# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT HOUSTON PARKS BOARD

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## DEAR FRIENDS,

We all know that Houston is one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States. While it continues to expand, it is also densifying as more Houstonians choose to live near the urban center. More people in our city than ever before are living in multi-family buildings and in neighborhoods where parks have become their backyards. And Houstonians, like people everywhere, are healthier and happier when they are exposed to nature on a daily basis.

Research shows convincingly that green cities are healthy cities. People who can easily access gardens, parks and trees have a measurably better outlook on life and are more satisfied with their lives than people who are deprived of these simple experiences. And neighborhoods with green space have less crime, less litter and better property values than those without it. In cities like Houston that are urbanizing rapidly, it's important to set aside parkland now if our community is to be livable and offer a high quality of life in the years ahead.

As the nonprofit organization entrusted with creating, improving, protecting and advocating for our city's parks, the Houston Parks Board is hard at work bringing to life Bayou Greenways 2020, a city-wide public-private project to create a continuous parks system along Houston's major waterways (page 4). When it is complete, the Bayou Greenways will elevate Houston to one of the top "quality of place" cities in the nation, with 1,500 acres of new parkland and 80 miles of new off-street hike and bike trails, for a total of 150 miles of bayou trails. The project will also provide further access to an additional 3,000 underutilized acres.

A vital aspect of Bayou Greenways 2020 is connectivity: connecting not just greenspaces, but people and communities. And on April 4, 2015, we celebrated making connections with members of the East End community on the first-ever Bayou Greenway Day on Brays Bayou (page 8).

Even while devoting unprecedented energy to the Bayou Greenways, the Houston Parks Board continues to lead and invest in an array of other exciting projects across the city (page 2). Over the past year, we have brought positive change to neighborhoods across Houston, a responsibility that we embrace and celebrate.

As we close this eventful and productive year, we also pause to congratulate and thank Roksan Okan-Vick, who served as our Executive Director for more than a decade, and whose tireless work, talent and vision has made an impact on Houston that cannot be quantified or described. We owe her a debt of gratitude for all that she did during her tenure, weaving together parks, trails and other recreational areas that create, connect and strengthen communities and bring people together in unprecedented ways. And most of all, we thank *you* for supporting us so generously. We are truly grateful.

Thomas G. Bacon Chairman

this report: July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015.

Una

Nina O'Leary Zilkha President

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**











#### **AVENUE PLACE PARK**

Thanks to Houston's open space ordinance, a new affordable housing community north of downtown has a park. Houston Parks Board was proud to manage construction of a community park in Avenue Community Development Corporation's newest project, Avenue Place. Officially opened April 17, the park is an excellent example of the use of greenspace funds, as provided for by the 2007 ordinance. Funding was provided by Avenue CDC and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

#### WEST 11<sup>th</sup> STREET PARK

With the help of Former Mayor Bill White, Senator John Whitmire and private donors, Houston Parks Board and the City of Houston were able to acquire this 20-acre natural treasure near White Oak Bayou and preserve it as parkland in 2008.

This year, Houston Parks Board was pleased to partner with Friends of West 11th Street Park to continue to make improvements and complete the decomposed granite trail loop, which now provides dry, stable footing for observing the park's abundant wildlife and enjoying nature.

#### **FUTSAL COURT AT MILBY PARK**

Two under-used tennis courts in southeast Houston were ripe for a transformation. Houston Parks Board partnered with the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Soccer Shots Houston and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department to convert two tennis courts at Milby Park into soccer mini-pitches, also known as futsal courts. The new courts have been packed with young footballers since opening on June 6.

#### **KIRBY TREE REPLACEMENT**

To the dismay of the neighborhood, in late 2014, a local business owner unlawfully cut down six mature oak trees along North Boulevard and Kirby Drive. With a \$300,000 damages settlement reached by the City of Houston, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and Houston Parks Board were able to replace five of the removed oak trees.

#### **NELLIE KEYES PARK**

Since 2006, Houston Parks Board has worked with the Association of Washington Avenue Neighbors (AWAN) to make improvements to Nellie Keyes Park including reforestation, tree watering, drainage improvements and other beautification efforts. This year, we helped AWAN obtain a City of Houston Neighborhood Matching Grant and arranged for the installation of a new toddler swing set.

#### WOODLAND PARK FLOODING RECOVERY

The severe Memorial Day weekend flooding left much of Woodland Park's recently reforested section damaged and uprooted. Houston Parks Board, along with the Friends of Woodland Park and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, came together to quickly clean up what the storm left behind. The collaboration produced outstanding results and left the park in great shape for its Happy Trails and Hot Dogs event in early June.

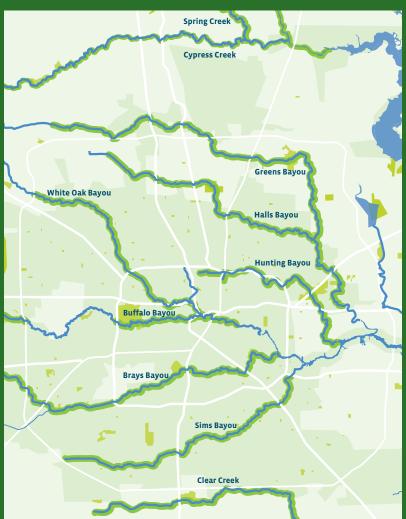


### **BAYOU GREENWAYS 2020**

Over White Oak Bayou, just west of Shepherd Drive and the Heights Hike and Bike Trail, there once stood an old, burned-out railroad bridge. It was not safe to cross, but that didn't prevent the neighbors from laying down plywood in an attempt to make a path. This bridge was a neglected but essential piece of infrastructure for a small but determined community of commuters.



After



That changed this year when Houston Parks Board, along with its project partners (see page 7), opened a brand new hike and bike bridge in place of the old as part of **Bayou Greenways 2020**. With this bridge, Houston Parks Board connected three neighborhoods to wonderful greenspace, water, trails, a breathtaking view of downtown — and each other.

Through the Bayou Greenways 2020 project, Houston Parks Board is making connections throughout Houston.

A public-private partnership with the City of Houston through the Houston Parks & Recreation Department and the Harris County Flood Control District, Bayou Greenways 2020 is the most extensive project Houston Parks Board has ever undertaken, and it will be transformative for our city. As different project segments are completed over the next several years, Bayou Greenways 2020 will add approximately **1,500 acres of new parkland** in neighborhoods throughout Houston and **80 new miles of off-street hike and bike trails**, resulting in a network of 150 miles of parkland and trails. When the project is complete, approximately 60 percent of Houstonians will live within a mile and a half of a Bayou Greenway.

During the last year, Houston Parks Board acquired more land for parks, built more trails and completed more critical connections than any other 12-month period since the inception of the project, as detailed in the following pages.

### BAYOU GREENWAYS 2020 BENEFITS

- Physical and mental health: \$50 million/year
- Environmental health: \$10 million/year
- Economic health: \$30 million/year
- Total city-wide annual benefits: \$90 million/year

Source: "Bayou Greenways – A Key to a Healthy Houston," John Crompton and Marsh Darcy Partners, Inc. August 2011.

Photograph by Anthony Rathbun

#### **BRAYS BAYOU GREENWAY**

On Nov. 13, 2014, Houston Parks Board – along with Mayor Annise Parker and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department – held the first ribbon cutting of Bayou Greenways 2020 and officially opened 2.75 miles of new parkland and trails. The new section of Brays Bayou Greenway connects existing parkland and trails in Mason Park to Old Spanish Trail near Wheeler Street. The new segment gives Houstonians in the East End access to one of Houston's most scenic stretches of bayou in a densely populated part of the city.

When it is complete, Brays Bayou Greenway will offer 31 miles of continuous parkland and trails with access to neighborhoods from the Ship Channel to Eldridge. Recent progress includes:

- Bridge over Brays Bayou at Mason Park

   design underway.
- Mason Park to Old Spanish Trail segment complete.
- Old Spanish Trail to University of Houston Main Campus

   construction begins late 2015.
- Bridge over Brays Bayou from University of Houston Main Campus to MacGregor Park – design underway.
- Hermann Park gaps design underway.
- Upper Brays Bayou, from Braeburn Glen to Eldridge programming (pre-design) underway.



#### **GREENS BAYOU GREENWAY**

Greens Bayou Greenway will include two unique sections within the city limits: Thomas Bell Foster Park to Mt. Houston, referred to as "Lower Greens" (11 miles) – one of our most beautiful, natural stretches of bayou – and I-45 to Greens Parkway, referred to as "Upper Greens" (7.5 miles). Recent progress includes:

- Thomas Bell Foster Park to Brock Park programming (pre-design) underway.
- I-45 to Greens Parkway design underway.



### HALLS BAYOU GREENWAY

When complete, Halls Bayou Greenway will connect 10 miles of parkland and trails along this serene bayou from Brock Park to Keith Wiess Park. Recent progress includes:

- Brock Park to Bretshire design underway.
- Hirsch to Jensen design underway.



### **HUNTING BAYOU GREENWAY**

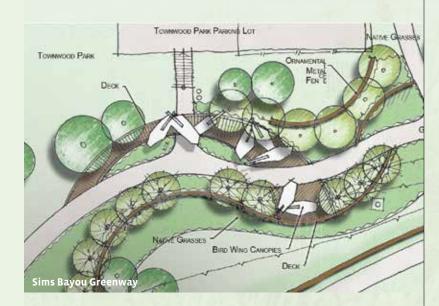
When complete, Hunting Bayou Greenway will connect 9 miles of parkland and trails from the Ship Channel to Mickey Leland Park. Recent progress includes:

• Hutcheson Park to Leland – design underway.

#### SIMS BAYOU GREENWAY

Sims Bayou Greenway will connect 18 miles of parkland and trails along this beautiful bayou from Milby Park to Hillcroft when completed. Recent progress includes:

- Milby Park to I-45 construction begins early 2016.
- Reveille Park to Stuart Park design and construction led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- MLK to Scott Street design underway to replace existing asphalt trail.
- Scott to Heatherbrook design underway.
- Heatherbrook Drive to Hillcroft Avenue construction begins early 2016.





### WHITE OAK BAYOU GREENWAY

White Oak Bayou Greenway saw the most activity in 2015 with two ribbon cutting celebrations. On May 2, more than 200 people attended a "Bridge Bash" hosted by the Houston Parks Board, Memorial Heights Redevelopment Authority, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) 5 and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department. The event marked the completion of new hike and bike trails and a new bridge over White Oak Bayou that connect to the Heights Hike and Bike Trail. The new bridge replaces the former MKT Railroad Bridge west of Shepherd Drive.

On July 9, the Houston Parks Board and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department officially opened another segment of White Oak Bayou Greenway, from Antoine Drive to Alabonson Road.

White Oak Bayou will be the first Bayou Greenway fully completed within city limits, connecting 25 miles of parkland and trails with access to neighborhoods from downtown to northwest Houston. Recent progress includes:

- Closing gaps around University of Houston Downtown and connections to MetroRail construction begins early 2016.
- MKT Bridge (west of Studemont Street) to MKT Bridge (between N Shepherd Drive and T C Jester Boulevard) – construction underway.
- New MKT Bridge to W. 11th Street construction underway.
- Antoine Drive to Alabonson Road Bayou Greenway segment complete.
- Alabonson Road to City Limits construction begins fall 2015.

### LAND ACQUISITION

In 2015, Houston Parks Board spent \$3.2 million to acquire 30 parcels of land — land that will become public parkland in perpetuity.

#### Notable acquisitions include:

- Glen Lakes Professional Building, on Greens Parkway near Greens Bayou, 10.4 acres.
- Former HISD School Site, on Grand River Drive adjacent to Brock Park near Halls Bayou, 17.8 acres.
- Williams Brothers Construction property, on Royal Pine Drive along Halls Bayou, 13 acres.

Questions about Bayou Greenways 2020? Visit the Houston Parks Board website at www.houstonparksboard.org or email us at info@houstonparksboard.org.

### **BAYOU GREENWAY DAY 2015**



On April 4, 2015, thousands of Houstonians visited Brays Bayou Greenway for the first-ever Bayou Greenway Day. Hosted by the Houston Parks Board and presented by Noble Energy, Bayou Greenway Day gave families from the East End community and beyond the chance to walk, bike, run, stroll, play, picnic and paddle along the bayou — and see firsthand the transformation happening as part of Bayou Greenways 2020.

Photography by F. Carter Smith, unless otherwise specified

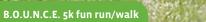














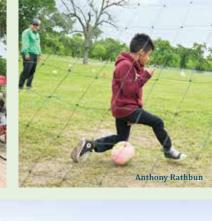
For information on Bayou Greenway Day 2016, along White Oak Bayou Greenway, visit www. bayougreenwayday.org.

Frame Dance









Bayou City Adventures Kayaking



## **CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE**





High quality **maintenance** is essential to protecting the long-term capital investment the Houston Parks Board is making in Bayou Greenways 2020. The Houston Parks Board is responsible for maintaining completed Bayou Greenway segments, funded through an agreement with the City of Houston. In Fiscal Year 2015, our Bayou Greenways Conservation and Maintenance team worked with contractors to ensure that more than 1,100 acres of greenway parkland and 50 miles of trails remained clean, attractive and accessible.

Our maintenance activities include mowing, litter and heavy debris removal, flood cleanup, graffiti abatement and repair/replacement of amenities such as benches, trash receptacles, etc. During the past year, our contractors removed **3,000 cubic yards of litter and debris** during routine maintenance, and another **2,000 cubic yards of debris resulting from flooding.** Houston Parks Board also hauled out over **6,000 cubic yards of silt** that had built up over the years, primarily along Buffalo and Brays Bayous. **In total: about 1,000 truckloads of litter, debris and silt.** 

Our **conservation** efforts are focused on development and management of meadows and forests, wildlife habitat, and wetland plantings. Last year, 140 acres were seeded with a mix of wildflowers and tall grasses, which will improve aesthetics, sustain pollinators and other wildlife and reduce mowing.

All of this important work is coordinated with our public sector partners, which include Harris County Flood Control District, Harris County Precincts and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department.



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## ADVOCACY

The advocacy program at the Houston Parks Board continues to focus on its main goals for an equitable park system: (1) increase access to parks and trails for all Houstonians; (2) provide connectivity along the Bayou Greenways and to and from neighborhoods; (3) support the physical and biological diversity of Houston's park system including its bayous and streams; and (4) ensure ample funding for parks across the state and locally.

Because of our commitment to ensuring equal — and safe access to parkland, in 2015, representatives of the Houston Parks Board worked in partnership with a variety of public sector agencies to support neighborhood accessibility and connectivity. We also contributed to planning initiatives and served on various city- and county-wide planning committees to emphasize the importance of open space and recreation facilities to Houstonians' quality of life and our city's future. These efforts reaffirm the important role that the Bayou Greenways 2020 project will play in making our city a greener, healthier place to live — physically, environmentally and economically.

Now that our conservation and maintenance program has been active for a full year, we have begun to restore and enhance the ecological assets that are our bayous (see page 11). We continue to work with our private and public partners to improve the environmental quality of our bayous and parks.

Finally, this year we were proud to be part of a coalition of allied organizations that successfully advocated for a bill to restore funding to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the State Park System through the dedicated Sporting Goods Sales Tax funds. With the passage of this law, the 84th Texas Legislature took an important step toward preserving our parks for future generations. At a time when our parks are in dire need of maintenance, this new law will help ensure TPWD gets the funding it needs. This is great news for our environment, our economy and our way of life.

## **THANK YOU, 2015 DONORS**

**BAYOU GREENWAYS** Bavou Greenwavs 2020 \$5,000,000 - \$9,999,999 The Hildebrand Foundation (pledge \$9,000,000) Kinder Foundation (pledae \$50.000.000) \$1.000.000 - \$2.999.999 The Brown Foundation, In \$500,000 - \$999,999 The Cullen Four \$300,000 - \$499,999 The Elkins Foundation (pledge \$1,000,000) Robert & Janice McNair Foundation (pledge \$1,000,000) Silver Eagle Distributors Meg and Dick Weekley The Wortham Foundation, Inc (pledae \$1.600.000) Nina and Michael Zilkha (multi-year pledae) \$100,000 - \$299,999 The Fondren Foundation (pledge \$500,000) The Hearst Foundation, Inc Sterling-Turner Foundation \$50,000 - \$99,999 Laura and Tom Bacor (multi-year pledge) Maire and David Baldwin (multi-year pledge) The William Stamps Farish Fund (pledge \$150,000) Noble Energy Susan Vaughan Foundation \$25,000 - \$49,999 Kate and Steve Gib (multi-year pledge) **Jill and Dunham Jewett** (multi-year pledge) Marie Louise and David Kinder (multi-year pledge) Ann Lents and David Heane (multi-year pledge) John P. McGovern Foundation \$10,000 - \$24,999 Anor Ellie and Roy Camberg (multi-year pledge) Susie and Joe Dilg (multi-year pledge) Cindy and David Fitch (multi-year pledge) Cullen Geiselman \$5,000 - \$9,999 Sue Sue and Don Aron (multi-year pledae) The Garden Club of Houston The Greentree Fund The Jacob and Terese Hershev Foundation Mr. and Mrs. Edward Randall, IV (multi-year pledge) Lisa and Barron Wallace (multi-year pledge) \$1,000 - \$4,999 Gavl and Chuck Carlberg (multi-year pledge) Kathryn and Gary Dudley Diana Espitia Precious and Ore Owodunni

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\$25,000 - \$49,999 **Riverview Foundation**, Inc Bayou Greenway Day \$50,000 - \$99,999 \$10,000 - \$24,999

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\$100.000 - \$299.999 Apache Corporation Individual Registrations Coca-Cola Enterprises

Individual and Team Registrations Alliance Futbol Hispano, BRC Group LLC Schneider Soccer, LLC

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Annual Lunch 2014 \$50,000 - \$99,999 Mindy and Jeff Hildebrand \$25,000 - \$49,999 Maire and David Baldwin DX Service Company Inc. Cherie and Jim Flores Kathrine McGovern McGovern Foundation Nina and Michael Zilkha \$10,000 - \$24,999 Chinhui and Eddie Aller Laura and Tom Bacon The Brown Foundation, Inc. Kate and Steve Gibson Diana and Russell Hawkins Huitt-Zollars, Inc. **Jill and Dunham Jewett** Cornelia and Meredith I. Long Isabel and Ransom Lummis Ellen and Ed Randall Leslie and Shannon Sasser Family Fund Vinson & Elkins LLP S5.000 - S0.000 Amegy Bank Melina and John Bishop **Cameron Management** Clark Condon Associates, Inc. Sylvie and Gary Crum Susie and Joe Dilg Lisa and Ralph Eads Jenny Elkins Frost Bank Anonymous Cullen K. Geiselman H.G. Ash Foundation Terri and John Havens H-E-B J.P. Morgan Jefferies LLC Lori and Chip Johnson Marie Louise and David Kinder Ann Lents and David Heaney Nancy and Neal Manne Midway Companies Celia and Iav Munisteri Noble Energy Norton Rose Fulbright Sissy and Grady Roberts RPS Klotz Associates Nancy and Clive Runnells Foundation Anne Whitlock and Michael Skelly Aliyya and Herman Stude Transwestern Uptown Houston Meg and Dick Weekley \$1,000 - \$4,999 Nancy and Butch Abendshein Maria and Michael Ainbinder Laurie and Randy Allen Stephanie and Isaac Arnold Sue Sue and Don Aron Susan and Iim Baker Laura and John Beckworth Elizabeth and Rob Bickham Dee and Jeff Boswell Bracewell & Giuliani LLP Martha and John Britton Gavl and Chuck Carlberg Georgia Carter and John Brown Clare Casademont and Mike Metz Cathy and Paul Chapman Mary and John Craddock Laura and Buce Crawford Susie and Sanford Criner InduMar / Cuenod Families Ellen and Jim Cummins Sara Paschall Dodd Stephen P. Farish, III The Finger Companies Marybeth and Tom Flaherty Claudia and Ford Frost Karen and Roland Garcia

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Katherine and David Lucke

Mary Jane and Bob Wakefield

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wessel

The Brown Foundation Inc.

**2015 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT** 

Statement of Financial Position as of lung as and	
Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2015	
ASSETS	
Cash	\$ 1,003,377
Pledges Receivable	11,852,911
Property and Equipment	12,594,452
Investments	12,872,517
Cash held for Bayou Greenway 2020 maintenance	2,540,102
Cash held for Bayou Greenway 2020 Project Beneficial interest in funds held by	9,469,550
Houston Parks Board Foundation	5,197,502
Total Assets	\$ 55,530,411
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	100
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 1,199,012
Construction projects payable	308,933
Payable to Houston Parks Board LGC, Inc.	595,974
Funds held for others	125,793
Total Liabilities	2,229,712
NET ASSETS	53,300,699
Total Net Assets & Liabilities	\$ 55,530,411
Statement of Activities for the year ended June 30, 2015	
OPERATING REVENUE	
Contributions	\$ 17,171,831
City concessions and event fees	164,695
Investment	183,370
Bayou Greenways 2020 maintenance	5,484,000
Park improvement projects — Houston Parks Board LGC	88,208
Total Operating Revenue	23,092,104
OPERATING EXPENSES	
Program Services:	
Bayou Greenways 2020 projects	5,542,815
City park improvements & additions	4,380,221
Bayou Greenways 2020 maintenance	3,868,760
City-supported parks programs	1,642,957
	15,434,753
Management and General	552,438
Fundraising	348,909
Total Operating Expenses	16,336,100
Changes in Net Assets from Operations Funding to Houston Parks Board LGC, Inc.	6,756,004
Conveyance of land to the City of Houston	(3,259,150)
Conveyance of land to the City of Houston Conveyance of land to Harris County Flood Control District	(42,931)
Conveyance of faile to Harris County Flood Control District Change in beneficial interest in funds held by	(5,671) (229,875)
Houston Parks Board Foundation	(229,0/5)
Change in net assets	3,218,377
	3,,3//
	E0 083 333
Net assets, beginning of year Net assets, end of year	50,082,322 \$ 53,300,699

### **HOUSTON PARKS BOARD TEAM**



#### **STAFF TEAM**

Michael C. Nichols. Interim Executive Director\*

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Catherine Butsch, Communications Manager

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Deborah Rule, Development Manager

With special thanks to Eric Bassett, Michelle Jordan, LaTrice Monroe, Jen Powis, Ralph Peña and Kelly Whitcomb.

\* Since August 17, 2015



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