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# Livable Places Action Committee

## Scope and Timeline



PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

### **Project Description:**

The Livable Places Action Committee will continue the Planning Department's effort to update the City of Houston's development codes to create more opportunities for walkability, affordability and equity. Following the Walkable Places and Transit-Oriented Development Committee's work, the Livable Places Action Committee will focus on rules that encourage the development and preservation of quality, affordable housing for all. It will also focus on creating opportunities for increased infill development that will strengthen Houston's core. This effort is the next step the Department will take to realize the community's preferences identified in several previous planning efforts.

Houston is a city of opportunity that thrives on diversity. It is located within one of the fastest growing and diverse metropolitan areas in the U.S. Despite the success, Houston's growth has brought with it challenges such as rising home costs, displacement, lack of pedestrian and cyclist safety and many neighborhoods where homes and activities are separated by long distances. *Plan Houston*, adopted by City Council in 2015, describes a vision of Houston where these challenges don't exist. *Plan Houston* and other plans such as *Resilient Houston*, the *Climate Action Plan*, the *Complete Communities Action Plans*, *Complete Streets Executive Order*, and the *Vision Zero Action Plan* list goals and actions that will help achieve that vision. All of these were created with significant community input.

The Livable Places Action Committee is not another planning effort. It is the implementation of these plans through changes to the City's development codes. This project will result in more affordable housing and stronger communities across Houston and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. It will create opportunities for more infill urban development that reduces pressure on greenfield areas, maximizes use of existing infrastructure, encourages use of multi-modal transportation options, improve safety, and preserves great neighborhoods.

This approach is holistic and forward-thinking. This project will leverage other City of Houston initiatives, including Complete Communities, Comprehensive Housing study, and Walkable Places. It will build on previous public engagement efforts to increase access to the planning process and create a better outcome.

### **Livable Places Action Committee Objectives:**

- Allow for flexibility while maintaining certainty for developers and the community.
- Allow for an efficient planning and development process.
- Clarify and coordinate policies and regulations to maintain consistency.
- Provide options that encourage varying housing types and price points including smaller multi-family residential developments.
- Incentivize denser development along major transportation corridors and inner core while providing improved buffering for existing neighborhoods.
- Create walkable streetscapes and intersection spacings to support multi-modal transportation options.
- Ensure adequate access is available to properties during emergencies.
- Assess infrastructure needs considering the impact of newer development trends.
- Integrate flood mitigation principles into design.
- Create user friendly, plain language documents and exhibits.

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**Project Team:** The project will be led by the Planning & Development Department with support and input from the entire Houston community.

**Project Partners:** City of Houston departments including Housing and Community Development, Houston Public Works, and Administrative and Regulatory Affairs. Other public agencies including Harris County and METRO. Additional community and industry groups.

**Steering Committee:**

A Steering Committee comprised of industry representatives, subject matter experts, community leaders, other agencies will guide the process. The Steering Committee will help staff in analyzing these action steps in order to bring these plans to fruition. The following people have confirmed their participation as of August 20, 2020.

**Lisa Clark**, Planning Commission,  
Committee Co-Chair

**Sonny Garza**, Planning Commission,  
Committee Co-Chair

**John Blount**, Harris County Engineer

**Antoine Bryant**, Planning Commission

**Toby Coal**, Houston Commission on Disabilities

**Scott Cubbler**, Super Neighborhood Alliance

**Steve Curry**, Houston Archaeological and Historical  
Commission

**Curtis Davis**, ReBuildit Collaborative

**Mike Dishberger**, Sandcastle Homes

**Zion Escobar**, Houston Freedmen's Town  
Conservancy

**Melissa Fontenot**, Avenue CDC

**Peter Freedman**, Agape Ministries

**Luis Guajardo**, Kinder Institute

**Gwen Guidy**, Lindale Park Super Neighborhood

**Omar Izfar**, Wilson, Cribbs + Gorem

**Ron Lindsey**, Houston Real Estate Council

**Kirby Liu**, Lovett Commercial

**Meg Lousteau**, Historic preservation advocate

**Yuhayna Mahmud**, METRO

**Dustin O'Neal**, American Council of Engineering  
Companies

**Kathy Payton**, Fifth Ward Redevelopment  
Corporation

**Megan Sigler**, Planning Commission

**Dr. Sheri Smith**, Texas Southern University

**Sandy Stevens** Museum District Neighborhood  
Association

**Bobby Tyson**, Realtor

**Stakeholders:**

- **City of Houston departments** including, but not limited to the Houston Planning & Development Department, Houston Public Works, Houston Parks & Recreation Department, Houston Housing and Community Development Department, Mayor's Office of Complete Communities, Mayor's Office for Persons with Disabilities,
- **Agency partners** including Harris County, METRO, CenterPoint, housing authorities.
- **Super Neighborhood Alliance, individual Councils** and other neighborhood-based organizations
- **Houston area builders and developers**
- **Advocacy groups** like LINK Houston, Complete Streets Coalition and housing advocates
- **Commercial interests**
- **The greater Houston community**

**Preliminary Methodology:**

The project will be divided into several components that may run concurrently:

- Steering Committee will meet monthly to review staff proposals, provide input and make recommendations to Planning Commission.
- The Planning Commission who oversees the project, will consider the recommendations, listen to public input, and make recommendations intermittently to the City Council for their action.
- Minor technical amendments will be addressed and sent to City Council quickly.
- Topics such as Parking and Housing will be studied with the help of outside consultants to identify best practices.
- Extensive public outreach and engagement will occur to better understand the public vision for development in Houston and to inform people how various regulations can help achieve that vision.
- Staff will engage professional experts within a consultant team to develop regulatory tools that can help achieve the public vision.
- Throughout the process staff will present regular updates of the progress to the Planning Commission as well as the City Council Committee and seek input.

**Timeline:**

This project is expected to take 18-24 months to complete.

