2026 Panther Island Form-Based Code Update

Significant Changes 2016 Form-Based Code

Section 1: Introduction (previously "Understanding the District")

- New content, background, purpose and clear applicability.
- Amended map to remove Henderson Street Bazaar property that is being rezoned to MU2/PD by the owner.
- Retained other properties south of the river in prior PI-FBC pending rezoning to appropriate categories in coordination with DFWI and property owners.

Section 2: Principles (previously "Intent and General Development")

- Added Vision 2.0 Guiding Principles
- Updated General Development Principles to emphasize waterfront/open space/mixed use and de-emphasize residential nature of the District.
- Added references to the Stockyards as an important neighboring district.
- Updated reference to view corridors to be less about limited building heights than generally preserving sightlines to the Courthouse, Downtown, and waterfront open spaces.

Section 3: Administration

- Clarifies applicability and explicitly excludes Canal System from review since governed by TRWD and the Canal System Manual.
- Clearly defines authority of FBC Administrator, Urban Design Commission, and adds PI Program Office and Panther Island Design Review Committee.
    - DRC to review all new construction to provide feedback to developer and/or formal position on any waiver items going to UDC.
    - UDC to review waivers only which is more permissive than downtown which requires all new projects to go to DDRB.
- Adds administrative authority for limited adjustments to setbacks, transparency, block dimensions, landscaping and signs.

Section 4: Regulating Plan (previously part of "Urban Design Plan")

- Reduces development zones from 9 to 2 (PI-Core and PI-Edge).
- Refines street grid and cross sections. Note changes from Vision 2.0:
    - Panther Blvd alignment adjusted for constructability;
    - Current ROW width of 4th Street maintained, diminishing green street intent due to constructability and parcel sizes; and

    - Adjusted certain pedestrian bridges to vehicular bridges to ensure serviceability of buildings.
- Establishes hierarchy of Frontages for purposes of standards, development phasing, waivers, compliance:
    - Canal, Waterfront and Bypass Channel
    - Type 'A' facing public open space
    - Type 'A' facing streets
    - Type 'B'
    - All Other
- Type 'A' frontages provides enhanced walkability and design on corridors that are intended to be active and vibrant. Type 'B' frontage balances the needs of pedestrians, vehicles, and building servicing.
- Reduces block sizes to 210 - 230 feet on North Island with street grid and pedestrian connector requirements (current code has blocks as long as 500 feet).
- Reflects Vision 2.0 public open space; notes they are non-binding recommendations pending future negotiation since land owned by TRWD and private entities.

Section 5: Permitted Land Uses (previously "Land Use")

- Shifts from prohibited uses to permissible uses.
- Excludes townhouses that were previously not prohibited although practically restricted due to minimum building heights.
- Adds temporary use of Mobile Vendor Food Court to manage planned activation on public property during early development.

Section 6: Waterfront Standards (previously "Waterways" subsection of Urban Design Plan)

- Adds clear descriptions and authority for the waterfront elements: Canal System, Trinity River and Urban Lake, and Bypass Channel.
- Replaces Bypass Channel standards with explanatory information that defers to future regulations governing adjacent property development when the levees are removed.
- Removes all Canal System standards and guidelines, alternatively adopting the TRWD Canal System Manual by reference to exclusively govern the TRWD Canal System ROW.

- Unlike Vision 2.0 that contemplated ingress of the Urban Lake into the shoreline at Canal C, the code aligns the edge of the Urban Lake with existing property lines since storage capacity and design to occur and be negotiated in the future.
- Increases required walkway of 12 – 18 feet with Shoreline Easements of 25-feet on the Trinity River Channel and 50-feet on the Urban Lake to provide continuous waterfront access and maintenance areas.
- Provides clear standards and guidelines on Waterfront Transition Zones to ensure quality private development facing these amenities.
- Adds prohibited uses including trash collection, mechanical equipment yards, surface parking , drive aisles, parking garage entrances, and loading docks.
- Limits retaining wall heights and slopes in the Waterfront Transition Zones to avoid cavernous feel in the canals.

Section 7: Streets, Blocks, Streetscapes, and Sidewalks (previously part of "Urban Design Plan" and "Public Space Furnishing")

- Adds block standards that specify maximum block perimeter and length to be bounded by streets, canals and pedestrian connectors.
    - Maximum block perimeter: 1,200 feet
    - Maximum block length on any side: 300 feet
- Adds cross sections for bridges, accessways, local curbless streets, shared streets, and North Main bridge.
- Defines Ring Road as a Collector with right-of-way increased from 89 to 100 feet.
- Increases local street right-of-way from 54 feet to 56 or 60 feet (options) for furnishing zones.
- Expands Street Tree Standards to make clear distinction from Canal/WTZ trees. Expands allowed street tree species to align with Downtown. Removes irrigation requirement for Street Trees to avoid infrastructure damage during maintenance. Intent is to manage like downtown with Public Improvement District, watering trucks, and adjacent property owners.
- Increases maximum streetlight spacing from 50 feet to 75 feet.
- Reduces transit shelter standards and guidelines that will be driven by Trinity Metro collaboration.
- Removes bollard standards to consider separate Streetscape Specification Manual by the City once Phase I selections are made.

Section 8: Public Open Space (previously "Parks, Schools, and Open Space")

- Reflects Vision 2.0 goal of 15% open space.
- Adds landscaping, furnishing, kiosks and building frontages on Public Open Spaces (excludes Paseos which are governed by Canal System Manual).

- Retains current standards for maximum impermeable paving.
- Adds guidelines for fountains, public art, and surrounding sidewalks.
- Reduces Zoning Ordinance requirements for Mobile Vendor Food Courts for temporary open space activation on publicly-owned property – bathrooms, location, and electricity/water.

Section 9: Urban Form Standards (previously "Sites and Buildings")

- Reduces requirement for facades in Build-to-Zone from 80% to 50 - 80% depending on frontage type.
- Expands minimum and maximum building height range to 4 – 24 stories for PI-CORE and 3 – 15 stories for PI-EDGE. The previous maximum height was 288 feet (~24 stories but most were 8 stories maximum and 5 stories minimum. North Main was previously increased to 20 stories and Phase I to 15 stories.
- Expands Phase I amendment language to entire district to allow buildings less than the minimum height if supporting active uses along canals and parks.
- Reduces building setbacks from streets from 5' - 15' to 0' - 15'.
- Increases building setbacks from waterfronts from 5' - 15' to 10' - 50' for canals and 15' - no max for water frontage. This reflects the greater open space anticipated in Vision 2.0. Administrative relief is included for reductions of minimums when necessary for bridges, grade changes, etc.
- Adds parking garage setback of 20' of commercial use in commercial corners of Regulating Plan.
- Adds parking garage setback of 25' of occupiable space on entire side of buildings facing Canals, Waterfront, and Open Space, with 20 behind the building façade. Adds the same for ground floor on Type 'A' Frontage with a guideline to encourage it for all floors along street frontage.
- Adds side/rear setback of 30' above tower level when abutting another property to preserve light and air for adjacent properties.
- Strikes view corridor standards that required 50' widths and support of the green pedestrian corridor that was not codified from Vision 2.0. Now preserves views to Courthouse and public open spaces along waterways, supported by principles rather than standards.

Section 10: Building Design (previously part of "Sites and Buildings")

- Adds 4-foot clear zone behind storefront glazing.
- Adds minimum glazing of 25% for residential ground floor.

- Adds specific façade variation standards requiring breaks in horizontal or vertical plane at least every 250 feet, but eliminates prescribed architectural methodology.
- Adds top-story cap requirement for buildings up to 75'.
- Removes highrise tower standards dictating narrow side face waterfront and replaces with guideline since it is premature to determine these site layouts.
- Adds highrise tower guidelines to encourage step backs to break up massing and preserve views, air and light. These could become standards in the future if high rises become prevalent.
- Adds ground floor residential standards to include landscaping, stoops, and delineation of public and private spaces in 5' setback for individual entrances.
- Expands Parking Garage standards for screening, including full concealment of ground-level parking on Frontage Type 'A' and Canals. Refers to the Urban Form Standards that require wrap in 25' of habitable space.
- Adds light roof surface requirements for aesthetics of adjacent taller buildings but also to aid in their achievement of Energy Code requirements.
- Removes specified exterior materials since now precluded by State law.
- Expands standards and guidelines for galleries, canopies, arcades, awnings and balconies.
- Adds standards for construction trailers to be inconspicuously placed but allows administrative approval.

Section 11: Landscaping on Private Property

- Consolidates and enhances prior code and minimize references to Zoning Ordinance that are more suburban in application. References American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60.1) to guide plant materials and volumes.
- Requires 50% tree canopy and 20% landscaping area with up to 80% paved surface (pervious and impervious) in Waterfront Transition Zones.
- Requires 40% tree canopy, and appropriate plantings and delineation from sidewalks for surface parking lots.
- Provides list of approved trees on private property by canopy size (consistent with downtown), noting City Forester can administratively approve additional species.

Section 12: Parking

- Refers to enhanced parking garage standards under Section 9: Urban Form.
- Increases standards for surface parking lots including landscaping.
    - Distinguishes between permanent parking on an improved site and transitional parking that may be a primary use on a lot serving off-premise parking demands.

- Maintains requirement that they be located behind or to the side of buildings with maximum frontage reflecting the inverse of the building required to be in the build-to-zone (ie. 20% for Type 'A' and 40% for Type 'B').
- Prohibits on waterfront, canals, and Type 'A' Streets.

Section 13: Screening and Fencing (previously part of "Sites and Buildings")

- Added clarity for service area requirements.
- Added specific requirements for location and screening of wall- and ground-mounted equipment with flexibility for meeting line-of-sight requirements of utility providers.

Section 14: Signage

- Aligned with downtown standards and guidelines without significant change from current requirements.