

Date: August 14, 2020  
To: City of Austin Design Commission  
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group

Re: Density Bonus Working Group review of 617 Colorado Street for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines

Meeting date: August 7, 2020/11:00 am  
Applicant: Leah Bojo- Drenner Group

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The project location is 617 Colorado Street.

The project includes mixed uses of retail (4,827 sf) and a hotel (119,401 sf), totaling 124,228 sf.

The applicant is seeking a density bonus to raise the FAR from 8:1 to 13:1 (maximum allowance). The site area is 10,018 sf (0.23 acres), and the total project area is 124,228 sf.

The total building height is 271'-0" (17 floors). The maximum height achievable under the density bonus program in this portion of Downtown is unlimited.

The additional square footage made available by the FAR & height density bonus is 50,060 sf. The current 8:1 FAR yields 80,096 sf.

Per ordinance, the applicant is required to provide streetscape improvements along all public street frontages consistent with the Great Streets Standards, and the applicant shall commit to a minimum of 2-star green building rating (3-star proposed). The Mayor and Council and the Planning & Development Review Director is to determine appropriate bonus area and in light of community benefits to be provided.

Positive attributes of the project are that it is densifying and activating a site that is currently a surface parking lot. In addition, the hotel project is not providing parking and recognizes the utilization of multi-modal and public transportation for hotel guests, the community, and employees. Furthermore, most of their public amenity/retail space is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor (atypical) but this allows a nice mix of activating spaces that include a bar, outdoor terrace and "we work" areas that will be available to the public (not free) but a lottery process for public school teachers will be implemented. Also, some type of public art will be utilized on much of the 7<sup>th</sup> Street 1<sup>st</sup> Floor exterior walls that contain back-of-house functions.

Concerns primarily center on the lack of ride-share drop-off/pick-up areas since no parking is provided. Also, the treatment of bare exterior walls along Colorado, housing back-of-house functions requires more attention. And the proposed public art itself; how will it be selected? Hopefully it will provide opportunities for local, talented, historically underutilized artists to exhibit their work. Usually, multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level is encouraged, but due to the small footprint of this project, housing the public amenities/retail space on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor is more effective.

**We recommend that this project, as presented, is in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.**

## **URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES CECKLIST**

### *AREA WIDE GUIDELINES*

1. *Create dense development - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
2. *Create mixed-use development - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
3. *Limit development which closes downtown streets - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
4. *Buffer neighborhood edges - [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*
5. *Incorporate civic art in both public and private development - [X] incorporated, [X] need input, [ ] n/a*  
**More definition of the type of art and how it will be selected should be added to the presentation.**
6. *Protect important public views - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
7. *Avoid historical misrepresentations - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
8. *Respect adjacent historic buildings - [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*
9. *Acknowledge that rooftops are seen from other buildings and the street - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a`*
10. *Avoid the development of theme environments - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
11. *Recycle existing building stock - [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*

### *GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETScape*

1. *Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
2. *Minimize curb cuts - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
3. *Create a potential for two-way streets - [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*
4. *Reinforce pedestrian activity - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
5. *Enhance key transit stops - [X] incorporated, [X] need input, [ ] n/a*
6. *Enhance the streetscape- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
7. *Avoid conflicts between pedestrians and utility equipment - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
8. *Install street trees- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
9. *Provide pedestrian-scaled lighting-[X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*  
**Existing Great Street lighting will be utilized.**
10. *Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking - [ ] incorporated, [X] need input, [ ] n/a*  
**Since this project is not providing on-site parking, more attention to queuing of ride-share vehicles is required.**
11. *Screen mechanical and utility equipment- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
12. *Provide generous street-level windows- [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*  
**Due to limited 1<sup>st</sup> Floor area, public amenities/retail space will be housed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, but treatment of Colorado bare walls require more attention.**

13. *Install pedestrian-friendly materials at street level - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*

*GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS*

1. *Build to the street- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
2. *Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level- [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
3. *Accentuate primary entrances - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
4. *Encourage the inclusion of local character - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
5. *Control on-site parking - [ ] incorporated, [ ] need input, [X] n/a*  
**Since this project is not providing on-site parking, more attention to queuing of ride-share vehicles is required.**
6. *Create quality construction - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*
7. *Create buildings with human scale - [X] incorporated, [ ] need input, [ ] n/a*

*GUIDELINES FOR OPEN SPACE (not applicable)*

The Working Group appreciates the opportunity to preliminarily review and comment on this project and we look forward to a continued collaborative process while moving this project forward.

Respectfully,



Evan K. Taniguchi, AIA  
Planning & Urban Design Working Group of the Design Commission