EMANCIPATION PARK NEIGHBORHOOD

Strategies for Community-Led Regeneration in the Third Ward

Prepared for
Emancipation Economic Development Council

June 2016

MIT CoLab DUSPMIT

Contents

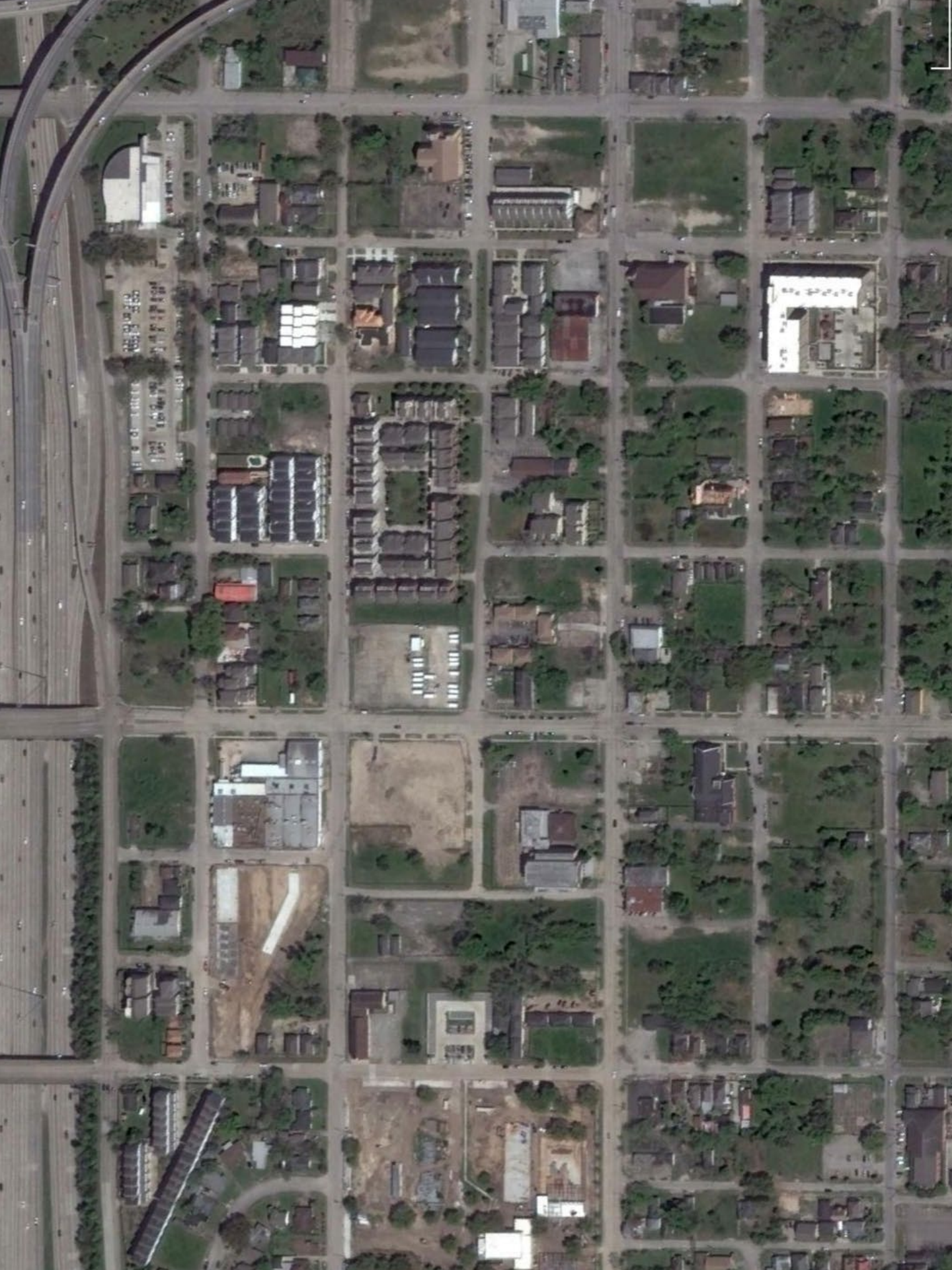
Introduction **5**

Background **11**

Strategies **19**
1. Establish a Community Land Trust 21
2. Make Mixed-Use Development Happen 41
3. Lots to Love 53
4. Create People-Centered Green Infrastructure 75
5. Preserve the Third Ward 109
6. Organize the Community 127

Conclusion **139**

Introduction



Introduction

We envision a resilient, dynamic, and economically prosperous community where people live, work, and thrive in a historically and culturally rich African-American neighborhood.

– Emancipation Economic Development Council

Beginning in the summer of 2015, students from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT began working with residents of the Emancipation Park neighborhood, a historically African-American community in Houston, Texas. The first group of five students (MIT 1) helped the Emancipation Economic Development Council establish a set of working groups to study key community issues.

This report was prepared by a second team of MIT students in Spring 2016 as part of a practicum course. It follows up on the initial work by proposing a series of strategies the EEDC might use to work towards its vision. We believe that Houston's Third Ward is rich with possibility and legacy. Our hope is that our work can be used to help the EEDC and residents in the Emancipation Park neighborhood gain greater control over decisions in their neighborhood.

We have built on the work of MIT 1 with six strategies that manifest this mission. These strategies are connected by a deep commitment to preserve and leverage the neighborhood's many existing assets for a resilient Emancipation Park neighborhood that serves its residents first.

The Emancipation Park neighborhood and the Historic Third Ward were long at the heart of Houston's proud Black community, and the unique heritage of its historic buildings remains today. The area is blessed with strong community ties, including the close connections and deep roots of community organizations such as local churches, Project Row Houses, and SHAPE Community Center. But even aspects of the neighborhood that do not seem like assets can be used as such.

Strategies at Work

The strategies in this book build on and reinforce each other. This holistic approach is illustrative of the role we believe the EEDC can play in bringing together the many organizations and interests of those who love this neighborhood. The EEDC offers a space to facilitate these different groups by identifying where their interests align. There is power and potential in working together. The following themes put the EEDC's mission into action.

Amplify History

The Emancipation Park neighborhood has a large place in the history of Houston, particularly for its African-American population. The EEDC will works towards a "historically and culturally rich African-American neighborhood," and the "Preserve the Third Ward" and "Lots to Love" strategies especially emphasize this goal.

Integrate Nature

Building a resilient neighborhood requires integrating the natural environment into infrastructure and development. Investing in green infrastructure, such as complete streets, will help shape development that is at the forefront of design. This type of planning will benefit the people of the Emancipation Park neighborhood and help mitigate environmental issues such as flooding. Strategies "Lots to Love" and "Create People-Centered Green Infrastructure" particularly emphasize the benefits of seeing nature as an asset.

Ensure Self-Determination

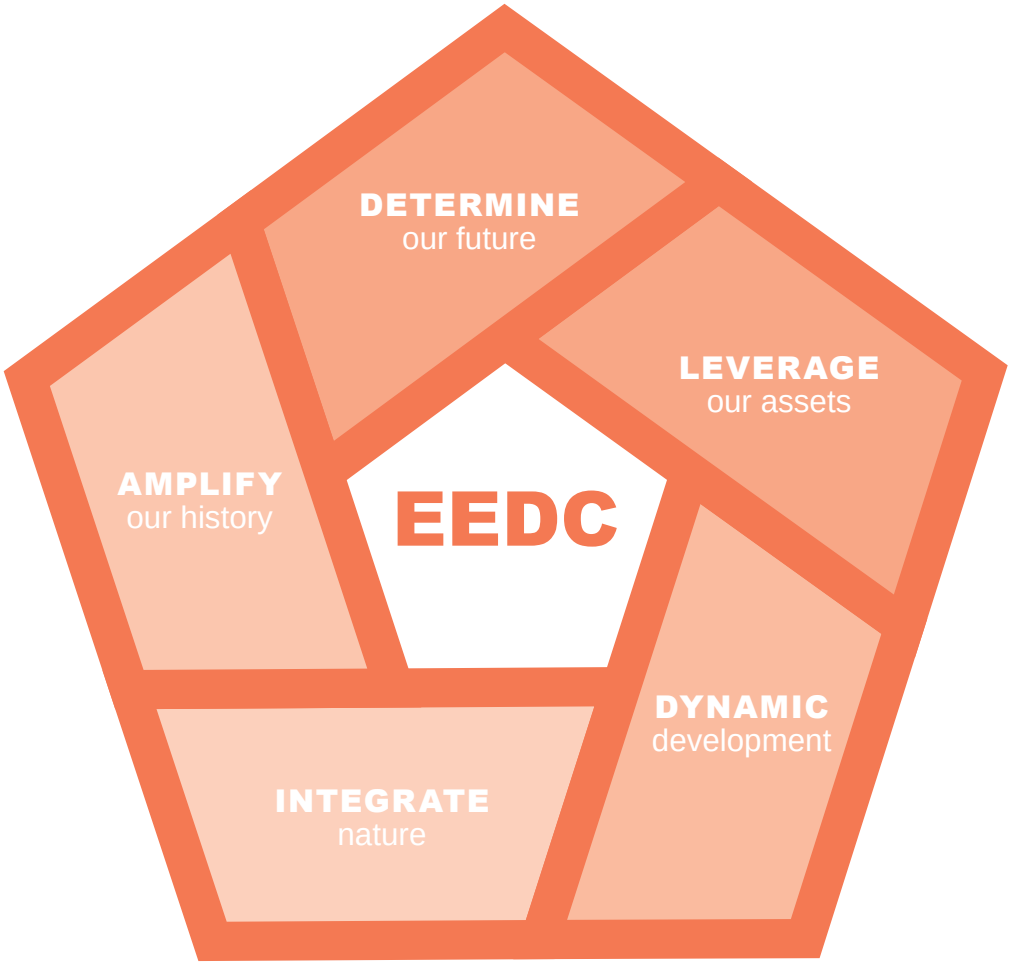
The Emancipation Park neighborhood is at a moment of change with large investments, park renovations, and a surge in townhouse development. The EEDC is committed to fighting for neighborhood residents to benefit from and guide the development of their neighborhood. It therefore aims to empower and give voice to residents and advocate for development without displacement. Strategies "Establish a Community Land Trust" and "Organize the Community" embrace this idea.

Lead Dynamic Development

A thriving economy is central to the history of the Emancipation Park neighborhood and must be central to its future. However, development characterized by gentrification, displacement, and a muting of the African-American legacy of the neighborhood is unacceptable. Shepherding development that builds on the rich history of the area, and in which residents are key stakeholders, is a key role for the EEDC. Strategies "Make Mixed-Use Development Happen" and "Create People-Centered Green Infrastructure" address the importance of physical changes to the neighborhood.

Leverage Our Assets

We emphasize that the Emancipation Park neighborhood is already rich in assets. Some are immediately obvious such as the strong community ties, many active community-based organizations already advocating for the Emancipation Park neighborhood, and land owned by community members, such as local churches. The EEDC brings together these groups and reinforces collaboration. Strategies "Establish a Community Land Trust" and "Organize the Community" outline specific ways neighborhood assets can be leveraged.


DETERMINE
our future
LEVERAGE
our assets
AMPLIFY
our history
EEDC
DYNAMIC
development
INTEGRATE
nature

Background

Third Ward and EEDC History

Third Ward, Houston, Texas

Houston's Third Ward is a historically Black neighborhood that was once a booming epicenter for African-American culture and business. In the 1950s, the Third Ward was home to hundreds of businesses. The neighborhood houses notable landmarks like the Eldorado Ballroom, where cultural icons like B.B. King once played, and birthed popular-culture icons like Beyoncé and Solange Knowles. Following integration and the construction of I-69 slicing through the Third Ward in the 1960s, the neighborhood suffered from disinvestment and political neglect. Recently, the low cost of land and proximity to Downtown have made the Third Ward attractive to townhome developers.

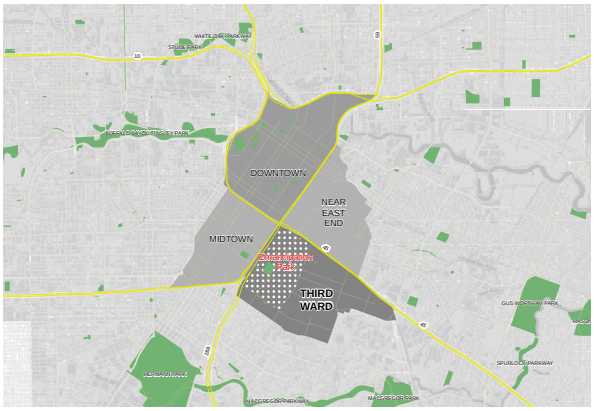
Emancipation Park

Emancipation Park was purchased by newly freed slaves in 1872 and served as Houston's first public park. This park has remained a staple for the Third Ward celebrations including the annual Juneteenth celebration and parade. In 2013, the City of Houston and OST/Almeda Redevelopment Authority launched a $38 million renovation of Emancipation Park designed by architect Phil Freelon.

Project Row Houses (PRH)

In 1993, artist and community activist Rick Lowe founded Project Row Houses along with other artists and activists including James Bettison, Bert Long, Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum, Bert Samples, and George Samples, started this project as an opportunity to "establish a positive, creative, and transformative presence" in the Third Ward.

The artists and activists were inspired by the prominent African-American artist Dr. John Biggers. With Lowe as the face of PRH, there has been a spectacular national spotlight placed on this initiative. Often described as an unconventional approach to community development, the Project uses art as a means of improving the quality of life for current Third Ward residents though community programs including Monday night tutoring sessions, the Third Ward College Bound Project, community markets, an Incubation Project for project development assistance, artists residences and exhibition spaces, and the Young Mothers Program.



Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC)

Many organizations in the Third Ward have long done meaningful work in the community to leverage resources in the interest of existing residents. With a history of disinvestment and now a rising wave of gentrification, the area faces many challenges. Active organizations were able to use the report produced by MIT students and staff in 2015 to generate new energy and a collective platform that led to the founding of the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC).

The EEDC envisions a “resilient, dynamic, and economically prosperous community where people live, work, and thrive in a historically and culturally rich African-American neighborhood.” The Council is composed of numerous stakeholders including churches, CDCs, nonprofits, universities, local businesses, and concerned citizens. The EEDC’s founding organizations were:

- Trinity United Methodist Church (Dr. Robert McGee, Senior Pastor)
- Trinity East United Methodist Church (Marilyn M. White, Senior Pastor)
- St. Philip Missionary Baptist Church (W.R. Ivory, Senior Pastor)
- Wesley Chapel A.M.E. Church (Leo Griffin, Senior Pastor)
- Project Row Houses
- Sankofa Research Institute
- Row House Community Development Corporation

With its founding in 2015, the EEDC formed four working groups:

- Dowling Corridor Development for Community Wealth Building
- Partnerships with Anchor Institutions for Community Wealth Building
- Housing Development & Community Land Trust
- Political Engagement

Area of Study and Demographics

Area of Study

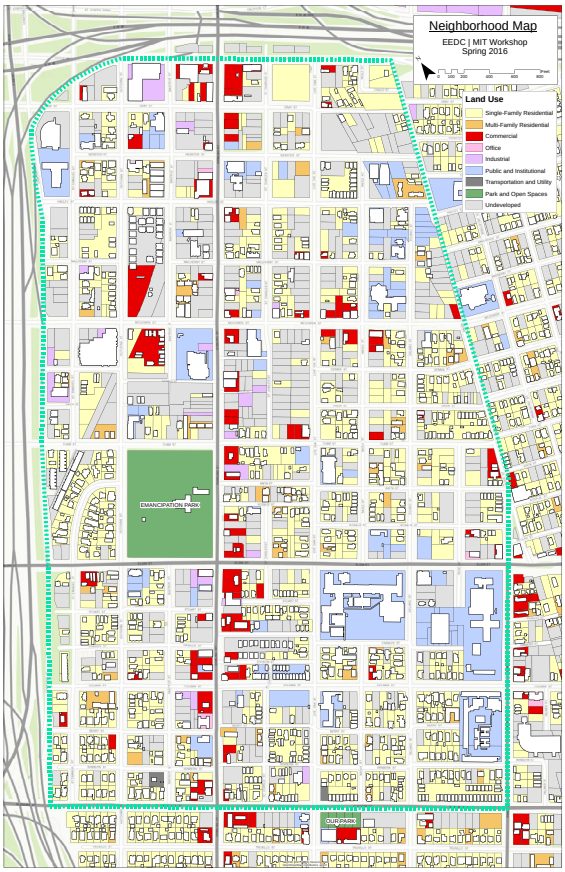
The EEDC has identified an area of study in the Greater Third Ward, bounded by Interstates 69 and 45, Sauer, Elgin, and Alabama Streets. This area is a manageable size, in which strategies to combat displacement, develop affordable housing, and foster commercial development can be impactfully implemented. The EEDC may also choose to pilot strategies in the area to be replicated in other parts of the Greater Third Ward.

The selected area of study has many attributes that make it a strategic location for implementing EEDC strategies. The study area has high levels vacant parcels and abandoned housing relative, especially, to the portion area Alabama Street.

The neighborhood has significantly less housing stock than in the past, both single-family and multifamily, and many fewer businesses. Only 20 remain open on the once bustling Dowling Avenue, out of the 175 businesses that existed in 1950.

The study area is adjacent to Downtown and Midtown making it well situated for and thus vulnerable to an influx of market-rate and luxury development. The northwestern and southwestern corners of the study area have seen the greatest increase in replatting, demolitions and new construction, townhouse development, and rising property and property tax values, directly adjacent to thruways to Midtown and Downtown.

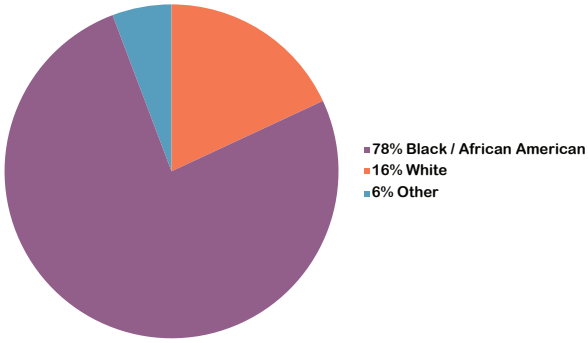
Finally, many cultural and community institutions are located within the study area, including Emancipation Park, Project Rowhouses, several historic church es, the Eldorado Ballroom, the former Houston Negro Hospital and Nursing School, the SHAPE Center, the Third Ward Multi-Service Center, and several public schools.



Demographics

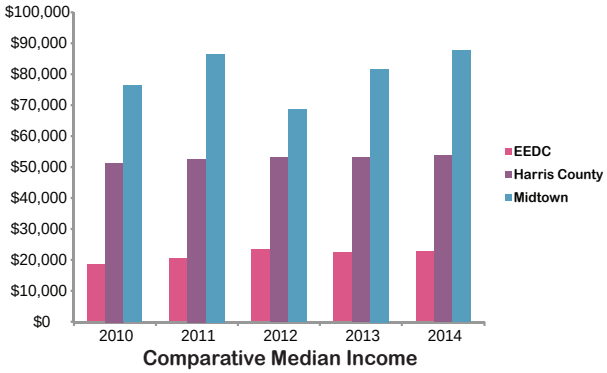
Race

The study area has a population of 4,001 and is 76% Black or African American and 18% White.



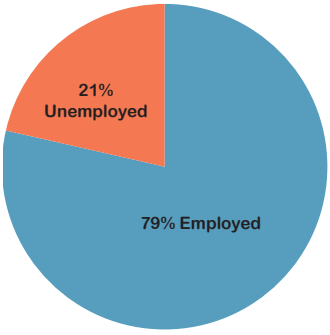
Income

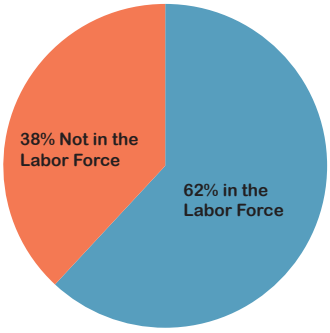
The median household income for the area is $22,948. In comparison, the Harris County area median income, upon which HUD income-restricted housing eligibility is based, is $53,822. This means that many area residents are very low income relative to affordable housing income restrictions.



Unemployment

The unemployment rate in the area is among the highest in Houston. As of 2014, 21% of the labor force population was unemployed and 38% of residents ages16 years and older are not in the labor force.





The EEDC and MIT Collaboration

MIT 1

In the summer of 2015, a group of MIT students traveled to Houston with the MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab). They were hosted by Project Row Houses and began an initial assessment of the Third Ward in order to understand community needs. Through community engagement this first team gathered data and published a report recommending that the EEDC adopt the following strategies: 1) build political power 2) strengthen community ownership 3) increase housing choice and 4) generate community wealth.

MIT 2

The MIT 2 team is made up of current graduate students in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. All students are enrolled in a practicum course whose aim is to aid the EEDC by outlining potential community strategies. In January and March of 2016 the group traveled to Houston to coordinate with the EEDC and follow up on the work of MIT 1. Students met with EEDC stakeholders and engaged community members through community surveys to get a better understanding of the effects of rapid change and the needs and hopes of residents. MIT 2 developed this report in collaboration with the EEDC working groups.

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Strategies

For Sale
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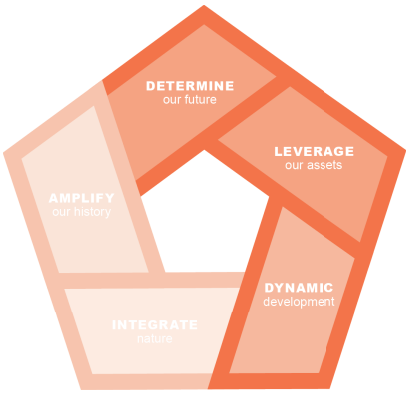
Strategy 1: Establish a Community Land Trust

Fay Strongin, Rob Call, Priya Johnson, Rachel Belanger

Rising property taxes and increased market rate development pressure threaten the ability of current residents to stay. There is not enough affordable housing in the neighborhood. Recognizing these challenges, the EEDC has adopted the goal of providing permanently affordable housing that is community controlled.



Strengths

Despite a recent increase in market rate development and displacement, the Emancipation Park neighborhood has many assets that can support the EEDC in its goal of providing community controlled affordable housing. There is significant community land ownership amongst the EEDC member organizations, churches, and homeowners, and a commitment to solving problems collaboratively and creatively.

CLT Solution

A community land trust (CLT) is a nonprofit organization that stewards land for community needs, with a focus on affordable housing. By holding ownership of land separate from homes, CLTs provide permanent affordability and allow homeowners to build wealth with less risk.

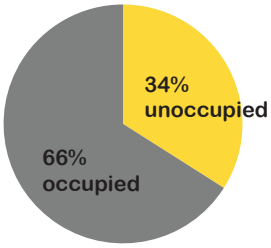
Like Emancipation Park, the community land trust model is founded in values of liberation, community ownership, and community control. The first modern CLT— New Communities, Inc — was founded in 1969 in South Georgia to steward Black-owned agricultural land in an area wrought by the history of slavery and sharecropping.

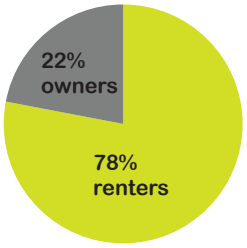
A CLT strategy is well suited to the context of the Emancipation Park neighborhood. Through a CLT, organizations, churches, and homeowners can work together to develop organizational capacity, access the necessary housing development resources, and make the most of their individual land holdings.

The Housing Market and Development Trends

Renting vs. Owning

In the Emancipation Park neighborhood, the majority of residents are renters and the majority of homes are occupied. As new development continues to enter the neighborhood, existing residents are likely to face an increase in housing costs, and renters will be especially vulnerable to displacement.

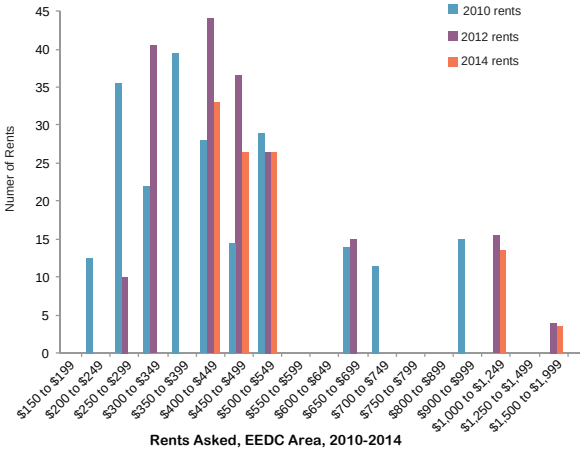




Affordability

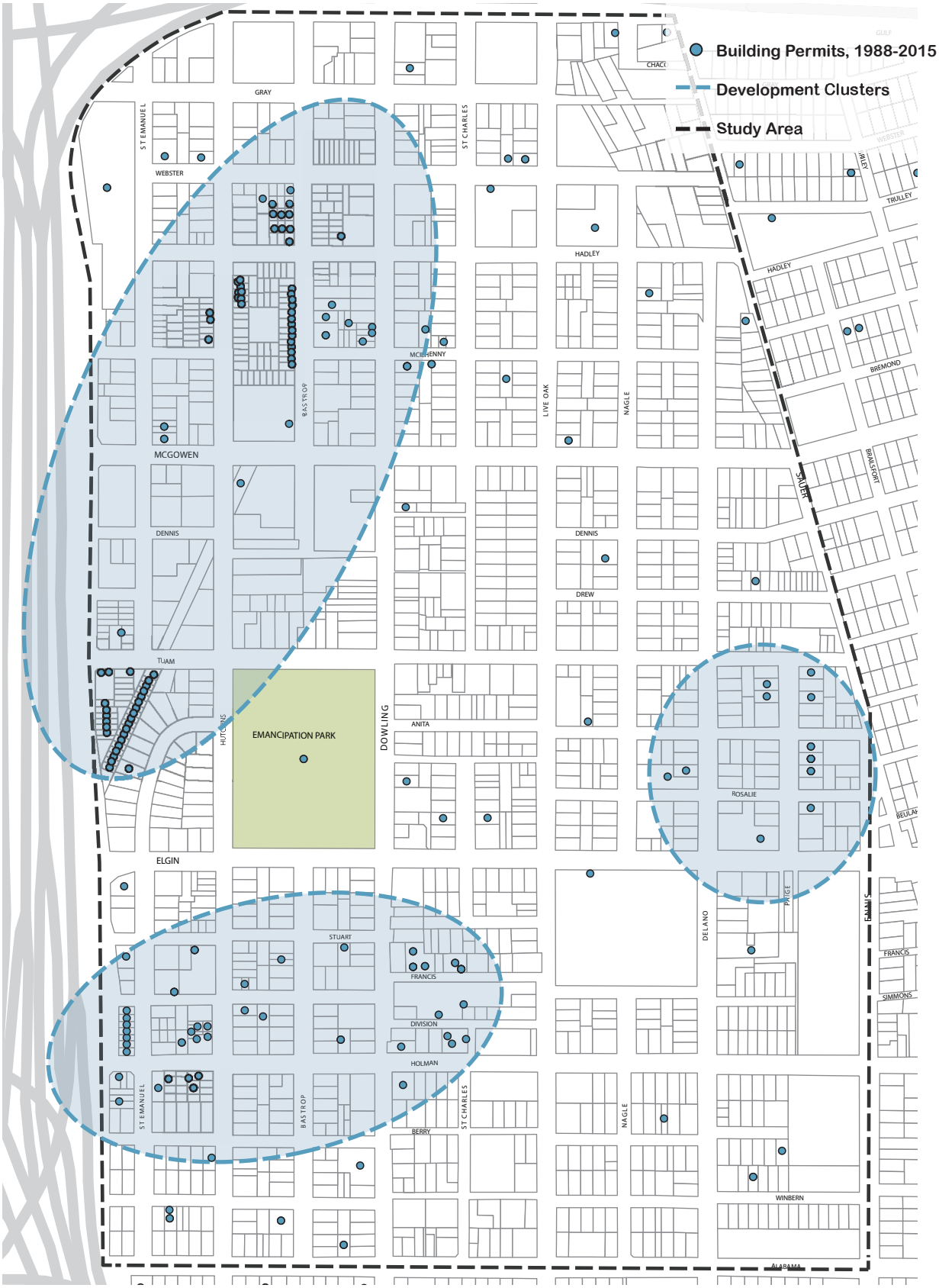
The average median income in the Emancipation Park neighborhood in 2014 was $22,948. Defined as 30% of income, an affordable rent for a household earning median income would be $573/month. In recent years, rental housing opportunities in that price range have diminished, and rents have become concentrated in higher price brackets.

Renters and those owning homes near rapid development clusters are particularly vulnerable to changing markets. Strategies must be developed to maintain housing affordability so that current residents are not forced out of their own community.



New Construction

Most recently, building permits for new construction (right) have been concentrated in the northwestern and southwestern corners of the Emancipation Park neighborhood, raising property values in these areas. The southeastern corner of the neighborhood has seen a rise in demolition permits, and little new construction.


Building Permits, 1988-2015
Development Clusters
Study Area
GRAY
WEBSTER
ST EMANUEL
ST CHARLES
HADLEY
TRULLEY
BREMOND
BRAUSFORT
MCHENNY
BASTROP
LIVE OAK
NAGLE
MCGOWEN
DENNIS
DREW
TUAM
HUTCHINS
EMANCIPATION PARK
DOWLING
ANITA
ROSALIE
ELGIN
STUART
FRANCIS
DIVISION
HOLMAN
BERRY
DELANO
PAUGE
SIMMONS
WINBERN
ALABAMA

Objectives

This strategy builds on the work of the MIT1 team and the ongoing work of the EEDC's Community Land Trust and Affordable Housing Development Working Group. This strategy, as presented here, has four main objectives:

Illustrate the Benefits of a Community Land Trust

A CLT is one method that may be used to achieve the EEDC's goal of providing permanently affordable housing that is community controlled.

Emphasize the Benefits of Working Together

Land ownership in the neighborhood is a significant asset. However, developing permanently affordable housing also requires capacity for housing development, funding acquisition, and property management. Land-owning organizations have the greatest opportunity to achieve this goal by working together.

Define Key Decisions Regarding Governance and Operations

By breaking down the process into specific steps, this strategy can help guide the EEDC through the first steps of making a CLT a reality.

Increase the EEDC's Capacity to Build Relationships and Garner Support for a CLT

Although the EEDC has members with CLT expertise, many people are still unfamiliar with the concept. In addition to illustrating how a CLT succeeds in providing permanent affordability by separating home ownership from land ownership, we have described the potential financial impact for homeowners and renters.

Many homes in the Emancipation Park neighborhood have already been demolished, and many more are vulnerable without a mechanism that fundamentally shifts the nature of land and home ownership.

Benefits of a Community Land Trust

In a community facing rapid development and potential displacement, a CLT can be a particularly powerful strategy to allow existing residents to maintain control over their community as it exists and to steer the future of development. Today there are over 200 CLTs across the country being utilized to spur equitable neighborhood revitalization and to provide affordable housing.

Some of the potential benefits of a CLT include the following:

Permanent Affordability

Community land trusts can be used by communities experiencing displacement as a way to protect residents' rights to remain and thrive in their communities. By retaining permanent ownership of the land, community land trusts lower the costs of rent, mortgages, and taxes, making housing more affordable for low-income households.

Community Wealth

Today, when residents and businesses leave the neighborhood, they take their wealth with them. Community land trusts create more opportunities for homeownership, construction and maintenance jobs, and local business. This model can incubate local enterprise and spur employment that stays in the Third Ward.

Community Control

Under a community land trust model, members have the power to decide what gets built and where, instead of decisions being imposed from the outside. Democratic governance by a group that includes leaseholders, community members, and public interest representatives, ensures that land in the trust is developed in way that meets community needs and desires.

Learning from Other Land Trusts

Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation (GNDC)
Austin, Texas

GNDC began in 1981 a non-profit, facilitating affordable homeownership in East Austin. In 2014, the City of Austin designated GNDC as a CLT.

GNDC supports itself through rental revenues and a combination of city funding and donations. It is also involved in lending to homeowners.

Relevance:
- First CLT designated under Texas law, SB 402, effective in 2012
- Combination of single family and multifamily housing, scattered site and clustered
- Austin median income similar to Houston

Image Source: ***The Atlantic***

Homestead Community Land Trust
Seattle, Washington

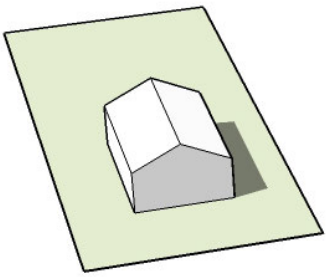
HCLT was incorporated in 1992 by low-income residents of Central and South Seattle. HCLT now has 193 homes in trust. HCLT collaborates with faith-based partners through donation of underutilized land or buildings, volunteering to rehabilitate a home, or through co-development partnerships.

Relevance:
- Combination of single family homes, condos, and townhomes
- Acquisition strategies include: home-buyer driven, partnerships with developers for new development, and rehabilitation
- Collaborates with faith-based partners

How It Works on a Parcel

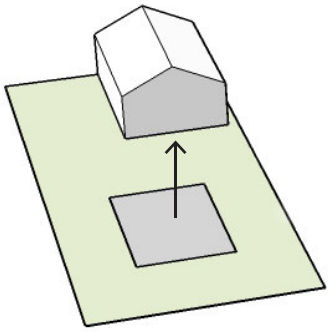
Homeownership not in a CLT

When buying a home, the home and the land it sits on are typically sold together. Most mortgages for homeownership must cover the cost of both the land and the housing structure. This kind of homeownership is often subsidized with forgivable loans to first time homebuyers. When the first purchaser decides to sell the home, they sell it at market rate and the subsidy is lost.



Homeownership in a CLT

Under a community land trust, ownership of the home and the land it sits on are separated. When a property is held in trust by a CLT, the CLT it retains ownership of the land and stewards the affordability of the home. Separating the land and housing makes buying housing more affordable. In this scenario, the homeowner owns their house leases the land from the CLT through the use of a low cost ground lease.



When a CLT home is resold, the seller earns equity and the land trust helps keep the resale price affordable for the next homebuyer. In this way, land trusts allow for subsidies to have a permanent effect.

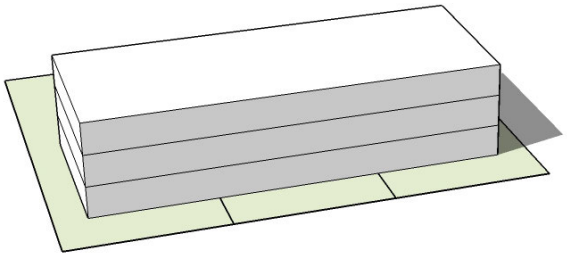
Estimate of Costs and Benefits over 10 Years in the EEDC Study Area		Status Quo	Community Land Trust
Initial Purchase	Land	$85,000	$85,000
	Improvement	$125,000	$125,000
	Total	$210,000	$210,000
	Land Subsidy	$0	$85,000
	Homeowner Assistance	$40,000	$40,000
	Cost to First Buyer	$170,000	$85,000
Resale (annual price appreciation of 3% over 10 years)	Land	$114,232	Held by CLT
	Improvement	$167,990	$167,990
	Total	$282,222	$167,990
	Equity Generated	$72,222	$42,990
	Equity that leaves neighborhood	$72,222	$10,747
	Equity used to build more affordable housing	$0	$32,241
	Cost to Second Buyer	$282,222	$135,747

Assuming ground lease guarantees 25% of equity gains to seller and 75% to CLT.
Sale value to non-CLT seller $282,222, to CLT seller $135,747.

Affordable Rental Housing

In addition to allowing for innovative affordable homeownership, land owned by a CLT can also be used to build larger scale multifamily housing. Building larger structures will require diverse sources of funding and subsidy. The amount of subsidy required depends on the desired level of affordability and the mix of affordable and market rate units. If the CLT owns the land and the building, it can either manage the property itself or hire another organization to do so.

CLT multifamily development is similar to other nonprofit multifamily development, but the primary difference is that a CLT uses a more democratic decision-making process.

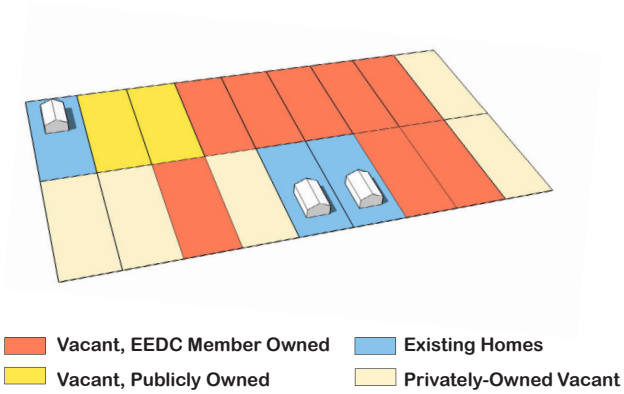


Multifamily Development Costs per Square Foot

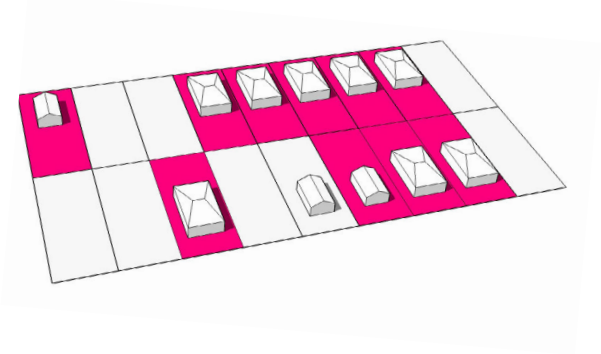
All units affordable at 30-50% AMI: approx. $126/sf
Mix of market rate and affordable: approx. $110/sf

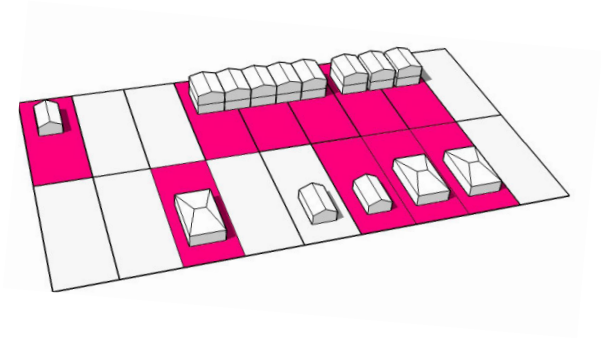
How It Works on a Block

Many blocks within the Emancipation Park neighborhood contain a mix of public, private, and institutional land ownership. The arrangement of parcels within a block provides different options for housing development by the CLT. The following illustrations are for a “typical” block in the neighborhood.



Potential Community Land Trust





Scenario 1: Single Family Home Infill

- New single family homes can be built on the parcels already owned by EEDC members
- Existing homeowners may choose to donate or sell their land to the CLT in order to ensure permanent affordability

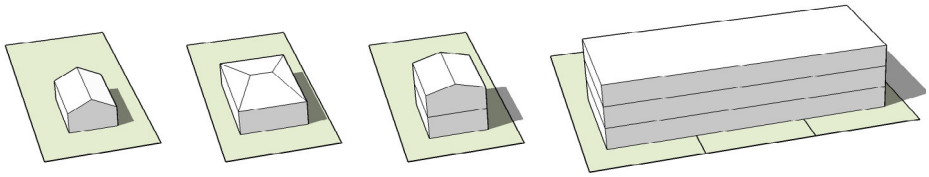
Gross Square Feet:	19,800
Floor Area Ratio:	0.13
Units:	11
Units per Acre:	3.2

Scenario 2: Single- and Multi-family

- Within the same land area, more units could be added with condos or apartment buildings
- The addition of rental housing would allow the CLT to utilize Low Income Housing Tax Credits

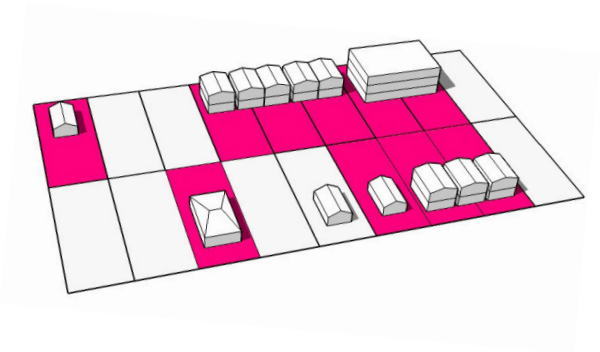
Gross Square Feet:	28,500
Floor Area Ratio:	0.19
Units:	22
Units per Acre:	6.3

Creating a Range of Housing Options



	Row House	Contemporary Single Family House	Duplex	Apartment Building
Gross Square Feet	1000	2100	2400	27000
# of units per building	1	1	2	30
Bedrooms	1-2	3-4	2-3	mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedrooms
Approximate Cost Per Unit	$83,000	$174,300	$99,600	$99,000

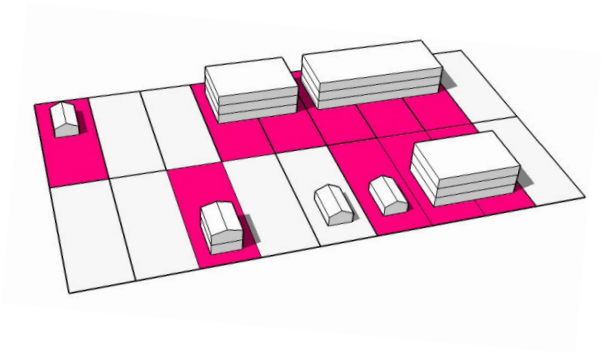
Approximate costs based on $83/sf single-family development costs from Womack Development and $110/sf multi-family from tax credit applications



Scenario 3: Primarily Multi-family

- A mix on single- and multi-family typologies allows for the greatest variety in unit sizes
- Larger buildings are more cost effective to build and maintain and enable the creation of more units on the site

Gross Square Feet:	40,500
Floor Area Ratio:	0.27
Units:	38
Units per Acre:	10.9



Scenario 4: Apartments and/or Mixed-Use

- Retail can be added to the ground floor
- A range of income restrictions can be offered within a given building

Gross Square Feet:	64,800
Floor Area Ratio:	0.43
Units:	71
Units per Acre:	20.4

How It Works Across the Neighborhood

Community land trusts target a specific geographic area. Existing CLTs around the country target a single neighborhood or city. An Emancipation Park CLT could target the Emancipation Park neighborhood, a smaller area, or the Greater Third Ward as a whole. Once the CLT decides on its target area, it can begin to acquire properties to hold in trust and develop, including existing homes and vacant land.

The areas circled on the map illustrate three approaches to land acquisition given the land ownership and development trends found within each.

1

Trends:

- Significant recent townhome development, with prices higher than neighborhood average
- Scattered historic owner-occupied homes
- Few undeveloped lots compared to rest of neighborhood

Potential acquisition approach:

- Acquire remaining vacant lots to secure space for affordable housing development
- Reach out to owner-occupiers in historic homes, who may be vulnerable to displacement due to rising property taxes or pressure to sell to developers and who could benefit financially from incorporating homes in the CLT

2

Trends:

- Many lots owned privately and by Midtown Redevelopment Authority undeveloped lots
- A cluster of undeveloped lots owned by local community institutions such as churches
- Scattered historic owner-occupied homes

Potential acquisition approach:

- Properties donated by churches and other community institutions form the basis of the CLT and are the first properties to be developed
- CLT purchases other undeveloped properties near this cluster benefit financially from incorporating homes in the CLT and who could benefit financially from incorporating homes in the CLT

3

Trends:

- Many historic owner-occupied homes
- Significant number of privately-owned undeveloped lots
- Many demolitions and little new construction over past 20 years

Potential acquisition approach:

- Reach out to owner-occupiers in historic homes who may want to access the financial benefits of incorporating homes in the CLT
- Acquire remaining vacant lots to develop as affordable housing the CLT and who could benefit financially from incorporating homes in the CLT

Land Ownership
Church & PRH, Undeveloped
Owner-Occupied, Historic
Midtown Redevelopment
Private, Undeveloped (non-corporate)
Other
Acquisition Strategy Example
EEDC Study Area
1
2
3
PIERCE
CHACO
GRAY
HADLEY
MCILHENNY
MCGOWEN
DOWLING
LIVE OAK
US 59
ST EMANUEL
BASTROP
DENNIS
SAUER
DREW
TUAM
ANITA
NAGLE
PAGE
EMANCIPATION PARK
HUTCHINS
ST CHARLES
ELGIN
CHARTRES
STUART
FRANCIS
DELANO
ENNIS
HOLMAN
BERRY
WINBERN
ALABAMA

Steps to Make the CLT a Reality

STARTUP PHASE →

Organize and Convene → Make Key Decisions → Incorporate CLT as a Nonprofit → Seek State Property Tax Exemption

1. Organize and Convene

The EEDC should convene organizational stakeholders, including churches and local nonprofit affordable housing developers, to decide which of the following corporate structures will best allow it to perform the necessary activities:

- Incorporate a new nonprofit and hire staff with expertise
- Convert an existing nonprofit to a CLT
- Create a CLT as a new program of an existing nonprofit
- Be an affiliate of an existing nonprofit with Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) status

2. Make Key Decisions

Governance:

- A "classic" CLT has public membership made up of leaseholders and community members, and a tripartite Board of Directors made up of ⅓ leaseholder, ⅓ community member, and ⅓ "public interest"
- The EEDC could adopt a "classic" structure or a variation, such as a Board with seats designated for EEDC churches or other organizations that donate land to the CLT

Affordability and population:

- Decide income eligibility criteria for CLT homes
- Decide if CLT intends to create both homeownership and rental opportunities

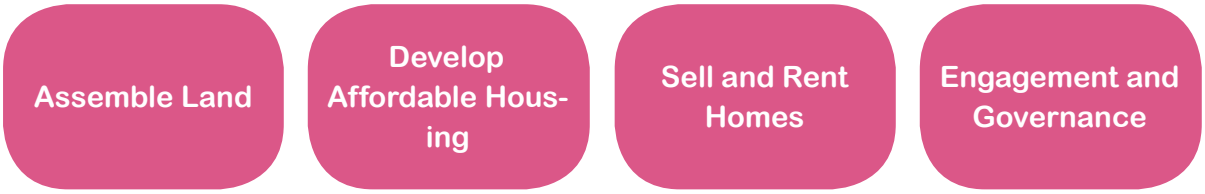
3. Incorporate CLT as a Nonprofit

- Consult with an attorney who is familiar with Texas nonprofit filing procedures
- File 'Articles of Incorporation' with the Texas
- Secretary of State
- Draft and adopt bylaws, reflecting key decisions
- Submit application for federal tax exemption

4. Seek State Property Tax Exemption

- Seek CHDO certification from the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD):
  - CHDO certification is required to qualify for federal Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) set-aside funds
  - Organization must have at least a third of Board seats reserved for residents of low-income areas or other low-income residents
- Seek designation as a land trust from the City of Houston
  - Consult with City of Houston regarding procedures
  - CLT must be a certified CHDO and exempt from federal income tax as a certified 501c(3) nonprofit

ONGOING OPERATIONS



5. Assemble Land

Land assembly strategies could include one or more of the following:

- Current homeowners donate the land under their homes to the CLT
- EEDC member organizations donate land holdings to the CLT
- CLT purchases foreclosed homes to renovate and resell
- CLT strategically purchases vacant lots to develop

6. Develop Affordable Housing

The tasks associated with affordable housing development on CLT land generally match those of non-profit development. A CLT can take one of two approaches to development:

- *Self-initiated development:* the CLT secures subsidies, prepares the site, creates architectural plans, puts out an RFP for a contractor and monitors construction, markets the development, and closes the deal
- *Facilitated development:* CLT contracts with a skilled nonprofit affordable housing developer that manages the development process
- All affordable housing development will require subsidies. A variety of subsidies are available at the city, state and federal level

7. Sell and Rent Homes

- Consult Texas Senate Bill 402 for state affordability requirements for designated land trusts and decide on homeowner and renter eligibility
- Establish terms of ground lease and resale formula
- Provide or contract for homebuyer education and support services
- Use revenue from ground leases and rental income to offset the costs of ongoing operations

8. Engagement, Membership and Governance

- Continue to educate and garner support for CLT model among Emancipation Park neighborhood residents
- Recruit non-leaseholding community residents to be active CLT members
- Full membership meets at least annually
- Board of Directors meets
- Maintain good working relationships with public sector actors at the city and state levels
- Maintain good working relationships with private sector actors such as lenders

Outreach and Engagement

The Role of the EEDC

Starting a community land trust requires organizing in many different directions, often simultaneously. In addition to the steps outlined in the process diagram, the EEDC must also begin building relationships to build support, catalyze, and organize.

Members of the EEDC already own a significant amount of land in the neighborhood. The EEDC should convene organizations and residents to: 1) build an understanding of the benefits of a community land trust, 2) create the formal organizational structure of the CLT, 3) consolidate land owned by organizations and individuals, and, (4) define an acquisition strategy

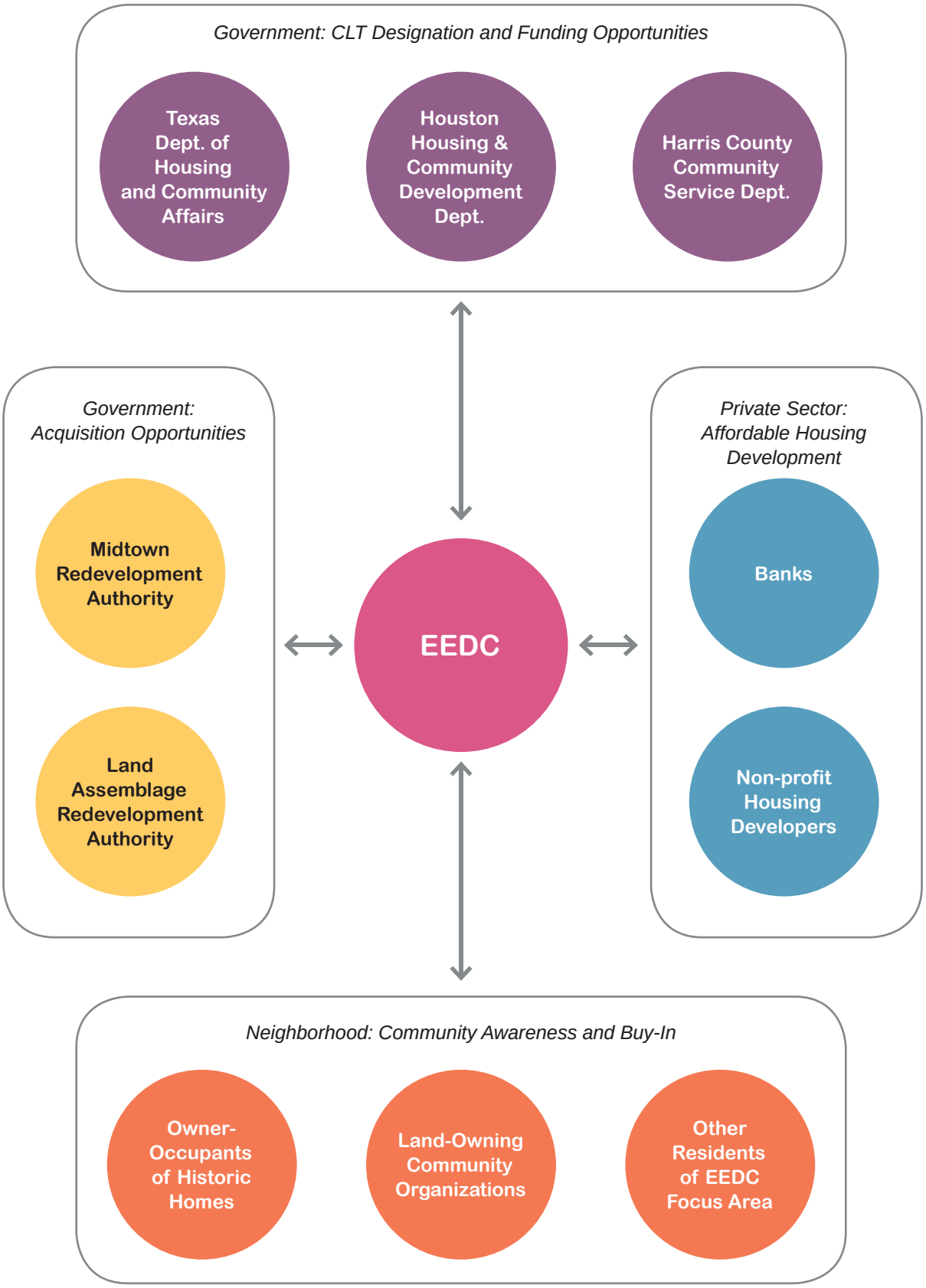
Recommended Outreach and Engagement

Creating a successful CLT will require political engagement with neighborhood residents, government officials, and the private sector.

Neighborhood:
- Build resident awareness and buy-in to build a base of prospective tenants and members
- Talk with owner-occupants about the potential benefits of incorporating homes into the CLT
- Identify potential parcels for acquisition, including those owned by vulnerable homeowners

Government:
- Cultivate relationships with municipal land authorities like the Midtown Redevelopment Authority and the City of Houston Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority for coordination and potential acquisition
- Meet with state and local officials to understand qualifications for CHDO status, land trust status, and state property tax exemption
- Learn about potential sources of subsidy and funding

Private Sector:
- Create relationships with non-profit affordable housing developers who may assist with the establishment of the CLT entity
- Develop relationships with banks that have experience funding affordable housing development and subsidizing low-income homebuyers

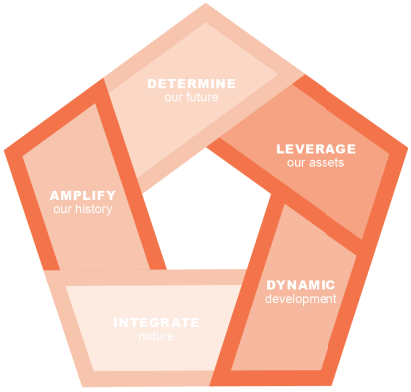

Government: CLT Designation and Funding Opportunities
Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs
Houston Housing & Community Development Dept.
Harris County Community Service Dept.
Government: Acquisition Opportunities
Midtown Redevelopment Authority
Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority
EEDC
Private Sector: Affordable Housing Development
Banks
Non-profit Housing Developers
Neighborhood: Community Awareness and Buy-In
Owner-Occupants of Historic Homes
Land-Owning Community Organizations
Other Residents of EEDC Focus Area

Curbed.com

Strategy 2: Make Mixed-Use Development Happen

Ryan Kiracofe

The Upper Third Ward has a wealth of community-minded landowners, many of whom have acquired vacant or abandoned parcels in key spots along the Dowling Street corridor and around Emancipation Park. While not intended to act as a developer or Community Development Corporation (CDC), the EEDC can act as a catalyst for meaningful, locally-focused development by helping guide landowners through the complicated process of mixed-use development for lowiincome residents.



EEDC as Facilitator

The strength of a neighborhood organization like the EEDC lies in its ability to bring together passionate people with different roles and resources. Their common bond is a deep-seated interest in the Upper Third Ward's future as a place of continued significance to Houston's black community. The EEDC will work best as a connector, a shared space where stakeholders can come together, pool resources, and then engage separately on projects and programs that add value for the neighborhood's residents.

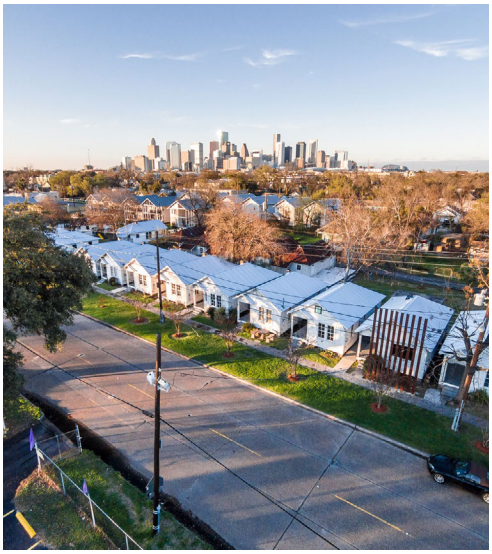
Community-Minded Development

"Development" often becomes a dirty word in communities that are experiencing gentrification. That said, the EEDC's role need not be purely resistance to the neighborhood's changing fabric; it can also guide public opinion and landowners towards development that serves the community's long-time residents. In a neighborhood working to address problems of unemployment, a lack of amenities (the Upper Third Ward has been labeled a "food desert" by the city), and uncertainty over residents' ability to remain, responsible development can be a catalyst for positive change.

Space for Meaningful Development

Landowners

A large proportion of vacant or abandoned parcels within the critical Dowling Street and Alabama Street corridors are owned by groups interested in more than just market-rate development. The neighborhood's wealth of churches and Community Development Corporations hold as many as 16 parcels within a block of Dowling Street, space that may be well-suited for mixed use development. In addition, land acquired by the Midtown Redevelopment Authority via a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) scheme is slated for use in low-income housing or mixed use/commercial development beneficial to the neighborhood.



Project Row Houses

High-Impact Parcels

While every vacant or underused parcel has the potential to have a positive impact on the neighborhood, parcels along Dowling and Alabama Street can have an outsized influence on the Upper Third Ward's future. Parcels bordering the refurbished Emancipation Park are especially critical, considering their anticipated future real estate growth, the importance of Elgin Street as an east-west connector, and the relatively underutilized spaces on the park's southern and eastern edges. Thankfully for the EEDC, many of these high-impact parcels are in the hands of the aforementioned landowners, amenable to the group's ambitions for neighborhood-minded development.

The Freelon Group

N
Project Row Houses or Row House CDC Owned
Church or CDC Owned
Midtown Redevelopment Authority Owned
Vacant/Abandoned/Undeveloped Parcels near Emancipation Park
0
0.05
0.1
0.2
Miles

Why Mixed Use Development? Why EEDC?

Advance EEDC and Neighborhood Goals

In its efforts to preserve the human character and physical scale of the historic Upper Third Ward, the EEDC can aim to be a catalyst for real estate development/refurbishment that benefits its existing residents. Mixed-use projects unlock a world of potential for increased vibrancy, access to amenities and shopping, and job creation, all within a financial framework that can make low-income housing development feasible.

A Foothold on Emancipation Park's Edge

As with any great public amenity, the refurbished Emancipation Park will be an amazing venue for the neighborhood to play, convene, and relax. With raised interest in the park will come raised land values on adjacent parcels. Mixed-use development that serves the Upper Third Ward will not only put a physical "stake in the ground" for the preservation of human history of the neighborhood, but can also serve as a symbol of much-needed progress on providing amenities and housing for long-term residents.

Image: TransWestern Development Corp.

E 6th ST
1600

How It Works

Bring Leaders to the Table

Low-income housing development in Houston usually involves close engagement with elected officials. The EEDC can serve as a third-party facilitator of dialogue between important figures in local government and the neighborhood's leaders. These include those affiliated with church CDC's, the two relevant TIRZ organizations, and anchor institutions like the University of Houston and Texas Southern University.

City of Houston

Create Value

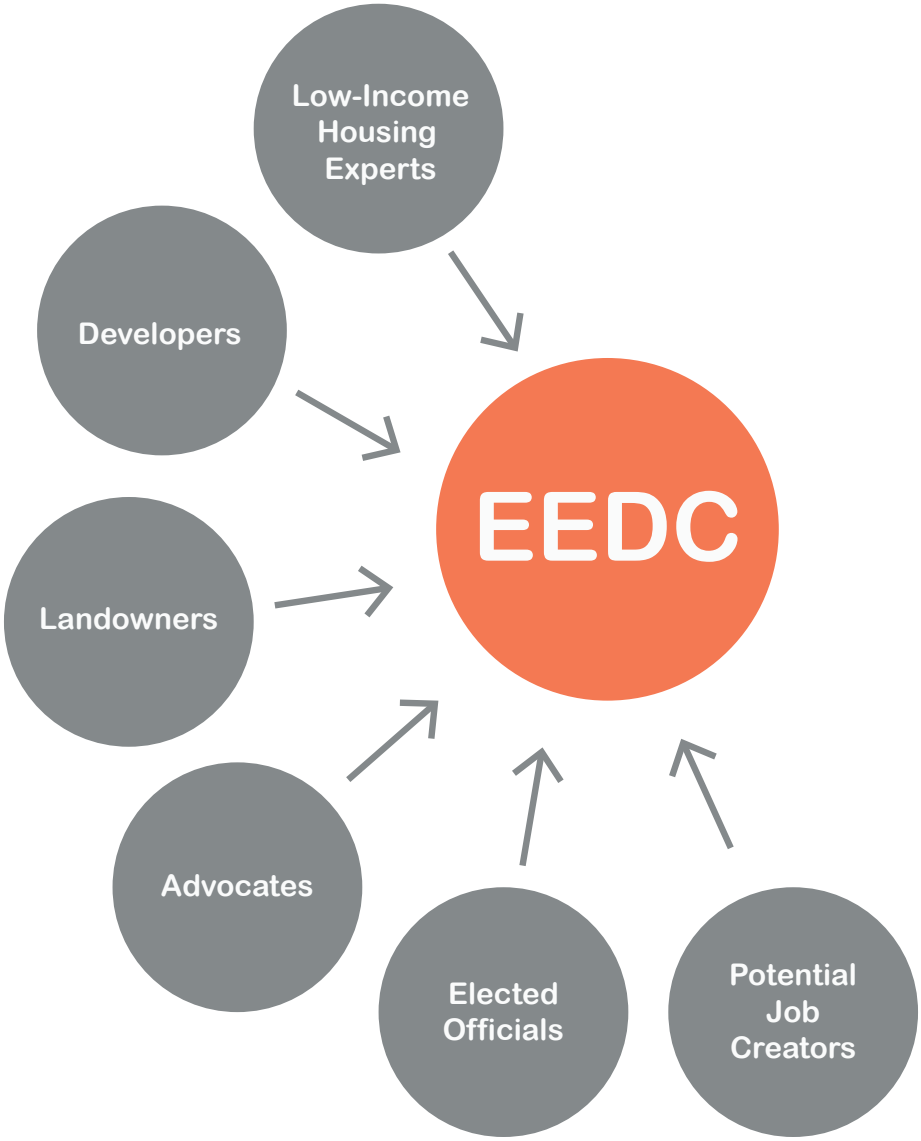
Mixed use development can open up additional revenue streams that support low income housing. As the neighborhood's population grows, additional opportunities for commerce can help make community-minded projects financially feasible where they wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Stockbox Grocers

Focus on Context & Fit

The EEDC and associated landowners can encourage development that serves the neighborhood and honors its culture. In holding critical parcels along Dowling Street and around the refurbished Emancipation Park, leaders can set the tone for future projects.

R. Kiracofe, MIT DUSP


Low-Income Housing Experts
Developers
Landowners
Advocates
EEDC
Elected Officials
Potential Job Creators

A Path To Responsible Development

Who Needs to be on Board?

While market-rate development remains strong in Houston despite the recent fall in oil prices, low-income housing requires engagement and support from a broader number of sources.

Mayor's Office

Houston Housing Authority
Property Owners program
housingforhouston.com/property-owners.aspx
"Housing Authority will pay what your rental unit is worth in comparison to other similar properties in the neighborhood."

Houston Housing & Community Development (HCDD)
hcdd@houstontx.gov
832.394.6200
How they can help:
Multifamily housing: 9% Tax Credit Support

Church & Community Leaders
Even if development is on land not owned by a church or affiliated CDC, churches can play an important role in helping community members to understand the benefits of responsible mixed-use development.

Anchor Institutions
- University of Houston
- Texas Southern University
- Houston Community College

Local Elected Officials
- City of Houston Mayor
  - *(Sylvester Turner as of writing)*
  - Appoints five board members of the Midtown Redevelopment Authority
- State Representative
  - *(G. Coleman as of writing)*
  - Appoints a board member of the Midtown Redevelopment Authority
- City Councilor
  - *(D. Boykins as of writing)*

Developers
For example:
- Row House CDC – has previously developed low-income housing in the Third Ward
- New Hope Housing – has specialized in Houston mixed income development
- Avenue CDC – has specialized in Houston mixed income development
- ITEX Group – has worked with EEDC member Theola Petteway & OST/Almeda TIRZ
- Artspace – has built LIHTC-qualified live/work housing in El Paso

What funding sources are available?

Government Programs
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- FHA 221(d)(4)
- New Market Tax Credits
- CDBG (HUD) Funding
- HCDD 9% Tax Credits

Private & Charitable Programs
- Wells Fargo Foundation
- The Houston Endowment
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- The United Way

What uses make sense for residents?

Grocery Store
The Upper Third Ward has been identified by the City of Houston as a “food desert,” which lacks easy access to fresh, healthy eating options.

Pharmacy/Convenience
As of writing, all operating pharmacies within a short drive or walking distance of Emancipation Park were located in Midtown.

Personal Services
Beneficial businesses like legal services, tax services, tutors and academic advisors can bring expertise and access to information to the neighborhood.

Medical Clinic
With the closing of Riverside Hospital, the Upper Third Ward lacks easy access to both general practitioners and specialists.

Bargain Staple Retail
Anecdotally, many residents have voiced a desire to meet more of their basic shopping needs in the immediate neighborhood. A low-price clothing, home goods, or hardware retailer could serve as a catalyst for more businesses aimed at meeting this need.

City of Santa Monica, CA

Implementation - An Example

Principles

Housing + Useful Retail/Office to the blocks near Emancipation Park
Transformative mixed use projects are feasible on a number of large undeveloped parcels near the park. Mixed uses can unlock vibrancy and street life, be a catalyst for low-income housing, and provide new amenities and jobs.

Adding density
Despite Houston's car-centric culture, increasing density near Dowling Street and Emancipation Park will help to build a critical mass to support new businesses and employment.

Building and maintaining the street wall
In reviving the blocks near Emancipation Park as an inviting environment from which to draw park-goers, active frontage on the street's edge is critical. Historic buildings like the Eldorado Ballroom set an example for effective setbacks and activation.

On-site parking away from critical streets and intersections
Parking is an essential part of any economic development in Houston. It can be provided, however, in ways that minimize negative effects on Dowling Street and the Park's surrounding blocks.

Respect for existing architecture & space
While added density and its financial constraints may require buildings to be taller or larger than some nearby structures, they should be designed in a manner respectful to the traditional scale and style of the neighborhood.

Imagining Implementation: The Eldorado Block

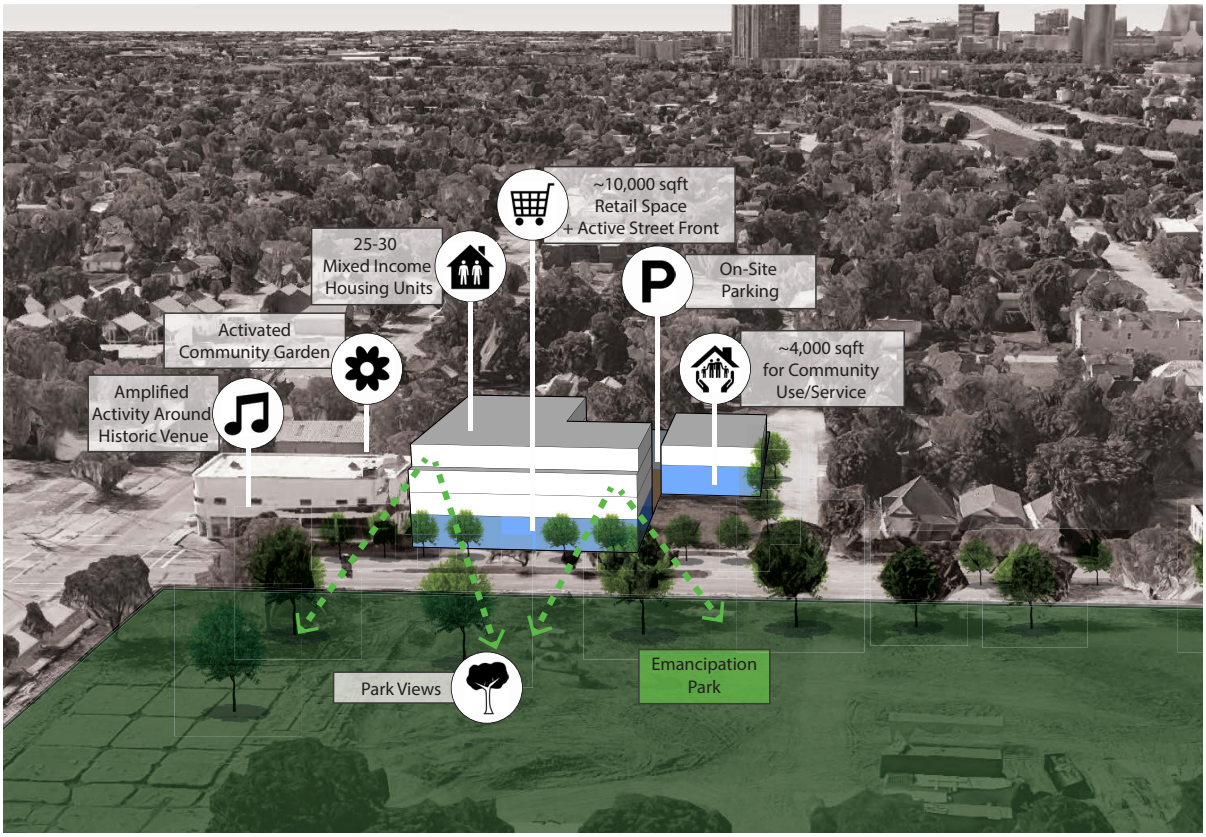
Project Row Houses and Row House CDC own a number of parcels around the historic Eldorado Ballroom, in the block bordered by Dowling, Elgin, Bastrop and Stuart Streets. Of the seven PRH-owned parcels within this block, only two have functional use today: one, the Eldorado Ballroom itself, is home to an event space, an office, and Nuwaters Coop; the other, a garden.

At right is an image of how the parcels could be used to provide much-needed housing and amenities in a way that adds vibrancy and attracts visitors to and from the adjacent park.

As imagined here, the site could provide up to 24 apartments, nearly 10,000 sq. ft. of retail space (ideal for a mid-sized grocery store), open space to be used as a plaza, small park, or outdoor dining area, and on-site parking spaces. The rough, estimated financials for a project of this size and scale could resemble the following:

	$ Million
Construction Costs	($6.7)
Soft Costs	($1.0)
Total Development Cost	**($7.7)**
Annual Gross Effective Income	$0.2
less Annual Operating Expenses	*($0.1)*
Net Operating Income	**$0.1**
Funding Sources:	
City of Houston/Foundation	$4.0
Investor/Tax Credit Equity	$3.0
Supportable Debt Service*	$0.7
Total Funding Sources	**$7.7**

***Assumes 30-year loan period at 6% interest, paid with debt service coverage ratio of 1.2.**



Google Earth

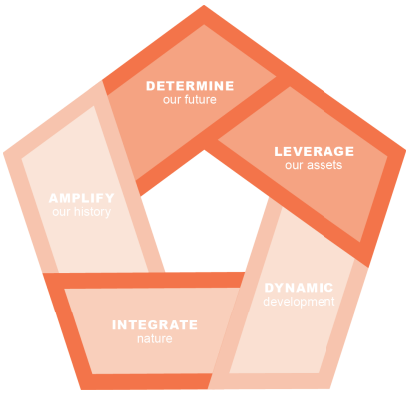
LOTS TO LOVE

farmer's market
community garden
park
public art
Imagery Date: 3/3/2016

Strategy 3: Lots to Love

Alexis Harrison, Brandon Peterson

Lots to Love is a roadmap for the EEDC to approach vacant land as an asset rather than just blighted property. This strategy fits within the interests of the Dowling Corridor Revitalization group and aims to develop relationships with community members and anchor institutions to address the observed needs of the community. Suggested short and long term programming seeks to improve social and environmental conditions as an overall quality of life strategy and will serve as opportunities to improve the EEDC's community engagement process while honoring the important history of the Third Ward.



Project Description

After several decades of disinvestment and pressures of integration, the predominately Black and economically diverse neighborhood in Houston's Third Ward have experienced population decline and increasingly high numbers of abandoned homes and vacant lots.

Currently, the Third Ward is in the midst of an interesting transition: its proximity to downtown and low costs for land and development have attracted developers to the area. Gentrification in the Third Ward is leading to the replacement of long-time African-American residents and vernacular row houses with higher income White residents and mid-rise condo residences. In juxtaposition to the out-of-scale new developments, many of the yet-to-be-developed lots either stand dilapidated or vacant.

In addition to its environmental, aesthetic, and social costs, vacant land proves to be an expensive maintenance burden for the city and its residents. By introducing new uses to vacant lots, Lots to Love introduces economic, social, and environmental benefits for the city's Third Ward residents.

Current Conditions

Vacant Lots

The Emancipation Park neighborhood has faced immense disinvestment, and the result has been population and economic decline. Of the 762.6 million square feet of land in the Third Ward, three million currently sit vacant.

In 1950 the one-mile Dowling Corridor between Pierce Street to the north and Alabama Street to the south had: 114 Stores; 59 Homes; 29 Restaurants; 9 Auto Repair Shops; 6 Gas Stations; 6 Apartment Buildings; 3 Dry Cleaners; 3 Churches; 3 Rooming Houses; 2 Movie Theaters; 2 Drug Stores; 2 Hotels; and a Furniture Store, Lodge Hall, Office Building, Printing Shop, Electric Repair, Radio Repair, Vacuum Repair, Private School, Barber College, Night Club, and Lumber Yard. In 2015 the same corridor had: 5 Stores; 11 Homes; 4 Restaurants; 4 Churches; 4 Office Buildings; 2 Gas Stations; 2 Barber Shops or Hair Salons; 1 Bar; 1 Dental Office; 1 Boxing Center; and 1 Historic Ballroom.

Today, the Dowling (soon to be “Emancipation”) corridor displays striking evidence of its loss of investment. Forty-two percent of the parcels along this street sit vacant. This equates to 347.1 thousand sq. ft. of vacant land. Despite such striking numbers, the community has significant ownership within the neighborhood (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Church, CDC, or Midtown Owned Land.

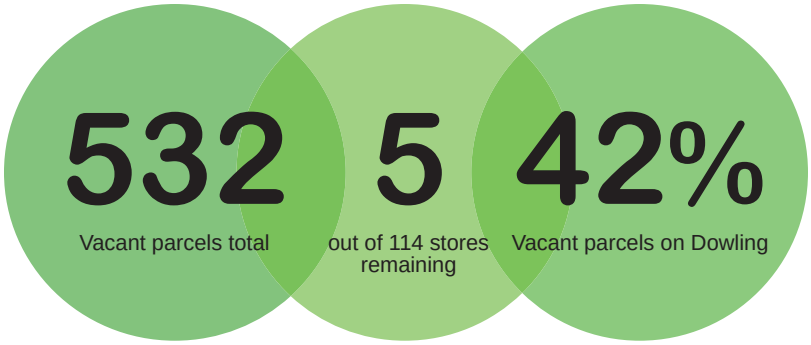


Figure 2. Vacancy within the Emancipation Park Neighborhood.

Objectives

Utilize

Instead of accepting negative perceptions of the blighted conditions of vacant lots and abandoned buildings, taking ownership and activating vacant lots will positively impact the Emancipation Park neighborhood.

Engage

Programming the vacant lots along Dowling will provide opportunity to bring in external institutions and businesses. More importantly, this scheme introduces the opportunity to establish a program allowing for temporary or long-term pop-up shops that will aid in the revitalization of the Dowling Corridor. Additionally, the various uses for vacant lots introduced in this document provide the EEDC with interactive platforms for community engagement.

Fulfill

Programming vacant lots can fulfill direct community needs including job creation, wealth generation, community building, quality of life improvements, and better environmental conditions.

Honor

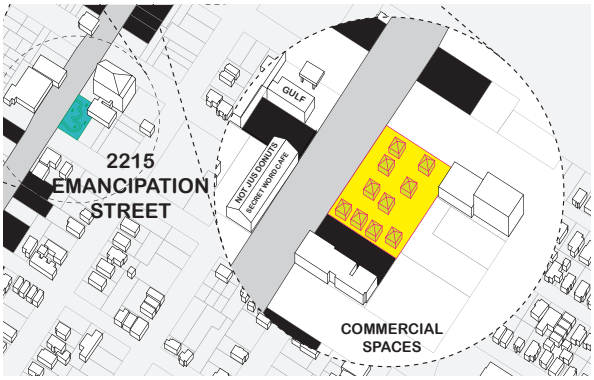
Much of the history of the Third Ward is learned at external institutions. Vacant lots can be used as places to engage the community and visitors about the area's rich history through art installations, educational events, Juneteenth programs, and more.

“ [The neighborhood] is on the incline but there is great concern about preserving the integrity of the Third Ward.”
- Edith Selgary

How It Works - Programming Schemes

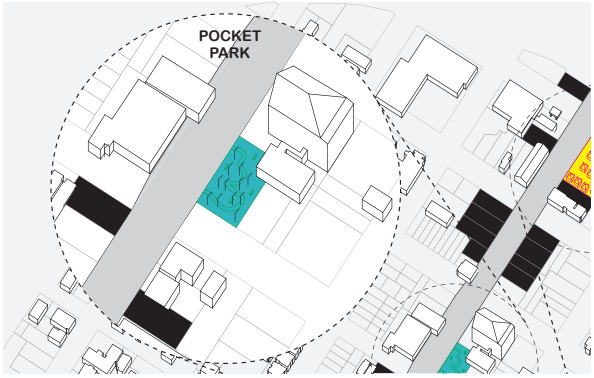
Pop-up Commercial Spaces

Pop-up shops will aid in community wealth and relationship building and could serve as venues to activate identified anchor institutions in the neighborhood. Shops can either be semi-permanent or temporary installations: semi-permanent shops can be housed in flexible buildings open for retail or food service, while temporary shops, like open markets and food trucks, can create easily replicable events.



Pocket Parks

Pocket parks will provide formalized opportunities for current informal uses in the neighborhood by creating small open spaces that fit the lifestyles of community members. This scheme can create an opportunity for the EEDC and developers to find out firsthand what the neighborhood wants, allowing the spaces to be programmed to meet specific recreational or cultural needs. Pocket parks will help create a more active Third Ward.



Community Art Installations

The community art installation scheme will embrace the theme of using art as a means of expression. Its integration of public space, history, and culture will invite the public to engage in conversations about their neighborhood and its past. This scheme can bring anchor institutions into the neighborhood while creating semi-permanent or temporary installation art featuring elements of the Third Ward, right in its own backyard.

Community Gardens

Community gardens will address the Third Ward's food desert issues by creating meeting places for neighbors to exchange goods and knowledge about producing, preparing, and enjoying food. By establishing an EEDC community garden, this scheme can open opportunities for job creation and community outreach. Growing fruits and vegetables on vacant property establishes productivity on land once viewed only as blight.

LOTS TO LOVE

EMANCIPATION STREET CORRIDOR

The Emancipation Park neighborhood has faced immense disinvestment, and the result has been population and economic decline. Of the 762.6 million square feet of land in the Third Ward, three million currently sit vacant.

In 1950 the one-mile Dowling Corridor between Pierce Street to the north and Alabama Street to the south had: 114 Stores; 59 Homes; 29 Restaurants; 9 Auto Repair Shops; 6 Gas Stations; 6 Apartment Buildings; 3 Dry Cleaners; 3 Churches; 3 Rooming Houses; 2 Movie Theaters; 2 Drug Stores; 2 Hotels; and a Furniture Store, Lodge Hall, Office Building, Printing Shop, Electric Repair, Radio Repair, Vacuum Repair, Private School, Barber College, Night Club, and Lumber Yard. In 2015 the same corridor had: 5 Stores; 11 Homes; 4 Restaurants; 4 Churches; 4 Office Buildings; 2 Gas Stations; 2 Barber Shops or Hair Salons; 1 Bar; 1 Dental Office; 1 Boxing Center; and 1 Historic Ballroom.

Today, the Dowling (soon to be "Emancipation") Corridor displays striking evidence of its loss of investment. Forty-two percent of the parcels along this street sit vacant. This equates to 347.1 thousand sqft of vacant land. Despite such striking numbers, the community has significant ownership within the neighborhood

LOTS TO LOVE will provide a road map for the EEDC to approach vacant land as an asset rather than as blighted property. This strategy will fit in with the interests of the Dowling Corridor Revitalization group and aims to develop relationships with immediate community members and anchor institutions to address the observed needs of the community.

Alexis Harrison
Brandon Peterson

May 12, 2016

Figure 3. "Emancipation" Corridor Vacant Lot Programming System.

Vacant Lots as Pop-up Commercial Spaces

As of 2015, there were only five identified commercial businesses on Dowling Street. The pop-up shop scheme introduces a flexible opportunity to bring desired services and activities into the neighborhood while addressing immediate needs of the community. This scheme provides the EEDC with the option to engage with residents to understand what services are being provided, what services can be provided, and create a sense of ownership and ignite entrepreneurship. This scheme will aid in community wealth and relationship building while serving to provide venues that bring anchor institutions into the neighborhood.

Pop-ups shops can be:

- Semi-permanent. The shops would be housed under shipping containers or constructed stalls for retail or food.
- Temporary. The pop-up shops would be in the form of open-air markets or food trucks – easily replicated in a short time frame and cleared up for another event.

Establishing pop-up shops can be done by:

- Connecting with neighborhood vendors, artists, cooks, or organizations interested in participating
- Creating structures for semi-permanent and temporary shops
- Applying for the appropriate permits

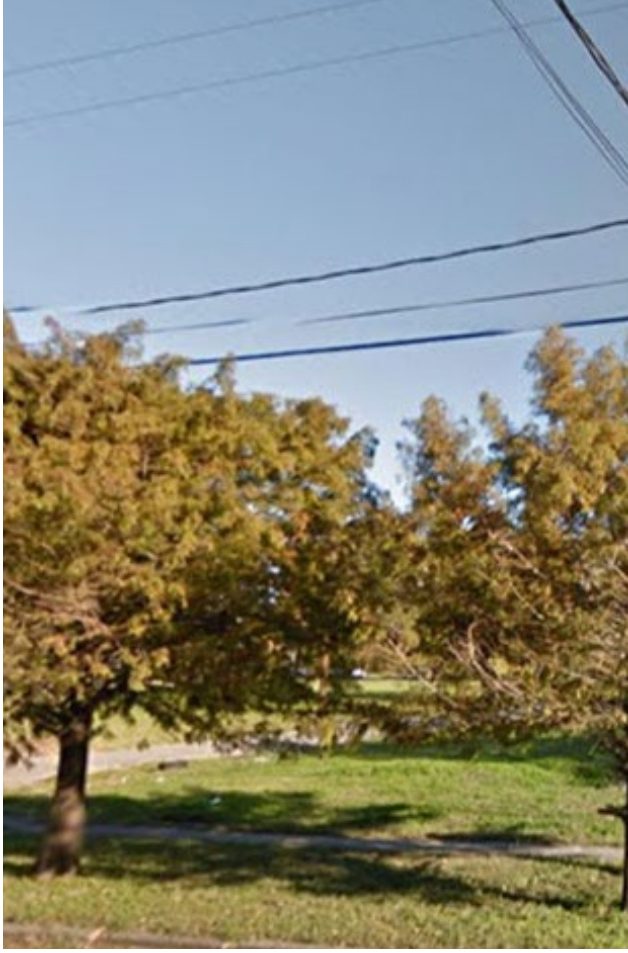
Examples of services and events that can be held on the vacant lots include:

- Group or individual tutoring sessions
- Community meetings
- Tax preparation
- Homeownership inquiry sessions
- Community visioning
- Farmer’s and community markets

Ideal pop-up schemes can be achieved through an intensive visioning process led by members of the EEDC. Keeping in mind preferences of the community, these schemes can become rich additions to the Dowling Corridor and be used as a tool for EEDC community engagement.

Snug Valley Farm

Vacant Lots as Pocket Parks



Through observation, we noticed vacant lots being used for recreational activities by younger residents, as lounging spaces by the elderly, and as gathering spaces by community groups.

Pocket Parks can be:

- Semi-permanent. Quality of ground covering can be improved to establish a safe environment for multiple uses for an extended amount of time.
- Temporary. Maintenance of vacant lots can be improved for activities that do not require physical, permanent features.

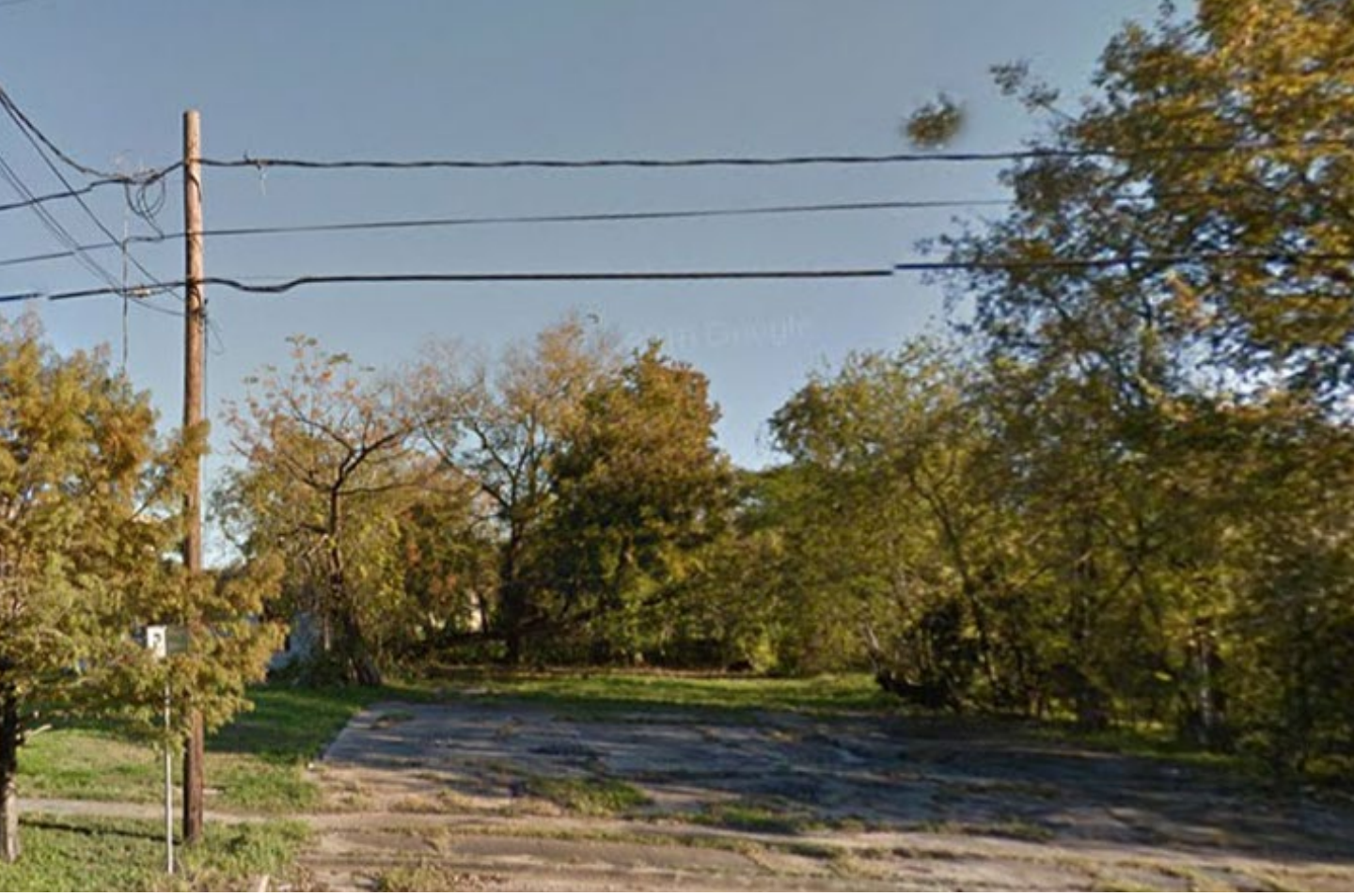
Establishing pocket parks can be done by:

- Embarking on ‘discovery walks’ to understand how vacant lots are currently fulfilling everyday needs of residents
- Creating structures for semi-permanent and temporary activities to be held on the vacant land
- Applying for the appropriate permits
- Connecting with organizations and groups interested in throwing community festivals or events
- Introducing low-cost, fun installations for the whole family

Examples of activities and events that can be held at the pocket parks include:

- Pick-up sport games
- Club meetings
- Individual or group exercise classes
- Safe, local places for children to play
- Play Streets - the closing of specific streets to traffic to open space for the community to play!

Ideal pocket park schemes can be achieved through discussions and observations of how the community is creating public space through everyday urbanism. The schemes aim to improve the quality of the public realm for residents of all ages and interests, and will help to improve the EEDC’s outreach to residents.



Vacant Lots as Community Art Installations

The Community Art installation scheme serves as a vehicle to introduce public art to the Dowling Corridor by continuing the neighborhood's renowned history of artistic expression. The integration of public space, history, and culture invite the public to engage in conversations about their neighborhood and its history. This scheme brings anchor institutions, such as the Houston Museum of Modern Art, into the neighborhood while highlighting the rich history of the Third Ward.

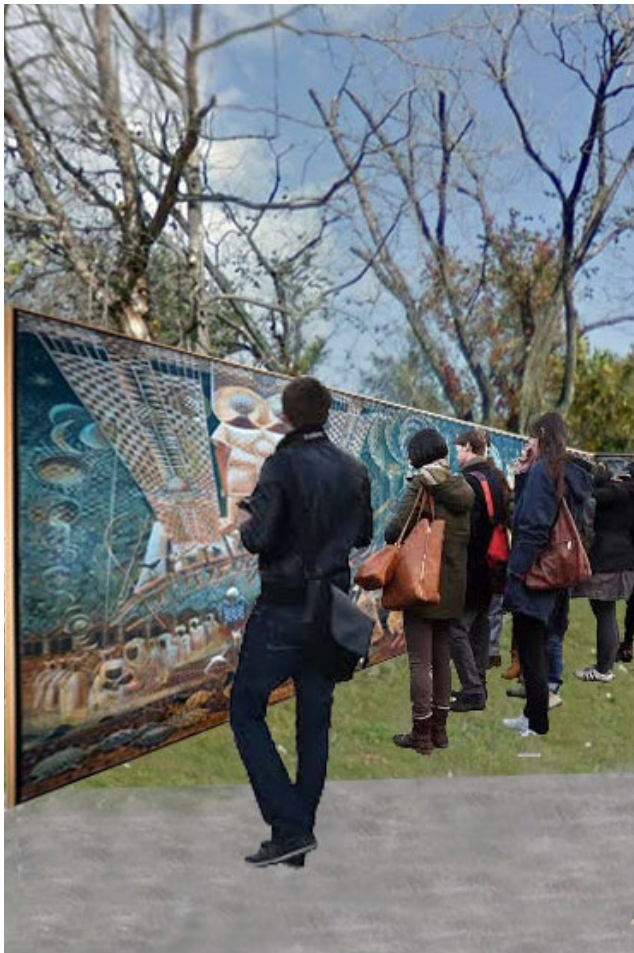
Community art installations can be:

- Semi-permanent. Statues, public art displays, and monuments can be brought in for an extended amount of time to bring vibrancy to vacant lots.
- Temporary. Community art programs can be introduced to vacant lots and allow for community events such as art making, discussions on culture, and history and walking tours.

Establishing community art installations can be done by:

- Connecting with community artists interested in producing community art
- Connecting with anchor institutions to bring in art and discussion based events that reflect the history and culture of the Third Ward
- Creating temporary installations with low-cost materials

By creating semi-permanent and temporary installation art featuring elements of the Third Ward (specifically work done by John Biggers and art reflecting Juneteenth celebrations and the history of slavery in Houston), this scheme provides opportunity for Project Row Houses' expansion onto the Dowling Corridor while also serving as an opportunity for public engagement.



Vacant Lots as Community Gardens

The Third Ward is officially designated as a food desert, and there is only one fresh food market in the Emancipation Park neighborhood. There are, however, a few community gardens in the neighborhood. As an opportunity to create productivity from blighted and abandoned land, community gardens grown and run by the EEDC are one option to fight food insecurity within the Third Ward.

Community gardens can be:

- Seasonal: Community gardens can produce a variety of foods and serve as a direct means of addressing food insecurity.
- Educational: The EEDC can use community gardens as an opportunity to engage with local residents and educate youth and adults on sustainable food choices.

Community gardens can be established by:

- Connecting with neighborhood residents and organizations interested in participating
- Applying for the appropriate permits for food distribution

Examples of community benefits that come from community gardens include:

- Reduced food insecurity
- Community educational opportunities
- Relationships with food distributors

Ideal community garden schemes can achieve success through impactful leadership from the EEDC. By keeping in mind the community's needs, gardens can become valuable additions to the Dowling Corridor and be used as tool for EEDC community engagement.

COMMUNITY
GARDEN

Case Studies

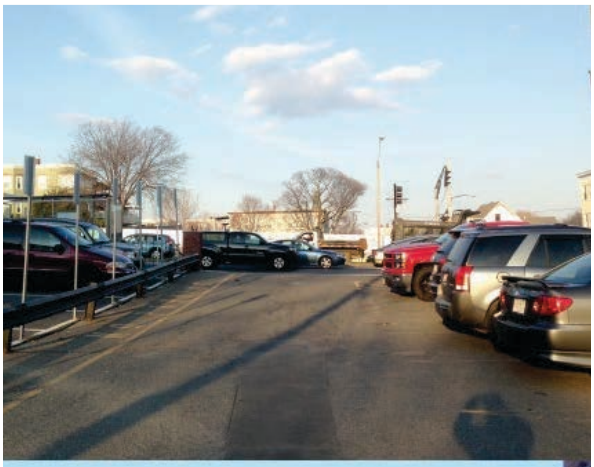
Free Lo(t)s Angeles - Los Angeles, CA

Free Lo(t)s Angeles is a collaborative of six non-profits working to reclaim underutilized spaces, such as vacant lots and dilapidated buildings, and imagine healthy alternatives for the community through collaborative participatory planning processes. Through research and data collection, the collaborative highlights the needs of the community through physical design.

Relevance:

- Primarily for marginalized communities
- Vacant lot programming
- Community involvement
- Grassroots organized
- Transform blight to assets
- “Pop-up” activities

Winter Hill Better Block - Somerville, MA



The Winter Hill Better Block was completed in partnership with the City of Somerville to grow the vibrancy of the Winter Hill neighborhood. The project was a weekend intervention to improve walkability, community space, outdoor amenities, and public art.

Relevance:

- "Pop-up" shops
- Infill to gauge development potential
- Community oriented events

The Neighborhood Project - Detroit, MI

The Neighborhood Project works to use art as an opportunity to transform the visual and social characteristics of neighborhoods. Artists Mitch Cipe and Gina Reicher of Design 99 use art as a way to "rethink and rebuild" their neighborhoods. Much of the art done in these installations reflects the history, environmental, and culture of Detroit neighborhoods.

Relevance:

- Anchor institution involvement
- Bringing arts into the community
- Small scale project creating huge impact

The City of Pittsburgh, PA

The Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Department of City Planning conducted an inventory of city-owned vacant lots and created a toolkit for reuse initiatives with the purpose of transforming vacant, blighted lots into temporary, purposeful, sites. The ideal programs for the city's vacant lot are edible, flower, or rain gardens.

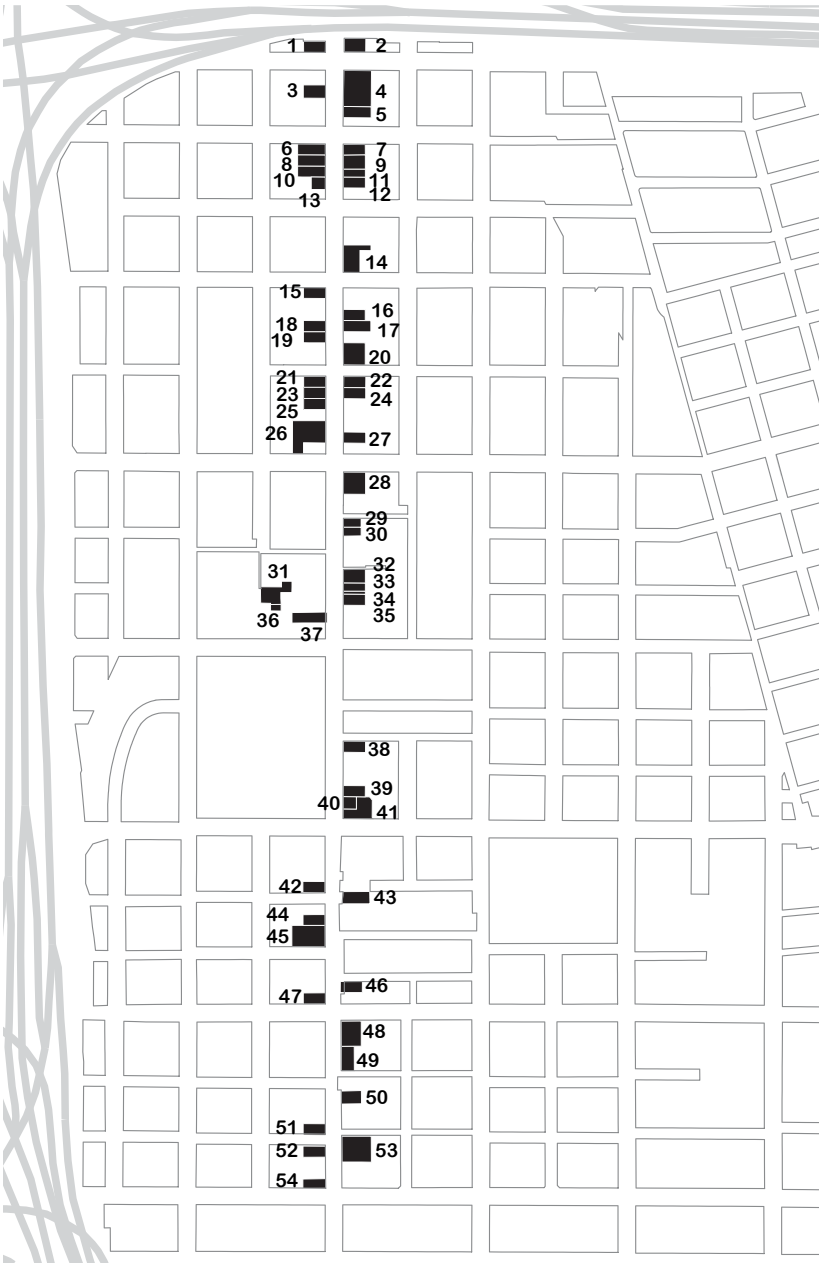
Relevance:

- City involvement
- Interim uses for vacant lots
- Provides measurable steps for success

Implementation:
Lots to Love Catalog / Lots to Love Map

The Lots to Love Catalog will be a compendium of information regarding all the vacant lots on Emancipation Street within the Emancipation Park neighborhood. It will include lot information, specific programming possibilities, and an appendix of information regarding how to fund and implement vacant property interventions.

The Lots to Love Map will be a projective exercise that the EEDC can use to show possible futures for the vacant lots on Emancipation Street. It will construct and program the system of fifty-four lots on Emancipation, identifying each lot by intervention type and programmed time schedule, how they would interact in such a configuration, and the pros and cons behind the potential choices.

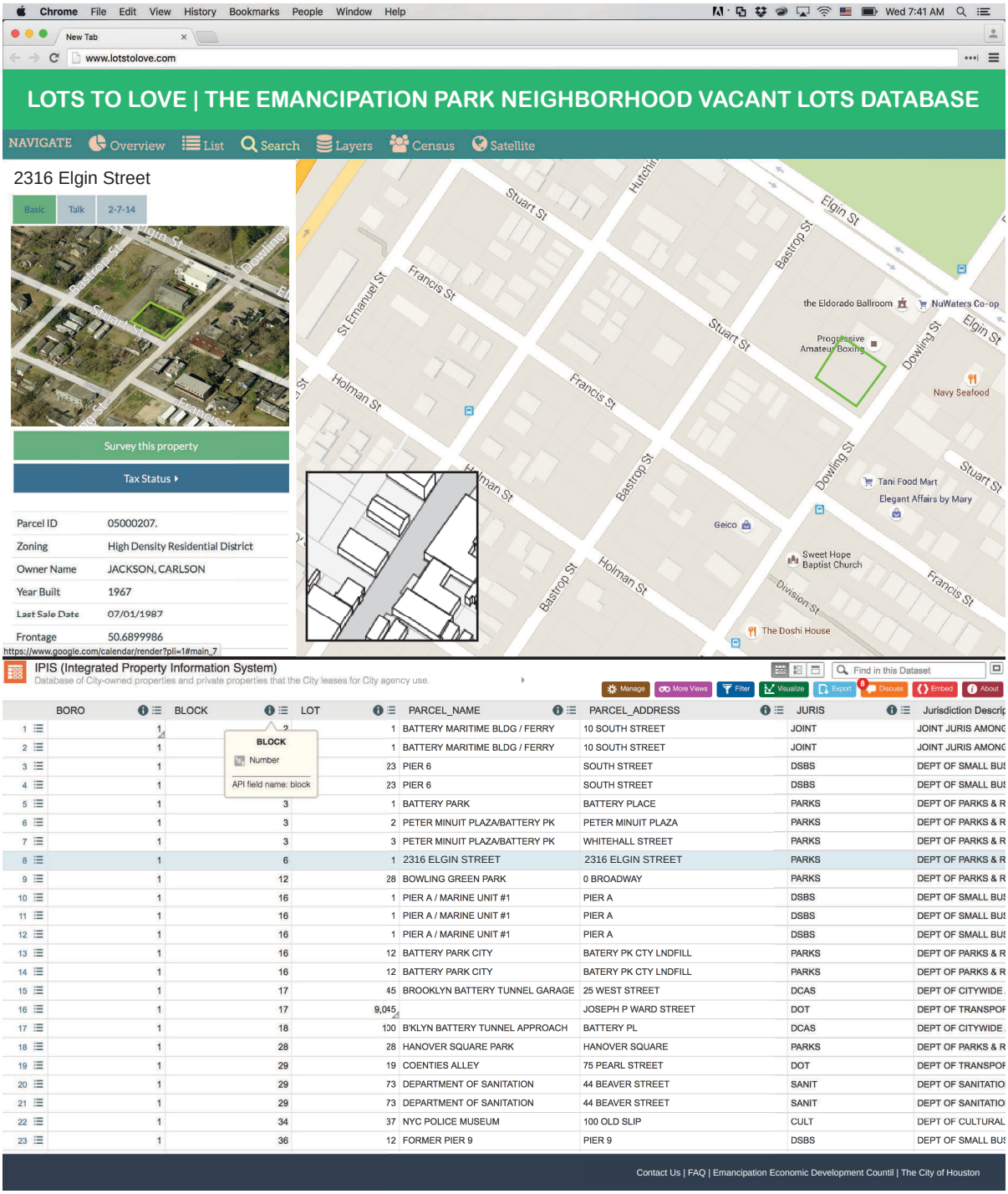


01. 1900 Dowling Street
02. 1915 Dowling Street
03. 2010 Dowling Street
04. 2001 Dowling Street
05. 2015 Dowling Street
06. 2100 Dowling Street
07. 2101 Dowling Street
08. 2106 Dowling Street
09. 2107 Dowling Street
10. 2116 Dowling Street
11. 2209 Dowling Street
12. 2117 Dowling Street
13. 2116 Dowling Street
14. 2215 Dowling Street
15. 2214 Dowling Street
16. 2305 Dowling Street
17. 2307 Dowling Street
18. 2312 Dowling Street
19. 2316 Dowling Street
20. 2315 Dowling Street
21. 2398 McIlhenny Street
22. 2404 McIlhenny Street
23. 2408 Dowling Street
24. 2407 Dowling Street
25. 2412 Dowling Street
26. 2303 McGowen Street
27. 2415 Dowling Street
28. 2601 Dowling Street
29. 2615 Dowling Street
30. 2619 Dowling Street
31. 2806 Dowling Street
32. 2717 Dowling Street
33. 2801 Dowling Street
34. 2803 Dowling Street
35. 2807 Dowling Street
36. 2806 Dowling Street
37. 2814 Dowling Street
38. 3101 Dowling Street
39. 3117 Dowling Street
40. 3119 Dowling Street
41. 2401 Elgin Street
42. 2316 Elgin Street
43. 3219 Dowling Street
44. 3300 Dowling Street
45. 2305 Francis Street
46. 3409 Dowling Street
47. 2309 Holman Street
48. 2408 Holman Street
49. 2401 Berry Street
50. 3605 Dowling Street
51. 2311 Winbern Street
52. 2312 Winbern Street
53. 2420 Winbern Street
54. 2309 Alabama Street

Figure 4. Lots to Love Catalog mock-up: table of contents diagram with fifty-four vacant lots.

Implementation:
Lots to Love Website

The Lots to Love Website will be an online informational tool for the Third Ward community. Residents will be able to access data on vacant lots in their community, express interest in lot interventions, connect with like-minded neighbors, and find resources on how to implement projects in their neighborhood.



	BORO	BLOCK	LOT	PARCEL_NAME	PARCEL_ADDRESS	JURIS	Jurisdiction Descrip
1	1	2	1	BATTERY MARITIME BLDG / FERRY	10 SOUTH STREET	JOINT	JOINT JURIS AMONG
2	1		1	BATTERY MARITIME BLDG / FERRY	10 SOUTH STREET	JOINT	JOINT JURIS AMONG
3	1		23	PIER 6	SOUTH STREET	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS
4	1		23	PIER 6	SOUTH STREET	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS
5	1	3	1	BATTERY PARK	BATTERY PLACE	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
6	1	3	2	PETER MINUIT PLAZA/BATTERY PK	PETER MINUIT PLAZA	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
7	1	3	3	PETER MINUIT PLAZA/BATTERY PK	WHITEHALL STREET	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
8	1	6	1	2316 ELGIN STREET	2316 ELGIN STREET	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
9	1	12	28	BOWLING GREEN PARK	0 BROADWAY	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
10	1	16	1	PIER A / MARINE UNIT #1	PIER A	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS
11	1	16	1	PIER A / MARINE UNIT #1	PIER A	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS
12	1	16	1	PIER A / MARINE UNIT #1	PIER A	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS
13	1	16	12	BATTERY PARK CITY	BATERY PK CTY LNDFILL	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
14	1	16	12	BATTERY PARK CITY	BATERY PK CTY LNDFILL	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
15	1	17	45	BROOKLYN BATTERY TUNNEL GARAGE	25 WEST STREET	DCAS	DEPT OF CITYWIDE
16	1	17	9,045		JOSEPH P WARD STREET	DOT	DEPT OF TRANSPOR
17	1	18	100	B'KLYN BATTERY TUNNEL APPROACH	BATTERY PL	DCAS	DEPT OF CITYWIDE
18	1	28	28	HANOVER SQUARE PARK	HANOVER SQUARE	PARKS	DEPT OF PARKS & R
19	1	29	19	COENTIES ALLEY	75 PEARL STREET	DOT	DEPT OF TRANSPOR
20	1	29	73	DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION	44 BEAVER STREET	SANIT	DEPT OF SANITATIO
21	1	29	73	DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION	44 BEAVER STREET	SANIT	DEPT OF SANITATIO
22	1	34	37	NYC POLICE MUSEUM	100 OLD SLIP	CULT	DEPT OF CULTURAL
23	1	36	12	FORMER PIER 9	PIER 9	DSBS	DEPT OF SMALL BUS

Figure 5. Lots to Love Website mock-up: aerial image, lot diagram, information database, program types, and social media tools.

Strategy 4: Create People-Centered Green Infrastructure

Samuel Jung and Elaine Kim

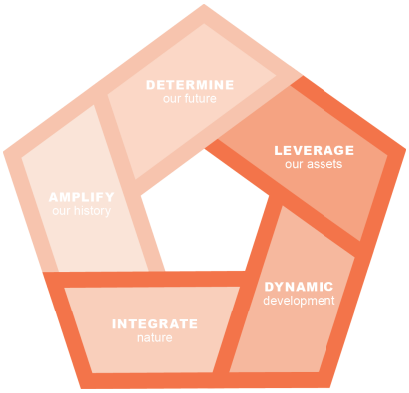
Houston is undergoing a monumental transformation at a scope and scale unparalleled within the US in order to shift its reputation from that of a "concrete wasteland" to a "green city" that better incorporates the landscape and natural systems within its urban and social formations.

Greater Houston is America's sixth-largest metropolitan area and continues to grow. According to the Conservation Fund, the Houston-Galveston area is expected to gain 3.5 million people by 2040, bringing the area's population to nearly 10 million people. In April 2016, Houston experienced a 500-year storm that subjected more than 21,000 square miles of Southeast Texas to flash flood warnings, brought more than 17 inches of rainfall within 24 hours in some neighborhoods, flooded thousands of homes, and killed eight individuals.

Since the 1950s, Houston has seen a 167 percent increase in the heaviest downpours one of the fastest rates of increase anywhere in the country –which is linked to a global warming. As the impacts of climate disruption manifest more intensely in the city, creating neighborhoods that live harmoniously with the changing world by respecting and responding to the landscape and natural systems is imperative in order to ensure bright futures for all. In response to this imperative, we seek to continue the work of urban planners, landscape architects, elected officials, and community-based groups across Houston.

Our projects go beyond the standard definition of green infrastructure at localized and site specific scales – projects that manage stormwater by mimicking natural hydrologic processes. We build upon this framework by understanding the landscape and natural systems that constitute it as part of the human-built form. In other words, we think of the land, water, and air as part of the human ecosystem. We therefore take a systems-based approach to understanding how the ecological and social functions of the Emancipation Park neighborhood work in dynamic relation to each other. Through this approach we propose three projects: a new open space network, complete streets, and a site specific stormwater garden.

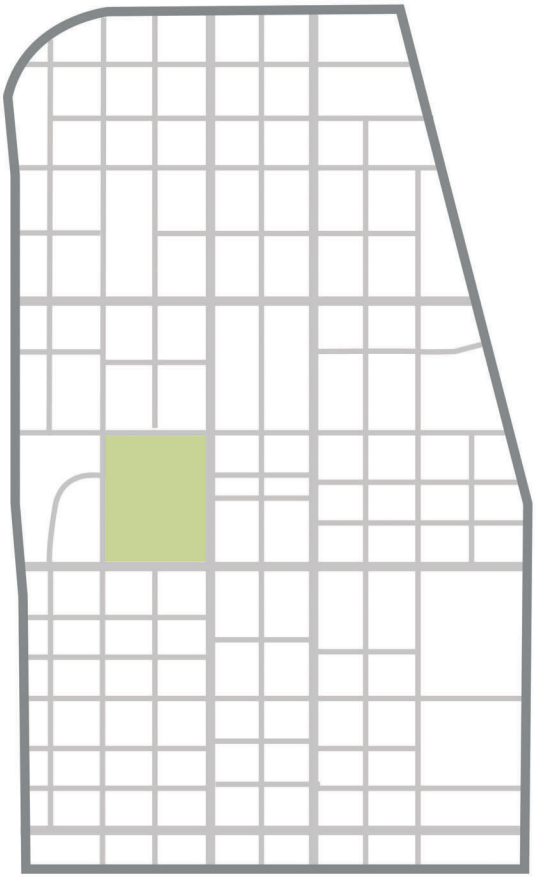
Our project envisions physical manifestations of complex, dynamic, multi-functional systems that provide ecologically rooted, culturally relevant, and reciprocal relationships with residents of, and visitors to the Third Ward as a strategy for making the Emancipation Park neighborhood more ready to continue to thrive in the changing future.



Objectives

Current Conditions

A robust understanding of the current environmental conditions is a crucial foundation for any ideas and plans for intervention. This strategy includes an analysis of the regional context of the Third Ward, as well as the major thoroughfares and areas within the neighborhood.



Goal 1: Open Space Network

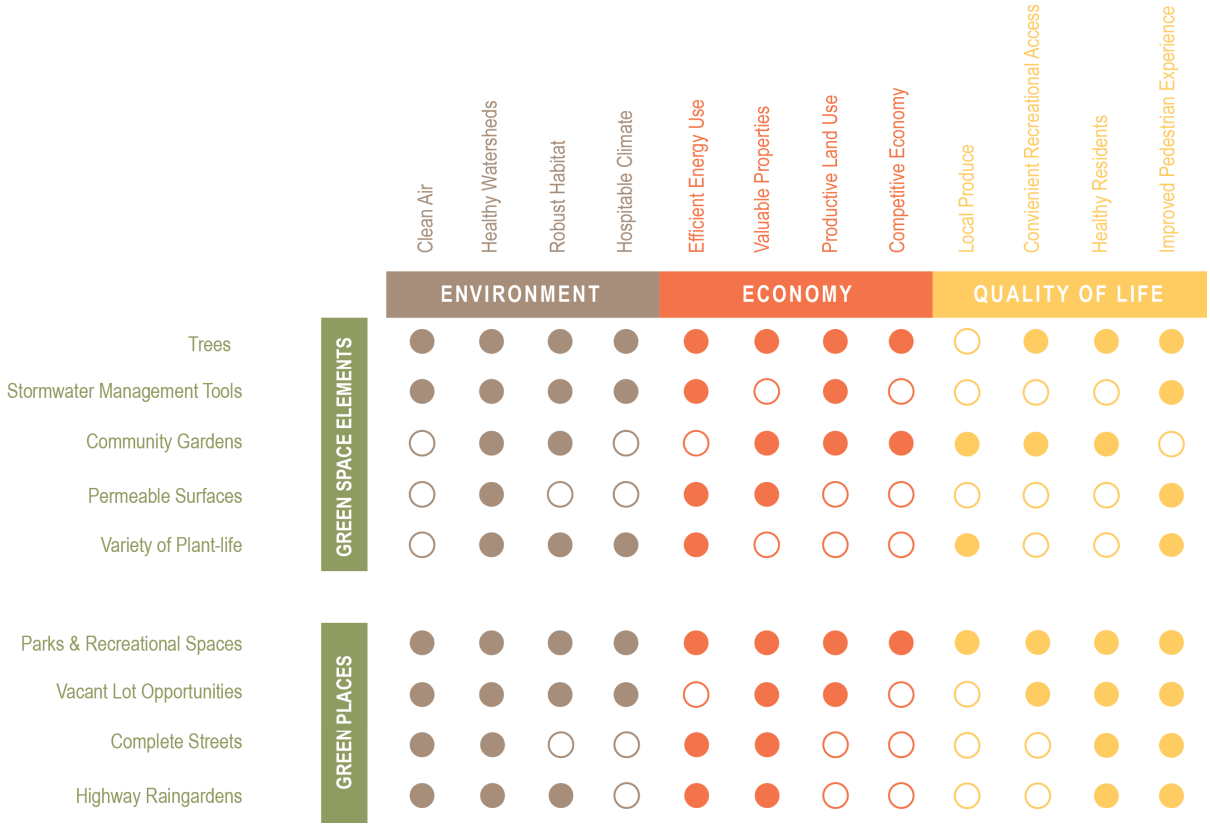
Parcels that are currently unpaved and unoccupied within the neighborhood present an opportunity to preserve land that can serve community members and create wildlife habitat. This strategy illustrates a potential network of green spaces integrated throughout the neighborhood.

Goal 2: Complete Streets

Roadways can serve not only to transport cars, but can also enhance the experience of pedestrians and expand the capacity of natural systems. This section provides a vision of how streets can accommodate more transportation types and remediate stormwater.

Goal 3: Green Infrastructure

In 2015 alone, the City of Houston received 70 inches of rain. This strategy explains how an open space network and complete streets can help reduce flooding and filter rain before it enters the groundwater.

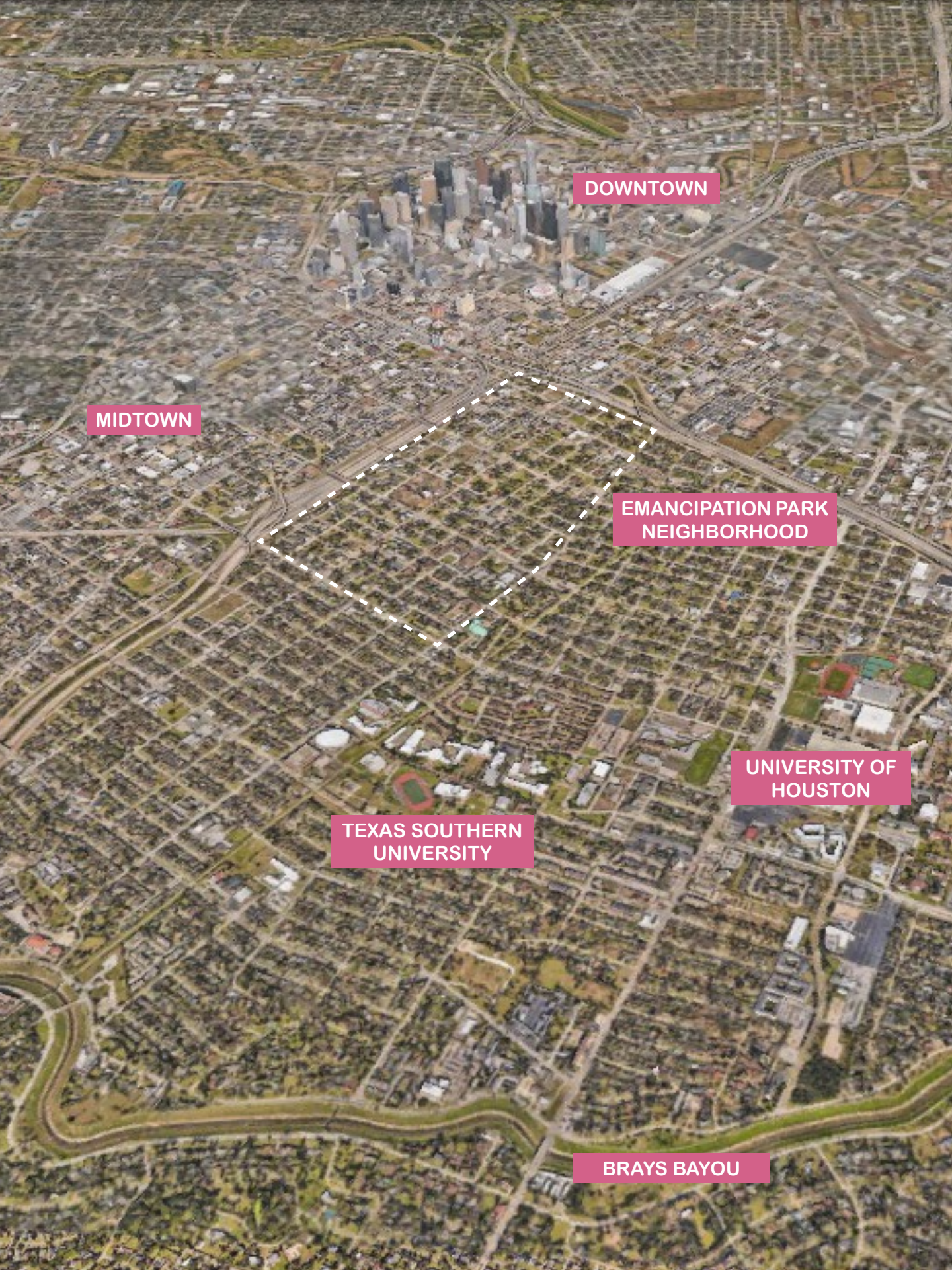


^ Network of Benefits

Green places provide a network of benefits for the neighborhood beyond just improving environmental conditions. As this diagram shows, green infrastructure projects such as increasing the number of trees or variety of plant life have benefits for not only the environment, but also for the economy and residents' quality of life.

> The Larger Context

In order to understand a neighborhood's environmental system, it is important to zoom out and view the larger physical and social context surrounding it. The Emancipation Park neighborhood is situated between the tall buildings of Houston's downtown and the low-lying Brays Bayou.


DOWNTOWN
MIDTOWN
EMANCIPATION PARK NEIGHBORHOOD
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
BRAYS BAYOU

Current Conditions

It is of special significance that the Third Ward is anchored by Emancipation Park, a sacred piece of land bought communally by emancipated slaves as a gift to present and future members of the African diaspora, brought to the United States forcibly and otherwise, to celebrate the end of slavery.

The neighborhood has experienced periods of robust growth and subsequent decline. What is clear today is that amidst the current redevelopment efforts across the Emancipation Park neighborhood there exists a wealth of natural resources.

Currently there are more than 1,500,000 sq. ft. of tree canopy, 800,000 sq. ft. of open green space, 700,000 sq. ft. of private yard space, and 3,000,000 sq. ft. of vacant lots which undergird historic and contemporary social hubs that are part and parcel of this neighborhood. The Greater Houston Area has almost 49,643 acres of total park space, with 22 acres per 1000 residents, while the national average is 12.4 acres per 1,000 residents. We see a similar wealth of open green space in the Emancipation Park neighborhood, which provides the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC) an unprecedented opportunity to engage in a systems-based approach towards integrating natural resources into the social fabric of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood comes with its environmental challenges. Flooding, standing water, sediment runoff, air pollution, heat-island effect, and aging water distribution infrastructure are issues that the neighborhood contends with on a near daily basis.

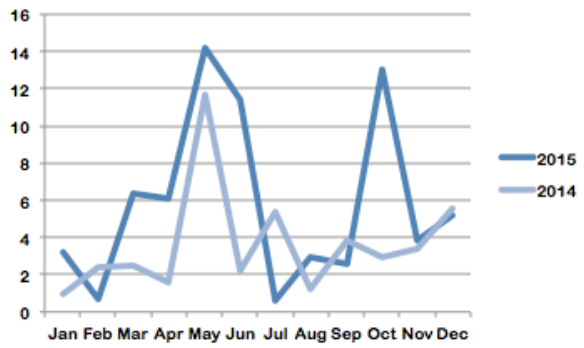
The Emancipation Park neighborhood's proximity to two major highways makes the reduction of air pollution a challenge. On a regional scale, these highways also exacerbate stormwater management issues. Although decades of divestment and capital flight have created conditions where building demolition and vacant lots have now become the norm in the neighborhood, this surplus of land is also the Emancipation Park neighborhood's greatest asset. This land has the potential, if organized and planned for in ways that incorporate natural and social systems, to transform the Third Ward physically and socially in ways that can mitigate environmental and social challenges.

The story of the Emancipation Park neighborhood is rooted in land bought and claimed by freed slaves. It is a point of inspiration, then, to understand that the wealth of land and natural resources within the neighborhood plays such an important role in envisioning a more dynamic future for the residents of the Third Ward today.

The Regional Context

Rates of Rainfall

As the major floods in the last few years show, the City of Houston faces large amounts of rainfall. This rate is increasing due to the effects of climate change. In 2015, Houston received 70.03 inches of rain, a huge jump from 43.72 inches the year before. Neighborhoods within Houston, especially in the Third Ward which is located at a low point within the city, must implement interventions that expand the city's capacity to store stormwater in sustainable and productive ways.

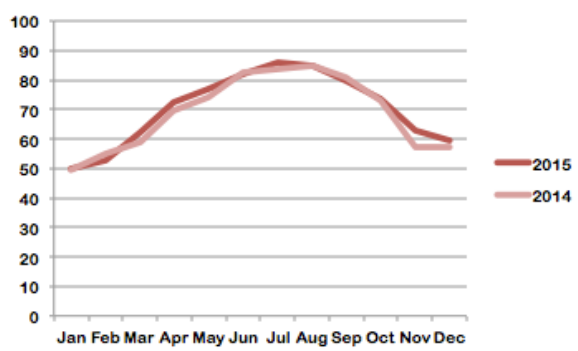


Total Rainfall (inches)

(Source: National Weather Service)

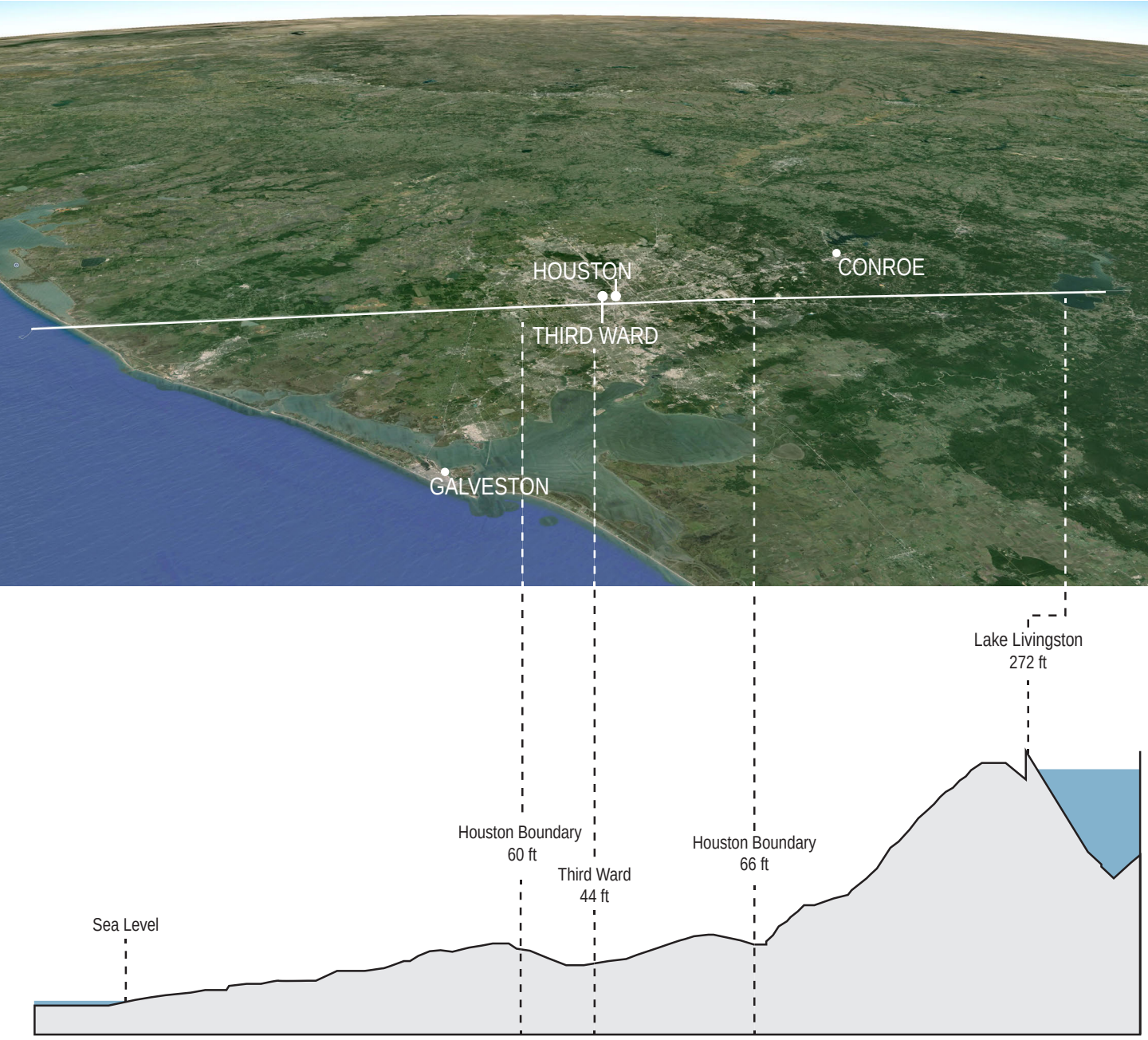
Rising Temperatures

Houston has always stayed warm throughout the year and faced high temperatures in the summer months. A look at the temperatures over the last couple of years shows a slow but steady rise in average temperatures. In 2015, the average temperature for the year was 70.3 degrees Fahrenheit, compared to 68.7°F in 2014. Strategic environmental systems interventions can help delay the rate of climate change, while providing relief for residents in the form of additional shade.



Average Temperature (F)

(Source: National Weather Service)

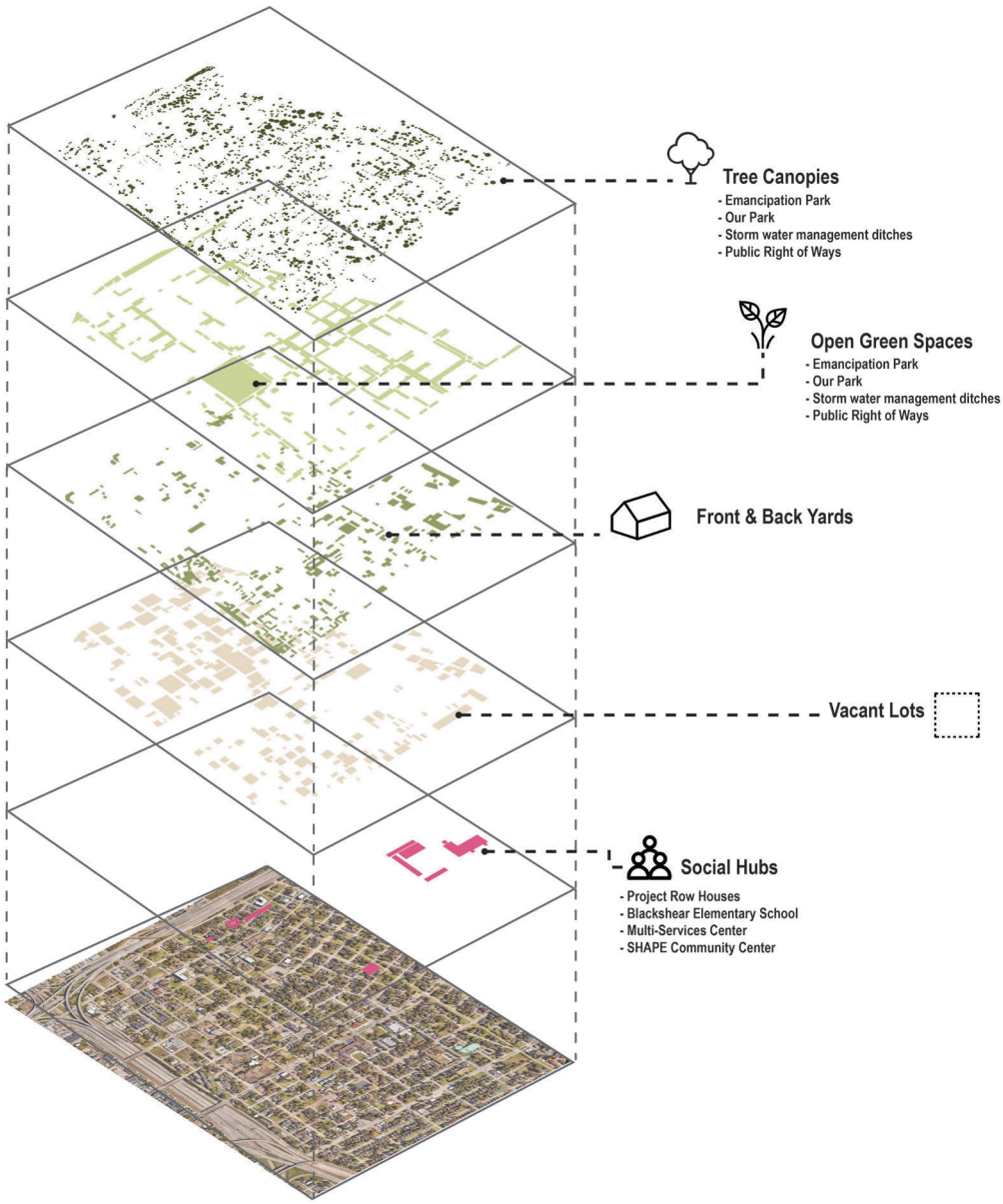


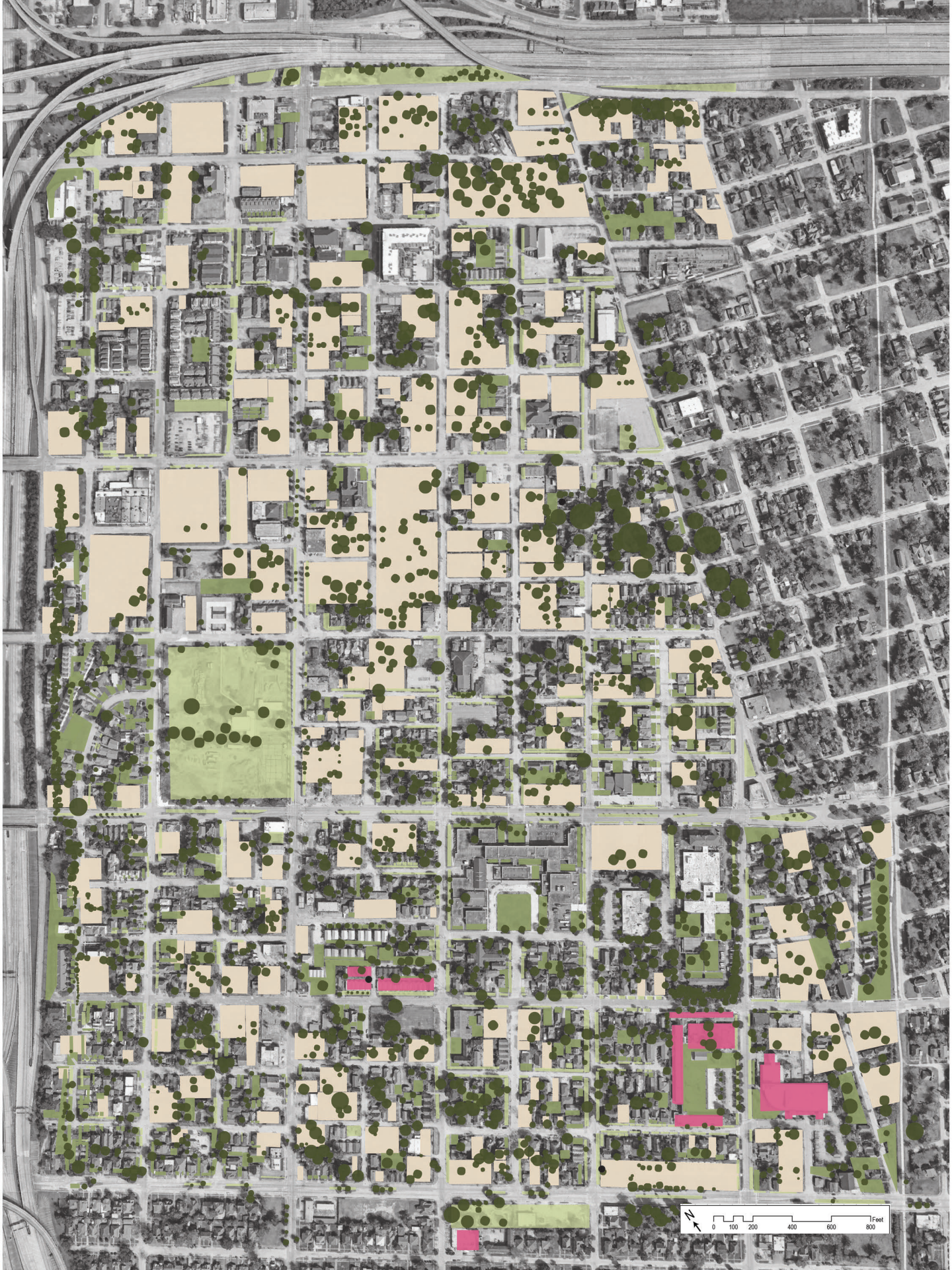
Regional Elevation

Zooming out of the neighborhood and viewing where the Third Ward is situated in the regional context reveals that the neighborhood sits within a basin within the Houston boundaries.

Understanding the Neighborhood

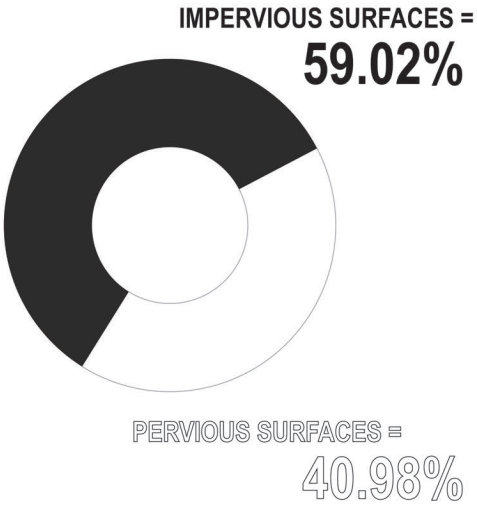
Currently there are more than 1,500,000 sq. ft. of tree canopy, 800,000 sq. ft. of open green space, 700,000 sq. ft. of private yard space, and 3,000,000 sq. ft. of vacant lots which undergird historic and contemporary social hubs that are part and parcel of this neighborhood.




N
0 100 200 400 600 800
Feet

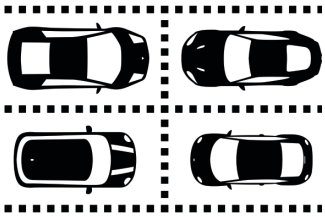
Pervious and Impervious Surfaces

One of the ways we can understand the neighborhood's current capacity to remediate stormwater is to look at what percentage of the area absorbs water (pervious) and what percentage of the area does not absorb water (impervious). Pervious surfaces include front and back yards, parks, and vacant lots. Impervious surfaces include roadways, buildings, and highways.



Impervious Surfaces:

Roads

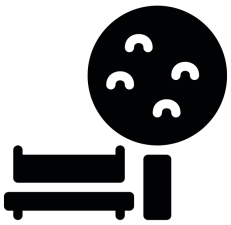


Parking lot

Building footprints

Pervious Surfaces:

Yards



Parks

Community Gardens

N
0
100
200
400
600
800
Feet

Open Space Network

Currently, the Emancipation Park neighborhood has a wealth of resources ranging from vacant lots to a robust web of tree canopies that enrich the potential of the neighborhood for connecting the social fabric of the community to the ecological systems that undergird the site.

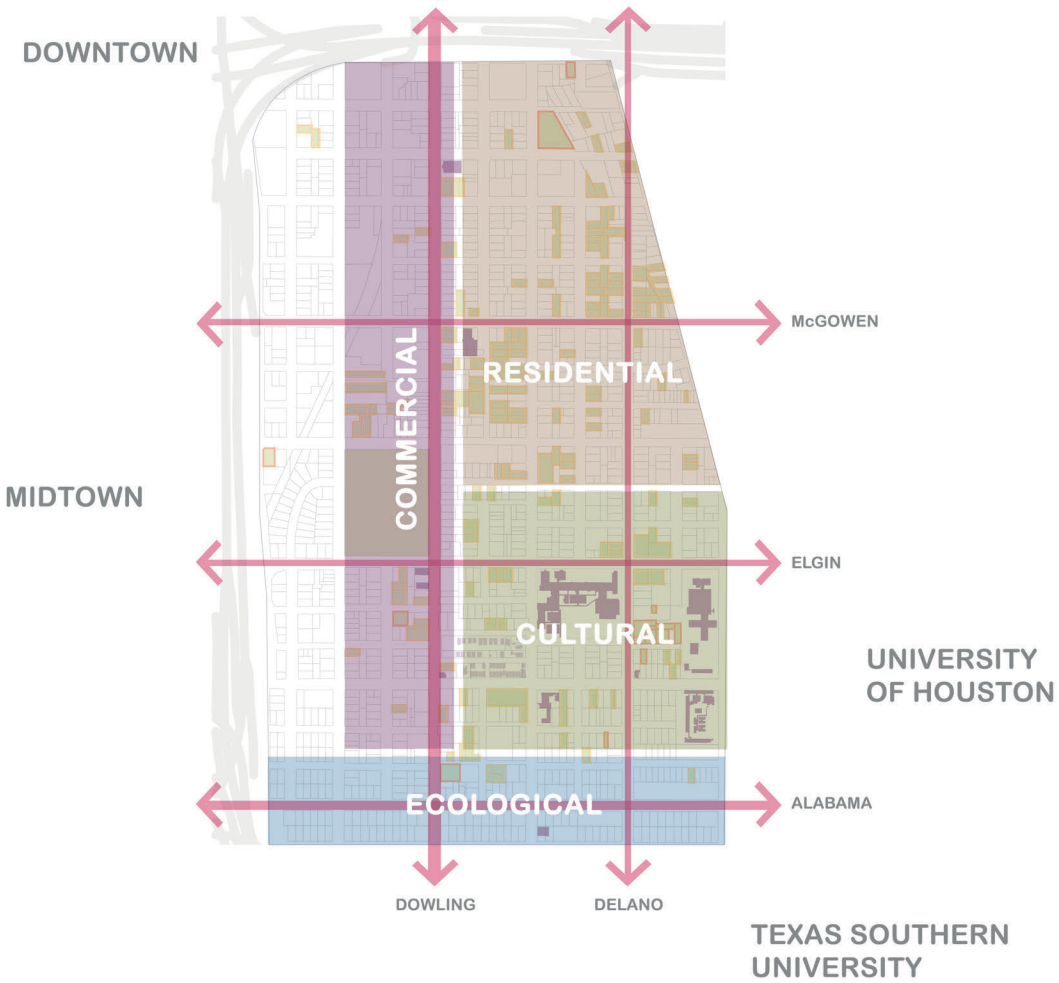
In particular, the neighborhood has more than 3,000,000 sq. ft. of vacant lot space and 800,000 sq. ft. of open green space anchored by the newly renovated Emancipation Park.

The City of Houston is experiencing a renaissance of sorts with respect to the ways in which people are understanding and activating open green space in new and innovative ways. For example, the Sam Houston Greenbelt Network is a bio-regional planning project that seeks to connect watersheds and open spaces at the region's core in order to preserve, promote, and protect 10 diverse ecoregions in the Greater Houston Area.

Millions of dollars have been invested in green infrastructure projects across the city to integrate natural systems into the built environment while creating more livable places and protecting people against environmental hazards, like flooding, in places like the Buffalo Bayou and the Sabine Promenade.

Networks of open green spaces in Houston have the capacity to mitigate the impacts of extreme flooding that has inundated the city, enhance social life, and create better neighborhoods. We propose that the Emancipation Park Neighborhood utilizes its existing assets– an abundance of vacant lots and open green space – in order to create a connective "green tissue" that integrates the cultural and social life of the neighborhood with open green space that will mitigate flooding while connecting economic, cultural, ecological, and residential zones of the Emancipation Park neighborhood.

This project links existing vacant lots, open green spaces, cultural hubs, and key natural resources into a unified system. Linking green spaces throughout the neighborhood boosts recreational, ecological, scenic, economic, and social value. We imagine this open space network as a form of public social-environmental infrastructure necessary for enhancing community health, sustainability, water management capacity, and social connectivity.

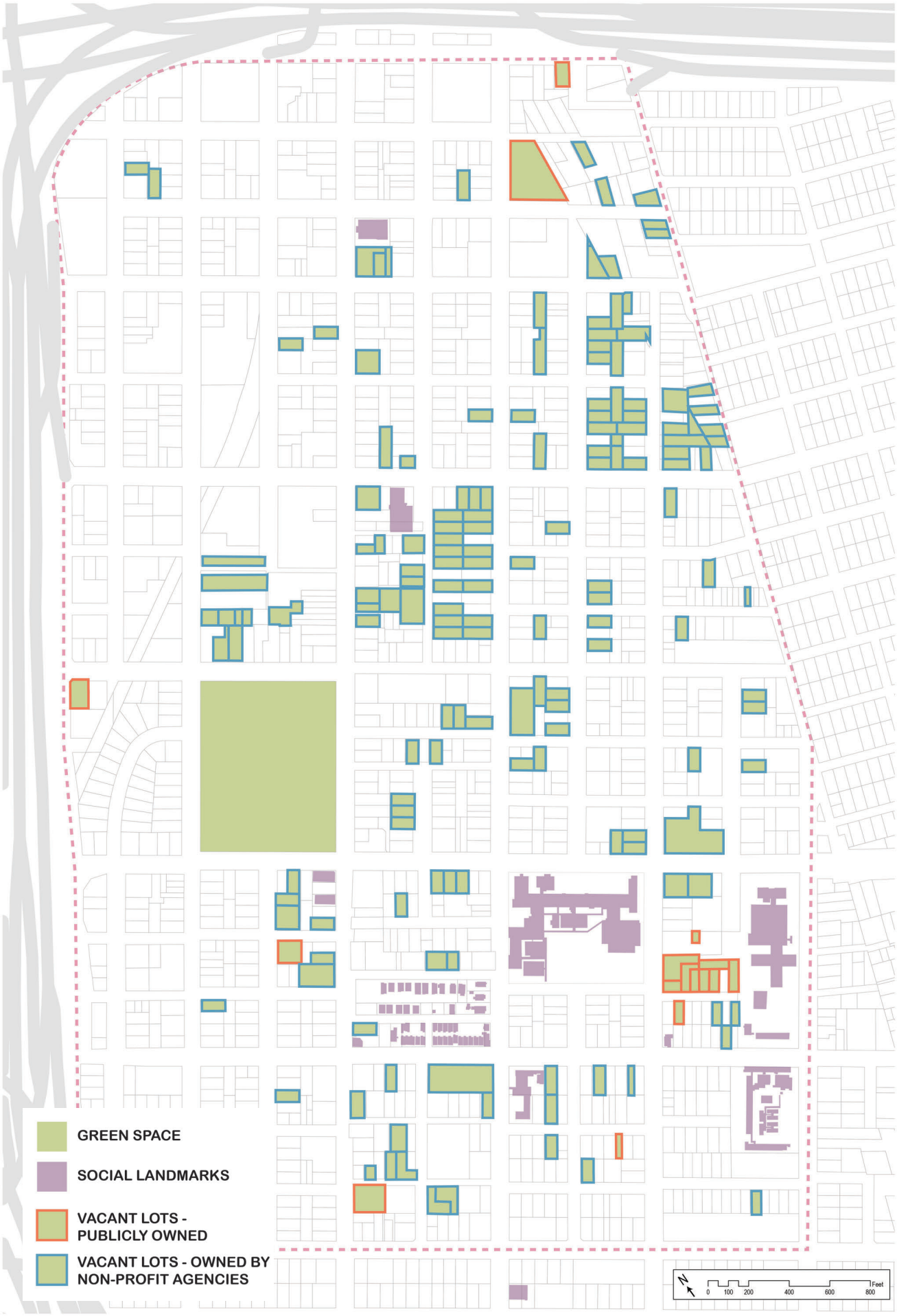


∧ Understanding the Neighborhood

This diagram illustrates the neighborhood's various concentrations of use, such as the commercial corridor of Dowling/Emancipation Avenue and the cultural institutions along the Eastern boundary. It also points out the major surrounding neighborhoods and anchor institutions.

> Opportunity Lots

In order to identify the lots that could be used as part of the open space network, we selected those that were currently vacant and owned by public or non-profit entities (as opposed to private developers). The map to the right shows all available lots that met these guidelines, as well as the social landmarks within the neighborhood.


GREEN SPACE
SOCIAL LANDMARKS
VACANT LOTS - PUBLICLY OWNED
VACANT LOTS - OWNED BY NON-PROFIT AGENCIES
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PARCEL 1:
CURRENT CONDITIONS
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PARCEL 3:
CURRENT CONDITIONS
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PARCEL 2:
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PARCEL 4:
CURRENT CONDITIONS
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PARCEL 5:
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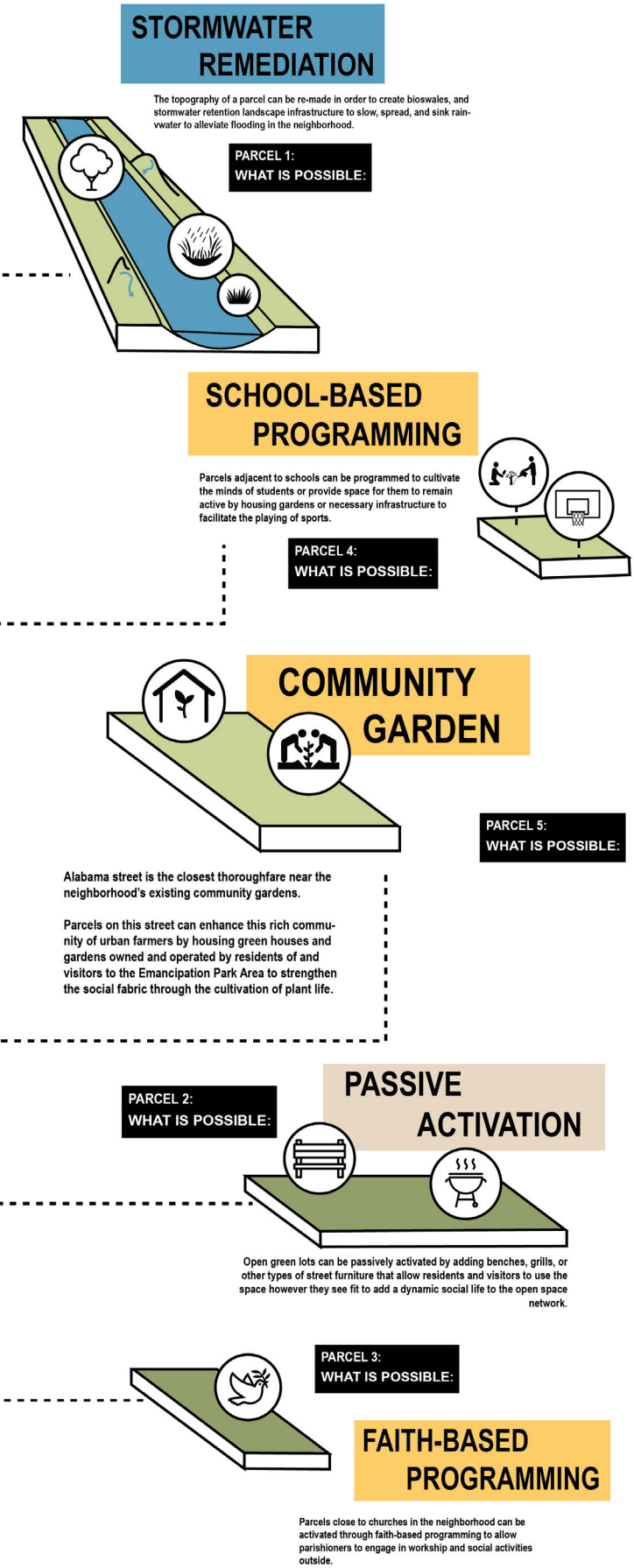


< Open Space Network

An open green space network can be made of lots that serve different types of activities. Within the Emancipation Park neighborhood current vacant lots can be used to create a network of spaces that are:

- Activated Passively
- Alleviate flooding
- Serve the needs of the residents

The map to the left demonstrates how five different lots in the neighborhood that are currently unpaved, vacant, and owned by either a public or non-profit entity can be used to serve a variety of uses, from stormwater remediation to faith-based programming.

Complete Streets

Complete streets is a transportation policy and design approach that seeks to put pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users of all ages on equal footing with motor-vehicle drivers to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel.

Currently, the streets in the Emancipation Park neighborhood do not support the multiple ways that people get around. Streets often lack sidewalks, trees, seating areas, dedicated bike lanes, and green space for residents and visitors to enjoy.

This policy and design approach has wide appeal and has inspired “Complete Streets” projects across the nation. In Houston, the Old Spanish Trail/Almeda Corridors Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone has initiated the Historic Holman Street Reconstruction Plan in order to make Holman Street more pedestrian friendly and green.

Building upon the Holman Street Reconstruction Plan, we propose re-making the Emancipation Park neighborhood’s main thoroughfares and key connective residential streets into complete streets.

Our proposal aims to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood by creating streets that are great public spaces, support multi-modal transportation networks, and incorporate features that help the neighborhood better manage stormwater with features such as permeable streets, bioswales, and trees.

The objective is to ensure that the Emancipation Park neighborhood’s streets are:

Multimodal
Incorporates pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motor vehicle drivers into the physical layout of the street in order to enable safe, convenient, and accessible transportation for all residents and visitors. A multimodal approach ensures that the streetscape is not dominated just by motor vehicles, but allows for diverse modes of transportation.

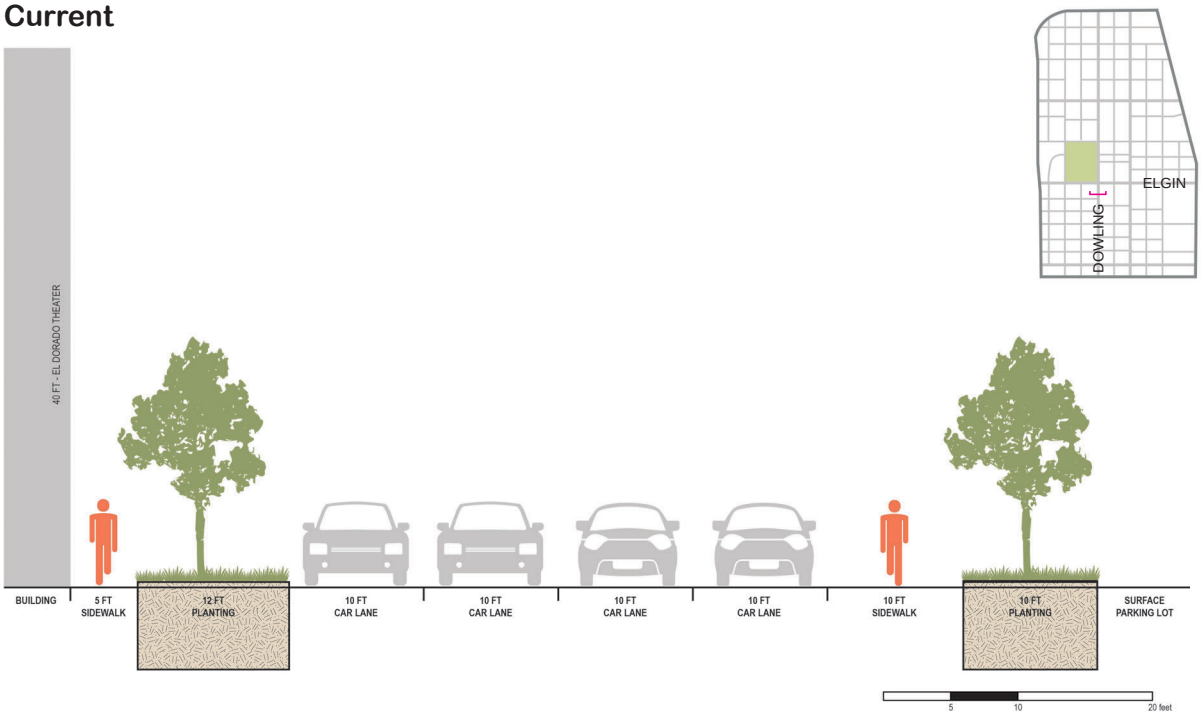
Green
Incorporates bioswales, stormwater gardens, permeable surfaces, and street trees with ecologically appropriate plants and soils that collect rainwater and enhance the street’s capacity to manage flooding and air pollution.

Infrastructural
Incorporates necessary changes in street elevations through topographical interventions on the streetscape to better facilitate the movement of water and provide structure to social activity.

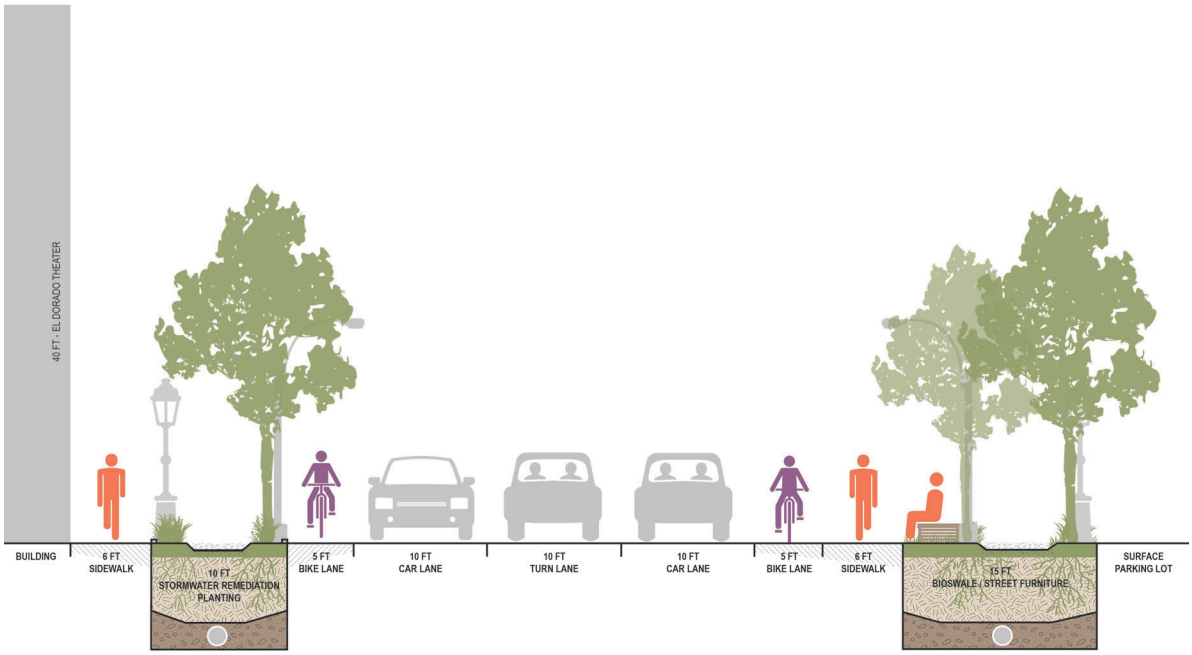
Social
Incorporates culturally relevant and context-specific street furniture that facilitates and activates a range of social activity for the neighborhood’s residents, supporting local businesses, social interactions, and historic and contemporary hubs of activity throughout the neighborhood.

Complete Streets: Dowling/Emancipation Avenue

Current

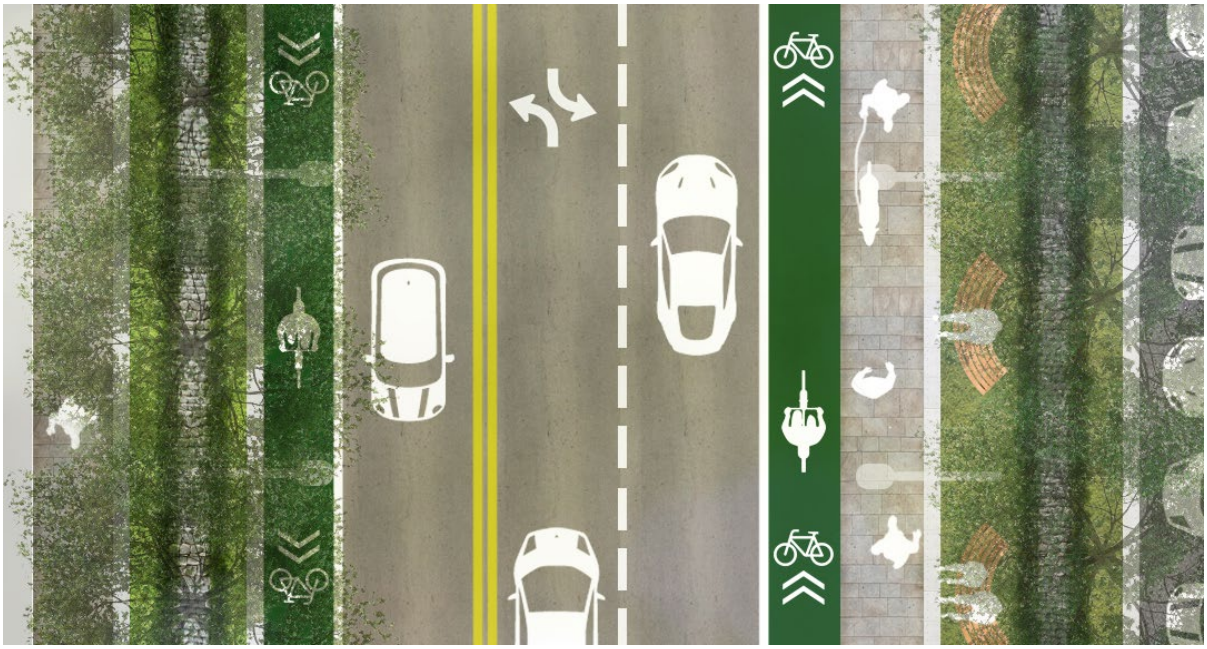


Potential



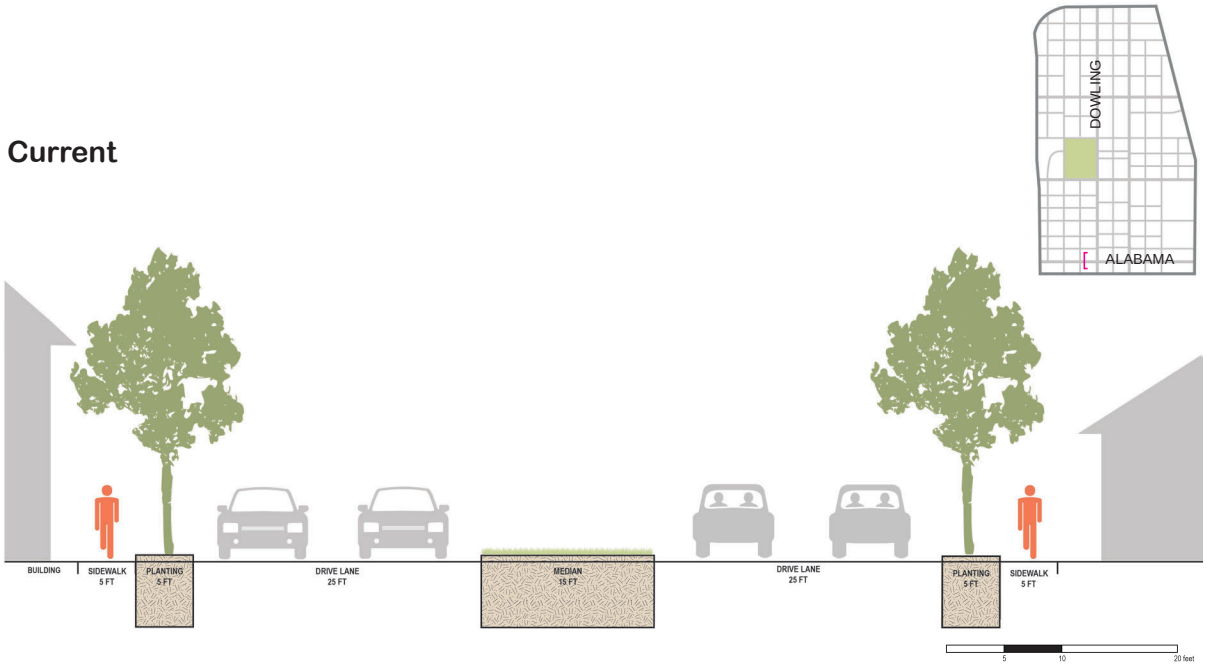
Existing Conditions

Dowling/Emancipation Avenue imagined as a complete street

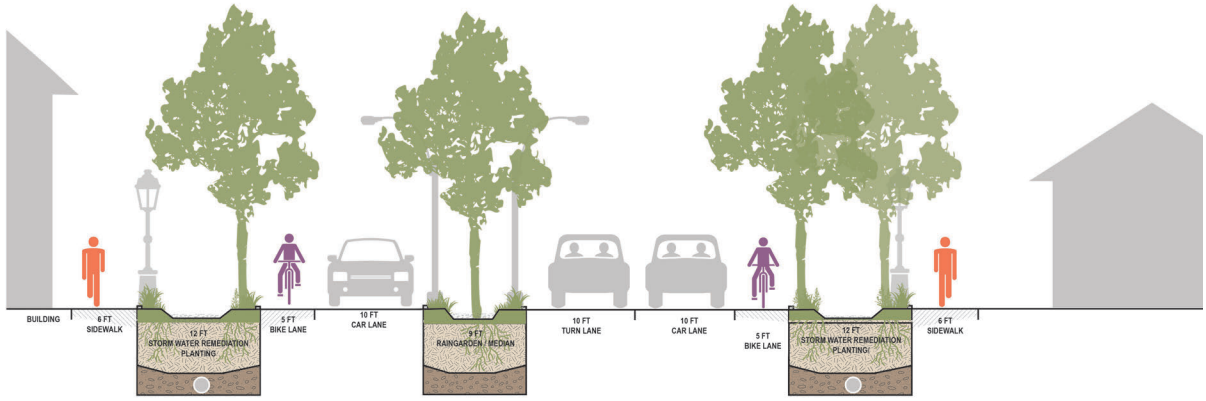


Complete Streets: Alabama Street

Current



Potential



Stormwater Management

Heavy rainfall has increased in intensity and frequency over the past 50 years. According to a report by Climate Central, Houston saw a 167% increase in heavy downpours in 2005-2014 compared to 1950-1959. As global temperatures rise, intense rainfall is expected to become more common.

Houston is no stranger to flooding and stormwater management issues. According to the Harris County Flood Control District, flooding is the biggest natural disaster that the city faces despite the 2,500 miles of flood management channels that have been laid throughout the county. The EPA states that the "average 100-year floodplain is projected to increase 45 percent by the year 2100, while the annual damages from flooding are predicted to increase by $750 million." Localized neighborhood flooding is expected to become more frequent.

Localized flooding happens when rainfall overwhelms the neighborhood or city drainage systems, while riverine flooding happens when river flows exceed the river channel. When intense downpour occurs in Houston, the city experiences both of these types of flooding with highways inundated with more than 10 feet of water and stormwater overflowing from the Bayous that are a part of the city's urban fabric. Green infrastructure can help to manage localized and riverine floods.

In impacted areas, green infrastructure like rain/stormwater gardens, bioswales, and permeable surfaces can help to slow, sink, and spread water in order to prevent piped networks and open air canals from being overwhelmed. Furthermore, green infrastructure has the ability to enhance the filtration of water and help restore groundwater levels in the long term. By reducing the volume of stormwater that is left to pool or flood a neighborhood or city, green infrastructure helps to protect property values, enhance the quality of the built environment, and provide green spaces for residents of a neighborhood.

We propose that the EEDC explore the idea of creating site specific stormwater gardens along major sites of flooding, especially along the I-69 Freeway along Chartres Street near Alabama Street and Elgin Street.

Green corridors, or intentionally planned stormwater gardens, could provide the residents of the Emancipation Park neighborhood with more open green space and infrastructure that respects the natural and environmental systems of the city in order to mitigate issues of flooding and pooling of stormwater in the neighborhood.

We also see the creation of green infrastructure as a social process, whereby residents and those invested in the development of the neighborhood can ensure that green infrastructure projects respect the cultural heritage and future of the neighborhood particularly as it relates to race. In this manner, we envision green infrastructure projects as locus points for community organizing and opportunities to manifest into physical projects that represent the philosophy and histories of the residents and people who help to create them.

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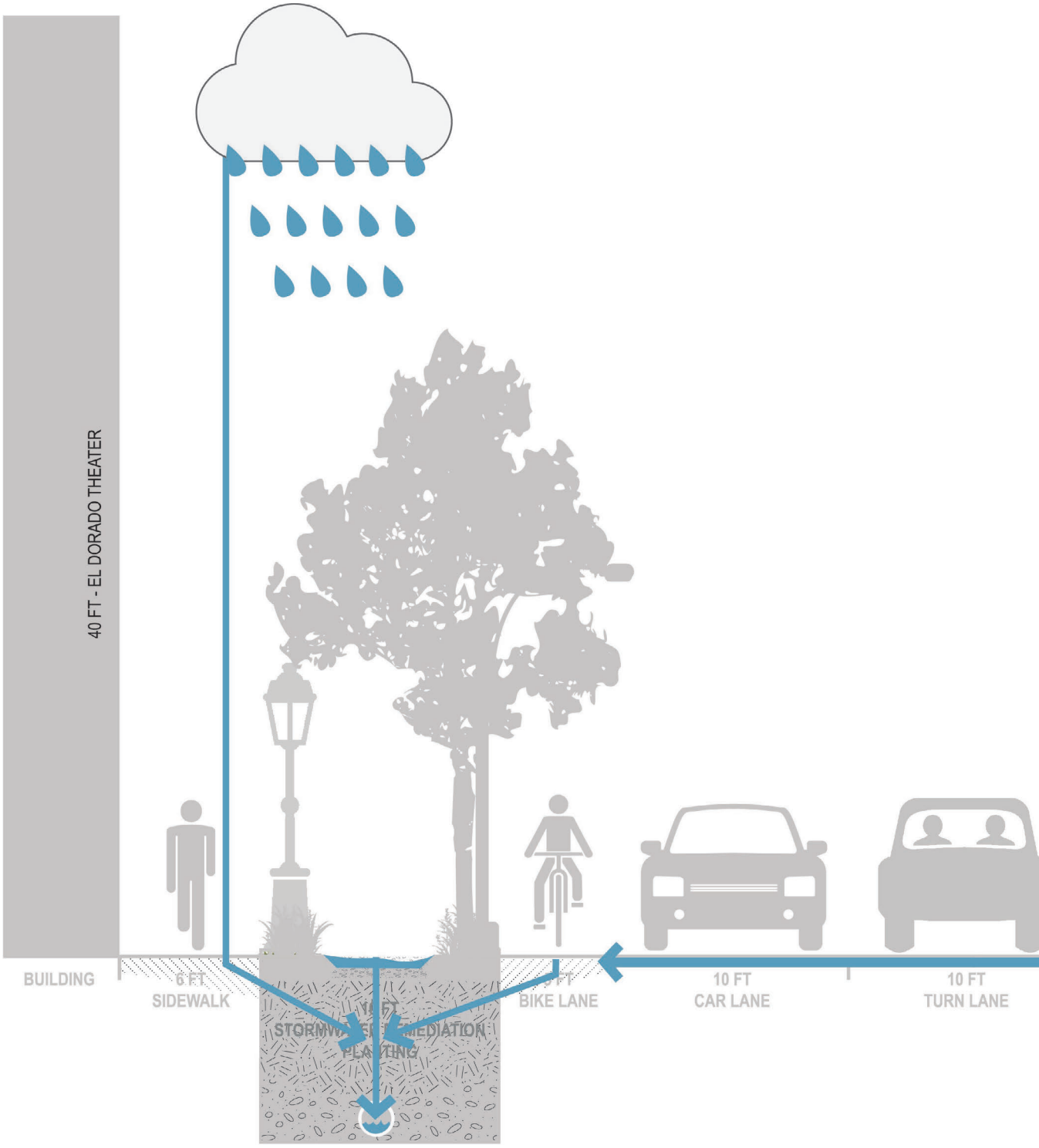
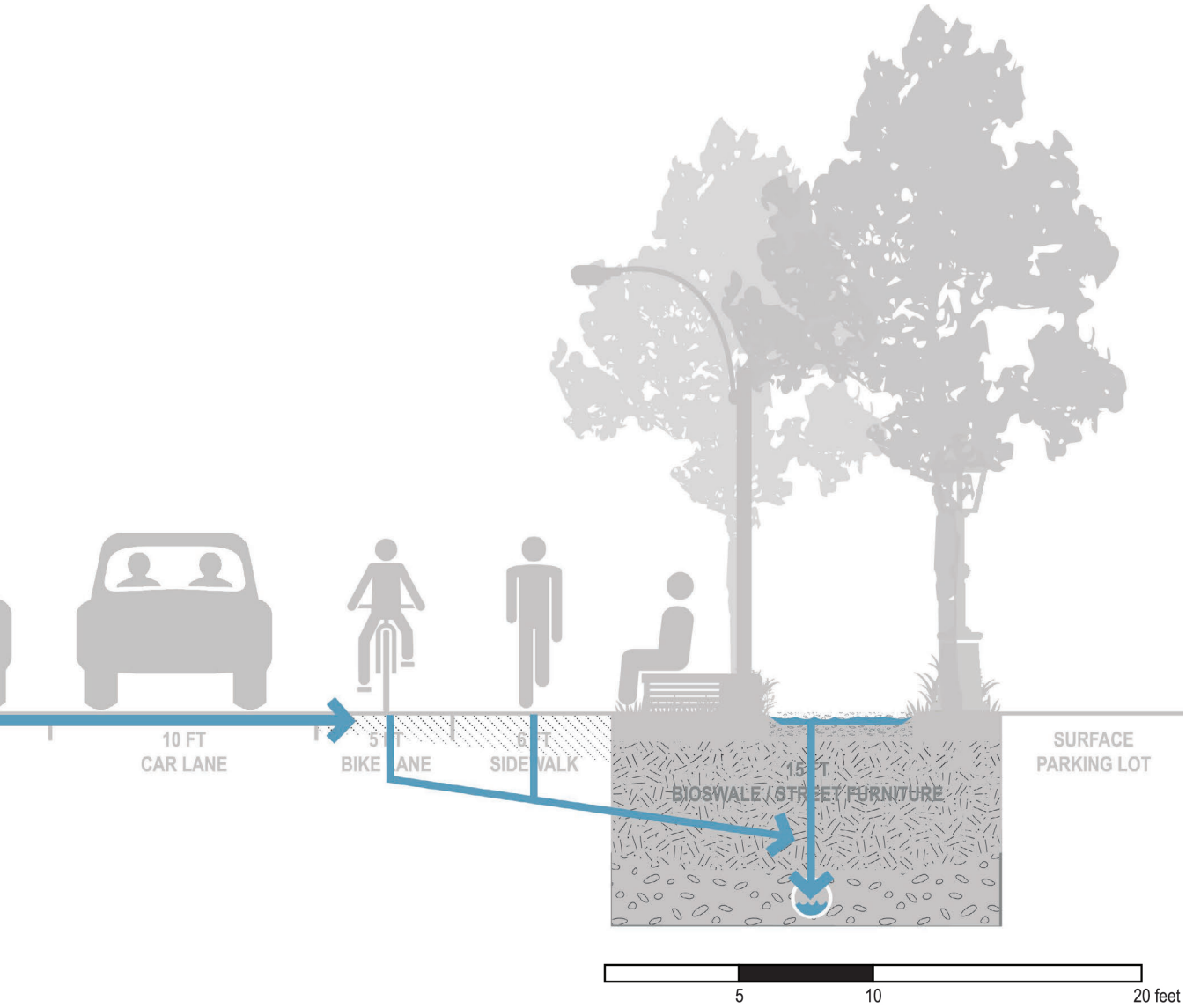
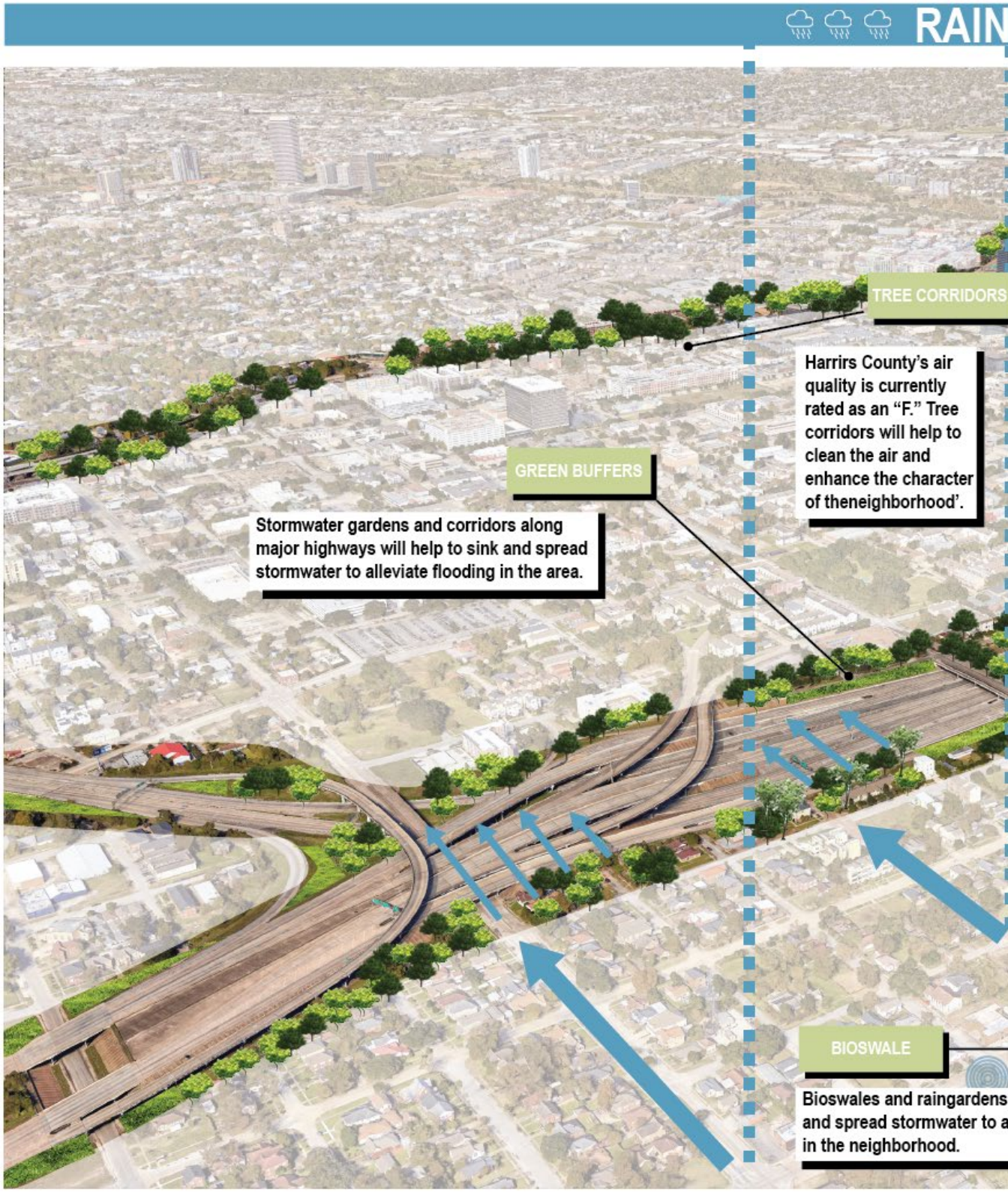

40 FT - EL DORADO THEATER
BUILDING
6 FT
SIDEWALK
BIKE LANE
10 FT
CAR LANE
10 FT
TURN LANE

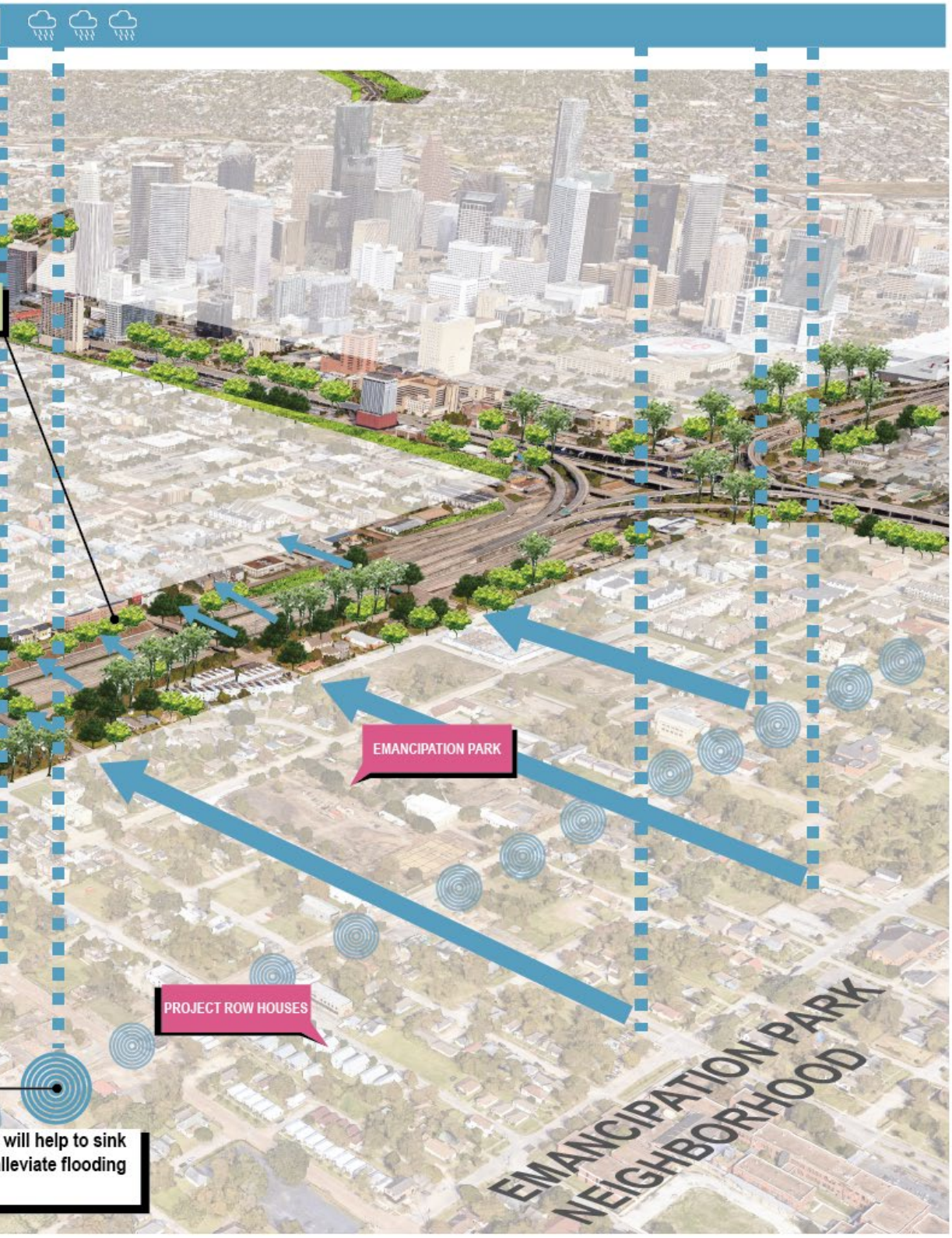
Complete Streets: Stormwater Management

The addition of raingardens and impervious surfaces along the major streets in the neighborhood can be a potent way to reduce the amount of flooding and standing water in the roadways after a rainstorm. Compared to the current flat, mostly grass, green barriers along the roads, the depth of a rain garden builds water storage capacity. Using pervious pavement options for bike lanes and sidewalks rather than solid concrete can help direct water away from the surface into the ground to feed plant life.





GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE HELPS TO *SLOW, SPREAD,*



AND SINK STORMWATER TO REDUCE FLOODING.

Implementation

Action Items

Creating people-centered green infrastructure is not a goal that will be achieved overnight, but through a consistent prioritization of including environmental systems in a vision for the neighborhood.

Connecting with Potential Funding Sources:

- Local: The Old Spanish Trail / Almeda Corridors Redevelopment Authority is currently working on a Historic Dowling Street Reconstruction Project. Residents can seize this opportune moment to push a project that is already in progress and receiving funding to expand and include environmental systems benefits.
- National: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides substantial grants to support initiatives such as watershed management and drinking water systems improvements.

Long-Term Steps:

- On-the-ground analysis: A robust green infrastructure system must rest on reliable analysis of the local conditions. While this report provides an overview of the current neighborhood conditions, working with local universities and agencies to analyze flooding zones, microclimate conditions, and ecosystems of local plant and animal life
- Building political will: While there are interventions for a more environmentally enriching neighborhood that can be done directly by individuals, such as creating a community garden, a full green infrastructure program requires engagement with the local and state municipalities to address statewide infrastructure such as water pipes and roadways.

The Role of the EEDC

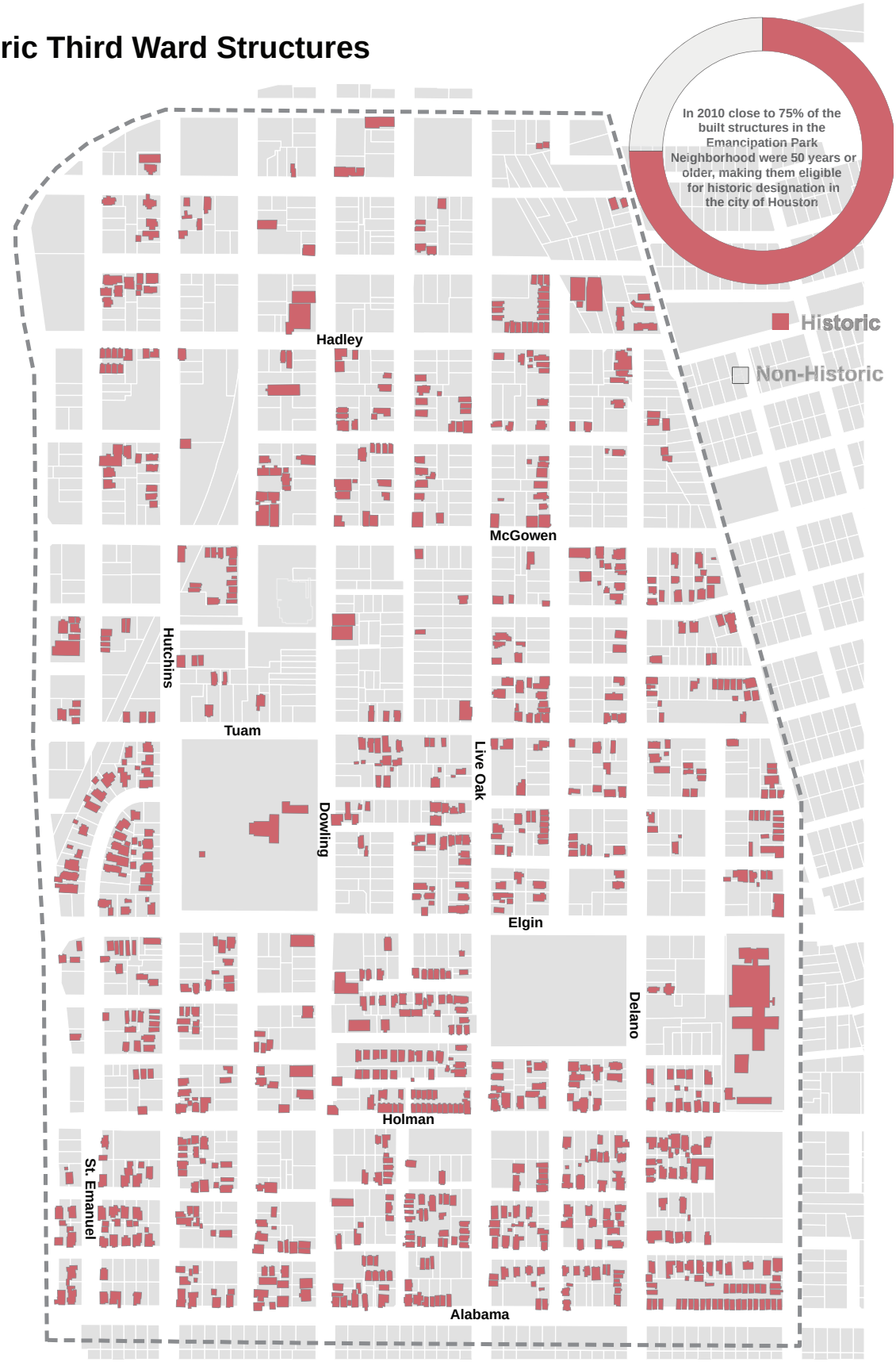
As a convener of invested community agencies and residents, the EEDC plays the important role of making the connection between green infrastructure and other neighborhood initiatives. The Dowling Corridor Revitalization Working Group can begin to incorporate the idea of complete street designs and stormwater remediation as they build their vision for this main corridor.

Recommended Political Engagement

While it may not seem this way, every resident of the Emancipation Park neighborhood is an expert on the environmental systems of the neighborhood due to their first-hand, lived experiences. Every resident can tell you where exactly they see flooding on their street after a big rain storm, in what vacant lot plants seem to thrive, and how the vegetables in the closest community garden are growing. In order to push for truly people-centered green infrastructure, the EEDC must tap into this knowledge through meaningful conversations with residents about their understanding of the neighborhood. The Political Engagement Working Group can help educate residents about the benefits of green infrastructure for public health, the local economy, and pedestrian experience and work to mobilize residents to receive long-term larger funding grants for green infrastructure improvements.

ALWAYS
Remember
your
Roots

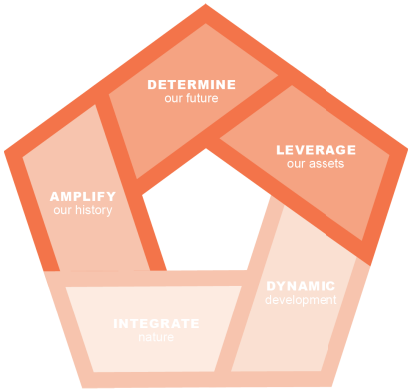
Historic Third Ward Structures



Strategy 5: Preserve the Third Ward

Anna Doty and Jessica Myers

Historic Third Ward has deep roots and has long been the center of Black life in Houston and the South. Preserving that past is key to the Emancipation Park neighborhood's future. Historic designation is a tool that acknowledges and protects this history by incentivizing preservation of historic buildings. Third Ward can look to case studies around the U.S. that take Historic Preservation tools and integrate them with a holistic set of strategies to empower residents and help them preserve their historic contributions in a rapidly changing neighborhood.



City of Houston's Tools to Preserve Neighborhood Character

The City of Houston's Historic District Designation is a tool for homeowners seeking to restore and preserve their neighborhood character. Neighborhoods with homes at least 50 years old and of local historic importance can qualify for designation with the support of the majority of property owners. Designation will give homeowners more notice and time to respond to development and send a clear message to developers about the quality of the neighborhood and what residents want to protect. Designation also provides tax incentives to homeowners who invest in and renovate their homes.

Objectives of Historic Designation

As a community development strategy, Historic District Designation can aid the EEDC in furthering four primary objectives:

1. Slow Speculative Development
2. Increase Economic Support for Homeowners
3. Honor Emancipation Park Neighborhood History
4. Support Local Economic Development

Designation as a Strategy for Building Neighborhood Ties

Designation relies highly on owner-occupancy and owner approval, but as a neighborhood of primarily renters, the EEDC must ensure that designation preserves not just buildings, but also residents' presence. Any designation strategy should therefore include renters as part of the organizing.

Objectives

Slow Speculative Development

By limiting subdivision of lots and requiring developers to build consistently with existing neighborhood character, Historic District Designation and accompanying tools such as minimum lot size and minimum building line requirements may help slow speculative development of townhomes in the Emancipation Park neighborhood. Although Historic Designation in some cases is used as a tool for gentrification, a comprehensive strategy of inclusive community development in the Third Ward that includes Historic Designation can instead preserve affordability and increase opportunity for current residents.

Increase Economic Support for Homeowners

Historic District Designation compensates homeowners who invest to renovate and refurbish their homes consistent with the neighborhood character by making owners eligible for tax benefits. For homeowners who want to stay in the neighborhood rather than sell to a developer, the benefits of Historic District Designation can help compensate homeowners for investing in their neighborhood and provide an alternative to selling. Paired with other financing that can improve access to upfront capital, Historic Designation renovation tax exemptions can make home improvements more affordable and allow residents to remain and invest in the neighborhood.

Preserve the History of Emancipation Park Neighborhood

First and foremost, Historic District Designation provides official recognition of the significance and contributions of Emancipation Park Neighborhood to the history of larger Houston. Historic Designation is official recognition by the City of Houston that the neighborhood is an area of local historic importance because of the history of the neighborhood, the people who make up that neighborhood, and the large number of historic buildings.

Provide Opportunity for Local Economic Development

Historic Designation can help maintain property values and stimulate economic development by attracting small business and identifying areas as viable business districts. Through a mix of new residential and commercial historic designations using Houston's Historic District and Historic Landmark Designations, Emancipation Park can spur reinvestment in the neighborhood that honors and is consistent with its long legacy as a vibrant center for Black life in Houston.

Historic Designation and Housing Resilience

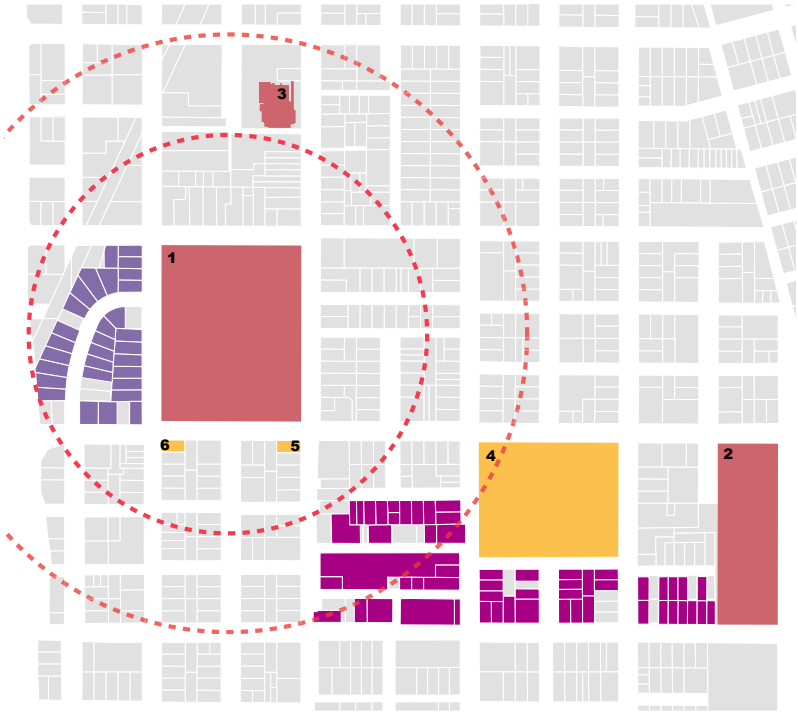
Potential for Historic Designation in Emancipation Park Neighborhood

The Emancipation Park Neighborhood has a significant number of buildings greater than 50 years old and of historical significance, making the neighborhood a strong candidate for Historic District Designation. Emancipation Park Neighborhood also has three existing City of Houston designated Historic Landmarks--Emancipation Park, St. John Missionary Baptist Church, and the Houston Negro Hospital and Houston Negro School of Nursing.

High Opportunity Neighborhoods for Historic Designation

Given their existing building age, degree of vacancy, and consistent historic character, several smaller neighborhoods within the Emancipation Park Neighborhood boundaries might be a prime opportunity for immediate historic designation--namely the Mid-century Bungalows of St. Emanuel and Hutchins near Emancipation Park and several blocks along the Holman and Elgin corridors connecting two existing designated Historic Landmarks of Emancipation Park and the Houston Negro Hospital.

Both proposed historic districts, three of the proposed new landmarks and two of the existing landmarks fall into a one and three block radius of Emancipation Park. Considering the development happening in the park, now would be a crucial moment to preserve and protect these areas.



Emblematic Architecture of Third Ward

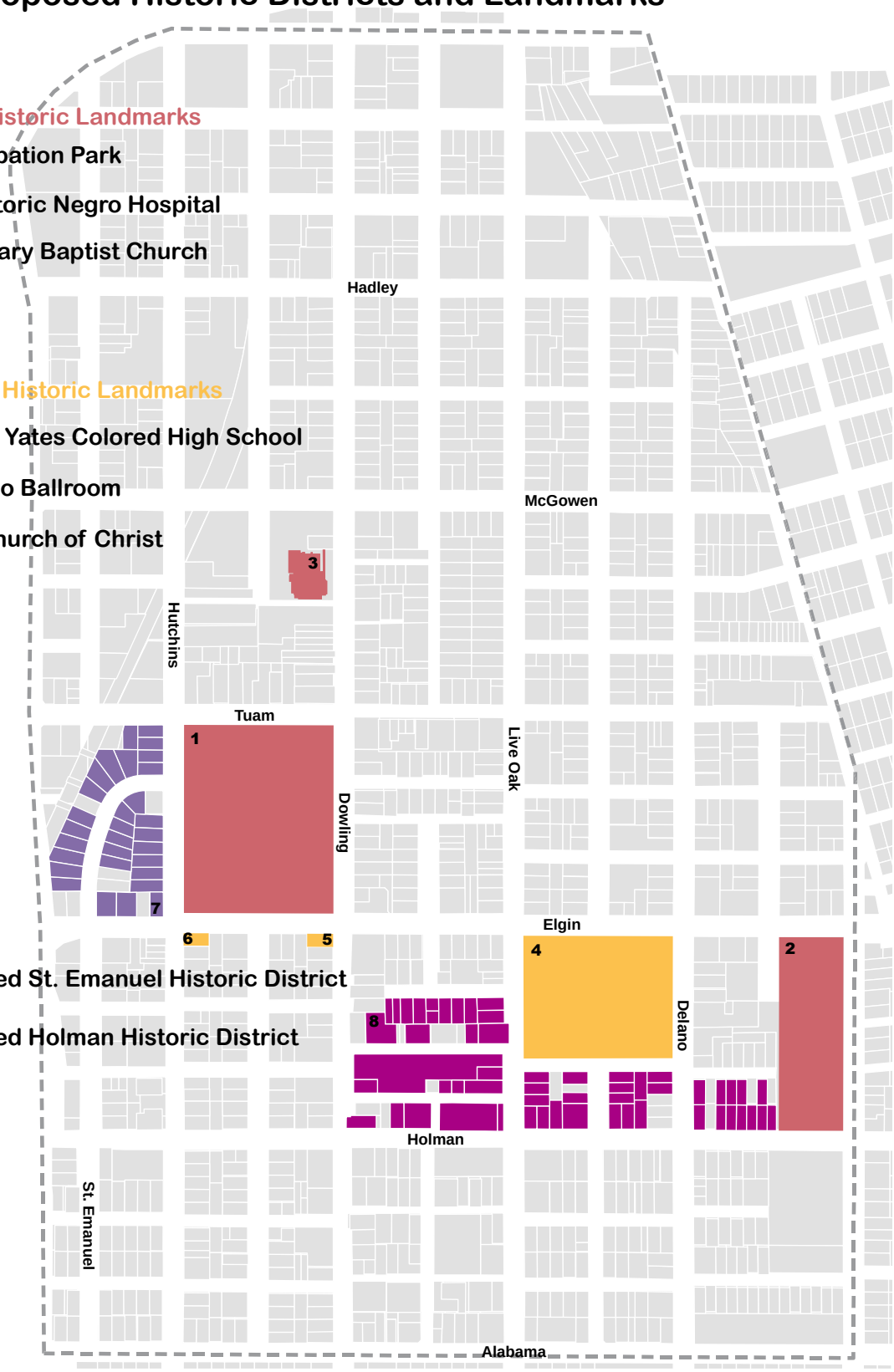
Row Houses

The iconic structure of the row house was brought to the American Gulf Coast through a number of influences, the most cited being the Yoruba structural style brought over to New Orleans by former slaves who escaped from Haiti. But the style also comes from the building materials available to the working poor of the region and early building codes originating in New Orleans taxing the width of residential façades, which influenced the houses long narrow shape. The shape is also conducive to the Gulf Coast climate, allowing breezes to move through the whole house. The many influences that brought the row house to Houston show that not only are these houses a testament to the resilience of early Third Ward residents but also to the great contributions Black Americans made to the American architectural vernacular. As such these structures are a prime example of Houston's history and should be protected.

Mid-century Bungalow

The proposed St. Emanuel historic district has an eclectic collection of architectural styles popularized in Houston in the 1950s. However, the most dominant style among them is the single family hipped-Bungalow, although there are also examples of the Colonial Revival and one Mod-interpretation of the hipped-Bungalow. The St. Emanuel houses are a continuation and compliment to both the architectural history of Houston and the narrative of resilience the row houses began. Facing the famous and historically rich Emancipation Park these houses represent an opening of opportunities for Third Ward residents in the 1950s. These beautifully kept homes continue a narrative of mobility and striving that the founders of Emancipation Park began with the purchase of the land. Like the row house, this architecture also shows the neighborhood's connection to the rest of Houston and the Gulf Coast more broadly. These styles are also prevalent in other historic districts in Houston, namely Audubon Place, Freeland, Norhill, and Woodland Heights.

Current Historic Third Ward Landmarks with Proposed Historic Districts and Landmarks



Current Historic Landmarks

1 Emancipation Park

2 The Historic Negro Hospital

3 Missionary Baptist Church

Proposed Historic Landmarks

4 Original Yates Colored High School

5 Eldorado Ballroom

6 Sixth Church of Christ

7 Proposed St. Emanuel Historic District

8 Proposed Holman Historic District

Landmarks of Third Ward

Existing Designated Houston Historic Landmarks

St. John Missionary Baptist Church
2702 Dowling Street
Designated 2010

Emancipation Park
3018 Dowling Street
Designated 2007

Houston Negro Hospital School of Nursing
2900 Elgin Street // 3204 Ennis Street
Designated 1999

Potential Future Designated Landmarks

In addition to the high priority neighborhoods on St. Emanuel Street and Holman Street, there are a number of individual structures the EEDC could seek to designate as Historic Landmarks to further anchor and establish the larger Historic Districts.

Eldorado Ballroom
2310 Elgin Street
Built in 1939
In 2011 the Eldorado received a Texas Historical Marker.

Sixth Church of Christ Scientist
2202 Elgin Ave
Built in 1941, unaltered

Baylor College of Medicine Academy/ Historic Jack Yates Senior High
2610 Elgin Ave
Built in 1927

How It Works

Historic District designation is initiated first by local homeowners and eventually moves through a process of both homeowner and city approval.

Designating Your Neighborhood as a Historic District

1.Interested in historic preservation? Is your home more than 50 years old and contributes to your neighborhood's character?

2.Start the process! You can initiate the process of historic designation of your neighborhood by collecting petitions of support from 10% of the owners in your proposed district and submitting them to the City of Houston's Historic Preservation Office.

3.Time for a public meeting: Once a complete application is received, the City will hold a public meeting in your neighborhood.

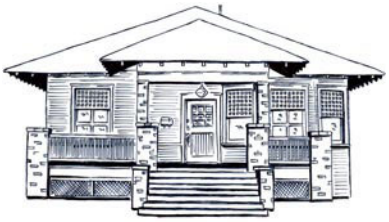
4.Start organizing! After the public meeting is held, the city will mail out a survey to all property owners in your proposed district. At least 67% of all property owners within a district must return cards in support of district designation in order for the historic district to be established. Property owners will have 15 days to return the survey.

5.Reviewing your application: If less than 67% support is received, the planning director may modify the proposed boundaries to create a district in which 67% of the owners are in favor. If there is no way to modify the boundaries to achieve a district in which there is 67% support, the application will be denied and no new application may be filed for one full year.

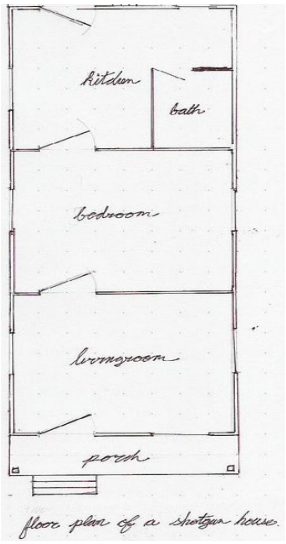
6.Getting the city's approval: If more than 67% of is received, the application will go to the City of Houston Planning Department and the Houston City Council for Approval.

7.Congratulations! Once approved, homeowners can begin the process of renovations and qualify for tax exemptions by moving through the Certificate of Appropriateness process with the City.

Four-Square - Colonial Revival



Bungalow - Hipped



Traditional plan for a row house

After Designation:

1. Is your home in a designated Historic District? Is your home a contributing structure included in the Historic District? Unsure? Call Houston's Office of Historic Preservation to find out: (832) 393-6556

2. Want to fix up your home? Do you want to alter, rehabilitate, or restore your house? Before beginning construction, contact the Houston Preservation office to ensure your project will quality for tax credits: (832) 393-6556 or historicpreservation@houstontx.gov

3. Complete an application: After consulting with the city, complete a Certificate of Appropriateness Application. Historic Preservation staff can guide you through the process and can offer technical assistance. The application can be found here: http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/HistoricPreservationManual/certofapp.html

4. Submit your application to the City: If the application is approved, your project will be eligible for a 50% discount on building permit fees and may be eligible for a City of Houston tax exemption.

5. Apply for your tax exemption: To qualify for this tax exemption, the expenditures for this work must amount to at least 25% of the assessed value of the improvements (i.e., buildings) prior to the work, as established by the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD). The percentage of the tax exemption (from 25% up to 100%) is dependent on the amount of qualified expenditures relative to this initial year improvement value. The tax exemption applies to the HCAD improvement value only (not land value), for up to 15 years. The exemption applies only to City of Houston taxes, and does not apply to county or school district taxes on the property.

Other Levels of Historic Designation

In addition to Houston's Historic District Preservation program, the EEDC may also consider Federal and State programs for protecting and incentivizing preservation of historically significant places.

Federal: National Register of Historic Places

Properties (individual buildings and districts) on the Register may qualify for specific preservation benefits and incentives including federal Preservation Tax Credits and state tax incentives, as well as state and federal preservation grants for planning and rehabilitation. Once properties are placed on the Register, the owner of the historic properties are not restricted in any way, but Federal money cannot be used to harm the building.

To qualify for the National Register of Historic Places, structures must be at least 50 years old and embody significance in American history through association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American History, association with a significant person in the past, or embodiment of a distinctive period character or method of construction.

Once properties are placed on the Register, the owners of "certified historic structure" may apply for the Federal Rehabilitation Income Tax Credit, equal to 20% of their rehabilitation costs. However, only income-generating properties are eligible to participate in the program and the National Park Service--the administering agency of the National Register of Historic Places--must certify the rehabilitation.

Anyone may nominate a single historic property for inclusion on the National Register. However, if the EEDC is interested in pursuing National Register designation for a historic district, they should seek technical support from the Texas Historical Commission's National Register coordinator.

Federal: National Historic Landmarks (NHL)

In addition to the National Register of Historic Places, the federal government also registers National Historic Landmarks. Whereas most properties on the National Register are usually of state or local significance, a National Historic Landmark is a nationally significant property of exceptional value in representing or illustrating an important theme in the history of the United States.

State: Texas Historical Commission

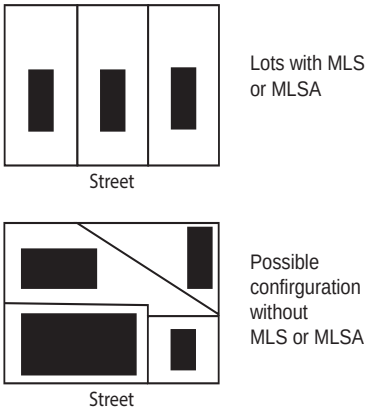
The Texas Historical Commission (THC) is the state agency for historic preservation. The THC has a number of programs registering Texas historic landmarks and significant places and also serves as the State's administering body for the federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program and other programs of the National Register of Historic Places.

Other Tools to Preserve Neighborhood Character

In addition to Historic Designation, the City of Houston offers other homeowner initiated planning tools that aim to preserve neighborhood style and character including minimum lot size, minimum lot size area, and minimum building line standards.

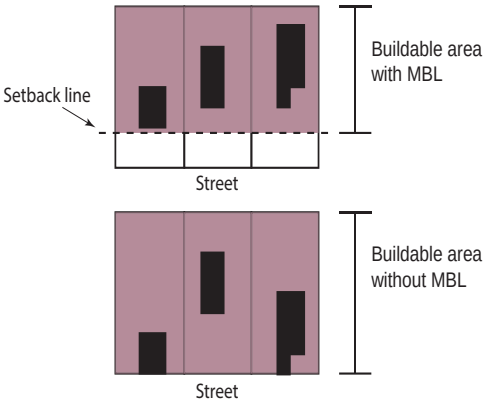
Minimum Lot Size and Minimum Lot Size Area

Minimum lot size and minimum lot size area standards are used by the City of Houston to prohibit subdivision below the “special minimum” lot size in the designated area--helping to ensure the historic size and character of homes in a neighborhood.
Owner initiation percentage: 10%
City of Houston process: Approval by Houston Planning Commission and the Houston City Council
Percentage of Homeowner Approval Required: 51% (Block); 55% (Area)



Minimum Building Line

Similar to lot size, a minimum building line standard requires that all buildings in the designated area be constructed behind the minimum building line, also known as a required setback--helping to limit new or different housing types in designated areas and preserving neighborhood character.
City of Houston process: Approval by Houston Planning Commission and the Houston City Council
Percentage of Homeowner Approval Required: 51%



Planning Tools

Together, these designations are tools to homeowners seeking ways to limit future development or ensure that it is consistent with the existing neighborhood character. However, they also limit the building rights of existing homeowners and should be considered carefully before being pursued.

Historic Preservation and Anchor Institutons

Washington, D.C.:
Howard University & The LeDroit Park Initiative

In 1997, Howard University embarked on an ambitious partnership with Fannie Mae Foundation, the Fannie Mae operation, and Riggs Bank to re-envision and revitalize a 150-block area around the university. At the time, nearly 18% of residential properties in the historically black neighborhood of LeDroit Park were either vacant or abandoned, many of which were by Howard University itself and were on the National Register of Historic Places.

Over the course of the partnership, the LeDroit Park Initiative renovated 28 historic rowhouses, constructed 12 new homes on formerly vacant lots, and beautified local streetscapes consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood. As part of the larger effort to bring new life to the community, Howard University wrote off its cost to acquire and carry these properties, charging new owners a price only reflecting the renovation costs. Furthermore, Fannie Mae agreed to make below-market-rate, 30-year financing at 5.9 percent available to new homeowners by purchasing special mortgage revenue bonds issued by the local Housing Financing Agency.

All together, the LeDroit Park Initiative serves as an example of how the EEDC could use historic designation and partnerships with local anchor institutions and larger financing agencies to preserve neighborhood character and affordability in the Third Ward.

Historic Preservation Financing Models

Portsmouth, Virginia: Elder Loans

The neighborhoods of Cradock and Truxtun (a historically black township) were both built by the federal government in the early 1900s to serve as housing for shipyard workers and their families. By the 1970 the owners of these homes were aging. Many lived on fixed incomes and were unable to repair their homes. In the 1980s, through organization with the City of Portsmouth's department of planning and small civic leagues that homeowners formed in both neighborhoods, Cradock and Truxtun were able to apply for and receive a historic district designation from the city. This process also lead the department of planning to write a basic set of design guidelines, which coordinated basic upkeep of façades to preserve the neighborhood's historic character.

By agreeing to these guidelines, homeowners were able to request Home Rehab and HomeCare loans funded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to make repairs. The residents applied through the city housing authority and receive loans between five and ten thousand dollars, which were forgiven if the residents stayed in their homes another ten years. If residents sold their homes before that time the loan repayment was deducted from the sale of the house.

The Cradock and Truxtun houses are now 100 years old and beautifully kept. Through resident organization and coordination with Houston's planning and redevelopment offices, Third Ward residents could advocate for a similar program which leverages the requirements of historic preservation upkeep to secure funding for needed repairs.

Historic Preservation Financing Models

City of Boulder, Colorado: Tax Incentives

There are many ways to support a historic preservation program through community cooperation with the municipal government. While one of the most important means of support is capital incentives for financing immediate repairs, it is imperative to develop incentives that encourage long term upkeep beyond simply penalizing homeowners for non-compliance. In the City of Boulder, the municipality waives the city sales tax for up to 12,500 dollars of construction materials. However, Third Ward historic designations could advocate for two modifications of this type of incentive by aggregating the benefits up from just a homeowner by homeowner purchases to improvement purchases set aside for the whole district.

Cooperation with other homeowners would encourage community accountability for design standards but it would also increase a historic district's political capacity to advocate for benefits. For example, in the State of Texas each municipality may only charge up to 2% of sales tax on top of the state level 6.25% sales tax. This would mean savings of only $250 on a $12,500 purchase. If this benefit was aggregated up to the district level, with an estimated 30 homeowners in a proposed district like St. Emmanuel, the saving on $375,000 worth of materials would be $7,500.

However, if the historic district was able to work with the Planning Commission of Houston to lobby the state to remove its sales tax for a building materials, the savings would go up to $30,937.50 for the same purchase. $12,500 is capital cap set by the City of Boulder for its historic districts, but Houston is a different context with a different taxing structure and architectural history. This cap should be adjusted to suit the average needs of a historic district homeowner in Houston. In addition to lobbying for certain tax benefits, the historic districts of Houston could partner with home improvement retailers like Home Depot or Lowes to receive discounts on purchases in exchange for purchasing loyalty at that particular retailer.

City of Boulder, Colorado: Grants

The City of Boulder also offers a matching program through grants to help sustain the rehabilitation of privately owned historic structures. Third Ward Historic Districts could partner with city programs like Midtown Development Authority to set up a matching grants program that would subsidize the purchase of construction materials and renovation fees, as already described. While grants like these are primarily used for the maintenance of historic façades, capital from this type of matching grant program could also be applied to another very crucial aspect of historic renovation and that is lead removal.

Although there is a grant program through the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through its Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH), the grant funds are scarce and the competition is high. Lead removal in historic homes is a crucial aspect of keeping these homes safe for generations to come and Third Ward could make financial partnerships with other city programs to insure that this feature is built into its preservation plans.

Implementation

Action Items for EEDC

Although historic designation is initiated by homeowners, the EEDC could play an important role in organizing in several key ways:

1. Create a space where homeowners can meet and discuss the possibility for upkeep of historic districts

2. Help facilitate the initial community meeting with the city, required for homeowners considering historic preservation

3. Keep a record of homeowners who have been through the historic designation process and connect them to others who are looking to do the same

4. Help facilitate renters who would like to encourage their landlords pursue historic designation

First Black Houston Chamber of Commerce

Recommended Political Engagement

Although Houston's existing Historic Preservation ordinances provide an important tool for preserving neighborhood character and in many cases, keeping and bringing capital into the local community, they could also be improved to ensure access for more homeowners. As a political advocacy body, the EEDC can propose and support new city-initiated financing mechanisms such as a Cultural Heritage Preservation Fund that could provide upfront, low-interest loans to homeowners renovating their historic buildings.

Project Row Houses Block Party

The Challenges

Historic District designation is a homeowner-oriented tool. However, as a community primarily of renters, Emancipation Park Neighborhood and the EEDC must understand historic preservation as part of a broader strategy of neighborhood organizing and community development that explicitly includes renters.

Many of the economic and tax benefits of Historic District designation come only after designation has been established and significant investments have been made. In communities with less access to capital, the existing Historic Designation process can be time-consuming, difficult, and expensive.

The Opportunities

The process of seeking historic designation can be an opportunity to knock on doors, meet with neighborhoods, and discuss what residents of the Emancipation Park neighborhood value most about their community. Historic Designation can support the larger strategy of community development and resident organizing as a single campaign to bring together all residents--not just homeowners--to talk about their vision for the community.

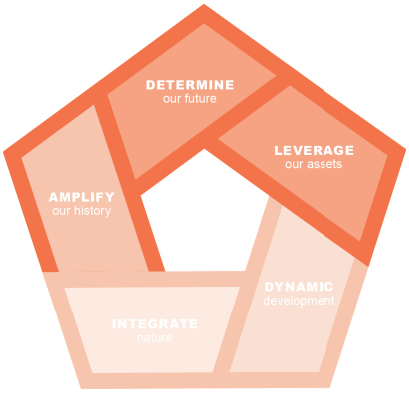
A number of political engagement opportunities exist for the EEDC to both facilitate partnerships throughout the historic designation process and advocate for new programs that make historic designation more accessible and beneficial to less affluent communities. As a coordinating body, the EEDC can help facilitate new partnerships between the Third Ward, local anchor institutions such as universities and financial institutions, and larger financing agencies that can support the community in renovating and developing new housing and commercial spaces. Together, these strategies can improve the EEDC's relationship with local anchor institutions and help to bring new capital into the Third Ward to support community-driven development.

It's beauty
240°
— In the
Struggle

Strategy 6: Organize the Community

Aurora Kazi Bassett

The EEDC will need both sides of organizing – the grasstops and the grassroots – to sustain its work. Thus far the EEDC has emphasized grasstops-oriented political organizing.



All of the strategies in this book offer opportunities to organize (both at the grasstops and the grassroots) and build capacity in the Emancipation Park neighborhood. Ujima is a community-outreach project proposed by Dr. Assata Richard's team. Ujima was originally imagined as working in parallel to the EEDC's work. We believe in the power of community organizing and strongly encourage the EEDC to make Ujima another working group. We also advocate that Ujima expand its work from community outreach to community organizing. Ujima's expanded role would include the essentials of organizing: to 1) identify potential leaders, 2) recruit and 3) support the development of leaders through training and assistance. These leaders will go on to identify other leaders, and so on and so on – creating a cycle of capacity building.

Why is Organizing Important?

The EEDC has a working group focused on Political Engagement. This group does great work reaching out to the grasstops, using the power and connections of the EEDC's 36 member organizations. However, grasstops organizing must be strengthened and reinforced by grassroots community organizing.

We believe that making Ujima a part of the EEDC is vitally important for this work. The EEDC is more the sum of the member organizations, it must have credibility as a voice for the residents of neighborhood. The community organizing Ujima will do will help build the legitimacy it takes to have a lasting and positive effect on the lives of those in the neighborhood.

Grasstops and Grassroots Organizing

Organizing can be separated into two kinds: Grasstops and Grassroots. As the metaphor suggests, each form relies upon the other.

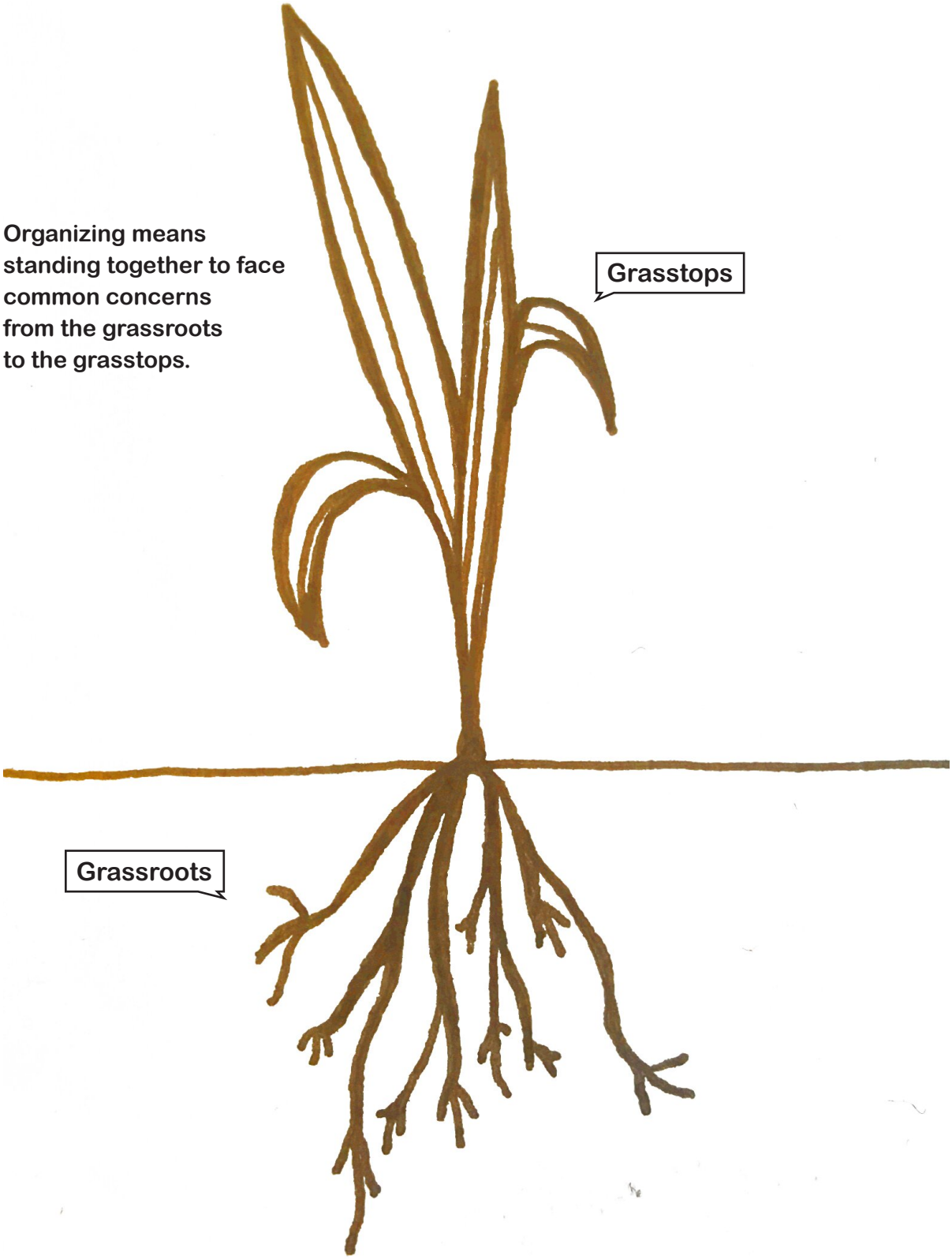
Grasstops

Grasstops, or political organizing, can also be thought of as organizing power players. It requires the mobilization of people in decision making roles, those who make policy decisions. This is the target work of the Political Engagement working group.

Grassroots

Community organizing is the hard work of meetings, discussions, and getting to know the community. This work allows you to identify, recruit, and develop leadership amongst the people of the Third Ward. Developing leadership will strengthen and focus all of the work the EEDC does while making its strategies more likely to succeed and more rooted in the community's identified needs.

Organizing means standing together to face common concerns from the grassroots to the grasstops.



Why Two Working Groups?

Political Engagement Working Group

This working group will focus on the grasstops organizing goals of the EEDC's working groups. This work will require identifying the political and community leaders who are decision makers. Creating and, importantly, maintaining these relationships takes time and sustained effort.

Target Population:
City Council, the Parks Department, state legislators, the Historic Preservation Office, affordable housing developers, etc.

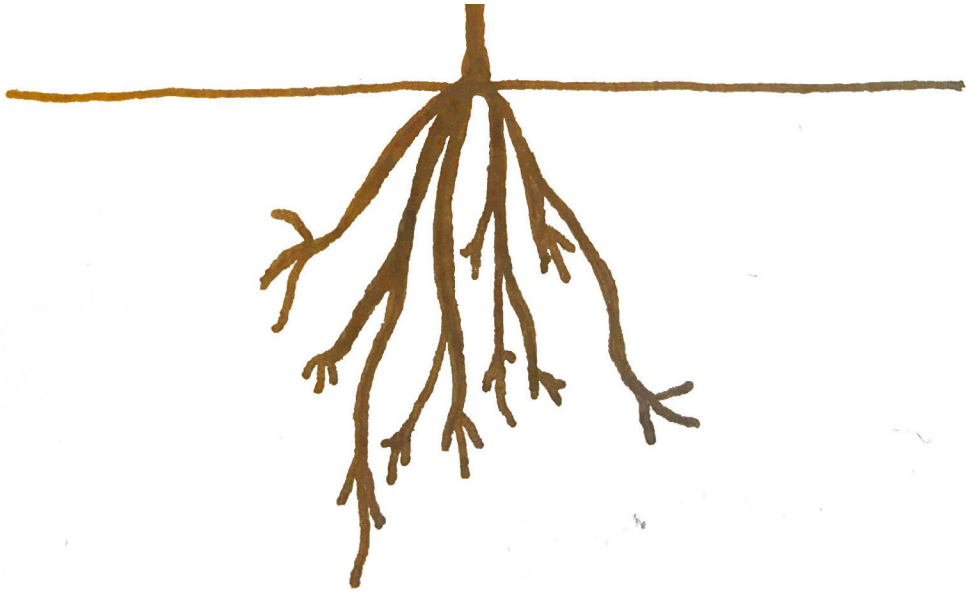
Possible First Steps:
- The first step must be to build the EEDC's capacity. This means hiring a staff person to coordinate activities.
- Create Political Maps of those who make decisions about the Third Ward, such as the list above.

Ujima Community Organizing Working Group

This working group will focus on the grassroots organizing goals of the EEDC's working groups. This works requires identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders already in the community.

Target Population:
The people of Third Ward!

Possible First Steps:
- Get to know the community. Members of EEDC knock on every door and invite residents to an event, such as Juneteenth celebration.
- Host organizing training sessions for residents identified as potential leaders, those who are already well connected, passionate about an issue, and need support to build that passion into something more concrete.



What Can Grassroots Community Organizing Add?

Here's an example how adding organizing to the EEDC's work. Take the example of an Ujima led college send-off, a celebration for all community high school students who are starting college or training programs. This is a great idea to bring people together to celebrate achievement. Here we illustrate the benefits of adding grassroots organizing to identify, recruit and develop leaders to build capacity in the neighborhood.

EEDC-Led Planning

- EEDC identifies high-school seniors and their families
- EEDC coordinates logistics with local vendors and identifies graduating students
- EEDC invites residents to celebrate
- The party!
- EEDC waits a year and repeats process again

The Pluses

- Fun
- Well-deserved communal celebration
- Builds EEDC connections in the community

Added Organizing: Community-Led Planning

- EEDC identifies some teachers, parents and/or students to lead event planning
- Team meets and discusses aims of the event
- Each team member works to identify other interested groups
- Expanded team organizes the event (thereby building their capacity and connections through the process of finding the students to celebrate, local vendors for cater, etc.)
- Host event
- Use party to identify interested people to organize the next college send-off, and other potential celebrations (e.g. a beginning of school event) and school-related opportunities for organizing
- First team and new team meet to discuss larger issues around education, for example identify charter schools and local attendance as an issue
- Plan a strategy to address charter schools
- Continue this process throughout the year

The Pluses

- Fun
- Well deserved communal celebration
- Identifies a team interested and passionate about education
- Builds resident capacity and networks
- Identifies other issues to address
- An ongoing process that brings in multiple people

How It Has Worked: Case Studies of Success

SAJE
South Los Angeles, CA

Strategic Action for a Just Economy believes that “development should benefit all” focusing on tenant rights, healthy housing, and equitable development.

How it connects to EEDC:
- Similar density
- Confronting gentrification and displacement
- Demographic and socio-economic mix
- Similar mix of home ownership and renters

Successes:
- Community land trust creation
- Relocating renters to good housing in the neighborhood (400 units of housing created)
- Community benefits agreement with anchor institutions (Staples Center, USC)
- Legal cases against slumlords

PUSH Buffalo
Buffalo, NY

People United for Sustainable Housing is a membership based organization that works to make strong neighborhoods with affordable housing and local economic opportunities for residents.

How it connects to EEDC:
- Focus on affordable housing
- Renter organizing
- CDC in partnership with organizing

Successes:
- Home energy assessments, and low-cost financing for home owners
- Buying abandoned properties & developing them for affordable, sustainable occupancy
- Connecting home owners, job seekers and business owners to city, state and federal resources.

Chainbreaker Collective
Santa Fe, NM

Chainbreaker Collective is a membership-based group focused on economic, environmental and transportation justice.

How it connects to EEDC:
- Focus on bus, bike and other public transportation equity
- Confronting gentrification and displacement
- Political engagement: voter registration, education and advocacy.

Successes:
- Residents' Bill of Rights passed by City Council
- $2 Million in federal funding for buses
- Bike resource center, bus pass rebates, free annual bus passes for poor residents

PACT
San Jose, CA

People Acting in Community Together is an inter-faith umbrella organization that offers leadership and organizing training as well as conducting campaigns itself.

How it connects to EEDC:
- Focus on education reform and equitable access
- Renters' Rights organizing
- Works in communities of diverse racial, socio-economic and religious backgrounds.

Successes:
- Passing of Prop 47 to fund schools, not prisons
- Opening of 50 new public schools in Santa Clara County

How It Works for the Strategies

Organizing involves a lot of uncertainty because the specifics of organizing must come from the work the community and Working Groups want to do. The EEDC and Ujima's role will be to offer support in identifying leaders, perhaps even arranging organizing training as leaders emerge. This uncertainly means new possibilities will continue to emerge.

All the strategies outlined in this report will require elements of both grasstops and grassroots organizing. Here are some thoughts to get started!

Establish a Community Land Trust

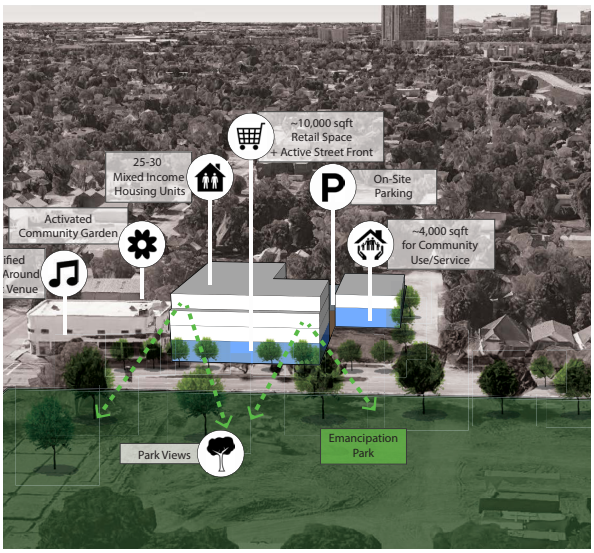
The EEDC's role will be to advocate for collective action – many CDCs and other land-owning groups in the neighborhood will be able to do much more together than they can do apart. Creating a land trust will require extensive grassroots organizing to bring people together.

Create People-Centered Green Infrastructure

Infrastructure investment will require coordination and buy-in from city government. There is also a long history of environmental justice movements to fight against the disproportionate environmental burden on Black Houstonians. Advocacy for green infrastructure and just and integrated environmental systems could be a unifying topic for all residents.

Make Mixed-Use Development Happen

With a large renting population and many people struggling to have decent jobs and living wages there is ample opportunity for the EEDC to play a central role in asking the members of community what kind of economy they want and fighting to make sure these needs are met. This work will require connecting with real estate companies and meeting business owners, etc. The EEDC will also have to get a sense of who is in the neighborhood and what skills they have or need.



Lots to Love

In order to fully utilize the neighborhood's vacant land for flexible programing and environmental systems, the EEDC will need to get permission from city agencies to use the land and ensure safety. Figuring out what programming to do is the perfect opportunity to identify, recruit, and develop community leaders to coordinate events that can be fun, flexible, and easy wins for the community.

Preserve the Third Ward

The history of the Emancipation Park neighborhood is what makes it unique. The EEDC can be the central body to coordinate events, businesses, and housing that acknowledges and celebrates this history. Obtaining official districts will require grassroots organizing of home-owners and the grasstops work of making the case to government officials.

Conclusion

Moving Forward

The EEDC has an incredible opportunity to make a lasting, positive impact on the Upper Third Ward. Its unique collection of venerable institutions, active community leaders, creative businesspeople and concerned citizens will make the EEDC a powerful force in the neighborhood and in broader Houston.

The effort to preserve and grow this exciting and dynamic neighborhood will take cooperation, focus, and drive. Our hope is that the six strategies presented in this report can help guide the EEDC towards further clarity in its short- and long-term, action-focused goals. Our recommendations are just that; ideas for how the EEDC might learn from what has worked in other cities and adapt it to the particular context of the Third Ward. The strategies are by no means the only ways to positively influence the neighborhood's direction. The success of this report will lay not in its predictive power, but in its ability to inspire and support further discussion among the EEDC and the community it serves.