

Urban Houston Framework Tools and Expectations



Goal	Tool	Expectations	Reasoning	Changes from Current Code and Policies	Benchmarks	Applicable Centers
<i>What does the City hope to accomplish with the tool?</i>	<i>Identify the tool</i>	<i>What must the developer do? What are the incentives for the developer?</i>	<i>What is the reasoning behind establishing this tool for urban centers?</i>	<i>How will this differ from current policy?</i>	<i>What resources exist that clarify rational for starting values?</i>	<i>Which size of activity center could benefit from this tool?</i>
#2 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Advance local and regional housing initiatives by ensuring smooth and timely progression through City development process	The City assigns the project to one City representative to facilitate the permit process. There will also be a XX% reduction in permitting fees.	The developer provides multiple uses on their site and/or a minimum of XX% affordable housing units.	Encouraging mixed-use development and some portion of affordable housing allows mix of income and ages to live in urban centers.	There are currently no mixed use or minimum affordable housing requirements within Houston. Current process for permitting is 30 days.	LEED – ND SITES	Small, Medium, Large
#3 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Contribute to high-quality infrastructure: To allow for dense, urban development	The City will pay for the additional cost through the use of tax abatements as defined within a 380 agreement.	The developer updates surrounding utility systems (water, wastewater, and storm) to accommodate projected capacity (as determined by the City).	Allows for upgrades to City system earlier than might be possible if the City had to finance the improvement. Provides the capacity for denser development within the activity center.	Utilizes existing financing models to better accomplish desired goals and reduce perception of financial risk to developers.		Small, Medium, Large

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#4 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Contribute to high-quality infrastructure: To create denser development through use of offsite/regional stormwater mitigation	The City coordinates the development and management of regional stormwater facilities in or near Urban Centers.	Developer reserves capacity in regional stormwater detention facility within certain proximity to site.	Allows dense development and better return on investment given the potential for high price of land in urban centers.	The City of Houston is undertaking a study of regional stormwater mitigation options. Chapters 9 and 13 currently require Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans (SWPPPs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs)—coordination could be emphasized during these processes.		Large
#5 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Contribute to high-quality infrastructure: Encourage cleaning and reuse of stormwater	Developer would be allowed to treat stormwater within the public right of way provided the use does not interfere with pedestrian clear zone and is outside the bike and vehicle travel ways and receive credits that could then be traded or sold between adjacent properties (within the watershed).	The developer goes above and beyond local and state standard requirements for cleaning and reuse of stormwater , and participates in a joint maintenance agreement .	Encourages filtration methods in landscape buffer zones. Rewards efforts to incorporate Low Impact Design (LID), managing stormwater at the source. An urban center could bank quality credits which could then be traded or sold between adjacent properties.	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Procedures are currently regulated by Chapter 13 of the Infrastructure Design Manual. Infrastructure Design Manual Chapter 4: Platting Requirements also includes a review of major impediments to water, wastewater collection and treatment, and storm drainage.		Small, Medium, Large

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#6 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Contribute to high-quality infrastructure: To encourage development where infrastructure can support the density	City provides encouragement for better practices by creating a plan for each urban center and then investing in infrastructure and transit money in identified centers first.	Development must fit the character and description outlined in the plan for the center.	Developers will develop where they know there will be infrastructure to support their development.	The Infrastructure Design Manual Chapter 15: Traffic and Signal Design Requirements reviews design considerations regarding traffic impacts on dwelling unit density and connectivity, but besides the H-GAC Livable Centers Plans and Mobility Plans, there aren't plans specific to centers.		Small, Medium, Large
#7 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Contribute to high-quality infrastructure: To promote responsible and sustainable design in Houston	City provides encouragement for better development practices by demonstrating LID principles in City projects.	Developers must use LID techniques .	Show developers what works and doesn't work in Houston.	There is no City policy to incorporate LID techniques in Park and other capital improvement projects.		Small, Medium, Large

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#8 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Encourage economic viability and diversity: To create larger parcels that support denser development, while preserving pedestrian connectivity	Street Abandonment , where developers own the property on both sides of the ROW and the City determines abandonment does not negatively impact traffic patterns, surrounding communities, nor planning objectives as determined by the City, the ROW may be abandoned and closed off to vehicular traffic.	Public pedestrian/bike passage is maintained and proposed development is built to XX density.	Small parcels created by small roadway grids may not be desirable for developers. Abandoning certain streets allows for the possibility of denser development. Preserving pedestrian connectivity will ensure that walkability is maintained. <i>We caution against this recommendation for the following reasons:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>It could conflict with the goal, "Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity"</i> - <i>Unless there is a coordinated approach to abandoning ROW, it could result in disjointed vehicular circulation patterns.</i> - <i>Where there are one-way street pairs, this approach can work at odds against making the center more accessible for cars. Instead it can cause frustration and lack of visibility.</i> 	This will change how current ROW acquisition is handled.		Medium, Large

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#9 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Enhance Community stability, accessibility and equity: To encourage development within reasonable walking distance of Parks Master Plan parks and open space	The developer will not be required to dedicate land or pay a fee in lieu of land dedication. This limitation, however, shall not apply to limit the size of compensating open space, which shall be governed by Section 42-185 of City Code.	The developer provides pedestrian clear zone access (at least X' wide by X' high) to an existing park or other public space and is within a quarter mile walk to a regional park, or otherwise presents an opportunity to enhance the city parks system consistent with the Parks Master Plan.	Encouraging density within reasonable walking distance of Parks Master Plan parks and open space can allow more people to benefit from a regional park plan, focuses public park investment, and could potentially yield a healthier community.	Residential developers are currently required to either dedicate private or public park land or pay a fee per Chapter 42, Article III, Division 7 based on the number of dwelling units. The fee (\$700 per DU) has the potential to increase annually based on the increase in appraised value. There is no credit given for locating a development along an existing public park or within a quarter mile access to a public park.		Small, Medium, Large

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#10 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
<p>Promote sustainable, healthy design and better construction practices: To encourage developments to provide parking behind the building, not between the ROW and front entrance</p>	<p>The City will permit developers to build up to the property line.</p>	<p>The developer must provide a minimum of XX' along Major Thoroughfares and Major Collectors, or XX' along all other roadways to the back of curb to the building façade, and if the developer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - builds at least XX% of their building frontage within XX' of the pedestrian realm; - has no on-site parking or driveways between the building façade and the pedestrian realm unless distance is greater than XX'; - provides a minimum X' vegetative buffer between pedestrian realm and any surface parking; - places a public entrance adjacent to the pedestrian realm; - ensures that no doors swing into the pedestrian realm; - has XX% of façade surface less than X' above the ground be transparent; - provides a door, window, or other opening at least every XX' where the building is within XX' of the pedestrian realm; - and keeps softscape at least X' back from any on-street parking. 	<p>To encourage developers to move parking to the back and create active pedestrian realms along the ROWs, there must be an incentive to the developers. The Transit Corridor Ordinance is one with which many developers are familiar. The curb to building distances and other metrics should be based on sound urban design principles documented by a reliable source such as ULI, CNU, LEED, APA, ASLA, or AIA.</p>	<p>This is based on the existing Transit Corridor Ordinance, and Extends the number of properties that qualify for reduced setbacks. Current Transit Corridor Ordinance requires applicants that opt in to provide 15' distance from curb to building along all Transit Corridor or Type A streets and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - builds at least 50% of their building frontage within 10' of the pedestrian realm; - has no on-site parking or driveways between the building façade and the pedestrian realm unless distance is greater than 25'; - provides a minimum 3' vegetative buffer between pedestrian realm and any surface parking; - places a public entrance adjacent to the pedestrian realm; - ensures that no doors swing into the pedestrian realm; - has 30% of façade surface less than 8' above the ground be transparent; - provides a door, window, or other opening at least every 20' where the building is within 10 feet of the pedestrian realm; - limits softscape planting area to 20%; and keep softscape at least 2' back from any on-street parking. 	<p>LEED-ND SITES ULI CNU LEED APA ASLA AIA</p>	<p>Small, Medium, Large</p>

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#11 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Promote sustainable, healthy design and better construction practices: To provide public parking in dense urban centers that can be shared, reducing the requirement to provide onsite parking for each project	Onsite parking requirement will be reduced by XX%.	The developer must provide a mixed-use development where at least two of the uses have compatible uses for parking, and are within an eighth mile walk of a parking facility that is owned by the City or some other government or quasi-governmental agency (management district, college, etc.).	To encourage dense, mixed use development within close proximity of a City of Houston public parking amenity without creating a shortage of parking that might impact neighboring properties.	COH offers a formula to present a shared parking alternative to the required parking in Chapter 26, Article VIII, Division 2, Section 26-499. The COH manages shared parking garages in Downtown Houston but has not yet offered such a program outside the Central Business District.		Medium, Large
#12 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Promote sustainable, healthy design and better construction practices: To allow smaller properties to create denser development	A parking district is established for an urban center (similar to Downtown, TMC, or Uptown).	Parking may be provided off-site , provided that it is within an eighth of a mile walking distance of the main entrance to the development.	Allowing for larger garages that serve multiple properties will open smaller properties for denser development.	This will expand the number Parking Management Zones based on existing code. Currently Downtown, TMC, and Uptown are the only centers with a Parking Management Zone.		Medium, Large

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#13 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Promote sustainable, healthy design and better construction practices: To promote dense urban development	Create vision plans for each urban center (example: http://www.capi.tolriverfront.org/files/docs/capriudfp13web.pdf).	Developer must meet the intent of the vision plan.	Laying out a plan will give developers an idea of what the area could yield when fully redeveloped with compatible dense, mixed-use.	n/a		Medium, Large
#14 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Promote sustainable, healthy design and better construction practices: To promote responsible and sustainable design in Houston	Proactively celebrate developer sustainability initiatives to responsibly detain and clean water on-site.	Development meets the minimum standards for SITES, LEED , or other comparable third-party validation.	This will provide an incentive for developers to include sustainable design elements.	Innovative developers sometimes receive City resistance if their sustainable suggestion is not standard policy.		Small, Medium, Large

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#15 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity (goal), by ensuring adequate pedestrian realm exists	The city provides tax abatement equal to cost of difference between currently required sidewalk width and the new expectation (see next column) for the length of the property along City ROW.	The developer must provide a XX' wide pedestrian realm along Major Thoroughfares and Major Collectors, a XX' wide pedestrian realm along all other roadways. The pedestrian realm must have a Pedestrian Clear Zone (at least X' wide sidewalk by X' high) and an X' wide minimum landscape buffer.	Connecting properties with wide sidewalks along major thoroughfares encourages walking as an alternative to the private auto for short trips. Walkability is critical as areas become denser.	Increases width of minimum sidewalk required. Current required widths are 6' for transit corridor streets and 5' for non-transit corridor streets.	LEED – ND SITES ULI	Small, Medium, Large
#16 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity: To encourage dense development along the major corridors where transportation improvements can benefit the most users	The City prioritizes available infrastructure improvement funds on corridors that have the potential to benefit the most users and the Developer does not need to complete a Traffic Impact Analysis if development is on a Major Thoroughfare or Major Collector and there is a minimum density of XX per acre.	The Developer does not need to complete a Traffic Impact Analysis if the development is on a Major Thoroughfare or Major Collector and there is a minimum density of XX.	Not requiring a Traffic Impact Analysis allows developers the assurance that their project can be built. By focusing this initiative along the Major Thoroughfares and Major Collectors, developers will be motivated to construct dense properties along corridors that can support the density.	This removes the current requirement that a Traffic Impact Analysis be completed for all developments outside the Downtown area if they generate more than 100 trips during the peak hour.		Small, Medium, Large

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#17 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity: To encourage dense urban development	Extend the existing development rules as they apply to Downtown Houston development to all large Urban Centers. This includes X' setbacks and no Traffic Impact Analysis requirement.	The developer must provide a XX' wide pedestrian realm along Major Thoroughfares and Major Collectors, a XX' wide pedestrian realm along all other roadways. The pedestrian realm must have a Pedestrian Clear Zone (at least X' wide sidewalk by X' high) and an X' wide minimum landscape buffer.	<i>The extension of the Downtown standard reductions would be fair and equitable across all Large Centers. We caution against this recommendation for the following reasons:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>It will encourage sprawl beyond the CBD.</i> - <i>0' setbacks work well in CBD due to wide, one-way street pairs and short block grid.</i> - <i>Multimodal transportation options and strong transit frequency of CBD support the current policy and are not yet fully integrated into other similarly dense areas of Houston.</i> 	Extends current exceptions in Downtown area to other similarly dense areas.		Large
#18 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity: To holistically consider traffic impact	Create area traffic impact study for identified Urban Centers showing expected development and needed area improvements.	N/A—Developers don't have to pay for a TIA.	Allows for overall traffic and transportation improvements to be planned and implemented where they will benefit the most users. Creates solutions based on area trends, not just addressing the changes brought on by one development.	n/a		Medium, Large

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#19 Suite of Tools and Expectations						
Support multimodal transportation and increased connectivity: To promote development in walkable areas	Reduce fees when developing along urban trail networks that allow for alternative transportation modes (bicycling and walking)	Developers must show a XX' by XX' connection to nearby trails and bicycle connections to nearby routes.	Reduced fees will attract potential developers to areas that have a base walkability to sustain/promote urban development.	n/a		Small, Medium, Large