



Houston

THE EAST END PASEO

Houston, Texas

Technical Assistance Panel
March 24–26, 2026



About

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Cover photo: A path along the vacated Union Pacific rail line forms connects neighborhood assets and provides a welcoming walking path in the East End. (ULI)

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The objective of ULI Houston's Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) program is to provide expert, multidisciplinary, and objective advice on land use and real estate issues facing local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations throughout ULI's local geographies. Drawing from its extensive membership base, ULI Houston conducts two- and three-day panels, offering unbiased, pragmatic solutions, best practice advice, and market-based strategies to local decision-makers on a wide variety of complex land use challenges, ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAPs program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues.

Learn more at houston.uli.org.

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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Houston's East End is known for its industry, transportation access, diverse residential roots, and community members who are deeply committed to the neighborhood.

Today, as new home construction outpaces new warehouse construction, the neighborhood still manages to balance its rich cultural heritage and residential homes with the industrial businesses that still line many streets. This balance is one that few neighborhoods facing similar scenarios have achieved.

The East End District, a management district formed in 1999, carefully leads public realm work across the 16 square miles of the East End, ensuring that the area is safe, infrastructure needs are met, and that businesses are supported. The team is also committed to maintaining and supporting the area's cultural identity.

More recently, Concept Neighborhood, a local development team, has been at work in the East End, bringing buildings and spaces online, supporting local business owners, and amplifying what is already appealing about the neighborhood. Today, the development team controls approximately 30 acres between Harrisburg Boulevard and Buffalo Bayou and is interested in creating something special for the community that will also spark additional investment in the East End.

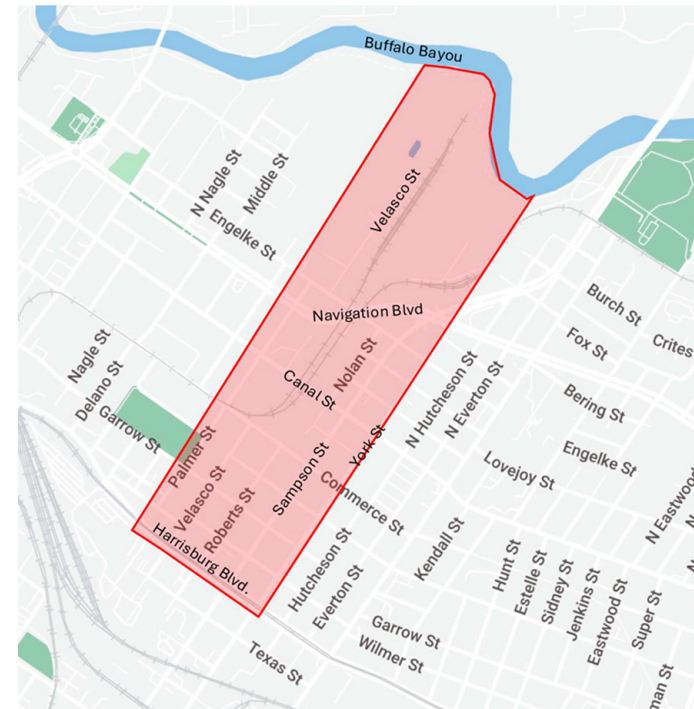
The improvements underway along Buffalo Bayou, namely the rebuilding portions of the Buffalo Bayou Trail and extending it east, led

by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP), have prompted many in the community to consider how to better connect the East End's assets with the bayou and its associated recreational and commuting assets.

Together, the East End District and Concept Neighborhood, with support from the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (the sponsors), turned to the Urban Land Institute Houston District Council (ULI) for insights on connectivity and development advice. Using its technical assistance panel program, ULI convened a panel of real estate and land use professionals with expertise particularly relevant to the sponsors' questions, which centered on the formation of a linear park through the East End to connect to the trail deep into the East End. The sponsors also inquired about the associated ownership, management, programming, maintenance, and funding of such an endeavor. The panel's recommendations are summarized below.

The Paseo

While the request from the TAP sponsors asked the panel to consider potential connectivity through the East End to the Buffalo Bayou Trail using a new linear park, the panel shifted the idea, instead envisioning something more specific, connected, economically additive and unique—The Paseo. The name "Paseo" was chosen intentionally to signal a different pace and purpose for this space. It invites people to slow down, use it every day, and connect with one another—a place to walk, linger, and say hello to your neighbors.



The TAP study area is in the pink shaded area on the map, bound by Harrisburg Boulevard on the south and Buffalo Bayou to the north.

Envisioning the Paseo. Stretching one mile between Harrisburg Boulevard and Buffalo Bayou, the Paseo would generally follow Roberts Street and the vacated railroad lines, connecting residents and visitors with the following neighborhood assets.

- Transportation assets, including light rail, roadways, and the trail network.
- Parks and open space, including Settegast Park, Antonio (Tony) Marron Park, and the Harrisburg Hike and Bike Trail.
- Private-sector investments and the parcels owned by Concept Neighborhood.

The Paseo would extend north, creating a direct connection between the East End and the anticipated Gregg Street bridge across the bayou north to the East River district beyond.

Phasing the Paseo improvements. Building on the early Concept Neighborhood investments, a phasing strategy for new investments would begin near Harrisburg Boulevard and move north.

- Phase One: Leverage the W-K-F campus to draw more businesses and entrepreneurs to the district. The campus, once home to oil and gas equipment manufacturer W-K-F, encompasses approximately 145,000 square feet of interior space across 13 buildings.
- Phase Two: Create a central green space between Canal Street and Navigation Boulevard to provide recreational and community gathering space and space for active programming.
- Phase Three: Connect to the bayou and trail network along the vacated Union Pacific (UP) rail line.

Fostering economic opportunities. Within the proposed Phase Three, the panel considered two development scenarios that could bring an additional 200,000 square feet of commercial space to the area and further activate the neighborhood.

- Option 1: Position the Paseo near Velasco Street, which could be lined with new commercial buildings between the Paseo and the industrial building to the east.
- Option 2: Position new commercial buildings on Velasco to open onto the

Paseo, creating a pedestrian thoroughfare for sidewalk cafes, additional retail activity, and more.

Public-Private Partnerships and Value Generation

The type and scope of the development envisioned by the panel—public space surrounded by catalyzed private development—led the panel to consider how a public-private partnership (P3) could bring the vision to life.

Consider P3 models. The panel pointed to developments made possible by P3S, including Hemisfair in San Antonio and Park Row in Houston's Energy Corridor District. The funding models, infrastructure improvements, and surrounding economic development could provide a model for the Paseo.

Leverage park and greenspace value generation. The panel reviewed several relevant park projects, each of which indicated increased valuation of adjacent land. In the East End, the land vacated by the rail line has the potential to stimulate new investment along the Paseo and would be built on property that has a \$0 basis, creating a significant incremental value increase.

Plan for potential improvements along the Paseo. To create the Paseo, improvements to the northern reaches of Velasco Street, the Paseo alignment, and the land formerly held by the railroad will be funded.

- Velasco Street, north of Engelke Street, would provide access for the proposed new commercial buildings. Private

funding could be reimbursed through a development agreement, and a public partner and/or discretionary grants could assist.

- The construction of the Paseo could be eligible for a variety of discretionary and partnership opportunities, could be funded through a development agreement, and/or could leverage grant funding.
- Site preparation and infrastructure are needed in the center of the study area, which will enable additional future development. A potential development agreement, Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants, or partnerships could help facilitate and fund the work.

Explore capital funding tools. The panel outlined the following options for potential capital funding for the improvements.

- A partnership with Harris County Precinct 2 could support preliminary engineering, roadway retrofitting, monetizing parking, and assistance with Paseo infrastructure.
- Up-front investment and financing could come from a community-oriented bank, BBP's maintenance endowment fund, or a public finance vehicle.
- In addition to creating a sidewalk and trail, the Paseo is also a transportation and economic development project, and it has the potential to be a flood mitigation project, all of which may open the door to related funding.
- The corridor could serve as drainage conveyance, managing stormwater and

providing a clean slate for additional development along the corridor.

Activation and Maintenance

Activation. In addition to planned activation, the community should be encouraged to use the Paseo organically. Early programming can encourage residents and visitors to discover the alignment, but care should be taken to not over program the spaces, instead allowing time for community members to discover and explore on their own. Activating underused spaces, encouraging businesses to provide restroom access, and creating buffered play areas can further enliven the area and ensure visitors feel comfortable while there.

Engagement. The East End District has an excellent reputation in the community and a strong foundation of deep community engagement that could be leveraged in early activation. Meeting people where they are already gathering, hosting surveys, pop-up events, and information tables can help shape the early Paseo events, helping ensure that everyone feels welcome.

Parking. The East End does not lack on-street parking, yet planning today for future parking needs and revenues is important. A Walkable Places designation might help adjust parking requirements for new development, and a parking benefits district could generate revenue to support the Paseo.

Maintenance. Assessment revenue and revenue from parking fees can help pay for the ongoing maintenance of the Paseo. Another option is to convey the public realm

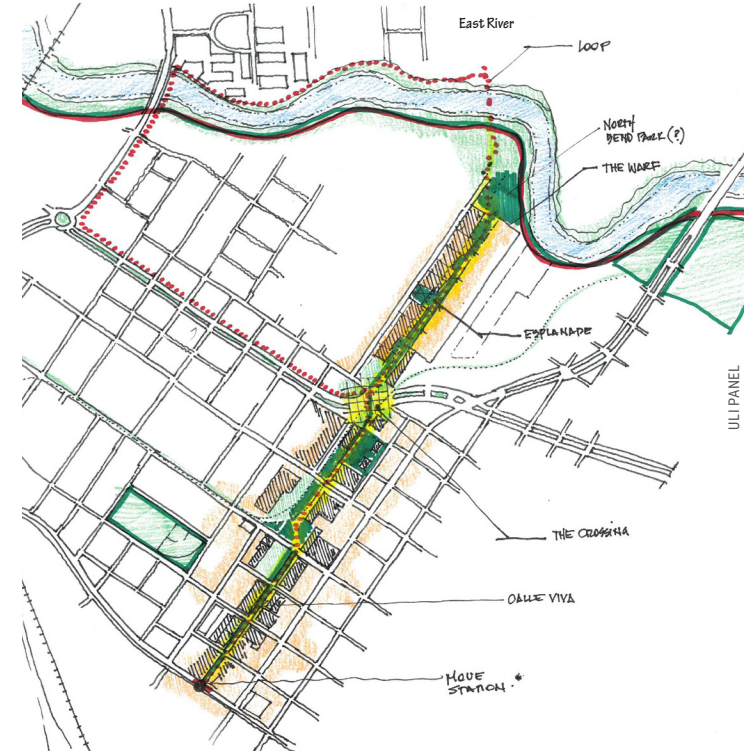
assets to a public partner to ensure long-term maintenance is managed. Alternatively, a new parking benefits district could assume operations and maintenance responsibilities. It is important to note that selecting durable materials and adapted plants can help keep maintenance, future repair, and replacement costs low.

Additional ideas. The panel shared the following additional ideas, which were outside of the study scope.

- Wayfinding, trees, and shade are needed across the neighborhood.
- Sampson Street has multiple names across the city and needs to be consolidated.
- A district parking strategy is needed in the East End, starting in the study area.
- An alternative section for the Paseo could run through a Concept Neighborhood-owned building, lining this section with retailers and providing shade, which could be particularly beneficial in the early years of the Paseo, to mitigate heat until the tree canopy along the route has matured further.
- The light rail station would work well if aligned with the Paseo terminus at Harrisburg Boulevard.
- Transportation-oriented development should be encouraged around the light rail station to support area retailers.

Conclusion

As one panelist noted, “the East End is uniquely Houston.” The neighborhood is full of residents who love the East End and



The Paseo creates an inviting thoroughfare for pedestrians through the study area, connecting the public transportation and commercial assets to the south to the Buffalo Bayou, trail network, and future Gregg Street bridge to the north.

businesses that have launched and flourished there. Under the careful guidance of the East End District and in partnership with entities such as Concept Neighborhood and Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the East End is on the cusp of additional exciting developments. By pursuing the development of the Paseo and leveraging the neighborhood’s existing assets, the East End can become more actively and deeply connected, supporting economic development, fostering community connection, and celebrating everything that is uniquely Houston along the way.



Introduction and Background

In Houston's East End neighborhood, local leadership and the steadfast efforts of the East End District are ensuring that this 16-square-mile section of Houston remains the vibrant, diverse, and approachable area for which it is known. While the early years of the East End District organization focused on safety and maintaining a viable business environment, more recent efforts have expanded its priorities to include cultural expression and community-centered investment. Today, the East End District (the District) is led by a team of professionals and staff who are deeply passionate about the neighborhood and committed to its continued success.

Over the past several years, additional local efforts by developers and business owners have delivered new development, redevelopment, and new retail concepts to the community. The Plant, developed by the team at Concept Neighborhood, opened in 2022 along Harrisburg Boulevard, bringing retail, a signature restaurant, and other commercial space to the area. Today, additional local retailers and food purveyors are testing new concepts in The Plant, much to the neighborhood's delight.

Concept Neighborhood—which aims to “create authentic, connected, and inclusive developments that serve and

reflect the surrounding community”—has since expanded its footprint in the area, purchasing additional parcels and buildings as owners have expressed an interest. These acquisitions have resulted in over 30 acres of Concept Neighborhood holdings, extending from the bayou to the north to Harrisburg Avenue to the south.

Other recent investments along Buffalo Bayou have sparked additional attention. Under the stewardship of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the signature trail that parallels Buffalo Bayou is undergoing significant construction, improving recreational opportunities and commuting connectivity for the East End.

Recognizing this nexus of investment, energy, and interest, the East End District and Concept Neighborhood, with support from the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (together the sponsors), contemplated how the neighborhood and resources south of the bayou could better connect to this important regional trail and waterway asset. To help provide guidance on the best path forward, the sponsors turned to the Urban Land Institute Houston District Council (ULI) for assistance.

ULI, using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel (TAP) program, assembled a panel of real estate and land use professionals to assist. With expertise in real estate development, urban design, architecture, park planning and management, and public finance, the ULI panel spent two days touring the area, meeting with community and related stakeholders, and



Buffalo Bayou, shaded with green in the above map, runs along the northern edge of the East End and generally creates a northern boundary for the TAP study area, noted by the yellow shading.

applying their professional expertise to the following questions from the sponsors.

TAP Questions

1. Are there relevant examples of successful public-private partnerships or best practices (either regionally or nationally) that provide opportunities for guidance or lessons learned?
2. How do we evaluate the potential economic impacts of a proposed linear park on the redevelopment of an existing community within Houston?
3. What additional funding sources and partnerships exist that can be leveraged to ensure these plans are implemented?
4. How do we finance this type of public/private partnership?
5. How do we delineate between physical ownership and greenspace management? Specifically, what do those activities look like?
6. How do we approach design, including community engagement and final approval? Who is responsible for contracting and payment of the designers?
7. Is there a way for the City of Houston to create a financial instrument to support industrial redevelopment? This could look like carbon credit (traded), historic tax credit (syndicated), or deferred impact fees.

What the Panel Observed & Heard

To help inform the ULI study, the panel interviewed over 30 representatives from community organizations, elected leaders and staff from related jurisdictions, business and real estate owners, residents, and current and potential partners in the area's redevelopment efforts. These interviews illuminated a series of challenges and opportunities that might influence where and how additional development and investment in the East End unfold.

Challenges

- **Stormwater management.** The East End is full of old stormwater infrastructure that is beginning to fail. In some areas, stormwater management mechanisms are missing altogether.
- **Safety.** The District has made great strides in improving pedestrian and other traffic safety, yet some still perceive the area as unsafe. Other stakeholders noted that loose dogs and unhoused individuals lingering near the bayou also undermine feelings of personal safety.
- **Wayfinding and lighting.** Residents and visitors often prefer walking over driving when possible, yet wayfinding is inconsistent, and sporadic lighting along sidewalks makes evening walks challenging.
- **Limited tree canopy.** The heat of summer drives people indoors and into their cars.

With shade from added trees, walking could become more comfortable.

- **Overly-wide streets that encourage high speeds.** Even with industrial uses in the area, traffic on most streets is light, and the thoroughfares' widths make crossing challenging for pedestrians.
- **Movement and access.** Stakeholders noted that trains moving through—and stopping in—the area create challenges for car commuters and anyone hoping to visit neighborhood amenities. The nearby highways also create physical barriers, interrupting the urban fabric of streets and limiting east-west movement.

Assets and Opportunities

- **Bayou proximity and park assets.** With proximate access to Settegast Park, Tony Marron Park, Buffalo Bayou, and the Buffalo Bayou trail network, the study area could offer something new, active, and connected, yet distinct from other parks or trails in the East End.
- **Third spaces and gathering areas.** Neighbors voiced an appreciation for third spaces (places where people spend time outside of home and work) and other gathering places. Some retail spaces are starting to meet this need, but the neighborhood would like more.
- **Retail and industrial history.** The area continues to have a strong industrial presence, and residential and industrial neighbors co-exist well. Retail is gaining

strength and helping to shape new commercial destinations.

- **Cultural resources and celebrations.** The neighborhood has a rich, diverse culture treasured by residents. There are exciting opportunities to expand the celebration of these cultural assets.
- **Rich history and adaptive reuse.** Residents generally appreciate the area's existing built environment and recognize its relationship to the East End's history. A number of homes are being restored and buildings adapted for new uses.
- **New housing development.** In addition to restoring existing homes, new housing development is underway, providing households with additional housing options and typologies not yet seen in this area.

- **Attainable housing.** The East End remains a unique Houston neighborhood, in close proximity to major regional employment centers, that offers for-sale and rent prices that are attainable.
- **Multi-generational and welcoming.** Residents in the East End shared stories of growing up in the area and enjoying the opportunity to remain in the neighborhood. For new residents, the East End is seen as very welcoming.
- **Nonprofit partners.** Nonprofit organizations working in and around the East End are generally interested in partnering to improve the quality of life and opportunities for East End residents.
- **Strong, capable district management.** The staff and leaders of the East End District have proven to be strong, capable, and tireless in their management and support

of the 16-mile-square geography. Their approach and commitment have earned the respect of the community.

- **Good development partners.** There are capable and proven developers already working in the district, which can help attract new investment even as existing entities broaden or deepen their efforts.

Recommendation Framework

Building on the rich history of the area and with an eye toward the future, the panel developed a recommendation framework that leverages the broader neighborhood's assets, creates and activates space in the specific study area to meet residents' needs, and builds a foundation for the ongoing operation and maintenance of new community assets.



Industrial businesses, historic buildings, new retail, and attainable homes mix well in the East End, creating a welcoming district that celebrates what is uniquely Houston.



The Story of the District

The East End has a rich history. The area is often seen as Houston's original maker district—where new products are designed and tested, businesses gain traction, and industrial buildings and railroads connect to Buffalo Bayou.

The East End is also home to some of the city's oldest housing stock. Small cottages are being restored, new and legacy neighbors are woven throughout the area, and new housing is filling some gaps in the streetscape. The East End continues to grow and evolve organically, and everyone generally feels welcome.

While this section of the East End slowly transitions from a majority industrial area to a more active mix of industrial and residential

uses, these uses coexist well. As one panelist noted, the East End represents a “celebration of all that is authentically Houston and remains a welcome counter to the modernity and more rigid use separations of suburbia.”

The East End Today

The current momentum in the East End is notable. The work led by the East End District is impressive. The investments to date by individuals and private developers have further strengthened the neighborhood's upward trajectory. The area is also witnessing another catalytic infusion, this time through investments in recreational and trail infrastructure along the bayou. The anticipated \$300 million in investments

by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP) along the bayou could be transformative for Houston and this neighborhood in particular. The improvements enabled by this funding provide an opportune time to connect to the trails and bayou, facilitating recreational and commuter access for East End residents. Connections can also encourage trail users to detour south into the neighborhood, to explore and patronize the restaurants and shops found along the way.

Leveraging these investments and improvements by creating a connective infrastructure can support neighborhood pride, joy, and quality of life. The panel believes its vision for the study area creates that connective infrastructure. It is the Paseo.



Vendor carts and brick-and-mortar businesses give the East End its personality while the bayou trail construction to the north holds promise of even more activity in the district.



The Paseo

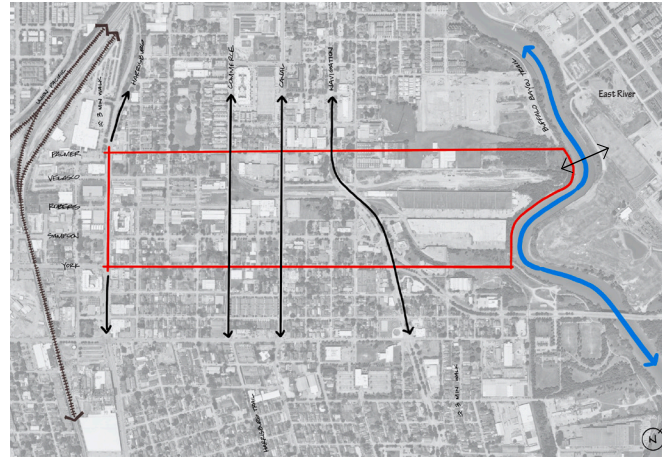
One mile. That is the distance between Harrisburg Boulevard and Buffalo Bayou, between light rail transportation assets and the bayou's recreational and commuter assets. Between the two sit blocks of industrial spaces, commercial businesses, homes, gardens, sidewalks, and more. The Paseo is designed to connect it all.

Paseo Recommendations

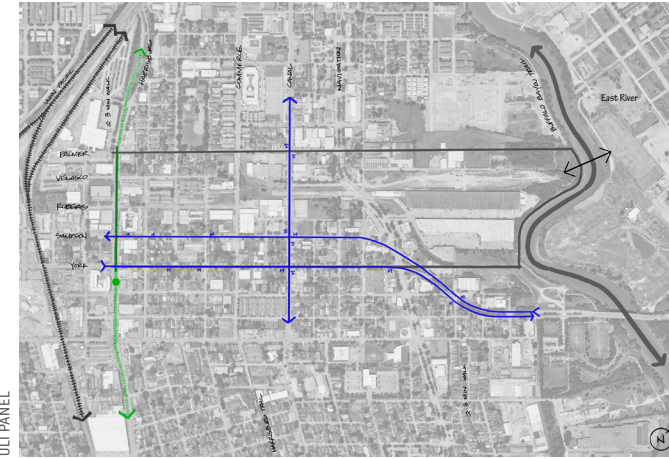
The panel's vision for the Paseo strengthens existing assets and builds on the connectivity framework established by the city's streets, open spaces, and natural environment. The Paseo is about strengthening neighborhood connections and inviting daily use.

Leverage transportation access. This section of the East End is served by strong transportation assets. Roadways like Harrisburg, Commerce, Canal, and Navigation provide multiple opportunities to connect to downtown or to destinations further east. Active rail lines traverse the area, serving a number of the industrial businesses while also creating barriers across the street network. The Green Line of the Houston METRORail runs along Harrisburg Boulevard and has a station near the intersection of Harrisburg and York Street. Bus lines serve the study area, with north-south connections along Sampson Street and York, and east-west connections along Canal Street. The Buffalo Bayou Trail also serves as an important transportation asset, with both recreational users and commuters expected to regularly access the trail.

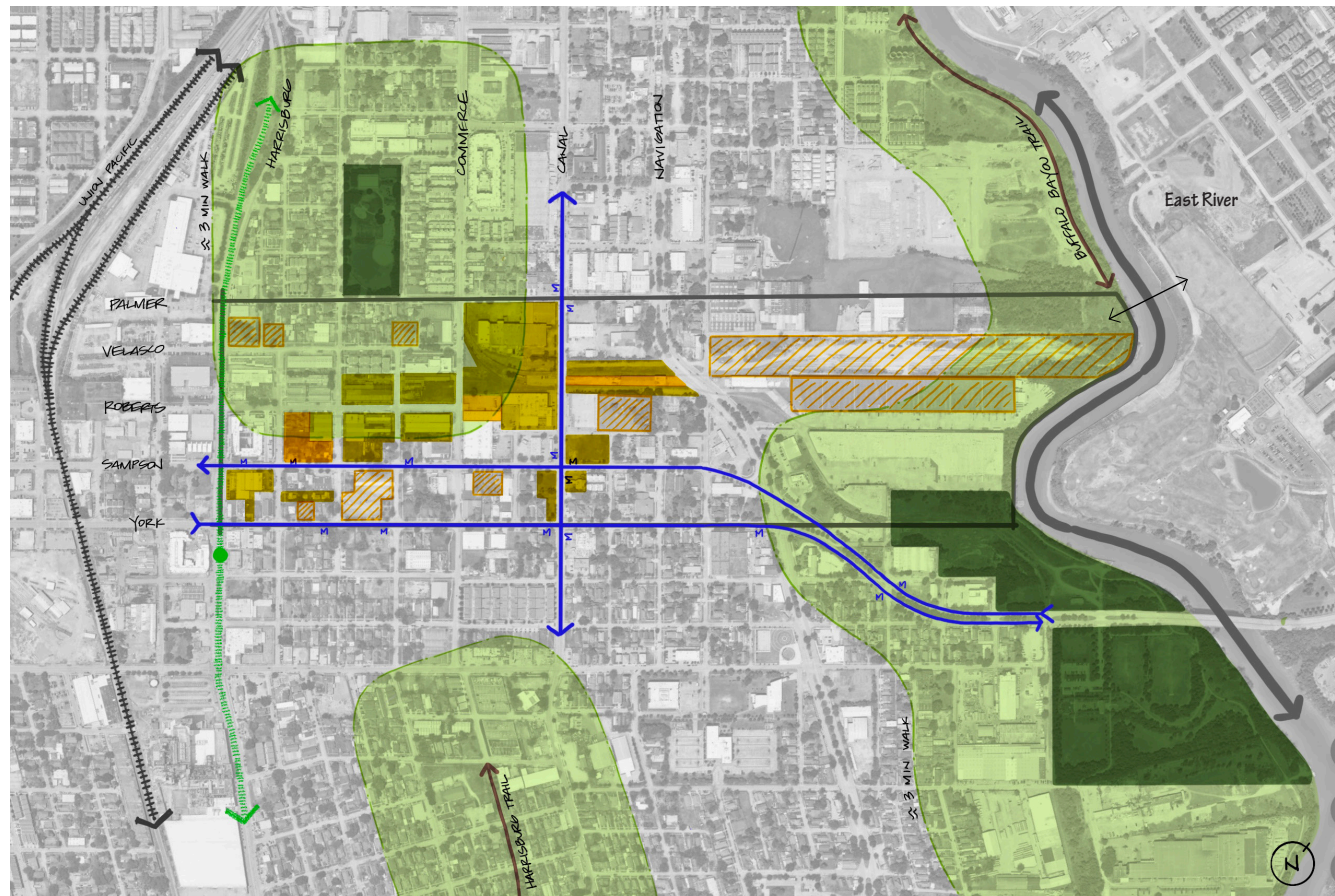
Connect to parks and open space. Parks, open space, and trail assets are also important



The study area, outlined in red, benefits from strong east-west roadway connections.

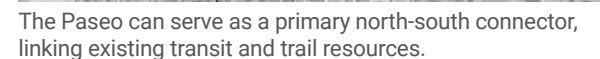
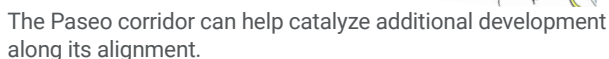
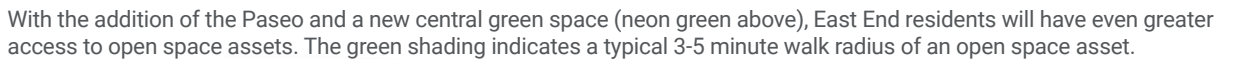


Light rail, in green, and bus lines, noted in blue, support public transportation access in the study area.



The yellow shaded areas represent Concept Neighborhood holdings while the hatched areas represent parcels worth exploring as they would strengthen the connection between Harrisburg and the bayou. The light green shaded area around each park represents the radius a pedestrian could travel within a five-minute walk.

Create the Paseo. Building on this spine of potential activity and with an eye toward connectivity, the panel envisioned the Paseo. Depicted by the red line in the maps to the right, the Paseo is envisioned as a connector of assets, an activated green thoroughfare that connects residents to the bayou, to commerce, and to one another. It is a point of exploration, an inviting greenway that draws people from the bayou trail south to explore this authentically Houston neighborhood. The Paseo is a place for wandering, recreation, shopping, relaxation, and



more. The Paseo creates a direct connection between the neighborhood and the anticipated Gregg Street bridge across the bayou, further connecting pedestrians and bicyclists with the East River destinations to the north and west.

Consider light rail opportunities. While it may be a stretch goal, it is possible to amplify the transit opportunities in the study area by shifting the METRORail station two blocks west to more closely align with this new spine of activity. By shifting the station to Roberts Street, the station becomes visible to travelers on the Paseo and provides a more direct connection for those moving between the bayou, light rail, and destinations beyond.

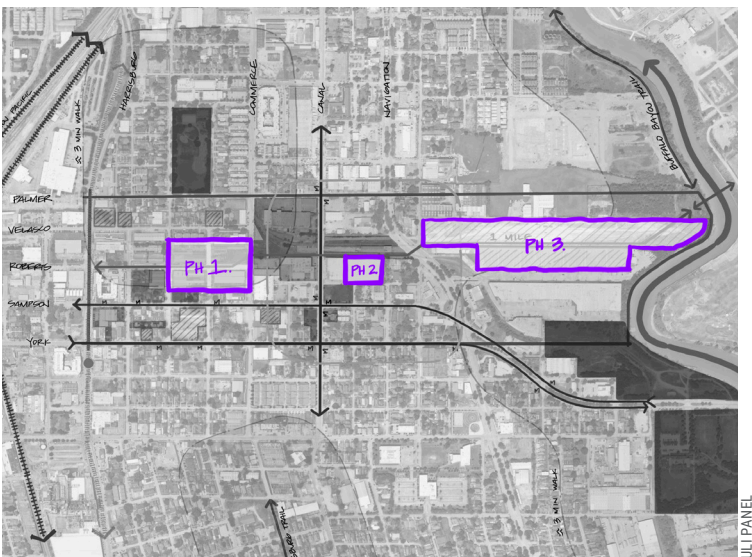
Enhance safety for pedestrians and non-vehicular transit. Responding to stakeholders' concerns around pedestrian safety in the area, the panel paid close attention to the intersection of the Paseo and Navigation Boulevard. This intersection today is a confusing assembly of six roadways, a wide concrete median that acts like another traffic lane, vacated rail lines, and very limited pedestrian infrastructure. At this non-signalized intersection, there is no safe pedestrian route. To address this challenge, the panel recommends adding a broad expanse of pedestrian infrastructure at the intersection. Noted in the cross-hatched yellow zone in the map to the right (top), this pedestrian zone could feature a raised table, a wide, painted surface, or some other visual and physical signaling for drivers to slow down as this space prioritizes pedestrians over vehicles.



The panel's vision for the Paseo includes a special treatment for the intersection of the Paseo with Navigation Boulevard.



Pedestrian crosswalks can be colorful, textured, raised, and divided, all of which call attention to the space, encouraging drivers to slow down and helping protect the pedestrians moving through the area.



The potential phasing of the Paseo improvements can be spread across three sections, beginning near Harrisburg Boulevard and moving north.

Phasing Improvements

The Concept Neighborhood team has made excellent progress in the neighborhood. Additional private investments could follow a phasing strategy that leverages those early Concept Neighborhood investments near Harrisburg Boulevard and moves north.

Phase One improvements: W-K-M campus.

The historic W-K-M campus represents a wide variety of redevelopment opportunities for the study area. Concept Neighborhoods has a number of leases in process, many of which will further activate the area, draw more businesses and entrepreneurs to the district, and build on the neighborhood's existing ecosystem of makers and creators.

Phase Two: central green space. A potential second phase of development could feature



The W-K-M campus, centered around the intersection of Roberts and Sherman streets, could launch the first phase of improvements along the Paseo.



The vacated UP rail line, between Canal Street and Navigation Boulevard could represent the second phase of Paseo improvement.



Phase three could center around the former rail line north of Navigation Boulevard to the bayou.

the build-out of a central green connector. Sitting between Canal Street and Navigation Boulevard, between Nolan Street and the vacated rail lines, a wide swath of green, open space could serve recreational purposes, create community gathering space, and further connect the neighborhood's residents with proximate open space assets.

Phase Three: partnered connectivity. The stretch of land between Navigation Boulevard and the bayou represents another opportunity for redevelopment and activation in the study area. Currently held by a small number of property owners, this land and the former UP rail line would provide the final link in the trail network and bayou beyond.

Building Economic Opportunities

Within a contemplated Phase Three of development, the panel considered two potential scenarios that could bring the Paseo to life while also creating an active and vibrant community and commercial space.

The potential phase three site is broad and long. With even the most conservative planning scenarios, the panel estimates that approximately 200,000 square feet of commercial space could be built along the Paseo in this section. Configured as a mix of one- and two-story buildings to complement the existing building typologies, this new commercial district could provide welcome retail and restaurant offerings to users of the Paseo, as well as to residents and employees in the surrounding neighborhood.

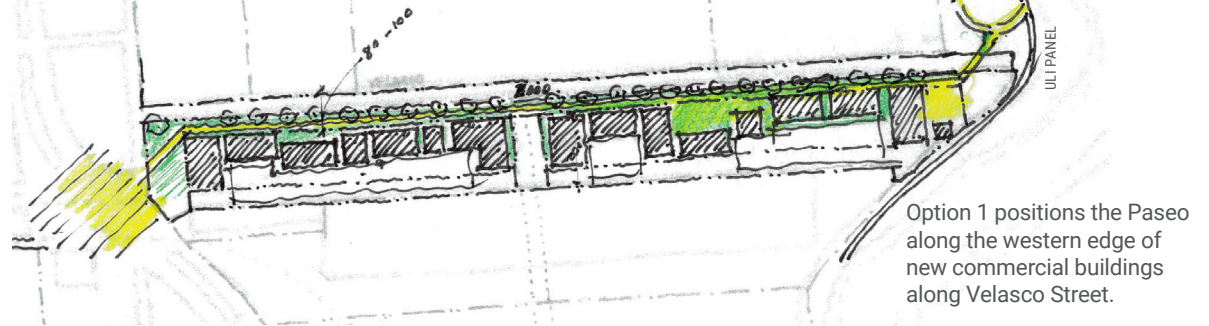
The width of the proposed phase allowed the panel to consider two potential alignments.

- **Option 1, buildings fronting Velasco Street.** In this scenario, the Paseo runs along the eastern edge of Velasco Street, and the new commercial buildings are sited between the Paseo and the existing building to the east. This scenario provides direct automobile access to the commercial spaces and activates the western side of the new commercial buildings. The Paseo would connect directly to the bayou trail and the Gregg Street bridge beyond.
- **Option 2, buildings fronting the Paseo.** In this second scenario, the buildings are shifted closer to Velasco Street and positioned to create a front door on the Paseo, running along the eastern edge of the new buildings. The space between the new buildings and the existing building is wide enough for an expansive pedestrian thoroughfare, sidewalk cafes, and other small gathering spaces that would benefit from shade cast by the buildings along the western edge.

In both scenarios, the panel envisioned a reconnected Fox Street, entering the area from the east and providing additional connectivity and movement into the new commercial development and Paseo.

Paseo Positioning, Option 1

North of Navigation Boulevard



Paseo Positioning, Option 2

North of Navigation Boulevard



The northern end of the Paseo, running along Velasco Street north of Navigation Boulevard, could be lined by new commercial space, including potentially retail and restaurants, becoming a new East End destination.



Public Private Partnerships and Value Generation

The type and scope of the development envisioned by the panel—public space surrounded by catalyzed private development—led the panel to consider how a public-private partnership could bring the vision to life.

Concept Neighborhood controls a significant portion of the study area. The team is already active in the district and has demonstrated its willingness and capability as developers. There is considerable work ahead, however. Sites will need to be prepped for new development and vacated rail lines, industrial remnants, and other environmental assessments will need to be addressed before development can begin. Public infrastructure, including stormwater drainage and conveyance, must also be addressed. Sidewalks will need to be built, and streets likely reconnected. These important tasks are well-suited for a public-private partnership (P3), bringing together private development with the public sector or other nonprofits to each address the items to which they are best suited and deliver improvements with significant public benefit.

Relevant Examples of P3s

The panel pointed to several developments that leveraged a P3 arrangement:

- **Hemisfair, San Antonio.** In 2009, the San Antonio City Council established the Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation (HPARC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit local government corporation governed by

a board comprised of local stakeholders and two City executive staff members. A key factor in fulfilling HPARC's vision was the ability to facilitate real estate development on P3 properties. In 2013, the San Antonio City Council formed the Hemisfair Park Public Facility Corporation (HPPFC) to act as owner and landlord for the developable parcels at Hemisfair and then transferred all developable P3 properties to the HPPFC to facilitate real estate development. The Master Lease and Master Agreement between the city, the HPPFC, and HPARC authorizes HPARC to develop properties under long-term ground leases and to manage development, operations, maintenance, and activation of the new parks. Revenue generated by HPARC stays at Hemisfair and is dedicated to operations, maintenance, and programming of the parks and open spaces. ([read more](#))

- **The Wharf, Washington, DC.** The Wharf is a P3 with the District of Columbia's Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. The project transformed what was once a low-density, commercial development strip into a bustling mixed-use quarter. The Wharf's 3.2 million square feet of development are located on 27 acres of land and 49 acres of water along roughly one mile of the Washington Channel. The \$2.5 billion mixed-use neighborhood integrates innovative ideas in waterfront design, construction, and operations. ([read more](#))

- **Uptown Public Improvement District, Dallas.** Recognizing the need for organized management and continued improvement of the Uptown TIF district, local stakeholders created Uptown, Inc. in 1992, and the Uptown Public Improvement District (UPID) soon followed. Funded by property owners and overseen by what would become Uptown Dallas Inc., this PID model ensures ongoing investments in safety, beautification, mobility, and more. Today, the UPID manages and maintains the neighborhood's public spaces, funding enhancements, supporting events and transportation, and represents the community's collective voice.
- **The Pearl, Charlotte.** The development of the Pearl's 26-acre campus is led by a P3 with the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Atrium Health, Wexford Science & Technology, and Ventas. Uniting research, medical education, and industry innovation, the district is projected to create more than 5,500 on-site jobs and more than 11,500 total jobs across the region. The multi-phased, mixed-use development will feature office, lab, retail, residential, including affordable housing, hospitality, academic spaces, and an outdoor plaza and community gathering space.
- **Park Row, Energy Corridor District, Houston.** Running through Houston's Energy Corridor, Park Row has evolved into an impressive spine of commercial and residential development anchored by

parks, trails, and open space. Viewed by many as a fallow corridor lacking access and utilities, property owners along the corridor wanted to catalyze development. Working together as the Energy Corridor District, property owners entered into a Chapter 380 agreement with the City of Houston to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to promote economic development in the district. The result is an exciting mix of uses that allows people to work, live, and play in the district while enjoying the proximity to neighboring amenities such as Addicks Reservoir, George Bush Park, and others.

This last example, Park Row in Houston, may provide the TAP sponsors with an interesting corollary to the work posed by the panel. The funding mechanism, the needed improvements, and the intended surrounding development mix, while presented at a different scale, could serve as a model for the Paseo and related work in the East End.

Park and Greenspace Value Generation

Historically, parks and green space in Houston are financed as economic development projects. The panel reviewed a number of park projects funded through TIRZ resources, including Levy Park, Emancipation Park, Trebly Park, and Rockstar Energy Bike Parks. In each of these cases, the value of the land adjacent to the park improvement outperformed other parcels disconnected from the green space improvement. These

value increases are often seen in early days, when the improvement is announced, and then, upon completion, values rise again.

The key takeaway for the TAP sponsors is that park and green space improvements increase the long-term value generation of adjacent land by raising both pre- and post-construction values.

In the study area, the land vacated by the Union Pacific rail line will require significant upfront investment to clean the site and facilitate redevelopment. However, the panel anticipates that redevelopment of the Paseo will facilitate development on surrounding sites, creating an environment that stimulates new investment more broadly. It is also

Valuation of Park-Adjacent Land Overtime

Value Growth of All Adjacent Parcels		
	Adjacent Parcels	Related TIRZ Growth
Total (13-24)	361,905,112	8,884,641,085
% of TIRZ Growth	3.5%	
Average CAGR per Period		
Pre-Construction	10.5%	4.8%
Completion Year	9.1%	10.7%
Post Construction	18.3%	3.0%
Remainder-2024	4.2%	7.1%
Long-Run Growth	11.2%	5.7%

**As a baseline for comparison, parcels with park improvements comprise just .68% or less of their respective TIRZ's managed area.*
Takeaway: An area totaling .68% of the TIRZ (by land area) contributed 3.5% of the TIRZ growth over a ten-year period.

important to note that this section of the Paseo would be constructed on property with a \$0 base value. With the basis in the land at zero, and the increment potential is significant.

Estimates and Potential Improvements

To create the green space the panel envisioned along the Paseo in the core of the study area, it considered improvements to Velasco Street (from Engelke to the BBP property), the Paseo (from Harrisburg to the bayou), and the land held by Union Pacific at the time of this study.

Velasco Street

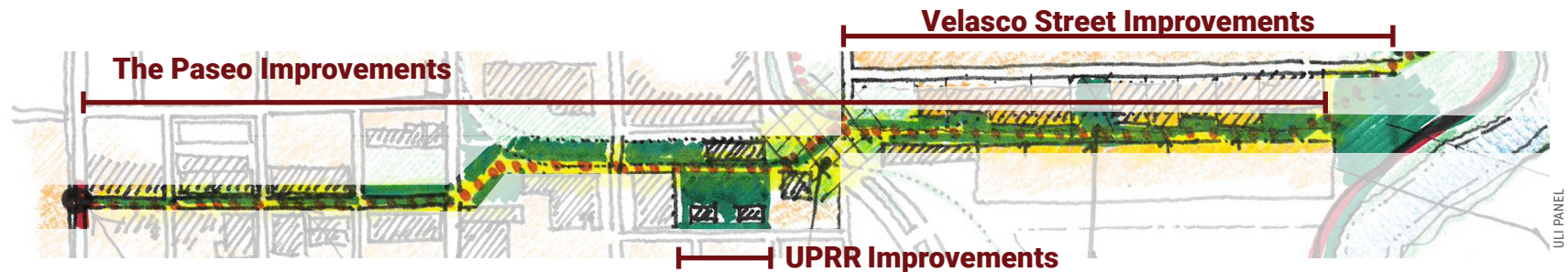
Velasco Street is an important access point for the improvements envisioned by the panel. It is a public road that will provide access to a variety of uses along, including parcels adjacent to the Paseo and BBP-owned land to the north.

- **Use private funding.** The fastest funding approach for the roadway improvements is to use private funding that is reimbursed through a development agreement. This is a prototypical project for this sort of approach.
- **Seek public partners or grant funding.** Alternatively, the road work could be funded directly by a public partner and further supported by a discretionary grant. This roadway would be a good candidate for community project funding (CPF) or Economic Development Administration

Potential Capital Costs Related to Paseo Construction

Project	LF/SF	Est. Capital Cost*	Contingency (20%)	Design (15%)	CE&I/MTS (10%)	Total
Velasco Street (Engelke to BBP cap)	2,120	\$ 1,205,000*	\$ 241,000	\$ 216,900	\$ 144,600	\$ 1,807,500
Paseo (Harrisburg to Bayou)	6,780	\$ 1,695,000**	\$ 339,000	\$ 305,100	\$ 203,400	\$ 2,542,500
Clear, Grade and Prepare UPRR Site	520,511	\$ 1,561,533***	\$ 312,306	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 1,893,839
Total Costs		\$ 4,461,533	\$ 892,306	\$ 532,000	\$ 358,000	\$ 6,243,839

The cost and increment estimates are simply estimates based on current metrics found in the broader Houston market. * \$ 1,500,000/ lane mile for road; ** \$250/linear foot; *** \$3/square foot. These are intended to be illustrative only and should not be construed as an opinion of or guarantee of future value.



Funding for Paseo improvements could be segmented into three areas that may be eligible for different types of funding.

(EDA) funding. It is worth noting that these and other similar funding streams have the potential to prolong the process.

The Paseo

The contemplated construction of the Paseo could be eligible for a variety of discretionary and partnership opportunities, provided the improvements are public. The first step is the joint development of a concept plan with private interests and a public partner to determine the specific 'what and where' of both the Paseo and the development plan, including preliminary engineering work. Harris County Precinct 2 could be a good partner and conduit for this portion of the project.

- **Use a development agreement.** The section of the Paseo north of Navigation Boulevard and Engelke Street could be funded through a development agreement that leverages the future value of the land.
- **Pursue grant funding.** The southern segments of the Paseo, south of Navigation, would be better suited for grant funding. For a sidewalk and trail, grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife or Transportation Alternative grants might be good funding fits.

It is also possible that grants and loans could fund the entire length of the Paseo if partners find that approach necessary or preferred.

Site Improvements

The site preparation and infrastructure development at the former UP railroad site in the center of the study area will actually enable future development and create taxable value (currently valued at \$0). Due to the public nature of the property, it is important to discuss a potential development agreement before the property becomes taxable.

- **Leverage public partners or grant funding.** It may be possible to partner with the Houston Land Bank on potential EPA grants, as the land bank holds property near the terminus of the Paseo at the bayou. EPA funds could assist with the

land evaluation, and there may be other opportunities to absorb some clearing costs through those same grants.

- **Leverage other (existing) partners.** Given the scope of BBP's work in the area, the panel also recommends exploring opportunities to leverage existing BBP contracts to add the work at the UP railroad site through a consolidated approach that would require fewer additional dollars than a standalone project.

Capital Funding Tools

The panel outlined the following options for potential capital funding for the Paseo and related improvements.

Consider a partnership with Harris County Precinct 2. The County could potentially provide funding support (in a 50/50 or 80/20 split) for the universe of public improvements in this area, including roadway improvements to Velasco, Roberts, and Sampson streets.

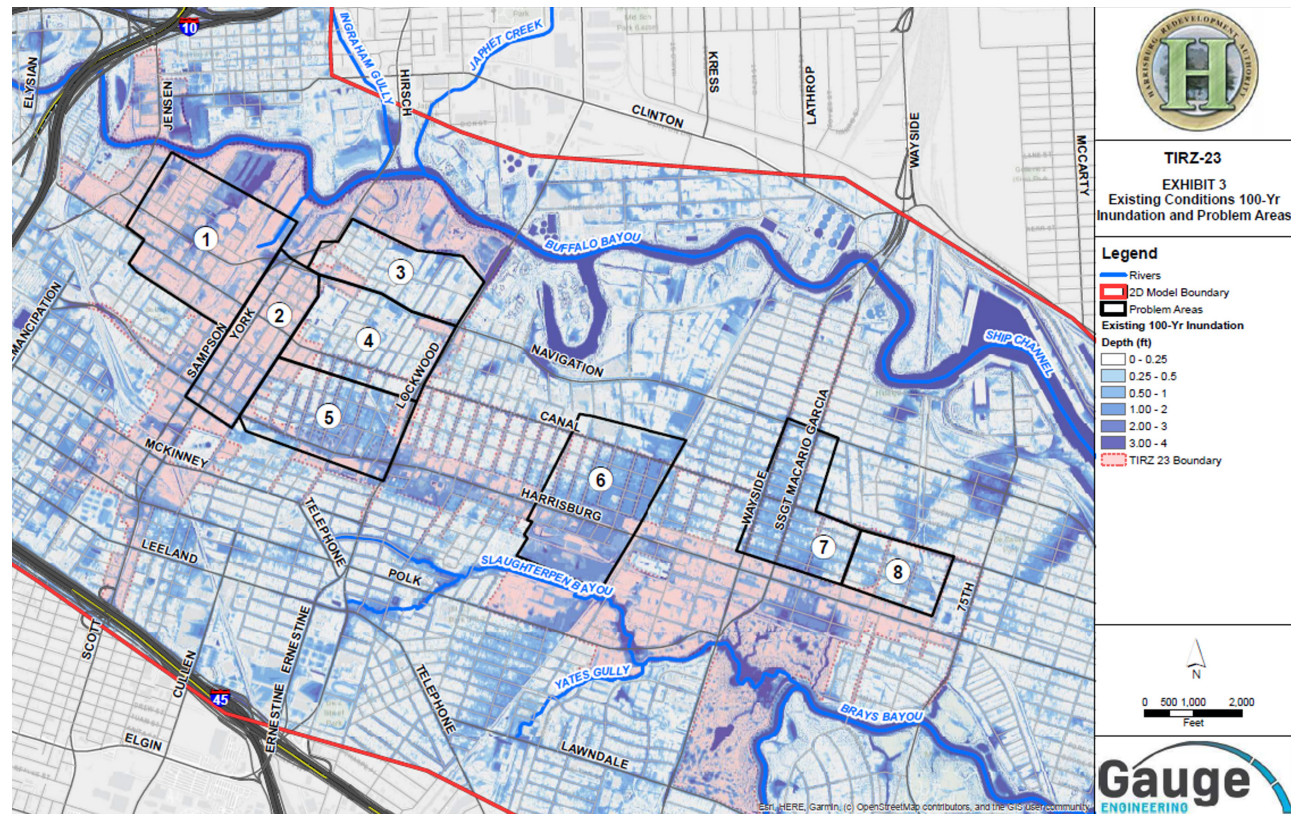
- This funding could support preliminary engineering concepts for the area.
- It could also help with retrofitting the roadway with the goals of providing a shaded pedestrian corridor, balancing the parking, and monetizing the parking.
- The County could also provide seed funding for the infrastructure needed for the Paseo, including public utilities, access, and parking, with a focus on the northern edge.

Explore the potential of a development agreement (and execute early). The current assessed value of the land along the rail line is \$0, according to HCAD 2025 data, so the increment opportunity is significant. This points to the need to establish a development agreement early in the process to fund the Paseo's hardscape and infrastructure work.

- The funding for the work could be tied to the value created, focusing on infrastructure and including an interest component targeted at an annual

participation rate of 80 percent until the full amount is reimbursed.

- Up-front investment and financing could be supported through a variety of sources:
 - Pursue community-oriented banking and related financial partners.
 - Leverage BBP's maintenance endowment fund, which could be secured and repaid with interest.
 - Use a public finance vehicle (bonds, government supported debt, etc.) in partnership with the East End District.



The study area falls within the TIRZ-23 areas of interest and, as such, may be eligible for funding to assist with stormwater management and conveyance.

- It may also be possible to integrate a community benefits agreement into the development agreement, including other community goals for the broader development area. This could facilitate broader support and buy-in for the work along the Paseo and related work of the development partners.

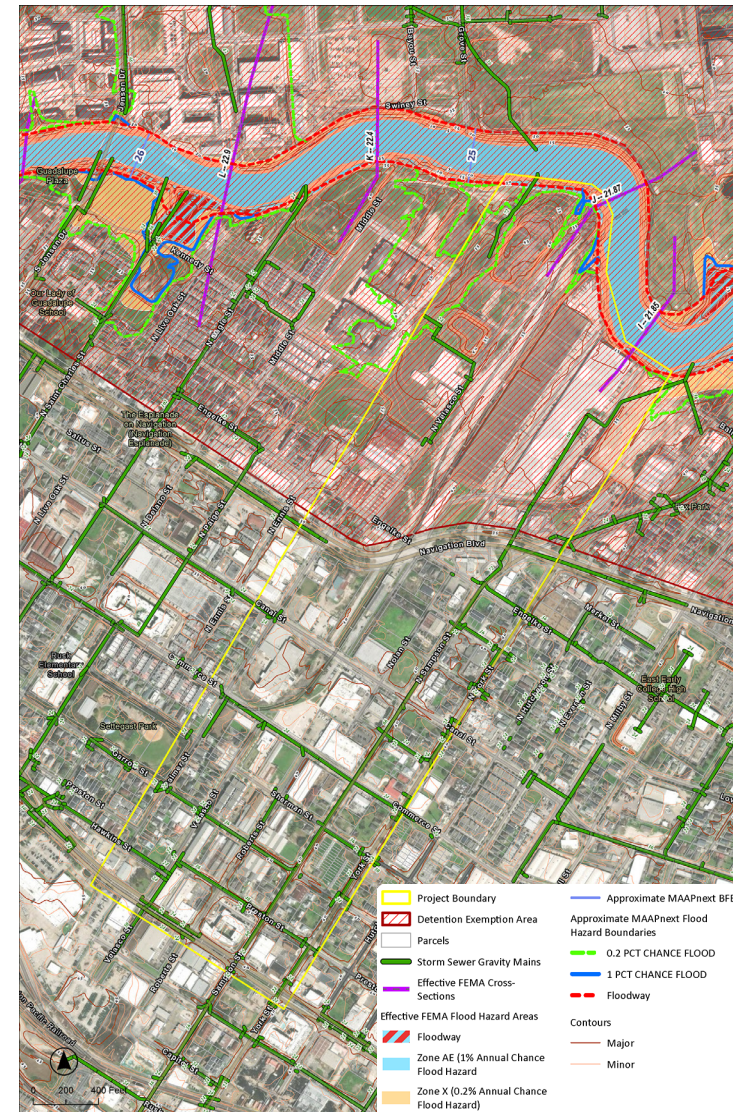
Explore discretionary funding opportunities.

In addition to the creation of a sidewalk and trail, the Paseo is also a transportation project, an economic development project, and has the potential to be a flood mitigation project. Using these approaches, the work may also be eligible for related funding support.

- [Flood Mitigation Assistance](#)
- [Economic Development Administration](#)
- [Community Project Funding](#)
- [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Recreational Trails Grants](#)
- [Surface Transportation Block Grant \(STBG\)](#)
- [Rails to Trails Network](#) and the [Trails Nation Collaborative](#)

All of these resources will require a local, nimble, creative, and motivated local government agency to serve as the sponsor of the effort.

Utilize the corridor as a drainage conveyance. The land north of Navigation Boulevard does not require additional stormwater management; the water drains directly into the bayou. The land south of Navigation, however, does require retention, management, and other stormwater interventions. A recent TIRZ drainage study identified priority areas, one of which includes the TAP study area. By extending the banks of that opportunity area south into the neighborhood, it may be possible to position the improvements along the Paseo and the surrounding corridor as stormwater drainage and conveyance infrastructure. This could benefit the broader neighborhood by serving as a conveyance mechanism for adjacent development and as a detention benefit for areas to the south that may flood. Using this approach, the Paseo infrastructure could provide a clean slate for other development in the corridor, allowing new projects to come online without having to build additional stormwater management systems along the way. This approach would require a longer-term vision and could take time to implement, but it could yield significant benefits beyond the immediate Paseo alignment.



This map depicts the area north of Navigation that does not require additional stormwater conveyance (Detention Exemption Area). It may be possible to use stormwater infrastructure updates along the Paseo to address conveyance and detention for the surrounding development sites, reducing future development costs and easing the process.



Activation and Maintenance

Great community spaces are built on a solid foundation, but vibrancy—the thing that makes spaces compelling, attractive, and popular over time—comes from activation and ongoing maintenance. Without those two elements, places are easily forgotten, fall into disrepair, and are often viewed as a waste of resources. For the Paseo, the panel outlined several steps the sponsors can take to support the regular activation of the space and the ongoing maintenance and care of this new community amenity.

Activation Planning

It is possible to spend considerable time, money, and human resources on programming community spaces. For a community like the East End, however, the resources are already generally in place.

Support community use. The Paseo runs through a community that is already finding places and reasons for gathering. By encouraging the community to use and embrace this location organically, they can find reasons to be there and explore new ways to connect through the neighborhood. Adding low cost investments like quarter-mile markers can help encourage daily recreational use by residents. Active community use will help preserve the neighborhood's authenticity across the Paseo, protecting against uses that feel counter to the community's culture or are inauthentic to the neighborhood.

Do not overprogram the space. Early programming can help encourage residents

“

Design and construction deliver beauty. Activation delivers community love.

—Andres Andujar
ULI Panelist

and visitors to discover the Paseo, but care should be taken to not over program the space, instead allowing plenty of time for community members to discover and explore on their own, experiencing the route in the quiet of their own thoughts or bouncing along with their kids after school without having to dodge pre-planned activities, vendor booths, tents, and other programmed accoutrement.

Work with what exists and seek partners.

The East End is known for its rich history, culture, and authenticity. By working with organizations already operating in and known/trusted by neighbors, activations along the Paseo can weave into the neighborhood's existing fabric, elevating what is beloved and adding a new flair. These local nonprofit organizations, community partners, and community benefits organizations can also be excellent partners in programming the Paseo. The new painted basketball court in the neighborhood is a great example of this approach, working with what is already there and partnering to deliver something of value to the community.

Business Support + Vacant Spaces

Cities are getting creative in their support of the arts and entrepreneurs and have found a solution for activating streetscapes in the process. In these scenarios, the public sector is linking artists and emerging business owners with real estate owners, providing seed funding for tenancy while activating storefronts and streetscapes.

Minneapolis, MN. The [Arts & Culture Vibrant Storefronts](#) is a City-led initiative that supports new and growing creatives in the Uptown neighborhood and other areas of Minneapolis. Working with property owners, the City provides qualifying artists and makers with up to \$50,000 annually to subsidize the lease of commercial space. With a goal of increasing vibrancy, innovation, and sustainability, the program helps ensure stable tenants for property owners and furnishes essential space for the local creative community.

Detroit, MI. [Motor City Match](#) is a Detroit-based program that supports entrepreneurs through funding, resources, and guidance to launch and grow small businesses. The program provides small businesses with guidance, from idea to opening, as well as grants (up to \$100,000) and services like legal aid, marketing, and architectural design to turn ideas into brick-and-mortar storefronts. The program also connects businesses with vacant commercial spaces by offering property listings, hosting open houses, and facilitating direct engagement with building owners. Finally, Motor City Match prioritizes Detroit-based, minority-owned, and women-owned businesses, helping revitalize neighborhoods and create local jobs across the city.

Embrace the urbanity. The urbanity of the East End and its walkability make the Paseo a wonderful complement to the existing neighborhood. By highlighting this aspect and promoting a unique experience, the adaptive reuse of buildings, and the culture of the East End and the Paseo, the area can gain broader attention and support additional follow-on private investment.

Activate unused spaces. For vacant buildings and spaces—particularly those situated between active spaces—pop-up markets, business incubators, and other semi-temporary uses can help fill the activity gap while also providing space for new businesses and additional goods or services for the neighborhood. This activation of unused space can serve as an important stepping stone in a broader incremental growth strategy, and activations by existing businesses can add to the vibrancy while also reminding residents of the great businesses already active in the neighborhood.

Encourage or incentivize restroom access. For those individuals and families spending time along the Paseo, restroom access will be important. Rather than building standalone facilities, tenants along the Paseo could be encouraged to open their doors to visitors to use their facilities. Wayfinding will be needed to help ensure that visitors know that a restroom might just be around the corner—and that they are welcome to use it.

Consider buffered play areas. In addition to serving as a connector and conveyor, the Paseo could provide play space for children

and families. In areas where stopping for play is encouraged, particularly those not bordered by buildings, the Paseo's play environment should include a loose enclosure. The separation does not have to be a fence or a built structure; it could be landscaping or some other identifiable boundary. This will allow parents and guardians to communicate those boundaries to children and relax a bit, knowing that children will not easily wander into the street beyond.



The East End District is deeply involved with the community, is a trusted resource, and information source.

Community Engagement

The East End District has an excellent reputation in the community and a strong foundation of deep community engagement. Concept Neighborhood has been working in the East End for years now, too, and is gaining its own reputation in the community. The addition of the high-profile BBP team adds a layer of gravitas and excitement through their investments along the bayou. Continuing to work in partnership—the private development team, BBP, and the East End—makes excellent sense and can continue to serve the community well.

The Paseo concept is new and fresh while also firmly grounded in cultural values of connecting with one's neighbors. This is an ideal time to engage with the community, asking questions about how they might like to see the space shaped and evolve over time. It would also be interesting to know how community members like to spend their free time, their evenings out, and how the Paseo might factor into those plans.

Engagement activities should be held in spaces where people already spend time—on the sidewalks, in neighborhood coffee shops, and in places of worship—to discover what may be missing from the area's public realm. It is also helpful to connect with people who are not using public spaces and find out why—this can help shape spaces that are more appealing.

This is a great time to follow the sage advice to “meet people where they are.” Rather

than relying solely on a hosted engagement meeting or event, savvy engagement professionals visit existing community gathering spots, attend community meetings, and gather information while there. Supplementing these in-person encounters with online surveys, pop-up events, and tables at other community events can help ensure that a broad population is consulted during the early design and activation stages.

Maintenance and Operations Planning

The ongoing operation and maintenance of the Paseo must be incorporated into budget planning. Revenue from district parking, earned income from events, and even additional assessment revenue can help pay for the Paseo's ongoing operations. The



On-street parking is available across the district. A district management strategy could benefit existing businesses while also generating revenue for district improvements.

panel provided the following advice to help with future planning and budgeting.

- Separate the private, for-profit aspects of the alignment from the public realm aspects.
- Convey the public realm aspects to a public partner to help manage and support effective long-term maintenance services. This could be the East End District, the County, City of Houston, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, or another entity working in the area.
- A parking benefits district could be tied to the conversion of on-street public parking to paid parking and could help offset and perhaps even absorb the operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. The panel recommends making special accommodations for businesses lining the street (and their employees) and providing a short duration of complimentary time for retail customers visiting area businesses (e.g., first 30 minutes or even one hour free, etc.).
- New development could contribute to O&M costs through an assessment, with a portion or all of the funds going to O&M.
- Any Paseo improvements and landscaping should include a four-year maintenance period tied to the establishment period. This will support the early growth years (with heavy watering and perhaps replacement costs) as new plants get established and become accustomed to the location.

- Explore setting aside sufficient public space to accommodate functions that generate income. These spaces could include a vendor area, space for programmed events, a space to rent for private parties, etc.
- Minimize future maintenance burden by selecting durable materials and adaptive plants, which will be more resilient in Houston summers and require less maintenance, repair, or replacement.
- Explore the potential to bring the City's Adopt an Esplanade program to the Paseo, which could require some modification to the definition of "Esplanade" for this purpose but could provide helpful municipal funding support for irrigation.
- Provide a more secure environment by upgrading and installing adequate lighting and supporting efforts to remove unwanted or illegal activities from the streets and sidewalks.

Parking Opportunities

The walkable East End neighborhood does not lack on-street parking, and yet new development is still required to provide new parking to meet the City's parking ratios. Switching to different parking management models can help create a more walkable environment while ensuring adequate parking remains available.

- By pursuing a Walkable Places designation, it may be possible to reduce parking minimums for new development in the district.

- Creating a parking benefits district could generate revenue to support the Paseo, particularly its O&M budget. There may also be funding potential from this kind of revenue for mid-size project phasing.
- Further discussion about shared parking revenue is warranted. It may be possible to reinvest parking funds into long-term O&M benefits, but further evaluation is needed.

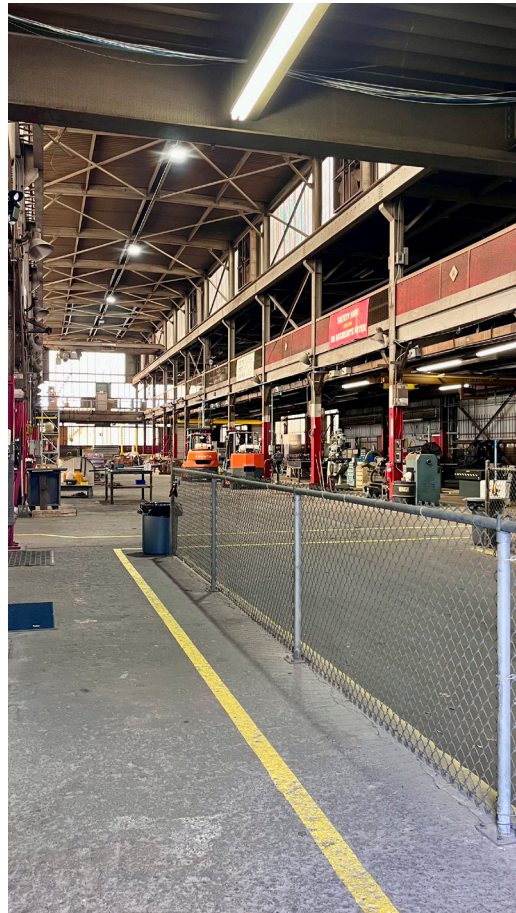
Additional Ideas

In addition to the ideas the panel generated in response to the sponsor's direct questions, the panel generated the following additional ideas for sponsors' consideration.

- **Create an alternative Paseo path through retail.** Concept Neighborhood owns a warehouse building along the Paseo alignment that could become an interesting alternative path. Open during business hours, the interior could host retail businesses, and shoppers could wander through as they otherwise enjoy the rest of the Paseo experience.
- **Install wayfinding.** The neighborhood would benefit from additional signage and wayfinding. The addition of the Paseo should be included, noting distances and destinations along the way.
- **Consolidate street names.** Sampson Street, as it is known in the East End, is also known as Waco, Hirsch, Scott, and York in other parts of the city. This is

confusing to those trying to navigate to the East End.

- **Start planting trees now.** Trees for Houston could be an excellent partner in the effort to plant more trees and expand the neighborhood's tree canopy,



The interior of this Concept Neighborhood warehouse could become an exciting alternative to a portion of the Paseo, offering people the opportunity to stroll inside and explore an inviting interior path lined by potential new retail tenants, further enhancing feelings of discovery.

particularly along the Paseo alignment. (Using an open parcel for a small nursery can help trees get started while ultimate planting locations are being determined.) The additional shade cast by these trees will support district walkability.

- **Use district parking.** The area would benefit from a comprehensive district parking strategy. This could include residential permit parking, a 1st-Hour-Free service for businesses, and micro-mobility options stationed at businesses or residential developments.
- **Align the light rail.** While it may be a moonshot, realigning the light rail station with the Paseo intersection would create a strong connection through the neighborhood to the bayou beyond.
- **Promote transportation-oriented development.** Transportation-oriented development (TOD) belongs around the light rail station. Marked by higher densities and a focus on pedestrians, TOD allows more people to live in close proximity to public transportation, thereby reducing household transportation costs and supporting broader affordability. This development approach will also bring more people closer to the retail offerings along and just off Harrisburg, thereby supporting the district's retail success.



Next Steps, Early Momentum

The East End is a dynamic, unique, and special district in Houston. New and legacy neighbors are proud of the area's history and are energized by the careful curation of improvements they have seen, largely under the careful direction of the East End District.

More recently, the infusion of energy and investment from Concept Neighborhood has layered in more retail and restaurants while being careful to “keep it local” and elevate the authenticity of the East End. As the team has acquired more real estate, they have recognized the opportunity to create something really special for the East End community. The prospect of the Buffalo Bayou trail improvements and the associated investment the BBP team is making along its alignment has elevated the connectivity potential of the East End district to the bayou.

Connecting to trail network and bayou for recreation and commuting—on foot, bike, kayak, or other means—and creating a Paseo along the way, is a generational opportunity that can benefit the residents, business owners, and visitors of the East End.

As the TAP sponsors consider the work ahead, the panel noted the following areas that warrant early attention and action from the partners in the work.

- **Shift language from “linear park” to Paseo.** This is more than a park or open space, and this shift can help everyone begin to envision the space differently.
- **Meet with Harris County Precinct 2.** There are a host of opportunities to partner with the County, and an early conversation to explore interest in funding design and development is needed.
- **Create a preliminary layout (PER).** In addition to helping to determine the broader budget for the Paseo, these early designs can be used to share the idea with potential partners, funders, and the community.
- **Address the Navigation intersection.** The sponsor team is encouraged to coordinate with TEI Planning + Design, BBP, and Houston-Galveston Area Council to identify multi-modal traffic safety solutions for the Navigation intersection.
- **Concurrently explore detention and conveyance.** The opportunity to manage stormwater and conveyance through work contemplated by Houston Public Works and TIRZ 23 is particularly intriguing and could hold promise for a comprehensive solution that will support additional real estate and economic development along the alignment.
- **Discuss potential ongoing maintenance and parking among sponsors.** With more people come more cars and expanded parking needs. Planning today can help ensure that future developments do not create untenable parking headaches for residents and businesses. Similarly, planning today for the ongoing maintenance of the Paseo can help ensure that everyone knows their roles and responsibilities and that the alignment is as appealing in Year 10 as it is on the day it opens.

The prospect of a Paseo for the East End is exciting and is only made possible through the generosity of spirit found across the TAP sponsors. The collective vision for the future of the neighborhood is one in which legacy residents remain valued and proud of their community, new residents feel welcome and accepted, and businesses, largely owned and operated by locals, can flourish. The Paseo can be the thread that ties these elements together and connects them to recreation and the broader community along the bayou and the neighborhoods beyond.



About the Panel



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Gonzalo Echeverria

**Panel Chair
Principal and Director
of Design for Urban
Design + Planning at
TBG Partners**



With nearly 30 years of experience as an architect and urban designer across Latin America, North America, and Europe, Gonzalo Echeverria brings a global design perspective and developer-led expertise in town planning, commercial development, and mixed-use placemaking to his role as Principal and Director of Design at TBG Partners.

Gonzalo's previous leadership roles include notable firms like McCord Development, LRK, Urban Design Associates and URBE Ltd. where he worked with clients like Hines, The Howard Hughes Corporation, UNDP, Lennar, Hillwood, and Crescent Communities. A frequent speaker and mentor, Gonzalo is an active member of ULI's Urban Revitalization National Council and serves on the Board of Partnership Lake Houston.

Andres Andujar

**CEO (retired)
Hemisfair**



Andres Andujar is an architectural engineer and former CEO of Hemisfair who led the transformation of San Antonio's historic World's Fair site into a nationally recognized mixed-use urban district. Over his 14-year tenure, Andres advanced a model of public-private redevelopment centered on parks, housing, and community-driven placemaking.

Cara Lambright

**President and CEO
Hermann Park
Conservancy**



Cara Lambright is President and CEO of Hermann Park Conservancy, where she leads the stewardship and long-term vision of one of Houston's most significant civic spaces. She is known for advancing ambitious public-private partnerships, strengthening park operations, and delivering complex capital projects that expand access and elevate the role of parks in urban life. Lambright previously served as CEO of New Orleans City Park and as Executive Vice President of Memorial Park Conservancy. At Memorial Park, she helped lead the development of a nationally recognized master plan, negotiated a landmark 30-year agreement with the City of Houston, quadrupled the park's operating budget, and helped raise more than \$200 million for capital improvements and long-term care. In New Orleans, she established the City Park Conservancy and launched a comprehensive master planning effort, earning recognition in The New Orleans 500 as one of the region's most influential leaders.

Her expertise spans governance, capital strategy, operations, and fundraising, with a focus on aligning public investment and philanthropy to achieve lasting civic impact. She is a graduate of the London School of Economics, a certified nonprofit accounting professional, and a Senior Fellow of the American Leadership Forum. She holds a certificate in Urban Park Executive Leadership from CUNY's Central Park Institute and is a proud citizen of the Chickasaw Nation.

Alex Ramirez

**Principal
Design Workshop**



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 client teams and design teams to solutions that balance the goals and aspirations of each individual project with real word 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 the highest quality work, documentation and implementation.

Alex is a graduate of Louisiana State University, with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree, a member of Central Houston, American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Urban Land Institute.

Jim Webb
CEO
The Goodman Corporation



Jim Webb, AICP, is the Chief Executive Officer at The Goodman Corporation (TGC). He manages business operations, executes TGC's strategic vision, and cultivates impactful relationships between clients and their public and private project partners. Jim brings significant experience in transportation planning, economic development, public-private partnership creation, funding pursuit, and overall project management processes.

Jim's experience includes work at the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Government level, which provided a comprehensive understanding of how districts, cities, and regions plan, prioritize, and deliver projects. Jim holds numerous TxDOT pre-certifications and additional certifications from FHWA and FTA related to procurement, compliance, and property acquisition. His passion for translating concepts into the built environment has enabled the leverage of significant public and private resources towards project delivery.

Jim holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as well as a Master of Public Administration from the University of Illinois Springfield and is a Certified Planner with the American Planning Association.

Sherry Weesner, P.E.
President
SMW Principal Solutions



Sherry is an accomplished professional with a unique blend of public policy, project management, legislative, communications, and advocacy experience. Sherry has managed organizational affairs and shaped public policy in the areas of sustainable economic development, government relations, and community services to achieve mission objectives and influence key public and government officials.

With exceptional program and project management, grassroots development, and consensus building expertise, Sherry has successfully influenced decision-makers at all levels, and built strong working relationships with business partners, government officials, and local communities. A respected leader and solution provider, Sherry excels at developing and implementing solutions to achieve goals. Sherry leverages her strong business and financial acumen to produce extraordinary results.

Randy Wile
Founder
Wile Interests



Randy Wile is a Houston real estate developer and CEO of Wile Interests, a firm known for value-driven commercial and mixed-use projects, including adaptive reuse developments in areas like East Downtown. He brings decades of experience across acquisition, development, and urban redevelopment in Texas.