



MEMORANDUM

Date: September 11, 2020
To: City of Austin Design Commission
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group
Subject: Downtown Density Bonus Program review of the 14th and Guadalupe Streets project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines.
Meeting Date: September 03, 2020; 1:00 pm, Virtual Meeting (Microsoft Teams)
Applicant: Leah Bojo, Drenner Group.
Architect: STG Design

The project is located at 84 East Avenue.

Existing zoning is CBD and is in the Rainey Street Subdistrict. It is not within the Capitol View Corridor. The lot area is 17,642 square feet and the total proposed project area is 272,939 square feet with Residential Apartment use providing 284 units. The base FAR allow is 8:1. The proposed FAR for this project is 21:1, so an increase in FAR of 13:1 is being requested. Additionally, this is more than the 15:1 FAR allowed by the Downtown Density Bonus Program and therefore additional Community Benefits should be provided. The proposed building height is 450 feet with 41 floors. An above ground parking garage will be provided, with ten levels of parking and 350 spaces included. Six affordable housing units are proposed to fulfill Rainey Street Subdistrict requirements with the additional Community Benefit requirements being proposed as 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:
21:1 FAR being requested. Project complies with this section.
2. Create Mixed-Use Development:
The project has only one use. This project does not comply with this section. Provide more uses to comply.
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 neighborhood. Guideline is not applicable.
5. Incorporate Civic Art in both Public and Private Development:
Public Art Gallery is provided on street level off of alley and mural is proposed on alley wall. 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:
There are no adjacent historically designated buildings. Guideline is not applicable.
9. Acknowledge that Rooftops are Seen from other Buildings and the Street:
Rooftops appear to comply. Project complies with this section.
10. Avoid the Development of Theme Environments:
No theme shown. Project complies.
11. Recycle Existing Building Stock:
The existing building is not being reused. This project does not comply.

*Project complies with 7 of the 9 applicable Area Wide Guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC STREETSCAPE

1. Protect the Pedestrian where the Building Meets the Street:
Overhead sun/rain protection does not appear to be provided on building and no street trees are provided. Project does not comply. Provide protection to comply.
2. Minimize Curb Cuts:
There is one curb cut proposed, which is less than exists currently. Project complies with this section.
3. Create a Potential for Two-Way Streets:
The proposed garage has entry and exit off of East Ave. Project complies with this section.
4. Reinforce Pedestrian Activity:
There are no pedestrian-oriented uses or Great Streets treatment provided along East Ave. Project does not comply.
5. Enhance Key Transit Stops:
There are no transit stops on site or adjacent to the site. Not applicable to this project.
6. Enhance the Streetscape:
Great Streets trees and furniture are not shown. Project does not comply. Provide trees and furniture to comply. Also, remove the special paving at the entry that is shown in the TXDOT ROW unless there is some certainty that it can be provided.
7. Avoid Conflicts between Pedestrians and Utility Equipment:
Utilities are indicated to be underground or in closets off the alley. Project complies with this section.
8. Install Street Trees:
Street trees are not provided. Project does not comply. Provide trees to comply.
9. Provide Pedestrian-Scaled Lighting:
No exhibits were provided to indicate compliance. Project does not comply.
10. Provide Protection from Cars/Promote Curbside Parking-
No protections shown. Project does not comply. Provide trees, planters, bollards, etc. to comply. Provide indication of garage entry for pedestrians along with median.
11. Screen Mechanical and Utility Equipment:
Utility equipment shown to be inside building or underground vault. Project complies.
12. Provide Generous Street-Level Windows:
Project appears to comply
13. Install Pedestrian-Friendly Materials at Street Level:
Planters and green wall soften hard edges of concrete. Project minimally complies.

*Project complies with 6 of the 12 applicable Guidelines for Public Streetscape.

GUIDELINES FOR PLAZAS AND OPEN SPACE

No Plaza or Open Space provided; Section not applicable.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS

1. Build to the street:
Building proposed to the street, except at open corner. Project complies.
2. Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street level:
Project does not propose multi-tenant pedestrian-oriented uses on ground floor. Project does not comply.
3. Accentuate primary entrances:
Primary entry is identifiable. Project complies.
4. Encourage the inclusion of local character:
The building design shows no indication of local character. Project does not comply. Provide local character as outlined in the UDG to comply.
5. Control on-site parking:
Above ground parking garage is provided and screened. Project minimally complies.
6. Create quality construction:
Project appears to minimally comply.
7. Create buildings with human scale:
Project appears to comply

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

Positive features of this project are the inclusion of the Public Art Gallery and the art mural proposed on the alley façade. However, the lack of street activation and pedestrian oriented uses along East Avenue is problematic. Additionally, it is concerning to the Working Group that Great Streets is not being provided. There are no shade trees, covered walkways, or street furniture provided along East Avenue. While Great Streets is not part of the Urban Design Guidelines, many of the standards do overlap. The Working Group recognizes that TXDOT limits what can be accomplished in the adjacent ROW. However, we believe this project should address the streetscape as an additional community benefit for exceeding the 15:1 FAR allowed in the Rainey Street Subdistrict. Therefore, we recommend that the project consider alternative ways to provide structural shade, shade trees, and street furnishings on-site; to create a similar pedestrian experience to the Great Streets Standards.

Based on the information provided, the Planning & Urban Design Working Group has concluded that the project does not substantially comply with the Urban Design Guidelines. We encourage you to address the concerns listed in this review before presenting to the full Design Commission in order to ensure a finding of substantial compliance from the larger body. The Working Group has appreciated the opportunity to review and comment on this project.

Respectfully,



David Carroll, Chair
City of Austin Design Commission

Working Group Members in attendance - David Carroll, Evan Taniguchi, Bart Whatley, Aan Coleman

cc: Evan Taniguchi, Bart Whatley, Aan Coleman, Aaron Jenkins, Jorge Rousselin