



NEWS RELEASE

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\$2 Million Dollars Earmarked for Improvements to Historic Sam Houston Park

\$1 Million T.P.W.D. Grant matched by \$1 Million in CIP Funding Will Unify Three Sections of Park

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department is the proud recipient of a \$1 Million Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Urban Outdoor Recreation Grant for improvements to Sam Houston Park. The announcement was made during the regularly scheduled TPWD Commission Meeting on August 26, 2010. The grant will be matched with \$1 Million in Capital Improvement Project funding to create a \$2 Million funding source to be used to implement the Sam Houston Park Master Plan.

"Sam Houston Park is one of the most beautiful and historic parks in our system," said Mayor Annise Parker. "We are thankful to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for awarding us this grant which, in combination with existing CIP funding, will help us create more usable park space for visitors while preserving and enhancing the natural environment and historic significance of the park."

Sam Houston Park serves as the backdrop for countless public and private events and has been designated a 'Protected Landmark' by the Houston City Council and recognized as a historically significant area by Texas Historical Commission.

"This park is a very popular attraction for the many Houstonians and visitors we host in our city for marathons, 5K walks and runs, festivals and many special events. The funding to improve this gem comes at a pivotal time as, we the stewards of tax payer's dollars, look for partnerships to continue developing and improving green space while balancing our budget," said District I City Council Member James Rodriguez.

The 20 acre park, originally created in 1899 by Mayor Sam Brashear, is a unique combination of living history and open green space amidst Houston's sits at the epicenter of Houston's downtown district.

"For over 100 years, Sam Houston Park has been an outdoor oasis for over a quarter of a million people who come to learn about Houston's history and enjoy the beauty and many special events that take place here," said Joe Turner, Director Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "The Heritage Society, our partner at Sam Houston Park, plays a major role in preserving that history. Today, thanks to the \$1 Million TPWD Grant and \$1 Million in CIP matching money, we will recognize their efforts and build on that history so that future generations will continue to enjoy this treasure for years to come."

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Since its formation in 1954, The Heritage Society, a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization formed to save the deteriorating Kellum-Noble House, has preserved and saved nine important historic buildings and placed them inside of Sam Houston Park. Their efforts give the public a peak into 82 years of the Bayou City's fascinating and diverse history.

"Sam Houston Park and its historic structures embody the spirit and tenacity of the early settlers of Houston," said Alice Collette, Executive Director The Heritage Society. "As the city's first public park, site of the city's first zoo, and as the location of one of Houston's earliest schools, the park offers an unparalleled 'walk through Houston's past' for residents and for tourists. We are very grateful to the Houston Parks and Recreation Department and to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for their commitment to preserving our city's fascinating and diverse history through their support of the park master plan."

About the Sam Houston Park Master Plan

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD), the Mayor's Office of Special Events (MOSE), and The Heritage Society (THS) collaboratively developed the Sam Houston Park Master Plan with the assistance of Clark Condon & Associates. The purpose of the master plan is to enhance the preservation of Houston's history through the historic structures as well as to address the demands on the park now and in the foreseeable future.

The master plan will help unify the three separate sections of the park, improve way-finding and circulation, develop gateways to define the edges and entries to the park, create more usable space for every day activities, preserve and enhance the natural environment of the park, provide a coherent presentation of the eclectic collections of memorials, create a prominent central gathering place for visitors seeking information about Houston's history, enhance the park for children and families, improve parking, and maintain the park's ability to stage large events throughout the year.

About the Heritage Society

The Heritage Society, a museum complex at Sam Houston Park, collects, preserves, exhibits, and celebrates the diverse history of the Houston region. It operates nine historic structures that date from 1823 to 1905. The Heritage Society exists not just to educate visitors about Houston's interesting history but also to celebrate the diversity of the people who came together to build this world-class city. For more information on the Heritage Society call (713) 655-1912 or visit www.heritagesociety.org.

About the Houston Parks and Recreation Department

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 38,992 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on Sam Houston Park or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.