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, 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

Nina O’Leary Zilkha
President
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 11TH 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.
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.

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.
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 1.45 — 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.
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.
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.
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 parks and trails, 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 12). 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 public and private 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 8th 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
Includes gifts, pledges and pledge payments received between July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015
## 2015 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

### Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2015

**ASSETS**

- Cash: $1,903,377
- Pledges Receivable: $11,752,811
- Property and Equipment: $12,994,857
- Investments: $12,872,517
- Cash held for Bayou Greenway 2020 maintenance: $2,040,302
- Cash held for Bayou Greenway 2020 Project: $9,069,550
- Beneficial interest in funds held by Houston Parks Board Foundation:
  - Total Assets: $12,770,918

**LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS**

- Accounts payable and accrued expenses: $3,218,377
- Construction projects payable: $596,874
- Payable to Houston Parks Board LGC, Inc.: $325,793
- Total Liabilities: $4,141,044
- Net Assets & Liabilities: $8,539,874

**Total Net Assets & Liabilities**: $8,539,874

### Statement of Activities for the year ended June 30, 2015

**OPERATING REVENUE**

- Contributions: $7,177,821
- City concessions and event fees: $164,895
- Investment: $183,370
- Bayou Greenways 2020 maintenance: $5,400
- Park improvement projects — Houston Parks Board LGC:
  - Total Operating Revenue: $23,492,104

**OPERATING EXPENSES**

- Program Services:
  - Bayou Greenways 2020 projects: $5,542,815
  - City park improvements & additions: $4,305,200
  - Bayou Greenways 2020 maintenance: $3,868,260
- City-supported parks programs:
  - Management and General:
    - Total Operating Expenses: $16,336,100
    - Change in Net Assets from Operations: $9,750,004
    - Funding to Houston Parks Board LGC, Inc.:
      - Conveyance of land to the City of Houston:
        - Change in beneficial interest in funds held by Houston Parks Board Foundation:
          - Net assets, beginning of year: $10,082,332
          - Net assets, end of year: $13,100,899

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**STAFF TEAM**

- **Executive Director**
  - Michael C. Nichols, Interim Executive Director
  - Alexander Angelescu, Project Coordinator
  - Adrian P. Bisag, Land Acquisition Coordinator
  - Catherine Butsch, Communications Manager
  - Russ Clements, Greenway Manager
  - Keith Crenshaw, Bayou Greenways Natural Resource Manager
  - Tom J. Gall, Parks Project Manager

- **Finance Team**
  - Marcia and Richard Hawkins
  - Adrin P. Biagas
  - Roksan Okan-Vick, FAIA

- **Support Team**
  - President, Slade Moore
  - Chief Financial Officer, Marcia and Richard Hawkins
  - Executive Director, Adrin P. Biagas
  - Director of Finance, Marcia and Richard Hawkins

- **General Team**
  - John Sangree
  - Jennifer Roane
  - Dr. Robert W. Richardson

- **Board of Directors**
  - Suzanne K. Morris
  - Katherine and David Lucke
  - Dan Moody, Jr.
  - John E. (Sandy) Parkerson

- **Staff**
  - cigars for the U.S. Army
  - Misty Hines
  - Subject to the Endowment

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**Photography**

- Photograph by Anthony Rathbun
- Photograph by F. Carter Smith

**Design**

- Design by Minor Design