

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Sam Houston Park (originally known as City Park)

OWNER: City of Houston

APPLICANT: City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department and
The Heritage Society

LOCATION: 1100 Bagby Street

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: III.a

HPO FILE NO.: 06PL33

DATE ACCEPTED: Oct-20-06

HAHC HEARING DATE: Dec-21-06

PC HEARING DATE: Jan-04-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Land leased from the City of Houston, Harris County, Texas to The Heritage Society authorized by Ordinance 84-968, dated June 20, 1984 as follows: Tract 1: 42, 393 square feet out of Block 265; Tract 2: 78,074 square feet out of Block 262, being part of and out of Sam Houston Park, in the John Austin Survey, Abstract No. 1, more fully described by metes and bounds therein; and Tract 3: 11,971 square feet out of Block 264, S. S. B. B., and part of Block 54, Houston City Street Railway No. 3, John Austin Survey, Abstract 1, more fully described by metes and bounds therein, Houston, Harris County, Texas.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation for Sam Houston Park. The Kellum-Noble House located within the park is already designated as a City of Houston Landmark and Protected Landmark.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

Sam Houston Park is the first and oldest municipal park in the city and currently comprises nineteen acres on the edge of the downtown business district, adjacent to the Buffalo Bayou parkway and Bagby Street. Its acreage was originally comprised of several different plots of land—each of which relates significantly to Houston’s history, heritage and development. Since its founding in 1899, the park has served Houstonians as a center for recreation and social activities and events. However, the site of the park was also where early schools were housed in the Kellum House, and where eventually an early public museum and collections was gathered for a short period of time. The site was also the location of the first zoo and Parks Department Headquarters in Houston. In addition, some of the park land was earlier the sites of brick manufacturing in Houston. The park was eventually expanded as well to incorporate the lands of two important, historic cemeteries--the Masonic and Episcopal Cemeteries, where many important and prominent Houstonians had once been buried. Later, the cemeteries were discontinued and all burials were relocated elsewhere. Sam Houston Park is also the first site where many monuments and memorials were collectively gathered and erected to honor veterans of all previous wars as well as to honor events, the arts and important people of Houston and Texas alike.

Sam Houston Park was the first publicly landscaped park in Houston complete with a children’s playground. While the park has continuously been used for the locations of festivals and events, Sam Houston Park is a multi-faceted site today that has evolved during Houston’s periods of growth and has attained a unique identity of its own. Today, the site also serves as the location of the first and only “outdoor” museum in Houston, comprised currently of nine historic buildings and related collections for public viewing and education. Today the outdoor museum site is operated and maintained by The Heritage Society. These outdoor museum buildings are representative of the historic architecture of early Houston and Harris County, and the museum homes represent many prominent families who helped to establish Houston and help Houston develop. The park also

contains several “modern” auxiliary buildings that have been constructed and are maintained by The Heritage Society to support their educational efforts as well as to serve as exhibit space or to support museum activities associated with the historic buildings. The park also features several historic structures, including monuments and pieces of artwork, which commemorate events and/or individuals relevant to the city’s illustrious history. All of the buildings and structures located within the park, with the exception of the Kellum-Noble House, are either not located on their original sites or have been relocated to the park subsequently to the park’s founding. The Heritage Society and the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department continue daily to operate Sam Houston Park to meet their respective goals and their individual needs to meet those goals as they arise. From time to time, as has been the case in the past, they may endeavor in the future to reconfigure the historic buildings and structures within the park and/or remove, relocate or construct other “modern” buildings within the park to achieve their goals. Most recently, several historic buildings were elevated or relocated to higher ground within the park above the flood plain. Thus, their past activities as well as any future activities in association with the park site does not affect any established, historical context associated with the historic buildings or structures in the park, all of which are not original to any one particular site within the park. The only historic building that is located on its original site within the park, the Kellum-Noble House, has been associated with the park from its inception, and it has been individually designated previously as a City of Houston Landmark and Protected Landmark. The property qualifies for Landmark and Protected Landmark under Criteria 1-8 as well as additional criteria for Protected Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The property known today as Sam Houston Park was part of the land granted by Stephen F. Austin to John Austin in 1824. It remained undeveloped until 1836 when John Austin’s widow, Elizabeth Parrott, sold it to Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen for the location of a new town to be named Houston. When the Allen brothers laid out the plan for their real estate venture, this particular acreage was outside the city limits. However, it did not remain unnoticed for long. On May 3, 1837, William N. Mock purchased an 8-acre tract from the Allens and soon constructed a house on his property. Subsequent owners—Robert P. Stewart, Michael Dyer, and Peter Elgart—erected another house in addition to “tan vats, bark mills, lime vats and other improvements.” It is also apparent that at this same time, a brick-making facility was placed along Buffalo Bayou, which bordered the property. Following several other transactions, the property was sold with improvements at public auction on March 7, 1843, to Thomas M. Bagby for \$166.67. Less than a year later, Bagby sold these premises to Nathaniel K. Kellum for \$500. By this time the property was within the corporate limits of the city. Records indicated that Kellum was already using the brick-making facility, and he purchased additional property to increase his holdings to thirteen acres.

The neighborhood just to the west around the Kellum-Noble house, which was located at that time on a bluff above the bayou, developed as a genteel one. Along the San Felipe Road, which like Washington Street led to one of the pioneer settlements on the Brazos River, a concentration of German immigrants also occurred. However, after the Civil War this area just on the fringe of Houston was where emancipated slaves congregated. New and existing subdivisions, such as Seneshal Addition and the Justin Castanie Addition (both 1848), two G. S. Hardcastle Additions and three other real estate developments undertaken by William R. Baker, accommodated this settlement. As late as the 1880s this district was referred to as Freedmantown. It lay on the south bank of Buffalo Bayou, across from the W. R. Baker Addition in the First Ward (later Sixth Ward, as it became named after redistricting in 1876).

Nathaniel Kellum, a native of Virginia, had moved to Houston in 1839 where he became involved in construction. He continued to operate his brick factory, lime vats for making mortar and plaster, and a tannery for hides that were made into boots sold at B. A. Shepherd’s business. He had a sawmill at another location in town. Kellum is credited with the construction of several commercial buildings, and in 1847 he began building

a spacious, two-story house for his family on the grounds of his industrial complex. The house, known today as the Kellum-Noble House, contained 35,000 bricks when it was completed and is considered the oldest brick building in the city.

Two years later when Kellum moved to Grimes County to open a health resort, he left the property in the hands of B. A. Shepherd, who in 1851 sold it to the Abram Nobles for \$2,000. The family of eight, including Mr. Noble's five children by his first marriage and Mrs. Noble's teenage daughter by her first marriage, moved into the house. The acreage included all of the land in the present-day park except for that of the Masonic and Episcopal cemeteries on the north side of the property.

"Like the Noble property, the cemetery grounds did not conform to Houston's ruling grid pattern. However, inasmuch as deep ravines had been washed out by the bayou along one side of the cemeteries, the grid skirted, rather than attempted to bridge, this impediment. The Koch's bird's-eye view map indicates that the bayou banks along this stretch of the watercourse – still upstream from Houston – were heavily wooded and lightly settled in the early 1870s" (HAS, Vol 6).

The present-day park property was the setting for several educational ventures during the Nobles' residency on the property. Zerviah Noble and her daughter, Catherine Kelley, opened a private school in their home in 1851. For the next thirty years, Mrs. Noble intermittently operated schools, both private and public, from this location. In 1877, one of the first public schools in the city, the Fourth Ward Public School, opened with Mrs. Noble as the principal and first grade teacher.

"In 1871 Timothy H. Scanlan, during his controversial tenure as mayor of Houston, made a tour of large American cities to examine recent public improvements" since he was mainly focused on improving Houston's water system and fire protection system. But interestingly enough, while "reporting his observations to the City Council, Scanlan emphasized the role which public parks served in attracting citizens." However, "despite his admonition, the best that could be done was to have Alfred Whitaker landscape the Courthouse Square." Later a "satirical piece entitled 'Typical Houston' was published in the Houston Daily Post in 1890. This purported to be an exchange between a Houstonian and an admiring visitor eager to view the city's parks. The Houstonian was shamefully forced to admit that Houston's people, lacking a public park, used Glenwood Cemetery for that purpose." Glenwood Cemetery, which was established in 1871, was one of Houston's most beautiful and most landscaped cemeteries.

Prior to the concept of public parks, cemeteries were used for a similar purpose when people would gather together particularly on Sundays while visiting the graves of their deceased relatives in the cemetery, they would also socialize with their neighbors who were there for the same reasons. Glenwood Cemetery, as the Episcopal and Masonic Cemeteries, was built along Buffalo Bayou, and as such, did not conform to Houston's ruling grid pattern. "Presumably it was this arcadian aspect which made the bayou's edge seem an appropriate situation for cemeteries. The arcadian theme was certainly exploited by the Houston Cemetery Company which commenced improvements for Glenwood Cemetery. The superintendent of grounds, Alfred Whitaker, a commercial nurseryman who was also secretary of the Houston Cemetery Company, was apparently responsible for the layout of Glenwood Cemetery, as contemporary reports credited him with carrying out the landscaping of the cemetery during the early 1870s. A network of curvilinear drives was inserted into a rolling topography cut through by ravines. Ornamental planting was dense, enhancing the much remarked upon 'romantic' character of the site." "One indicator of the impact made by Glenwood Park Cemetery (as it was called during the 1880s and 1890s) in Houston was the number of comparatively large cemeteries which were subsequently located along Buffalo Bayou," including Magnolia Cemetery, Beth Israel Cemetery, Hebrew Cemetery (now called Adath Yeshurun), Deutsche Gesellschaft Cemetery (now called Washington Cemetery), as well as one of Houston's first two city cemeteries, called City Cemetery, located on the north side of Buffalo Bayou. "None of the burial grounds ever attained the civic character of Glenwood however. From its inception, Glenwood Cemetery was

considered a public amenity, for it was not only a cemetery, but a landscaped park. Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was the closest thing Houston had to a public park. (HAS, Vol. 6)

“As Houston continued to grow after the Civil War, the need for public recreation space was met by private interests” prior to the founding of City Park, including: Houston Fairgrounds, lying on the southern edge of town; Merkel’s Grove, on the eastern edge of the Second Ward on the south bank of Buffalo Bayou; Houston Volkfest Park; and Magnolia Park, to the east of Houston. (HAS, Vol. 6)

After Mrs. Noble’s death in 1894, her granddaughter, Eloise Szabo Witte, and her husband, Otto, continued to live in the Kellum-Noble House on West Dallas Street. On June 23, 1899, the Wittes sold 6.2 acres of land, along with the residence, to the City of Houston for \$14,000. A portion of the original acreage had been sold to George R. Byers in 1883. Two days before the Wittes’ transaction, the city acquired the Byers’ property—5.28 acres—for \$9,250. Altogether, the City acquired 11.48 acres for \$23,250. With these sales, the City of Houston took a giant step in acquiring the first land for a public park, named City Park. This happened one year after Sam Brashear was elected Mayor of Houston – thus the City of Houston finally responded to a crusade for a city park which had begun many years earlier. “John W. Maxcey, the City Engineer, prepared plans for improving the park.” His prints, dated September 1899, show each parcel of land cut by a series of curvilinear drives and a network of curvilinear paths. Originally, there were two entrances on the Southeast side of the park. The southernmost entrance was at the foot of Dallas Avenue, and the northernmost entrance was at the foot of Lamar Avenues. The drives were consistent with the approach also taken in the earlier plan for Glenwood Cemetery along Buffalo Bayou in 1871. “On the south segment,” the Noble house, “its approach shaded by a stand of live oaks – was retained as a park shelter.” The park was dedicated on September 29, 1899 (HAS, Vol. 6) At one time, according to old residents, the house was shaded by 15 live oak trees, but during successive hurricanes, the most severe being in 1915, most were destroyed. There were plans early on to expand the park to the north side of Buffalo Bayou, and a plan for early park extension, outlined by Harvey T. D. Wilson, included riverside drives on both sides of the bayou.

By 1903 the park had been renamed Sam Houston Park. It became a popular destination when a zoo was placed on the premises. A municipal report in 1903 lists these zoological specimens: 1 bear, 5 coons, 2 flying squirrels, 2 wolves, 9 squirrels, 2 deer, 10 rabbits, 2 guinea pigs, 1 fox, 1 gila monster, 1 turkey, 1 wild cat, 8 prairie dogs, 2 monkeys, 6 Belgian hares, and 7 alligators. A variety of birds completed the zoo population. To provide plantings for the park, a hothouse was built in which to grow palms, ferns, roses, and other unusual horticultural specimens. As a result, the grounds were lavishly landscaped with a water mill and several small lakes. Wide driveways accommodated carriage travel into the park, which was fenced at the time. A wooden bridge connected the drive to a drive on the north bank, which was an extension of Young Avenue, and which was on the tract of the park acquired by the city -- the former site of Samuel W. Young brickyard. “The L-shaped tract was also to receive its complement of winding paths. However, not all of Maxcey’s improvements were carried out. The annual reports of the City of Houston through the early 1900s frequently made reference to the need to improve the north bank acreage, through which the drive was extended, but apparently nothing else was done.”(HAS, Vol. 6)

Several distinctive features were added to Sam Houston Park over the years. In 1903 the bell from the U.S.S. Harriet Lane was installed in the park. The Harriet Lane was a copper-plated, naval steamer seized in the Battle of Galveston on January 1, 1863 by forces under Confederate General J. Bankhead Magruder and Commodore Leon Smith. Its bell was originally mounted in an elaborate, brick Classical Revival style bellcote in front of the Kellum-Noble House by the Robert E. Lee Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). According to the 1942 WPA History of Houston, “immediately back of the bell tower is an old cannon made in Galveston during the Civil War by boring a crude hole through a cylinder of iron. The piece never saw battle service, and for many years was used as a hitching post on Milam Street.” Later, the bell of the U.S.S. Harriet Lane was relocated and installed in a Mission style bellcote, which was located to the left of the Lamar Avenue entrance.

It was used in the park for several years to signal the opening at “8 o’clock every morning and the close at 7:30 o’clock every evening,” and a newspaper reported in 1903 that “there were about 4,000 visitors yesterday.” Before coming to Sam Houston Park, the bell had been mounted at Fannin School and summoned students to their classes. When that institution was badly damaged by fire on December 3, 1900, the bell fell into ruins. The School Board voted to present it to the UDC, with the stipulation that it should be placed in the new City Park, and after some litigation with the school demolition contractor, it was rescued and placed in Sam Houston Park by the UDC. The bell was returned to them a number of years ago, and it is now on display at the Museum of Southern History on Highway 59 South.

On July 4, 1907, the park received the Brownie Fountain as a gift from the Fourth Ward Civic Club. The 4-foot bronze leprechaun was a copy of an original sculpture by then-famous Louis Amateis. It served as a drinking fountain for children who, according to newspaper accounts, loved to tweak the elf’s nose. It was relocated several times within the park – once to a rock grotto and later moved into the center of Valentine Lake, which then became Brownie Fountain Glen (HAS, Vol. 6). The fountain was removed eventually from the park in 1937, and today, it resides at the Houston Zoo. Another Amateis sculpture, *The Spirit of the Confederacy*, is a bronze allegorical figure originally placed in the park on the acreage later acquired near the Walker Avenue side. Later it was placed in the park near the bayou on the bank of a newly created pond, which like the “lake” (which had acquired a heart shape and consequently was designated Valentine Lake), had been made by damming a ravine and filling it with water. This winged figure, originally mounted on natural rocks (now a granite base), rests its arms on a down-turned sword, one hand clasping the palm of peace, the other holding laurels earned on the field of battle. It had been originally dedicated on January 19, 1908 by the Robert E. Lee Chapter of the UDC on the anniversary of the births of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. The statue was cast in Washington, D. C., by Roman Bronze Works foundry. It was one of the two Houston outdoor sculptures that were selected recently for restoration by the Texas Historical Commission in 1991 under the Federal Grant Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), and also has the distinction of being selected as one of the “Texas Ten” – most important outdoor sculptures in Texas. Conservation Treatment was completed in 1996 at a cost of \$18,500 in conjunction with Houston Municipal Arts Commission and Daughters of the Confederacy, Chapter 186. Also in 1908 the Lady Washington Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) placed a stone marker in the park on the north side of the half-circle drive inside the park which connected the park entrances on Dallas and Lamar. It was dedicated to the memory of Alexander Hodge (1790-1836), recognizing him as the hero of two Republics. It subsequently has been relocated to a site near “Old Place” where it stands today.

“Because of the intensive use to which Sam Houston Park was subjected, maintenance seems to have been a problem. In the summer of 1906, J. B. Marmion, a member of the City Council and Chairman of the Streets, Bridges and Public Grounds Committee, commenced a major remodeling of the park in order to improve its facilities. (HAS, Vol. 6) James B. Marmion was later to become the last Mayor of Houston Heights from 1914 to 1918 when Houston Heights was annexed by the City of Houston. He was honored in recent times by the Houston Heights Association when they named their park at 18th and Heights Boulevard after him, not only for his service to Houston Heights, but also for his work with Sam Houston Park. During Marmion’s oversight of City Park, the zoological garden and conservatory, which was kept in and about the Noble House, was removed” (HAS, Vol. 6). The collection of animals, which had cost \$200 a month to feed, was sold to an amusement park in Little Rock, Arkansas according to the Standard History of Houston.

“More lagoon-like ponds were created, with a water-mill and rustic bridge included to enhance the picturesque effect.” The children’s playground, which had been installed to “improve the character of children,” as one report stated, was entered just off the Lamar Avenue entrance. “This facility was one of the most important elements in the park, for it was considered that poor children would be attracted to a healthful open-air environment where their physical well-being might be improved, rather than menaced by the ‘foul conditions

prevailing in the neighborhood of the poor.’ By the early 1900s, such ‘working class’ residential neighborhoods had drawn more closely about the park as the town continued to grow.” (HAS, Vol. 6) In fact the entire park was surrounded originally by residential developments on three sides, with Buffalo Bayou being on the west side. The playground equipment originally included swings, climbing poles and ropes, a seesaw, giant strides, sliding bars, and a teeter ladder. The original equipment was made of wood, but it was later replaced with steel pieces. A wading pool was also built. “O. H. Noland, the park’s superintendent, noted in his report for 1903 that ‘throughout the year multitudes of people pass through (Sam Houston Park) on their way to and from work.’” (HAS, Vol. 6). According to the WPA History of Houston the park included “live oaks, sycamores, palmettos and cottonwood trees” which provided shade for much of Sam Houston Park, but the “western part of it is a wide expanse of sloping lawn.”

However, the events attracting the largest crowds were the free band concerts presented twice a week from the central bandstand, which had been erected in 1901. One hundred benches were placed around the park and around the bandstand for comfortable seating. Sunday attendance of 4,000 was not uncommon when evening band concerts were a regular feature. According to the Houston Post on March 28, 1937, when describing days past in City Park on a Sunday afternoon, it relates that the park “was a favorite driving place of Houston’s horse-and-buggy days. Visiting the park on those occasions, I have stood and witnessed in admiration the passing of shiny, new carriages of all types, American and European. One might note the English hack, the French barouche, the German landau, the low-aproned phaetons and carriages, or even the Irish dog-cart, the majority of them drawn by sleek-looking, high-prancing and thorough-bred horses.”

In October, 1909 a granite monument was placed in the park to the left of the park drive at the Dallas Avenue entrance, near the Kellum-Noble House. The monument commemorates Terry’s Texas Rangers 1861-1865. Benjamin Franklin Terry headed the regiment of Houston Confederate soldiers of the 8th Texas Cavalry, which had been organized in 1861. The monument was placed in City Park by E. Bennett Bates Auxiliary of the Oran M. Roberts Chapter, UDC. Today, the monument is located on MacGregor Loop, directly across from the entrance to Hermann Park Zoo. It was placed on the grounds donated by the City of Houston for the Pioneer Memorial Log House, which was conceived by the San Jacinto Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. It was dedicated on March 2, 1936, the 100th anniversary of Texas independence, during the Texas Centennial celebration.

“Despite the length of time which elapsed before the acquisition of Sam Houston Park in 1899, the City of Houston embarked on a concerted program of park acquisition and development following the election of Horace Baldwin Rice in 1905. Rice’s aunt, Mrs. William Marsh Rice, had bequeathed a sum of money to the City for the purchase of park land, effected by Rice’s predecessor Mayor Oran T. Holt in 1904. When the city established a park on W. Chenevert in 1905, it was named Elizabeth Baldwin Park. Rice presided over the purchase of nearly forty-five acres along Buffalo Bayou, encompassing what had been Vick’s Park, as well as an additional five and one-half acres for Sam Houston Park. Moreover, it was understood that the City’s purchase of the Houston Waterworks Company in 1906 and its two tracts of eight acres on either side of the bayou, four blocks downstream from Sam Houston Park, entailed the acquisition of property which might eventually be committed to park purposes.”

It was Mayor Rice, in his annual report for 1909, that “urged prompt action be taken to acquire more parks and playgrounds since increasing property values would render appropriate sites too expensive for the city to obtain. Rice demonstrated his commitment to the issue by appointing a Board of Park Commissioners in the spring of 1910. The commission was composed of Edwin B. Parker, an attorney and amateur horticulturist; George H. Hermann, a real estate investor and industrialist; and William H. Wilson, a real estate developer, who had developed the beautiful, tree-lined neighborhood of Woodland Heights. The board was to advise the Mayor and Council on the acquisition, development and maintenance of park property. The most important aspect of the actions and future vision shown by Mayor Rice, who also expanded Sam Houston Park, was described in a

newspaper interview in January 1911 when Rice stated that the ultimate objective was “the establishment of a ‘park circle’ around Houston, to be accomplished by joining Houston’s parks with landscaped parkway boulevards. The courses of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou would provide the site for this parkway, with a possible link to Heights Boulevard in Houston Heights.” Mayor Rice in his Annual Report for 1912 commended these actions and “urged future administrations maintain a commitment to park planning and particularly endorsed the idea of acquiring a large park along Buffalo Bayou ‘that will for all time be of sufficient magnitude for our people.’” Throughout the administration of Rice, he was focused on expanding and developing park space. The city acquired the existing Highland Park, a twenty-six acre pleasure garden near the confluence of White Oak and Little White Oak Bayous, which translated to more park space with bayou frontage. Even the Houston Chamber of Commerce encouraged “modest landscaping gestures that could visually transform the banks of the bayou to publicly commending efforts of private individuals for landscaping the bayous rather than developing them which caused debris and erosion.” It was the Houston Daily Post which first promoted the notion of a landscaped, pedestrian promenade along Buffalo Bayou in the early days of Houston. (HAS, Vol. 6)

By 1915 the Parks Department estimated that over 200,000 persons visited the park annually. The former residence of the Kellum and Noble families was utilized as headquarters for the Parks Department. Reports indicate that the park caretaker lived in the house at one time. The home has also served as a storeroom and public restrooms, and for a short time, contained a historical museum according to the WPA history of Houston. Drawings from the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1934 indicate that alterations were made to the building, one being the addition of an outside staircase. It is also likely that additional exterior doors were added on the second floor at this time and that a portion of the back gallery was enclosed to provide additional storage space.

“In order to provide a substantive basis for redressing this situation, the Board of Park Commissioners in 1912 retained Arthur Coleman Comey, a landscape architect from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to compile a comprehensive park report. The next year, Comey’s report was published as ‘Houston, Tentative Plans for Its Development.’” The report revealed that Houston was clearly deficient in park space with a mere acre for every six hundred and eighty-five people, which was considerable higher than found in Kansas City, where one hundred and ten people per acre was the norm. More importantly Comey’s report advocated that “the backbone of a park system for Houston will naturally be its bayou or creek valleys, which readily lend themselves to parking (park space) and cannot so advantageously be used for any other purpose” especially since the waterways are natural and are the flood drainage system which is vital to the existence of Houston. Furthermore, he stated “these valleys intersect the city in such a way as to furnish opportunity for parks of unusual value within a comparatively short distance of most of the residential areas.” All the bayous should be parked except where utilized for commerce, such as the Houston Ship Channel and Port. He observed that where bayous were developed privately, they were “sordid and ill-kept, and depressed property values” around them. He further stated that “as publicly-owned parkland they would enhance the economic value of surrounding neighborhoods.” He advised acquisition of bayou property from four to six miles beyond the existing corporate limits. Another segment of the report which “related to Buffalo Bayou was the proposal that Houston establish a civic center in or near the central commercial district where public buildings might be constructed in a harmonious style to achieve monumental effect.” (HAS, Vol. 6)

Comey’s recommendations had their effect. In July 1912 the city acquired property on the north bank of White Oak Bayou from the Southern Pacific Hospital in the Fifth Ward all the way west to the Houston Heights City Limits. Other tracts purchased went west from downtown along Buffalo Bayou to Shepherd’s Dam (Shepherd Drive today). In 1913 Mayor Rice was not re-elected but his successor, Ben Campbell, fully shared Rice’s enthusiasm at least for parks and civic planning. Clarence L. Brock was appointed General Superintendent of City Parks.

The Masonic Cemetery was located just behind the single row of residential development just to the northwest on Bagby between Lamar and McKinney Avenues, and was located also just to the southeast of the Episcopal Cemetery, which extended down to the banks of Buffalo Bayou. The Masonic Cemetery had been established in May 1856 by Holland Lodge No. 1, which purchased the property for \$200 from Peter W. Gray. They had fenced their newly acquired property and sold lots for \$20 each to lodge members in good standing, whose families could also be interred with them. Many prominent Masons were buried there, the most notable one being Anson Jones, a Grand Master of the Holland Lodge and the last President of the Republic of Texas, who died in 1858. According to WPA history of Houston, among the oldest graves were those of Stephen Richardson, one of Austin's first 300 colonists, and his wife and her sister, both daughters of Alexander Hodge. The Houston Chronicle on March 1, 1938 said of the cemetery, "Among the original ones buried there were children of Mrs. Priscilla Hadley Key, grandchildren of Obedience Smith, who owned all of southwestern Houston, extending from Main west and south of Buffalo Bayou. These children also were descendants of Francis Scott Key, who wrote the Star-Spangled Banner." When Glenwood Cemetery was incorporated in 1871, a section was dedicated as a Masonic burial ground. Many remains (including those of Jones) were re-interred at Glenwood. The last burial in the Masonic Cemetery occurred in 1879. The Masonic Building Association continued to own the property and even considered building their temple there. In May 1959 the Masons had the cemetery's dedication removed and the remaining sixteen bodies were re-interred at Glenwood. They sold the remaining property to the City in 1960 for \$289,964 for Civic Center expansion. Although the land was initially used as a parking lot, it too, was ultimately incorporated into Sam Houston Park.

Subsequently the former Episcopal Cemetery land was also added to Sam Houston Park. Members of Christ Episcopal Church had established the Episcopal Cemetery in 1848. Lots sold for \$10-\$50, depending on the size and location. Many graves were moved to Glenwood Cemetery after it was established in 1871, as one of Houston's most beautiful and most landscaped cemeteries. The dedication on the Episcopal Cemetery was removed June 22, 1938, since it was no longer being used. Most of the remaining graves were moved to Brookside Memorial Park, where the Christ Church section is designated with a single, large marker. The property remained unused except for occasional parking. After removing the remaining graves in 1948, Christ Church sold the property to the City for \$52,500, and it was ultimately incorporated into Sam Houston Park.

Brock also advocated in his annual report in 1912 that a landscape plan needed to be prepared and a system of connecting boulevards constructed between parks. During 1914 important steps were taken toward realizing these recommendations. In May 1914 George H. Hermann gave a 287-acre park site along Brays Bayou to the city for Hermann Park. He also gave additional land to the city including a square block near Sam Houston Park, "a breathing space" later to be called Hermann Square, fronting the existing City Hall (City of Houston Protected Landmark). Another important step was taken at this time in 1914. George E. Kessler, one of the best known landscape architects in the United States, was appointed as a consulting landscape architect by the Board of Park Commissioners. Kessler began the task of implementing as many of Comey's recommendations as could be afforded by the City of Houston. Many parks in Houston were improved and priority was given to improving neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

It was about this time that the older Sam Houston Park began to fall gradually into disuse as the surrounding residential areas were replaced by commercial establishments. In 1916 Kessler turned his attention to the parks along Buffalo Bayou near downtown, when he proposed a "formal garden in Sam Houston Park, set at the main entrance (East) to the park" at Bagby and Lamar. The formal garden was carried out to coincide with the meeting of the Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturalists in Houston, and therefore, was referred to as the "Convention Garden." The other project he proposed was for a site layout for the South Texas Permanent Exposition on the seventy acres along Buffalo Bayou just west of Sam Houston Park that had been acquired by the city in 1916. The tract also included the old golf links tract formerly used by the Houston Golf Club and owned by the William M. Rice Institute. The project was elaborate in scope and called for the re-

channeling of the bayou as a straight stream, eliminating three ox-box bends, and Lamar and Dallas Avenues were to be extended through Sam Houston Park, totally changing its character. Moreover, the avenues were to connect to Shipman Street, which was to become a “scenic drive” along the south bank of Buffalo Bayou including the installation of a continuous pedestrian promenade. No part of the South Texas Permanent Exposition project was carried out due to lack of park funds and the United States had just entered into World War I. After the war, lack of funding still plagued the progress for the expanding and improving of park lands. The Chamber of Commerce still advocated in its monthly news magazine the adoption of rational city planning methods and the support for an active parks movement.

Near the end of his first term as mayor, Oscar F. Holcombe took the first step in this direction by appointing a City Planning Commission, which unfortunately had no money, no authority and no statutory existence. In March 1924 City Council passed an ordinance authorizing the Commissioners to prepare a zoning plan, a civic center plan, a major street and thoroughfare plan, and plans for beautifying the bayous which were to be developed in concert with the Board of Park Commissioners. One of the most important acts of the Commission was retaining Hare and Hare of Kansas City as consultants. Like Comey and Kessler, they were exponents of the landscaping-planning tradition initiated by Frederick Law Olmsted. They were very active in Houston and Texas, in both public and private capacities, through the 1950s.

Hare and Hare developed Hermann Square Park adjacent to City Hall in 1949 albeit, it was a reduced version of the Civic Center plan. While they had advocated locating the Civic Center there, adjoining Sam Houston Park, and the Waterworks site, of which would form a continuous park stretching downstream to the four block site of a proposed new city market, only part of those plans ever materialized. And the plans were revised and changed as time went forward by different City administrations. However, a part of the project involving Sam Houston Park was carried out, which resulted in it being greatly remodeled. The pattern of drives which penetrated the park was simplified, primarily, it would seem, to facilitate the flow of automobile traffic. Although the existing monuments and the Noble house were to be retained, the character of the park was modified. It was no longer to serve as an intensive recreation area, although the surrounding district was just beginning to change from residential to non-residential uses. Sam Houston Park was also planned to mark the eastern-most point of the Buffalo Bayou parkway. Hare and Hare projected this running all the way west to Memorial Park, and on either side of Buffalo Bayou. The first segment of the parkway of Buffalo Drive (now called Allen Parkway) was completed from the Downtown district west to Shepherd Drive at River Oaks. The parkway running west began at the foot of Lamar Avenue in Downtown and intersected through Sam Houston Park. The parkway running east into Downtown joined Dallas Avenue, and also intersected through Sam Houston Park. The driving force, especially for the southern parkway was William Hogg. However, Houston would see the largest expansion of park lands to the west in April 1924 when the Hogg family facilitated the acquisition by the city of what is now known as Memorial Park (old World War I Training Camp Logan site). It was named Memorial Park in memory of Houstonians who had died in World War I.

In 1938 another development occurred in Sam Houston Park which greatly affected its character. The City of Houston Fire Alarm building was constructed on the northwest corner of Bagby and Lamar, adjacent to the entrance of Sam Houston Park. The building was located at 1018-1020 Bagby and was designed by architects, MacKie and Kamrath. The building originally housed the City of Houston central fire alarm control equipment and offices. And while it was regarded at the time as an important building architecturally, it did not support the original 1925 Civic Center plan. In 1939 a World War I Memorial was moved to Sam Houston Park from the old City Hall, where it had faced Travis Street on Market Square. Called “Cenotaph To The Unknown Soldier,” it had been originally dedicated on April 21, 1920 by Houston War Mothers (later known as Service Star Legion), and it commemorates all of the men from Harris County who lost their lives during that war. It was located to Sam Houston Park and placed “in a landscaped plot between the drives at the park entrance” between Lamar and Dallas. Also about 1939 the statue of Civil War hero Dick Dowling, which had also been located in

front of the old City Hall, facing Travis Street, was placed in Sam Houston Park. It was originally located in the park to the west of the Kellum-Noble House. The gray granite monument was sculptured by Frank Teich of Llano, Texas, and serves as the mount for the life-size statue. An inscription gives the names of the members of the Davis Guards with whom Lt. Richard W. Dowling repulsed a superior Federal force at Fort Griffin, Sabine Pass, on September 8, 1863. Shamrock leaves appear at each corner. The Dowling statue was later relocated to face South MacGregor Way at MacGregor Loop in Hermann Park, where it remains today.

Hare and Hare expanded on Comey's proposals of 1913 by suggesting the acquisition of channel-side corridor parks along all bayous (except the ship channel portion) in advance of the city's growth. But they also dealt with another facet of bayou conservation and maintenance that Comey had only alluded to: the problem of flooding. Flooding was something that naturally occurred in Houston, and which has affected Sam Houston Park also even up until recent times. Furthermore complicating the scene were the plans formulated for the interstate highway system. This system in 1951 called for an elevated freeway loop to encircle the downtown area, the first phase being completed in 1955-56. Sam Houston Park was effectively disjoined from the parkway along Buffalo Bayou. The park itself was invaded by exit and access ramps. The concrete piers supporting the freeway structure were built for nearly five blocks either in or right alongside the course of the bayou. The freeway expansion was the proposed solution to the tremendous growth and an unparalleled degree of physical expansion that Houston was experiencing during that time period.

Even though Sam Houston Park had suffered setbacks and decline over the past few years, the park actually began to recover an identity of its own, albeit, it was still the first public park land along Buffalo Bayou and perhaps the inspiration for the thousands of acres of parkland acquired later along the same waterways. The Noble House, as it was known, continued to be used as a storage facility in Sam Houston Park for several years, and had recently suffered some fire damage. As time passed, the structure deteriorated, and in 1954 the city had announced plans to demolish it. A group of concerned citizens, who realized its historic value, created the Harris County Heritage and Conservation Society, as it was called at that time, and worked to raise funds for its preservation and restoration. Two years later in 1956, City Council designated Sam Houston Park as the site of an outdoor historic buildings museum, to be maintained and operated by the Harris County Heritage Society, as the organization came to be called. Today it is known as The Heritage Society. According to The Heritage Society website, "They had one goal in mind: preserve the hastily disappearing past of this great city for the education of future generations."

The Kellum-Noble House, the only historic building in the park located on its original site, was restored by The Heritage Society as much to its original configuration as possible. In addition to changes made during the past years and during long periods of neglect, the house had suffered another damaging fire during the renovation. The building was finally opened to the public as a museum on April 13, 1958. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and also was designated as a Recorded Texas Landmark in 1967. Recently it was designated as a City of Houston Landmark and Protected Landmark in 2005.

In 1958 an event occurred that would expand the mission of both Sam Houston Park and The Heritage Society. A historic house, then located in the Montrose neighborhood, was to be demolished. It was originally the home of General Ebenezer B. Nichols, who built the home about 1850 fronting the Courthouse Square in the Quality Hill neighborhood of Houston. It was later purchased in 1856 by philanthropist, William Marsh Rice, for his own home, who most likely completed any unfinished construction and the elaborate interior finishes. After the death of his first wife in 1863, Rice no longer lived in the house. Rice sold the house in 1873 to the Railroad Real Estate Building and Savings Company, which relocated it between 1874 and 1883 to a new location, which was a short distance from its original site at the southwest corner of Franklin Avenue and San Jacinto Street.

D. B. Cherry, a real estate investor in 1897, offered a bid of only \$25.00 for the front door, but discovered later that he won not just the door but the entire house, which was then relocated to 608 Fargo at Hopkins, in the

Fairview Addition in Montrose. Instead of just buying a door, artist Emma Richardson Cherry, had purchased, relocated and saved the house from being razed. When the house was once again threatened with neglect and demolition, Houstonians Gus Wortham and Wesley West came to the rescue and ensured that the 1850 Greek Revival dwelling would be moved and preserved in Sam Houston Park by The Heritage Society. The relocation of the house to Sam Houston Park is also a tribute to the Rice family directly and indirectly. First, the house was owned by William Marsh Rice. Although his second wife, Elizabeth Baldwin Rice, never lived in the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, she did in fact donate money for the acquisition of park land. And when the City of Houston created a park on W. Chenevert in 1905, it was named, Elizabeth Baldwin Park. Secondly, William March Rice's nephew, Horace Baldwin Rice, was Houston's first mayor to advocate the establishment of extensive parkland, especially along both sides of Buffalo Bayou.

In order for the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, and any subsequent ones, to operate as historical venues open to the public, The Heritage Society had previously entered into a unique arrangement with the City of Houston. The organization agreed to deed to the city any structures they might move there, while retaining ownership of the furnishings and historical collections, and providing full maintenance of the buildings. The City of Houston also made an agreement with the Harris County Heritage Society which took custody of the Houston Fire Alarm Building, located at 1018-1020 Bagby at Lamar Avenue, which then occupied part of Sam Houston Park. The building had been expanded in 1962 in the rear, and when it was replaced with a more modern facility at 410 Bagby, the building was no longer used, except for library storage. The Harris County Heritage Society moved into the rear addition of the building in 1976 with plans to restore the 1938 building as a museum and use the 1962 addition as offices. As plans progressed, it was discovered that the building was constructed on filled land near Buffalo Bayou, which had shifted so that the main piers and beams had cracked and were dislocated beyond repair. Eventually the building was demolished. The Heritage Society built Long Row, a hypothetical reconstruction of Houston's first business block, as a meeting and retail facility in 1968 at 1100 Bagby, and constructed other buildings for their use as well which they occupy today. Bagby Street, by the way, was named after Thomas M. Bagby, a prosperous cotton factor. He had owned some of the land in Sam Houston Park which he sold to the Kellums. Mr. Bagby was the founder of the Houston Lyceum in 1848, Houston's first library. His home once stood on the grounds where the Julia Ideson Library (City of Houston Protected Landmark) is located today, which is located across Bagby Street from Sam Houston Park. Thomas M. Bagby also had an interest in horticulture, especially roses.

Over the past forty years, an additional seven historic buildings have been relocated to Sam Houston Park by The Heritage Society. They include:

- Old Place, built about 1823 on the banks of Clear Creek
- Fourth Ward Cottage, archival documented to 1866, while physical features date it to the early 1840s
- San Felipe Cottage, built in 1868 by German immigrants William and Justina Ruppertsberg
- Pillot House, built in 1868 by Eugene Pillot, a native of France who became a large landholder and county official
- Yates House, built in the 1870s by Rev. Jack Yates, African American minister in Freedmantown (Fourth Ward)
- St. John Church, built in 1891 in the Spring Branch farming community
- Staiti House, built in 1905 in the Westmoreland neighborhood -- home to oilman Henry Staiti's family

In 1960 a wooden replica of the original bandstand was built in the center of the park. These structures, as well as the society's museum, are open on a daily basis to the public. The Heritage Society also has erected the John

B. Connally Plaza, which is located behind Long Row. Installed for some time in the Plaza were the pair of bronze dogs, which are replicas of the ones that once ornamented the Pillot House on either side of the entry. The replicas have now been re-installed at the Pillot House, and the original, bronze dogs, continue to be displayed in the Museum Gallery to preserve them from the elements. There are several modern buildings for their museum and its activities, all of which are not historic structures and include: the Long Row, facing Bagby Street; the Museum Gallery; and compatible outbuildings for the Kellum-Noble House and the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House.

Other additions to the park in more recent years include the Scanlan Fountain, which was fabricated by J. L. Mott Iron Works, New York. It was relocated to Sam Houston Park where it honors T. H. Scanlan, who was the one of the first mayors to raise the issue that Houston should have more park land. The fountain once graced the grounds of the Timothy H. Scanlan Home at 1917 Main Street at Pierce, built in 1891 and designed by Houston architect, Eugene T. Heiner. The Scanlan Home was actually relocated and not demolished as originally thought. The house was actually moved in 1937 by Scanlan's daughters to their Sienna Plantation, an old sugar plantation, since its former Main Street neighborhood had deteriorated. After its relocation, the home was remodeled in the Colonial Revival style and where Lillian and Stella Scanlan lived in their rebuilt mansion on the plantation until their deaths in 1948 and 1950 respectively. (Sienna Plantation is now a Master Planned Community and the old remodeled mansion is now used as community center). It seems an appropriate tribute to Scanlan for the Scanlan Fountain to have been relocated to Sam Houston Park, Houston's first public park. Other recent installations in the park include the: Neuhaus Fountain (1992); the bell from the U.S.S. Houston, a World War II cruiser; the Houston Armillary Sphere; and a statue of former Texas Governor John Bowden Connally Jr. in the Connally Plaza.

Sam Houston Park has existed for more than a century. Not only is it a green oasis in the shadows of looming skyscrapers, but it is place that captures our city's past in a vivid way. The Heritage Society hosts countless school-aged children and visitors annually from around the world, who come to learn about the families and their lifestyles that inhabited these historic buildings once located in various historic neighborhoods in Houston and Harris County. Their Museum Gallery has items on display from their collection of 20,000 artifacts. The Museum Gallery has both permanent exhibits and rotating exhibits. The permanent exhibit focuses primarily on items from the late 19th-century to the early 20th-century. The Heritage Society has utilized the Long Row building for many different functions over the years, including a Tea Room and Yesteryear Shop, but uses the building space currently for meetings, lectures and staff offices. The park is used also for numerous citywide and international events and festivals annually. The Heritage Society and City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department have created a unique experience in Sam Houston Park for the enjoyment and education of everyone as well as for future generations to come.

The information and sources provided for this application have been researched and compiled by Betty Trapp Chapman, Chair, Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission, and G. Randle "Randy" Pace, Historic Preservation Officer, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston, 713/837-7796 or Randy.Pace@cityofhouston.net.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Protected Landmark.

(a) The HAHC and the commission, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider three or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the Protected Landmark designation. If the HAHC reviews an application for designation of a Protected Landmark initiated after the designation of the Landmark, the HAHC shall review the basis for its initial recommendation for designation and may recommend designation of the landmark as a protected landmark unless the property owner elects to designate and if the landmark has met at least (3) three of the criteria of Section 33-224 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO) at the time of its designation or, based upon additional information considered by the HAHC, the landmark then meets at least (3) three of criteria of Section 33-224 of the HPO, as follows:

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;		

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- (3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- (4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;
- (5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;
- (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

OR

- The property was constructed before 1905;

OR

- The property was listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a “contributing structure” in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places;

The Kellum-Noble House, located within Sam Houston park, has been previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places

OR

- The property was designated as a State of Texas Recorded Texas Historical Landmark.

Some of the buildings located in Sam Houston Park, such as Kellum-Noble House, the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, San Felipe Cottage and the Pillot House, have been previously designated as Recorded Texas Historical Landmarks

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of Sam Houston Park at 1100 Bagby Street.

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Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP
SAM HOUSTON PARK
1100 BAGBY STREET
NOT TO SCALE

