

DI

Memorandum

From: Myron Smith – City of Austin Planning Commission

To: Dave Anderson, Chair – City of Austin Planning Commission, Greg Guernsey, Director – City of Austin Planning & Development Review Department

cc: Bart Whatley, Chair – City of Austin Downtown Commission
Dora Anguiano, Liaison – City of Austin Planning Commission

At a recent Planning Commission Meeting, I brought up the topic of referring downtown cases being considered before the Planning Commission to the Downtown Commission, with subsequent clarification being requested by several other Commissioners. In response to this request, the following commissioners formed a working group to discuss the topic and provide clarification to staff on our expectations: Planning Commissioners Smith, Hatfield, Northey, and Anderson; and Downtown Commissioner Dealey.

The Planning Commission understands the important role the Downtown Commission plays in 1) the review of policies and projects impacting downtown Austin; and 2) serving as stewards for the Downtown Austin Plan and, as such, serve as a sounding board for the City Council and Staff on the implementation of the Downtown Plan; and offer recommendations on amendments to the Downtown Austin Plan as needed¹. We also benefit greatly from the reviews provided the Downtown Commission on difficult cases located in the CBD.

However, the Planning Commission also realizes that Planning & Development Review Staff have little time to spend on cases where reviews by multiple Commissions may not be warranted given the straightforwardness of the case or other circumstances.

In response to these facts, the Planning Commission would like to reiterate our desire – which is consistent with existing, if unwritten, policy – that those projects or cases that are regulated by the Downtown Plan be reviewed by that Commission prior to the case being heard at Planning Commission.

While we cannot require this review, we are desirous of this review as it enables those with the best understanding of the Downtown Plan to interpret it (Downtown Commissioners), thereby affording us with more information and therefore able to make better decisions as Planning Commissioners.

Further, we request that the backup information for cases located downtown to clearly state if any case is (or is not) in compliance with the Downtown Plan, and if it is, that the Downtown Commission act on those cases expeditiously.

I trust you will communicate this to the appropriate stakeholders.

¹ Downtown Commission Bylaws: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/document.cfm?id=134363>