

Amber Allen
Historic Preservation Office
City of Austin

August 16, 2023

Dear Ms. Allen:

I would like to include the State Theater, 719 Congress Avenue, on our September agenda for consideration of initiation of historic zoning. I understand this will be an owner-supported historic zoning process. The State Theater and its sister property, the already-landmarked Paramount Theater, are prime candidates for landmark designation given their central location on historic Congress Avenue within the downtown area most frequented and enjoyed by tourists; their public use operated by a not-for-profit entity focused on maintaining these historic buildings and providing music and theater events, which are a reflection and continuation of the State's historic use as an entertainment venue; and generally, their past, present, and future contributions to the history, image, culture, and economy of downtown and the City of Austin as a whole. The tax benefits offered would directly benefit the non-profit's ability to preserve the historic structure and continue their historic service to the city, reaping rewards for the city on multiple fronts, fiscal and otherwise.

I do not believe the alterations we recently commented on as part of our National Register review will impact integrity in a way that would preclude its designation. This being a row-type building, the primary façade is being retained, with none of its historic material is being removed. The roof deck is set back and shielded by the parapet of the decorative façade. The recessed area to the right is being added on to in a way that does not detract from the primary façade, and is differentiated enough to avoid false historicism. The entrance to the lower right, while not a complete restoration of the original entry, does reflect the character and feel of the original entry in a way that allows the building to convey its history. I do have concerns about replacing neon with LED on the iconic sign, but given the history of the applicant's sensitive restoration, believe this will become an example case of how to handle such cases in the future.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Koch', with a stylized, looping initial 'K'.

Kevin Koch, AIA
Historic Landmark Commissioner District 3

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