



**BRACKENRIDGE PARK
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT**

SETTING THE COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

THREE OPPORTUNITIES TO JOIN US!

HOSTED BY

BRACKENRIDGE PARK CONSERVANCY
& SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY

SPONSORED BY

SAN ANTONIO PARKS & RECREATION

brackenridgepark.org

1

Online Informational
Session
6-7:30 p.m.
Wednesday
Oct. 6, 2021

2

Park Open House
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Saturday
Oct. 16, 2021

3

Park Open House
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Saturday
Nov. 6, 2021

BRACKENRIDGE PARK CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Prepared for
Brackenridge Park Conservancy
San Antonio Parks & Recreation and
San Antonio River Authority



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December 2019
FINAL DRAFT

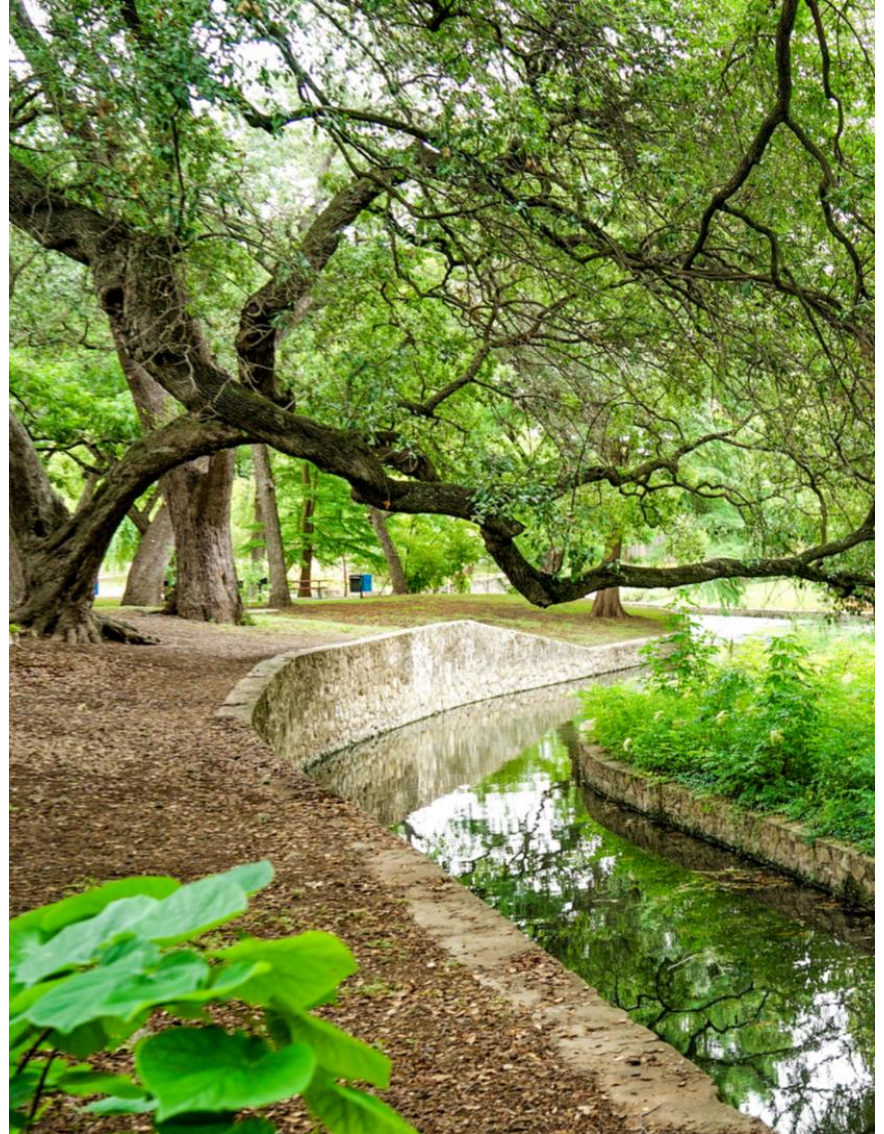
In Collaboration with
The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
Michelle Bertelsen

BRACKENRIDGE PARK'S HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Cultural Landscape Report concludes that Brackenridge Park is distinctive in *Texas, the nation, and even the world* because of the relationship between its natural ecology, the San Antonio River, and its cultural history.

“As a municipal park, Brackenridge Park is unequalled in its layers of history. It is one of the most culturally significant urban public parks in the United States.” Charles Birnbaum, CEO & Founder, The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Brackenridge Park's unrivaled prehistoric and historic resources are to municipal parks what national monuments like Yosemite are to the nation—places where the conservation of unique landscapes for posterity serve as a symbol of national pride and informed stewardship.



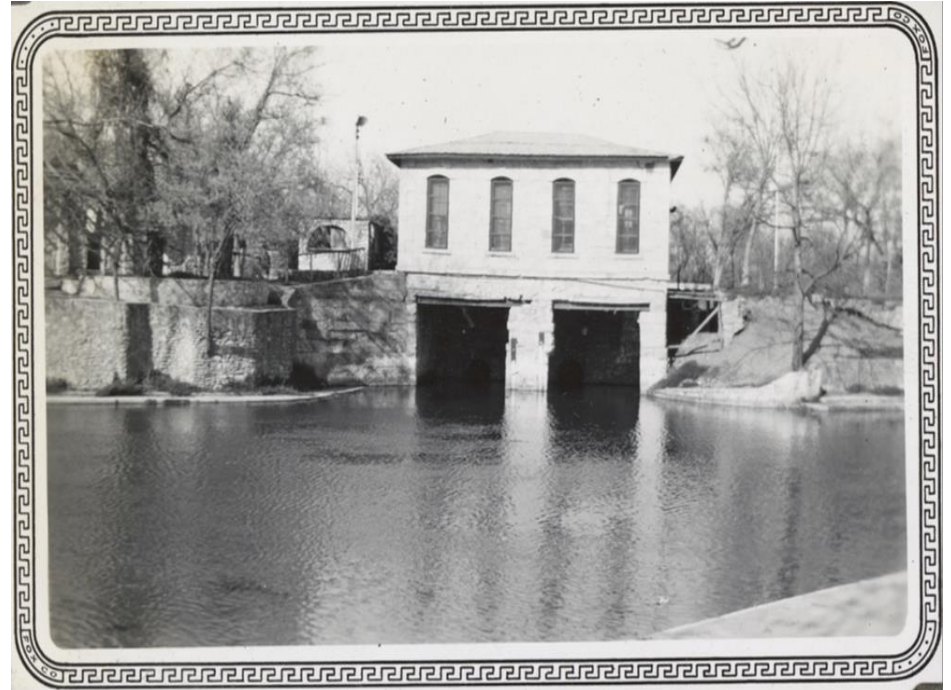
BRACKENRIDGE PARK MASTER PLAN

In 2016, the City of San Antonio commissioned a Master Plan for Brackenridge Park. It was approved in February 2017.

The Master Plan strategies include

1. Improving water quality/restoring natural features
2. Restoring and preserving cultural and historical features
3. Increasing park visibility and pedestrian access.

In June 2018, the Brackenridge Park Conservancy, in partnership with the San Antonio River Authority and City of San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department, commissioned a Cultural Landscape Report as the next step.



Circa 1940-1950s photograph of Pump House No. 1, one of oldest intact industrial buildings in San Antonio, was constructed in 1878 and located on the San Antonio River in Brackenridge Park.

Source: Witte Museum

LEADERSHIP TEAM



BRACKENRIDGE PARK
CONSERVANCY



SAN ANTONIO
RIVER AUTHORITY



PARKS & RECREATION
SAN ANTONIO

CONSULTING TEAM

REED-HILDERBRAND



suzanne turner ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Lady Bird Johnson

Wildflower
center

Two nationally acclaimed landscape architecture firms, along with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, prepared this four-part study of Brackenridge Park, beginning in June 2018 and ending in December 2019.

The findings will serve as a guide in the Park's preservation and its future management and will provide the underpinnings for us to prepare the nomination for a National Heritage Area.

SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY INVESTMENT

The San Antonio River Authority invested \$300,000 and provided in-kind work and data to launch the Cultural Landscape Report.

Leveraged additional support from City of San Antonio, Foundations, and Donors of \$150,000.

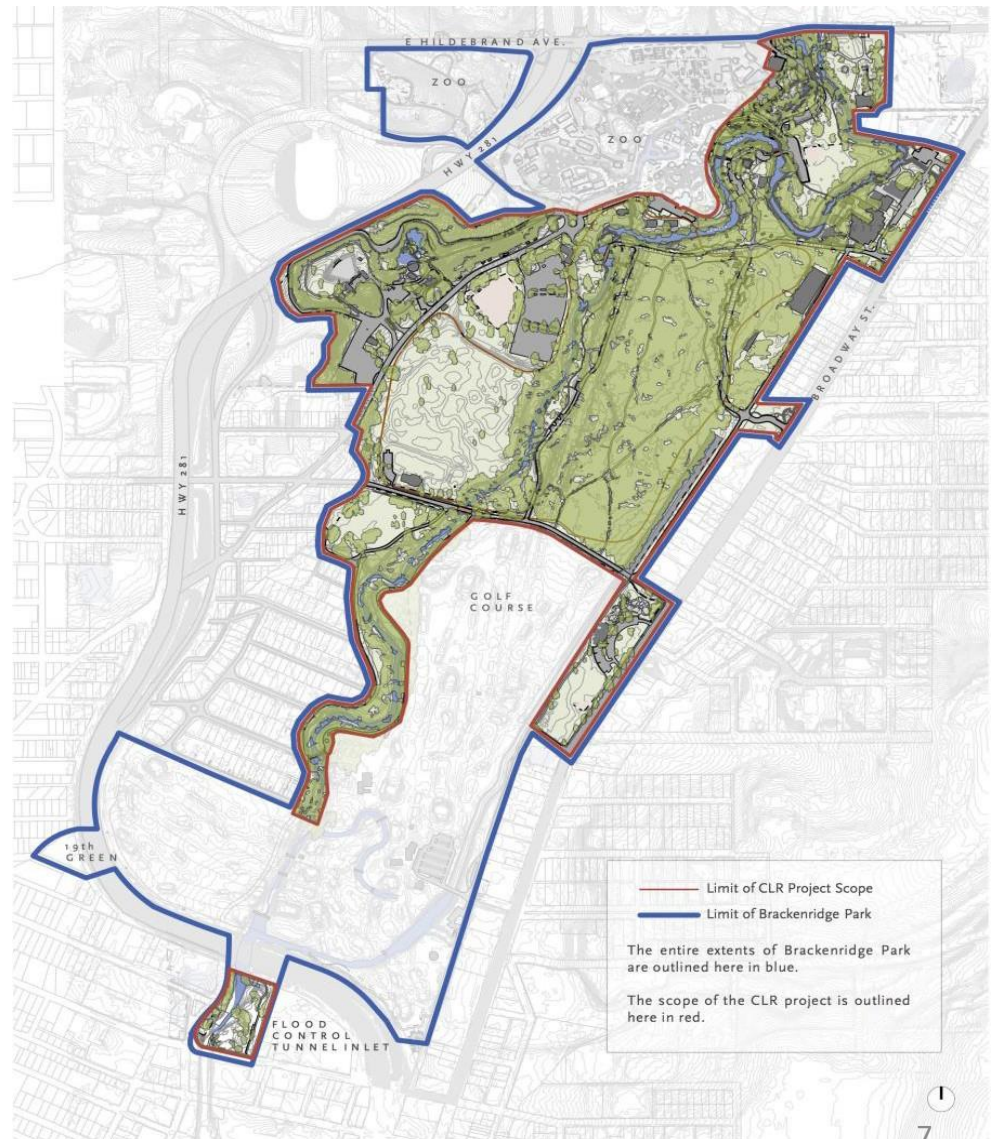


WHAT IS A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT?

A Cultural Landscape Report is a technical document grounded in multiple disciplines and research that

- Documents and analyzes a site's history, development, and current conditions
- Defines the cultural significance of a landscape
- Evaluates physical integrity of a landscape.

A CLR serves as a guide for preserving a cultural landscape and is the primary tool for long-term management.

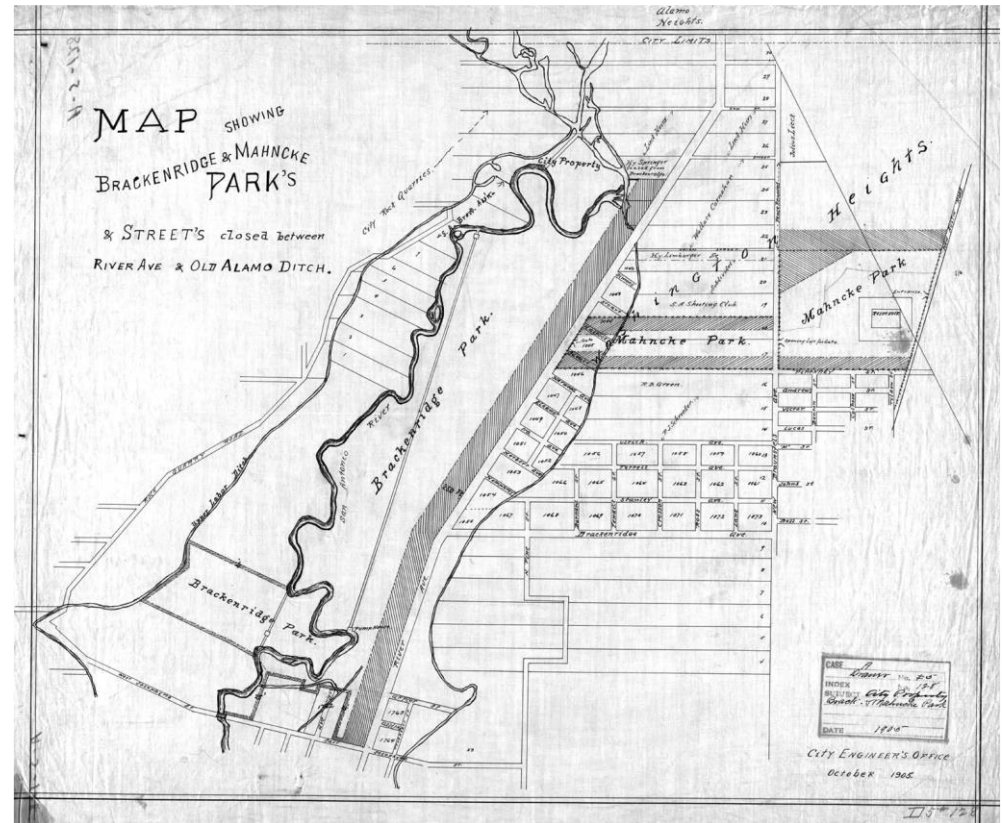


Cultural Landscape and Park Boundaries

WHAT APPROACH WAS USED?

The CLR is written and organized according to National Park Service (NPS) guidelines, for initiating and guiding cultural landscape preservation; although, it is tailored specifically to the needs of Brackenridge Park.

- Documentation of Site History and Existing Conditions
- Analysis and Evaluation of cultural/historical significance
- Development of Statement of Significance at National, State and Local Levels
- Creation of Treatment Plan/ Recommendations



This 1905 map shows the layout of both Brackenridge Park and, to the east, the western tip of Mahncke Park. Mahncke Park's limits encompassed the old reservoir that still served as the source of the city's drinking water.

Source: San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department

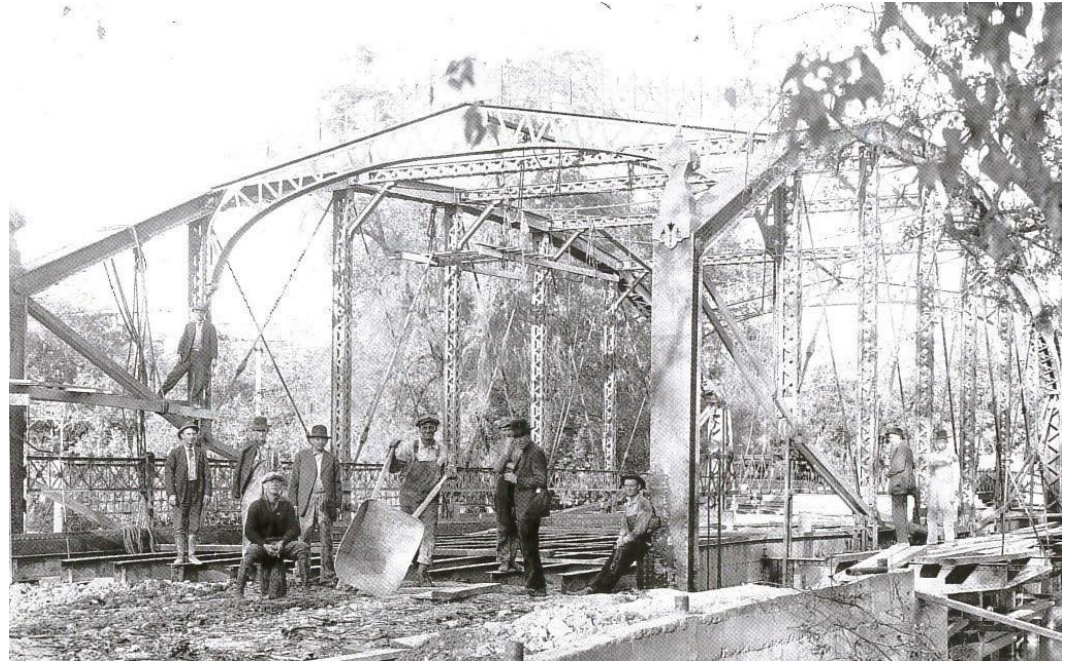
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA DESIGNATION

Using NPS standards for the CLR will contribute to a long-term, overarching goal:

National Heritage Area (NHA) designation in the City of San Antonio

What are the benefits of NHA designation?

1. Sustainable Economic Development through leveraged federal investment
2. Potential Restoration Projects that balance environmental needs and recreational opportunities
3. Education and Stewardship that more effectively connect communities to natural, historic, and cultural sites

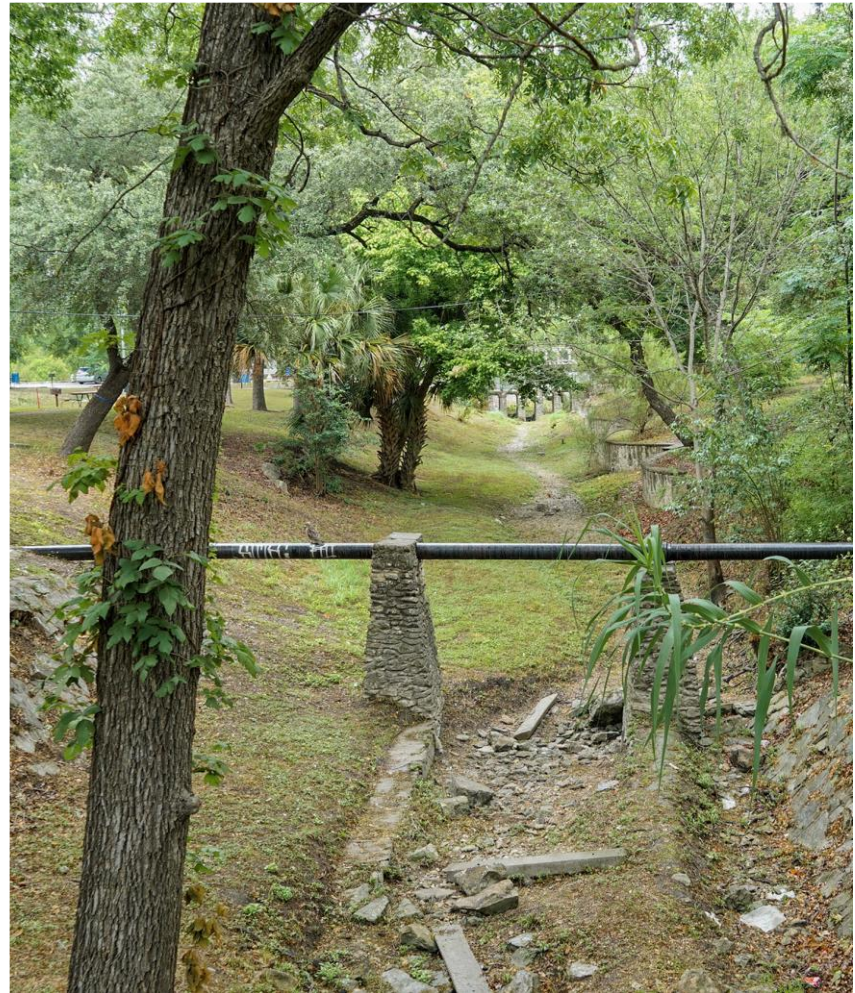



Workers reassemble the “Letters of Gold” bridge in Brackenridge Park from its former location on South St. Mary’s Street.

8 SYSTEMS / 5 PRIORITY SYSTEMS


A HOLISTIC APPROACH

1. ***Archeology (priority)***
2. ***San Antonio River and Riparian Corridor (priority)***
3. River Structures
4. ***Vegetation + Soils + Hydrology (priority)***
5. ***Entry + Arrival Areas (priority)***
6. ***Circulation through the Park (priority)***
7. Institutional Edges
8. Buildings & Structures




A photograph of a stone-lined path in a park-like setting. The path is made of large, flat stones and runs through a grassy area. To the right of the path is a low stone wall. In the background, there are several trees, some with bare branches, and a building with a porch. The sky is overcast.

Buried
prehistoric
and historic
archeology

A photograph of a park area. In the foreground, a concrete sidewalk curves from the bottom center towards the right. To the left of the sidewalk is a small pond with several ducks swimming and standing on the bank. The background features a line of trees, some with bare branches and some with green leaves. Behind the trees is a fenced-in area, possibly a sports field, and a parking lot with a dark car parked. A tall, grey lamppost stands on the right side of the sidewalk. A white circular callout is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing text.

No longer healthy
nor accessible
upper course of the
San Antonio River



Threatened
vegetation/soils/
hydrology
made up of historic
tree canopies and
dwindling plant
communities



Damaged or hidden river structures

Entry areas that are not completely evident or inviting



Confusing edges
between cultural
institutions that
mask historic
relationship with the
Park



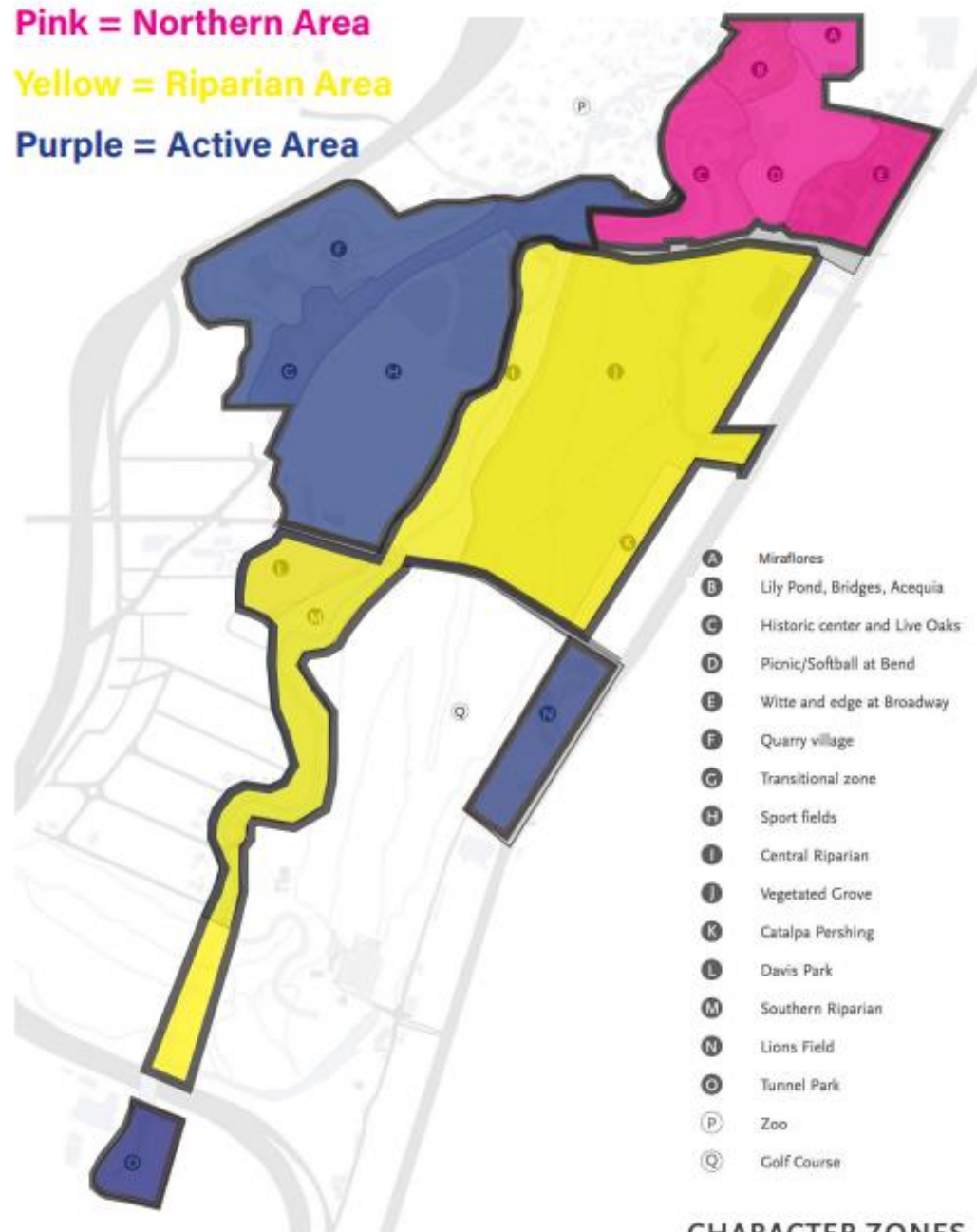
LEGEND CHARACTER ZONES

To better assess the existing conditions of the Park, the landscape has been divided into 15 character zones.



The 15 character zones were categorized into three Areas:

- Northern Area - Pink
- Riparian Area - Yellow
- Active Area - Purple



CLR Intentions

1. to heal Brackenridge Park's ecology
2. to protect and celebrate its many layers of historic significance and cultural diversity
3. to elevate its identity locally and nationally
4. to usher it into the 21st century

Histories in Brackenridge Park

- Prehistoric and historic life (circa 9200 BCE – 1500 CE)
- Indigenous occupancy (circa 1000 CE – 1530s)
- Mexican heritage (circa 1000 CE – present)
- Spanish exploration (1535 – 1718)
- Spanish colonization (1718)
- Early agricultural practices (1724)
- Industrial development (1850s – 1880)
- European immigration (1847–1861)
- Brackenridge Park as a park (1899 – present)

STORIES OF BRACKENRIDGE PARK

The Cultural Landscape Report captures our history —

Stories that most of us in this room are aware of, but that on site, as part of the park experience, are not visible or understood.



STORIES OF BRACKENRIDGE PARK

Recurrent flooding and management of water is part of the rhythm, and human imprint on the park.

This is a story we can tell as we continue to develop new approaches.



1724

Flood results in relocation of the Alamo

1819

Disastrous flood strikes San Antonio River

1865

San Antonio River floods



1880

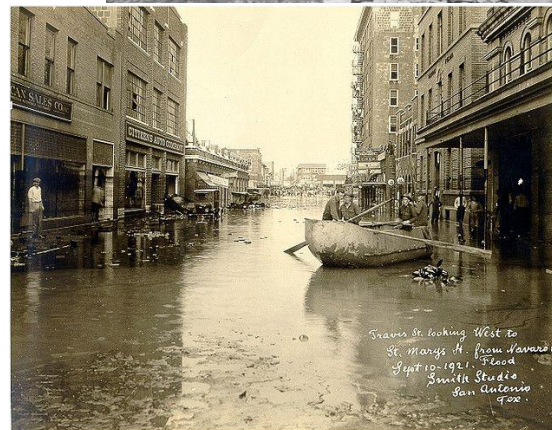
San Antonio River floods

1913

Two floods in San Antonio

1914

Major flood of San Antonio River



1921

Devastating flood strikes downtown San Antonio



1925-1927

Deadly floods result in Olmos Dam construction

INTERPRETATION

Immersing Visitors in Ecological Experiences

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Luci and Ian Family Garden, in Austin, Texas, is a 4.5-acre interactive learning environment and unstructured play area. Through the design of various landscape experiences, the garden tells the complex story of the region's native plants, hydrology, geography, and local materials, and it employs and teaches principles of sustainability.



Dinosaur Creek illustrates the region's deep history and offers an exploratory exhibit.



The Giant Birds Nest is made of native grape vines and provides a hands-on opportunity to observe the structure of a birds nest at a human scale.



Giant tree stumps offer a place for kids to climb and balance on repurposed native materials

INTERPRETATION

Preserving In Place and Revealing Archaeological Ruins



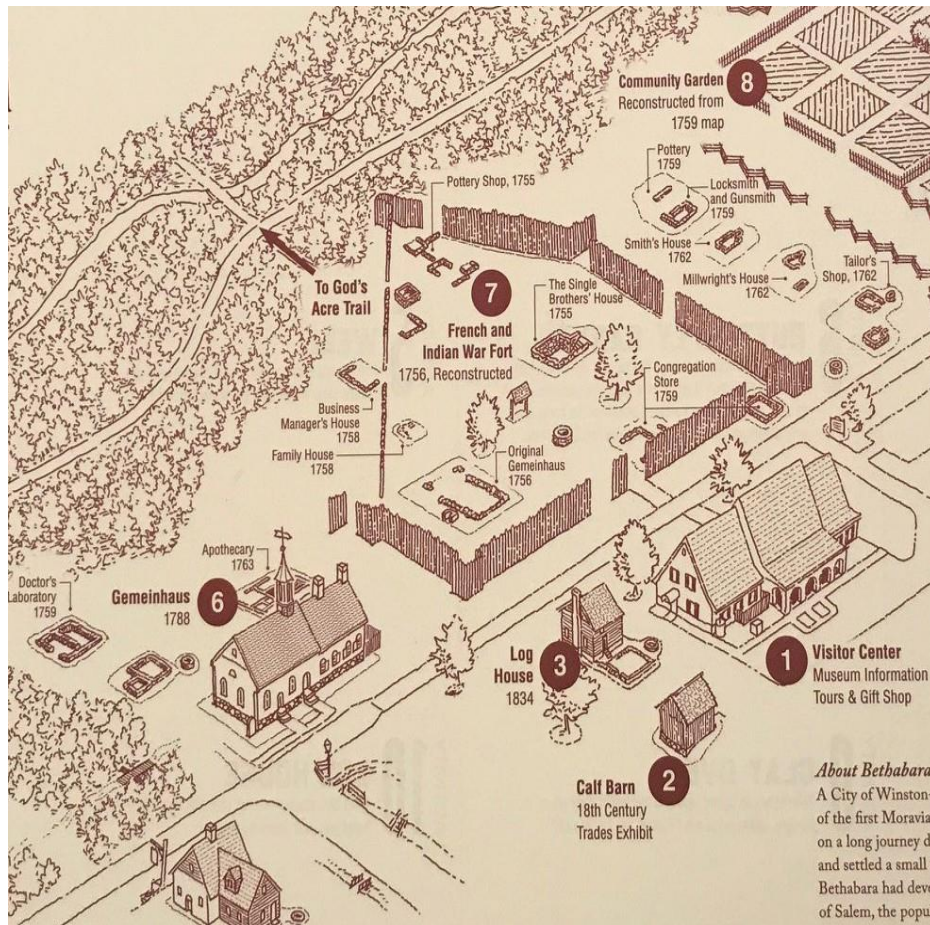
Smyrna Beach Archaeological ruins are preserved in place, revealed, and made accessible at Old Fort Park in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, where ruins of a British colony are located. The mill was destroyed by the end of 1835 and was not rebuilt.



C. 1770 foundation of limestone shell and the arched ruins of a C. 1830 sugar mill on property that is part of a prehistoric Indian midden dating from 500 AD to 1565 AD.

INTERPRETATION

Preserving In Place and Revealing Archaeological Ruins



Bethabara Park. Archaeological investigations in Historic Bethabara Park, outside of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, began in the 1960s, under then North Carolina State Archaeologist Stanley South. Excavations continued through the 1980s and picked up again in the early 2000s. In the park, the public can view findings dating to the 1780s. The map shows archaeological sites found in the park, dating to the 1750s. Some sites are preserved ruins, while some sites have been reconstructed.

INTERPRETATION

Immersing Pedestrians in Industrial and Ecological Histories



New York City's High Line interprets a decommissioned 1930s elevated railroad as a pedestrian parkway.



Art deco railing along the High Line, with a pattern that would be interpreted in the future design by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and James Corner Field Operations.

INTERPRETATION

Revealing Difficult and Hidden Histories



Shadowcatcher memorializes the remains of the Foster family homestead and cemetery, sited on what is now the University of Virginia's South Lawn, which belonged to an African American family. Walls and depressions in the lawn suggest graves and mark the remains of the cemetery site. Archaeological research was completed and these resources were left exposed to reveal the stone pathways and a portion of the porch.

TOMORROW'S BRACKENRIDGE PARK

It is essential that future efforts:

- Restore a greater level of health to the park's ecology
- Preserve and maintain its distinctive “homegrown” regional vernacular character
- Make ecological systems and prehistory and history—the difficult and the endearing histories—more evident and understandable
- Create a unified and exceptional municipal park and cultural landscape—an immersive landscape of learning that lives up to Brackenridge Park's astonishing heritage.



OUTCOMES

We are ALL stewards of a landscape that takes on greater importance than previously imagined.

The CLR is now a primary management guide that records the past, captures the present conditions, and proposes opportunities for the future.

The CLR establishes guiding principles—all existing and future projects should be evaluated against the Treatment Plan Recommendations and the guiding principles, viewing Brackenridge Park as a whole.

Fundraising is identified as crucial for management and for adopting a systems-based approach.

We can come together and move forward with these principles to heal the Park.

NEXT STEPS

Please complete the CLR Survey at www.brackenridgepark.org

Send Questions or Comments to CLRQuestions@brackenridgepark.org

Join Us

- Open House, Saturday, October 16, 2021, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Open House, Saturday, November 6, 2021, 10 a.m.-2 p.m

After Open Houses, Complete Second Survey either in person or online

BPC Report back to community in January 2022