



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Rosie Truelove, Director, Housing Department *RT*  
Lauren Middleton-Pratt, Director, Planning Department *lmp*

**DATE:** September 5, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Findings and Recommendations for Implementing Ordinance No. 20221201-056  
Regarding Compatibility Regulations

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City Council approved [Ordinance No. 20221201-056](#) in December of 2022, implementing changes to compatibility and parking regulations along corridors and directing staff to complete an analysis of citywide compatibility regulations to assess the impact of current compatibility standards and potential changes to those standards, especially in high opportunity areas and to help meet Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint (Blueprint) goals. On May 5, 2023, the Housing Department and the Planning Department released [a joint memo](#) summarizing the methodology for performing the analysis. The attached document provides the results of the analysis and staff's recommendations for possible modifications to compatibility standards.

Staff conducted a quantitative housing capacity analysis to estimate the unit capacity lost due to compatibility restrictions. A housing capacity analysis is a simplistic projection of how many housing units could be built in a community if every property were to develop or redevelop under existing zoning regulations. Due to the complexity of zoning regulations, broad assumptions are always necessary to perform a citywide capacity analysis, which likely result in an overestimate of potential units. However, the primary purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate the impact of height variations between compatibility buffers and zoning districts while holding other factors steady. The housing capacity analysis demonstrates the relative impact of the compatibility regulations at different buffer distances, which helps decision makers understand the distances that have the most significant impacts on zoning capacity.

Under this analysis, staff found that compatibility standards significantly restrict the development capacity for high-density residential housing throughout Austin. Specifically, the analysis estimates that compatibility standards limit the City's potential capacity for high-density residential housing by approximately 72,000 units. When commercial properties that can now take advantage of the Residential in Commercial density bonus program are included in the analysis, expanding the area included, potential capacity is reduced by approximately 135,000 units citywide. Nearly two thirds of the estimated unit capacity lost due to compatibility falls within 100 feet of a triggering property, where restrictions on height are most severe.

Compatibility restrictions were found to impact a smaller number of potential units in areas with less existing capacity for high-density residential housing. The estimated unit capacity limited by compatibility in high opportunity areas represents just 23% of the total citywide. The analysis also showed that the potential capacity loss is greater in areas of displacement risk than in areas not at risk of displacement. This is likely because most high-density residential properties in the city are in displacement risk areas. Therefore, any modifications to compatibility must carefully consider potential displacement impacts.

To better understand how compatibility impacts the development of housing, staff conducted a survey of the housing development community in Austin. Responses indicated that compatibility standards are a substantial constraint that delays and limits housing production. Most respondents said that compatibility

typically caused moderate to long delays in their projects while 98% said that the restrictions had caused them to abandon potential projects. Developers suggested a variety of different policy changes, from reducing compatibility standards to creating transition zones.

It is important to acknowledge that the stakeholder engagement for this study focused on members of the development community to better understand the ways this regulation impacts the development process and a project's potential unit yield. However, moving forward with potential code amendments, staff recommends broader community engagement and involving a wider range of stakeholders in the decision-making process.

As initiated by [Ordinance No. 20221201-056](#), the purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of compatibility regulations on housing unit capacity and recommend potential changes to compatibility to help meet Blueprint goals. On June 8, 2023, City Council adopted [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#), which proposes significant modifications to citywide compatibility standards. Based on Council direction and the findings from this analysis, staff recommends the following:

1. **End compatibility at 75 feet:** end compatibility height limitations at 75 feet from a triggering property to increase housing capacity in line with Blueprint goals and align with peer cities.
2. **Further reduce compatibility for on-site affordable housing:** allow further reductions to compatibility for projects participating in density bonus programs that require on-site affordable housing, in order to unlock additional unit capacity and contribute to affordable housing goals.
3. **Remove compatibility requirements from SF-6, MF-1, MF-2, and MF-3:** exempt these zones from compatibility requirements to encourage gentle density and blend housing types with similar bulk and height requirements, in line with the Blueprint's goals to encourage more missing middle housing.
4. **Further refine heights in the compatibility buffer:** build off this analysis to test different height scenarios within the compatibility buffer informed by reviewing peer cities and gathering additional public input.
5. **Conduct additional stakeholder engagement:** conduct broader stakeholder engagement to gather feedback on proposed modifications and additional input on other policy objectives important to stakeholders.
6. **Analyze potential impacts and preservation strategies for existing multi-family housing:** identify properties with older multi-family housing that may be susceptible to increased development pressure from relaxing compatibility standards and identify strategies to preserve and replace these units.
7. **Explore programs and partnerships that bring back displaced communities:** explore partnerships and programs to leverage the additional housing in displacement risk areas created by relaxed compatibility standards and help displaced communities re-establish roots.
8. **Minimize potential displacement impacts on vulnerable populations:** continue to prioritize investments such as rental assistance, legal services, and education on fair housing and tenant rights to stabilize existing residents vulnerable to displacement.
9. **Balance the impacts of other regulations on housing capacity:** balance the impacts of other existing regulations on housing capacity and engage the community in holistic discussions on zoning, urban design, and landscaping to establish transitions between development intensities.

If you have any questions, please contact Rosie Truelove at 512-974-3064 or [rosie.truelove@austintexas.gov](mailto:rosie.truelove@austintexas.gov) or Lauren Middleton-Pratt at 512-974-1827 or [lauren.middleton-pratt@austintexas.gov](mailto:lauren.middleton-pratt@austintexas.gov).

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager  
Veronica Briseño, Assistant City Manager

Attachment

## Compatibility Regulations Analysis

The purpose of the City of Austin's compatibility standards is to ensure that there is a transition between new, potentially taller development and less tall and less dense residential development. The standards include specific requirements for building height, setbacks, screening, and design. These standards may be modified by the City Council to respond to changing needs and conditions within the city.

[Resolution No. 20220609-066](#), adopted by City Council in June 2022, called for changes to Austin's compatibility regulations on corridors to help address the worsening affordability crisis. The resolution states that the citywide compatibility regulations adopted in the 1980s, which limit the height of developments within 540 feet of single-family properties, were "significantly more restrictive compared to cities with similar regulations." The resolution also states that "moderate changes to compatibility and parking regulations on corridors would increase affordable and market-rate housing supply and support the City's transit investments." When City Council adopted some modifications to compatibility standards along specific corridors in December 2022 through [Ordinance No. 20221201-056](#), they directed staff to develop an analysis of citywide compatibility regulations to assess the impact of current compatibility standards and identify potential changes to those standards, especially in high opportunity areas and to help meet Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint (Blueprint) goals.

The Blueprint establishes goals for affordable housing units both citywide and in each Council district, including 60,000 new affordable housing units in 10 years, 75,000 new moderate and high-income housing units in 10 years, housing in high opportunity areas, and accommodating 25% of affordable housing units within a ¼ mile of transit stops. This document presents findings on compatibility's impact on housing capacity and the development process, along with recommendations for potential changes to compatibility to support Blueprint goals.

This document is organized into five sections:

- [Overview of Compatibility Standards](#): a short description of the City's current compatibility standards
- [Quantitative Analysis](#): quantitative assessment measuring the footprint of the area impacted by compatibility regulations and the estimated impact on housing capacity
- [Qualitative Analysis](#): qualitative assessment measured by a survey of applicants who have submitted a Density Bonus Application, Multifamily Site Plan, or Multifamily Building Permit to the City of Austin within the last five years
- [Recommendations](#): list of potential modifications to compatibility and areas to explore further based on findings
- [Appendix](#): detailed methodology and data sources

## Overview of Compatibility Standards

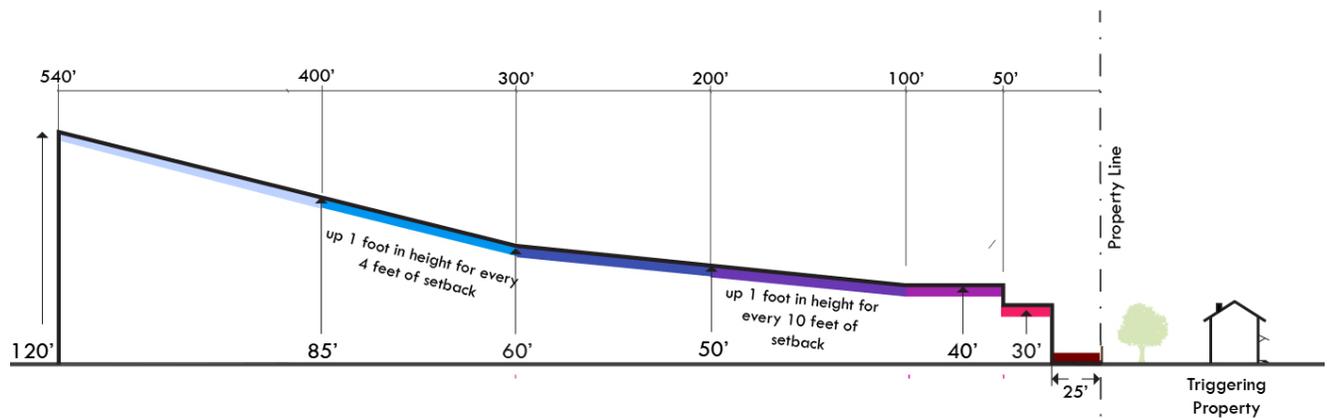
Compatibility standards can be found in [Title 25, Chapter 2, Subchapter C, – Article 10. Compatibility Standards](#). The City of Austin's compatibility standards generally apply to sites that are within 540 feet (or nearly two blocks) of the property line of an urban family residence (SF-5) or more restrictive zoning district (known as Triggering Properties). Compatibility standards also apply when a site is adjacent to a lot on which a use permitted in an SF-5 or more restrictive zoning district is located.

Current compatibility standards include:

- Height and Setback Limitations
- Scale and Clustering Requirements
- Screening Requirements

The height and setback requirements of the citywide compatibility standards are shown in Figure 1 below. Map 1 on the next page shows an area of the city with triggering properties next to commercial and high-density residential properties, along with the extent of compatibility standards.

*Note: Compatibility height standards are applied in addition to any restrictions that apply to a site based on its zoning district. Depending on the zoning of the site, actual allowed heights could be lower than those shown on the diagram below. For example, most commercial zoning has a 60- or 65-foot height limit.*



**Figure 1** Compatibility Standards

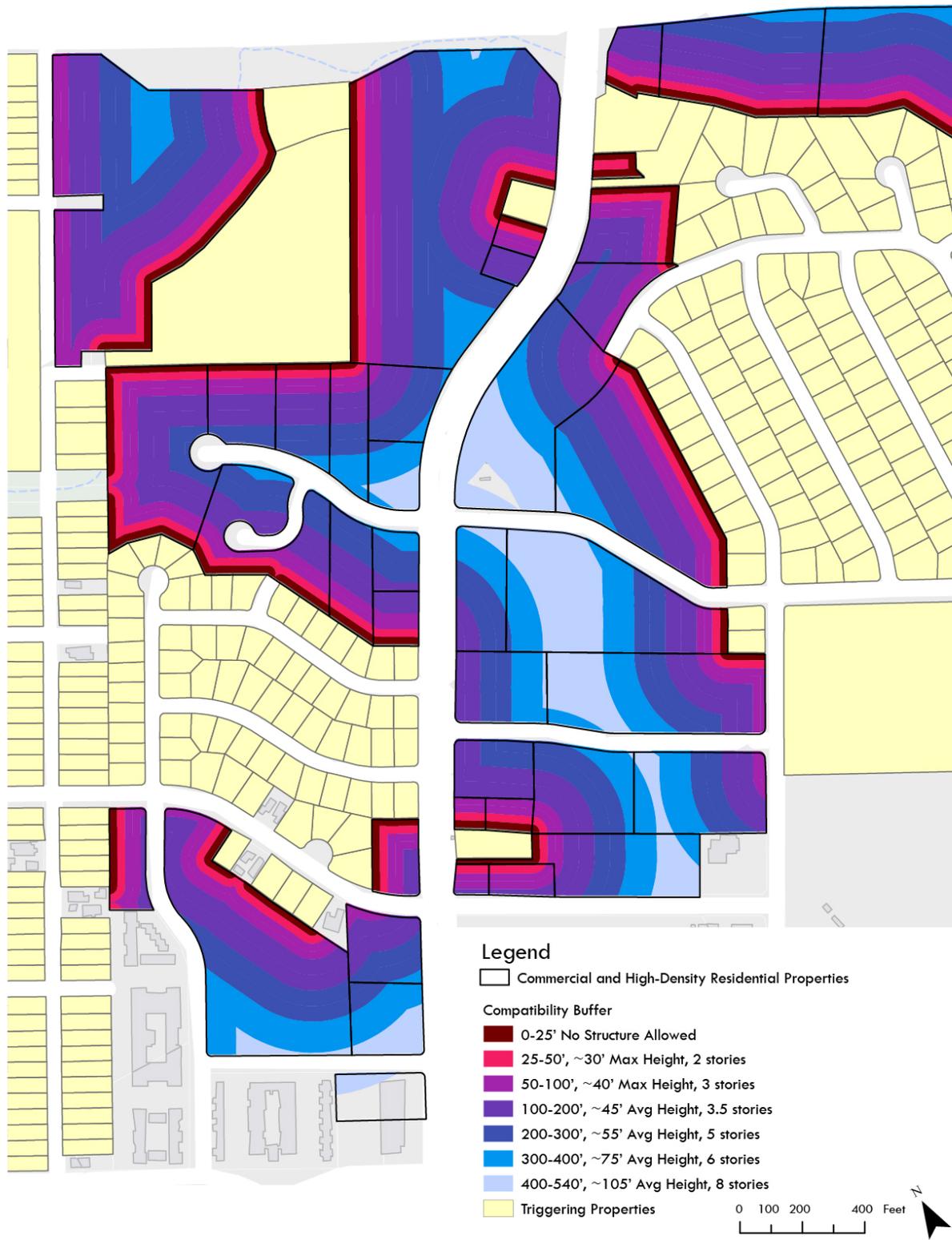


Figure 2 Prototypical Map of Compatibility Standards

## Quantitative Analysis

Staff conducted a quantitative analysis to estimate the total land area impacted by compatibility, the potential unit capacity lost due to compatibility restrictions, and the potential impacts to Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint goals, existing density bonus programs, displacement risk areas, high amenity areas, and housing supply near existing and planned transit investments. A detailed methodology and list of data sources used for this analysis is provided in the [Appendix](#).

### Total Land Area Impacted by Compatibility

To begin the analysis, staff estimated the total acreage of all properties zoned commercial and high-density residential subject to citywide compatibility standards. The following chart shows the acreage of commercial and high-density residential properties in the compatibility buffer at various distances, compared to the acreage of commercial and high-density residential properties citywide.

Total Sq. Miles of Commercial & High-Density Residential Properties Citywide [in Sq. Mi.]	Total Sq. Miles of Commercial & High-Density Residential Properties Impacted by Compatibility [in Sq. Mi.]	Percent of Area of Commercial & High-Density Residential Properties Citywide Impacted by Compatibility
51.0	27.1	53%

**Table 1** Land Area of Commercial and High-Density Residential Properties Citywide and in the Compatibility Buffer

Compatibility Distance	Acres/Square Miles of Commercial and High-Density Residential Property Subject to Compatibility [acres/sq. mi]	% of Total Commercial and High-Density Residential Property Subject to Compatibility
0-25'	988 / 1.5	6%
25-50'	964 / 1.5	6%
50-75'	1,058 / 1.7	6%
75-100'	1,118 / 1.7	6%
100-150'	2,146 / 3.4	12%
150-200'	1,912 / 3.0	11%
200-250'	1,718 / 2.7	10%
250-300'	1,572 / 2.5	9%
300-400'	2,747 / 4.3	16%
400-540'	3,092 / 4.8	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,316 / 27.1</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2** Land Area of Commercial and High-Density Residential Properties Subject to Citywide Compatibility at Various Distances

### Housing Unit Capacity Analysis

The size of the land affected by the compatibility buffer provides an overall idea of the scale of the impact. However, to truly grasp how compatibility affects housing capacity, it is essential to consider the amount of floor area and potential housing units that may be lost due to height restrictions.

To estimate potential housing units, staff conducted a quantitative housing capacity analysis to estimate the unit capacity lost due to compatibility restrictions. A housing capacity analysis is a simplistic projection of how many housing units could be built in a community if every property were to develop or redevelop under existing zoning regulations. Due to the complexity of zoning regulations, broad assumptions are always necessary to perform a citywide capacity analysis, which likely result in an overestimate of potential units. However, the primary purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate the impact of height variations between compatibility buffers and zoning districts while holding other factors steady. The housing capacity analysis demonstrates the relative impact of the compatibility regulations at different buffer distances, which helps decision makers understand the distances that have the most significant impacts on zoning capacity.

To estimate the impacts on zoning capacity, staff calculated the potential unit yield using the compatibility height restrictions and compared it with the potential unit yield using the maximum heights specified by the zoning district. Because projects are additionally constrained by watershed regulations, staff used a property’s watershed impervious cover limit when it was stricter than the maximum building coverage allowed by zoning to provide a more realistic estimate of unit capacity. For a comprehensive understanding of the calculation process used to determine the estimated loss in housing capacity, including a detailed methodology and a step-by-step example, please refer to the [Appendix](#).

*Estimated Total Unit Capacity Lost*

The tables below show the estimated loss of unit capacity at each buffer distance for commercial and high-density residential properties, both separately and combined. In much of the subsequent geographic analysis, only high-density residential zoning districts are considered to avoid overstating the impacts, as residential uses are permitted in commercial districts solely through a density bonus program. However, the combined estimates aid in understanding the extent to which compatibility impacts potential unit capacity.

The following tables present the estimated capacity loss for each compatibility distance, along with the cumulative percentage of units lost when each row is added to the previous ones. This cumulative percentage loss helps gauge the potential recovery of units if compatibility ends at a specific distance. The study estimates that compatibility regulations reduce citywide unit capacity by approximately 71,794 units in high-density residential zoning districts. When commercial properties that can now take advantage of the Residential in Commercial density bonus program are included in the analysis, expanding the area included, potential capacity is reduced by approximately 135,349 units citywide.

[Table 5](#) illustrates that compatibility distances between 0 and 100 feet result in the majority (62%) of estimated unit capacity loss for both commercial and high-density residential properties combined.

Compatibility Distance	Estimated High-Density Residential Unit Capacity Loss	% of Capacity Loss	Cumulative % of Capacity Loss
0-25'	≈ 12,233	17%	17%
25-50'	≈ 14,197	20%	37%
50-75'	≈ 10,835	15%	52%
75-100'	≈ 12,085	17%	69%
100-150'	≈ 10,095	14%	83%
150-200'	≈ 4,386	6%	89%
200-250'	≈ 3,933	5%	94%
250-300'	≈ 222	0%	95%
300-400'	≈ 3,808	5%	100%
400-540'			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 71,794</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 3** Estimated Unit Capacity Loss for High-Density Residential Properties Subject to Citywide Compatibility at Various Distances

Compatibility Distance	Estimated Commercial Unit Capacity Loss	% of Capacity Loss	Cumulative % of Capacity Loss
0-25'	≈ 9,165	14%	14%
25-50'	≈ 10,399	16%	31%
50-75'	≈ 7,048	11%	42%
75-100'	≈ 7,595	12%	54%
100-150'	≈ 15,524	24%	78%
150-200'	≈ 7,155	11%	90%
200-250'	≈ 6,669	10%	100%
250-300'			
300-400'			
400-540'			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 63,554</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 4** Estimated Unit Capacity Loss for Commercial Properties Subject to Citywide Compatibility at Various Distances

Compatibility Distance	Estimated Commercial and High-Density Residential Unit Capacity Loss	% of Capacity Loss	Cumulative % of Capacity Loss
0-25'	≈ 21,398	16%	16%
25-50'	≈ 24,596	18%	34%
50-75'	≈ 17,883	13%	47%
75-100'	≈ 19,680	15%	62%
100-150'	≈ 25,619	19%	81%
150-200'	≈ 11,541	9%	89%
200-250'	≈ 10,602	8%	97%
250-300'	≈ 222	0%	97%
300-400'	≈ 3,808	3%	100%
400-540'			
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 135,349</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 5** Estimated Unit Capacity Loss for Commercial and High-Density Residential Properties Subject to Citywide Compatibility at Various Distances

### **Affordable Housing Capacity Analysis**

To understand how compatibility standards impact income-restricted units/affordable housing, staff estimated the affordable housing capacity of the Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) and Residential in Commercial (RC) density bonus programs because these density bonus programs are currently subject to citywide compatibility standards.

#### Vertical Mixed Use (VMU)

In June of 2022, City Council adopted changes to the VMU program allowing developers additional height increases in exchange for building more affordable units. The ordinance created two tiers for VMU properties. The first tier, or VMU1, allows for reduced setbacks, no floor to area ratio limit, reduced parking requirements, and a broader range of allowed uses in exchange for 10% of units being set aside at 60% of the median family income (MFI). The second tier, or VMU2, grants all incentives of VMU1 and an additional 30 feet of height to developments in exchange for either 12% of units set aside at 60% MFI or 10% of units set aside at 50% MFI. Council also modified compatibility standards to only apply within 100 feet of a triggering property for VMU1 or VMU2 parcels along planned light rail lines.

For this high-level analysis, staff assumed 100% participation in VMU2 for all VMU-zoned property, including the height bonus of 30 feet, which is unlikely, but the percentages below aid in determining the compatibility distances that result in the most impact to potential affordable housing capacity. Because the maximum set aside for VMU2 is 10% at 50% MFI or 12% at 60% MFI, staff assumed an average set aside of 11%. Staff multiplied the estimated unit capacity loss of all VMU acreage in the compatibility buffer by 11% to estimate compatibility's potential impact on affordable housing. The table below shows the estimated unit capacity loss and estimated affordable housing capacity loss for Vertical Mixed Use properties between 0 and 540 feet from a triggering property. These numbers are a subset of the total estimated unit capacity loss for all commercial and high-density residential properties but are pulled out here to show the impact to affordable housing capacity.

Compatibility Distance	Estimated Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) Unit Capacity Loss	Estimated Affordable Unit Capacity Loss (est. 11%)
0-25'	≈ 3,425	≈ 377
25-50'	≈ 5,562	≈ 612
50-75'	≈ 5,544	≈ 610
75-100'	≈ 6,475	≈ 712
100-150'		-
150-200'		-
200-250'		-
250-300'		-
300-400'	≈ 3,619	≈ 398
400-540'		-
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 24,625</b>	<b>≈ 2,709</b>

*Table 6 VMU Estimated Unit and Affordable Unit Capacity Loss Due to Compatibility*

**Due to compatibility, the unit capacity of Vertical Mixed Use properties is reduced by an estimated 24,625 units and 2,709 affordable units. Vertical Mixed Use represents 18% of capacity lost in commercial and high-density residential zoning districts, and 34% of the total high-density residential zoning districts only.**

Residential in Commercial

In December of 2022, City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 20221201-055](#) allowing for residential use in commercial zoning districts. For developers to take advantage of this change, they must reserve 10% of units for those making no more than 60% MFI. Residential properties built in a commercial zone through this program would have to meet the same requirements as those granted through VMU, including design standards and lowered parking requirements.

For this high-level capacity analysis, staff assumed 100% participation in Residential in Commercial (RC), which is unlikely, but the percentages below aid in determining the compatibility distances that result in the most impact to potential affordable housing capacity. The chart below shows the estimated unit capacity loss and affordable housing capacity loss for RC. **Due to compatibility, the unit capacity of commercial properties that are now able to add residential units is reduced by an estimated 63,554 units and 6,355 affordable units.**

Compatibility Distance	Estimated Residential in Commercial (RC) Unit Capacity Loss	Estimated Affordable Unit Capacity Loss (est. 10%)
0-25'	≈ 9,165	≈ 916
25-50'	≈ 10,399	≈ 1,040
50-75'	≈ 7,048	≈ 705
75-100'	≈ 7,595	≈ 759
100-150'	≈ 15,524	≈ 1,552
150-200'	≈ 7,155	≈ 715
200-250'	≈ 6,669	≈ 667
250-300'		
300-400'		
400-540'		
<b>Total</b>	<b>≈ 63,554</b>	<b>≈ 6,355</b>

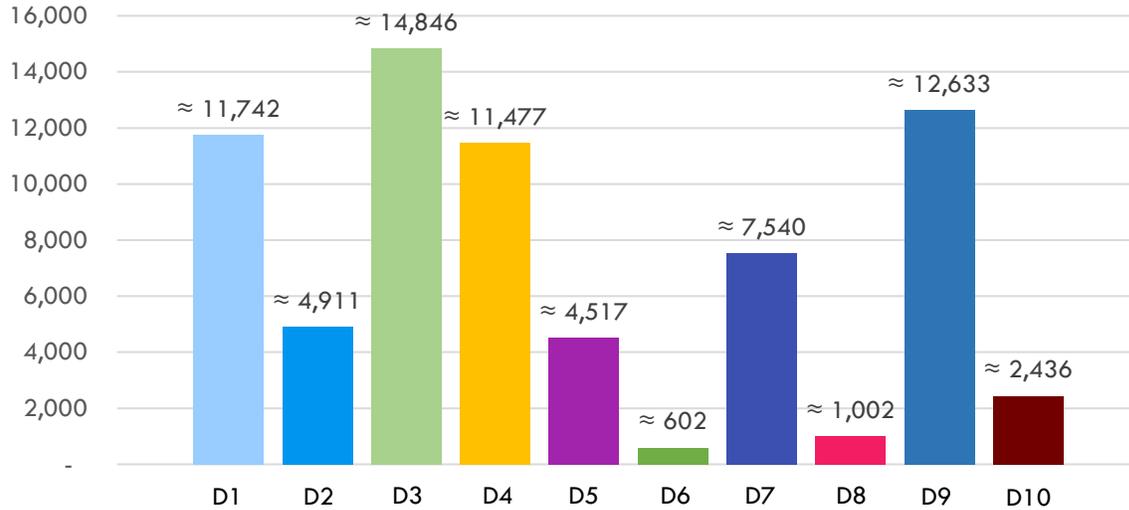
**Table 7** RC Estimated Unit and Affordable Unit Capacity Loss Due to Compatibility

Compatibility on Corridors

In December of 2022, City Council adopted changes to compatibility by relaxing standards for properties that front-face or side-face one of the three types of designated corridors (Light Rail, Medium, or Larger). The new rules removed compatibility standards entirely for corridor properties more than 300 feet from a triggering property. Depending on the distance from a triggering property as well as which type of corridor a property faces, additional reductions to compatibility standards were granted. The complexity of the varying standards made it difficult to estimate the potential unit capacity gained back due to the Compatibility on Corridors Ordinance. However, [previous staff analysis](#) indicated these reforms only covered around a third of the total area that is limited by compatibility and the complexity of implementation poses a potential administrative burden.

Impacts to Council Districts

To respond to the request for an assessment of compatibility’s impact on the City’s ability to meet the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint goals, staff estimated the unit capacity limited by compatibility in each Council district. Recognizing that most commercial property will not develop as residential, this analysis only includes high-density residential properties subject to compatibility. The chart below shows the estimated unit capacity loss by Council district. **The estimates show that districts 1, 3, 4, and 9 have their estimated unit capacity reduced by at least 10,000 units due to compatibility. The estimated unit capacity limited by compatibility in Council Districts 6, 8, and 10 combined represents just 6% of the total high-density residential unit capacity lost citywide and less than 5,000 units combined.** As seen in [Table 8](#), these disparities are largely due to the lower number of properties with high-density residential zoning found in these Districts.



**Figure 3** Estimated High-Density Residential Unit Capacity Loss by Council District Due to Compatibility

Council District	Total Number of High-Density Residential Properties	Percentage of High-Density Residential Properties Citywide
1	2,096	17%
2	721	6%
3	1,505	12%
4	1,265	11%
5	643	5%
6	370	3%
7	1,933	16%
8	494	4%
9	2,309	19%
10	709	6%

**Table 8** Total Number of High-Density Residential Properties by Council District

### **Impacts to High Opportunity Areas, Displacement Risk Areas, and Vulnerable Populations**

To evaluate the impact compatibility standards have on different populations, staff used existing datasets based on a range of demographic and housing market data. The data and geography for High Opportunity Areas is based on the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint and data from Opportunity360, a national database of opportunity metrics developed by Enterprise Community Partners. Both the Vulnerable Areas and Displacement Risk Areas typologies were developed by the Uprooted Report, published by the University of Texas in partnership with the City of Austin.

#### High Opportunity Areas

The Blueprint defined “high opportunity” areas using two sets of indicators: Pathway Indices, which measure access to opportunity, and outcome indices, which measure the life outcomes of current residents. The Blueprint set a target of 25% of affordable units to be built in “high opportunity” areas to improve life outcomes of children and families living in the city. Recognizing that most commercial property will not develop as residential, this analysis only includes high-density residential properties subject to compatibility. Also, it is important to note that the Opportunity360 data is no longer updated so the data used to identify High Opportunity Areas is from 2017, the year the Blueprint was adopted.

**Due to compatibility, unit capacity in high opportunity areas is reduced by an estimated 16,318 units,**

**which represents 23% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.** Furthermore, out of the estimated 2,709 affordable unit capacity lost due to compatibility, 25% or 680 units are found in high opportunity areas. High opportunity areas heavily overlap with stricter watershed regulations that limit development yield, so it is not surprising that there is less potential housing capacity in these areas. However, this analysis shows that potential housing capacity could still be unlocked by reducing compatibility without impacting watershed regulations.

Displacement Risk Areas

The Uprooted Report developed typologies to capture the different stages of gentrification. Variables used to designate an area’s displacement risk type include:

- Vulnerable Populations (described in further detail below)
- Housing Market Condition
- Demographic Change

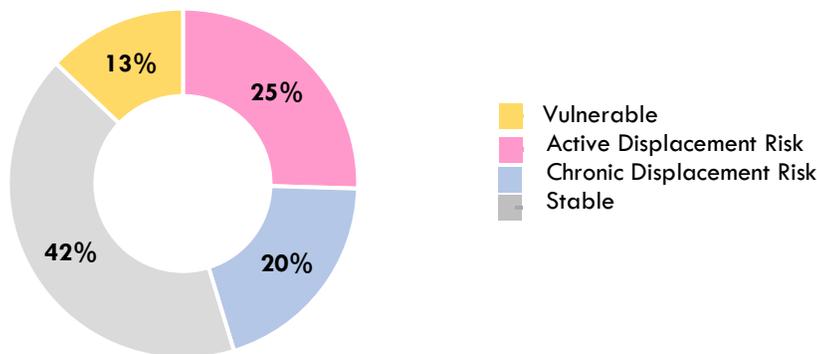
The City of Austin Housing and Planning staff [updated the data](#) and simplified the categories below.

- Vulnerable: Vulnerable populations present, no significant demographic change, some tracts are near or contain high-value and high-appreciation areas.
- Active Displacement Risk: Vulnerable populations present, active demographic change, accelerating or appreciating housing market.
- Chronic Displacement Risk: Vulnerable populations have been displaced, demographic change has occurred, and the housing market is high value and appreciated or appreciating.

Recognizing that most commercial property will not develop as residential, this analysis only includes high-density residential properties subject to compatibility. The total land area of high-density residential properties in displacement risk areas is 10.9 square miles. This represents 66% of all high-density residential land area in the city. The majority (68%) of the high-density residential land area in displacement risk areas is subject to compatibility.

**Due to compatibility, unit capacity in displacement risk areas is reduced by an estimated 41,481 units, which represents 58% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.** Furthermore, out of the estimated 2,709 affordable unit capacity lost due to compatibility, 57% or 1,542 units are found in displacement risk areas.

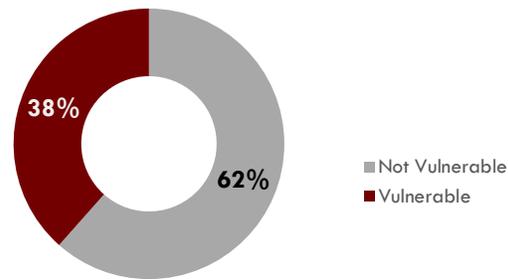
The slight majority can be explained by the fact that most (66%) of high-density residential properties are in displacement risk areas. This finding indicates that modifications to compatibility standards must consider the potential displacement impacts of reducing compatibility.



**Figure 4** Percentage of Unit Capacity Lost Due to Compatibility by Displacement Risk Area

### Vulnerable Populations

The Uprooted Report identified a set of population characteristics that correspond to the vulnerability of residents to increasing housing costs by census tract. The authors used indicators to identify residents who, according to academic research, are least able to absorb rising housing costs, which includes communities of color, low-income households, heads of households without a bachelor's degree or higher, families with children in poverty, and renters. The presence of vulnerable populations is one of three factors considered to determine an area's displacement risk, as described above.



*Figure 5 Percentage of Unit Capacity Lost by Compatibility in Census Tracts with Vulnerable Populations*

**Due to compatibility, unit capacity in census tracts with a predominance of vulnerable populations is reduced by an estimated 27,221 units, which represents 38% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.** In other words, most of the estimated unit capacity lost due to compatibility occurs in areas with populations not considered vulnerable using the report's criteria. This finding aligns with the displacement risk categories above because only Active and Vulnerable displacement risk areas still comprise of a majority of vulnerable populations.

Modifications to compatibility standards must consider the potential displacement impacts of reducing compatibility in census tracts with vulnerable populations – particularly those populations who may live in existing multi-family housing that will see increased development pressure.

The population data used to calculate vulnerability was most recently updated in 2021 using ACS 5-year estimates. To learn more about the Uprooted report and its methodology for calculating vulnerability reference its [appendix](#).

### Impacts to Transit and Nearby Amenities

#### Existing Transit

The Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint identified the “growing need for affordable housing near transit.” Compatibility severely reduces the housing unit capacity near existing transit. **Due to compatibility, unit capacity within ¼ mile of an existing transit stop is reduced by an estimated 58,887 units, which represents 82% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.** Furthermore, out of the estimated 2,709 affordable unit capacity lost due to compatibility, 91% or 2,466 units within ¼ mile of an existing transit stop. Recognizing that most commercial property will not develop as residential, this analysis only includes high-density residential properties subject to compatibility.

#### Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD)

The Equitable Transit Oriented Development (ETOD) Policy Plan accepted by Council in March of 2023 [calls for increased accessibility to transit options](#) while also seeking to increase affordable and attainable housing options in order to create a more inclusive and connected community in Austin.

As a part of Austin's strategy to promote ETOD, station areas were identified to promote attainable housing options near MetroRapid, MetroRail, Phase 1 Light Rail Investment, Priority Extensions, and Future Extensions. A station area is defined as the area within a ½ mile of the station. **Due to compatibility, unit capacity in ETOD station areas is reduced by an estimated 46,641 units, which represents 65% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.** Recognizing that most commercial property will not develop as residential, this analysis only includes high-density residential properties subject to compatibility.

ETOD Station Type	Estimated Unit Capacity Loss Within ½ Mile	Estimated Affordable Unit Capacity Loss Within ½ Mile
Commuter Rail	≈ 4,513	≈ 97
Commuter Rail, MetroRapid	≈ 1,332	≈ 129
Metro Rapid	≈ 28,394	≈ 1,358
Phase1 LRT	≈ 6,373	≈ 286
LRT Priority Ext	≈ 4,426	≈ 161
LRT Future Ext	≈ 1,602	≈ 43

**Table 9** Estimated Unit and Affordable Unit Capacity Loss Near ETOD Station Areas

Nearby Amenities

Comprehensive planning initiatives in Austin such as Imagine Austin and the Blueprint have emphasized the importance of “complete communities” where residents have easy access to amenities. To understand how compatibility impacts the development of complete communities, staff estimated the unit capacity loss near city parks, grocery stores, and public schools.

High-density residential properties near parks, grocery stores, and public schools were found to be limited significantly due to compatibility, though not to the same degree as properties near transit. **Due to compatibility, unit capacity within ¼ mile of at least one of these amenities is reduced by an estimated 49,402 units, which represents 69% of citywide capacity lost due to compatibility.**

Amenity	Estimated Unit Capacity Loss Within ¼ Mile	Percent of Total Capacity Lost	Estimated Affordable Unit Capacity Loss within ¼ Mile
<b>Grocery Stores</b>	≈ 11,507	16%	≈ 571
<b>City Parks</b>	≈ 40,882	57%	≈ 1,424
<b>AISD Public Schools</b>	≈ 12,575	17%	≈ 566
<b>Near One or More Amenities</b>	≈ 49,402	69%	≈ 1,854
<b>Near Two or More Amenities</b>	≈ 14,012	20%	≈ 605

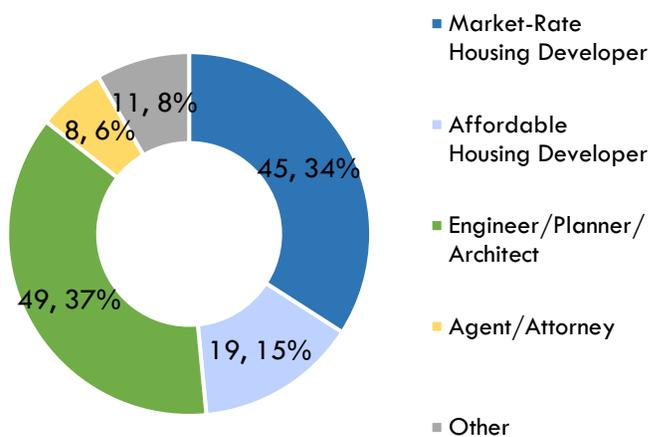
**Table 10** Estimated Unit and Affordable Unit Capacity Loss Near Amenities

## Qualitative Analysis

To understand more about how compatibility impacts the development process and a project's potential unit yield, staff sent a survey to applicants who have submitted a Density Bonus Application, Multifamily Site Plan, or Multifamily Building Permit to the City of Austin within the last five years. To gather the contact information, staff generated a custom report from the City's AMANDA permitting software and the Housing Department's database of density bonus programs. The survey was open from Thursday, May 25 to Monday, June 19, 2023. Staff received 111 responses from the housing development community.

The following is a short summary of the key themes from the survey responses. A complete inventory of survey responses can be found at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/bddhu97n>

### Who responded to the Compatibility and Housing Development Survey?



Respondents indicated an average of 12.5 years of experience working in housing development in Austin.

Experience completing projects varied, with an equal distribution of respondents that have completed 1-5, 5-20, and 20+ projects.

The typical scale of developments also varied, with the most common scale of development being over 100 units. Most respondents identify themselves as market-rate housing developers or design professionals such as engineers, planners, and architects.

**Figure 6** Respondent's Roles in the Development Process

**What stages of development have respondents participated in?**

Most respondents have participated in pre-development, site plan in review, or have had their site plan approved. About 75% of the total 111 respondents have had a building permit issued, building plan under review, or a project completed, and 50% of respondents have had a density bonus certification letter or Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) loan executed.

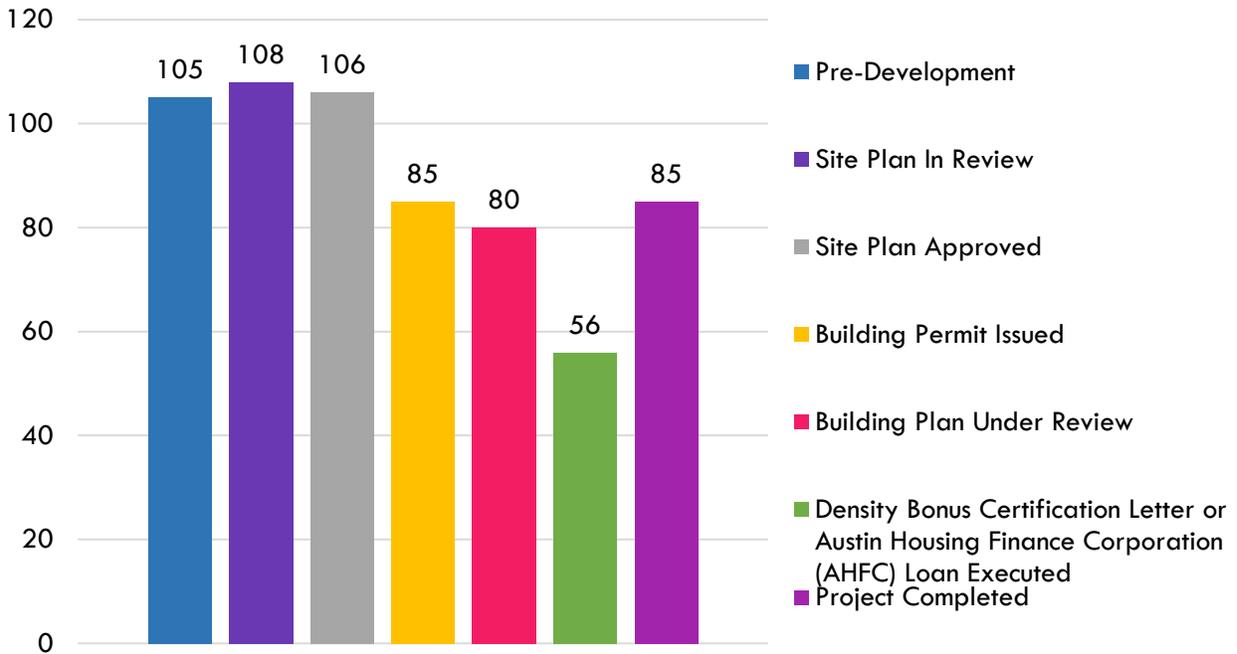


Figure 7 Respondent Participation in the Development Process

**Which of the City's affordable housing programs have respondents participated in?**

Among the affordable housing programs, respondents indicated the most participation in Vertical Mixed Use, Transit-Oriented Development, and Affordability Unlocked. For participants who have utilized Affordability Unlocked, 28% utilized a waiver from compatibility standards. On average, 34.7% of the units constructed by these respondents were a result of this compatibility waiver.

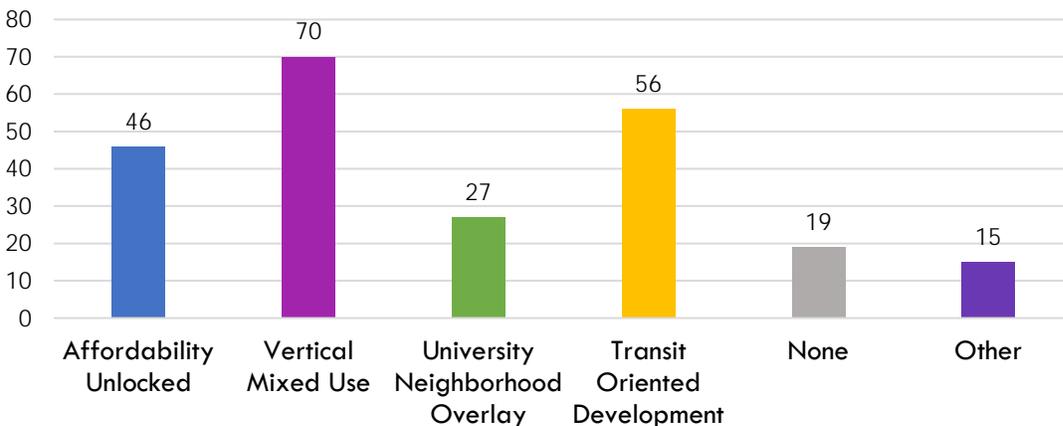
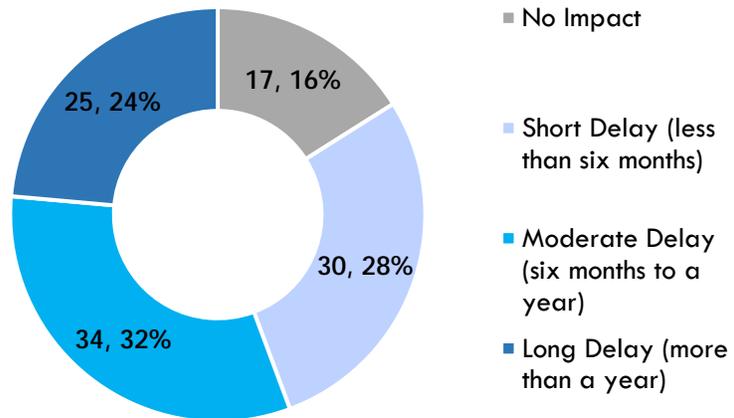


Figure 8 Respondent Participation in Affordable Housing Programs

**On average, how have compatibility standards impacted the timeline of respondents' projects?**

According to respondents, compatibility standards do result in delays to project timelines, with 84% indicating short, moderate, or long delays.

Delays were primarily caused by factors such as seeking variances, negotiations, extensive staff review and interpretation, neighborhood opposition, lack of clarity, financial feasibility issues, design complexity, and lengthy review timelines and legal processes.



*Figure 9 Responses to the Impact of Compatibility on Project Timelines*

**On average, how have compatibility standards impacted the number and cost of residential units?**

Compatibility standards have resulted in a reduced number of residential units built in developments, as reported by 90% of respondents. On average, respondents estimated a loss of 36% of units due to these standards. Moreover, 90% of respondents stated that compatibility standards impact development costs, with an average increase of approximately \$3 million in costs per project. Seventy-eight percent of respondents noted that compatibility standards have led to increased rent or for-sale costs of units in their developments.

**Why have compatibility standards caused respondents to not pursue a potential project?**

An overwhelming majority (98%) reported that compatibility standards have caused them to abandon potential projects. Respondents identified various reasons why compatibility standards led to financial infeasibility, including insufficient yield, limitations on unit count, increased construction costs, financial feasibility challenges, reduced buildable area, and time delays.

**Are there areas of the city where respondents indicated that compatibility standards result in more significant cost or a lower unit yield of a project?**

A significant majority (83%) of respondents believe that compatibility standards result in higher costs or lower unit yield in specific areas of the city. These areas include urban infill sites, core transit corridor sites, areas experiencing rapid change, and areas adjacent to single-family zoning or use.

**Did respondents think the recent modifications to compatibility (relaxing and reducing compatibility on certain corridors) will lead them to pursue additional projects or increase units on existing projects?**

The recent modifications to compatibility standards were generally seen as a positive step, although some respondents expressed the need for further adjustments and more flexibility. There is optimism that the relaxed measures will support higher-density projects and promote walkable areas, but concerns were raised about the limited impact and the desire to expand the reduction of compatibility standards beyond specific corridors.

**The intent of the compatibility standards is to ensure a transition between new, potentially taller development and less tall, less dense residential development. Did respondents think there are policies or practices the City could implement to better achieve the intended outcome?**

Based on their experiences, respondents provided suggestions to better achieve the intended outcome of compatibility standards. These recommendations include modifying standards to balance compatibility with the city's growth and development goals, improving communication and community engagement to ensure better understanding of the standards, allowing compatibility waivers on a case-by-case basis, using transition zones between different development intensities, focusing on design and landscaping, and considering the city's future growth and affordability challenges.

Overall, the survey results shed light on the experiences and perspectives of the housing development community in Austin regarding compatibility standards. The findings emphasize the need for ongoing evaluation and potential adjustments to these standards to balance the goals of housing development, affordability, and neighborhood compatibility.

## Recommendations

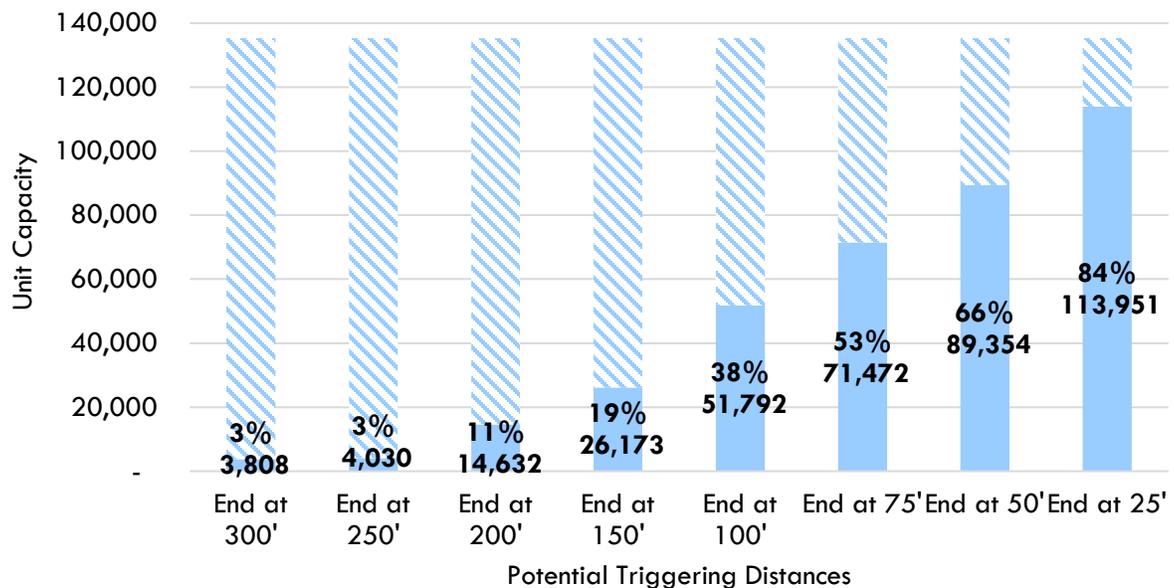
On June 8, 2023, City Council passed [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#) to initiate amendments to City Code Title 25 (Land Development Code) to change compatibility requirements. This resolution proposes significant modifications to citywide compatibility standards, including:

1. Establishing a simpler, unified standard that is easy to use, understand, and administer;
2. Aligning Austin’s compatibility standards with peer cities and the results of this analysis;
3. Redefining “triggering properties” so that the property contains only residential uses and is zoned SF-5 or more restrictive;
4. Exempting small missing middle projects that are under 16 units and 40 feet of height from compatibility;
5. Setting limits in current 25-foot no build buffer to be no stricter than limits on single family property;
6. Allowing for a larger variety of waivers;
7. Removing the limit on the number of stories and increasing height limits by at least 5 feet;
8. Allowing more in the “no-build setback”;
9. Consider reducing or eliminating compatibility for projects participating in a density bonus program; and
10. Initiating staff recommendations based on the result of this analysis.

Based on the findings from this analysis and the direction from [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#), staff recommends the following:

### 1. End compatibility at 75 feet to increase housing capacity in line with Blueprint goals and align with peer cities

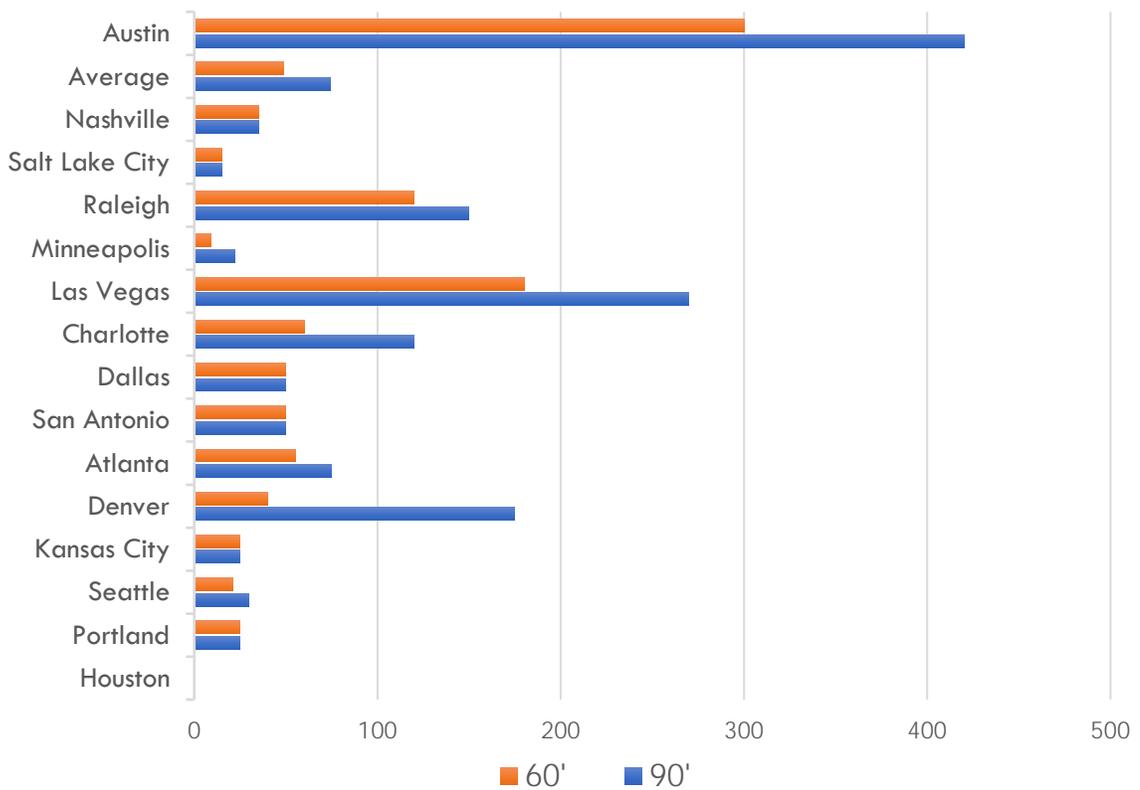
Based on Table 5 in this report, ending compatibility standards height limits at 100 feet or less results in the most significant increases to potential housing capacity due to compatibility. To understand what changes to compatibility regulations could result in the biggest gains for housing capacity, the chart below looks at the cumulative gains in unit capacity if compatibility ended at various distances.



**Figure 10** Cumulative Estimated Unit Capacity Gained for Commercial and High-Density Residential Properties by Ending Compatibility Standards at Different Distances

Staff previously recommended ending compatibility at 100 feet, but with the results of this analysis and a closer look at peer cities, staff recommends ending compatibility at 75 feet to align with peer cities and to increase housing capacity near transit, goods, and services. Ending compatibility standards at 75 feet could increase the estimated unit capacity by 71,492 potential units, or 53% of total estimated unit capacity lost due to compatibility.

The following analysis from peer cities further supports reducing compatibility to 75 feet from a triggering property. Results of peer city research indicates that the average distance from a triggering property to reach a height of 60 feet is approximately 49 feet and the average distance to reach a height of 90 feet is approximately 74 feet (excluding Austin). Both Dallas and San Antonio end all compatibility related height restrictions after 50 feet from triggering properties while Houston does not have specific compatibility restrictions based on adjacency to single-family zoning or use. Current compatibility standards in Austin were the most restrictive of the peer city group studied.



**Figure 11** Peer City Comparison: Distance to Reach Maximum Height of 60' and 90'

Staff also recognizes the need to establish a simpler, unified standard and recommends that compatibility standards completely supersede the Compatibility on Corridors overlay, where compatibility only applies on the same side of the street as triggering properties. Ending compatibility at 75 feet would ensure that compatibility regulations do not cross major corridors, because corridor right of ways are generally greater than 75 feet.

**2. Allow further reductions to compatibility for on-site affordable housing**

Staff recommends further reductions to compatibility for projects participating in density bonus programs that require on-site affordable housing. Compatibility standards vary from site to site, so a reduction is most useful as an option alongside other incentives in an established density bonus program, rather than as stand-alone program. Additional analysis would be necessary to determine the extent of the relaxation and the programs that would be included. However, the analysis on and [Table 7](#) illustrate the number of units potentially gained back by reduced compatibility for Vertical Mixed Use and Residential in Commercial. Allowing the remaining unit capacity to be unlocked through an existing density bonus program will help secure additional affordable housing, tenant protections, and replacement of existing market affordable units in existing multi-family developments.

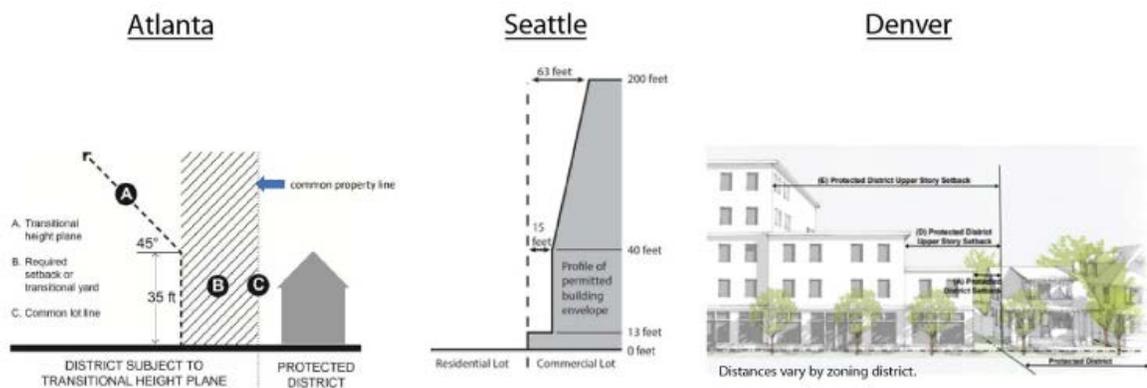
**3. Remove compatibility requirements from SF-6, MF-1, MF-2, and MF-3**

Building on the direction in [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#) to exempt small missing middle projects that are under 16 units and 40 feet of height, and establish a simpler, unified standard that is easy to use, understand, and administer, staff recommends exempting SF-6, MF-1, MF-2, and MF-3 from compatibility requirements. These zones have the same setback requirements as single-family zones and are intended to be similar in height and scale. The Blueprint sets a goal that at least 30% of new housing should be a range of housing types from small-lot single-family to eightplexes to help address Austin’s need for multigenerational housing. Removing these zones from compatibility is a straightforward way to encourage small missing middle projects that blend into existing neighborhoods.

**4. Further refine heights in the compatibility buffer**

Building on the direction in [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#) to remove the limit on the number of stories and increase height limits by at least 5 feet in the compatibility buffer, staff also recommends building off this analysis to test different height scenarios within the compatibility buffer informed by reviewing peer cities and gathering additional public input. From staff’s previous analysis of compatibility regulations in peer cities, staff found that in Atlanta, setbacks vary by zoning district, but under the 45-degree plane (see below) a building can reach at least 110 feet in height at 100 feet from the triggering property’s property line.

Seattle has the least restrictive height restrictions with buildings able to reach over 300 feet in height at 100 feet from a single-family property line. In Denver, zoning districts with a height maximum of 70 feet can reach full height at 40 feet from the triggering property. Generally, zoning districts in Denver that allow more height are limited to 75 feet within 175 feet of the triggering property; however, this height restriction does not apply to all zoning districts, building forms, and contexts.



**Figure 12** Compatibility Regulations in Peer Cities

**5. Conduct additional stakeholder engagement**

Moving forward with potential code amendments, staff recommends broader engagement and involving a wider range of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Based on Council direction, this analysis narrowly focused on current compatibility standards and potential changes to meet Blueprint goals, but it did not engage community members with broader discussions on the policy goals of current compatibility standards. Staff plans to seek input from stakeholders as this process moves forward to develop proposed code amendments as directed in [Resolution No. 20230608-045](#).

It will be important to engage stakeholders to communicate Council direction, share the results of this study, gather feedback on the proposed modifications, and gather additional input on other policy objectives important to stakeholders. Particular attention should be paid to residents who live in existing multi-family housing and residents who live in displacement risk areas, who will be most impacted by potential development pressure.

**6. Analyze potential impacts and preservation strategies for existing multi-family housing**

Reducing compatibility will likely allow for more housing to be built on properties already developed with older multi-family housing. Prior to adoption of modifications to citywide compatibility, Housing staff should conduct an analysis to identify properties with older multi-family housing that will see the greatest increase in housing capacity due to relaxed compatibility and identify real-estate strategies to help preserve and replace these housing units.

The Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint set an annual goal to preserve 1,000 units, and according to the [2021 Blueprint Scorecard](#), “Successful efforts to preserve affordable housing have far exceeded the annual Blueprint goal of 1,000 affordable units.” City staff should continue the successful efforts to preserve affordable housing while also identifying other strategies to mitigate displacement risks.

**7. Explore programs and partnerships that bring back displaced communities**

Reducing compatibility presents an opportunity to add more housing in displacement risk areas, especially Chronic Displacement Areas where vulnerable populations have been displaced. The Housing Department should continue to explore partnerships and programs that help displaced communities re-establish roots, such as preference policies, grant programs, and rental and mortgage assistance for people with historic ties.

**8. Minimize potential displacement impacts on vulnerable populations**

Reducing compatibility may increase speculation and development pressure for nearby tenants and homeowners who are vulnerable to rising housing costs. Investments should be made to stabilize existing residents using tools such as rental assistance, tenant legal services and representation, education on fair housing laws, tenant rights, and homeowner rights.

**9. Balance the impact of other regulations on housing capacity**

Because this analysis adjusted estimated housing capacity to account for watershed regulations, findings illustrate that significant capacity loss in high opportunity areas is related to watershed regulations in addition to compatibility. This analysis did not include additional zoning overlays such as historic districts, Neighborhood Conservation Combining Districts (NCCDs), and other regulations that may further constrain housing capacity. Staff recommends continuing to balance the impacts of existing regulations in future planning efforts like Equitable Transit Oriented Development to achieve an equitable distribution of housing across the city. As respondents to the development survey point out, future planning efforts should also engage the community in discussions on how zoning, urban design, and landscaping can be used to establish transitions between development intensities.

## Appendix

### Detailed Methodology

#### **High-Density Residential and Commercial Properties**

Staff used the City of Austin's [Zoning map](#) to select both high-density residential properties (properties with MF, MU, V, and SF-6 zoning) as well as commercial properties (properties with CS, GR, GO, LR, and LO zoning) that could take advantage of the City's new Residential in Commercial density bonus program.

#### **Triggering Properties**

According to [Title 25, Chapter 2, Subchapter C, Article 10. Compatibility Standards](#), height limitations for a structure are triggered based on proximity to properties "zoned SF-5 or more restrictive district or on which a use permitted in an SF-5 or more restrictive zoning district is located." To identify properties that trigger compatibility height restrictions, staff used the City of Austin's [Zoning map](#) to select single-family properties with SF-5 zoning or more restrictive and the Travis County Appraisal District's (TCAD) [property map](#) to find properties with single-family uses. This was done by selecting properties that had "One-Family Dwelling" listed within the "improvement type" field. These two sets of properties were combined and used as the "triggering properties" for this analysis.

#### **Compatibility Buffers**

From the triggering property layer, buffers were created at 25 feet, 50 feet, 75 feet, 100 feet, 150 feet, 200 feet, 250 feet, 300 feet, 400 feet, and 540 feet, where compatibility ends. Using the buffers created from the triggering properties, high-density residential and commercial properties within 540 feet were selected. These impacted properties were then divided using the buffering distances, which allowed staff to determine impacts to capacity as described below.

#### **Detailed Housing Unit Capacity Calculation**

To estimate the housing unit capacity, staff performed the following steps on all high-density residential and commercial land area in the compatibility buffer:

1. Measured the area in each compatibility buffer.
2. Multiplied the area in the compatibility buffer by the permitted heights and maximum building coverage allowed by the zoning district. Adjusted the maximum building coverage to account for watershed regulations. If a property's watershed impervious cover limit was stricter than the maximum building coverage allowed by zoning, staff used the watershed impervious cover limit to determine a more realistic estimate of potential unit capacity.
3. Divided the result by an average unit size of 1200 sf or adjusted to dwelling unit per acre requirements if applicable to calculate the housing capacity permitted by current zoning.
4. Applied a general limitation factor of 60% to the potential unit capacity to account for other regulations such as setbacks and floor to area ratios (FAR). Additionally, to accommodate zoning setbacks typically applicable to the initial 10 feet of the property line, staff applied a 30% limitation factor to the potential unit capacity within the 25-foot setback area.
5. Repeated steps 2-4 but modified the allowable height to the maximum height allowed in the compatibility buffer.
6. Subtracted the estimated number of units allowed in the compatibility buffer from the estimated units permitted by current zoning.
7. The remaining number represents the potential unit capacity allowed by zoning but restricted due to compatibility regulations.

The following graphics illustrate how this calculation works on an example site. The example site is in the urban watershed, so step 3 in the list above was not needed because no adjustments were needed to the maximum building coverage.

**Step 1:** Measured the area in each compatibility buffer.

**Example Property**

Size: 49,500sf

Zoning: CS-MU

Max Height: 60 ft, 5 stories

Max Building Coverage: 95%

Limitation Factor Due to Other Regulations: 60%

Unit Size: 1,200sf

Watershed: Urban

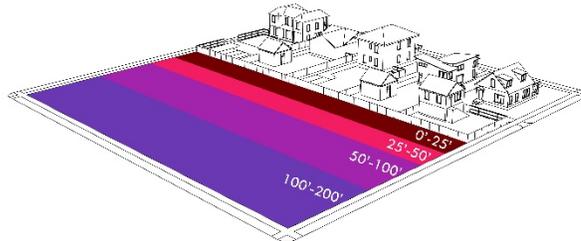
**Compatibility Buffer Area**

0'-25': 7,500sf

25'-50': 7,500sf

50'-100': 15,000sf

100'-200': 19,500sf



**Figure 13** Example Housing Unit Capacity Calculation - Step 1

**Step 2:** Multiplied the area in the compatibility buffer by the permitted heights and maximum building coverage allowed by the zoning district.

**Step 3:** Divided the result by an average unit size of 1200 sf or adjusted to dwelling unit per acre requirements if applicable to calculate the housing capacity permitted by current zoning.

**Step 4:** Applied a general limitation factor of 60% to account for other regulations such as setbacks, and floor-area ratios (FAR). To account for zoning setbacks that significantly reduce developability in the 25-foot setback, even without the compatibility buffer, staff applied a limitation factor of 30%.

**Estimated Housing Capacity Based on Heights Permitted by Zoning**

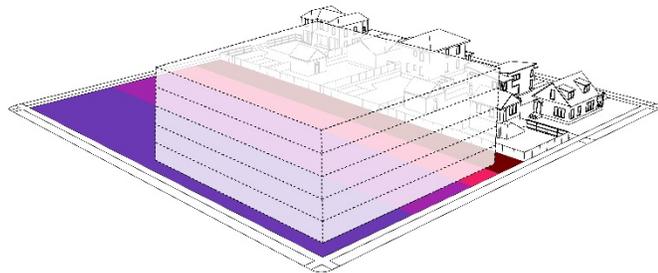
0'-25':  $((7,500\text{sf} \times 5 \times .95) / 1200\text{sf}) \times .3 = 9$  units

25'-50':  $((7,500\text{sf} \times 5 \times .95) / 1200\text{sf}) \times .6 = 17$  units

50'-100':  $((15,000\text{sf} \times 5 \times .95) / 1200\text{sf} \times .6 = 35$  units

100'-200':  $((19,500\text{sf} \times 5 \times .95) / 1200\text{sf} \times .6 = 46$  units

**Total Units: 107**



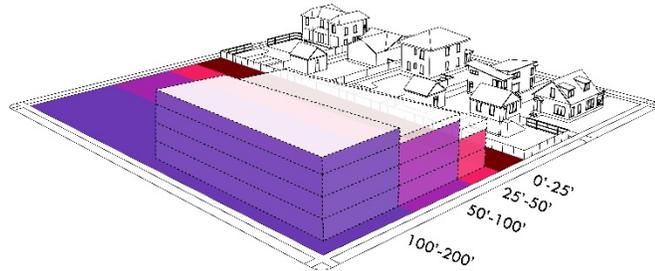
**Figure 14** Example Housing Unit Capacity Calculation – Steps 2-4

**Step 5:** Repeated the previous calculation but modified the allowable height to the maximum height allowed in the compatibility buffer.

**Estimated Housing Capacity Based on Compatibility Heights**

0'-25':  $((7,500\text{sf} \times 0 \times .95)/1200\text{sf}) \times .3 = 0$  units  
25'-50':  $((7,500\text{sf} \times 2 \times .95)/1200\text{sf}) \times .6 = 7$  units  
50'-100':  $((15,000\text{sf} \times 3 \times .95)/1200\text{sf}) \times .6 = 21$  units  
100'-200':  $((19,500\text{sf} \times 3.5 \times .95)/1200\text{sf}) \times .6 = 32$  units

**Total Units: 60**



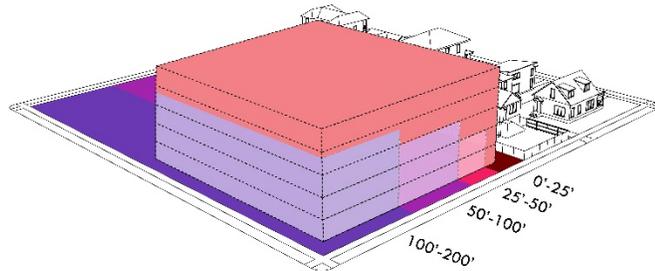
**Figure 15** Example Housing Unit Capacity Calculation - Step 5

**Step 6-7:** Subtracted the potential unit capacity allowed in the compatibility buffer from the estimated units permitted by current zoning.

**Difference in Zoning Capacity and Compatibility**

Estimated Unit Capacity Permitted by Zoning District: 107  
Estimated Unit Capacity Permitted Based on Compatibility: 60

**Total Unit Capacity Loss:**  
**107 - 60 = 47 Housing Units**



**Figure 16** Example Housing Unit Capacity Calculation - Step 6-7

### **Watershed Regulations**

Staff identified a property's watershed impervious cover limit by using the City's [Watershed Regulation Areas](#) layer to assign the watershed regulation area that each property fell into: Suburban, Urban, Water Supply Rural, Water Supply Suburban, or Barton Springs Zone (BSZ). For the capacity analysis, staff adjusted the maximum building coverage to account for watershed regulations. If a property's watershed impervious cover limit is stricter than the maximum building coverage allowed by zoning, staff used the watershed impervious cover limit to determine a more realistic estimate of potential unit capacity.

Watershed Area	Maximum Impervious Cover
Suburban (Multifamily)	60%
Urban	100% (no watershed impervious cover limit)
Water Supply Rural	20%
Water Supply Suburban	40%
BSZ	15%

*Table 11 Maximum Impervious Cover by Watershed Area*

### **Compatibility on Corridors Overlay**

Staff identified impacted properties that fall along the corridors included in the recently adopted Compatibility on Corridors using the City's [Corridor Adjacent Properties](#) layer, which includes recent corrections.

### **Displacement Risk Areas**

Staff identified impacted properties within Displacement Risk Areas using the City's [Displacement Risk Areas](#) layer.

### **High Opportunity Areas**

Staff identified impacted properties within High Opportunity Areas using the City's [High Opportunity Areas](#) layer.

### **Access to Amenities**

Staff identified impacted properties within ¼ mile of parks, grocery stores, and AISD schools by using the City's [City Parks layer](#), the City's Grocery Store layer, and AISD's [school location file](#).

### **Existing Transit and ETOD Station Areas**

Staff identified existing transit stops using Capital Metro's [most recently updated maps](#). ETOD station areas were identified using an internal layer that reflects the most recent updates to the Project Connect maps.

### **Peer City Analysis**

Staff researched compatibility and height related restrictions in peer cities to better understand how the City of Austin's current regulations compare to their standards and to ensure recommendations are in line with peer cities. Cities were selected based on similarities in size, demographics, housing market trends, and regulatory environment. Staff researched existing regulations related to building height, buffering, and adjacency to single-family zones in each of the peer cities. Beyond the code sections cited below, peer cities may have additional mechanisms to control height such as mandatory design reviews or the use of transitional zones to buffer incompatible uses. While unrelated to maximum height, many peer cities had additional landscaping or screening requirements for commercial or high-density residential districts that abut single-family zones.

Distances from Single-Family Zones to Reach a Maximum Building Height of 60 feet and 90 feet				
	60'	90'	Code Section	Notes
<b>Houston</b>	0	0		
<b>Portland</b>	25	25	33.120.215 Height	
<b>Seattle</b>	21	30	23.47A.014 - Setback requirements	Applies to commercial lots abutting residential lots.
<b>Kansas City</b>	25	25	88-110-06 - LOT AND BUILDING STANDARDS	R-1.5 - R-0.3
<b>Denver</b>	40	175	Article 4. Urban Edge Neighborhood Context Division 4.3 Design Standards	E-MS/MX 5, 75' max if within 175' of protected district
<b>Atlanta</b>	55	75	Sec. 16-08.006. - Transitional uses, structures, requirements.	
<b>San Antonio</b>	50	50	Sec. 35-517. - Building Height Regulations.	
<b>Dallas</b>	50	50	SEC. 51A-4.412. RESIDENTIAL PROXIMITY SLOPE.	
<b>Charlotte</b>	60	120	Section 12.108. Height limitations.	
<b>Las Vegas</b>	180	270	Residential Adjacency Standards	
<b>Minneapolis</b>	9	22	ARTICLE V. - HEIGHT OF PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS	Applies to zones within the Built Form overlay. There are no specific height restrictions due to adjacency to single-family zones for structures below 64'.
<b>Raleigh</b>	120	150	Sec. 3.5.5. Zone C: Height and Form	Only applies in the Mixed Use and Campus Districts when the site immediately abuts a single-family zone.
<b>Salt Lake City</b>	15	15	21A.48.080: LANDSCAPE BUFFERS:	A design review process is required for buildings beyond 75'. No specific height restrictions apply due to adjacency to single-family zones, however additional landscaping requirements apply to sites directly abutting single-family zones.
<b>Nashville</b>	35	35	Chapter 17.12 - DISTRICT BULK REGULATIONS	Additional landscaping requirements apply to sites abutting single-family zones as defined in Article III. - Landscape Buffer Yard Requirements.
<b>Average</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>74</b>		<b>Peer city average, excluding Austin.</b>
<b>Austin</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>ARTICLE 10. - COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS.</b>	

Table 12 Distances from Single-Family Zones to Reach a Maximum Building Height of 60 feet and 90 feet in Peer Cities