



City of Austin

Austin Energy

Town Lake Center • 721 Barton Springs Road • Austin, Texas 78704 - 1145

7/06/2016

The Grove at Shoal Creek PUD

Dear Zoning and Platting Commission,

I am writing to provide some background information and context for Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) rating requirements and to provide staff's recommendation that the Grove Shoal Creek PUD comply with Austin Energy Green Building two star requirements.

An Austin Energy Green Building mandate is a serious regulation requiring developers to meet stringent requirements that go above and beyond Austin's already rigorous building and energy codes. Its correct implementation demands planning, staff hours from several departments and periodic assessment of its efficacy as a policy tool. An AEGB rating includes a core component of rating requirements and a menu of additional voluntary measures. The rating is broken into categories: Site, Energy, Water, Indoor Environmental Quality, Materials and Resources, Education and Equity and Innovation. Achieving the rating requirements alone is a significant effort compared to building to code, and earns a project the designation of a One Star AEGB Rating. Rating requirements include achievement in Energy, Water, Indoor Environmental Quality and Materials categories. A Two Star Rating is earned when a project earns approximately thirty-five percent (35%) of the additional measures and a Three Star Rating is earned when a project earns approximately forty-five percent (45%) of the additional measures. The points a project pursues are entirely up to the project and their sustainability objectives, so the difference is first and foremost a matter of degree.

AEGB staff recommends a Two Star PUD requirement for the following reasons:

- Any project which is required to achieve an AEGB rating must document that their design is on track to achieve the required rating for the scope of work being permitted at Permit Application and again at Certificate of Occupancy. In our experience, a Two Star project of any type or scope (including Shell Construction for speculative tenants) can document their rating by selecting points that are typically documented for any scope of work in the design phase or at building occupancy. Operational items that contribute to ratings are not typically determined within this scope of work or at these phases in the process so, they can be difficult to document and require additional documentation outside the scope of a standard permit set. Three Star requirements are particularly challenging for speculative development with unknown tenants as they must be designed for flexibility to accommodate a variety of real estate priorities or

preferences. For example, green buildings are characterized by open offices to accommodate natural lighting and views to the outdoors, however, a medical office building must provide partitions to meet privacy standards. Austin Energy is committed to helping projects achieve the highest rating level they can achieve, however the timeline and sequence of the permitting process does not always align with the natural sequence for ratings. This is why LEED green building certifications are often not earned until a year after building occupancy. Projects that have difficulty demonstrating the required rating due to yet-to-be-determined uses or scope can face costly permitting and Certificate of Occupancy delays.

- The City of Austin (COA) is committed to continuous improvement of baseline building standards through a regular building code adoption cycle on which AEGB ratings are based. The COA is preparing to adopt the 2015 International Building Code and update the AEGB Ratings, raising the baseline for new projects.
- An AEGB 3-star PUD rating is to be used sparingly, to further Austin's sustainability goals, rather than as a mitigation tool for unrelated environmental impacts. Specific instances where a 3-star PUD might be recommended by AEGB staff include:
 - Owner-occupied, relatively small PUDs (ie: a single building): An owner occupied, single-building PUD has far better insight into their own sustainability goals, budget and abilities. A single building can better understand the impact of the decision within the market.
 - PUDs located in the CBD/DMU. These projects are on select sites that do very well in our rating. They achieve points for being in the desired development zone in dense neighborhoods; they have many public transportation options, have formalized mechanisms (and neighborhood buy-in) for reducing parking capacity, and are located in diverse and walkable communities.
- Any Austin Energy Green Building rated project represents a significant achievement in Energy Efficiency, Water Efficiency and Material efficiency. Green Building Ratings were conceived as voluntary programs to demonstrate leadership in the built environment and considerable work has been made to use these ratings in development requirements, however this is not the intended use of the program. Much experience and expertise has informed this recommendation for a two star requirement.

Kind regards,



Heidi Kasper
Energy Efficiency Services Manager, Austin Energy Green Building