

# The **BAYOU** & beyond

A Newsletter of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership  
Annual Report 2002

**As we look back at 2002, we see a year of planning, progress and partnerships. We invite you to read about our accomplishments, and then take a peek at what's taking place in 2003.**

## 2002 A Look Back

*Buffalo Bayou and Beyond*, a 20-year plan to redevelop our city's historic waterway into a pedestrian-oriented waterfront district, was unveiled at a major event held at The Wortham Theater Center on September 23, 2003. Mayor Lee Brown and Harris County Robert Eckels were among more than 250 governmental, civic and business leaders in attendance at the unveiling ceremony.

Sponsored by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, City of Houston, Harris County and Harris County Flood Control District, the Master Plan focuses on a 10-square-mile district – from Shepherd Drive to the Port of Houston Turning Basin. The planning effort was coordinated by a consultant team led by the Thompson Design Group (Boston), a firm internationally recognized for reconnecting cities to their waterfronts.

The Buffalo Bayou Master Plan projects \$5.6 billion of private investment in the Buffalo Bayou District over the next 20 years. Public investment is estimated at \$800 million, with the majority of funds targeted to flood management initiatives.

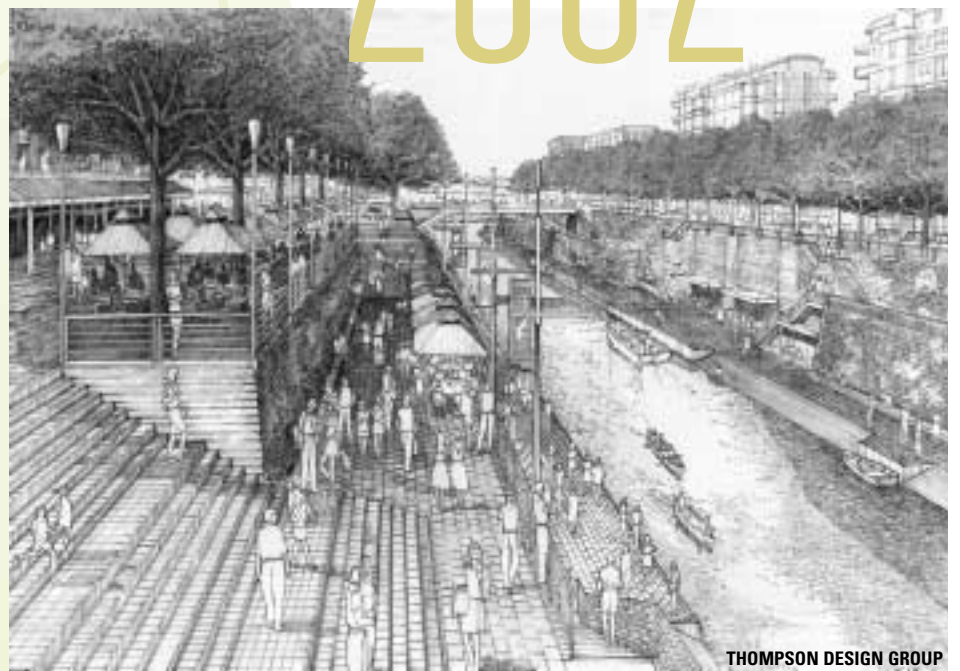
Balancing conservation and development, the Master Plan's theme invites Houstonians to explore a deeper relationship between nature and the city.

"Nature isn't just green decoration but an essential system that adds economic value and builds a better quality of life," said lead master plan consultant Jane Thompson at the September 23 event. She pointed out that cities throughout the world are reinventing themselves around their waterfronts.

Toni Beauchamp, Buffalo Bayou Partnership board chair stated, "This visionary plan puts the 'Bayou' back in 'Bayou City' by restoring the waterway to an ecologically functional system."

*The Buffalo Bayou Master Plan sets forth specific proposals to:*

- Create 850 acres of new park land
- Reduce flooding in downtown Houston and upstream communities bordering Buffalo and White Oak bayous
- Create major development sites that will make the Bayou a focal point for Houston's future development



*The North Canal, which diverts stormwater at the Buffalo and White Oak confluence, features a three-tiered quay connected by a system of stairs and ramps, accommodating temporary and seasonal amenities such as cafes and restaurants.*

- Build a network of trails and public sites to promote access to the Bayou and to re-connect cities to the waterway
- Reclaim former industrial sites and restore damaged environmental resources

**Master Plan recommendations have been identified for three distinct bayou sectors:**

### DOWNTOWN (*Sabine-U.S. 59*)

The Plan expands Downtown's Historic and Theater Districts with a mix of attractions, Bayou-fronting parks and a pedestrian friendly street network. Flood management in downtown also is a major component of the Buffalo Bayou Master Plan. Two new canals are recommended to provide supplementary flood water capacity. In addition to the canals, widening of Buffalo Bayou along Commerce Street, between Fannin and Crawford, will increase stormwater conveyance capacity and create a wide promenade along the Bayou's edge.

Based on findings from a special hydraulic model developed by the Harris County Flood Control District, the North and South Canals, Commerce Street conveyance improvements, and channel bank modifications could reduce flooding in north downtown by 5.5 ft.

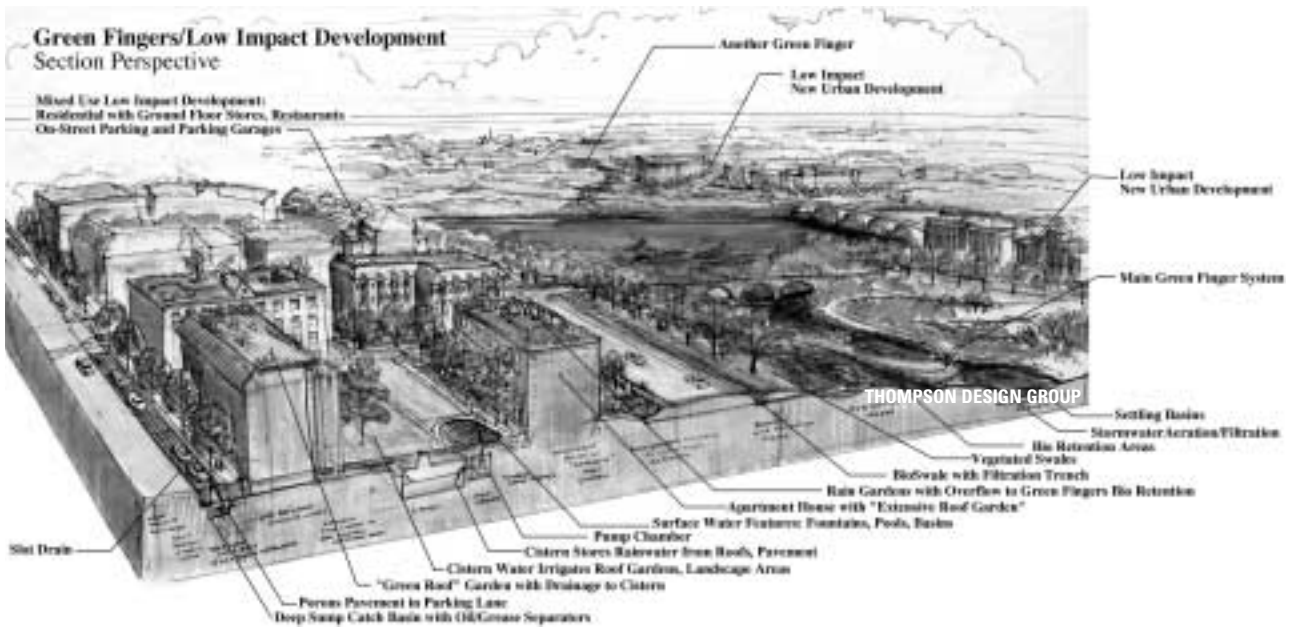


*"This visionary plan puts the 'Bayou' back in 'Bayou City' "*

— **TONI BEAUCHAMP**  
Buffalo Bayou  
Partnership Chair-2002

The Master Plan includes several recommendations for improving the Bayou's environmental quality. As a means of retaining stormwater on site for biological treatment as well as to replenish groundwater systems, several micro-detention strategies and techniques are recommended for application throughout the Buffalo Bayou watershed region. Techniques include rooftop gardens, vegetated swales, permeable paving, cisterns, and constructed wetlands.

Another concept for bio-retention is the development of what are termed "Green Fingers." These constructed riparian, open-space corridors will follow the historic alignment of tributaries that originally drained the lands adjacent to the Bayou. Stormwater retention ponds and constructed wetlands will provide time for suspended sediment to settle out of the water.



The abandoned North Side Sewage Treatment Facility (Lockwood Drive) is envisioned as a new environmental or botanical center (left) that would utilize the existing settling basins and other industrial infrastructure.



The site as it appears today (right).

## EAST SECTOR

(U.S. 59 to Port of Houston Turning Basin)

The Plan capitalizes on an ample supply of redevelopable land that can be transformed into mixed-density, mixed-use neighborhoods. Affordable housing also will be a major focus of East End neighborhood development.

Other major East End initiatives include:

- Expansion of trails and parks eastward to the Turning Basin
- Redevelopment of the City of Houston's derelict North Side Sewage Treatment Facility (Lockwood Drive)
- Upgrades to Clinton Drive and Navigation Boulevards and improved modes of public transportation along these corridors
- Creation of new mixed-use and mixed-affordability neighborhoods



Reconfiguring the Waugh/Heights and Memorial Drive intersection (from a cloverleaf to a diamond intersection, above) will open an additional 20 acres of park space to accommodate parking, additional recreational area at Spotts Park and a boat house.

## WEST SECTOR (Shepherd Drive to Sabine)

To enhance strong existing land values and further develop a strong residential base, the Plan recommends upgrading the Bayou environment, increasing wildlife habitat, and expanding the waterfront for boating and other recreational activity. Specific proposals include:

- Creation of ponds and wetlands that historically defined Buffalo Bayou
- Reconfiguration of the Waugh/Heights and Memorial Drive intersection
- Realignment of Allen Parkway (from Taft to Sabine) to provide green space and needed parking
- Enhanced landscaping and streetscaping along the Allen Parkway/Memorial Drive corridor



Hundreds of committed citizens, business leaders and neighborhood residents participated in major Buffalo Bayou Master Plan workshops, focus groups meetings and design sessions over an 18-month period.

To date the following groups and agencies have formally endorsed the Buffalo Bayou Master Plan:

- American Institute of Architects/Houston Bayou Preservation Association
- Central Houston
- East Lawndale/Wayside Super Neighborhood
- First Ward Civic Council
- Greater East End Management District
- Greater Heights Community Alliance
- Greater Houston Partnership
- Harris County Commissioner's Court
- Houston Canoe Club
- Houston Parks Board
- Houston's Quality of Life Coalition
- Main Street Coalition
- North Montrose Civic Association
- Old Sixth Ward Neighborhood Association
- Old West End Association
- Pleasant Hill Community Development Corporation
- The Park People
- Rice University
- Second Ward Residents Organization
- Scenic Houston
- Theater District Association
- The Park People
- Trees for Houston
- University of Houston-Downtown
- White Oak Bayou Association



You can find out more about the Buffalo Bayou Master Plan

Check out the Buffalo Bayou Partnership Web site – [www.buffalobayou.org](http://www.buffalobayou.org)

Request a Buffalo Bayou Master Plan Summary Document (Call 713-752-0314)

Schedule Buffalo Bayou Partnership staff to show the Buffalo Bayou Master Plan powerpoint presentation before your civic or business group. (call 713-752-0314)

Visit the Buffalo Bayou Partnership's office at Vine Street Studios (1113 Vine Street, Suite 200) in Downtown's Warehouse District to view the Master Plan renderings and maps. (Call 713-752-0314)

*What many competitive cities have is a central regional-scale amenity that creates a vivid impression of the place and that offers opportunities for recreation, urban living, entertainment and urbanity. Buffalo Bayou offers such promise for Houston.*

— JANE THOMPSON, Thompson Design Group,  
Lead Master Plan Consultant

## 2002 Awards and Honors

The **Buffalo Bayou and Beyond Master Plan** was recognized with an Excellence on the Waterfront Honor Award by the Waterfront Center, a Washington, D.C.-based public interest advocacy group dedicated to waterfront development around the world.

In citing the Master Plan, jurors said: “This plan contains a sweeping vision as big and bold as Houston itself. Its aim is nothing short of transforming the city’s image by emphasizing a broad green space running through its heart, giving the city a new environmental emphasis.”

The Excellence on the Waterfront Award was presented to Buffalo Bayou Partnership chair Toni Beauchamp at the Waterfront

Center’s annual conference in Washington, D.C. in November 2002. From 70 entries, 12 projects were chosen. Included among the winning entries were waterfront initiatives in Australia, Ireland, Canada and Sweden.



In February 2002, former board chair Mike Garver accepted the inaugural Landmark Quality of Life Award on behalf of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. The awards, which recognized commercial real estate projects, were sponsored by the *Houston Business Journal*, Stewart Title, and Urban Land Institute Houston Chapter. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership was cited for: “Affecting the downtown landscape and developing projects geared towards enhancing the quality of life for Houston residents.” As an award winner, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership was featured in a special *Houston Business Journal* supplement.

The **Buffalo Bayou Partnership board and staff** were deeply honored to have President George W. Bush sign the Buffalo Bayou National Heritage Bill (HB 1776) that was introduced by Congressman Gene Green and sponsored in the Senate by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. The bill, signed by the President just before the 2002 Christmas holiday, authorizes the National Park Service “to study the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Buffalo Bayou National Heritage Area.” We will keep you updated as the planning study progresses.

Land acquisition continued to be the Buffalo Bayou Partnership’s highest priority in 2002. The organization’s land acquisition program is part of a comprehensive, long-term effort to redevelop Buffalo Bayou as a natural, recreational, cultural and historic resource for our city.

In 2002, the organization purchased or put under contract nearly 20 acres of Bayou property. In addition, the historic Sunset Coffee Building at Allen’s Landing (Commerce at Main) was purchased and a major easement for future hike and bike trail development was donated to the Buffalo Bayou Partnership by Halliburton.



Halliburton generously donated a one-mile-long 30 ft. easement along the corporation’s Clinton Drive–Buffalo Bayou East Sector property (left). This easement is needed for the planned hike and bike trail that will be constructed by the Texas Department of Transportation in 2003.

Historic Allen’s Landing will benefit from the restoration of the historic Sunset Coffee Building (right), which was purchased by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership in 2002. Preliminary plans call for the development of commercial and office space at our city’s founding site. (For additional information, see newsletter insert.)



## Also in 2002

- **Allen’s Landing Phase I** redevelopment was completed. The \$2.7 million project includes a restored wharf, promenade/walkway, entry plaza at the Main and Commerce intersection, sloping grass lawn, and text-based public artwork.



- Construction was completed on the **north side downtown trail**, connecting Sesquicentennial Park and the University of Houston–Downtown. The \$3 million project is a small but vital link in Buffalo Bayou’s comprehensive trail system.
- Design work was completed for the enhancement of the **Sabine-Bagby stretch of downtown’s waterfront**. The plan calls for bank stabilization, street-to-bayou connections, pedestrian

footbridges, and several major gardens. The plan was funded with private funds raised by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. (For additional information, see newsletter insert.)

- The Buffalo Bayou Partnership sponsored the development of a **comprehensive lighting plan for the downtown bayou corridor**. Artist Steven Korn (Amherst, MA) and L’Observatoire and Halie Light, international lighting design firms based in New York City, developed the plan that creates a setting and mood, drawing people’s attention to specific elements and features that comprise the Bayou’s environment.
- A two-mile **hike and bike trail along Buffalo Bayou’s eastern sector** (Baker Street to North York Street) was awarded \$3 million in federal funding from the Texas Department of Transportation.



**The Bayou Beckons**, Houston’s annual downtown waterfront festival, expanded to two days in 2002. Besides the traditional Buffalo Bayou Regatta and Anything That Floats Parade, the Houston Dragon Boat Festival was part of the May 4 and 5 festivities. Corporate teams competed in a 250-meter bayou race course and enjoyed various activities celebrating Asian culture at Allen’s Landing. The Dragon Boat Festival was sponsored by the Houston Chinese American Lions Club and Buffalo Bayou Partnership.



# Buffalo Bayou Partnership

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## Mission Statement

“The Buffalo Bayou Partnership serves as an advisory resource and liaison among groups pursuing development of Bayou amenities and the many private- and public-sector entities with interests in and/or jurisdictions over various Bayou functions. It also coordinates integration of major amenities into the Bayou Greenbelt and seeks ways to increase community involvement in Bayou-related activities.”



### Help from our Friends

The Buffalo Bayou Partnership works hard to involve others in the Bayou's on-going restoration. In 2002, BP America completed a major .5 mile beautification effort along Buffalo Bayou's western sector, just east of the Houston Police Memorial. The \$800,000 project includes a new trail, bank stabilization, pedestrian footbridges, and landscaping. In November 2002, BP volunteers spent a day planting more than 40 trees along this enhanced stretch of the Buffalo Bayou greenway.

### The Buffalo Bayou Partnership sincerely thanks the following 2002 donors for their commitment to Buffalo Bayou's redevelopment.\*

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