

Frequently Asked Questions: Ben Taub Hospital Expansion & Bayou Parkland West

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What is being proposed?

Harris Health has proposed expanding the Ben Taub Hospital campus, which may require acquiring approximately nine acres of Hermann Park in an area we refer to as Bayou Parkland West, which includes the Warnecke Tract.

What is Chapter 26, in plain language?

Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code governs the use of public parkland for another public purpose. It sets a high standard to minimize harm and includes a required public process.

What is Hermann Park Conservancy's role?

We are the Park's nonprofit steward and advocate, working in partnership with the City of Houston. Our responsibility is to help steward and manage parkland, execute the Park's Master Plan, and uphold high standards for the protection, design, and long-term public benefit of Hermann Park. We do not own the land and do not control the legal process, but we advocate for Park users' interests by pushing to reduce impacts, ensure high standards are met, and secure meaningful public benefits if parkland is ultimately used.

In addition to engaging in this process, what are Hermann Park Conservancy's current priorities?

This process is one part of Hermann Park Conservancy's responsibility as the Park's steward, but it does not pause or redefine our daily work. While we continue to engage with public partners on complex matters, the Conservancy continues its ongoing work caring for Hermann Park.

Hermann Park Conservancy's work in the Park is active and visible every day. That work shows up across the Park in tangible ways, from maintaining landscapes and amenities to supporting daily use and programs and advancing major projects that improve how visitors move through, gather in, and connect with the Park. Guided by the Master Plan, these efforts are about strengthening the Park's infrastructure, restoring important spaces, and ensuring Hermann Park continues to serve a growing and diverse city.

One of the next major projects ahead is North Lake Sanctuary, a six-acre restoration at the center of Hermann Park. Early work is already underway, with completion expected within the next year. The North Lake Sanctuary project will restore critical habitat, improve water quality, enhance pathways and visitor amenities, and reintroduce native landscapes that support wildlife. These improvements deepen visitors' connection to nature and reflect the kind of thoughtful, forward-looking investment that has shaped the Conservancy's efforts.

Are you just giving away parkland?

No. Hermann Park Conservancy cannot "give away" parkland. We do not own it, and it is not ours to give. What we can do—and what we are doing—is advocate for the Park's interests and

the public’s interest: minimizing harm to protected parkland, insisting on high standards, and seeking clear, measurable benefits for park users.

Our goal is not only to minimize harm, but to ensure that any outcome results in a stronger, more accessible park for future generations.

What are Bayou Parkland West and the Warnecke Tract, and why does donor intent matter?

For clarity, Hermann Park Conservancy uses “Bayou Parkland West” to describe the connected landscape in the area under discussion, including the Warnecke Tract. This area plays an important role in connectivity, safety, and Park access. The Warnecke Tract was donated to the City of Houston with the intent that it be protected and used as parkland. That intent is central to how we approach this work as a steward for current and future Park users.

Why focus so much on access?

Access is one of the most pressing issues facing Hermann Park today. Access challenges, including limited convenient parking and safe road crossings, keep many people from visiting and enjoying their Park. Improving access also improves safety and the overall visitor experience.

What is the Fannin Parking Garage?

When it became clear to us that condemnation was likely to occur, we began to expedite exploration of practical alternatives that could reduce impacts to protected parkland while still addressing key public needs. One of the largest needs that we were to address in the Bayou Parkland West proposal was parking relief to improve Park access and safety. That is what led us to pursue shifting the proposed garage away from Bayou Parkland West and toward the existing public parking area along Fannin that already serves Hermann Park visitors.

The Fannin Parking Garage is a concept to improve Park access through a carefully designed, park-integrated garage paired with a safe pedestrian connection into the Park. Key goals we are advocating for include a pedestrian overpass over Fannin connecting directly into the Commons and a design embedded in a landform to fit the Park aesthetic, protect the historic oak allée, and preserve iconic views down Main Street. The garage would be free for Park users. The garage has not yet been fully designed; final design specifics would be developed through appropriate planning and design processes.

More broadly, the garage represents an opportunity to rethink how visitors access Hermann Park. By concentrating parking at the edge, it supports long-term efforts to reduce vehicular impact in the interior of the Park and move closer to restoring the heart of Hermann Park as a more connected, people-centered landscape.

How does the Fannin Parking Garage benefit Hermann Park long-term?

The Fannin Parking Garage is not just about parking. By locating parking to the existing Fannin edge and improving access and safety, it allows us to reduce pressure on the interior of the Park over time. This is a critical step toward restoring and reconnecting the heart of Hermann Park—

creating more usable greenspace, improving the visitor experience, and advancing long-standing goals in the Park's master plan.

How will the Fannin Parking Garage be paid for?

The funding path under discussion is tied to public partners and TIRZ 28. We are grateful for Harris County's commitment, including Commissioner Ellis's \$20 million allocation toward the garage, which represents meaningful progress. A funding gap remains, and the project is included in the TIRZ 28 project plan. We are seek to close that gap via TIRZ funding and ensure the garage is delivered.

What other protections or public benefits are being discussed?

Additional elements that we have advocated for and that Harris Health has expressed support for include a park-like landscaped buffer along Cambridge and other master plan-aligned elements within the campus area, such as a healing garden. These details must still be formalized through clear commitments.

What happens next?

Regardless of the outcome of any vote, Hermann Park Conservancy will remain focused on ensuring that the Park is made whole and that key investments—such as the Fannin Parking Garage—move forward to improve access, safety, and the long-term restoration of the Park's core.

How can I learn more and stay informed?

Hermann Park Conservancy will share its updates and materials only through its official website and official social media channels. This includes FAQs, statements, meeting information, and links to public documents and recordings as they become available. While others may express their own perspectives or advocacy related to Hermann Park, the Conservancy's communications are the sole source for its official statements and information.