



## Community Enhancement Section

### *6.1 — Introduction*

A city is defined not only by its cuisine, art, culture, events, commerce, inhabitants, and visitors, but also by its built form found in the streetscape, roadways, signs, structures, commerce, landscape, and parks. Quite naturally, cities can be perceived by residents and visitors in different ways—depending on the length and breadth of the experience; however, the components that contribute to the overall look and appeal of a community can be analyzed, and, in some cases, remedied, revised, or enhanced. An entire city, or portions of a municipality, can appear vibrant or defunct, attractive or blighted, modern or antiquated, inviting or desolate. As the built environment characterizes a community to the greatest degree, a city has the opportunity to shape and brand certain aspects in its favor, which is community enhancement. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan focuses on improving the City of Webster in a visual manner, which entails identifying areas for improvement, articulating a vision and ideas to improve those areas, and determining a process or methodology that leads to implementation.

The visual appeal of the City is important to those who reside, visit, work, and conduct business in Webster. Too, the overall look or view of the municipality reinforces its brand, and, quite naturally, Webster seeks to promote a positive brand. Those traveling within Webster make conclusions about the municipality based on many elements, such as the quality of streets, landscaping, types of businesses, buildings, and residences. As the built environment influences the daily lives of constituents and plays a major role in business attraction, expansion, and retention, the significance of community enhancement is quite broad and extensive and impacts the City's property tax base, sales tax base, ability to attract visitors, and more.

### *6.2 — Elements of a Streetscape*

The streetscape encompasses the visual elements of a corridor, such as pavement treatments, sidewalks, landscaping, streetlights, signage, street furniture, benches, public art, sculptures, bike racks, special lighting, building setbacks, buildings, fountains, waterways, rest areas, and more. Insofar as establishing and promoting Web-

**FIGURE 6.1: “GREAT STREETS” AS DEFINED BY THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

ster’s brand, the streetscape is one of the most important elements because it “frames” the environment; the streetscape exudes the character and condition of the area. Smart Growth America defines “complete streets” as impeccable, attractive, unique roadways designed for all possible users, which enable safe access for pedestri-

ans, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation, encourage healthy lifestyles, reduce transportation costs and build strong communities. The American Planning Association lists twelve characteristics of a “Great Street.” (Figure 6.1)

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1  | Provides orientation and connectivity or location, accessibility, and mobility—the street design accords with the street users and flows or connects to other streets or areas |
| 2  | Balances competing needs of the street—driving, transit, walking, cycling, servicing, parking, drop-offs   |
| 3  | Uses topography and natural features for aesthetic purposes or artificially creates those features   |
| 4  | Contains unique or interesting activities or elements that are appealing and memorable   |
| 5  | Incorporates urban design or architectural features that are exemplary in design   |
| 6  | Correlates with bordering uses and allows for continuous flow and activity   |
| 7  | Encourages frequent and longer visits; fosters vibrant, sustainable business and social activity   |
| 8  | Utilizes hardscape and landscape to great effect   |
| 9  | Promotes safety of pedestrians and vehicles around the clock   |
| 10 | Promotes sustainability through “green” practices—regarding irrigation, energy, impervious surfaces, heat islands  |
| 11 | Ensures excellent maintenance without high operation costs   |
| 12 | Brands or promotes area as memorable, unique, innovative, and novel  |

**6.2.1 — Webster’s Best Streetscapes**

Two examples of Webster’s best streetscapes include Bay Area Boulevard and Medical Center Boulevard. These corridors not only feature landscaped medians, stately palms and oaks, sidewalks, and streetlights but also they accommodate vibrant businesses. Bay Area Boulevard is frequently referred to as the “Westheimer of Clear Lake” for its array of top-notch full-serve, fast-casual, and quick-serve restaurants, successful retailers, hotels, and office buildings. Bay Area Boulevard is both pedestrian and automobile friendly and accommodates over 100,000 vehicles daily. Medical Center Boulevard is the premier corridor for Webster’s impressive medical center. This corridor, too, is both pedestrian and automobile friendly and features an elevated walkway over Medical Center Boulevard connecting Clear Lake Regional Medical Center to The Heart and Vascular Hospital. (Figures 6.2 & 6.3)

FIGURE 6.2: EXAMPLE OF WEBSTER'S BEST STREETS: BAY AREA BOULEVARD



FIGURE 6.3: EXAMPLE OF WEBSTER'S BEST STREETS: MEDICAL CENTER BOULEVARD



### 6.2.2 — Corridors that Require Streetscape Improvements

Several key corridors in Webster that require streetscape improvement, according to the 2013 Community Survey, include NASA Parkway, Highway 3, and Egret Bay Boulevard/FM 270. As each of these corridors is unique and carries its own set of limitations, challenges, and opportunities, ideas for streetscape improvements will be delineated individually.

### 6.3 — NASA Parkway

Elected and appointed officials, constituents, and staff have attempted through the years to enhance NASA Parkway, the “Gateway to NASA,” and transform the older, less attractive, disjointed corridor into a vibrant, upscale, attractive, thematically-unified roadway. This effort to improve NASA Parkway has been reinforced by the completion of the NASA Parkway Revitalization Plan, a mixed-use development plan. (Figures 6.4 & 6.5) This goal of achieving redevelopment on NASA Parkway, one of the oldest corridors of the City, remains a substantial challenge. This goal are attainable; however, it will be both costly and time-intensive.

FIGURE 6.4 NASA PARKWAY FROM I-45 FACING EAST CIRCA 1992



FIGURE 6.5 NASA PARKWAY FACING EAST FROM I-45 TODAY



FIGURE 6.6 NASA PARKWAY WITH MEDIAN



FIGURE 6.7 NASA PARKWAY FACING EAST FROM HIGHWAY 3



### 6.3.1 — NASA Parkway Enhancement Priorities

1. Perform a capital improvement project that adds a landscaped median, promenade, space art, space statues, landscaping, and waterscaping
2. Consider innovative ideas, such as a road diet — which utilizes existing rights-of-way to maximize multi-modal activities, or widening the street — which adds more options to accommodate an esplanade, turn lanes, wider sidewalks, and enhancements
3. Increase pedestrian walkways, accommodate public gathering areas, and incorporate public parking lot on side street
4. Continue to work with TxDOT, HGAC, and other organizations for the completion of a great street/complete street
5. Consider a management district that can assess properties within a defined area for the sole purpose of improving the district for economic and community development. (Figure 6.6)

### 6.4 — Highway 3

Another prominent corridor within the City is State Highway 3, a primary north and south roadway. One particular challenge for enhancing this corridor is the major railroad easement that runs parallel along this artery. This roadway has obstacles, similar to NASA Parkway, in that there is a substantial amount of older buildings with little setback for the public right-of-way. There are great opportunities, however, to improve this corridor, which can have a positive impact in the near future. The installation of landscaping in the median and utiliz-

ing landscaping to screen and enhance the railroad corridor is easily achievable. In the longer term, the City can work with TxDOT to establish pedestrian, landscaping, and bicycle facilities on this corridor. (Figure 6.7 )

#### 6.4.1 — Highway 3 Enhancement Priorities

1. Perform a capital improvement project that will add a landscaped median, and provide landscaping treatments to screen the railroad easement
2. Construct pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle facilities on this corridor
3. Continue to work with TxDOT and other organizations for the completion of a great street/complete street for Highway 3

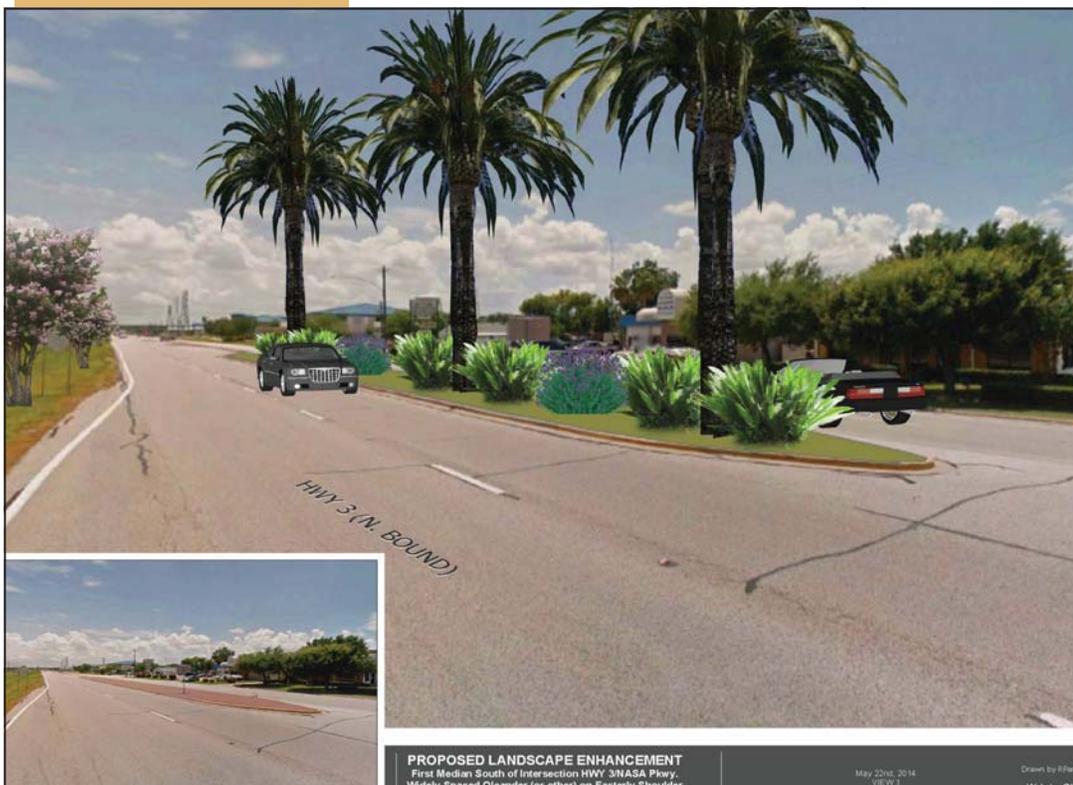
#### 6.5 — Egret Bay Boulevard

Egret Bay Boulevard, a primary north and south roadway within Webster, is another corridor that can be enhanced. This major corridor is the least challenging corridor to improve in the City, as its right-of-way is more than sufficient to provide a landscaped median. Too, this corridor has a shared-use pedestrian path being constructed in coordination with TxDOT and the City of Webster. This new shared-use pedestrian path will provide a much needed facility that will connect bicycle riders and pedestrians from NASA Parkway to the League City Trail System. (Figure 6.8)

#### 6.5.1 — Egret Bay Boulevard Enhancement Priorities

1. Perform a capital improvement project that will add landscaping median to this roadway

FIGURE 6.7 HIGHWAY 3 WITH ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING



2. Construct pedestrian walkways and shared-use paths
3. Continue to work with TxDOT for the completion of a great street/complete street for Egret Bay Boulevard

### *6.6 Regional Projects Incorporating Streetscape Improvements Via Economic and Community Development*

The future of Webster’s major roadways is tied to economic and community development, as corridor enhancements require capital investment. Regional examples that transform focused areas or districts, including their all-important corridors, abound within the Greater Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area. In the examples of the Nassau Bay Town Square and Greater East End, the roadways were revitalized, modernized, and transformed in concert with new development.

FIGURE 6.8 EGRET BAY BOULEVARD (FM 270) WITH ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPING



|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
|  <p style="font-size: 8px; margin-top: 5px;">NOTE:<br/>This map has been made for information<br/>purposes only. It is not intended to replace a<br/>GIS plan. Accuracy may vary.</p> | <p><b>PROPOSED LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT</b><br/>FM 270 Between Henderson Rd. and Clear Creek.<br/>Canary Palms, Norfolk Pine, Pampas Grass</p> | <p style="font-size: 8px;">June 02, 2014<br/>VIEW 2</p> | <p style="font-size: 8px;">Drawn by R.Park<br/>Webster GIS</p> |
|---|---|---|--|

#### **6.6.1 — Nassau Bay Town Square**

Nearby, the City of Nassau Bay initiated an economic development project called Nassau Bay Town Square, a 31-acre mixed use development. This premier project, which commenced in 2008 through the creation of a management district, features a 313-unit luxury apartment complex, a 176-room Marriot hotel, the Saturn One office building, extensive retail-commercial venues, and new city hall facilities. The forthcoming projects within the district include 600,000 square feet of office space, 73,000 square

FIGURE 6.9 NASSAU BAY TOWN SQUARE LINEAR PARK AND PUBLIC ART

feet of retail, and a 27,000 square foot conference center. A project of this caliber, which totals \$150 million in new investment, requires a substantial amount of infrastructure improvements, including the design of great streets, utilities, landscaping and other important site work. In particular, Saturn Lane features a 210 foot long linear park that is within the 60-foot wide right-of-way. The linear park includes an interactive public art piece, water features, aerospace-themed public art, sidewalk with quality pavers, and superior landscaping. This public/private partnership project, with its elevated design standards, constitutes a high quality master planned development. Certainly, this project represents a major improvement for the Nassau Bay community, which has revitalized a stagnant commercial and office area of the city. The major piece to the success of this project has been the establishment of the NASA Area Management District.

This management district assesses properties within a defined area for the sole purpose of improving and fostering economic development. The Nassau Bay Town Square is vigorously filling up its retail space with new restaurants, leasing office space, and generating stellar traffic and sales tax in the City of Nassau Bay. (Figure 6.9)



### 6.6.2 — Greater East End—Navigation Street Improvements

The Greater East End, located east of downtown Houston with major corridors such as Navigation Boulevard and Harrisburg, initiated a revitalization project through a management district created in 1999. While this warehouse and commercial district flourished prior to the 1980s, it was in dire need of investment and transformation. The Greater East End Management District has been instrumental in leveraging a \$5 million grant to transform Navigation Boulevard, which is the primary corridor for business.

Components of the Navigation Boulevard transformation include myriad attractive enhancements, such as artistic benches, public art, bike racks, special pavers, thematic trash receptacles, solar lighting, linear park, attractive landscaping, and district branding.

Effects of the management district improvements include increased private investment, business recruitment, and creation of a community gathering place. New businesses, such as El Tiempo Cantina, Walmart, CVS, and Tout Suite Coffee House, bring a significant return on investment to an area that was formerly distressed. Now, just under 100,000 people reside in the area, enjoy activities and special events in the public areas, and conduct business. The Greater East End, with its historic ties to the port,

FIGURE 6.10 GREATER EAST END STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.



railroad, and oil industry, has retained vestiges of its remarkable past through various design elements for the streetscape, while revitalizing the defunct warehouse and commercial district into a unified, vibrant, attractive, and safe environs. Without the proactive creation of the management district, it is unlikely that the transformation of the Greater East End would transpire (Figure 6.10)

### 6.7 — Gateway Signage

While there are many methods of branding a municipality, such as Webster, one of the most compelling modes is gateway signage. When gateway signage is installed on major corridors (entrances and exits of the City), certain iconic elements are reinforced for residents, commuters, and visitors and include large art that is representative of the region, arches, sculptures, signage, and logo. Currently, Webster features gateway monuments on Bay Area Boulevard, Egret Bay Boulevard, and NASA Parkway (Figure 6.11)

FIGURE 6.11 EXISTING CITY OF WEBSTER ENTRY MONUMENTS



Opportunities exist, however, to augment gateway signage to achieve thematic unity and create a more impactful, highly visible statement capitalizing on Webster's aerospace past, present, and future. (Figure 6.12)

Cities all over the globe utilize gateway signage on major arterials to promote their "brand." One example on the Katy Freeway (Interstate 10) is located at the Bunker Hill exit, where a Texas star and memorable highway monuments are located. This highway monument serves as a landmark, wayfinder, and branding tool. (Figure 6.13)

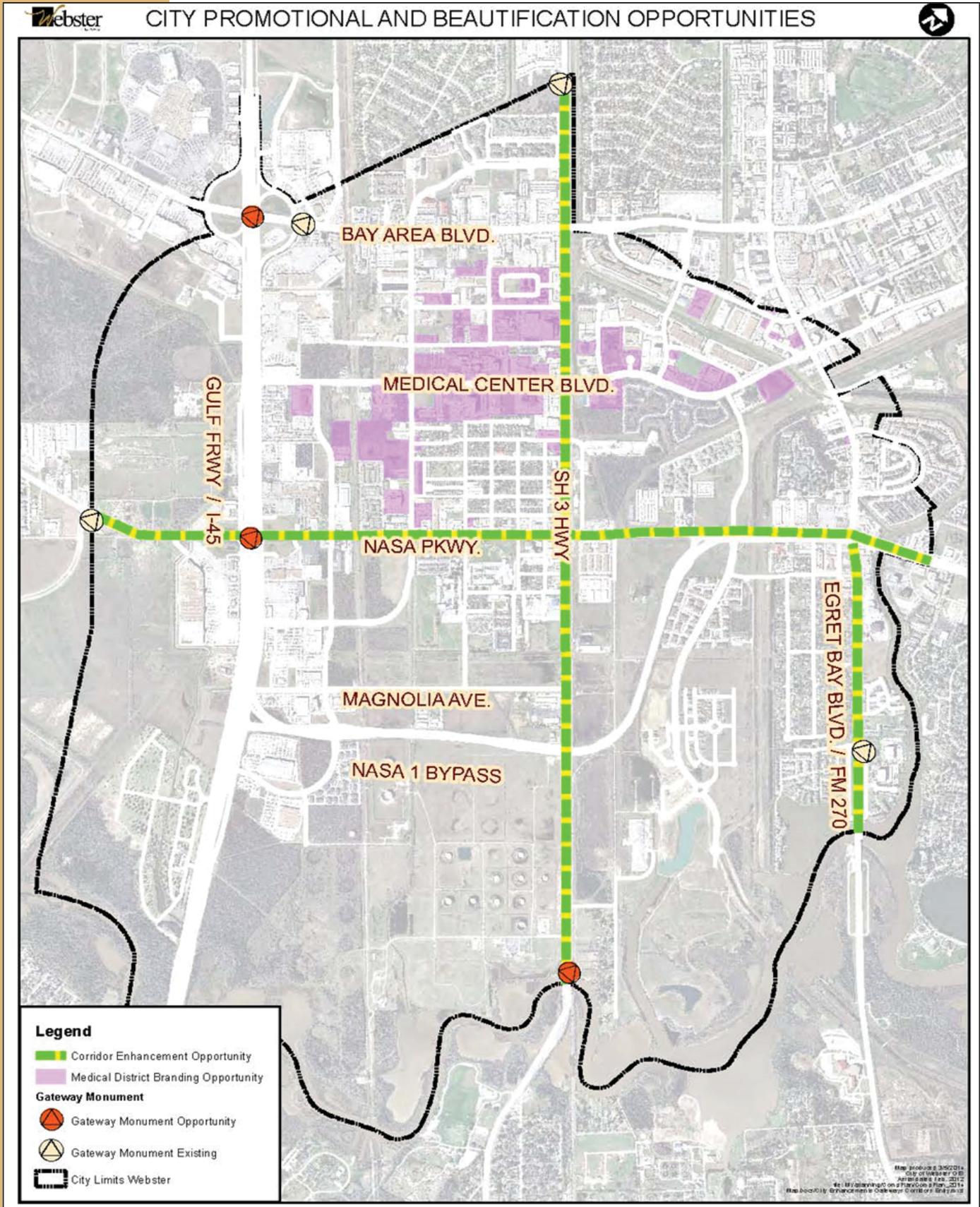
### *6.8 — Single-family Residential Enhancement*

Webster's neighborhoods, both old and new, have attributes that are timeless. Some of these components include quality building materials, landscaping, and neighborhood parks. Each of Webster's single family neighborhoods is unique based on era of construction, density, location, and lot size. The oldest subdivision in Webster is Webdale/Old Townsite, which dates back to 1930 but continued to develop until 2000. In contrast, the newest subdivision is Edgewater, which commenced in 2006 and continues to develop today. Other communities, like Green Acres, feature homes that were constructed in the 1960s through the present time. As a result, most of the City's single-family neighborhoods have no unifying theme; the style and age of homes vary markedly, which render the community interesting and visually appealing. Webster's most recent subdivisions are master-planned in that they have coordinated themes and design standards. Walnut Place, for example, built in 2003, is both a commercial and residential planned development that includes an office park on Texas Avenue and townhomes and single-family detached residences on Travis and Brad Court. Like Walnut Place, Edgewater is a master planned community. In the case of Edgewater, a defunct brownfield was transformed into a vibrant, sustainable, attractive subdivision.

An analysis of single-family developments within the City illustrate that most residential homes were constructed with durable materials, such as brick, cement board, and stucco. Additionally, all of these subdivisions have, or will have, a neighborhood park within their subdivision boundaries, which allow quality outdoor space for children, family, and friends to enjoy. While most of the City's neighborhoods do not look homogenous, in that they have a unique look, the homes, in general, were constructed with masonry requirements that fit current standards.

There are challenges and opportunities for enhancing the municipality's single-family residential neighborhoods. Infill development, property maintenance, and continued construction are key to improving the City's residential sector. Webdale/Old Townsite and Green Acres feature some vacant lots that are opportune for quality infill development. The potential exists, too, for redevelopment of some older homes that invite new investment. Oftentimes, with established subdivisions, there are maintenance issues, such as dilapidated fencing, overgrown vegetation, and unsightly secondary structures. In the case of Edgewater, which holds great potential for continued high-quality, single-family development, both the developer and home builders will abide by design standards adopted in 2007.

FIGURE 6.12 CITY GATEWAY AND BEAUTIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES

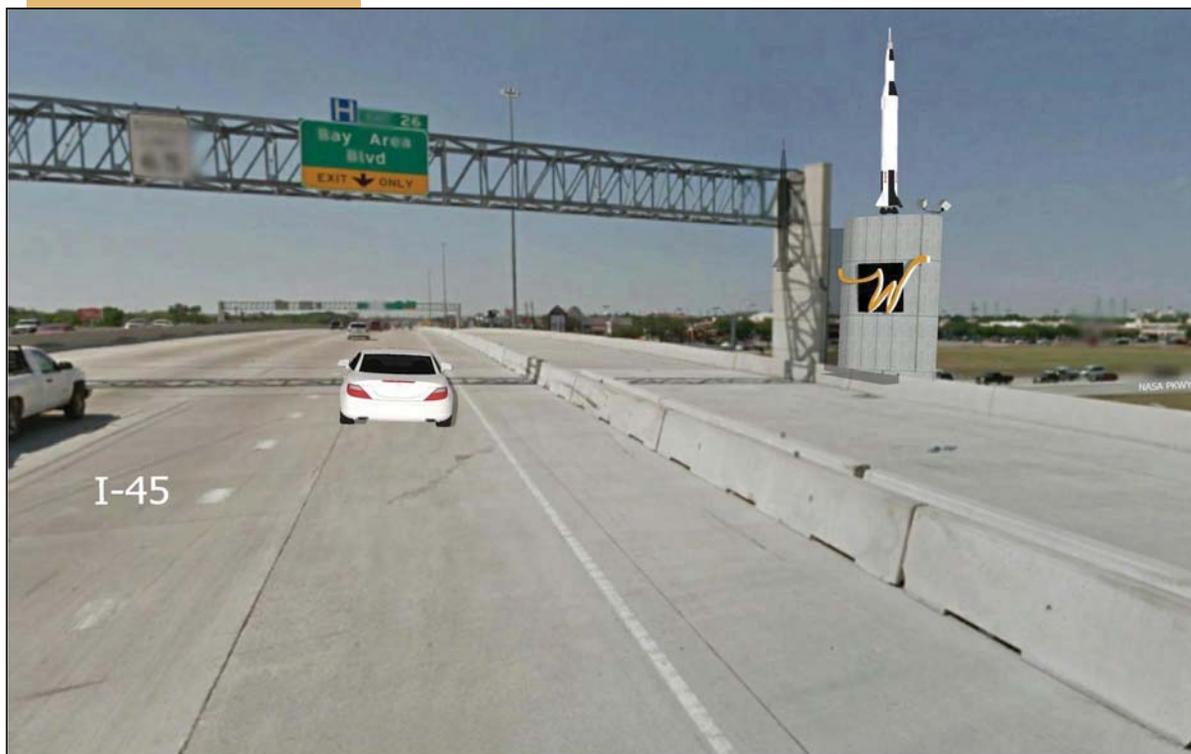


MAP IS ILLUSTRATIVE, AS OTHER ROADWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS WILL BE CONSIDERED.

FIGURE 6.13 EXAMPLE OF A  
FREEWAY MONUMENT SIGN AT I-  
10 AND BUNKER HILL



PROPOSED HIGHWAY  
MONUMENT FOR I-45



### **6.8.1 — Residential Enhancement Priorities**

1. Ensure that park equipment is adequately updated within residential communities
2. Uphold requirements for durable, time-tested, lasting building materials in the construction of single family residences
3. Continue to foster the completion of the Edgewater Development
4. Utilize relevant City ordinances to mitigate and resolve maintenance issues

### **6.8.2 — Single-family Residential Fencing**

In the poem, “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost, the famous quote of “Good fences make good neighbors” was immortalized. For single-family residences, there are benefits to be derived from perimeter fencing, including privacy, safety, security, noise reduction, and streetscape enhancement. Within the Zoning Ordinance, criteria for perimeter fencing is delineated, such as height, material, and location. The recommendation from Comprehensive Plan Update stakeholders is to allow only perimeter fencing in single-family residential districts for purposes of aesthetics and uniformity. (Figure 6.14)

## **6.9 — Commercial Enhancement**

Both the appearance of the business and type of commerce contribute to the City’s commercial look. Oftentimes, the two components go hand-in-hand—upscale, nationally or regionally recognized business enterprises are located in appealing buildings; whereas, underperforming businesses are located in unattractive, low-rent centers and buildings. In general, higher end, top-performing businesses are housed in aesthetically pleasing, modern buildings that are masonry, stucco, and glass. These successful businesses are complemented by attractive landscaping, lighting, and signage. In contrast, the City features large stretches of businesses along important arteries, like NASA Parkway, that are visually unappealing with their disjointedness. In many instances, the buildings do not conform to the City’s masonry standards, landscaping, signage, or setback requirements. The issue of what can be done to enhance nonconforming businesses along key corridors, especially, is of concern. (Figure 6.15)

#### **Ideas for redevelopment or transformation include the following:**

1. Secure an investor who seeks to partner with City in redevelopment initiatives
2. Consider a management district as a tool for redevelopment
3. Incorporate design elements, such as water features and architectural accoutrements
4. Promote the use of durable materials for all commercial buildings
5. Provide minimum standards for parking lot lighting
6. Continue to work with existing shopping centers to improve parking lot landscaping

FIGURE 6.14 EXAMPLE OF PERIMETER FENCING IN WEBSTER



FIGURE 6.15 BEFORE AND AFTER EXAMPLE OF COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT AT THE PROMENADE

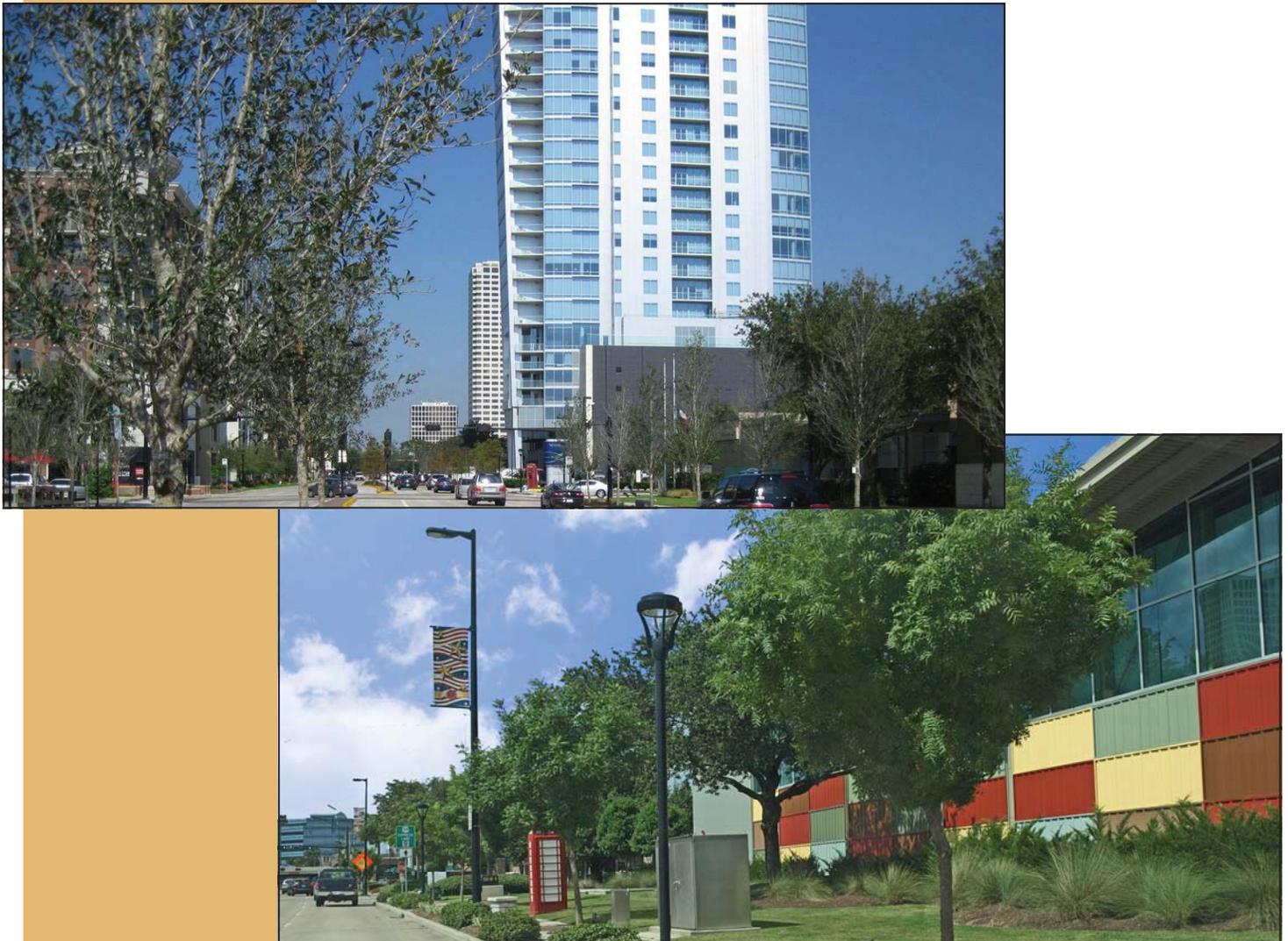


### 6.9.1 — District Themes

Districts, or areas that are regarded as distinct units based on particular characteristics, can be viewed as opportunities to capitalize on positioning, branding, and marketing important assets within a community. Oftentimes, districts can be further defined and promoted with enhancements that are unique to the district, such as signage, artwork, design, and landscape amenities. Some regional examples of well-defined, compelling, vibrant districts in the region include Houston’s Museum District, which includes 20 museums within a 1.5 mile radius that accommodates 8M visitors annually, and Houston’s Theatre District, established to market the 17-block area with nine performing arts organizations to 2M visitors annually. These two districts are readily delineated not only in marketing materials but also by their thematic street and directional signage, architectural accoutrements, landscaping, and parking. Another Houston-area district, Upper Kirby, is readily identifiable for its vibrant red color scheme, British-style artifacts, successful businesses, and attractive residences. (Figure 6.16)

Webster, too, has defined districts that could benefit from focused, thematic enhancements. The NASA Parkway District is defined geographically but not thematically. Opportunities exist to revitalize and brand this iconic corridor with space-themed art and signage, amid new investment and uniform design standards. As the gateway to NASA,

FIGURE 6.16 UPPER KIRBY DISTRICT THEMES



the NASA Parkway District is ideal for instilling the aerospace theme in every imaginable way. Webster's medical sector constitutes one of the City's most vibrant economic engines and should feature enhancements within the two-mile area that further define and promote the City's invaluable, thriving healthcare industry. As 1.8M visitors are accommodated by Webster's medical sector, this district offers a striking opportunity to capitalize on its world-class healthcare offerings.

FIGURE 6.17 OVERHEAD UTILITY LINES ON TEXAS AVENUE



### 6.10 — Utility Enhancement

While Webster requires underground utilities for commercial constituents—adopted from an ordinance in 1998, the City features an extensive, unsightly array of overhead utility lines that contribute to visual blight. These utility corridors can be overgrown with weeds and debris, which add to the overall unsightly view. As the Houston-Galveston Region experiences weather events, such as hurricanes, buried utility lines would provide better protection from power failure and greatly enhance the visual appeal of the City. (Figure 6.17)

#### Options to ameliorate utility corridors and overhead utility structures

1. Work with CenterPoint Energy to establish a cost for these improvements. While CenterPoint Energy will not pay to bury lines, the company will provide cost estimates to facilitate planning. The City can then determine which areas will result in the best return on investment. In the case of an area suitable for a management district, the management district could provide funding for the goal of removing unsightly overhead power lines.
2. Relocate overhead utility lines to alleys and rear of properties, whenever possible.

### 6.11 — Community Building

The process of enhancing a community is not solely about buildings, streets, parks, and visual appeal but also about relationships—partnerships, events, and activities that propel a city in positive directions. One of Webster's signature annual events is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration at Texas Avenue Park. Other recurring annual events include the City-wide cleanup and Easter Egg Hunt. The Webster Fire Department recently initiated a reading program at McWhirter Elementary and has been engaged for many years in fire prevention and training for residents and businesses. (Figure 6.18)

FIGURE 6.18 WEBSTER'S ANNUAL JULY 4TH CELEBRATION DRAWS THOUSANDS FROM THE REGION



## 6.12 — Vision, Goals and Actions

The Comprehensive Plan stakeholders formulated a vision, series of goals, and actions to serve as a framework for implementation of the community enhancement chapter. The vision statement below was prepared as the foundation for the goals and actions that follow. These goals and actions are numbered for reference purposes only and do not suggest a priority.

# Vision

*Facilitate a strong community that is attractive and desirable for residents, businesses, and visitors to the City*

### **GOAL 6.1**

Enhance the visual and aesthetic character of the community through the establishment of programs, standards, and guidelines.

#### **Action 1**

Develop and implement guidelines and standards to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the community.

#### **Action 2**

Create a program to organize and promote the maintenance and upkeep of neighborhoods and business districts.

#### **Action 3**

Continue to cite and enforce code violations.

#### **Action 4**

Enhance and maintain public infrastructure, such as streets, traffic signals, signage, sidewalks, crosswalks, and parks, especially in highly visible areas of the community.

### **GOAL 6.2**

Improve corridors and gateways into and throughout the community to promote strong branding and first impression.

#### **Action 1**

Generate specific gateway and corridor plans for public improvements, such as traffic signals, landscaping, and entrance signage.

#### **Action 2**

Design, fund, and construct appealing monument signage and install them at unmarked gateways.

#### **Action 3**

Utilize plant materials that are proven performers in the region. Install low maintenance, hardy, drought resistant and resilient plant materials in public rights-of-way.

#### **Action 4**

Determine and pursue additional funding sources for enhancement projects and develop a timeline for submitting applications to necessary agencies.

### GOAL 6.3

Improve the visual environment in high priority areas of the City by relocating or burying overhead power and utility lines where practical and feasible.

#### **Action 1**

Identify and consider alternative solutions for overhead power lines. Partner with local utility providers to determine cost, timing, and feasibility of relocating overhead lines underground throughout the City or in targeted locations such as defined enhancement corridors and nodes. Incorporate costs to bury overhead power lines along enhancement corridors into the Capital Improvement Program and Annual Budget.

#### **Action 2**

Amend applicable ordinances, whenever possible, to require utility lines to be buried, or utility easements to be located at the rear of lots, or along the perimeter of new subdivisions.

### GOAL 6.4

Revitalize antiquated commercial areas of the City.

#### **Action 1**

Research funding opportunities for enhancing business corridors.

#### **Action 2**

Consider the creation of a management district within Webster, which has the authority to levy an assessment apportioned for improvements within a focused area.

### GOAL 6.5

Create an attractive pedestrian friendly environment throughout the City of Webster to accommodate residents and visitors.

#### **Action 1**

Promote and fund the installation and use of decorative sidewalks, paved and raised crosswalks, pathways and trails to create a variety of pedestrian-friendly environments, i.e. textured or stamped concrete.

#### **Action 2**

Identify multi-modal corridors to ensure public safety.

#### **Action 3**

Research funding opportunities for community enhancement.

### GOAL 6.6

Encourage community activities that promote Webster's brand.

#### **Action 1**

Create, publicize, and encourage local participation in community activities and events.

#### **Action 2**

Create positive partnerships among businesses, property owners, and the City to foster meaningful activities and initiatives.