

RESOLUTION NO. 20180614-064

WHEREAS, Austin's rapid growth and redevelopment is contributing to the loss of important and irreplaceable historic assets across the city; and

WHEREAS, Historic Preservation Offices in other cities play an integral role in effective planning efforts, as well as evaluating and preserving each city's historic assets; and

WHEREAS, adequate staffing and authority would facilitate the robust integration of Austin's Historic Preservation Office (HPO) activities, duties, and responsibilities into all the City's planning efforts; and

WHEREAS, adopted city plans such as Imagine Austin, the Downtown Austin Plan, and the Strategic Direction 2023 call for policies and programs that honor and promote the preservation of Austin's historic assets and cultural and ethnic heritage; and

WHEREAS, Council recently established the Historic Preservation Fund with revenue from the hotel occupancy tax to provide much-needed investment in heritage tourism and City-owned and private historic sites; and

WHEREAS, realizing the full potential of the Historic Preservation Fund will likely require adequate staffing to support additional preservation activities; and

WHEREAS, in February 2017, the City Auditor reported several issues preventing the HPO and Historic Landmark Commission (HLC) from achieving their mission to support the preservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods that reflect elements of Austin's cultural, social, political, and architectural history; and

WHEREAS, this audit's additional observations found that compared with eight other Texas cities, the HLC has the second highest caseload per meeting and the HPO has one of the lowest full-time employee staffing levels among similar programs; and

WHEREAS, approximately 3,000 historic-age buildings have been demolished in the past five years; and

WHEREAS, the East Austin Historic Resources Survey that Council approved in December 2016 identifies a number of potential historic landmarks and historic districts with significant architectural and ethnic/cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, partially due to a lack of resources within the HPO and in the community, the City has, to date, received no completed applications for potential landmark designations or historic districts in the survey area; and

WHEREAS, equitable treatment for the city's historically disadvantaged communities requires an additional investment in public outreach, assistance, and historic preservation expertise; and

WHEREAS, on February 26, 2018, the HLC passed a resolution recommending Council evaluate the current fee structure for historic zoning and recommending additional funding and staffing in the FY 2019 budget to enable the HPO to identify historic properties, develop design standards, and work with communities to develop local historic districts; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council directs the City Manager to consider changes related to the HPO and HLC that more meaningfully protect and enhance neighborhoods, buildings, and sites that reflect elements of Austin's cultural, social, political, and architectural history, including, but not limited to the following:

1. Creating a separate Preservation Planning Division within the Planning and Zoning Department equal in standing to divisions such as Urban Design and Long-Range Planning to provide the preservation program with a stronger voice in carrying out preservation priorities and efforts and to better integrate its activities into the City's planning, equity, and economic development efforts.
2. Aligning the HPO staffing levels with peer cities along the following priority areas:

- a. Necessary Preservation Planning Division management, coordination, and supervision of all historic preservation activities and preservation staff;
 - b. Community assistance in developing local historic district applications, especially in areas experiencing significant loss of cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural assets;
 - c. Community education and outreach activities and development of community partnerships for preservation;
 - d. Strengthened review of demolition and Certificate of Appropriateness applications;
 - e. Strengthened inspection of construction projects subject to a Certificate of Appropriateness and investigation of violations of the historic preservation code requirements.
3. Revising outdated sections of the Land Development Code related to historic preservation activities to reflect best practices in the field, including the establishment of clearer language for designation criteria and additional qualification requirements for HLC membership in line with peer cities.
 4. Funding historic resource survey efforts on an annual basis.
 5. Posting backup materials for commission and public review at least three business days prior to HLC meetings.

6. Streamlining commission meetings through identification of cases that may be administratively approved.
7. Permitting HPO staff to apply for and accept grants in any amount to carry out preservation programming.
8. Providing adequate support and training of HPO staff and HLC members by a City attorney with experience in preservation law or provide for outside expert counsel on an as-needed basis.
9. Reviewing the current historic zoning fee structure to identify opportunities for equity and affordability.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Council directs the City Manager to provide Council with recommendations and analysis of the benefits, feasibility, and estimated annual budget impact of the changes listed above, along with any other potential changes to effect the intent of this resolution, by June 28, 2018.

ADOPTED: June 14, 2018

ATTEST: Enka Brady for
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk