



IMPERIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Strategic Vision Report | Sugar Land, Texas

20
26

Acknowledgments

MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

Carol McCutcheon, Mayor
Jim Vonderhaar, At Large Position 1
Robert Boettcher, At Large Position 2
Suzanne Whatley, District 1
Sanjay Singhal, District 2
Stewart Jacobson, District 3
Rick Miller, Mayor Pro Tem and District 4

CITY MANAGER

Mike Goodrum

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Matthew Caligur, Chair
Taylor Landin, Vice Chair
Fareena Dawood
Apurva Parikh
Sapana Patel
Mary Smith
Chuck Brown
Randall Hallbrook

CONSULTANT

Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC)

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

The City of Sugar Land would like to express our gratitude to all the community members, organizations, business owners, friends, and families who participated in the Imperial Historic District Redevelopment Visioning Workshop. Whether you came to a meeting, stopped by open studio, completed a survey, or visited the Project website, your participation helped to inform the creation of this Strategic Vision Plan. Thank you for playing an important role in shaping the vision for the Imperial Historic District.

We would also like to thank the T.E. Harman Center and the Sugar Land Heritage Foundation and Museum for hosting the event over the course of several days.

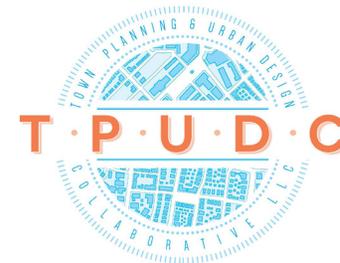
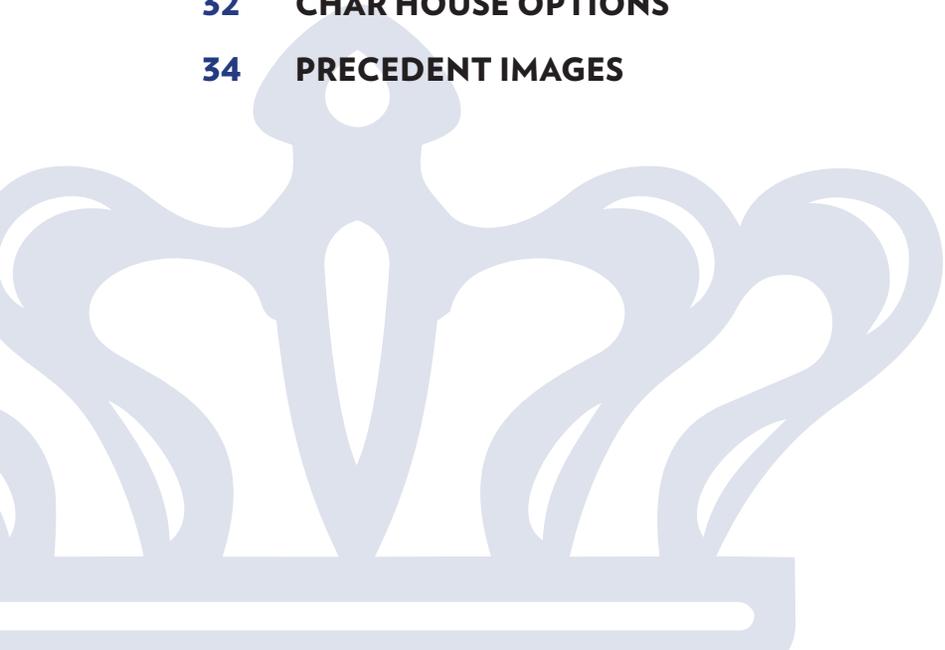




Table of Contents

- 4 AREA PROFILE & HISTORY**
 - 8 SITE ANALYSIS/CURRENT CONDITIONS**
 - 16 BACKGROUND INFORMATION SUMMARY**
 - 18 VISIONING WORKSHOP SUMMARY**
 - 26 VISION STATEMENT & GUIDING PILLARS**
 - 32 CHAR HOUSE OPTIONS**
 - 34 PRECEDENT IMAGES**
- 

WHAT IS THE IMPERIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STRATEGIC VISION REPORT?

The Imperial Historic District Strategic Vision Report is a high-level summary document that outlines the history of the site, describes public engagement efforts related to the property, and establishes goals for the redevelopment of the District for years to come. It was created for the City to use as a guide when selecting a Master Development Partner, who will also use this Strategic Vision Report to bring the community's vision to life.

WHY NOW?

The City of Sugar Land purchased the Imperial Historic District and surrounding property in June 2025 and involved TPUDC to engage with the community in November 2025 to help the City establish a vision and guiding pillars for the site.



SUGAR LAND

AREA PROFILE & HISTORY

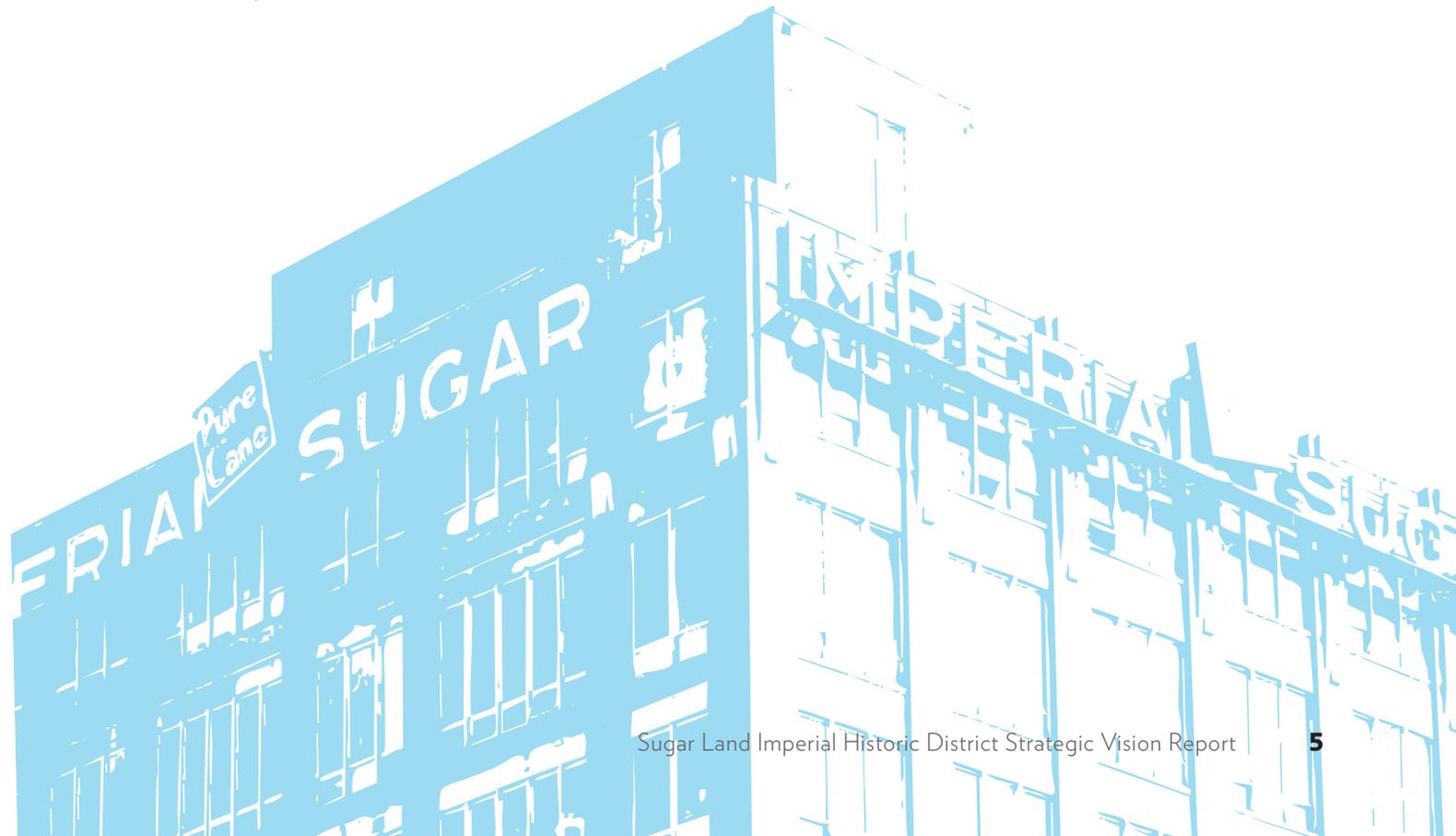
AREA PROFILE

Long before there was the City of Sugar Land, Texas, there was a small company town centered on the Imperial Sugar Refinery. First known as Oakland Plantation in the mid-1800s, the property changed hands multiple times before Isaac H. Kempner and William T. Eldridge purchased it in 1906. Under their leadership, the operation grew from a modest agricultural outpost into a fully developed company town, complete with its very own post office, hospital, general store, school, and fire station. The refinery became the economic engine of the region, shaping early settlement patterns and influencing daily rhythms of life in the community.

As Imperial Sugar expanded, so did the support infrastructure around it. Worker housing, ranging from simple cottages to more substantial residences for managers, lined the streets near the refinery, creating a neighborhood structured around employment hierarchy and proximity to the plant. Civic and social institutions grew organically from the needs of the workforce. Churches, fraternal organizations, a movie theater, mercantile, and recreation facilities emerged alongside essential services, reinforcing the sense of a self-contained community.

The District also reflects the complex history of labor in the Southern United States. Prior to the modern company town era, the site was tied to plantation agriculture and, later, convict-leasing operations, both of which left lasting social and architectural imprints on the area. The evolution into a corporately-run community marked a shift toward a more regulated and stable workforce.

Over time, the built environment of the Imperial Sugar Historic District developed a distinctive character rooted in industrial architecture and early twentieth-century civic design. Brick warehouses, steel-frame structures, and preserved equipment pieces speak to the industrial heritage of this site, while the surrounding civic buildings and workforce residences reveal the company town's social fabric. Today, these elements combine to form a cohesive historic landscape that illustrates the intertwined industrial and community development which preceded modern Sugar Land that over 100,000 people call home.



1828-1838

Stephen F. Austin's secretary, Samuel May Williams, starts growing sugar cane in Northeastern Fort Bend County, Texas on land granted to him by Austin.

Williams' brother, Nathaniel, buys this land and establishes Oakland Plantation with their third brother, Matthew.



1858-1892

The area's first post office is built and later closes in 1886. A second post office opens in 1890.

Convict labor is introduced on the Sugar Land plantations in the 1870s, following the State of Texas' convict leasing system in 1867.

E. H. Cunningham acquires thousands of acres of the site in the 1890s and invests over \$1 million into new industrial facilities and rail infrastructure.

The town's population reaches 500.

1917-1925

Drainage improvements are made on the property.

An elementary school, hospital, and fire station are built.

The Char House is built.

The town's population grows to 2,500.

1843-1853

Matthew Williams forms a sugar mill along Oyster Creek.

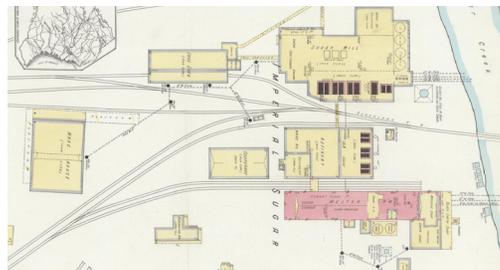
Oakland Plantation is purchased by Benjamin Franklin Terry and William Jefferson Kyle who successfully bring a rail line extension to the property.

1906-1914

Isaac H. Kempner and William T. Eldridge purchase Cunningham's sugar company and plantation land, expanding it into a true company town and naming it "Imperial".

Convict labor is outlawed in the State of Texas.

Industrial growth occurs, but the town's population decreases to 200.



1928

Due to high taxes and plant disease, sugar cane farming permanently comes to a halt in Fort Bend County.

Sources:
City of Sugar Land Historical Timeline
Sugar Land Heritage Foundation

1936-1956

Sugar Land's population decreases due to the Great Depression.

The Kempner Family becomes the sole owners of the company town.

Segregation becomes a common practice, with minority populations being forced to have separated neighborhoods, community facilities, and space for leisure activities.

1964-1989

Sugar Land's population expands from 3,100 in 1964 to almost 20,000 by 1989. Rapid development of master planned communities occurs, including Sugar Creek and First Colony.



2001-2003

Imperial Sugar ceases operations of its Sugar Land refinery in 2003 after filing for bankruptcy two years earlier.

1959

Sugar Land becomes an incorporated city with T.E. Harman as its first mayor.



1990-1999

The Imperial Sugar site continues to operate in Sugar Land while the company expands into other states.

The silos are constructed in 1997.



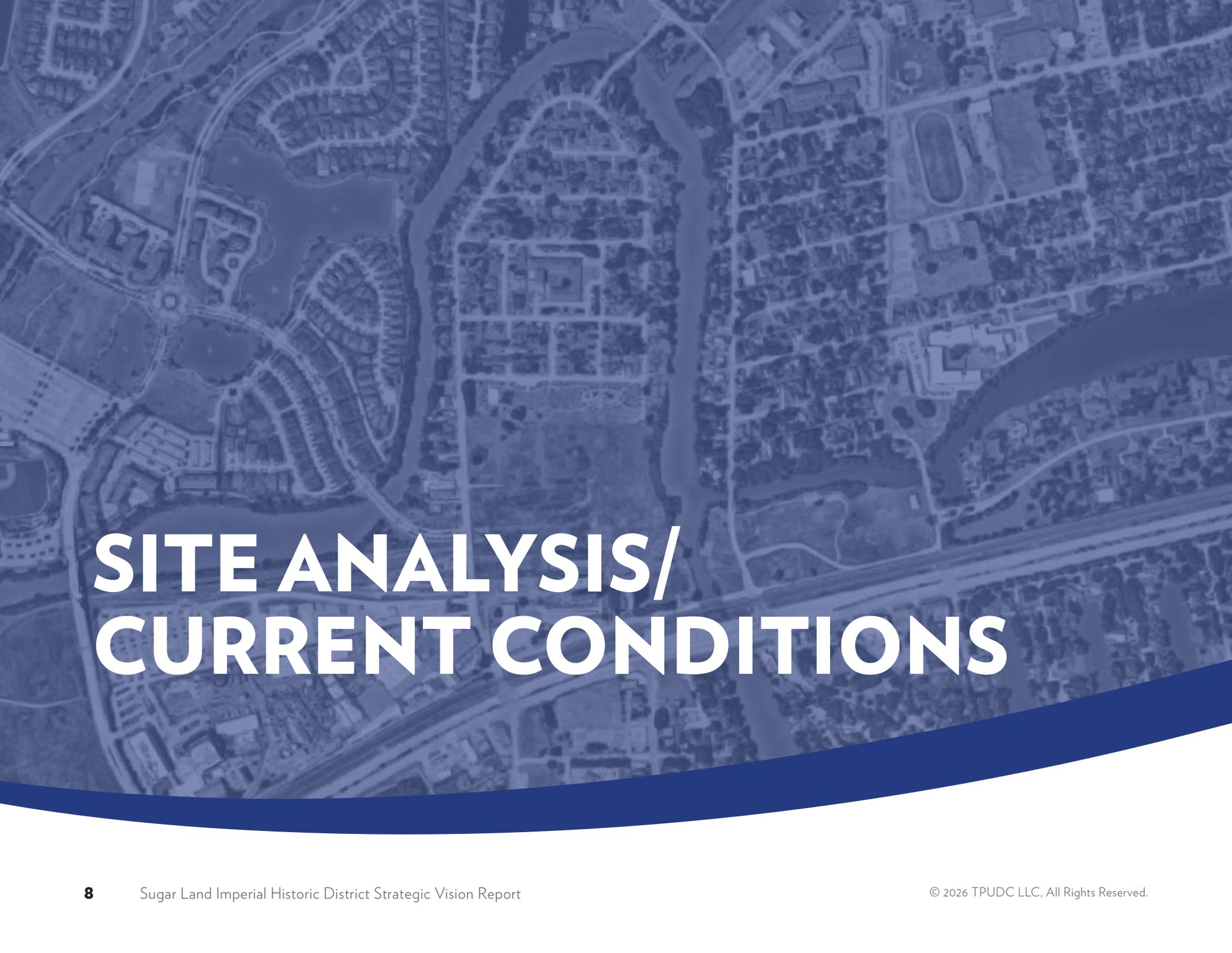
2000

Sugar Land becomes the second-fastest growing city in the State of Texas.



2025

The City of Sugar Land purchases the Imperial Historic District and surrounding property.



SITE ANALYSIS/ CURRENT CONDITIONS

SITE ANALYSIS

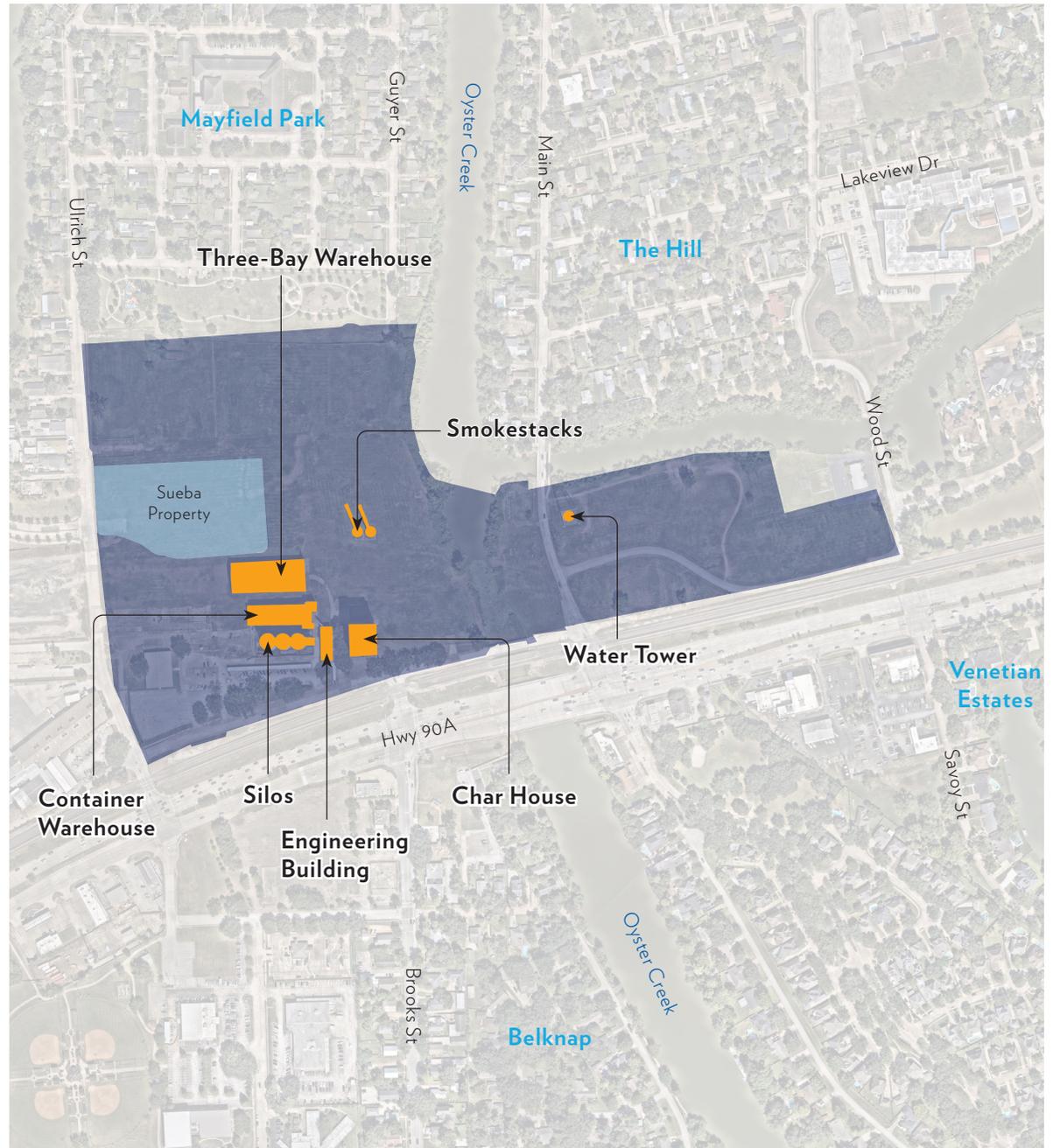
The Imperial Historic District is located in north-central Sugar Land, positioned just north of Highway 90A and east of Highway 6, with Oyster Creek running through the middle of the property and serving as a natural dividing feature. The District sits within an established urban context. To the north lies historic Mayfield Park, one of Sugar Land's earliest residential areas. The Hill neighborhood is immediately to the northeast, characterized by its older single-family housing stock and gridded street pattern. To the west, the Imperial neighborhood consists of a mix of newer residential development, commercial amenities, and Constellation Field. Directly south of Highway 90A are the Belknap and Venetian Estates neighborhoods, both well-established communities with strong local identities. The SLB chemical processing facility (formerly known as ChampionX) also occupies land to the west and forms part of the District's broader industrial surroundings.

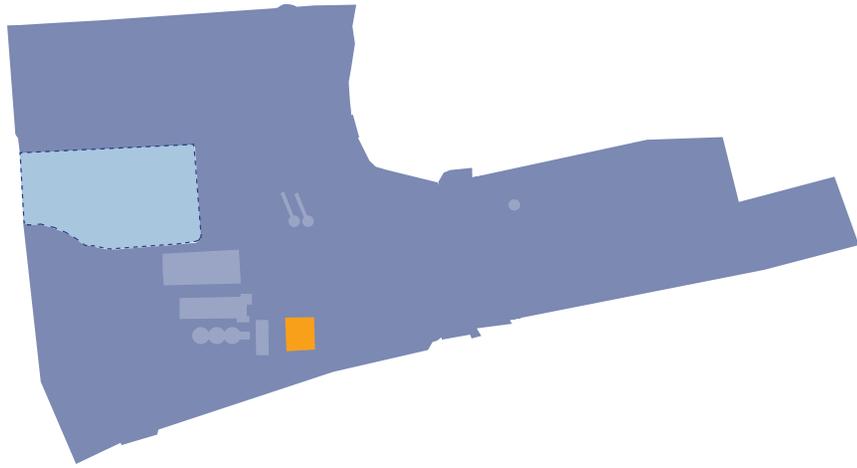
The site encompasses just over 40 acres, with the majority of the land area located to the west side of Oyster Creek. This distribution has shaped circulation patterns and land use within the historic district, concentrating most of the significant buildings, structures, and open spaces on the western portion while the eastern side remains more limited in development.

There are 8 significant resources within the District: 4 buildings and 4 structures that remain from the former Imperial Sugar refinery operations. The contributing historic buildings include the iconic Char House, Engineering Building, Three-Bay Warehouse, and Container Warehouse. The 4 key structures consist of the Silos, two Smokestacks, and a Water Tower. These collectively represent the industrial core of the former refinery and are visually prominent landmarks both within the site and from surrounding communities.

The remainder of the site is composed of a combination of paved parking areas, covered walkways, a pavilion, and grassy areas where additional refinery buildings once stood.

The mixture of standing structures, foundations, and open land forms the site's historic character and offers flexibility for future redevelopment.





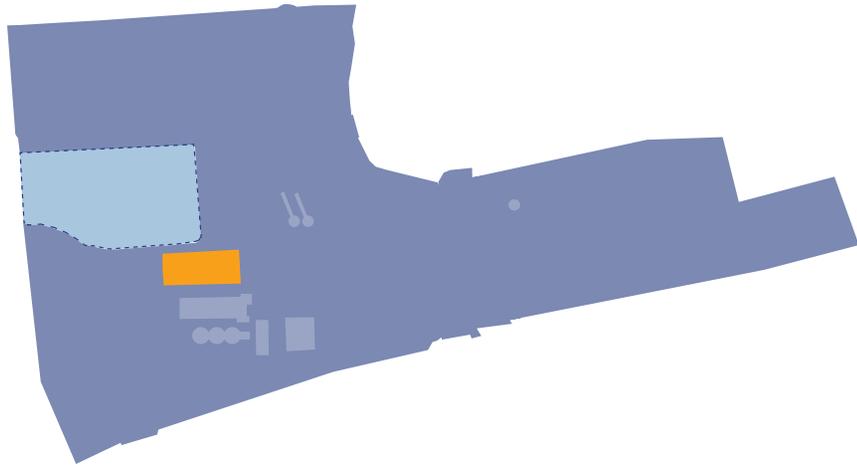
CHAR HOUSE

Undoubtedly the most iconic building in Sugar Land, the Char House has stood as a dominant visual landmark since its construction in 1925. Built with a concrete frame, brick cladding, and aluminum-framed windows, the building reflects the utilitarian character of the early 20th century industrial design. Its eight stories of varying heights create a distinctive silhouette, reinforced by the large Imperial Sugar signs on the south and west cornices. A projection on the sixth floor of the north elevation, known as the “saddlebag,” contributes to the building’s unique profile.

Despite its scale, the Char House operated with a very small workforce. Even at peak production, only about four workers were stationed inside at any time, overseeing the equipment that handled most of the operation. The building served as the center of the sugar refinement process, where raw cane moved through affination, carbonation, decolorization, boiling, crystallization, and recovery. Since the refinery relied on a gravity-fed filtration system, the Char House was constructed around the machinery itself, leaving large holes in the floor once that machinery was removed.

For much of Sugar Land’s early history, the Char House’s towering mass, smokestacks, and illuminated signage functioned as a citywide visual reference point. Today, it remains the most recognizable symbol of the former Imperial Sugar refinery and a defining feature of the District, embodying its industrial heritage.

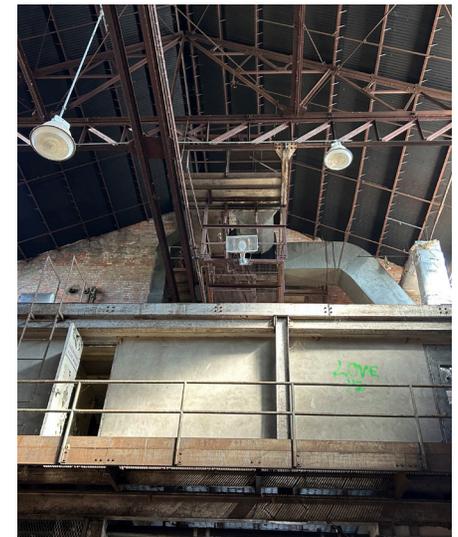
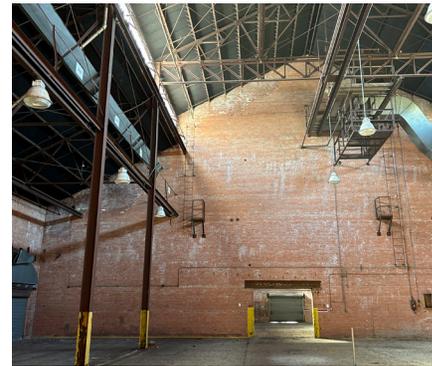


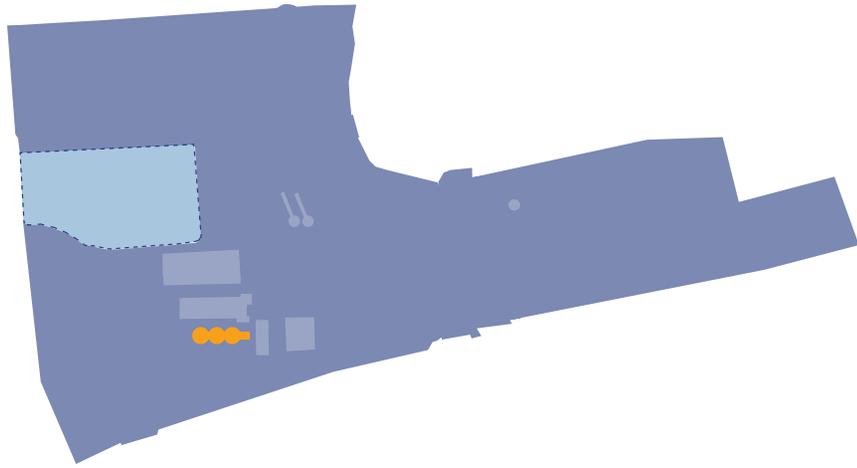


THREE-BAY WAREHOUSE

The Three-Bay Warehouse takes up the largest building footprint on the Imperial Historic District site at 26,000 square feet. It is a rectangular, gabled masonry building that served as the primary storage facility for packaged sugar awaiting distribution. Its design consists of three symmetrical gabled bays, a feature clearly expressed in the roofline and reinforced by structural divisions inside. The warehouse incorporates adequate natural light through large upper windows. Both of the north and south elevations contain twelve truck door openings for loading and distribution.

Although not as visually commanding as the Char House, the Three-Bay Warehouse played an essential role in the refinery's operations, serving as the final stage in the production chain. Its scale, simplicity, and clear industrial function make it a key contributing building within the Imperial Historic District and an important reminder of the logistical backbone that supported the refinery's output.

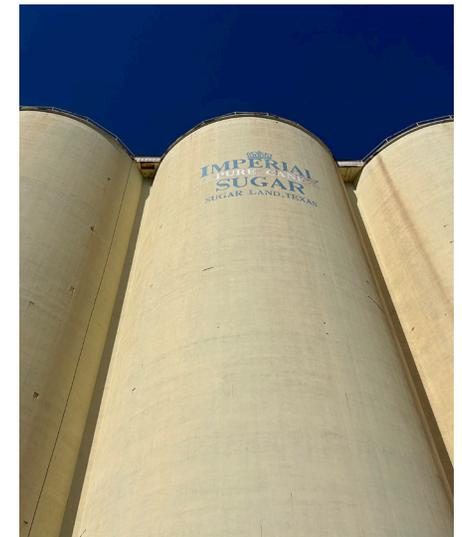


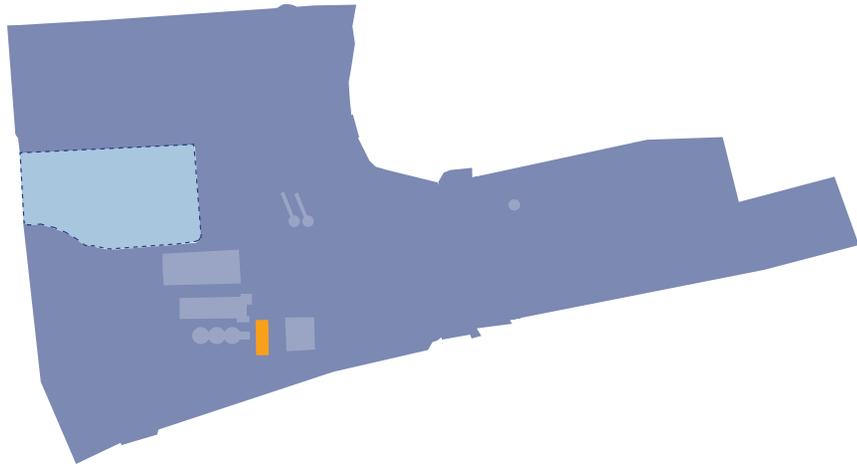


SILOS

Prominently positioned within the Imperial Historic District are three connected cylindrical concrete silos that rise to a height of approximately 150 feet. The central silo features the large Imperial Sugar logo, making the trio one of the most recognizable visual elements on the site. Constructed in 1997, the silos fall outside the District's period of historical significance and are therefore considered non-contributing structures. However, they played an important role in the final few years of the refinery operations and remain a defining part of the industrial skyline. Collectively, the silos stored nearly 12,000 tons of granulated sugar, functioning as critical large-capacity holding units.

In active use, the silos served as the major buffer point between the refinery's processing stages and its packaging and distribution systems. Once raw sugar was clarified, filtered, and crystallized in the Char House, it was conveyed into the silos for bulk storage. This step allowed the facility to maintain consistent output levels even when upstream or downstream processes varied. Their enclosed construction also protected the sugar from moisture, dust, and contamination, ensuring uniform quality and compliance with food safety standards. From the base of the silos, sugar could be routed directly into bagging machinery, loaded into railcars or trucks, or moved to other parts of the refinery to meet production needs. Though relatively modern, the silos reflect the scale and efficiency of late-twentieth-century sugar refining and continue to shape the visual and functional character of the site.





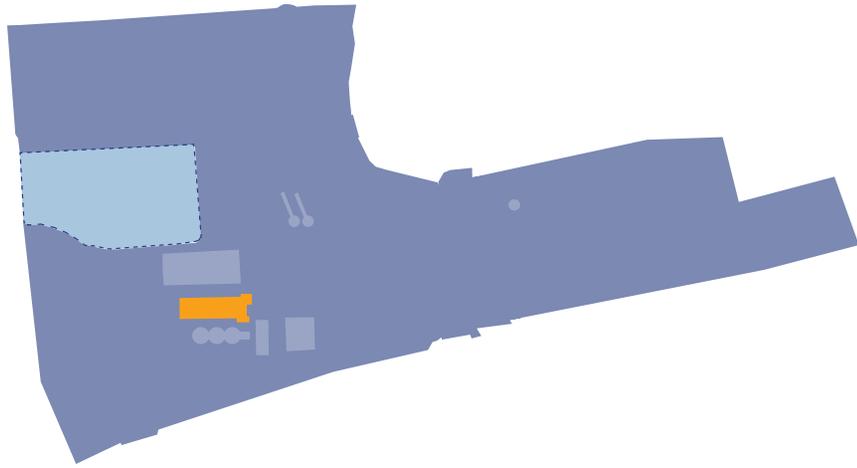
ENGINEERING BUILDING

The Engineering Building is a modest two-story brick building situated between the Char House and the later-built silos, occupying a central location within the refinery complex. Its straightforward industrial design includes a flat metal roof and simple rectangular footprint, with the front elevation lined by a covered walkway. Although unassuming in appearance, the building played an important administrative and technical role in the day-to-day operations of Imperial Sugar.

Historically, the payroll department was housed in this building, and employees would line up at a designated window on the ground floor to collect their paychecks. Research and development was also in the Engineering Building, along with other administrative offices.

While not as architecturally prominent as the Char House or three-bay warehouse, it contributed significantly to the organizational infrastructure that allowed Imperial Sugar to function as a large, coordinated operation. Its continued presence offers insight into the behind-the-scenes administrative and technical work that sustained the refinery for decades.





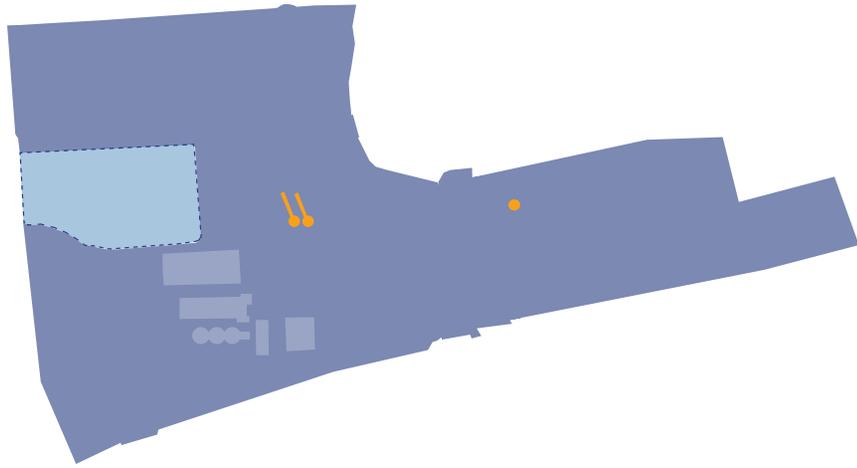
CONTAINER WAREHOUSE

The Container Warehouse strategically sits between the Three-Bay Warehouse and the silos. Built prior to 1950, the building reflects the practical, durable design typical of mid-1900s industrial facilities. Its uncomplicated form and masonry construction were well suited for the heavy, long-term use associated with equipment storage.

The Container Warehouse served as the primary storage space for packaging equipment used throughout the refinery. This included machinery, replacement parts, and specialized tools associated with the bagging, boxing, and handling of finished sugar products. Its proximity to both the Three-Bay Warehouse and the silos allowed for efficient movement of equipment and materials between storage, processing, and distribution areas. Although not the largest of the site's industrial buildings, the Container Warehouse played a vital role in maintaining operations and ensuring packaging liens could be kept in continuous service.

In 2016, the Sugar Land Heritage Foundation & Museum and the Fort Bend Children's Discovery Center moved into the Container Warehouse after it underwent significant renovations and expansion. This transformation introduced new public-facing uses to the former industrial building, preserving its exterior character while converting the interior into an educational and cultural space.

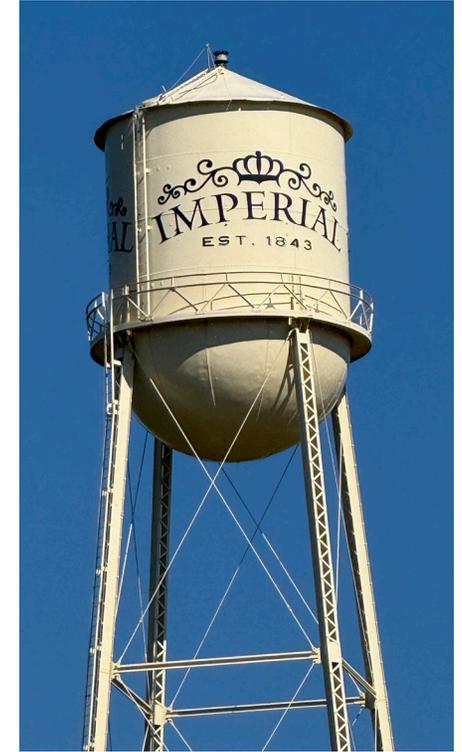


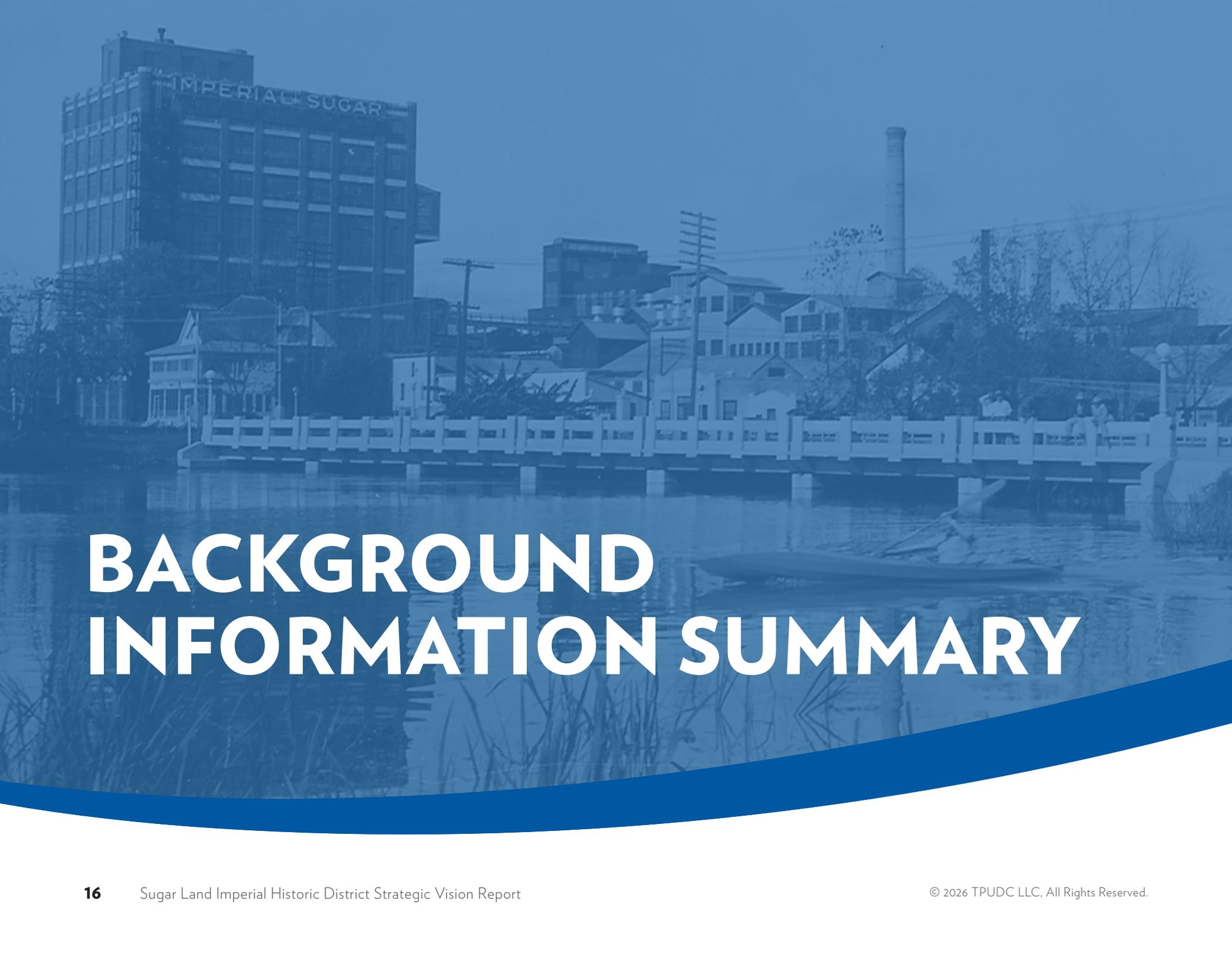


WATER TOWER & SMOKESTACKS

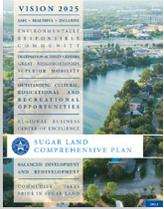
The Water Tower stands just east of the Char House across Oyster Creek and has long been one of the most significant vertical elements of the Imperial Sugar site. Constructed in 1925 to support expanding operations of the company, the tower provided essential water pressure for both daily industrial use and fire protection. Its elevated tank and lattice-style support frame exemplify early 1900s industrial infrastructure designed for durability and efficiency.

The two towering Smokestacks adjacent to the Char House and former power plant building are among the most dramatic remnants of the refinery's past. Built as part of the facility's steam and power generation system, the stacks once vented emissions from the boilers that supplied energy for sugar processing equipment throughout the complex. Their tall, cylindrical forms were engineered for maximum draft efficiency, allowing heat and exhaust to rise quickly and disperse high above the site. For much of the 20th century, the smokestacks were visible markers of the refinery's activity, signaling to residents that production was underway. Although no longer operational, the stacks remain powerful visual symbols of the heavy industrial processes that shaped Sugar Land's economy and continue to define the skyline of the District.



The background image shows a historic district scene. In the foreground, a white wooden bridge with a railing spans across a body of water. A small boat is visible on the water. In the background, there are several buildings, including a prominent multi-story building with "IMPERIAL SUGAR" written on its facade. The entire image is overlaid with a blue gradient.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION SUMMARY



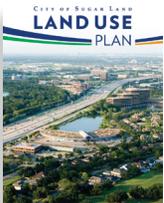
VISION 2025: SUGAR LAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2012)

In 2012, the City of Sugar Land adopted “Vision 2025: Sugar Land Comprehensive Plan” (Chapters 1-5), a strategic long-range policy document, to guide the City’s growth and development for the next 10+ years. This Plan establishes a vision statement for the City and outlines 11 goals to become a more inclusive, environmentally-responsible, economically attractive, balanced, and connected community. A top priority in the 2012 Comprehensive Plan is to create “destination activity centers,” with an emphasis on redevelopment of the Imperial Sugar site as a mixed-use community. The document emphasizes preservation of the Char House, Three-Bay Warehouse, and water tower and continuance of historical themes throughout the development (see the Imperial Sugar / Tract 3 General Plan on page 40).

CITY OF SUGAR LAND LAND USE PLAN (2018)

The Land Use Plan for the City of Sugar Land is one of several components of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan described above. It is also sometimes referred to as “Chapter 6” of the Comprehensive Plan, as it gives further direction on development and redevelopment in the City. There are 10 goals in the Land Use Plan that reinforce those of the Comprehensive Plan: Preserving Single-Family Neighborhoods, Creating Mixed-Use Activity Centers, Encouraging Residential Options, A Great Place for Businesses, Amenities for All, Inviting Outdoor Spaces, Connected Land Uses, Balanced Growth, Fostering Redevelopment, Celebrate Sugar Land.

In the Land Use Plan, 2.6% of the City’s land is designated as Redevelopment Area, with one of those being the former Imperial Sugar complex. Additionally, the site’ classified Future Land Use is Regional Activity Center (RAC), which is described as a walkable place offering a mix of uses that attract not only regional visitors but also employers. The Imperial RAC is comprised of the Imperial Historic District, Constellation Field, the now-built Imperial at Sugar Land community, Overture, and Talyard Brewing Co. The area is envisioned to preserve and reuse the Char House and surrounding historic Imperial buildings to complement new future retail, office, and entertainment uses. It calls for new buildings to match the character of existing industrial buildings, and requires that view corridors of the Char House are protected. For details, please see pages 82-83 of the Land Use Plan.



URBAN3 STUDY (2023)

In 2023, the City of Sugar Land consulted with Urban3 for site-specific scenario planning and analysis of the City on a value per acre basis, showing where redevelopment makes the most sense. As part of the study projections were calculated for the 40-acre Imperial Redevelopment site. The scenario assumed retail/office, multi-family, and office uses in the potential redevelopment, generating a total projected taxable value of \$444 million, compared to its current total taxable value of \$3 million. This study reinforces the importance of establishing an economically viable district with a mix of uses that generates revenue for the City.



IMPERIAL CHAR HOUSE HISTORIC DISTRICT MARKET & FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS (2025)

The City contracted a land economics firm to conduct a market study for the Imperial Historic District in May 2025. Existing socioeconomic conditions were examined for the City and area immediately surrounding the District. This analysis found that the most feasible near-term uses for the site are neighborhood retail, townhomes, and low- and mid-density apartments. It was determined that hotel, office, and high-density residential uses would be the least feasible in the near term due to post-COVID workplace shifts, hotels currently in the City’s pipeline, and the potential need for structured parking that would increase construction costs.





VISIONING WORKSHOP SUMMARY

SUMMARY

From Monday, November 3 to Thursday, November 6, 2025, the City of Sugar Land and Town Planning and Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC) hosted the Imperial Historic District Redevelopment Visioning Workshop, which was a multi-day public workshop and participatory process where all members of the community got to work directly with a planning team to shape the future vision of the Imperial Historic District. Presentations, topical meetings, a hands-on mapping workshop, and pop-up design studio were all open to the public.

All events were promoted weeks in advance by the City, using print materials, press releases, local news stories, mailers, and social media. Every element of this public process was held either on the District at the Sugar Land Heritage Foundation and Museum, or within walking distance to the District at the T.E. Harman Center.

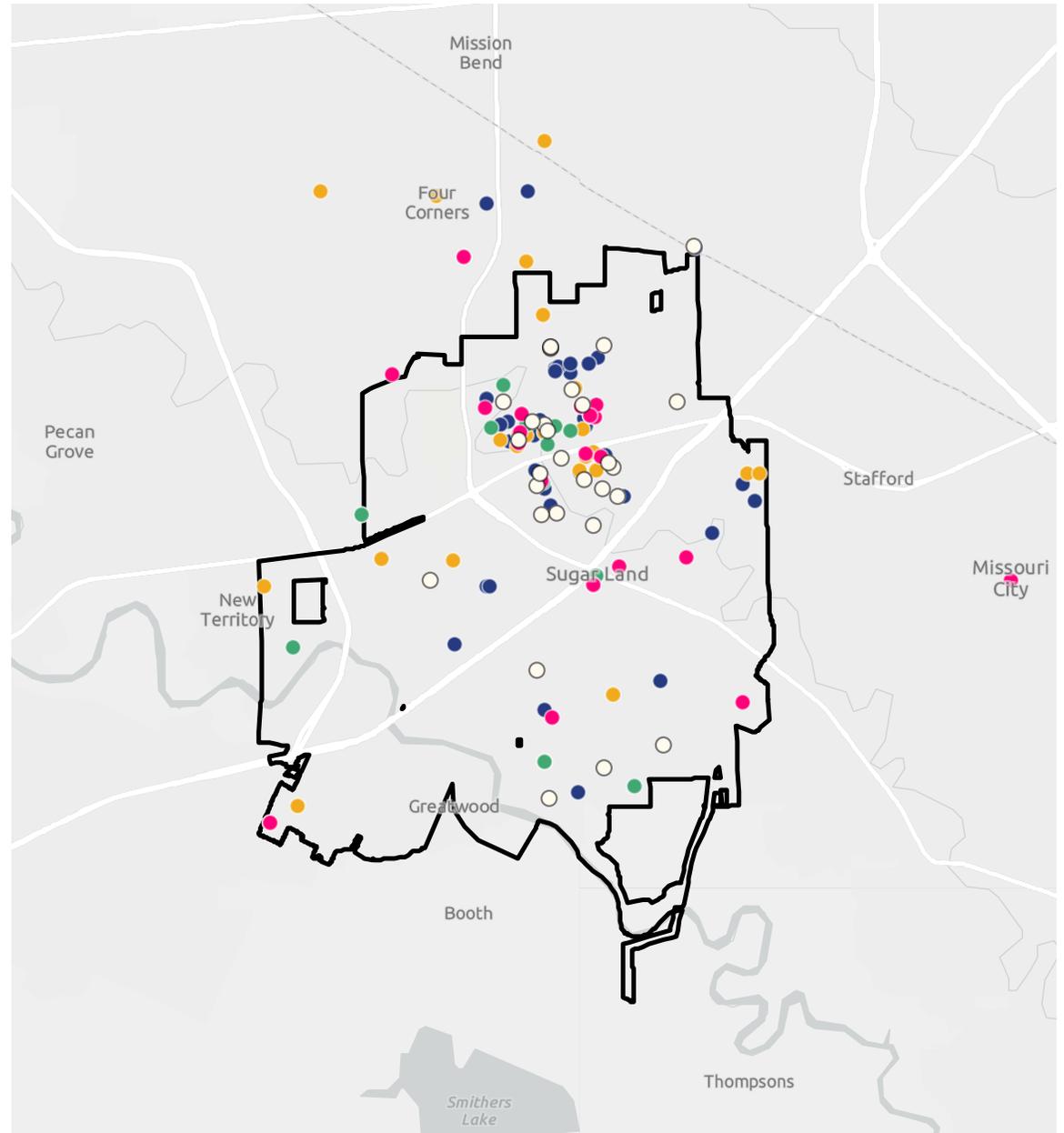
360

Attendees across all four days

- Opening Presentation Attendees 11/3/25
- Topical Meeting 1 Attendees 11/4/25
- Topical Meeting 2 Attendees 11/5/25
- Topical Meeting 3 Attendees 11/5/25
- Closing Presentation Attendees 11/6/25
- Sugar Land City Limits

Each dot indicates an attendee's home address.

Visioning Workshop Attendees



MARKETING

The City's Department of Redevelopment launched a robust public relations and community engagement strategy ahead of the visioning sessions to increase awareness and promote the opportunity to generate as much participation as possible. Outreach was inclusive of strategic press releases and media relations, paid advertising, and grassroots marketing.

Paid Ads

136,649
Impressions

Earned Media

2.4m
Reach

Social Media

170k
Views

Yard Signs

25

Banners

3



SUGAR LAND
IMPERIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT VISIONING
NOVEMBER 3-6, 2025

This four-day community engagement series, hosted by the City of Sugar Land with Town Planning & Urban Design Collaborative (TPUDC), is your chance to help shape the future of the Imperial Historic District. Share your input on what redevelopment should look like by joining interactive workshops and presentations to help define a vision for this historic site.

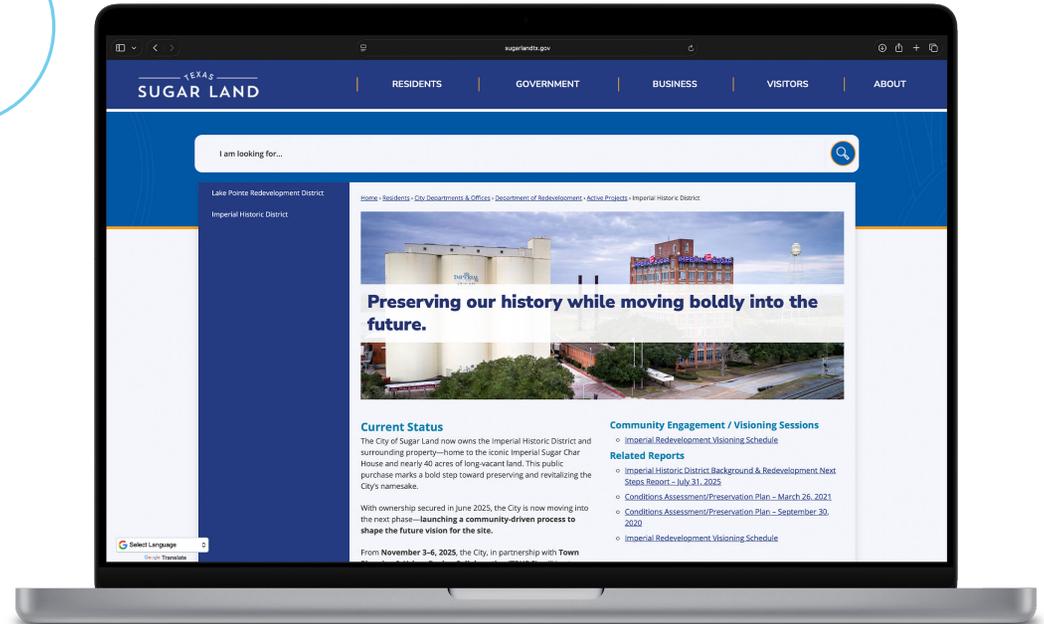
MON NOV. 3	TUE NOV. 4	WED NOV. 5	THU NOV. 6
6:30-8:30 PM Opening Presentation LOCATION A	9 AM - 7 PM Open Studio* 7 - 8 PM Topical Meeting 1: History, Culture & Arts LOCATION B	9 AM - 5 PM Open Studio* 12 - 1 PM Topical Meeting 2: Walking, Biking & Driving 7 - 8 PM Topical Meeting 3: Housing, Mixed-Use & Public Space LOCATION B	9 AM - 12 PM Open Studio* 6:30-8:30 PM Closing Presentation LOCATION A

*Open Studio is time available for community members to have one-on-one conversations with the planning team.

LOCATION A
T.E. Hurman Center
224 Heritage Way,
Sugar Land, TX 77478

LOCATION B
Heritage Museum
178 Kaufman Street,
Sugar Land, TX 77478

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION



OPENING PRESENTATION

On the first night of the Workshop, TPUDC hosted an Opening Presentation at T.E. Harman Center, which involved a general overview of the Imperial Historic District, changing preferences for development and redevelopment around the country, and a glimpse into how the rest of the Workshop would work. TPUDC Principal, Brian Wright, presented to around 100 people.



HANDS-ON WORKSHOP

Following the Opening Presentation, participants were invited to contribute their ideas in a Hands-On Workshop, working over maps of the District to identify how they might like to see the Site develop in the future, what features of the site they want to preserve, and what challenges should be addressed. This interactive process provided a preliminary inventory and assessment of issues and opportunities based on the concerns of the public who participated in the workshop. Each of the sixteen tables presented their “big ideas,” followed by a Question & Answer session led by Brian Wright. Examples of the workshop maps are included in page 24.



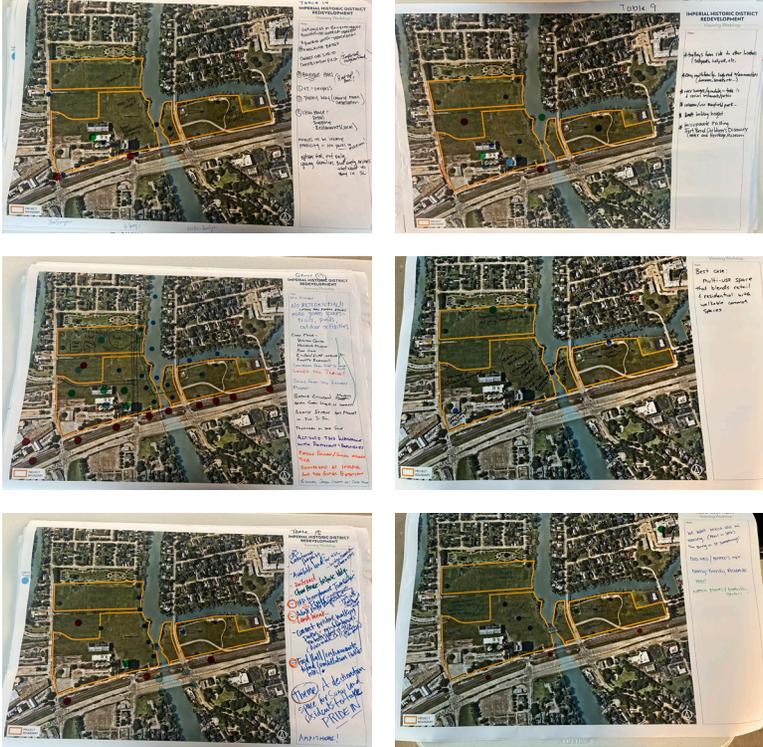
TOPICAL MEETINGS

Over the next two days of the Workshop, three topical meetings were held. The first meeting was on the evening of Tuesday, November 4th to talk about History, Culture, and Arts. The following Wednesday afternoon meeting was about Walking, Biking, and Driving, and the final topical meeting Wednesday night covered Housing, Mixed-Use, and Public Space. Each meeting was well-attended and involved respectful and meaningful conversations.



OPEN STUDIO

Over the course of the Visioning Workshop, the TPUDC Team set up a temporary planning studio at the Sugar Land Heritage Museum in the Imperial Historic District. Any resident, business owner, or public official who wished to participate was welcome to drop in at their convenience during Open Studio hours and provide comments, suggestions, or simply hear what other participants have said. All maps from the Hands-On Mapping Workshop were hung up for people to look at, along with blank maps for anyone who missed the mapping exercise to mark up as desired. The studio was open from Tuesday morning to Thursday afternoon, and ran concurrently with the three Topical Meetings.



WORK-IN-PROGRESS CLOSING PRESENTATION

On the final night of the Visioning Workshop, TPUDC's Brian Wright conducted a Work-In-Progress Presentation, synthesizing feedback that was received throughout the week, along with precedent images from exemplary projects mentioned by Workshop participants throughout the week. The reception was positive overall and participants were eager to hear about next steps for the Imperial Historic District redevelopment process. The evening concluded with a Q&A session.





VISION STATEMENT & GUIDING PILLARS

The City of Sugar Land now owns the Imperial Historic District and surrounding property, which is home to the iconic Imperial Sugar Char House and nearly 40 acres of long-vacant land. This public purchase marks a bold step in preserving and revitalizing the City's namesake, while creating a bold new development unlike anything else in Sugar Land. The draft Vision Statement and proposed Guiding Pillars presented here reflect community feedback and will guide the City and a Master Development Partner through a thoughtful redevelopment process rooted in shared values.

IMPERIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

VISION STATEMENT

An authentically Sugar Land district designed for our future.

GUIDING PILLARS



TELL THE STORY

A place that adapts the District's historic buildings in ways that preserve its industrial character and cultural heritage while positioning the site for a bold and vibrant future.



CREATE A LIVING DISTRICT

A place that is lively throughout the day and evening--energized by food, events, and local experiences--and designed to be flexible and adaptable to long-term market changes.



DESIGN FOR GATHERING

A place that is welcoming, where all ages and backgrounds gather and feel at home.



CONNECT & ENHANCE MOBILITY

A place that is walkable, well-connected, integrates Oyster Creek and surrounding neighborhoods, and is easy to get to and move through.



TELL THE STORY

Sugar Land residents desire for the Imperial Historic District to present an accurate and balanced account of the site's history that respectfully addresses both the difficult chapters and achievements.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

Ensuring the District's story reflects and respects well-established communities surrounding the site, including Mayfield Park.

Including oral histories, refinery artifacts, and archives from local families and past company employees throughout the District in public spaces, art, self-guided tours, interpretative signage, and other means.





CREATE A LIVING DISTRICT

The community wants the District to provide a mix of both daytime and nighttime activities and experiences, which aligns with the City's desires of a profitable and revenue-generating development.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

Encouraging neighborhood-scale uses to create a balanced District that supports residents and visitors alike.

Bringing in a mix of income-generating and experiential businesses, along with office spaces and a mix of housing to increase foot traffic.





DESIGN FOR GATHERING

Sugar Land is longing for a place that embraces the City's diversity and reinforces the bonds of its residents.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

Providing spaces and activities to engage all ages, from children to senior citizens and everything in between.

Accommodating various lifestyles and preferences by incorporating a variety of housing options throughout the District such as live/work buildings, townhomes, and multi-family apartments.





CONNECT & ENHANCE MOBILITY

The community wants to ensure that any redevelopment in this area will connect to existing developments and improve traffic circulation.

WHAT COULD THIS LOOK LIKE?

Linking the District to the Imperial neighborhood, Mayfield Park, The Hill, Constellation Field, and development across Highway 90A, and creating continuous shaded sidewalks with street trees, awnings, and colonnades, safe crossings, and multi-modal access.

Exploring non-vehicular options to safely access and move throughout the Imperial Historic District, such as shuttle buses, pedestrian bridges, bicycle infrastructure, and waterway activation.

Improving way-finding signage to ensure optimal distribution of traffic in and out of the District through the multitude of access points to the property.



A photograph of a multi-story brick building with a grid of windows. The words 'IMPERIAL SUGAR' are written in large, white, block letters across the top of the building. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. At the bottom of the page, there is a white curved banner.

CHAR HOUSE OPTIONS

CHAR HOUSE OPTIONS

The most common question throughout the Visioning Workshop was, “What would happen to the Char House?,” considering its history and eye-catching presence on the site. The prevailing sentiment was that the building should be preserved and activated.

On November 18, 2025, City Council approved a contract with Urbano Architects to begin preservation design work for the 100-year-old Char House. The initial phase focuses on critical roof, window, and structural repairs needed to stop deterioration and prepare the building for future reuse. On-site preservation work is anticipated to begin in April 2026 and continue for 18–24 months.

In addition to strong support for preservation, participants shared ideas about potential future uses that would be nice to see. The ideas listed in this section reflect the most commonly expressed suggestions. However, many unknowns remain, and additional studies will be required to evaluate building conditions, market demand, and financial feasibility of these ideas. Should any of these ideas prove unfeasible for the Char House itself, they may still be realized in other ways across the site.

MUSEUM

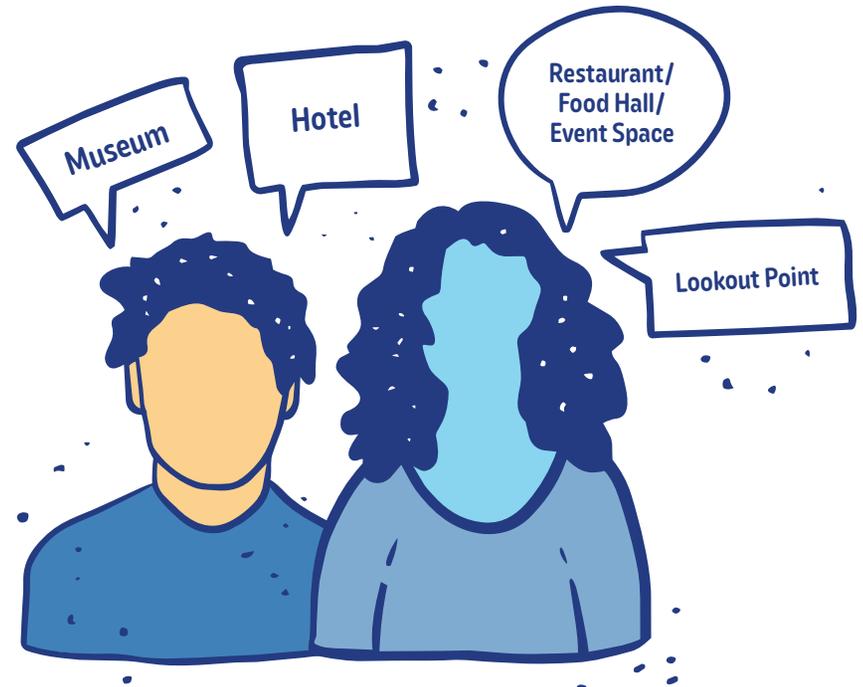


The most frequent suggestion by participants was a history-focused use inside the Char House. Participants suggested creating a museum on the ground floor with rotating exhibits to keep it from being a one-time-only attraction. They mentioned incorporating artifacts and stories that have been collected by the Sugar Land Heritage Foundation Museum and Fort Bend ISD/Sugar Land 95 Memorial Project. When asked why participants envisioned a museum, most said it was because they could not think of any other potential uses. It should also be noted that there is already a museum in the District.

HOTEL



The May 2025 Market & Feasibility Analysis found that a hotel use within the Imperial Historic District should not be recommended in the near term. However, during the workshop, participants repeatedly brought up converting the Char House into a boutique hotel. While not currently feasible due to the market, this could be a potential longer-term use. Participants noted that a hotel use could be combined with the other uses mentioned in this section to attract visitors and integrate well into a mixed-use activity center.



RESTAURANT/FOOD HALL/ EVENT SPACE



There was a strong desire to bring more local restaurants into the Imperial Historic District, and the idea of a rooftop restaurant was commonly mentioned, with the option to convert into a private event space. Similarly, adapting the Char House into a multi-level food hall for independent/local concept restaurants was introduced as a potential use. However, the Three-Bay Warehouse’s layout better lends itself to a food hall and event space.

LOOKOUT POINT



Some workshop participants had no opinion on the Char House’s future, other than opening the rooftop to the public for providing exceptional views of the City of Sugar Land.

As preservation of the Char House begins and additional necessary studies are conducted, the City will partner with a private developer to identify the best and most feasible future for this iconic building.



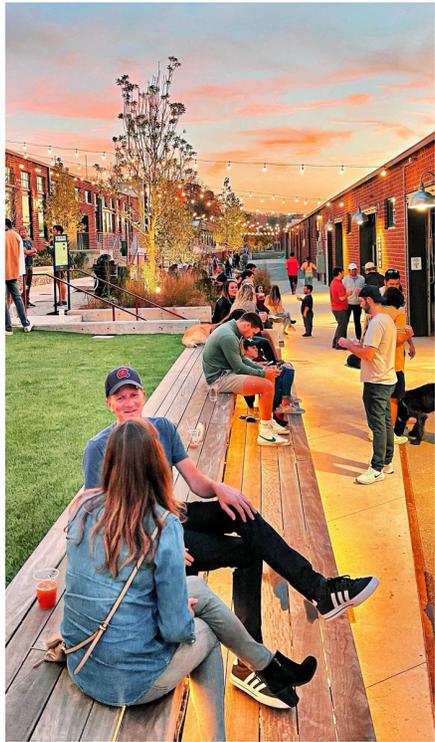
PRECEDENT IMAGES

PRECEDENT IMAGES

Throughout the 4-day visioning workshop, participants identified other projects and cities that could be used as precedent for the redevelopment of the Imperial Historic District. The images highlight the community's goals to celebrate the history of Imperial Sugar and foster a lively district filled with public gathering spaces, entertainment, retail, flexible and creative workspaces, and living spaces.



PRECEDENT IMAGES



PRECEDENT IMAGES



PRECEDENT IMAGES



PRECEDENT IMAGES



IMAGE SOURCES

Front Cover: City of Sugar Land. Image of Imperial Historic District. (n.d.).

Pg. 2-3:

- Sugar Land Heritage Foundation. Historic images of Sugar Land. (n.d.).
- Library of Congress. Sanborn Map of Sugar Land, Texas. (n.d.). https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08772_001/
- Houstonia Magazine. Imperial Sugar Char house: \$1B Makeover. (2023). <https://www.houstoniamag.com/news-and-city-life/2023/04/sugar-land-imperial-char-house-one-billion-makeover>
- TPUDC. Project images. (2025).
- Texas Economic Development. Ranking economic growth / population graphic. (n.d.). <https://businessintexas.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ranking-economic-3-1-growing-population.jpg>

Pg. 4: Sugar Scoop. Is Sugar Land One Word or Two? (2021). <https://sugar-scoop.com/2021/12/14/is-sugar-land-one-word-or-two-we-have-your-answer/>

Pg. 6-7:

- Texas State Historical Association (TSHA). Samuel May Williams Entry. (n.d.). <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/williams-samuel-may>
- Library of Congress. Sanborn Map of Sugar Land, Texas. (n.d.). https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08772_001/
- Facebook (public group post). Historic Sugar Land Photo. (n.d.). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/395644778725885/posts/1086124369677919/>
- City of Sugar Land. Historical Timeline. (n.d.). <https://www.sugarlandtx.gov/1773/Sugar-Land-Historical-Timeline>
- Sugar Land Heritage Foundation. Sugar Land History Overview. (n.d.). <https://slheritage.org/about/sugar-land-history/>
- Wikipedia. Imperial Sugar. (n.d.). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Sugar

Pg. 8-9: Nearmap. Aerial imagery. (2025).

Pg. 10:

- TPUDC. Project images. (2025).
- Houston Chronicle. Sugar Land Char House redevelopment. (2024). <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/neighborhood/fort-bend/article/sugar-land-char-house-imperial-20173185.php>
- Houstonia Magazine. Imperial Char House Makeover. (2023). <https://www.houstoniamag.com/news-and-city-life/2023/04/sugar-land-imperial-char-house-one-billion-makeover>

Pg. 11: TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

Pg. 12:

- TPUDC. Project images. (2025).
- Instagram. Historic Sugar Land Photo. (2020). https://www.instagram.com/p/CA_qgLepaj9/

Pg. 13: TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

IMAGE SOURCES (CONTINUED)

Pg. 14: TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

Pg. 15: TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

Pg. 16: <https://sugarlanddecodev.com/project/imperial-historic-district>

Pg. 17: City of Sugar Land. Project photo. (n.d.).

Pg. 18-25:

- City of Sugar Land. Project photo. (n.d.).
- TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

Pg. 26: TPUDC. Project images. (2025).

Pg. 28:

- Facebook (public group post). Historic Aerial Photo. (n.d.). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/395644778725885/posts/1086124369677919/>
- Sugar Land Heritage Foundation Store. Digital Photograph 23: Aerial View 1923-1924. (n.d.). <https://slheritage.org/shop/digital-photograph-23-aerial-view-1923-1924/>

Pg. 29:

- McEwen Northside Apartments. (n.d.). <https://livemcewennorthside.com/residents/>
- PATS Charlotte. Light Rail Weekender Blog. (n.d.) <https://pats.charlotte.edu/light-rail-weekender-may-30-june-1/>

Pg. 30:

- Facebook (Visit Sugar Land). (2025). <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=690197550197029&set=pb.100076203690417.-2207520000&type=3>
- Adobe Stock. Stock image. (licensed).

Pg. 31:

- REA. Indianapolis Cultural Trail project image. (n.d.). <https://www.reasite.com/projects/indianapolis-cultural-trail>
- City of Sugar Land. Project imagery. (n.d.).

Pg. 32: Community Impact. Sugar Land Historic District Feedback Overview. (2025). <https://communityimpact.com/houston/sugar-land-missouri-city/government/2025/11/10/sugar-land-residents-desire-preserving-elements-in-imperial-historic-district-feedback-shows/>

Pg. 34: Facebook. Historic Sugar Land Photo. (n.d.). <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=851100093721071&set=pb.100064632646133.-2207520000&type=3>

Pg. 35:

- DB Architect. Bandsaw Building. (n.d.). <https://www.dbarchitect.com/projects/bandsaw-building>
- Texas Economic Development. Population growth graphic. (n.d.). <https://businessintexas.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ranking-economic-3-1-growing-population.jpg>
- Sloss Real Estate. Pepper Place. (n.d.). <https://slossrealestate.com/portfolio-items/pepper-place/>

IMAGE SOURCES (CONTINUED)

- At Home Upstate. Ponce City Market Experience. (n.d.). <https://athomeupstate.com/experience-ponce-city-market/>
- Visit Houston LGBTQ. Lynn Wyatt Square photo. (n.d.). <https://lgbtq.visithoustontexas.com/listings/lynn-wyatt-square-for-the-performing-arts/31878/>
- The Barlow. Project Photo. (n.d.). <https://thebarlow.net/>

Pg. 36:

- Cultural Creatives. Things to Do in Phoenix. (n.d.). <https://culturalcreatives.org/united-states/things-to-do-in-phoenix-arizona/>
- The Works ATL. Redevelopment Photo (Flickr). (2023). https://theworksatl.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/47726538701_cd937c193f_b.jpg
- Facebook. Community photo. (n.d.). <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10163020520410788&id=121694765787&set=a.190867045787>
- The Infatuation Seattle. Terra Plata Review Photo. (n.d.). <https://www.theinfatuation.com/seattle/reviews/terra-plata>
- Facebook. Community garden/gathering photo. (n.d.). <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=4065649566813228&id=1510994688945408&set=a.1663959090315633>
- See What Grows. Community Gardens Article. (n.d.). <https://seewhatgrows.org/community-gardens-important-community/>
- Bellaire TX. City document image. (n.d.). <https://www.bellairetx.gov/ImageRepository/Document?documentID=28122>

Pg. 37:

- The Factory at Franklin. Event image. (n.d.). <https://factoryatfranklin.com/event/birthday-bash-celebratory-walking-tour/>
- YouTube - Rip City Drone. Aerial video still. (n.d.). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHMeJheC85c> (Rip City Drone YouTube channel)
- Olio in Iowa. Mill City Museum Blog. (n.d.). <https://olioiniowa.com/blog/mill-city-museum/>
- Instagram. Photo post. (2024). <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOYqZOmDvv6/>
- Squarespace CDN. Industrial museum photo. (n.d.). <https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5e143243e8e81546da5cd885/1597290048009-WoTXGKLLVDNXXWJVPQ4D/marathon-museum-poundry-department.jpg>
- Pinterest. Historic industrial site reference. (n.d.). <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/223209725254093420/>
- Texas Highways. Houston First Ward Arts Article. (n.d.). <https://texashighways.com/culture/arts-entertainment/how-houston-s-first-ward-industrial-yard-transformed-into-an-artistic-epicenter/>

Pg. 38:

- HAR.com. High-rise interior. (n.d.). https://content.harstatic.com/high_rise/hr/1055_8.jpg
- Yelp. Landy Gardner Interiors. (n.d.). https://www.yelp.com/biz_photos/landy-gardner-interiors-nashville?select=jQxIBjlrGNeDKL2Ombq8Q
- Issuu. Dwell Magazine excerpt. (2015). https://issuu.com/lawrenceambrocio5018/docs/dwell_april_2015/s/14768564
- Medium. Herd Mentality: Dining Choices. (n.d.). <https://medium.com/@joeyandersonbcc/herd-mentality-when-deciding-where-to-eat-3186f45b3a0b>
- Square Feet Studio. Optimist Food Hall. (n.d.). <https://squarefeetstudio.com/projects/optimist-food-hall/>

IMAGE SOURCES (CONTINUED)

- The Works ATL. Redevelopment Photo. (n.d.). https://theworksatl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/IMG_1671-1.jpeg

Pg. 39:

- Pinterest. Art studio interior. (n.d.). <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/bd/98/fd/bd98fd6c3516b50cf2bbb43cb394ff43.jpg>
- ArchDaily. Artist Studios and Creative Workspaces. (2024). <https://www.archdaily.com/1026607/artist-studios-and-creative-workspaces-8-latin-american-projects-that-blend-work-living-and-exhibition-spaces>
- Boston Magazine. Artisans in Boston. (2025). <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/life-style/2025/07/31/artisans-boston/>
- Deskmag. Coworking Tools & Tips. (n.d.). <https://www.deskmag.com/en/coworking-tools-tips/designer-accessories-furniture-diy-for-coworking-spaces-795>
- Site Solutions LA. Creative workspace. (n.d.). <https://sitesolutionsla.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Works-1-1.jpg.webp>
- Camels and Chocolate. Franklin, TN photo. (2025). <https://www.camelsandchocolate.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Solo-Trip-FranklinTN-31.jpg>
- The Monopolitan. Otis James Atelier. (2016). <https://themonopolitan.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/otis-james1.png>
- Triad. GIF workspace. (2022). <https://wearetriad.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/IF-032.gif>

Back Cover: iStock. Imperial Sugar Building, Sugar Land, Texas. (n.d.). <https://media.istockphoto.com/id/1445771114/photo/imperial-sugar-building-in-sugar-land-texas-usa.jpg?s=612x612&w=0&k=20&c=UdAOtJuwgw5uG8hvHyr740jjS9bR5dvWCrPCW6IEH5M=>

