

AGENDA



Recommendation for Council Action

Austin City Council	Item ID	38227	Agenda Number	201.
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Meeting Date:	12/11/2014	Department:	Planning and Development Review
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Subject

Conduct a public hearing and consider an ordinance amending City Code Title 25 related to the Congress Avenue combining district.

Amount and Source of Funding

Fiscal Note

Purchasing Language:	
Prior Council Action:	
For More Information:	Jerry Rusthoven, 512-974-3207; Greg Dutton, 512-974-3509.
Boards and Commission Action:	December 9, 2014 – To be reviewed by the Planning Commission.
MBE / WBE:	
Related Items:	

Additional Backup Information

The Congress Avenue overlay district requires buildings to be set back from Congress Avenue as they get taller. Staff believes this was implemented to avoid a “canyon effect” along Congress Avenue. However, prior to the existence of the overlay the Bank of America building was built on the east side of the street. This building does not have a setback. Because the view shed is already impeded by the Bank of America building the City Council has four times in the past approved a reduction of the setback from 60 to 40 feet on the east side of the street. This was done twice for properties owned by Tom Stacy, for the Frost Bank Tower, as well as the JW Marriot. In each instance the Central Urban Redevelopment (CURE) zoning tool was used to reduce the setback.

Staff is requesting this amendment because upon further review it has been determined that the CURE tool can only be used to adjust a base district regulation, not an overlay regulation. Given that there have been four adjustments to the overlay in the past because of the Bank of America building, staff believes that the overlay itself should be changed to conform with what the City Council has previously approved.

It is important to note that staff is recommending this change only to the east side of Congress Avenue. On the west side of the street there have been no impediments to the view shed. Indeed, when a similar adjustment to the setback was requested on the west side of the street last year it was met with much opposition and was not approved by the City Council. The City Council adopted Downtown Plan also calls for a reduction of the setback along Congress Avenue.

Because of the precedent of four existing approvals and the recently adopted Downtown Plan, staff is requesting that Council initiate a change to the Code reducing the setback of the Congress Avenue Overlay on the east side of the street from 60 feet to 40 feet. Staff will be taking this amendment to the December 9th Planning Commission meeting and back to City Council for approval at the December 11th meeting.