



Built To Last

Masonry Ordinance Case Study

LEANDER, TEXAS

The city of Leander, Texas sits 22 miles northwest of Austin, Texas and is one of the fastest growing cities in Central Texas. In 2005, Leander approved a composite zoning ordinance designed to establish a framework of zoning guidelines and criteria that would provide for and support the development of a quality living and work environment.

By adopting the ordinance, the City Council sought to preserve and protect the attractiveness of the community and to provide reasonable regulations and requirements to protect, preserve, improve, and provide for the health, safety, and general welfare of the city.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2005, the Leander City Council passed a new composite zoning ordinance to create standards for development within the city. By calling for the use of masonry products, Leander sought to improve the quality and appearance of the city's residential and commercial structures without slowing the city's double-digit growth. They also understood the tremendous added benefit of an expanded tax base as masonry buildings and homes typically appraise at higher values than like non-masonry structures. Oftentimes this scenario allows a city to actually lower its effective tax rate.

JUST THE FACTS:

- City: Leander, Texas
- Population: 20,000
- Type of Government: Mayor and City Council
- Founded: July 17, 1882
- David H. Hutton, AICP Senior Planner for the City of Leander, 512-528-2732, david.hutton@ci.leander.tx.us
- Website: www.ci.leander.tx.us/index.cfm

Leander offers residents a quality school system, affordable cost of living, progressive government, and close proximity to many employment options. As a result, the city's population skyrocketed from approximately 7,596 people in 2000 to more than 20,000 people in 2006, making it one of the fastest growing cities in Central Texas.

Naturally, a lot of new buildings and homes were constructed in the last few years. Since it was a safe bet that even more were to come, the City Council undertook measures in 2005 to ensure that future development improved the appearance, quality, and overall marketability of the city.

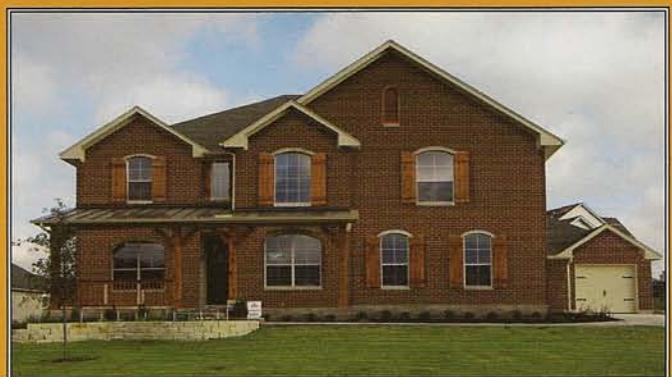
According to David Hutton, senior planner for the city of Leander, "Some residents were concerned that the city's zoning ordinance and development standards would not produce desired quality growth in the future. That is one reason why the city passed this comprehensive zoning ordinance that includes masonry requirements."

The 2005 composite zoning ordinance defines building standards for new developments according to use, site, and architectural



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*-Dave Hutton
Senior Planner for the City of Leander*





characteristics. The zoning ordinance calls for a minimum of 85 percent masonry on residential and 60 percent masonry on commercial structures in some areas adjacent to residential areas. The ordinance also calls for all commercial structures to have at least 60 percent of street facing walls constructed with masonry products.

"Non-residential properties are improved in non-residential zoning districts if they are adjacent to homes or are prominently located," says Hutton.

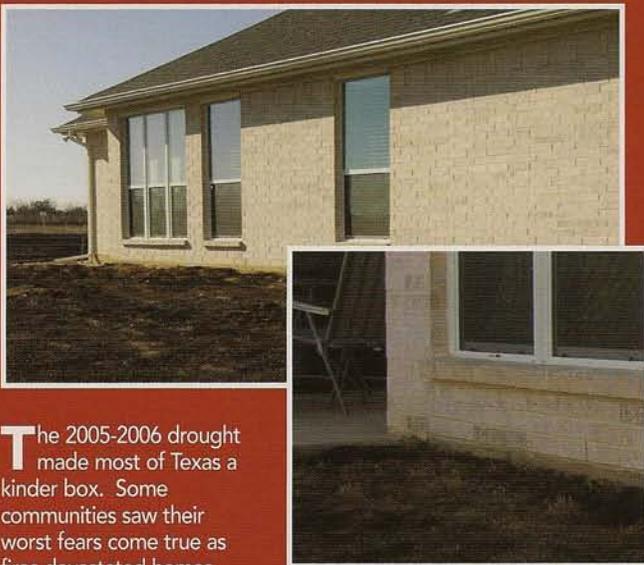
By calling for the use of brick and other masonry materials, Leander took deliberate steps to ensure the city could continue to grow and meet the needs of future residents and business, and maintain a high-quality appearance throughout the city.

The impact of the new composite zoning ordinance on new housing and commercial developments in Leander has been positive. Many exciting properties are planned — or are now under construction. And more high quality, attractive homes have been built using brick or other masonry products. As such, they are now more durable, will require less maintenance over their lifetimes, and maintain higher appraisal values.

By adopting its 2005 composite zoning ordinance, Leander hopes to continue its Texas-sized growth, while improving the marketability of its buildings along the way. They are also going to enjoy the added benefits of an expanded tax base, increased fire and wind safety, and lower insurance rates for the city and its residents. ■

ADDED BENEFITS

BRICK SIMPLY WON'T BURN



The 2005-2006 drought made most of Texas a kinder box. Some communities saw their worst fears come true as fires devastated homes, farms, and commercial buildings.

On January 17, 2006 a 40-acre grass fire threatened homes in Joshua, Texas. Homeowners used water hoses in an effort to keep flames from engulfing their homes and possessions. The amazing thing is that even though yards were completely charred and storage sheds and fences burned to the ground, the all-brick homes were spared. The primary ingredient in brick is clay, which is fired to around 2000° F. This process makes brick a non-combustible material and an excellent cladding choice for resistance to fires.

Masonry ordinances that require masonry materials can help raise a community's fire rating and lower insurance rates for the city and its residents. The fire resistance of brick was proven during the January 17th Joshua, Texas fire.

BRICK RESISTS WIND DAMAGE



Coming off the worst and most devastating hurricane season on record, city officials are scrambling to find ways to make their communities safer. In Texas, springtime tornadoes can be spawned at anytime, putting lives and property in the path of destruction.

Texas Tech University conducted tests to determine the safety of cladding surfaces when they're up against the natural strength and devastation of tornadoes. The tests used a wooden 2x4 projectile at a relatively slow speed of 34 mph. Results showed that the missile bounced off the brick veneer, but penetrated to the interior of all other materials tested, including wood siding and fiber cement.

For more information on how your community can increase its tax base, increase fire and wind safety, and attract quality residential and commercial development, call the Southwestern Brick Institute at 800-733-1813 or go to www.MasonryOrdinance.com.