



Austin Design Commission

To: City of Austin Staff

March 3, 2014

From: Austin Design Commission

Re: Review of W. 5th & West Project for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines

Meeting date: February 24, 2014

Applicant: Riverside Resources

The applicant is seeking a density bonus to raise the FAR from 8:1, past the allowable 15:1 to 20:1 FAR. The project is in a floodplain and is on a site sized approximately one quarter of a city block.

The applicant reported to have been working with the surrounding community groups to fine-tune the list of community benefits offered in connection with the density bonus sought. This list includes extending Great Streets improvements along both sides of West between 5th and 6th.

Positive attributes of the project address plazas and open space with the green roof deck and contributions to Shoal Creek. Additionally extension of Great Streets improvements is regarded as positive.

Concerns primarily center on the manner in which the building and the spaces within relate to the streetscape on both West 5th and West Avenue. The Working Group discussed possibilities of more engaging building materials and a kiosk type space at sidewalk elevation.

We recommend that the project, as presented, is not in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines. The floodplain seems to create unique difficulties for the project to address the streetscape as outlined in the Urban Design Guidelines. The project does not substantially meet guidelines of reinforcing pedestrian activity, enhancing the streetscape, and providing pedestrian oriented uses at street level.

The Commission requests that Riverside Resources modify the design's interface with the public streetscape in such a way that the design provide for infrastructure which would support public uses in the spirit of the Great Streets program so as to activate the pedestrian realm. Infrastructural improvements should include, but not be limited to, provision for uses that would accommodate and encourage an animated public realm in which elements such as: pedestrian-scaled lighting in the areas in front of the proposed development, along with seating, together with sales kiosks, be designed to be compatible with the architectural character of the project. It is the sense of the Design Commission that if these criteria are met, then substantial compliance could be achieved.

Respectfully,

Dean Almy, Chair
City of Austin Design Commission

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