

## Shedding the Training Wheels: Houston Bikeway Plan, Phase Two

An update of the City of Houston's comprehensive Bikeway Plan is under way to boost Houston's efforts to become a bicycle-friendly community. Many of the projects envisioned in the existing plan, developed in 1993 by the Department of Public Works and Engineering, are done or nearly complete. They include 350 miles of trails, lanes, and other multi-use paths. The most recent addition, the Columbia Tap Rails-to-Trails project, converted an old Union Pacific corridor into a four-mile paved path connecting the east side of Downtown to the Third Ward. A similar project, still under construction, will connect the Heights to Downtown via the MKT (Missouri, Kansas, Texas) line.

Dan Raine, the city's new bicycle-pedestrian coordinator, is directing the Bikeway Plan. A transportation planner with 15 years of experience, including four years as bicycling coordinator at the Houston-Galveston Area Council, he has many cycling advocates feeling optimistic. After soliciting feedback through contacts with Super Neighborhoods, CIP meetings, an online form, and a meeting held with the non-profit BikeHouston, he received 600 responses. "Think of the Bikeway Plan as a 15-year-old teenager," he has said. "Without direction, support, help, and education, you will have a troubled teen; you have to help this person grow." Details have not been released, but Raine hopes



Cyclists riding the Columbia Tap trail during the official opening.

to repeat and build on what has been successful in the existing network, improve safety conditions, and repair deteriorating trails and pathways.

Peter Wang, a League of American Bicyclists instructor and cycling advocate, points to county-wide problems that extend beyond the Bikeway Plan. "At the Houston-Galveston level, we need a regional bikeway plan that every local government uses," he said in an interview. He added, "In some parts of the county, we are losing cyclable roads." He also called for a better intermodal network whereby cyclists could access routes by public transportation. Bicycle racks on buses have proven successful, but METRO has not placed racks on its light rail trains.

Wang argues further that the development of bicycling infrastructure needs to be accompanied by a cultural realignment. Cycling continues to be viewed in the U.S. as primarily a means of recreation, rather than transport. The development of multi-modal commuting, he points out, would have a beneficial effect on problems of traffic, health, air quality, and fuel consumption. The challenge of Houston's comprehensive Bikeway Plan is to both meet immediate needs and cultivate this attitudinal change.



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## MASTER OF VISUAL POETICS: Henrique Oliveira's Tapumes at the Rice Gallery

At the age of 34, Henrique Oliveira earned his Masters of Visual Poetics from the University of São Paulo. Slightly tense, with skinny dark jeans and curly hair, his mannerisms bring to mind a young Bob Dylan. His installation at the Rice Gallery was open from March 26 to May 9. Oliveira began his artistic explorations as a painter and expands a vocabulary suited to brush and canvas, transposing terms such as "gestural abstraction, movement, and blending" into the context of sculpture, or more specifically "Tridimensional." The latest of these is called "tapumes," a Portuguese word that references temporary construction fencing made from cheap Brazilian wood. Oliveira's piece is a jolting repurposing of these weathered castoffs.

Pliant and supple, Oliveira's construction appears so flexible that it gives the impression that pushing on one bubble would create two more. A girl slips between the installation and a solitary shape that seems to have dripped from above. This is a sculpture that begs to be occupied. In fact the entire piece gives the impression that the artist is



Cast-off wood was arranged by color and then layered into a three-dimensional installation.

engaged in a schizophrenic nesting, inviting you to join. The textures, depth of color, tunnels, and voids formed by the thin wood appears at times violent and at other moments serene. Caves and tunnels are formed so abruptly that they betray the slenderness of the surface; one can't help but wonder if there is more beneath.

—Jesse Hager



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