

TIDWELL

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) PLAN

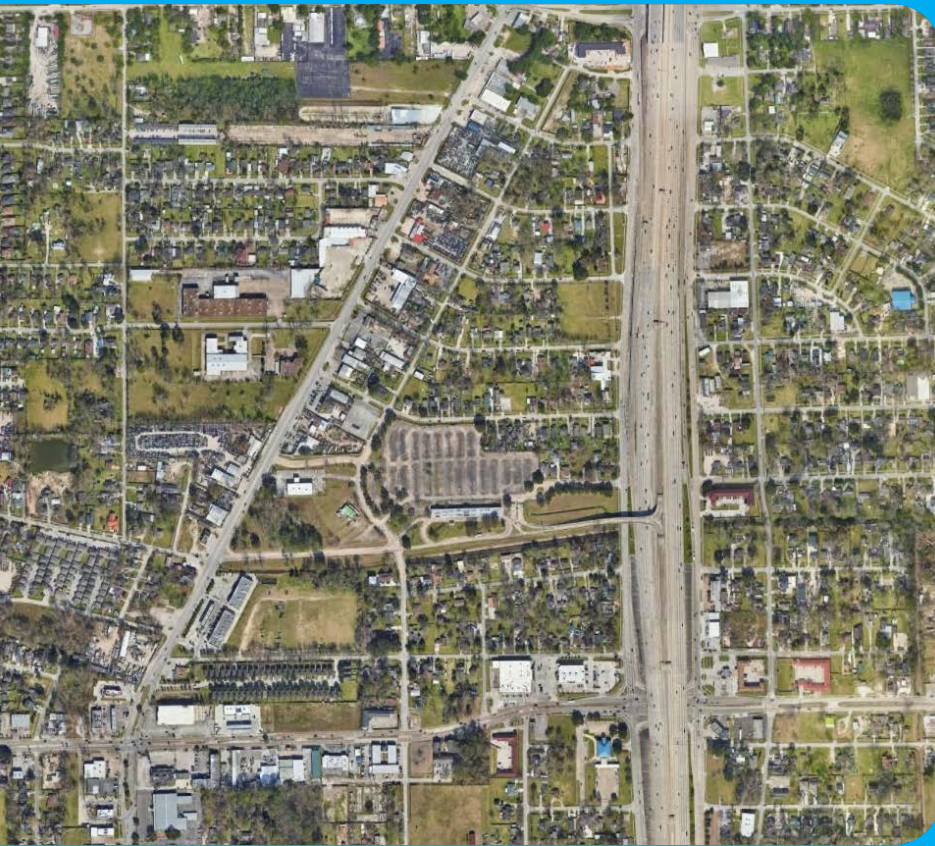


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Tidwell Transit Center aerial



Message from Diann L. Lewter

METRO Board of Directors, Chair of Joint Development and Land Use Committee

The Eastex-Jensen neighborhood is a place rich in history and culture. The people are passionate about their community and have a clear sense of their priorities for future.

The Tidwell Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan leverages METRO's investments in high-quality, reliable transit for the community. Moreover, this plan enabled METRO to work alongside community members to rethink the Tidwell Transit Center property and surrounding area, prioritize the safety and connectivity of streets for people of all ages and abilities, and identify opportunities to bring more social and economic life back into the neighborhood.

The Tidwell TOD Plan was created by community members, for the community. This is just the beginning. METRO will continue dialogue with its partners, residents, and businesses to see the Tidwell TOD vision come to life.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

METRO Board of Directors

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Htx Art in the Heart for being the cornerstone and home for all engagement activities for the community, METRO, and consultant team.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

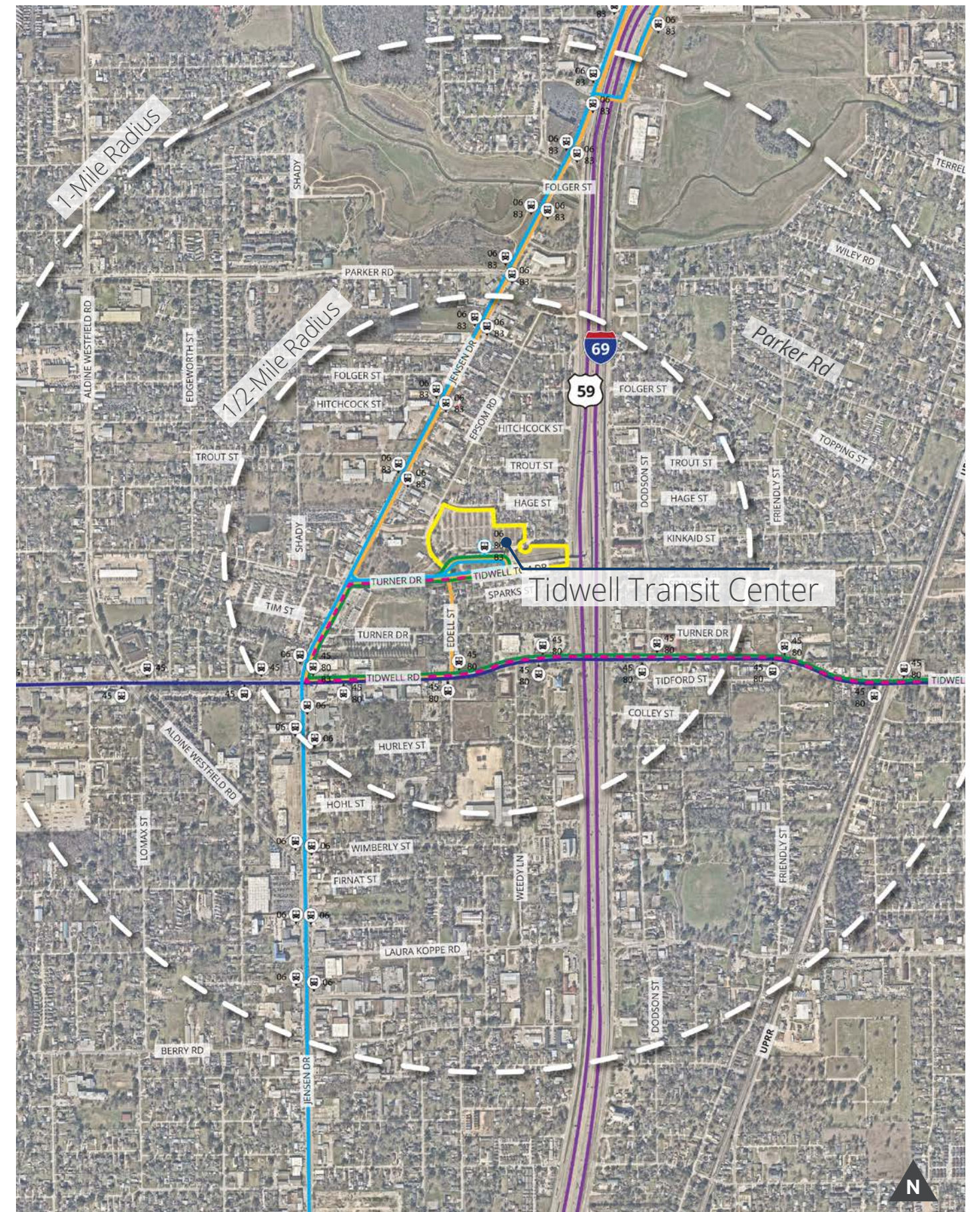
Convenient Transit. Vibrant Communities.

The Tidwell Transit Center is nestled in the heart of Houston's Eastex-Jensen neighborhood.

METRO is planning the METRORapid University Corridor Project and bringing bus rapid transit (BRT) to the community, and the Tidwell Transit Center will be the northern terminus of the line—elevating its role as a major multimodal hub to connect more people to places across Houston. With this momentum, METRO has an opportunity to work with the community to redevelop the transit center into a place that combines high-quality transit with new housing, businesses, public space, and essential services.

The Tidwell TOD Plan provides a vision and actionable plan for improvements around the Tidwell Transit Center. The TOD Plan is the first step toward identifying redevelopment

opportunities in and around the transit center property and ways to enhance mobility and connectivity to people, jobs, goods, and services; support local, sustainable, and resilient housing and economic investments, and leverage community assets.



Tidwell TOD Planning Area

Not to Scale

A Time to Reinvest

The Tidwell TOD Planning Area and greater Eastex-Jensen neighborhood has suffered from disinvestment for decades with more housing and commercial activity, and neighborhood-scale infrastructure developing elsewhere around Houston. Real estate market conditions have shown slow growth, as the pace of new or redevelopment in the area is lagging far behind other nearby neighborhoods. Further, economic stress is prevalent in the planning area with nearly 51% of households with incomes below \$35,000. To exacerbate these conditions, nearly 25% of homeowners and over 65% of renters are considered “cost burdened” and pay over 30% of their income on housing. Housing supply is also limited, making it difficult for new residents to come into the neighborhood.

Essential services, such as grocery stores with healthy food options, pharmacies, medical clinics, childcare, schools, etc. are in short supply. Only about 1/4 of residents can access these services and destinations on foot, bike, wheelchair, or other personal mobility device. Furthermore, the auto-centric nature of the street network combined with disconnected sidewalks and non-existent bikeways create significant barriers to moving safely, conveniently, and affordably to neighborhood destinations.

The Tidwell TOD Plan is a catalyst for much-needed change and reinvestment in the neighborhood. The Tidwell Transit Center property combined with the vast number of parcels that are currently vacant or underutilized present an opportunity to regenerate economic and housing activity, and support larger community needs for generations to come. Additionally, ongoing community initiatives coupled with proposed high-quality transit along Tidwell Road and Jensen Drive further strengthens the community’s desire and commitment for

street infrastructure and safety improvements throughout the neighborhood.



Existing home near Tidwell Transit Center



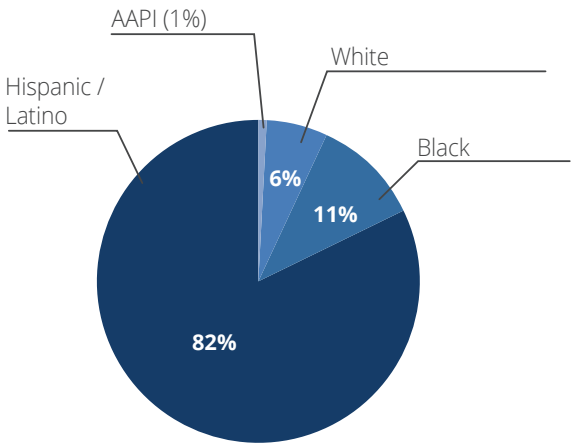
View looking north on Jensen Drive

A Community Driven Plan

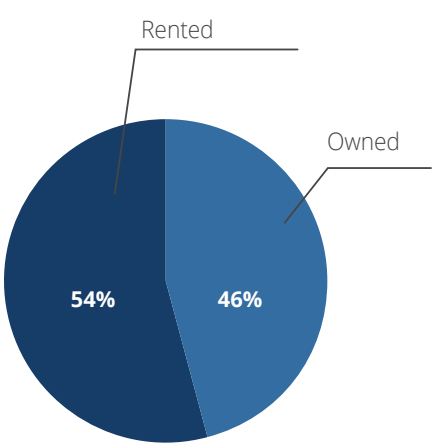
The creation of the Tidwell TOD Plan was a community-led process that brought together neighborhood residents, businesses, community groups, and public agencies, including METRO, City of Houston, and Harris County and several other groups and organizations.

Tidwell TOD Planning Area – Community Snapshot

ETHNICITY



HOUSEHOLDS RENTED VS OWNED



	City of Houston	Tidwell Station Area
Total Population	2,293,288	6,906
Total Housing Units	990,632	2,228
Average Household Size	2.44	3.11
Total Jobs	1,746,026	1,090
Low English Proficiency	23%	24%
Minority Population	76%	94%
Median Household Income	\$52,000	\$39,000
Average % of Households without Vehicle Access	9%	17%
Average % of Households with 1 or More Persons with a Disability	10%	4%

Community input and perspective, such as their lived experience and knowledge of the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood and Tidwell Transit Center environs, provided invaluable information to understanding systemic challenges grappling the community and identifying potential opportunities to improve (and redevelop) the Tidwell Transit Center and adjacent street network and properties.

This multi-pronged, inclusive approach included the development of a Project Working Group and a series of scheduled open house events for community members.

Additionally, focus groups were developed to speak to select community members, organizations, businesses, and agencies on specific topics to help guide the planning and design elements of the Tidwell TOD Plan (e.g., housing, economic development, private developers, etc). Other engagement tools, including digital surveys, marketing and branding, social media posts, and door-to-door canvassing were done to help get the word out and attract and retain community members to be a part of the planning process.

A Vision for a Transit-Oriented Neighborhood

VISION

To establish the Tidwell Transit Center Area as a safe and distinct neighborhood hub that leverages quality transit for a more livable community

GOALS



A Roadmap to Get There

Implementation Plan



Action Plan

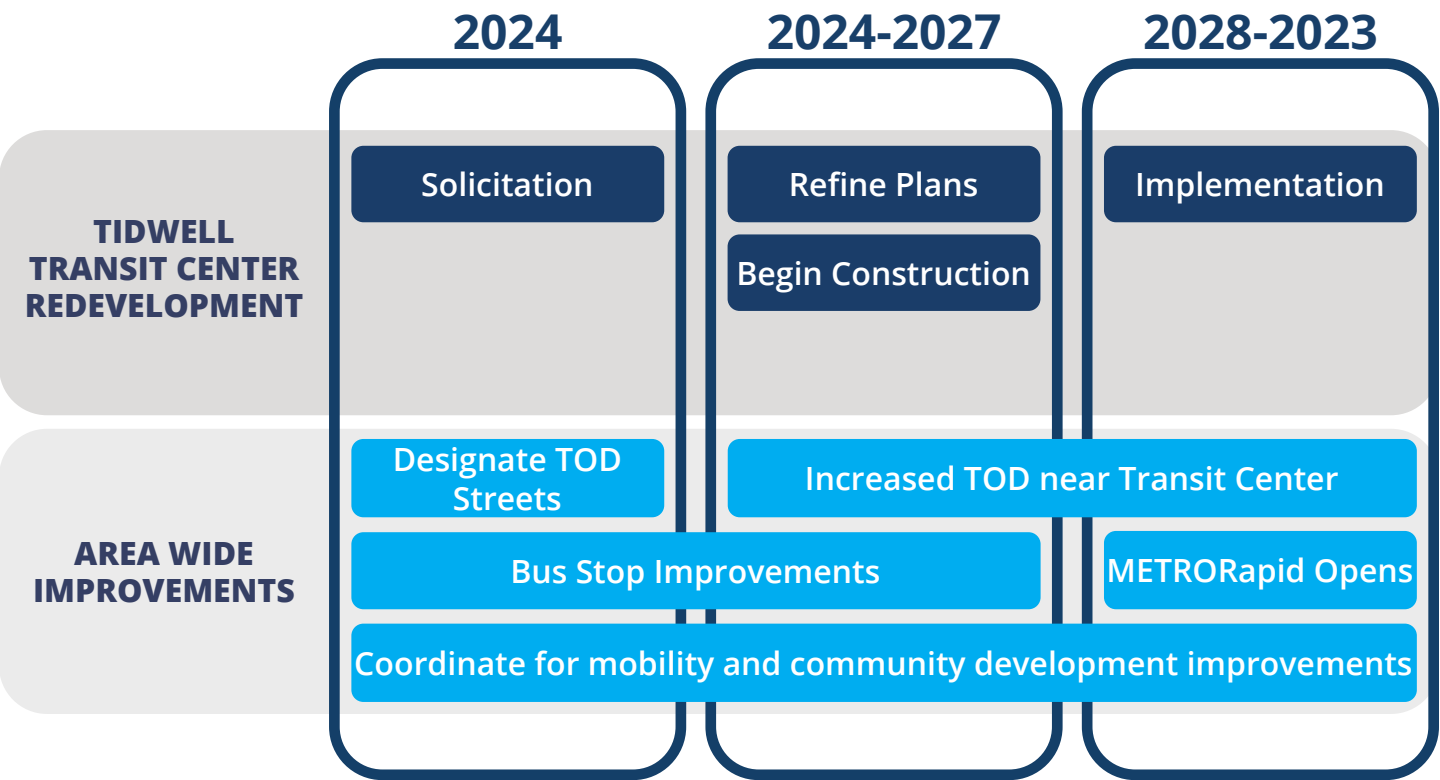
- Actions identified for each strategy
- Short- and long-term actions
- Lead and support roles identified for each action



Transit Center Redevelopment Considerations

- To be carried forward into Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Based on community input and technical analysis

Implementation Timeline



INTRODUCTION

The Opportunity

The Tidwell Transit Center is nestled in the heart of Houston's Eastex-Jensen neighborhood. The TOD Plan serves as an action plan to increase mobility and connectivity to goods and services, support local, sustainable, and resilient investments, and leverage community assets for the Eastex-Jensen Neighborhood and surrounding area.

The TOD Plan offers an opportunity to understand the current environment in and around the Tidwell Transit Center and establish long-standing goals with respect to mobility, housing, economic development and improving quality of life for community members.

The TOD Plan is guided by a community-led process to identify potential ways to transform the Tidwell Transit Center, adjacent properties and streets into a place that aligns with a vision and goals established by METRO and community members.



Tidwell Transit Center

TOD Planning Grant & METRORapid University Corridor

METRO applied for, and successfully received grant funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) "Pilot Program for TOD Planning." This program focuses on improving communities through public transportation investments to integrate land use and transportation planning along fixed guideway or core capacity transit capital investments, such as the proposed METRORapid University Corridor Project, a 25-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that terminates at the Tidwell Transit Center.

These funds are to be applied toward plans and programs set to improve economic development and ridership, support multimodal connectivity and accessibility, improve access and active transportation opportunities while also identifying infrastructure needs, engaging the private sector, and enabling mixed-use development near transit stations.¹



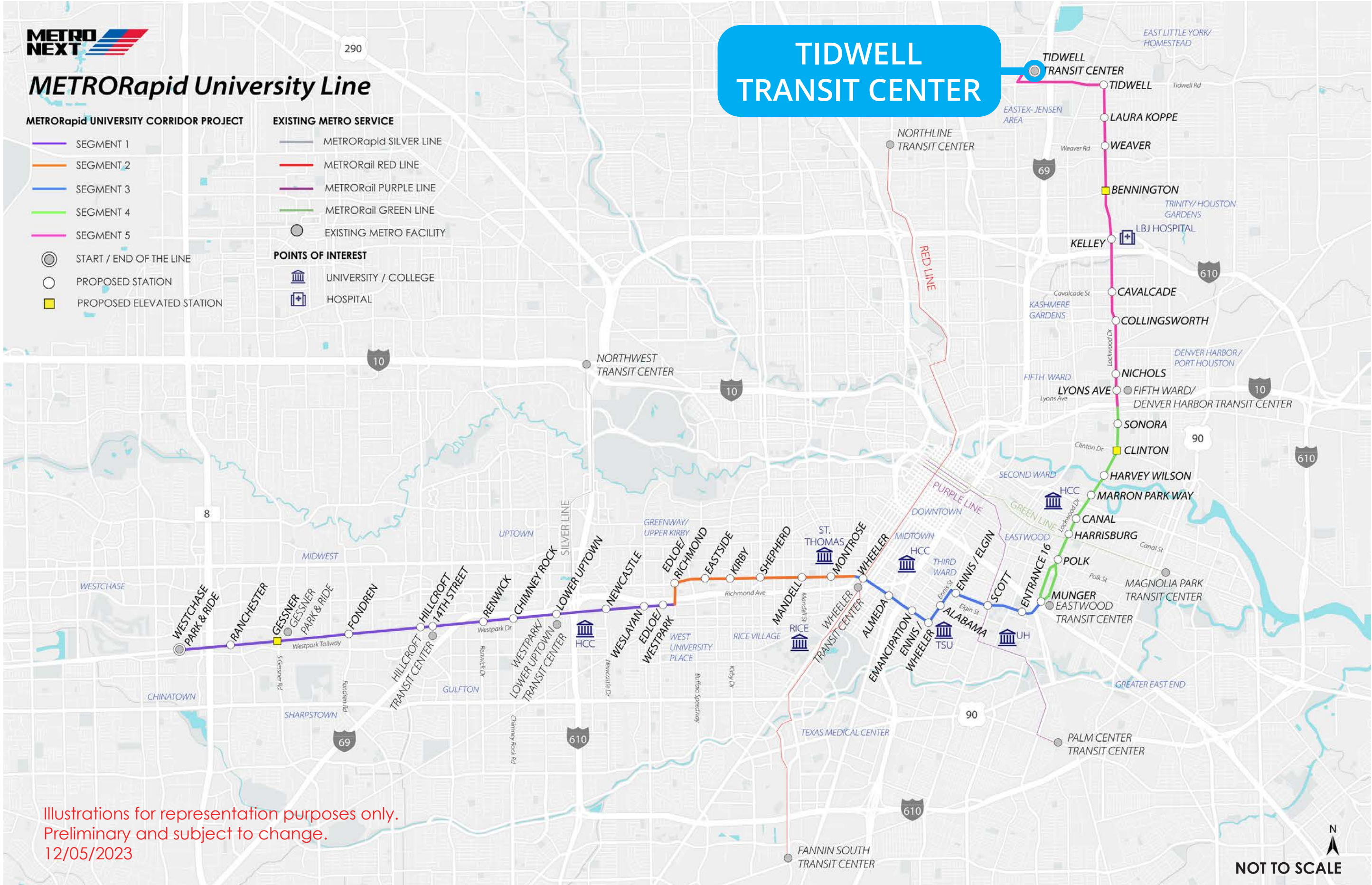
Federal Transit
Administration

The TOD Plan is a direct result of these TOD grant funds and a focused effort to identify ways to leverage high-quality transit investments to bolster community enhancements in and around the Tidwell Transit Center.



Downtown Houston Transit Mall

¹ FTA Pilot Program for TOD Planning available online: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/TODPilot>



METRORapid University Corridor Map

Planning Area

Because the Tidwell Transit Center is connected to the greater Eastex-Jensen neighborhood, the planning area includes a sphere of influence that stretches beyond the typical 0.25-mile radius of the transit center to major roadways, key connection points, and neighborhood enclaves and activity nodes in between.

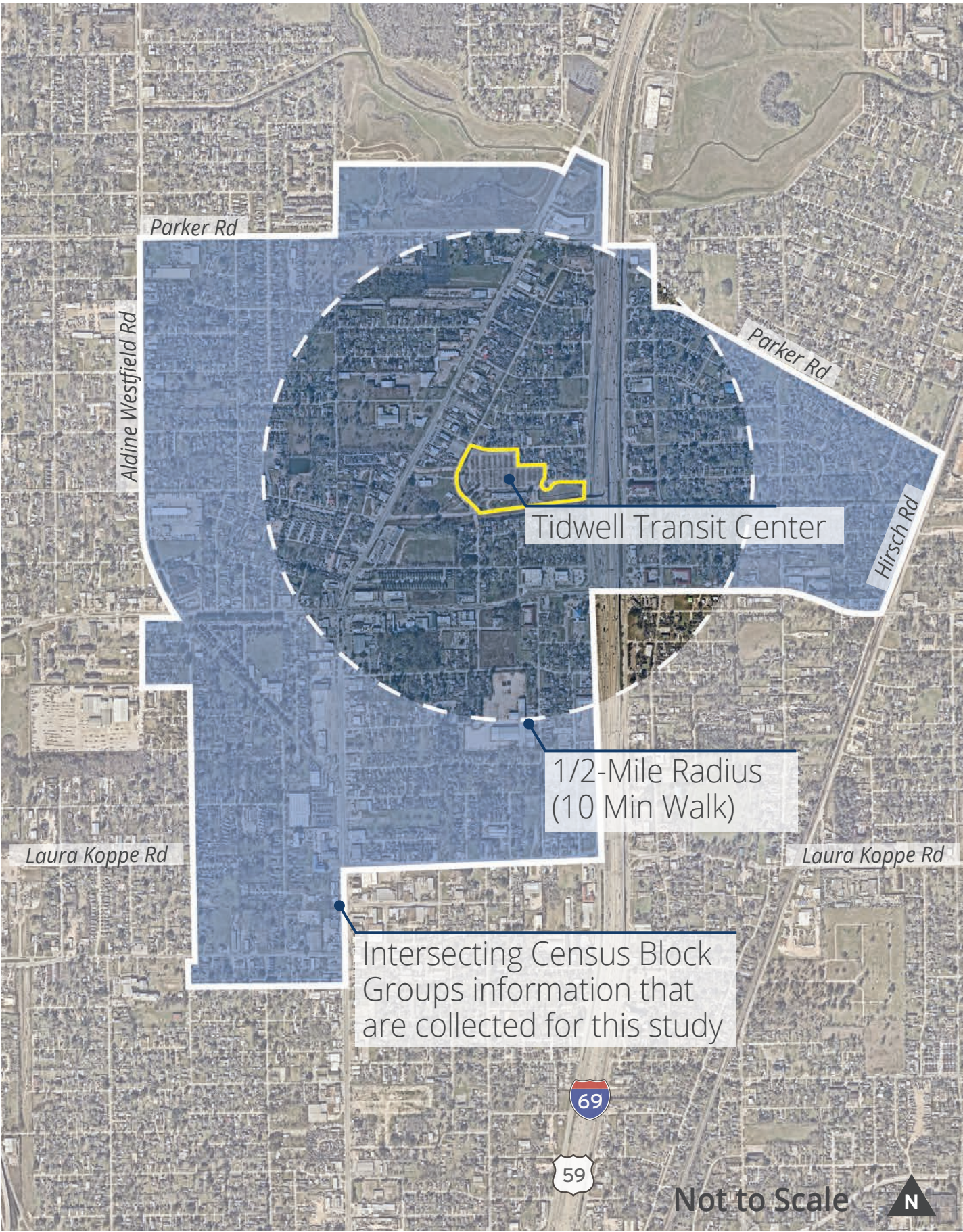
Importantly, the statistics and data analytics, existing and proposed development plans and transportation improvements used to describe current, and future (potential) conditions were based on established datasets and plans that expand beyond the boundaries of the transit center. Expanding the planning area around the Tidwell Transit Center provides greater context of how interconnected the transit center is to the surrounding community.



Open House #1 Participants

“The Tidwell Transit Center can be a one-of-a-kind destination for the Eastex-Jensen Community.”

*- Anibeth Turcios,
Greater Northside Management District
Representative (October 2023)*



Tidwell TOD Planning Area

What is Transit-Oriented Development?

Defining TOD



Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is the term used to refer to compact, mixed-use development near transit. TOD is designed to:

- Make public transit more convenient due to adjacent housing, retail, and employment activity
- Create a sense of community
- Leverage existing infrastructure

TOD has been a fixture of community development for over 40 years and is most prevalent in our urbanized cities and neighborhoods in the U.S. Over the past decades, TOD opportunities have grown significantly around bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors and rail stations—creating concentrations of mixed-use development in both urban and suburban locations.

To date, TOD has taken a new role in promoting greater community benefits. Transit agencies and partner municipalities have transformed the concept of TOD from site-specific developments with limited housing, business, and transportation opportunities to a set of broader actions that advance equity, wealth building, public health, and climate resilience goals. Today, TOD is a means of enabling people of all backgrounds and abilities to experience the benefits of compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development near transit hubs.



TOD by METRORail Red Line Station

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MOBILITY OPTIONS

Increase travel options that improve quality of life and access to needed goods and services



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Implement policies and designs that promote sustainability to the community and enhance the transit system resilience in extreme climate events



SAFETY

Upgrade infrastructure and amenities surrounding transit station to create a safe and comfortable environment for community members



PUBLIC HEALTH

Enhance the built environment to create more walkable and bikeable communities, leading to increased health and wellness



AFFORDABILITY

Promote affordable housing options around transit stations and low cost transportation choices



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Expand access to high-quality jobs, career opportunities, and greater community investments



NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Promote a mix of diverse destinations and attractions that support daily needs of residents and businesses



EQUITY

Prioritize public investment in disadvantaged neighborhoods

Alignment: Plans & Programs

METRO Joint Development and Transit-Oriented Development Program

In late 2022, METRO updated the Joint Development and Transit-Oriented Development (JD/TOD) Policy document that outlines its vision, goals, and policies.

Vision

METRO properties effectively and equitably balance community and mobility needs and anchor compact, mixed-income communities across the region that are connected to each other and other major destinations by reliable, frequent transit service.

Goals

- Enhance the overall customer experience in terms of service and facilities.
- Enhance the value of METRO-owned properties by generating additional community benefits, ridership, and revenue.
- Create and promote equitable TOD, including affordable, workforce and market-rate housing around transit, as a strategy for placemaking, equity, sustainability, and smart growth.
- Collaborate with service area jurisdictions to leverage resources and funding to achieve common goals and objectives related to this Policy and METRO’s overall mission
- Partner with public and private entities to advance and deliver JD/TOD initiatives in the region.
- Stay revenue neutral across METRO’s portfolio of JD projects in accordance with state and federal requirements.



Image source: Greater Houston Partnership (online).

Tidwell TOD Plan Alignment

The TOD plan aligns with established plans and initiatives set forth by the City of Houston, METRO, and other partner agencies.

	Policies and Programs	Tidwell TOD Plan Alignment
Tidwell TOD Plan currently aligns with...	METRO Joint Development / Transit-Oriented Development and Policy	Equitably balance community and mobility needs and anchor development on METRO properties
	Plan Houston	Policies to support existing and future community investments in public transit and land development
	Houston Complete Streets and Transportation Plan	Citywide efforts to provide safe, accessible, convenient streets for people of all abilities and modes
	Houston Bike Plan	City aims to plan, design, construct over 1,800 high-comfort bikeways and expand citywide network
	Houston Vision Zero Program	City commitment to safe streets for all users and eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries
	Houston Affordable Housing Program	Coordination and financing opportunities for affordable housing for neighborhoods and residents
	Houston Active Living Plan	Elevate community input, involvement in program to improve healthier living and access to resources
	Greater Northside Management District	Commercial property owners to collaborate to promote neighborhood revitalization and development
The Tidwell TOD Plan will also align with...	Northside on the Move Plan	Support community-led strategies for future infrastructure and mobility improvements in Greater Northside Management District
	Houston TOD Ordinance / Houston TOD Street Designation	Promote TOD adjacent to METRO facilities and enforce design guidelines for land development. Creates developments adjacent to designated TOD streets to comply with new pedestrian, building, parking standards
	Houston Walkable Places Designation	Encourages development to provide multimodal transportation, high-density, mixed-use opportunities
	Houston Sidewalk Ordinance	Enables the City of Houston to require new developments to meet expanded sidewalk width standards
	H-GAC Urban Houston Framework Plan	Establishes regional effort to coordinate land use development standards with new transit investments

**Note: Policies and programs identified above are not meant to be an exhaustive list and other established documents may apply, as appropriate.*



TOD PLANNING PROCESS

Creating the TOD Plan

The development of the Tidwell TOD Plan was prepared in three phases. From the onset of the project, an engagement plan and outreach strategy were developed to establish a Project Working Group (local representatives) and strategy for all engagement activities. This effort was combined with an evaluation of existing community, market and economy, and transportation conditions. The second phase focused on potential area-wide improvements and conceptual development scenarios for the Tidwell Transit Center based on community input and goals. The final phase centered around key actions and implementation measures to carry goals and strategies forward.



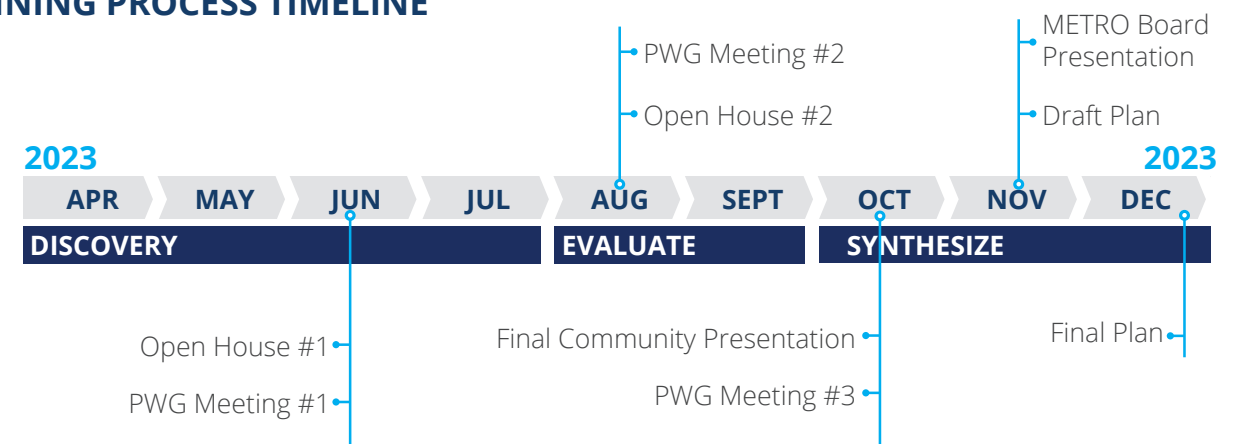
Open house engagement activity

Planning Process

The Tidwell TOD Plan was developed in three major phases, and with each phase including a number of engagement activities and community coordination.

- **Phase 1: Discovery** – focused on initiating the Project Working Group, creating a community engagement plan, and undergoing an assessment of existing conditions in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area (which culminated into a *Briefing Book*, see **Appendix A**).
- **Phase 2: Evaluate** – centered the planning process around a series of open house events, focus group meetings, conversations with the City of Houston, Harris County, and other organizations (e.g., Northside Management District), and METRO to transform key challenges and opportunities into viable area-wide improvements and development concepts for the Tidwell Transit Center property.
- **Phase 3: Synthesize** – the final phase comprising the creation of the Tidwell Transit TOD Plan—memorializing the comprehensive analysis and engagement activities over the 10-month process, and development of implementation strategies for METRO and its partners to carry out after plan adoption.

PLANNING PROCESS TIMELINE



Community Focus

The creation of the Tidwell TOD Plan was a community-led process that brought together neighborhood residents, businesses, community groups, and public agencies, including METRO, City of Houston, and Harris County and several other groups and organizations.

Community input and perspective, such as their lived experience and knowledge of the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood and Tidwell Transit Center environs, provided invaluable information to understanding systemic challenges grappling the community and identifying potential opportunities to improve the Tidwell Transit Center and adjacent street network and properties.

The engagement process started at the onset of the project, beginning in April 2023 through the end of November 2023. This multi-pronged, inclusive approach included the development of a Project Working Group and a series of scheduled open house events for community members. In addition to these engagement events, focus groups were developed to speak to select community members, organizations, businesses, and agencies on specific topics to help guide the planning and design elements of the Tidwell TOD Plan (e.g., housing, economic development, private developers, etc.).

The following provides a description of activities, key takeaways, and input from community members during each round of engagement over the course of the plan development. Please refer to **Appendix B** for a detailed summary of all project engagement coordination and engagement.



Tidwell TOD Plan Open House Meeting



Instagram Announcement



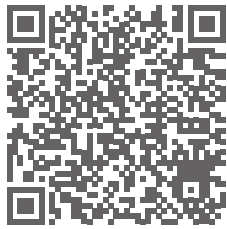
Open House Mailer



Dedicated Tidwell TOD Webpage

Communication Tools

Dedicated Project Website: With an increasingly digital world, a dedicated project website served as the central hub of information for the Tidwell TOD Plan, a virtual home where the community could access detailed project information, updates, surveys, and open house material at their fingertips. For ease of access, direct links and QR codes were provided at open houses.



QR link to the Tidwell TOD Webpage

Street Team Campaigning & Mailers: METRO Street Team met the community where it is and took engagement to the streets. With the idea that person-to-person interaction cannot be underestimated, the Street Team strategically engaged the community during weekday evenings and over weekends to maximize effectiveness. The Street Team was equipped with the community survey on tablets to increase feedback received. Street Team Campaigning directly helped increase the number of surveys received from the focus neighborhood area and allowed the METRO team to develop project material that was an accurate depiction of the community.

Social Media: Social media platforms like Instagram were indispensable tools for engagement, allowing the Tidwell TOD Plan to reach the targeted community with compelling visuals and storytelling. The project team uncovered strategies to maximize the project's impact through the artful use of social media.

Surveys: The voice of the community is invaluable and plays a major role in Tidwell TOD Plan success and effectiveness. A survey was provided at the first and second open house events that involved a structured approach to gather feedback, opinions, and preferences.

Email blast: METRO utilized its comprehensive email address database as a reliable and versatile tool for engagement. Over 7,000 emails were included in each email blasts with a 99% delivery rate. An email blast was sent prior to each open house meeting.

Round 1: Discovery

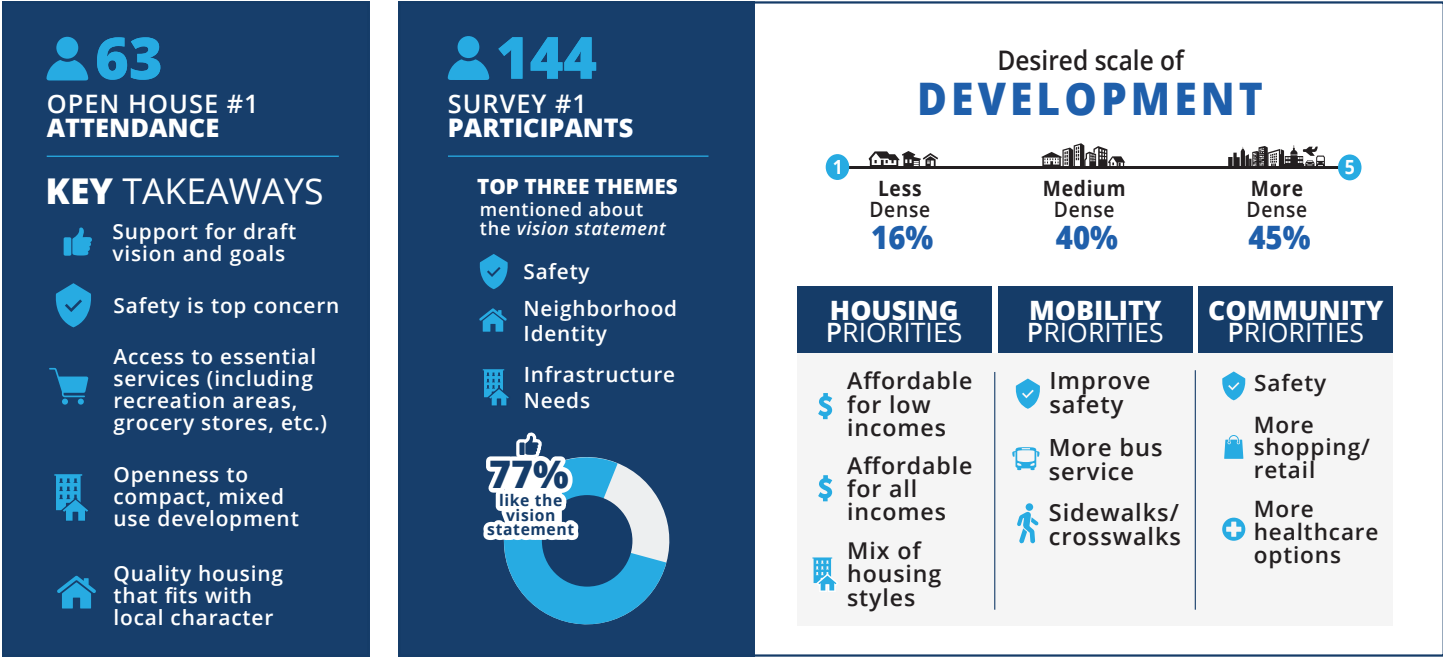
The first round of engagement focused on hosting a meeting with the established Project Working Group, conducting the first open house event, distributing an online (digital) survey, and developing the project webpage and survey to gain public input and insight. This round set the foundation and cadence for all future events and outreach activities.

Key takeaways from these events focused on challenges and opportunities facing the community and how the potential for the redevelopment of the Tidwell Transit Center can be a catalyst for improvements throughout the area. This was also an opportunity to gauge community priorities and development potential for the Tidwell Transit Center.

Importantly, this round of engagement solidified the vision, goals, and strategies for the Tidwell TOD plan. While these were initially developed at the first Project Working Group meeting, these “guiding” statements were socialized at the open house and garnered critical input from community members. This enabled the project team to make refinements and align community needs and interests with the Tidwell TOD Plan and area-wide improvements.



Summary of Round #1 Results



Photos from Open House #1

Round 2: Evaluate

The second round of engagement advanced community input on systemic challenges facing the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood as well as highlighted opportunities for improvements around housing, mobility, economic development, and community space and public services. This effort included two additional Project Working Group meetings, the second open house event, an accompanying survey, and series of focus groups – all of which were centered on area-wide improvements and potential development scenarios on the Tidwell Transit Center property.

With established goals and strategies in mind, the project team provided a step-by-step approach to allow the Project Working Group and community members to understand the overall framework approach to developing the Tidwell Transit Center concepts and area-wide improvements. This effort tied these concepts

to established vision, goals, challenges, and opportunities while creating a spectrum of land development and multimodal improvements based on community input. A digital survey was also distributed to accompany these engagement activities, allowing the public to opine about these initial development concepts for the Tidwell Transit Center.

The community provided a generally positive response to the development concepts for the Tidwell Transit Center and area-wide improvements. All comments were recorded at the open house event, Project Working Group meetings, and via the digital survey.

Please refer to **Appendix C** for detailed plans and illustrations of the Tidwell Transit Center development scenarios presented at the public open house event.

Summary of Round #2 Results

KEY TAKEAWAYS



High interest in “missing middle” housing, including diversity and medium density housing opportunities



High awareness of how new developments will affect seniors with fixed income

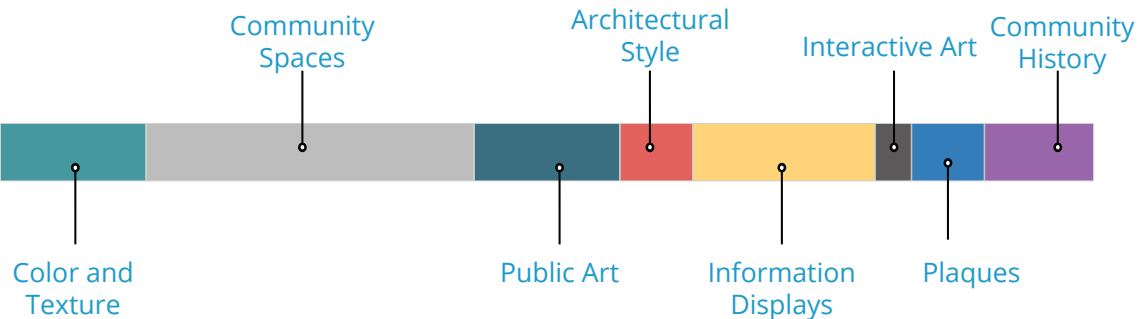


Lack of adequate, safe access to fresh food is a major concern



Major interest in how neighborhood streets will be improved through METRORapid University BRT

How Should We Celebrate Local History and Culture?



What People Liked Most of Tidwell Transit Center Concept Scenarios

For the three development scenarios, the public was able to capture what they liked, disliked, and what needed to be improved, and to rate each scenario by level of favorability (“1” being not favored “5” being very well favored). All three scenarios were favorable. Across all three scenarios, community members liked a community center, recreational space, and resiliency measures to mitigate flooding. The Green & Resilient Scenario was rated higher than the other scenarios.

Green & Resilient

What community members like most:

1. Community center
2. Vast recreational and green spaces
3. Areas to help reduce flood impact

Community Rating
Highly Favorable

Neighborhood Hub

What community members like most:

1. Community center
2. Balance between residential and commercial space
3. Areas for recreational and green space

Community Rating
Favorable

Complete Community

What community members like most:

1. Commercial development along Epsom Street
2. District parking arrangement and flexible community space on top level of parking garage
3. Areas to help reduce flood impact

Community Rating
Favorable

Tidwell Transit Center TOD Scenarios

Round 3: Synthesize

The final round of engagement concentrated on implementation strategies, timeline, and setting a course of action for METRO and its partners to advance the Tidwell TOD Plan and other essential efforts to plan, promote, and finance transportation, economic, and social development for the area.

Community members were able to revisit established vision and goals that led to the development of key strategies and actions. Summaries of the previous open house events were also available to highlight the progress made leading up to the final open house event.

The public was able to provide comments online through the end of November 2023.

Summary of Round #3 Results

During this final round of engagement, there was resounding support for the Tidwell TOD Plan and the identification of tangible actions that METRO and its partners plan to undertake after the plan is finalized.



Photo from Open House #3



Photos from Open House #3



VISION, GOALS & STRATEGIES

Overview

The Tidwell TOD Plan vision, goals, and strategies are a product of robust public engagement with multiple organizations and private entities and comprehensive data analysis. The vision, goals, and strategies were co-created and vetted with community

residents, businesses, and Project Working Group members and serve as a guiding framework for transitioning the area around the Tidwell Transit Center into a transit-oriented community.

VISION

To establish the Tidwell Transit Center Area as a safe and distinct neighborhood hub that leverages quality transit for a more livable community

GOALS



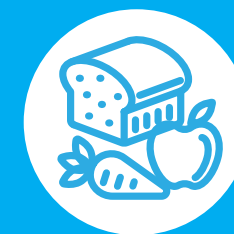
EXPAND HOUSING
OPTIONS



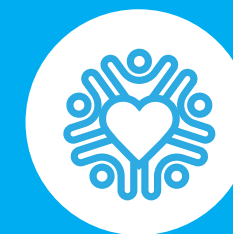
ENHANCE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT



IMPROVE SAFETY AND
CONNECTIVITY



ATTRACT AND
RETAIN ESSENTIAL
NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES



PROMOTE
NEIGHBORHOOD
IDENTITY

Expand Housing Options

The Tidwell TOD Planning Area includes established residential enclaves and is home to over 7,000 residents. The vast majority of the planning area (80%) is comprised of single-family homes situated on small and medium-sized lots with setbacks for front yards and driveways, with a few pockets of multi-family buildings.

Housing stock in the area is relatively older than most homes throughout Houston, with many built in the 1960s or earlier. New housing stock is very limited, with about 14% of homes in the area being built after 2000. The age of housing stock correlates with land and housing values, as nearly 75% of all homes valuing around \$115,000, which is much less than the citywide average of \$258,000.

Systemic barriers to housing opportunities are evident in the area, with limited new or redeveloped housing supply available for first-time homebuyers and limited developer interest due to financial feasibility of new housing investments based on relatively low to very-low median household incomes. However, market rate housing prices and rents are lower than the citywide average, offering opportunities for individuals and families to enter the community. Large swaths of land in the planning area are underdeveloped or vacant, which can also serve as potential priority locations for new residential developments and increased housing diversity.



Townhome



Multi-family unit

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities	Challenges
Land availability for new residential development	Limited available housing stock
Lower market rate housing prices to attract new first-time buyers	Majority older homes and need of repair/renovation
Adequate market conditions for single-family, townhomes, and/or duplex housing types	Slow-growth developer activity
Established neighborhood enclaves	Lack of jobs in area to attract and retain residents

Strategies

- ✓ Encourage development of “missing middle” housing stock, including second dwelling units, townhomes, and multi-unit residential, in a way that is compatible with the existing community
- ✓ Support development of housing in a way that benefits people of all socioeconomic backgrounds in the community



Community input on potential development for the Tidwell Transit Center property and other vacant parcels in the area were in favor of moderately dense housing, with a strong emphasis on affordability for people of all incomes.



Berry Estates. New residential development near Tidwell Transit Center

What is “Missing Middle” Housing?

The City of Houston’s recently adopted Livable Places Ordinance set new policy in action to meet the city’s housing needs in allowing a wider mix of housing developments and housing choices for community members. This initiative started in 2020 to diversify the variety and affordability of homes in Houston, bring forth significant development requirements to improve walkability, affordability, and equity. These changes center around incentives for smaller neighborhood-scale homes, including accessible dwelling units (e.g., garage apartments), courtyard-style developments and other developments of eight units or less.²

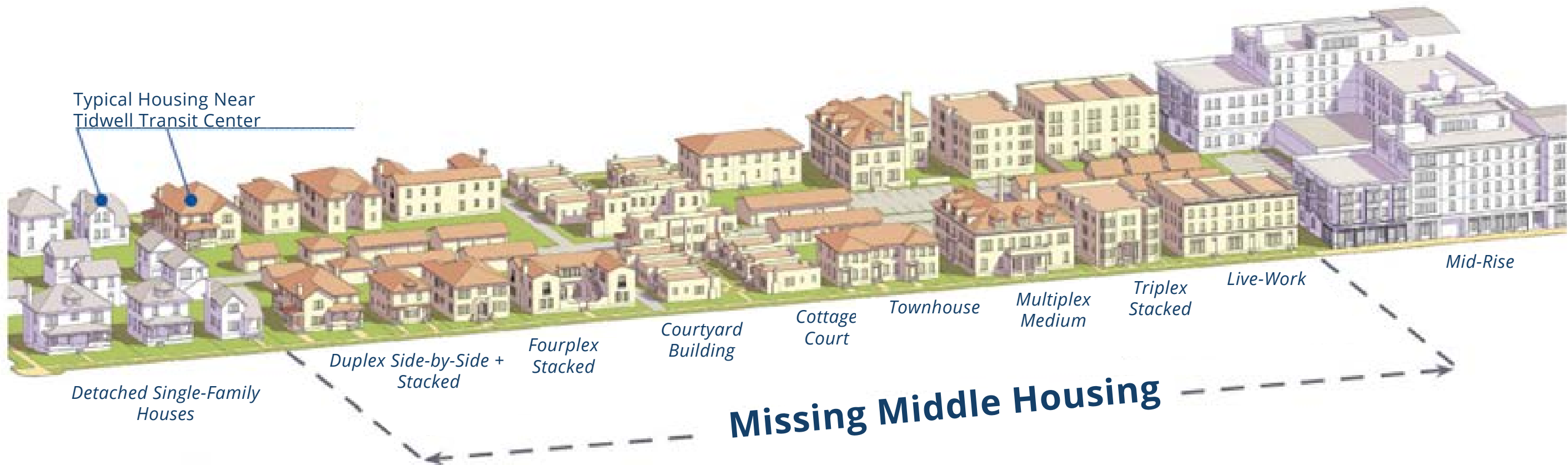
With the land and construction costs for new housing continuing to rise, it is expensive to building residential developments with a small to medium number of units.

In the Tidwell TOD Planning Area, existing housing stock is mostly older single-family homes, which may become more expensive to maintain with age. Additionally, traditional residential development in the area has focused on more single-family, larger-lot homes which generates fewer housing units and compresses owner- or rental housing supply, therefore making it more difficult for first-time homebuyers or those looking to rent in the area. Preserving and building small to mid-sized housing units offers denser and more affordable living opportunities and generates more economic wealth in the area.



Oracle City Homes. Newly built duplexes in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area; examples of “missing middle.”

² More information on the Livable Places Ordinance is available online at: <https://www.letstalkhouston.org/livable-places>



Source: Opticos, 2020

Enhance Economic Development

To quote an established business owner in the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood: “businesses attract businesses.” A stable, diverse ecosystem of commerce is fundamental to the health and wellness of a local economy. Moreover, an area that is self-sustaining while also generating more jobs and attracting more workers is a sign of a positive economic market.

The Tidwell TOD Planning Area and greater neighborhood is largely a “bedroom community” that is supported by a string of local businesses, restaurants, service areas, schools, and parkland. The area has not been a major job generator and is limited in attracting more economic and business diversity beyond accommodation and food services. Additionally, the pace of redevelopment and new economic activity has been considerably slower than shown in other parts of Houston. Recent commercial and retail development activity in the area is limited to a few smaller scale developments.

Pockets of industrial, commercial, and retail businesses in the area are stable with vacancy rates of less than 2%, which is much less

than the citywide average of 5%. However, without new development opportunities it will be difficult for new businesses to arise and establish a foothold in this marketplace. There is much focus and attention on revitalizing Tidwell Road and Jensen Drive as major economic corridors—re-establishing their historic roots as places of commerce and social engagement. With vacant and underutilized land, combined with traditional industrial properties considering selling excess land to commercial and retail space, there are evident areas for more economic growth and job creation. Importantly, the Tidwell TOD can also be a majority catalyst for job generation and attracting new businesses and customers to the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood.

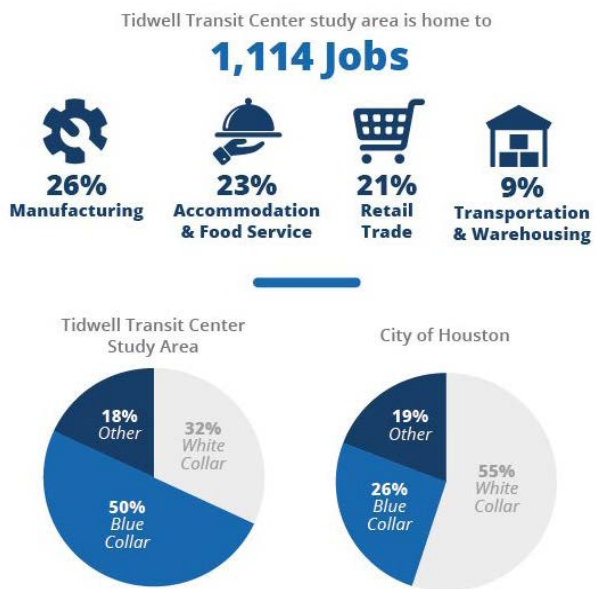
Continued collaboration between business owners, Greater Northside Management District, city, and county departments combined with grant funding can yield a wealth of future opportunities to create more jobs and economic activity in and around the Tidwell TOD Planning Area.

Opportunities and Challenges

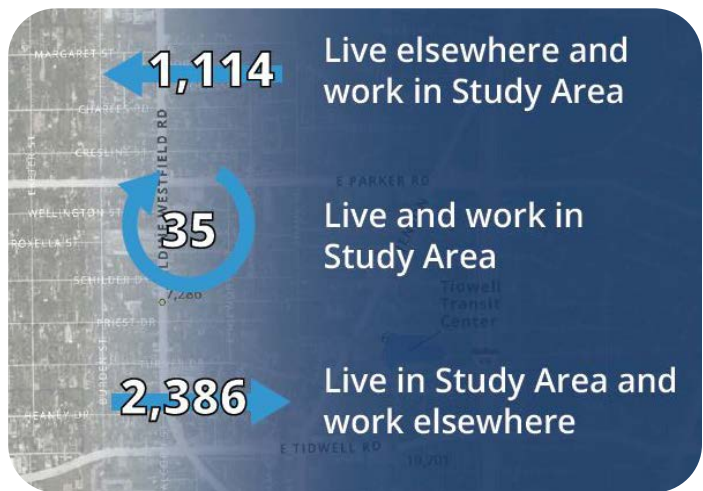
Opportunities	Challenges
Strong contingent of long-time minority-owned business	Stagnant job growth and slow-growth working population
Stable occupancy rates in existing commercial space	Exporting more workers out of the neighborhood than importing workers into the neighborhood
Lower leasing rates for commercial space than most of Houston	Limited existing availability of additional commercial space
Established manufacturing and food/accommodation services market with local and regional influence	No established Opportunity Zone, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, or similar financial support mechanism for local economic development
Land availability (e.g., underutilized, vacant) for new commercial development	Excessive number of gas stations and convenience stores

Strategies

- ✓ Increase jobs in the neighborhood
- ✓ Establish Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road as key economic corridors
- ✓ Attract and retain local-serving commercial services



Source: US Census, Center for Economic Studies, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), OnTheMap 2019.



Planning Area Job Inflow and Outflow, Source: US Census, Center of Economic Studies, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), OnTheMap 2019.



Existing retail and commercial near Tidwell Transit Center



Principles of TOD + Economic Development



1. Build on existing strengths of local economy and businesses

Leverage current policies and initiatives that focus on success of local businesses

2. Invest and expand in public and private infrastructure

Access to transportation, power and utilities, data fiber, telecommunications is fundamental for business to be able to create jobs and economic activity

3. Expand and diversify workforce and skills training

Encourage and incentive business growth and job creation to increase wages and benefits

4. Generate funding mechanisms to invest and support in business growth and job creation

Leverage federal, state, and local funding resources dedicated to increased business activity and development

5. Encourage public-private partnerships and maximize local government responsiveness

Minimize barriers to business development and partnership building to bolster funding and workforce resources

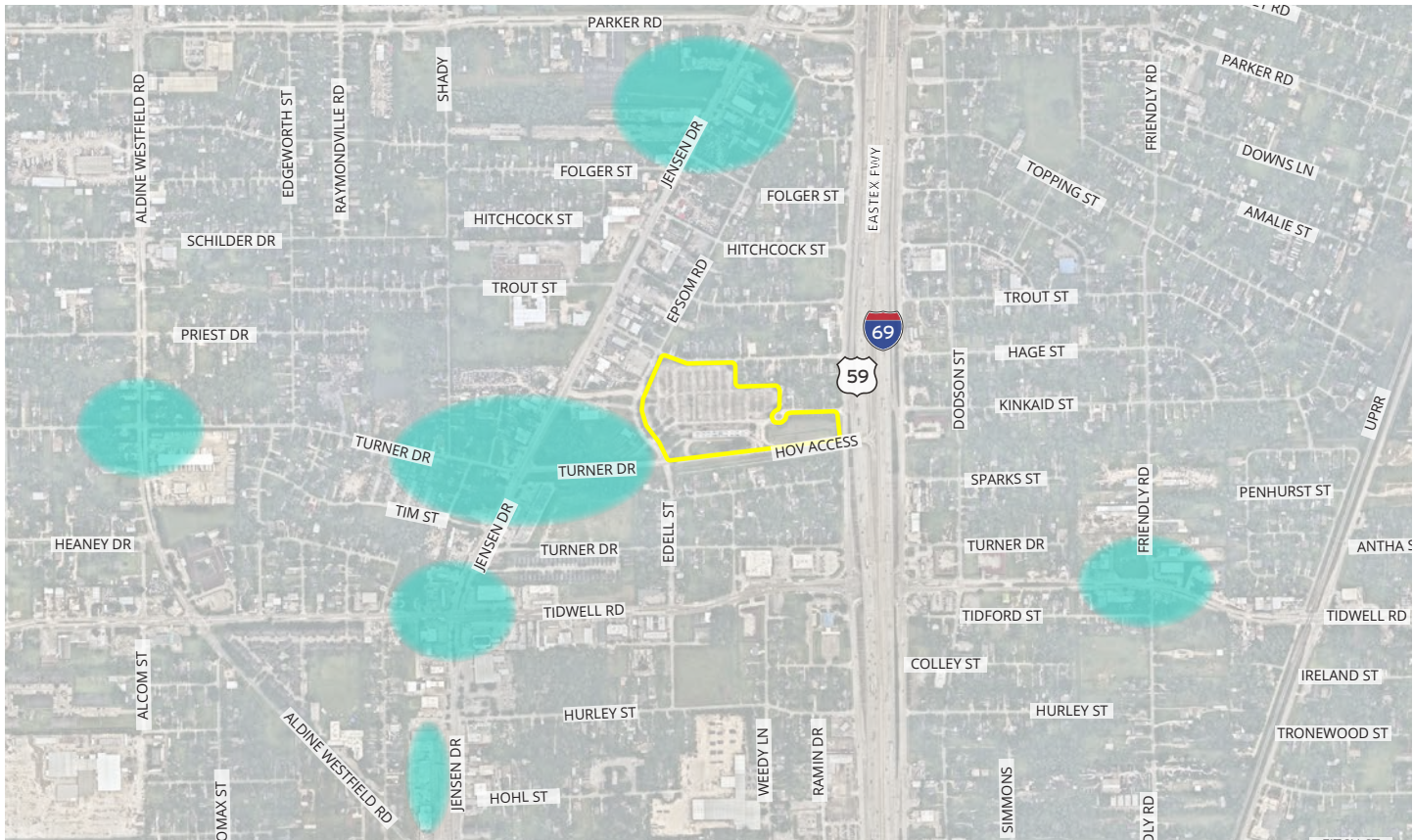
6. Attract and foster emerging industries, entrepreneurship, and increase market competitiveness

Strengthen productivity of existing industries and encourage diversity in local business market

Tidwell Road and Jensen Drive once served as the economic hub of the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood—a cornerstone location of commerce, mobility, and civic activity. Today, these streets have maintained a foothold in hosting local- and regional-serving businesses; however, storefronts are fewer and farther between and have become less diverse over past decades. This area is mostly home to automotive service / repair shops, agricultural and manufacturing buildings, and a few local, “mom-and-pop” restaurants and event halls—all typically separated by large setbacks, driveways, and property lines.

Most parcels over 35 years old and below median value per acre are centered along Jensen Drive and portions of Tidwell Road. In addition, these locations are comprised of large concentrations of vacant land that is greater than a half an acre.

Due to their age and size, these parcels could be preferable locations for new development or redevelopment opportunities for business and job growth in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area.



Tidwell TOD Planing Area - Development Opportunity Areas

Not to Scale

LEGEND

- Opportunity Zone
- Tidwell Transit Center



Improve Safety and Connectivity

A transportation network that provides an abundance of mobility choices for people of all ages and abilities lends itself to a higher quality of living for residents, employees, and visitors—and a more sustainable future. Increased opportunities to move more people, more efficiently within the public right of way can also support more transit-supportive and diverse land use development, generating more jobs and businesses to serve the local neighborhood and larger community.

The Tidwell TOD Planning Area and Eastex-Jensen neighborhood are built upon a foundation of urban streets shaped in a grid-like manner, spanning roughly 200 to 300 feet per block (akin to most downtown environs). However, over the past several decades, neighborhood streets are built for, and predominantly used by automobiles and are inhospitable to anyone not in a vehicle or bus. Community members have indicated a need for a more connected, accessible, safer street network—from routine maintenance to fill potholes and new pedestrian lighting, to street redesign construction to slow vehicles and make it safer to cross the street on foot, bike, wheelchair, or another personal device.

Bringing TOD and two new transit service

lines to the area (bus rapid transit and METRO BOOST Program) is an opportunity to catalyze and transform the street network that exists today. With most streets overbuilt for the car, curb lines can be redrawn, and adjacent public property can be repurposed to support more active and affordable mobility for all community members—linking more people to more places and without the need to drive, park, or even own a car. Importantly, these transit investments can bolster new opportunities to get people to more jobs in the neighborhood and across the entire city.

Leveraging this momentum from planned transportation improvements and ongoing partnership-building with local organizations and neighborhood groups can capture increased funding opportunities to plan, construct and maintain a safer, connected, accessible street network for the Tidwell TOD Planning Area and its surroundings.



Proposed METRO BOOST bus stop enhancements



Protected bike lane

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities	Challenges
METRORapid University Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to bring frequent, high-quality transit connections and new multimodal facilities along Tidwell Road and Jensen Drive	Significant neglect of street and utility maintenance and lack of street lighting
METRO BOOST Program planned along Tidwell Road to increase bus service and enhanced access to transit	Notable crime and public safety concerns on neighborhood streets, including excessive speeding, vagrancy, etc.
Ample right-of-way space on neighborhood streets to accommodate new bikeways, side paths, wider sidewalks, and reduced vehicular conflict points at driveways and intersections	Many streets without adequate space or access to destinations for people on foot, bike, wheelchair, or other personal mobility device (i.e., vulnerable roadway users)
Prioritize funding to advance existing citywide transportation improvement projects	Systemic physical barriers from elevated highway network and divided neighborhood streets

Strategies

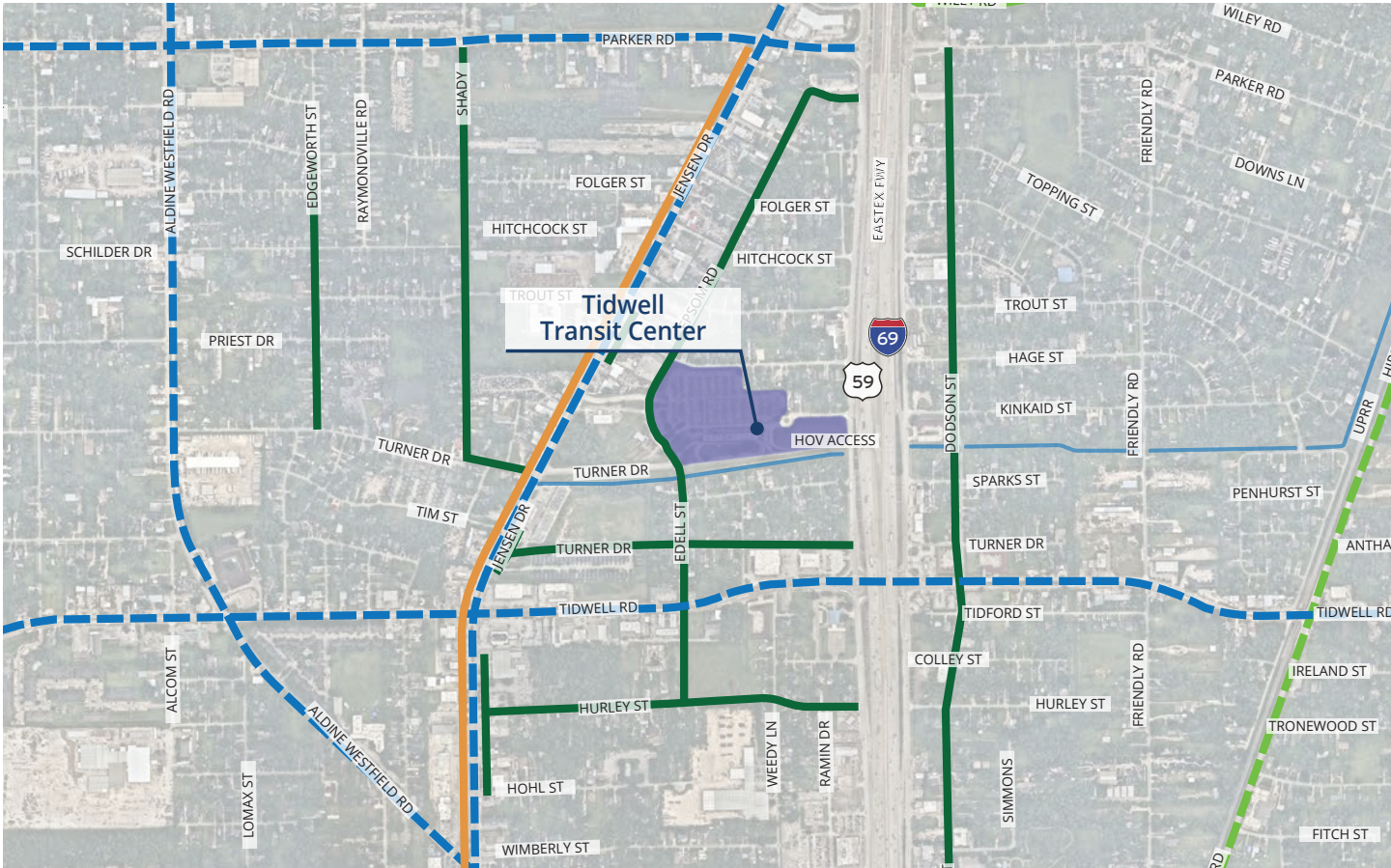
- ✓ Use Tidwell Transit Center redevelopment as opportunity to bolster public safety
- ✓ Improve access to transit for pedestrians and bicyclists
- ✓ Partner with local jurisdictions to redesign streets in a way that fosters neighborhood traffic calming, reduces noise / congestion, and prioritizes vulnerable roadway users
- ✓ Promote long-term maintenance of transportation infrastructure and safety measures
- ✓ Prioritize pedestrian-oriented design in new development



Existing street conditions



Planned Pedestrian and Bike Improvements in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area



Planned Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements - City, County, and Management District

Not to Scale

There are several planned improvements for neighborhood streets. The City of Houston's Bike Plan includes several new bikeways on area streets to create a high-comfort, connected network. The Greater Northside Management District, through their Northside On The Move initiative, is working with the City of Houston, Harris County, and other partners to advance street redesign concepts for several neighborhood streets, including Jensen Drive, south of Tidwell Road.

METRO has identified key first and last-mile connectivity improvements for the future Tidwell Transit Center Station, including new sidewalk improvements along Edell Street, Epsom Street, Turner Drive, and Jensen Drive to allow for pedestrian connections to the station. Additional improvements include bikeways

and trail connections from the station to Shady Lane Park and Halls Bayou Greenway. The Tidwell TOD Plan is an opportunity to advance these plans through planning and design efforts and future financing measures.

LEGEND

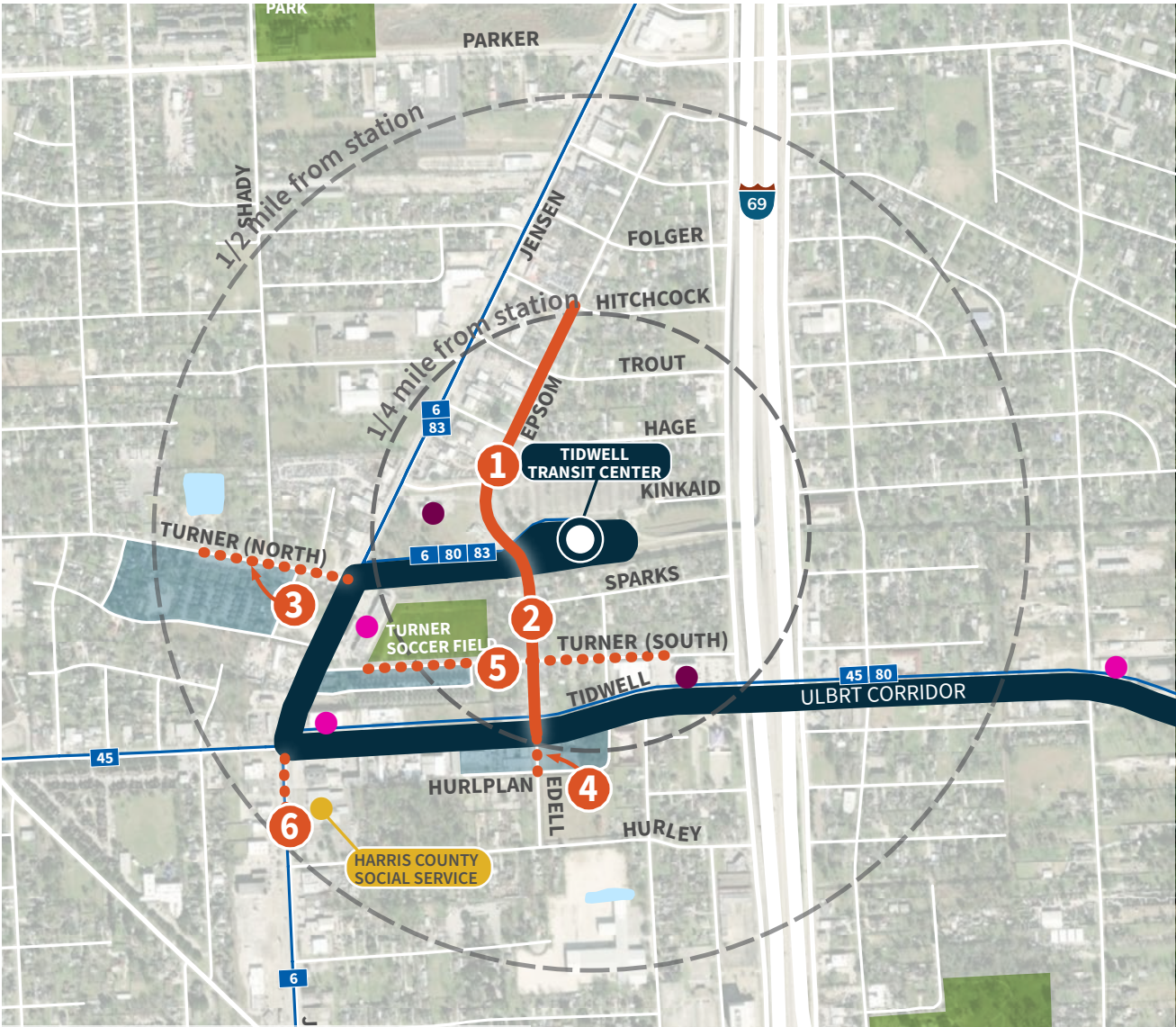
Houston Bike Plan

- Proposed Off-Street
- Proposed On-Street

Northside on the Move

- Jensen Drive Corridor
- Berry Road Corridor
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Tidwell Transit Center

Planned Pedestrian Access Improvements - METRORapid University Corridor



Source: TEI Planning + Design, University Corridor Station Area Plans (February 2023)

Not to Scale

Legend

- Recommended Sidewalk Improvements
- Potential Future Sidewalk Improvements
- Existing Accessible/Programmed Sidewalks
- Improvement at other Stations
- Existing Trails/Side Paths
- Programmed Trails by Others
- Recommended UCBRT Trails
- Frequent METRO Local Bus Lines
- Other METRO Local Bus Lines
- High-Density Residential Census Blocks
- Trail Access Points
- Civic Institutions
- Hospital/Medical Facilities
- Commercial Centers

Sidewalks

Recommended Sidewalk Improvements

Key	Segment	Type of Work	Length
1	Epsom Street Hitchcock Street to Sparks Road	New Construction/ Reconstruction	0.74 miles
2	Edell Street Sparks Road to Tidwell Road	New Construction	0.30 miles

Total 1.04 mi.

Potential Future Sidewalk Improvements

Key	Segment	Type of Work	Length
3	Turner Drive (North) Jensen Drive to Site Access	New Construction	0.18 miles
4	Edell Street Tidwell Road to Hurlplan Street	New Construction	0.09 miles
5	Turner Drive (South) Soccer Park Access to CVS Site Access	New Construction	0.33 miles
6	Jensen Drive Tidwell Road to Site Access	Reconstruction	0.08 miles

Total 0.68 mi.

Implementation Considerations

Tidwell Transit Center is around a quarter of a mile from both Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road, so it is important to make sure there are safe walking and biking infrastructure for UCBRT riders to reach these major corridors. Main portions of Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road will be reconstructed with the UCBRT corridor, but six recommended walking paths above will help riders reach those two streets and the Tidwell TC Station.

Planned Bicycle Access Improvements - METRORapid University Corridor



Source: TEI Planning + Design, University Corridor Station Area Plans (February 2023)

Not to Scale

Legend

- Recommended Bikeways & Trails
- Potential Future Bikeways & Trails
- Other Station Bikeway/Trail Improvements
- Existing BCycle Station
- Proposed BCycle Station
- Schools
- Existing, Programmed & Planned Bikeways
 - Shared On-Street
 - Dedicated On-Street
 - Trail/ Off-Street

Bikeways and Trails

Potential Future Bikeway Improvements

Key	Street/Corridor	Recommendation	Length
1	Shady Lane UCBRT Alignment to Parker Road	Shared On-Street	0.67 miles
2	Shady Lane Parker Road to Halls Bayou Greenway	Shared On-Street; Trail (incl. Bayou bridge)	0.45 miles

Total 1.12 mi.

Sample Shared On-Street Concept



Implementation Considerations

A bikeway along Shady Lane to Parker Road, and ultimately to Halls Bayou Greenway, would offer a connection to the UCBRT Corridor from the north. Shady Lane is a narrow street with open ditch drainage and would therefore only support Shared On-Street improvements. Designs should consider safe crossing treatments at Parker Road. Additionally, a safe crossing of Jensen Drive and a wide side path along the UCBRT alignment on Turner Road would support safe access to the BRT station and should be considered in the corridor design. The segment north of Parker Road would require a bridge over Halls Bayou. METRO may pursue partnerships to support this connection.

Jensen Drive was reviewed for feasibility at this station but is deemed not feasible in the near term. For additional information about those corridors, see Appendix C. A future bikeway along Jensen Drive to Halls Bayou would provide a more direct connection to the BRT station and benefit neighborhood connectivity. A Jensen Drive connection should be considered if funding and/or roadway context changes.

Advancing City's "TOD Streets"

The purpose of the city's TOD Ordinance is to promote development adjacent to METRO light rail and bus rapid transit stations. The ordinance also establishes new design standards to improve walkability and pedestrian realm elements (e.g., wider sidewalks, street furniture and shade, etc.), reform building standards to maintain pedestrian-scaled design features and clearances (including ground-floor activation),

and reducing parking requirements, to reduce traffic demand, better utilize valuable property for other uses, and decrease housing costs. The METRORapid University Corridor project is an opportunity to solidify future design and developments along adjacent streets—all of which will enhance safety, connectivity, and accessibility to transit and key destinations.



WHAT IS A TOD STREET?

A TOD Street is a street classification designated by the Planning and Development Department to encourage dense, walkable, mixed-use development near certain Metro transit stations. A TOD Street is within ½ mile (10 minute walk) walking distance from a transit station and meets certain criteria to promote transit-oriented development.



WHERE DO TOD STREETS APPLY?

New development and redevelopment on private properties along a designated TOD Street shall either comply with or opt-in to the TOD rules, depending on whether the TOD Street is classified as Primary or Secondary.



WHAT DOES A TOD STREET ACCOMPLISH?

New TOD streets help to create a more spacious and continuous pedestrian environment, encourage more thoughtful and organized site design, and promote a pedestrian-first approach to building design.



Rethink. Redesign. Repurpose Neighborhood Streets

The redevelopment of the Tidwell Transit Center along with planned bus rapid transit and METRO BOOST program on area streets will further knit multimodal enhancements across the entire neighborhood. Transforming area-wide streets that are consistent with Houston’s Complete Streets efforts will ensure that new construction or reconstruction of

neighborhood streets will be designed for people, including pedestrian-friendly roadways with slower traffic, wider sidewalks, safer intersection crossings, bike connections and make traveling more comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.

Elements of Complete Streets: Creating Space for People and Places



THE STREET SYSTEM CAN INCLUDE VARIOUS STREETScape ELEMENTS:

SIDEWALKS	TRANSIT STOPS AND STATIONS	PUBLIC ART	BIKE LANES AND CAR LANES	WAYFINDING
TREES	PEDESTRIAN SCALE	FAMILY-FRIENDLY AMENITIES	CROSSWALKS	ROUNDBABOUTS
SHADE	LIGHTING	PET-FRIENDLY AMENITIES	TRAFFIC SIGNALS	TRAFFIC CALMING FEATURES
STREET FURNITURE	PLANTERS	CHARGING STATIONS	PEDESTRIAN RAMPS	PUBLIC SPACE
BUILDING FACADES	BANNERS	OUTDOOR DINING		GREEN SPACE
PARKING FOR CARS, BIKES, SCOOTERS, ETC.	TRASH RECEPTACLES	ALLEYS	...and elements that may be unique to your street	
LAMPPOSTS	WATER FEATURES	PATHWAYS		

THE STREET SYSTEM CAN ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES:

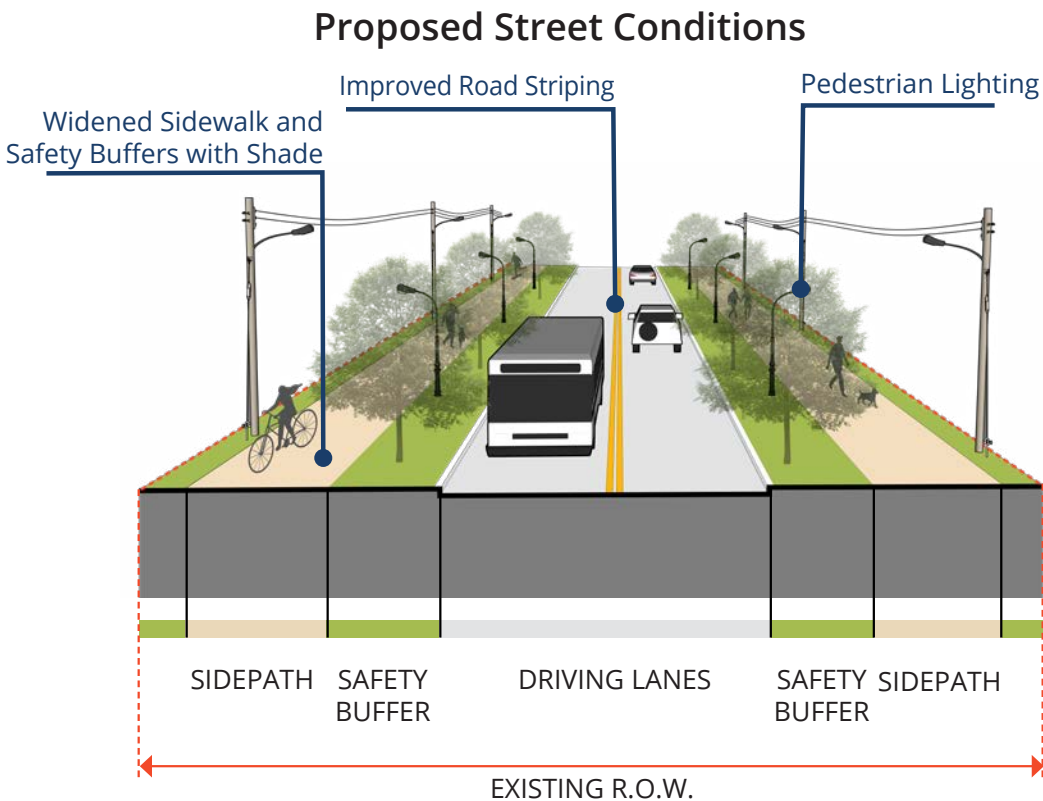
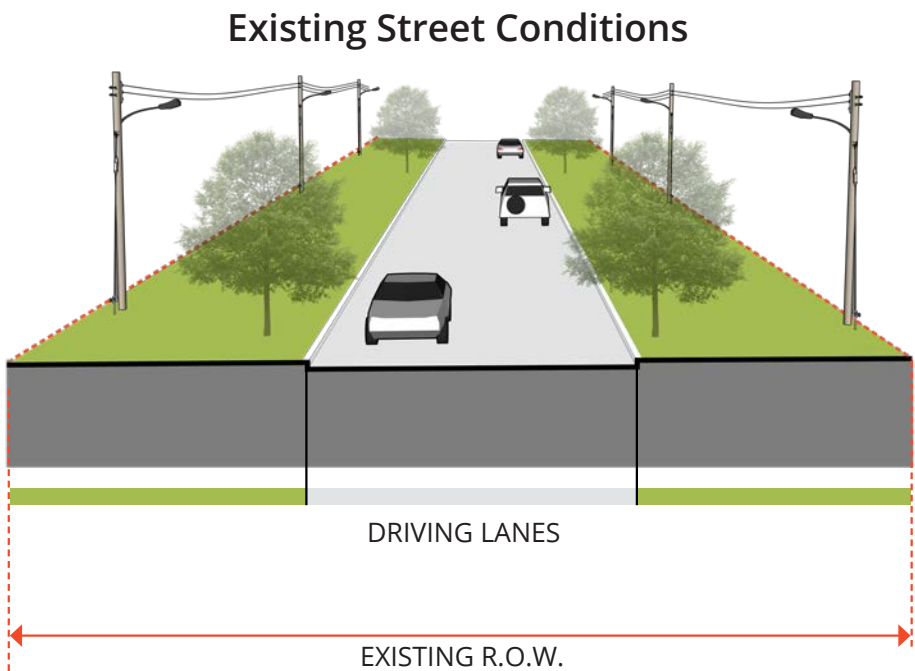
MOVING PEOPLE ON FEET AND WHEELS	ARRIVING, DEPARTING, OR STAYING	PLAYING
DELIVERING GOODS	STROLLING	SHOPPING
PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES	GAZING	WORKING
	EXERCISING	CIVIC PARTICIPATION
	SOCIALIZING	SOCIALIZING
	...and activities that may be unique to your street	

THE STREET SYSTEM CAN ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENT MODES OF TRANSPORTATION:

PEDESTRIANS	TRANSIT OPTIONS (SHUTTLES, BUSES, TRAINS, BRT)
WHEELCHAIRS	SCOOTERS
BIKES	SKATEBOARDS
CARS	
TRUCKS AND DELIVERY VEHICLES	
...and modes that may be unique to your street	

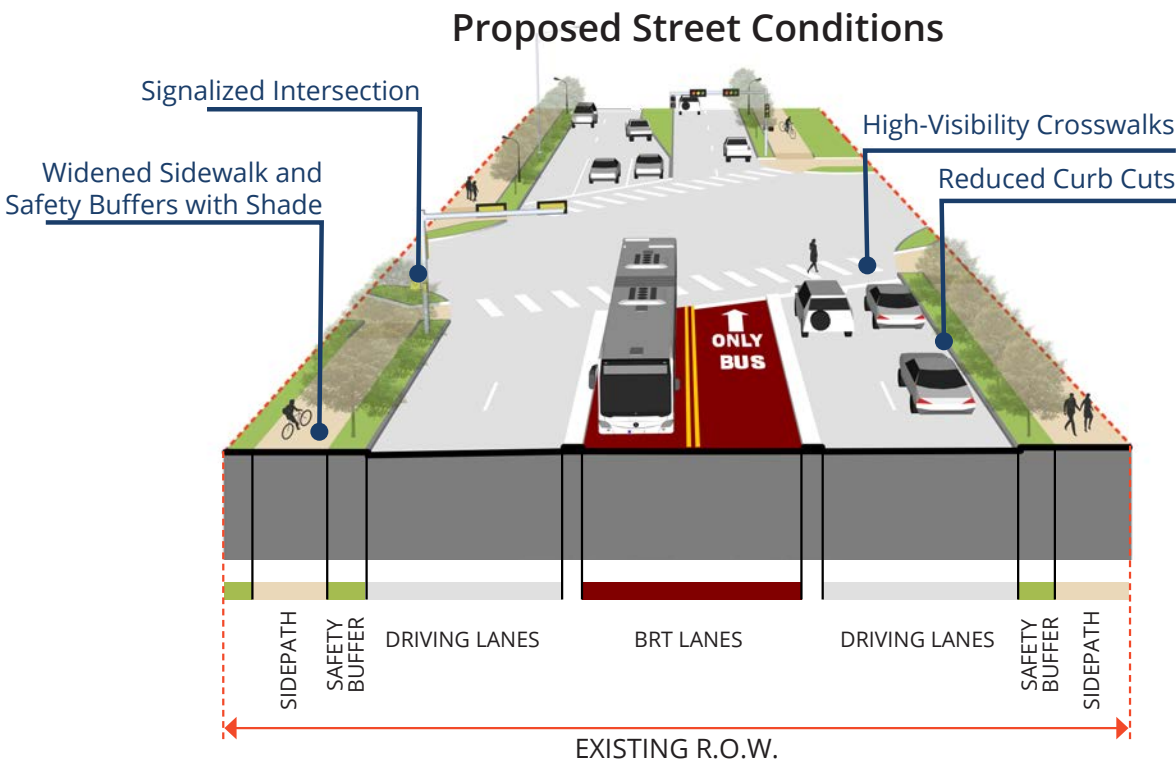
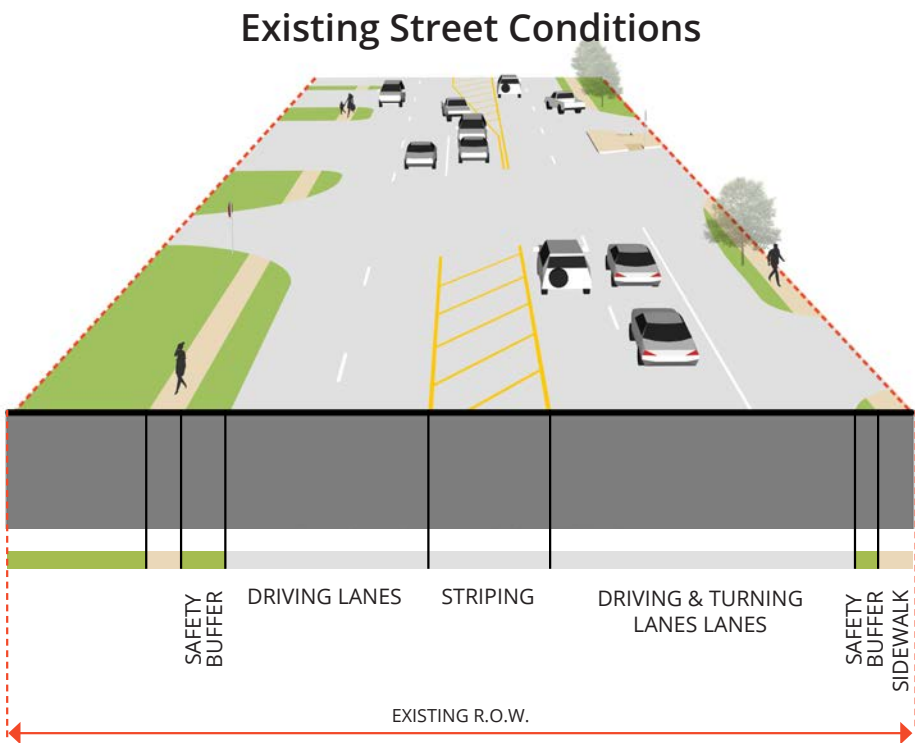
Reimagining Edell St (north of Tidwell Rd)

There is opportunity to maintain the residential character of Edell Street while repurposing the street as a key north-south connection to the Tidwell Transit Center and Tidwell Road. New street features, such as pedestrian-scaled lighting, road striping and delineation, and widened sidewalks with street trees can create a more connected, safer pedestrian experience all within the existing right of way. The following is a conceptual rendering. Additional, refined design plans will be required before a new street design can be finalized and approved by the City of Houston.



Reimagining Tidwell Road (west of Jensen Drive)

The introduction of the METRORapid University BRT along Tidwell Road repurposes Tidwell Road from a place of moving of cars to moving people—allowing this street to be the key east-west multimodal corridor in the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood. High-visibility crosswalks, new signals with pedestrian treatments, wider sidewalks and landscape treatments, and reducing driveways will make it more comfortable and safer to walk or bike in the area. The following is a conceptual rendering and additional, refined design plans will be required before a new street design can be finalized and approved by the City of Houston.





Attract & Retain Essential Neighborhood Services

The Eastex-Jensen neighborhood is rich in culture and home to many residents with deep familial, generational roots. The local businesses in the area largely reflect the diversity of its people, including several ethnic restaurants and entertainment venues for large gatherings, including a significant presence of event hall space for family reunions, birthdays, weddings, and other occasions.

Essential services generally include grocery stores with healthy food options, schools, financial institutions (e.g., banks), hospitals, medical clinics and pharmacies, public safety (e.g., police, fire, emergency) and places to recreate, exercise, and socialize for persons of all ages and abilities.

The stagnant pace of population and job growth, combined with lower consumer spending power over the years has resulted in fewer of these types of businesses. Other market pressures, such as limited tax incentives and lack of housing density, discourage major commercial and retail anchors to invest in the area. This puts enormous strain on residents, especially senior citizens, and youth, in not having adequate access to these services. Further, the auto-centric street network of the area requires

nearly all residents to drive their own vehicle to get around, placing more burden on those who cannot drive or afford to own a vehicle.

There is an opportunity to redevelop underutilized and vacant parcels in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area that may be repurposed to house essential services. Given the favorable commercial leasing pricing in the area (which is less than the citywide average), this can attract potential new businesses that are scalable to the area, such as micro-sized marketplaces, such as La Michoacana, El Ahorro, and El Rancho that exist today. Vacant commercial space in strip malls can also be identified as viable locations for new businesses. Redevelopment of the Tidwell Transit Center also offers an opportunity to consider mixed-use development to bring more diverse, local-serving business to the area and activating the area with new public open space and much-needed parkland.



The Houston Parks & Recreation Department (HPARD) Master Plan acknowledged there is a parkland shortage within the Tidwell TOD Planning Area and 11 additional acres are needed to meet future needs. The area is considered as “very high need” and is currently deficient in playgrounds, trails, volleyball courts, dog parks, skate parks, community centers, and pools.

(Source: HPARD Master Plan, <https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/pdfs/2015/2015MasterPlan.pdf>)

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities	Challenges
Favorable ground-lease pricing to attract new businesses into existing strip malls and commercial buildings	Lower area-wide resident consumer buying power may be high risk to developers and new businesses
Land availability (e.g., underutilized, vacant) for new commercial development	Lack of existing housing density difficult for major grocer viability
Allow for more density along major corridors (e.g., Jensen Drive, Tidwell Road, Aldine Westfield Road, etc.)	Negative perceptions around vagrancy, homelessness, safety, and cleanliness
Focus on micro-sized grocery markets and minority-owned chains	Major barriers to safe and comfortable neighborhood and pedestrian connectivity

Strategies

- ✓ Attract and maintain quality essential services, such as grocery stores with healthy food options, pharmacies, clinics and medical services, public safety, and recreational space with community-based programs for people of all ages and abilities.
- ✓ Leverage new neighborhood services to attract more residents and businesses to the community while retaining long-term residents and employees



Fiesta Mart Grocery Store, a major source of fresh food and produce located north of Tidwell TOD Planning Area



Veterans Memorial Park, located west of the Tidwell TOD Planning Area

Opportunity Zones in Action



**East River Development
(Greater Fifth Ward)**

Located at 100 Jensen Drive, the East River Development is a 150-acre redevelopment site that will be constructed in five phases.

The redevelopment will comprise over 9 million square feet of office space, over 500,000 square feet of retail, 475 single-family homes and more than 1,400 multifamily units and 12 acres of open space.

Source: <https://www.eastriverhtx.com/explore>

Image: <https://www.loopnet.com/Listing/100->



**Forth at Navigation
(Second Ward)**

Located at 2404 Navigation Boulevard, the Forth at Navigation Development is a 300-unit multifamily apartment complex, offering studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom units.

Source: <https://www.liveatforth.com/>

Image: <https://www.facebook.com/liveatforth/>



**The Ironworks
(Greater Eastwood)**

Located at 800 Milby Street and a former oil field manufacturing plant, this building will be repurposed for workspace and commercial uses, including retail and restaurants.

Source and Image: <https://kaldis.com/project/ironworks/>

A Need for Walkable Opportunities to Essential Services

While grocery stores, healthcare clinics, parks, and financial institutions exist throughout the Tidwell TOD Planning Area, most of these destinations are not within a convenient, comfortable, or safe walking distance from residents.

Nearly 60% of the community can generally walk to parks and open space areas; however, between 75% to 90% of all residents in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area live more than a

10-minute walk to a bank, grocery store, or healthcare services.

Placing more of these essential services within proximity to residents can help increase accessibility for more people of all ages and abilities, while also supporting healthier, active living and generate increased economic activity.



Parks / Open Space



Grocery Stores

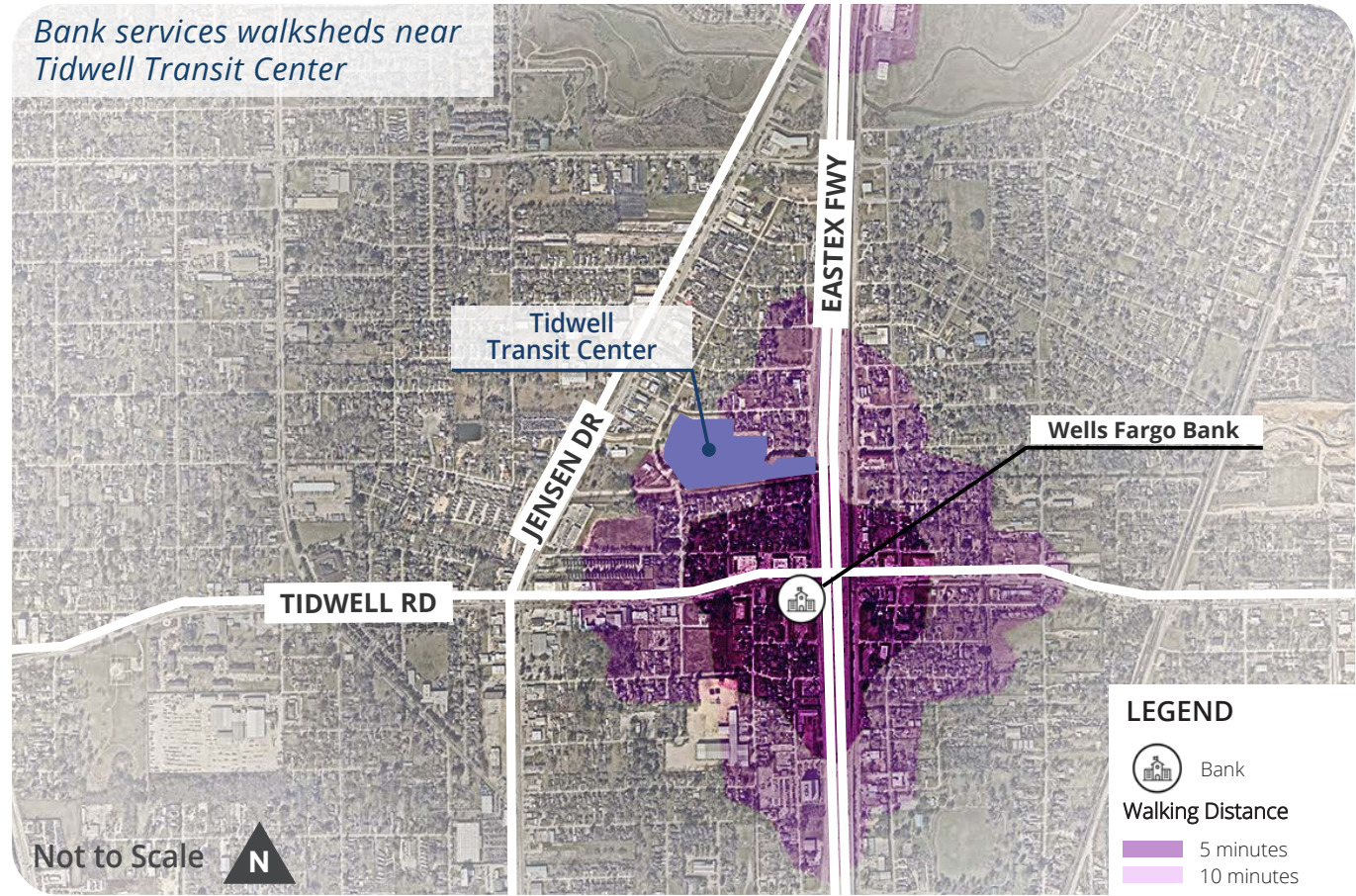
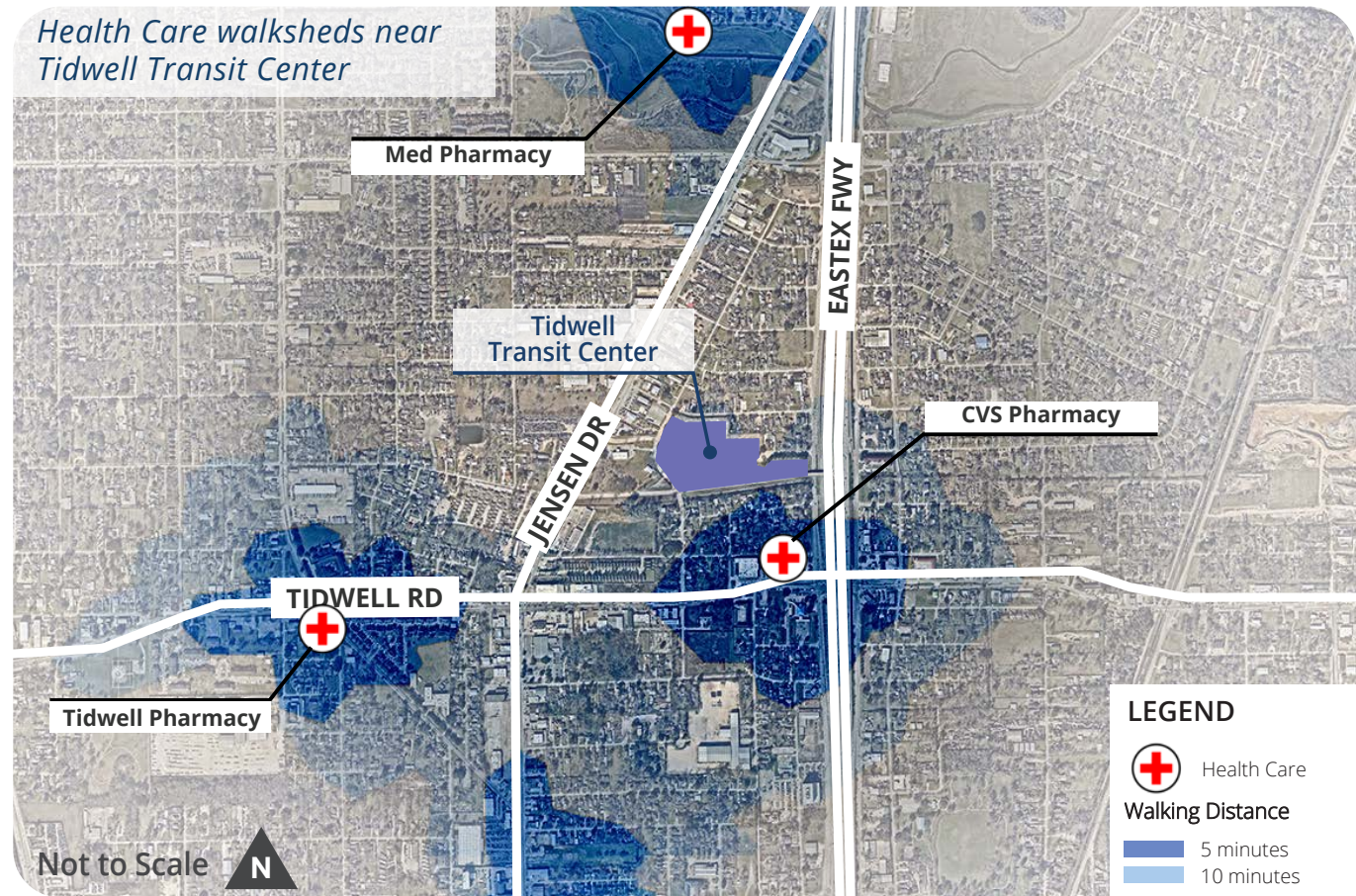
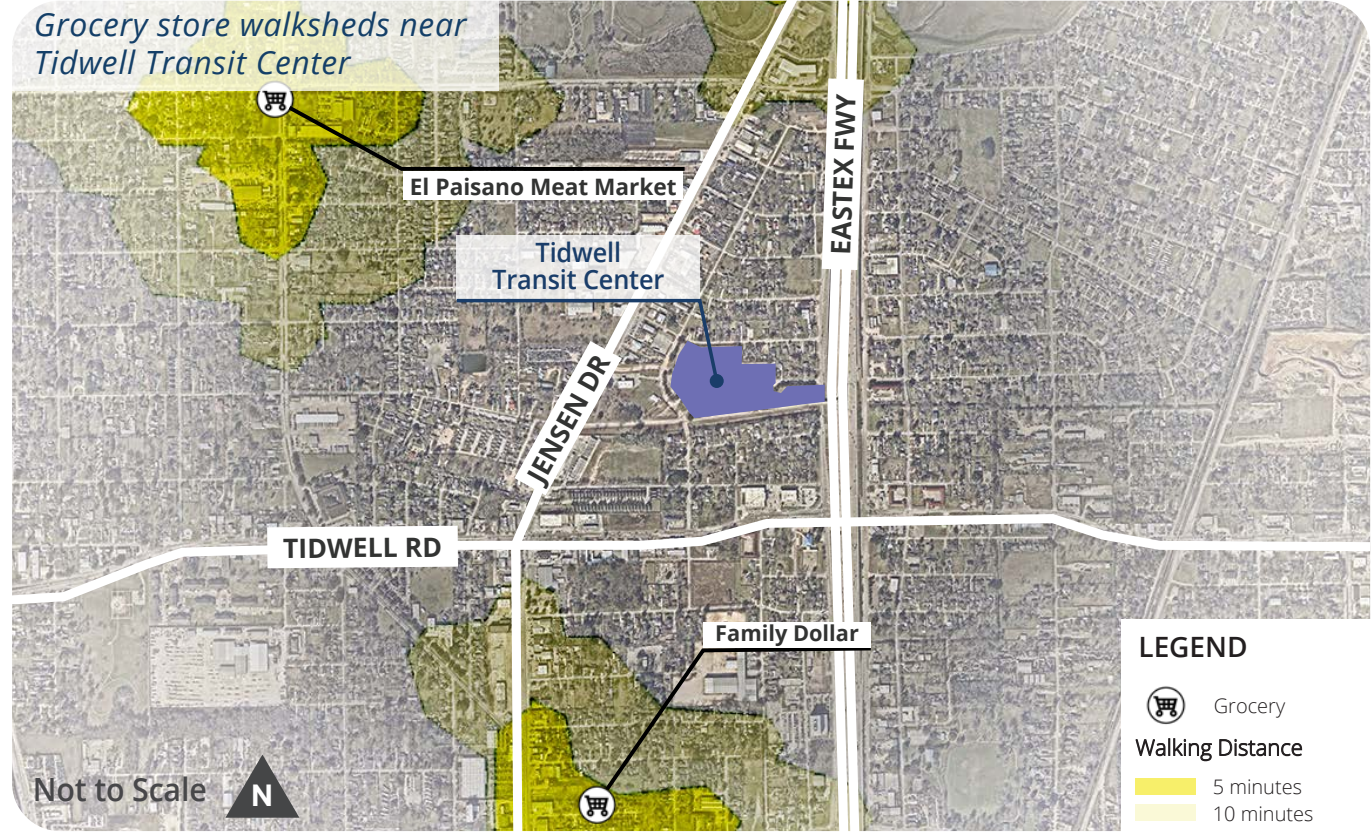
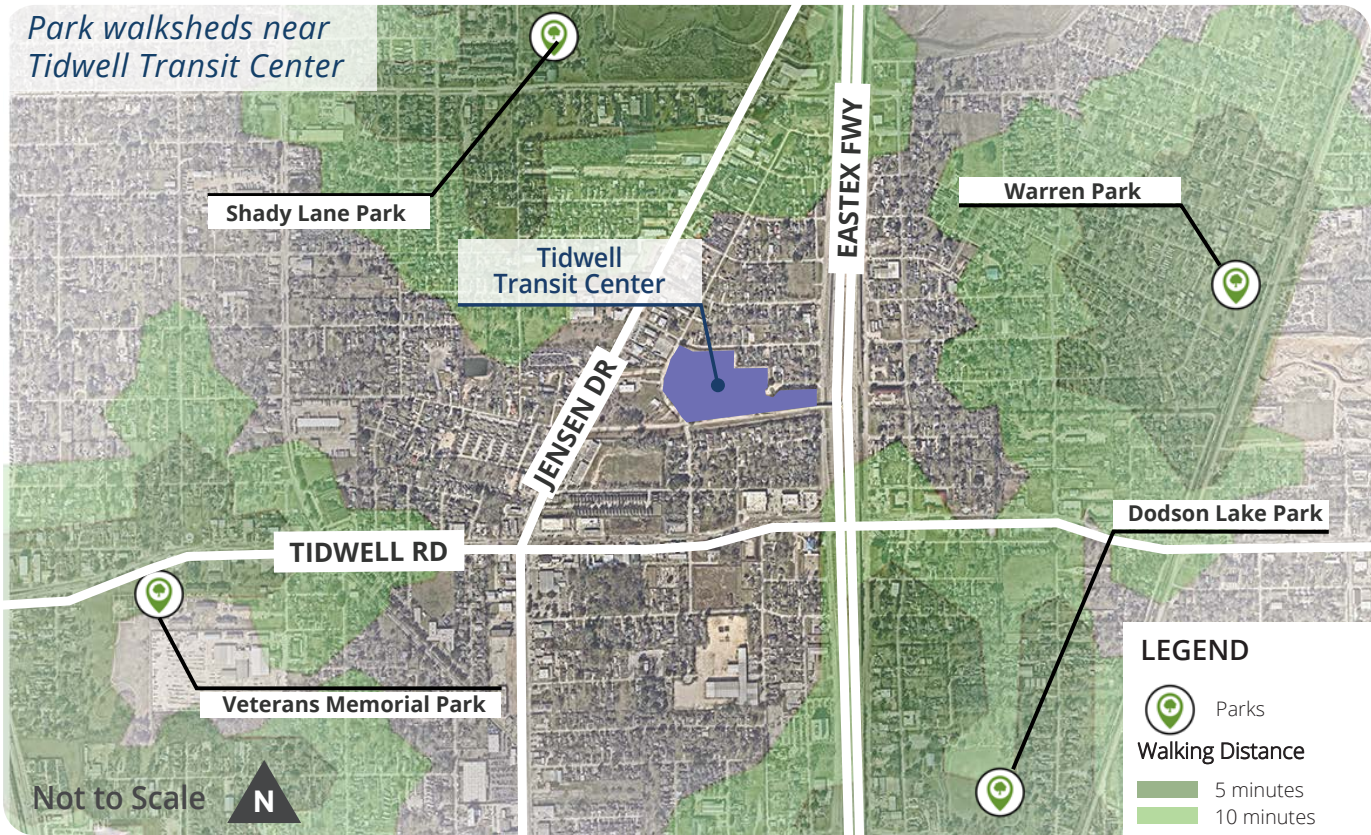


Health Care Services



Banking / Financial Services

Neighborhood Services Walkshed Maps



Promote Neighborhood Identity

The preservation and promotion of the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood’s cultural heritage is central to all developments and plans in the area that are focused on housing, economic generation and attraction, equitable mobility, and public spaces and neighborhood amenities.

The role of placemaking is to identify opportunities to create something new within the public realm to highlight the area’s unique history and cultural heritage, and a physical place to host a variety of social engagement activities. As a complementary and equal measure, placekeeping is designed to ensure long-term efforts are made with existing and future resources to upkeep and maintain culturally rich destinations for the community.

Residents of the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood have a continued desire for more places to congregate, socialize, host community events, and create a place of cultural significance that is a reflection of themselves. Moreover, community members want to overcome the neighborhood’s image of “a community represented by concrete” , but rather envision a future of a neighborhood of more color and vegetation—a place to celebrate its long history and a safe place for generations to come.

While parks, open space, and community centers exist in and around the Tidwell TOD Planning Area, the actual or perceived limitations of police enforcement, excessive vagrancy, inadequate street connections and lighting, and unmanaged street maintenance have hindered efforts to create and sustain public spaces, plazas, and other places of cultural significance.

Funding efforts to support existing programs, such as the Greater Northside Management District’s “Artist Meet and Greet”, Murals

Program and new pocket parks , are required to sustain existing programs and expand services into a long-standing community program, and future funding is never guaranteed.

The redevelopment of the Tidwell Transit Center and presence of vacant or underutilized parcels in the area offer opportunities to reactivate these spaces as public amenities. Repurposing vacant storefronts can also generate new places for cultural arts and related programs. Establishing new financial mechanisms, through development and project funding and philanthropic organizations, can also establish a sustainable public arts program and provide inclusive spaces for signature art installations, murals, and events while also supporting local businesses, youth programs, and attract more economic investments.



Local Houston art programs

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities	Challenges
An established arts program supported by Greater Northside Management District	Limited funding opportunities to expand upon existing programs
Land availability (e.g., underutilized, vacant) for new spaces for arts programs and educational services, and other cultural event activities	Limited coordination with small businesses and property owners to advance existing programs or finance art into infrastructure, wayfinding, street furniture or other higher quality pedestrian realm improvements
Tidwell Transit Center redevelopment to offer open space dedicated to public parks, murals, and other social events, including “art walks” and festivals	Inadequate street lighting, connectivity, unmanaged or unmaintained open space areas
Implementation of METRO Urban Design Guidelines and City of Houston TOD Street design requirements to support artist street redesign elements, such as wayfinding and gateway features	Actual or perception of high crime in the area making unsafe for residents to frequent existing parkland and open space areas, especially in the evening hours

Strategies

- ✓ Enable placemaking opportunities to bring people together and support cultural significance of the community.
- ✓ Foster placekeeping opportunities to prioritize equity and collaboration with current resources of the community.



Billboard fostering Eastex-Jensen neighborhood identity

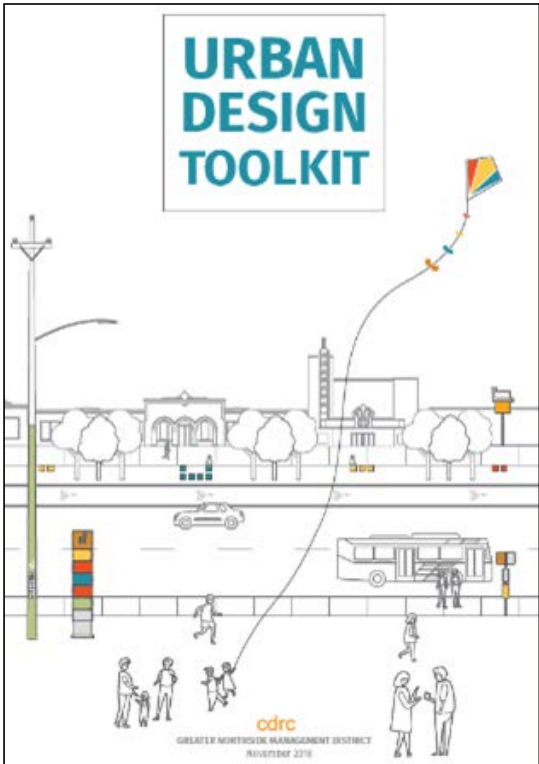
⁶ Quote from Project Working Group participant and community representative.

⁷ More information on Greater Northside Management District Urban Design Projects available online at: <http://www.greaternorthsidedistrict.org/CapitalProjects.shtml>

Advancing Place-Based Initiatives in Eastex-Jensen Neighborhood

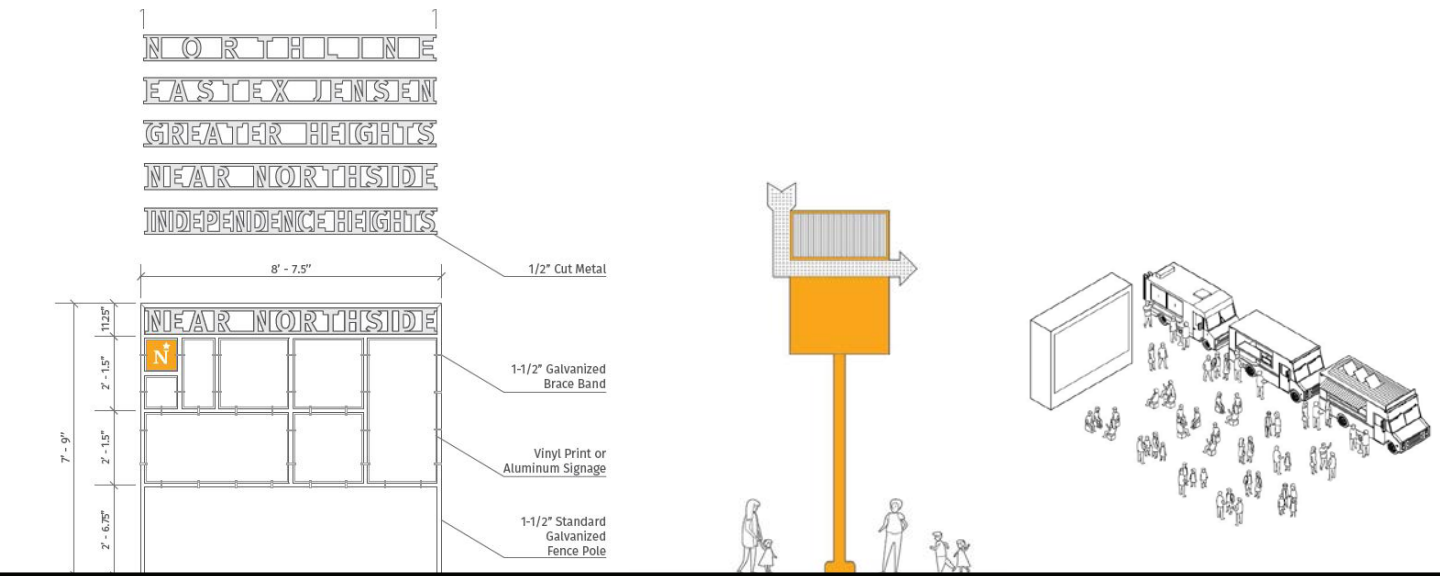
In 2018, the Greater Northside Management District published its Urban Design Toolkit which included a series of contextual strategies focused on ‘place-based’ measures to strengthen the identity of the district. These included physical amenities to activate and regenerate public spaces, economic development, and pedestrian-scaled street connectivity.

The Tidwell TOD Plan is an opportunity to continue these efforts to identify, plan, fund, and construct wayfinding and signage, street furniture, gateways, and special events that are unique and culturally-significant to the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood. Newly-constructed and redesigned streets, intersection corners, and under-developed or vacant parcels in and around the Tidwell Transit Center can be opportunity areas to install these place-based features into the community fabric.



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Elements of the Greater Northside Management District’s Urban Design Toolkit. All of which can be applied to the streets, underutilized (e.g., parking lots), and vacant parcels in the Tidwell TOD Planning Area.



Neighborhood Signs

Stories of Place:
Historic Signs

Pop-up Events



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Action Plan

The Tidwell TOD Plan is an “actionable plan” to redevelop the Tidwell Transit Center property and surrounding area to support larger community goals. This document serves as a collaborative understanding between METRO, its local and regional public partners, private businesses, and the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood on how to capitalize on TOD opportunities and planned METRORapid University BRT and BOOST Programs for improving mobility, housing, economic development, and overall quality of life for the community.

METRO and its partners have identified specific actions to advance the strategies identified for the Tidwell TOD Plan. These actions are to be administered by responsible (owning) parties and supporting partners, and are to be monitored over the next several years.



Expand Housing Options



Enhance Economic Development



Improve Safety and Connectivity



Attract & Retain Essential Neighborhood Services



Promote Neighborhood Identity



Expand Housing Options

Strategies

- ✓ Encourage development of “missing middle” housing stock, including second dwelling units, townhomes, and multi-unit residential, in a way that is compatible with the existing community
- ✓ Support development of housing in a way that benefits people of all socioeconomic backgrounds in the community

Action

Lead

Support

1	Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a mixed-use, mixed income TOD at the Tidwell Transit Center that includes a variety of housing styles and incorporates community priorities for development	METRO	Greater Northside Management District City of Houston Harris County
2	Redevelop METRO’s property at the Tidwell Transit Center as a TOD that includes a variety of housing styles and is affordable for a variety of income levels	METRO’s development partner(s)	METRO
3	Work with the City of Houston to designate streets immediately near the Tidwell Transit Center as TOD Streets to reduce parking requirements that restricts the development of missing middle housing	METRO	City of Houston
4	Apply additional changes to Chapter 42 Subdivisions, Developments and Platting Ordinance that reduce barriers to developing “missing middle” housing, such as overly burdensome parking requirements	METRO	City of Houston
5	Work with local housing agencies, housing providers, and developers to prioritize the area around the Tidwell Transit Center for smaller home sizes and diverse housing for homeowners and renters, both for construction and rental assistance and down payment assistance for potential homebuyers	METRO	Greater Northside Management District City of Houston Harris County Housing Authorities Developers (nonprofit and for-profit)
6	Acquire and preserve existing Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) stock in Eastex-Jensen neighborhood to be offered at various affordability levels	City of Houston Harris County Housing Authorities Houston Land Bank Houston Community Land Trust Existing property owners Developers	



Enhance Economic Development

Strategies

- ✓ Increase jobs in the neighborhood
- ✓ Establish Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road as key economic corridors
- ✓ Attract and retain local-serving commercial services

Action	Lead	Support
1 Encourage major employers to apply for Texas Enterprise Zone Program (EZ) to encourage job creation and capital investment for individual businesses	Business owners	City of Houston Harris County METRO Greater Northside Management District
2 Explore Opportunity Zone (OZ) Program, seek designation in and around Tidwell Transit Center to spur economic development, support affordable and/or workforce housing, retail development and food desert mitigation, manufacturing/distribution, and neighborhood investments	City of Houston State of Texas Governor’s Office	Greater Northside Management District METRO
3 Explore potential for expansion of Leland Woods Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) or if new TIRZ could be developed to serve the Eastex-Jensen neighborhood to provide public improvements to attract new development	City of Houston Leland Woods TIRZ	Greater Northside Management District METRO
4 Develop marketing materials to attract new businesses, especially along Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road and highlight vacant and underutilized land opportunities	Greater Northside Management District	City of Houston Harris County METRO
5 Continue the THRIVE business revitalization program	Greater Northside Management District	City of Houston Harris County Nonprofit organizations Community-Based Organizations
6 Explore Brownfields subsidy program (through federal, state, or local sources of funding) to help with site work costs, soil testing or other environmental hazard assessments prior to the sale of property	City of Houston	Harris County Greater Northside Management District
7 Incentivize commercial space with affordable and favorable lease terms for small businesses and community-supporting space in the RFP for the Tidwell Transit Center TOD	METRO	Harris County Greater Northside Management District



Enhance Economic Development

(Continued)

Action	Lead	Support
8 Promote economic activity, walkability, and civic connection by activating strip malls through temporary public plazas in parking areas, including community events and vendor “pop-up” activities	Greater Northside Management District Super Neighborhood 46	METRO City of Houston Nonprofit organizations Small Business Development Centers
9 Identify tax incentive opportunities for the relocation, expansion, or retention of businesses in the neighborhood	City of Houston	Greater Northside Management District Harris County
10 Identify measures to understand operations and needs of businesses to minimize impacts and provide safe access during reconstruction of Tidwell Transit Center and other area-wide infrastructure and transportation improvements (e.g., University Corridor)	METRO	City of Houston
11 Encourage businesses to seek Houston Business Development Inc. (HBDI) loans and technical assistance to small businesses and micro enterprises in and around Tidwell Transit Center	Existing business owners	Greater Northside Management District City of Houston Harris County



Improve Safety and Connectivity

Strategies

- ✓ Use Tidwell Transit Center redevelopment as opportunity to bolster public safety
- ✓ Improve access to transit for pedestrians and bicyclists
- ✓ Partner with local jurisdictions to redesign streets in a way that fosters neighborhood traffic calming, reduces noise / congestion, and prioritizes vulnerable roadway users
- ✓ Promote long-term maintenance of transportation infrastructure and safety measures
- ✓ Prioritize pedestrian-oriented design in new development

Action

Action		Lead	Support
1	Implement various safety improvements into Tidwell Transit Center including the integration of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, encouraging a mix of land uses that promote “eyes on the street” at all times of the day, establishing a METRO Police Department “home base” (public safety outpost), Installing security cameras, and coordinating street light improvements along streets in and around Tidwell Transit Center.	METRO	City of Houston METRO’s Development Partner(s) CenterPoint Houston Public Works
2	Implement the METRORapid University Corridor and 45-Tidwell BOOST projects	METRO	City of Houston
3	Implement bike/ped access improvements identified in the METRORapid University Corridor First/Last Mile Plan and Northside On The Move Plan	METRO	City of Houston Harris County Greater Northside Management District
4	Require new and/or redevelopments to implement city’s new Multimodal Service Standards (e.g., improve sidewalks, intersection design, controls, and crossings and street lighting)	City of Houston	
5	Leverage the METRORapid University Corridor as an opportunity to redesign portions of Tidwell, Jensen, and Turner	METRO	City of Houston Harris County Greater Northside Management District
6	Fund advanced planning and design study for Jensen Drive Complete Streets transformation and implement project	Greater Northside Management District Harris County	City of Houston METRO



Improve Safety and Connectivity

(Continued)

Action	Lead	Support
7 Implement Houston Bike Plan improvements along major corridors such as Jensen Drive and Tidwell Road	City of Houston Harris County	Greater Northside Management District METRO
8 Require Complete Streets and Vision Zero approach for all future new and/or reconstruction of public streets	City of Houston Harris County	Greater Northside Management District METRO
9 Identify high priority locations for safety treatments, signage, traffic calming devices, etc., with emphasis on locations in “high-injury” network and residential, neighborhood streets (i.e., Edell Street, Turner Drive)	City of Houston	
10 Implement infrastructure and asset management prioritization strategy to identify immediate, near, and long-term capital investments within the public right of way, with emphasis on safety treatments for vulnerable roadway users	City of Houston Harris County	
11 Implement Transit Asset Management Plan strategies for long-term maintenance of Tidwell Transit Center and bus stops	METRO	
12 Designate TOD Streets near Tidwell Transit Center	City of Houston	
13 Seek City of Houston Walkable Places designation within Eastex-Jensen neighborhood, with focus in and around Tidwell Transit Center to encourage walkability and promote human-scaled spaces	City of Houston Property owners (50% support required)	Greater Northside Management District METRO



Attract & Retain Essential Neighborhood Services

Strategies

- ✓ Attract and maintain quality essential services, such as grocery stores with healthy food options, pharmacies, clinics and medical services, public safety, and recreational space with community-based programs for people of all ages and abilities.
- ✓ Leverage new neighborhood services to attract more residents and businesses to the community while retaining long-term residents and employees

Action	Lead	Support
1 Seek Opportunity Zone designation in and around the Tidwell Transit Center to spur economic development and neighborhood investments	City of Houston	Greater Northside Management District METRO
2 Advocate for the development of a grocery store offering healthy food at affordable prices	City of Houston	Greater Northside Management District METRO
3 Advocate for the development and activation of parks and recreational areas on vacant or underutilized properties	City of Houston	Greater Northside Management District METRO
4 Encourage the provision of recreational and open spaces and some essential services as part of the overall redevelopment of METRO’s property at the Tidwell Transit Center	METRO City of Houston	City of Houston Houston Parks Board Trust for Public Land Greater Northside Management District
5 Work with community partners to further identify community health service needs, fresh food production and identify opportunity areas such as publicly owned land, and develop an implementation strategy	Existing health clinics City of Houston	Greater Northside Management District Harris County METRO Houston Health Department Healthcare Foundations



Promote Neighborhood Identity

Strategies

- ✓ Enable placemaking opportunities to bring people together and support cultural significance of the community.
- ✓ Foster placekeeping opportunities to prioritize equity and collaboration with current resources of the community.

Action

Action		Lead	Support
1	Implement community-driven urban design recommendations for METRORapid University Corridor along Tidwell Road, Jensen Drive, and Turner Drive	METRO	City of Houston Greater Northside Management District
2	Incorporate placemaking/placekeeping into the design of the Jensen Drive redesign project	Greater Northside Management District Super Neighborhood 46	City of Houston Harris County
3	Include public spaces for placemaking/placekeeping and opportunities for placemaking/placekeeping in the urban design of the Tidwell Transit Center TOD	METRO	Greater Northside Management District METRO’s Development Partner
4	Hire local artists to activate vacant land	Super Neighborhood 46 Nonprofit Organizations Community-Based Organizations	City of Houston Harris County Greater Northside Management District
5	Hire local artists and students for bus stop art program	METRO	Greater Northside Management District Super Neighborhood 46
6	Promote economic activity, walkability, and civic connection by activating strip malls through temporary public plazas in parking areas, including community events and vendor “pop-up” activities	Greater Northside Management District Super Neighborhood 46 Existing businesses and property owners	City of Houston

Key Considerations for Tidwell Transit Center Redevelopment

METRO has an opportunity to issue a solicitation to developers for redeveloping the Tidwell Transit Center property as a joint development / TOD project. The solicitation can include specific language that aligns with the established vision, goals, and strategies presented in the Tidwell TOD Plan. Importantly, METRO can evaluate proposals based on developer responses on how they would align the development program with these established goals.

To that end, there are key considerations that METRO and the community have identified for the solicitation. These are shown below.

Key Consideration Descriptions



“Missing middle” housing (neighborhood scale housing) that is affordable for moderate income workers (teachers, firefighters, etc.) and seniors



Space for community events and personal/professional development (community center, workforce training, etc.)



Space for neighborhood scale retail, including essential services (fresh foods, healthcare, childcare, etc.)



Open space for recreation and stormwater management



Safety and security improvements

Next Steps

In 2024, METRO intends to issue an RFP for the Tidwell Transit Center property and select a developer to begin the next phase in the redevelopment effort. Concurrently, METRO will work with the City of Houston and other partners to encourage TOD in the area surrounding the transit center. To complement this momentum, the METRORapid University Corridor Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, METRO BOOST Program, and local street improvements will advance into the stage of planning and engineering phases in the next few years.

as a mixed-use development anchored by the transit center; more transit-oriented development will occur in the area around the transit center; the BRT system will be operational, and additional infrastructure improvements will be constructed along area streets—culminating into a connected, compact multimodal network linking more people to more places and sustaining a thriving economy and quality of life for the Eastex-Jensen community.

It is anticipated that within a decade, the Tidwell Transit Center will be reconstructed

