



Themes from S.M.A.R.T. Housing stakeholder one-on-one interviews: May-June, 2014

Everyone Agrees that:

- Transit orientation is always a priority but the cost of land has become a great barrier to developing on a medium-large scale within transit connected areas
- Lack of sidewalk connectivity and inconsistency of sidewalk quality makes providing an accessible route very challenging
 - Onus should be on the City not on affordable housing developers
- S.M.A.R.T. certified projects are no longer experiencing expedited review or development review advocacy from the City
 - Planning & Development Review, Law Department, Austin Energy, and Austin Water Utility all should be included
- Fees eligible to be waived should be expanded beyond the current list and capture future fees
- A much higher percentage of fee waivers will be necessary to entice for-profit developers to participate
- The most valued current incentive is the promise of expedited review
- Frequent Development Review staff turnover makes consistency challenging
- Policy should consider differences between non-profit and for-profit business models and goals
- There is a need for additional incentives to bring for-profit developers to the table
- Program could benefit from targeted outreach and education to for-profit developers/builders
- Providing accessible units does not increase cost of development significantly, nor do the units elicit negative feedback from residents
- Land value/cost is a major challenge for...
 - Non-profits to secure financing
 - For-profits to provide affordable units and still meet investor expectations
 - In transit connected areas where land costs are generally higher



Non-profit Developers:

- Non-profit affordable housing developer business models incorporate and often exceed all S.M.A.R.T. criteria.
 - Affordability requirements (term, MFI, percentage of development) are very minimal in the context of non-profit missions
- Accessibility and AE Green Building requirements can be challenging to meet in rehab projects.
 - There should be clear criteria specifically tailored to rehab development
- Flexibility is greatly valued – overly prescriptive requirements can impede the success of furthering a non-profit mission
- Need for clarity in both the S.M.A.R.T. Housing and RHDA application forms and process
- Transit Access -
 - Generally successful in working with Capital Metro to secure transit access for residents
 - Many developers consider an alternative transportation plan that includes multiple modes
 - Developers work with the City and private property owners to build sidewalks

For-profit Developers:

- The current incentives are not substantial enough to justify subsidizing affordable units.
- Large development projects that have participated in the S.M.A.R.T Housing program in the past primarily had market rate units that met the 80% MFI requirement and therefore were not required to subsidize the affordable units.

Program Administrators (current and past):

- Overall there has been a decline in communication (regarding S.M.A.R.T.) between City departments
- Policy and program should better support rehab and renovation
- We should explore opportunities to integrate S.M.A.R.T. standards into all density bonus programs
- Dedicated review team allowed for targeted customer service where expectations were clearly laid out up front and the reviewers and developers could work together to identify ways to expedite a project