



AIA
Dallas

A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

June 28, 2017

Dear Mayor Rawlings and members of the City Council:

As the City of Dallas prepares to solicit bids for the management of Fair Park, AIA Dallas wants to express its strong support for any and all efforts that recognize the architectural, cultural, and historic significance of Fair Park, that commit to restoring and maintaining the buildings and grounds in a manner consistent with established preservation standards, and that place a high priority on beginning the work of reversing the deterioration that so clearly threatens Fair Park's use and preservation. As the seventh largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects, AIA Dallas has a membership base of more than 2,200 members and 300 architectural firms in the Dallas area. Our architectural and design expertise allows us a unique perspective on the current discussions of the future of Fair Park and we want to share that insight with you as you consider options for this valuable Dallas asset.

Fair Park is widely acknowledged as one of the best and largest collections of Art Deco-era structures in the world. The story of how it came to be is an important part of the folklore of our city, and the architectural and artistic careers it launched very much shaped our city over the last 80 years and continues to do so today. It is truly a cultural and architectural treasure.

Fair Park has been designated a National Historic Landmark, the most rigorous and prestigious designation that can be bestowed by our Nation upon historic buildings and sites. It shares that title with the likes of Taliesin, the Wright Brothers National Memorial, our nation's capital in Washington D.C., as well as the Alamo and San Jacinto themselves. Fair Park is as deserving as any buildings in the country of protection and the appropriate treatment as outlined in the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

AIA Dallas urges you to support the appropriate protection and interpretation of Fair Park National Historic Landmark by incorporating into the requirements listed in the upcoming Request for Proposal the following policies:

1. Protect, maintain and preserve the historic buildings and grounds in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interiors Standards. Mandated by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Secretary's Standards are the universally proven and accepted guidelines for the treatment of important historic structures and sites.
2. Recognize and maintain the standards established when Fair Park was designated as a City of Dallas Landmark and follow the established Preservation Criteria developed specifically for Fair Park. As a Dallas Landmark, the Dallas Landmark Commission should continue to be the primary regulatory entity protecting the historic integrity of Fair Park, including prior review and approval of any and all alterations to the buildings and site.
3. Encourage a high level of year-round community use and access to the site and the buildings, and broaden that access where possible and where consistent with the appropriate preservation of Fair Park.
4. Make funding for the repair, maintenance and restoration of the buildings and assets within Fair Park a top priority. Over the past several decades, the park has been underfunded in these areas and the consequences are readily visible across the site. Without significant, timely intervention, we risk losing historic elements of Fair Park and impair our ability to use the facilities.

We believe a restored, active and vibrant Fair Park is a substantial benefit to the community, the City of Dallas and all of Texas. It is essential that the City Council consider an effort that commits in writing to all of these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Nunzio DeSantis, FAIA
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