

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE January 17, 2025

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Proposal to Designate Dallas City Hall as a City of Dallas Landmark**

On January 15, the Landmark Commission's designation committee held a meeting at which Commissioner Rothenberger presented a statement of intent letter signed by 13 of the Landmark Commission members to consider initiation of Dallas City Hall as a City of Dallas Landmark. The letter is attached to this memorandum.

Per the Landmark Commission's Rules of Procedure, a commissioner may request that a property be placed on a commission meeting agenda to discuss initiation of the historic designation process. Should this occur, a public hearing at an upcoming Landmark Commission meeting would be scheduled to determine whether sufficient information is included in the request to initiate the historic district procedure.

If the designation process is initiated, a 2-year pre-designation moratorium would be placed on Dallas City Hall. During the moratorium all exterior projects must be reviewed. Routine maintenance of the exterior can be reviewed by staff; however, anything beyond routine maintenance requires Landmark Commission approval. During the moratorium period, research regarding the significance of the building would begin. The designation committee would work with staff to determine the appropriate preservation criteria for the exterior of the property. This process can take two years or more to complete before it is ready for a final vote from the Landmark Commission to move forward to City Plan Commission and then City Council.

Planning and Development staff will monitor this matter and will continue to update the City Council on future developments.

Service First, Now!

Robin Bentley,
Assistant City Manager (I)

c: Kimberly Bizzor Tolbert City Manager (I)
Tammy Palomino, City Attorney
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Billerae Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety (I)
Dev Rastogi, Assistant City Manager

M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira, Assistant City Manager
Alina Ciocan, Assistant City Manager
Donzell Gipson, Assistant City Manager (I)
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer
Elizabeth Saab, Chief of Strategy, Engagement, and Alignment (I)
Directors and Assistant Directors

City of Dallas
Office of Historic Preservation
1500 Marilla St., Room 5CN
Dallas, Texas 75201

November 22, 2024

RE: Statement of Intent; Initiation of Dallas City Hall as a City of Dallas Landmark

I, Reagan Rothenberger and co-signed Landmark Commissioners, request a public hearing to consider initiating the landmark designation process for Dallas City Hall.

In 1964, Jacqueline Kennedy chose a young architect by the name of I.M. Pei to design a presidential library to perpetuate the memory of her late husband, John F. Kennedy. In 1966, Mr. Pei, now a rising star, was chosen to design a new city hall for Dallas. The concept of a new City Hall emerged from *Goals For Dallas*, a community-driven plan with an unspoken purpose of overcoming the painful memory of the loss of President Kennedy in the heart of the city. These buildings would be completed after more than a decade of challenges and setbacks. Each would serve their unique purpose in relation to one of our nation's darkest days.

These projects are reflective of the swift rise of Pei's reputation, and Dallas City Hall figuratively "cemented" Mr. Pei's relationship with Dallas. With other buildings such as One Dallas Center, Energy Plaza, Fountain Place, and the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Pei and his firm's buildings forever changed how Dallas citizens interact with government, business, and the arts.

Since opening in 1978, the growth of our city has been reflected in City Hall's iconic tilted windows. The City Council Chamber has echoed the demands of citizens wanting the best for their city. The Flag Room has hosted dignitaries and marked important milestones. Visitors have been awed by the 100-foot-tall Great Court while paying their water bill. City Hall Plaza has been home to demonstrations, gatherings, and countless special events such as the Dallas Marathon.

Though only 46 years old, the building and overall site meets multiple criteria for Dallas preservation eligibility including but not limited to: Historic Events, Significant Persons, Architecture, Architect or master builder, and unique visual features. Mark Lamster has written a significant illustrative history of the building with the *Dallas Morning News* article entitled, "Dallas City Hall: Why the city's most hated building might be its greatest masterpiece".

Should Dallas designate this so-called "most hated" building as a landmark? Dallas City Hall can commiserate with Boston City Hall in that its brutalist design has provided fodder for many detractors. Nevertheless, this circa 1968 building will soon become a Boston Landmark. The landmark designation for Boston City Hall was first petitioned by citizens in 2007 when the city considered the sale of the then 39-year-old building for commercial development. The brutalist architectural style divides architects, historians, and daily visitors to these respective buildings, yet it expresses the ambitions of both Boston and Dallas during the era of their design and construction.


Dallas' ambition is now reflected in the redevelopment of City Hall's western neighbor; the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center. It is unclear at this time how City Hall aligns with the vision of this monumental project. It is now time to weigh the historic value of Dallas City Hall in preparation for the area's redevelopment over the next decade.

There's the old phrase, "You can't fight city hall". Perhaps it's time to fight *for* city hall.

Sincerely,



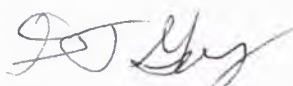
Reagan C. Rothenberger, AICP
Dallas Landmark Commission
District 12


JASON HARPER
DALLAS LANDMARK COMMISSION
DISTRICT 14

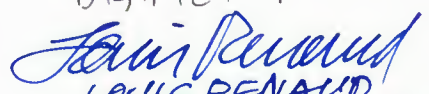
Co-Signed:

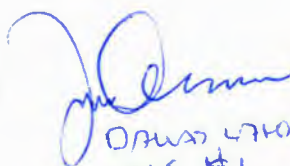


Courtney Spellacy
Dallas Landmark Commission
District 8



Derrick T. Gay
Dallas Landmark Commission
District 11


LOUIS RENAUD
DALLAS LANDMARK COM. .
DISTRICT 9



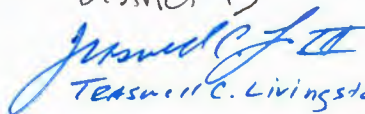
DAVID L. THOMAS
ALT. #1



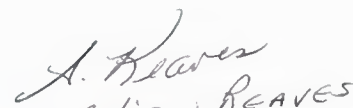
JEFF CUMMINGS
DALLAS LANDMARK
ALT



David Preziosi
Dallas Landmark Commission
District 13

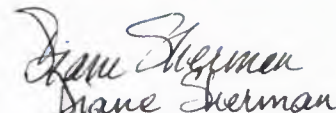


Treasurer C. Livingston III
DALLAS LANDMARK COM. .
District 7

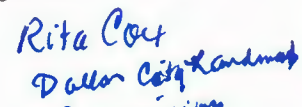

ALLISON REEVES
ALT



Jay Taylor
DALLAS LANDMARK
DISTRICT #4



Diane Sherman
Dallas Landmark
Commission D1


Rita Cox
Dallas City Landmark
Commission
District 10