



## RECOMMENDATION RESOLUTION

### Historic Preservation Commission

**Recommendation Number: (2021-05RR):** Recommending that the City Council support alternative designation options, such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts and Cultural Heritage Districts, as recommended in *My Historic SMTX*.

WHEREAS, the City's Comprehensive Plan, "Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us," recognizes that the citizens of San Marcos "are conscious of preserving our rich historical past and will pursue future cultural enrichment"; and

WHEREAS, historic district designation is not always recommended and may not be applicable for areas that have experienced loss of original historic buildings, significant alterations, and modern infill development; and

WHEREAS, these areas may be significant culturally and historically and may merit alternative designation options such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts and Cultural Heritage Districts; and

WHEREAS, Neighborhood Conservation Districts areas designated by zoning overlays that provide specific regulations to preserve and revitalize communities where regulations generally focus on requirements for new construction, such as setbacks, massing, and height of buildings, to ensure that new development is in keeping with the overall character of the area; and

WHEREAS, Cultural Heritage Districts, designated by the Texas Commission on the Arts, are largely honorific but can serve as economic development tools to attract businesses, artists, and cultural arts to areas by highlighting the history, culture, and identity of a particular community; and

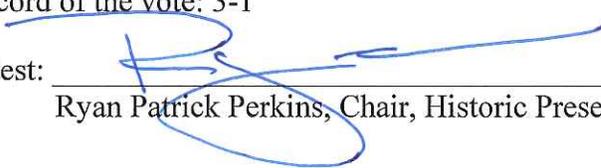
WHEREAS, the *My Historic SMTX* historic resources survey of 2019 recommends the City review alternative designation options in Section IX.B.2.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends that the San Marcos City Council consider supporting alternative designation options, such as Neighborhood Conservation Districts and Cultural Heritage Districts, as recommended in *My Historic SMTX*.

Date of Approval: August 5, 2021

Record of the vote: 3-1

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ryan Patrick Perkins, Chair, Historic Preservation Commission

A Heritage Grant Program, such as the one offered by the City of Austin in conjunction with the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau, could be established to provide funding for rehabilitation of designated historic resources. The Austin Heritage Grant Program uses funds collected from the Hotel Occupancy Tax for preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation of historic sites and properties for public or non-profit organizations that support and attract tourism. Further information about Austin’s incentives and grants for historic resources is available through the City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department (<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/incentives-and-grants>). A grant program would be especially beneficial for residential areas such as the East Guadalupe, Dunbar, and Victory Gardens neighborhoods to encourage the retention of original housing stock and deter demolition.

### **IX.B.2. Alternative Designation Options**

Historic district designation is not always recommended and may not be applicable for areas that have experienced loss of original historic buildings, significant alterations, and modern infill development. Areas such as these, however, may be significant culturally and historically and may merit alternative designation options. Examples from other Texas cities include Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) and Cultural Heritage Districts. The East Guadalupe, Victory Gardens, and portions of the Dunbar neighborhood outside of the local historic district boundary may benefit from this type of designation option.

#### **IX.B.2.a. Neighborhood Conservation Districts (Overlays)**

Cities such as San Antonio have a number of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs). Similar to local historic districts, NCDs are areas designated by zoning overlays that provide specific regulations to preserve and revitalize communities. Regulations generally focus on requirements for new construction, such as setbacks, overall massing, and building heights, and are often more inclusive than the design guidelines or regulations within local historic districts. Regulations are usually created specifically for each NCD, through community input and participation, to cater to the specific characteristics of the neighborhood. Areas that may lack cohesiveness and may not be eligible for historic designation may benefit from the creation of an NCD to ensure that new development is in keeping with the overall character of the area. NCDs can encourage neighborhood pride of place and can help stabilize property values against gentrification and incompatible development.<sup>177</sup> Neighborhood conservation district designation should take into consideration the relevance to the local community, and residents and property owners should be active participants in the process.

#### **IX.B.2.b. Cultural Heritage Districts**

Cultural heritage districts are designated by the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) to “harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization.”<sup>178</sup> These districts, although largely honorary, can serve as economic development tools to attract businesses, artists, and cultural arts to areas by highlighting the history, culture, and identity of a particular community.<sup>179</sup> Specifically for commercial areas within the Dunbar and East Guadalupe neighborhoods that are experiencing new development and loss of historic character, the designation of cultural districts could foster community pride and encourage new development and rehabilitation of existing resources

in keeping with community values and cultural heritage. If pursued, cultural district designation should take into consideration the relevance to local residents and seek support, close involvement, and partnerships from the local community.<sup>180</sup> Austin's East End Cultural Heritage District is a successful example that celebrates and promotes local art, music, heritage, historic sites, and business and neighborhood development (<http://www.eastendculturaldistrict.org/cms/>)

#### **IX.B.2.c. OTHMs and Interpretive Material**

In addition to district or individual historic designation, commemorative markers such as OTHMs through the THC may be an appropriate mechanism for celebrating and sharing the history and significance of local communities and resources, especially those that have historically been underrepresented. Other educational materials such as local interpretive signage utilizing historic photographs, maps, and other images can help to convey the story of a community or particular site. Neighborhood banners or decorative street signs can also identify a particular community and foster a sense of pride and civic engagement. The City is encouraged to solicit input from neighborhood associations and local residents and business owners within the Dunbar, East Guadalupe, and Victory Gardens neighborhoods. Citizen stakeholder groups could be established to determine areas of greatest local interest and to fully recognize and represent the history and culture of these neighborhoods. Interpretive materials should also be created in Spanish within the East Guadalupe and Victory Gardens neighborhoods.

### **IX.C. Third Phase Recommendations**

#### **IX.C.1. Resources Meriting Further Study**

Numerous resources were evaluated in the reconnaissance survey area as medium priority but may have significant historical associations to local communities, events, or people. The resources identified below in **Table 12** are recommended for further research and may be eligible for individual historic designation based on historical significance. It is recommended that the City solicit assistance with this undertaking from community members and volunteers who signed up to participate in the survey initiative during the My Historic SMTX Historic Resources Survey public meetings.