

Pedestrian Advisory Council Recommendation:

The People of Austin Deserve a Sustainable, Equitable, Healthy Land Development Code

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) is to advise the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding creating, maintaining, and operating pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, all people who live, work, or visit the City of Austin deserve safe options to access all elements of the city by foot or wheelchair;

WHEREAS, most Austin residents would prefer to use public transit as their primary mode of transportation and would like to walk and bike more, but have not been able to for various reasons, according to the City of Austin Mobility Talks Public Engagement Report;

WHEREAS, connectivity between private, semi-private and public spaces play a vital role in supporting community cohesion, reducing socio-economic barriers to jobs and amenities and providing healthy options for people to move about Austin;

WHEREAS, a 10 minute walk (roughly .5 miles) is considered to be a reasonable standard distance to various daily necessities including groceries, healthcare, parks and transit,

WHEREAS, current Floor-to-Area-Ratio (FAR) rules for high-rise buildings do not count parking garages in the calculation and lead to buildings with many floors of above-ground parking, affecting its accessibility and appearance, all while encouraging car use and ownership downtown;

WHEREAS, one of the stated goals of the draft Land Development Code is to increase housing stock and increase affordable housing, especially in transition areas and the urban core;

WHEREAS, many businesses are only safely accessible for customers who drive;

WHEREAS, maximizing the ability to add mixed-use, mixed income infill development in healthy transit-oriented neighborhoods in a region experiencing rapid population and job growth can dramatically reduce traffic impacts compared to the sprawl alternatives and multiple studies have shown the trip generation methodologies currently used by the City of Austin in the Traffic Impact Analysis system to be flawed;

WHEREAS, significant progress on pedestrian issues, the ability of the city land development code to allow for all people to have affordable options for living in walkable neighborhoods, and transformation of the urban planning and transportation regulation system to allow for safe, multimodal access for all has been made in the new draft Land Development Code presented by staff on October 4, 2019;

WHEREAS, gated communities and private streets interrupt the street grid and block safe pedestrian and public transit access, impacting both walkability and mobility for the able bodied and especially the disabled;

WHEREAS, the residents of the City of Austin have expressed a desire for a more walkable and accessible urban environment, developing strategies to support improved site layout and structural design and

orientation can create these walkable urban scapes by providing a better sense of street definition to improve accessibility for pedestrians;

WHEREAS, all children growing up in Austin should be able to walk to schools, parks, stores, and their friends' houses, all people wishing to live in the city of Austin should have affordable options to live in healthy, walkable neighborhoods, land use and transportation policy largely dictate the amount of vehicle miles traveled, carbon emissions, and victims of traffic violence in our region, and the piecemeal approach to land development has failed the people of Austin for several decades;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) recommends the Austin City Council adopt a sustainable, equitable land development code as soon as possible that allows for the possibility of a majority of regional population and job growth to occur in walkable transit-oriented locations inside of the City of Austin;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends disallowing the creation of private streets and gated communities from this point forward, in order to encourage a connected public street grid that maximizes walkability and public transportation for people of all abilities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends changes to the code ensuring that any businesses with drive-through windows or otherwise inaccessible automobile dependent methods, provide access to a walk-up window also accessible by wheelchair, ensuring that people of all abilities and modes have equivalent access to the business at all times that the business is open, even if they are not in a car;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends eliminating all elements of Traffic Impact Analysis systems that rely upon car trip generation measures and Level of Service for private motorized vehicles, and replacing these with a system that imposes impact fees for development to handle off-site vehicle issues, requiring transit and active transportation reviews for new development, require transportation demand management plans, and require safety studies for proposed access plans for new developments;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends including above-ground parking structures in a building's FAR calculation, thereby encouraging underground parking structures if they are absolutely necessary;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends that pedestrian paseos, similar to the paseo in the Mueller Neighborhood adjacent to the Children's Museum, be designed for all projects and neighborhoods where a street or road may not be appropriate and that staff recommend changes to this code to allow and encourage such uses, recognizing that human access, beyond car connectivity, is paramount to a healthy city;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends that the placement of surface parking lots along street frontages should be kept to a minimum to provide a more walkable urban environment and improved pedestrian access, and further that in limiting the placement of parking spaces between the primary building frontage and the street, the Development Code should encourage alternatives such as the location of parking areas behind or alongside existing buildings that comply with existing ADA accessibility standards, above- and below-ground in-structure parking, the use of shared parking areas, and the provision of access to parking from secondary streets as opposed to major thoroughfares;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends that Mixed-Use Zones within transition zones and the urban core prioritize and incentivize residential use, and especially affordable housing use, rather than office and service use with the intent that “mixed-use” zoning almost always results in the inclusion of some housing;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC strongly supports the progress on ending parking minimums found in the staff proposal, and appreciates the thoughtful, forward-leaning progress demonstrated by it;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC also strongly supports the proposed removal of parking minimums in the current draft, and recommends an end to all parking minimum requirements citywide as soon as is practicable, as was outlined in our previous resolution;

Date of Approval:

Vote:

Attest:

DRAFT