

## STEERING COMMITTEE

### Top Priorities for FY 2018

The Steering Committee considered actions that can be taken by public agencies, non-profits, private corporations and individual Houstonians in order to address the top priorities. Following is their list of brainstormed actions.

Note: Priorities are based on Plan Houston survey options

#### **Transportation Options:**

The City should be a leader in regional transportation decisions working toward a greater mode-split, encouraging transit-friendly development, and investing in improvements that use the ROW more efficiently to make needed connections.

#### **Affordable Housing:**

Create a comprehensive housing policy that includes mixed-income housing in more desirable areas (use trust funds and dedicated tax mechanisms).

#### **Walkable Streets:**

Create a comprehensive sidewalk plan and policy that addresses priorities for City investment, standards for new development, coordination with County and Metro, and maintenance.

#### **Supporting Schools and After-School Activity**

The City should provide much needed support to schools by influencing improved public perception of urban schools (many are excellent), encouraging companies to locate/remain inside City boundaries, encouraging the development of complete communities and coordinating with schools to provide social services on school campuses.

#### **Traffic Congestion**

Congestion is often a sign of a successful economy. Instead of investing resources on improving capacity for more vehicles, the City should increase/improve alternative transportation options, and encourage more activity centers (housing, jobs, schools, and commerce) to reduce the need to travel long distances.

#### **Flooding**

Establish a regional approach to detention, including an impact fee based on floor area ratios and/or sectors or watersheds. Some existing parks may be used for detention as well as recreation.

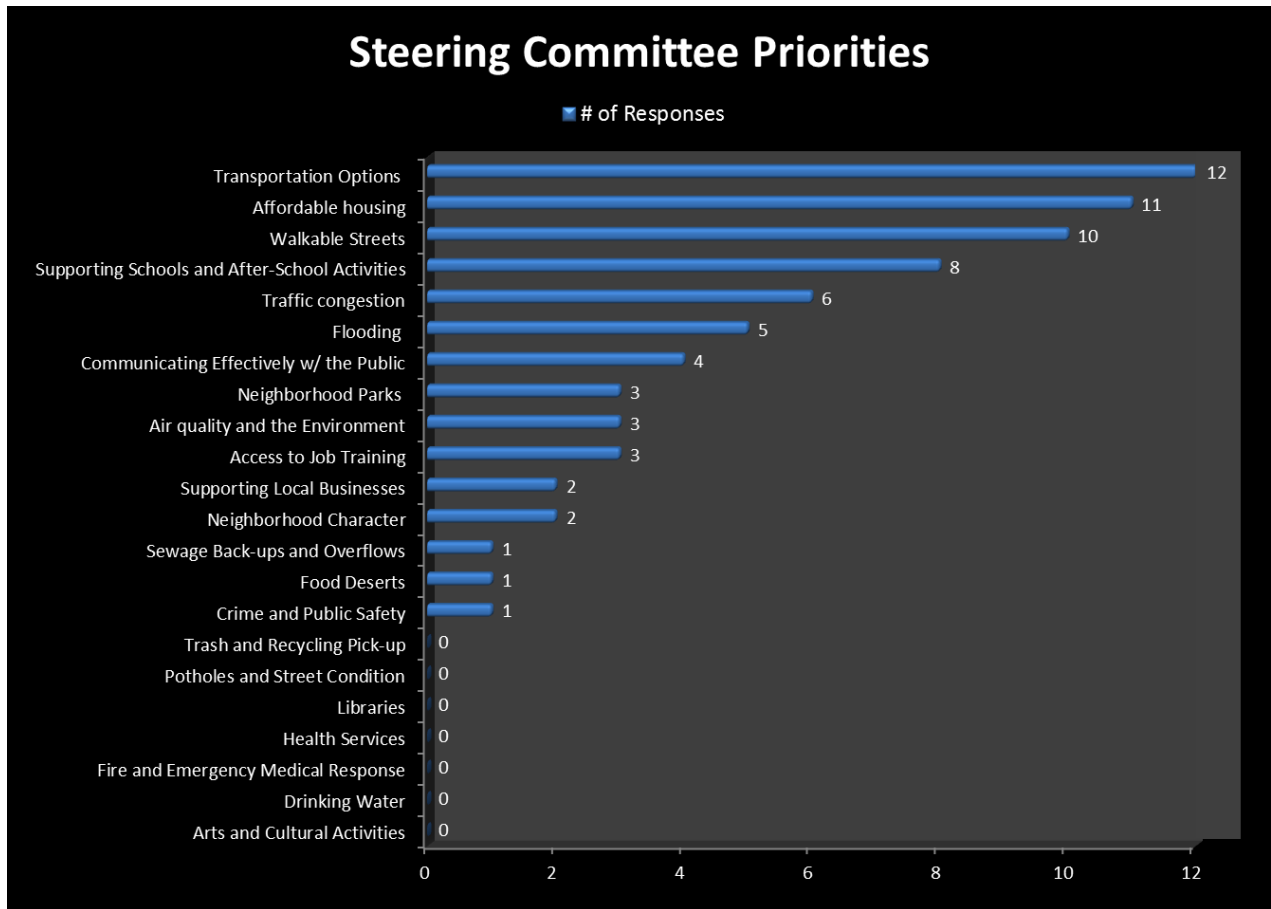
#### **Communicating Effectively with the Public**

More resources should be spent on outreach; it must not be an afterthought. This includes developing a coordinated approach among departments, targeting issues people care about and establishing focus groups to reach more people and get more detailed input.

## STEERING COMMITTEE

### Comments from November and December Meetings

#### I. Survey Results



Note: Steering Committee members voted on their top three issues for the City to address in FY 2018.

## II. Discussion of Top Priorities

### 1. Transportation Options

**The City should be a leader in regional transportation decisions working toward a greater mode-split, encouraging transit-friendly development, and investing in improvements that use the ROW more efficiently to make needed connections.**

- Rail line – tap into general mobility fund.
- Use City’s leverage with regional transportation organizations to promote improved transit. Current path is too auto-oriented.
- City should be more active in regional transportation planning.
- Need higher mode-split starting at Grand Parkway .
- Coordinate and collaborate, but do not push responsibilities onto other agencies.
- The “last mile” connection is crucial – Bayou Greenways are a crucial link to employment and schools, focus on connections to street level routes. How to invest?
- How to use ROW more effectively?
- Develop and execute a comprehensive mobility plan.
- Budget priorities (City) Vs Policy priorities (State).
- Work with Metro to achieve a higher level of mode-split – develop strategic partnerships and regional coordination.
- Adopt policies to encourage transit – land use and density.

### 2. Affordable Housing

**Create a comprehensive housing policy that includes mixed-income housing in more desirable areas (use trust funds and dedicated tax mechanisms).**

- Invest in minorities through education – they are the leaders of the next generation
- View affordable housing as a tool to alleviate poverty.
- Implement a comprehensive housing policy at the City level. Balance competing interests better.
- Counter market-driven density with policy. Examples given included providing incentives for not driving and building infrastructure as amenities in areas where the market isn’t.
- Encourage affordable, high-density development mixed with with single-family homes.
- Address negative perception of high-density development and affordable housing.
- Involve the public in plans for multi-family development.
- Consider alternative permitting requirements for high-density affordable housing.

- The Complete Communities concept is a huge opportunity and we need to infuse planning into this process.
- The need for mixed-income housing – we should work with communities earlier in the process to create a win/win.
- State controls the subsidized housing money – the City needs a comprehensive plan to develop strategies such as trust funds and dedicated taxing.
- Address vacant, undeveloped land – many of these areas lack necessary infrastructure – the City should invest in underperforming areas so that they can attract and be ready for development.
- There currently exists a negative perception of affordable housing – the messaging issue must be addressed first by educating the population that fears affordable housing.
- Use eminent domain more effectively for land assemblage for public use.
- Convert abandoned or underperforming strip centers into multifamily mixed-use developments.
- Policy Changes – growth, mobility and housing.

### 3. Walkable Streets

**Create a comprehensive sidewalk plan and policy that addresses priorities for City investment, standards for new development, coordination with County and Metro, and maintenance.**

- Sidewalk mapping – take an inventory of current situations (network and condition)
- Best practices survey – sidewalks and crosswalks – crowdsourcing?
- Metro should commit to walkability – Metro’s standard sidewalk width is 4’ and City’s is 5’
- Coordinate sidewalks and crosswalks with bus stops.
- Avoid street furniture “obstacle courses.”
- Prioritize sidewalks around schools to promote walkability.
- Enforce and revive Complete Streets Executive Order – all reconstruction should make streets safe for all users
- Look at Dallas sidewalk program as a model – cost sharing, requirements and enforcement
- Comprehensive Sidewalk Plan – bring together all of the actors (Walkable Places Committee)
- Harris County is now largely urban and the County’s role in sidewalk construction needs to be revisited
- Prioritize maintenance issues – sidewalk and other infrastructure
- Prioritize sidewalks next to schools
- Important to visit with each Commissioner and Judge

#### 4. Supporting Schools and After-School Activity

**The City should provide much needed support to schools by influencing improved public perception of urban schools (many are excellent), encouraging companies to locate/remain inside City boundaries, encouraging the development of complete communities and coordinating with schools to provide social services on school campuses.**

- Better educate Latino and African-American youth to set them up for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.
- Involve schools, starting at the pre-school level.
- Retain companies in the city center. Loss of Exxon and Shell takes parents-students away from HISD as families relocate closer to their jobs.
- Bolster public schools and minimize flight to private schools.
- Improve public perception of public/urban schools.
- The Mayor should use his influence to improve the perception of urban schools – they are actually very good.
- More social services in high poverty schools.
- Fix permitting issues that may block schools from locating in certain areas.
- Safe routes to school/transportation issues should be a focus.
- More cooperation between communities and schools.
- Racial segregation is a problem.
- HISD should work more closely w/ community organizations.
- Housing and affordability is connected with education.
- Community level collaboration is vital.
- Celebrate the success that is currently happening.
- Funding issues related to the November election are an issue.
- Work with the State government to improve ALL schools since some are falling behind.
- Poverty issues affect learning ability.
- If we don't take care of environmental issues then we won't have anyone to educate – no more urban sprawl.
- Some urban infrastructure and design patterns are not conducive to families.
- Early childhood literacy is key to educational success (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) – we should focus on this age group and include in Plan Houston.
- Send more advocates to Austin to lobby for better schools in Houston.
- Improve access to the arts.
- Vancouver as a model for city planning and management – all decisions should take children into account first.
- The current lottery system is scary for parents and should be looked at.

## **5. Traffic Congestion**

**Congestion is often a sign of a successful economy. Instead of investing resources on improving capacity for more vehicles, the City should increase/improve alternative transportation options, and encourage more activity centers (housing, jobs, schools, and commerce) to reduce the need to travel long distances.**

- Traffic Congestion is unavoidable – an indicator of a healthy, vibrant urban economy.
- Provide incentives for employees to live close to work.
- Provide incentives for mass transit – get people out of their cars!!
- Building more lanes doesn't work; it only compounds the problem and promotes more auto-dependency.
- City regulations value cars over pedestrians – we need to change our laws.
- Public policy works against the changes communities want to make – EADO example.
- Congestion is a result of cars existing in the urban environment and are a result of a successful economy.
- We need HOV lanes inside the loop on I-10.
- Sidewalk easements may offer a more effective alternative to providing sidewalks in the ROW.
- How do we shift public sentiment and create a paradigm shift? With public education.
- Ride sharing services are vital to reducing congestion – a market based solution to the problem.
- People need to be educated with good information – neighborhood planning, grassroots campaign to plan our neighborhoods better.
- Charge money for auto facilities (roads, parking).
- Widening the streets, freeways are not the answer.
- Change development regulations to promote more urban design.

## **6. Flooding**

**Establish a regional approach to detention, including an impact fee based on floor area ratios and/or sectors or watersheds. Some existing parks may be used for detention as well as recreation.**

- City codes needs revisions to better address drainage and detention.
- Infrastructure should be expanded to accommodate increased density.
- Consider regulations regarding floor area ratio.
- Regional detention should be the focus – current city infrastructure is not improved along with developments.
- Look at the current policy and make changes.

- Lower-income communities are being affected more.
- Use parks as stormwater management.
- Why do we subsidize sprawl in the form of highway construction – Harris County.
- Sanitary sewer overflows run into the bayous.
- Find a way to finance regional detention.
- Coordinate with better HCFCO.
- Create system similar to Parks Sectors (flood sectors).
- Address sewage overflows to storm drainage system. This is what causes sewage backups.

## 7. Communicating Effectively with the Public

**More resources should be spent on outreach; it must not be an afterthought. This includes developing a coordinated approach among departments, targeting issues people care about and establishing focus groups to reach more people and get more detailed input.**

- Change the conversation – make it more issue driven – focus on issues people care about
- Involve the public in policy process – need more funding for outreach
- More investment in civic engagement
- Take out a page in the paper
- Public education videos available to the public
- We need to empower the Super Neighborhoods - give them more money and decision making power
- A weekly public outreach newsletter from the city would be helpful
- City needs a more wide-range outreach effort – focus groups, issue driven
- Better communication between experts and the public. An example was given of an engineer telling someone that the issue was too complicated for a layperson to understand.
- Include public education in the city budget
- Tap into the volunteerism of the community – they can be an asset | public outreach process
- Funding!!! Budget cuts have hurt outreach efforts
- Utilize the Mayor's influence. Conduct outreach via the Mayor's social media accounts.

### III. Comments on Public Engagement Process

- Decide on a clear logo brand for Plan Houston.
- Retreat demonstrates that Plan Houston is real and the process is moving forward.
- Include Plan Houston's logo on all retreat materials.
- Inform the public on the role of Plan Houston in the retreat.
- Did we set a goal/target for survey responses?
- What do we want to do with the survey?
- We know what we want/need, but how do we achieve it?
- Are we planning on making the results public?
- Can we gauge if responses are from cities or organizations?
- Collect surveys from multi-service centers.
- Promote the survey with the Mayor's Facebook page.
- Prepare residents prior to sending out the survey so that they provide informed responses.
- Steering Committee should meet more than once a year.
- Citizens Net – sort between organizations and individuals.
- Market the survey through Metro, the Houston Permitting Center, the Houston's Public Library and other organizations that work with the City.
- Better education as to what the survey is. Some felt that a good portion of the public does not know what Plan Houston is.
- Refine questions to allow the responses to be more useful.
- Survey and Plan Houston should be sensitive to the diverse geography and population of the region and avoid a "one size fits all" approach.
- Google Analytics – see where (location) computers are being accessed.
- Sort City vs ETJ respondents.
- There should be a specific survey link on planning home page or a flash page that pops up. More info on why the survey is important and how we are going to use it.
- More outreach to Hispanic community (40% of population).
- Bring tablet surveys to community meetings for on-the-spot surveying.
- Connect Plan Houston w/ allocation of tax dollars when explain to the public.
- What are we going to do with the data?
- Active media push ran by a city department – TV, radio, etc.
- Missing Planning idea in questions – ex. Complete Communities.
- Messaging – the goal is a better city and this is a way to achieve that.
- How can Plan Houston and steering committee fit into Mayor's initiatives and working groups – "transformative."
- Sort survey data by council district.
- Job creation, health, environmental issues/climate change is missing from the survey.



#### **IV. Concluding Comments**

- Need to acknowledge that Houston doesn't live in isolation in our region—and for our region to succeed we need all our communities to plan their future...and even more importantly, we need a way for us to act and plan regionally, or at the least a way for us to stitch these community actions and plans together.
- Engage with major employers – they are potential partners on the development and implementation of Plan Houston.
- Emphasis on job creation in distressed communities.
- Plan should directly address climate change.
- Include maintenance when planning for sidewalks or other infrastructure.
- Support schools to retain residents – the viability of the public school system is paramount.
- Basic infrastructure is a must (water and sewer, roads, etc.) – a basic necessity for any city/civilization.
- Public education is critical – affordable housing and other survey points. The public must be educated on a regular basis on the importance of survey points.