

Houston – 2007 Goals and Implementation Checklist

Goals

- ❑ To preserve its quiet small-town quality of life, respect its architectural heritage as a 19th century railroad town, and protect and preserve the natural heritage of its agricultural and natural resource lands
- ❑ To encourage family living and small scale single-family residential development in good neighborhoods, in keeping with the life and feeling of a quiet residential town
- ❑ To encourage historic preservation within the town, and, as appropriate, within other portions of the Study Area
- ❑ To encourage and work toward the redevelopment of blighted and deteriorated properties that threaten property conditions in the Town and especially to work proactively with parties seeking to redevelop deteriorated properties along the railroad corridor
- ❑ To promote new investment in community revitalization by working cooperatively with owners and developers
- ❑ To explore new municipal services and community facilities, including infrastructure and utility improvements, that will improve Houston
- ❑ To cooperate with county and state governments on intergovernmental efforts to benefit the goals of Houston, the state and county
- ❑ To accommodate a mix of uses within the predominantly single-family residential character of the Town and the predominantly agricultural and natural character of the surrounding area. These should include agriculture, forests, waterways, greenways and trails, essential services, small-scale commercial, possibly light industrial, low- and medium-density residential, community facilities and institutional uses like churches, parks and playgrounds, and government buildings
- ❑ To develop new land use regulations, including a new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance, including Environmental and Subdivision Regulations, that will protect the character and life style of the Town and encourage quality small-scale development
- ❑ To develop the capabilities and responsibilities of Town government to serve its citizens, including a greater role in planning and community development, code enforcement services by the Town and enhancements of the Town's tax base
- ❑ To recognize the potential redevelopment of the former Libby Cannery property as a state-of-the-art freezer facility as an important economic development project for the Town and County
- ❑ To work with DelDOT and other transportation agencies to improve signage, speed controls, street surfacing and traffic safety measures on arterial streets

Implementation Checklist

Immediate and Short Term Actions (within 18 months)

- ❑ Adopt the Comprehensive Plan and request its certification by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination.
- ❑ Work cooperatively with Kent County on aspects of the new Kent County Comprehensive Plan that affect the Town of Houston and its Study Area, including the County's TDR and zoning revisions program.
- ❑ Develop a new Town of Houston Land Conservation and Development Ordinance to regulate permitted uses and densities, reflect the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and replace the town's existing Zoning Ordinance.
- ❑ Develop Design Guidelines as part of the Land Conservation and Development Ordinance that reflect Houston's unique character.
- ❑ Establish a Town of Houston Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.
- ❑ Develop the Town's capacity to administer the new land use regulations, especially in the areas of zoning and subdivision regulation compliance. It is recommended that the Town continue to rely on the Kent County Department of Planning and Permits for Building Code matters, but assume greater responsibility in the areas of Zoning, Subdivision and Property Maintenance. This can be done by hiring a part-time Town of Houston Code Enforcement Officer.
- ❑ As part of the adoption of new Land Conservation and Development Ordinance, the Town Council should adopt a set of new planning, zoning, subdivision and annexation application and review fees.
- ❑ It should also consider seeking the help of the General Assembly to amend the Town Charter (re-incorporate the Town) in order to add provision for charging development impact or annexation fees to any future developers.
- ❑ Work closely with Paris/Trappe Foods as it attempts to redevelop the Libby Cannery site as a state-of-the-art food processing and freezer facility, including possible plans to construct a new rail siding at the site.
- ❑ Work closely with DelDOT to bring new sidewalk, street and streetscape improvements to Houston.
- ❑ Work to develop drainage improvements for the Pine Street area, using EPA Best Management Practices.

Intermediate Term Actions (18 months to 5 years)

- ❑ Conduct a planning study for a new town office, community center, parking lot, access road and small park on the town-owned land east of Broad Street.
- ❑ Conduct a feasibility study to assess the desirability and need for a new water and/or sewer system to serve the Town of Houston, being careful to scale the study to fit the vision of a small rural Town.
- ❑ Work with DeIDOT on measures to ensure traffic safety on School and Front Streets, and Deep Grass Lane and Blairs Pond Road.
- ❑ Work to obtain CBDG funds to assist homeowners with serious property maintenance and repair needs.
- ❑ Work on actions to bring about the redevelopment of vacant and blighted properties.
- ❑ Undertake cooperative planning with Kent County to implement a Beaver Dam Branch extension of the Mispillion River Greenway.

Long Term Actions (More than 5 years)

- ❑ Implement the Beaver Dam Branch Extension of the Mispillion River Greenway, working with the City of Milford and Kent County.
- ❑ Construct the new Town Office project as described above.
- ❑ Work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture on programs to preserve agricultural and natural resource lands within and around the Town of Houston.
- ❑ Work with Kent County's Department of Planning services to implement a full Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program