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November 11, 2020

Terri Myers, Chair
City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: Baker School Historic Zoning

Dear Ms. Myers,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write today to express our support of the proposed historic zoning of 3908 Avenue B, the Baker School. The property has clear historical associations and community value, which we implore the Historic Landmark Commission to recognize.

Historical Associations: Built in 1911, Baker School is one of the oldest school buildings in the city. It was built to serve the developing Hyde Park neighborhood. Its namesake was DeWitt Clinton Baker (1832-1881), who helped establish the Austin public school system as well as Austin's first public library.

Community Value: The school is a neighborhood focal point, signaling Hyde Park as an upper-middle-class district. The founders recognized the need for social, cultural, religious, and educational institutions to attract residents. In the early 20th century, the importance of education reflects Austin's transition from a frontier city to one of a cultured and literate population.

Architectural Significance: The Baker School is also a contributing structure to the Hyde Park Historic District, already recognizing its architectural significance. Three prominent local architecture firms contributed to the existing structure, Roy Thomas, Hugo Kuehne, and Kreisle and Brooks. The popular Neo-Classical style of the early 20th century is evident in Baker School.

This fall Preservation Austin honored Baker School with a 2020 Preservation Merit Award for its rehabilitation, and its owners have long demonstrated their commitment to historic preservation in our city. As Austin faces more school closures on the horizon, we are all called to find creative and sustainable ways to honor this heritage while serving today's businesses and families.

Preservation Austin has adopted this issue as a FY21 Advocacy Priority, and will work to educate our community and our leaders about the potential for adaptive reuse of Austin's decommissioned schools as one option for the challenges facing AISD – using Baker School as an example of how to do this so well.

Thank you for your service to the community,

Clayton Bullock, President