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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“BRIDGE BASH” CELEBRATES COMPLETION OF NEW WHITE OAK BAYOU GREENWAY
BRIDGE AND TRAILS**

New hike and bike bridge over White Oak Bayou extends Heights trail, connects neighborhoods

HOUSTON – May 2, 2015 – The Houston Parks Board, Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority and Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) 5, and the City of Houston will officially open a new segment of White Oak Bayou Greenway at a “Bridge Bash” and dedication ceremony May 2. Part of Bayou Greenways 2020, the new segment includes new hike and bike trails and a bridge over White Oak Bayou that connect to the Heights trail. The new bridge replaces the former MKT Railroad Bridge (also known as the “BBQ Bridge”) between Shepherd Drive and Moy Street.

“With each new link in our off road hike and bike network, we are making it easier and safer for Houstonians traveling on two wheels or two feet to get around,” said Mayor Annise Parker. “Residents can reimagine how they gain access to downtown, to shopping and places of employment in way that is so uniquely Houston: along a bayou.”

From 10 a.m. to noon, community members, bicyclists, runners, nature-lovers and the general public will join in the “Bridge Bash” festivities: a brief ceremony and procession across the bridge and free activities including face painters, food trucks and Texas GOLD Sprint'em virtual bike races. Guests are encouraged to walk, run or ride on the Heights trail to the new bridge and experience the important addition to Bayou Greenways 2020, a project that will create a continuous park system along Houston’s major waterways.

“What is important about the new bridge and other pedestrian/cycling bridges, is how they can unite neighborhoods and cultures within this city without the interference of vehicles,” said Joe Hood, an avid cyclist who lives in the area. “I figured others would eventually discover the old bridge and one day the missing link between the White Oak Bayou trails would be completed. Now that is exactly what is happening thanks to the Houston Parks Board, the Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority, and federal grant funding. We are very pleased with our emerging new car-free mobility.”

Construction of the new hike and bike bridge and connecting trails to be built to the south was made possible through the financial support of the Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority and TIRZ 5. Additional funders of the White Oak Bayou Greenway include the Brown Foundation, Wortham Foundation, Houston Endowment and Fondren Foundation. A City of Houston federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant will fund construction of the trails along the bayou from the new bridge to existing bayou trails north of W 11th St. The total cost of the project will be \$5 million.

“At our department every project begins with a dream. Our dream was to connect bayou parkland for transportation and recreation for Houstonians,” said Joe Turner, Director of the Houston Parks and Recreation

Department. “We thank all Houstonians for sharing our dream with their vote for the 2012 parks bonds measure that provided funding for BG2020 and other park projects. This new connection and others funded by the City’s US Department of Transportation TIGER grant, and TxDOT Transportation Enhancement grants will help us bring our dream to reality.”

Using the city’s bayous as a backbone, Bayou Greenways 2020 will create a network of connected, off-street hike and bike trails and nature parks along nine of the bayous that run through every neighborhood within city limits. The project will add 1,500 acres of parkland throughout Houston, connect 150 miles of multi-use trails and put 60 percent of all Houstonians within 1.5 miles of bayou greenway. A “bayou greenway” typically includes a ten-foot-wide shared-use concrete trail and a linear, public greenspace adjacent to the bayou.

“Celebrating the completion of this section allows Houstonians to see the progress Bayou Greenways 2020 is making, and it gives a glimpse of what Houston’s bayous will offer when the project is completed,” said Roksan Okan-Vick, Houston Parks Board executive director. “The changes to White Oak Bayou Greenway are a great example of what Houstonians can look forward to. Even now, construction is underway to connect the greenway to existing White Oak Bayou trails north of W 11th St.”

To learn more about the “Bridge Bash” and the newly completed section along White Oak Bayou Greenway visit www.houstonparksboard.org. Please check the website for event [information](#) and a [map](#).

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The **Houston Parks Board** is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization whose mission is to create, improve, protect and advocate for parkland in the Greater Houston region. Since its inception in 1976, the organization has raised and leveraged millions of dollars and touched at least 75 percent of the City’s parkland either through acquisitions and/or capital improvements. For more information, visit www.houstonparksboard.org.

Bayou Greenways 2020 will create a continuous park system along Houston’s major waterways. The project will establish an interconnected system of parks and trails linking people, places and green space while enhancing air and water quality, reducing flooding and stimulating economic development. The Houston Parks Board is leading the private fundraising of \$120 million and managing the acquisition, design and construction of the Bayou Greenways 2020 Project over the next five years. Bayou Greenways 2020 was made possible by Houston voters who supported the “Parks by You!” city bond referendum of 2012. For more information, visit www.bayougreenways.org.

The **Houston Parks and Recreation Department** (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and its golf programs, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.