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PRESS RELEASE

Plans are underway to transform the Hill at Sims, a 100-acre regional detention basin, into a public park

*Precinct One Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis provides funding for initial improvements
Houston Parks Board leads design*

HOUSTON, TX – March 18, 2021 – Harris County Precinct One Commissioner Rodney Ellis and Houston Parks Board are pleased to announce that funding is in place for initial improvements to the Hill at Sims, which aims to transform Harris County Flood Control District’s 100-acre detention basin and associated property into easily accessible parkland for public use. Funding for design and construction comes from Commissioner Ellis and a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grant secured by State Representative Alma Allen and the Harris County Delegation. Houston Parks Board is responsible for managing the design process, including community engagement.

Hurricane Harvey’s devastating impacts in Precinct One communities demonstrated a continued vulnerability to severe flooding and underscored the need to equitably expand parks, trails, and greenspace to increase flood resiliency. To address this need, Precinct One and Houston Parks Board identified the Hill at Sims site as an opportunity to foster environmental resiliency and enrich the Sunnyside, South Acres, and Crestmont Park communities as well as the broader region.

“Our goal is to expand recreational opportunities and improve environmental resiliency for communities that have historically been neglected,” said Commissioner Ellis. “And we are excited for projects like the Hill at Sims that will accomplish both. As a son of Sunnyside, I am especially proud to be able to bring a beautiful new park to this community.”

At the request of Precinct One, Houston Parks Board conducted an analysis of the Hill at Sims site to develop implementation strategies. The process looked at the Sunnyside Complete Communities initiative and the Beyond the Bayous framework to identify key opportunities for the space. The project is divided into phases, with funding in place to design and construct elements of Phase I initial improvements.

“We applaud Commissioner Ellis for his vision and leadership on the Hill at Sims project,” said Beth White, President and CEO of the Houston Parks Board. “As our city continues to grow, Houston Parks Board remains committed to preserving greenspace for multiple uses. The Hill at Sims project is a shining example of how floodable parks can enrich and support resilient communities.”

The Initial Improvements Phase will soon enter design, which will focus on creating primary site connections that future phases can expand. Improvements include:

- A 10-foot-wide concrete shared use path around the basin and on the property frontage at Scott Street
- Other park amenities like 4-foot-wide nature paths, parking/gateways, water access, and improved pedestrian crossing at Scott Street

In addition, Harris County Precinct One and Harris County Engineering are working simultaneously to construct a new pedestrian – bicycle bridge across Sims Bayou connecting to Sims Bayou Greenway and Margaret Jenkins Park.

As the project gets underway, Precinct One and the Houston Parks Board are hosting a virtual community meeting at 6 p.m. CT on Wednesday, March 31 to update the community on the planning study and discuss the initial improvements to gather public input. For more information on the project and to register for the upcoming community meeting, please visit <https://www.hcp1.net/HillatSimsTrails>.

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A nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing access to quality parks and greenspace in the Greater Houston region, **Houston Parks Board** creates, improves, protects, and advocates for parks for everyone. Since 1976, the organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government and community relationships to improve parks large and small. Houston Parks Board is currently leading the transformational \$220 million Bayou Greenways 2020 project to complete a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston’s major waterways. For more information, visit www.houstonparksboard.org.

Beyond the Bayous is the shared vision of Houston Parks Board and its cross-sector partners for expanding Greater Houston’s public realm to improve greenspace equity and connectivity between parks, homes and jobs; increase public access to parks; and enhance the environmental health of communities. By fostering collaboration, reinvesting in existing parks, and identifying opportunities which allow the expansion of the regional park network, parks and greenways will weave throughout Houston’s urban fabric, creating a tapestry of vibrant, connected communities. The initiative is the result of a 2017 study generously funded by Houston Endowment.