

A Park With Many Moods

Nowhere is the Master Plan's theme of balancing conservation and development more apparent than along Buffalo Bayou's West Sector. With Downtown's dramatic skyline as the backdrop, this reach is a sylvan yet urban setting, comprised of neighborhoods, parks and paths. Plan elements include a general upgrading of the Bayou environment, improving habitat, and expanding the waterway for boating and other recreational activity. Improved access is also required along the corridor. This can be achieved with angled parking, drop-off areas and new shared parking lots along Allen Parkway. A linked system of trails will connect schools and neighborhoods to parks so that residents and visitors alike can reach diverse destinations and events along Buffalo Bayou.

GOALS :

Initiate incremental park enhancements

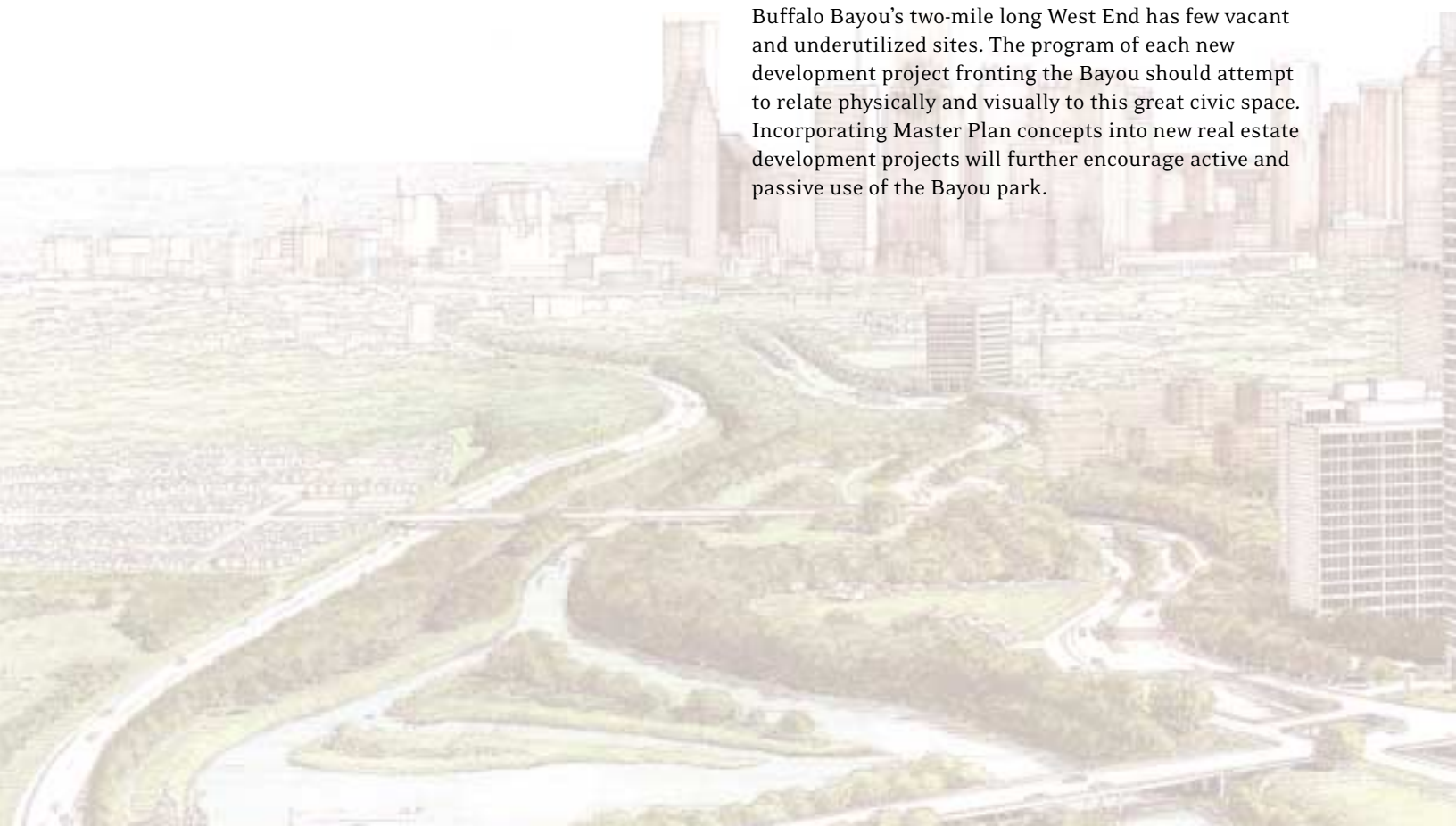
A great urban park system provides a variety of settings for active and passive recreation. The West End greenway and Eleanor Tinsley Park are underutilized because existing amenities and treatments cater to a limited and divided, albeit growing, audience. Incremental improvements will make this unique stretch of the Bayou a sequence of varied parks with amenities and moods ranging from active recreation, large and small gathering spaces, quiet, introspective places, and wetland wilderness areas.

Improve Bayou access

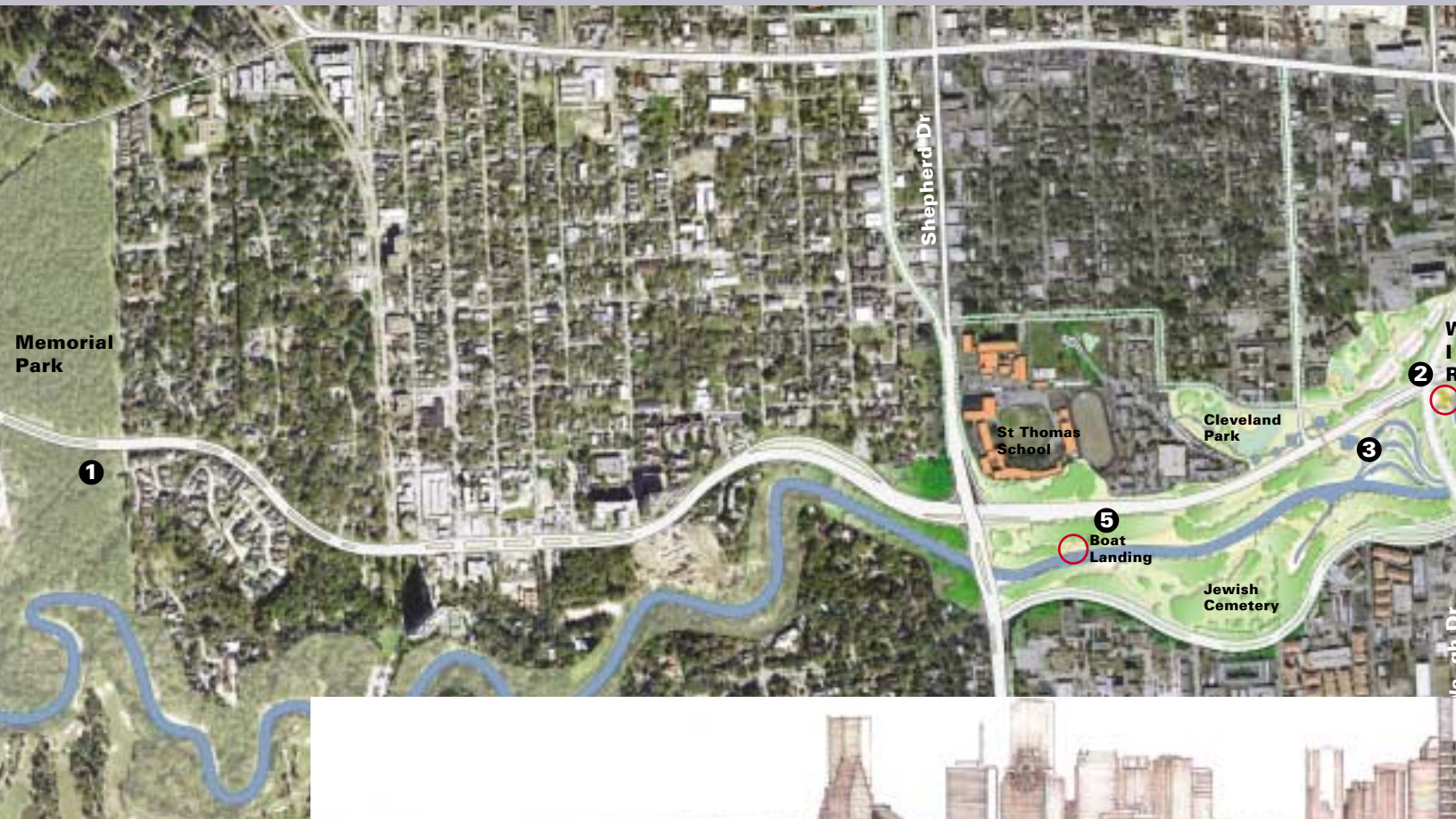
Currently, limited and poor access points prevent full utilization and restrict use of the West End's wooded park setting. Recommendations focus on access to the Bayou park system from historic Fourth and Sixth Wards, as well as from Allen Parkway and Memorial Drive. Enhanced contact with the water will include small boat landings near parking and drop off areas.

Encourage compatible Bayou-front development

Buffalo Bayou's two-mile long West End has few vacant and underutilized sites. The program of each new development project fronting the Bayou should attempt to relate physically and visually to this great civic space. Incorporating Master Plan concepts into new real estate development projects will further encourage active and passive use of the Bayou park.



WEST SECTOR *A Park With Many Moods*



② Reconfiguring the Waugh/Heights and Memorial Drive Intersection (from a cloverleaf to a diamond intersection) will open an additional 20 acres of new park space along the Buffalo Bayou corridor.



1 Memorial Park Linkage

Memorial Park anchors Buffalo Bayou to the west and is an integral part of the waterway’s ecological, recreational and hydrological system. Existing links between Memorial Park and the Plan’s study area will be strengthened and new connections established.

2 Vaughn/Heights and Memorial Drive Cloverleaf Reconfiguration

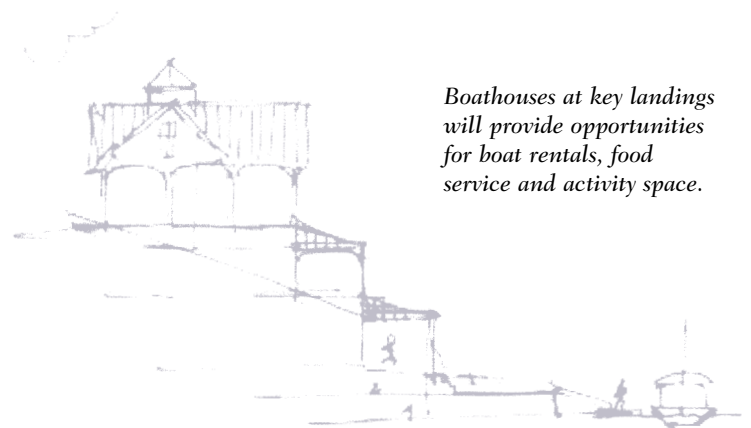
Vaugh Drive’s existing cloverleaf will be redesigned as a compact diamond intersection with traditional on and off ramps, opening up as much as 20 acres of new green space to accommodate parking, additional recreational area at Spotts Park, a large water body, and new boathouse, where watercraft can be anchored and landed.

3 Reconstructed Wetlands

New ponds shaped like oxbow meanders that historically defined Buffalo Bayou will be created to provide additional flood storage capacity, wildlife habitat, boating areas and visual interest. New wetland areas will improve water quality dramatically by naturally filtering water before it reaches Buffalo Bayou. These areas also will improve flood management by moderating the time required for stormwater to reach the Bayou. Reintroducing native plants will provide for greater diversity of wildlife to exist within the Bayou environment, creating a natural bayou preserve for Houstonians to enjoy.

4 Allen Parkway Realignment

Allen Parkway is usually closed to traffic during special performance events, creating a pedestrian destination. Event parking often aggravates nearby neighborhood residents. Shared structured parking, located in the potential development sites at Montrose/Studewood and the realignment of Allen Parkway from Taft to Sabine, will provide additional parking and open space. Improved pedestrian amenities, such as promenades, crosswalks and overpasses, links between all parks along the Bayou, and access to new developments will make this area a truly pedestrian-friendly destination.



Boathouses at key landings will provide opportunities for boat rentals, food service and activity space.



To extend the ecological richness of rehabilitated wetlands into the surrounding City as well as provide passive filtering of stormwater, a system of greenways, or "Green Fingers" will link existing neighborhoods to the Bayou corridor.

5 Boat Landings

To encourage recreational use, a program featuring enhanced waterfront activity and launching areas along the Bayou's length are included in the Plan. Boat landings, some coordinated with parking drop-offs, are proposed at Shepherd Drive, Waugh Drive/Memorial Drive, Eleanor Tinsley Park, and Sam Houston Park.



Boat landings will encourage recreational activity on the Bayou.



Through reclamation, regrading and restoration of native vegetation on the Bayou's steep, sterile banks, the varied ecological zones that once flourished along the Bayou can be recreated.



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