HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
Applications for Permits in National Register Historic Districts
December 2, 2026
HR-2026-146981
Congress Avenue National Register Historic District
408 Congress Avenue

Proposal

Construction of a mixed-use building at 400, 404 1/2, and 408 Congress and 100 W. 4th Streets.

Project Specifications

The proposed tower is 71 stories and 993 feet in height. The podium will be a combination of milled stone veneer pilasters with clear glazing set in an aluminum mullion system with dark metal accents. The secondary material, glass-reinforced concrete (GFRC), is a composite of glass fibers embedded in a concrete matrix, usually comprising Portland cement and fine aggregate along with plasticizers and curing agents. On the first five floors, this material forms organic-inspired pilasters between full- and double-height glazing, creating a series of irregular bays which become more gridlike at upper floors. A curved canopy with decorative screening shelters similar rounded accents and openings at each main entry along 4th Street, with a smaller canopy shading the secondary entrance on Congress Avenue.

Design Standards

The City of Austin's Historic Design Standards (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects in National Register districts. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

1. Location
1.1 Set back a new building from the street: a. In line with at least one adjacent historic building; or b. The median setback of all historic buildings on the same blockface.
The proposed building is set back in line with the historic landmark at 410 Congress Avenue.

1.2 Locate a new building to maintain the rhythm of contributing buildings on the street.
The proposed building encompasses the entire corner of the block, aligned with the contributing buildings along Congress.

1.3 Orient a new building to be consistent with the predominant orientation of contributing buildings on the same block.
While the proposed building is not oriented with its primary façade facing Congress Avenue, like the contributing buildings on the block, its secondary entrance is more aligned with the scale of the nearby contributing buildings' entrances.

2. Scale, Massing, and Height
2.1 Design the massing of new buildings to reflect the massing of nearby historic buildings. Simple massing is typically appropriate.
The proposed massing does not reflect nearby historic buildings. Though it is stepped back at the sixth floor, its strong verticality and oversized bays read as monolithic next to the adjacent buildings.

2.2 Match floor-to-floor heights as closely as possible with at least one adjacent historic building, if extant.
The proposed building's floor-to-floor heights do not match those of the adjacent landmark at 410 Congress Ave.

2.3 Visually divide wider buildings into vertical bays that reflect typical widths of historic buildings on adjacent properties or the same block.
The vertical bays of the building are somewhat reflective of typical widths of historic buildings on the same block at the first and second floors on the Congress Avenue façade, though the irregularity of the third through fifth floors and the varying heights of the "melting" verticals do not echo the rhythm of the historic streetscape.

2.4 For wider and taller buildings, make the lower floors (the base of the building) equal to the height of the adjacent historic building. Use vertical and horizontal articulation design techniques such as shifts in wall planes and differentiating materials to reduce a building's apparent scale and massing.
See 2.1. The building's base does not match the height of the adjacent historic building. Materials remain the same throughout the building. No shifts in wall planes, save the pilasters, are proposed for the lower floors of the Congress Avenue façade.

2.5 In low-rise commercial districts, use step-downs in building height, wall-plane offsets, and other variations in building massing to provide a visual transition when the height of new construction exceeds that of adjacent contributing buildings by more than one story.
See 2.1 and 2.4.

3. Design and Style
3.1 Design new buildings to be compatible with the character of the historic district and/or historic landmark in terms of proportions, patterns, materials, and architectural features. 3.2 Design new buildings to be differentiated from historic buildings. Do not use a replica style to create a false sense of history. 3.3 No particular architectural style is required.
The proposed building is sufficiently differentiated from nearby historic buildings, as its overall design evokes a lit candle, with a slim profile for its height, flowing verticals, and gentle taper toward a warm-toned glass cap. It appears to invoke some elements of Art Nouveau/Art Deco eclecticism that do not appear on historic buildings in its immediate context, though present in subtler decorative detailing at 522 Congress (Scarbrough Building), 106 E. 6th St (Littlefield Building), and 905 Congress (Mutual Building). The exaggerated organic shapes and irregular placement of the podium-level pilasters contrast with the Romanesque and Classical Revival influences of the three landmark buildings on the same block, though upper floors appear more rhythmic.

4. Materials
4.1 Use building materials that are compatible with the historic district and the style of the building.
The proposed materials appear compatible, though the organic pilaster detailing is not.

4.2 Use materials to visually divide larger buildings into modules that reflect typical widths of historic buildings on adjacent properties or the same block.
See 2.3.

4.3 Glass on the first floor must be transparent.
The building's glass is transparent on lower floors and reflective on upper residential floors.

5. Storefronts
5.1 Prioritize the pedestrian experience at the base of commercial buildings (lower floors) through large windows, prominent entrances, and pedestrian-scale detailing.
The proposed building's main entrance is on 4th Street, which features a prominent entrance. The Congress Avenue entrance is not prominent in comparison. There are many large windows. The Congress façade as a whole is not pedestrian scale.

5.2 Design storefronts to be a similar width to storefronts on nearby historic buildings.
See 2.3 and 4.2.

6. Parking Structures
No above-ground parking structure is proposed.

Summary
The project mostly does not meet the applicable standards.

Department Comments

On November 5, 2025 the Historic Landmark Commission approved the application for demolition of the existing building. See https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=464719.

The application first appears on the December 2, 2026 agenda of the Historic Landmark Commission. The 75-day

timeline for issuing advisory comments elapses on February 15, 2027.

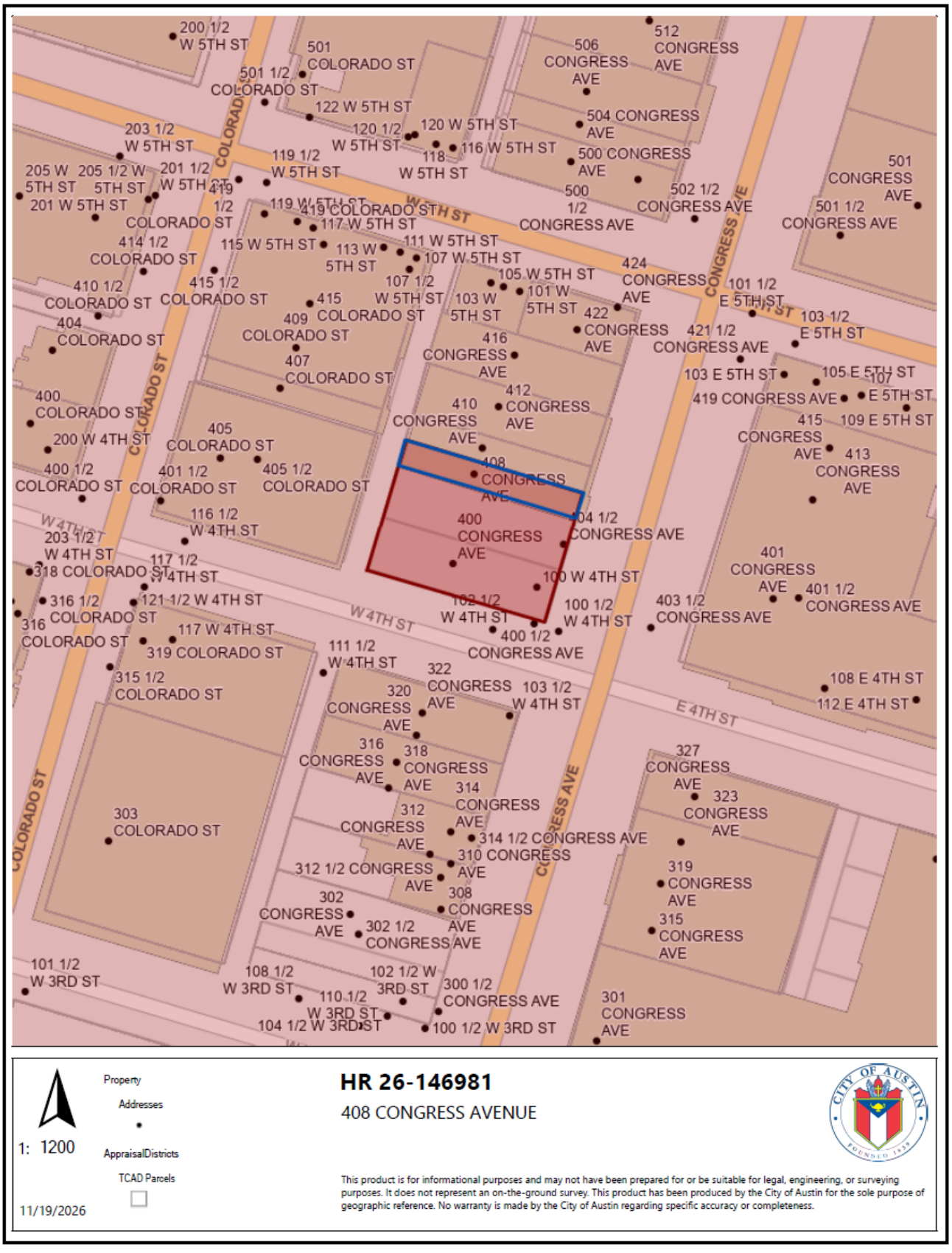
Committee Feedback

The Architectural Review Committee issued comments on November 18, 2026.

Staff Recommendation

Comment on plans for new construction and release the application, encouraging the applicant to reduce or articulate floor-to-floor heights at the podium level to be more compatible with both adjacent historic landmarks and pedestrian scaling, and to use lower relief on decorative pilasters at lower floors.

Location Map



Property Information

Photos

Photo source, year

Occupancy History
City Directory Research, [date]

1959	[Name, owner or renter, occupation]
1955	Address not listed
1952	
1949	
1947	
1944	
1941	
1939	
1935	
1932	
1929	
1927	
1924	
1922	
1920	
1918	
1916	
1914	
1912	
1909	
1906	

Historical Information

Source, date (copy from ProQuest, when applicable)

Permits

Permit type and description, year