



What's Out There.[®] San Antonio



The Cultural Landscape Foundation
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Photo by Genie Cooper



The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF)

TCLF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 1998 to connect people to places. TCLF educates and engages the public to make our shared landscape heritage more visible, identify its value, and empower its stewards. Through its website, publishing, lectures and other events, TCLF broadens support and understanding for cultural landscapes.

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Welcome to *What's Out There San Antonio*, organized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) in collaboration with the City of San Antonio Parks & Recreation and a committee of local experts, with generous support from national and local partners.

This guidebook provides photographs and details of 36 examples of the city's incredible landscape legacy. Its publication is timed to coincide with the celebration of San Antonio's Tricentennial and with *What's Out There Weekend San Antonio*, November 10-11, 2018, a weekend of free, expert-led tours.

From the establishment of the San Antonio missions in the eighteenth century, to the 21st-century Mission and Museum Reach extensions of the San Antonio River Walk, the San Antonio River has continuously shaped the city's landscapes over the past three centuries. The essays in this guide emphasize this key connection between the river and the city, with sites such as Main Plaza, established along the river's west bank in 1731 as the civic center of Villa San Fernando de Béxar, the first civilian Spanish settlement in Texas (and predecessor to modern-day San Antonio); Brackenridge Park, a major cultural institution just below the river's headwaters that has been a place of human inhabitation for many centuries; and Confluence Park, a recent reuse project located on a former construction storage yard on a bluff overlooking the intersection of the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek.

The guidebook also features the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, which, along with the Alamo, is one of only 23 UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the United States.

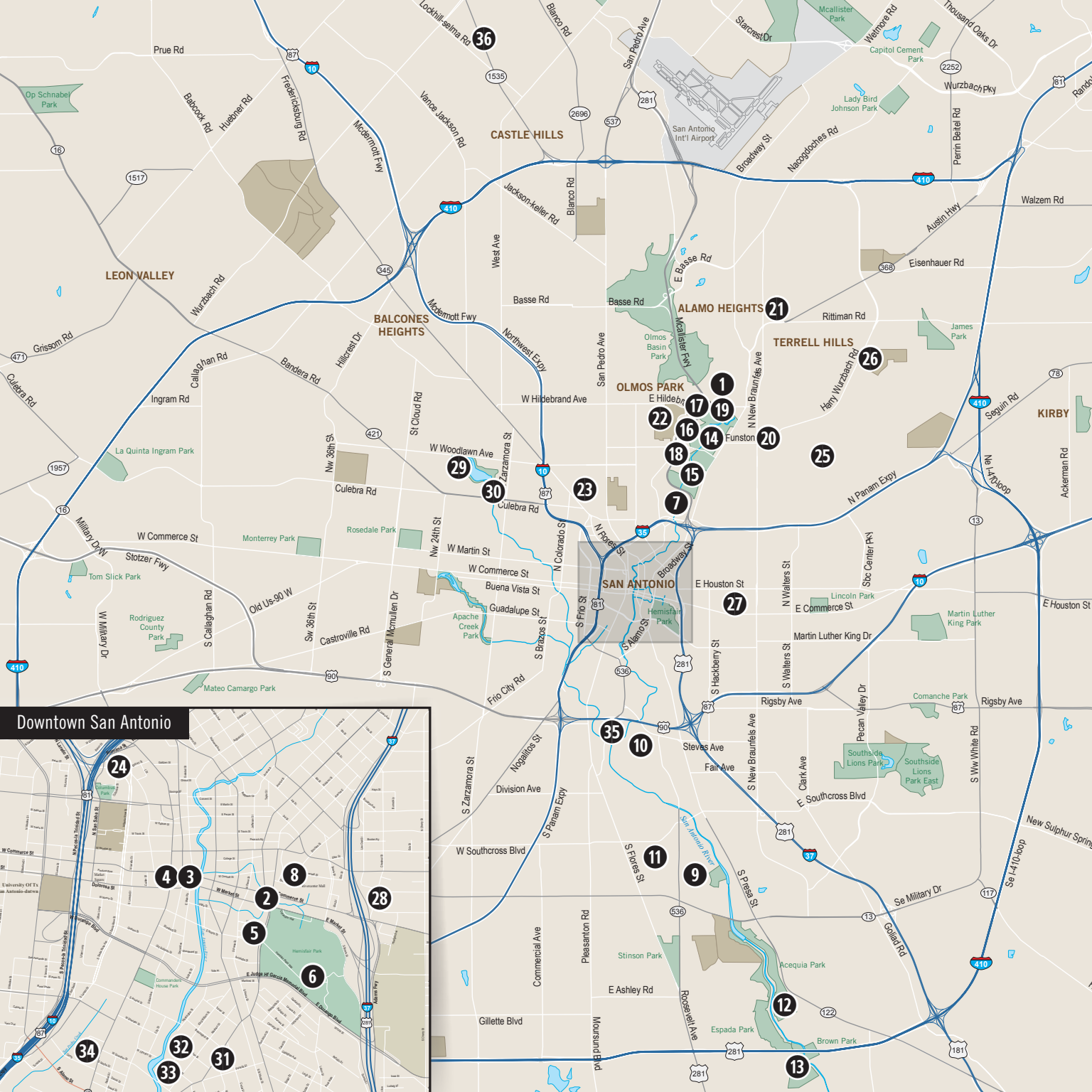
San Pedro Springs Park, among the oldest public parks in the country, and the works of Dionicio Rodriguez, prolific *faux bois* sculptor, further illuminate the city's unique landscape legacy. Historic districts such as La Villita and King William speak to San Antonio's immigrant past, while the East Side Cemeteries and Ellis Alley Enclave highlight its significant African American heritage.

This guidebook is a complement to TCLF's digital *What's Out There San Antonio Guide (tclf.org/san-antonio)*, an interactive online platform that includes the enclosed essays plus many others, as well as overarching narratives, maps, historic photographs, and biographical profiles. The guide is one of several online compendia of urban landscapes, dovetailing with TCLF's web-based *What's Out There*, the nation's most comprehensive searchable database of historic designed landscapes. Profusely illustrated and carefully vetted, the searchable database currently features more than 2,000 sites, 12,000 images, and 1,100 designer profiles. The database has been optimized for iPhones and similar handheld devices and includes *What's Nearby*, a GPS-enabled feature that locates all landscapes within a certain distance, customizable by mileage or walking time.

On behalf of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, I appreciate your interest in *What's Out There San Antonio*, and I hope you will enjoy experiencing the region's unique and valuable landscape legacy.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION



San Pedro Springs Park

Photo by Alayna Jordan

List of sites

- 1 The Blue Hole
- 2 San Antonio River Walk
- 3 Main Plaza
- 4 Military Plaza
- 5 La Villita Historic Arts Village
- 6 Hemisfair
- 7 Pearl District
- 8 The Alamo
- 9 San Antonio Missions National Historical Park
- 10 Mission Concepción
- 11 Mission San José
- 12 Mission San Juan Capistrano
- 13 Mission Espada
- 14 Brackenridge Park
- 15 Brackenridge Park Golf Course
- 16 Japanese Tea Garden
- 17 San Antonio Zoo
- 18 Sunken Garden Theater
- 19 Miraflores
- 20 San Antonio Botanical Garden
- 21 McNay Art Museum
- 22 Trinity University
- 23 San Pedro Springs Park
- 24 San Pedro Creek Culture Park
- 25 Fort Sam Houston
- 26 Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery
- 27 Eastside Cemeteries
- 28 Ellis Alley Enclave
- 29 Woodlawn Lake Park
- 30 Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower
- 31 King William Historic District
- 32 Villa Finale
- 33 Edward Steves Homestead Museum
- 34 Chris Park at Ruby City
- 35 Confluence Park
- 36 Phil Hardberger Park



The Blue Hole

Photo by Charles A. Birnbaum



Located among riparian woodlands north of downtown San Antonio, this natural spring has long been identified as the headwaters of the San Antonio River. Known to Native peoples as *Yanaguana* (spirit waters), the Blue Hole is the largest of a network of natural springs sourced from the Edwards Aquifer that has been critical to human habitation in the region.

Originally described, including by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., in 1857, as a geyser-like fountain, the water flow dramatically reduced as artesian wells were drilled into the Edwards Aquifer in the 1890s. Typically dry today, the spring still flows naturally when the aquifer water table reaches approximately 676 feet above sea level.

Today, the Blue Hole is part of the Headwaters at Incarnate Word, a 53-acre nature sanctuary established in 2006 that extends northwest of the University of Incarnate Word campus. A paved concrete pathway leads to the spring on the west side of the campus, and a wooden pedestrian bridge with a red iron trestle crosses the river just south of the Blue Hole, providing connectivity to the Headwaters Sanctuary Heritage Trail. The octagonal limestone wall surrounding the top of the spring and the current walkway that provides access to it were added by the University in 1989. A concrete rim, installed by George Brackenridge as a part of his waterworks system, continues deep below the ground to the aquifer. The Blue Hole is a contributing feature of the Source of the River District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.



San Antonio River Walk

Following a catastrophic flood that killed 50 people in 1921, plans were made to control the San Antonio River by creating an upstream dam and a bypass for a large bend in the river. The bend would then be paved and converted into a storm sewer. Opponents to the latter part of the plan included the San Antonio Conservation Society and local architect Robert Hugman, who submitted a proposal in 1929 for a linear public park flanking the natural riverbed. In 1938 funds were appropriated for the construction of 2.5 miles of the River Walk, which was largely undertaken with Works Progress Administration labor.

Landscape Type:

Public Park

Designed By:

Robert H. H. (Harvey Harold) Hugman
Works Progress Administration
Ford, Powell & Carson
SWA Group
Rialto Studios
Biohabitats, Inc.
Robey Architecture, Inc.
JQ Engineering

Today the River Walk is a pedestrian way descending twenty feet below street level and comprising stone-paved sidewalks on either side of the river, rusticated stone retaining walls, picturesque arched bridges, boat landings, and staircases. The walk is shaded by bald cypress and other mature trees and planted with beds of native shrubs and perennials. The walk incorporates constructed waterfalls and small pools, a river islet, and an amphitheater oriented toward the river. In 1955 San Antonio Parks and Recreation established a small botanical garden on the River Walk containing philodendron, banana plants, and palms. In 1962 some 17,000 trees, shrubs, and vines (along with other groundcover) were planted along two miles of the walk. The 3.5-mile Museum Reach, extending the River Walk north for access to the San Antonio Zoo, San Antonio Museum of Art, and other points of cultural interest, and the eight-mile Mission Reach, providing connectivity south to the four Spanish missions, were completed in 2009 and 2013, respectively.



All photos this page by Genie Cooper

Photo by Alayna Jordan



Main Plaza

This approximately three-acre trapezoidal plaza, established in 1731 as the civic center of Villa de San Fernando de Béxar, the first civilian Spanish settlement in Texas (and predecessor to modern-day San Antonio), continues to serve as a focal point of downtown. Following Spanish colonial urban planning principles, important structures, including the church and the seat of government, were arranged around the plaza. Originally a flat square of packed earth, the public space was improved with sidewalks and plantings in the 1880s. A small parish church along the western edge of the plaza was replaced in 1870 by the San Fernando Cathedral (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975), and in 1896 the Bexar County Courthouse (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977) was constructed on the southern edge of the plaza.

LakelFlato, in collaboration with SWA Group, completed a major renovation in 2008 to improve pedestrian connectivity. Paved with brown-hued limestone to complement the surrounding architecture, the plaza is shaded by lacebark elms and red oaks and lushly planted with native perennials. A large splash pad, flush with the ground plane, is central to the space, with four additional similar, smaller pads located throughout. Movable seating is situated beneath curved arbors with canopies of interwoven red, orange, and yellow strips of durable fabric. Walkways connect to the River Walk to the east and Military Plaza to the west via the north side of San Fernando Cathedral. Main Plaza is a contributing feature of the Main and Military Plazas Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Landscape Type:
Plaza
Public Park –
Greens/Commons/Squares

Designed By:
LakelFlato
SWA Group



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Military Plaza

Located to the west of Main Plaza beyond the San Fernando Cathedral, this approximately two-acre landscape was established in 1722 as a parade ground and open-air market for soldiers garrisoned at the Presidio San Antonio de Béxar, the colonial Spanish fort built to protect the area's missions and territory. It remained an open square until 1891 when City Hall, designed by architect Otto Kramer, was constructed at its center, occupying most of the site. Manicured grass, beds of native perennial plantings, mature live oaks, and sabal palms surround the four-story Italian Renaissance Revival structure. An obelisk topped with Mexican and U.S. eagles occupies a rectangular planting bed in front of the eastern, main entrance. Several other monuments are placed throughout the square, including a granite milestone in the northeast corner denoting the zero-mile mark for the Old Spanish Trail.

The last surviving remnant of the *presidio* (fort), the adobe Spanish Governor's Palace (listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970), is connected to the west side of the plaza by a pathway shaded with staggered live oaks. The square is integrated into the downtown street grid, with other government and commercial buildings surrounding it on the north, south, and east sides. Military Plaza is a contributing feature of the Main and Military Plazas Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Landscape Type:
Plaza
Public Park –
Greens/Commons/Squares
Institutional Grounds –
Government Institution or Facility

Landscape Style:
Victorian Gardenesque
Beaux Arts / Neoclassical

Designed By:
Otto Kramer



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La Villita Historic Arts Village

Photo by Alayna Jordan



Bounded by Presa, Nueva, and South Alamo Streets and the San Antonio River, this seven-acre site was among the city's first residential neighborhoods, inhabited by Spanish settlers as early as 1768 and subsequently by German, Swiss, and French immigrants throughout the nineteenth century. Between 1939 and 1941, the National Youth Administration, guided by architect O'Neil Ford, restored nearly 30 vernacular Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival structures. They also constructed the Arneson River Theatre, an 800-seat amphitheater with seating made of large blocks of natural stone and grass. The circular Villita Assembly building, also designed by Ford, was completed in 1958 just west of the amphitheater. In 1981 Ford's firm, Ford, Powell & Carson, in association with Saldana, Williams & Schubert, added red-clay tiled pathways and low stone walls throughout the neighborhood as part of a master plan. Today, the urban arts village is home to dozens of shops, art galleries, and restaurants accessible via Villita and King Philip Streets, which have been converted into tree-lined pedestrian walkways.

Three rectangular plazas lined with live oaks in elevated stone beds serve as public gathering spaces. The largest, Mayor Maury Maverick Plaza, is located in the southeastern quadrant and centered around an octagonal fountain. The sunken Plaza Juarez is bounded by a masonry wall south of the Villita Assembly building and features an adobe well. The smallest plaza, Plaza Nacional, is located along the southwest edge of the district. The La Villita Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Landscape Type:
Restoration Village

Landscape Style:
Mission Revival

Designed By:
O'Neil Ford
Ford, Powell & Carson
Saldana, Williams & Schubert
National Youth Administration



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Hemisfair

Landscape Type:
Exposition Grounds
Public Park

Designed By:
O'Neil Ford
Allison Peery
Johnson Fain
OLIN
HR&A Advisors
Poteet Architects
Pape-Dawson Engineers
Arup
RJ Rivera
MIG, Inc.
GGN

Located just southeast of downtown, this 96-acre park is bounded by East Market and South Alamo Streets, East César E. Chávez Boulevard, and Interstate 37 (Highway 281). The site was first developed to host the 1968 World's Fair, which commemorated the city's 250th anniversary, drawing some 6.3 million visitors to the grounds. Architects O'Neil Ford and Allison Peery oversaw the exposition's development beginning in 1964. To make way for the grounds, the diverse Germantown neighborhood was razed, displacing 1,600 people, demolishing 1,349 structures, and altering or erasing two dozen streets.

More than 30 countries sponsored cultural pavilions around *Las Plazas del Mundo* (The Plazas of the World). While many structures were dismantled after the fair, the Mexican Pavilion (now the Instituto de Mexico), U.S. Pavilion (now the Confluence Theater and John H. Wood Federal Courthouse), and Institute of Texan Cultures remain today. The fair's most iconic structure, the 622-foot-high Tower of the Americas, designed by Ford, stands as San Antonio's tallest building. Hemisfair's northern boundary is bisected by a quarter-mile extension of the River Walk. Established by the San Antonio City Council in 2009, the Hemisfair Park Area Redevelopment Corporation adopted a master plan in 2012 to revitalize the site as a mixed-use district with improved public spaces. In the first phase, Yanaguana Garden was constructed at the southwestern zone of the park, designed by MIG, Inc., and completed in 2015. A team led by GGN was selected in 2014 to design a Civic Park as part of the second phase, slated for completion in 2021.



All photos this page by Shannon Perry



Photo by Shannon Perry



Pearl District

Photo by Alayna Jordan



A synthesis of historic architecture and Postmodernist landscape design bounded by the San Antonio River, the McAllister Freeway, and Highway 35, this 26-acre district, designed by LakelFlato in 2011, transformed the once-abandoned brownfield site into a commercial, culinary, and residential destination. Historically the home of Pearl Brewery, which began producing beer in 1883, the site was purchased by Pabst in 1985 and closed in 2001. In 2002 Silver Ventures acquired the complex. Today, the district comprises some 30 apartment buildings, shops, and restaurants, and is home to the San Antonio campus of the Culinary Institute of America and the Hotel Emma.

With a focus on environmental sustainability and adaptive reuse, repurposed artifacts are found throughout the district. The gravel-paved main plaza and the Cellars (designed in 2017 by Ten Eyck Landscape Architects) fronting the brewery feature a mesh-roofed arbor and sitting area constructed with salvaged steel and defined by a grid of trees and linear concrete planters. Pedestrian thoroughfares are complemented by shaded pavilions, green spaces, and water features, such as the recreated Bottling House's country porch and water pods. Beer vats have been transformed into rainwater cisterns, and ivy-covered tanks and hoppers reference the site's industrial past. The backdrop of the Pearl Amphitheater Stage is a water body composed of restored wetlands and animated with waterfalls occupying land donated to the City by the developer. The district serves as the terminus to the San Antonio River Walk Extension.

Landscape Style:
Postmodernist

Designed By:
Ten Eyck Landscape Architects
LakelFlato
Durand-Hollis Rupe Architects
RVK Architects
Ford, Powell & Carson
WGW Architects
Pape-Dawson Engineers
Danysh & Associates
Rialto Studio
Brown Design Consultants
Casey Dunn
Lara Swimmer



The Alamo

Landscape Type:
 Institutional Grounds –
 Cultural Institution,
 Military Institution,
 Religious Institution

Established as a Spanish mission in 1724, the Alamo has also served as a U.S. Quartermaster Department depot, a hospital, and, today, a museum and archaeological site. A stone church with twin symmetrical towers, a barrel vault, and a dome was built in 1744 (but was largely destroyed in the late 1750s), and the site soon expanded to include shops, dwellings, and storehouses built of adobe. All that remains of the original site is the chapel (with its non-historic curvilinear gable in place of the original bell towers); the restored ruins of the long barracks; and a wall that runs parallel to East Houston Street before turning 90 degrees toward the chapel.

The western Alamo Plaza, a linear, north-south grand boulevard, is anchored by the 1939 Alamo Cenotaph to the north and the 1976 gazebo to the south. The flagstone-paved plaza acts as an island that buffers vehicular traffic from the Alamo. It comprises a series of two-foot-high, raised terraces filled with ryegrass and lined with shade trees. Enclosing the church to the north and east, the Convento Courtyard is radially designed with concrete walking paths set amid strips of zoysia grass and ryegrass and flowerbeds with plantings of yucca, agave, cacti, wildflowers, redbuds, Texas mountain laurels, papaya, peach, and pecan trees. It also contains live oaks, including the 148-year-old Big Tree, brought to the site in 1912 by Walter Whall and planted behind the north barracks wall. The Alamo was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960.



Photo by Carol M. Highsmith



San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

Landscape Type:
 Institutional Grounds –
 Religious Institution
 Public Park – National Park

Related Landscapes:
 Mission San José
 Mission Concepción
 Mission San Juan Capistrano
 Mission Espada

Established as Mission Parkway in 1975 and promoted to a National Historical Park three years later, this 476-acre landscape comprises four Spanish frontier missions and their associated archaeological sites: Missions Concepción, San José, San Juan Capistrano, and Espada. Spanning a roughly eight-mile stretch extending south from present-day San Antonio along the San Antonio River, the missions were founded throughout the eighteenth century by the Spanish/Mexican Catholic Church. Secularized in 1824, they fell to neglect until the early twentieth century, when they were re-established as places of religious worship. All four continue to serve as parish churches today under the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

While much historic fabric has been removed over three centuries, the four original churches remain. The holdings of the southernmost missions, Espada and San Juan, also include a combined 200-acre *labores* (fields) and historic *acequias* (irrigation systems), of which the Espada acequia is still in use by neighboring farming communities. Rubble masonry perimeter walls, Texas Blackland Prairie and Southern Brush Country vegetation characterize all four sites. In 2013 the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation Project was established to better connect the four missions via a recreational trail, with much of the native vegetation renewed or reintroduced at the time. The San Antonio Missions National Historical Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. In 2015 the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, Rancho de las Cabras, and the Alamo were designated together as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



All photos this page by Alayma Jordan



Mission Concepción

Founded by Franciscan friars in 1716 as Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de los Hainais, in East Texas, this mission was relocated to its current site along the San Antonio river in 1731, just south of what is now the King William Historic District. Constructed over fifteen years and dedicated in 1755, the limestone, cruciform church is considered one of the best preserved Spanish colonial structures in the United States. Concepción's standing structures include a sanctuary, nave, *convento* (convent), and granary. Traces of original painted frescos are evident on the buildings' facades, and restoration efforts in 1988 revealed original artwork along the walls and ceiling of the *convento*.

Today, the 21-acre Concepción Park, comprised of lawn, shade trees, and a playground, abuts the river to the west and mission to the east, providing connectivity between the two. In 2015 the San Antonio River Foundation (SARF) developed River Return, a "portal" at the entrance to Concepción Park. Borrowing design elements from the mission, Philadelphia environmental artist Stacy Levy, in collaboration with Rialto Studio, designed River Return as a series of outdoor rooms with undulating limestone walls mimicking the flow of water. Concrete paving is etched with water- and fresco-inspired patterns, and trails lead to the mission site. Mission Concepción was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970 and is a contributing feature of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The four San Antonio Missions, along with the Alamo, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015.

Landscape Type:
 Institutional Grounds –
 Religious Institution
 Public Park – National Park

Designed By:
 Stacy Levy
 Rialto Studio

Related Landscapes:
 San Antonio Missions National
 Historical Park



Photo by Alayma Jordan



Photo by Alayma Jordan



Mission San José

Located approximately two miles south of Mission Concepción, Misión San José y San Miguel de Aguayo was established in 1720 and is the largest of the five San Antonio missions. Constructed between 1768 and 1782, the domed church features *La Ventana de Rosa* (The Rose Window), constructed circa 1775 on its south face, and a grand main entrance surrounded by elaborate sculptures depicting religious figures and scenes on its west. In the 1930s the church was extensively restored by the Works Progress Administration to reflect its original design.

The mission is accessed from the east, where East Pyron Avenue leads from the National Park visitor center (constructed 1995) to the northeast corner of the original rectangular site, which is bordered by a fortified masonry wall. The park-like grounds are primarily composed of grassy lawn with large, sparsely planted shade trees and the archaeological remains of several building foundations. An unpaved path leads visitors along the perimeter of the site. At the northernmost area within the walls are the extant granary, church, and *convento* (convent). Beyond the north wall lies the gristmill, constructed in 1794 and restored in 1996 to operable use, and remnants of several lime kilns that predate the mill. The San José Mission National Historic Site was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 and is a contributing feature of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, listed in 1978. The four San Antonio Missions, along with the Alamo, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds –
Religious Institution
Public Park – National Park

Designed By:
Works Progress Administration

Related Landscapes:
San Antonio Missions National
Historical Park



Photo by Alayna Jordan



Photo by Alayna Jordan



Mission San Juan Capistrano

Established in 1716 as Misión San José de los Nazonis, in East Texas, the mission was renamed and moved to San Antonio in 1731, about 2.5 miles south of Mission San José and one mile north of Mission Espada. Native flora of the Blackland Prairie and South Texas Brush Country regions can be found throughout the mostly rural landscape. The 0.3-mile Yanaguana Trail loops south and west from the mission, following the original channel of the San Antonio River (which has since been partially rerouted) through woodlands, with boardwalks and overlooks at several points along the walking path.

In addition to the church, *convento* (convent), and remnants of living quarters, San Juan's original *porteria* (gate house), composed of mud and lime plaster, is still standing at the southwest corner of the perimeter wall. Extensive excavation work in the twentieth century has provided insight into mission life, and in 2012 a \$2.2 million restoration effort was undertaken to preserve and restore the church, which had become structurally unsound. Unique among the San Antonio missions, the main church was covered in protective white lime plaster at this time, in stark contrast with the adjacent dark stone structures and surrounding flat and open verdant landscape. Mission San Juan was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and is a contributing feature of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, listed in 1978. The four San Antonio Missions, along with the Alamo, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds –
Religious Institution
Public Park – National Park

Related Landscapes:
San Antonio Missions National
Historical Park



Photo by Alayna Jordan



Mission Espada

Photo by Alayna Jordan



The most rural of the missions and the farthest from downtown, Mission Espada was established in 1690 near present-day Augusta and relocated to San Antonio in 1731. It is the only mission located on the west side of the San Antonio River and, at 558 feet from the bank, is the closest to the river's present course. The mission complex includes a church, *convento* (convent), ruins of other historic structures, and perimeter masonry walls. It connects to more than 100 acres of *labores* (fields) and an *acequia* (irrigation system), still in use by neighboring farms. The 5.6-mile-long irrigation system terminates several miles north of the mission grounds at the Mission Espada dam.

On the west side of the property, adjacent to the church and *convento*, is a garden planted with trees and colorful perennials. To the south, ruins of the granary, living quarters, and a late-colonial church remain as low stone walls among a grassy field. Archaeological evidence of indigenous living quarters, as well as significant midden deposits, was discovered in the southern part of the site. The stone ruins of Rancho de las Cabras, located some 30 miles southeast of the mission grounds, have been identified as the ranch that supported the mission and are included as part of the National Park. Mission Espada was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and is a contributing feature of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, listed in 1978. The four San Antonio Missions, along with the Alamo, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2015.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds –
Religious Institution
Public Park – National Park

Related Landscapes:
San Antonio Missions National
Historical Park



All photos this page by Alayna Jordan

Brackenridge Park

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Large Municipal Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Dionicio Rodriguez
Ludwig Mahncke
Johnathan Raymond Lambert
A. W. Tillinghast
John Colligan

Related Landscapes:
Brackenridge Park Golf Course
Japanese Tea Garden
San Antonio Zoo
Sunken Garden Theater
Miraflores

Situated just below the headwaters of the San Antonio River, the site of Brackenridge Park has been a gathering place since Native Americans lived in the area. In the eighteenth century, Spanish settlers established a sophisticated water system there, remnants of which remain today. In 1899 George Brackenridge of the San Antonio Water Works Company donated an initial 199 acres to the city for recreational use. The park's first improvements were led by City Park Commissioner Ludwig Mahncke (a friend of Brackenridge who had encouraged him to donate the land), who established a wild game preserve and developed curvilinear paths and drives that wound through the trees along the river. Beginning in 1915, park commissioner Ray Lambert used local rough-cut stone for walls and structures throughout the park, giving it a distinctly rustic character. Lambert converted a former rock quarry into the Japanese Tea Garden, and transformed the wild game preserve into the 35-acre San Antonio Zoo. He is also responsible for the oldest municipal golf course in Texas, designed in 1916 by A. W. Tillinghast and John Colligan; the Sunken Garden Theater, carved out of the quarry in the 1930s; the Witte Museum, opened in 1926; and the Joske Pavilion.

The now 500-acre Brackenridge Park is San Antonio's second oldest. Its rustic character remains intact, with tree-lined paths, picnic areas, playgrounds and athletic fields, and a 3.5-mile miniature railway. The Japanese Tea Garden, a bridge designed by Dionicio Rodriguez, and the Water Works Pump House No. 1 are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Photo by Kenneth Erfurth



Photo by Kenneth Erfurth



Brackenridge Park Golf Course

Landscape Type:
Golf Course – Golden Age

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
A. W. Tillinghast
Johnathan Raymond Lambert
Murray Brooks
George Hoffman
Ralph Cameron

Related Landscapes:
Brackenridge Park

Located just north of downtown in the southern portion of Brackenridge Park, this 114-acre golf course was designed by A. W. Tillinghast in 1916. After years of petitioning by the San Antonio Men's Hotel Association, park commissioner Ray Lambert agreed to develop the state's first municipal golf course in the expansive park. Tillinghast began work on the project in 1915, completing construction one year later. The course was unique for its use of grass greens rather than the hard sand that was prevalent at the time. The course has undergone significant changes since its completion. In the 1960s the development of U.S. Highway 281 sliced through its western edge, separating the twelfth and thirteenth holes from the rest of the course. The course was subsequently redesigned by course manager Murray Brooks and consultant George Hoffman to fit the site's new boundaries. In 2008 the golf course was rerouted to better reflect Tillinghast's original design.

The predominantly flat eighteen-hole course retains its original square greens, a common design element of the early 1900s rarely found today. Winding cart paths cross the San Antonio River and Water Works Channel on stone bridges designed by Tillinghast. Woodlands border the site's northwestern perimeter, screening it from nearby development. On the southeastern edge of the property, a Tudor-style, stone clubhouse designed by architect Ralph Cameron in 1923 (and remodeled in 1968) serves as the entrance to the course, fronted by a parking lot. The golf course is a contributing feature of Brackenridge Park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.



All photos this page courtesy Alamo City Golf Trail



Japanese Tea Garden

Designed by park commissioner Ray Lambert in 1917, this garden is sited on a portion of a former limestone quarry. Abandoned in 1908, the quarry site's transformation began in 1915 when Lambert set out to create an ornamental landscape. Beginning in 1917, the commissioner deployed prison labor to convert the space. In 1926 city officials invited Kimi Eizo Jingu, a local Japanese-American artist, to inhabit the garden and open a café. The Jingu family continued to reside at and operate the garden until 1942, when they were evicted due to anti-Japanese sentiment during World War II. Initially known as the Chinese Sunken Garden, in 1984 the landscape was rededicated as a Japanese cultural site.

Contained within an irregularly shaped area of approximately 1,200 square feet, the small garden is composed of two pools carved from limestone, framed by tropical plants. A man-made island straddles both bodies of water and connects to their surroundings by a network of stone arch bridges and pathways. A waterfall descends from the quarry's northernmost wall, which drops approximately 60 feet and is set back a few yards from the ponds. A Japanese-style, palm-leaf roofed pagoda sits along the edge of the southern pool near the Jingu House and offers panoramic views. The garden's entrance features a Japanese torii gate created by artist Dionicio Rodriguez in 1942, using his signature *faux bois* technique. In 2007 the ponds underwent repairs and a new water recirculation system was installed. The garden is a contributing feature of Brackenridge Park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Japanese

Designed By:
Johnathan Raymond Lambert
Kimi Eizo Jingu
Dionicio Rodriguez

Related Landscapes:
Brackenridge Park



Photo courtesy San Antonio Parks Foundation



San Antonio Zoo

Designed by park commissioner Ray Lambert in 1916, this zoological park originated as a fenced deer preserve established by Ludwig Mahncke in Brackenridge Park in 1902. By 1915 the preserve's population had grown, and new space was needed to accommodate the animals. Lambert chose to create a zoological garden in an abandoned rock quarry adjacent to the park. He designed the zoo around the quarry's natural setting, terracing the stone walls for the creation of animal enclosures. An extensive canal system was constructed from the San Antonio River, which flows along the site's southern edge. The zoo opened in 1929 and within the year established two of the first cage-free animal exhibits in America. The San Antonio Zoological Society formed in 1928 and began to manage the zoo in 1931.

Today the zoo encompasses 55 acres northeast of the Japanese Tea Garden. The space contains a network of brick and cement pathways that direct visitors to ten park areas dedicated to various ecosystems and fauna. The zoo contains 750 animal species within exhibits that focus on natural habitats and allow for a wide range of movement and activity. A pond containing a fountain and a footbridge marks the center of the site. Many canopy trees encircle the zoo and are interspersed throughout, providing shade and screening from nearby development. The San Antonio Zoo operates a miniature train service that departs from a depot just beyond the zoo's southwestern boundary. The railway leading from the depot runs along the zoo's southern border before heading into Brackenridge Park.

Landscape Type:

Zoo – Contemporary Zoo

Landscape Style:

Picturesque

Designed By:

Johnathan Raymond Lambert

Related Landscapes:

Brackenridge Park



All photos this page by John Toy



Sunken Garden Theater

Located southwest of the Japanese Tea Garden in Brackenridge Park, this theater was designed in 1930 by architect Harvey Smith, Sr. The theater was originally the site of a limestone quarry, which sat abandoned between 1908 and 1915, when park commissioner Ray Lambert transformed the site into a civic space. He initially had the Japanese Tea Garden built on the north side of the quarry and the Texas Star Garden installed to the south. It was on this latter site that construction of the theater began in 1930. The site was further renovated by Smith, Sr., in 1937 with the assistance of architects George Willes and Charles Boelhauwe and the Works Progress Administration.

The theater's most prominent feature is an excavated limestone ridge that forms the rear wall of the stage. Nestled among surrounding woodlands, rocky outcroppings and stone steps protrude from the face of the ridge, lending to its rugged appearance. This natural terrain gives way to the smooth concrete of an elevated stage flanked on either side by the classical colonnades of two ancillary structures. The stage transitions to a ground-level, concrete hardscape, which fans out into a large open area with movable seats capable of accommodating nearly 5,000 people. The rows of seating ascend on a gentle incline to meet a concession stand and a pair of stone staircases that descend outside the theater. Trees encircle the site, providing a buffer to the McAllister Freeway. The Sunken Garden Theater is a contributing feature to Brackenridge Park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

Landscape Type:

Amphitheater –
Depression Era Theater

Landscape Style:

Beaux-Arts / Neoclassical

Designed By:

Johnathan Raymond Lambert
Harvey Smith, Sr.
George Willies
Charles T. Boelhauwe
Works Progress Administration

Related Landscapes:

Brackenridge Park



Photo courtesy San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department



Photo courtesy San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department



Miraflores

Photo by Mary Fisher



Located east of Brackenridge Park on the east bank of the San Antonio River, this 4.5-acre parcel derives from fifteen acres purchased in 1921 and developed over two decades as the private garden of Aureliano Urrutia, a renowned physician who fled to San Antonio in 1914. Inspired by Urrutia's youth spent in Xochimilco, Mexico City, the original landscape contained a series of fountains, pools, and walking paths, along with more than 30 sculptures commemorating Aztec and Mexican history and the life of Urrutia, including nine *faux bois* sculptures by Dionicio Rodriguez and six tiled benches designed by local architect Atlee Ayres. In 1962 Urrutia sold Miraflores to the United Services Automobile Association, which demolished nearly ten acres for an eight-story office building and parking lot. Southwestern Bell Telephone Company purchased the remainder of the garden in 1974. In 2001 the property was transferred to the University of the Incarnate Word, and it was acquired by the City of San Antonio in 2006.

Much of the original garden design has deteriorated over time. RVK Architects developed a master plan in 2007 to rehabilitate the garden for public use while conserving the remaining statues and tiled benches. A pedestrian bridge completed in 2008 connects Miraflores to Brackenridge Park over the river, and the restoration of brick walkways and the Hildebrand Avenue entrance tower and gates is underway. A large entrance arch designed by Rodriguez and originally located on Broadway was moved to the San Antonio Museum of Art in 1998. Miraflores was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006.

Landscape Type:
Public Park

Designed By:
Dionicio Rodriguez
Atlee B. Ayres
RVK Architects

Related Landscapes:
Brackenridge Park



Photo by Alayna Jordan



Photo by Alayna Jordan



San Antonio Botanical Garden

Sited on rolling topography with views of downtown San Antonio, this 38-acre botanical garden opened in 1980 after decades of planning and advocacy by the San Antonio Garden Center. Located approximately three miles northeast of downtown, the site once housed a reservoir (today an amphitheater) used by George Brackenridge's San Antonio Water Works Company. In 1899 Brackenridge donated 25 acres, including the reservoir and its surroundings, to the City, as well as a rectangular strip of land known today as Mahncke Park, which continues to connect the botanical garden to Brackenridge Park to its west.

The master plan by landscape architect Jim Keeter included formal display gardens connected by curving pathways. The Texas Native Trail features more than 250 plant species from three regional ecosystems—the Hill Country, East Texas pineywoods, and South Texas coastal plains—surrounding a small lake. The Lucile Halsell Conservatory, designed by architect Emilio Ambasz and completed in 1988, comprises five Modernist glass structures among a central courtyard, each housing a distinct habitat. The Kumamoto En Japanese Garden, a gift from sister city Kumamoto, Japan, opened in 1989 in the western portion of the site. In 1988 the Sullivan Carriage House, designed by Alfred Giles in 1896, was relocated to the garden from downtown. It served as the site's main entrance from 1995 to 2017, when the Welcome and Discovery Complex opened as part of an eight-acre expansion led by Ten Eyck Landscape Architects, along with interactive spaces such as an adventure garden and a culinary garden with an outdoor kitchen.

Landscape Type:
Botanical Garden

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
Emilio Ambasz
Jim Keeter
Alfred Giles
Ten Eyck Landscape Architects
Weddle Gilmore Architects
Pape-Dawson Engineers
Kopplow Construction



All photos this page by Marlon Bremner

Photo courtesy San Antonio Botanical Garden



McNay Art Museum

In 1950 Marion Koogler McNay bequeathed more than 700 works of art, a 1929 Spanish Colonial Revival estate designed by San Antonio architects Atlee and Robert Ayres, and her fortune to establish the first modern art museum in Texas. Situated on 23 acres located approximately five miles northwest of downtown, the McNay Art Museum opened to the public in 1954. The architectural firm Ford, Powell & Carson oversaw a series of five additions to the original house between 1969 and 1985. In 2008 French architect Jean-Paul Viguier completed the Jane & Arthur Stieren Center for Exhibitions, a 45,000-square-foot expansion on the east side of the museum that includes a sculpture garden to its south. Today, the museum houses more than 23,000 works of art. The landscaped grounds include sculptures by Robert Indiana, Luis A. Jiménez, Jr., George Rickey, Joel Shapiro, and Kiki Smith.

The museum is arranged around a central courtyard, featuring a fountain with Spanish Colonial Revival tile work and planting beds with local perennials and shrubs. The surrounding grounds' gently rolling landscape evokes a park-like setting, especially south and west of the museum buildings. Curving driveways traverse the manicured lawn punctuated by groves of mature shade trees. A formal garden planted with local shrubs and perennials features a paved terrace, and a large tiered fountain is located just southwest of the museum. A grove of palm trees and a Japanese-inspired fishpond with a causeway and island at its center is located east of the fountain.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds –
Cultural Institution

Landscape Style:
Spanish Colonial Revival
(Hispano-Moorish)

Designed By:
Altee B. Ayers
Robert Ayers
Ford, Powell & Carson
Jean Paul Viguier



Photo courtesy Theresa McBerth, McNay Art Museum



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Trinity University

In 1948 architects O'Neil Ford and Bartlett Cocke, with consulting architect William Wurster, created a master plan for this university, a Presbyterian institution in northern San Antonio. The rugged former quarry site north of downtown required an informal arrangement of buildings that exploited the natural drama of the site. The resulting plan was a departure from traditional campus design in America. There is no formal mall or great lawn. Roads curve and dip in response to topographical contours. Individual buildings are fitted to the land, capturing views of the city's skyline. A series of pedestrian precincts contain intimate spaces for relaxation and conversation.

Dallas landscape architects Arthur and Marie Berger prepared the original landscape design for the campus and worked with the architectural team to site new construction. Their straightforward design approach takes advantage of the landscape's inherent qualities. In response to the tight budget of the new campus, the Bergers utilized native plants to minimize maintenance costs. Drifts of live oaks border pathways, ground covers drape over quarry walls, and small courtyards include water features with occasional waterfalls and pools. During Ford's 33-year association with the campus, San Antonio landscape architect Stewart King collaborated with him on several major projects.

Landscape Type:
Campus

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
O'Neil Ford
Bartlett Cocke
William Wurster
Arthur Berger
Marie Berger
Stewart E. King
Kim Laube
RVK Architects
Rialto Studio



All photos this page courtesy Rialto Studio

San Pedro Springs Park

Located approximately two miles northwest of downtown, this 46-acre square, designated as commons by the Spanish monarchy in 1729, is considered among the oldest public parks in the United States. The park's focal point is a natural spring flowing from a terraced outcropping of limestone, a critical water source discovered by Spanish explorers in 1709, although it had been known to native peoples as early as 9000 B.C.

In 1851 San Antonio city surveyor Francois Giraud established the site's modern-day boundaries. From 1864 to 1874, John Duerler created a lush Victorian Picturesque landscape featuring five shallow ponds spread out in the shape of a fan just west of the naturally occurring lake south of the spring. By 1878 the park became the northern terminus of the city's first mule-driven streetcar (which extended south to Alamo Plaza) and contained several attractions, including row boats, a horse-race track, a small museum, and a zoo. During the 1920s, a large swimming pool replaced the natural lake. Today the pool is shaded by large cypress trees. The San Pedro Library and San Pedro Playhouse were constructed in 1929 on the eastern and northwestern edges of the park, respectively. Recreational facilities were expanded during the 1950s on the eastern half of the park, including a large tennis complex to the north and two softball fields to the south. Curving concrete footpaths connect the park's landscape features through an expansive lawn punctuated by mature shade trees. San Pedro Springs Park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
John Jacob Duerler
Francois P. Giraud



San Pedro Creek Culture Park

This linear urban park was previously a concrete-lined drainage ditch that serviced stormwater runoff in downtown San Antonio. The redesign, begun in 2015 and led by Henry R. Muñoz III, consists of four phases slated for completion in 2020. In phase one of the project (which opened in 2018), the channel was lined with limestone walls and flanked by curvilinear walkways, tiled benches, murals, and beds planted with trees and grasses. This section runs 1.5 miles from the flood tunnel inlet at North Santa Rosa Street to Houston Street, approximately 400 feet from what is believed to be the original site of the first Alamo, Mission San Antonio de Valero, prior to its relocation.

At the northern tip of the park, a limestone plaza is set amid grasses and herbaceous plants with canopies of live oaks. The plaza, arranged in a horse-shoe formation, contains arcing rows of terraced blocks partially submerged in flowing water. The water is fed by the stainless-steel-paneled flood tunnel inlet, whose sheets have been perforated to replicate the night sky as it appeared on May 5, 1718, the founding date of Presidio San Antonio de Béxar. Once complete, the park will traverse more than 2.2 miles and include 60,000 linear feet of new walls, four miles of walking trails, eight restored and redesigned bridges, eleven acres of planting beds, and a variety of artwork depicting scenes from the city's history. The park will contain the 100-year flood plain while transforming the banks of the flood-control channel, which historically served as a barrier between the city's west side and downtown, into walkable green space and a community gathering place.

Landscape Type:
Public Park
Waterfront Development

Landscape Style:
Postmodernist

Designed By:
Henry R. Muñoz III
Muñoz & Company
HDR Engineering
Pape-Dawson Engineers
Alamo Architects
Ford, Powell & Carson



All photos this page courtesy San Antonio River Foundation

Fort Sam Houston

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds –
Military Institution

Designed By:
Alfred Giles
Montgomery Meigs
Suzanne Keith Loechl

Related Landscapes:
Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery

Originating in the 1870s on 40 acres located 2.5 miles northeast of downtown, this army base has since expanded to nearly 3,000 acres situated between Interstate 35 and Harry Wurzbach Highway. The initial phase of construction began in 1876 on the Quadrangle, the historic core of the post, and was completed three years later. Enclosed by a square, grey limestone building, a nine-acre courtyard is centered around a 90-foot-tall limestone clock tower (commissioned by General Montgomery Meigs) and is accessible via an arched gateway at the center of the south facade. Deer, peacocks, and other wildlife have roamed the symmetrical grass plaza punctuated by live oaks since the early 1880s. Architect Alfred Giles designed officers' quarters west of the Quadrangle in 1881, including Pershing House (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1975). Between 1885 and 1891, Giles designed an additional 60 structures, which formed the Infantry Post. The Army Housing Program of 1926 spurred another major period of growth between 1928 and 1939, with the addition of more than 500 structures constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style at the suggestion of architect Atlee Ayres.

Today, the active military base comprises a wide network of roads that connect barracks, offices, residences, training fields, commercial areas, a medical campus, and a golf course. In 2009 it was named headquarters of the Joint Base San Antonio, which comprises more than 35,000 acres throughout the region. Fort Sam Houston was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1975.



All photos this page by Alayna Jordan



Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery

In 1924 a 60-acre burial ground was established beyond the northeastern boundary of Fort Sam Houston. By 1931 it was serving as an annex to the San Antonio National Cemetery and in 1937 became a national cemetery in its own right.

A stone wall borders the cemetery along Harry Wurzbach Road, interrupted by the main entrance gate. Upright white marble headstones are arranged in rows on a north-south axis among a manicured lawn punctuated by mature shade trees. The original 1920s circulation system included an oval-shaped road just within the main entrance. As burials increased, the circulation system was extended in a grid pattern with large avenues flanked by oaks and sycamores. Between the 1970s and 2009 the cemetery was expanded farther east and south along Sam Houston Boulevard, past Nursery Road, to encompass a total of 338 acres. The new sections feature an extension of the gridded circulation system with an administration building, more than 2,000 columbaria niches, and an amphitheater-style assembly area along Fredericksburg Street. In 1947 a separate enclosure for burials of prisoners of war was established at the southeast corner of the property. The cemetery has since grown around this enclosure.

Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs manages the cemetery, where nearly 150,000 people are interred. Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2016, both individually and as a contributing feature of the "Inter-World War National Cemeteries, 1934-1939."

Landscape Type:
Cemetery – National Cemetery
Commemorative Landscape

Related Landscapes:
Fort Sam Houston



All photos this page by Alayna Jordan

Eastside Cemeteries

Photo by William Luther, San Antonio Express-News, ZUMA Press



Encompassing a total of 103 acres east of downtown San Antonio are the Eastside Cemeteries. Starting with the establishment of City Cemetery No. 1 in 1853, a total of 31 cemeteries, ranging in size from 0.06 to 10.6 acres, were created by different groups including the City of San Antonio, the U.S. Government, the United Confederate Veterans, various synagogues, churches, fraternal and religious organizations, and local families.

Arranged on flat sodded terrain featuring live oaks located sporadically throughout, the cemeteries are arranged in a grid with rows of east-facing grave markers running north-south. Each cemetery is bound by either a stone wall or a metal fence, often with decorative piers at their main point of entry. Among the landscapes' many features are funereal sculptures, statues, mausoleums, arches, gateposts, and tombstones. While most of the grave markers are modest, obelisks, vertical monuments, Woodmen of the World tree-trunk markers, and other sculptures can be found throughout.

One noteworthy cemetery in the district is the 3.7-acre rectilinear San Antonio National Cemetery. Established in 1867, the site is entered from the south through a double-door wrought-iron gate supported by four simple block piers each capped with a stone urn. The grave markers are set in rows disrupted by two large vehicular roundabouts and large live oaks on the periphery. Although infrequent, burials do still occur at the cemeteries. The Eastside Cemeteries Historic District and the San Antonio National Cemetery were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

Landscape Type:
Cemetery



All photos this page by John Troy

Ellis Alley Enclave

Located in San Antonio's historic East Side community, this 0.7-acre enclave comprises six buildings that were part of the first African American settlement in San Antonio after Emancipation. In the late 1860s, the land began to be developed by its owners, Dr. Anthony Dignowity and Sam Maverick, who by 1879 had subdivided it into 25-foot-wide lots and sold them exclusively to African Americans. Expanses of lawn are planted with live oaks, while historic lamp posts front each property. To the south of the enclave is a large, abstract, red-painted steel sculpture surrounded by circular planting beds. Located inside the brick wall enclosing the back porch of the property at 214 Chestnut Street is the 2003 painted tile mural, "Founding Mothers," created by Jacqui Dorsey, which depicts three matriarchs of the city's African American community. The construction of Interstate Highway 37 in the late 1970s disrupted vehicular connections to downtown and accelerated the removal of African American businesses and residences. The buildings were purchased by VIA Metropolitan Transit in the late 1990s and, in partnership with the San Antonio Conservation Society, were refurbished to house small businesses, non-profit organizations, and city-service buildings.

Designed By:
Anthony Dignowity
Sam Maverick
Ford, Powell & Carson
Mainstreet Architects, Inc.
Cleary Zimmerman
Calvetti & Associates

Another nearby site important to the East Side's African American heritage is the Samuel and Lillian Sutton home. Built in 1896, the single-story, ranch-style house gave shelter to prominent African Americans who were barred from downtown hotels in the era of segregation, prior to 1965. The list of those who stayed there includes Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Thurgood Marshall.



All photos this page by John Troy



Photo by John Troy



Woodlawn Lake Park

In 1887 George Russ, F. H. Brown, and W. P. Anderson of the West End Town Company purchased 1,000 acres of rural land known as Maverick's Pasture to develop a streetcar suburb three miles northwest of downtown San Antonio. Two years later, they constructed a dam across Alazan Creek, creating a large lake with a small casting pond at its southeast corner, at the terminus of the line. In 1919 the lake and its surroundings comprising a total of 62 acres were donated to the city for the establishment of a public park, subsequently named Woodlawn Lake Park.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Neighborhood Park

Landscape Style:
Picturesque

Designed By:
George Russ
F. H. Brown
W. P. Anderson
Marc Fornes

A 1.5-mile-long asphalt path lined with willows, evergreens, wetland plants, and grass encircles the 30-acre lake, which has a small, ornamental lighthouse at its center. Situated at the park's main entrance on its western side, the 1930s Mission Revival-style Woodlawn Island House is adjacent to fishing docks, picnic pavilions, tennis courts, a basketball court, a playground, parking lots, and a storage shed. The eastern side of the park features a swimming pool, baseball field, playground, and gym. Serving as a beacon, "Spineway," a large-scale, illuminated Modernist sculpture painted in 22 shades of blue and green and designed by Marc Fornes was installed in 2015 on the corner of Cincinnati Avenue and Josephine Tobin Drive, near the main entrance. The small Centennial Garden, containing diverse native plantings, was established at the northwest corner of the park in 2018 to commemorate its 100th anniversary as a public park and provides a habitat for birds, butterflies, and bees.



Photo by Alayna Jordan



Photo courtesy San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department



Photo by Alayna Jordan

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower

Designed by architect Charles Monnot, Jr., and completed in 1931, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower, originally Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Thérèse Church, is one of only 86 basilicas in the United States that bears the papal designation of Minor Basilica. The 2.5-acre site is dedicated to St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the "Little Flower," and was built to promote religious devotion to her. The basilica's most distinct features are its three golden domes—two capping the asymmetrical towers flanking the entrance and a third over the transept—that are visible from Interstate 10, several blocks to the west.

The grounds to the east of the main entrance are radially designed with walkways that form four irregularly shaped grass parcels, three of which have queen palms along North Zarzamora Street. A circular flowerbed with a statue of St. Thérèse is flanked on both sides by semi-circular raised beds filled with perennials. The grounds to the west of the basilica, occupying the remainder of the block, are enclosed by a metal fence and hedges. Entered via gates on Kentucky Avenue, the main garden lies west of a large, concrete apron for parking. The landscape contains a wide variety of flowering plants, large live oaks, conifers, cacti, a vegetable garden, and a butterfly garden, all informally arranged. A shaded patio is paved to resemble a life-size chessboard. The grounds are traversed by meandering, brick-paved walking paths, which define distinct planting areas and garden rooms. The Basilica was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

Landscape Type:
Institutional Grounds – Religious Institution

Designed By:
Charles L. Monnot, Jr.



Photo courtesy Fisher Heck Architects



Photo by John Troy



Photo by John Troy

King William Historic District

Photo by Alayna Jordan



This historic residential neighborhood spans approximately 65 acres between the San Antonio River, East César Chávez Boulevard, South St. Mary’s Street, and South Alamo Street. Originally farmland belonging to the Alamo mission, real estate developers Thomas Devine and Newton Mitchell acquired the land in the 1840s, and a rectangular street grid was laid out during the following decade. As prosperous German immigrants began constructing homes in the area in the second half of the century, the main thoroughfare was named King William Street to honor King Wilhelm I of Prussia.

Grand Victorian, Greek Revival, and Italianate homes were constructed on small rectangular lots with manicured lawns, often bounded by hedges or masonry and wrought-iron fences. Crepe myrtles and other mature shade trees create a lush canopy overhead. The triangular half-acre King William Park, sited near the neighborhood’s northern boundary, features a grass lawn planted with small trees, divided by three concrete and brick walkways that radiate from a tall central gazebo to the corners of the park. By the 1930s, many homes were converted into apartments while others fell to disrepair. Historic preservation efforts began in the 1960s, led by Walter Nold Mathis, who restored Villa Finale in 1967 and subsequently restored fourteen other properties in the neighborhood, leading King William to become the city’s first historic district in 1968. The King William Historic District, of which Villa Finale and Steves Homestead are contributing features, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Landscape Type:
Suburb – Planned Rectilinear
Subdivision

Designed By:
Thomas Devine
Newton Mitchell
Walter Nold Mathis

Related Landscapes:
Villa Finale
Edward Steves Homestead Museum



All photos this page by Alayna Jordan

Villa Finale

Landscape Type:
Garden and Estate –
Picturesque Garden

Landscape Style:
Victorian Gardenesque

Designed By:
Walter Nold Mathis
O'Neil Ford
Fisher Heck Architects
Main Street Architects

Related Landscapes:
King William Historic District

Located along the east bank of the San Antonio River in the King William Historic District, this residential estate was completed in 1876 for hardware merchant Russel Norton. Originally a single-story structure, the home was expanded to its current two-story limestone form, with an Italianate tower, by 1904. After passing through a succession of owners, serving as housing for military wives during World War II, and as a boarding house, the property was acquired in 1967 by Walter Nold Mathis, who named it Villa Finale. Mathis meticulously restored the home and grounds with architect O'Neil Ford as consultant.

The 1.5-acre, rectangular site—which includes the Italianate mansion, carriage house, and gate house—is nestled behind a stone-and-wrought-iron fence. The Mathis-designed landscape includes a lush formal garden south of the mansion. Boxwoods and other perennials surround ornate stone-cut walkways and a Corinthian-columned gazebo. Other features include a pair of griffin statues that flank the gazebo entry, and classical friezes along the southwest wall. A sweeping lawn with mature canopy shade trees spans the remainder of the property. Escarpment live oaks and mountain laurels provide privacy along the perimeter of the site, along with English ivy, which cascades over the fences. In 2004 Mathis donated the estate to the National Trust for Historic Preservation which, with Fisher Heck Architects and Mainstreet Architects, further restored the property and opened it as a museum in 2010. Villa Finale is a contributing feature of the King William Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.



All photos this page by Alayna Jordan

Photo by Alayna Jordan



Edward Steves Homestead Museum

Located along the east bank of the San Antonio River in the King William Historic District, this approximately 1.5-acre residential estate was completed in 1876 for Edward Steves, founder of Steves Lumber Company. The three-story French Renaissance Revival-style mansion is thought to have been designed by architect Alfred Giles.

Landscape Type:
Garden and Estate

Landscape Style:
Beaux Arts / Neoclassical

Designed By:
Alfred Giles

Related Landscapes:
King William Historic District

Formal boxwood parterres flank the tiled path that leads from King William Street to the estate's front entrance. To the northeast of the mansion, the main lawn is inscribed with an oval, red-gravel pathway that encompasses a rectangular, vine-covered pergola and a circular cast-iron fountain acquired at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. Mature palms and shade trees punctuate the manicured grass throughout the landscape, particularly within the large rectangular lawn to the southwest. A yellow wrought-iron fence lines the front of the property along King William Street, and hedges form its border along East Johnson Street.

Edna Steves Vaughn, Steves' granddaughter, donated the property to the San Antonio Conservation Society in 1952, which opened it as a museum two years later. The River House, constructed in 1913 towards the rear of the property, housed an indoor swimming pool (no longer extant), one of the first in the city. Other outbuildings include servants' quarters (used today as the visitor center) and a carriage house, both constructed between 1875 and 1877. The Steves Homestead is a contributing feature of the King William Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.



Photo courtesy San Antonio Conservation Society



Photo by Aiyana Jordan



Photo by Aiyana Jordan

Chris Park at Ruby City

Located in the Arsenal neighborhood southwest of downtown, this nearly square, one-acre park was established in 2005 by Linda Pace to honor her son David Christopher (Chris) Goldbury, who passed away in 1997. Formerly an asphalt parking lot for Tobin Aerial Maps, the commemorative space was designed by local landscape architect Jon Ahrens and features visual experiences by contemporary artist Teresita Fernández.

Enclosed by a metal fence, the lush green space features a number of native and exotic plant species and is accessible through a wisteria vine-covered steel trellis on Camp Street. The trellis leads into a rectangular limestone terrace surrounded by groves of bamboo and Texas sabal palms. The terrace paving is embedded with 55 small LED light fixtures that represent stars in the night sky on the evening Chris Goldbury was born. From the terrace, a meandering walkway, paved with stone blocks and shaded by Texas sabal palms, sago palms, bald cypress, anaqua, and other tree species, leads to a tall grass mound known as Tumble Hill in the northeast quadrant of the park and Studio, an auxiliary exhibition space, in the northwest corner. A short path extends southeast off the main walkway loop to a natchez mock orange shrub, known as "Chris' tree." The path's design includes seven circular glass pavers illuminated with various colors and inscribed with the nursery rhyme "Wednesday's Child." Quarried stone benches throughout the park are engraved with quotations from Chris' personal journal. The Linda Pace Foundation owns and maintains the park, which is one component of the foundation's new contemporary art center campus, Ruby City.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Vest Pocket Park
Commemorative Landscape

Designed By:
Jon Ahrens
Teresita Fernández



All photos this page by Dror Baldinger

Confluence Park

Photo by Casey Dunn



Located on a former construction storage yard approximately two miles south of downtown, this three-acre park is situated along the Mission Reach segment of the River Walk on a bluff overlooking the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek. Designed by LakelFlato, Matsys Design, and Rialto Studio, the park officially opened in 2018.

Curving paved pathways lined with terraced planting beds connect five distinct areas representing different regional ecosystems. A small terraced hill of native grassland is central to the space, surrounded by San Antonio River Improvement Project ecosystem restoration habitat, Trans Pecos/Chihuahua Desert plants, a Texas Oak Conservatory, and a Texas Live Oak Savanna. The park's most prominent feature is a paved terrace with a large open-air pavilion made up of 22 curved concrete "petals" that reach nearly 30 feet high and funnel rainwater into a site-wide water catchment system. The Estela Avery Education Center, a multi-purpose building topped with a green roof and powered by solar panels, is adjacent to the main pavilion. A small pedestrian bridge leads to the main pavilion over a sunken area where rainwater harvesting structures are buried. Three smaller pavilions, each comprising two concrete "petals" that extend nearly twenty feet high, create smaller gathering spaces across the site, which also features a permeable parking lot. Taking full advantage of the site, the park hosts a variety of educational programs led by the San Antonio River Foundation (SARF), which connects people to their surroundings while fostering environmental stewardship.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Neighborhood Park

Designed By:
LakelFlato
Matsys Design
Rialto Studio



All photos this page by Casey Dunn

Phil Hardberger Park

In 2007 the City of San Antonio purchased this 311-acre parcel to establish a nature preserve and recreational park. Located approximately ten miles north of downtown and surrounded by dense suburban development, the site was part of the Voelcker family dairy farm, the last working farm in what was once a predominantly agricultural area known as Buttermilk Hill. Named after Phil Hardberger, a former mayor of San Antonio who advocated for the project, the park opened to the public in 2010.

Landscape Type:
Public Park – Large Municipal Park

Designed By:
Stephen Stimson Associates
D.I.R.T. Studio
Rialto Studio

Stephen Stimson Associates and D.I.R.T. Studio developed the master plan to create a "cultivated wild landscape" with an expansive network of nature trails and other recreational amenities. The six-lane Wurzbach Parkway divides the park into two distinct sections: northeast and southwest. Cedar elm woodlands with scattered groves of oak cover the northeastern tract, which includes the restored Voelcker Homestead (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2014). Texas brushland extends across most of the southwestern tract, punctuated by live oaks and exposed limestone. As part of the master plan, oak savanna is being reintroduced to the southwestern section, which also features a five-acre open field and basketball courts. An Urban Ecology Center, designed by Stephen Stimson Associates and Rialto Studio, was completed in 2013 and provides recreational and educational space with pathways and overlooks. Slated for completion in 2019, an innovative 150-foot-wide land bridge, designed by Rialto Studio, will span Wurzbach Parkway to connect trails on both sides of the park.



Photo courtesy Rialto Studio



Photo courtesy Rialto Studio



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Photo courtesy Phil Hardberger Park Conservancy



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