



**SOUTH CENTRAL WATERFRONT ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION
APRIL 15, 2024
AGENDA ITEM #4**

Date: April 15, 2024

Subject: Proposed South Central Waterfront Combining District and Density Bonus Program

Motioned By: Board Member Cohen

Seconded By: Chair Stephenson

Recommendation:

The SCWAB recommends that City Council reject the Planning Commission's approved amendment on April 3rd to use the Downtown Density Bonus Program as the regulatory framework for the South Central Waterfront District.

Rationale.

In this amendment, the Planning Commission seeks to replace the entire SCW Combining District and Density Bonus Program with the Downtown Density Bonus Program, exclusive of the more stringent Rainey District requirements. In doing so, the following salient features of the vision are lost:

- .1 Under this amendment, superior environmental requirements, including many site-specific constraints unique to the South Central Waterfront District, are at risk. Some examples of these crucial requirements include enhanced watershed protection in the Ladybird Lake and East Bouldin Creek critical water quality zones, on-site reclaimed water reuse, rain garden infrastructure, and integrated pest management.
- .2 All requirements for on-site benefits are removed and replaced with open-ended fee-in-lieu contributions that have no locational constraints and limited use constraints. These changes fundamentally end the capacity for any District-wide vision.
- .3 Site-specific massing constraints and height limits that provide a transition from CBD to lower density residential zones are lost.
- .4 Site-specific building footprint constraints designed to create a dense grid in the presence of multi-acre lots are lost, hurting walkability and pedestrian engagement across the entire District.

.5 Transit-supportive requirements designed to enhance Project Connect's most important hub at the Waterfront Station are lost.

.6 All requirements for on-site affordable housing would be eliminated and critical funding for District Parkland and Infrastructure improvement are lost.

.7 The four large open spaces promised in the Vision Framework Plan would be impossible to achieve.

In addition to the technical requirement changes that act to the detriment to the region and long-term vision, there is another problem: the loss of public trust.

The choice to replace the work product of thousands of hours of staff and volunteer effort guided by a long public engagement process is disrespectful to the constituents the City Council is meant to represent. Many on the Council often talk about the importance of transparency and not simply bowing to developer interests. This amendment was justified as being preferred by the property owners. The property owners had representatives present at the meeting who were asked to speak in support and who did so eagerly. This amendment was not shared in advance or properly noticed, and in doing so, the public was denied the opportunity to speak for their interests.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, we strongly recommend that the City Council reject using the existing Downtown Density Bonus Program as the baseline for the South Central Waterfront and instead uses the April 3 staff recommended SCW Combining District and Density Bonus Program as the starting point for all amendments.

Vote:

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: _____

Chair Jim Stephenson