Main Street

Corridor-specific Report

Phase II and III
City of Houston

May 2008
June 27, 2008

Dear Urban Corridor Planning participants,

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Carol Abel Lewis, Ph.D.
Chair, Houston Planning Commission
Main Street Corridor

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

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

While there are many common characteristics between the various Corridors, each has distinctive features. The Main Street Corridor is distinct from other Corridors in that it already has transit in place. Most importantly, this Corridor connects major urban amenities in the City of Houston including the Downtown, the Museum District, the Medical Center, Hermann Park, Rice University, and Reliant Park. This report includes observations about the existing conditions in the Corridor, new directions for future development, and recommendations specific to the Main Street Corridor.

Context/Background Analysis

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

Block Pattern

The predominant block size in the downtown area is 250' x 250' which are developed in 1/2 block and full block developments. As the Corridor extends south past Hermann Park the block sizes become larger reflecting the form of development common in the Texas Medical Center and the areas around the Reliant Park. These block sizes are an advantage in that they allow Transit Oriented Development to occur in a variety of scales. The smaller blocks in the downtown core can be developed as full blocks of comprehensive development, while the larger blocks at the southern half of the Main Street Corridor will likely be developed in phases.

Pedestrian Realm

Sidewalks in the downtown are well developed, however, the quality of the pedestrian realm diminishes as one moves south along the Main Street line. For example, amenities such as pedestrian level lighting, wide sidewalks, trash receptacles and street trees are missing for a large part of the Corridor.

Demographics

The average household size is 1.90 persons, among the lowest of the six Corridors. Persons under the age of 25 make up 27% of the population, while those aged between 25 and 34 make up 57% of the Corridor residents. In terms of tenure, just over one-quarter of the households are owner occupied. The high proportion of renter households is a result of the high number of apartments along the Corridor.

Main Street Corridor Planning Strategy

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

A key component of the Main Street Corridor Planning Strategy is the Land Development Concept Plan that divides the Corridor into Development Opportunity Areas (those areas where Transit Oriented Development is most probable and should be promoted and focused) and Stable Areas (where an emphasis should be placed on protecting and enhancing the physical character of stable residential neighborhoods). The Main Street Corridor is divided into the following three Land Development Concept categories:
Development Opportunity Area 1 - Corridor
This area is concentrated in a few key locations along the Corridor, including the area between the Wheeler and Museum stations, where there are a number of vacant sites suitable for potential infill developments, as well as sites further along the line at the Smith Lands and Fannin Stations.

Development Opportunity Area 2 - Downtown
This includes the area located in the downtown core, from the University of Houston south to Wheeler Station. This area will likely continue to see large-scale redevelopment activity. There are a number of vacant parcels in this area that lend themselves to new Transit Oriented Development.

Stable Areas
This includes areas with existing lower density residential neighborhoods along the Corridor, particularly near Hermann Park and Rice University.

Demonstration Plans
Based on the Land Development Concept Plan, three demonstration plans were developed for sites along the Corridor that demonstrate the scale and nature that Transit Oriented Design might take. The sites include the area of the Bell Station site, the Wheeler station site and the “Smith” lands. The plans demonstrate a variety of block sizes and development scenarios.

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

1

2
Introduction

The Main Street Corridor is distinct from the other Corridors in that it already has LRT service available and the existing streetscapes are highly developed in a manner unique to the area. It is the most urban of all of the Corridors and, although new development related to transit has not occurred everywhere, some important new development is taking place along the line, mainly in the downtown area. The Corridor-specific recommendations for the Main Street Corridor are aimed at providing the context to assist more development in a manner that results in a pedestrian environment supportive of the existing community and the new transit facilities. The report suggests some built form objectives for the pedestrian realm that can be implemented within the context of current conditions. At the same time, the report suggests some benefits that can be accrued as portions of the Corridor redevelop over time. Finally, an important component of all of the Corridors is strengthening connections to the Transit Street from the surrounding community.

The Main Street Corridor passes through some areas with very different characteristics and each will relate to the Transit Street in a slightly different manner. The true downtown area of the plan between the University of Houston Downtown Campus and the highway is the traditional downtown of the city and it is characterized by highrise commercial buildings, some with retail at the street level, that create a very distinctive street wall. There are some empty lots and a number of parking lots at grade in this area.

Moving south, the LRT passes through what has been traditionally called Midtown. The proximity of this area to downtown on the north, and the museum and medical districts on the south, provide a development context that should be very bright. Presently, there are many empty lots and parking lots adjacent to the Transit Street. However, some good examples of Transit Oriented Development can be found not far on either side of the Corridor. As the line passes through the medical district, it traversing an area that attracts workers from all of the urban corridors and is the center of one of the most concentrated groups of medical facilities in the world. This area has the potential to see Transit Oriented Development along the Transit Streets, as well as on sites within easy walking distance at its edges. Finally, the Main Street Corridor connects to the Fannin South Station and its park and ride facilities. Reliant Park and the Smith Lands are major locations for new development to occur.

This Corridor-specific Report presents a strategy for encouraging the forms of development that will be supportive of transit, as well as creating pedestrian scaled streets that lead from the surrounding neighborhoods to the Transit Street. The report also suggests that most development will occur within a five-minute walk of the stations. With the exception of some areas of Midtown and the Museum District, most of the area within a five-minute walk of the stations is of a scale and density that will be compatible with traditional forms of Transit Oriented Development. This approach to development, and the attendant ordinance controls and urban design guidelines, advances the concept that different forms of development should compliment and reinforce other buildings, in areas such as the downtown and the medical center.
1 Context/Background Analysis

This chapter provides the context and background for the Main Street Corridor.

D1.1 Main Street Urban Corridor Study Area

The Main Street Urban Corridor begins in the downtown at the University of Houston, extending south along Main Street. Continuing south, the Main Street Corridor runs through the Museum District, Herman Park and the Texas Medical Center, terminating just beyond Reliant Park.

The Main Street Corridor is approximately 8 miles long. The eastern and western boundaries of the North Urban Corridor Study Area – measured at a 1/4 mile on either side of the proposed transit line – are shown on the adjacent map.

All Transit Street and station locations in this report are based on information provided by METRO and the City of Houston as of December, 2007.
D1.2

**The Context of the Main Street Corridor**

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

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**D1.2.1 Land Use**

The map on the opposite page illustrates the range of existing land uses along the Main Street Urban Corridor. The area is composed of high density office uses, retail and service commercial uses and significant institutional uses, including museums, other public and cultural institutions, a university campus and the Texas Medical Center. The Main Street Corridor includes a range of single and multi-family residential uses, parks and open space. It also contains Reliant Park, a major entertainment use at the southern terminus of the Corridor.
D1.2.2 Building Footprint

The map on the facing page illustrates the size and scale of buildings found in the Main Street Corridor. All existing structures have been shaded to show the pattern created by different buildings, streets and open space - or the area’s urban fabric.

The typical small downtown block dimensions of 250 by 250’ extend to the northern most edge of the Main Street Corridor and continue south to Herman Park. At this point, the block dimensions significantly increase, reflecting the large scale uses (i.e. Herman Park, Rice University, Reliant Park, medium density residential development, the Texas Medical Center and related employment uses) that characterize the southern half of the Main Street Corridor. The building footprints in the downtown generally reveal full block and half block developments, with building sizes and block coverage gradually decreasing as one moves south along the Corridor between Clay Street and Herman Park. The building sizes within the large block developments in the southern half of the Corridor vary according to use. The Texas Medical Center is configured with a number of tightly organized large buildings, whereas the large block developments further south along the Corridor are typified by larger building footprints though with significantly greater building separation, reflective of the nature of the land uses and the large expanses of surface parking. The smallest building footprints show the prominence of single detached homes in adjacent residential neighborhoods.
D1.2.3 Pedestrian Realm/ Mobility Inventory

Parks
The table on the left lists the Main Street Corridor Parks and the Land Acquisition Target Areas described in the 2001 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Other park projects are also listed in the third table.

Many City of Houston community center parks offer after school and summer enrichment programs, summer food service programs and teen camps, as well as teen, adult and senior recreation programs.

Publicly Accessible Open Space
Numerous civic, cultural and institutional campuses located along the Main Street Corridor greatly enhance park-like open spaces and plazas. These campuses include: The Theatre District, Minute Maid Park, U of H Downtown, The Museum District, Rice University, Texas Medical Center and Reliant Park.

Other privately held open spaces with park-like qualities include Resthaven Memorial Gardens and Founders Memorial Cemetery.

Sidewalks
In general, the pedestrian realm is exceptionally well developed within the downtown CBD area. Other areas along the Main Street Corridor, especially undeveloped areas within the Midtown District, the Museum District and south of the Texas Medical Center are in need of pedestrian realm improvements. Sidewalks constructed along the undeveloped sections of the Main Street Line by METRO in 2004 generally meet City of Houston minimum width standards of 4'. This width is not sufficient to accommodate targeted development densities along the length of the Corridor.

Community Facilities
Schools - Schools in the Main Street Corridor are dependent on pedestrian and bicycle mobility in order for students to safely and efficiently arrive and depart. Public schools within the Main Street Corridor are administered by the Houston Independent School District (HISD).

The SPARK School Park Program is a non-profit organization which increases park space by developing public school grounds into neighborhood parks. SPARK Parks within the Main Street Corridor Area are located at Dodson Elementary, Douglass Elementary, Ryan Middle School, J. Will Jones Elementary and Roberts Elementary.

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

- Numerous CBD City, County, State and Federal buildings
- The US Customs House and Federal Detention Center
- Houston Post Office on Franklin
- “Justice Square” Harris County Court buildings
- St. Joseph’s Medical Center
- Numerous churches and synagogues
- Houston Public Library-Downtown

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<th>Acres</th>
<th>Park Class</th>
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<td>Hermann Park</td>
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<td>Buffalo Bayou</td>
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<td>1/3 Park/Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Houston</td>
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<td>1/3 Park/Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Medical Center</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1/3 Park/Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliant Park</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1/3 Park/Station</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Park Projects of Note

- Hermann Park, Main at Montrose
- Shamrock Fountain, Main at Holcombe
- Main Street Plaza and Square
- Buffalo Bayou
- Discovery Green
- Hermann Park
- Houston Post Office
- “Justice Square” | Harris County Court buildings
- St. Joseph’s Medical Center
- Numerous churches and synagogues
- Houston Public Library-Downtown

The Historic Downtown is one of the most historic and extensively developed areas in the City of Houston. The area has a rich history dating back to the early 19th century, with many of its buildings and structures reflecting the architectural styles of that period. The area is home to many significant cultural, historic, and architectural landmarks, as well as a variety of entertainment and recreational facilities.
Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research
Downtown YMCA
The Midtown Civic Club

Many area schools and other significant public facilities are not adequately served by safe and ample sidewalks, with the exception of those located within the recently redeveloped CBD.

**Streetscape**

**Street trees** - The downtown CBD, The Cotswold Project, The Museum District, Rice University, Southgate Neighborhood, Cambridge Green Neighborhood, Reliant Park entries and Hermann Park area streets benefit from mature street tree plantings. Street tree species primarily consist of Live Oaks whose shallow root systems exacerbate concrete sidewalk maintenance needs in the Corridor.

The Cotswold Project completed in 2004 focused on pedestrian enhancements, streetscapes, and street improvements in a 90-block area in the northeast sector of downtown. Featured amenities include fountains, public art, wider sidewalks and street trees, at a cost of $68 million.

The same year, Main Street Square, a pedestrian plaza in the heart of downtown Houston, was constructed. This area includes a 250’ reflecting pool with waterjets, trees, public art, banners and upgraded sidewalks at $8.9 million.

Also in 2004, the Main Street Corridor METRO Rail Line was developed and constructed by the Metropolitan Transit Authority. Enhancements along this 7 1/2- mile at-grade light rail line include upgraded sidewalks and bulbouts, brick pavers, special streetlights, drinking fountains, additional landscaping, and a street clock at a cost of $10 million.

In the southeast sector of downtown, pedestrian walkways have been upgraded and include new street pavement, improved drainage, sidewalks, trees and landscaping, removal of overhead utilities, and traffic signal upgrades at $8 million.

METRO bus shelters exist at major intersections along existing bus routes.

Pedestrian oriented lighting provides a safer and more attractive environment for night-time use of pedestrian realm areas. Pedestrian level lighting is recommended to be augmented throughout the Main Street Corridor area, especially in undeveloped areas.

**Public Art**

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

- Louis and Annie Friedman Clock Tower
- “The Market” mural by Suzanne Sellers
- “Planters and Stems” sculpture at Market Street Square by Floyd Nessum
- George H.W. Bush statue in Sesquicentennial Park
- Two Medallions, Texas Avenue at Fannin and San Jacinto
“Movement” located downtown on Prairie at Travis.
Camuth Plaza, sculpture garden at Reliant Park
Museum of Cultural Arts, Houston (MODAH)
DePelchin Children’s Center Mural
MOCAH ChevronTexaco Global Aviation Mural
Cotswoold Fountains (Main at Congress and Preston)
Nine sculptures at Sam Houston Park
Christopher Columbus Bell Park, Montrose
Charlotte Allen Fountain, Baldwin Park
Water Screen, Main Street Square
Heritage Lanterns, Root Square Memorial Park
Gazebo Roof, Root Square Memorial Park
17 sculptures at Hermann Park, Houston Garden Center including
Sam Houston Monument by Cemacchio, Enrico Fiberto
“Cancer, There is Hope” by Victor Saliones, 1990, bronze sculpture
The Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden by Isamu Noguchi, 1986
Metro Downtown Light Rail System: Stations at UH-Downtown, Preston, Lamar/McKinney, Bell, Downtown Transit Center, McGowen, Ensemble/ HCC, Wheeler Museum District, Hermann Park/ Rice Univ., Memorial Hermann Hospital/Houston 2bo, Dryden/TMC, TMC Transit Center, Smith Lands, Reliant Park and Fannin South.

Mobility
Crosswalks - Demarcation of crosswalks at key intersections provide safe and visible pedestrian crossings of public rights-of-way. Crosswalks exist at many signaled intersections along the Main Street Corridor or the Street.
Bikeways/Trails - The Houston Bikeway Program provides a 345-mile bikeway network for urban cycling that spans across 500 square-mile area of the city. This bikeway network is integrated into the overall transportation system.

Several City of Houston bike lanes are located along Main Street, Caroline, Austin, West Dallas, Hawthorne, Alabama, Yoakum, Bankhead, Sunset, MacGregor Parkway, and Holly Hall. These bike lanes are often narrow and do not meet current AASHTO standards for recommended bike lane widths and demarcation.

METRO allows cyclists to bring their bikes onto the Main Street Light Rail System. The fleet is being equipped with bike racks and bicycles can be stowed on high-floor buses in the designated baggage compartment.

The Hamburg-Sunset Trail serves the Main Street Corridor as a designated regional bikeway. This hike/bikeway is a Rails-to-Trails project consisting of over 5 miles of trail and on-street bikeways just east of downtown Houston. This 10’ asphalt trail is lit and runs from Drennan to Hidalgo Park. The on-street portion of the trail runs from Commerce and McKee to Avenue H and West Hendrick. A future designated connection at S. 70th Street will connect the Hamburg-Sunset Trail to Brays Bayou.

Current METRO bus lines include commuter and local lines running between the Downtown Transit Center, Wheeler Station, Eastwood, TMC, Magnolia, Gulfgate and Southeast Transit Centers. The downtown Greyhound Bus Station is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is located on Main Street at Gray. The Amtrak Train Station is located downtown near Washington and Bagby.

Transit Centers - The downtown transit centers are:
- Downtown Transit Center
- Wheeler Station
- TMC Transit Center
- Fannin South Park and Ride

Transit Options - Transit options within the Main Street Corridor include:
- METRO Bus Local and Commuter Lines
- METRO Texas Medical Center Campus Trolley
- METRO Park and Ride at S. Fannin
- METRO HOV lane access from Franklin Street under IH-45 overpass, Smith Street South of Holman via Spur 527, Milam Street South of W. Alabama
- Greyhound Bus Service
- Amtrak Train Service
D1.2.4 Engineering/Infrastructure Inventory

Existing Road
The Main Street Corridor traverses through Main Street, Fannin Street, San Jacinto Street, S. Braeswood Boulevard, and Greenbriar Drive.

Existing Watermains
The typical life of a water transmission main is 40-50 years. For the Main Street Corridor, research indicates that eight out of existing 21 watermains along the existing alignment of the Main Street Corridor are at the end of their life span and will require replacement in the near future.

Existing Sanitary Sewer Lines
The typical life of a sewer line is typically 30 to 40 years, unless the lines are rehabilitated. Based on the City’s GIM database, there are several sewer lines along the Main Street Corridor that are older than 40 years. Given that data is unavailable with respect to the rehabilitation of these lines, it is recommended that the condition assessment of sewer lines be done for all sewers that are more than 30 years.

Existing Storm Sewer Lines
Current City regulations require storm water detention for all new development. Hence, any new developments that are proposed will be required to design for storm water detention.

Existing Lighting
Along the existing Main Street Corridor, the entire Corridor has an existing continuous lighting system. The existing poles range from 20 to 25’ in height and are mounted on breakaway bases that are founded on drilled shafts. The existing streetlights along Main Street between Commerce and Pierce are decorative light poles spaced between 80 to 110’ apart on both sides of the roadway. Poles are mounted behind the roadway curb at varying distances depending on site conditions. The remaining Corridor has existing lights along both sides of the roadway, except along San Jacinto, where the existing lighting is primarily along the east side of the roadway. It is assumed that existing lighting meets current City of Houston standards.

Summary
As in other Corridors, it is clear that redevelopment will occur over a long period of time. This allows time to replace older water mains and other services. The Transit Street itself is characterized with a combination of office, commercial, institutional and residential uses, which would normally have the capacities needed for redevelopment. However, despite infrastructure upgrades associated with the construction of the Main Street Transit Street, the condition of water mains and sewer lines appears to be quite old along the and replacement of these services should be contemplated as redevelopment occurs. It is recommended that the condition assessment of sewer lines (by closed circuit television inspection) be done for sewers that are more than 30 years old. Storm water provision should be considered early in the redevelopment process to insure that the proper capacity exists.
### Main Street Corridor Demographic Market Overview

**Demographic Overview**

The methodology for generating the demographic profile was consistent for all of the Corridors examined - a one-mile buffer around the length of the Transit Street was generated from geographic information systems (GIS) files, and socio-economic data for all residents within this zone were analyzed and extrapolated from the 2005 Census using Claritas data. The rationale is that this sample draws upon not only the residents in the immediate area of influence of the transit corridor infrastructure improvements, but also adjacent neighborhoods that will see secondary benefits (proximity to higher-order transit, improved commercial-retail facilities over time, improved pedestrian realm and civic spaces, etc.).

The Main Street Corridor area has a population of just over 81,000 persons. In terms of population profile, the median age level is 33.9 years old, which is among the oldest among the six Corridors being examined, which range from 30.2 to 40.2 years of age. Persons under the age of 25 account for a 27% share of the local population in the Main Street Corridor, while persons aged 25 to 54 (prime income-earning years) account for a much more sizable 57% share of the total.

The average household size in the Main Street Corridor is 1.90 persons, placing it second lowest among the Corridors being analyzed, which range from 3.26 down to 1.79 persons per household. Households with one or two persons account for an 80% share of the total, while households of five or more persons account for just a 5% share.

The Main Street Corridor has among the newest housing stock of the six Corridors being examined. Homes built since 1990 account for 27% of the total, while homes built pre-1970 represent a 57% share. This compares to an average of 21% and 54% share, respectively, for the total sample of housing across the six Corridors. Just over one-quarter of area homes are owner-occupied, with some three-quarters being renter-occupied, which is the highest prevalence of rental tenure housing among all the Corridors being examined – not surprising given the relatively high concentration of apartments in this area.

In assessing housing income levels, the Main Street Corridor ranks second highest (after Uptown Corridor) among the six Corridors being studied. With a median household income level of just less than $43,500, some 43% of households have an income level of over $50,000, and 19% earn in excess of $100,000.

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**Table:**

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<td>Total Households</td>
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### Population Age Profile:

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<td>Age 5 - 9</td>
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<td>Age 10 - 14</td>
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### Average Household Size:

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### Average Household Income:

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<tr>
<td>$25,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>9,352</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $74,999</td>
<td>5,059</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>2,646</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000+</td>
<td>6,441</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Household Income: $45,463
Neighborhood Description

The Main Street Corridor is part of Study Area 10 (although portions extend into other Study Areas, the majority is situated within Study Area 10). It has been analyzed as part of a Land Use and Demographic Profile prepared by the City’s Planning and Development Department in 2003. The Main Street Corridor itself principally comprises five neighborhoods (from north to south): Binz, University Place, Medical Center, Astrodome, and South Main. The following is a brief area description.

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

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

- **Medical Center Area includes the original campus of the Texas Medical Center, Hermann Park, and a fringe of private development. The Texas Medical Center has expanded its campus far beyond the original site (north of Holcombe and east of Fannin), and has replaced the early restaurants and shopping centers on Main Street with high-rise hotels, outpatient clinics and professional buildings. Hermann Park contains the city’s zoo, amphitheater and the Museum of Natural History, furthermore, it is bordered on the north by several high rise condominiums, a private hospital and a medical museum.**

- **The Astrodome Area includes the commercial and residential developments which have located in what was a virtually empty part of south Houston before the opening of the Astrodome in 1965. The area lies south of South Braeswood Boulevard, extending to Loop 610 further to the south. Plaza Del Oro, a mixed use development by Shell Oil Company, comprises a few technical and medical office buildings and many apartments and condominiums. The majority of residential units in the area are multifamily or single-family attached.**

- **South Main Area is along South Main Street on both sides of Loop 610 including the Astroworld, south of the Loop. Most of the residential development in the area consists of large multi-family complexes, some of which deteriorated in the 1980’s. Currently, the South Main Center Association, a major institutional coalition, is an active participant in the Main Street Corridor Project, a public/private partnership to turn Main Street into Houston’s signature boulevard.**
The following land use characteristics are identified for Study Area 10:

- Study Area 10 is located inside Loop 610 south of Buffalo Bayou, extending south just beyond the southern portion of Loop 610. It encompasses 13,376 acres of land, of which more than 30% are residential uses. Concentrations of public and institutional growth are located here including: Texas Medical Center, Hermann Park, Museum District, Rice University, Rice Village and Saint Thomas University.

- Single-family residential constitutes about 21% of this area. The overwhelming majority of these parcels are located north of Brays Bayou. Single-family uses grew in the area by 6.4% from 2,694 acres in 1990 to 2,864 acres in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000 new housing construction has tended to concentrate north of US 59 and west of downtown.

- Multi-family residential uses are about 9% of an acreage in this Study Area, up by more than 30% from 889 acres in 1990 to 1,164 acres in 2000. Multi-family residential uses are located in the Reliant Park area, around Old Spanish Road, and toward the south. In the northern part of the Study Area, multi-family residential uses tend to concentrate in the northeast corner between Buffalo Bayou and Westheimer Road, and south of Westheimer between Wesleyan and Buffalo Speedway. Between 1990 and 2000 apartment construction grew considerably – almost 1,600 units were built in the decade, which was the second highest figure recorded among Study Areas across the city. Apartment buildings and condominiums were built mainly north of the Brays Bayou, and in even greater numbers, north of US 59.
Commercial and Office land uses cover slightly more than 12% of the land. Commercial land accounted for 7.7% in 2000, with dense concentrations of development located along Kirby Drive, US 59, Richmond Avenue, Westheimer Road, and Bissonnet Street, in the northern portion of the study area. Also, concentrations are along South Main Street, Bellaire Blvd, Old Spanish Trail and south of Loop 610 in the southern portion. Office uses cluster in Greenway Plaza and the Medical Center and also on Allen Parkway in the vicinity of Montrose, and north of Reliant Park. Commercial land uses expanded from 661 acres in 1990 to 1,030 acres in 2000, while office land uses increased from 446 to 583 acres in the same period. Some industrial and residential parcels have been converted into commercial uses, especially along Montrose and South Main in Midtown. New commercial and office development are also increasing along the major thoroughfares and in the already established areas.

Industrial uses have expanded slowly, from 644 acres in 1990 to 677 acres in 2000. In 2000, industrial uses covered 3% of the land, located primarily in the southern portion of the study area, more specifically south of Old Spanish Trail between SH 288 and Almeda Rd., and south of Loop 610. Part of the growth in the last decade is due to use of vacant land, and part is due to data reclassification. New warehouse development is increasing south of Old Spanish Road.

Transportation and utilities make up 11% of the land in the study area. The largest concentration of this land is located in the vicinity of the intersection of US 59 and Loop 610.

Parks and open space occupy 2.7% of the land in the study area including Hermann Park and linear parks along the Brays and Buffalo Bayous. Most of the increase from 1990 to 2000 is the result of reclassification of land along Buffalo and Brays Bayous.

Public and institutional uses account for 13.6% of the total land, about 1,800 acres, the largest amount of any Study Area. Public and institutional land is concentrated along South Main and includes the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, Museum District and Reliant Park. To the north of US 59 and to the west of Montrose is the university of Saint Thomas. Between 1990 and 2000, several major institutional projects were completed, for example: the Texas Medical Center added two new hospitals and parking garage; two new museums were built, including the MFA expansion; The University of Saint Thomas added a new science building and a chapel; and Rice University added a new student residence.

Vacant land accounts for about 13% of the land in the Study Area. Vacant land decreased from 2,141 acres in 1990 to 1,757 acres in 2000. Vacant parcels are mainly located south of the Texas Medical Center, between South Main Street and Holmes Road. Vacant land has decreased mostly because of growth in institutional uses and park space.

Roads cover 21.3% of the area, higher than the citywide figure of 15%. Major roads crossing the Study Area include US 59 in the north, Loop 610 in the south and SH 288 on the eastern boundary. Other important roads are South Main and Fannin Streets, which will include a light rail line running from the downtown to Reliant Park.
Office Market
The Main Street Corridor incorporates the Central Business District office node, as tracked by Cushman & Wakefield’s Research Department. The CBD has an inventory of some 36 million sf of space, with a 2007 Q4 overall vacancy rate of just under 12%. There is presently 207,000 sf of office space under construction.

Overall vacancy has dropped significantly throughout 2007 - a dramatic decrease from the over 22% level at the end of first quarter of 2006. Few large blocks of space remain vacant, and rental rates have been escalating rapidly, as landlords capitalize on vastly improved market demand conditions. Overall Class A average asking gross rental rates were up from $25.00 at 2006 Q4 to $36.50 psf at 2007 Q4. The vast majority of recent leasing activity has occurred in the Class A space market.

Housing Market
The average single family house price was approximately $672,500 in 2007, based upon Multiple Listing Service (MLS) data compiled by the Houston Association of Realtors. There were a total of 1,178 sales in 2007, compared to 1,281 during the same period one year ago, representing a decline of nearly 8%. The average townhouse/condominium sale price was considerably more affordable, at close to $193,000, compared to roughly $160,000 one year earlier. These values have increased sharply, in the range of 20%-35% since 2004.

In the rental market, the single-family home rental rate was approximately $2,100 per month in September 2007, compared to around $1,150 in the townhouse/condominium segment of the market. Rents for both market segments reflect roughly 20% growth since 2004.
D1.4

Summary of Initiatives

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

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

Opportunity Areas

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

Opportunity Districts:

Houston Downtown Development Framework

1. Sport and Convention District
   The downtown vision for 2025 includes a thriving Sport and Convention District, primary attractions include the George R. Brown Convention Center, the Minute Maid Center, Toyota Center and Discovery Green (a new civic park).

2. Recreational District
   The Buffalo Bayou Greenbelt project will transform the water’s edge into a linear cultural park, connecting downtown adjacent areas in the city.

3. Retail and Entertainment District
   Street-level commercial and entertainment is to be focused in this area, creating a critical mass of retail and destinations for downtown residents and visitors.

Government Campuses:

4. Public Safety Campus
   A new public safety campus for the Houston Police Department is planned west of I-45. Maintaining a police presence in the downtown will help establish a sense of safety.
5. Joint Booking Facility
The City plans to implement a joint jail and booking facility with Harris County.

6. Restored Courthouse
The restoration of the Civil Courthouse Building began in 2006 and is expected to be complete by 2010.

7. New Federal Campus
A downtown Houston Federal Campus will include a new federal courthouse and post office centered on the historic Customs House.

8. Fire Station #1
The Houston Station 1 located at 410 Bagby is currently closed and being renovated.

9. Christ Church Cathedral Campus
The expansion responds to issues of accessibility, a parking garage, a new diocesan center, the Latham and Hines buildings, a new three-story building for the youth program, some Cathedral offices and a generous green space on Texas Avenue.

10. Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral
The Catholic Church is building a Romanesque style cathedral with a 12-story bell tower on a full city block. “Cathedral Square” is currently characterized by office buildings with blank facades, underutilized properties serving as a surface parking lots and vacant buildings. This new cathedral and the METRO Headquarters are applying the design principles set forth in the Main Street Corridor Master Plan.

11. Christus St. Joseph Extension
In 1998, a new garage and ambulatory care facility were built.

Private Development:

12. Bayou Place Phase II
Offices with parking at grade are being built on Texas Avenue at Bagby.

13. Allen’s Landing
The City of Houston and Buffalo Bayou Partnership are continuing the renovation of the waterfront at the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak Bayous. The project includes the addition of a promenade, terraced lawn, public art, benches and bike racks.

14. Regional Visitor Center
A new regional visitor center along Avenida de las Americas will connect visitors to downtown attractions.

15. Library
There are plans for a new central library be built in the downtown area.

16. New Arts Facility
A new arts facility is proposed at Rusk and Smith Streets.

17. New Theater
The Downtown Aquarium area would benefit from a complementary use, such as a family-oriented theater.

18. Main Place
A new 46-story LEED silver-certified office tower is being built at 811 Main Street. Construction is estimated to be completed by 2011, bringing approximately one million rentable square feet to the area.
Development Opportunities: Main Street Corridor Master Plan

19. Elizabeth Baldwin Park
The City acquired Elizabeth Baldwin Park in 1905. It is 4.88 acres and is the neighborhood focus for houses and businesses.

20. Signature Gateways
An intermodal station is planned at the northern end of Main Street, connecting to the North Corridor Transit Street. Toward the south, the underutilized lands around Reliant Park are suitable for a “New Town in Town”. These hubs could have significant public art that corresponds to the cultural identity of each place.

21. Water Elements
Creative water detention solutions to deal with Houston’s flooding issues are recommended at Hermann Park and Reliant Park.

22. Amphitheater
The Buffalo Bayou Master Plan includes an amphitheater at junction of the Gable Street Landing, Festival Place and Symphony Island.

23. Market Square
Flanking the Main Street transit line, Market Square was originally a thriving public market. There are plans to restore the square and reintroduce the market.

24. New Civic Building
The southeast downtown quadrant is underdeveloped and would benefit from a new civic building that could act as the front door to the downtown segment of the Main Street Corridor.

25. Convention Center Expansion
The George R. Brown Convention Center Expansion was completed in 2003 - 400,000 sf of exhibit space and meeting rooms were added, which can accommodate large conventions.

26. Boulevard to Convention Center
This boulevard leading to the George R. Brown Convention Center widens and creates a bottle-shaped 11-acre space currently being transformed into a destination park. The open space components will include: a lawn, walkways, gardens, lake and landforms.

27. New Firefighters Museum

28. Relocated Flower Market

29. High School for Performing & Visual Arts
A new high school is proposed on Main Street between Truxillo and Cleburne, fronting onto the lawn of the South Main Baptist Church.

Stable Areas
It is important to protect and enhance residential neighborhoods. Neighborhoods should work with the City to evaluate the application of available tools to preserve Stable Areas or encourage redevelopment.

30. Historic District
The Main Street Corridor Master Plan suggests a Historic District be established between Market and Courtyard Squares.

31. Historic Area
Pedestrian Realm

The Main Street Corridor has several neighborhood, community, and city-scale parks and open spaces. Workshop participants identified several initiatives for open space, streetscape and Corridor enhancements.

Parks:
The protection and enhancement of existing parks is crucial to the pedestrian realm. Enhancements could include landscape upgrading, improved pedestrian and cycling access and upgraded facilities. (Houston Downtown Development Framework)

32. Cultural Park
33. Harris County Plaza
34. Discovery Green
35. Christ Church Park
36. Buffalo Bayou Greenbelt
37. Main St. Corridor Master Plan
38. Restored Sam Houston Park
39. Green Connection to Midtown

Gateways:
Significant entry points to strengthen the community identity have been identified. Gateways could include signage, landscape treatment or special buildings.

40. I45 & Frontage Rd. Extension
41. Main St. & I45
42. McGowan & SH 288
43. Elgin St. & SH 288
44. Crawford & US H59
45. Main St. & US H59
46. Elgin St. & Spur 527
47. Gray & Webster
48. Main St. & Rice Blvd.

Infrastructure Upgrading:

Drainage:
49. Dallas Street
50. Polk Street
51. Clay Street
52. Bell Street
53. Leeland Street
54. Pease Street
55. Jefferson Street
56. Rusk Street
57. Capitol Street
58. Midtown - Potential Relief Storm Sewer

Utilities:
59. Overhead Utility Lines to be Relocated
Streetscapes:
Streets are to be designed to create a pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Improvements could include street planting, safe and connected sidewalks, pedestrian scale lighting and amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and transit shelters.

Pedestrian Walks:
60. Museum Art Walk on Binz
61. Wheeler - Spur 527 to LaBranch
62. Alabama - Milam to Chenevert
63. Holman
64. Elgin St. - Smith to Main St.
65. McGowen - Smith to Main St.
66. Gray - Smith to Main St.

New Roads:
67. I45 Realignment
68. Washington St. Extension
69. Bagby Extension to San Jacinta
70. Redesigned SH 288 - I445 Ramps
71. Navigation Blvd.
72. Hardy Toll Rd. Extension

Streetscape Improvements:
73. Main St. - Downtown to 610 Loop
74. Bell St.
75. Greenbriar
76. Holcombe Square Design Project

Civic Corridor Improvements:
(Midtown Project Corridors)
77. McGowen Corridor
78. Oak Sq. District: Baldwin, Helena, Albany and Bagby
79. Baldwin Park: Crawford, Dennis & Drew

Proposed Corridors:
(Houston Downtown Development Framework)
80. Bagby to I45 to San Jacinto to Preston
81. Avenida de las Americas
82. Walker from I45 to Louisiana
83. McKinney from I45 to Louisiana

Texas Medical Center corridors to demarcate identity beyond its boundaries:
84. Old Spanish Trail
85. Cambridge
86. McGregor
87. Crawford/Almeda
88. Holcombe
89. Heman Pressler
90. Bertner Ave.
91. Knight Rd.
92. N. Braeswood Blvd.
D1.5

Main Street Corridor Workshop

A two-day workshop was held in April 2007 to engage area stakeholders and residents in Urban Corridor Planning.

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

Each one of the table groups identified many opportunities in the Main Street Corridor that have been included in the Initiatives Plan (see Chapter D1.4). A summary of comments made by participants follows:

- **Pedestrian Realm**
  - create great public spaces
  - concerned about pedestrian interaction
  - Wheeler Station - two elevated roads limit access and attractiveness for pedestrians
  - need to include trees
  - better lighting is required under freeway
  - pedestrian gateways: southbound Main, eastbound Richmond Wheeler, westbound Blodgett, northbound Main
  - green parking lots
  - green collector to and from rail line
  - shady access to and from rail line
  - urban corridor to and from rail
  - hike and bike trail along bayou being expanded
  - closing off Fannin or Main and making it just for pedestrians

- **Redevelopment Opportunities**
  - need additional residential in the downtown
  - mixed use - office and residential
  - encourage alternative forms of commercial development
  - density should be greater
  - maximum parking ratios should be applied
  - want: Whole Foods, Target, Market Place, a movie theater and affordable housing
  - use parking structures for something more than a garage
  - TIRZ should reward quality developments
Participants were also asked to write a headline for the front page of The Houston Chronicle in 2012. The headline was to reflect the character of the Main Street Corridor once the Transit Network is been up and running. The facing page summarizes some of the headlines collected during this exercise. These statements clearly represent a positive future for the Main Street Corridor and the benefits of transit for the area.

Based on the input provided during the first workshop day, the preliminary Pedestrian Realm, Land Development Concept Plans and two Demonstration Plans were developed and presented for discussion the next day.

The drawings on the previous page illustrate the input received at the workshop and the evolution to the report’s Pedestrian Realm, Current Initiatives and Land Development Concept Plans (see Chapter D2 for proposed Plans).
Main Street Corridor: Houston’s Signature Boulevard
Tree-Lined rail RE-LEAVES stress

Target opens the first urban store
TMC continues to thrive

Fannin traffic problems cured
Pedestrians Swarm Plaza - Grand Opening Target/Whole Foods

Sears unveils original Art Deco Sears strips!

Wheeler Street Farmers’ Market Anniversary

These headlines were taken during the Main Street Corridor Workshop.