

Background

The **Play Your Park** campaign is a **\$51 million** project and is the next major phase of Hermann Park Conservancy's 20-year master plan.

Included in the campaign is **the Commons, a 26-acre area** of the Park which include the improvement and addition of community and play spaces, public art installations, and a revitalization and increase in natural habitats and plants.

The Commons will be designed by landscape architects **Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.** who are also the minds behind Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis, MO and Gathering Place Riverfront Park in Tulsa, OK.

A priority of the Commons project is to invigorate the presence of nature by bringing native plants back to Hermann Park where they once thrived as tall grass prairie.

Pioneer Plants

Over the past 100 years, the soil of the Commons site has been compacted. In order to make the ground viable for all of the native plantings, the soil must first be rejuvenated.

The Conservancy is steering away from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and is instead using **regenerative agriculture** to restore **seven acres** of soil, and the **first major park in Houston** to do so.

The entire restoration process will take place in **three rounds** of "**pioneer plants.**"

The first step involved planting **65 pounds of daikon radish seeds**. The radishes are known for their ability to penetrate tough soil and break it down. After the radishes are fully grown, instead of harvesting them, they are left to decompose in the ground, providing nutrients below ground level.

Rye grass was planted in the second step. It currently stands about waist-high and after its growing season ends will compost in place and provide another organic layer on top of the soil.

The third round of plantings is not yet determined but will be happening soon as the rye grass is almost at the end of its season.

Natural Habitats

Over **200 avian species** have been identified in Hermann Park as it sits on the north-south route of the Central Flyway for migratory birds.

Six acres around McGovern Lake will be restored to **bird-friendly natural habitats** stretching from the area surrounding the northwest bridge, curving with the lake, and running to the Houston Zoo entrance at the southeast.

With the enhancement and expansion of plant zones, the Conservancy has proposed strategically-placed, species-friendly birdhouses to spur an even more dynamic migratory bird population in Hermann Park.

Water Conservation

Included in the plans are the experiential **Wetland Garden** which will take the water flowing through the water-based play features and filtered as it travels through the natural prairie to McGovern Lake, where it will eventually be recycled for irrigation needs throughout the area.