

magnolia park

healthy community design

ideas book



MAGNOLIA PARK: Healthy Community Design Ideas Book

Community Design Resource Center
University of Houston
in partnership with the
Community Transformation Initiative
through the Houston Department of
Health and Human Services

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Introduction



Introduction

Community Transformation is a movement taking place across the nation that is changing the way we look at health and prevention of chronic diseases. Health in All Policies (HiAP) is a strategy to improve the health of the population by addressing factors outside the health system that have important health effects. These factors relate to our common life: what we eat and drink, where we live, how we work and how we spend our leisure time which may have positive or negative effects on our health.

The HiAP approach has gained support from health advocates in the United States. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) acknowledges that policies made outside of the health sector shape the environments people live in and the choices they make. They note that some public health problems are sufficiently complex that they are best tackled not just through traditional health policy but also through policies and issues that affect the social determinants of health such as schools, zoning, food advertising, public transportation, parks, workplaces, restaurants, and tax policy. The IOM recommends implementing a HiAP approach in order to more fully address the determinants of health, better coordinate efforts across sectors, and more effectively use public resources.

The National Prevention Strategy, published in June 2011, calls for increased coordination between government agencies, as well as partnerships with community organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, and others. The National Prevention Strategy prioritizes work around four strategic directions: creating healthy community environments, empowering individuals to make healthy choices, integrating clinical and community preventive services, and reducing health disparities. This can be accomplished, for example, through ensuring more neighborhoods have better access to fruits and vegetables, opportunities for physical activity, active transportation options, and clean air.

The Community Transformation Initiative through the Houston Department of Health and Human Services has promoted a Health in All Policies approach in its recent efforts. This project in collaboration with the University of Houston's College of Architecture and the Community Design Resource Center (CDRC) represents one current example of this approach.

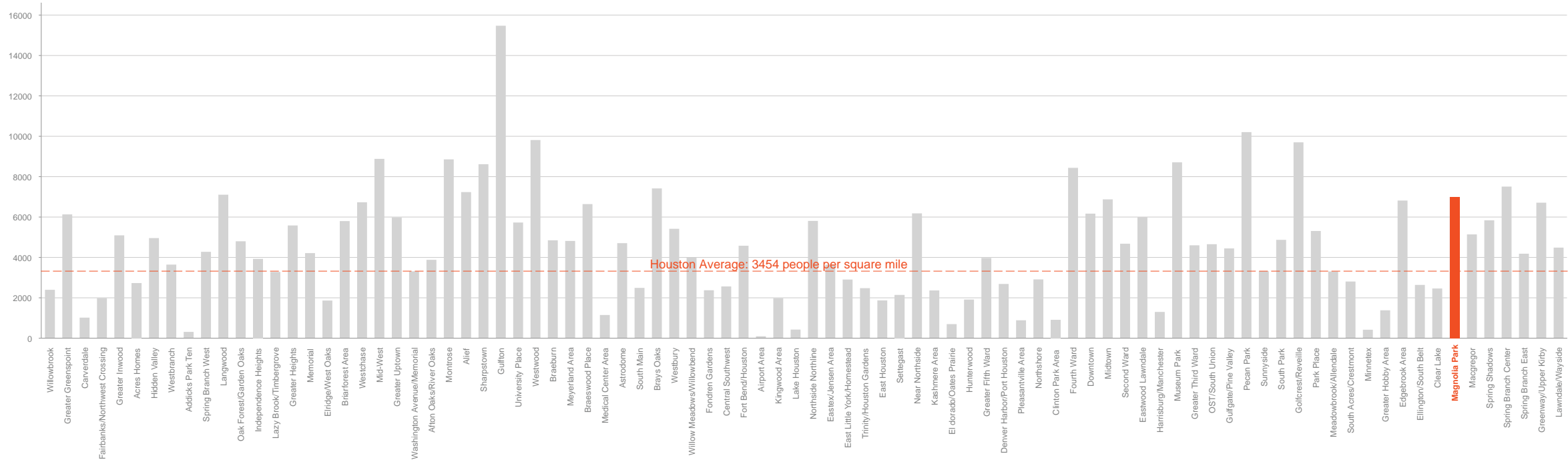
Our partnership with the College of Architecture and the CDRC has been mutually beneficial. For example, students and faculty at the College of Architecture and CDRC have integrated ideas about healthy communities into a comprehensive approach to community change. At the same time, the Community Transformation Initiative team has an increased understanding of the built environment and has gained new insights into the challenges and opportunities for health impact planning. Another key element of our collaborative approach has been to actively engage community leaders and stakeholders in the process, bringing community voices to the table as partners in our efforts to imagine and create healthy communities. This has included a series of community meetings and listening sessions held in each neighborhood. Finally, experts and professionals from a diverse array of disciplines, including community development, public health, urban planning, architecture, and non-profit leaders shared their expertise with community stakeholders at a day long community design charrette. In the end our goal has been to create a collaborative and comprehensive approach to community health and community design that is based in partnership, and works across disciplines, policies and scales to generate real solutions.

Context

Context

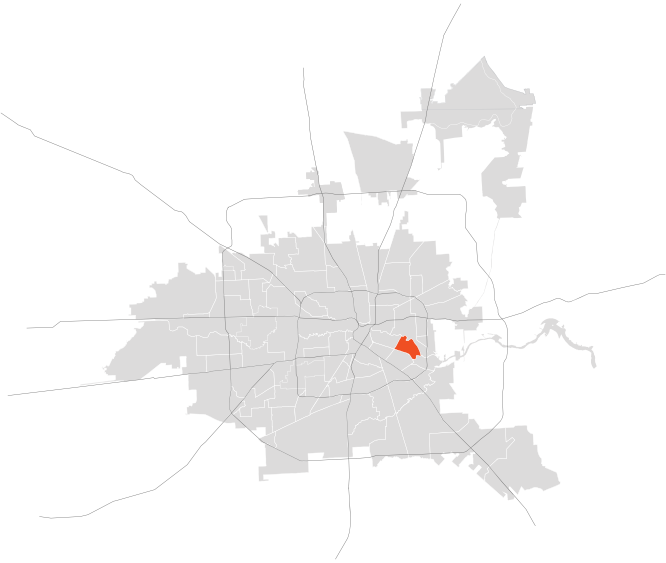


BELOW: Population Density by Super Neighborhood, 2010
BELOW, Right: Magnolia Park Location Map



communities as a means to shape and create new jobs, enhancing access to open spaces, recreation, and trails as means to build healthier communities, and working towards achieving sustainability in its fullest and most meaningful definition—which includes achieving a balance between equity, economy, and ecology in all that we do.

Participatory, proactive, and asset-based community processes have the potential to point us towards opportunities for meaningful and sustainable change that will create thriving and healthy communities. To this end the strategies included in the Magnolia Park Healthy Community Design Ideas Book have been developed over the course of a year and based on interdisciplinary problem-solving, community engagement and collaboration. Nearly 100 people from diverse backgrounds, including students, residents, stakeholders, and professionals have been engaged in the process. The publication is intended to be a guide, or toolbox, for change—as well as point to potential strategies and tactics in communities across the country.





Houston, the fourth largest city in the U.S., is a study in contradictions. It is simultaneously diverse and divided, connected and isolated, sprawling and dense, rich and poor, urban and rural. In Houston, and across the nation, health is directly related to the socio-economic conditions of our neighborhoods. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that “the socioeconomic circumstances of persons and where they live and work strongly influence their health.”

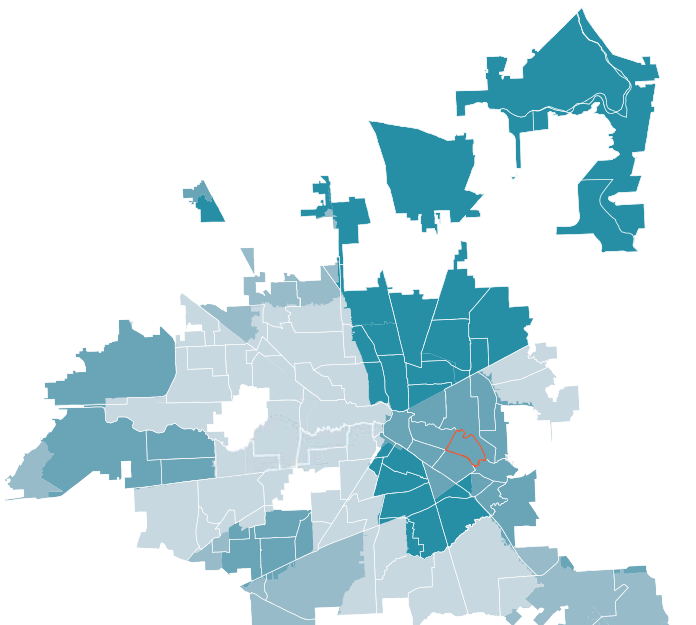
Houston, while incredibly diverse, is also profoundly divided by income, education, and opportunity. This division is reinforced by ethnic and gender disparities that continue to define inequality in the city. The socioeconomic conditions that divide us have also created geographic disparities where some neighborhoods are rich with resources and others are without even the most basic of necessities. Finally, the neighborhoods that face the most

severe economic hardships are more often than not the same neighborhoods that have significant health challenges.

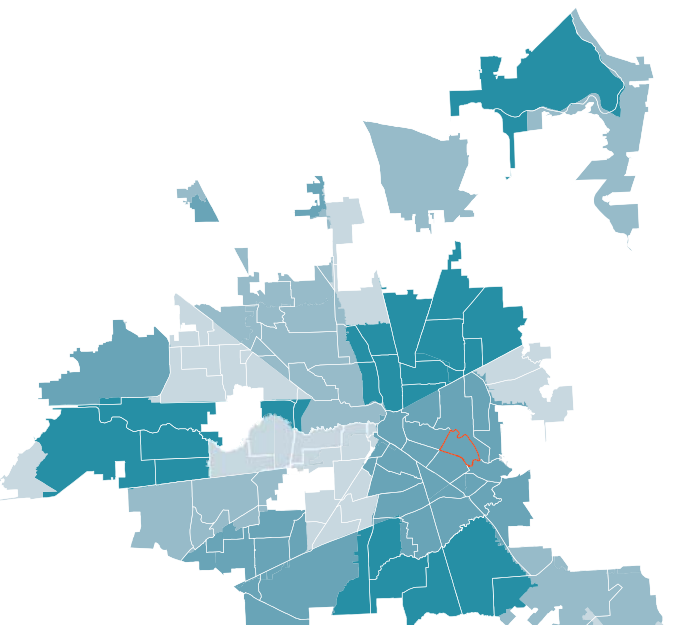
Community design has a role to play in advocating for and creating healthy communities. The first step is to understand and illustrate the qualities and conditions that exist in our neighborhoods and identify both the assets and constraints. The second step is to understand the factors that design has the power to impact. For example, design can influence the quality of public spaces, creating attractive and useful places for exercise, recreation and play. Design can impact safety by working to ensure that places are active, visible, and free from hazards. Design can transform our neighborhoods, by advocating for development that is compact, walkable, and affordable. Design can help to create alternative networks for pedestrians and cyclists. And finally, design has the power to innovate, creating new models for

partnerships and processes that have the potential to transform neighborhoods.

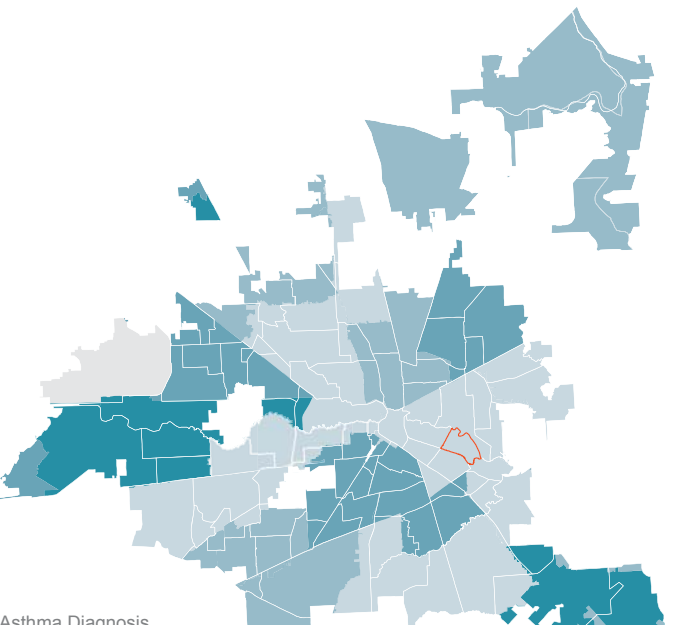
As health care costs continue to escalate and decades of gains in longevity are at risk because of sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles there is a new emphasis on the relationship between where we live and our health. This emerging emphasis points to the need for new ways of thinking about change in our neighborhoods, and the need for a new process that departs from standard ideas about planning and design to create a more inter-disciplinary and dynamic process which incorporates a comprehensive vision for community health. Healthy communities are a goal across the nation, and a hope for Houston. By focusing on creating healthy communities we can begin to move toward a goal of ensuring that all of our residents have the opportunity for healthy and productive lives.



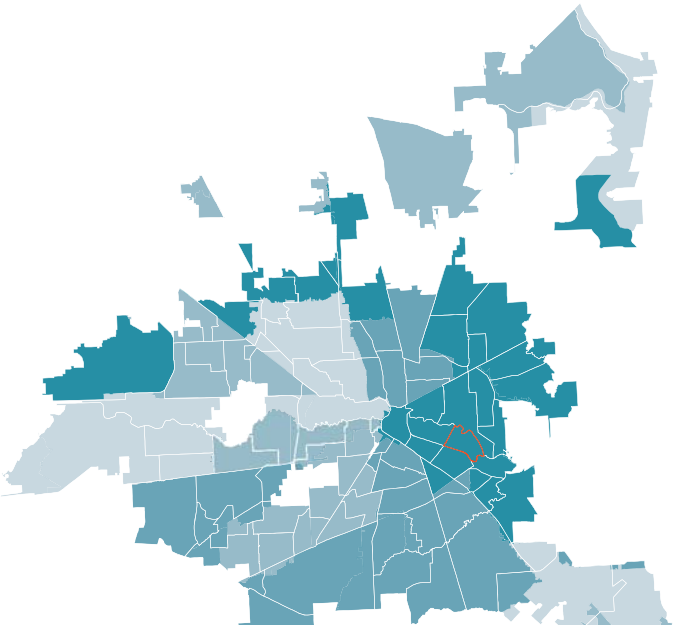
Overweight and Obese (18 Years+)
 68 - 76%
 63 - 67%
 59 - 62%
 46 - 58%
 Houston Average: 63%
 Source: Health of Houston Survey 2010



High Blood Pressure Diagnosis
 36 - 59%
 31 - 35%
 26 - 30%
 18 - 25%
 Houston Average: 30%
 Source: Health of Houston Survey 2010



Asthma Diagnosis
 13 - 17%
 11 - 12%
 8 - 10%
 4 - 7%
 Not Applicable
 Houston Average: 9%
 Source: Health of Houston Survey 2010



Economic Hardship (18+ Years)
 58 - 68%
 48 - 57%
 38 - 47%
 22 - 37%
 Houston Average: 48%
 Source: Health of Houston Survey 2010

Health and Community Design

The built environment, including our homes, businesses, parks and green spaces, infrastructure, transportation networks, and public buildings, shape our neighborhoods. These same factors impact opportunities for walkability, economic opportunity, recreation, play, safety, social cohesion and health—in other words these factors are both determinants of the health of a neighborhood and determined by the health of a neighborhood.

As a result the neighborhoods where we live impact our chances to live healthy lives, rich with opportunities. In cities across the U.S., including Houston, the distribution of resources and the quality of our built environments, public spaces and neighborhoods are not equal. The socio-economic context of our neighborhoods— income, race, housing, education, and employment—is more often than not directly correlated to the health of the people that call them home. Some neighborhoods have plentiful fresh food options while others are food deserts, some neighborhoods have well-maintained parks while others do not, and some neighborhoods thrive while others decline.

The goal of this project has been to identify the determinants of health that can be impacted by community design. Much work has been done to this end over the last decade, as more and more resources are expended on addressing existing individual health problems, instead of understanding how the larger environment effects health issues and proactively working to ensure that all of our communities and the people who call them home have an opportunity to be healthy. At the national level, the Healthy People 2020 program includes two broad goals that can be addressed through community design. First, creating social and physical environments that promote good health for all. Second, promoting quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Seven strategies for building healthy communities were identified. The strategies include: Food Security, Education, Environmental Justice, Neighborhood Stability, Economic Opportunity, Safety, and Public Spaces and Amenities. Each strategy is defined and detailed on the pages that follow, including the potential impacts.

"Where people live affects their health and chances of leading flourishing lives."

World Health Organization

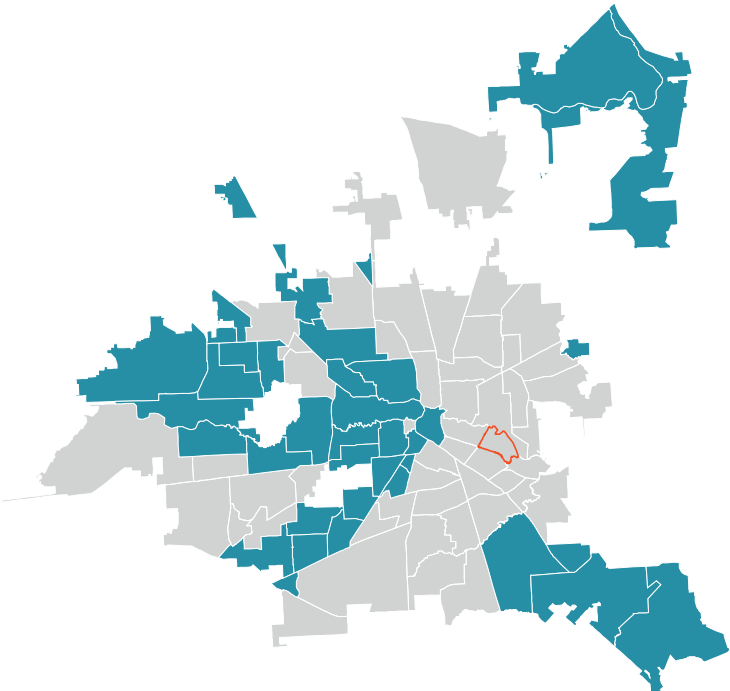
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Healthy communities depend on healthy economies, equity, and opportunities to succeed, including:

- Employment opportunities
- Access to employment resources, such as computers, job training and learning opportunities
- Wealth building opportunities such as home ownership
- Local businesses
- Entrepreneurial opportunities
- Access to banking services

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Reduced Stress
- Improved Personal Health
- Greater Equity and Family Wealth
- Safer Neighborhood Greater Social Cohesion
- Improved Property Values



Median Household Income (2010)
■ Above Median
■ Below Median

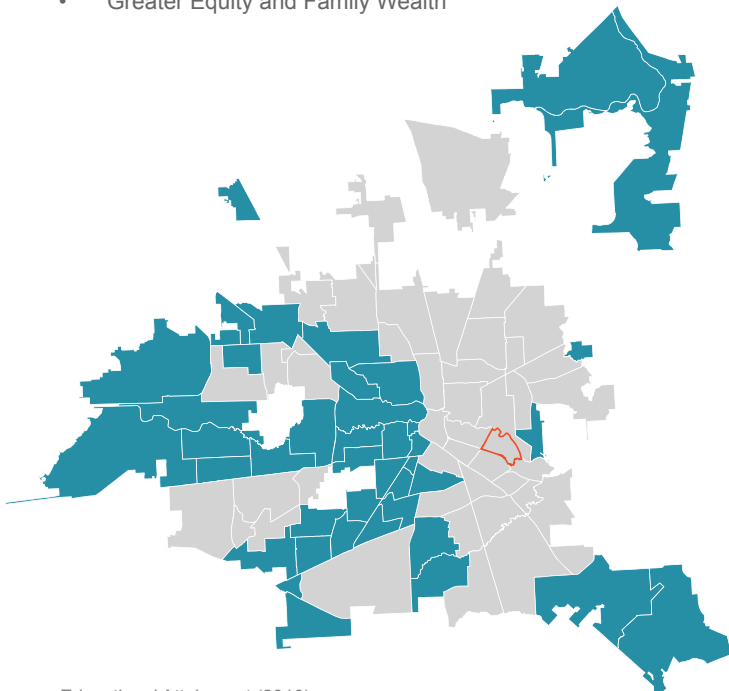
EDUCATION

Education is the foundation for our future, ensuring quality school environments and lifelong learning opportunities enhances economic success and community health, including:

- Schools that are the center of communities, with shared spaces, resources and programs
- Multi-generational learning opportunities
- Quality after-school programming

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased Physical Activity
- Reduced Obesity
- Improved Personal Health
- Community Activation
- Safer Neighborhood
- Greater Social Cohesion
- Economic Prosperity
- Greater Equity and Family Wealth



Educational Attainment (2010)
Percent of Population over 25 years
With a High School Diploma
■ Above Houston Average (74%)
■ Below Houston Average

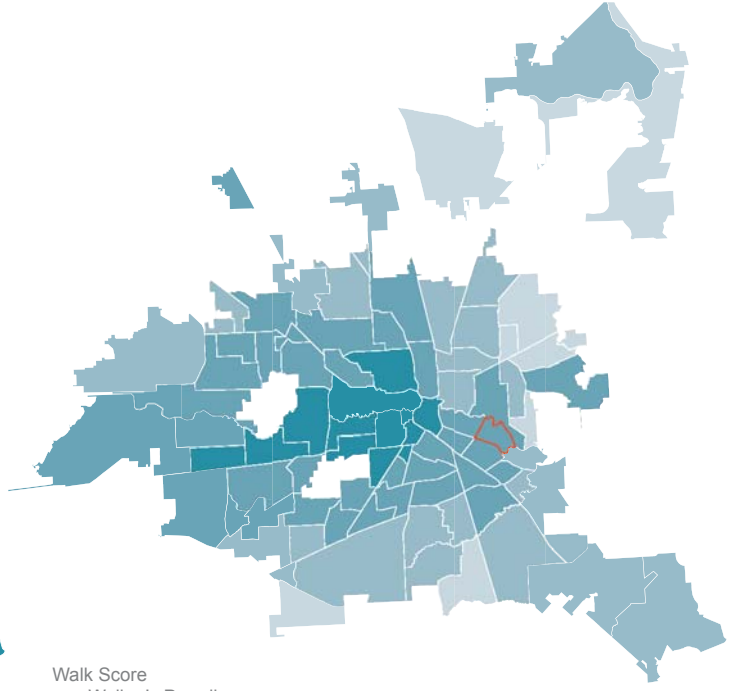
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

A neighborhood free from environmental hazards is a healthier community, including:

- Accessible waste and recycling systems to eliminate litter and dumping
- Freedom from pollution, including hazardous air, soils and industries
- Elimination of blight and abandoned or hazardous properties
- Transit options that eliminate air pollution

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Improved Personal Health
- Community Activation
- Reduced Stress
- Improved Property Values



Walk Score
■ Walker's Paradise
■ Very Walkable
■ Somewhat Walkable
■ Car Dependent
■ Extremely Car Dependent

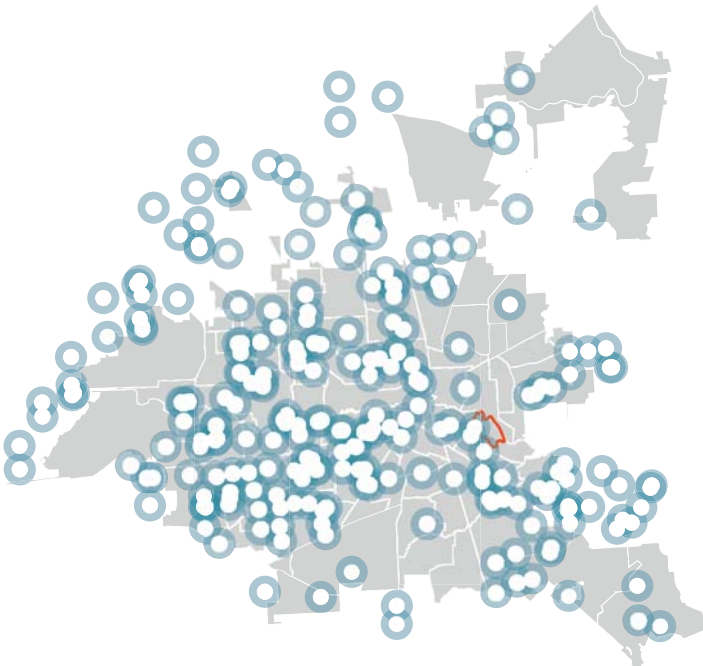
FOOD SECURITY

Creating neighborhoods where the healthy choice is the easy choice begins with the basics, access to healthy food, including:

- Convenient access to fresh, affordable, and nutritious foods, whether at nearby grocery stores, community gardens, or local farmers markets
- Healthy restaurant options
- Limited fast food, liquor and convenient stores
- Urban farming and garden programs
- Nutrition and cooking classes

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Healthy Eating
- Increased Physical Activity
- Reduced Obesity
- Improved Personal Health
- Greater Social Cohesion



Map of Grocery Stores (2011)

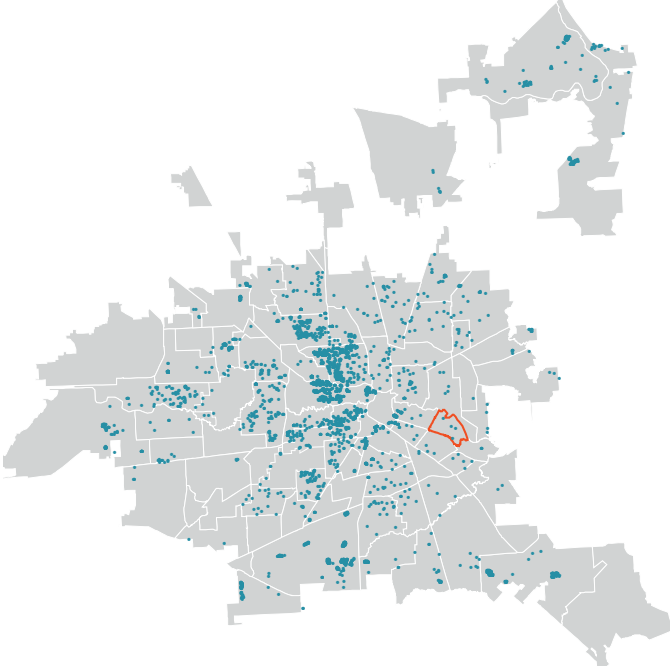
NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY

The strength and stability of a neighborhood impacts the health of residents through social engagement, ownership and empowerment, including:

- Building community pride and identity
- Engaging residents to invest in their neighborhood
- Locally organized civic events to bring people together
- Multi-generational activities, especially at schools or senior centers
- Programs that celebrate the history and future of a neighborhood

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Community Activation
- Safer Neighborhood
- Greater Social Cohesion
- Increased Community Pride
- Reduced Stress
- Improved Property Values



Single-Family Housing Permits (2012)

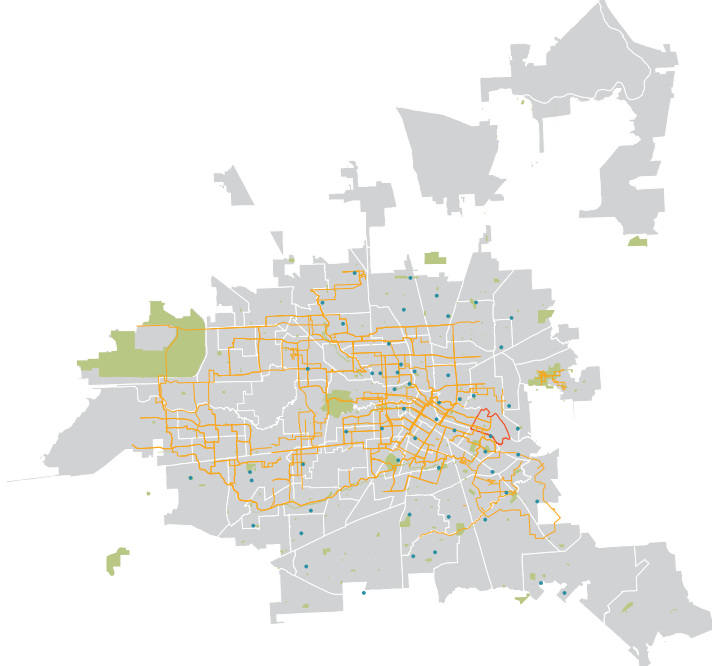
PUBLIC SPACES AND AMENITIES

Neighborhoods designed to promote healthy lifestyles have quality public spaces and the infrastructure to make it easy to walk or bike as part of a daily routine, including:

- Complete Streets (streets designed for transit, pedestrians, and cyclists)
- Greenery and shade along pedestrian routes
- Wide sidewalks
- Dense, mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods
- Accessible libraries, clinics, parks, schools and recreational centers
- Safe routes to schools

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased Physical Activity
- Reduced Obesity
- Improved Personal Health
- Community Activation
- Safer Neighborhood
- Greater Social Cohesion



Public Amenities
Parks
Bike Routes
Community Centers

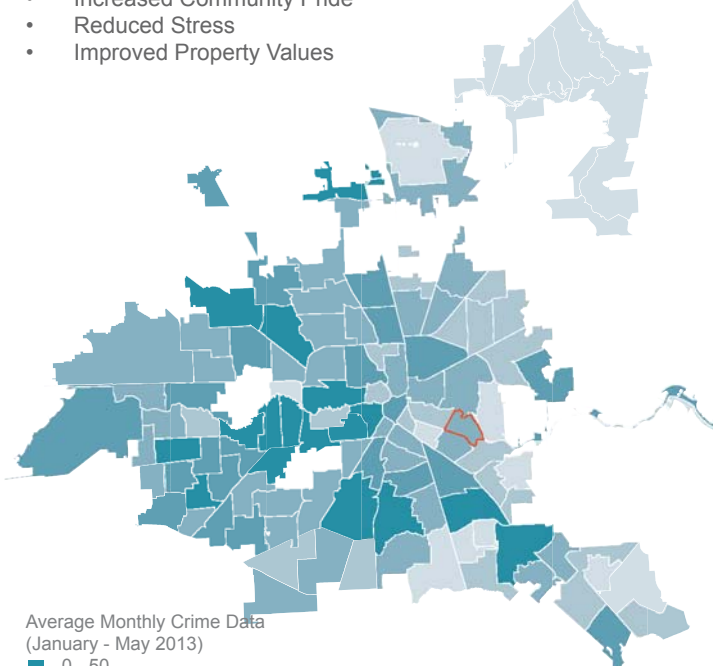
SAFETY

A healthy community is a safe community, and safety is influenced by how well a neighborhood is cared for, including:

- Freedom from crime and violence
- Adequate street lighting
- Freedom from stray animals
- Resident led safety programs, for example Neighborhood Watch
- Well maintained vacant lots and vacant homes
- No littering or dumping

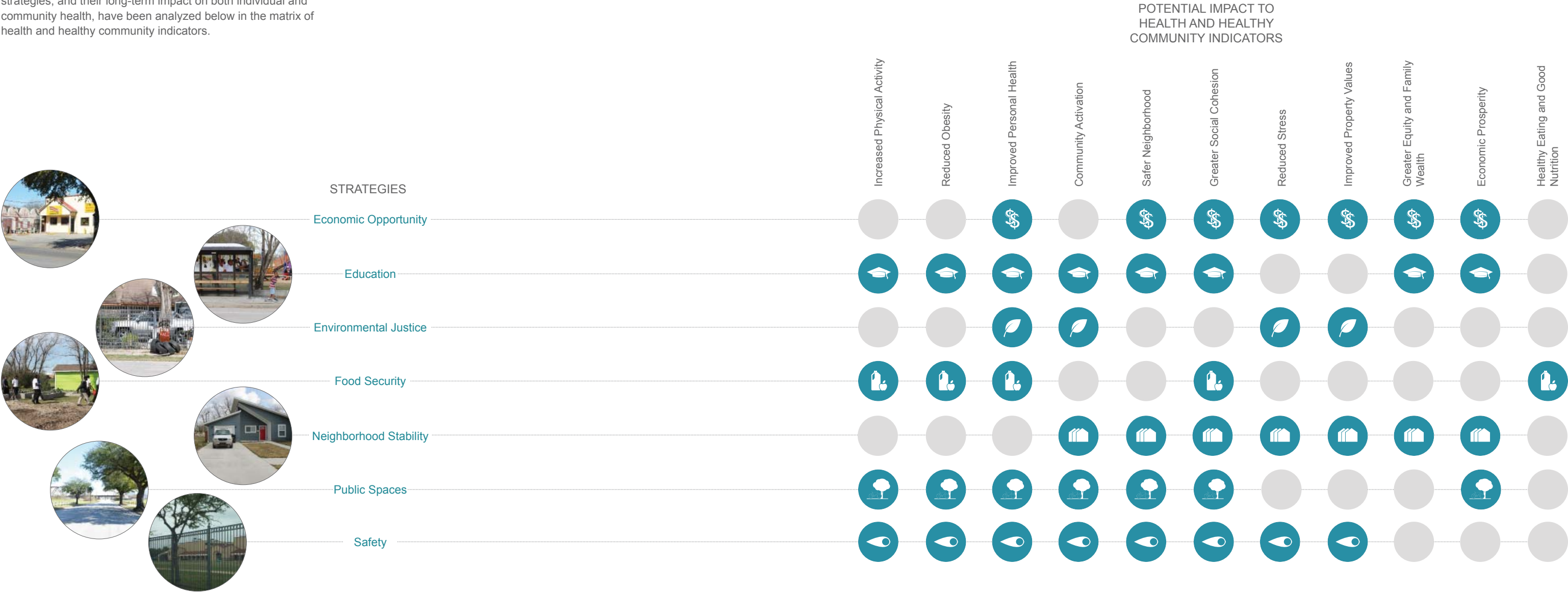
POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased Physical Activity
- Reduced Obesity
- Improved Personal Health
- Community Activation
- Safer Neighborhood
- Greater Social Cohesion
- Increased Community Pride
- Reduced Stress
- Improved Property Values

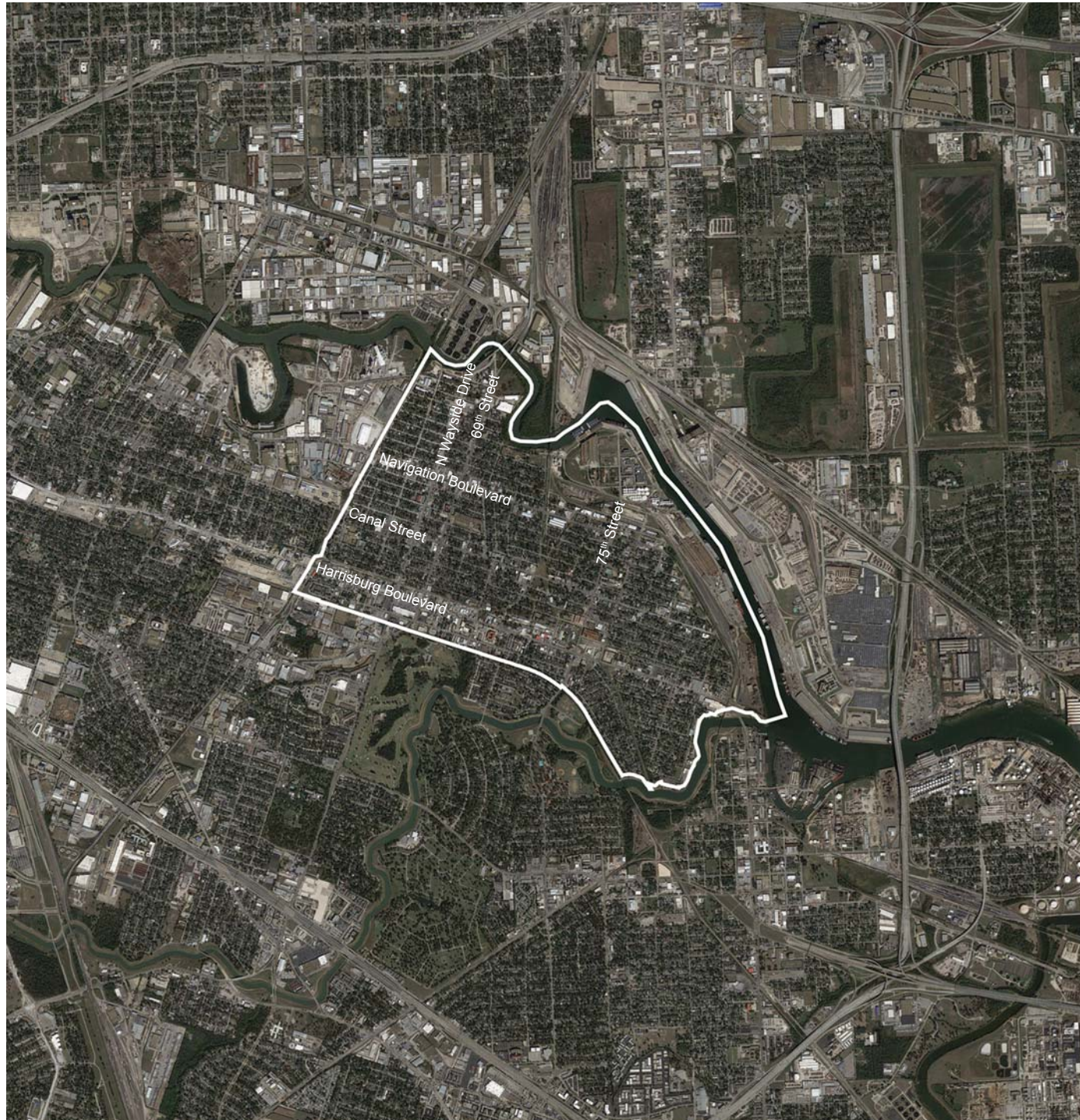


Average Monthly Crime Data
(January - May 2013)
0 - 50
51 - 100
101 - 150
151 - 200
200 +

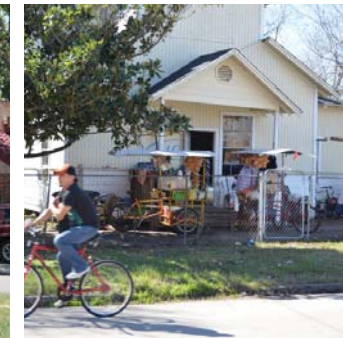
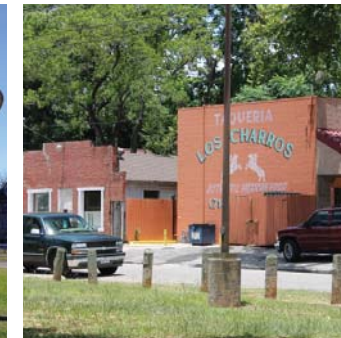
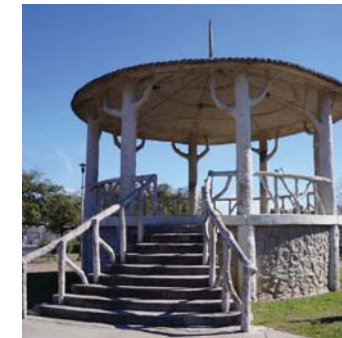
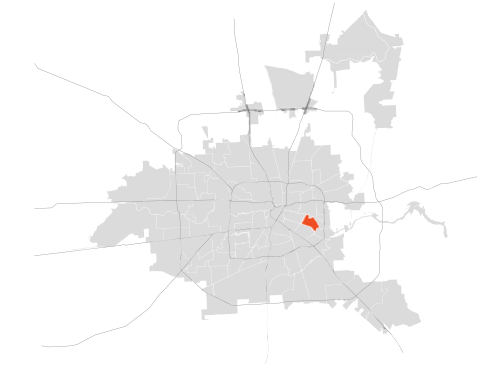
The seven healthy community design strategies address economic opportunity, education, environmental justice, food security, neighborhood stability, public spaces, and safety. The seven strategies focus on building a healthy community by increasing physical activity, social cohesion, economic prosperity, equity and healthy eating, while reducing obesity and stress. The seven strategies, and their long-term impact on both individual and community health, have been analyzed below in the matrix of health and healthy community indicators.



Magnolia Park



Magnolia Park



Magnolia Park, just east of downtown, is one of the Houston's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods. The neighborhood is bounded by Buffalo Bayou on the north, Rusk Street on the south, Brays Bayou on the east, and Terminal Road on the west. The Houston Ship Channel and other industrial land uses define Magnolia Park's northern edge, while dense neighborhoods of single-family homes define much of the remainder of the area. Harrisburg Boulevard is the primary shopping and commercial corridor and where the East End's METRO Light Rail line is being constructed. The light rail line will connect Magnolia Park to downtown and other destinations throughout the city, the transit route is planned to be operational in 2014.

Magnolia Park is one of Houston's smallest super neighborhoods and one of the most densely populated. In this close-knit

community generations of residents share a deep sense of pride in the history, political activism, and culture of the neighborhood. Magnolia Park's resources include proximity to two major bayous, Brays and Buffalo, a number of parks, historic buildings, and easy access to downtown and other central destinations. Over the last ten years there has been major public investment in the neighborhood, including the soon to be complete East End Light Rail line and new trails and amenities along Brays Bayou. It seems clear that over the coming decades the neighborhood will experience great change. Exploring how future development and public investment can benefit existing residents, while also accommodating growth and change, is one of the major goals of the project, along with ensuring that Magnolia Park continues to be a strong, connected, and mixed-use neighborhood that is a healthy place to live and raise a family.

History

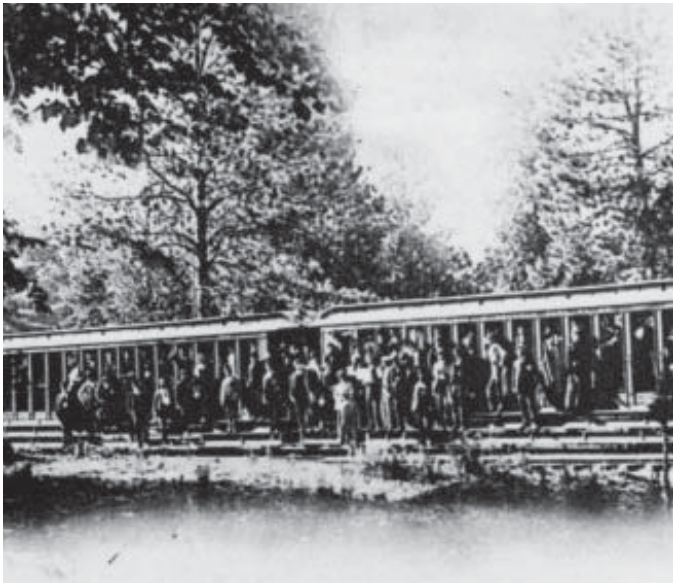
The 1374-acre site that is now Magnolia Park was originally owned by Thomas M. Brady. The land, initially planned to be a park, began being developed as a residential community in the 1900s.

Investment and development of the neighborhood flourished and in 1913 the community became an independent municipality. The original City Hall, constructed in 1923, and located at 7301 Avenue F, is the only remaining municipal structure of the former City of Magnolia Park. In 2010 the structure was designated a “Protected Historic Landmark” by the City of Houston.

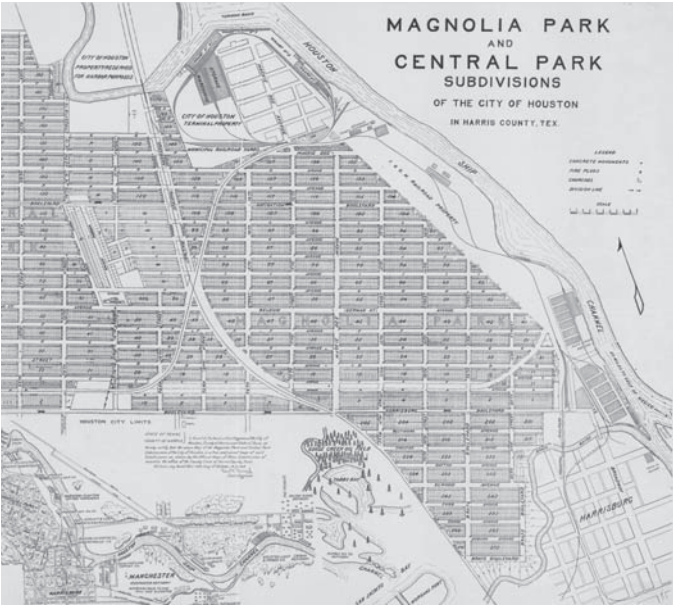
Magnolia Park was first settled by whites, but by 1911 Mexican-Americans from South Texas began arriving, first settling in the area filled by sand dredged from the turning basin and known as El Arenal or the Sands. Most of the new settlers found jobs at the Ship Channel, adjacent industries or laying new railroads. As time passed, residents of Mexican origin purchased lots at the townsite, built single-family homes, and fostered an active Mexican cultural life through clubs, political and fraternal organizations, theatrical

groups, and events. Organizations like the Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez, founded in 1919, provided mutual aid and a hall for social functions. Churches, such as Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, and Immaculate Conception served as community centers.

In October 1926 Magnolia Park was annexed to the city of Houston. By 1929 Magnolia Park, surrounded by refineries, factories, textile mills, industrial plants, and wharves, was the largest Mexican neighborhood in Houston. The Escuela Mexicana Hidalgo, a private school organized to preserve Mexican culture, was established in the community by 1930. Political organizations developed, and groups like Club Femenino-Chapultepec provided recreation, promoted Mexican-American culture, and protested segregation in the city.



Historic Magnolia Park Photo



Historic Magnolia Park Map



1953 Aerial



1978 Aerial



2013 Aerial

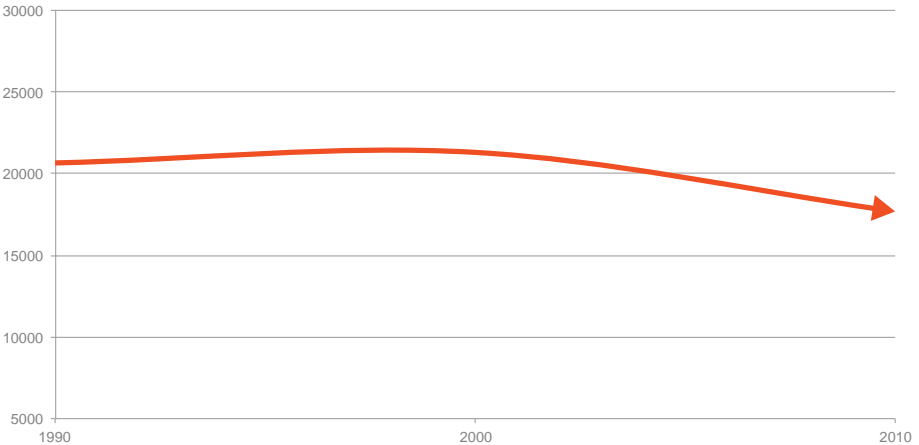
Context

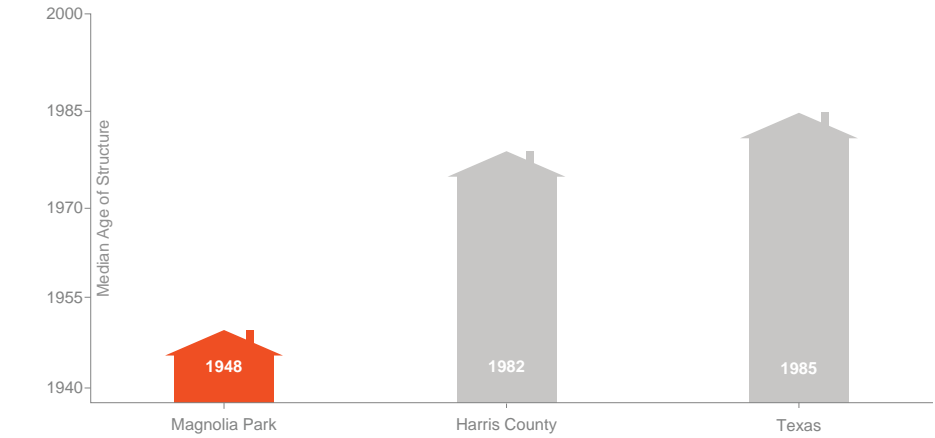
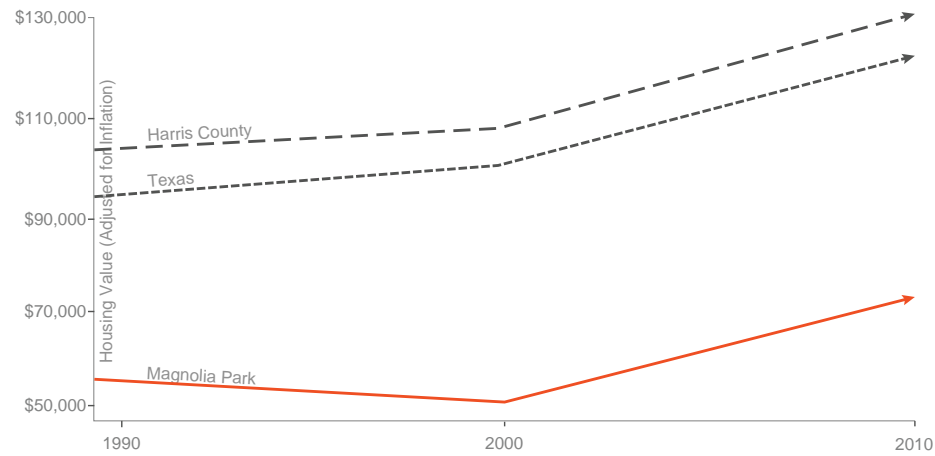
Magnolia Park is a densely populated neighborhood with a compact pattern of development. Single-family homes are the predominant building type, with bayous, railroad lines, and industrial uses defining the edges of the neighborhood. Over the last 100 years the built fabric in Magnolia Park has not substantially changed, and as a result there is very little vacant land.

Magnolia Park is 2.6 square miles in area and home to 17,684 people. The population density of the area is approximately 7,000 people per square mile, roughly twice the average population density of the city of Houston. Over the last twenty years Magnolia Park's population has declined by 14%, and over this same time period the number of residents under the age of 18 has declined by 30%, dropping from 8,250 in 1990 to 5,836 in 2010. Simultaneously the number of residents over the age of 65 has increased by 22%. In order for Magnolia Park to continue to flourish strategies need to be developed that make the neighborhood an attractive place to raise a young family, as well as finding ways to meet the needs of the increasing number of seniors.



ABOVE; Figure Ground
OPPOSITE PAGE, Top Right: Map of Vacant Land
OPPOSITE PAGE, Bottom: Magnolia Park
Population, 1990-2010





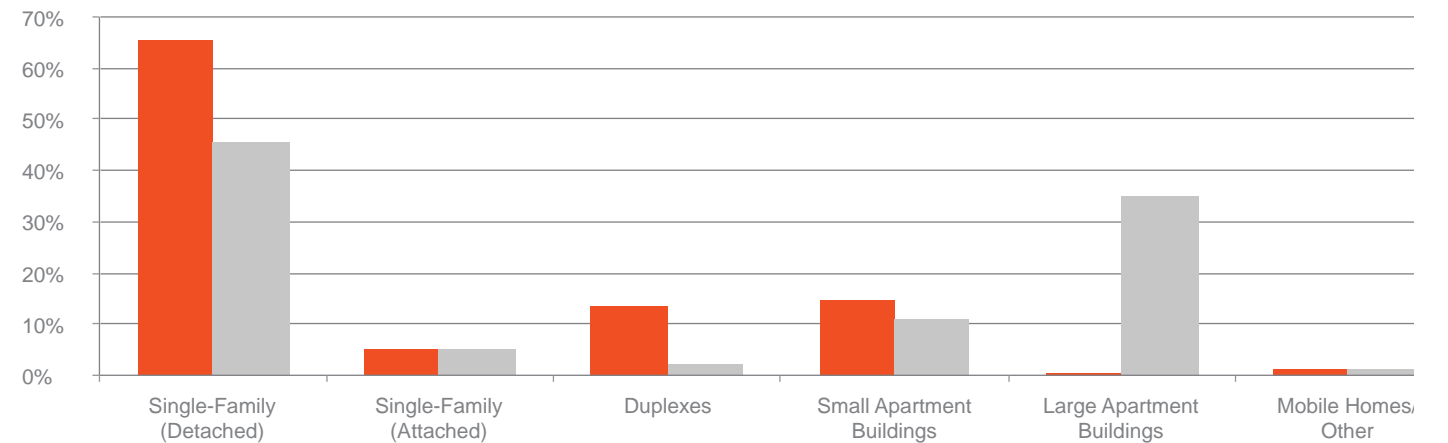
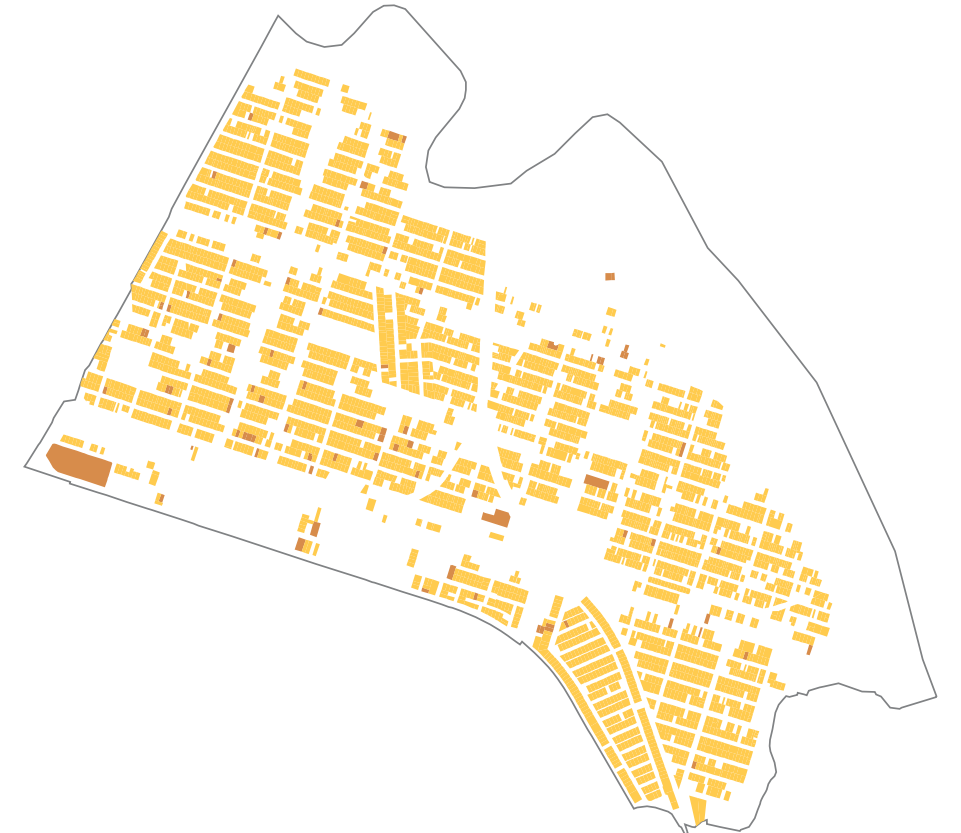
ABOVE, Left: Housing Value
 LEFT: Median Year Structure Built
 BELOW: Magnolia Park Photos by T. Lyon, N. Hori,
 D. Yao
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Right: Residential Land Use
 Single Family
 Multi-Family
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Bottom: Housing by Type
 Magnolia Park
 Houston



Single-family housing is the primary form of residence in Magnolia Park, comprising 65% of all housing by type. Only a few scattered site duplexes and small multi-family apartments are in the area, and these are clustered near Harrisburg Boulevard. Combined, attached single-family housing, duplexes, and apartments make up the remaining 35% of housing (see chart below). Comparatively 46% of all housing in Houston is single-family, and 35% is in large apartment complexes with 10 units or more.

Magnolia Park has similar housing demographics to the city of Houston. In 2010 the percentage of residents who owned their home was 45%, which mirrors the city, and this number has remained stable over the last twenty years.

The median age of housing in Magnolia Park is 1948, compared to 1975 for Houston, and 1982 for Harris County. The median value of housing in Magnolia Park has increased over the past decade, at a similar rate as Harris County and Texas. However, homes remain very affordable in the neighborhood, with a median value of just under \$70,000.

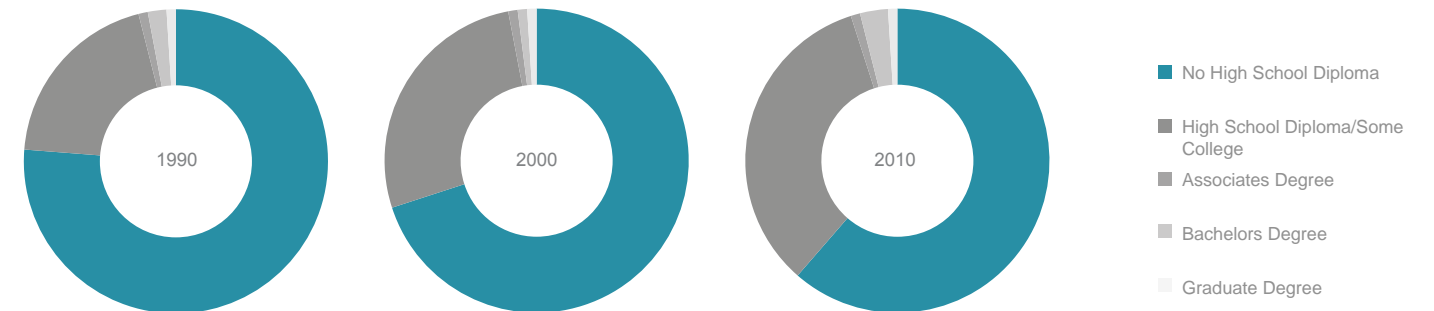




ABOVE: Map of Magnolia Park Schools
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Middle: Educational Attainment, 1990-2010
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Bottom: Magnolia Park School Photos

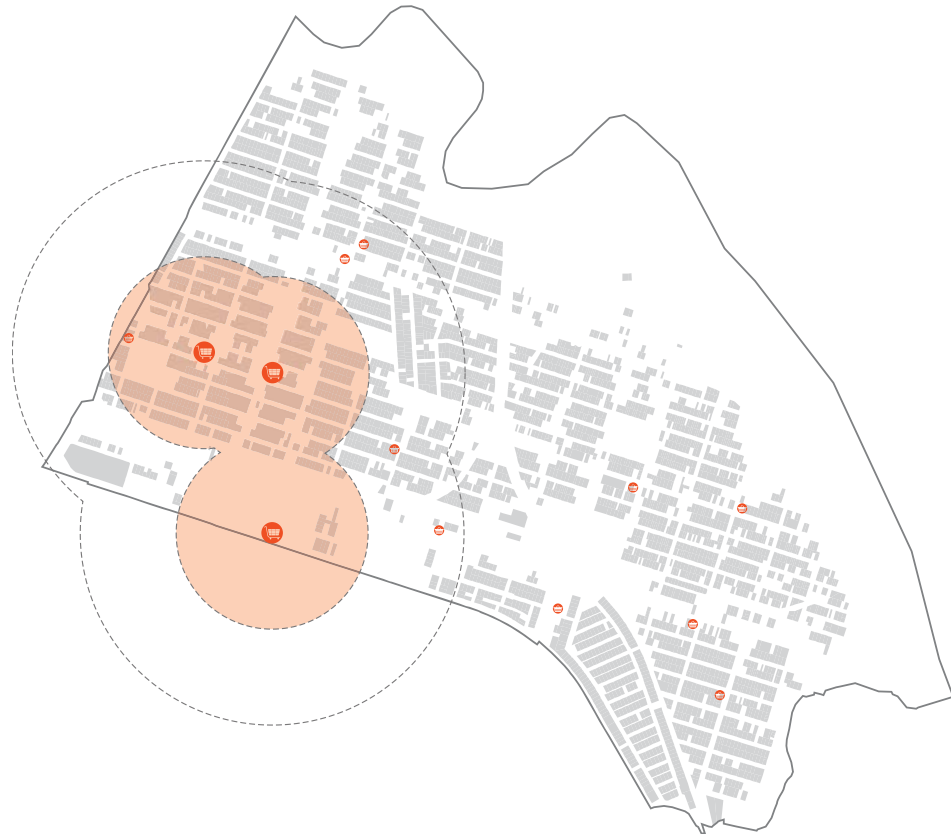
There are five HISD public schools in Magnolia Park: De Zavala, Franklin, Gallegos, and Tijerina Elementary Schools; and Edison Middle School. Milby High School, which serves Magnolia Park, is located just outside of the neighborhood to the east.

The success of our neighborhoods is closely tied to the education of our residents. There is a clear statistical correlation between education and income, and both impact our health, quality of life, and opportunities. Education, throughout Houston's east end, has been a challenge for many years, and Magnolia Park is no different. In 2010 the US Census reported that 62% of Magnolia Park residents over the age of 25 had not completed high school. While this number is an improvement from 1990 when 77% of the population had not finished high school, it is 2.4 times higher than Houston's 26%. Furthermore, only 4% of Magnolia Park residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, while in Houston 29% of residents have earned a college degree.



The percent of residents without a high school diploma has fallen over the last twenty years, but remains very high at 62%.





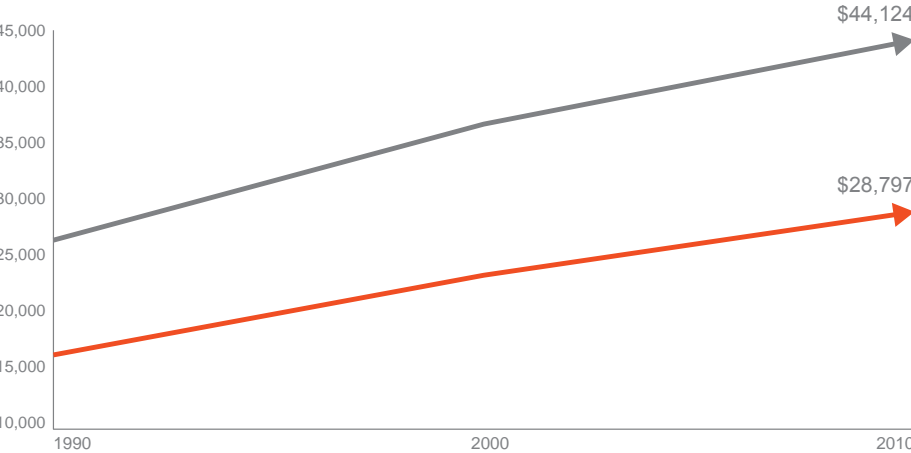
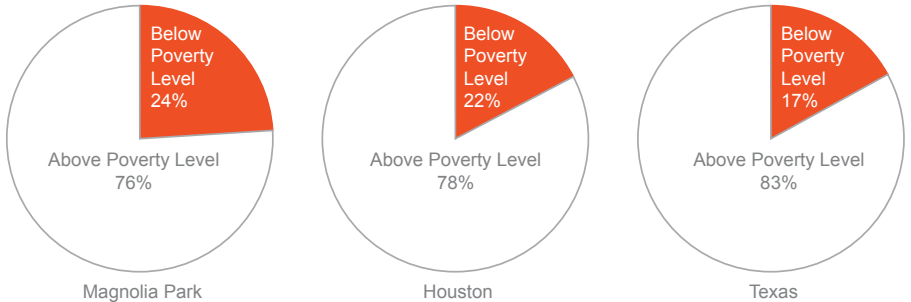
ABOVE: Map of Grocery and Convenience Stores (1/4-Mile and 1/2-Mile Walking Distance)
 Grocery Stores
 Convenience Stores
 BELOW, From Left to Right: Sellers Bros., La Michoacana, El Ahorro



In many ways, access to healthy food is a function of neighborhood income and grocers locate in the most successful communities. Magnolia Park is no different, the area has three Houston-based grocery stores—Sellers Bros, La Michoacana, and El Ahorro—but no major national franchises. There are a number of other small grocery and convenience stores throughout the neighborhood. However, easy access to healthy and fresh food is a challenge for many residents, especially on the east side of the neighborhood.

The 2010 median household income in the Magnolia Park Super Neighborhood was \$28,797, approximately 65% of the Houston median of \$44,124. The percent of families living below the federal poverty rate in Magnolia Park has declined significantly in the last twenty years from 34% in 1990 to 24% in 2010. In Houston 22% of households live below the poverty line.

ABOVE, Right: Poverty Level, 2010
 RIGHT: Median Household Income, 1990-2010
 Magnolia Park
 Houston
 BELOW: Magnolia Park Photo





Magnolia Park has an abundance of industrial land uses, particularly along the Houston Ship Channel, which defines the northern and eastern boundaries of the neighborhood. Many of these industries have been in the neighborhood for decades. Numerous active rail lines, which serve the industries, criss-cross the neighborhood. Commercial and retail areas dominate along Harrisburg Boulevard running east to west and N. Wayside Drive, 75th and 76th Streets running north to south.

According to the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services within one mile of Magnolia Park there are 36 Toxic Release Inventory reporting facilities, 10 Large Quantity Generators of hazardous waste, 3 facilities that treat, store, or dispose of hazardous waste, 6 major dischargers of air pollutants, and 6 major storm water discharging facilities. In all, these sites total approximately 10% of all monitored facilities and potential hazardous sites in the Houston area.

RIGHT: Commercial and Industrial Land Uses

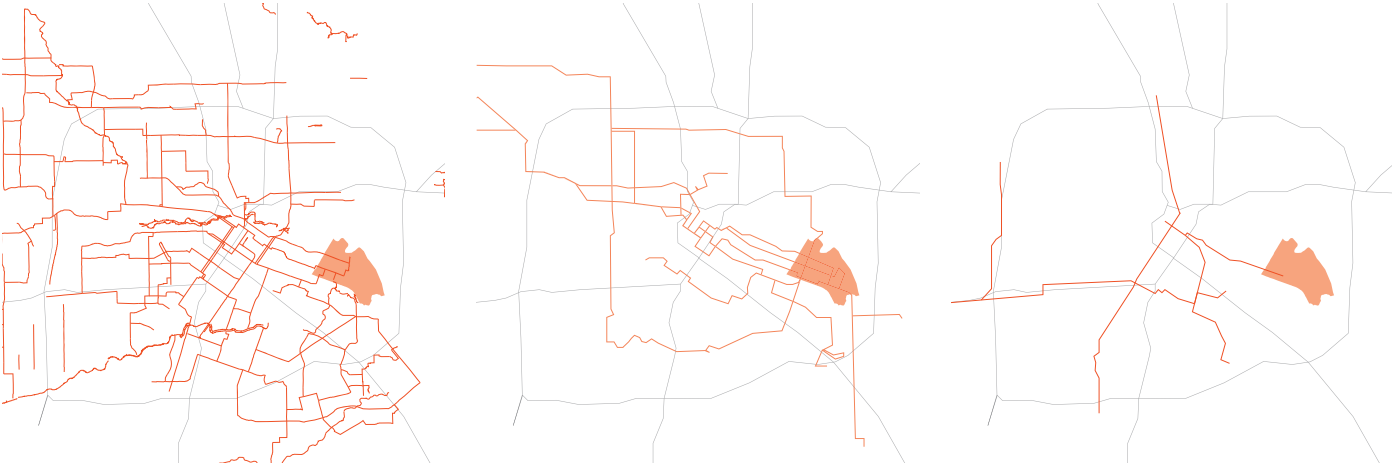
- Commercial
- Industrial

BELOW, Left: Map of Railroad Lines

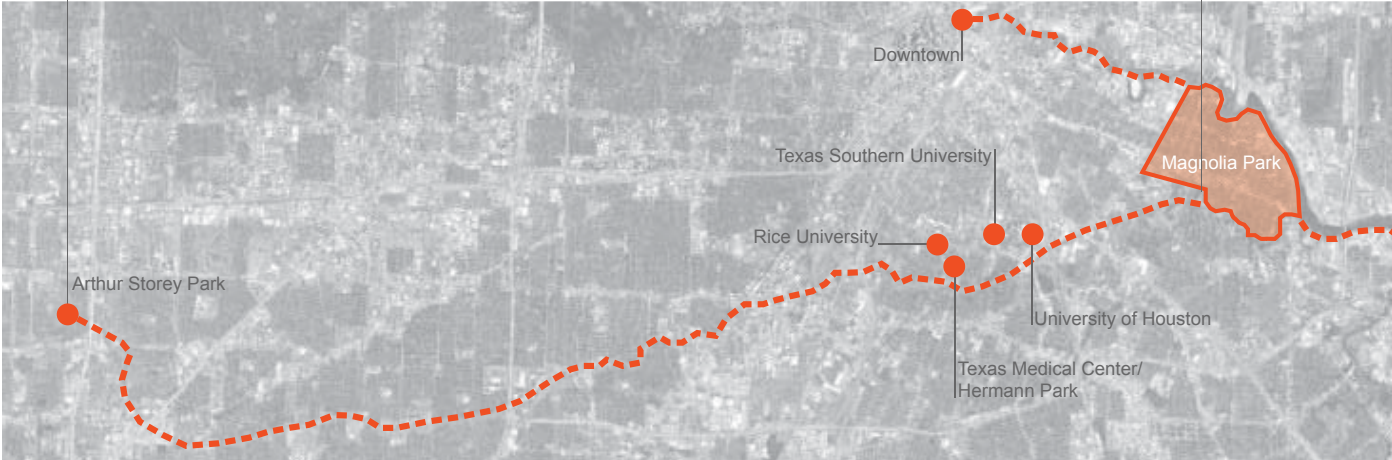
BELOW, Right: Magnolia Park Photo



Magnolia Park is well served by public transit and hike and bike trails.



ABOVE, From Left to Right: Bike Trails; Metro Bus Lines; Metro Light Rail Lines
BELOW: Proposed Trails along Buffalo and Brays Bayous, Bayou Greenway Initiative
Graphics by N. Hori, T. Lyon, D. Yao



Magnolia Park is a densely populated and walkable community. Walking at a comfortable pace one can traverse the entire neighborhood on foot in less than an hour. In addition the neighborhood is served by a number of hike and bike trails, with additional trails either in the planning or construction phases.

Trails in the area include the Harrisburg Sunset Trail, a “Rails to Trails” project completed in 2003, which begins just east of downtown Houston and connects to Hidalgo Park. The planned Brays Bayou Hike and Bike Trails are nearly in place, with more than half of the 30 miles of trails completed. The Brays Bayou trails will connect Magnolia Park to the University of Houston, Texas Medical Center, and other destinations further west. Finally, the Bayou Greenway Initiative plans to extend the trails along Buffalo Bayou from downtown east to Magnolia Park, the bayou is the northern boundary of the neighborhood.

Magnolia Park is well served by transit. Eight bus routes travel through the Magnolia Transit Center, located near the center of the neighborhood on Harrisburg just east of 70th Street, and directly adjacent to the Magnolia Multi-Service Center. The routes connect transit riders to downtown, the Texas Medical Center, Gulfgate Center, the University of Houston, and Hobby Airport, among numerous other destinations.

The East End Light Rail line, currently near completion, will travel along Harrisburg from the Magnolia Park Transit Center west to downtown. The transit line will connect to both the Main Street and Southeast Light Rail lines, connecting residents to additional entertainment, employment, and educational centers throughout the city.



ABOVE: Magnolia Park Neighborhood Scale
BELOW: Rendering of Metro East End Light Rail Stop, METRO

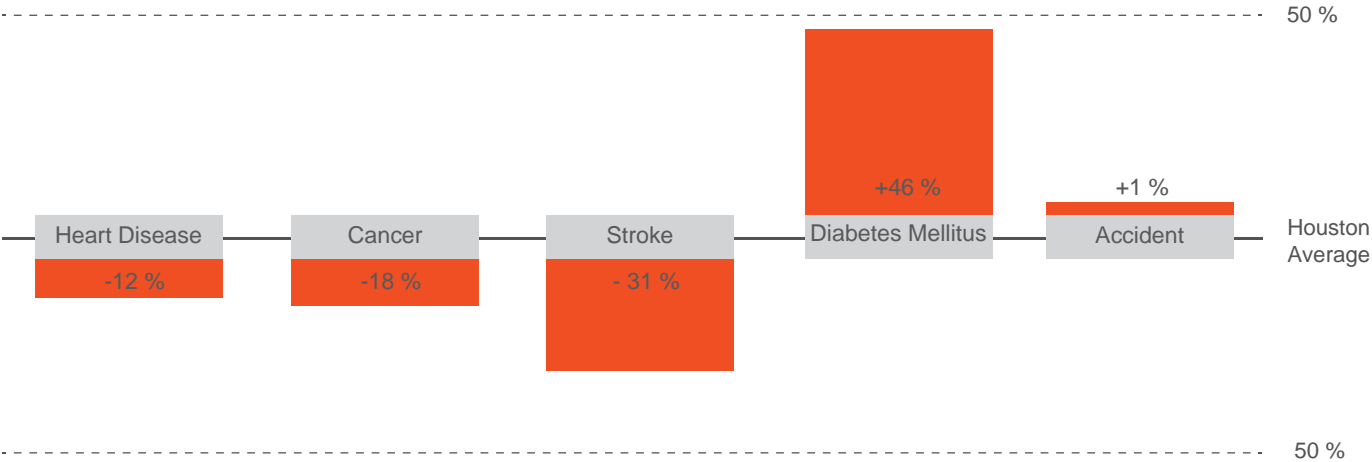
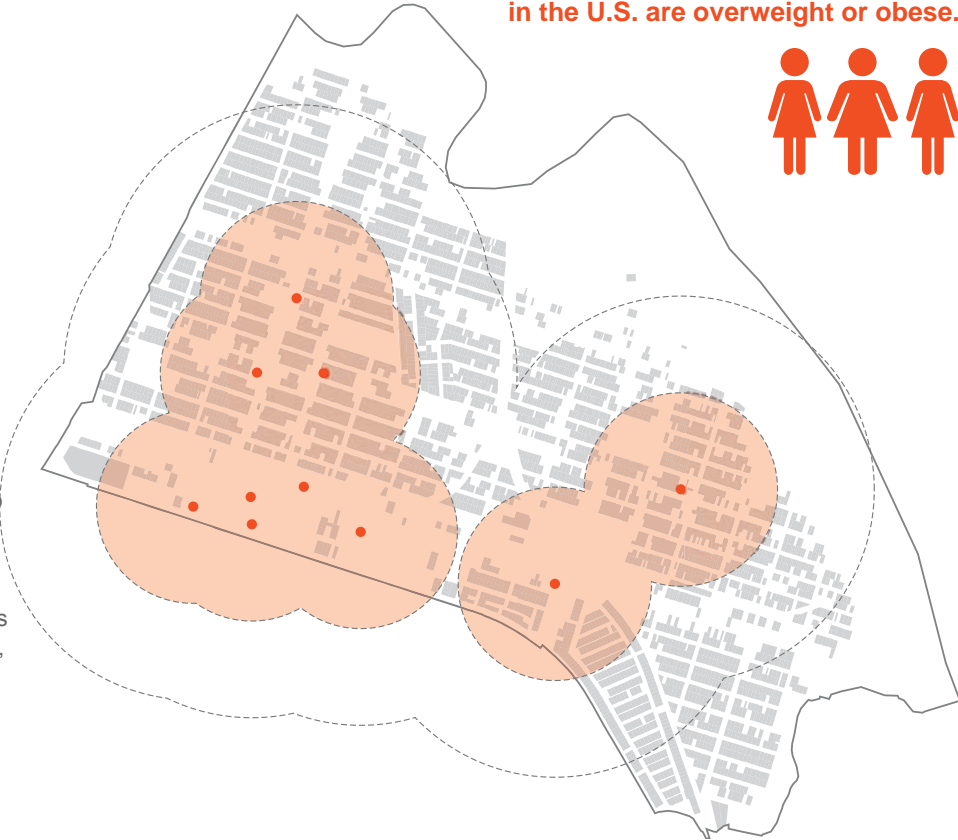
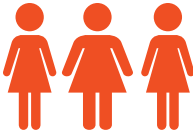


Magnolia Park is a healthy neighborhood. Based on data from the City of Houston’s Department of Health and Human Services “Community Health Profile,” the mortality rate for neighborhood residents was lower compared to Houston’s mortality rate for heart disease, cancer, and stroke. The one chronic disease that poses a threat in the neighborhood is diabetes. This illness impacts a much higher percentage of residents in Magnolia Park than in Houston overall.

Regular exercise and healthy eating can assist diabetics in living long and healthy lives. Parks and open spaces that are easily accessible to residents, safe, and well-maintained can greatly increase the likelihood of regular exercise and have also been found to increase property values. Specifically, studies have found that children who live within two-thirds of a mile from a park with a playground are five times more likely to have a healthy weight. Today, one out of three children in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Accessibility to parks and fresh food are key components for making the healthy choice the easy choice in Magnolia Park.

RIGHT: Map of Health Clinics
(1/4-Mile and 1/2-Mile Walking Distance)
BELOW: Health Indicators, Magnolia Park Compared to Houston, from DHHS

Nearly one of every three children in the U.S. are overweight or obese.



Magnolia Park has three parks: Buffalo Bend Nature Park; Hidalgo Park; and De Zavala Park. Combined the neighborhood parks total 13.3 acres, or approximately 32 square feet per resident, which is far below the Houston average. New parks, particularly small pocket parks and plazas, would help to build a stronger network of green space.

Hidalgo Park adjacent to Buffalo Bayou has been an integral part of the civic and cultural history of the neighborhood since its' founding in 1934. Residents originally purchased the park property and sponsored the construction of the gazebo-like “quiosco.” The quiosco has been the center of many Mexican-American celebrations over the years. The structure was designated a state historic landmark in 2011.

Just south of Magnolia Park is Mason Park, a large and historic park on the banks of Brays Bayou.

RIGHT: Park Map
(2/3 Mile Walking Distance)
BELOW, From Left to Right: Hidalgo Park, De Zavala Park, Buffalo Bend Nature Park, Photos by T. Lyon, N. Hori, D. Yao

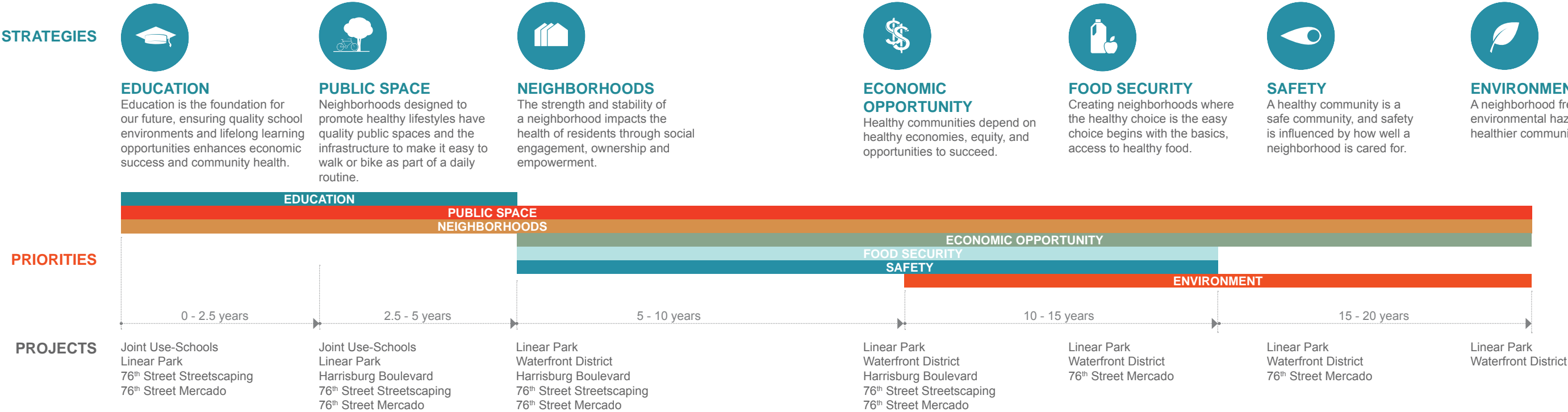


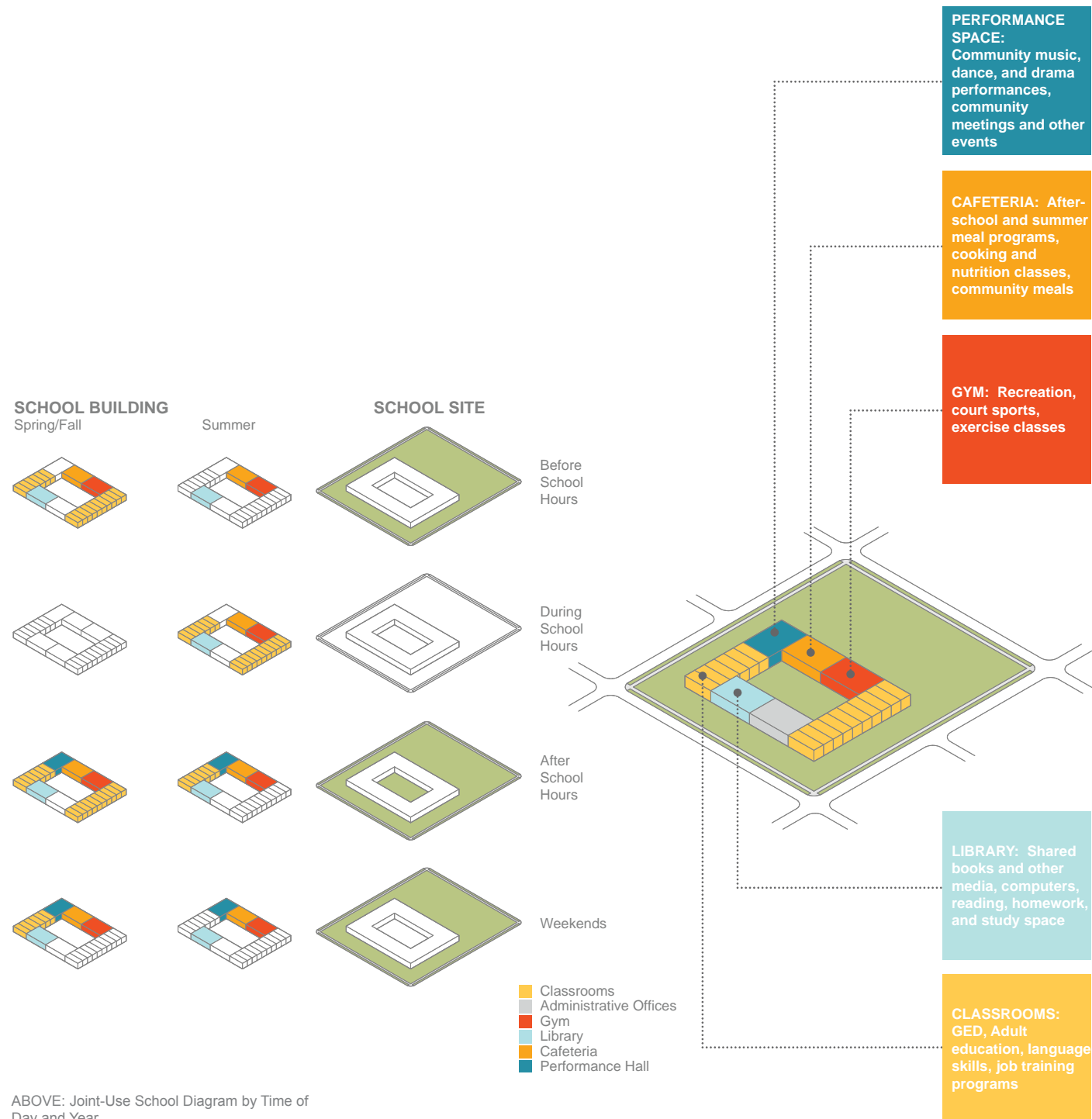
Healthy Community Design Strategies

Healthy Community Design Strategies

Seven strategies, listed below, have been identified to address the challenges of building a healthy neighborhood through community design. The strategies for Magnolia Park focus on education by developing the resources of neighborhood schools so that they become the center of community activity and health; building on the network of public spaces to encourage physical activity and walking; and stabilizing existing neighborhoods so that they can continue to draw young families and support residents throughout their lives. Many of the community design ideas work across several strategies, for example joint-use schools could improve educational success, the health of residents, food security, and neighborhood stability. Each design idea is covered in detail on the following pages.

The healthy community design strategies for Magnolia Park focus on education, public space, and neighborhoods.





ABOVE: Joint-Use School Diagram by Time of Day and Year

EDUCATION Joint-Use Schools

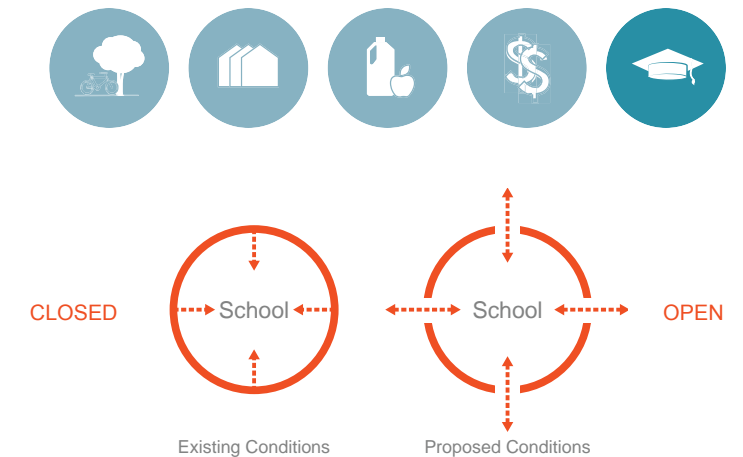
There are more public school buildings than any other public facility in the United States; the buildings contain an estimated 6.6 billion square feet of space on more than one million acres of land.

Demographic shifts, changing housing patterns, and new school capital investments present an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the ways local government and schools work together to provide for the people who depend on them and the resources they manage. This is especially important for low-income, low-resource urban communities who disproportionately struggle to meet community needs.

The Center for Cities and Schools at the University of California at Berkeley reports that there is a growing interest in creating innovative joint use programs for neighborhood schools. It is one way to expand services for children and families, increase opportunities for physical activity and healthy living, and provide additional educational, cultural, and civic uses. The Center's list of potential joint uses include gyms, outdoor recreational spaces, libraries, performance venues, cafeterias and kitchens, and meeting spaces.

Magnolia Park's schools have the potential to become community centers and civic hubs with continuous activity. The Spark Park program is a model for how joint uses might be achieved. Sharing civic facilities could greatly enhance the health and livability of the neighborhood, not just in Magnolia Park but throughout Houston.

RIGHT, Top: Conceptual Diagram of Open Schools
Concept by N. Hori, T. Lyon, D. Yao
RIGHT: Map of Schools



PUBLIC SPACE

Linear Park

Walkability and access to parks are key elements for encouraging healthy lifestyles. Magnolia Park is located at the confluence of two major bayous, Buffalo and Brays. The Bayou Greenway Initiative is a program to develop trails along all of Houston's major bayous. As a result, in the future both of the bayous will be lined with trails and Magnolia Park will be connected to destinations such as the University of Houston, Texas Southern University, the Texas Medical Center, downtown, Rice University, and other places. In addition, a necklace of major parks occur along the bayous, including Hermann and Mason Park.

Over the last decade the City of Houston has expanded its trails and bikeways throughout the city to encourage alternative transportation and physical activity. The Harrisburg and Sunset Trail, which serves the greater East End, is part of this expanded system. Sunset Trail runs from Hidalgo Park south to Canal Street and then links via on-street bikeways to the Harrisburg Trail, which connects west to downtown; developing and building on this neighborhood amenity promises to draw new families and residents to the area.

The Linear Park strategy aims to enhance the quality of the existing Harrisburg and Sunset Trail by inserting new public programs, attractions, and amenities and extending the trail south to Brays Bayou. The connection to Brays Bayou could be made via an electrical easement. Legislation was just passed opening up these right-of-ways for recreational trails. The strategy will open up the trail to new users and programs and transform it into a green network that links throughout the neighborhood.



The two-part Linear Park strategy proposes a string of active, programmed and quality green spaces through the heart of Magnolia Park. The first part of the strategy is to extend Sunset Trail south to Brays Bayou. Because of the location of Community Family Centers the extension would be an on-street trail Canal to Harrisburg. The extension south from Harrisburg to Brays Bayou would be along an existing utility easement. In addition to the extension of the trail, three programmatic nodes have been developed to activate the linear park. The community node (1) includes an outdoor performance space, public art, community garden, and the proposed Dynamo public soccer field. The Harrisburg node (2) includes new residential, mixed-use, and an outdoor farmers market. The Brays Bayou node (3) is a proposed picnic area and orchard.



Trail Amenities



Lighting



Shading

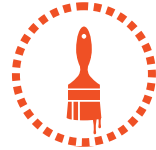
Node Amenities



Seating



Signage



Public Art

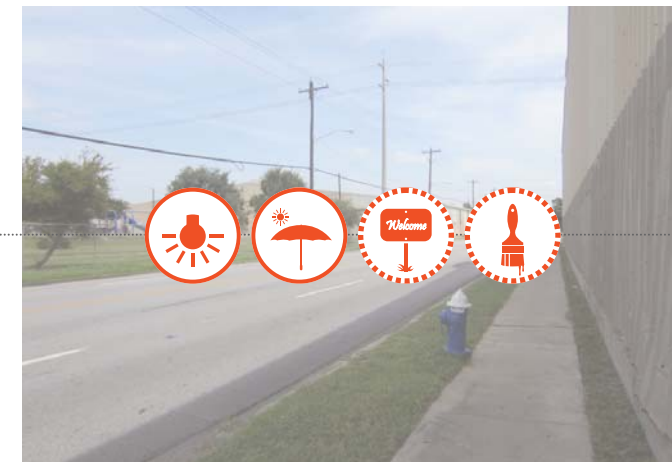


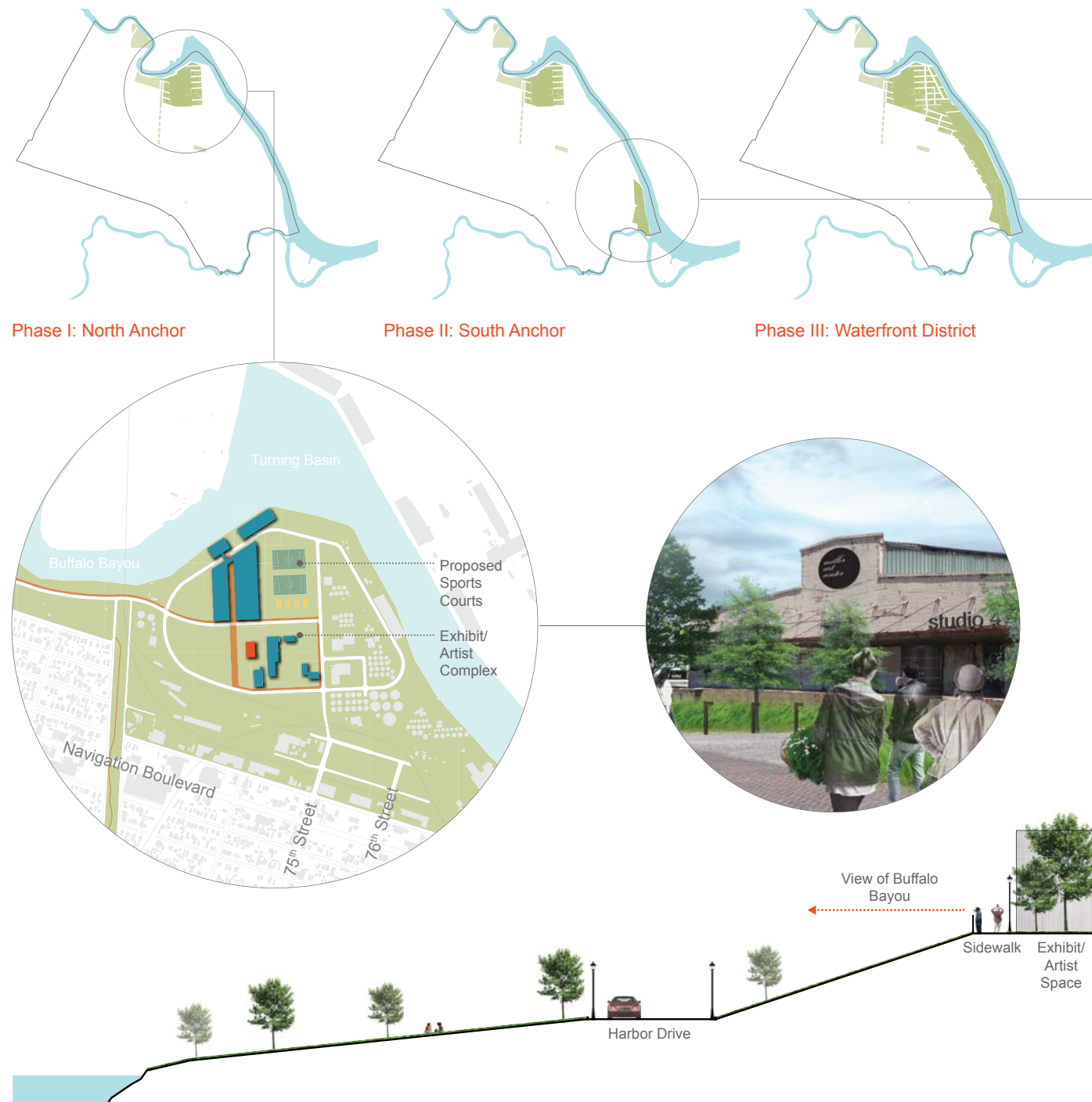
Exercise Spots



The Linear Park strategy also focuses on adding a series of public amenities to the existing and proposed trail system. There are two types of proposed improvements to the trail, first continuous trail amenities and second node amenities. Trail improvements include lighting and shade to increase users and improve the sense of safety. Node amenities include seating areas, signage, public art, and exercise spots. Seven nodes have been established along the trail; each node would provide a different combination of amenities, but the goal is to create gathering areas for neighborhood residents.

BELOW, Middle and Bottom: Existing Conditions and Proposed Improvements along the Linear Park
OPPOSITE PAGE, Left: Linear Park Amenities
OPPOSITE PAGE, Right: Proposed Amenity Nodes





PUBLIC SPACE Waterfront District

Magnolia Park's northeastern edge is along Buffalo Bayou. This area was once the heart of Houston's port and industrial activities, with close proximity to the Houston Ship Channel and Turning Basin. Over the decades the requirements and infrastructure of the port have changed and many industrial facilities have moved further south towards the Bay. As a result, many of the waterfront properties in Magnolia Park now sit vacant or underutilized. The opportunity to redevelop these areas into green spaces and city-wide attractions is on the near horizon.

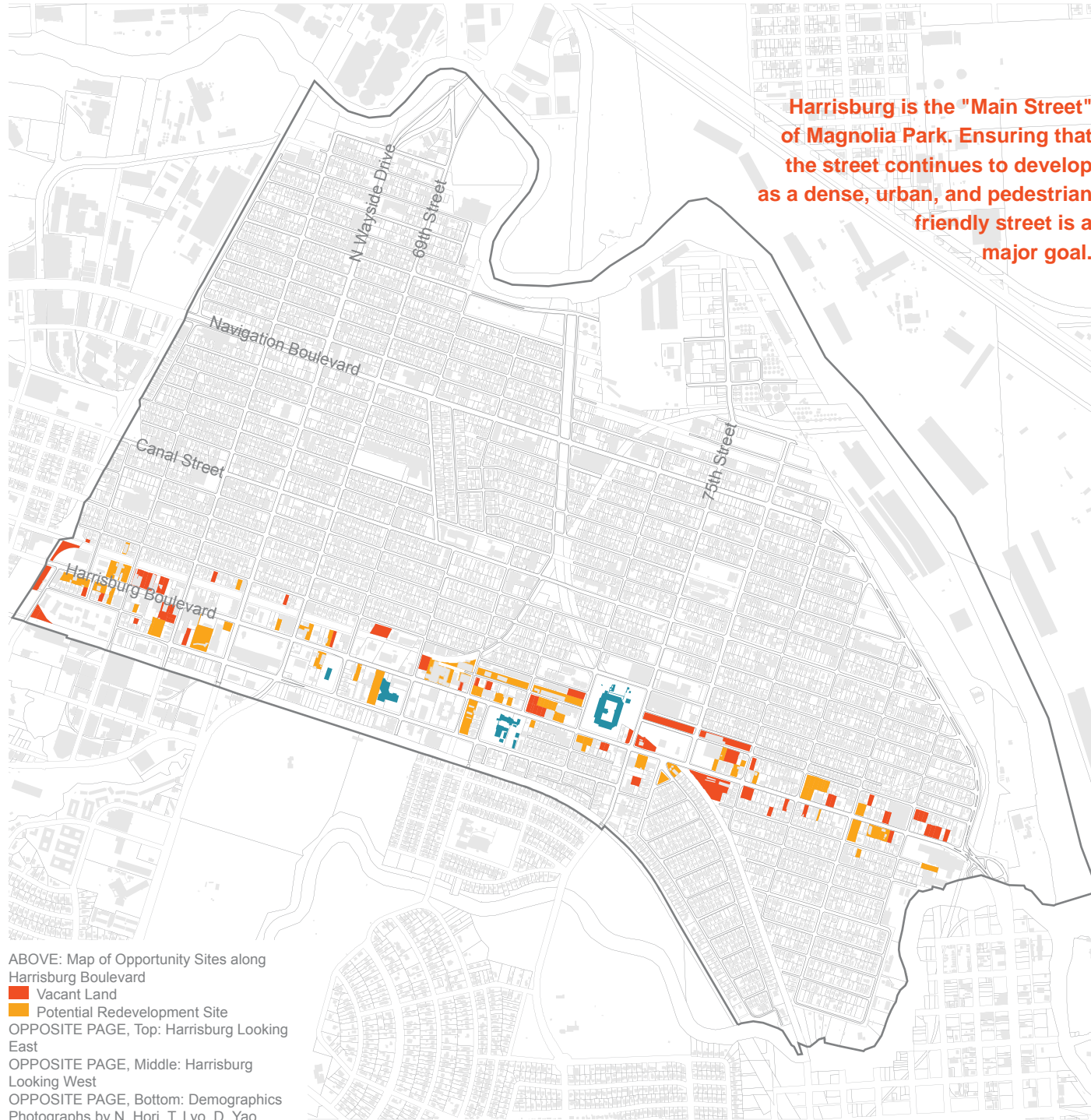
To this end, the Waterfront District proposal seeks to meet two goals. First, to encourage uses that are incompatible with residential areas to move to more appropriate industrial zones; and second, to develop strategies for these properties that create amenities for the neighborhood, while also re-using existing buildings and structures, and working toward environmental remediation where necessary.



Two key focus areas along Buffalo Bayou were identified to transform the waterfront into a public recreation area and destination. The north anchor site is just east of Hidalgo Park and has a number of vacant lots and empty buildings. Many of the empty buildings are substantial historic structures that could be easily adapted to artist studios and exhibition spaces. Vacant land in the same area could be transformed into sport and recreational fields. The south anchor site is at the confluence of Brays and Buffalo Bayou. Currently, there is a large scrap metal yard at this location. The business is a nuisance to area residents and disrupts the view to both bayous. Transforming this industrial zone into a green space with views to both bayous and the Houston Ship Channel is a unique opportunity in Houston. The green space could be further improved with picnic pavilions and trails.



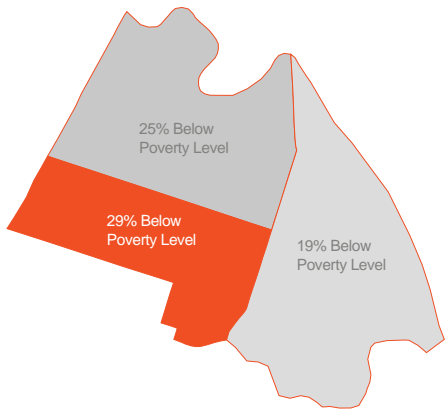
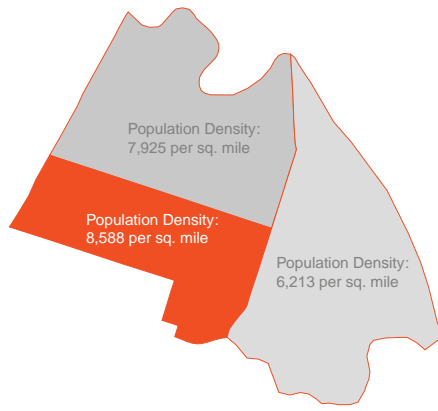
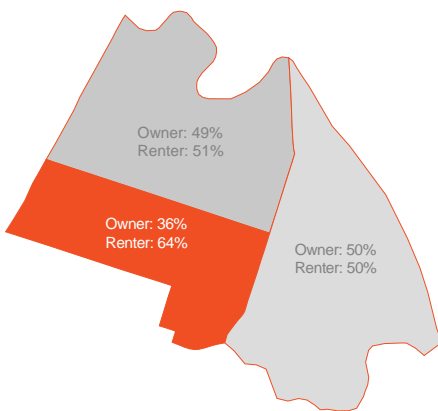
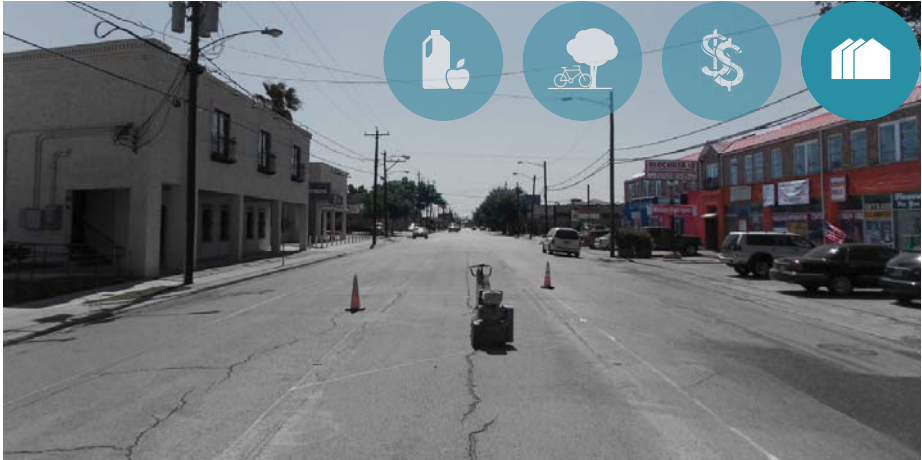
ABOVE: Brays Bayou Photo
 RIGHT: SouthAnchor Proposal
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Middle Left: North Anchor Proposal
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Middle Right: North Anchor Perspective based on a concept by N. Hori, T. Lyon, D. Yao
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Bottom: Section through North Anchor Proposal

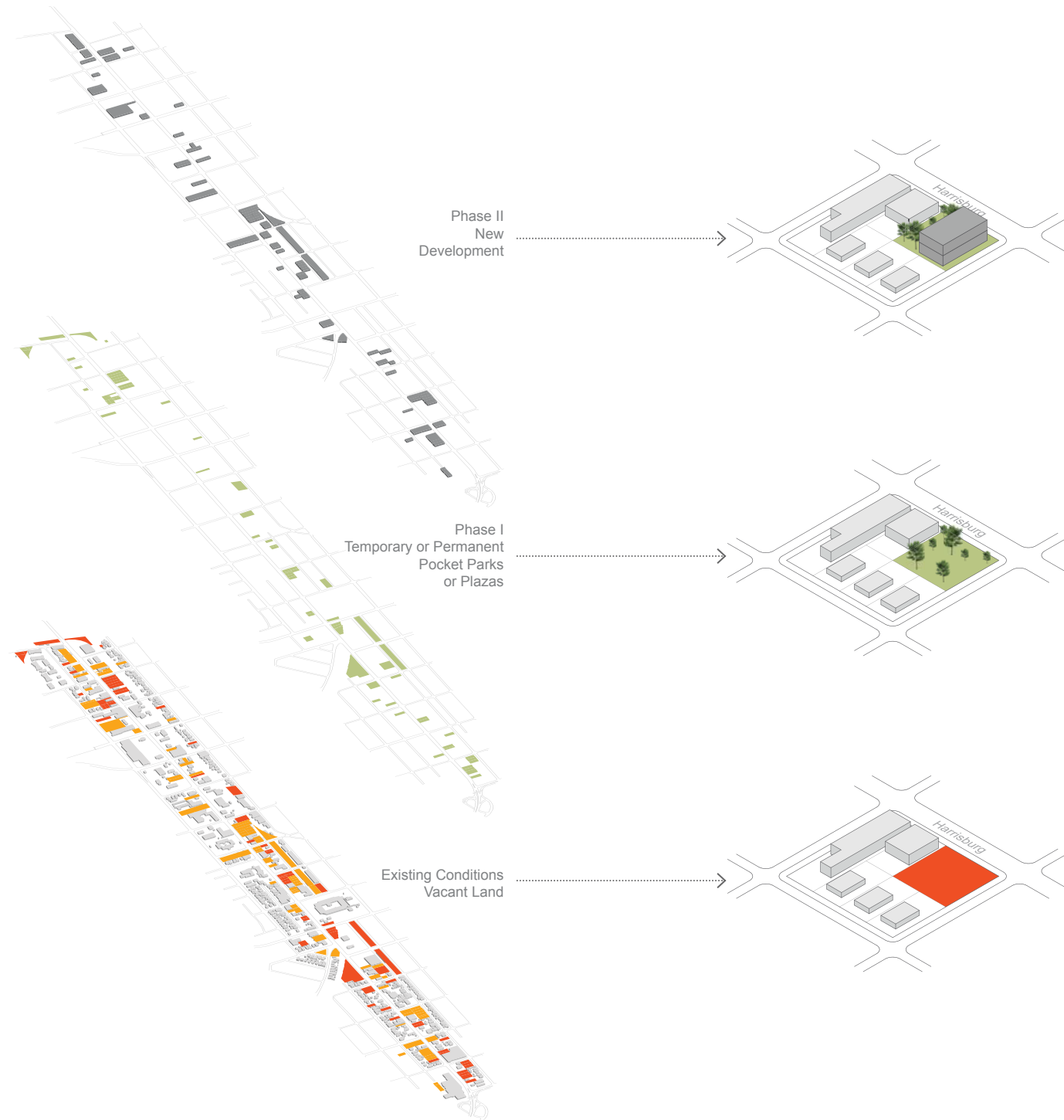


NEIGHBORHOODS Harrisburg Boulevard

Harrisburg Boulevard is the primary commercial corridor in Magnolia Park, and continues west to Downtown Houston. While Harrisburg is the historic shopping street, substantial change is occurring in association with the light rail construction. Development west of 70th Street is increasingly following a suburban model, such as fast food franchises (see photo right), even though this area is ripe for new mixed-use or high density housing development. Learning from the historic built fabric along Harrisburg is important for future development, including buildings framing and defining the street, open storefronts, and wide sidewalks—characteristics that are urban and pedestrian friendly.

The demographic analysis below indicates that the area adjacent to Harrisburg is at the highest risk for gentrification and re-development. The area has the largest amount of vacant land, the lowest income, highest poverty rates, and highest renter occupancy of all the three census tracts that comprise Magnolia Park.





Developing design strategies to minimize the impacts of speculation along Harrisburg, as well as increase walkability and density, have the potential to strengthen the neighborhood. To this end, a two-phase process was developed. The first phase is to develop small pocket parks and plazas along the street on existing vacant sites. These spaces would keep the street activated and safe until new uses and buildings can be developed. The parks and plazas could also become social gathering areas and places to celebrate the rich history and culture of the neighborhood. The second phase is new development. High-density mixed-use housing should be a primary focus for this phase, particularly housing that would draw young professionals and families back to the neighborhood, or accommodate the increasing number of seniors.

Demographic data suggest that Magnolia Park has been losing young families. Specifically, since 1990 the number of residents under the age of 18 has declined by 30%, dropping from 8,250 in 1990 to 5,836 in 2010. Simultaneously the number of residents over the age of 65 has increased by 22% (see charts to the right).

In order for Magnolia Park to flourish the neighborhood must continue to be an attractive place to live throughout your life, as generations of residents have in the past, as well as a place to raise a young family or retire.

RIGHT, Top: Housing Precedents
RIGHT, Middle: Public Space Precedents
RIGHT, Bottom: Magnolia Park Population by Age, 1990-2010

0-34 Years
35-64 Years
65+ Years

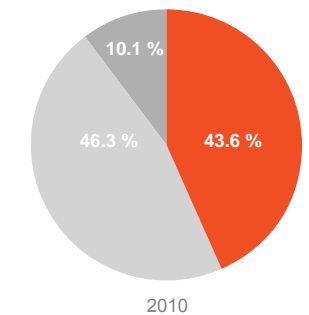
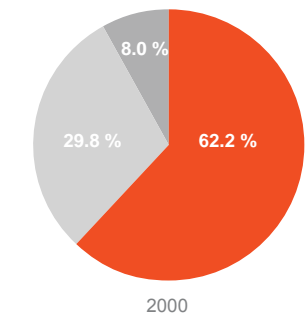
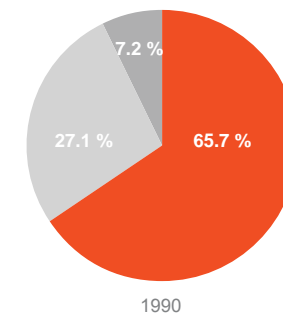
Chart by T. Lyon, N. Hori, D. Yao



New housing and mixed-use development should be high-density and take advantage of the light rail.



Pocket parks and small plazas could activate vacant land along Harrisburg until new development can occur.





ABOVE: Harrisburg Proposal
 Retail/Commercial
 Multifamily Housing
 Single Family Housing
 Parks
 Light Rail
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Right: Proposed Perspective of Harrisburg Boulevard

Public spaces, pedestrian amenities and mixed-uses will create opportunities for economic development, affordable housing, and greater walkability in the Harrisburg corridor.





NEIGHBORHOODS

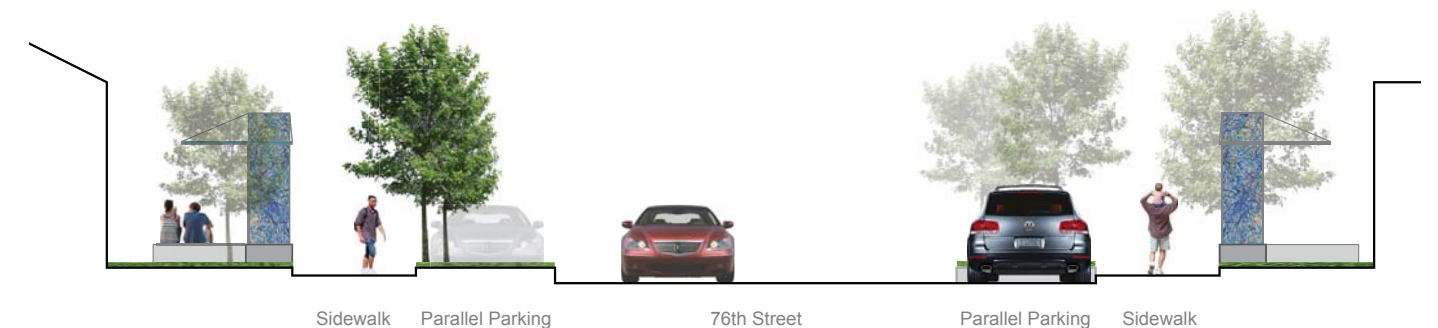
76th Street Streetscaping

76th Street has the potential to become an intimate and walkable “Main Street” in the heart of Magnolia Park. The street travels north and south, connecting across the neighborhood and is lined with many small and local businesses. The social life of the street is focused on the area adjacent to De Zavala Park, an urban park that is the center of activity in this part of the neighborhood. Improving the street with trees, lighting, wide sidewalks, benches, bike lanes, and other amenities, will reinforce the street’s current role as a “Main Street,” draw additional small businesses to the corridor, and encourage new users to come to the area.

Gateways were also proposed for the street at the intersections with Harrisburg, Canal, and Navigation. The gateways would welcome visitors to the area, enhance the neighborhood’s identity, and also serve as transit stops for local bus routes. The gateways should be considered a public art initiative that would engage area youth and could include bus route information, seating, and shade.

RIGHT, Top: 76th Street Gateway Proposal
 BELOW: Proposed 76th Street Section
 OPPOSITE PAGE, Left: Proposed 76th Street Plan

- Sidewalk
- Gateway
- Bus Routes





ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

76th Street Mercado

76th Street has an intimate scale and is home to popular local businesses such as Don Carlos Restaurant and La Jarasca Bakery. The street is also anchored by civic gathering places such as De Zavala Park and the historic Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Currently, the narrow street is lined with housing, small businesses and shops creating an active environment.

As a means to support and enhance the street's role as a neighborhood "Main Street" we are proposing that on weekends and special occasions the street could be closed to vehicular traffic. During these times the street could accommodate block parties, social gatherings, markets, festivals, vendors, and other events. A weekly farmers market with local vendors could be established on Saturday mornings. The goal is to create a neighborhood destination that truly reflects the culture of the area.

Potential redevelopment sites were identified along 76th Street that might be ripe for new businesses. An incentive program for small businesses could be put in place to enhance entrepreneurship and improve economic opportunity in the neighborhood.

BELOW: 76th Street Photographs
 OPPOSITE PAGE: 76th Street Existing Conditions



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