

Land Use Plan Activity Centers Implementation

Ruth Lohmer, AICP

City Planner – Long Range

Matt Goebel and Gabby Hart

Clarion Associates

November 16, 2021

Workshop Overview

- ▶ Workshop Overview & Introduction
- ▶ Background
 - ▶ Land Use Plan
 - ▶ Development Code
- ▶ Stakeholder Interviews & Peer City Research Results
- ▶ Key Themes & Recommendations
- ▶ Summary

Activity Centers Implementation Project

- ▶ 2018 Land Use Plan encourages City to be more proactive in redevelopment
- ▶ High Priority Action Item directs City to evaluate best way to implement Regional and Neighborhood Activity Centers
- ▶ City is in a new stage of development cycle – almost built-out
 - ▶ Council identified redevelopment as top priority
- ▶ Staff working with planning consultant Clarion Associates
 - ▶ Assisting with research and evaluation, recommendations for next steps

Workshop Purpose

- ▶ Review stakeholder input and consultant recommendations
- ▶ Provide feedback on recommendations and direction for next steps

Background

Ruth Lohmer

Land Use Plan Overview

- ▶ Updated in August 2018
- ▶ Chapter 6 of the Comprehensive Plan
- ▶ Outlines policy direction and guidance for land use decisions
- ▶ Guides how the city positively and proactively responds to long-term market shifts and demographic trends
- ▶ Incorporates community values and preferences
 - ▶ Based on community input over 5 years of development
 - ▶ Via Council appointed citizen LUAC, stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and online town halls

2018 Land Use Plan: Land Use Goals



1. Protecting Single-family Neighborhoods



2. Creating Mixed Use Activity Centers



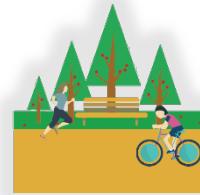
3. Encouraging Residential Options



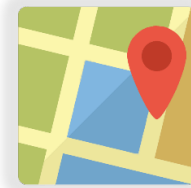
4. A Great Place for Business



5. Amenities for All



6. Inviting Outdoor Spaces



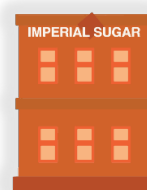
7. Connected Land Uses



8. Balanced Growth



9. Fostering Redevelopment



10. Celebrate Sugar Land

Land Use Goals

Goal 2: Creating Mixed Use Activity Centers

- ▶ Compact, walkable
- ▶ Draw people throughout the day
- ▶ Encourage interaction
- ▶ Grow and support business
- ▶ Build community



Goal 3: Encouraging Residential Options

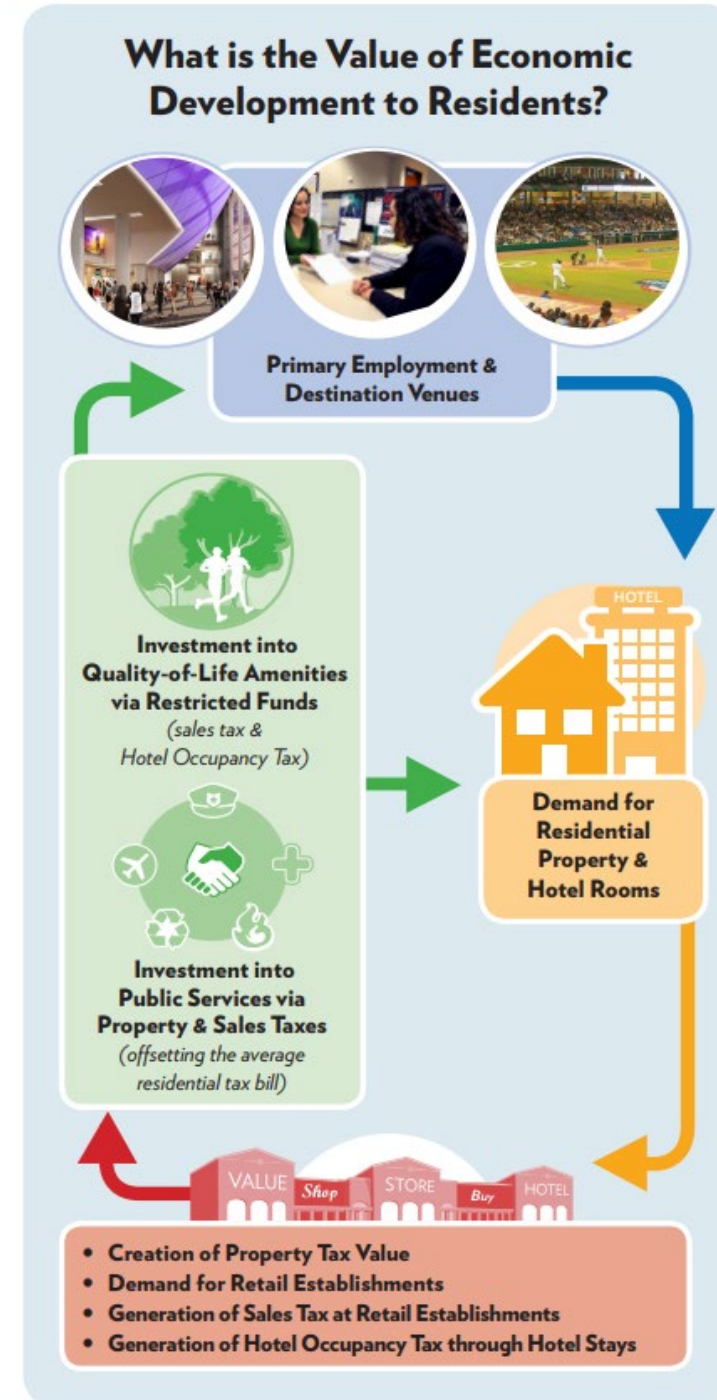
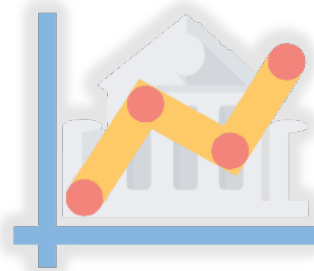
- ▶ Mixture of residential options
- ▶ In a variety of settings
- ▶ Appeal to a wide range of people
- ▶ Expand housing options to respond to changing demographics and market preferences



Land Use Goals

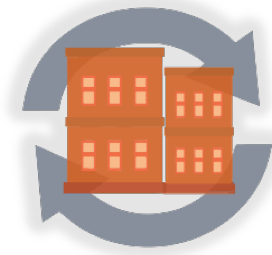
Goal 8: Balanced Growth

- ▶ Develop and redevelop in a way that maintains the long-term fiscal health of the city
- ▶ Promote balanced mix of land uses

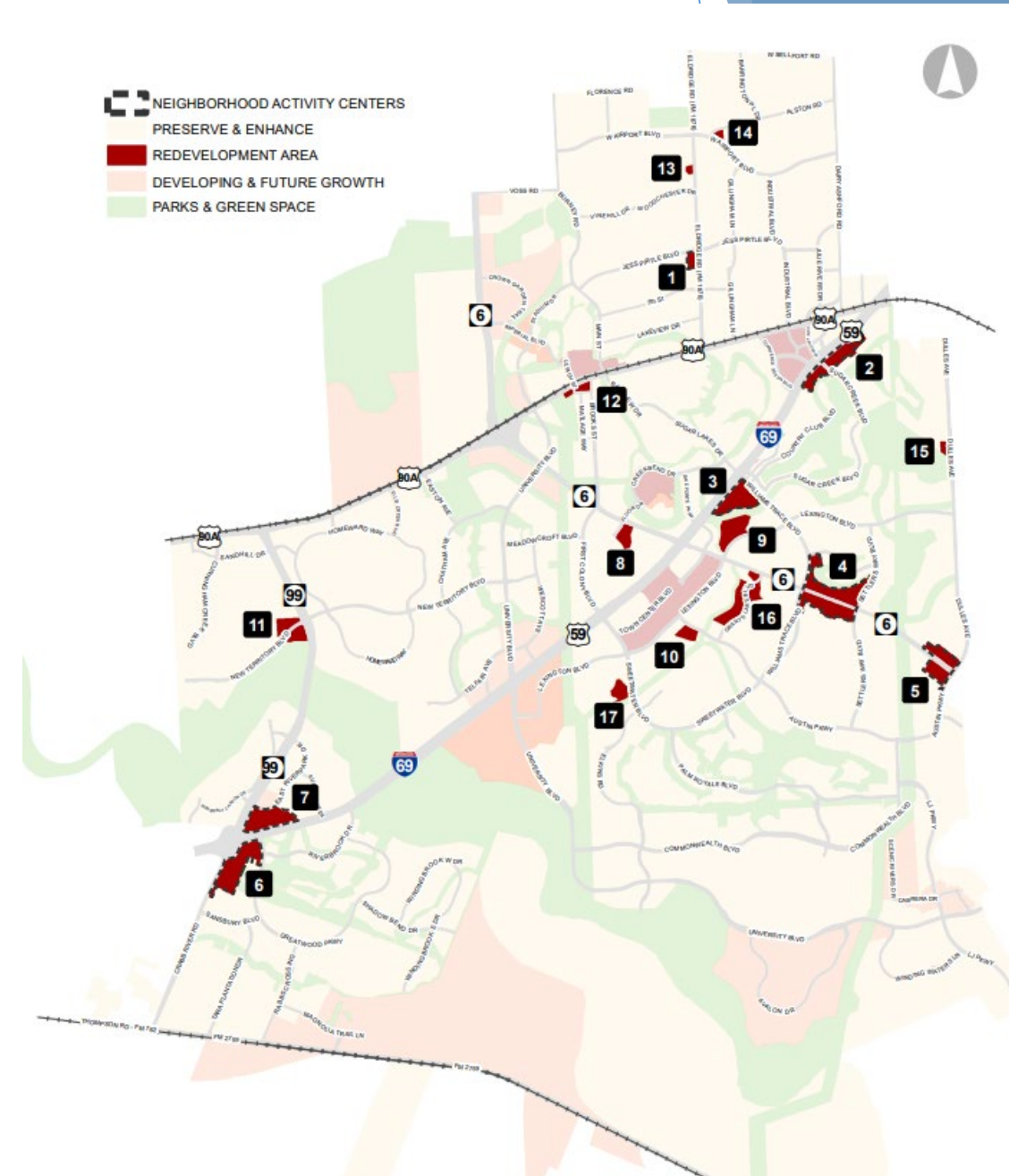


Land Use Goals

Goal 9: Fostering Redevelopment



- ▶ Promote redevelopment that supports the goals of the city & is respectful of surrounding community
- ▶ Support rehabilitation & redevelopment to prevent declining retail centers
- ▶ Support infill development



Land Use Plan Overview – RACs and NACs



- ▶ Mixed use walkable areas with offices, retail, residential, amenities, and public spaces
- ▶ 5 RACs, 9 NACs
- ▶ Achieving vision requires redevelopment

Regional Activity Center



- ▶ Commercial & civic hubs for City & region
- ▶ Vertically mixed use area
- ▶ Multiple public spaces
- ▶ Narrow streets to slow traffic
- ▶ Near major highways
- ▶ Potential locations for park & ride
- ▶ Low to high rise buildings

Neighborhood Activity Center



- ▶ Main street for nearby neighborhoods
- ▶ Vertically & horizontally mixed use area
- ▶ At least one public space
- ▶ Connected to adjacent neighborhoods w/ pedestrian & bike trails
- ▶ Narrow streets to slow traffic
- ▶ On arterials & collectors
- ▶ Low to midrise buildings

Development Code Overview

- ▶ Regulatory tool for implementing vision of Comprehensive Plan/ Land Use Plan
- ▶ Establishes zoning regulations (Chapter 2), for example:
 - ▶ Use
 - ▶ Bulk (setbacks, height, floor to area ratio)
 - ▶ Landscaping
 - ▶ Parking requirements

Development Code – Mixed Use Overview

- ▶ **Planned Development (PD) District**
 - ▶ Current zoning mechanism for mixed use
 - ▶ Encourage innovative concepts different than those permitted in standard districts
 - ▶ Intended to permit flexibility in development proposals
 - ▶ Sugar Land Town Square is sole vertically mixed-use PD today

Activity Centers Implementation

- ▶ Evaluate best way to implement Regional and Neighborhood Activity Centers
 - ▶ Consider creating new zoning district(s) or continuing PD
- ▶ From a regulatory standpoint, how do cities encourage/incentivize redevelopment of strip retail into mixed use areas?
- ▶ What other tools do cities use besides zoning? Identify other regulatory or economic development incentives to offset development costs that can be used to incentivize redevelopment

Outcomes of Recommendations

- ▶ **Development Code that implements the LUP Vision and clearly outlines desired outcome**
- ▶ **Shorter and simpler development process for mixed-use redevelopment**
 - ▶ **Provides more clarity and certainty for developers, encourages redevelopment**

Stakeholder Interviews and Peer City Research

Clarion

Stakeholder Input

- ▶ Virtual interviews with:
 - ▶ Local developers and architects
 - ▶ Property owners and management staff
 - ▶ Sugar Land Planning, City Management and Economic Development staff
 - ▶ Sugar Land City Council and P&Z

Stakeholder Input – What We Heard

- ▶ What does successful mixed-use redevelopment look like?
 - ▶ Dynamic public spaces where there is “something for everyone”
 - ▶ Features unique to, historically significant, or associated with the community within which it is located
 - ▶ Pedestrian-oriented building and site design (e.g., wide sidewalks, attractive storefronts, public art)
 - ▶ Long-term economic and environmental sustainability

Stakeholder Input – What We Heard

- ▶ What are the strengths and weaknesses of the PD district?
 - ▶ Iterative and constructive process allows for effective collaboration between the developer and staff.
 - ▶ Process lacks the flexibility necessary to respond to a changing market. Level of detail required limits ability to change without going through entire process.
 - ▶ Process is “good at stopping bad things from happening, but it has been less successful at encouraging good things to happen.”
 - ▶ Lengthy, unpredictable process.

Stakeholder Input – What We Heard

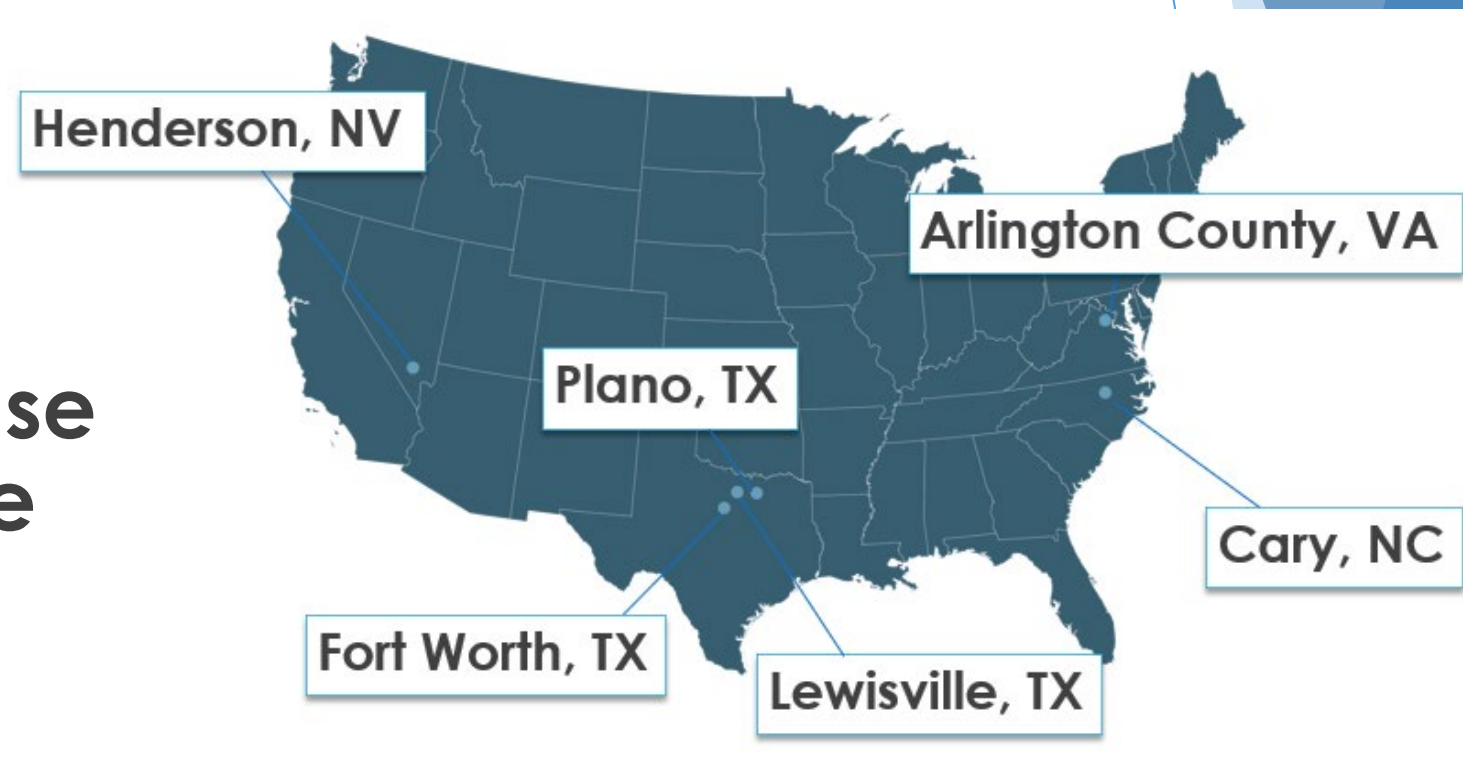
- ▶ What are the barriers to redevelopment in Sugar Land?
 - ▶ Sugar Land is not as competitive as neighboring communities due to cumbersome processes and perceived cost of development.
 - ▶ The many rules and layers of process (such as City, POA, and others) make it difficult for property owners and developers to respond to market changes and take advantage of evolving opportunities.
 - ▶ The Land Use Plan does not support the density to integrate the amount of multifamily product to support a successful mixed-use redevelopment project.

Stakeholder Input – What We Heard

- ▶ Are the available economic incentives working to achieve mixed-use redevelopment?
 - ▶ Good range of economic incentives already available; better awareness would help ensure they are used widely.
 - ▶ If a project is not viable without the City's contribution, the City will not typically provide funding and may preclude the developer from moving forward with a project.
 - ▶ Perception that a handful of existing Sugar Land companies tend to receive tax abatements or other funding sources; more effort needed to incentivize and attract new companies to locate in Sugar Land.

Mixed-Use Redevelopment Case Studies

- ▶ Population size
- ▶ Community character
- ▶ Exemplary mixed-use projects & economic incentives
- ▶ Length of time mixed-use zoning regulations have been in place
- ▶ Similar scales of development identified in Comprehensive Plan



Mixed-Use Redevelopment Case Studies

Legacy West
Plano, Texas



West 7th
Fort Worth, Texas



Mixed-Use Redevelopment Case Studies



Case Studies – Lessons Learned

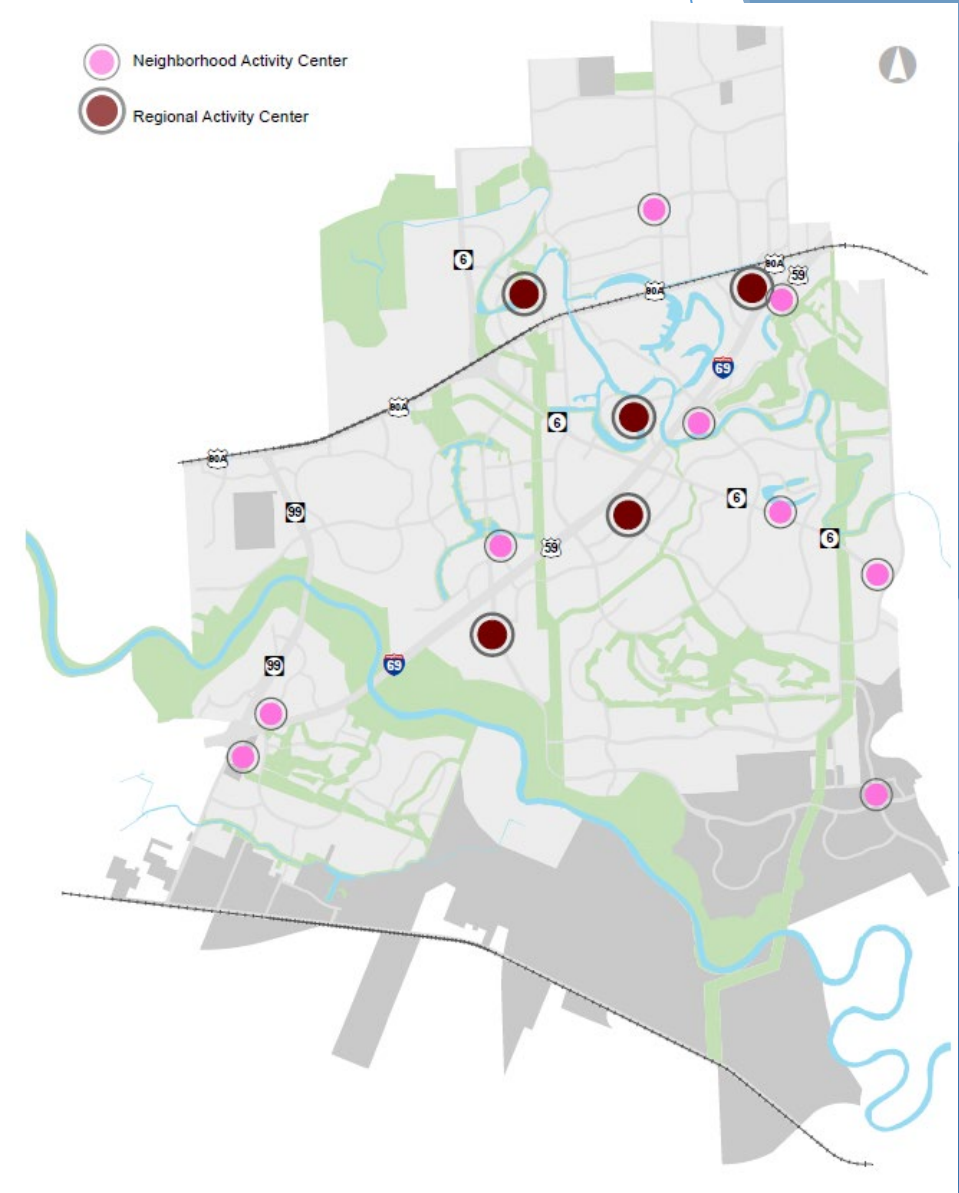
- ▶ All implemented standard mixed-use zoning districts (varied in scope/extent)
- ▶ Avoid “too much, too soon” e.g. overlay districts, targeted Code amendments, and area-specific implementation
- ▶ Internal coordination between staff, city management, and local officials is essential to successful implementation
- ▶ Accessible and transparent communication and engagement with the public prevents contentious outcomes during future development proposals
- ▶ Economic incentives benefit innovative development

Key Themes and Recommendations

Clarion

Start with the Land Use Plan

- ▶ 5 RACs
- ▶ 9 NACs
- ▶ Design and implement zoning and economic development tools that support the plan's vision
- ▶ Eliminate barriers that discourage the type of mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, and attractive spaces called for in the activity centers



Build on Sugar Land's Unique Assets

- ▶ Anchor projects with Sugar Land's assets such as water features, quality landscaping and open space, and local history.
- ▶ Encourage unique places that set themselves apart from other Houston-area destinations
- ▶ Create small-scale destinations in the NACs



Educate and Build Community Support

- ▶ Build community support through transparent and proactive public engagement opportunities.
- ▶ Facilitate a cooperative working relationship between the private and public sectors.
- ▶ Community support essential to the approval of individual, successful projects.
- ▶ Start public outreach early for large development projects and require (or encourage) the developer to host neighborhood meetings before submitting an application.



Discussion

- ▶ **Start with the Land Use Plan**
- ▶ **Build on Sugar Land's Unique Assets**
- ▶ **Educate and Build Community Support**
- ▶ Zone for *Mixed Use*
- ▶ Simplify and Incentivize Redevelopment
- ▶ Rein in the Planned Development Process
- ▶ Embrace a Balanced Approach

Zone for Mixed Use

“A community should proactively adopt zoning tools designed to incentivize, encourage, and require the types of development that it wants to see – rather than creating workarounds using zoning tools originally intended for other purposes.”

Zone for Mixed Use:

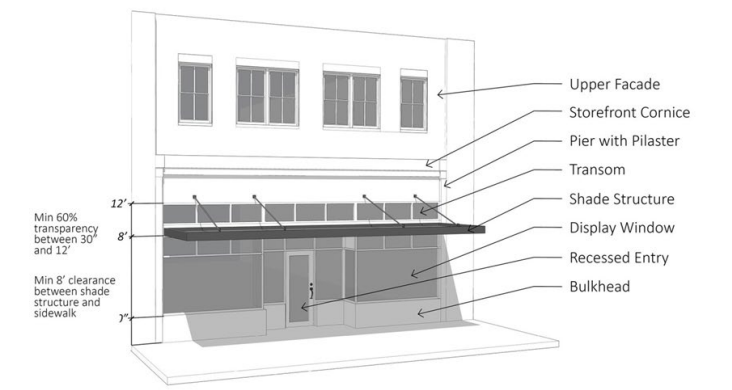
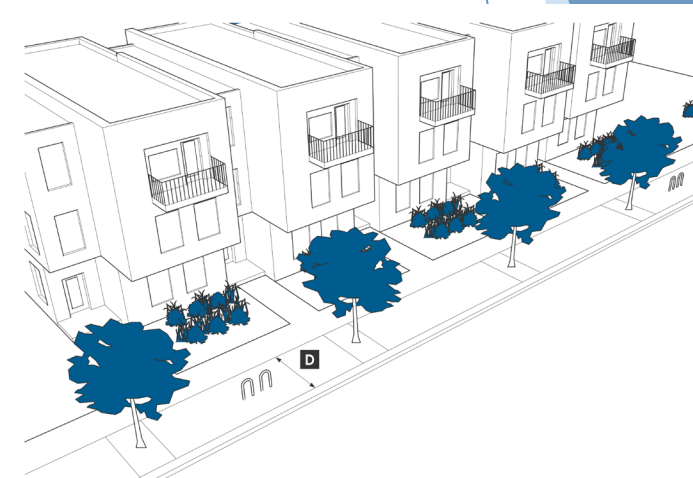
Introduce New Mixed-Use Zoning Districts

- ▶ **Two districts based on RAC and NAC**
 - ▶ **Neighborhood Mixed-Use**
 - ▶ **Regional Mixed-Use**
- ▶ **Use suburban and urban PD development standards to inform district requirements**
- ▶ **Other factors to consider:**
 - ▶ **Use mixing requirements**
 - ▶ **Extent of built-in flexibility to vary district requirements**
 - ▶ **How new zoning districts would be applied to the zoning map**

Zone for Mixed Use:

Adopt Mixed-Use Oriented Development Standards

- ▶ Evaluate parking ratios and shared parking allowances.
- ▶ Establish pedestrian-friendly streetscape standards
- ▶ Review the current Urban and Suburban PD development requirements to determine if certain standards should be more broadly applied in base zoning districts.
- ▶ Consider integrating building-form standards



Zone for Mixed Use: ***Allow Flexibility***

- ▶ **Allow wider range of administrative-level modifications and increase staff decision-making authority**
- ▶ **Establish criteria for minor and major development projects**
- ▶ **Introduce a *Minor Modification* procedure that authorizes staff to approve minor deviations from certain dimensional or development standards based on specific criteria**
- ▶ **Establish a referral procedure by which staff can defer final decision-making authority to P&Z based on specific criteria**

Zone for Mixed Use: *Encourage Incremental Progress*

- ▶ Adopt tailored rules for when to apply new development standards to redevelopment projects (e.g. applicability matrix)

Regulations →	Building and Envelope Regulations							Architectural Regulations						Landscape Regulations		
Development Application/Request	Placement	Orientation	Blocks/Lots	Height	Driveways	Ped-Circulation	Parking	Articulation	Facades	Materials/Colors	Awnings/Canopies	Windows	Parking Structures	Tree/Plant Materials	Hardscaping	Open Space
(a) New Development*	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
(b) Change of use/expansion of existing use (with NO increase in building area) (new use shall comply with the underlying zoning district)**							■									
(c) Interior remodel with no change of use, no change in any Street facing Facade, no increase of any existing nonconformity and no increase of building area																

- ▶ Adopt alternative compliance provisions that allow developers to reduce or modify certain required standards if alternative achieves the same intent

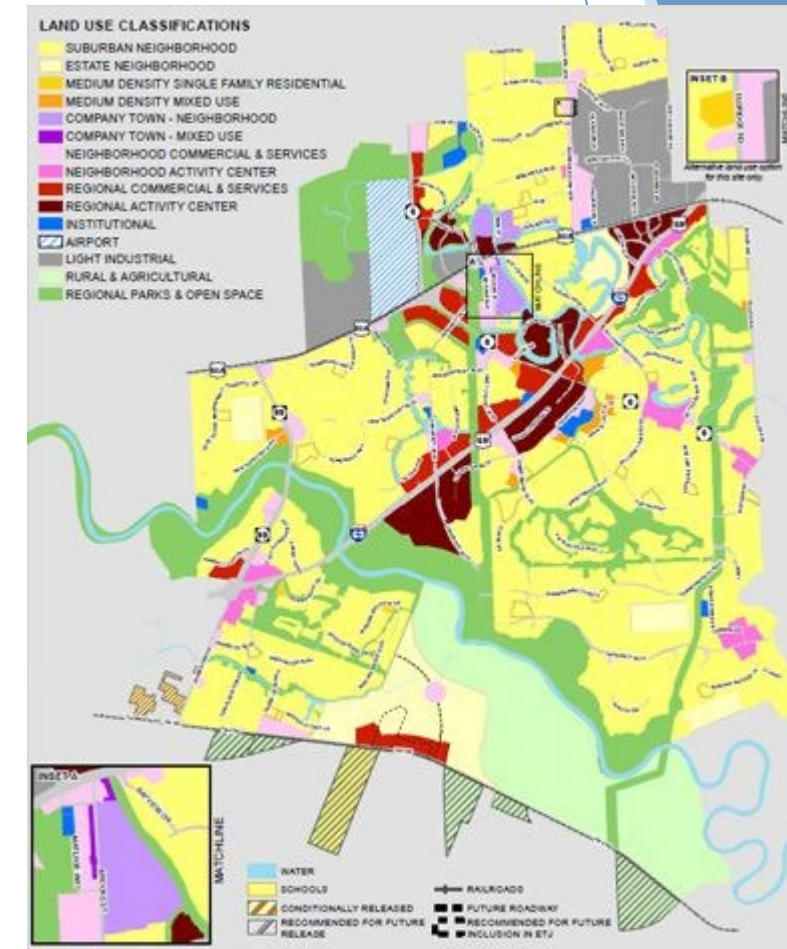
Zone for Mixed Use: *Enhance Opportunities for Multifamily Residential*

- ▶ Mixed-use redevelopment projects depend on residential tenants to support retail and other commercial
- ▶ Build on previous Land Use Plan efforts to support multifamily development in Activity Centers
- ▶ Opportunity for new zoning tools to address concerns with past multifamily development (building design, traffic, school capacity, etc.)



Zone for Mixed Use: *Focus on Targeted Areas*

- ▶ Avoid applying mixed-use oriented tools across too broad an area
- ▶ Focus on areas where tools make the most sense and area is most prime for redevelopment
- ▶ Use RACs and NACs as starting point with additional evaluation
- ▶ More opportunities to work directly with residents in the area and better inform design of any future redevelopment



Zone for Mixed Use: *Supplement Zoning with Economic Incentives*

- ▶ Find a viable combination of existing economic incentives (TIRZ, tax abatement, Chapter 380) to support individual projects
- ▶ Development review fee waivers and reductions on a case-by-case basis
 - ▶ Application fees
 - ▶ Building permit fees

www.sugarlandtx.gov/LandUsePlan

<p>LOCAL</p> <p>Chapter 380 Economic Development Agreements</p> <p>Chapter 380 of the Texas Local Government Code allows Sugar Land to offer a range of incentives for economic development, including the ability to rebate some of the city's portion of the 1.0% sales and use tax collected from business entities located in the jurisdiction.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>	<p>LOCAL</p> <p>Direct Incentives</p> <p>The SLDC has a direct incentive program, which may be used to provide cash grants to qualifying projects and companies.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>	<p>LOCAL</p> <p>Tax Abatement</p> <p>Qualifying businesses considering locate in Sugar Land have the opportunity to apply for a property tax abatement on new value created as a result of the project. Tax abatements are available from the City of Sugar Land, Fort Bend County and other jurisdictions, as applicable.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>
<p>LOCAL</p> <p>Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones</p> <p>The City has historically utilized Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) as a powerful vehicle to develop and redevelop qualified projects based on City goals and objectives.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>	<p>STATE</p> <p>Economic Development and Diversification In-State Tuition for Employees</p> <p>Economic Development & Diversification In-State Tuition for Employees is a program that allows employees—and those employees' family members—of a qualified business considering a relocation or expansion of its operations in the State of Texas to pay in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education in the state without first establishing residency.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>	<p>STATE</p> <p>Product Development and Small Business Incubator Fund</p> <p>The Product Development and Small Business Incubator Fund (PDSBI) is a revolving loan program financed through original bond issuances. The primary objective of the program is to aid in the development, production and commercialization of new or improved products and to foster and stimulate small business in the State of Texas.</p> <p>LEARN MORE →</p>

Discussion

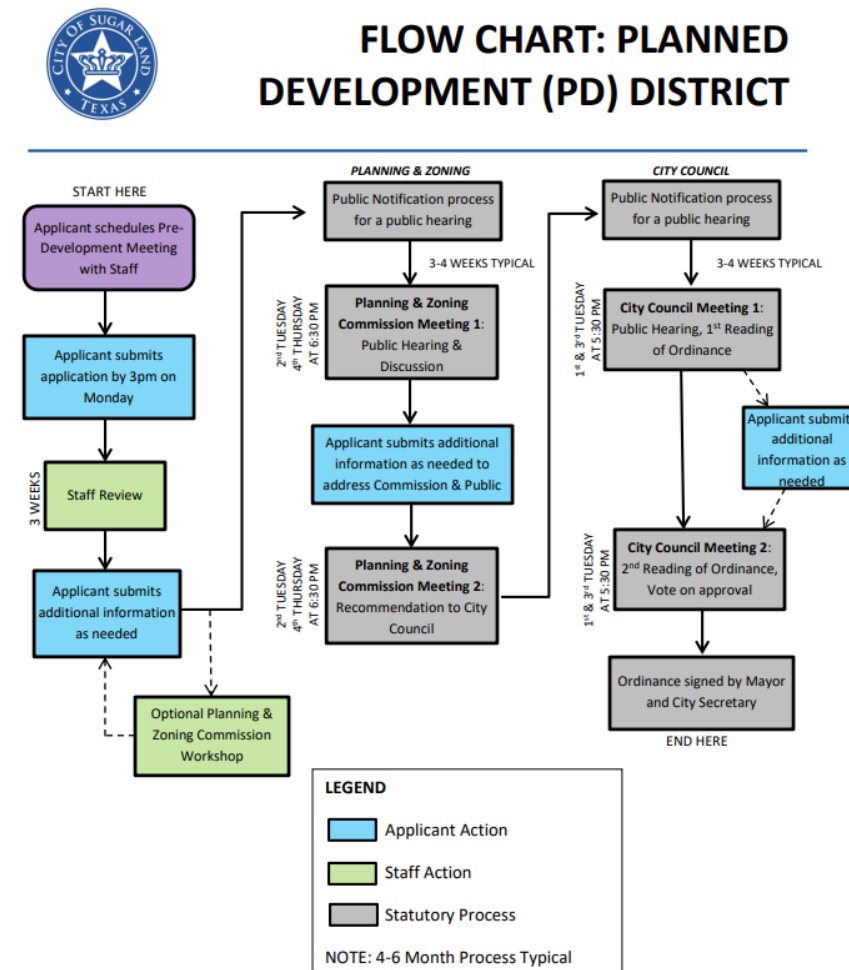
- ▶ Start with the Land Use Plan
- ▶ Build on Sugar Land's Unique Assets
- ▶ Educate and Build Community Support
- ▶ **Zone for Mixed Use**
- ▶ Simplify and Incentivize Redevelopment
- ▶ Rein in the Planned Development Process
- ▶ Embrace a Balanced Approach

Simplify and Incentivize Redevelopment

- ▶ **Development bonuses and reductions**
 - ▶ Additional building height
 - ▶ Parking reductions
- ▶ **Expedite some development review applications**
 - ▶ Eliminate additional workshops
 - ▶ Shorten staff review time
 - ▶ Combine multiple types of applications required for one project

Rein in the Planned Development Process

- ▶ Evaluate the current two-step process to identify and eliminate unnecessary requirements
- ▶ Introduce a streamlined amendment process for General and Final Development Plans
- ▶ Restricting when PDs are allowed and requiring public benefit in exchange for approval



Embrace a Balanced Approach

- ▶ Develop a more robust toolbox with tools to:
 - ▶ Address unusual projects
 - ▶ Manage projects of different scale and compatibility with the Land Use Plan
 - ▶ Make the development process more predictable and flexible



Land Use Plan | RAC & NAC Implementation
Assessment and Recommendations Report

AUGUST 2021

Report prepared by:
CLARION

Summary

Ruth Lohmer

Outcomes of Recommendations

- ▶ **Development Code that implements the LUP Vision and clearly outlines desired outcome**
 - ▶ P&Z and Council input during Code development instead of individual project proposals
- ▶ **Shorter and simpler development process for mixed-use redevelopment**
 - ▶ Provides more clarity and certainty for developers, encourages redevelopment
- ▶ **More limited application of PD in the future**
- ▶ **More administrative approvals of specific development applications that align with the LUP Vision and Development Code**

Discussion & Next Steps

- ▶ **Discussion:**

- ▶ Seeking P&Z and Council feedback on Recommendations

- ▶ **Next Steps:**

- ▶ Proceed with implementing consultant recommendations
 - ▶ Potential Code Amendments

CLARIFYING QUESTIONS FOR STAFF

www.sugarlandtx.gov/LandUsePlan