



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Parks & Recreation Board

Recommendation Number 20220822-4: Recommendation that the Council Ensure a Signature Park at South Central Waterfront

Whereas the Vision Plan Framework, adopted in 2016 and updated in 2020 after hundreds of hours of input from stakeholders and volunteers, calls for a signature park along the South Central Waterfront, and

Whereas this special downtown property along the lake has long been recognized as a unique and iconic spot for bat-watching and other recreational activities; and

Whereas access to this land has been relatively unfettered for more than half a century, so that residents are accustomed to freer access than this PUD will offer; and

Whereas, substantial new information has been developed since the Parks Board vote in September 2021 on the 305 S. Congress PUD; and

Whereas the 305 S. Congress PUD Amendment funnels all pedestrians and cyclists through an upscale development, removing direct and public access to the park that residents have appreciated and freely accessed for more than 50 years—public accesses with direct connectivity of Auditorium Shores, Congress Avenue, the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, and the bat viewing area; and

Whereas the applicant's plan requires pedestrians to navigate multiple skyscrapers to find designated park accesses, a situation far less equitable, welcoming, and accessible to an area the public has used as a community gathering spot and tourist destination for years; and

Whereas fully credited parkland is less than half of the acreage recommended in the Vision Plan, and park amenities are not funded by the PUD applicant; and

Whereas the proposed ordinance allows the applicant to develop park programming, rather than maintaining park programming for this public parkland through the Parks and Recreation Department; and

Whereas, for approval, any PUD should be deemed superior, providing amenities beyond what are available to the City without the application; and

Whereas this is the opportunity we have to develop a signature park to benefit all Austinites, offering respite in the density of a growing city;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Parks & Recreation Board recommends that the City Council hold this 305 S. Congress PUD Amendment applicant—like all others—to full superiority, as detailed in the recommended conditions of the Parks and Recreation Board, the Environmental Board, and the Planning Commission.

We again recommend more visible, welcoming, and equitable access for City residents to this iconic park.

We again recommend that programming for this public parkland be guided by the Parks and Recreation Department staff, rather than by the developer, for public transparency and access.

We recommend that water control features for the development not be credited as both parkland and as environmental or watershed requirements.

We recommend that all deeded parkland should be fully and clearly accessible to all residents—not counting as parkland any parcel separated from the park as entry to the private development, such as elevated walkways to enter the development or parcels between the buildings that give the appearance of private property.

The 305 S. Congress PUD Ordinance now before City Council would be denied by the Parks Board as inferior and not superior.

Date of Approval: August 22, 2022

Record of the vote: The motion to approve the recommendation that the City Council hold this 305 S. Congress PUD Amendment applicant—like all others—to full superiority, as detailed in the recommended conditions of the Parks and Recreation Board, the Environmental Board, and the Planning Commission was approved on Chair Cottam Sajbel's motion, Board Member Lewis' second on a 9-0 vote. Board Members Hugman and Rinaldi absent.

Attest: 