



**Meeting Notes**  
**July 12, 2022**

**Call to Order**

Recording started by Tamara Fou.

Sonny Garza, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Welcome by Co-Chairs**

Mr. Sonny Garza, Co-Chair, took the roll and presented the speaker rules. 17 committee members were present during roll call. There were 72 participants (including committee members).

**Director's Report:** Margaret Wallace Brown, Director, Planning & Development Department welcomed everyone to the meeting and mentioned the following:

- The Director wants to thank everyone for participating in this effort, as it matters greatly to the community.
- As an FYI, the City is undergoing the decennial redistricting process for council districts – public hearings will be held July 14<sup>th</sup> and July 20<sup>th</sup> at City Hall and virtually.

**Meeting Agenda:** Suvidha Bandi introduced the agenda items for the rest of the meeting.

- Recommendations for Reserves
- Recommendations for Multifamily Requirements
- Updates and Next Steps
- Public Comments

**Recommendations for Reserves Requirements**

**Tammi Williamson:** Staff is seeking consensus on recommended changes to two types of reserves: recreation reserves, and parking reserves.

- Recreation reserves are currently only allowed with frontage on a public street or type I PAE. Staff recommends allowing these along Type II PAE and Shared Driveways. Staff feels occupiable structures on these reserves still require vehicular access for maintenance/visitors.
- Parking reserves are required for a certain number of lots in a Type II PAE/shared drive subdivision. The ordinance states reserves must be accessible to all units, with multiple reserves spread out. Staff recommends clarifying that “accessible” here means having a pedestrian pathway within the development from all lots to the parking reserve(s).
- Staff also recommends that required parking reserves must be at least 20' from the right-of-way (ROW) edge when adjacent to Major Thoroughfares/Collectors and existing high-comfort bike lanes
- Staff needs more time to develop common open space (COS) reserve changes, so they will no longer be included in this committee's scope.

**Recommendations for Reserves Requirements Questions? Comments?:**

**Mike Dishberger:** I'm not in favor of the 20' minimum parking distance. Your diagram (*see recording*) showed the worst-case scenario, not typical. 12' would be better, and 20' seems excessive to accomplish purpose.

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Also, on first slide, when we say “pedestrian pathway” it’s obvious that would include sidewalks in the public ROW; for private pathways, give us a minimum width (to avoid underbuilding them).

**Lloyd Smith:** On the thoroughfare designation, the 20’ requirement was not very precisely worded last time, right?

**Tammi Williamson:** Correct. Our original recommendation was general, and now we have narrowed it to just these roads.

**Lloyd Smith:** Then I take issue with the previous comment that driveways on thoroughfares isn’t an issue – we’ve prohibited this for 30 years. The current proposal seems to address issues from last time, makes it more moderate and specific.

**Mike Dishberger:** Clarifying now, I apologize. I withdraw my objection after realizing that this only applies narrowly to certain roads.

**Tammi Williamson:** To clarify, this only applies to *designated* Major Thoroughfares, Major Collectors, and *existing* high-comfort bike lanes. As for the “accessible” parking pathway, we think current sidewalk ordinance dimensions – minimum 5’ width – should be sufficient.

**Sonny Garza:** – Mike (Dishberger), I’ll call on you and open the floor for comments on this item.

**Mike Dishberger:** I agree with the sidewalk ordinance widths, but prefer it’s not a “sidewalk” required for these paths. I want the option for something low-impact like gravel, not necessarily concrete.

**Tammi Williamson:** Phrasing will be cleaned up – we will mirror the width standards of the sidewalk ordinance but not materials – just a safe pathway.

**Sonny Garza:** As an example, we could do brick paths? Do we need to create language to specifically address that and allow for materials other than concrete?

**Tammi Williamson:** We could mimic Public Works’ language, something like “improved surface,” which lists a lot of materials.

**Curtis Davis:** Whatever pathway is put in should be *accessible*, meaning wheelchair-friendly – firm, stable, slip-resistant.

**Kirby Liu:** I second that we limit the options only to appropriate materials, re: Curtis’ comment.

**Megan Sigler:** I’m worried this pathway requirement could create a loophole to allow someone to plat developments as two separate plats, avoiding the standard plat requirements.

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**Suvidha Bandi:** Thank you. You're saying if we require a 5' connection, it's possible someone could submit adjacent properties with two different plats to avoid it?

**Margaret Wallace Brown:** I understand that this could be a matter of unintended perverse incentives, where developers would use poor platting to avoid making these connections.

**Sonny Garza:** You're saying that we could see examples where a developer re-plats the property to avoid the parking requirements?

**Megan Sigler:** Exactly. When re-platting you don't have to show contiguous owned land, so this could create a loophole where someone is trying to avoid providing enough parking, the walkway, or other requirements.

**Sonny Garza:** Suvidha, please note that to possibly address it.

**Tammi Williamson:** I'll say there's not a ton of examples of this. It's quite a rare issue.

**Lloyd Smith:** Changing subject, I want to understand what about COS reserves is being tabled and why.

**Tammi Williamson:** I want to look closer at COS reserves and figure out responses to the long discussion from last month. We want language that fulfills the intent but isn't too restrictive, which takes more work than fits the timeline of this committee. It still needs revisiting to make it better later.

**Sonny Garza:** Basically, we know it when we see it, but it's hard to craft the language itself with the proper balance of freedom and control.

**Lloyd Smith:** Are we deferring this to another meeting or removing it from scope?

**Tammi Williamson:** It is being removed from scope.

**Lloyd Smith:** Mark me down as disappointed. We have wrestled with this issue many times in many cases at Planning Commission.

**Margaret Wallace Brown:** Let me take responsibility for that decision. We've always had the timeline for Livable Places established, and that this committee will wrap up deliberative work at the end of this summer. Fall is for engagement/review, and final products are due to Council in January. The timeline must remain for a variety of reasons. I agree this topic is important, but it needs more deliberative work than we have capacity for. We can't let this committee's other goals be held up by it. I hear your concerns, no one is happy about this removal.

**Sonny Garza:** Committee members, do we have consensus on: 1. recreation reserve frontage changes, and 2. parking reserve accessibility? Hearing no objections, we have consensus.

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## **Recommendations for Multifamily Requirements**

**Tammi Williamson:** Staff recommends several changes to multifamily requirements.

- We recommend in Sec. 42-232 to change the limit on dead-end private streets from 200 feet, to match fire code at 150 feet.
- We recommend in Sec. 26-523 an addition – adding “Unobstructed clearance to no less than 12 feet” for loading berths.
- We recommend the creation of a PAE section separate from the multifamily requirements. Currently these standards are contained in the multifamily section but creating a separate place to house them will improve clarity. It will match the current standards but be better organized.
- We recommend removing 42-236, the open space requirement for multifamily in the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ), from the ordinance to allow county rules to prevail.

## **Recommendations for Multifamily Requirements Questions? Comments?:**

**Lloyd Smith:** On the two-points-of-access requirement, I want clarity here on street length. What we’ve found increasingly for multifamily development within the ETJ is that application of fire code has a set of access requirements that essentially means long, skinny tracts with narrow frontage must place secondary access somewhere other than the frontage. Have you considered whether this point-of-access for multifamily could be tightened up or formalized?

**Tammi Williamson:** On two points of access, we’re just going to correct a diagram. What do you mean more formal?

**Lloyd Smith:** I’m speaking of apartments, mobile homes, single-family-rental platted as reserves, all of which are “multifamily” for fire code. I don’t think we have County fire enforcement and Ch. 42 as tightly coordinated with each other as possible.

**Tammi Williamson:** In the City, there’s a separate fire review where the Fire Marshall goes through projects *with Planning* to ensure all requirements are met, even things that aren’t covered in Ch. 42. Instead of trying to match these and risk being repetitive, we just left those things outside of Ch. 42.

**Lloyd Smith:** That’s fair – I agree that bringing fire code into Ch. 42 is not a recipe for clarity. Thank you.

**Curtis Davis:** In general, regarding deferring to counties in the ETJ: is this a general policy, or specific to this one item (open space)? It makes sense to defer here, but is it an overall approach?

**Tammi Williamson:** Basically, this regulation was slowly chipped away at over time, to the point we’ve realized it’s just unnecessary/not desired.

**Curtis Davis:** Thinking of stormwater management, in a particular geography in the ETJ, would this kind of item restrict joint stormwater management of multiple parcels?

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**Suvidha Bandi:** We're only talking about this section, which is written to apply only to the ETJ.

**Curtis Davis:** I understand, but I'm trying to discern from the specific a general approach to regulatory changes. Or is this truly discrete?

**Sonny Garza:** Suvidha, correct me if I'm wrong, but we're saying this is not part of an overall strategy dealing with counties/ETJ, just specific to this one item – it's peculiar.

**Suvidha Bandi:** That's correct.

**Mike Dishberger:** Clarification on Ch. 42-232: the title of this slide says "multifamily" – are we talking SFR and it's 150' (single-access road), or just multifamily?

**Tammi Williamson:** No, scope in this division of 42 only covers *true* multifamily.

**Sonny Garza:** Do we have consensus on these items? Hearing no objections, we have consensus.

**Updates and Next Steps:**

**Tammi Williamson:** After internal discussion on the issue, and so as not to rush the work or strain this committee, we have decided to not pursue transportation focus groups on a set of topics as previously planned. These topics will no longer be within scope of this committee; the consultant hired will continue work.

**Sonny Garza:** Frankly, I'm not disappointed – just too much work to be done here.

**Suvidha Bandi:** Progress Report on Committee's Work. **Slides highlighting detailed information on each topic.** See recording. Topics include:

- Technical amendments, including minor changes to notification are proposed.
- Conservation districts recommendations will be available soon.
- Buffering for residential buildings, screening and lighting recommendations will be available soon.
- The overall housing concept is one package of recommendations including multi-unit residential (MUR), second dwelling units, courtyard developments, and narrow-lot standards, and is being prepared for public input.
- Reserves and multifamily recommendations will be posted to website and developed for public review

**Sonny Garza:** Let's have a round of applause for the committee and staff – it's been two years and it wasn't easy.

**Curtis Davis:** Comment – staff, you've done a great job with transparency on this work. It would be helpful to bring a narrative element to contextualize all the work, and make sure it isn't "dry, legal planning stuff" but a narrative of what a "livable city" is. Not a criticism at all – appreciate your work.

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**Suvidha Bandi:** Thank you all for your guidance. The consultant team is putting together a quick-reference guide to have everything together for review.

**Margaret Wallace Brown:** Want to remind the committee where we came from. The list of items presented to you came out of many past Houston planning efforts (Resilient Houston, Plan Houston); compiling here brings it full circle, but these aren't things we just came up with. This was the community and Council's instructions for us. "Action committee" means we are implementing past plans.

**Sonny Garza:** Thank you, Director. I concur – "action" committee means we are doing the work of putting past efforts' ideas into place.

**Margaret Wallace Brown:** I speak with lots of people across the country about Houston – people say, "I didn't know Houston had planning!" Our challenge is implementing all the great ideas we do have as a city. This group is key as implementers to go from plan to reality, and I'm interested in seeing how continued efforts go (City legal, etc.).

**Homework:**

**Lynn Henson:** Visit Let's letstalkhouston.org/livable-places to:

- Read articles
- Provide Input
- Spread the word
- See the winning design "Double House" highlighted in *ADU / HOU* design book, now available printed or in digital form at [letstalkhouston.org/adu](http://letstalkhouston.org/adu).

**Next Meeting:** No meeting in August and next meeting is on September 6th

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Curtis Davis:** You've done a great job, Sonny.

**Meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.**