

March 26, 2024

President Jay Hartzell
110 Inner Campus Drive
Stop G3400
Austin, Texas 78712-3400

RE: University Junior High/Steve Hicks School of Social Work Building

Dear President Hartzell,

The Texas Exes Hispanic Alumni Network (HAN), is writing to you today to express our concern about the plan to demolish the Steve Hicks School of Social Work to build a football grass practice facility. Formerly home to the historically significant University Junior High (UJH), the building is an extremely valuable asset that tells a distinct and hopeful story of Austin's racial past that we believe must be preserved for future generations.

Listed in the ***National Register of Historic Places*** in 2001, University Junior High was established in 1933 in a unique collaboration between The University of Texas and the Austin Public School System that was in place for 34 years. The laboratory school served a dual purpose, benefitting The University as a facility for the training of future educators as well as accommodating Austin's growing school-age population. But in addition, the College of Education at that time was able to research and develop new educational methodologies that were cutting edge for that day in time. UJH, in 1957, became the first successfully racially integrated public school in Austin following the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

The architecture of University Junior High is also of major historical importance, as a premier example from the portfolio of the renowned architect ***Paul Phillippe Cret***, responsible for the original designs of twenty Spanish Revival buildings on campus, including the Main Building and UT Tower, and the Texas Memorial Museum, all a testament to the university's rich history and architectural heritage.

In addition to this historic association, the building is also home to the work of celebrated ***Austin muralist, Raul Valdez. His masterpiece, "Heart and Soul"*** was commissioned by the School of Social Work in the mid 1990's, and spans three levels of the grand staircase, and contains depictions of social justice and resilience - all underscoring the building's cultural importance.

We believe that the demolition of this building would represent a major loss of both UT's history but also a loss for our community. This building represents a significant historical legacy of particular importance to us, since ***The University of Texas has been designated as an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).***

The demolition of this building would represent an absolute loss to UT's history. This includes the history of the designers, craftsmen, and laborers who shaped this monumental building; the **powerful history of desegregation** that transpired within its walls; and the histories of the countless children and university students who learned lessons in that building and applied that knowledge to **"what starts here changes the world"**.

We strongly believe that the University should take pride in the stewardship of these historical legacies and consider deeply what the loss of this building would represent.

The University of Texas at Austin has amazing resources dedicated to both athletic programs and the 575 student athletes, and the priority that they represent on campus.

However, we call on The University to grant similar priority to the historical legacy for future generations of Longhorns, and reconsider the demolition of the Steve Hicks School of Social Work. We encourage The University to **explore options for adaptive reuse and sustainable redevelopment. Repurposing the building** could not only preserve its historical legacy but also promote environmentally responsible practices in campus development, aligning with The University's commitment to sustainability.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and to working together to ensure the preservation of UJH for future generations of Longhorns.

Sincerely,

Patrick Caballero
President
Hispanic Alumni Network (HAN)