

# CITY OF HOUSTON TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONE NO. 13

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## Walkability, Accessibility and Complete Streets Policies

### *Purpose*

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone 13 (the “TIRZ”) has developed, over the course of its term, various policies (written and verbal) of with respect to walkability and accessibility issues within the boundaries, and on the perimeter, of the Zone of TIRZ 13 (the “Zone”). The purpose of this document is to compile and memorialize all of these policies (the “Policies”) into a comprehensive document.

### *Background*

The TIRZ has made a significant positive impact on walkability and accessibility within the Zone by installing over 4.5 miles of sidewalk and 37 wheelchair ramps. The TIRZ is currently installing 1,550 feet of sidewalks and 3 wheelchair ramps as part of the Sabine project that is under construction and the TIRZ is developing CIP projects that will further increase sidewalks and wheelchair ramps within the Zone by at least 2 miles and 24 ramps, respectively. These Policies are intended to recognize the TIRZ’s priorities and to serve as guidance for the TIRZ in moving forward with its CIP program.

### *Goals, Objectives and Policies*

- **Goal 1: Walkability and Mobility.** The TIRZ will continue to accommodate the need for pedestrian mobility and accessibility when planning, designing, and developing right of way improvements.
  - Objective 1.A: Identify gaps in the pedestrian facilities network and needed improvements to and within key pedestrian activity centers, and define priorities for eliminating such gaps by making needed improvements.

- Policy 1.A.1: Continue to construct sidewalks where none exist, or correct issues where sidewalks have deteriorated. Develop action plans to focus on critical areas in which pedestrian access is restricted or inaccessible due to site conditions.
    - Policy 1.A.2: Continue to evaluate all sidewalks to determine if existing sidewalks are inadequate.
  - Objective 1.B: Continue work to eliminate barriers to accessibility.
    - Policy 1.B.1: Ensure that new or refurbished sidewalks contain accessibility elements that comply with the ADA and applicable building codes.
    - Policy 1.B.2: Identify existing sidewalks that lack adequate accessibility features and develop plans to remedy such inadequacies by increasing the number of wheelchair ramps within the Zone
  - Objective 1.C: Coordinate with METRO to provide safe access to bus stops within the Zone.
- **Goal 2: Streetscapes and Safety.** Create public pedestrian environments that are attractive, functional and accessible to all people.
  - Objective 2.A: Improve pedestrian safety through the design and refurbishment of streets, intersections, on an as-needed basis, and other roadway improvements such as signage, lighting, and landscaping; improve overall pedestrian safety.
    - Policy 2.A.1: Accommodate the needs of all travelers through a “complete streets” approach to right of way improvements, wherever practical. Complete streets are roadways designed to facilitate safe, comfortable, and efficient travel for all roadway users.
    - Policy 2.A.2: Incorporate pedestrian friendly features, such as benches and waste receptacles to facilitate a clean environment for streetscapes.
    - Policy 2.A.3: Identify opportunities to reduce pedestrian exposure to risk by reducing crossing distances or providing pedestrian crossing facilities. Improve or add pedestrian crossing(s) across Washington Avenue and across railroad tracks along Sawyer Street that separate pedestrians from road traffic.
    - Policy 2.A.4: Incorporate pedestrian lighting into all streetscapes with moderate pedestrian activity to ensure a safer environment.
    - Policy 2.A.5: Identify opportunities for public art to increase the desirability of pedestrian activity.
- **Goal 3: Infrastructure and Support Facilities.** Improve the quality and integrity of the pedestrian network infrastructure, and reconstruct sidewalks.
  - Objective 3.A: Encourage the incorporation of pedestrian facilities and amenities into private projects.
    - Policy 3.A.1: Support and encourage construction of pedestrian facilities and amenities, where warranted, as a condition of TIRZ reimbursements relating to private development projects.

- Policy 3.A.2: Facilitate pedestrian travel during and through public and private construction zones.
    - Policy 3.A.3: Establish and maintain pedestrian design guidelines that address topics such as sidewalk zones, street corners and street crossings.
  - Objective 3.B: Provide maintained walkways that are clean, safe and encourage use.
    - Policy 3.B.1: The TIRZ is unable to provide routine maintenance of sidewalk and street improvements. It is each property owner’s responsibility to maintain sidewalks and portions of the adjacent right of way, and prevent excessive vegetation from growing in or encroaching into pedestrian space of the sidewalk. Parking vehicles that materially encroach onto the sidewalk is also not permitted. The TIRZ will encourage neighborhood associations and city resources to follow up on areas at which property owners fail in such responsibilities or where vehicles are parked so as to encroach upon a sidewalk.
    - Policy 3.B.2 Work with property owners of vacant land adjacent to public walkways to identify and implement beautification opportunities on the vacant property, such as landscaping, fencing and/or art installations.
- **Goal 4: Shade.** In Houston’s climate (frequently hot and humid), shade is an essential component of for walkability and accessibility. Shade (tree coverage) creates a healthier environment for pedestrians by decreasing surface temperature, and it provides a more ecological friendly and esthetically pleasing streetscape environment.
  - Objective 4.A: Increasing pedestrian activity within the Zone will require more trees. New trees should be planted in the Zone, wherever possible, in order to increase tree coverage and resulting shade.
    - Policy 4.A.1 Identify, obtain and plant trees throughout the Zone, within the right of way, to provide a more comfortable environment for all pedestrians. Proper tree spacing, and compliance with the municipal code, shall be followed.
    - Policy 4.A.2 The TIRZ will take property owners’ desires into account when deciding where to place trees, but such desires shall be balanced with the overall needs of the Zone for additional tree planting. Property owners shall not be permitted to veto tree placement within the bordering right of way if all other conditions are met.
- **Goal 5: Implementation.** Identify and implement Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) to further this Policy,
  - Objective 6.C: Ensure pedestrian transportation is coordinated with the City of Houston and other applicable governmental entities.

*Summary*

These Policies do not create any private rights; they are intended as guidance to be implemented and interpreted by the Board of Directors of the TIRZ. The TIRZ will implement these Policies by identifying programmatic opportunities, assessing their feasibility, gauging public support, identifying funding sources and developing implementation strategies.