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August 5, 2022

Board of Adjustment  
301 W. 2nd Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: Case #C15-2022-0043, 509 E. 38th Street

Dear Chair Cohen, Vice Chair Hawthorne, and Members of the Board of Adjustment,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write to you today to respectfully support the owner's request for a variance to subdivide 509 E. 38th Street with a reduced setback requirement in order to retain the existing historic-age home on the lot. The current code requires a setback of 10 feet and the owner requests a reduction to 9 feet and 4 inches. This variance will allow the owners to keep the existing house while creating density in a Central Austin neighborhood through subdivision and infill. If the variance is not granted, the owners of the property will be required to demolish the existing structure before finalizing the subdivision.

The residence at 509 E. 38th Street was built in 1958 and sits on an oversized lot of 14,027 SF. It is an example of a Mid-century Ranch house that is characteristic of post-war American development and exhibits distinctive architectural features such as low-pitch roof lines, limestone veneer, and an oversized chimney. The house is in excellent condition and there is no reason why it cannot continue to serve as a home for future families.

Too often our land development code incentivizes the demolition of existing, more affordable housing stock throughout Central Austin - in this case, because of a mere eight-inch discrepancy. This practice has environmental implications as well. We know based on [our research](#) that construction and demolition debris accounted for 25% of the waste found in Travis County's three municipal solid waste landfills in 2020. If preserved, we believe this property is well suited to serve as an example of best practices in promoting preservation, sustainability, and density by balancing preservation and thoughtful new infill development. In a development climate that incentivizes preservation over demolition, we applaud the owner's efforts to preserve older housing stock, add new housing, and divert landfill waste.

It is for these reasons that Preservation Austin encourages the Board of Adjustment to grant this variance and allow the owners of 509 E. 39th Street to subdivide the lot with a reduced setback of 9 feet and 4 inches.

Thank you for your service to the community,

Linda Y. Jackson, President