

A scenic view of a city skyline across a body of water. The skyline includes several tall buildings, some under construction with cranes. The water is calm, reflecting the buildings and the blue sky with scattered clouds. Green trees and grass are visible in the foreground on the right side.

Downtown Density Bonus Program Refresher Training

**Design Commission meeting
July 24, 2017**

Mission Statement

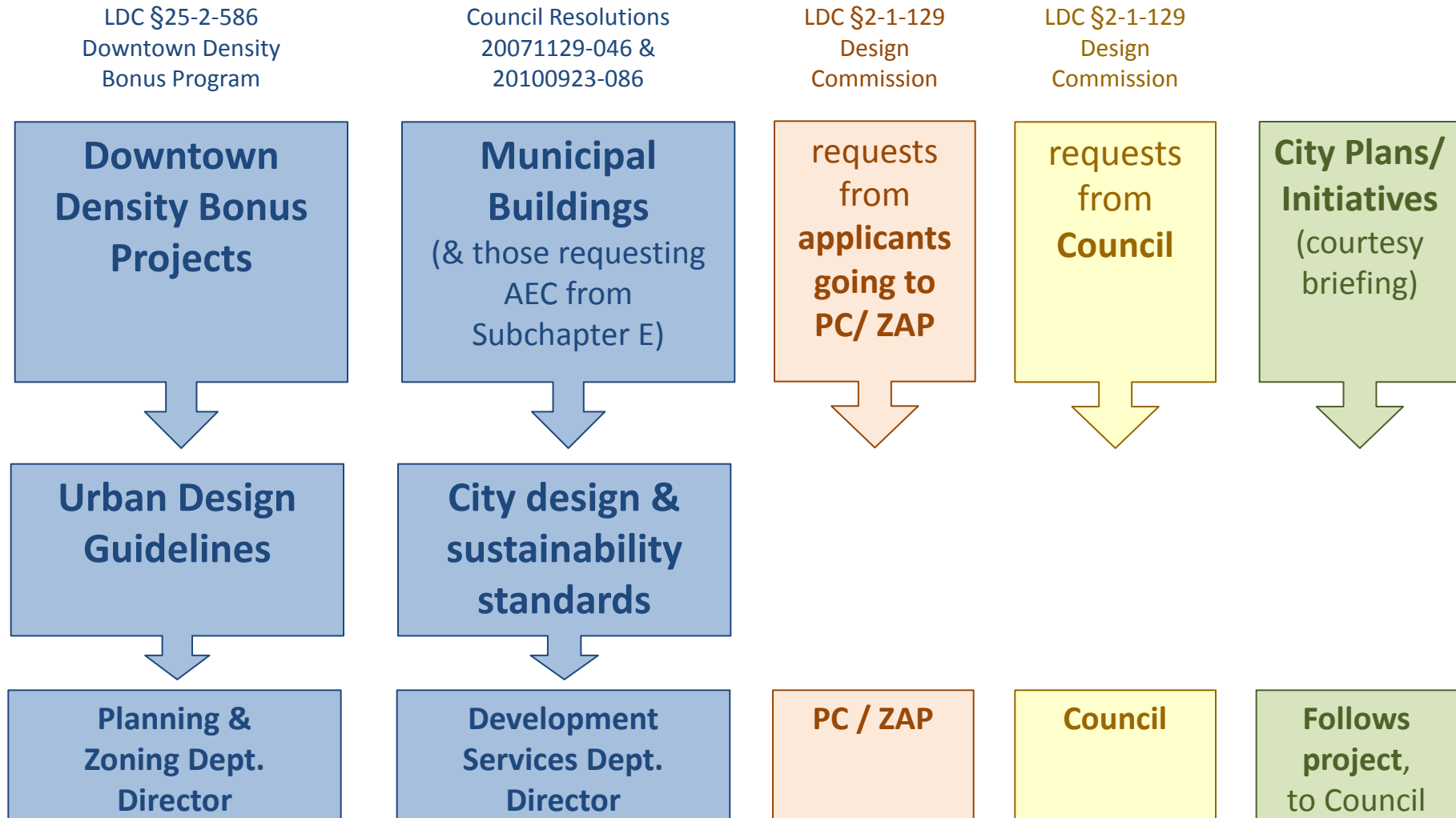
§ 2-1-129 - DESIGN COMMISSION.



- (A) The Design Commission membership should include a diverse group of persons having expertise in urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, civic art, real property development, construction, and economic development.
- (B) The commission shall provide advisory recommendations to the city council as requested by the city council to assist in developing public policy and to promote excellence in the design and development of the urban environment.
- (C) The commission shall:
- (1) offer policy recommendations regarding specific issues of urban design;
 - (2) participate in developing design guidelines;
 - (3) unless otherwise directed by the city council, for projects that require the approval of the Planning Commission or the Zoning and Platting Commission:
 - (a) review a project only after a formal request by the project sponsor or applicant; and
 - (b) complete the review before the respective Planning or Zoning and Platting Commission takes final action;
 - (4) provide citizen education and outreach regarding quality urban design;
 - (5) provide a venue for citizen input on the design and development of the urban environment;
 - (6) maintain liaison relationships with city staff and other boards and commissions; and
 - (7) perform other activities as directed by the city council.
- (D) The commission may appoint one or more of its members to serve as liaison to a project-specific community advisory group addressing urban design and planning issues at the formal request of the project sponsor.

Source: Ord. 20071129-011.

Types of Projects Commission Reviews



Project Examples


LDC §25-2-586
Downtown Density Bonus
Program

Downtown Density Bonus Projects

- 
1. 300 Colorado (7/16)
 2. Marriott at Cesar Chavez (6/17)
 3. 405 Colorado (5/17)
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 5. 48 East (1/17)
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 7. 1400 Lavaca (11/16)
 8. Third & Shoal (4/16)
 9. 5th & Brazos (2015)
 10. 7th & Congress (2015)
 11. 5th & West (2015)
 12. Aspen Heights (2014)

Council Resolutions
20071129-046 &
20100923-086

Municipal Buildings (& those requesting AEC from Subchapter E)

- 
1. Austin SHINES (4/17)
 2. Zilker Trailhead R.room (8/16)
 3. Dove Springs Rec Center (7/16)

AEC:

4. Shipe Park (12/16)
5. Montopolis Rec Center (10/16)
6. Govalle Pool (5/16)
7. Onion Creek Fire & EMS (5/16)

LDC §2-1-129
Design
Commission

requests from applicants going to PC/ ZAP


- 
1. 4th St. Skybridge (4/17)
 2. Seton Skybridge (7/14)

LDC §2-1-129
Design
Commission

requests from Council

- 
1. Park PUD (3/11)

City Plans/ Initiatives (courtesy briefing)

- 
1. CodeNEXT recs (7/17)
 2. Agent of Change (5/17)
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 4. Wooldridge Sq. Prelim. Plan (11/16)
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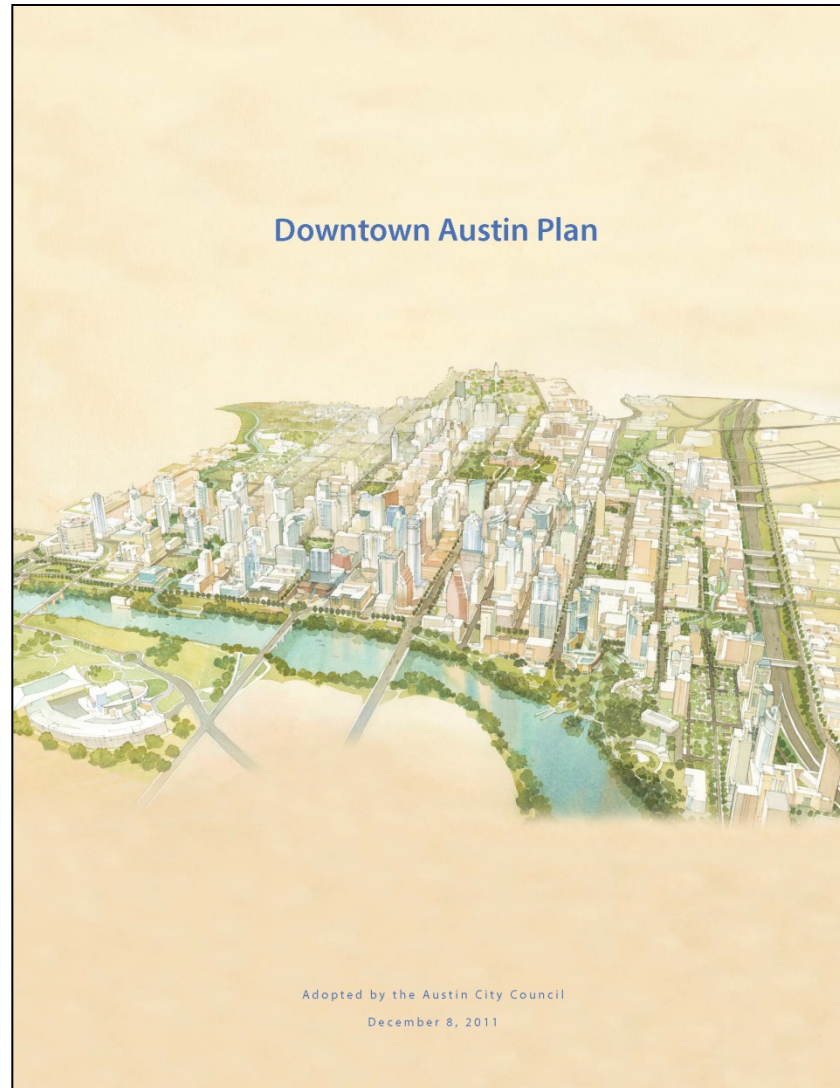
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Downtown Austin Plan (2011)

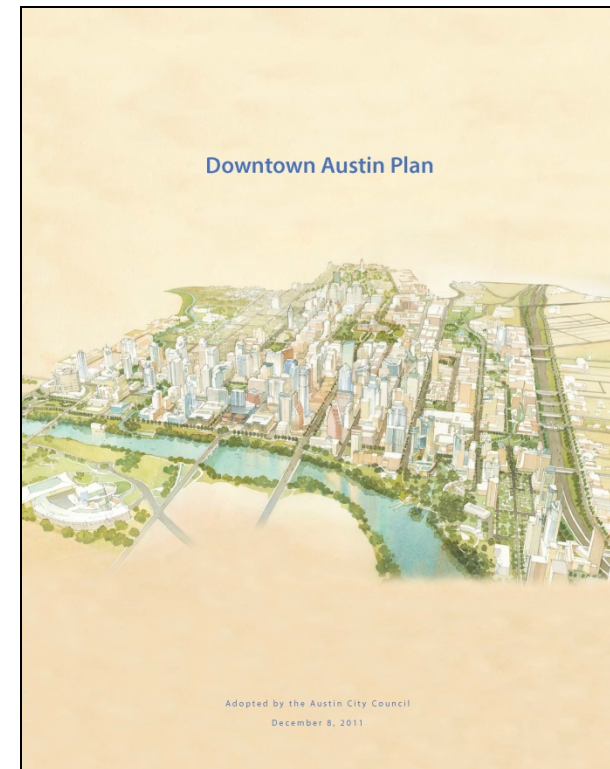


Downtown Austin Plan (2011)

THE VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

Over a three-year planning process of the Downtown Austin Plan (DAP), a vision has emerged for Downtown Austin. At its Bicentennial in 2039, Downtown will be at the heart of one of the most sustainable cities in the nation with:

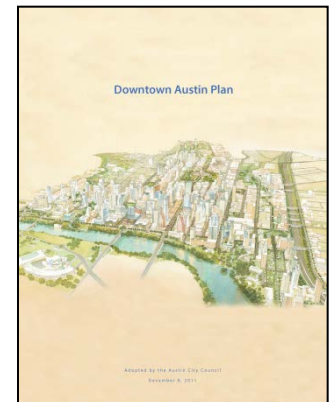
- A dense and livable pattern of development that supports a vibrant day and nighttime environment;
- An interconnected pattern of streets, parks and public spaces that instill a unique sense of place and community;
- A variety of districts and destinations that support the creative expression of its citizenry through art, music, theater, dance and performance;
- A green “necklace” of trails extending from Lady Bird Lake, and along Waller and Shoal Creeks into surrounding neighborhoods;
- A wide range of housing choices for individuals and families with diverse social and economic backgrounds; and
- An array of innovative businesses – small and large - that are attracted to the Downtown by its rich human capital and unique sense of place.



Downtown Austin Plan (2011)

WHAT IS AT RISK?

- **The quality of streets and parks is lacking.** The “public realm”, the system of publicly-used streets and open spaces which make up 50% of Downtown’s land area, **is in deteriorating condition.** Most streets are still uncomfortable places for people to walk or linger. Due to limited funding, Downtown parks are poorly maintained and are often occupied by the homeless, making them uncomfortable for others to enjoy. **Significant public and private investment is critical to enhance the quality of life in Downtown,** and its appeal as a place to live, work, play and visit.



Downtown Austin Plan (2011)

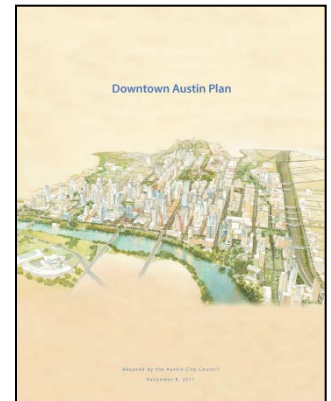
WHAT IS AT RISK?

- **Downtown's share of the regional office and employment market has declined to less than 20% of the region's supply. Downtown is no longer the principal employment center of the region, and it has not been the location of choice for the primary tenant drivers of the office market, such as technology companies.**¹²

Frost Bank Tower (4th & Congress)



Apple Offices (5503 W. Parmer Ln.)

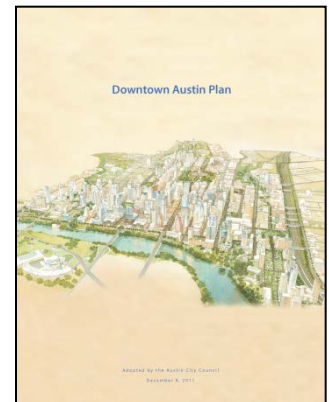


Downtown Austin Plan (2011)

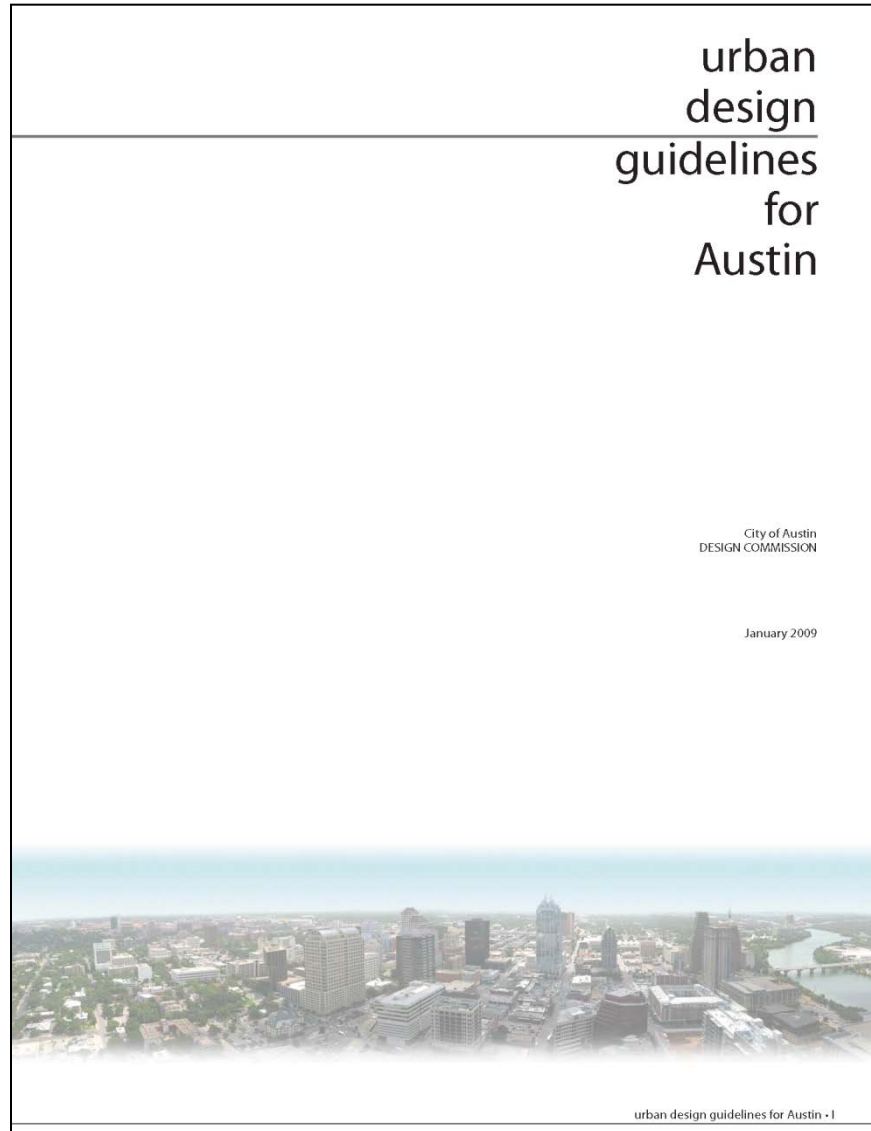
Urban Design Priorities:

- Incentivize office and hotel uses to bolster the Core/Waterfront as the premier office employment district and visitor destination of the region.
- Improve the pedestrian environment and streetscape throughout the District and especially along Congress Avenue and East 6th Street.
- Establish a better mix of ground-level retail uses throughout, particularly along Congress Avenue, 2nd Street and East 6th Street.

JW Marriott (2nd & Congress)



Urban Design Guidelines (2009)



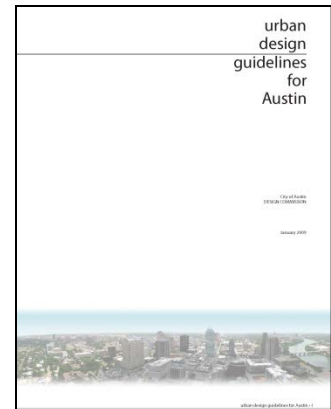
Urban Design Guidelines (2009)

Shared Values for Urban Areas

2 - Density

Density refers to the concentration of people, buildings and activities. With this concentration comes a great efficiency and vitality. We value density because density facilitates commercial and social interaction by simply placing many people together in a relatively compact space. The serendipity arising from this inevitable interaction is evident in all great cities of the world.

Density and concentration are not to be confused with overcrowding. According to Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, density is critical “to generate exuberant diversity in a city’s streets and districts.” In the same book Jacobs quotes Lewis Mumford on the function of the city (inset). In summary, density promotes vitality and diversity. In the suburbs where most often there is neither density nor diversity, it is a homogenous majority that defines the character of the community. Dense urban places are, by their very nature, highly diverse in character and therefore more representative and democratic in character, more experientially diverse and exciting.



Urban Design Guidelines (2009)

Area-Wide 1

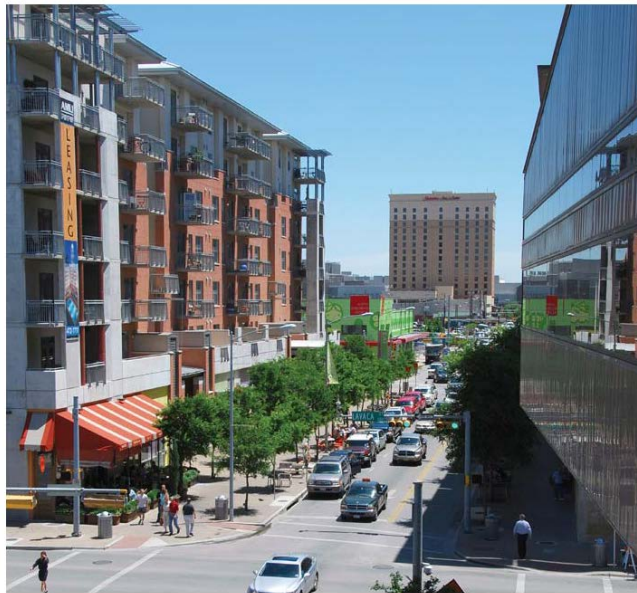
Create Dense Development

Values Supported

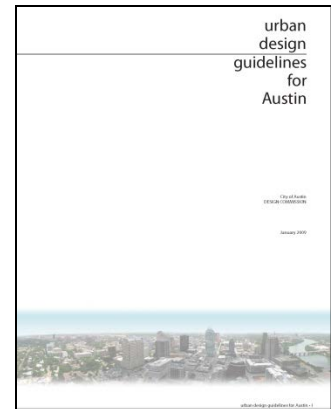
Economic Vitality
Diversity
Unique Character
Authenticity
Sustainability
Safety
Civic Art

Recommendations

- Density should be expressed in terms of a floor to area ratio for commercial developments and units per acre for residential developments. Standards should be consistent with LEED Neighborhood Design Standards.
- It is recommended that all current limits on FAR be maintained, and that developments which adopt and abide by the Urban Design Guidelines along with Density Bonus and other specified requirements should be eligible for additional density on a case by case basis.



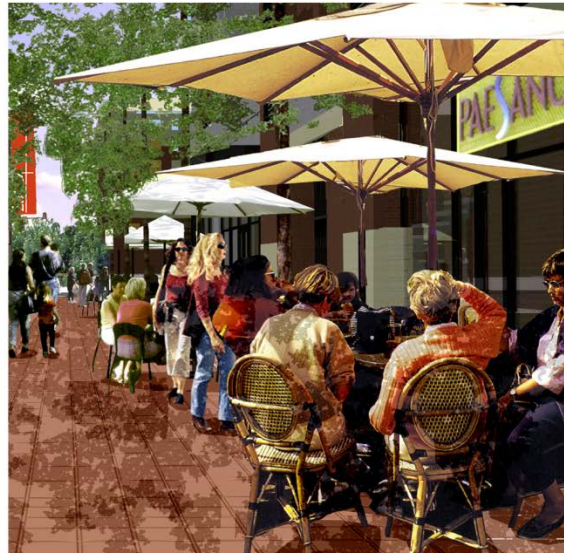
This mixed use district has wide sidewalks, shade trees, awnings, and retail that create a welcoming urban streetscape that can accommodate Density.



Great Streets (2001)



DOWNTOWN GREAT STREETS MASTER PLAN



PROJECT NOTEBOOK

NOVEMBER 2001

Prepared by
Black & Vernooy + Kinney & Associates,
Joint Venture

CIP PROJECT NO 8760 - 607 - 2107

Great Streets (2001)

Built one of three ways:

1

City of Austin Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

- Publically funded, often through bonds

2

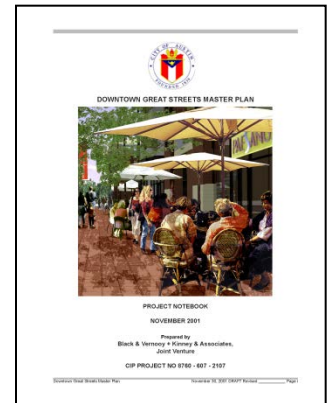
Great Streets Development Program

- Voluntary
- City cost shares with private developers
- Funding through Great Streets parking meter fund

3

Downtown Density Bonus Program

- Required to meet Gatekeeper requirements
- At owner's expense



Great Streets (2001)

Cesar Chavez Blvd - **Before**



Cesar Chavez Blvd - **After**



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Downtown Density Bonus Program (2014)

Created to:

1. Implement Downtown Austin Plan
 1. Promote dense development downtown
 2. Ensure good urban design downtown
 3. Obtain better streetscape downtown
 4. Encourage sustainable buildings
2. Make bonus process more fair and predictable (vs. CURE)

Downtown Density Bonus Requirements (2014)

(1) Gatekeeper Requirements.

1

(a) To receive bonus area, the director must determine that the project substantially complies with the Urban Design Guidelines.

(i) The applicant must submit to the director a schematic level site plan, building elevations, and other drawings, simulations or other documents necessary to fully describe the urban design character of the project and relationship of the project to its surroundings.

(ii) The Design Commission shall evaluate and make recommendations regarding whether the project complies with the Urban Design Guidelines and the director shall consider comments and recommendations of the Design Commission.

2

(b) The applicant shall execute a restrictive covenant committing to provide streetscape improvements along all public street frontages, consistent with the Great Streets Standards.

3

(c) The applicant shall execute a restrictive covenant committing to achieve a minimum two star rating under the Austin Energy Green Building program using the ratings in effect at the time the project is registered with the Austin Energy Green Building program. The applicant shall also provide the director with a copy of the project's signed Austin Energy Green Building Letter of Intent before the director may approve bonus area for a site.

(2) After the director determines the applicant meets the gatekeeper requirements, the applicant shall provide sufficient written information so that the director can determine:

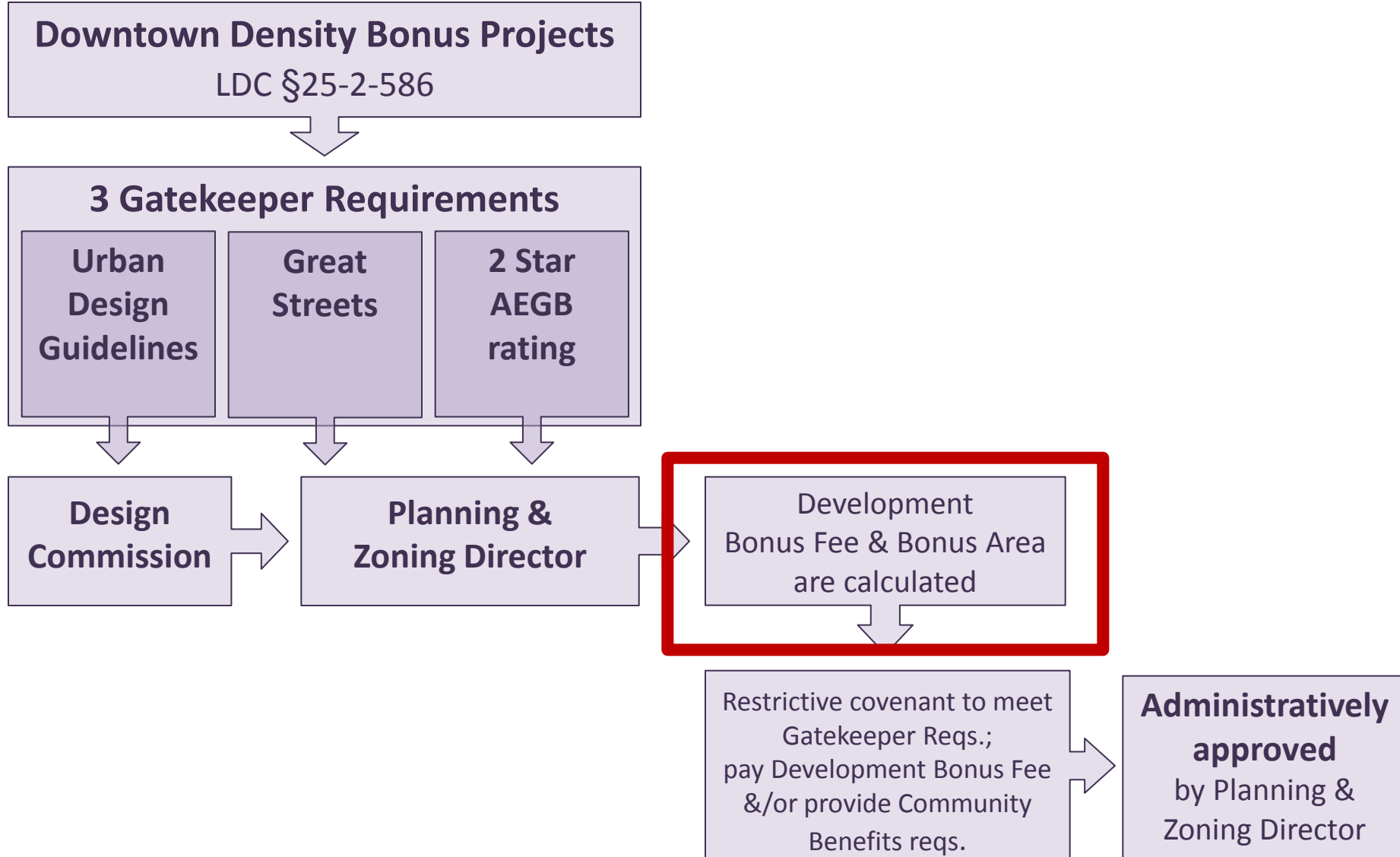
(a) the site's primary entitlement;

(b) the amount of bonus area that the applicant is requesting;

(c) the total dollar amount the applicant will pay if the applicant chooses to obtain the entire bonus area exclusively by paying a development bonus fee, and the amount of the fee to be dedicated to each community benefit; and,

(d) the community benefits the applicant proposes to provide to obtain bonus area if the bonus area will not be obtained exclusively by paying a development bonus fee.

Downtown Density Bonus Flow Chart



Downtown Density Bonus Flow Chart (2014)

Downtown Density Bonus Projects

LDC §25-2-586



3 Gatekeeper Requirements

Urban
Design
Guidelines

Great
Streets

Development Bonus Fee

& Area are calculated

Development Type	Downtown District	Development Bonus Fee (\$/SqFt Bonus Area)
Residential	Core/Waterfront District	\$10/SqFt Bonus Area
	Lower Shoal Creek & Rainey Street Districts	\$5/SqFt Bonus Area
	All other districts	\$3/SqFt Bonus Area
Office	All districts	No Fee
Hotel	All districts	No Fee



Restrictive covenant to meet Gatekeeper Reqs.;
pay Development Bonus Fee
&/or provide Community
Benefits reqs.



**Administratively
approved**
by Planning &
Zoning Director

Downtown Density Bonus Program (2014)

2014



2017 – rise (805 Nueces St.)



Downtown Density Bonus Program (2014)

2014



2017 – Fifth & West (718 W. 5th St.)

