



City of Austin

Founded by Congress, Republic of Texas, 1839
Historic Preservation Office
Planning and Zoning Department
One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road
P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767

May 29, 2015

Jessica Herrera
Redevelopment Manager
City of El Paso, Texas

Via e-mail

Re: Historic Structure Survey

Dear Ms. Herrera:

I applaud the City of El Paso for applying for and being approved for a Texas Historical Commission grant for an architectural survey of downtown El Paso. Architectural surveys are invaluable tools to identify and evaluate individual historic structures and to delineate potential historic districts for protection and preservation. Here in Austin, we are fortunate to have several historic structure surveys that have allowed us to make informed decisions about designating individual buildings as historic landmarks and nominating both locally-designated historic districts and National Register Historic Districts. The surveys have proven to be very useful in evaluating the historical significance of buildings in our downtown area as well as in the historic central residential areas. Based upon our surveys, we have nominated 2 downtown historic districts and 13 residential districts, as well as over 500 individual landmarks within the city. Neighborhood groups throughout the city also turn to our surveys to learn more about their neighborhood history, the historically-significant buildings within the neighborhood, and to help guide them in the process for formulating a nomination for a historic district.

I would advise that you consider the survey to be a wonderful tool to identify and evaluate potentially historic buildings with the added recommendation that your survey should include some sort of history of the building and the neighborhood to help place the surveyed buildings in context. Our first survey back in 1984 was simply a "windshield" type survey, which included only the photographs and addresses of each surveyed building. That was good as an inventory, but the better practice is to include a research component in the survey to develop the historic context of the building and its environment – i.e., why is the building significant beyond its architecture.

Please consider yourselves very fortunate to have received approval from the Texas Historical Commission for this grant – they have only a limited amount of grant money to disperse every year, and your project proposal must have been excellent and considered a good investment by them in the preservation of historic buildings in El Paso.

Please let me know if you need further information. I cannot stress enough that surveys are the principal tool to enable effective and meaningful preservation, and I hope that this project works very successfully for you.

Sincerely,

Steve Sadowsky
Historic Preservation Officer
City of Austin, Texas