



# *AUSTIN PLANNING COMMISSION*

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## **Re: Support for On-line 3-Dimensional Models for New Development Projects**

Mayor Wynn and Members of the Austin City Council

Recently we have been made aware of an endorsement by the Design Commission of the use of computer-generated three-dimensional (3D) models to help developers of large-scale projects better represent land development proposals. The Planning Commission itself recently saw an effective use of 3D modeling of large-scale project during deliberations on the next phase of the Domain in North Austin (see the “plan” link at [www.thedomainaustin.com](http://www.thedomainaustin.com)). In addition, many of us have seen the illuminating 3D images of Houston, Portland, OR, New York City using the downloadable Google Earth application.

Planning Commission Chairperson Dave Sullivan attended a meeting on February 16, 2007 at which Design Commissioner Girard Kinney and community activists Ms Laura Morrison and Ms Wendy Todd coordinated a discussion on this subject among CoA Neighborhood Planning staff, CoA Information Technology staff, University of Texas Community & Regional Planning faculty and students, and additional concerned citizens. There was an apparent consensus at this meeting that the CoA should move toward routine translation of two-dimensional site plans or draft “conceptual” site plans into 3D images, with pseudo-animation features that allow “fly-by” and “walk-through” viewing. CoA staff can provide you with a sample demonstration they created based on the proposed East Avenue planned unit development if you request.

The Planning Commission is very interested in seeing computer tools such as Internet-based 3D imagery of development proposals made available to the CoA staff, the Commission, and the public. Internet-based 3D imagery will be of direct assistance in helping citizen and planners to visualize our proposed Mixed-use Activity Centers, and the already adopted Transit-Oriented Districts, Core Transit Corridors, Vertical Mixed-Use and other new land development approaches to handling Austin’s growth. Thus, we offer our support for efforts to bring on-line 3D simulated imagery and animation tools to the CoA Web site.

The Planning Commission offers this support in a general sense. We do not have a specific proposal at this point other than to encourage the City Staff to work with experts in this field and to develop a plan based on the best practices in other cities to bring back to the City Manager and City Council. Because the Commission is also concerned about the costs of development, we would like to see any requirements on the development community tailored to not affect affordable housing projects or small businesses. If new requirements are created for submission of electronic 3D models with zoning applications or site plans, there should be a to-be-determined threshold below which the new requirements are waived.

We would be happy to provide more information at your request. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Dave Sullivan, PC Chair