Chapter Two

Existing Conditions

Pearland Trail Master Plan

Before turning to future possibilities for trail network development in Pearland, this chapter considers existing conditions for walking and bicycling in the community.

2.1 Public Trails

At the time this trail master planning process was initiated in Fall 2006, the City of Pearland had only a few existing trails for public use. Some of these are highlighted in the photographs on this page, and include:

- a segment of trail to the east and west of Aaron Pasternak Park, along the north bank of Mary’s Creek, in east Pearland;
- a north-south segment along the western edge of the West Oaks neighborhood in central Pearland, from Fite Road northward toward Broadway-FM 518;
- a loop trail around a large detention basin that is within Pearland’s extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) in the northeasternmost area of the city; and
- several initial trail segments (of an eventual overall trail network) within the Shadow Creek Ranch master-planned development in west Pearland.

Technically, most of these walking paths would not meet one or more criteria necessary to be considered true “trails,” particularly in terms of their width, design and/or type or quality of surface material so they can withstand significant public use and weather impacts. Some, such as the West Oaks example, have a paved surface and are closer to being sidewalks, although they are in “off-street” locations unlike typical sidewalks that run alongside a street within only a few feet of setback, if any, from the street itself. Walking paths are also found within several of the City’s parks, such as at Independence and Centennial parks. However, these are only amenities of the
Figure 2.1, Existing Sidewalk Locations
(Based on September 2006 Inventory)

Legend
- City Limits
- Destinations
- Major Creeks
- Sidewalks
- Handicap-Accessible Curb Cut
- Points of Interest

Adopted
August 13, 2007

E:\Projects\Pearland, TX\GIS

Points of Interest:
1. Future Detention Area
2. Rustic Oak Elementary
3. Woodcreek Park
4. Sleepy Hollow Park
5. Existing Detention Area
6. Future Harris County Park
7. Future Beltway Mitigation Park
8. New Elementary School
9. Harris County E/I Franco-Lee Park
10. Rogers Middle School
11. New Jr. High
12. Shea Club Sports Park
13. Future Detention Area
14. Mossy Ranch Elementary
15. Rogers Middle School
16. New Elementary School
17. Pearland Jr. High South
18. 9th Grade Campus
19. Future Detention Area
20. Corrigan Park
21. Jordan Middle School
22. VFW
23. Pearland Police Department
24. Salettes Middle School
25. Pearland Jr. High West
27. Harris Elementary
28. New Middle School
29. Faindeld Elementary School
30. Carden Jackson School
31. Faindeld Park
32. Shadycrest Elementary
33. Future Park & Ride
34. Southdown Park
35. Challenger Elementary
36. Silverlake Elementary
37. Pearland High School
38. Mary Barks Meeks Elementary
39. Future AISD Junior High School
40. Manvel Elementary
Existing Conditions

Pearland Trail Master Plan

Both Independence (above) and Centennial (below) parks have internal trails that do not extend beyond the park properties.

One existing on-street bike lane in Pearland runs along a portion of Broadway-FM 518.

park itself and do not extend outward from these sites along any linear routes within the community, which would be the objective of a formal trail system.

Pearland also has one designated on-street bike lane, which is indicated by pavement markings and signage along a portion of Broadway-FM 518, from Main Street-SH 35 eastward to Westminster Road.

2.2 Private Trails

Just as the Pearland community has reached a point of desiring greater investment in trails as a public amenity, many larger subdivisions and master-planned developments in the area have already incorporated trails as a key design feature and marketing asset. As an example, trails are a prominent and highlighted element of the Shadow Creek Ranch site plan, as presented in its promotional materials and on its website. The Village Grove subdivision in north central Pearland, between O’Day and Hatfield roads, also was designed around an internal (non-paved) trail system to provide residents and their children a safe, off-street walking route to the neighborhood playground and other sections of the development.

Off-street walking paths and curving sidewalks are also evident in many of the newer subdivisions being built in Pearland, such as those in the vicinity of the new Pearland Parkway. While these walking routes are theoretically open to any person or visitor once the development is constructed and homes and commercial buildings are occupied, there is a “private” aspect to them in that they tend to be internal to the particular development, although they may connect to public sidewalks along the perimeter of the development. In other cases, such as some gated communities, the internal sidewalks and walking paths are either physically inaccessible to non-residents or clearly marked and indicated as “private” and only for the use of residents. One example in Pearland is the Autumn Lakes subdivision, north of Broadway-FM 518 between Fair Oak Street and Miller Ranch Road. This subdivision has a water feature with a trail running along
the south side of it that is marked as “private” and is actually within a perimeter fence at certain points and not accessible to outsiders.

2.3 Sidewalk System

In support of this Plan, a city-wide sidewalk inventory was completed in September 2006 to document existing locations in the city limits where sidewalks are in place along public streets and thoroughfares. The locations of all handicap-accessible curb cuts (“ramps”) were also noted through this field work. The results of this inventory are illustrated in Figure 2.1, Existing Sidewalk Locations.

Like many cities that had a more rural and suburban past—and then have undergone rapid growth—Pearland has extensive areas of the community where sidewalks were not installed along public roadways, including within many residential neighborhoods. Newly-developing areas of Pearland are being built to a higher standard through the City’s more recent planning and development regulations.

The City’s 1999 Comprehensive Plan called for additional focus on sidewalks through the following provisions:

- **Section 5.0-Land Use, Village District Design Guidelines.** “Where space allows, provide sidewalks along all streets to allow pedestrian accessibility.”
- **Section 5.0-Land Use, Planning Initiative #2 (Pearland Parkway).** To achieve the vision of a true parkway, “… sidewalks will be widened to hike and bike trail standards” (and this objective is reiterated in Section 6.0-Parks and Open Space).
- **Section 7.0-Transportation, Thoroughfare Standards.** Sets a standard for six-foot sidewalks (and five-foot on-street bicycle
Existing Conditions

Pearland Trail Master Plan

lanes) along both sides of streets classified as Major or Secondary Thoroughfares; the same for Major Collectors (although the accompanying cross-section diagram for a Major Collector shows four-foot sidewalks); four-foot sidewalks along both sides of Minor Collectors (with adequate space in the street pavement section for bicyclists to ride near the curb); and the same for Local Residential Streets.

- **Section 7.0 - Transportation, Policies for Implementing the Thoroughfare Plan.** Includes a policy statement that, “Safe sidewalk routes should be established for children to access parks and elementary schools within the school’s respective service zone.”

- **Section 7.0 - Bikeway Planning.** Points out that “children cyclists,” as opposed to “advanced” and “basic” cyclists, prefer to ride on sidewalks, local residential streets or off-road bike paths.

When the Comprehensive Plan was last updated in May 2004, additional language was incorporated that promotes sidewalk (and trail) construction:

- **Housing Guidance Recommendations, Walkable Neighborhoods.** “Neighborhoods should be designed to be pedestrian-centered, with residential sidewalks and streets that interconnect with adjacent developments, schools, neighborhood retail areas, open areas, walkways, greenways, etc.” Also, “Design standards that ensure safety, mobility, and adequate separation between pedestrian and non-motorized modes of transport should be incorporated into neighborhoods.”

- **Housing Guidance Recommendations, Open Space and Neighborhood Squares.** “Neighborhoods along waterfronts and lakes should be encouraged to provide parks, walking trails and areas along the waterfront accessible to the public.”

- **Community Image Recommendations, Increased Beautification of Corridors.** With regard to the City establishing new zoning overlays or enhancing its existing overlay districts for key corridors, it is recommended that Sidewalk Standards continue to be among the set of key standards applied to promote corridor appearance and development quality.

The City of Pearland Unified Development Code (UDC), through Chapter 3-Subdivision Regulations (Division 11-Sidewalks & Alleys), establishes the following requirements for sidewalks:

- Sidewalks are required along both sides of all streets, in accordance with
Existing Conditions

**Pearland Trail Master Plan**

the City’s adopted Thoroughfare Plan, in all subdivisions (residential or nonresidential). [UDC Section 3.2.11.1(a)]

- Width and location requirements for sidewalk construction are governed by the City’s adopted Engineering Design Criteria Manual (EDCM). In general, the UDC requires that sidewalks at least six feet in width be installed along both sides of thoroughfares and collectors in accordance with the City’s adopted Thoroughfare Plan. Sidewalks at least four feet in width must be installed along both sides of all other streets per the Thoroughfare Plan. [UDC Sections 3.2.11.1(b) & (d)]

- In existing platted subdivisions, sidewalks must be installed on all existing vacant lots, and on all lots that are planned for redevelopment. [UDC Section 3.2.11.1(c)]

- Sidewalks are not required along any side of a minor street that abuts residential property which utilizes open ditches for the drainage of stormwater. [UDC Section 3.2.11.1(f)]

In addition, UDC Section 3.2.6.4, Specific Street Standards, promotes pedestrian connectivity in Pearland through the following provision:

> Pedestrian connectivity and access shall be provided between subdivisions, schools, cul-de-sacs (i.e., bulb-to-bulb access) and park areas. In cases where a subdivision is constructed in a location that is adjacent to another subdivision, pedestrian access shall be provided such that adjacent development can connect to such access at a later date, when development occurs. Gated subdivisions may be exempt from this requirement upon approval by the Planning Director.

Finally, zoning requirements for the Spectrum mixed-use district (SPD) and the Corridors Overlay District (COD) include specific provisions related to sidewalks (UDC Sections 2.4.3.1(k) and 2.4.5.1(k) respectively), including:

- Constructing a minimum six foot wide sidewalk.
- Providing a 10 foot wide public use easement for the required sidewalk when placed outside of a public right-of-way.
- Allowing for deviation from these criteria by the City Engineer for good cause such as cases of unusual or unique topography or to preserve...
Existing Conditions

**Pearland Trail Master Plan**

- Providing a minimum eight foot width sidewalk along all streets in the Mixed Use-High Density Residential District (Sub-District S-3) within the overall Spectrum District.

While the lack of sidewalks takes away from neighborhood and community connectivity in some areas of Pearland, in other areas existing sidewalks actually provide a valuable linkage where construction of a full-scale trail cross section would not be feasible for whatever reason.

### 2.4 Opportunities and Challenges

Pearland has clear opportunities in front of it as well as obvious challenges to overcome in working toward a community-wide trail network:

**Opportunities**

- The extent of creeks and other linear drainageways across the community, which are highly accessible from many neighborhoods and developed areas and, if used for trail alignments, would readily connect a variety of community destinations.

- The presence of drainage districts in the region, which have maintenance easements along many waterways, providing the basis for a continuous, accessible trail system in attractive settings.

- The flat terrain found in Pearland.

- Private development interest in trails as site amenities (especially with the extent of master-planned development in the area) – and the desire by developers to see connectivity between trail segments they build and a broader community trail network.

- The extent of storm water detention sites already built or planned in the area, which provides loop trail opportunities, especially
where the detention area is well designed to serve as a community amenity.

- The extent of utility and pipeline corridors in certain areas of Pearland, which, in many cases, provide very open and unobstructed paths between neighborhoods and other nearby destinations such as schools, parks, community facilities and commercial areas.

- The extent of open space around the perimeter of many residential subdivisions and commercial developments in Pearland, due to the scattered nature of development in certain areas, which provides an “opening” for potential trail alignments close to existing development and in advance of additional development in the vicinity.

**Challenges**

- Existing developed areas where trail connections, or adequate trail widths, would not be feasible due to limited space (and also neighborhood opposition, in some cases). This is a particular constraint along portions of some area creeks, including Mary’s Creek and Clear Creek, where maintenance easements were never established and the back yards of individual residences extend all the way to the creek bank.

- The need to cross busy arterial roadways in various locations to maintain the connectivity of the envisioned trail network (e.g., Broadway-FM 518), as well as the physical barrier presented by the SH 288 freeway corridor and the limited street and creek/drainage links across this corridor.

- Uncertainty about the ultimate nature, physical scale and appearance of federally-funded flood control improvements along Clear Creek – one of the City’s premier corridors for long-term trail development.