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Executive Director

September 30, 2009

Mr. Mark Walters and Mr. Gardner Stoll
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78768
Sent via e-mail

Dear Mr. Walters and Mr. Stoll:

As the City of Austin and its residents embark upon the comprehensive planning process, the Heritage Society of Austin (HSA) wishes to express its enthusiasm for creating a shared vision of a sustainable future. We ask that preservation be included as a central element of the plan and recognized as an integral component of a sustainable model. We believe that the comprehensive plan could reflect not only the views of our membership, but also the broad public appreciation and concern for Austin's historical and cultural assets.



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Historic preservation makes important contributions to sustainability efforts in the community through a range of strategies for conserving and adapting the built environment. Preservation contributes to the vitality of our historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. By saving cherished places, preservation ensures Austin's high quality of life and the places that are valued by residents and visitors alike. Retaining and respecting Austin's historic assets in the planning process also helps encourage the development of sensitive, high-quality infill and contributes to lively, transit-friendly neighborhoods. Preservation reduces the amount of materials that end up in landfills and conserves the embodied energy of existing buildings. Preservation also contributes millions to the local economy through support for tourism and generation of jobs in Austin's building and construction industry.

First and foremost, we affirmatively request the appointment of persons with an understanding of Austin's preservation needs and goals to the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Committee. The HSA requests that preservation be given a home in the comprehensive plan through the inclusion of a Preservation Element. We believe that preservation goals should be articulated as a chapter distinct from, but related to, other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, such as neighborhoods, land use, and economic development. Inclusion of a Preservation Element would provide an opportunity to address two essential tools that are presently lacking in Austin, a current preservation plan and an updated comprehensive survey of historic resources.

Many other peer cities, including San Antonio, have very recently engaged in the creation of preservation plans. These plans provide an opportunity for the in-depth assessment of preservation policies and the development of a road map for coordinating and improving historic preservation in the community. A Preservation Element in the comprehensive plan would provide the needed goals and objectives to guide in updating Austin's 1982 Preservation Plan.

Finally, we believe a comprehensive survey of historic resources is an essential basis for preservation planning. The City of Austin presently lacks an up-to-date, citywide inventory of historic resources. The last comprehensive survey was completed in 1984. We hope that the comprehensive planning process will recognize the lack of an up-to-date survey and pay particular attention to the need to identify these assets. The comprehensive planning effort should be sensitive to the recognized and the unrecognized historic and cultural treasures of the community and work towards retention of the places that make Austin livable and unique. Preserving the historic community assets of Austin should be a consideration in creation of a Comprehensive Plan as well as a goal to be articulated in the plan.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to further participation in the comprehensive planning process.

Kind regards,



Jacqui Schraad
Executive Director

CC: Mayor Lee Leffingwell
Mayor Pro Tem Mike Martinez
Council Member Sheryl Cole
Council Member Laura Morrison
Council Member Chris Riley
Council Member Bill Spelman
Council Member Randi Shade
Greg Guernsey
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