For information on land development or to ask specific information on a plat:
Planning and Development Department:
832-393-6600
(ask for Planner of the Day)
Public Affairs:
PlanningDepartment@houstontx.gov
www.houstonplanning.com

**Classes of Plats**

A **Class I plat** is only for residential and either amends a previous plat or:
1. Creates no more than four (4) lots, each fronting on an existing street;
2. Does not require or propose the creation of any new street;
3. Does not require or propose the dedication of any easement for public water, wastewater collection or storm sewer lines; and
4. Is not a replat.
There is a one time submittal process for class I plats. Class I plats are not very common.

A **Class II plat/replat** is a subdivision plat that:
1. Does not require or propose the creation of any new street;
2. Does not require or propose the dedication of any easement for public water, wastewater collection or storm sewer lines; and
3. Can be a replat but does not require notification of adjacent property owners for replatting purposes.
There is a one-time submittal process. A variance or a special exception may be sought with a Class II plat/replat.
All variance or special exception applications within the city limits of Houston require notification of adjacent property owners.

A **Class III plat/replat** is required for subdivisions that require or propose the creation of any new street or the dedication of any easement for public water, wastewater collection or storm sewer lines. A Class III plat requires two submittals: a preliminary and a final. A variance or a special exception may be sought with a Class III preliminary plat/replat and all variance or special exception applications within the city limits require notification of adjacent property owners. Objections from adjacent property owners should be raised during the preliminary platting process.
A preliminary plat application can be filed on land that is being considered for purchase. In many cases, final purchase may depend on the outcome of the plat submittal.

**Planning and Development Department**

**Land Regulation and Development**

**Houston Planning Commission**

Approval by Planning Commission is often the first step required in the development process. The Planning Commission is a 25-member board appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council with responsibility for reviewing and approving subdivision plats and variances in the City and the ETJ. The Commission also reviews development site plan variances within the city limits.

The Commission meets every other Thursday at 2:30 p.m. in City Hall annex chamber, 900 Bagby, unless otherwise posted. The agenda is posted three days in advance on the Department’s web site at www.houstonplanning.com. Items on the agenda posted as consent are typically considered all in one grouping. Items considered separately include replats requiring a public hearing and variances.

Members of the public can sign up to speak on any agenda item at the meeting. Speakers are allowed two minutes and can only speak once per item (if the item is deferred, speakers must choose at which meeting to speak).

**Platting**

A plat provides for the subdivision of land that can be legally defined (i.e. Lot 29, block 19 of the Happy Trails subdivision). Subdivision plats are required to show how land will be subdivided. The plat must reflect adequate streets and right-of-way for the project. The plat is checked to assure it abides by all development rules as established by Chapter 42, the City’s land development ordinance. By law, the Commission is required to approve plats that meet the requirements of Chapter 42.

Undeveloped land must be platted before development occurs. If land is platted, it can be replatted to further subdivide the existing subdivision plat or change the use of the property (i.e. from single-family to multi-family). Typically, a replat will make changes to the layout of lots, reserves, building setback lines and easements.
Plats must be considered and either approved or disapproved within 30 days or state law mandates that the plat is automatically approved if no action is taken. Plats can
be deferred twice but action must be taken within the 30 days. Residents who were notified of a public hearing or variance will not receive a second notice if the item is deferred at Planning Commission. The item will automatically come up at the next Planning Commission meeting.

The Commission's authority on platting does not extend to land use and therefore cannot approve a plat because of the intended use of the property. Other issues applicable to land development such as adequate water, sewer and drainage are handled by other agencies and are not part of the Commission's authority regarding plat approval.

A plat must be prepared by a licensed surveyor, land planner and/or engineer and a licensed surveyor or engineer must sign the plat. If the property is located within Fort Bend County, a licensed engineer must sign the plat in addition to a licensed surveyor.

Replat requiring public hearing
A public hearing for a replat is required if single-family restrictions existed within the original plat boundary. Public hearings are held before Planning Commission during the meeting. Residents within 500 feet of the property replat and within the original subdivision boundary will be mailed letters of notification and a sign will be posted announcing the public hearing date. If there are no variances requested, Planning Commission must approve the replat if it meets all the rules according to Chapter 42 and does not violate state law. If the replat violates deed restrictions, the Planning Commission must disapprove the plat.

Variance
Planning Commission does have discretionary authority if a plat requires a variance or special exception. Residents in the city limits that are within 500 feet of the proposed development will be notified of certain variances and have a chance to offer input on how the variance will affect their neighborhood or property. A variance is a deviation from the strict compliance of the rules and regulations of Chapter 42. The applicant must document a reasonable hardship for the variance. This usually means that applying the rules of Chapter 42 would make the land difficult to develop without the variance or that the rules applied to the project are contrary to sound public policy.

The Platting Process

| Day 1 | Plat submitted to the Planning and Development Department |
| Day 1-9 | Planning staff along with related agencies review submitted plats |
| Day 9 | Staff makes recommendation to Planning Commission |

Planning Commission takes one of the following actions:
- Defer
- Preliminary Approval
- Final Approval
- Disapprove

| Day 10 | Staff notifies applicant of Commission action |

Plat scheduled for next Commission meeting
Applicant contacts Public Works and Engineering for utilities and then prepares Final Plat
PWE approves paving and utility plans and Applicant submits final plat for recordation. Applicant applies for permits.
Applicant can submit revised plans with full fees

Approval          Approval          Defer   Preliminary Approval          Final Approval          Disapprove

Steps
1. Plat submitted to the Planning and Development Department
2. Planning staff along with related agencies review submitted plats
3. Staff makes recommendation to Planning Commission
4. Planning Commission takes one of the following actions:
   - Defer
   - Preliminary Approval
   - Final Approval
   - Disapprove
5. Staff notifies applicant of Commission action
   - Plat scheduled for next Commission meeting
   - Applicant contacts Public Works and Engineering for utilities and then prepares Final Plat
   - PWE approves paving and utility plans and Applicant submits final plat for recordation. Applicant applies for permits.
   - Applicant can submit revised plans with full fees

Next Steps

Site Plan
Site plans are required for all buildings constructed in the city limits. Site plans are also required if a building is remodeled and the remodeling changes the footprint of the structure. The site plan must include parking, landscaping, building lines, and setbacks. The site plan will show how the structure(s) sits on the lot and how the public accesses the property (i.e. driveway connections). The site plan is reviewed when the owner/builder applies for a building permit.

Permitting
All construction within the city limits must be permitted. This is handled by the Department of Public Works and Engineering's Planning and Development Services Division. City staff reviews the details (blueprints) of the actual construction project. The application must adhere to the City's building code and related construction codes. For more information about this process, contact Public Works at 832-394-9000 or log onto the Public Works and Engineering web site at www.HoustonPermittingCenter.org. It is during the permitting process that applications are reviewed for water and wastewater capacity, drainage and infrastructure.