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August 31, 2022

Austin City Council
301 W. Second St. Second Floor
Austin, TX 78701

RE: September 1, 2022 Meeting, Item 137, Castleman Bull Interior Renovation

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Alter, and Members of the Austin City Council,

Preservation Austin exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We write to you today in support of Council Member Tovo's resolution (Item 137) to allocate \$8 million from the Austin Convention Center funds for interior renovations of the Castleman-Bull House for Convention Center use. Our organization and the City of Austin have invested significant time and resources into saving this landmark. Completing the interior renovation of the Castleman-Bull House will see this decades-long investment through, secure the future of an important Austin landmark, and fulfill the City of Austin's goal of activating this underutilized space.

Formerly located at E. 7th and Trinity Streets, the Castleman-Bull House was built in 1873 by Austin merchant R.M. Castleman. The two-story brick structure, considered an excellent example of the Italianate style, represents the last remnant of the 19th-century residential architecture that once proliferated in Austin. Castleman-Bull was home to four generations of Castlemans before St. David's acquired the property in 1963. Wanting more space to build a new facility in the St. David's complex, the church planned to demolish the house unless it could be moved to a new location and restored. In 2000, the Heritage Society of Austin, Preservation Austin's predecessor organization, worked with City Council to secure a city-owned lot upon which the building could be moved for eventual restoration. The project was one of the largest building relocation efforts in Austin's history.

In 2019 the Austin Convention Center spent \$1.7 million to renovate the exterior of the Castleman-Bull House. This historic, city-owned structure has been under-utilized and vacant for the period of time that the City has owned it. Situated within the Palm District in a central downtown location, the Castleman-Bull House is an ideal space for future programming and events to attract visitors and enliven the streetscape. Without timely restoration to the interior of the building, the City risks losing this valuable asset within the Austin Convention Center portfolio.

It is for these reasons that Preservation Austin requests that you support Council Member Tovo's resolution and vote in favor of allocating \$8 million from the Austin Convention Center funds for the interior renovation of the Castleman-Bull House.

Thank you for your service to the community,

Linda Y. Jackson, President