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



Town Hall Meeting #1
October 20, 2014

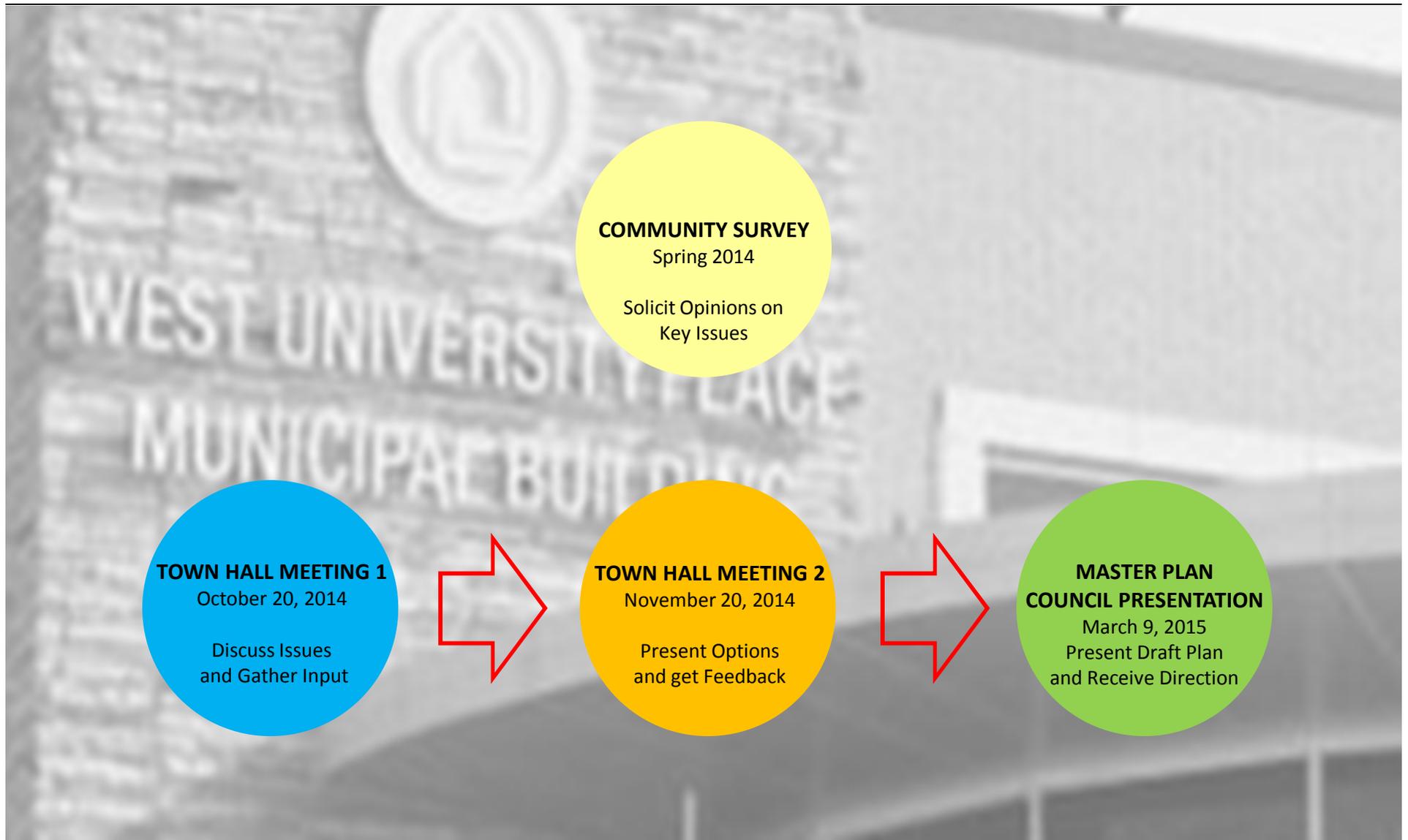


WHITE OAK STUDIO
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



INTRODUCTIONS

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS



TONIGHT'S AGENDA



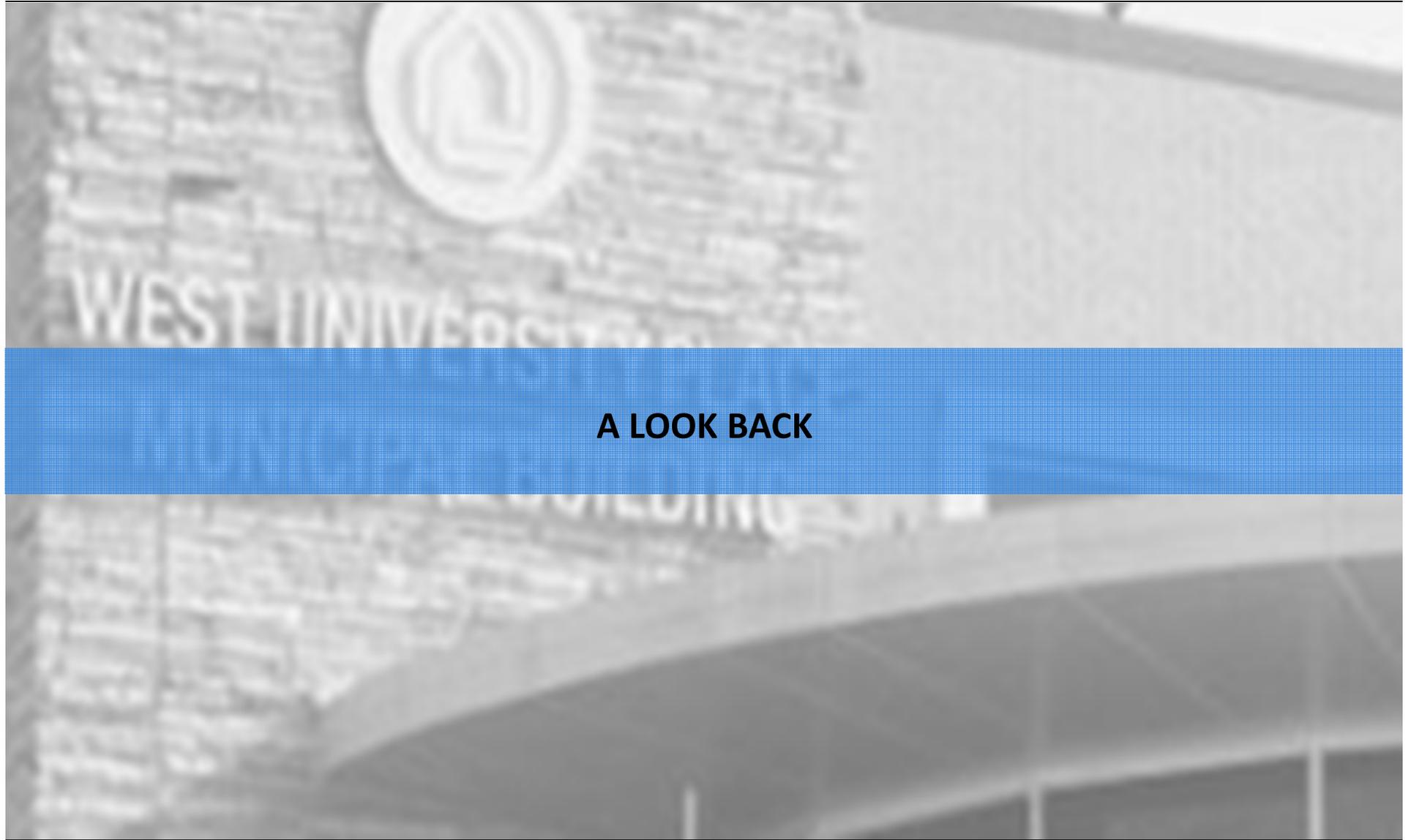
Presentation (1 hour)

A Look Back

A Look at Today

A Look at the Future

Public Discussion & Feedback (1 hour)



A LOOK BACK

Right Park in the Right Place

Achievements:

- Redeveloped Colonial Park as combined neighborhood and community park
- Upgraded all neighborhood parks
- Developed standards for park furnishings

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 Park Near Home

Achievements:

- Significant City investment in sidewalks, street lights, streets and intersections improves safety and access to parks
- Friends Park developed
- Liberty Hill remains undeveloped
- Develop the east end of Colonial Park as neighborhood park

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Ensure neighborhood park facilities within 5 to 10 minute walk from all homes
- 2. Encourage walking and biking to parks
- 3. Reduce barriers that discourage walking and biking to parks
- 4. Acquire land in key residential areas to add neighborhood parks
- 5. Develop existing unused parks in key locations



1 Park Service Areas
 West University Park
 Within 1/2 mile of a West U Park
 YMCA
 Within 1/2 mile of West U Elementary



2 Barriers
 Barrier to Pedestrian Access
 West University Park



3 Access to Parks
 West University Park
 Within 1/2 mile of a West U Park
 Barrier to Pedestrian Access
 West U Park easily accessible
 West U Park not easily accessible

Neighborhood park facilities should be available within 1/2 mile (5 -10 min. walk) of all homes. Busy streets and the Poor Farm Ditch impose barriers to pedestrian access, effectively limiting park service areas. The major effect of those barriers is that the homes between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway do not have adequate pedestrian access to neighborhood parks.

A Look Back

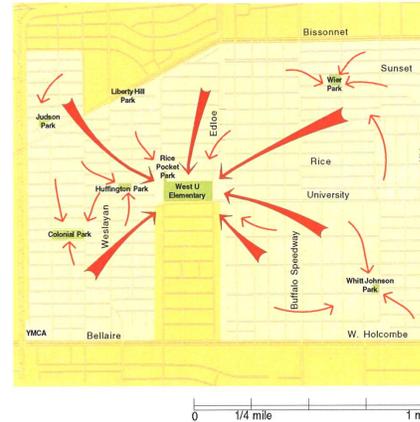
Performance of Master Plan Objectives

Mobility in the City

Achievements:

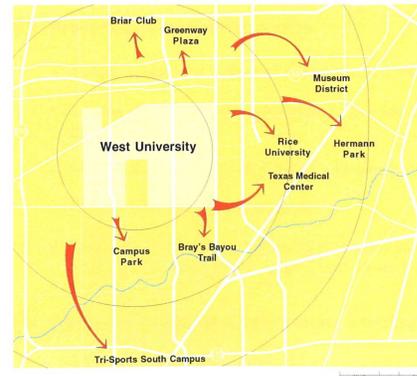
- Sidewalk, street and lighting program
- Pedestrian bridges at Poor Farm Ditch installed
- University Blvd. promenade – **not implemented**
- Delineate bike routes along key streets – **not implemented**

OBJECTIVES



Arrows indicate important pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to parks, school and city center

- ① Develop pedestrian linkages to the City Center and to parks
- ② Delineate bike routes along key streets within West U
- ③ Eliminate barriers to pedestrian movement
- ④ Enhance pedestrian access and safety in and around park



Key pedestrian and bicycling destinations outside of West University

- ⑤ Work with City of Houston to encourage walking and bike connections to key locations out of the city

Civic Spaces – Green Spaces

Achievements:

- City center streetscape improvements
- New restaurants and shops in city center
- Friends Park: civic space and urban landmark
- Entry sign at Wesleyan/ Bissonnet
- West U Elementary School grounds improved
- Considering Auden streetscape improvements

OBJECTIVES

Enhance the hometown character of West University

Civic spaces – sidewalks, school grounds, municipal buildings and city entrances – are important to the function and appearance of the city. They are landmarks and gathering places, visible from the car and accessible on foot. Civic spaces are a vital part of hometown character.

- ① Ensure the City Center functions as the heart of West U — civic, commercial, open space, institutions and pedestrian environment
- ② Encourage the ongoing commercial viability of the City Center
- ③ Develop parks and other civic open spaces as urban landmarks
- ④ Provide safe convenient places for people to walk in neighborhoods. Sidewalks are important civic spaces.



The City Center is the focal point of West University, the magnet that holds the city together and makes the city different from surrounding Houston. The Center's blend of commercial, civic public school, open space and institutional facilities represents what is unique about West University Place.

Recreation Facilities for the Future

Achievements:

- Added programs and facilities at Recreation Center
- Added indoor swimming and recreation facilities at Recreation Center
- Enhanced pool at Colonial Park

OBJECTIVES

Provide recreation facilities to meet the long term needs of the entire community

1 Current facilities primarily provide for young children and families. Seniors and young teens should be better accommodated.

2 Provide facilities for adult sport leagues and expanded youth sports leagues

- Outdoor leagues: softball and soccer
- Indoor leagues: basketball and volleyball

3 Broaden capabilities and capacity for swimming

- Accommodate variety of users: families, lap swimmers, lessons, exercise, teens
- Accommodate volume of swimmers during peak season

4 City-wide recreation facilities should be located primarily at community parks

5 Ensure tennis is provided in adequate facilities at appropriate locations

- Limit facilities in Neighborhood Parks to single courts where possible. Multiple courts dominate the limited space of small neighborhood parks and attract excessive vehicular traffic
- Multiple tennis courts are appropriate in Community Parks, where there is more space and provisions for traffic and parking

6 Provide facilities for dog owners to exercise dogs in an appropriate setting



Recreation Facilities for the Future

Achievements:

- New streets, sidewalks and ramps dramatically improve access to parks
- Skate park not pursued
- Dog park not developed

ACTION

A Ensure parks are accessible to seniors and mobility impaired residents

- Review access within and around parks and reconstruct sidewalks, steps and ramps to provide walkable access
- Add adequate seating in shaded areas
- Add planting, screens, low fences to existing parks to provide appropriate delineation of spaces within parks to allow choices about proximity to other activities
- Provide continuous, safe sidewalks and curb ramps in the traditional sidewalk configuration



A Develop a Skate Park

- Consider joint development and use
- Accommodate parking, noise and high activity



A Develop an animal recreation facility at city-owned property on Braeswood

- Provide appropriate separation from other activities
- Accommodate auto access and parking with pedestrian access
- Coordinate development with interest groups



A Monitor city-wide need for active recreation, such as tennis and basketball

- Reduce active recreation facilities such as tennis and basketball in Neighborhood Parks and relocate to Community Parks

Recreation Facilities for the Future

Achievements:

- Acquired and developed new Recreation Center

ACTION

A Acquire the Southwest YMCA and develop as a Community Park

Since 1990, there has been discussion of the Southwest YMCA moving to another campus, and the property being offered for sale. This property offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity for the City of West University to dramatically enhance park and recreation facilities for West U residents. West U currently does not have an appropriate, functioning Community Park that has adequate open space, recreation facilities, vehicular access, parking and separation from residences. Due to the scarcity of available land in the city, it is probable that without this property the City would never have a Community Park with appropriate size and facilities. It is vital that the City not miss the opportunity to acquire this facility.

- Complement facilities at Colonial Park – Colonial Park swimming and indoor recreation facilities are frequently overburdened. This facility offers opportunity to relieve overcrowding and space limitations.
- Athletic fields provide opportunity to offer sports activities:
 - Adult team sports
 - Practice space for children's sports leagues
 - Unstructured open space for West U residents
- Gymnasium is an important recreation amenity for West U residents
 - Adult, teen, youth and children's sports leagues (basketball, volleyball)
 - Space for large exercise and dance classes
 - Unstructured recreation for all residents
 - Teen Activities – sports, parties and classes
- Existing parking lots and access from Bellaire Blvd. enable vehicular access without disturbing nearby residents



A LOOK AT TODAY

A Look At Today

Survey Results

- 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



CITIZEN PREFERENCES

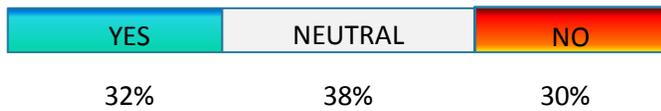
- Parks within safe walking distance (70%)
- Shaded seating / benches (51%)
- Open, unstructured green spaces (45%)
- Walking paths in parks (42%)
- Playgrounds (48%)
- Linear parks with trails (37%)
- Picnic Tables (32%)
- Native plant habitat area (28%)
- Open air pavilion (25%)
- Community Garden (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

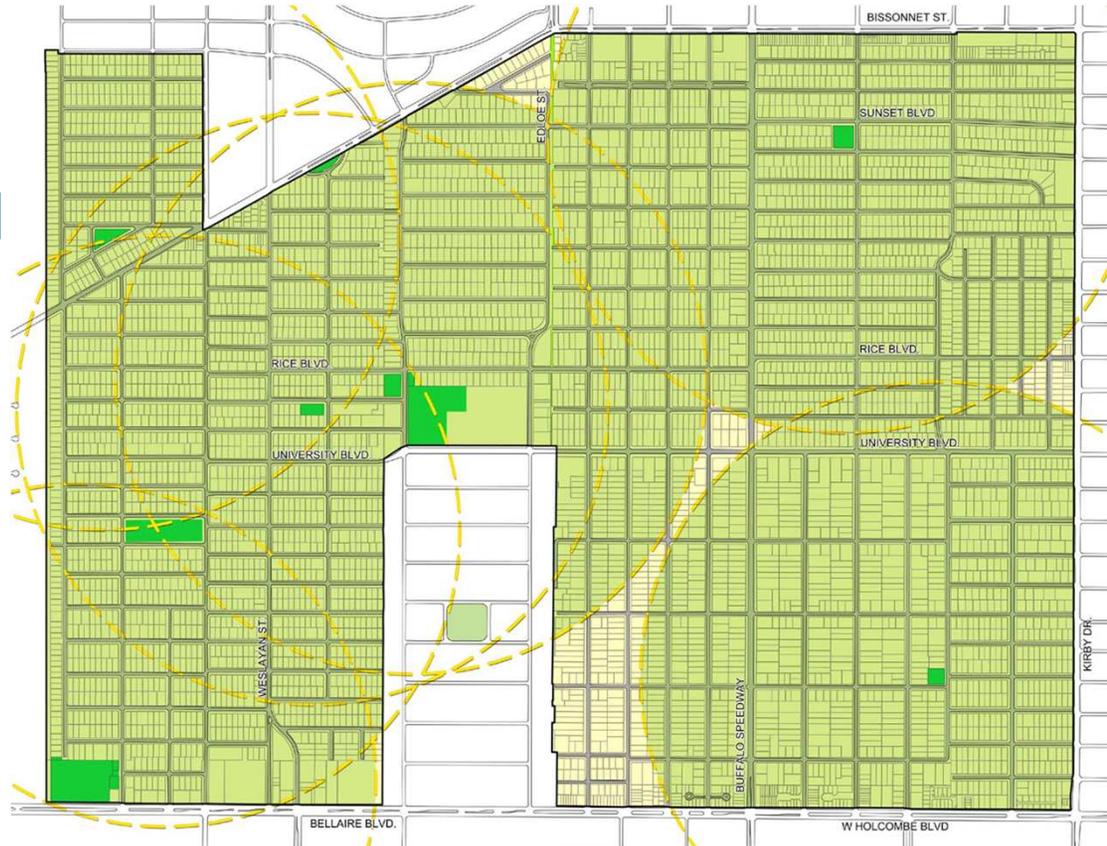
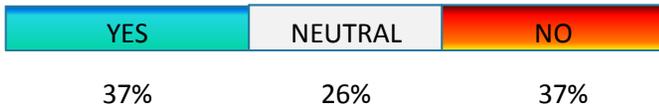
- **Balanced Response:**



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:

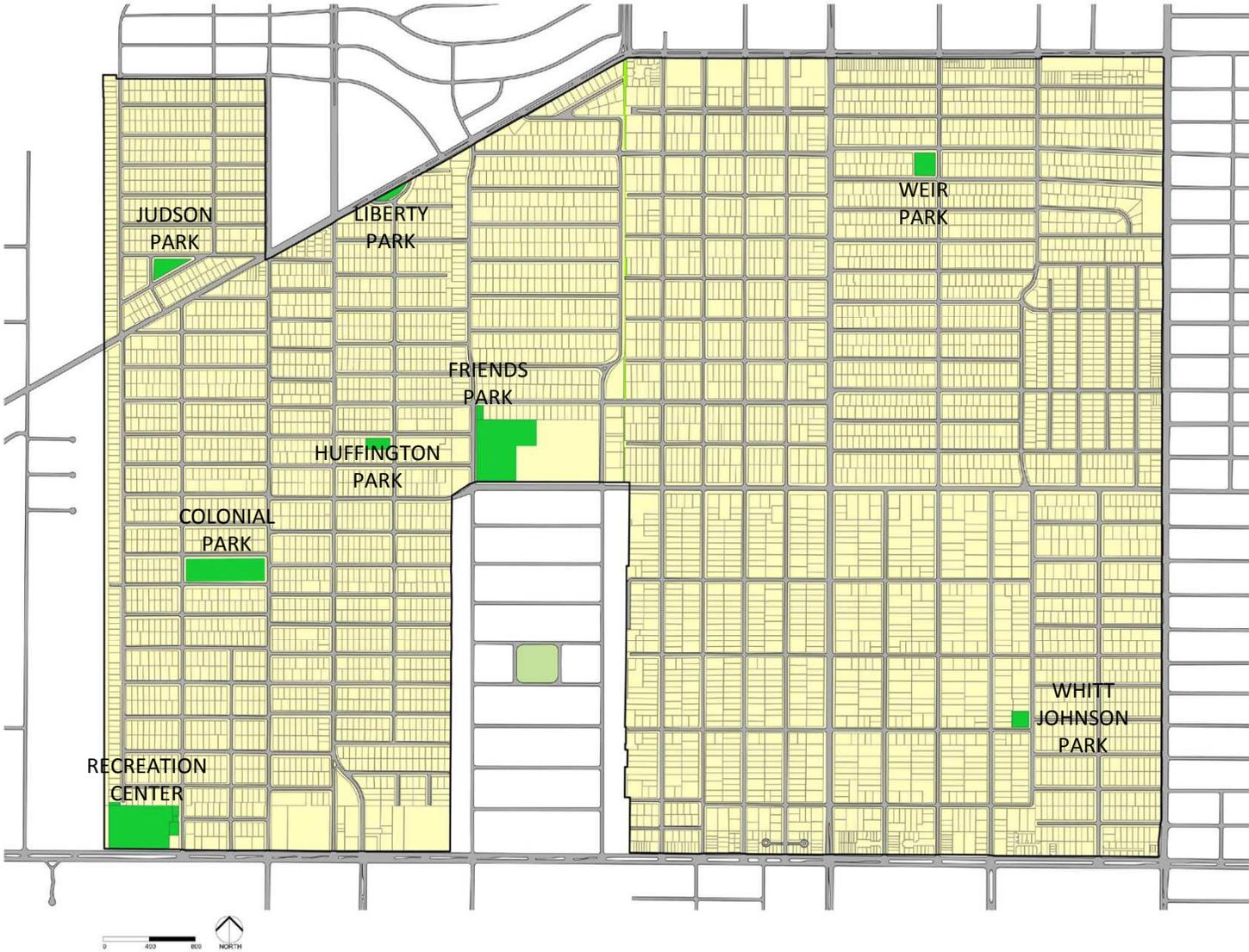


Corporate Sponsorship:



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. Re-consider dedication of space to tennis court
3. Playground areas significant separation limits parent supervision

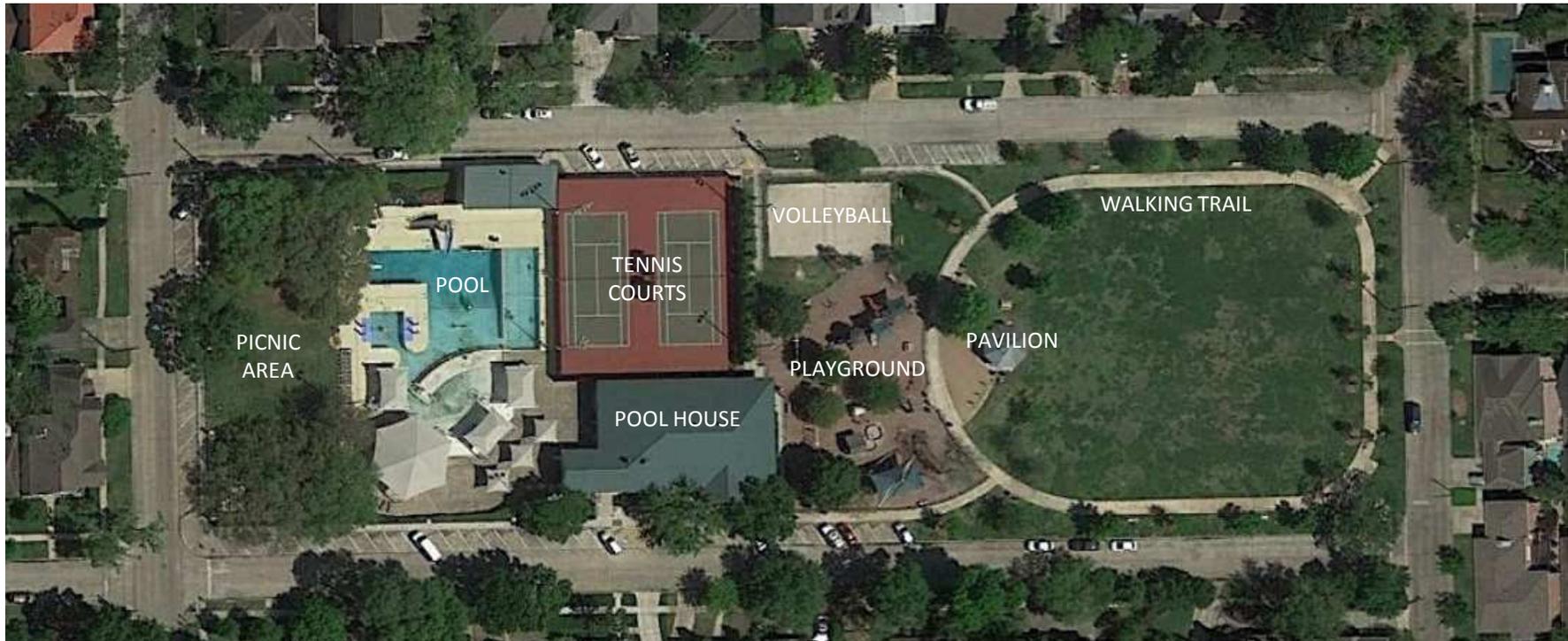


A Look at Today

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. East end of park needs terminus.
3. Picnic area west of pool inaccessible in off-season.

A Look at Today

Colonial Park
Park Assessment & Analysis



A Look at Today

Neighborhood Park

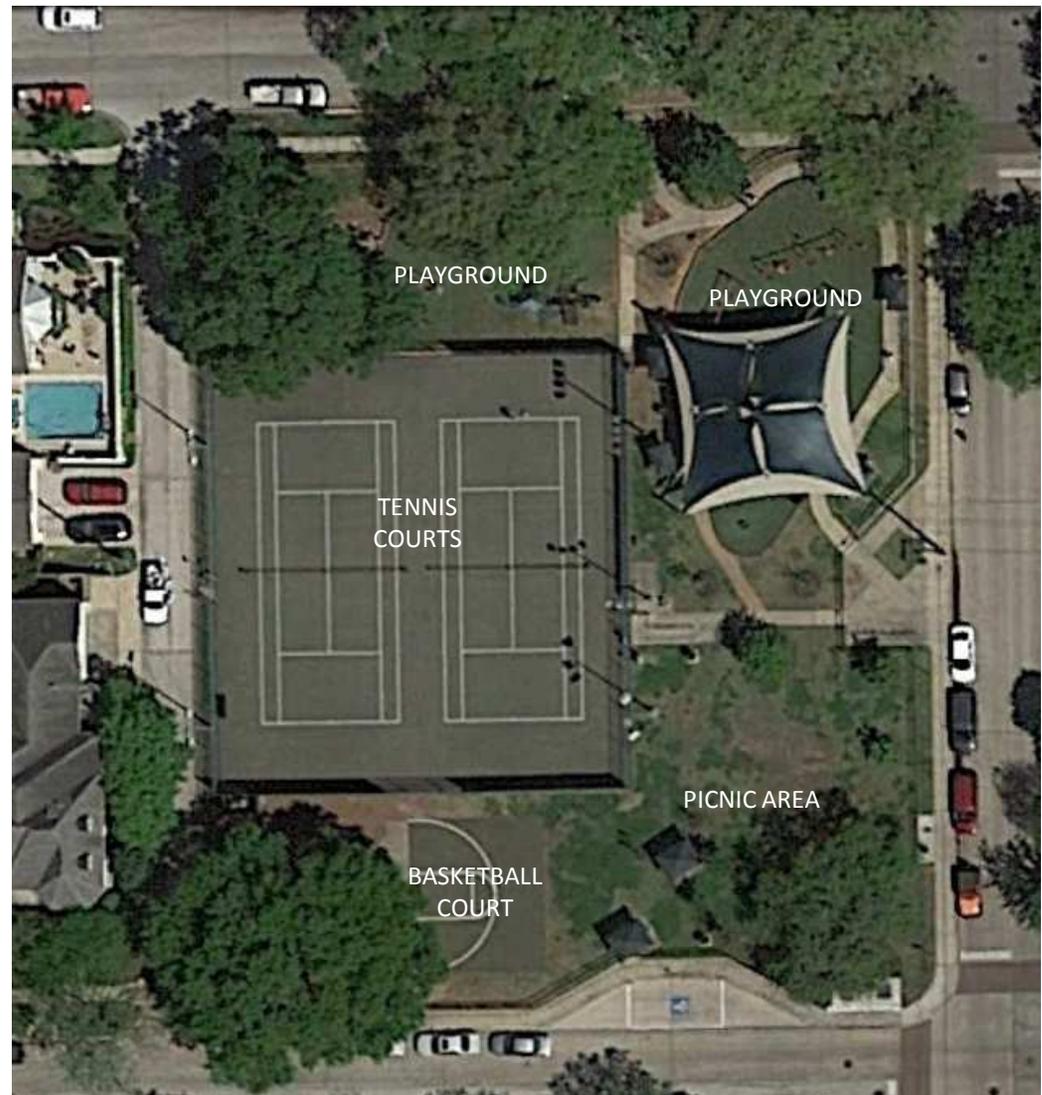
Redeveloped in 2008

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

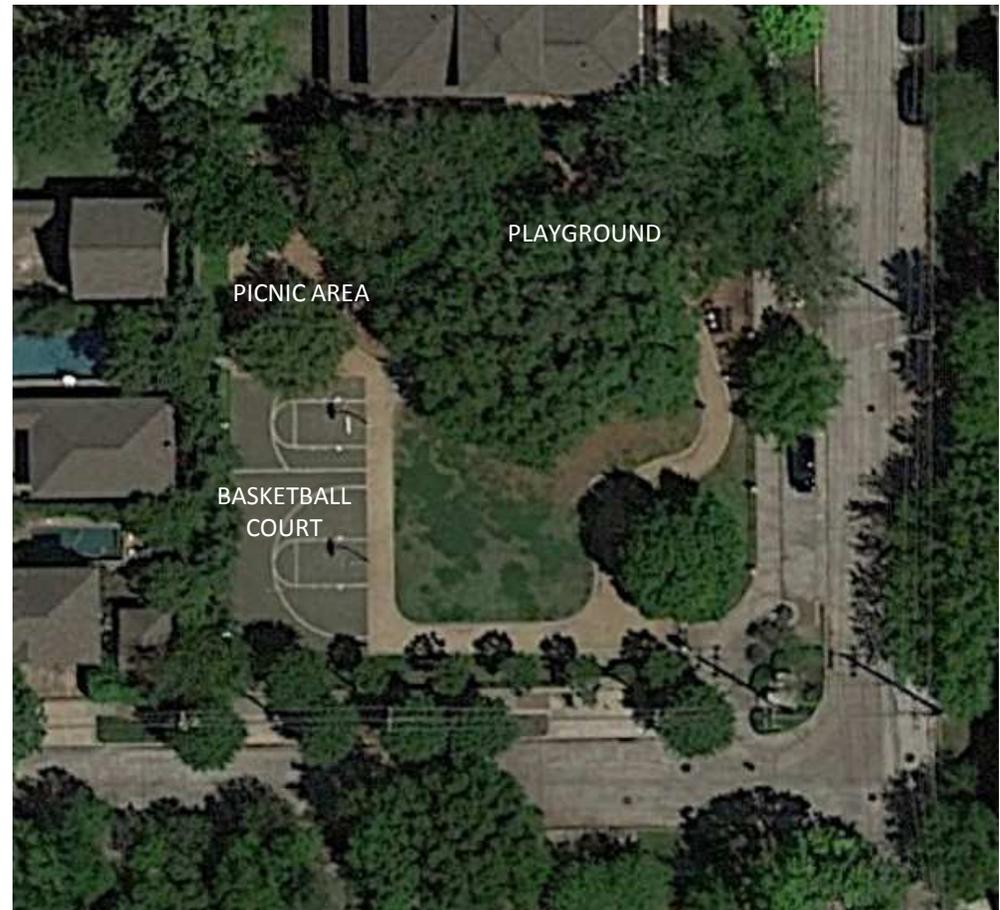
Redeveloped 2013

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

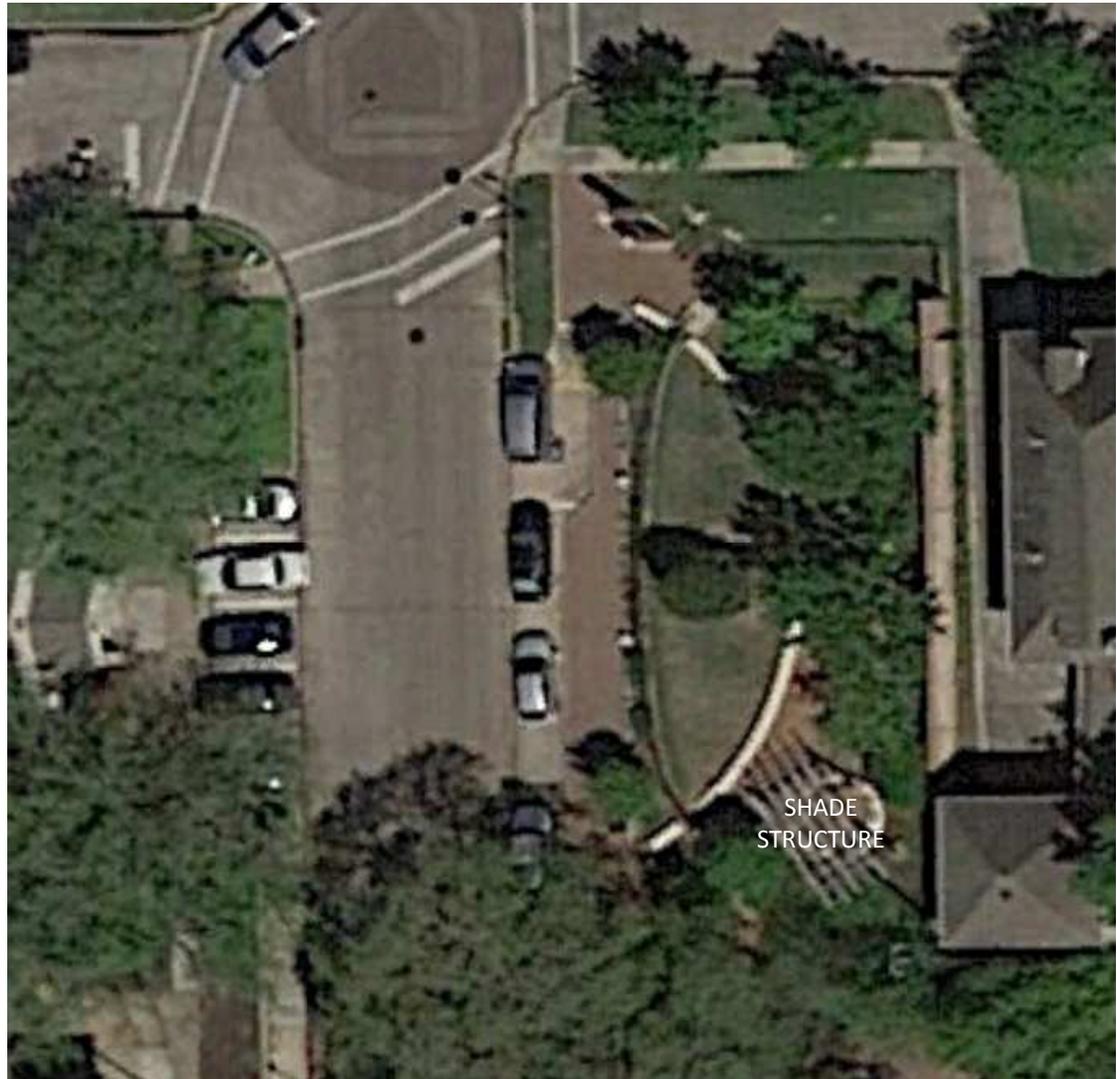
Neighborhood Park

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

Recreation Center Park Assessment & Analysis

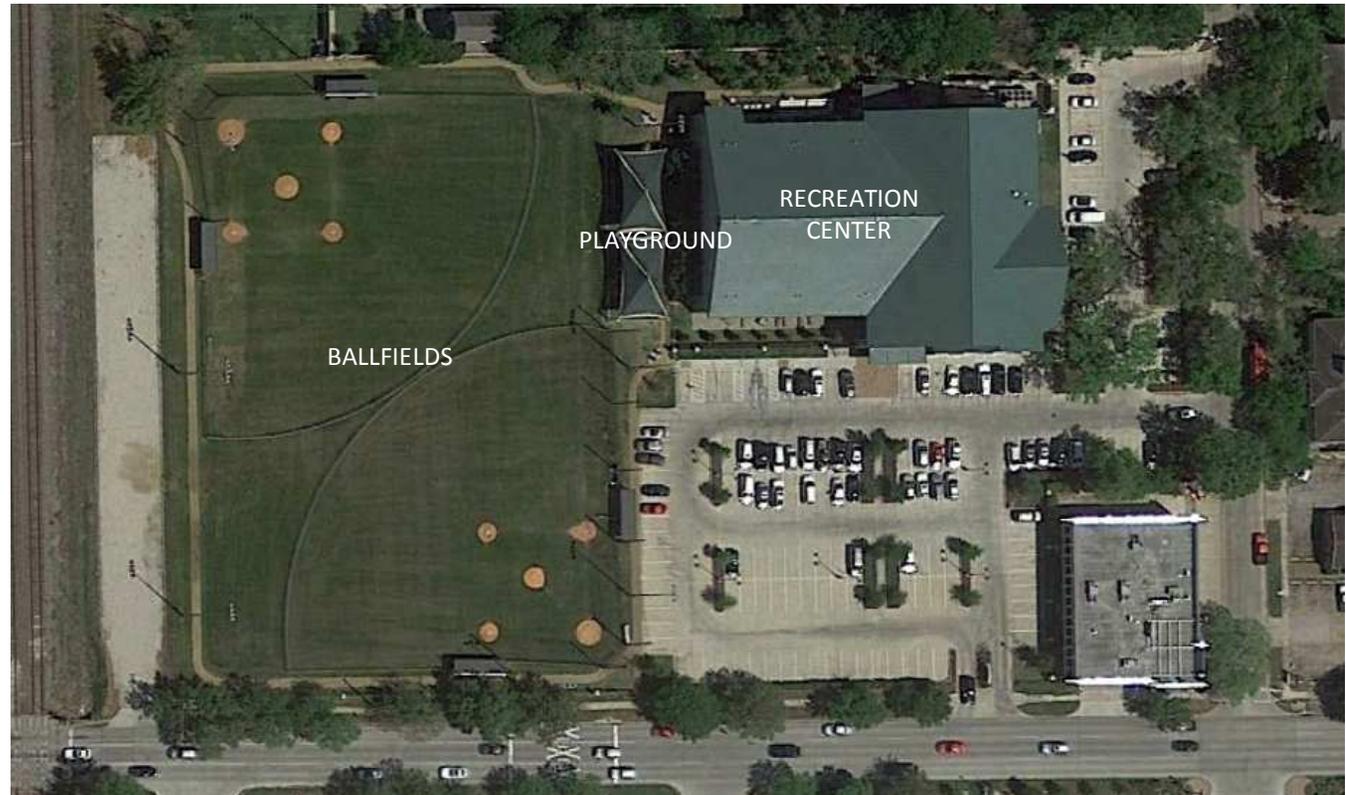
Community Park

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

Demographic and Population Changes

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 by Rice demographer Stephen Klineberg 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.



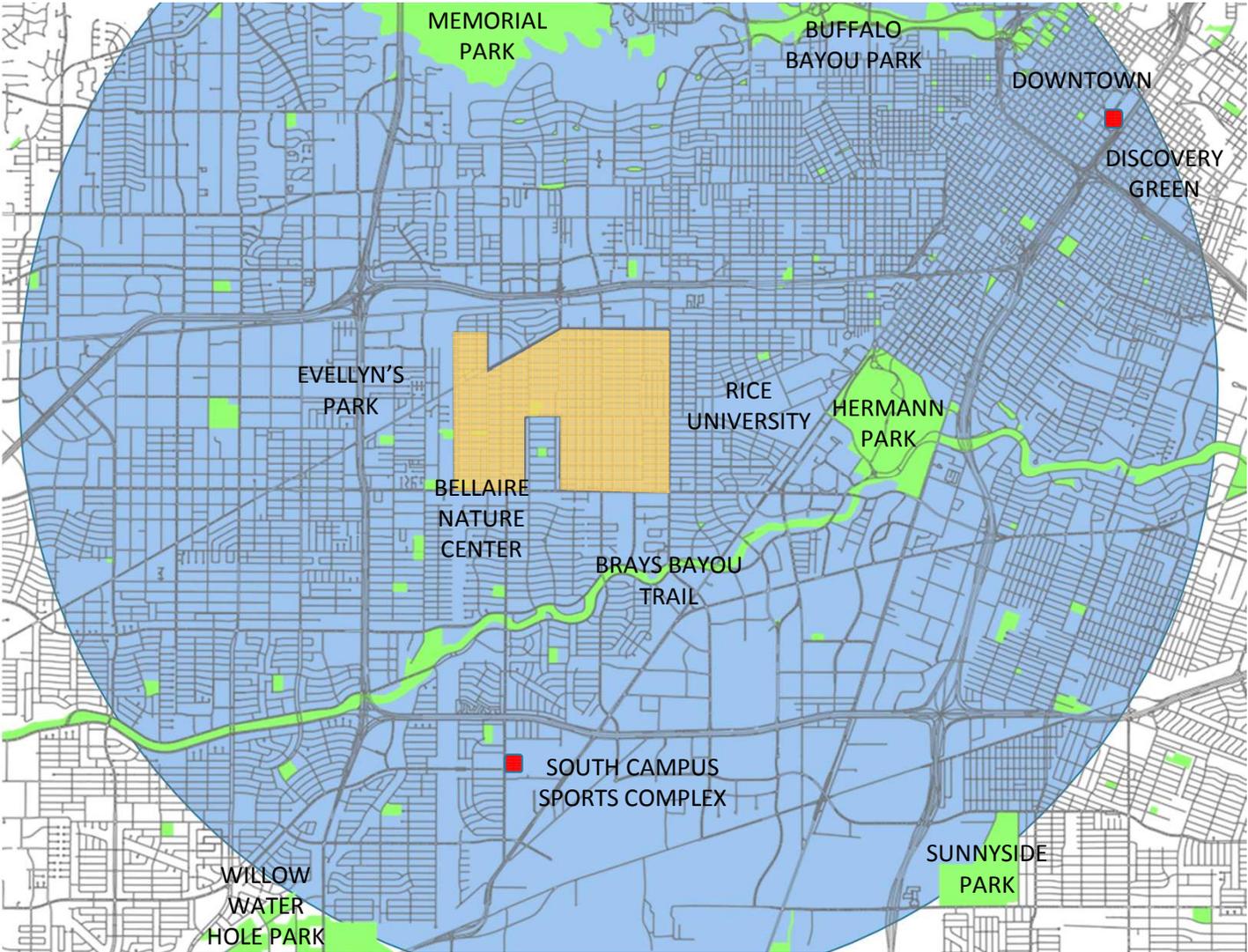
A Look at Today

Demographic and Population Changes



A Look at Today

Parks and Open Space Resources Outside WUP



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
- Out of style after about 10 years



Parks & Recreation Department 2014 Operating Budget

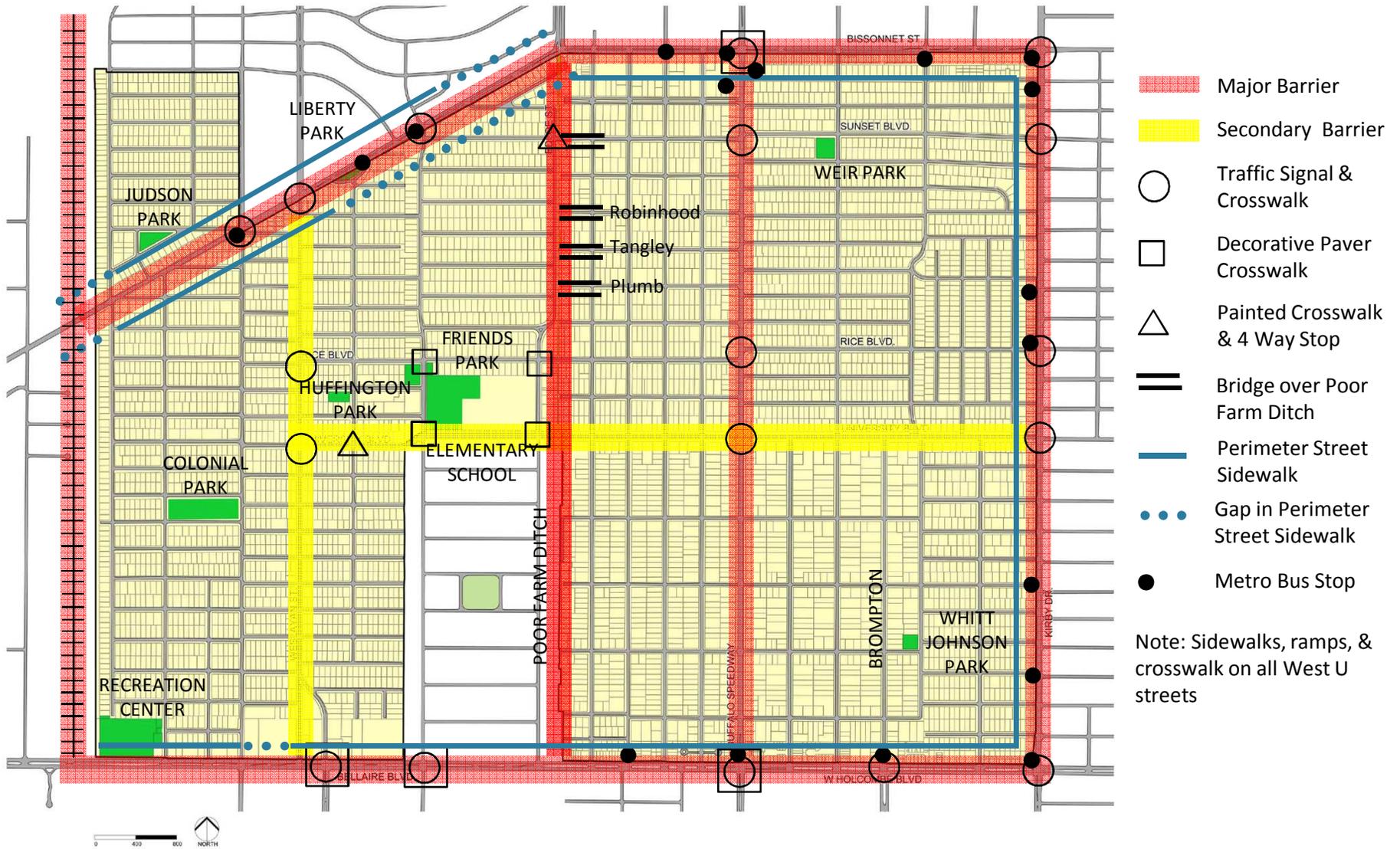
- Administration \$493,500
- Recreation Center \$1,235,000
- Colonial Park Pool \$407,700
- Senior Services \$308,500
- Park Operations \$540,000
- Total 2014 Budget \$2,984,700

Estimated 2014 Revenue \$1,300,000

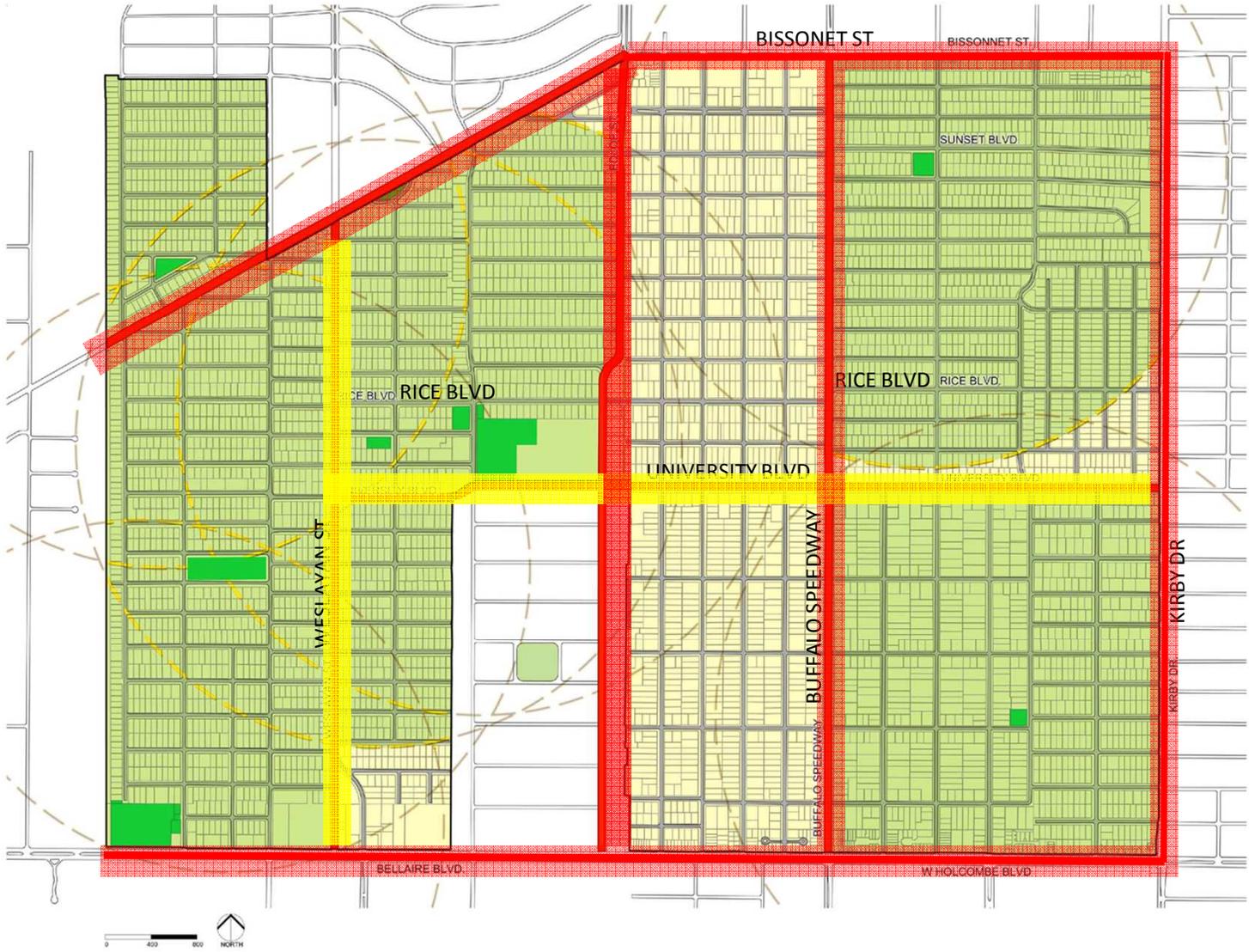
Net Taxpayer Expense \$1,684,700

Capital Improvement Projects Funding

1. The City of West U does not budget for major park improvements – capital expenditures.
2. Capital improvement projects are funded by Friends of West University Parks or by taxpayer-approved City parks bonds (repaid by City taxes).

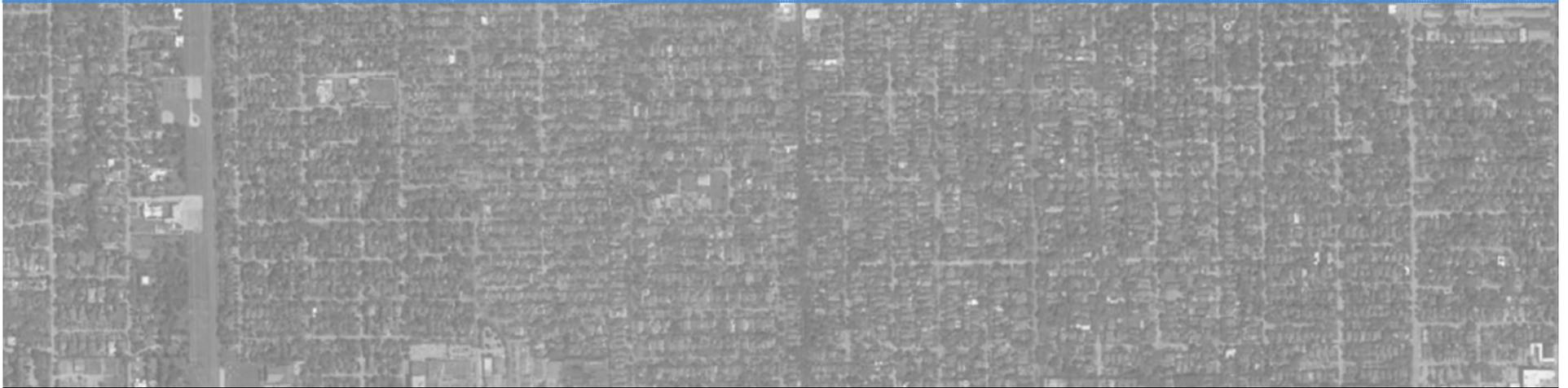


A Look at Today





A LOOK AT THE FUTURE



A Look at the Future

Next Generation of West U Parks

- Major Park Renovation
 - Establish program for redesign and phased, budgeted major renovation of parks over 15 year period



A Look at the Future

•Major Park Renovation

- Opportunities for new types of facilities
 - Outdoor performance space/outdoor classroom
 - Restrooms in parks
 - Covered basketball pavilion
 - Skate park
 - Accommodate personal trainers or boot camps
 - Climbing walls



Next Generation of West U Parks



A Look at the Future

Next Generation of West U Parks

- Major Park Renovation
 - Opportunities for new types of facilities
 - Dog park
 - Splash pad
 - Exercise stations
 - Community gardens
 - Serve evolving population
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Interests/needs



A Look at the Future

Partnerships and Cooperation

- Continue key partnership with West University Parks Board and Friends of West University Parks
- Explore cooperative arrangements with Bellaire, Southside Place, City of Houston, Harris County Precinct 3, Harris County Flood Control District, and Houston Parks Board
 - Joint use
 - Cooperative development
 - Planning coordination
- Explore possibility of corporate partnerships



A Look at the Future

Unstructured Open Space

- Unstructured open space ranked high in survey
 - Open play lawns
 - Natural areas
 - Allow varied use of park space
- Linear open space
 - Walking paths
 - Hike & bike trails
 - Corridor opportunities
 - Bayous & drainage ways
 - Power line corridors
 - Public street right of way

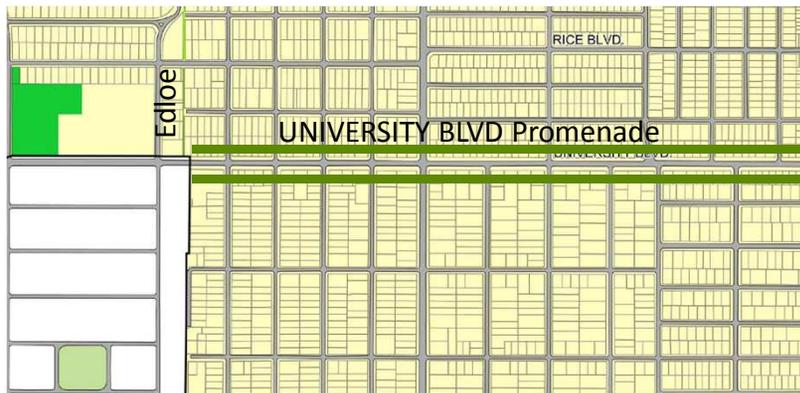


A Look at the Future

Linear Open Space Opportunities

University Boulevard Promenade

- Create promenade using widened, enhanced sidewalks along each side of University Boulevard
- Provides enhanced pedestrian mobility, safety and access to parks
- Key east-west connector with flexible design minimizes conflicts with existing landscape features
- Creates beautiful community landmark – iconic West U image



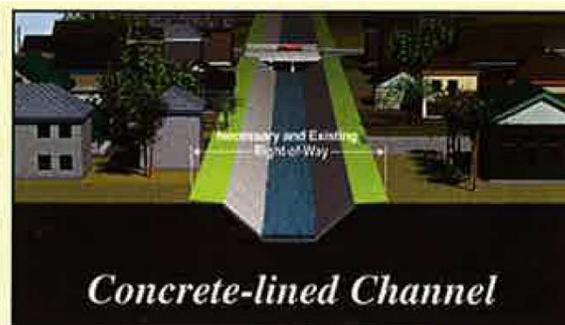
A Look at the Future

Linear Open Space Opportunities

Poor Farm Ditch



Poor Farm Ditch

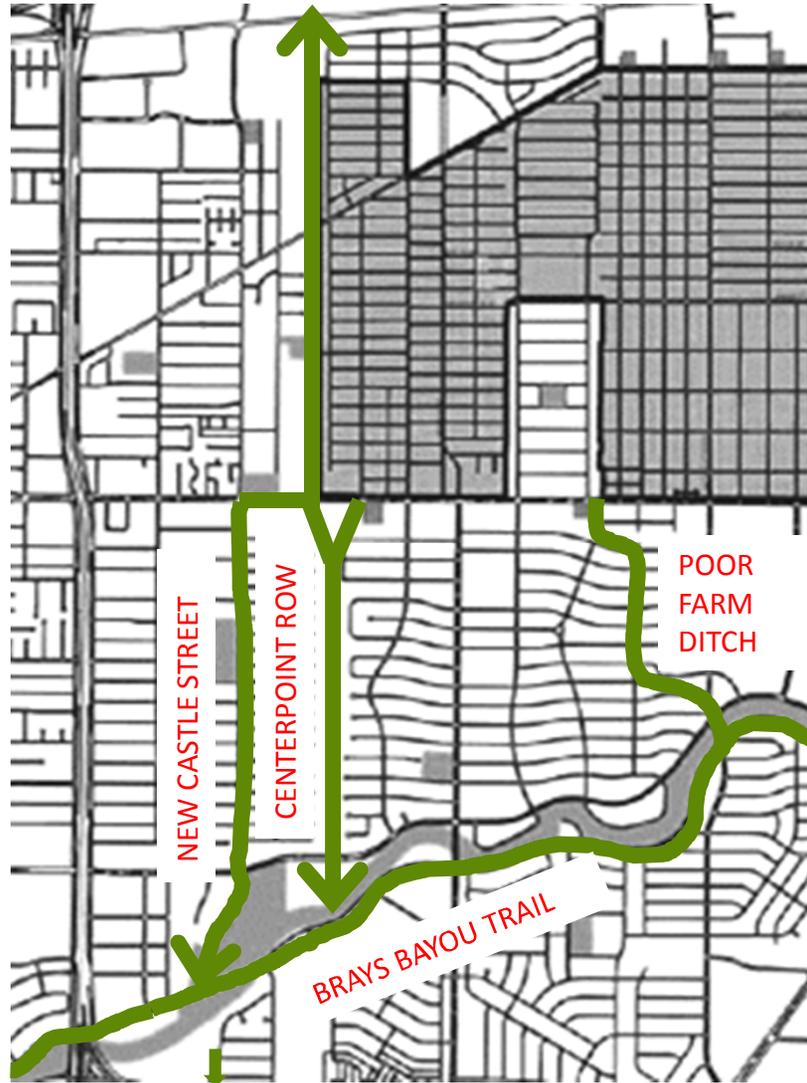


- Valuable resource with excellent location
- Ditch can be a blight or an amenity
- Issues has been studied previously with Harris County Flood Control District and found viable
- Various alternative solutions
 - Each requires careful study and consideration by the community
- Long-term, costly project

Images from Harris County Flood Control District Study

A Look at the Future

Linear Open Space Opportunities



NORTH – SOUTH CORRIDORS

- Centerpoint right-of-way
- Newcastle Street
- Poor Farm Ditch
- All require collaboration with others

A Look at the Future

City Center

- City Center remains the heart of West University and significant improvements have been made since 2000
- Future opportunities:
 - Auden streetscape improvements
 - City Center superblock

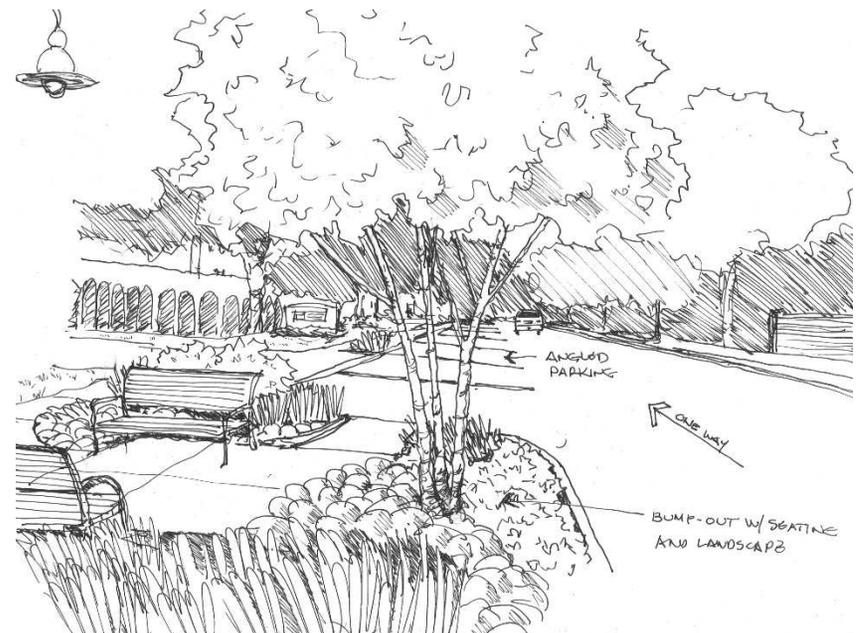


A Look at the Future

City Center

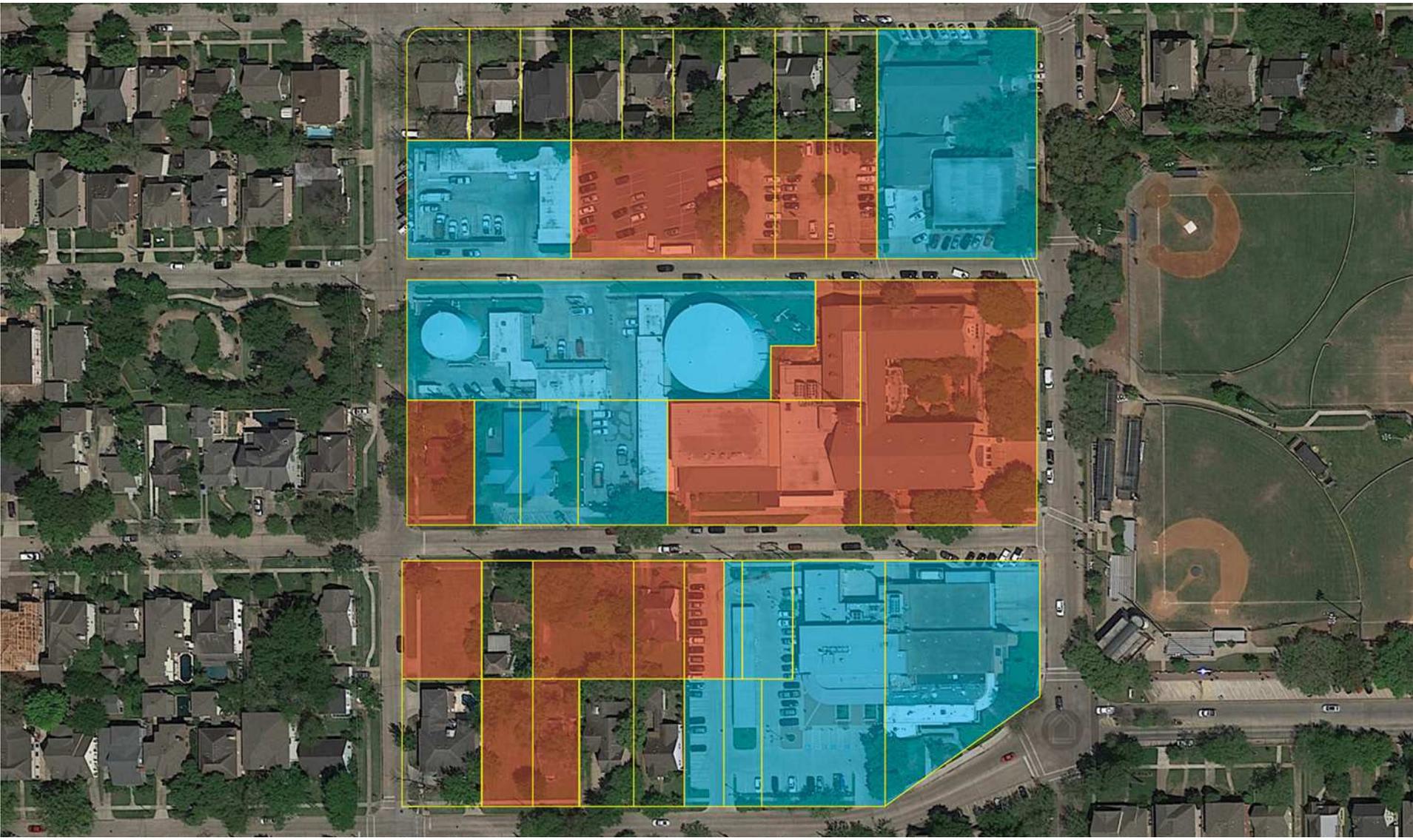
Auden Streetscape

- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Enhance appearance of the street and walks
- Improve pedestrian mobility at library and community garden



A Look at The Future

Existing Property Ownership



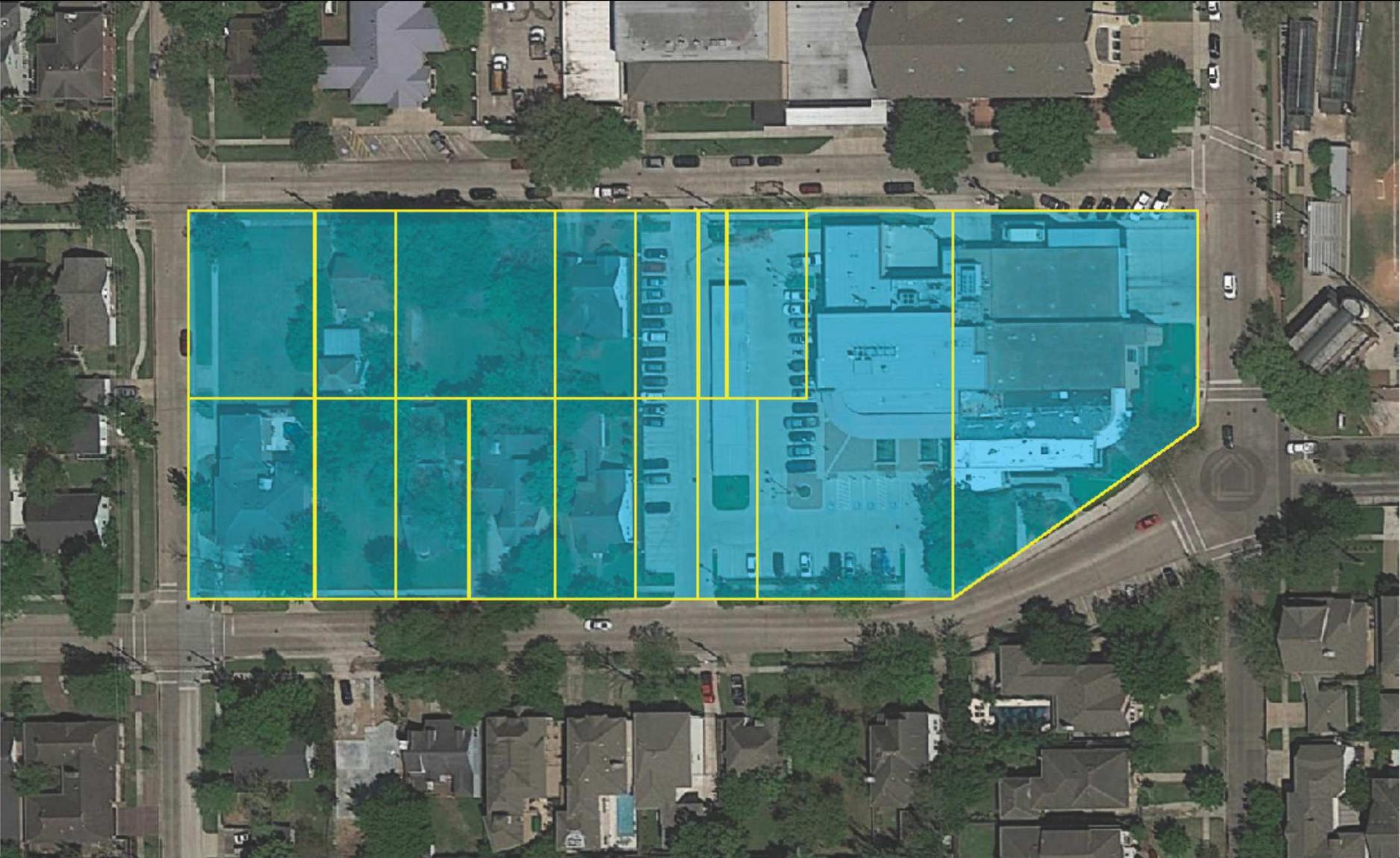
A Look at The Future

Long Term Possible Ownership Strategy



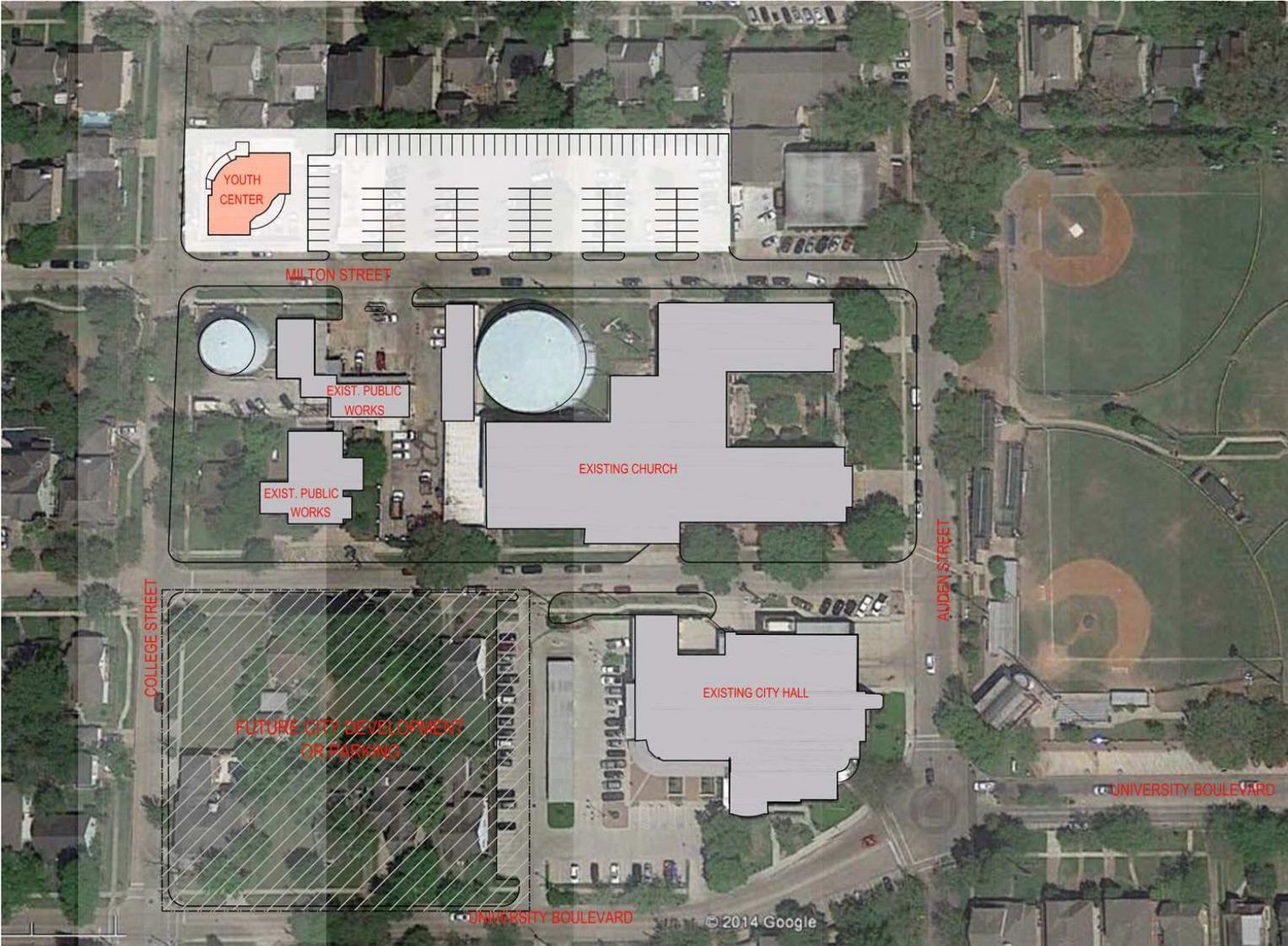
A Look at The Future

City Center and Super Block Idea



A Look at The Future

Possible Long Term Campus Master Plan



Tax Rate Impact Analysis

Fiscal Year	<u>Current Situation</u>		<u>December 2014 Sale</u>				<u>December 2020 Sale</u>			
	Projected Tax Rate	Average Monthly Tax Bill	\$5,000,000		\$10,000,000		\$5,000,000		\$10,000,000	
			Projected Tax Rate	Average Monthly Tax Bill	Projected Tax Rate	Average Monthly Tax Bill	Projected Tax Rate	Average Monthly Tax Bill	Projected Tax Rate	Average Monthly Tax Bill
2015	\$0.1682	\$125.91	\$0.1682	\$125.91	\$0.1682	\$125.91	\$0.1682	\$125.91	\$0.1682	\$125.91
2016	0.1682	125.91	0.1725	129.10	0.1760	131.72	0.1682	125.91	0.1682	125.91
2017	0.1682	125.91	0.1725	129.10	0.1760	131.72	0.1682	125.91	0.1682	125.91
2018	0.1682	125.91	0.1725	129.10	0.1760	131.72	0.1682	125.91	0.1682	125.91
2019	0.1682	125.91	0.1725	129.10	0.1760	131.72	0.1682	125.91	0.1682	125.91
2020	0.1682	125.91	0.1700	127.23	0.1700	127.23	0.1682	125.91	0.1682	125.91
2021	0.0675	50.52	0.0775	58.00	0.0900	67.36	0.0750	56.13	0.0850	63.62
2022	0.0675	50.52	0.0750	56.13	0.0850	63.62	0.0750	56.13	0.0825	61.74
2023	0.0650	48.65	0.0750	56.13	0.0850	63.62	0.0750	56.13	0.0815	61.00
2024	0.0615	46.03	0.0725	54.26	0.0800	59.87	0.0750	56.13	0.0785	58.75
2025	0.0615	46.03	0.0700	52.39	0.0800	59.87	0.0700	52.39	0.0785	58.75
2026	0.0615	46.03	0.0700	52.39	0.0800	59.87	0.0700	52.39	0.0785	58.75
2027	0.0615	46.03	0.0700	52.39	0.0800	59.87	0.0700	52.39	0.0785	58.75
2028	0.0525	39.29	0.0615	46.03	0.0700	52.39	0.0650	48.65	0.0695	52.02
Maximum Increase:			\$0.0043	\$3.20	\$0.0078	\$5.82	\$0.0000	\$0.00	\$0.0000	\$0.00

Assumptions:
 Starting Assessed Valuation: \$4,824,935,368 in Tax Year 2014
 Assessed Valuation Growth: No Growth
 Starting Debt Service Fund Balance: \$174,480
 Interest Rate on Bond Sales: December 2014 – Current Market Rates and December 2020 – 5.50%
 Interest Income: 0.00% for 2015 and 2016; 1.50% thereafter. Tax Collection Rate of 95%.



A Look at The Future

Funding and Financial Resources

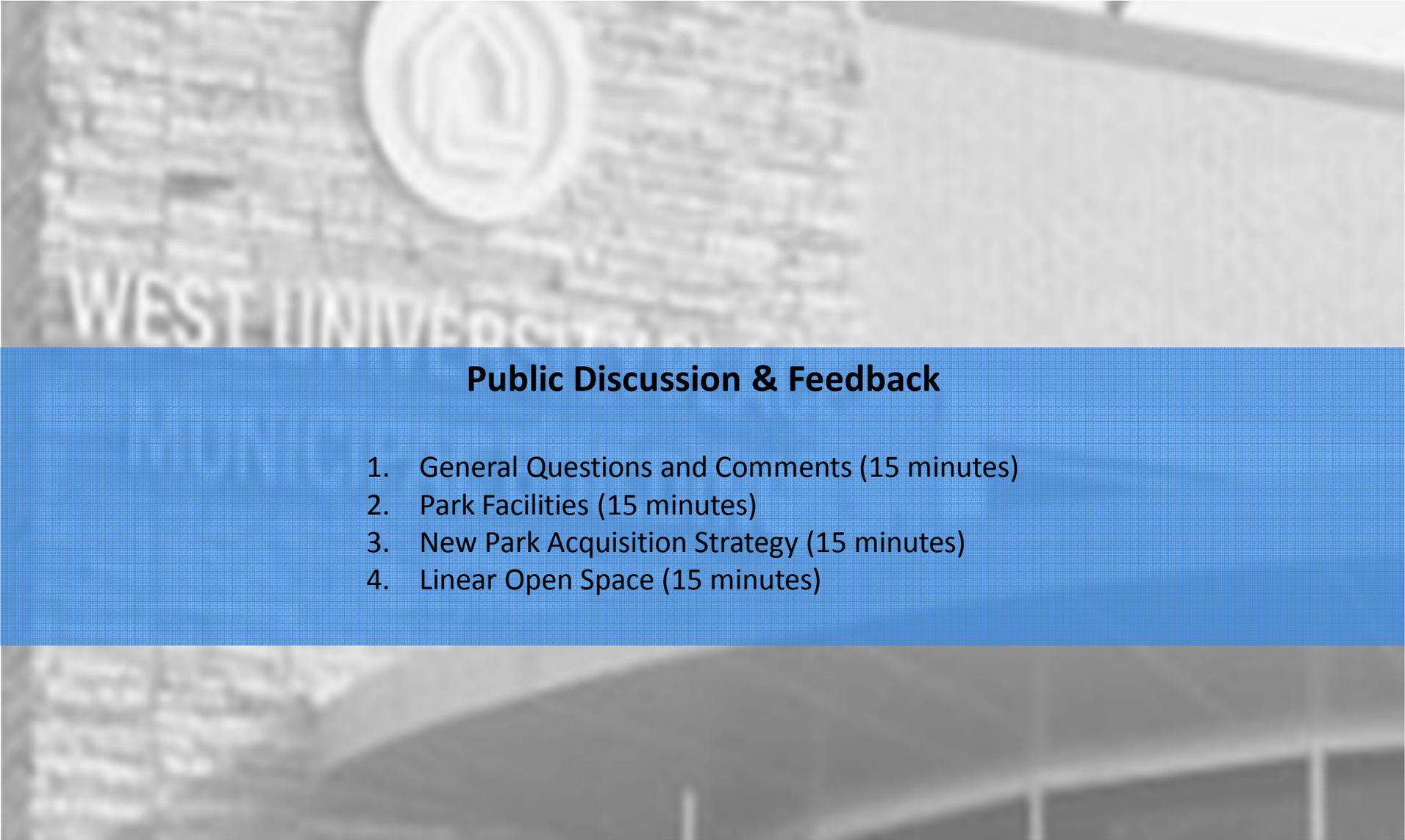
- Potential Grant Assistance
 - Texas Parks & Wildlife
 - Park Acquisition and Improvements
 - Texas Department of Transportation
 - Multi-Modal Transportation Projects
 - (Past: City Center Streetscape)
- Harris County Precinct 3
 - Past – Pedestrian Bridges
 - Possible park improvements assistance
 - Possible In-Kind Services
 - Possible Library Courtyard assistance
- Houston Galveston Area Council
- WUP Parks & Recreation Department Operating Budget
- WUP Bond Funding
- Friends of WU Parks
- Corporate Partnerships
- Private Donations (Property and Funding)



Parkland Acquisition

- Survey results clearly rejected tax increase as payment method for park acquisition
- WUP will have available bond capacity in the future, without tax increases
- Master Plan should provide direction and planning tools for the next 10 – 15 years
- Staff and Council needs flexibility to respond to future opportunities and needs
 - Ability to accept and develop donated parkland
 - Tools to respond to unforeseen opportunities
- Council does not want to place restrictions on future Councils and citizens





Public Discussion & Feedback

1. General Questions and Comments (15 minutes)
2. Park Facilities (15 minutes)
3. New Park Acquisition Strategy (15 minutes)
4. Linear Open Space (15 minutes)

Public Discussion & Feedback



General Questions and Comments?

Judson Park

Park Facilities Preferences

Public Discussion & Feedback



Public Discussion & Feedback

Weir Park
Park Facilities Preferences



Public Discussion & Feedback

Whitt Johnson Park
Park Facilities Preferences



Public Discussion & Feedback

Friends Park
Park Facilities Preferences



Public Discussion & Feedback

Huffington Park
Park Facilities Preferences



Public Discussion & Feedback

Liberty Hill Park
Park Facilities Preferences

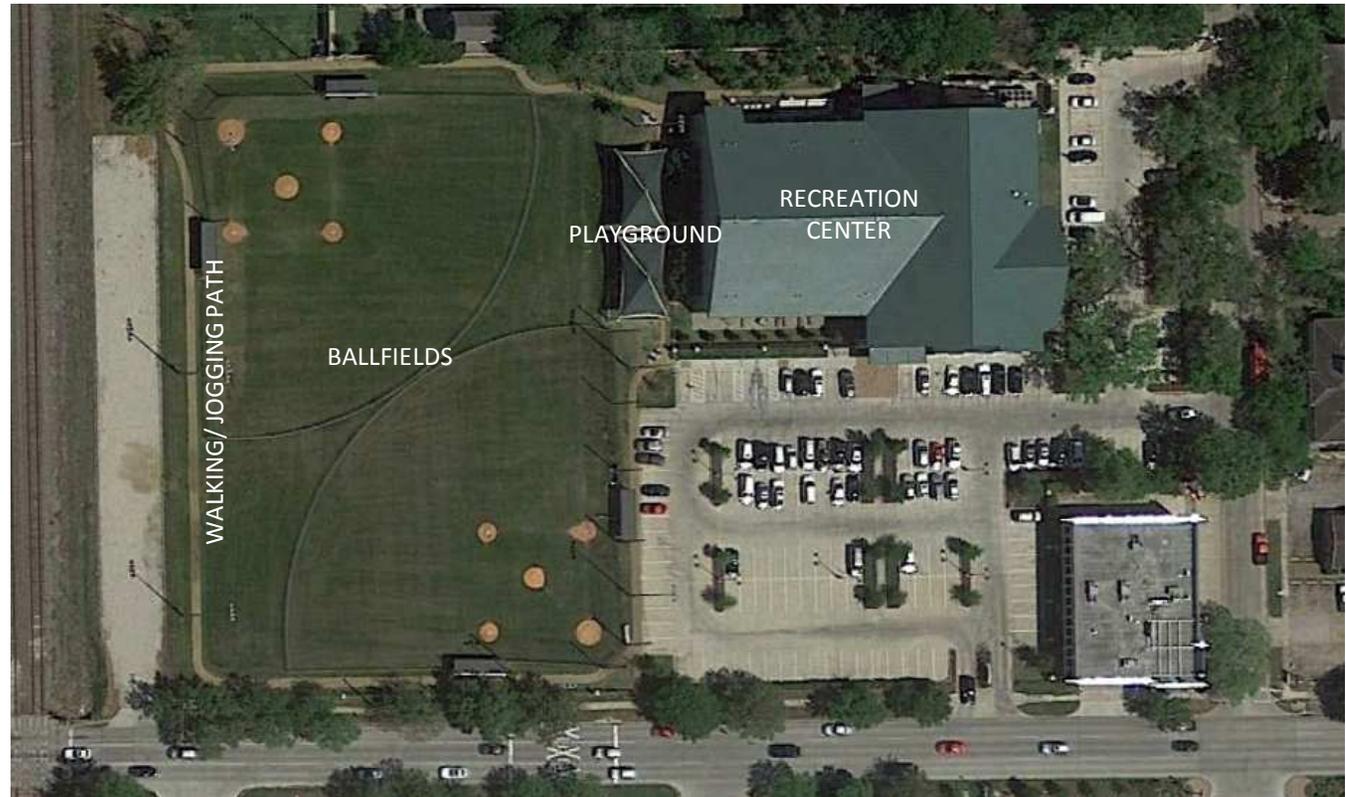


Colonial Park

Park Facilities Preferences

Public Discussion & Feedback





New Park Acquisition Strategy

Acquire additional property?

Accept property gifts?

Target areas?

Funding strategies?



Linear Parks

- Regional trail in Centerpoint right-of-way



- Poor Farm Ditch



- University Blvd. Promenade



