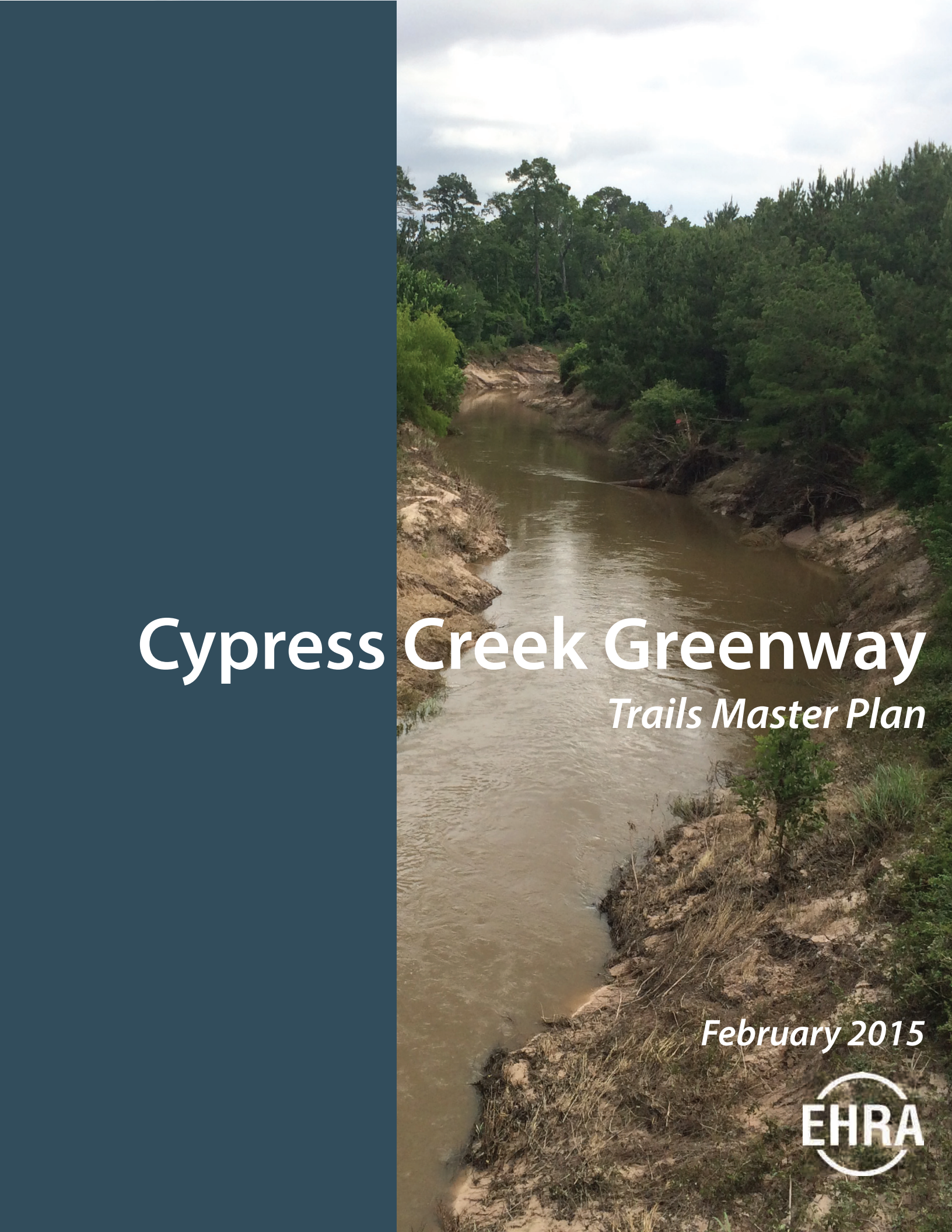




Cypress Creek Greenway

Trails Master Plan

February 2015



Acknowledgments

*Prepared for the Cypress Creek Trails Master Plan
Coordinating Board*

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Cypress Creek Greenway

Trails Master Plan

Introduction

and

Overview



Introduction

Project Overview

The Cypress Creek Master Plan Coordinating Board was formed in 2013. Comprised of both public and private partners, the Board's main goal is to develop a comprehensive trails plan for an area along Cypress Creek. Utility Districts, as well as other entities were approached to become members of the board, and participate in the plan's development. Current board members include the following:

Voting Members

- Lake Forest Utility District
- Prestonwood Forest Utility District
- Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 468
- Malcomson Road Utility District
- Houston Parks Board

Non-Voting Members

- Harris County Municipal Utility District No. 286
- Lone Star College
- Sueba USA Corporation
- Noble Energy

Cypress Creek

The largest watershed in Harris County, Cypress Creek is 53 miles long and includes over 300 square miles. Originating in Waller County, the Creek extends through northern Harris County, until it joins Spring Creek.

Previous planning efforts that have been performed along the corridor include the 2014 Cypress Creek Parkway Livable Centers Study, sponsored by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC); the 2013 Cypress Creek Greenway Case Study, as part of the "Our Region" study effort, facilitated by H-GAC; and the Cypress Creek Greenway - East Section, funded by the Timberlane Utility District and completed by students of the Landscape Architecture Graduate Program at Texas A&M University.

The Cypress Creek Greenway Project

The Cypress Creek Greenway is an effort by the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition to promote the development of a continuous recreational corridor along Cypress Creek from west of Highway 290 to Spring Creek. The Coalition has been meeting with local stakeholders, government officials, developers, and neighborhood associations for many years now, in order to advocate for the project. As further planning is undertaken along the corridor, implementation will soon follow.

Project Area

For purposes of this plan, the project area incorporates approximately 13.5 square miles and is shown on the map to the right. The project boundaries are roughly defined as Spring Cypress Road on the north, Old Louetta and Cutten Roads on the east, Grant Road on the South, and Eldridge Parkway and Grant Road on the west. The project area includes land which falls within board member's jurisdictions and was expanded to include important segments of Cypress Creek and its tributaries.

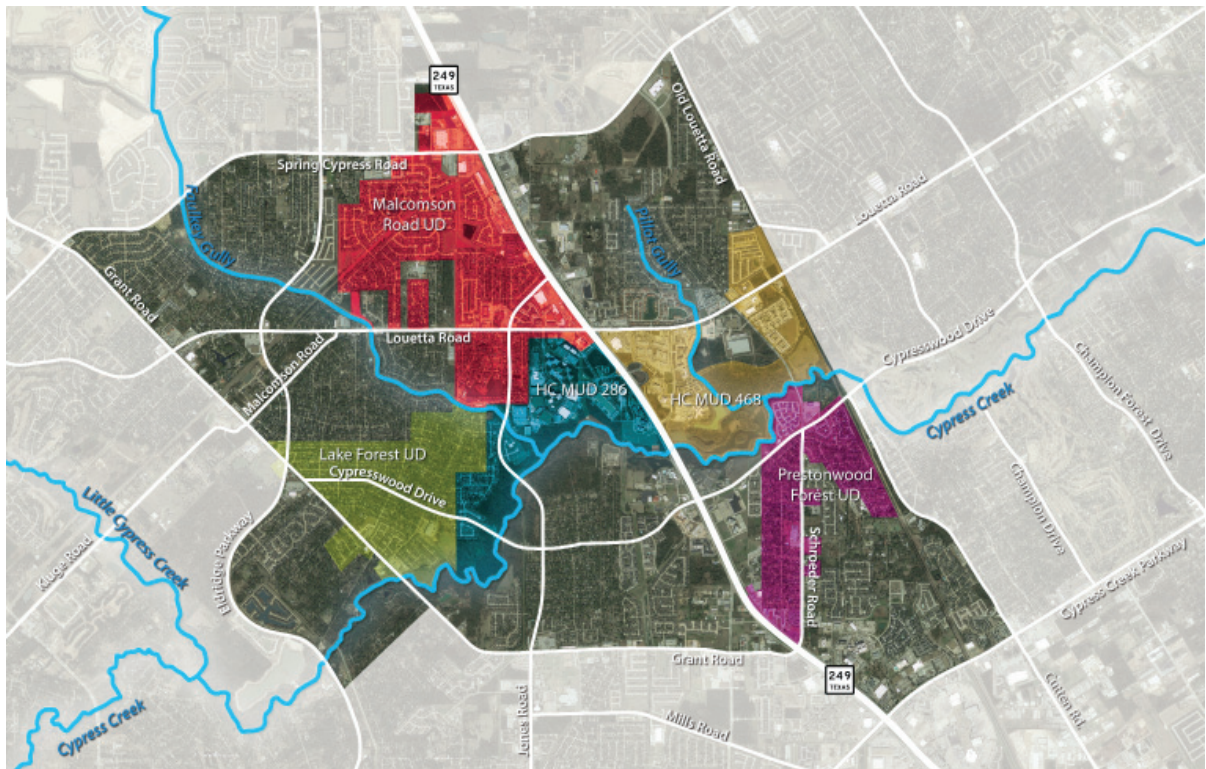
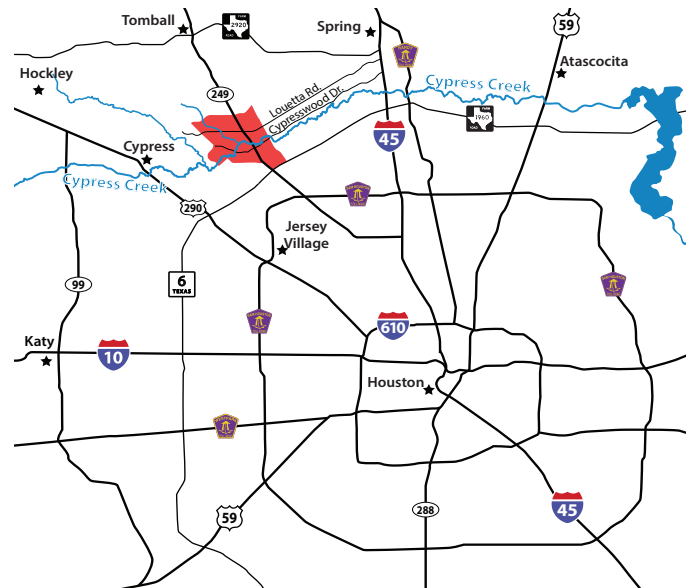


Figure 1.1 Study Area with Project Partner Locations

Benefit of Trails

The Gulf Coast Region has seen a push for more recreational facilities, specifically more trails, in recent years. The Bayou Greenways initiative, a revival of the vision of an urban planner over 100 years ago, is a plan to develop trunk line trails along the ten major bayous in the region. In 2012, Houston voters approved \$100 Million towards the development of trails within the city limits.

The Master Plan Vision

Developing a Trails Master Plan for the study area will provide guidance and direction to the Coordinating Board members for identifying and budgeting future trail projects. The plan can also be used to encourage trail development, especially critical connections to Cypress Creek, by adjacent Utility Districts and land owners who chose not to participate in this plan. Overlying governmental agencies, such as Harris County, could be encouraged to “fill-in-the-gaps” by constructing portions of trails where no other potential partner is identified. The plan can also serve as a model for other portions of Cypress Creek, so that they may take the initiative to prepare a similar plan and begin a unified effort to develop contiguous trailways along the Creek.

The Plan was designed to identify suitable trail corridors within the study area, as well as provide recommendations for design standards for trail development. The board understands that various groups may undertake portions of trail construction and maintenance recommended in the plan. Providing general guidelines, rather than specific standards allows for some flexibility in the implementation of the plan.

Community outreach during the planning effort, including stakeholder and public meetings as well as an online survey have also assisted in increasing public awareness of the Creek, its existing trails, and the vision for the future. The process has continued the grassroots efforts of the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition. Seeking public input creates a sense of ownership and may help to encourage future volunteer efforts along the Cypress Creek corridor.

The Trails Master Plan clearly defines the goals and scope of the planned effort to increase pedestrian

opportunities within the study area. The report includes analysis of the availability and condition of existing facilities, as well as identifying the gaps between them. Understanding the needs of the region by incorporating feedback from board members, residents, stakeholders, and local jurisdictions also aids in determining appropriate recommendations for future trail development.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been established for the master planning process. These goals and objectives outline the focus of this Plan.

1. Provide a multi-use system for the diverse groups within the study area.
 - Locate existing trails and identify desirable routes
 - Involve stakeholders in the planning process
 - Address interests of participating members
2. Improve pedestrian accessibility
 - Improve safety and remove barriers
 - Provide better connectivity to popular destinations
3. Maintain environmental integrity
 - Conserve and respect natural resources and processes
 - Limit impact of trail development
 - Identify design standards that utilize best management practices

Plan Development Process

The Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition was formed in 1999 to “actively pursue the development of a regional Cypress Creek Watershed flood reduction/ environmental preservation plan.” As part of their mission, the Coalition seeks to “promote park, recreational, forest, and wildlife habitat development consistent with the preservation of the watershed’s natural environment.”

Jim Robertson, chairman of the Coalition’s Cypress Creek Greenway Project, has been meeting with public and private landowners and stakeholders within Cypress Creek’s watershed for over a decade to promote the Greenway project, a multi-use trail system extending from west of US 290, eastward to the Spring Creek Greenway.

Mr. Robertson sought to bring multiple partners together to begin planning and developing the Greenway system, with Lake Forest Utility District taking the lead role in working with other partners. Discovering support among numerous Utility Districts as well as private land owners and tenants surrounding the US 249 corridor, Jim, as well as other advocates, began to assemble the Coordinating Board.

On September 30, 2013 six of the Coordinating Board members executed an inter-local agreement in order to fund and develop the Cypress Creek Greenway Trails Master Plan. In January of 2014, the Board solicited requests for qualifications from local firms for the creation of the plan. Selecting EHRA in May, the board and its consultants quickly got to work outlining plan goals.

The next three months were spent assessing existing trail facilities within the study area. Corridors along Cypress Creek and its major tributaries were walked and photographed. Existing trail facilities were explored and documented. Once existing conditions were established, the consultant began to address needs assessment. During this portion of the study a short online survey was prepared in order to obtain public input regarding current usage of existing trail facilities, as well as identify desired usage for future trail development. The survey received an impressive response of over 700 respondents. Meetings were held with the individual board members groups as well as other stakeholders. The survey and a summary of findings during stakeholder meetings are explored

more in the needs assessment chapter.

Analyzing existing trail corridors, current land usage and property ownership, as well as incorporating public and stakeholder desires, recommendations were prepared to identify proposed trail corridors and connections.

On January 28, 2015, a public meeting was held at Lone Star College - University Park to present the final recommendations. Approximately 120 people attended the meeting and a variety of groups and organizations were represented. In February, the final plan was adopted by the Coordinating Board.

