

Livable Centers Project Requirements

Goals Statement: The goals of the Livable Centers Program are to facilitate the creation of walkable, mixed-use places by promoting economic generators and housing diversity, encouraging multi-modal transportation options, and promoting equitable and resilient infrastructure.

All projects must meet the following requirements to be accepted for funding consideration:

Project Readiness: The project scope of work, timeline for completion, and budget will be examined for feasibility and reasonableness. Specifically, projects must address the following elements:

- Projects must clearly articulate the goals and vision of the proposal and how these goals relate to local/regional planning efforts. This description should discuss the need and purpose of the project and the desired outcomes.
- Projects must clearly delineate a timeline for completion.
- Projects must identify stakeholders (public and private) that will be involved and demonstrate how coordination among these stakeholders will be achieved.
- Sponsoring agencies must demonstrate their financial commitment to the contribution fund level required for the proposed study. Based on LCNI for the proposed study area, sponsor's cash match requirements will be defined by a percentage of the total study cost and are defined as: LCNI Score > 75: 0% Cash Contribution, LCNI Score < 75: 10% Cash Contribution, and LCNI Score < 50: 20% Cash Contribution
- To the greatest extent possible, projects should aim to leverage private investment and use additional funding resources where available.
- The sponsor's record of successful implementation of past TIP studies/projects will be examined.

Areas of Interest: Projects must be located in one of the following areas of interest:

- High density areas with mixed land uses and a traditional street grid system, such as the Urban Core.
- Regional Centers: areas of concentrated employment or other major trip generators.
- Town or Village Centers: concentration of housing, retail/office and civic destinations within walking distance of a community gathering place and a good pedestrian network.
- Transit-Oriented Development: high density mix of uses within walking distance of, and with good access to, a transit facility.
- Corridor: roadways classified as major collectors or higher that increase multi-modal accessibility and connectivity to major centers or transit facilities.
- Emerging Centers or Corridors: those areas that are experiencing strong growth and could develop as regional centers.

Additional Guidelines: Fulfilling Livable Centers Program Goals: Describe how the project will address and advance the Livable Centers Program Goals within the project area. The description must address the four major goals but not necessarily all sub-goals. Goals of the Livable Centers Program:

1. Create multi-modal travel choices by facilitating a range of transportation mode opportunities:
 - Project has the potential for air quality improvements from mode shift.
 - Project will improve connectivity with existing neighborhoods and developments.
 - Project will improve pedestrian/bicyclist safety.
 - Project will strengthen accessibility to transit.
2. Create resilient quality places:
 - Project has the potential to positively transform a project area.
 - Project will promote better utilization of existing and/or planned community infrastructure (i.e., infill development).
 - Project seeks to integrate green space and preserves natural resources.
 - Project will incorporate flood recovery, mitigation, and other resiliency elements.
3. Promote safe and equitable infrastructure:
 - Project will create or improve connectivity, “last mile” infrastructure and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Project will reduce negative impacts of defined barriers to pedestrian and bicyclists (e.g., intersections, highways, railroads, bayous, network gaps, etc.)
 - Project will promote access between the public right-of-way and adjacent land use for non-vehicular traffic.
 - Project will explore strategies for vehicular parking that complement a high-quality pedestrian-bicyclist environment.
4. Promote economic development and housing diversity:
 - Project will create or improve connectivity, “last mile” infrastructure and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Project will reduce negative impacts of defined barriers to pedestrian and bicyclists (e.g., intersections, highways, railroads, bayous, network gaps, etc.)
 - Project will promote access between the public right-of-way and adjacent land use for non-vehicular traffic.
 - Project will explore strategies for vehicular parking that complement a high-quality pedestrian-bicyclist environment.

Design Principles: Projects containing design elements should be compatible with design criteria within City of Houston Urban Corridors criteria (if project is within City of Houston Urban Corridor area), and/or other local guidelines where applicable. Projects are encouraged to incorporate the following design principles:

- Incorporate pedestrian amenities throughout the project area such as sidewalks, shade, lighting, trees, and landscaping.
- Development in the project area is encouraged to be pedestrian-oriented and scaled with a mix of uses.
- Utilize access management and safety elements including crosswalks, medians, driveway consolidation throughout the project area.
- Use the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process and design guidelines for project developments throughout the project area.
- Use the LEED ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – Neighborhood Development) standards in the project area.

- Emphasize identity through design through elements in the project area such as signage, public art, and streetscape elements that create a sense of identity.
- Parking in the project area should be encouraged to be in the rear of the development through the use of build-to-lines. Shared parking, on-street parking and parking garages should be encouraged. Convenient bicycle parking and bicycle access should be included where possible.

Definitions: ‘Project’ refers to the study or transportation investment being proposed for funding consideration. ‘Project Area’ refers to the area surrounding the proposed project site in which the project applicant hopes to leverage benefits and investments. Project area is no greater than ¼ mile around project site.

Livable Centers Studies: Selection of Study Sponsors

Sponsor proposals will be evaluated by a project selection committee comprised of H-GAC staff and representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation and former study partners. The selection committee recommendations will be submitted to the Transportation Policy Council for a potential funding award. Upon identification of funding levels, the recommendations will be submitted to the H-GAC Board of Directors for approval. H-GAC reserves the right to make all final decisions and to withdraw this call for planning study partners. The following is the evaluation criteria:

1. Description/Scope/Project Impact (20%): The potential impact of the study will be determined based on the project description. The area of interest, project scale, study impact, and regional significance of the study will also be considered. The project description should describe the:
 - Need and purpose of the study and the desired outcomes.
 - Impact on vulnerable populations including but not limited to minority and low-income populations, populations with limited English proficiency, senior citizens, limited educational attainment, carless households, and female headed households, etc.
 - How study sponsor envisions vulnerable populations and community-based organizations (CBOs) being involved in study throughout the project’s lifecycle, encompassing the study period, the advancement of study recommendations, and the ongoing progress of implementation.
 - Proposed study area location and street name boundaries that complements the submitted map. Scale or size of study area should be appropriate and fit the scope and study impact description.
 - Local significance and potential for the study to serve as a model for others in the region. This includes connection between proposed study area as it relates to other local and other regional planning efforts.
2. Ability to Implement (20%): The ability to implement the project will be measured by the level of commitment demonstrated, including: the sponsor’s ability to successfully complete the project in the allocated time, stakeholder involvement, and the ability of the sponsor to track the implementation of study recommendations by type and funding amount after the completion of the study. The commitment statement should describe the:
 - Staff and/or departments of the sponsoring agency that will be involved in coordinating the study effort.

- Level of support from key sponsor officials (such as city council, management district board, agency head, etc.). Please include a list of names, titles, and entities.
 - Sponsor's commitment to be an active sponsor throughout the study. This includes sponsor's commitment to advancing study recommendations and to ongoing implementation progress (sponsor commits to providing a progress update every two years with Livable Centers staff).
 - Sponsor's high-level plan for implementation of recommendations after the completion of study. This could include how the sponsor will integrate the study into other plans (e.g., comprehensive plan).
 - Level of support from the local community and potential project partners. Demonstration of local/community support may include but is not limited to:
 - Letters of support from community or neighborhood groups, partner agencies, local businesses, or other stakeholders (please include in Attachments).
 - Local plans or other studies that have identified livable center program goals as a community or neighborhood priority (i.e., local visioning exercise, comprehensive plan, or other study).
3. Fulfilling Program Goals (60%): The ability of the project to fulfill the Livable Centers program goals will be evaluated using the following methodology:
- Create multi-modal travel choices by facilitating a range of transportation mode opportunities (30%):
 - Project has the potential for air quality improvements from mode shift.
 - Project will improve connectivity with existing neighborhoods and developments.
 - Project will improve pedestrian/bicyclist safety.
 - Project will strengthen accessibility to transit.
 - Create resilient quality places (10%):
 - Project has the potential to positively transform a project area.
 - Project will promote better utilization of existing and/or planned community infrastructure (i.e., infill development).
 - Project seeks to integrate green space and preserves natural resources.
 - Project will incorporate flood recovery, mitigation, and other resiliency elements.
 - Promote safe and equitable infrastructure (10%):
 - Project will create or improve connectivity, "last mile" infrastructure and amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - Project will reduce negative impacts of defined barriers to pedestrian and bicyclists (e.g., intersections, highways, railroads, bayous, network gaps, etc.)
 - Project will promote access between the public right-of-way and adjacent land use for non-vehicular traffic.
 - Project will explore strategies for vehicular parking that complement a high-quality pedestrian-bicyclist environment.
 - Promote economic development and housing diversity (10%):
 - Project will connect to existing infrastructure and/or serve as a catalyst for investment/development.

- Project will incentivize an improvement in the range of housing options.
- Project will increase walkability/bikeability of a 1/2-mile radius of job and/or activity centers within the proposed study area.
- Project will promote development practices which emphasize design considerations for pedestrian, transit, and non-vehicular access and connectivity (i.e., Transit Oriented Development).

Livable Centers Study Deliverables:

The Livable Centers study should result in a plan that addresses the following elements:

1. A description of the study process and methodology.
2. An analysis of the study's major outcomes. In addition to addressing the major program goals of the Livable Centers program, the study should:
 - Address the potential for development at an urban and pedestrian scale that supports multi-modal transportation in the project area.
 - Address the consistency of the project with local planning efforts and show the commitment and ability to implement the proposed study results through an implementation plan.
 - Show the continuity of the project area's street network, connectivity to other centers, and the impact on pedestrian/bicyclist safety.
 - Demonstrate how the project will facilitate a range of transportation modes.
 - Demonstrate how the project will facilitate or incentivize a balance of development options and land use types for residents of multiple age groups and economic levels within the project area.
 - Demonstrate how the project will strengthen community identity in the project area through use of compatible, quality architectural and landscape design and preservation of significant historic structures and/or natural features.
 - Demonstrate coordination with stakeholders.
3. Maps and supporting graphics to show study outcomes, including existing and future land uses, existing and proposed transportation facilities, street design and pedestrian improvement cross-sections, and parking plans.
4. Event summary reports of each community engagement event, which includes pictures of the event and activities, quantity of participants, those engaged, and any relevant information about results. This will be attached as an Appendix.
5. A fiscal feasibility analysis of the plan's recommendations and a proposed implementation plan, including:
 - A description of transportation infrastructure investments (i.e. Livable Centers implementation projects) that will support the goals of the study. Description should include proposed project scopes, cost estimates, and priority.
 - An analysis of the potential market feasibility of the proposed projects including
 - An analysis of the area's demographics, major trip attractors within the area, current state of development in the area, an estimation of future development in terms of gross floor area and the level of current and future transit service.
 - Identification of leveraging of public and private investment and any potential partnerships for implementation of identified goals and projects.
 - Identification of any policy changes or changes in codes/ordinances needed at the local level to accomplish the goals of the study and complete the implementation plan.

- A description of the public participation process and stakeholder participation and support.
6. Complete Livable Centers Air Quality Methodology and the VMT Reduction Methodology, which is used to estimate air quality benefits and the reduction of vehicle miles traveled derived from implementing Livable Centers projects within a defined study area. This is provided by H-GAC.
 7. Complete program tracker template, provided by H-GAC, that outlines every study recommendation.

Please note that not all studies will address all elements. H-GAC staff will work with the project sponsor to determine the appropriate plan inputs.

Post Plan Evaluation: (To be conducted by H-GAC in coordination with project sponsor)

- Track the progress of Livable Centers recommendations by tracking projects built or invested and projects planned or programmed every two years.