

## **BUDGET RESOLUTION RECOMMENDATION**

City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission

Recommendation Number: 2018-001

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission was established in 1974 to promote historic preservation activities in Austin and advise the Austin City Council on matters related to historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Historic Landmark Commission is to prepare and periodically revise an inventory of the structures and areas that may be eligible for designation as historic landmarks, most recently completed in 1984; prepare, review, and propose amendments to a citywide Historic Preservation Plan, last adopted in 1981; and review requests to establish or remove a historic designation and make recommendations on the requests to the Land Use Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan outlines historic preservation policies for the City of Austin to preserve and interpret historic resources in Austin for residents and visitors, with goals including 1) the inventory and protection of historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the city; and 2) the retention of the character of National Register and local historic districts by ensuring development is compatible with the historic character of the districts; and

WHEREAS, the draft Strategic Direction 2023 includes the commemoration and preservation of historical and ethnic heritage as an indicator category, with proposed strategies that include protecting neighborhoods, buildings, and sites that reflect Austin's diverse history; prioritizing inclusive representation in preservation efforts; and broadening support for and participation in preserving underrepresented histories and resources; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the identification and evaluation of all properties within the city of Austin is a necessary first step in developing a process to preserve historic properties that convey the significance of all areas of the city; and that the development of consistent design standards and guidelines is required to retain the character of historic properties in the city and make the historic district designation process more transparent and equitable; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that the demolition of older residential and commercial buildings in Austin results in the loss of historic fabric, including more than 3,000 historic-age buildings demolished in the last five years; and that the demolition of older buildings often occurs in areas of Austin where the percentage of households represent <80% of HUD median family income, where there are high concentrations of rental properties, and in neighborhoods historically home to persons of color, as noted by the UT Austin Gentrification Study Update presented to the City of Austin Anti-Displacement Task Force on January 5, 2018; and that historic landmark and local historic district designation is an effective tool to preserve affordable housing and prevent displacement in areas of the city vulnerable to displacement; and

WHEREAS, the East Austin Historic Resources Survey presented to Council in December 2016 recommends a number of potential historic landmarks and local historic districts with significant built and ethnic/cultural heritage; for which no applications have been reviewed by the Commission to date; and

WHEREAS, the Commission finds the current application process for designation of historic landmarks and historic districts requires a substantial investment of time and funds by homeowners and neighborhoods, including hiring a preservation professional to survey and evaluate properties within proposed districts, researching building and neighborhood history, compiling historic maps, developing district design standards,

conducting extensive public outreach, and paying the application fee; and results in a process that is not equitable for all homeowners or neighborhoods in the city;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the Council allocate funds to the Historic Preservation Office in the amount of \$325,000 per year for a period of two years to implement the historic preservation responsibilities and priorities as outlined by the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Land Development Code, Imagine Austin, and the draft Strategic Direction 2023; and allocate an additional \$635,000 annually to the Historic Preservation Office to fund additional permanent staff positions, public outreach programs, and detailed historic building surveys. To meet the City of Austin's historic preservation responsibilities and priorities, the Historic Landmark Commission recommends the following steps:

1. Initiate a citywide historic building scan of all 40/45+ year-old buildings, to be conducted by Historic Preservation Office staff. The inventory and historic context developed as part of the citywide survey would be used to prepare future historic landmark and district applications, and provide an equitable solution for the designation of historic properties.
2. Initiate a detailed historic building survey based on the priority areas identified as part of the citywide scan that represent significant architectural and historical themes throughout the city of Austin, to be conducted by Historic Preservation Office staff and, as needed, outside consultants.
3. Initiate the preparation of citywide design standards and guidelines for historic properties in Austin. Citywide standards will result in a consistent evaluation of modifications to landmarks and local historic districts based on the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, increase transparency in the application process, and provide an equitable solution for the retention of historic character throughout the city.
4. Initiate a study to evaluate the current fee structure for landmark and local historic district zoning applications and assess options for increasing equity through reduced fees or other mechanisms.
5. Create an additional permanent Historic Preservation Office position to review demolition and Certificate of Appropriateness applications.
6. Create a permanent planner position to inspect construction projects subject to a Certificate of Appropriateness. Failure to meet the requirements of approved Certificates of Appropriateness, as determined by this construction inspection, results in fines and/or other penalties per Code.
7. Create a permanent Historic Preservation Office staff position to assist community members in the development of future local historic district applications and to coordinate local historic district applications for priority areas.
8. Create a permanent Historic Preservation Office staff position dedicated to education, outreach, and community partnerships to promote historic preservation efforts in the city of Austin, and dedicate a modest amount of funding to outreach and programming.

Date of Approval:

Record of the Vote:

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Attest: Mary Jo Galindo  
Chair, Historic Landmark Commission