



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Planning & Development Department

**Sylvester Turner**

Mayor

Margaret Wallace Brown  
Director  
P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

T. 832.393.6600  
F. 832.393.6661  
[www.houstontx.gov](http://www.houstontx.gov)

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The Honorable Brian Birdwell  
Chairman, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development  
P.O. Box 12068- Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Birdwell and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding Senate Bill 558 by Senator Bryan Hughes. On behalf of the City of Houston ("City"), I write in opposition to SB 558.

The Planning and Development Department works hand in hand with Houston Parks and Recreation Department to ensure that every person across the City of Houston, no matter the area, income level or housing type, will have access to greenspace in their neighborhood. In 2007, we worked with the developers in Houston to establish a program to assist the City in achieving its goal of a park within walking distance of every home in Houston. Our park dedication program requires developers dedicate park space or pay a fee in lieu of the dedication. At the time, we established a fee of \$700 per dwelling unit, a tiny fraction of the cost of most land in Houston. This has not changed. Our system is easy to understand whether you're a developer by trade or an individual constructing your dream house or an accessory dwelling unit.

The revised version of the bill allows an alternative method for cities wishing to assess low fees based on median family income for the city. This proposal would work today but might prevent the City and developers from updating that fee to one that is still low but above 2% of the median income. We would then have to follow the more complicated, onerous process described in sections 212.209 and 212.210.

This process for determining the amount of land to be dedicated and the fee-in-lieu proposed is complicated and would be burdensome for city staff, developers, and property owners. In particular, the requirement to update the urban, suburban and CBD area designations through a comprehensive planning process is not doable for Houston. We don't have a comprehensive plan.

The City of Houston determines the amount of dedication or fee -in-lieu of during the platting process. Dedication is made at that time. Fees are collected at the time the building permit is purchased. We are concerned that the bill will require us to collect fees later in the process as a condition of granting a certificate of occupancy which could be problematic.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you through the duration of this legislative session.

Sincerely,

*/s/Jennifer Ostlind*

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Jennifer Ostlind, AICP

Deputy Director, City of Houston Planning and Development Department