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November 13, 2020

Terri Myers, Chair  
City of Austin  
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: 416 W 12<sup>th</sup> Street Demolition Permit

Dear Ms. Myers,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write today to express our opposition to the proposed demolition of 416 W 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International Headquarters Building. We ask that the Historic Landmark Commission instead support historic zoning for this significant property in the areas of Architecture and Historical Associations. As the property is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this demonstrated significance is supplementary.

Historical Associations:

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society is a significant organization supporting women in education through scholarships and a fellowship program. The Society was founded in 1929 by a University of Texas professor, Dr. Annie Webb Blanton, to encourage equal opportunities for women in education. Dr. Blanton was the first female State Superintendent of Public Instruction, making her the first woman elected to a Texas state office. By 1960, the Society had chapters in every state.

The Delta Kappa Gamma Society played a large role in women's history as an organization founded by women to support women, at a time when such support was scarcely found elsewhere. Women are typically left out of dominant historical narratives and underrepresented amongst protected heritage sites locally and nationally. We urge that this building be protected as landmark to women's agency and collective power.

Architecture:

The 1955 building is an excellent example of postwar modern design by Kuehne, Brooks, and Barr. It features an International Style façade, functionalist floorplan, and a more traditional aesthetic in its finishes. The women of Delta Kappa Gamma sought to accommodate a diverse range of functions that their ever-growing organization demanded. Uninterrupted planes of single materials were a signature of the firm and can also be seen in their work at the American National Bank (now the Starr Building).

This National Register-listed building is recommended for individual landmark status in the recently completed Historic Resources Survey of Downtown Austin. Sponsored by the Old Austin Neighborhood Association, the survey was supported by a Certified Local Government grant received by the City of Austin and a matching grant from our nonprofit. Preservation Austin further supported the community's hard-fought efforts with a 2020 Preservation Merit Award this fall for their public service.

The survey's purpose is to recommend significant landmarks and potential districts for designation, and to provide the information needed to make educated decisions about demolitions such as this. Significant resources go into these efforts with the understanding that they will make a difference to preservation outcomes moving forward. The city must stand by its historic resource surveys, in good faith, to protect our significant buildings and landmarks. We urge the Historic Landmark Commission to do so here.

Austin cannot afford to lose this piece of women's history or afford to lose another potential local landmark. Thank you for your service, and for all you do to protect Austin's heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clayton Bullock". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Clayton Bullock