



Austin Design Commission

Date: May 22, 2017

To: City of Austin Staff

Subject: Review of 405 Colorado for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines

Applicant: Michelle Haussmann (Land Use Solutions)

DC Action: The motion to approve the working group letter, which states that the project as presented does not substantially comply with the Urban Design Guidelines, was made by S. Franco; second by E. Taniguchi. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of [8-0]. A. Coleman recused; D. Carroll not present.

The project location is 401-405 Colorado Street.

Existing zoning for the project is CBD. The project design includes office, retail uses and public parking. The lot area is 0.42 acres (18,439 sq ft), and the total proposed project area is 233,146 sq ft.

The FAR for this project is 13:1, above the 8:1 maximum allowance for CBD zoning, so an increase in FAR of 5:1 is being requested.

The proposed building height is 363 feet; essentially 13 stories of parking garage and 12 stories of office/retail.

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.

DESIGN COMMISSION COMMENTS REGARDING PROJECT'S COMPLIANCE WITH URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

AREA WIDE GUIDELINES

1. Create dense development-
13 stories of parking and only 12 stories of habitable space is not increasing density as intended by the Urban Design Guidelines (UDG) of the Density Bonus Program. This section specifically encourages walkability and reduces reliance on cars. Less parking and more habitable space is preferred. The Working Group does not believe that this project complies with this section.
2. Create mixed-use development-
Only 19.5% of Ground Floor (street level) is mixed-use and only designed for one tenant. Only 1.94% of total building area is mixed-use. Buildings must

David Carroll, Chair

Bart Whatley, Vice Chair

Aan Coleman

Beau Frail

Samuel Franco

Martha Gonzalez

Katie Halloran

Conor Kenny

Melissa Henao-Robledo

Evan Taniguchi

Katie Mulholland,
Executive Liaison

Nichole Koerth,
Staff Liaison

have 25% or more of their floor area as a different use to comply. Parking is not considered a mixed-use in the UDG. Prefer more mixed-use with multiple tenants to increase public pedestrian activity at street level. Project does not substantially comply with this section

3. Limit development which closes downtown streets-
No street closures planned. Project complies with this section
4. Buffer neighborhood edges-
Project not applicable to this section
5. Incorporate civic art in both public and private development-
Will retain existing public art at corner of 4th & Colorado- Project complies with this section
6. Protect important public views-
Not applicable but upper floors encroach on ROW. Prefer no encroachment unless totally justified.
7. Avoid historical misrepresentations-
Project complies.
8. Respect adjacent historic buildings-
No adjacent historic buildings.
9. Acknowledge that rooftops are seen from other buildings and the street-
Not addressed by applicant, but Sky Lobby at Level 13 mentioned. Unclear if project complies with this section.
10. Avoid the development of theme environments-
Project complies.
11. Recycle existing building stock-
Not applicable

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETSCAPE

1. Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street-
Overhead protection provided at sidewalk around entire building.- The project complies with this section.
2. Minimize curb cuts-
There is only one curb cut but it is 3 lanes wide and is located in an area that already suffers from traffic gridlock during peak hours. Safety of pedestrians crossing this wide parking entry/exit is of great concern. -Project does comply
3. Create a potential for two-way streets-
Design of garage entry allows for two-way street, design allows 100+feet of queuing inside the garage.- project complies
4. Reinforce pedestrian activity-
Incorporation of Great Streets reinforces existing pedestrian activity but minimal mixed-use and wide garage entry/exit limit activity that could be generated by this project itself. The Lobby does not have a public appeal and appears that it will probably be most used by building tenants. Possible street vendors, café- project complies
5. Enhance key transit stops-
Not applicable.
6. Enhance the streetscape-
Incorporation of Great Streets enhances streetscape.- Project complies
7. Avoid conflicts between pedestrians and utility equipment-
There are no conflicts.-project complies
8. Install street trees-
Street trees included with incorporation of Great Streets.- Project complies
9. Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting-
Pedestrian scaled lighting included with incorporation of Great Streets.- Project complies
10. Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking-
Curbside parking not possible due to incorporation of Great Streets.-Project complies
11. Screen mechanical and utility equipment-
Project complies.
12. Provide generous street-level windows-
Project complies but windows do not create public appeal.
13. Install pedestrian-friendly materials at street level-
Incorporation of Great Streets provides pedestrian-friendly materials in ROW but building itself does not have

public appeal. – Project Complies

GUIDELINES FOR PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

Not applicable.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

1. Build to the street-
Incorporates Great Streets so cannot build to street but builds up to sidewalk ROW.- Project complies
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level-
Project lacks pedestrian-oriented development as envisioned in UDG. Refer to previous comments-Project does not comply
3. Accentuate primary entrances-
Project complies but no special effort to create public appeal.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character-
The inclusion of local character is limited; the “sculpted art form” did not impress as reflecting Austin’s character.- Project does not comply
5. Control on-site parking-
Project appears to control on-site parking but less parking and more inhabited and multi-use space preferred.
6. Create quality construction-
Project appears to comply.
7. Create buildings with human scale-
Project appears to comply.

It appears that the only difference between this second presentation from the first is some redesign of the Lobby and the extension of the canopy over the parking entry/exit. None of our concerns of less parking, minimizing the curb cut, which would provide a safer, more pedestrian oriented urban core, were addressed. Therefore, we again determined that this project, as presented, is not in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.

The Design Commission has appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Design Commission,



Evan Taniguchi, AIA
Chair of the Planning & Urban Design Working Group

cc: David Carroll, Chair of the Design Commission
Katie Mullholland, Executive Liaison to the Design Commission