



Recommendation to Council

Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation 20260324-017: Capital Improvement Funding for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center – Phase 2

WHEREAS, The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center serves as a central hub for Latino arts, culture, and community engagement in the City of Austin and is the only cultural arts facility of this magnitude in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center provides vital cultural programming, educational opportunities, and performance space for Austin’s Latino/Chicano/Immigrant artists, organizations, and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center is the only Latino / Hispanic cultural arts center in the City of Austin – serving the approximately 32% of Austin’s population that identifies as Hispanic or Latino; and

WHEREAS, There were critical architectural, design, and equipment aspects of The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center’s Phase 2 renovations that were value-engineered out of the original master plan; and

WHEREAS, these eliminated features limit the cultural centers’ overall community impact and renders the facility impractical and ineffectual; and

WHEREAS, City Council Resolution No. 20221208-068 directed the City Manager to:

1. Proceed with the construction of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center WITHOUT a reduction in the scope of proposed work, and develop an estimate of the resulting funding gap for inclusion in the next applicable City of Austin General Obligation Bond Program.

WHEREAS, correcting these critical features is imperative to the success of the grand reopening of the City’s only Latino / Hispanic Cultural center; and

WHEREAS, the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Commission has recognized capital improvements at the cultural center as a priority for sustaining and growing Latino arts programs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Commission recommends that the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to allocate \$6,000,000 (Six Million Dollars) in funding for the completion of Phase 2 capital improvements, and/or items that were

value engineered out of the original Phase 2 master plan at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that recommended capital improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- Building and facility upgrades to ensure accessibility and ADA compliance
- Improved lighting, sound, and audiovisual systems for performance and exhibition spaces •
Renovation and addition of rehearsal, classroom, and gallery areas to meet the needs of artists and the community
- Enhanced safety measures, including fire, security, and emergency systems

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission recommends prioritizing upgrades that directly support artist residency programs, public arts events, community workshops, and cultural heritage programming;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Commission requests ongoing reporting on the implementation of Phase 2 improvements, including timelines, budget expenditures, and outcomes to ensure accountability and community benefit.

Date of Approval: March 24, 2026

Motion: Vice Chair Ramos

Second: Commissioner Castañeda

Record of the vote: 8-0

For: Chair Afifi, Vice Chair Ramos, Commissioners Castañeda, Flores, Galvan, Perales, Morales, Ruiz

Absent: Commissioners Peña and Moya Fábregas

Attest: *Nekaybaw Watson*, Staff Liaison