

Press Release



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New buffering requirements adopted for new high-rise developments on residential streets

HOUSTON, December 21 – City Council adopted new regulations that “buffer” certain single family residential homes from neighboring high-rise development. The standards ensure certain distance requirements and encourage development in more appropriate locations. The provisions do not apply where neighborhoods generally understand that more intense development occurs such as along transit corridors, major thoroughfares and more densely developed areas within the city, such as Uptown. The provisions do apply to areas where neighborhoods do not expect more intense development to occur such as on local and collector streets. The ordinance defines high-rises as taller than 75 feet.

The regulations only require a buffer to be provided in cases where the majority of the property line of the high-rise development abuts homes that are developed as or deed-restricted to single-family residential use. There are also instances where single family residential homes are separated by an alley or a green belt. In those instances, a buffer will still have to be provided. However, a buffer will not have to be provided when the development is across the street because the street will act as the buffer. A buffer is also not required in designated Major Activity Centers or on development that abuts transit corridor streets or major thoroughfares. A development that abuts local streets would have to provide a 40 foot buffer and development that abuts a collector street must provide a 30 foot buffer.

A buffer is required to include a ten foot landscape buffer, trees and an eight foot tall fence. A portion of the buffer area, excluding the landscape buffer, may be used for vehicular access and surface parking, but it may not include a structure or carports.

The ordinance designates eight Major Activity Centers where dense development is expected to occur: Downtown, Uptown, Greenway, Greenspoint, the Medical Center, Westchase, the Energy Corridor and Memorial City.

The new regulations also call for garage screening when any parking garage structure is located within a certain distance of single family residential property and full cutoff light fixtures.