

Press Release



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City Council approves landmark transit corridor ordinance

HOUSTON, August 19, 2009 – Houston City Council approved establishing new development criteria for streets along METRO’s light rail transit corridors: Main Street, Uptown, East End, North, Southeast and University. The three year planning initiative known as Urban Corridor Planning culminated in the promulgation of new regulations designed to foster transit-supportive development and enhance pedestrian mobility along transit corridors.

“Houston continues to undergo dramatic growth and redevelopment. Our citizens, businesses, elected officials and agencies understand the unique opportunity the Urban Corridor Planning initiative offers in creating transit supportive development,” said Marlene Gafrick, director, Houston Planning and Development Department.

The new standards create both mandatory rules to improve pedestrian infrastructure and “opt-in” rules developers could choose to use in exchange for certain incentives.

Mandatory rules require a six foot wide unobstructed clear pedestrian space (sidewalk) and apply to the transit streets (along the light rail lines) and the streets that intersect with transit streets that are within 1,320 feet from the end of the transit station. Where the 1,320 foot distance ends mid block, the sidewalk requirement is extended to the next intersection.

If a property owner chooses the optional rules, they will be required to create a 15 foot pedestrian realm that includes the six foot unobstructed sidewalk. Required performance standards include items such as plantings or softscape, first floor building transparency, type of fencing, driveway restrictions, door openings, a build-within-zone and maximum building setback. In return, the owner may build up to the property line but no closer than 15 feet from the back of curb. This increases the overall buildable area of the property providing the potential of greater financial return.

This effort has included input and partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders including agencies such as METRO, citizens and businesses in the corridors, and the real estate and development community.

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These changes will affect how Houston grows and develops. It can shape the quality, character, and connectivity in its neighborhoods. It is change that makes sense for Houston by guiding both public and private investment in the urban transit corridors while preserving the market-driven flexibility that is the City's hallmark.

Details regarding the history and proposed rules can be found on the Planning Department's website at www.houstonplanning.com; click on Urban Corridor Planning.