

PLAN HOUSTON

Opportunity. Diversity. Community. Home.



Final Report

September 30, 2015



planhouston.org

Houston:
Opportunity.
Diversity. Community.
Home.

Introduction

Houston is a great city. From its winding greenways, to its thriving arts and cultural scene, to its bold entrepreneurialism, Houston is a city of opportunity. Houston is also renowned for its welcoming culture: a city that thrives on its international diversity, where eclectic inner city neighborhoods and master-planned suburban communities come together. Houston is a place where all of us can feel at home.

Even with our successes, Houston faces many challenges: from managing its continued growth, to sustaining quality infrastructure, enhancing its existing neighborhoods, and addressing social and economic inequities. Overcoming these challenges requires strong and effective local government, including a City organization that is well-coordinated, pro-active, and efficient. Having this kind of highly capable City is vital to ensuring our community enjoys the highest possible quality of life and competes successfully for the best and brightest people, businesses, and institutions.

In short, achieving Houston's full potential requires a plan.

Realizing this potential is the ambition of Plan Houston. In developing this plan, the project team, led by the City's Planning and Development Department, began by looking at plans that had previously been created by dozens of public and private sector groups. The team then listened to Houstonians themselves, who described their vision for Houston's future. Finally, the team sought guidance from Plan Houston's diverse leadership groups – notably its Steering Committee, Stakeholder Advisory Group and Technical Advisory Committee – to develop strategies to achieve the vision.

Plan Houston supports Houston's continued success by providing consensus around Houston's goals and policies and encouraging coordination and partnerships, thus enabling more effective government. Plan Houston charts a course to a healthy, prosperous future for our city for decades to come.

Plan Houston's Components

Plan Houston begins with a vision and goals for the entire community. These statements – generated by Houstonians themselves – describe Houston's preferred future. This definition of the community's success lays a foundation for actions needed to achieve the vision.

In addition to the community vision and goals, Plan Houston includes 12 Core Strategies. These strategies, along with each strategy's more specific Actions, describe the role the City plays in achieving the community's vision and goals. Each

strategy also identifies the community goals impacted by the strategy. The strategies represent an effective approach for the City to provide its core services and serve as the starting point for Plan Houston's implementation.

Any plan must be acted upon in order to be effective, and Plan Houston includes two online tools to enable implementation:

- Performance indicators that track the community's progress towards achieving the vision and goals and inform policymaking; and
- A planning coordination tool that displays local plans, helping neighborhoods, developers, and officials leverage planning efforts.

Implementing Plan Houston

Rather than an end in itself, Plan Houston is actually a starting point for better governance for the City of Houston. In addition to the online implementation tools, Plan Houston's findings must be actively utilized and integrated into the City organization to fully realize the plan's benefits. Plan Houston recommends an ongoing, organization-wide effort to implement the Core Strategies and achieve the community's vision and goals. This effort will require recurring assessments of this achievement and decision-making on priorities and funding for next steps to fulfill the plan. These assessments will include a review of the City's governance structure, including the Charter. Other elements, such as boards and commissions, ordinances, and recommendations to this structure that support community vision and goals, will be addressed in an annual work plan. Plan Houston should be a living document routinely utilized by future mayoral administrations, city councils, and City departments as an underlying framework for this decision-making. In this way, Plan Houston creates a strategic framework for a more effective organization and enables a path to a thriving, more successful Houston.

Vision

After months of community dialogue, the Houstonians expressed a vision for their community, describing aspirations for Houston’s long-term future:

Houston offers opportunity for all and celebrates its diversity of people, economy, culture, and places. Houston promotes healthy and resilient communities through smart civic investments, dynamic partnerships, education, and innovation. Houston is the place where anyone can prosper and feel at home.

Houston: Opportunity. Diversity. Community. Home.

Goals

Houstonians identified a set of 32 goals, organized into nine categories, which further describe the community vision. The numbering of goals in this section does not indicate priority or importance. These goals are listed below.

People

1. Equal access to opportunity and prosperity.
2. Engaged and informed residents.
3. Strong social ties supported by social, civic, and faith organizations.
4. Affordable, high-quality health care available to the community.
5. Supportive services for disadvantaged and at-risk groups.
6. An inclusive community that reflects our international heritage.
7. A diverse, welcoming culture that is celebrated and respected.

Place

8. A safe, secure community.
9. Inviting and accessible parks and public spaces that provide recreation experiences, respect the environment, and connect people and places.
10. Attractive streetscapes and public spaces.
11. Vibrant, enjoyable activity centers.
12. High-quality community facilities that provide for the diverse needs of residents.
13. A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles, and social well-being.
14. A community that respects our history.

Culture

15. Unique and internationally recognized cultural and entertainment opportunities.
16. A thriving local arts and creative community.

Education

17. Quality learning opportunities from early childhood onward.
18. Schools and communities that invest in each other.
19. A skilled and talented workforce.

Economy

20. A thriving, resilient, and diverse economy.
21. An exemplary climate for business, with an entrepreneurial spirit, support for innovation, and world-wide competitiveness.
22. Job opportunities that support a good standard of living and financial stability.
23. A culture that encourages innovation.

Environment

24. Efficient use and reuse, and conservation of resources.
25. Clean, plentiful, and accessible water, air, land, and food resources.
26. Resilient man-made and natural systems that protect citizens and assets from disasters and other risks.

Public Services

27. Ample, efficient, and well-maintained infrastructure.
28. Fiscally responsible, accountable, and responsive public services and civic investments.
29. Active regional cooperation and collaboration among governments, community leaders, and residents.

Transportation

30. An affordable, multi-modal transportation network providing convenient access and mobility throughout the region for people and goods.

Housing

31. Attractive, walkable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character.
32. Sufficient quality, affordable housing options throughout the community.

Core Strategies

Plan Houston proposes 12 Core Strategies for the City of Houston. These strategies identify City of Houston actions necessary to achieve the community vision and goals.

In order to achieve the community's vision and goals and to provide for the needs of all Houstonians, the City of Houston will do the following:

- Spend money wisely.
- Grow responsibly.
- Sustain quality infrastructure.
- Nurture safe and healthy neighborhoods.
- Connect people and places.
- Support our global economy.
- Champion learning.
- Foster an affordable city.
- Protect and conserve our resources.
- Communicate clearly and with transparency.
- Partner with others, public and private.
- Celebrate what's uniquely Houston.

Greater detail on each Core Strategy, including Actions necessary to implement each strategy, can be found on the following pages. The numbering of actions on the following pages does not indicate priority or importance.

Spend money wisely.

The City must manage the public's money wisely, using every means possible to provide the best benefit for each dollar. Prudent fiscal management requires the City to prioritize its investments and take advantage of cost-sharing opportunities. Further, the City should anticipate long-term fiscal challenges and identify the best strategies for overcoming them.

Actions:

1. Maintain a long-range fiscal plan for the City.
2. Fund essential programs and services according to prioritized community needs.
3. Institutionalize communication and coordination within departments and among partner agencies to increase efficiencies.
4. Encourage cost sharing among departments and partners agencies.
5. Adequately maintain City assets to reduce capital replacement expenditures.
6. Ensure that long-term growth supports the City's fiscal viability.
7. Distribute services and investments equitably based on need and benefit.

Related goals:

- Fiscally responsible, accountable, and responsive public services and investments.
- Ample, efficient and well-maintained infrastructure.
- Active regional cooperation and collaboration among governments, community leaders and residents
- Equal access to opportunity and prosperity.

Grow responsibly.

Houston is located in one of the fastest growing regions in the country. In order to sustain the City’s vitality, the City must balance the benefits of growth with the need to protect existing neighborhoods. The City should coordinate development with transportation and infrastructure investments. Finally, the City should encourage growth that supports the economy and quality of life.

Actions:

1. Engage with the community to identify local needs and pursue neighborhood goals.
2. Enhance tools that protect and preserve neighborhoods.
3. Anticipate growth and plan for it, ensuring that infrastructure and services accommodate growth.
4. Adopt policies supporting existing and future activity centers that enable a combination of live, work and play options.
5. Support community investment in public transit and adopt policies that coordinate transit with supporting land development.
6. Encourage development of a transportation network that considers all modes of transportation and context sensitive design principles.
7. Maintain transportation and infrastructure plans.
8. Encourage targeted development and redevelopment that support the City’s vitality.

Related goals:

- Inviting and accessible parks and public spaces that provide recreation experiences, respect the environment, and connect people and places
- Attractive streetscapes and public spaces
- Vibrant and connected activity centers
- A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles and social well-being
- An affordable, multi-modal transportation network providing convenient access and mobility throughout the region for people and goods
- Ample, efficient, and well-maintained infrastructure

Sustain quality infrastructure.

Houston maintains vast infrastructure systems, including miles of streets, sidewalks, and utilities, as well as other facilities. These systems help move people and goods, enhance safety, and support the economy. Keeping these systems in good working order requires coordination, planning, and ongoing investment.

Actions:

1. Coordinate with partner agencies to plan for infrastructure needs in a comprehensive manner.
2. Adequately maintain existing infrastructure to reduce capital replacement expenditures.
3. Seek means to accelerate infrastructure repair and reconstruction.
4. Provide efficient, cost-effective infrastructure.
5. Coordinate with partners to improve drainage.
6. Ensure that infrastructure accommodates growth and meets the community's changing needs.
7. Encourage development of green infrastructure and low impact development.
8. Align infrastructure investment with neighborhood needs.
9. Use infrastructure improvements strategically to enhance economic development.
10. Minimize risk of damages resulting from catastrophic events.

Related Goals:

- Attractive, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character
- Attractive streetscapes and public spaces
- Resilient man-made and natural systems that protect citizens and assets from disasters and other risks
- Ample, efficient, and well-maintained infrastructure
- Fiscally responsible, accountable, and responsive public services and civic investments

Nurture safe and healthy neighborhoods.

Every Houstonian should have the opportunity to live in a safe and healthy community. The City should support residents with well-coordinated public safety and social services and ensure its neighborhoods foster healthy lifestyles.

Actions:

1. Provide responsive and efficient public safety services that use technology effectively.
2. Expand partnerships to support healthy neighborhoods.
3. Bolster awareness of public health and safety programs.
4. Provide coordinated supplemental services for those without access to adequate health care.
5. Use localized planning to help neighborhoods improve and maintain quality of life.
6. Encourage development that fosters healthy lifestyles for Houstonians of all ages.
7. Coordinate with partner agencies to maintain safe, healthy neighborhoods.

Related Goals:

- Affordable, high-quality health care available to the community
- A safe, secure community
- Supportive services for disadvantaged and at-risk groups
- Attractive, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character
- High-quality community facilities that provide for the diverse needs of residents
- A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles and social well-being
- An affordable, multi-modal transportation network providing convenient access and mobility throughout the region for people and goods

Connect people and places.

Mobility is a chief interest for Houstonians. Houston's rapid growth, however, presents an ongoing transportation challenge. Supporting Houston's growth, while preserving quality of life, requires increasing reliance on creative transportation solutions. These solutions should include safe and efficient roadways, an effective transit system, and activity centers with housing, jobs and services.

Actions:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive mobility plan.
2. Encourage compact, pedestrian-friendly development around transit.
3. Support a well-connected transportation network that includes transit, bicycle and pedestrian options.
4. Work with partner agencies to increase transit ridership among all Houstonians.
5. Maintain a citywide plan for bicycling.
6. Maintain a parking strategy that supports economic development, protects neighborhoods, and achieves vibrant, walkable activity centers.
7. Enhance access to affordable transportation options.
8. Coordinate with partner agencies on regional transportation solutions.

Related Goals:

- Attractive, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character
- A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles and social well-being
- Vibrant and connected activity centers
- A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles and social well-being
- An affordable, multi-modal transportation network providing convenient access and mobility throughout the region for people and goods
- Ample, efficient, and well-maintained infrastructure
- Active regional cooperation and collaboration among governments, community leaders, and residents

Support our global economy.

Houston’s economic success is increasingly reliant on the community’s ability to reach a global audience. The City should partner with the corporate sector to support Houston’s ability to compete for customers, businesses, and workers. The City should also use its economic tools strategically to attract desired development and jobs.

Actions:

1. Leverage Houston’s international diversity to attract businesses, investors and tourism.
2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive economic development plan, including policies that identify both city-wide and localized strategies.
3. Support local and historically disadvantaged businesses.
4. Support long-term economic durability by encouraging industry diversity.
5. Improve and promote Houston’s quality of life to attract and retain talented and creative workers and businesses.
6. Strengthen efforts to identify and encourage emerging industries.
7. Develop, maintain, and implement a regional tourism plan.
8. Maintain a world-class airport network.
9. Develop and maintain state of the art convention and entertainment facilities.
10. Support initiatives that welcome newcomers and help them integrate into and succeed in the community.
11. Encourage programs that help job seekers connect with potential employers.

Related Goals:

- An integrated community that reflects our cultural diversity and heritage
- A skilled and talented workforce
- A thriving, resilient, and diverse economy
- An exemplary climate for all businesses, with an entrepreneurial spirit and world-wide competitiveness
- Job opportunities that support a good standard of living and financial stability
- A culture that encourages innovation

Champion learning.

An educated, well-trained workforce is essential to thriving neighborhoods and a healthy economy. The City should play a strong supportive role to education providers to ensure a well-educated community. The City should also seek out opportunities to encourage innovation and broad use of technology by the entire community.

Actions:

1. Partner with organizations to improve education and related support services.
2. Expand out-of-school programs and resources.
3. Adopt policies to support education and provide learning opportunities for Houstonians of all ages.
4. Support mentorship and internship programs that teach applied skills.
5. Support efforts that foster new ideas, entrepreneurship, innovation and growth in technology-related businesses.
6. Support partnerships that provide adult education and job training at all skill levels.

Related goals:

- Equal access to opportunity and prosperity
- Engaged and informed residents
- Strong social ties supported by social, civic, and faith organizations
- Supportive services for disadvantaged and at-risk groups
- Quality learning opportunities from early childhood onward
- Schools and communities that invest in each other
- A skilled and talented workforce
- Job opportunities that support a good standard of living and financial stability

Foster an affordable city.

A successful city should help provide access to quality housing for people of all income levels. Houston should sustain its historic affordability by encouraging mixed-income neighborhoods and enhancing access to quality affordable housing options.

Actions:

1. Develop and maintain a comprehensive housing policy to support access to quality, well-maintained, and affordable housing.
2. Adopt housing policies that support underdeveloped communities while also encouraging housing opportunities in high-opportunity areas.
3. Ensure that affordable housing is connected to the community and its services.
4. Provide options to make affordable, workforce and mixed-income housing development more attractive to private investment.
5. Support opportunities to improve affordability of targeted services based on need.
6. Provide incentives to replace affordable housing units lost through redevelopment and neglect.
7. Leverage external funds and incentives to build additional affordable housing.
8. Encourage mixed-income communities.
9. Work with external organizations to ensure permanent supportive housing is available for the homeless.
10. Ensure regulatory policies support housing affordability.

Related goals:

- Equal access to opportunity and prosperity
- Attractive, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character
- High-quality community facilities that provide for the diverse needs of residents
- A city that enables healthy, active lifestyles and social well-being
- Sufficient quality, affordable housing options throughout the community

Protect and conserve our resources.

Great cities provide outstanding quality of life amenities, including opportunities for recreation and experiencing nature. Additionally, Houstonians increasingly support environmental responsibility and desire clean air and water. The City should pursue opportunities to provide open space, conserve resources and protect the environment.

Actions:

1. Preserve open space for recreation, habitat, and other uses.
2. Maintain a comprehensive plan for acquiring, developing and maintaining parks and open space.
3. Encourage reduced consumption of natural resources.
4. Support recycling throughout the city.
5. Expand education for waste management and conservation programs.
6. Encourage green building and sustainable energy practices.
7. Limit the City's impact on the environment.
8. Preserve and enhance the public tree canopy.
9. Adopt policies and coordinate with partner organizations to improve air and water quality.

Related goals:

- Inviting and accessible parks and public spaces that provide recreation experiences, respect the environment, and connect people and places
- Attractive streetscapes and public spaces
- Efficient use and reuse, and conservation of resources
- Clean, plentiful, and accessible water, air, land, and food resources
- Resilient man-made and natural systems that protect citizens and assets from disasters and other risks

Communicate clearly and with transparency.

The City communicates with Houstonians every day as a means to inform, educate, and listen. The City should strengthen its ability to connect to diverse audiences and provide convenient ways for people to find accurate information quickly. Further, the City should engage in a dialogue with its residents in order to develop policies that reflect the interests of the community.

Actions:

1. Provide information to the public in formats they can use and understand.
2. Leverage technology effectively to engage the community.
3. Develop and maintain a comprehensive citywide public engagement policy.
4. Use public engagement to better understand community needs and interests in order to develop sound public policy.
5. Use metrics to gauge success in achieving community goals.
6. Enable individuals with diverse backgrounds to fully participate in City activities.
7. Partner with surrounding communities to provide seamless regional communication.

Related goals:

- Engaged and informed residents
- Strong social ties supported by social, civic, and faith organizations
- An integrated community that reflects our cultural diversity and heritage
- A diverse, welcoming culture that is celebrated and respected
- Attractive, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with diverse housing types, values, and character
- Inviting and accessible parks and public spaces that provide recreation experiences, respect the environment, and connect people and places
- Fiscally responsible, accountable, and responsive public services and civic investments
- Active regional cooperation and collaboration among governments, community leaders, and residents

Partner with others, public and private.

Partnerships between the City and other organizations enable Houston to achieve greater results. The City should strengthen ties to public and private partners as a means to share resources, expand programs, and enhance civic investment.

Actions:

1. Coordinate with other governmental entities to ensure policy alignment, identify overlapping services, and find efficiencies.
2. Ensure coordination among City departments to identify efficiencies and share facilities and resources.
3. Collaborate with partner organizations on infrastructure solutions, economic development and other opportunities.
4. Expand opportunities for non-profits to provide services at City-owned facilities.
5. Use public-private partnerships to generate funding for civic investments.
6. Promote shared use of City-owned facilities to provide opportunities for community interaction.

Related goals:

- Strong social ties supported by social, civic, and faith organizations
- Supportive services for disadvantaged and at-risk groups
- High-quality community facilities that provide for the diverse needs of residents
- Unique and internationally-recognized cultural and entertainment opportunities
- A thriving local arts and creative community
- Schools and communities that invest in each other
- A skilled and talented workforce
- An exemplary climate for all businesses, with an entrepreneurial spirit and world-wide competitiveness
- Active regional cooperation and collaboration among governments, community leaders, and residents

Celebrate what's uniquely Houston.

Houston is a unique and exciting city. The City should reinforce and highlight its distinctive elements, including areas of character and identity, historic resources, arts, special attractions, and events.

Actions:

1. Maintain a plan for supporting arts and culture.
2. Seek additional means to support and promote arts and culture organizations locally and internationally.
3. Ensure that all Houstonians have access to art and culture attractions.
4. Celebrate Houston's past and present diversity and culture through City activities, events and publications.
5. Encourage and support attractive public spaces and roadways.
6. Preserve historic resources.

Related goals:

- Engaged and informed residents
- Strong social ties supported by social, civic, and faith organizations
- An integrated community that reflects our cultural diversity and heritage
- Attractive streetscapes and public spaces
- A community that respects its history
- Unique and internationally-recognized cultural and entertainment opportunities
- A thriving local arts and creative community

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