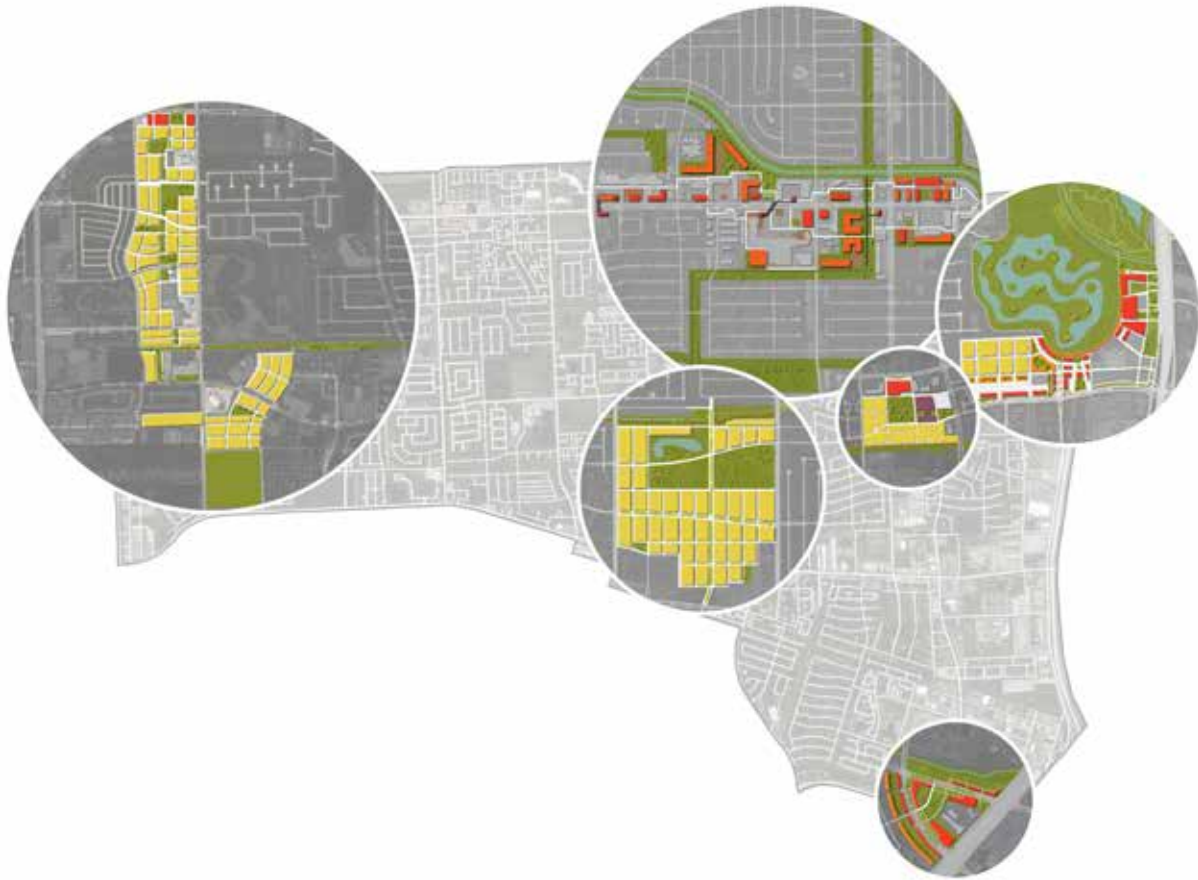


## > INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT DISTRICT



### **ZONES and STRATEGIES**

Community Design Resource Center  
University of Houston  
March 2013  
Final Report

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**> Introduction**

The Community Design Resource Center has developed a series of design proposals and recommendations for future development within the International Management District. Specifically, our work has focused on housing, economic development, public space, transportation, and pedestrian amenities. In addition, we have identified six geographic focus areas that fall within five zones defined for the Management District to test ideas and strategies for future development and establish priorities for new development and public improvements.

The proposals included in this document are based on our market and demographic research, population projections, and the existing market for goods and services, housing and property.

Our goal has been to emphasize and build on the existing strengths and resources of the District, while looking toward a future where the District is connected by transit, walkable, and home to diverse housing choices and mixed-uses. We have also emphasized enhancing the overall identity of the area by first understanding how the District’s geographic areas are unique and building on these qualities, and second by developing a set of district-wide design strategies that build on the more general identity of the area.

Finally, we have worked to introduce new models that would serve to diversify the area and provide a range of choices to potential residents, visitors, and investors by introducing different housing models, commercial development typologies, and public amenities.

## > Summary of Findings

The International Management District study is comprised of two major parts. The first is a set of recommendations for the District overall and the second is a set of design studies for specific focus areas. The overall study can be summarized in a set of guidelines to shape future development in the District organized around three topics: Housing; Economic Development; and Public Spaces. The recommendations are summarized below.

### Housing:

1. Encourage new residential development to connect to the existing street network, eliminating the issue of "islands" of disconnected subdivisions.
2. Develop housing to take advantage of the existing drainage easements as an amenity, including the potential for new hike and bike trails.
3. Maximize the potential of parks and open spaces as catalysts for new housing development and look for opportunities to create new parks in the District.
4. Create greater diversity in the District's multi-family housing market by focusing on higher density urban housing models that meet the needs of two growing population segments, young professionals and empty nesters,
5. Combine different housing typologies and price ranges to create diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods.

### Economic Development:

1. Focus on attracting development that fills the gaps in retail, office, hotel, conference, and entertainment venues.
2. Create diversity and density by encouraging mixed-use buildings and developments.
3. Encourage new development along major commercial corridors to locate buildings adjacent to the street and parking in the rear.
4. Focus new development along Brays Bayou, to create a "Water District."
5. Retrofit existing parking lots to accommodate public spaces and amenities.
6. Encourage retail developers to connect across sites.

### Public Spaces:

1. Identify opportunities to create new parks in the western and southern areas of the District.
2. Create a network of linked hike and bike trails along the drainage and utility easements in the District.
3. Build the identity of the District by looking for opportunities for public art, for example through a painted crosswalk program.
4. Utilize gateways, or pedestrian bridges, to create greater connectivity across Bellaire and Brays Bayou, and further enhance the identity of the area.
5. Create a program to link existing retail parking lots as a means to create greater connectivity in the District and encourage pedestrians.
6. Incentivize the transformation of existing parking lots to include public amenities such as shade, seating, landscaping, outdoor dining and patios.
7. Advocate for the proposed Bus Rapid Transit line along the Bellaire corridor.





> CONTEXT



The International Management District has the opportunity to shape new development to create a connected, walkable, and diverse community.

> Context

As a means to support the goal of developing strategies that build on the existing characteristics and qualities within the International Management District we have identified five zones: West Park, Chinatown West, Neighborhood Center, Sugar Hill, and West Belt. Each zone has different assets and opportunities which are described in detail below. The six focus areas, analyzed in depth, fall within these distinct zones, and in many cases share a title.

**West Park:** The West Park Zone is bounded by Highway 6 on the west, Howell Sugar Land Road on the east, Westpark on the north and Bissonnet on the South. The area has a large concentration of vacant land and has also experienced substantial growth over the last ten years. For example, the population of this area has grown by 10-15% over the last decade. The area also has one of the highest median household incomes in the District, averaging approximately \$45,000. The area has a fair amount of new development, particularly larger big-box type retail development along Highway 6, but is under-served by parks and open spaces. We have identified this area to develop new housing organized around new public parks and open spaces.

*Focus Area: West End*

**Chinatown West:** The Chinatown West Zone follows the Bellaire corridor from Brays Bayou west to Howell Sugar Land Road. Land values along this corridor have steadily risen over the last five years and new development is being constructed at increasing densities. The proposals for this area focus on building the public realm and enhancing the identity of the area, including creating small pocket parks and plazas, pedestrian bridges or gateways, new high density mixed-use developments, and public transit.

*Focus Area: Chinatown West*

**Neighborhood Center:** The Neighborhood Center Zone is bounded by Howell Sugar Land Road on the west, Dairy Ashford and Boone Road on the east, a major drainage easement on the north, and Beechnut and Bissonnet on the south. This zone is characterized by relatively stable single-family neighborhoods and very little vacant land, as a result only the broader District strategies apply to this area.

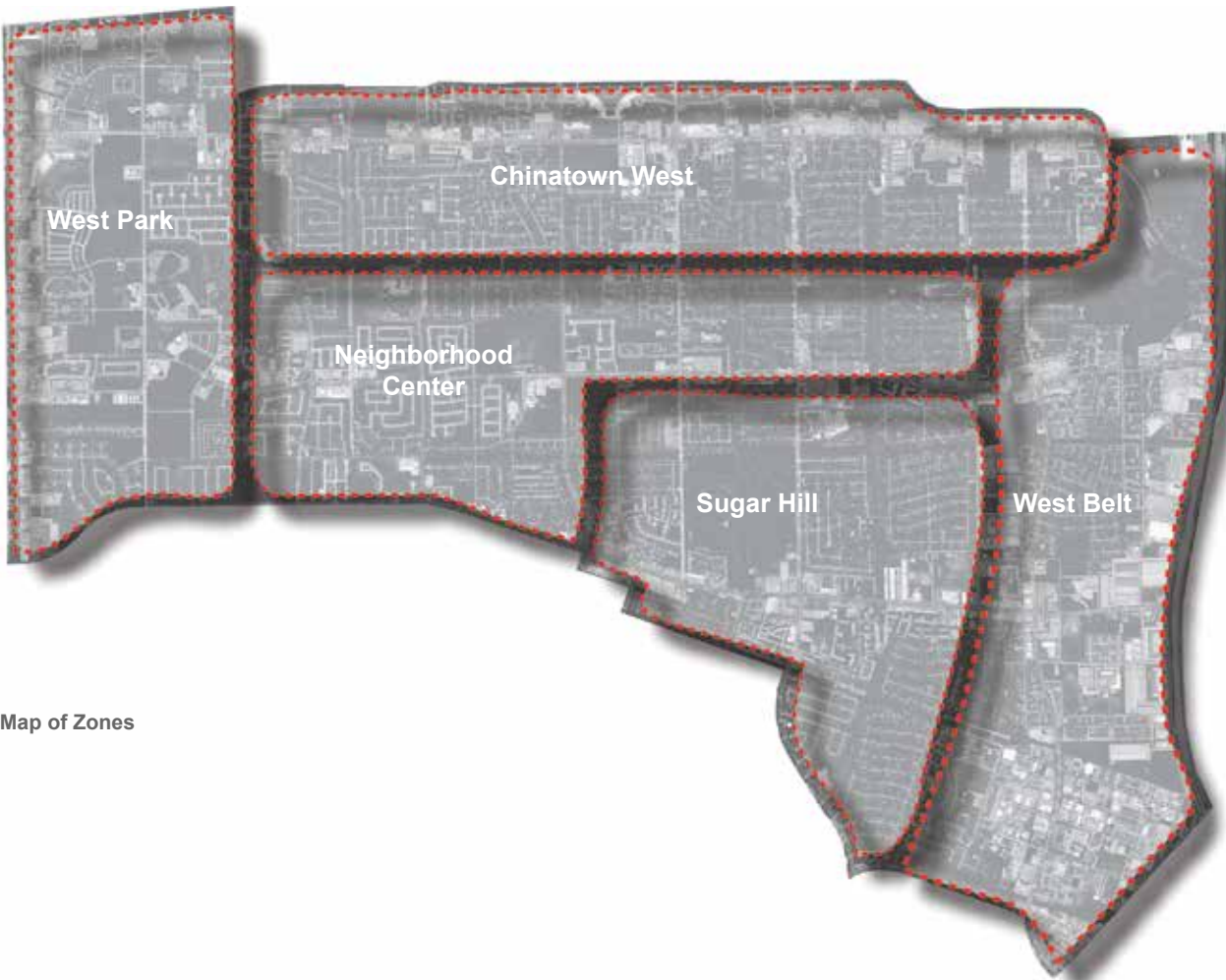
*Focus Area: Neighborhood Center*

**Sugar Hill:** The Sugar Hill Zone is bounded by Dairy Ashford on the west, Boone Road on the east, Beechnut on the north, and the District boundaries on the south. The center of opportunity in this zone is the former Sugar Hill Golf Course, a 136 acre property currently being offered for sale at \$2,000,000. The site is a former construction waste dump and therefore will need remediation. The proposals for the site include housing and a major new public park.

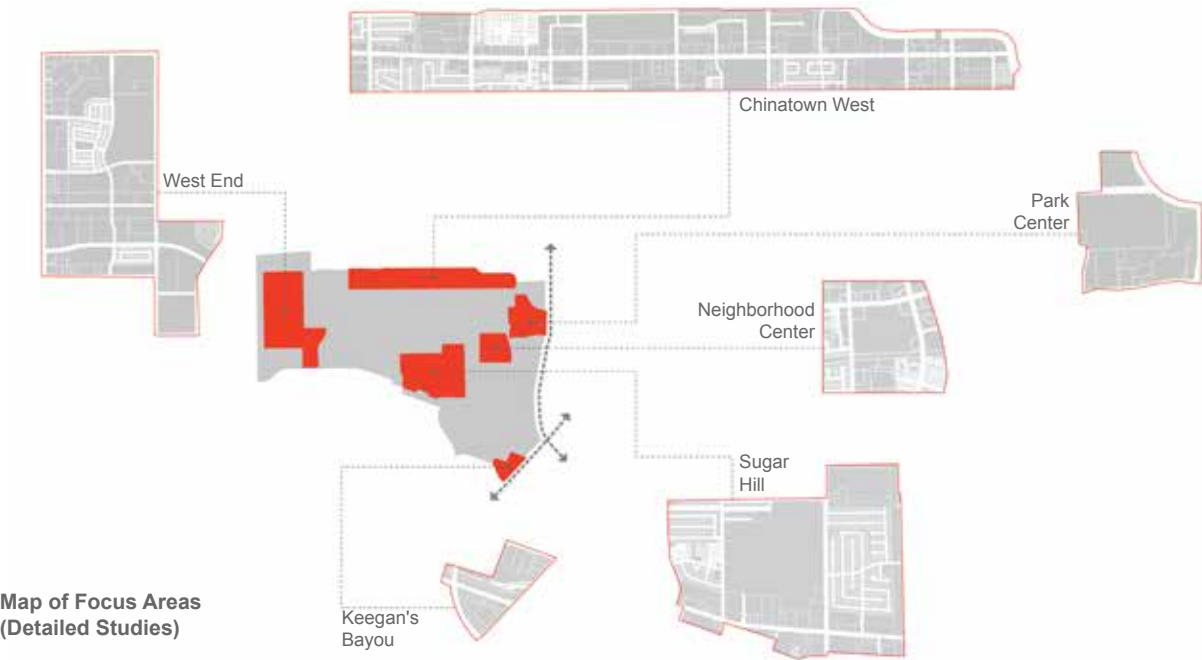
*Focus Area: Sugar Hill*

**West Belt:** The West Belt Zone is bounded by Boone Road on the west, Beltway 8 on the east, Bellaire on the north and West Bellfort on the south. The area is characterized by a concentration of multi-family housing, low median household incomes, light industrial uses on the south, and Arthur Storey Park on the north. Because of adjacency to Beltway 8 the area has the potential to substantially transform in the coming decades. The proposals focus on two opportunity, or focus areas, in the zone—the major properties north of Beechnut and just west of Beltway 8 and the area near the intersection of West Bellfort and Wilcrest. The proposals emphasize and build on opportunities to create high-density mixed-use developments that include housing, retail, office, hotel, and conference space.

*Focus Areas: Park Center and Keegan's Bayou*



Map of Zones

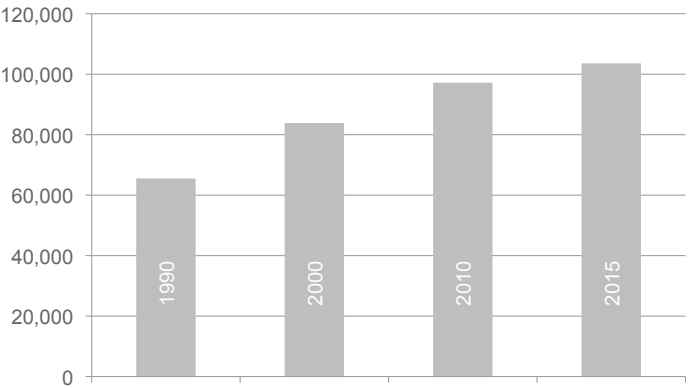


Map of Focus Areas  
(Detailed Studies)



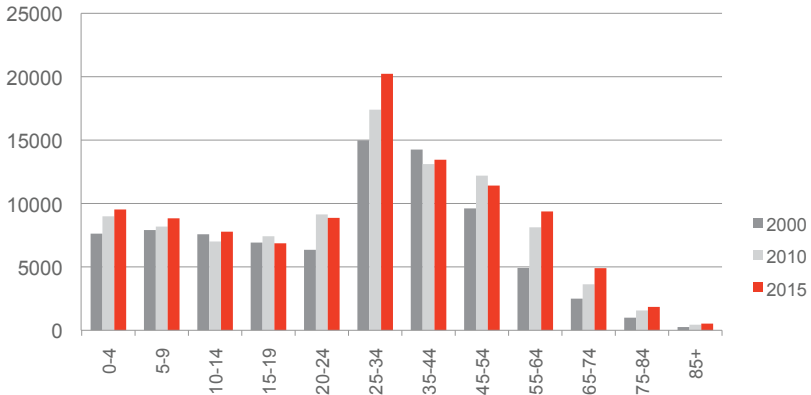


The International Management District covers approximately 12 square miles and is bounded by Highway 6 on the west, the Sam Houston Tollway on the east, Brays Bayou and Bellaire on the north and along Bissonnet from Highway 6 to Kirkwood and West Bellfort to Highway 59. The District is home to approximately 97,000 people, and is expected to grow by over 6,000 residents by 2015, an annual growth rate of 1.3%, to a population of 103,000. The District is characterized by a fairly high population density, averaging approximately 8,000 people per square mile, more than double the average population density in the City of Houston overall. Over the last decade, population growth in the District has been concentrated in the western and southeastern sections. In these areas the population has increased on average 5% between 2000 and 2010. Over the same decade, population decline occurred in the northeastern section of the District.



Population Change, 1990-2015

**Based on current population projections the IMD will grow by 1,336 new residents each year until 2015. In order to provide housing for these new residents approximately 460 new units will need to be built each year.**

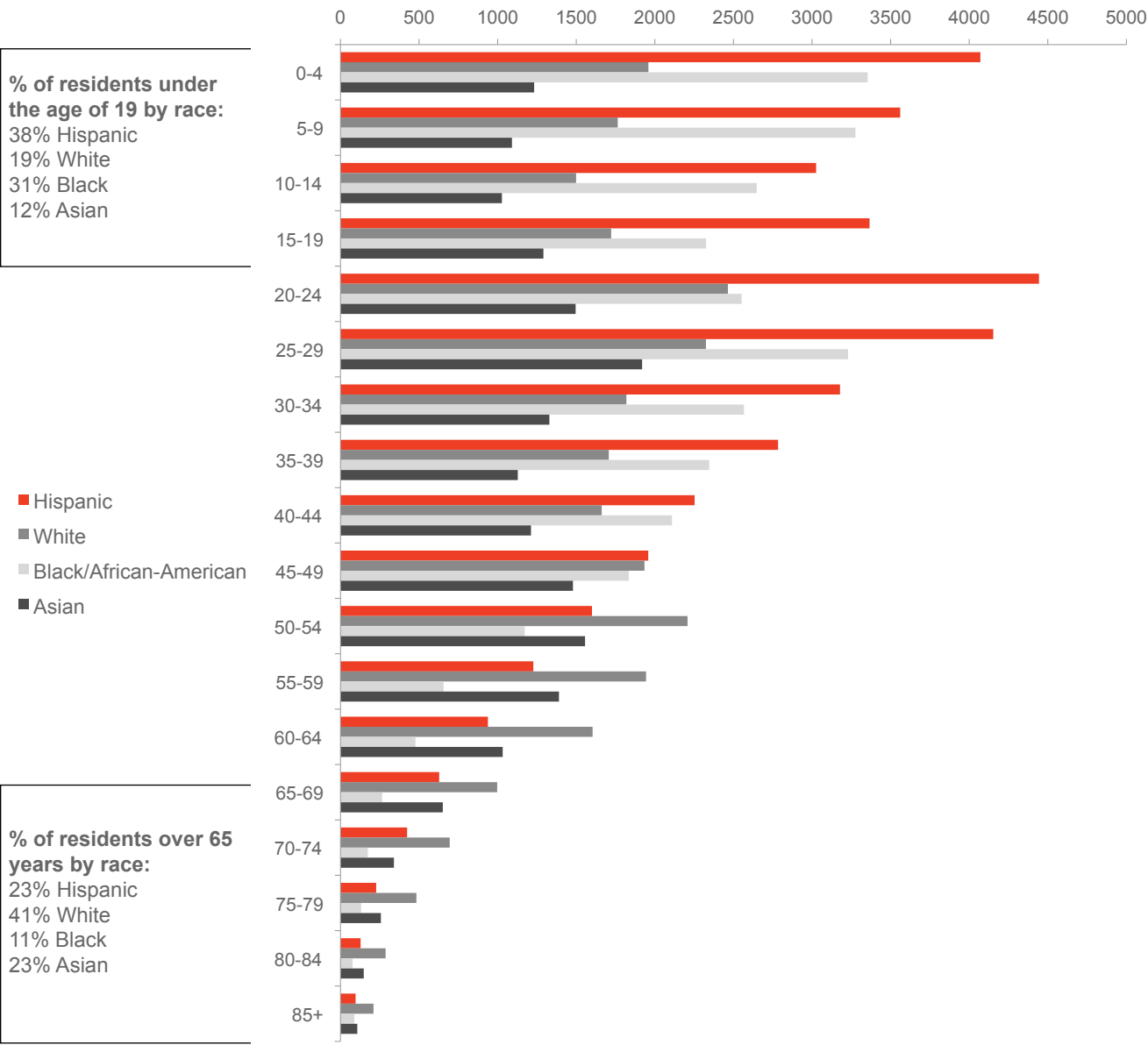


Population Change by Age, 1990-2015

Based on population projections for the International Management District the number of residents in two age brackets will increase by 2015. Residents over the age of 55 will increase by 16%, or 2,891. The number of residents aged 25-34 will increase by 20%, or 2,829, and represent 20% of the total population. These age groups share a desire for "lock and leave" housing, particularly in the form of apartments or condominiums. Addressing the growth in these age brackets, suggest the development of new, denser housing models for the area.

The International Management District is very diverse, 33% of the population is Hispanic, 24% White, 26% Black/ African-American, and 16% Asian. The distribution of the population by age and ethnicity is varied. For example, 69% of all District residents under the age of 18 are either Hispanic or Black, while 64% of the residents over 65 years of age are White or Asian. In the age bracket of 45-49 the distribution by race and ethnicity is nearly equal.

Median household income changes substantially moving east to west through the District. The eastern section has median incomes averaging \$25,000 annually; while the western edge has incomes averaging approximately \$40,000



Population by Age and Ethnicity, 2010

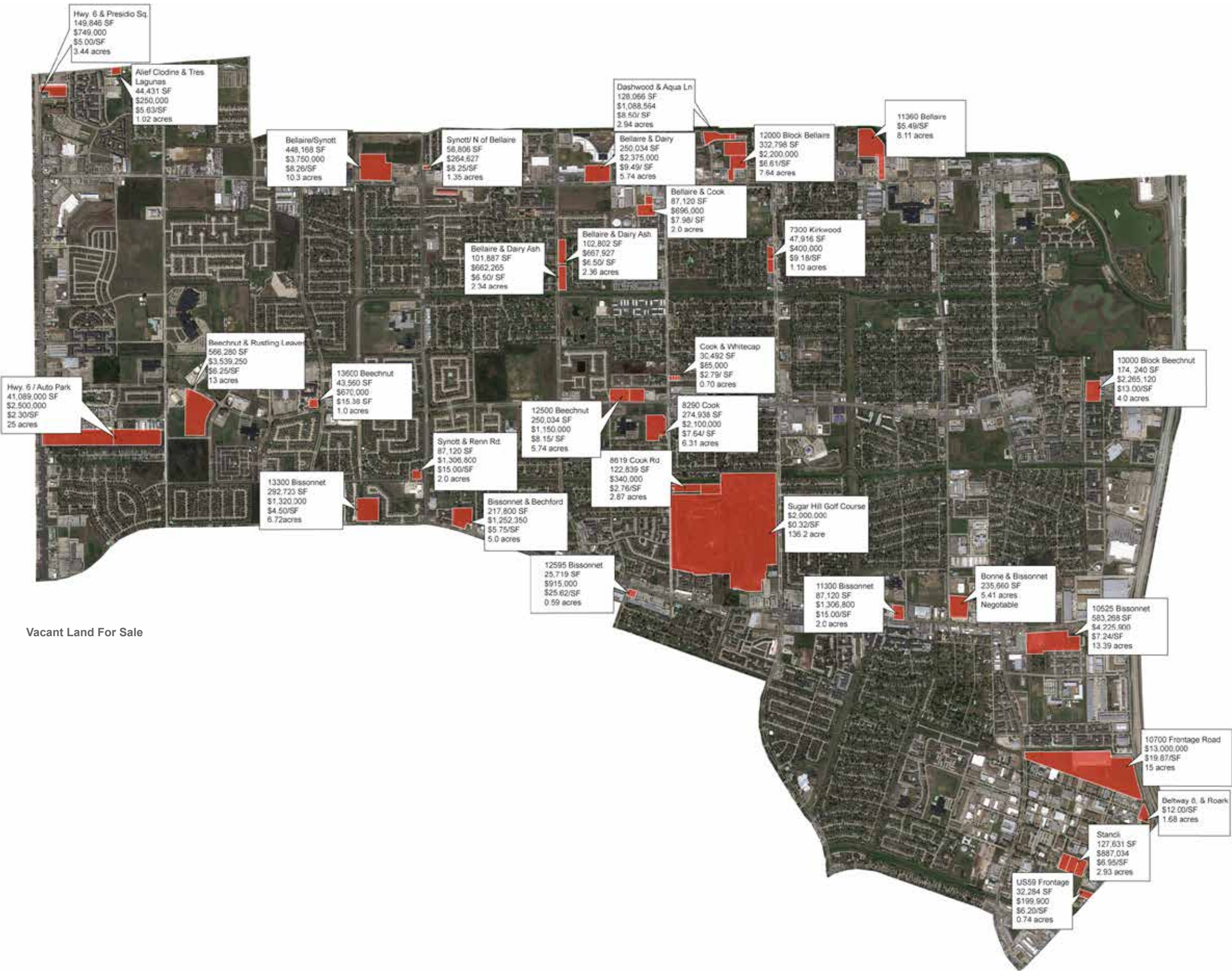
The International Management District has 813 acres, or 35 million square feet, of vacant land. 299 acres of vacant land are currently for sale, this land could accommodate five years of population growth, assuming 460 new units of single-family housing on 5,000 s.f. lots each year. There are currently 514 acres, or 22 million square feet, of vacant land that is not for sale, this land could accommodate an additional 10 years of growth, with the same assumptions as above. Vacant land is distributed throughout the District, with major concentrations along Howell Sugar Land Road and adjacent to the Beechnut and Bellaire corridors.





The International Management District has 32 active vacant properties for sale as of October 1, 2012. The properties are dispersed across the District and range in size from one acre to over 136 acres. Together the properties comprise nearly 300 acres of available land. The properties range in value from \$5 to \$20 per square foot, with exceptions both on the low and the high ends.

The combined value of this property is just under \$55 million. The average price per square foot is approximately \$4.25.



Vacant Land For Sale





> District Strategies > **HOUSING**



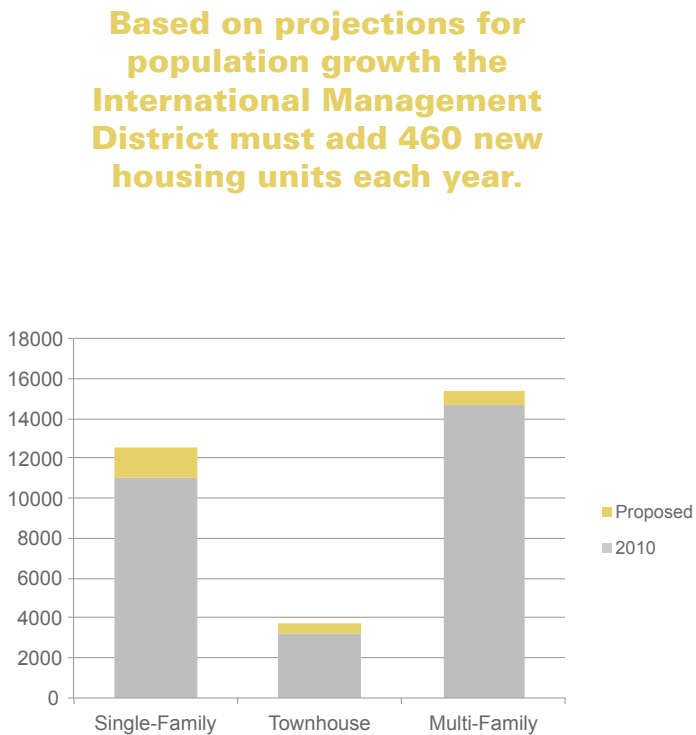
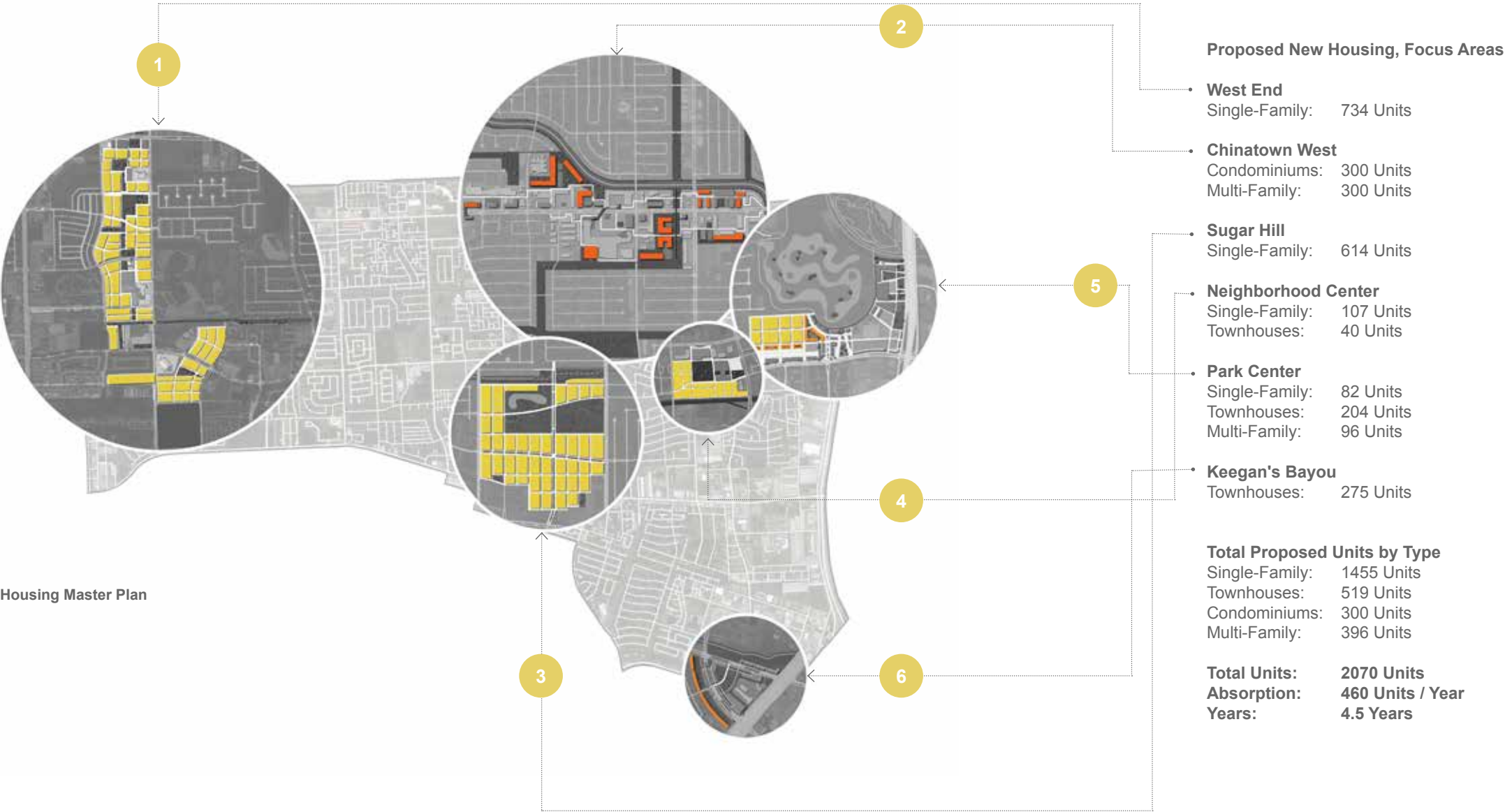
**Neighborhoods are the heart of our communities. Building well-connected, walkable, and diverse neighborhoods will strengthen the District as it grows.**



> District Strategies > Housing

Housing is the basic unit of all communities. The International Management District has approximately 34,000 housing units distributed in subdivisions, multi-family complexes, and smaller developments. Currently, 38% of all housing is single-family (11,065 units), 11% are townhomes or duplexes (3,270 units), 14% are multi-family units in buildings with 3-9 units (3,270), and 36% are multi-family units in buildings with 10 or more units (10,569 units). Over the next five years the District will need to add approximately 2,500 units of housing in order to absorb the projected population growth. To this end, a set of housing proposals were developed for the six focus areas which combine single-family, multi-family, townhouses, and condominiums.

The six focus areas, highlighted on the opposite page, were identified based on existing vacant land and/or redevelopment opportunities. As a means to create a better balance between single-family and multi-family housing the study primarily focused on opportunities to add single-family units. The six focus area proposals would add over 2000 housing units to the District, accommodating approximately 4.5 years of population growth. The proposed units are distributed as follows: 1455 single-family units; 519 townhouses; 300 condominium units; and 396 units of multi-family.



Housing Units by Type, 2010 and Proposed

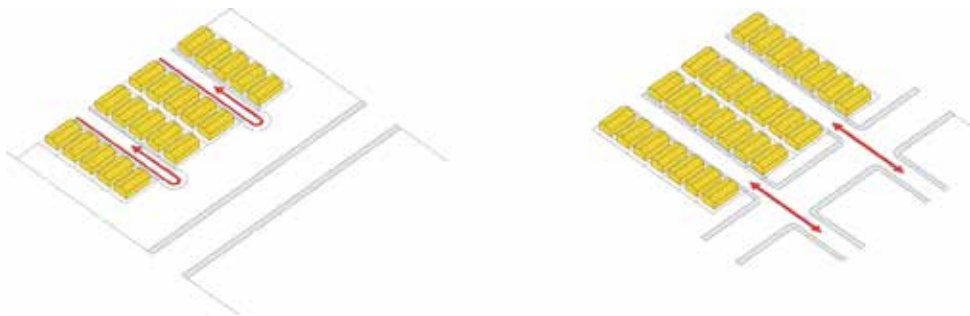
> District Strategies > Housing

As the District's population increases it is important to attract new housing that will add value to the existing neighborhoods. New housing should work to create diverse, walkable, and connected neighborhoods. To this end, it is important to identify clear strategies and recommendations for new housing in the District. Based on the analysis of existing conditions, housing market growth segments, and potential redevelopment opportunities, five strategies have been developed to guide residential development in the District.

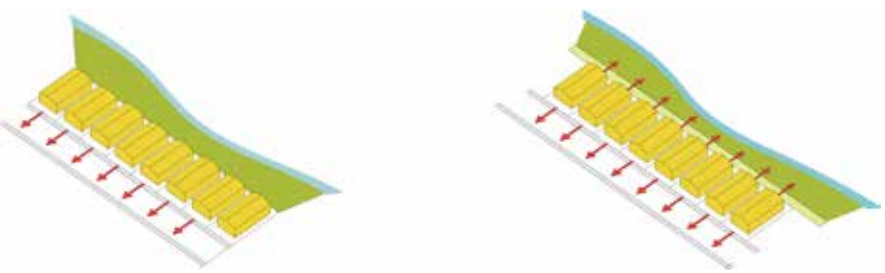
The first recommendation is to encourage street connectivity for all new residential developments. Specifically, new developments should connect to the existing street networks, where they exist, and eliminate dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs. The challenge with the existing development model is that it is prone to the problems of "closed" systems, meaning that if one part of the development fails it is possible it may all fail. A more "open" integrated development, connected to existing streets and networks, is more likely to be resilient and not subject to total failure. The second recommendation is to take advantage of existing drainage easements as an amenity for new housing development. As the District works towards the vision of a network of hike and bike trails along the existing drainage easements new housing should take advantage of the potential of this future amenity. The third recommendation is to take advantage of existing parks and open spaces as amenities for new housing, while also creating new open spaces, particularly in the southern and western portions of the District. The fourth recommendation is to create greater diversity in the multi-family options in the area. The existing multi-family developments have similar age and price points, the District needs to encourage new multi-family development that will meet the needs of young professionals and empty nesters. Finally, work to encourage greater diversity in housing types and price ranges. Having diverse mixed-income neighborhoods can lead to better resiliency and renewal over time.

As noted, housing is the basic unit of our neighborhoods, creating diverse, high-quality, affordable, connected, and walkable neighborhoods will make the District more attractive to residents and developers alike.

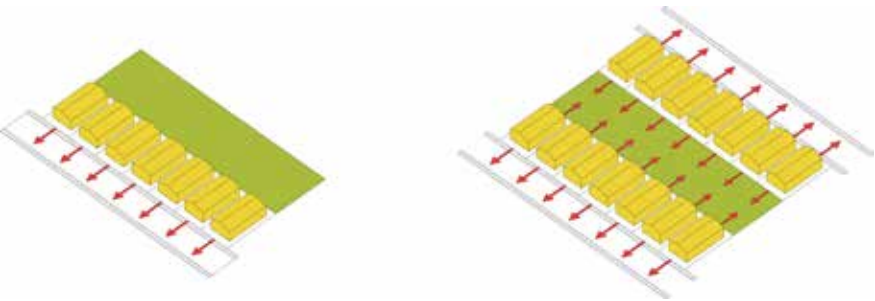
Housing Strategies



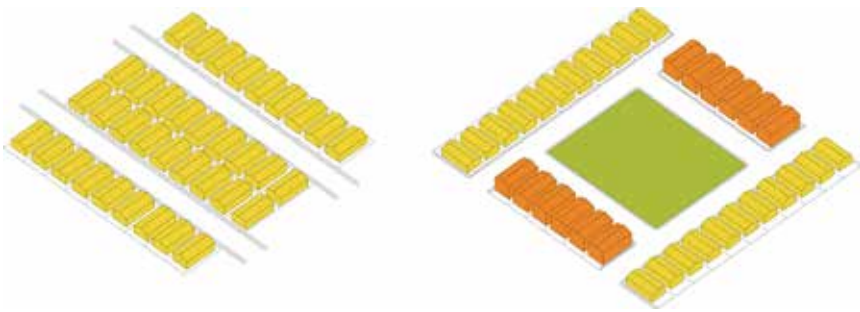
Encourage new residential development to connect to the existing street network, eliminating the issue of "islands" of disconnected subdivisions.



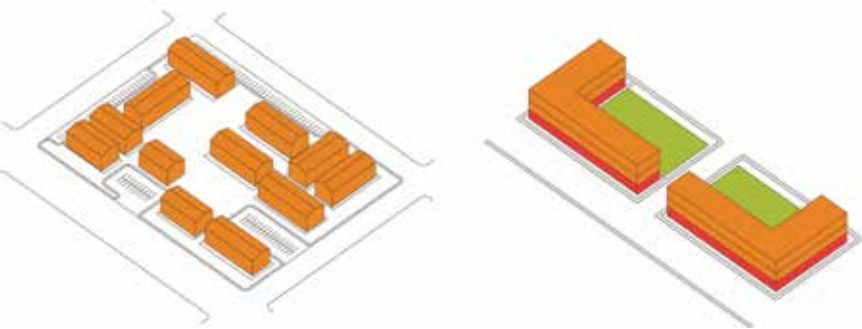
Develop housing to take advantage of the existing drainage easements as an amenity for new housing, including the potential for new hike and bike trails.



Maximize the potential of parks and open spaces as catalysts for new housing development and look for opportunities to create new parks in the District.



Combine different housing typologies and price ranges to create diverse, mixed-income neighborhoods.



Create greater diversity in the District's multi-family housing market by focusing on the desires of young professionals and empty nesters for higher density urban housing models, particularly along major thoroughfares such as Bellaire.

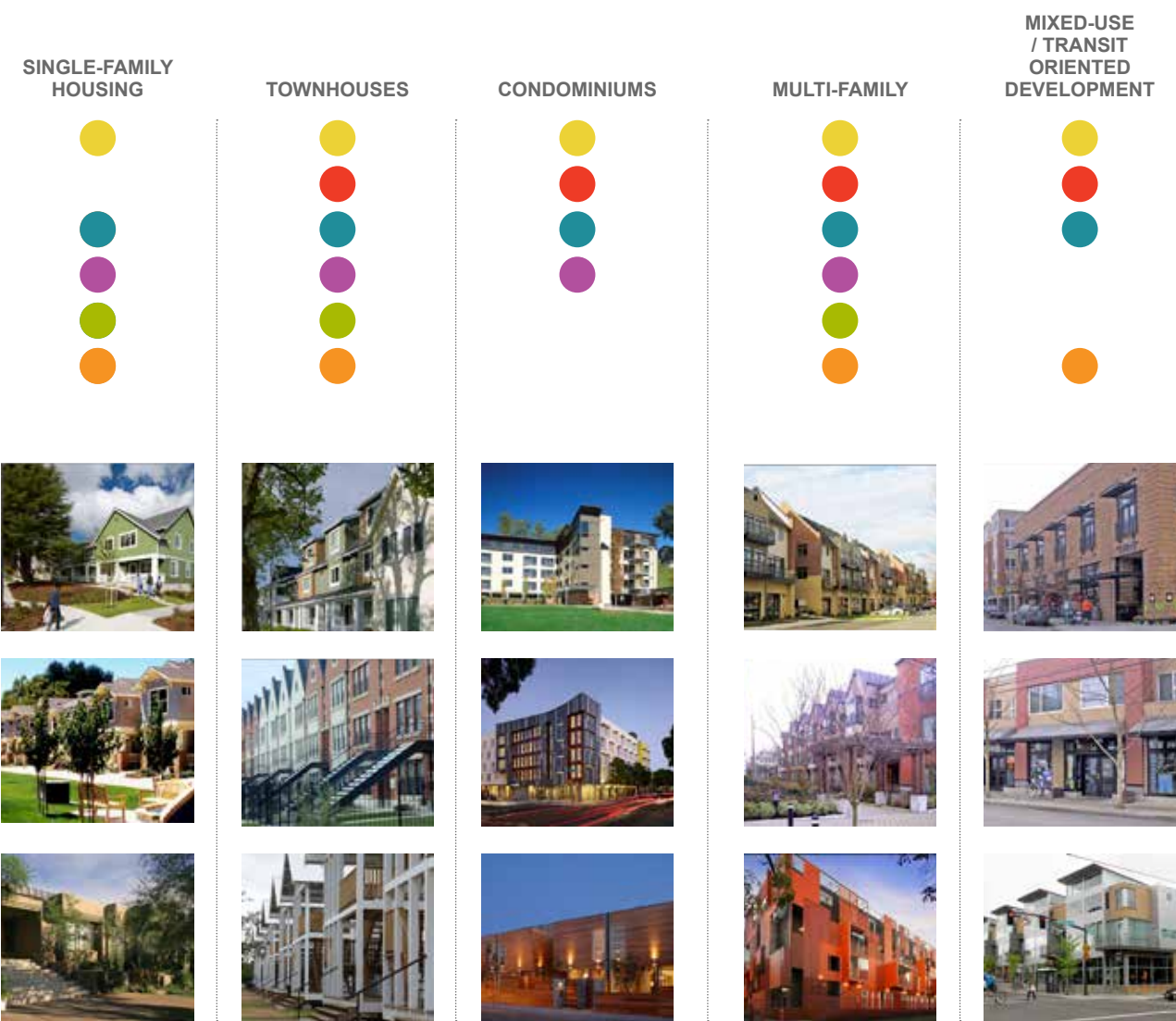
> District Strategies > Housing

A full range of housing typologies should be explored in the District—from single-family, to townhouses, condominiums, multi-family, and mixed-use or transit-oriented development—in order to support the diversity of residents and households in the area. Each of the six focus area, defined for this study, have unique conditions and thus require different approaches to housing.

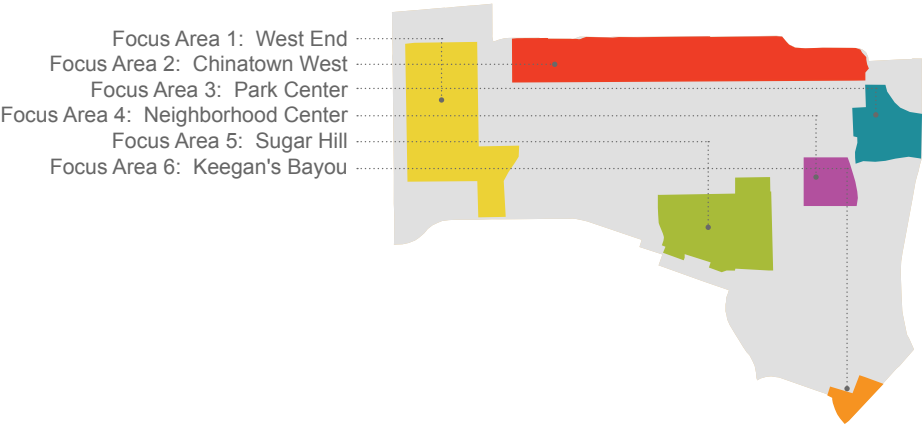
Single-family housing is in many ways the most desired of housing types. Building the inventory and diversity of single-family housing can help support the ongoing success of the District. New single-family housing should conform to the character and quality of the existing neighborhoods, and where large tracts of land are being developed, connectivity to the existing street network should be a priority, as well as developing parks and open spaces. New models of single-family housing should be explored, for example the mother-in-law suite, or duplexes and patio homes.

Townhouses and condominiums provide housing options for young professionals and those over 55, two growing population segments within the District. This housing typology provides "lock and leave" convenience and reduces time spent on maintenance and repairs. Townhouses and condominiums should be explored particularly in higher density areas of the district, such as Park Center and Chinatown West (Bellaire).

Finally, multi-family and mixed-use or transit oriented development have the potential to continue to build density in the District while providing sound housing choices for diverse residents. Higher end luxury style apartments should be pursued in areas where an "urban" style condition exists, such as Park Center, Keegan's Bayou, and Chinatown West. Transit-oriented development, which is fundamentally high density mixed-use and includes a major housing component should be explored expressly along Bellaire. The model would provide for additional retail growth, while providing housing choices for those who desire to live close to the action. High density housing models can create anchors for new retail development and community centers and provide affordable rental housing for singles, students or seniors.



Matrix of Housing Typologies





> District Strategies > **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

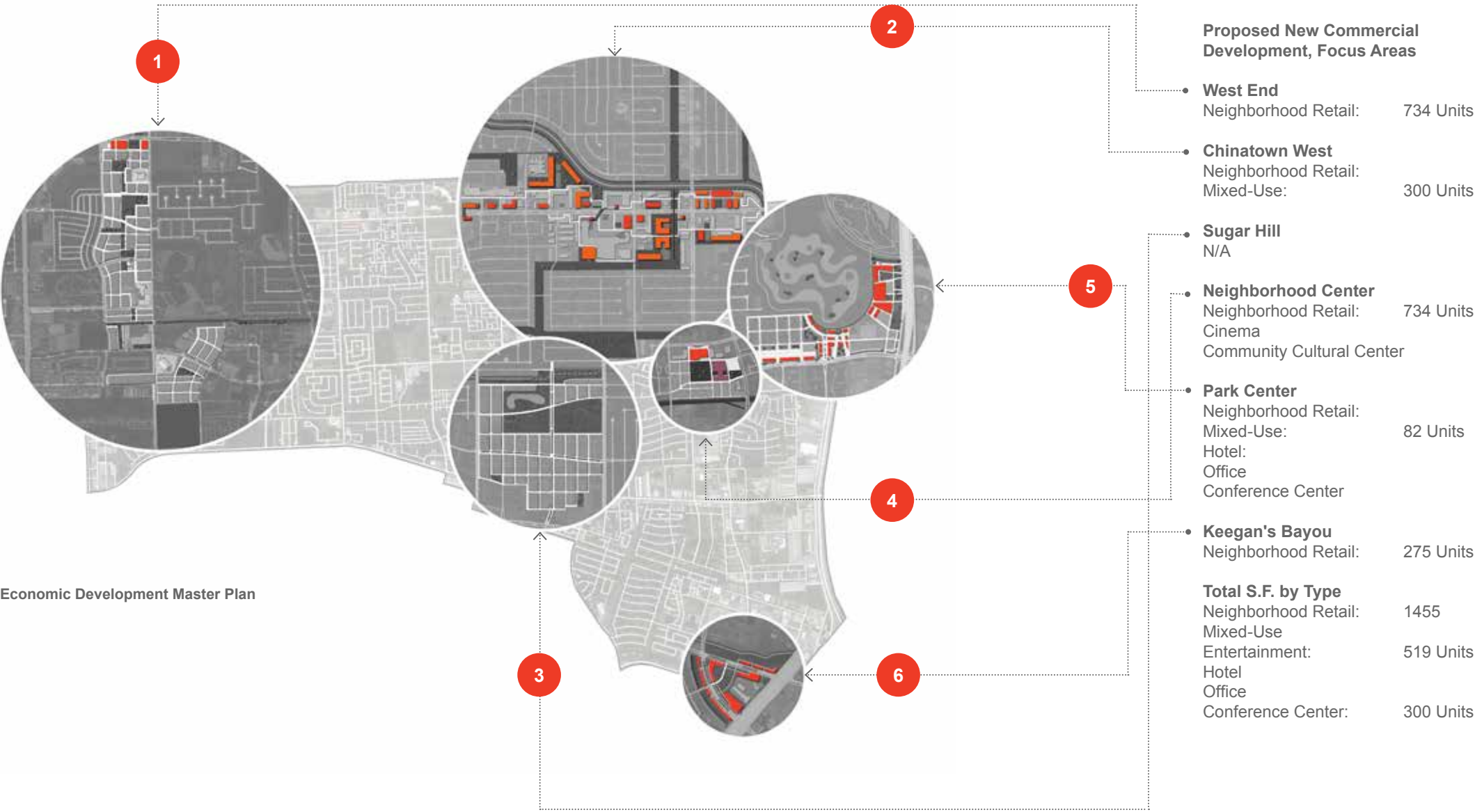


Economic development can create opportunities for residents while building the District's strength as a destination and site for investment.

> District Strategies > Economic Development

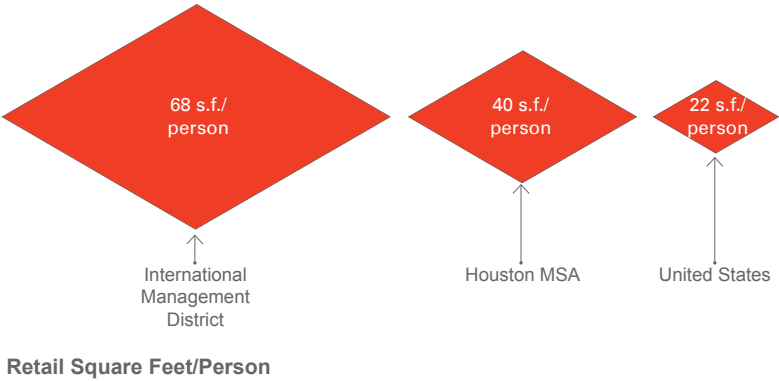
The International Management District is home to hundreds of independently owned small businesses but has very few major national retailers. The impact is that the District has become a niche market, with retail and commercial development focusing primarily on Asian groceries, small shops, and restaurants. The goal of the economic development proposals included here is to encourage the development of a more diverse set of retail establishments, while also supporting the niche market. In addition, the District should focus on attracting retailers that fall within the leakage market segments and attracting other users such as office, hotel, and conventional facilities.

As noted, the six focus areas, highlighted on the opposite page, were identified based on existing vacant land and/or redevelopment opportunities. Economic development opportunities focused on balancing the needs of residents with the developed niche of the Asian markets and restaurants. The goal is to fill basic gaps in certain retail markets while simultaneously building on the quality of the District as a destination by proposing new programs such as a hotel, conference center, cultural center, and cinema.



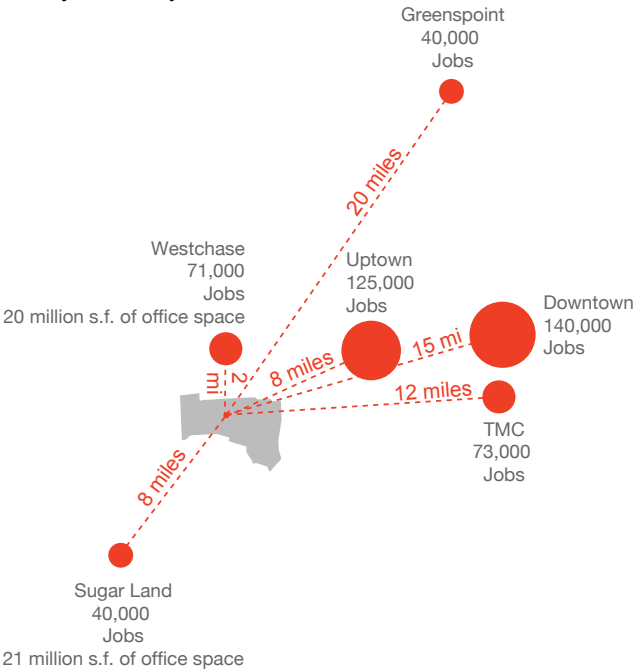
Economic Development Master Plan

**The International Management District has over three times the amount of retail space compared to the average in the United States.**

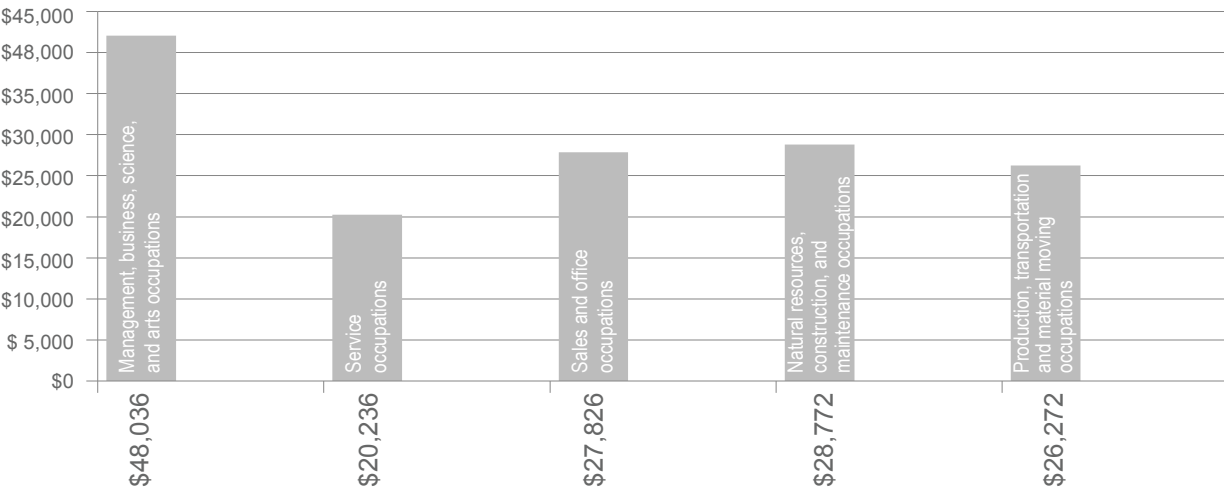


> District Strategies > Economic Development

The District enjoys close proximity to many major employment centers in the Houston region. However, compared to these centers the District has a very limited supply of office space. According to a recent report by O'Connor Associates the District has approximately 720,000 square feet of office space, with an occupancy rate of 89.6%. In contrast, both Sugar Land and the Westchase District have over 20 million square feet. Approximately 20% of area residents are employed in management and business sectors, this is also the highest earnings category (see chart below). As a result, the District should work to encourage the development of office space in the area, particularly adjacent to major freeways.



Map of Employment Centers



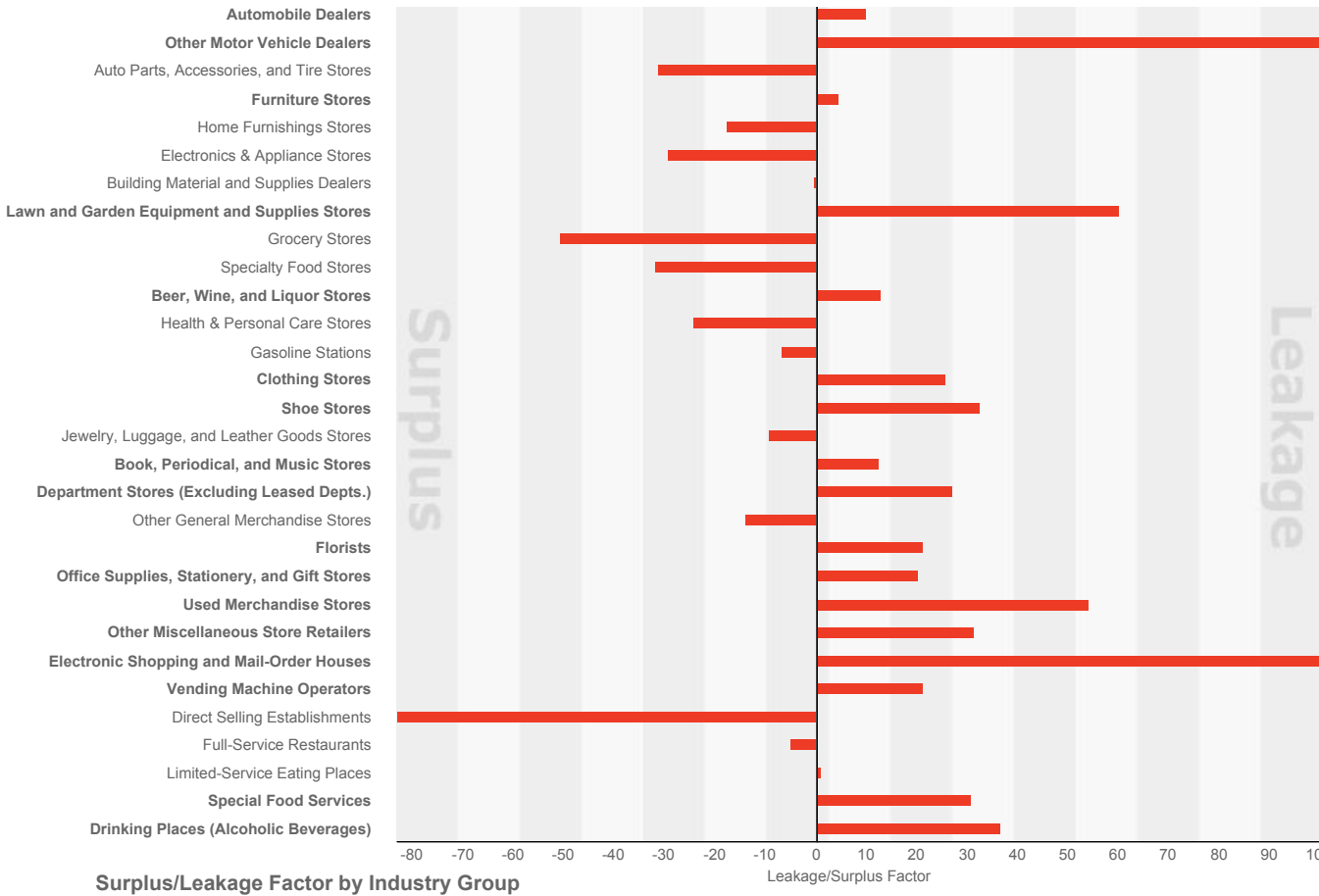
Earning by Employment Sector, 2010

While the District has an abundance of retail space as noted, there are a number of sectors that are under-represented in the area, these include sporting goods, books, clothing, lawn and garden, home repair, general merchandise, office supplies and pet supplies. The map below is an analysis of existing national franchises in or near the District and at the bottom of the page an analysis of surplus and leakage by industry groups.



Map of Major Retailers

The International Management District is home to hundreds of small independently owned businesses but has very few major national retailers.



Surplus/Leakage Factor by Industry Group

\*Source: ESRI

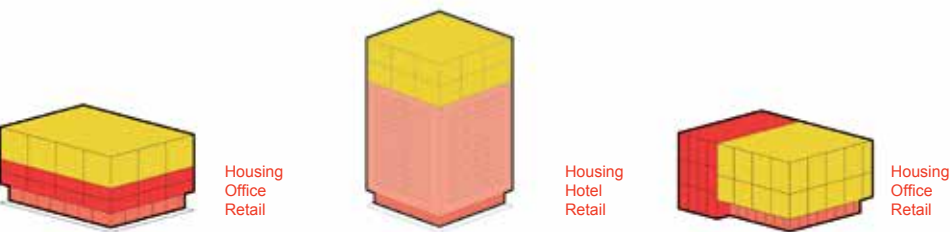


> District Strategies > Economic Development

As the International Management District grows and changes it is imperative to develop a set of recommendations to guide commercial development in the area. We have identified six specific recommendations for new commercial development in the area with the goal of transforming the District from an auto-centric strip landscape to a more dense and walkable urban center. First, encourage the development of new uses that are currently under-represented in the District, including hotel, office, conference space, and entertainment venues. Second, encourage mixed-use high density development along the major east-west commercial corridors, Bellaire, Beechnut, and Bissonnet, as a means to support the increasing role of the District as a destination and also encourage housing in the center of the action. Third, discourage the typical strip retail model of giant parking lots in the front of the site and retail to the rear along major commercial corridors. Instead, encourage developers to locate buildings along the street edge and place parking to the rear of the site. Fourth, where it is appropriate take advantage of the amenity of Brays Bayou, including encouraging a "water district" that could focus on outdoor dining and entertainment areas facing the Bayou. Fifth, work with existing retail centers to transform existing parking lots into places that are more welcoming to pedestrians, including encouraging outdoor dining, increased shade and landscaping, events, markets and festivals. Finally, encourage retail developers to connect across sites to create better connectivity.



Focus on attracting development that fills the gaps in retail, office, hotel, conference, and entertainment venues.



Create diversity by encouraging mixed-use buildings and developments.

Economic Development Strategies



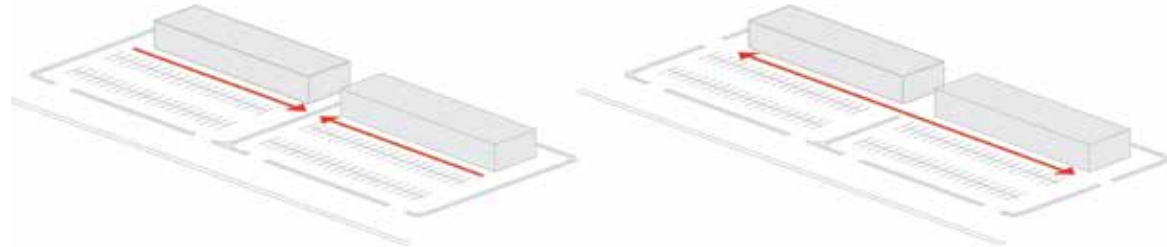
Encourage new retail developments to locate buildings along the street edge and place parking to the rear of the site.



Encourage new development to take advantage of Brays Bayou, creating a "Water District."



Retrofit existing parking lots to accommodate public spaces and amenities.



Encourage retail developers to connect across sites.

> District Strategies > Economic Development

The International Management District draws visitors from around the city and the world. As the District matures it is imperative to understand the type of development that will add value to the area and support this destination quality while also serving the nearly 100,000 residents who call the area home. High-quality design is a key element to this, but also understanding the typologies that will assist the District in growing and transforming to serve everyone's needs.

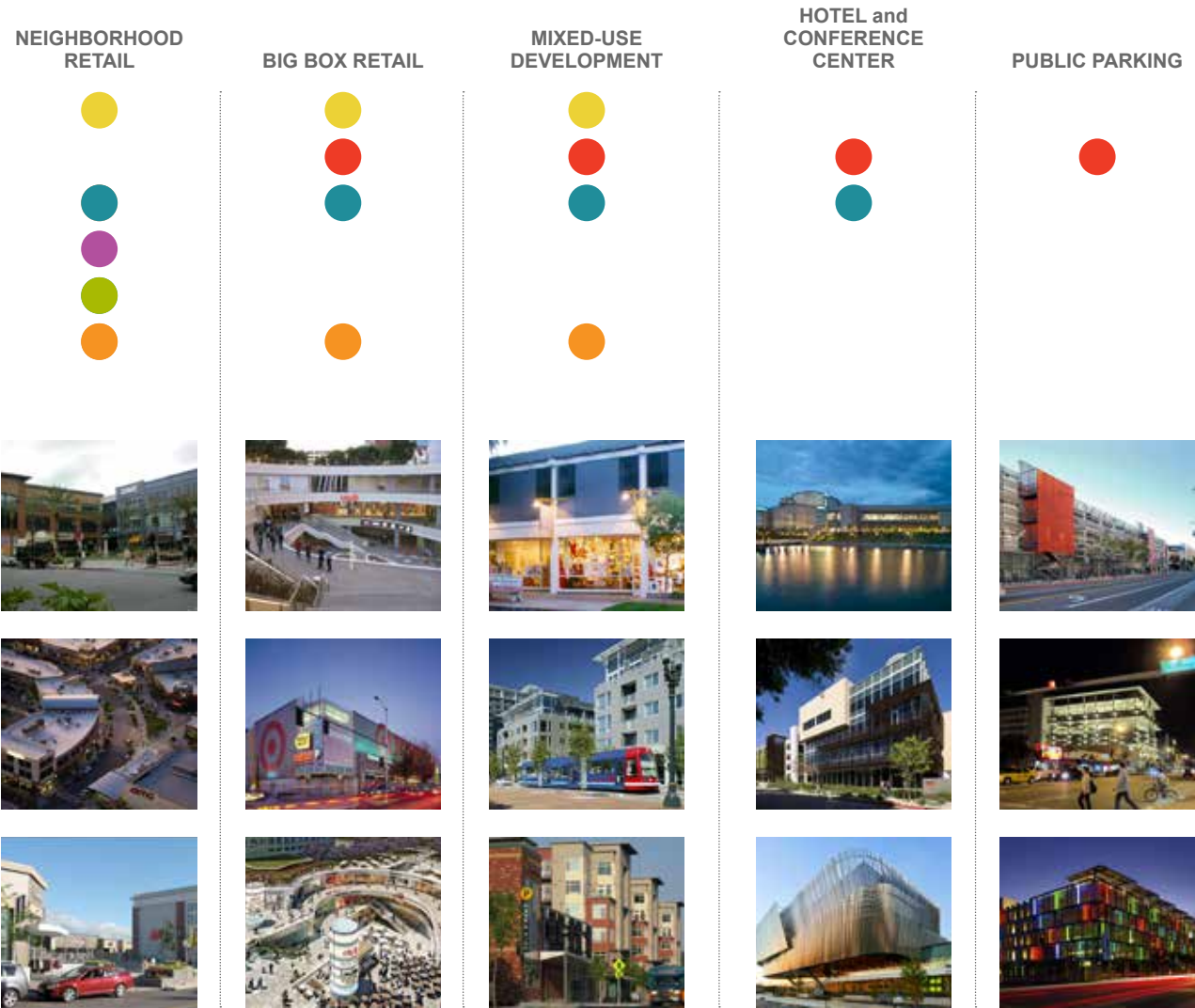
The District currently has an abundance of retail space. Part of this excess is due to its role as a destination, and in many ways much of the retail is catering to a niche market, specifically Asian restaurants, grocers, and services. As a result some of the basic needs of residents are not being met. This is particularly relevant at the scale of neighborhood retail, where the District has leakage in sectors such as office supplies, books, apparel, home improvement, pet supplies, electronics, diverse restaurants and entertainment, and lawn and garden. Working with retailers and property owners to identify the most appropriate and accessible areas for new neighborhood retail development, specifically that will serve residents is a key recommendation.

Major big box retailers, such as Target, Best Buy, or Staples, do not have a presence in the District. There are a number of vacant parcels and redevelopment sites that could draw these retailers, including the area near the intersection of Howell Sugar Land Road and Bellaire (near Highway 6), the intersection of Beechnut and Beltway 8, and the area near the intersection of Highway 59 and West Bellfort. Integrating this retail into the character of the area is important, new big-box retail models are emerging in cities like Los Angeles and Seattle where the developments are integrated into the existing fabric, instead of setback behind a sea of parking.

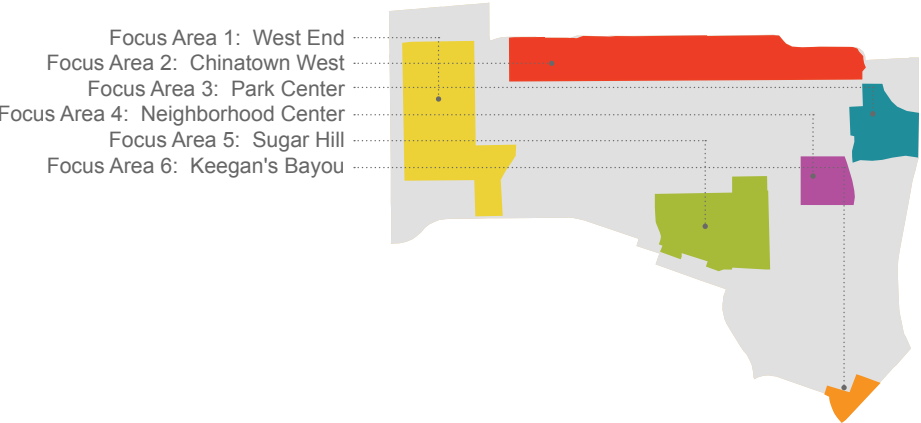
Mixed-use development should be targeted in the Bellaire corridor, but has great potential in a number of other areas in the District also. Mixed-use can focus on retail and offices, or retail and housing, or more current models such as hotels and housing and conference centers combined. Mixed-use has the potential to transform the District into a high density, walkable neighborhood that is very desirable to young professionals and empty nesters, two growing population segments in the area. Finally, if the proposed bus rapid transit system along Bellaire moves forward creating transit-oriented development, a form of mixed-use high density projects, should be focused near transit stops.

The International Management District is not just a destination for shoppers it is also a destination for business people and tourists. Yet, the District is lacking quality office space, hotels, and conference and meeting spaces. Looking for opportunities to encourage development in these sectors has the potential to support and enhance the unique destination quality that the District already enjoys.

Finally, as the District develops it is important to look at strategic locations for public parking, particularly along Bellaire Boulevard. This parking could provide park and ride lots for future transit users, and also be shared across a number of major retail, housing, or mixed-use developments. Increasingly public parking is being considered as a part of the infrastructure of a city, and can be well integrated into the context to support the identity and character of the area.



Matrix of Commercial Development Typologies



> District Strategies > **PUBLIC SPACE**

**Public spaces and amenities  
are the key to successful  
communities, and can catalyze  
new development.**





> District Strategies > Public Space > Parks

There are four parks, Hackberry, Alief, Boone Road, and Arthur Storey Park, within the boundaries of the International Management District. In addition, the City of Houston recently purchased a site south of Sand Canyon Road to become a future park, the site is 25 acres. Combined the existing parks provide 257 acres of open space, or approximately 2.71 Acres/1,000 residents. While the District is adequately served by public parks, the parks (with the exception of Sand Canyon) are all in the northeastern section. We have identified the western and southern most portions of the District to pursue the potential development of new public parks. The City of Houston’s Parks Master Plan (2007) has established the following standards for parks in our communities, which do not include regional parks or natural areas:

**City of Houston Park Standards:**

Pocket Parks:	.005 Acres/1000 Residents
Neighborhood Parks:	1.0 Acres/1000 Residents
Community Park:	1.5 Acres/1000 Residents
Total:	2.505 Acres/1000 Residents



There is increasing evidence that a quality park system can enhance economic development, increase property values, and transform the desirability of places and neighborhoods. Clearly, parks provide environmental, aesthetic, and recreational benefits to our cities and communities. At the bottom line, parks are a good financial investment for a community. Understanding the economic impacts of parks can help decision makers better evaluate the creation and maintenance of urban parks.

A 2001 survey by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) revealed that 57 percent of voters would choose a home close to parks and open space over one that was not. In addition, the NAR survey found that 50 percent of voters would be willing to pay 10 percent more for a house located near a park or protected open space.



Lake Edge, Malaysia



Linear Park, Hartford Connecticut



Map of Existing and Proposed Parks

Potential Linear Park  
Connecting to proposed trails along  
drainage easements

Potential Public Park  
Sugar Hill Golf Course Site  
Connecting to potential trail along  
northern drainage easement

(See Focus Area Studies 1 and 5,  
West End and Sugar Hill)

> District Strategies > Public Space > Trail Network

The proposed trail construction along the two drainage easements running east to west in the northern section of the District should continue to be expanded to create a complete pedestrian network in the area. The network should also include the two major Bayous, Brays and Keegan's, the utility easement that runs north to south, and the additional five major drainage easements that criss-cross the area. Creating this network has the potential to generate a unique identity for the District enhancing its attractiveness for development.



Brays Bayou, Photo



Transforming the drainage easements into trails and a pedestrian network will not only enhance connectivity throughout the District, but also has the potential to transform how housing and commercial development occurs along the edges of these easements, and increase the marketability of the developments.



Drainage Easement Diagrams

Rendering of Potential Transformation of Drainage Easements





> District Strategies > Public Space > Crosswalks

Public art is an opportunity to build the identity of the District. Public art can take many forms, some of which are very inexpensive like painted crosswalks, others that would take a larger investment, such as major public sculpture. In either case, public art is an opportunity to build the character of the District and continue to make it unique. The map below and the images on the opposite page illustrate a potential crosswalk design program for the District, welcoming residents and visitors in four languages—Chinese, English, Vietnamese, and Spanish.



Plan of Crosswalks



Plan of "Welcome" Crosswalk

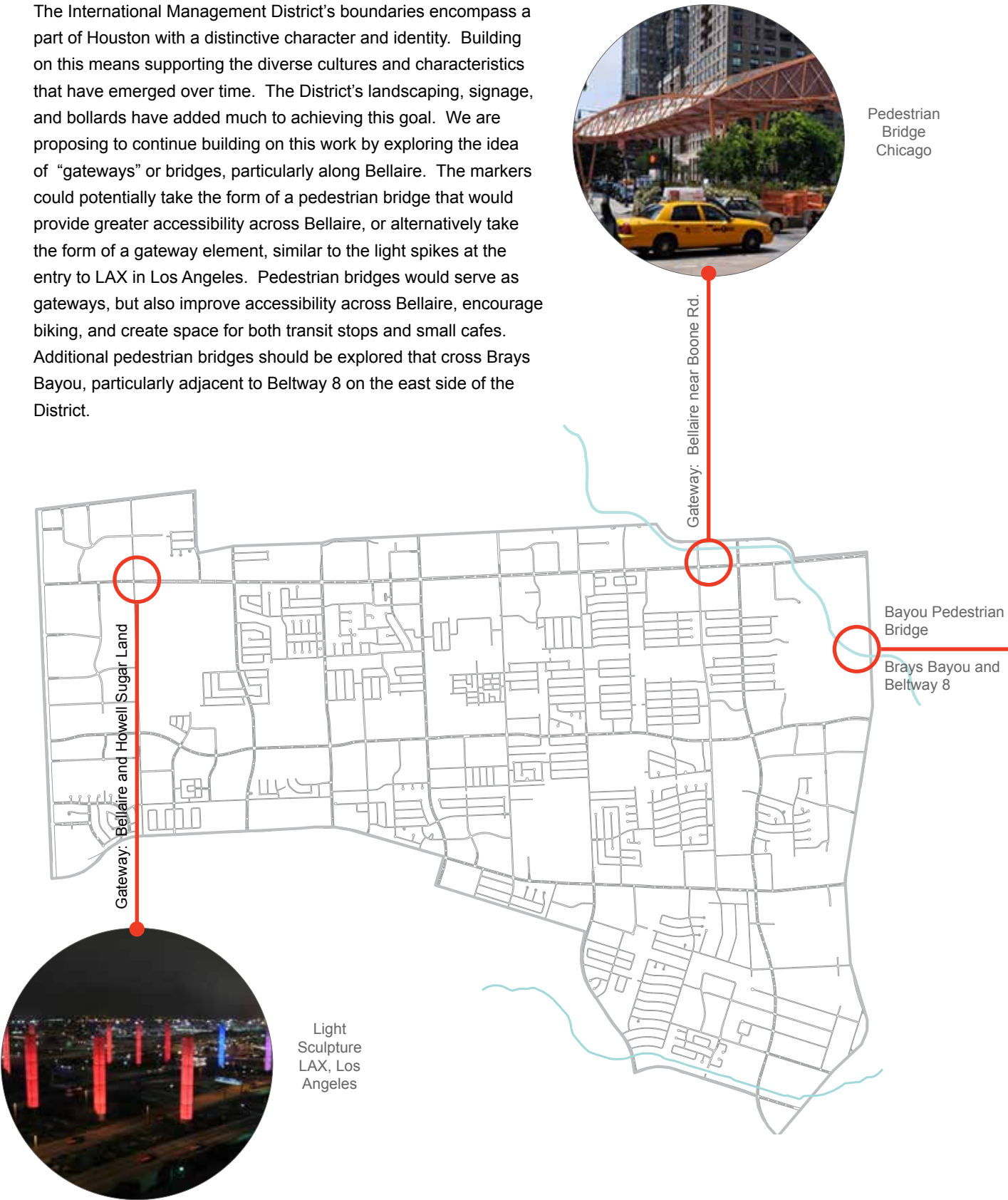


Perspective of "Welcome" Crosswalk



> District Strategies > Public Space > Gateways

The International Management District’s boundaries encompass a part of Houston with a distinctive character and identity. Building on this means supporting the diverse cultures and characteristics that have emerged over time. The District’s landscaping, signage, and bollards have added much to achieving this goal. We are proposing to continue building on this work by exploring the idea of “gateways” or bridges, particularly along Bellaire. The markers could potentially take the form of a pedestrian bridge that would provide greater accessibility across Bellaire, or alternatively take the form of a gateway element, similar to the light spikes at the entry to LAX in Los Angeles. Pedestrian bridges would serve as gateways, but also improve accessibility across Bellaire, encourage biking, and create space for both transit stops and small cafes. Additional pedestrian bridges should be explored that cross Brays Bayou, particularly adjacent to Beltway 8 on the east side of the District.



**Bridging across Arthur Storey Park from north to south will create greater connectivity in the District, and prevent people from walking along the Beltway 8 Frontage Road.**

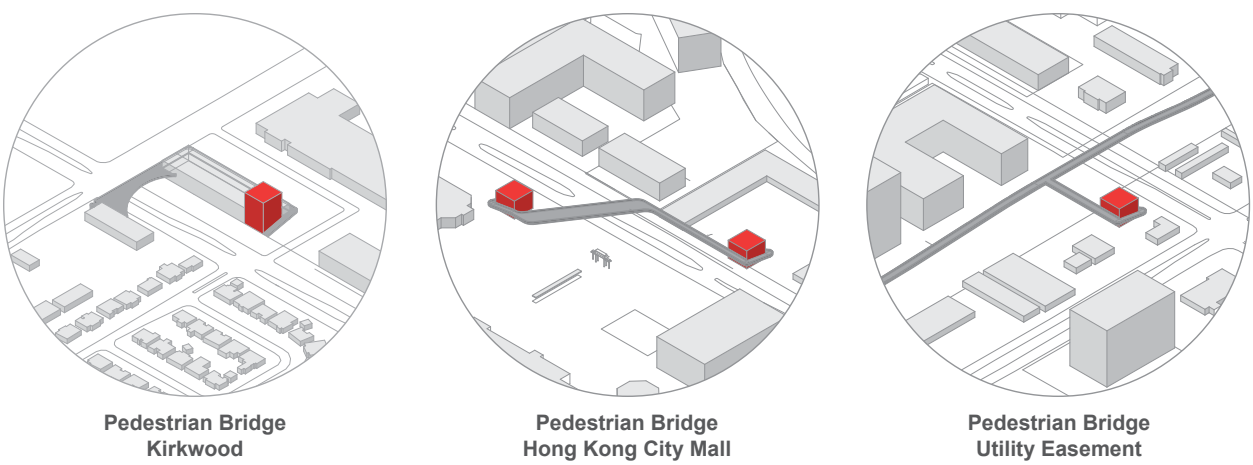


Borneo Sporenberg, Pedestrian Bridge Netherlands



> District Strategies > Public Space > Gateways

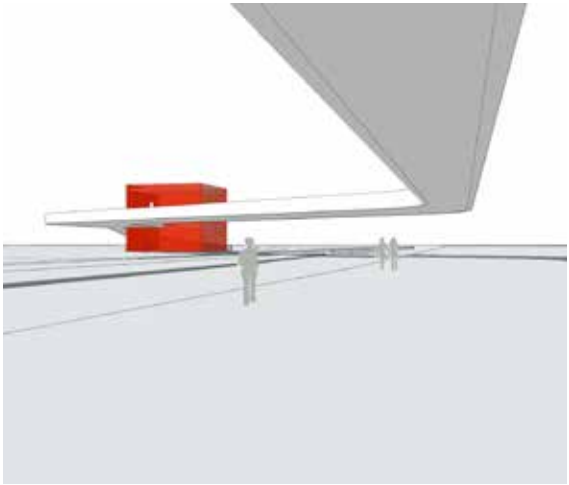
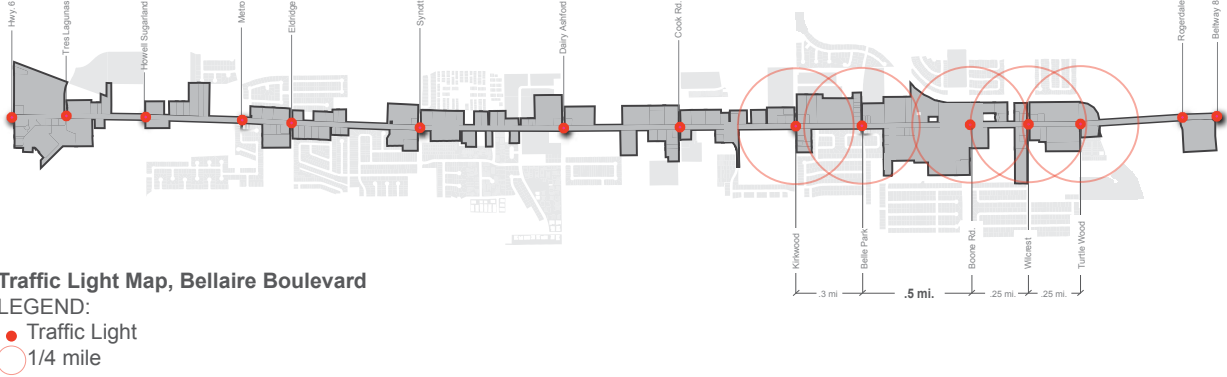
The International Management District’s primary commercial corridor is Bellaire. The street, with six lanes of fast moving traffic, is the gateway to the diverse shopping district. Along the 5.2 mile length of Bellaire, from Beltway 8 east to Highway 6 on the west, there are only 15 traffic lights, spaced on average at greater than one-third of a mile, beyond the comfortable walking distance of one-quarter of a mile. The distance between the traffic lights at Boone Road and Belle Park is one-half mile. To create gateways for the District and provide greater connectivity across Bellaire Boulevard we have developed concepts for pedestrian bridges in this area. We see the bridges as potential identity markers that would be both functional and celebrate the unique characteristics of the area. The bridges could potentially include program, small cafes or shops, and transit centers or bus stops for the future bus rapid transit system.



Plan of Pedestrian Bridges



Proposed Pedestrian Bridge Perspective



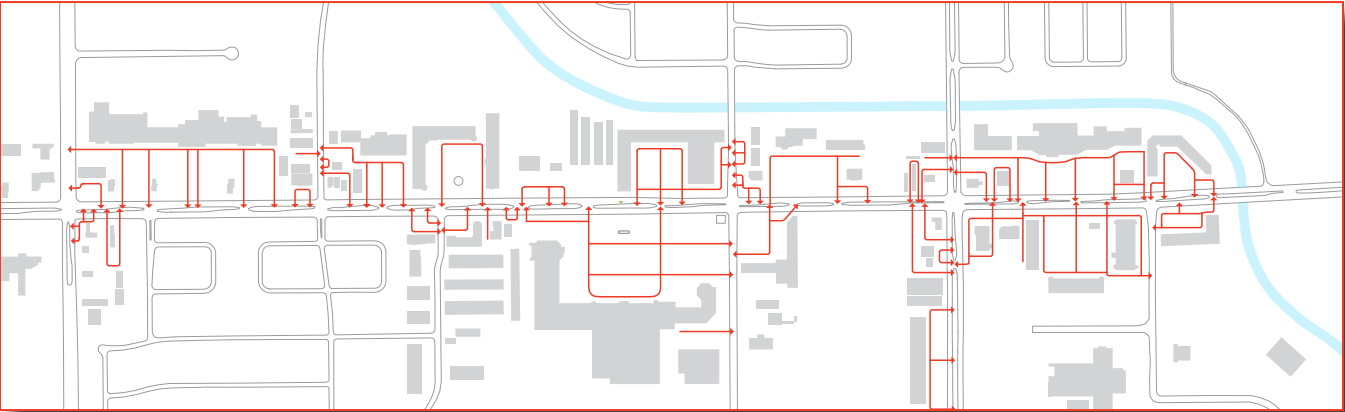
Proposed Pedestrian Bridge Perspectives



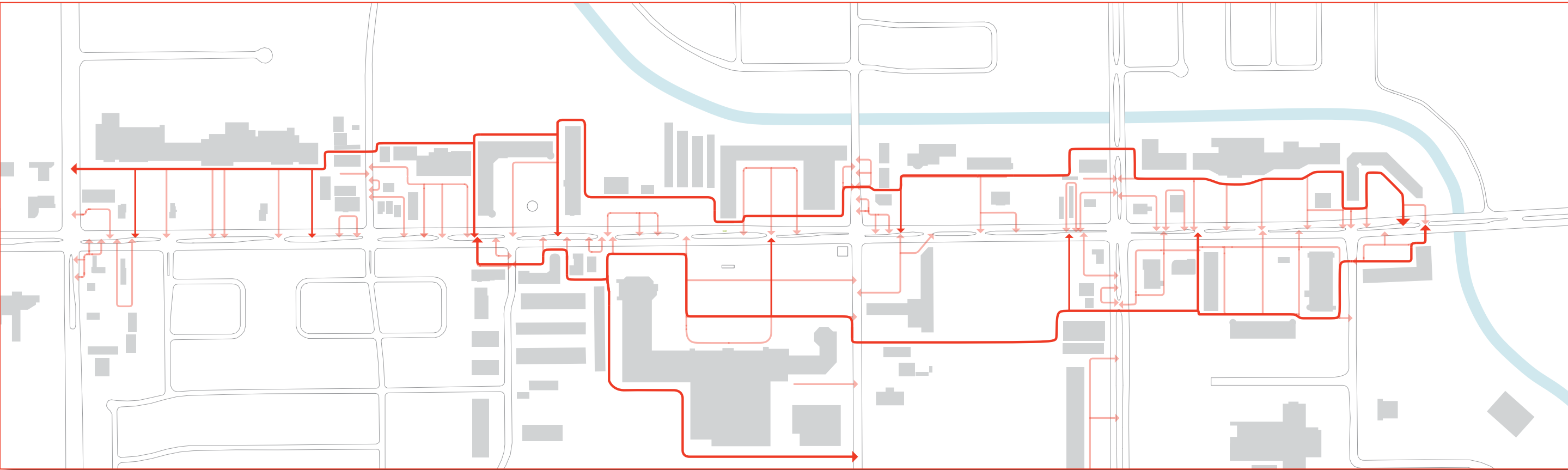
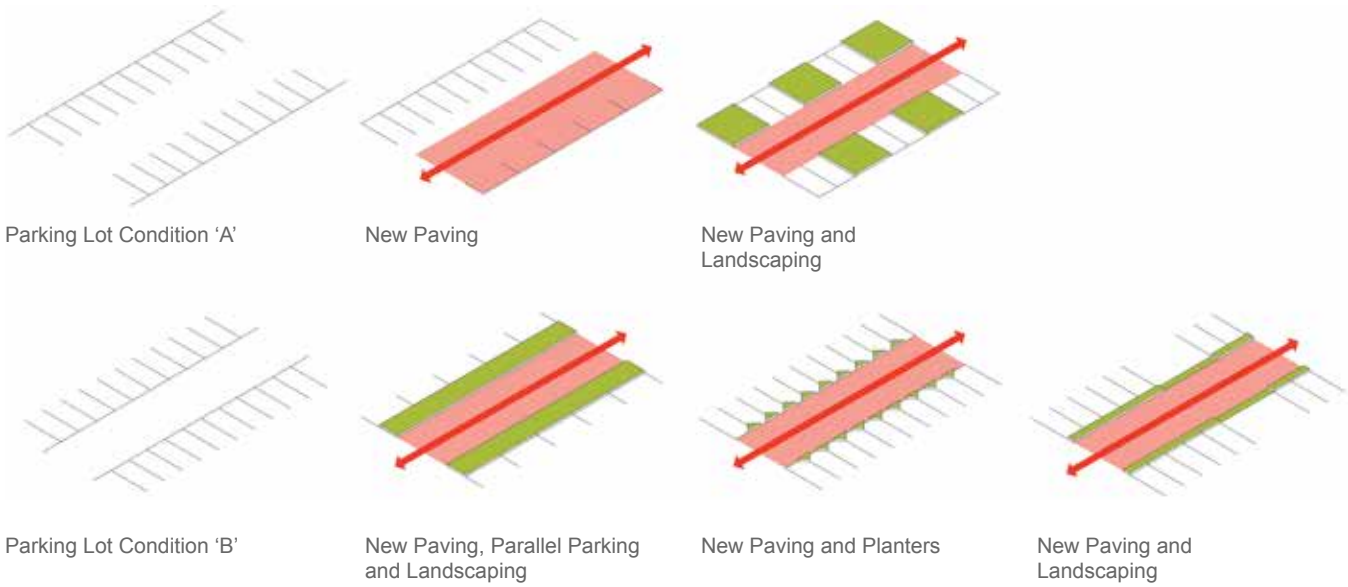
> District Strategies > Public Space > Connectivity

Strip retail development dominates many of the major thoroughfares in the International Management District. The impact of this development model is that each parcel is divided from neighboring parcels creating the necessity to drive from one destination to another, the division along Bellaire Boulevard is compounded by the lack of connecting streets. Each parking lot along Bellaire was analyzed, as illustrated in the drawings below, and a plan for new connecting streets was developed.

Design strategies for creating and defining the connecting streets inside existing parking lots include modifying the pavement surface, for example brick pavers or stamped concrete, or inserting additional landscaping areas and trees.



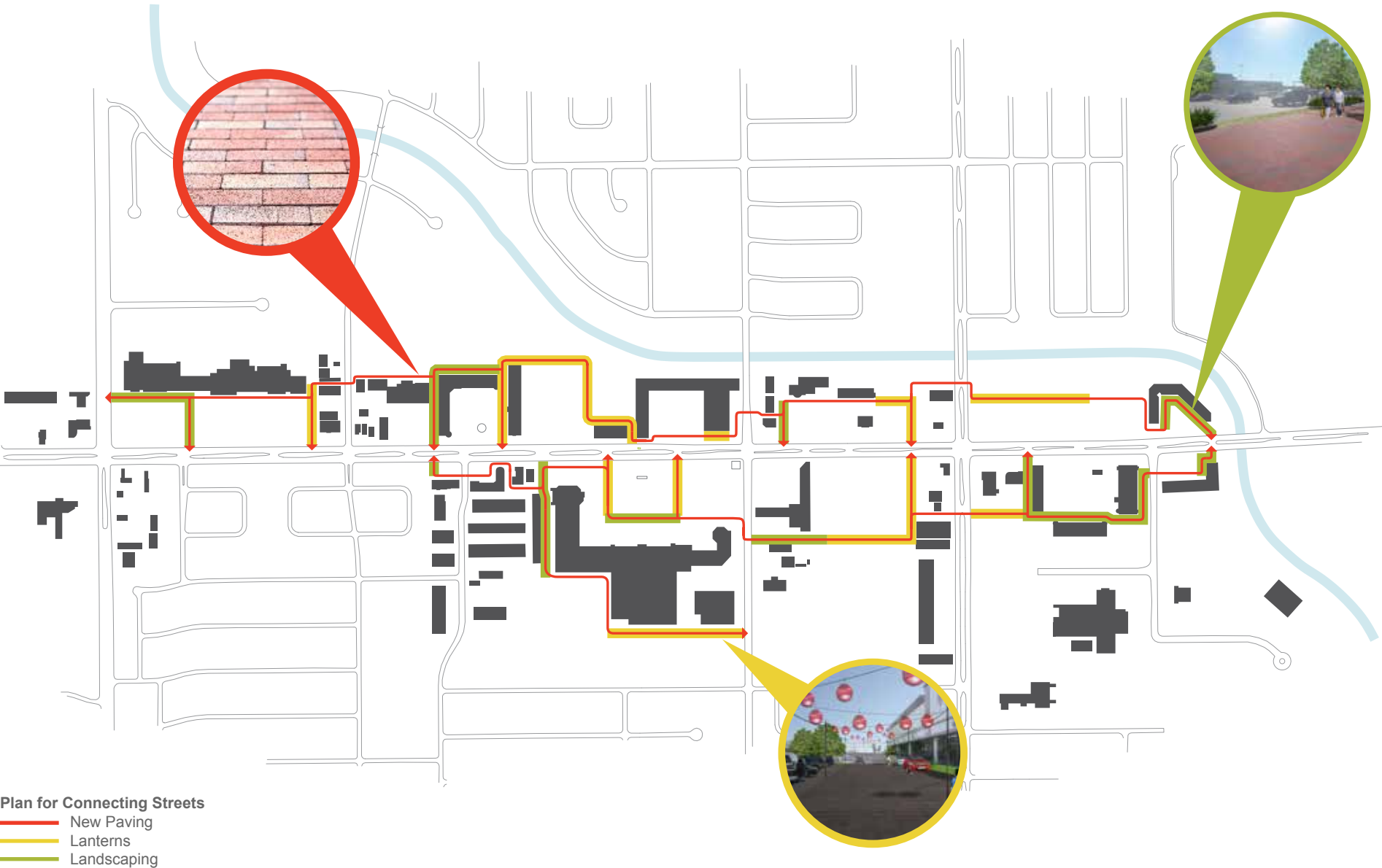
Existing Driveways



Existing Driveways  
Proposed Connecting Streets

> District Strategies > Public Space > Connectivity

Connecting streets must be designed to be easily identified, and also have the potential to be used for events and festivals in the parking lots. Three treatments are highlighted in the plan below, including modifying the pavement as a means to define the connecting streets, adding landscaping to bound the streets, and finally celebrating the streets by stringing lanterns, lights, or shade cloths across the width.



PRECEDENTS

**LANTERNS**  
Lanterns stringing across proposed connecting streets will define the area.



**NIGHT MARKETS**  
The new connecting streets could be used for night markets to draw visitors to the District.

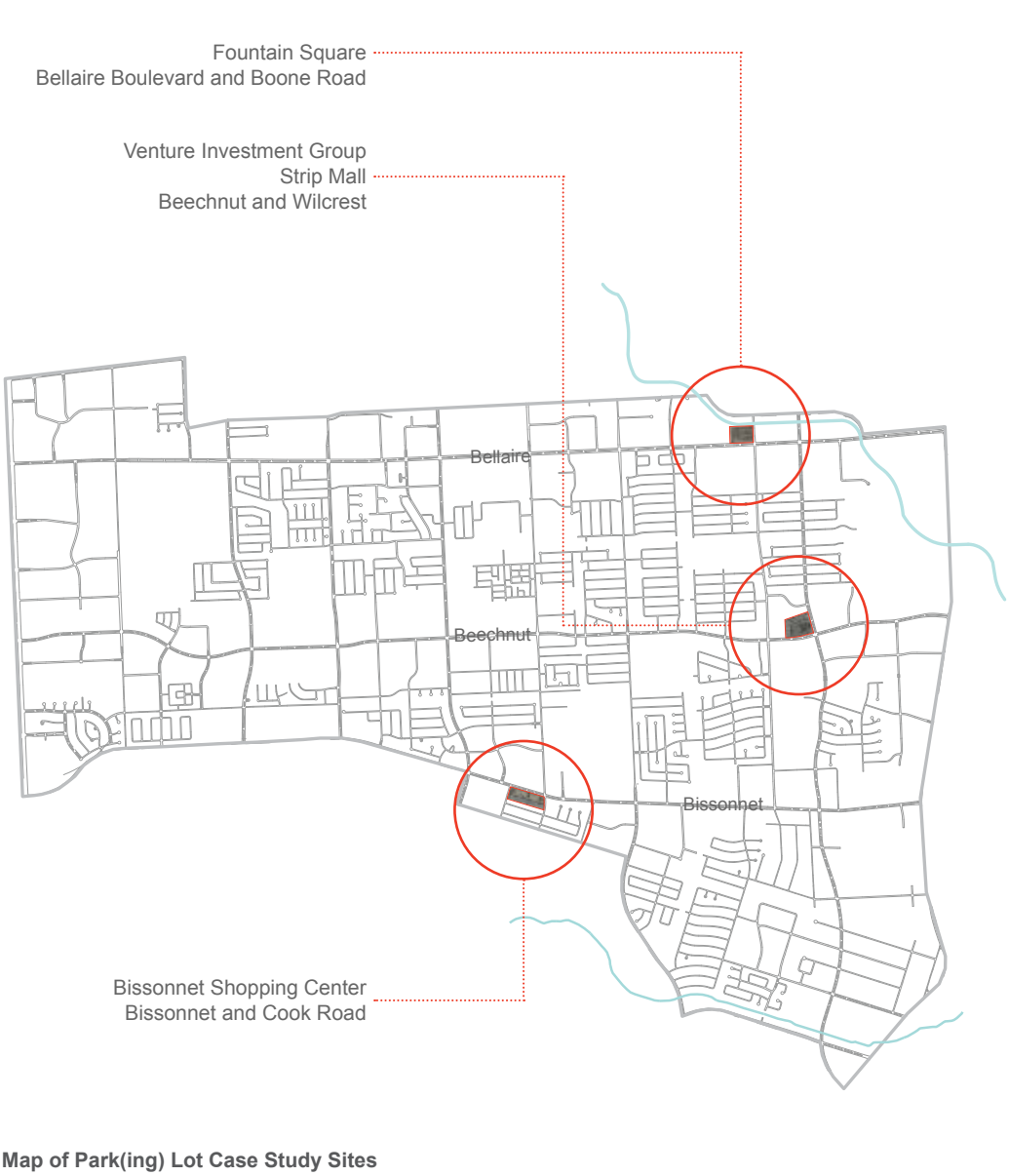
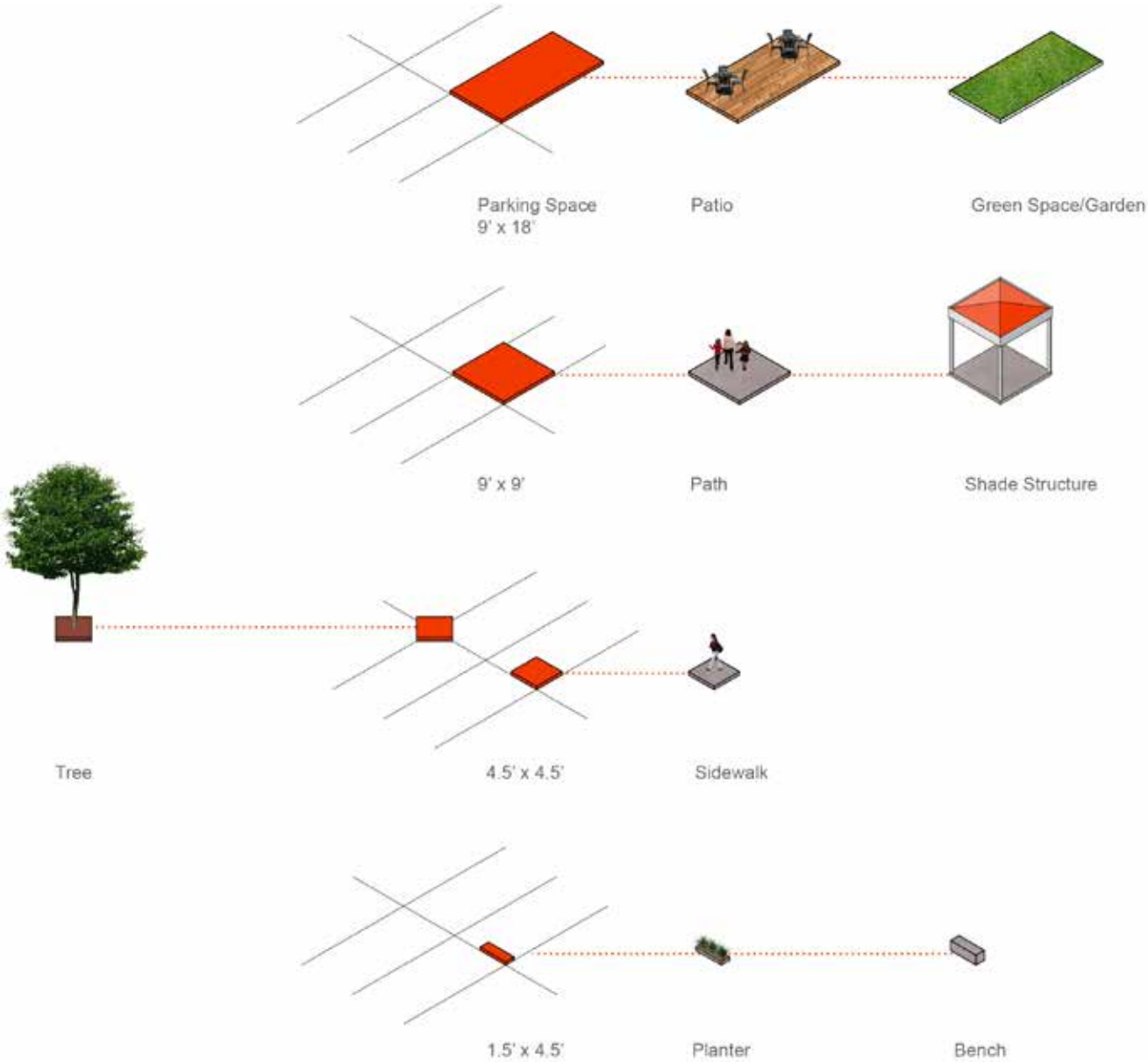


**STREETS**  
New connecting streets could be more welcoming to pedestrians with landscaping and new paving.



> District Strategies > Public Space > Park(ing) Lots

The International Management District is characterized by a large number of retail shopping strips, many of which serve both locals and visitors from across the city. The developments are characterized by large lots of surface parking. Looking for ways to enhance these developments by adding public spaces, new circulation routes, and other amenities can help to build the qualities and characteristics that make the District a destination. The Park(ing) Lot strategy proposes utilizing the typical dimension of an individual parking space to create pocket parks, outside dining patios, new pedestrian sidewalks, shaded areas, landscaping, places to sit, and small plazas. The strategy was tested at the following three strip malls: Fountain Square on Bellaire; Venture Investments Center on Beechnut; and Bissonnet Shopping Center on Bissonnet (see map opposite page).



PRECEDENTS



Powell Street, San Francisco



Parklet Program, San Francisco

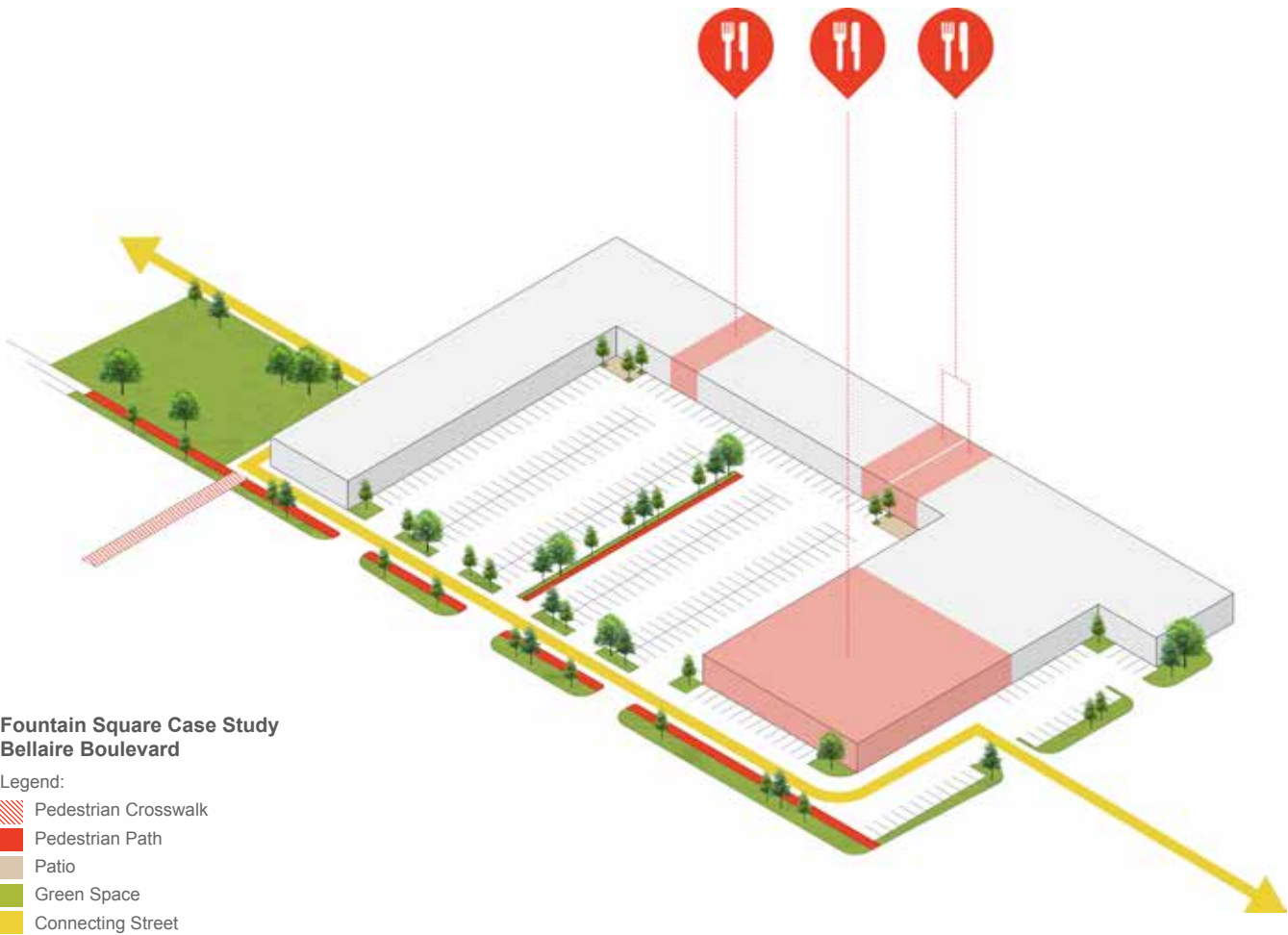


Stripscape, Phoenix



> District Strategies > Park(ing) Lots

The three case studies—Bellaire, Beechnut, and Bissonnet—illustrate the potential of the "Park(ing) Lot" design strategies to transform the appearance and usefulness of existing parking lots. The case studies were developed through an analysis of existing programs, with a particular emphasis on active uses such as cafes, retail stores, laundromats, or other uses. Where uses had the potential to take advantage of or activate new outdoor spaces, the parking lot areas were transformed.



Fountain Square Case Study  
Bellaire Boulevard

- Legend:
- Pedestrian Crosswalk
  - Pedestrian Path
  - Patio
  - Green Space
  - Connecting Street



Fountain Square Aerial

Existing Parking Spaces: 350 Spaces  
City of Houston Parking Ordinance  
Required: 4 parking spaces per 1,000 S.F.  
Total S.F. 107,750  
Required Parking Spaces: 400 Spaces  
Parking Spaces Removed: 40 Spaces  
Deficit: 90 Spaces



Perspective of Proposed Landscaping





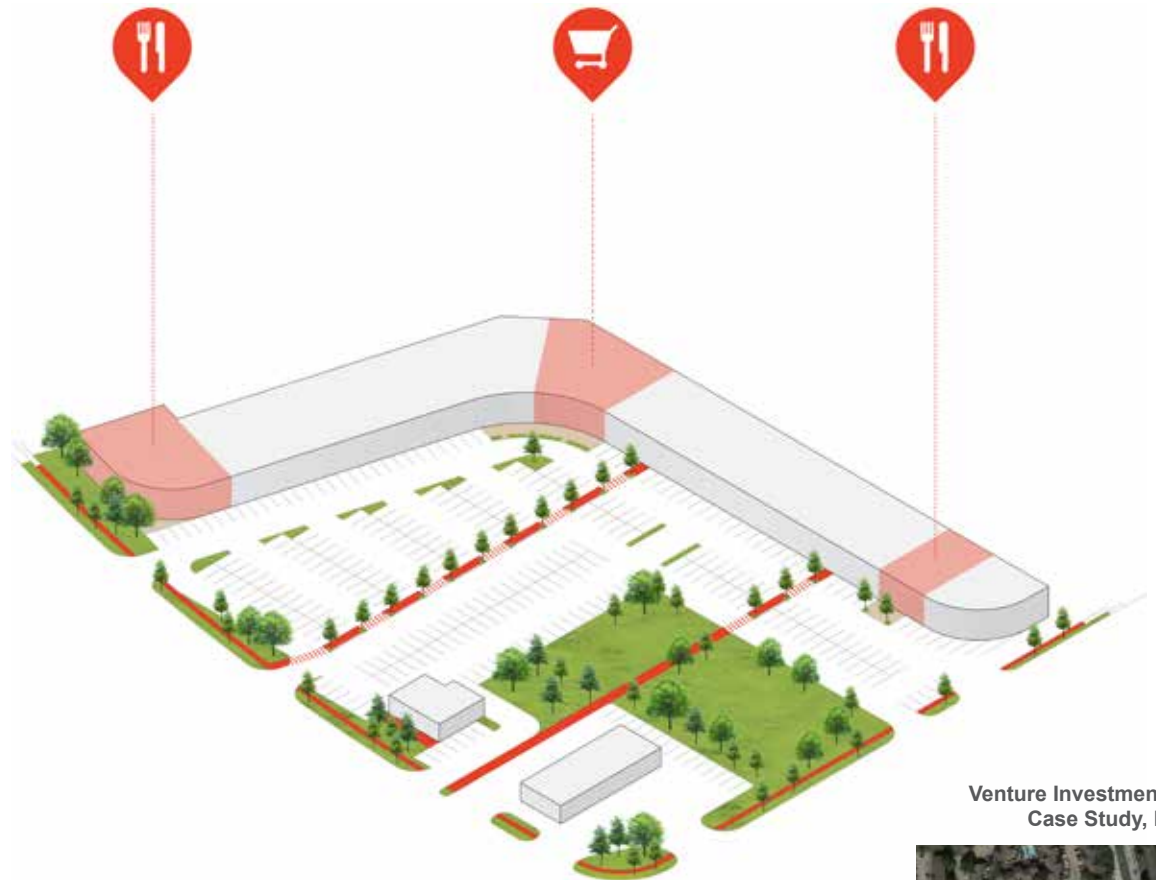
**Bissonnet Shopping Center  
Case Study, Bissonnet**



**Bissonnet Shopping Center Aerial**

Existing Parking Spaces: 400 Spaces  
City of Houston Parking Ordinance  
Required: 4 parking spaces per 1,000 S.F.  
Total S.F. 87,900  
Required Parking Spaces: 350 Spaces  
Parking Spaces Removed: 50 Spaces  
Deficit: 0 Spaces

Legend:  
Pedestrian Crosswalk  
Pedestrian Path  
Patio  
Green Space  
Connecting Street



**Venture Investments Center  
Case Study, Beechnut**



**Venture Investments Aerial**

Existing Parking Spaces: 320 Spaces  
City of Houston Parking Ordinance  
Required: 4 parking spaces per 1,000 S.F.  
Total S.F. 75,000  
Required Parking Spaces: 300 Spaces  
Parking Spaces Removed: 17 Spaces  
Excess: 3 Spaces

Legend:  
Pedestrian Crosswalk  
Pedestrian Path  
Patio  
Green Space  
Connecting Street



**Perspective of Proposed Play Area**

56 <



**Perspective of Proposed Outdoor Dining Area**

> 57



## > FOCUS AREAS



Six focus areas were identified based on vacant land or redevelopment opportunities. The focus areas provide a means to test the proposed design strategies and illustrate best practices.



> Focus Areas > Introduction

Six focus areas have been identified based on the existing conditions, available vacant land, and potentials for transformation. The six sites are analyzed in greater detail in the following pages.



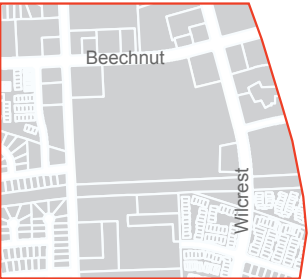
**Focus Area 1: West End**  
The focus area, near the intersection of Howell Sugar Land Road and Bellaire, is characterized by abundant vacant land, community amenities such as the Alief YMCA and a future park, and major commercial development near the intersection of Highway 6 and Bellaire. The focus area could accommodate new high-end housing.



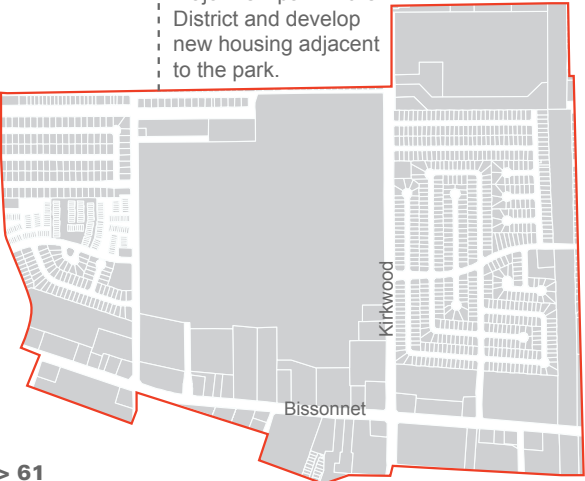
**Focus Area 2: Chinatown West**  
The Bellaire Boulevard focus area, which runs east-west from Wilcrest to Howell Sugarland Road, is anchored by the Hong Kong City Mall and Universal Shopping Center. The focus area should take advantage of adjacency to Brays Bayou, the potential for higher density mixed-use development, and the addition of public amenities to improve the pedestrian experience.



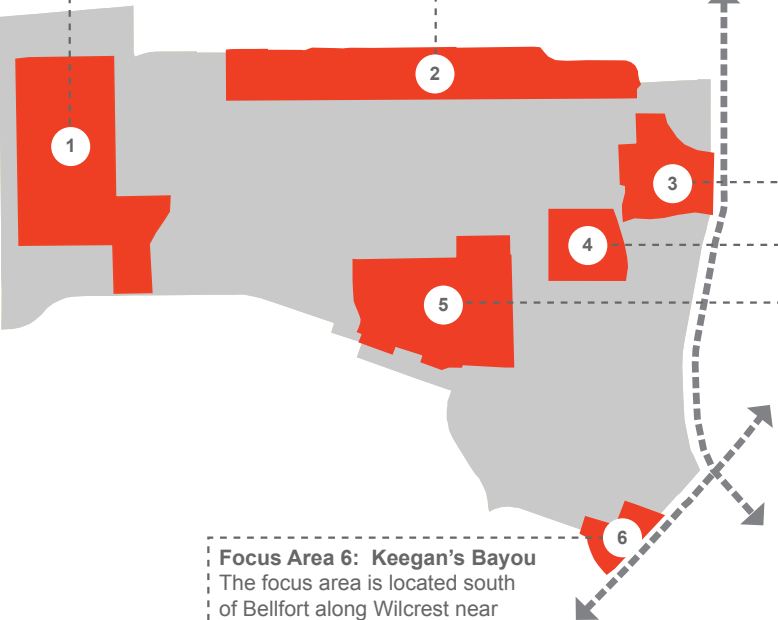
**Focus Area 3: Park Center**  
Park Center focus area is located near the intersection of Beltway 8 and Beechnut. The site has spectacular views to Arthur Storey Park, and has the potential to become an anchor site with hotel, conference, and new office space.



**Focus Area 4: Neighborhood Center**  
The focus area south of Beechnut along Wilcrest has the opportunity to become a neighborhood hub, and could house a new cinema, retail, and a community center.



**Focus Area 5: Sugar Hill**  
The former Sugar Hill golf course site is an opportunity to create a major new park in the District and develop new housing adjacent to the park.

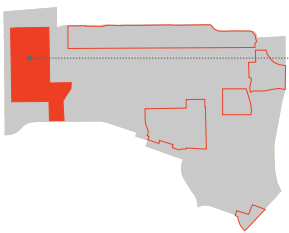


**Focus Area 6: Keegan's Bayou**  
The focus area is located south of Bellfort along Wilcrest near Highway 59. The area has the opportunity to be re-developed with high density housing, shopping, and other amenities.



> Focus Area 1 > West End

Focus Area 1, the West End, is located on the far western side of the District, near the intersection of Bellaire Boulevard and Howell Sugar Land Road. The Focus Area is characterized by sizable vacant properties and is in close proximity to major commercial development at the intersection of Bellaire and Highway 6, as well as being adjacent to the Alief YMCA. The population of this area has increased over the last ten years, and the median household income is fairly high compared to other places in the District. The City of Houston has acquired a park in this area, just south of Sand Canyon Road, that will become an amenity in the future. The Focus Area could also be connected to the proposed trail network being developed along drainage easements through the introduction of a north-south linear park. The park could help to meet the open space needs in the western portion of the District.



Focus Area 1  
West End

Focus new housing development along a major public amenity, such as a linear park. This would enhance the marketability and attractiveness of development in the area.



Linear Park



Single-Family Housing

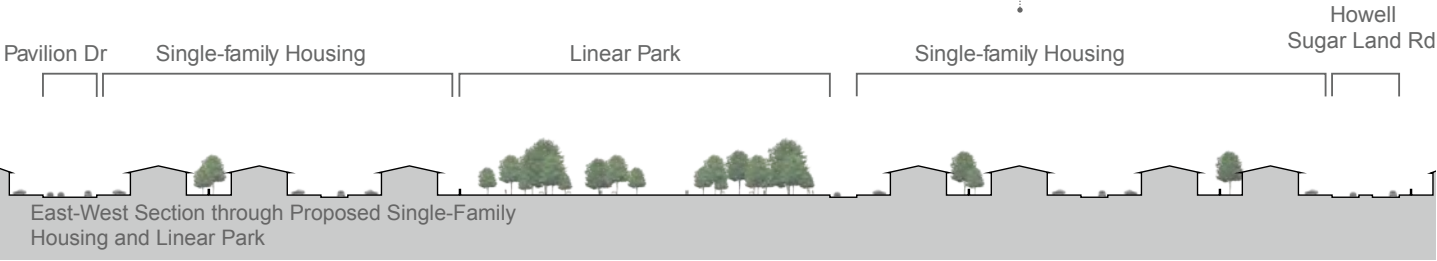


High-density Housing



Connect new single-family housing development to the future Sand Canyon Park to the south (City of Houston)

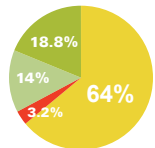
New single-family housing could take advantage of the proposed park.



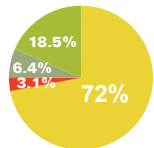
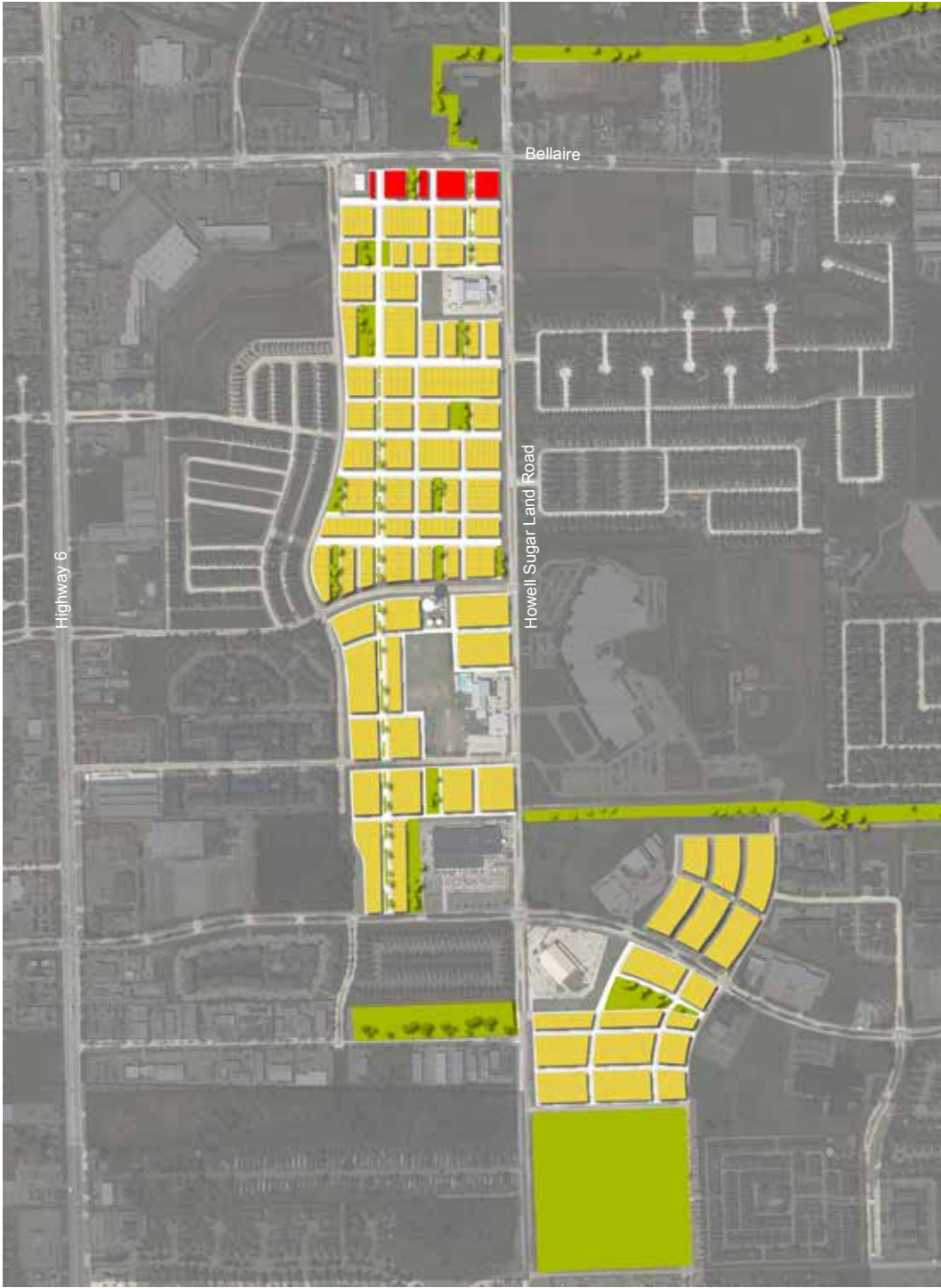


> Focus Area 1 > West End

Two schemes were developed for the West End site. Scheme 'A' focuses on new single family housing woven around a linear park and connecting to the drainage easements to the north and to the south. Scheme 'B' proposes new single family housing facing a series of small pocket parks.



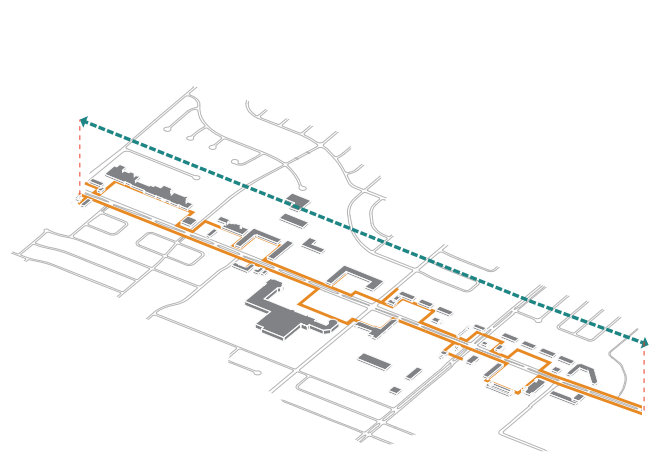
**SCHEME 'A'**  
Single Family Lots: 734 or 80 Acres  
Commercial Land: 4 Acres  
Park Area: 17.4 Acres  
Existing Park: 23.5 Acres



**SCHEME 'B'**  
Single Family Lots: 848 or 92.4 Acres  
Commercial Land: 4 Acres  
Park Area: 8.14 Acres  
Existing Park: 23.5 Acres

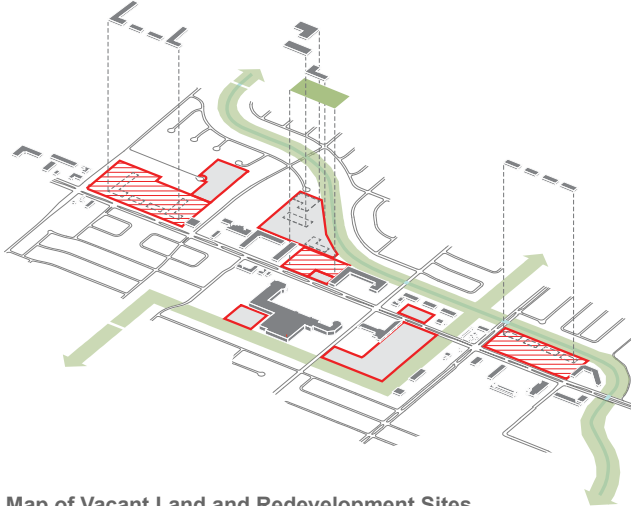
> Focus Area 2 > Chinatown West

Focus Area 2 is located along Bellaire Boulevard between Wilcrest and Kirkwood on the west. This area provides an opportunity to explore the potential of capitalizing on Brays Bayou, creating new pocket parks and plazas in parking lots, supporting the development of transit and shade structures to create cohesion, and encouraging major mixed-use redevelopment.



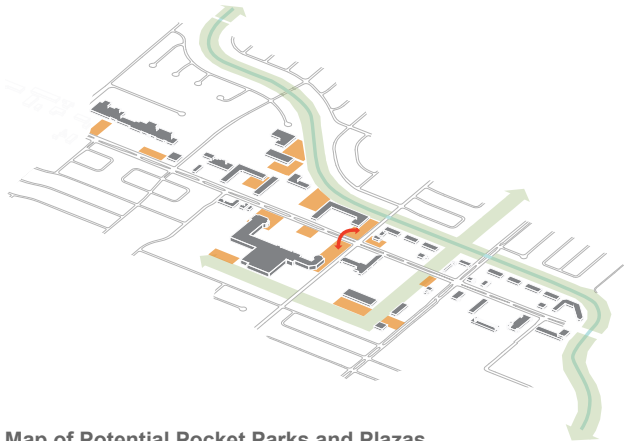
Map of Potential Connecting Streets and Bellaire Transit

- Shade Structures
- Bellaire Bus Rapid Transit



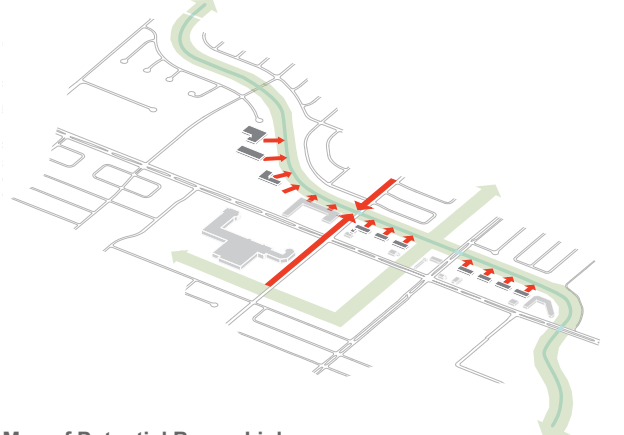
Map of Vacant Land and Redevelopment Sites

- Vacant Land
- Redevelopment Sites



Map of Potential Pocket Parks and Plazas

- Pocket Parks and Plazas



Map of Potential Bayou Links

- Bayou Link



Transit connectivity has the potential to transform the Bellaire corridor. In addition, developing a strategy for shade and other programmatic uses, such as the “Stripscape” project in Phoenix, illustrated above, could provide cohesion to the street.



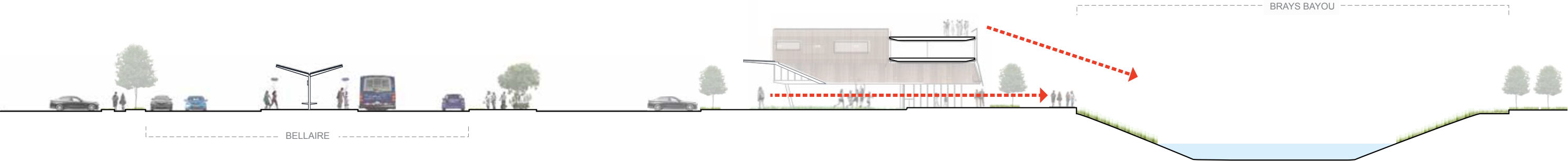
There are a number of properties in this focus area that are ripe for re-development, encouraging the projects to define the street edge and mix uses has the potential to continue to support the role of Bellaire as a destination.



Explore the potential of creating pocket parks and plazas in the parking lots of existing strip malls. The example above is in Silver Lake, Los Angeles.



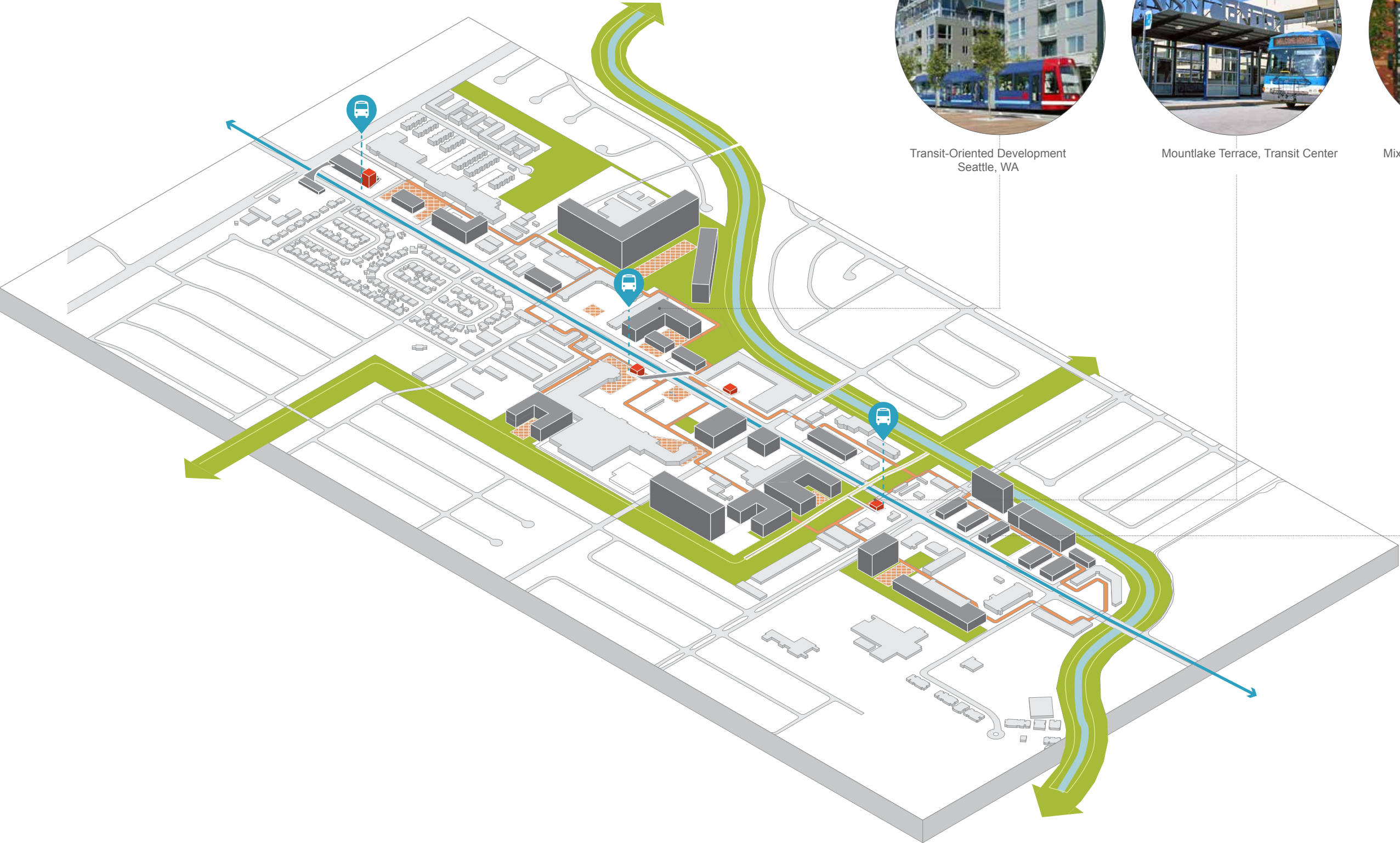
Capitalize on the potential to develop cafes and restaurants facing Brays Bayou, a “Water District.”





> Focus Area 2 > Chinatown West

The Chinatown West Focus Area has the potential to become a dense, mixed-use transit-oriented corridor, served by a new Bus Rapid Transit line, and activated with new housing. To achieve this goal, new models of mixed-use and transit-oriented development should be reviewed, and opportunities for redevelopment along the Bellaire corridor should be capitalized on to create a more "urban" center that would be attractive to new residents and visitors.



Transit-Oriented Development  
Seattle, WA



Mountlake Terrace, Transit Center

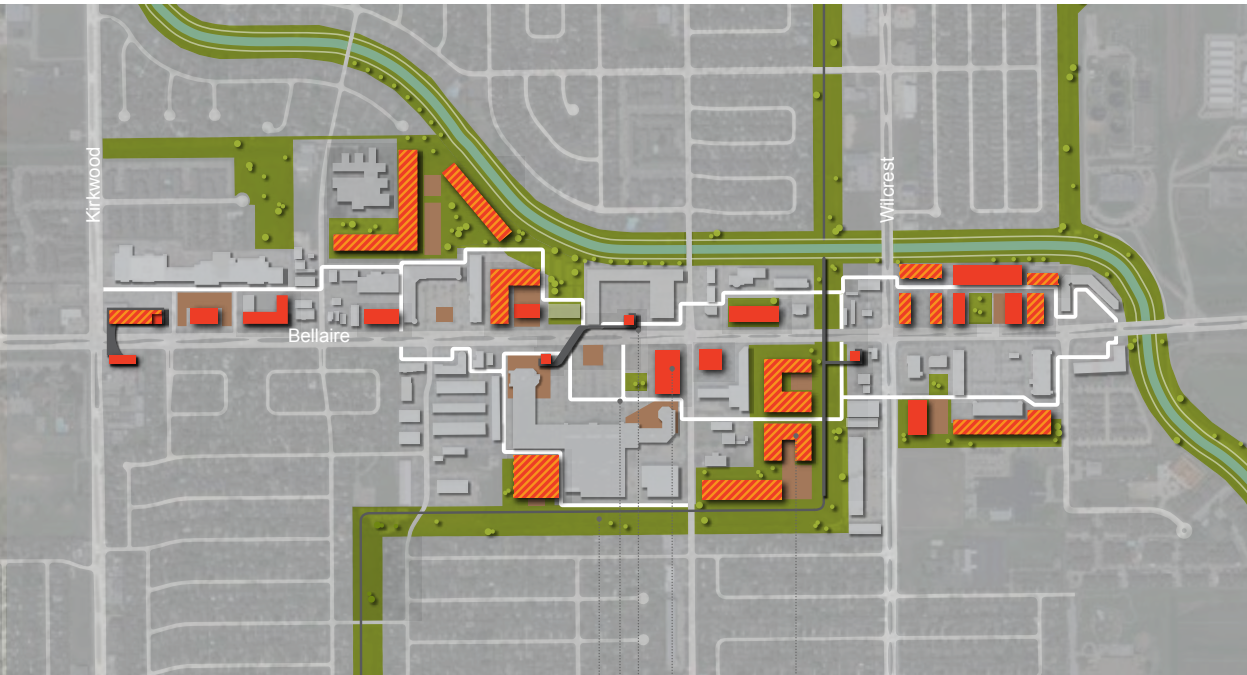


Mixed-Use Housing Redmond, WA



> Focus Area 2 > Chinatown West

The vision for the Chinatown West Focus Area is guided by a number of strategies. First, to capitalize on Brays Bayou by opening up new development to the green space and water amenity. Second, to introduce mixed-use high-density development along Bellaire. Third, to weave public green spaces into the proposal. The result is a signature street that would be both an attractive place to live and a destination for visitors. The image on the opposite page provides a perspective of how these strategies would transform the Bellaire corridor.



Bellaire Boulevard, Proposed Plan



Bellaire Boulevard, Existing Figure Ground



Bellaire Boulevard, Proposed Figure Ground

- Mixed-Use (Residential, Office, Retail)
- New Commercial Development (Office and/or Retail)
- Pedestrian Bridges
- Connecting Streets
- New Hike and Bike Trails

New development should define the edge of the street, creating an urban District



Bellaire Boulevard, Perspective Looking West

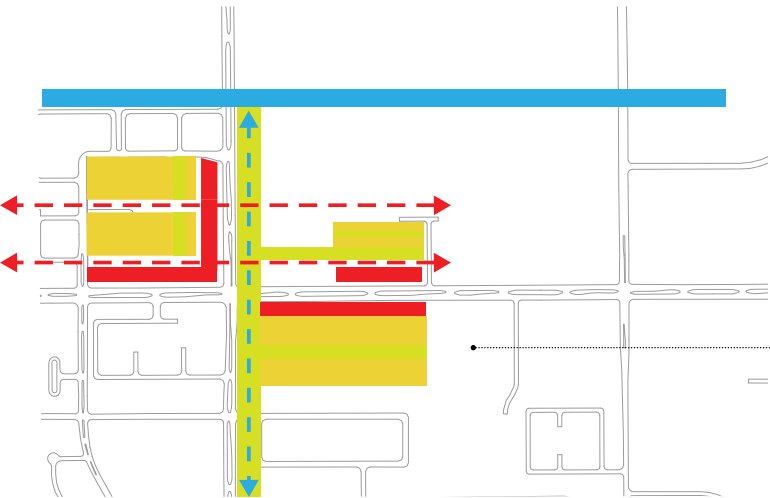


Bellaire Boulevard, Existing Conditions Looking East



> Focus Area 3 > Chinatown West > Dairy Ashford Site

The Chinatown West Focus Area includes a prime site for both new development and re-development at the intersection of Dairy Ashford and Bellaire Boulevard. The area is in close proximity to Elsik Ninth Grade Center and the sports facilities of Alief ISD. The site includes a large parcel on the northwest corner which is ripe for redevelopment, a large parcel of vacant land on the southeast corner, and a medium-sized parcel to the northeast that is currently for sale. The proposal for the site focuses on adding housing—including single-family, townhouses, and multi-family—all focused on linear parks, and a major office and commercial center.



With an abundance of vacant land and sites that are ripe for redevelopment this area could become a major office center and include a wide range of new housing focused along linear parks.

PRECEDENTS



Lenox Apartments  
Atlanta, Georgia



The Park  
Nadu, India



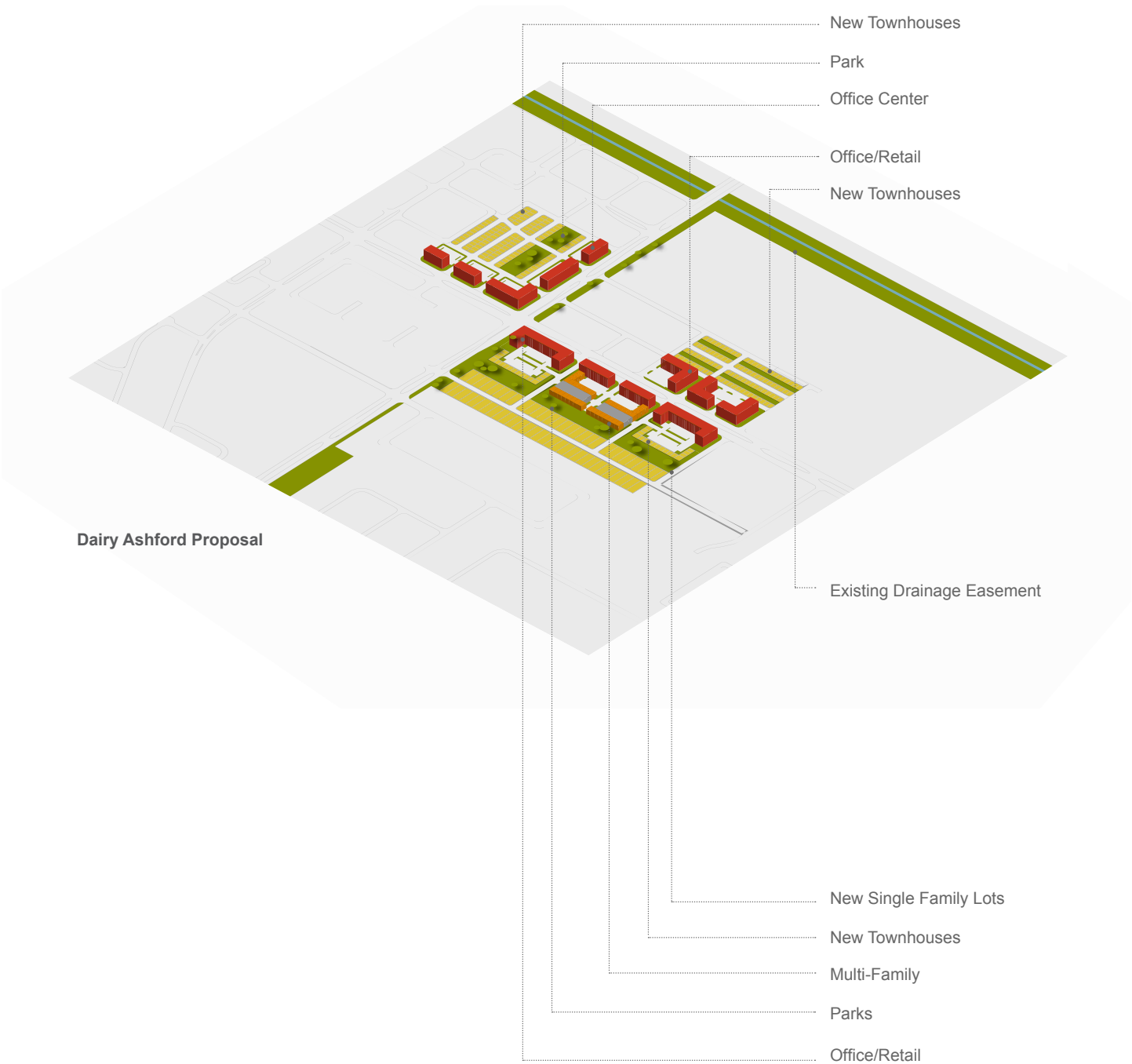
Okecie Business Park, Proposal



Dairy Ashford and Bellaire Perspective, looking Northeast

> Focus Area 3 > Chinatown West > Dairy Ashford Site

The proposed scheme, illustrated below and on the opposite page, is a combination of office space, commercial and retail, and housing focused along linear parks. The scheme includes a north-south linear park and trail to connect to the proposed trails along the drainage easement, which runs east-west, and to connect the new housing to the school facilities to the north and east. Office development is focused on the northwest corner of Bellaire and Dairy Ashford, this area should be considered similar to an office park, framing the street and with green space and housing surrounding it. An urban grid of streets and blocks is created throughout the study area to support high density development.



**PROPOSED SCHEME**  
59 Single-Family Lots  
232 Townhomes  
150 Multi-Family Units  
Commercial 7 acres  
Park 5.3 acres



> Focus Area 3 > Park Center

Park Center, Focus Area 3, is located just west of Beltway 8 and just north of Beechnut Street. A number of properties in this area are vacant and/or for sale, and a large storage site and aging multi-family housing to the west are ripe for redevelopment. The site provides views to Arthur Storey Park and the detention area, and bounds Brays Bayou on the far northern edge. As a result, the site could be a pleasant walk to the International Trade Center and other destinations along Bellaire. The proposals focus on new office space, diverse housing, hotel, and conference and meeting space.



The site can be a major destination with high end office space, hotel, and meeting and convention facilities. The site could be linked with trails and a pedestrian bridge to the International Trade Center and destinations along Bellaire.



Pedestrian Bridge, Chicago

PRECEDENTS



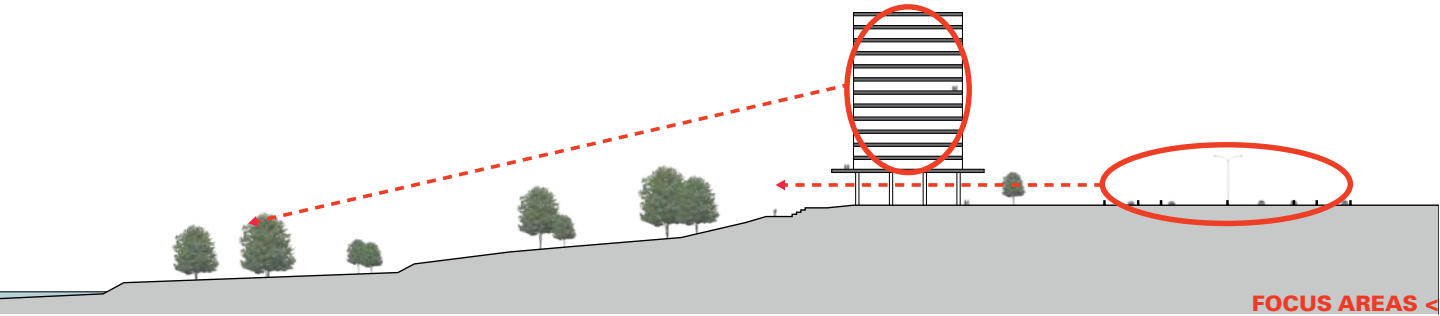
Gaylord National Hotel  
Maryland



Foothill Road Office Center



Stockholm Convention Center  
Stockholm, Sweden



FOCUS AREAS <

● East-West Section Through Proposed Office, Hotel and Conference Center, and Detention Area

> Focus Area 3 > Park Center

The proposals for Park Center focus on three opportunities: connecting to the trails and amenities at Arthur Storey Park; encouraging the development of existing vacant land; developing a major office, hotel, and conference center; and capitalizing on the potential public investment related to the Southwest TIRZ #20. Specifically, it is proposed that the District explore the creation of a series of pedestrian bridges. The bridges would cross Brays Bayou and the adjacent drainage channel to connect the area to the park, local school, and activities along Bellaire. In addition, the site has several major vacant parcels, as well as an existing storage center that might be ripe for redevelopment. Future development on the site should capitalize on the combined amenities of the park and frontage along Beltway 8.



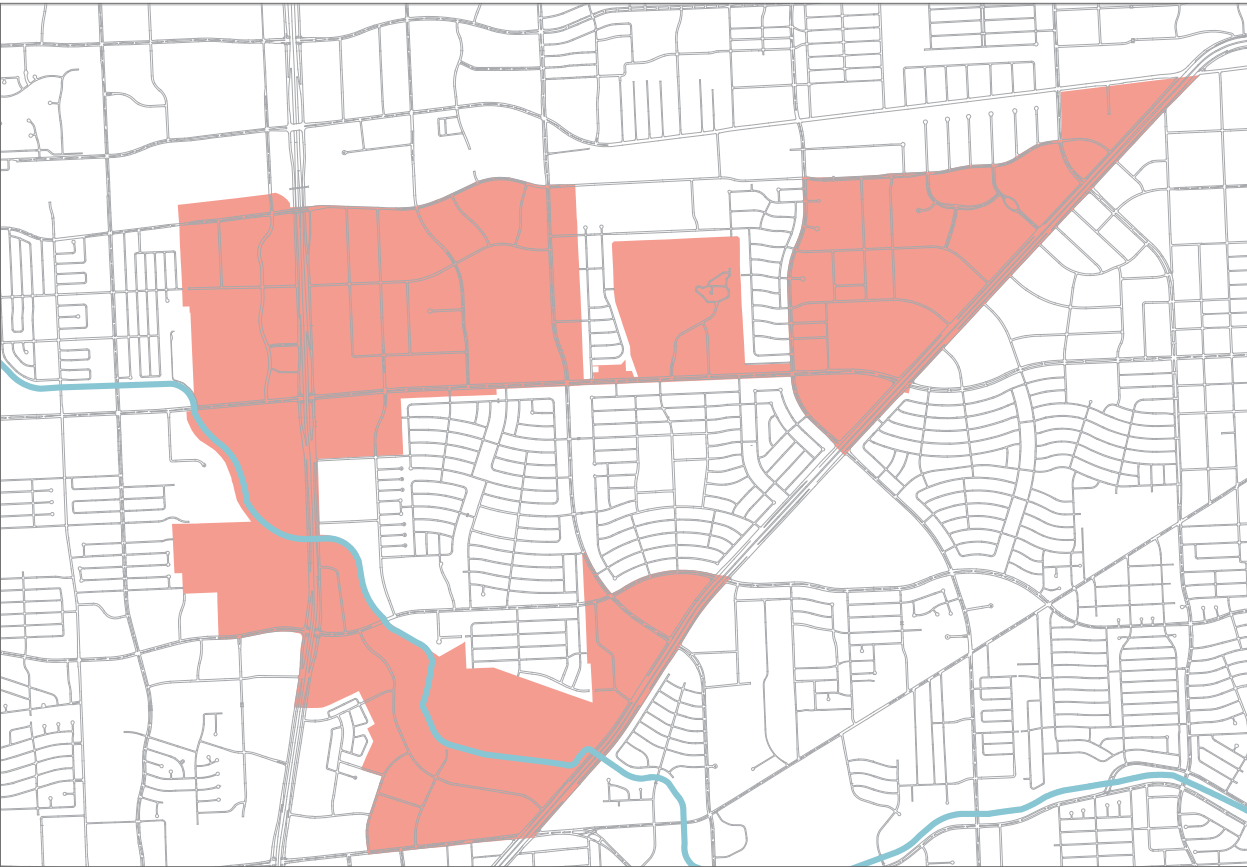
Proposed Connecting Trails and Bridges



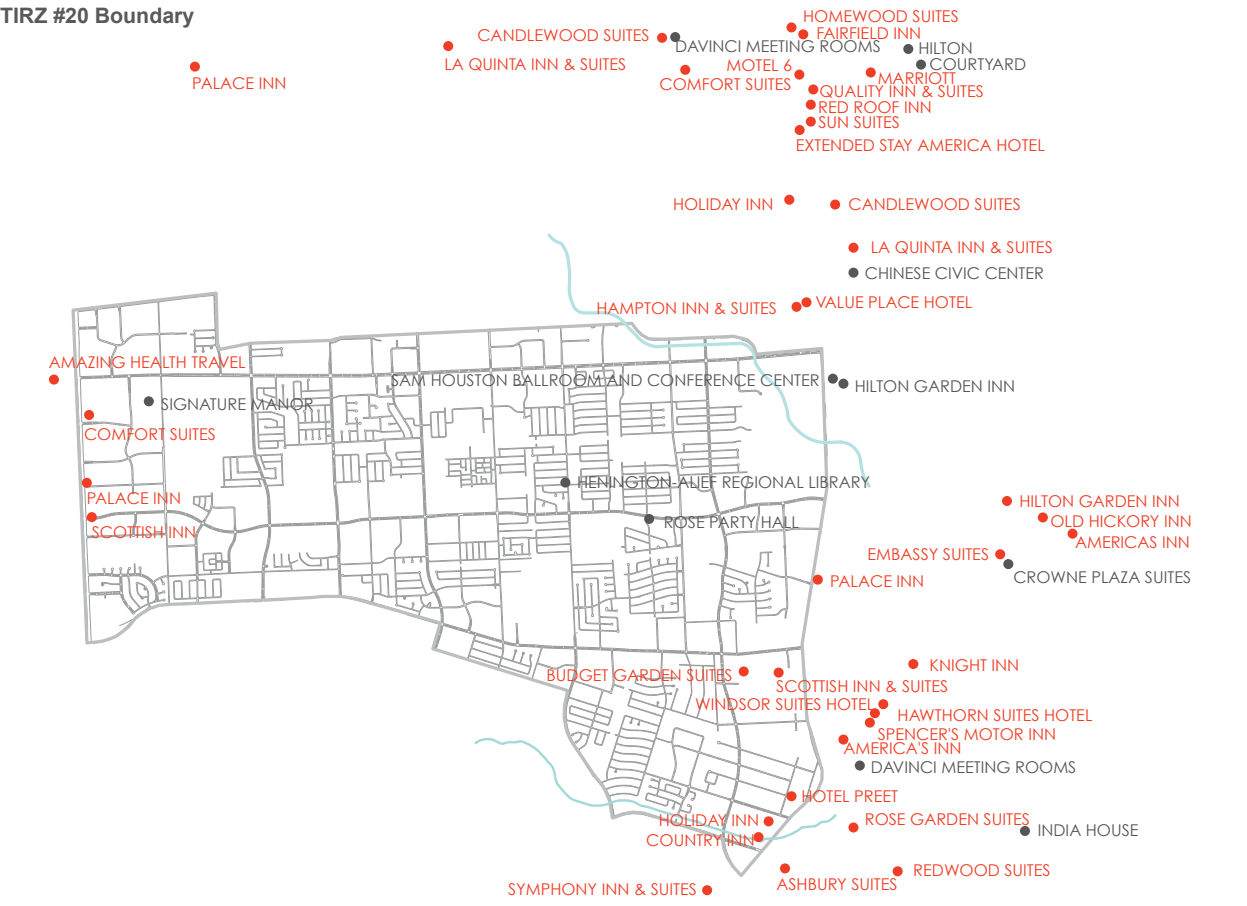
Proposed Development Sites



Arthur Storey Park, Harris County Flood Control District



TIRZ #20 Boundary



Map of Hotels and Conference Centers



> Focus Area 3 > Park Center

Three schemes were developed for the Park Center site. Schemes 'A' and 'B' propose a mixture of office space, hotel and conference space, and retail focused along the park. Scheme 'C' expands to propose the redevelopment of existing housing on the western edge of the focus area and the existing storage center. Each scheme focuses on the green space to the north, which is part of the Arthur Storey Park flood detention area, takes advantage of vacant land, while also linking the site with a pedestrian bridge to the trails and amenities of the park, the International Trade Center, and destinations along Bellaire.



SCHEME 'A'



SCHEME 'B'



SCHEME 'C'



> Focus Area 3 > Park Center

The Park Center final proposal is focused on the amenity of Arthur Storey Park. The offices, hotel, and conference center are located on the east side of the park and are connected to the retail development, further west, with the proposed boardwalk. New housing, including single-family, townhouses, and multi-family are located on the western portion of the site and take advantage of proximity to the park. New retail development faces Beechnut and moves north towards the park, creating a new lifestyle center atmosphere.



Park Center Proposal

- Boardwalk
- Offices/Hotel/Conference Center
- New Townhouses
- Retail
- New Multi-Family Housing
- New Single-Family Housing



Dragon Boat Festival, Kansas City

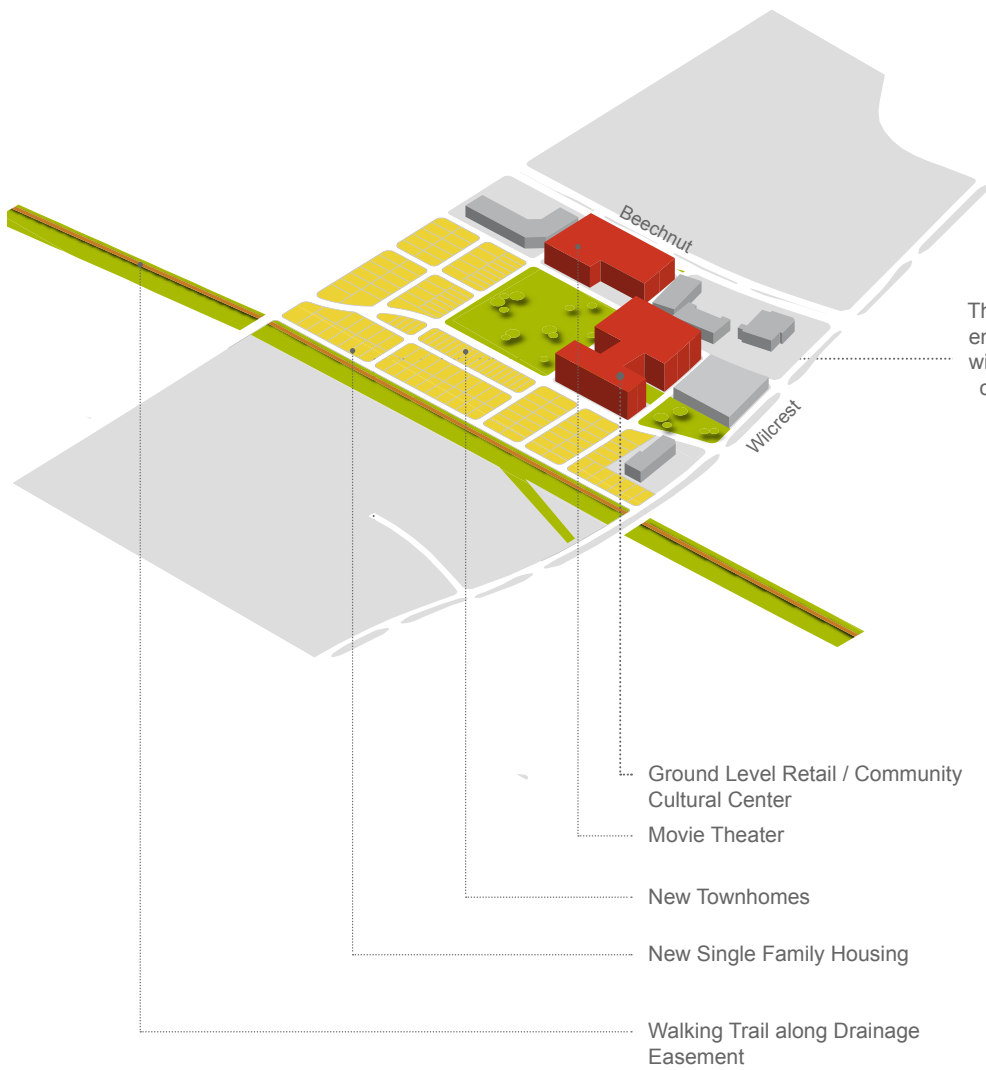


Park Center Boardwalk Perspective

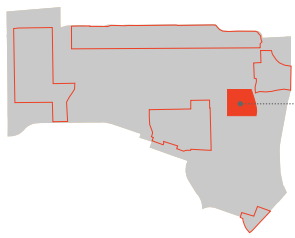


> Focus Area 4 > Neighborhood Center

Focus Area 4, Neighborhood Center, is located south of Beechnut and west of Wilcrest. The site is currently vacant and is bounded on the south side by a drainage easement. A number of schemes were developed for this site, each combining a neighborhood movie theater, community cultural center, new retail, parking garage, and new housing. The scheme below is organized around a central park, the park would be activated with many different users, including residents, movie goers, and those visiting the cultural center.



The Neighborhood Center site is envisioned as a community hub, with a movie theater, community cultural center, new retail, and diverse housing options.



Focus Area 4  
Neighborhood Center

PRECEDENTS



Lafayette Park, Townhouses Detroit



Kent Station, Washington



Mizner Park, Boca Raton



Neighborhood Center Perspective

> Focus Area 4 > Neighborhood Center

Three schemes were developed for the Neighborhood Center focus area. Each scheme combines a movie theater (the closest major cinema is three miles, see map opposite page), housing, and new retail. Schemes A and C also include a community cultural center. The key recommendations are to connect new development to the existing street network, combine housing models to create diversity, and center the development around amenities, such as open space.



SCHEME 'A'



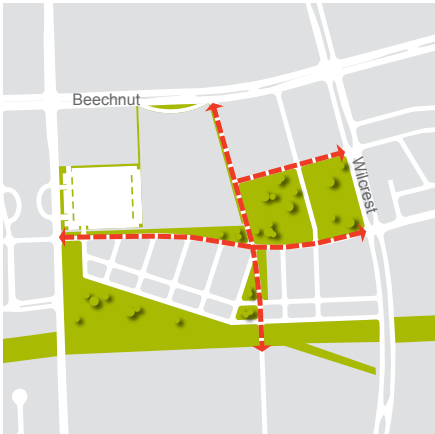
SCHEME 'B'



SCHEME 'C'



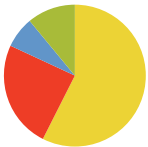
SCHEME 'A' Diagram



SCHEME 'B' Diagram



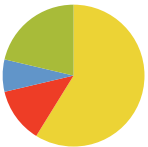
SCHEME 'C' Diagram



96 Single-Family Lots  
38 Townhomes  
Commercial 6.9 acres  
Park 3.1 acres  
Community Center 2 acres



126 Single-Family Lots  
Commercial 9.7 acres  
Park 7.8 acres



107 Single-Family Lots  
40 Townhomes  
Commercial 3.4 acres  
Park 5.8 acres  
Community Center 2 acres

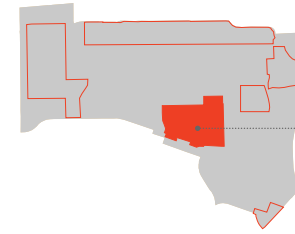


Map of Area Cinemas and Community Centers

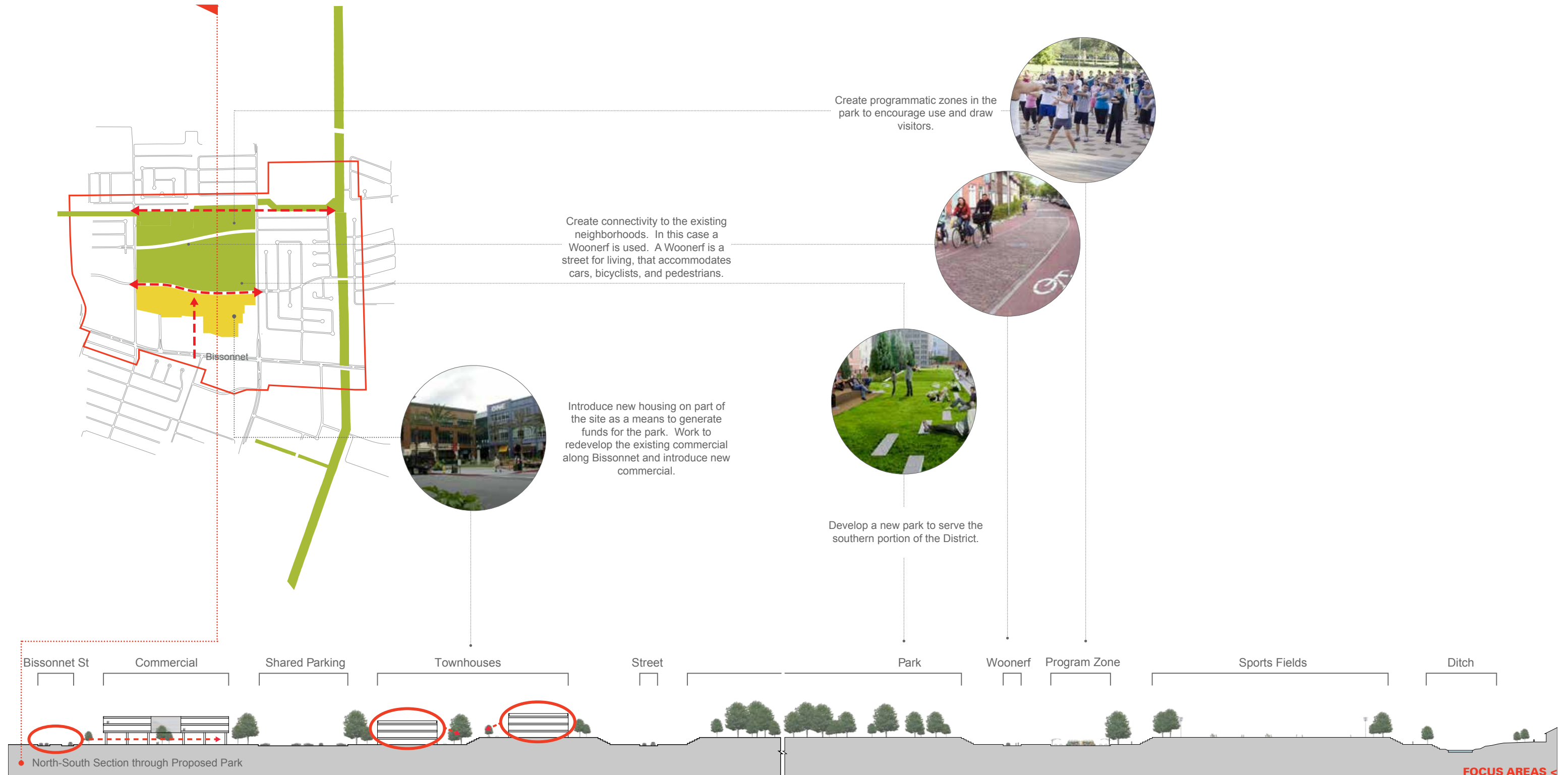


## > Focus Area 5 > Sugar Hill

The Sugar Hill Golf Course site is an opportunity to develop a new public park and new residential development. Redevelopment of the site could also spark new commercial projects along Bissonnet. Connectivity to the existing street network should be a priority, as well as maximizing the amount of housing facing and adjacent to the proposed park. The environmental conditions of the site need to be evaluated and the costs of any necessary remediation estimated.



Focus Area 5  
Sugar Hill Golf Course  
Site

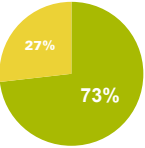


> Focus Area 5 > Sugar Hill

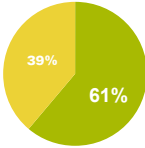
Three schemes were developed for the Sugar Hill Golf Course site. Each scheme combines new housing and a public park in different ratios. Scheme 'A' introduces new housing along the western edges of the site, while Schemes 'B' and 'C' propose additional housing development in the southern portion of the focus area, and throughout the site. The details of each scheme are highlighted below. Scheme 'C' maximizes the potential return of a new housing development, the profit would assist in funding the required environmental remediation.



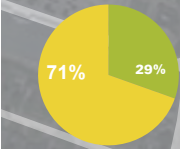
**SCHEME 'A'**  
Single Family Lots: 318  
Price per lot: \$5,000  
Total Single Family Cost: \$1,590,000  
Total site value: \$2,000,000  
Residual: - \$410,000  
Park Space: 88 acres



**SCHEME 'B'**  
Single Family Lots: 445  
Price per lot: \$5,000  
Total Single Family Cost: \$2,225,000  
Total site value: \$2,000,000  
Residual: + \$225,000  
Park Space: 70 acres



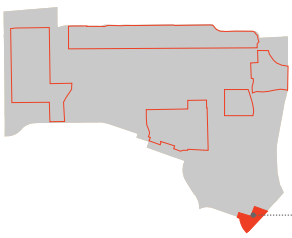
**SCHEME 'C'**  
Single Family Lots: 680  
Price per lot: \$5,000  
Total Single Family Cost: \$3,400,000  
Total site value: \$2,000,000  
Residual: + \$1,400,000  
Park Space: 30 acres





> Focus Area 6 > Keegan's Bayou

Focus Area 6 is located near the intersection of Wilcrest and West Belfort, and just south of Keegan's Bayou. The site is easily accessible from Highway 59. Currently the area is characterized by aging strip retail development and various light industrial uses. The site is directly adjacent to stable neighborhoods to the west and north. The proposal recommends that the area be redeveloped as a neighborhood focused mixed-use district.



Focus Area 6  
Keegan's Bayou



The site has the potential to become a neighborhood focused mixed-use development, including new retail, restaurants, open space, and housing.

PRECEDENTS



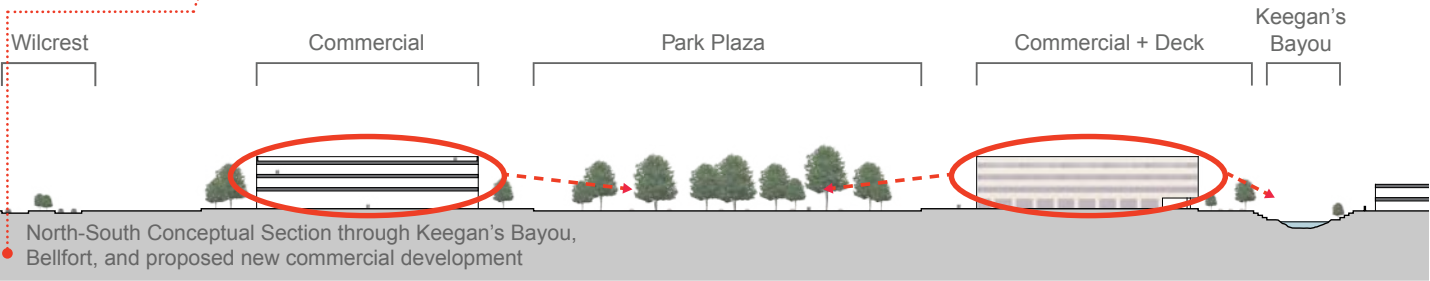
City Target, Los Angeles



Mixed Use Building, Chicago



Kent Station, Washington



> Focus Area 6 > Keegan’s Bayou

Three schemes were developed for Focus Area 6. Scheme ‘A’ simply proposes the introduction of additional green space to connect across the site between Wilcrest and West Belfort. Scheme ‘B’ proposes new retail development focused on Keegan’s Bayou and includes the introduction of new open space to address potential flooding. Scheme ‘C’ proposes a more complete redevelopment of the site, including new retail and housing. Scheme ‘C’ represents the highest and best use of the property and would create a neighborhood destination in the District for shopping and dining.



SCHEME ‘A’

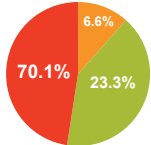


SCHEME ‘B’



SCHEME ‘C’

**Proposed Land Uses**  
Townhouses: 275 Units  
Commercial Land: 18 Acres  
Park Area: 6 Acres





> Focus Area 6 > Keegan’s Bayou

Scheme 'C' is represented in detail below. The proposal includes new townhouses and mixed-use retail along Wilcrest and new retail development along Belfort and Keegan’s Bayou. In addition, new park space is proposed to connect across the site to the bayou.



Perspective of Proposed Retail along Wilcrest

