



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Historic Landmark Commission

Recommendation Number: [20260204-ITEM]: SUPPORTING RALLY AUSTIN'S "KEEP AUSTIN OURS"
2026 BOND PROPOSAL AND ITS ALIGNMENT WITH CITY PRESERVATION PRIORITIES

Date of Approval: TBD Proposed: 2/4/2026

Recommendation:

WHEREAS, Austin's historic places, cultural corridors, legacy businesses, and iconic community-serving spaces are central to the city's identity, contributing significantly to cultural vibrancy, neighborhood character, local economic activity, and cohesive community values; and

WHEREAS, the rapid loss of affordable commercial, cultural, and creative space, particularly for legacy businesses, historic-area enterprises, and culturally significant venues, heightens the risk of displacement and erosion of Austin's historic fabric; and

WHEREAS, Rally Austin, the City's first multi-purpose local government corporation, was created by City Council in 2020 to advance equitable, community-driven development, and has delivered real estate strategies that preserve cultural and historic identity while expanding public benefit, including stewardship of Austin Cultural Trust projects and mixed-use preservation-oriented redevelopment; and

WHEREAS, the Keep Austin Ours 2026 Bond Proposal presented by Rally Austin during our October 1, 2025 meeting, outlines comprehensive efforts, partnerships and tools, such as property acquisition, lease stabilization, capital improvements, commercial trust programming, and expanded investment in the Austin Cultural Trust, to secure spaces that reflect Austin's history, identity, and community representation; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Cultural Trust has demonstrated the effectiveness of targeted investment to preserve at-risk cultural and historic spaces, with Rally Austin structuring \$19.15 million toward eight projects, delivering 64,570 square feet of preserved, affordable creative and cultural space that produces significant public benefit and impact projections; and

WHEREAS, a complementary Legacy Business Preservation & Commercial Trust framework, as proposed within Keep Austin Ours, offers new tools to stabilize long-standing and culturally meaningful businesses by addressing affordability, lease insecurity, and displacement pressures in historic and cultural corridors; and

WHEREAS, City Council, through Resolution 20240926-069, directed the City Manager to work with Rally Austin and key preservation stakeholders to develop a framework for stewardship of the Historic Preservation Acquisition Fund, and City staff confirmed in December 2025 that Rally Austin is recommended to serve as steward of that fund and is already implementing a planning and governance structure to align acquisitions with equity-based preservation goals, community engagement, and historic-resource criteria; and

WHEREAS, alignment between the Keep Austin Ours proposal, the HPAF framework, and the Equity-Based Preservation Plan strengthens the City's ability to protect historically significant structures, cultural anchors, and place-based heritage, especially in communities facing displacement or historic underinvestment; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Landmark Commission recognizes that preservation of historic buildings, cultural sites, and legacy businesses requires coordinated, multi-tool, cross-

departmental approaches that combine property acquisition, cultural space stabilization, commercial affordability programs, and community-led identification of assets;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the Austin City Council support the inclusion of Rally Austin's Keep Austin Ours 2026 Bond Proposal within the City's 2026 Bond Election as a comprehensive, partnership-driven strategy for cultural, historic, and commercial preservation consistent with City goals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The Commission recommends that City Council receive a formal briefing from Rally Austin to review how its organizational structure, public-private partnership model, and community-driven investment tools can advance historic preservation while reducing cost and risk to the City and deliver both short-term and long-term solutions that combat displacement, maintain representation, and safeguard Austin's historic character.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

The Historic Landmark Commission urges the City Manager and relevant staff to analyze and report on alignment between the Keep Austin Ours proposal and City preservation policy frameworks, including the Equity-Based Preservation Plan, the Historic Preservation Acquisition Fund criteria, and corridor-based preservation strategies, to ensure timely, efficient integration of these tools and complimentary programming, should the proposal receive voter approval in 2026.

Description of Recommendation to Council:

- The Historic Landmark Commission recommends that the Austin City Council support the inclusion of Rally Austin's Keep Austin Ours 2026 Bond Proposal within the City's 2026 Bond Election.
- The Commission recommends that City Council receive a formal briefing from Rally Austin.
- The Commission urges the City Manager and relevant staff to analyze and report on alignment between the Keep Austin Ours proposal and City preservation policy frameworks.

Motioned By: Ben Heimsath, Chair

Seconded By:

Vote:

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Off the dais:

Absent:

Attest: _____
(Staff or commissioner)