

# MIDTOWN PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACE MASTER PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOUSTON, TX - 2023



# PURPOSE

The Midtown Parks and Public Space Master Plan is a follow-up to the 2011 Midtown Parks and Open Space Master Plan. Over a decade has passed since the initial plan was developed, and parks and public space remain of key importance to the community. The results of the 2022 Midtown Capital Improvements Plan Survey indicate that parks and public space, as well as active mobility, are top items that respondents feel need more attention and investment. In the survey, 93.2 percent of respondents felt that it is very/somewhat important that public and recreational amenities are within a short walk of their homes. Similarly, 88.5 percent of people considered creating more pedestrian/bike linkages as very/somewhat important. As a result, this master plan update focuses not only on parks, but also on walkable and bikeable streetscapes that can provide comfortable connections throughout Midtown.

This plan is intended to assist Midtown Houston in updating their goals, strategies, and recommendations for their parks and public space. It ties into previous planning efforts by Midtown and references key plans created by the City of Houston as well. Where feasible, this master plan attempts to build off these past efforts, but while keeping an eye towards the current and future needs of Midtown. In some instances, this requires assisting Midtown in developing a stance in relation to outside plans that may impact the parks and open space opportunities in Midtown. The priority recommendations in this plan are organized sequentially into streets and parks, with some overlapping recommendations. For example, an enhanced streetscape may provide a linear park program opportunity. The master plan finishes with an implementation roadmap section that summarizes projects, programs, and policies that will allow Midtown to execute their vision for parks and public space.

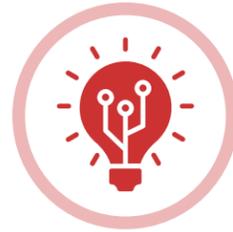
# GOALS



**DESTINATION QUALITY**



**RESILIENCE & MAINTENANCE**



**CULTURE & INNOVATION**



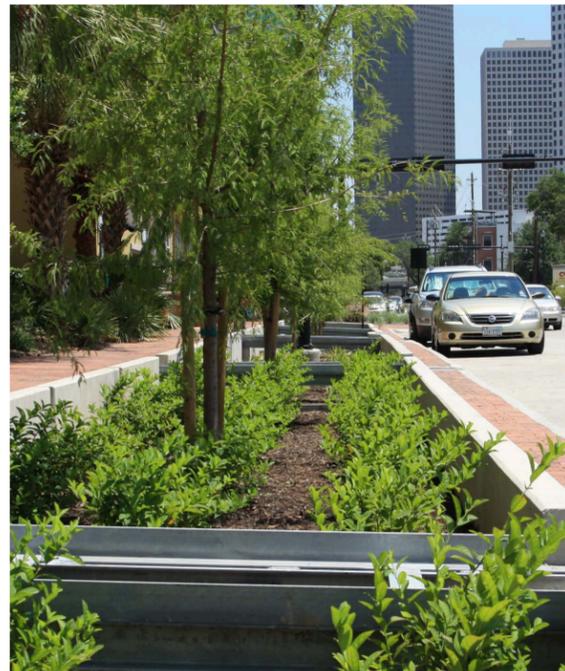
**HEALTH & WELLNESS**



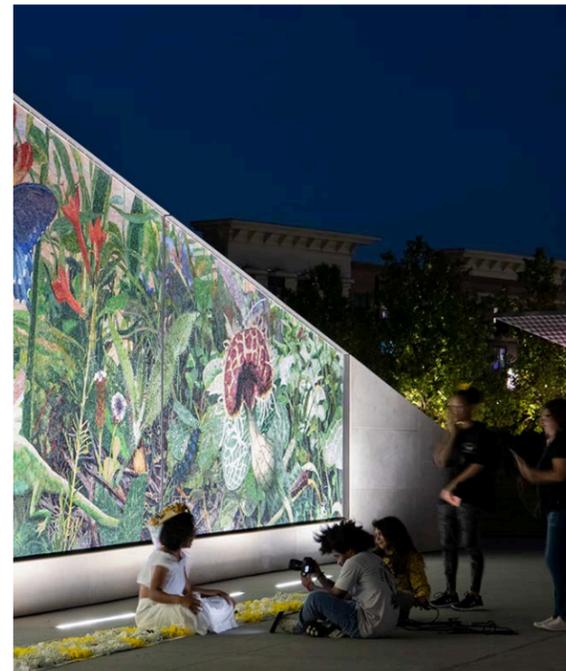
**EQUITABLE ACCESS**



Enhance Midtown as a citywide destination to live, work, and play.



Make parks and public space infrastructure more resilient.



Design and program parks and public space that reflect the culture and innovative spirit of Midtown.



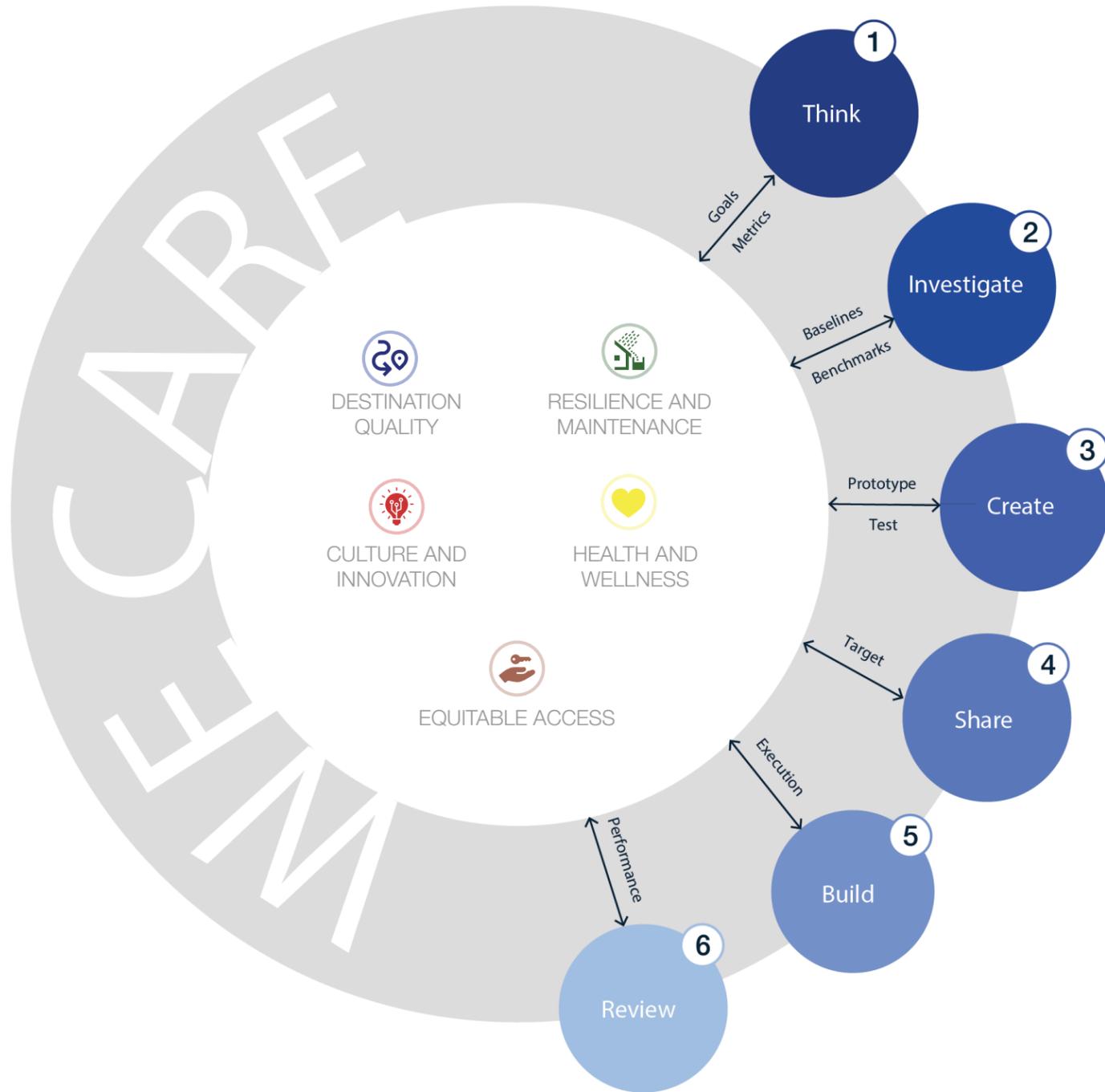
Increase the health of nearby residents by creating easy access to parks, public space, and cultural institutions.



Expand equitable access to parks and public space resources.

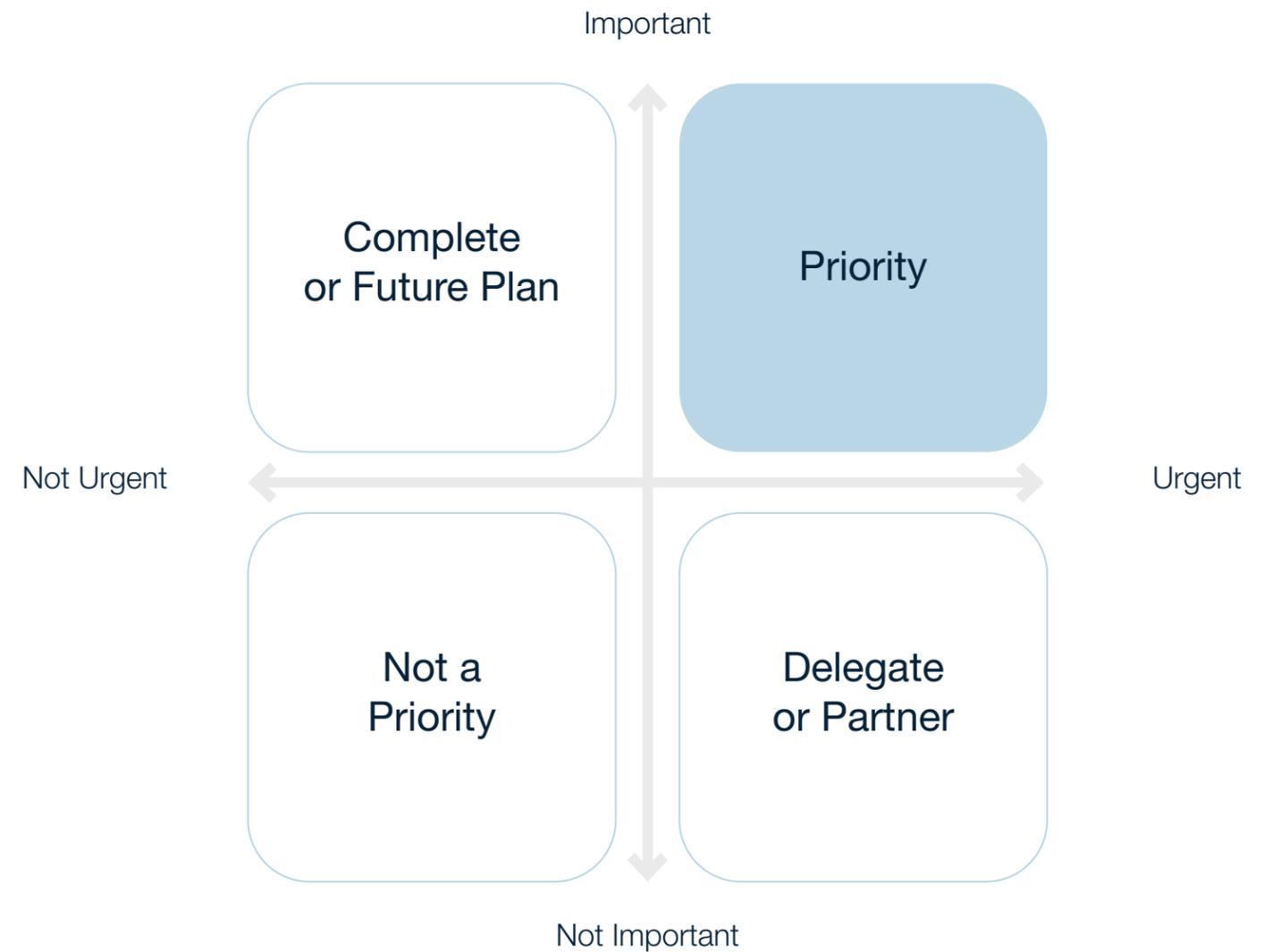
# APPROACH

The project approach for the Midtown Parks and Public Space Master Plan included a sequence of phases to develop the content: Think, Investigate, Create, and Share. The Build and Review phases reflect the future implementation of the recommendations in the plan. All of these phases included community outreach and engagement as a core part of the process. This engagement took the form of public workshops, surveys, and focus group meetings.



# HIERARCHY VS PRIORITY

The Midtown Parks and Public Space Master Plan seeks to develop recommendations for capital improvements to public space over the next five to 10 years. In order to narrow down to the key priority projects for this time period, the project team started by establishing a hierarchy list for streets and parks. These lists assigned points to each street and park based on analysis of the previous plans and other site factors, such as transit routes on streets. This helped to create a list of streets organized by importance and ability to achieve Midtown's goals. From those, a professional value judgment was made on the priority of the parks and public space to further distill the top candidates for capital improvements based on those that are the most urgent. The priority diagram below illustrates how this plan strives to target projects that will be both urgent and of high importance.



# STREET HIERARCHY

The top level streets from the investigation phase analysis are graphically shown as thicker lines on this map. It is from the top level streets that a more narrow set of priority streets was identified as the best candidates for capital improvements that could enhance the streetscape and public space in Midtown.



LEVEL 6 | MCGOWEN STREET



LEVEL 5 | MAIN STREET



LEVEL 4 | ELGIN STREET



LEVEL 3 | FANNIN STREET



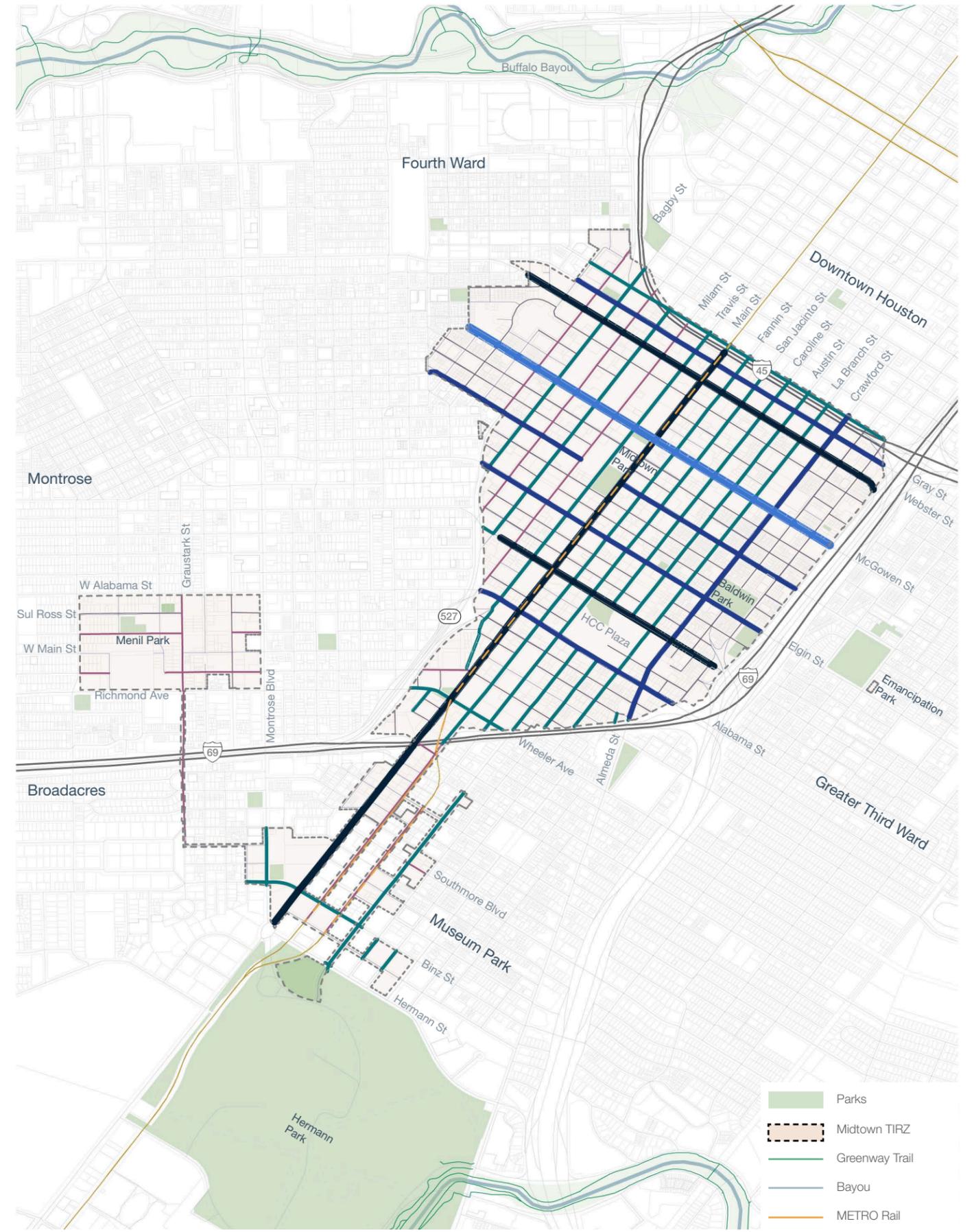
LEVEL 2 | MILAM STREET



LEVEL 1 | DREW STREET

## KEY

- █ Level 6 street
- █ Level 5 street
- █ Level 4 street
- █ Level 3 street
- █ Level 2 street
- █ Level 1 street



Street Hierarchy

# PRIORITY STREETS

From the top hierarchy streets, a sub-set of 'priority streets' was established as the streets recommended for capital improvements that would have the most impact on Midtown. These top 11 priority streets include:

Alabama Street	
Brazos Street	
Crawford Street	
Elgin Street	
Fannin Street	
Gray Street	
Main Street	
McGowen Street	
Travis Street	
Webster Street	
Wheeler Street	

The narrowing process took into consideration previous capital improvement projects. If a street recently had major construction that enhanced the public space, then the street or the specific portion of the street was removed from the recommended priority street.

The street section recommendations in the master plan are representative of typical conditions. Detailed designs for streets should respond to specific site conditions. Bike lane types and locations shown are also conceptual and may be revised based on project design needs.

## STREETS

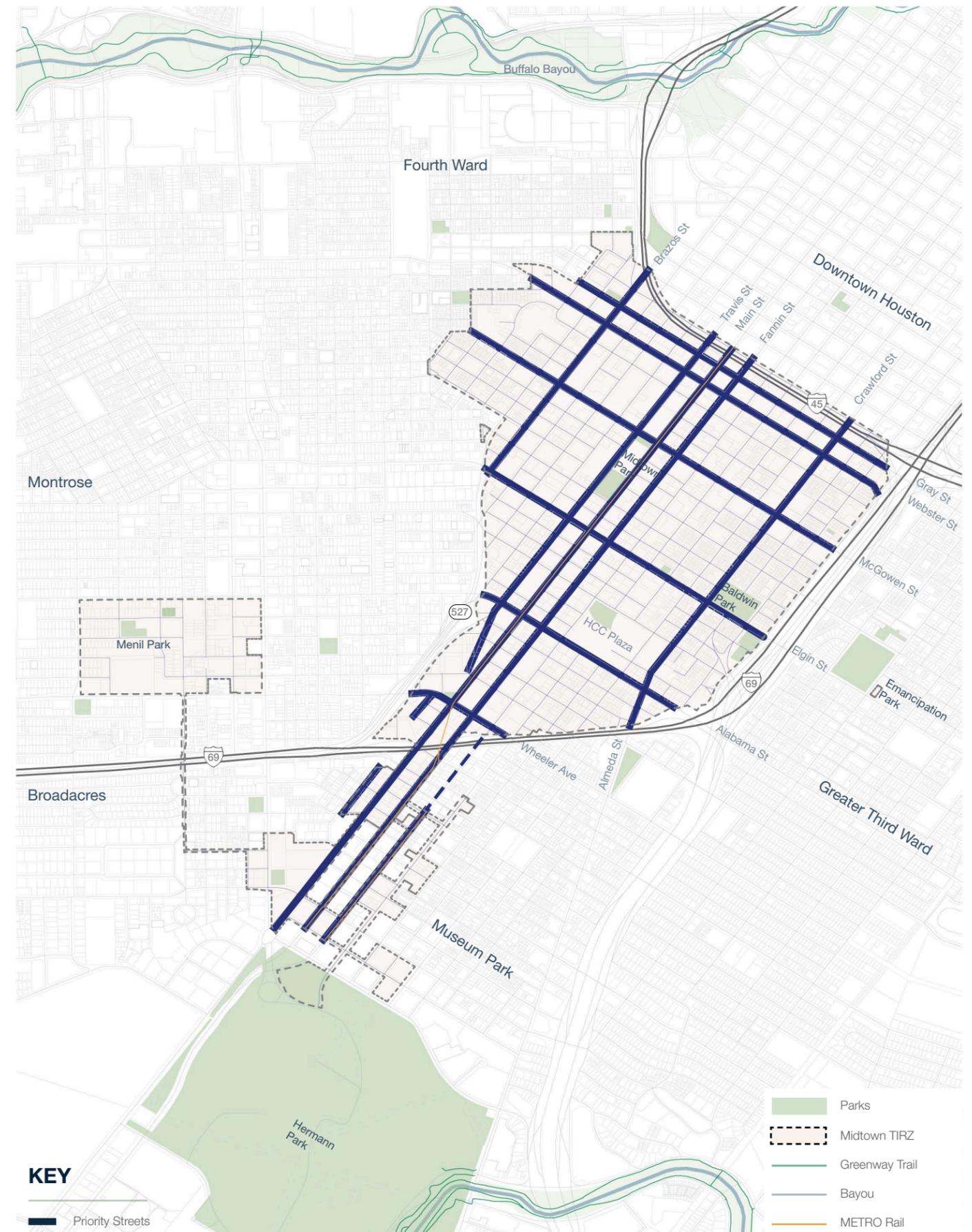
- Remove/ reduce travel lane
- Improve crosswalk stripping
- Add dedicated bike lane
- Add shared bike lane
- Bury utility lines, raise utility lines, remove sidewalk hindrances

## PEDESTRIAN REALM

- Add trees to the planting zone
- Improve/ add planting bed
- Add streetlights
- Improve sidewalk conditions
- Widen sidewalk
- Add planting bed to the median
- Add street furniture

## ON-STREET PARKING

- Reduce on-street parking
- Add on-street parking
- Add buffer between the street and pedestrian realm



Street Priority

# PARKS HIERARCHY

This map catalogs the number of program elements in the existing parks. The quantity and type of programs vary based on the park size, context, etc. The resulting “heat map” shows the density of program available within a quarter-mile (5-minute) walk around the park. The map displays areas that are lacking in park program diversity. Programming a park with the necessary and required elements will help increase the health and well being of the surrounding residents. Understanding the park deficit areas within Midtown will aid in identifying the need for potential parks and program diversification.

## EXAMPLES:



### MIDTOWN PARK

Out of the 10 measured program elements, Midtown Park has 8 programs that fit a wide variety of users.

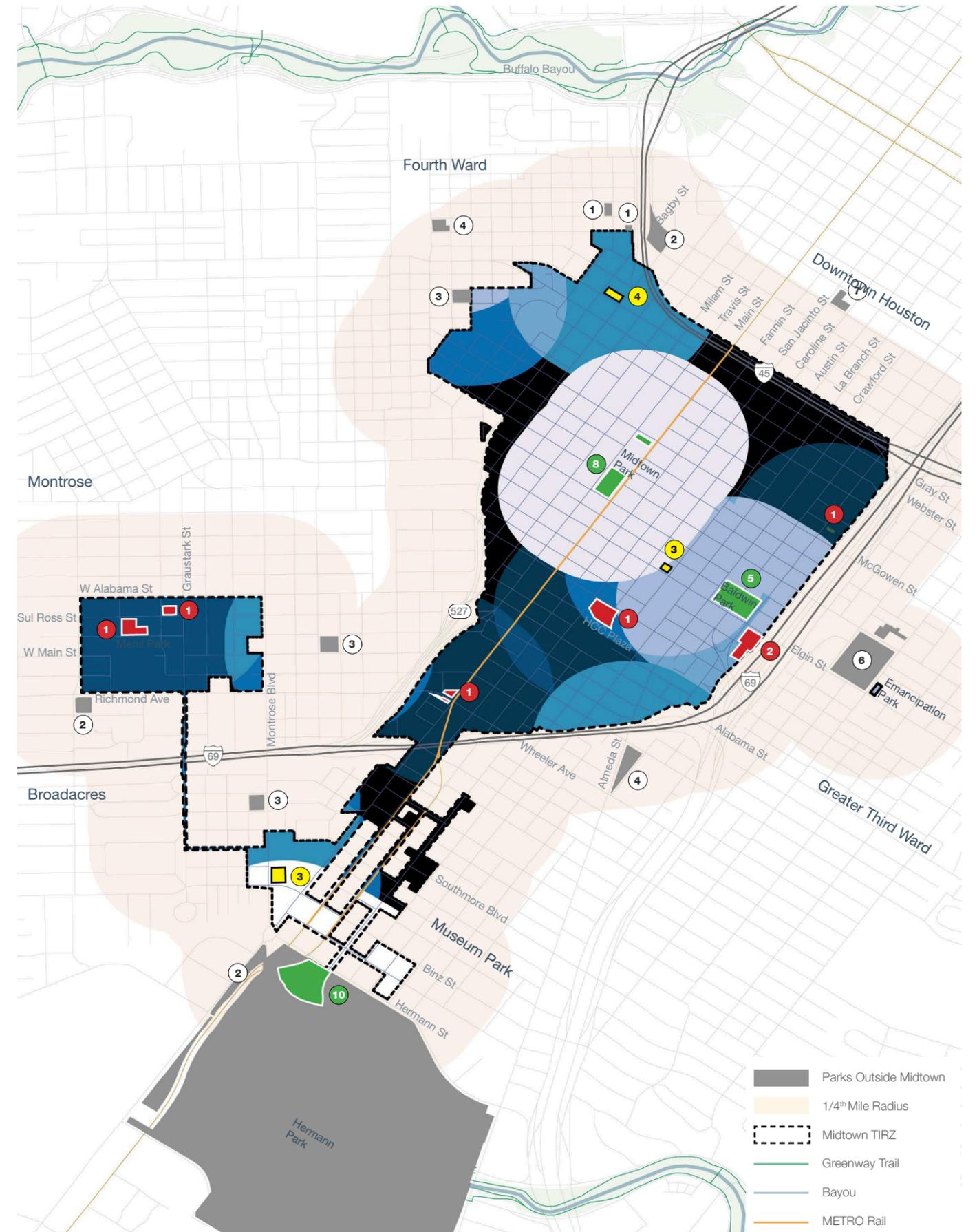


### MENIL PARK

Out of the 10 measured program elements, Menil Park has one program element - lawn/open space.

## KEY

- # Number of programs in the parks < 3
- # Number of programs in the parks > 3 < 5
- # Number of programs in the parks > 5
- # Number of programs in the parks outside Midtown
- No programs
- 1 program
- 2 programs
- 3 programs
- 4 programs
- 5 programs
- 6 programs
- 7 programs
- 8 programs
- 9 programs
- 10 programs



Park Hierarchy

# PARKS PRIORITY

The six priority park deficit zones identified in this map are areas in Midtown with no parks within a quarter-mile walk and/or the parks that are within quarter-mile walk collectively offer less than three park programs to residents. The deficit zones have been shaped to conform to street boundaries to better define them. In addition to the deficit zones, the map also overlays the priority streets defined in the master plan. Recommendations to address park deficits should take into consideration the recommendations for the streetscape improvements. The master plan details out the six deficit areas and suggests potential recommendations.



**PARK DEFICIT A | GAZEBO ON A UNDERUTILIZED PARCEL**



**PARK DEFICIT B | CHENEVERT URBAN GARDENS**



**PARK DEFICIT C | LULAC COUNCIL 60**



**PARK DEFICIT D | SAN JACINTO MEMORIAL GREEN**



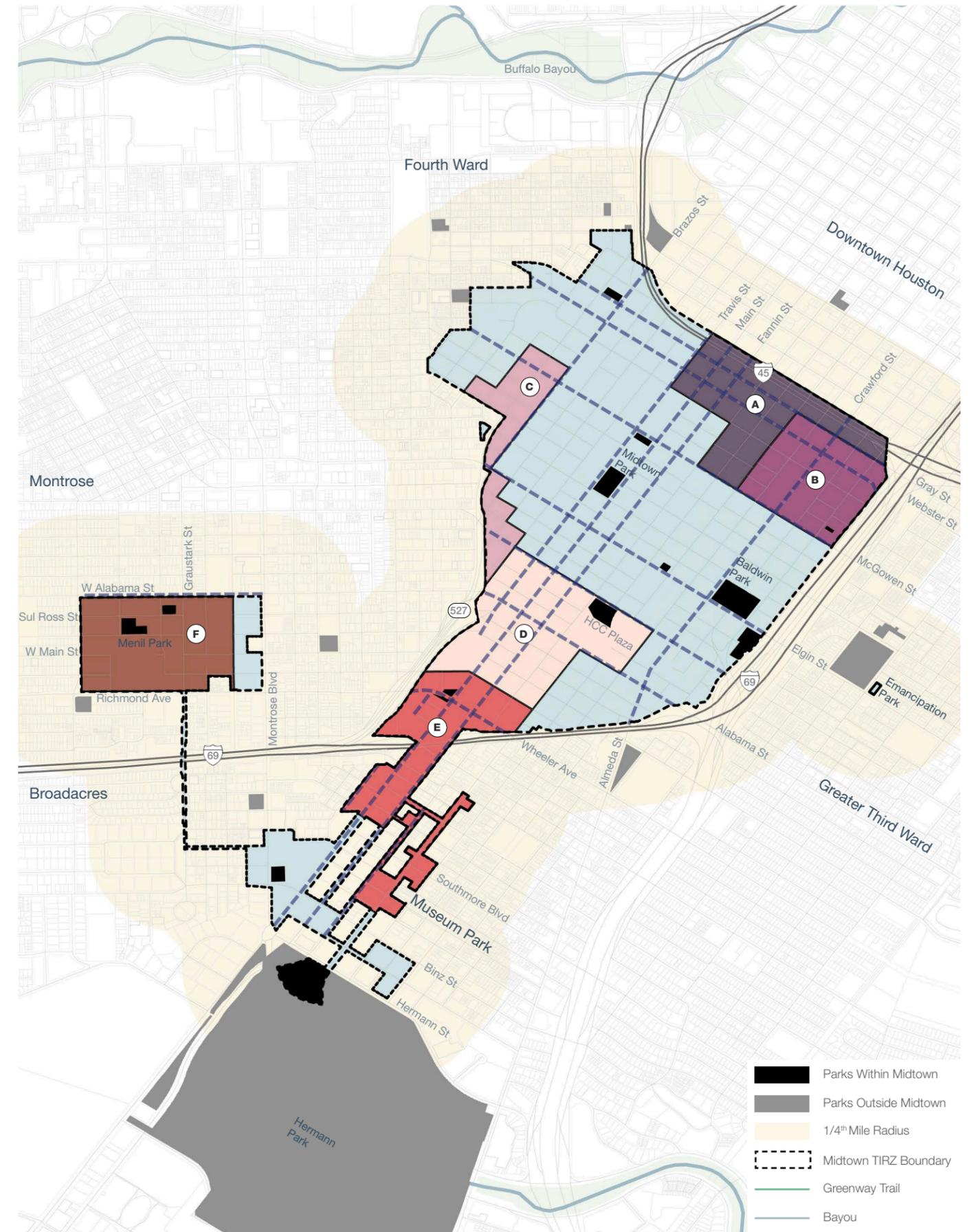
**PARK DEFICIT E | PEGGY POINT PLAZA PARK**



**PARK DEFICIT F | MENIL PARK**

## KEY

- Park Deficit A
- Park Deficit B
- Park Deficit C
- Park Deficit D
- Park Deficit E
- Park Deficit F
- Non Park Deficit within Midtown
- Priority Streets



Park Priority

# ELEMENTS OF IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTION ITEM

Action steps provide guidance about where and how to start implementing each of the recommendations. Action steps also help in planning for full implementation and establishing when funding sources will be needed.

## PHASE

Implementation phases are estimated time frames for initiation to completion of each recommendation. They are classified as follows:

- Short-term (1 - 5 years) - These are typically less complex recommendations which require fewer resources and involve fewer partners for implementation. It also includes projects which are currently in advanced planning or full design stage.
- Mid-term (5 - 10 years) - These are recommendations that may require more resources and planning than the 5-year horizon.
- Long-term (10+ years) - These recommendations typically require a large amount of capital and coordination between different partners. Implementation for long-term recommendations may begin earlier but may include a number of steps and phases to construction taking the full

## LEVEL OF INVESTMENT

Level of investment designations help to provide planning level estimates for future budgets, resources, and funding sources. The symbology for the designations is described here:

- \$ Low - Typically includes allocating or reallocating existing resources, staff time, and partner coordination. A low level of investment does not typically require capital expenditures.
- \$\$ Medium - Typically includes design, studies, aesthetic enhancements and limited infrastructure improvements.
- \$\$\$ High - Typically includes construction of significant infrastructure that would be part of a Capital Improvement Program.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Potential funding sources are included for each recommendation in the master plan. Funding strategies are to assist Midtown Redevelopment Authority in seeking available funding. Every strategy is not applicable in every case; however, a single strategy may be utilized to fund multiple recommendations. Potential funding sources include:

- Midtown Redevelopment Authority (MRA);
- Private organizations (ie.- Houston Community College, Menil Foundation, etc.);
- Private developers and donors;
- Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC);
- Houston Parks Board;
- City of Houston Public Works Department;
- City of Houston Parks Department (HPARD);
- Houston METRO (transit tax funds, etc.)
- TxDOT;
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- USDOT Safe Streets and Roads Grants; and
- Federal funding (IIJA or RAISE grants, appropriations, etc.).

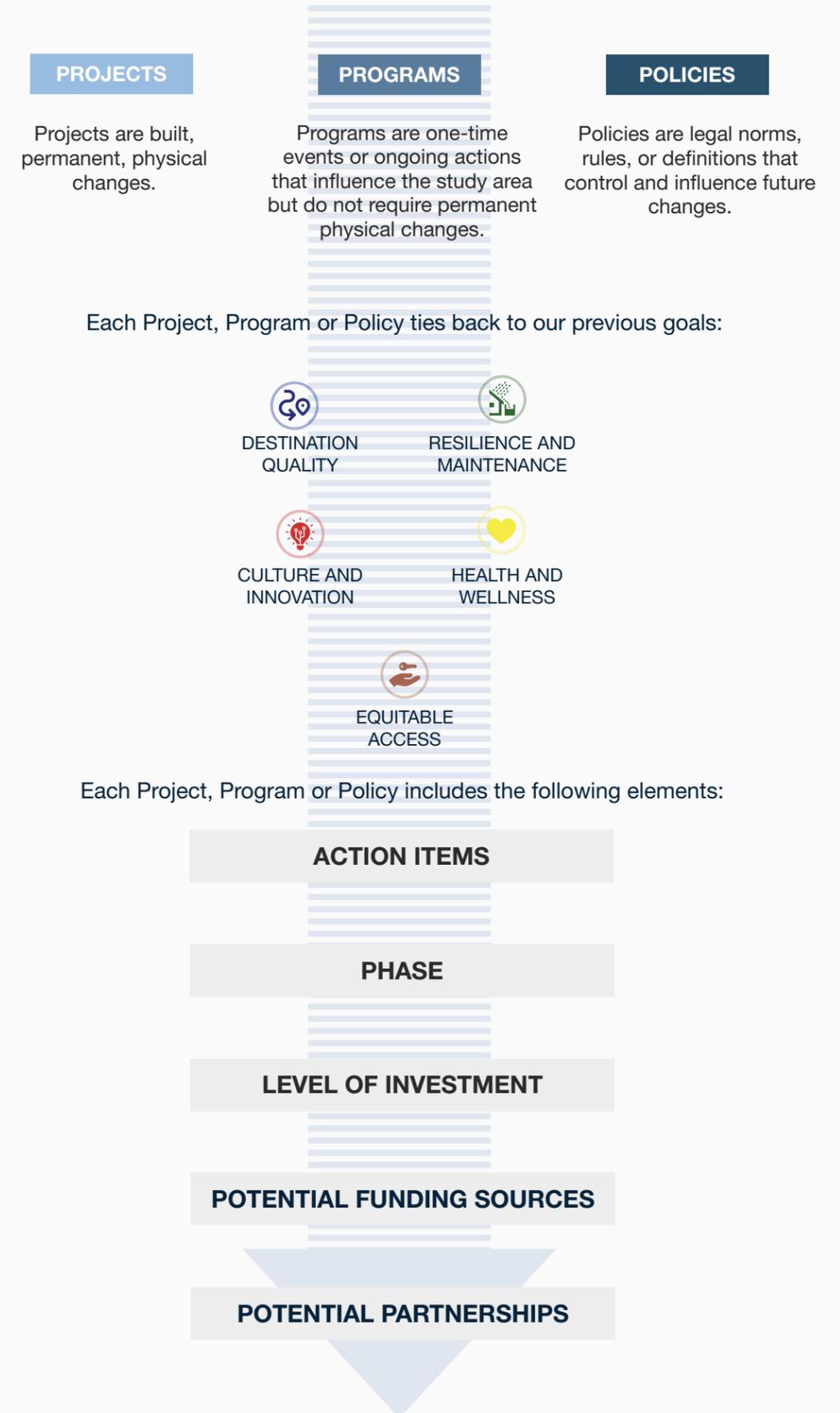
## POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Both public, private, and community organizations have roles to play in contributing to the implementation of these recommendations. Partners can play a number of different roles including:

- Organize;
- Advocate;
- Initiate;
- Participate; and/or
- Lead.

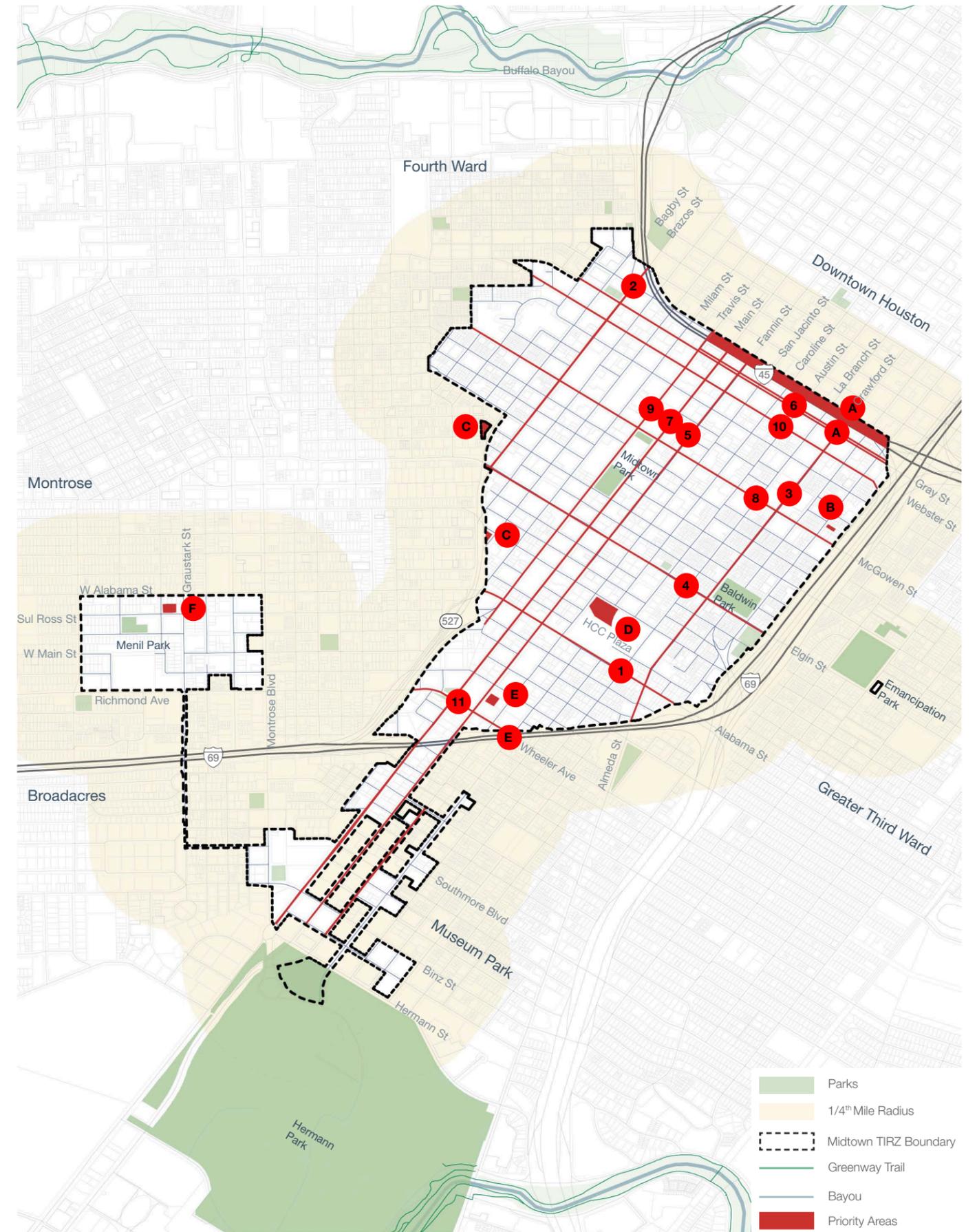
Examples of organizations include:

- City of Houston Mobility Planning (Vision Zero);
- Rice University;
- LULAC Council;
- Houston METRO;
- Houston Community College (HCC);
- TxDOT;
- Midtown Parks Conservancy; and
- Houston Art Alliance.



# IMPLEMENTATION MAP

#	RECOMMENDATION	PHASE	LEVEL OF INVESTMENT
<b>STREETS</b>			
PS 1	Alabama Street	Short-term	\$\$\$
PS 2	Brazos Street	Short-term	\$\$\$
PS 3	Crawford Street	Mid-term	\$\$
PS 4	Elgin Street	Mid-term	\$\$
PS 5	Fannin Street	Mid-term	\$\$
PS 6	Gray Street	Long-term	\$\$
PS 7	Main Street	Short-term	\$
PS 8	McGowen Street	Mid-term	\$\$
PS 9	Travis Street	Long-term	\$\$\$
PS 10	Webster Street	Mid-term	\$\$\$
PS 11	Wheeler Street	Mid-term	\$\$
<b>PARKS</b>			
PD A	Park associated with NHHIP	Long-term	\$\$\$
PD A	Create a linear park along Gray Street	Long-term	\$\$\$
PD B	Add programming to Chenevert Urban Gardens	Short-term	\$\$
PD C	LULAC Council 60 building as an outdoor performance space	Mid-term	\$\$\$
PD C	Develop the entry portal as a park space	Mid-term	\$\$\$
PD D	Add programming to San Jacinto Plaza	Mid-term	\$\$\$
PD E	Civic Plaza at Ion District	Short-term	\$
PD E	Cap at Caroline and Wheeler	Long-term	\$\$\$
PD F	Add programming to Plant it Forward - community garden	Short-term	\$\$



Implementation Map

