Monumental Milestone for the Play Your Park Campaign

The morning of April 2, 2022 was filled with gratitude and excitement for the future of Hermann Park as community members, public officials and supporters joined Hermann Park Conservancy to break ground on the expansive Commons project, a 26-acre space in the Park’s southwest corner near Fannin and Cambridge Streets.

A guiding tenet of the Commons project is to create a space to serve everyone in the community equally, where each person can find their favorite spot. The visionary project includes a six-acre Welcome Garden, full of native plantings, as a place of respite for health care workers and patient families from the Texas Medical Center; two new shade pavilions offering space for families and friends to gather and create memories; multiple Play Gardens for children to explore; inspired public art exhibits; and, a new fantastical carousel which is sure to be a favorite with park-goers.

Additionally, the Conservancy has focused intently on large-scale habitat restoration. The rejuvenation of the area will attract more native birds and animals, provide visitors a meaningful connection to nature and improve management of rain water. Efforts have included use of regenerative agriculture techniques. Daikon radishes and other crops in rotation throughout the site have been a joyful surprise to visitors and something they likely have never before seen in an urban park. When the Commons opens, visitors will encounter thousands of newly-planted trees and plants.

Continued on page 3
Over my twenty years with the Conservancy, I have given literally hundreds of tours of Hermann Park. These tours start in our conference room where we talk about the history of the Park. Then—my favorite part—we set out on the golf cart to wave at the people gathered on the Marvin Taylor Trail outside our office, see what is blooming in the McGovern Centennial Gardens, and pause to enjoy the long view down the Jones Reflection Pool.

While there is much to admire from the golf cart now, when I started back in 2003 we only had poster boards with Master Plan images showing what the Park could be—and very few improvements to actually see in the Park. That means, most of my tours involved looking at the Park in its sad early-2000s condition (aka the “before”), waving my arms and asking people to imagine the “after.”

A major change in those early tours came with the completion of the reflection pool in 2004—and eighteen years later I still remember the reactions. Long-time Houstonians expected to see the giant mud pit of their childhood and were stunned by the new reflection pool’s beauty. They could not believe this was actually Hermann Park! Now so much time has passed that we have become accustomed to this grand space and I cannot get people to believe just how awful it was.

With each additional improvement—Lake Plaza with Kinder Station, the centennial gardens—my golf cart tours continue to surprise those familiar with what had been there, and delight them to see what Hermann Park has become. But as each view gets prettier than the last, when we approach the Commons site I caution everyone that we have been enjoying the “after” and are about to plunge back into the “before.” The 26-acre site is huge—and the project is multi-faceted. I have found myself relying once again on broad gestures and asking people to “just imagine.”

On these golf cart tours, I have visited the site of the Commons at least weekly for twenty years. Before the construction fences went up this past April, I went on one final golf cart ride through the Commons by myself—knowing that this was the last time I would see the “before.” Now, construction is well under way and the “before” only exists in our memories.

I just can’t wait to share the “after” with you.

See you in the Park—perhaps on the golf cart!

Doreen Stoller, President
The groundbreaking celebration of the Commons also included a fun nod to the past. When the Buddy Carruth Playground for All Children was dedicated in 1995, a time capsule was filled by local students and then buried in the area. A couple of the now grown-ups, including board member Buddy Carruth, were on hand as the capsule was opened and revealed items not seen in 25 years. Anyone remember phone books and floppy disks?

The Commons is one of three projects funded by the $52 million Play Your Park campaign. Fundraising for the Commons began in 2019, with 79 percent of the funding secured to-date. We need your help to reach 100 percent. If you are inspired to learn more and support this special project, please visit hermannpark.org/commons.

Photos by Quy Tran

While the adults mingled, our younger guests enjoyed fun activities.

Buddy Carruth, Peter Mosbacher, James Ross Mosbacher, Linda Hunsaker and Kristy Bradshaw display items from the unearthed 1995 time capsule.
Kite Festival 2022

News of the return of Hermann Park Conservancy’s Kite Festival, presented by Kirkland & Ellis, garnered much excitement and the day delivered. On Sunday, March 27, the wind was perfect and the Park welcomed thousands of Houstonians for a fun-filled day. Activities included arts and crafts, live performances on the Miller Outdoor Theatre stage, a kids’ bubble dance party, a large bounce house, and the main attraction—kite flying.

Special thanks to Kite Festival co-chairs Holly Alvis, Katie Arnoldy, and Brittany Sakowitz Kushner along with our host committee, sponsors and volunteers.

Photos by Kevin Velasquez
Evening in the Park 2022

The sun was setting and the air was electric as old friends caught up and new friendships were sparked upon arrival at Lindsey Plaza on April 22. All were excited to ride the Hermann Park Railroad to dinner at Molly Ann Smith Plaza through the soon-to-be Commons, the last train rides through the site before construction began.

The vibrancy envisioned by Brigitte Kalai and Hallie Vanderhider came to life through breathtaking floral arrangements and stunning chandeliers—a fitting atmosphere for such a significant Evening in the Park focused on Hermann Park’s future.

This year’s gala honored Kim and Dan Tutcher, who fell in love with Hermann Park after moving to Houston 35 years ago thanks to near-daily dog walks in the area. Kim enthusiastically joined the Conservancy board in 2004 and together with Dan, they have been true champions of Hermann Park.

Through Brigitte’s and Hallie’s leadership, the night was a smashing success and surpassed its goal for the evening by raising $700,000 for the stewardship and improvement of Houston’s 108-year-old Hermann Park.

We are grateful to everyone who supported this special evening benefiting the Conservancy.

Photos by Daniel Ortiz
Brigitte Kalai and Hallie Vanderhider
Dan and Kim Tutcher
Laura and Brad McWilliams
Kristy and Chris Bradshaw
Sallie and George Alcorn
Delaina Curry-Allen and Kenneth Allen
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Susie and Sanford Criner
Carla Valencia, Michael Mandola and Divya Brown
Marc and Duyen Nguyen, Debbie Festari and Richard Hester
Rosanette Cullen
Touring the Commons: Water Play Gardens

Built-in activities, such as water dams and releases, give children an opportunity to work collaboratively and experience cause-effect in water management.

Flowing down from the 12-foot peak, the Water Play Gardens recreate and reflect Houston’s water system—from the bayous to the bay.

Fundraising is happening now. Visit hermannpark.org/thecommons to get involved.
Water Play Gardens combine a fun—and wet—way for children to play and learn while beating the Houston heat!

Shaded, natural stone bleachers will provide cool and dry respite for parents and guardians.
Student Interns and Volunteers Make a Difference

Summertime brings opportunity for the Conservancy to benefit from driven, talented students. These young people offer valuable support to our team and gain early work experience through a variety of activities. We are grateful for all of our student interns and volunteers and delight in being part of their education!

The Conservancy was awarded funding for a GIS/Forestry Intern through the ExxonMobil Foundation Community Summer Jobs Program. Jeevan Kaur utilized GIS software to document tree location and growth, tree canopy density, and invasive species in the Park. Our forestry program uses this information to strategically care for Park trees and fill in tree canopy gaps. Jeevan said of her experience, “Being here has further deepened my love for Hermann Park and the effort that goes to maintaining it. I look forward to using the knowledge I’ve gained here towards a path in conservation.”

Through the Bank of America Summer Youth Employment Program, in partnership with SERJobs, the Conservancy welcomed four high school students as Maintenance Assistant Interns. Each completed 140 hours between June and August with our grounds team to perform routine maintenance such as weeding in the Japanese Garden and painting our much-loved park benches.

The Conservancy’s Job Shadow Summer Teen Volunteer Program participants are pictured removing invasive plants in the Japanese Garden. Starting as a group of strangers, these teens not only make friends but also learn how to work and communicate as a team. At the end of the summer, many of this year’s student volunteers expressed how much they enjoyed spending time outdoors and learning about the Park’s ecosystem especially the impact of native vs. invasive plants on the land.
A sense of wonder greets visitors as they explore the McGovern Centennial Gardens. A big part of that response is thanks to the colorful display provided by hundreds of plant and flowers species in each of the garden “rooms”.

Throughout the hot days we’ve seen in recent months, our garden team has diligently kept up the Garden’s care and maintenance. Thank you to all our members and generous supporters of our general operations. Your support makes this all possible. To join the effort, become a member today. Learn more by visiting hermannpark.org/membership.

And, be sure to add a visit to the McGovern Centennial Gardens on your fall calendar—open from 9 am to 7 pm daily until November 6 when closing time shifts to 5 pm.
Meet Our Newest Board Members

Paula DesRoches
Paula is a highly accomplished healthcare professional, nurse practitioner and administrator recognized for her leadership in occupational health. She is currently a healthcare consultant in occupational health for Houston Methodist. Paula is a runner and exercise enthusiast. She enjoys a rich family life with her husband, Rice University President Reginald DesRoches, and their three children, Andrew, Jacob and Shelby. The couple met at UC Berkeley as undergraduate students.

Carey Kirkpatrick
Carey is CEO & founder of CKP, an award-winning, multi-state PR agency headquartered in Houston. She also serves as an Adjunct Instructor of Arts Leadership at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. In addition to serving many years as an advisory board member and co-chair of the Marketing and Membership Committee at Hermann Park Conservancy, Carey serves as a Governing Director on the Board of Trustees of the Houston Symphony Society and as Marketing Committee co-chair. Carey and her dog Susan are avid park goers, enjoying the trails, people watching and wildlife.

Joe Meppelink
Joe is a Principal and co-founder of METALAB, a multidisciplinary design firm specializing in architecture, product design and public art project management. Joe earned his Masters in Architecture across the street at Rice University, and since graduating in 2000, has lived with his wife and 3 children in an 1880’s Victorian house in Houston’s Old Sixth Ward. He also serves as a founding board member of Every Shelter and as board chairman of the East End Management District, where his company is located in a vintage Art-Deco building. Joe is a cyclist-explorer of Houston, and an avid rock climber.

Sharon McLaughlin
Sharon is a former practicing attorney who now serves as the Managing Director of a retained search firm, where she specializes in law firm consulting, opening Texas offices and placing lateral partners and groups at prestigious global law firms. She grew up in Houston and has spent many years enjoying Hermann Park, including Miller Outdoor Theatre, the winding walking and running trails and riding the train as a child. She and her spouse, Errol Jr., have passed on these park traditions to their 10-year-old son Errol Joseph.

Laura McWilliams
Laura is a community volunteer with interests in city services, Houston cultural organizations and Houston’s role in the international arena. She is retired from Amegy Bank’s International Department. She has since been involved with Houston Grand Opera, University of St. Thomas International Studies and Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary. She is married to Brad McWilliams, and they began supporting Hermann Park Conservancy during the Centennial celebrations.

Yuzuru Nagawa
Yuzuru is Vice President and General Manager of Houston & Southern Region for All Nippon Airways. He graduated from the International Economics of Yokohama National University in 1989. Yuzuru serves as Vice President for the Japan-America Society of Houston and is a member of the Board for Japan Business Association of Houston, Japanese Association of Greater Houston, and Japan-America Society of Greater Austin. He and his wife, Junko, enjoy living in Houston and his hobbies include playing tennis, golf, and running.

Brian Rolins
Brian retired from Royal Dutch Shell after a long career as a Human Resources Executive. He has served with the Conservancy in various capacities for over 15 years and is now rejoining our board. Brian lives near Hermann Park with his wife Mary and is committed to enhancing the Park’s beauty and many amenities.

Thank you to our board and advisory board members for their dedicated service.

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$15,000 – $25,000
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PARKSIDE / FALL 2022
New Board Members continued

Josh Solera
Josh leads Egon Zehnder’s Services Practice in the U.S. as well as the Transport & Logistics and Aviation segments. Josh earned an AB in history and French from Duke University and an MBA from Harvard Business School. He is married with three children and his extended family plays an important role in his life. Josh volunteers at his children’s school and is an avid fan of the Houston Astros.

Ishwaria Subbiah MD
Ishwaria is an integrative medicine and palliative care oncology physician at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Her patient care and research maximize quality of life and managing side effects from cancer treatment. Ishwaria and her husband of 12 years, Vivek, who is also an oncologist, are often walking and paddling in Hermann Park with their three young children, Sasha, Nathan, and Ari. Ishwaria actively supports Houston arts and community groups, serving on the boards of Houston Grand Opera, Houston Symphony, Shepherd School of Music as well as Big Brothers Big Sisters of Texas and CanCare.

George Hermann Turns 179!

On Saturday, August 6, party-goers joined Hermann Park Conservancy in celebrating our Park’s namesake. There was plenty of cake and offerings from Gelu Italian Ice to make sure everyone had a sweet treat. At the Dr. Seuss-themed gathering, activities enjoyed included games, face-painting and of course, train rides. Thank you to all who attended and we can’t wait for next year!
Save the Dates!

Thursday, October 20 | 8:00 pm
Urban Green’s Halloween Screen
Join Urban Green, our young professionals member group, for another spooktacular movie night on the McGovern Centennial Gardens lawn and get in the Halloween spirit watching the classic Ghostbusters (1984). Bring your chairs or blanket and enjoy the outdoor show at this fall fundraising event.

hermannpark.org/halloweenscreen

Wednesday, October 26 | 6:00 pm
Garden and Nature Series: What’s in the Water?
Join us to learn how a water sample, and the cool critters living in it, gives us a “snapshot” of the present and past conditions of the bayou or pond. Diane Kerr, Master Naturalist and staff member, will take you on an exploration of the many aquatic invertebrates and the role they play in the ecosystem. In this family-friendly, hands-on presentation.

hermannpark.org/water

Saturday, November 5 | 7:30 am
Park to Port
The 20-mile round-trip bike ride takes cyclists from Hermann Park’s Bayou Parkland along the Bayou Greenway trail all the way to the Port of Houston. Enjoy a turn-around party sponsored by Port Houston, but be sure to save some energy for a well-deserved post-ride party under the Bill Coats Bridge.

hermannpark.org/bike

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### Hermann Park Conservancy

**Every Membership Counts at Hermann Park Conservancy**

Hermann Park Conservancy members all join for different reasons. Some want to support urban conservation and wildlife habitat preservation, some want to share the joy they had as children playing in Hermann Park with their own children, and some love riding the train.

While each member might enjoy the Park in their own way or have a unique favorite spot, they share a common bond and join together to support vital operational needs in Hermann Park, which helps us keep it looking better than ever.

And just how do memberships do that exactly?

- A Bronze membership buys 24 pairs of garden gloves for staff and volunteers to work in the Park.
- A Centennial membership buys weeding tools for 20 volunteers to remove invasive species from the Park’s plant beds.
- A Gold membership purchases a portable water tank to water newly-planted trees during drought conditions.
- A Platinum membership purchases 1.5 acres of Coastal Prairie Seed Mix to help restore the natural habitat of the migratory bird islands.
- A Conductor’s Circle membership purchases 20 native trees to plant in the Park.

### Hermann Park Conservancy membership:

- while maintaining and caring for Hermann Park isn’t always glamorous, it is essential. Every membership counts and they are the best way to directly support the Conservancy’s efforts to make sure Hermann Park is here today and for generations to come. Learn how you can help by visiting [hermannpark.org/membership](http://hermannpark.org/membership).
The Commons project is underway!
To learn more or make a contribution, visit hermannpark.org/commons

Printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink