

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION REPORT

B: Wilcrest Drive

APPLICANT: Rolando Guajardo

JURISDICTION: COH

PRECINCT: Harris County Pct. 4
COUNCIL DISTRICT: J

PROPOSAL:

Rolando Guajardo is requesting the reclassification of a segment of Wilcrest Drive from Beechnut Street to Bissonnet Street in the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP).

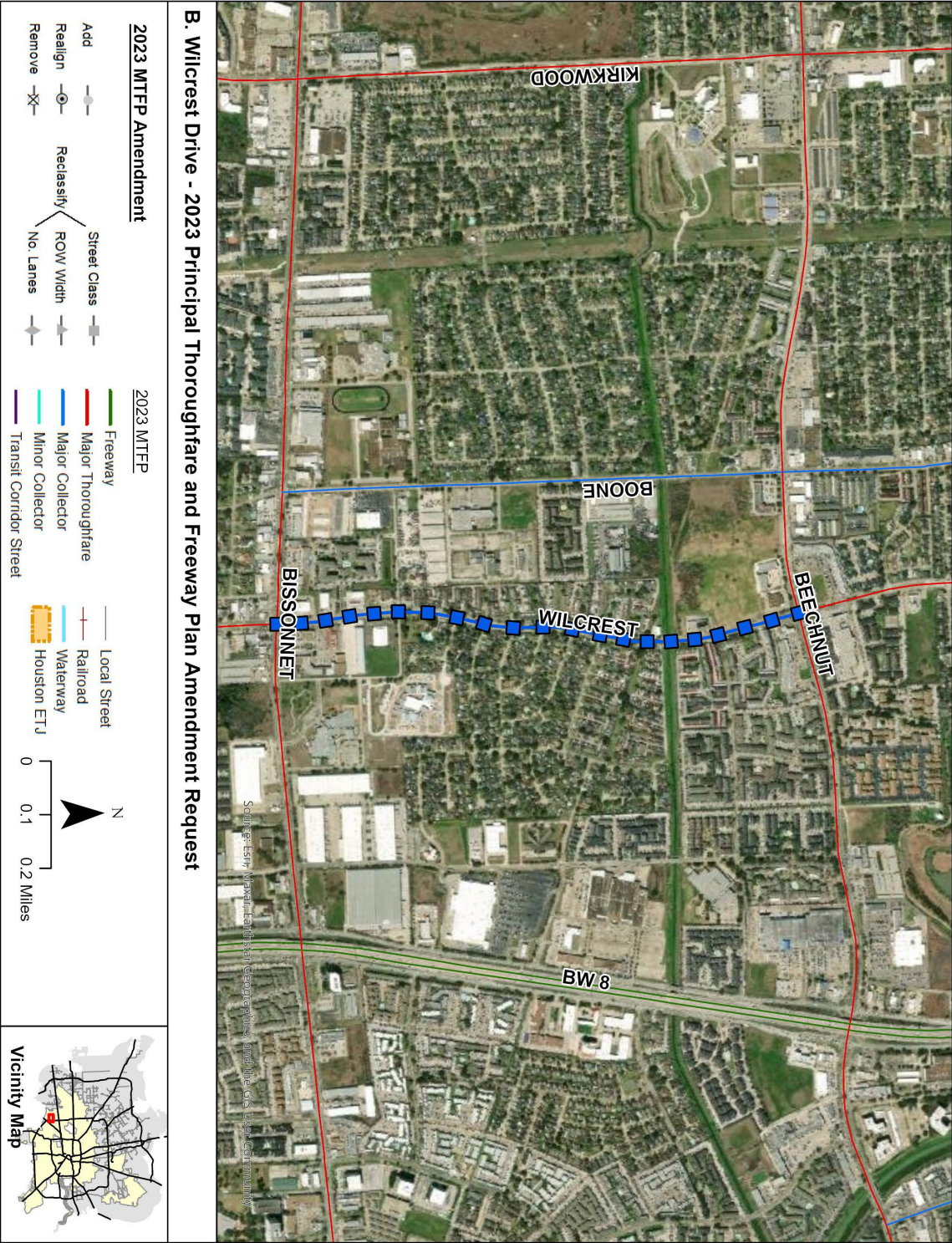
APPLICANT'S JUSTIFICATION and HISTORY:

The applicant is making this reclassification proposal with the stated objective to provide safer solutions to stop the speeding and reckless driving that the applicant contends has caused fatalities and cost his community thousands of dollars in property damage. The applicant states that the current designation of the corridor as a Major Thoroughfare is not an appropriate classification, as the classification limits the solutions available for traffic control, as speed humps, stop signs, and traffic signals are not permitted. Therefore, according to the applicant, the classification of this existing corridor is insufficient.

Additionally, the applicant states that his request to reclassify a 1-mile segment of Wilcrest Drive is justifiable due to the persistent problems connected with the corridor and the concern of the homeowners in the area. The applicant maintains that the reclassification of this segment is necessary, as it is a residential section in Alief, a Complete Community. However, the applicant contends that the current designation of the corridor as a Major Thoroughfare does not comply with the City of Houston's vision for a Complete Community. The applicant asserts that Wilcrest Drive enables speeding and reckless driving. He states further that homeowners have bedrooms less than 20' from Wilcrest Drive and are in fear of cars crashing into their homes. According to the applicant, several crashes have already occurred which places pedestrians, bike, and bus riders continually at risk of serious injury or death. The applicant states that one of the crashes "nearly decimated the pool association's fence and cost the Homeowners Association (HOA) over \$22,000 to replace." Additionally, the applicant states that less than two months after the initial repair of the fence, a similar crash occurred, costing the HOA another \$7,700. The applicant states that the budget of the HOA is extremely stressed, and that the repair costs are devastating. Therefore, the applicant is requesting to reclassify the 1-mile segment of the corridor, as he believes that the reclassification will provide better options for the community. The applicant also believes that the reclassification of the corridor will help deter dangerous destructive driving in the area. Moreover, from the applicant's perspective, the reclassification of the corridor will help reduce the cost to the HOA, by reducing the injurious effect of drivers along the corridor.

Additionally, the applicant states that Wilcrest Drive is a corridor utilized by the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) for bus route 161, and that it is classified as a METRO Boost Route because of its high ridership, so safety is a concern. Finally, the applicant states that this portion of Wilcrest Drive is designated as part of the City's High Injury Network (HIN), however the numbers are only reflective through 2019.

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STAFF ANALYSIS

Population & Employment Projections

A demographic analysis using projections provided by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) was conducted for the MTFP amendment proposal area. According to the H-GAC data, the population of the surrounding area is projected to increase by nearly 15,000 residents (140%) from 2015 to 2045 compared to 40% projected population growth of the City of Houston. Jobs are projected to increase by approximately 1,400 (43%) between 2015 and 2045, with the largest increase between 2030 and 2035.

Year	Population	Population Density (Persons/Acre)	% Change	Jobs	Job Density (Jobs/Acre)	% Change
2015	10,523	14.7		3,276	4.6	
2020	10,422	14.6	-1.0%	3,381	4.7	3.2%
2025	10,673	14.9	2.4%	3,392	4.7	0.3%
2030	10,640	14.9	-0.3%	3,582	5.0	5.6%
2035	9,908	13.8	-6.9%	4,005	5.6	11.8%
2040	11,577	16.2	16.8%	4,237	5.9	5.8%
2045	25,293	35.3	118.5%	4,695	6.6	10.8%
Change (2015 to 2045)	14,770	20.6	140.4%	1,419	2.0	43.3%
COH Change (2015 to 2045)	919,984	2.1	40.2%	548,987	1.3	30.5%
COH ETJ Change (2015 to 2045)	1,530,387	0.3	58.7%	637,772	0.5	71.9%

Source: 2015-2045 Demographic Projections by H-GAC released in 2018. This represents the most current data available at the time of publishing.

Data represents population and jobs in 3 Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) encompassing approximately 716 acres around the proposed amendment.

Land Use and Platting Activity

Land use surrounding the proposed alignment of Wilcrest Drive is mixed, but primarily single family residential. On the northern end of the proposed amendment are a few undeveloped parcels, as well as some commercial and multi-family residential use plats. The southern end of the alignment is mostly commercial use, including public and institutional use, with a limited amount of industrial use scattered along the corridor. A summary of platting activity that has occurred within the study area is shown below. There have been 4 plats filed in the area of the proposed amendment since 2015. The plats are distributed around the proposed amendment area, with two plats on the east of the corridor and two plats on the west. Two out of four plats are parks and open space, with one of the open space plats being partially commercial. There is one plat that is currently undeveloped, and one public plat. This type of platting activity can serve to lessen the impact of vehicular traffic in the area, as less person trips would be generated for parks and open space, than for residential and commercial developments.

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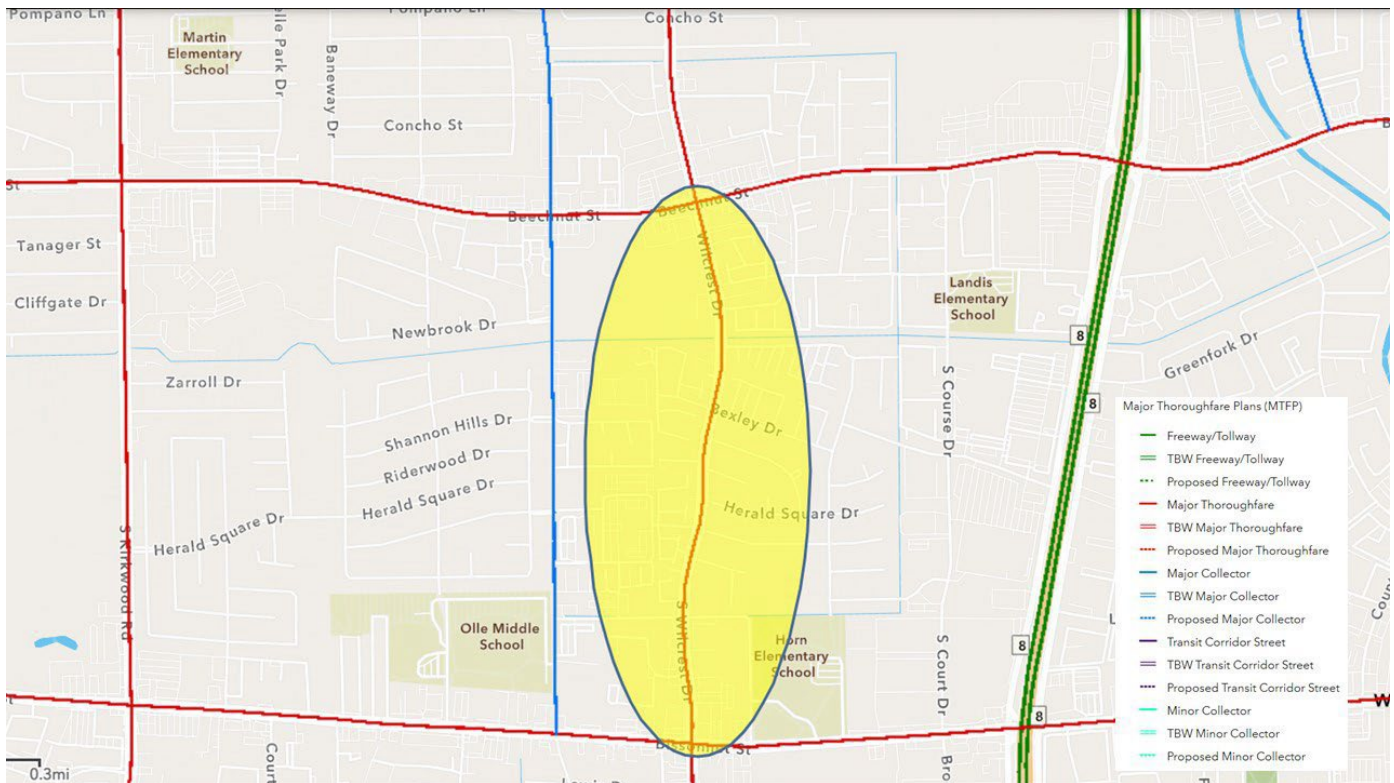
GP or Subdivision Plat Name	PC Action Date	Land Use	Property Size (acres)	Lots
Alief ISD Elementary School	02/20/2020	Public and Institutional	31.76	0
Crown Park Estates	06/23/2016	Undeveloped	32.05	121
Bhavika	03/03/2016	Park/Open Space and Commercial	5.287	0
West Belt Plaza	04/30/2015	Park and Open Space	2.50	0

Right of Way (ROW) Status

The MTFP shows the segment of Wilcrest Drive currently exists as a Major Thoroughfare with 100' ROW. The proposed amendment request is for Wilcrest Drive to be reclassified as a Major Collector. The length of the proposed reclassification request is approximately 5,085, beginning at Beechnut Street and terminating at Bissonnet Street.

Spacing

The proposed reclassification of Wilcrest Drive does not make any changes to the alignment or connectivity of the Major Thoroughfare. Accordingly, there is no impact on the spacing between adjacent corridors.



<https://mycity.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=54b1132148c540a9ae8a88d461d84d8b>

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RECOMMENDATION:

DENY the request to reclassify Major Thoroughfare Wilcrest Drive, from Beechnut Street to Bissonnet Street.

Justification

Reclassifying the Major Thoroughfare Wilcrest Drive will not have a significant impact on population, employment, land use, or platting. However, reclassification of a Major Thoroughfare in the middle of the corridor is not the best practice and does not comply with the MTFP, as the change in the middle of the infrastructure is unsafe and interrupts the integrity of the street grid.

The applicant submitted the reclassification request with the stated objective of providing safer solutions to stop speeding and reckless driving in the area. The applicant anticipates that the reclassification of the corridor from a Major Thoroughfare to a Major Collector would enable the community to utilize more traffic calming strategies such as speed humps, stop signs, or traffic signals to help slow down the vehicular traffic in the area.

Wilcrest Drive is a north/south Major Thoroughfare that traverses approximately 10-miles from IH 10 to Dorrance Road. The segment that the applicant requests to have reclassified is a 1-mile segment of the existing Major Thoroughfare. Should the applicant's request be approved, the reclassification would affect the integrity of the street grid, as it would downgrade the Major Thoroughfare within the existing infrastructure to a Major Collector, then revert back to a Major Throughfare. The result of the amendment as proposed would create an inconsistent corridor which is not the recommended practice to create safer streets.

Staff believes that Wilcrest Drive is not an MTFP amendment issue, but a street design issue that requires a more comprehensive planning strategy. Staff contends that a more effective way of reviewing this corridor is not from the MTFP amendment process, but from a Vision Zero Houston perspective, as Vision Zero is a systemic policy driven approach, that places a strong emphasis on reducing speeds to decrease transportation related fatalities by establishing traffic and roadway safety. Instead of amending the MTFP with a reclassification. Staff recommends the corridor be subject to a Vision Zero Connectivity Study, one of the 50 actions identified in the Houston Vision Zero Action Plan.

There was one public comment provided in support of the reclassification of the Major Thoroughfare as proposed by the applicant.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DENIED the request to reclassify Major Thoroughfare Wilcrest Drive, from Beechnut Street to Bissonnet Street in the MTFP.