COMING SOON:
The Commons at Hermann Park

Houston is a very different city than it was in 1914, the year Hermann Park was created. It is, of course, much larger and more diverse than anyone could have ever imagined. The neighborhoods surrounding Hermann Park have also evolved and grown in that century. The needs and wants of Hermann Park’s neighbors and Houstonians at large have changed dramatically, nearly as much as this city’s many skylines.

In that spirit, Hermann Park Conservancy is developing the Commons at Hermann Park, an exciting new project located along Cambridge and Fannin Streets. The Commons, currently in the design stage, is a project geared towards meeting the needs of park users, now and in the future.

It is located at the crossroads of the Museum District, the Texas Medical Center, and Rice University. In addition, it sits at the heart of the upcoming Innovation Corridor—with the tech startups to the north in Midtown and the TMC3 research complex to the south along Brays Bayou.

With this prime location, this new project’s goal is to be a gathering place for all Houstonians, from families and university students to tech workers and medical researchers.

Hermann Park Conservancy has always had one mission: maintain and improve the Park for generations to come. Over the years, that has included projects both big and small—from construction of the McGovern Centennial Gardens to improving the network of trails and paths to cleaning up green spaces.

The Conservancy’s goal with every project, including the Commons at Hermann Park, is to get feedback from those that use the Park the most: you.

Continued on page 10

hermannpark.org
letter from the president

As part of the team behind Hermann Park’s first master plan back in the 1990s, Jane and the team at Laurie Olins’ firm had a lot to look at. Think back to 1991 in those days. We didn’t have Google Earth, no Buffalo Bayou, and Hermann Park was not looking so pretty. We took a look (and a lot of determination) to look at Hermann Park and says “What if?”

Luckily for Hermann Park and Houston, it was love at first sight when Jane met Bill Curtis and decided to move to Houston full time. She joined the Conservancy in 1990, and her work has brought great pleasure to Houston and our children.

As a part of the team behind Hermann Park, Jane had her first year, then hauling baby Pete around for the second. There were board meetings when she was passed around like a party favor. What’s the expression, hold my beer? Hold my kid.

But we got through it all, and like an unloved teen, the Park became greener and bluer as per Laurie’s vision and began to mature into the landmark public space that it is today.

Doreen took me out to lunch about two years before we opened McGovern Centennial Gardens, and asked me to consider taking it on—to see the project through construction and build the operation for the Gardens as the first Director of Horticulture.

As I recall, her exact words were “go into your prayer closet,” and I did have to mull it over for a long time. But I am so grateful that I said yes, because I’ve had this privileged experience of shepherding the Gardens from its early stages to where it is today.

Working in the public realm is more like an endurance relay race, as it can take years to take a project from conception to completion. You have to be able to pass the baton and accept slow, steady progress in order to build something on this magnificent scale.

Continued on page 11

![Image 227x56 to 311x89](image)

PARKSIDE / SPRING 2019

DONORS

The Commons at Hermann Park
$200,000–$499,999
- John P. McGovern Foundation
- Cullen Family Fund
- Curves
- Sandra Slay/Plug-In Young
- Mary Pottinger
- Leslie Ballard Hull
- In memory of Carolyn O. Robertson Younko and Alan Kitson
- Scottish Rite Shriner’s Foundation
- Shriners Hospitals for Children

McGovern Centennial Gardens
$100,000–$499,999
- Mary and Ravi Chaudhri
- In honor of their parents
- Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit
- Master Plan Improvements
- Doreen Stoller and Dan Pettit
- In memory of Forrest Gregory Neale and Lomen Gregory Neale
- Dog Park
- $1,000–$4,999
- Doreen Stoller and Dan Pettit
- In memory of Forrest Gregory Neale and Lomen Gregory Neale

In the Park Luncheon
$25,000–$499,999
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- William Kerner
- Susan Slay
- Jennifer Wheat
- Amanda Dugas
- Pat Slay
- Tracey Leeds, Bill Curtis, Jane Curtis (Honoree), Brooke Runnette, and Jennifer DeVore at this year’s Hats in the Park luncheon.

In memory of Mary M. Boulton
- Texas A&M University
- College Station
- Tootsie’s
- Mary Faye Way
- Elizabeth Harrison Cooper
- Valarie Dieterich
- Burguieres Family Foundation
- UTHealth
- Tootsie’s
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Creating a Space for all Houstonians by Jane Curtis

I didn’t grow up in Houston, so my first memories of the park date to August of 1993, when I came with my mentor Laurie Olin to take stock of the park and have our initial meeting for the Master Plan. I was in charge of the camera, and when we went back to Phil’s and I printed up all the images of the park—the mud pit that is now the reflection pool, the long rows of porta-johns outside the front door of the Zoo, the scooped earth—my other landscape architect friends would come over to my desk, look at the pictures, and start laughing. It didn’t look much like a park.

Over the years, as the projects completed by the Conservancy grew in scale and scope, most of my memories are tied to the birth and early days of raising our children.

The epic night at Holiday Lights when little Lucy fell into the new McGovern Lake, and proved that the safety bench to keep children from drowning did, in fact, work. Then there was cutting the ribbon of the Reflection Pool when I was hugely pregnant with Pete, so I had to ask Jay Baker to be my stunt double.

Actually, during my two-year term as chair of the Conservancy, I was my first pregnant year, then hauling baby Pete around for the second. There were board meetings when he was passed around like a party favor. What’s the expression, hold my beer? Hold my kid.

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Continued on page 11

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Continued on page 11
Holocaust Museum ‘Coexistence’ Exhibit Coming to Hermann Park

Hermann Park Conservancy continues this year with a grant in support of conservation initiatives, helping our mission of maintaining and improving Hermann Park for generations to come. With this support—through both grants and corporate volunteers—forest trails have been raked along Brays Bayou, and thousands of seeds have been planted. In addition, Phillips 66 has partnered with Hermann Park Conservancy on a Post-it note therapy session with artist Matthew Levee Chavez. Coexistence is open and free to the public during Park hours. For more information, visit hm.org.

Love Your Park: Member Volunteer Day

Nearly thirty members of Hermann Park Conservancy showed up on a brisk morning to volunteer at McGovern Centennial Gardens. The first Love Your Park Member Volunteer Day was held on February 9 to help Conservancy members show their support for Hermann Park by planting and weeding in the beds along Hermann Drive.

Want to get involved in the future? Keep your eye out for future Love Your Park volunteer opportunities!

Donors

Hermann Park Conservancy

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 Pinewood Cafe.

Learn more by visiting hermannpark.org/membership.

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Hermann Park Conservancy

Member volunteer toward the cold to plant along Hermann Drive

Join the Conservancy

Play Your Park

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Hats in the Park 2019

It was the second official day of spring, and the McGovern Centennial Gardens were in full bloom in preparation for Hats in the Park, the Conservancy’s annual fundraising luncheon. Guests started the afternoon with a champagne reception, followed by a fantastic lunch under the tent on the formal lawn. Co-chairs Laura Wareing Wheless and Kelley Young planned a “tea with best friends in the garden” affair topped off—of course—with beautiful hats.

Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the luncheon.

Photos by Jenny Antill
2019 Kite Festival
Thousands of people gathered in Hermann Park for our sixth annual Kite Festival.
The Conservancy hosted a public meeting on Thursday, February 7, to gather thoughts and feedback on how to move forward with this project. Attendees listened to a presentation on the designs by the project’s landscape architects from Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, and voiced their ideas and concerns about parking, maintenance, safety issues, ecological impacts, and other areas of the project.

Since this project is being designed for all Houstonians in mind, any and all comments and ideas are taken into consideration.

Over the coming months, Hermann Park Conservancy will continue gathering feedback—through public meetings and emails sent to ideas@hermannpark.org—to ensure this is a space the community can use for years to come.

After final designs and permits are filed and fundraising is complete (through private and corporate donations), work can begin along Cambridge and Fannin. The Conservancy expects the full timeline to be between five and six years. This is just the first step in the Conservancy’s revised Master Plan. A dog park, further improvements to infrastructure, parking enhancements, and many more improvements are also in the pipeline for Hermann Park.

Creating a Space for all Houstonians

But the best memories I have of Hermann Park come from my last five years here, and the relationships that I built through the construction of the Gardens and its opening. There are a lot of men and women in the Parks department who work so hard to keep the Park clean and green, and working side by side with them was an honor and a privilege.

I know that it can be easy to look past the people who pick up trash all day long, but I’m telling you, it’s an act of love. The people who work in Hermann Park day after day to keep the Park in good shape for the city of Houston are wonderful people and they changed my life. I also made friends with arborists, nurserymen, compost makers, pine straw delivery drivers—wonderful tradespeople and advisors who helped us get the garden operation off the ground and running.

Then there was my staff of gardeners and maintenance people, as well as my colleagues at Hermann Park Conservancy. All of those relationships made working long days and weeks worthwhile as we tried to figure out how to get the gates open and closed, and the fountains on and running, and the Mount green and the hedges trimmed.

But at the end of the day, the memories that will stay with me the longest are of the random encounters that you can have here in Houston going through treatment for cancer, and they often don’t have much to do between sessions of chemotherapy, so they come here—sometimes to volunteer or just to sit in the Gardens.

Then there are special moments of celebration: people who came to propose to their partner, or on Mother’s Day, or to bring their grandmother, or celebrate an anniversary. In one special tale, the moment a teenage boy finally had the courage to hold his girl’s hand as they sat together on the benches at the top of the Mount.

If you can think back to the days before we opened the Gardens, there used to be a continuous fence along Hermann Drive. During lunch hour, you could see car after car of single people parked on Hermann Drive, eating their sandwiches alone with the engine running.

They would drive to the Park, but they would feel blocked by the fences and wouldn’t come into the Park. But now they are here, the park edge is more permeable, those same people are here together, in community.

My best memories are watching how much life happens here, in a public park, and how this place serves so many people in the course of a regular day.
This year’s event took place on Saturday, October 6. Cyclists taking a 20-mile route from the Park to the Port of Houston and back.

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Runner’s Guide to the 2018 Run in the Park

Runners of all ages came to Hermann Park on Saturday, November 10 for the annual Run in the Park. The 5K run was followed with an after-party for participants along the Jones Reflection Pool.
Stonyfield Organic, Walmart, and Hermann Park Conservancy Team Up to Go Organic.

A vermicomposting unit, signage, and training. The new maintenance methods will eliminate the use of herbicides and synthetic fertilizers on two high-profile turf locations.

Doreen Stoller, Hermann Park Conservancy's president, said, “Houston is a rapidly growing city which increases the need for green space. Public funding cannot keep up with the need, so private investment in public parks is critical to keep communities healthy. We believe that parks should be healthy, safe environments for both people and nature.”

The Conservancy will start implementing these new methods by this summer.

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Dorothy Stoller and Dan Petipa
Kathie and Paul Reim

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The George Hermann Society recognizes donors who have provided the funds to purchase or underwrite gifts to Hermann Park

The names listed above and on the preceding pages include donors who made gifts of $100 or more to Hermann Park on or before December 31, 2018, as well as past Park Board and Board of Directors. In compliance with IRS standards, commitments paid over time are not recognized to be fully paid until they are paid in full. Please contact the Conservancy if we inadvertently

failed to list your name. This list will be published in the next issue. If you would like to be listed later in future publications.

Member Surge Night
Thursday, May 9, 2019, 5–7 p.m.
Pinewood Cafe

Mother’s Day at Hermann Park
Sunday, May 12, 2019, 8:30–10:15 a.m.
Pinewood Cafe

Summer Vegetable Planting with Urban Harvest
Family Day, May 20, 2019, 6–7:30 p.m.
Family Garden, McGovern Centennial Gardens

Father’s Day at Hermann Park
Sunday, June 16, 2019, 8:30–10:15 a.m.
Pinewood Cafe

Save the Dates! Hermann Park Conservancy Calendar of Events

Evening in the Park Gala
Chairs: June Dowdell & Barbara Friedman
Honoring Terrylin Neale
Thursday, April 25, 2019, 6:30 p.m.
Jones Reflection Pool and Molly Ann Smith Plaza

Summer Vegetation Planting with Urban Harvest
Family Day, May 20, 2019, 6–7:30 p.m.
Family Garden, McGovern Centennial Gardens

Father’s Day at Hermann Park
Sunday, June 16, 2019, 8:30-10:15 a.m.
Pinewood Cafe

Details at hermannpark.org
contribute today!

Become a Conservancy member

Support Park Improvements

Dedicate a bench

Plant a tree

Join the George Hermann Society

Volunteer in the Park

1700 Hermann Drive
Houston, Texas 77004
713-524-5876 | hermannpark.org

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