From: [redacted]
To: Lofton, Zack
Subject: copy of email re Case # SP-2022-0852C
Date: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 2:19:41 PM

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Dear Mr. Lofton:

This email is my opinion on this subject.
This ordinance for a density bonus MUST NOT BE GRANTED.
If it is granted, it is a sellout to greed.

The destruction of the historic Rainey District is a fait accompli.
Further damage must be contained.

Thousands of new residents will be moving in soon;
thousands more cars will be driven and parked here;
additionally, thousands more dogs will also will be living here
WITHOUT A VIABLE DOG PARK
and without widening access and streets.

We lived for many years in Manhattan, NY, and are accustomed to high density living.
It works in NYC because few residents own cars and fewer still have dogs.

In a few years we believe the citizens of the Rainey Street District will be up in arms over the inevitable bad consequences of this overkill planning and development.
People are paying high condo prices and high taxes.
They are in for a devastating surprise - unintended consequences.

The overdevelopment is a disgrace.
The lack of understanding of developing a suitable human living space is a wonder!

Exactly how long will it take to go two blocks and get on I35?
Exactly how many dogs are too many in an area without a fenced dog park?

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Pastore, [redacted]

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From: [redacted]
To: Lofton, Zack
Subject: Planning on East Avenue is Reckless
Date: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 5:02:42 PM

You don't often get email from [redacted] Learn why this is important

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Dear Mr. Lofton,

I received a notice that the developers of 62-64 East Ave want a FAR variance for their proposed project. This practice of issuing variances in the Rainey Street area, specifically along East Avenue, must stop. When I moved to the area (just 6 years ago), there were small 1-story buildings along East Avenue that historically was a neighborhood of small houses. Today, the East Avenue roadway is narrower by 12 feet with a row of high rises--all due to variances. Traffic cannot move. It is becoming dangerous for city services -- fire trucks and ambulances. When asked, City services' staff say it's not their job to deal with these issues, it's the City Planning Commission and the City Council. I implore you to not allow this most recent and reckless request. We are not Manhattan with an adequate public transportation system to support the already existing FAR that the City has allowed in the Rainey area. What the City of Austin is doing is nothing short of reckless.

Ann Marie Ellis
[redacted]

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Lofton, Zack

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2023 3:20 PM
To: Lofton, Zack
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Re: Which city is allowing the highest floor area ratio in the world? Austin!

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

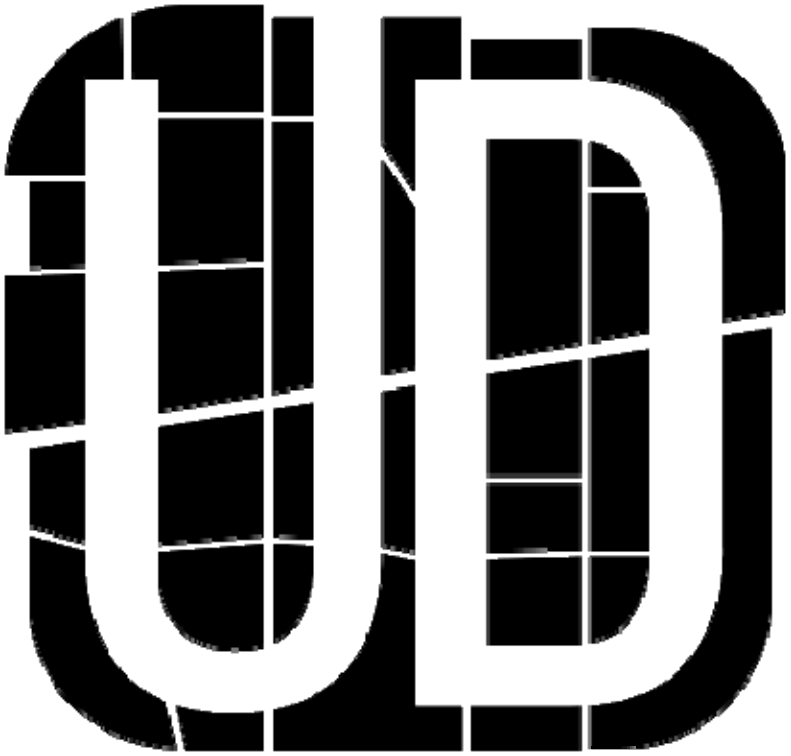
Zack,

Thanks for letting me know that Chicago is the one large American city that is able to make special FAR approvals, without cap, other than Austin. As we discussed, Chicago has a street system and a mass transit system in its CBD that carries much more traffic than do the narrow, short and discontinuous streets of Rainey, which is totally devoid of mass transit. In addition, no neighborhood in Chicago is being built up to the same degree as the Rainey District, where Planning and the City Council are approving a forest of nearby high rises in the 21-32 FAR range, all over a short time frame. In Chicago, special planning approvals are preceded by traffic studies.

Thanks for agreeing to add my comments to the record.

Brian Furlong

> On Apr 10, 2023, at 12:53 PM, Lofton, Zack <Zack.Lofton@austintexas.gov> wrote:
>
> Good afternoon, Brian:
>
> Thanks for your comments. I will include these in the background materials for 62 East Avenue. If you have not, please feel free to sign up to speak for this item at tomorrow's Planning Commission meeting.
>
> Sincerely,
> Zack
>
> **Zack Lofton, AICP, CNU-A**
> Planner Senior & Urban Designer
> City of Austin | Housing and Planning Dept. | Zoning & Urban Design
> Phone: 512-974-9363 | Email: zack.lofton@austintexas.gov



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Please note: E-mail correspondence to and from the City of Austin is subject to required disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act.

PER CITY ORDINANCE: All individuals scheduling or accepting a meeting invitation with a City Official are requested to provide responses to the questions at the following link: https://bit.ly/HPDLobbyingForm

Please note that all information provided is subject to public disclosure. For more information please visit: City of Austin Ordinance 2016-0922-005 | City Clerk's website | City Clerk's FAQ's

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From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2023 1:21 PM
To: Lofton, Zack <Zack.Lofton@austintexas.gov>
Cc: [redacted]

[redacted]

Subject: Which city is allowing the highest floor area ratio in the world? Austin!

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

To: Austin Planning Department Case Worker for 60-62 East Avenue Approvals
(Zack Lofton)

Dear Zack,

Since Austin Planning is recommending record setting density for many Rainey District developments, all during a short time frame, it is essential that Planning first do a traffic study to insure that the local street system can handle the traffic flow. You told me that such a study has not, and will not, be recommended by you for this project and that no Rainey Area district-wide traffic study has been performed for any of the several other record setting high rises now under construction within Rainey.

Any honestly-performed traffic study will show that the record density being green lighted in the Rainey District will result in record traffic flows, on short narrow roads within the Rainey District that were not designed to accommodate such densities. That will seriously degrade the quality of life for thousands of residents soon to live within the Rainey District, and create life threatening conditions for those who may depend on a reasonable flow of traffic to accomodate fire trucks and ambulances when they need to get through the ensnarled neighborhood in a timely fashion.

Please consider this notice to the City that they are legally negligent approving such record setting density while willingly ignoring traffic as a key impact and consideration. This negligence, clearly stated herein, should be available in the public record to any plaintiff's attorney representing anyone killed or harmed by the City's negligence. I know that there are dozens of people within Rainey that would be ready and keenly willing to testify against the City in any such lawsuit, as we been ignored for years regarding this exact point.

Please submit the attached commentary in to the public record. Please share this commentary with all members of the Planning Commission, or let me know how I may do so.

Thanks,

Brian Furlong
[redacted]

Begin forwarded message

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Date: April 9, 2023 at 11:18:35 PM CST
To: [redacted]



Subject: Which city is allowing the highest floor area ratio in the world? Austin!

Linked below is a summary of the maximum limit for Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for dense cities throughout the world. The Austin City Council and Austin Department of Planning seem to be intent setting a new density record, in our City in the Rainey District.

Austin is approving residential FAR of up to 32:1 in the Rainey District. In contrast, note that the New York City limit on residential FAR is 12:1, and 15:1 only if it is a commercial (non-residential) district. No place in the world is allowing up to 32 FAR except Austin.

Every city with very high FAR also has extensive mass transit to support the trip count that comes from the high density. Rainey has ZERO mass transit and the City has no plans to add any in or even near Rainey. The most dense areas of the densest cities have wide streets in an extensive network, whereas the Rainey District has few streets and they are short and narrow and hence not conducive to the throughput of heavy traffic.

Every city with very high FAR has a lot of retail in its most dense areas. Residents can buy their groceries and shop for goods and services by foot. That allows for non-car mobility. Rainey has almost no retail or service businesses and the City is not promoting that. Residents must leave the area by car to go to the grocery or to buy most things or receive most services, other than food and beverage establishments.

The City of Austin is blithely engaging in an experiment of max density in Rainey that is unlike anything else happening anywhere else in the world. At next Tuesday's Planning Commission meeting, the Planning Department staff plans to recommend the approval of 29:1 FAR for 60-62 East Avenue.

This experimentation in the smashing of world wide density norms is being done by the City without so much as a traffic study. The Rainey District, which must simultaneously deal with a complete rebuild of I-35 at its flank that will entangle the neighborhood's main points of car egress for years to come, will experience having its traffic routinely ground to a halt.

The City planner for 60-62 East Avenue told me that the City has not,

and will not, consider traffic when recommending that the City Council approve these record setting densities. He told me that the number one issue involved is that Austin desperately needs more housing. His concern about affordable housing is a sensible concern. Yet he says this need trumps traffic concerns to such a degree that there is no need to consider traffic planning at all. Apparently, if traffic concerns can only be addressed by setting limits on Rainey District density, that would reduce housing in the area and therefore he is against that. He refuses to recommend a traffic study to consider the implications of record setting density on local traffic flows.

Roadways have their capacity limits. It is a simple, irrefutable fact taught in any Planning 101 course. Every city planning department elsewhere in the world seems to be wise to that fact, which is why FAR limits are not set as high as 29:1 (60 East Ave.) or 32:1 (90 Rainey Street) anywhere other than in our fair city.

It is common sense that the Rainey District, if it is built out to record-setting density with no mass transit, an anemic road system and virtually no local retail and services to walk to, will therefore have record-setting traffic. The Planning Department and the City Council either don't understand this or simply don't care because they are single minded in generating more housing , with the sky being the limit.

It will be a train wreck.

Brian Furlong
[redacted]

https://geographydiscussions.quora.com/Which-country-has-the-highest-floor-area-ratio-in-the-world

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From: Brian Furlong
To: Lofton, Zack
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Hong Kong Limit Tops at 10x
Date: Monday, April 10, 2023 3:57:03 PM
Attachments: ch2.pdf

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

See page 18.

https://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/tech_doc/hkpsg/full/pdf/ch2.pdf

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From: Brian Furlong
To: Lofton, Zack
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FAR in Tokyo
Date: Monday, April 10, 2023 4:24:51 PM
Attachments: BCinJ_Part_E_1910.pdf

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

http://www.iibh.org/kijun/pdf/BCinJ_Part_E_1910.pdf

Further to my goal of documenting the highest FAR's allowed in the biggest cities in the world, note on page 49 of the attachment that allowable FAR in Tokyo caps out at 13:1, verses uncapped and up to 32:1 in practice in the Rainey District. Tokyo serves its densest districts with wide avenues, extensive mass transit, street level retail on virtually every major roadway and a series of downtown shopping malls that promote walkability. Not so Rainey.

Brian

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Lofton, Zack

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2023 5:27 PM
To: Lofton, Zack
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Sierra Club Promotes "Black Hole of Calcutta" Densities, Then Retreats

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Zack,

As a counter example to your recommendation from the Planning Department that the City of Austin approve 60-62 Rainey Street at a density of over 800 units per acre, please see the linked article that discusses how the Sierra Club has backed away from recommending urban densities of 500 housing units per acre. 500 units per acre was judged by the Sierra Club to be unworkable dense, as it exceeds the highest existing densities even in Calcutta. Note that the Sierra Club is a leading national proponent of putting high densities in CBDs, provided that those CBDs have adequate mass transit. That helps control for urban sprawl.

Yet even the Sierra Club understands that there are practical limits to approved density, even if one agrees (as I do) that sensibly dense CBD development is laudable. Calcutta level density will obviously not make us Calcutta, but it will make smooth traffic flows impossible and suffocate our quality of life in Rainey.

Brian Furlong

https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.demographia.com%2Fdb-sierraclub500a.htm&data=05%7C01%7Czack.lofton%40austintexas.gov%7C0eb74f858d2242435e4908db3a12c75c%7C5c5e19f6a6ab4b45b1d0be4608a9a67f%7C0%7C0%7C638167624568457663%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Vgh128XBTxnzfAMLsn9JXQEipGOOHZMnrmLtXj0Hwuo%3D&reserved=0
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Lofton, Zack

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2023 8:17 PM
To: Austin Planning Commission
Cc: Lofton, Zack; [redacted]
Subject: Austin's Rainey District to Set New National Record for Density

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Re: 60-62 East Avenue Approval at 29:1 FAR - April 11th Agenda Item 14

Begin forwarded message:

From: Brian Furlong
Sent: Wednesday, April 5, 2023 10:20 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Austin's Rainey District to Set New National Record for Density

I

Bridget,

In the link below is the US. government data on the most crowded census tracks in the United States. The Rainey District is about 1/10th of a square mile, and it will soon be more densely developed per square mile than the prior record holder for density, in New York City. Unlike in NYC, Rainey has zero mass transit, none is planned, and it has an endemic street system with short, discontinuous, narrow roadways built for single family houses rather than skyscrapers. Soon, the Rainey District will be boxed in a full scale redevelopment of I-35, which will further entangle local traffic.

The record setting density is occurring here because the City of Austin continues to approve FAR that is dramatically above the local zoning limits or any existing American urban development standards, on an "exception" basis by City Council vote. The Council has granted density exception after density exception after density exception, to the point that exceptionally dense development in Rainey has become a "right" expected by the local developers.

The neighbors here are shocked and alarmed. They understand that the City Council is blithely creating a dangerous condition, whereby fire trucks and ambulances will soon not be able to get through chocked local roads in time to save lives. The City Council and Planning departments do not require a traffic study, or in any regard consider traffic load, when by exception they repeatedly approve wildly dense FARs.

The neighbors' hopes now rest with our new Council Member, Zo Qadri, to put a stop to such irresponsible growth within the Rainey District before it is too late. We hope that he blocks the newest site development request, at 62 East Avenue, for development at 29:1 FAR. The City is being asked to approve 229 units on that 0.274 acre site, which amounts to 836 units per acre. Wild!

We are happy that you are planning to write a series of articles regarding this at The Statesman. You have proven yourself masterful at understanding and clearly explaining the implications of urban policy, so I am thrilled that you have taken an interest in this very important story.

Brian Furlong

[redacted]

https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/where-are-the-most-crowded-census-tracts-in-the-country-12331

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Lofton, Zack

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 10, 2023 8:20 PM
To: Austin Planning Commission
Cc: Lofton, Zack; [redacted]
Subject: Fwd: Sierra Club Promotes "Black Hole of Calcutta" Densities, Then Retreats

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Begin forwarded message:

From: Brian Furlong [redacted]
Date: April 10, 2023 at 4:27:32 PM CST
To: Zack Lofton <zack.lofton@austintexas.gov>
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Sierra Club Promotes "Black Hole of Calcutta" Densities, Then Retreats

Zack,

As a counter example to your recommendation from the Planning Department that the City of Austin approve 60-62 Rainey Street at a density of over 800 units per acre, please see the linked article that discusses how the Sierra Club has backed away from recommending urban densities of 500 housing units per acre. 500 units per acre was judged by the Sierra Club to be unworkable dense, as it exceeds the highest existing densities even in Calcutta. Note that the Sierra Club is a leading national proponent of putting high densities in CBDs, provided that those CBDs have adequate mass transit. That helps control for urban sprawl.

Yet even the Sierra Club understands that there are practical limits to approved density, even if one agrees (as I do) that sensibly dense CBD development is laudable. Calcutta level density will obviously not make us Calcutta, but it will make smooth traffic flows impossible and suffocate our quality of life in Rainey.

Brian Furlong

http://www.demographia.com/db-sierraclub500a.htm

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