



## MEMORANDUM

Date: May 29, 2020  
To: City of Austin Design Commission  
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group  
Subject: Downtown Density Bonus Program review of the 3rd and Brazos Streets project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.  
Meeting Date: May 21, 2020; 10:00 am, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)  
Applicant: Michele Rogerson Lynch, Metcalfe Wolff Stuart & Williams  
Architect: SCB

---

The project is located at the northwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Brazos Streets.

Existing zoning for the property is CBD. It is not in the Capitol View Corridor or Capitol Dominance Overlay. The lot area is 17,707 SF and the total proposed project area is 442,675 SF with Retail and Residential uses. The proposed FAR for this project is 25:1, this is more than the 8:1 maximum allowed, so an increase in FAR of 17:1 is being requested. The proposed building height is 513 feet with 45 floors. Nine levels of above ground parking are proposed, with 308 parking spaces. The project proposes to fulfill the Community Benefit requirements by paying a fee-in-lieu to the Affordable Housing Trust.

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:  
25.1:1 FAR being requested. Project complies with this section.
2. Create Mixed-Use Development:  
The project has residential and retail uses. 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 adjacent to a residential neighborhood. Not applicable
5. Incorporate Civic Art in both Public and Private Development:  
Project will preserve existing public art along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Brazos Street, but no new art is planned by applicant. Project does not comply.
6. Protect Important Public Views:  
Project does not obscure existing view through the public right-of-way. This project complies with this section.

7. Avoid Historical Misrepresentations:  
Project design is not a historic style. Project complies.
8. Respect Adjacent Historic Buildings:  
No adjacent historic buildings. Not applicable.
9. Acknowledge that Rooftops are Seen from other Buildings and the Street:  
Roof decks will be landscaped. Mechanical equipment will be screened. Project complies.
10. Avoid the Development of Theme Environments:  
No theme proposed. Project complies.
11. Recycle Existing Building Stock:  
Existing building brick will be salvaged and reused on first floor of proposed building. Project complies.

\*Project complies with 8 of the 9 applicable Area Wide Guidelines.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETScape**

1. Protect the Pedestrian where the Building Meets the Street:  
The canopies as graphically presented will not provide meaningful shade. Consider utilizing the perforated panels or similar material as inset to improve the shading coefficient. Additionally, consider lowering the height to improve their actual shading performance. Project does not comply.
2. Minimize Curb Cuts:  
There is one curb cut proposed, which is more than exists currently. Additionally, appropriate overhead protection and pedestrian pavers are not provided at proposed curb cut. Project does not comply with this section.
3. Create a Potential for Two-Way Streets:  
Both streets are currently two-way. Not applicable.
4. Reinforce Pedestrian Activity:  
Beyond implementing the required Great Streets, the project is proposing an outdoor patio along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. This will help activate this side, but the Brazos Street side, however, appears inhospitable to pedestrians with only a flat façade and little shading. 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:  
Consider allocating more of the indoor bar area to the outdoor patio. Additionally, more landscaping, like Fig Ivy would help soften the façade along the Brazos Street side. Project does not comply.
7. Avoid Conflicts between Pedestrians and Utility Equipment:  
Utility entrances are located off of alley. Project complies.
8. Install Street Trees:  
Full street trees are not provided along Brazos Street due to garage entry and artwork. Existing trees will be removed as part of this project. Applicant to indicate the species and size of trees being removed and being proposed. Clarify that the COA ROW planters are being reconstructed. Present type of plant materials being planted in the raised planters. Project does not comply.
9. Provide Pedestrian-Scaled Lighting:  
Cannot confirm compliance as no lighting is shown on exhibits provided. Project does not comply.
10. Provide Protection from Cars/Promote Curbside Parking:  
Planters will provide protection along Brazos Street. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side is protected by parking and bike lanes. Project complies with this section.
11. Screen Mechanical and Utility Equipment:  
Equipment is enclosed. Project complies.
12. Provide Generous Street-Level Windows:  
Lots of glazing proposed on lower two levels along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street façade, but the Brazos side does not have a similar treatment. Project does not comply.
13. Install Pedestrian-Friendly Materials at Street Level:  
Proposed brick, glass, and wood planters are pedestrian friendly and durable. Project complies.

\*Project complies with 4 of the 11 applicable Guidelines for Public Streetscape.

### **GUIDELINES FOR PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE**

No plaza or open space is being proposed. Section not applicable to this project.

### **GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS**

1. Build to the street:  
Building built to the street. Project complies.
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level:  
Project has retail and residential lobby on ground floor. Project complies.
3. Accentuate primary entrances:  
Architectural expression at the Residential entry is well articulated and clear, however the entry to the Public Space (retail) is not identified architecturally or graphically. Project does not comply.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character:  
While at the lower levels, the building design includes reuse of existing brick and copper color metal cladding it also doesn't respond to local climate conditions. Additionally, above the parking podium the building lacks any indication of local character and even appears to be a replica of the development at 5<sup>th</sup> and Lavaca. Project does not comply.
5. Control on-site parking:  
Above ground parking garage with layered screening has been proposed. Project complies.
6. Create quality construction:  
Project appears to comply.
7. Create buildings with human scale:  
The proposed brick and awnings, along with the layered cladding on garage block help to break down the scale of the tower. Project complies.

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

Positive features of this project include the outdoor patio, the reuse of the brick façade, the glazing along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the layering of materials. However, the outdoor patio is small, and unshaded, and there is concern that it won't do enough to activate the streetscape. We would recommend that the patio be made larger to ensure success. Further, please clarify the materiality of the planters at the patio's edge. Although they are on private property; if they are permanent, they are significant in the visual and public impact when considering the public space benefit provided by the patio. Similarly, please elaborate on the materiality of the surface of the patio as it visually connects to the Great Streets pavement.

The perforated metal screens, at the garage levels, are architecturally significant as experienced from the public realm. Consider subtle lighting to better accentuate their geometry and layering. We would also recommend studying the integration of these panels on the residential tower so the two pieces are more visually connected. Currently, the residential tower and garage block have two competing languages.

Most notably, it appears that a lot of thought, and sensitivity, was applied to the design 3<sup>rd</sup> Street elevation, but the Brazos elevation does not have the same level of treatment. It is completely devoid of the layered dynamic qualities seen on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side, and does very little to promote pedestrian activity. The lightweight canopies are attractive floating above the sidewalk, but they are too open and are relegated to simple aesthetic devices that won't serve to protect pedestrians. Furthermore, they appear to be very shallow. The Working Group recommends that they are extended further out and made less open; perhaps infilled with metal panels similar to those being proposed on the façade above.

The Planning & Urban Design Working Group has concluded that the project, as presented, does not substantially comply with the Urban Design Guidelines. We encourage you to address the concerns listed above before presenting to the Design Commission in order to achieve a finding of substantial compliance. The Working Group has appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Carroll".

David Carroll, AIA  
Chair  
City of Austin Design Commission

Working Group Members in attendance - David Carroll, Evan Taniguchi, Melissa Henao-Robledo, Aan  
Coleman

cc: Evan Taniguchi, Melissa Henao-Robledo, Aan Coleman, Aaron Jenkins, Jorge Rousselin