



MEMORANDUM

Date: November 27, 2019
To: City of Austin Design Commission
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group
Subject: Downtown Density Bonus Program review of 90 Rainey Street project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.
Meeting Date: November 21, 2019; 12:00 pm, One Texas Center, Room 500
Applicant: Amanda Swor – Drenner Group
Architect: Nelsen Partners

The project is located at the corner of Rainey 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 0.3674 acres (16,004 SF) and the total proposed project area is 582,513 square feet. The proposed FAR for this project is 36.7:1, this is more than the base 8:1 FAR allowed and more than the maximum 15:1 FAR administratively allowed so City Council must approve an increase in FAR of 28.7:1. The proposed building height is 606 feet with 53 floors. The proposed breakdown of areas is Residential: 227,180 SF, Hotel: 349,508 SF, & Restaurant/Bar: 5,825 SF.

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-
36.4:1 FAR being requested. Height is also taller than most building in this area. Project complies with this section.
2. Create mixed-use development-
The project has residential, hotel, and restaurant/bar use. This project complies with this section.
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 is not on neighborhood edge. Section not applicable to this project.
5. Incorporate civic art in both public and private development-
Project is proposing wall mural along Rainey Street. 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-
Project complies.
9. Acknowledge that rooftops are seen from other buildings and the street-
Project complies with this section.
10. Avoid the development of theme environments-
Stacking shipping containers and old home creates a thematic environment. Project does not comply.
11. Recycle existing building stock-
Existing house is being removed. This project does not comply.

*Project complies with 8 of the applicable 10 Area Wide Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETScape

1. Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street-
Building covers sidewalk. Project complies.
2. Minimize curb cuts-
There is one curb cut planned for Davis 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-
Trees added to Davis St. Project appears to 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-
Project appears to comply with this section.
7. Avoid conflicts between pedestrians and utility equipment-
No conflict. Utilities are hidden in alley. Project complies with this section.
8. Install street trees-
Project complies with this section
9. Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting-
No pedestrian lighting is shown. Project does not comply with this section. Please include pedestrian lighting on pathway to comply.
10. Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking-
All vehicles will be entering and exiting from the same pinch point along Davis St. This will be extremely dangerous for pedestrians. No mitigation measures are shown. Project does not comply. Provide pedestrian protections, like alternate paving material, to comply
11. Screen mechanical and utility equipment-
Equipment is screened and/or within building envelope. Project complies.
12. Provide generous street-level windows-
Street level windows are provided. Project complies.
13. Install pedestrian-friendly materials at street level-
Added stone does little to soften street level. Project does not comply.

*Project complies with 8 of the 11 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 contribute in providing access to the park and Hike and Bike Trail entrances. Project complies.
3. Emphasize Connections to Parks and Greenways-
Project does not connect to park or greenway. Not applicable.

4. Incorporate Open Space into Residential Development-
Project provides open space on roof terraces. Project complies.
5. Develop Green Roofs-
Roof terraces contains 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-
No visual or spatial complexity is provided in public areas on ground level. Project does not comply.
12. Use Plants to Enliven Urban Spaces-
Projects provides plantings on roof terraces, but little at ground level. Project minimally complies.
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 6 Guidelines for Plazas and Open Space.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

1. Build to the street-
Building is not built to the street, but it is accommodating additional sidewalk width. Project complies.
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level-
Project has commercial and bar use along Rainey Street frontage and Residential Lobby along Davis St. Project complies.
3. Accentuate primary entrances-
Project complies.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character-
The building shows little indication of local character. Entire building appears to be concrete and glass. Project does not comply. Provide local character as outlined in the UDG to comply.
5. Control on-site parking-
All parking appears to be in underground garage. Project complies with this section.
6. Create quality construction-
Project appears to comply.
7. Create buildings with human scale-
The large scale of tower and double height windows at ground level do not create human scale. Additionally, the large glass panes and stone panels do not create smaller scale. Project does not comply.

*Project complies with 5 of the 7 Guidelines for Buildings.

The Working Group appreciates the reduced parking count, and locating it underground, as well as the lack of curb cuts on Rainey Street. We also like the concept of low-cost food service at ground floor, and a food type, like a taco, that may offer business hours spanning breakfast through dinner and beyond. However, the taco window does little in creating a true sense of place at the corner, which is the most prominent piece of the project. The commercial space at this corner needs a more thoughtful solution that activates the streetscape.

The Working Group has determined that this project, as presented, is barely 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 ensure a substantial compliance recommendation.

While the project appears to be meeting the minimum gatekeeper requirements, the Working Group has concerns over the large amount of FAR being requested. Since this project is seeking a FAR that is more than double the maximum allowed under the Downtown Density Bonus Program, the Working Group believes the applicant should provide more Community Benefits than the affordable housing and fees being proposed, including mobility and streetscape improvements as example. The Working Group questions how responsible it is to add this much FAR to an area like Rainey that already suffers from mobility issues. Even with reduced parking, the large FAR being requested for this 622-unit building will result in thousands of building users, and these users will rely on some type of transportation to get there and that will only add to the Rainey mobility nightmare. While it is not our intent to punish the applicant for the City's planning failures, requesting such a drastic increase in FAR, under the current Rainey climate seems hasty. The Working Group requests that the full Design Commission recommend additional Community Benefits for this project that will alleviate the impact this large project will have on an area that is already struggling.

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, Bart Whatley

cc: Aaron Jenkins