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JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ
STATE SENATOR
SENATE DISTRICT 29
EL PASO, CULBERSON, HUDSPETH, PRESIDIO & JEFF DAVIS COUNTIES

August 15, 2014

The Honorable Oscar Leaser
The Honorable Ann Morgan Lilly
The Honorable Larry E. Romero
The Honorable Emma Acosta
The Honorable Carl L. Robinson
The Honorable Michiel Noe
The Honorable Claudia Ordaz
The Honorable Lily Limón
The Honorable Cortney Niland
City of El Paso
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I am writing to support the efforts of a coalition that is working to promote and develop a proactive historic preservation policy that will protect our City's assets. Malissa Arras of the Texas Trost Society, Dr. Max Grossman of the El Paso County Historic Commission, and several members of the Senate District 29 Heritage Tourism Advisory Committee have recently outlined the substantive steps the City can take to begin building a heritage tourism economic sector. To achieve that goal, it is vital that we protect the City's assets, which include historic structures.

As a first step, I support the appointment of an independent commission comprised of professionals, historians, and a variety of community leaders. This commission would report back to City Council after nine months and make specific recommendations for reform, which would then be voted upon after a period of public discussion. The commission would be charged with the following:

- (1) review the boundaries of the downtown Historic District, which currently do not support development of heritage corridors;
- (2) review the historic overlays (or lack thereof) of buildings both within and outside the downtown Historic District; and

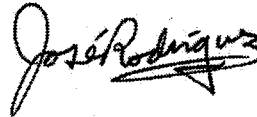
- (3) review the municipal statutes that govern demolition, modification, and code enforcement.

On a related note, the El Paso Times reported that the City waives demolition and other fees for the downtown area. This current policy seems to encourage demolition, rather than restoration, of structures. For that reason, I echo what local preservationists have requested, and I respectfully ask the City to consider placing a moratorium on the demolition of downtown edifices that are 75 years or older until the commission completes its work and reports back to the City.

Council is well aware of recent downtown demolitions and certainly of our struggle to save the Lincoln Center. If done properly with sufficient investments in city personnel to coordinate, enforce and implement provisions related to historic preservation, heritage tourism could be a multi-million dollar enterprise for the City of El Paso. A broad coalition of citizens and officials are eager to begin a new discussion and to collaborate on proactive action to ensure that our unique heritage is protected, preserved, and promoted for generations to come.

Thank you for your leadership, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "José Rodríguez". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

José Rodríguez

cc: Tomas Gonzalez, City Manager
Max Grossman, Ph.D., Vice Chair, El Paso County Historical Commission
Malissa Arras, Texas Trost Society