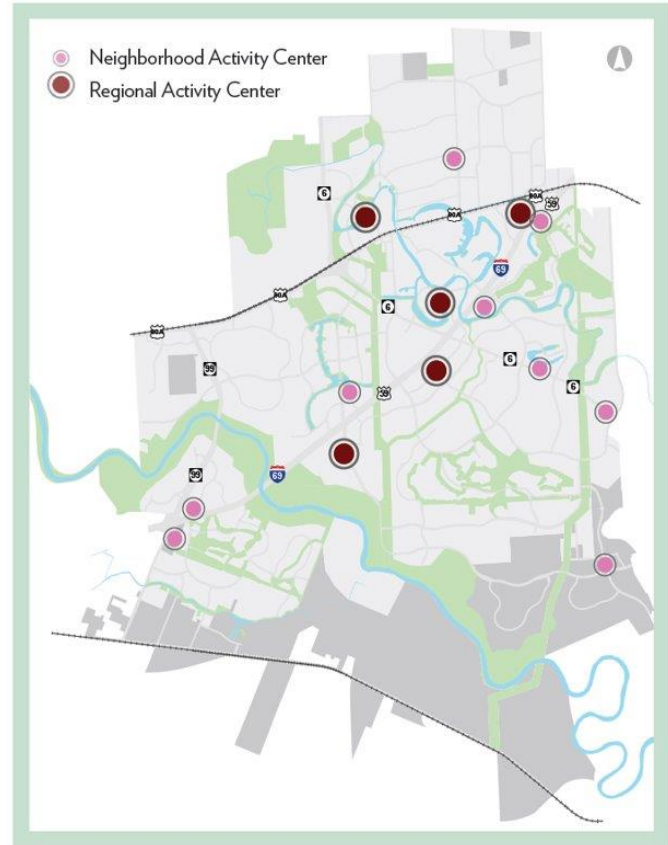


Bringing Activity Centers to Life

Sugar Land residents have said they want mixed-use areas in their community - places that combine offices, housing, retail, entertainment, and civic spaces where people can gather outside of work, school and their homes. City staff heard this feedback through the City's Comprehensive Plan update (specifically, Chapter 6 - the Land Use Plan, which was adopted by City Council in 2018), and continue to hear this from residents today.

The Land Use Plan provides the policy framework to guide Sugar Land's development and redevelopment into the future. Creating mixed-use Activity Centers is an essential element of achieving the long-term vision: that Sugar Land will remain a desirable place to live and do business, and preserve the City's appeal. Achieving this vision requires that the City's Development Code respond to long-term shifts in market demands and demographic trends.

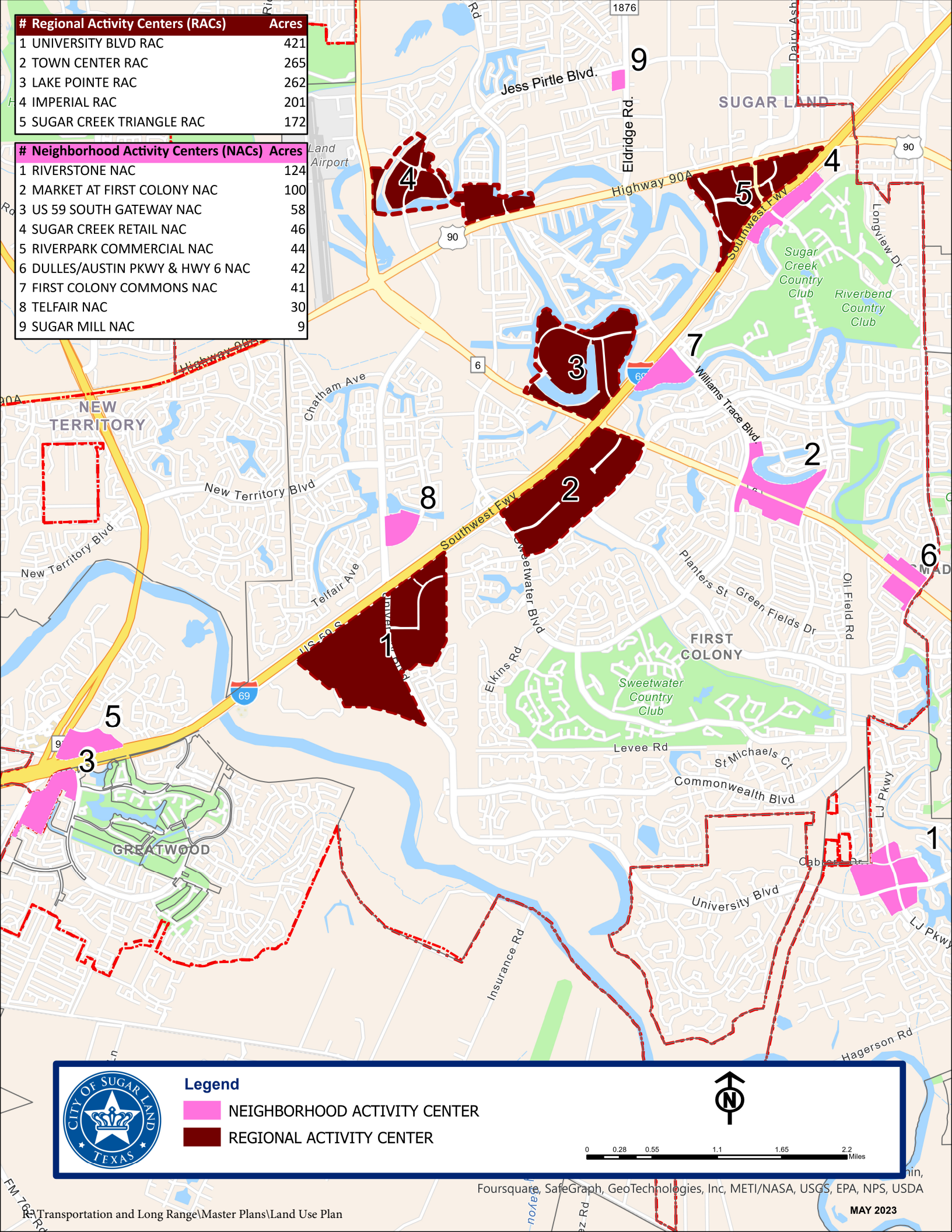


The proposed Development Code update includes the creation of two mixed-use zoning districts in support of the Land Use Plan (LUP). The proposed new districts are:

- **Mixed-Use Neighborhood (MU-N):** Intended to provide pedestrian-friendly areas of low- to medium-density and accommodate primarily residential uses with limited community, educational, commercial uses, and incidental or accessory uses. Residential uses in the MU-N district are intended to offer a diverse mix of housing opportunities at varied densities consistent with the Land Use Plan's Neighborhood Activity Centers (NACs).
- **Mixed-Use Regional (MU-R):** Intended to provide for pedestrian-friendly areas of medium- to higher-density residential development and compatible nonresidential uses such as lodging, offices, supporting commercial and service uses, other civic and community uses, and incidental or accessory uses consistent with the Land Use Plan's Regional Activity Centers (RACs).

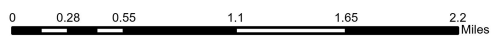
#	Regional Activity Centers (RACs)	Acres
1	UNIVERSITY BLVD RAC	421
2	TOWN CENTER RAC	265
3	LAKE POINTE RAC	262
4	IMPERIAL RAC	201
5	SUGAR CREEK TRIANGLE RAC	172

#	Neighborhood Activity Centers (NACs)	Acres
1	RIVERSTONE NAC	124
2	MARKET AT FIRST COLONY NAC	100
3	US 59 SOUTH GATEWAY NAC	58
4	SUGAR CREEK RETAIL NAC	46
5	RIVERPARK COMMERCIAL NAC	44
6	DULLES/AUSTIN PKWY & HWY 6 NAC	42
7	FIRST COLONY COMMONS NAC	41
8	TELFAIR NAC	30
9	SUGAR MILL NAC	9



Legend

- NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVITY CENTER
- REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER



Foursquare, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA

MAY 2023

The following is a summary of the draft elements of the Development Code revisions.

1. PROVIDE A HOME NEARBY FOR FAMILY

Activity centers are often recognized or defined most for the types of amenities and services within them, but those businesses cannot thrive without the residential units necessary to support them. The mixed-use zoning districts provide an opportunity for residential units to be located within activity centers and integrated with nonresidential uses. Additional housing will provide places for young professionals and families to become new Sugar Land residents or current residents to downsize while staying in their beloved community. Specific updates to the Development Code include:

- Defining and allowing new house-scale “middle housing” residential use types (e.g., triplex, fourplex, sixplex and cottage court development);
- Allowing multi-family development by-right according to density limitations established in the Land Use Plan and requiring a public process for those that exceed those limitations; and
- Establishing basic residential design requirements including transition standards.

What is Middle Housing?

“A range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood.”

2. ENABLE WALKABLE PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Applying the mixed-use zoning districts in activity centers can help “address the growing demand for living closer to services and entertainment [while remaining] considerate of the impact on any adjacent single-family neighborhoods (LUP, p.4).” To produce this desired built environment, the districts establish lot, building, and site design standards tailored to align with the expected intensity and character appropriate for neighborhood and regional activity centers. The standards will create places focused on people instead of vehicles as is typical in suburban environments. Specific updates to the Development Code include:

- Requiring minimum amounts of nonresidential and residential uses for developments over 2 acres; and
- Establishing form standards of the built environment such as lot layout and design, multi-modal connectivity, parking lot location, streetscape design, pedestrian amenities, building placement and architectural features.



What are the benefits to this approach?

- Incremental redevelopment of activity centers by responding to market pressure;
- Creates pedestrian-friendly and attractive spaces that support multiple age groups, household, and family styles;
- Enables aging in place and pathways to homeownership; and
- Supports community enhancements.

3. FACILITATE LESS DRIVING AND MORE LIVING THROUGH REDUCED PARKING

Typical suburban development includes swaths of unused parking spaces. This parking costs the developer up-front and everyone in the long run.

A key component in ensuring a more efficient use of land, as well as more creative design and reducing development costs, is evaluating the amount of parking each development is required to provide.

Additionally, it is challenging to create the type of pedestrian-focused environment desired in the NACs and RACs if development standards are drafted to be most suitable for vehicles rather than other modes of transportation (e.g., walking or cycling).

Specific updates to the Development Code include:

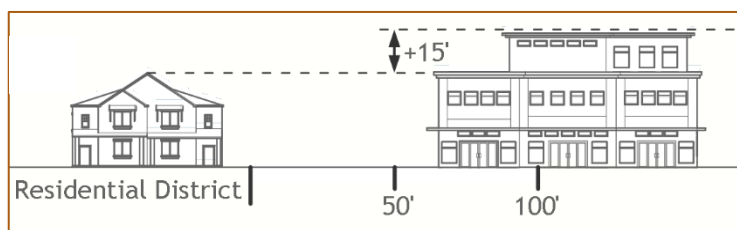
- Reducing the minimum off-street parking requirements in the mixed-use districts by 25%; and
- Further parking reductions allowed through provision of:
 - Structured parking (e.g., parking garages),
 - Shared parking (i.e., multiple businesses using one parking lot),
 - Bicycle parking,
 - On-street parking,
 - Electric vehicle charging stations,
 - Rideshare designated zones (e.g., Uber or Lyft)

4. RESPECT ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

The Land Use Plan emphasizes the importance of mitigating and preventing impacts from development in activity centers on adjacent single-family neighborhoods.

Applying additional regulations to mixed-use zoning districts can address concerns related to both visual (e.g., height) and operational (e.g., service areas). Specific updates to the Development Code include:

- Requiring the height of buildings in mixed-use zoning districts to gradually “step down” beginning within 250 feet of a Residential zoning district;
- Limiting the location of off-street surface parking lots, loading and service areas and other sources of audible noise away from adjacent residential uses; and
- Establishing basic design requirements related to the placement of windows, porches, balconies, and outdoor living spaces.



5. STREAMLINE AND REWARD INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Existing zoning regulations separate residential and commercial uses and focus on vehicular connectivity between uses, whereas activity centers are envisioned to mix uses and focus on pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

The Planned Development (PD) District is currently the primary mechanism for approving mixed-use projects in Sugar Land, but PD applications can be inconsistent and unpredictable due to the case-by-case negotiations that allow developers and policymakers to modify requirements through the process.

An unpredictable process means that developers will go elsewhere to invest. To encourage redevelopment of activity centers into walkable places, the development process must change.

Specific updates to the Development Code include:

- Establishing expectations for mixed-use development through specific standards in the mixed-use zoning districts;
- Establishing a Mixed-Use Concept Plan for staff to review large, complex, or phased projects and applicant to inform the public early in the development process; and
- Establishing a Minor Modification process to allow for minor deviations from certain dimensional or development standards.

Why is this important?

- Address the perception that Sugar Land's development process is overly burdensome and costly;
- Establishes a predictable process while maintaining high standards; and
- Allows the PD to be used in truly unique and compelling projects.

6. ACCELERATE REDEVELOPMENT

Adopting the mixed-use zoning districts and associated standards into the Development Code does not automatically rezone any land in the city. Implementation of the districts requires a formal rezoning process that can be either City-initiated (Staff, Planning Commission, or City Council) or property owner-initiated.

Though property-owner initiated rezonings offer individuals the opportunity to take advantage of greater development potential without negotiating a PD, City-initiated rezonings are often the most efficient and holistic way to pursue implementation of the activity centers as envisioned in the Land Use Plan. Additionally, pursuing City-initiated rezonings:

- Signals interest in redevelopment to property owners and the development community (inside and outside of Sugar Land)
- Accelerates redevelopment by reducing the overall review time for a mixed-use development projects; and
- Provides a consistent regulatory framework to encourage and attract desired development.

Bringing Activity Centers to Life through Mixed-Use Zoning

