



Hemisfair Civic Park

VISION AND PROGRAM PLAN

OCTOBER 2013



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Prepared under the direction of the Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation.



Planning assistance and document production by MIG, Inc.



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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the vision and program for a new park in downtown San Antonio. Construction of the park is expected to begin mid-2016 at the northwest corner of Hemisfair, on the site of the original portion of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. This document provides direction for the design team that will create the final park design.

Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation (HPARC) is responsible for expanding the park and improving its quality. The Hemisfair Master Plan, approved by City Council in February 2012, includes two urban parks with different characteristics on the western portion of Hemisfair. The first, at the southwest corner of the site, will be an active play and recreational environment for people of all ages and abilities. Called the Play Escape, this project is currently in design, with construction scheduled to begin in mid-2014.

The second major Hemisfair project will be the civic park which will complement the Play Escape's strong focus on play with a larger space for a broader range of activities.



Expanding the Convention Center towards the east and deconstructing the western portion creates space for the civic park.



The civic park will significantly expand open space at Hemisfair.



PROCESS

HPARC and design firm MIG developed this program document based on input received from the San Antonio community.

Community outreach started in June of 2013 with multiple focus group meetings including civic organizations, residential neighbors, artists, and other stakeholders, followed by a large public workshop attended by approximately 160 San Antonians.

During the public workshop, participants first worked in small teams to brainstorm desired park uses and features while reviewing dozens of images of other urban spaces. Following an open discussion session, the groups developed aspirational statements to describe the future park.

Themes that emerged during the public workshop and focus group meetings included:

- open spaces that accommodate multiple uses;
- water and shade that create a cool and comfortable oasis;
- interactive and flexible spaces for events, both large and small.

Overwhelmingly people felt that the park should be designed for the residents of San Antonio and highlight the city's history and artistic energy.



A draft vision and program was presented to another round of focus groups in July, and after additional refinement, an online survey was released to the public to test the programming concepts. The nearly 1,000 survey responses were considered and incorporated into the final Vision and Program document which follows.

We gratefully acknowledge the creative energy of all the participants who helped develop this program.



VISION

The vision of Hemisfair is to create a series of beloved urban parks embraced by a vibrant and walkable neighborhood. Hemisfair will be an urban oasis that improves the quality of life for San Antonians and is celebrated by the whole community.

Hemisfair's civic park will be an uncommonly beautiful urban green space in the heart of San Antonio. The park will offer enriching and captivating experiences that draw people together and strengthen our community. It will be recognized as one of the world's great urban parks.



Key Attributes



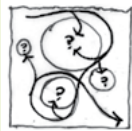
Oasis: The civic park will be an inviting place for all to gather, connect, recharge and enjoy art, culture and entertainment. The park will be comfortable, safe, welcoming, public and fun.



Functionality: The park will work for both small and large events, programmed or spontaneous activities, and will function as a whole or in parts.



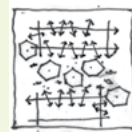
Around the clock: Pleasant surprises will reliably greet the visitor day and night, whether eating, exercising, attending an event, or relaxing.



Exploration and variety: A spectrum of spaces will offer a variety of experiences that flow together: from a large lawn to smaller gardens and courtyards; from vibrant boulevards to peacefully shaded pathways.



Serendipity: The park will be a place where old friends meet and new friends are made. It will strengthen the soul of San Antonio by connecting people, place and culture.



Active Frame: Vibrant uses on the edges and within the park will define public space and activate the park. Shops, restaurants and cultural destinations on the ground floor of buildings will attract users and enhance the park experience even when there are no organized events.



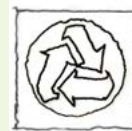
Connections: Multimodal linkages to the surrounding areas and within Hemisfair will make the park fully accessible and viable.



Authentic: The City's history and confluence of local and international cultures will be expressed by the park's design and through events, performances and art.



Craftsmanship: The design and materials will be crafted so Hemisfair increases in beauty and the quality becomes even more evident as it ages.



Sustainability: Every feature will have more than one purpose while achieving a high standard of environmental, social and economic sustainability. Natural spaces and systems with water and shade will elicit exploration, restore the spirit, educate, and sustain.





PROGRAM

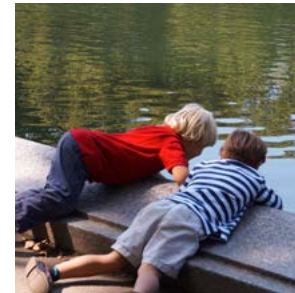
The park will have several distinct areas and places. The design of these places will vary based on their purpose, but they will all be perceived as a part of the park. The design will not create a feeling of “separate rooms.”



A. The Zócalo



B. Great Lawn



C. The Shallows



D. Groves



E. Courtyards



F. Gardens



G. Amphitheater



H. Reception Area

DESTINATIONS & PLACES

A. The Zócalo

An entrance plaza at Market and South Alamo Streets, the zócalo will be alive day and night with music, bustling cafés with outdoor seating, and people watching. The scene here will include people dining, congregating and meeting, playing at a central fountain or art feature, popping in and out of shops and restaurants, or strolling through as they enter the main park lawn. The modest size of the zócalo will concentrate its energy.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

B. Great Lawn

An open great lawn will offer flexibility for a wide variety of activities—including picnics, birthday parties, casual kickball, Frisbee, dog-walking, sunbathing, and large and small events. The great lawn will be well-defined and activated by buildings to create a strong edge and provide ground floor amenities that spill out to the lawn. The great lawn will also be event-ready, with specified space to set up stages and walls for projecting movies. It will feel comfortable when accommodating crowds from a few hundred to several thousand people. A pathway will provide clear access from Market and South Alamo Streets to the west entrance of the Convention Center. A portion of the lawn may be a green roof over an underground parking structure.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

C. The Shallows

A shallow interactive water feature designed for people of all ages will allow wading, sailing a model boat or dozing in a chaise lounge in the water. An adjacent plaza and lawn provides space for enjoying snacks and beverages. The Shallows will feature shade and cooling devices, including canopies that can spread over the water, tree shade, and umbrellas all around the plaza. It will be divided into active play and passive relaxing areas. The Shallows will feature innovative and artistically designed amenities and seating with a central interactive art feature in the water.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

D. Groves

Extraordinary natural settings with trees and landscaping will be a feature of the park, including groves of trees that invite exploration, relaxing walks in the shade, learning about botany, climbing trees and boulders, swinging, playing hide-and-seek, and discovering the wonder and fun of nature. Small clearings in the groves will also provide spaces to sit quietly or enjoy an intimate concert.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

E. Courtyards

Hemisfair will be known for its courtyards and intimate spaces. These shaded areas adjacent to both new and existing buildings in the park and along its edge will provide contrast to the bigger open spaces. Courtyards will be suitable for public and private events, both formal and casual. Inspired by the historic character and tradition of courtyards within San Antonio, these spaces will be enclosed but subtly noticeable from a distance.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

F. Gardens

Small garden spaces will add texture to the rich spectrum of spaces encouraging visitors to explore the park again and again. Gardens will provide a combination of contrasting plantings with sufficient shade to break the heat. They will be well appointed with seating of many kinds, including natural stumps or boulders. Interpretive signage and education will make each garden a learning opportunity. Gardens will also be suitable for small music events.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

G. Amphitheater/Stepped Garden

A terraced or sloped area leading down to the river level will attract people whether or not there is a performance. When there is no event, this area will be one of the top passive attractions in the park, with a waterfall or other interactive feature, floral plantings, art features, and a café. The amphitheater will also be designed for all types of performance, accommodating up to 2,000 people, including standing room areas.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

H. Reception Area

An outdoor garden or plaza adjacent to a restaurant on the ground floor of a commercial building on the park edge will accommodate medium and large receptions. This space can be used by the public and private groups as well as the Convention Center.



DESTINATIONS & PLACES

Surrounding the Park

The park will have great active edges, including a combination of sidewalk cafes, civic uses, cultural institutions, and mixed-use buildings. Commercial uses on the park's edges will activate the park and provide amenities for park users. The design of the park will influence the design of the adjacent buildings and ensure connectivity between the active streets and the park. Convenient parking will be essential to attracting park users. The park design will also be convenient for bicycles, pedestrians and mass transit users.

The following existing and planned developments will be reflected in the design of the civic park:

- 200 East Market Street – a new mixed-use residential or office building with ground floor retail and food and beverage tenants which may have entrances on both the Market Street and the park sides. The ground floor of the building will also have pedestrian penetrations from Market to the park. The building project will include parking for building tenants and visitors to the park.
- 220 South Alamo Street – a new mixed-use residential or office building with ground floor tenants and parking similar to the Market Street building.
- Goliad Road – The historic homes on the north side of Goliad will be restored for use by commercial, retail, or food and beverage tenants. The backyards of these buildings face the park and may be integrated into the park's design. Alternatively, a new building(s) between these homes and the park could create special layers and provide opportunities for courtyards.





DESTINATIONS & PLACES

Park-wide

Extraordinary infrastructure: The park will include:

- › Clean, safe, and charming restrooms, including family restrooms and areas to change
- › Free Wi-Fi
- › Creative, fun, and artistic approaches to seating
- › Shade in every form: natural tree shading, canopies between buildings, artistic shade structures, simple, modest shade devices, arbors, etc.
- › Built-in power outlets, water, and sound system for events
- › Art and lighting that brighten the park
- › Multi-use pathways for walking, biking, running, and rolling – including a loop path and linkages through the rest of Hemisfair
- › Water features designed so they have artistic or other merit if they are turned off
- › Complete streets to connect the park to surrounding areas and neighborhoods

Active programming: areas for events of various types and sizes:

- › Music, performance, art, movies, festivals, markets
- › Exercise classes
- › Special courses or gatherings with leaders/instructors



- › Spontaneous street performances
- › Exercise and game opportunities for groups and individuals of all ages

Variety of dining opportunities:

- › Many ways to enjoy food
- › Outdoor dining at restaurants
- › Chairs and tables for people that bring their own food and drinks





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go out to the many San Antonio residents who participated in the visioning for the Hemisfair civic park, including:

- › *Local artists and cultural organizations*
- › *Area neighbors*
- › *Civic organizations and city agencies*
- › *Local developers*

And the nearly 1,000 people who participated in our survey

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