

TEXAS MASONRY COUNCIL: IMPROVING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FOR MASONRY CONTRACTORS

Growing Trend Benefits Texas Cities and Masonry Industry

Masonry planning as a strategy for sustainable growth and development is starting to take root across Texas. That's good news for Texas cities and for the Texas masonry industry.

The reasons vary – concerns about protection from fire and storms, aesthetics and community image, sustainability of the tax base. But the bottom line is the same: city administrators and policy-makers have decided that masonry construction makes better communities. As the economy continues to improve, these masonry requirements will have an important positive impact on the entire Texas masonry industry.

All told, over 200 Texas cities have now adopted masonry planning, usually in the form of minimum percentages of masonry required for new construction. Most are city wide policies covering all residential and commercial construction, but some are tied to specific uses, areas of town, corridors or gateways. In the past twelve months, these are some of the Texas communities that have joined the trend:

BAYTOWN – (passing of ordinance took approximately four years from initial contact)

The City Council approved this Houston-area city's first-ever masonry requirements, as part of a strategy to enhance the refinery town's tax base, image, and quality of life. The city wide masonry requirements for both new commercial and residential construction are included in the city's new Unified Land Development Code (ULDC), which the City Council approved on February 23, 2012, culminating a three-year review process.

Under the adopted ULDC, new construction in Baytown will be required to have the following percentages of masonry materials on exterior walls:

- Non-residential – up to 80 percent on the front and up to 70 percent on sides, with trade-offs for increases in landscaping for a lower percentage of masonry;
- Single-family Residential – minimum 60 percent; and,
- Multi-family Residential – 60 percent of first floor walls, 30 percent of all walls above.





BELLAIRE – (passing of the ordinance took approximately three and a half years from initial contact)

With the aim of ensuring lasting value for the community, this Houston-area city determined that masonry will be the predominant building material in the planned redevelopment of a newly designated Urban Village district.

The district encompasses about 18 acres near the intersection of the Southwest Freeway and Loop 610, which currently is occupied mostly by under-utilized warehouses.

The plan envisions redevelopment of the area into a lively mix of retail, residential and office buildings that will leverage the impact of a new Houston Metro light-rail station planned for the urban location and create a destination for Bellaire residents to gather, shop, live, and work.

The zoning ordinance for the Urban Village district – approved by the City Council on December 19, 2011 – states: “The intent of this subsection is to ensure use of building materials in the Urban Village-Transit (UV-T) District which convey an appearance of quality and durability.”

The ordinance requires that the predominant exterior building material for all the buildings in the redevelopment area are either some type of masonry; genuine brick, natural stone or marble. Other masonry materials such as stucco, tile, and concrete fiber products are limited to fifteen percent of the exterior surface.

CEDAR PARK - (passing of ordinance took approximately six years from initial contact)

Cedar Park is the third largest city in the Austin metropolitan area and is located in the Texas Hill Country just northwest of Austin in the fast-growing Williamson County.

The Cedar Park City Council on April 12, 2012 voted to raise minimum masonry requirements for new industrial and commercial buildings and for some new residential units. The masonry standards for new construction are:

- Commercial – raised from the present 25, 50, and 75 percent to 100 percent masonry exteriors for all types of commercial buildings;
- Industrial – raised from the present 25 percent to 50 percent for all such buildings;
- Residential – units that face two roads, such as on corner lots, minimum raised from a 50 percent to 75 percent masonry exteriors; other residential units continue to have 50 percent minimum requirement;
- Multi-Family – raised from 50 percent to 100 percent masonry;
- Townhomes and Condominiums – raised from 50 percent to 75 percent masonry; and,
- Institutional – minimum increased from present 50 percent masonry exterior to 100 percent.



DICKINSON – (passing of ordinance took approximately five years from initial contact)

With an eye toward promoting a new pedestrian-oriented main street, the Dickinson City Council approved a State Highway 3 zoning overlay district that requires masonry exteriors throughout, recalling the long love affair that Texas has had with brick and natural stone construction.

State Highway 3 is one of the main north/south arteries within the Dickinson (pop. 18,680) city limits and often is referred to as Old Galveston Road, indicating its historic role of linking Houston and Galveston. Most of that traffic now uses IH-45, which runs roughly parallel to State Highway 3.

Dickinson officials envision a new pedestrian-oriented main street developing along and around State Highway 3. The city's handsome new brick and masonry City Hall and Library are seen as the anchors for new development in the district.

The new Overlay District was approved by the City Council on July 24, and took effect on July 28, 2012. The district encompasses 275 square city blocks. The city's official description of the Overlay District states:

"The purpose of the State Highway 3 Overlay District (the "District") is to support the creation of an area similar in look

and feel to the late 19th and early 20th century historic main streets. It is not the intention of this District to duplicate history, only to capture the essence of historical character and use. The architectural features are designed to support the desired type of construction. The District is intended to encourage special attention to architectural details such as building materials, colors, facades, windows, doors, roof lines, parapet design, and other elements used as references or inspiration in creating historical detailing for a building.

The District seeks to transition the area from a vehicle-oriented environment to a pedestrian-oriented environment – creating a safe, walkable community. This purpose is achieved by providing regulation both in addition to and, in some cases, in place of, the existing base zoning within the State Highway 3 Overlay District."

The Overlay District specifies brick and tinted concrete block as primary exterior materials throughout the district and requires 100 percent brick or other masonry in the most visible areas of the district.

NOLANVILLE – (passing of ordinance took approximately six years from initial contact)

Fast-growing Nolanville for the first time will require minimum percentages of masonry for the exteriors of all new construction city wide, the City Council decided.

The City Council voted unanimously at its regular meeting on May 17 to approve the comprehensive zoning ordinance recommended by the city Planning and Zoning Commission. Located in Bell County, near Killeen, Nolanville's population roughly doubled in the last decade to almost 4,300, according to the US Census. Nolanville is targeted as a hot spot for entry level homes for military families.

The new zoning ordinance includes the following masonry requirements:

- Residential structures – 80 percent on the front and 75 percent on the sides; and
- Non-residential structures – 85 percent on the front and 75 percent on the sides.

City officials said the masonry requirements will help ensure the sustainability of the city tax base and will help shape future development in a way that will protect and preserve the character of the city.





PEARSALL – (passing of ordinance took approximately one year from initial contact)

This fast-growing South Texas city joined the growing state trend and opted to require minimum percentages of masonry for new construction, becoming the first South Texas city to do so.

Pearsall, located 54 miles south of San Antonio, is the county seat of Frio County. It lies within the Eagle Ford Shale Play, a major oil and gas exploration and production area, and grew nearly 28 percent over 10 years to a population of 9,146 in 2010. Continued significant population growth has spurred new residential and commercial development, but also concerns about construction quality.

Citing concerns about the city’s appearance and the long-term sustainability of the tax base, the City Council on June 12, 2012 voted unanimously to require minimum percentages of masonry for all new residential, multi-family, commercial and industrial buildings. The new masonry requirements are:

- Residential – Minimum 3 ft. masonry at the ground level and minimum 50 percent masonry or stucco on all walls visible from a street;
- Multi-family – Minimum 3 ft. masonry at the ground level and minimum 50 percent masonry or stucco on all exterior walls. Minimum 75 percent masonry or stucco on all walls visible from a street;
- Commercial – Minimum 3 ft. masonry at ground level and minimum 75 percent masonry or stucco on all exterior walls; and,
- Industrial – Minimum 50 percent masonry on the building front.

Without these regulations in place and without the hard work of the TMC staff, the masonry industry would be subject to continued loss of wall share to competing product. It is the goal of the Masonry Policy Planning (MPP) Program that all major metropolitan areas in Texas would include as many communities with masonry regulations as the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex where over 100 cities now require masonry construction.

If you live in a community that you believe should be visited by a TMC Community Planner, please call Rudy Garza, Executive Vice President, at (254) 770-7213.



P.O. Box 4278 Waco, TX 76708 (254) 300-4544
www.texasmasonrycouncil.org