

Equity-Based Preservation Plan—Implementation Plan

The Preservation Plan Working Group and Historic Landmark Commission identified high-impact recommendations in summer 2024. The implementation plan is based on that list. It identifies other City departments as potential partners and notes unmet needs through FY2025-26. The Planning Department will coordinate with other departments or lead many of these efforts, so is not listed on specific recommendations.

UNDERWAY

Work has already started to implement these recommendations. Additional resources may be helpful in the future to fully implement some recommendations.

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners	Unmet Needs
7	Reach out to owners of potential historic landmarks and historic districts, particularly those associated with communities that have historically been marginalized.	PARD	-
8	Designate more historic landmarks and districts that represent communities that have historically been marginalized to tell Austin's full story.	PARD	-
37	Develop accessible materials about historic preservation, community heritage, incentives, archaeology, and City historic designation and review processes.		-
45	Ensure that Historic Landmark Commission members and community ambassadors have access to regular training and helpful resources.	Law	-
46	Provide regular training and professional development opportunities for Historic Preservation Office staff.		-
50	Define preservation audiences broadly, recognizing that places and stories are important to a broad range of people.	PARD	-
53	In outreach, meet people where they are.		-
63	Survey older buildings and areas that have not yet been included in a historic resource survey.		-
64	Identify potential heritage tourism sites and support existing sites.	PARD	-
65	Update existing surveys every 10 years to include buildings that have reached the 45+ year-old threshold and evaluate changes to historic property eligibility.		-
87	Recognize the importance of publicly and privately owned historic cemeteries.	PARD	-
91	Retain a demolition or relocation delay of up to 180 days for contributing properties in National Register districts.		-
94	For properties without historic designation, ensure that demolition and partial demolition applications referred for Commission review are for properties that meet the criteria for historic landmark designation or other procedural criteria established by Council.		-

YEAR 1 (FY 2024-25)

Implementation of these recommendations will begin in the current fiscal year. Additional resources may be helpful in the future to fully implement some recommendations.

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners	Unmet Needs
9	Strongly support iconic longstanding legacy businesses that contribute to Austin’s unique character and heritage.	EDD, PARD	-
11	Consider how various district designations could support Austin’s cultural heritage.	EDD	-
17	Create and improve tools for retaining existing buildings when developing multiple units on a property.	DSD	-
21	Provide resources for heirs’ property owners and low-income seniors.	Housing	-
23	Educate historic property owners about resources that can help them remain in and improve their buildings.	Austin Energy, Housing	-
31	Support energy efficiency improvements for older and historic properties.	Austin Energy, Housing, Sustainability	-
34	Encourage deconstruction and materials salvage when preservation in place and relocation are not feasible.	ARR, Sustainability	-
35	Improve historic designation and historic review processes to be more clear, streamlined, and transparent.	-	-
41	Proactively communicate about historic review processes with property owners, architects, developers, contractors, real estate agents, and land use consultants.	DSD	-
51	Raise awareness of preservation’s benefits among community members, decision-makers, and other stakeholders.	-	-
52	Work with trusted partners in the community and other City departments to conduct public outreach and engagement.	ARR, Austin History Center, DSD, EDD, PARD	-
59	Update the recommendations for whom Council may appoint to the Historic Landmark Commission.	-	-
60	Create and maintain a publicly accessible, regularly updated online map with survey recommendations and previous staff determinations of eligibility.	DSD	-
75	Require that potential historic districts meet at least one historic designation criterion for significance to be designated.	-	-
76	Allow properties in historic districts to be designated as historic landmarks based on architectural significance.	-	-
78	Require supermajorities of Historic Landmark Commission and Council members to remove historic zoning.	-	-
81	Actively explore how a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program could successfully support preservation of smaller-scale downtown buildings, commercial corridors, and historic districts in areas targeted for higher density.	EDD	Funding Need
83	Make existing incentives available to income-producing and nonprofit-owned properties in locally designated historic districts.	-	-
90	Review changes to privately owned properties in National Register districts only to assess historic landmark eligibility.	DSD	-

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners	Unmet Needs
93	Allow more time for staff review of permit and historic review applications.	-	-
96	Develop a prerequisite review process to allow the Historic Landmark Commission to hear commercial demolition requests prior to site plan approval.	DSD	-
97	Improve enforcement processes to be clearer and more accessible.	DSD	-
104	Engage community members in process improvements, policy changes, and program development.	Equity	-
105	Work with other City departments and government agencies to align and coordinate processes and provide regular cross-training to staff.	ARR, Austin Energy, DSD, PARD	-

YEAR 2 (FY 2025-26)

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners	Unmet Needs
1	Gather stories that tell Austin's diverse history across different cultures and languages.	Austin History Center, PARD	Funding Need, Staffing Need
2	Create a cultural mapping program to identify significant places, businesses, and other resources, prioritizing communities that have historically been marginalized and neighborhoods where longtime residents face a high risk of displacement.	Austin History Center, PARD	Funding Need, Staffing Need
5	Research historic properties to identify and recognize untold stories, especially those associated with communities that have historically been marginalized.	-	Funding Need
14	Make professional archaeological expertise readily available to City staff.	PARD	Funding Need
20	Streamline and expedite the development review process for projects that support the retention of older properties.	DSD	Funding Need
32	Recognize the significant external costs associated with demolition by adopting policies and practices that incentivize alternatives.	ARR, DSD, Sustainability	Funding Need
33	Make it easier to relocate buildings within Austin.	DSD	Funding Need
40	Provide regular building maintenance education and training for homeowners and tenants.	DSD, Housing	Staffing Need
47	Make structural engineering expertise readily available to City staff.	-	Funding Need
73	Create a new preservation tax abatement tied to designation of historic districts and historic landmarks.	-	Funding Need
80	Make the rehabilitation tax abatement more effective via multi-pronged substantial improvements and expand it to historic landmarks.	-	Funding Need
82	Evaluate the benefits and equity aspects of the historic landmark tax exemption in comparison with the proposed abatement and Transfer of Development Rights programs.	-	Funding Need
106	Create more staff positions in the Historic Preservation Office.	-	Staffing Need

YEARS 3-4 (FY 2026-27 to 2027-28)

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners
3	Develop thematic context statements to understand how local communities, groups, and building types grew and changed, prioritizing themes associated with communities that have historically been marginalized.	Austin History Center
4	Tell the full stories of historic places in Austin through creative interpretation.	Austin History Center, PARD
16	Explore incorporating archaeological review requirements into the predevelopment review process for large projects in areas with known or high probability for archaeological sites.	DSD, PARD
25	Direct some affordable housing funding towards historic properties.	Housing
36	Help people access knowledge and resources and preserve community stories.	Austin History Center
38	Share preservation success stories while being up-front about potential costs and tradeoffs.	
42	Create a preservation resource center.	
54	Develop educational programming for youth.	Austin History Center, Equity, PARD, Sustainability
55	Develop programs that connect the next generation of Austinites with legacy businesses, local heritage, and economic opportunities.	EDD, PARD
56	Develop education and outreach programs around archaeology.	PARD, TPW
61	Use community engagement, historic resource surveys, thematic context statements, and other means to identify culturally significant properties.	Austin History Center, EDD, Housing, PARD
67	Recalibrate historic designation criteria.	Equity
68	Reframe integrity requirements for historic designation.	Equity
69	Establish a process for considering the significance of properties younger than 50 years old.	Equity
70	Enable non-contiguous historic districts and multiple property designations.	
84	Raise awareness about the historic tax abatement programs and other preservation incentives.	
85	Create a clear, transparent, fair process for property owners to claim economic hardship.	Law
99	Inspect historic preservation work at strategic points during permitted projects.	DSD
100	Develop a rapid response to violations to ensure minimal historic fabric is destroyed.	DSD
101	Augment penalty fees with non-financial penalties that more effectively deter violations. Clearly communicate potential penalties to property owners and contractors.	DSD, Law
102	Increase penalties for repeat violators.	DSD, Law
103	Better enforce violations.	DSD, Law

YEARS 5-10 (FY 2028-29 to FY 2032-33)

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners
6	Document places that have been lost.	Austin History Center
10	Create a way to designate exterior murals for historic or cultural significance, with incentives for property owners.	EDD, PARD
12	Develop consistent definitions and criteria around intangible cultural heritage to inform and guide local programs and policies. Clearly define legacy businesses and other cultural heritage.	EDD, PARD
13	Develop an addendum for landscape management and update historic sign standards; add both to the City of Austin Historic Design Standards.	PARD
15	Ensure significant archaeological resources are adequately recognized in planning for City projects.	DSD, PARD, TPW
18	Incentivize more, smaller dwelling units to provide more affordable housing while stewarding neighborhood character.	DSD
19	Explore how to support the retention of older and historic commercial and multi-family properties.	DSD
22	Explore a legacy inheritance incentive to support low- and moderate-income descendants who want to stay in an inherited property.	Equity, Housing
24	Educate historic property owners about resources that support affordable rental housing.	Housing
26	Support community land trusts as a way to provide accessible ownership opportunities, preserve affordability, retain older buildings, and prevent displacement.	Housing
27	Explore a tiered rehabilitation tax abatement for non-designated older properties.	DSD, Sustainability
28	Examine whether existing and proposed incentive programs could incorporate a preference policy benefiting households with ties to Austin, both to help prevent displacement from homes, neighborhoods, and the city and to help people return to Austin.	EDD, Equity, Housing
29	Research other government units' approaches to documenting historic inequities in relation to dispossession, property retention, and generational wealth-building among residents.	-
30	Advocate for an income-based property tax circuit breaker.	Equity, Housing
39	Make it easier to participate in public decision-making.	-
43	Host historic preservation trade fairs.	EDD
44	Highlight craftspeople who work on historic buildings, through skills demonstrations, and by highlighting career pathways in preservation.	EDD, PARD
48	Institute fair compensation for City board and commission members.	-
49	Provide free childcare for City board and commission members.	-
57	Train City staff to be ambassadors for historic preservation.	Austin Energy, Austin History Center, ARR, DSD, Sustainability
58	Recommend that Council appoint Commission members who reflect their districts' racial, ethnic, age, and income diversity.	-
62	Complete a citywide windshield survey.	-
66	Re-evaluate existing survey data to reflect any changes in designation criteria, integrity requirements, and/or age thresholds.	-
71	Partner with City departments to designate historically significant publicly owned property.	PARD, TPW
72	Reduce cost barriers to historic landmark and historic district applications.	DSD

#	Recommendation	Potential Partners
74	Use existing tools in code to create highest priority historic districts.	-
77	Explore interior designation of publicly accessible spaces, including incentives for property owners.	DSD, PARD
79	Working with other jurisdictions, advocate to reverse state policies with disparate requirements for historic zoning.	-
86	Reduce cost barriers associated with historic review processes for historic landmarks and districts.	DSD
88	Advocate for a state homeowner rehabilitation tax credit.	-
89	Review changes to noncontributing properties in locally designated historic districts to ensure properties do not become less compatible.	DSD
92	With regard to reviewing changes to and demolitions of buildings without local historic designation, assess ways to spend staff time strategically, engage and empower communities, and create more predictability for property owners and developers.	-
95	Expand projects eligible for administrative approval.	-
98	Require historic approval to be visibly posted alongside building permits on active job sites at designated and pending historic properties.	DSD