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R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the City Council considers it desirable to maintain the historical and cultural integrity of our public places, and Republic Square Park is a place of historical significance in the City; and

WHEREAS, Republic Square Park, bounded by Fifth, Fourth, Guadalupe and San Antonio streets, was the heart of an area known as "Mexico" from 1873 to the early and mid-part of the 20th Century; and

WHEREAS, archival sources indicate this area housed many of Austin's earliest Hispanic families, and that within it were located many of Austin's early Hispanic businesses including blacksmiths, restaurants, barbers, grocers, meat markets, bakeries, manufacturing enterprises, Mexican fast food vendors, and lumber enterprises; and

WHEREAS, in this area Hispanic institutions such as the Mexican Methodist Church, the First Mexican Church (later, Our Lady of Guadalupe), and the Mutualist Society, the Sociedad Juarista Mexicana-Texana were first established in Austin by the Hispanic community and others ministering to the community; and

WHEREAS, Republic Square Park with its benches and speakers platform was the cultural and political meeting place where each year Diez y Seis de Septiembre (Mexico's and Texas' first independence) was celebrated, where Cinco de Mayo annual dancing and fireworks commemorated Austin's Hispanic heritage; and

WHEREAS, currently, the City of Austin and the East Austin community are undertaking the construction of Saltillo Plaza to commemorate Hispanic culture and business enterprise on East 5th and Comal Street; and

WHEREAS, Plaza Saltillo is a cultural expression of the continuity of the Hispanic presence, being symbolically and in fact, relocated from Republic Square to its present East Austin location; and

WHEREAS, additionally this district of Republic Square Park and Saltillo Plaza are both located in a sector connected by the Town Lake Park recreational area, and by the proposed arts district including the Austin Museum of Art discussed over the past 10 years; and

WHEREAS, there are efforts under way to eradicate the negative boundaries between west and east imposed by Interstate 35, through efforts to redefine the historical, cultural and geographical connections of the lower downtown residential, and business district from MoPac to Pleasant Valley, and to reconnect this district through existing entities as well as future projects such as the Austin Museum of Art and Capital Metro's proposed Dillo and Light Rail services; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Museum of Art was originally designed by Architect Robert Venturi to be located on Fourth Street at the north end of the block, immediately south of Republic Square Park, and facing it; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Museum of Art is to be an essential component of the artistic and social fabric of the community and to serve as a catalyst for cross-cultural understanding, communication and appreciation; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Museum of Art is to focus on American visual art significant to our time and region, inclusive of the Mexican and Caribbean heritage; this focus challenges us to explore and celebrate multiple traditions and innovations from inclusive intellectual and cultural perspectives; and

WHEREAS, the vision of the Austin Museum of Art is compatible with the historic heritage of Republic Square Park which at the turn of the century was vibrant, entrepreneurial, lively cultural area, and both entities jointly would enrich and nurture the proposed arts district; and

WHEREAS, the State of Texas currently owns all of the block where the Austin Museum of Art was designed to be built originally; and

WHEREAS, currently, the U.S. Post Office Building and the proposed State Office Building and parking structure threaten to encase Republic Square Park in concrete and thereby eliminate its potential for shared public use space with the proposed Austin Museum of Art,

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

That the City of Austin shall designate Republic Square Park as a park that is commemorative of the historic presence of the Hispanic community in Austin and a companion entity to Plaza Saltillo, connecting the east and west lower downtown district.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Republic Square Park be designated as a park dedicated to cultural arts activities consistent with the historical antecedents of the area, together with the proposed Austin Museum of Art, designate it as part of the culture and arts district.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the City Council direct the City Manager to continue discussions with the State of Texas to discuss selection of an alternate site for the possible relocation of the proposed state office building.

ADOPTED: June 29, 1995 ATTEST: James E. Aldridge  
James E. Aldridge  
City Clerk

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