



# City of Austin

## Recommendation for Action

**File #:** 24-5175, **Agenda Item #:** 68.

9/12/2024

### Posting Language

Conduct a public hearing and consider an ordinance amending City Code Title 25 to establish boundaries for new zoning districts located in the vicinity commonly known as the South Central Waterfront; creating a new zoning district and modifying related site development regulations and compatibility standards; creating a new zoning district for density bonus that includes granting additional floor-to-area ratio in exchange for providing community benefits; and initiating zoning and rezoning and necessary neighborhood plan amendments for eligible properties located within the boundaries of the new zoning districts.

### Lead Department

Planning Department.

### Fiscal Note

This item has no fiscal impact.

### Prior Council Action:

September 15, 2022 - City Council initiated the Code amendments by approving Resolution No. 20220915-090, which directed the City Manager to develop regulations to implement the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan.

### For More Information:

Mark Walters, Principal Planner, Planning Department, [Mark.Walters@austintexas.gov](mailto:Mark.Walters@austintexas.gov), (512) 974-7695.

### Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

April 1, 2024 - Recommendation unanimously approved as amended by the Codes and Ordinances Joint Committee on a 6-0 vote with Commissioner Maxwell absent.

April 1, 2024 - Recommendation unanimously approved as amended by the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board on a 6-0 vote with Board Member Bazan absent.

April 9, 2024 - Recommendation approved as amended by the Planning Commission on an 8-1 vote with Commissioner Mushtaler voting against the item and Commissioner Cox abstaining from the item.

April 15, 2024 - The South Central Waterfront Advisory Board unanimously recommended the city reject the Planning Commission recommendation to use the Downtown Density Bonus Program as the regulatory framework for the South Central Waterfront District on a 6-0 vote with Board Members Bazan and Ladner absent.

April 17, 2024 - Recommendation not approved by the Small Area Planning Joint Committee on a 3-2 vote with Commissioners Greenberg and Mushtaler voting against the item.

### Additional Backup Information:

On June 22, 2016, the City Council adopted the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan as an element of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. On September 15, 2022, Council passed Resolution No. 20220915-090 directing staff to develop regulations to implement the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan. The resolution directed that the regulations should:

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- Maximize the number of affordable housing units within and near the South Central Waterfront District;
  - Maximize infrastructure investments, such as for new streets, parks, bicycle infrastructure, and trails;
  - Maximize other community benefits;
  - Ensure enhanced environmental standards and protections;
  - Support the Project Connect transit investment the community is making;
  - Help create a connected, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use district where thousands of Austinites can live, work, and play;
  - Establish a density bonus program that generates community benefits; and
  - Allow entitlements to support infrastructure investments.

Resolution No. 20220915-090 directs staff to create a regulating plan to implement the South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan. Staff explored creating such a plan but has identified other options which better achieve the goals for the South Central Waterfront area. Staff recommends amending Title 25 to add the South Central Waterfront (SCW) combining district and the South Central Waterfront Density Bonus Program.

In drafting the regulations, staff received input from the Planning, Housing, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Watershed Protection, Austin Water, and Transportation and Public Works Departments, as well as from the Project Connect Office.

The public comment period began on February 20, 2024, and ended on March 20, 2024. In addition to an online survey available at [SpeakUpAustin.org/SouthCentralWaterfront](https://SpeakUpAustin.org/SouthCentralWaterfront), there were two online meetings on February 28 and March 20 and an in-person meeting on March 18 at the Central Library.

The proposed regulations align with and support the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan's goal of creating complete communities across the City. These communities provide access to employment, shopping, learning, open space, recreation, and other amenities and services.

In order to realize Phase 1 of the Austin Light Rail Project, federal funding is necessary, and the project will be evaluated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for funding under the FTA's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) New Starts program. The Austin Transit Partnership is seeking approximately 50 percent of project capital costs from the federal government through the CIG program. The FTA evaluates and rates projects based on multiple criteria, including criteria in Land Use and Economic Development categories. The Austin Light Rail Project's Waterfront station is planned to be centrally located in the South Central Waterfront. The City is the land use authority and therefore has the ability to amend regulations along the Phase 1 Austin Light Rail project. Any potential regulatory changes along the Phase 1 Austin Light Rail project could be considered as part of preliminary ratings packages to be submitted to the FTA in the summer of 2024 in support of future Austin Light Rail project funding. If the South Central Waterfront Combining District and the South Central Waterfront Density Bonus Program are not adopted prior to the grant application being submitted to the FTA, these regulations cannot be considered as part of the application.

This ordinance will not rezone any properties within the area commonly known as the South Central Waterfront.