
Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) Application



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

Dear Applicant:

You are taking an important step toward preserving the character of your block. The Planning and Development Department staff will help you determine if your block qualifies for this application and can assist you in completing the application process. If approved, an ordinance will be created that preserves the building line character of your block.

This application packet includes:

- a Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) Application
- a list of Submittal Requirements and a sample of the notification signs
- a blank Evidence of Support page for other property owners to sign.
- a sample of a Map Sketch
- a set of Frequently Asked Questions

It is recommended, but not required, that each applicant meet with a staff person for a preliminary meeting before an application is submitted, allowing staff to go over the eligibility requirements that are reviewed for all applications. Below are the five criteria that applications and their proposed boundaries must meet:

1. contain at least one blockface, but not more than two opposing blockfaces;
2. contain all lots on each blockface;
3. form a contiguous area;
4. have at least 60% of the lots developed for or restricted to single-family use (exclusive of land used for a park, library, place of worship, or school); and
5. contain at least one lot that does not have a minimum building line established by deed restrictions

A complete application must include all items listed in the submittal requirements on page 6 of this packet. A complete application package must be mailed or hand-delivered during standard business hours to:

Planning and Development Department
Attn: Community and Regional Planning
611 Walker Street, 6th Floor
Houston, TX 77002

A step-by-step guide is provided in this packet. Contact the Community and Regional Planning Division at (832) 393-6600 with any questions or to schedule a meeting prior to submitting an application. More information can be found on www.houstonplanning.com. Thank you for your interest and we look forward to meeting with you soon.

¡ATENCIÓN! Si necesita ayuda en español o gustaría recibir más información acerca de este asunto, Comuníquese al número 832-393-6659.

Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) Application



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Special Minimum Building Line Block: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) application, what does it mean and who created the boundary?

An SMBLB application provides property owners an opportunity to preserve the building line character of a blockface or two opposing blockfaces. This means any structures built in the application area must have building lines greater than or equal to the established Special Minimum Building Line. The application is submitted by a property owner within the application area, or a representative of an entity in your neighborhood.

What if my building line is less than the designated Special Minimum Building Line?

For example, if a 15-foot Special Minimum Building Line is established for your block, no structures will be permitted to be built with a building line of less than 15 feet. If you currently own a lot with a structure that has a building line that is less than the Minimum Building Line there is no penalty, however, future building lines would need to meet the established Special Minimum Building Line.

What can I build on my lot?

There are no land use restrictions with a Special Minimum Building Line ordinance. Also note that this application does not determine the physical design of buildings, aside from how far they are built from the front property line subject to a Special Minimum Building Line designation. Please note that deed restrictions for building lines may already be imposed on some properties in your neighborhood. In those cases, the more restrictive of either the proposed minimum building line or deed restriction will be applied to the property.

Can I add to or rebuild my single-family/multifamily/commercial property?

Yes, if you have an existing single-family lot you are allowed to rebuild or improve your home. If you have an existing commercial or multifamily lot, you are allowed to rebuild or improve the building. Any new residence or addition on your property would need to meet the Special Minimum Building Line. If you decide to add a porch that is habitable or has enough space to add furniture, it must meet the Special Minimum Building Line.

What happens during the application process?

An applicant for the Special Minimum Building Line Block will submit a completed application packet. You may choose to support this application by signing the Evidence of Support page before its submittal. Planning and Development Department staff will review the application and notify residents within the application area that a complete application was submitted.

What if I disagree with this application?

Notification sent to property owners will indicate a 30-day protest period allowing property owners to file a written protest with the Planning and Development Department. If an SMBLB application receives less than 51% support when it is submitted to the Planning and Development Department, or if there is a protest from a property owner within the block, the application will be referred to the Houston Planning Commission.

What happens at the Planning Commission?

At the Planning Commission, there will be a public hearing where you will have an opportunity to speak. The Planning Commission will approve or deny the application. If approved, the application will be forwarded to the City Council. If the application is denied by the Planning Commission or City Council, the application may not be resubmitted for one year.

To approve an application, Planning Commission must find that:

- The application area has an identifiable building line character.
- The identifiable building line character of the application area will be preserved.
- There is sufficient support from the property owners; and
- The application meets all submittal requirements as defined by city ordinance.

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Special Minimum Building Line Block: Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What happens after the City Council?

If the City Council approves the application, the Special Minimum Building Line Block designation will apply immediately. The ordinance shall be effective for up to 40 years.

How is the Special Minimum Building Line calculated?

The Planning and Development Department calculates the Special Minimum Building Line by using the following steps outlined in the ordinance:

1. List the building lines in order of largest to smallest.
2. Express each lot's building line as a percentage of the total sum of the building lines within the proposed special minimum building line block by dividing the building line of each lot by the sum of the combined building lines of all lots within the entire special minimum building line block.
3. Add the areas expressed as a percentage in the order of the list until the cumulative sum of the percentages reaches 70 percent or greater, or in the case of a special minimum building line block within a historic district designated by the city council, 60 percent or greater; and
4. The building line of the lot at which the cumulative sum reaches the percentage required by item (3) of this section is the proposed special minimum building line requirement.

Building Line Rank	Address	Building Line in feet	% of all B.L.'s	Cumulative %
1	1611 Dachshund	23	14.3%	14.3%
2	1603 Dachshund	20	14.3%	28.6%
3	1613 Dachshund	18	14.3%	42.9%
4	1607 Dachshund	18	14.3%	57.1%
5	1609 Dachshund	18	14.3%	71.4%
6	1601 Dachshund	15	14.3%	85.7%
7	1605 Dachshund	13	14.3%	100.0%
The fifth largest building line in this example is 18 feet. This would be the new Special Building Line for this street.				

If at any time you have questions or need assistance, please call the Planning and Development Department at (832) 393-6600 or visit the department's website at www.houstonplanning.com.

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Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) Steps

- **Step 1: Meet with Staff of the Planning and Development Department (Optional)**
Applicants may choose to meet with Planning and Development staff before submitting an application. At the meeting, the applicant should bring a map with the proposed boundary and a copy of any existing deed restrictions. To schedule a pre-submittal meeting, contact Community and Regional Planning at (832) 393-6600.
- **Step 2: Submit a Complete Application**
A complete application package must be mailed through the US Postal Service or hand-delivered during standard business hours to the Planning and Development Department. If the application is determined to be incomplete, it will be returned with an explanation of what is needed to make it complete. Within two (2) business days, Planning and Development staff will contact the applicant(s) regarding whether their application is accepted or rejected. If the application is rejected, staff will explain any necessary revisions. It is important to note that any subdivision or development plats submitted within seven (7) days after a Special Minimum Building Line Block application is accepted will NOT be subject to the building line requirement.
- **Step 3: Application Review and Notification Signs**
An accepted application will be posted on the Planning and Development Department's website within two (2) business days. Planning and Development staff will review the application, and within 30 business days, determine if the application meets eligibility requirements. After it has been determined that the application meets eligibility requirements staff will notify the applicant(s) and send an instruction letter for the posting of notification signs within the application boundary area. The applicant will have 10 days from when they receive the instruction letter to post the signs.
- **Step 4: 30-Day Protest Period**
Within 15 days of receiving a complete application, the Planning and Development Department will send a notification to property owners within the proposed boundaries, as well as the District Council Member. The notifications will include instructions on how property owners may object to this designation. Any objections must be made in writing within 30 days of the date of the notice.
- **Step 5: Department Review of Protest Responses**
At the end of the thirty days, one of the following actions will occur:
 - the application will be sent to the City Council if it has at least 51% support with no protests; or
 - the application will be sent to the Planning Commission for a public hearing if:
 - a) it has at least 51% support and has received protests, or
 - b) it has less than 51% support but has received no protestsA notification letter will be sent to property owners no less than 15 days before the Planning Commission hearing date. Applications recommended for approval by the Commission will be forwarded to the City Council. Applications denied by the Commission will not be forwarded to the City Council.
- **Step 6: Attend the Planning Commission Public Hearing**
A letter indicating the time, date, and place of the Planning Commission meeting will be sent to all property owners within the proposed SMBLB. Members of the public may present comments about the SMBLB at the public hearing. After the public hearing, the Commission will consider whether or not to recommend that the City Council establish the SMBLB. If the Commission recommends that the City Council establish the SMBLB, the Planning and Development Director will refer the application to the City Council. If the application is denied, the decision of the Commission will be final.
- **Step 7: City Council Action**
City Council will consider all Special Minimum Building Line Block applications that are approved by the Planning Commission or forwarded by the Director of Planning and Development. The City Council's action to approve or deny the designation is final. Persons wanting to address the City Council during the public comment session of the meeting should contact the City Secretary at (832) 393-1100 or citysecretary@houstontx.gov.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: WE WILL NOT ACCEPT APPLICATIONS THAT ARE SENT THROUGH EMAIL OR FAX

Special Minimum Building Line Block (SMBLB) Application



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Main Applicant Information (required)

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____
Street Address *Apartment/Unit #*

_____ _____
City *State* *ZIP Code*

Phone: _____ Email _____

Are you a property owner within the application boundary? YES NO If no, what is your relation to the application boundary? _____

Did you have a preliminary meeting with the Planning and Development Department? YES NO If yes, what was the date of the meeting? _____

Does the application boundary have deed restrictions? YES NO If yes, do they address a Minimum Building Line? _____

Describe the location of the application boundary. (Example: "North side of Golden Retriever Drive between Boxer and Schnauzer Streets" or "Block 15, Lots 1-5, in Cocker Spaniel Subdivision")

Signature of applicant: _____

Alternate Applicant Information (optional)

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____
Street Address *Apartment/Unit #*

_____ _____
City *State* *ZIP Code*

Phone: _____ Email _____

Signature of alternate applicant: _____

Application Information (STAFF USE ONLY)

File Number: _____ Super Neighborhood: _____
City Council District: _____ Planner Assigned: _____

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

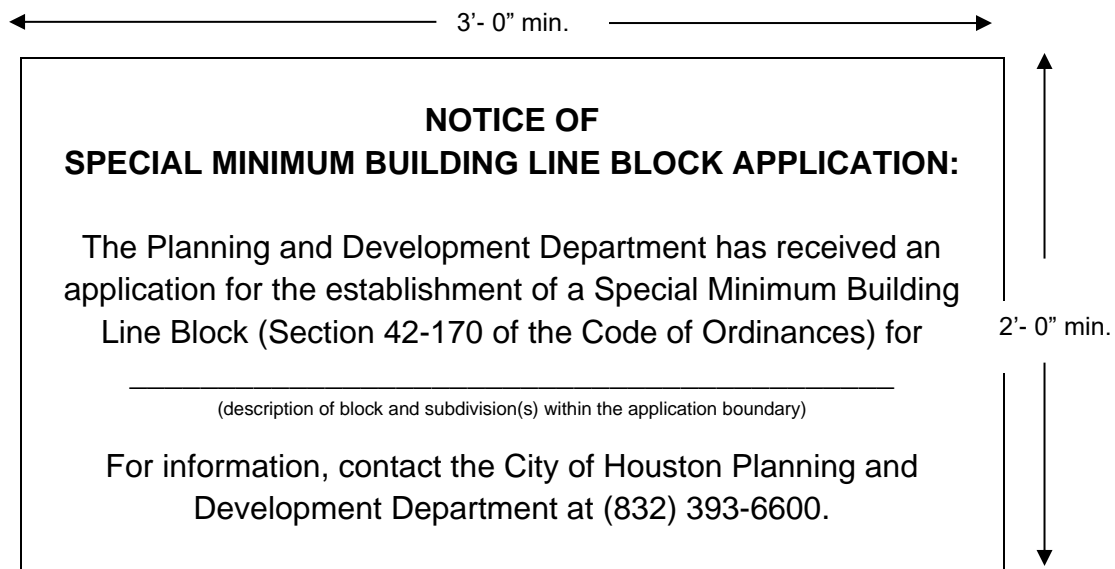
Submittal Requirements (Please check and complete)

Completed application form (page 5)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sample of Notification Sign (page 6)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of support signed by lot owners within the boundary area (page 7)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copy of deed restrictions, if applicable***	<input type="checkbox"/>
Map or sketch showing the address, land use and size of all lots within boundary area (page 8)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A survey of at least one lot on each blockface that includes the location and dimensions of all buildings on the lot	<input type="checkbox"/>

*****DISCLAIMER:** The Planning Department reviewed the deed restrictions you submitted for your subdivision and noted no language addressing a minimum lot size or minimum building line requirement. As such, revisions to Chapter 42 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances extending the minimum lot size and minimum building line requirements to neighborhoods within the corporate boundaries of the City of Houston that do not have a minimum lot size or minimum building line established in their deed restrictions are applicable to your subdivision. It's important to understand, however, Planning's review and decision regarding the eligibility of your subdivision to avail itself of the protections set forth in Chapter 42 of the City of Houston Code of Ordinances is based solely on the instruments you have provided and which purport to be the most recent, valid version of your subdivision's deed restrictions. The City of Houston is making no assurances or representations regarding the actual validity of your deed restrictions. You should consult with a private attorney if you have any questions or concerns about your deed restrictions.

Sample Notification Sign (Fill in the blank)

The applicant is responsible for obtaining and posting a minimum of two (2) signs per blockface within the boundary of the proposed Special Minimum Building Line Block within ten (10) days of written notice from the Planning and Development Department. Planning and Development staff may approve an alternative number of signs for the application of a Special Minimum Building Line Block upon determining that the signs will provide sufficient notice within the application area. Each sign shall be at least two feet by three feet (2' x 3'), face the street, and be legible from the street. Applicants are responsible for contacting Planning and Development Staff once the signs are posted. The applicant shall use reasonable efforts to maintain the signs until the Planning and Development Director or the Houston Planning Commission has approved an application. Applicants shall include the name of each subdivision in the application on the notification sign.



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Evidence of Support for a Special Minimum Building Line Block

Below are signatures of property owners within the proposed Special Minimum Building Line Block boundary who support the request to preserve the character of the existing building lines and the creation of a Special Minimum Building Line Block for the following area: (Example: "North and south side of Winter Lane between Spring Avenue and Summer Avenue" or "Block 15, Lots 1-5, in Four Seasons Subdivision")

By signing this evidence of support, I hereby represent:

- (1) That I am the lot owner or representative of the property listed with my signature, and
- (2) I support the petition to create a Special Minimum Building Line Block.

Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:
Property Owner (Please Print Name):	Address:	
Signature: X	Date:	Telephone:

For any questions on the Special Minimum Building Line Block, call the Planning and Development Department at (832) 393-6600 or visit the department's website at www.houstonplanning.com.

¡ATENCIÓN! Si necesita ayuda en español o gustaría recibir más información acerca de este asunto, comuníquese al número 832-393-6659.

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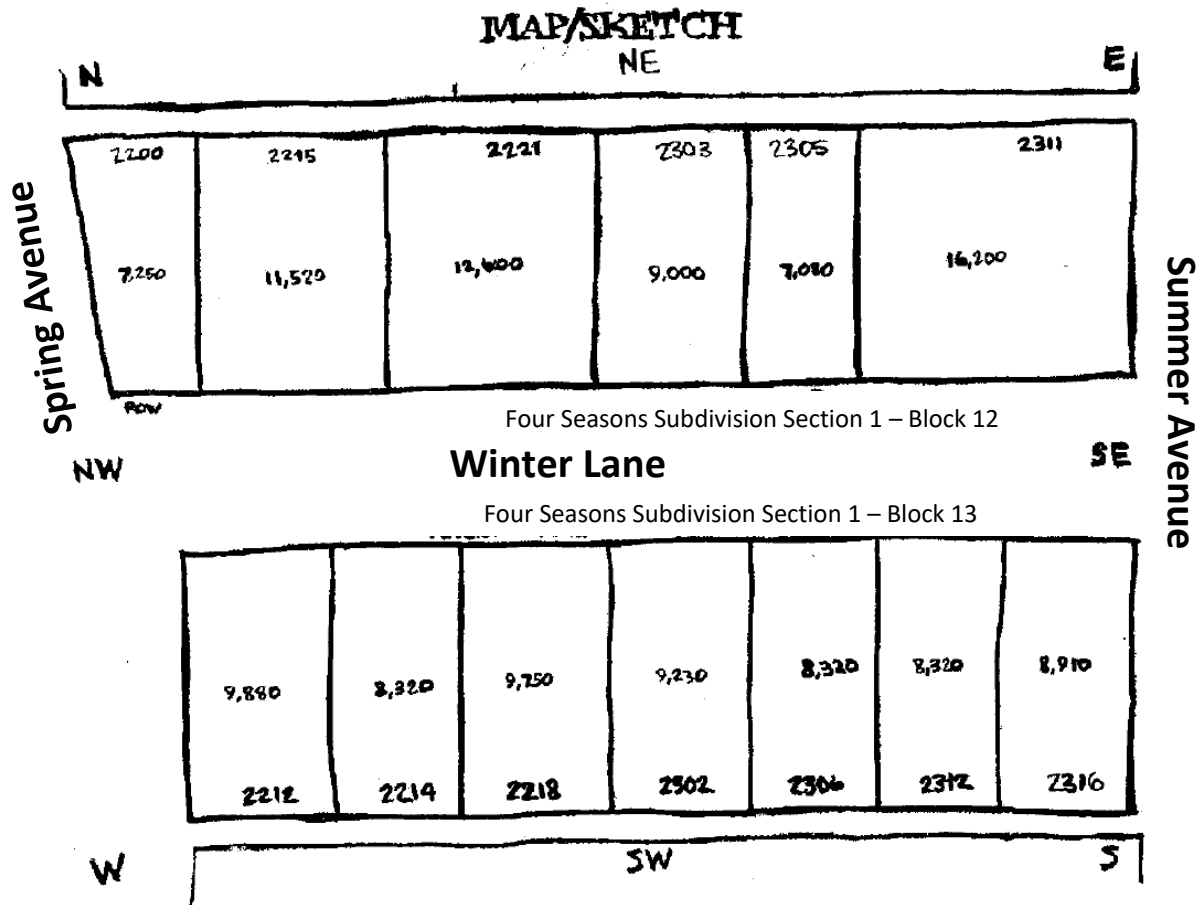


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Sample Map Sketch (Include Map Sketch in Application)

As part of the Special Minimum Building Line Block application, applicants must provide a map sketch of the proposed application area. It should look similar to the drawing below. Information for each lot within the proposed Special Minimum Building Line Block shall be shown on the drawing that includes the following:

- The land use of any lot that is **NOT** single-family residential. *Example: multifamily, commercial, a park, or vacant land*
- Any lot that may have a minimum building line previously established by deed restrictions.



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Special Minimum Building Line Block: Public Information Request Form

How can applicants or property owners stay updated as to the status of an application?

Applicants or property owners within a Special Minimum Building Line Block can receive information about an application, including who is applying for the designation, as well as details related to the support of the application. Please follow the steps below to request information from our department's Public Information Office.

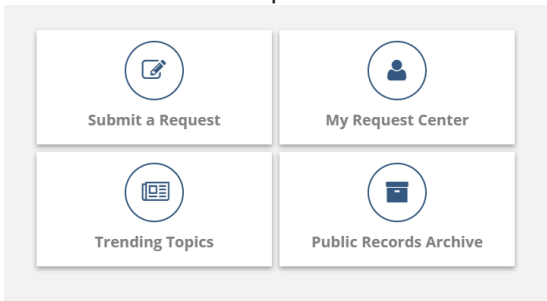
1. Go to Public Information Act Requests home page:

<https://www.houstontx.gov/pia.html>

2. Scroll down to click on "Please click here to access the portal"

Using the online portal, you may now request public records of most City departments. [Please click here to access the portal.](#)

3. Click on "Submit a Request"



4. Select Planning and Development Department

Select	Planning and Development	Cellular Towers Application, Geographic Information Systems Data, Development Plats, Historic Landmarks, Historic Districts, Major Thoroughfare & Freeway Plan, Off-Street Parking Variance, Prohibited Yard Parking Application, Special Minimum Lot Size Applications, Special Minimum Building Line Applications, Landscape Plan Variance, Hotel/Motel Application, Hazmat Application
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5. Create an account and then, fill out the request form

Login

If you have used this service previously, please log in. If this is your first online request, please create an account and provide as much contact information as possible. You will be able to track the progress of your request by logging in to your account.

Login and Submit

Email Address:*

Password:*

You can also find the steps to request information in the following [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qixeK59ohks).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qixeK59ohks>