



Criteria Manual Screening Standards

Purpose

To provide defined standards for identifying criteria manual rules that should be reviewed by the Technical Advisory Review Panel (TARP).

Enabling Authority

[Resolution No. 20230323-057](#)

Directs the City Manager to establish a Technical Advisory Review Panel (TARP) to be tasked with:

- “Reviewing the City’s technical criteria manuals, with the goal of:
 - “Identifying the most challenges issues for staff and industry in implementing criteria manuals...”
 - “Providing recommendations for improving the criteria manuals and the process for adopting and amending criteria manuals.”
- “Ensuring opportunities for public input and consultation with relevant City boards and commissions, which should be timed to maximize opportunities for departments to consider the TARP’s recommendations before beginning the process required by City Chapter 1-2 (Adoption of Rules) for adopting criteria manuals or amendments.”

[City Code Chapter 1-2 – Adoption of Rules](#)

Establishes mandatory process for adopting administrative rules

Standards for Criteria Manuals

This section establishes standards to be used by the TARP and the Land Development Rules Administrator (LDRA) in evaluating existing criteria manuals and proposed updates.

Background

— Resolution No. 20230323-057 includes several objectives for improving criteria manuals:

- “[B]etter align criteria manuals with existing City Council policies, City housing goals, and industry best practices, as well as the needs of individual departments and the protection of public health and safety;”
- “Minimize cross-departmental conflicts and redundancies;”
- “Establishing a process for conflict resolution;”

- “Documenting the costs, timeline, and housing capacity implications to City staff and the development community of the implementation and enforcement of new rules;”
- “Identifying opportunities to clarify conflicts and redundancies in the Land Development Code (LDC) to simplify and clarify application of new rules;”
- “Where appropriate, working with relevant City boards and commissions, including but not limited to the Planning and Design Commissions”

Standards for Screening

Based on the direction in Resolution No. 20230323-057, the following standards shall be used in evaluating provisions of existing criteria manuals or proposed updates:

- ***Land Development Code Authority***
 - What provisions of Title 25 or other Council adopted policy does the criteria manual implement?
 - City Code Sec. 1-2-1(B) provides that administrative rules may be adopted to “implement, administer, enforce, or comply with the Code, an ordinance, or another law for which the department is responsible.” Since criteria manuals are administrative rules, all requirements included in a criteria manual should perform one or more of those functions.
- ***Health and Safety***
 - To what extent is a criteria manual requirement necessary to protect public health and safety?
 - Not all criteria manuals relate to health and safety in the same way. For example, requirements in the Environmental Criteria Manual (ECM) related to erosion or shoring requirements in the Standard Specifications may be necessary to guard against imminent harm, while water quality standards in the ECM or requirements for traffic analysis in the Transportation Criteria Manual relate to broader concepts of health and safety.
 - So, this standard will apply differently based on the purpose a requirement and the regulation it implements. However, to fully assess the value of a requirement and the purpose it serves, it’s important to understand the extent to which requirements (individually or collectively) ensure safer development that protects public health.
- ***Impact on Development Potential***
 - In general, how significantly does a requirement reduce the likelihood that projects will be able to achieve their full development potential under Title 25?

- Does the requirement minimize loss of development potential to the extent possible, particularly for housing construction?
- The LDC does not guarantee a particular intensity of development or number of units. Not every project is capable of achieving maximum yields due to site conditions or other regulatory requirements. In general, however, criteria manuals should minimize impacts on development potential except where necessary to achieve the LDC-related objectives specified under Standard No. 1.
- ***Impact on Housing Capacity***
 - How likely is a requirement to reduce the number of housing units otherwise permitted under Title 25?
 - Does the requirement minimize impacts on housing, to the extent possible.
- ***Conflicts & Redundancies***
 - When considered in light of other City requirements, including separately adopted criteria manuals, is the requirement likely to create conflicts or result in duplicative processes?
- ***Best Practices***
 - Is the requirement consistent with approaches used by peer cities in addressing similar issues?
- ***Cost Estimates***
 - Does this requirement create a new review to be performed by City staff? Adding reviews as permitting requirements often requires additional staff at a cost to the applicant and the City.
 - Does complying with this requirement raise building costs for planning, material, or labor? Development costs have a direct impact on project feasibility.

Guidelines for Applying Standards

These standards are intended to be applied in a context-sensitive manner that accounts for the regulatory objectives a criteria manual seeks to achieve. They are not intended to be prescriptive, nor will they apply equally to every requirement.

All criteria manuals should, to the greatest extent possible, seek to address these standards in a manner that facilitates development that complies with the LDC and avoids unnecessary impediments to achieving the City's housing targets and realizing other council-adopted planning goals.

Appendix – Screening Criteria Worksheet

Standard #1 – Land Development Code Authority

Criteria Manual:

Rule Name:

Rule Section Number and Title:

Rule Description:

Rule Justification:

Relevant City Code:

Does this rule effect subdivisions in the ETJ? (Flag for Travis County review)

Does this rule apply to swimming pools or food preparation areas? (Flag for Austin Public Health review)

Does this rule impact the implementation of other Council adopted policies (i.e. the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, Water Forward Integrated Resource Plan)? If so, which plan and what are the impacts?

Standard #2 – Health and Safety

To what extent is the rule necessary to protect public health and safety?

Standard # 3 – Impact on Development Potential

Describe how this rule may reduce the likelihood that projects will achieve their full development potential under Title 25:

If loss of development potential is expected, what steps are being taken to reduce the loss?

Standard #4 – Impacts on Housing Capacity

How likely is the rule to reduce the number of housing units otherwise permitted under Title25?

Standard # 5 – Conflicts and Redundancies

Does this rule impact other rules in other criteria manuals? Does it impact the operations of other departments? If so, describe.

Standard #6 – Best Practices

How does the requirement of this rule differ from peer cities? Are requirements similar or different? If different, what is the local justification?

Standard #7 – Cost Estimates

Does the rule require additional City staff to perform reviews?

Number of staff needed:

Will this create additional costs for developers/contractors to comply? If so, describe and provide estimates.