

6/18/18

Constance Holland, AICP
State Planning Director
Office of State Planning Coordination
122 William Penn Street, Suite 302
Haslet Building, Third Floor
Dover, DE 19901

RE: PLUS review 2018-04-02; Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan

Dear Connie,

Thank you for your letter of May 22, 2018 regarding the PLUS comments for the Town of Houston Comprehensive Plan Update. This letter, in response to those comments, has been written by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) on behalf of the Town.

The following is the Town's response to specific agencies' comments, suggestions, and observations, as well as its response to certification comments. Please note that the page numbers offered with each response refers to the page number from the PLUS letter. The Town wishes to thank all the reviewing agencies for their thoughtful comments

CERTIFICATION ISSUES

Page 1, first bullet – Houston has no impending plans or property owners petitioning for annexation at this time. However, the town wishes to preserve its ability to annex, should a need consistent with this plan, arise within the ten year planning period.

Future land uses have been added to the potential annexation area/area of concern map. The predominant FLU of "residential" is consistent with Kent County's vision for the area. The town does note one difference, regarding the commercial/industrial parcel in the county, touching the town's western boundary. Whereas Kent's 2018 FLU shows the property as "highway commercial," if it were ever annexed, the Town of Houston would classify it as industrial.

Also, the town wishes to dually identify its potential annexation area also as its area of concern, for purposes of intergovernmental coordination. This is stated in the text of the plan and indicated on the appropriate map. These items are also detailed in the plan, section 10-5.

Page 1, second bullet

Houston was very proactive in engaging with Kent County, going so far as to spend an hour reviewing both the county's, and the town's plan at length at a plan development meeting. Kent County took no position on the town's plan. Additional correspondence has been attached to the appendix of the draft plan documenting that Kent County has seen and reviewed the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC)

Page 2, first bullet – as requested, a table was added to this section detailing and describing the proposed FLU categories.

Page 2, second bullet – A disclaimer has been added to the Houston and Surrounding Area Zoning map.

Page 2, third bullet – The town agrees and will develop a work plan and strategy for tasks that must be immediately addressed following adoption. However, the town prefers this take the form of an internal/working document and not be published as a part of the plan.

Department of Transportation (DeDOT)

Page 2, fourth bullet – The reference to DART vehicles using S.R. 14 was removed. The goal of exploring fixed route transit service remains.

Page 2, fifth bullet (and subs) – Thank you. The Town appreciates you sharing the best contact info and personnel

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Page 3, first bullet – the town has chosen an “opt-in” approach to the somewhat dormant district that was proposed in the late 90’s. Should enough property owners demonstrate an interest, the town will likely consider pursuing a listing on the registry.

Delaware State Housing Authority

The Town thanks DSHS for its thoughtful comments and for providing links to the agency’s many resources

Department of Agriculture

The Town thanks DDA for its thoughtful comments and the important work it has already done in preserving agricultural lands near Houston. Regarding the second bullet on page

4, the text of the plan no longer refers to a DDA brochure and instead, references websites.

Department of Natural Resource and Environmental Control (DNREC)

Page 4, fourth bullet – No wellhead protection areas have, as yet, been defined by Houston and none were apparent in the relevant GIS data layer.

Page 4, fifth bullet – The term excellent recharge area has been replaced throughout the plan with “excellent groundwater recharge potential area.”

Page 4, sixth bullet – The text of the plan now refers specifically to 7 Del. C. 6082©. The plan text and goals of the plan do suggest the town should consider developing and adopting a sourcewater protection ordinance

Page 4, seventh bullet – The Town will almost certainly rely upon assistance from DNREC should it choose to move ahead with developing a sourcewater protection ordinance

Page 4, eighth bullet and page 5, first bullet (and subs) – Houston appreciates and understands the ramifications of a changing climate. DNREC’s comments correctly note that the town has struggled with unaffordable engineering solutions to some stormwater management issues in the vicinity of Pine Street. The Town appreciates DNREC sharing useful resources, as well as potential grant programs.

Page 5, second bullet and page 6, first bullet – Thank you. Houston does what it can for a town of its size. The town does allow mixed uses, conditionally, and intends to continue doing so. Likewise, it hopes to one day have access to transit. The bike/ped network is very limited, but the town is open to having it expanded. Significant development is not anticipated within town; however, the plan does recommend the use of annexation agreements (should annexation ever take place) to preserve environmentally sensitive and natural features.

Page 6, second bullet – Thank you. The Town is open to hosting EV accommodations. However, at the moment, it does not even have a traditional gas station.

Page 6, third bullet – Thank you for the resources on the TAP program. The town will review this information as it works to resolve its transportation issues.

Page 6, fourth bullet – Thank you. Collecting resident commuting data is an excellent suggestion. As DNREC suggests, the plan does recommend pursuing transit service with DART.

Page 6, fifth bullet – Thank you for making the town aware of the Energy Efficiency Investment Fund.

Page 6, sixth bullet – Thank you for making the town aware of DNREC’s weatherization assistance program. An objective to promote the program has been added to the draft plan.

Thank You,
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