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February 28, 2022

Jeremy Striffler, AISD Director of Real Estate
via email, jeremy.striffler@austinisd.org

Dear Mr. Striffler,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. As Austin's leading non-profit for preservation issues, we are reaching out regarding the [call for submission of ideas](#) relating to the Austin Independent School District's repurposing of various buildings and sites within its real estate portfolio. We are reaching out regarding our immediate interest in and concern for Pease Elementary, Rosedale School, and the Anita Coy Facility, formerly Allan Middle School. These buildings help convey our history and tell the stories of Austinites from all walks of life.

Preservation Austin welcomes an opportunity to meet with you and other appropriate stakeholders to discuss the viable opportunities and untapped potential we envision for the decommissioned schools in AISD's real estate portfolio.

We are very interested in scheduling an in-person meeting to explore ways in which we can be a resource for the District. In the interim, we would like to take this opportunity to also convey our general thoughts on AISD's repurposing decommissioned school buildings. Preservation Austin is a community stakeholder with a membership of over 1,000 Austinites, along with countless others who rely on us to protect the historic resources of our city.

Neighborhood schools are an integral part of our city's character. Each campus can play an important role in the future of its surrounding neighborhood. Although we are sensitive to the budgetary challenges that AISD faces, we urge AISD Trustees to engage with parents and community organizations such as Preservation Austin to explore how these historic school buildings might be re-used in ways that honor their past and allow them to remain active and vibrant resources to our community.

Preservation Austin strongly encourages AISD to prioritize adaptive reuse of historic buildings on all the campuses that are closed and asks that the criteria for the RFP include preservation of the existing historic buildings on these properties as an important objective of the selection process.

Nation-wide, for-profit and nonprofit organizations have adapted former school buildings or public buildings to an incredible range of uses. Some specific examples (see attachments) include Dallas High School for commercial office space, the Baker School in Austin's Hyde Park neighborhood for corporate headquarters/workspaces, and Taylor High School for multi-use retail and eatery. Robust imagination

can adapt Austin's historic schools to new uses compatible with their place in the community and would achieve numerous goals, from preserving these beloved community landmarks to demonstrating Austin's creative attitude and keeping still-viable buildings out of the landfill.

This matter is of such great importance to our mission and the constituents we represent that Preservation Austin has adopted this issue as a FY21 and FY22 Advocacy Priority and will work to educate our community and our leaders about the adaptive reuse potential of Austin's decommissioned schools, see *The Case for the Adaptive Reuse of School Buildings*, attached. Additionally, our Education Committee conducted preliminary research into the historical significance of several schools recommended for closure in the School Changes 2019 report. Pease Elementary has well-documented historical significance as the state's longest continually operating school until its closure in 2020. With regard to the first set of schools currently under discussion, the other two schools, Rosedale School and Allan Elementary are more than 50 years old, meeting the age threshold to be considered historic. Given that they have architectural significance, community value and retain their original integrity, the high potential for historic zoning by the City's Historic Landmark Commission should be taken into account when making decisions about their future. *The City's Historic Landmark Commission can initiate the zoning change (Section 25-11-214 of local code) when a construction permit is filed and subsequently prevent the owner from inappropriate alteration or demolition of the property.*

Preservation Austin strongly encourages AISD to take into account the potential for use of Historic Tax Credit incentives paired with Low Income Housing Tax Credits in its real estate analysis for each of these properties.

In support of the case for adaptive re-use described above, we strongly recommend use of the financial incentives currently available through state and federal historic tax credits. The tax credits are a very powerful tool for revitalizing rather than replacing historic buildings. The Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit program alone has certified over a billion dollars of redevelopment in Texas. Pairing Historic Tax Credits with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits helps achieve a two-fold goal: promote affordable housing and preserve the unique fabric of Austin. Unfortunately, many developers are not familiar with these incentives. These tax credit programs are used concurrently for maximum impact to the bottom line.

Preservation Austin offers its resources and expertise to assist in providing valuable information regarding the advantages of HTCs to potential lessees or purchasers of the properties through the RFP process.

We have prepared a document for initiating a conversation on their applicability for these three schools, *Financial Incentives for AISD Properties through Historic Tax Credits (HTC)*, attached. Members of our Advocacy Committee are well versed on these programs and would be glad to partner with the district to provide further information or guidance on how to take advantage of these financial incentives for historic preservation.

As Austin faces more school closures on the horizon, we are all called to find creative and sustainable ways to honor this heritage while serving today's businesses and families. We would be happy to continue this conversation in greater depth and provide the historical research we have conducted, examples of successful rehabilitation of historic schools across the country, and further guidance on the potential funding incentives for historic rehabilitation like the HTCs.

A member of our committee will contact you next week to discuss a time to meet to further explore the myriad of opportunities for the District's decommissioned schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Lindsey Derrington
Executive Director, Preservation Austin

Cc: Gabriel Beker, AISD Community Engagement Coord, *via email at gabriella.beker@austinisd.com*
Jay Brown, Hayat Brown Real Estate Advisory Consultant *via email at jay@hayatbrown.com*
Ryan Losch, PAGE *via email at rlosch@pagethink.com*
Elizabeth Brummett, City of Austin Historic Preservation Office *via email at elizabeth.brummett@austintexas.gov*

Preservation Austin supports preservation and re-use of Pease Elementary School, Rosedale School and the Anita Coy Facility (formerly Allan Elementary) and have the following site-specific comments:

Pease Elementary School: We support continued use of the building for AISD special programs such as P-TECH, STEM, etc. AISD is not eligible to use HTCs for their own remodeling or repair costs. However, if AISD leases the building to an outside entity then those final rehabilitation costs could be significantly lower, by as much as 45% using the HTCs (a caveat being the HTCs could be used on the 1876 Main Building but not the 1998 Gymnasium or sitework). Obviously, demolition of Pease Elementary is prohibited by its City Historic Landmark and Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designations. Also note that any proposed exterior alterations of the building are currently subject to city (Historic Landmark Commission) and state (Texas Historical Commission) review and approval.

Rosedale School: This neighborhood school has served as a respite for families of children with severe special needs. We support the concept of leasing the historic 1939 Rosedale School building to a nonprofit or for-profit entity who can take advantage of the HTCs and rehabilitate it for a compatible new use while preserving its original exterior appearance. Such compatible new uses may include private academies, childcare centers, vocational/shared work spaces and/or a community center, any of which could potentially qualify for HTCs if under non-AISD management. A very successful local example of a sensitive rehabilitation for Class C office use includes the historic Baker School in Hyde Park. Conversion of the Rosedale School into affordable housing, despite likely more interior modifications, may also qualify for the HTCs. Any proposal to demolish the school and redevelop the site will likely be met by resistance from the neighborhood and the Historic Landmark Commission as the school is almost certainly eligible for Landmark designation.

Anita Coy Facility/Allan Middle School: We support continued use of the 1957 building complex, originally Allan Middle School, and consider it historic as it is more than 50 years old. Use by AISD and/or redevelopment of the open space by others can offer viable options for a successful use of the property. While not as historically unique as Pease Elementary or Rosedale School, the complex exemplifies the post-war boom in school construction across the nation as the baby-boomer generation reached school age and is an excellent example of mid-century modern school architecture. We note that this school building complex has a high degree of its original architectural integrity and has community value which meets two criteria used by the Historic Landmark Commission to initiate H-zoning and landmark designation. We recognize, however, the site's significant redevelopment potential, and in doing so support the lease or sale of the entire property to a developer to facilitate adaptive re-use of the school complex on condition that it is sensitively rehabilitated. As long as this is a long-term lease or sale, the complex could be rehabbed for any number of new uses and may qualify for the HTCs, saving millions. Concurrently, the addition of multistory new affordable housing units on the rear acreage of the site would be allowed subject to review and approval for architectural compatibility. A good example of a project which had substantial new construction on the site but also earned the historic tax credit is St. John's Seminary in San Antonio. The rehabilitation of St. John's Seminary called for the redevelopment of three historic structures and the construction of seven new apartment buildings, resulting in a total of 228 new housing units and the economic impact is significant. The project generated over 200 jobs and more than \$8.5 million in income. Additional housing, economic impact and preservation make for a winning combination.

Financial Incentives for AISD Properties through Historic Tax Credits (HTC)

Two programs provide substantial tax credit incentives for rehabilitation of historic buildings: the Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit program (25% of eligible project costs) and the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program (an additional 20% of eligible project costs). Further information on these programs can be found at the www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/preservation-tax-incentives. Eligible project costs relate to rehabilitation of the historic building, however, site development and new construction on the site are not covered by HTCs.

Access to the financial benefits of HTCs will be obtained by the entity undertaking the rehabilitation work as long as that entity is given a long-term lease of at least 40 years by AISD. AISD itself cannot qualify for the HTCs as a governmental entity for either program.

Each property must be designated *or determined eligible for historic designation*, i.e listing on the National Register of Historic Places, by the Texas Historical Commission to be considered eligible for the HTCs. In addition to National Register designation, the Texas HTC program allows properties to participate which are designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) such as Pease Elementary.

The following chart explains qualification for HTCs under various owner/lessee scenarios:

	USE BY AISD	LEASED BY AISD to non-profit	LEASED BY AISD to for-profit	SOLD BY AISD to non-profit	SOLD BY AISD to for-profit
Pease Elementary (RTHL)	Not eligible for HTCs	Qualifies currently for Texas HTC (only)	Qualifies currently for Texas HTC and, Federal HTC, if determined NR-eligible	Qualifies currently for Texas HTC (only)	Qualifies currently for Texas HTC and, Federal HTC if determined NR-eligible
Rosedale School	Not eligible for HTCs	Qualifies for Texas HTC (only), if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for both Texas HTC and Federal HTC if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for Texas HTC (only) if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for both Texas HTC and Federal HTC if determined NR-eligible
Anita Coy Facility (Allan Middle School)	Not eligible for HTCs	Qualifies for Texas HTC (only), if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for both Texas HTC and Federal HTC if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for Texas HTC (only), if determined NR-eligible	Eligible for both Texas HTC and Federal HTC if determined NR-eligible

In support of proposals for re-use/new uses which may benefit from one or both of these financial incentives, determinations of eligibility for listing on the National Register can be sought from the Texas Historical Commission for any of these schools. This is a non-binding determination and would only be used to obtain state and federal

tax incentives if the entity selected by AISD as the lessee or new owner wishes to take full advantage of these programs. Note that participation does not obligate a lessee or new owner to further review and approval.

If there are questions on the above information, please contact Sharon Fleming, AIA, Preservation Austin Advocacy Committee member at 512.468-1454.

Adaptive Reuse of Schools



PRESERVATION
— AUSTIN —

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation.

School Significance

- Mathews Elementary is local historic landmarks
- Becker School, Blackshear Elementary, Mathews Elementary, **Pease Elementary**, Pecan Springs Elementary, Zavala Elementary are Registered Texas Historic Landmarks
- Lee Elementary and S.F. Austin High School have Texas Historical Commission markers
- All of the presently closed schools meet the 50-year age threshold for historic designation



Adaptive Reuse over Demolition

- Community value through memory and sense of place
- Demolition and construction waste makes up about 25% of the material added to landfills

Baker School

- Constructed in 1911, rehabilitated in 2020
- Transformed into corporate headquarters for Alamo Drafthouse Cinema



Austin High School, Rio Grande Campus

- Constructed in 1925, rehabilitation begun in 2017
- ACC's Rio Grande campus will feature state-of-the-art classrooms, innovative labs, and accelerated learning environments.



Dallas High School

- Constructed in 1907, rehabilitated in 2017
- Features commercial spaces on the ground floor and offices on the upper floors



Richland School, Oregon

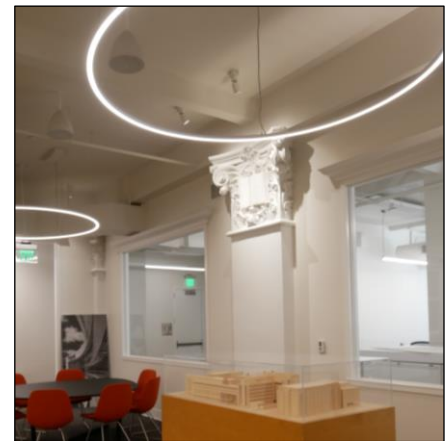
- Constructed in 1958, rehabilitated in 2011
- Contains ten units for senior housings and a community center with a library and public meeting space



How We Can Help

- Uncover histories of schools
- Assist in forming partnerships with preservation-minded developers
- Matching grant program

TEXAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM



Dallas High School 1907 Dallas • Dallas County • Texas

History

The Dallas High School Historic District encompassed some of the oldest buildings on school district property, which remained in continuous use until September 1995. The district was one of the oldest intact educational facilities in Dallas and a prominent landmark, until a 1998 fire decimated most of the structures. The four-story Classical Revival Auditorium and Classroom building, built in 1907 and designed by local firm Lang and Witchell and constructed by Chrisman and Nesbit, survived the fire. The Auditorium building features a two-story auditorium space surrounded by classrooms with Corinthian columns and unique brick vent houses on each side, used for air intake when the boilers were coal fed.

Rehabilitation Project

The high school operated as magnet schools under other names until 1995, when it was sold by the school district to a private developer. Other buildings from the historic complex were later lost to a large fire. Previous attempts to reuse the building were unsuccessful until the current owner purchased the property in 2015. The school building has now been fully rehabilitated and serves as leasable office space. Much of the building had been gutted, but remaining historic features were carefully repaired. The auditorium, with restored plaster work, serves as the reception and main gathering space for an architecture firm that leases most of the building. A glass elevator is now located in place of the stage. Remaining original windows were retained and repaired, while hundreds of new wood windows were custom built for the project. A small addition was made to the rear to create an accessible entrance from the parking lot.

DESIGNATION: Listed in the National Register as contributing to the Dallas High School Historic District

HISTORIC USE: Education

CURRENT USE: Office/Retail

CERTIFIED: June 3, 2019

CONTACT: Matthews Southwest;
Balfour Beatty Construction; Merriman
Anderson Architects; MSW Crozier
Tech, LP

Also certified for federal tax credits.

For more info

www.thc.texas.gov/taxcreditprogram



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TEXAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM



St. John's Seminary 1920-1947 San Antonio • Bexar County • Texas

History

In 1874, the five Spanish missions under local control by the Diocese of San Antonio and were thus no longer under Spanish rule. Without an overseas source of priests, the diocese was lacking in religious leadership, with only one priest for every 1,000 square miles as of 1911. This spurred the 1915 founding of St. John's Seminary to provide religious education for future priests. Initially housed in what was built as a bishop's residence, the school provided only partial training and would require a scholar to transfer to a Major Seminary to complete their eleven-year course of study for the priesthood. This complex, adjacent to Mission Concepcion, opened in 1920 as the permanent home of St. John's, which was now also a Major Seminary. The first building, Drossaerts Hall, was named after the Diocese Bishop.

Rehabilitation Project

The historic complex consists of three original brick buildings: main seminary building Drossaerts Hall (1920), Margil Hall (1935), and St. Mary's Hall (1947). All three were rehabilitated as part of a larger residential complex, which also includes extensive new construction that is outside the historic district. The three historic buildings had been vacant and unsecured for years, resulting in deterioration, damage by vagrants and a few small fires. All three buildings were fully rehabilitated, which required all new HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and fire suppression systems, as well as modern apartments and amenity spaces on the interior. Careful attention was given to the historic features that remained, including repair to brick masonry, wood floors, and hundreds of original windows; and incorporating historic staircases, corridors, doorways, and trim into the new interiors.

DESIGNATION: Listed in the National Register of Historic Places as St. John's Seminary Historic District

HISTORIC USE: Religious Education

CURRENT USE: Multi-family housing

CERTIFIED: September 24, 2020

CONTACT: MacRostie Historic Advisors; SJS Redevelopment, LLP; B&A Architects; NRP Contractors LLC; SJS Redevelopment LLP; WGI

Also certified for federal tax credits.

For more info

www.thc.texas.gov/taxcreditprogram

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TEXAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM



Taylor High School Campus 1923

Taylor • Williamson County • Texas

History

This tract of land was home to Taylor's local school for a full century, beginning in 1884, when Taylor's first three-room school was constructed on the property. The newly founded town had begun developing rapidly after the arrival of two major railways in 1876 and 1882. It was a major shipping center, and boasted more than 32 businesses and a growing population. Earlier school buildings were demolished when the existing brick high school was constructed in 1923. The campus expanded to include an Art Deco gymnasium built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration, and a Modern-era Junior High building in 1956. The three buildings all share a palette of buff brick and cast stone and concrete elements, which visually unifies them despite varying architectural styles. The complex was operated by the Taylor school system until the 1980s.

Rehabilitation Project

This project rehabilitated all three of the main buildings, creating a mixed-use center that features offices, restaurants, apartments, and event space. The high school received the most minimal interventions, as basic repairs and infrastructure updates were made so each individual classroom could be available separately for rent. Tenants include a pub, professional offices, and community organizations. The gymnasium had its original wood floors refinished, and received new systems, restrooms, and a catering kitchen for its new use as an event hall. The Junior High building underwent the most extensive changes, as its missing aluminum windows were recreated, its classrooms were reconfigured into a series of apartments, and the former band room was converted into a restaurant space. Solar panels also were installed in unobtrusive rooftop locations on the buildings. The complex was long underutilized, but now is a bustling hub of activity once more.

DESIGNATION: Listed as a district in the National Register of Historic Places

HISTORIC USE: High School, Junior High, Gymnasium

CURRENT USE: mixed use

TOTAL COST: \$2,777,549

QUALIFIED REHABILITATION EXPENSES: \$2,676,465

CERTIFIED: February 13, 2020

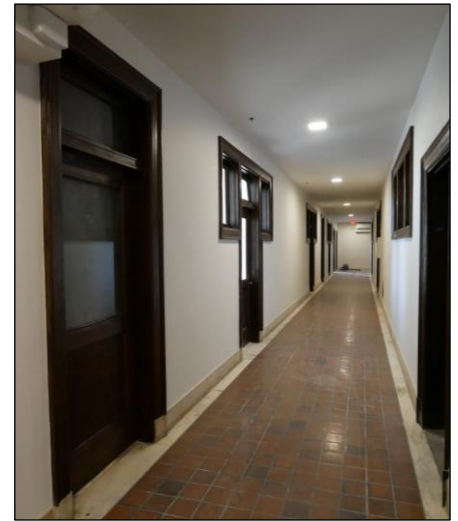
CONTACT: Ogee Preservation, East Wilco 95, LLC

Also certified for federal tax credits.

For more info

www.thc.texas.gov/taxcreditprogram

TEXAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM



Lubbock Post Office and Federal Building 1932 Lubbock • Lubbock County • Texas

History

The Lubbock Post Office and Federal Building stands as a symbol of federal government influence in the west Texan plains. Federal funds obtained through the 1926 Public Buildings Act spurred construction of federal building to meet the demands of a growing population and was completed in 1932. The United States District Court of the Northern District of Texas convened in this building until 1968, at which time it was used by Lubbock County for general offices. After years of neglect, the building was abandoned in 1998. Preservation Texas, a private non-profit historic organization, listed the Lubbock Post Office and Federal Building on its Most Endangered Historic Places list in 2011.

Rehabilitation Project

The building was sold by the county in 2014, to a group of private developers, who set about planning to convert the building into apartments. The building now has 23 apartment units, as well as office spaces in the basement. Historic fabric and features were preserved throughout, and each unit is truly unique. First floor units, where postal sorting occurred, have industrial features like slate floors, skylights, and even (inoperable) freight elevator doors. Two historic vaults on upper floors were converted to bedroom closets. Woodwork and marble trim is retained throughout the building. The original wood-paneled courtroom now serves as a large apartment with loft bedrooms.

DESIGNATION: Individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places

HISTORIC USE: Post office and federal courthouse

CURRENT USE: Multi-family residence, offices

CERTIFIED: December 17, 2018

CONTACT: RTGS Development, LLC; PreserveLandmarks, LLC; Brickhugger LLC; PSR Architects; Sustainable Supply LLC

Also certified for Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits.

For more info

www.thc.texas.gov/taxcreditprogram

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QUESTIONS?

Lindsey Derrington

Executive Director

lindsey@preservationaustin.org

