Seven Years in the Making!—
The Commons

The Commons is currently under construction and we want to share some of its exciting elements coming to life. With the expertise of Marlon Blackwell Architects, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, MONSTRUM, and Forney Construction, areas such as gorilla forest, the rest pavilion, carousel and fishing pier are taking shape. Here is a behind the scenes look at some of the magic.

Within the Gorilla Forest, visitors will be greeted with a friendly face. As a nod to our neighbors at the Houston Zoo, the Gorilla sits along the path from the Commons to the Houston Zoo and Lake Plaza. Primarily constructed of highly durable wood, the gorilla will be able to withstand the Houston climate and weather for years to come. The gorilla will delight with fun features like special views for children from the gorilla's eyes, and the opportunity to slide down the gorilla's arm or his banana! The 11-foot gorilla is currently located in Denmark where it is being constructed and will be shipped to its new home in the Commons. The Danish contractor, MONSTRUM, is including play elements to accompany the gorilla and simulate its natural habitat, such as climbable tree trunks.

Continued, pages 6–7
It takes the entire community to help Hermann Park— including a community of daikon radishes! See the results of these hardworking plants on pages 4 and 5 to see why Lulu is impressed.

Every time you walk in Hermann Park you are surrounded by beauty. You see it high in the crown of the cathedral live oaks along the Marvin Taylor Trail. You see it in the esplanade of blooms flanking the central lawn in the McGovern Centennial Garden. And you see it in the stillness of the Japanese Garden. Despite the ever-shifting weather during this seasonal transition, the horticulture team continues to work assiduously to care for all the plant life in the Japanese Garden. The team is working to continuously improve plant nutrition through seasonal fertilizer inputs and regular plant and soil health assessments. Thanks to our members and generous supporters, we are able to continue caring for the Japanese Garden. Your support makes it possible for the thousands of visitors to find serenity here.

To learn more about the Japanese Garden or to help us keep the Garden blooming, visit us at hermannpark.org/japanesegarden.

And a quick reminder that the Japanese Garden hours have changed to reflect the spring time. So make sure to visit from 9 am to 6 pm daily until October 31.

Play Your Park Campaign & The Commons $1,000,000+ Anonymous $500,000–$999,999 The Acta Foundation Mervyn Finger Family Foundation $100,000–$499,999 In honor of Susan and Richard Keaton— Emily K. Keaton John P. Keaton Marley Keaton Laura and Henry McIey The Weekeley Family $100,000–$499,999 Anonymous $50,000–$99,999 Exxon Mobil Corporation Sue and Harry Johnson Sara and Craig Stone $25,000–$49,999 Dorothy and Mickey Ables $10,000–$24,999 Kety and Glen Gondo Kevin and Michael McMurry Shumway and Shol Nair Carol and Den Plus Rob and Susan Stolar – In honor of Casey Finsler $5,000–$9,999 Joan and Helmholtz Goeplert A. C. Mestel $1,000–$4,999 Gloria and Jesse Boudan Catherine and Thes Clarke Kathleen Cowdier and Susan Zaran – In honor of Lucia and Liz and in memory of TBA Betsy and Steven Drachsler Beth and Wayne Gibbons Brenda and Jim Ray Laura and Brad McIlvaine Debbie Menkenheimer Winnie and Noc Phipps Brian J. Seths Chris and Kay Thompson Gaye Lynn and Stuart Zaron – In memory of Stephen Zaron $500–$999 Keri Deyon and Rod Danielson Mary L. and Brian N. Rollins $250–$499 Laura Fred Jones Kathleen Louise St Paul’s United Methodist Church School – In memory of David Mark Wyethouth M. Williams Dog Park $25,000–$49,999 Michael Casey Rosalyn Bazell Mitchell and Derrick Mitchell – In memory of Beatch, Keenan, Twaini, Lee, Prince & Gucci $10,000–$24,999 Barbara and Louis Sklar – In honor of Liz and Brad McIlvain Williams $10,000–$24,999 Josephine and Philip John $1,000–$4,999 Cathlyn Taylor Chapman $100–$499 Anne Adams – In honor of Kate Gorry David Gorno and David Romans Fund for Public Art $100,000–$249,999 John P. McGovern Foundation $5,000–$9,999 Kevin Foley $100–$499 H. J. Joe Nelson III – In memory of Roy Samuel Holder, III


Asian
(Multiple Species)

Azalea

(Prunus 'Okame')

Mexican Plum

(Cercis)
From the Ground Up!

Work on the Commons began two years before construction fences went up. With over 7 acres of natural habitat coming to the site, the Conservancy began to condition the soil so new plantings would thrive. The Conservancy adopted regenerative agricultural techniques to improve the land’s overall ecological health, benefitting the relationship between plant life, wildlife, and people.

Rejuvenating the native dirt was of utmost importance to the Commons’ future plant life due to the soil in the area becoming compacted over the years. The Conservancy set out to break up the clay-like soil by planting cereal rye and daikon radish plants. These plants penetrated the soil’s compaction zone with their deep roots—breaking up the soil and improving its water infiltration and nutrients. Afterwards, these plants were allowed to decompose in place to further enrich the soil.

Once the cereal rye and daikon radish plants fulfilled their duties, an estimated 9,000 cubic yards of revitalized topsoil was collected and piled into four mounds for later use in the Commons project.

Preservation of the newly revitalized soil was of top priority as it awaited its final destination in areas such as the Welcome Garden. Pipes were inserted into each mound to allow drainage and provide aeration. Drainage displaces water and allows nutrients to flow into and remain in the soil, and aeration reduces compaction and oxidation.

When the Commons opens in 2024, visitors will see native plantings flourish as a result of this process. What started almost three years ago will now conclude with the Conservancy fulfilling the soil project by transforming the area into a healthy habitat for people, plants, and nature.
CAROUSEL One of the most anticipated features of the Commons is the carousel. Similar to the rest pavilion, the carousel’s structure was designed to interact with light creating an illusion that the halo-like roof is floating over the carousel. The carousel includes horses and other animals that were selected by the public such as a hummingbird, cat, frog, and rabbit. Thank you to Sherry and Tommy Lott, longtime Hermann Park supporters, for their gift to underwrite the new carousel.

Continued, next page
This year marked the 15th anniversary of Hats in the Park. Co-chairs Kristy Bradshaw, Kelley Lubanko and Leigh Smith, dubbed the “Triumphant Trio,” ensured the March 23 celebration was befitting of this very special occasion. The beautiful and joyful affair in the McGovern Centennial Gardens was filled with friends and, of course, fabulous hats.

The 15th anniversary luncheon honored Susie Criner and Ann Short, who had the vision and tenacity to create and co-chair the very first Hats in the Park in 2008. Susie and Ann proudly shared this honor with their husbands and families in attendance—with many members travelling from across the country to celebrate with them. Both families have decades of memories from time spent in the Park—from visits when their kids were young to the Criner grandchildren now getting to enjoy the Park and share rides on the Hermann Park Railroad. The Shorts are looking forward to sharing Hermann Park with their grandchildren one day.

With the help of all of the generous attendees and donors, Hats in the Park was able to raise over $520,000 towards the care and improvement of Hermann Park—setting a new fundraising record.

To everyone that supported the luncheon, thank you for making a difference in Hermann Park.

Photos by Jenny Antill
Run in the Park

Over 700 Park supporters ran, walked, and strolled beneath the lush tree canopy along Hermann Park trails at the 19th annual Run in the Park, powered by Reliant. Amasha Forward, a Teacher Specialist for Kate Bell Elementary, has attended the run year after year. "Forward ran on the trails alongside her students and their parents. "This park is a staple in the Houston community, a safe place for runners and joggers of all abilities, and is also very dear to me personally," Forward said. "It reminds us that we all may begin together, but use our own pace as a journey to finish whatever we start."

During the Williams’ ‘Kid’s Run, hundreds of children tested around the Jones Reflection Pool heading toward the finish line. Among them was Forward’s daughter, Andrieya.

"Being able to attend this event with my daughter was awesome," Forward said. "To see her engage with other children her age and paravane through the finish line was everything!"

Make sure to mark your calendar for the 20th annual Run in the Park on Saturday, October 21, 2023.

Cyclists cruised through the Bayou City on a cool fall morning at the 8th annual Park to Port ride on Saturday, November 5, 2022. Meeting at Hermann Park’s Bayou Parkland, hundreds of cyclists prepared to journey along the Bayou Greenway Trail. A long-time cycle enthusiast, Paul Eustace, biked an estimated 8,300 miles in 2022, and participated in 152 bike rides, including Park to Port.

"I was informed about the event by a friend of mine and we thought it would be a great idea for us to join knowing that it would directly support the park," Eustace said. "I try to do as many charity rides as I can, so knowing my contribution would go toward one of Houston’s major parks felt good."

At the midway point riders were greeted with a turn-around party at Mason Park sponsored by Houston Port, and then a post-ride party under Hermann Park’s Bill Coats Bridge.

The 9th annual Park to Port bike ride is scheduled for Saturday, November 4, 2023.
In November of 2022, we reached out to the members of the community to share what traditions bring them to the Park.

“For the last several years I gather my children and family on Mother’s Day to meet for a picnic in the grass behind my sweet mother’s bench near the reflection pool. They have literally been the most memorable of my life.”

—@WealthyKnowledge

“It’s tradition after visiting the Zoo to ride the train after.”

—@TexasCityTripper

“The kite festival is our family tradition, love walking around and seeing how colorful the kites become. Also lunch at Ginger Kale after a long walk, it's our treat after walking the trails.”

—@aem910

“I have a tradition of taking a day for myself every six months and going to the Museum of Natural Science during the free hours on Thursday. But first, I get myself a coffee and sit and write postcards to my friends as I watch other park goers and enjoy the beauty of the Park.”

—@Flx254

“Despite not being able to garden in her home, Conservancy volunteer team, finds a sense of serenity in the middle of a sprawling city. Despite not being able to garden in her home, she is able to cross the street to the McGovern Centennial Gardens to lose herself in the gardens. “I mostly volunteer at the Centennial Gardens and my most favorite part is spending time in the Rose Garden,” Orman said. “As I am working, the smell of the roses is so mesmerizing; it feels so peaceful.””

As a thank you, the Conservancy, hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Holiday Party at the Brown Foundation Volunteer Center. The delightful aroma of hot chocolate filled the air and volunteers enjoyed sweets provided by Ginger Kale and Paulie’s.

“I've been volunteering at the Park for seven to eight years,” Yanowski said. “What brings me back every year, besides the blooms, are all the friends I've made while volunteering in the Park.”

Gumes Orman, who recently joined the Conservancy volunteer team, finds a sense of serenity in the middle of a sprawling city. Despite not being able to garden in her home, she is able to cross the street to the McGovern Centennial Gardens to lose herself in the gardens.

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Every Membership Counts at Hermann Park Conservancy

Hermann Park Conservancy members 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 keep it looking better than ever.

While maintaining and caring for Hermann Park isn’t always glamorous, it is essential. Every Membership Counts at Hermann Park Conservancy 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 by visiting hermannpark.org/membership.

Play Your Park

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Pappal...
Shay and Gary Wissinger

Evening in the Park

Friday, April 28 | 6:30 pm
Kick off the spring season with Garden & Nature Series! Hermann Park every Fourth Wednesday from April to June, meet with HPC Horticulture staff and garden professionals for a hands-on, interactive evening in the McGovern Centennial Gardens. While Garden & Nature Series is free to the public and open to all ages, RSVP is required. To keep up-to-date visit us at hermannpark.org/calendar.

Every Fourth Wednesday April - June | 6:00 pm
Network and Garden Series

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Save the Dates!

Friday, April 28 | 6:30 pm
Evening in the Park

Chaired by Ping Sun and David Leebroon and Phoebe and (Bobby Tudor, this year’s annual gala will honor Doreen Stoller as she celebrates 20 years as president of Hermann Park Conservancy. What a legacy! We hope you will join us for this special occasion. Learn more at hermannpark.org/gala.

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Thursday, May 18 | 6:30 pm
Urban Green’s Night of Loteria

Join Hermann Park Conservancy’s young professional group, Urban Green, for a Night of Loteria at Lott Hall! Inspired by the most-recognized version of Loteria by Don Clemente, players will find original cards such as “El World Series,” “El Slab” and “Los Rockets.” Make sure to save the date for a night of Loteria, music, food, and more!

Saturday, October 21
Run in the Park

Save the date for Hermann Park Conservancy’s longest-standing community event, the 20th annual Run in the Park! The event will feature a 5K, 10K, and 10K. Kids route and a post-run party taking place at Molly Ann Smith Plaza. Make sure to check hermannpark.org to find the latest updates regarding Run in the Park!
Help us reach the finish line!
We’re less than 3% away from closing out the Play Your Park campaign.

Visit hermannpark.org/commons to make a contribution.

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