

# Downtown Density Bonus Program- Urban Design Standards

Downtown Density Bonus Program Urban Design Standards apply only to projects participating in the Downtown Density Bonus Program and are intended to implement public realm and pedestrian environment objectives that currently apply under §25-2-586.

## Frontage Designations

For the purpose of complying with the Downtown Density Bonus Program Urban Design Standards, frontage designations are determined based on the street or trail that is adjacent to the lot line:

- **Primary Street-**
  - All streets identified as Main Streets are primary streets. A site has multiple primary street frontages where it is adjacent to more than one Main Street.
  - Where a site does not abut a Main Street, the primary street is the street with the highest priority (see *Street Priorities* below). A site has only one primary street frontage where it is not adjacent to multiple Main Streets.
- **Side Street-** Side streets are all other streets and listed trails, excluding alleys, not designated as primary streets.
- **Street Priorities-** are based on Great Streets Master Plan street typologies and named streets and trails within the Downtown Density Bonus Program boundary. Street priorities are as follows, from highest to lowest:
  1. Main Streets
    - a. Pedestrian Priority Street (Great Streets)
    - b. Congress Avenue
    - c. Red River Street
    - d. Rainey Street
    - e. 6th Street
  2. Bicycle and Local Access Street (Great Streets)
  3. Rapid Transit Street (Great Streets)
  4. Mixed Mode Street (Great Streets)
  5. Waller Creek Trail, Waterloo Greenbelt,
  6. Shoal Creek Trail, Shoal Creek Greenbelt
  7. Pedestrian Promenade (Great Streets) / Butler Hike and Bike Trail
  8. Commuter Street (Great Streets)
  9. Commuter Boulevard (Great Streets)

## Mandatory Standards

All projects participating in the Downtown Density Bonus (DDB) program must comply with each of the following mandatory standards:

## 1. Windows

- a. Ground story facades must include transparent windows for a minimum portion of the facade area:
  - i. Primary streets: 65%
  - ii. Side streets: 45%
  - iii. Alley: 0%
- b. Window glazing must have a visible light transmittance of 60% or higher and an external reflectance of 20% or less to be considered transparent.

## 2. Doors

- a. Entrances must be provided at the following minimum average frequencies\* :
  - i. Primary street: 1 per 75 feet of street frontage
  - ii. Side street: 1 per 100 feet of street frontage
  - iii. Alleys: not required
- b. Doors separated by less than 25' accessing the same tenant space do not count as separate entrances.
- c. Doors exclusively designed for fire stair egress, utilities, or service entrances do not count as required street-facing entrances.
- d. All required entrances must be provided within 5 vertical feet of adjacent sidewalk grade and have a direct pedestrian route to the adjacent sidewalk. A direct route must be located within 25' of the street-facing entrance.
- e. Required entrances must be sheltered\*. Sheltering structures must have a depth no less than 40% of their clear height and a width no less than 60% their clear height.

*\*Consider designing in accordance with "Human Scale Sheltering Structures" enhanced standard*

## 3. Active Uses

- a. Ground floor pedestrian-oriented commercial spaces must comprise at least 75% of the street-facing linear building frontage for a depth of no less than 24 feet.
- b. Pedestrian-oriented commercial spaces must have 12' min. ceiling height for their required depth.
- c. Where an average of one independent ground-floor tenant space designed for a pedestrian-oriented use is provided for every 60 feet of primary street frontage, in conformance with the Walkable Mainstreet Frontage enhanced standard, the required street-facing linear building frontage may be reduced to 60%.

## 4. Gutters and Driplines

- a. Building drip lines must not be located over the pedestrian clear zone or access routes to entrances.
- b. Gutter or downspout outlets must not direct water onto the sidewalk clear zone.

## 5. Screening

- a. Utility equipment, mechanical equipment, solid waste collection areas, and motor vehicle use areas except for access driveways of the minimum allowed width (including loading docks, truck parking, outdoor storage, trash collection, trash compaction, and other service functions) must be screened within a building or located in a public alley.
- b. This subsection applies to a site with frontage on a public alley 20 feet or more in width.
  - i. All utility equipment, mechanical equipment, solid waste collection areas must be accessed from the alley.
  - ii. A transformer room or utility vault must be adjacent to and accessible from the alley, unless Austin Energy determines placement is required in another location.
  - iii. A pump room, fire riser room, or other utility or mechanical room must be adjacent to and accessible from the alley unless the Fire Chief determines that another location is required for life safety reasons. To provide emergency access to riser rooms, projects may dedicate additional alley right-of-way or emergency access easement and widen the alley.
- c. Above-ground parking must be screened so that vehicles are concealed from view from a public street or adjacent property. Vehicle and parking garage screening materials must cover at least 70% of the garage facade area.

## 6. Driveways

- a. A maximum of 2 drive lanes are allowed for every 250' of non-alley street frontage. There is no limit to the number of drive lanes allowed accessing an alley.
- b. Where access to a garage or other motor vehicle area is provided on a primary or side street, driveways shall not exceed 2 drive lanes and no drive lane may exceed 10' in width in the right-of-way.
- c. Provide  $\leq$  10 MPH speedbumps on egress drive lanes, located 5'-8' before pedestrian or bicycle crossings.

## 7. Parking

- a. The maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces allowed is 40% of the number of parking spaces listed in 25-6, Appendix A of the LDC.
- b. **Uncoupled Parking-** The maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces may be increased to 60% of the number of parking spaces listed in Appendix A if all parking spaces are rented or sold separately from the lease, sale, or occupancy of individual dwelling units or commercial spaces. The site plan must indicate uncoupled parking as a condition of approval.
- c. **Small projects-** Projects including less than 10,000 square feet of floor area and 70 or fewer dwelling units may provide a maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces equal to 60% of the number of parking spaces listed in Appendix A.

- d. **Underground parking spaces-** Parking spaces in motor vehicle use areas located below the finished ground floor elevation with no portion exposed more than 5 feet above sidewalk grade do not count toward the maximum number of parking spaces.
- e. **Shared district parking-** A shared district parking facility may exceed the maximum motor vehicle parking space requirements if the following standards are met to the satisfaction of the Director:
  - i. The facility serves multiple properties, uses, or developments;
  - ii. Parking is made available to the public on an hourly basis, with pricing generally consistent with prevailing market rates in the surrounding area;
  - iii. No more than 50 percent of parking spaces may be assigned, reserved, or otherwise restricted from general shared use;
  - iv. The total number of parking spaces provided is supported by a parking demand analysis, shared parking study, or equivalent documentation demonstrating that the facility size is reasonably related to district-wide parking demand or demand projected within the next 10 years.
  - v. The primary pedestrian entrance(s) and any vertical circulation elements (including elevators) are directly accessible from the public sidewalk network.
  - vi. The site plan identifies all parking in the facility as part of a shared district parking facility and with parking uncoupled from individual units, tenants, or uses as a condition of approval.

## **Enhanced Standards**

All projects participating in the Downtown Density Bonus program must comply with a minimum number of the enhanced standards listed below.

- Projects zoned DDB400 must comply with at least 7 enhanced standards.
- Projects zoned DDB850 must comply with at least 10 enhanced standards.

### **1. Heat Island Mitigation**

At least 50% of the site area must be composed of non-occupiable roof surfaces (excluding mechanical areas, occupiable roof surfaces, and ground floor outdoor gathering spaces) meeting the following standards:

- a. **Non-occupiable roof surfaces:** Provide 20% intensive green roof on all non-occupiable roof surfaces, excluding mechanical areas; where used, green roofs must have irrigation and a minimum of 15 inches of substrate.
- b. **Occupiable roof surfaces:** Provide minimum 50% shade coverage over all occupiable roof surfaces and above grade outdoor amenity spaces including roof decks and terraces.
- c. **Ground floor outdoor gathering spaces:** Provide minimum 50% shade coverage over all on-site outdoor spaces with a minimum horizontal dimension of 15 feet and an area of 300 square feet or more, including courtyards, forecourts, plazas, and patios.

## 2. Covered Sidewalk

Permanent sheltering structures must be provided that:

- a. Is along no less than 60% of street frontage
- b. Is located over the pedestrian clear zone or frontage zone;
- c. Has a depth no less than 40% of the clear height; and
- d. Is open to and maintains access from the sidewalk

## 3. Eyes on the Street

- a. On the second floor, regularly inhabited commercial or residential uses must comprise at least 60% of the linear building frontage along a primary street for a minimum depth of 14 feet.
- b. Within this portion of the street-facing facade, at least 50% of the facade area must be composed of transparent window area or outdoor porch area. Glazing is considered transparent if it has a visible light transmittance (VLT) of at least 60% and an external reflectance of no more than 20%.

## 4. Enhanced Eyes on the Street

- a. On the second floor, regularly inhabited commercial or residential uses must comprise at least 60% of the linear building frontage along a primary and secondary street for a minimum depth of 14 feet.
- b. Within this portion of the street-facing facade, at least 50% of the facade area must be composed of transparent window area or outdoor porch area. Glazing is considered transparent if it has a visible light transmittance (VLT) of at least 60% and an external reflectance of no more than 20%.
- c. This standard can be used in addition to "Eyes on the Street".

## 5. Walkable Mainstreet Frontage

- a. Provide at an average of one independent ground-floor tenant space designed for a pedestrian-oriented use for each 60 feet of primary street frontage.
- b. Each qualifying tenant space must have an independent primary entrance and be directly accessible and clearly visible from the sidewalk.
- c. No more than one lobby may count toward compliance with this standard.

## 6. Active Open Space Frontage

Provide doors and windows along property frontages abutting publicly-accessible parkland, open space, or trails. Provide at least 1 door per 150 feet of frontage. Facades along these frontages must include transparent windows for a minimum of 45% of the facade area.

## 7. Pedestrian Amenity Spaces

Street-facing outdoor amenity space must be provided at a minimum ratio of 250 square feet per 100 linear feet of street frontage and meet the following criteria:

- a. Must be located within 3 feet of the average adjacent sidewalk grade;

- b. Must be no less than 10 feet at its narrowest horizontal dimension;
- c. Must abut the street lot line and be directly accessible from the sidewalk; and
- d. Must not include fences, barriers, and walls greater than 36 inches tall or that obstruct required building entrances or storefronts.

## 8. No Curbcuts

Curbcuts are prohibited along street frontages. Access may be taken from an alley or from a neighboring property.

## 9. Service Area and Garage Liners

Utility rooms, mechanical rooms, motor vehicle use areas, and other service spaces must not abut the sidewalk. These areas must be separated from the street by a separate occupiable indoor space with a minimum depth of 10 feet.

## 10. Publicly Accessible Facilities

Provide and maintain at least one of the two options below:

- a. A permanent no-cost all-gender restroom facility, directly accessible from the public right-of-way with at least one toilet, baby changing station, sink or hand-washing station, and waste receptacle per restroom.
- b. A permanent no-cost facility that includes a minimum of 2 private stalls for breastfeeding, breast pumping and diaper changing, directly accessible from the public right-of-way with at least one baby changing station, sink or hand-washing station, and waste receptacle per restroom.

## 11. Water Fountains

Provide and maintain permanent publicly-accessible water fountain(s) located either in the planting zone, frontage zone of the streetscape, or a publicly accessible plaza. The fountains **must** be directly accessible from the sidewalk. A minimum of 1 water fountain for every 250 feet of street frontage.

## 12. Human-Scale Sheltering Structures

- a. A minimum of 70% of the total width of sheltering structures like overhangs, canopies, awnings, and arcades must have a clear height of no more than 14 feet.

## 13. Human-Scale Materials

Provide at least one of the two options below:

- a. At least 70% of the ground floor facade, which is not composed of fenestration, must be clad in a durable, human-scaled facade material. To be considered human-scale, individual units of the facade material must have either a height OR width of no more than 18".
- b. At least 70% of ground floor windows and doors must be human-scaled. To be considered human scaled, an individual window pane or door must not be wider

than 48". Large sections of glass facade can be visually broken into multiple human-scaled sections of glass using mullions. Muntins and sashbars are not considered when measuring a window pane.

#### **14. Major Landscaped Area**

- a. Provide an at-grade planting area, directly accessible from the public sidewalk, having an area no less than 15% of the site area.
- b. Projects must employ a layered planting plan; provide at least 2 layers of canopies (shade trees, understory trees, shrubs, or ground cover)
- c. 75% of planting areas provided to comply with this guideline should be covered by plants after 3 years.
- d. One plant species must not make up more than 50% of the overall number of plants. No less than 80% of the plants must be native or adapted species per Texas Nursery and Landscape Association Best of Texas Landscape Guide OR Texas AgriLife Extension

#### **15. Enhanced Construction & Operations Sustainability**

Projects must achieve one of the following certifications:

- a. Austin Energy Green Building 3 Star Rating;
- b. 3 Petals of the Living Building Challenge; or
- c. LEED Gold Certification.

#### **16. Continuity with Historic Landmarks**

Where a project abuts a designated Historic Landmark, any portion of the new building that exceeds the height of the landmark's street-facing façade must be stepped back from the lower portions of the new building's street-facing facade by at least 15 feet. For corner lots, this standard only applies along the non-alley street lot line shared with the landmarked structure.

#### **17. Preserve Historic Building Facades**

- a. Where a building built before 1950 exists on-site, projects must preserve and maintain a minimum of 75% of that building's street-facing building façade area.
- b. This preserved facade must be permanently visible from the street.