

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 12, 2016
To: Austin Design Commission
From: Design Commission Planning & Urban Design Working Group
Subject: Working Group Density Bonus Program review of East Avenue Apartments for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.
Meeting Date: December 8, 2016; 8:30 am
Applicant: East Avenue Towne Lake, LLC
Architect: Rhode Partners

The project location is 16 North IH-35 Service Road. It was presented as a multi-family apartment project.

The existing zoning is CBD.

The applicant is seeking a density bonus to raise the FAR from 8:1 to 15:1 FAR (within 15:1 maximum allowance). The lot area is 15,602 sq ft, and the total project area is 234,030 sf ft.

The applicant is not seeking additional height as the maximum height achievable under the density bonus program in this portion of downtown is unlimited. The total building height proposed is 351'-10" or 32 floors.

The additional square footage made available by the FAR density bonus is 109,214 sq ft.

Community benefit of affordable housing being offered for this residential project includes:

1. 5% of units within 8:1 FAR affordable to 80% MFI (7 units for this project).
2. A fee in lieu of community benefits will be paid for the density increase above the 8:1 FAR which results in a \$546,070 as per the Applicant's attached letter from COA Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Dept.

The square footage increase due to additional height per density bonus is 47,000 sq ft.

Per the Density Bonus Program ordinance, the applicant is required to provide streetscape improvements along all public street frontages consistent with the Great Streets Standards, and the applicant shall commit to a minimum of 2 star Green Building rating. The Mayor and City Council and the Planning & Development Review Director will determine appropriate bonus area in light of community benefits to be provided.

Positive attributes of the project:

1. Screened parking.
2. Linkage to adjacent green space.
3. Additional streetscape along parkland space (substitute for Great Streets)
4. Letter of intent to meet or exceed Green Building 2 star rating was attached but scorecard was not included.

Concerns/suggestions for the project:

1. Lack of canopy shading and landscaped streetscape along IH-35 Service Rd. per TXDOT mandate. TXDOT should consider a mechanism to allow these items in their ROW.
2. Small street frontage and lack of alley access is driving a wide curb cut for the entrance and building services. As a result, there is a lack of active space at the street frontage. The project starts to make up for this by having active spaces and streetscape improvements facing the south along parkland space. This is a unique site and the design solution essentially transfers the active space and streetscape from the frontage facing east to the south along parkland which would have more pedestrian traffic than the IH-35 frontage road.
3. Suggest less space on ground level dedicated to cars by minimizing motor court and offering more pedestrian/human scaled amenities. The project seems a little too heavily automobile focused. Building is a private residential project and surrounding space could benefit from a publicly accessible retail or restaurant space.
4. A sidewalk is proposed along East Ave. to the west of the site. The city sidewalk standard to have the walk against the curb is not as attractive for pedestrians than having a landscape strip between the walk and street curb.
5. We are curious about the city position on potential partnerships between developer and city parks on adjacent parkland.
6. Fee in lieu \$5/sf for the Rainey District versus \$10 in the core downtown seems out of line.
7. We are concerned about traffic in the area, especially along East Avenue where there is a great deal of hikers and bikers with pets and children. Would a neighborhood Traffic Analysis (NTA) be prudent? We would like to know more about completion of any detailed Rainey District P which might alleviate this concern.
8. Since a scorecard was not included with the Green Building intent letter, it is difficult to assess the project's sustainability features.

We determined that the project, as presented, is in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.

The Working Group appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully submitted,
Planning & Urban Design Working Group of the Design Commission
Evan Taniguchi, Chair