

Sugar Land Council Vote Starts Imperial Redevelopment In Earnest

by [Bob Dunn](#), Jun 27, 2007, 06 38 AM

Sugar Land City Council approved Cherokee Investment Partners' general plan Tuesday night for the long-awaited Imperial Sugar redevelopment project.

That project could consist of up to 1,619 homes on 234 acres, 27 acres of commercial retail space, 36 acres of office or light industrial space and 46 acres devoted to a mix of uses surrounding Imperial's historic sugar plant.

Bounded by U.S. 90A to the south, State Highway 6 to the west, Kempner High School and a tract of land owned by the Texas Department of Transportation on the north, and by Burney Drive on the east, the property includes several hundred acres known as Tract 3, owned by the Texas General Land Office, and about 220 acres Cherokee expects to buy from Imperial Sugar, including an historic sugar refinery and char house.

Cherokee will be the developer, but is partnering with the Texas General Land Office via a development agreement that has not been made public. The project consists of about 650 acres including the historic Imperial Sugar Co. property on U.S. 90A.

Cherokee first revealed its general plan [in April](#) before the Sugar Land Planning & Zoning Commission.

While the City Council approved that general plan on Tuesday, numerous details of the development still remain to be worked out, including:

- Clarification of how buffer areas will be treated adjacent to residential areas;
- Setback restrictions south of the Mayfield Park expansion property line;
- Determining whether certain tracts fronting State Highway 6 near Sugar Land Regional Airport will be permitted for residential use;
- Establishing minimum residential/non-residential development ratios in areas of the project allowing mixed uses.

In its general plan, Cherokee describes development on about 45 acres surrounding the historic Imperial buildings as “the heart of this development project,” which would be converted into “a historic themed mixed-use development centered on the eight-story Char House, which will be preserved and redeveloped.”

But connecting the project’s heart, the majority of the project’s acreage and the rest of the city has proved to be a challenge.

University Boulevard was originally to have extended across U.S. 90A to become a key entryway to the project, and especially to the historic mixed-use center. However, [FortBendNow reported in March](#) that Imperial Sugar mistakenly believed it owned a piece of property including the proposed University Boulevard entry. But due diligence in preparation for the sale of land to Cherokee revealed that portion of the property actually is owned by Union Pacific Railroad.

While there has been speculation that the revelation about Union Pacific’s ownership would stall the project, Cherokee said in its general plan that it is working with the railroad, Imperial Sugar Co. and the city to find a way to still allow the northward extension of University Boulevard.