



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 03, 2019
To: City of Austin Design Commission
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group
Subject: Downtown Density Bonus Program review of 80 Red River Street project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.
Meeting Date: April 25, 2019; 12:00 pm, One Texas Center, Room 500
Applicant: Leah Bojo – Drenner Group
Architect: GDA Architects

The project is located at the southwest corner of Red River and Davis Streets.

Existing zoning for the property is CBD. It lies within the boundary of the Rainey Street Subdistrict of the Waterfront Overlay and the Rainey Street District of the Downtown Austin Plan. The lot area is 2.291 acres (99,796 SF) and the total proposed project area is 1,236,806 square feet. The proposed FAR for this project is 13:1, this is more than the 8:1 maximum allowed, so an increase in FAR of 5:1 is being requested. Two towers are being proposed. One with a building height of 695 feet and a second with a height of 575 feet.

Per the Density Bonus Program ordinance, the applicant is required, at a minimum, to meet the three gatekeeper requirements:

1. Substantially comply with the City's Urban Design Guidelines
2. Provide streetscape improvements that meet the Great Streets Program Standards.
3. Commit to a minimum of 2-Star rating under Austin Energy's Green Building Program.

WORKING GROUP COMMENTS REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH THE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

AREA WIDE GUIDELINES

1. Create dense development-
13:1 FAR being requested. Height is taller than most building in this area. Project complies with this section.
2. Create mixed-use development-
The project has residential main use. The retail use is very small. There are not two uses per half block. This project does not comply with this section. Provide a greater amount of uses to comply.
3. Limit development which closes downtown streets-
This project is not proposing to permanently close any streets. Project complies with this section.
4. Buffer neighborhood edges-
Project has one way in and one way out on Red River Street. Vehicular access will have adverse effects on neighborhood traffic flow. The project does not comply with this section.
5. Incorporate civic art in both public and private development-
Although unclear as to the final form, public art is being proposed at pedestrian trail head. This project complies with this section.
6. Protect important public views-
Project is not within the Capitol View Corridor and does not encroach ROW. This project complies with this section.

7. Avoid historical misrepresentations-
Project design is a modern style. Project complies.
8. Respect adjacent historic buildings-
No adjacent buildings identified as historic landmarks. Project complies.
9. Acknowledge that rooftops are seen from other buildings and the street-
Mechanical equipment will be screened. Terraces will include landscaping. Project complies with this section.
10. Avoid the development of theme environments-
No theme shown. Project complies.
11. Recycle existing building stock-
Existing buildings have been demolished. This project does not comply.

*Project complies with 8 of the 11 Area Wide Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETScape

1. Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street-
Building does not meet the street. Not applicable with this section.
2. Minimize curb cuts-
There is one curb cut planned for Red River Street. Project complies with this section.
3. Create a potential for two-way streets-
Both streets are currently two-way streets. Section not applicable.
4. Reinforce pedestrian activity-
Great Streets is not provided. Project does not address the streetscape. Project does not comply.
5. Enhance key transit stops-
There are no transit stops on site or adjacent site. Not applicable to this project.
6. Enhance the streetscape-
Great Streets is not provided, furniture and kiosks are not provided. Project does not comply with this section.
7. Avoid conflicts between pedestrians and utility equipment-
No conflict. Utilities are hidden. Project complies with this section.
8. Install street trees-
No street trees provided. Project does not comply with this section
9. Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting-
Lighting is shown around building, but no lighting is shown at public pathway. Project does not comply with this section. Please include pedestrian lighting on pathway to comply.
10. Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking-
All 1,240 vehicles will be entering and exiting from the same pinch point at the public ROW. This will be extremely dangerous for pedestrians. Project does not comply. Provide pedestrian protections to comply
11. Screen mechanical and utility equipment-
Equipment is screened and/or within building envelope. Project complies.
12. Provide generous street-level windows-
Buildings, and therefore windows, are placed far from street. Section is not applicable.
13. Install pedestrian-friendly materials at street level-
Buildings do not meet the street. Section is not applicable.

*Project complies with 4 of the 8 applicable Guidelines for Public Streetscape.

GUIDELINES FOR PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

1. Treat the Four Squares with Special Consideration-
Project is not adjacent to any of the four squares. Project not applicable.
2. Contribute to an Open Space Network-
The project will face and provide access to the park and Hike and Bike Trail. Project complies.

3. Emphasize Connections to Parks and Greenways-
Project connects to Hike and Bike Trail. Project complies.
4. Incorporate Open Space into Residential Development-
Project provides landscaped terraces and opens to city parkland to the south. Project complies.
5. Develop Green Roofs-
Roof terrace contains large vegetated area. Project complies.
6. Provide Plazas in High Use Areas-
No Plaza provided. Project does not comply.
7. Determine Plaza Function, Size, and Activity-
Project does not provide plaza. Section not applicable.
8. Respond to the Microclimate in Plaza Design-
Project does not provide plaza. Section not applicable.
9. Consider Views, Circulation, Boundaries, and Subspaces in Plaza Design-
Project does not provide plaza. Section not applicable.
10. Provide an appropriate amount of Plaza Seating-
Project does not provide plaza. Section not applicable.
11. Provide Visual and Spatial Complexity in Public Spaces-
Dramatic grade change to trail discourages public use. Project does not provide visual connection to Hike and Bike Trail. From ROW no one would know it is there. Project does not comply.
12. Use Plants to Enliven Urban Spaces-
Project provides vines along wall but does little else to enliven the connection to the park and trail. Project does not comply.
13. Provide Interactive Civic Art and Fountains in Plazas-
Plaza is not provided. Section is not applicable.
14. Provide Food Service for Plaza Participants-
Plaza is not provided. Section is not applicable.
15. Increase Safety in Plazas through Wayfinding, Lighting, & Visibility-
Plaza is not provided. Section is not applicable.
16. Consider Plaza Operations and Maintenance-
Plaza is not provided. Section is not applicable.

*Project complies with 4 of the applicable 7 Guidelines for Plazas and Open Space.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

1. Build to the street-
Buildings are not built to the street. Project does not comply.
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level-
Project has one coffee shop but it is set too far back from public street and is blocked from the street by a three-lane driveway. This discourages walk in traffic and does not meet the pedestrian-oriented intent of the guideline. Project does not comply.
3. Accentuate primary entrances-
Primary entries are unclear in rendering. Entrances should be given more attention. Project does comply.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character-
The building shows no indication of local character. The public art piece is not considered part of the building as this a building specific guideline. Project does not comply. Provide local character as outlined in the UDG to comply.
5. Control on-site parking-
All parking is in garage. Design screens automobiles but does not appear to have 50% of habitable space on street side. Project minimally complies with this section.
6. Create quality construction-
Project appears to comply.

7. Create buildings with human scale-

The large masses of the two towers and garage, combined with being pushed back from the street, do not create human scale. Project does not comply.

*Project complies with 2 of the 7 Guidelines for Buildings.

This project has little connection with the public realm and ostensibly turns its back to Red River Street. Many of the non-compliant guidelines listed above are a direct result of the proposed project being set so far back from the public right-of-way (ROW) so that the project does not have the ability to enhance the public streetscape or pedestrian experience in anyway. While acknowledging that the applicant has very little ROW to work with, the Working Group suggests the applicant rethink their strategy to become substantially compliant.

One example could be to enhance the public trailhead. By creating a public plaza near the street to serve as the public trailhead this project could begin to activate the area as the guidelines intend. In addition, since no Great Streets has been provided on this project, we would suggest that the provided sidewalk, leading to the trail, be widened and given a "Great Streets" style treatment, with furniture and shade trees. This is a public easement that could replace the Great Streets normally provided at the street ROW. Lastly, the adjacent Hike & Bike Trail is a great amenity for this project. It offers a huge benefit to the residents and the city. The project is applauded for proposing improvements to the public access to the trail, however it also a concern with how this project aligns with the Urban Design Guidelines. The project does little to embrace the connection to the park or trail. Providing a small plaza on the park side could be another example of how the project can activate the public realm since it fails to do so on the street side. There is a great opportunity to program a plaza in this location, not unlike the successful plaza at the MACC. Relocating the proposed café to the park side to serve the plaza, and park visitors, could also be beneficial since in its current location, tucked far away from the street, it will likely never be frequented by anyone other than a resident of the building.

The Working Group has determined that this project, as presented, is not in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines. We would encourage you to address the concerns listed above before presenting to the Commission in order to achieve substantial compliance. The Working Group has appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully submitted,



David Carroll, Chair
City of Austin Design Commission

Working Group Commissioners in attendance- David Carroll, Evan Taniguchi, Samuel Franco

cc: Benjamin Campbell
Density Bonus Program Coordinator & Executive Liaison to the Design Commission