

**HOUSTON PLANNING COMMISSION  
COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**JUNE 1, 2006**

**SUMMARIES**

**Houston Planning Commission  
Suburban Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Suburban</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mixed Use Areas</b></p>	<p>The planning standards in the urban area allows for higher densities, reduced setbacks and smaller lot sizes. The suburban committee explored the urban area standards to see what rules could apply in the suburban area. Chpt. 42 allows for areas outside the 610 loop to be designated as an urban area if the area meets define criteria. To date, PD has not received an application for an urban area designation. Urban development in the suburban area needs variances in order to move forward.</p>	<p>Create a Mixed Use Area (MUA) designation that will foster mixed use, high density development that reduces auto dependency and create a high-quality, pedestrian-friendly transit-supportive environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft concept developed</li> <li>▪ Draft regulatory requirements developed</li> <li>▪ <u>Call Sugarland TownCenter</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Who did it</u></li> <li>○ <u>False Starts</u></li> <li>○ <u>Do over</u></li> <li>○ <u>Who worked on the project</u></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Establish MUA working group to refine concept and draft ordinance</p> <p><u>Experts</u> <u>Architects</u> <u>Developers</u> <u>Management Districts</u></p> <p><u>Private Sector funds position to help 1 person on staff to assist with long term staying power</u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Courtyards</b></p>	<p>PC has considered several projects that proposed to create more pedestrian friendly communities.</p>	<p>Establish working group to examine potential performance standards to encourage use of courtyards as a means of creating more pedestrian friendly communities</p>	<p>Draft concept and performance standards developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>How do you ensure the greenspace is</u></li> </ul>	<p>Establishes working group to refine concept and performance standards</p>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Suburban Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
	Vehicular access is taken from the rear of lots or via private alleys. The PC has allowed these projects to go forward by granting variances to Chpt. 42.		<u>maintained –Fund set aside to cover O &amp; M</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Public Safety for Police and Fire is a concern</u></li> </ul>	
<b>Amenities Plans</b>	Detention ponds may be used to fulfill open space requirements when an applicant files an amenity plan. Chpt. 42 does not contain criteria for the PC to consider when reviewing and approving amenity plans.	Adopt point system for calculating the proportion of required detention that can also satisfy required compensating open space.	Draft concept developed including proposed point system	PD test the concept and report back to the committee.  <u>OK. Draft Guidelines</u>
<b>Reserves</b>	Chpt. 42 defines criteria for creating reserves but the language for restricted reserves is unclear.	Revise requirements for creating reserves and promulgate those requirements clearly in Chapter 42 Code of Ordinances	Draft reserves matrix created; modifications to reserves proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Legal Department prepares amendment to Chapter 42</li> <li>▪ P&amp;D presents draft ordinance to PC, Council Committee and City Council for adoption <u>Legal Dept. move now</u></li> </ul>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Development Impacts Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<b>Development Impacts</b>  <b>Financing Infrastructure Improvements</b>	<p>Redevelopment is occurring in older neighborhoods without corresponding improvements to the aging infrastructure such as water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, narrow paving, and sidewalks. (Rice Military)</p> <p>Need coordinated planning for infrastructure improvements in these areas and a structure for spreading the costs of improvements equally.</p>	<p>Recommend a combination of builder impact fees and a city sponsored financing entity.</p> <p><del>Develop a new or second generation TIRZ (NRD). The incremental increase in tax values in defined redevelopment area (Cottage Grove) is restricted to use as the City's share of cost of upgrading infrastructure to accommodate higher density development (i) limited to basic infrastructure, (ii) sunset provision that terminates upon retirement of any issued debt, and (iii) controlled by the city.</del></p>	<p>Concept plan drafted</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PD and PWE identify zones and assess existing infrastructure in and around the zone.</li> <li>2. PWE prepares plan for upgrading the infrastructure to meet needs of new development</li> <li>3. Infrastructure financing and implementation plan would be created that incorporates (i) Builder impact fee and (ii) <u>NRD zone to finance debt some commitment from COH to match revenues from new Builder Impact Fee for project meeting certain criteria.</u></li> <li>4. <del>Create a Master LGC responsible for budgeting, administration and finances of all NRD's</del></li> </ol>	<p>P&amp;D and PWE identify areas</p> <p>PWE</p> <p>PWE</p>
<b>Drainage Impacts</b>	<p>Small scale development over time has a considerable impact on storm drainage. Without a mechanism for creating sub-regional detention facilities, mitigation must occur on a site by site basis.</p>	<p>Amend Chapter 9 of the Infrastructure Design Manual to (i) address single family parcels currently excluded from the detention requirements, and (ii) require detention at a rate of 0.5 acre-feet per acre of increased impervious area for tracts being subdivided in less than an acre</p> <p>Develop sub-regional detention facilities that would mitigate storm water runoff impact of development within the neighborhoods where it is occurring.</p>	<p>Proposed amendments drafted</p> <p>Need additional study <u>to identify 2 or 3 candidate projects within 9 months.</u></p>	<p>PWE will identify candidate projects</p>
<b>Public Notification - platting</b>	<p>Notification is required for replats when a public hearing is required (State law) and plats with variances (Chpt. 42). Neighborhoods are not notified of routine platting items and may miss out on critical issues (street extensions)</p>	<p>Improve public notification by including original plat names for each replat application on the Subdivision Plat Summary Report and further expand e-mail notification to neighborhood representatives.</p>	<p>PD revised Subdivision Plat Summary Report to include the original subdivision plat names on replats.</p> <p>PD created a Subdivision Plat Summary E-Report and notified via e-mail super neighborhood councils, civic clubs within our database and council offices advising them of this service and how they can sign up. This service works similar to e-permit report.</p> <p>Developed flyer for staff to take to civic club and CIP meetings.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Neighborhood Preservation Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<p><b>Neighborhood Preservation</b></p> <p><b>Prevailing Building Line/ Prevailing Lot Size</b></p>	<p>Blocks that have a definite character are eliminated because they fail to meet the criteria due to (i) the term “prevailing” as the most frequently occurring and (ii) the ordinance relies on the number of lots to measure neighborhood character instead of total lot area.</p> <p>PD found technical amendments that need to be addressed - grandfathering, identify when an application may be amended, calculation of tracts, expand to applicability to City</p> <p>Some neighborhoods do not have uniform lot sizes because of slight changes in parcel boundaries or were platted on a curved street.</p>	<p>Lower the threshold of qualifying lots from 75% to somewhere between 51% and 60% to allow more older neighborhoods to remain intact</p> <p>Change basis of calculation on PVLS to area rather than number or lots</p> <p>Forward technical amends to the Legal Department to draft ordinance amendments</p> <p>Allow neighborhoods to preserve the existing lot sizes, regardless of whether a prevailing size exists by calculating character on area.</p>	<p>Proposed calculations prepared</p> <p>P&amp;D proposed amendments sent to Legal Department for review</p>	<p>Convene a working group to review proposed amendments to the Prevailing Lot Size and Prevailing Building Line ordinances. <u>Get input from GHBA – PD to work with Legal on drafting amendments</u></p>
<p><b>Neighborhood Character</b></p>	<p>Neighborhood character is more than front building lines and lot sizes.</p>	<p>Define a menu of options (Lot coverage, height, side setbacks, garage location and architectural style) for preserving character across an entire neighborhood or lesser portion. Criteria and process will mirror Prevailing Building Line and Prevailing Lot Size.</p>	<p>Draft matrix developed</p>	<p>Establish working group to further define the elements of neighborhood character and propose criteria for preserving such character. <u>PD will work with committee and Legal on drafting ordinance</u></p>
<p><b>Performance Standards</b></p>	<p>The absence of a zoning</p>	<p>Planning Commission should</p>		<p>Reconvene joint committee working group</p>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Neighborhood Preservation Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
	<p>ordinance has allowed for the existence and creation of incompatible uses throughout the city, most notably in older neighborhoods. A performance standard concept was reviewed as a mechanism to minimize the impact of development on SFR areas</p>	<p>conduct a thorough testing of possible scenarios following a two pronged approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevent businesses from locating on streets in areas that are predominantly SFR and</li> <li>2. Study the effect of mitigation where predominantly SFR is adjacent to commercial development along streets</li> </ol>		<p>(urban, neighborhood and development impacts) and invite additional neighborhood representatives to further refine concept.</p>
<p><b>Public Notification - platting</b></p>	<p>Notification is required for replats when a public hearing is required (State law) and plats inside the city with variances (Chpt. 42). Neighborhoods are not notified of routine platting items and may miss out on critical issues (street extensions)</p>	<p>Improve public notification by including original plat names for each replat application on the Subdivision Plat Summary Report and further expand e-mail notification to neighborhood representatives.</p>	<p>PD revised Subdivision Plat Summary Report to include the original subdivision plat names on replats. PD created a Subdivision Plat Summary E- Report and notified via e-mail super neighborhood councils, civic clubs within our database and council offices advising them of this service and how they can sign up. This service works similar to e-permit report. Developed flyer for staff to take to civic club and CIP meetings.</p>	<p>Completed</p>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Long Range Planning Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<b>Long Range Planning</b>	Houston no longer relies on growth by annexation. This change in Houston's growth model places greater emphasis on Houston's need to compete with other metropolitan areas for the attraction of new economic development opportunities. The success of economic growth is increasingly dependent on the quality of life offered by the city. The city needs a strategic plan which defines its current condition and identifies opportunities and threats for its future.			
<b>Strategic Planning</b>		Commit to the development of a strategic plan that addresses the symbiotic relationship between economic growth and quality of life. Such a plan should define the current condition and identify opportunities and threats for the future.	Committee developed draft revisions to Chapter 33 of the Code of Ordinances enabling comprehensive planning in Houston.	Reconstitute a Committee that develops strategic goals for development in the city. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing</li> <li>▪ Industry – suggest industry location and capacity to serve the industries that the City seeks to attract</li> <li>▪ Encourage growth yet balance quality of life</li> </ul> Develop Housing Gap analysis (Demand Generator)
<b>Focus on Mobility</b>		Mobility planning needs to be part of the economic growth strategy to promote growth of property values and sales tax bases while serving the needs of the community in housing and services.		Establish new, long-term focus on planning, agency coordination, scheduling, and identification and securing of funding opportunities through a transportation liaison person in PD – <u>PD to hire person</u>
<b>Focus on Drainage</b>		The City should have a dedicated focus on drainage and flooding with attention to the coordination of improvements with the Harris County Flood Control District and other agencies. This effort should include the identification and securing of leveraged funding opportunities and develop an understanding of the requirements of the mandated storm water quality programs and their impacts on the drainage system.		<u>Develop a policy with input from Planning Commission, PWE and Private Sector – topics to be included:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Sub regional detention</u></li> <li>▪ <u>Impervious Cover</u></li> <li>▪ <u>Neighborhood Drainage</u></li> <li>▪ Funding source</li> </ul>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Long Range Planning Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
Comprehensive GIS		Develop a geographic information system (GIS) that is coordinated with the data provided by others to identify quality of life and economic growth opportunities.	Mayor's Geo Spatial Committee (COH, HGAC, Harris County, etc.) are meeting to develop a seamless approach using common architecture. Recently hired City's GIS person to assist with this effort – start date 3/27	Utilize updated GIS to conduct gap analysis and identify and foster strategic growth.  Recognize that the GIS is a marketing and informational tool
Capital Improvements Plan		The Capital Improvements Program is a manifestation of the strategic plan. Its projects should largely serve the strategic goals. The City should consider adopting a ten year view of the CIP with two components- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ long range programmatic improvements (representing the bulk of the CIP) and</li> <li>▪ Shorter term responsiveness to citizen calls for action.</li> </ul>	Revisions to Super Neighborhood Program requires neighborhoods to identify short term CIP items.	Create 10 year CIP ( <u>5 years funded</u> ) based upon <u>strategic-10 project</u> plan (long range programmatic improvements)

**Houston Planning Commission  
Urban Core Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<b>Urban Core</b>				
<b>Transit Corridor Plans</b>	There are no rules or standards in place to respond to the needs of development along the transit corridors (setbacks, pedestrian access and parking). The PC considers parking and setback variances without any framework.	PC convene a working group composed of all stakeholder groups to develop a pilot plan by May 2006 centered on Main Street Corridor light rail stations with recommended rules reflecting the different corridor segments.	Transit Corridor Plan concept drafted	Establishes working group to define scope of pilot plan, evaluate plan and develops implementation plan
<b>Performance Standards</b>	Non residential development impacts the residential community as a whole.	<p>Planning Commission should conduct a thorough testing of possible scenarios following a two pronged approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevent businesses from locating on streets in areas that are predominantly SFR and</li> <li>2. Study the effect of mitigation where predominantly SFR is adjacent to commercial development along streets</li> </ol> <p>A subcommittee and other appropriate stakeholders further develop the concept to address non-compatible uses from locating in predominantly single family neighborhoods, adjacency issues and any unintended consequences that may result if such standards are implemented. Include impact on expansion of existing development adjacent to neighborhoods</p>		Reconvene joint committee working group (urban, neighborhood and development impacts) and invite additional neighborhood representatives to further refine concept.
<b>Right of Way Dedication</b>	As redevelopment occurs, the PC is regularly asked to grant variances not to dedicate ROW on existing streets. In many cases, the pavement is very narrow, there's open ditch drainage and homes setback only 10' from the ROW. The result is a patchwork of ROW dedication.	<p>Planning Commission should further define the street hierarchy classification system to include local streets.</p> <p>Analyzed performance standards for local streets in specific areas in terms of ROW and Paving (4<sup>th</sup> Ward, French Town, River Oaks, Shepherd/Westheimer)</p>		<p>Reconvene subcommittee to define criteria for hierarchy and develop performance standards for specific areas.</p> <p><u>Move to Neighborhood Preservation Committee and include as part of Neighborhood Character (ROW)</u></p>
<b>Additional Considerations</b>		<p>Reconvene Urban Core Subcommittee to consider the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Routine Variances – widening, setbacks, houses front on courtyards</li> <li>▪ Delineating recommendations that stimulate the development of affordable housing in the more costly infill neighborhoods of Houston, such as the enlarged rear entry streets of Parkside.</li> <li>▪ Remainder tracts left over from ROW acquisition</li> <li>▪ Provide standards that stimulate revitalizations which is more pedestrian</li> </ul>		<p>Planning Commission reconvenes subcommittee to work on items under additional consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Routine Variances - PD supplies information</li> </ul>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Urban Core Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
		<p>friendly, such as less street, more sidewalks, denser development where there was formerly dense development in central Houston.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish coordination practices with the PWE Department that stimulate development opportunities</li> <li>▪ Encourage planning of green space where parcels have been abandoned or floating somewhere in environmental suspension (brownfields)</li> <li>▪ Establish flexible standards/guidance for central city commercial opportunities.</li> <li>▪ <u>Parking for infill development</u></li> </ul>		

**Houston Planning Commission  
Parking Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<b>Parking</b>				
<b>Texas Medical Center</b>	Continued growth in the Medical Center area and the need for structured parking facilities is straining capacity of the area's roadway system. The combination of TMC's location along Main and Fannin Streets and the increasing development with in the medical center is resulting in daily gridlock on the streets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand the Texas Medical Center Parking Management Area to include new properties and require traffic studies for proposed development locating in congested areas</li> <li>▪ Establish a max. parking ratio or ceiling for congested areas within the Texas Medical Center PMA</li> <li>▪ Encourage partnerships with City, County, Metro to build remote structured parking facilities at strategic points along the Main Street light rail line.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ P&amp;D, Parking Management Office and TMC establish new boundaries and amend PMA.</li> <li>▪ P&amp;D, Parking Management Office and TMC explore concept of parking ratios or ceilings. If feasible, proposed amendment to PMA to require such ratios <u>as requested by TMC.</u></li> <li>▪ <del>P&amp;D and Parking Management assist Parking Commission and Planning Commission on identifying locations for public parking facilities.</del></li> </ul>
<b>Decal Parking Program</b>	<p>Businesses whose patrons park on neighborhood streets are not notified of the pending application. The only notification is when the decal parking signs are installed. Businesses are frantically looking for parking after the signs are installed.</p> <p>Guest parking is limited to 2 spaces. The ordinance does not address special event parking for the residents (wedding, funerals and parties).</p> <p>Contractor/Builder Permits are not available for contractors building or remodeling homes.</p>	<p>Notification of Decal Parking application should be mailed to both owners and tenants of properties within 200 feet of the proposed decal parking area</p> <p>Special Events Permits should be given to residents upon request</p> <p>Contractor/Builder permits should be made available</p>	<p>Ordinance amended October 05 to require notification of Decal Parking application to owners and tenants of properties within 200 feet of the proposed decal parking area</p> <p>Special Events Permits are available to residents upon request of the Parking Management Office</p> <p>Contractor/Builder permits are available upon request of the Parking Management Office</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
<b>1. Guest Parking</b>	As density increase in urban and suburban neighborhoods, on-street and off-street guest parking is becoming scarce. This condition is often exacerbated when infrastructure in older neighborhoods is not adequate, such as narrow paving and open ditch drainage. Multiple driveways and wide driveways also add to the problem. Chapter 42 does not require guest parking for residential infill.	<p>The following ideas should be studied further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish incentives for providing guest parking</li> <li>▪ Encourage single entry driveways to preserve on-street parking</li> <li>▪ Encourage shared driveway entrances</li> <li>▪ Re-institute paving assessment program to replace open ditch with curb and gutter</li> <li>▪ Anticipate the need for neighborhood parking lots</li> <li>▪ Development Impacts subcommittee drafted concept to spread cost of infrastructure improvements (curb and gutter, neighborhood parking, etc.).</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish working group to further consider the issue of guest parking.</li> <li>▪ If consensus reached, P&amp;D presents proposal to Planning Commission for approval and Parking Commission.</li> <li>▪ <u>Amend Chapter 42 to require guest parking for large scale development</u></li> </ul>

**Houston Planning Commission  
Parking Subcommittee  
Summary of Recommendations**

Subcommittee	Issue	Recommendation	Status	Next Steps
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Parking on Transit/Commercial Corridors</b></p>	<p>Recently, retail and mixed use projects proposed in the Main Street Corridor have requested reduced parking based on the proximity to light rail stations. There is little data available to substantiate arguments in favor of granting variance for reduced parking. There is concern that that overflow parking will spill onto adjacent properties and the possibility of establishing a retail environment that is certain to fail.</p>	<p>Planning Commission should study the following two concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish parking grids based on need. Some areas may have a ceiling and some areas may have alternative parking ratios.</li> <li>▪ <del>Public/private partnerships to develop parking structures at strategic locations along high capacity transit corridors</del></li> </ul>		<p><u>2. Public/private partnerships to develop parking structures at strategic locations along high capacity transit corridors</u>  <u>3. Look at highly dense corridors with residential and commercial development</u>  <u>4. Develop parking ratios for development near rail and BRT.</u> (Obtain peer data – Dallas hired a consultant to study parking ratios along rail – need to include BRT)</p>

This report includes numbered items which reflect the work priority