



Houston

# PLACEMAKING ALONG THE SOUTH MAIN CORRIDOR

Houston, Texas





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This report represents the recommendations of the  
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ON THE COVER: The South Main Street Corridor with the study  
areas circled. (*Google Earth/ULI*)



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The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

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## About ULI Houston

As the preeminent, multidisciplinary real estate forum, ULI facilitates the open exchange of ideas, information, and experience among local, national, and international industry leaders and policymakers dedicated to creating better places. The ULI Houston District Council brings together real estate professionals, civic leaders, and the Houston community for educational programs, initiatives impacting the region, and networking events, all in the pursuit of advancing responsible and equitable land use throughout the region. With 900 members locally, ULI Houston provides a unique venue to convene and share best practices in the region. ULI Houston believes everyone needs to be at the table when the region's future is at stake, so ULI serves the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines – from architects to developers, CEOs to analysts, builders, property owners, investors, public officials, and everyone in between. Using this interdisciplinary approach, ULI examines land use issues, impartially reports findings, and convenes forums to find solutions.

### ULI District Council Leadership

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## ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI-member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services).

## Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve complex land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Houston region. Drawing from its professional membership base, ULI Houston offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and presenting it to the panel. TAP panelists spend two days interviewing stakeholders, evaluating the challenges, and ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations that the sponsoring organization can use to guide development going forward.

Learn more at [houston.uli.org/get-involved/advisory-services/](https://houston.uli.org/get-involved/advisory-services/).

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ULI Advisory Services identify creative, practical solutions for complex land use and development challenges.



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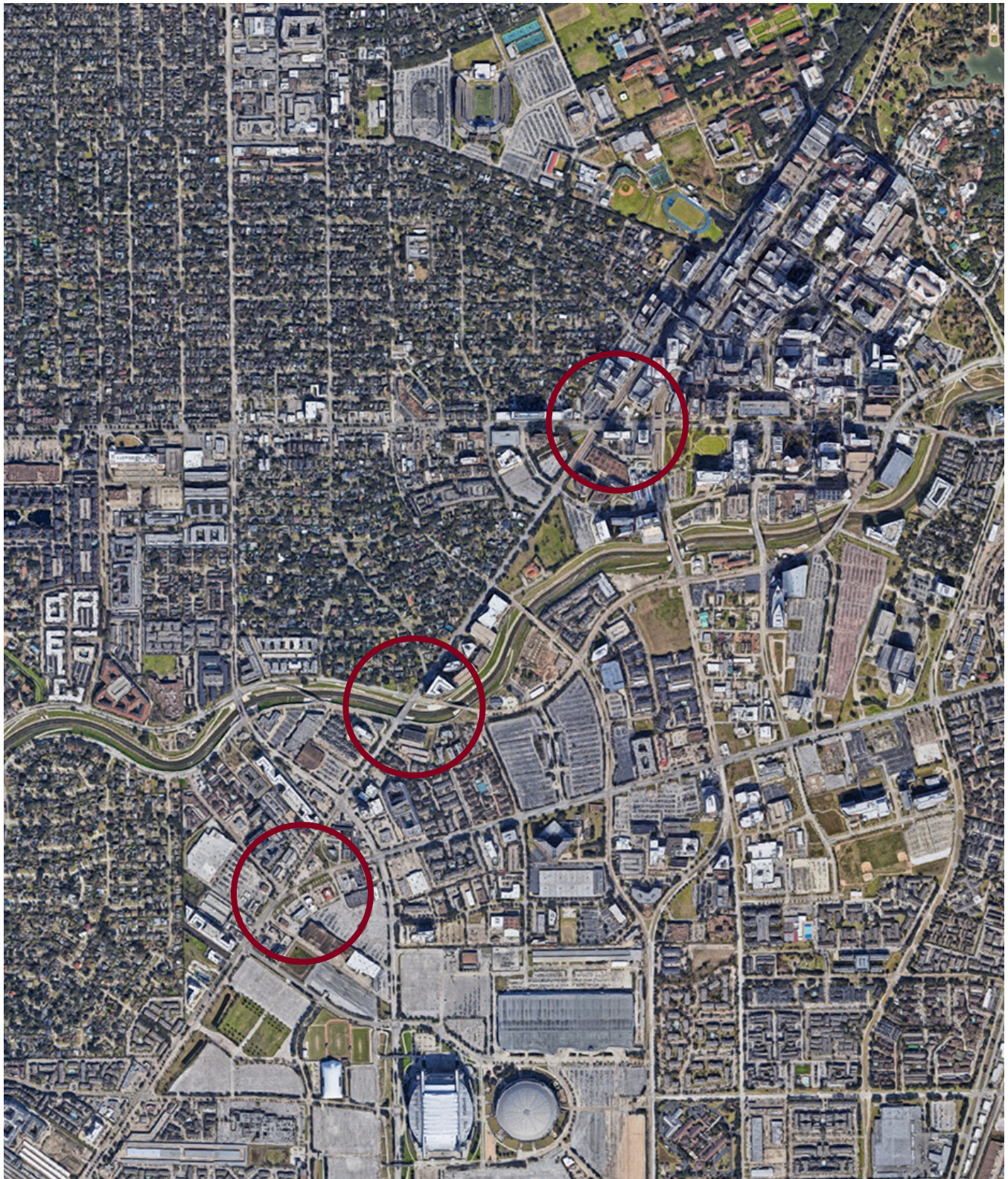
The George E. Kessler design for Hermann Park and the design intent for Main Street was to create a Champs-Élysées experience for Houston.



# CONTENTS

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary                    | 9  |
| Introduction and Background          | 12 |
| Land Use                             | 16 |
| Mobility and Transportation          | 21 |
| Scenic Experience                    | 25 |
| Incentives and Funding Opportunities | 28 |
| Conclusion                           | 30 |
| About the Panel                      | 32 |





GOOGLE/ULI

From the medical campuses in the northeast to NRG Park in the southwest, South Main Street is a spine of economic activity surrounded by residential and bisected by Brays Bayou and its trail network. The intersections of focus for this study are circled in red and moving from the top down, note Main Street’s intersections with Holcombe Boulevard, Brays Bayou, and Old Spanish Trail.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Houston's Main Street is living up to its name. While other American cities have seen the rise and then diminution of main street, the Main Street corridor in Houston continues to draw activity, development, and economic investment. From a vibrant downtown, to the flourishing Midtown area, to Hermann Park, Rice University and the Houston Museum District, to the cluster of world-renowned medical institutions, to NRG Park, South Main Street is the spine connecting them all. Even with all of this economic activity along South Main Street, key intersections along this important boulevard lack a sense of place, and there is little to no cohesion for those driving, biking, or walking along South Main Street, Houston.

Houston's South Main Alliance, formed to protect and enhance the area in which many of the institutions that make Houston Houston are located, recognizes the need for a more cohesive thread to tie Main Street together, a greater sense of arrival within the corridor, and a more inviting experience for all modes of transportation. To better understand the potential for placemaking improvements along Main Street, the South Main Alliance (SMA) turned to the Urban Land Institute Houston district council (ULI Houston) to convene a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to evaluate three key intersections along the corridor.

From the briefing materials provided by SMA to ULI, "the concept of Main Street as Houston's signature boulevard always recognized Main Street as a thread that links extremely diverse districts, each with its own character." That diversity of districts along the corridor has created an experience in which those moving along Main Street have no sense of arrival at any key intersection, there is no sense of connection along the corridor, and there is little sense of place, particularly in light of the tremendous civic, cultural, recreational, and health/wellness resources located along Main Street. This led SMA to pose the following key question to ULI: what are strategies that can coax "orphan nodes" to become gateway moments of urban enhancement?

The intersections – Main Street at Old Spanish Trail, Brays Bayou, and Holcombe – are indeed unique in character, and, at present, the key commonality – an auto-centric

thoroughfare – poses challenges to the continued success and safety for all modalities along the corridor. The car reigns supreme along the corridor and pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit patrons appear to be an afterthought. Buildings and businesses line the corridor, yet most do not engage with Main Street and few serve as activation points for the area as evidenced by large, street-facing parking lots and first-floor uses that do not invite the public (e.g., non-retail uses). Recreation opportunities are prevalent close to and crossing the corridor, yet the connections to and from those opportunities are weak.

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**The concept of Main Street as Houston's signature boulevard always recognized Main Street as a thread that links extremely diverse districts, each with its own character, rather than relying on uniform branding elements as in a single district, neighborhood, or shopping center.**

**–TAP Briefing Book**

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In evaluating the challenges evident along the corridor in light of the key question and further, more granular questions posed by SMA, the panel delivered a set of recommendations that address land use, mobility, scenic experience, finance, and implementation framed around each intersection and for the corridor as a whole.



NRG Park, close to the intersection of Old Spanish Trail and Main Street, offers residents and visitors a host of entertainment options.

## The South Main Street Corridor

For the length of the corridor, several key themes and areas for improvement were identified.

- Improving pedestrian access and safety along the corridor and at each intersection;
- Providing bike lanes and further protection from automobile traffic;
- Maintain the 11-foot wide traffic lanes, and where lanes are wider than 11 feet, put that land to use for other mobilities and enhanced protection from vehicular traffic;
- A cohesive land use strategy to encourage more street-level uses and activation; and
- A move to consolidate or relocate parking facilities to areas not fronting Main Street.

Through all of these recommendations, the theme of “being bold” was emphasized by the panel.

## Individual Intersection Improvements

Each of the intersections studied by the panel features a distinct character that can be leveraged to Main Street’s advantage.

**Old Spanish Trail – Entertainment District.** At the Old Spanish Trail intersection with Main Street, there is an opportunity to create a gateway to South Main and, by leveraging the attractions at NRG Park, establish an entertainment district in the area. Realigning the point of intersection of these two major streets is also of interest and holds promise for improving the safety of all modalities as well as potentially helping reduce the traffic load on Main Street.

**Brays Bayou – Recreation Junction.** The recreation opportunities at Main Street’s intersection with Brays Bayou led the panel to consider this intersection as “Recreation Junction.” Improvements in this area focused around a need to establish a presence – create a more significant architectural feature of the bridge, use art such as murals to enliven the bayou infrastructure and blank walls adjacent to





The Rosemont Pedestrian Bridge provides an excellent example of a recreational bridge that provides a safer passage over bayou waters, separate from vehicular traffic.

the trail, and add trees where feasible to soften the effects of the concrete infrastructure and provide shade for trail users. Safety was also of concern at this intersection and drove the panel to suggest a separate pedestrian bridge across the bayou and additional barriers along the trail to prevent trail users from slipping down into the water in the event of a slight misstep or slip.

**Holcombe and Fannin – Health District.** At the Holcombe and Fannin intersections with Main Street, the very urban nature of this intersection and the degree to which the streets are subverted beneath Holcombe led to a set of recommendations aimed at providing more open and green public spaces as well as modified overpass infrastructure to improve pedestrian safety and lessen the visual impact of the rather imposing concrete structures. The pedestrian experience would also be improved through more outward-facing uses in the first floors of the surrounding buildings and greater street-level activation. It should be noted here that none of the recommendations contained in this report are positioned to supersede the access required by emergency vehicles moving to and through the area and particularly this intersection. Further study will be required to detail how the spirit of these recommendations may be

realized in a manner that meets the needs of emergency vehicles and improves the experience of other modes of transportation.

## Implementation

To champion these recommendations and begin implementation, the panel identified the need for a central organizing entity such as an improvement district, which could also serve as a central fiduciary entity in light of the potential funding needs for the improvements. Management District and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ) provide potential legal frameworks that might be considered as possible means to achieve these goals.

Houston's Main Street, particularly this stretch from Holcombe to Old Spanish Trail, is rich in transportation, cultural, entertainment, medical, innovation, and recreational assets, but it remains largely disconnected and unable to fulfill its potential as the grand Main Street boulevard George Kessler envisioned it to be. With considerable focus, attention, patience, and funding, South Main can become the southernmost gateway to all of the treasures Houston has to offer.

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The South Main Alliance, with its focus on the vitality and success of the Main Street corridor, from downtown Houston south to Belfort Avenue, recognizes the value of the diversity of uses found along the corridor and also understands the challenge that this diversity brings to those navigating the corridor, visiting the businesses and institutions, and seeking recreation along Brays Bayou and beyond. With stakeholders ranging from Rice University and the Texas Medical Center (TMC), to small business owners, to individual residents of and visitors to the area, SMA (the sponsor) turned to the ULI TAP process for answers to the following questions.

## Questions for the Panel

1. What could be done to make the drive down the corridor memorable and an attraction to visitors? What could make the study area iconic for the city of Houston?
2. Leveraging the sponsor's ongoing work and other efforts, what does the panel recommend as a balanced, "highest and best use" approach with an emphasis on placemaking, safety, and revitalization to accommodate current mobility and potential residential, retail, institutional, open spaces, and other uses at each of the intersections in the study area?
3. Leveraging the sponsor's ongoing work and other efforts, what does the panel recommend from a balanced, "highest and best use" approach with an emphasis on placemaking, safety, and revitalization to encourage and support all kinds of transportation at each of the intersections in the study area without reducing automobile mobility given the need for continued access to emergency and important health care services at Texas Medical Center?
4. What potential barriers exist to achieving this approach to such recommendations and plans emerging from the services? How might these recommendations and plans overcome such barriers?
5. What will it take to encourage and guide subsequent development in the study area and along the corridor to be in alignment with the recommendations and plans emerging from the services?
6. What additional incentives, funding sources, and partnerships exist that can be leveraged to ensure the recommendations and plans emerging from the services are realized?
7. Are there relevant examples or best practices (either regionally or nationally) that provide opportunities for guidance or lessons learned?

In addition to the questions posed to the panel, SMA also sought to achieve the following outcomes via the TAP process:

- Greater consensus among stakeholders moving forward to achieve their desired improvements;
- Recommendations with clear priorities to focus efforts of consultants, leaders, funders, and other stakeholders; and
- A tool for productive dialogue with public officials and potential private sector partners who seek to use limited public resources well.

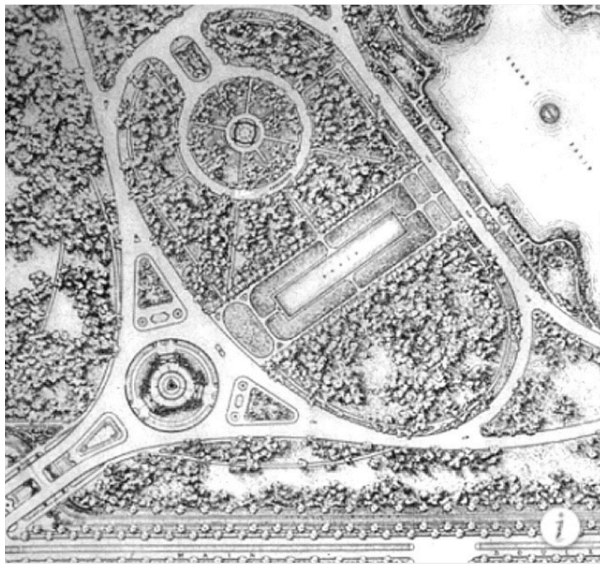
In the study of the South Main corridor, it was important to understand the foundation of history and context that began to shape Main Street into the corridor it is today. This context is also foundational to envisioning a path forward that is sensitive to history, builds on progress, and leverages and supports the energy of the stakeholders who are invested in the area, today and into the future.

The significance and magnificence of Houston’s Main Street, as envisioned by the renowned landscape architect and urban planner George E. Kessler, served as

a touchstone for the panel in their deliberations. At the northern end of the corridor, just beyond the Texas Medical Center, the grandeur of the entrance to Hermann Park creates a sense of arrival, a sense of place, and begins to shape an experience along Main Street that Kessler had envisioned to rival Paris’ Champs-Élysées.

Moving south along the corridor to the Holcombe Boulevard and Fannin Street intersections in the heart of the medical and educational campuses, Main Street becomes a thoroughfare focused on vehicular traffic and the efficient and effective movement of cars to and through the space. The grand vision of a tree-lined boulevard is briefly interrupted at each node by infrastructure features specific to each location.

Further south, at Main Street’s intersection with Brays Bayou, the urbanity of Main Street at the medical center transitions into a suburban-style corridor, with buildings set back from the street, uses that do not cater to pedestrian traffic, and nothing to indicate that there is a connection to the impressive bayou trail system at the intersection. Given the lack of architectural significance or appeal to the bridge infrastructure and the below-grade nature of the trail



HERMANN PARK CONSERVANCY

Historic documents depict the designs for Hermann Park and its intersection with Main Street.



HOUSTON LIBRARY

The street network beyond Hermann Park was built around the concept of Main Street as the central spine moving southwest from downtown Houston.



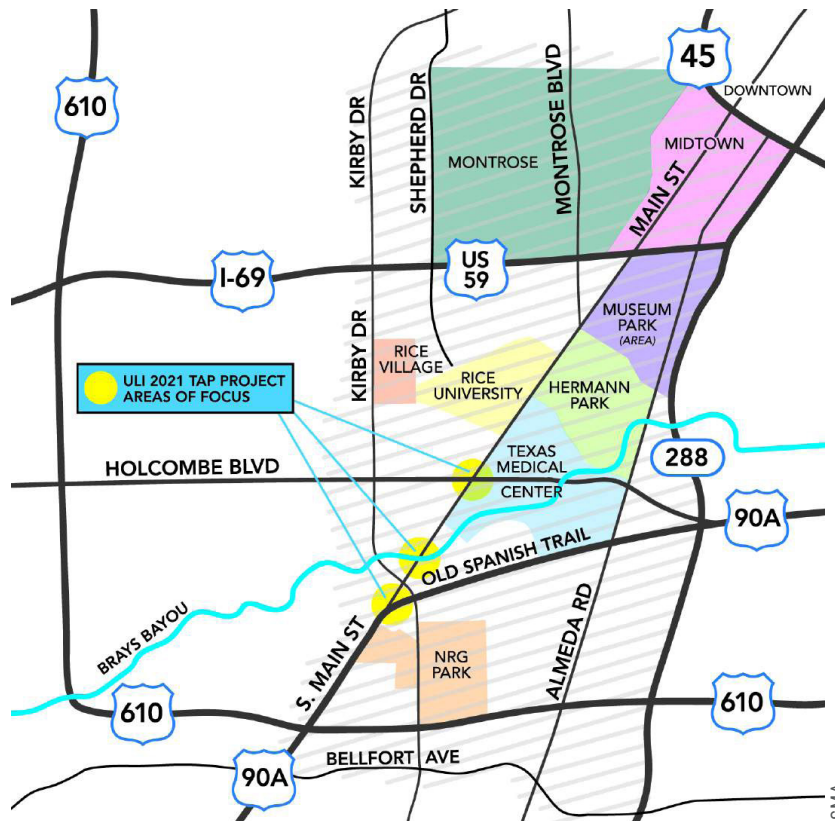
system, it is entirely possible to pass over Brays Bayou and not even recognize that the waterway and its associated trail system are there.

Finally, near the southern edge of the SMA geography, Old Spanish Trail intersects with Main Street in an interesting assembly of streets and crossings that is confusing to all modalities. For cars moving northeast/southwest on Main Street, the alignment of Old Spanish Trail into Main Street is relatively smooth. For those traveling west on Old Spanish Trail and wishing to turn north onto Main Street, the roughly 20-degree intersection of streets is awkward and confusing. This awkward and odd configuration creates a significant amount of “dead space” within that pie-shaped area, a sea of pavement that isn’t functional for economic or recreational uses and is intimidating for pedestrians who wish to move between businesses north and south on Main Street or to cross to or from nearby NRG Park.

Each uniquely different, the three intersections along South Main Street do share the following attributes: a focus on vehicular passage that is not welcoming to other modalities and a missing sense of place, arrival, or cohesion with the surrounding community or corridor.

The TAP panel, comprised of ULI members with professional expertise in real estate development, land use, transportation planning, architecture, finance, and urban planning, studied the briefing materials provided by the sponsor, interviewed over 25 stakeholders, and ultimately arrived at a set of recommendations that the sponsor can pursue to achieve its goal of improving the three key intersections to ‘become gateway moments’ for the South Main Street corridor.

The panel’s core advice: BE BOLD.



The intersections of focus along South Main Street could serve as welcoming gateways into the neighborhoods, districts, and destinations that surround the area.

## Insights from Stakeholder Interviews

The panel interviewed a series of stakeholders from across the study area's geography. The following points of reference emerged from those conversations.

**History.** The old Shamrock Hotel was iconic and a destination, as were the smaller amusement and entertainment attractions that were once found in the area around the Main Street intersection with Old Spanish Trail.

**Destination.** The area lacks much destination attraction today, yet has the potential to be the central spine for tourism – connecting downtown to Midtown, the Museum District, the Medical Center, and NRG Park.

**Talent attraction.** Stakeholders seek to attract and retain talent to the institutions operating in the study area and seek improvements in the area supportive of that goal.

**Trails and recreation.** Although there is an impressive trail network running through the study area, the connections to the trails are neither clear nor easily accessible. At present, the Brays Bayou trails near Main Street lack trees or other shading/cooling mechanisms, as well as barriers to improve safety along the channel.

**Pedestrian access.** There needs to be a stronger emphasis on pedestrian access and movement along and across Main Street. At Brays Bayou, a separate pedestrian bridge would be welcomed.

**Brays Bayou bridge.** The current bridge over Brays Bayou is nondescript and blends into the surrounding infrastructure. A bridge that is more architecturally interesting or has more significant design elements would be welcomed.

**Buildings and open space.** Around the Holcombe intersection, buildings are arranged around interior open spaces that are not accessible to pedestrians moving along Main Street. ("The buildings have turned their back on the street," interpreted one panelist.) The southwest

corner of Holcombe and Main is scheduled for improvements, which may provide welcomed public and open green space in the area.

**Skybridges.** The medical center's skybridges keep the staff and patients connected in times of extreme weather and facilitate pedestrian movement critical to hospital operations; yet, the skybridges do not facilitate movement for the general public.

**Street network.** Old Main Street and Travis Street (near Holcombe) might be worth considering for additional circulation of both autos and pedestrians around this node.

**Safety.** There is concern around the safety of pedestrians moving around all three intersections as all three nodes fall within the High Injury Network, a network of 6% of Houston's streets which account for 60% of traffic deaths and serious injuries. ([houstontx.gov/visionzero/](http://houstontx.gov/visionzero/))

**Bicycle traffic.** Many noted the desire for a dedicated bike lanes in the corridor, separate from vehicular and sidewalk traffic.

**Parking.** There are a significant number of surface parking lots and parking garages along Main Street; there may be some interest among organizations and institutions in sharing additional parking infrastructure.

**Branding.** The areas around Old Spanish Trail and Brays Bayou lack character or sense of place. There is little to no wayfinding at any of the three intersections or along the corridor.

**Transit rich and comfort poor.** While there is a significant number of people moving along the corridor, and mass transit (buses) serves many of them, there are few comfort facilities for those using public transit. Specifically, many of the bus stops along the corridor do not provide shelters for transit riders, which can make a wait for the bus an incredibly uncomfortable experience in the summer.

## LAND USE

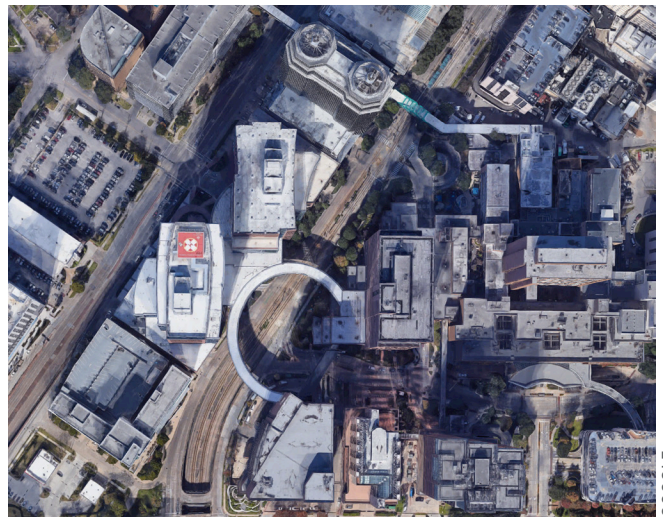
While the northern end of the South Main Street corridor around Hermann Park was designed thoughtfully by urban planners/designers with a civic focus, the stretch of Main Street under examination by this study was largely left to private landowners and individual institutions to design as development occurred. The organic nature of this development has created a streetscape along Main Street that would benefit from a more cohesive approach going forward.

### Existing Conditions

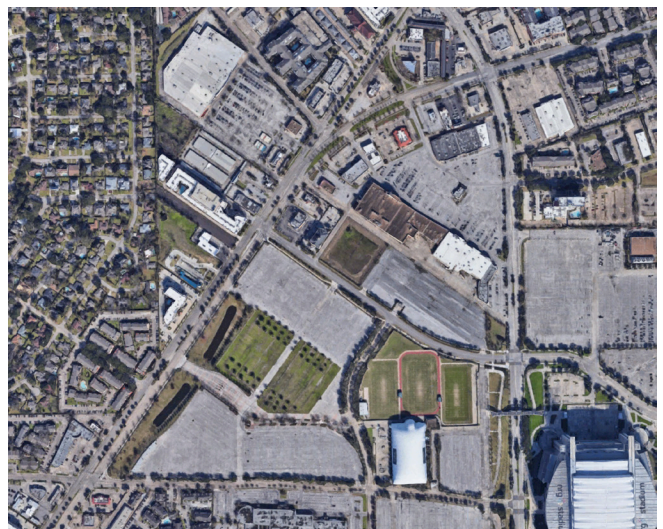
The three intersections within the TAP study area are unique from one another, and each presents a separate set of challenges. Around the Holcombe intersection, many of the buildings are oriented internally, designed to create a more intimate space for visitors, faculty, students, and employees within the Texas Medical Center (TMC) campus setting.” While this may create a more welcoming environment once inside the buildings, it leaves those passing by on the sidewalk completely disconnected from the activity and humanity within. The result is an unengaging and impersonal experience for pedestrians, including those walking to the buildings for a purpose inside.

Further south, at the Brays Bayou intersection, the buildings are not inwardly focused but remain just as uninviting to pedestrians. To the south, the intersection features an office building and storage facility, and to the north, there are homes and apartments, none of which contribute to a sense of cohesion, place, or community here. Further south along the corridor, the retail uses are often fronted by large surface parking lots, and several multi-family housing developments along the corridor are separated from the sidewalk and Main Street by tall fencing.

Around the Old Spanish Trail intersection, the car continues to reign supreme. Large surface parking lots dominate the area around a very confusing and dangerous intersection. The proximity of NRG Park to this intersection results in a significant number of visitors to and around the area, yet



Buildings around the Holcombe intersection with Main Street are internally focused on spaces that are not publicly accessible.



Large surface parking lots are found near the intersection of Main Street and Old Spanish Trail.





Buildings along the corridor, such as this one near Brays Bayou, do not feature uses that encourage passersby to stop and visit the spaces within.

there is a lack of focus on visitor orientation, wayfinding, or other visitor services.

## Progress To Date

There have been a number of initiatives along Main Street that have contributed to an improved experience for pedestrians walking along the corridor today. Both the Complete Streets and Walkable Places programs have served to improve the pedestrian experience along Main Street. Transit connectivity and “last mile” options along Main Street have improved mobility along the corridor and given visitors and residents other mobility options beyond a personal automobile.

The private investments made in the study area and immediate surroundings are also of note. The work completed to date on NRG Park has significantly improved the area and positively impacted economic development around the Old Spanish Trail intersection. On the horizon, nearby investments by the Texas Medical Center in TMC<sup>3</sup> will further boost the vitality of the area around this southern node. Initial design scenarios for TMC<sup>3</sup> include additional green/open space that will be accessible to the public and could serve as a model for inclusive planning for other developments coming to this intersection.

The public investments made to date in the trail network running along Brays Bayou are impressive and hold

great promise for additional investments in the health, wellness, and recreation opportunities of Houston’s residents and visitors.

Finally, the conversations underway focused on a community parking program could also have a significant impact on the current and future land uses in the area by thoughtfully consolidating parking needs and freeing land formerly consumed by parking lots for future commercial development.

## Overall Framework Going Forward

As the panel considered the future of land use for the study area, they considered the area’s qualities as a destination, its health and wellness reputation, and the rich transportation connections through the area.

**Leverage destinations.** The current destinations within the study area, from the institutions around Holcombe to the entertainment destinations at NRG Park, are worthy of promotion and can serve as important points of connection along Main Street. The next step will be to reinforce those current destination qualities and use those anchors to help revitalize the areas in between. Both the current destinations and the future businesses, services, and venues in between each need to work together to engage more actively with Main Street. Through intentional focus on its interaction with the street, a business can become more welcoming to those passing by, thereby encouraging new patrons to visit and making the pedestrian experience more interesting and engaging for those just passing along on Main Street’s sidewalks.

**Build on connections.** South Main Street is an area rich in transportation connections. While automotive traffic appears to be the corridor’s primary focus, the mobility options available via METRO (bus and light rail) and the trails intersecting through the study area, and particularly at the Brays Bayou and Old Spanish Trail nodes, are worth building upon further. Leveraging and building on those connections in a way that makes them more inviting, safer, and more visible will be critical to increasing their use and providing viable alternatives to using a personal automobile to move along South Main Street and the streets beyond.

## Old Spanish Trail Implementation – Entertainment District

The businesses and venues around the Old Spanish Trail intersection lend to the area’s potential to serve as an entertainment district for South Main Street. Building on the uses currently at play there, including NRG Park’s major league sports and the world-renowned Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, it would also make sense to encourage mixed-use development to provide more 24/7 activation in the district and further support these destination venues. Similarly, future land uses should encourage people to stay longer in the district (e.g., restaurants, breweries, public art, and retail) and not leave directly after the sporting event or concert concludes. A cohesive plan for the area should be considered and would include a unified approach to branding, signage, and development going forward.

With regard to transportation and mobility around Old Spanish Trail and this entertainment district, it will be important to likewise take a unified approach to create clarity, ease access, and make the highest and best use of the land in the district. Those visiting the “island” parcels in the district today – NRG Stadium, NRG Center, and NRG Arena – would benefit from clarity of transportation options to and between venues as well as a method by which they could connect to the heart of the entertainment district



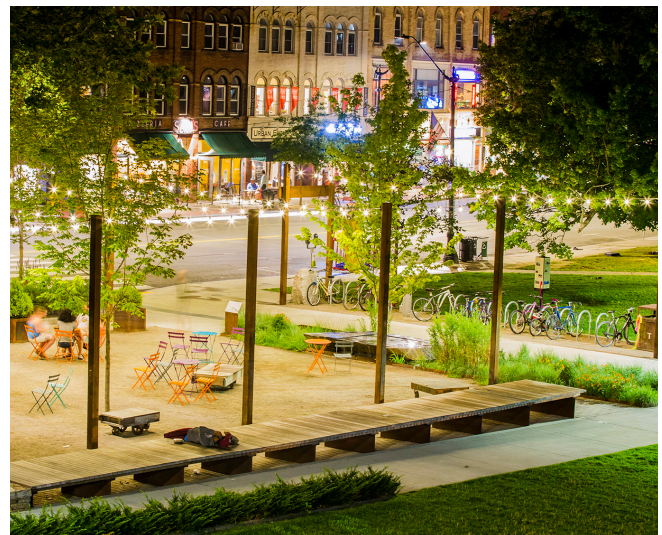
The pedestrian experience around this stadium is artful, engaging, and fully separate from automobile traffic.

from outside parking areas. As it relates to those parking areas, there is an overabundance of surface parking lots today, some of which could be consolidated, freeing land for potential redevelopment opportunities or public space.

Given the number of visitors to this entertainment district, strong focus needs to be placed on the pedestrian experience. The pedestrian experience should take center stage via large pedestrian avenues and ample green spaces. Further connections beyond the entertainment district and into the surrounding residential communities should be considered. By encouraging interaction from those neighborhoods and by creating connection points, walkable paths, and dynamic sight lines, the entertainment district will feel more connected, safe, and inviting to residents and visitors alike.

## Brays Bayou Implementation – Recreation Junction

Brays Bayou provides Main Street with critical connections to recreation, nature, and alternative transportation routes via the system of urban trails. To fully embrace this nature, the panel recommends envisioning Main Street at Brays Bayou as a recreation junction for Main Street. The trails are in place, yet the surrounding buildings do nothing to add to the trail experience nor do the uses complement the



Pulaski Park in Northampton, MA, could provide an interesting example for enhancing the pedestrian experience around NRG Park.

STIMSON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



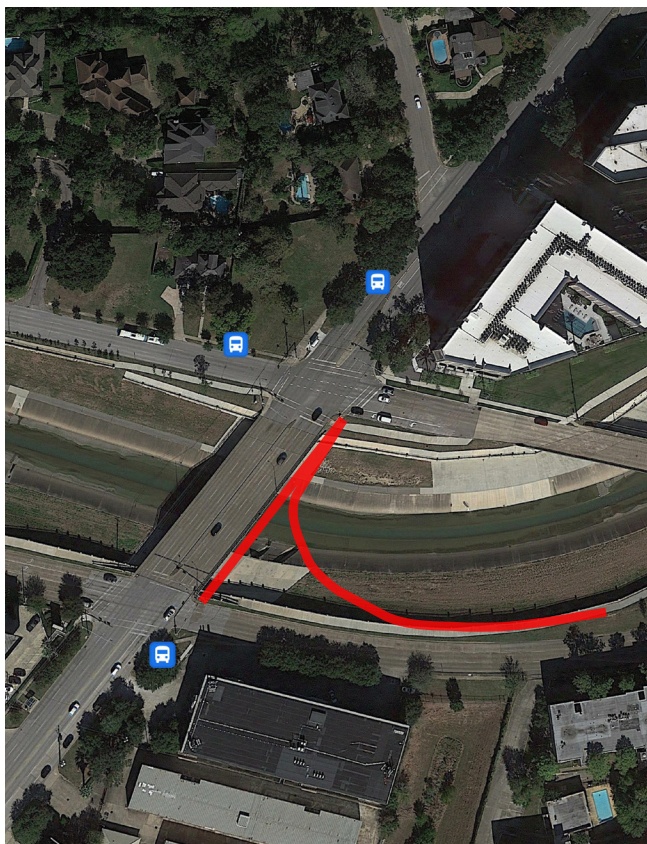
needs of trail users. By encouraging uses in those ground floor spaces that attract frequent visitors, such as food and beverage operators and other retail venues, diners and shoppers may be drawn to the paths beyond. Likewise, trail users might be drawn up to the surrounding businesses, helping to further activate the area around the upper trail and enhance the experience for all. There will be spaces along the trail where activation of buildings or infrastructure isn't possible; for those areas, it is possible to create beautiful buffers that can mask the blank and uninviting walls and concrete.

To further enhance the recreation opportunities around the Brays Bayou intersection, it may be helpful to install a separate pedestrian bridge across Brays Bayou. Not only will this bridge create a safer and more inviting space to cross the bayou, it will also provide a more direct connection to South Main Street and to Stadium Drive

where additional development and improvements may be on the near horizon.

## Holcombe Implementation – Health District

The area surrounding the Holcombe and Fannin intersections off Main Street is rich in institutional assets. While the area has been known as a medical district, the panel suggests a subtle but important shift to a warmer and more welcoming approach to branding that focuses on health and wellness. The area has developed into an impressive mix of uses that have worked well together and have leveraged one another's proximity. Taking that work a step further, it would be helpful to develop a cohesive plan for the health district, one that is inclusive of all landowners in the area. This inclusive approach could promote land uses and development decisions that will



Panelist to draft rendering of pedestrian bridge placement over the bayou.

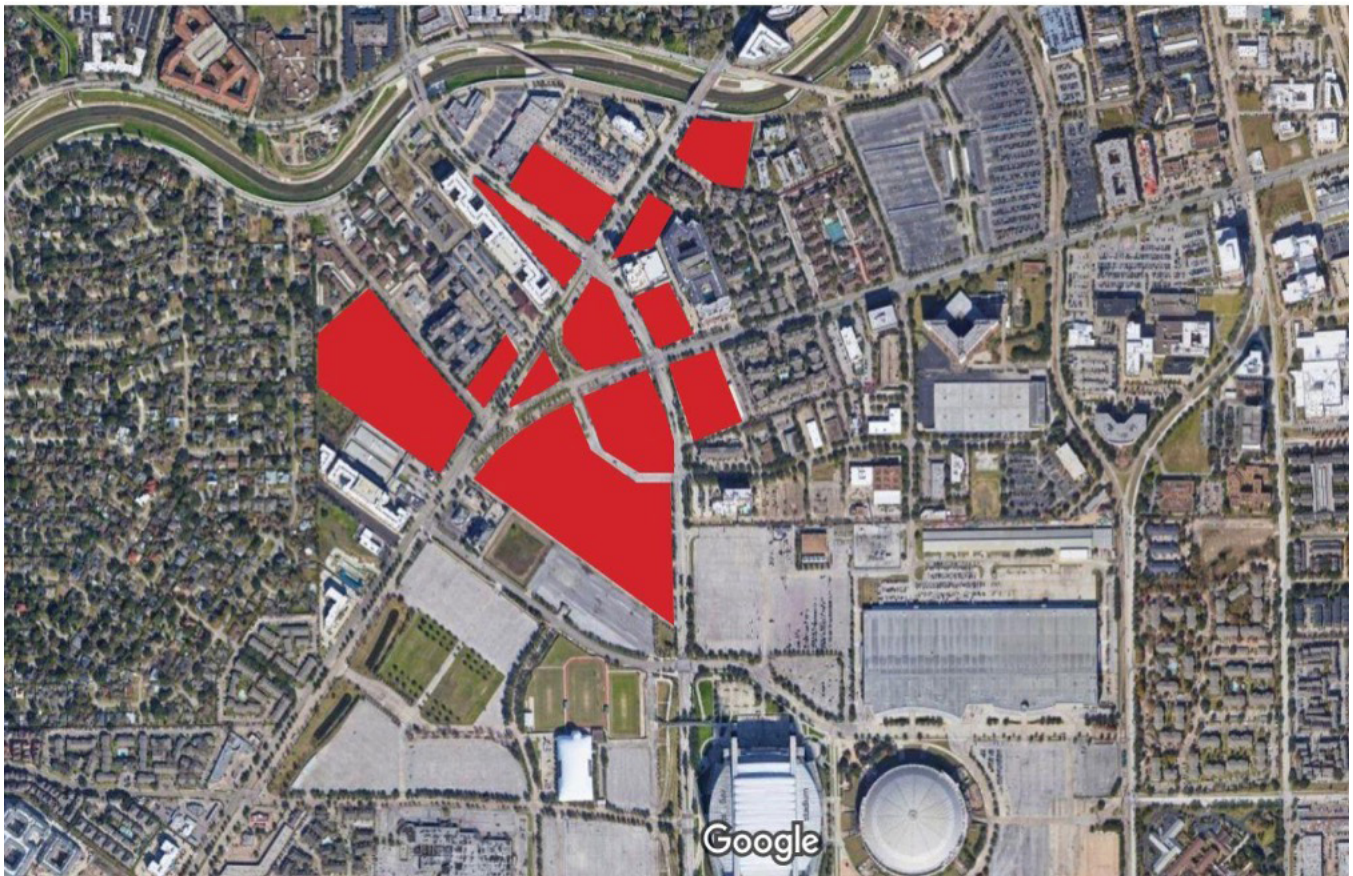


Concrete walls, even those with barred windows and doors, are less imposing when treated artfully.



contribute to the public realm and might include beautiful and functional streetscapes, activated ground floors, and plazas and courtyards that allow for safe and convenient public access. The district could also encourage land uses that deliver daily needs – coffee shops and cafés – to further activate the streetscape along Main Street. Bringing workforce housing to the area will also help activate the streetscape around this intersection as employees move between housing and university facilities. These residents would also provide patrons for those street-level cafés and coffee shops.

As the land around this intersection becomes even more scarce, it may be helpful for the current institutions in the health district to consider potential redevelopment sites further south on Main in much the same way that TMC is approaching TMC<sup>3</sup>.



There are a number of sites that may provide potential redevelopment opportunities for those seeking expansion parcels.



# MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Main Street is the spine of an important transportation network in this part of Houston, connecting residents with businesses, health, educational, recreational and cultural centers, and the downtown business district. As it exists today, this transportation asset is fraught with challenges. The wide vehicular lanes on Main Street facilitate the daily movement of thousands of vehicles and also unintentionally encourage high speeds and land much of the corridor on Houston's Vision Zero High Injury Network. The corridor also features a significant number of curb cuts for tightly spaced driveways, creating abrupt and at times difficult turning conditions for drivers. The corridor lacks wayfinding mechanisms, which leaves all modalities without navigation assistance to, among, or through the area's businesses, destinations, or institutions. Finally, for those not traveling in a personal vehicle, the sidewalks along the corridor are inconsistent, deteriorating, and narrow, and transit riders are not provided with shelters as the right of way is too often not wide enough to provide space for a shelter.

In spite of these existing conditions, there are a number of interventions that can be taken to improve the mobility of all moving through the South Main Street corridor.

## Overall Framework

Across the study area, there are a few common areas that warrant attention and potential improvement.

**Narrower vehicular lanes.** In areas where the lane widths along Main Street are greater than 11 feet, the lanes might be reduced slightly, which will result in a number of benefits without reducing potential vehicular volume or emergency vehicle access/priority. Narrower lanes will encourage drivers to slow slightly as they pass through the

area. This reduction in speed will also encourage drivers to seek alternative routes, which might include intended redistribution to Fannin Street, Bertner Avenue, and other parallel roadways. The space gained by the reduction in lane widths can be redistributed to the benefit of pedestrians and transit riders. Sidewalks could be widened to provide more comfortable passage, and the widened right of way may finally provide adequate space for the addition of bus shelters where feasible.

**Wayfinding along the corridor.** For pedestrians and vehicular traffic, robust wayfinding should be added to the corridor – particularly at Holcombe Boulevard and Old Spanish Trail.



The pedestrian crossings along the corridor are very wide and weakly defined.





GOOGLE/JUL

Beyond Main Street, a host of secondary streets could serve as alternative transportation routes for those commuting north and south.

**Clear bicycle and pedestrian facilities.** Pedestrian and bike crossings along the entire corridor are in need of attention to create a safer and more welcoming experience for all. The addition of physical barriers and landscape buffers at intersections will further separate pedestrians and bicyclists from vehicular traffic. Widening the existing sidewalks and elevating the bike path would also provide a clear definition of intended space as well as a welcomed separation between transit modes. This separation will make the experience more welcoming for pedestrians and bicyclists, which may encourage more frequent use by each. The added benefit of the increased foot and bike traffic may also be a slight reduction in vehicle speeds as drivers are aware of more non-vehicular traffic around them.

**Pedestrian crossing infrastructure.** Finally, innovations like pedestrian scrambles, lighting, and accessible notification

systems added to the corridor can assist with the safe movement of non-vehicular traffic along Main Street.

### Old Spanish Trail Node

The current street configuration at the intersection of Old Spanish Trail and Main Street is dangerous and confusing for all. To create an environment where cars and pedestrians can co-exist safely, it may be necessary to realign Main Street in a way that creates a new intersection with Old Spanish Trail in the existing u-turn/slip lane space northwest of the Taco Cabana property. While detailed traffic analysis will be required to determine the viability of this reconfiguration and potential impacts to the surrounding streets, a realignment of this nature may provide the following benefits:

- **Slower traffic entering the Main Street corridor.**





Innovative crosswalks, such as this one featuring lighted stripes, create a defined pedestrian space and further enhance safety.



Creative signage encourages safety at intersections with vehicular traffic as well as potential bicycling or other mobility crossings.

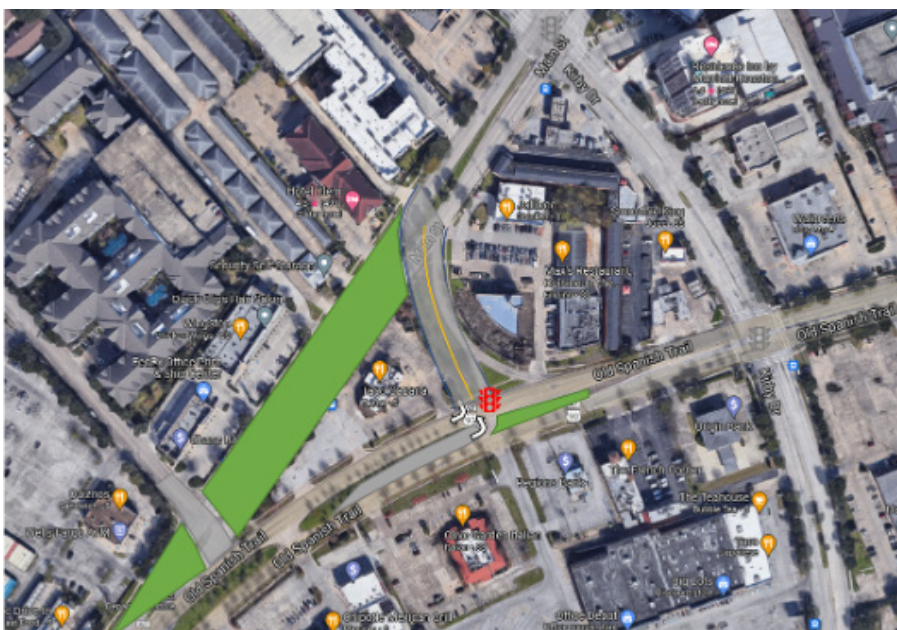
With the addition of a 90-degree turn at the new intersection, traffic entering Main Street will be slower than it is today.

- **Slight reduction in traffic volume on Main Street.**

At the prospect of navigating this new signaled intersection, drivers traveling north toward Main Street may choose to continue north on Old Spanish Trail and use Fannin Street to proceed to the health district and downtown beyond.

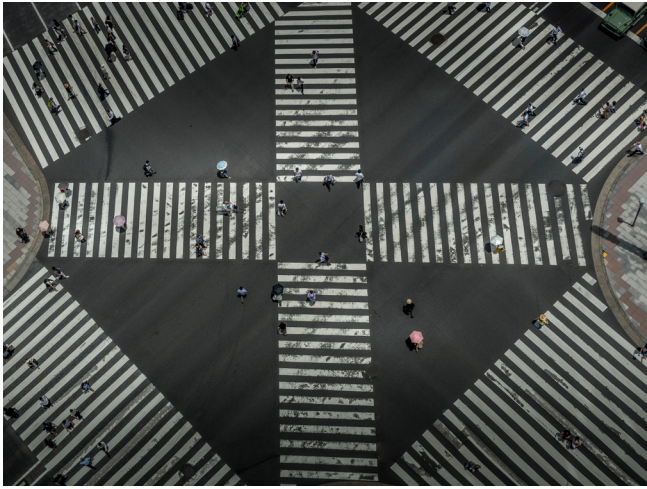
This realignment and new light may result in phasing or lane changes at the Kirby Drive intersection and will, again, require a detailed traffic analysis.

In another approach to restoring or improving the urban fabric and traffic grid in the area around the Old Spanish Trail intersection, it may be worth considering a future extension from Main Street to La Concha Lane. This extension will expand the grid network toward NRG Park and provide additional opportunities to more easily navigate the area.



GOOGLE/ULI

A realignment of the intersection of Old Spanish Trail and Main Street, creating a 90-degree turn and signaled intersection, may be worth further study and consideration.



A pedestrian scramble, or Barnes Dance, allows pedestrians to move in all directions, including diagonally, across an intersection and increases pedestrian safety.

### Brays Bayou Node

Around Brays Bayou, an area that is a gateway to a rich trail network, it is incredibly important to create safe and welcoming pedestrian and bicycling access and experiences. As mentioned previously, a separate pedestrian bridge connection across the bayou and near the existing Main Street bridge would be a welcomed addition. In addition to this new bridge, new pedestrian infrastructure would also be a welcomed addition to the existing bayou greenway network as the current connections are rather far from the intersection and may be difficult for some to navigate.

While there is currently a plan to create a bike lane along Main Street, according to the Houston Bikeways plan, it might be possible to implement bike facilities in a phased manner starting at Old Spanish Trail. Should the reduction in vehicular traffic occur following the realignment of the Old Spanish Trail and Main Street intersection, the aforementioned potential reduction in vehicular lane widths may provide the space needed on the outside edges of the corridor to create space for the installation of bike lanes in both directions. Similarly, as traffic slows and the bike lanes approach Brays Bayou, additional space may be gained over the bridge if the pedestrians are moved to a separate dedicated bridge. This phased approach may allow for a gradual implementation that is more readily achievable and acceptable to those commuting by car along the corridor.

### Holcombe Node

The intersection of Main Street and Holcombe is one in which pedestrians wish to move in a number of different directions and in numbers that may make the installation of a pedestrian scramble, also known as a Barnes Dance, beneficial. Similarly, the intersection of Holcombe Boulevard and Fannin Street experiences a similar volume of pedestrian crossings that may be made easier and more efficient with signal phasing and timing modifications, such as a pedestrian-only phase or a pedestrian scramble. In both instances, the preemption feature on traffic signals for emergency vehicles will help ensure that emergency traffic remains the priority, particularly around this node.

The vehicular movement of Main Street through this section of the corridor is enhanced by an underpass that eliminates the need for a traffic signal at Holcombe for northbound and southbound traffic. Immediately north and south of that underpass and at the underpass at Fannin and Holcombe are north/south u-turn lanes. The combination of these additional traffic mechanisms creates a pedestrian experience that is very intimidating and even dangerous given the narrow nature of the sidewalk at these crossings, which are also currently not ADA accessible. Should traffic analysis support the idea, it is worth considering the potential removal of one or both of these u-turn lanes to provide additional space for pedestrian accommodations at this particularly challenging section of Main Street.

Should these intersection modifications prove too limiting for efficient movement of emergency vehicles, improved pedestrian mobility and access might be enhanced in the health district through the creation of an above-grade pedestrian area or system of elevated walkways, similar to those seen at Texas Children's Hospital. These walkways, positioned at intersections of high vehicular traffic, would further protect pedestrians from auto traffic and ease movement around the district with little change to the existing street network.

Given the importance of emergency vehicle access and movement at this intersection, additional study, beyond the capacity of this two-day TAP engagement, would be beneficial in determining how to best prioritize emergency vehicle access while also improving the safety of the pedestrians and bicyclists in the area.



# SCENIC EXPERIENCE

Main Street is an important transportation corridor for Houston and one that was envisioned at its creation as a grand boulevard. Today, the vehicular transportation function of Main Street has taken a very utilitarian turn and has left Houstonians with a roadway that is functional for cars and generally unsafe for pedestrians. The intersections studied by the TAP would benefit from a unifying identity and sense of place, signage and wayfinding, and land uses that better engage pedestrians and others traveling along the corridor.

Current conditions along Main Street, which may be limiting its potential as a gateway and destination in its own right, include the following:

- The roadway is in poor condition, negatively impacting the visual aesthetics and contributing to mobility challenges.
- Sidewalks are in poor condition and not ADA accessible, and topographic grade separations along



Sidewalks along the corridor are in poor condition and oftentimes not ADA accessible.

the corridor present challenges with continuous pedestrian mobility.

- The underutilized right of way along Main Street does not contribute to the pedestrian experience or bolster a sense of place.
- The general lack of ground floor activity in buildings fronting Main Street inhibits the development of a vibrant and active public realm.
- The gaps in tree and landscape cover along the corridor and near the sidewalks leave pedestrians without shade opportunities and may curtail pedestrian activity for those who have a choice to either walk or drive.

## Implementation Strategy – General Framework

In order to improve the scenic experience for those driving, walking, or biking along South Main Street, the development of a set of streetscape standards would help strengthen the identity of the area and begin to create a sense of place.

Those standards could include, but are not limited to:

- Traffic signals and pedestrian pushbuttons;
- Street lighting;
- Pedestrian/sidewalk lighting;
- Signage and wayfinding for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic;
- Trash receptacles;



The South Platte River Bridge in Denver's Commons Park connects the Lower Downtown neighborhood with recreation opportunities and alternative modes for commuting to downtown Denver.

- Paving treatments such as pavers, colored concrete, etc.;
- Landscape treatments, including street trees, shrubs/perennials, etc.; and
- Bus shelters.

Supporting these improvements to the public realm, the private sector could further activate the spaces along Main Street. Through the addition of destinations accessible at the ground floor like coffee shops, sandwich shops, libraries, parks, and patios, the spaces along Main Street will begin to come alive with people moving to, from, and between businesses.

When it comes to the experience at each node, as stated, each intersection is distinctly different from the other. Those differences can be highlighted via identifiable experiences at each node yet still tied together via an overarching theme, brand, and wayfinding strategy that brings the districts together. The delivery of this theme or brand could be further promoted by maximizing the use

of available right-of-way space for art, monumentation, or other defining elements (including artistically designed crosswalks) that could contribute to placemaking at and around each intersection.

The need to improve the pedestrian experience has been stressed throughout this report. That experience, however, goes beyond just the physical experience of things such as ADA accessibility and safe crossings. The experience for pedestrians can also be enhanced visually by widening sidewalks to create a better sense of scale and safety and using art to enliven otherwise blank and imposing walls of adjacent buildings.

### **Old Spanish Trail – Entertainment District Experience**

The intersection of Old Spanish Trail and Main Street serves as the southernmost gateway to the South Main corridor. As such, this intersection should be branded in a manner that makes clear this connectivity to the surrounding





Shade from trees along a trail provides both comfort and visual appeal to those using the trail network.

SWA

entertainment options or further north to the recreation district or health and wellness institutions. The significance of this intersection should be supported by a clear articulation of circulation for autos, bikes, and pedestrians. It is important that navigating this important gateway is clear, safe, and easy. The advantage of multi-modal access for entertainment venues close to the stadium district can also provide the area with interesting redevelopment opportunities that leverage that transportation access.

### Brays Bayou – Recreation Junction Experience

The intersection at Brays Bayou is a bit of a blank canvas that holds great potential. There is an opportunity to leverage the available right of way to create an impact that assists with placemaking in the area. It is also possible to utilize the infrastructure of the bayou and the façades of surrounding buildings for art installments like murals, which would create great visual impact and appeal. Murals in these spaces could also create a celebration point at the bridge crossing and help tell the story of the significant role the bayou plays in the region. The wide-open nature of this intersection also calls for more shade and comfort. Planting trees at the intersection and along the bayou would begin to meet both goals as well as provide more visual interest and appeal in the area.



Near the Holcombe intersection, the addition of a plaza with seating and landscaping can provide welcomed relief in the midst of buildings and urban infrastructure.

CORTEX INNOVATION COMMUNITY

### Holcombe – Health District Experience

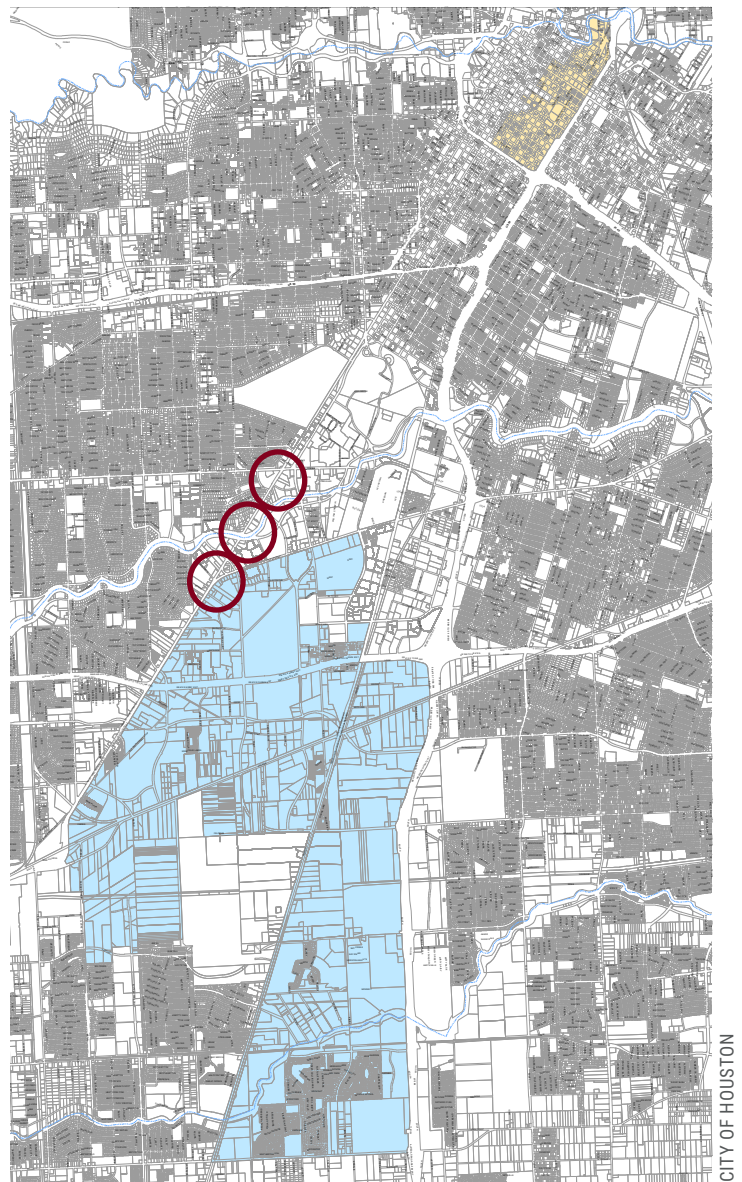
The area surrounding the Main Street and Fannin Street intersections with Holcombe Boulevard is full of buildings and infrastructure. To create spaces that are appealing and welcoming for patients, families, and visitors, careful attention should be given to enhancing the public realm. Open and green spaces, small gathering spots, or even seating areas or benches for those working in or visiting the district would be welcomed. Finally, as in other areas of the corridor, the Health District would benefit from intentional ground floor activation, creating destinations to attract pedestrians to the public realm. The new InterContinental Houston and the Westin, both near this intersection, feature engaging ground floor uses such as a restaurant with wide sidewalks and seating near the street in the former and retail on the entire ground floor on the latter.

# INCENTIVES AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The breadth and the scope of the improvements contemplated by the panel would be well-served by an overarching organization that can continue to convene stakeholders, provide the leadership these initiatives will need, and serve as the financial clearinghouse for the funding that will be required to see these improvements through.

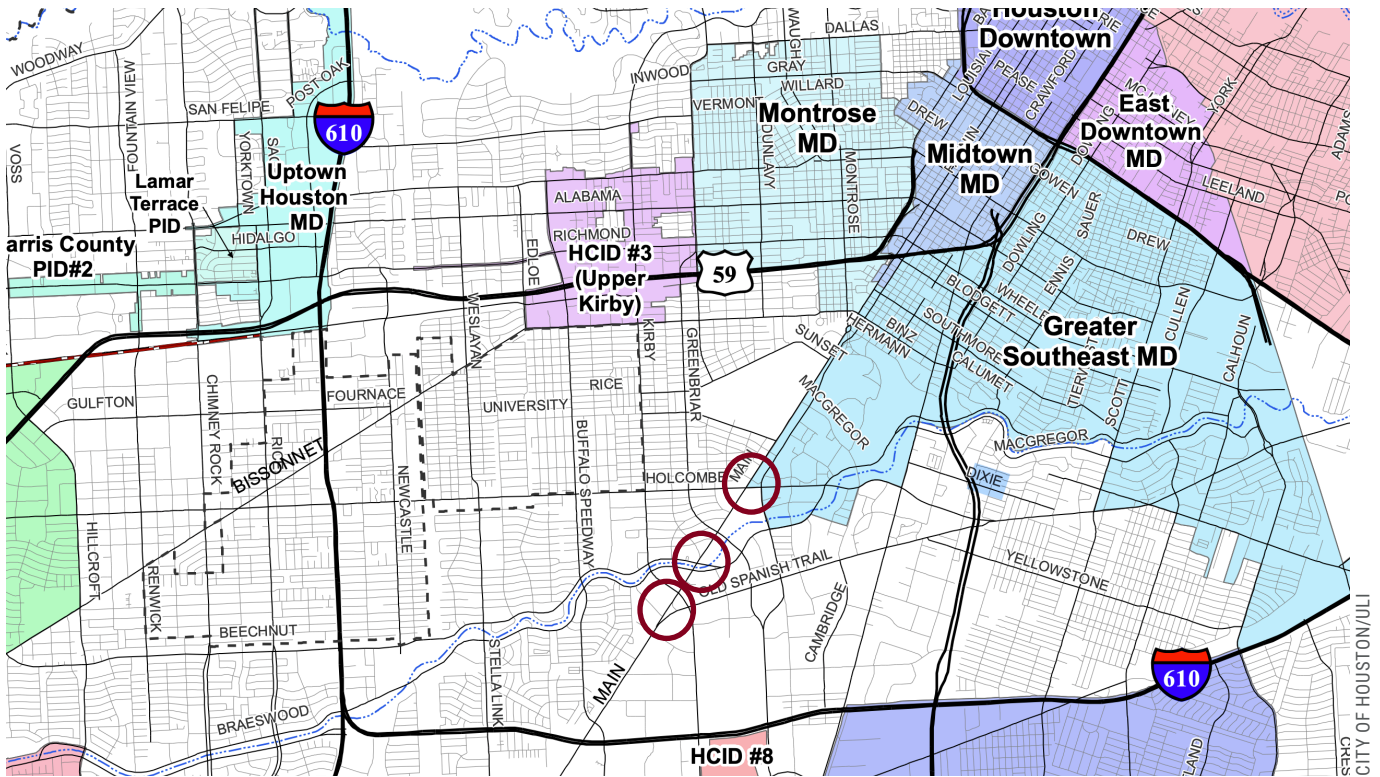
The improvements recommended by the panel will necessitate significant capital investment that will require long-term maintenance and oversight. A responsible entity, likely an improvement or management district, which is established via an agreement with the property owners in the affected geography, will be needed to guide all activities and oversee the construction process and ongoing maintenance. The improvement district would serve as the convening force for the corridor, aligning the interests and desires for shared outcomes by the stakeholders, and would be funded via a shared contribution by property owners in the geography. A disproportionate number of landowners along the South Main Corridor, especially in the health district, are exempt from property taxes or other assessments as nonprofits or governmental entities. Should they choose to, those entities nonetheless have the ability to make contributions by contract in the form of Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) or other agreements to assist in funding the improvements contemplated by the improvement district.

While at first blush it seems natural to create a new entity specifically tailored to this task, leveraging an existing entity may be preferable as it might save time and money that would normally be spent in the formation of the new entity. A new entity may also create further confusion as to who has responsibility or leadership for an initiative of this



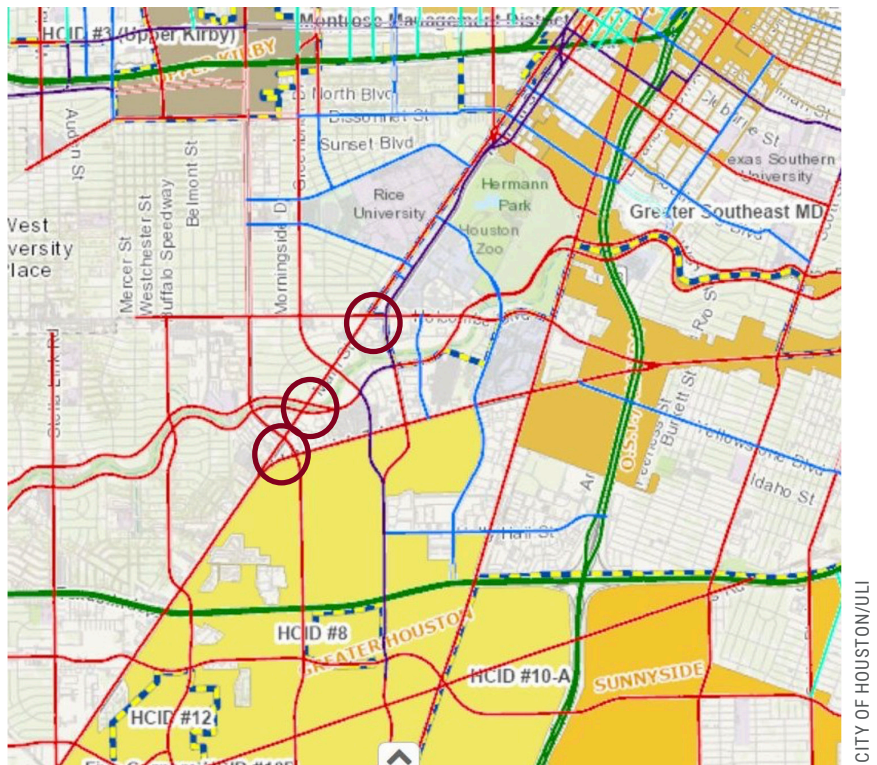
The Greater Houston TIRZ #24 coverage, noted in blue and yellow. The intersections comprising the study area are outlined in red.





Existing management districts in operation around the study sites.

nature. There are a number of existing management and improvement districts currently operating in the area, and the TAP sponsor is encouraged to further explore the possibility of an existing entity taking on the responsibilities for the work contemplated in these recommendations.



Existing improvement districts near the subject intersections.

## CONCLUSION

South Main Street deserves to be a Houston destination. Home to NRG Park, Brays Bayou and the related recreation trails, and all of the innovative and world-renowned institutions around the Texas Medical Center and Rice University, the design of the South Main Street experience – all 1.2 miles of it – is deserving of the attention of the city, stakeholders, and the South Main Alliance. This grand street serves as an important connector of people, destinations, recreation, and economic activity. Through the meticulous design of the pedestrian space and a comprehensive approach to improving the streetscape, South Main Street will better balance the daily requirement of vehicular traffic and provide a more welcoming and safer experience for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other modes of transportation.

**Continue the vision.** Kessler’s original design for the area should serve as the touchstone for design improvements going forward. The movement of vehicles, particularly those emergency vehicles traveling to and around the Holcombe intersection, is very important. It is also critically important to maximize the safety and comfort of all transportation modes.

**Improve the built environment.** Buildings along Main Street should be designed or redesigned in order to better engage the street and sidewalk and create a corridor that is visually welcoming. Parking lots, garages, and other infrastructure should be tucked behind buildings leaving space along Main Street for businesses and buildings that are accessible, engaging, and activated.

**Standardize improvements.** All of the businesses and institutions along Main Street would benefit from the creation of a recognizable and unified character for South Main Street. This character and related branding should be translated into wayfinding throughout the corridor and beyond, attracting people to and helping them navigate around the corridor.

**Address vehicular traffic.** While the panel is not recommending a reduction in the number of lanes, there are steps that can be taken to encourage drivers to use the roadway at a slower and safer speed (and perhaps closer to

the posted speed limits). One such step might be realigning the Old Spanish Trail intersection to re-route the through vehicular traffic to other roadways and providing preference to local traffic.

**Improve pedestrian safety.** At the Holcombe and Main intersection, signal phasing and timing modifications might be considered to provide ample opportunities for clear and safe passage for pedestrians moving among the various campuses and buildings in the area. Additionally, consolidating a number of the driveways found along Main Street will also improve pedestrian safety by limiting the number of crossings where vehicles are turning in or out of businesses.

**Celebrate Brays Bayou.** Potential improvements to the crossing and connection at Brays Bayou abound. Adding trees to the side of the trail, creating a more interesting architectural design for the vehicular bridge, and establishing a separate pedestrian bridge are just a few improvements that will make a significant impact in this ‘riverfront’ section of Main Street and the newly reimagined Recreation Junction.

**Identify an entity to lead efforts.** A formally-organized management or improvement district could serve the role of administrator for this section of South Main Street, guiding the implementation of the recommendations contemplated herein.



**Create an environment to attract innovation and talent.**

In the race to attract talent and innovative thinkers to the businesses along the corridor, business owners, civic leaders, and the institutional leaders in the health district should devote attention and resources to creating an environment that welcomes and attracts the next generation of Houston's inventors, physicians, and leaders.

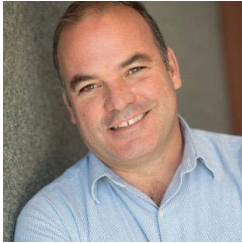
**Celebrate South Main Street's gateway.** The intersection of South Main and Old Spanish Trail has the potential to become South Main Street's gateway as well as home to a significant entertainment district given the proximity of NRG Park and its related venues and events.

**Envision improved public spaces.** From new bus shelters in newly expanded rights of way to a signature public space at Holcombe in between Main Street and Fannin, there are a number of opportunities along the Main Street corridor to enhance the public realm and create spaces for residents and visitors to rest, relax, or enjoy recreation.

The actions and recommendations posed by the panel will take time. Some actions, such as creating murals along the Bayou might be realized in the coming months. Other recommendations, such as the redevelopment of buildings into more active storefronts will take years. The area needs and will surely benefit from a champion and the support of stakeholders such as the South Main Alliance.

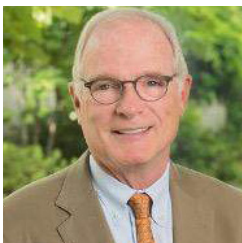
**Be Bold.**

## ABOUT THE PANEL



**Gonzalo Echeverria, AIA**  
**Panel Chair**  
**Director of Design & Planning,**  
**McCord Development**  
**Houston, Texas**

Gonzalo serves as Director of Design and Planning for MDI. Over the past 20+ years, the focus of his work has been on architecture, urban design, regional planning, and research. Gonzalo's project experience includes several master plans for residential, commercial, mixed-use, transit-oriented, waterfront, and TND communities. Gonzalo has worked on projects in 38 states across the U.S. as well as in Latin America, the U.K., and Canada. Prior to joining MDI, Gonzalo was principal and design lead for Looney Ricks Kiss Architects in Princeton, NJ., and Philadelphia, PA. He was a project manager with Urban Design Associates in Pittsburgh, PA, project manager with URBE in Santiago, Chile, and intern architect at Arquitectonica Intl', Miami. Gonzalo holds an Architecture Degree and graduate degree in Urban Economics from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and a Master's Degree in Architecture and Urban Design from University of Miami, Coral Gables.



**Lance Gilliam, CRX CSM**  
**SCLS CDP**  
**Partner, Waterman Steele**  
**Houston, Texas**

Lance has spent most of his career focused on retail user transactions, including tenant representation and project development. He has represented national, regional, and local restaurateurs and retailers throughout a broad market area including Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and most of the southeastern and western United States. Lance has shared responsibility for leasing numerous significant retail projects in

Houston, Texas, including lifestyle shopping centers, urban infill redevelopment, and community shopping centers associated with master planned communities. He also has advised the city of Houston on programs to incentivize grocers to construct stores in so-called food deserts. Lance is a partner in Waterman Steele Real Estate Advisors, a member of The Waterman Steele Group and, until 2013, was the managing partner and shareholder in UCR Houston and its predecessors Moody Rambin Interests' Retail Properties Division, which he co-founded in 1993. He was also a shareholder in Moody Rambin Interests. Prior to this, Lance was executive vice president of Grubb & Ellis Retail Properties Division in Houston, Texas. A past president of The Children's Museum of Houston's board of directors, Lance continues to serve on the museum's advisory board of directors. He also serves on the Greater Houston Partnership's Early Matters Committee and as an advisory committee member to The Collaborative for Children. In 1977, Lance earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Real Estate with Honors from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He also attended Southern Methodist's graduate program in Real Estate and Regional Science.



**Rebecca Leonard FAICP,**  
**PLA, CNU-A**  
**Founder, Lionheart Places**  
**Austin, Texas**

Rebecca has over 25 years of experience in community planning, urban design, stakeholder engagement and facilitation, and landscape architecture. With a successful career in both the public and private sector, Rebecca understands the needs of both sides and has mastered negotiations between them. She has worked closely with her private development and public agency clients to ensure that their projects are implemented and their visions are realized.





**Vanessa Ortega, AIA**  
**Founder & Principal, Loe Ortega**  
**Architecture**  
**Houston, Texas**

Vanessa grew up in the Texas panhandle. A passion for art, math, and team sports helped define her path to architecture. She loves that

part of her job is helping others realize and build their dreams. Vanessa started her own commercial architecture firm in 2019, and now leads a team of five. She is excited to see the increase in adaptive reuse projects, especially in the inner city of Houston. She has recently discovered a passion for collaborating with other artists and architects, where she is able to share experiences and resources. A recent project of hers is Railway Height Market (RHM), which is a blend of food hall, local market, and art gallery. The 24,000-square-foot space is designed to house all local food, retail, and art vendors. The stalls vary in size and allow for each vendor to customize their space. The focus of RHM is to provide a space where small businesses can open their first storefront and collaborate with other small business owners, which are as diverse as the city of Houston.



**Beth Ostrowski, PE,**  
**PTOE**  
**Transportation Regional**  
**Practice Leader, KCI**  
**Nashville, Tennessee**

Beth serves as transportation regional practice leader in KCI's Nashville,

Tennessee, office. She oversees traffic planning and design, as well as roundabout and bikeway design, and traffic data collection operations across the state while simultaneously leading business and staff development and strategic planning efforts throughout the region. Beth joined KCI in 2017 as a senior project manager and since that time has quickly grown into management roles of increasing responsibility, most recently leading KCI's traffic studies team. Her prolific career in traffic studies, transportation planning, intelligent transportation systems design and neighborhood traffic management has led to her recognition as an expert in the Nashville region. Beth leverages her experience in project management and operations oversight to continue expanding KCI's capabilities in the Southeast and supporting the firm's growing client base in Tennessee. Beth earned her bachelor's degree in

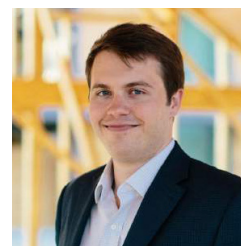
civil engineering from Marquette University and is a registered professional engineer in Tennessee. She recently became a certified professional traffic operations engineer, demonstrating her knowledge and ability in her field. Through technical presentations and involvement in professional organizations, Beth frequently works to further the industry and currently serves on committees for both the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the Urban Land Institute.



**Heather Personne**  
**Founder and Managing**  
**Principal, Evolve Ventures**  
**Phoenix, Arizona**

Heather has over 20 years of experience in real estate acquisitions, development, management, and

dispositions. Throughout her career, she has spearheaded the development of more than 100 retail, office, and multi-family properties throughout the western United States. Prior to co-founding Evolve, she held roles as a principal with Point B Property Development, a retail partner with Phoenix-based commercial development and investment firm ViaWest Group and a principal with Evergreen Devco, Inc., a regional retail and multi-family developer. Heather graduated *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Arizona Honors College and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and French. She is heavily involved with the Urban Land Institute, currently serving as Treasurer for the Arizona District Council and Vice Chair/Founding Member of the National ULI Placemaking Product Council. Heather resides in Phoenix, Arizona, with her husband Matt and three children. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, snow-skiing, and traveling.



**Evan Peterson**  
**Development Director and**  
**Principal, Radom Capital**  
**Houston, Texas**

Evan Peterson is a principal at Radom Capital and serves as the firm's development director. He supports

the execution of the Radom Capital's developments by managing the development processes including completing initial land acquisition due diligence, managing consultants through the

project design and all construction processes. He joined the company in 2017. Previously, Evan worked at SWA group as a landscape architect focusing on urban development projects and transformational master planned communities. He is a member of the Urban Land Institute and has been active in a number of civic leadership organizations focused on parks and green space. Evan holds a Bachelor's Degree in Landscape Architecture from Louisiana State University.



**Alex Ramirez, PLA, ASLA**  
**Office Director and Associate**  
**Design Workshop**  
**Houston, Texas**

Alex, a landscape architect practicing in Design Workshop's Houston studio, enjoys the challenges complex

projects present to the firm and its clients. Valued for his technical understanding and ability to problem solve, Alex takes great pride in understanding complex design problems and guiding his client teams and design teams to solutions that balance the goals and aspirations of each individual project with real world applications. With a diverse design-build background, Alex draws upon his experiences to lead his teams through all phases of design – conceptualization to implementation – with thoughtful and organized rigor focused on delivering their clients with the highest quality work, documentation, and implementation. Alex is a graduate of Louisiana State University, with a Bachelor's Degree in Landscape Architecture, and is a member of Central Houston, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Urban Land Institute.





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