

Existing Conditions

Chapter One

*The Greater
Heights Strategic
Connections Plan*



**Existing Conditions
Key Insights**

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About the Study Area

**Who lives in the
Study Area?**

**Today's
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Network**

Key Safety Indicators



**MEMORIAL HEIGHTS
REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

tei Planning
+ Design

**TOOLE
DESIGN**

Key Insights from Existing Conditions

Major Takeaways from Mobility & Demographic Data

This Existing Conditions document reviews publicly available data as well as data provided by MHRA and its partners to unearth a more comprehensive understanding of mobility in Greater Heights. This data highlights both challenges and opportunities within the Study Area from the layout and design of the street grid to the location of destinations and the purposes for daily trips.

The seven statements on this page represent the Key Insights, or major takeaways from the Existing Conditions exercise. They offer a baseline for the next steps of this planning effort and ultimately to help identify the right projects in the right locations to best serve the needs of the people who travel in Greater Heights every day.

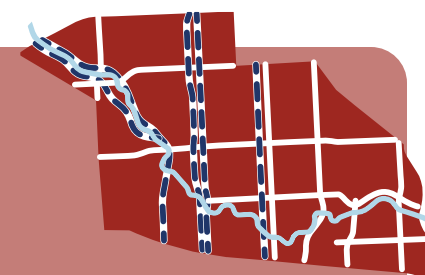
The Greater Heights benefits from **local destinations that provide access to daily essentials** without the need to cross a major highway.



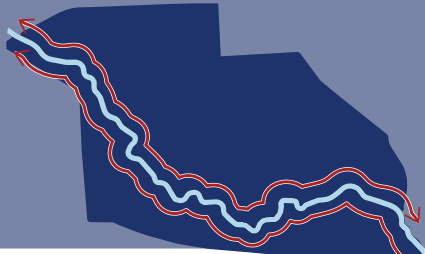
Neighborhoods in Greater Heights are **popular for families with children and older adults** who want to age in place.



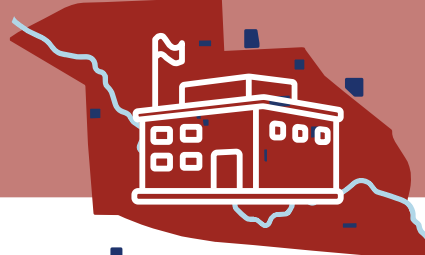
Several **major corridors act as barriers for local travel of all modes** with compounding safety challenges — high vehicle speeds, few crossings and wide roadways. While MHRA is proactively addressing safety and access along Shepherd and Durham, other corridors such as TC Jester Boulevard, Yale Street, N Main Street, and others still have safety and access challenges.



Although it is a great community asset, **White Oak Bayou is a major barrier** with infrequent and unsafe crossings for all modes of travel.



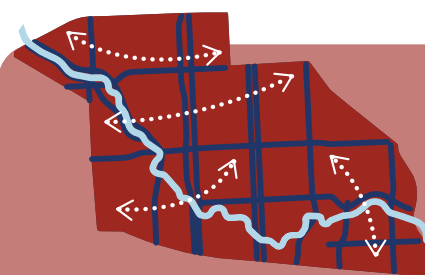
Many **neighborhood schools are located along or near major corridors with high crash rates**, high vehicle speeds, and few safe crossings, making it difficult for students to get to class safely.



Many daily trips in Greater Heights are less than three miles, but most travelers are still choosing to drive. Safe, well-connected sidewalks, trails, and bikeways would give residents greater mobility choices for those small trips and could help reduce congestion on local streets.



Recent investments have improved overall network connectivity, but **safe east-west connections in northern neighborhoods and north-south connections across I-10 and White Oak Bayou remain a challenge.**



Plan & Project Review

Review of Previous Planning Efforts

For more than a decade, MHRA and other stakeholders have developed several plans and projects aimed at improving street safety, connectivity, and comfort in the Greater Heights area and beyond. These plans emphasize things including safety, streetscape enhancements, and accessibility for people with disabilities, and have highlighted the public's recurring emphasis on improving the roadway and trail network for all road users.

Local Efforts

- TIRZ 5 Three Study Areas Mobility & Drainage Study
- City Park | TIRZ 12 Mobility Plan
- Envision Old 6th Ward TIRZ: A Mobility Plan for the Future
- Old 6th Ward/TIRZ 13 Phase II Mobility Plan
- All in 4 Inner Northwest Community Plan by Harris County Precinct 4
Note: This plan was not publicly released upon completion of this Plan Review.

Regional Efforts

- Beyond the Bayous - Houston Parks Board
- Houston Bike Plan - City of Houston
- Vision Zero Action Plan - City of Houston and Harris County
- Streetscape Resource Guide - Scenic Houston

Taking stock of previous plans and projects is critical to the mobility planning process as these documents highlight ideas that have already been considered and where gaps may exist in existing recommendations. For example, the *Houston Bike Plan* proposes a high-level vision for bikeways across the City of Houston, while the *City Park | TIRZ 12 Mobility Plan* focuses on specific roadway design considerations for the TIRZ itself, while still referencing the *Houston Bike Plan* in its recommendations. This keeps the smaller area plans in alignment with the regional vision to ensure that both neighborhood and city-wide networks and connections can be made incrementally.

In addition to documenting previous recommendations, this analysis offers insight into prior community engagement efforts in the Study Area. Community members and local elected officials played a key role in shaping these planning efforts. Through that engagement and this Plan and Project Review, MHRA can better calibrate the recommendations of this Greater Heights Strategic Connections Plan to address the consistent public input from residents, workers, and businesses.



TIRZ 5 Three Study Areas Mobility & Drainage Study



Memorial Heights
Redevelopment Authority
December 2024

The *Three Study Areas Mobility & Drainage Study* was completed by MHRA in December 2024. The plan outlines recommendations aimed at improving mobility and drainage in three distinct study areas near the Shepherd Durham Corridor, the Missouri Kansas Texas (MKT) Trail, and White Oak Bayou. Recommended mobility investments would improve connectivity and safety for all modes and address street parking needs. Drainage improvements would provide additional stormwater detention.

Relevant Projects,
Policies, & Programs

- Reconstruct multiple roadway segments between Shepherd Drive and Durham Drive to create better connections and complete the reconstruction of the corridor.
- Reconstruct streets near the MKT development for improved access to the MKT Trail, Lawrence Park, and retail.
- Reconstruct and repave east/west corridors between the Shepherd Durham project and White Oak Bayou,including 19th Street.
- Improve the safety and connectivity of study area trails with improved crossings at neighborhood streets along the MKT Trail and Nicholson Trail.
- Improve drainage: provide additional stormwater detention, support Shepherd-Durham Project.
- Improve area walkability with upgraded sidewalks and ramps.
- Improve on-street parking for residents and area visitors: reconfigure and formalize on-street parking pending the reconstruction of corridors.

For a map of projects included in this plan, see Figure 6.

City Park | TIRZ 12 Mobility Plan

The *City Park | TIRZ 12 Mobility Plan* was completed by the City Park Redevelopment Authority in August 2024. The plan highlights several recommendations which focus on creating and expanding the area’s multimodal transportation network, community spaces, and transportation safety.

Relevant Projects,
Policies, & Programs

- Create a multimodal network through the expansion of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure that complements existing trails and bikeways.
- Implement projects on Ella Boulevard and 18th Street (reconstruction), Bevis Street and Grovewood Lane (retrofit), and the CenterPoint Corridor and west bank of White Oak Bayou (new trails) to expand facilities for people walking and biking.
- Retrofit corridors such as Bevis Street and Grovewood Lane to include improvements such as protected bike lanes and neighborhood safe street improvements
- Leverage infrastructure improvements by other partnering agencies to capitalize on regional efforts that support economic development.
- Expand access to existing recreational opportunities, green spaces, and destinations such as the Lorraine Cherry Nature Preserve and White Oak Bayou.
- Implement projects that create separate, well-lit and signalized facilities for all modes with a priority for intersections with high incidences of crashes.

For a map of projects included in this plan, see Figure 6.



City Park Development Authority
August 2024

Old 6th Ward/TIRZ 13 Phase II Mobility Plan



Old 6th Ward (TIRZ 13) and Houston-Galveston Area Council 2024

The *Old 6th Ward/TIRZ 13 Phase II Mobility Plan* was completed by TIRZ 13 and H-GAC in 2024. The plan outlines several recommendations for improved landscaping and placemaking, better access for people who walk, bike or have a disability, and improved connectivity across mobility barriers like railroads.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- A vision for Houston Avenue, including a railroad underpass, landscaping, and sidepaths behind the curb.
- Traffic calming on Crockett Street, especially near Crockett Elementary and an updated signal and intersection at Crockett Street and Houston Avenue.
- New sidewalks and curb ramps for streets like Shearn Street, Silver Street, and Taylor Street.
- New sidewalks, curb ramps, and trail crossing treatments along Spring Street and the MKT Trail.
- Strategic partnership opportunities.
- Sidewalk prioritization program.

For a map of projects included in this plan, see Figure 6.

Envision Old 6th Ward TIRZ: A Mobility Plan for the Future

Envision Old 6th Ward TIRZ: A Mobility Plan for the Future was completed by the Old 6th Ward TIRZ (TIRZ 13) in July 2021. The plan focuses on creating a more active community and vibrant atmosphere through revitalizing neighborhood blocks and improving active transportation networks throughout the area.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- Bridge the gaps between people and great places while building on the historic street grid.
- Encourage an active, walkable community for people of all ages and abilities through a District Sidewalk Program and a Safe Intersection and Street Crossing Program.
- Transit service enhancements and accessibility improvements for the 44 Acres Homes and the 30 Clinton/Ella.
- Reconstruction of streets such as Sawyer Street and Oliver Street to include safe and comfortable facilities for all modes of transportation.

For a map of projects included in this plan, see Figure 6.



Old 6th Ward TIRZ (TIRZ 13) July 2021

Beyond the Bayous



Houston Parks Board
November 2018

The *Beyond the Bayous* Plan was completed for the Houston Parks Board in November 2017. The plan discusses several high-level connectivity improvements across Houston’s bayous such as converting underutilized right-of-way to trails, adding new parks in neighborhoods that lack open space, and more connections in neighborhoods along the bayous.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- Convert underutilized right-of-way to greenways to create regional connections between the bayous. This includes right-of-way in CenterPoint easements like the one immediately west of Little Thicket Park that crosses White Oak Bayou in the Study Area. It also includes a recommendation to extend the MKT Trail west along the existing rail lines and Old Katy Road to Post Oak Road.
- Build new trails along minor bayous such as Little White Oak Bayou in the east of the Study Area.

Houston Bike Plan

The *Houston Bike Plan* was completed in 2017 for the City of Houston and establishes a ten-year vision for Houston’s bikeway network. As Houston grows and the trend of cycling for commuting and recreation increases, the *Houston Bike Plan* plays a crucial role in understanding the importance of cycling and why Houston needs more safe and accessible facilities and routes.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- Provide a safer bicycle network for people of all ages and abilities through improved facilities, education, and enforcement.
- Multimodal retrofits or full reconstruction of roadways to include high-comfort pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- Provide shared-use paths, on- and off-street bicycle facilities, and neighborhood safe streets that connect people to activity centers like commercial, employment, and recreation areas.

Selection of Recommended Bikeways in the Study Area

- On-Street Bikeways: Houston Avenue, Crockett Street, White Oak Drive, Taylor/ Sawyer Street, Ella Boulevard, Pecore Street, TC Jester Boulevard
- Off-Street Bikeways and Shared-Use Paths: Shepherd Drive/Durham Drive, 19th Street
- Neighborhood Safe Streets: 18th Street, 23rd Street, 24th Street, 14th Street, Watson Street, and Cornish Street



City of Houston
February 2017

Houston Vision Zero Action Plan



City of Houston
November 2020

The *Houston Vision Zero Action Plan* was completed for the City of Houston in November 2020. The plan highlights the importance of transportation safety for all modes for all people and presents goals actions to take to achieve zero traffic-related deaths by 2030. The plan defines a **High-Injury Network**, which identifies the six percent of roadways where 60 percent of fatal and serious-injury crashes occur.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- Prioritize Vision Zero goals in Houston’s Infrastructure Design Manual and evaluate every roadway reconstruction project and ensure safety for people walking, biking, rolling, and driving.
- Encourage pedestrian right-of-way at intersections and mid-block crossings and construct 50 miles of sidewalks and 25 miles of high-comfort bikeways each year.
- Redesign ten locations on the High-Injury Network every two years.

Study Area Corridors with Segments on the High-Injury Network

Ella Boulevard, Yale Street, Shepherd Drive, Durham Drive, Studemont Street, Inker Street, E 4th Street, W 18th Street, W 24th Street, and W 27th Street.

Note: These Study Area corridors are on the **Harris County High-Injury Network**, but not the City of Houston network: Larkin Street, TC Jester Boulevard, Fowler Street, Sawyer Street, Houston Avenue, Heights Boulevard, W 6th Street, W 11th Street, W 20th Street, and W 26th Street.

Streetscape Resource Guide

The third edition of the *Scenic Houston Streetscape Resource Guide* was completed in 2025 by Scenic Houston, a non-profit organization advocating for improvements to the overall experience of public spaces in the City. The guide shares recommendations from materials and landscaping to signage and public art to create a more appealing and safe streetscape.

The guide highlights both national and local examples of well-designed streetscapes as a resource and inspiration for local Houston stakeholders involved in the planning, design, engineering, and maintenance of local roadways.

Relevant Projects, Policies, & Programs

- Improve the pedestrian realm: add pedestrian connections, more comfortable transit stops, landscape buffers, public art, lighting, and street furniture.
- Improve the travelway realm: provide on-street parking with curb extensions, landscaped medians, placemaking, protected bikeways, and clear signage.
- Improve the shared realm (intersections): design accessible intersections for people who walk, bike, roll, ride transit, or drive using lighting, high-visibility crosswalks, and ramps.



Scenic Houston
2025

Programmed Projects

MHRA and other agencies have programmed mobility, parks, and drainage projects in the Study Area, see Figure 1. **What does “Programmed” mean?** Programmed projects have been allocated funding for implementation and often appear in an agency’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The final design of these projects may change due to a shift in priorities and conditions.

The following pages contain a full list of Programmed Projects, and the implementing agencies. Projects include:

Corridor Projects

Intersection Projects

Parks & Other

Note: Map colors have no specific meaning and are only intended to help distinguish project boundaries.

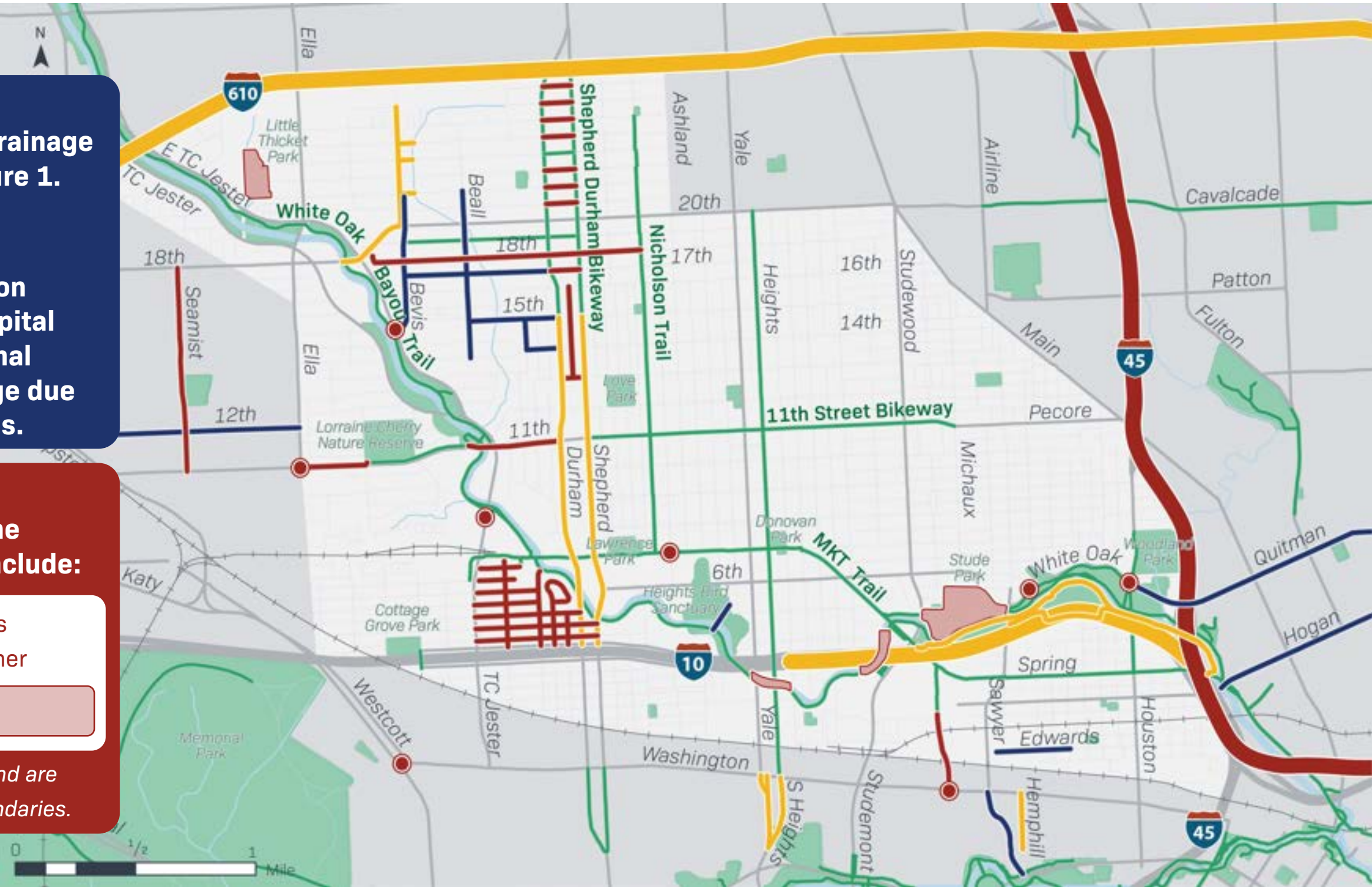


Figure 1. Programmed Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, City of Houston, Harris County, TxDOT, TIRZ 12, TIRZ 13, 2025)

Programmed Corridor Projects



Figure 2. Programmed Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, City of Houston, Harris County, TxDOT, TIRZ 12, TIRZ 13, 2025)

MHRA, the City of Houston (COH), Congressional District 7 (CD7, Representative Lizzie Fletcher), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Harris County Precincts 2 and 4, and the Greater Northside Management District (GNMD) all have programmed corridor projects in the Study Area.

These projects, shown in Figure 2 and described in the table (Figure 3), vary from sidewalk construction to large highway reconstruction and elevation.

LEGEND

Water

Park/Greenspace

Railroad

High-Comfort Bikeway & Trails

Programmed Projects

Project (Agency)	Description
A Shepherd Durham Cross Streets (MHRA)	Reconstruction of roadway including pavement and utilities on: W 28th, W 27th, W 26th, W 25th, W 23rd, W 22nd, W 21st, W 17th, W 13th, and Laird streets
B Shepherd Durham Project (Phase 2) (MHRA & COH)	Reconstruction of Shepherd Drive and Durham Drive from I-10 to W 15th Street to include drainage improvements, streetlights, bikeways, sidewalks, and landscaping. This project is an extension of Phase 1 improvements north to I-610.
C CD7 Sidewalk Improvements (MHRA & CD 7)	Assessment, design, and construction of high-priority sidewalk improvements as part of a Community Project Funding request facilitated by U.S. Rep. Lizzie Fletcher of Texas's CD7
D Lorraine Cherry-White Oak Bayou Connectivity (MHRA)	Extension of the existing path from Shirkmere Road west to between Ella Blvd and from White Oak Bayou east to Durham Drive
E I-10 White Oak Bayou Project; CSJ: 0271-07-326 (TxDOT)	Elevation of I-10 to allow additional stormwater detention beneath the highway; to include construction of trail on south bank of White Oak Bayou
F Rutland Bridge; CSJ: 0912-72-581 (TxDOT)	Construction of a bridge over White Oak Bayou to connect the trail on the southern side to Rutland Place
G Cottage Grove East (COH)	Reconstruction of local streets east of TC Jester Boulevard to include curb and gutter drainage and sidewalk infrastructure
H Turkey Gully Project (COH)	Reconstruction of local streets to improve drainage from Turkey Gully; may include mobility improvements and utility upgrades
I Quitman Street Project (Harris Co. Precinct 2 & GNMD)	Reconstruction of Quitman Street from Houston Avenue to Elysian Street, providing new sidewalks, trees, lighting, safe crossing improvements, and bi-directional bike lanes
J Seamist Drive Improvements (TIRZ 12, Harris Co. Precinct 4)	Roadway reconstruction between 11th Street and 18th Street to include safety buffers, new sidewalks, and drainage improvements
K Multimodal Connectivity to Jaycee Park (TIRZ 12)	Construct safe multimodal infrastructure to Jaycee Park for residents in Lazybrook/Timbergrove; roadways for improvement to be determined
L 12th St Impr. (TIRZ 12, Harris Co. Precinct 4)	Roadway reconstruction to include curbed roadways with 6-foot safety buffers and new drainage
M North Houston Highway Impr. Proj.; CSJ: 0500-03-560 & 0500-03-599 (TxDOT)	Reconstruction and widening of I-45, including a re-routing of I-45 to the east side of Downtown; includes reconstruction of frontage roads
N Hemphill Street (TIRZ 13)	Reconstruction, improving pavement conditions, walkability, updating drainage, and constructing new sidewalks
O Sawyer & Edwards Streets (TIRZ 13)	Roadway safety measures to strengthen the connection to Buffalo Bayou, including sidewalk improvements and safe crossings
P Oliver Street (TIRZ 13)	Reconstruction of Oliver Street from Washington Avenue to Summer Street
Q Waugh & S. Heights Improvements (MHRA)	Safety and mobility improvements on Waugh, South Heights, Yale and Waughford between the bridge over Memorial Drive and Washington Avenue
R Reimagine Hogan St (TIRZ 21, Harris Co. Precinct 2)	Engineering study to improve mobility and safety along Hogan Street
S 18th St. Impr. (MHRA)	Street rehabilitation project to improve safety and access along 18th Street
T I-610; MPO IDs 19326, 19327 (TxDOT)	Safety, operational and mobility improvements to I-610 N mainlanes and frontage roads

Figure 3. Programmed Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, City of Houston, Harris County, TxDOT, TIRZ 12, TIRZ 13, 2025)

Programmed Intersection, Parks & Other Projects

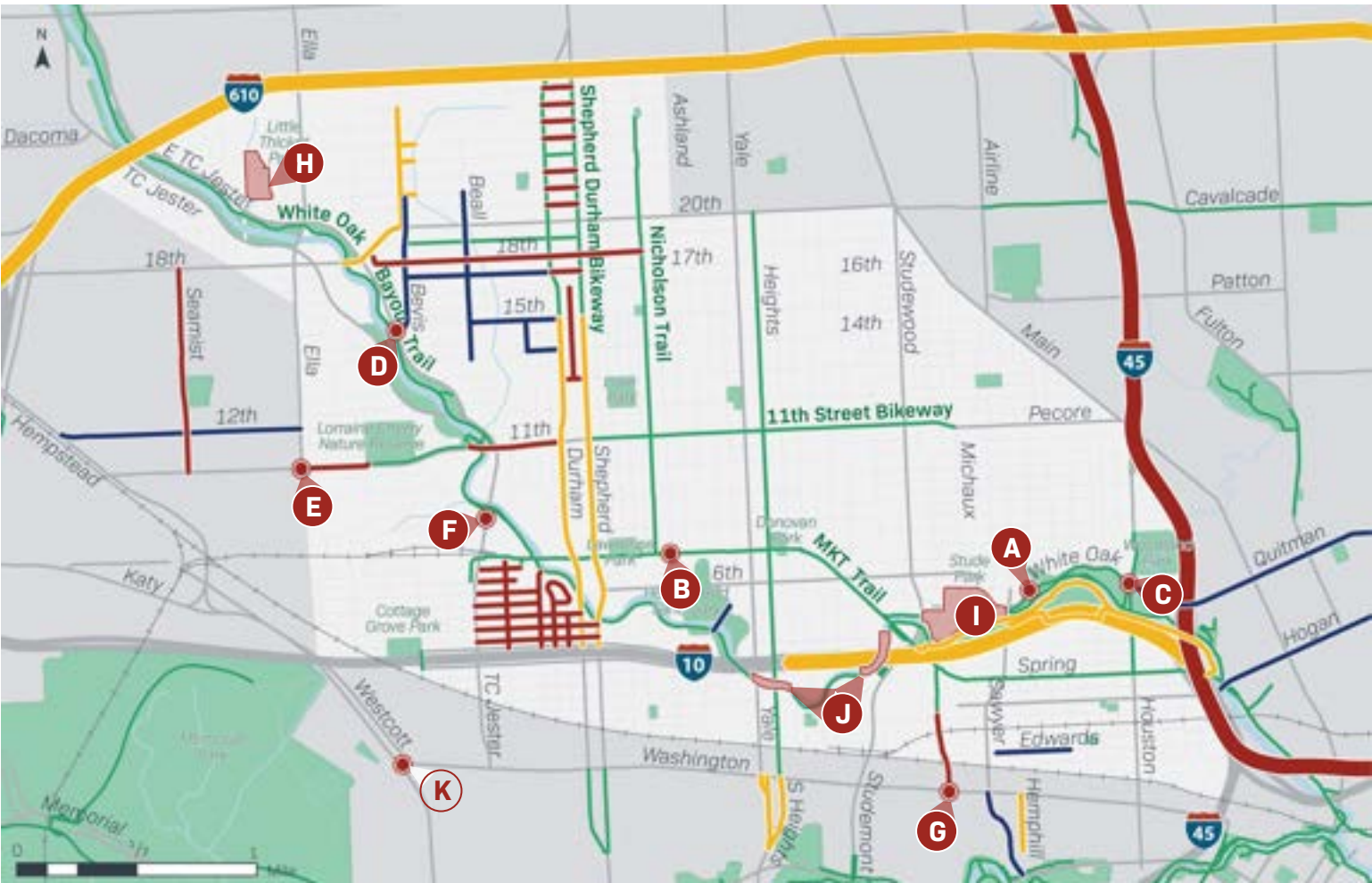


Figure 4. Programmed Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, City of Houston, Harris County, TxDOT, TIRZ 12, TIRZ 13, 2025)

In addition to corridor projects, MHRA, the City of Houston, and the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) have programmed several intersection, parks, and other projects such as the North Canal Project in various stages of planning and construction.

Figure 4 maps these programmed projects, which are described in detail in the table in Figure 5.

LEGEND

Water

Park/Greenspace

Railroad

High-Comfort Bikeway & Trails

Programmed Projects

Project		Agency	Description
Intersection Projects			
A	White Oak Dr & Greenleaf St	MHRA	Improved intersection for more visible and safer crossing between the neighborhood and the White Oak Bayou Trail for people walking and biking
B	Waverly St & MKT Trail	MHRA, City of Houston Council District C	Crossing improvements at the Waverly Street and MKT Trail intersection
C	Houston Ave & White Oak Dr	MHRA	Rehabilitation of damaged wall and sidewalk and installation of bollards to protect sidewalk and park
D	E TC Jester Blvd & Bevis St	TIRZ 12	Crossing improvements of E TC Jester Blvd including curb ramps, pedestrian crossings, & other improvements
E	11th St & Ella Blvd	TIRZ 12	Traffic signal and intersection redesign to include mast arms, curb ramps, markings, & other improvements
F	TC Jester Blvd & Stonewood	City of Houston Council District C	Improved crossing of TC Jester Boulevard south of White Oak Bayou near the Stonewood Apartments
G	Washington Ave & Sawyer St	City of Houston	Signal and crossing improvements at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Sawyer Street
Park & Drainage Projects			
H	Little Thicket Park Improvements	MHRA	Improved park amenities and erosion control/bank stabilization
I	Stude Park Improvements	MHRA & City of Houston	Improvement of park facilities, including new playground amenities
J	North Canal Project	MHRA, City of Houston, TxDOT, and HCFCD	Expansion of White Oak Bayou beneath the Yale Street and Heights Boulevard bridges, and beneath I-10 west of Studemont Street; part of North Canal Project
Other Projects			
K	Westcott Greenspace Improvements	MHRA	Improvements to the greenspace of the Westcott Street roundabout

Figure 5. Programmed Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, City of Houston, Harris County, TxDOT, TIRZ 12, TIRZ 13, 2025)

Planned Projects

In addition to the programmed projects described on previous pages and shown in red in Figure 6, MHRA and others have conducted transportation planning efforts to identify potential future projects.

These planning efforts, shown in dashed lines in Figure 6 will serve as key inputs into the Greater Heights Strategic Connections Plan.

- Programmed Projects (See Figure 1)**
- TIRZ 12 Mobility Plan (2024)**
- TIRZ 5 Three Study Areas Mobility & Drainage Study (2024)**
- Old Sixth Ward/TIRZ 13 Mobility Plan Phases 1 (2021) and 2 (2024)**

City- and Region-Wide Plans

This planning effort will also take into account other planning documents not shown on this map. These plans, in particular the *Houston Bike Plan* and *Houston Vision Zero Action Plan*, will provide an important starting point for potential recommendations.



Figure 6. Planned Projects in the Study Area (Source: MHRA, 2025)

About the Study Area

A History of Greater Heights

Origin Story on High Ground

The Greater Heights Strategic Connection Study Area encompasses a collection of historic communities central to the early days of Houston's founding. The area includes the Houston Heights, Woodland Heights, Shady Acres, Cottage Grove, First Ward, Rice Military, Olivewood, and Washington Avenue neighborhoods, and portions of Lazybrook and Timbergrove, among others. Figure 7 shows an 1895 map with major neighborhoods already established, including the "Houston Heights" as its own coherent community to the northwest of Downtown Houston.

This portion of the Heights was planned in 1891 by successful businessman Oscar Martin Carter, who saw an opportunity in the higher land northwest of the City's core to establish a new community. The successful and bustling city of Houston Heights was a small independent municipality until 1918, when the City of Houston annexed it.

For the next seventy years, the area flourished as an economically diverse population, serviced by an electric street car, several local factories, and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT) railroad. This early infrastructure has persisted in the success of the community to this day. However, Houston growth further west eventually led to the completion of the Katy Freeway (I-10) and a downturn for the Heights neighborhood in the 1950s-1970s.

Reaching New Heights

Today, the Greater Heights area is seen as rapidly changing and re-urbanizing, regaining its reputation as a popular neighborhood. Successful commercial corridors like Shepherd-Durham and 19th Street, as well as vibrant new developments like Sawyer Yards and the MKT demonstrate the appeal of these neighborhoods and solidify their place as true destinations in the region.

New opportunities for development across the area were created in 1996, with the establishment of the Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority/ TIRZ 5. This has allowed communities in Greater Heights to take inspiration from broader trends in infrastructure and neighborhood improvements such as rail-to-trail conversion and Bayou trail development, leading to projects such as the MKT Trail, White Oak Bayou Trail, and Shepherd-Durham corridor. These projects connect diverse parts of the Greater Heights neighborhoods to each other and a broader Houston network, and contribute to the reputation of the area as active and welcoming.

Greater Heights neighborhoods continue to be sought-after, changing and adapting as rapidly as Houston itself. The existing infrastructure of multi-mobility options, and the neighborhoods' reputation as an exciting and urban place to be, are a framework for future progress towards a more connected and livable future.

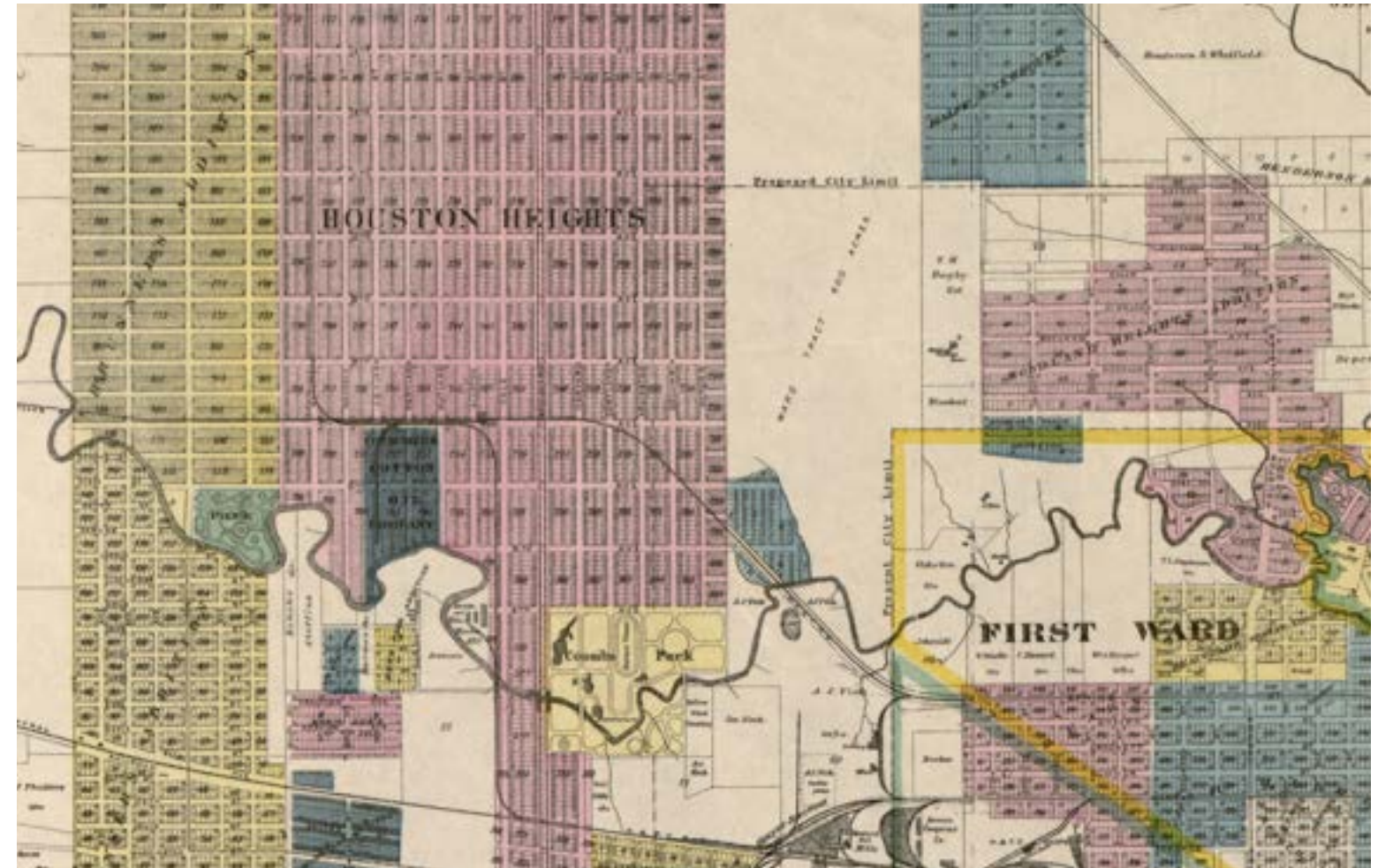


Figure 7. Historic Map of Houston Neighborhoods (Source: City of Houston and Environs, Whitty & Stott, 1895)

Growth, Change, and Mobility Timeline

The Atakapa and a Natural Bayou

The natural land of the area was marshy, and the swamps and bayous traversed by the Indigenous Atakapa people, navigating by foot and on dugout cypress canoes.

Welcome, Houston Heights

The city of Houston Heights was established in 1891 as the first planned community in the area, extending from the White Oak Bayou to above what is now I-45. The community was accessible to Downtown while offering peace and separation from the lower, swampy areas of the big city.

Highway Fever

Freeways including the Katy Freeway (I-10) and the I-610 loop were designed and built in the 1950s, bisecting the Heights above Washington Avenue and furthering a broader goal of the era to increase automobile connectivity in the region.

Modern Mobility

The MKT Trail and the Shepherd Durham Bikeway were among the major mobility projects that answered the community's desire for expanded walking, biking, and multimodal access in the Greater Heights.

City of Houston

The City of Houston was established in 1836, on marshland at the edge of the bayou and with a street grid of 80'-wide blocks, suited for travel by carriage, horse, or foot.

Rail in the Heights

Houston was a railroad city, fueled by the connections made between the port and inland. The MKT railroad was an artery of business and industry in the northwestern corner of the city, running through the Heights. Union Pacific still operates an active rail line adjacent to Cottage Grove.

Streetcar City

Electrified streetcar lines along Studewood Street, Houston Avenue, Washington Avenue, and others connected the First Ward, Old Sixth Ward, Houston Heights, and Woodland Heights neighborhoods to Downtown.

Civic Associations

Through post-war population shifts and exodus to the suburbs fueled by new highways, the inner loop of Houston lost popularity. Civic groups like the Houston Heights Association were established as a way to build community organizing capacity and breathe life into local neighborhoods.

Founding of MHRA

MHRA/TIRZ 5 was established in 1996 and began making mobility, drainage, and quality of life investments in the Greater Heights area. Ongoing investments include comprehensive sidewalk repair, trails, pedestrian bridges, and parks: for example, the development of the White Oak Bayou Trail.

Pre-1850s 1836 1891 1865-1988 1918 1950s 1973 1996 2000s-2020s



Study Area

The Study Area includes an area principally made up of the Greater Heights and surrounding neighborhoods including Woodland Heights and Shady Acres, as shown in Figure 8. To the west, parts of Lazybrook and Timbergrove are included all the way down to Cottage Grove. Just south of I-10, parts of Washington Avenue, Rice Military, West End, Olivewood, and First Ward are included in the Study Area. North Main Street and 20th Street make up the eastern boundary of the Study Area near neighborhoods like Norhill and Sunset Heights.

This area includes many important active transportation links that are cherished destinations by community members. The White Oak Bayou Trail is the principal active transportation artery, connecting to dedicated paths like the MKT Trail, the 11th Street Bikeway, and the Nicholson Trail. Importantly, this area also includes the new and future Shepherd-Durham Bikeways that will strengthen the network and connections to an important commercial corridor for the community.



Figure 8. Greater Heights Strategic Connections Plan Study Area Boundary (Source: Team Analysis, 2025)

TIRZ Boundaries

The Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority, also known as Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone 5 (TIRZ 5), is a jurisdiction created by the City of Houston. TIRZs invest in infrastructure projects with the goal to attract additional investment and economic development within and near its boundaries.

The revenue generated within a TIRZ comes from existing tax revenue. The City sets the property tax base year at the same time the TIRZ is created, and then any increases of that initial revenue each year is called “increment.” The TIRZ Board identifies infrastructure projects via a Capital Improvements Program that is approved by City Council and then implemented by the TIRZ.

MHRA has the ability to leverage debt and utilize federal grant funding to deliver projects. MHRA has experience as a direct recipient of U.S. Department of Transportation funding and is a Federal Transit Administration grantee. To date, MHRA has leveraged over \$85 million in federal funding.

As shown in Figure 9, the Study Area boundaries and the MHRA boundaries are not identical. In fact, parts of the Study Area are within both TIRZ 12 and TIRZ 13. MHRA worked closely with the City to ensure that the Study Area could comprehensively address mobility concerns across neighborhoods and along corridors, even sections outside of the MHRA boundaries.

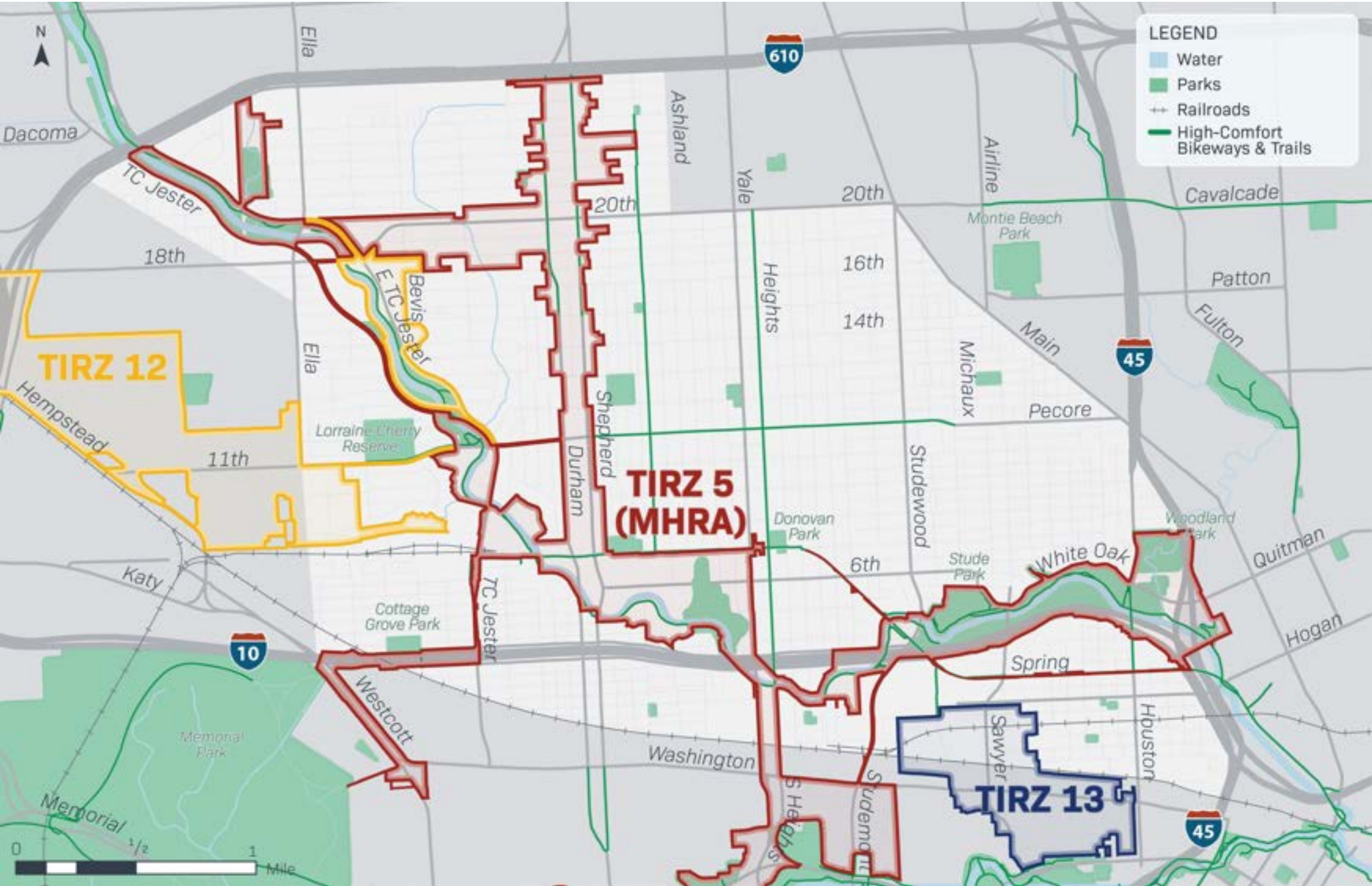


Figure 9. Greater Heights Strategic Connections Plan Study Area Boundary (Source: City of Houston, 2025)

Houston City Council Districts

Figure 10 displays the two Houston City Council Districts that share boundaries with parts of the Study Area - District C and District H. District C is represented by Abbie Kamin and District H is represented by Mario Castillo Jr.

The boundary splitting the two council districts follows Main Street from I-610, and then Studewood Street to Washington Avenue.

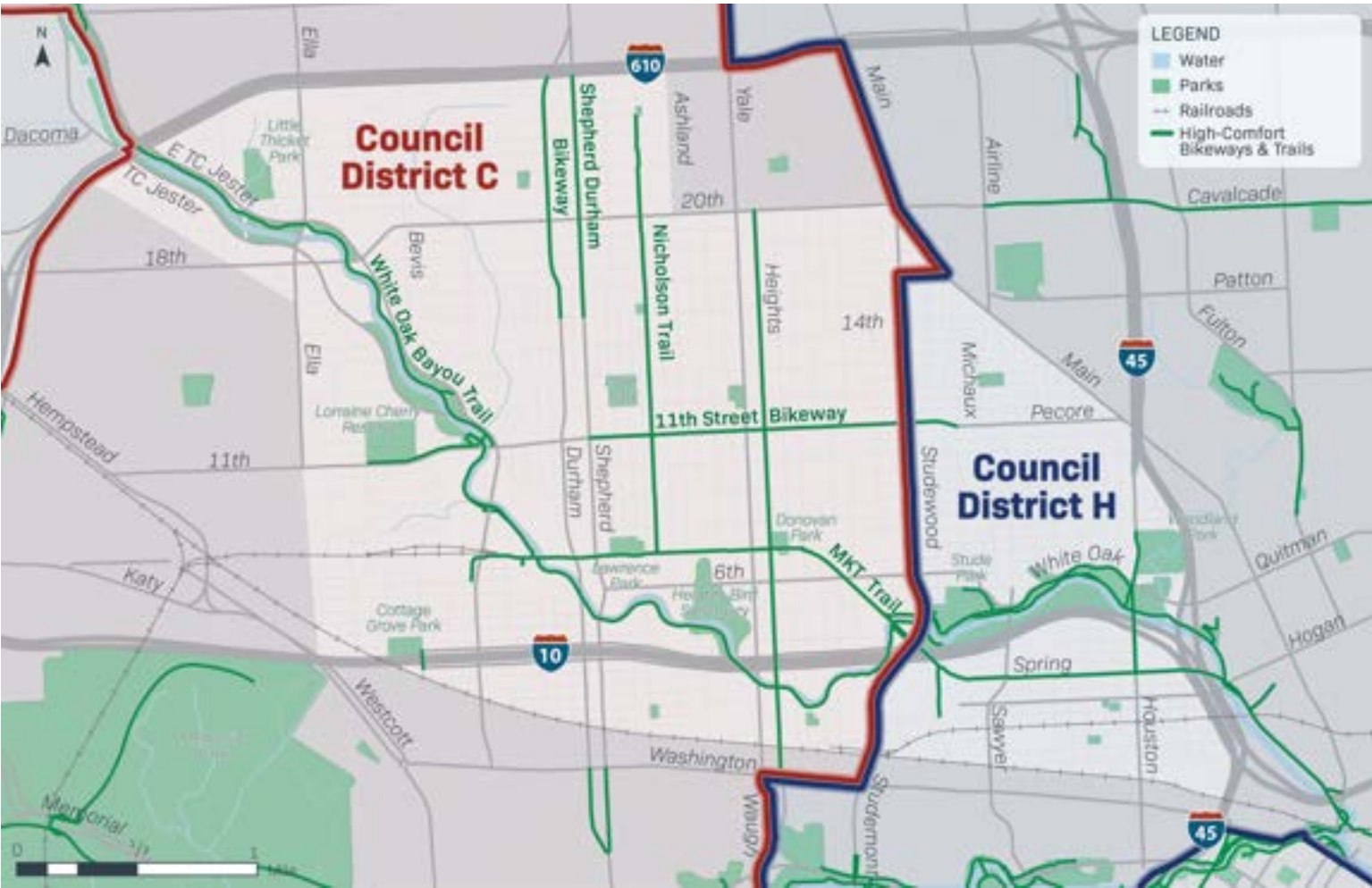


Figure 10. Houston City Council District Boundaries (Source: City of Houston, 2025)

Harris County Precincts

Figure 11 displays the three Harris County Commissioner Precincts with jurisdiction in the Study Area - Precinct 1 (Commissioner Rodney Ellis), Precinct 2 (Commissioner Adrian Garcia), and Precinct 4 (Commissioner Leslie Briones).

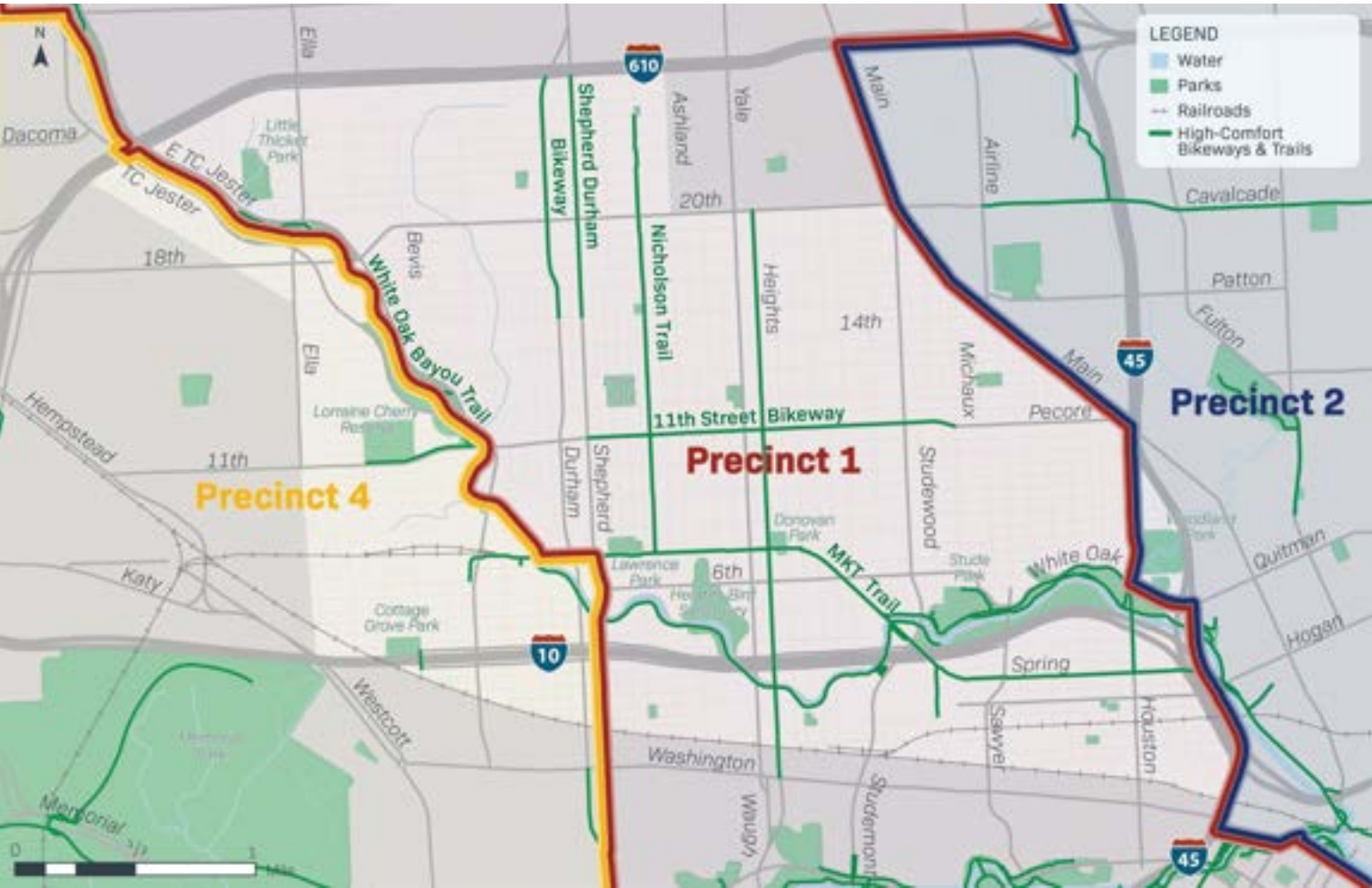


Figure 11. Harris County Precinct Boundaries (Source: Harris County, 2025)

Major Destinations

Figure 12 displays key destinations in and around the Study Area, including some schools, parks, hospitals, community centers, libraries, and commercial corridors.

Schools

More than twelve public schools are located in or near the Study Area, serving the many families that live in these neighborhoods. The Study Area is also home to many private schools, not mapped here.

Parks

The Study Area is dotted with several neighborhood parks like Love Park, Woodland Park, and Cottage Grove Park, as well as regional parks like Stude Park the White Oak Bayou Greenway.

Major Commercial Corridors

Businesses in the Study Area attract visitors from across the city and region to major commercial corridors like Shepherd Drive and Durham Drive, Main Street, 20th Street, Studemont Street, Heights Boulevard and Yale Street, as well as developments like the MKT and Sawyer Yards.

Community Centers

Several other community resources are located in the Study Area, including the Heights Hospital.

Libraries

Hospitals

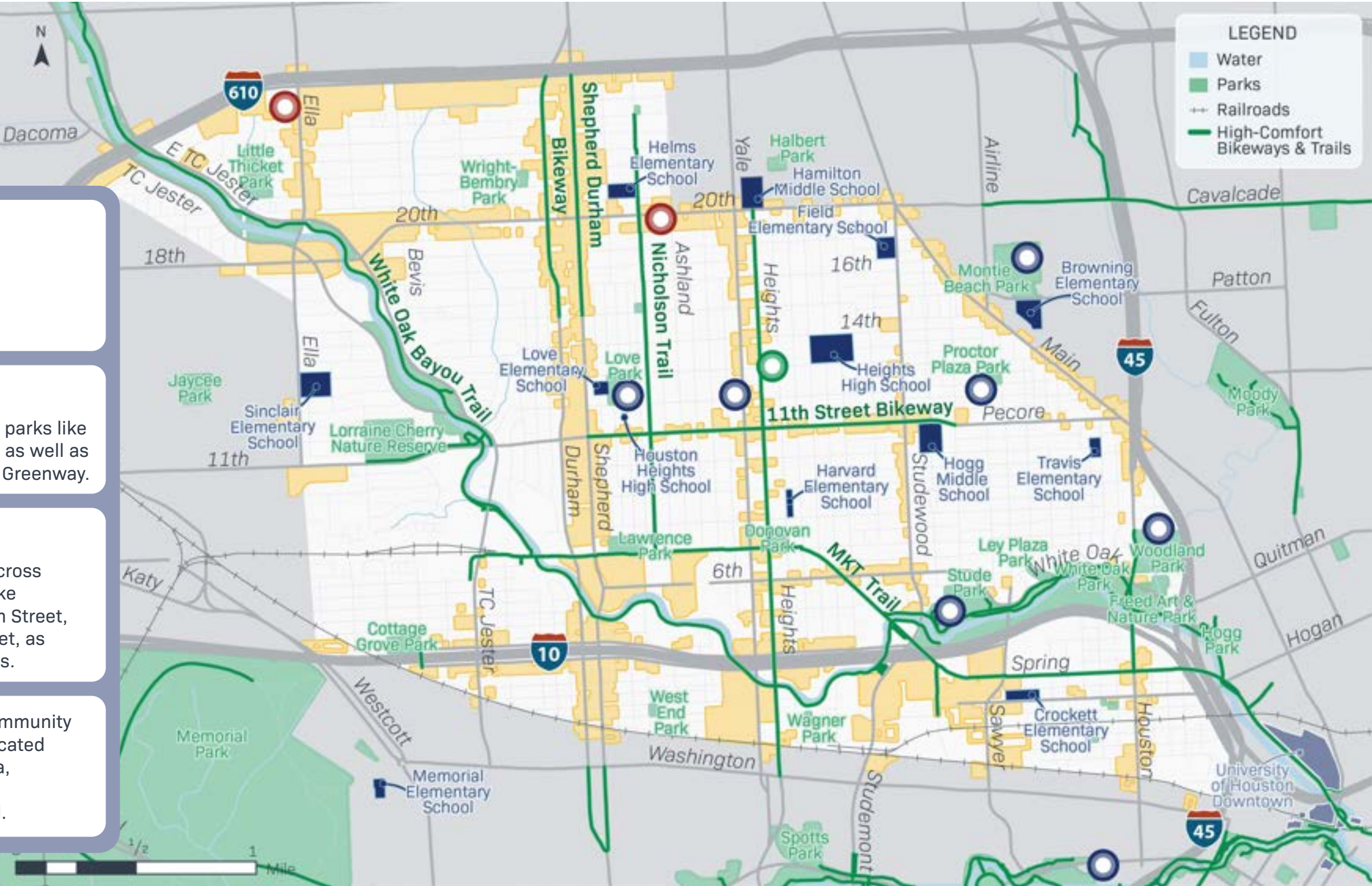


Figure 12. Destinations & Commercial Corridors (Source: Harris County Appraisal District Land Use, 2024; Team Analysis, 2025).

Who Lives in the Study Area?

Population Density

Greater Heights is home to more residents than the City of Galveston and tens of thousands of households as shown in the tables in Figure 13. Figure 14 maps population density in the Study Area. Pockets of density are spread throughout the Study Area, including south of I-10 and west of Heights Boulevard, south of Pecore Street, in the heart of Cottage Grove, and west of Durham Drive, north of 20th Street.

	Study Area	Inner Loop
Total Number of Households	34,000	236,800
Average Household Size	2.01	2.17

	Study Area	Inner Loop
Total & Vulnerable Populations		
Total Population	68,500	513,700
Population Under 18 Years Old	11,500 (17%)	85,600 (17%)
Population 65 Years and Older	6,100 (9%)	63,900 (12%)
Population 75 Years and Older	2,000 (3%)	17,230 (3%)

Figure 13. Population Density (Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023).

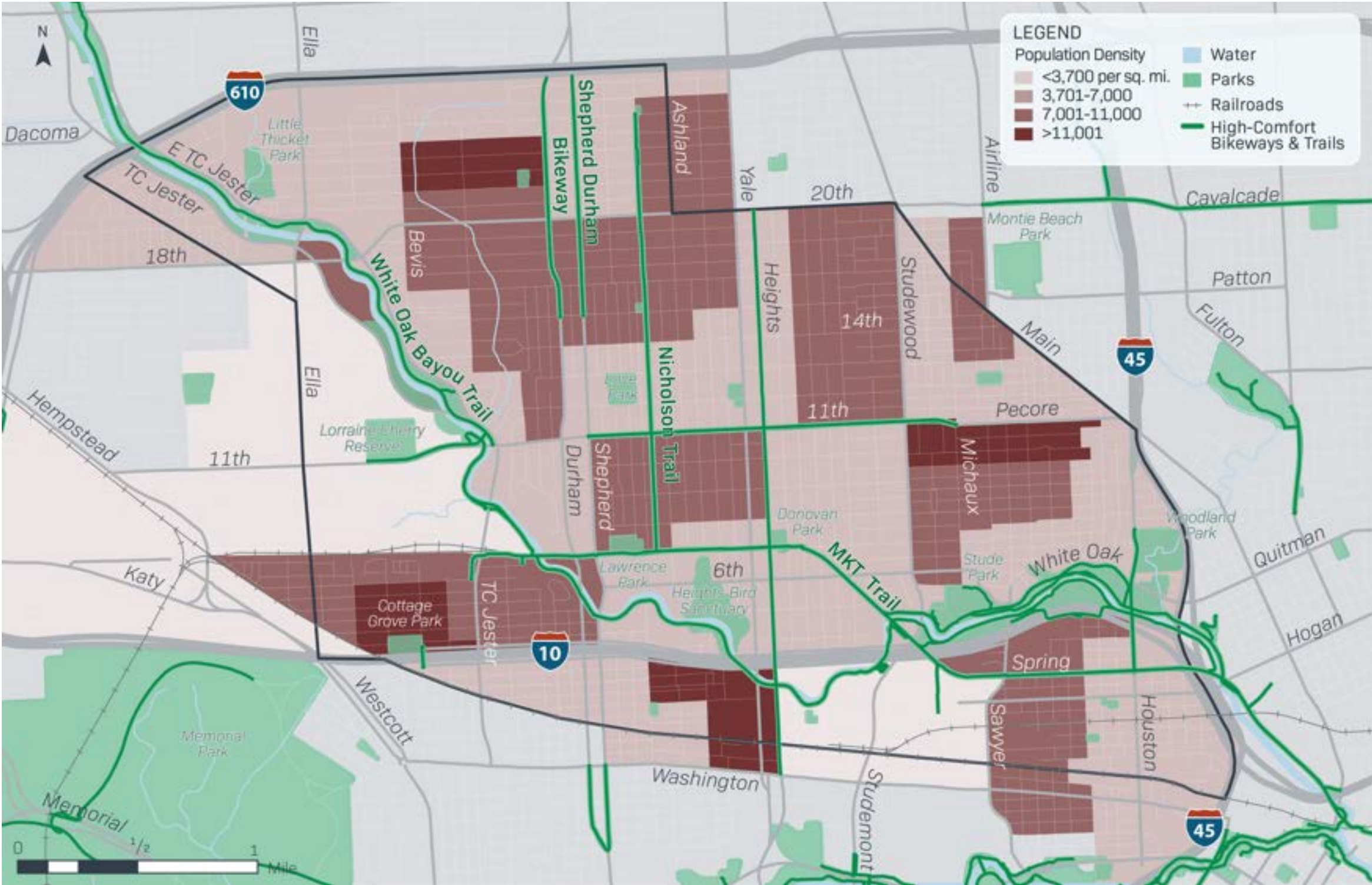


Figure 14. Population Density (Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023).

Youth Population Density (under 18 years)

Around 11,500 of the residents in the Study Area are children. Figure 15 shows the population density of youth residents (under the age of 18 years) in the Study Area. Locations with the highest density of youth residents include Cottage Grove west, the Census Block Groups south of Pecore Street near Studewood Street, and near N Main Street closer to the intersection with Airline Drive.

Schools like Hogg Middle, Travis Elementary, and Browning Elementary are located in areas with a high youth population density. Although Cottage Grove has a high youth density, its students are zoned to Memorial Elementary south of I-10 with limited crossings.

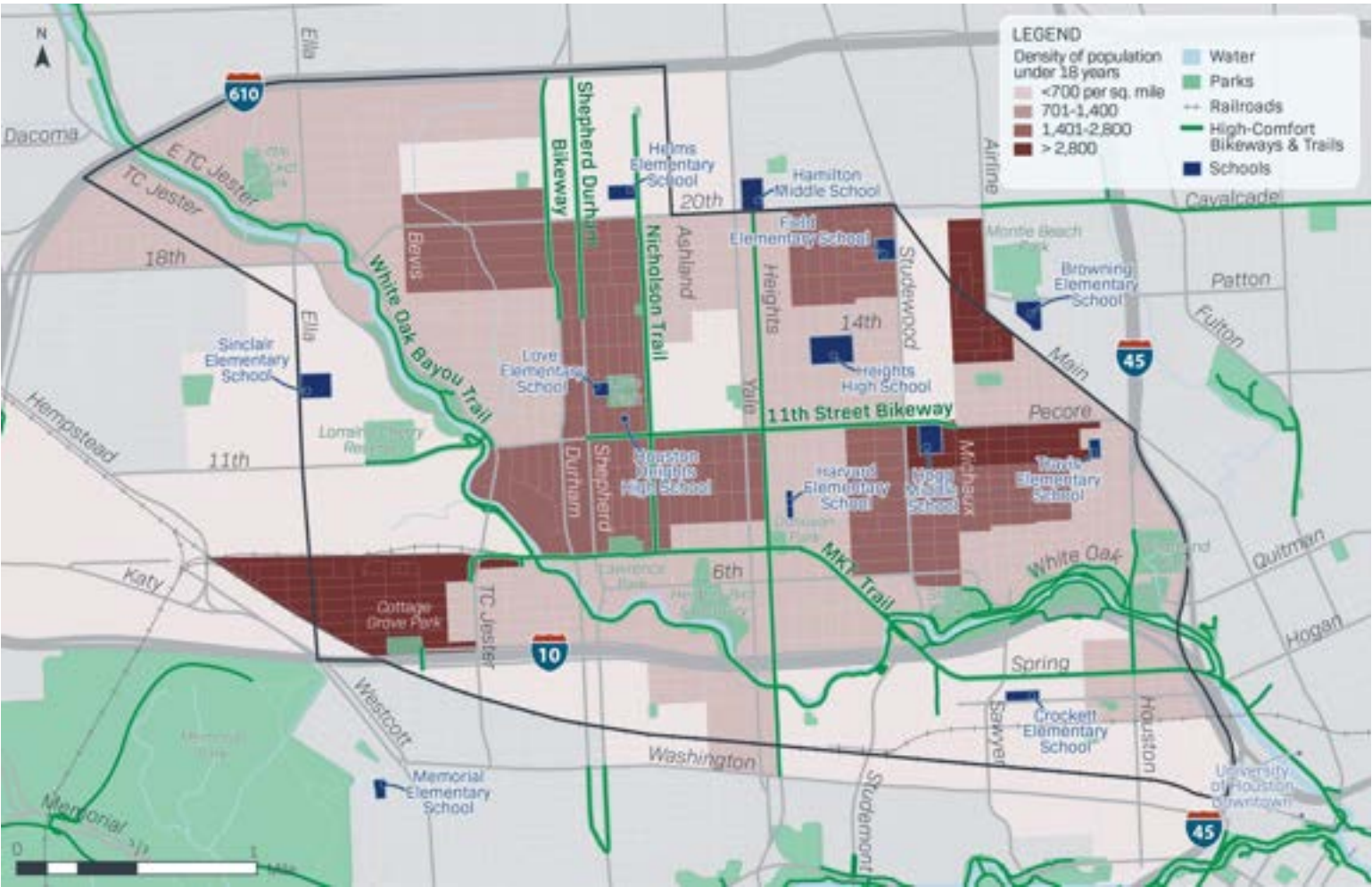


Figure 15. Population Density of Study Area Residents Under the Age of 18 (Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023).

Older Adult Population Density (65+ years)

Just over 6,100 residents in the Study Area are 65 years old or older, with around one-third of those over the age of 74. Figure 16 shows the population density of residents 65 years or older. The largest concentration of older residents are east of the Nicholson Trail south of 20th Street and south of Pecore Street near Michaux Street.

There is also a relatively high density in Lazybrook/ Timbergrove area and north of 11th Street. Although many adults over the age of 65 work and live independently, safe local streets are critical for ensuring that these residents are able to age in the neighborhoods where they have lived for years.

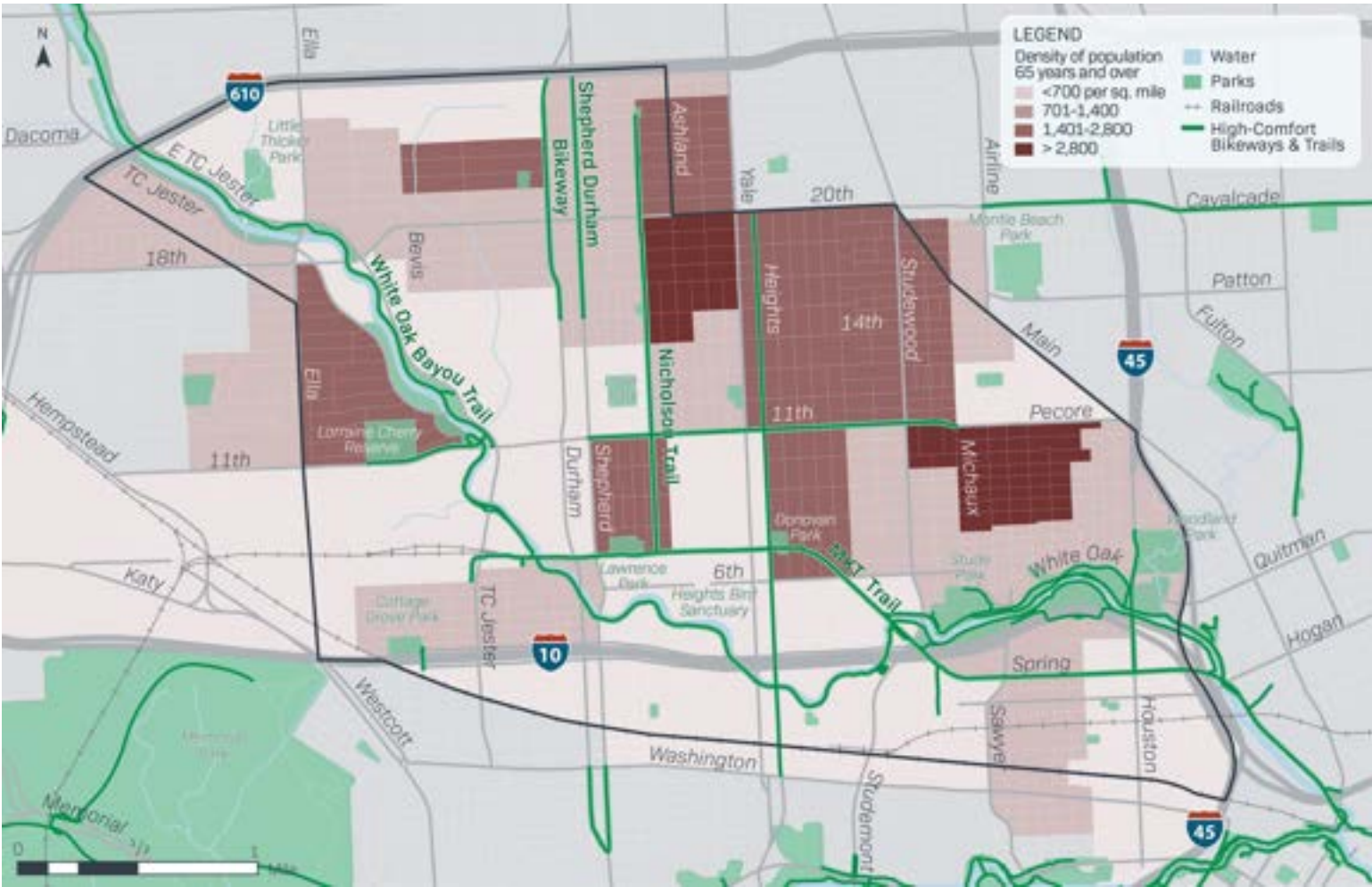


Figure 16. Population Density of Study Area Residents Over the Age of 64 (Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019-2023).

Today's Transportation Network

Major Roadways & Signals

Figure 17 shows roadways in the Greater Heights on the City of Houston’s Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP), updated in 2025 as well as signalized intersections.

In most cases, these roadways carry more vehicle volumes than local streets and often serve as locations where many mobility uses and land uses converge with transit lines, bikeways, freight traffic, commercial and office uses, and more.

Definitions

- Major Thoroughfare:** roadways designed for more traffic, typically with higher posted speed limits spaced out in a one-mile grid pattern.
- Major Collector:** roadways that gather traffic from smaller roads like local streets or Minor Collectors and distribute them to Major Thoroughfares.
- Minor Collector:** roadways that gather traffic from local streets and distributes it to Major Collectors.
- Transit Corridor:** Roadways with an existing or proposed METRO fixed guideway such as light rail or bus rapid transit.

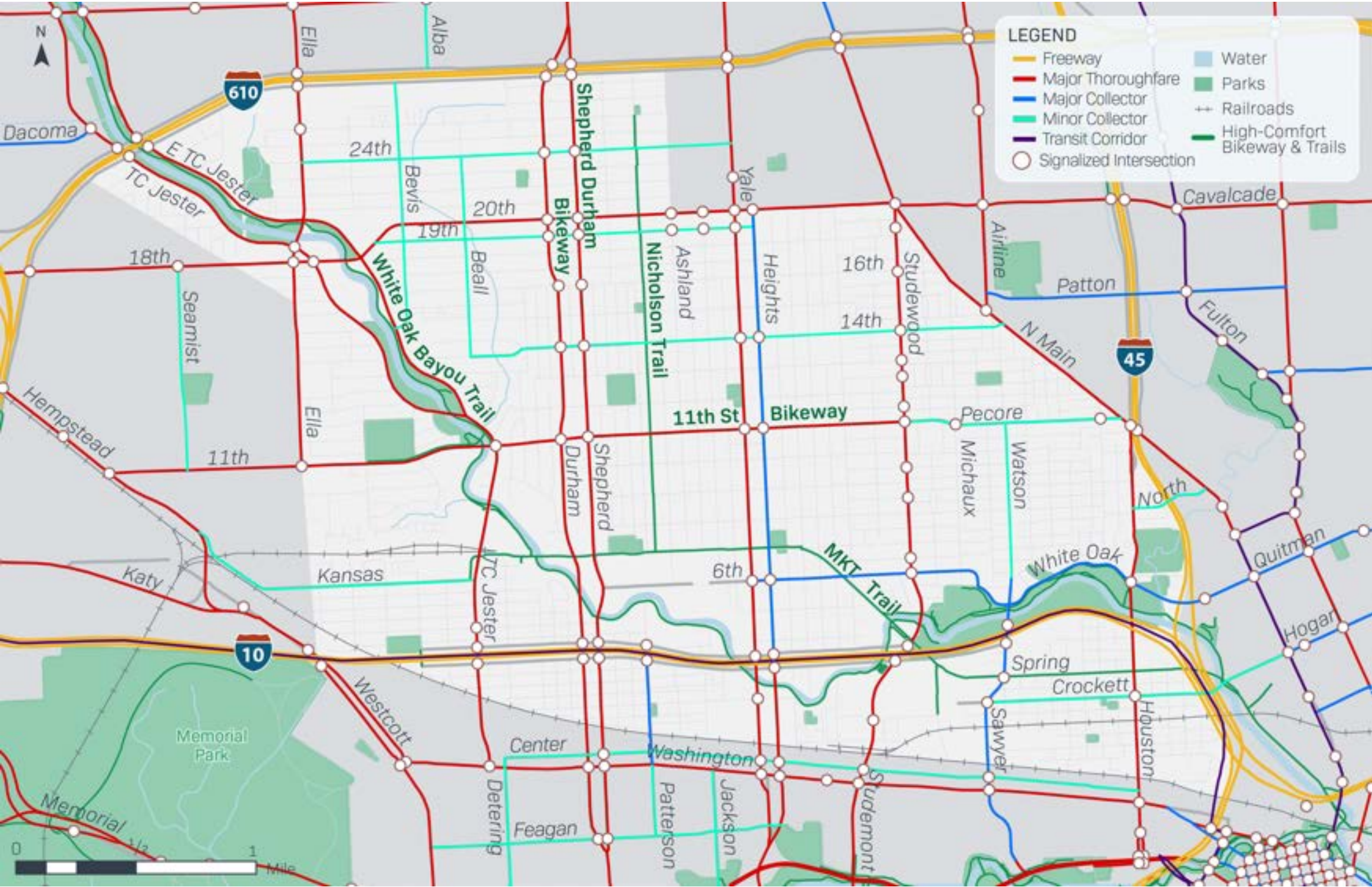


Figure 17. MTFP Classification & Signalized Intersections (Source: City of Houston, 2023 & 2025).

Trip Purpose: How Are People Getting Around?

Commuting to Work

Figure 18 shows how workers in the Greater Heights and the Inner Loop are getting to work, split out by transportation mode. As in the rest of the Inner Loop, most workers in the Study Area are driving alone. While a greater portion of people in Greater Heights are working from home, a smaller percentage are carpooling, riding transit, biking, or walking compared to the rest of the Inner Loop.

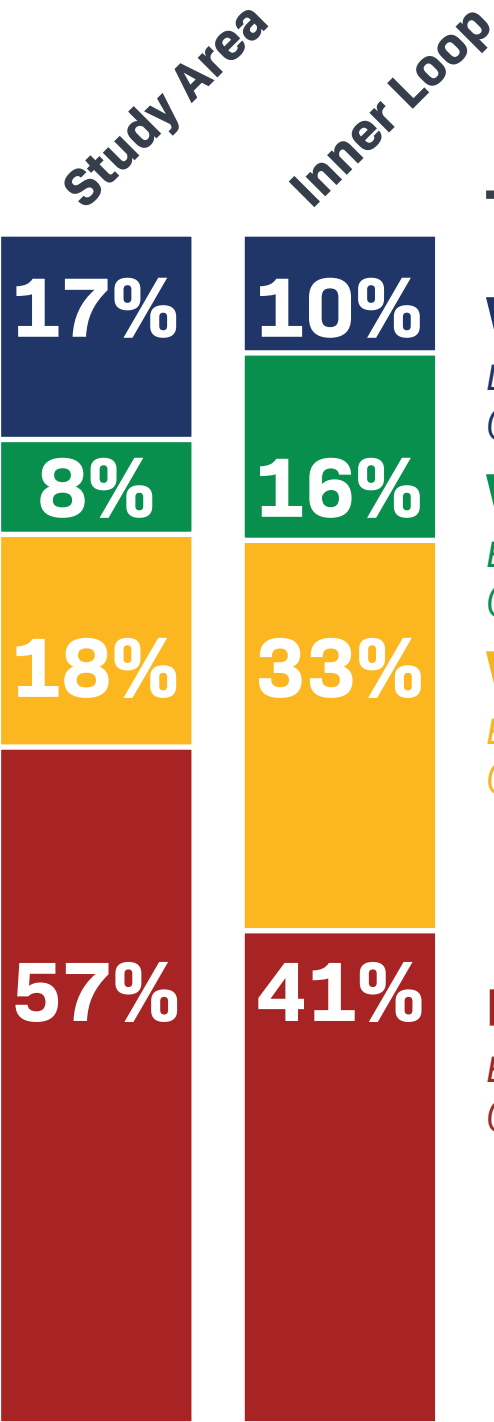
Non-Commuting Trips

However, the vast majority of trips are not for a daily work commute. Data from the H-GAC Regional Travel Model can show all the types of trips people make and how far they go between different origin and destination zones. Figure 19 categorizes average weekday auto and transit trips into four trip types. In the Study Area, only 17 percent of all trips are commutes to and from work. Another 26 percent of trips are work related, such as driving to a work site or taking the bus to dinner after work.

The majority of trips in the Study Area are trips taken from home to places that are not work. This includes running errands, visiting friends, or going out to eat with family. This number is much higher for the Study Area than for the Inner Loop as a whole, representing a real opportunity to shift non-work-based driving trips to other modes like walking and biking.

Commute Mode to Work		
Mode	Study Area	Inner Loop
Drive Alone	68%	67%
Carpool	5%	6.5%
Public Transit	0.5%	3%
Bike	0.5%	1%
Walk	1%	3%
Work from Home/Other	24%	19%

Figure 18. Commute mode to work in the Study Area and Inner Loop (Source: Census ACS 2019-2023 5-year Estimates)



Trip Purpose for Average Weekdays

Work Commute

Daily commute to and from work
(Home-based work trip)

Work ↔ Work Trips

Ex: Meeting a client at their office
(Non-home based work trip)

Work ↔ Other Places

Ex: Picking up groceries after work
(Non-home based non-work trip)

Home ↔ Other Places

Ex: Running errands or going out to eat
(Home-based non-work trip)

Trips from home to other places, like a friend's house, are the most common trip type in the Study Area and represent an opportunity for folks to walk, bike, and ride transit instead of drive.

Figure 19. Trip purpose for auto and transit trips in the Study Area and Inner Loop (Source: H-GAC, 2023)

Trip Distance: How Are People Getting Around?

The length of a trip directly impacts the travel mode a person chooses. If the destination is far away, people tend to drive or take transit. For trips nearby, walking and biking are more viable options, especially if streets are safe and comfortable. Figure 20 shows trip distances in miles for all vehicle and transit trips on a typical weekday in the Study Area (left) and Inner Loop (right).

In both the Study Area and the Inner Loop, around one-third of all vehicle/transit trips are less than three miles, indicating a latent demand for biking trips. Additionally, five percent of all trips are less than one mile, an ideal distance for walking.

One mile is used as a standard for short walking trips based on the City of Houston Infrastructure Design Manual which uses three feet per second as the design basis for pedestrian crossing times. At that speed, a one mile walking trip would take just under 30 minutes.

Three miles is used as a standard for short trips for biking based on 2011 Federal Transit Administration guidance* establishing three miles as a reasonable distance for a bicyclist to travel to access a transit stop or station.

**Final Policy Statement on the Eligibility of Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements Under Federal Transit Law*

Figure 21 shows data from Replica* estimating the transportation mode for all weekday trips in the Study Area under one mile in spring 2024. 41 percent of these short trips are taken on foot or by bike, revealing how many people are already taking advantage of the local sidewalk, trail, and bikeway network in the Greater Heights.

**Note: Replica is a privately owned data platform that compiles existing “big data” sources such as phone-based location tracking to estimate where, when, and how people are traveling. As with any big data, the resulting estimates should be viewed with caution as they do not represent a total, verified count of travelers.*

Trip Distance for Average Weekday

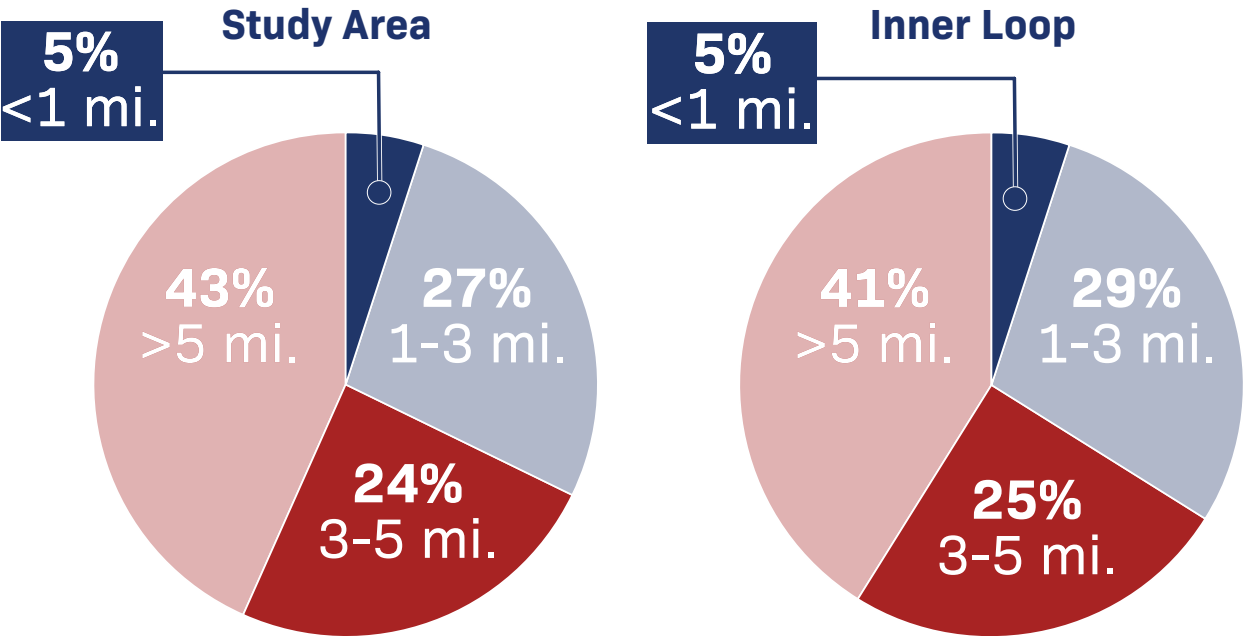


Figure 20. Trip distance for the Study Area (left) and Inner Loop (right) (Source: H-GAC, 2023)

Short Trip (<1 mi.) Travel Mode for Average Weekday

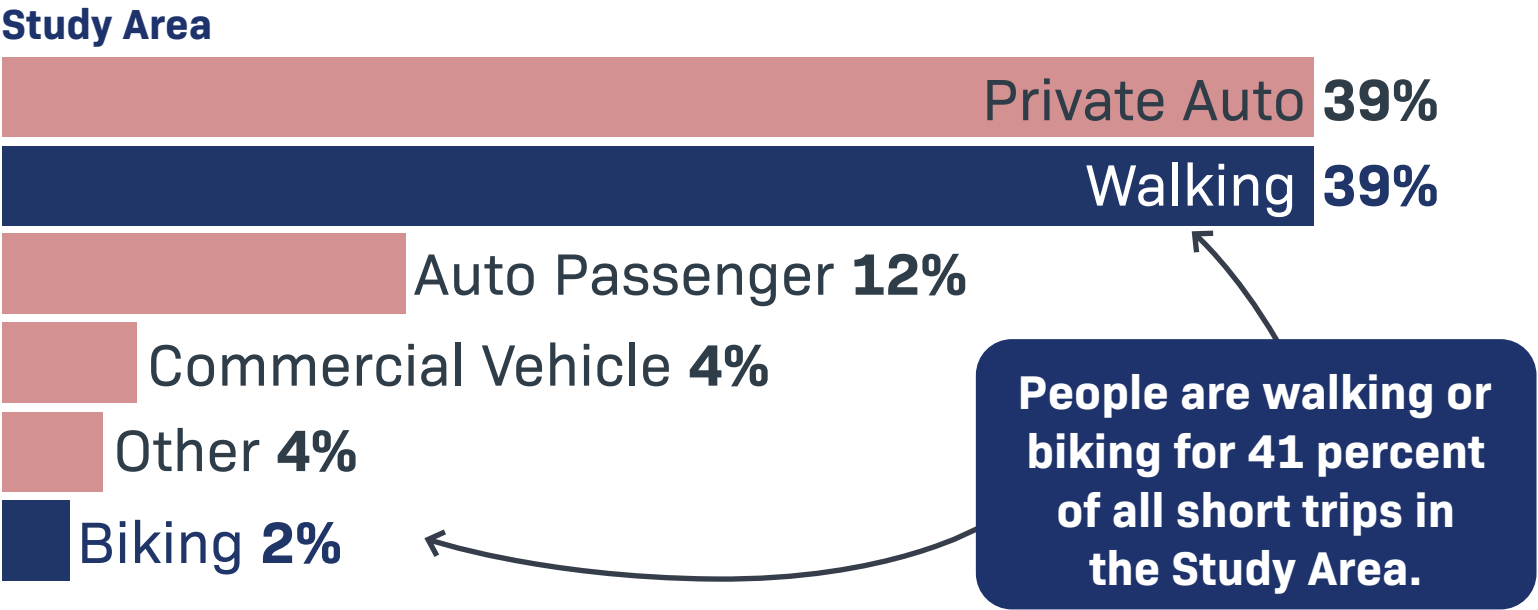


Figure 21. Travel mode for all trips in the Study Area less than 1 mile in distance (Source: ReplicaHQ, Spring 2024)

Vehicle Volumes

Vehicle counts for major streets indicate where more volumes are moving through the Study Area. Figure 22 shows average daily traffic (ADT) based on counts by the City of Houston and TxDOT. Studemont Street carries the highest number of vehicles, along with the Shepherd and Durham Drive corridor. Other major roadways like Studewood Street, Ella Boulevard north of 18th Street, Yale Street, and TC Jester Boulevard all see volumes above 15,000 ADT. Portions of Ella Boulevard, 20th Street, W 11th Street, and Crockett Street see volumes well below 10,000 ADT.

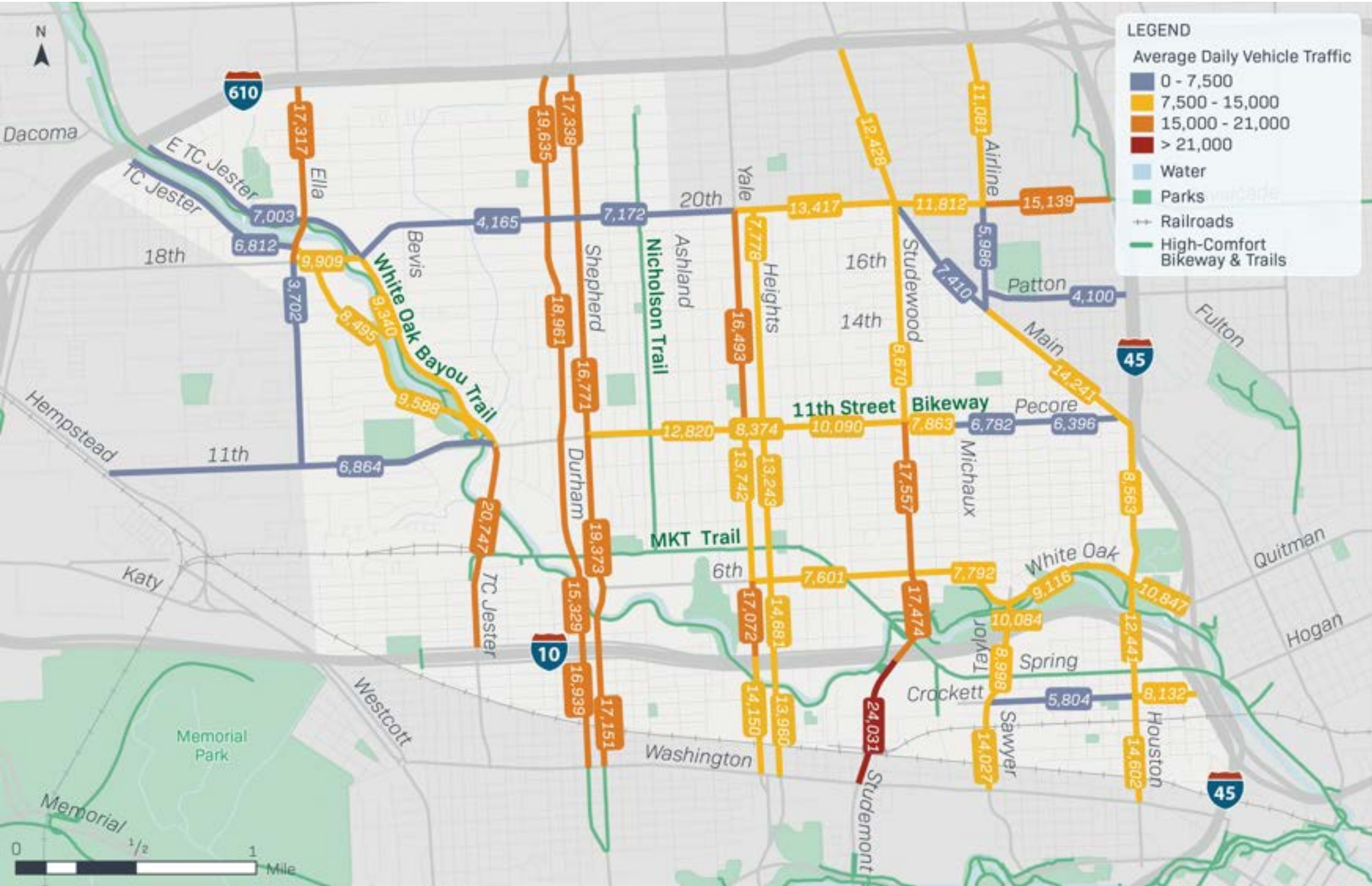
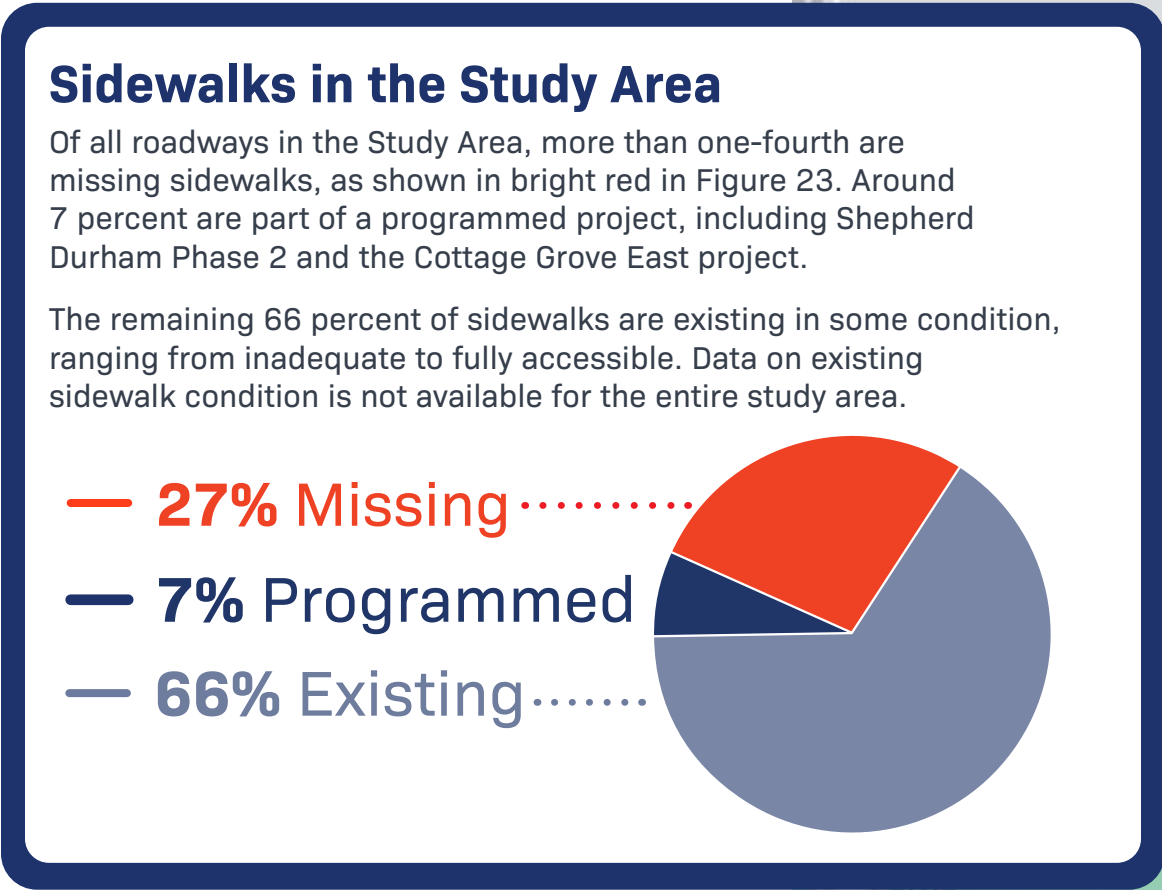


Figure 22. Traffic Volumes (Source: City of Houston, 2019-2025; TxDOT, 2022).

Existing Sidewalks

Figure 23 shows sidewalk coverage in the Study Area as either missing, programmed, or existing. MHRA and other agencies have recently conducted detailed sidewalk assessments in specific block sections to identify areas with needed sidewalk improvements.



Existing Bikeways

Current Connections

Figure 24 shows existing bikeways within the Study Area. Whether it is a protected bicycle lane, a bayou trail, or a designated shared on-street bikeway, the existing bicycle network provides a great starting point for a future connected network in the Greater Heights.

The current bikeway network provides access to key local and regional destinations such as parks, schools, and commercial destinations. The current reach of the bikeway networks allows for access outside the I-610 Loop in some instances, including all the way to Downtown Houston and beyond.

Today's Gaps

The bikeways and trails in the Study Area are not currently connected into a full network, as envisioned in the *Houston Bike Plan*. Current **gaps include east-west connections north of 11th Street**, especially lacking connections between White Oak Bayou, the Shepherd Durham Bikeway, Nicholson Trail, and Heights Boulevard.

South of 11th Street, the gap is in north-south connections, especially across I-10, the Union Pacific Rail Line, and Washington Avenue. Of the few existing bridges across the bayou, several have substandard facilities for people walking and biking. Studemont Street, for example, does not even have an existing sidewalk.

While White Oak Bayou and the trail along the bayou are a great community resource, the bayou is difficult to cross, with only a few exceptions where MHRA and others have made intentional investments in walking and biking infrastructure.

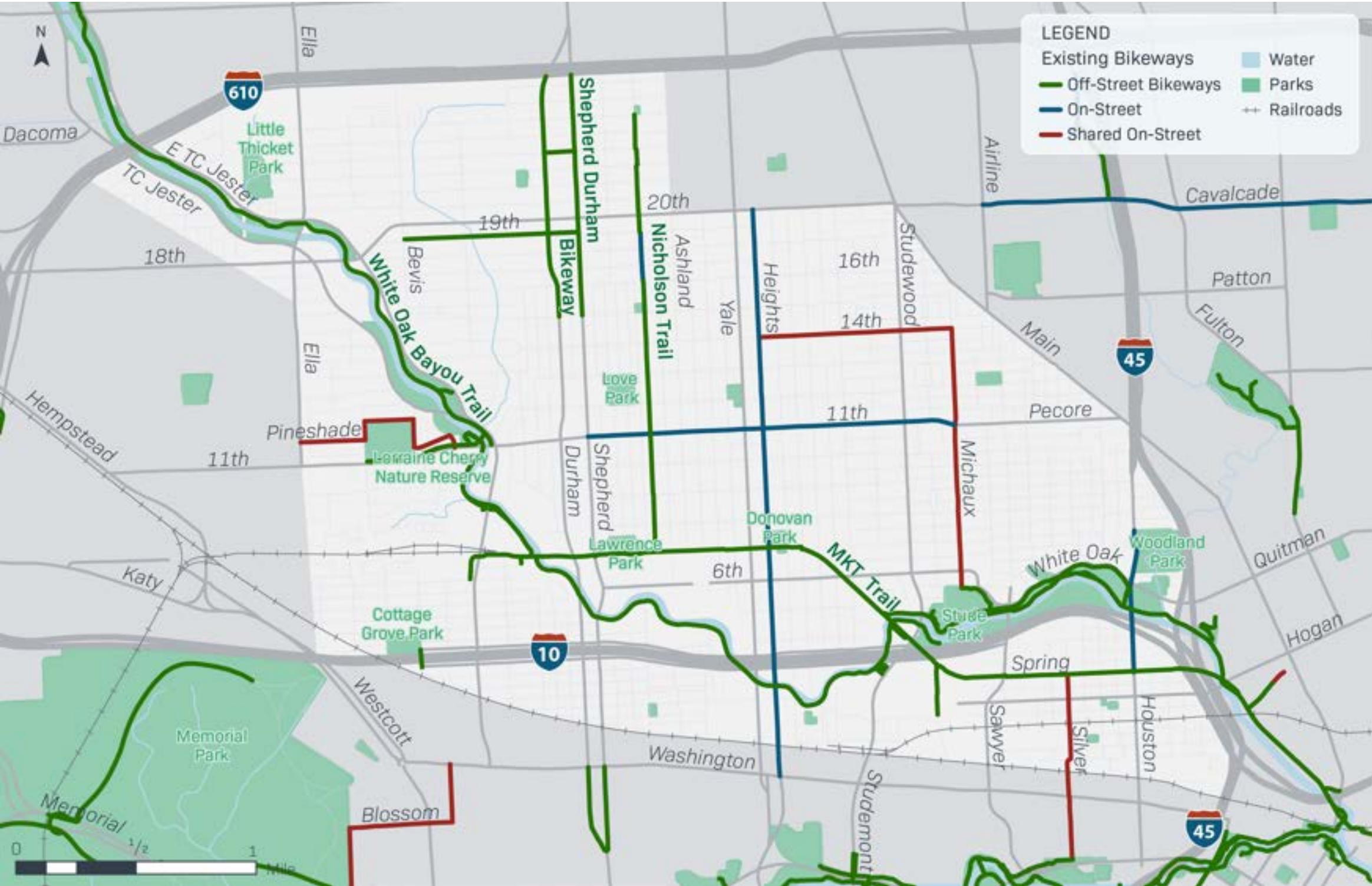


Figure 24. Existing Bikeways (Source: City of Houston, 2024; Team Analysis, 2025)

Programmed Bikeways

Figure 25 displays both existing and programmed bikeways in the Study Area. The term “programmed” means that the MHRA or another agency has allocated funding and a timeline to implement these specific bikeway projects.

These programmed bikeways include MHRA projects like the Phase 2 extension of the Shepherd Durham Project south to I-10. These connections will help build a more completed high-comfort network of bikeways to serve people of all ages and abilities, including students biking to school.

Benefits for All Roadway Users

These bikeway improvements also improve roadway safety and relieve congestion for people who are not biking. For people driving, more people choosing bicycles for short trips means fewer cars on the road. These projects all include safe crossing improvements, updated signage and markings, and encourage responsible vehicle speeds by reducing roadway widths to accommodate the bikeway, making streets more comfortable for people walking.

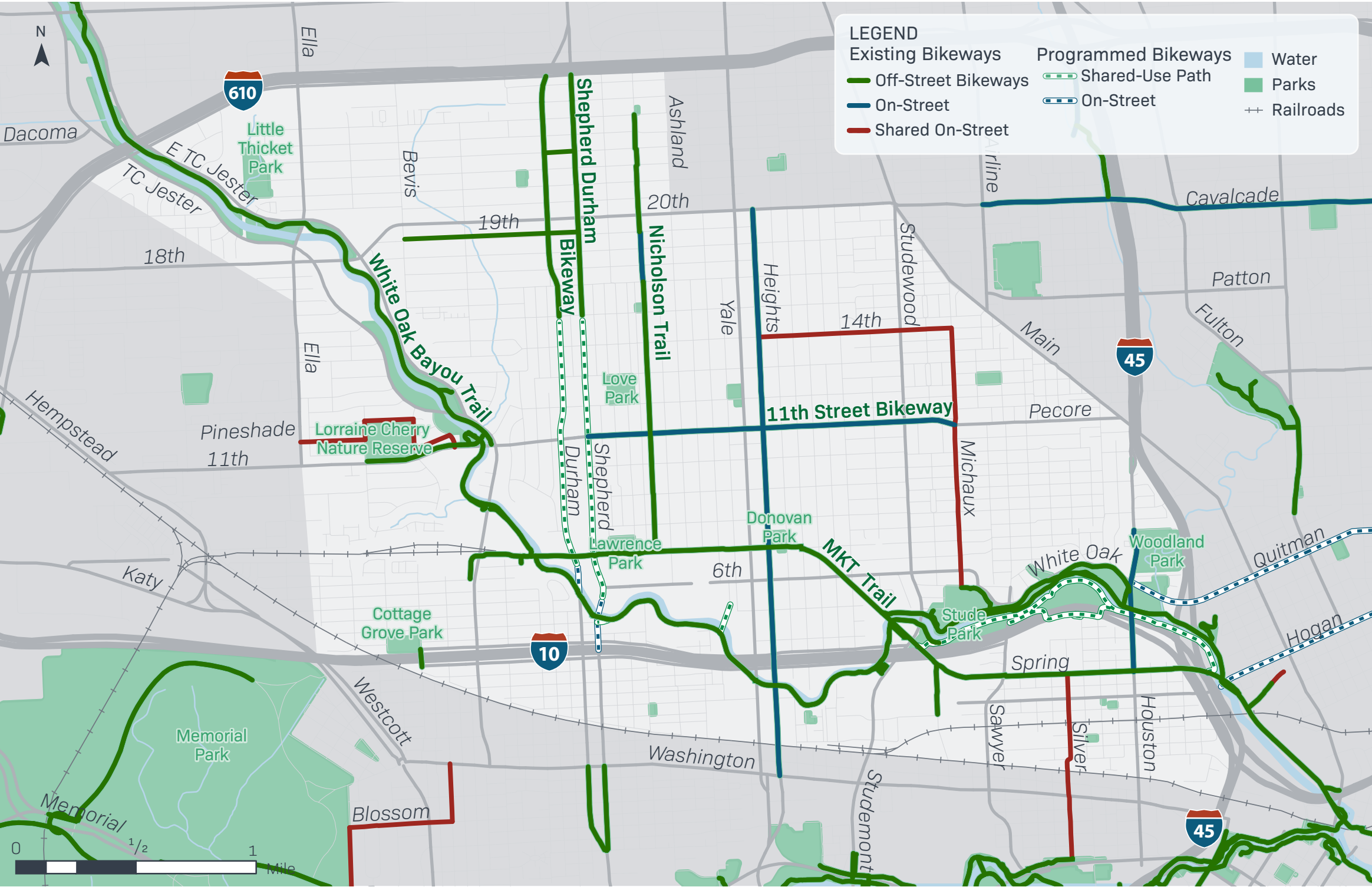


Figure 25. Programmed Bikeways (Source: City of Houston, 2024; Team Analysis, 2025)

Access to Active Streets

Figure 27 shows the streets within an eighth- and quarter-mile from existing bikeways and trails in the Study Area. **These golden areas on the map highlight the areas of the Greater Heights where someone can open their front door and be on a designated trail or bikeway within a block or two.** In other words, the eight-mile corridors show which neighborhoods have excellent access to an existing “active” street, where walking, biking, and rolling are safer and more comfortable.

Some critical spines of the trail and bikeway network like the Shepherd Durham Bikeway and 11th Street have great connection to the local street grid. However, the White Oak Bayou Greenway is strikingly disconnected from the nearby local streets, underperforming other paths due to limited connections at more regular intervals.

Who Has Access?

Figure 26 shows the number of residents, employees, businesses, and public schools that currently have eighth-mile and quarter-mile access to an active street.

	Distance from Bikeway	
	1/8 mi.	1/4 mi.
Residents	13,700 (20%)	29,000 (42%)
Schools	7	9
Employees	6,300 (18%)	12,200 (35%)
Businesses	990 (25%)	1,900 (48%)

Figure 26. Quarter- and Eighth-Mile Bikesheds (Source: Toole Design, 2025; ESRI Business Summary Report via Data Axle Inc., 2025).

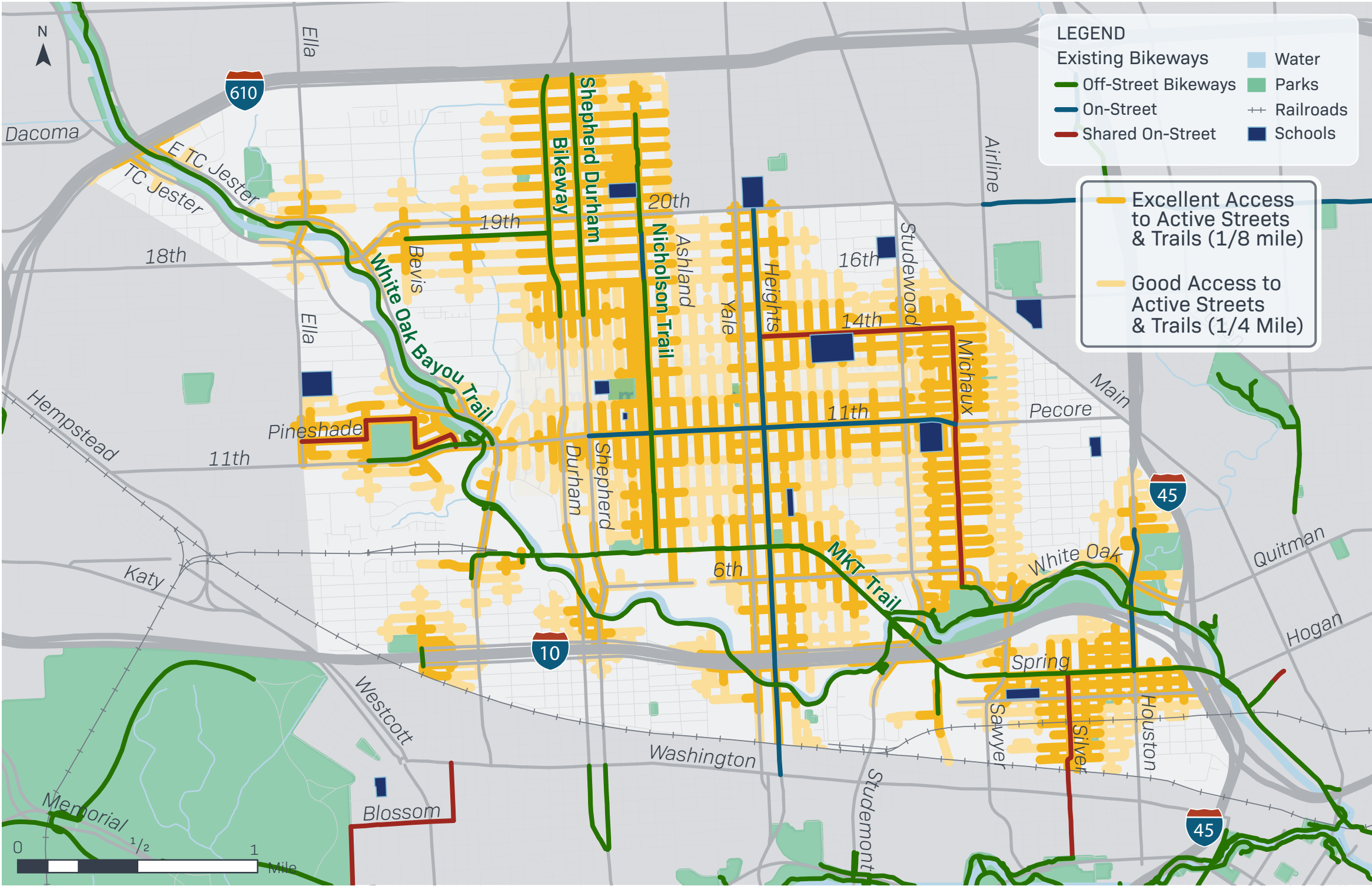


Figure 27. Quarter- and Eighth-Mile Bikesheds (Source: Toole Design, 2025; Esri Business Summary Report via Data Axle Inc., 2025)

Transit Service

Figure 28 shows the 14 existing METRO local bus routes by frequency, as well as the Heights Community Connector Zone.

Current transit options can help people travel within and to the Study Area. The only two current high-frequency options (every 15 minutes or better) in the Study Area include the 26 Long Point/Cavalcade running east-west, and the 27 Shepherd running north-south.

The Heights Community Connector Zone is one of six in Houston, and was first introduced in April 2025. These zones provide a free, on-call connection to METRO services in places where transit coverage may be limited.

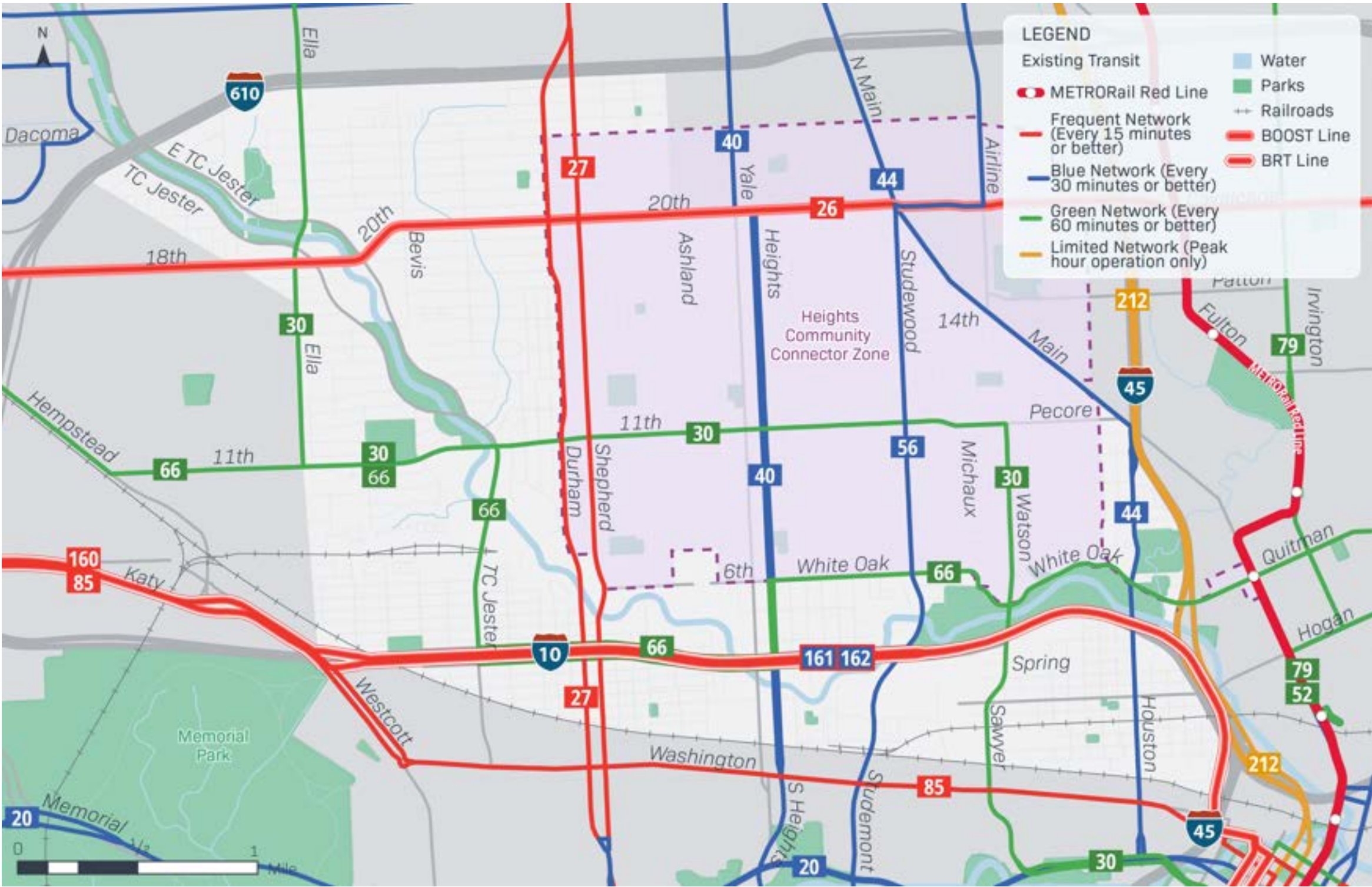


Figure 28. Existing Transit as of June 2025 Service Changes (Source: METRO, 2025).

Transit Ridership

METRO ridership in the Greater Heights area is particularly elevated in areas where high-frequency and well-connected transit lines intersect. Figure 29 demonstrates average weekday boardings and alightings from area bus stops in October 2024. A kernel density estimation was used to create heat maps of bus rider activity to account for potential transfers between lines. This data pre-dates the completion of Phase I of the Shepherd-Durham project and includes more bus stops than are currently along the corridor.

The Heights Boulevard/Yale Street at 20th Street intersection shows the highest concentration of transit ridership, where the 26 Long Point/ Cavalcade intersects the 40 Telephone/Heights, providing direct service to Downtown. Lines 44 and 56 go to Downtown and the Texas Medical Center, respectively. These, corresponding with Line 26, see the second highest activity in the area. Line 30 also provides a direct ride to Downtown and attracts more riders. The top 5 ridership intersections are shown in the table below.

Intersection	Avg. Weekday Users	Connecting Lines
20th St @ Heights Blvd/Yale St	421	40 26
N Main St @ Studewood St	239	44 26 56
20th St @ Shepherd Dr/Durham Dr	217	26 27
W 11th St @ Shepherd Dr/Durham Dr	169	30 27
Studemont St @ Summer St (Kroger)	145	56

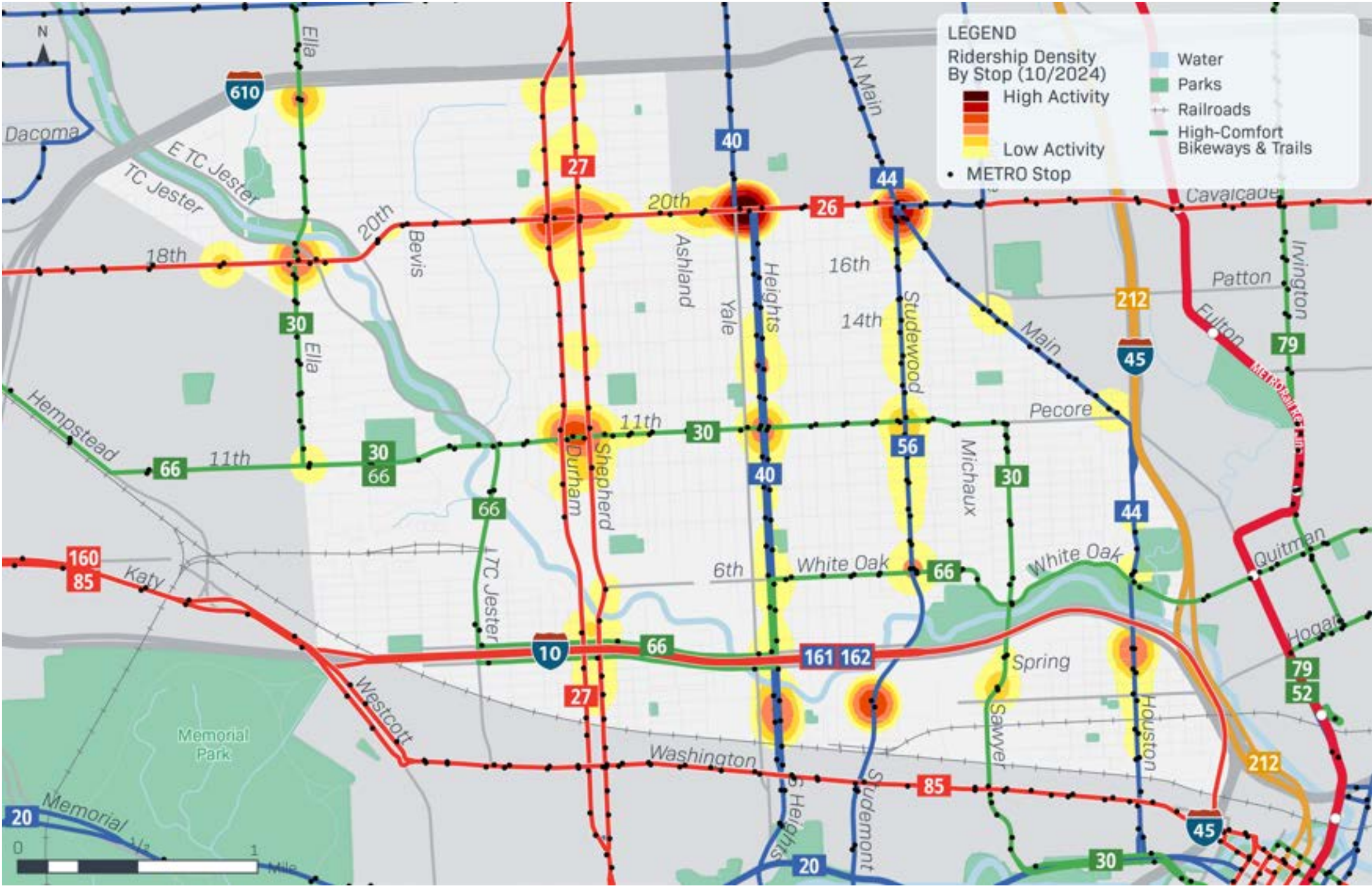


Figure 29. Transit Ridership Density by Stop (Source: METRO, 2024-2025).

Key Safety Indicators

Roadway Speeds

Figure 30 displays lines color coded by recorded 85th percentile speeds on major roadways, with higher speeds in darker color. Each segment is labeled with its 85th percentile speed and its difference with the posted speed limit. The City’s default speed limit is 30 mph, with exceptions in the Study Area shown in Figure 31.

The 85th percentile speed shows a pattern of excessive speeding (10 mph over the posted limit) on several roads. These high-speed streets include North Main Street from I-45 to I-610, where the 85th percentile speed reaches 42 mph despite a speed limit of 30 mph. Durham Drive south of W 11th Street is also a problematic zone for speeding, where drivers regularly travel 16 miles per hour over the posted speed limit on a long stretch with no signals until I-10.

Note: This data was collected prior to the completion of Phase 1 of the Shepherd Durham Project.

Posted Speed Limits over 30 mph	
Heights Blvd.	35 mph
T.C. Jester Blvd.	35 mph
E T.C. Jester Blvd. (west of Ella Blvd.)	40 mph
Ella Blvd.	35 mph
W 11th St. (west of Shepherd Dr.)	35 mph
N Shepherd Dr.	35 mph
N Durham Dr. (south of White Oak Bayou)	35 mph

Figure 31. Posted speed limits over standard 30 mph in the study area (Source: City of Houston, 2025).

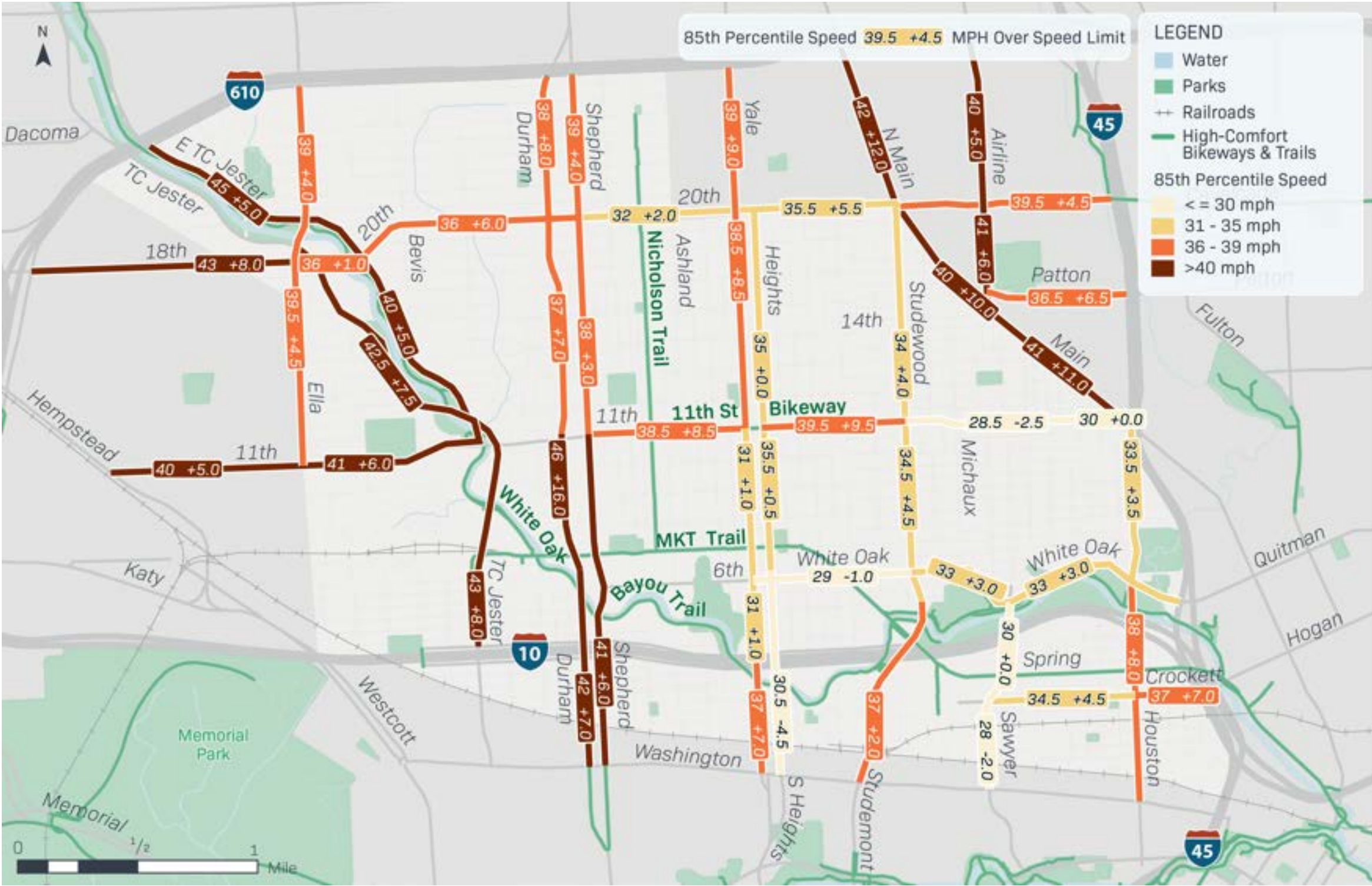


Figure 30. Roadway Speeds (Source: City of Houston, 2019-2025).

Crash Analysis

Figure 32 visualizes crash density in the Study Area between 2020 and 2024. This crash data was collected prior to the Shepherd/Durham reconstruction, which was designed to address crashes on the corridor, as well as other mobility and connectivity improvements. On Figure 30, a kernel density estimation was used to visualize where the highest density of crashes occurred on Study Area roadways.

Red lines on the map denote streets designated on the City of Houston’s High-Injury Network: an analysis of the top six percent of roadways in Houston that account for nearly 60 percent of traffic deaths and serious injuries caused by crashes.

While high-crash areas are found throughout the Study Area, high concentrations include on Washington Avenue between Durham Drive and S. Heights Boulevard, Shepherd and Durham Drives at the I-610 intersection, Ella Boulevard and East TC Jester Boulevard, N Main Street, and along Yale Street.

Note: This data was collected prior to the completion of Phase 1 of the Shepherd Durham Project. Some of this data was also collected prior to the completion of the 11th Street Bikeway.

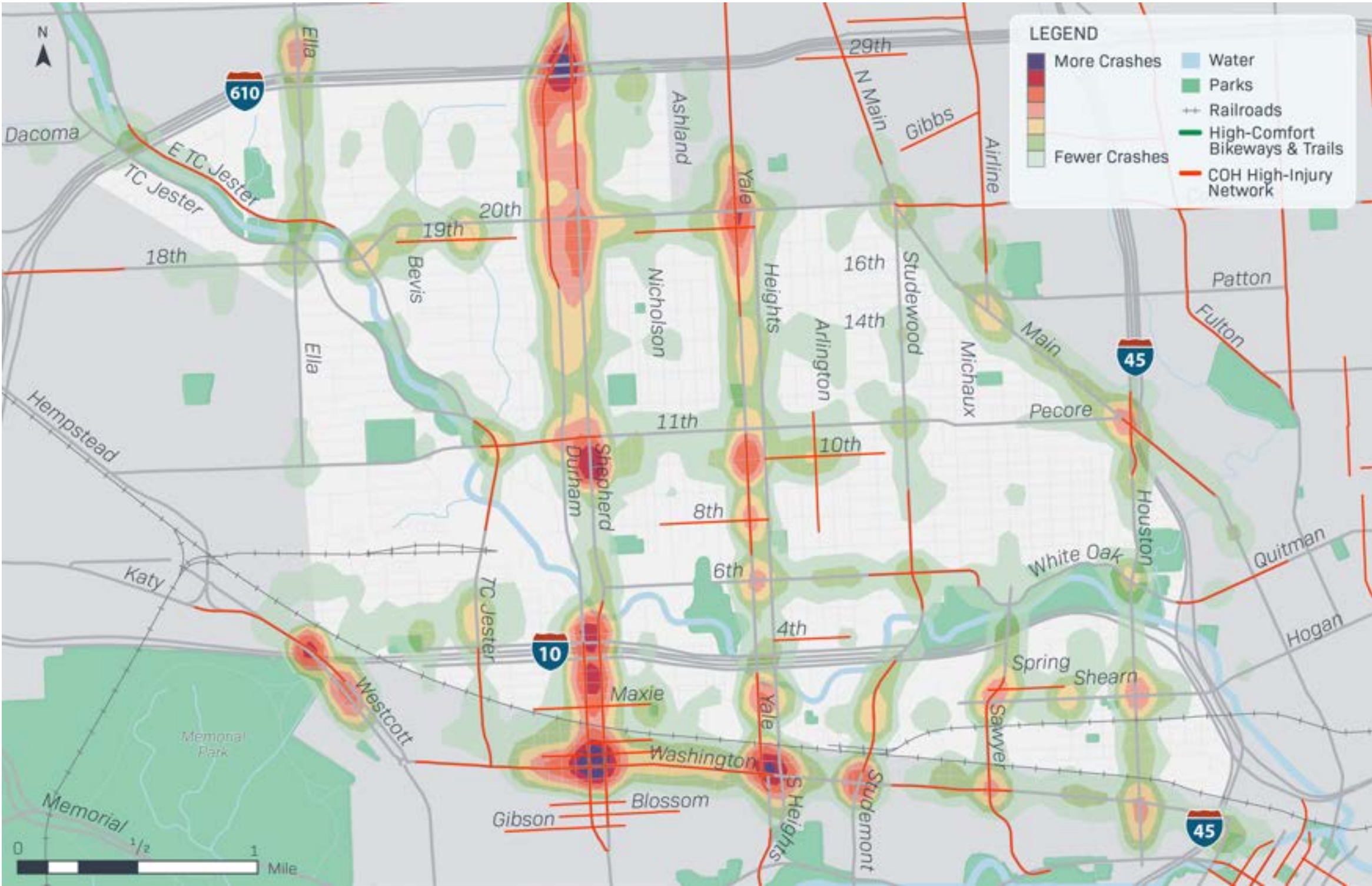


Figure 32. Crash Analysis (Source: TxDOT Crash Records Information System, 2020-2024).

Pedestrian and Cyclist Crash Analysis

While vehicle crashes involving cyclists and pedestrians occur throughout the Study Area, concentrations can be found demonstrating particularly dangerous intersections. Figure 33 displays a kernel density estimation of the largest concentrations of crashes, as well as a record of every individual crash involving a cyclist and pedestrian.

Particularly high densities of crashes are found along Washington Avenue at Shepherd Drive, Durham Drive, Yale Street, and S. Heights Boulevard, and at the intersection of Yale Street, Heights Boulevard, and 20th Street. Other notable intersections include Studewood Street and 6th street, and along the Nicholson Trail and 11th Street Bikeway, at intersections where bikes and pedestrians interact with cars.

Note: This data was collected prior to the completion of Phase 1 of the Shepherd Durham Project. Some of this data was also collected prior to the completion of the 11th Street Bikeway.

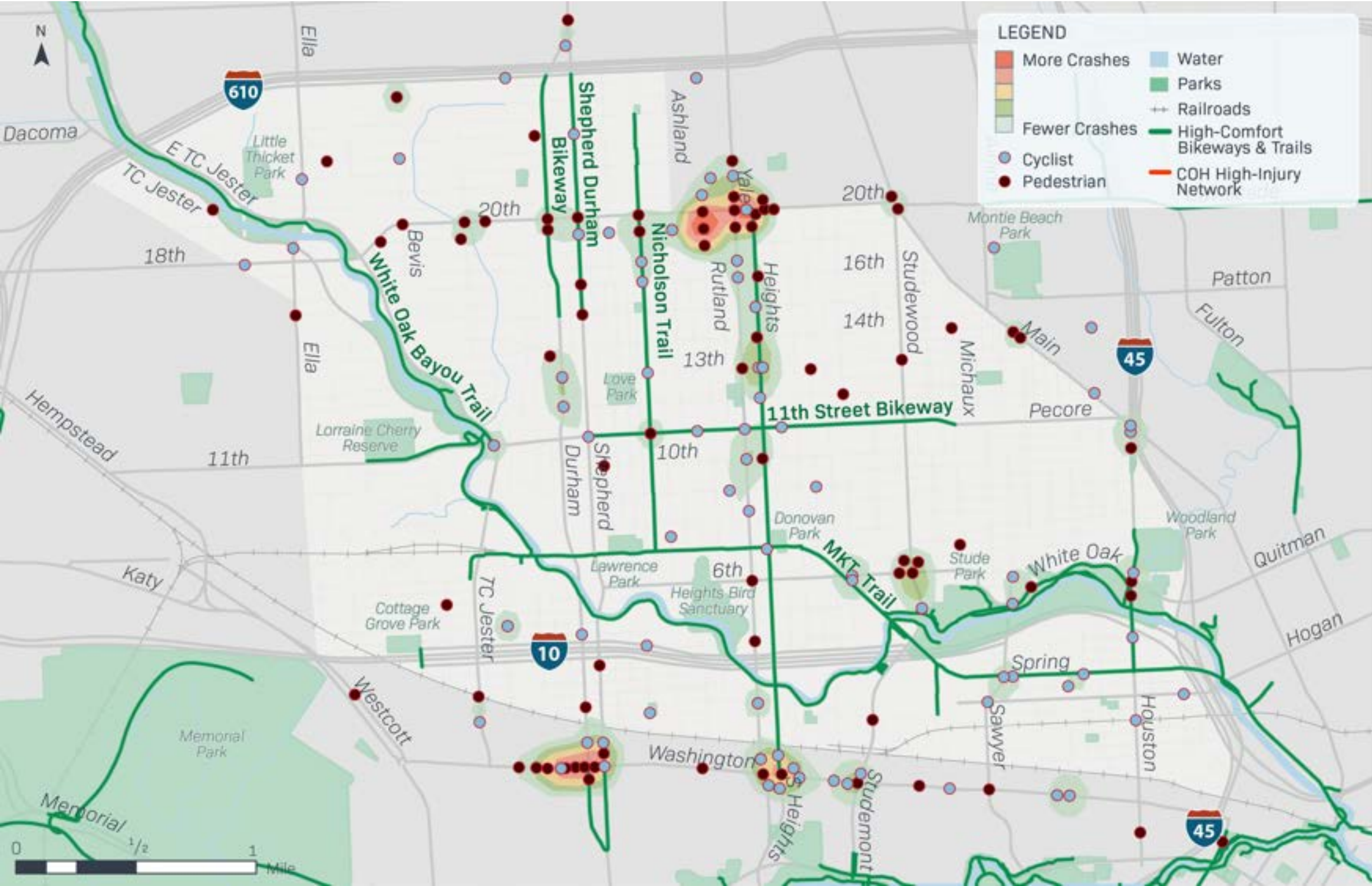


Figure 33. Pedestrian and Cyclist Crash Analysis (Source: TxDOT Crash Records Information System, 2020-2024).

Major Roadway Crossing Distances

Busy roadways, like the ones classified as Major Thoroughfares or Major Collectors, can often act as barriers for safe travel, especially for vulnerable road users like children, older adults, people walking, biking, and using assistive devices like wheelchairs. **The City of Houston’s standards recommend safe crossings be spaced 500 to 720 feet** to ensure that people crossing major corridors can get to their destination safely without traveling far out of their way to reach the next crossing. This becomes even more urgent during summer months when people are walking in the heat.

Figure 34 shows the distance between pedestrian crossings along all Major Thoroughfares and Major Collectors. The average distance to the next crossing for all streets in the Study Area is 1,323 feet, nearly twice the recommended crossing distance. Pink and red lines show roadway segments where crossing distances are more than twice and three times the recommendation, respectively.

COH Recommended Crossing Distance: 720 feet

Major Corridors Average Crossing Distance: 1,323 feet

Shepherd Durham Phase 1 Crossing Distance: 485 feet

Phase I of the Shepherd Durham Project added new signals and pedestrian crossings and brought the average crossing distance to 485 feet within the project bounds, better than the City’s standard and a threefold improvement compared to the rest of the Study Area.

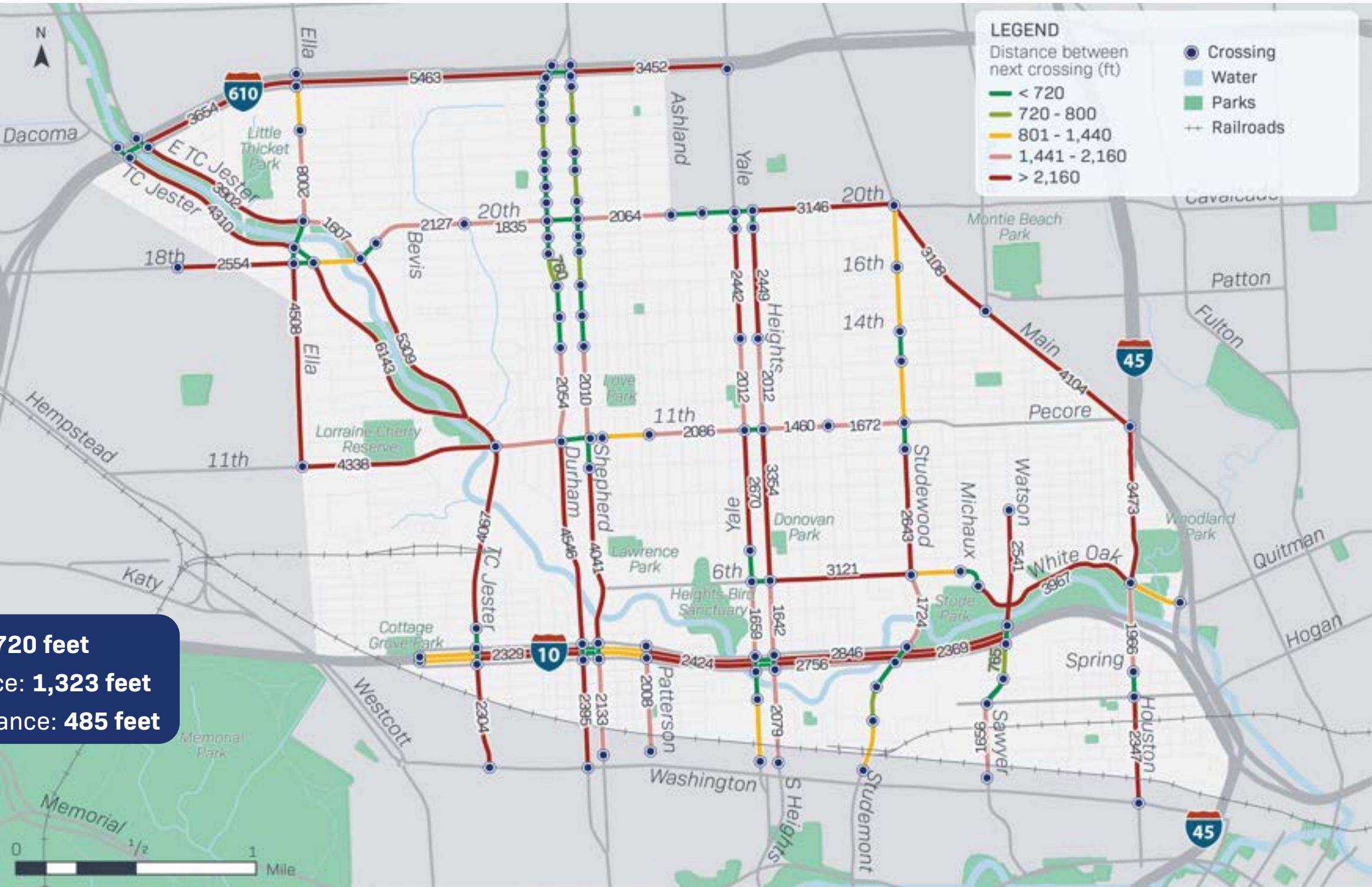


Figure 34. Crossing Distances at Major Thoroughfares (Source: Team Analysis, 2025).

Family-Safe Streets

The comfort level of a street for people walking and biking is determined by many factors, such as availability of paths, safe crossings, vehicle speeds and volumes, among others. To give these data points more meaning, a comfort level was determined from an in-depth analysis of safety and accessibility factors for users outside of a vehicle. The comfort of these streets is shown in Figure 35.

Streets were categorized into four qualifying levels of comfort. Level A represents streets where perceived comfort, in green, is highest—streets where families can comfortably walk or bike and where even the most vulnerable road users are most protected. These include streets with existing trails or wide paths.

Conversely, Level D streets represent those that are most precarious and nearly impossible to travel on outside of a vehicle. Highways and their frontage roads are unsurprisingly Level D streets. Local streets like 20th Street, Yale Street, N Main Street, Ella Boulevard, and others are also Level D. As it stands, these roadways are dangerous and unaccommodating for families.

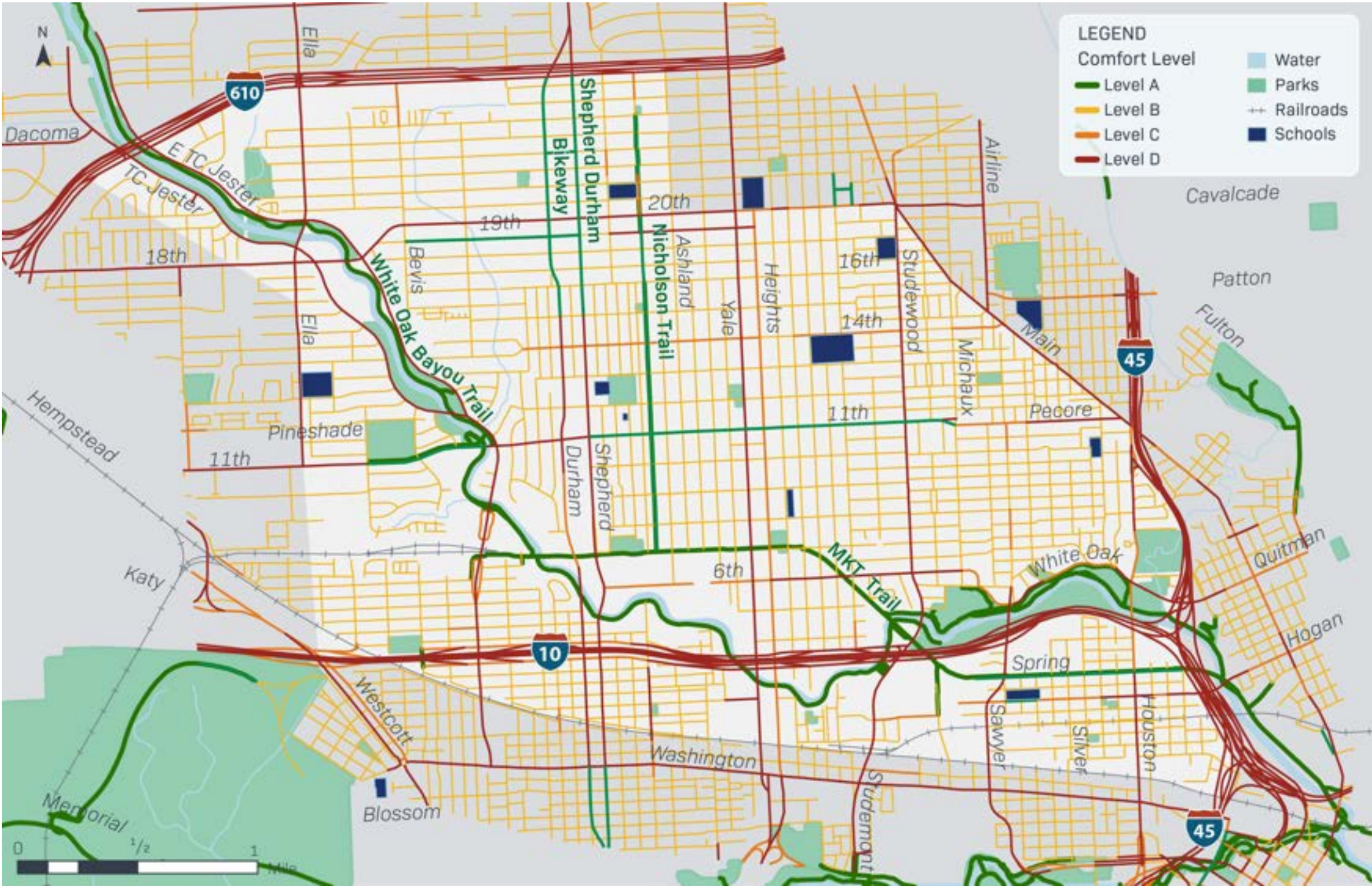


Figure 35. Family-Safe Streets (Source: Toole Design, 2025)