

October 3, 2022

Jeff Berryman  
Michael Hsu Office of Architecture  
826 Houston Street, Ste 100  
Austin, Texas 78756  
*Via email to berryman@hsuoffice.com*

Re: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark project review, Heierman Building, 115 E. 5th Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas (RTHL 14733)

Dear Mr. Jeff Berryman:

Thank you for sending information regarding proposed work on the Heierman Building, which has been designated, with the adjacent Hotel Provident, as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) since 1974. This letter represents the comments of the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

The THC Division of Architecture staff, led by Alex Toprac, has completed its review of the proposed exterior work to the property, including the Heierman – Historic Landmark Commission Review design document by Michael Hsu Office of Architecture, dated September 07, 2022. Our staff acknowledges the scope will notably include replacement of the existing roof and associated mechanical equipment and appurtenances to accommodate the construction of a 16' tall, custom steel panel and curtain glass clad, modern rooftop addition to be set back twenty feet from the north, primary elevation parapet; removal of the egress door, primary double door entrance and associated sidelights, and existing three storefront windows on the previously altered first floor of the north, primary façade to be replaced with a single 3x5 light fixed multi-paned window in place of the egress door, a new recessed entry referencing the 1974 entry appearance reusing the salvaged existing double doors and installing slightly larger sidelights to fill in the associated remaining brick veneer masonry opening, and three new multi-paned, fixed storefront windows; as well as selective demolition of the existing fenestration and a large portion of the brick masonry on the rear, south elevation in order to accommodate the installation of a custom steel framed and paneled facade with large steel multi-paned storefront windows and a new enclosed building area on the first floor extending west from the existing egress stairwell addition that will also be extended a floor in height to be incorporated into the proposed rooftop addition.

Regarding the proposed rooftop addition, our staff appreciates the architect providing the sight line diagram and accordingly setting the associated new construction twenty feet back from the primary façade's parapet to reduce visibility of the new addition from the principal perspective across 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Yet, our staff recommends the new addition being lowered in height to be more commensurate to the approximately 12'-13' heights of the historic second and third stories of the building. Furthermore, our staff recommends and expects the proposed steel paneling of the new addition to be painted a lighter color to blend in more with the existing buff colored historic brick of the Heierman Building and the light grey concrete color of the parking garage directly behind the building to the south.

Our review staff acknowledges the architectural team's commendable effort to reference historic photo-documentation of the Heierman Building as a means of providing rationale for their chosen design approach. Yet, our staff always recommends preservation of as much existing repairable material as possible and otherwise to replace deteriorated existing material in-kind wherever necessary, or alternatively restore the building back to its appearance at a certain period of significance to ideally meet either the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* or *Restoration*, respectively.

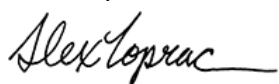
Furthermore, although the 1974 appearance of the building was referenced as a rationale for the proposed inset reconfiguration of the primary façade, the architectural condition of that portion of building had already been significantly altered and would not be considered historically significant, despite the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation having been awarded at that time. Similarly, the planned alterations to the rear, south elevation are not a recommended approach due to the extensive removal of original historic brick masonry and original fenestration openings that is proposed. Yet, due to the severity of inappropriate changes to the building over time, along with the most extensive alterations proposed being on the rear elevation and therefore not visible to the public, our staff will not be making a recommendation to pursue removal of the RTHL designation in the case that the current design plans are carried out. Our staff does recommend salvaging and storing (for potential future reuse), as much of the historic material planned for removal as possible.

Although the THC Division of Architecture staff finds the proposed scope of work does not meet the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, it has been decided that no additional waiting period will be imposed for the project and work may proceed at this time. Should the nature or scope of the RTHL project change, or if unforeseen events or findings are encountered, please contact the THC as soon as possible.

Additionally, as the applicant noted interest in potentially applying for historic preservation tax credits, our staff would like to clarify that the receipt of this letter only represents the fulfillment of the required RTHL review and consultation process and does not constitute review and approval for the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program (THPTCP). Furthermore, in preliminarily reviewing the submitted design documentation with the THPTCP staff, it was concluded that the project as proposed would not be eligible for the associated financial incentive. If the owner is still interested in pursuing historic preservation tax credits, our staff strongly encourages them to contact and work with the THPTCP staff as soon as possible to ensure necessary design revisions are made to meet the associated program requirements.

Thank you for your interest in the cultural heritage of Texas, and for the opportunity to comment on this proposed project in accordance with Recorded Texas Historic Landmark legislation. We look forward to further consultation with your office and hope to maintain a partnership that will foster effective historic preservation. **If you have any questions concerning our review or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Alex Toprac at 512/463-6183.**

Sincerely,



Alex Toprac, North Texas Project Reviewer  
for: Mark Wolfe, Executive Director

MW/at

Cc: 115 Provident Holdings, LLC. (*via email*)  
Bob Ward, Travis County Historical Commission Chairman (*via email*)