

Encourage Density in Downtown: Downtown Austin Alliance's Views on Height Limits, CURE & Density Bonus Programs

A dense, vibrant downtown is good for the whole community:

- Develops tax base: Downtown generates more than \$145 million in taxes every year.
- Supports entire community: 80 cents of every dollar generated by downtown is used to provide services outside of downtown.
- Better for environment and improves quality of life of ALL Austinites: helps to reduce sprawl, relieves traffic congestion.

To achieve the density desired in our downtown, as laid out in the Downtown Austin Plan and the Envision Central Texas plan, we must protect property owners' rights and create an environment that does not penalize developers for seeking the very density that our community desires. To that end, the Downtown Austin Alliance makes the following recommendations:

Oppose 45-Foot Height Limits in Warehouse District

- Current zoning is CBD with 8:1 FAR and no height limit, so we consider the proposed 45-foot height limit is a taking of property rights.
- The Transfer of Development Rights proposal is not viable because: a) there may not be a market for the TDR when the time comes and b) if there is, the rate will have been capped at \$10 per square foot. This method does not offer enough certainty for it to be adequate compensation.

Retain CURE As An Option for Seeking Additional Density

- We want to ensure that downtown Austin is a viable location for new development and that we're not encouraging projects to build within their base FAR of 8:1, which would rob the City of long-term tax base.
- Small sites are at a disadvantage, and there are very few full-block sites that remain downtown.
- City Council should have the authority and discretion to approve projects that don't fit the mold but would be beneficial to the city.

Create Desirable and Equitable Density Bonus Program

Projects should have options when seeking additional density. Options should include:

- Meet Austin Energy Green Building 4- and 5-star standards, not just 2- and 3-star.
- Enhance Existing Parks: Allow for a project to pay a fee in lieu of creating new open space in order to enhance existing parks.
 - The draft Downtown Parks & Open Space Master Plan shows that most areas of downtown are located within 800 feet of an existing park, many of which are in poor condition.
 - Improved parks could have a positive impact for the contributing project and the entire community.
- Create Below Grade Parking: Underground parking is desirable but highly expensive, and projects should be able to receive additional entitlements for taking this route.
- Waive fees for residential projects that use the density bonus program.
 - The fee waivers could not exceed the fee in lieu of affordable housing paid.