



BLUEPRINTHOUSTON
It's about your future

Citizens' Congress

GUIDING VALUES, GOALS AND ACTIONS

MAY 2003

Guiding Values, Goals, and Actions

Introduction

This document includes the Guiding Values, Goals, and Actions recommended by those who participated in the Blueprint Houston public process.

Guiding Values were proposed, discussed, and finalized by participants of the Blueprint Houston Leaders Conference held February 15, 2003. These values were subsequently tested at the five Blueprint Houston Public Meetings held on April 7, 8, 12, 14, and 15, 2003 at locations throughout the city.

In addition to evaluating the Guiding Values, participants at the Public Meetings submitted their recommendations on how to improve Houston. The Goals and Actions contained in this document are based on the 2,500 ideas the participants proposed during those meetings. These ideas were organized into specific goals and actions at the Blueprint Houston Steering Committee and Task Force Workshop held on May 1, 2003. There are 11 categories and 29 goals in total. These categories and their associated goals are listed in alphabetical order in this document. The categories are as follows:

- Culture and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Education
- Environment
- Infrastructure and services
- Law Enforcement
- Leadership and Decision Making
- Planning and Managing Growth
- Redevelopment
- Social Equity
- Transportation

Familiarize yourself with these Guiding Values, Goals, and Actions; they depict a comprehensive vision of what Houston has the potential of becoming in the future.

Culture and Recreation

Guiding value

We should make Houston an internationally recognizable center of artistic and cultural excellence.

1. Goal: Culture

Houston supports a vital and diverse arts community with affordable and accessible arts centers and programs.

Actions

Public/Private Sectors

- *Support the arts to levels comparable to and modeled on sports programs.*
- *Create urban and suburban centers for arts.*
- *Develop a comprehensive public relations program.*
- *Publicize arts programs in neighborhoods and schools.*
- *Create an inclusive environment in the arts that welcomes participation and opens opportunities.*

City

- *Subsidize the arts with alternative tax funds.*

2. Goal: Recreational and Community Facilities

Houston offers libraries, parks and recreational facilities available within walking distance for every Houstonian.

Actions

City

- *Allocate more resources to upgrade and improve libraries and parks.*
- *Offer more sports and community programs.*
- *Create and maintain after school programs.*
- *Expand uses and hours of operations of all public facilities.*
- *Re-use and renovate outdated public facilities, where feasible.*
- *Increase public access to outdoor recreational areas including water-based activities and trails.*

Economic Development

Guiding Values

We should diversify our economy and reduce our dependence on the energy industry.

We should invest in innovation, research, and local entrepreneurship in new industries.

3. Goal: Economic Development

Houston becomes a sophisticated, vibrant, information technology driven city with a highly skilled workforce, a diversified business community attractive to international interests and small businesses thriving in local neighborhoods.

Actions

Public Private Sectors

- *Bridge the digital divide providing access to high-speed fiber optic technology in every home and small business.*
- *Diversify Houston's economy by focusing on technological innovations in biotechnology, nano-technology and computer science.*

City

- *Use tax credits and other incentives to attract businesses in neighborhoods.*

4. Goal: Employment and Training

Houston provides increased employment training opportunities that address a wide range of occupations and industries, offered in a culturally sensitive and language-sensitive manner, inside and outside the workplace including in the public schools.

Actions

Economic development entities

- *Attract a wider range of industries, including technology industries and light manufacturing.*
- *Increase language and cultural sensitivity training offered in a variety of settings including the public schools.*
- *Coordinate training with available jobs.*

City

- *Adopt economic development incentives that create jobs closer to where people live.*

Education

Guiding Value

We should have an accessible, high-quality education system with kindergarten through high school and continuing educational opportunities for all.

5. Goal: Education

Houston provides high quality bilingual public education in schools that are safe and have highly trained teachers and small classes.

Actions

City and Houston Independent School District

- *Require that all teachers be certified.*
- *Require that teachers participate in professional development including computer literacy courses.*
- *Ensure that fifty percent of Houston's teachers are bilingual (Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.).*
- *Assess student's development with an array of oral and verbal testing.*
- *Reduce class sizes.*
- *Provide physical education and after school programs.*
- *Make schools safe with more police officers, metal detectors, strict visitation guidelines, and conflict resolution classes.*
- *Encourage students to look after one another.*

Environment

Guiding Values

We should leave future generations an environment at least as good as the environment we enjoy today.

We should establish sound environmental stewardship by individuals, communities, institutions, and government.

We should make indoor and outdoor air safe to breathe and hold industry accountable for air quality.

6. Goal: A clean city

Houston becomes a clean and unpolluted city that supports technologically advanced clean alternative fuels and energy efficient green buildings in sustainable developments.

Actions

City

- *Encourage the use of new sources of energy and cleaner fuels.*
- *Regulate and drastically reduce noise and visual pollution levels.*
- *Provide incentives for the development of "green" buildings.*
- *Encourage through regulations sustainable building practices.*

- *Address consumer and industrial wastes in ways that enhance the natural environment with County and State.*

Private Sector

- *Design “green buildings” that integrate with and respect their surroundings.*

7. Goal: Air Quality

Houston improves the quality of its air and in turn improves the quality of life and health of its citizens.

Actions

City

- *Establish a minimum clean air standard for the City, County, and State agreed upon by appropriate policy-makers and business-owners.*
- *Hold owners of both stationary and mobile pollution sources responsible.*
- *Improve air quality through community outreach, regulations, and incentives.*

8. Goal: Flood Management

Houston develops and adopts a flood management plan that encourages cooperation among City, County and developers in all aspects of flood management.

Actions

City and County

- *Establish a plan to better manage flooding.*
- *Clean ditches and bayous.*
- *Limit development in floodplains.*
- *Develop parks along bayous for flood control and recreation.*

Private Sector

- *Mitigate detention and runoff in their projects.*
- *Build ponds for flood and drainage.*

9. Goal: Preservation, Parks, and Trails

Houston adds, preserves and restores natural areas, creates more parks evenly distributed geographically and accessible to all citizens; develops linear parks along bayous; and connects neighborhoods with hike and bike trails.

Actions

City

- *Fund, develop, and maintain the best urban park system in the country with help from the County, making our park space per capita level the highest in the nation.*
- *Adopt aggressive landscape and green space ordinances.*
- *Collaborate with urban reforestation and parks-related groups in pursuit of the goal.*
- *Reclaim brownfields to create more parks.*
- *Develop linear parks with hike and bike trails to connect neighborhoods.*
- *Make new and existing parks accessible to all citizens including children, elderly, and the low-income.*

Private Sector

- *Set aside land for parks in developments.*

10. Goal: Steward of water resources

Houston becomes a steward of water resources, develops new and safe water supplies, and cleans up waterways to eliminate water pollution.

Actions

City

- *Develop new water sources with other municipalities in the region.*
- *Adopt ordinances that encourage water conservation measures.*
- *Strengthen protection of existing water supply through a river authority.*

Private Sector and Citizens

- *Develop programs that help minimize water pollution.*
- *Conduct clean-ups of waterways and wetland plantings with the help of City agencies.*

Infrastructure and Services

Guiding Value

We should demand fiscal responsibility and efficient use of government financial resources.

11. Goal: Delivery of Services

Houston delivers public services equally to all areas of the City including recycling, street cleanup, lighting, curbs and gutters, and mosquito control.

Actions

City

- *Appoint and fund an interdepartmental committee to create and publicize plans to improve service delivery efficiency.*
- *Require public officials to hold monthly meetings in their district to address citizens concerns.*
- *Create a media campaign to publicize availability of city services to all parts of the community.*
- *Establish a community hotline to report waste and to provide information on actions taken.*
- *Establish a three-month hotline for citizens to report areas where curbs and gutters need replacement and provide timely schedule of repairs.*
- *Rotate equitably the areas of the city where repairs are taking place.*
- *Hire additional city workers only when economically feasible.*
- *Sprays for mosquitoes beginning in mid- to late March to head off breeding.*

The Public Waste Department of the City of Houston

- *Form a committee of employees, directors, and residents to develop a recycling plan with incentives for the public.*

12. Goal: Infrastructure Provision and Maintenance

Houston maintains and improves its infrastructure – including streets, roads, sidewalks, traffic management devices and public facilities – in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

Actions

City

- *Allocate resources in a fiscally responsible manner through a quality, long-range plan for infrastructure.*
- *Build and maintain streets, sidewalks, and public facilities in neighborhoods.*
- *Is sensitive to the needs and resources of historic, cultural and expanding neighborhoods.*

Law Enforcement

Guiding Value

We should make Houston a city that provides equal opportunity, equal access, and equal protection for everyone.

13. Goal: Law Enforcement

Houston develops secure public and private places and adequate laws for public protection that address both non-violent and violent offenses, and shows the willingness to enforce those laws extensively and fairly.

Actions

City

- *Support development of public places that facilitate visibility and that are active and populated.*
- *Enact stricter laws regarding alcohol, sexually oriented businesses and weapons.*
- *Increases taxes to hire more and better-paid police and firefighters to ensure competitive recruiting.*
- *Develop an inventory of nuisance sites (e.g. illegal dumping) and measure annual enforcement progress.*
- *Use PSAs to educate and remind public and law enforcement officials of key laws (e.g. DW/UI, red light running).*
- *Equip police vehicles with computerized language translators to better communicate with non-English speaking citizens.*
- *Increase the fine for non-violent offenses – link to mandatory community service.*

Public Private Sectors

- *Improve lighting and maintain property following Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.*

Leadership and Decision Making

Guiding Values

We should require active regional cooperation and collaboration among government, leaders and citizens.

We should support civic and political leaders committed to balancing the City's short-term needs and long-term vision.

14. Goal: Civic Involvement

Houston becomes an informed and empowered citizenry able to access information from all relevant sources and to collectively influence government decisions.

Actions

City

- *Give residents a direct voice in affecting government's actions within or toward their communities.*
- *Give residents a say in how land is used and where growth should occur in their communities.*
- *Supports residents' decisions.*
- *Create transparency through extensive use of public service announcements on radio and television and through periodical emails.*

15. Goal: Government and Leadership

Houston restructures and reforms City government to make it more accountable, to give citizens an active voice in policy decision making, to reduce taxes, and to better collaborate and coordinate activities with other governmental entities.

Actions

City

- *Hire a city manager and an ombudsman.*
- *Conduct annual customer relations training for city employees.*
- *Hire an independent agency to determine where to cut wasteful spending.*

Citizens

- *Elect ethical, visionary leaders in government who really listen, respect and respond to the citizens.*

Planning and Managing Growth

Guiding Values

We should plan to balance the rights of individuals with the good of the community.

We should plan to ensure efficient and sustainable growth.

16. Goal: Community Appearance

Houston's neighborhoods become beautiful, well-preserved, and free of visual blight supported by appropriate development standards that respect their unique identity and values.

Actions

City

- *Create and adopt development standards (ordinances and deed restrictions) that meet community and business needs.*
- *Adopt strict regulations controlling visual blight including billboards, on-premises signage, overhead utility lines, derelict buildings, and other offensive sources of visual pollution.*
- *Respect the unique and historic character of individual neighborhoods.*

17. Goal: Growth Management

Houston creates a master plan for city growth that fosters dense, vibrant urban cores surrounded by affordable, accessible, diverse, mixed-use neighborhoods.

Actions

City

- *Develop a plan to manage future growth.*
- *Ensure that the City's living and working centers are within walking distance to one another include green spaces, shops, schools, services, and harbor a mix of housing types.*

Private Sector

- *Coordinate development with transportation plans and pay for infrastructure needs generated through development.*

Citizens

- *Demand a sustainable intelligent master plan from the City and County.*

18. Goal: Neighborhoods and Regulations

Houston protects and strengthens its neighborhoods through sensible application of newly created zoning laws.

Actions

City

- *Establish and enforces zoning laws based on sound planning and neighborhood aspirations.*
- *Develop regulations and incentives that favor the development of mixed-use neighborhoods.*

- *Support the integration of uses such as parks, shops, places of employment and police services into each neighborhood to reduce dependency to automobiles.*
- *Impose impact fees to reduce traffic, noise, light and impervious surfaces in inappropriate locations.*
- *Invest four times the current level in the Super Neighborhoods programs.*

Super Neighborhoods

- *Identify chief community concerns and assess needed modifications to programs and regulations.*
- *Conduct design workshops and visual preference surveys and develop resulting plans.*
- *Define priorities for future budget allocations.*

Redevelopment

Guiding Values

We should plan to integrate our commercial and business centers with their surrounding neighborhoods.

We should promote the preservation and production of affordable housing.

We should provide a wide range of choices in the quality, size and price of housing within neighborhoods and real estate developments.

We should help low-income families become homeowners particularly in the inner city.

19. Goal: Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Houston promotes and preserves inner city and older neighborhoods, improves their infrastructure with increased public open space and encourages historic preservation resulting in diverse livable, walkable neighborhoods.

Actions

City

- *Promote redevelopment of older neighborhoods.*
- *Provide tax incentives and mortgage assistance so that older areas can revitalize themselves.*
- *Encourage the Super Neighborhood Council to identify improvements to the public infrastructure and submit them to the City for inclusion in the C.I.P. (Capital Improvement Projects).*
- *Clean up and utilize abandoned homes and convert vacant lots into parks and green spaces.*
- *Enforce codes more aggressively and prosecute illegal dumpers.*

Private Sector

- *Create and support active, effective preservation organizations focused on preserving historic structures in older neighborhoods.*

Citizens

- *Form, strengthen and support Neighborhood Associations to give equal representation to neighborhoods in asserting and preserving their unique identity.*

20. Goal: Urban Cores

Houston promotes the revitalization of vibrant, walkable urban cores as entertainment, workplace, and residential destinations, preserving historic older areas and neighborhoods and promoting sensitive new development.

Actions

City

- *Adopt urban design guidelines and incentives that support the creation of vibrant walkable urban cores.*
- *Promote inner loop neighborhood preservation and conservation.*
- *Increase green spaces and parks in the inner loop area.*
- *Attract new business, residences and entertainment facilities in Downtown while respecting its existing cultural, historic and open space amenities.*
- *Implement the Buffalo Bayou Partnership Plan with the involvement of the Partnership itself, the private sector, and County.*

Social Equity

Guiding Values

We should integrate ethnic and immigrant groups in the decision-making process.

We should provide excellent, affordable, and accessible health care to our citizens.

We should support healthcare, childcare, after-school programs, and recreational opportunities for neighborhoods, families, and children.

We should assist the indigent and homeless to gain access to safe, adequate housing, and shelter.

21. Goal: An equitable city

Houston provides affordable quality day care to children; encourages drug counseling and other drug prevention intervention in schools; facilitates the transition process for intermediate and junior high students in poverty; assists the homeless; and provides opportunities for residents to earn a living wage.

Actions

City

- *Develop standards for and provide tax incentives to quality day care facilities.*
- *Ensure that all citizens make a living wage, or that wages are supplemented with food, medical care and clothing.*
- *Expand the multi-service center concept to include social programs or creates associations that provide center services (jobs, education, health, preventive health, daycare, food) in a central location for each community.*
- *Expand use of schools to become multi-functional hubs of activity: healthcare, after school activities, study halls after school, and clubs.*
- *Provide decent shelter for homeless and homeless mentally ill with help from not for profit organizations.*

22. Goal: Appreciating diversity

Houston promotes, embraces and increases appreciation of diversity especially race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual preference, religion and socio-economic status.

Actions

City

- *Hold town hall meetings within ethnic neighborhoods and then across neighborhoods so that all ethnic groups can express their concerns and suggest possible solutions.*
- *Promote and support legislation to demonstrate that the rich diversity of Houston is welcomed and valued.*

23. Goal: Housing

Houston redevelops its subdivisions into beautiful neighborhoods with housing for all economic and age groups located in the proximity of parks, schools, shops, police services and places of work.

Actions

City

- *Develop regulations that facilitate the creation of neighborhoods with diverse housing types so that people of different income, needs and age can live together.*
- *Increase rates of homeownership and the supply of decent, affordable housing with help from the Housing and Community Development Department and other housing-related organizations.*

Public and Private Sectors

- *Assist low-income residents to purchase their homes.*

24. Goal: Immigration

Houston provides opportunities for immigrants to learn how our government works so they can access jobs, education opportunities and the justice system on par with non-immigrants.

Actions

Schools

- *Teach American Civics at all levels so that immigrants can more easily use the justice and other governmental systems.*
- *Promote bilingual education for better communication between immigrant and non-immigrant populations.*

Police

- *Develop outreach programs to serve the immigrant population better.*

25. Goal: Senior Citizens

Houston supports seniors with affordable housing, tax exemptions, access to healthcare, transportation, more park facilities and activities, environmental awareness about senior housing areas and police presence in senior communities.

Actions

Public Private Sectors

- *Develop moderately priced housing for the elderly integrated in every community.*

26. Goal: Healthcare

Houston encourages healthy living and affordable quality care for all economic and age groups with adequate trauma centers and clinics.

Actions

City and Healthcare providers

- *Encourage healthy living habits at home, school and work.*
- *Provide affordable quality healthcare for all citizens with part of the cost paid for by the State.*
- *Encourage preventive care for all citizens to prevent expensive care later.*

Citizens

- *Vote for the creation of trauma centers and clinics so that adequate emergency care is available.*

Transportation**Guiding Values**

We should coordinate land use and transportation planning throughout the City.

We should value choice in transportation with safe and efficient transportation options.

27. Goal: Alternative Transportation

Houston improves and expands existing pedestrian trails and bike paths providing alternative transportation options and ensuring safety and connectivity.

Actions

City

- *Expand the current pedestrian and bike trails network.*
- *Improve existing pedestrian and bike trails making them more accessible, connected, and wider.*
- *Adopt and enforce laws that improve safety of trails and paths.*

28. Goal: Public Transportation

Houston develops a public transit system that reduces traffic congestion, improves air quality and provides increased density and mobility options throughout the region; and that is clean, fast, efficient, high frequency, comfortable, accessible and well routed.

Actions

City

- *Develop a comprehensive mass transit plan that addresses the issue of communities underserved by transit and that is agreed upon and supported by the private sector, elected officials, and the public.*

Houston Galveston Area Council /TPC

- *Develop and adopt a plan supported by technical analysis and computer modeling to maximize ridership within the current system.*
- *Investigate the expansion of current coverage area.*

- *Form cooperative agreements with other transit agencies to provide broader regional coverage.*

29. Goal: Roads and Congestion

Houston supports a coordinated and accessible network of streets, roads and expressways that are well built, well maintained and integrated with other modes of transportation; that reduce congestion through traffic management, road construction, and parking; and that are aesthetically pleasing.

Actions

City

- *Develop a multimodal regional transportation plan to manage traffic flow and reduce congestion.*
- *Develop planning, design and construction standards through the Texas Department of Transportation to ensure well-coordinated, beautiful and well-built roads.*