

FOREWORD

Two nationally acclaimed landscape architecture firms, in collaboration with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center of the University of Texas at Austin, have spent a year and a half preparing this surprising and challenging two-part study of Brackenridge Park, a Cultural Landscape Report and an Environmental Site Assessment, giving us a rare opportunity to see ourselves as others see us.

We San Antonians have been enjoying Brackenridge Park, our city's major municipal park, since it was established in 1899. But we have also tended to take it for granted. Concern over a drift in the park's direction led to formation of the Brackenridge Park Conservancy in 2008 under the auspices of the San Antonio Conservation Society, which has played an active role in the park's preservation since its founding in 1924. There was also important input from San Antonian Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, founder of the Central Park Conservancy in New York.

Happily, the findings of the Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Site Assessment provide, as we hoped, the underpinning for another major Brackenridge Park Conservancy goal, preparing a nomination for a National Heritage Area. Its fifteen-mile length would include Brackenridge Park and the headwaters of the San Antonio River on the campus of the University of the Incarnate Word. It would extend south through the river corridor and the San Antonio Missions World Heritage Site. Of the National Park Service's fifty-five National Heritage Areas, there are few in the Southwest, and none in Texas.

We owe a debt of gratitude to special friends Ann and Chico Newman, long-time Brackenridge Park advocates, for introducing the Conservancy to Charles Birnbaum, chief executive and founder of The Cultural Landscape Foundation in Washington, DC, and for securing his consultation. While sharing his expertise with the Conservancy and with city leaders, Charles Birnbaum concluded that "Brackenridge Park, as a public municipal park, is unequaled across the United States." It is he who recommended a Cultural Landscape Report as the next step after the city's Brackenridge Park Master Plan, completed in 2017. Without his guidance we may not have embarked on this journey.

City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department Director Xavier Urrutia recognized the value of compiling previously uncollected information into one comprehensive document. We are grateful to him and Assistant Director Homer Garcia and to landscape architect Bill Pennell, who all offered their institutional, on-the-ground knowledge about the park's later development, providing the Parks and Recreation Department partnership so critical to this work's success.

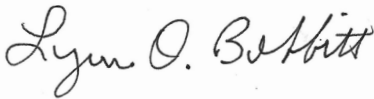
A generous financial investment by the San Antonio River Authority launched the project, and we are most grateful for that partnership as well. I express my sincere gratitude to Suzanne Scott, the River Authority’s general manager, for her commitment to finding solutions to protecting the park and improving its interface with the San Antonio River. River Authority staff members Kirk Moravits, Aarin Teague, Patrice Melancon, and Emilio Molina were invaluable members of the team.

A host of local experts also lent invaluable aid to the Conservancy, as they did to preparers of this study—Reed Hilderbrand Landscape Architects of Cambridge, Massachusetts and Suzanne Turner Associates of Baton Rouge, Louisiana—who list them in their following Acknowledgements. In addition, we appreciate the support of San Antonio Conservation Society President Susan Beavin and of the society’s executive director, Vincent Michael.

We are grateful for the professional work of Reed Hilderbrand staff members Doug Reed, John Grove and Christina Sohn and of Suzanne Turner Associates staff members Susan Turner, John Welch, Herpreet Singh, and Ashley Braquet. Austin’s Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Project Director Michelle Bertelsen and Adam Barbe also made important contributions.

Making sense of 12,000 years of an evolving landscape and providing a useable plan for the future has been no easy job. But the green space of Brackenridge Park and the San Antonio River through the urban center along with the heritage of uses and stories of people through time is irreplaceable, and well worth the effort. The documentation, chronology, mapping, and analysis chronicled in this Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Site Assessment will be an invaluable guide as we work together to ensure a healthy and sustainable future for Brackenridge Park.

Onward,



Lynn Osborne Bobbitt
Executive Director
Brackenridge Park Conservancy
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