



BUFFALO BAYOU  
PARTNERSHIP

## **Buffalo Bayou Park Project Achieves Milestone; Groundbreaking set for Mid-2012**

*Action by Houston City Council and Harris County Commissioners Court paves the way for \$55 million renovation of signature Houston green space*

HOUSTON (DECEMBER 20, 2011) – The plans to transform one of Houston’s iconic green spaces, Buffalo Bayou Park, achieved major milestones this month with support from both Houston City Council and Harris County Commissioners Court. This support paves the way for the transformation of the 158-acre, 2.3-mile stretch of the bayou from Shepherd Drive to Sabine Street likened to Houston’s own “Central Park.” The \$55 million project is a public-private partnership led by Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the City of Houston, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and the Harris County Flood Control District with catalyst funding from the Kinder Foundation. Using BBP’s 2002 *Buffalo Bayou and Beyond* Master Plan as a guide, the project will restore the area to a more natural and self-sustaining state, reintroduce native landscapes and add amenities to enhance safety and convenience for visitors.

“This is our Central Park. It is where we hold our Fourth of July and other celebrations as well as a place where Houstonians bike, hike and enjoy nature every day,” said Houston Mayor Annise Parker. “This project will be transformative beyond imagination. The park will be a jewel.”

### **The Project**

For the thousands of Houstonians and visitors to the city who enjoy the park, the completed project improvements will include:

- a restoration of natural landscapes, including trees and native grasses;
- upgraded or new trails for walkers and hikers to enjoy nature including places for canoes and kayaks to launch;
- two pedestrian bridges – one near Jackson Hill Street improving access from surrounding neighborhoods and one connecting the Houston Police Officer Memorial into the park for the first time;
- an extension of the distinctive blue lunar cycle lighting;
- new destination features such as Water Music Place adjacent to the Lee and Joe Jamail Skatepark, Lost Lake near Dunlavy and Allen Parkway, a dog park near Studemont and Allen Parkway; and modifications to a portion of Eleanor Tinsley Park;
- additional benches, shade, picnic spots and drinking fountains.

Construction is expected to start in mid-2012 and be complete in mid-2015. The park will remain open during the construction phases.

## **The Partners**

The non-profit organization, Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP), has taken the lead on the park improvements and will manage the construction and future operation of the completed park. The construction cost of \$50 million will be raised through private donations.

The Harris County Flood Control District plans to implement a \$5 million project to improve the stretch of Buffalo Bayou from Shepherd to Sabine. Work includes removing silt and sediment and re-grading the slopes of the bayou to reduce the risk of erosion, enhancing the ability of the bayou to maintain itself naturally, preserving existing high quality trees, and reintroducing native trees and vegetation to this area.

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department, which owns the land for the City of Houston, has entered into an operating agreement with BBP through 2041, with two additional renewal options. Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #3 will contribute approximately \$2 million for annual maintenance and operations beginning in fiscal year 2015. In advance of this project, the City with the Texas Department of Transportation has begun reconstruction of the long-planned and already-budgeted Sandy Reed Memorial Trail, which is expected to be complete in 2013.

## **Project Background**

In early 2010, the Kinder Foundation approached Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the City and HCFCD with interest in supporting an effort to invest in the vision for Buffalo Bayou. The Foundation proposed to serve as the catalyst funder of up to \$30 million, an unprecedented gift to Houston's park system. A Steering Committee was formed consisting of the City (including the Houston Parks and Recreation Department), Harris County Flood Control District, Buffalo Bayou Partnership and the Kinder Foundation, and over an 18-month period, it collaborated to develop a Master Plan and Maintenance Plan. The committee effort was led by Project Manager Guy Hagstette and consultant SWA Group.

## **Key Project Milestones:**

### **2010**

- Kinder Foundation approaches Buffalo Bayou Partnership with catalyst gift of \$30 million
- Steering Committee consisting of Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Kinder Foundation, City of Houston, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and Harris County Flood Control District formed to develop a Master Plan
- Community meetings held to seek input from the public (June and October)
- Preliminary Engineering
- Master Plan work conducted

### **2011**

- A Preliminary Buffalo Bayou Park Master Plan and Preliminary Maintenance Plan were completed in January 2011
- Buffalo Bayou Partnership, City of Houston and Harris County Commissioners Court approval of the Tri-Party Development Agreement, which covered design and engineering
- Harris County Flood Control District completed final engineering for the bayou work
- Community meetings held to review final design (Fall)
- Construction completed on Sandy Reed Memorial Trail segments

- City of Houston and TXDOT trail reconstruction begins
- City of Houston Harris County Commissioners court approve the Construction, Maintenance and Operating Agreement (December)

For more information about the Buffalo Bayou Park Project, please visit [www.buffalobayou.org](http://www.buffalobayou.org).

Media Contacts:

Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Trudi Smith, (713) 752-0314 ext. 3, [tsmith@buffalobayou.org](mailto:tsmith@buffalobayou.org)

Harris County Flood Control District

Heather Saucier, (713) 684-4078, [heather.saucier@hcfcd.org](mailto:heather.saucier@hcfcd.org)

Houston Parks and Recreation

Estella Espinosa, (832) 395-7022, [estella.espinosa@houstontx.gov](mailto:estella.espinosa@houstontx.gov)

City of Houston, Mayor's Office

Janice Evans, (832) 393-0800, [Janice.Evans@houstontx.gov](mailto:Janice.Evans@houstontx.gov)