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Tower permits on hold — traffic 'implications' under study

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Except for giving permission for developers of the 1717 Bissonnet St. to disconnect water and sewer lines on some of its present buildings, the city of Houston has placed a hold on all other permits for the property.

According to a city spokesman, Andy Icken of the Public Works Department issued the holds and is the only one who can rescind them. In that eventuality, the process would continue forward to code enforcement officials.

Alvin Wright of Public Works said in an e-mail that the delays were caused because the department decided to study "further traffic implications in the area."

He said it is standard procedure for large projects to be

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handled in this manner, saying the department has made "unique decisions in the past."

The city is considering an ordinance distributed by the mayor's office to council members Tuesday requiring developments with 100 or more units to comply with the guidelines of a traffic impact study if density is increased by at least 100 percent.

The property at 1717 Bissonnet St. falls within those parameters.

On a related matter, Wright said repairs to Dunlavy Street from the work done by the developer during

installation of a sewer line for the project are under way and are the responsibility of the contractor.

On Sept. 20, 2007, residents of the area expressed dismay during a community meeting at Poe Elementary about not knowing that work on a planned 23-story building was being done to the city's infrastructure without their knowledge.

The following week, developer Matthew Morgan told the Examiner, "Believe me, there was nothing (secretive) about it. We met with City Council and the mayor from July to August."

Public Works documents received by the Examiner through an

Open Records request showed plans for a project including 210 apartments, 10-square-feet of office space and a full-service restaurant were received by the city Nov. 21, 2006.

An application for site work and foundation was "walked through" the Planning Department on July 30, 2007 and submitted for a full-code review on the same day, city records show.

According to an e-mail from Gary Bridges to other Public Works employees, the plans were rejected Aug. 8 by entities listed as "Water/Wastewater, Traffic, Storm Drainage, Structural, Electrical and Plumbing."