

For Immediate Release

Avenida Houston to Become Downtown Houston's Town Square

Images Available Upon Request



Avenida Houston

Houston, TX (December 23, 2016) - A narrative of nature and industry underscores the design of the new 3-1/2 acre *Avenida Houston*, adjacent to the freshly renovated George R. Brown Convention Center downtown. The lead visionaries of this vast urban square were the architects at EYP and the planners and landscape architects at SWA. SWA is also the homegrown creative team responsible for the reemergence of Houston's newest public space, Buffalo Bayou Park.

Houston's formidable legacy in the oil and space industries is well known; the city survived the housing recession admirably and has become the fastest-growing metropolis in the US. But that's only half the story. The same fortunate geography that supports Houston's economic stability is lately a cause for celebration in itself. Nature, it turns out, is equally Houston's identity, as the people who founded this city on three major waterways well understood. The coupling of these advantages—industry and nature—is what makes Houston a standout today as an exceedingly livable place.

"I'm excited that work is nearly complete on Avenida Houston," said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner. "This place-making initiative is a key component in making our downtown more active and engaging, not just during the workday but into the evenings and weekends, and will have a long-term impact on this part of our city."

Central to the theme of nature as it plays out in this new downtown Houston events venue is the famous central flyway that offers hundreds of species of birds a safe place to rest along their annual transcontinental journey. Their flight is echoed in the pavement and lighting that directs pedestrians through the plaza. Safe migration serves as a significant metaphor for the city that is home to the country's most diverse population. Houston's industrial history is also interpreted in the plaza, where vertical features include crane-like catenary lighting systems and an event space designed along the lines of the massive wooden crane mats used in oil fields across southeast Texas.

The Plaza will feature numerous attractions, including new food and beverage outlets, flexible community space, native gardens, and towering shade trees. Among ten artworks continuing the theme of nature and industry commissioned for the space is the captivating "Wings Over Water". This mechanical sculpture measuring 20 by 60 feet brings together the industrial artifacts of Houston with the enormous natural systems that the city has embraced as its new identity. Artist Joe O'Donnell, of Tucson-based Creative Machines, worked in close collaboration with SWA Group to realize this ultimate tribute to man and nature living in harmony.

About SWA

SWA plans and designs healthy, inspiring outdoor spaces throughout the world. The firm's purpose is to help clients create places that are at once ecologically resilient, aesthetically compelling, and socially beneficial. With more than 200 professionals throughout its eight studios worldwide, SWA offers clients both a deep bench of talent and experience as well as the energy, personal commitment, and responsiveness typical in smaller firms. SWA was founded nearly six decades ago and has contributed to more than 800 award-winning projects in 60 countries.
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