



Blueprint Houston Reception on January 8th at the Ensemble Theatre

Transcript of Mayor White's Comments

Opening

Bob and I were with each other yesterday when the water feature was unveiled along Main Street Square. I wore my hat. It was 30 degrees. I needed the hat. Some commented was I trying to introduce a retro look. Eury told me "I need one of those hats too." For the same reason—biological.

What a crowd here... It's a wonderful group of people.

About Blueprint Houston

During the course of my job interview during the last year, one of the first forums we had, somebody asked... and this was a group called... it had real estate in it and it was about 500 people... And they said, "What do you think about Blueprint Houston?" When they say it that way you know where they are coming from. I said there what I thought. That whenever citizens get together to talk about the future of this community, how could that possibly be anything other than good?

Now, your effort. I guess I am a little biased. I along with a few others, Ann Hamilton, David and Calloway, Joe Nelson and a few, were in a room at the Houston Endowment where – thank goodness for the leadership that the Houston Endowment and its staff have provided for so much- we discussed the idea that became Blueprint Houston.

I thought it was amazing when we had the first Congress when over 1000 people from all over the city showed up. Wasn't that amazing?

It was also amazing what a consensus there is in Houston about the things we need to do.

Advice from Phoenix

When we had the first meeting-- I don't know what you called it--a planning session?— with the person who headed planning from Phoenix. That was over on the east side. She gave me some good advice.

Let me repeat a couple of those advice because Phoenix has had some planning processes that have had a lot of community acceptance. She said “Not a lot of reports, look for some early deliverables.” And she said, “People talked about doing surveys and studies and things like this and she said “Don’t you have enough polls?”

Consensus in Houston

I ‘m telling you right now, we do have a consensus in this community about some of the things we want to do.

- We want more transportation alternatives. People don’t want to subsidize excessively expensive sprawl.
- People want to revitalize the neighborhoods close in where people now live and work.
- People know that we can’t keep on doing what we’ve been doing to control flooding and drainage for the past 50 years and expect a different result than we’re getting which is getting worse.

These are not liberal issues, these are not conservative issues, these are a matter of common sense.

People would rather see trees than billboards. People would rather see parks that have flooding. People would rather have tax cuts on affordable housing than see structures that—we have 29,000 that have been sitting there and haven’t paid taxes for ten years and are not paying taxes --that are a blight on their neighborhoods.

So we have a consensus.

Challenges for Blueprint Houston

One of the challenges in the evolution of this organization is going to be how you work with the voluntary civic leadership of this community, with elected officials, with non-profit organizations, with government organizations, to help us do what we need to do about the things for which we know the goals that we want already, right?

And if anybody here wants to be a partner with me and the members of council and try to do what people have talked about, then you are going to find some great allies.

There’s one thing I’ve learned about this Council. There’s people who want to do things in City Hall right now.

That’s what the excitement is about. It is not about whether I have charisma or anything like that. It’s about people having a sense that there’s a group down there who wants to do something and I want to be apart of that.

And we need to keep that up!

So, I’m telling you stuff because I’m with friends and I don’t want to give a platitude.

So I ‘m going to say I want to challenge people to act and not talk. And whether we who are in government tell you

Here’s what we can do;

Here’s what we don’t have enough money to do;

Here's what we can't do legally;
But here's what a civic club can do-- here's what an organization can do consisting of
community volunteers
Here's what a non profit will do.

**We need people to join us so that we get those things done.
And, these doers will be our allies.**

Finally, I'll say I've been there what—I see the Mayor Pro Tem Alvarado and Controller
Parker and a number of outstanding Council members here. All of them will be a thrill to
work with and I think you'll be hearing from all of them tonight right?

New Committee on Flooding and Drainage

I'll give you a preview of something so that....

When you go out in neighborhoods, people are interested in stuff like

- We flooded for the first time and we've been living here for 40 years.
- Deed restrictions, they have lapsed and how do we get them back?
- Dead restrictions are un-enforced, why can't we enforce them?

**I want to tell you that more so-- it's about 100 to 1-- of these comments as opposed
to "I want a big book with a master plan"**

I know that planning is important. I do. I do.

Now I'm communicating with you, ok? And if you go down the plan and the first ten
pages of specific things which were done in the last 6 months because they were in the
plan, then I like to read, but if they don't apply to neighborhoods and serious issues of
flooding, then.....

So tomorrow I'll be announcing the formation of a committee for the first time devoted to
flooding and drainage in the community. Among other things, it will have **responsibility
for reasonable and responsible restrictions, reasonable and responsible restrictions,**
that don't deny growth in the community but make sure that when somebody builds
something it will take into account the downstream effects and effects on the overall
water table.

I'll tell you what. I don't know... Not all the Council members have been talked so and
some I will talk to and sign up tomorrow if they agree, but **Council Member Ada
Edwards** has agreed to chair that committee and, I want to tell you, when she sets out to
do something it does get done.

Closing

So, good luck.

You have a friend and ally in City Hall.

**You'll have somebody who will talk planning. We'll have a lot of fun together and
there will be a little gap between reasonable words and actions.**

And with that, I want to thank you all for everything you've done for Houston.