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February 27, 2023

Terri Myers, Chair
City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission

Re: Broken Spoke City of Austin Historic Landmark Designation

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 support for the designation of the Broken Spoke as a City of Austin Historic Landmark for Architecture, Historic Associations, Community Value. Simply put, the Broken Spoke is an Austin institution whose existence is essential to the identity of our city. As development pressures are ever-increasing, landmark designation is one of the best and only tools available to safeguard the future of the Broken Spoke. We applaud Council for initiating historic zoning on this property and for recognizing the urgent need to protect this treasured icon of Austin.

On November 10, 1964, proprietors James and Annetta While opened the Broken Spoke as a traditional country music venue and old fashioned Texas dance hall. Its utilitarian and vernacular style is characteristic of honky tonks across Texas from the time, with a porch facade and single-story wood construction as hallmarks of the style. Over the last 59 years, a “who’s who” of Texas music has performed at this iconic venue. Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, Roy Acuff, Tex Ritter, Ernest Tubb all sang at the Spoke in its early days, followed by such luminaries as Willie Nelson, Kris Kristofferson, the Dixie Chicks, George Strait, Jerry Jeff Walker, and Alvin Crow. In 2021, the Broken Spoke was honored with a State Historic Marker and is currently pending Registered Texas Historic Landmark status. Though South Lamar’s rural landscape has transformed drastically since the 1960s, the Broken Spoke continues to endure as a cornerstone of Austin’s live music culture.

Our support for the designation of the Broken Spoke is in alignment with our organization’s Legacy Business [Advocacy Priority](#). Over the last several years, many of Austin’s most iconic businesses have shuttered due to economic and development pressures, with others expected to follow in the near future. Recognizing the urgent need to protect these important cultural landmarks, we adopted this priority to identify, uplift, and create new tools to preserve and sustain legacy businesses citywide.

We know that landmark designation is one of the most important tools available to protect what remains of Austin’s historic and cultural heritage. While many legacy businesses often do not meet the criteria for designation, the Broken Spoke’s historic significance to Austin and the state of Texas is undeniable and must be recognized. The permanent protections offered by landmark designation are imperative to secure the future of this vital institution. Preservation Austin urges the Historic Landmark Commission to recommend historic zoning for the iconic Broken Spoke so that it may continue to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your service to our city,

Linda Y. Jackson, President