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March 27, 2022

Historic Landmark Commission

City of Austin Permitting and Development Center

6310 Wilhelmina Delco Dr, Room 1405

Austin, TX 78752

Re: Budget recommendation for Phase 2 of Equity-Based Historic Preservation Plan

Dear Chair Myers, Vice Chair Heimsath, and members of the Historic Landmark Commission,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. As our city's leading nonprofit voice for historic preservation since 1953, we rely on effective collaboration with members of the Historic Landmark Commission (HLC), the City of Austin, and the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) for our success. We are grateful to you for your service and dedication to the City of Austin.

Austin faces unprecedented challenges, as the vibrant economy and real estate market are creating dramatic changes in neighborhoods and unique pressures in the housing market, including affordability, displacement, and gentrification. These problems have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which has disrupted the lives of so many in so many ways. The necessity to continue the work of Equity-Based Historic Preservation Plan has never been greater.

We thus support the HLC's recommendation to City Council to fund Phase 2 of the Equity-Based Historic Preservation Plan, and to fund a permanent HPO staff position to manage Phase 2 and coordinate implementation of the Preservation Plan after its adoption. As the HLC has noted, these resources are essential to engage the community in the preservation planning process, set equitable priorities for historic preservation policy, and better meet the City of Austin's responsibilities to promote and preserve its character and history.

The community engagement focus of Phase 2 is an essential part of the process as the working group continues to seek answers to the questions posed in its foundation. These include whose heritage is represented in designated historic properties; what stories are missing; who benefits from preservation policies, programs, and incentives; and how historic preservation tools can be expanded to address the issues of sustainability, affordability, and displacement.

Preservation Austin is deeply committed to this process, with staff (Meghan King, our Programs and Outreach Planner) and two board members (Linda Jackson and Alyson McGee) participating on the working group. As the community engagement phase of the Plan unfolds, they and other members of the working group will continue to offer diverse preservation perspectives in a collaboration that successfully reflects the diversity of Austin. The group is doing valuable work, and Phase 2 is crucial to accomplishing this effort.

Preservation Austin welcomes the conversations underlying the Equity-Based Historic Preservation Plan, and as Austin forges ahead with Phase 2, we support the Plan's new approach to preservation, one that reflects twenty-first century values while honoring diverse histories of our past, that encourages investment in historic resources both for their inherent value and because doing so aligns with broader goals of building a more affordable, equitable, and sustainable city.

We thank you for your ongoing leadership as Austin navigates the challenges and opportunities of the years and decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lindsey Derrington', with a stylized, overlapping loop structure.

Lindsey Derrington
Executive Director