Walkable, mixed-use centers at all scales surrounded by affordable, accessible, diverse neighborhoods with parks near all homes

Citizens’ Vision for Houston’s Future

A diverse city of opportunity where we live in harmony in a healthy environment.
Choices for home, work, and play in healthy and beautiful neighborhoods with self-determination.
Sustainable prosperity and development that balances economy, community, and environment.
Coordinated land use and transportation plans to create and maintain a high level of access for all.
A government that is wise, efficient, accountable, and creative.
An educated and skilled workforce, with lifelong educational opportunities.
A vibrant, internationally recognized center of artistic and cultural excellence.

PRINCIPLES FOR A GENERAL PLAN
This document outlines a vision and a set of principles and goals based on citizen values in the City of Houston. It was developed over a period of eight years as the basis for a General Plan for Houston’s Future. It was distilled from several years of public visioning processes and a scientific survey of likely voters.

The need for a true General Plan is clear. It would serve as a management tool that city government, city departments, developers, business leaders, and citizens could use as they make infrastructure and other investment decisions.

A General Plan for the City’s future is consistently supported by 83% of respondents in the Houston Area Survey, which was last conducted in February 2009 by Dr. Stephen Klineberg of the Rice University Sociology Department. It is also required by law in Chapter 33 of the City’s Code of Ordinances.
PRINCIPLES AND GOALS FOR A SUSTAINABLE HOUSTON

ECONOMY
Principles
• A prosperous city with a climate for capital and human investment that supports global competitiveness.
• The creation of wealth through innovation, research, and local entrepreneurship.
• A diversified economy, while retaining our position as the global energy leader.

Goals
• Become a sophisticated, vibrant, information technology-driven city with a highly skilled workforce.
• Promote a diversified business community attractive to international interests.
• Help small businesses thrive in local neighborhoods.
• Provide increased employment training opportunities that address a wide range of occupations and industries.
• Be sensitive to culture and language inside, outside the work place including schools.

COMMUNITY
Principles
• Fairness, justice, opportunity, access.
• The right to speak and to participate.
• Good health; excellent, affordable, accessible health care.
• Safe shelter, food for our indigent and homeless; help for citizens living in poverty.
• Childcare, after-school programs, and recreational opportunities for children.
• Safety and security.

Goals
• Encourage healthy living, affordable quality care for all economic and age groups with adequate trauma centers and clinics.
• Affordable quality day care to children.
• Drug counseling and other drug prevention intervention in schools.
• Facilitate transition process for intermediate, junior high students living in poverty.
• Assist the homeless.
• Provide opportunities to earn a living wage.
• Respect diversity, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual preference, religion, socio-economic status.
• Informed and empowered citizenry able to access information, influence government decisions.
• Support seniors with affordable housing, tax exemptions, healthcare, transportation, park facilities and activities, environmental awareness about housing areas, and police presence in senior communities.
• Support vital, diverse art community.
• Affordable, accessible art centers, programs.

ENVIRONMENT
Principles
• Houston to be a beautiful city with air and water that are plentiful and healthy.
• Preservation of natural greenspace with parks of many sizes.
• Protection of our trees and more of them.
• Policies to protect our floodplains.
• An environment for future generations that is at least as good as the environment we enjoy today.

Goals
• Improve health by improving the quality of the air.
• Guard and care for our water resources.
• Develop new and safe water supplies.
• Clean up waterways, eliminate pollution.
• A flood management plan that encourages regional cooperation.
• Become a clean and unpolluted city.
• Support technologically advanced energy alternatives.
• Support sustainable buildings and developments.
• Preserve, restore, add natural areas.
• Create more parks and open space evenly distributed geographically and accessible to all citizens.
PRINCIPLES AND GOALS FOR A SUSTAINABLE HOUSTON

NEIGHBORHOODS

Principles
- Choices in quality, size, and price of housing in urban centers with jobs, schools, goods, and services.
- Home ownership, affordable housing for the whole range of citizen incomes.
- Parks near homes, respect for historic places.

Goals
- Support, preserve beautiful neighborhoods.
- Protect, strengthen neighborhood identity and values through sensible application of newly created laws, regulations, programs, incentives.
- Promote, preserve older neighborhoods, and where appropriate redevelop them into better places.
- Support housing for all near shops, schools, police services, workplaces.
- Repair visual blight, regulate to prevent it.
- Provide libraries, recreational facilities, parks, in walking distance of every home.
- Improve neighborhood infrastructure.
- Preserve historic areas.

TRANSPORTATION

Principles
- The best transportation system in America.
- An integrated, efficient, multi-modal network that provides choices and safety.

Goals
- A transit system that is clean, fast, efficient, high frequency, comfortable, accessible, fiscally responsible, aesthetically pleasing, well routed.
- Maintain and improve a well built, coordinated, accessible network of expressways, roads, streets, and sidewalks integrated with other modes of transportation.
- Improve and expand pedestrian and bicyclist facilities and paths to provide alternative mobility options, en-sure safety, and connect neighborhoods and centers.
- Link transportation and land use planning.

GOVERNMENT

Principles
- Flexible, efficient, and excellent public service and policies for our health, safety, and welfare.
- Public officials who can balance long-term and short-term visions, and make fair use of our assets.
- Sustainable, unobtrusive infrastructure.
- Active regional collaboration.

Goals
- Create a master plan for growth that fosters dense, walkable, mixed-use urban centers at all scales surrounded by affordable, accessible, diverse neighborhoods.
- Reduce costs, become more accountable.
- Give citizens active voice in policy making.
- Deliver public services equally to all areas of the City, including recycling, street cleanup, lighting, curbs and gutters, and mosquito control.
- Develop secure public and private places and adequate laws for public protection from all offenses.
- Enforce laws extensively and fairly.
- Collaborate, coordinate in the region.
- Provide high-quality bilingual public education; safe schools, highly trained teachers, small classes.
- Help immigrants learn how our government works so they can access jobs, education opportunities, and the justice system on par with non-immigrants.
A General Plan is
• a citizen-based statement of long-term civic vision
• a guide or roadmap for setting short and long term goals, based on a vision and set of values deemed important by the community
• the official policy document that guides planning, public improvements, and development in a city
• a tool for coordinating existing and previous plans, reports, and studies
• a set of community values and priorities to set and guide goals, policies, and strategies necessary to deal effectively with the economic, social, and physical impact of existing and future development and growth

How long does it last?
The General Plan would be a flexible document, updated annually, with major revisions at five-year intervals. A major purpose of the Plan is to formulate and institutionalize the process of public and private decision-making related to major issues confronting the city.

Why does Houston need a General Plan?
• It is required by law: Chapter 33, City of Houston Code of Ordinances.
  • A General Plan is the most effective mechanism for achieving the greatest leverage of taxpayer dollars.
  • A General Plan promotes more orderly, efficient, and attractive patterns of growth and urban revitalization.
• It will maximize our competitiveness in the global economy by promoting a more attractive, vibrant metropolis, with diverse environments for living, working, and recreation.
• It will lead to improvement of the City’s image and its ability to attract and keep intellectual capital in the 21st century global marketplace.
• It is the best approach to dealing with Houston’s major problems – including congestion, air pollution, flooding, and beautification.
• It provides a framework to identify community goals and priorities for the future.
• The greatest benefit is the process, which brings citizens together to define a shared vision of the future.

Where did the Citizens’ Vision come from?
Beginning in 2002, Blueprint Houston hosted a series of workshops for hundreds of City residents. That culminated in Citizens’ Congress I in May, 2003, where 1,040 people discussed a set of goals and actions that had been developed at the earlier public workshops. They voted for the goals shown in this document, and for an action statement to ask City Council to adopt the vision and values as the basis for a general plan.

In 2007, 100 participants in the Leaders’ Conference reviewed and discussed values that arose during the citizen processes, and agreed on this consensus statement of values and goals. The vision statements were derived from the values and will be presented for affirmation at a third Citizens’ Congress in October, 2009.

Prepared by
PROVIDED BY HoustonTomorrow

for
BLUEPRINT HOUSTON
It’s about your future

The mission of Blueprint Houston is to assure the creation of a General Plan for the City of Houston based on citizens’ vision, values, and goals.