Houston Heights Historic Districts Design Guidelines

Community Meeting #2

January 14, 2016

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Agenda

Brief Recap

- Project purpose and scope
- Status update

Context Areas

- How the ordinance defines a "context area"
- What this definition affects
- What we will need from YOU

Feedback Stations

- Please share your comments!

OLD BUSINESS

Traffic & Public Works Questions

- Historic street signs – call 311 to report if missing or replaced with standard street signs
- Speed limits in historic district – minimum 30 mph by state law
- Traffic calming/speed cushions
  - Neighborhood Traffic Management Program
  - Cannot be installed on major thoroughfares or collector streets
  - Current 18-month backlog of requests
  - Neighborhood funds some or all of costs (avg. $50,000-100,000)
- "Parking in front of my house" – parking in the right-of-way cannot be restricted or controlled
- Width of sidewalks – historically narrow, width not standard
  - Standard was 4' until 2008, then 5' for redevelopment/new const.
  - Variances are available for different circumstances (residential)

PROJECT UPDATE

Ordinance Amendments (part)

- Clarified list of exemptions for Certificates of Appropriateness
- Expanded types of projects eligible for Administrative Review to enable approval by staff rather than commission
- Clarified "shall approve" criteria for alterations to contributing buildings
- Clarified criteria for new construction
- Modified appeals process to create an appeals board
- Required applicants for Certificates of Appropriateness to post a yard sign to notify neighbors
- Required the City to create design guidelines for the Houston Heights East, West, and South Historic Districts within 16 months

Project Plan & Schedule (tent.)

Phase I

- City solicits proposals from qualified consulting firms/teams and hires a vendor: November 2015 – March 2016
- City gathers input from property owners: December 2015 – March 2016

Phase II

- Consultants do their work: May – September 2016

Phase III

- City tests usability of draft design guidelines: September 2016
- Consultants present revised design guidelines, gather feedback: October 2016
- Design guidelines go to HAHC and City Council's Quality of Life Committee: (estimated) December 2016

Status: Request for Proposals

- ✓ Request For Proposals issued 11/25/2015

- ✓ Pre-proposal conference 12/8/2015

- ✓ Proposal deadline 1/14/2016

- RFP Evaluation Committee meets 1/19/2016

- Contract negotiations: March 2016

- Vendor hired and begins work: (estimated) April 2016

RFP Evaluation Committee

- Steph McDougal (project manager)
- Diana DuCroz (historic preservation officer)
- Jonathan Smulian (architect/urban planner)
- Anna Mod (HAHC commissioner, preservation consultant)
- Rob Hellyer (HAHC commissioner, building professional)
- Margaret Wallace-Brown (deputy planning director)

- *Note: RFP responses contain proprietary information about vendors and their pricing strategies, so these are not shared with the public.*

RFP Evaluation Process

- First meeting: City Procurement Office explains process, provides an evaluation score card

- Evaluators review proposals (but not proposed prices), complete score cards individually

- Second meeting: Evaluators shall score and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal in accordance with the specified evaluation criteria

- City creates shortlist of vendors

- Third meeting: Evaluators review pricing information, may ask to interview vendors

- Vendor interviews/presentations (optional)

- Following vendor interviews/presentations (if applicable): Evaluators may select a top-ranked proposer and develop a final evaluation recommendation

Information Gathering

- Community Meetings to gather property owner input:
  - ✓ December 8
  - ✓ January 14
  - • February 16

- Survey to measure the extent to which various ideas or directions shared in these meetings are representative of the larger community: March 2016

- Community Meeting to share survey results: April 26

Drafts and Revisions (tentative schedule)

Consultants present findings and recommendations, collect community feedback: August 2016

⬇

Consultants deliver draft design guidelines document

Steering Committee and City staff review

Steph conducts usability testing of the design guidelines

Consultants make revisions: September 2016

⬇

Revised Design Guidelines posted for Community Review & Comment: mid-October through mid-November (4 weeks)

⬇

Possible revision before HAHC/Quality of Life committee

Steering Committee

Purpose

- Serve as the voice of the community
- Provide feedback during development of the Design Guidelines
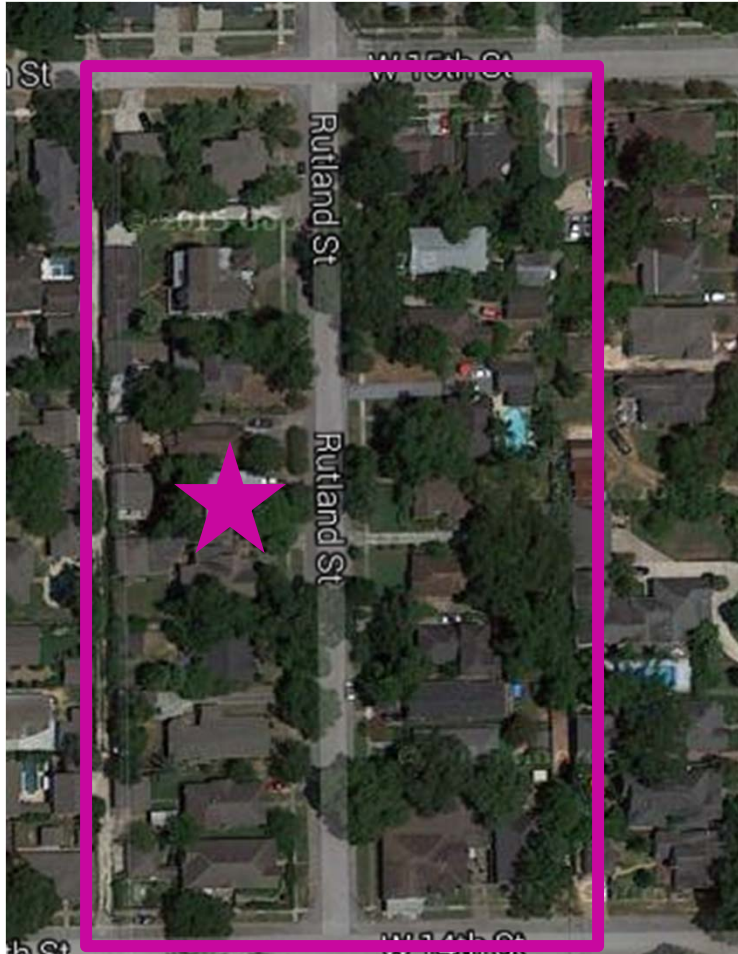- Sounding board for ideas in the early-concept stage

Configuration

- 3 members from each Houston Heights Historic District: East, West, and South, plus 3 building professionals

Meetings

- Once a month from April – November 2016

OPPORTUNITIES TO AFFECT CONTENT OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

Context Area definition

As defined in the 2015 historic preservation ordinance:
" the blockface and the opposing blockface within the district where the proposed activity is located. Context area may include a different geographic area if the commission finds that unusual and compelling circumstances exist **or that the context area is described different in design guidelines**."

How is that used?

- Exterior Alterations
- New Construction
- Relocation of a Contributing Structure Within Same District
- Administrative Approvals for Non-contributing Structures

Must be compatible with context area

Why Define Differently?

- May need to be different for specific areas or conditions
  - Unusual land uses (e.g., new church or school construction)
  - Few or no other Contributing structures on block
    (e.g., 1900 block of Heights Blvd, East side – one historic house)
  - East-West streets vs. North-South streets
  - Heights Boulevard - ????

We need your input …

- What specific areas should the consultants look at?
- What conditions might they need to consider?

Exemptions

- Some exterior alterations do not require a COA at all
- Design guidelines can require that an alteration which is listed as an exemption must have a COA
- Example: Installation of free-standing signs
  - Could be different for Heights, 20th, and 11th than on other streets
  - What do property owners want?
  - City sign ordinance still applies

Administrative Approvals

- Planning Director has the authority to approve some COA applications administratively (aka staff review)

- Those COA do not go to the HAHC

- Design guidelines can require that one or more items listed as eligible for administrative approval must go to the commission

- Example: Signs attached to the exterior of a building
  - Do not damage historic exterior features
  - Are 25 square feet or less in total area
  - Are installed without damage to significant historic material

Height of New Construction

The height of new construction must not be taller than the typical height of existing contributing structures in the context area unless special circumstances … warrant, except that:

- Design guidelines for an individual historic district may provide that a new construction with two stories may be constructed in a context area with only one-story contributing structures as long as the first story of the new construction has proportions compatible with the contributing structures in the context area, and the second story has similar proportions to the first story; and

- A new construction shall not be constructed with more than one story in a historic district that is comprised entirely of one-story contributing structures, except as provided for in design guidelines for an individual historic district.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Ways to Receive Information

- Visit the project website at http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/Design-Guidelines-Heights.html

- Sign up for our monthly newsletter on project website OR pick up a paper copy at the library or Fire Station

- Get automatic updates via Citizensnet
Sign up at http://cohapp.cityofhouston.gov/citizensnet/

Steph McDougal

Steph.McDougal@houstontx.gov

832-393-6541

P. O. Box 1562, Attn: Planning

Houston TX 77251-1562