



April 13, 2023

Historic and Design Review Commission  
Chairman Jeffrey Fetzer  
Development and Business Services Center  
1901 S. Alamo  
San Antonio, TX 78204

Chairman Fetzer,

I am writing to reiterate the San Antonio River Authority's (SARA) support for the Brackenridge Park 2017 – 2022 City of San Antonio Bond project. The project supports the City Council approved master plan and the Brackenridge Park Conservancy's Cultural Landscape Report. The Council approved Brackenridge Park master plan contains the following publicly supported strategies:

- *Restore natural park features and improve water quality*
- *Restore, preserve, and articulate park cultural and historical features*
- *Increase visibility and pedestrian access to and within the park*

The bond project employs these strategies aiming to preserve where possible and restore where necessary the Lambert Beach river walls and steps as well as other park features in the vicinity. Over the past 6 months, the City Parks and Recreation Department has conducted an extensive public input process that led to some changes to the original plan. Based on the public input, the revised plan preserves additional trees, relocates another 19, and includes planting new trees in the project area. SARA believes the City has struck the appropriate delicate balance that allows for the necessary rehabilitation of the historic walls and steps while maintaining as much of the existing natural landscape as possible.

The Ecological Site Assessment section of the Brackenridge Park Conservancy's Cultural Landscape Report highlights the following issues, amongst others, in the same general area. The Cultural Landscape Report highlights the following strategies:

- *Establish more diverse riparian buffer to include grasses and midstory herbaceous plant community layers*

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Derek Boese, JD, PMP

- *Discourage the feeding of wildlife*
- *Increase efforts to relocate the rookery*

The Description on page 34 of the Ecological Site Assessment describes the lack of grasses and midstory herbaceous plant community in the following manner:

*Midstory woody species and the herbaceous layer are largely absent. In particular, perennial, densely rooted, grasses that play an important role in soil building, infiltration and water cleansing are absent. The herbaceous layer that is present is predominantly the non-native Bermudagrass. The site has a significant amount of bare soil (>50%). Soils retain a reasonable amount of organic matter (~5%). However, the soils are compacted and have poor structure which is associated with reduced infiltration rates, permeability (capacity of the soil to conduct water), increased runoff and resistance to root growth. Moderate to severe sheet erosion is evident between the road and the river, with rills forming. Lambert Beach, across the river, is in a similar condition. The lack of healthy bottomland and riparian plant communities and soils compromise river health in several ways. The river receives a higher volume of runoff more quickly after rain because the bottomland communities cannot absorb it. The water quality is lower because contaminants are not filtered before reaching the river*

*The plant community is at risk. Few species are present making the community unable to respond to changing conditions and less able to perform basic ecological functions such as nutrient cycling, energy capture and mediating infiltration and runoff. Young and middle aged individuals to replace the current generation are absent. Bare soil temperatures fluctuate more than covered soil, stressing roots. Compacted soil limits root growth and the soil's ability to store water and gasses, further stressing plants. The lack of structural diversity, i.e. the missing midstory and herbaceous layer, puts both the plant community and the river bank at risk. Mature trees can hold through many flood events, however they can fail under enough pressure. Young saplings and herbaceous plants lay down during high flow events and can often stay in place. Additionally, tree roots tend to spread out at the surface, while grasses and sedges develop dense networks of fibrous roots that intertwine providing high stability. Riparian buffers containing both herbaceous and woody vegetation are more stable.*

Continuing, the third full paragraph on page 36 of the Ecological Site Assessment states:

*Area A is experiencing considerable pressure from the Rookery located in the area. The high concentration of avian waste from the Rookery is likely reducing water quality as well as degrading human experience of the site by creating unsanitary conditions and an unpleasant*

*smell. The existence of such a dense concentration of birds in a high use area is not ideal, and it is recommended the rookery be encouraged to relocate to a lower use area. The park and zoo are employing harassment techniques to make the area less attractive for the rookery, with limited success. The next option would be to increase habitat value in a more appropriate location, while decreasing it in the current location by discouraging feeding, dislodging nests prior to egg laying and modifying the plant community.*

The bond project is supportive of the community-based master plan and landscape report and the voters of San Antonio overwhelmingly approved the project in the bond election. For these reasons the River Authority supports the 2017-2022 Brackenridge Park bond project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Derek Boese', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Derek Boese, JD, PMP



April 14, 2023

Homer Garcia, Director  
San Antonio Parks and Recreation  
San Antonio, Texas

Mr. Garcia,

We are writing to support the proposed repairs of the stone walls and renovations of Lambert Beach in preparation for the review by the Historic Design and Review Commission.

As part of Brackenridge Park, the Witte Museum is cognizant of the important history of Lambert Beach and the stone walls built along the San Antonio River, particularly those built in 1925, just a year prior to the Witte Museum opening. Sustaining and beautifying Brackenridge Park's historic structures is essential as we prepare for the next 100 years of community engagement and enjoyment.

We acknowledge that the scope of work to repair and renovate Lambert Beach as well as the 1877 Pump House is consistent with the publicly approved Brackenridge Park Master Plan strategy to restore, preserve, and articulate park cultural and historic features and were prioritized in the FY17 Bond as approved by voters.

We recognize that some trees will have to be removed for the repairs and renovations, but are heartened that the Brackenridge Park staff listened to the community during meetings hosted by the Witte and have mitigated the original plans to take only those trees that must be removed for safety and stability.

We accept the conclusion of Parks officials and support the City's goal:

The City maintains that **the proposed design will deliver a project that balances tree preservation with delivery of a lasting project that ensures future public access and recreational use** and preserves historic features of the park consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

We urge the HDRC to approve the permit to move forward with these critical improvements for Brackenridge Park.

Sincerely and on behalf of the Witte Museum,

Marise McDermott  
President and CEO



**Go.All.Out.**

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April 14, 2023

City of San Antonio  
Office of Historic Preservation  
Historic and Design Review Commission  
100 W Houston  
San Antonio, TX 78205

Re: Brackenridge Park Phase 1 Bond Improvements

The San Antonio Parks Foundation is in support of the Brackenridge Park Phase 1 Bond Improvements, Lambert Beach Area. The public engagement process was extensive and it is in the interest of the community to move forward and to recognize that the public's voices were heard and incorporated into multiple changes in the design.

The foundation promotes acknowledgement of the complex histories of our public parks, such as Brackenridge, to further the growth of an inclusive community with opportunities for future generations to create new memories in a safe and healthy environment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Jane Verette". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "M" and "V".

Mary Jane Verette  
President & CEO



BRACKENRIDGE PARK  
CONSERVANCY  
Established 2008

City of San Antonio Historic Design Review Commission Members  
April 13, 2023

### Brackenridge Park Conservancy Letter of Support

The Brackenridge Park Conservancy (BPC), founded in 2008, is dedicated to advocating for the preservation of Brackenridge Park. In 2017, the Brackenridge Park Conservancy supported the adoption of the City of San Antonio's Master Plan, including the approved public strategy to restore and preserve the cultural and historic features. The next opportunity to begin to secure the future of the park was the 2017 Bond Program which presented the potential for critical funding to address the deteriorated historic resources. The 124-year-old park is very loved; however, the heavy visitor usage has taken its toll on the historic infrastructure of the park and its landscape. When Parks Superintendent Ray Lambert began improvements to the park in 1920, the population of Bexar County was only 160,000. Today, the annual visitors to the park alone total 1.5 million.

The BPC strongly supported the passage of the Bond Program. The city identified the Lambert Beach area as a priority since it included the second oldest industrial structure in the city, 1878 Water Works Pump House and the river walls (1937). The BPC recently completed a capital campaign to augment the resources of the City Bond Program, raising \$4.7 million to date.

In addition, the Conservancy commissioned a Cultural Landscape Report, completed in 2019, to complement the city's master plan and further document, explore and understand the historical and cultural significance of Brackenridge Park not only locally, but at the state and national level. The Report also identifies a phased treatment plan. The report determined that the park is one of the "premier urban parks in the country." This is reinforced in *Brackenridge, San Antonio's Acclaimed Urban Park* by Lewis F. Fisher published in 2021 by Trinity University Press.

The Texas Historical Commission approved the Brackenridge Park, Lambert Beach area, San Antonio, Bexar County Historic Buildings and Structures Antiquities Permit for Phase I of the 2017 bond project on April 11, 2023. The BPC requests your consideration for approval of the Project as approved by the Texas Historical Commission.

The City hosted seven community engagement meetings and walking tours in March – August 2022 and in response to public input has reduced the number of trees to be removed from 70 to 48 trees and will preserve 35 additional trees. BPC strongly supports the saving of these additional trees in the spirit of collaboration and compromise. The City also considered proposals for alternative wall designs to save more trees, conducted a tree age study and reported their findings to the THC. We believe the THC has taken the time to understand the full scope and implications of the project and has issued the permit based on the final plans submitted by the City.

The BPC supports the project as the proposed work is necessary to stabilize and restore the historic stone walls, the 1877 Pump House foundation, and Grand Staircase consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for treatment of historic properties.

Thank you.

Nick Hollis

Board Chair



To Whom It May Concern:

I am lucky to have lived most of my life in San Antonio. As I have grown older, I have gained a greater appreciation for the history of this amazing city. I visited Brackenridge Park in the 1970s as a child, and I have brought my children here for the last 20 years as well. More recently I began working at the historic San Antonio Zoo, another San Antonio historic treasure nestled within a former quarry in and on the edge of Brackenridge Park.

I have now worked at San Antonio Zoo and in my role for 8 years, and I am often in the park. Once I began working in the park I learned much more about its history. I have gained a new appreciation for this park and what its source of and connection to water have meant to the development of our city.

Sadly, time and lack of attention has taken its toll on many of the historic structures and features. The very first industrial building in San Antonio sits here, the former gathering place known as Lambert Beach, the Bath House, Pump House, hand-carved work of Dionicio Rodriguez, acequia, the upper dam and more. Each of these are in desperate need of restoration to better project and interpret their stories.

Currently, we see broken windows, failed roofs, failing river walls, buried historic features and conditions bordering on the edge of dangerous. I have been very encouraged by the planning and focus of recent bonds to restore the historic park features and support those efforts for our community and future generations.

Since the initial planning I have become even more encouraged by multiple community meetings and the overall public engagement process, a process that ultimately led to a modified design to the original plan. I believe the city and it's Parks & Recreation department have gone into those meetings with open ears and minds. They have listened, they have adjusted, and now it is time to move forward.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Morrow".

Tim Morrow  
President & CEO  
San Antonio Zoo



February 19, 2023

STATEMENT:

TO: Historic and Design Review Commission, City of San Antonio

RE: Item 16: 3700 N St Marys St, Brackenridge Park, Lambert Beach

HDRC Case No.: 2022-091

The Conservation Society supports the project of the Brackenridge Park Conservancy and the Parks Department to remove trees that are damaging the historic walls and foundations of the Pump House and Lambert Beach.

Respectfully Submitted,

THE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF SAN ANTONIO

Kathy Rhoads, President