



NEWS RELEASE

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HPARD Celebrates World Space Week by Honoring its Historic NASA Roots

The years between 1962 and 1964 were some of the most critical years for the American Space Program. The space race was on. The Mercury, Apollo and Gemini programs were all running concurrently and NASA was housed in the Gragg Building, which would later become HPARD's main office. The Houston Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate World Space Week by honoring this historic connection during the Gragg Building's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Renovation Kickoff. The event will take place at the Gragg Building, 2999 South Wayside, on October 5 at 11:00 a.m.

"We were delighted to discover that astronauts once walked the halls of our main office building," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We already knew that the design was heavily influenced by the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright but until we began to dig into the history of the building itself we were not aware of the NASA connection."

During the celebration, the history of the Gragg Building will be honored and plans for the renovation of the 50-year-old building will be announced. "While NASA has been leading the way in advancements through its space program the building that once served as its home has remained much as it was when it was first built," Turner continued. "As we look toward the future we'd like to preserve the past 50 years of history while building a facility that will last for the next 50 years and beyond."

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The Gragg Building was designed by the architectural firm of MacKie & Kamrath and was originally named the Farnsworth & Chambers Building. It was based on the architectural concepts of Frank Lloyd Wright. Construction was completed in 1956. In 1961, the green stone building was bought as a real estate investment by W.D. York and Gragg Drilling Company. The Manned Space Center moved into the building during 1962 when NASA, dedicated to beating the Soviet Union to the moon, was transferred to Houston from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia. The City of Houston acquired the building in 1976. The Gragg Building became HPARD headquarters in January 1977.

For additional information on the Gragg Building or the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call 713-845-1135 or visit www.houstonparks.org.