

REDEFINING PLANNING

Department of Planning & Development
Fiscal Year 2005 Annual Report

planning (noun):
the act or process of making or
carrying out plans; specifically:
the establishment of goals,
policies, and procedures for
a social or economic unit



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT
MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to provide leadership and support to make Houston a vibrant city in which to live, learn, work and play by:

- ✦ Providing planning and related support to neighborhoods,
- ✦ Developing long-range plans to meet future city-wide needs,
- ✦ Fostering economic growth,
- ✦ Providing reliable data, mapping and analysis to decision-makers.
- ✦ Enforcing land development regulations.



Dear Houstonians,

Through the past ten years, I have always stressed the need for staff to work strategically and think outside the boundaries of a traditional planning department to create a better future for our City. Fiscal year 2005 and my final year as director of Planning and Development was no exception.

There were many challenges, not the least of which was a reorganization of the Department, including the reassignment of Code Enforcement and Neighborhood Protection to other city departments. This created an opportunity to refocus our efforts and redefine planning for Houston's future.

As we go through this process to reshape and redefine planning in Houston, it is worthwhile to look at our accomplishments over the past ten years.

Over that time, we launched the Super Neighborhood Program to empower neighborhoods; expanded the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone program to reinvigorate and strengthen areas of the city; and led the first major rewrite of Houston's land development ordinance, known as Chapter 42, to create new rules for urban development.

We have developed ordinances to offer protection to neighborhoods and improve quality of life such as the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Hotel/Motel Ordinance, Cellular Tower Ordinance and Tree and Shrub Ordinance.

We supported the Main Street master planning process, which is helping to transform Main Street into a signature boulevard for Houston. We oversaw the creation of new scenic districts, created the prevailing building line and minimum lot size amendments, and the permit parking program to protect the character of neighborhoods.

We have made significant technological advances that included online plat submittal and payment, improved geographic information systems used citywide, online permitting, and the ability to track building projects online and schedule inspections. We used technology to increase efficiency and provide greater service to the public.

As I conclude my service to the Houston community and my career as a public servant, I can say that these accomplishments were possible because our staff worked as a team imbued with an understanding that we owe quality service to the people of Houston. I have been supported by the best and brightest in the past and present. As a department, we have championed the viability of Houston's neighborhoods, adopted creative strategies to foster growth and worked hard to coordinate our efforts with other agencies.

I leave the department in the very capable hands of my deputy director Marlene Gafrick and with the satisfaction of knowing that I have given my all to help make Houston a great place to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Litke". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Robert Litke

REDEFINING PLANNING

To enhance customer service

CUSTOMER SUPPORT

This year, the Department developed a free email subscription newsletter that provides detailed information about upcoming plats posted for consideration by Planning Commission. The report lets residents know about proposed development in their area. Residents can sign up online at the Department's web site. Now, citizens have online access to platting, building permits and related data.

The Department developed **Planning News**, a new online and email newsletter that provides information about the Department's events, programs and services. People can subscribe to it on the www.houstonplanning.com web site.

The Department developed an online fee payment system for plat submittal that began in early fiscal year 2006. It will greatly streamline the Department's record keeping and the applicant's plat submittal process.

The Department made improvements to the Geographic Information System (GIS) which serves as the city's core geographic database. This year:

- ✦ Staff established the customer GIS liaison telephone number and e-mail address to provide GIS services such as technical support and map data requests.
- ✦ Staff updated the GIS database and the EZ-Tools and distributed it to city departments, other governmental agencies and the private sector.

The department is migrating to an Enterprise Geodatabase, a multi-user geographic database, which allows centralized access and distribution of GIS data and will enable users with Internet connectivity to perform these functions online, in real time.



REDEFINING PLANNING

To support and strengthen Houston's

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



The City recognized three new super neighborhood councils: Westbury, MacGregor, and Spring Branch North, for a total of 41 super neighborhood councils representing 48 super neighborhood areas.

The department provided research and analysis and conducted community outreach as part of the Department's traditional neighborhood planning activities.

The Department launched the Stop Trashing Houston campaign with a \$250,000 grant from the Houston-Galveston Area Council to combat the problem of early placement of heavy trash and illegal dumping. The enormously successful and popular program provided:

- ✦ Water bill messaging to 450,000 households,
- ✦ Outreach and educational efforts including the distribution of more than 170,000 door hangers and more than 4,500 warning postcards,
- ✦ Simplified ways for citizens to report violations,
- ✦ Approximately 500 tickets issued monthly for violations,
- ✦ Hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines collected with an average of \$180 court fines,
- ✦ Dramatic reduction of violations in targeted neighborhoods,
- ✦ Unprecedented participation by grassroots partners,
- ✦ Exceptionally positive media coverage with more than 11 major newspaper stories and 18 television news stories,



- ✦ Radio ads featuring the Mayor and neighborhood leaders
- ✦ Three innovative television advertisements featuring:
 - ✦ Assistant Police Chief Brian Lumpkin,
 - ✦ Mayor Bill White with Houston Astros pitcher Roger Clemens, and
 - ✦ Grammy Award-winning Latin band La Mafia.

communities

COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Department completed urban redevelopment plans in partnership with the Fifth Ward and Third Ward communities for the Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority. The authority addresses neighborhood revitalization issues by returning unproductive tax delinquent properties to productive use while providing an increase in affordable housing opportunities. The plans address health and safety nuisances and abandoned properties, elimination of blight, promotion of economic growth and redevelopment, and community stability.

COMMUNITY STABILITY

The Department provides a number of tools designed to protect the residential character of neighborhoods. This fiscal year:

- ✦ Staff reviewed 44 certificates of appropriateness for properties in historic districts, of which 38 were approved by the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC).
- ✦ Staff referred seven historic landmark designations to HAHC and then to City Council for approval for a total of 121 historical landmarks.
- ✦ Staff forwarded to City Council 26 minimum lot size applications for approval creating a total of 112 minimum lot size areas.
- ✦ Staff forwarded to City Council two prevailing building line applications for approval creating a total of 42 prevailing building line areas.
- ✦ Staff forwarded to City Council for approval 14 applications for permit only parking areas creating a total of 60 designated areas.



REDEFINING PLANNING *To Support Houston's Growth*

SUSTAINING GROWTH



The Department develops the City's annexation plan and reviews applications for limited purpose annexations (LPAs). In FY 05, the department sent to City Council for adoption 17 LPAs for a total of 83, providing more than \$12 million in revenue for the City this year.

The Department reviews development for compliance with Chapter 42 and related ordinances. This fiscal year:

- ✦ Staff reviewed 4,467 subdivision plats and 525 subdivision plat variances. Staff recorded 1,499 subdivision plats.
- ✦ Staff reviewed 1,189 development plats and 31 development site variances.
- ✦ Staff reviewed 19 cellular tower applications, 8 off-street parking variances, and 14 hotel/motel applications.
- ✦ Staff reviewed 11 major thoroughfare and freeway plan amendments.
- ✦ Staff assisted approximately 60,000 customers with development questions.

ENCOURAGING GROWTH

The Department manages 20 tax increment reinvestment zones. Currently, the TIRZs have a value of \$9.3 billion which is a 69% increase over their base value of \$5.5 billion. \$53 million in tax increment revenue was generated for the 2003 tax year. To date, \$24.5 million in affordable housing set-aside revenue has been deposited into the City's affordable housing fund.

The Department continued its support of the Main Street Corridor Revitalization Project. Over the past four years, 15.4 million square feet have been added to tax roles inside the corridor, and property values have increased more than \$581 million (9%) in the corridor. This fiscal year, the Department:

- ✦ Received \$1 million in funding from Congress for the Main Street Project. We have received over \$6 million in federal grants since 1999 for the Main Street project.



and Economic Sustainability

- ✦ Began the Holcombe Square Design Project to enhance mobility in a major intersection at Main, Fannin and Holcombe Boulevards. The use of wayfinding signage, design motifs, varied textures and materials will be incorporated to provide a safer, more human-scaled space for people, automobiles and bicycles.
- ✦ Received the 2004 Transportation Planning Excellence Award for Planning Leadership from the Federal Highway Administration and American Planning Association. The award recognizes outstanding initiatives across the country to develop, plan and implement innovative transportation planning practices.
- ✦ Began participation in a study to determine the feasibility of an intermodal facility that would serve both local and intercity transit modes including intercity bus, Amtrak, commuter rail, local bus and rail and potentially remote airport parking.

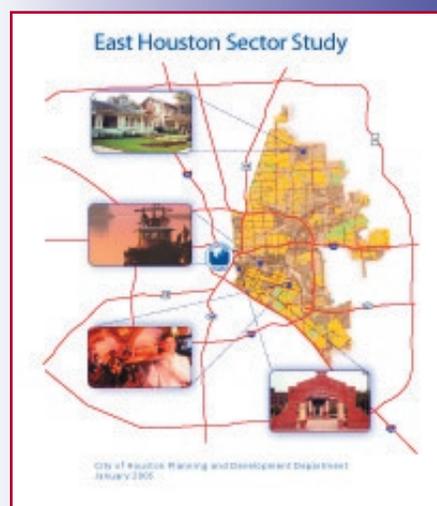
STUDYING GROWTH

Six committees formed under the auspices of the Houston Planning Commission are examining how development impacts growth in the city of Houston and what changes need to be made in policies and ordinances to allow growth competitive to the suburbs, protect neighborhoods and provide more coordinated planning efforts. The following six committees were established with reports expected from the committees in fiscal year 2006:

- ✦ Suburban,
- ✦ Urban Core,
- ✦ Parking,
- ✦ Development Impact,
- ✦ Long Range Planning and
- ✦ Neighborhood Preservation.

The Department published the East Houston Sector Study, an analysis of the challenges and prospects for growth on Houston's east side. The report analyzes the future development or redevelopment opportunities through the examination of existing conditions such as land use, housing, infrastructure, population, and economics. Included in the study are cost and revenue analysis for selected micro-area economic development.

The Department published "How We Compare," a report that shows how Houston compares nationally in terms of population, housing, income, economic and other variables, as well as notes the changes that have taken place in some of the areas since 1990.



MAYOR
Bill White

CONTROLLER
Annise Parker

CITY COUNCIL

Mark Ellis	At Large 1
Gordon Ouan	At Large 2
Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, M.D.	At Large 3
Ronald C. Green	At Large 4
Michael Berry	At Large 5
Toni Lawrence	District A
Carol Mims Galloway	District B
Mark Goldberg	District C
Ada Edwards	District D
Addie Wiseman	District E
M.J. Khan	District F
Pam Holm	District G
Adrian Garcia	District H
Carol Alvarado	District I

HOUSTON PLANNING COMMISSION

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Algenita Scott Davis
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Etan Mirwis
Robin Reed
Richard A. Rice
Jeff E. Ross
Lee Schlanger
Talmadge Sharp, Sr.
Jon Strange
B.J. Walter
Shaukat Zakaria
Honorable Ed Chance, Montgomery County
Honorable Robert Eckels, Harris County
Honorable Grady Prestage, Fort Bend County
Robert Litke, Secretary
Michael Marcotte, (Ex Officio)
M. Marvin Katz (Ex Officio)
Alternate Members:
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Mark J. Mooney, P.E., Montgomery County
Jesse Hegemier, P.E., Fort Bend County



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Ray Bailey, FAIA
Elaine Gaskamp
John Melcher
Virginia Parras
Bessie Swindle
Dr. Shin-Shem Steven Pei
Robert M. Litke, Secretary

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Graham Luhn, F.A.I.A.
Monty McDannald
Bart J. Truxillo, Vice Chair
Caro Ivy Walker
Albert Wong
Lydia Zermeno-Chavarria
Robert Litke, Secretary