

University

Houston Urban Corridor Planning

Corridor-specific Report

Phase II and III

City of Houston

June 2008

The Planning Partnership

in collaboration with:

Asakura Robinson Company • Gunda Corporation • Cushman & Wakefield LePage • Working Partner

F

Foreword



CITY OF HOUSTON
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June 27, 2008

Dear Urban Corridor Planning participants,

It is an exciting and interesting time for the City's Urban Corridor Planning initiative.

After a long and productive process, the work of our consultants is coming to a close. They conducted a vast amount of research into the neighborhoods and conditions along METRO's light rail corridors, engaged in a thoughtful conversation with the community through a series of public workshops, and put tremendous effort into producing ideas and recommendations. These ideas and recommendations are contained in reports that we are now releasing.

In addition to our consultants' work, we have received input from ongoing dialogue with our Stakeholder Group, citizens and businesses in the corridors, and the real estate and development community. We are considering all of this input as we determine how we will go forward with modified City policies for development and infrastructure. Whatever we adopt, it has to make sense for Houston. Therefore, it is important to understand that actual development and infrastructure policies drafted by the City may differ from the guidelines presented in the consultants' reports.

The City will continue working to develop new policies that will smoothly integrate the Urban Corridors concepts into our communities. We look forward to the continued involvement of our citizens and businesses as we move ahead.

Sincerely,

Carol Abel Lewis

Carol Abel Lewis, Ph.D.
Chair, Houston Planning Commission

Planning Commissioners: Honorable Ed Chance, Marlene Gafrick, D. Fred Martinez, Lee Schlanger, Shaukat Zakaria, John W.H. Chiang, Sonny Garza, Robin Reed, Talmadge Sharp, Sr., David Collins, Honorable Grady Prestage, Richard A. Rice, Algenita Scott Segars, Kay Crooker, James R. Jard, David Robinson, Jon Strange, Honorable Ed Emmett, Mark A. Kilkenny, Jeff E. Ross, Beth Wolff

Executive Summary

University Corridor

This Report for the University Corridor should be read in conjunction with the Urban Corridor Planning Report. While the Urban Corridor Planning Report provides an overview of issues and recommendations that are common to all of the six Urban Corridors, this report provides specificity to the University Corridor.

The study process included a background analysis of the existing Corridor, interviews with stakeholders throughout the University Corridor, working sessions with residents and landowners along the Corridor, and extensive consultation with the stakeholder group and the City of Houston staff.

While there are many common characteristics between the various Corridors, each has distinctive features. The University Corridor is the longest of the six Urban Corridors, beginning at the Hillcroft Transit Center and extending east to Eastwood Transit Center. Most importantly, the University Corridor will effectively function as the primary east-west link connecting the entire planned transit network, given that it traverses the planned Uptown Corridor, the existing Main Street Corridor and the planned Southeast Corridor.

Context/Background Analysis

The first part of this Report examines the existing conditions and planned initiatives for the Corridor and establishes the framework for a Corridor-specific planning strategy.

Block Pattern

Given the extent of the Corridor, the block pattern varies considerably along its length. The western extent of the University Corridor is characterized by large 1/4 mile by 1/4 mile blocks. The dense apartment complex developments within these blocks reveal a system of internal roads and open spaces. East along the Corridor there are irregular shaped blocks with large building footprints. Further along Richmond Avenue, blocks sizes average a depth of 225 feet with varying frontages. Most buildings on this stretch of Richmond facing the Transit Street fill most of the block, exhibiting a typical urban condition. At the Main Street Corridor junction, the typical downtown block dimension of 250 by 250 feet exists, albeit with some irregular and vacant parcels. East of the Main Station, the prominence of low density neighborhoods is displayed by the small footprints of buildings along Wheeler and Ennis Streets. At the eastern end of the Corridor, the large building footprints set in open spaces or parking lots illustrate the University of Houston and the Eastwood Transit Center.

Pedestrian Realm

Overall, sidewalks providing access to parks and community facilities within the University Corridor are in need of maintenance and repair. Further, sidewalk widths (generally 4 feet) are inadequate for not only for current pedestrian traffic, but also the anticipated increase in pedestrian traffic volumes generated by the planned transit system. Notwithstanding that, exceptions to poor sidewalk conditions occur in proximity to the Universities and along some areas of Richmond Avenue.

Demographics

Persons under the age of 25 make up 32% of the population, while those aged between 25 and 54 make up 51% of the Corridor residents. The average household size is 2.17 persons. In terms of tenure, just over one-quarter of the households are owner occupied. The high proportion of renter households is a result of the high number of rental apartments located in various neighborhoods along the Corridor, particularly at its western most end.

University Corridor Planning Strategy

Based on the existing conditions along the Corridor, a strategy has been developed for the integration of new forms of development that includes a number of different conditions.

A key component of the University Corridor Planning Strategy is the Land Development Concept Plan that divides the Corridor into Development Opportunity Areas (those areas where Transit Oriented Development is most probable and should be promoted and focused) and Stable Areas (where an emphasis should be placed on protecting and enhancing the physical character of stable residential neighborhoods). The University Corridor is divided into the following three Land Development Concept categories:

Development Opportunity Area 1 - Corridor

This category is dispersed throughout the entire University Corridor. Representing those areas where redevelopment is anticipated as a result of the planned transit network and where there are a number of opportunities for potential infill developments. Development Opportunity Area 1 is particularly concentrated along Richmond Avenue between the planned Shepherd and Newcastle Stations, corresponding with the high concentration of employment and commercial uses. This is contrasted with a more sparse distribution of this category east of the planned Shepherd Station because the alignment moves through areas characterized by established residential areas.

Development Opportunity Area 2 - Downtown

This category comprises only a small portion of the University Corridor, concentrated around the planned Main Street Corridor and existing Wheeler Station, where the University Corridor intersects the Main Street Station. The Downtown area is likely to experience large-scale redevelopment activity as a result of the planned transit facilities and proximity to the City center. There are a number of vacant parcels in this area that lend themselves to new Transit Oriented Development.

Stable Areas

This includes areas with existing lower density residential neighborhoods along the Corridor, which are not likely to experience large scale redevelopment activity as a result of the planning transit network.

Demonstration Plans

Based on the Land Development Concept Plan, four demonstration plans were developed for sites along the Corridor that demonstrate the scale and nature that Transit Oriented Design might take. The sites include the Hillcroft Transit Center, the area around Main Street and Wheeler Street, a large lot located on the south side of Richmond Avenue between Greenbriar Street and South Shepherd Drive and a site located on Scott Street near the University of Houston Stadium. The plans demonstrate a variety of block sizes and development scenarios.

Recommendations for Implementation

The final component of this Report is a series of recommended design guidelines that are intended to eventually form the basis of the City's new planning regime for Transit Oriented Development. The guidelines correspond with the Development Opportunity Areas as delineated by the Land Development Concept Plan and provide a series of mandatory requirements, performance standards and optional guidelines for the design of pedestrian realm, buildings, parking, access and service facilities, as well as engineering standards.

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Introduction

The University Corridor is the longest of the Urban Corridors, starting at the Hillcroft Transit Center and extending east to Eastwood Transit Center. Intersecting the planned Uptown Corridor, the existing Main Street Corridor and the planned Southeast Corridor, the University Corridor will effectively function as the primary east-west link connecting the entire planned transit network.

Given its length, it is not surprising that there are significant variations in the context and character of the areas through which its planned alignment traverses. At its most western point, the Corridor runs through an area characterized by high density, multi-family, residential neighborhoods, located behind a veneer of employment and commercial uses that flank US-59 and Westpark Drive. As it moves east, shifting from Westpark Drive to Richmond Avenue, land uses along the Corridor are characterized by a mix of commercial and office uses. However, between Kirby and Main Streets, the Corridor is primarily characterized by established residential areas with retail and service commercial uses along the Richmond frontage. Moving east beyond Main Street, the character of the University Corridor changes again, with a mix of small scale neighborhood commercial uses and single family residential dwellings fronting directly onto the proposed Transit Street. The eastern terminus of the University Corridor is dominated largely by the presence of the University of Houston's vast campus, though a mix of employment and industrial uses surrounds the Eastwood Transit Center itself.

Undoubtedly, the proposed University Corridor alignment has been the most contentious of the planned Urban Corridors. Recognizing the distinct characteristics and contexts that exist along the proposed alignment, this study presents a strategy that responds to and respects the inherent differences along the Corridor. It identifies redevelopment opportunities that support transit functionality and encourage ridership, while at the same time ensuring that stable residential areas are protected and enhanced. This approach has been used in the planning and design of all of the Urban Corridors.

1 Context/Background Analysis

This chapter provides the context and background for the University Corridor.

F1.1

University Urban Corridor Study Area

The University Urban Corridor starts at the Hillcroft Transit Center and extends east to the Eastwood Transit Center, intersecting the Uptown, Main and Southeast Corridors.

The University Corridor is approximately 9.5 miles long. The boundaries of the Corridor Study Area are measured at ¼ mile on either side of the proposed Transit Street as shown on the facing map.

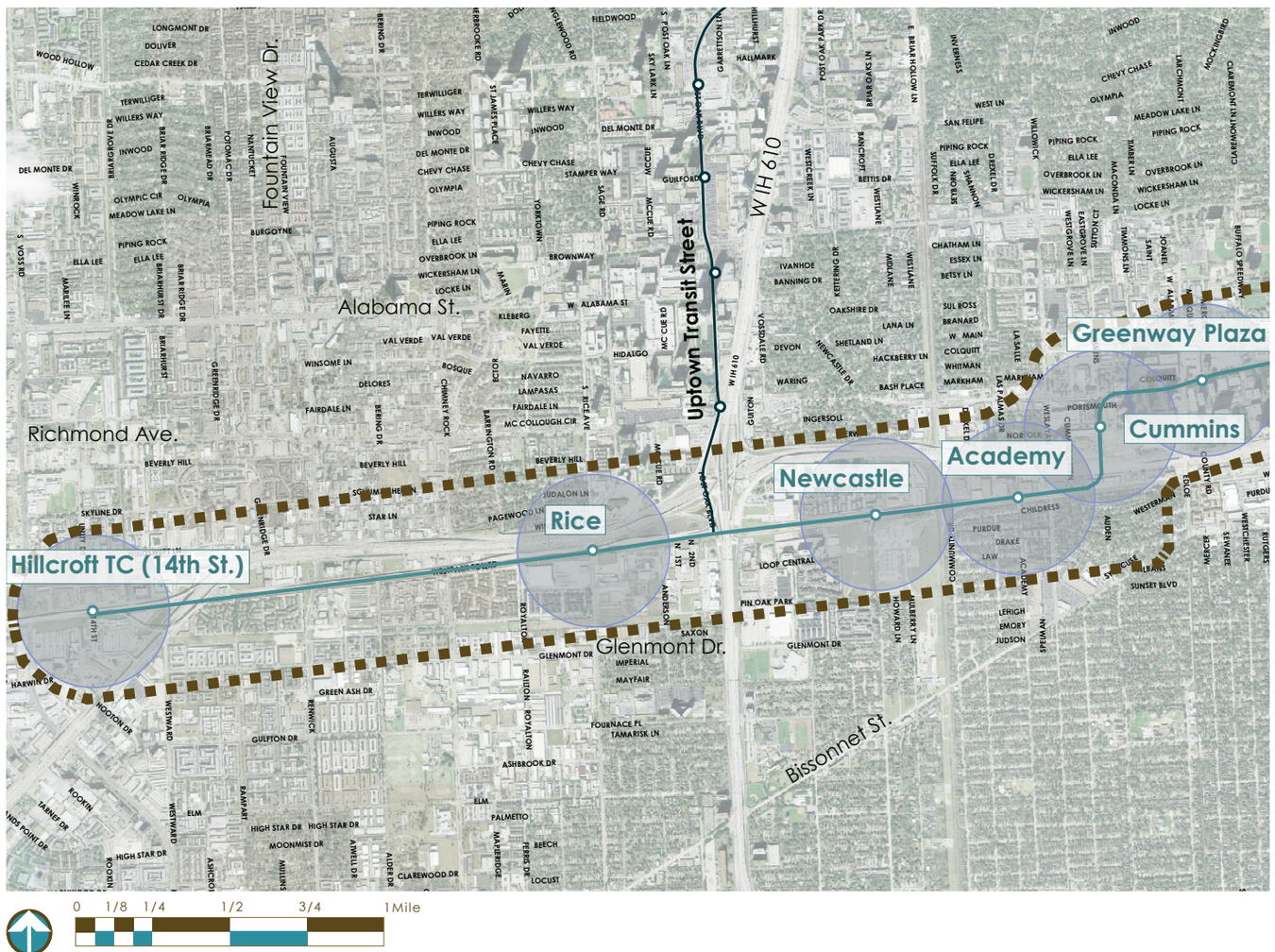
All Transit Street and station locations in this report are based on information provided by METRO and the City of Houston as of December, 2007.



Wheeler and Main Street intersection

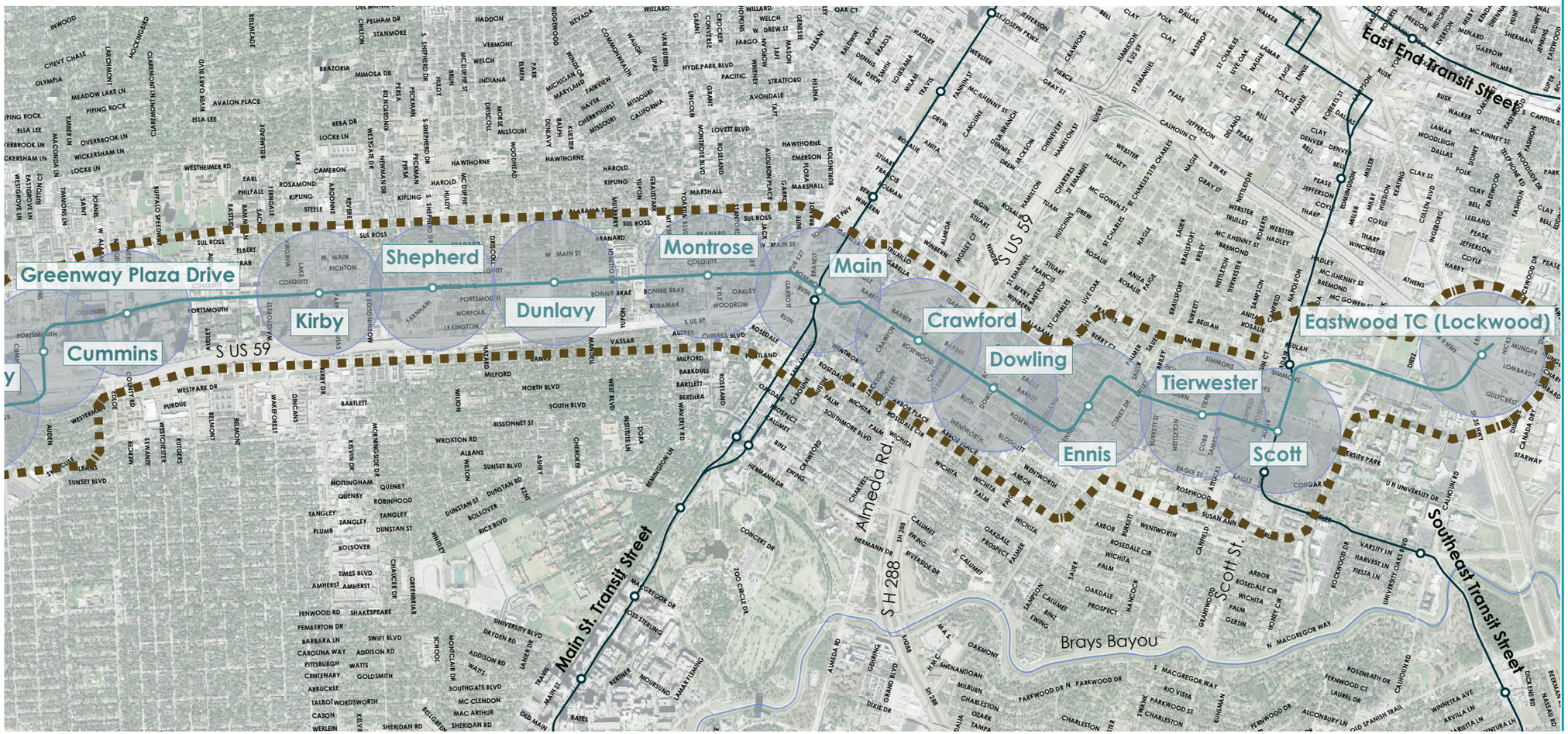

Planted median at Yupon St. and Richmond


Norfolk and Cummins intersection facing east


Fountain View Dr.
Alabama St.
Richmond Ave.
Uptown Transit Street
W IH 610
Glenmont Dr.
Bissonnet St.
Hillcroft TC (14th St.)
Rice
Newcastle
Academy
Cummins
Greenway Plaza
0 1/8 1/4 1/2 3/4 1Mile
0 660 1,320 2,640 3,960 5,280 Feet

Urban Corridor Study Area

University



University Transit Street

Connecting Transit Streets

Corridor Study Area

5 Minute Walking Distance to Station

F1.2

The Context of the University Corridor

Part of this Urban Corridor Planning Study is to understand the common and unique characters of each Urban Corridor. Four elements that define the area are the land uses, the size and scale of buildings, the pedestrian realm and the infrastructure.

F1.2.1 Land Use

The map on these pages illustrates the significant range of existing land uses along the University Corridor. Between the proposed Hillcroft and Newcastle Stations, existing land uses are characterized primarily by a mix of multi-family residential neighborhoods and large scale employment and commercial uses. The land use transition moving east along Richmond is quite striking, shifting from the office uses around Greenway Plaza, to commercial uses surrounding the planned Kirby Station, to predominately single family residential neighborhoods with small scale retail uses between the proposed Shepherd and Montrose Stations.

The area surrounding the interchange between the University and Main Street Corridors is characterized by large scale retail uses with some undeveloped parcels intermixed. East of Main Street, the University Corridor is characterized by single family residential development and large scale public/institutional uses associated with the Texas Southern University and University of Houston Campuses.



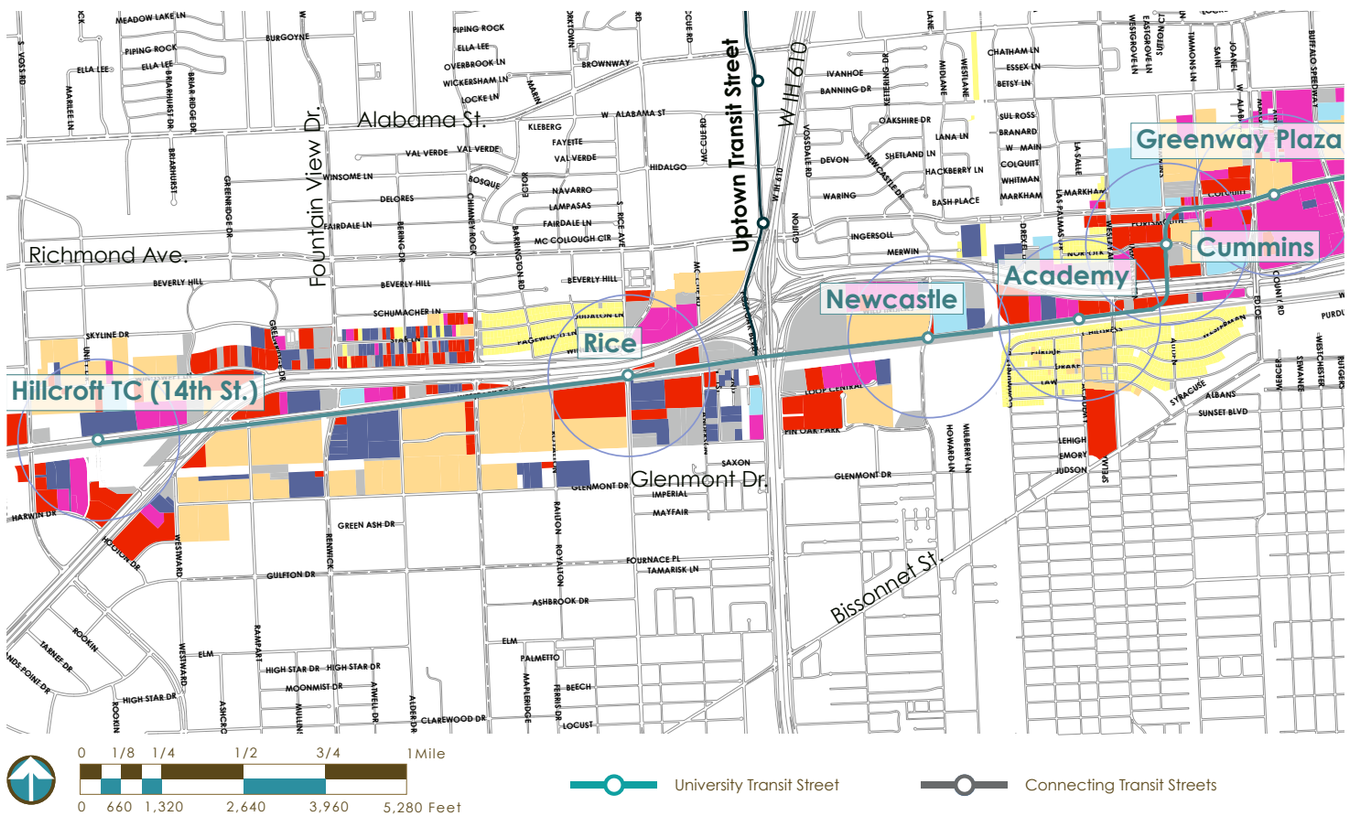
Hillcroft Transit Center, an example of transportation/utility land use


Commercial establishment near the proposed Scott Station


Northwest view of residential land use on Cleburne St.

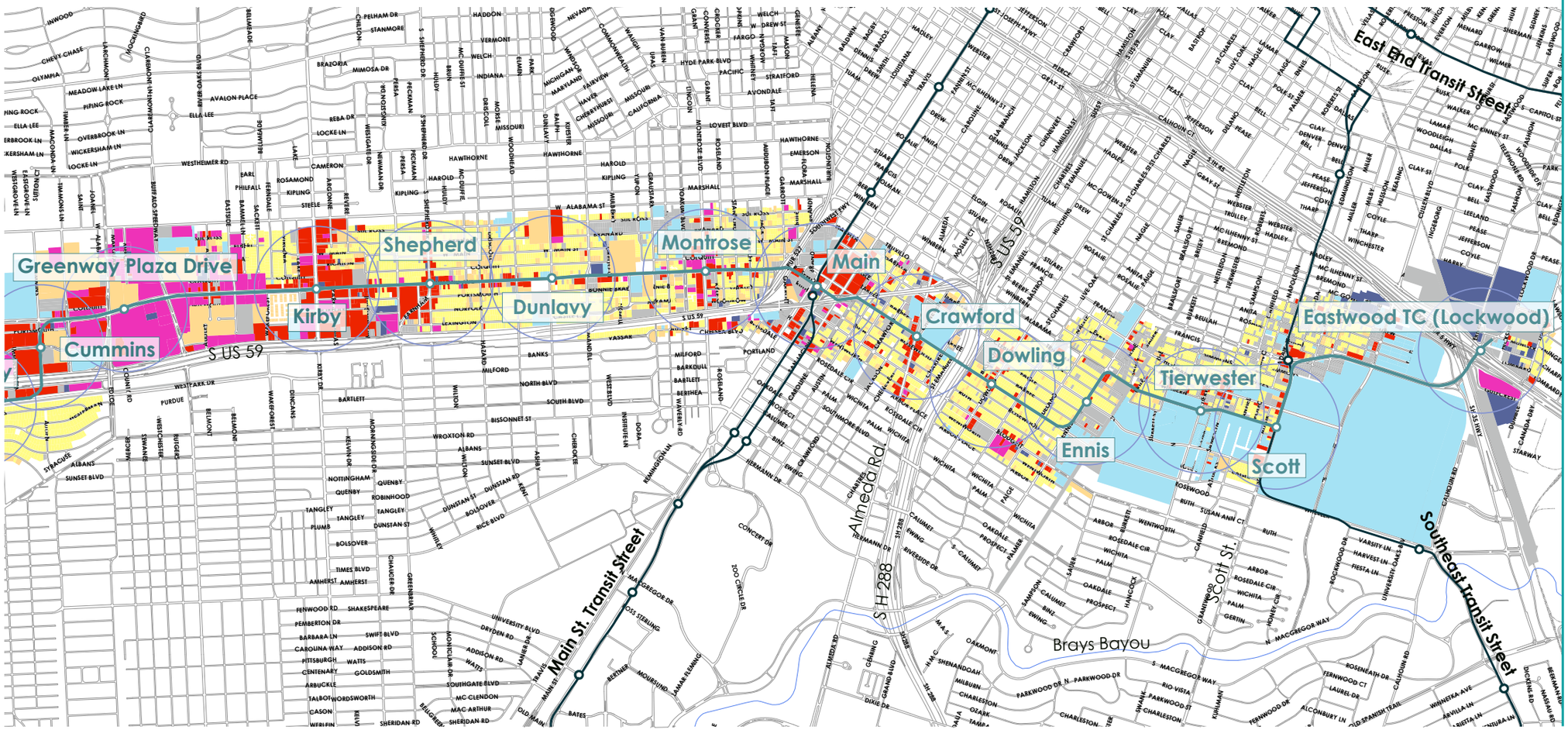


Multi-family residential near the proposed Greenway Plaza Dr Station



Existing Land Uses

University



Single Family Residential | Multi Family Residential | Commercial | Office | Industrial | Public/Institutional | Transportation/Utility | Park/Open Spaces | Undeveloped

F1.2.2
Building Footprint

The map on these pages illustrates the size and scale of buildings found in the University Corridor. All existing buildings have been shaded to help create a picture of the pattern created by different buildings, streets and open space - or the area's urban fabric.

The western extent of the University Corridor is characterized by large ¼ mile by ¼ mile blocks. The dense apartment complex developments within these blocks reveal a system of internal roads and open spaces. East along the Corridor there are irregular shaped blocks with large building footprints. Further along Richmond Avenue, blocks sizes average a depth of 225' with varying frontages. Most buildings on this stretch of Richmond facing the Transit Street fill most of the block, exhibiting a typical urban condition. At the Main Street Transit Street junction, the typical downtown block dimension of 250 by 250' exists, albeit with some irregular and vacant parcels. East of the Main Station, the prominence of low density neighborhoods is displayed by the small footprints of buildings along Wheeler and Ennis Streets. At the eastern end of the Corridor, the large building footprints set in open spaces or parking lots illustrate the University of Houston and the Eastwood Transit Center .



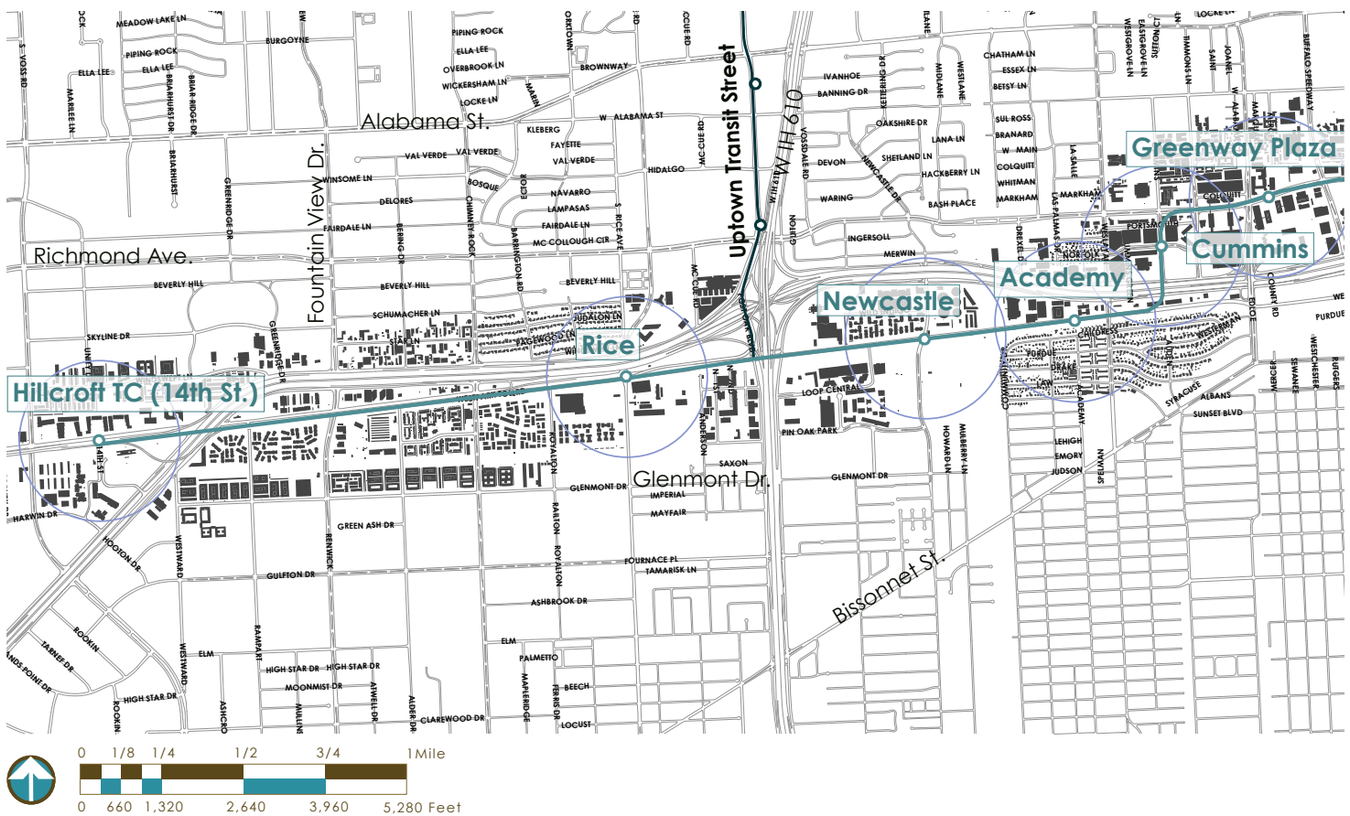
Small building footprint - Carwash at Reeves and Scott St.



Larger building footprints - Cummins and Richmond intersection

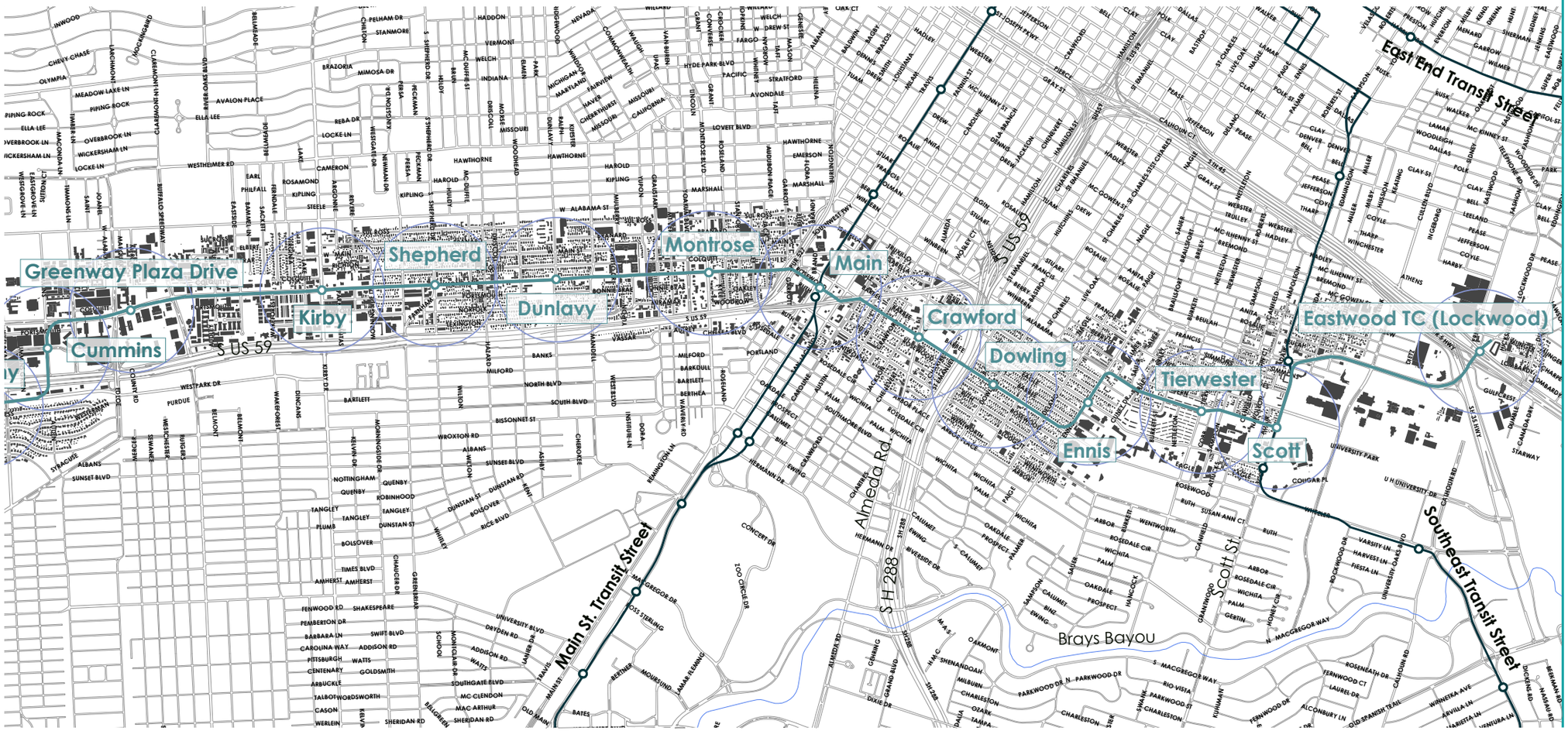


Shotgun houses at Palmer and Alabama St.



Existing Building Footprints

University



University Transit Street

Connecting Transit Streets

Building Footprint

5 Minute Walking Distance to Station

F1.2.3
Pedestrian Realm/Mobility Inventory

Parks

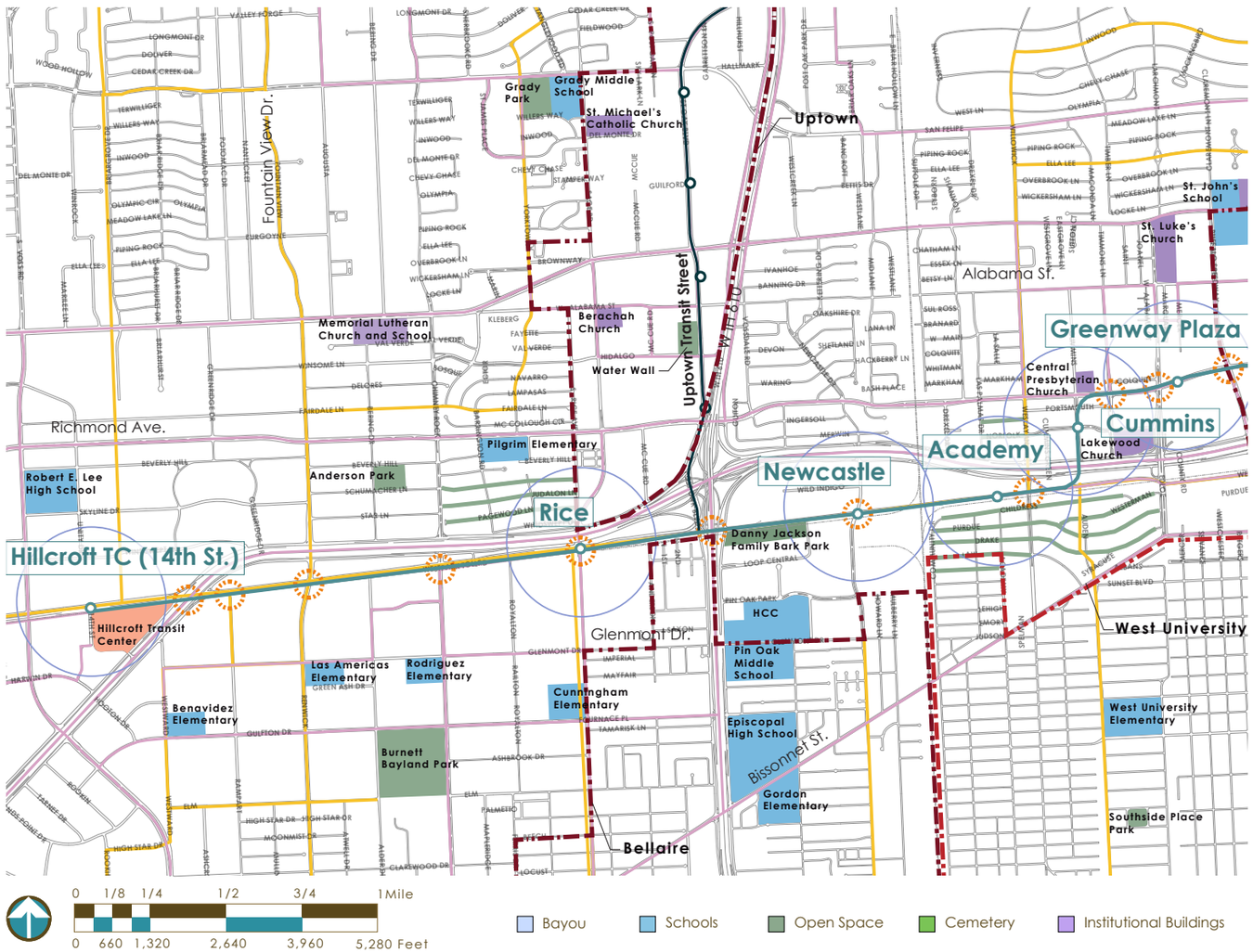
The table on page 12 lists the University Corridor Parks described in the 2001 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Other park projects include Danny Jackson Family Bark Park, Mandell Park, and Fleming Park.

In general, there are a few small parks such as the Danny Jackson Family Bark Park, Mandell Park. Anderson Park, Levy Park, Ervan Chew Park, Emancipation Park, and Peggy Park along the University Corridor. Danny Jackson Family Bark Park is located in the proposed LRT Corridor and must be relocated.

Publicly Accessible Open Space

The city boasts other publicly accessible park-like areas, which are not City-owned. For example, the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, and St. Thomas University provide plazas and park-like spaces serving students, faculty and the public.

Greenway Plaza is a master planned, mixed use development located along the University Corridor. Greenway Plaza is Houston's first totally planned business-commercial-residential complex. Most buildings within the Greenway Plaza campus are interconnected by environmentally-controlled bridges, and/or tunnels and covered walkways.



Existing Pedestrian Realm/Mobility

University



Metro Transit Center
Trail/Bikeway
Tree Lined Streets
Bus Routes
Pedestrian Signalized Crossing
University Transit Street
Connecting Transit Streets
Zones / Districts
5 Minute Walking Distance to Station
Building Footprint



Existing streetscape along Westpark Drive



Existing sidewalk condition along Richmond-Shepherd

Park	Acquired	Acres	Park Class
Grady Park	1952	4.73	Neighborhood Park
Anderson Park	1960	7.10	Neighborhood Park
Burnett Bayland Park	1971	0.40	Pocket Park
Levy Park	1942	5.60	Neighborhood Park
Ervan Chew Park	1945	3.40	Neighborhood Park
Hermann Park	1914	402.45	Regional Park
Bell Park	1968	1.50	Neighborhood Park
Cullen Sculpture Garden	1973	1.00	Neighborhood Park
Baldwin Park	1910	4.88	Neighborhood Park
Peggy Park	1925	9.22	Neighborhood Park
Emancipation Park	1918	10.00	Community Park
Leroy Park	1969	0.78	Pocket Park
Our Park	1982	0.66	Pocket Park
Riverside Park	1927	4.14	Neighborhood Park
Malone Park	1973	0.69	Pocket Park
Mills Bennett Park	1924	1.00	Neighborhood Park
Parkwood Park	1927	2.00	Neighborhood Park
MacGregor Park	1925	113.58	Regional Park

Numerous cultural institutions along the University Corridor greatly enhance these open spaces. Located within the ¼ mile radius from the Transit Street is the Menil Collection, Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum, Houston Center for Photography, Rothko Chapel, Houston Center for Contemporary Crafts, Lawndale Art Center, the University of Houston Moore School of Music, and the Blaffer Gallery.

Sidewalks

In general, sidewalks providing access to parks and community facilities within the University Corridor are in need of maintenance and repair. Sidewalk widths, generally 4', are inadequate for current and anticipated pedestrian traffic. Exceptions to poor sidewalk conditions usually occur in the University areas and along some areas of Richmond Avenue.

Most deficient in pedestrian realm function are areas along Westpark Drive. If any sidewalks do exist, they are often discontinuous due to the interjections of driveways, parking lots and fences. These areas also generally need street furnishings, pedestrian lighting, street trees and shade.

The more stable areas along Richmond Avenue and Wheeler Street typically have paved streets, concrete curbs, large street trees, and a City of Houston standard 4' sidewalk.

Community Facilities

Schools - **University Corridor** schools are significantly dependent on pedestrian and bicycle mobility in order for students to safely and efficiently arrive at and depart. Public schools within the Corridor are administered by the Houston Independent School District (HISD). A total of 23 schools are located within the Corridor.

University Corridor is also home to numerous higher education facilities such as the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, St. Thomas University and the HCC campuses.

The SPARK School Park Program is a non-profit organization which increases park space by developing public school grounds into neighborhood parks when school is not in session. SPARK parks within the University Corridor Area are located at most of the elementary schools in the Corridor.

Other facilities accessed by pedestrians -

Several significant public, civic, and cultural facilities rely on safe and continuous sidewalks for optimum access. These facilities include:

- Central Presbyterian Church
- Lakewood Church
- St. Luke's Methodist Church
- South Main Baptist Church
- Freed Montrose Neighborhood Library
- Smith Neighborhood Library
- Jungman Neighborhood Library

Streetscape

Street Trees - The established neighborhoods along Richmond Avenue and Wheeler Street benefit from mature street tree plantings. The trees primarily consist of Live Oaks, whose shallow root systems often exacerbate concrete sidewalk maintenance needs in those areas.

However, street furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, recycling bins, bollards and bicycle racks are rarely visible within the Corridor today. METRO bus shelters exist only at major intersections along the existing bus routes. Upper Kirby District provides an exception to pedestrian realm streetscaping along the Corridor, providing street signage, lighting, and site furnishings that are unique to that area.

Pedestrian-oriented lighting provides a safer and more attractive environment for night-time use within the pedestrian realm, though this type of lighting rarely exists within the Corridor today. Currently, street lights and a few attached fixtures to building facades provide the only ambient lighting along pedestrian walkways within the Corridor.

Public Art

Public art adds elements of pride and interest to the pedestrian realm. In 1999, the City of Houston established an ordinance mandating that 1.75% of qualified Capital Improvement Project monies be set aside for civic art.
Civic art works located within the University Corridor include:

- MOCAH "Cultures of our World", Lee High School
- Looscan Houston Public Library

Mobility

Crosswalks - Demarcation of crosswalks at key intersections and mid-block areas provide safe and visible pedestrian crossings of public rights-of-way. Crosswalks exist at many signaled intersections along the University Corridor Transit Street.

Currently, traffic exiting from US 59 and along Westpark Drive have a negative impact on pedestrian mobility. Furthermore, the west end of the corridor has large block patterns and private streets that do not always connect to the Transit Street, reducing opportunities for foot traffic.

Bikeways/Trails - Houston boasts an extensive Bikeway Program. This transportation network of designated bikeways is integrated into the overall transportation system and consists of a total of 345 miles of designated on-street and off-street bikeways. These bike lanes are often narrow and do not meet current AASHTO standards for recommended bike lane widths and demarcation.

Columbia Tap is part of the Rails-to-Trails system, consisting of over 4 miles of a 10' wide, concrete, multi-use hike and bike trail along the old Columbia Tap railroad. The trail extends from Dixie Drive at Hermann Park to the north and west of Polk Street, and into east downtown, creating a greenway corridor in the Third Ward and downtown areas.

METRO's bus fleet is being equipped with bike racks and can also be stowed on high-floor buses in the designated baggage compartment.

Public Transit - Additional transit services within the University Corridor include a METRO high occupancy vehicle lane, as well as eight METRO commuter bus lines, 23 METRO local bus lines, and two METRO Transit Centers (see Existing Pedestrian Realm/Mobility map for detail).



Danny Jackson Family Bark Park



Levy Park, University Corridor



University of Houston Campus



View of Westpark Tollway facing west



Wooden service poles at the Greenbriar - Richmond intersection



Renovation at Alabama and Scott St.

F1.2.4
Engineering/Infrastructure Inventory

Existing Watermains

For the University Corridor, research indicates that the watermains along Westpark Drive vary from 12" lines at US 59 and loop central to Newcastle, to a 42" line at S. Rice and 66" at the Newcastle intersection. Most of the lines on Westpark Drive are older, having been in place since 1945.

The Richmond Avenue watermains are smaller, ranging from 8" lines from Woodhead Street to the Spur 527 intersection, with the only large line being 66" PCCP pipes from Cummins to Main Street. These lines range in age from those installed in 1939 from Greeley to Spur 527, to a number of lines being installed in the 1950s and most recently in 2004 at the Main Street intersection. The typical life of a water transmission main is 40 to 50 years.



Utility corridor along Westpark Dr.

Existing Sanitary Sewer Lines

The existing sanitary sewer lines range in size from 84" at Wheeler to the smallest 36" line at Westpark and Rice.

The typical life of a sewer line is typically 30 to 40 years, unless the lines are rehabilitated. From the City's GIMS database, it appears that there are several sewer lines that are older than 40 years. It is unclear if some of these lines have been rehabilitated.

Existing Storm Sewer Lines

The storm sewers identified in the University Corridor range between 30" in diameter at Wheeler and Cummins to 132" on Scott from Holman to Elgin Street.

Current City regulations require storm water detention for all new developments.

Existing Lighting

Along the proposed University Corridor, there is an existing continuous lighting system. Poles are mounted behind the roadway curb at varying distances depending on site conditions. In several portions of the Corridor, the lighting is limited.

Socio-Economic Profile - University Corridor

		% Share
Total Population	164,954	
Total Households	73,269	
Population Age Profile:		
Age 0 - 4	11,854	7.2%
Age 5 - 9	10,429	6.3%
Age 10 - 14	9,150	5.5%
Age 15 - 17	4,357	2.6%
Age 18 - 20	7,254	4.4%
Age 21 - 24	10,483	6.4%
Age 25 - 34	36,443	22.1%
Age 35 - 44	26,627	16.1%
Age 45 - 49	11,483	7.0%
Age 50 - 54	10,007	6.1%
Age 55 - 59	8,001	4.9%
Age 60 - 64	5,728	3.5%
Age 65 - 74	7,024	4.3%
Age 75 - 84	4,362	2.6%
Age 85+	1,751	1.1%
Median Age	32.9	
Average Age	34.6	
Household Size Profile:		
1 Person	31,921	43.6%
2 Person	20,911	28.5%
3 Person	8,323	11.4%
4 Person	6,067	8.3%
5 Person	3,240	4.4%
6 Person	1,514	2.1%
7+ Person	1,293	1.8%
Average Household Size	2.17	
Period of Housing Construction:		
Built 1999 to 2006	8,504	10.2%
Built 1995 to 1998	4,016	4.8%
Built 1990 to 1994	3,890	4.7%
Built 1980 to 1989	10,044	12.0%
Built 1970 to 1979	16,413	19.7%
Built 1960 to 1969	13,470	16.1%
Built 1950 to 1959	9,816	11.8%
Built 1940 to 1949	7,668	9.2%
Built 1939 or Earlier	9,701	11.6%
Median Year Built	1971	
Owner Occupied Households	21,151	28.9%
Renter Occupied Households	52,118	71.1%
Household Income Range:		
< $25,000	21,724	29.6%
$25,000 - $49,999	19,671	26.8%
$50,000 - $74,999	10,409	14.2%
$75,000 - $99,999	5,928	8.1%
$100,000+	15,538	21.2%
Median Household Income	$43.259	

Source: Claritas

F1.3

University Corridor Demographic Market Overview

Demographic Overview

Demographic data for the University Corridor was drawn from households within a one mile distance of the Transit Street. This provides details of the population, not only in immediate proximity to the Corridor, but also adjacent neighborhoods that will also benefit from the infrastructure improvements.

The University Corridor is home to a population of nearly 165,000 persons, which is significantly larger than the population sample drawn from other Transit Corridors being examined. This population is spread among roughly 73,300 households (an average of 2.17 persons per household). The median age level is 32.9 years old. Persons under the age of 25 account for roughly a 32% share of the local population, while persons aged 25 to 54 (prime income earning years) account for a more sizable 51% share of the total. Households with 1 or 2 persons account for a 72% share of the total, while households of 5 or more persons account for just an 8% share.

The University Corridor has among the newest housing stock within the Urban Corridor Planning Study. Homes built since 1990 account for close to a 20% share of the total, while homes built pre-1970 represent a 50% share. This compares to an average of 21% and 57% share, respectively, for the total sample of housing across the other five corridors (East, Southeast, North, Main Street and Uptown). Some 29% of homes are owner-occupied, though the vast majority are rental tenure; this represents the second highest share after the Main Street Corridor.

In assessing household income levels, the University Corridor ranks third highest (just less than Main Street, but well below the Uptown Corridor). With a median household income level of approximately $43,250, some 44% of households have an income level of over $50,000, and nearly 21% earn in excess of $100,000.

Neighborhood Description

The University Corridor stretches east-west across the city of Houston, running through a number of distinctly different neighborhoods. In 2003, the City's Planning and Development Department prepared a Land Use and Demographic Profile; according to this study, the western extent of the corridor begins in Study Area 8, and the route continues through Study Area 10. The eastern segment runs through Study Area 5. The following profiles describe the character of some of the local neighborhoods traversing the University Corridor.

- Gulfton is located just outside of Loop 610, in southwest Houston, south of US 59. Although it includes two small areas of single-family homes, its large apartment complexes dominate the area's landscape, along with scattered commercial and light industrial uses. Most of Gulfton was originally developed as a rural subdivision called Westmoreland Farms. The large acreage parcels and widely-spaced grid pattern of roads made it possible for very large apartment complexes to be built in the area starting in the 1960s. Gulfton is home to many recent immigrants from Mexico and Latin America.

- The Greenway/Upper Kirby area is located inside Loop 610, south of Westheimer Road. The area is a mixture of single and multi-family residential uses with office and commercial uses along major thoroughfares. The Southwest Freeway runs through the southernmost part of the area, which includes Greenway Plaza, a major activity and employment center. Kirby Drive, one of the major commercial thoroughfares, is undergoing transformation into an upscale restaurant and retail district.

- Montrose is an eclectic neighborhood where cottage housing exists side by side with burgeoning townhome developments, large luxury apartment complexes and older duplexes. Many of Houston's historic mansions are found locally. Expiring deed restrictions and development pressures of a fast-growing city led to the conversion of much of the area's finest homes to businesses. The area is populated with restaurants, bars and unique retail shops.

- University Place is a group of neighborhoods surrounding Rice University. Some of the area's better neighborhoods are deed restricted and expensive, and include some of the city's finest homes, especially along the live oak esplanades of Sunset, North and South Boulevards. Proximity to the Texas Medical Center has led to intense redevelopment along Holcombe and Main, and on the site of the old Shamrock Hilton Hotel. The Village shopping district and the blocks adjacent to Montrose Boulevard have a mix of uses with considerable redevelopment underway.

- Binz neighborhood north of Hermann Park is home to the majority of the city's museums. It is nestled between downtown and the Medical Center. The construction of Highway 288 in the 1970s effectively separated it from the Riverside area. Binz is characterized as a district of large homes, small apartment buildings and scattered commercial buildings. While many of the pre-World War II buildings have been renovated and some new residential construction has occurred, substantial redevelopment in the area has not taken hold.

- Greater Third Ward is the home of many important institutions in Houston's African American community, including Texas Southern University, Riverside Hospital, and dozens of churches. Originally a small area of shotgun houses and modest frame homes, it expanded to the south with more substantial brick homes and duplexes. Washington Terrace, situated adjacent to TSU, is characterized by stable, historic homes.

- Eastwood/Lawndale is a middle class community located to the southeast of the downtown area. The area was once exclusively Anglo, but is now largely Hispanic. The Gulf Freeway created a commercial edge on its south.

- Lawndale/Wayside is a collection of neighborhoods which still reflect the area's origins as a prestigious east side neighborhood. The areas of Forest Hill, Idylwood neighborhoods and Mason Park are shady, middle class havens with curving streets and large lots. The presence of wooded preserves such as the large Forest Park Cemetery, Villa De Matel convent, Mason Park and Wortham Golf Center, the city's first country club, have helped to maintain the area's beauty.

Housing Market

Given the length of the University Corridor, it is useful to examine the local housing market condition in two segments: west and east (which are quite distinct from one another); The western segment is principally contained within MLS Districts 16 (Central) and 17 (Southwest), while examining data for MLS District 4 (South) provides an indication of pricing and market trends for the eastern segment of the Corridor.

University Corridor West (west of Main Street):

- The average single family house price was approximately $653,000 for the year 2007, based upon MLS data compiled by the Houston Association of Realtors, representing an increase of 12% year-over-year. The average townhouse/condominium

sale price was considerably less costly, at close to $246,000, up 5% since 2006.

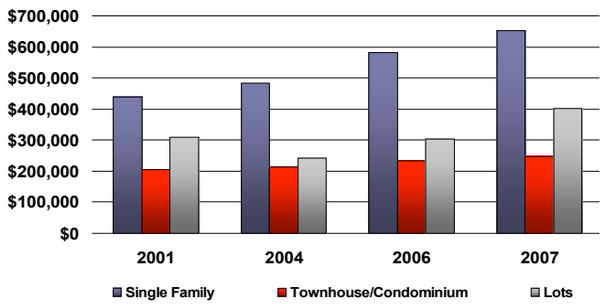
- In the rental market, the single-family home rental rate was approximately $2,075 per month during 2007, compared to just less than $1,500 in the townhouse/condominium segment of the market. Rents reflect roughly 5% to 10% growth since 2006.

University Corridor East (east of Main Street):

- The average single-family house price was approximately $127,500 in 2007, representing a decline of around 6% over the year, based upon Houston Association of Realtors MLS data. The average townhouse/condominium sale price was higher, at $221,000, (attributable to newer housing stock).

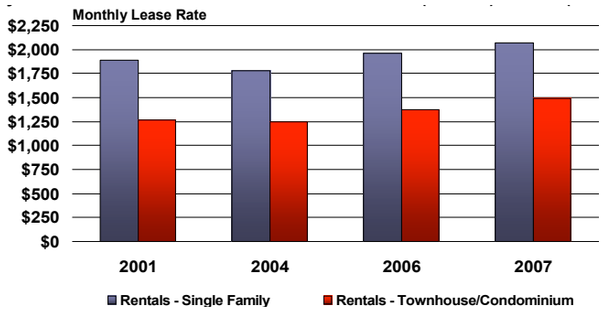
- In the rental market, the single-family home rental rate was approximately $1,125 per month during 2007, compared to almost $1,400 in the townhouse/ condominium market. Rents for both market segments are up modestly year-over-year.

Houston Association of Realtors MLS Statistics
Average Price by Property Type
University Corridor: Western Section-
MLS District 16 (Central) and 17 (Southwest)



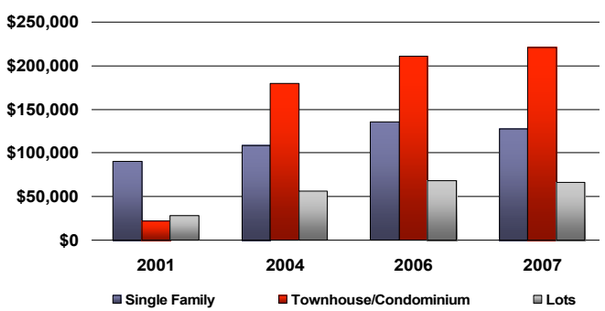
Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University and Houston Association of Realtors
Note 1: Data shown is annual
Note 2: Data from MLS Districts 16 and 17 has been aggregated for this exhibit

Houston Association of Realtors MLS Statistics
Average Price (Lease Rate) by Property Type
University Corridor: Western Section-
MLS District 16 (Central) and 17 (Southwest)



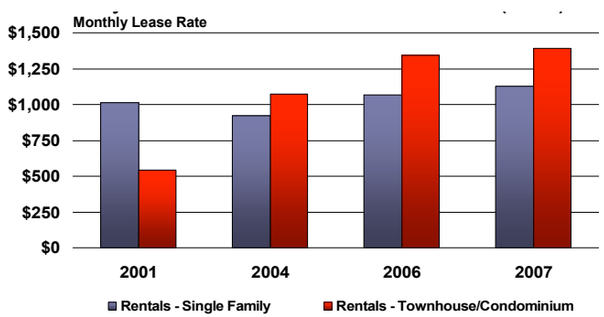
Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University and Houston Association of Realtors
Note 1: Data shown is annual
Note 2: Data from MLS Districts 16 and 17 has been aggregated for this exhibit

Houston Association of Realtors MLS Statistics
Average Price by Property Type
University Corridor: East Section- MLS District 4 (South)



Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University and Houston Association of Realtors
Note: Data shown is annual

Houston Association of Realtors MLS Statistics
Average Price (Lease Rate) by Property Type
University Corridor: East Section- MLS District 4 (South)



Source: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University and Houston Association of Realtors
Note: Data shown is annual

F1.4

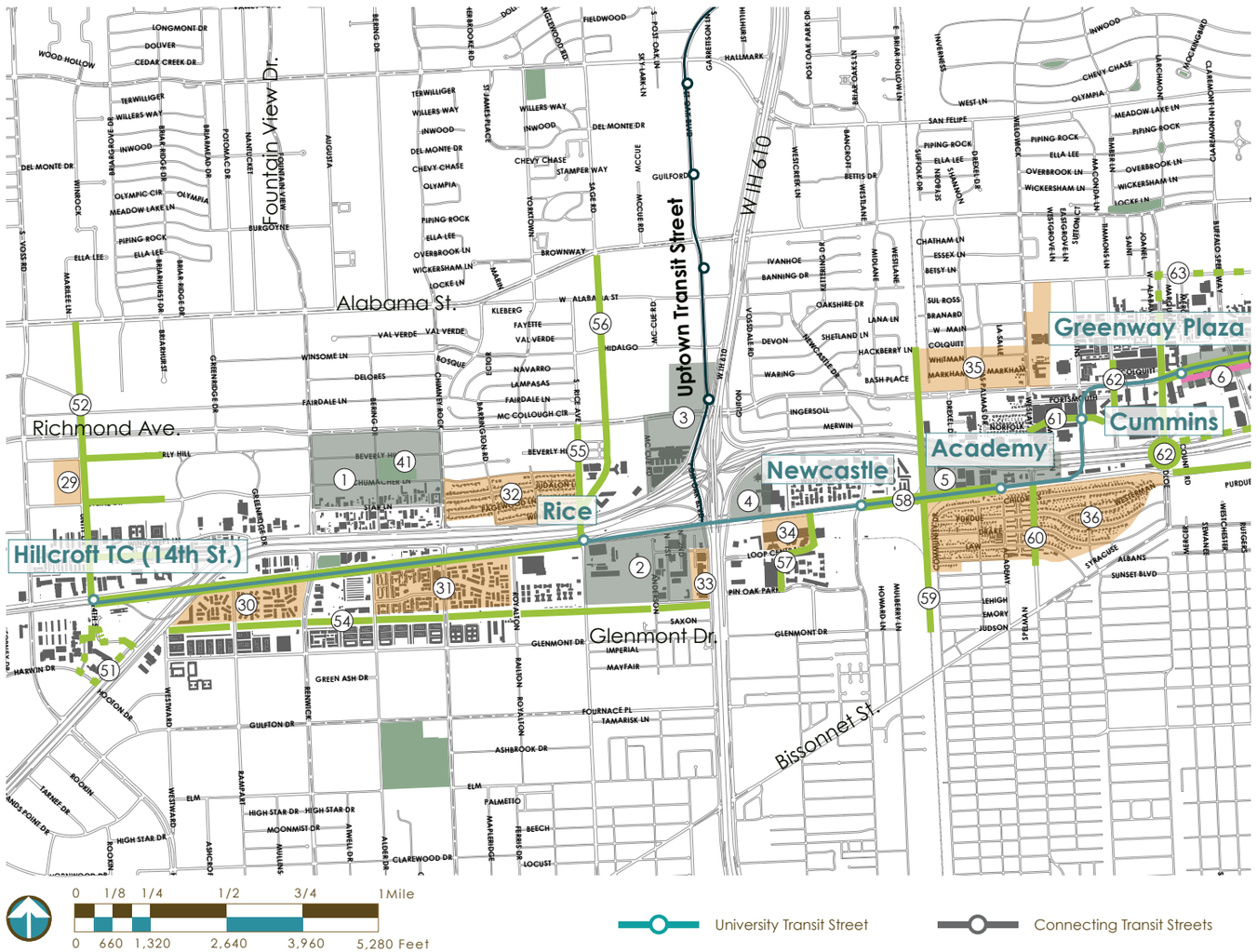
Summary of Initiatives

The Initiatives Plan compiles and maps the initiatives, projects and plans that have been prepared for lands in the study area. In addition, initiatives identified by participants in the workshop have been added.

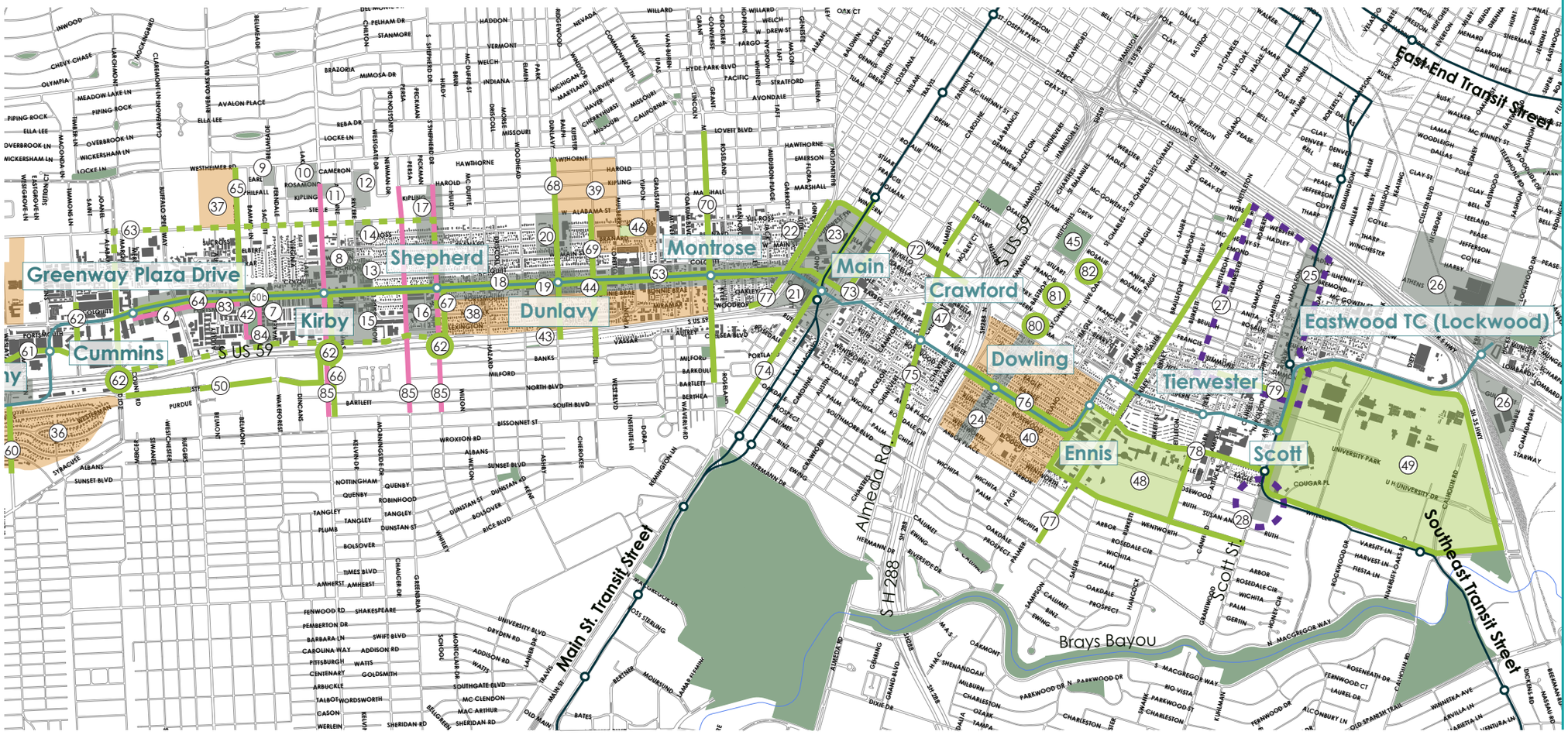
A comprehensive picture emerges of the immense planning and development efforts undertaken in the University Corridor to date and the geographical relationship between the initiatives and the Transit Streets and stations. From a strategic stance, the Initiatives Plan provides a clearer sense of the location of priority areas within the Corridor and how future Transit Oriented Development objectives might be focused and positioned to build on existing initiatives and planning efforts.



Academy Station area



Initiatives University



Proposed Pedestrian Realm
Infrastructure
Proposed Pedestrian Realm Zone
Opportunity Area
Stable Area
Existing Open Space
Proposed Open Space
Opportunity District



Dunlavy St. south of Richmond Ave.



Land adjacent to the Eastwood TC (Lockwood) Station



Scott and Wheeler St. intersection

Opportunity Areas

These locations identify sites that are or could be considered for redevelopment. Some sites located along the Transit Street are suitable for intensification with transit supportive uses. These sites and districts were identified by workshop participants.

1. South of Richmond Avenue, east of Fountain View Dr.

Workshop participants identified these blocks as potential redevelopment sites for Transit Oriented Development that would frame the existing Anderson Park.

2. Southeast of Rice Station

Industrial and undeveloped lands are located adjacent to Rice Station. Redevelopment with a mix of uses and higher density would help create an activity node at the station.

3. Northwest of the 610/59

This is an underutilized site that currently houses a one-story big box development. Creative alternatives to the typical large format retail layout have shown that it is possible to incorporate these into denser mixed use developments.

4. West of Newcastle Station

The site east of the 610 and Westpark Drive is a prime site for a transit supportive development adjacent to the Corridor and the highway.

5. North of Academy Station

The commercial, office and industrial sites in this area could accommodate higher density mixed use buildings that would help support transit.

6. Richmond Avenue, between Greenway Plaza Drive and Kirby Stations

Many infill opportunities can be found along this section of the Corridor.

7. Proposed Community Center

A mixed use community center is proposed surrounding Levy Park.

8. W Main Street and Kirby Drive

A proposed mixed use development is currently being reviewed for this site.

9. Between Ferndale St. and Sackett St., south of Westheimer Rd.

A high density residential development is currently under construction and will contain 177 units.

10. Corner of Kirby Dr. and Westheimer Rd.

A mixed use development is under construction and will contain 390 residential units, 180,000 sf of retail and 16,000 sf of office space.

11. Between Kirby Dr. and Argonne, south of Cameron

A high density residential development is currently under construction and will contain 93 units.

12. East of Revere, south of Cameron, north of Steele

A high density residential development is currently under construction and will contain 330 units.

13. Morningside to the east, Revere to the west, W Main to the north and Richmond to the south

A high density residential development is currently under construction and will contain 230 units.

14. Northeast of the Revere and Sul Ross Intersection

Located within a five minute walking distance to Kirby and Shepherd Stations, future redevelopment of existing plazas set far back from the curb should contribute to an enhanced pedestrian environment.

15. Land surrounding Kirby Station

This underutilized intersection has the potential to become an important Upper Kirby destination, where one could live, work and be entertained.

16. Southwest of Shepherd Station

Adjacent to transit and near highway access, this is also a prime redevelopment site. Bringing the building frontage closer to the street would improve the character of the area.

17. Shepherd Street, North of Shepherd Station

A consistent street edge would provide spatial definition and containment to the street.

18. Transit Street from Shepherd to Main St Station

This street segment is underutilized and could benefit from transit supportive development that compliments existing retail, restaurants and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

19. Dunlavy St. south of Richmond

A high density development is under construction with 236 residential units spanning 2.7 acres with potential for retail at grade in the second phase.

20. North of Dunlavy Station

The grocery store and facing development are complementary uses, but the current built form does not entice pedestrian movements. Redevelopment of this site with transit oriented uses and an enhanced streetscape would enhance transit ridership.

21. Wheeler Intermodal

The proposed intermodal facility has the potential of acting as a signature gateway highlighting the transition between the University and Main Street Corridors.

22. Southwest of Bute and Branard

This site is surrounded by residences and could be redeveloped to contribute to the neighborhood life.

23. Proposed High School for Performing and Visual Arts

A new high school is proposed between Truxillo and Cleburne, fronting the lawn of the South Main Baptist Church.

24. Dowling Street

Properties to the north and south of Dowling Station offer some redevelopment opportunities that would complement the residential and historic nature of the area.

25. Land adjacent to the Southeast Transit Street between McKinney and Wheeler St.

These sites are mainly under-used or vacant lots, which are suited for mixed use, Transit Oriented Development that would complement the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

26. Land adjacent to the Eastwood TC (Lockwood) Station

The eastern limit of the Corridor is surrounded by vacant and industrial lands that can accommodate future transit supportive mixed use development.

Opportunity Districts

27. Between Pierce St. and Reeves St.

The proximity of this residential neighborhood to the Transit Streets and the IH 45, and the number of vacant lots available, make this an attractive opportunity district.

28. Potential retail development- Scott St. At Wheeler St.

Retail concentration areas have been identified in the Greater Southeast Management District market demand study for potential retail development (CDS Market Research). This area has a lack of quality shopping for residents and campus visitors. The proximity of this node to the universities, residential neighborhoods, and the Transit Streets creates an attractive redevelopment opportunity that could provide basic goods and services to the community.



Wheeler St. between Dowling and Ennis Stations

Stable Areas

Workshop participants identified neighborhoods, schools and employment areas as Stable Areas. It is important to protect and enhance employment areas close to the transit stations so that employees can conveniently and safely walk to and from the stations. Neighborhoods should work with the City to evaluate the application of available tools to preserve Stable Areas or encourage redevelopment. Safe and convenient pedestrian connections to the Corridor will encourage ridership and help to support the new retail and service uses that may develop near the stations. The following areas were identified as Stable Areas by workshop participants.

29. South of Richmond Avenue, North of Hillcroft TC Station
30. South of Westpark Dr. between US 59 and Renwick Dr.
31. South of Westpark Dr. between 9th and Royalton St.
32. Northwest of Rice Station
33. West of W IH 610 between Rice and Newcastle Stations
34. East of W IH 610 between Rice and Newcastle Stations
35. Northeast of Richmond Avenue and E Briar Hollow Ln.
36. South of the Academy Station between Community Dr. and Edloe St.
37. South of Westheimer Rd. and West of Eastside St.
38. South of Transit Street between Shepherd and Montrose Stations
39. South of Hawthorne between Dunlavy St. and Graustark St.
40. Neighborhood between Dowling and Ennis Stations

Pedestrian Realm

The University Corridor has only a few parks and open spaces. Workshop participants identified several initiatives for open space. In addition, the management districts and TIRZs along the Corridor have been involved in significant streetscape and open space enhancement projects.

Existing Parks/Open Space:

41. Anderson Park

Southeast of Beverly Hill and Bering Street is a 7 acre neighborhood park to be maintained.

42. Levy Park

Located at the southern end of Eastside Street, Levy Park was recently renovated through the Upper Kirby Management District's Adopt-A-Park agreement with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD).

43. Ervan Chew Park

In 2004, the Friends of Ervan Chew Park helped establish the first off-leash dog zone in a neighborhood park. Previously known as Dunlavy Park, this open space also offers a picnic area and swimming pool that should be maintained.

44. Mandell Park

The Friends of Mandell Park are transforming the site located on the southeast corner of Richmond and Mandell (between Shepherd and Montrose) into a pocket park equipped with seating, walkways and lighting for a more enticing urban space.

45. Emancipation Park

This park has recently been designated as a protected historic landmark under the Houston Preservation Ordinance. The designation means that the park will be protected for posterity. This site was the first established public space in Texas and was originally conceived as a site for freed slaves to celebrate the anniversary of June 19, 1865, when Texas slaves were emancipated. The Friends of Emancipation Park are working to upgrade this park's neglected state.

46. Menil Collection

The Menil's outdoor sculpture collection, reflecting pool and Rothko Chapel are privately owned spaces that were opened to the public in 1987. This internationally-renowned collection is a very important asset for the city of Houston.

47. Peggy Park

The community feels strongly about enhancing and maintaining this neighborhood park. A major upgrade of Peggy Park is currently underway by TIRZ#7. It is anticipated that a construction contract will be awarded by June 2008.

Proposed Parks/Open Space/Campuses:

48. Texas Southern University Master Plan

The Master Plan for the campus of 11,000 students is a five-year blueprint for the maintenance, improvement and expansion of University facilities and grounds. Projected construction of new buildings is based on planned growth of the student population and related program space needs. The University hopes to acquire land for additional facilities, upgrade infrastructure and increase student services.



Peggy Park



Menil Collection


University of Houston Campus


Columbia Tap Trail Construction



Columbia Tap Trail groundbreaking

49. University of Houston Master Plan

It is expected that the number of students will increase from 35,000 to 45,000 in the next 10 years. In response to this probable growth, the University has completed a planning strategy for the next 20 years. The main objectives of the Master Plan are to double the learning space and double the living space, create districts for the arts, for professionals and undergraduates, and to increase parking.

50. Potential Linear Park

The utility corridor in this location is suited for a linear park and could be the site for the relocation of the Danny Jackson Family Bark Park.

50b. The proposed community center project includes a public plaza on the frontage of the southeast corner of Richmond Avenue and Wakeforest.

Trails/Streetscape/Connections:

51. Sharpstown Center

This site is currently undergoing changes and improvements to landscaping, paving, lighting and utilities. The Center is also in the process of addressing the issues surrounding large, vacant retail facilities.

52. Hike/Bike Connection

The existing trail system should be enhanced to improve connections to the Hillcroft Transit Center and adjacent neighborhoods.

53. Streetscape along Richmond Avenue

The Richmond Rail organization is committed to enhancing the quality of life and vitality of neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions on Richmond Avenue.

54. Potential Linear Park

The land between the Hillcroft Transit Center and Loop 610 is suited for a linear park that would service the dense apartment neighborhoods in the area.

55. Rice Avenue Streetscape, North of Rice Station

56. Streetscape along Sage Road

57. Streetscape and access along Loop Central Rd

58. Pedestrian environment between Newcastle and Academy Stations

59. Streetscape along Briar Hollow Lane

60. Pedestrian connection to Academy Station along Willowick

61. Access to neighborhood east of Cummins Station

62. Highway 59 Overpass Security

These overpasses have seen the implementation of security devices at the overpasses of Edloe Street, Kirby and S Shepherd Drive.

63. Upper Kirby Wayfinding

Within the Upper Kirby TIRZ, specialized TIRZ-specific wayfinding street signage has been installed and continues to be maintained.

64. 'Richmond Esplanades'

Along Richmond, within the Upper Kirby TIRZ, there is an initiative to create "Richmond Esplanades", to increase the pedestrian access and visitation frequency, along with the aesthetic draw.

65. Streetscape along Eastside connecting Lamar High School to the Transit Street

66. Access to Transit Street from Kirby

67. Shepherd Streetscape

68. Streetscape along Dunlavy

69. Streetscape along Mandell

70. 'Montrose Streetscape'

The Neartown Community has launched a beautification project involving the clean-up of graffiti along Montrose Boulevard. Additionally, the Montrose Boulevard Conservancy has developed a strategy for a 2.7 mile pedestrian walkway called "Walkable Montrose: A Master Plan for Re-Establishing Houston's Grand Boulevard".

71. Sidewalk adjacent to Spur 527

Pedestrians going towards downtown from Richmond Avenue must walk along side of Spur 527. A safer enhanced pedestrian environment has been requested by the community in areas adjacent to this highway crossing.

72. Wheeler between Spur 527 and La Branch

A Pedestrian Walk has been proposed with enhanced street planting, safe and connected sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting and amenities such as benches and trash receptacles.

73. Gateway- Main St. and US H59

This significant entry point has been identified to strengthen the community identity. This gateway could include signage, landscape treatment or special buildings.

74. Main St. Corridor Enhancement

See initiatives in the Main Street Corridor-specific Report.

75. Almeda Road Improvements

The OST/Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority is implementing streetscape enhancements and various pedestrian amenities along this Corridor.

76. Wheeler Street, from Highway 288 to Ennis Station

This portion of the Corridor, being mainly residential, will require special attention to connections, parking screening, and maintaining historical integrity.

77. Columbia Tap/ Union Station

A 4 mile hike and bike trail is being constructed along the old Columbia Tap railroad. Once completed, the trail will connect the neighborhoods to the existing bikeway network along Polk, McGowen and Alabama Streets, the Brays Bayou Trail, and the Dixie bike route.

78. Streetscape along Cleburne St.

79. Streetscape along Reeves St.

Intersections:

The Houston-Galveston Area Council's Pedestrian and Bicycle Special Districts Study (Phase II) recommended improvements at these intersections.

80. Dowling St. and Alabama St.

81. Dowling St. and Holman St.

82. Roundabout at Elgin St. and Dowling St.

Infrastructure

83. Richmond east of Greenway Plaza Station

New development should take into consideration the storm drainage issues in this area. Storm drainage improvements are planned and under the current upper Kirby District TIRZ UP.

84. Levy Park

The park is currently undergoing drainage improvements.

85. Kirby, Greenbriar and Shepherd

Storm drainage Improvements are in progress on these streets.



Cummins Station area



University Corridor workshop



University Corridor workshop presentation



Table group discussions during the workshop

F1.5

University Corridor Workshop

A two-day workshop was held in January 2008 to engage area stakeholders and residents in the Urban Corridor Planning process.

The purpose of the first day of the workshop was to establish a common understanding of existing conditions and opportunities along the Corridor. During the day, the consulting team met with City staff representatives as well as major landowners to review the Corridor's current context, potential issues and opportunities. During the evening session with the public, following a presentation on our understanding of the context, participants were asked to identify projects or initiatives that would enhance the area, as well as to help identify areas that could change and those that should be protected. As background, the Current Initiatives plan was presented at the workshop. It was a compilation of projects identified in previous strategies, plans and reports.

Each one of the table groups identified many opportunities in the University Corridor that have been included in the Initiatives Plan (see Chapter F1.4). Suggestions of the participants, with respect to the pedestrian realm, redevelopment opportunities and areas to be protected included:

Pedestrian Realm

- need wider sidewalks, 10' near stations
- push trees to curb and widen the pedestrian zone
- encourage awnings and arcades
- consider fences to keep pedestrians from wandering into traffic and crossing at wrong places
- improved access to the Hillcroft Station
- dense trees to screen the train
- pocket parks should be created where train alignment follows a corner (dog park, kids' jungle gym, etc.)
- screen objectionable facilities
- pedestrian links are necessary and desirable
- want hike and bike trails along railroad
- need more streets and smaller blocks in the western portion of the Corridor
- enhance Hillcroft Center park-and-ride
- preserve the trees
- provide parking structures
- improve traffic signals
- improve drainage along proposed sidewalks
- improve wheelchair accessibility
- should put utilities, trees, fire hydrants, etc, at the curbs to act as buffer zones
- smaller block faces were suggested with alleyways for easy access from neighboring areas so that residents don't have to walk too far out of their way to access the trains

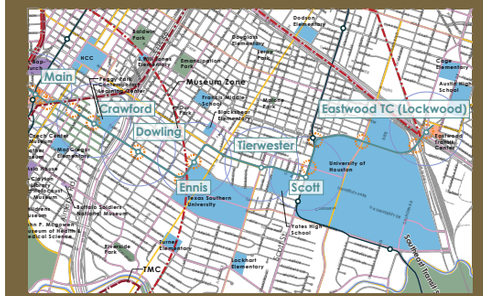
Redevelopment Opportunities

- Richmond at Spur 527
- Richmond from Shepherd to Montrose – Near Town: there are many opportunities for infill development but would like to see scale and character that reflect the surrounding residential neighborhoods
- Dunlavy north of Richmond currently has a great neighborhood-scale grocery store. How can we encourage this type of development?

Evolution from workshop suggestions to report

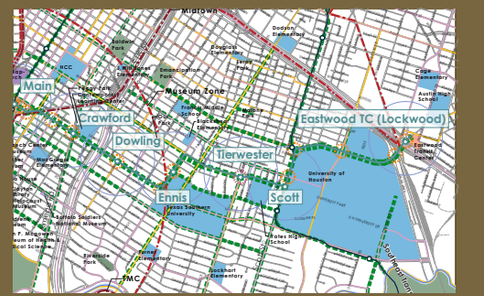
University

Pedestrian Realm



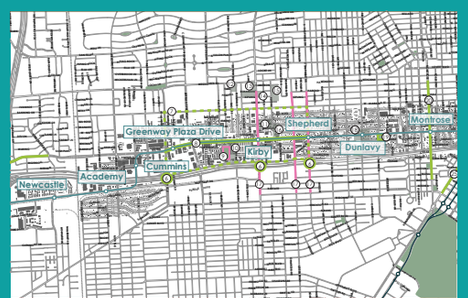
Existing Pedestrian Realm as presented at the workshop


Potential Pedestrian Realm drawn during the two-day workshop



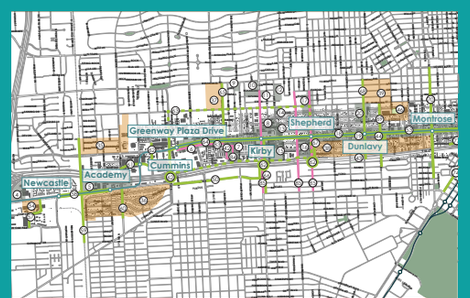
Proposed Pedestrian Realm

Initiatives



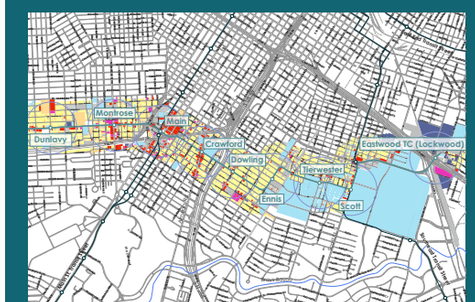
Current Initiatives Plan as presented at the workshop


Summary of workshop initiative results



Summary of initiatives

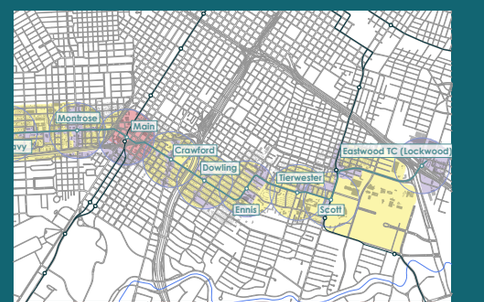
Land Development



Existing Land Use as presented at the workshop



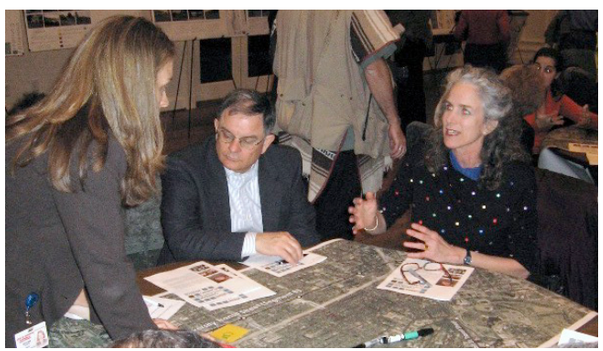
Land Development Concept Plan produced during the workshop



Proposed Land Development Concept Plan



University Corridor workshop



Participants discussing initiatives during the workshop



University Corridor display panels

- relocate city facilities (i.e., solid waste) and create signature area between corridor and freeway
- when apartment redevelopment occurs, need more streets- blocks too big
- area between Rice and 610
- many one-story strip centers that were built for a 15 year lifespan
- big box developments offer an opportunity to redevelop as well
- create financial incentives to improve storefronts along rail lines
- create commercial nodes along rail stops
- former location of Houston Community College Tech Ed Campus would be good location for public private partnership parking garage/lot
- would like to see more mid-rise mixed use development
- want more cafes at stations
- multi-level parking should gradually be introduced so that we don't have huge asphalted areas that serve no purpose after work and in the weekends

Areas to be Protected

- all stable residential
- neighborhood west of Weslayan Road
- diverse stores at Harwin Drive
- area encompassing the University of St. Thomas and Menil Museum
- apartment neighborhoods south of Westpark Drive
- residential neighborhood adjacent to Texas Southern University
- existing historic buildings



Yorkville Street, Toronto, Canada



Nicolett Ave., Minneapolis, MN



Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL

Need parks!

Historical preservation is important

Please don't short change Hillcroft just because we're not a wealthy neighborhood

Good! Yes! Please!

Provide wider sidewalks

Need soccer fields!

Concerns about rail include safety, health, mobility, noise, and loss of mature trees and character of the existing neighborhood

We want underground utilities

These comments were taken during the University Corridor Workshop