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September 1, 2010

Central Health
Board of Managers
1111 East Cesar Chavez Street
Austin, Texas 78702

Dear Dr. Coopwood and Board Managers:

The Heritage Society of Austin salutes your agency's vision of Central Texas as a model healthy community. It resonates with our mission, which is to promote the recognition and experience of Austin's diverse cultural heritage through the preservation of historic treasures and places. Healthy communities thrive in places where people are in touch with their neighbors and their neighborhoods. The Heritage Society believes preserving the character and culture of our neighborhoods provides the sense of community and shared purpose which is essential for social unity and health.



HERITAGE
SOCIETY OF
AUSTIN

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As you know, the City of Austin is conducting a review of its historic preservation program, an action precipitated by recent unprecedented increases in the number of Historic Landmark applications. The Heritage Society welcomes the opportunity presented by this review to explore ways to make our preservation program more effective in accomplishing goals that benefit all of our city.

As the review process has begun, we are dismayed by Austin Independent School District's move to suspend participation in the incentive program for historic preservation. We believe that action to be precipitous and ill-advised, pre-empting as it does the study now under way by the City. Acting without benefit of the full study risks unintended consequences that may harm not only our city's historic assets, but economic goals and property values as well. We urge the Board of Managers of Central Health to refrain from the impulse to follow AISD, but instead to join with the city, as invited by Mayor Lee Leffingwell, in a cooperative effort to assure that our historic preservation program is the best it can be.

Critics of historic preservation have used inflammatory rhetoric to incorrectly frame the conversation to portray historic preservation as a drain on the City's resources, rather than as a proven generator of economic vitality. We ask you to recognize historic preservation as a critical economic driver for Austin. A study by the Texas Historical Commission shows that preservation generates more than \$140 million in economic activity in the Austin area each year. We urge you to continue your support for this program which is both a core value of our community and critical for the economic vitality of our City.

Sincerely,

Linda B. Team
Co-Chair, Preservation Committee
Heritage Society of Austin