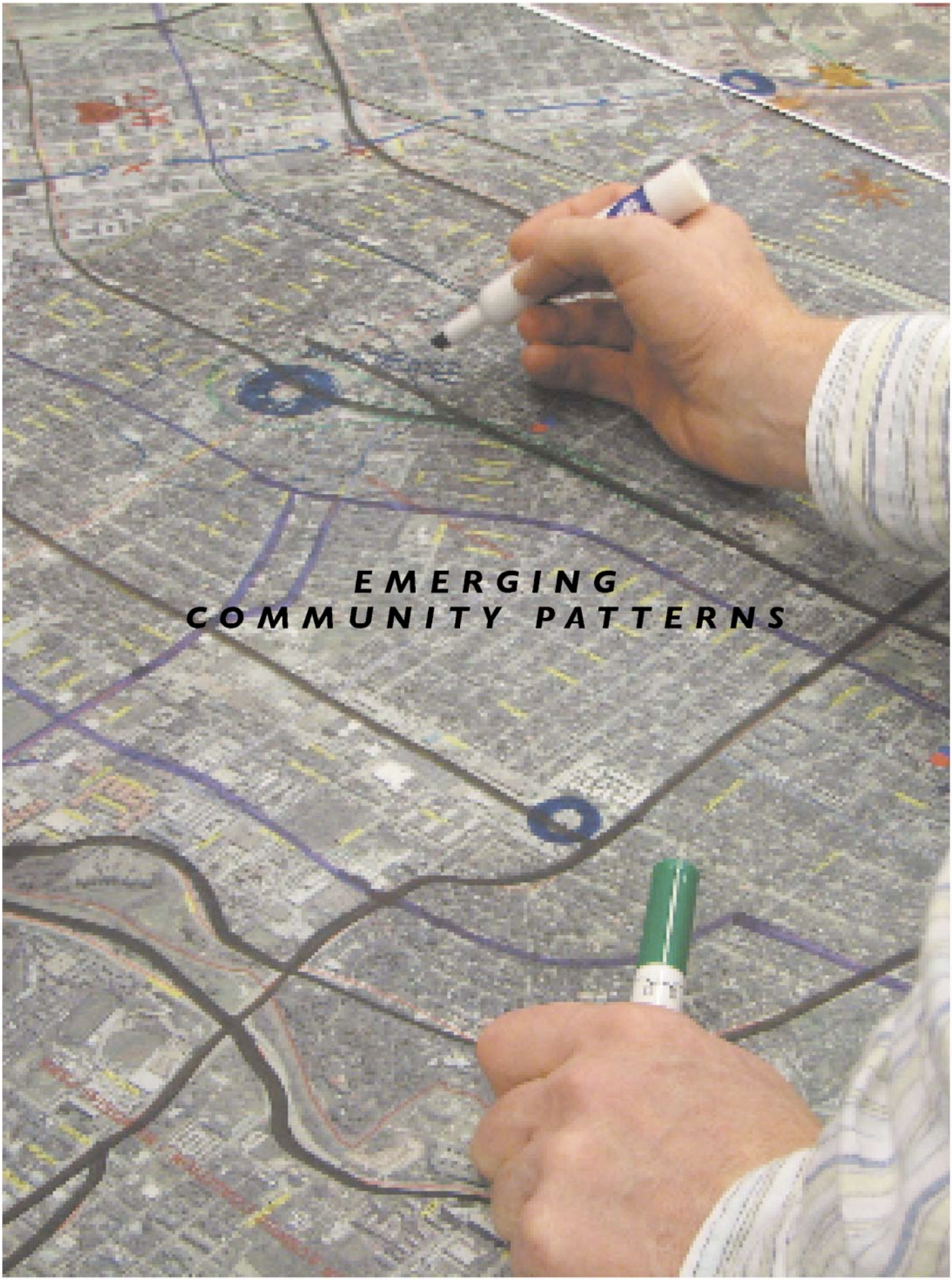


EMERGING COMMUNITY PATTERNS

III. emerging community patterns.

The discussions of the Steering Committee and the recommendations from the Community Workshop reflected very similar issues. The actual workshop maps and detailed notes are attached as appendices, with the findings of both merged into eight broad community patterns highlighted below. The topics are hierarchically ordered by number of times they appeared in each of the corridor workshop table's top three talking points and then how prevalent they were in each individual tables comments. Specific community comments from the workshop are paraphrased or quoted and noted by table number.

1. Create a Connected Multimodal Network and Provide Alternate Transportation Options.

Houston & the Automobile- Community Concerns
o Existing traffic congestion and future growth patterns (A3/A4/C5)
o Limit Freeway expansion (A1/A4/B2/C4)
o Noise from freeways (A3)
o Unsafe streets due to speed of cars, lack of buffering and lack of safe pedestrian friendly sidewalks (A1-A3/B5/B7/C1)
o Mobility options for population that does not drive (C5)

More Transit Options
o Invest in an integrated, efficient alternative transit network of light rail, commuter rail, buses, pedestrian streets, interconnected bicycle ways and auto connections (park-n-rides and kiss-n-rides). (A1/A4/B1/C1/C2/C5)
o "Less focus on cars, instead focus on other forms of transportation" (B6/C5)
o Increase mobility (C1/C5)
o Good dependable accessible public transportation that is clean, safe, pleasant, easy to use, well maintained and operates frequently at all hours to enable and support the needs of a twenty four hour city. (B4/B7)

Increase Connectivity
o Increase connectivity between existing treasures, major destinations, home and work, urban & suburban areas, activity nodes, outdoor destinations, urban neighborhoods, natural corridors, transit centers (including the airport) through an intermodal network that includes streets, mass transit, and a complete, interconnected system of walking and bike trails. (A1-A4/ B4/ B5/ B7/ C1-C5)
o "Mobility network must connect to activity nodes and natural corridors / places" (B5)
o "Transit available to all with key connectivity – better unified system" (C5)

Pedestrian & Bicycle Friendly Streets & Corridors (A1-A4/ B5-B7/ C1-C5)
o Community suggested pedestrian friendly street improvements
- Narrow streets "Narrow neighborhood streets are a treasure" (A1/ C4)
- Buffering sidewalk with trees and street parking (A3/ A4)
- Make streets walkable and safe with streetscape improvements including landscaping/ trees/ curbs/ safe street crossings/ (A3/A4/ B5)
- "Walkable Community/ Neighborhood" (B5/ B7)
- Accessible, pedestrian friendly sidewalks with street level retail along urban streets/ make streets "a place" (B5/ C2)
- Pedestrian-oriented development (C4)
- Current sidewalk conditions are "too narrow", poorly lit, dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists, poorly maintained, lacking any buffer to fast moving cars, missing shade, ugly, and too frequently dangerous to cross. Transit workshop participants emphasized the importance of implementing street standards that transform existing "ditches and lack of sidewalks" along roadways with fast moving traffic and unsafe crosswalks into pleasant environments that encourage pedestrian and

bicycle activity. (A1-A5/ B1/ B4/ B6/B7/ C1-C5)
- More great beautiful streets and boulevards that serve both the car and the pedestrian and re-link neighborhoods and communities (B4/ B6/ C4)

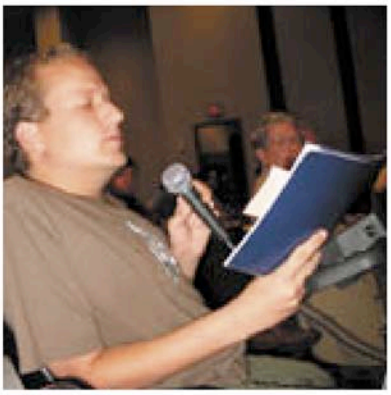
o ***Bicycle friendly policies and amenities***
- Suggested strategies to encourage bicycle use include connecting existing bicycle and pedestrian ways, installing secure racks for locking up bikes at transit stops, allowing bikes on transit, bike racks on buses, and showers at stations to clean up before work. (A1-A5/ B1/ B4/ B6/B7/ C1-C5)

Collaborative community process (Consultant comment with comments from table A5/ C3)
While the workshop atmosphere was decidedly pro-transit, concern was expressed regarding the methodology of weaving transit infrastructure into the urban fabric of the city in a thoughtful manner that includes community input.

2. Protect the unique character of existing stable neighborhoods and preservation of historic buildings, homes, landmarks and community treasures. (A3/ A4/ B1/B2/B3/B5/B7/C1/C3/ C4/C5)

3. Develop Urban Standards and Ordinances that enable, encourage and allow urban development (C4/ A4/B3/C1)

o Development Guidelines –development, implementation and enforcement of higher development standards through City policy and regulation (B6/ A4/ B7/ C3/C4)
o Development guidelines that are specific to different area types (C4/ B6)
o "Policy that coherently guides development within the public realm that provides tools to focus development along the major corridors, and that through transit supports and connects on urban centers" (B3)
o "Build commercial buildings to street front, reconsider set-back ordinance" (C4/C1/ A4/ B7)
o Ordinances that balance density around urban centers, neighborhood centers and transit corridors (A1/ A4/ C5)
o Pedestrian street standards (A4/ B7/C2/C4)
o Improve sign regulations (B7/ C2/ A4/ B1/ B7/ C4)
o Regulations that require utilities and power lines to be buried (B7/ C2/ A4/ B3/ C4)
o Updated parking standards that respond to urban condition (A1/ A3/ A4/ B1/ C4)
- " Parking should be expensive" (B1)
o Stronger Historic Preservation Ordinance (A3/ B7/ C3/ C4/ C5)
o Create more parks and green spaces through incentives and regulations (A4/ C3)
o Comprehensive Plan - Sector planning with zoning and land use regulations (B7/ C3/ C4/ C5)
o Tax incentives for mixed income housing, transit oriented development, affordable housing (B7/ C4/ B1/B3)



4. Create Neighborhood Centers and great "places"

Consultant Analysis: The need for many and various great "places" is a thread that ran throughout the conversations of the Steering Committee and the workshop participants alike. Specific issues relative to place making fell into five distinct categories with additional workshop comments below:

- o burying infrastructure (see comments above)
- o multimodal connectivity (see comments above)
- o more green spaces (see comments below in parks & green space)
- o pedestrian and bike friendly streets (see comments above)

5. Pedestrian-friendly destination places / neighborhood serving amenities and neighborhood centers

*Pedestrian and bike friendly streets (*see comments above)

- o See above comments for street standards, connectivity, pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets and preservation and improvement of "places" and "treasures" as they relate to place making. (A1-A4/ B2-B7/ C1-C5)

Pedestrian-friendly destination, neighborhood serving amenities and neighborhood centers

- o Make Houston an international city by preserving existing and creating more "destinations" that include gathering spaces, parks, open space, neighborhood centers, urban centers and public art including gateways, statues, and galleries. (A1/ A2/ A4/ B2/ B4/ B6/ B7/ C1/ C3/ C4/ C5)
- o "Create place along transit – not just throughways – by making sidewalks accessible and pedestrian friendly and requiring street level retail in urban centers." (C2)
- o Current neighborhoods and residential redevelopment is VERY underserved by neighborhood amenities including; retail, restaurants, cafes (with outdoor seating and awnings) grocery stores, employment, educational options, amenities, community centers, churches, community services, social services, youth programs, parks, open space, civic uses like libraries and the pleasant pedestrian oriented sidewalks necessary to link a residential neighborhood to these amenities. (A1/ A4/ B2/ B7/C4/ C5)
- o More mixed- use neighborhood centers that create a village character with "Main Streets" and neighborhood/retail place types that reinforce the many special neighborhoods within the city. (A1/ A2/ A4/ B2/ B4/ B6/ B7/ C1/ C3/ C4/ C5)

5. Preserve and expand Parks, Open Space, Green Space Corridors and Trail Connections

- o More Parks of all kinds, Open Space, Green Space Corridors & Trail Connections throughout Houston serving all neighborhoods (A3/ A4/ B2/ B7/ C1/ C4/ C3)
- o Preserve and improve amenities, access and connectivity to existing parks, trails and open space. (A3/ A4/ B2/ B7/ C1/ C4/ C3/ B5)
- o More green spaces with native plants (B2)
- o Green space and gardens in unused right of ways and easements, more rail to trail conversions (A4)

Preserve Bayous and return them to a more natural state for recreation and flood control (B4/ B6/ A3/ A4/ B2/ C1/ A1/ A3)

Better protect old growth trees, enable more beautiful tree lined streets and more trees throughout Houston. (B6/ B7/ C3/ A3/ B4/ B7)

6. Encourage and support more urban infill development

Consultant Analysis: Urban infill and redevelopment is the economic use of vacant land in urban areas where water, sewer and other public services are already in place. Urban infill development revitalizes underutilized and vacant urban land and invigorates blighted city streets.

- o Vacant parking lots, big box suburban-type developments, dying strip centers, dying malls, abandoned businesses, vacant property, dilapidated buildings, old industrial areas (along bayou), blighted neighborhoods and thoroughfares are excellent, often-overlooked opportunities for infill development that could be rewoven into the city fabric as economic mixed-use districts. (A1/ A4/ B2/ B3/ B7/ C1/ C2/ C4/ C5)
- o Urban infill development is especially valuable when located in transit districts and should be prioritized for redevelopment. (B4/ C1/ C3/ C4/C5)
- o Urban infill should be concentrated inside the Loop (B6)
- o Urban infill projects should be built to urban standards NOT suburban standards (C3/ C4/ C5)

7. Make new development sustainable

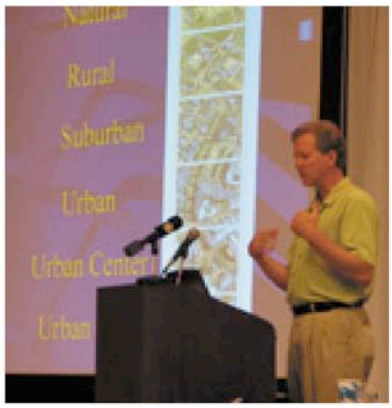
Consultant analysis: Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

- o Sustainability needs to be considered in all new projects, infrastructure life cycle, pedestrian friendly design, landscaping, flooding, housing durability, and drainage-permeable surfaces. (B5)

Mitigate the environmental effects of development and growth (A2)

- o Flood mitigation through use of permeable materials and increased green space (A1/ B2/ B5/ C3/ C4/ C5/ A4)
- o Consideration and improvement of air quality issues from traffic congestion (B5/ A1/ A4)

- Protect clean water from polluted run off (A2)
- Minimize transportation costs and energy use through enhanced public transit corridors (C1)
- Brownfield remediation (A4)

8. Provide affordable housing in mixed-income neighborhoods

- Insure inter-generational, socio-economic diverse neighborhoods based on a variety of housing options (including permanently affordable housing both for sale and rent) (B7/ A1/ A3/ C4/ A4/ B4/ B7/ C1/ C3)
- Challenges of gentrification and displacement must be addressed by each neighborhood. (B2/ A1/ C3/ C4)
- The City should formulate a comprehensive strategy for mixed-income and workforce housing (C4)
- Locate affordable mixed income housing near transit (B2/ C5/ C5/ B7)