

809 West 32nd Street
Austin, TX 78705

January 25, 2023

Dear Mayor Watson, Council Member Qadri, and Members of the City Council:

I write today to urge your support of the rezoning for Westgate Tower to recognize it as a City Historic Landmark.

As the former representative of City Council District 9, I am very familiar with the merits of this zoning case and believe strongly that the Westgate Tower meets the criteria specified in the City of Austin zoning ordinance. Indeed, in recognition of its historical, architectural, and cultural significance, the Westgate was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 and became a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark that same year.

The Westgate was designed in 1962 by internationally acclaimed modernist architect Edward Durrell Stone, who served as design architect for the Museum of Modern Art, played key roles in the design of New York City's Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall, and designed multiple other buildings of significance. The Westgate is the only Austin building designed by Stone, and the fact of his involvement in helping shape the Downtown landscape reveals a great deal about Austin's increasing importance as a city during the early 1960s.

When it was built, the Westgate – so named for its location West of the Capitol -- was so significantly taller than any other buildings in Austin other than the Capitol that it caused some level of controversy and led to the creation of the state's Capitol View Corridors. It was a mixed use building from its beginnings, containing first-floor retail spaces, residential units, and a restaurant and club on the top floor. Local architects Fehr & Granger served as associate architects and designed the interior spaces. Through the years, the Westgate has had rich associations with multiple figures of national and local significance who have resided there or been regular visitors.

The City of Austin has few multifamily properties in its portfolio of historically designated properties because few would be able to meet the stringent criteria of the ordinance. The inclusion of the Westgate would be an important addition.

The Westgate's zoning application has received a recommendation from the City staff, unanimous approval from the City's Historic Landmark Commission, and majority support (though not an official recommendation) from the Planning Commission. The Westgate has met – and some would say, exceeded – the ordinance requirements for historic zoning, and I would urge your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Kathie Tovo, Ph.D.