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February 21, 2018

Chair Mary Jo Galindo and Landmark Commissioners
Historic Landmark Commission
City of Austin
Post Office Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767-8865
Sent via E-mail

Re: Smoot/Terrace Park Local Historic District

Dear Chair Galindo and Commissioners:

Preservation Austin respectfully requests your support for the designation of the Smoot/Terrace Park Place Local Historic District. In establishing the Local Historic District program, Austin's City Council has endorsed the Local Historic Districts mechanism to preserve the unique character of Austin's historic neighborhoods, and to create an alternative to the ad hoc designation of individual landmark structures. Preservation Austin believes that the establishment of Local Historic Districts is the best means to preserve the treasured and unique heritage of our City.

Located in Central Austin, the boundaries of the Smoot/Terrace Park Historic District are encompassed by the larger West Line National Register Historic District. The Smoot/Terrace Park Historic District consists of a portion of the 200 acres of land just west of downtown Austin and Shoal Creek settled by James H. Raymond. Raymond served as Treasurer of both the Republic and the State of Texas and later became a well-known banker in Austin. Four different country estates were built on large parcels within the boundaries of the Smoot/Terrace Park Historic District. Today, all four are historic landmarks: the Smoot House (1613 W. 6th Street), the Johnson House (1412 W. 6 ½ Street), the William Pillow House (1407 W. 9th Street), and the Ben Pillow House (1403 W. 9th Street). The remainder of the area was developed between 1911 and 1935 by middle-class families. The predominate style of these houses is Craftsman bungalow with some of the houses featuring Colonial and Classical Revival elements.

The proposed historic district is part of an already established National Register Historic District. Local designation of this area help to further ensure the preservation and stabilization of the neighborhood. We are impressed with the work that led to the Smoot/Terrace Park Local Historic District nomination. The neighborhood has done extensive outreach to every property owner, meeting in small groups, one-on-one and through mailings and a website to explain the design standards as well as benefits and responsibilities of a Local Historic District. The applicants have responded to concerns of property owners and incorporated feedback into their proposed Design Standards. The nomination criteria are clearly stated, and the proposed district on all counts meets the criteria for acceptance.

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Furthermore, the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan states that one of the challenges for the city is “Maintaining historic neighborhood character and preserving historic resources.” To that end the plan includes two policies for the City to carry out:

LUT P38: Preserve and interpret historic resources...in Austin for residents and visitors.

LUT P41: Protect historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the City.

Designation of the Smoot/Terrace Park Local Historic District plays a key part in meeting that goal.

For 65 years, Preservation Austin has been the leading protector of Austin’s diverse cultural heritage through the preservation of historic treasures and places. As such, we believe that learning from and celebrating our past while planning for and creating the future enhances livability and a sense of identity for our city. The Smoot/Terrace Park neighborhood takes great pride in its historic character and has actively worked to educate the public about its history.

Instituting Local Historic Districts is a goal of our City, and we hope you will take this opportunity to recommend Plan Commission and Council approval of this application. Thank you for your many hours of hard work to preserve what is best about Austin for future generations.

Sincerely,

Ken Johnson
President, Preservation Austin