



BRACKENRIDGE PARK

MASTER PLAN

FEBRUARY 21, 2017



PARKS & RECREATION SAN ANTONIO

BRACKENRIDGE PARK CONSERVANCY



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BRACKENRIDGE PARK

MASTER PLAN

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Brackenridge Park Conservancy

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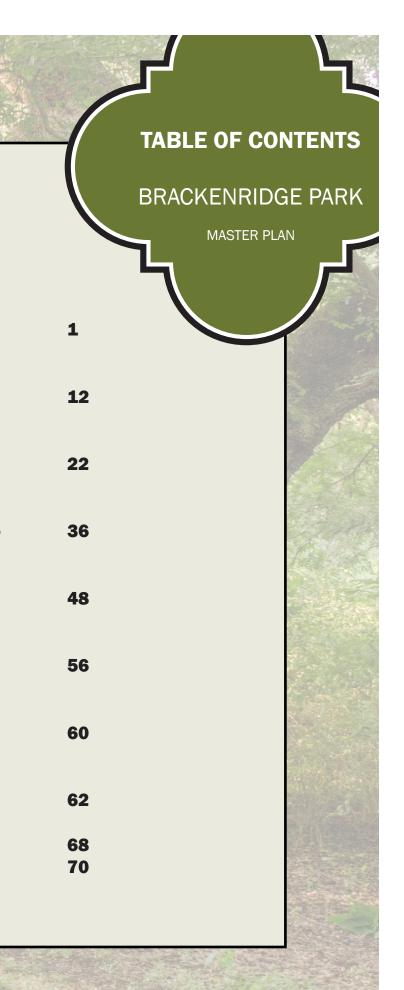
Brackenridge Park Conservancy



Brackenridge Park Conservancy

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Executive Summary

The Brackenridge Park Master Plan was commissioned by the City of San Antonio to create a comprehensive plan to shape the future development and rehabilitation of Brackenridge Park for many years to come.

Brackenridge Park is a State Antiquities Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The park is located north of downtown San Antonio, in City Council Districts 1 and 2, bordered by Highway 281 to the west and south, Broadway Avenue to the east and Hildebrand Avenue to the north.

The project was managed by the **Transportation and Capital Improvements** Department in collaboration with the City's Parks and Recreation Department and the Brackenridge Park Conservancy.

Elements of the Plan

The planning team was charged with the development of a master plan for the park that includes:

- Land use planning to maintain the balance of fee versus free activity space in the park.
- Creation of design guidelines for rehabilitation of existing park elements, and design of new park features.
- Identification, prioritization, and estimated costs for future capital improvement projects for the Park.



Methodology

The planning team implemented a traditional project planning methodology to arrive at recommendations that would ultimately be incorporated into the plan.

- Existing plans, studies and surveys of Brackenridge Park and the surrounding area, as well as master plans for leased properties within the park boundaries and existing funded improvement projects were compiled and reviewed.
- A public input design charrette was held prior to developing any plan recommendations. In addition, the team met with 23 individual stakeholders who are directly involved in, or impacted by, daily activities in the park.
- The first draft plan was developed that incorporated input from the public, analysis of the park and its surroundings, review of previous plans for the park, and review of plans for entities immediately in or adjacent to the park.
- The first draft plan was presented to the client, the 23 identified stakeholders, and to the public.
- Numerous additional public meetings were held throughout the city to elicit responses to the first draft master plan.
- The final plan is a result of the input of all the interested parties.



INTRODUCTION

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The Park is approximately 343 acres and includes several landmark destinations, such as the San Antonio Zoo, Brackenridge Eagle Train Ride, Sunken Garden Theater, Sunken Garden, Japanese Tea Garden, Tuesday Musical Club, First Tee Driving Range, Witte Museum, Brackenridge Golf Course, Lions Field and the San Antonio River. Not to mention the newest entry into the park district, the DoSeum!

EXISTING CONDITIONS

BRACKENRIDGE PARK

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Fee versus Non-Fee Access

Inside the park itself, a significant portion of the land is dedicated to fee-based usage, which encompasses constituent institutions that are some of the park's biggest draws. Both the San Antonio Zoo and the Witte Museum are north of Mulberry, as are the majority of historic buildings that have potential to be re-used as vital park facilities. Visitation is concentrated in the northern half of the park, as lower-density usages like trails along Avenue A and the Brackenridge Park Golf Course dominate the south half of the park.

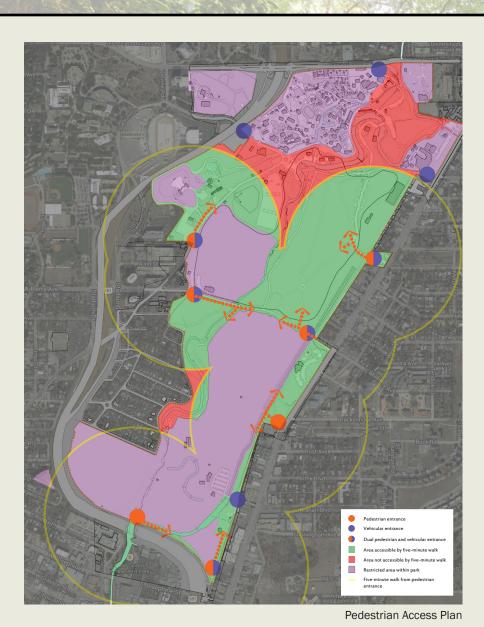


Green Space in the Park

Surprisingly, twenty percent of the park is impervious cover; buildings, paving, and other solid cover. This is a high percentage for a natural area. Taken together with the consensus goals for natural habitat and native vegetation restoration espoused by the public and several other planning efforts, these strategies form a clear basis for an approach to goal setting and recommendations regarding vegetation and impervious surfaces in the park.

Fee and Non-fee Areas Plan

Greenspace and Impervious Cover Plan



Pedestrian Access

Given the importance of park connections to nearby residential areas, including neighborhoods, multifamily developments, and student housing; pedestrian connections should be emphasized. Pedestrian entrances, amenities, and linkages from those areas to destinations within the park are acceptable in some areas, but pedestrian entrances are lacking in the northern part of the park where the heaviest visitation occurs. In the graphic, the red indicates areas un-served by pedestrian entrances, while the yellow circles show five-minute walk radii from the entrances.



Historic Places & Elements (Brackenridge Park Conservancy)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

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History and Culture

One of the most notable features of Brackenridge Park is its history. The park is home to some of San Antonio's most culturally and historically significant structures, but little prominence has been given to that history in terms of investment, planning, and development. For example, the eastern edge of the park, near the Witte Museum, holds the dam and head of an acequia which watered the agricultural lands around the Alamo. Further north, the Upper Labor Dam (another Spanish Colonial structure) is buried just beneath the surface, and its associated acequia still winds from the site south and west towards and through the San Antonio Zoo. The pump house for San Antonio's first waterworks, the oldest known industrial building in the city, stands on the edge of the river near the Joske Pavilion, itself a historic structure.

PUBLIC PROCESS

BRACKENRIDGE PARK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

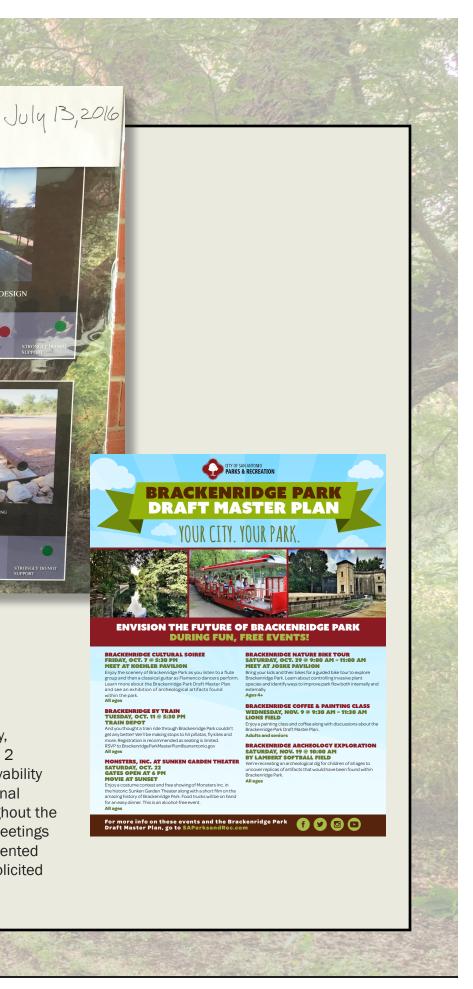


The public involvement process evolved over the course of the project. At the start of the project, a public design charrette was held to present basic information about the park and elicit a vision for the Master Plan from the community. The planning team identified a list of 23-stakeholders, and individual interviews were held with each entity. In addition to the public, City staff and the Neighborhoods and Livability Council were apprised of the information gathered from the input process and draft Master Plan concepts being developed. The first Draft Master Plan was presented to an assembly of the 23-stakeholder entities, in addition to a separate presentation to the general public.





Individuals from the community, through Council Districts 1 and 2 and the Neighborhoods and Livability Council, requested that additional public meetings be held throughout the city. Seven additional public meetings were held where City staff presented major tenets of the plan and solicited verbal and written feedback.

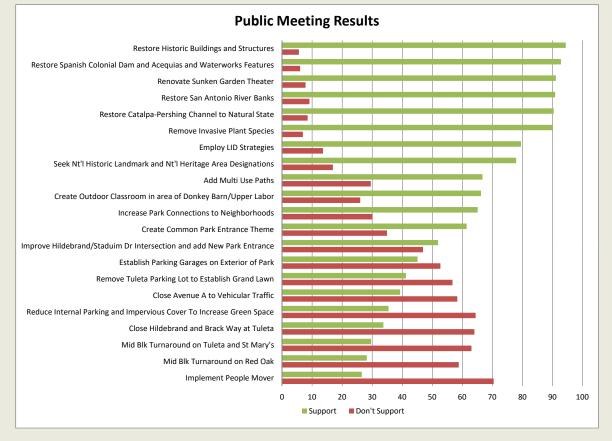


Entity Stakeholder Meetings:

Council District 1 Roberto Trevino Council District 2 Alan Warrick Witte Museum San Antonio Zoo Alamo City Golf DoSeum Botanical Garden San Antonio River Authority San Antonio River Improvement Projects (Oversight Committee member Tony Cantu) Headwaters at Incarnate Word Glenn Huddleston San Antonio Water System Acorn School **River Road Association** First Tee Office of Historic Preservation Parks and Recreation Department San Antonio Audubon Society **TCI** Departments VIA Metropolitan Transit San Antonio Conservation Society University of the Incarnate Word

In addition to the citywide input process, the Neighborhoods and Livability Committee requested an "activity-based" input process from users in the park. An additional six events were held to test the results of the citywide public meetings. Those events included a range of activities from a mock archaeological dig for children at the Lambert Beach Softball Field, to a guided bike ride through the park to learn about pedestrian/automobile interaction in the park as well as invasive plant species control.





What Needs Improving from the **Community's Perspective**

The results of the public input process, where between 800 and 1,000 citizens voiced their opinions are represented in the adjacent graph. In general the community supports the restoration of natural park features; improvement of water quality in the San Antonio River; restoration, preservation, and articulation of cultural and historic features; the increase of visibility and pedestrian access to and within the park.



PUBLIC PROCESS

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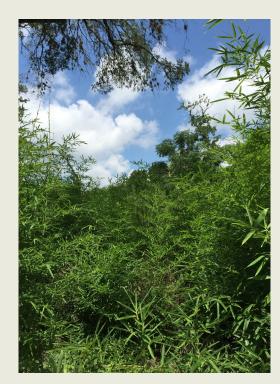
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PRINCIPLES & GOALS

BRACKENRIDGE PARK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







This list of goals represents the principles behind the vision for the park **Enlarge the park** laid out in the sections that follow. These principals and goals were derived through public meetings, interviews with park stakeholders, and observations by the planning team. These goals represent a consensus view for transforming the park into a more walkable, enjoyable place, which respects the traditions of the people who use it, and highlights the deep history found in the park.

Integrate the park into its surroundings and clarify the park perimeter.

- The park edge should look like a park wherever it is publicly visible. The dominant park boundaries of US-281, Broadway, and Hildebrand should be treated as park-related public ways, not hard edges containing the park.
- Create additional paths and entrance features to access the park.
- · Create clear vehicular entrances to the park and major attractions and institutions coupled with structured parking as the vehicular destination.
- Work with the park's institutional neighbors to create a park district.

- Manage invasive species in the park, both flora and fauna.
- Create policies which:
 - Set hard boundaries regarding any future encroachment on current publicly owned/accessible land.
 - Establish the current free area of the park as the minimum free area in the future.
 - Return current fee-based park uses to public and free use where possible.
 - Support the acquisition of land for public purposes.

Strengthen the historic organization of the park along the river and **Catalpa-Pershing Channel**

- · Create a series of pedestrian-focused active and passive use spaces.
- Create a series of view corridors.
- Enhance clear connecting pedestrian pathways.





Lake Flato Rendering









Balance active, passive, and cultural uses of the park

- Cultural institutions should be more closely incorporated into the park.
 - Each institution should have a policy in place treating their current boundary as a common park edge, not as a firm boundary of their facility.
 - · Park institutions should expand beyond the current park whenever possible, like the Witte's expansion across Tuleta into previously privately owned building and parking structure.
 - Perimeter institutions like the DoSeum and the San Antonio Botanical Garden should be integrated into the park's perceived boundaries (District)
 - Other cultural institutions should be encouraged to locate adjacent to park edges and to integrate their facilities into the park district.
- Create additional activities for daily use, and include park uses needed by the surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Additional playgrounds, athletic fields, health trail, swimming, boating, open space, dog park, etc.
- Enhance event spaces for regional use of the park:

- resources.

Create community support for the well-being of the park.

- Enhance educational opportunities in the non-fee portions of the park.
- Include neighboring citizens and organizations in planning and implementing park improvements. • Support other planning and design initiatives that are adjacent to the park (including Broadway corridor improvements, etc.).
- Empower the Brackenridge Park Conservancy to develop a "well-funded strategic management plan" to sustain park programming, development, maintenance, and operations.



PRINCIPLES & GOALS BRACKENRIDGE PARK

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• Outdoor open space for large events, performance spaces, Sunken Garden Theater, etc. • Respect and enable culturally significant uses like Easter camping to continue and expand.

Preserve and re-purpose historic structures and

RECOMMENDATIONS

BRACKENRIDGE PARK

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Recommendations and Items for Future Consideration

The planning process, including extensive community input has reaffirmed Brackenridge Park's importance to the community as a cultural and recreational resource. This land has been a vital part of the region's history for at least 10,000 years and continues to be an important part of everyday life and important cultural events in San Antonio. Three major categories for improvement to Brackenridge Park were identified through the stakeholder meetings and public input:

- Restore Natural Park Features and Improve Water Quality in the San Antonio River.
- Restore, Preserve, and Articulate Park Cultural and Historical Features.
- Increase Visibility and Pedestrian Access to and within the Park.

Within each category there are numerous measures to support the major category.

Both short and long-term recommendations are made in the plan, based on need and potential funding availability. The initial set of recommendations could be funded as part of the upcoming 2017 Bond Election. The following projects were selected for consideration in the 2017 Bond Program:

Near-term Capital Projects

Upper Labor Interpretive Area

In a recent UTSA Center for Archaeological Research investigation, a head gate at the upper end of the Upper Labor Acequia and a significant portion of what remains of the Upper Labor dam were found. Large solid cut limestone blocks placed on top of the Spanish Colonial dam in the late 1800's would be exposed for interpretation. The Upper Labor Acequia channel walls will be repaired and restored to replace missing stone and spalling mortar.

Avenue A Hike & Bike Path

Avenue A south of Mulberry would be closed to vehicular traffic, except for emergency and Parks Maintenance vehicles and golf course maintenance traffic in favor of a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly riverside trail. A small parking area would be created directly off Mulberry for access to the path. Invasive plant species along the path would be removed and replaced with appropriate native species.

New Pedestrian Bridge

A new universally accessible pedestrian bridge

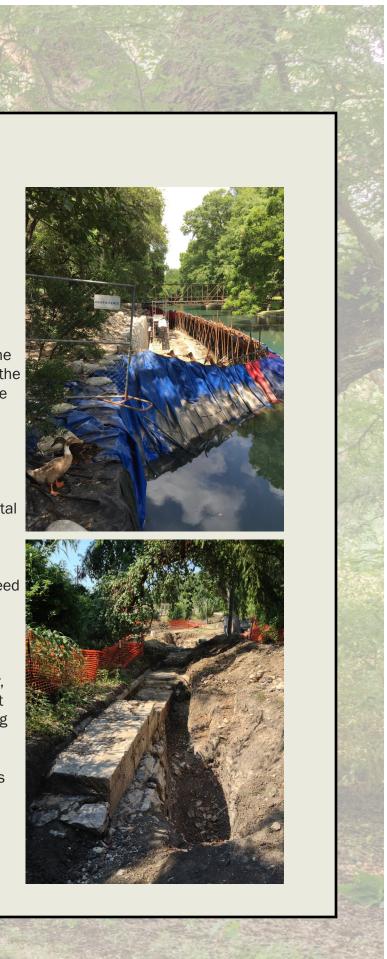
is proposed to provide a more direct access between Broadway, the Witte Museum, and the east side of the park near Tuleta Avenue and the San Antonio Zoo and other destinations on the west bank of the river.

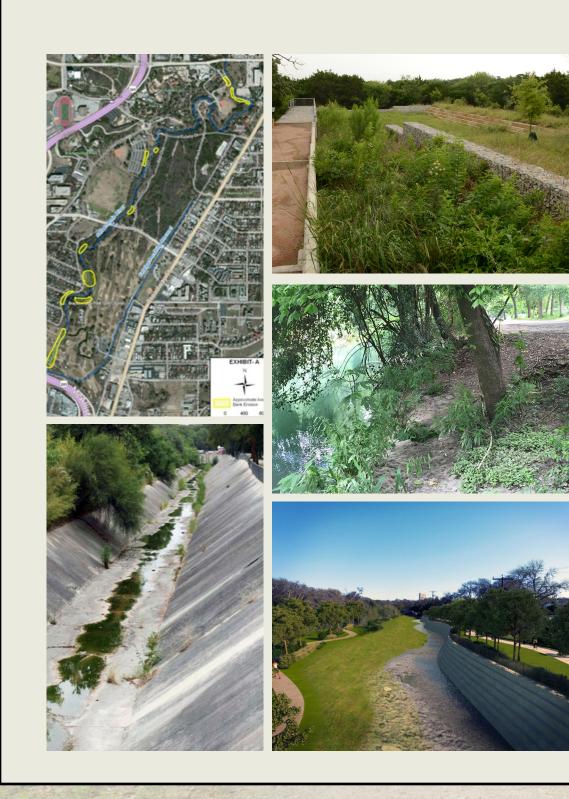
San Antonio River Wall Repair

For years, sections of San Antonio River channel walls have been failing. Several Capital Improvement Projects have been initiated to repair wall sections that had failed, or were deemed to be a danger to the general public. Many more hundreds of feet of walls are in need or replacement.

Tuleta Parking Garage

The San Antonio Zoo, Sunken Garden Theater, and other destinations along St. Mary's Street suffer from insufficient parking. A new parking garage on San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) land would augment parking available in the park as well as support events at Alamo Stadium and SAISD's convocation center.





Long-Term Recommendations

The projects not identified as "near-term" are currently unfunded. These projects represent long-range improvements for Brackenridge Park. As future funding sources become available, these concepts should be considered for implementation. The long-range improvements consist of a mix of projects that will restore and improve both the natural and man-made elements of the park; preserve historic uses and create new uses; as well as create policy that will protect the park into the future.

Restore Natural Park Features and Improve Water Quality in the San Antonio River.

Stabilize and restore San Antonio River Banks

• Continued monitoring and evaluation of bank erosion of the San Antonio River channel between Hildebrand Avenue and US Highway 281, in the approximate areas identified on the adjacent exhibit, should continue. Removal of invasive vegetation species and the stabilization of the banks of the San Antonio River, using methods that will result in a natural appearance are recommended.

Restore the Catalpa-Pershing Channel to a natural design to include new pedestrian access to the area.

The Catalpa-Pershing Channel is another in a series of river channels and tributaries ripe for restoration, and its location between Avenue B and the Wilderness Area makes its restoration both critical and transformative. Avenue B should be reconfigured to accommodate vehicular traffic, more green space, and a north/south-walking trail that could also connect across the Catalpa-Pershing to the Wilderness Area.

Remove invasive plant species.

• For decades non-native plant materials have been introduces to the park either through natural or human means. The Master Plan proposed the development of an invasive plant specie removal program coupled with a proposal to develop a re-vegetation plan using primarily native plant species.

Incorporate low impact development features into the park.

• Water guality in the San Antonio River can be improved by implementing Low Impact Development (LID) strategies. LID strategies are stormwater management and planning techniques that are intended to reproduce natural predevelopment conditions by reducing the amount of impervious surfaces and infiltrating, evaporating, and storing stormwater runoff. Unlike the conventional method of quickly discharging stormwater off-site and conveying it to a downstream watershed, LID treats stormwater as a resource on-site.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

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National Heritage Landmark

Long-Term Recommendations

Restore, Preserve, and Articulate Park Cultural and Historical Features.

Establish the park as a National Historic Landmark and become the first National Heritage Area in Texas.

- National Historic Landmark (NHL): This designation helps recognize, preserve, and protect important locations in American history. Designating a property as an NHL may provide it with additional protections from development, and may also make the property eligible for preservation grants and technical preservation assistance. The National Park Service Intermountain Region administers the National Historic Landmarks Program in Texas. NHL sites in this region include the Hoover Dam, United States Air Force Academy, Georgia O'Keeffe Home and Studio to name a few.
- NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (NHA): Through public-private partnerships, NHA entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Leveraging funds and long-term support for projects. National Park Service partners provide technical assistance, and distribute matching federal funds from Congress to NHA entities. NPS does not assume ownership of land inside heritage areas or impose land use controls. Examples of NHA sites include: Abraham Lincoln NHA, Illinois; Northern Rio Grande NHA, New Mexico; Freedoms Frontier, Oklahoma; and Baltimore NHA, Maryland

Restore and interpret Spanish Colonial dams, acequias and water works

• Significant cultural and historic features ranging from prehistoric archaeological sites, to remnants of Spanish Colonial dams and acequias, to structures from San Antonio's first waterworks, to some of the earliest park facilities exist in close proximity to

each other offering an opportunity to interpret those features to park users. Where possible, without risking the resource, expose and interpret the historic features.

Restore historic buildings and structures.

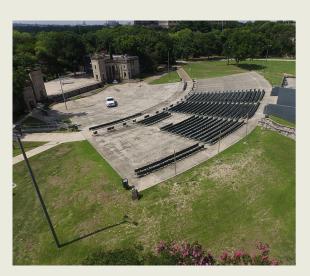
- Historic structures abound in Brackenridge Park. As an example, Pump House #1, built as part of San Antonio's original waterworks, should be restored and renovated for a new use (perhaps a café, coffee shop, or ice cream shop). Other buildings could be restored to their original use (restrooms, storage, swimming changing rooms, etc.), or serve new purposes as defined at another time.
- Over the years changes have been made to the landscape as well. As an example, the non-historic earthen road bridge immediately north of Pump House #1 should be removed and replaced with a pedestrian bridge, as was originally present there, allowing the waterworks channel to enter the Pump House as it did when constructed.

Create outdoor classrooms.

• The opportunity for learning abounds in Brackenridge Park. Formal and informal spaces and amenities should be created to foster use of the park as a place for learning.

Renovate the Sunken Garden Theater.

- A Public/Private partnership should be formed to provide for a major renovation of the Sunken Garden Theater, with the goal of enabling its use as a year-round venue. New parking structures, and utilization of existing parking contracts in private structures provides more than sufficient parking nearby to support capacity crowds while not congesting local streets around the park as has been the case in years past.
- Preserve and enhance Easter camping and daily picnic uses.





Long-Term Recommendations

Increase Visibility and Pedestrian Access to and within the Park.

Make park edge and entrance improvements. The roadways around the park (Broadway, Hildebrand, and US Highway 281) are of different types and sizes. With exception to the few formal entrances to the park, park boundaries are not well defined. All park edges should be designed in a way to highlight the existence of the park through the use of common built elements, planting, lighting, and pedestrian amenities. These actions will enhance perception of the park as one diverse but unified place.

Increase park connections to neighborhoods. Broadway Corridor: At least two access corridors should be created (via land acquisition) from Broadway into the park. Corridor elements will include architectural features that will visually connect these new spaces to the existing framework of the park boundary. Generous walks, public art, lighting, and appropriate planting will grace the spaces. These connections between Broadway and the park could be accomplished in concert with improvements to Avenue B and the Catalpa-Pershing Channel.

Connections north: From the area of the Upper Labor Dam, a path will be extended north, under Hildebrand

Avenue, to the Blue Hole and the Headwaters at Incarnate Word, a nature preserve which protects part of the headwaters of the San Antonio River. Connections South: Connections to the south, such as the path recently completed beneath US-281 as part of the San Antonio River Improvements Project, are the primary means of connecting Brackenridge Park to downtown. Additional connections to the restored Catalpa-Pershing Channel, and a revitalized Avenue B will further establish connections to downtown. Better connection to St. Mary's Street entry to the park. Better connection from the west along Tuleta Avenue: Vehicular, pedestrian, wayfinding, lighting, and landscape improvements along Stadium Drive and eastward on Tuleta will be used to provide better access from the west, and to reinforce the sense of arrival at the park.

Create multi-use pathways to facilitate safer pedestrian use of the park.

Brackenridge Park was originally conceived as a series of parkways – a park to be enjoyed from a vehicle, with interesting spots to visit. Since then, park use has shifted from vehicle-centric to pedestrian-centric, without much change to the infrastructure to support such a change. Creative ways must be found to integrate the need for higher pedestrian usage (as was accomplished in the Wilderness Area) while not negating the need for vehicular access to park facilities.



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