



Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts, Pedestrian Forecourt, Lake | Flato, 2005



McElhinney Hall, Covered Walkways, Neuhaus & Taylor, 1973

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Transformation to a Pedestrian Campus

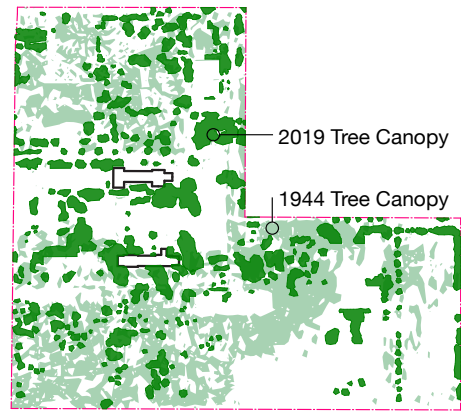
The transformation of what was once an automobile-dominated commuter campus environment to a pedestrian-oriented campus began with the recommendations of the 2006 Framework plan that included improved pathways, enhanced gathering spaces and the construction of garages to replace surface lots. Implementation of these initiatives began slowly but in the intervening years have built momentum for a rapid transformation. Also influential on this shift is the expansion of available on-campus housing which began with the construction of the five buildings comprising the Quadrangle in 1950. The transformation is now fully underway and the drive to house more students on campus not only seeks to improve students' success rate as demonstrated by national data but will have the added benefit of driving the campus toward the 24/7 vitality that it lacked when it was a commuter campus environment.

Increasing on-campus housing (now at more than 8000 beds) also brings with it an accompanying increase in demand for variety and convenience in available food service as well as a need for improvement in the walking paths that connect on-campus destinations. As a corollary, the types of destinations expand to include not just indoor classrooms, laboratories and offices, but also outdoor gathering places and settings for informal and formal public events.

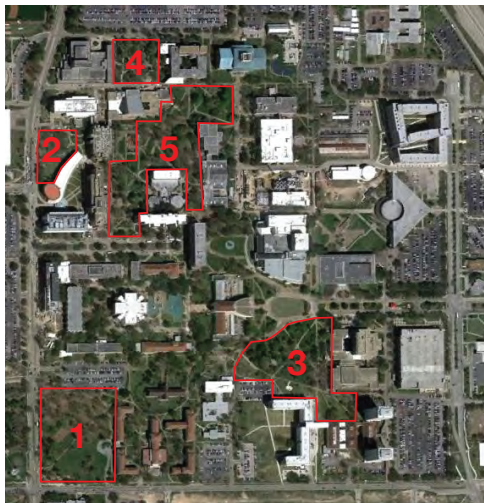
Key to better accommodating pedestrians, especially as the campus community grows well beyond its current 45,000 students, is the ability to resolve conflicts between pedestrians, bicyclists, service carts and other vehicles all seeking to share many of the same paved paths. An overlay of a hierarchy of paths shift bikes and carts to select wider paths that also may double as curbless fire truck access lanes. These reinforce the armature of cross-campus links inherited from the Hare & Hare plan.



Canopy in 110 Acres, 1944



Loss of Canopy, designLAB, 2019



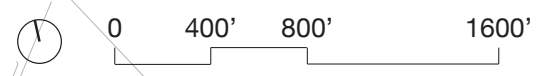
Five Urban Forest Fragments, SWA, 2011

Districts, Bayou and Tree Canopy

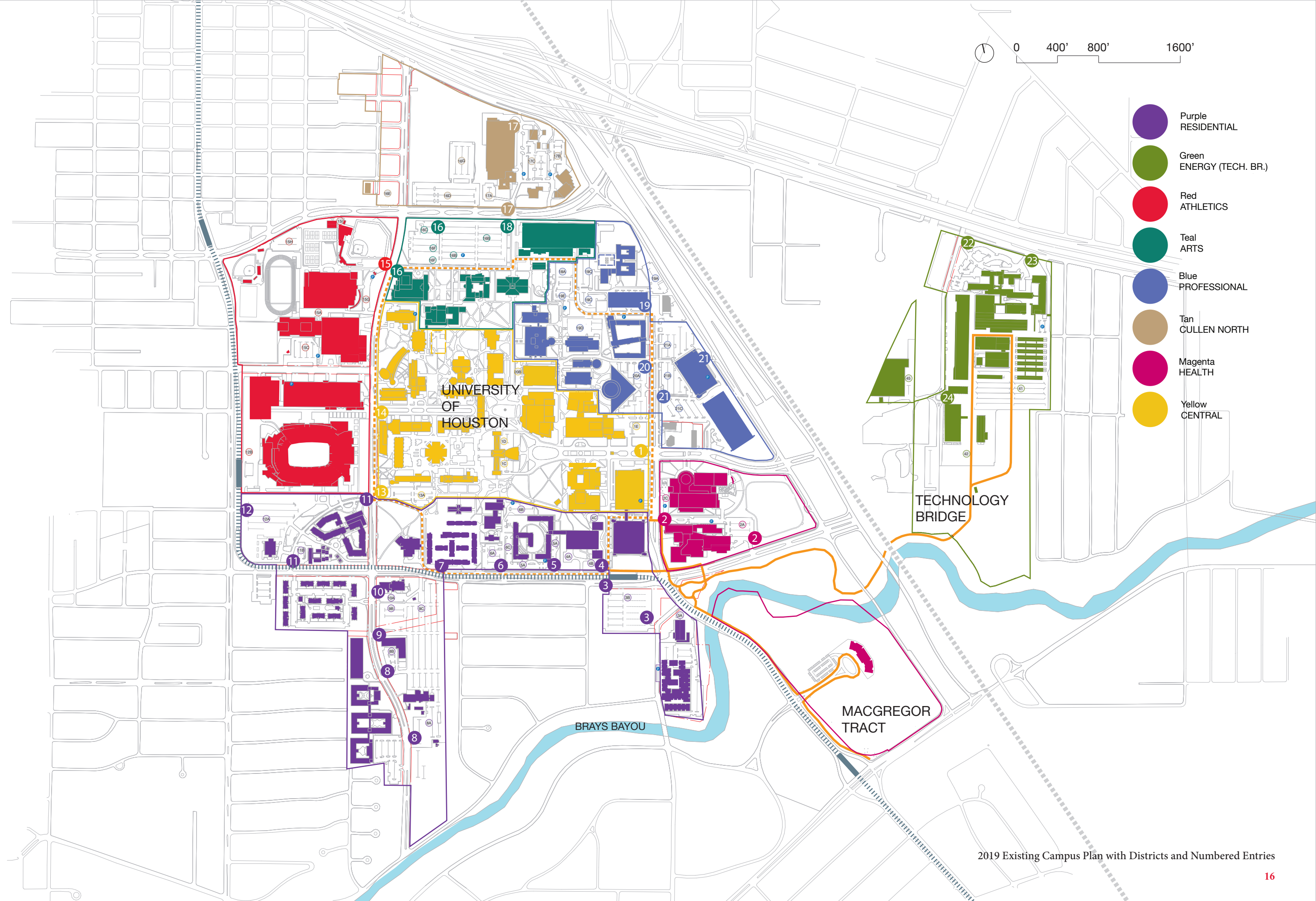
The 2006 *Framework Plan* proposed that portions of the campus be subdivided into five precincts. As an element of its 2014 *UH Wayfinding System* and to assist with orientation, designLAB updated the *Framework Plan* precincts and expanded those to include all property within the University of Houston campus. The result is eight color-coded districts, organized by similar existing use groups and, in some cases, by geographic area.

From its origin, the campus' proximity to Brays Bayou has shaped its development constraints and opportunities. However, the recent development of the Bayou Greenways initiative by the Houston Parks Board had significantly expanded the value of a bayou location, making amenities available to the University of Houston community through Brays Bayou trail linkages to the larger Houston region. Since the purchase and active use by the university of the former Schlumberger Drilling Services facility as the UH Technology Bridge (74 acres) and the MacGregor Tract as the site of the UH College of Medicine (43 acres), the wooded landscape fronting the bayou and its multi-use trails provide the features key to knitting three disparate parcels together into one integrated campus.

A common perception of the University of Houston campus today is that its most attractive areas derive their character not from individual buildings but from the pattern of tree cover that offers cooling shade and an organic foil to parking lot pavement. Surprisingly, while much of Houston has become more forested over the last ninety years, the UH campus has become less so losing 48% of its tree canopy since 1940. Five distinct urban forest fragments are noteworthy and require deliberate protection as remnants of the original coastal forest. These five urban forest fragments, along with the Brays Bayou woodlands and aggressive tree planting for streetscapes, pathways, and a campus greenbelt, make up the catalysts to reforest the campus. Direct benefits of reforestation include enhanced pedestrian environment through shade, reduction in the heat island effect, massive rain water absorption for flood mitigation, and effective carbon sequestration.



- Purple
RESIDENTIAL
- Green
ENERGY (TECH. BR.)
- Red
ATHLETICS
- Teal
ARTS
- Blue
PROFESSIONAL
- Tan
CULLEN NORTH
- Magenta
HEALTH
- Yellow
CENTRAL



2019 Existing Campus Plan with Districts and Numbered Entries