



Building Linear Parks Along

Brays Bayou

As construction along Brays Bayou progresses, the Harris County Flood Control District is doing its part to ensure that residents enjoy the added greenspace by incorporating linear parks. HCFCD realizes that linear parks are not a necessity to flood control, but they make the bayou a much more beautiful and enjoyable place to visit.

Linear parks are long parks built along the bayou that often include hike and bike trails or running paths, park benches, exercise stations and parking lots.

Before Brays Bayou construction plans are finalized, HCFCD will approach either the county precinct or the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department to help them plan and map out the linear park. Securing partners allows HCFCD to incorporate parks and other recreational amenities to improve the visual appeal of Brays Bayou. HCFCD wants to construct Project Brays in a manner that allows for amenities like linear parks to be integrated either at construction or a later date.



Linear parks are created on the greenspace along the banks of the bayou and include such amenities as hike and bike trails and jogging paths.

A Look Back as HCFCD Celebrates 70 Years

Following tremendously destructive floods in 1929 and in 1935, Harris County citizens clamored for solutions. Cumulative flood losses had reached a staggering sum. If ever there was a county in need of flood assistance, this was it.

On April 23, 1937, after local leaders petitioned the State of Texas for help, the 45th Texas Legislature unanimously passed a bill that created the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) to be the local partner of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It established the Harris County Commissioners Court as the District's governing body.

Roles & Responsibilities

Originally, HCFCD was given the responsibility of overseeing rivers, streams, tributaries and flood waters "for domestic, municipal, flood control, irrigation and other useful purposes." Although the primary function was to serve as the local partner to the Corps., HCFCD gradually took on a much more complex role. As the population of Harris County doubled to 600,000 by mid-century, and the number of plants and factories tripled, managing the problems of flooding became more urgent. Costly floods became nearly an annual event. More homes and businesses were built in improvident locations, prior to establishing the standard of the 1% (100-year) floodplain and prior to the current level of understanding of flood-prone areas. Still, managing the flooding as efficiently as possible was essential.

Changing Times, Changing Tools

Every year, new flood damage reduction projects were proposed and others were constructed and completed. Major projects, such as the enlargement of a 25.4-mile stretch of Brays Bayou in 1968, made great strides. Despite the progress, however, flooding continued with 21 damaging storms from 1950-1980. It became apparent that additional flood damage reduction "tools" were needed. The concept of stormwater detention basins began to figure prominently in project planning and in new development projects. These basins store excess stormwater until peak flows pass and then release water slowly, as flood waters recede. HCFCD now has more than 40 stormwater detention basins throughout Harris County, covering more than 7,000 acres, with many more in the planning stages.

A More Efficient District

New technologies have also influenced the evolution of flood damage reduction by allowing a better understanding of our flooding potential and providing the means to build more efficient and effective projects. Additionally, floodplain regulations and stringent environmental codes have played an increasingly important role. Efficiency of HCFCD operations has also improved through the years: a streamlining of the organization in the 1990s reduced the staff by two-thirds, while engineering, construction and maintenance duties were privatized.

Although operations have become more complex through the years, the mission remains simple: provide flood damage reduction projects that work, with appropriate regard for community and natural values.

Through widening and deepening channels, excavating stormwater detention basins, or maintaining today's 2,500 miles of channel and helping residents located deep in the floodplain move to higher ground, HCFCD will continue to hold true to its mission.



The Old Westheimer Stormwater Detention Basin can hold approximately 200 million gallons of stormwater.

TREES ARE SPRINGING UP ALONG *the Banks of the Bayous*

"For in the true nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver." – Martin Luther

What do Bulgaria, China, India, Israel and the United State have in common? They all celebrate Arbor Day. While the date varies from country to country, the sentiment is the same – trees are a crucial renewable resource that must be honored. The Harris County Flood Control District is doing its part to make sure Harris County has an abundance of native trees planted along our bayous' banks, many of which are grown at HCFCD's tree farm.

Located at the intersection of Highway 288 and Almeda-Genoa, HCFCD's South Service Center has approximately four acres dedicated to a tree farm, where its Vegetation Management Program team maintains about 9,000 trees. The farm currently produces 18 to 20 different species of trees, including American elm, river birch, red maple, magnolia, white oak, sycamore and pecan. An additional 3,200 trees will be added later this year.

Annually, the team buys bare-root seedlings from the Texas Forest Service and brings them to the farm to plant in pots. The trees are given anywhere from one to three years to grow until they are about 10 feet tall before they are planted. At the time of the relocation, typically between the months of October and March, most trees must be transported by truck.

The team goes through a three-step selection process while creating a planting plan. The first phase includes determining whether a site meets the appropriate criteria. Some of the many criteria include:

- Probability of eventually eliminating the need for mowing
- Probability of tree survival
- Citizen request

If the site meets the necessary criteria, the team evaluates several types of information to develop the long-term planting plan. Types of information used include:

- Aerial photographs
- Recommendations from HCFCD's urban forester
- Site visits
- Nominations by HCFCD staff

After the site is secured and a planting plan is developed, the team must decide which species to plant. Tree species are selected based on:

- Ability to meet objectives of program (such as eliminating need for mowing)
- Intended location along channel or within basin site
- Availability
- Indigenous or native classification

The team planted approximately 16,000 trees this past season, including 288 trees that were recently planted at the Willow Waterhole Stormwater Detention Basin. Plans are in place to plant approximately 3,500 trees at the Arthur Storey Park Stormwater Detention Basin once construction is complete.

HCFCD, one of the largest tree-planting organizations in the region, understands that trees are a viable resource for reducing the maintenance cost along Brays Bayou while maintaining a high level of beauty and comfort.

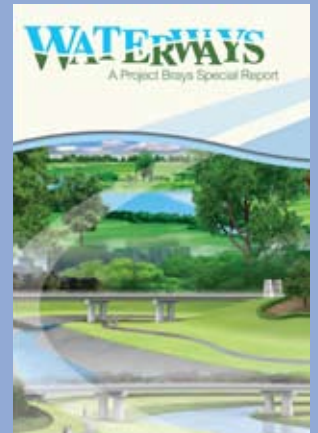


White Oaks are among the native tree species planted by HCFCD along the bayous.

NEIGHBORHOOD *News And Events*

April Community Work Group Meetings
The Project Brays team presented "The Progress of Project Brays" at the Community Work Group meetings, April 11. Two meetings were held at the Hermann Park Garden Center. Guest speakers included Glenn Laird, Environmental Services Department Manager, Harris County Flood Control District and Roksan Okan-Vick, Executive Director, Houston Parks Board.

Project Brays Team Wins an Award
The Project Brays team was awarded the 2007 National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) Blue Pencil Award for Waterways: A Project Brays Special Report. The NAGC's annual Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards program recognizes superior government communication products and their producers.



This special report provides an up-close look at Project Brays to give a better understanding of the project benefits, planned improvements and construction information. *Waterways* is packed full of facts and figures, a historical timeline of events along the bayou, and a 17" x 34" map of the Brays Bayou watershed and the more than 70 projects that comprise Project Brays. For a copy of *Waterways: A Project Brays Special Report*, please call the Project Brays hotline at (713) 316-4820 or e-mail info@projectbrays.org.

Waterways: A Project Brays Special Report – April 2006

Contact Us

We welcome your feedback!
If you have questions, please e-mail us at info@projectbrays.org or call the Project Brays Hotline at **713-316-4820**.
For up-to-date information, you can also visit the Project Brays website at www.projectbrays.org.

