



MEMORANDUM

TO: Cesar Zavala, Case Manager
Planning and Development Review

From: Robert Anderson, Planner
Planning and Development Review Department

Date: February 19, 2014

RE: Ross Complex Subdivision (Case #: C8-2013-0221.0A)

Dear Mr. Zavala:

Whereas the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) is in nascent form, without official members or a chair to submit a recommendation on the group's behalf, I submit this memorandum as PAC staff reflecting the group's recommendation regarding the Ross Complex Subdivision. The language was approved by those in attendance and an official vote count is included of all members of the public in the audience.

The PAC was formed in summer 2013 in order to advise City of Austin on pedestrian planning, design, funding, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities in order to ensure a safe and enjoyable circulation for both commuting and recreation within the City of Austin. The PAC's goal is to ensure sensitivity to pedestrian issues in the design and implementation of all public and private projects impacting pedestrians.

On February 3, 2014 the PAC reviewed the submitted plans of the Ross Complex Subdivision and the associated variance that would ultimately be necessary to fulfill the plans as proposed. The variance request, if plans are submitted and proceed to Zoning and Platting Commission, would be to not connect Spiers Way to Ross Road as required by 25-4-151 STREET ALIGNMENT AND CONNECTIVITY.

“Streets of a new subdivision shall be aligned with and connect to existing streets on adjoining property unless the Land Use Commission determines that the Comprehensive Plan, topography, requirements of traffic circulation, or other considerations make it desirable to depart from the alignment or connection.”¹

The Pedestrian Advisory Council identified numerous points in the applicant’s proposal as submitted and recommends denial of any request for a variance to City of Austin’s Street Alignment and Connectivity standards, if requested. **The PAC, after discussion of the points to follow, voted 12-0 in favor of recommending requiring Spiers Way to connect to Ross Road as per current Subdivision Regulation requirements.² There were two abstentions and one recusal.**

The group recommends requiring Ross Road to connect to Spiers Way for the following reasons:

1. Connecting Spiers Way to Ross Road provides for a pedestrian connection as required by current Subdivision Regulations. Figure 1 below shows the existing stub street.



Figure 1. Google photograph of the Spiers Way stub street looking into the proposed subdivision and toward the Del Valle Elementary School.

¹ Austin City Code. § 25-4-151. Available at [http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Texas/austin/thecodeofthecityofaustintexas?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:austin_tx\\$anc=](http://www.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Texas/austin/thecodeofthecityofaustintexas?f=templates$fn=default.htm$3.0$vid=amlegal:austin_tx$anc=)

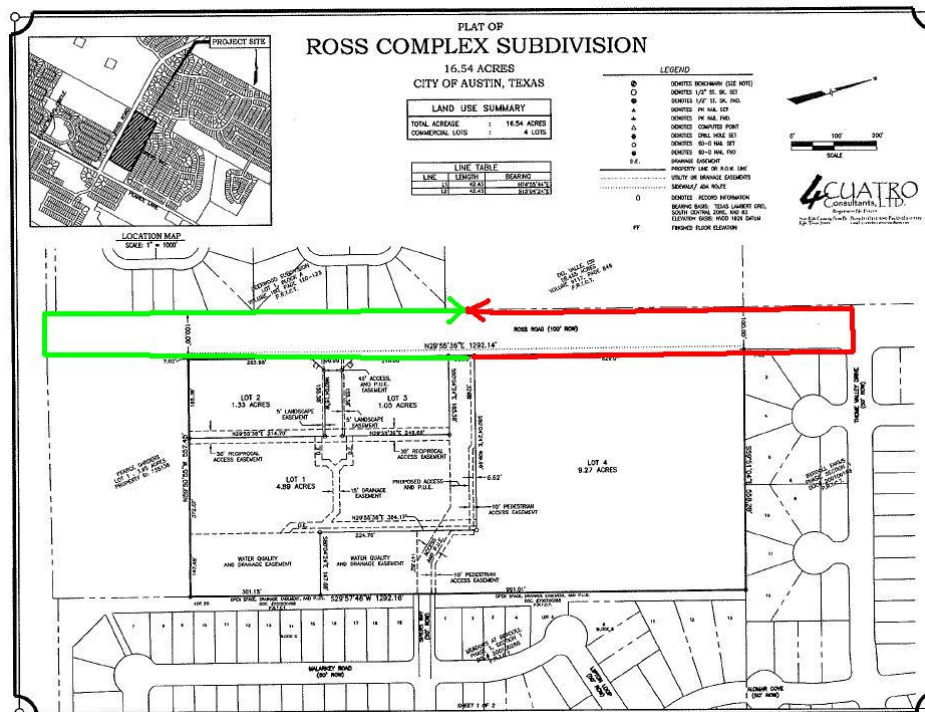
² Originally, the PAC vote was 13-0 in favor of the recommendations, with two abstentions. Following the meeting, a City staff member in attendance *not* on City time, indicated a preference for having their vote recorded as a recusal.

2. The *Imagine Austin* Comprehensive Plan, adopted summer 2012, articulates a clear vision for compact and connected development encouraging pedestrian connections and walkable places. Sample language within the Plan articulating walkable communities:

“Austin promotes safe bicycle and pedestrian access with well-designed routes that provide connectivity throughout the greater Austin area. These routes are part of our comprehensive regional transportation network.”³

“Build new neighborhoods where grocery stores, shopping and dining options, and community services (such as post offices, libraries, healthcare, government offices) are easily accessed from nearby neighborhoods via bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Limit ‘sprawl’ and commutes all over town to access these types of services.”⁴

3. A private drive would not create a legal crossing point at Ross Road. Instead, individuals will still have to navigate to the North or South in order to legally (and safely) cross Ross Road at either Thome Valley Drive or Pearce Lane. This creates additional time barriers to pedestrianism of approximately 10 minutes. Figure 2 below illustrates in red and green the required pedestrian travel pathways in order to cross Ross Road if approaching through the proposed private drive.



³ City of Austin. (2012). *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*, p. 86. Retrieved from <http://assets.austintexas.gov/webiacpfullreduced.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 119.

Figure 2. Private drives do not create legal crossing points or effective pedestrian connections. A private drive does not enhance pedestrian connectivity.

4. Del Valle Middle School is situated immediately to the Northwest of the proposed subdivision. Providing for a public street encourages more transportation options for families and children in order to access the school.
5. The proposed private drive includes a pedestrian easement on only one side of the drive, whereas a public street would provide for sidewalks on both sides of the street;
6. Private drives are not required to be constructed to City of Austin street standards. As a result, the proposed private drive to connect Spiers Way to Ross Road would not be required to incorporate street lighting, nor other elements of public streets, unless specific provisions are stipulated. Absence of lighting presents safety concerns;

The Pedestrian Advisory Council has expressed an interest in the progression of this subdivision case.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the recommendations of the Pedestrian Advisory Council.

Sincerely,



Robert Anderson, Community Transformation Grant Planner
Comprehensive Planning Division

cc: Pedestrian Advisory Council