

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

real places telling real stories

May 12, 2015

Max Grossman, Ph.D.
El Paso County Historical Commission
6265 Camino Alegre Dr.
El Paso, TX 79912

RE: Historic Resources Survey and National Register Districts, El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Dear Dr. Grossman:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding historic resource surveys and National Register designations in El Paso. The Texas Historical Commission is very supportive of your organization's commitment to historic preservation county-wide, and especially your efforts in preserving historic buildings within El Paso's central business district.

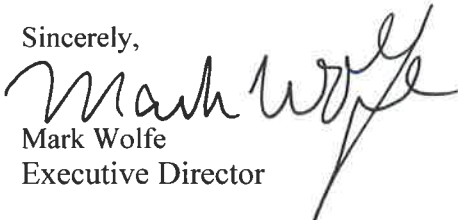
Downtown El Paso contains one of the richest collections of commercial buildings in the State of Texas, and the potential for rehabilitation and continued commercial use of these properties is high. The Texas Historical Commission encourages citizens, local history organizations, and the city and county governments to support an updated survey of the city's historic resources. In recognition of El Paso's architectural and cultural heritage, the Texas Historical Commission recently awarded the city a \$56,000 grant to undertake a comprehensive historic resource survey of the city's historic core, laying the foundation for one or more National Register districts. Such surveys are an important step in establishing local preservation priorities, as they take into account the significance of all historic-age buildings, structures, and sites in a given area, and create a good opportunity to participate in a worthwhile activity that encourages a deeper understanding of local history.

Although there are no state or federal restrictions inherent with National Register listing, recognition of a property's historic significance can often lead to its future preservation. National Register listing allows owners of historic buildings to qualify for federal investment tax credits worth 20% of rehabilitation costs, and comparable 25% state credit if the property is rehabilitated for commercial use following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Since January 1 of this year, when the state credit became available, THC staff members have reviewed dozens of projects, the vast majority of which have been located within previously-listed districts in large cities such as Dallas, as well as smaller cities such as Beaumont, Galveston, and Columbus. The owners of these properties have greatly benefited from the establishment of National Register districts as they already meet the eligibility requirements of both state and federal tax credit programs.

We very much look forward to seeing the completion of the comprehensive downtown survey and working with the El Paso County Historical Commission and the City of El Paso to prepare National Register nominations that will recognize the significance of these irreplaceable historic properties and set the stage for their rehabilitation, and placement in service as revenue-generating properties.

Thank you for your interest in the National Register and in preserving Texas' rich cultural heritage.

Sincerely,



Mark Wolfe
Executive Director

