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April 10, 2020

Austin City Council  
301 W. Second Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Garza and City Council Members,

Preservation Austin has been our city's leading voice for historic preservation since 1953. Our nonprofit's mission is to promote Austin's diverse cultural heritage through the preservation of historic places. Preservation Austin has a long track record of supporting Pioneer Farms and the Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms Foundation (Foundation), the only living-history farm in Austin. We continue that support by assisting the Foundation's Board of Governors in navigating the relocation of the Dessau Lutheran Church, a City of Austin Landmark, from its current location at 13300 North Dessau Road to the nearby Pioneer Farms site.

The Dessau Lutheran Church Cemetery Association, as owner of the church building, is no longer able to maintain and protect it. After years of diligently exploring options to preserve the structure in its current location, its membership has voted to overwhelmingly support the church's relocation to Pioneer Farms. The Foundation's Board of Governors has voted to accept the church, and to raise the required funds to relocate, restore, and interpret its history to a wide public audience. If the church remains in its current location, it will fall to demolition by neglect. If moved to Pioneer Farms, the building and its diverse, multi-cultural history will help educate the site's 60,000 visitors each year, including thousands of school children.

The Historic Landmark Commission voted 10-0 to support a future Certificate of Appropriateness for the church's relocation after the Foundation presented its proposed plans for feedback. However, when the Foundation submitted its relocation application to the Development Services Department (DSD), its leaders were informed that they would be required to obtain a Land Status Determination and Site Plan, and to bring the church up to commercial building code standards.

Obtaining a Land Status Determination and Site Plan permit requires exorbitant and unanticipated costs for consultant and permitting fees that will very likely make the project unfeasible. The time necessary to go through the review processes put the church at further risk of being lost to vandalism and deterioration. Requiring the church to be brought to commercial building code standards will destroy the historical character and fabric of this important historic resource.

Preservation Austin requests that City Council direct the City Manager to direct City departments to waive permitting fees for this important preservation project, and work with the Foundation and

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Preservation Austin to find a creative solution that avoids an arduous permitting process that would threaten the integrity of the building and site. We ask that this include waiving the need for a Site Plan permit, and that Pioneer Farms be allowed to provide a safe experience for visitors and volunteers without overly stringent building code requirements that will lead to loss of historic fabric.

We appreciate your consideration on this issue. Thank you for your service to our City during these challenging times.

Lori Martin  
President, Board of Directors