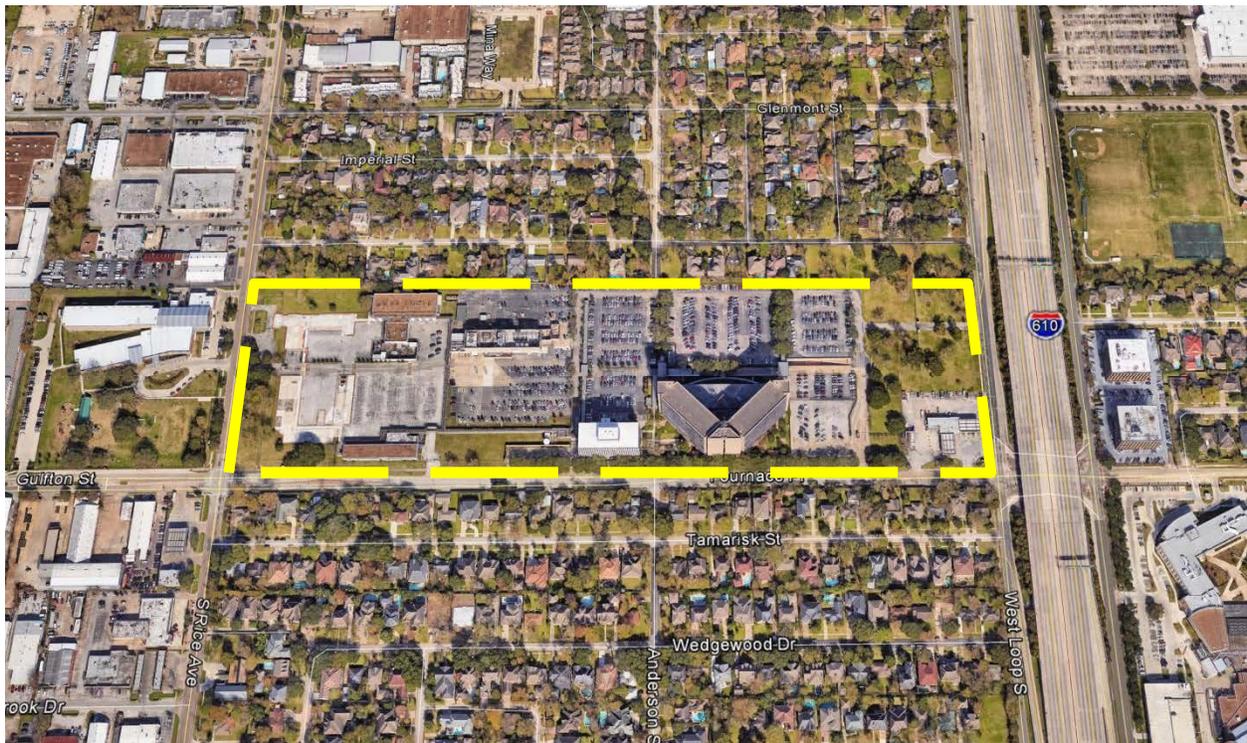


North Bellaire Special Development Area

Since the 1940s, the area just north of Fournace Place, between the present-day West Loop 610 on the east and South Rice Avenue on the west, has been devoted to technical/research functions and other office space, first by Texaco and in recent decades by Chevron Corporation. Through its zoning ordinance, the City of Bellaire applied a Technical Research Park (TRP) classification to the area, including several adjacent properties that front on Loop 610. One of these properties has long been in use as a gas station at the northwest corner of Fournace and the Loop. The zoning classification corresponded with a Business Park designation for this area on the Future Land Use and Character map within the City's Comprehensive Plan. This Land Use and Community Character section of the plan previously described the Business Park designation as appropriate for "areas already developed as, or envisioned for office and research and technology-related uses in a campus-like environment."



In summer 2016, Chevron announced its plans to remove all activities from this location by 2017 and sell the property. This turn of events opened up redevelopment possibilities for a contiguous, rectangular area of some 30 acres in north Bellaire, with the corner gas station property also going on the market. This is similar to significant property sales and land use transitions seen in nearby areas of central Houston, and particularly to the north around the West Loop 610 corridor through Uptown Houston. The difference is that Bellaire uses a Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations to set parameters for land use and clarify desired community outcomes from new development and redevelopment activity. This is essential as the North Bellaire Special Development Area is bordered not only by busy arterial streets but also a major freeway. Long-established neighborhoods of single-family detached homes are immediately north of the area and also to the south across Fournace Place.

Given this context, the area presents a unique redevelopment opportunity. A range of potential uses might be appropriately accommodated, but only with such uses being located and designed to provide protection to adjacent residential areas. Specifically, the most intensive uses in the Special Development Area, and their

associated vehicular access points, should be located along or near the Loop 610 frontage. A next tier of use intensity could occur along the South Rice Avenue frontage and along the Fournace Place frontage, especially in the areas nearest the existing office building on the Chevron site, constructed in the 1970s and situated close to Fournace. The lowest development intensities, together with adequate separation and buffering, should occur along the northern boundary of the area, closest to the single-family homes that front on Mayfair Street. As in the other Bellaire zoning districts that involve the interface between low-density residential and higher-intensity land uses, a “height-setback plane” (greater setback of upper portions of buildings) should govern the allowable height of potential multistory buildings near single-family homes to maintain openness and protect residential privacy.

Along with creating value and quality for the community, residential options developed in the area should help to satisfy housing needs of current and prospective Bellaire residents at various stages of life (i.e., homes for young professionals and families, “downsizing” options for senior residents), to the extent that development economics allow. Such a “lifecycle” residential component might include single-family homes developed in a clustered fashion, on small lots and possibly with a more vertical house profile (i.e., three stories) than seen previously in Bellaire but common in residential construction in the vicinity in recent years, including in redeveloping areas along Bellaire Boulevard in the City of Southside Place. To ensure quality development outcomes, design standards should be considered for all residential development in the area, both traditional and “lifecycle.”

Multi-family development is provided for in several other areas of Bellaire, including within the Residential-Multifamily (R-MF) zoning district, as well as the more recently established Urban Village-Downtown (UV-D), Urban Village-Transit Oriented Development (UV-T) and Corridor Mixed Use (CMU) districts. For this reason, the North Bellaire Special Development Area is seen as more appropriate for other uses.

Non-residential development outcomes and amenities should contribute to residents’ quality of life through potential new retail and service uses, including restaurants. It is recognized that some portion of the area may still be attractive for office use, either as a stand-alone development or as part of a mixed-use scenario. Medical or other institutional uses are also possible, although public or faith-based educational campuses are not desired given their prevalence elsewhere throughout the City.

Traditional single-family residential development consistent with Bellaire’s identity as a “City of Homes” should be a permitted use throughout the entire North Bellaire Special Development Area, and “lifecycle” residential developments subject to specific development standards could be a permitted use as well. Non-residential and mixed-use developments should be considered as specific uses or for Planned Development (PD) zoning approval, and should be concentrated in the portions of the area identified above for higher and moderate use intensities, and not in the portion along the northern boundary of the area, closest to the single-family homes that front on Mayfair Street. As in other areas of the community, a PD application provides the opportunity to put forward a master-planned development approach that may involve an alternate set of land uses and/or special site design elements. As with proposals for specific uses, any such proposal for a PD would be vetted through a site plan review process and associated public discussion and hearings as provided for in the City’s development regulations and procedures.

Whether pursued through conventional development proposals or PD applications, the redevelopment opportunity afforded by this significant land turnover in north Bellaire should also lead to creative site planning and design that incorporates green and open space areas into any proposed development. The tree-lined frontage and pathway along the north side of Fournace Place should also be maintained and extended all the way to South Rice Avenue. Residential areas could include orientation of homes toward landscaped mews (open space common areas), with rear garage access, to yield a

true sense of neighborhood for residents living in relatively close quarters compared to many other areas of Bellaire. In non-residential and mixed-use areas, pocket parks, landscaped plazas and seating areas, and generous plantings within street rights-of-way would provide the desired green amenities and area enhancement. Additionally, landscaping plans across the entire Special Development Area should have a core objective of extending the signature urban tree canopy of Bellaire into the interior of the area—including through targeted installation of mature oaks from offsite rather than only through smaller plantings for future growth.

