
PARKS & OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN
City of West University Place, Texas



Town Hall Meeting #2
November 20, 2014

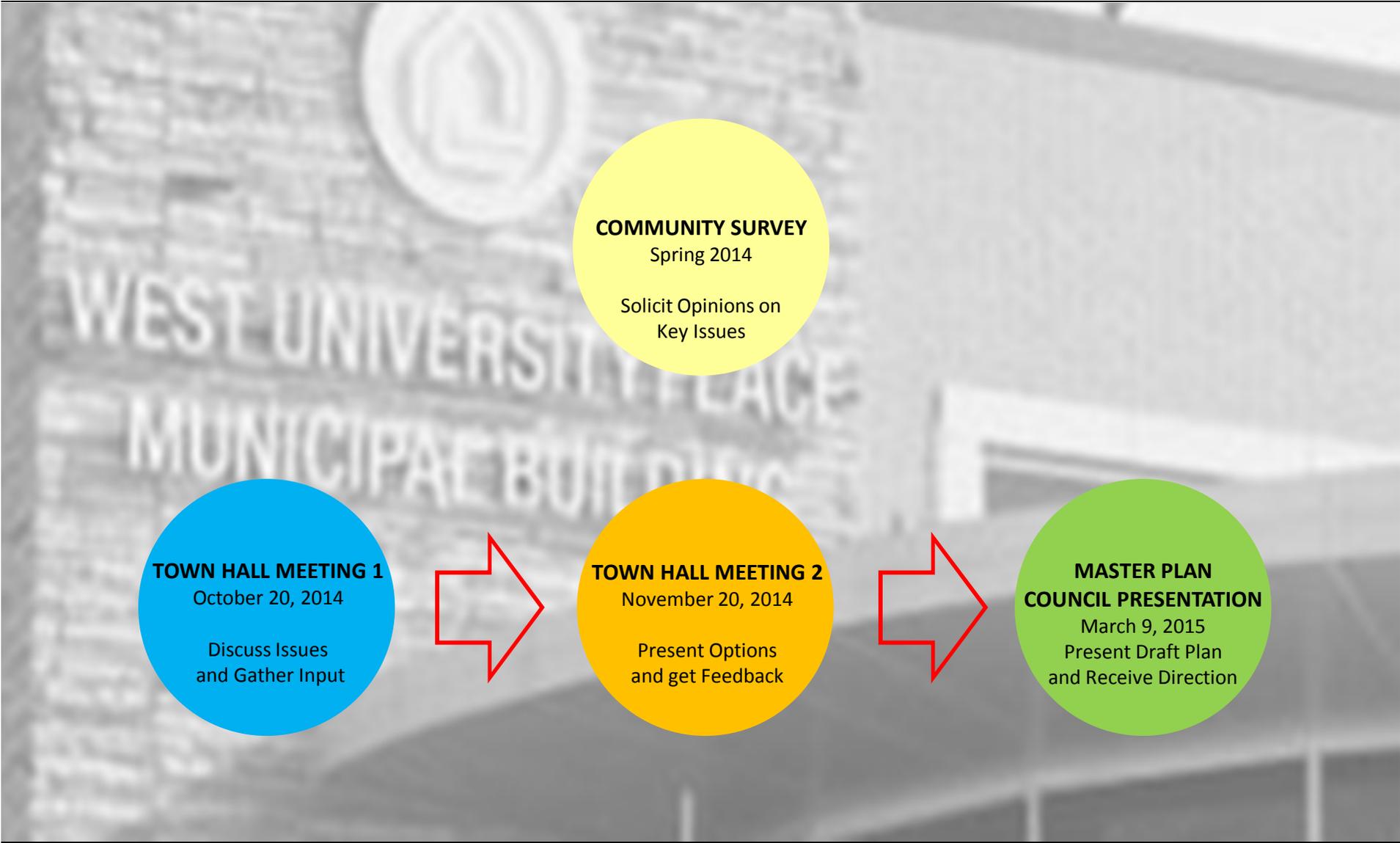


WHITE OAK STUDIO
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



INTRODUCTIONS

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS



TONIGHT'S AGENDA



Presentation (1 hour)

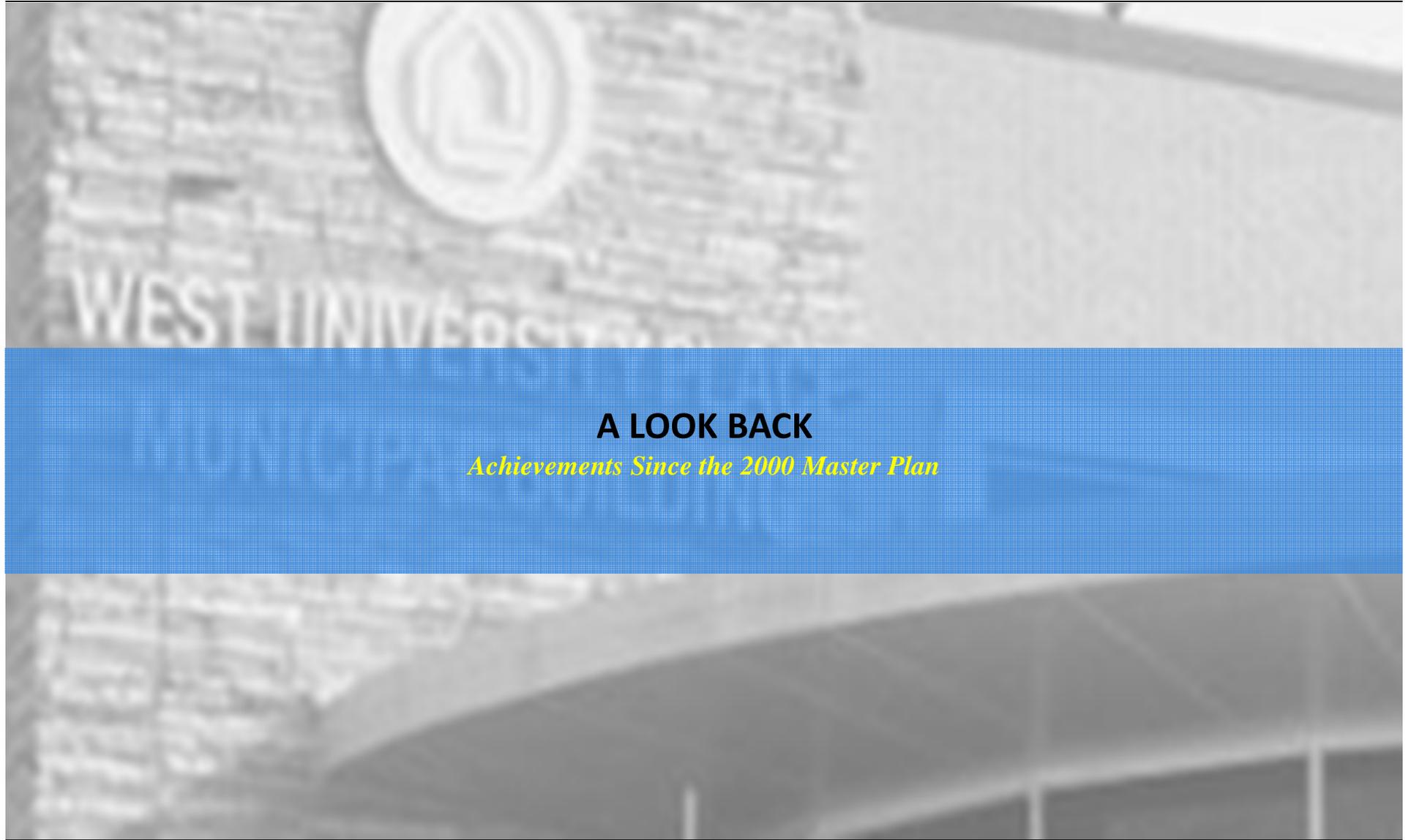
A Look Back

A Look at Today

A Look at the Future

- Major Park Redevelopment Program
- Next Generation Parks
- Partnerships & Cooperation
- Unstructured Open Space
- Pedestrian Mobility
- Linear Open Space
- City Center
- Funding & Financial Resources
- Parkland Acquisition

Public Discussion & Feedback (1 hour)



A LOOK BACK

Achievements Since the 2000 Master Plan

Parks Highlights since 2000 Master Plan

- Redeveloped Colonial Park as combined neighborhood and community park
- Reinvented Colonial Pool as family aquatics center
- Upgraded all neighborhood parks
- Created Friends Park
- Acquired and developed Recreation Center
- Indoor swimming facilities at Recreation Center
- Significant City investment in sidewalks, streets and lighting improved safety and access to parks
- 3 bridges across Poor Farm Ditch
- City Center streetscape improvements

OBJECTIVES

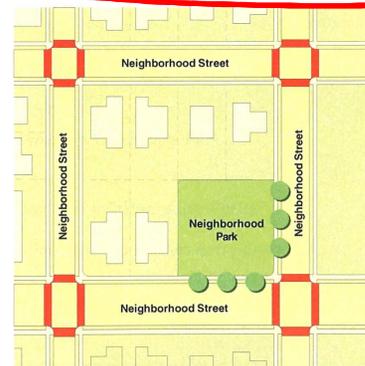
1 Provide parks that are appropriate to their location in the community

- Parks must be good neighbors to surrounding residents
- Facilities and activities should be appropriate to the neighborhood and purpose of the park
- Parks should not attract excessive vehicular traffic onto residential streets

2 Provide parks that are beautiful, unique and contribute to the character of the neighborhood and to the city overall

- Continue to upgrade and update existing parks
- Include unique imaginative elements that give each park a personality
- Establish common palette of support furnishings: benches, trash cans, fences, signage, lighting

3 Establish a two-tier system of parks based upon site, use and location



Prototype Neighborhood Park



A LOOK AT TODAY

Current Conditions, Issues and Resources

- Survey conducted Spring 2014
- 1,430 Responses (27% response)

Goals:

- To understand park use and preferences
- To understand opinions about acquisition and funding of new park property

West University is a city of park users –
56% use parks at least once a month



West University Place Citizen Survey

2014 Parks and Recreation Department Citizen Survey

The graphic features a dark blue header with the title 'West University Place Citizen Survey' in white. Below the header are four vertical panels, each containing a photograph: a woman in a white tank top and blue pants jogging; a child on a swing set; a white dog standing on a paved path; and a close-up of a tree trunk. At the bottom right of the graphic is a blue house-shaped icon.

CITIZEN PREFERENCES

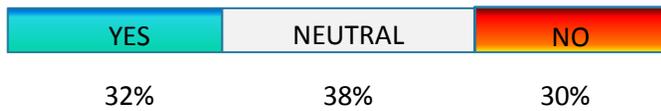
- Parks within safe walking distance (70%)
- Shaded seating / benches (51%)
- Open, unstructured green spaces (45%)
- Walking paths in parks (42%)
- Playgrounds (48%)
- Linear parks with trails (37%)
- Picnic Tables (32%)
- Native plant habitat area (28%)
- Open air pavilion (25%)
- Community Garden (23%)
- Tennis Courts (20%)
- Outdoor areas for personal fitness (19%)
- Outdoor exercise equipment (14%)
- Basketball courts (15%)
- Outdoor Classroom (10%)



PARK ACQUISITION

West U should acquire and develop land for a park between Buffalo Speedway and Edloe

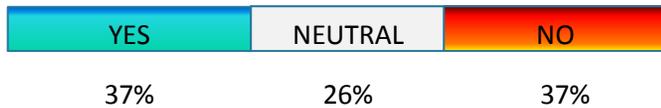
- Balanced Response:



PARK ACQUISITION

Support a new park near my home

Balanced Response:



PARK ACQUISITION FUNDING

Preferences for funding methods:

Private Funding:



Revenue Bonds with increased taxes:



Corporate Sponsorship:

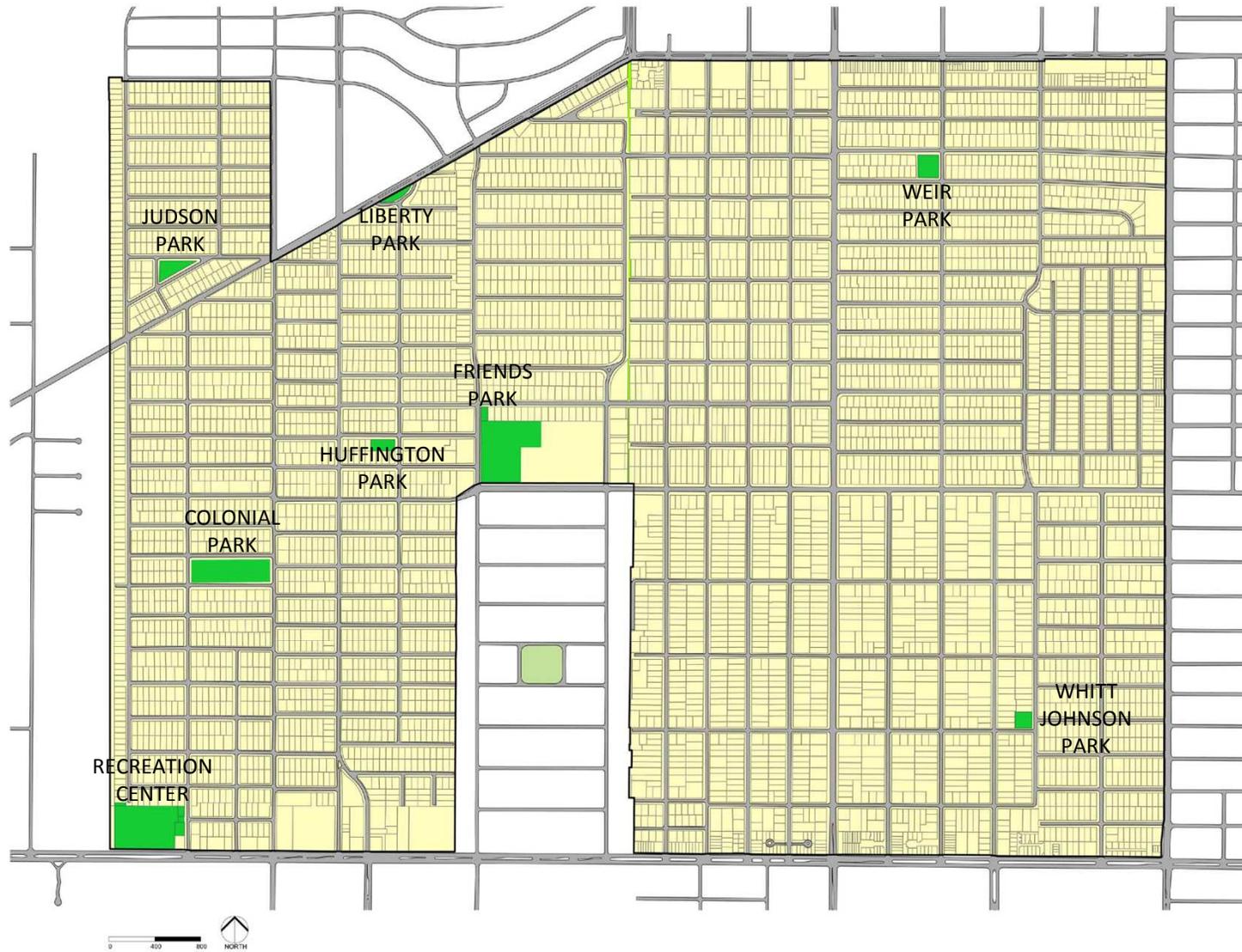


PARK ACQUISITION FUNDING

Support a tax increase to acquire and develop a new park.

Strongly opposed





A Look at Today

Neighborhood Park

Redeveloped in 2011 & 2012

Facility Inventory:

- 1 Tennis Court
- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Playground (ages 5-12)
- BBQ area
- Parking (8 spaces)

Assessment Comments:

1. Park functions well as traditional neighborhood park.
2. Playground areas significant separation limits parent supervision



A Look at Today

Judson Park
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today



Combined Neighborhood and Community Park

Redevelopment Projects:

2010: Pool, Pool House, Tennis Courts

2013: Playground, turf and furnishings

2014: Playgrounds (2-5 and 5-12)

Facility Inventory:

- Recreation Pool
- 2 Tennis Courts
- Playground (ages 1-5, 6-12)
- Pavilion
- Sand Volleyball Court
- Concrete walking trail

- Parking (52 spaces)

- Open play lawn

- Picnic area

Assessment Comments:

1. Functions well as two parks.
2. Picnic area west of pool inaccessible in off-season.

A Look at Today

Colonial Park
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today

Neighborhood Park

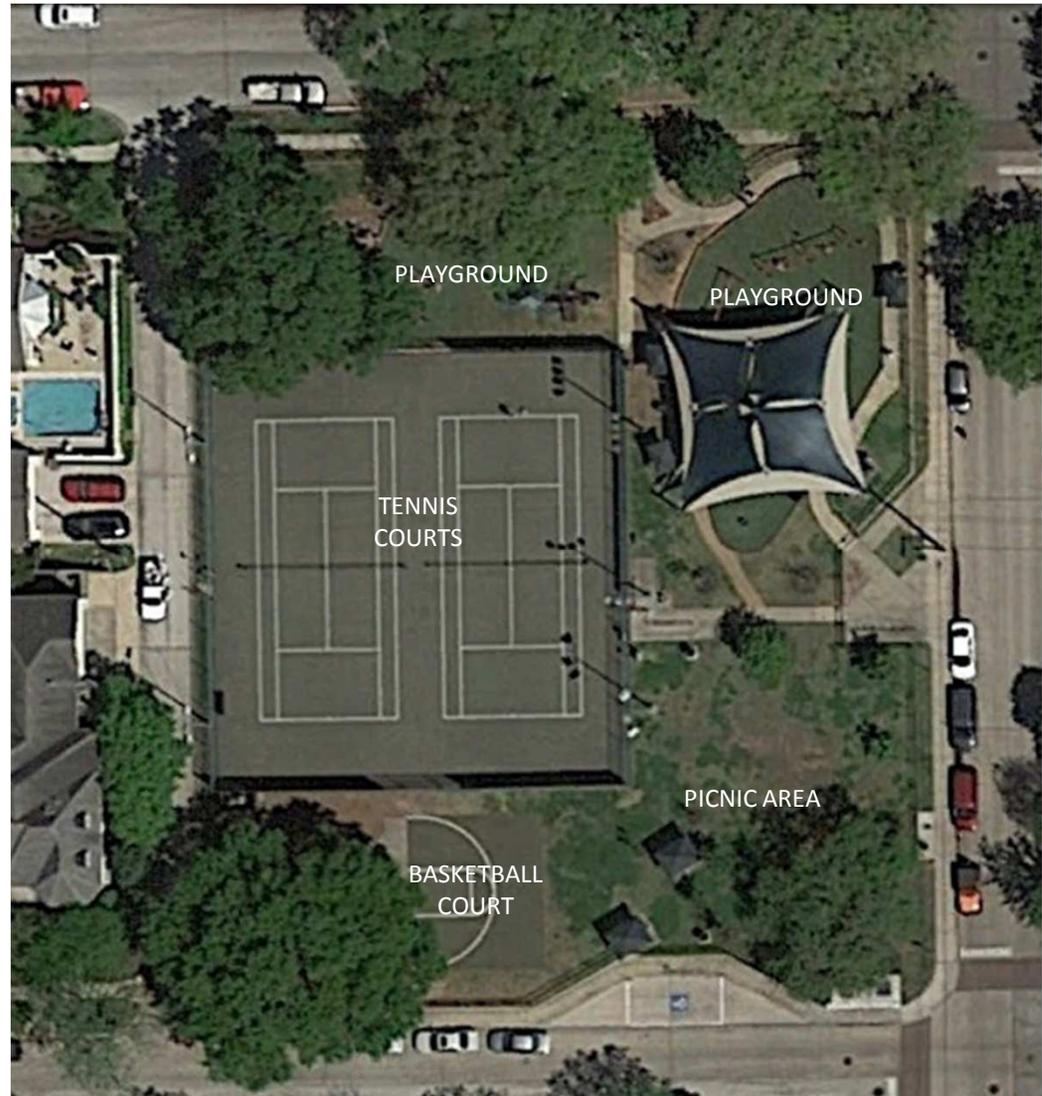
Redeveloped in 2008

Facility Inventory:

- 2 Tennis Courts
- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Playground (ages 5-12)
- Shade structure
- Picnic area
- Basketball half-court

Assessment Comments:

1. Well loved neighborhood park; heavily used
2. Nicely shaded
3. Park space dominated by two tennis courts.
(Reconsider one court.)



A Look at Today



A Look at Today

Neighborhood Park

Redeveloped 2013

Facility Inventory:

- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Playground (ages 5-12)
- Swingset
- Picnic area
- Shade structure
- 2 Basketball half-courts
- Parking (3 parallel spaces)

Assessment Comments:

1. Park elements well-integrated: columns, fence, furnishings
2. Reconsider need for one half-basketball courts
3. Well-used park



Whitt Johnson Park

Park Assessment & Analysis

A Look at Today



A Look at Today

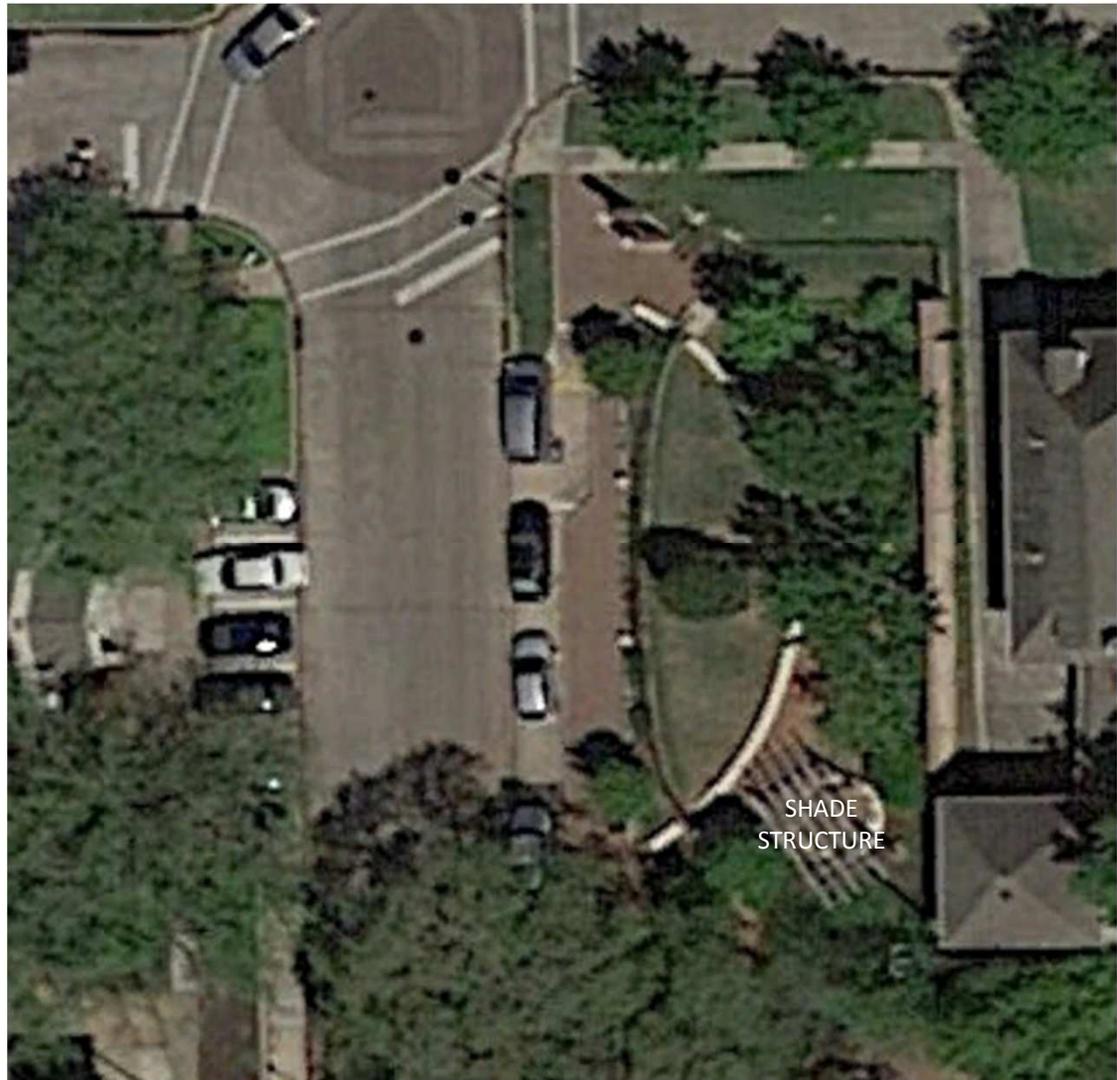
Neighborhood Park

Facility Inventory:

- Picnic area
- Shade structure
- Parking (3 spaces)

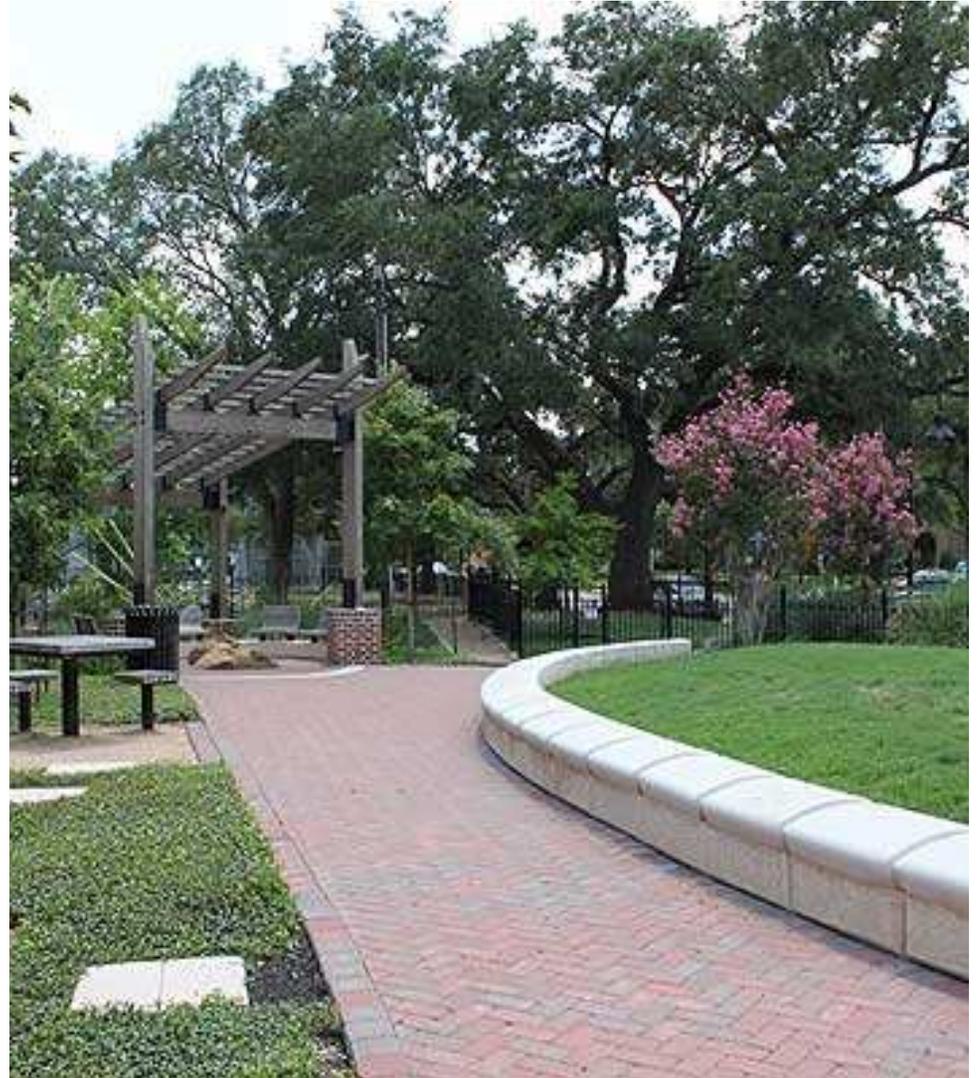
Assessment Comments:

1. Successful pocket park and civic landmark
2. Planting and clock tower enhance streetscape



A Look at Today

Friends Park
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today

Neighborhood Park

Facility Inventory:

- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Swingset
- Picnic area
- Shade structure

Assessment Comments:

1. Poor visibility into park
2. Excessive shade limits lawn growth
3. Entry hardscape outdated and needs repair/ replacement
4. Reconsider arbor and circular path.



A Look at Today

Huffington Park
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today

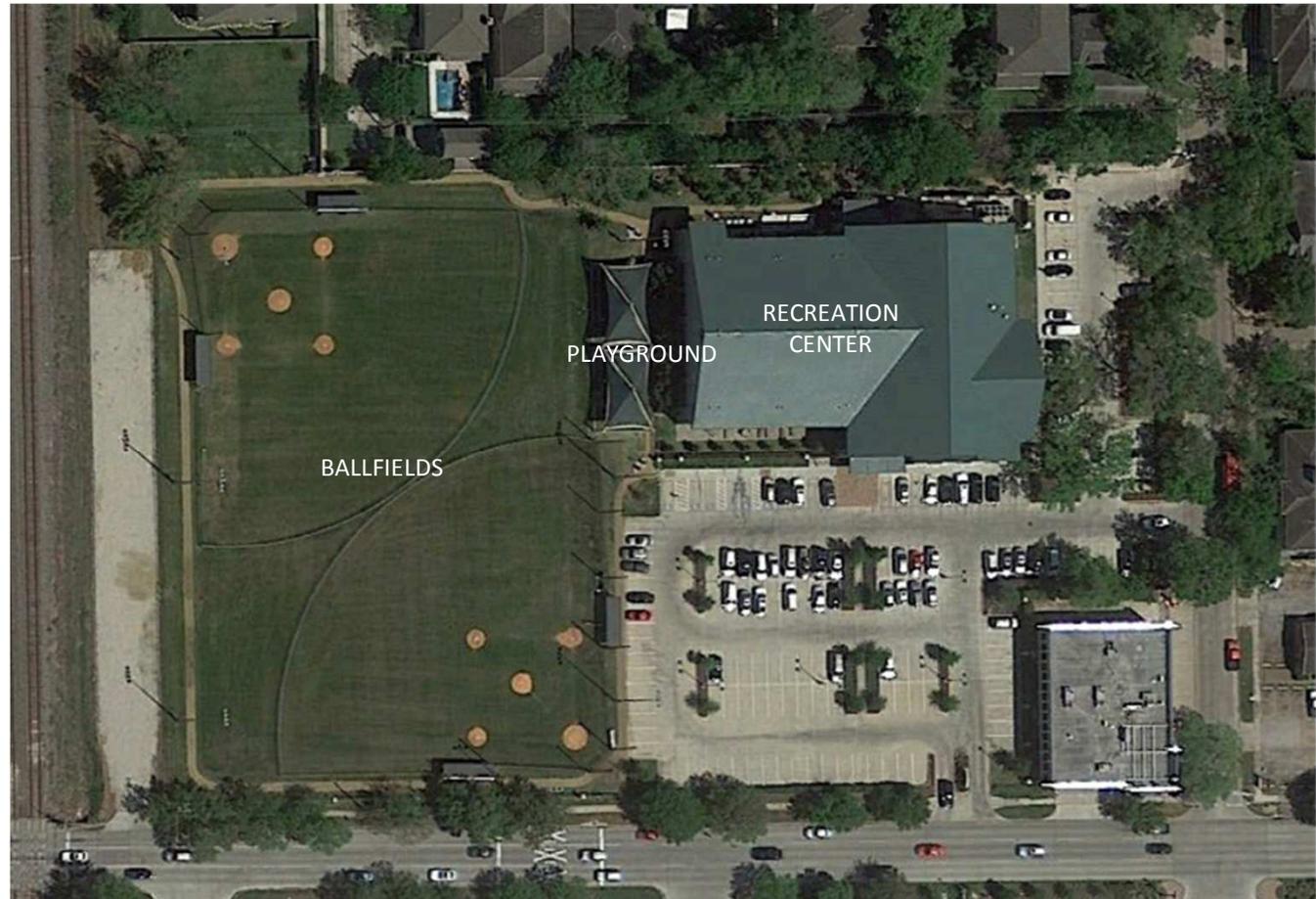
Community Park

Facility Inventory:

- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Playground (ages 5-12)
- Swingset
- Picnic area
- Shade structure
- Parking
- Ball fields
- Jogging track
- Indoor Facilities

Assessment Comments:

1. Successful facility
2. Outdoor recreation opportunities are limited
3. Access from neighborhood needs improvement
4. Consider park use for lot at northwest corner



A Look at Today

Recreation Center
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today

Facility Inventory:

- City Sign and landscaping
- Art Work
- Lawn and trees



Assessment Comments:

1. No recreation facilities
2. Primarily serves as city identification sign and buffer for homes from Bissonnet
3. Reconsider purpose and design of property
4. Outdated landscape at Bissonnet sign
5. Trees are in good shape and provide lots of shade



A Look at Today

Population Issues:

- West U population stable since 2000
- Increase in multi-family residential near WUP may add pressure on park facilities
- Staff estimates that 5% to 10% of WUP population moves in or out of the city annually

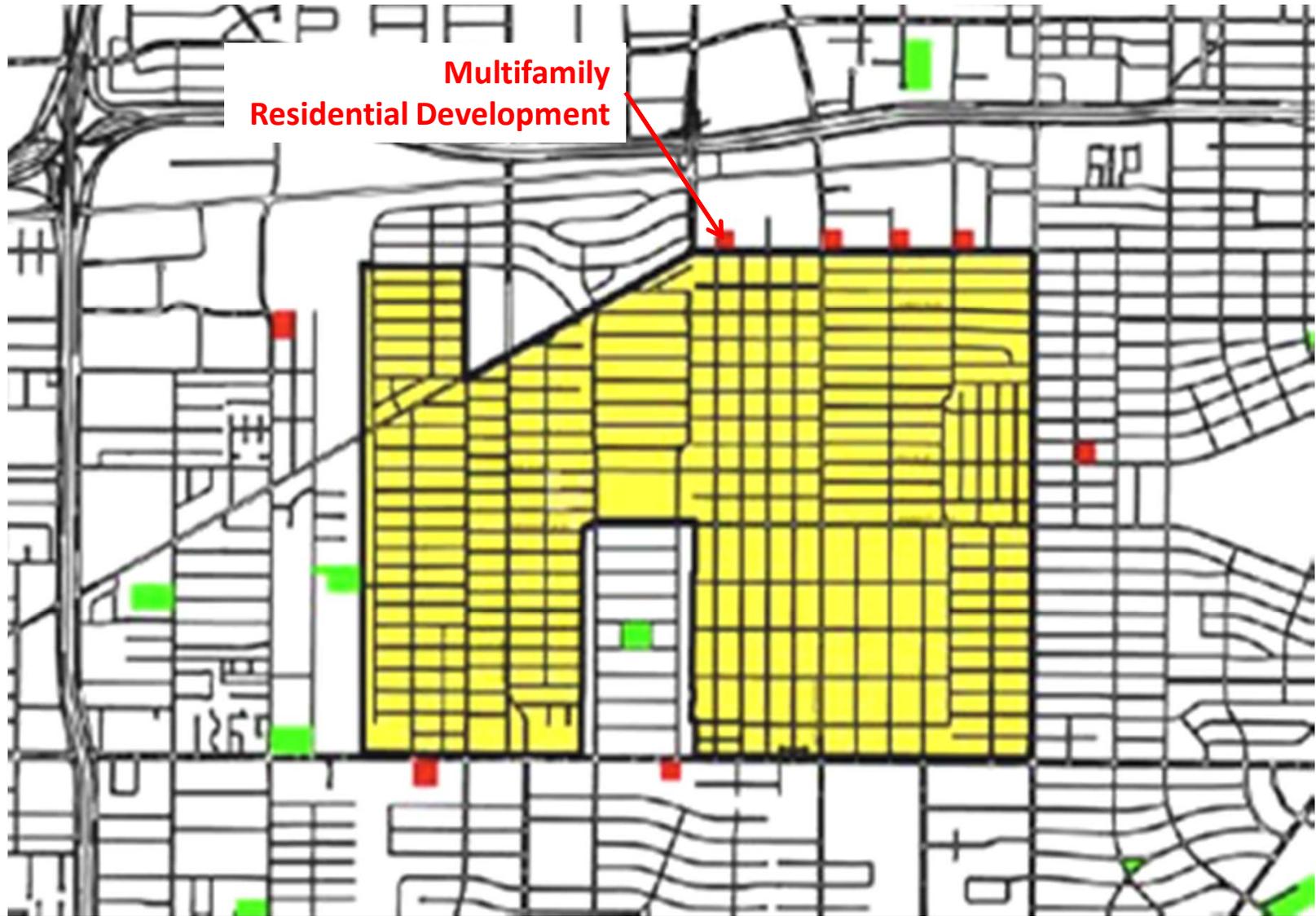
Demographic Changes:

- Master Plan will include demographic projections, assessing age and ethnicity projections through 2025
- Staff observes a more diverse, global citizenry attending events and recreation classes.

Changes in age, ethnicity and mobility may result in changing recreation needs and practices.

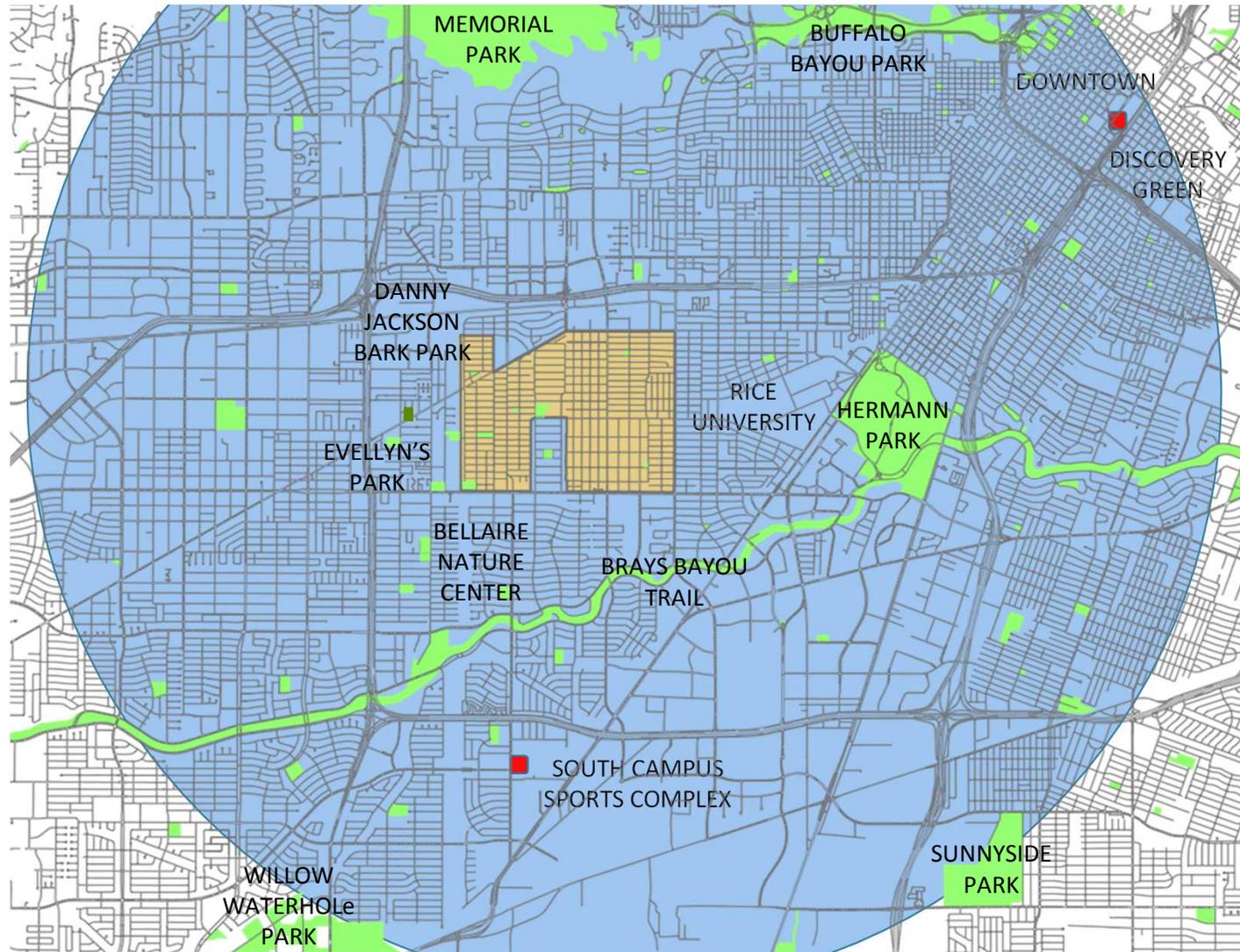
Demographic and Population Changes





A Look at Today

Parks and Open Space Resources Outside West U



A Look at Today

Parks Capital Expenditures

Parks & Recreation Facilities Redevelopment Expenditures Since 2000

- \$20 Million – City of WUP
- \$2.5 Million – Friends of WUP Parks Fund, Inc.

New Parks:

Recreation Center
Colonial Park East End
Friends Park

Major Renovation Projects

(Average \$225,000 per park):

Colonial Park waterpark, tennis courts
Wier Park
Huffington Park
Community Building and Senior Center
Scout House
Judson Park
Whitt Johnson Park

Facilities Life Cycle

- Play Equipment approximately 15 years life
- Improvements dated after about 10 years



Parks & Recreation Department 2014 Operating Budget

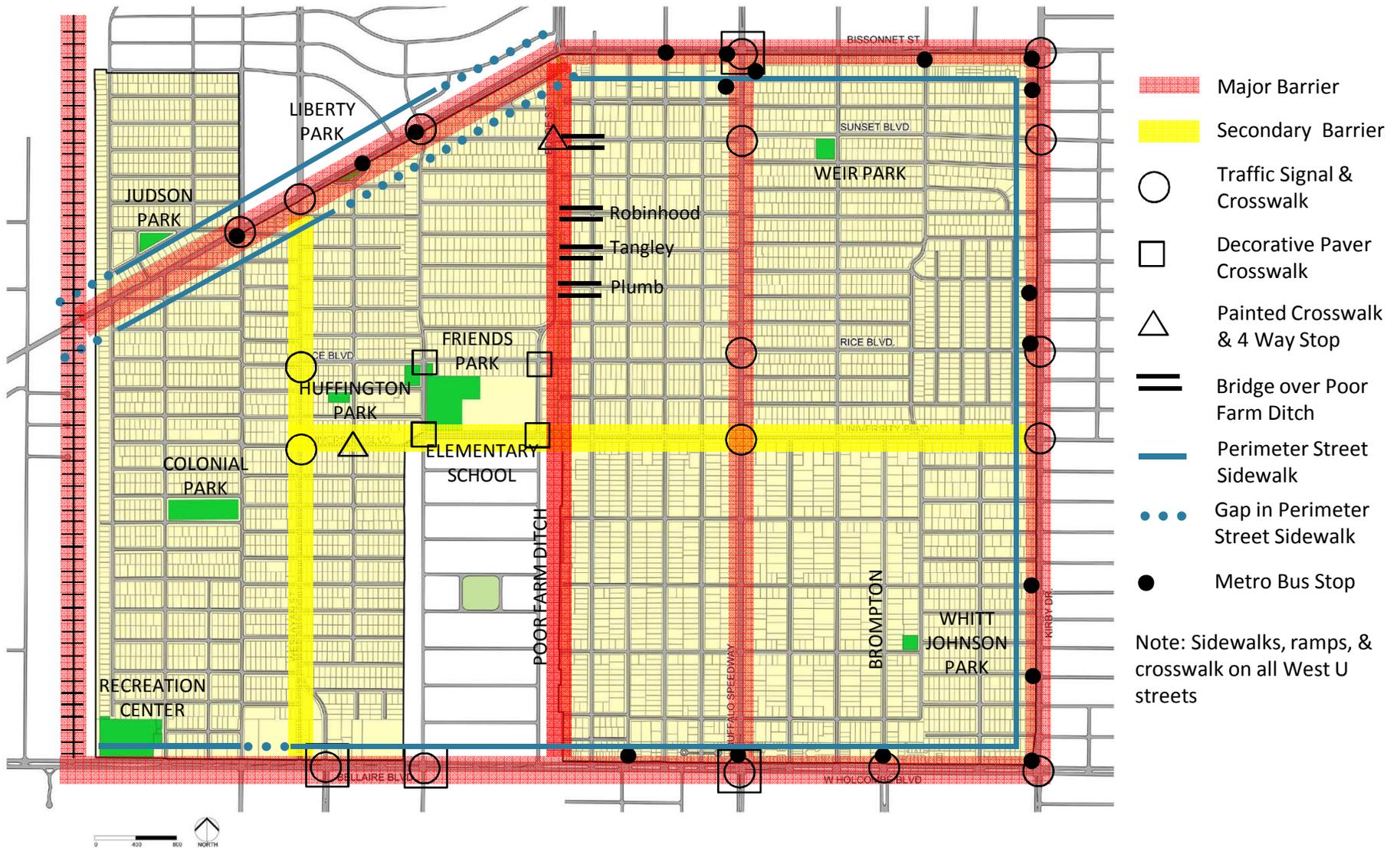
- Administration \$493,500
- Recreation Center \$1,235,000
- Colonial Park Pool \$407,700
- Senior Services \$308,500
- Park Operations \$540,000
- Total 2014 Budget \$2,984,700

Estimated 2014 Revenue \$1,300,000

Net Taxpayer Expense \$1,684,700

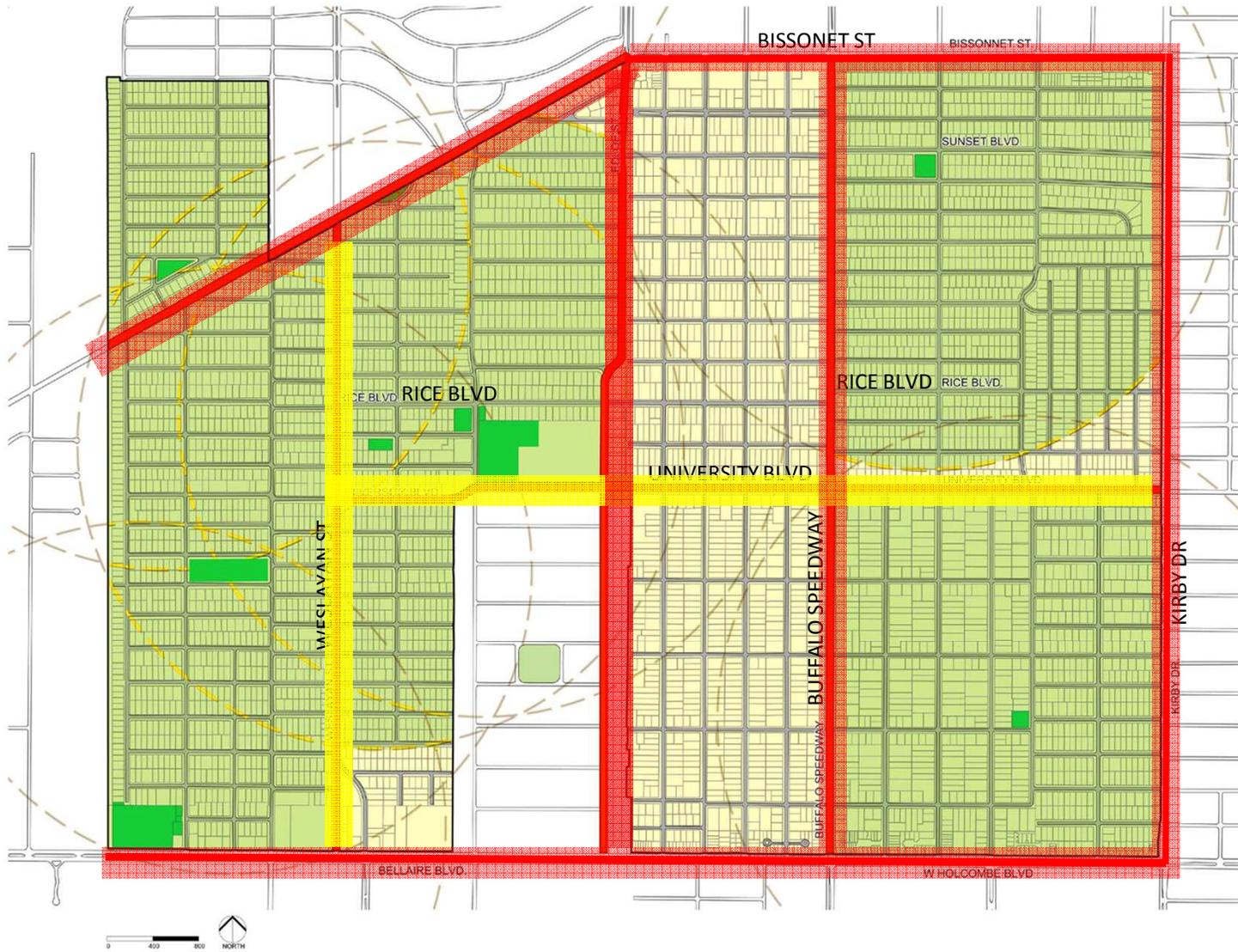
Capital Improvement Projects Funding

1. The City of West U does not include major park capital improvement projects in annual budgets
2. Capital improvement projects are funded by Friends of West University Parks or by taxpayer-approved City parks bonds (repaid by City taxes).



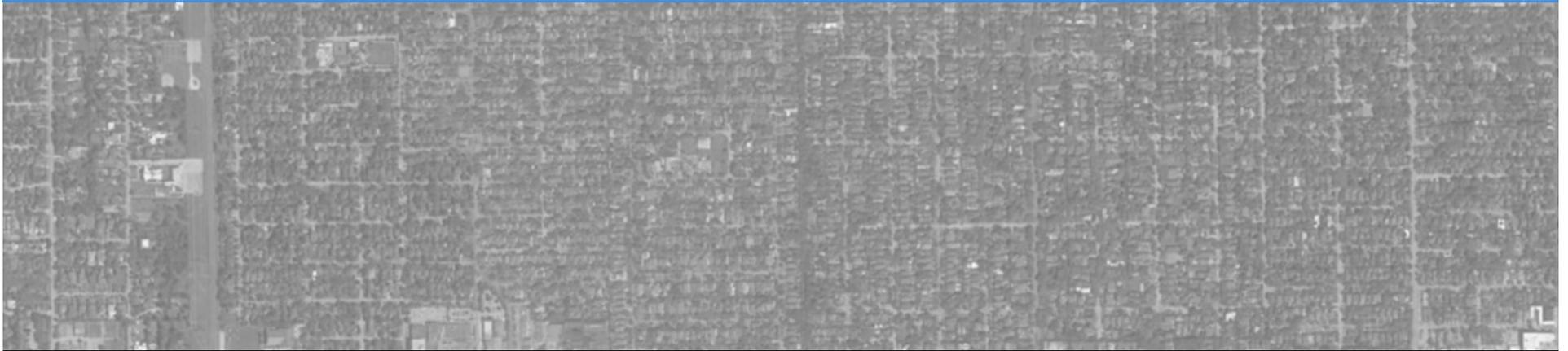
A Look at Today

Access to Parks
Pedestrian Mobility





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE
Master Plan Recommendations

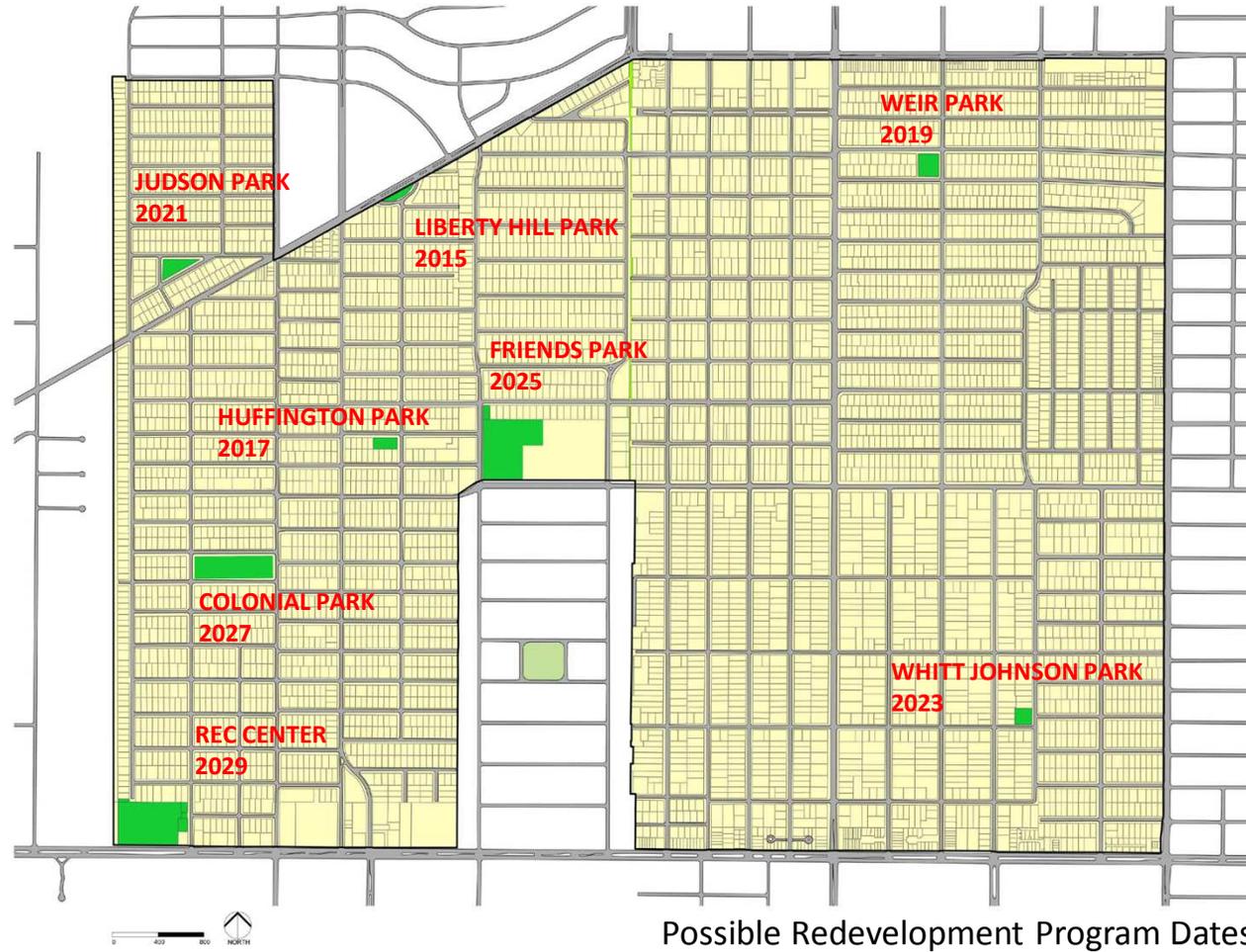


A Look at the Future

Major Park Redevelopment Program

Recommendation

Establish a phased program to evaluate, design and redevelop each park over the next 15 years.

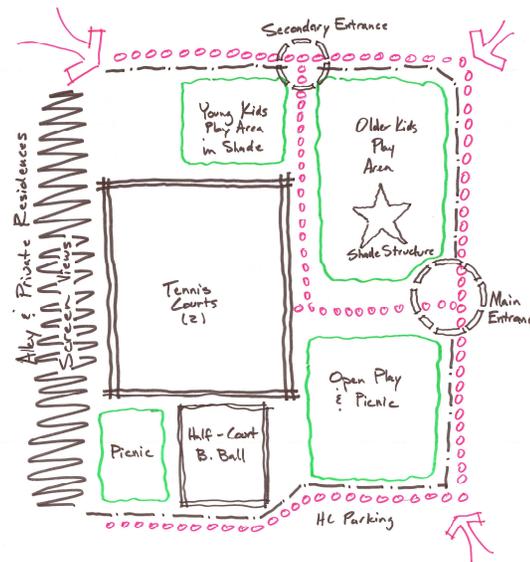
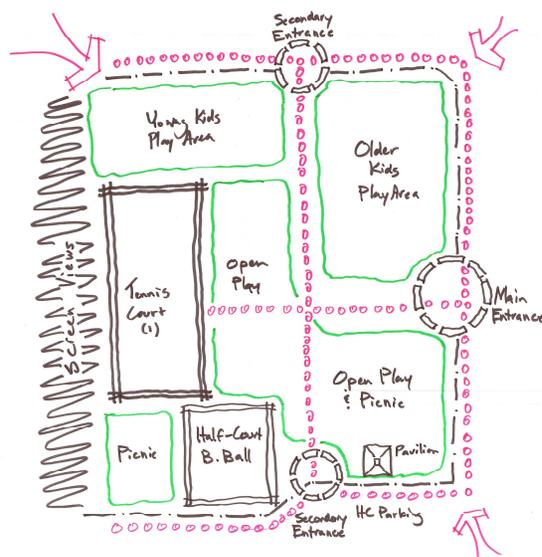


A Look at the Future

Major Park Redevelopment Program

PROCESS

- Address one park every two years
- Evaluate preferences of park users and community needs
- Evaluate conditions and performance of the park
- Evaluate surrounding neighborhood conditions and pedestrian access
- Consider a variety of improvements – up to complete redesign as warranted



EXAMPLE CONCEPT DIAGRAMS

A Look at the Future

Major Park Redevelopment Program

STAKEHOLDERS

- Residents around the park
- Park users
- Parks Board – balanced view of overall park system
- Friends of West U Parks
- Parks Department Staff
- Design Professionals



BUDGET AND FUNDING

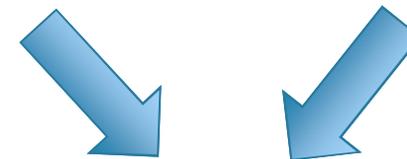
- Allocate \$250,000 to \$500,000 for each park depending on park size and project scope
- Work with Friends to determine target share for each



\$



\$



PROJECT BUDGET

A Look at the Future

Next Generation Parks

Recommendations

1. **West U population is becoming more diverse and global. Parks Facilities should reflect evolving needs and interests of the community.**
2. **Be proactive to encourage new residents to be involved and vocal about their needs**
 - **Consider non-traditional facilities and programs to supplement familiar park amenities.**
 - **Continue informal staff observation and communication regarding public preferences and desires.**
 - **Conduct a Five Year Follow-up preference survey in 2020 to obtain updated feedback.**
 - **Public events are gateways to civic involvement. Continue parks-based events that engage new residents.**



A Look at the Future

Next Generation Parks



A Look at the Future

Next Generation Parks



A Look at the Future

Partnerships and Cooperation

Recommendations

1. Continue key partnership with Friends of West U Parks.
2. Explore cooperative arrangements with other agencies and non-profit organizations
 - Joint-use arrangements
 - Cooperative development
 - Planning Coordination
3. Work with Friends to explore expanding corporate sponsorships and partnerships



A Look at the Future

Definition

Unstructured Open Space – mowed lawn areas that allow a variety of activities.

Conclusion

Survey results ranked Unstructured Open Space high. Unstructured Open Space is short supply in West U.



Unstructured Open Space

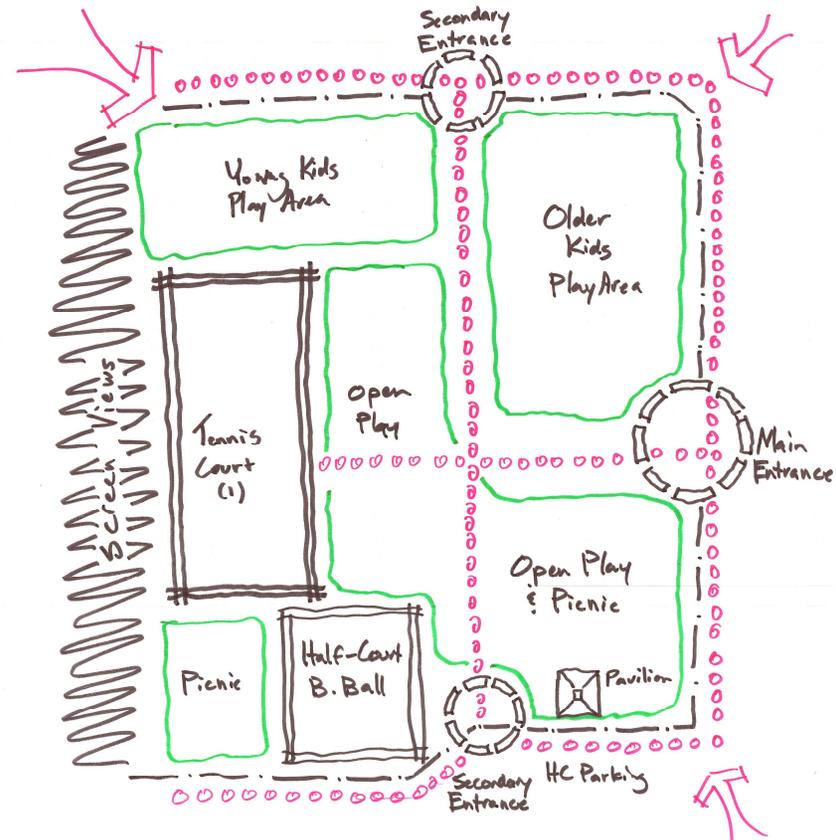


A Look at the Future

Unstructured Open Space

Recommendations:

1. Explore ways to increase unstructured open space in existing parks.
 - Consider replacing one tennis court at Wier Park with open play lawn
 - Consider replacing one basketball half-court at Whitt Johnson with open play lawn

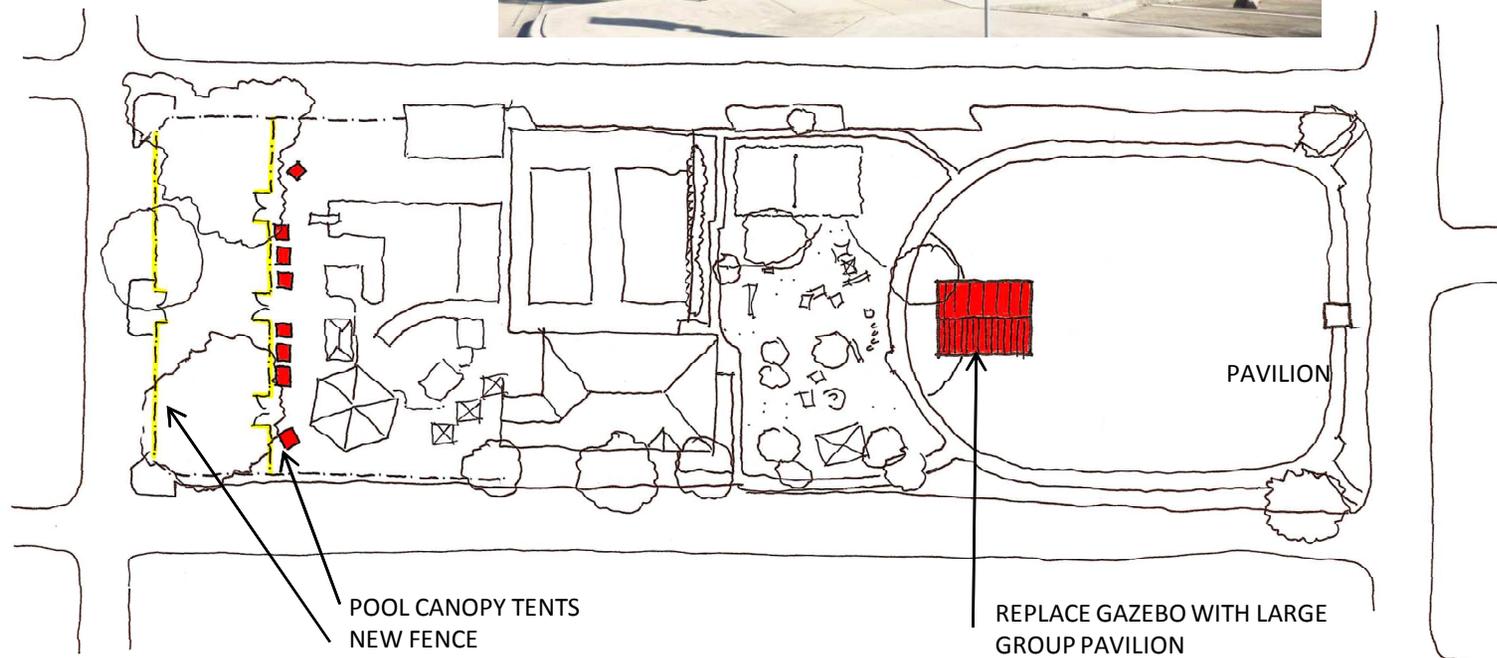


A Look at the Future

Unstructured Open Space

Recommendations:

- Replace pavilion on east side of Colonial Park to allow for larger gatherings
- Add new fence with double gates between picnic area and pool to allow for use of picnic area during off season of pool.

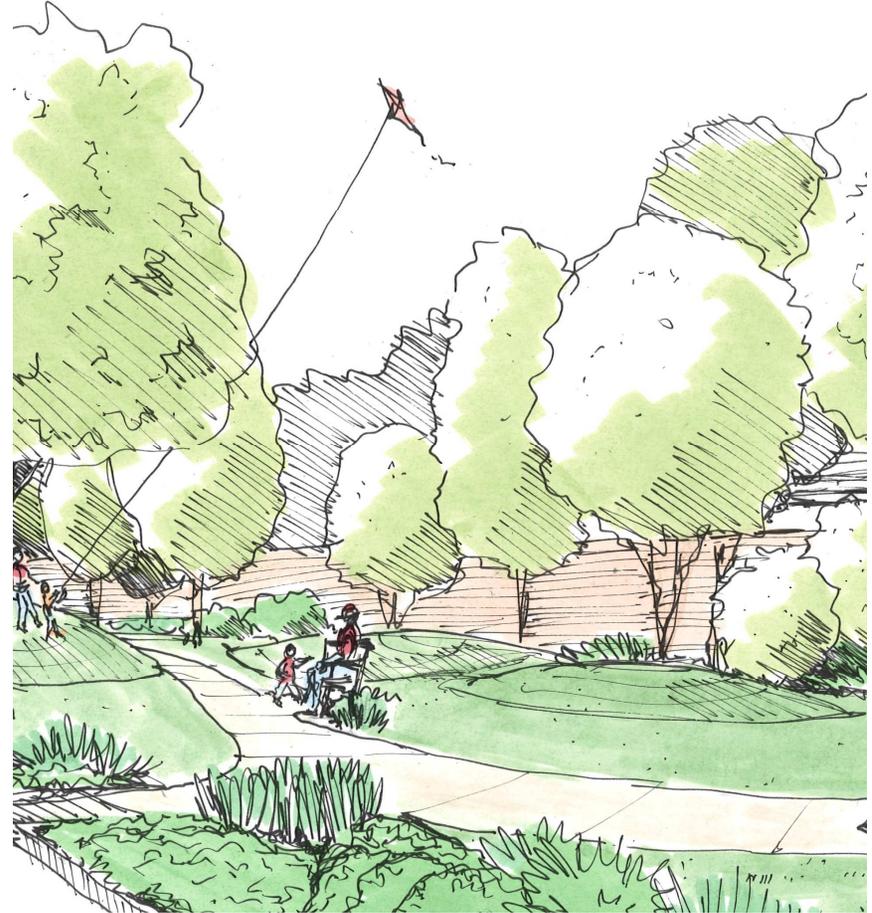


A Look at the Future

Unstructured Open Space

Recommendations:

2. Seek opportunities to add unstructured open space to the park system
 - Consider expanding existing parks by acquiring adjacent lots as available
 - Pursue conversion of a portion of Poor Farm Ditch along Edloe to park space

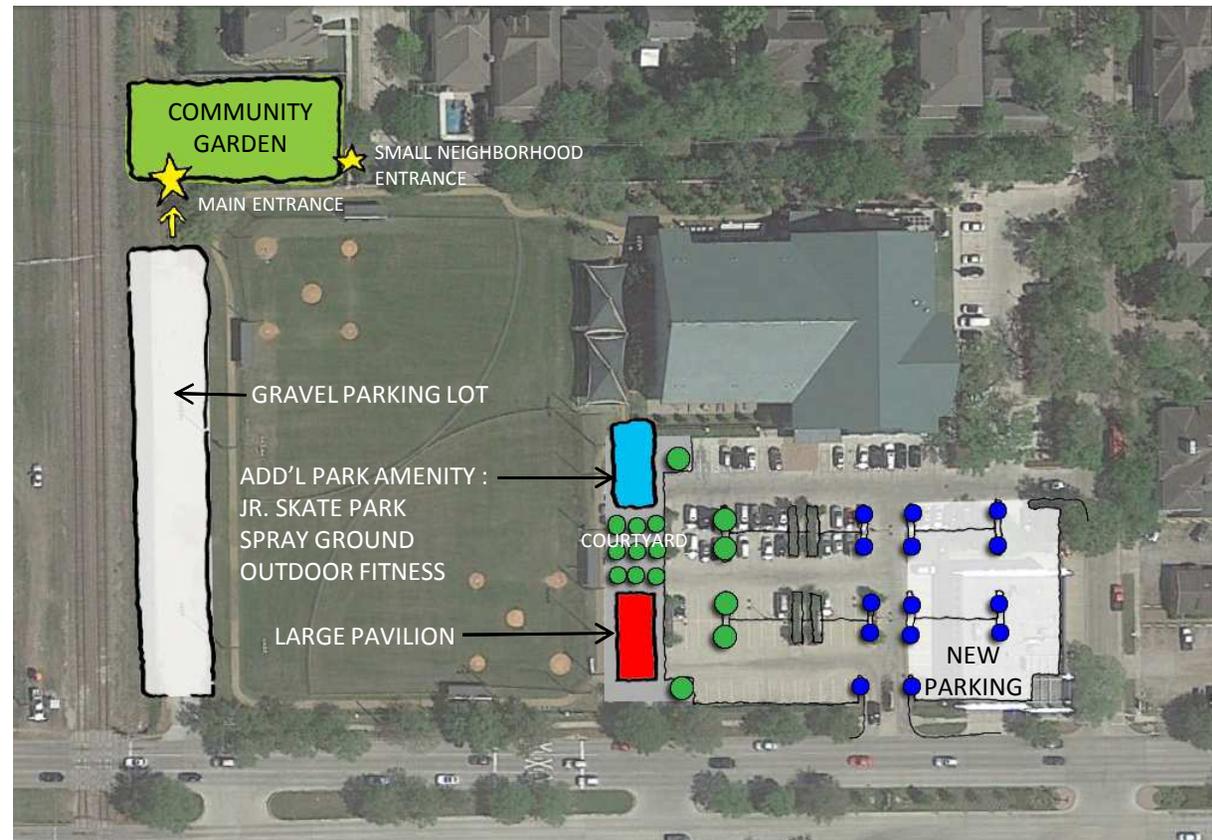


A Look at the Future

Increase Usage of Underutilized Spaces

Recommendations:

1. Expand outdoor recreation opportunities at the Rec Center:
 - Acquire property at corner of Bellaire and West Point – convert to parking
 - Create large group open air pavilion and sprayground along west end of parking lot
 - Create community garden in city-owned lot on Community Dr. Access from expanded parking lot along railroad tracks.
2. Explore ways to make Liberty Hill Park usable for unstructured open space.



A Look at the Future

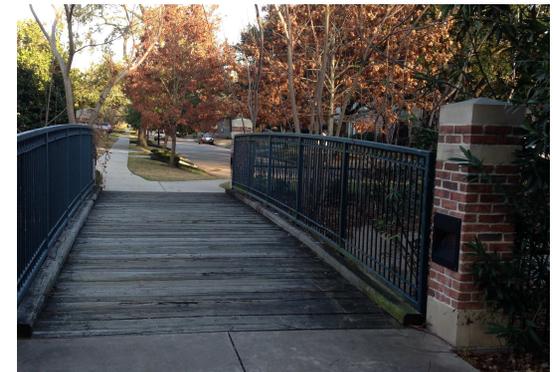
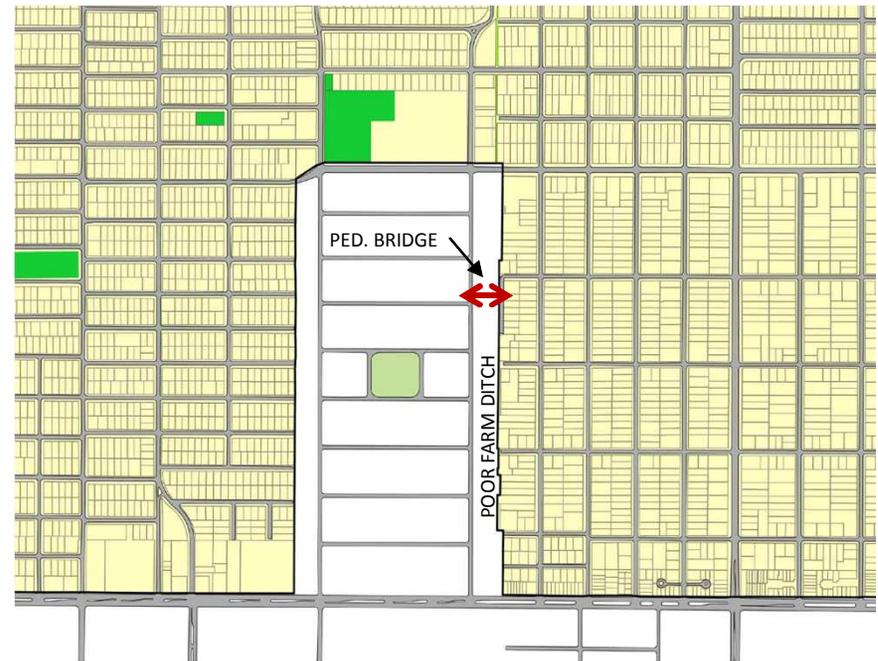
PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY

Conclusion

West U has limited parkland and people of all backgrounds love to walk, jog and bicycle along streets and other public areas.

Recommendations:

1. Explore ways optimize residents' ability to enjoy public ways and to access parks on bike and foot.
 - Consider cooperating with Southside Place to install pedestrian bridge across Poor Farm Ditch south of University
 - Ensure bike racks are well located within all parks.



A Look at the Future

LINEAR OPEN SPACE

Conclusion

West U residents want to walk/run on paths in parks and open space. West U parks do not allow adequately for that activity. Linear tracts of public land within and near West U offer opportunities without purchasing new parkland.

Recommendations:

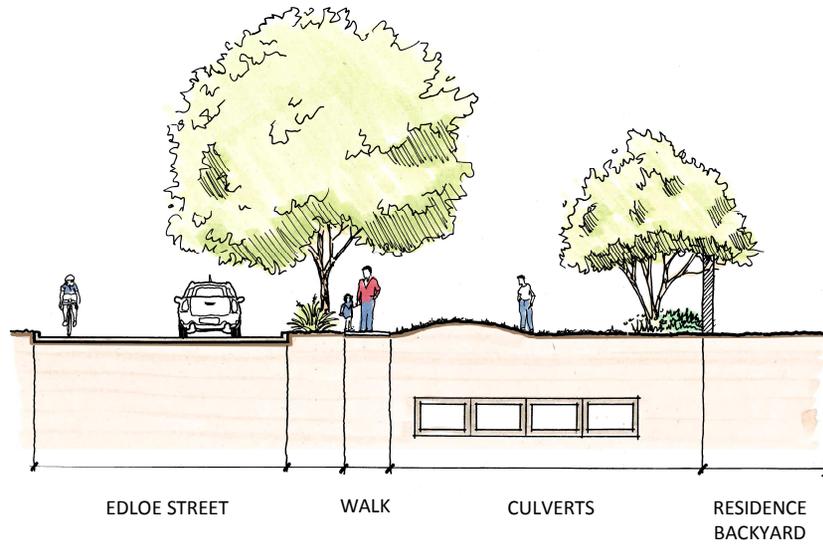
1. Pursue conversion of Poor Farm Ditch between Sunset and Rice to linear open space, including unstructured lawn.
 - Valuable resource with excellent location
 - Ditch can be a blight or an amenity
 - Issue has been studied previously with Harris County Flood Control District and found viable
 - Long-term, costly project



A Look at the Future

LINEAR OPEN SPACE

Poor Farm Ditch

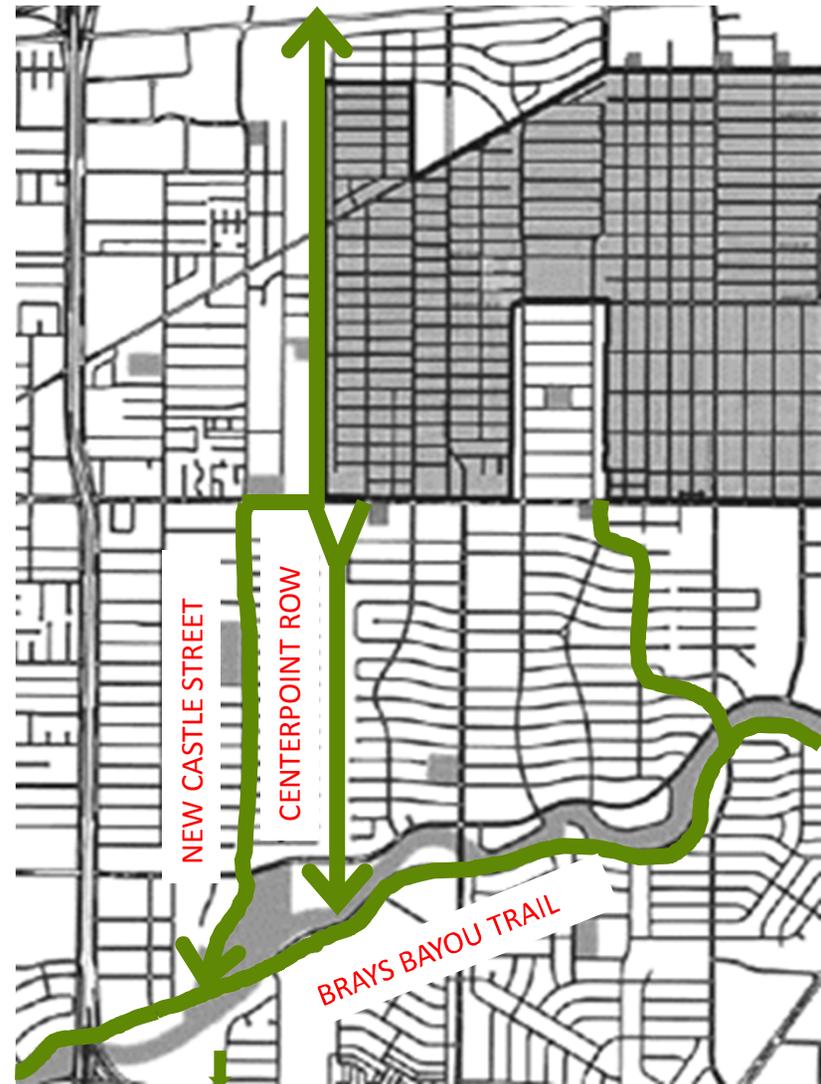
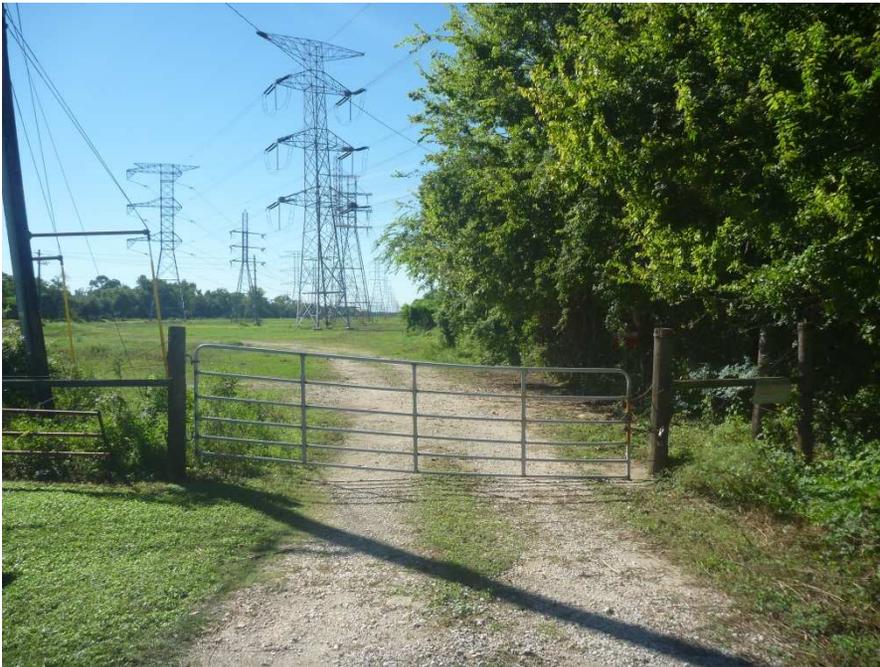


A Look at the Future

LINEAR OPEN SPACE

Recommendations:

2. Coordinate with public agencies, non-profit organizations and CenterPoint to create public Hike & Bike Trail extending north-south to Brays Bayou and Memorial Park



A Look at the Future

CITY CENTER

Conclusion

The City Center is a vital area of West U, contributing to a unique small-town atmosphere and sense of place. Improvement projects over the last 10 years have made dramatic improvements. The City Center must continue to be attractive and functional for pedestrians and drivers, children and adults.

Recommendations:

1. Explore cooperative efforts with WU Elementary School to enhance public use of school grounds after hours and to improve outdoor recreation facilities at the campus.

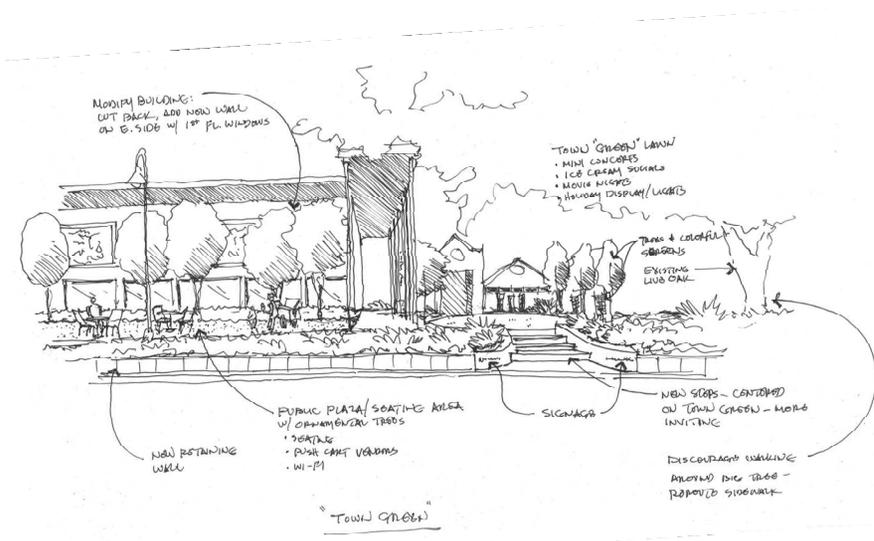
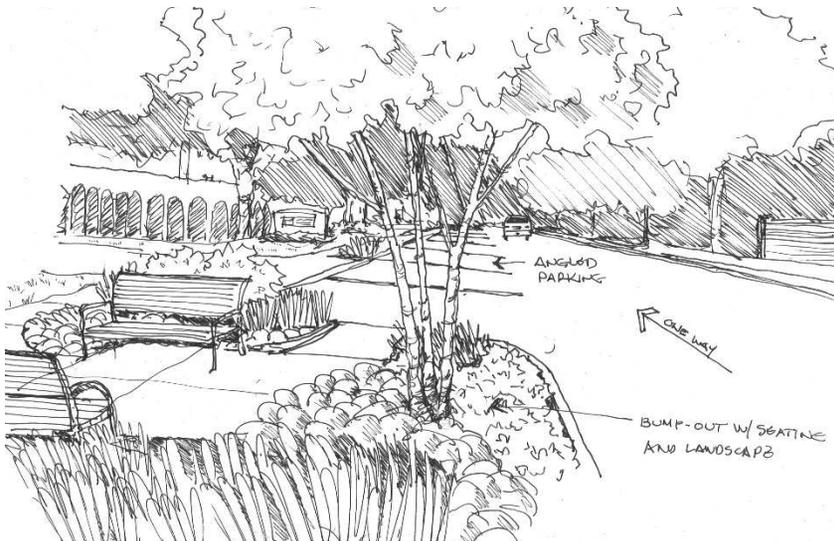


A Look at the Future

CITY CENTER

Recommendations:

- 2. Pursue street, sidewalk and landscape improvements along Auden.
 - Enhance pedestrian safety
 - Improve appearance
 - Reduce congestion
 - Improve pedestrian mobility at Library and Community Center



Conclusions

1. **West U currently uses Parks budget for operations, repairs and replacements**
2. **West U currently relies on Friends for funding major capital improvement projects**
3. **The citizen survey indicates a strong preference to avoid tax increases to pay for parks**
4. **West U has previously used bond debt to pay for major sidewalk, street and lighting projects that have made substantial improvements for walking, jogging and biking within the community**
5. **West U currently has significant bond debt repayment obligations, however repayment of current bonds over the next several years will enable new bond debt without tax increases**

Recommendations

1. **Develop a broad-based strategy to fund parks acquisition and capital projects**
 - **Include major park improvement projects in long-range planning for the City annual budget**
 - **Explore grants and interagency assistance**
 - Tx Parks & Wildlife
 - Tx Department of Transportation
 - Harris County Precinct Three
 - Harris County Flood Control District
 - H-GAC
 - **Work with Friends of West U Parks to establish a structured, stable project strategy. Schedule major projects and set targets for Friends and City share.**
 - **Consider strategy of bond financing with no-increased-taxes for major acquisition and/or development projects if needed outside of city budget and Friends assistance.**
 - **Explore private donations of property where appropriate**

Conclusions

- **While improvements have been made for walking access to parks for West U residents, the area between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway remains underserved.**
- **Public feedback indicates that passive, unstructured open space should be the focus for any new parkland.**
- **The community continues to be concerned about the ability of new parks to be ‘good neighbors’ to the surrounding residents. Parking, light and noise are concerns.**

Recommendations

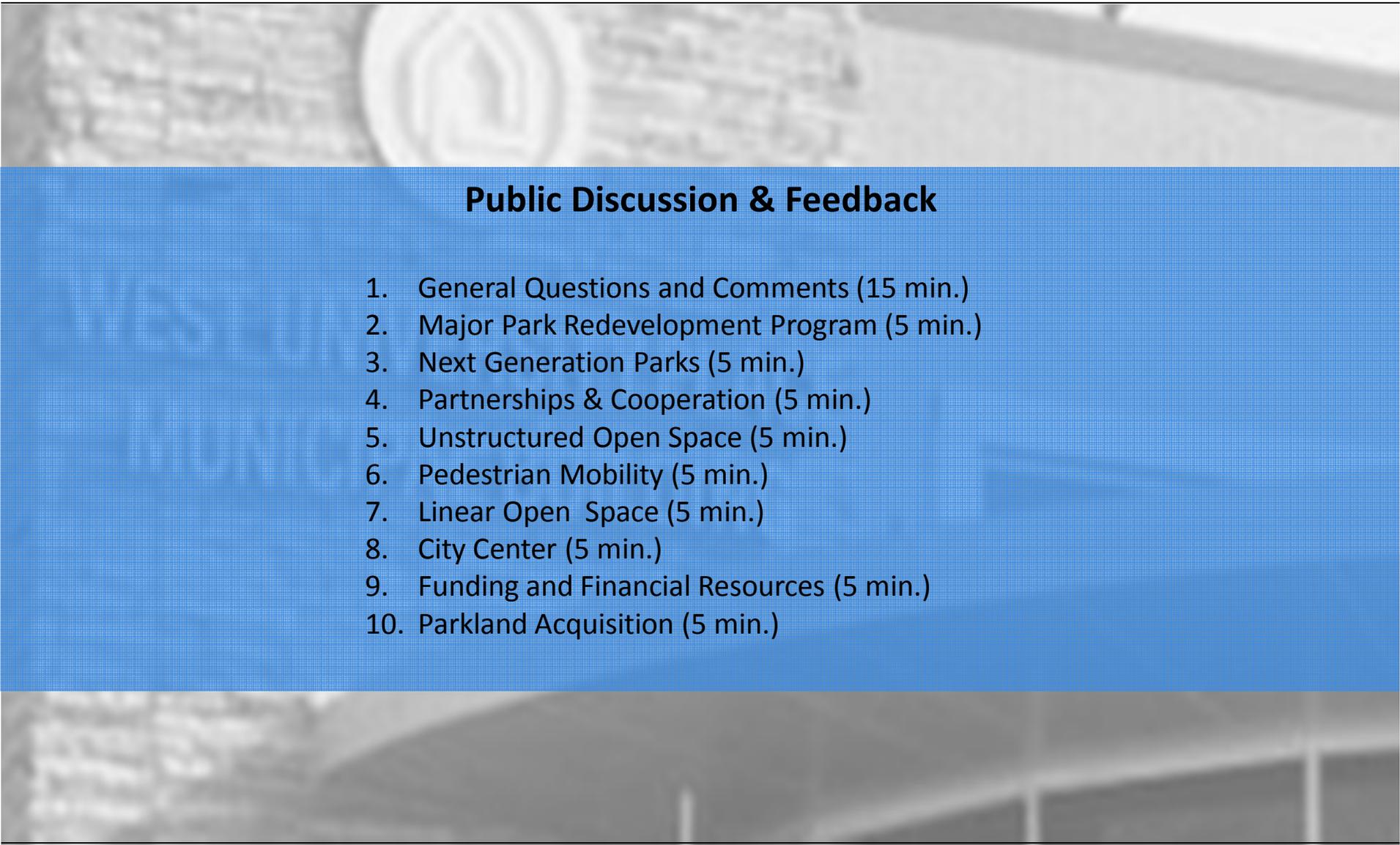
1. Pursue acquisition of additional property if certain parameters can be met:
 - within target area between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway, both north and south of University
 - No tax increase
 - Local neighbors' support

2. Work with residents within the target area to ensure property selection and planned improvements are good for the nearby residents

Recommendations

- 3. Focus development of new neighborhood park as passive, unstructured open space.**
- 4. Consider obtaining option on properties for future acquisition**
i.e. Lot at West Point & Bellaire (at Rec. Center)





Public Discussion & Feedback

1. General Questions and Comments (15 min.)
2. Major Park Redevelopment Program (5 min.)
3. Next Generation Parks (5 min.)
4. Partnerships & Cooperation (5 min.)
5. Unstructured Open Space (5 min.)
6. Pedestrian Mobility (5 min.)
7. Linear Open Space (5 min.)
8. City Center (5 min.)
9. Funding and Financial Resources (5 min.)
10. Parkland Acquisition (5 min.)

Public Discussion & Feedback



General Questions and Comments?

