



January 8, 2021

Mr. Mark Wolfe  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711

RE: Downtown El Paso Historic District Nomination

Dear Mr. Wolfe:

As an organization supportive of the City of El Paso's efforts to build and operate the voter approved Multi-Purpose Center (MPC) in Downtown El Paso, I write in support of the City's request to exclude properties within the MPC footprint from the proposed Downtown El Paso Historic District.

The El Paso Downtown Management District is a Municipal Management District (DMD) created by property owners in 1997 under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 375. The DMD includes over 600 properties, 350 property owners, and nearly 700 businesses. Our mission is to deliver economic development-driven initiatives, projects, and services that create a more vibrant, welcoming environment.

Since 2015, the DMD Board of Directors has maintained its position recognizing the value of historical buildings as an important part of the overall building stock within Downtown El Paso. The DMD supports the restoration of historic buildings, and the establishment of tools and incentives to facilitate the restoration of historic buildings. However, we believe that any effort, whether it provide benefits or restrictions on property owners, be the result of active interest by the property owner.

Over the past few years, a planned effort to revitalize Downtown El Paso has ushered in public and private investment in new construction and historic restorations. These projects have fueled each other, and helped create an economic environment making future projects viable to those investing in their success.

A critical component and driver of El Paso's Downtown revitalization plan is the MPC. It was identified as an anchor for the Downtown, and its proposed location was identified in the City of El Paso's Downtown 2015 Master Plan (established in 2006). The voters' overwhelming support of this project in 2012 set into motion numerous investments associated with its construction, and to date, the El Paso City Council has continually reaffirmed its commitment to implement the project.

With the future use of the properties within the MPC footprint already determined, and with no intention to utilize any benefits associated with the designation, their exclusion from the proposed Downtown El

Paso Historic District is logical. To include them at this point could cause public confusion and create unnecessary challenges for the implementation of the proposed MPC project.

Lastly, we want to point out concerns about the overall nomination process for properties to be included in the proposed historic district. The contractor hired to handle the nomination process did little to engage the public, never reached out to the DMD for its input or position, and, in our opinion, failed to adequately share information about the nomination directly with affected property owners. This left a negative impression and a degree of confusion on many of the property owners and businesses in Downtown El Paso, a group which is generally supportive of both the MPC and the preservation of treasured historical buildings.

As this nomination process proceeds, we are hopeful that preference is given to the City of El Paso's request for exclusion of MPC properties in the proposed historic district. We believe the exclusion is important to the successful conclusion of the MPC project, which we strongly support.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Joe Gudenrath  
Executive Director

cc: Ricardo Samaniego, El Paso County Judge  
David Stout, El Paso County Commissioner  
Betsy Keller, El Paso County Administrator  
Oscar Leeser, City of El Paso Mayor  
Cissy Lizarraga, El Paso City Council Representative  
Tommy Gonzalez, City of Paso City Manager