

October 31, 2020

USACE, Galveston District ATTN: BBTRS  
P.O. Box 1229  
Galveston, TX, 77553  
Re: Buffalo Bayou and Tributaries Resiliency Study (BBTRS)

Dear Sir/Madam:

We have concerns with alternatives 5, 6, 7 and 8 that all deal with changes to Buffalo Bayou. What we do support is brainstorming solutions with those who have done expert research. This includes Houston Stronger advocating for the needs of those upstream and Memorial Super Neighborhood and Sandalwood advocating for the needs of those downstream. There are areas along Buffalo Bayou that could benefit with improvements, such as at Chimney Rock and Memorial where my daughter lives. Each area is unique and requires the eyes of those who live there to share what works for their ecosystem. We hope those that border the bayou would be able to know exactly what they plan, as they are the experts in their space they look at daily. If the USACE and Harris County Flood Control District could facilitate forums like you provided in October with all who wrote a letter to brainstorm solutions and reach consensus, maybe in 20 years we will look back and say it worked. If no action is taken, we would look back and say why. Houston knows the costs of no action.

We strongly oppose to the proposed "channel improvements" (Alternative #6) identified in the BBTRS Interim Report. This would destroy the natural environment along Buffalo Bayou and create a 23 mile long concrete drainage ditch. This proposal would require the taking by condemnation of a large number of private homes. In Sandalwood, a 290-foot right-of-way would appear to require the removal of the dam between our largest lake (the swimming lake) and Buffalo Bayou. This would be highly destructive of the beautiful environment and ecosystem that presently thrives in Sandalwood and would cause drastic damages.

I have lived in the bayou city since 1949. We will always deal with flooding. It is time to stop destroying natural areas and ecosystems in Houston and look to nature to help with prevention. I moved to Sandalwood in 1958 when I was 10 years old. I remember crossing the bayou and hiking around Camp Hudson and having cookouts on the sand banks. Those with houses that bordered the bayou looked out on the beauty of nature and trees. We were told it would always be a Boy Scout camp. The Camp was sold in 1973. Now homeowners that bordered Camp Hudson look out at parking covers for the Hudson Oak Townhouses. From beautiful to eyesore. And on the path around the third lake which borders Buffalo Bayou we look at houses. And now the addition of a wall of rocks to deal with the erosion due to Harvey flooding. Which will be made worse with your alternatives to alter Buffalo Bayou. We still have many nature areas and wildlife to enjoy and want to maintain in our neighborhood. The Sandalwood board of directors in their letter shared more details along with pictures.

The destruction of Camp Hudson should have never happened. It was replaced with homes. There was no long-term conservation plan. Had that been in place and a priority over selling the property to builders, it might still be a park. A park that could help with water overflow. And that building continues throughout Harris County without making the environmental impact a priority.

The same thing happened to the Spring Shadows Neighborhood. The Pinecrest Golf Course in 2017 could have been used for flood retention. The residents tried to save it, but alas their voices were not heard. It is being replaced with townhomes.

I request that the Corps of Engineers re-evaluate Alternative #3 and clean out and deepen Addicks and Barker Reservoirs. This is Component #3 and #4 of the Houston Stronger plan. But their plan suggests lowering the spillways would not be good for those living downstream. These reservoirs have silted in and lost water storage capacity since they were constructed in the 1930s. I remember as a child driving down Memorial Drive to the reservoir dam and rolling on the natural grasses down the hill on trips and wondering about the future of this beautiful area. I do think that cleaning out and deepening the reservoirs to restore their storage capacity is both good for Sandalwood and for the folks who live north and west of the Addicks reservoir. Also the critical aspects of Spillway Safety must be addressed. All fair-minded Stakeholders are likely to agree that Spillway Reconstruction must be approved and started ASAP.

We agree with Jim Blackburn in his [Houston Matters](#) discussion who said the USACE is using 20th century thinking to solve a 21st century problem. Better alternatives need to be developed. The best outcome of your work is the open communication with the community. We commend you for giving us the opportunity to express our ideas. This has opened communication in Sandalwood with neighbors sharing ideas and feelings. That is the best solution for our future, moving hearts from apathy to action.

We do not have zoning, but we do have building codes. We can use those to prevent and solve problems. I have been watching ideas from around the world with unique solutions including <https://www.expo2020dubai.com/> - <https://countdown.ted.com/> - and locally [on an Urban Harvest show](#). We have universities in Houston with architectural students designing innovative 21st century homes. As many advocacy, environmental and engineering groups have collaborated to develop solutions for flooding, the builders in Houston could do the same. On the pathways of health vs wealth, we need to find common ground. Mayor Turner said "We must deal with the challenges facing us today and prepare for those facing us tomorrow. No other city is better suited to tackle climate change than Houston." This challenge of flooding can be solved collaborating together.

Thank you for your consideration in revisiting Alternative #3,

Karen Kerver North and William North  
70 Patti Lynn Lane, Houston, TX 77024