

**RESOLUTION NO. 20220915-054**

**WHEREAS**, the Castleman-Bull House was originally constructed in 1873 at 308 East 7th Street by Austin merchant R. M. Castleman; and

**WHEREAS**, the Castleman-Bull House is a two-story, masonry historic house located at 201 Red River Street across from the service yard entrance of the Austin Convention Center; and

**WHEREAS**, the Castleman-Bull is one of the oldest and most substantial 19<sup>th</sup> century houses in Austin, a fine example of the High Victorian Italianate style; and

**WHEREAS**, four generations of Castlemans lived in the house before St. David's Episcopal Church in 1963 where it would then serve as home to the Caritas Foundation for more than 30 years; and

**WHEREAS**, in December 2000, in lieu of demolition, St. David's Episcopal Church donated the house to the City of Austin, and the Heritage Society (now Preservation Austin) paid to move the Castleman-Bull House seven blocks to its current location; and

**WHEREAS**, the building has been unoccupied since the move; and

**WHEREAS**, a two-year effort was undertaken between 2010 and 2012 to create a public-private partnership between the Waller Creek Conservancy, the MFI Foundation, and the City of Austin that would have resulted in a restored building at no cost to the public, coupled with a significant public benefit; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2017, renovations for the interior of the Castleman-Bull House were estimated at about \$2 million; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019 the Austin Convention Center spent \$1.7 million to restore and stabilize the exterior of the Castleman-Bull House; and

**WHEREAS**, the Convention Center paid for the renovation from its capital budget, which has a proposed ending balance for Fiscal Year 2023 of more than \$181 million; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the Jamail & Smith website, the Castleman-Bull House exterior renovation was intended to create “the first fixed-front porch in the Promiseland Project movement, also known as America’s Front Porch,” an initiative to create spaces “where all people from every walk of life, can sit together, talk, and listen to each other, as neighbors”; and

**WHEREAS**, this historic, city-owned structure has been under-utilized and vacant for the 20 years that the City has owned it; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin has a vested interest in ensuring that all quadrants of its Downtown remain active, vibrant places where visitors and residents alike want to spend time; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin periodically has had conversations about methods and strategies for discouraging Downtown property owners from allowing their properties to stand vacant; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Austin should model this practice with its own facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Castleman-Bull's location within the Palm District and adjacent to the Convention Center makes it ideally suited for events, programs, a visitors center, or other public uses; and

**WHEREAS**, restoration of the Castleman-Bull House will help further the goal of transforming this quadrant of Downtown into more active, vibrant pedestrian uses; and

**WHEREAS**, without timely restoration to the interior of the building, the City risks losing this valuable asset within the Austin Convention Center portfolio;  
**NOW, THEREFORE,**

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:**

That the City Manager shall work with the City of Austin Historic Preservation Office to define a scope of work and to provide a cost estimate for the restoration and renovation of the Castleman-Bull House consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties that would return it to service. The City Manager shall provide this estimate no later than November 1, 2022.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Council, by separate action, reserves \$8 million from the Austin Convention Center funds so money is available for an interior restoration consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties should the Council choose to authorize moving forward after having received the City Manager recommendations on possible uses, final funding sources, restoration, and location.



**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

The City Manager shall conduct community engagement meetings in October and November to discuss possible public uses of this building, including for the Black Embassy, Convention Center purposes, or other city-or third-party uses. The City Manager shall engage with culturally significant and representative organizations; stakeholders shall include and not be limited to Preservation Austin, Six Square, Waterloo Greenway, the Downtown Austin Alliance, and participants in the Palm District Planning initiative.

The City Manager shall notify the following boards and commissions (and any other relevant ones) in advance of these conversations: Visit Austin, the Downtown Commission, the Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board, the African American Quality of Life Commission, the Parks and Recreation Board, and the Historic Landmark Commission.

The City Manager shall consult with and involve in these conversations city staff from multiple departments, including the Palm District Planning effort, the Historic Preservation Office, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Equity Office, the George Washington Carvery Museum and Genealogy Center, and the Convention Center.

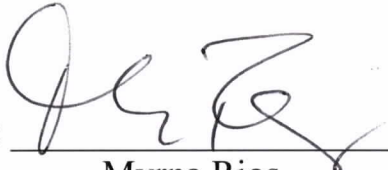
The City Manager shall provide a Council memo or briefing about these meetings along with staff recommendations no later than December 1, 2022.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

In the event that staff and/or the community recommend non-Convention Center options for use, staff shall recommend sources of funding.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

In keeping with the process that the Equity Office is spearheading to review facility names associated with the Confederacy, the City Manager shall also initiate a community input process to consider the appropriateness of changing the name of the structure and to review alternative recommendations.

**ADOPTED:** September 15, 2022 **ATTEST:**   
Myrna Rios  
City Clerk