



Rodney Ellis
COMMISSIONER
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Credit: *Courtesy of Houston Parks Board*

Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Houston Parks Board Move Forward on \$28.3 Million New Regional Park: Hill at Sims

The Brown Foundation to provide \$7.5 million investment to project in Sunnyside

HOUSTON – January 30, 2024 – Today, Harris County Commissioners Court approved the last major piece of funding for Hill at Sims, a new regional park in the Sunnyside area of Houston spearheaded by the office of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis. The site is currently home to a 100-acre regional detention basin owned by the Harris County Flood Control District. The agreement will secure funding to add recreational amenities to the existing detention basin, providing 4.5 miles of new hike-and-bike trails and a connection to nearly 20 miles of trails along Sims Bayou Greenway. Construction is estimated to be complete by the end of 2025, with Houston Parks Board serving as the project manager for two phases of the project.

As part of the project, the Office of Commissioner Rodney Ellis has begun construction on a new Sims Bayou Pedestrian Bridge that will connect Hill at Sims with the existing Sims Bayou Greenway. The bridge will enable easy access to greenspace on the other side of the Bayou, creating a more connected trail and park experience for the community. The bridge will feature an overlook area with a view of Sims Bayou Greenway and lighting to enhance user safety.

“My office has made it a priority to expand equitable access to greenspace and trails for all communities. You shouldn’t have to drive to an affluent neighborhood to have access to world-class greenspace. Once complete, the Hill at Sims will be a source of pride and an invaluable gathering space for the Sunnyside community, which will improve community health, help build social connections, and foster environmental resilience. I couldn’t be more excited to make this project a reality for the residents of Sunnyside,” said Commissioner Rodney Ellis, Harris County Precinct One.

The total cost of Hill at Sims, including the bridge and recreational amenities, is \$28.3 million. Precinct One is contributing \$18.8 million, The Brown Foundation made a generous \$7.5 million gift, secured by Houston Parks Board, and an additional \$2 million came from public federal and state funds thanks to the advocacy of State Representative Alma Allen and Congressman Al Green. The complete transformation of Hill at Sims will consist of four recreational components: hill and basin improvements, the nature pavilion, the Scott Street Greenway, and the Sims Bayou Bridge. The new greenway will



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include a 1.5-mile hike-and-bike trail connecting directly to Hill at Sims and offers the opportunity to coordinate with the METRO BOOST corridor to include improved bus stops and road crossings.

“We are grateful for the steadfast leadership of Commissioner Ellis and generous commitment from The Brown Foundation,” said Beth White, President and CEO, Houston Parks Board. “Hill at Sims is a true testament to the power of collaboration between public and private entities in expanding greenspaces to underserved communities. Our goal is to increase the connectivity between communities along the Bayou Greenway system and also identify opportunities for parks to contribute to Houston’s resiliency.”

The recreational amenities of Hill at Sims will also include:

- Hilltop pavilion with a view of downtown Houston over 10 miles away
- Access to the Hill via trails with three overlook areas
- A 1.6-mile loop and nature trails
- Water access pier
- A 2000-square-foot open air nature pavilion with restrooms and storage area
- Accessible picnic structure
- Flexible lawn space for active programming

“The Brown Foundation is proud to support the new recreation amenities at Hill at Sims. We build a stronger, more vibrant community through grantmaking, and greenspace projects are essential to the quality of life for all Houstonians,” Isabel Stude Lummis, President, Brown Foundation.

In 2019, Precinct One hired the Houston Parks Board to conduct a planning study at Hill at Sims to determine the possibility of recreational amenities and enhanced natural areas. The planning study included SWA Group as the lead consultant and was guided by a committee comprised of the Office of Commissioner Rodney Ellis, the Houston Parks Board, and the Flood Control District. As the study continued, community outreach and input were significant components of the process to determine the priorities of nearby residents. The outreach efforts resulted in over 700 constituents attending over 20 community meetings. Hill at Sims is part of Commissioner Rodney Ellis’ efforts to expand greenspace to underserved communities and aligns with Houston Parks Board’s Strategic Plan to improve regional parks as destinations along the Bayou Greenways system.

“We are honored to be a partner in this effort, which aligns with our core mission to build flood damage reduction projects that work, with appropriate regard for community and natural values,” said Dr. Tina Petersen, Executive Director, Harris County Flood Control District. “We value our partnership with the Houston Parks Board, as it provides an incredible opportunity to combine greenspace and flood mitigation tactics to enhance the natural beauty and resiliency of our region.”

For additional details regarding Hill at Sims and to stay informed of the latest updates, visit <https://houstonparksboard.org/hills-at-sims/>.

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Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis has served as Precinct One Commissioner since 2016. He represents 1.2 million people and controls a budget of more than \$200 million. As Commissioner, Ellis has played a critical role on the Court by securing misdemeanor bail reform, flood equity guidelines, stronger worker protections, and economic opportunity provisions, funding for indigent defense and COVID-19 recovery funding, as well as other innovative programs. Previously, Commissioner Ellis was a member of the Texas Senate for more than 25 years, earning widespread praise as a leader on economic and workforce development, education and civil rights.

Houston Parks Board expands, improves, and protects parks and greenspace in the Houston region. Since 1976, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government, and community relationships to provide equitable access to quality parks and greenspace to the Greater Houston region. In addition to leading the transformational Bayou Greenways initiative, Houston Parks Board cares for more than 2,600 acres of greenspace and supports park projects large and small. For more information, visit houstonparksboard.org.

The Brown Foundation, Inc. is a private family foundation dedicated to making Houston a stronger, more vibrant community. Founded in 1951 by Herman and Margaret Root Brown and George R. and Alice Pratt Brown, the Brown Foundation has distributed more than \$2 billion in charitable grants to the Houston region and beyond. For more information, please visit brownfoundation.org.

The **Harris County Flood Control District** provides flood damage reduction projects that work with the appropriate regard for community and natural values. With more than 1,500 bayous and creeks totaling approximately 2,500 miles in length, the Flood Control District accomplishes its mission by devising flood damage reduction plans, implementing the plans, and maintaining the infrastructure. For more information about the Flood Control District, visit HCFCD.org or follow us @HCFCD on Facebook and Twitter for all the latest #HCFCDnews.