



Downtown Mixed-Use Zoning Amendments

Summary of Public Input 2024

Main takeaways across all sources:

- Maintain historic character and small-town feel
- Ensure pedestrian oriented
- Have more retail and diverse dining options with outdoor spaces
- Need streetscape improvements, lighting, shade, on-street parking
- Confusion about allowed building heights in MU districts; codifying height in feet instead of stories will address most questions people had related to height allowances

Community Survey, report published October 2024:

- 60% identified taller buildings as a low priority or did not want
- Thoughtful sidewalk design was the most important element needed when considering taller buildings. Open space and structured parking were also important. Ground floor retail was 4th but also came up a lot at the open house as being very important.
- Things to further improve downtown (which aligns with what we heard with other input):
 - Enhance public spaces and green areas
 - Improve walkability, bikeability, and accessibility
 - Foster a diverse mix of businesses and amenities
 - Activate the area with events and programming
 - Strengthen the area's historic and cultural identity
 - Improve parking and traffic flow
 - Promote safety and cleanliness

Developer Roundtable, October 8, 2024:

- Importance of identity, sense of place, and preserving historic character
- Importance of the development of N Mays Street, road diet, sidewalk improvements, having active public spaces
- Traffic can move slower downtown
- Connectivity from trails into downtown, including needing appropriate signage
- Lighting needed
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements needed
- On-street parking
- Have more events downtown
- Support retail, have more diverse retail and dining options
- Beautification
- Hindering development: residential parking requirements, need to allow private infrastructure in the ROW, identify potential uses (small scale manufacturing)

- Mixed opinions about allowing taller buildings because height needs to be sensitive to historic character; should require mixture of uses/true mixed-use projects, ground floor retail

Business Survey, September 2024:

- **Businesses located downtown because (top 3):** Access to amenities and city services, Historic character and charm of downtown buildings, Walkability and pedestrian activity
- **What do you enjoy about being downtown?** Access to amenities and city services, Walkability and pedestrian activity, Proximity to events and downtown programming, Atmosphere and sense of place
- **Missing from downtown:** Parking, Diverse retail and dining options; many mention wanting fewer bars
- Generally in favor of taller buildings for economic development and pedestrian activity. However, depends on location and mixture of uses allowed and the need to protect historic character and view corridors. Mention not wanting increased traffic or to diminish small town feel. There were definite opinions about incompatible architecture (ugly) both in this survey and at the open house.

Open House Survey, October 29, 2024:

- 2:1 survey respondents were residents vs. those that work or visit downtown
- **What enjoy about being downtown?** Walkable/pedestrian oriented; historic character
- **What would further improve downtown?** Long-term preservation of historic landmarks and older buildings; More public spaces and parks/trails
- **What is one thing that would improve downtown? Summary of comments below:**

The comments highlight a strong desire for expanded retail, dining, and recreational options in Round Rock's downtown area, with an emphasis on enhancing walkability, family-friendliness, and outdoor amenities.

Key themes:

- Increased retail and dining options: Many commenters want a greater variety of shops, boutiques, cafes, and restaurants. Several noted a desire for retail spaces beyond bars, focusing on family-friendly and diverse establishments, including affordable dining, a delicatessen, or a mini grocery store with grab-and-go options.
- Walkability and pedestrian-friendly areas: There's a shared emphasis on making downtown more pedestrian-friendly, with safe, accessible walkways and shade for a comfortable walking experience. Suggestions include more on-street parking near shops, as well as organized events to draw people into the area.
- Outdoor and family-friendly spaces: Commenters express interest in more outdoor dining options, with patios, shade, and green spaces to support a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. A few suggest that downtown could benefit from a large music venue, live performances, and more park-based family activities to create a lively community hub.

- Enhanced green spaces and safety: Adding shaded trails, maintaining green spaces, and ensuring a safe environment were highlighted, indicating that people want a balance between activity zones and relaxing, family-oriented places.
- Economic development through unique downtown experiences: Some commenters suggest studying successful historic downtown redevelopments in other cities to guide Round Rock's growth in a way that respects its character. They envision a vibrant yet tasteful downtown with unique eateries, cultural events, and business opportunities.

In summary, there is a strong interest in making downtown Round Rock a well-rounded, pedestrian-friendly space with diverse retail, dining, and green areas that retain its charm while providing varied activities for locals and visitors alike.

- **In favor of taller buildings? Summary of comments below:**

The comments show a strong split in opinions about allowing taller buildings in Round Rock's downtown area, with most concerns centering around maintaining the area's historic charm, aesthetic, and character.

Key themes:

- Preservation of charm and historic character: A significant portion of commenters feel that taller buildings could detract from the small-town, historic appeal of downtown. Many emphasize keeping buildings under 3 or 4 stories, with the water tower and historic structures preserved as focal points. Some see Round Rock as distinct from larger cities like Austin, preferring to avoid high-rise developments that would change the small-town aesthetic.
- Targeted growth with height restrictions: Many commenters suggest a balanced approach, allowing taller buildings in specific areas, particularly west of Mays Street, near I-35, or along other major corridors. These commenters often propose height limits to ensure that new developments do not overshadow historic landmarks or obstruct views of iconic features like the water tower.
- Economic and commercial benefits: Some believe taller buildings could enhance economic development by attracting more retail, dining, and residential options, which could increase the local tax base and provide amenities. They argue for increased density to support businesses and walkability but stress that growth should align with preserving historic appeal.
- Infrastructure and livability concerns: A number of commenters point to issues with traffic congestion and limited parking in the downtown area. They worry that denser, taller buildings might exacerbate these problems unless there's a clear plan for accommodating increased population and maintaining walkability, green spaces, and tree-lined streets.
- Height limit preferences: Those open to taller buildings generally support a limit of 3-4 stories, with some willing to consider heights up to 8 stories in certain areas. They see height restrictions as a way to enable growth without compromising the town's atmosphere.

In summary, while there is openness to carefully planned, limited height increases for economic growth, a considerable group is protective of downtown Round Rock's historic charm and skeptical of major height changes without specific zoning controls and infrastructure improvements.

Open House General Feedback, October 29, 2024:

- Concerns over noise ordinance not working
- MU-L: more uses (retail and café), more flexible parking requirements
- More parking: structured parking, parking on E Main Street, ADA parking on W Main Street
- Connectivity issues: dislike roundabout, limit truck traffic, bat bridge issues for pedestrians
- Concerns about taller than 3 stories east of Mays Street
- Confusion about allowable heights
- Short term rental control in MU-L
- Mixed thoughts about SF changing to MU-L
- Concerns about trail bringing people into residential areas of downtown which conflicts with PARD goal of bringing people through downtown.
- Timing of streetscape improvements – not happening quickly enough, not supporting development; will DIP expand with expanded MU rezoning?
- Change bringing too much traffic
- Expand MU from Hesters Crossing into downtown on Mays Street
- Concerns over ADU quality/longevity of units
- Concerns about alley improvements and requirements to keep land for access

Open House Dot Exercise, October 29, 2024:

- Most people loved something like patio/café in all areas
- Multi-story multifamily (single use) with landscaping OK west of Spring Street
- Taller multifamily (8 or 9 stories) not liked anywhere in downtown
- It was clear that pitched roofs are important east of Sheppard Street, and neighborhood scale is important, especially for mixed-use buildings.
- Eastern downtown liked a residential unit above a commercial use (still 2-story with pitched roof)
- Taller mixed-use buildings preferred west of Mays Street
- Single-family homes liked everywhere but most suitable between Sheppard Street and Georgetown Avenue
- Like ADUs east of Spring Street that are compatible with the primary dwelling unit in design and scale
- Multiple units OK on one lot if have green space; didn't like 0 setback for residential
- Townhomes most suitable between Sheppard Street and Spring Street. Most preferred townhomes with a garage, trees, and setback from street
- Standalone single-family office conversion most suitable east of Spring Street, most preferred with a community or green space
- Cultural center within a mixed-use development OK west of Mays Street
- Concern about height impacting historic character

- Concerns about height but aesthetics, use mix and location were all factors also
- Overall, people don't like office suites or apartment buildings. They want a mixture of uses
- Overall wanted shade and greenery; images with fewer trees and greenery were selected less often
- Confusion over nuances of different multifamily uses like multifamily house