

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE August 2, 2024

TO Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBJECT **Elm Thicket-Northpark Permit Oversights and Violations**

In September 2017, the City Plan Commission authorized a hearing to amend Planned Development (PD) No. 67. The resulting amendment, effective October 12, 2022, sought to preserve Elm Thicket-Northpark's historic character and prevent displacement. Key changes included district expansion, height restrictions, a revised land-use map, reduced lot coverage, and new roof design standards.

Earlier this year, the City began receiving complaints about construction violations on new homes and duplexes. On June 12, 2024, Interim City Manager Tolbert (ICM) announced the consolidation of the Planning and Urban Design and Development Services departments with new leadership. Immediately, the staff of the newly merged departments collaborated on a deeper dive into the complaints. The initial fact finding revealed that permit applications for projects in the Elm Thicket-Northpark neighborhood reviewed between October 12, 2022 and June 2, 2023 were evaluated using outdated zoning information, and some permits may have been approved in error. We are working to determine what led to these errors.

A total of 29 initial sites were identified for review in collaboration with Save Elm Thicket, a neighborhood advocacy group. Of the 29 initial sites investigated, 10 met the PD requirements and therefore had no violations, five had non-compliant plans but had not yet started construction, and the rest were in various stages of construction with violations.

Last week, after completing the fact-finding and field visits, Planning and Development Department staff began contacting contractors and applicants to address the 19 sites with violations. Actions taken by staff included issuing stop work orders and placing holds on violating sites. Our residential and enforcement teams are working closely with applicants and contractors to quickly bring these sites into compliance with the new development provisions.

As a next step, Planning and Development staff will review all additional Elm Thicket-Northpark permits issued within the October 12, 2022 to June 2, 2023 timeframe. This review will be completed no later than September 30, and Planning and Development staff will update the City Council once that review is complete.

In addition to resolving these specific Elm Thicket-Northpark permitting errors, staff is looking at larger systemic changes to ensure this type of error does not occur in the future. As a reminder, in the last few weeks, ICM Tolbert announced the formation of a City Action Strike Team (CAST) to engage and collaborate cross-departmentally in situations

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such as this. The CAST will evaluate the processes by which the City updates our GIS and permitting systems following an ordinance change. The CAST will also consider procedural changes such as allowing a short delay between ordinance approval and implementation to build in time for staff training and system updates. The recent consolidation of zoning, planning and permitting into one department under common leadership will also create stronger communication between the various land use teams.

As a reminder, please be advised that there may be some media coverage regarding this PD. We will continue to provide updates as the work progresses.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or Emily Liu, Director of Planning and Development, yu.liu@dallas.gov.



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