

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

June 28, 2024

HDRC CASE NO: 2024-220
COMMON NAME: Dawson Park
ADDRESS: 803 N CHERRY
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 527 BLK 1 LOT 2 (LOOPY SUBD)
ZONING: D, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 2
APPLICANT: Tara Lindberg/Dunaway
OWNER: CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
TYPE OF WORK: Signage
APPLICATION RECEIVED: June 13, 2024
60-DAY REVIEW: August 12, 2024
CASE MANAGER: Rachel Rettaliata

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install interpretive park signage.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

UDC Sec. 35-641. - Design Considerations for Historic and Design Review Commission Recommendations.

In reviewing an application, the historic and design review commission shall be aware of the importance of attempting to find a way to meet the current needs of the City of San Antonio, lessee or licensee of public property. The historic and design review commission shall also recognize the importance of recommending approval of plans that will be reasonable to implement. The best urban design standards possible can and should be employed with public property including buildings and facilities, parks and open spaces, and the public right-of-way. Design and construction on public property should employ such standards because the use of public monies for design and construction is a public trust. Public commitment to quality design should encourage better design by the private sector. Finally, using such design standards for public property improves the identity and the quality of life of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Sec. 35-645. - Signs and Billboards on Public Property or Right-of-Way.

(a) General Provisions. All non-regulatory signage on public property, on the public right-of-way, or overhanging the public right-of-way shall conform to all city codes and must be approved by the historic preservation officer prior to installation. Permits must be obtained following approval of the application. The historic preservation officer may submit an application under this section to the historic and design review commission for their recommendation prior to approving, denying, or approving with conditions the application. Memorials, markers, naming rights of public property, and recognition of charitable donations given to the City of San Antonio shall be additionally governed by existing policies for memorials and markers and/or any formal action passed by city council. Temporary displays approved by the department exercising control of the public property are authorized if in accordance with chapter 28 of the City Code of San Antonio, Texas.

FINDINGS:

- a. The property at 803 N Cherry is the new city park commonly known as Dawson Park, which is currently under development. The property is adjacent to the Hays Street Bridge and is bound by Lamar to the north, N Cherry to the east, the Hays Street Bridge to the south and railroad tracks and a parking lot to the west. The new park is 1.69 acres and will feature a playground, skate park, event space, pavilion, and signage.
- b. INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE – The applicant has proposed to install interpretive signage throughout Dawson Park. The applicant previously received final approval from the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) on June 29, 2022, with the stipulation that the applicant submits final interpretive signage design and text to staff for review and approval. Sign panels are proposed in the entry/story-telling plaza, outside of the entry plaza in the Community Story area, and along the walkway referred to as the Historic Timeline Walk. The

applicant has proposed one (1) entry sign, six (6) timeline signs along the Historic Timeline Walk, and three (3) Story-telling Plaza signs. UDC Sec. 35-642(b)(7) stipulates that signs which are out of keeping with the character of the environment in question should not be used. Excessive size and inappropriate placement on buildings results in visual clutter. Signs should be designed to relate harmoniously to exterior building materials and colors. Signs should express a simple clear message with wording kept to a minimum. The applicant held a public meeting on January 10, 2024, for review of the signage and incorporated community feedback. The proposed signage package has been reviewed and approved by the City of San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department team. Staff finds the proposal to install signage generally consistent with the UDC Sec 35-642.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval based on findings a through b with the following stipulation:

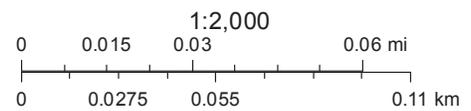
- i. ARCHAEOLOGY – The project shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations regarding, as applicable.

City of San Antonio One Stop



June 23, 2022

 User drawn lines



BERKLEY V. AND VINCENT M. DAWSON PARK INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE PACKAGE

HISTORIC TIMELINE WALK SIGNAGE



1910

Bridge Relocated to San Antonio, Texas

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The City wanted to ensure the East Side residents had access to downtown, which required the railroad to build a bridge over the railroad tracks.

The original bridge was built in 1881, constructed west of Uvalde, over the Nueces River. The bridge was built to be used for horse-drawn carriages & motorized vehicles.

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1982

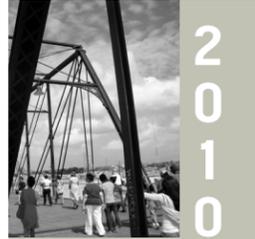
Hays Street Bridge Closure

As traffic significantly increased due to the abundance of motorized vehicles, Hays Street Bridge began to deteriorate and was later deemed unsafe.

The deck and beams of the bridge's approach spans exhibited 80 percent deterioration, and the retaining walls had settled. As a result, the concrete approach spans were considered to be in such poor condition that their preservation was not critical.

Due to these poor conditions, the bridge was officially closed.

After closing the Hays Street Bridge to vehicular service, the City of San Antonio considered demolishing it, but local efforts to preserve the bridge raised awareness of its historical significance, and the bridge was left alone for several years.



2010

Hays Street Bridge Reopened to the Public

Prior to 2010, Hays Street Bridge was marked as a key component of a hike & bike network linking downtown San Antonio and the River North/Museum Corridor to East Side cultural attractions and Salado Creek Greenway.

The 2010 bridge rehabilitation included the removal of deteriorated structural pieces. The new bridge approaches were designed to maintain a similar profile as the 1910 approaches but with modifications for accessibility.

The original deck was wooden, but it had been overlaid with asphalt and other paving materials over the years. In the rehabilitation, the decking was replaced with wood, restoring it to its original character.

The rehabilitation project included the addition of lighting, landscaping, artwork on the handrails of the approaches, and interpretive signage.

Hays Street Bridge was then rededicated and reopened to the public as a pedestrian and bicycle gateway.



2012

Community Support for the Park

In February of 2012, the "Alamo Beer Project" received a development incentive package that included the purchase of surplus city property adjacent to the Hays Street Bridge. The community, comprised of neighborhood residents, activists, and preservationists, expressed concern over the allocation of surplus city land to private use, rather than fulfilling the community's long envisioned park as part of a larger bridge restoration project. In response, the community rallied together, organized public demonstrations, collected more than 2,800 petition signatures, and explored legal avenues. Through the collective efforts of the community, the 1.69-acre parcel was successfully reclaimed as public space. This victory solidified the park's role as a community hub and preserved its cherished view of the historic Hays Street Bridge.



2019

Beginning of Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Design

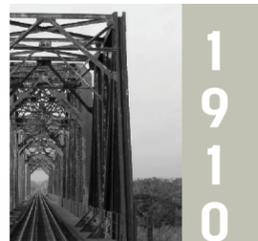
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During this meeting, it was determined that three public meetings would be required to provide the community with multiple opportunities to provide comments and review a conceptual plan with future phasing possibilities for the site. An accelerated schedule was required due to an ordinance requiring concept design completed in December 2019. Research and analysis took place from August through October and consisted of the design team walking the site to understand the existing site conditions.

With the completion of the park design, the City of San Antonio realized that this site is important not only for amplifying the Hays Street Bridge but also for the community that made this park possible.



HISTORIC TIMELINE WALK SIGNAGE



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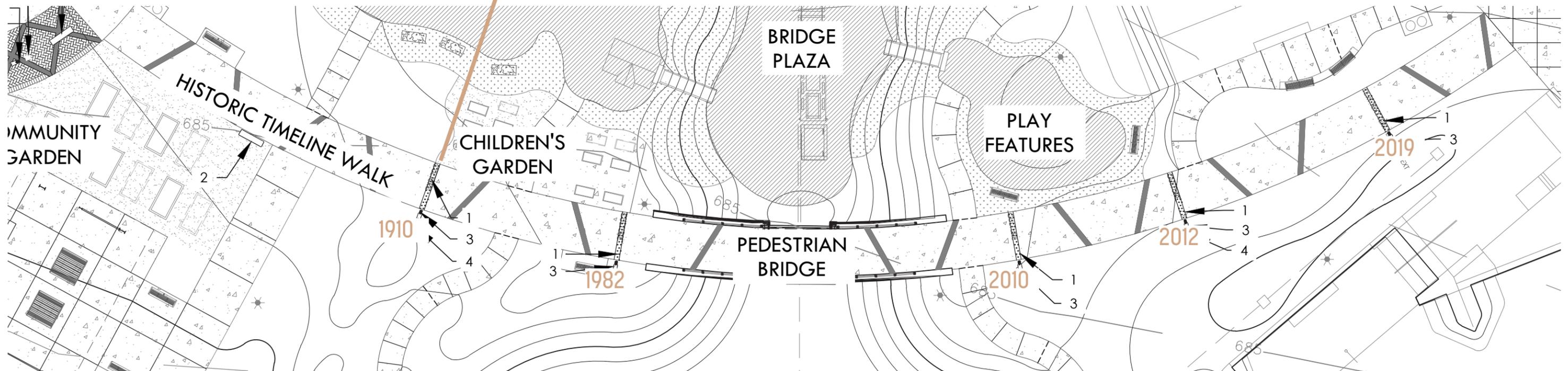
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CORRESPONDING CAST STONE PLAQUE



location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE - PEOPLE

PEOPLE



The Hays St. Bridge Restoration Group

The Hays St. Bridge Restoration Group is a diverse group of community members working together to restore the Hays Street Bridge. They began their collaborative efforts in 2000 and played a key role in 2012 by rallying the community during the lawsuit battle with the City of San Antonio regarding the land on which Hays Street Bridge sits. The group obtained approximately 2,800 petition signatures in an effort to create the park it is today.

San Antonio Conservation Society

The San Antonio Conservation Society was organized on March 24, 1924, under the leadership of Emily Edwards and Rena Maverick Green. San Antonio was the largest city in Texas at that time, and its rapid growth threatened many of the city's historic aspects. They played a key role in the funding of Hays Street Bridge restoration. In April of 2001, they granted \$50,000 toward the local match of federal ISTEA-221 funds for the Hays Street Bridge restoration. In 2006, the San Antonio Conservation Society supported the City of San Antonio and Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group in applying for a TXDOT grant for "Hays St. Bridge Park and Railroad Relocation." They have assisted in the restoration of the bridge since the beginning and continue to advocate for the conservation of San Antonio's beautiful landmarks.

Neighbors Acting Together Organization

Currently, the San Antonio Neighbors Acting Together Organization is an annual event held on the first Tuesday of October each year. The event focuses on strengthening relationships between local police and the communities they serve. In 2001, the Neighbors Acting Together Organization and the City of San Antonio began a special study of future bridge uses and potential sources for the rehabilitation of Hays Street Bridge.

Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association

The Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association is a group open to all residents and property owners in the Dignowity Hill area. It consists of an active group of neighbors striving to make a difference in Dignowity Hill. In 2006, Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association supported the City of San Antonio and Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group, applying for the TXDOT grant for "Hays St. Bridge Park and Railroad Relocation." They have played a key role in the restoration of Hays Street Bridge for nearly 20 years and continue to advocate for the neighborhood of Dignowity Hill.

Esperanza Peace and Justice Center

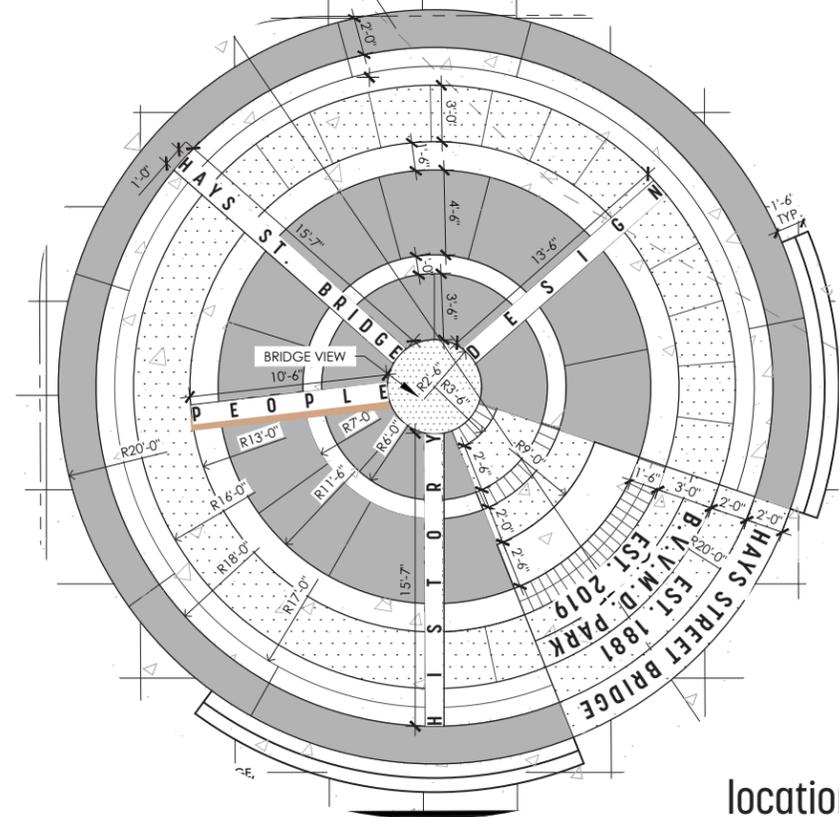
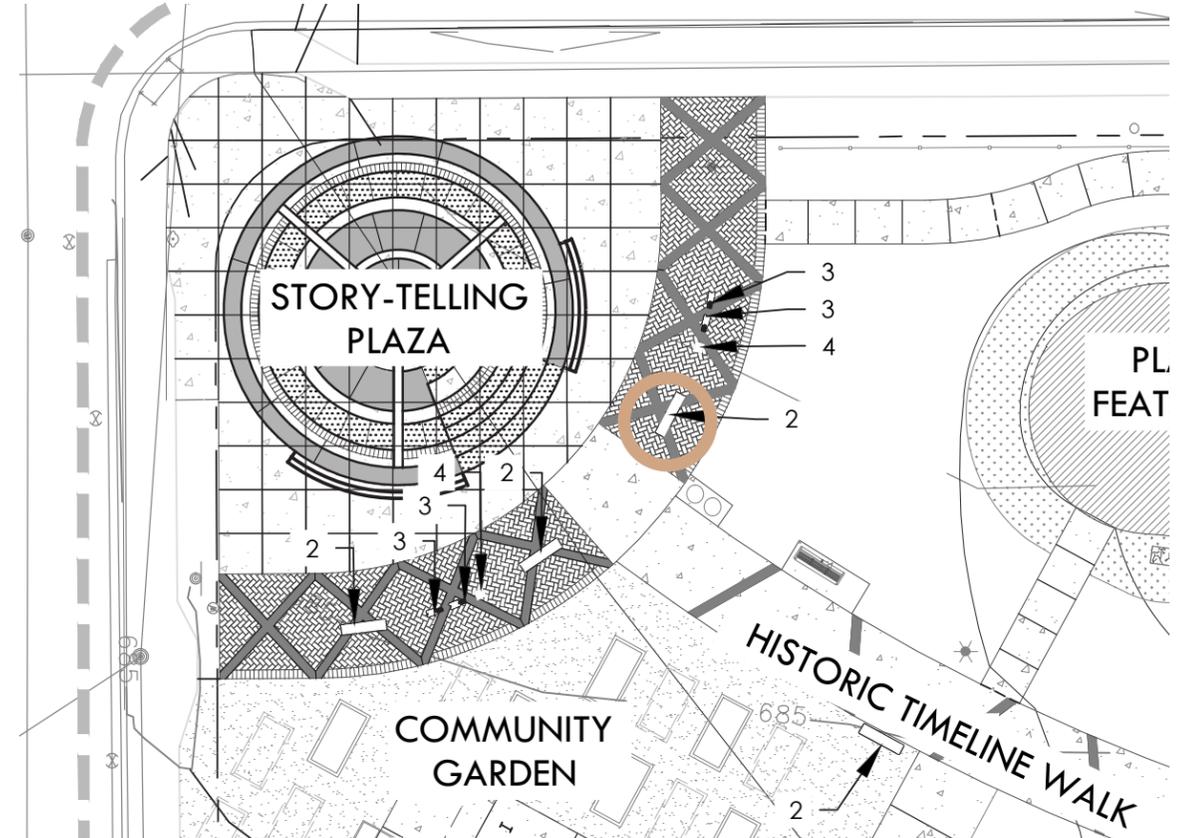
The mission statement of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center states: "The people of Esperanza dream of a world where everyone has civil rights and economic justice, where the environment is cared for, where cultures are honored and communities are safe. The Esperanza advocates for those wounded by domination and inequality. We believe in creating bridges between people by exchanging ideas and educating and empowering each other. We believe it is vital to share our visions of hope... we are hope." In 2013, the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center ran its "Cities of Hope" series, exploring urban redevelopment in San Antonio. Throughout the years, the group has continued to support and advocate for the restoration of Hays Street Bridge.

The City of San Antonio

Through the years of the rehabilitation process of Hays Street Bridge, the City of San Antonio has played a key role in the communication with the nearby residents of the East Side, families in the community, and supporters of Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park. They have financially supported this project, as well as assisted in the design of the park.



PEOPLE



location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE

HISTORY

Railroad San Antonio Railway Company

1850 The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado (B.B. & C.) Railroad is chartered and is the first railroad in Texas.

1865 The Southern Pacific is formed in San Francisco, California.

1870 Thomas Pierce, a trader in Texas products from Boston, takes over bankrupt B.B. & C.

1873 B.B. & C is renamed to Galveston, Harrisburg, & San Antonio (G.H. & S.A.) following the offer of \$500,000 from the City of San Antonio.

1877 On February 2nd, the first railroad train arrives in San Antonio. The G.H. & S.A. tracks stop at Hays Street.

1881 Under Southern Pacific control, the G.H. & S.A. railroad begins building towards the west.

San Antonio's geographic location created a perfect spot for the addition of a railroad, as it was a crossroad on routes to the north, south, east and west. During that time, it was noted that San Antonio was perhaps the largest city on the continent that had remained for so long without rail connections. With the addition of the railroad, the future of the city was bright. This brings us to the construction of longer whiplike bridge over the Nueces River, west of Uvalde, Texas in 1881.

In 1903, the G.H. & S.A. RR desired to further establish its position as a prominent railroad in San Antonio and built the Sunset Station, a beautiful landmark that remains today. The San Antonio Railway Company is the reason for the installment of Hays Street Bridge, thus leading to the design and construction of Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park.

Community San Antonio East Side

Historically, San Antonio's East Side has served as a vibrant African American community shaped by a legacy of racial segregation dating back to the 1700s. The city's division was stark, with "whites" residing to the west of the San Antonio River, while the East Side became home to Native Americans and African Americans. Following the emancipation of enslaved people, the East Side marked San Antonio's initial African American settlement. The persistence of racial segregation in San Antonio mirrored the norms of the segregated South until the mid-20th century. Today, the East Side remains one of the city's most racially and ethnically diverse areas, undergoing a transformation with a predominantly Hispanic/Latino population alongside a significant African American presence. The construction of the Hays Street Bridge in 1910 facilitated connectivity between the East Side and downtown San Antonio. Presently, numerous neighborhoods on the East Side advocate for the Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park, emphasizing the preservation of their rich cultural and historical heritage.

Neighborhood Dignowity Hill

As San Antonio's first exclusive residential suburb, Dignowity Hill plays a vital role in the history of Hays St. Bridge. Dr. Anthony Michael Dignowity, a distinguished physician and Czech immigrant, laid the foundation for this community during the latter part of the 19th century. Initially settled by prominent San Antonio merchants and business tycoons, the landscape of Dignowity Hill was adorned with opulent estates. With the railroad's arrival in 1877, significant changes were made to the neighborhood's built environment and demographic diversity. Notably, African American residents have significantly shaped the community's identity. Today, designated as a local historic district, the neighborhood actively preserves and celebrates its multifaceted history, ensuring that the enduring narrative of African American culture remains an integral and cherished part of Dignowity Hill's vibrant legacy.

"The bridge, to me, represented... an aspirational experience for me as a child growing up, and I never lost sight of that. I wanted to make sure that the generations to come would have that experience as well"

- Nettie Hinton, 2019

HISTORY

Railroad



G.H. & S.A. Map

Neighborhood



Harmony House



Emil Elmendorf House, 1884

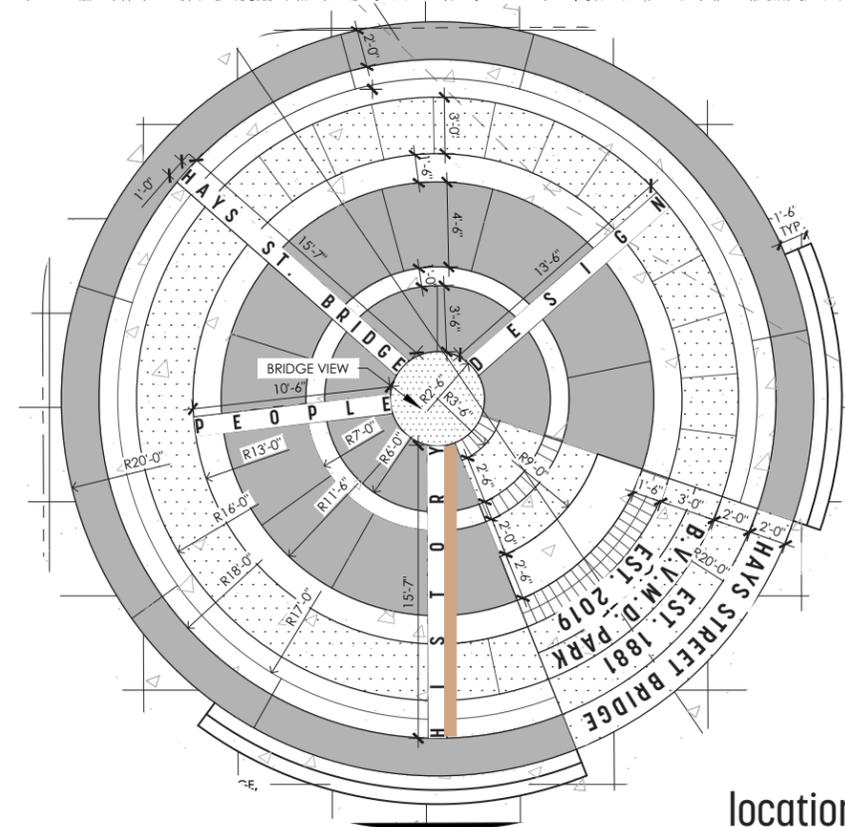
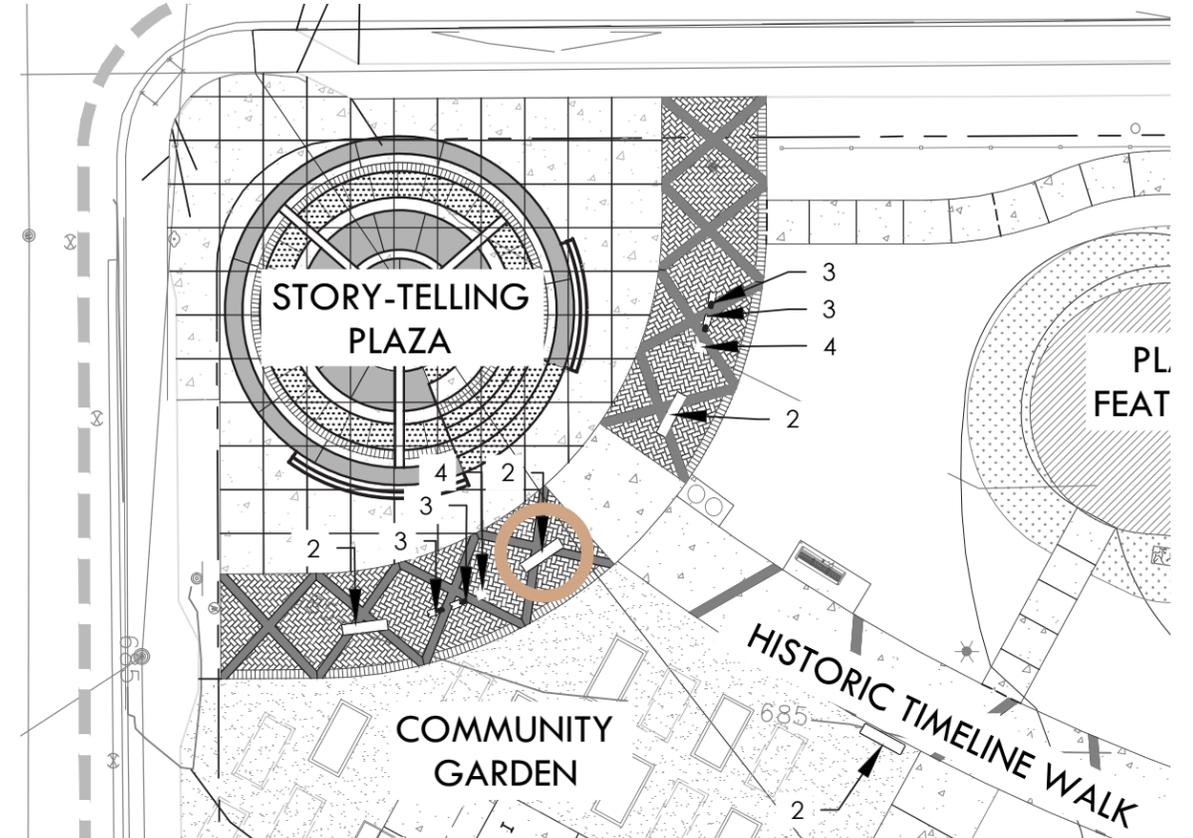


732 North Olive Street, 1872

Community



Neon Drive Mural at Nolan Street underpass



location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE

DESIGN

Skate Park

The first public meeting gathered the community and received a large amount of voices advocating for a skate park. The advocacy group continued to grow, with local skate members and nearby skate shops attending every public meeting for the park. With action sports users in mind, such as skateboarders, BMX bikers, and scooters, this skate park was designed to offer both beginner and advanced sections. The skate park was an important element to provide to the community, as it is the first of its size and scale on the East Side of San Antonio.

Story-Telling Plaza

In recent times, Hays Street Bridge has transformed into a symbol of community resilience and cultural revival for the surrounding community with its multitude of stories and history. The Story-Telling Plaza is a space that acts as a vibrant center for local engagements and celebrations as well as the start of the Historic Timeline Walk to showcase Hays Street Bridge's historical significance.

Historic Timeline Walk

The history of the site is essential to the surrounding neighborhood and the City of San Antonio. The Hays Street Bridge is a historic element that shows how the city has grown and evolved as an essential connection from the East Side to downtown. Nearby residents, visitors, cyclists, pedestrians, historic enthusiasts, past residents, schools, and families were all considered throughout the design process. The goals of this element of design are to provide a timeline and historical reference for the site and how it became a park, as well as provide information about the Hays St. Bridge Park and its construction, evolution of use, and importance as a focal point of this unique area in San Antonio.

Bridge Plaza

The Bridge Plaza is important in the design of Hays Street Bridge Park because it portrays how extraordinary the Hays Street Bridge is to the City of San Antonio, and provides access to the bridge from the park. This space is designed with a variety of visitors in mind, with amenities such as a bike repair station, a restroom, bike racks, seating areas, and informative signage. With the inclusion of the bridge plaza in the design, the site is able to have a space dedicated solely to the bridge and its construction.

Garden Plaza

East San Antonio currently lacks healthy food options and public gardens for the community, creating 'food deserts' in certain areas. In response to the community's expressed interest to combat 'food deserts', a Garden Plaza that will provide healthier alternatives, a community garden that offers a space for locals, park visitors, schools, and garden supply vendors, has been implemented. The Garden Plaza, including a pavilion, was designed to support various activities. This space now offers educational opportunities for garden care, cooking classes, and aims to foster a healthier neighborhood by encouraging the cultivation and sharing of edible plants and trees within the community.

Play Features

The neighborhood expressed interest in a space for play, but to also in keeping the site's history in mind. The playground symbolizes Hays Street Bridge's connections with the community, downtown, and the railroad. It's designed for children of all abilities, ensuring safety and ADA compliance. The inclusive play design philosophy is at the core of the playground's features. These elements uniquely showcase the area's culture and history, preserving a piece of the East Side and Dignowity Hill's past thoughtfully.

Open Green Space

Many community members stressed the importance of open green space in the park. This element allows for a multitude of activities in a vibrant environment. The space was designed for different users, such as nearby residents, park visitors, vendors, event planners, and families. It allows anyone visiting the park to have a place of respite while admiring the Hays Street Bridge and city skyline. This area was also designed to have seating along the slopes of the lawn. The large open space is perfect for activities such as sitting and reading or having a community movie night.

DESIGN

1st Public Meeting



Skate Park



Story-Telling Plaza



Historic Timeline Walk



Bridge Plaza



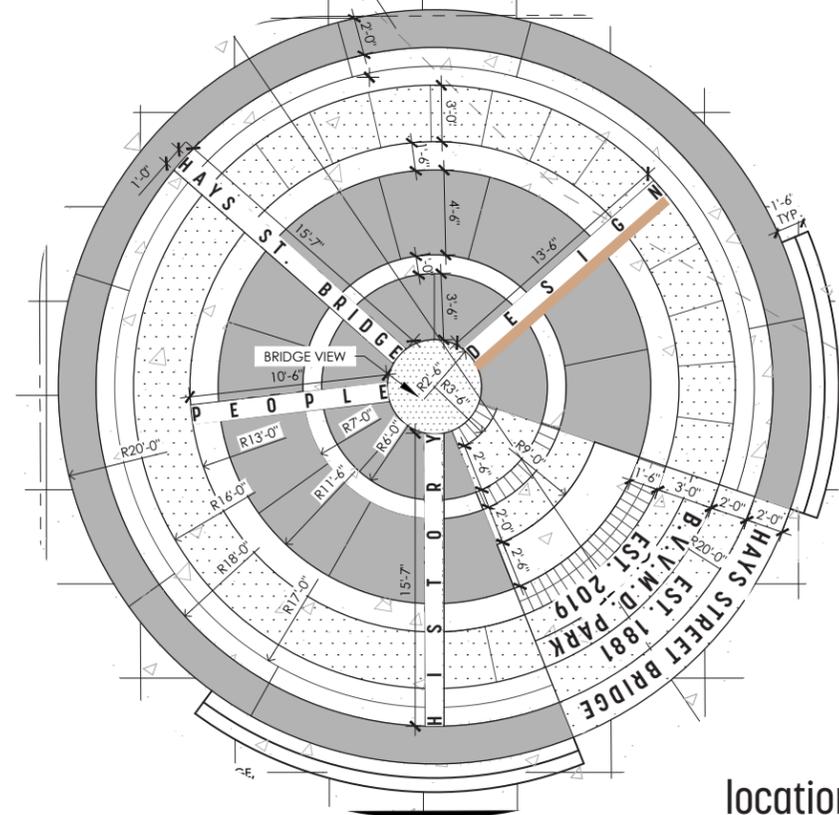
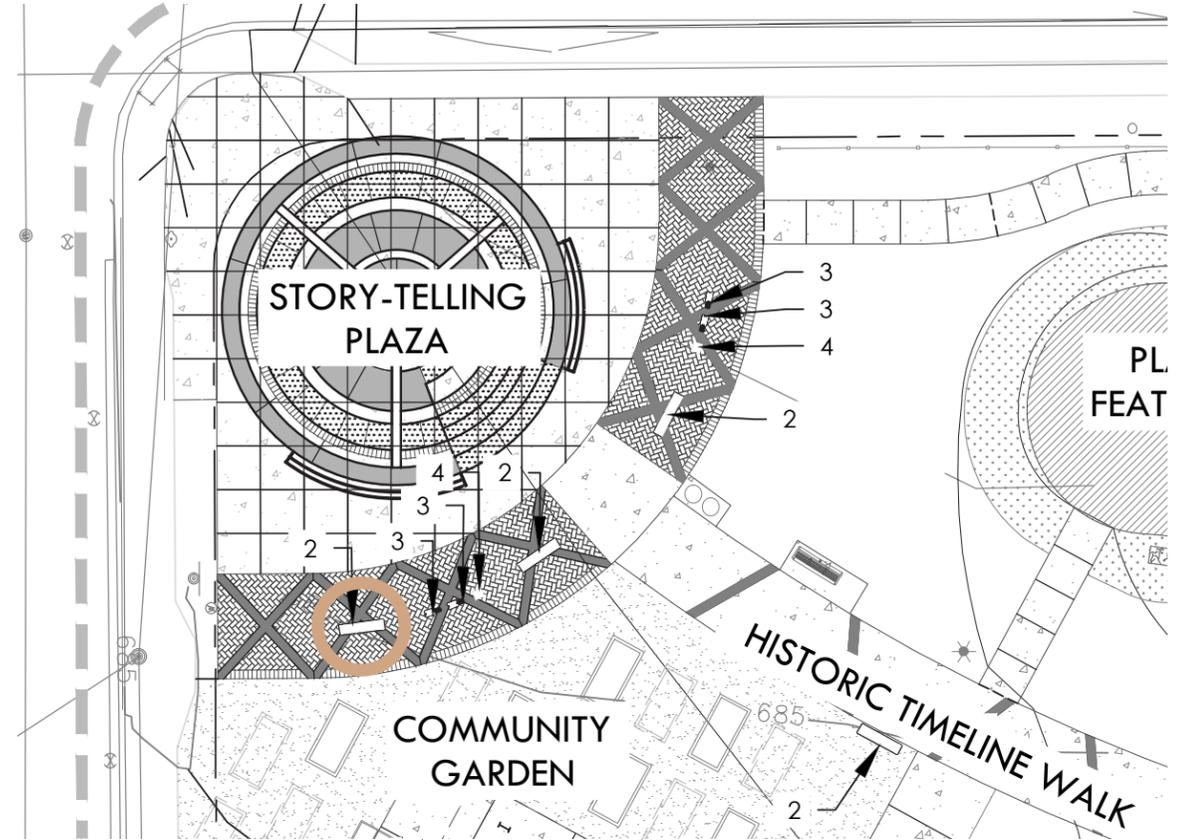
Garden Plaza



Play Features



Open Green Space



location of signage on plan

ENTRY MONUMENT & BLADE SIGNAGE

HAYS STREET BRIDGE

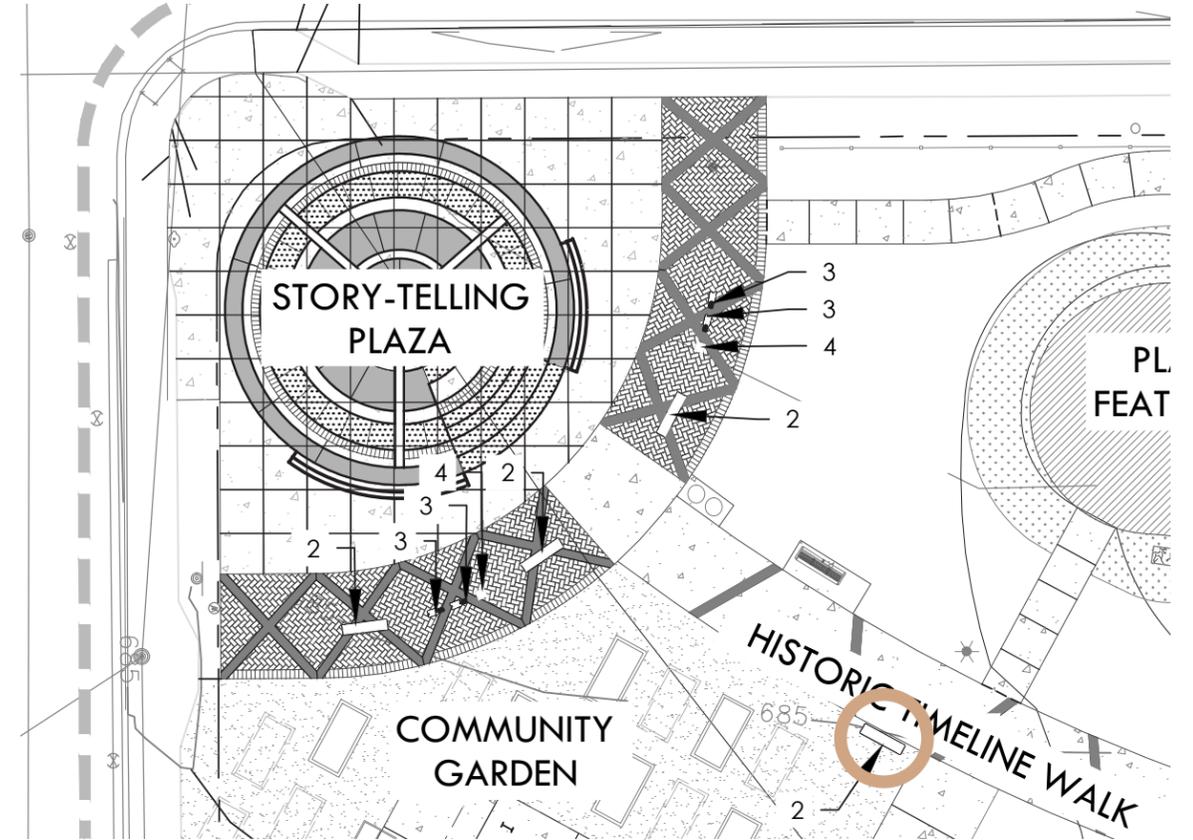
est. 1881



1881 1910 1982 2010 2012 2019 2023



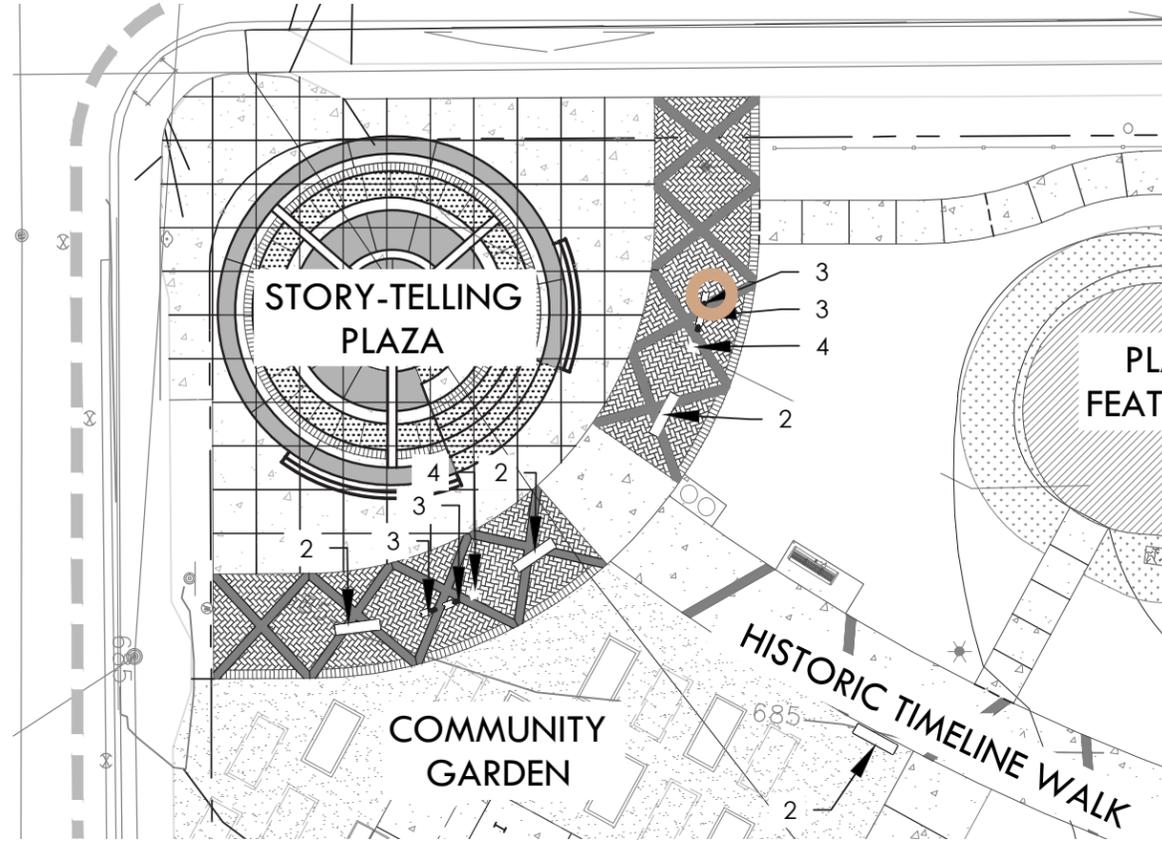
- 1881 Construction of the Murphy-Whipple Truss over the Nueces River west of Uvalde, Texas
- 1910 Bridge Relocated to San Antonio, Texas
- 1982 Hays Street Bridge Closure
- 2010 Rehabilitation of Bridge & Reopening to Public
- 2012 Community Support for the Park
- 2019 Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Design begins
- 2023 Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park construction begins



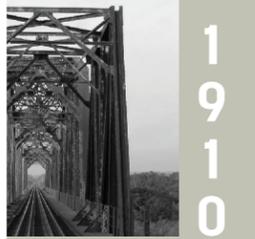
BLADE SIGNAGE

BERKLEY V. AND VINCENT M. DAWSON PARK

803 N. CHERRY ST. SAN ANTONIO, TX



BLADE SIGNAGE



1910

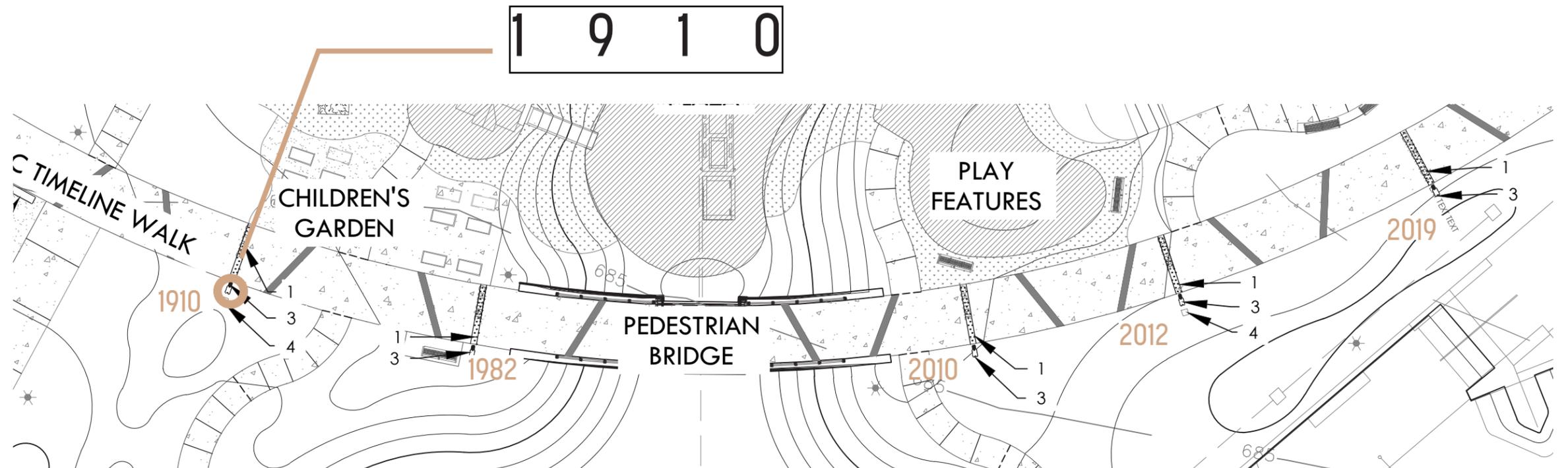
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BLADE SIGNAGE



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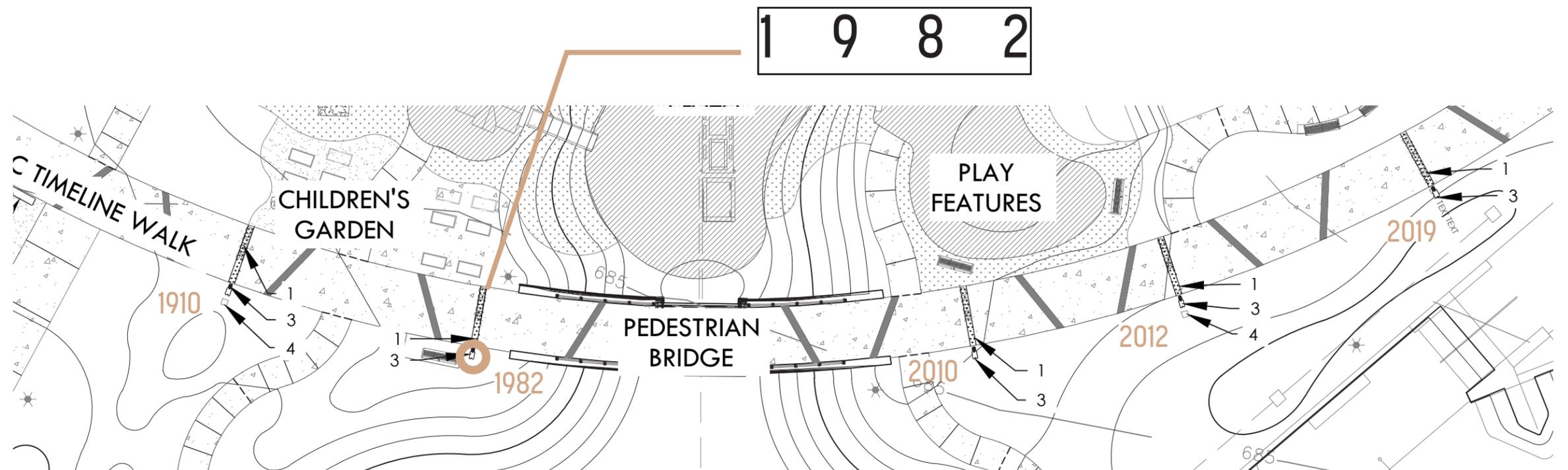
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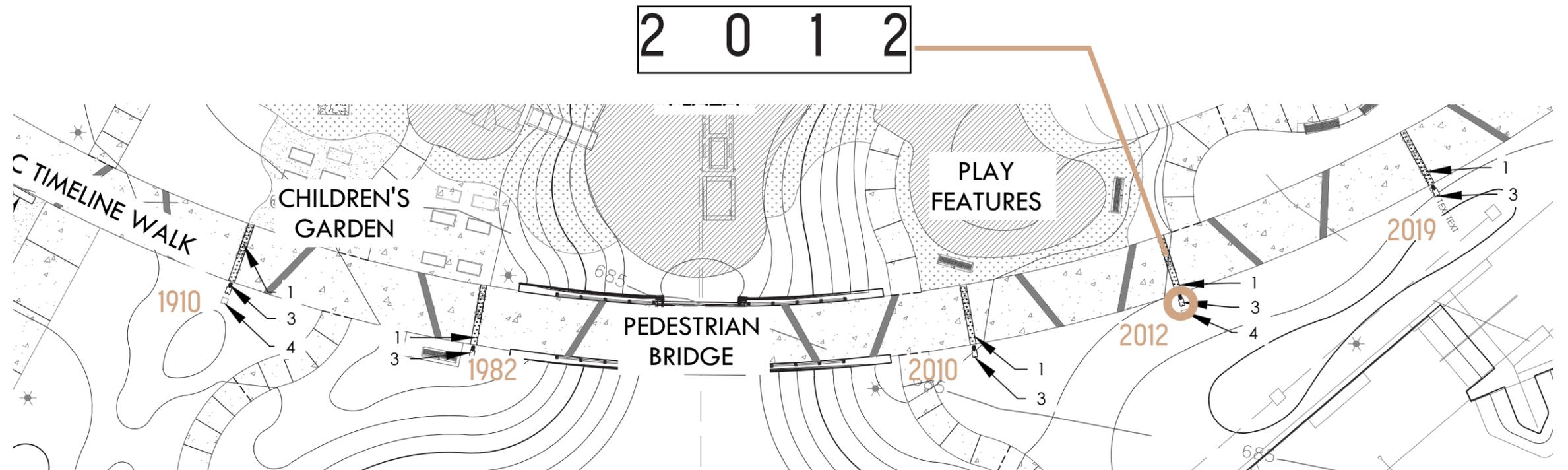
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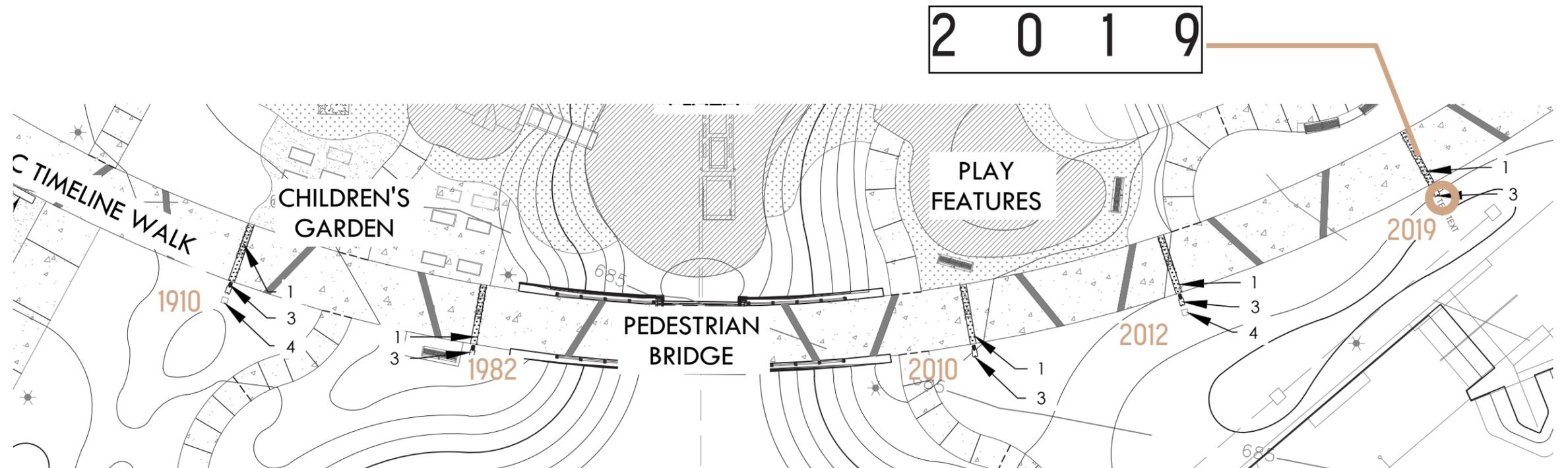


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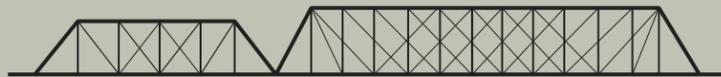
BRIDGE PLAZA MONUMENT SIGNAGE

HAYS STREET BRIDGE

est. 1881

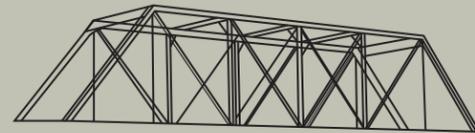


1881 1910 1982 2010 2012 2018 2023



Pratt Truss
Bridge Spans 130 feet

Murphy-Whipple Truss
Bridge Spans 225 feet



Pratt Truss

The Pratt design was designed by Thomas Willis Pratt and his father, Caleb Pratt, in 1844. The Pratt Truss is a structural system with horizontal, vertical, and diagonal members that can carry loads with longer spans compared to beams.



Murphy-Whipple Truss

The Murphy-Whipple Truss is a modification of the Whipple Truss by John Murphy of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Its design consisted of double-intersections and horizontal chords, along with eyebar and pin connections, which permitted longer iron bridge spans.



TEXAS SECTION HISTORIC CE LANDMARK - 2001

In 2001 the Hays Street Bridge was designated a Texas Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

