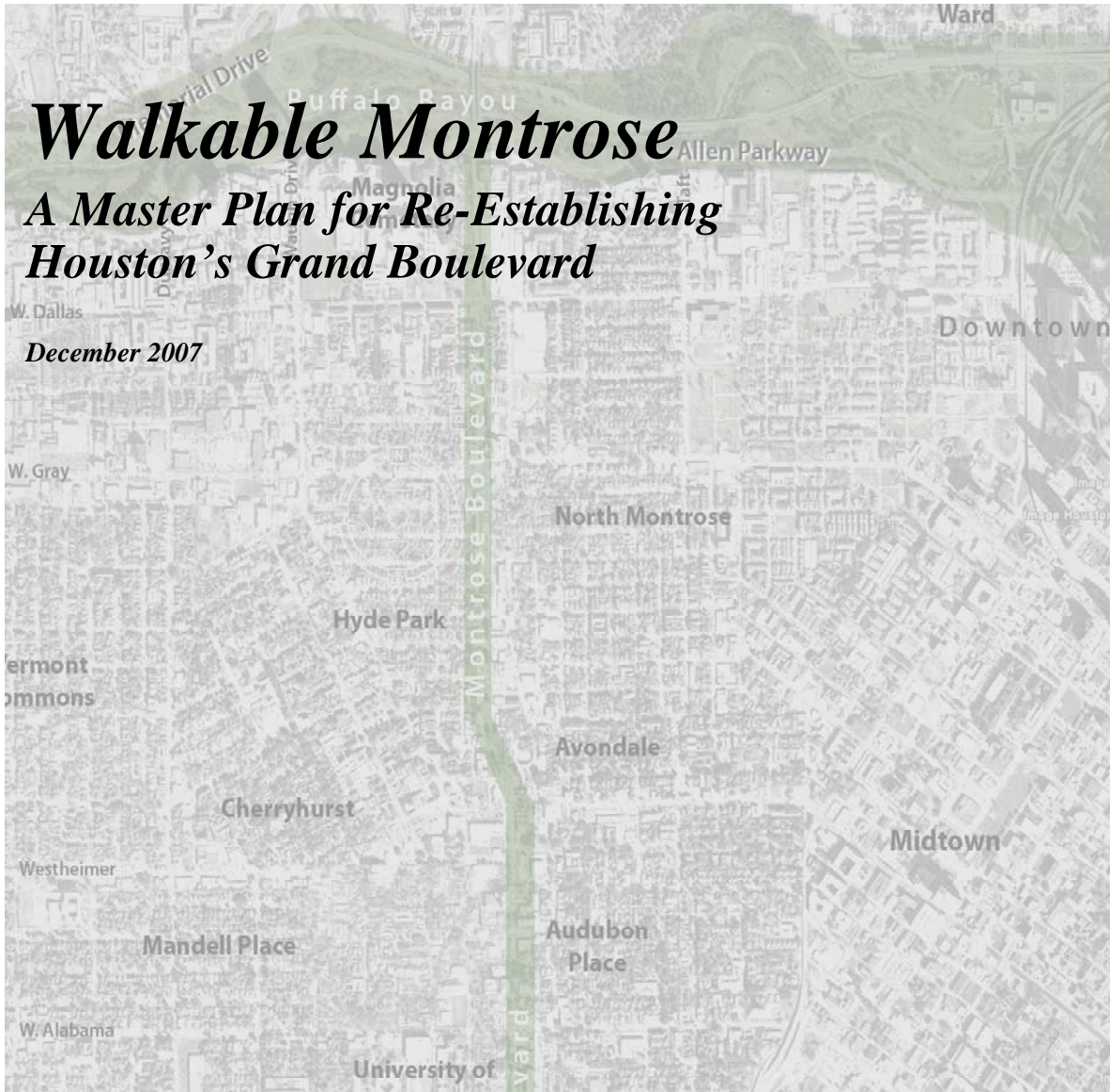


# *Walkable Montrose*

## *A Master Plan for Re-Establishing Houston's Grand Boulevard*

December 2007



WHITE OAK STUDIO Landscape Architecture

December, 2007 – Prepared for **Montrose Boulevard Conservancy**

*Walkable Montrose*



# ***Walkable Montrose***

## ***A Master Plan for Re-Establishing Houston's Grand Boulevard***

***Sponsor: Montrose Boulevard Conservancy  
Prepared by White Oak Studio***

### ***Contents***

- 1 Credits and Contents**
- 2 The Past and The Present**
- 3 A Compelling Mission (Executive Summary)**
- 4 Connecting Neighborhoods – Creating Community**
- 5 Comprehensive Pedestrian Circulation System**
- 6 Walkways**
- 7 Crosswalks**
- 8 Lighting**
- 9 Signage & Wayfinding**
- 10 Sidewalk Markings**
- 11 Pedestrian Connections**
- 12 Beautification**
- 13 Landscape**
- 14 Landmarks and Special Projects**
- 15 Stewardship**
- 16 Master Plan**

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## ‘Grand Vision’

- Developed beginning in 1911 by J.W. Link and the Houston Land Corporation as an affluent suburban neighborhood
- Part of development focus south of the city, including Hermann Park, Hermann Hospital, Rice Institute, Museum of Fine Arts, Shadyside and the South End
- Inspired by the City Beautiful Movement –
  - Boulevard with wide landscaped esplanades
  - Generous sidewalks lined with street trees
  - Provided grandeur and unity for elegant estates along boulevard



## ‘Great Places, Bad Spaces’

- One of most recognizable place-names in Houston – home to a diverse and dynamic collection of restaurants, night-spots, neighborhoods, museums, churches and businesses
- Central location with vital proximity to:
  - Downtown Houston
  - Texas Medical Center
  - Rice University
  - Hermann Park
  - Buffalo Bayou
- Over time, with the dramatic diversification of land use, the character of the public pedestrian / streetscape infrastructure has not been updated and has been allowed to decline:
  - Decay of the public streetscape
  - Narrow, discontinuous sidewalks
  - Unsafe light levels
  - Lack of visual continuity
  - Public safety issues



**In response to compelling needs along Montrose, The Montrose Boulevard Conservancy** was formed in 2005 as a community based, civic purpose, non-profit corporation, dedicated to the re-development of Montrose Boulevard as a grand boulevard for Houston, Texas.

**This Plan will define the steps** for re-establishing Montrose as Houston's Grand Boulevard. A summary of the key components of the Plan is as follows:

**Community Context and Connectivity** is vital to understanding the importance of the Montrose Blvd. pedestrian environment. Montrose is a key pedestrian link between Buffalo Bayou trails and the Hermann Park / Rice University / Texas Medical Center Area.

❑ **A Comprehensive Pedestrian Circulation System** is the first component of the Plan and will enhance pedestrian connectivity from surrounding neighborhoods, along both sides of the Boulevard and outward to regional pedestrian trail systems. Aspects of that system will include:

Connectivity – Walkways, Crosswalks

Improved pedestrian safety and security – Lighting, Sidewalk Markings

Enhanced pedestrian comfort, accessibility, convenience and enjoyment – Signage/Wayfinding, Plantings



❑ **Beautification** of the streetscape is the second major component of the Plan. A strong, simple, beautiful streetscape is integral to re-establishing Montrose as a grand civic avenue and creating visual continuity to unify diverse properties. Beautification will include:

Esplanade landscape and irrigation improvements

Street Trees

Parking Lot Screen Plantings

Landmarks and Special Projects

❑ **Stewardship** is the third major component of the Plan. The Montrose Boulevard Conservancy is committed to ongoing advocacy and maintenance of Montrose Boulevard to standards established in this Plan.

The MBC **Action Plan** for implementation includes two primary phases:

Phase One includes the Pedestrian Circulation and Beautification components outlined in this Plan.

Phase Two will address roadway infrastructure, traffic management and esplanades south of Westheimer.



# Connecting Neighborhoods – Creating Community

Buffalo Bayou Trails  
Future Ismaili Center  
Shopping  
Restaurants  
Historic Neighborhoods  
Lower Westheimer  
University of St. Thomas  
Future METRORail Line  
Places of Worship  
Museum District  
Mecom Fountain  
Hermann Park  
Rice University



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Diverse collection of neighborhoods, shops, businesses, institutions
- Lack of pedestrian connections
- Limited sense of visual continuity
- Unsafe, unattractive pedestrian environment

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide important linkage in regional pedestrian system
- Pedestrian and streetscape improvements provide connectivity and visual continuity to Montrose destinations
- ‘Green Finger’ of landscape and walkways along Montrose connects neighborhoods to Buffalo Bayou trails





# Comprehensive Pedestrian Circulation System

## GOAL

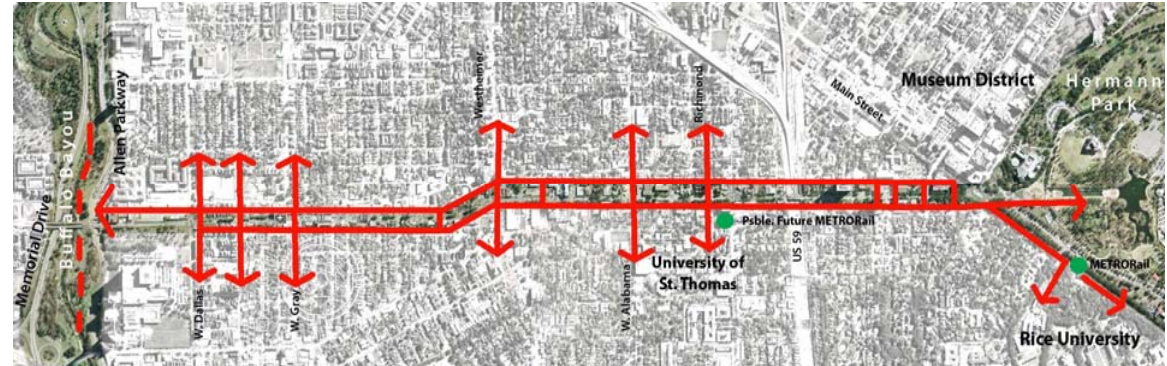
- ❑ Provide continuous pedestrian system connecting:
  - Buffalo Bayou trails
  - Hermann Park
  - Rice University
  - METRO Rail

## GOAL

- ❑ Improve pedestrian safety and security

## GOAL

- ❑ Improve pedestrian comfort, accessibility, convenience and enjoyment



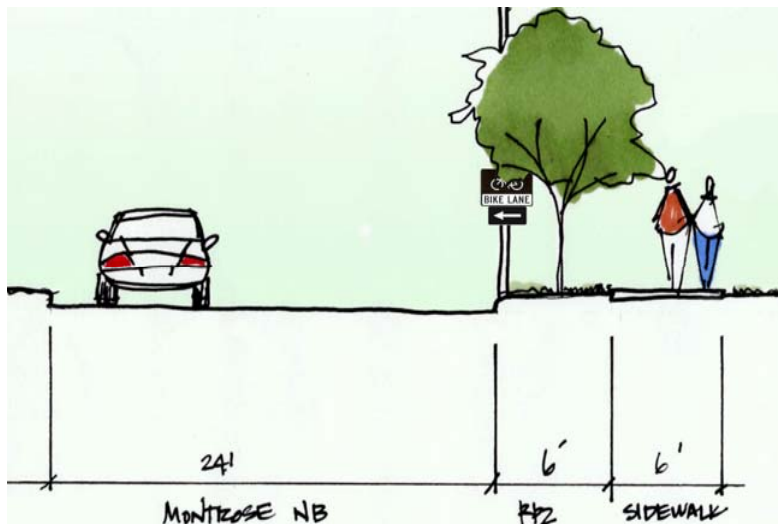
## COMPONENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION SYSTEM

- Walkways
- Crosswalks
- Lighting
- Signage & Wayfinding
- Parking Lot Pavement Markings
- Connections to the community



## OBJECTIVES

- Replace narrow, rundown sidewalks with continuous 6' wide concrete sidewalks along both sides of Montrose Blvd.
- Utilize a high-quality, cost-effective, easily maintained standard material – standard gray concrete with broom finish
- Place walk 6' to 8' behind curb to separate pedestrians from traffic and allow consistent planting zone
- Improve accessibility with concrete curb ramps at every street corner
- Accommodate special needs with owner-provided wider walks and enhanced paving at special locations



6' wide sidewalks separated from street curb by 6' wide planting zone for safety and beauty

6' wide sidewalks provide adequate room for 2-way pedestrian traffic



Colored concrete curb ramps at each intersection meet accessibility standards

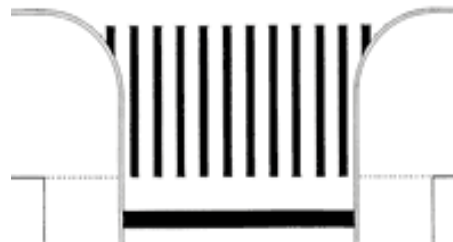


## OBJECTIVES

- Provide safe, visible, durable crosswalks at every pedestrian street crossing
- Utilize materials that comply with City of Houston standards – heat applied ‘Thermoplastic’ striping
- Utilize ‘zebra’ stripe pattern for highest degree of visibility and safety
- 12’ wide crosswalks and ‘stop bar’ at each major side street and across Montrose at existing locations
- 8’ wide crosswalks and ‘stop bar’ at each minor cross street
- Include City of Houston standard warning sign with each crosswalk



Existing crosswalk in poor condition



Configuration of typical 'zebra-stripe' crosswalk and stop bar at intersection.



Cars wait behind Stop Bar while pedestrians use Crosswalk at traffic signal

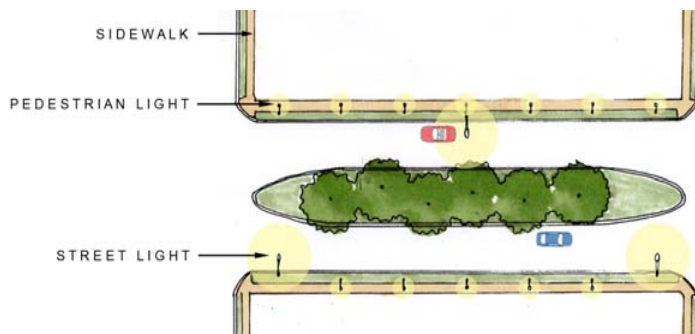


Sign alerts motorists to upcoming pedestrian crosswalk





## OBJECTIVES



Street lights at COH standard 200' spacing. Pedestrian lights at 60' spacing along sidewalks

- Improve light levels along the roadway and pedestrian walkways to comply with established safe-lighting standards
- Achieve visual consistency by converting wood pole-mounted lights to attractive metal poles
- Utilize City of Houston / Centerpoint standard fixtures where possible:
  - Street lights on galvanized steel poles
  - Walkway lighting mounted on 12 to 14 foot high poles, spaced approximately 60 feet apart



Lighting mounted on pedestrian-scale poles will provide a safe level of light along the walkways. Style of fixtures to be determined during specific design.

Durable, cost-effective Street Light mounted on galvanized steel pole



## OBJECTIVES

- Ensure adequate signage for traffic control, wayfinding and neighborhood identification
- Ensure existing signage in R.O.W.
  - Complies with City of Houston standards
  - Is visually consistent and erect
  - Is well maintained
- Utilize City of Houston standard regulatory and wayfinding signs (white text on brown background) – metal sign blades mounted on galvanized steel poles



COH standard Street Signs mounted on signal arms where available to reduce clutter



Neighborhood Identification signs standardized and mounted on city street signs

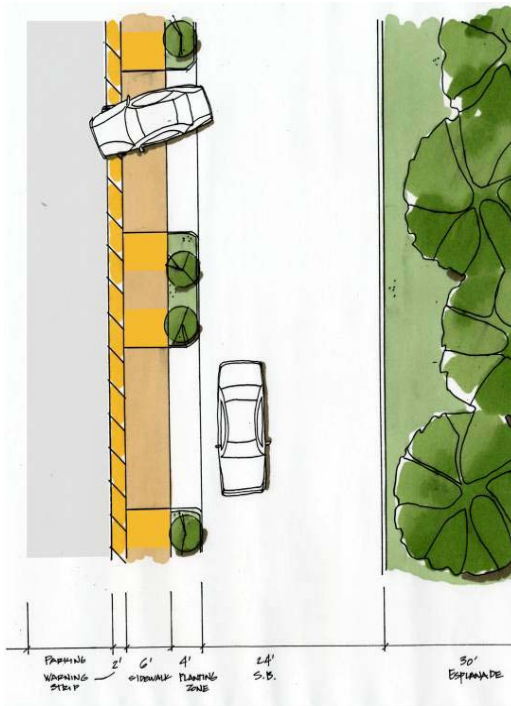


Standardized Wayfinding signage with white letters on brown background



## OBJECTIVES

- Enhance pedestrian safety at driveways and parking lots
- Enhance accessibility for visually-impaired pedestrians
  - Install colored, textured sidewalk panel at each side of each parking lot or extended driveway crossing
  - Apply color / texture band along edge of sidewalks within parking lots



Plan indicating sidewalk safety markings at driveway crossings and along walks within parking lots



Photo overlay indicating sidewalk safety markings at driveway crossings and along walks within parking lots





## OBJECTIVES

- Create connections to make Montrose Blvd. walkway network a vital link in neighborhood and regional pedestrian connectivity
- Enable path connection from Montrose sidewalks to Buffalo Bayou trails
- Ensure pedestrian connections between Montrose and Hermann Park, Rice University, METRORail and the Texas Medical Center
- Encourage sidewalk connections to neighborhoods and institutions adjoining Montrose
- Encourage enhanced pedestrian connections to future METRORail station on Richmond



Original development of Montrose Blvd included walks on each side of the street



Photo overlay indicating path connections to Buffalo Bayou trails from Allen Parkway / Montrose intersection



Montrose walks will connect to Hermann Park and the METRORail station at Sunset



## GOAL

- ❑ Re-establish Montrose Boulevard as a beautiful grand avenue as originally inspired by the City Beautiful Movement

## GOAL

- ❑ Create visual continuity within the public R.O.W. along Montrose Boulevard to unify diverse areas and properties

## GOAL

- ❑ Encourage and enrich the diversity of visual experience along Montrose

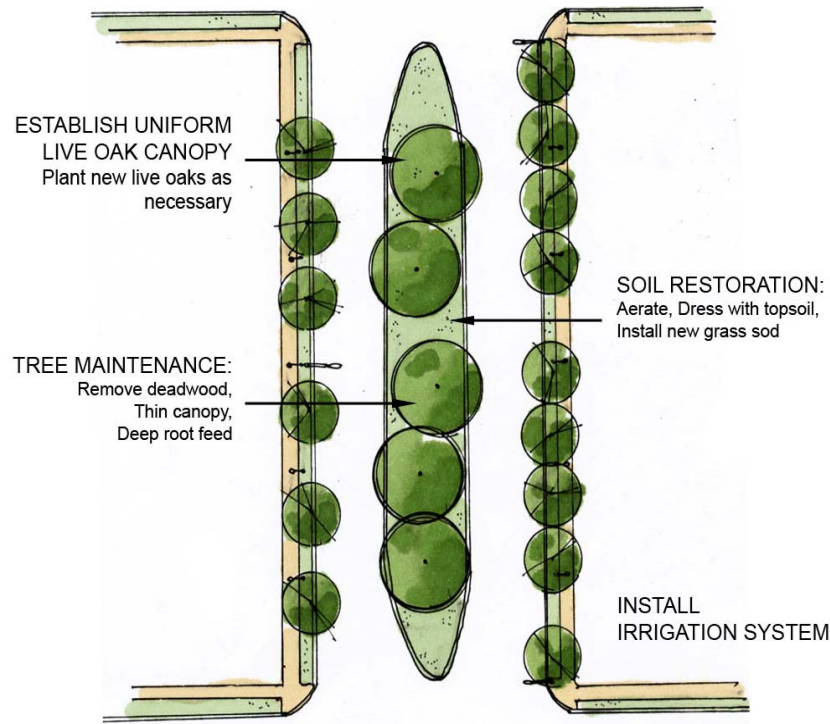


## COMPONENTS OF MONTROSE BLVD. BEAUTIFICATION

- Esplanade Landscape Improvements
- Street Trees
- Parking Lot Screen Plantings
- Landmarks and Special Projects
- Attractive and visually unified walkways, lighting and signage



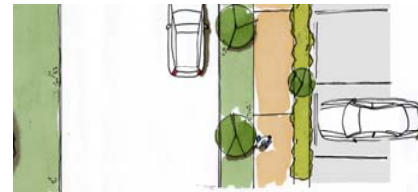
## OBJECTIVES



Typical Esplanade Planting Improvements



Street section showing esplanade planting and street trees along each sidewalk



Hedge planted behind sidewalk to screen parking lot



Concrete removed between driveways to create tree planting zones



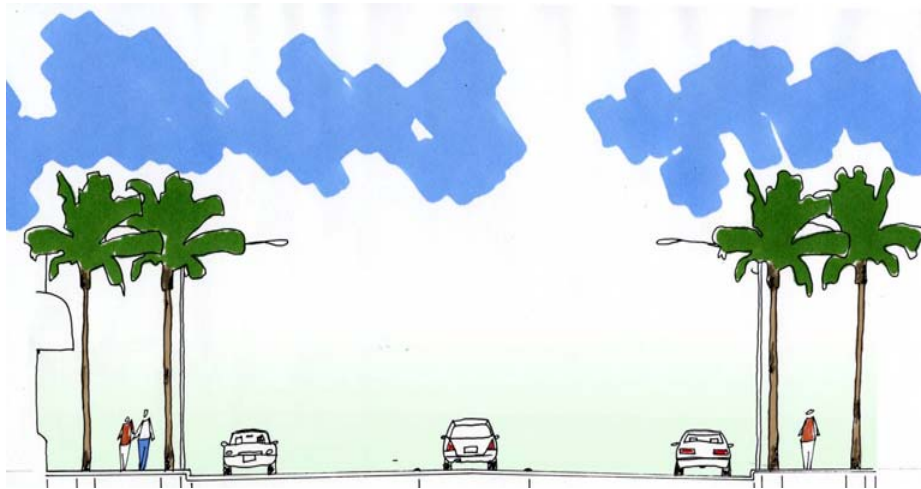




'Oasis' seating areas could include art and local history 'jewels'



Mecom Fountain and Sam Houston monument are a dramatic gateway at the south end of Montrose



Full width sidewalk paving, double rows of palm trees, special lighting and sidewalk furniture highlight Westheimer landmark intersection

## OBJECTIVES

- Create a special landmark streetscape at the Montrose / Westheimer intersection to celebrate the important location and to revitalize an area with aesthetic, safety and security problems.
- Mecom Fountain and the Sam Houston monument are a dramatic landmark at the south end of Montrose. Encourage enhancements of the interchange planting and island paving.
- Encourage future development of the Allen Parkway / Montrose intersection as a north gateway landmark to Montrose Blvd.
- Encourage future 'oasis' seating areas along Montrose by private property owners. Incorporate 'jewels' of local history and public art.

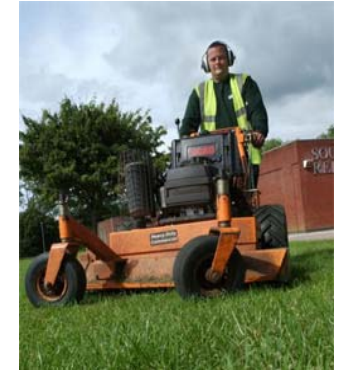


North gateway at Allen Parkway / Buffalo Bayou could include enhanced pedestrian crossings, corner 'plazas' public art features and large scale plantings



## OBJECTIVES

- Ensure that Montrose Blvd. public streetscape is maintained to standards established in this Master Plan
  - Predictable
  - Safe and secure
  - Clean
  - Attractive
- Montrose Boulevard Conservancy will advocate with the City of Houston to ensure all City maintenance responsibilities are addressed on a regular schedule.
- Montrose Boulevard Conservancy and future Management District will be responsible for:
  - Esplanade planting and irrigation maintenance
  - Litter Removal
  - Lighting operation costs (street and pedestrian lights)
  - Crosswalk repair and maintenance
  - Street tree maintenance and replacement

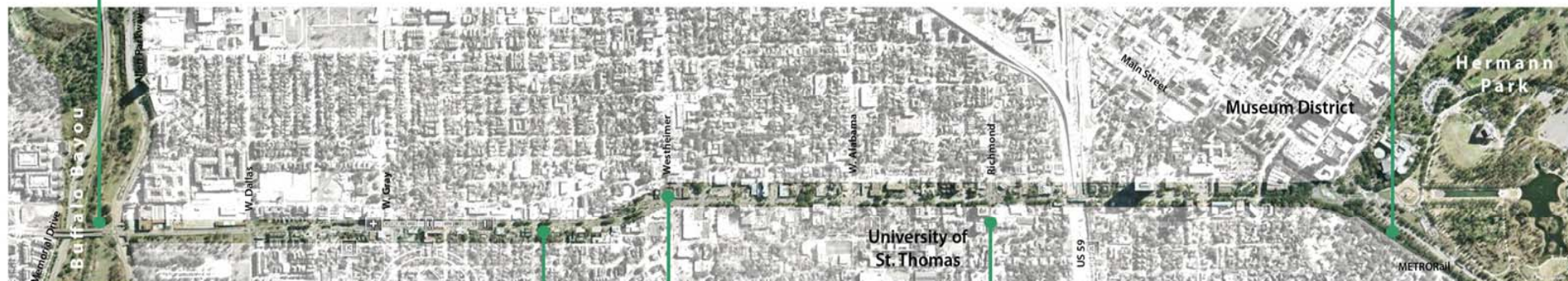




Gateway at Allen Parkway  
Path Connections to Buffalo Bayou Trail -  
Leads to Downtown & Memorial Park

- Provide 6' wide concrete sidewalks along both sides of Montrose
- Provide concrete curb ramps & crosswalks at intersections
- Install sidewalk markings to improve pedestrian safety at parking lots and driveways

Pedestrian Connections to  
Hermann Park,  
METRORail Station,  
Rice University &  
Texas Medical Center



- Provide street lighting and walkway lighting
- Improve signage & wayfinding
- Plant sidewalk trees
- Screen parking lots with evergreen hedges

Adopt all existing Esplanades  
Install and maintain landscape & irrigation

Landmark  
Streetscape Development  
@ Westheimer Intersection

Connection to possible  
future METRORail Station



WHITE OAK STUDIO Landscape Architecture

December, 2007 – Prepared for *Montrose Boulevard Conservancy*