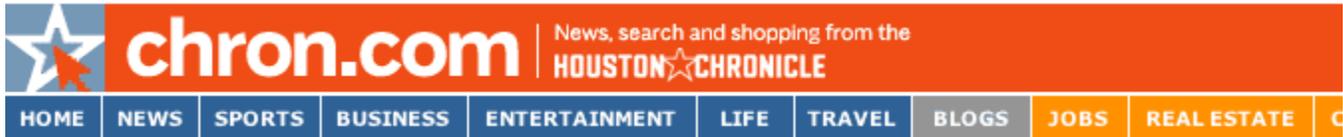


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## Houston Politics

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July 10, 2008

### The elephant not in the room

About 400 business leaders, elected officials and others gathered in a Galleria hotel today to hear experts lay out a vision of how the Houston region should grow in the decades to come. Their idea is in [this report](#). (PDF).

One of the key points made by the [Urban Land Institute](#) panel was the need for closer collaboration between the leaders of city and county governments throughout the area, as well as the private sector, to address problems that transcend jurisdictional boundaries.

Houston Mayor Bill White, who leads the largest jurisdiction within the area and arguably has more authority than anyone else to deal with the issues addressed in the experts' report, didn't attend. White's spokesman, Michel, told me earlier this week that he didn't think the mayor had read the group's report, although one of his staff had reviewed it.

Those who did attend, including Harris County Judge Ed Emmett and City Councilwoman Toni Lawrence, discussed strategies for how local institutions, notably the [Houston-Galveston Area Council](#), could exert influence over where and how development occurs. The goal wouldn't be to restrain growth, but to encourage more sustainable forms through a series of compact, walkable urban centers connected by roads, trails, and transit.

The leader of a local nonprofit who has been promoting similar concepts for years found much to agree with in the ULI report.

"This event marks a huge turning point in Houston," said David Crossley, the president of the [Gulf Institute](#). "The perfect storm of energy prices, climate change, and high-speed growth have ene discussion that can find direction in this report. We have been urging moves toward transit-conne centers for 10 years; now that's front and center on the regional plate. If we can just sort out the the ideology, Houston stands poised to be one of the great cities of the world."

Not all of the reaction was so enthusiastic. Blogger Cory Crow suggested in this [post](#) that the rep are simply pushing the trend of the moment in growth and development.

The H-GAC's Alan Clark, who was on a panel of local leaders who responded to the report today, afterward that his agency is working on an initiative to improve conditions in the FM 1960 corrido featured in my [story](#) today about the ULI report. A report on that effort is [here](#). (PDF)

Posted by Mike Snyder at July 10, 2008 04:37 PM

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