

PROJECT SUMMARY: MECOM FOUNTAIN

The Friends of the Fountain fundraising/project management team was founded by Phoebe Tudor and Bill Baldwin, who each volunteered countless hours over the last seven months to reach this outcome. This was a remarkably hands-on effort for both, and it was driven by a shared passion for quality of life for all Houstonians. As an off-shoot of the Mayor's Quality of Life Transition Committee, it demonstrated an uncommon willingness for citizens to assume primary ownership over quality of life initiatives in a time of political transition/prioritization and fiscal constraint.

As one of the city's most active preservationists and friends to public greenspace, Mrs. Tudor was instrumental in bringing attention to the enormous historical significance of the fountain early on and in brokering the public-private solution. She conceived of the crowdfunding aspect of the campaign and was its leading fundraiser. Her very strong relationships with the HAHC, Houston Parks Board, Hermann Park Conservancy and many, many others ensured an exceptional spirit of collaboration throughout the last seven months.

Mr. Baldwin worked to ensure swift action throughout the campaign and leveraged his relationships with City Hall, various City departments, HAHC, and others to contribute to a smooth process at zero cost to the taxpayer. He used his extensive experience in the areas of restoration and project management to negotiate lower costs and source historically accurate applications.

OVERVIEW OF EVENTS

August 2013—Grand Gateway renovation project at Hermann Park breaks ground after almost five years of planning. During this time, "The Texas Historical Commission approved the plans, but the information about the fountain was vague." (Chronicle)

December 2014—Mayor Annise Parker signs paperwork to nominate the fountain as a city protected landmark.

2/7/2016 (Super Bowl Sunday)—Strong preservation concerns are raised when an HAHC Commissioner discovers historically inaccurate work being performed on the fountain by TXDOT.

- Chronicle: [How sacred is Mecom Fountain?](#)

2/12/2016—Mayor's Office halts TXDOT's work to explore options.

- Chronicle: [Mayor says Mecom Fountain work to proceed](#)
- Chronicle: [Mayor shifts course, asks for halt to Mecom Fountain work](#)

2/26/2016—Friends of the Fountain crowdfunding campaign is officially launched as an off-shoot of MST's Transition Committee on Quality of Life.

3/22/2016—Restoration begins under the original scope of work, which was to remove the limestone panels placed by TXDOT at an estimate of \$60,000. However, Bill Baldwin negotiates a lower rate for this scope of work and the campaign projects a surplus, the scope of work expands.

FACTS

Friends of the Fountain is the first citizen-led crowdfunding campaign to preserve a City-owned protected landmark.

In addition to enjoying broad political and public support, this campaign demonstrated a uniquely effective public-private approach to Quality of Life and Planning issues such as historic preservation even in lean fiscal times.

Original scope of project:

1. Remove limestone panels placed along fountain wall.
2. Repair holes and cracks in fountain wall resulting from affixed limestone panels.
3. Reimburse TXDOT for its initial work on the fountain as part of the Grand Gateway project and reimburse the Hermann Park Conservancy the 20% matching funds that were required for that portion of the Grand Gateway project. There was zero expenditure of state or federal taxpayer dollars on the restoration.

Expanded scope and results:

1. Work performed and made possible through additional private funds with/ a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HAHC and in accordance with original 1964 plans provided by HPARD.
2. Remove limestone panels placed along fountain wall.
3. Repair holes and cracks in fountain wall resulting from affixed limestone panels.
4. The fountain's perimeter surface was restored by its original Cocoon Coating, a liquid polymer coating.
5. The interior of the fountain was resurfaced with Moon Dust Plaster.
6. \$30,000 worth of fountain lights that had been stolen or broken over time are to be replaced, thus saving the Parks Department and the City of Houston future capital expenditure.
7. A chlorinator system is installed for the first time in the fountain's 51 year history, thus saving both labor but more importantly providing consistency with chlorine distribution.

HPARD has been an excellent partner in this work, from securing the ROE to receiving materials shipment.

Initial Goal \$60,000

Actual amount raised by deadline: \$104,690

Fundraising start: 2/15/2016

Fundraising deadline set by *Friends of the Fountain*: 3/31/2016

Total number of private donors: 324

Largest donation: Hushang & Shahla Ansary gifted \$20,000

Ribbon Cutting Event and Reception to honor donors will take place on Thursday 9/8 from 6-8 PM at Hotel Zaza

PROGRAM: MECOM FOUNTAIN RIBBON CUTTING &
RECEPTION

6 PM—Event begins

Ultimate Ransom & Fountain Rooms, first floor of Hotel Zaza

Guests will arrive and valet, compliments of Hotel Zaza.

Champagne, beer, wine and hors d'oeuvres served, compliments of Hotel Zaza. Cash bar for cocktails.

Bill and Phoebe will greet guests.

6:30 PM to 7PM—Approximate arrival time of Mayor Turner

Ultimate Ransom & Fountain Rooms

Mayor greets attendees.

Approximately 15 minutes later—Program begins

Ultimate Ransom & Fountain Rooms

Phoebe begins with remarks on the historical significance of the fountain and on the state of historic preservation in the City of Houston generally.

Bill remarks on the Quality of Life Transition committee and its role in the project, as well as the uniquely citizen-led, public-private approach to the project.

Mayor remarks based on project overview provided to his office on 9/2/16.

Approximately 15 minutes later—Ribbon Cutting

Mecom Fountain/Ultimate Ransom & Fountain Rooms

Phoebe, Bill, and Mayor only will go to Mecom Fountain for the ribbon cutting and a photo. Guests can view from the reception rooms.

Phoebe, Bill, and Mayor return to the reception.

7:50 PM—Phoebe and Bill return to podium to thank guests and end event