



CITY OF HOUSTON

NEWS RELEASE

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Houston Mayor Bill White, State Sen. Tommy Williams Announce Historic Agreement on Partnership Between City and The Woodlands

Texas State Senator Tommy Williams and Houston's Mayor Bill White today announced a historic agreement allowing residents of The Woodlands to choose their form of self-government and to provide an ongoing financial partnership between The Woodlands and the City of Houston for projects. Projects would include funding for mobility, the development and maintenance of major regional parks, and certain improvements making it easier to get in and out of the institutions within the Texas Medical Center used by residents of the entire region, including The Woodlands.

The Woodlands was deliberately developed within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City of Houston. That has limited its self-governance options.

"The Woodlands has demonstrated the success of a planned community, has flourished and created a critical mass of residential development and employment, and has developed its own sense of identity and community," said Mayor White. "Senator Williams and I have worked to make sure that the people of The Woodlands have an opportunity for self-governance in the future."

In 1999, the City of Houston and The Woodlands agreed to jointly study the future role of The Woodlands and the governance of the region. The parties agreed to defer any plans for annexation for 12 years. The agreement recognized that it was in the best interests of all "to eliminate the perceived threat of immediate annexation of The Woodlands in order to ... facilitate cooperative planning; permit the continuing, orderly development of The Woodlands as a high quality component of the greater Houston area; ensure that adequate capital is available for the provision of essential public facilities and services; and better utilize the financial and management resources of the City and local government agencies in the provision of public facilities and services. ..."

According to Sen. Williams, "both Houston and The Woodlands recognize their interdependence, and the financial arrangements negotiated by Mayor White allow for a fair contribution for regional projects benefiting everyone who lives in our metropolitan area. It will also give The Woodlands area the financial flexibility to maintain a good quality of life and prepare for an independent future."

Both the Mayor and the Senator applauded the agreement as a model for regional cooperation. Their agreement would require legislation permitting the creation of a special district, which Sen. Williams says he intends to introduce during the upcoming session of the Legislature. The agreement would allow the option for a broader source of revenue - specifically the use of local sales tax - to reduce pressures on future MUD (municipal utility district) fees and property taxes.

Mayor White said he would ask the State Senate and House members representing districts within the City of Houston to strongly support the agreement.

"This is a classic 'win-win' solution," said Mayor White. "No one wins from an adversarial approach, although Senator Williams and I both bargained hard for the benefit of our constituents."

The Woodlands is a master-planned community, lying predominantly in Montgomery County, north of the City.

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