

Livable Places Houston

Livable Places is a community-led initiative to create opportunities within our land-development standards that encourage housing variety and affordability. Initiated in late 2020, this effort will achieve the goals identified in several previous planning efforts such as Plan Houston, Resilient Houston, the Climate Action Plan and various Livable Center Studies conducted with neighborhoods across Houston.

Houston is a rapidly growing city and household sizes are shrinking. There's a growing need for smaller homes for people of all ages, but the City's rules make it difficult to build small, neighborhood-scale homes for people to build, buy or rent.

If we want to preserve our great diversity and culture, we need to act now to address issues like displacement and rising home and transportation costs. That's the goal of Livable Places: to pave the way for more connected, resilient and livable neighborhoods for all Houstonians.

To do this, we've created an Action Committee representing various stakeholder groups. The Committee is focused on updating development rules that encourage opportunities to build more variety of homes that are also connected to alternative transportation. For example:

- Building homes on currently vacant lots in developed neighborhoods
- Building more "missing middle" homes, like triplexes and small house scale apartment buildings, in developed neighborhoods when not prohibited by deed restrictions
- Encouraging more accessory dwelling units, like garage apartments or "granny flats," on single-family residential lots when not prohibited by deed restrictions
- Increasing home options that are connected to multiple transit options like bus stops, protected bike lanes, Metro lines and more
- Minimizing residential curb cuts to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

What we've done: Since September 2020, we've defined issues and developed recommendations for technical amendments, conservation districts, residential buffering standards, housing types and access to small lots. City Council adopted the technical amendments in May 2022.

What we're doing: Now through the summer 2022, we are drafting ordinance language for conservation districts, and residential buffering standards, and reviewing recommendations for housing types and small lot developments with the public. We will refine issues and develop recommendations for streets and intersections.

Where we're going: By early 2023, we will finalize ordinance language for all amendments, hold public hearings on proposed ordinance amendments, and request City Council adopt the amendments.

Public Engagement: We've encouraged everyone to attend virtual Committee meetings, submit comments, participate in surveys, mapping activities, an ADU workshops and design contest, and a self-guided tour of design elements. In the coming months we plan to meet with community members often to discuss proposed ordinance changes.

Learn about the initiative at www.houstontx.gov/planning/livableplaces.html. Engage with us at www.letstalkhouston.org/livable-places.