



**RECOMMENDATIONS IN SUPPORT OF A  
RESPONSIBLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**THE YALE/KOEHLER STREET SITE:**

**WHY THE CURRENT PLAN DESERVES AND REQUIRES SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT.**

**Prepared: 15 September 2010**

**By: Responsible Urban Development for Houston**

## PERSPECTIVE

*“The property owner is developing a multi-use development, which will consist of a supermarket, theater, fitness center, book store, shopping center, general office building, restaurants and multi-family residential units.”*

*Texas Department of Transportation  
February 19, 2010  
TxDOT Memo to Steven E. Simmons PE  
Subject: Request for Release of Access rights*

*“That site is an absolutely incomparable infill tract, and it could easily support moderate-density, mixed-use development. Such a development could be reasonably expected to produce \$70-\$100million dollars of ad-valorem tax value, versus \$15-20 million for the proposed development.”*

*Andrew Burlison  
President  
Congress for a New Urbanism - Houston*

## **WHO WE ARE**

### **Responsible Urban Development for Houston**

We are a not for profit, grassroots, community organization devoted to preserving the character, traditions, and appearance of the Heights and West End neighborhoods in Houston

It is our goal to represent our neighbors before local government, to educate the community about the potential impacts of real estate development on our infrastructure, environment, taxpayer-funded public services, and quality of life.

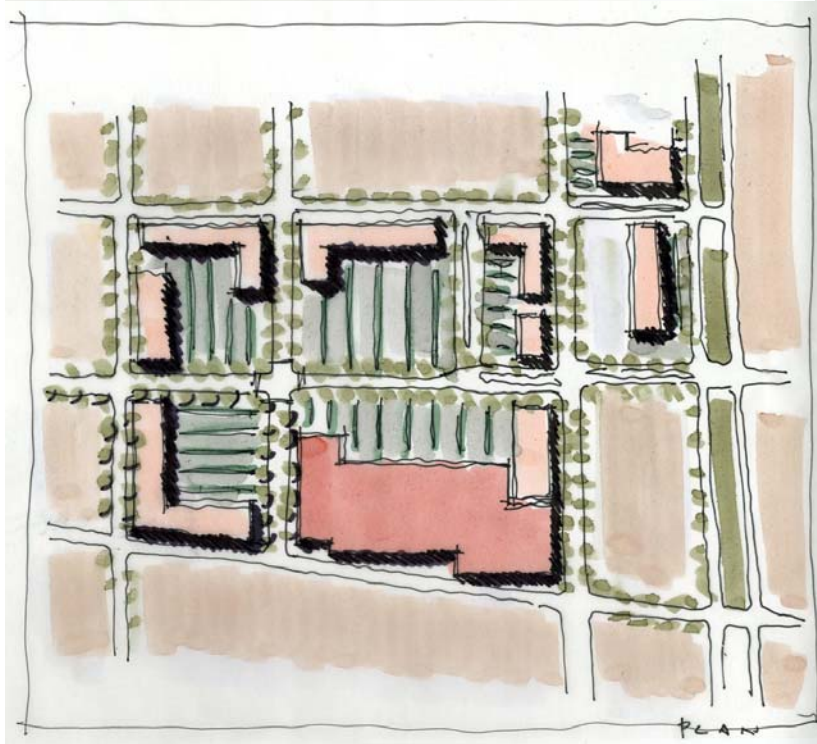
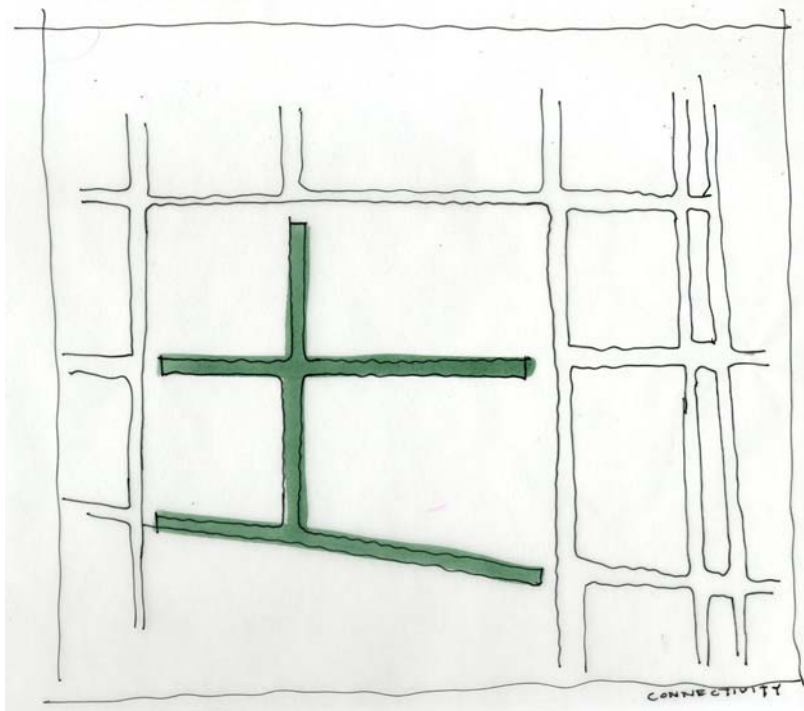
## SECTION 1: STATEMENT OF GOALS

- A more groundbreaking, innovative site design, which is original and productive and does not set a dangerous policy precedent with regard to “*very ordinary*” private developments within the City of Houston.
- A significantly better utilization of the site, and thus, a correction of the current potential major financial opportunity loss and neutral or negative Economic Impact.
- A development plan which addresses the concerns of area residents, home owners and local business owners.
- A revised 380 agreement which meets the requests of the public and provides a responsible compromise in order to promote achieving goals for all parties

## SECTION 2: EXPERT RECOMMENDATIONS

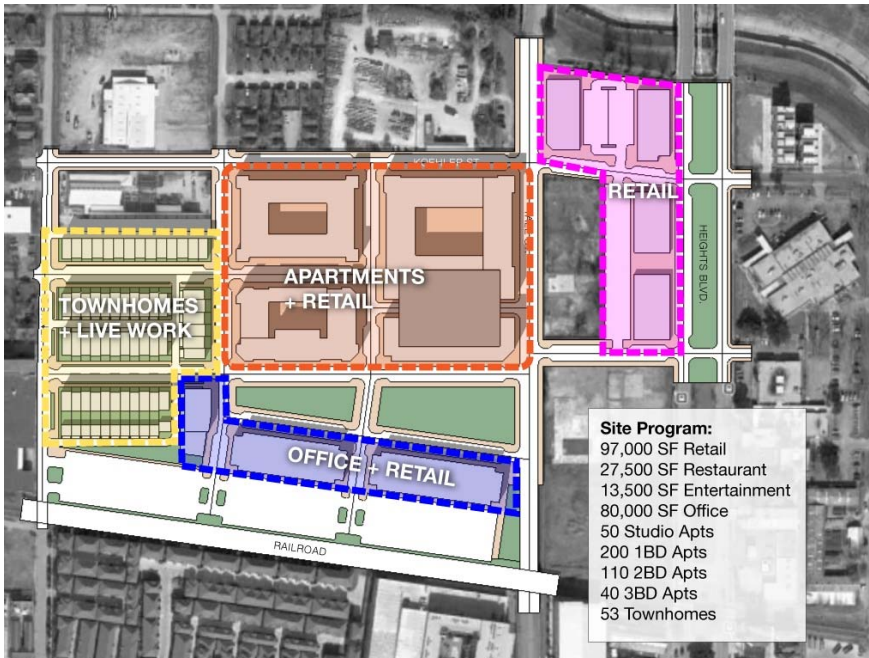
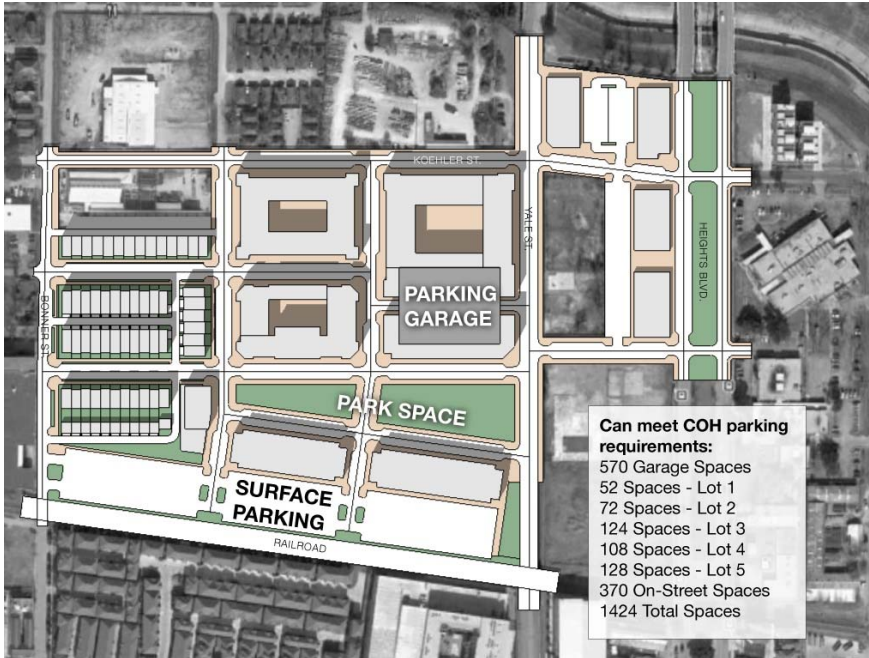
### ENCOURAGING CONNECTIVITY & LIVABILITY:

Extend street grids, create urban architectural street walls, include large-scale, shade bearing planting, bio-swales and heat-island mitigation practices. (Courtesy of SWA Group, Houston)



### ENCOURAGING HIGHER SITE UTILIZATION & GREATER REVENUE GENERATION

Employ city blocks, metered parking, dedicated park space and mixed-use development. Property tax and sales tax revenue increases. (Courtesy of Andrew Burleson - Congress for New Urbanism Houston)



### SECTION 3: DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- LEED Silver or higher certification.
- Create an architectural streetwall (as shown on the second SWA sketch) to maintain urban character, increase sidewalk access and pedestrian mobility.
- Direct lighting towards parking lot so as to mitigate light pollution for surrounding residential neighborhood.
- Consider structured parking. Alternately, limit residential viewpoints for surface parking by appropriately siting architectural footprints or increasing large-scale planting of shade-bearing trees.
- Limit the size of the store to be no larger than competing area stores:
  - Kroger/1035 Shepherd = 90K SF (Source: Houston Chronicle)
  - Target stores planned for Urban Markets = 60K–100K SF (Source: Houston Chronicle)
  - Prohibit 24-Hour Operation. Limit the operating times of the store to have a set opening and closing schedule. Suggest closing retail operation at 12:00 am and opening at 6:00 am. There is a precedent for this approach:
  - Walmart @ Northcross – Austin, TX is closed from 1:00 am–5:00 am to response to community concerns.
- Develop appropriately urban architectural character. Several site plans have been discussed and released by multiple area firms. (Reference: SWA Group, Peter Brown and Congress for New Urbanism sketches)
- Connect the street grid to new roadways that penetrate the development site. (As presented by Marsh Darcy during the Variance discussion for Koehler Street).
- Connect mass-transportation and pedestrian links to the street grid within the development site. (As presented by Robin Holzer of the Citizen's Transportation Coalition at the SN22 Panel Discussion 13 Sept. 2010)
- Employ a City 'block' grid-plan to span the width of the property and create a more walk-able, urban experience. Maximize tax revenue from multiple city blocks via parking meters and street-level retail opportunities rather than inserting a single 'big box' with pad sites and a large parking lot. (See Appendix – CNU Presentation – 13 Sept. 2010)

- Include requirement for dedication of 'right-of-way' on the north side of the rail line for future accommodation of added commuter tracks. (The future plans for Houston Commuter rail are shared with the extension of the existing rail line bordering the south edge of the development.)
- Utilize "Low Impact Development Strategies" (Reference Appendix – LID – Koehler Street Development/RUDH ) throughout the development and as previously implemented by Walmart in Austin and McKinney, TX, including but not limited to:
  - Bio-retention
  - Vegetated swales
  - Rain gardens
  - Green Roofs
  - Cisterns/Water Collection
  - Permeable Paving
  - Soil Amendments
  - Overall reduction in impervious cover
- Signage should be externally lit for building and ground-mounted entry monuments.
- Address stormwater run-off and financial impacts on taxpayers and public agencies by requiring on-site water mitigation practices (noted above) and disallowing the grandfathering in of existing standards.

## SECTION 4: INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Widened sidewalks, with Oak or Sycamore shade-bearing street trees of 4" or greater caliper, surrounding and connecting the development to all West End neighborhood streets and to all existing pedestrian/bike trails.
- Upgrade all West End streets by widening (where appropriate) and installing curbs and gutters.
- Extend East & West from Yale/Heights Boulevard to Shepherd & Durham Drive
  - Nolda (Chester/Smith Addressed with I-10 Feeder)
  - Marina/Inker
  - Spencer
  - Eigel
  - Koehler/Maxie
  - Eli
  - Schuler
  - Allen St
- Extending North and South from I-10 to the Railroad tracks/Crossing
  - Bonner Street
  - Thompson St.
  - Patterson St
  - Fowler
  - Parker
- Hide or otherwise bury power lines.
  - Suggest: aerial utility lines – to include phone + cable.
- Bass Street Considerations:
  - No truck entrance.
  - No divided median at the entrance to the development. Homeowners and emergency response vehicles must retain access approaching from either North, or South.
  - Alternate: No Access from Bass Street. No Connection to the Feeder Road.
  - Bass Street should not be 'encouraged' as an entrance to the north of the development.
- Consider refurbishing/utilizing old Rail Road Bridge north of Koehler/West of Yale as new pedestrian walk/bike trail to encourage connection to 'Heights Bike Trail'.
  - *TxDOT does plan to remove some of this structure (either the concrete or wood portion) as part of the current frontage road and bridge project. The 380 would be taking out what TxDOT leaves.*

## **SECTION 5: COMMUNITY IMPACT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Signalized Pedestrian Crosswalks throughout and around development.
- Protected crossings on high volume streets for Pedestrians/Bike Lanes to encourage safe connection to Heights Esplanade trail/Heights MKT Bike Trail.
- Devoted Bike Lanes on Yale and Heights to encourage less vehicular traffic.
- Mature Trees (minimum 4" caliper Oak or Sycamore to match existing and ensure maximum shade bearing) planted on all four sides of the development.
- LID Solutions implemented in all public areas.
- Sound mitigation wall on the South Side of the development.
- No truck deliveries from Walmart or vendors through the West End neighborhood, specifically on Bass, Koehler, and Bonner.
- Truck entrances only from the I-10 feeder road West to Yale South.
- An overall smaller scale store to mitigate impending heavy traffic impact.
- Shopping cart retention system.
- 24-hour, *retail anchor funded*, Houston Police Department or private constable on site.

*Reference: Plano Walmart Supporting Attachment.*

## **SECTION 6: RESPONSIBLE 380 INCENTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The developer should bear the cost or a fair proportion of the cost of any public infrastructure improvement that is needed as a result of the increased demand on infrastructure caused by the development.
- The 380 agreement should bind the developer to construct the development according to final plans that have been approved by the city and not to merely “endeavor” to build at least 75,000 sq ft in an architectural style that is consistent with the Heights.

## **SECTION 6: PUBLIC PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Defer the '380' Agreement.

Take the next 60 days to further consider public input. Listen to our ideas, quantify the solutions provided, and then decide with comprehensive information in both the City and the public's hands, what is the most prudent development to incentivize on this land.

A rushed 'compromise' cannot achieve the utmost level of success for all parties involved.

Let the private sector assist our City leaders, through a truly open and transparent process, in formulating a development that will exceed the highest goals set by the City, the Developer, and its Residents. This will result in greater goodwill for all involved parties and a potential increase in acceptance and patronage by area residents.

## **SECTION 7: SOURCES FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT**

Peter Brown - Better Houston

Andrew Burlison - Congress for New Urbanism

Robin Holzer – Citizen’s Transportation Coalition

David Robinson – Neartown/Montrose Super Neighborhood 24

Kevin Shanley – SWA Group

Reid Wilson – Wilson, Cribbs & Goren, PC

Dan Houston – Civic Economics

Bayou Preservation Alliance

SN 22 Transit Strategic Vision

Facebook Members in Support of RUDH currently 5,943 and counting.

Residents, taxpayers, homeowners, residents and local business owners.

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