Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Presentation to Mixed-Use/Transit-Oriented Development Committee, Houston Planning Commission—February 25, 2009
Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Outline

- Overview of Process
- Analysis & Benchmarking
- Conclusions & Recommendations
Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process
Urban Corridors Planning Assessment

Overview of Process

Our Goal

Provide a thoughtful and deliberate analysis of the development impacts and consequences of the City of Houston’s Urban Corridors Planning Proposal, and to make recommendations as necessary based upon real-world experiences and best practices of the real estate development profession.
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Overview of Process

Original City of Houston Proposal

Establishes standards for the following:

- Pedestrian realm and sidewalks
- Building location within the site
- Minimum built frontage
- Fenestrations on the building frontage and entrances
- Curb cuts (access management)
- Parking (location and quantity)
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Overview of Process

The Dilemma at Hand

Great Planning & Development (ULI)

Free Market Capitalism
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Analysis & Benchmarking
Existing Conditions – Density Typology

- Transit lines each vary in character and structure
- Range of conditions also changes along each line
Existing Conditions – Density Typology (University Line Example)
Existing Conditions – Block Typology

Blocks form the basic framework for development.....
Existing Conditions – Block Typology
Existing Conditions – Block Typology

Although there are hundreds and hundreds of blocks…
Five block types begin to emerge as “typical” conditions
Upon closer examination…
Six parcel types begin to emerge as “typical” conditions
Case Studies – Mixed Use

Before

- 75% minimum building frontage
- 15’ pedestrian realm
- Parking on side or rear of buildings
- Parking lot screening
- 75% of facade to facilitate visibility into building

After
Benchmarking Analysis

Review of Pedestrian Oriented / Mixed Use Ordinances

- Atlanta, GA - Midtown
- Charlotte, NC – Mixed Use Development & Pedestrian Overlay District
- Denver, CO – Main Street Zone District
- Phoenix, AZ – Interim TOD Overlay District
- Arlington, VA – Rosslyn – Ballston Corridor
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Conclusions & Recommendations
Conclusions & Recommendations

- Our objective is to provide a *streamlined regulatory framework* with *reasonable mandates* for pedestrian-friendly development in specific areas of the city located in close proximity to existing and proposed light rail transit stations.

- The City, Private Utilities, METRO and the private development community must *work together in a constructive and collaborative partnership* to achieve this objective.
Conclusions
Conclusions
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Conclusions
Conclusions & Recommendations

- Preserve the tradition of diversity in Houston and avoid a "one size fits all" approach.
- **Delineate a hierarchy of streets** - Transit Streets, "A" Streets and "B" Streets - with different levels of requirements and incentives for each.
- **Support performance standards** instead of prescriptive land use and density regulations.
- **Calibrate incentives** using a performance-based scale to evaluate walkability.
- **Promote “opt-in” provisions** for developments that adhere to the proposed guidelines, but are outside of the urban corridor boundary.
- Provide additional incentives to encourage existing landowners to achieve **continuity of the pedestrian realm** with greater speed.
- **Recognize the importance of utilities**, and particularly the location of overhead and buried power lines, as a critical factor in the success of any proposed guidelines.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Preserve the tradition of diversity in Houston and avoid a "one size fits all" approach.

We believe the same standard cannot reasonably apply in all conditions across our diverse city. Therefore, we advocate flexibility to achieve the overarching goal of a quality pedestrian realm.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Delineate a hierarchy of streets - Transit Streets, "A" Streets and "B" Streets - with different levels of requirements and incentives for each.

We believe the "A" Streets, which run perpendicular and provide access to the Transit Streets, are vitally important to achieve the stated aims of the proposed ordinances. "B" Streets support both Transit Streets and "A" Streets to fulfill a variety of conditions in the City.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Support performance standards instead of prescriptive regulations.

We believe prescriptive regulations that dictate specific land use and density do not support the stated objective of improving walkability, pedestrian access and encouraging a variety of transportation modes. We believe the market will guide land use and density in our dynamic city.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Calibrate incentives using a performance-based scale to evaluate walkability.

We believe incentives should reward a higher level of walkability with a higher level of incentives to encourage quality development practices. Incentives should also be made available to existing landowners to achieve continuity of the pedestrian realm with greater speed.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Promote “opt-in” provisions for developments within the area influenced by the transit corridor which also adhere to the proposed guidelines.

This option will help reduce the need for variances and will encourage a greater number of pedestrian-friendly developments across the City. The same incentives should be offered to properties that “opt-in” to the guidelines.
Conclusions & Recommendations

Recognize the importance of utilities, and particularly the location of overhead and buried power lines, as a critical factor in the success of any proposed guidelines.
## Conclusions & Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEDESTRIAN</th>
<th>Transit Street</th>
<th>A Street</th>
<th>B Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Clear Zone</td>
<td>8’ Min (Required)</td>
<td>6’ Min (Required)</td>
<td>6’ Min (Required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Realm</td>
<td>15’ Min (Preferred) / 12’ Min (Required)</td>
<td>12’ Min (Preferred) / 10’ Min (Required)</td>
<td>10’ Min (Preferred) / 8’ Min (Required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[If preferred pedestrian realm widths are not met, then Trees in Grates and 3 of the 5 options are required]</td>
<td>* Trees in Grates (Required)</td>
<td>Trees in Grates (Required)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Specialized Paving</td>
<td>Specialized Paving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street Furniture (cannot be in clear zone)</td>
<td>Street Furniture (cannot be in clear zone)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance</td>
<td>Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Awnings / Canopies</td>
<td>Awnings / Canopies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Enhanced Landscaping or Other Planting Materials</td>
<td>Enhanced Landscaping or Other Planting Materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Conclusions & Recommendations**

The Planning Commission, after public notice and hearing, shall issue a special exception under the following circumstances:

i) A “significant project”

ii) Located in a “major activity center”

iii) Providing alternative public benefits, such as, but not limited to, publicly available plaza, superior design characteristics, upgraded landscaping, alternative pedestrian-friendly design, or other enhancements to the pedestrian realm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULI Urban Corridors Planning Assessment Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions &amp; Recommendations</strong></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUILDING</th>
<th>Transit Street</th>
<th>A Street</th>
<th>B Street</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Within Zone</td>
<td><strong>0-10’ (Required)</strong>&lt;br&gt;From Edge of Pedestrian Realm</td>
<td><strong>0-20’ (Required)</strong>&lt;br&gt;From Edge of Pedestrian Realm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Built Frontage</td>
<td><strong>75% Min (Preferred) / 60% Min (Required)</strong></td>
<td><strong>60% Min (Preferred) / 40% Min (Required)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Façade Articulation</td>
<td><strong>40% Transparency (Preferred)</strong> [1]</td>
<td><strong>25% Transparency (Preferred)</strong> [1]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Continuous run of blank walls not to exceed 30’ in length and not to comprise more than 25% of the total façade length</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Façade must be articulated through change in materials, change in depth, etc</td>
<td>Façade must be articulated through change in materials, change in depth, etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>“Soft” landscaping (plant material) that will be continuous along the linear frontage (gaps for utility access permitted) and a minimum height of 72” upon full growth, cannot encroach in pedestrian clear zone</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Public artwork approved by the Houston Arts Alliance</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Façade Height</td>
<td><strong>24’ Min (Required)</strong></td>
<td><strong>24’ Min (Required)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Conclusions & Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block Length</th>
<th>Transit Street</th>
<th>A Street</th>
<th>B Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block face may be broken by a publicly accessible street. Street must be open at least from dawn to dusk. Street may be pedestrian/bike only.</td>
<td>600’ Max (Preferred)</td>
<td>600’ Max (Preferred)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curb Cuts/Driveways</th>
<th>Transit Street</th>
<th>A Street</th>
<th>B Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100’ spacing between curb cuts OR 1 per parcel (Preferred)</td>
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<td>100’ spacing between curb cuts OR 1 per parcel (Preferred)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If access is available from an A or B street, it is preferred over parcel access from a transit street</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking</th>
<th>Transit Street</th>
<th>A Street</th>
<th>B Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)</td>
<td>Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)</td>
<td>Located at rear of parcel (Preferred)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The visual impact of structured parking garages should be mitigated by façade articulation, change in materials, louvers, landscaping, or other architectural treatments</td>
<td>The visual impact of structured parking garages should be mitigated by façade articulation, change in materials, louvers, landscaping, or other architectural treatments</td>
<td>The visual impact of structured parking garages should be mitigated through the use of landscape screening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Street Parking - Parallel or Angled (Preferred)</td>
<td>On-Street Parking - Parallel or Angled (Preferred)</td>
<td>On-Street Parking - Parallel or Angled (Preferred)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note [1]: Percentage is measured from grade vertically, up to 10’ of façade.
Task Force Members

- Area / District Representatives
  - Robert Eury, Central Houston
  - Tina Araujo, East Downtown Mgmt District
  - Daniel Barnum, Midtown Mgmt District

- Consultant Representatives
  - Roger Soto, HOK
  - Abbey Roberson, HOK
  - Jason Tramonte, HOK
  - Avanish Pendharkar, HOK
  - Edwin Friedrichs, Walter P Moore

- Developer Representatives
  - Victoria Brown, Weingarten Realty Investors
  - Alan Hassenflu, Fidelis Realty Partners, Ltd.
  - John Mooz, Hines
  - John Anderson/Derek Darnell, Pelican Builders
  - Carlton Riser, Transwestern
  - Adam Saphier, Trammell Crow Company
  - Matt Stoval, Crosspoint Properties
  - Barbara Tennant, Lovett Homes
  - Jonathan Brinsden, Midway Companies
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Steering Committee Members

Patricia Bender, Senior Vice President, Weingarten Realty Investors
Mark Cover, Executive Vice President, Hines
Larry Heard, President & CEO, Transwestern
Matt Khourie, President, Development & Investment Central US, Trammell Crow
Frank Liu, President, Lovett Homes
Matt Thibodeaux, Executive Director, Midtown Redevelopment Authority
John E. Walsh, Jr., Director of Real Estate & Campus Planning, University of Houston System
Jim Wilson, Senior Vice President, Property Management, Crescent Real Estate Equities
Reid Wilson, Managing Shareholder, Wilson, Cribbs & Goren
Ed Wulfe, President, Wulfe & Co.