The Buffalo Bayou East Master Plan brings the community’s vision for its waterfront to life.

Like other cities such as New York, Boston and St. Louis where Frederick Law Olmstead designed park systems, Houston hired Cambridge, Massachusetts landscape architect Arthur Coleman Comey in 1912 to provide a plan that would guide the city’s growth. In his plan, *Houston: Tentative Plans for Its Development*, Comey asserted: “The backbone of a park system for Houston will naturally be its creek valleys, which readily lend themselves to ‘parking’ ... All the bayous should be ‘parked’ except where utilized for commerce.”

Building upon Comey’s vision, Buffalo Bayou Partnership’s (BBP) 2002 *Buffalo Bayou and Beyond* Master Plan envisioned a network of green spaces along the Bayou stretching from Shepherd Drive to the Port of Houston Turning Basin. Today, countless Houstonians and visitors utilize the extensive parks and trails along the waterfront to the west, most notably Buffalo Bayou Park. In addition to being a central gathering place for all Houstonians to enjoy, the park has become a symbol of the city’s rejuvenation and an important impetus for other park and bayou enhancement projects throughout the city.

While most of Buffalo Bayou Partnership’s green space development has occurred west of Downtown, for more than a decade the organization has been acquiring property and building a nascent trail system along the waterway’s East Sector. The Buffalo Bayou East Master Plan brings the community’s vision for its waterfront to life. Informed by significant outreach and engagement, the plan envisions integrating new parks and trails, dynamic recreational and cultural destinations, and connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

This plan is an important step forward for the future of Houston’s historic bayou—a project that will take decades and require creative partnerships to unfold. Step by step, piece by piece, Buffalo Bayou East will pay tribute to Houston’s industrial roots, celebrate culturally rich neighborhoods, and serve as an important symbol for the city’s continuing commitment to accessible park space for all.

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Looking Back

Houston's rich history has been shaped by Buffalo Bayou and the waterway east of Downtown has played a particularly important role in the city's evolution. While Allen's Landing in Downtown Houston is the site most often associated with the city's founding in 1836, in fact it was the town of Harrisburg, located at the confluence of Brays and Buffalo bayous, where Houston's founders, Augustus and John Kirby Allen, preferred to locate. Situated just below the Turning Basin, Harrisburg served as a port of entry and became known as the commercial and shipping center of the southwest. For a brief period, the city served as the Republic of Texas capital.

Houston's early success was driven by Buffalo Bayou and its influence is strongly felt to this day. Continually competing with Galveston, Houston business leaders saw the need to straighten and widen the Bayou. After years of dredging and other improvements, an agreement was reached with the federal government and the Houston Ship Channel opened.

Galveston's 1900 hurricane and discovery of oil at Spindletop near Beaumont ensured Houston's future as a major trading and transportation center, and today, the Ship Channel is one of the world's great international ports.

A Cultural Legacy

As Buffalo Bayou transitioned from a lazy stream to the transportation powerhouse it is today, so too have the neighborhoods that line its banks. Early years saw a large concentration of working class Germans, Italians and Irish, then an influx of African-Americans and Mexican-Americans.

Along with their strong work ethic and devotion to family, these early residents brought rich cultural traditions and customs that remain in the East Sector today. Whether it is the colorful murals and Tex-Mex cuisine of the Greater East End or the zydeco and blues music of the Fifth Ward, Buffalo Bayou East neighborhoods are among the most culturally vibrant in Houston.

An Industrial Legacy

While industrial activity has migrated towards the Ship Channel, active nodes still serve as important East Sector employment hubs and link the area to Houston's history as a port city. At the same time, abandoned industrial relics contribute to a fascinating interaction of natural beauty and grit. Buffalo Bayou East celebrates the area's industrial legacy and finds opportunities for industry and open space to exist.
Four core principles guided the master planning process and serve as a roadmap for the Plan’s implementation. Building upon the area’s rich history and character, the principles inspired designs that reflect local residents’ priorities, ensure established neighborhoods stay intact, and bring people to the water, so they can enjoy Buffalo Bayou East as it continues to flourish in the coming decades.

**Authentic**
Create unique open spaces that reflect the cultural and industrial legacy of Buffalo Bayou East.

**Connected**
Rethink how parks and neighborhoods interact, activating and connecting the waterfront with surrounding communities.

**Inclusive**
Catalyze investment and inclusive neighborhood growth that does not leave current residents behind.

**Resilient**
Promote investments that mitigate flooding, stabilize the Bayou’s banks, and increase economic and social mobility.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It was important for Buffalo Bayou Partnership to engage community members throughout the planning process. In addition to reaching out to over 50,000 community members through bilingual postcards and social media, BBP organized numerous opportunities for over 700 stakeholders to provide feedback through larger community-wide events as well as smaller group settings. Other activities, such as the self-guided public art tour *Encounter: Meeting Points on Buffalo Bayou*, allowed participants to share their ideas and opinions for future Bayou improvements.

A NEW DIRECTION

Buffalo Bayou East represents a new focus for Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Very different physical and geographic characteristics mean design solutions that activate the Bayou must consider the East Sector’s unique conditions. Using the set of guiding principles, the Master Plan includes several key objectives and strategies.

- Preserve Buffalo Bayou East’s culture and traditions.
- Repurpose the East Sector’s industrial relics and showcase the area’s ongoing industrial activity.
- Extend the neighborhood fabric to the Bayou and create a public waterfront edge open to all.
- Leverage Buffalo Bayou Partnership-owned and publicly-held properties for future open space development.
- Create a diverse network of parks and destinations with wide appeal.
- As early as possible, develop trails, greenways, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhood streets to connect the Bayou to the city’s bike and pedestrian networks.
- Develop an economically integrated, Bayou-facing neighborhood.
- Create a safe and resilient waterfront to support an ecologically rich habitat connected to the wider open space system.
The Master Plan is organized into four key nodes: Downtown Gateway, Central Hub, Industrial District, and Eastern Terminus. New multi-modal connections in the form of on- and off-street trails link to public transit. New streets in key locations, developed over time, create an enhanced network between neighborhoods separated from each other and the Bayou. Small-scaled parks and open spaces tie the larger destinations together to create a cohesive system of green spaces and attractions that will reinvigorate Buffalo Bayou East.

**DOWNTOWN GATEWAY**

* A Bridge Between East and West
New open spaces and connections near the northeastern corner of Downtown link the East Sector to destinations farther west such as Buffalo Bayou Park. Bayou improvements associated with major infrastructure projects allow the area to become the primary entrance from Downtown to Buffalo Bayou and the city’s entire bayou trail network.

**CENTRAL HUB**

* The Heart of Buffalo Bayou East
An expanded Tony Marron Park, enhanced with new and upgraded facilities, and Japhet Creek, with its natural splendor restored, become the engaging open space core of Buffalo Bayou East. New residential development along the Bayou brings surrounding communities closer to the water and to each other.
INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Repurposed Industrial Relics

Abandoned industrial structures, repurposed with exciting new uses, present residents with unparalleled experiences against an inspiring backdrop only Buffalo Bayou East can provide. The destinations’ designs honor Houston’s enduring legacy as a port city and simultaneously showcase how relics from the past can be thoughtfully adapted to give them new life.

EASTERN TERMINUS

A Gateway to the Port

New connections between existing parks and undeveloped green space create a cohesive and attractive destination for local residents and transform an underappreciated corner of Buffalo Bayou into a location where the Port of Houston can present its face to the public.
CONNECTIONS

Vital Links for Buffalo Bayou East

A carefully considered network of trails, multi-modal connections, on-street bikeways, and neighborhood-scaled open spaces creates a cohesive transportation backbone for experiencing Buffalo Bayou East. Trails and small open spaces provide continuous linkages between destinations and surrounding communities. New routes weave between active industrial sites that are currently difficult to access. Enhanced lighting, furniture, shade structures, and landscape upgrades make existing trails feel more attractive, secure, and comfortable. Linear green spaces extend the natural beauty of the Bayou deep into surrounding communities. And most importantly, new boat landings allow residents to travel from one place to another along Houston’s most important and historic waterway.
Communities of the Greater East End and Fifth Ward have long been separated from their Bayou, and one another. Large active and abandoned industrial sites create obstacles between the waterway and the upland neighborhoods, while street linkages and visual connections remain broken. The Bayou has been the East Sector’s back door and a barrier. No longer.

Buffalo Bayou East reunites neighborhoods and creates a common meeting ground to gather and experience a part of Houston like no other. A comprehensive network of trails, on-street bikeways, green fingers, promenades and multi-modal connections provides vital linkages.

Historically, Buffalo Bayou has been used for transportation. Recently, BBP has made boating a central part of the waterway’s revitalization. Buffalo Bayou East offers more boating activities and gives people an opportunity to see Houston from a unique perspective.

MARRON PARK WAY
A new street, from just east of North York Street at Milby Street to Lockwood Drive, will provide park frontage and access at Tony Marron Park as well as community access via pedestrian and vehicular connections at Lockwood South. It will also address major traffic issues for residents by removing large trucks from their streets.

NAVIGATION REALIGNMENT
Along Navigation Boulevard, the former westbound lanes become an on-street greenway, wide enough to be a transportation path and a linear park. At the Turkey Bend site, this space can be used for neighborhood festivals and events. The former eastbound lanes now handle traffic in both directions. With active industrial sites still lining Buffalo Bayou’s eastern stretches, the Navigation Greenway provides an alternative route for accessing destinations towards the Port of Houston Turning Basin.

Reunite Neighborhoods to the Bayou and Each Other
Communities of the Greater East and Fifth Ward have long been separated from their Bayou, and one another. Large active and abandoned industrial sites create obstacles between the waterway and the upland neighborhoods, while street linkages and visual connections remain broken. The Bayou has been the East Sector’s back door and a barrier. No longer.

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**Bayou Trails**

A continuous, 15-foot wide multi-use trail follows the north and south banks of the Bayou where possible. Benches with nearby trash cans at regular intervals along the trail provide places to rest. Wayfinding and interpretive signage mark key points.

**Links to Downtown**

As part of the 10-Year Plan, BBP will build new trail links as well as upgrade and reconstruct existing segments to extend the system from just east of US 59 to Lockwood Drive on the south bank and from just east of US 59 on the north bank to Jensen Drive where the trail will connect to trails being developed as part of the East River project and ultimately to Japhet Creek.

**Pedestrian Bridges**

Two new pedestrian bridges will link the Fifth Ward to the trail system: one unifying Tony Marron Park and Japhet Creek, and a second connecting trails and Gregg Street on the north bank to the trails and Velasco Street on the south.

**Water Connections**

New landings and expanded canoe/kayak concessions provide community residents stronger connections to the water.
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Lockwood South: A New Economically Inclusive Neighborhood

Throughout the Buffalo Bayou East Master Plan’s community engagement process, neighborhood residents voiced their need for affordable housing. Responding to this need, BBP is devoting 13 acres of property to a mixed-income housing project. Located on the south bank of the bayou along Lockwood Drive, the development is slated to include multi-family apartments, townhomes, and single-family residences adjacent to over six acres of new parks and trails.

Partnering with Brinshore, a Chicago-based affordable housing developer, BBP has been awarded 9% federal tax credits and Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant financing for Phase I of the project which consists of 80 multi-family units. BBP hopes to announce future phases of the affordable housing development soon.

Central Hub

The Heart of Buffalo Bayou East

Expand and Improve Parks

The Central Hub becomes the park and neighborhood centerpiece of Buffalo Bayou East. Existing parks on the south side banks expand to provide a wider range of recreational and cultural activities. Investments in soccer fields, a play area, and venues for events and festivals transform currently underutilized areas. In addition to creating park space, a new residential development extends the existing neighborhood south of the Bayou to the water’s edge. On the north side of the Bayou, restoration of a historic natural tributary provides an important connection from the waterway to the Fifth Ward.
Expand Tony Marron Park into one of Houston’s Best Neighborhood Parks

Tony Marron Park becomes a gathering place for Greater East End and Fifth Ward residents and serves as the primary green space destination for Buffalo Bayou East.

- Upgrades include new entry gardens connecting to North York Street (1), enhanced sports fields (2), improved habitat areas (3), and new nature play areas (4).
- A central maintenance facility will house park operations for the entire Buffalo Bayou East area along with BBP’s waterway cleanup operation (5).
- A picnic lawn and boat launch make the North York site a more active and beautiful area (6).
- A new barbeque plaza will be popular for small and large gatherings (7).
- Existing buildings on the City-owned Drennan Street site, refurbished as picnic pavilions for a food truck court, support community events and activities in the Fiesta Plaza (8).

- A bayou-crossing pedestrian bridge connects the park to Japhet Creek (9).

Transform Japhet Creek into a Natural Connection

Before the development of this part of the city, Japhet Creek, a Bayou tributary, stretched north, deep into the Fifth Ward. Now only visible south of Clinton Drive, a restored Japhet Creek can serve as a key connection to Buffalo Bayou.

- New pedestrian and bike trails from the Fifth Ward and Finnigan Park (10) arrive at a Bayou trailhead with parking (11).
- Nature trails lead along the creek and cross at a new pedestrian bridge (12), linking interpretive elements (13) that extend to the Bayou.
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• Nature trails lead along the creek and cross at a new pedestrian bridge (12), linking interpretive elements (13) that extend to the Bayou.

• Shade structures distributed throughout the park encourage families to come for birthdays, picnics, and other celebrations.
• A pedestrian bridge connects the park to Japhet Creek (9).
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While industrial activity has migrated toward the Ship Channel in recent decades, active nodes still serve as important East Sector employment hubs and link the area to Houston’s history as a port city. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bayou East’s intriguing industrial relics serve as a unique backdrop for creating new public spaces unlike anywhere in Houston. With the underground Cistern in Buffalo Bayou Park, Buffalo Bayou Partnership has already seen the benefits of repurposing these types of remnants. The abandoned former City water reservoir has been toured by tens of thousands and is one of the most popular sites for visitors to Houston. Gas Works Park in Seattle, Concrete Plant Park in the Bronx, and numerous sites in Germany’s Ruhr Valley also demonstrate how industrial relics in Buffalo Bayou East can be renovated into popular parks and cultural attractions.

A Neighborhood Arts and Event Center

A Buffalo Bayou Partnership-owned site along Navigation Boulevard at a stretch of the Bayou called Turkey Bend transforms abandoned structures into a center of activity.

- A renovated warehouse includes community art and event facilities, possible incubator space for nurturing neighborhood businesses, and food service (1).
- Along the water, the wharf serves as event and gathering space (2) as well as a boating center and canoe/kayak launch (3). A protected oxbow off of Buffalo Bayou’s main channel allows boaters to explore the water in a safe environment (4).
- Transformation of Navigation Boulevard into a linear greenway (5) improves pedestrian and bicycle connections and allows for outdoor events and activities in the plaza (6) in front of the warehouse building.

Transform Abandoned Artifacts into Regional Attractions

While industrial activity has migrated toward the Ship Channel in recent decades, active nodes still serve as important East Sector employment hubs and link the area to Houston’s history as a port city. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bayou East’s intriguing industrial relics serve as a unique backdrop for creating new public spaces unlike anywhere in Houston. With the underground Cistern in Buffalo Bayou Park, Buffalo Bayou Partnership has already seen the benefits of repurposing these types of remnants. The abandoned former City water reservoir has been toured by tens of thousands and is one of the most popular sites for visitors to Houston. Gas Works Park in Seattle, Concrete Plant Park in the Bronx, and numerous sites in Germany’s Ruhr Valley also demonstrate how industrial relics in Buffalo Bayou East can be renovated into popular parks and cultural attractions.
A Neighborhood Arts and Event Center

A Buffalo Bayou Partnership-owned site along Navigation Boulevard at a stretch of the Bayou called Turkey Bend transforms abandoned structures into a center of activity for performances, public art and a variety of boating activities.

- A 50,000 sq. ft. warehouse on Navigation Boulevard will house the City’s Hispanic History Research Center (HHRC) and Archives as well as community based retail and a large central gathering space (1).
- Along the water, the wharf serves as event and gathering space (2) as well as a boating center and canoe/kayak launch (3). A protected oxbow off of Buffalo Bayou’s main channel allows boaters to explore the water in a safe environment (4).
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