

streetscape improvement plan



Prepare and prioritize streetscape improvements that incorporate long-term tree planting, sidewalk and street improvements.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

pedestrian-friendly route construction projects



Implement streetscape improvements for key destinations within study area, focusing on sidewalks and human comfort.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project typically applies to the entire study area in the form of design guidelines and can include layout of trees, sidewalks, street furniture, lighting. There are currently Houston transit design guidelines on Fulton Street.

benefits

This project may:

- create a more pedestrian-friendly street environment
- densify neighborhood tree canopy
- visually indicate the major thoroughfares and improve traffic circulation

limitations

This project may:

- increase traffic through study area
- provide additional requirements for private developments to adhere to when improving public right-of-way
- be limited by right-of-way availability

cost:

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
Public Improvement District
Livable Centers Implementation Grant Program
Capital Improvement Plan

Transportation Enhancements Statewide Program
Surface Transportation Program (STP)

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies only to specific streets designated under a project list. These streets only follow previously established standards by the City of Houston or a subdistrict or corridor guidelines. The Houston Capital Improvement Plan includes 39th Street.

benefits

This project may:

- encourage more active living by providing safe places to walk
- increase connectivity to parks and pedestrian destinations
- enhance accessibility by having to comply with ADA guidelines

limitations

This project may:

- be difficult to implement sidewalk network on older properties
- require ongoing maintenance and operations expenses

cost:

\$47,172.23 per block (Crosstimbers Street as example; block measurement is 260 feet in length) ...includes ADA ramps, 5 foot wide sidewalks, pedestrian signals, crosswalks, bike lanes striping and street trees

potential implementation mechanisms:

Public Improvement District
Livable Centers Implementation Grant Program

Transportation Enhancements Statewide Program
Surface Transportation Program (STP)

DESIGNWORKSHOP

pedestrian connection under I-45



Implement streetscape improvements for key destinations within study area, focusing on sidewalks and human comfort.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

transit-oriented neighborhoods



Ensure that there is a strong transit connection between commercial and residential uses.

connectivity

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environment

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potential implementation mechanisms:

Public Improvement District
Livable Centers Implementation Grant Program

Transportation Enhancements Statewide Program
Surface Transportation Program (STP)

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to new development around transit hubs, informed by design guidelines for key corridors. Working with METRO, this would ensure adequate transit stops to service all of neighborhoods by adding stops to currently underserved areas and making sure stops were pedestrian and ADA accessible through streetscape plans.

benefits

This project may:

- provide better access to public transportation for all residents

limitations

This project may:

- take time to amend METRO's transit lines

cost:

\$16,000-20,000 per bus shelter

potential implementation mechanisms:

METRO
Federal Transit Authority funding
Livable Centers Implementation Grant Program
Transportation Enhancements Statewide Program
Surface Transportation Program (STP)

DESIGNWORKSHOP

neighborhood parks plan



Plan for neighborhood parks and prioritize projects.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

demolition strategy



Identify vacant, dangerous structures to be demolished.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project applies to planning for improvement of existing park facilities and prioritizing the acquisition of public owned and floodplain lots.

benefits

This project may:

- create more park space for the community
- provide a public use for lands located in the floodplain
- provide multi-use benefits for stormwater capture
- tie into trail system that links to other park facilities
- provide opportunities for joint community facilities such as library and community services

limitations

This project may:

- have a high land or capital cost
- require ongoing maintenance and operations expenses
- reduce land that is to be used for economic redevelopment

cost:

\$20,000-\$50,000

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
Public Improvement District

Capital Improvement Plan

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

Within the study area are 11 vacant lots that qualify for the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) buyout program. HCFCD then works with the community to determine feasible uses for the land that remains after the structure is removed.

benefits

This project may:

- maximize use of vacant lots as the community sees fit
- make community safer by clearing out vacant and unsafe structures
- increase property values
- improve appearance through conversion of vacant lots into green space

limitations

This project may:

- decrease the availability of developable land
- be limited in extent because the floodplain is a regional issue under the jurisdiction of HCFCD
- not have a very large impact because floodplain management and strategies require a regional approach

cost:

Homes that qualify for the buyout program are demolished free of charge.

potential implementation mechanisms:

Harris County Flood Control District buyout program

DESIGNWORKSHOP

floodplain redevelopment guidelines



Develop guidelines that determine how and what can be built in the floodplain after vacant structures have been cleared.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

floodplain engineering projects



Identify projects within the floodplain that would benefit from engineering to be elevated out of the danger of flooding.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project applies to the entire study area and would guide future development in the floodplain once lots located within the floodplain have been vacated or sold.

benefits

This project may:

- protect future structure from flood damage by restricting development in the floodplain
- maximize use of vacant lots as the community sees fit
- increase property values

limitations

This project may:

- decrease the availability of developable land
- limit economic development

cost:

potential implementation mechanisms:

Harris County Flood Control District buyout program
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
City of Houston's Neighborhood Stabilization Program
Public Improvement District
Houston HOPE

Leveraging Publicly Owned Property
Community Development Block Grant Program
Ground Leases

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to the entire study area and would identify land in the floodplain that will benefit from engineering so that the land is no longer within the floodplain.

benefits

This project may:

- protect future structure from flood damage by using engineering techniques to elevate land out of the floodplain
- maximize use of vacant lots as the community sees fit
- increase property values

limitations

This project may:

- be costly
- not have a very large impact because floodplain management and strategies require a regional approach

cost:

Cost will largely depend on the quantity and size of projects.

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
City of Houston's Neighborhood Stabilization Program
Public Improvement District
Houston HOPE

Leveraging Publicly Owned Property
Community Development Block Grant Program
Ground Leases

DESIGNWORKSHOP

increase food security



Increase food security through promotion of farmers markets, creation of community gardens and promoting businesses such as fresh food vendors.

connectivity

public space

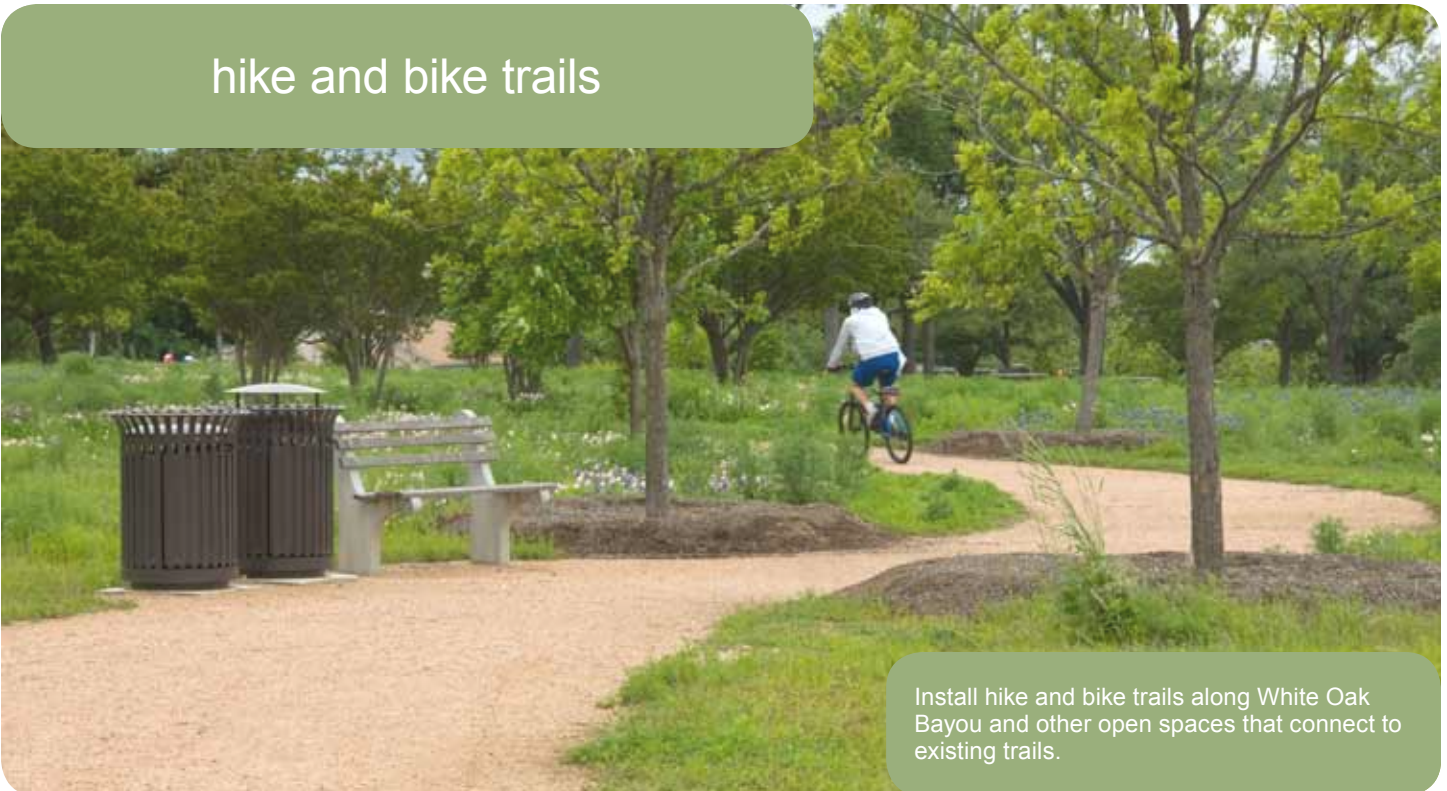
environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

hike and bike trails



Install hike and bike trails along White Oak Bayou and other open spaces that connect to existing trails.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project applies to both specific sites within the study area and the entire area. This project would mean the creation of community gardens in conjunction with the floodplain vacant lot plan. Existing markets would be encouraged to carry fresh food.

benefits

This project may:

- increase residents' access to healthier food choices
- increase open space
- allow residents to grow their own food
- promote healthier lifestyle choices
- provide after-school activity for youth

limitations

This project may:

- require ongoing maintenance and operations expenses
- reduce land that is to be used for economic redevelopment

cost:

\$1,500-4,000 to start community garden (per www.urbanharvest.org)

potential implementation mechanisms:

American Community Gardening Association
Food Trust, Houston

City of Houston's Neighborhood Stabilization Program
Leveraging Publicly Owned Property
Ground Leases
City of Houston

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to open spaces, key corridor streets and White Oak Bayou and consists of the construction of a multi-use trail made of gravel or concrete and the identification of shared use opportunities, such as bike-vehicular use roadways. The City of Houston currently has a bikeways plan.

benefits

This project may:

- link study area to neighboring communities via greenways
- encourage physical activity
- make White Oak Bayou safer by increasing use of trails
- potential shift in mode split

limitations

This project may:

- require ongoing maintenance and operations expenses

cost:

\$60.41 per linear foot of bike trail (12 foot wide path)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Harris County Flood Control District - coordinate pedestrian and bike routes with floodplain lot and bayou construction projects

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
Public Improvement District
Livable Centers Implementation Grant Program
Capital Improvement Plan

DESIGNWORKSHOP

low impact design techniques



Incorporate LID techniques into development.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

tree canopy



Increase tree canopy cover on new and existing properties, rights-of-way and streetscapes.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

Low Impact Design techniques may be used on a site-wide or specific development scale. They can be used in streetscapes, parking lots, open spaces, stormwater management through developer incentives, resident education and changes in codes.

benefits

This project may:

- help mitigate effects of damaging floodwaters and reduce runoff
- provide multi-functional open space, serving as both park and detention facility
- improve water quality on stormwater drains and on the Bayou
- conserve water through rainwater harvesting

limitations

This project may:

- deter some developers from building due to regulations
- be costly

cost:

potential implementation mechanisms:

Harris County Flood Control District
City of Houston

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to the entire study area in the form of tree planting programs and the streetscape improvement plan in order to mitigate carbon dioxide levels in the air, reduce the urban heat island effect and increase the neighborhoods' beauty and property value.

benefits

This project may:

- improve air quality
- sequester carbon dioxide, which will contribute to reducing global warming
- increase shade cover on streets and residence, which will lower energy costs

limitations

This project may:

- require ongoing maintenance and operations expenses
- take time for trees to reach a size and height that create enough impactful shade

cost:

\$350 per planted tree

potential implementation mechanisms:

Trees for Houston
Million Trees + Houston
Harris County Flood Control District
Quality of Life Coalition

Scenic Houston
Center for Houston's Future
Greater Houston Partnership

DESIGNWORKSHOP

transit education and marketing



Encourage use of public transportation through information and education.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

library



Strategically plan for library location and construction.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project is an area-wide effort that would educate residents about alternative methods of transportation as well as plan for the location of benches and shade structures at major transit stops.

benefits

This project may:

- save families money on fuel and other related automobile costs
- contribute to better air quality
- encourage pedestrian activity

limitations

This project may:

- not be fully realized until more community services are located within the area

cost:

None - education can occur through churches, schools and community organizations by providing information about bus routes to events, services and parks

potential implementation mechanisms:

METRO

City of Houston

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project entails the planning, budgeting and construction of a library. If funding or need is not yet available, alternatives to an actual library building are a mobile library and school programs.

benefits

This project may:

- provide a vital community service
- provide space for various community functions
- enable educational opportunities close to the study area residents
- spur economic development

limitations

This project may:

- be costly

cost:

\$6.6 million (per City of Houston 2012 Capital Improvement Plan for Fifth Ward Neighborhood Library budget)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Houston HOPE

Capital Improvement Plan

DESIGNWORKSHOP

middle school



Strategically plan for middle school location and construction.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

family and community support



Strategically plan for family and community support services location and construction.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project entails the planning, budgeting and construction of a middle school. Critical needs for middle school planning include understanding the study area population, student to teacher ratio, and understanding Houston Independent School District's plans.

benefits

This project may:

- provide a vital community service
- provide space for various community functions
- enable educational opportunities close to the study area residents
- shape an identity for the youth of the Independence Heights-Northline area

limitations

This project may:

- be costly
- be heavily dependent upon Houston Independent School District plans
- have to be located in an heavily trafficked intersection at North Main and Crosstimbers Street

cost:

\$34 million (per Fort Worth Independent School District)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Houston Independent School District
Charter Schools
Houston Community College

Independence Heights Education Task Force
Houston HOPE

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project entails the planning, budgeting and construction of a community support and the associated services, including daycare, case management, mentoring programs and parent support. This project should be included as part of a catalyst project for the area.

benefits

This project may:

- promote the long-term stability of local families
- be heavily supported by the community

limitations

This project may:

- be costly
- have to be implemented over long periods of time
- require on-going maintenance

cost:

\$2 million (per City of Houston 2012 Capital Improvement Plan Alief Park & Community Center budget)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
Houston HOPE
HUD Section 3
Capital Improvement Plan
Community Development Block Grant Program

DESIGNWORKSHOP

affordable and diverse housing



Provide affordable housing afford ability and a mix of housing types.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

transit-oriented development around Northline Transit Center



Strategize development within and near the Northline Transit Center.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project can be implemented through city programs and public-private partnerships, such as using design standards or policy and making accessory dwelling units a viable option for homeowners to build.

benefits

This project may:

- help to maintain the same level of housing affordability that currently exists
- add approximately 10% of the study area population without disturbing the character of the area
- be able to build on some of the 27.4% vacant lots
- be needed by residents

limitations

This project may:

- be difficult to implement in regards to policy
- be hard to locate because the floodplain covers most of the study area

cost:

potential implementation mechanisms:

HUD Section 3
Developer Participation Contracts

New Markets Tax Credits
Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
Tax Abatements
Capital Improvement Plan
Community Development Block Grant Program
HOME-Home Investment Partnership Act
Economic Development Initiative Grant (EDI)
Low Income Housing Tax Credits

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to Northline Transit Center and is concerned with increasing the economic vitality of this transit hub and adjacencies, while simultaneously serving the needs of Independence Heights-Northline.

benefits

This project may:

- more strongly tie Northline Commons into the existing community economic structure

limitations

This project may:

- not bring the desired services to the area
- be too big of a risk to investors

cost:

Cost is strongly linked to elements with the transit-oriented development and funding sources.

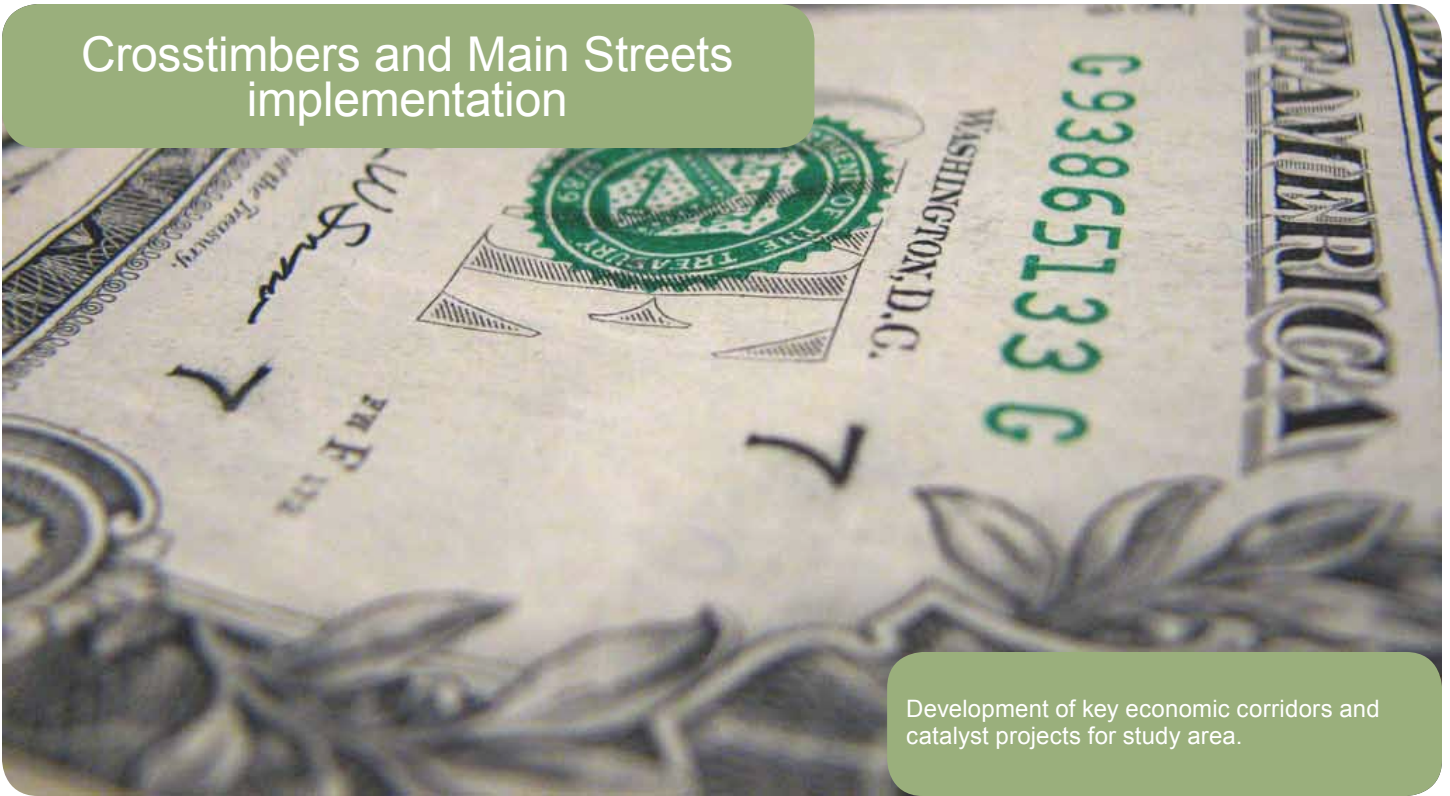
potential implementation mechanisms:

380/381 Agreement
New Markets Tax Credits
Tax Abatements
Municipal Management District
Community Development Block Grant Program
Economic Development Administration (EDA)
Grants

Texas Enterprise Zones

DESIGNWORKSHOP

Crosstimbers and Main Streets implementation



Development of key economic corridors and catalyst projects for study area.

connectivity

public space

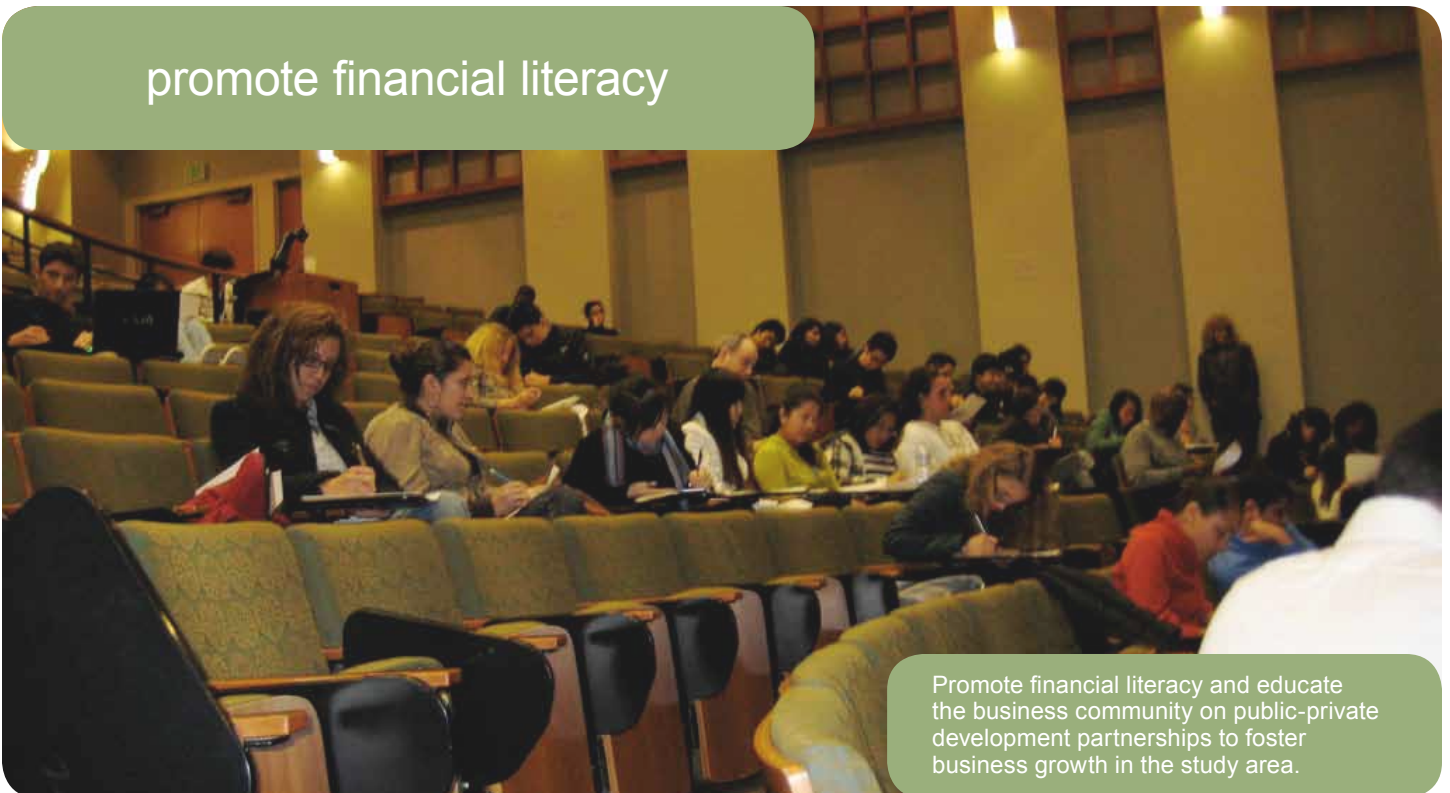
environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

promote financial literacy



Promote financial literacy and educate the business community on public-private development partnerships to foster business growth in the study area.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project outlines the commercial lots available for purchase as opportunity locations in along the key corridors and strategizes economic stimulus focal points in the area.

benefits

This project may:

- make developers more aware of the developmental opportunities within the study area
- facilitate projects by prioritizing the most achievable ones

limitations

This project may:

- be difficult to reach consensus on key projects

cost:

This process will help to determine the key catalyst projects

potential implementation mechanisms:

380/381 Agreement

New Markets Tax Credits

Tax Abatements

Municipal Management District

Community Development Block Grant Program

Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grants

Texas Enterprise Zones

Ground Leases

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to all of the residents and business owners in the study area. It serves to promote financial literacy through assisted income tax preparation (Neighborhood Centers, Inc.), financial education and homebuyer courses, financial coaching and support in finding money for education self-employment/small business.

benefits

This project may:

- create new opportunities for local entrepreneurs and business growth
- educate families on budget management, financing, taxes

limitations

This project may:

- be costly when there is no direct return on investment

cost:

None - the programs by the organizations listed below are provided for free

potential implementation mechanisms:

Women's Resource of Greater Houston

People's Trust

Neighborhood Centers, Incorporated

Houston Area Urban League

Houston HOPE

380/381 Agreement

New Markets Tax Credits

Municipal Management District

Leveraging Publicly Owned Property

Community Development Block Grant Program

HOME-Home Investment Partnership Act

Low Income Housing Tax Credits

Texas Enterprise Zones

DESIGNWORKSHOP

Burgess Hall redevelopment



Develop Burgess Hall into a commemorative community facility.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

historic building preservation



Identify and strategize historic buildings preservation to protect community sites.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project applies specifically to the feasibility study, planning, budgeting and reconstruction of Burgess Hall in its current location.

benefits

This project may:

- provide much needed community space for the residents
- serve as the heart of Independence Heights-Northline district
- preserve neighborhood's history

limitations

This project may:

- be extremely costly
- be difficult to fund building refurbishment

cost:

\$500,000-1 million to redevelop Burgess Hall

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone
Tax Abatements

City of Houston's Neighborhood Stabilization Program
Historic Site Tax Exemption
"Under-told Stories" Grants

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project applies to the historic buildings within the study area and their relationship to the historic district. In particular, the project may include placement of historic markers (city, state and federal), illustrated interpretive panels

benefits

This project may:

- increase neighborhood visibility
- educate residents and the greater Houston community about the historic importance of Independence heights
- protect neighborhood against unwanted uses (such as cellphone towers)

limitations

This project may:

- incur great up-front cost to rehabilitate historic structures
- cause economic hardship on some property owners

cost:

Varies: Cost per marker ranges from \$95 (City of Houston); \$750 (State of Texas); \$150 (National Register)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Historic Site Tax Exemption
City of Houston Tax Abatement Program
Federal Investment Tax Credit Program

County Tax Exemption
Sales Tax Exemption on Labor
ADA Credits
National Register of Historic Places Historic District Conservation District
Texas Main Street Program
Preserve America Grants

DESIGNWORKSHOP

gateway and signage plan



Identify gateway hierarchy and incorporate local art into the gateways' signage.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

historic business owners



Involve long-term business owners in signage and branding plan.

connectivity

public space

environment

community development

economic development

signage and branding

project details:

This project applies to the historic district and the study area as a whole. It may consist of enhanced street signage, neighborhood gateways, art in prominent places and enhanced METRO stops.

benefits

This project may:

- create a sense of identity for the community
- allow visitors to know that they are in a culturally and historically significant neighborhood

limitations

This project may:

- be costly

cost:

\$50,000-75,000 per block for signage and markers

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone

Public Improvement District

Historic Site Tax Exemption

DESIGNWORKSHOP

project details:

This project will work to highlight long-term business owners as special within the community.

benefits

This project may:

- foster long-term relationships between business owners and the community
- create a sense of identity for the business community

limitations

This project may:

- require up-front and on-going involvement between members of the business community and the neighborhood's representatives

cost:

Varies: Cost per marker ranges from \$95 (City of Houston); \$750 (State of Texas); \$150 (National Register)

potential implementation mechanisms:

Tax Abatements

Municipal Management District

Historic Site Tax Exemption

Community Development Block Grant Program

Texas Enterprise Zones

DESIGNWORKSHOP