



City of Austin - Design Commission Project Review Application

The [Design Commission](#) provides advisory recommendations to the City Council to assist in developing public policy and to promote excellence in the design and development of the urban environment. The Design Commission reviews three types of projects:

1. **City projects** (see page ii for process)

The Commission reviews all municipal buildings and associated site plans to ensure they demonstrate compliance with city design and sustainability standards ([Council Resolution No. 20071129-046](#)), including those seeking [Subchapter E Design Standards Alternative Equivalent Compliance \(AEC\)](#) ([Council Resolution No. 20100923-086](#)).

2. **Destiny Bonus projects** (see page iv for process)

The Commission reviews density bonus projects for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin in accordance with the Gatekeeper requirements of [LDC 25-2-586](#) for the Downtown Density Bonus Program.

3. **Advisory Recommendations for Private projects** (see page ii for process)

The Commission will consider Project Review Applications from private projects during its regularly scheduled monthly public meetings and may issue an advisory recommendation in the form of a Project Review Letter to the Applicant.

This Project Review Application must be submitted before your project can be presented to the Design Commission for their review. Design Commission requests project be presented in their Conceptual/Schematic Design phase. This application primarily addresses inhabited buildings and structures and their effect on the public realm; please refer to Appendix A for infrastructure type projects.

The Commission's review of projects is based on the planning/design principles in the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin. Ensure that all applicable principles are addressed in the application questions and in your presentation.

https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Boards_and_Commissions/Design_Commission_urban_design_guidelines_for_austin.pdf

The Design Commission supports the vision and principles of [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#), especially those that affect the urban environment and fabric. All projects should consider this vision and principles, many of which are similar to the Urban Design Guidelines. Refer to Appendix C for the most pertinent sections of Imagine Austin.

The Design Commission expects the applicant's design team to present their project with those most knowledgeable and encourages the inclusion of sub-consultants at the presentation, when deemed necessary.

EXHIBITS TO PRESENT

- 1) Completed Project Review Application (p.1-6)
- 2) Existing zoning classification, adjacent zoning & uses, future land use map classification, topography
- 3) Vicinity plan, including public transportation and connectivity on-site and within quarter mile
- 4) Site plan and landscape plan
- 5) Ground level, basement plan, and typical floor plan
- 6) Elevations and/or 3d views
- 7) Any letters of support or findings by other commissions
- 8) Staff reports, if any
- 9) Records of public participation

PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS: CITY PROJECTS

The Design Commission reviews all municipal buildings and associated site development projects to ensure they demonstrate compliance with city design and sustainability standards ([Council Resolution No. 20071129-046](#)), including those seeking [Subchapter E Design Standards Alternative Equivalent Compliance \(AEC\)](#) ([Council Resolution No. 20100923-086](#)).

1. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Office of the City Architect prior to submitting a Project Review Application, especially if seeking Alternative Equivalent Compliance (AEC) under Subchapter E Design Standards. (See Staff Contacts on page iv.)
2. Applicant submits completed Project Review Application, including Exhibits, to Commission Liaisons a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the Design Commission meeting. (See and [Calendar of Regular Meetings](#) and "Exhibits to Present" on page i)
3. Commission Liaisons review Project Review Application for completeness. Once the Application is deemed complete, the project will be added to the agenda. (Agendas are posted online 72 hours prior to the meeting.)
4. Commission Liaisons post backup, including complete Project Review Application and letters/decisions from other Boards and Commissions, the Friday before the meeting. (See [Meeting Documents](#) website.)
5. Design Commission meets and hears a 15 minute presentation by the Owner/Applicant/Architect. The Commission asks questions and makes recommendations. At the end of the project review, the Design Commission may rely on the recommendations recorded in their meeting minutes or submit a Project Review Letter to City Staff in Development Services Department.
6. Design Commission may direct a Working Group to write the Project Review Letter. The Working Group will take comments from the full Design Commission meeting, add their comments, and coordinate with the Design Commission Chair to issue a Letter to applicable Development Services Department Staff. The Working Group shall meet prior to the next regularly-scheduled Design Commission to finalize comments on any project submittal. The goal is for this to happen in a one (1) month time frame.
7. Commission Liaisons will forward approved meeting minutes or Project Review Letters to applicable Development Services Staff.
8. Design Commission may request that an Owner/Applicant or City Staff submit an update report in the future so that the Commission can review progress as a project is further detailed.

PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS: DENSITY BONUS PROJECTS

The Design Commission reviews density bonus projects for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin in accordance with the Gatekeeper requirements of LDC 25-2-586 for the Downtown Density Bonus Program.

1. **Six weeks prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Applicant will contact Density Bonus Liaison with intent to schedule project on the next Design Commission agenda.
 - a. Density Bonus Liaison will provide application and submittal documentation to Applicant and notify Commission Liaisons.
2. **Five weeks prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Density Bonus Liaison will contact Chair of Working Group to schedule a meeting, copying Commission Liaisons.
3. **By the end of the fourth week (24 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** The Applicant will submit all completed application requirements to Density Bonus Staff Liaison.
4. **By the end of the third week (17 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Design Commission Working Group will meet to review Project Review Application and evaluate Applicant's presentation **detailing substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.**
 - a. Working Group will provide Applicant comments and suggestions on improving presentation and issue a recommendation to the Design Commission on achieving substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.
5. **By the end of the second week (10 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Chair of the Working Group will send the Density Bonus and Commission Liaisons the Working Group's written recommendation to the Design Commission containing **specific feedback** given to the Applicant and, if lacking, detailing items to address to achieve substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.
6. **One week (7 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Once the Density Bonus Liaison receives the revised project submittal from the Applicant and the Commission Liaison receive the written recommendation from the Working Group Chair, the Commission Liaison will place project on Design Commission agenda for discussion and possible action.
7. **Design Commission meeting:** At the meeting, Design Commission will review the project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin based on Working Group recommendations and issue a final recommendation detailing to Planning and Zoning Department Staff items needed to be addressed in order to achieve substantial compliance.
8. **Within one week after Design Commission meeting:** The Chair will issue a formal written recommendation based on the action taken by the by the Commission detailing to Planning and Zoning Department Staff items needed to be addressed in order to achieve substantial compliance.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Incomplete Applications

Should Commission Liaisons determine that the Project Review Application is incomplete, the Application shall be returned to the Applicant and the project will not be posted on the agenda for consideration by the Commission.

Submissions without the required Adobe PDF electronic file shall be deemed incomplete.

Public Notice

Posting of public notices on the proposed project site or giving notice to adjacent property owners is not required by the enabling ordinance of the Design Commission. The posted agenda for the Design Commission meetings serves to inform the public of subjects considered by the Commission. The Applicant shall note that the concomitant regulatory procedures by other boards and commissions have legal public notice requirements. Actions taken by the Austin Design Commission shall be in respect of and in compliance with such local ordinances and project review procedures.

Limits on Resubmissions

Applicants are limited to two (2) resubmissions per design phase (as described herein) and shall notify Commission Staff of the intent and desire to resubmit project(s) for review within seven (7) days of the action vote by the Commission. The Commission shall consider such resubmissions prior to issuing the Project Review Letter.

Rebuttal of Project Review Letter

Since the Commission issues advisory recommendations only, there is no instance for appeals to the Commission. Rebuttals of such advisory recommendations may be made by the Applicant to the applicable city department, planning commission, or City Council in accordance with applicable standard processes and procedures.

STAFF CONTACTS

By appointment, City Staff is available for consultation on submittal requirements. To schedule a pre-submission conference or for information on any of the above submittal requirements, please contact:

City of Austin, One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Rd., Austin, TX 78704

Commission Liaisons:

Executive Liaison: Benjamin.Campbell@austintexas.gov, (512) 974-7691

Staff Liaison: Nichole.Koerth@austintexas.gov, (512) 974-2752
Urban Design Division, Planning and Zoning Department, 5th floor

City Architect: Janice.White@austintexas.gov, (512) 974-7997
Office of the City Architect, Public Works Department, 9th floor

**Density Bonus
Program Coordinator:** Benjamin.Campbell@austintexas.gov, (512) 974-7691
Urban Design Division, Planning and Zoning Department, 5th floor

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name

Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative

Project Type:

- Infrastructure City building & site Density bonus
 Private project Other

Project Location/Address

Congress Avenue from 11th Street south to Riverside Drive

Applicant

City of Austin, Public Works Department
Project Manager: David Taylor

Property Owner

City of Austin

Applicant Mailing Address

City of Austin, Public Works Department
Office of the City Architect
505 Barton Springs Road, Suite 900 - 78704

Property Owner Mailing Address

City of Austin, Public Works Department
Office of the City Architect
P.O. Box 1088 - 78767

Applicant Telephone Number

David Taylor
(512) 974-7132

Property Owner Telephone Number

Project Start Date

To Be Determined

Project Completion Date

To Be Determined

Applicant's Architect

To Be Determined

Applicant's Engineer

To Be Determined

1] Indicate if proposed Project is required by City Ordinance to be reviewed by the Design Commission.

No - this is a courtesy briefing.

2] Describe the recommendation that you are requesting from the Design Commission.

A recommendation of support is requested.

3] Current Design Phase of Project (Design Commission prefers to see projects right after approved schematic design).

The plan is complete. Technical drawings are not complete.

4] Is this Project subject to Site Plan and/or Zoning application approvals? Will it be presented to Planning Commission and/or City Council? If so, when?

No zone change is required for public right-of-way. The plan will be presented to both the Planning Commission and City Council within the next several months.

5] Does this Project comply with Land Development Code Subchapter E? List specifically any Alternative Equivalent Compliance request if any. Please refer to website for Alternate Equivalent Compliance (AEC) requirements.

https://www.municode.com/library/tx/austin/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodid=TIT25LADE_CH25-2ZO_SUBCHAPTER_EDESTMIUS

N/A

B. PROJECT BACKGROUND

6] Provide project background including goals, scope, building/planning type, and schedule. Broadly address each of the "Shared Values for Urban Areas" that are listed on Page 6 of the Urban Design Guidelines. Attach additional pages as needed.

The Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative envisions Congress Avenue as a great Texas people place - the cultural, historic, and commercial spine of Downtown where people come to share, celebrate, and create a bright future. City Council's call in the Downtown Austin Plan to redesign the Avenue as the "Main Street of Texas" requires its transformation into a functional complete street that is, above all, walkable and retail-supportive. A schedule for the construction will depend on available funding. (See attached.)

7] Has this project conducted community/stakeholder outreach? If so, please provide documentation to demonstrate community/stakeholder support of this project.

Yes - a total of four public meetings/open houses were held at various stages of planning and design. In addition, online surveys were set up after each public meeting to gather additional input.

8] Is this project submitting for the Downtown Density Bonus Program? If so, please provide a completed Downtown Density Bonus Application.

N/A

9] Has the project been reviewed by COA Department (i.e. DAC) Staff? If so, please describe and cite any relevant comments or feedback that the Commission should be aware of.

Yes - City Staff has been involved in the project from the beginning.

10] Are there any limitations to compliance or planning principles due to the specific requirements of this project that the Commission should be aware of?

No.

Shared Values for Urban Areas
Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative

1. **Humane Character**
The comfort of the people using Congress Avenue was of great importance in the design process. The design will provide ample shade, high quality materials, and visual interest for users of the street.
2. **Density**
The project will create more pedestrian space and greatly enhance the bicycle/scooter infrastructure.
3. **Sustainability**
A key part of the project is new trees along Congress Avenue as well as upgraded stormwater infrastructure. The wider sidewalks and enhanced bicycle/scooter lanes will encourage modes of transportation other than the automobile.
4. **Diversity**
A key part of the project is the idea that Congress Avenue is welcoming to everyone. Multiple uses of the space by multiple groups was integral to the thinking of the proposed design.
5. **Economic Vitality**
Increasing the pedestrian space and enhancing the public realm will make Congress Avenue an even more inviting place for the people of Austin. This will increase its appeal as a place to visit and to shop.
6. **Civic Art**
The street itself can be considered a work of art, in addition to enhancement to the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge. The bridge in particular is set to incorporate shade structures that will be of artistic merit.
7. **A Sense of Time**
The proposed design seeks to maintain the strong connection the Avenue already has to the Texas State Capitol Building at the top of the street.
8. **Unique Character**
The design proposes to create a uniquely Austin place that will celebrate the local and state culture.
9. **Authenticity**
The proposed design has Austin and Capitol Building very much in mind. The space will be one where people from Austin and all of Texas can come, congregate, shop, and enjoy the public realm.

10. Safety

One of the primary goals of the project is to increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, scooters, and drivers by enlarging the sidewalks and giving dedicated space for bicycles and scooters.

11. Connection with Outdoors

A goal of the design is to enhance the public realm thereby drawing people outdoors and connecting them with their City.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CONTEXT

11] Identify connectivity to public transportation including, bicycle and pedestrian routes and/or multi-modal transportation. Does the project comply with ADA requirements? Provide a site context map and attach additional pages as needed.

Congress Avenue does not currently have any bus routes, though there are numerous bus routes within a few blocks. The proposal is to rebuild the avenue to have bike/scooter lanes and wider sidewalks. The project will seek to correct numerous deficiencies with the existing infrastructure, including sidewalks that are not currently ADA compliant.

12] Identify and describe any existing features that are required to be preserved and/or protected such as heritage trees, creeks or streams, endangered species (flora and/or fauna)? Attach additional site diagrams as needed.

The Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge is required to be preserved, though the proposal is to make changes to the top of the bridge where the pedestrians, bicyclists, people who scoot, and drivers are.

13] Is this project within any City of Austin planning district, master plan, neighborhood plan, regulatory district, overlay, etc.? If so, please illustrate how this project conforms to the respective plan. Attach additional pages as needed. (See below for requirements.)

This project is a part of the Downtown Austin Plan. The DAP was intentionally light on details for Congress Avenue as the intention was to have a separate process for the street.

14] List any project program and/or site constraints that should be considered.

This project is currently unfunded.

D. RELATIONSHIP TO PUBLIC REALM

Public realm is defined as any publically owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities. The quality of our public realm is vital if we are to be successful in creating environments that people want to live and work in.

15] The shared values outlined in the Urban Design Guidelines include Human Character, Density, Sustainability, Diversity, Economic Vitality, Civic Art, A Sense of Time, Unique Character, Authenticity, Safety and Connection to the Outdoors. How is the project addressing these unique community characteristics? Is the project developing any public amenities for urban continuity and vital place making?

The project is entirely public. It will enhance the public realm by creating wider sidewalks, dedicated bike/scooter lanes, correct existing ADA deficiencies, and creating an unified design for the avenue of excellent quality.

16] Does this project encourage street level activity to engage and respond to functional needs such as shade, rest areas, multi-modal transportation storage and paths?

The project very much encourages street-level activity and will increase shade trees and multimodal transportation paths. The exact location of benches and bike racks has not been determined, but they will certainly be a part of the final design.

17] How will the project be a good neighbor to adjacent properties? For example, describe the treatment of the transition area between properties, i.e. fence, landscape improvements, etc.

N/A

E. ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABLE ISSUES

The Austin Urban Design Guidelines set a goal that, "All development should take into consideration the need to conserve energy and resources. It should also strive for a small carbon footprint."

18] Please list any significant components of the project that contribute to meeting this goal. If the project has been designed to accommodate future inclusion of such components (for example, by being built "solar ready") please list them.

N/A

19] If the project is being designed to meet any sustainability/environmental standards or certifications (for example, LEED Silver), please list them here and attach relevant checklists or similar documents that demonstrate how the standard or certification will be achieved.

N/A

20] If the project contains other significant sustainability components not included above that the Commission should note, please list them here.

The project will encourage mode shifting from automobile to other forms of transportation including walking, bicycling, and scooting.