



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Urban Transportation Commission

Recommendation Number 20191101-02A Part 6:

Land Development Code Revision draft – S.M.A.R.T. Housing Program Requirements

WHEREAS, the City of Austin’s S.M.A.R.T. Housing program requires a development to be “transit-oriented,”

WHEREAS, the draft LDC Revision defines “transit-oriented” as being located within one-half mile walking distance of a local public transit route, with no requirements for Walkability or Bikability,

WHEREAS, current City Code requires S.M.A.R.T. Housing to be located within one-quarter mile walking distance of a public transit route for multi-family developments (5+ units);

WHEREAS, the Center for Sustainable Development issued a 2011 Report, “S.M.A.R.T. Housing: A Review and Recommendations,” thoroughly assessing Austin’s program, and this report:

- recommended keeping the distance requirement to transit routes one-quarter mile for multi-family developments;
- recommended scoring developments on their walkability and bikability, and adding a metric to the “transit-oriented” standard that took these scores into account;
- found that transportation costs disproportionately affect low-income residents; and that if homes are conveniently located near reasonably-priced public transportation access, this can significantly reduce both the financial and environmental burden caused by longer commutes.

WHEREAS, proximity and access to transit complements S.M.A.R.T. Housing’s goals to provide affordable living, promote equity, and protect the environment.

WHEREAS, access to transit is based on distance from a transit stop as well as the safety and the conditions of the route to transit (including presence of physical and social barriers),

WHEREAS, reduced distances to transit can reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled by encouraging a shift from driving to public transit, but also by encouraging transit users to walk or bicycle to the station rather than drive.

WHEREAS, planners generally assume that most transit users will not walk more than one-quarter mile to bus stops;

WHEREAS, traveling one-half mile without adequate pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks and crosswalks, disproportionately burdens persons with disabilities, small children, parents pushing strollers, the elderly, and other people dependent on public transit;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the UTC recommends that Sections 23-4E-4020 (B) (5) and 23-4E-4020 (D) (4) of the draft Land Development Code revision be modified as follows prior to approval:

- **23-4E-4020 (B) (5):** *Be located within one-half mile walking distance of a local public transit route, along a sidewalk or otherwise safe and accessible pathway, at the time of application, except as provided in Subsection (D); and*
- **23-4E-4020 (D) (4):** *The development is within one-half mile of a planned local public transit route, along an existing or planned sidewalk or otherwise safe and accessible pathway documented in a plan approved by the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority.*

Date of Approval: November 1, 2019

Record of the vote: 8-0 with Commissioners Blume, Somers, and Wilfley absent

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Smith".

Emily Smith, Staff Liaison