

# League City Parks Master Plan: The Exurb Re-imagined

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## IMAGINING REALITY/CONSTRUCTING IDEALS

The League City Parks Master Plan represents the collaboration between a fourth year undergraduate architecture studio and a small town of 35,000 inhabitants to re-imagine their environment through the reconfiguration of its municipal parks system. By taking on an actual project, this studio went beyond merely studying urban issues. A commitment was made by students and faculty to demonstrate that the ideals imagined in schools are not inconsistent with the pragmatics of a real-life situation. For their part, the City Council of League City, Texas, made a commitment to engage in a process that turned the design of their parks into a teaching project.

## PARKS FOR THE GARDEN CITY

With a territory covering 54 square miles, and an estimated 1995 population of 35,000 inhabitants, League City has a net density of approximately one person per acre. In many cities parks are conceived as refuges from the intense activity of the surrounding city; in League City a park is perhaps more useful as a place of communal gathering and a refuge from the sense of isolation commonly found in automobile-oriented environments. The students proposals contained in the master plan sought to create multiple linkages amongst the new and existing parks, neighborhoods, and the town's other civic institution through opportunistic use of natural features and existing infrastructure.

## DISTANT PAST AND NEAR FUTURE

Issues of local identity were also a great concern of the residents of this coastal town who sought to affirm their uniqueness amongst the vast sprawl at Houston's edge. References were often made to the past and the future. However the past that most informed the designs was not the 19th century origins of the town, but rather, the millennial history of the area that tells a tale of emerging from the sea, and is shaped by the recurrent natural cycles: weather, tides, floods, day and night. The moon, in particular, became a recurrent theme of many of the parks because of its role in the regulating of tides, as well as the powerful symbolism it holds for the many residents who work in the adjacent Johnson Space Center (NASA).

University of Houston College of Architecture 1994-1995  
Honors Studio: George Atallah, Arthur Campos, David Caudillo, Darren Copeland, Chung Dinh, Robert Dudley, Wael El Dasher, Thatcher Focke, Albert Frias, Clint Huff, Chad Johnson, Cynthia Melo, and Virna Scharunovych.

*Visiting Critics: Julia Badenhope (Ames), Jacques Boulet (Paris), John Kaliski (Los Angeles), Carlos Jimenez (Houston), Markku Komonen (Helsinki), and Glenn Murcutt (Sydney).*

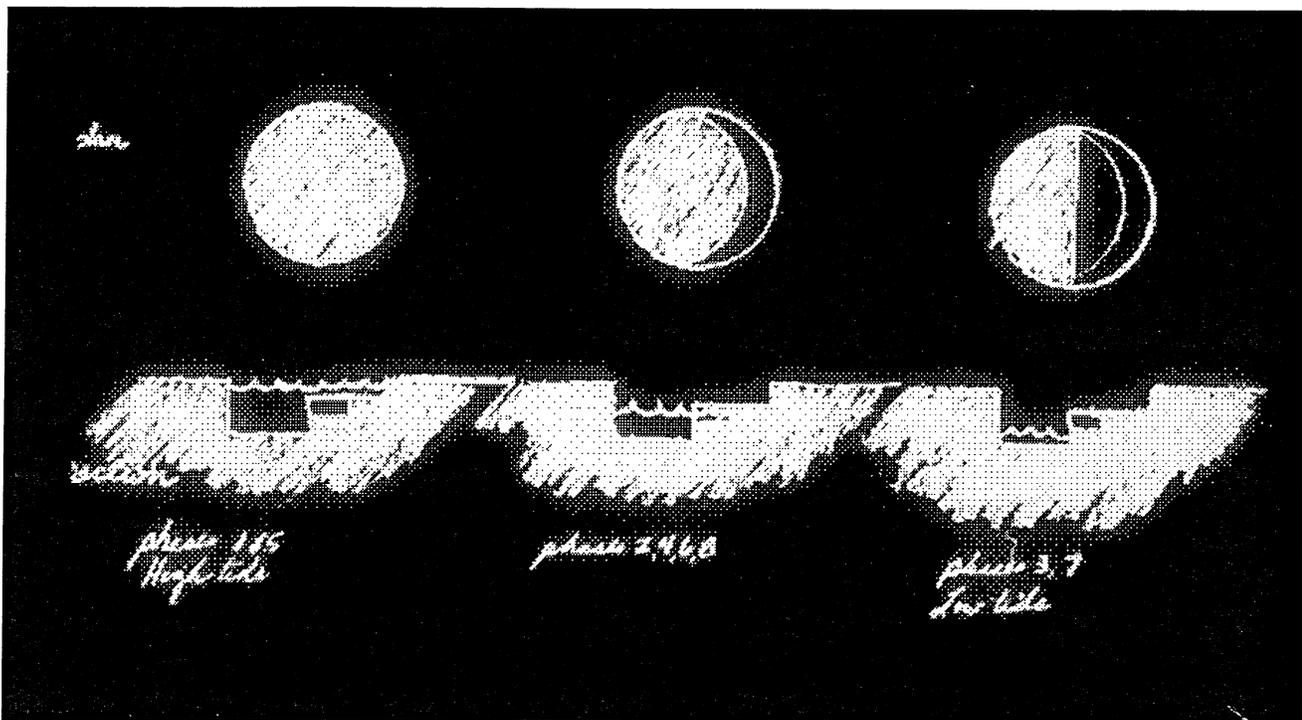
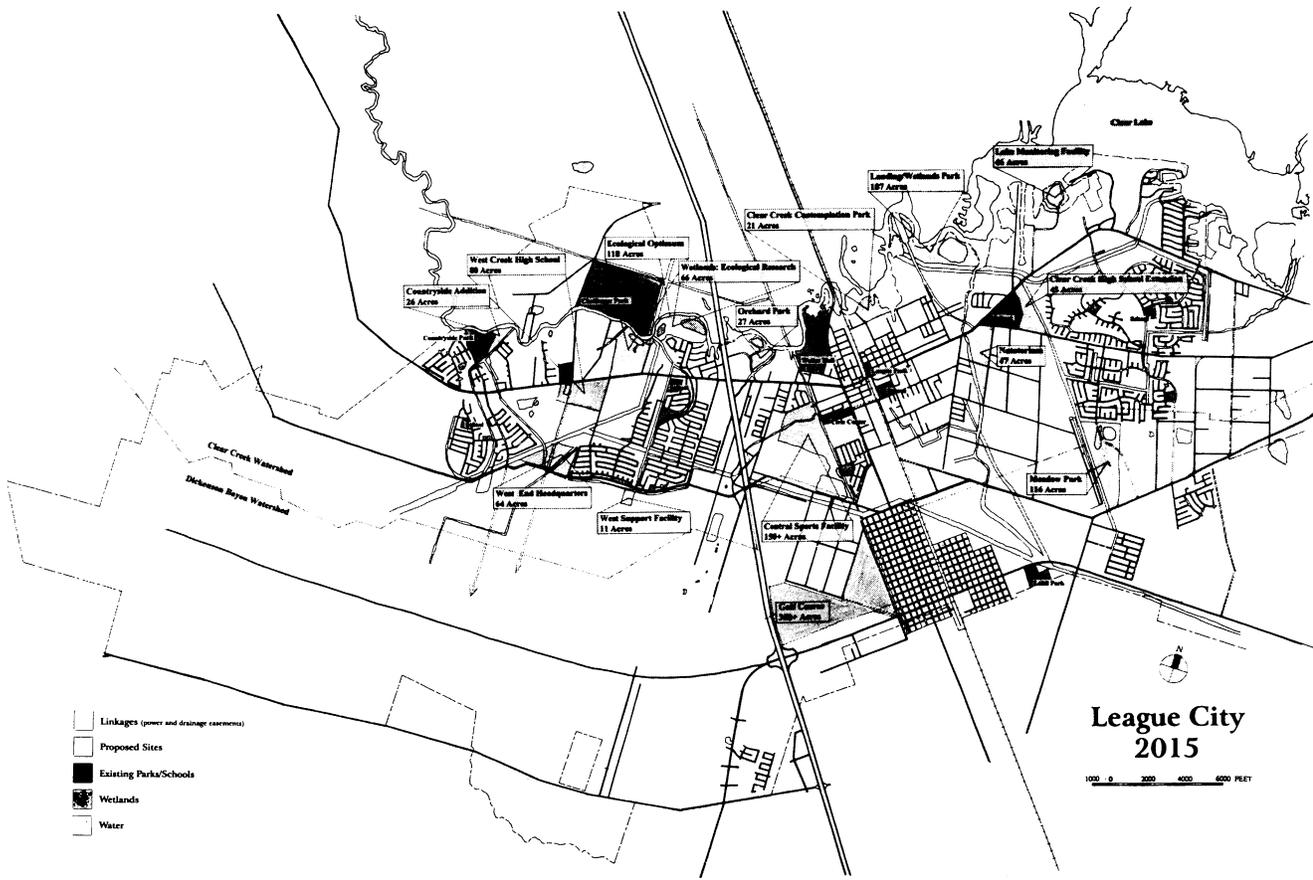


Fig. 1. Map of League City showing the various parks and civic institutions to be linked.  
Fig. 2. Retaining tidal pond marking the phases of the moon. Drawing: Robert Dudley