

House Committee on Land and Resource Management August 14, 2020

City of Houston, Planning and Development Department

Contact:

Nicole Smothers

611 Walker St., 6th Floor

Houston, TX 77002

Nicole.Smothers@houstontx.gov

832-393-6580

The City of Houston, Planning and Development Department would like to comment on the House Land and Resource Management's request for information regarding Interim Charge No. 1, specifically, the need for the continuation of extraterritorial jurisdiction, even with voter-approved annexation in place statewide. No part of the City of Houston's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) is currently under consideration for annexation. The approved House Bill 347 has changed the process for annexation into cities, but not the purpose of the ETJ. The ETJ functionally provides a mechanism for rational development outside the City limits as well as optional services for developing areas. It serves a vital purpose for the City of Houston, which currently has some regulatory influence on growth outside its boundaries. Every day, the City experiences an increase in population of over 600,000 from daily commuters and could face further strain on city infrastructure and services without influence in the ETJ. The City of Houston gives the prerogative of a property owner the utmost consideration before making any changes to its jurisdiction or ETJ. It is current City policy not to release any property into the ETJ from the City limits of Houston without the property owner's consent. The City of Houston has also not processed any non-consensual full purpose annexations since the 1990s. The City's role in the ETJ relieves pressure from Harris County to plan and regulate the development of some of the fastest-growing areas in the region. It also fosters a collaborative approach to planning and growth between the City and the County. Without the ETJ, several services would no longer be provided by the City in the current ETJ including the following:

- Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP): Annually, the City produces the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP). In compiling the MTFP, the City listens to developers and neighborhoods about such issues as congestion, mobility and future development plans. In that plan, the City identifies sections of roadways (either thoroughfares or major collectors) that need expansion, either by lengthening or widening. The plan serves as notice to the public for developing land adjacent to the identified roads. Nine amendments to the MTFP were submitted to the City of Houston within the past year.
- Subdivision plat review: The City's Planning and Development Department reviews subdivision plats for the proper subdivision of land, adequate street or right-of-way, building lines and compliance with Chapter 42, the City's land development ordinance. This city service allows ETJ residents the opportunity for rational growth and development without full purpose annexation. The City of Houston supports the continuation of this practice so that development remains consistent, and barriers for integrating with City services are reduced should the area want to be annexed in the future.
- Strategic Partnership Agreements: Some areas of the ETJ have been annexed into the City for limited purposes. These limited purpose annexations allow for areas to maintain autonomy, while also receiving a portion of City of Houston taxes that are reinvested in the Municipal

Utility Districts (MUD) where they are generated. In some instances, services such as police and fire are also provided.

While the ETJ system was designed to allow Texas cities to regulate areas outside their boundaries for the purpose of annexation in the future, the current system is more complex than that. It offers these areas flexibility and options for how they grow and develop. Without the ETJ, property owners and residents may face difficult decisions about whether to continue as unincorporated areas or go through the difficult process of creating new cities and, possibly, duplication of some services provided by or available through the City of Houston.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.