



# *Scenic* City

## CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

**The mission of the Scenic City Certification Program is to support and recognize municipalities that implement high-quality scenic standards for public roadways and public spaces, with the long-term goal of improving the image of all cities.**

A program of Scenic Texas, in consultation with the American Planning Association, Houston Council of Engineering Companies, Houston-Galveston Area Council, Regional Leadership in Development Standards, Scenic America, Texas Municipal League and Urban Land Institute. These organizations comprise our Scenic City Certification Program Advisory Committee.



# Scenic City Certification Program Application Form

**Reminder: Applications due by March 31, 2011**

## Instructions:

1) The Scenic City application is points-based. For each criterion that applies to your city, please check the corresponding box. **Please note** that the following criteria are required before being named a Scenic City; applicant cities without these programs will not qualify:

- a) trees and landscaping along city streetscapes, such as major roadways, city streets, street medians and in parking lots
- b) prohibition on new off-premises signage (billboards)
- c) permitting process and size, placement, and quantity requirements for on-premises signage

All other criteria in the application are optional, and the more of them an applicant city has, the more points toward certification will be earned. Please refer to the glossary for a definition of terms.

2) Provide clearly-stated evidence that this criterion is contained either in an ordinance or is a component of a formal program. No statements will receive points unless evidence/documentation is provided.

In order to provide proper evidence, you may enter the relevant link(s) to a website containing this information – please provide the specific page where the information is found, not the home page. If link is to Municode, for example, please cite the location within your code (see sample below).

If applicable, put additional documents on a CD with file names noting the applicable section.

Here is an example of how to fill out the form:

The dumpster area is screened on three sides using material consisting of stone, brick, block, wood or a continuous planting of evergreens.

<http://www.municode.com/resources/gateway.asp?pid=10123&sid=43>  
see Chapter 39, Article VI, Sec 39-101 item (c)

- 3) Your application will be evaluated by the Scenic City Certification Program Advisory Committee. The decision by the Advisory Committee will be final. You will receive notification of your Scenic City certification status within 60 days of receipt of your application.
- 4) Each application must be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee of \$500. Checks should be made payable to *Scenic Texas*.

Mail to:

Scenic City Certification Program  
Scenic Texas  
3015 Richmond Ave, Ste 220  
Houston TX 77098

- 5) Submit completed application and supplemental materials by mail or email to:

[application@sceniccitycertification.org](mailto:application@sceniccitycertification.org)

or

Scenic City Certification Program  
Scenic Texas  
3015 Richmond Ave, Ste 220  
Houston TX 77098

- 6) Applications for 2011 certification will be accepted ONLY from January 1, 2011 – March 31, 2011. Only 100 applications can be considered for certification in 2011.

Please direct questions regarding the application to Holly Eaton at 713-979-4374 or [holly@sceniccitycertification.org](mailto:holly@sceniccitycertification.org).

# Candidate Scenic City:



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**Application submitted by** *(city department or organization):*

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**Contact name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*[All communication regarding evaluation of this application will be directed to this contact.]*

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City Statistics:**

**Population:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Area in Square Miles:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Define your extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do all of your municipal ordinances and city-wide programs extend into your ETJ?**

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## Section 1



### Streetscape: protection of native and established trees, landscaping and sidewalks

**1.1** Trees and landscaping along major roadways, city streets, street medians and in parking lots are required. [*Mandatory requirement*]

**1.2** Require upkeep of landscaping to ensure viability of plants.

**1.3** Landscape requirements apply to all public, private and institutional developments and must be installed in a sound manner and in accordance with accepted good planting procedures.

**1.4** Landscaping and screening required to be installed as a part of project construction. Existing landscape areas to be retained shall be protected from vehicular encroachment during and after the construction phase by appropriate barriers.

**1.5** Sidewalks required to be a minimum of 5 feet in width; 8 feet in transit corridors; 10 feet in downtowns and high-density areas. Sidewalks must be maintained in good condition and have pedestrian buffers with a minimum width of 2 feet.

**1.6** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 2



### Parks, Trails and Public Spaces

**2.1** Provide a comprehensive system of parks, greenbelts and open space that is compatible with the environment and conducive to residential neighborhoods, and meets national standards of 10 acres per 1,000 population.

**2.2** Parks contain a significant number of amenities including trees, benches, playgrounds, etc which are maintained to good condition and have security features (anti-theft devices, safety for parking areas and trails, etc).

**2.3** There exists a park set-aside ordinance for development.

**2.4** Provide for a comprehensive and connective multi-use trail system and map. Trails are clearly marked with appropriate signage, and there are established measures for upkeep and maintenance.

**2.5** The boundaries of designated open space and recreational areas are clearly delineated as public spaces with future development prohibited or designated for public use if on private property.

**2.6** Any new development site must permanently set aside open space for public or private use which will not be developed. Open space may be used as community open space or preserved as green space.

**2.8** The following areas are considered high priorities when designating open space: conservation buffers, high quality native trees, critical habitat areas, and high quality soil resources.

**2.9** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 3



### On-premises sign ordinance

- 3.1** Strict limits on size, placement, and quantity of signs per business. All permanent signs require permits separate from the building permit. *[Mandatory requirement – the more restrictive, the more points will be awarded]* **Answer individually as follows:**  
1.m Minimum requirement: signs require permits separate from the building permit.  
1.a Strict limits on quantity of signs per business.  
1.b Strict limits on size (both square footage and height), placement, and quantity of signs per side/property frontage.

- 3.2** Banned signage: All wind devices, roof signs and portable signs.

- 3.3** Restricted digital signage: All electronic changeable message (digital) signs should be banned outright or restricted to special districts within city limits.

- 3.4** If digital signs are allowed, clearly-stated regulations must strictly limit size, height, and brightness of such signs, and prohibit moving images and frequent rotation of fixed images on such signs. Regulations written so that signs are designed to be in context with the natural and built environment.

- 3.5** A mechanism exists to bring existing (grandfathered) signs into conformity with the municipality's current sign code.

- 3.6** A process exists to enforce removal of any sign that is significantly damaged, destroyed or abandoned.

- 3.7** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 4



### Off-premises signage

- 4.1** No permits are allowed to be issued for new outdoor general advertising off-premises signs. *[Mandatory requirement]*
- 4.2** Specific ordinance language states that existing, non-electronic billboards may NOT be modified, upgraded or in any way converted to an electronic, changeable message (digital) billboard format.
- 4.3** If digital billboards are allowed, clearly-stated regulations must strictly limit brightness of such signs, and prohibit moving images and frequent rotation of fixed images on such signs.
- 4.4** Policy prohibiting the relocation of billboards, or allowing relocation only when required by the construction of a project using public funding, provided that such relocation is restricted to a limited period of time.
- 4.5** Parked motor vehicles and/or trailers are not allowed to be intentionally located so as to serve as an advertising device for a use, product or service.
- 4.6** Moving motor vehicles and/or trailers may not be employed primarily for the purpose of displaying commercial advertising messages. Commercial advertising messages are prohibited on any vehicle if the messages are unrelated to the primary business or activity for which the vehicle is utilized; this includes but is not limited to transit vehicles and school buses.
- 4.7** No advertising allowed on street furniture (bus shelters, park benches, transit stations, trash receptacles, directional kiosks, etc).
- 4.8** Ban on posting of signs on public property. Any signs found upon any public property may be removed by the city.
- 4.9** Law prohibiting tree-cutting or similar clearing of vegetation on public rights-of-way to provide better view of off-premises signs.
- 4.10** A process exists to remove nonconforming outdoor general advertising devices (i.e. billboards) that are not on federally-funded roadways.
- 4.11** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 5



### Lighting standards for streetscapes and public spaces

**5.1** Street lighting program that places emphasis on the selection of lighting equipment and the location of street lighting so as to provide sufficient visibility, increased safety, and improved security for pedestrians and vehicles.

**5.2** Adequate illumination that meets the level-of-use standards set for the municipality is required.

**5.3** Outdoor lighting program that decreases light pollution effects and preserves the nighttime visual environment. The program should minimize glare and obtrusive light by emphasizing directional lighting, limiting misdirected, excessive, or unnecessary outdoor lighting, and curtailing and reversing any degradation of the night sky.

**5.4** Cost-sharing program exists between the city and power provider(s) to upgrade light fixtures.

**5.5** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 6



### Landscaping in parking lots

**6.1** Incorporate appropriately-scaled, well-graded and planted earth berms, shrubs, or other landscaping on parking area perimeters to screen the parking area from streets and other facilities.

**6.2** Require that planted islands have curbs.

**6.3** Integrate groundcovers and small shrubs at island ends to add interest while maintaining visibility of pedestrians and vehicles; minimize the use of medium to tall shrubs on internal islands.

**6.4** If paving around a tree is required, use porous pavements such as cast-in-place, monolithic turf and concrete combinations over specimen tree roots to allow water and air exchange.

**6.5** Require that regionally native, drought-tolerant and extreme temperature-tolerant species are used whenever possible. Ensure that plants installed in or around parking areas receive proper irrigation to encourage deep root growth.

**6.6** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 7



### Protection of landscaping during construction activities

**7.1** Require that protective barricades are installed around all protected trees and grand trees prior to any construction activities on a development site.

**7.2** Barricades are to be installed a minimum of 10 feet from a protected tree or at the designated protective root zone.

**7.3** Materials used for protective barricades shall be made of wood, fencing or solid material.

**7.4** Vertical barricades no less than 3 feet in height and no more than 6 feet apart. Horizontal members consisting of wood no less than 3 feet above existing grade and securely attached to the vertical members.

**7.5** Protective barricades removed only to prepare the development site for final landscaping activities.

**7.6** No parking or storing of vehicles, equipment or materials allowed within the protective root zone.

**7.7** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.



## Section 8

**Clearly-stated unity-of-design standards throughout the city or within defined areas or special districts (such as retail centers, historic districts, mixed-use developments, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones, etc). Five or more of these areas exist in the city, or these areas comprise at least 35% of the city. Please also describe how these standards are maintained/enforced. Examples of standards that must be in place to qualify as a unified-design area include:**

- Storefront design standards in terms of shapes and materials for awnings, storefront lighting, entries, doors, windows, and building appurtenances
- Signage limitations for permitted on-premises signs and specific guidelines for display window signage, window graphics, plaque signs, and entry paving
- Exterior furnishings / landscape - requirements regarding allowed exterior furnishings, landscaping, sidewalk grade, and ADA compliance



## Section 9



### Litter and graffiti

**9.1** Littering is expressly prohibited and fined by city ordinance, including pedestrian trash as well as that thrown from motor vehicles.

**9.2** Publicly supported cleanup efforts and education program for trash and graffiti.

**9.3** Graffiti is expressly prohibited and fined by city ordinance, and a program exists to enforce effective removal.

**9.4** Public trash receptacles have a protective covering to prevent trash from blowing out of can.

**9.5** Trash can only be placed for collection on certain designated days, and not before or after within a period of 15 hours.

**9.6** Strict prohibition on dumping.

**9.7** Please describe your enforcement program:  
a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 10



### Utility and cable line program

**10.1** Install utility lines (including individual service lines, transmission lines and distribution lines) underground, below the finished grade of the right of way. Remove (if appropriate) all poles, guy wires and related structures used to support overhead prior to burial.

**10.2** Utility infrastructure should be mounted on pads at ground level; if within the right of way, should not block sidewalks or visibility at intersections.

**10.3** All utility services located within the boundaries of a major roadway reconstruction or public improvement project are placed underground (in a minimum of 20% of the city).

**10.4** For future individual utility service, lines which originate in a public road right of way and extend to any building or structure constructed after a certain date (including residential, commercial, or industrial) are installed underground.

**10.5** Once utility service lines have been installed underground, the installation of new above-ground lines in that location is prohibited by ordinance.

**10.6** On side streets with above-ground utility services which intersect with a roadway with underground utility lines, the first pole supporting the above ground service is placed on such side street at least 100 feet from the center of the roadway with the underground utilities.

**10.7** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

## Section 11



### Dumpster screening

**11.1** The dumpster area is screened on three sides using material consisting of stone, brick, block, wood or a continuous planting of evergreens.

**11.2** The opening for removal of the dumpster for collection is a minimum of 12 feet to allow for proper access when it is serviced. For every dumpster added, an additional 10 feet in width is required.

**11.3** All dumpster enclosures are approved by the city prior to construction.

**11.4** Require that durable materials complement the building.

**11.5** Require that the owner incorporate landscaping to make the screen more effective.

**11.6** Require that location of the opening to the area be away from the sidewalk.

**11.7** Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.



## Bonus!

Your city may have features or programs that contribute to its scenic appeal that are not listed in these specifications. If you would like these to be considered with your application, please provide a detailed description thereof. These features are not limited to, but might include:

- historic districts
- historic preservation programs
- a scenic program related to a unique geographic feature
- a natural environment enhancement program
- storm runoff collectors
- beach/lake/river cleanups
- retention basins
- plantings in detention areas
- landscaping along a body of water
- a vegetated area bordering a stream or established to protect a stream system
- innovative programs above and beyond our criteria in any of the certification categories

Please describe your enforcement program: a) methods, b) budget, and c) number of FTEs or their equivalent.

Thank you for applying. Your application will be reviewed and you will receive a response along with your scored evaluation within 60 days. This evaluation will indicate your level of certification: Recognized, Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum. If your city did not meet minimum certification requirements, the score sheet will be an effective tool for your use in future reapplication.



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Houston TX 77098  
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