

Date: Nov 12, 2023  
To: City of Austin Design Commission  
From: Planning & Urban Design Working Group  
Subject: Density Bonus Working Group review of 408 W. 18th St for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines  
Meeting date: Nov 8, 2023; 12:00 pm; Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting  
Applicant: Kate Kniejski- Drenner Group

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The project is located at 408 W. 18th St

The project includes mixed use of hotel (194 Keys), Residential 228 Units and restaurant space (unknown sq. ft.). The project also includes unknown number of parking levels.

The applicant is seeking a Density Bonus to raise the FAR from 5:1 to 8:1 resulting in a total project gross area of 339,088 gsf. The site is 42,396 sf with a current allowable building size of approx.. 211,980 sf based on the current allowable 5:1 FAR.

The total proposed building height is 200' (19 floors). The maximum height achievable under the Density Bonus program is 200'. This site is not affected by Capitol View Corridor height restrictions.

Per the Density Bonus Program ordinance, the applicant is required to meet the three gatekeeper requirements:

- Substantially comply with the City's Urban Design Guidelines
- Provide streetscape improvements along all public street frontages consistent with the Great Streets Program Standards
- Applicant must commit to a minimum of 2-star green building rating (Pursuing 3-star rating).

## **WORKING GROUP REVIEW OF PROJECT FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES**

**PS.1 Protect the pedestrian where the building meets the street:** Provide more information at both San Antonio and Guadalupe streets for the street plazas, at the parking garage entry and address how pedestrian will be protected walk across driveway

**PS.6 Enhance the streetscape:**

**PS.10 Provide protection from cars/promote curbside parking:** Protect cyclist at raised curb drop-off by preventing vehicles from encroaching into bike lanes

**PS.12 Provide generous street-level windows:** Generous windows provided however, large portions of windows along San Antonio and Guadalupe are within loading and back of house areas. Applicant is encouraged to provide activated uses behind these large windows

**PZ.5 Develop green roofs:** No green roofs proposed for this project

**PZ.7 Determine plaza function, size and activity-** Street plazas appear to meet great street standards, however no connection to the interior activated uses exists. Tables and chairs do not directly connect or correlate to any interior use

**PZ.10 Provide an appropriate amount of plaza seating:** Refer to the recommendations in the design guidelines to provide for a variety of seating locations which accommodate the needs of various sitters.

**PZ.14 Provide food service for plaza participants:** No direct food service or outdoor sitting area directly related to street plaza. Applicant is encouraged to provide more connectivity to first floor activated use

**PZ.15 Increase safety in plazas through wayfinding, lighting and visibility:** Provide more information on wayfinding that would direct public to upper level terraces. Access from hotel lobby to F&B for person's with disabilities not clear. Applicant encouraged to show route for clarity

**B.2 Provide multi-tenant, pedestrian-oriented development at the street:** Only small portions of the frontage along San Antonio and Guadalupe have access to tenant spaces. The chairs and tables along San Antonio do not have direct access to hotel lobby. Hotel lobby doesn't indicate any active uses to support the table/chairs. Applicant is encouraged to activate the frontage along San Antonio and Guadalupe as much as possible

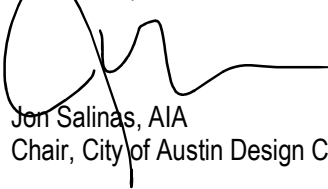
**B.5 Control on-site parking:** Refer to PS.10 comment above.

**The Density Bonus Working Group has determined that 408 W. 18th St may not be in substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines. It should be noted that the findings of this Working Group Memo are not reflective of the Design Commission and should not be construed as a final determination. Not all categories have equal weight from a points determination perspective. Substantial Compliance is a judgement call based upon the overall contribution to the experience of the public. Bringing partial points to full compliance 4 and any out of compliance items to full compliance increases the likelihood of support from the full Design Commission**

**WORKING GROUP COMMENTS (Comments from Specific Working Group Members):**

The Working Group appreciates this opportunity to preliminarily review and comment on this project and we look forward to a continued collaborative process while moving this project forward.

Respectfully,



Jon Salinas, AIA  
Chair, City of Austin Design Commission



City of Austin

**Design Commission**

**Project Review Application**

# City of Austin

## Design Commission

### Project Review Application

The [Design Commission](#) provides advisory recommendations to the City Council to assist in developing public policy and to promote excellence in the design and development of the urban environment. The Design Commission reviews three types of projects:

1. **City projects** (see page 3 for process)

The Commission reviews all municipal buildings and associated site plans to ensure they demonstrate compliance with city design and sustainability standards ([Council Resolution No. 20071129-046](#)), including those seeking [Subchapter E Design Standards Alternative Equivalent Compliance](#) (AEC) ([Council Resolution No. 20100923-086](#)).

2. **Density Bonus projects** (see page 4 for process)

The Commission reviews density bonus projects for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin in accordance with the Gatekeeper requirements of [LDC 25-2-586](#) for the Downtown Density Bonus Program.

3. **Advisory Recommendations for Private projects** (see page 3 for process)

The Commission will consider Project Review Applications from private projects during its regularly scheduled monthly public meetings and may issue an advisory recommendation in the form of a Project Review Letter to the Applicant.



Photo courtesy of Jorge E. Rousselin

This Project Review Application must be submitted before your project can be presented to the Design Commission for their review. Design Commission requests project be presented in their Conceptual/Schematic Design phase. This application primarily addresses inhabited buildings and structures and their effect on the public realm; please refer to Appendix A for infrastructure type projects.

The Commission's review of projects is based on the planning/design principles in the [Urban Design Guidelines](#) for Austin. Ensure that all applicable principles are addressed in the application questions and in your presentation.

The Design Commission supports the vision and principles of [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#), especially those that affect the urban environment and fabric. All projects should consider this vision and principles, many of which are similar to the Urban Design Guidelines. Refer to Appendix C for the most pertinent sections of Imagine Austin.

The Design Commission expects the applicant's design team to present their project with those most knowledgeable and encourages the inclusion of sub-consultants at the presentation, when deemed necessary.

## EXHIBITS TO PRESENT

1. Completed Project Review Application (p.1-6)
2. Existing zoning classification, adjacent zoning & uses, future land use map classification, topography
3. Vicinity plan, including public transportation and connectivity on-site and within quarter mile
4. Site plan and landscape plan
5. Ground level, basement plan, and typical floor plan
6. Elevations and/or 3d views
7. Any letters of support or findings by other commissions
8. Staff reports, if any
9. Records of public participation

# PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS: CITY PROJECTS

The Design Commission reviews all municipal buildings and associated site development projects to ensure they demonstrate compliance with city design and sustainability standards ([Council Resolution No. 20071129-046](#)), including those seeking [Subchapter E Design Standards Alternative Equivalent Compliance \(AEC\)](#) ([Council Resolution No. 20100923-086](#)).

1. Applicants are encouraged to meet with the Office of the City Architect prior to submitting a Project Review Application, especially if seeking Alternative Equivalent Compliance (AEC) under Subchapter E Design Standards. (See Staff Contacts on page 5.)
2. Applicant submits completed Project Review Application, including Exhibits, to Commission Liaisons a minimum of (10) Business days prior to the Design Commission meeting. (See [Meeting Schedule](#) and "Exhibits to Present" on page 1)
3. Commission Liaisons review Project Review Application for completeness. Once the Application is deemed complete, the project will be added to the agenda. (Agendas are posted online 72 hours prior to the meeting.)
4. Commission Liaisons post backup, including complete Project Review Application and letters/decisions from other Boards and Commissions, the Thursday before the meeting. (See [Meeting Documents](#) website.)
5. Design Commission meets and hears a 15 minute presentation by the Owner/Applicant/Architect. The Commission asks questions and makes recommendations. At the end of the project review, the Design Commission may rely on the recommendations recorded in their meeting minutes or submit a Project Review Letter to City Staff.
6. Commission Liaisons will forward approved meeting minutes or Project Review Letters to applicable Staff.



Photo courtesy of Jorge E. Rousselin

# PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS: DENSITY BONUS PROJECTS

The Design Commission reviews density bonus projects for substantial compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin in accordance with the Gatekeeper requirements of [LDC 25-2-586](#) for the Downtown Density Bonus Program.

- 1. Six weeks prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Applicant will contact Density Bonus Staff with intent to schedule project on the next Design Commission agenda.
  - a. Density Bonus Staff will provide application and submittal documentation to Applicant and notify Commission Liaisons.
- 2. Five weeks prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Density Bonus Staff will contact Chair of Working Group to schedule a meeting, copying Commission Liaisons.
- 3. By the end of the fourth week (24 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** The Applicant will submit all completed application requirements to Density Bonus Staff.
- 4. By the end of the third week (17 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Design Commission Working Group will meet to review Project Review Application and evaluate Applicant's presentation detailing compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.
  - a. Working Group will provide Applicant comments and suggestions on improving presentation and issue a recommendation to the Design Commission on achieving compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.
- 5. By the end of the second week (10 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Chair of the Working Group will send the Density Bonus and Commission Liaisons the Working Group's written recommendation to the Design Commission containing specific feedback given to the Applicant and, if lacking, detailing items to address to achieve compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin.
- 6. One week (7 calendar days) prior to the target Design Commission meeting:** Once the Density Bonus Liaison receives the revised project submittal from the Applicant and the Commission Liaison receive the written recommendation from the Working Group Chair, the Commission Liaison will place project on Design Commission agenda for discussion and action.
- 7. Design Commission meeting:** At the meeting, Design Commission will review the project for compliance with the Urban Design Guidelines for Austin based on Working Group recommendations and issue a recommendation detailing to Staff items needed to be addressed in order to achieve substantial compliance.
- 8. Within one week after Design Commission meeting:** The Chair will issue a formal written recommendation based on the action taken by the by the Commission detailing to Staff items needed to be addressed in order to achieve compliance.

# PROJECT REVIEW PROCESS: DENSITY BONUS PROJECTS





# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

## ***Incomplete Applications***

Should Commission Liaisons determine that the Project Review Application is incomplete, the Application shall be returned to the Applicant and the project will not be posted on the agenda for consideration by the Commission.

**Submissions without the required Adobe PDF electronic file shall be deemed incomplete.**

## ***Public Notice***

Posting of public notices on the proposed project site or giving notice to adjacent property owners is not required by the enabling ordinance of the Design Commission. The posted agenda for the Design Commission meetings serves to inform the public of subjects considered by the Commission. The Applicant shall note that the concomitant regulatory procedures by other boards and commissions have legal public notice requirements. Actions taken by the Austin Design Commission shall be in respect of and in compliance with such local ordinances and project review procedures.

## ***Limits on Resubmissions***

Applicants are limited to two (2) resubmissions per design phase (as described herein) and shall notify Commission Staff of the intent and desire to resubmit project(s) for review within seven (7) days of the action vote by the Commission. The Commission shall consider such resubmissions prior to issuing the Project Review Letter.

## ***Rebuttal of Project Review Letter***

Since the Commission issues advisory recommendations only, there is no instance for appeals to the Commission. Rebuttals of such advisory recommendations may be made by the Applicant to the applicable city department, planning commission, or City Council in accordance with applicable standard processes and procedures.

# STAFF CONTACTS

By appointment, City Staff is available for consultation on submittal requirements. To schedule a pre-submission conference or for information on any of the above submittal requirements, please contact:

**City Of Austin, Street Jones Building, 1000 E 11th St, Austin, TX 78702**

**Executive Liason:** Jorge E. Rousselin [jorge.rousselin@austintexas.gov](mailto:jorge.rousselin@austintexas.gov) (512) 974-2975

**Staff Liason:** Nicole Corona [nicole.corona@austintexas.gov](mailto:nicole.corona@austintexas.gov) (512) 974-3146

**Density Bonus Program Staff:** Jorge E. Rousselin [jorge.rousselin@austintexas.gov](mailto:jorge.rousselin@austintexas.gov) (512) 974-2975

# A. PROJECT INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME

PROJECT TYPE

**Infrastructure**

**Private project**

**City building & site**

**Density Bonus**

**Other**

PROJECT LOCATION/ADDRESS

PROJECT LOCATION/ADDRESS

APPLICANT

PROPERTY OWNER

APPLICANT MAILING ADDRESS

PROPERTY OWNER MAILING ADDRESS

APPLICANT TELEPHONE NUMBER

PROPERTY OWNER TELEPHONE NUMBER

PROJECT START DATE

PROJECT COMPLETION DATE

APPLICANT'S ARCHITECT

APPLICANT'S ENGINEER

1. Indicate if proposed Project is required by City Ordinance to be reviewed by the Design Commission.

2. Describe the recommendation that you are requesting from the Design Commission.

3. Current Design Phase of Project (Design Commission prefers to see projects right after approved conceptual, schematic, design development).

4. Is this Project subject to Site Plan and/or Zoning application approvals? Will it be presented to Planning Commission and/or City Council? If so, when?

5. Does this Project comply with Land Development Code Subchapter E? List specifically any Alternative Equivalent Compliance request if any. Please refer to website for [Alternate Equivalent Compliance \(AEC\)](#) requirements.

## B. PROJECT BACKGROUND

6. Provide project background including goals, scope, building/planning type, and schedule. Broadly address each of the "Shared Values for Urban Areas" that are listed on Page 6 of the Urban Design Guidelines.

7. Has this project conducted community/stakeholder outreach? If so, please provide documentation to demonstrate community/stakeholder support of this project.

8. Is this project submitting for the Downtown Density Bonus Program? If so, please provide a completed Downtown Density Bonus Application.

9. Has the project been reviewed by COA Department (i.e. DAC) Staff? If so, please describe and cite any relevant comments or feedback that the Commission should be aware of.

10. Are there any limitations to compliance or planning principles due to the specific requirements of this project that the Commission should be aware of?

## C. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CONTEXT

11. Identify connectivity to public transportation including, bicycle and pedestrian routes and/or multi-modal transportation. Does the project comply with ADA requirements? Provide a site context map and attach additional pages as needed.

12. Identify and describe any existing features that are required to be preserved and/or protected such as heritage trees, creeks or streams, endangered species (flora and/or fauna)? Attach additional site diagrams as needed.

13. Is this project within any City of Austin planning district, master plan, neighborhood plan, regulatory district, overlay, etc.? If so, please illustrate how this project conforms to the respective plan. Attach additional pages as needed. (See below for requirements.)

14. List any project program and/or site constraints that should be considered.

## D. RELATIONSHIP TO PUBLIC REALM

Public realm is defined as any publically owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities. The quality of our public realm is vital if we are to be successful in creating environments that people want to live and work in.

16. The shared values outlined in the Urban Design Guidelines include Human Character, Density, Sustainability, Diversity, Economic Vitality, Civic Art, A Sense of Time, Unique Character, Authenticity, Safety and Connection to the Outdoors. How is the project addressing these unique community characteristics? Is the project developing any public amenities for urban continuity and vital place making?

16. Does this project encourage street level activity to engage and respond to functional needs such as shade, rest areas, multi-modal transportation storage and paths?

17. How will the project be a good neighbor to adjacent properties? For example, describe the treatment of the transition area between properties, i.e. fence, landscape improvements, etc.

## E. ENVIRONMENTAL / SUSTAINABLE ISSUES

The Austin Urban Design Guidelines set a goal that, "All development should take into consideration the need to conserve energy and resources. It should also strive for a small carbon footprint."

18. Please list any significant components of the project that contribute to meeting this goal. If the project has been designed to accommodate future inclusion of such components (for example, by being built "solar ready") please list them.

19. If the project is being designed to meet any sustainability/environmental standards or certifications (for example, LEED Silver), please list them here and attach relevant checklists or similar documents that demonstrate how the standard or certification will be achieved.

20. If the project contains other significant sustainability components not included above that the Commission should note, please list them here.

# APPENDIX A

## IMAGINE AUSTIN RELATED POLICIES

### Land Use and Transportation Building Block

LUT P30: Protect and enhance the unique qualities of Austin’s treasured public spaces and places such as parks, plazas, and streetscapes; and, where needed, enrich those areas lacking distinctive visual character or where the character has faded.

LUT 31: Define the community’s goals for new public and private development using principles and design guidelines that capture the distinctive local character of Austin.

LUT P35: Infuse public art into Austin’s urban fabric in streetscapes along roadways and in such places as parks, plazas, and other public gathering places.

LUT P41: Protect historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the City.

LUT P43: Continue to protect and enhance important view corridors such as those of the Texas State Capitol District, Lady Bird Lake, and other public waterways

LUT P44: Preserve and protect historic parks and recreation areas.



## **Economy Building Block**

E P6: Support up-to-date infrastructure, flexible policies, and programs, and adaptive reuse of buildings, so that local, small, and creative businesses thrive and innovate.

## **Conservation and Environment Policies Building Block**

CE P3: Expand the City's green infrastructure network to include such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, and agricultural lands.

CE P11: Integrate development with the natural environment through green building and site planning practices such as tree preservation and reduced impervious cover and regulations. Ensure new development provides necessary and adequate infrastructure improvements.

## **City Facilities and Services Building Block**

CFS P14: Integrate erosion, flood, and water quality control measures into all City of Austin capital improvement projects.

CFS P24: Increase the share of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and biomass, used by Austin Energy to generate electricity, including infrastructure for on-site sources throughout the City.

CFS P29: Increase the use of joint or shared facilities between public safety and other service providers, when possible, to provide residents with efficient services, reduce costs, and maintain public safety infrastructure.

CFS P35: Distribute public buildings where neighborhood services are located and other accessible locations throughout the City.

CFS P36: Improve multimodal public transportation access to the City's public buildings and facilities, including the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

CFS P37: Integrate public buildings and facilities into active, walkable, mixed use neighborhoods and complete, healthy communities.

CFS P38: Reduce energy consumption and waste generation in all public buildings to meet the City's greenhouse gas reduction and zero waste goals.

CFS P39: Develop public buildings and facilities that create healthy work environments and educate the public about energy-efficient, sustainable building, and greening best practices.

CFS P44: Feature superior design in parks and recreational facilities and include opportunities for public art and sustainable design solutions.

## **Society Building Block**

S P14: Locate emergency services within close proximity to all neighborhoods and continue to improve community outreach and relationships between police and neighbors

S P25: Increase sidewalks and bicycle lanes in neighborhoods to create safer routes to schools, parks, and transit stops.

## **Creativity Building Block**

C P16: Increase the availability of significant public art to designate districts and/or their entrances and to assist visitors in navigating the area.

C P17: Define Austin's sense of place through high standards for architecture and urban design, public art, public spaces and parks, and arts education.