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July 17, 2020

Emily Reed, Chair
City of Austin
Historic Landmark Commission

Re: Rogers Washington Holy Cross District LHD Application

Dear Ms. Reed,

Preservation Austin is so pleased to offer this letter of support for the Rogers Washington Holy Cross Historic District application. Our organization has been Austin's leading nonprofit voice for historic preservation since 1953, with a mission to promote our city's diverse cultural heritage through the preservation of historic places. We strongly support the establishment of a local historic district in Rogers Washington Holy Cross (RWHC).

The Rogers Washington Holy Cross Historic District is one of the most intact concentrations of post-World War II housing for African Americans in Austin. As an early neighborhood developed by Black professionals for Black professionals, Rogers Washington Holy Cross represents the strength and tenacity of many African American families who dedicated their lives to the education and uplifting of their children and their community. The RWHC neighborhood is small in size but large in significance, including several architecturally distinct buildings designed by African American architect John Chase, FAIA, and many residences of individuals and families who made meaningful contributions to the city of Austin and beyond. Historic district status would help preserve this unique cultural and built legacy.

The RWHC neighborhood organization has been committed to investing in the needs and improvements of the neighborhood for decades, despite the pressures of systemic racism and economic inequities. The neighborhood association has worked collaboratively and creatively with homeowners, renters, and businesses over the last three years to develop design standards that incorporate the spirit of preservation and the dynamic realities of this central East Austin neighborhood.

Our nonprofit has supported this community-based, volunteer-driven effort for the past two years, including through two matching grants to help cover application fees. We've been honored to work with these advocates, and urge the Historic Landmark Commission to support making this district a reality.

Sincerely,

Lori Martin, President