

# Solutions, not Soundbytes.



## Washington Avenue: Making History a Model for the Future

Noel Freeman's plan for improving transportation, parking and redevelopment along the Washington Avenue Corridor

Washington Avenue was once the gateway to Houston. It served as both US 290 and US 90 for many years and was the first paved street in Houston. For years, the businesses and residential structures along Washington Avenue fell into neglect and disrepair, but recent redevelopment and new businesses have caused Washington Avenue to thrive. Unfortunately, this progress and redevelopment has created a number of transportation and parking problems that threaten quality of life and the ability of businesses to thrive and grow. My plan to address these issues can make Washington Avenue a model for the future of urban redevelopment in Houston.

### ★ Shared-Use Structured Parking

The fundamental aspect of getting customers to businesses and residences in a dense urban environment is getting people to them. As a result, neighborhoods along Washington Avenue are frequently packed with cars using on-street parking when visiting local businesses. These problems have begun to degrade the neighborhood and limit the ability of patrons to get to businesses, which may lead to another decline in the community.

**“Washington Avenue can be a thriving jewel of urban redevelopment and I will work toward real solutions to make it a shining example of how to make transportation, parking and redevelopment work for the future.”**

**- NOEL FREEMAN**

The first step toward improving the Washington Avenue Corridor will be to construct shared-use structured parking facilities at strategic location along Washington Avenue. These parking structures can provide adequate off-street parking for patrons of local businesses, contract parking for employees or residents and even small storefronts for the Houston Police Department. Structured parking at the east end of Washington Avenue could also provide better parking facilities for citizens visiting the expanding Municipal Campus, which includes Municipal Courts, various Houston Police Department facilities and the new Central

Permitting Center. Ideally, it could be possible for a business to attain permits with zero on-site parking if adequate shared-use parking is available in the area.

## ★ Establish Circulator Shuttle Service

Once shared-use structured parking has been constructed, the mission then becomes access to businesses and residences along Washington Avenue. This can be easily done by establishing a circulator shuttle that continuously travels between Westcott and Preston or an additional point between the two ends of Washington Avenue, resulting in multiple circulator routes. Riders can use the shuttle to travel between businesses, to or from parking, or even use it as a means of commuting to locations downtown with connections to METRO bus routes serving the downtown area. The shuttle could be funded through a partnership with METRO, parking management contracts similar to those at Houston's airports, or other means that make it inexpensive to riders and beneficial to local businesses.

## ★ Center Street as an Option for Light Rail

With the expansion of light rail continuing, some discussion has involved the possibility of creating light rail service along Washington Avenue. Center street can be considered as an option for a light rail route due to its close proximity and parallel relation to Washington Ave. This would prevent significant disruption to businesses along Washington Avenue during construction and would provide a light rail route that does not interfere with traffic along Washington Avenue, particularly at major intersections such as Shepherd and TC Jester. Depending on the location of structured parking, light rail could provide a direct connection to parking facilities, making light rail more useful as a commuter transportation solution.

## ★ Washington Avenue Management District

Washington Avenue is an excellent candidate for the establishment of a management district to guide and foster redevelopment, transportation, tourism and branding. Many Houstonians are already looking to Washington Avenue as an up and coming entertainment district, which would lend itself very well to a coordinated effort to market the area as a place to live, work and play, while providing service to the business and residential communities to provide more direct input into area redevelopment. Additionally, a management district could be used to fund and/or manage structured parking and shuttle service. I will work with our delegation in Austin to explore creation of a Washington Avenue management district.



**Noel Freeman Campaign**

P.O. Box 66656

Houston, Texas 77266

(713) 426-3651