
Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) Application



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

Dear Applicant:

You are taking the first step toward preserving the character of your neighborhood. The Planning and Development Department staff will help you determine if your neighborhood qualifies for this application and can assist you in completing the application process. If approved, an ordinance will be created for your application that preserves the lot size character of your neighborhood.

This application packet includes:

- a Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) Application
- a list of Submittal Requirements and a sample of the notification signs
- a blank Evidence of Support page for other property owners to sign.
- a sample of a Map Sketch
- a list of Recommended Community Meeting Sites
- a set of Frequently Asked Questions

Each applicant must meet with a staff person for a preliminary meeting before an application is submitted, allowing staff to go over the eligibility requirements that are reviewed for all applications. Below are the five criteria that applications and their proposed boundaries must meet:

1. contains no less than five blockfaces (a blockface is from one intersecting street to the next intersecting street);
2. contains no more than 500 lots within one subdivision and not more than 400 lots within multiple subdivisions;
3. forms an area that does not exclude a block or lot within the boundary area;
4. has at least 80% of the lots developed for or restricted to single-family use (exclusive of land used for a park, utility, drainage or detention, public recreation or community center, library, place of worship, schools) ; and
5. contains at least 10% of lots within the boundary that do not have a minimum lot size established by deed restrictions.

A complete application must include all items listed in the submittal requirements on page 6 of this packet. A complete application package must be mailed or hand-delivered during standard business hours to:

Planning and Development Department
Attn: Community and Regional Planning
611 Walker Street, 6th Floor
Houston, TX 77002

A step-by-step guide is provided in this packet. Contact the Community and Regional Planning division at (832) 393-6600 with any questions or to schedule a meeting before submitting an application. More information can be found on www.houstonplanning.com. Thank you for your interest and we look forward to meeting with you soon.

¡ATENCIÓN! Si necesita ayuda en español o gustaría recibir más información acerca de este asunto, comuníquese al número 832-393-6659.

Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) Application



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Special Minimum Lot Size Area: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) application, what does it mean, and who created the boundary?

An SMLSA application provides property owners an opportunity to preserve the lot size character within a specified area. This means any new lots that are created must be greater than or equal to the established Special Minimum Lot Size. The application is submitted by someone within the application area or a representative of an entity in your neighborhood.

What if my lot is smaller than the Minimum Lot Size designated?

For example, if a 5,000 square foot special minimum lot size is established for your area, no lots will be able to divide into any size less than 5,000 square feet. If you currently own a lot that is smaller than the special minimum lot size (for this example it's 5,000 square feet), you would not be allowed to divide your property. If you had a 10,000 square foot lot, then you could divide your property into two 5,000 square foot lots.

What can I build on my lot?

On a single-family lot, you can build a single-family home, a single-family home with a detached garage apartment not larger than 900 square feet, or a duplex. A Special Minimum Lot Size Ordinance does not determine the physical design of buildings. Please note that deed restrictions may already be imposed on your neighborhood. In those cases, the more restrictive of either the special minimum lot size or deed restrictions will be applied to the property.

Can I add to or rebuild my single-family/multifamily/commercial property?

Yes, if you have an existing single-family lot you are allowed to rebuild, improve, or add to your home. If you have an existing commercial or multifamily lot you are allowed to rebuild, improve, or add to the building. Please note that deed restrictions may already be imposed on your neighborhood. In those cases, the more restrictive of either the special minimum lot size or deed restrictions will be applied to the property.

What will happen to my commercial/multifamily lot if the Special Minimum Lot Size Area application is approved?

If you have a commercial/multifamily lot it will remain commercial/multifamily. If at any time you desire to change your property to single-family residential use, you would not be allowed to convert back to commercial/multifamily. If you decide to subdivide your property, any lots that are created would need to meet the special minimum lot size.

What happens during the application process?

An applicant for the Special Minimum Lot Size Area will submit a completed application packet. You may choose to support this application by signing the Evidence of Support page. Planning and Development Department staff will review the application and notify residents within the application area that a complete application was submitted. Notification of a community meeting and instructions regarding the response form process will follow. When an application is referred to the Houston Planning Commission, a public hearing will be held. Planning and Development Department staff will let you know the time and place of the public hearing. Applications are only finalized with City Council approval.

What if I disagree with this application?

A 30-day response form period will take place. Response forms (ballots) will be mailed to each property owner. Residents may choose to support or protest the application by responding YES or NO. For an application to be referred to the Planning Commission, at least 55% of all property owners within the boundary area must respond in support of the SMLSA.

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Special Minimum Lot Size Area: Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What happens at the Planning Commission?

At the Planning Commission, there will be a public hearing where you will have an opportunity to speak. The Planning Commission will approve or deny the application. If approved, the application will be forwarded to the City Council. If the application is denied by the Planning Commission or City Council, the application may not be resubmitted for one year.

To approve an application, Planning Commission must find that:

- The area has an identifiable lot-size character.
- The identifiable lot-size character of the area will be preserved.
- There is sufficient support from the property owners.
- The application meets all submittal requirements as defined by city ordinance.
- Blockfaces within the application do not contain a significant area that is not single-family residential; and
- Blockfaces within the application do not contain a significant area that does not share the same lot size.

What happens after the City Council?

If the City Council approves the application, the Special Minimum Lot Size Area designation will apply immediately. The ordinance shall be effective for up to 40 years.

How is the Special Minimum Lot Size calculated?

The Planning and Development Department calculates the special minimum lot size by using the following steps outlined in the ordinance:

1. List all lot sizes in the application area from the largest to the smallest.
2. Add all the lot size numbers and get the total square footage.
3. Each lot's area (in square feet) is expressed as a percentage of the total area of all lots in the application area.
4. A cumulative total is kept; and
5. The first lot that represents a cumulative total of at least 70 percent by area (60 percent by area for applications in the City of Houston designated historic districts), becomes the proposed special minimum lot size.

Lots Ranked By Size	Address	Size	% by Area	Cumulative % by Area
1	1510 Cocker Spaniel	6,500 sf	15.4%	15.4%
2	1502 Cocker Spaniel	6,000 sf	14.3%	29.7%
3	1508 Cocker Spaniel	6,000 sf	14.3%	43.9%
4	1506 Cocker Spaniel	6,000 sf	14.3%	58.2%
5	1504 Cocker Spaniel	5,830 sf	13.8%	72.0%
6	1500 Cocker Spaniel	5,500 sf	13.1%	85.1%
7	1512 Cocker Spaniel	3,270 sf	7.8%	92.9%
8	1514 Cocker Spaniel	3,000 sf	7.1%	100.0%
Total		42,100 sf	100.0%	
The fifth-largest lot size in this example is 5,830 square feet. This would be the new Special Minimum Lot Size for the area.				

If at any time you have questions or need assistance, please call the Planning and Development Department at (832) 393-6600 or visit the department's website at www.houstonplanning.com.

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Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) Steps

- **Step 1: Meet with Staff of the Planning and Development Department**

The applicant(s) must meet with Planning and Development staff before submitting an application. At the meeting, the applicant should bring a map with the proposed boundary and a copy of any existing deed restrictions. To schedule a pre-submittal meeting, contact Community and Regional Planning at (832) 393-6600.
- **Step 2: Gather Signatures from Property Owners**

Applicant(s) must gather support from property owners of at least 10% of the lots within the application boundary area through signatures on the Evidence of Support handout found on page 7.
- **Step 3: Submit the Application**

The application package can be mailed through the US Postal Service or hand delivered to the Planning and Development Department. Within two (2) business days, Planning and Development staff will contact the applicant(s) regarding whether their application is accepted or rejected. If the application is rejected, staff will explain any necessary revisions. It is important to note that any subdivision or development plats submitted within seven (7) days after a Special Minimum Lot Size Area application is accepted will NOT be subject to the lot size requirement.
- **Step 4: Application Review and Notification Signs**

An accepted application will be posted on the Planning and Development Department's website within two (2) business days. Planning and Development staff will review the application, and within 60 business days, determine if the application meets eligibility requirements. After it has been determined that the application meets eligibility requirements staff will notify the applicant(s) and send an instruction letter for the posting of notification signs within the application boundary area. The applicant will have 10 days from when they receive the instruction letter to post the signs.
- **Step 5: Community Meeting**

A letter will be sent from the Planning and Development Department to the residents within the application boundary area detailing the date, time, and location for a community meeting. The letter will be sent no later than 15 days before a community meeting is to be held.
- **Step 6: Response Form Period**

Within 60 business days after the community meeting the residents within the application boundary area will receive a response form (many residents refer to it as a ballot) from the Planning and Development Department. The property owners will have 30 days to respond to the SMLSA application.

If property owners of 55% of the application boundary area support the SMLSA designation, the Planning Director will forward the application to the Houston Planning Commission. If less than 55% of the property owners in the application boundary area support the designation of the proposed area, the Planning Director will:

 - modify the application boundary to obtain 55% support and forward the application to the Planning Commission; OR
 - determine that the application fails, with no further action being taken, and the proposed boundary area will not be allowed to reapply for a year.
- **Step 7: Attend the Planning Commission Public Hearing**

A Planning Commission date will be established by the Planning and Development Department no later than 60 business days from the deadline for the response forms. A letter indicating the time, date, and place of the Planning Commission meeting will be sent to all property owners within the proposed boundary area no less than 15 days before the hearing date. Members of the public may present comments about the SMLSA at the public hearing. After the public hearing, the Commission will consider whether or not to recommend that the City Council establish the SMLSA. If the Commission recommends that the City Council establish the SMLSA, the Planning and Development Director will refer the application to the City Council. If the application is denied, the decision of the Commission will be final.
- **Step 8: City Council Action**

The City Council will consider all Special Minimum Lot Size Area applications that are approved by the Planning Commission. The City Council's action to approve or deny the designation is final. Persons wanting to address the City Council during the public comment session of the meeting should contact the City Secretary at (832) 393-1100 or citysecretary@houstontx.gov.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: WE WILL NOT ACCEPT APPLICATIONS THAT ARE SENT THROUGH EMAIL OR FAX

Special Minimum Lot Size Area (SMLSA) Application



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Main Applicant Information (required)

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Street Address

Apartment/Unit #

City

State

ZIP Code

Phone: _____ Email _____

Are you a property owner within the application boundary? YES NO If no, what is your relation to the application boundary? _____

Did you have a preliminary meeting with the Planning and Development Department? YES NO If yes, what was the date of the meeting? _____

Does the application boundary have deed restrictions? YES NO If yes, do they address a Minimum Lot Size? _____

Describe the location of the application boundary. (Example: "North side of Golden Retriever Drive between Boxer and Schnauzer Streets" or "Block 15, Lots 1-5, in Cocker Spaniel Subdivision")

Signature of applicant: _____

Alternate Applicant Information (optional)

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Street Address

Apartment/Unit #

City

State

ZIP Code

Phone: _____ Email _____

Signature of alternate applicant: _____

Application Information (STAFF USE ONLY)

File Number: _____ Super Neighborhood: _____

City Council District: _____ Planner Assigned: _____

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Submittal Requirements (Please check and complete)

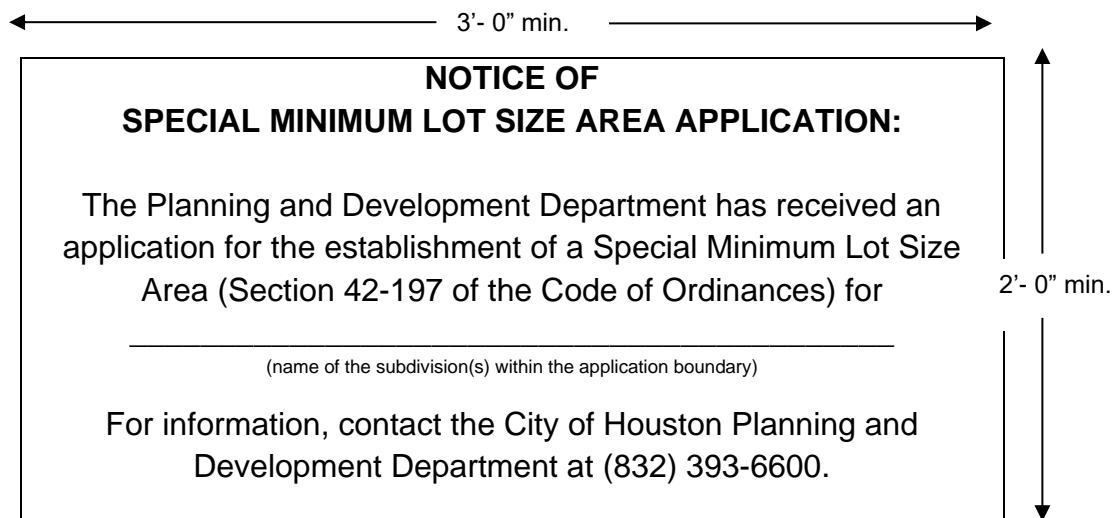
Completed application form (page 5)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample of Notification Sign (page 6)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of support signed by lot owners within the boundary area (page 7)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of deed restrictions, if applicable***	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map or sketch showing the address, land use, and size of all lots within the boundary area (page 8)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Three (3) recommended locations for a community meeting (page 9)	<input type="checkbox"/>

How will an SMLSA maintain the lot size and character of your neighborhood?

*****DISCLAIMER:** The Planning Department reviewed the deed restrictions you submitted for your subdivision and noted no language addressing a minimum lot size or minimum building line requirement. As such, revisions to Chapter 42 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances extending the minimum lot size and minimum building line requirements to neighborhoods within the corporate boundaries of the City of Houston that do not have a minimum lot size or minimum building line established in their deed restrictions are applicable to your subdivision. It's important to understand, however, that Planning's review and decision regarding the eligibility of your subdivision to avail itself of the protections set forth in Chapter 42 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances is based solely on the instruments you have provided and which purport to be the most recent, valid version of your subdivision's deed restrictions. The City of Houston is making no assurances or representations regarding the actual validity of your deed restrictions. You should consult with a private attorney if you have any questions or concerns about your deed restrictions.

Sample Notification Sign (Fill in the blank)

The applicant is responsible for obtaining and posting a minimum of two (2) signs per blockface within the boundary of the proposed Special Minimum Lot Size Area within ten (10) days of written notice from the Planning and Development Department. Planning and Development staff may approve an alternative number of signs for the application of a Special Minimum Lot Size Area upon determining that the signs will provide sufficient notice within the application area. Each sign shall be at least two feet by three feet (2' x 3'), face the street, and be legible from the street. Applicants are responsible for contacting Planning and Development Staff once the signs are posted. The applicant shall use reasonable efforts to maintain the signs until the Planning and Development Director or the Houston Planning Commission has approved an application. Applicants shall include the name of each subdivision in the application on the notification sign.



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Evidence of Support for a Special Minimum Lot Size Area

Below are signatures of property owners within the proposed Special Minimum Lot Size Area boundary who support the request to preserve the character of the existing lot sizes and the creation of a Special Minimum Lot Size Area for the following area: (Example: "North and south side of Winter Lane between Spring Avenue and Summer Avenue" or "Block 15, Lots 1-5, in Four Seasons Subdivision")

By signing this evidence of support, I hereby represent:

- (1) That I am the lot owner or representative of the property listed with my signature, and
- (2) I support the petition to create a Special Minimum Lot Size Area.

Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:

For any questions on the Special Minimum Lot Size Area, call the Planning and Development Department at (832) 393-6600 or visit the department's website at www.houstonplanning.com.

¡ATENCIÓN! Si necesita ayuda en español o gustaría recibir más información acerca de este asunto, comuníquese al número 832-393-6659.

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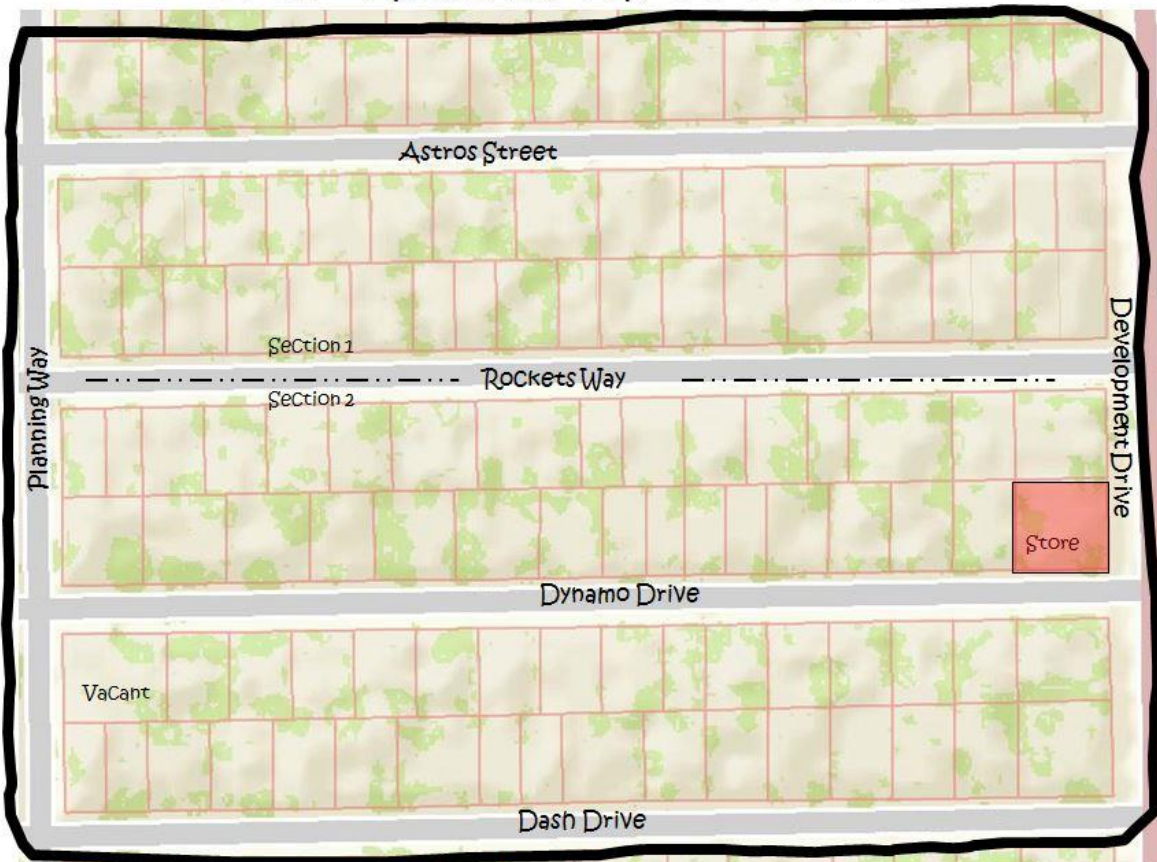
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Sample Map Sketch (Include Map Sketch in Application)

As part of the Special Minimum Lot Size Area application, applicants must provide a map sketch of the proposed application area. It should look similar to the drawing below. Information for each lot within the proposed Special Minimum Lot Size Area shall be shown on the drawing that includes the following:

- The land use of any lot that is **NOT** single-family residential. *Example: multifamily, commercial, a park, or vacant land*
- Any lot that may have a minimum lot size previously established by deed restrictions.

Houston Subdivision, Sections 1 and 2



If at any time you need assistance, please call the Planning and Development Department at (832) 393-6600 or visit the department's website at www.houstonplanning.com.

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Community Meeting Sites (To be Completed by the Applicant)

A community meeting must take place no more than 90 business days after the application has been accepted by the Planning and Development Department. The meeting site must be within or near the proposed application boundary area. At the community meeting, property owners will be given information about the SMLSA application submitted and the Planning and Development Department review process.

The requirements of the venue are:

- Accessible to all property owners within the boundary area.
- The venue must hold at least 20% of the number of lot owners within the boundary area.
- Adequate amount of seating for those present at the community meeting
- Access to a working electrical outlet.
- Available between 6pm-9pm, Monday-Friday (Saturdays will be considered on a case-by-case basis)
- Free of cost (including security)

In the boxes below please give 3 proposed meeting sites:

Name of Venue	Address	Time and Date Available	Contact Information

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Special Minimum Lot Size Area: Public Information Request Form

How can applicants or property owners stay updated as to the status of an application?

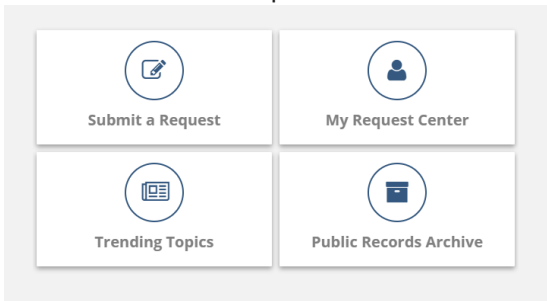
Applicants or property owners within a Special Minimum Lot Size Area can receive information about an application, including who is applying for the designation, as well as details relating to the support of the application from the response forms. Please follow the steps below to request information from our department's Public Information Office.

1. Go to Public Information Act Requests home page:
<https://www.houstontx.gov/pia.html>

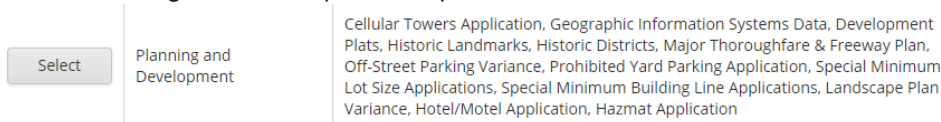
2. Scroll down to click on "Please click here to access the portal"

Using the online portal, you may now request public records of most City departments. [Please click here to access the portal.](#)

3. Click on "Submit a Request"



4. Select Planning and Development Department



5. Create an account and then, fill out the request form

You can also find the steps to request information in the following [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qixeK59ohks).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qixeK59ohks>