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May 22, 2015

Max Grossman, Ph.D.  
El Paso County Historical Commission  
6265 Camino Alegre Drive  
El Paso, Texas 79912

Dear Dr. Grossman:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the advantages a historic resources survey and National Register district designation offer for the El Paso business district. Please feel free to share this letter with the mayor, City Council members and other interested parties.

In 1980, the City of Houston conducted its first historic resources survey. Preservation Houston incorporated this information into its successful effort to designate the Main Street/Market Square National Register Historic District in downtown Houston. We faced many of the same challenges and controversies you are dealing with in El Paso, nevertheless, the results here have been impressive.

Since 1995, the federal tax incentives alone have encouraged more than \$210 million in reinvestment and repurposing of qualified historic buildings in Houston's downtown National Register district as apartments, offices, hotels and restaurants. El Paso will have the added advantage of the new Texas preservation tax credit, which, combined with the federal incentives, can cover 45% of the costs for approved projects.

El Paso landmarks such as the Bassett Tower and Kress Building are vital to establishing and maintaining your city's identity, but smaller, lesser-known historic buildings are essential to preserving the business district's distinctive character and cohesiveness. Intact historic streetscapes encourage creative redevelopment and provide a backdrop for highly sought-after urban experiences; identifying undervalued historic properties is essential to the process. Having survey results and a National Register district in place are themselves incentives for property owners to rehabilitate their buildings, because individuals would not be required to verify historical significance and seek designation on their own.

Downtown El Paso has an amazing stock of significant historic buildings. You have an unprecedented opportunity to revitalize your business district by repurposing landmarks large and small to create a unique, sustainable cosmopolitan environment for residents, businesses and visitors alike. I strongly encourage you to conduct the necessary survey and protect your city's irreplaceable historic resources in a National Register district.

Sincerely,

David Bush  
Deputy Director