

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON HOUSTON HISTORY

The following recommendations are the result of many hours of research and study by sixty-five citizens serving on five committees over the past six months. The first four recommendations are of a general nature; the ones that follow were compiled by the individual committees.

- 1. We recommend that a History Center be established in the city.** This center would serve as a central location for offerings of a historical nature (i.e. place for staging classes, seminars, etc.; point of departure for public tours; place for disseminating information on historical resources in the city; space for exhibits; site for city-wide celebrations and other related activities). We suggest that a committee be appointed to explore this possibility.

- 2. We recommend that a Non-profit Historical Association be established in the private sector to serve as an umbrella for the city's historical ventures.** It might be patterned after the Texas State Historical Association with individual, institutional, organizational, and corporate members. It is not intended to compete with existing historical organizations; rather it would enhance the efforts of such entities by giving support and visibility to them. In addition, this association could develop such programming as recommended by the Task Force. The Task Force believes that such an association is critical to the realization of our charge: to educate all Houstonians about our city's history and to identify and make available our city's historical resources to the entire community. Again, we suggest that a committee be appointed to explore the potential formation of such an entity.

- 3. We recommend that a City of Houston Archives be established with the goal of determining which city records need to be retained, archived, and maintained in a professional manner.** It appears that such records have not been handled in a systematic way, causing many vital records to be destroyed while others are residing in scattered locations under less than desirable environmental conditions. Our research has determined that there are two potential ways this could be implemented: (1.) employ an archivist at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center to solely handle the city's archives or (2) create an archivist position in the city's Records Management Program office to be solely responsible for maintaining the official city archives. We suggest that someone well-versed in archival management be consulted to determine the best solution to this problem.

- 4. We recommend that a Web site be developed to focus solely on Houston History and all of its related elements.** It could be implemented by an appropriate non-profit organization (as proposed in **Recommendation 2**) or it could be a link to the City of Houston web site. It would publicize all historical happenings in the city, educate the community with its changing historical content, serve as a network to link the entire city together through its neighborhoods, and serve as the instrument to

contain the Historical Database, as proposed in **Recommendation 5**. (See **Appendix A** for details.)

5. **We recommend that a comprehensive Historical Database be developed to include what has been compiled by the Task Force Committee on Identifying the City's Historical Resources (see Appendix B), as well as the Houston Architectural Database compiled by the Committee on Identifying and Preserving the Built Environment (see Appendix F).** It will be necessary to create a maintenance vehicle to update these materials on a regular basis.
6. **We recommend that the Medium of Television be used to educate the public about our history.** Two specific projects have been proposed: (1.) Develop a series of educational documentaries which would be created for a broad audience but could also be used by schools in the area as supplementary curriculum and by area universities in distance learning classes for undergraduates and (2.) Develop a regularly scheduled (perhaps monthly), studio-based history program that would include guest interviews with Houstonians who have experienced significant events relating to the city's history, discussions of timely historical subjects, and commemorations of special dates in our collective history. (See **Appendix C**)
7. **We recommend that a public Houston History Fair be held annually to celebrate the rich, diverse heritage of our city.** It could include exhibits, learning activities for children, workshops in specialized areas, and other celebratory venues. It might even serve as the city's birthday celebration each year. (See **Appendix C**)
8. **We recommend that Educating Houston's Youth should be a high priority.** We propose that this education should consist of these components: educating youth in the schools, providing education for teachers, and educating youth in the community. (See **Appendix D**.)
9. **We recommend that a comprehensive Media Package be developed to spotlight Houston's history and to publicize historical happenings within the entire community.** In addition to developing a web site (as in **Recommendation 4**), these venues could be utilized: (1.) Developing an ongoing entry in the *Houston Chronicle*, tentatively named "This Day in Houston," which highlights historical dates/information; (2.) Creating Public Service Announcements with a variety of citizens recalling their own memories of specific events in history or retelling a significant historical event; (3.) Organizing a Speakers' Bureau of individuals who can give presentations to appropriate groups in the city; and (4) Releasing information on a regular basis to all appropriate local publications. (See **Appendix E**)
10. **We recommend that Historic Neighborhood Surveys be conducted throughout the city.** This program can be done either by professional preservation consultants or by neighborhood groups under the leadership of a professional. Information collected could be used in two ways: (1.) to produce brochures on specific neighborhoods and

(2.) to apply for historic designations, for both entire districts and individual structures. (See **Appendix F**)

11. We recommend the following in the area of Public Policy:

- A. Revision of the City Building Code to accommodate historic buildings**
- B. Strengthen the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance**
- C. Hire additional staff to administer the City Historic Preservation Program**
- D. Initiate an aggressive Historic Plaque Program**

Although we realize that these policies are addressed through designated channels in the city government, we, nevertheless, felt that they were intricately tied to our charge of identifying and preserving the city's built environment; therefore, we are submitting them for your consideration. (See **Appendix F**)