

IMAGINE...





WHAT IF HOUSTON HAD BARTON SPRINGS OR A BEACH?

...ON THE BANKS OF BUFFALO BAYOU



WE ALMOST DID...

BATHING SPOT ALONG BAYOU IS PROPOSED

Development of Upper Reaches
Would Aid Unemployed
of Houston

By GEORGE B. WATERS
Press Staff Writer

Since the Reconstruction Finance Corporation stands ready to lend money for construction of so-called self-liquidating enterprises, why shouldn't Houston carry out a plan that has been suggested in days gone by to convert the upper bayou into a beach.

The plan was to clean out and straighten the stream, build a huge dam to impound a lake of water, build a concrete or gravel floor to that part above the dam to make a beach, thus providing Houston with water sports and bathing facilities.

In the event there should be insufficient water to supply the reservoir, the city would drill an artesian well, something like the one at Park Place, to furnish any additional water that is needed.

Memorial Park Dam

The dam could be located in Memorial Park, a 1502-acre body of land, which, by the way, is almost paid for now.

Building a dam and a reservoir would provide a great deal of work for Houstonians—which is the exact purpose for which the congress made the money available.

Since a swimming pool has been

Clip from the Aug. 3, 1932
Houston Press, Courtesy of
J.R. Gonzales, Bayou City
History blogger



HOUSTON NEEDS A GREAT ESCAPE FROM THE HEAT IN THE SUMMER. HOUSTON NEEDS A PLACE TO SWIM!

Building on the incredible success of Discovery Green, the Houston Parks Board's Bayou Initiative, and the Buffalo Bayou Partnership's projects, a centrally located place to swim would add an element unrivaled by anything in Houston, and could give the city back an important amenity it lost years ago.

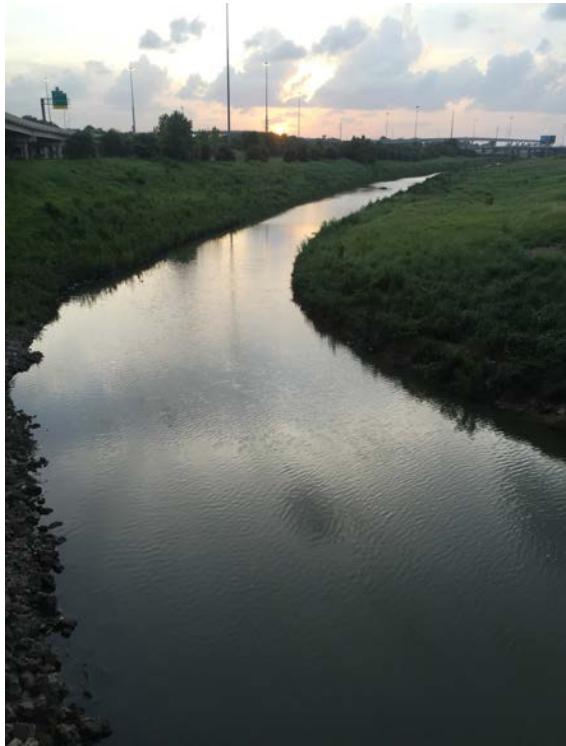
Taking a note from the former Shamrock Hotel Pool, Austin's Barton Springs, and beautiful beaches across the world, a large, centrally located, public, beautifully designed swimming hole could be the answer to the long summers in Houston.

The swimming hole would be a destination for residents and visitors alike and help immensely with Houston's image of quality-of-life.

Such an amenity would offer an incredible asset to Houston as it competes for the best and brightest.



Houston City Hall Reflection Pool Gay
Pride Weekend 2015. Photo By Jon
Shapley/Houston Chronicle



FLOODS AND DROUGHT - SUSTAINABLY UTILIZE AND CAPITALIZE ON THE REGION'S WATER

Houston's persistent flooding offers a challenge to the city for how and what it builds, and the future of thinking about water in the region.

Severe drought is also a major concern and has been a mainstay in Texas for years.

While a swimming hole will not solve flooding problems, it is potentially one way to utilize some of the rainwater. Rainwater could possibly be a resource instead of a nuisance.

The same is true of drought. Since the beach will be designed to be as sustainable and drought-resistant as possible, Buffalo Beach will be designed to preserve water and filter it. It might even filter water from the bayou, cleaning it in the process.

A goal of the Houston Needs a Swimming Hole Project is to focus on the regional watershed and work to create an amenity from water while hedging against drought conditions. A delicate balance will have to be achieved, but this will be one vital task of the team – to create an amenity that works whether the conditions are extremely wet or extremely dry.



HOUSTON LOST THE SHAMROCK,
ASTROWORLD, AND WATERWORLD...

IT'S TIME FOR A PLACE TO SWIM IN THE
MIDDLE OF HOUSTON!



SHAMROCK HOTEL POOL

“TEXAS-SIZED”

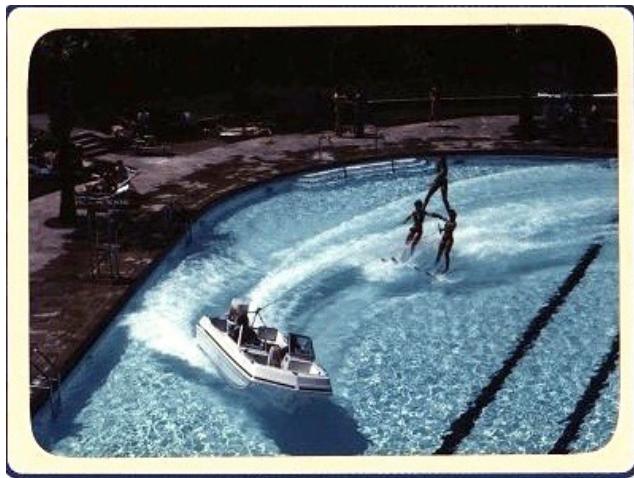
The swimming pool at Houston’s Shamrock Hotel measured 165 by 142 feet, or just over one half acre (approx. 23,500 square feet). When it opened, it was described as “world’s biggest outdoor pool.”

“Texas-sized” was also used to describe the pool. The Shamrock Hotel and its pool opened in 1949 and immediately became a symbol of local pride in Houston. The grand opening of the Shamrock is still cited as one of the biggest social events ever held in Houston. The pool was arguably its best and most enduring feature.



Sadly, the fate of the Shamrock pool was similar to many of the great buildings that have been built in Houston – it was torn down.





SHAMROCK'S LEGENDARY SWIMMING POOL WAS SO BIG YOU COULD WATER-SKI IN IT!



CardCow.com



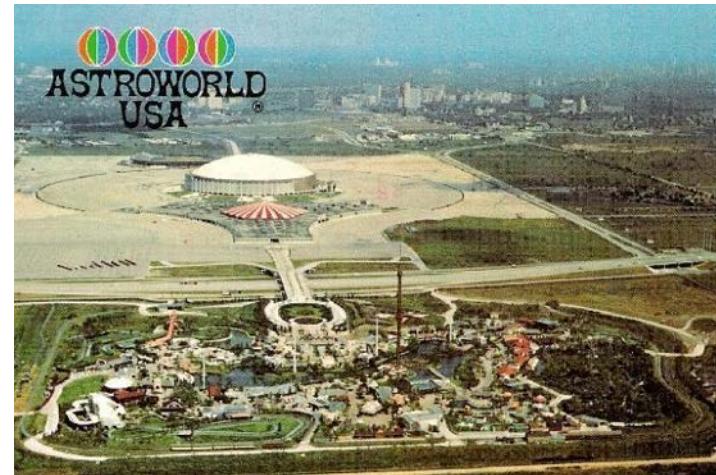
Shamrock Hotel Swimming Pool,
Houston, Texas '37

CardCow.com



ASTROWORLD AND WATERWORLD

Houston's first major water park, Waterworld, was constructed on a section of land east of AstroWorld and opened to the public in 1983. Admission to the water park was separate for almost 20 years, until it was decided in 2002 to allow admission to both parks with one paid ticket, at which time the entire water park became a themed area of AstroWorld. Six Flags Waterworld became a themed section of Six Flags Astroworld in 2002 with a second entrance being built near the "Plaza De Fiesta" section of Six Flags Astroworld. Original attractions included Breaker Beach (large wave pool), Squirt Splash (children's play area), speed slides, body slides, lagoon activity area, and an inner-tube chute that wound itself around and over the "Thunder River" river rapids ride. Many items from Six Flags Waterworld were moved to Six Flags Splashtown after the closure and demolition of Six Flags Astroworld.



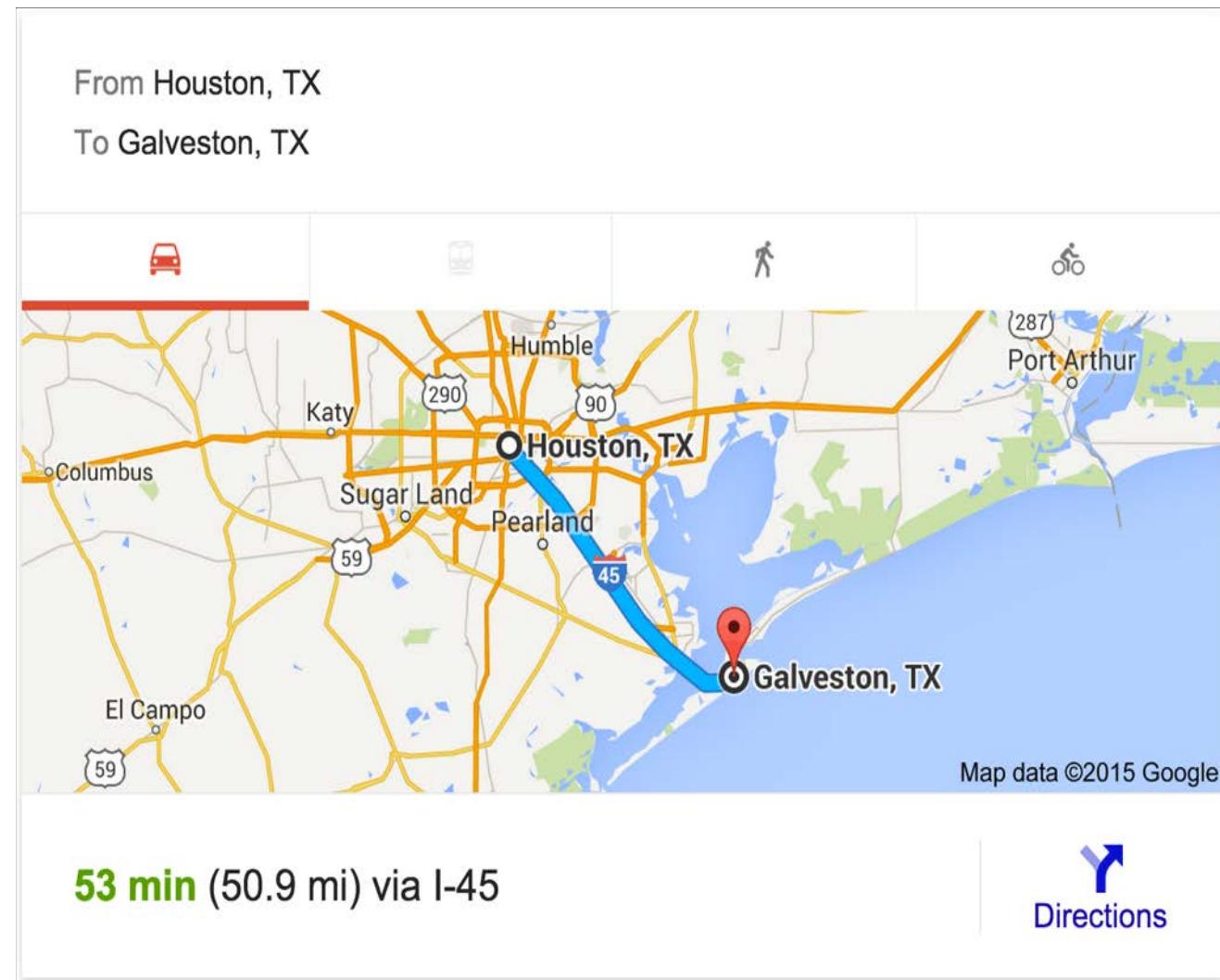


IN SUB-TROPICAL HOUSTON, THE BEACH IS SOMETIMES PAINFULLY FAR AWAY

Houston has many of the attributes of a beach town – hot and humid weather, native palm trees, lots of sunshine – but lacks that one BIG thing...a swimming hole! Buffalo Bayou and the surrounding linear park are quickly becoming great city assets thanks to the continued work of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Yet, there is still one amenity the park and Houston lacks, a place to swim. No water source that allows Houstonians easy access to jump in and cool off.

53 minutes away by car is Galveston, an hour away is Lake Conroe, 30 minutes away is Lake Houston...but good luck finding an easily accessible beach there; Houston's Inner Loop lacks easy access to a refreshing water source that all can enjoy.

A centrally located place to swim would allow Houstonians to enjoy such an amenity. Instead of having to pack into a car to go to the beach, one could ride a bike, jog, or even take public transportation. Imagine that!





LET'S MAKE HOUSTON A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE AND VISIT

Forget the Eiffel Tower, Empire State Building, or the Sears Tower. These are wonderful yet outdated symbols of what make great cities. Though each of these has successfully become a symbol and attraction, none creates such dynamic social spaces as parks. Water goes a step even further.

Barton Springs, the fountains at Millennium Park in Chicago, and even the pool atop the Marina Sands Hotel in Singapore – each of these has transformed its surroundings and created a level of quality-of-life that reaches far beyond the square footage they occupy.

Cities are evolving. Parks are evolving. The towering symbols that once were the envy of every city have given way to quality of life amenities that address people and the environment. Examples are Millennium Park in Chicago, Gardens by the Bay in Singapore, and the plethora of new parks along the once-overlooked and polluted waterfront in New York City.

Houston is undertaking its own efforts to become a better place to live and visit through its parks. Buffalo Bayou Park, Discovery Green, Hermann Park, Memorial Park, plus the network of parks along the city's bayous, etc. Each of these will help transform Houston into a friendlier place to live and visit. A large, centrally located, beautifully designed place to swim would put an exclamation point on all these efforts and highlight the new era for Houston!



©2006 Greater Houston Convention and Visitor's Bureau

LET'S MAKE HOUSTON THE PLACE TO BE IN THE SUMMER

Imagine jumping into beautifully clear cool water on a hot, sunny summer afternoon. Imagine the water instantly washing away the oppressive heat. Imagine floating in the water and looking out to the beautiful downtown skyline.

Opinions of Houston in the summer tend to be less than wonderful. Face it; Houston is hot in the summer. Very hot.

Instead of wasting away in the stuffy indoors, what if the city had a swimming hole as a respite for the city? What if there were instant relief and a place where all could enjoy the summer in the city?

SWIMMING IS HEALTHY!



Houstonians could definitely be healthier. In January, Houston was ranked as one of the “unhealthiest” cities in the U.S. by Better Docs. But, in a city that frequently flirts with temperatures in the 100s for months at a time, who would want to get physical in the summer? Swimming could be the answer!

Physical Health Benefits:

- 2.5 Hours per week reduces risk of chronic illness
- 70% of deaths in the U.S. are due to chronic diseases
- 50% lower risk of death among swimmers compared to inactive individuals
- Decreases effects of disabilities in older adults
- Allows for longer workouts with minimal strain on joints
- After only 10 minutes of swimming, you may burn anywhere from 60-150 calories.

Mental Health Benefits:

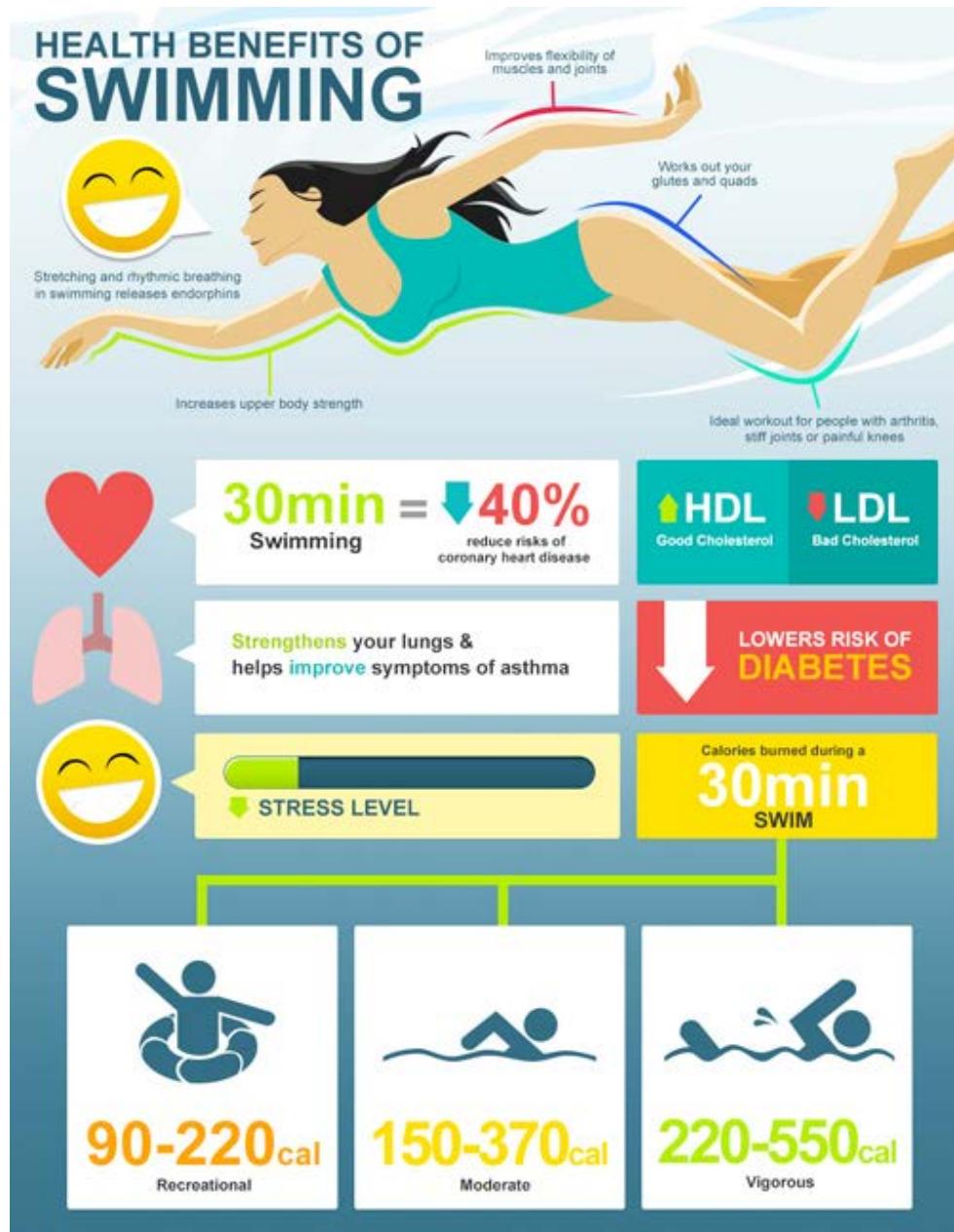
- Improve Mood
- Promotes Relation
- Increases Happiness
- Decreases Anxiety

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Houston ranked as one of the unhealthiest cities

By Andrea Waguespack, Tuesday, January 27, 2015

A study published by Better Docs revealed the list of the healthiest and unhealthiest cities in America, and it comes as no surprise that the Bayou City ranks #32...





SWIMMING IS PROFITABLE!

Lots of studies show the benefits of exercise. On July 28, 2015, NPR's Rae Ellen Bichell published a story on the work and financial benefits of physical activity. "We have a lot of research showing that investing in work well-being will bring back as much as six times" the money invested, says Matleena Livson of the Finnish Sports Confederation. "Because you reduce sick leaves, you improve the cohesiveness and good spirit, and you improve employer image at the workplace."

"Healthy employees do better work. They also don't have as many sick days. And staying fit, especially by playing sports together, could help build company cohesion and loyalty. "And that's actually even more important than the health side," says Livson.

"Physically active people also save the healthcare system a lot of money. According to a calculator devised by the World Health Organization, people who bike and walk save the health care system as much as \$5.5 billion, each year."





FOR THE DOGS?

Houston's Buffalo Bayou has arguably the best doggie beach / swimming hole in the entire world! Why not create one for humans?



Dogs enjoying Buffalo Bayou Partnership's Johnny Steele Dog Park Swimming Pond



A separate project - rendering of Buffalo Bayou Partnership's Lost Lake, currently under construction near Dunlavy. No swimming will be allowed in Lost Lake. Buffalo Beach is envisioned to be very similar, except one could swim in the water!



Rendering of Johnny Steele Dog Park Swimming Pond



HOUSTON'S SWIMMING HOLE





PART BEACH...PART SWIMMING HOLE...PART POOL

Taking notes from the landscape and climate that makes Houston unique - its proximity to beaches along the Gulf Coast, its proximity to Central Texas swimming holes, and its subtropical climate - the Project is envisioned to look and feel native to the city and the region in which it will be located. It is envisioned to be a hybrid between three types of bodies of water: a beach – with beautiful sandy edges for relaxing and plenty of shade, a swimming hole - with natural edges and grassy banks, and a modern marvel of a swimming pool.



POSSIBLE POOL TYPES / WATER SOURCES



Conventional Chlorine Pool

Pumps, mechanical filters, and disinfectants are often used to sanitize the water in conventional pools. Chemical disinfectants, such as chlorine (usually as a hypochlorite salt, such as calcium hypochlorite) and bromine, are commonly used to kill pathogens. If not properly maintained, chemical sanitation can produce high levels of disinfection byproducts. Sanitized swimming pool water can theoretically appear green if a certain amount of iron salts copper chloride are present in the water.

Saltwater Pool

Saltwater chlorination is a process that uses dissolved salt as a store for the chlorination system. The chlorine generator (also known as salt cell, salt generator, salt chlorinator) uses electrolysis in the presence of dissolved salt (NaCl) to produce hypochlorous acid (HClO) and sodium hypochlorite (NaClO), which are the sanitizing agents already commonly used in swimming pools. As such, a saltwater pool is not actually chlorine-free; it simply utilizes a chlorine generator instead of direct addition of chlorine. The benefits of salt systems in pools are the convenience and the constant delivery of pure chlorine-based sanitizer. The reduction of irritating chloramines versus traditional chlorinating methods and the "softening" effect of electrolysis reducing dissolved alkali minerals in the water are also perceived as benefits. For some people that have sensitivities to chlorine, these systems may be less offensive. Salt-water pools are cheaper to maintain throughout the year, since salt is significantly cheaper than the commercial chlorines. Disadvantages are the initial cost of the system, maintenance, and the cost of replacement cells. Salt is a corrosive and will damage some metals and some improperly sealed stone. However, as the ideal saline concentration of a salt-chlorinated pool is very low (<3,500ppm, the threshold for human perception of salt by taste; seawater is about ten times this concentration), damage usually occurs due to improperly maintained pool chemistry or improper maintenance of the electrolytic cell. Pool equipment manufacturers will not warranty stainless steel products damaged by saline pools.

Natural Pool

Natural pools were developed in central and western Europe in the early and mid-1980s by designers and landscape architects with environmental concerns. They have recently been growing in popularity as an alternative to traditional swimming pools. Natural pools are constructed bodies of water in which no chemicals or devices that disinfect or sterilize water are used, and all the cleaning of the pool is achieved purely with the motion of the water through biological filters and plants rooted hydroponically in the system. In essence, natural pools seek to recreate swimming holes and swimmable lakes, the environment where people feel safe swimming in a non-polluted, healthy, and ecologically balanced body of water. It should be noted, currently City of Houston requires residual chlorine treatment which may represent a permitting hurdle for this type of pool.

Pool Utilizing Bayou or Underground Water

Likely the most buzzworthy source of water would be filtered water from Buffalo Bayou or a nearby underground water source. These sources need to be studied to determine their feasibility.



CONVENTIONAL VS. SALTWATER POOLS

Chlorine in conventional swimming pools can be described as a combination of free available chlorine (FAC) and combined available chlorine (CAC). While FAC is composed of the free chlorine that is available for sanitizing the water, the CAC includes chloramines, which are formed by the reaction of FAC with amines. Chloramines are responsible for the "chlorine smell" of pools, as well as skin and eye irritation. These problems are the result of insufficient levels of free available chlorine, and indicate a pool that must be "shocked" by the addition of 5-10 times the normal amount of chlorine to maintain sanitation levels safe for swimming.

In saltwater pools, however, the generator continuously produces free chlorine, eliminating the formation of CAC. Electrolysis burns off chloramines in the same manner as traditional shock (oxidizer). As with conventionally chlorinated pools, saltwater pools must be monitored in order to maintain proper water chemistry. Insufficient salt, higher-than-normal chlorine demand, low stabilizer, sun exposure, or mechanical issues can cause low chlorine levels with the generator. Salt count can be lowered due to splash out, backwashing, and dilution via rainwater.

Research has shown that because saltwater pools still use chlorine sanitization, they generate the same disinfection byproducts (DBPs) that are present in conventional pools, although in much lower amounts. Saltwater and pools utilizing copper-silver ionization systems can significantly reduce but don't completely eliminate chlorine content.



The Ceuta Public Pool in the Maritime Park in Ceuta, Spain



The Ceuta Pool is 20,000 square feet of salt water



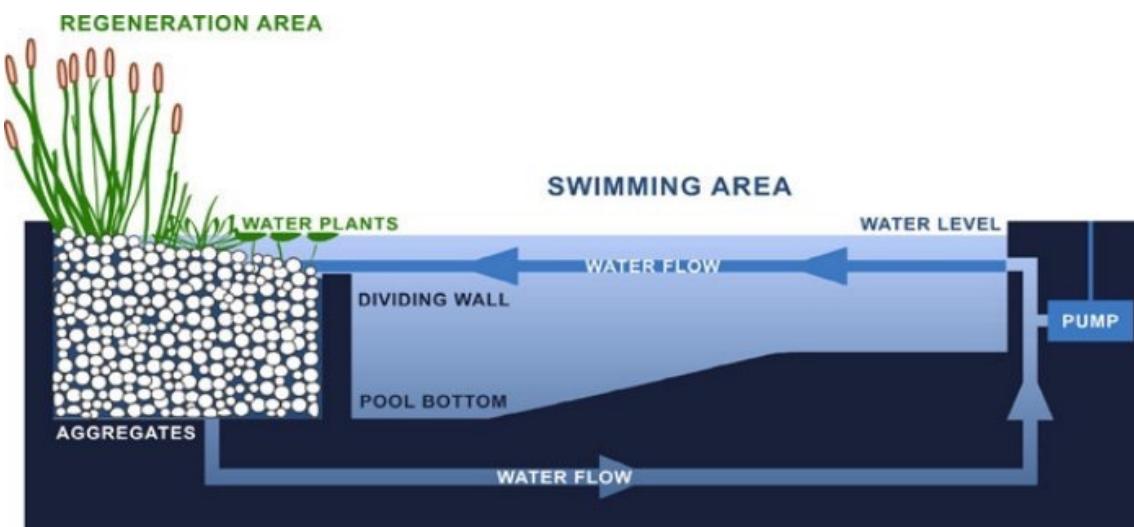
NATURAL SWIMMING POOLS

Natural Swimming Pools (NSP) originated in Austria & Germany in the 1980's as health concerns over chlorine grew. Today there are estimated to be more than 20,000 Natural Swimming Pools across Europe; including large, public swim facilities. The Natural Swimming Pool is based on limnology, a scientific system that allows plant and microorganisms to naturally filter the swimming water, which make it free of chlorine and other harmful chemicals.

Natural swimming pools are self-cleaning pools that combine swimming areas and water gardens. Materials and designs vary – the pools can be lined and look natural or modern – but all pools rely on “regeneration” zones, areas given over to aquatic plants that act as organic cleansers.

The pools have skimmers and pumps that circulate the water through the regeneration zone and draw it across a wall of rocks, loose gravel or tiles, to which friendly bacteria attach, serving as an additional biological filter. First, particles, grease and hair are strained out. Then the water filters into the regeneration area, where plants like water lilies, Cattails, irises, and other waterborne plants work with the aquatic sediment to filter and absorb bacteria and other compounds. In the regeneration area, the nutrient load (nitrogen and phosphorus) is purified and cleaned. This approach is compatible with naturalistic water feature aesthetics including plant life but not with fish due to the high nutrient loading.

Unlike artificial ponds, which tend to be as murky with groundwater runoff and sediment from soil erosion as the natural ponds they're modeled on, in a natural pool the water can be clear enough to see through to the bottom.



Natural Public Swimming Pool, Germany



Natural Swimming Pool, Provence, France



NATURAL SWIMMING POOLS

Natural pools often are created with a terraced design with the swimming area on top and natural regeneration area below. On the sloped banks of the bayou, this design approach might work.



Natural public pool Bingen-Bingerbruck in Germany diagram



POOL UTILIZING BAYOU, CREEK, OR UNDERGROUND WATER

If it is possible to utilize and clean water from, and release water back to either Buffalo Bayou, the underground water table, or another nearby natural water source, this method would likely be preferred. This method needs in depth feasibility investigation to determine if it would be safe for people and the environment and cost effective.





HYBRID POOL?

City regulations could create challenges for certain types of pools. Municipalities such as Minneapolis have encountered many hurdles when attempting to build 100% Natural pools because of the perceived (and possibly real) public safety concerns. Florida and California have had to create new laws in order to allow "swimming lakes", large bodies of water that have less than 2% of the added chemicals of conventional pools, to be built.

Public natural pools have shown a successful track record in Europe, but a hybrid model could be one answer to creating a beautiful and natural-looking beach while avoiding perception issues and working within the regulatory climate.

One type of hybrid pool would combine aspects of a Natural and conventional pool. It could look and feel as though it were part of the landscape while still fulfilling the City's requirements for disinfection and sanitation. The "hybrid" aspect of the pool would simply require building a physical barrier to separate the natural treatment from the residual chlorine treatment.



Natural Swimming Pool



Conventional Swimming Pool



BEST POOL TYPE?

Which technology or water source makes the most sense for the Site, for Houston? Which would make the most impact on the city?

The best fit could be one of the aforementioned pool types, a hybrid, or something else entirely.

Whatever the technology or source, the design of the Project's pool could take many forms – a crystal clear beach like Streets Beach in Brisbane, Australia, a "Crystal Lagoon", a natural Texas swimming hole like Barton Springs that taps a local underground creek or Buffalo Bayou, or a modern marvel like Singapore's Marina Bay Sands cantilevered pool (see photos of and information about these pools in subsequent sections in this package).





IDEAL SIZE

The Project should be large enough to function as a destination, essentially the beach, for Houston. Initial research indicates the ideal size in total would be roughly 10-12 acres: 2-4 for the water area, 3-4 for the beach/grass/relaxation areas, and the remaining 2-6 for the surrounding amenities such as restaurant(s), dressing rooms, pavilion, and parking lot. The pool portion could be one large swimming area or broken into separate swimming areas.

To compare the size, the old Shamrock Hotel pool reached 165 by 142 feet, or approximately 23,000 square feet. The pool/water area at Barton Springs in Austin is approximately 3 acres in size with the banks adding an additional 3 acres for a total of approximately 6 acres of total space. The largest current pool in the world is 30 acres in size in Egypt.

CAPACITY

To be determined based on final design

COST

Cost will be determined by the exact site, size, and final scope of the project.

REVENUE SOURCES

The Project will need ongoing revenue in order to pay for all maintenance, expenses, etc.



NATIVE SAND?

The banks of the bayou are already naturally sandy and silty. There is so much that it's difficult to control sometimes. There are literally piles of sand along the paths of Buffalo Bayou after a big rain. Why not utilize that sand for something instead of trying to get rid of all of it?

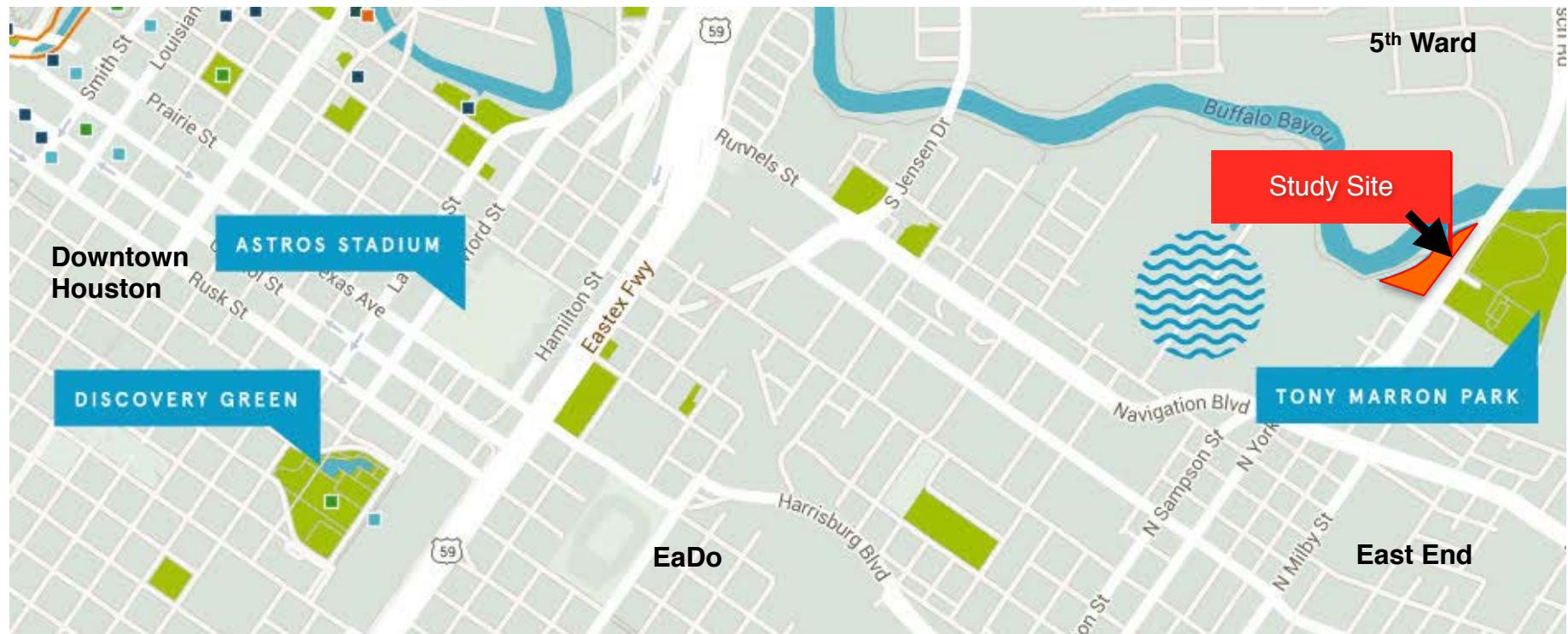




STUDY SITE

An approximately 9.8-acre (and possibly larger) site on Buffalo Bayou at York St is one possible location for the Swimming Hole. Although this site is not under contract or secured in any way, it is one of the more appealing potential sites because of its size, adjacency to other park space (Tony Marron Park and Buffalo Bayou Park), ability to feature onsite parking, and adjacency to Buffalo Bayou's interconnected hike and bike trail. The site has beautiful vistas of Buffalo Bayou and downtown Houston in the distance.

Its location on the East End could be seen as both a benefit and a challenge. Ideally, Buffalo Beach would be centrally located in order to be accessible to as many Houstonians as possible. While the Study Location is only about a mile from downtown, it is still rather off-the-beaten-path to some people. The industrial and largely underdeveloped surroundings today could be seen as detractors...or opportunities, however. One exciting aspect of this project in a site such as this is the potential to help shape a neighborhood and development around it. With proposed infrastructure improvements nearby, the Livability Study conducted by Asakura Robinson, the Greater East End Management District, the Fifth Ward Management District, and the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and development occurring nearby, this site could be one of the more important sites in one of the most exciting up-and-coming neighborhoods in Houston.





STUDY SITE

The approximately 9.8-acre site is adjacent and connected to Tony Marron Park and has a great view of the downtown skyline.





STUDY SITE

The site is adjacent to Buffalo Bayou and a hike-and-bike trail that is planned to connect throughout the bayou trail system.





STUDY SITE

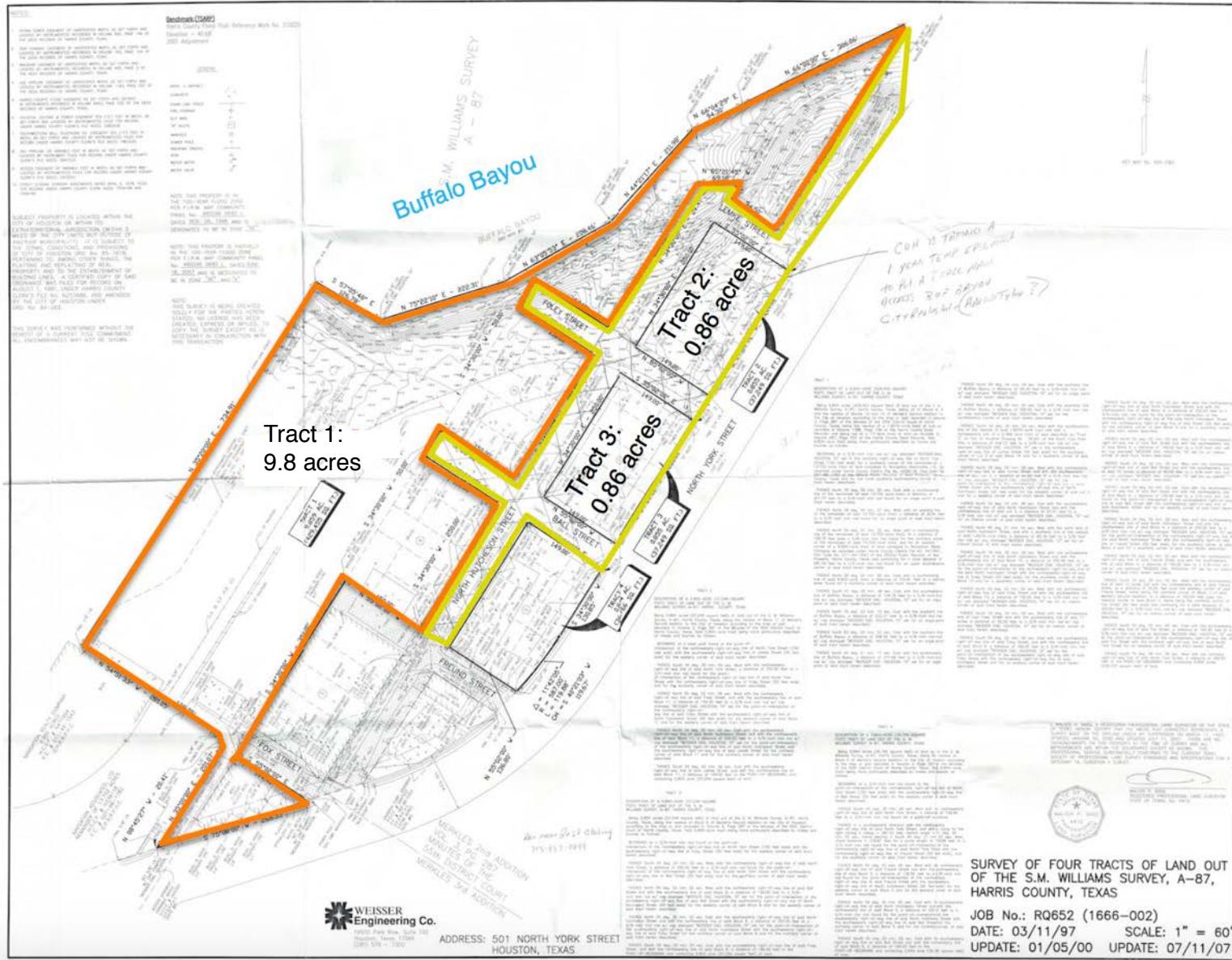
The approximately 9.8-acre site is also connected to the hike-and-bike trail and overlooking Buffalo Bayou. An additional approximately 2 acres could also possibly be available.





STUDY SITE

The survey indicates Tract 1 is approximately 9.8 acres. Tracts 2 and 3 and street closures totaling approximately 2 acres might also be available.





INITIAL CONCEPT

On the bank of and overlooking Buffalo Bayou, the concept envisions a sandy beach with surrounding grass, boardwalk, parking lot, pavilion for one or more restaurants, shops, event space, changing rooms, etc. Any number of other amenities could be added.

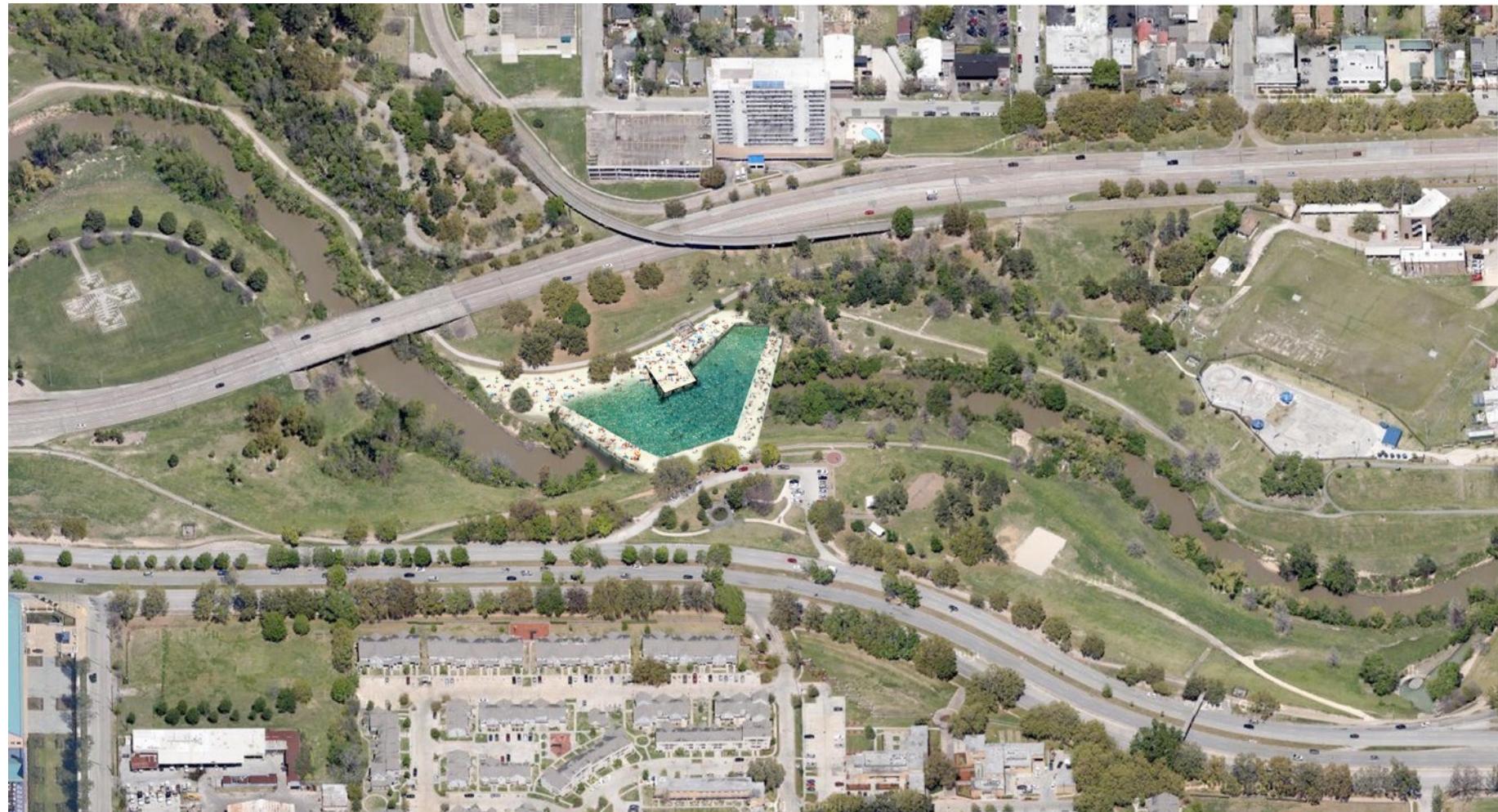




ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT

In keeping with the idea of Singapore's Marina Bay Sands rooftop pool, the Swimming Hole could possibly be cantilevered over Buffalo Bayou. This concept would be integrated into the landscape by utilizing the banks and sloping edge of the bayou to create a beach. The structure would need to be designed to withstand and not impede floodwaters during extremely high water events.

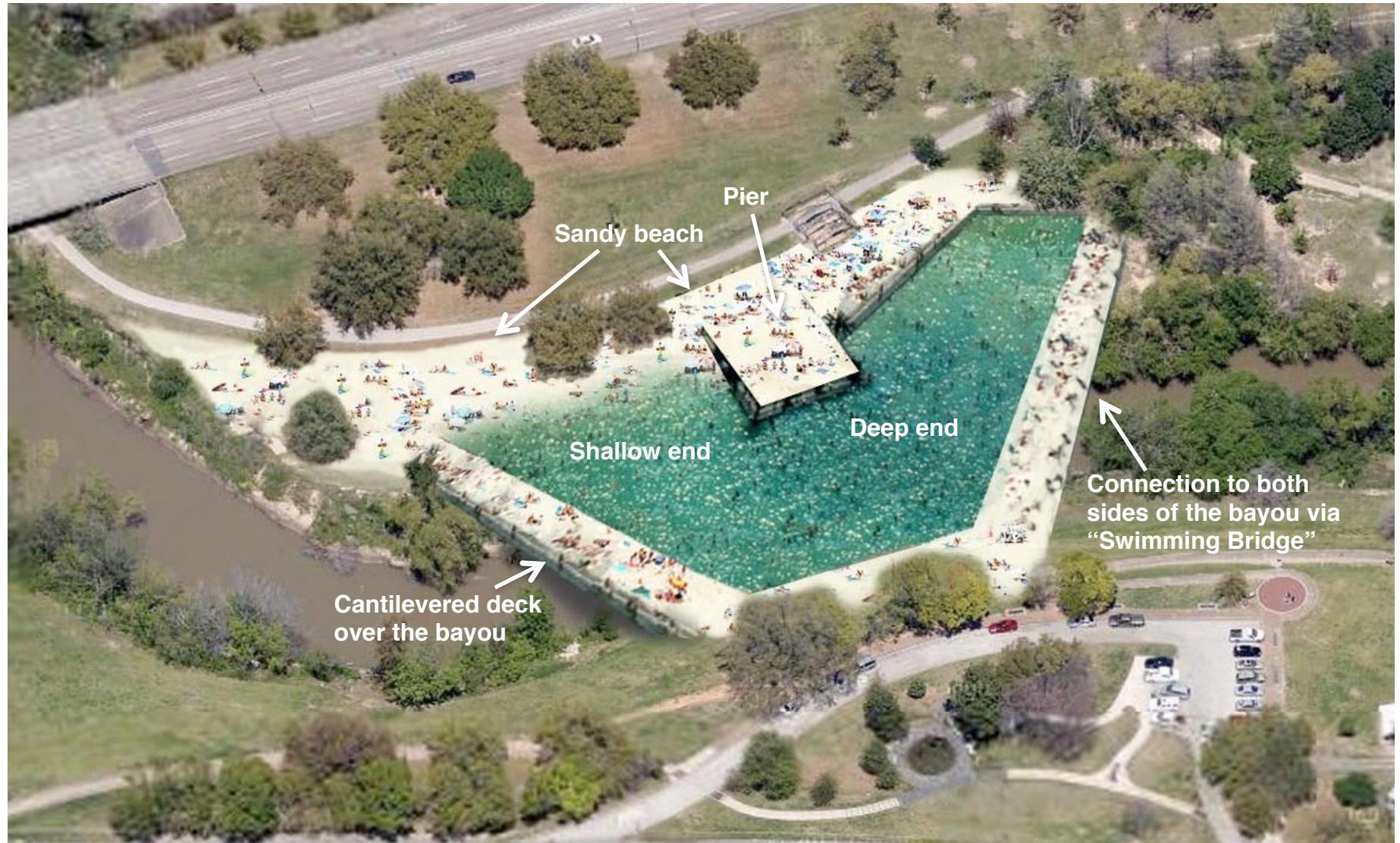
* For visual comparison of pool portion of the project, any parking lot(s), possible regeneration zone, and pavilion including restroom facilities, restaurants, and event spaces are not included in this image.





ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT

Both sides of the bayou could be linked via a “Swimming Bridge.”





ADDITIONAL AMENITIES

To create an active yet, at times, serene destination, a range of amenities will complement the swimming hole - night movies, a restaurant, bar, beach club, and retail amenities.



A restaurant and bar



Streets Beach, Brisbane, Australia



Atlantic Ocean beach front restaurant design in Florida=Bercy Chen Studio LP



Barbouni Beach Restaurant, Costa Navarino, Greece, K-STUDIO

CONVENTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD POOLS VS. HOUSTON'S SWIMMING HOLE

Houston's Beach will differ in many ways from neighborhood city pools:

Neighborhood Pools

Size: 3,000 – 8,000 square feet, typically

Capacity: 100 – 300 people

Maintenance: High

Typical User: Residents living nearby

Sustainability: Low – water usage is high, lots of chemicals are added, and often-inefficient pump systems that use a great deal of electricity are used

Health: Moderate – swimming is good exercise, however excessive chemicals can often lead to irritants

Community/City Benefit: Moderate

Use Experience: Urban, non-natural



Houston's Swimming Hole

Size: 100,000 – 150,000 square feet

Capacity: 2,000 – 3,000 people

Maintenance: Moderate to low

Typical User: Residents from all over the city + tourists

Sustainability: High – designs call for many of the features to be as sustainable as possible, utilizing low amounts of energy and low amounts of municipal water

Health: High – one can swim and exercise without the exposure to as many chemicals

Community/City Benefit: Very high

Use Experience: Natural, connected to environment





Houston is a city of innovation, where anything is possible. NASA, the Astrodome, the Port of Houston, the Texas Medical Center – these are Houston. A giant beautiful beach in the middle of the city would highlight these attributes and create a symbol for the new Houston...where innovative quality-of-life amenities are making Houston one of the great world cities.



Rendering Courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership's Masterplan



PARTNERS



BUFFALO BAYOU PARTNERSHIP

Buffalo Bayou Partnership is the non-profit organization revitalizing and transforming Buffalo Bayou, Houston's most significant natural resource.

Founded in 1986 by Houston Mayor Kathy Whitmire, Buffalo Bayou Partnership's geographic focus is the 10-mile stretch of Buffalo Bayou from Shepherd Drive to the Port of Houston

Turning Basin. Over the organization's 28-year history, the BBP board and staff have raised and leveraged more than \$150 million in private and public funds for the bayou's redevelopment and stewardship—spearheading award-winning projects such as Sabine Promenade and Sesquicentennial Park, protecting land for future parks, constructing hike and bike trails, and operating a comprehensive clean-up program.



**BUFFALO BAYOU
PARTNERSHIP**

Buffalo Bayou Partnership also seeks ways to activate Buffalo Bayou through pedestrian, boating and biking amenities; volunteer activities; permanent and temporary art installations; and wide-ranging tours and events that attract thousands.

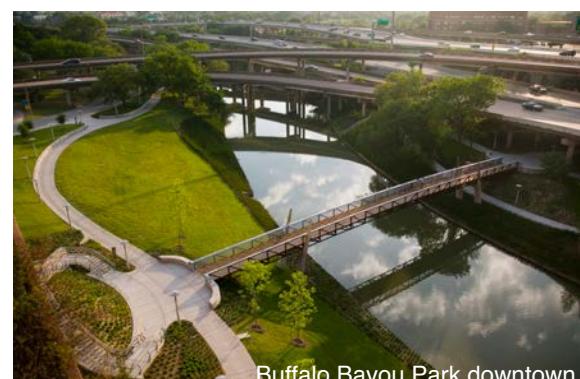
Buffalo Bayou officially starts just west of Katy, Texas and flows approximately 53 miles east through the Port of Houston and Houston Ship Channel into Galveston Bay and onto the Gulf of Mexico. Ever since the Allen Brothers founded Houston in 1836, Buffalo Bayou has played a critical role in the evolution of the city. In addition, it has served as a major artery in the network of waterways flowing from west to east into Galveston Bay. To learn more about the rich history of Buffalo Bayou, visit Louis Aulbach and Linda Gorski's website, Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings or read Marguerite Johnston's Houston: The Unknown City, 1836–1946.



Buffalo Bayou Park



Buffalo Bayou Park under HWY 45



Buffalo Bayou Park downtown

<http://buffalobayou.org/>



THE TEAM



Monte Large

Monte is a real estate developer focused on both private and public projects in Houston's urban core. He is Board Chair of the Urban Planning Committee at the Midtown Management District (MMD) where he is helping lead a District-wide quality-of-life improvement projects. He has also assisted with large capital projects such as the 3-acre Midtown Park, the \$9.6 Million Bagby Street reconstruction, Texas' first Certified Greenroad, and the recent completion of Bagby Park. Current real estate developments include the rehabilitation and preservation of buildings in Midtown and the East End. Monte is a partner in New Living and Beaver's Ice House, a Community Development Fellow with American Leadership Forum (ALF), co-founder of SPARC Growth Houston, an organization of management districts who's mission is to create opportunities for responsible, more focused development in close-in older neighborhoods, and was co-founder of Wulfe Urban, an urban development consulting and brokerage team at Wulfe & Co. Monte is a William Kinne Real Estate Fellow; an ICSC Graduate Scholar; and holds a Master of Science in Real Estate Development from Columbia University.

Evan O'Neill

Evan is a design entrepreneur interested in designing clean, simple and unexpected solutions for projects involved in sustainability, smart development, and social responsibility. Evan is a Project M alumnus, founding partner in New Living (a certified B Corporation), and dreams of a progressive city with public transportation, protected bike lanes, and a natural pool with bossa nova playing in the background.

Jeff Kaplan

Jeff is a social entrepreneur focusing on business start-ups and real estate. In 2007, Jeff founded New Living, a green building and home store that became the first certified B Corp (or Benefit Corporation) that was a retail store in the US. He was the founder of the Urban Land Institute's national Young Leaders Program at the age of 21. He was a co-founder of Wulfe Urban, an urban development consulting and brokerage team at Wulfe & Co. He was the Chair of Sustainability for the Houston District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as well as ULI's Urban Marketplace Program, and sat on ULI's Houston board for five of the last seven years. Jeff has helped develop many small, socially impactful businesses in Houston, including Caroline Collective, The Green Painter, Trentino Gelato, Texstone Solid Surfaces, Beaver's Ice House and Sammy's @ 2016 Main. He has served on the boards of The Blackwood Educational Land Institute, The Urban Land Institute, The Rice Building Institute, the Archetypes steering committee for the AIA, and The Great Plains Council. In 2011, he was named a "Green Hero" by the Houston Chapter of the United States Green Building Council. He is a scholar in the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business Program. His passions are green building, environmental health, and the revitalization of cities.



ADDITIONAL PRECEDENTS

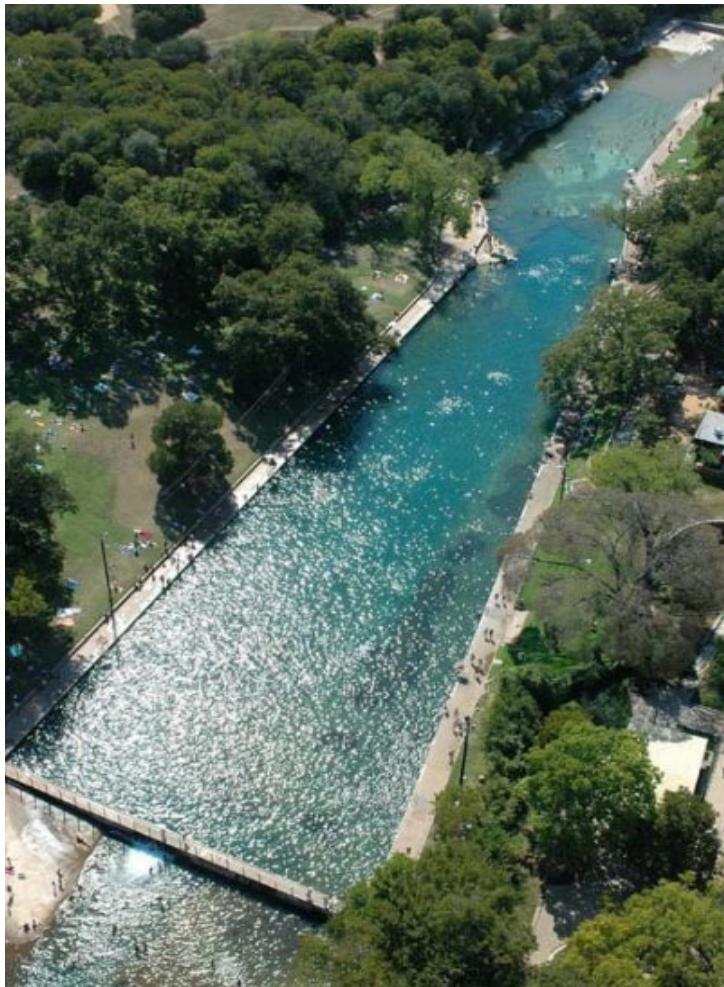


CLASSICS



BARTON SPRINGS POOL, AUSTIN, TX

Barton Springs Pool, arguably Austin's greatest feature, is a spring-fed swimming pool in Zilker Park, Austin, Texas. Andrew Jackson Zilker, deeded it to Austin in 1918. During the 1920s, the city undertook a construction project to create a larger swimming area by damming the springs and building sidewalks. The bathhouse was constructed in the 1940s and modeled after the design of the bathhouse at Deep Eddy Pool.



900 feet long and 3 acres in size, the pool is fed from underground springs and is, on average, 68 degrees year-round. 700,000 people visited Barton Springs Pool in 2010.

[Friends of Barton Springs Pool](#)





CORAL GABLES, FL - THE VENETIAN POOL

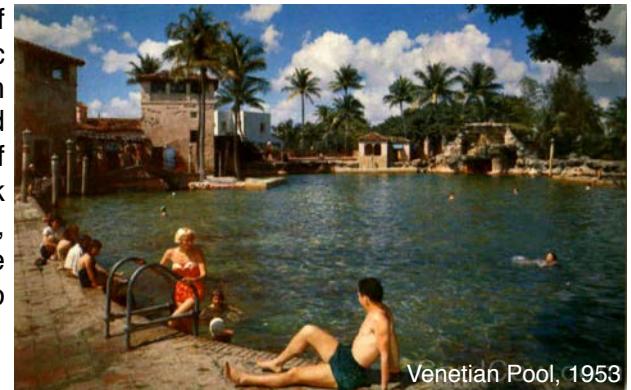
The Venetian Pool, built in 1923, is still one of the main tourist attractions in the City of Coral Gables. The pool was created from a coral rock quarry. It features two large historic lookout towers, with a view to the city. The 820,000-gallon pool is fed with spring water from an underground aquifer. In the spring and summer seasons, the pool is filled and drained daily. The Venetian pool was opened in 1924 as the “Venetian Casino,” which was part of the Grand Plan developer George Merrick had for the City of Coral Gables. George Merrick envisioned creating a City with Mediterranean features. With the efforts of George Merrick, artist Denman Fink, and architect Phineas Paist, the pool was transformed into a paradise that today is included in the National Register of Historic Places, the only swimming pool to have such a designation.

In its early days, the “Venetian Casino” was the destination for many celebrities. The pool was also a site for orchestrated concerts, in which the pool was emptied of its 820,000 gallons of water and the orchestra would perform on the pool bottom. Many years later in 2001, this scene was duplicated as a concert, which was held on the bottom of the pool to commemorate the City of Coral Gables’ 75th Birthday.

Coral Gables Venetian Pool Website: <http://coralgables.com/index.aspx?page=167>



Venetian Pool, Today



Venetian Pool, 1953



Venetian Pool, Today

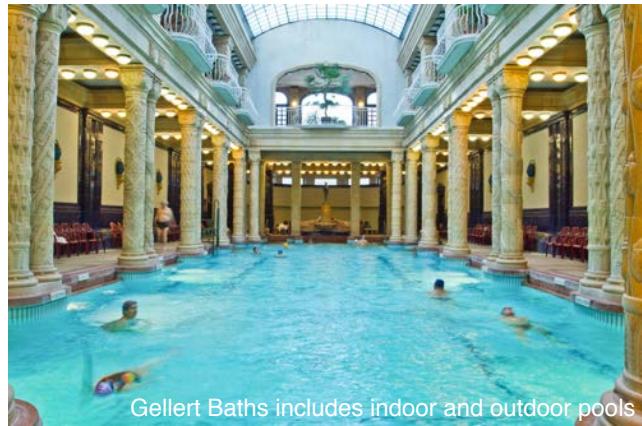


Venetian Pool, Today



GENEVA, BUDAPEST - GELLERT BATHS AND SPA

The Gellert Bath and Hotel opened its doors in 1918. Outdoor pools were subsequently added, and today it combines modern technical developments with rich historical heritage. 18.5 million gallons of 70-172 degree warm thermal water spring forth daily from its 118 natural thermal springs. The International Balneological Association was established at the Gellért Thermal Bath in Budapest in 1934. When formed, the Congress stated the following words: "No city can put forward a stronger claim to health than Budapest. Its high medical professionalism, the excellent equipment of its healing institutions, the high level of scientific research, makes Budapest the optimum choice for international affairs of balneology to be handled from here..."



Gellert Baths includes indoor and outdoor pools





SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA - BONDI BATHS

Bondi Baths, an Olympic-size pool, opened in 1929. The source of the water is the adjacent ocean, which provides a constant stream of saltwater. Because of its solid concrete construction, the pool is always slightly colder than the ocean. Upon emerging from the striking shoreside pool at the Icebergs, bathers enjoy the amenities of its modernist, beachy clubhouse complex, which includes a gourmet bistro, two bars, fitness facilities and a 1,600-square-foot sundeck. The Baths are open year round. The cost of entry in 2014 was \$6.

10 Gorgeous Pools You Won't Believe Are Public, By Sean O'Neill updated 8/27/2011





GERMANY - BINGEN-BINGERBRÜCK

The natural water park Bingen-Bingerbrück, built in 1969, is situated next to the river Rhine. It is built over a several levels of terraced land overlooking the river.

A biological-mechanical water treatment technology was used. A combination of an irrigated Neptune filter for peak load covering, a bank filter, and aquaculture with a subjacent over accumulated soil filter were chosen. The aquaculture also serves as splash water tank and has, depending on the operating load and the density of guests, alters water levels. A consistent turbation to upkeep the dilution approach like in traditional pools is utilized. However, in a disinfected pool the consistent turbation of the germicide is a priority. In a natural pool the aim is to minimize the leakage of zooplankton during the full-load operation, because the zooplankton poses an important part in the "biological in-situ decontamination" through specific filtration of the water body.

http://www.polyplan-gmbh.de/cms/polyplan/en/cms?cms_knuuid=2d86b777-251f-4f95-aa6a-56ce3edbf78a



The public natural pool, Bingen-Bingerbrück, overlooks the River Rhine





BARCELONA, SPAIN - PARC DE LA CREUETA DEL COLL

Renowned for its large 70,000 square foot public bathing pool, Barcelona's Parc de la Creueta del Coll opened in 1976 in Barcelona's Gràcia neighbourhood, amid much controversy about the ownership of the former quarry of El Coll. Instead of using the site to build flats, the decision was taken to create a public park open to all the neighbors in Gràcia. In the park there are ping-pong tables, picnic and play areas, and a shallow bathing pool. Eduardo Chillida's claw-shaped sculpture, In Praise of Water, is installed over the pool. The park area is open all year; only the lake-pool closes outside summer.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/spain/barcelona/sights/park/parc-creueta-coll#ixzz2dKJjsA4g>



70,000 square foot public pool



NEW YORK CITY POOLS, NYC

Astoria Park Pool is the oldest, and largest, in New York City. The pool complex, envisioned by Robert Moses, opened in 1936 and remains a mecca for all levels of swimmers. The gigantic main pool is 330 feet in length and can accommodate 3,000 people — meaning there's plenty of room for swimmers to relax and float around. The complex also features a diving pool and a wading pool. Guests can relax on the elevated bleachers, after a visit to the snack bar, to take the whole scene in: the historic art deco bathing house, the many families enjoying the pool, and the Triboro Bridge soaring over the East River in the background.

In 2012, McCarren Park Pool was reopened after an extensive reconstruction effort. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that reconstruction of the 37,950 square foot McCarren Park Pool was funded as part of the City's PlaNYC long-term planning initiative.

nycgovparks.org/parks/AstoriaPark/facilities/pools



Astoria Park Pool, 2010



Astoria Park Pool, 1948



McCarren Park Pool, 2013



NEW WAVE



BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA - STREETS BEACH

Possibly the closest example to what could be best suited for Houston is Streets Beach in Brisbane, Australia. Set next to the Brisbane River, a brackish urban river not too dissimilar to Houston's Buffalo Bayou, Brisbane's Streets Beach provides central Brisbane, Australia's 3rd largest city and one often overlooked, with a unique amenity and access to a "beach."

Australia's only beach in the middle of a city, Streets Beach, which opened in 1992, is one of Brisbane's most popular attractions. A unique, 22,000 square foot man-made swimming beach, Streets Beach overlooks the Central Business District.

Conceived as a major piece of landscape, Streets Beach has a swimming clear lagoon with white sand beaches, palm trees, pebbled creeks and shady shallows surrounded by sub-tropical trees and exotic plantings. 141,000 cubic feet of sand line Streets Beach. Every year the beach is topped up with an additional 70 tonnes to ensure that it is kept in pristine condition.

Streets Beach's lagoon contains chlorinated fresh water that is recirculated every six hours at up to 33 gallons per second. Water for the beach is pumped through two large sand filters and chemically treated before being pumped back into the pools. Dredge pump and self-propelled sifting machines clean the adjoining pools. The beach is patrolled seven days a week by lifeguards.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Bank_Parklands



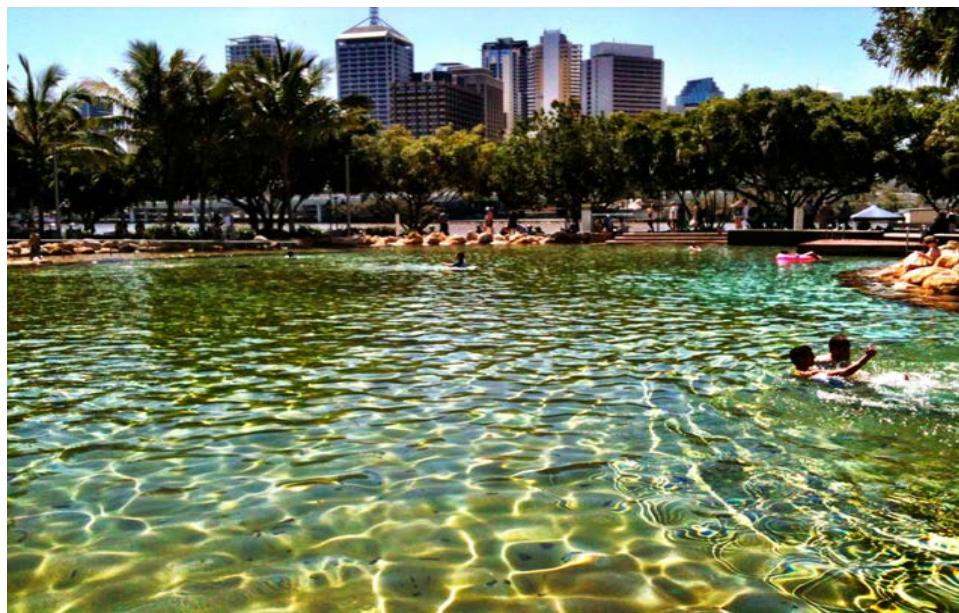
Streets Beach has sandy banks



www.traveljournals.net



STREETS BEACH, CONTINUED





STREETS BEACH, CONTINUED

Surrounding Streets Beach are the South Bank Parklands consisting of a mixture of rainforest, water, grassed areas and plazas as well as features such as the riverfront promenade, the Grand Arbour, the Courier Mail Piazza, the Nepal Peace Pagoda, the Wheel of Brisbane, restaurants, shops and fountains. South Bank and its parklands are one of Brisbane's most important cultural precincts and they regularly host large-scale festivals and events. Approximately 11,000,000 people visit each year.

The beach has received awards including the 1999 Moreton Bay region's cleanest beach in the Keep Australia Beautiful Council's Clean Beach Challenge and the 2001 Environmental Protection Agency's Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beach Challenge, Friendliest Beach Award. The beach area comprises a lagoon with enough water to fill five Olympic swimming pools, with sand beaches, palm trees, rocky creeks and subtropical trees and exotic plantings. The beach is patrolled seven days a week by lifeguards.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Bank_Parklands





STREETS BEACH, CONTINUED





STREETS BEACH, CONTINUED

Streets Beach and the 1.9 million square-foot (approx. 43-acre) South Bank Parklands overlook Brisbane's Downtown.



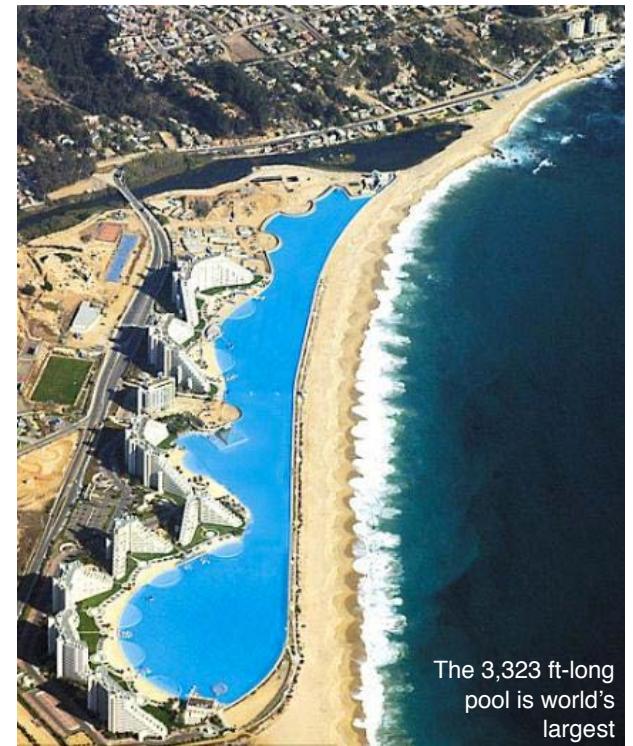


CHILE - SAN ALFONSO DEL MAR

San Alfonso del Mar is a private resort in Algarrobo, Chile, about 62 miles west of the capital Santiago. The resort is recognized as having the world's second largest swimming pool. The pool is 3,323 feet long, covering almost 20 acres, containing some 66 million gallons of seawater, with a maximum depth of 11.5 feet. The water is pumped from the Pacific Ocean, filtered, and treated.

Crystal Lagoons built the pool, which opened in December 2006. Estimates put the total cost of construction at about \$3.5 million.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Alfonso_del_Mar



The 3,323 ft-long pool is world's largest





SINGAPORE - POOL AT MARINA BAY SANDS HOTEL

The pool on top of the 55-story hotel Marina Bay Sands, opened in 2010, is a leading attraction in Asia. Its boat-shaped 'SkyPark', perched atop three connected towers, is a one hectare roof sky park offering 360-degree views of Singapore's skyline and featuring a 500 foot long infinity pool and landscaped gardens with over 900 different types of trees and plants.

The Sky-Park's infinity-edged swimming pool, with a 475-foot vanishing edge, is perched 650 feet above the ground, and the observation deck offers visitors a panoramic view of Singapore.

SKY-HIGH MARVEL

The finishing touch to the Marina Bay Sands resort, the SkyPark will be opened to the public by next June. The Straits Times looks at the nuts and bolts of the \$150 million project.

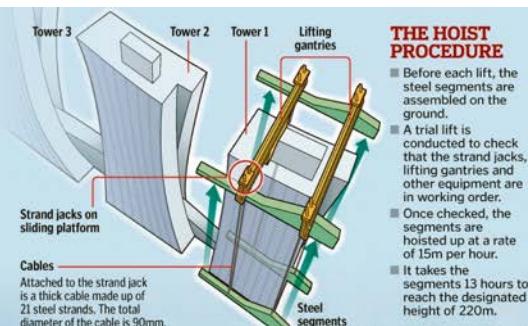


FAST FACTS ON THE SKYPARK

The SkyPark will sit on top of the three 55-storey Marina Bay Sands hotel towers, offering visitors a **360-degree view** of the city.

Designed by **renowned architect Moshe Safdie**. His other works include the acclaimed Salt Lake City Public Library in the US, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Israel and the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa.

It costs \$150m to build.
More than **7,000 tons of steel** will be used to construct its superstructure.
The gardens will be home to **250 trees and 650 plants**.
It can host **up to 3,900 people**.

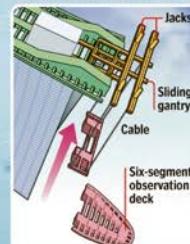


THE HOIST PROCEDURE

- Before each lift, the steel segments are assembled on the ground.
- A trial lift is conducted to check that the strand jacks, lifting gantries and other equipment are in working order.
- Once checked, the segments are hoisted up at a rate of 15m per hour.
- It takes the segments 13 hours to reach the designated height of 220m.

HOW THE OBSERVATION DECK IS BUILT

The observation deck comprises six segments, each weighing 100 to 200 tons.



- Strand jacks are positioned on a sliding gantry at the edge of the construction. Segments are hoisted, one at a time, to the top.
- At the top, the segment is connected to its adjoining piece.
- The process is repeated until all the observation deck segments are hoisted up.
- As building progresses, the gantry moves forward and cables are lowered to lift the next segment.

It is 340m long – longer than the Eiffel Tower laid on its side.
It is 1.2 hectares – equivalent to the size of **10 Olympic-size swimming pools**.
It will have three linked 50m swimming pools, which contain about **1.4 million litres of water**.

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION: MARINA BAY SANDS PTE LTD GRAPHICS: LIM YONG and FENG ZENGKUN



AUSTRALIA - CAIRNS LAGOON

Opened in 2003, Cairns Lagoon swimming pool is located in the heart of the Cairns business district. It is a popular destination for both tourists and locals. “The crystal clear waters of the Cairns swimming Lagoon prove to be incredibly inviting as the temperature warms up and the need for a quick dip to cool off is paramount,” remarks the Cairns Esplanade website.

The Lagoon allows 1,000 swimmers at one time. Ranging in depth from 32 inches to 5 feet, the Cairns Lagoon features underwater seating benches and a swimming area. Located on the foreshore of the Trinity Harbour front, the Cairns Lagoon has sandy shores and timber decking surrounding the 52,000 square foot saltwater swimming pool. The water that fills the state-of-the-art swimming facility is pumped in from the Trinity Inlet and cleansed through a high tech filtration system.



Cairns Lagoon overlooks the Trinity Harbour



Cairns Lagoon fits 1,000 swimmers at a time



MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA - WEBBER PARK POOL

The United States' first Natural Swimming Pool is set to open in Minneapolis in 2015. The 20,000 square foot regeneration area cost approximately \$4 Million to complete.

The following is an excerpt from an article published July 15, 2012 in the Minneapolis, Minnesota "Star Tribune:"

Swimmers won't have to rub the chlorine out of their eyes once they dive into a new swimming pool in north Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will soon demolish an old pool to make way for a pool-lake hybrid in Webber Park scheduled to open next summer. Instead of chlorine, wetland plants and a biological filter will purify the water -- the first pool of its kind in the country.

The new swimming pool will be connected to a wetland installed in the footprint of the adjacent pond, allowing water to move between them. The plants' roots will take in any nutrients and cleanse the water before pumping it back into the pool. The process should take 20 to 24 hours, said Cliff Swenson, the Park Board's director of design and project management.

Europe already has hundreds of swimming pool like this one. Jennifer Ringold, the Park Board's public engagement and citywide planning manager, said they have cleaner water than the city lakes.

The pool will add to the board's sustainability efforts by cutting down on the use of chemicals. It will also benefit the increasing number of people who are allergic to chemically treated water, Ringold said. The pool should cost about the same as a regular pool in terms of maintenance, and may cost even less because it doesn't need chemical treatment, Ringold said. With the natural treatment, the swimming pool won't qualify as sterile like a chlorinated pool, but Swenson said it will be safe. "What we're really creating is that lake experience," Swenson said.



Webber Park Master Plan

MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD

RECOMMENDED PLAN



LANDFORM
From the Ground Up



BONESTROO
COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION





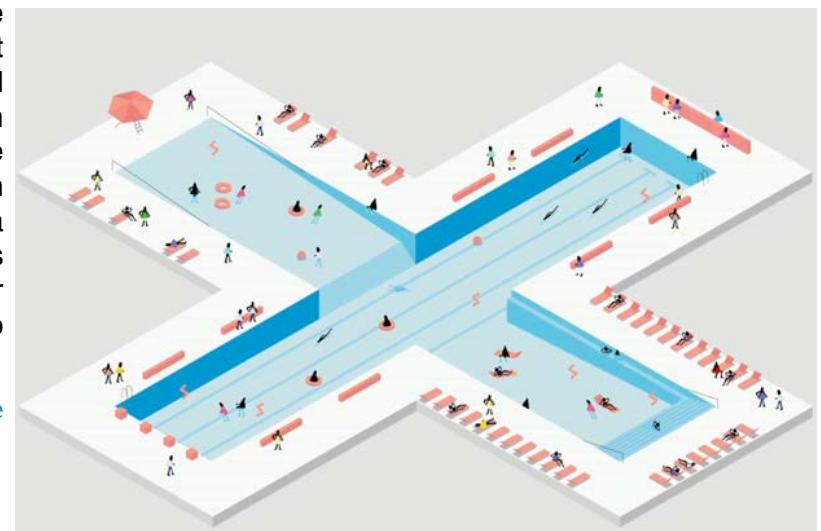
NEW YORK CITY - + POOL

+ POOL is an initiative to build the world's first water filtering, floating pool in New York's rivers. Currently, the project is raising funds and hopes to be fully funded by 2016. Arup is working on the engineering.



"Manhattan is surrounded by water, but the water is too dirty to allow the 8 million people who live here to enjoy it. It started with a simple goal: what if you started by cleaning it piece by piece? And what if you could change how New Yorkers see the rivers, just by giving them a chance to swim in it? + POOL is designed to filter the very river that it floats in through the walls of the pool, making it possible for New Yorkers and its visitors to swim in clean river water. The layered filtration system incrementally removes bacteria and contaminants to ensure nothing but clean, swimmable water that meets both city and state standards. No chemicals, no additives, just natural river water. Like a giant strainer dropped into the river, + POOL is designed to clean up to half a million gallons of water every single day."

[+ Pool Website](#)





LONDON - THAMES BATHS

Thames Baths, a concept launched in 2013, proposes the reintroduction of swimming in the River Thames. Envisioned as “London’s next big cultural project,” the proposal looks to re-establish an intimate and playful link between Londoners and this historic lifeblood of the city. The proposals are focused on London’s Victoria Embankment along the River Thames. The Baths are not just for swimmers, but provide refuge and habitat for fish, birds and a wide range of flora.



“Thames Baths is all about developing a scheme that is visionary but ultimately achievable. The idea was launched in 2013 as part of the ‘London As It Could Be Now’ program, an open call ideas project, developed by The Architecture Foundation with Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and the Royal Academy of Arts. Architects Studio Octopi and their team were selected as one of five groups to work up new visions

for the Thames. The proposals were subsequently exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts. Thames Baths has received considerable worldwide press coverage including The Guardian, BBC Radio, The Times, Wall Street Journal, Daily Mail and Time Out London. In August 2014 the team released their ideas for a floating freshwater pool at Temple Stairs off the Victoria Embankment.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thames_Baths





BERLIN - FLUSSBAD

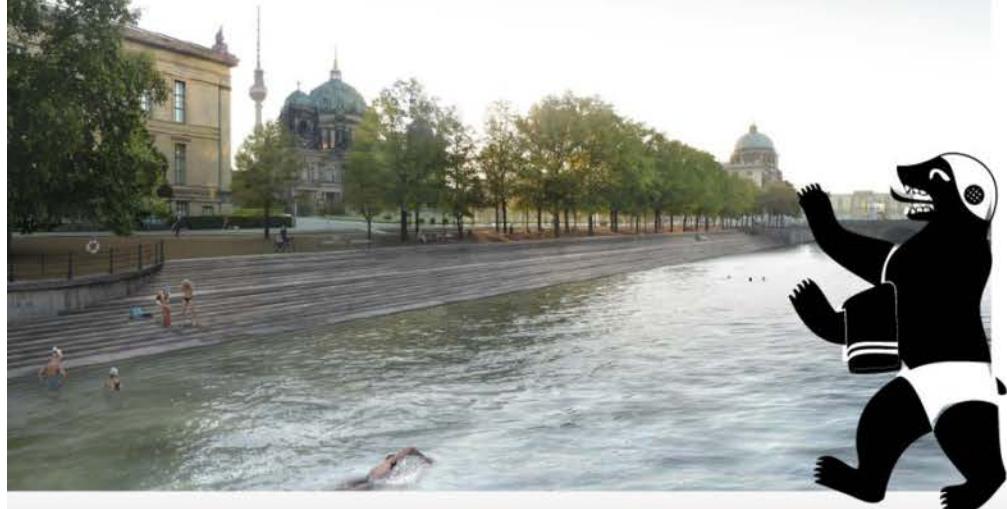
The Flussbad Berlin Association proposes to create a giant, 750 meter swimming pool, one which will run alongside the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Museum Island in the historical center of Berlin. The idea of swimming in Berlin's city center isn't new; the Badeschiff, Eichenstrae allows citizens to swim in a "sanitary environment" near the Spree river, resembling a sizeable lido, slap bang in the middle of the canal, with lights emanating from the surface. Flussbad Berlin however, aims to reanimate the entire side-canal of the river Spree in one of Berlin's biggest underused brownfield areas and turn it into an all natural sustainable swimming pool, also known as a Flussbad.

FLUSSBAD BERLIN

Providing plans go ahead, the 2,500 feet of canal which runs along Fischer and Museum Island will be transformed into an underwater biotope, utilizing a natural reed bed filter to purify river-water, feeding into a pool which stretches from the upcoming Humboldt-Forum to the tip of Museum Island at the historic Bode-Museum. Bringing Berlin into the 21st century does however present a few issues: the project does mean a fundamental re-evaluation of the river's significance to the city, renewing antiquated relationships between the city and river from which it once grew; which seems like an inevitable sacrifice, considering the projects noble intentions.

Berlin Turning River Spree Into The World's Biggest Swimming Pool by Matthew Kirby

WE WANT TO SWIM IN THE SPREE RIVER !
IN BERLIN'S HISTORICAL CENTRE



Rendering courtesy of Flussbad Berlin Association





SWITZERLAND, NATURBADS RIEHEN

In the small community of Riehen, Switzerland famed architects Herzog & de Meuron designed a new natural swimming pool. The Swiss firm originally designed a pool for the town back in 1979, and now they will see a revamped design come to fruition. Naturbad Riehen will be cleaned without chlorine or other chemicals - instead it will utilize surrounding landscaping and aquatic systems to process and treat the water. The construction of Naturbads Riehen, including year-round usable recreational facilities onsite is approximately \$5.5 Million.

Herzog & de Meuron's Naturbad Riehen Natural Swimming Poolreaks Ground in Switzerland | Inhabitat - Sustainable Design Innovation, architecture



Rendering courtesy of Herzog & De Meuron and Naturbad Riehen



Rendering courtesy of Herzog & De Meuron and Naturbad Riehen



SOUTH KOREA, GWANGGYO LAKESIDE PARK

Designs for Gwanggyo Lakeside Park in Gyeonggi Province, South Korea, include a riverside swimming hole similar to what is envisioned in Houston. WRT Architects' concept plan for the Gwanggyo Lakeside Park, which lies at the confluence of two regional watersheds—a receiving basin for the Mt. Gwanggyo water system, "envisions Gwanggyo Lakeside Park as an integrated urban water infrastructure that works symbiotically with the city to cultivate community, economic development, well being, and complete and connected urban lives. In this sense, the park complete the incomplete cycles of the city—the water cycle, the habitat cycle, the energy/carbon cycle, and the food/ health cycle. In addition, the park exists to connect – people to park, lake to lake, park to city, and local to the region. Water makes these completion and connections possible."

<http://www.wrtdesign.com/projects/detail/gwanggyo-lakeside-park/220>





THE KICKSTARTER & PRESS AND COMMENTARY



HOUSTON NEEDS A SWIMMING HOLE KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN

To gauge public interest and determine whether a swimming hole would even be feasible in Houston, a Kickstarter campaign was launched in November 2014. 112% of its goal was reached within 46 days. With the success of the campaign came an onslaught of public interest in helping make the project happen.

Houston Needs A Swimming Hole!



Let's build a giant natural swimming hole in Houston!

Created by
Houston Needs A Swimming Hole!

347 backers pledged \$33,768 to help bring this project to life.

Backers: 347

Average Pledge Per Backer: \$97

Funded: \$33,768 of \$30,000

Dates: Nov 25th -> Jan 9th (46 days)

Project By: [Houston Needs A Swimming Hole!](#)





“It’s about time!” « [Cary Sutter \(Houston\)](#)

“There are great swimming spots in cities all over the world, why not Houston? And, it would be a great place for my kids to go.” « [Brian O’Connor \(Houston\)](#)

“FINALLY!” « [Jesse Martinez \(Pearland\)](#)

“It’s an awesome idea!” « [Joshua Hall \(Katy\)](#)

“The city is a place for people – swimming by the bayou should be a natural part of life in the urban center.” « [Kristen Tomlinson \(Houston\)](#)

“Awesome!!” « [Samantha S. \(Spring\)](#)

“We need the bayous to be again part of our city. I wish there would be a ‘Houston swimming society’ where people could swim in giant swimming holes all over Houston.” « [Anna Lai \(Houston\)](#)



Houston needs a great big swimming hole

Good Idea: Let's build one

By Andrea White | October 4, 2014 | Updated: October 4, 2014 4:01pm

The good idea: Houston needs a great big swimming hole.

Idea guys: Monte Large and Evan O'Neil, of Houston Needs a Swimming Hole.

Where the idea came from: Enduring the Houston heat. Large, an urban real-estate developer, doesn't have a car and bikes everywhere. One summer day, the friends asked each other a series of questions while waiting in a coffee shop: "What if Houston still had the Shamrock hotel pool? What if Houston had a Barton Springs? Or our own beautiful big swimming hole in the middle of the city?" Neither Large nor O'Neil is into the sport of swimming.

Their hobby, they say, is helping Houston be cool. Large and O'Neil recognize several realities about their hometown. Houston is a subtropical environment; it is very close to, yet painfully far from the ocean; and improbably, the city has become a leader in the use of green technology. They researched available technology and decided that an enormous natural pool that filters the water with plant material could be a symbol of "the marvel Houston is becoming." According to their research, there are more than 20,000 natural pools across Europe. Managed properly, natural swimming pools have clear water and require no chemicals to maintain. Instead, they are self-cleaning: cattails, water lilies and other plants serve as natural filters.

According to the website that O'Neil, a designer, created with Large's help, the city of Minneapolis has built the nation's first natural pool for a cost of around \$4 million. Another source of inspiration was the Plus Pool in New York City. "They are utilizing water to create recreational use and attention to their water access in a really cool and unique way," says O'Neil. They're also inspired by a giant plus-shaped pool proposed in the middle of New York City's sewage-filled East River. (The proposal calls for major filters.) "Forget audacious tall buildings such as Burj Khalifa, the Petronas towers, or even the Eiffel or (former) Sears Towers. These are outdated ideas of what make great cities. Though each of these has successfully become a symbol and an attraction, nothing creates such dynamic social spaces as parks. Water goes even a step further," the Houston needs a swimming hole team believes.

Idea's deepest roots: Large remembers going to the Shamrock when he was six. He always held his mother's hand near pools and as he gripped her fingers, he looked up and was overwhelmed by the tall diving board. "People easily fall off of that," he thought. "Shamrock's legendary Texas-sized swimming pool was so large you could water-ski in it," O'Neil notes. Large believes that Houston hasn't had anything like ever since. "Anyone who remembers the Shamrock speaks of it with such awe and reverence," Large says.

Next steps: The duo, along with another team member, Jeff Kaplan, is looking for a 10-plus acre tract of land in central Houston to build the pool on. The pool and park will require six to nine acres; the remainder of the land is needed for facilities and parking. They figure that three acres is the minimum size for the perfect Houston pool. (That's the size of the swimmable portion of Barton Springs, the man-made recreational pool in Austin.) This would include a pool of approximately 50,000 square feet and a plant-filled "regeneration zone" of 40,000 square feet. The team estimates that construction costs be between \$6 million and \$10 million. They haven't started fundraising yet.

Bold idea: Use the bayou water and filter . Large recognizes that this may be a stretch, although he would like to talk to engineers about the process. More likely, the pool will need to use city water. But the maintenance costs of natural pools are relatively low.



OffCite

design.architecture.houston

IMAGINE...



Rendering from <http://www.houstonneedsaswimminghole.com/>.

RAJ
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DEC. 2,
2014
9:44 AM

Houston Needs a Swimming Hole ... or Pool ... or Hole-Like Pool

Place

Monte Large, Jeff Kaplan, and Evan O'Neil have launched a [Kickstarter campaign](#) to fund a feasibility study of building a swimming hole in Houston several acres in size with a capacity of hosting more than 2,000 people. Their efforts rapidly gained momentum after coverage in Andrea White's [column](#) for the *Houston Chronicle*.

According to *Springs of Texas, Volume 1*, Harris County once had swimming holes with "pure white sand and clean and limpid water." Beauchamps Springs, now beneath I-10 or possibly trickling out on its margin, was a popular swimming spot on White Oak Bayou. I have heard that high school students swim in Spring Creek to this day.

Houston no longer turns its bayous into trapezoidal concrete-lined ditches. In 1973, when the [Rice Design Alliance](#) (publisher of this blog) held a forum headlined by Terry Hershey and published the findings as *Bayous: Recycling an Urban Resource*, using the bayous for anything other than drainage was a controversial idea. Yet, the real skin-to-water intimacy that the first Houstonians enjoyed remains rare.



Monte Large, Evan O'Neil, and Jeff Kaplan.



We believe Houston needs a great swimming hole

Houston Tomorrow's on the team

David Crossley, Dec 19, 14.

Tagged with [quality of life](#), [health](#), [swimming](#)



The movement to create a swimming hole in Houston has a new fiscal partner in Houston Tomorrow, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the quality of life for everyone in the Houston region.

"We think this is a fabulous project and we want to do everything we can to help make it happen," said David Crossley, president of Houston Tomorrow.

From the website of [Houston Needs a Swimming Hole](#):

Houston needs a great escape from the heat in the summer. Houston needs a great big pool!

Building on the incredible success of Discovery Green, the Houston Parks Board,

the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and the recent Parks By You initiative, a centrally located pool would add an element unrivaled by anything in Houston, and could give the city back an important amenity it lost years ago.

Natural Swimming Ponds (NSP) are the most natural forms of swimming pools. They originated in Austria & Germany over 25 years ago and today there are estimated to be more than 20,000 Natural Swimming Pools across Europe; including large, public swim facilities.

Managed properly, natural swimming pools have crystal clear water and require no chemicals to maintain, as they are self-cleaning mini-ecosystems. The systems also have lower maintenance costs than conventional pools, and their installation costs are not much more than standard designs.

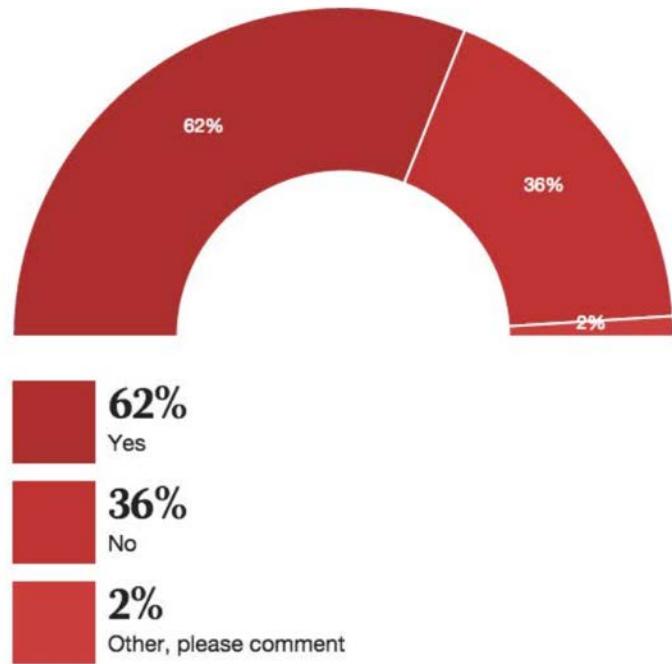
Houston Needs a Swimming Hole has a [Kickstarter campaign](#) nearing its goal of \$30,000 to provide funding for a feasibility study. The campaign has 21 days to go, and Houston Tomorrow urges Houstonians to join in to help complete the campaign and begin the work.

"We measure health and happiness as performance indicators for quality of life," Crossley said, "This project promises to deliver both."

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Results: Would you use a public natural swimming pool in Houston?





Good Idea: Houston Needs A Great Big Swimming Hole

OCTOBER 6, 2014

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Wednesday, November 26, 2014

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A swimming hole for Houston gets closer to reality

Could Houston have its own version of Barton Springs -- an enormous, beautiful swimming hole, right in the city, where people from every walk of life go to cool off?

U.S. oil interests may holiday with eye on C

The drop in crude oil prices will accelerate if the cartel that supplies 40 percent of world's oil doesn't move to curb output when it meets Thursday, and any such move appears unlikely on the eve of the meeting in Vienna in the long-term by kick-starting China's economy.

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Hey, Pool Guys—You're Not Thinking Big Enough!

If Houston needs a swimming hole, then we'd better build the biggest darn swimming hole there is.

Published Mar 9, 2015, 12:00am
By Jared Monmouth

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Image: [Lucky 11 Studios, Shutterstock](#)

protest

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BEAT THE HOUSTON HEAT WITH A LOCAL SWIMMING HOLE!



10 OurBlok Winter

If there was ever a case of "build it and they will come" this certainly fits the bill. When you think of the early pioneers in Houston who dreamed of digging a ditch 50 miles long to make us a thriving port city. Maybe this idea is not so far-fetched. There are a number of players behind a non-profit project to bring a massive, naturally filtered, chemical free swimming hole to our city, think of it as our version of Barton Springs.

Monte Large, Jeff Kaplan, and Evan O'Neil envisioned this and are the driving forces behind it. For their part they are not looking for credit but a place to swim on Houston's hot days. Though Monte has a background in urban design and real estate development, at heart they are all social entrepreneurs committed to making a positive impact on the city. "We've worked together for several years and are partners in projects such as New Living, Beaver's, and, most recently, Houston's first Parklet. We couldn't be more excited to be here in Houston at this moment. Houston is a city founded on big ideas and innovation, where bold visions become reality. The city is redefining itself before our eyes, and its current wave of profound growth proves that Houston is ready for such a noteworthy project with lasting urban impact. Houston's natural swimming hole is one of those big ideas that will help us love Houston even more."

After reading about the venture on Kickstarter we decided to sit down and explore the crazy notion and the possibilities for success.

Q. What led you to decide that Houston needed a swimming hole?

Have you been in Houston in August?!! Growing up in Houston without a pool made accessing water in this city a luxury. We couldn't often go to Galveston or Austin, so the water hose became our escape from the summer heat. Houston is so close to water - bayous run throughout the city - but swimming in the water isn't necessarily appealing. Being 45 minutes from Galveston and 3 hours from the springs in the Hill Country is kind of a cruel tease.

The incredible transformation of the bayous over the last couple of years inspired us to view the water that crisscrosses this city in an entirely new way. Witnessing how beautiful Buffalo Bayou can be led us to believe that Houston could go a step further and actually access the water that's already here.

Q. How big of a pool do you envision?

We believe the swimmable area of the Swimming Hole needs to be at least 3 acres in size, approximately the size of Barton Springs in Austin, though 4-6 acres would be ideal. Additional space would be needed for a 'beach', concessions, parking, dressing rooms and other amenities. The ideal total site size would be approximately 10-12 acres.

Q. Have you visited other outdoor swimming holes to draw inspiration from?

We are inspired greatly by a number of the swimming holes that used to exist in Houston. Just about every week we hear of another that people remember swimming in when they were kids. Barton Springs in Austin is such a close example and the impact that it has on the quality of life in Austin is profound. Barton Springs is one of our favorite getaways in the country. Though Austin in the



summer is just as hot as or hotter than Houston, visiting Austin in the summer is delightful because of Barton Springs. Just knowing it's there makes the city more bearable on the warmest of days.

Q. What about other working examples?

Streets Beach in Brisbane, Australia also inspired the idea. The proximity of that man-made waterway to the downtown area and to the brackish Brisbane River helped us form our ideas of how a similar swimming beach in Houston might look and feel.

Q. Are you surprised by the positive response you have received about the idea?

We are truly blown away!

Q. What is the next step after the Kickstarter funding goal is met?

The next step is developing the plan - from engineering and site analysis, to its actual design, to financing, to site selection, to creating a revenue model that allows it to be self-sustaining to the City. The critical next step the feasibility study will be conducted by Sherwood Design Engineers and they are anxious to get started.

Once the feasibility report is complete and the right sites are determined, we will pursue



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a location. Once the ideal location is secured, a capital campaign to raise funds for the construction will be launched.

We are looking to our community for help in laying the foundation and groundwork for this plan, so we can all invest in making it happen.

Q. How much funding do you see being needed to complete the project?

The feasibility study will give us a much better idea of the total cost of the project. So much is determined by the site, what other amenities might be nearby such as parking, concessions, and park space and the technology employed to filter and clean the water. Our hope is that the Swimming Hole can be located

in or very close to the park and, possibly, become an anchor attraction. Although a total number has not been determined and we will not know until we have a specific site--our best guess is approximately \$20M.

Q. How long do you project this taking to complete?

We want to be swimming within 3 years.

Q. Are you planning any type of event in the near future promoting the project?

We want the entire process to be a collaborative--we're planning a series of events next year for the community to come and explore, and "buy-in" to future potential sites. Maybe a Luau to kick it off!

Q. What are the biggest impediments to the success of the project?

Building a centrally-located, accessible, and noteworthy swimming hole presents a host of possible risks and challenges. Many of these will be addressed in the feasibility study. They include possible regulatory framework challenges in Houston, site engineering challenges, water source issues, long-term sustainability challenges, and safety concerns. We must also build community support in order to fund the final project. It looks as though we will hit our original goal of \$30,000 to Kick start the effort. Additional private funds will need to be raised in order to undertake the full feasibility analysis, cover organizational costs, and pay our team and consultants. There is a mountain of regulatory, insurance, and financial hurdles, but our team

find solutions. Sherwood Design Engineers brings years of credibility to the [project having overcome similar hurdles in projects around the world. We have no doubt that we can successfully work through any challenges.

Q. What will be natural and sustainable about the swimming hole?

Check out "natural swimming pools:" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_pool "A natural swimming pool is a system consisting of a constructed body of water...in which no chemicals or devices that disinfect or sterilize water are used, and all clarifying and purifying of the water is achieved through biological filters and plants rooted hydroponically in the system." Many natural swimming pools have large "regeneration areas" where algae and other water plants help create a sustainable micro-ecosystem while cleaning the water. Plus, one or two of the sites we are studying are currently parking lots; a natural pool would return many native plants to the area and promote biodiversity. Our main goal is to create a swimming area that is clean, refreshing, and that is also sensitive to and might actually help promote a more sustainable environment.

Q. What size are we talking about here?

The feasibility study will address these questions. The cost of entry will be determined by many factors, but we hope to keep it as low as possible. The size and capacity will be determined by the location and funding, but we would like it to be at least as large as Barton Spring in Austin, which is about 3 acres in size. Depending on the location, whether it's inside or adjacent to a park and surrounding amenities, there will likely need to be an additional 3-7 acres or so for dressing rooms, concessions, café, recreational area, and a regeneration/filtration zone.

Q. What is the estimated costs?

The final price tag will depend on the location, size, filtration technology, and other amenities. As soon as we determine each specific detail, we will announce it so stay tuned!

Q. How will ongoing expenses be handled?

As with Discovery Green, we intend the swimming hole to be partially maintained by third-party event and, possibly restaurant and licensing revenue. The exact model will rely heavily on where the swimming hole is located, what amenities might be appropriate for the exact location, what partners are involved, and how well it is funded. These are questions that are currently being studied and that will be addressed in the feasibility study.

A couple of projects we are also looking at are the High Line and the + Pool in New York City. Their models might not exactly translate to Houston, but the High Line, built in 2009 after a 10-year effort by a "self-taught artist," and freelance writer," was funded entirely by private money and then donated to the City of NY for ongoing maintenance, security, and insurance. Although the High Line is now property of the City of NY and under the jurisdiction of the Dept. of Parks & Rec., "the Friends of the High Line is the 501(c)(3) non-profit, private partner that funds virtually all the High Line's operations by raising contributions, and works with the City to make sure it is maintained as a great public place for all."

Our model might mirror or be somewhat of a hybrid between the High Line, Discovery Green, and Barton Springs all largely funded through private and institutional money and ongoing support through a 501(c)(3) arm that is eventually owned and maintained by the City of Houston or a parks organization through a structured partnership.

In a city with visionaries like the Allen Brothers and Roy Hofheinz and George Mitchell who brought so much to the city I wouldn't doubt this plan or these players.

For more info on this project:

houstonneedsaswimminghole.com
facebook.com/houstonneedsaswimminghole
twitter.com/houswimminghole





LET'S BUILD A SWIMMING HOLE IN HOUSTON!



Houston City Hall Reflection Pool. Gay Pride Weekend
2015. Photo By Jon Shapley/Houston Chronicle