



Town of Highland Park, Texas
TOWN COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
AND
JOINT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND
ZONING COMMISSION
AGENDA

8:00 AM
September 16, 2025

4700 Drexel Drive, Highland Park, TX 75205
Executive Conference Room, Second Floor

I. CALL TO ORDER - Town Council Study Session

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

This portion of the agenda is the public's opportunity to address the Town Council about any item listed on the agenda, except public hearings. Comments related to public hearings will be heard when the specific hearing begins. Public comments are limited to three (3) minutes per speaker, unless otherwise required by law. Per the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Town Council is not permitted to take action on or discuss any item not listed on the agenda. Items suggested for action may be placed on a future agenda at the Town Council's sole discretion.

III. FUTURE AGENDA DISCUSSION

- A. Review, discuss, and consider the opportunity for a Town Council Member to request an item to be placed on a future Town Council Meeting agenda.

IV. REPORTS

- A. Review and discuss park name/entry signage

V. CLOSED SESSION

- A. In accordance with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, Subchapter D, Section 551.072 – REAL ESTATE – the Town Council will convene into closed session to deliberate the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property.
- B. In accordance with the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, Subchapter D, Section 551.071 – CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY – on a matter in which the duty of the attorney to the governmental body under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas clearly conflicts with this chapter regarding Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART).

VI. OPEN SESSION

- A. Pursuant to Section 551.102 of the Texas Government Code, the final action, decision, or vote regarding Closed Session Item A. and B. above shall be made, if any.

VII. ADJOURNMENT - Town Council Study Session

VIII. CALL TO ORDER - Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Commission

IX. MAIN AGENDA

- A. Review and discuss the draft Land Use and Development Policies document.

X. ADJOURNMENT - Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Commission

Any item on this posted agenda could be discussed in closed session as long as it is within one of the permitted categories under Sections 551.071 through 551.076 and 551.087 of the Texas Government Code.

A member of the public may address the governing body regarding an item on the agenda either before or during the body's consideration of the item, upon being recognized by the presiding officer or the consent of the body.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS: Let us know if you need special assistance of any kind.

Please contact the Town of Highland Park Administrative staff at (214) 521-4161 from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.



**Town of Highland Park
Town Council Study Session
Tuesday, September 16, 2025**

Item Coversheet

Review and discuss park name/entry signage

PRESENTED BY: Chelsey Gordon, Director of Policy Development and Strategic Initiatives

BACKGROUND:

On December 5, 2023, the history of park names and markers were discussed at the Town Council Study Session. Staff indicated that most parks were named for founding members of the community, local civic leaders, or for the street they were located on. Town parks have historically not been marked by large monument signs typically seen in other municipal park spaces. Instead, many of the parks have been marked with small bronze or stone plaques noting the name of the individual the park was named after. At that time, council discussed keeping signage as is but directed staff to ensure a regular maintenance plan was in place to assist with longevity and readability.

Staff also discussed the creation of an interactive park map to be placed on the Town's website to assist residents and visitors with park names, locations, and amenities. This initiative is ongoing and should be live by the end of the year.

To follow up on the previous discussion, staff is seeking direction from Town Council regarding the potential development of new park name and entry signage. As noted above, it is common that active neighborhood parks, community parks, and special use parks have prominent entry signage indicating the name and location of the park. Parks within town are typically passive and are either smaller pocket parks, neighborhood parks or open lands/green space that would not typically require signage. With this in mind, town parks either have no signage or have smaller, bronze signage that is typically located in the ground except for Bartholow Square and Prather Park.

Attached is 1) a listing of all the official park spaces, location, size, amenities, and how they were named 2) photos of park markers and 3) examples of potential park name/entry signage.

RECOMMENDATION

Should the Town Council wish to move forward with new/additional park name/entry signage, it is recommended that larger, entry signage be included for active/passive neighborhood and community parks based on their size and amenities. This would include Abbott Park, Douglas

Park, Fairfax Park, and Flippen Park.

It is also recommended that the Park and Recreation Resident Advisory Committee review signage options and bring forward a recommendation to Town Council on the design.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

To be determined based on discussion.

ATTACHMENTS

Town of Highland Park - Park Listing and Amenities , Town of Highland Park - Park Markers ,
Example Park Name/Entry Signage



Town of Highland Park
Parks and Recreation Department
Parks: Acreage, Amenities, & History

Abbott Park, 4814 Abbott, 1.70 acres

Active Neighborhood Park with one lighted tennis court, playground area, seasonal flowers, and automatic irrigation system with pop up heads. Named for the street it is located on. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Alice Circle, 3701 Alice Circle, 0.92 acres

Passive Open/Green Space Park with rustic creek, gravel trails and stone foot bridge, and irrigation system. Named for the street it is located on, also named for John Armstrong's (founder of Highland Park) wife, Alice Armstrong. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Armstrong Parkway, 4202 Armstrong Parkway, 3.26 acres

Passive Open/Green Space landscaped boulevard of trees and azaleas, three large trees decorated each Christmas with approximately 5,000 lights, irrigation system with mixed rotary and pop-up sprinkler system and landscape lighting. Named for the founder of Highland Park, John Armstrong. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Ashley Priddy Fountain/Margaret Crow Plaza

Small landscaped traffic island with groundcover, seasonal color beds, irrigation, and a large fountain. The fountain was dedicated to Ashley H. Priddy, former Mayor of Highland Park from 1970-1975. Contains a bronze dedication marker. The entire traffic island was dedicated to Margaret Crow, former Town civic leader in 2008. The fountain is also engraved with rededication information for Ashley H. Priddy and dedication to Margaret Crow.

Bartholow Square, 4717 Drexel Drive, 0.0752 acres

Passive Pocket Park landscaped with trees, scrubs, ground cover, flower bed, turf, irrigation lines with turf and shrub heads. Named for J. Wharton Bartholow, Former Councilmember from 1980 - 1986. Contains a bronze dedication marker and a concrete wall naming the square.

Cave Park, 4821 Abbott Avenue, 0.18 acres

Passive Pocket Park landscaped with trees, shrubs, and spring flowering bulbs, irrigation lines with turf and shrub heads. Named for Dr. Harrison Cave, Town Civic Leader who lived nearby, in 1924. Contains a bronze dedication marker.

Connor Park, 4301 St. Johns Drive, 5.03 acres

Passive Open/Green Space Park landscaped with trees, azaleas bordering Turtle Creek, irrigation system with turf and shrub heads, and sidewalk on the east side of the park. Named for W.O. Connor, second Mayor of Highland Park from 1914 to 1915 and the Connor Family who willed their land to the Town. Contains a bronze dedication marker.

Davis Park, 4500 Drexel Drive, 7.48 acres

Active Neighborhood Park with rustic creek, natural landscaping with trees, ground cover, turf, trails and foot bridges, one swimming pool complex, one playground area, one tennis court, landscape lighting,

and irrigation system. Named for Henry Roberts Davis, Former Mayor of Highland Park from 1920-1924. Contains a bronze dedication marker.

Douglas Park, 4500 Douglas Avenue, 1.89 acres

Passive Neighborhood Park with a utility easement bisecting the property, trees, turf, meandering pathways, landscaped garden areas, a weather station, and newly planted (2022) descendant of the Monarch Pecan Tree. Named for the street it is located on. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Dyckman Park, 3700 Gillon Avenue, 0.73 acres

Passive Pocket Park with landscaping, trees, azaleas, turf, concrete and bronze monument, irrigation system with turf and shrub heads. Named for William Alexander Dyckman, a Town Civic Leader who lived nearby. Contains a bronze dedication marker.

Fairfax Park, 4524 Beverly Drive, 2.61 acres

Active Neighborhood Park with three lighted tennis courts, pickleball striping on one court, one multipurpose game court, one playground, one large game field, trees, shrubs, and turf irrigation. Named for the street it is located on. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Flippen Park, 4421 N. Versailles Avenue, 1.88 acres

Passive Neighborhood Park that is highly landscaped with azaleas, trees, ground cover, turf, seasonal flower beds, a Gazebo, reflection pool and fountain, irrigation system with rotary pop ups, turf pop up, and shrub heads, and landscape lighting. Named for Edgar Flippen, one of the Town's initial developers, in 1931. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Garden Club Park, 5301 Drexel Drive, 0.06 acres

Passive Pocket Park located adjacent to a tennis court. It is landscaped with trees, shrubs, turf, and seasonal flower beds, and irrigation system with turf tops. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Hackberry Creek, 4900 Drexel Drive, 6.16 acres

Passive Open/Green Space Park with rustic creek area, trees, ground cover, turf, naturalized spring flowering bulbs, stone foot bridge, one tennis court, adjacent azalea beds, and irrigation system with turf and shrub heads. Named for the creek that runs through it. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Jester Park, 3901 Lexington Avenue, 0.56 acres

Passive Pocket Park landscaped with trees, azaleas and turf, a small interior sidewalk, and irrigation lines with turf and shrub heads. Presumed to be dedicated to Levi Jester, an early Town civic leader. The park was named via council motion in 1921. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Lakeside Park, 4601 Lakeside Drive, 14.32 acres

Passive Open/Green Space Park highly landscaped park with trees, turf, ground cover, azaleas, flower beds, bridge over the dam, automatic irrigation system with rotary pop ups, and pop ups for turf areas and flower beds. Also contains, Read Fountain and garden area, stone outcroppings, a dedicated fern garden, and landscape lighting. Named for the street it is located on as well as Exall Lake that it surrounds. The park was named via council motion in 1921. Contains a bronze dedication marker explaining the history of Lakeside Historic District.

Lockart Park, 3600 Gillon Avenue, 0.75 acres

Passive Pocket Park landscaped with trees, azaleas, turf, and an irrigation system with turf and shrub heads. Named for James E. Lockart, Former Town Councilman in 1921, who lived nearby. Contains a bronze dedication marker.

Prather Park, 4660 Drexel Drive, 2.87 acres

Active Neighborhood Park with rustic creek area, walking trails, stone bridges, four lighted pickleball courts with ledgestone seating, two bronze sculpture areas, irrigation systems, and landscape lighting. Named for Hugh Prather, one of the Town's initial developers. Contains a stone and bronze dedication marker.

Preston Road Parkway, 4501 Preston Road, 1.20 acres

Passive Open/Green Space Park, highly landscaped with trees, azaleas, seasonal flower beds, shrubs, turf, and an irrigation system for azalea beds and turf areas. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Westside Park: 4683 Westside Drive, .178 acres

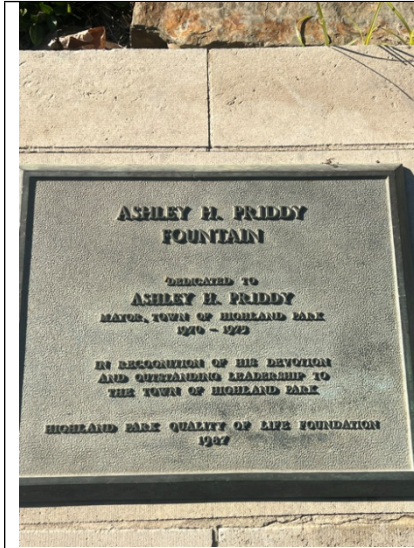
Passive Pocket Park landscaped with trees and shrubs. Named for the street it is located on. It does not contain a dedication marker.

Willow Wood Park/Teddy Bear Garden, 13 Willow Wood Circle, 0.5 acres

Passive Pocket Park, landscaped with a small bridge, trees, shrubs, ground cover, stream, Teddy Bear sculptures, irrigation, and landscape lighting. Named for the alley abuts to as well as the donated Teddy Bear sculptures it contains. Contains a bronze dedication marker for the Teddy Bears.



Town of Highland Park
Parks and Recreation Department
Park Markers



Ashley Priddy Fountain Marker



Ashley Priddy and Margaret Crow Marker



Bartholow Square Marker



Bartholow Square Wall Marker



Cave Park Marker



Connor Park Marker



Davis Park Marker



Dyckman Park Marker



Lakeside Historic District Marker



Lockart Park Marker



Prather Park Marker



Prather Park Marker



Willow Wood/Teddy Bear
Garden Park Marker



Examples of park name signage

Block Signage (Similar to Prather Park)	Bronze Signage	Classic Park Signage
Signage with flower bed	Stone Signage	Wall Signage (Similar to Bartholow Square)
Large Bronze Signage	Stone Seat Wall Signage	Traditional Wood Park Signage



**Town of Highland Park
Joint Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Commission
Tuesday, September 16, 2025**

Item Coversheet

Review and discuss the draft Land Use and Development Policies document.

PRESENTED BY: Jeff Armstrong, Director of Community Development

BACKGROUND:

In August, the Zoning Ordinance rewrite consultants, Kendig Keast Collaborative ("KKC"), introduced the rewrite process to the Council. One part of the rewrite is the creation of land use and development policies. These policies would be established in a document to fulfill the State requirement for a "Comprehensive Plan" when creating a zoning ordinance. They would also set the general policies that would guide the writing of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance implements the policies.

On September 16th, immediately following the Council's regular Study Session, KKC will present proposed land use and development policies at a joint meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Commission. This will be a time for discussion about the suggested language in the draft Land Use and Development Policies document. At a later date, both groups will be asked to formally consider the document for recommendation and adoption.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for discussion. No action is to be taken.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None

ATTACHMENTS

Land Use & Development Policies Final Draft

Land Use and Development Policies

Town of Highland Park, Texas

NOTE: This is a working draft that will be further refined based on feedback, ongoing leadership and community engagement for the overall Zoning Ordinance update process, and pending KKC's diagnostic review of the Town's existing Zoning Ordinance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this essential Town document is twofold:

- 1) To put into words certain principles and priorities that the Town of Highland Park intends to observe and pursue as it carries out its stated organizational mission: "Highland Park provides residents quality public services which contribute to a healthy, safe, and prosperous neighborhood of tranquility and natural beauty."
- 2) To satisfy Texas statutory requirements by providing a public policy basis for the Town's updated Zoning Ordinance.

Along with serving the second purpose above, such principles and policies also provide an additional input to other important Town activities, especially when cited as guidance for:

- New and amended Town ordinances and regulations, and associated review and approval procedures in the case of zoning, subdivision and land development activities.
- Targeted programs and expenditures prioritized through the Town's annual budget process.
- Major public improvements and land acquisitions financed through the Town's capital budgeting.
- Departmental work plans and resources in key areas.
- Ongoing planning and studies that will further clarify needs, costs, benefits and strategies.
- Pursuit of external grant funding to supplement local budgets and/or expedite certain projects.
- Initiatives pursued in conjunction with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve successes neither could accomplish on their own.

In particular, this document enhances the overall policy framework that Town officials and staff can draw from when making decisions that will determine the future direction, financial health and "look and feel" of their community. For the Town's Zoning Ordinance update process initiated in summer 2025, the Land Use and Development Policies can also guide the drafting of an enhanced purpose statement for the overall Zoning Ordinance, and potential new purpose statements for the individual zoning districts.

FOUNDATION FOR POLICIES

The policies itemized below reflect community issues, needs and priorities identified later in this paper. The policies are meant to align with the Town's established direction and policy priorities. The underlying issues were gleaned from a review of the Town Charter, the current Zoning Ordinance, the newest proposed annual budget and other Town documents, online information about Highland Park, and through zoning consultant Kendig Keast Collaborative's other initial background work for the 2025 Zoning Ordinance update process, along with their early interactions with Town management and staff. The set of guiding principles that precede the policies also derives from such local aspirations and concerns, which are themselves a reflection of shared **community values**.

"Community Values"

Values identify what matters most to a community and how it wishes to be viewed by others. Shared values inform the Guiding Principles.



Guiding Principles

In applying its state-enabled zoning authority and seeking to balance private and public interests for the betterment of the community, the Town of Highland Park aims to be:

“Guiding Principles”

A **guiding principle** expresses a basic philosophy that will apply regardless of the course of action ultimately chosen. In essence, such principles frame how the organization goes about pursuing its Mission. Along with more specific policies, the guiding principles should be consulted when making crucial decisions and when evaluating the results of previous decisions and actions (i.e., “Have we made our community more [insert a guiding principle such as Safe]?”).

SAFE

Prioritizing the security of its residents, businesses, institutions and visitors; promoting the safety of its neighborhoods, streets and public spaces; and reducing the risk of fire and other dangers to lives and property.

STABLE

Emphasizing a development pattern that respects the Town’s primarily residential heritage, with careful consideration of the suitability and fit of any new residential or nonresidential land uses proposed within the community.

COMFORTABLE

Controlling land use intensities and traffic generation to maintain Highland Park’s distinct character as a relatively quiet residential enclave amid one of the nation’s largest urbanized regions.

SUSTAINABLE

Promoting land use outcomes that maintain the Town’s fiscal wellbeing over time, and development practices that sustain a healthy environment and the area’s green amenities.

PRUDENT

Safeguarding the value and appeal of all property and improvements within the Town, for the benefit of residents and investors, but also to sustain the necessary public resources to provide the levels of Town services expected by Highland Park residents.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

A community’s physical setting and its “built environment” (the visible results of past improvements on public and private properties) are only part of what establishes its overall character and image. But they are tangible and, thus, fundamental elements. Especially for a community that most visitors and passersby see only fleetingly from vehicles when driving through, Highland Park’s physical design and appearance shape immediate and lasting perceptions. Residents, local businesses and institutions, and others who are literally invested in the community build an attachment to their place in the world through their experiences there every day.

When creating, updating, amending and applying the Town of Highland Park Zoning Ordinance and associated development standards, the Town Council, Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and Town management and staff will:

NOTE: Key aspects of each policy statement are highlighted in bold words and phrases.

1. First and foremost, **protect and preserve Highland Park's residential neighborhoods, and the distinctive character of each**, as an uppermost priority consistent with the Town's preamble:

"A Haven for Home and Fireside, undisturbed by conflict of commercial or political interests. The function of government in Highland Park is protection of the home. Citizens who cherish their homes will vigilantly preserve their heritage of self-government."



2. Along with the core objective of residential protection, also prioritize:
 - Compatible land use activity around the Town's **parks, other public spaces and facilities, local schools, and other community assets**.
 - Quality development and appearance at **Town entries and along key corridors**, including screening of certain outdoor activities from public rights-of-way and views as appropriate.
 - Overall **community aesthetics** and the generally **green and walkable suburban character** of Highland Park.
3. Seek **compatibility among, and acceptable transitions between different land use types and intensities** that are in close proximity, whether through baseline zoning requirements or opportunities to apply site-specific conditions and standards (e.g., specific use permits, Planned Development amendments, etc.).
4. Apply a **broader conception of compatibility** that looks beyond just basic micro-scale differences in land use and density to account for community and neighborhood character; the relative scale, height and form of buildings; the extent of open and green spaces retained Town-wide and within neighborhoods through maximum lot coverage, minimum yard depths, minimum building separation requirements, and other standards; the maintenance and expansion of the tree canopy, in particular, by installing new trees or replacing trees removed from the parkway; and the use of site-specific buffering and screening methods appropriate to the adjoining land uses and intensities versus one-size-fits-all standards.
5. Incorporate **performance standards** into zoning that recognize specific potential impacts on adjacent properties and the community and provide measures to prohibit or mitigate such effects,

whether involving residential privacy, lighting and glare, noise and vibration, odors and fumes, dust, traffic generation, parking, hours of operation, or other considerations.

6. As a largely residential community, adopt **reasonable zoning provisions to accommodate unobtrusive home business activity, remote work arrangements, on-site recreation (e.g., sports courts, pools, etc.) and other accessory uses** that enhance the value of residential property and benefits to the owner while protecting the rights of neighbors.
7. As stewards of a built-out community, give special scrutiny to **infill development and redevelopment** proposals amid existing residential development, especially where **multiple building sites** are assembled, to see that such projects fit within their **context** and minimize effects on adjacent lots.
8. Emphasize **high-quality outcomes** from all new development, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse or other renovations of existing structures, especially involving **commercial site design, signs and building appearance** in the Town's few nonresidential locations.
9. Pursue zoning methods and procedures that prioritize **consistency and predictability of outcomes**, as a core principle of zoning, for the benefit of all — property owners/applicants, neighboring properties, and the overall community.
10. Continue to refine a zoning framework for the town and its neighborhoods with **notable architecture and unique building and roof design elements** (e.g., basements/cellars, tall building features that exceed typical height limits, etc.).
11. Exert whatever influence Town officials and management can over proposed **development and redevelopment around the Town's edges** that is considered adverse to Highland Park, through ongoing coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and outreach to area land owners and developers, as appropriate.



12. When assessing potential added demands from, and any special service needs of proposed development or redevelopment, continue to safeguard:

- The **capacity, condition and efficient use of the Town's water and sewer infrastructure and drainage systems.**
 - The **traffic-carrying capacity, condition and safety of the Town's street network for all users,** including appropriate provision for and design of property ingress and egress.
 - The **capacity, responsiveness and quality of the Town's various public services,** from public safety to parks, library, street and parks maintenance, and all others.
 - In coordination with both area school districts, the **capacity and ability of local campuses to absorb potential new student populations.**
13. Account for **pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety** within the context of overall community design and connectivity, and the specific layout and design of private development and redevelopment, including how such projects enable those on foot or bike to seamlessly reach public sidewalks and paths.
 14. Seek a balance between excessive requirements for **off-street parking** and inadequate parking outcomes that can cause localized congestion on public streets and potential overflow of nonresidential parking onto nearby neighborhood streets.
 15. Support site and building design choices that enhance Highland Park's **community resilience** in the face of hazardous weather, flooding, excessive heat and other risks to lives, public health and property. Also provide reasonable parameters for **residents, businesses and institutions interested in reducing their own environmental footprint and/or utility costs** (e.g., through solar panels or other energy-efficiency measures, electric vehicle-ready parking spaces, water conservation and reuse methods, waste reduction and recycling options, etc.).
 16. Incorporate zoning methods and procedures that offer **flexibility to property owners and applicants** for achieving preferred, clearly-framed outcomes within specified parameters, and based on explicit purpose statements for the overall zoning regulations and its essential elements, including future prospects for well-designed and desirable mixed-use development where appropriate within Highland Park.
 17. Coordinate the Town's zoning processes with **other development- and building-related codes** that maintain the legal integrity of real property and related transactions and that protect the health and safety of property owners and building inhabitants.
 18. Ensure **procedural fairness** and development review and approval processes that are as predictable and timely as possible under state law.
 19. Raise **awareness among Town residents, businesses and other property owners** of new and pending development and redevelopment proposals, and opportunities for neighbors and other interested parties to weigh in with meaningful feedback and be heard in accordance with state law and local practice.
 20. Maintain a **legally-defensible Zoning Ordinance** as state statutes periodically change, and as relevant state and federal judicial outcomes require new or amended ordinance provisions.
-

KEY ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

State-Level Guidance

The first section (211.001) of Local Government Code Chapter 211, the Texas enabling legislation for municipal zoning, indicates potential priorities for such local regulation by stating that, "The powers granted under this subchapter are for the purpose of promoting the public health, safety, morals, or

general welfare and protecting and preserving places and areas of historical, cultural, or architectural importance and significance.” Section 211.004, which links zoning to a comprehensive plan, provides further indication of basic issues and needs that local community planning policies might touch on since it directs that zoning “must be designed to:

- (1) lessen congestion in the streets;
- (2) secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers;
- (3) promote health and the general welfare;
- (4) provide adequate light and air;
- (5) prevent the overcrowding of land;
- (6) avoid undue concentration of population; or
- (7) facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewers, schools, parks, and other public requirements.”

Local Fundamentals and Contemporary Issues

Residential and Neighborhood Protection (Job 1)

- Low intensity.
- Quiet.
- Safe (for all, but especially for children in a family-oriented community, and for seniors in a place that draws and retains retirees).
- Privacy.
- Attractive.
- Stable.

Community and Neighborhood Character

- Maintaining the value and integrity of the established built environment within Highland Park and other unique characteristics of the community.
- Residential tear-down/rebuild activity and the scale of some new construction relative to its vicinity.
- Town never adopted regulatory tools for historic preservation used by some other municipalities.
- Potential flexibility to accommodate more contemporary development forms and outcomes, particularly given market and cost factors, and possibly using a form-based regulatory approach that focuses more squarely on neighborhood, site and building design.



Compatibility

- A built-out community, so the focus is on compatible height and massing of ongoing redevelopment and infill projects, but not their architectural style.

- Also focused on development form more than use of properties in some areas since Highland Park land use is predominantly residential.
- Implications of larger home rebuilds and add-ons, including nonconforming garages, or other development or redevelopment that is proposed following lot combinations or replatting that assembles multiple previous lots into larger building sites. The degree of longstanding concern for this issue is reflected by Section 18-101 in the current Zoning Ordinance, Limitation on New Building Sites:
 - a. For zoning districts B, C, D, E and F, no more than (i) two building sites or (ii) one building site and a part of an adjacent building site shall be combined to create a combined building site.
 - b. No combined building site created after August 22, 2005, may be combined with another building site. *[Section 26-101.b. then lists 49 specific combined building sites created since August 2005 and through 2022. Section 26-101.a. lists another 18 pre-August 2005 combined building sites that would become subject to this subsection b if ever combined again with another site.]*
 - c. The requirements of this section cannot be varied by the Board of Adjustment.
- Status and condition of multi-family residential properties, other attached housing and nonresidential uses (retail/service, schools, places of worship, Town facilities, Dallas Country Club).
- Type and extent of permitted encroachments into minimum required yards.

Residential Options

- Appetite and tolerance for further housing variety beyond single-family detached homes and existing multi-family residential, condominiums and other attached housing, where appropriate, including potential mixed-use redevelopment projects with a higher-density residential component.
- Potential for expanded accessory dwelling units (ADUs) beyond guest and pool houses.
 - Allowance for full kitchens.
 - Potentially limited to family/others versus third-party rentals.
 - Dealing with some unpermitted ADUs in meantime.

Edges and External Activity Town Does Not Control

- Relatively intensive development, especially to east toward the North Central Expressway within City of Dallas.
 - High-rise buildings.
 - Mixed-use developments.
 - Concern about what might happen on vacant/redeveloping parcels, especially on large sites, including potential for more high-intensity multi-family residential.
- Effects of proximity to Love Field.
 - Resource page on Town website regarding Love Field noise abatement and related Town efforts, and guidance for filing complaints (<https://www.hptx.org/575/Love-Field-Noise-Complaints>).

Development Planning and Quality

- Priorities indicated by the content specifications for Planned Development proposals: “Such required plan and ordinance shall set forth the requirements for ingress and egress to the property, public or private streets or drives, with adequate right-of-way, sidewalks, utilities, drainage, parking space, height of building, maximum lot coverage, yards and open spaces, screening walls or fences and other

development and protective requirements considered necessary to create a reasonable transition to and protection of the adjacent property.”

- Need to define site features and address their placement and screening (e.g., fire pits, planters, statues, fountains, etc.) and also distinguish between fences and retaining walls.
- Visibility for motorists by preventing visual obstructions near street intersections and driveways.

FURTHER BACKGROUND FOR POLICIES

Texas Framework for Municipal Zoning and Development Regulation

Chapter 211, Municipal Zoning Authority, in the Texas Local Government Code is the enabling legislation that allows Texas cities to adopt local zoning regulations. Section 211.004, Compliance with Comprehensive Plan, is what makes this Town policies document necessary: “Zoning regulations must be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan ...” However, as in various other states, “comprehensive plan” was not defined until 1997 when the Texas Legislature passed Chapter 213, Municipal Comprehensive Plans. This new chapter still did not mandate that local governments in Texas prepare or maintain comprehensive plans as in some other U.S. states. Instead, Chapter 213 provides that, “The governing body of a municipality may adopt a comprehensive plan for the long-range development of the municipality.” The Chapter also cites the basic reasons for long-range, comprehensive community planning, stating that, “The powers granted under this chapter are for the purposes of promoting sound development of municipalities and promoting public health, safety and welfare.” The Code also gives Texas municipalities the freedom to “define the content and design” of their plans, although Section 213 suggests that a comprehensive plan may:



SOURCE: Texas Department of Transportation.

- include but is not limited to provisions on land use, transportation, and public facilities;
- consist of a single plan or a coordinated set of plans organized by subject and geographic area; and
- be used to coordinate and guide the establishment of development regulations.

For smaller and especially built-out cities, a much more concise statement of local issues, needs and aspirations – reflective of community values and leadership priorities – sometimes serves the purposes spelled out in Chapters 211 and 213.

Purposes of Existing Zoning Ordinance

As stated at the outset, the purpose of this paper is to provide a public policy basis for the Town’s zoning regulations. It does so by calling out various common issues and concerns with land use and development activity that are pertinent to Highland Park today and into the future. At the same time, already sprinkled within the text of the current Zoning Ordinance are clear indications of what triggered certain local zoning provisions and standards.

Looking back in time first, previous updates to the Zoning Ordinance cited the basic and enduring purposes of the original 1929 ordinance:

An ordinance of the Town of Highland Park, Texas, establishing a zone plan dividing the Town of Highland Park into districts for the purpose of regulating the location of trades, and of buildings and structures, designs for dwellings, apartment houses, and other specified purposes; regulating the height and bulk of buildings and structures and the

alignment thereof on street frontages; regulating the areas and dimensions of yards, courts and open spaces surrounding buildings and structures ...

Additionally, in later ordinances adopted to amend the original regulations, it was noted that “the Town of Highland Park is a mature and completely developed residential community consisting primarily of single-family residences,” and the intent of upgrading the ordinance was to provide “full protection to properties as developed” and “encourage the most appropriate use of the land.”

Beyond this historical foundation, the overall Zoning Ordinance purpose statement in Section 2-100 is a restatement of typical state enabling legislation language and standard text found in local Zoning Ordinances across the nation (with key words and phrases especially relevant to Highland Park in **bold**):

The Zoning Regulations and Districts as herein established have been made in accordance with a Comprehensive Plan for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the Town. They have been designed to **lessen the congestion in the streets**; to **secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers**; to **provide adequate light and air**; to **prevent the overcrowding of land**, to **avoid undue concentration of population**; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements. They have been made with reasonable consideration, among other things for the **character** of the district, and its peculiar suitability for the particular uses specified; and with a view to **conserving the value of buildings** and **encouraging the most appropriate use of land** throughout the Town consistent with a Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to five zoning districts for single-family residential use plus one for two-family dwellings and two for multi-family residential, the current Zoning Ordinance includes districts to address:

- Community Service (CS)
- Country Club-Golf Course (CC)
- Flood Hazard (FH)
- General Retail (GR)
- Planned Development (PD)

The provisions of Section 7-108 regarding Classification of New and Unlisted Uses are another indication of land use compatibility issues the ordinance aims to anticipate and address:

- the nature of the use and whether it involves dwelling activity, sales, storage, and amount and nature thereof,
- enclosed or open storage,
- anticipated employment,
- transportation requirements,
- the amount of noise, odor, fumes, dust, toxic material and vibration likely to be generated, and
- the general requirements for public utilities such as water and sanitary sewer.

In a primarily residential community like Highland Park, other indicators of regulatory intent may be found within the Definitions portion of the ordinance, Section 7-201. For example, key words and phrases are in bold within the definition of Home Occupations to justify why this accessory use within residential districts often receives close scrutiny:

- (8) Home Occupations – A home occupation is an occupation customarily carried on in the home by a member of the occupant’s family, **without the employment of additional persons, without the use of a sign to advertise the activity, without storing or offering any commodity or service for sale on the premises and which does not create obnoxious noise or other obnoxious conditions to abutting residential property such as odor, increased traffic, parking or noise and which does not involve any customer, client or potential customer visiting the premises.**

Likewise, the issuance of a Specific Use Permit under Section 11 enables the Town Council to “impose such development standards and safeguards as the conditions and location indicate important to the welfare and protection of adjacent property from **excessive noise, dust, fumes, odor, glare, offensive view or other adverse, undesirable or hazardous conditions.**”

Other random examples from the current Zoning Ordinance include:

- Definition of Accessory Building or Structure: “... in no case shall an accessory building involve the conduct of a business or the creation of a condition adverse to the use and enjoyment of adjacent residential property.”
- Definition of Off-Street Parking Incidental to Main Use: “An ... all-weather-surfaced area ... In all cases the parking shall be located without encroachment into a public street and in residential areas all parking facilities shall be located behind the front yard line.”
- Definition of Multi-Purpose Game Court (lighting): “Lighting shall be designed and installed to illuminate the playing surface only.” Similarly for Lighting of Parking Areas: “Any lights used to illuminate a parking area shall be so arranged as to reflect away from any adjacent residential uses or residential districts.”
- Definition of Auto Sales or Repair Garage: “... excluding the display or offering for sale of vehicles in open unenclosed space and not involving the repair or storage of vehicles or parts outside a building.”
- Definition of Bakery or Candy Shop: “... not involving processing, manufacturing or baking on a commercial scale for sale or delivery off the premises.”
- Definition of Retail Stores and Shops: “... excluding the display and sale of new or used automobiles, heavy machinery, building materials, used appliances, used furniture or salvage materials, and excluding the sale or offering for sale of commodities displayed outside of a building.”
- Required Site Plan for Planned Development District Applications: “Such required plan and ordinance shall set forth ... other development and protective requirements considered necessary to create a reasonable transition to and protection of the adjacent property.”
- Purpose of Applying a Flood Hazard District Designation: “To provide for the appropriate use of land which has a history of inundation or is determined subject to a flood hazard and to promote the general welfare and provide protection from flooding.”
- Extent of Underground Basements and Cellars: “In the C, D, E, F and G Districts, all basements and cellars shall observe the same front yard setback standards applicable to the primary structure.”
- Aesthetics in Residential Districts: “Permanently installed recreational sports equipment (including, but not limited to, basketball goals) shall be prohibited in the front yard of residential districts. Permanently installed recreational sports equipment attached to the residential structure shall be set back a minimum of fifteen (15) feet behind the front building line.” Likewise, “play structures are permitted only in the rear yard, or in the side yard behind the midpoint of the lot depth.”

- Open Space Around Multi-Family Residential Use: “Where apartment buildings or structures are constructed to exceed three (3) stories in height, a side yard equal to one foot for each two (2) feet of building height for all building faces or walls having openings for light, air or access shall be provided except that such side yard need not exceed fifty (50) feet.”
- Site Coverage Limitation for Dallas Country Club: “In the CC country club-golf course district the maximum building coverage shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the total acreage.” Similarly elsewhere, “private tennis courts or multi-purpose game courts ... shall not cover more than twenty percent (20%) of the building site.”
- Height Exception for Unique Residential Architecture of Highland Park: “In residential districts C, D, E, and F, one architectural feature per building site will be permitted to exceed the twenty-six (26) feet height of the top plate provided the feature complies with [specified requirements].”
- Limitation on Multi-Family Residential for Privacy of Other Residential: “In G Multifamily Districts: Windows shall not be permitted on the third story facing the rear yard adjacent to a residential zoning district.”
- Limitation on Accessory Buildings: “In a residence or apartment district, an accessory building cannot be rented, cannot contain kitchen facilities nor can an accessory building be used for commercial purposes.”
- Certain Limitations While Still Allowing for Private Actions that Have Both Potential Cost-Saving and Environmental Benefits: “Groundwater reclamation and rainwater harvesting systems shall be allowed in the front yard if located entirely below the natural front yard grade.” Also, “Small Solar Energy System devices must be designed and located to avoid glare or reflection onto: (i) neighboring properties, inclusive of properties across an alley, easement, or street, and (ii) adjacent roadways. The devices shall not interfere with traffic or create a safety hazard, and must meet [other specified requirements].”

Priorities Reflected in Town Budgeting

The Town’s proposed 2025-26 annual budget includes a traditional description of Highland Park as a “haven for home and fireside” and emphasizes the Town’s core responsibility to “preserve and protect the unique quality of life that makes Highland Park special.” The introductory budget message from the Town Administrator and Director of Finance also notes that: “Honoring the predominate citizen directive to preserve and protect the characteristics of a ‘bedroom community by design,’ Highland Park does not budget with a diversified revenue portfolio like most cities in Texas.” The Town relies on a uniquely robust residential property tax base, making it less dependent on various other nonresidential land uses that generate other types of typical municipal tax revenue (e.g., sales tax, hotel occupancy tax, etc.).

To the extent that sales tax bolsters Highland Park’s budget, the Town’s approach is “built on sustaining the current mix of retail outlets ... The Town has been fortunate over the last few years, experiencing a significant climb in sales tax revenue directly related to increased retail activity throughout the Town, but particularly at the Highland Park Shopping Village. It is anticipated that the Town will continue to see some growth in the future.”

While the Zoning Ordinance update process will likely lead to more extensive and explicit purpose statements, one example of this in the current ordinance is in the sign regulations (Section 14), where the stated purposes also signal some broader zoning intentions beyond just the size, design and placement of signs (in **bold**):

14-100 Objectives and Purpose. The principal objectives and purpose of this section of the Zoning Ordinance are:

- (1) To provide a reasonable system for the control of signs;
- (2) To encourage signs which are well designed and pleasing in appearance;
- (3) To encourage a **desirable urban character compatible with the general residential environment of the Town** which has a minimum of overhead clutter;

- (4) To **enhance the economic value of the community** through the location and the design of signs;
- (5) To provide for signs, for which the principal purpose will be to furnish information necessary for business and commerce;
- (6) To **reduce possible traffic and safety hazards** through good signage; and
- (7) To provide for proper sign area and height with relation to viewing distance and other circumstances.

How Others Perceive Highland Park

Finally, it is interesting to see how outsiders perceive a community. It can also be a reflection – and validation – of whether local policies and initiatives have yielded desired and lasting results over time, or where more attention may still be needed. Below is a sampling of Highland Park descriptions available online (notable references to the community’s physical characteristics are in bold), including a first one that provides historical perspective that is still relevant today:

“[Highland Park is] **a residential “island city”** surrounded by Dallas on the south, east, and west and University Park on the north. In 1889, [original investors who bought the property] intended to develop the land along Turtle Creek as Philadelphia Place, an area of exclusive housing modeled after parkland housing in Philadelphia. [Later investors, in the early 1900s,] gave Highland Park its name because of its location on high land overlooking downtown Dallas ... Twenty percent of the original land was set aside for parks ... Later appeared the slogan “It’s Ten Degrees Cooler in Highland Park” ... In 1931 Highland Park Village, **the first shopping center of its type in the United States**, was constructed in Highland Park. By 1933 ... [Highland Park’s] resident population was large, but few businesses and no industry operated in the city ... After its attempt to annex Highland Park was defeated [in 1945 after various earlier attempts], Dallas annexed the land around it. **Highland Park was forced to grow only by building houses on the few remaining vacant lots, or by tearing down old buildings to construct new ones.** As a result, **the community became known for its strict zoning ordinances.** Its **reputation for quality housing** was enhanced by the **abundance of parks** running along Turtle Creek and by the Dallas Country Club.”



Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association
<https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/highland-park-tx>

“Highland Park, Texas, is a prestigious and affluent small town in the Dallas area, **known for its luxurious homes, upscale amenities, and top-rated schools.** It is **characterized by tree-lined streets, beautiful parks** like Lakeside Park with its teddy bear statues, and a **strong sense of community.** The area also boasts the nationally recognized Highland Park Village, one of the first open-air luxury shopping centers in the US.

Strong Sense of Community: It offers a close-knit community atmosphere and a **safe environment, where residents often walk or bike freely.**

Beautiful Environment: The town boasts **well-manicured landscapes, tree-lined streets, and beautiful parks,** creating a **picturesque setting.**

Parks and Recreation: In addition to Lakeside Park, the town offers numerous other parks and green spaces, including athletic fields and walking paths.

Historical Significance: Highland Park Village, built in 1931, is recognized for its Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and its place as a **pioneer in the concept of open-air shopping centers**. [Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Highland Park Town Hall also has a Spanish Colonial architecture design.]

In essence, Highland Park is a sought-after community defined by ... a **unique blend of urban sophistication and small-town charm**."

Google AI Overview

<https://www.google.com/search?q=highland+park+tx+descriptions>

Prestigious City in the Middle of Dallas

The words Highland Park carry a certain **prestige** in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The town of around 8,000 is a **residential enclave** near the center of Dallas and is known far and wide for its **striking collection of historic single-family homes and upscale modern estates** that carry a high price tag ... **Towering hedges and a canopy of trees line Highland Park's historic streets**. Many homes are considered **architecturally and historically significant**, with certain builds dating back to the early 1900s. Building styles range from traditional Colonial Revivals and Tudor-style estates to classic Mediterranean villas with colorful, red-tiled roofs. Newer construction includes sleek, modern designs with oversized windows and open floor plans. **Homes typically sit on large, well-manicured lots with landscaping that often provides privacy**. 'Due to zoning and other restrictions, Highland Park **primarily consists of single-family homes typically built on larger lots than those in neighboring University Park**. In the past few years, there have been **numerous tear-downs of older homes and a proliferation of newly built estate homes** in Highland Park.' [As one of the state's most expensive places to live] This price tag is reflected in **well-maintained houses and striking architectural variety**."

Homes.com

<https://www.homes.com/local-guide/highland-park-tx/>

"... it's the **small-town charms** and some of the best public schools in the state that draw residents to its **leafy avenues lined by impressively sized houses**. Highland Park is an independent municipality, giving it access to all the advantages of Dallas' other dynamic neighborhoods with far fewer of the drawbacks ... [Locals Love ...] The **walkability and safety of the city's tree-lined streets**, zealously patrolled by the town's police force. ... [Locals Complain ...] Lot value so far outstrips the structural value of most of the original homes that buyers often feel they have no choice but to **tear down the old and put up something new and much bigger**. This has made both McMansions and narrow streets clogged by construction equipment an increasingly frequent sight."

D Magazine - Dallas Neighborhood Guide

<https://neighborhoods.dmagazine.com/dallas/park-cities/highland-park/>

"Some say Highland Park is the Beverly Hills of Texas ... Landscaped gardens and parks and green space around Turtle Creek add to the **open, elegant, suburban feel** of this community."

Dallas.com - Guide to Highland Park

<https://www.dallas.com/neighborhoods/highland-park>