

December XX, 2019

Re: Update to the Urban Design Guidelines

Honorable Mayor Adler and City Council Members

The Design Commission prides itself in assisting in developing public policy and promoting excellence in the design of the urban environment in Austin. Thanks to our collective expertise, ranging from urban and landscape design, public policy, and architecture, the Design Commission helps shape the future of downtown through our shared vision of the Urban Design Guidelines.

That being said, since the Urban Design Guidelines were adopted by Council in 2009 Austin has been experiencing tremendous growth and rapid change. During this time, the city has adopted many new policies that have influenced the vision of our urban core and the now ten-year-old Urban Design Guidelines no longer reflect these new values.

Therefore, the Design Commission respectfully requests that City Council direct staff to initiate a revision process for the Urban Design Guidelines to better align them with the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Austin Plan, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, the Austin Core Transportation Plan, Vision Zero, and the Austin Community Climate Plan.

Further, the Design Commission requests to be an integral part of this revision process. We offer our expertise to work alongside staff crafting these revisions. Our hope is that by updating the Urban Design Guidelines to reflect Austin's current priorities, and vision, we will have a better tool to influence the future design of our urban core.

We appreciate your attention to this matter.....

Sincerely.....

October 25,2019

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

The Design commission prides itself in promoting the ideals and principles set forth by Imagine Austin through contributing guidance and recommendations for future development impacting the public realm. The public realm is the most extensive and personal connection to our citizens, it creates a physical manifestation of our values and investment in community, mobility, equity, social justice, and sustainability.

Thanks to the collective expertise of the board, ranging from urban and landscape design, public policy, and architecture, the Design Commission's critical evaluation of future projects protects our community from hasty and opportunistic development by providing an avenue for discourse and collaboration.

The Design Commission would like to update you on the current state of the Urban Design Guidelines, the tool by which all projects we review are measured for substantial compliance. The purpose of these guidelines is to hold future development to a higher standard that reflects the objectives of Imagine Austin's smart growth.

Through numerous discussions beginning with city staff and within the Commission, we have created what will be a clear process to craft the necessary changes to the Urban Design Guidelines to best serve our community.

The Urban Design Guidelines have not been updated since January 29, 2009 through RESOLUTION NO. 20100819-035 when City Council First adopted them

- The Urban Design Guidelines recognize the significant impact of the built environment on the historic, iconic, and unique characteristics of Austin and its neighborhoods
- Design Commission serves as a tremendous resource to the City Council to offer expert advice on how infrastructure and urban projects can enhance the built environment to be more equitable, vibrant, inclusive, and how to successfully engage community input
- The Urban Design Guidelines serve as recommendations for all urban development and redevelopment projects by both the public and private sector

We respectfully request assistance rewriting the Urban Design Guidelines to reflect the rapidly evolving built environment of the City of Austin. We will need dedicated city staff members to work with the City of Austin's Design Commission on recommendations for design guidelines and procedures to incorporate opportunities for public notification and input. The Design Commission will continue to interface with relevant departments to ensure inclusion and understanding of The Urban Design Guidelines' proper use.

it will be very difficult to complete the Guidelines in a timely manner without assistance. Thank you very much for the opportunity to explore and address such an important issue for the City of Austin. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us anytime.

Sincerely,

October 25, 2019

Martha Gonzalez

Vice-Chair

City of Austin Design Commission