

Downtown Density Bonus Urban Design Standards

These standards would apply only to projects seeking Downtown Density Bonus entitlements and are intended to implement public realm and pedestrian environment objectives that currently apply under §25-2-586.

In order to participate in the proposed Downtown Density Bonus (DDB) program, projects would be required to adhere to all mandatory design standards and a minimum number of additional urban design standards from a menu of options.

For Phase I of the Downtown Density Bonus update, the proposed requirements would be:

- Projects zoned **-DDB400** must adhere to **all mandatory standards** and at least **7 out of the 14 menu standards** to participate in the DDB program
- Projects zoned **-DDB850** must adhere to **all mandatory standards** and least **10 out of the 14 menu standards** to participate in the DDB program

In future phases of the Downtown Density Bonus program update, additional combining districts may be created that have different requirements for the minimum number of urban design standards that must be met. Additionally, subdistricts may be created that provide additional urban design standards or requirements based on the unique character of specific areas (such as the Red River Cultural District).

Additional design standards may be added in the future. If additional design standards are added to the menu, the minimum number of standards that must be met may be modified.

The Urban Design team in Austin Planning will review site plans and determine compliance with the urban design standards.

Mandatory Urban Design Standards

Screening Requirements

- (A) Utility equipment, mechanical equipment, and solid waste collection areas, including loading docks, truck parking, outdoor storage, trash collection, trash compaction, and other service functions:
 - a. are prohibited in the area between a building and a street;
 - b. must not be visible from a street, adjacent property lines, or the property lines across adjacent public streets; and
 - c. must be screened or located in a public alley.
- (B) This subsection applies to a site with frontage on an alley 20 feet or more wide.

- a. 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.
 - b. A pump room, sprinkler room, or other utility or mechanical room must be adjacent to and accessible from the alley unless the Fire Chief determines that placing the room in another location is required because of a fire safety issue.
- (C) Above-ground parking must be screened so that vehicles are concealed from view from a public street or adjacent property.
- a. Vehicle and parking garage screening materials must be providing at least 70% coverage.

Parking Requirements

Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces allowed is 40 percent of the number of motor vehicle parking spaces formerly required by Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements).

The maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces allowed is 60 percent of the number of motor vehicle parking spaces formerly required by Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Loading Requirements and Former Off-Street Parking Requirements) if:

- (A) all parking spaces are contained in a parking structure;
- (B) the director finds that allowing additional parking spaces does not impact public health, safety, or welfare or undermine established planning policies for the area; and
- (C) one of the following:
 - a. the parking is a shared parking facility, and the site plan includes a note that identifies the shared parking facility as a condition of approval;
 - b. the parking is rented or sold separately from the building space, and the site plan includes a note that identifies the separate rental or sale of the parking spaces as a condition of approval;
 - c. the parking is designed and constructed for conversion to usable building space in the future, and the site plan includes a note that identifies the ability to convert the parking to usable building space as a condition of approval;
 - d. the parking is included in an underground parking structure; or
 - e. the applicant pays a mitigation fee established by separate ordinance.
 - f. A development that is less than 10,000 square feet in floor area or containing 70 or fewer residential units can include up to 60 percent of motor vehicle parking spaces formerly required by Appendix A (Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements).

The maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces allowed is 80 percent of the number of motor vehicle parking spaces formerly required by Appendix A (Tables of Off-

Street Loading Requirements and Former Off-Street Parking Requirements) if the additional parking is included in an underground parking structure

Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage Requirements

- (A) In this subsection, PRINCIPAL STREET has the same meaning as principal street in Article 5 (Definitions) of Subchapter E (Design Standards and Mixed Use).
- (B) At least 75 percent of the building frontage along the principal street must contain one or more commercial or civic uses and must comply with the dimensional requirements found in Section 4.3.3.C in Subchapter E (Design Standards and Mixed Use) of this chapter.
- (C) For properties with less than 100 feet along the frontage of the principal street, 50% of the ground floor occupiable area must contain one or more commercial or civic uses and must comply with the dimensional requirements found in Section 4.3.3.C in Subchapter E (Design Standards and Mixed Use) of this chapter.
- (D) Lobbies may qualify as pedestrian-oriented commercial or civic spaces if they include seating, are transparent, and are publicly accessible. A lobby that does not meet these qualifications may not count towards the required pedestrian-oriented commercial or civic space, except that up to 10% of required frontage may be satisfied by residential or office lobbies that are transparent, visible from the sidewalk, and with direct street access.

Primary Entrance Requirements

- (A) For purposes of this section, an “entrance” shall include a primary retail entrance, residential lobby entrance with direct street access, or shared public access point.
- (B) Buildings with at least 150 feet of a single street frontage shall provide at least one entrance on that frontage, and buildings with over 200 feet of frontage shall provide an entrance per every 150 feet of frontage, excluding alleys, with a minimum of two entrances.
 - a. Alternative compliance may be approved where preserved historic façades make strict compliance infeasible.
- (C) When not in conflict with Great Streets, provide permanent overhead shelter over all primary entrances, with a shelter depth of no less than 40% of the clear height.

Optional Urban Design Standards

1. Enhanced Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage Requirements

- (A) At least 75 percent of the total building frontage on the ground floor of the building must contain one or more commercial or civic uses and must comply with the

dimensional requirements found in Section 4.3.3.C in Subchapter E (Design Standards and Mixed Use) of this chapter.

2. Enhanced Primary Entrance Requirements

- (A) For purposes of this section, an “entrance” shall include a primary retail entrance, residential lobby entrance with direct street access, or shared public access point that meets pedestrian activation standards.
- (B) Buildings with at least 150 feet of a single street frontage shall provide at least two entrances on that frontage, and buildings with over 200 feet of frontage shall provide an entrance per every 75 feet of frontage, excluding alleys, with a minimum of three entrances.
 - a. Alternative compliance may be approved where preserved historic façades, structural constraints, or site conditions make strict compliance infeasible.
- (C) When not in conflict with Great Streets, provide permanent overhead shelter over all primary entrances, with a shelter depth of no less than 40% of the clear height, and seating adjacent to each entrance.

3. Bicycle Parking

- (A) Buildings shall provide a minimum of 15% of the proposed motor vehicle parking spaces or an additional 15 spaces beyond the minimum required bicycle parking in § 25-6-477 as bicycle parking, whichever is greater.
 - a. “Publicly accessible” shall mean accessible without restricted entry during posted building hours.

4. Upper Story Design

- (A) Buildings shall provide a minimum 10-foot stepback above 120 feet.
- (B) A 10-foot separation shall be maintained from existing buildings 120 feet or taller.
- (C) Lots with frontage under 100 feet on their front lot line shall limit building coverage above 120 feet to 85% of the lot frontage width.

5. Curb Cuts

- (A) Curb cuts shall be located to minimize pedestrian conflicts and preserve continuous active frontage.
- (B) Unless required by Fire Code or Transportation Criteria Manual standards, vehicular access to a site from a public street that runs:
 - a. east and west is limited to one curb cut for each 140 feet of street frontage;
 - b. north and south is limited to one curb cut.

6. Garage Lanes

- (A) Where access to a garage is required, driveways shall not exceed 2 lanes at the public right-of-way.

7. Minimum Cantilever Clearance in Private Space and Encroachments for Buildings

- (A) A minimum clearance of 40 feet from the ground shall be maintained for building cantilevering next to or into the public right of way to allow trees to grow.
- (B) If a building encroaches into the public right-of-way, a minimum horizontal clearance of 8 feet from proposed trees shall be maintained.

8. Protection for Pedestrian from Precipitation

- (A) When not in conflict with Great Streets, provide permanent overhead shelter over no less than 60% of street frontage located over or abutting the pedestrian clear zone, including parking garage entrances and exits, with a depth of no less than 40% of the clear height.
- (B) Sheltering structures including overhangs, canopies, awnings, and arcades must have a clear height of no more than 14 feet.

9. Provide Transparency on Street-Facing Ground Floor Facades

- (A) Reflective, tinted, or low-transparency glass shall not be used to provide transparency along the sidewalk. Ground floor door and window glazing must have a visible light transmittance of 60% or higher and an external reflectance of 20% or less to be considered transparent.
 - a. Transparent material used to satisfy (A) above must adhere to the Bird Friendly Design Standards outlined in the Austin Green Energy Building Standards.

10. Provide Transparency Above the Ground Floor

- (A) Reflective, tinted, or low-transparency glass shall not be used to provide transparency on the first 2 floors above the ground floor. Window glazing on these floors must have a visible light transmittance of 60% or higher and an external reflectance of 20% or less to be considered transparent.
- (B) Transparent material used to satisfy (a) above must adhere to the Bird Friendly Design Standards outlined in the Austin Green Energy Building Standards.

11. Provide a Publicly Accessible Restroom and/or Drinking Fountain

- (A) Provide and maintain at least one of the three options below:
- a. A no-cost all-gender indoor or outdoor restroom or restrooms directly accessible from the public right-of-way with at least one toilet, baby changing station, and one sink or hand-washing station and at least one baby changing station and at least one waste receptacle.
 - b. A no-cost room that includes private changing rooms or stalls for breastfeeding directly accessible from the public right-of-way with at least one sink or hand-washing station and at least one baby changing station and at least one waste receptacle.
 - i. Rooms or stalls shall provide locking doors for each room or stall.
 - c. Publicly-accessible water fountains located where not conflicting with Great Streets either in the planting zone, frontage zone of the streetscape, or a publicly accessible plaza. The fountains must be directly accessible from the sidewalk.

12. Provide a Planting Area or Green Roof

- (A) No less than 15% of the site area must be dedicated to an at-grade planting area or 50% of the roof area must be covered in a green roof.
- (B) Green roofs must be built to the Vegetated ("Green") Roof Performance Standards in Appendix W of the Environmental Criteria Manual.
- a. The percent of vegetated roof cover is calculated as a portion of total roof area excluding mechanical equipment, photovoltaic panels, swimming pools or other amenity and recreation areas, and skylights.

13. Match Historic Building Scale

- (A) For developments adjacent to a property that is currently listed as a City of Austin landmark or contributes to a local historic district:
- a. Developments must include a base with a height that is within 15 feet of the height of the adjacent historic property.
 - b. Any portions of new buildings exceeding the height of the adjacent historic property's building façade by more than 15 feet must step back at least 15 feet from the face of the base façade.

14. Preserve Existing Building Facade

- (A) Projects must preserve a minimum of 75% of the area of the street facing building façade of designated contributing historic properties and properties that meet an age threshold of 45 or more years.