



Downtown Density Bonus Phase 1 – Proposal

Austin Planning | Planning Commission Briefing | 04/14/2026

Agenda

- Background
- Existing Program & Process
- Proposed Changes
- Urban Design Standards
- Community Benefits
- Downtown Density Bonus Process
- Stakeholder Engagement and Timeline

Background

City Council Resolution

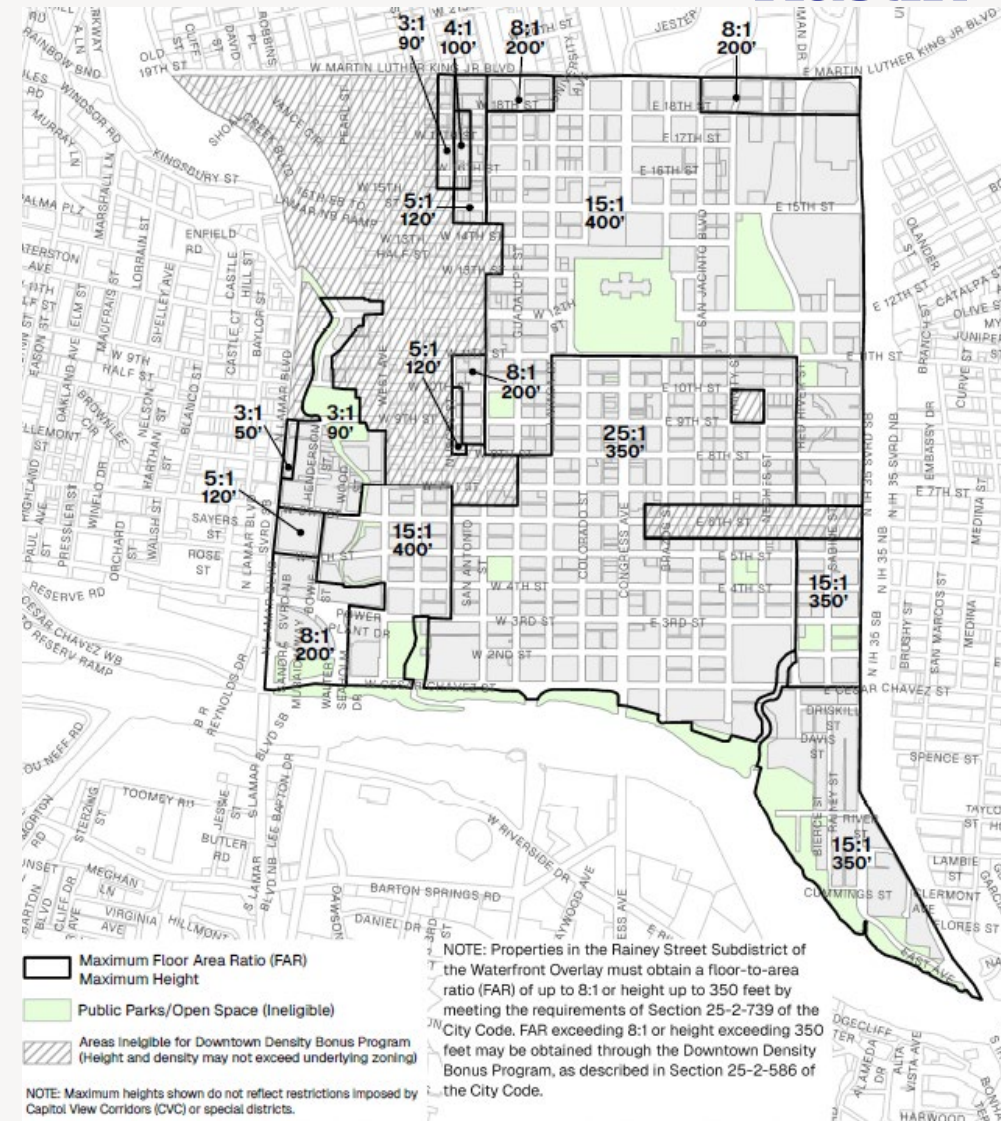


■ Downtown Density Bonus Update

- [Resolution No. 20240718-185](#) in July 2024 directed staff to update the Downtown Density Bonus (DDB) program
- Requested:
 - Updates to gatekeeper requirements
 - Integration of Rainey subdistrict
 - Creation of new subdistricts
 - Prioritization of accessibility and shade opportunities
 - Simplification of the affordability program
 - Alignment of the program with the Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) overlay.

■ Downtown Density Bonus – Phase 1

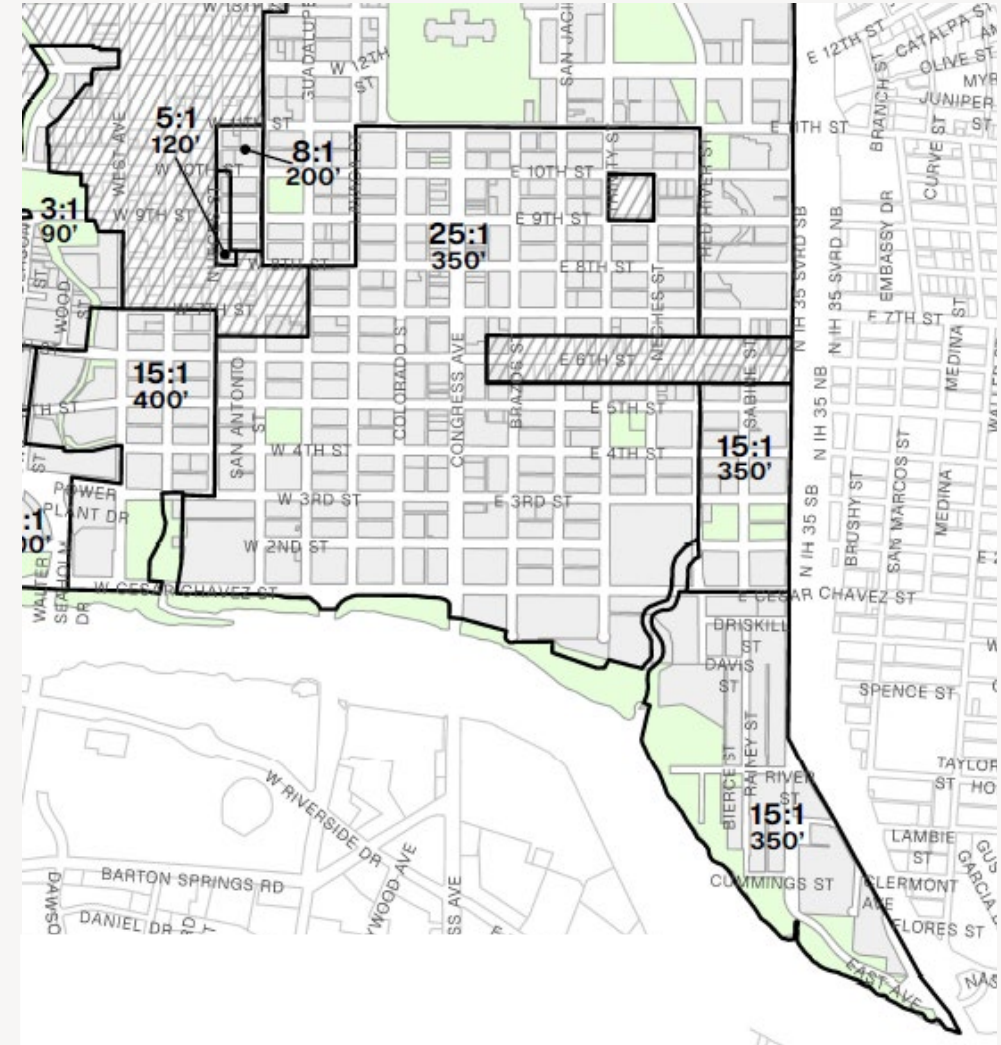
- In response to Senate Bill 840, Council adopted [Ordinance No. 20251023-063](#), which amended the Central Business District Zone and directed staff to update the DDB program by June 2026 for three DDB subdistricts



Existing Program & Process

Phase 1 - Existing Height & FAR Map

- After the recent adoption of the Central Business District Zone amendments and updates to the DDB, the three subdistricts in Phase 1 have the following entitlements available via the DDB program:
 - Core Subdistrict – 350ft of height and 25:1 FAR*
 - Rainey Subdistrict – 350ft of height and 15:1 FAR*
 - Convention Center Subdistrict – 350ft of height and 15:1 FAR*
- Applicants can request Council approval to exceed these entitlements



*FAR limits are only applicable to commercial developments





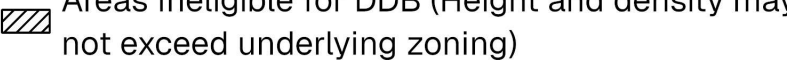
Proposed Changes

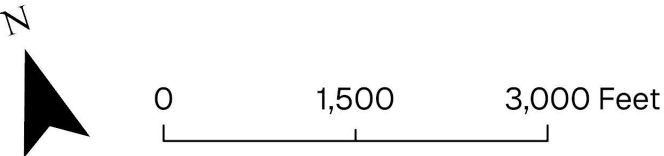
Phase I – Combining Districts



- Each combining district will have different entitlements/requirements. Phase I will create 2 combining districts:
 - **DDB400** has **+400 ft**
 - **DDB850** has **+850 ft**
 - Additional height is **additive** to the property's base zoning height limit
 - E.g., a CBD-DDB400 site could build up to **750 ft** (350 ft base height + 400 bonus ft)
- Sites will be rezoned into **DDB400** in Phase I.
- Sites will be eligible to request rezoning into **DDB850** through the standard rezoning process.
- Max height cannot be exceeded by Council approval.
- Additional combining districts will be created in Phase II.
- Within a combining district, different subdistricts could be mapped in the future.
 - Different subdistricts can have different gatekeeper requirements or community benefit options.
 - E.g., Red River may have more cultural/live music gatekeeper requirements or community benefit options.

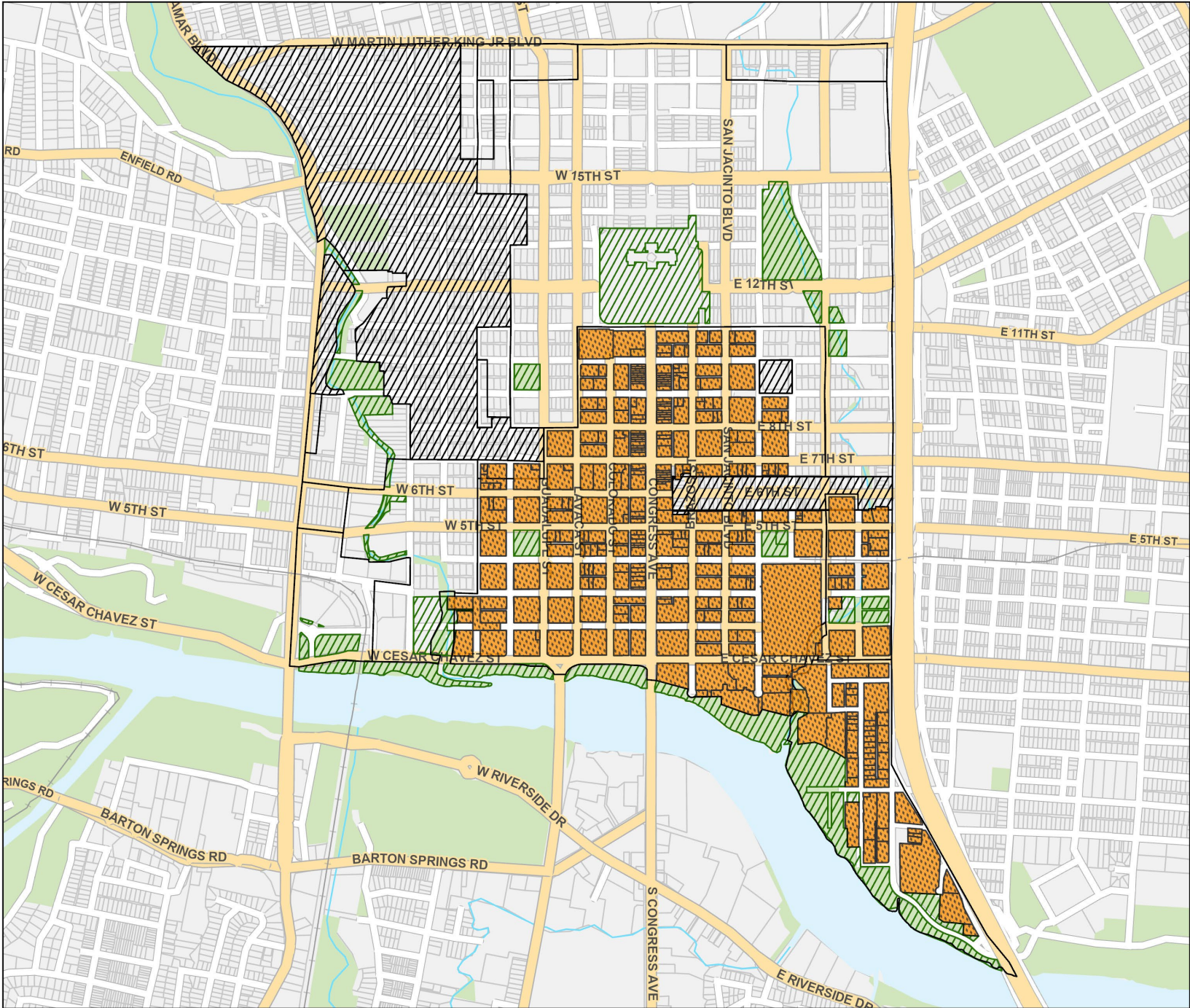
Existing DDB Boundaries and Proposed Combining Districts (Phase 1)

-  Current Downtown Density Bonus Subdistricts
-  DDB400 Combining District (City-initiated rezoning)
-  DDB850 Combining District (Applicant-initiated rezoning)
- DDB Ineligible Areas**
-  Public Parks/Open Space (Ineligible for DDB)
-  Areas Ineligible for DDB (Height and density may not exceed underlying zoning)



This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

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Downtown Heights

Current CBD Base Height
350 ft



Windsor on the Lake
332 ft

CBD Average Height
450 ft



300 Colorado
446 ft

DDB400 Max Height
750 ft



The Republic
707 ft

DDB850 Max Height
1,200 ft



Waterline 1,034 ft
(Austin's tallest building)

Program Structure

General Requirements



Subdistrict Requirements (Phase II)

- Regulations applicable to any participating developments include:
 - Applicability of the Program
 - Gatekeeper Requirements
 - Allowed Uses
 - Site Development and Design Standards
 - Parking Allowances
 - Other Requirements of City Code Chapter 4-18
 - Height Allowances
 - Affordability Requirements

- Additional regulations within each subdistrict could include:
 - Specific Site Development Standards
 - Specific Gatekeeper Requirements
 - Specific Community Benefits Requirements

Phase I – Site Development Standards



	Existing Core	Existing Rainey & Convention Center	Proposed DDB400	Proposed DDB850
Exemptions	None	None	Maximum building coverage Landscaping requirements Minimum site area Private common open space	Maximum building coverage Landscaping requirements Minimum site area Private common open space
Uses	None	None	Prohibits or makes conditional non-transit supportive uses	Prohibits or makes conditional non-transit supportive uses
FAR	25:1*	15:1*	Unlimited	Unlimited
Height	350'	350'	+400' (750' Max)	+850' (1200' Max)
Gatekeeper Requirements	Great Street Standards 2-Star Energy Green Building Rating Design Guidelines	Great Street Standards 2-Star Energy Green Building Rating Design Guidelines	Great Street Standards 2-Star Energy Green Building Rating Required Design Standards + 7 of 14 Optional Design Standards	Great Street Standards 2-Star Energy Green Building Rating Required Design Standards + 10 of 14 Optional Design Standards

*FAR limits do not apply to residential or mixed-use projects meeting SB840 standards

Phase I – Proposed Updated Gatekeeper Requirements

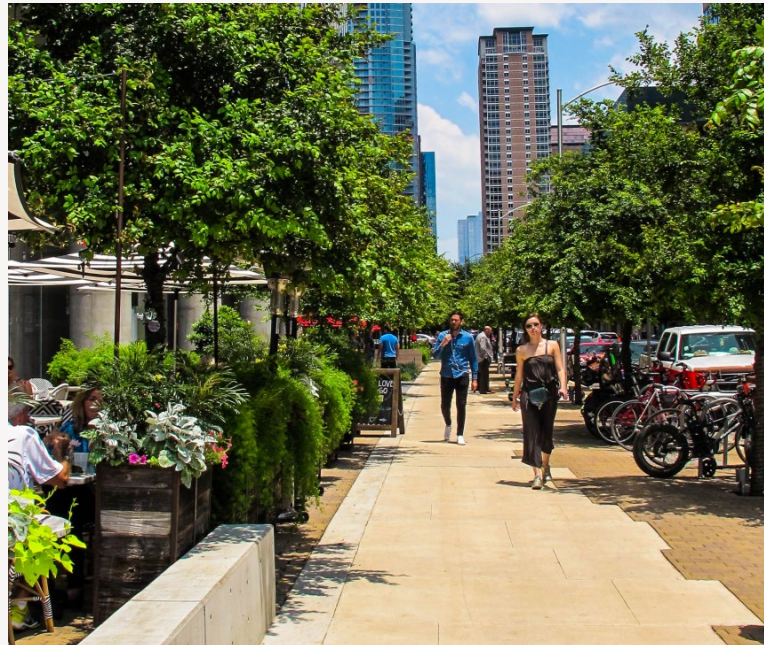
Compliance with Urban Design Standards

Required standards + selection from optional list of standards;
no Design Commission review



Great Streets Standards Streetscape Improvements

Will include any updates to Great Streets Plan



Min. 2-Star Rating under the Austin Energy Green Building Program

With bird-friendly design standards required



Urban Design Standards

Urban Design Standards Gatekeeper Requirement



- In order to participate in the DDB program, projects must adhere to the mandatory Urban Design Standards and select a number from the optional list to meet for their development.
 - The optional standards will follow a “menu” approach, where projects select which standards to meet.
 - Projects utilizing DDB400 must meet **7 out of 14 standards**.
 - Projects utilizing DDB850 must meet **10 out of 14 standards**.
- Design Commission review will no longer be required. Staff will determine compliance with the Urban Design Standards at the time of site plan review.
- In future phases, Standards may be revised and additional options added.

Mandatory Urban Design Standards



1. Screening Requirements

- Provide screening for waste, utility, mechanical and above-ground parking

2. Parking Limits

- Limit above ground parking to 60% of formerly required by Appendix A and up to 80% with underground parking

3. Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage

- Require 75% of frontage to be pedestrian-friendly uses along principal street

4. Primary Entrance Requirements

- Require buildings entrances every 150ft and buildings with over 200ft of frontage on a street shall provide a minimum of two entrances

Optional Urban Design Standards



1. Enhanced Pedestrian-Oriented Frontage

- Require 75% of total building frontage to be pedestrian-friendly uses

2. Enhanced Primary Entrance Requirements

- Provide buildings entrances every 75ft and buildings with over 200ft of frontage on a street shall provide a minimum of three entrances

3. Bicycle Parking

- Increase minimum number of required long-term bicycle parking spaces

4. Stepbacks

- Require minimum 10' setback above 120' of height

5. Curb Cuts

- Limit number of curb cuts per lot frontage

6. Garage Lanes

- Limit number of garage lanes

7. Cantilever Clearance

- Require 40' clearance for cantilevers

8. Protection for Pedestrians from Precipitation

- Require overhead shelter over 60% of street frontage with depth not less than 40% clear height

9. Provide Transparency on Street-Facades

- Require high-level of transparency along sidewalk

10. Provide Transparency Above Ground Floor

- Require high-level of transparency on first two floors above the ground floor

11. Provide Publicly Accessible Restroom and/or Drinking Fountain

12. Provide Planting Area or Green Roof

- Require 15% of site as dedicated at-grade planting or 50% of roof as green roof

13. Match Historic Building Scale

- Require a base with height within 15ft of the height adjacent to historic property

14. Preserve Existing Building Façade

- Preserve minimum 75% of historic building facade

Community Benefits

Phase I – Proposed Community Benefits



- Must provide 100% of community benefits as Affordable Housing On-Site Units or Fee-in-Lieu
- By providing one of the community benefits listed below, the affordable housing requirement can be reduced by up to 2% of units or 20% of the fee-in-lieu:
 - **Onsite Historic Preservation**
 - **Grocery Store Use (min. 2,500 sf)**
 - **Cultural Uses (min. 5,000 sf)**
 - **Live Music Venue (min. 5,000 sf)**
 - **Austin Energy Green Building 3-Star Rating**
 - **Transit Supportive Infrastructure**

Phase I – Affordable Housing Requirements



	Existing Core & Convention Center	Existing Rainey	Proposed DDB400	Proposed DDB850
Affordable On-Site	10 bonus square feet per 1 square foot of affordable units (10% of bonus square footage)	5% of units up to 8:1 FAR AND Fee-in-lieu or 10 bonus square feet per 1 square foot of affordable units	5% of all units at 50% Median Family Income (MFI) rental OR 5% of all units at 80% Median Family income for ownership	5% of all units at 50% Median Family Income (MFI) rental OR 5% of all units at 80% Median Family income for ownership
Affordable Fee-in-Lieu	Commercial CBD - \$9 Residential CBD - \$12 Commercial non-CBD zoning - \$6 Residential non-CBD zoning - \$10	Residential - \$5 Commercial CBD - \$9 Commercial non-CBD - \$6	DDB400 - \$10 per bonus area square foot	DDB850 - \$12 per bonus area square foot

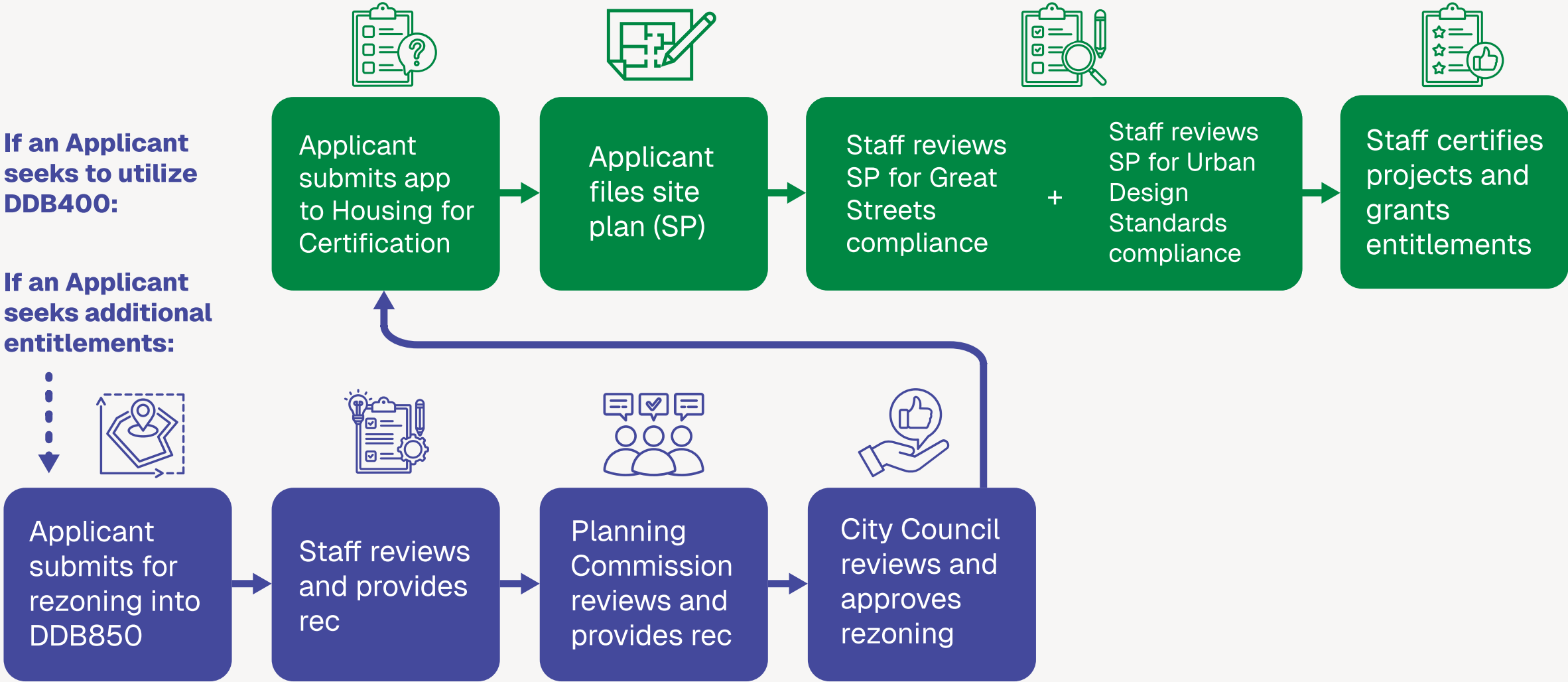
Phase I – Requirements from Code Ch. 4-18



- **Density Bonus Lease & Redevelopment Requirements (4-18)**
 - Require dispersion of affordable units and equal access to amenities
 - Require tenant protections and redevelopment requirements for existing multifamily and certain commercial uses:
 - Creative spaces (see § 25-2-654(F) for definition) operating for ≥ 3 years
 - Adult care services (general or limited) operating for ≥ 12 months
 - Child care services (general or limited) operating for ≥ 12 months
 - Cocktail lounges operating for ≥ 10 years
 - Food sales operating for ≥ 10 years w/ gross floor area of $\leq 20,000$ sq ft
 - General retail sales operating for ≥ 10 years w/ a gross floor area of $\leq 5,000$ sq ft
 - Personal services operating for ≥ 10 years w/ a gross floor area of $\leq 5,000$ sq ft
 - Restaurant (general or limited) operating for ≥ 10 years w/ gross floor area of $\leq 5,000$ sq ft

Downtown Density Bonus Process

Phase I – Proposed Process



Stakeholder Engagement and Timeline

Stakeholder Engagement



- Staff has met with several community stakeholder groups, including:
 - Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)
 - Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA)
 - Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA)
 - American Institute of Architects (AIA)
 - Red River Cultural District
 - Urban Land Institute (ULI)
- Staff is also engaging several commissions in this process:
 - Codes and Ordinances Joint Committee
 - Design Commission
 - Downtown Commission
 - Historic Landmark Commission
 - Planning Commission
- Staff has engaged several departments as well, including:
 - Austin Economic Development
 - Austin Energy
 - Austin Housing
 - Austin Parks and Recreation
 - Austin Watershed

Timeline



**Timeline subject to change*

Thank you!

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SpeakUpAustin.org/DDBP1