MISSION
Hermann Park Conservancy is a citizens’ organization dedicated to the stewardship and improvement of Hermann Park—today and for generations to come.

As soon as Marley Lott speaks, one immediately knows two things about her: she is from the Mississippi Delta, and she is very smart. Her formal credentials include a BA from Virginia’s Hollins University, two post-graduate years in France and Belgium, and a JD from Harvard Law School. She moved to Houston to accept a position at Baker Botts in 1978 and has never looked back.

While her professional career is stellar, her volunteer activities in the Houston community set her apart. It would not take long for a new friend to learn that she is passionate about art, architecture, and public green space. And her record of service in these areas proves that she puts her time and money where her mouth is. Her work with non-profit agencies includes serving as a long-time member of the board of trustees of the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, a stint on the board of the Architecture Center Houston Foundation, and, currently, Marley sits on the Watkins Council, the advisory board for the Rice School of Architecture.

Continued on page 4
Each morning a group of gentlemen who have been friends for decades greet me as I arrive to my office at Hermann Park Conservancy. Safely sitting one to a bench under the live oaks, they maintain their connections with each other at a time when many of us are isolated from friends and family we love.

During the day, I see families picnicking by the Jones Reflection Pool, or neighbors checking out what is blooming in the McGovern Centennial Gardens this week. Sometimes I give an impromptu overview of the Japanese Garden to a visitor discovering it for the first time — noting the best spots to see turtles sunning themselves on the rocks, or the giant koi submerging through the pond. I stop and chat with our gardeners who keep the Park sparkling even in the Houston heat, and laugh with one of our dedicated volunteers who has painstakingly cleared all the nutedge out of the rose beds and proclaims that he “is not going to let the weeds win.” And I realize Hermann Park has facilitated a COVID community — where people escape from the stress to find joy in beauty, relax in nature, and feel connected with others even if they are at a safe distance.

Despite the Park being open to the public, we cannot deny that things have changed. The playgrounds remain closed and there are no families gathering at the interactive fountains in the Molly Ann Smith Plaza. We have had to re-organize and re-evaluate how to bring our programming, community engagement efforts, and major events to the people who care about and support our work in the Park. Now in its 17th year, our Run in the Park went virtual — which for the first time has allowed my family spread across the U.S. to participate with the many regular runners using the Park’s gracious trails.

Hermann Park Conservancy’s master plan was designed to create a space where all people would be welcomed, and where they could connect with nature and with one another. While many plans get abandoned, remarkably we implemented our master plan over the course of 20 years. As we develop the plan for the next 20 years, we seek to ensure the Park will continue its most vital role — to be here for all of us, and to bring us together as a community when needed. Things have changed, but that will never change.

In a time when many businesses and gathering spots have been scaled back or indefinitely closed with no timeline of re-opening as normal, it is clear how community spaces like Hermann Park are vital to the city, and to our mental and physical health. I love many things about Houston. But I love Hermann Park in particular because it allows us to experience the best things about our city as a place where all are welcomed, and we can be together no matter what — or because of what — is happening in the world around us. Hermann Park is here and we are open for Houston.

Doreen Stoller, President
The Commons takes shape

As part of the Conservancy’s master plan, the Commons at Hermann Park continues to make progress.

Marlon Blackwell Architects have joined the project and are in the process of finalizing their designs. Since 1992, Marlon Blackwell Architects have been creating environmentally responsible projects with the philosophy that architecture can happen anywhere, at any scale—for anyone. Marlon and his team will be designing the modern-day carousel and pavilion structures around the Commons.

The firm has designed areas such as the visitors center and structures at Shelby Farms Park in Memphis, Tennessee and the Indianapolis Museum of Art visitors pavilion. Most recently his firm was awarded the American Institute of Architects’ Gold Medal in 2020.

To learn more about the Commons, visit hermannpark.org/thecommons.
Looking back and moving forward, continued

But Marley’s greatest commitment has been to Hermann Park Conservancy (HPC). She was a founding HPC board member and is the longest serving member (and current chair) of its projects committee, which has overseen $125 million of park projects to date. Developed over many years, her close relationships with leaders in the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, the Houston Parks Board, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and the Memorial Park Conservancy serve as a model of collaborative effort to make Houston a greener, more humane place. As much as she has accomplished in Hermann Park, her greatest satisfaction and joy continues to be her daily jaunts here with her dogs past and present: Hattie, Bessie, Sallie, and currently Elmo!

We hope you and your family have enjoyed transformations and improvements to the Park over the years, and we cannot wait to continue to make Hermann Park a space for everyone. See you in the Park!
Because of all that she has contributed to the Conservancy, Marley Lott was to be this year’s honoree for Evening in the Park. Due to Covid-19, the event was unable to happen in-person, but the Conservancy still raised a record $700,000 to support volunteer and stewardship programs in the Park.

We would like to thank our chairs, Sis and Hasty Johnson, and Vallette and Russell Windham, and many of those donors who recognized Marley’s long-term commitment to the Park. This includes Epic Underwriters Sherry and Tommy Lott; friends and colleagues of Marley from Baker Botts and Hines; members of the Conservancy board; and champions, admirers, and cheerleaders of Marley’s passion and work. Thank you to all of the donors for ensuring what we do at the Conservancy can continue.

Many thanks to underwriters and supporters of Evening in the Park 2020, honoring Marley Lott, for their generous gifts and honoring Marley Lott.

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Sherry and Tommy Lott

**Major Underwriters**
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Janet F. Clark
Sis and Hasty Johnson
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Matthew Donowho
Kathrine G. McGovern/
John P. McGovern Foundation/
Phoebe and Bobby Tudor
Vallette and Russell Windham

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Nature’s back…with attitude

The Commons has taken an important first step in its environmental transformation with the beginning of its seeding project. In the first phase of this multi-year plan, the Conservancy will restore and revitalize the damaged soil to bring nature back to this area of the Park.

Much like an artist selects colors before painting, our team has carefully planned and picked vegetation to reflect the natural history of the Gulf Coast Prairie. In this palette are colorful flowers to provide food for wildlife, grasses that will have water-absorbing root systems to mitigate flooding, and plants that can provide an expanded shelter to more than 400 species of migratory birds on the Central Flyway.

Each piece of this project will not only have an aesthetic charm, but a functional purpose as well. Plantings include inland sea oats, switchgrass, and dotted gayfeather. Despite being in the heart of a bustling city, nature is back. This environmental restoration is possible through a partnership with Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, and the Wildlife Habitat Federation.

For more information, visit hermannpark.org/seeding.
Extreme Makeover: Lott Hall Edition

After beginning in early 2020, the finishing touches are currently being applied to the renovation of Lott Hall, formerly known as the Historic Clubhouse. The restoration was envisioned by local firm Curtis & Windham Architects.

The building is set within vibrant courtyard gardens designed by landscape architects Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA). With 69 trees, 316 shrubs, 65 cycads, 450 agaves, and nearly 1,789 perennials in their designs, the landscaping is a massive, but essential, undertaking in order to help bring Lott Hall to life. Senior Associate at MVVA Jack Ohly traveled to Houston specifically to arrange the plants by hand and add a personal touch to the renovations.

The newly renovated, historic Lott Hall will be ready to make your next event a memorable one. For pricing and information, visit www.hermannpark.org/booklotthall.
Run in the Park…at home!

The 17th annual Run in the Park looked a little bit different this year. The Conservancy was unable to host our typical run through the Park and opted to host an at-home virtual event instead. Between September 26 and October 3, participants could run a 5K or 10K and share their race results online.

This year’s run had over 250 participants, of which 145 were first-time runners! And while the Conservancy was unable to host the event in-person, those that registered were challenged to share pictures of their in-park or at-home runs via our Instagram and Facebook pages.

The Conservancy would like to thank this year’s sponsor Williams for their support, along with Saint Arnold Brewing Company, Shake Shack, and Fleet Feet Houston for their contributions.

"This was my first ever 5K to actually participate in. I only just started running this year. I lost 260 pounds since 2017. (all through diet then exercise) and then started yoga and walking and eventually running! I now run on my treadmill several times a week.

I am the Dean of Instruction at Carnegie Vanguard High School, so my students have watched me transform over the last few years. I encouraged our students and staff to send in how they stayed active during Covid and we posted a lot of their biking, running, yoga, roller blading, exercise photos to our social media channels.”

— Melissa Matsu

Melissa Matsu (not pictured) also ran for Hermann Park and said, "the outdoor trails, plants, and foliage have been a game changer during these rough times. Your employees have been marvelous and friendly over these pandemic months... It made a difference for me."

Itze Soliz

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— Melissa Matsu
Joining the Conservancy is a Win-Win for Hermann Park and Members

Every Hermann Park Conservancy member is part of a team who believes Hermann Park is a treasure for all Houstonians. People join for different reasons. Some want to support urban conservation and wildlife habitat preservation, while others join to share the joy they had as children playing in Hermann Park with their own children. Membership support provides vital operating funds, which helps us to keep the Park looking better than ever.

In thanks for supporting this Houston treasure, Conservancy members receive exciting benefits including invitations to member exclusive events, free tickets to ride the Hermann Park Railroad and pedal boats, Member Express boarding lines, free unlimited rides on the train on the second Saturday of every month, and discounts in the Conservancy Gift Shop and Ginger Kale.

Learn more by visiting hermannpark.org/membership.

Your membership at work

New to the Hermann Park Conservancy team is Membership and Marketing Manager, Kevin Velasquez. A Houston native, Kevin went to Boston University to study archaeology, but couldn’t resist the call of Tex-Mex and humidity, and returned to Houston after graduating. He comes over to HPC after working seven years with younger demographics as a project manager of educational and creative exhibits at the Children’s Museum of Houston.

With membership under new management, Kevin is excited to work closely with the Conservancy’s supporters to help further engage the public and show how much their memberships help Hermann Park, especially during these uncertain months.

If you have any ideas on how to better connect your membership to the work of the Conservancy, feel free to email him at kcvelasquez@hermannpark.org.

Kristan Giles Photography
PNC Grow Up Great
natural play spaces

Hermann Park Conservancy and PNC Grow Up Great are teaming up to create a new learning and play space in the heart of Hermann Park. This new nature-focused area – geared towards children of all ages – encourages physical play and provides sensory experiences that help develop cognitive function. White Oak Studio is working with the Conservancy on the reforestation plans for the area, while helping weave these nature vignettes within the trees to provide children with challenging, nature-based interactives.

As part of the project, Hermann Park Conservancy and PNC Grow Up Great solicited public feedback through social media. Houstonians were asked what kind of interactives they’d like to see in the space and given the opportunity to provide opinions on White Oak Studio’s architectural designs.

As a longtime supporter of high-quality early childhood education, PNC is providing grant funding to help build this innovative outdoor play space through the PNC Foundation’s $500 million bilingual early childhood education initiative, PNC Grow Up Great.

For more information, visit hermannpark.org/pnc.
Say hello to Ginger Kale

We are very happy to announce that a new restaurant, Ginger Kale, has taken over the space previously occupied by the Pinewood Cafe! The new eatery opened to the public on October 31, 2020.

The menu features toasts, salads, sandwiches, cold-pressed juices, sweets, and more. Come get something and enjoy it while sitting by McGovern Lake.

And don’t forget, Hermann Park Conservancy members still receive a 10% discount at Ginger Kale! Visit gingerkale.com to see their full menu.

A special giving opportunity

With the establishment of the CARES Act, individuals that are at least age 59 ½ with a generously funded retirement plan may take advantage of a special giving opportunity. If this is you, you may deduct cash charitable contributions in 2020 of up to 100% of your adjusted gross income. You could withdraw any amount from your IRA, contribute that cash to Hermann Park Conservancy, as a public charity, and potentially offset the tax attributable to the retirement distribution with a charitable deduction.

For more information about the CARES Act and to take your opportunity to support Hermann Park Conservancy in the way, please call 713-524-5876 or email us at development@hermannpark.org.
“Hi, I’m Midas Bonebrake, co-chair of the Dog Park Committee. We’re at the home stretch in fundraising for the McWilliams Dog Park, and we sure would love your help. For more information, go to hermannpark.org/dogpark!”

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