

# *Making an Impact*



*Planning &  
Development  
Department  
Fiscal Year 2004  
Annual Report*



Making an **impact** on

# the community

*The Department continued the effort to streamline and improve processes aimed at fighting blight. This included erasing the backlog of dangerous buildings in Houston awaiting demolition and developing new priorities for weed abatement. In addition, inspectors made a comprehensive survey of buildings that had violations and warranted possible city abatement.*

*The Department worked to further strengthen and institutionalize the super neighborhood initiative leading the city to codify the program. The Department established partnerships with community organizations such as Technology for All and Keep Houston Beautiful to provide assistance in super neighborhood areas.*

In FY 04, the Department:

- ➔ Demolished 716 dangerous buildings this fiscal year, more than triple the previous year.
- ➔ Secured 237 open buildings and obtained compliance from property owners who corrected 2,098 dangerous building violations.
- ➔ Got 5,601 junk motor vehicles removed from neighborhoods through voluntary compliance.
- ➔ Cut 3,500 weeded lots and compelled property owners to cut over 4,600 lots in violation of city ordinance.
- ➔ Developed a new case management system in house to report and track violations. The system ties directly into 3-1-1 for more efficient tracking and response to complaints.
- ➔ Simplified the system for securing and demolishing most single-family structures by entering into single contracts with private contractors (one for securing and one for demolition).
- ➔ Streamlined the system of processing dangerous building properties with asbestos for demolition.
- ➔ Increased Neighborhood Protection inspectors' time in the field investigating nuisance violations from 40% to 75%.
- ➔ Created a back office operation to research property ownership and initiate contact with property owners resulting in greater owner compliance.
- ➔ Established a property database with approximately 1 million entries to help identify property ownership.
- ➔ Adopted new policies for weeded lots that targeted mowing lots near senior and/or disabled citizens, near schools and on lots with known criminal activity.
- ➔ Created a new partnership with Keep Houston Beautiful to assist super neighborhoods and civic groups in organizing volunteer cleanups and weed cutting activities.
- ➔ Selected two super neighborhoods for a pilot program to cut and maintain 50 lots four times a year in their community.



- Recognized two new super neighborhood councils, Carverdale and Willowbrook, for a total of 38 super neighborhood councils representing 45 super neighborhoods.
- Worked with the Super Neighborhood Alliance, to establish by city ordinance the Alliance as an advisory board to the Mayor and city government on community matters.
- Established 24 permit only parking (decal parking) areas for a total of 47 areas with three more in process at the end of the fiscal year.
- Established a tree planting partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Texas Forest Service, the Gulf Coast Institute, and Trees for Houston to provide super neighborhoods with the resources and training to sustain community tree planting projects.
- Partnered with Technology for All-Houston, a local non-profit organization, to provide 13 free computers with software, Internet access and training to six super neighborhood councils to help with communication and access to online resources such as grants opportunities and special workshops.
- Awarded graduation certificates to 38 neighborhood leaders who attended the Neighborhood Leadership Institute.



# Houston's growth and

*In fiscal year 2004, the Department sought to encourage growth and revitalization in Houston. Two new tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZs) will focus on inner city redevelopment and the need to provide additional housing. New jobs are being created with the relocation and consolidation of major employers such as Chevron Texaco and Citgo Petroleum.*

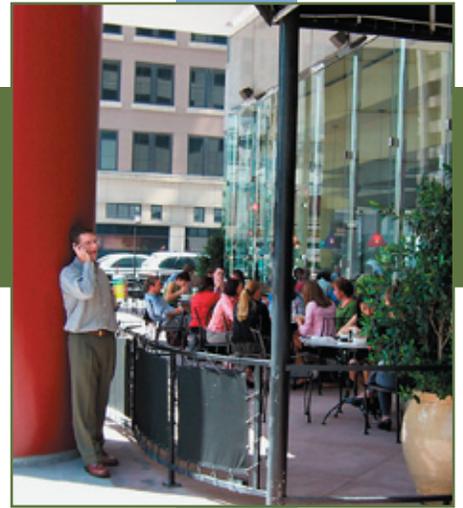
*The continued success of the Main Street corridor redevelopment is evident through the many streetscape enhancements, increased development along the spine and the highly successful light rail line.*

In FY 04, the Department:

- Added two tax increment reinvestment zones (TIRZs), the Hardy/Near Northside TIRZ and the Leland Woods TIRZ, for a total 22 TIRZs. Hardy Yard Partners plans to redevelop the 43-acre site as a high quality urban mixed-use development project that will be the catalyst for development throughout the full TIRZ. The 80-acre Leland Woods TIRZ located in northeast Houston will facilitate the development of 385 affordable single-family units in partnership with the Greater Houston Builders Association, Fannie Mae and the City of Houston.
- Sent to City Council four tax abatement agreements that received approval. The City has 42 total tax abatement agreements with a proposed investment of \$1.14 billion. The Chevron USA, Inc. agreement will consolidate a number of facilities, will retain 4,700 jobs, and create 500 new jobs. Chevron USA, Inc. plans to invest \$64 million in real and personal property improvements.
- Supported the first residential tax abatement project, the Avenue Community Development Corporation's Delaney Street project to construct 13 affordable single-family homes.
- Worked with the Mayor's office to relocate CITGO to Houston bringing 700 jobs to the area. The agreement entails a \$15 million low-interest loan to CITGO through the Texas Economic Development Bank bond program.
- Annexed 24 locations for limited purposes for a total of 66 limited partnership agreement areas. Previous limited purpose annexations resulted in \$9.6 million in additional revenue in fiscal year 2004.
- Received a 2004 Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Transportation Planning Excellence Award in the category of Planning Leadership for the Main Street Corridor Revitalization Project.
- Provided funding through federal grants to two Main Street streetscape projects: the Main Street Square and crosswalks and medians on Main between Wheeler Street and Calumet. The Department is currently working with stakeholder organizations along Main Street to implement similar improvements in the Museum District and along Blodgett Street in the Third Ward.
- Created a "Land Development Model" to track development activity along Main Street and to identify any links between new development and the light rail line. The modeling may be used on Metro's upcoming rail corridors.

# revitalization

- Partnered with the Parks Department, Midtown Redevelopment Authority, South Main Baptist Church, and others to refurbish Peggy's Point Place Park in Midtown.
- Continued assessing existing conditions and development potential in sections of the City to create a framework for prioritizing public investments, primarily infrastructure.
- Produced and posted online the Housing Report, a comprehensive look at housing and demographic indicators from Census 2000 at the superneighborhood level. The report compares Houston with other major US cities and is a counterpart to the Land Use and Demographics report published last year.
- Began community outreach to develop community-supported redevelopment plans to be implemented through the land assemblage process. The Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority held its first meetings to begin the process of foreclosing on 215 tax delinquent properties with the aim of redeveloping the lots for affordable housing.



Making an **impact** on

# building and develop

*The Department focused on management improvements and increasing efficiency through technology to improve productivity for customers going through the development process. In addition, Mayor Bill White appointed a task force to examine the permitting and development process. The Building Permit Task Force examined all aspects of the process from pre-development through construction and made recommendations aimed at streamlining the process and reducing the overall time it takes to get a building permit. A steering committee is working to implement proposals included in the report.*

In FY 04, the Department:

- Reviewed 16,202 development site plans.
- Reviewed and sent to the Houston Planning Commission for action 2,913 subdivision plats, 162 variances and 31 special exceptions.
- Recorded 1,702 subdivision plats.
- Sold 144,284 permits for projects worth a construction value of \$3.36 million and conducted 509,922 field inspections.
- Sold 6,466 sign permits and performed 11,209 field inspections to ensure compliance with the City's sign code.
- Reorganized and streamlined the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan process to handle amendments more effectively and reviewed 40 amendments to the plan.
- Introduced web scheduling, which allows customers to schedule inspections of permitted work for a future date, providing contractors with enhanced ability to manage their construction projects. Inspection results are now posted in real time through the online and interactive voice system.
- Began upgrading the permit database system, an intensive data system. The upgrade will increase efficiency, increase reporting capability and provide greater access to information. Expanded capability now allows inspectors to query the database from a remote location.

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- ➔ Provided customers the ability to track the review of their construction plans online.
- ➔ Added 47 prevailing lot size areas for a total of 86 approved areas, with 32 more in process at the end of the fiscal year. This covers 340 block faces.
- ➔ Added 6 prevailing building line areas for a total of 51, with one more in process at the end of the fiscal year. This covers 90 city block faces.
- ➔ Reviewed 41 certificates of appropriateness in historical districts, of which 40 were approved by the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission.
- ➔ Recommended six historic landmarks for designation.





**Mayor**  
**Bill White**

**City Controller**  
**Annise D. Parker**

### City Council

Mark Ellis	At Large Position 1
Gordon Quan	At Large Position 2
Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, M.D.	At Large Position 3
Ronald C. Green	At Large Position 4
Michael Berry	At Large Position
Toni Lawrence	District A
Carol Mims Galloway	District B
Mark Goldberg	District C
Ada Edwards	District D
Addie Wiseman	District E
Pam Holm	District G
M. J. Kahn	District F
Adrian Garcia	District H
Carol Alvarado	District I

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David Collins  
Kay Crooker  
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Dir., Secretary  
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Richard Rice  
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Jon N. Strange  
Orlando Teran  
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D. Jesse Hegemier, P.E., Fort Bend Cnty  
Mark J. Mooney, P.E., Montgomery Cnty

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Dr. W.M. Akalou  
Manuel V. Flores, P.E.  
J. Kyle LeFevers  
Robert M. Litke, Secretary  
Graham Luhn, F.A.I.A.  
Monty McDannald  
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Caro Ivy Walker  
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Elaine Gaskamp  
Robert M. Litke, Secretary  
Todd M. Litton, Chairperson  
John Melcher  
Virginia Parras  
Dr. Shin-Shem Steven Pei  
Bessie M. Swindle

### Houston Buildings & Standards Commission

**Panel 1:** Gloria Hobbs, Position 1; Ward Arendt, Position 2; Earl Harris, Position 4; Keith Jordan, Position 5; Edward Gonzales, Position 1a; Julian B. Coskey, Position 2a; Eural Johnson, Position 3a, Samuel Eaton, Position 4a

**Panel 2:** Jackson Chang, Position 1; Jessica Hulsey, Position 2; Larry Lee, Position 3; Ken Okorie, Position 4; Steve Whitfield, Position 5; Kurt Nordorf, Position 1a; James Harrison, Position 2a; Mary Vargo, Position 3a; Annabell Lopez, Position 4a

**Panel 3:** Eileen Subinsky, Position 1; Ruby Mosley, Position 2; Alphonso Delaney, Position 3; Michael Cramer, Position 4; Michael Catrett, Position 5; Ward Gray, Position 1a; Louis Carranza, Position 2a; Virginia Duke, Position 3a; R.C. Jones, Position 4a

**Panel 4:** Talmadge Sharp, Position 1; Candelaria Perez, Position 2; Vacant, Position 3; Ruth Hurst, Position 4; Robert Gray, Position 5; Ed Ryland, Position 1a; Fred Simpson, Position 2a; Marcia Perry, Position 3a; Derrick Mitchell, Position 4a

