

Design Commission
Recommendation 20220926-7

September 28, 2022

Honorable Mayor Adler
Honorable City Council Members
City Manager Spencer Cronk

RE: Functional Green Adoption Postponement

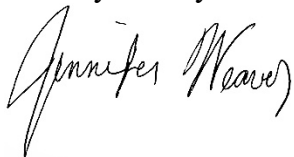
Dear Mayor and City Council Members.

Given that the Functional Green program may have a wide and potentially negative effect on development in our city, the Design Commission recommends the postponement of the adoption of Functional Green until a complete review can confirm the necessity and efficacy of the proposed code.

The attached Recommendation 20220926-7 details Design Commission's rationale for our unanimous agreement for postponement, including but not limited to stakeholder feedback that has not been utilized, at all. We request a review for redundancy in codes and in the review process, and also outline a path forward to confirm that the program will create effective improvements in future developments.

Because the Design Commission reviews projects to confirm compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines, we believe that we understand the existing requirements for landscapes, pedestrian-focused areas, and open space in urban areas. It is through this lens that we offer feedback for your consideration – to improve our approval process and ultimately our built city – that we may all enjoy together.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jen Weaver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jen Weaver
Chair
City of Austin Design Commission



DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20220926-7

Date: September 28, 2022

Subject: Design Commission Recommendation for Functional Green

Motioned By: Commissioner Coleman Seconded By: Commissioner Carroll

Recommendation

The Design Commission recommends the postponement of the adoption of Functional Green.

Description of Recommendation to Council

The Design Commission recommends the postponement of the adoption of Functional Green until stakeholder feedback is assessed, redundancies and cost are evaluated, actual submittals with costs are reviewed, a strategy for staff training and deployment has been reported, benefits of the program are proven, feasibility of planting requirements are verified, and an affordability assessment has been completed.

Rationale:

The questions and concerns generated during the Code Next stakeholder process were not addressed. Consultants and stakeholders had questions about the process, complexity of the site planning (as it relates to other codes like impervious cover per existing code, etc.) and the review process by other City of Austin departments.

The Design Commission would like to address the redundancies and overlaps between this potential code and the other landscape and site design ordinances including:

1. The Landscape Ordinance
2. Austin Energy Green Building Requirements
3. Water Forward
4. Great Streets
5. Subchapter E
6. Other stormwater managements codes including raingardens, bio retention and bio filtration
7. Urban Design Guidelines and Density Bonus Program

The Design Commission would like to request:

1. Staff produce actual submittals for both 100% and 90% allowable coverage demonstrating what a successful submittal would include to be approved, including calculations and how these calculations interact with other required calculations. These actual submittals and calculations should also include the review of other departments including Environmental, Austin Energy, Transportation, Public Works.

2. A summary of how staff will be deployed (existing staff, new hires), how many staff will be required, and training implementation, which has not been reported.
3. A summary of the benefits of this code that are not included in other codes, or how these initiatives may be integrated into existing codes to have an equal positive environmental impact without the need of, yet another code. This has not been reported.
4. A verification that a 100% native planting requirement for challenging urban environments has not been proven as possible.
5. An affordability impact statement for Functional Green that has not been reported.

Respectfully,
City of Austin Design Commission

Vote: **9-0-0**

For: Chair Weaver, Vice Chair Meiners, Commissioner Carroll, Commissioner Coleman, Commissioner Franco, Commissioner Henao-Robledo, Commissioner Salinas, Commissioner Taniguchi, Commissioner Whatley

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Commissioner Luckens, Commissioner Rollason

Attest: Jen Weaver, Chair of Design Commission

