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June 15, 2022

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Alter, and City Council Members,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write to you today in support of Council Member Tovo's proposed resolution for Item 95 and ask Council to initiate historic zoning for the Sixth Street National Register District. Historic buildings must, by necessity, be an integral part of any planning efforts for East Sixth and the City of Austin should take advantage of all the tools at its disposal for creating a vibrant, safe, and desirable commercial district here. Local historic districts are a powerful and commonly-used planning tool to help achieve those ends.

East Sixth Street is one of Austin's most important historic and cultural assets, downtown and citywide. Efforts to protect this incredible collection of buildings, representing a diverse confluence of our city's history, date back nearly 50 years. The Sixth Street Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. City Council later enshrined the East Sixth/Pecan Street Combining District "to protect the historic character of East Sixth and to enhance the pedestrian environment of the area." To date, 33 properties in the Sixth Street Historic District have been designated as local landmarks.

District-wide historic zoning is the logical next step to creating a vital, cohesive preservation vision for East Sixth Street. Local historic districts serve as a planning tool for neighborhoods to preserve heritage while agreeing on a clear set of guidelines to shape more compatible development. A local historic district here would support a balanced approach between preservation and density so that the most intact blocks of contributing buildings retain their historic character. The City of Austin's Historic Design Guidelines outline best practices for preservation and development to thrive together, which would support Stream Realty's plans for street improvements and the district's revitalization. Historic zoning would provide the City with more tools to work with property owners to maintain their properties according to preservation best practices. These outcomes are aligned with [Action #13](#) of the Safer 6th Street Initiative (Resolution No. [20210729-175](#)), which proposes engaging property owners and impacted stakeholders on potential land use regulations to achieve more diverse uses along the historic corridor.

We further encourage City Council to work with property owners to explore additional preservation incentives that would support reinvestment in this district, including the City of Austin's Heritage Grant program, offering up to \$250,000 to projects that support historic resources and programs that attract tourists, and federal and state historic tax credits, which combined total a 45 percent tax credit on qualifying expenses for income-producing properties.

It is for these reasons that we ask the Council to initiate historic zoning for the Sixth Street National Register District and provide the planning vision necessary to steward the future of this vital district.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Linda Y. Jackson, President