



Historic Landmark Commission Recommendation

Recommendation Number 20241002-31: Adoption of the Equity-Based Preservation Plan

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission (the Commission) was established in 1974 to promote historic preservation activities in Austin and advise the Austin City Council on matters related to historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Commission is to prepare and periodically revise an inventory of the structures and areas that may be eligible for designation as historic landmarks, most recently completed in 1984; prepare, review, and propose amendments to a citywide Historic Preservation Plan, last adopted in 1981; and review requests to establish or remove a historic designation and make recommendations on the requests to the Land Use Commission; and

WHEREAS, since its establishment the Commission has successfully recommended designation of 676 historic landmarks and 8 historic districts, stewarded changes to those properties through administrative and Commission review, partnered with historic landmark and historic district owners to maintain the integrity of individual properties and historic districts, overseen historic resource surveys to identify potential historic resources, and recommended heritage tourism grants for projects benefitting tourists and convention delegates; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has increasingly recognized the limitations of existing programs and tools to accomplish its mission; and

WHEREAS, City preservation efforts, in spite of many successes, have historically not reflected the full history of the city and its many diverse communities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission's work has largely been reactive to development pressures, a rising number of demolition applications, and increasing displacement of longtime communities; and

WHEREAS, national preservation efforts and best practices in other cities have grown to emphasize the value of historic and cultural resources that reflect more diverse histories and communities, tools to recognize and support cultural heritage such as legacy businesses, preservation's contributions to environmental sustainability and affordability, and more expansive and inclusive community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Commission and the Historic Preservation Office seek to respond to 21st-century challenges with improved and new policies, programs, and tools, including transparent and accessible historic review processes, inclusive community outreach, and incentives that meet both historic preservation and equity goals; and

WHEREAS, the Commission created a 26-member community working group, the Preservation Plan Working Group (the Working Group), on June 28, 2021, to develop a draft of an equity-based historic preservation plan between July 2021 and June 2022 (phase 1 of the planning process); and

WHEREAS, Working Group members are representative of Austin’s racial and ethnic diversity, live in 19 ZIP codes, and include one third renters; and

WHEREAS, the Working Group diligently completed the draft Equity-Based Preservation Plan (the Plan) during monthly meetings, drawing on research from national best practices, employing an equity evaluation framework, and incorporating feedback from 275 community members and stakeholders through a community heritage survey, focus groups, a Technical Advisory Group of City staff, and the Commission’s Preservation Plan Committee; and

WHEREAS, Council allocated \$160,000 to Phase 2 of the Plan in the FY2022-23 budget to support robust community engagement around the plan; and

WHEREAS, broad, inclusive outreach and engagement around the draft Plan reached more than 2,500 people throughout Austin to review and comment on the Plan’s goals and recommendations, conducting 127 targeted events and leveraging outreach by community ambassadors and organizational partners; and

WHEREAS, communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ communities, and renters were strongly represented in Plan engagement participants, and reside within 41 of Austin’s 64 ZIP codes; and

WHEREAS, the equity-based planning process has amplified the voices of those who have not historically been part of discussions about historic preservation; and

WHEREAS, the Working Group and Commission revised and finalized the Plan based on public feedback; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan outlines historic preservation policies for the City of Austin to identify, preserve, and interpret historic resources in Austin for residents and visitors; and


WHEREAS, the Plan aligns with and supports the historic preservation goals and recommendations in Imagine Austin; and

WHEREAS, amending Imagine Austin to incorporate the Plan upon adoption by Council will further a coordinated, strategic approach to planning for the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the Equity-Based Preservation Plan, amend Imagine Austin to make the Plan an element of the City’s comprehensive plan, and support the Plan’s timely implementation.

Date of Approval: October 2, 2024

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 9-0 vote

Attest: 

Cara Bertron, Planning Department staff