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PRESS RELEASE

Construction Begins on Key Buffalo Bayou Trail Connection

City of Houston, Houston Parks Board and Buffalo Bayou Partnership collaborate on new Buffalo Bayou trail segment

HOUSTON, TX – September 2, 2020 – Houston Parks Board and Buffalo Bayou Partnership, in cooperation with the Downtown Redevelopment Authority, the City of Houston, and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, have begun construction on a new park and 0.4-mile hike and bike trail along Buffalo Bayou from Fannin Street to McKee Street. When complete, this segment will tie directly into the proposed Austin Street Bikeway and provide important connections to Buffalo Bayou Park and to trails east of downtown.

The trail will begin at Allen’s Landing Park and continue east under the Fannin Street Bridge, transverse up the slope along Commerce Street before passing under the San Jacinto Bridge to the Wilson Building on Commerce Street. The trail will continue through the second basement level of the Wilson Building and under the Harris County Sheriff’s Inmate Processing Center.

From there the trail opens to a new park on former parking lots along the bayou on either side of Austin Street. As part of the park, the current Austin Street cul-de-sac will be converted into a public plaza.

East of the new plaza, the trail continues under the newly rebuilt Elysian Viaduct to McKee Street. There the trail will extend along the waterfront property owned by CenterPoint as a separate Buffalo Bayou Partnership project. These combined efforts will connect downtown and the south side of Buffalo Bayou to the MKT Trail and White Oak Bayou Greenway.



“We are delighted to collaborate with Buffalo Bayou Partnership to create this new park and trail segment along Buffalo Bayou. There are so many opportunities for exploration along the bayou and this

new open space system will provide an important access point for Houstonians to engage with our beautiful bayous,” said Beth White, President and CEO of Houston Parks Board. “The trail will help connect Buffalo Bayou to White Oak Bayou, one of nine bayous transformed by Bayou Greenways 2020.”

“This will be one of, if not the most unique trail in Houston,” said Anne Olson, Buffalo Bayou Partnership President. “Instead of removing urban infrastructure, our organization has a history of incorporating it into our projects.” She added that the trail is a vital link in the historic waterway’s trail system and will play an important role in connecting Buffalo Bayou Park to parks, green spaces and cultural destinations east of downtown.

“We are thankful to all the partners who have made this project possible,” said Steve Wright, Director Houston Parks and Recreation Department. “It is an example of how, working together, we find ways to add opportunities for all Houstonians to remain active.”

Notable features along the segment include:

- Pole lighting with blue orbs that reflect the lunar cycle continuing the lighting system along Buffalo Bayou Park
- Special art lighting under the San Jacinto Bridge to complement the pole lights
- Safety lighting under the San Jacinto Bridge, in the Wilson Building, and under the Inmate Processing Center
- A stairway connection from Commerce Street leading down to the trail
- Two trail connections at La Branch Street and McKee Street
- Wayfinding signage
- Benches, bike racks, and trash and recycling receptacles

The total cost of the project is \$8 million. Buffalo Bayou Partnership project donors are Barbara and Gerald Hines, Wendy and Jeff Hines, and Sis and Hasty Johnson. Partner funding comes from the Downtown Redevelopment Authority, a public entity that facilitates positive economic development within downtown’s TIRZ #3 boundaries, and Bayou Greenways 2020, a public-private partnership between Houston Parks Board and the City of Houston through the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, with catalyst funding from the Kinder Foundation.

“While we are excited that construction is underway, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership Board of Directors and staff are saddened by the recent passing of Gerald Hines, one of the major donors to this project. Mr. Hines was a visionary who shaped Houston’s skyline, and this critical trail connection through downtown will be a fitting tribute to his remarkable legacy,” said Anne Olson, Buffalo Bayou Partnership President.

Following approximately one year of construction, Buffalo Bayou Partnership will maintain the park and trail under contract with the Houston Parks Board as part of the Bayou Greenways 2020 maintenance agreement with the City of Houston.

For photos of Buffalo Bayou, please click [here](#).

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A nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing access to quality parks and greenspace in the Greater Houston region, **Houston Parks Board** creates, improves, protects, and advocates for parks for everyone. Since 1976, the organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government and community relationships to improve parks large and small. Houston Parks Board is currently leading the transformational \$220 million Bayou Greenways 2020 project to complete a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston's major waterways. For more information, visit www.houstonparksboard.org.

Bayou Greenways 2020 is one of the most ambitious parks projects in the U.S. By transforming more than 3,000 acres of underutilized land along Houston's major waterways into linear parks, Bayou Greenways 2020 will complete a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails. The \$220 million project will connect people, places, and greenspace while enhancing air and water quality, preserving flood-prone areas and stimulating economic development in Houston. Public investment was matched by significant private contributions including an extraordinary lead gift of \$50 million in 2013 from the Kinder Foundation.

Established in 1986, **Buffalo Bayou Partnership** (BBP) is the non-profit transforming and revitalizing Buffalo Bayou, Houston's most significant natural resource. The organization's geographic focus is the 10-square mile stretch of the bayou that flows from Shepherd Drive, through the heart of downtown into the East End, and onto the Port of Houston Turning Basin. Thanks to the generous support of foundations, corporations, individuals and government agencies, BBP has implemented more than \$200 million in improvements for the redevelopment and stewardship of the waterfront – spearheading award-winning projects such as Buffalo Bayou Park, planning for new parks and destinations east of downtown, constructing hike and bike trails, and operating comprehensive cleanup and maintenance programs. Buffalo Bayou Partnership also activates the waterway through pedestrian, boating and biking amenities; volunteer activities; permanent and temporary art installations; and wide-ranging tours and programs that engage tens of thousands of visitors each year. For more information, visit www.buffalobayou.org.

The **Houston Parks and Recreation Department** (H.P.A.R.D.) stewards and manages over 39,501 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 the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit www.houstonparks.org.