



The
WASHINGTON
AVENUE
COALITION

From A Colorful Past

From the 1880s to the 1960s, before Katy Road became an interstate, Washington Avenue served as a gateway to over-land transportation from the west and north. One of many thoroughfares radiating from the city, it was named after its ultimate destination, Washington on the Brazos in Washington County.

During its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, Washington Avenue was a vital business and industrial district dominated by the Houston & Central Railroad, with its first depot located at the site of the present Central Post Office.

The neighborhoods on either side of the Avenue were populated with the workers who staffed the railroad, drove the street cars, clerked the bustling shops, and fueled the area's industry — now fading from the collective memory.

Remnants of that memory can still be seen in the Lopresti Garage, now residential lofts, the Heights State Bank Building, the Glenwood and Olivewood Cemeteries, and the revitalized Victorian cottages that dot the nearby neighborhoods.



To A Bright Future

Today, the Avenue is at the center of a myriad of interests that signal the future. People living in the community reside harmoniously with commerce, education and the arts in this vital inner-city mecca.

To the east, fragmented from its origin at the north side of Allen's Landing, Washington connects to Houston's central business district at historic Market Square and the Theater District. To the west, after it bends at Westcott near Memorial Park, it continues northwest to meet Interstate-10.

This important thoroughfare links northwest Houston to the downtown business district, but many of the people who pass through each day are unaware of the underlying attractions that make the area unique:

- *Colorful history of industry, commerce and transportation.*
- *"Melting-pot" neighborhoods representing diverse cultures.*
- *Direct access to Houston's central business district.*
- *Recreational benefits of beautiful Memorial Park.*
- *Network of parks and trails along the bayous.*
- *West End art colony and its "tin house" phenomena.*
- *Contemporary music and theater scene.*

It is on these treasures — historic perspective, diverse peoples, cultural interests, community pride and commerce — that the Washington Avenue Coalition has built its vision for the future.

More Than an Avenue — A Destination

In 1994, the leaders of six neighborhoods along the avenue formed the Washington Avenue Coalition in partnership with the City of Houston's Neighborhood Planning Program. It is the first civic organization to collaborate with its local government in this way and has been recognized for pioneering a new approach to urban revitalization.

The Coalition's purpose is to provide united leadership and work with government to coordinate public and private resources in the planning and redevelopment of the Washington Avenue district.

In concert with the award-winning architecture, planning and urban design firm, EDI Architecture, and the City of Houston Planning and Development

Department, the Coalition created an exciting new streetscape design for Washington Avenue with three major focal points: an elegant traffic circle at the intersection of Westcott; a tree-lined entertainment plaza and village center at the Heights/Yale and Waugh intersections; and a civic plaza at Houston Avenue with features commemorating the corridor's colorful history.

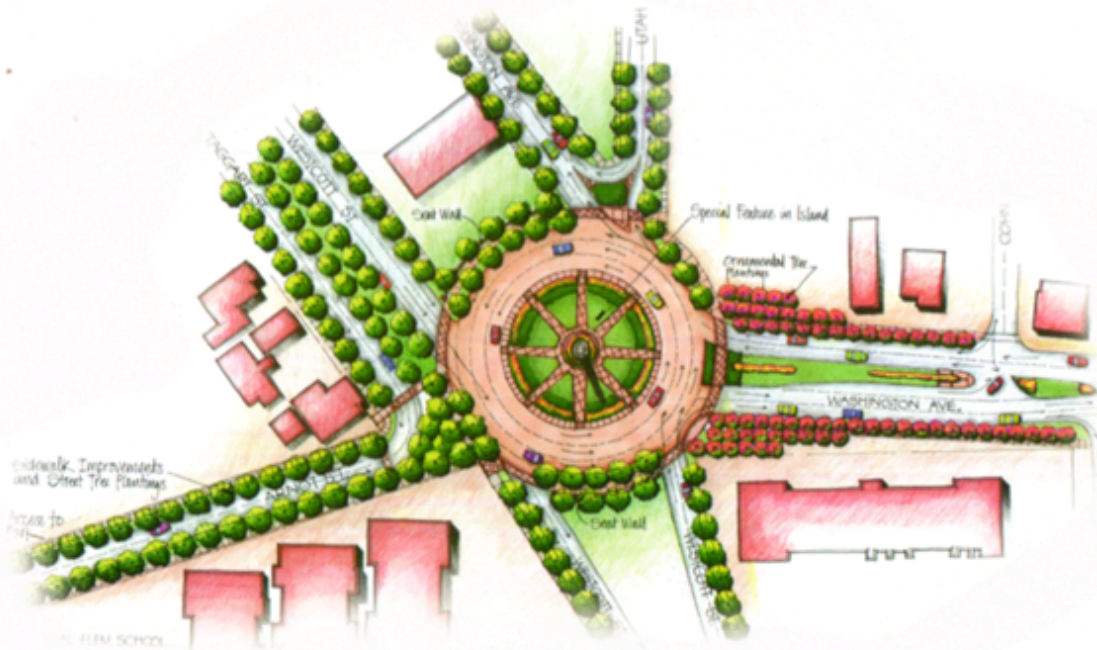


The plan promotes a traditional image at each intersection with common features and amenities that present a cohesive, attractive identity, while preserving the unique character of each neighborhood. These common features include light towers, benches, shade trees, kiosks, water fountains, public art, custom signs, street lamps,

overhead banners, brick cross-walks and sidewalks.

Transforming the Washington Avenue corridor into an attractive, prosperous district will make it a popular inner-loop destination that better serves its businesses and residents. Successful redevelopment will result in further revitalization of the surrounding neighborhoods, making the community an enjoyable

place to live. These exciting goals are within reach as the community pulls its substantial resources together.



A Charming Traffic Circle

At the west end of the Coalition area, Washington Avenue makes a turn to the northwest leading to Interstate 10. At the turn, an elegant traffic circle is designed to simplify the confusing confluence of Washington with Westcott, Arnot and Utah Streets while providing an attractive geometric solution. A sculpture or civic monument graces the circle as centerpiece.

The perimeter of the circle features shade trees and sidewalk improvements making it safer and more comfortable to cross busy streets from the adjacent neighborhoods to the elementary school on Arnot Street and to Memorial Park further to the west. The strong visual character of the circle combined with new landscape features creates a gateway from the west to the commercial corridor of Washington Avenue.



The Village Square

At the heart of the Coalition project, Washington Avenue intersects with Yale Street and Heights Boulevard at the location of numerous restaurants, music venues, a theater and several Houston Community College buildings. A village square on the south of the Avenue features a landscaped amphitheater with a stage — the downtown skyline, its backdrop. Under the redevelopment plan, the street connection between Yale and Waugh is closed, routing traffic to the existing street on the east side of the square.

Two brick and metal gateway towers of a traditional style identify entry into the Washington Avenue Corridor from the Heights Historic District to the north. Trees and sidewalk improvements allow for better pedestrian access between the HCC campus buildings, the businesses and the new apartments on adjacent blocks.



Downtown Gateway

At the east end where Washington meets Houston Avenue, a simple, elegant design marks the entry to the Washington Avenue corridor from downtown Houston.

It features two gateway towers on opposite corners with trees, lighting and other landscape amenities that beautify the area. Special paving at crosswalks improves safety for pedestrians, and reconstructed curbs facilitate turns for the many trucks and buses that pass through the intersection.

It is appropriate that the future vision of the Washington Avenue Coalition extends beyond this gateway to connect the corridor's rich history with the city's redevelopment plans for the area close to the Theater District and Historic Market Square.

“The Washington Avenue Coalition was formed in partnership with the City of Houston’s Neighborhood Planning Program to redevelop the district into a vital, inner-city destination.”

From Plan To Reality — Join Us!

Momentum builds. The City of Houston, Metro and the Texas Department of Transportation have begun to redevelop areas adjacent to the Coalition area, from the Arts district and Market Square to the County Courthouse and warehouse district. In its partnership with the City, the Coalition is moving decisively to capitalize on this progress.

The synergy resulting from the formation of the Washington Avenue Corridor Manager Oversight Board has been important to our efforts. Composed of the Coalition, prominent local business owners, the civic associations of the First Ward and Old Sixth Ward and the Avenue Community Development Corporation, the Oversight

Board promotes the area and generates funds, some of which are matched by the federal government through the designation of Washington Avenue as an Enhanced Enterprised Community.



These accomplishments give us strong resolve to continue serving as the forum for our great community, as a united voice to local government and as

leader in generating new ideas and opportunities within the City of Houston. *Join us in making the vision reality.*



The Washington Avenue Coalition
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Coalition Neighborhood Associations: Avenue CDC, First Ward, Magnolia Grove, Rice Military, Sixth Ward, West End, West End Business and Woodcrest
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