

# Aldine Community Workshop: Health Impact Assessment of the North Houston Highway Improvement Project

ALDINE HIGH SCHOOL

April 1, 2019



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Table of Contents</b>	1
<b>Workshop Overview</b>	2
Attendance	
Workshop Goals	
<b>Community Member Feedback</b>	3
Current Concerns	
<i>Air Quality</i>	
<i>Traffic</i>	
<i>Flooding</i>	
Expected Long and Short Term Impacts	
<i>Short Term</i>	
<i>Long Term</i>	
Recommendations	
<b>Wrap-Up</b>	15
Community Member Commentary	
Community Member Evaluations	

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

On April 1st, 2019, a community workshop was held at the Aldine School Campus to gather feedback on ways the I-45 N expansion project (also known as NHHIP) could be designed to protect health in Houston schools and neighborhoods. The Aldine campus was located at the time of the meeting within 500 feet of the highway. The workshop was part of a series of 4 meetings staged in communities projected to be affected by the project. The workshop provided an opportunity for community to share their perspectives on the locations along the NHHIP corridor they are currently concerned about regarding traffic-related pollution, locations and groups they felt were either missing or neglected in the current HIA focus, and what strategies and recommendations the HIA should include in the final report. Community member input will be used to inform the concerns and recommendations suggested by the assessment. At this location, some materials were provided in Spanish and translators were available throughout the presentation.

Twelve community members attended, representing education, neighborhood residents, public officials, and community-based nonprofit.

### Attendance

Aldine Parents Aldine Students Aldine High School	Antena Houston Office of Adrian Garcia, Harris County Commissioner Precinct 2
---	---

### Workshop Goals

The workshop was designed to meet the following learning objectives for participants:

1. Learn about the health effects of freeways.
2. Learn about the NHHIP expansion and its health impacts on their communities.
3. Learn about the goals of the HIA project.
4. Provide neighborhood-specific knowledge and input on impacted areas, potential dangers, and identify opportunities for mitigation strategies to protect health of community members.
5. Learn about officials to contact, events to attend, and information to leverage for better protection for their communities.

The learning objective for the project team was to better understand at a neighborhood-specific level what areas will be the most impacted, what the health and construction concerns of affected community members are, and which mitigation strategies they believe will be effective. This information will be incorporated into the HIA's final report.

## COMMUNITY MEMBER FEEDBACK

The workshop solicited feedback from community members in an interactive workshop with two engagement activities. Attendees were grouped into tables with other people and were given a large map of their community showing locations of school buildings, school campuses, and the project expansion footprint, to mark with stickers, markers, and post-it notes. In the first activity, attendees were asked to identify what and where they currently experienced negative health outcomes. In the second activity, attendees were asked to suggest what changes they wanted to be made and where.



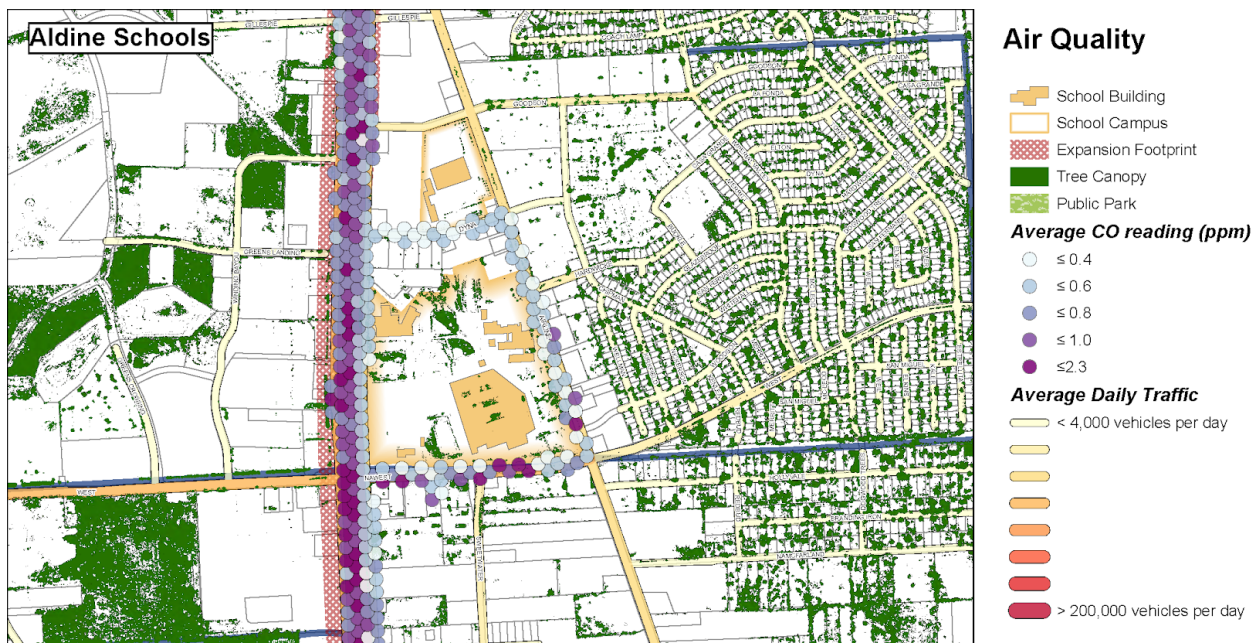
### Current Concerns

In the first activity, attendees were asked to identify the locations on their neighborhood map where they experience air pollution as they wanted to define it, where it is dangerous to walk/cycle/use public transit, and where they have experienced flooding. They indicated these locations by placing colored dots on their maps and were encouraged to explain if they wanted by writing next to the dot.

The lists below summarize the input across the 5 maps by numbering how many dots were placed in geographic areas for each indicator. It is helpful to get an idea of where air pollution, traffic, and flooding hotspots are most often identified by residents. However, through enumeration and ranking by highest number of indicators to least, we do not mean to indicate that any of the areas were identified as more important or urgent by participants, and do not intend to prioritize those areas. Rather, reference to the maps holistically should be considered to have an understanding of the small sample size of community members’ concerns in the neighborhood that were present at our meeting. Additionally, it is possible that participants might have used the wrong color dot when marking spots or tried to indicate things that we did not understand, so results are not guaranteed to have been interpreted correctly in all instances.

### Air Quality

Attendees were shown a map of Aldine schools and their surroundings including average daily traffic in the areas around the highway, CO readings from on and further away from the highway, and existing parks, greenspace, and tree canopy (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Joint Aldine Campus: Air Quality Metrics.**

Here is a list grouping dots by area:

Areas Identified in response to “How do you experience air pollution in your neighborhood?”
Area near intersection of I-45 and Sam Houston Parkway (5)
Area along I-45 corridor south of Sam Houston Parkway (4)
Area along Airline Dr. (4)
- “Business with large truck traffic, petroleum company.” (along Dale St.)
Area around intersection of West Rd. with I-45 (2)
- “Noise pollution.”

Near intersection of Sellers Rd. and E West Rd. (1)

- "Construction company."

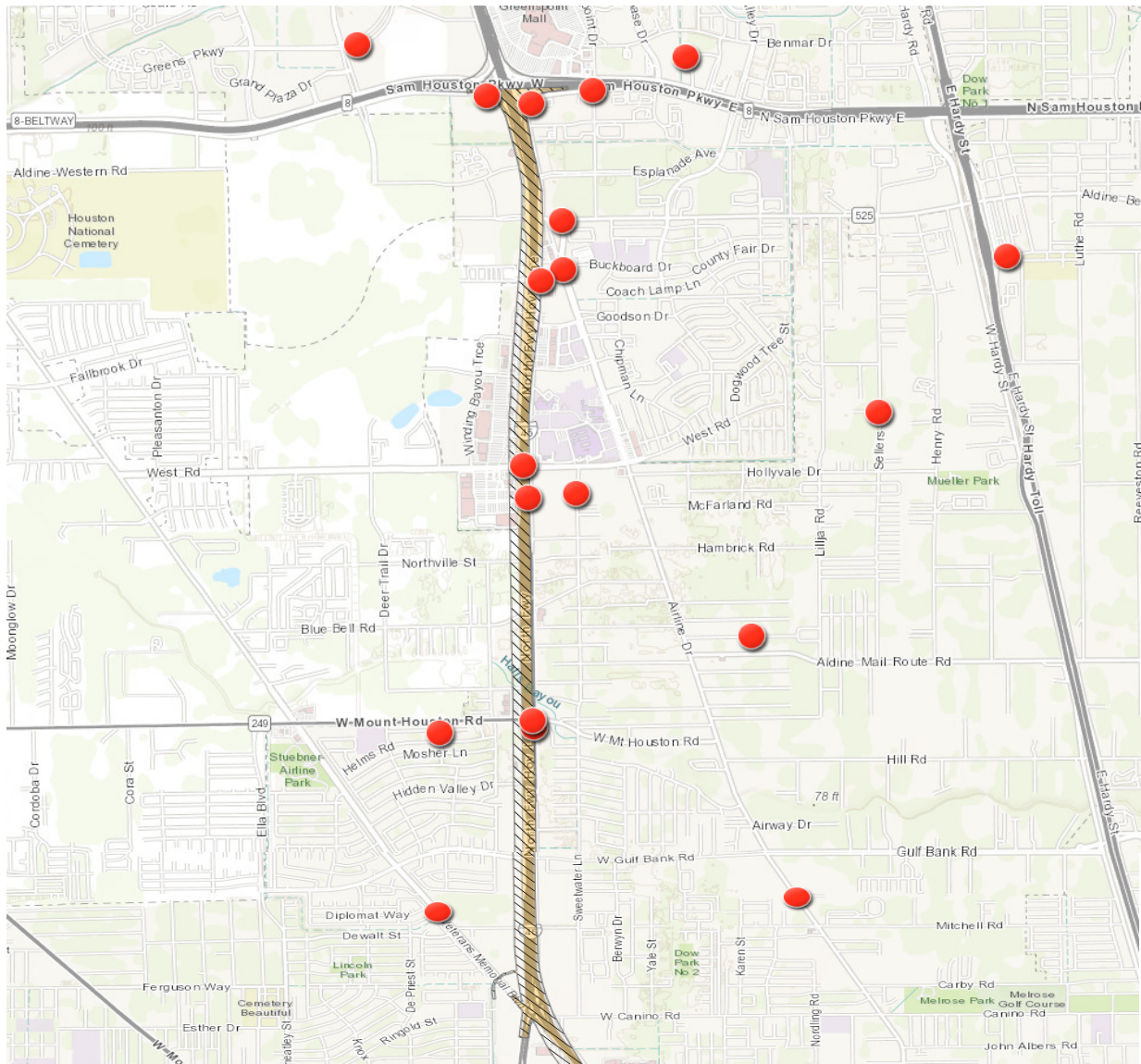
Near intersection of Mt Houston Rd. and Bunny Run Dr. (1)

Along Veterans Memorial Blvd (1)

Near Hardy Toll Road on Buschong St. (1)

### Air Quality Map

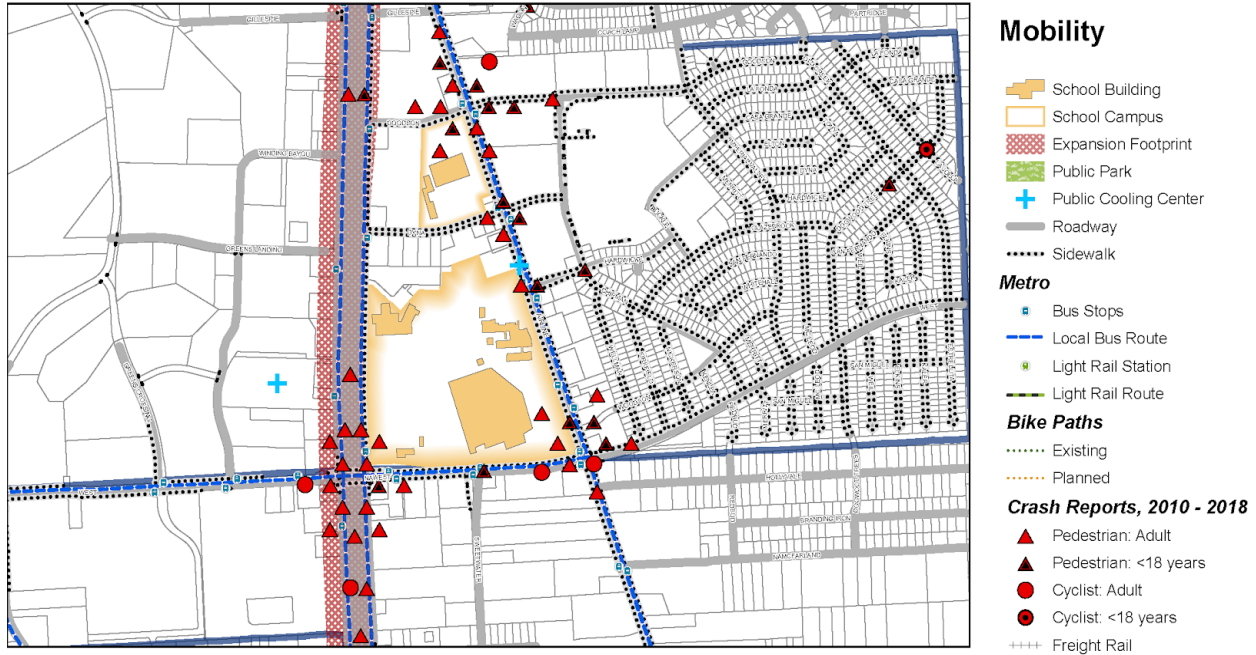
Below (Figure 2) is a digitized version of all the air quality points placed on the 5 maps. *Due to the length of map area that was plotted on, the figures below were each cut into two images, meant to be viewed as one.*



**Figure 2.**

## Pedestrian, Cyclist, and Traffic Safety

Attendees were shown a map of Aldine schools and their surroundings including parks and greenspace; current bus stops and routes; light rail stations and routes; routes of existing bike paths and of planned paths; freight rails; proximity and linear continuity of sidewalks; and locations of pedestrian and cyclist crash reports (Figure 3).



**Figure 3. Joint Aldine Campus: Pedestrian, Cyclist, and Traffic Safety Metrics.**

Here is a list grouping dots by area:

### Areas Identified in response to “How do you experience walking, cycling, and transit safety in your neighborhood?”

Area surrounding Aldine/Bussey school campuses (12)

Along Airline Dr. (9)

- “Residential community, no sidewalks.” (near intersection with Hambrick Rd.)
- “Vehicles travel too fast.” (near Aldine campus)

Area around intersection of West Rd. with I-45 (3)

- “Walking hazard.”

Along Veterans Memorial Blvd. (3)

Along Fallbrook Dr./Aldine Bender Rd. (2)

- “No sidewalks.” (near intersection with Green Plaza Dr.)

Along Sweetener Ln. south of Aldine school campus (2)

Area along Mt Houston Rd. (2)

Intersection of W Gulf Bank Rd. and Sunnywood Dr. (1)

## Pedestrian, Cyclist, and Traffic Safety Map

Below (Figure 4) is a digitized version of all the traffic points placed on the 5 maps.

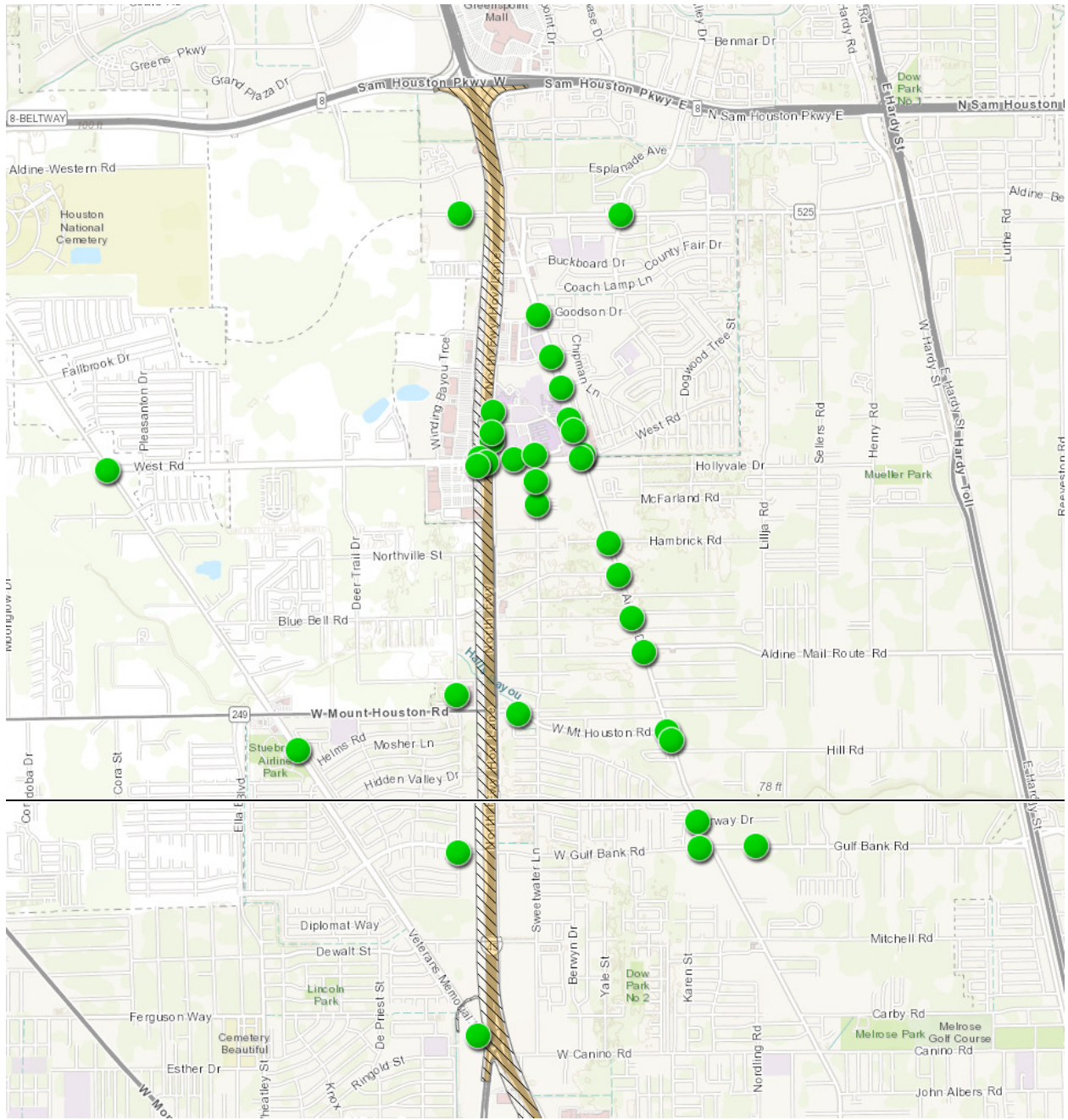
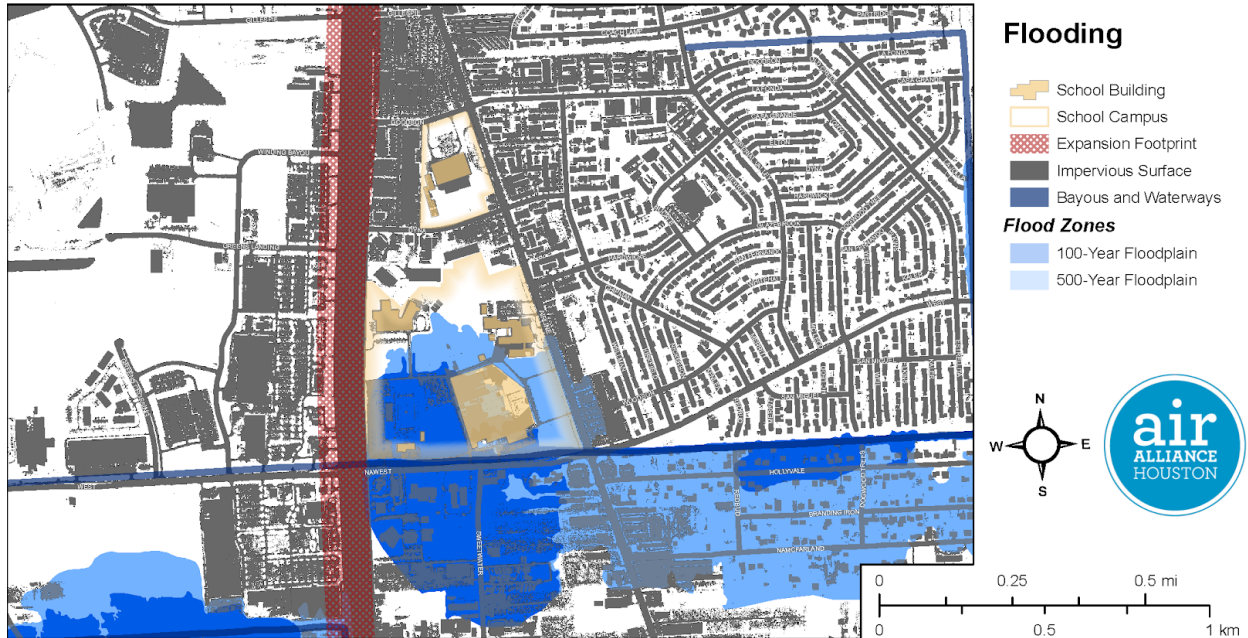


Figure 4.



## **Flooding Risk**

Attendees were shown a map of Aldine schools and their surroundings including regions of impervious surfaces; bayous and waterways; parks and greenspace; and flood zones as identified by the 100- and 500-Year floodplains (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Joint Aldine Campus: Flooding Risk Metrics.**

Here is a list which groups dots by area:

### **Locations Identified in response to “How do you experience flooding risk in your neighborhood?”**

- Along I-45 corridor (10)
- Area along Veterans Memorial Blvd. (7)
- Area surrounding Aldine/Bussey school campuses (5)
- Along Mt Houston Rd. (5)
- Along Airline Dr. (3)
- Along West St. (2)
- Along Greenspoint Dr. south of Sam Houston Parkway (2)
- Near intersection of N Montgomery Rd. and Ellington St. (1)
- Near intersection of Blue Bell Rd. and Deer Trail Dr. (1)
- Near intersection of Bell Shadow Ln. and Bellville Dr. (1)
- Near intersection of Aldine Mail Route Rd. and Lillja Rd. (1)
- Busch St. off of Airline Dr. (1)
- Hambrick Rd. off of Airline Dr. (1)

## Flooding Risk Map

Below (Figure 6) is a digitized version of all the flooding points placed on the 5 maps.

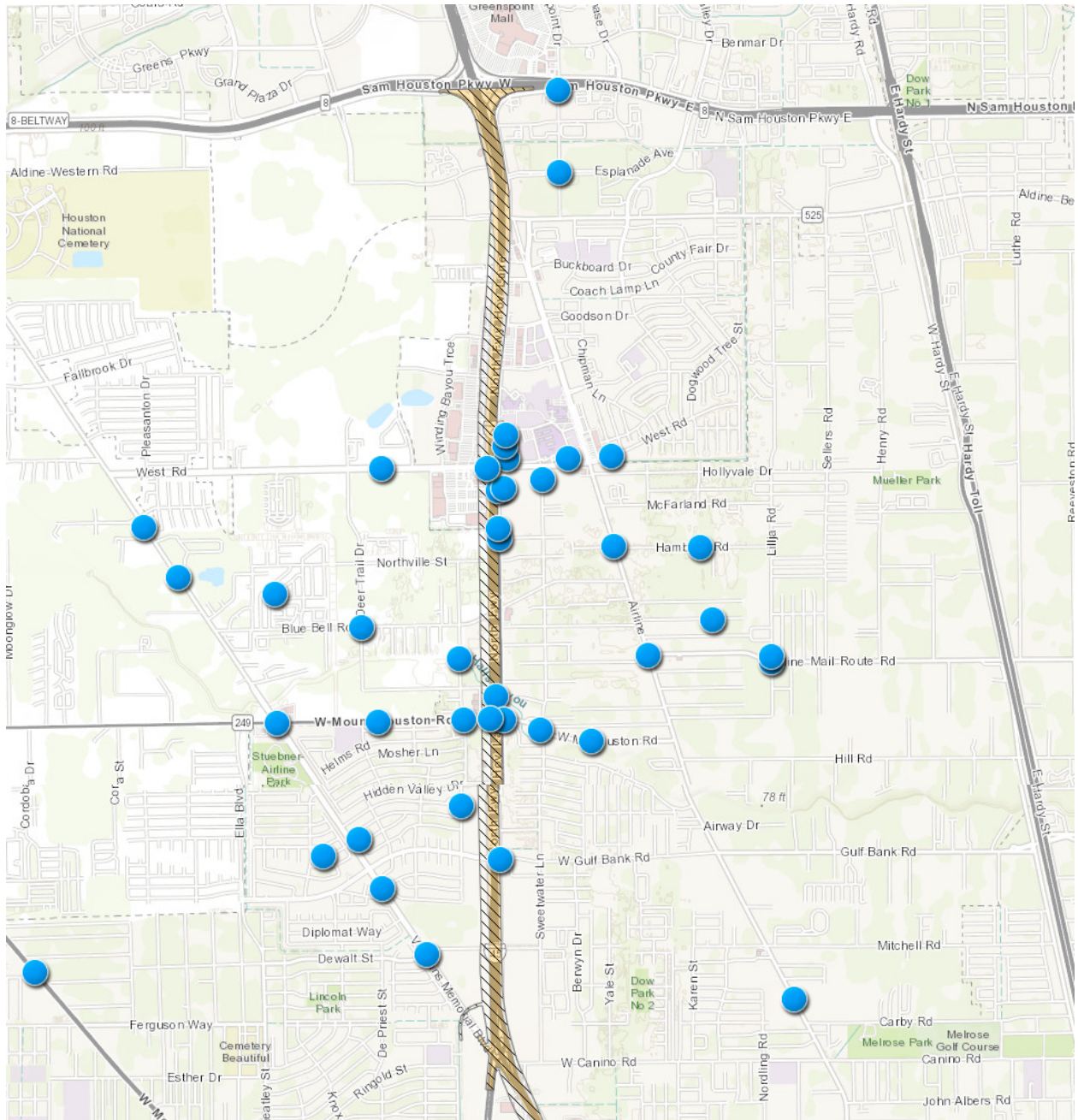


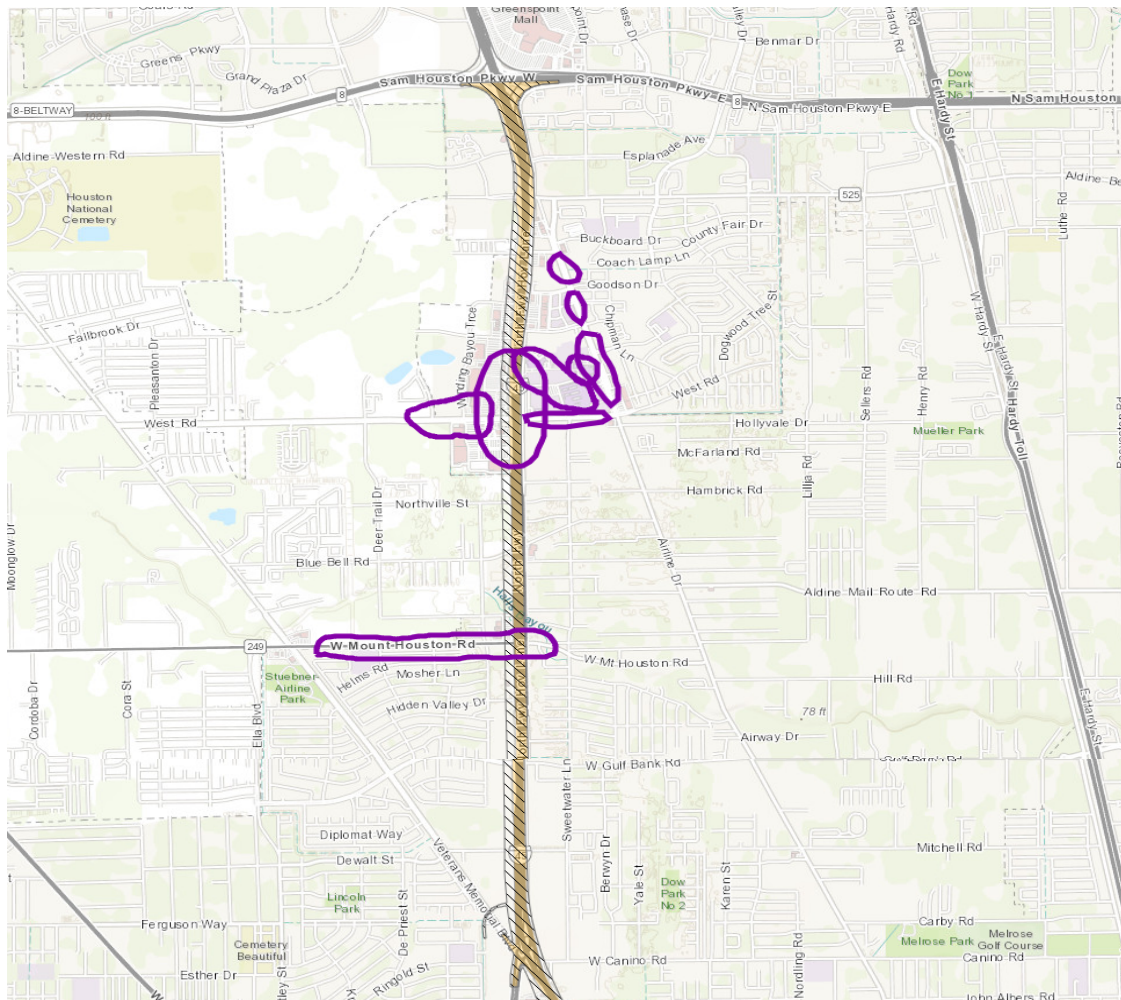
Figure 6.

## Expected Long & Short Term Impacts

In the first activity, attendees were then asked to circle areas with pens in two different colors. One color is where they anticipated locations most impacted by short term consequences associated with the project, like construction. The other color indicated where they anticipated locations most impacted by long-term consequences, like the freeway expansion itself. Again, they were encouraged to explain further by writing on the map. Additionally, different groups used differing colors and sometimes mixed colors to indicate what they wanted to communicate, so it is possible some depicted results may not have been intended by community members.

These results are more easily understood by looking at the entire map with additional comments listed underneath.

### Short-Term Areas Identified

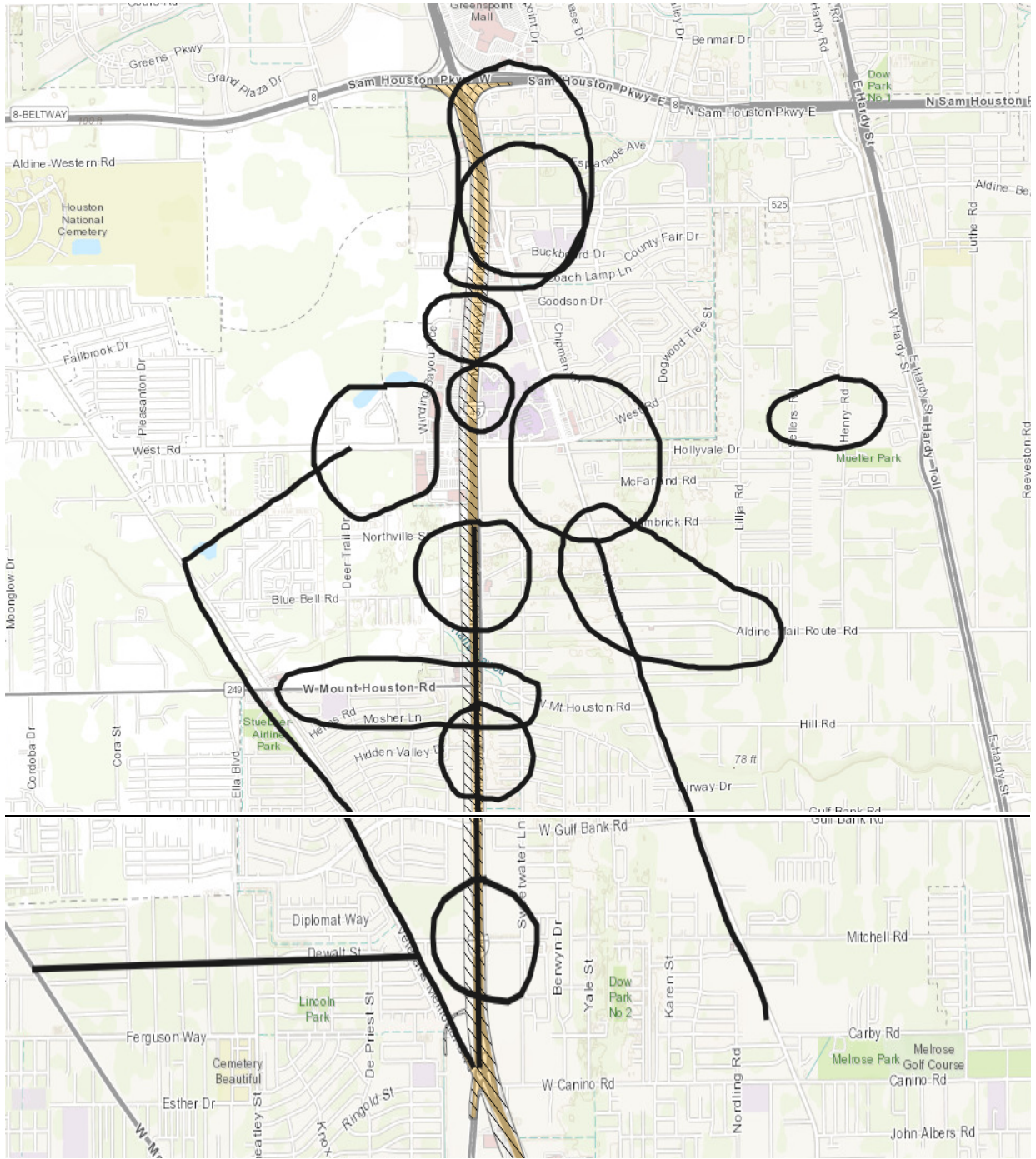


The areas circled are concentrated around the freeway and the area and surrounding streets of the Aldine/Bussey school campuses.

#### **Additional Comments:**

- “Traffic detours, delays.” (*in reference to construction around Aldine campus*)
- “My concern is over the health of youth who have activities after school, like band, soccer, etc., over the pollution and dust they’ll breathe.” (*originally written in Spanish*)

**Long-Term Areas Identified**

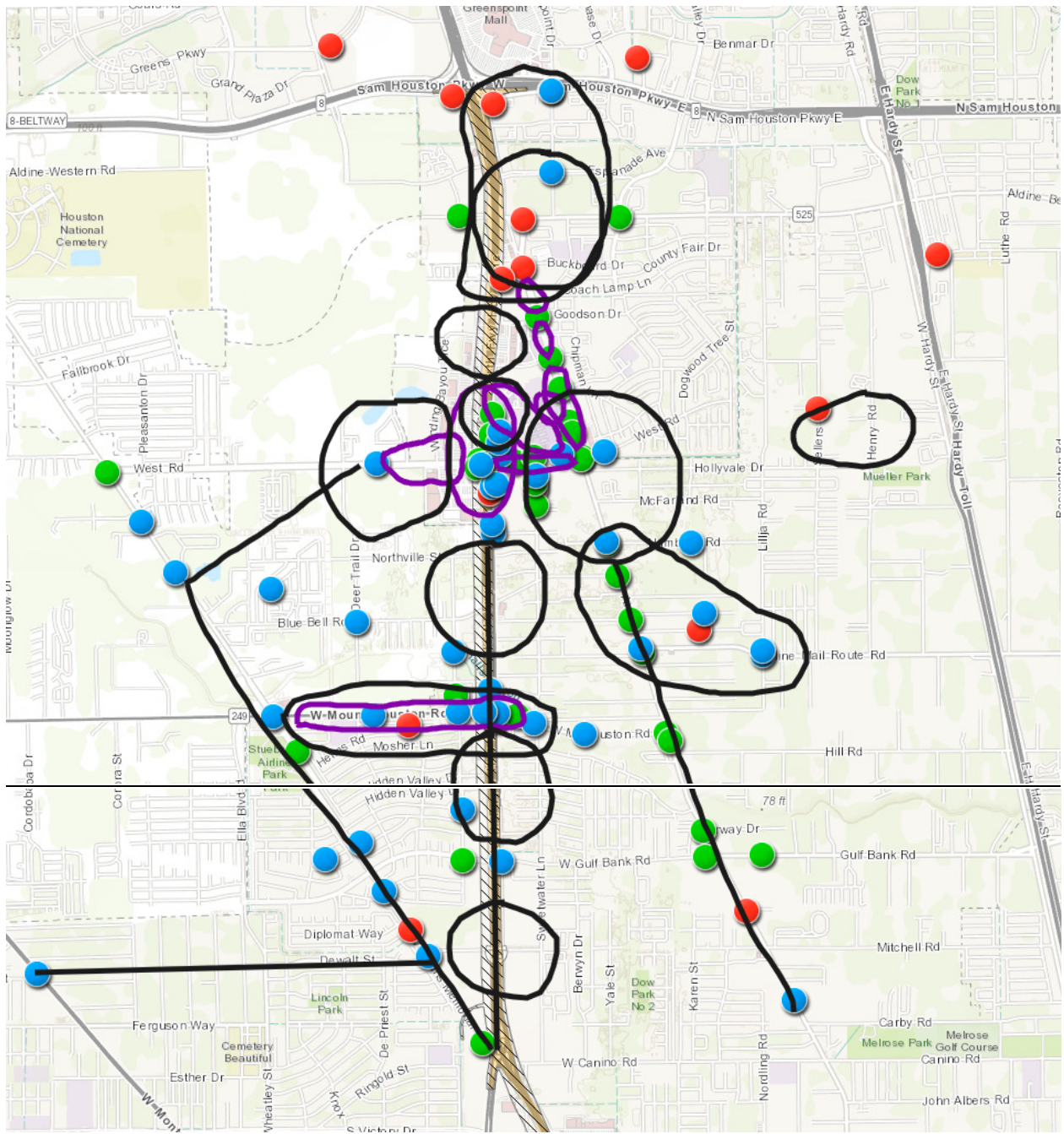


The areas circled are larger and correspond with entire communities or specific roads and intersections. This is likely referencing the ability to access communities with the anticipation of demolishing/creating exits and changes in traffic patterns.

**Additional Comments:**

*No additional comments on long-term impacts were written on the maps.*

**FULL ANNOTATED MAP:**



## Recommendations

After the first activity, attendees were shown examples of recommendations for mitigation strategies the HIA was considering. This included recommendations for transportation infrastructure not solely for vehicles; campus improvements like vegetation and dual use detentions ponds; and building and operations changes like air filters and timing of outside activities.

In the second activity, attendees were asked to mark and explain with post-it notes places where changes needed to be made to fix problems identified prior. Additionally, they were asked to identify opportunities for changes to be made keeping the current expansion plans in mind to best protect children and the community from harm.

Below are all comments relating to recommendations for the expansion and associated mitigation strategies. When appropriate, the comments are grouped into location-based recommendations. All other comments are listed below.

Location	Recommendation/Mitigation Strategy
Aldine School Campus	“Create a circular drive in the field in front of Aldine 9th to allow for car riders to drop off and pick up kids.”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Build sound walls dividing neighborhood and freeways.”</li> <li>- “Safety for children under the freeway. Construct bright light for students passing after dark.”</li> <li>- “Student safety during construction: Crossing guards, pedestrian walkways, pedestrian lights.”</li> <li>- “After construction: Bright lights under freeways. Pedestrian walkways and lights.”</li> <li>- “Pollution: Use trees and vegetation. Filters made available to schools during and after construction for student protection.”</li> <li>- “Flood prevention strategies should be implemented to address new potential flooding.”</li> <li>- “Have more control with high speed traffic.”</li> <li>- “More sidewalks for pedestrians.”</li> <li>- “Traffic lights between West Rd. and Deer Trail by Walmart.”</li> <li>- “Ensuring folks who are houseless and live under these bridges are rehoused and treated with dignity!”</li> <li>- “Opportunity for mass transit down I-45 instead of freeway which doesn’t alleviate traffic.”</li> <li>- “Would like to see Houston be more green and not just concrete underground tunnels with parks on top.”</li> <li>- “Tree canopy to block noise.”</li> <li>- “We would like to be treated the same as the wealthier sides of town. It is time for TXDOT to look at the long term impacts and not just low bid.”</li> <li>- “More trees, sound barrier, parks. Sidewalk improvements, bike lanes.”</li> <li>- “More tree/sound barriers. There are many incomplete sidewalks on major streets like Airline Dr. or West Rd. Also making sure they are wheelchair accessible!”</li> <li>- “I recommend that filters be provided for residences and businesses within 1,000 feet of the construction site. Also, inspectors should be sent out regularly to assess outcomes.”</li> <li>- “Host another meeting to discuss plan for traffic control, rerouting, and longevity of project.”</li> <li>- “Will this project bring jobs to our neighborhood?”</li> <li>- “How will this affect local businesses that are along the highway? Will this cause job loss because of buyer’s disinterest because of traffic?”</li> </ul>

- "Sidewalks and lights on Sweetwater for pedestrians."
- "Need school zones."

## WRAP-UP

After the engagement activities, the entire group discussed together what they had found. Community members were given to time to express any other concerns that were not addressed in the workshop already.

## Community Member Commentary

- Business properties; eminent domain cases
- Single family units; HEPA; equity question; weatherization program (Federal program)
- A lot of people are on fixed incomes.
- Flooding Risks
- Current highway design is considering the 100-year floodplain and not the 500-year floodplain; Harris county requires design to the 500-year floodplain.
- Really flooded west road concerns to the 100-year floodplain not being accurate
- On area airline there have been a lot of pedestrian accidents; there is not much respect to speed limit and jaywalking, therefore accidents are high in this area. The expansion would alleviate the transition of cars speeding on airline, but during the construction period of the highway it could be problematic, and safety of pedestrians would be at higher risk.
- Educator on behalf of their parents, campus and students: biggest concern and the long-term impact west to neighborhoods and the properties; will there be sound barriers? How will the business be affected?
- Community reach concerns: Awareness; Understanding; Language; Demographics; Time and Place.
- Security and safety; speeding problems and increasing volumes of ongoing traffic during the construction period; there is only one medical facility in this area (Shepard). During the construction, there could be health issues that would require more facilities (construction related health issues, i.e. pollution, contamination and accidents.)
- Security for kids after the project; bright lights are needed for underpass
- During the construction since we're near the loop it will be more dangerous for kids to cross through, a huge inconvenience to students, teachers, and parents. Unfortunately, kids will have to walk through the construction, that is a huge hazard i.e. pollution mask, walking alone, and construction hazards.

## Community Member Anonymous Evaluations

Before leaving, attendants were asked to complete evaluation forms of the meeting to help improve future AAH programming, further understand any concerns, and understand what they want to see from the HIA. Below are the questions asked and responses from this meeting. Some questions were left unanswered by attendees or sometimes community members checked multiple boxes when only asked for one, explaining the differing number of responses to some questions. It is important to note that attendees sometimes entered the presentation late or left early, meaning not everyone saw the full presentation and some missed the chance to leave an evaluation. In total, 8 evaluation forms were collected.

### 1. How would you best describe your affiliation? (select one)

Parent/Student/Family (4)	Civic Association (0)	Education (2)	Neighborhood Resident (0)
Community-Based	Neighborhood Business ( )	Other (1): County Com. A. Garcia's Office	



Organization (1)		
------------------	--	--

**2. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*After attending this community meeting I have a better understanding of...*

**... the areas that will be impacted by the I-45 N expansion project**

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**... the process and purpose of using Health Impact Assessment for the I-45N expansion project**

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**... how mobility, air quality, and flooding are impacted by the I-45 N expansion project**

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**... how schools and neighborhoods are impacted by the I-45 N expansion project**

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**3. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*The community meeting presentation was engaging*

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (4)	Disagree (1)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**Additional Comments:**

*I felt I was able to share information that will contribute to the HIA*

Strongly Agree (3)	Agree (3)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**Additional Comments:**

*I plan on continuing to engage with the coalition or Air Alliance in their work on addressing the impacts of the I-45 N expansion project*

Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**Additional Comments:**

*The outcomes of the HIA will be useful to my community to protect children and overall community health*

Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (0)	Strongly Disagree (0)
--------------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------------

**Additional Comments:**

**4. What formats of the HIA outcomes would be the most useful to you? (check all that apply)**

Executive Summary (2-4 pages): 3
Final Technical Report: 1
Delivered Presentation: 4
Factsheet: 3
Other:

Community members also wrote other comments on blank space on their forms:

“I appreciate your time and service. I never thought I could find a way to voice my opinion. Thank you. I also didn’t know about the expansion.”

