

Buffalo
Bayou
Park

MASTER PLAN [update]

Shepherd to Sabine

January 2012

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Van Stephens PG. 70 *top left*

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SUMMARY 1



1.1

SUMMARY

Buffalo Bayou from downtown to Shepherd Drive is Houston's **Iconic Landscape**. The result of a century-old civic vision to develop a greenbelt extending from downtown west to a regional park, now known as Memorial Park, this green space is one of Houston's triumphs of civic will and planning implemented over a period of decades in the early 20th century. While the view from Memorial Drive and Allen Parkway still offers green vistas and dramatic contrasts with the downtown skyline, the green space itself is suffering from years of under-funded maintenance and the absence of a master plan to guide improvements, both of which are preventing this unique natural asset from fulfilling its potential as one of **this country's great urban parks**.

With significant philanthropic support led by the **Kinder Foundation**, the **Buffalo Bayou Partnership** (BBP) embarked on a privately-funded master plan for the area in partnership with the **City of Houston** (City) and the **Harris County Flood Control District** (HCFCD) in 2010 that was updated in late 2011. As the owner of the land, the City will oversee this redevelopment process and the park's ongoing operations, which includes a commitment to fund maintenance and operations upon completion of construction. More than 50 years after its last investment in this area, HCFCD was invited to conduct preliminary and final engineering studies of the bayou channel to determine how the channel might be restored and maintained in an environmentally sensitive manner while also improving its storm water storage and conveyance capacity. Based on the plan presented in this report, the Kinder Foundation is prepared to increase its funding to \$30,000,000, and BBP is raising up to \$20,000,000 more in private funds so the ambitious improvements described in this Master Plan can be implemented in an era of limited government resources. BBP also will maintain and operate the park until 2041 and possibly until 2096.

Based on BBP's visionary master plan for Buffalo Bayou from Shepherd Drive ten miles east to the Turning Basin released in 2002, *Buffalo Bayou and Beyond* produced by the Thompson Design

Group, this more detailed project-based Master Plan seeks to enhance the green space, improve recreational amenities, restore the bayou channel, and improve access to nearby neighborhoods and the city at large, transforming the area into **Buffalo Bayou Park**, the centerpiece and focal point for Houston's growing network of linear parks along the region's bayous. The Master Plan builds upon completed and current projects:

- HCFCD's Pilot Project west of downtown, which has tested channel restoration concepts and public support for this work, completed in late 2010.
- The Rosemont Bridge (east of Studemont) and connector trails by the City's Memorial Heights Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #5 (TIRZ #5) and completed in early 2011.
- Spanish artist Jaume Plensa's *Tolerance* at the Rosemont Bridge's south approach by Houston Arts Alliance and completed in early 2011.
- Reconstruction of the Sandy Reed Memorial Trail by the City and TxDOT, which began in late 2011.

Based on this Master Plan and strong support from Houston's citizens and philanthropic community, the City, BBP and HCFCD are moving forward on final design and engineering of the Project, which is described in Chapter 4. Channel restoration work and improvements to the green space are scheduled to begin in mid-2012. This schedule should allow for a seamless transition from TxDOT's hike and bike trail construction project into overall green space improvements overseen by the City, BBP and HCFCD. If approvals and permits are obtained in a timely manner, construction should be complete by mid-2015. Chapter 4 also describes the Approved Master Plan that governs the Project and any future improvements to Buffalo Bayou Park.

Project Site Plan



