

## Response to Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA)

### Top 10 List

4/3/13

1. **Extend the “urban” rules out to Beltway in stages**, over say a three-year period, prioritizing development in transit and declining commercial corridors, brown fields, obsolete multi-family tracts, and larger vacant areas.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 - We propose to phase in the amendments over 2 years. Phase 1 is a 1 year wait period before the urban development rules are extended outside the 610 Loop. This will allow a year for neighborhoods outside the 610 Loop to file their Special Minimum Lot Size and Building Line Applications. Phase 2 is an additional year wait period for tracts that are less than 1 acre in size. After the second year the urban rules are fully available with no limit on tract size.
  - Chapter 42 - Neighborhoods that have filed a completed Special Minimum Lot Size or Building Line applications during the first year will be provided 1 year from the date of a completed application for Council to act upon the application.
  - Chapter 42 - The Special Minimum Lot Size and the Special Building Line requirement are valid for 20 years. We will add a provision that the Special Minimum Lot Size is valid for 40 years unless terminated prior to 20 years.
  - The Planning Commission will develop a process for existing Special Minimum Lot Size and Building Line requirements to extend the 20 year term. The Super Neighborhood Alliance will be part of a group that provides input into the amendments. Council Committee August 2013.
2. **Improve Drainage** by making storm water management and adequate infrastructure an integral part of every project, and by phasing out the “grandfathering” of detention exemptions that shifts flooding burdens to taxpayers and adjacent property owners.

*Response:*

- Drainage is not covered by Chapter 42 but rather is part of the Public Works & Engineering Infrastructure Design Manual (IDM) of Chapter 9, which is currently under review internally. The proposed revisions to Chapter 9 jointly developed by APAC and PWE will increase detention requirements by the current version by requiring detention both on the increase in impervious cover due to the development, and on the extent of existing impervious cover and the increased hydraulic efficiency typically related to redeveloped drainage on a site. We anticipate this recommendation to be considered during a 45 day public comment period in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2013 and a final revised Chapter 9 issued by July 1, 2013.

- 3. Adopt Modern Urban Street Standards/Complete Streets** or “complete streets,” designed for all users-motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, persons with disabilities and car parking-unimpeded by obstructions such as utility poles, fire hydrants, redundant poles and random signs. Attractive, well-designed streets can be strong incentives for new investment in the city.

*Response:*

- The Administration supports the development of city-wide Complete Streets standards and will issue a Complete Street Executive Order before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. The goal is to have the Executive Order completed by May. Additional items that need to be done as part of developing Complete Street Transportation Plan include: On-going small area transportation studies, Amending Chapter 1 of the Code to add Collector Streets, Amending the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan policy, Revisions to the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan as a result of completing small area transportation studies, Amending Chapter 10 (Streets) of the Infrastructure and Design Manual.
  - We are drafting an agreement with CenterPoint on collaboration in a number of areas including a 50 year plan to bury overhead lines. We are in the process of developing an Inter-local Agreement that will be brought to a Council Committee in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.
  - The Super Neighborhood Alliance will see a draft document of both items.
- 4. Keep Public Rights-of-Way Public, Walkable and “Green”** by protecting trees, landscaping and adequate sidewalks. Private uses such as utility meter boards, gang mailboxes, staging of trash receptacles and excessive curb cuts should be prohibited. Wider, attractive sidewalks should be a priority to facilitate walking and public transit in urban areas.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 amendments include the filing of an existing conditions survey with all single-family residential subdivision plats. This is consistent with the information required with construction plans for non-single family development.
  - We will establish a SWAT team composed of representatives from Neighborhoods, Public Works and Engineering and Planning Departments to inventory 5 areas of town. They will develop a report that discusses deviations from “right-of-way” standards and possible remedies. Each District Council Member will provide an area in their District that will be considered to be one of the 5 inventoried areas. We will hold a public forum where we will review our findings with the Super Neighborhood Alliance before going to a Council Committee.
  - A Planning Commission subcommittee will review the location and design criteria for group mail boxes and group meter boards. They will develop an appropriate strategy, i.e. amend rules, education by June 2013.
- 5. Manage Solid Waste Responsibly** by requiring sufficient space for garbage bins and re-cycling pick-up, without compromising street, drainage and sidewalk functions.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 amendments include showing the location and screening of bulk containers on a Development Plat at permitting.
  - A Planning Commission subcommittee will work with the Solid Waste Department to revise the Single Family Residential Solid Waste Collection Plans to take into account for additional waste containers and showing the location of the storage of the containers on private property. This will be completed by May 2013.
- 6. Limit Lot Size Averaging** to entire blocks or to larger tracts, to preserve neighborhood character, on-street parking, and vegetation, and to mitigate the cumulative impact of numerous small-scale development projects.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 was revised to clarify the area that can be used to allow lot size averaging to address this concern.
- 7. Require Adequate Setbacks Side Setbacks and Front Setbacks** by setting minimum safe distances between buildings and lot lines. Allow reduced front setbacks in exchange for wide, landscaped sidewalks, encourage attractive architectural projections such as roof overhands, balconies, window bays, and porches.
- There is an accompanying amendment to Chapter 10 of the Code of Ordinances that requires a construction and maintenance agreement for new construction within 3' of an abutting single-family residential property.
  - A Planning Commission subcommittee will examine encroachments into setbacks less than 10'. Their review will be completed by May 2013.
- 8. Share Driveways Safely** by setting maximum lengths and minimum widths for private streets serving multiple dwellings, to insure safe emergency access and vehicular circulations.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 amendments include improved shared driveway standards that were developed in partnership with the Houston Fire Department.

- 9. Use Parking Regulations as a Development Tool**, by maximizing the number of on-street spaces, limiting unnecessary curb cuts, and requiring on-site guest parking. Reward with reduced on-site parking requirements, the use of rear alleys, development within walking distance of transit stations, provisions of bike racks, share parking garages, and multi-destination “park-once” projects.

*Response:*

- Chapter 42 includes provision for additional parking for certain single-family residential development that may be met on site or on the street.
- The Comprehensive amendments Chapter 26 approved by City Council on March 6, 2013, include bike parking, incentives for additional bike parking, special parking provisions for properties that opt in to transit corridor rules, improved shared use parking table, increase parking distance for off-site parking lots and Special Parking Areas.

- 10. Allow for Creation of Special Purpose Urban Districts (SPUDs)** with customized development standards for we-planned areas, such as transit corridors in recognition of the fact that cities grow and change based on coherent districts of differing character, not on fragmented individual projects reflecting one-size-fits-all regulations.

*Response:*

- Currently being evaluated including Governance in the city.

**Items not on the SNA Top 10 List**

- The Building Code amendments on standards for mechanical equipment located within the buffer area were posted on February 25, 2013 for a 30 day public comment period. The item will go before Council Committee in April.
- Provide an update on the General Parking Plan. We will provide a briefing in April of 2013.
- Create a General Plan - The Mayor and staff have met with Blueprint Houston and have agreed the administration will work on an appropriate definition of a general plan to recognize that many of the fundamental elements of that plan are currently available today. Blueprint Houston is preparing two documents: “What is a General Plan?” and “What is deficient with our General Plan Web Site?”. This will help guide the General Plan discussions and the next steps.