



CITY OF HOUSTON - CITY COUNCIL

Meeting Date:

Item Creation Date:

Heights Historic Districts Design Guidelines

Agenda Item#:

Background:

Design guidelines for the Houston Heights Historic Districts (East, West, and South) are required by the historic preservation ordinance, as amended in 2015. If approved, design guidelines will illustrate how the historic preservation ordinance applies within Heights Historic District East, West, and South.

The City's Code of Ordinances sets the requirements for how alterations, additions, and new construction must be constructed to be compatible with the contributing structures within a historic district. Houston has 22 historic districts and Design Guidelines illustrate how the criteria should be interpreted for a specific district. In this case, one set of guidelines are appropriate for all three districts.

The public participation process included nine workshops with the public; four meetings with an advisory committee (including property owners and representatives from the builder, architecture, realtor communities); four meetings with the HAHC; two community-wide meetings to explain, in detail, the contents of the draft documents. In addition, the process included two Visual Preference Surveys that received responses from 25% of the property owners. Additionally, nine notification letters were mailed through the USPS to all property owners and near-monthly emails were sent to a distribution list of more than 200. Meeting recaps and all written comments were posted on the project website at houstonplanning.com. In total, 576 individuals attended at least one of these events and the department received 267 written comments on the two drafts circulated.

The content of the Design Guidelines document has evolved through many stages of discussion with community members, stakeholders, staff, and the Commission. A revised final Design Guidelines document was approved by the Commission in June 2018.

The Heights Design Guidelines creation was a multi-year process sculpted with an impressive amount of community participation in which staff and the Commission took into consideration each step of the way, carefully weighing the neighborhood's needs as well as the requirements for an effective preservation program. The Commission and the Planning Department believe this final document meets the requirement set forth in the Code of Ordinances. It will allow citizens and builders a more predictable Certificate of Appropriateness / design review process and includes formulas with quantitative parameters for establishing compatibility, especially in terms of scale and massing. When in force, they will provide predictability and certainty for our applicants, our staff, and our commission. The Planning & Development Department recommends approval of the Heights Historic Districts guidelines.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Walsh".

Patrick Walsh, P.E.

Director

Planning & Development Department

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