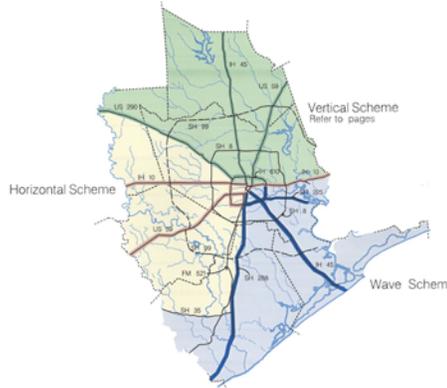


# GREEN RIBBON PROJECT



Houston, Harris County, Texas

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Houston District

1997-2001

Project Type: Urban Freeways; Design Guidelines

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Green Ribbon Project was to provide the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) with conceptual guidelines to integrate environmental aesthetics with roadway functionality. This project was intended to set forth a broad framework for future design teams to use during all phases of design, from project inception and planning to public involvement and final design. The framework was flexible enough to allow for individualized design expression.

## DESCRIPTION



TxDOT launched an effort to meld modern-day mobility with aesthetic principles, and restore some of the area's natural beauty along roadways. TxDOT already has transformed some of these concrete-dominated landscapes into ribbons of green. For comprehensive aesthetic improvements, TxDOT concluded that a unified master plan should be developed. In phase one, the goal was to develop the Corridor Aesthetics and Landscape Master Plan, which laid out the aesthetic enhancement process for the Houston District. In phase two, the phase one concepts were developed into Design Guidelines for the Construction of Highways, Streets, & Bridges, a design manual of all aesthetic and hardscape guidelines for use by final section designers. This document sets forth a palette of design details that provide maximum design flexibility while ensuring visual harmony within the roadway environment.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The project team determined early that an aggressive public input and involvement effort was vital to the success of the Green Ribbon Project. Through a series of public meetings a process of "Include, Inform, Involve, and Invoke" was used to guide public input and involvement for the project.

## CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS APPROACH

HNTB, the Texas Department of Transportation and the Green Ribbon Committee are collaborating on creating a stronger aesthetic appeal of the Green Ribbon Corridor. HNTB is developing a landscape master plan for an 80-mile stretch of highway in metropolitan Houston. HNTB studied cultural and social influences and maintenance issues of the Houston region. HNTB developed aesthetic themes and context sensitive designs for landscape architecture, architecture, and art. The corridor landscape approach calls for staged plantings of natural grasses, native shrubs, and trees to minimize maintenance needs.

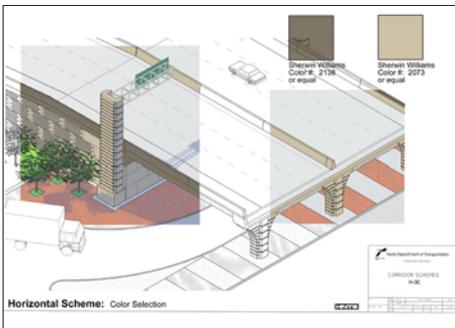
## OUTCOME

With the input of a special Green Ribbon Committee, the consultant team, and the general public, TxDOT has adopted a new corridor aesthetics and landscape master plan, known as the Green Ribbon Project (GRP). The GRP Design Guidelines for the Construction of Highways, Streets, and Bridges were adopted in late 2000 and have been developed into standardized sheets that can be implemented/included in any TxDOT project with ease. There are various projects currently under construction within the Houston District implementing the GRP guidelines.

## FUNDING

With more than 2700 centerline miles of roadway in the Houston District, TxDOT would not have the financial resources to implement all of the proposed design concepts. Partnership ventures have already proven to be the most effective way to ensure long-term value and are vital to the success and timely implementation of this project. Due to the limited amount of flexibility of funding provided by tax dollars, TxDOT can provide a base level of standard design, but successful public/private partnerships with the community can broaden the impact of available TxDOT funding.

## LESSONS LEARNED



- Public input regarding landscape treatments, public art, and aesthetic treatments should be collected during the planning stages and throughout the public meeting process.
- Strong public interest in a particular aesthetic treatment determined during the planning phase can be a useful indicator of potential partnerships.
- Agencies should begin investigating public/private partnerships to aid funding for aesthetic enhancements during the planning phase.
- Maintenance and operational issues need to be considered in any partnership agreements.

## KEY WORDS

*Applicable Project Delivery Stages:* Administration, Planning, Design, Construction, Maintenance

*Applicable Transportation Professionals:* Highway Engineers, Structural Engineers, Landscape Architects, Wetland Biologists, Historians

*Applicable Transportation Modes:* Highway, Bicycle, Pedestrian  
*Transportation Topics:* Visual Quality, Environmental Justice, Safety, Mobility, Context Sensitive Solutions/Design, Transportation Enhancement

**WEB LINKS** <http://www.dot.state.tx.us/>  
[http://www.katyfreeway.org/green\\_ribbon.html](http://www.katyfreeway.org/green_ribbon.html)

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