9 | SIGNATURE PROJECTS

Signature projects are complex transformative actions that address multiple objectives within the same framework, helping various actors involved in the implementation strategy of the plan to collaborate at various scales and levels. Those projects, as described in the previous section, comprise more than one near, short, and long-term objectives that elicited the most interest from the community.

9.1 | SIGNATURE PROJECT #1 - BROWNVILLE GREENWAY

Project background and purposes | The City of Brownsville is located on the ridgeline separating two watersheds, the Hatchie river watershed to the south, and the South Forked Deer watershed to the north. The County river ecosystems, and especially the Hatchie, are among the best-preserved in terms of biodiversity and stream quality. The Hatchie is today a protected area by virtue of its federal designation as the "Hatchie Wildlife Refuge".

In spite of Brownsville's strategic location, large sections of the its poorest neighborhoods surrounding or in the historic center, including the College Hill Historic District and the Downtown, flood on a regular basis. The most recent of these was the 500-year flood that hit mid Tennessee during the month of May (2010) seriously damaging large sections of the city. This convinced city leaders of the need to review the flood histories of other US cities and their responses. Among those responses was the San Antonio river restoration concept, consisting of systems of swales and levees that are both protective of the natural systems and the built environment while providing important recreational amenities for the nearby Low-income neighborhood and other city residents living farther away.

In Brownsville, the idea is to establish a greenway that surrounds and bisects the city while also connecting existing and new parks in the flood plain to be created in strategic areas within the damaged neighborhoods. In order to do so, the City has already used FEMA funds to acquire the most at-risk properties within the flood zone.

The re-design of the ground water system and the design of the proposed greenway system will have to address:

- The re-location and re-housing needs of families whose properties flood on a regular basis;
- The perception of some residents that such a large linear park around the city would be hard to maintain, and would attract and encourage crime (lack of eyes on the street) and would, in the end, become an eyesore.

Contribution to the Plan's Objectives | While providing a more natural and sustainable (low maintenance) storm water management system, the greenway is conceived as a multi-purpose infrastructure contributing to all 6 objectives of this plan**.** These are to:

a. **Preserve and enhance historic built environments**. The trail/floodplain section will connect urban paths to the major historic attractions of the city, while appropriate signage and way-finding systems will encourage tourists and locals using the overall trails to experience the city's historic heritage, enhancing their awareness of the cultural significance of the City's historic heritage. The urban trails and paths **[see Obj1-ST3 "Brownsville Urban Trails" Project]** will also be part of the overall project of improvement of specific sections of the historic district.

b. **Support economic development in the City.** More generally, the Greenway will help establish Brownsville and Haywood County as attractive destinations for eco-tourism, especially for residents of the region who want to take a day-trip (or more) to enjoy/explore the rare natural vistas of the of the Hatchie National Wildlife Refuge. At the same time, new retail businesses related to outdoor activities can also be located along the trail **[see Obj2-NT1- Branding Brownsville]**.

c. **Promote healthy living**. The trail will promote health and wellness among residents of all ages (walking, biking, running, etc.) while also including spaces and physical infrastructure for outdoor activities (bike and running trails; yoga and stretching spaces, etc.). Specific sports can be promoted along the trail by non-profit organizations and special-interest groups.

d. **Education and culture.** Different segments of the greenway can be converted into outdoor classrooms where children can play while landscaping, growing food, composting and recycling, etc. **[see Obj4-LT2 "The Greenway Ecological Education Center" Project]** This will help populate the trail and offer children an occasion to play an active role within the community, contributing practically to the collective landscape, recreation and events promoting the greenway.

e. **Increase recreational opportunities.** The greenway system can be promoted through periodical events and festivals that will not only attract people from outside, but also offer local residents enhanced recreational opportunities and local recreational amenities.

Planning and Design guidelines | Further details on how the system should be planned and designed are to be developed through an in-depth planning process that will engage the local community. In this way, the system's design can incorporate every form of local knowledge and community material and non-material resources while also promoting a sense of ownership within the community.

Each section will connect two major nodes of attraction and/or significance (a tentative map is attached).

Different sections can also imply different levels of community *engagement*, while the implementation of specific sections can be promoted by targeted community actors, such as: youth groups or schools promoting a linear community garden; local cultural or philanthropic organizations promoting urban sections crossing historic districts; etc.

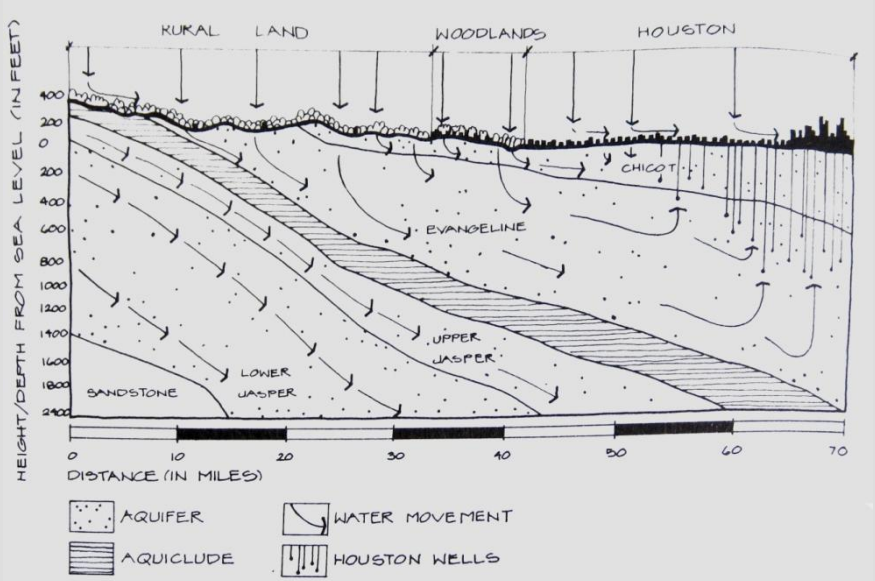
Suggestions for storm water management improvement | The city has already initiated a plan to conduct a detailed study on how to improve and retrofit the existing storm water management system. This study should take into account the fact that costs for retrofitting existing elements of the system and for implementing new ones can be reduced by reducing the area of impervious surfaces within city boundaries. This can be done adding specific design guidelines to the city building code, and starting pilot projects for public spaces (court square, streets, etc.).

Among the various example of sustainable and storm water management systems, **the case of Woodland, in Texas** (see Best Practice Table #1) has been selected as example of advanced techniques on how to address storm water management through the use of greenways and special rules embedded in building codes and zoning.

BEST PRACTICE #1 | A natural drainage system that serves as linear park: the case of Woodlands, Texas

[from Spirn A. W. (1984), *The Granite Garden. Urban Nature and Human Design*. Basic Books. pp. 163-166]

One of the most successful examples of using multifunctional linear parks to enhance ecological stormwater management is Woodlands in Texas, a new town planned to host 150,000 people on 20,000 acres of pine-oak woodland north of Houston. By 1971, when the preliminary ecological planning study and the parallel market research were complete, and the general plan for the city was underway, water had emerged as the critical factor. The Woodlands' "natural drainage system" exploits the capacity of natural, wooded floodplains to accommodate stormwater runoff and of well-drained soils to soak up and store rainfall. It reduces the combination of increased flooding and lower streams flows normally associated with urbanization, it maintains water quality, and recharges the aquifer below neighboring Houston (See figure A). The wooded floodplain, drainage channels, and recharge soils form a town-wide open-space system of natural drainage that offers substantial savings over the cost of constructing a conventional storm sewer system. When it was originally proposed, engineers compared the cost of the natural drainage system to that of a conventional storm sewer system and estimated that the natural drainage system would save the developer over $14 million.



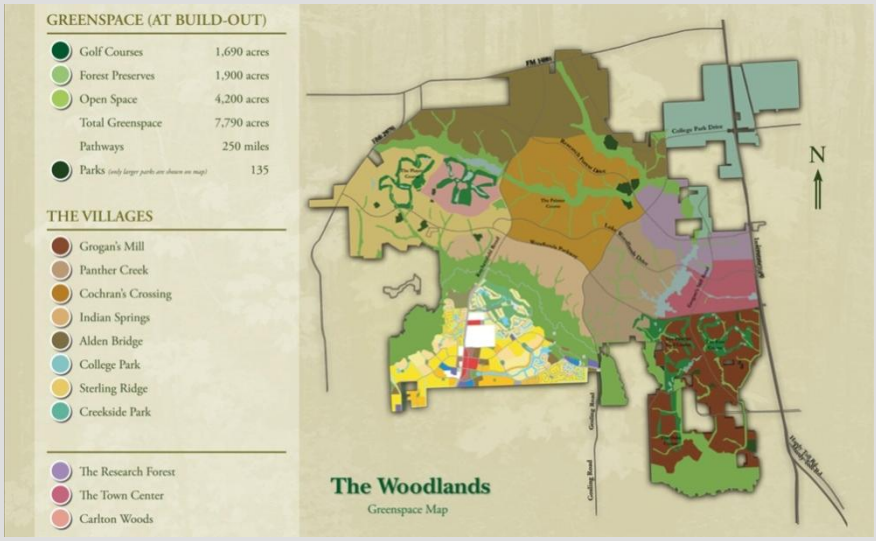


Figure A (up): Aquifers underlying Houston and Woodlands, Texas. Figure B (bottom): The Woodlands greenspaces map.

The natural drainage system comprises two subsystems: one stores and absorbs rainfall from frequent storms; the other drains floodwater from major storms (see figure C). The general plan responded to the major drainage system by locating large roads and dense development on ridge lines and higher elevations, while preserving the floodplains in parks and open land, and allocating low-density housing to the intermediate area. The use of floodplains and drainage channels as open space works well from both ecological and social standpoints. Most of the spectacular trees on the site occur within the floodplains of the major creeks. These same floodplains also harbor a diverse and abundant native wildlife, including white-tailed deer, opossum, armadillos, bobcats, and many birds, and provide the corridors along which they move. The continuous system of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails runs along the drainage network, linking places in town.

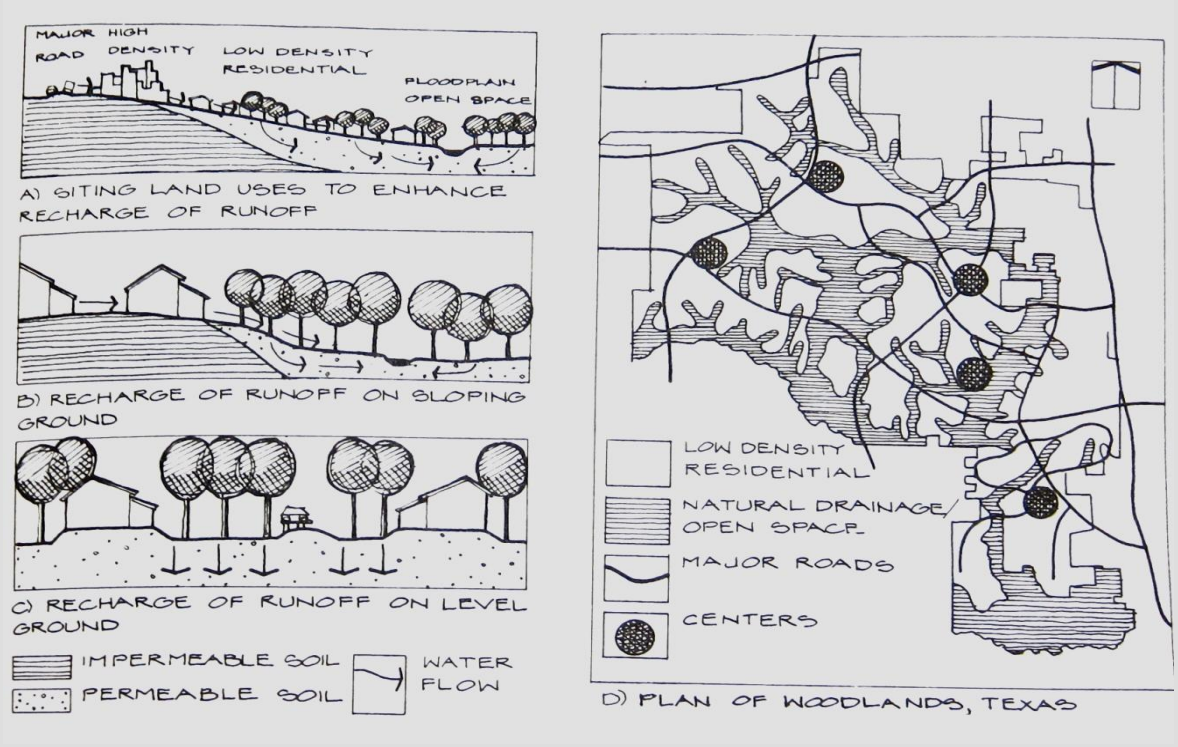
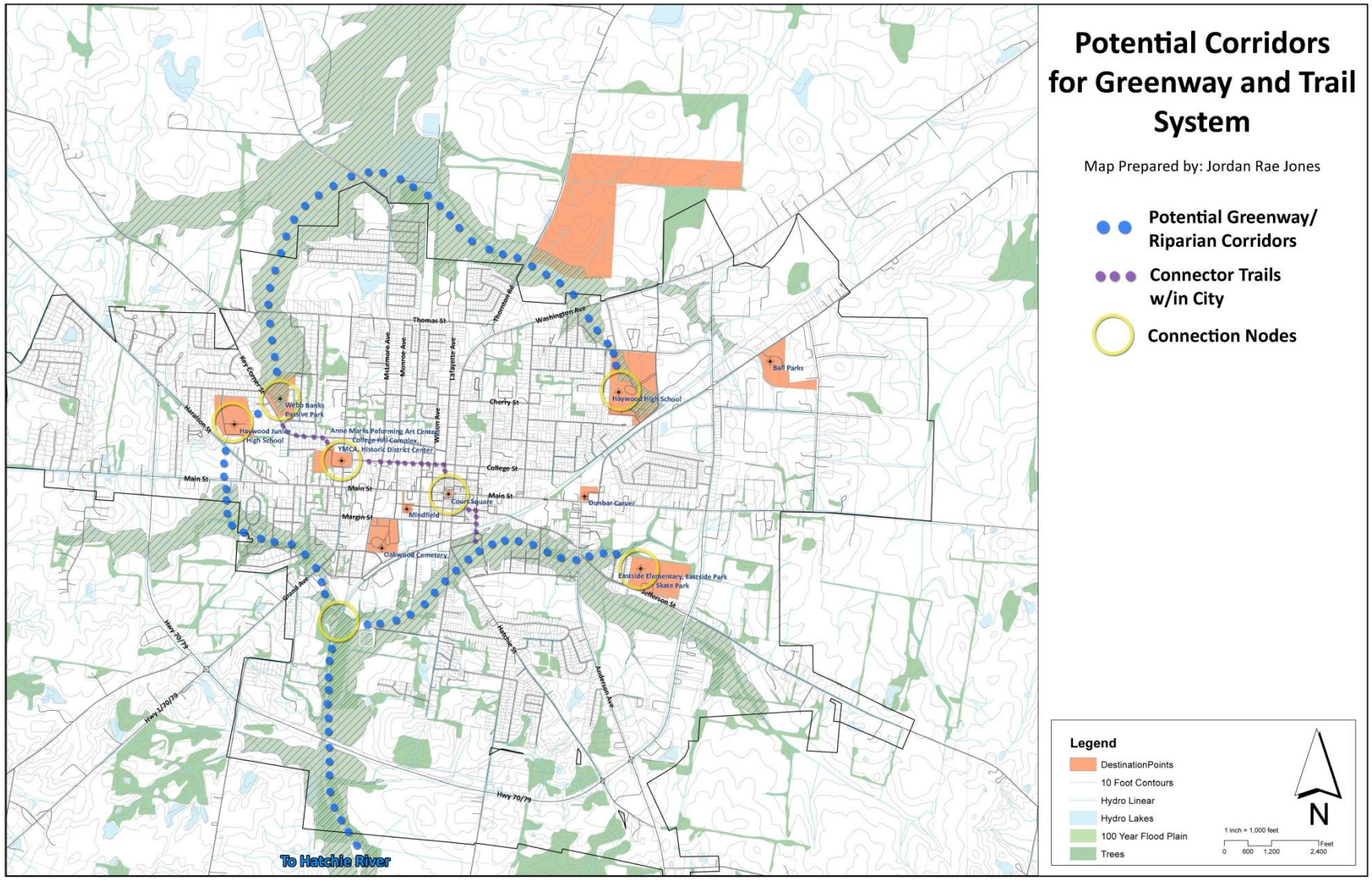


Figure C – The natural drainage system at Woodlands, Texas.

Although this larger floodplain network drains run-off from major storms, well drained soils and ponds absorb or store rain close to where it falls, either in private yards or in nearby parks. This local drainage system responds to subtle changes in topography and soils. Roads, golf courses, and parks are designed to impound storm water and enhance its absorption by well-drained soils.

Maintaining the structure of these soils, so essential to their ability to absorb water, requires strict regulation of construction activities. Areas designated as "recharge soils" are left wooded and specifically marked in the zoning ordinance. In some cases building construction has proceeded within a fenced-off zone that extended only a few feet on all sides from the building foundation.

Possible structure of sections and nodes to be connected through the system



Sections Typology

description | intensively vegetated floodplain, accessible or not accessible to humans, that help to restore wildlife, enhance urban landscape; vegetation can be entirely flooded without great damage.

context | non-urban areas, often including open-air streams, where specific environmental hazards (flooding or other phenomena) are dangerous for people; areas difficult to be acquired and/or used by the public, whose treatment can be determined through land use and codes.

description | public linear parks that combine recreational bike and pedestrian trails and environmental functions (ecological corridors), furnished with signage.

context | non-Urban areas that can include streams characterized by low environmental risk and are or can easily become public property.

description | public linear parks that combine recreational (bike and pedestrian trails) and environmental functions (ecological corridors); can be characterized by the presence of thriving vegetation, especially tree canopy, street furnishing and lighting, etc.

context | urban areas that usually include streets, urban creeks and green buffers that can be transformed to pursue re-naturalization and furnishing.

description | dedicated trail for bikers and pedestrians, with appropriate signage and design.

context | portions of streets that are large enough to be able to accommodate them.

description |horizontal street signage, indicating a dedicated space for bikers.

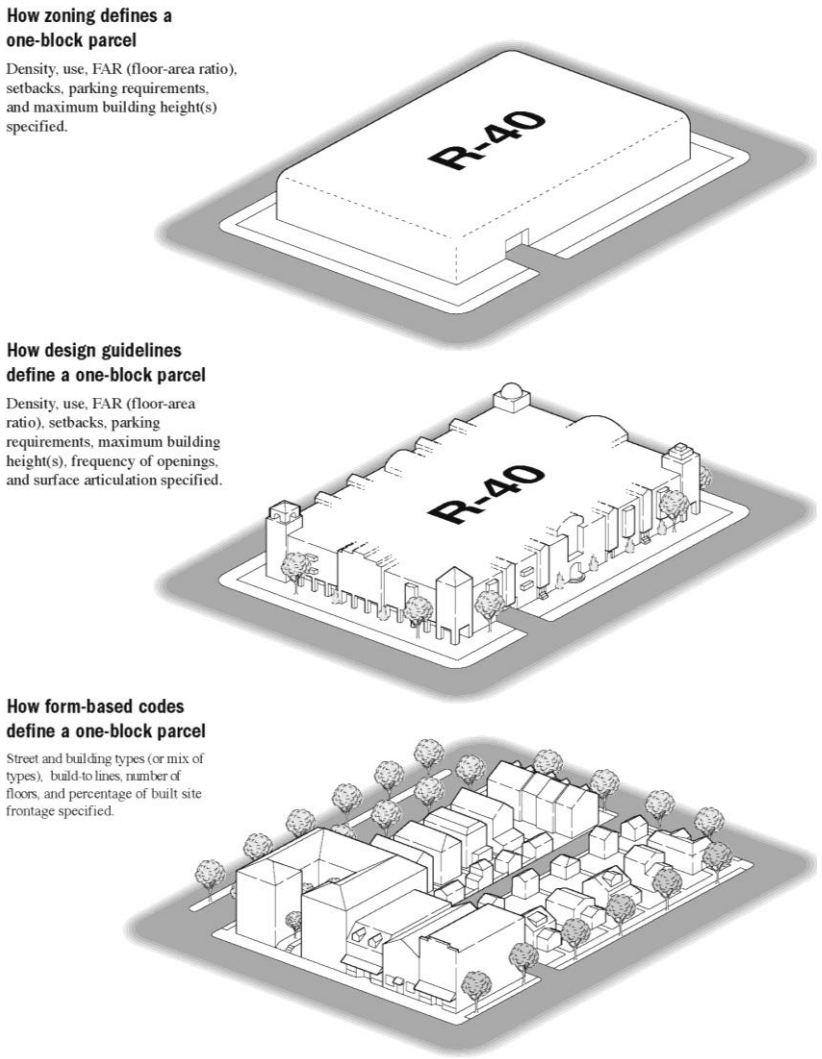
context | portions of streets that are large enough to be able to accommodate them.

9.2 | SIGNATURE PROJECT #2 - BEAUTIFUL BROWNSVILLE THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF URBAN DESIGN

Brownsvillians' affection and appreciation of the distinctive character of Brownsville, a southern cotton town with its distinctive urban morphology, is echoed by their will to preserve and enhance the quality of the city's built environment through the systematic implementation of high quality urban design principles, both in preserving and enhancing historic areas, improving low quality and mostly vacant neighborhoods, and pursuing the best aesthetic options for new developments.

Within a traditional pattern of development, developers, designers, and builders take into consideration, on a voluntary basis, the placement and the design of each building, plaza, and storefront. Even when moved by the best intentions, it is very difficult for single individuals to act in a way that each detail supports the shared collective vision of a beautiful town that builds its future upon its distinctive urban morphology.

For this purpose in recent years, towns and communities have adopted a wide range of planning tools that help them applying high quality urban design principles to the physical transformation of the built environment. Those tools can be indicative (Urban Design guidelines) or mandatory (form-based codes and ordinances indicating design standards).



(source: formbasedcodes.org)

In both cases, such tools use physical form rather than separation of uses as their organizing principle. Form-based codes, in particular, offer a powerful alternative to conventional zoning, addressing not just functions, but also the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types.

This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on the micromanagement and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters (e.g., FAR, dwellings)

A form-based code commonly includes the following elements:

- **Regulating Plan**. A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area being coded.
- **Public Space Standards**. Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.).
- **Building Form Standards**. Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
- **Administration**. A defined application and project review process.
- **Definitions**. A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

Form-based codes may also include:

- **Architectural Standards**. Regulations controlling external architectural materials and quality.
- **Landscaping Standards**. Regulations controlling landscape design and plant materials on private property as they impact public spaces (e.g. regulations about parking lot screening and shading, maintaining sight lines, ensuring unobstructed pedestrian movement, etc.).
- **Signage Standards**. Regulations controlling allowable signage sizes, materials, illumination, and placement.
  - Per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, traffic LOS), to the neglect of an integrated built form.

Example of signs allowed on a pedestrian friendly street in the Fort Meyers Beach Land Development code (FL): A sign projecting from the corner of a building is visible along two streets (1); lower signs cathches the eye of pedestrians passing in the front of the entrance (2 and 3); ground signs are designed to fit in deep setbacks of a suburban strip and are not appropriate on pedestrian oriented streets (source: http://www.cityftmyers.com/).

- **Environmental Resource Standards**. Regulations controlling issues such as storm water drainage and infiltration, development on slopes, tree protection, solar access, etc. In Brownsville, these specifications can specifically address the issue of improving water retention of public and private spaces within the urbanized areas.
- **Annotation**. Text and illustrations explaining the intentions of specific code provisions.

Examples of rain gardens in Portland, helping retention of storm water in urbanized areas.

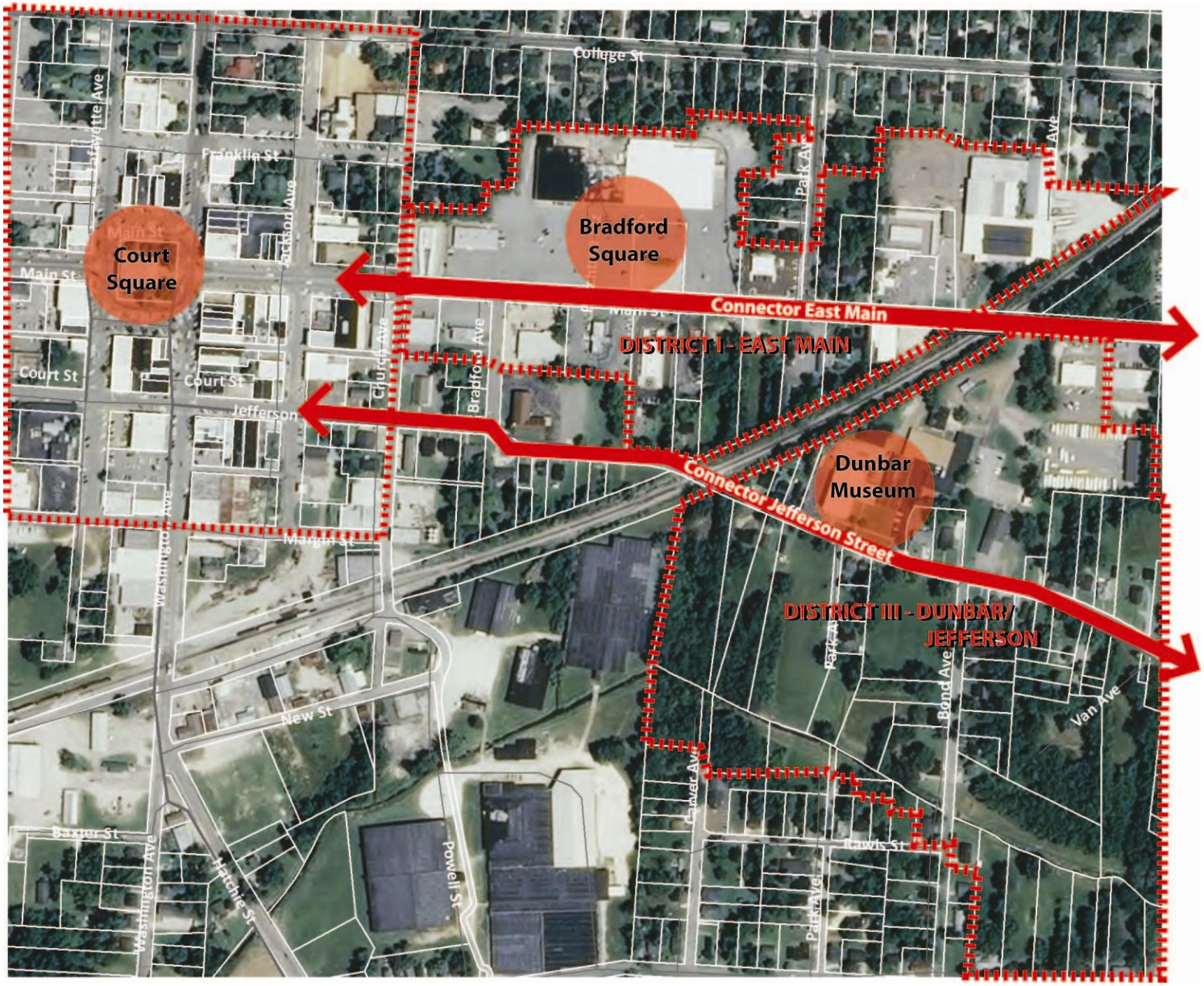
The first step for the construction of the City design standards and guidelines is the analysis of the city morphological structure, to be done through the identification of:

- **Districts**, i.e. areas of the Town that have a distinctive urban, economic, environmental, and/or social character; for each district specific design guidelines and prescriptions will aim to promote the district uniqueness while enhancing spatial connectivity with other parts of town;, for residential districts the functional and morphological connection with the urban core, Downtown Court Square, has to be improved.
- **Districts cores**; the core of each already developed district – usually where retail, public spaces, urban landmarks, etc. are concentrated – should be identified.
- **Existing or potential connectors** between district cores, such as main roads; sections of the greenways; secondary roads to be converted into primary pedestrian connectors, etc.

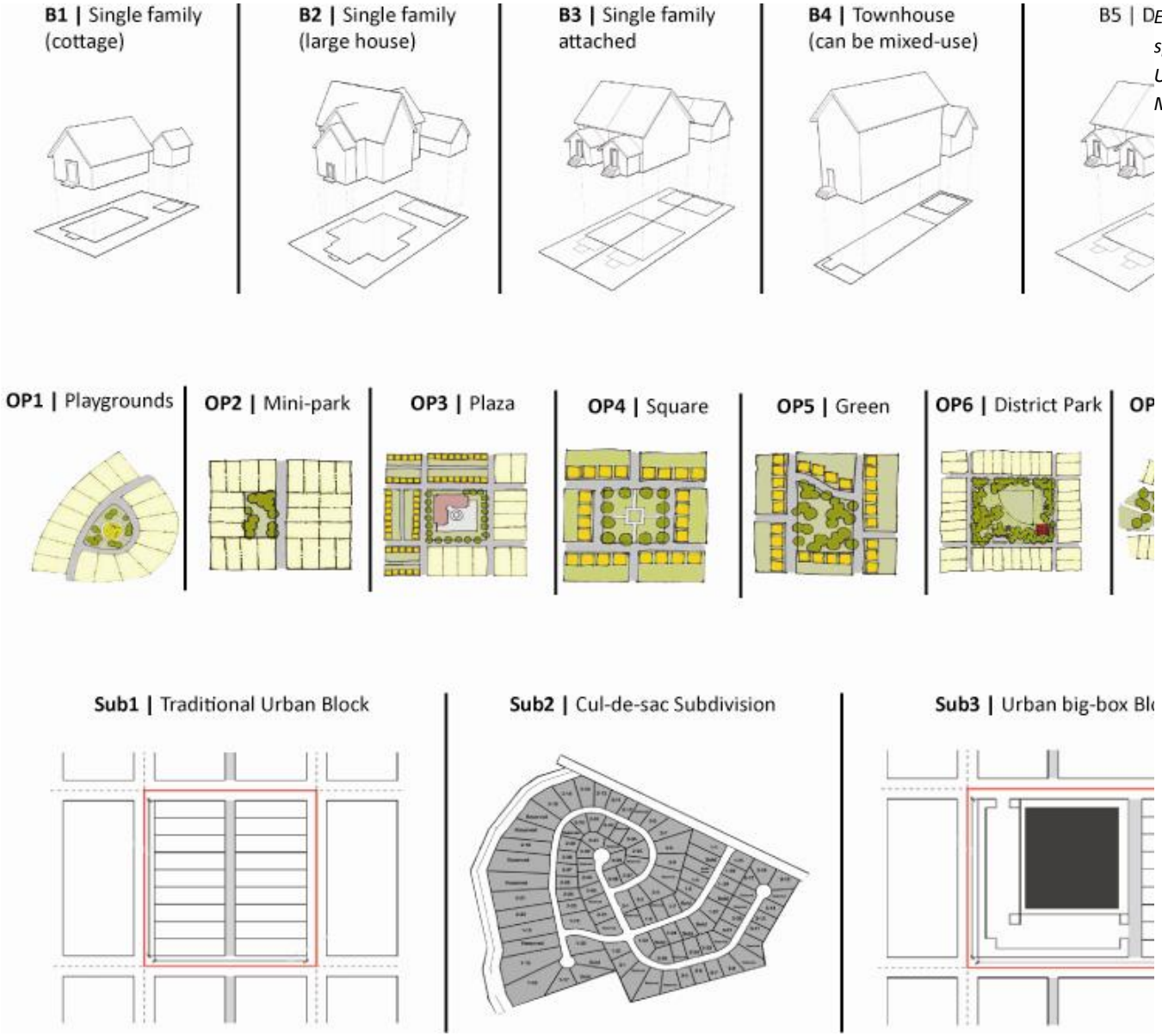
Residential districts can be divided into:

I. Well preserved historic districts, such as College Hill and Court Square, where most of the properties are historic and to be preserved; here design guidelines might prevent transformative actions that would compromise the historic urban morphology;
II. Less-preserved historic districts, such as East Main Street, where important historic properties have been replaced by modern structures (e.g. Bradford Square in East Main). Here design guidelines might address if and how to restore the historic urban morphology.
III. Semi-Historic, such as the Dunbar-Jefferson Street district, where historic properties mix with non-historic units and infill opportunities; here design standards should guide developers in addressing the issue of creating livable and aesthetically acceptable public spaces (streets, plazas, etc.).
IV. Newly developed or to be developed, mostly located at the edge of town; here urban design standards and guidelines might lead future transformations contributing to high quality public spaces (streets, plazas, greenway sections, etc.).

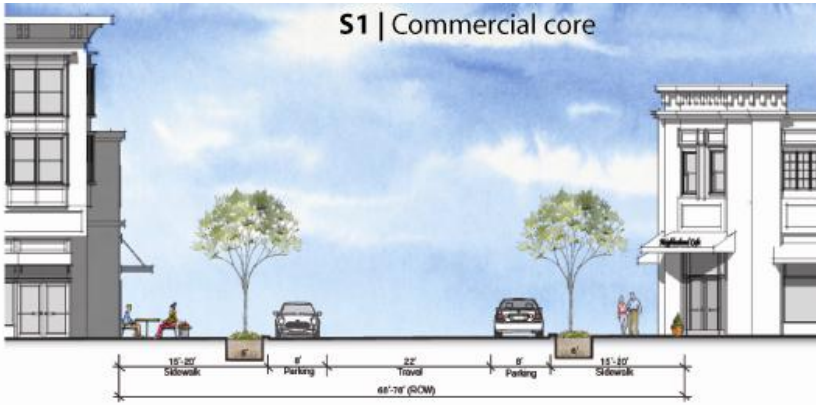
In establishing guidelines and standards the first step is to create typologies for important urban features such as Subdivisions (the division of sites in blocks, lots, streets, alleys, etc.), buildings, open spaces, street sections, etc. (see attached figures as examples of typologies). Types that enhance the quality of public and common spaces such as streets and open spaces should be allowed and/or suggested along a main connectors and districts cores.

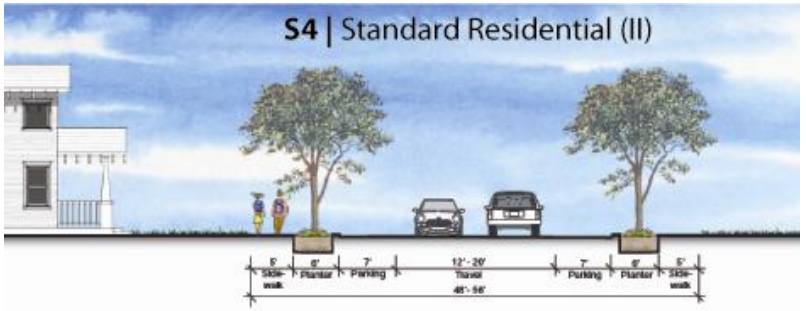


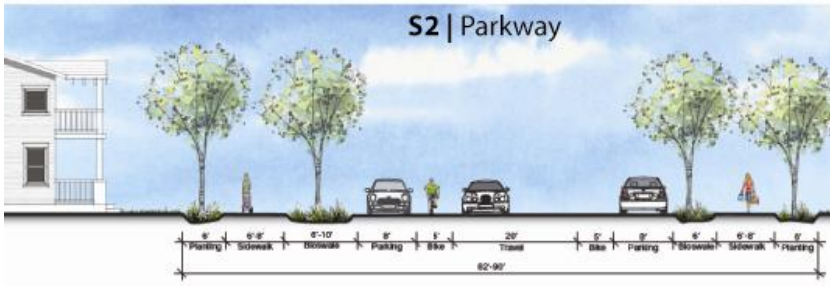
Examples of a districts, Subdivisions, and connectors.

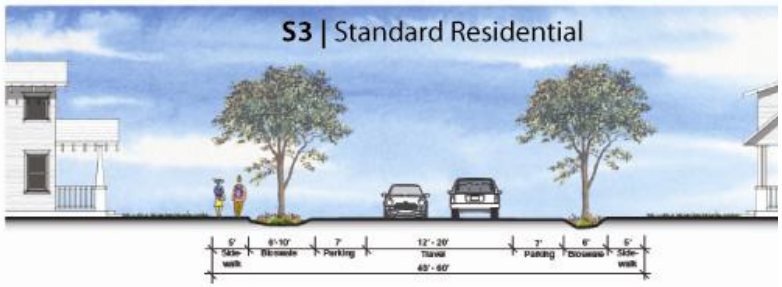


Examples of types of building, open spaces and subdivisions used in the Unified Development Code in Memphis, TN.









Example of street typology designed for Fort Bragg Mill Site, CA (source: http://www.ftbraggmillsite.com)

10 | WHERE WE GO FROM HERE?

10.1 | THE REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

This report will be presented to the Brownsville Planning Commission in January, 2012 for their review, comment, and endorsement. Following the Commission's action, the Board of Alderman will hold one or more public hearings to allow residents to comment upon the report. Following public input, the Mayor and Board of Alderman will vote on a resolution to adopt the plan.

10.2 | USING THE PLAN TO GUIDE FUTURE DECISIONS

Once the plan has been adopted, the Brownsville Regional Planning Commission (Commission) should review the report's full set of "Near Term" Projects selecting 3-4 as strategic objectives for Year 1. Working with the Board of Alderman, the Mayor's Office, the Chamber of Commerce, and other civic bodies within the community, the Commission should organize citizen-led committees to assume responsibility for advancing these initiatives along the lines presented in this document. At the end of each year, the Commission should review the progress made towards fully implementing these initiatives taking on new projects from the "Near Term Projects" list as additional people and resources become available. The annual review and status update will include progress toward action steps and will address any necessary revisions to strategically align with future conditions and economic factors at that point in time.

As the fifth anniversary of the plan approaches, the Commission should consider engaging an outside consultant to re-evaluate the remaining projects listed in the immediate, mid-term, and long-term categories. Once this review has been completed, the Commission should review the items listed in the "Mid-Term Project" List in order to establish priorities for Year-Six.

For more information regarding the plan, please visit the Brownsville on the Move website at: www.brownsvilleonthemove.org or contact:

Ms. Sharon Hayes
Director of Planning
City of Brownsville
111 N. Washington Avenue
Brownsville, TN 38012
731-772-1212
shayes@memphis.edu

Appendix A | Community Meetings List

DATE	LOCATION	PURPOSE
13 December 2010	City Hall	Planning Commission Retreat – Project Scope Review
18 January 2011	City Hall	Faculty and City Officials Meeting to finalize Contract, Scope of Services and Schedule
5 February 2011	City Hall	Key Stakeholders Meeting Announcing the Project
19 February 2011	National Guard Armory	Community Kick-Off Meeting, SWOT Exercise and Camera Exercise
25 March 2011	First South Community Center	Visioning Exercise, Report Back on Interviews and Research
02 April 2011	First South Community Center	Visioning Exercise II and Final Report on Resident Interviews
14 May 2011	Delta Room	Vision and Goals Presentation and Review
20 May 2011	Delta Room	Greenway and Downtown Design Charrettes

Appendix B | Residents Phone Interview

This survey is a joint effort between the City of Brownsville and the University of Memphis. Survey results will be used to create a comprehensive city improvement plan. Any comments you make may become a part of the plan; but whatever you say will be held strictly confidential. If you have other questions or would like a copy of the completed interview, please feel free to call the Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, Dr. Ken Reardon, 901-678-2610.

Date of Interview: _____ **Interview District:** _____

Interviewers #1: _____ #2: _____

We do not expect anyone to be able to answer all the questions (kids, seniors). If at any time you do not know how to answer a question or it makes you feel uncomfortable, that's ok. We'll skip that question. Your answers to these questions will be totally anonymous.

For multiple choice questions circle the number for the answer. For open-ended questions note all the residents comments in the provided space (Use back of survey form in case you run out of space, make sure you write the question # that you are continuing on the back).

1. GENERAL PERCEPTIONS

First we would like to know how you feel about your city.

1.1. How long have you and your family lived Brownsville

1. less than 1 year
2. 1 to 3 years

3. 4 to 10 years
4. 11 to 20 years
5. 21 to 30 years
6. more than 30 years

1.2. What are the <u>three things you like best</u> about living in Brownsville?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1.3. What are the <u>three things you like least</u> about living in Brownsville?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1.4. What are the <u>three most important changes</u> you would like to see made in Brownsville to improve the overall quality of life for local residents?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2. LIVING CONDITIONS

Next we'd like to know how you feel about the natural environment of the City.

2.1. How would you rate the overall cleanliness of the streets, sidewalks and open spaces in Brownsville?

1. excellent
2. good
3. fair
4. poor
5. very poor

Please explain:_____

_____

2.2. Are there places in the city where you or your family feel unsafe and avoid, if so, where?

_____

_____

2.3. How would you rate the overall quality of public parks in Brownsville?

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

2.4. How would you rate equipment and facilities in public parks?

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

2.5. How would you rate public parks cleanliness?

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

2.6. How would you rate public parks programs?

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

2.7. What suggestions do you have for improving area parks?

_____

3. HOUSING

We would like to know how you feel about housing in the city.

3.1. How would you rate the overall housing conditions in Brownsville?

1. excellent
2. good
3. fair
4. poor
5. very poor

3.2. Currently, there are some vacant homes in the city. How would you like to see it used? (Ask as open ended and then select the answer from below)

1. Single family homes
2. Multi-family homes
3. Parks / Playgrounds
4. Open space / green space
5. Community facilities (daycare, schools, seniors, etc.)
6. Community garden
7. Commercial
8. Other (please specify)_____

3.3. Currently, there are many vacant buildings in the downtown area. How would you like to see it used? (Ask as open ended and then select the answer from below)

9. Single family homes
10. Multi-family homes
11. Parks / Playgrounds
12. Open space / green space
13. Community facilities (daycare, schools, seniors, etc.)
14. Community garden
15. Commercial
16. Other (please specify)_____

3.4. What steps do you feel should be taken by local government leaders to improve the quality of housing in Brownsville?

_____

_____

_____

4. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Now, we'd like to know about the community services available in Brownsville.

4.1. How would you rate the quality of public services, (i.e. police, fire, garbage pick-up, cable services, etc.)

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

4.2. What suggestions do you have to improve public services?

_____

_____

Social Services

4.3. Please rate the availability and quality of the following services in your neighborhood or nearby (easy for you to access) your neighborhood

4.4.

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

Family Planning: 1 2 3 4 5

Child Care Centers:	1	2	3	4	5
Drug & Alcohol Programs:	1	2	3	4	5
Senior Citizens' Services:	1	2	3	4	5
Disability Services	1	2	3	4	5
Youth Development:	1	2	3	4	5

4.5. Are there any social services not currently available in this neighborhood that would you like to see?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Educational Services

4.6. Do you have school aged children? Yes ____ No _____

If so, please rate the availability and quality of the schools in the City.

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

4.6.1. Pre-Kindergarten 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4.6.2. Elementary Schools 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4.6.3. Middle Schools 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4.6.4. High schools 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4.6.5. Adult Education(GED etc.) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

4.7. What steps can the community take to improve the quality of educational services available to Brownsville residents?

_____

_____

4.8. What types of higher education would you be interested in taking?

_____

_____

Health Services

4.9. How would you rank the availability and quality of the following health services in Brownsville?

1 – Good 2 – Fair 3 – Poor 4 – Unavailable 5 - No Opinion

4.10. In your opinion, what's the greatest health problem in Brownsville?

_____

4.11. What can be done to improve the overall health of city residents?

a._____

b. _____

c. _____

Shopping and Economic Activity

The following set of questions will tell us about the availability of different stores in your neighborhood.

4.12. Where do you usually go for the following goods and services?

1 – Brownsville

2 – Jackson

3 – Memphis

4 – Other (please specify) _____

4.12.1. Groceries & Household Items 1 – 2 – 3 – 4
4.12.2. Medical/Dental Care
4.12.3. Clothing
4.12.4. Restaurants
4.12.5. Entertainment

4.13. Are there goods and services not currently available in the City that you would like to see offered? If so, what and where should they locate (i.e. downtown, Anderson etc.)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5. G. PLANNING & COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

This section includes questions about the kinds of planning and leadership you want to see in this neighborhood.

5.1. What are the three most important outcomes you think can make the most impact?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5.2. What are some barriers to improvement in Brownsville?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5.3. What can be done to overcome these barriers?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5.4. Do you belong to any neighborhood organizations or groups?

1. Yes
2. No

5.5. If yes, which ones:

_____

5.6. Do you think they would be interested in getting involved?

Yes _____ No ____

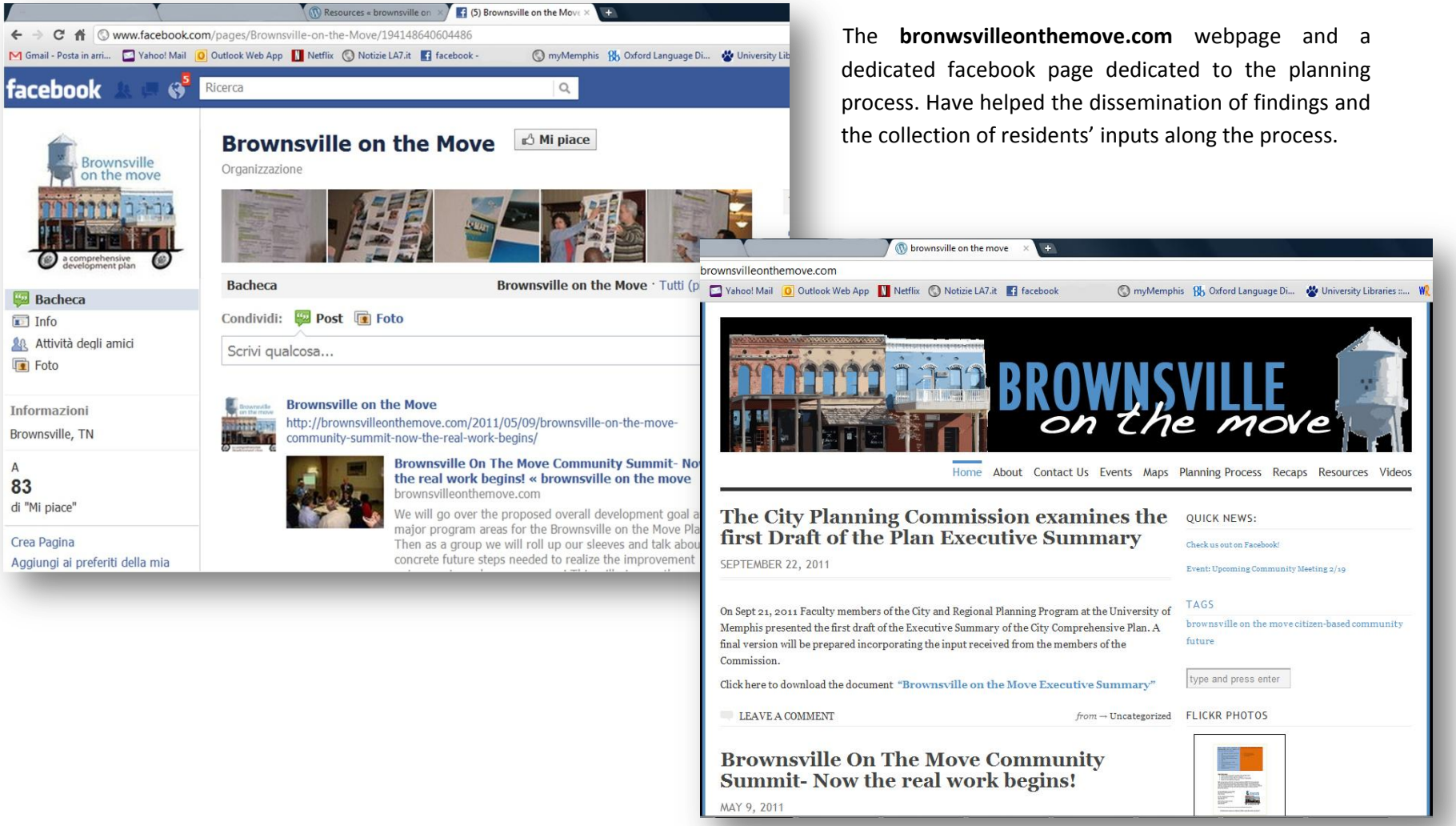
5.7. Is there anything else you'd like us to know about Brownsville?

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and concern for the City.

Appendix C | Web resources and communication



The **bronwsvilleonthemove.com** webpage and a dedicated facebook page dedicated to the planning process. Have helped the dissemination of findings and the collection of residents' inputs along the process.

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The plan is based upon a report prepared by
Kenneth M. Reardon, Professor and Director of the Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning,
University of Memphis

with the assistance of:

David Westendorff, Associate Professor, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning
Laura Saija, Visiting Faculty, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning and Marie Curie Research Fellow
Eric Miller, Graduate Assistant, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning
Jessica Buttermore, City and Regional Planning, University of Memphis
Antonio Raciti, Visiting Assistant Professor, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning

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