

# BRACKENRIDGE PARK: TRADITIONS ENDANGERED?



*An inclusive and open public process is what I am seeking when changes are being made to historic spaces that belong to everyone in our city.* —María Antonietta Berriozábal

Most San Antonians of any age or any epoch have memories of wonderful Brackenridge Park. I sure do! Recently, a friend sent me information on a recent meeting held to discuss a Master Plan for that special place. The missive raised my concern that major changes are being proposed for “Brack”, name we use for our beloved park, but when someone asked the presenters at the meeting I discuss below if a presentation would be made to the communities who actually use the park the answer was “those people do not attend meetings.” This is plain wrong.

Media reports indicate that about 75 people showed up to a public meeting held at the Botanical Gardens on April 26, 2016 sponsored by the Brackenridge Park Conservancy. As my friend described those present—they were “upper middle class to affluent white people” who, in this person’s

opinion, ‘never use the park’ “. A person from the “city’s transportation department” was in charge of a sign-in sheet.

The Project Team Leader Jim Gray from rialtostudios.com, a landscape architect, stated that this was the “second official hearing”. Gray was joined at the meeting by the architectural firms involved in the planning, Alamo Architects and Ford Powell Carson.

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## The Plan presented was:

1. That several multi-story parking garages will be built by Pape Dawson all around the perimeter of Brackenridge Park: at Alamo Stadium, the Doseum, near the golf course, at USAA at Hildebrand/Broadway, by the Sunken Gardens and other sites.





**2. Traffic will be closed into the park, except one or two one-way streets.**

**3. There will be no parking or driving in the park**

**4. Persons attending the park will have to ride a tram to get into the park.**

**5. A "Grand Lawn" will be created where the picnic areas now sit. Avenue A will be closed to traffic. Park attendees will walk in or park on River Road and then walk in.**

**6. A charge for Easter picnickers of perhaps \$50.00 will be charged for their picnic and camping areas. "Let them make reservations," it was stated.**

**WILL OUR TRADITIONS CONTINUE?**



Easter Picnic at Brack and other celebrations is a long held tradition. Those who use the park the most should be part of discussions on any modifications or outright changes.

tions or outright changes.

Unfortunately, what I continue to see is that while public spaces are being improved at public expense the communities who traditionally have used those spaces are no longer welcomed. From what I have seen so far, it seems Brackenridge Park is going the same way.

In all honesty what is very difficult to take is that this is one more example of

the gentrification that is occurring in our inner city and of the loss of understanding of the right of all people to enjoy the public spaces of our city—the Commons. It's privatization or removing direct accountability from our elected leaders through the creation of entities that manage these spaces. Hays Street Bridge. Hemisfair Park. Municipal Auditorium. Main Plaza. Where are we going?

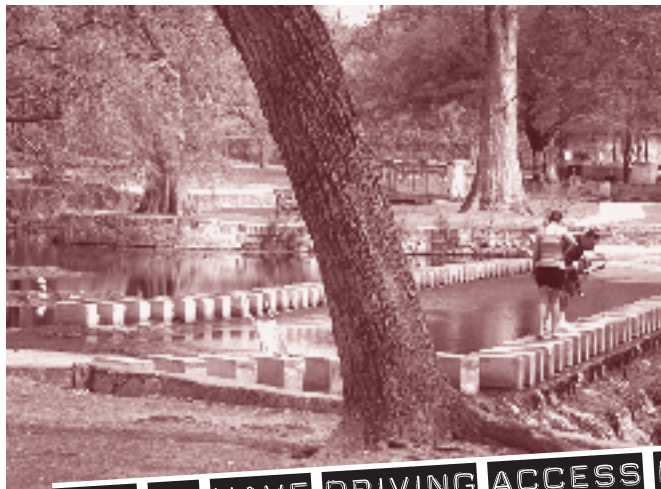


**CAN WE BRING OUR OWN PITS?**

After receiving this information I went to the Brackenridge Conservancy website and found the information on the master plan. I also found this article from the Rivard Report which reports on the proposed park master plan. It also includes a link to the Master Plan. However, neither this article nor the Conservancy website had the details provided at the April 26 meeting that the attendee provided for me. At that meeting even a developer's name was mentioned for the actual work - Pape Dawson. <http://bit.ly/rivardmeeting>

Worthy of note is that supposedly some of the estimated \$150,000,000 cost for the Master Plan

will be paid with 2017 bond funds. I can appreciate that there is investment needed in Brackenridge Park because it has long been neglected. However, it is a park that continues to be used, largely by the Latino community, and this has been the case for generations. The Family



**WILL WE HAVE DRIVING ACCESS INTO BRACK?**





My questions and comments at this point are:

1. Have only two public meetings been held on improvements of such an important park?
2. If the plan is going to be taken to the city in June, why have public hearings not been held in the neighborhoods where people live who frequent this park, particularly patrons from our east, west side and south sides?
3. Will the camp outs before Easter Sunday be eliminated?
4. If the Brackenridge Park's changes/improvements will be paid for with bond funds, it makes no sense to exclude the users of the park whose vote the city needs for bond issue passage in 2017.
5. On the other hand if the plans are to pay for the work with private monies, that means more privatization of public sites and that is going down on a very slippery slope.

In light of the climate of divisiveness we are experiencing at the national level these days the sense that I received of the meeting held April 26 is very troubling. It is exclusion and lack of respect for users of the park.

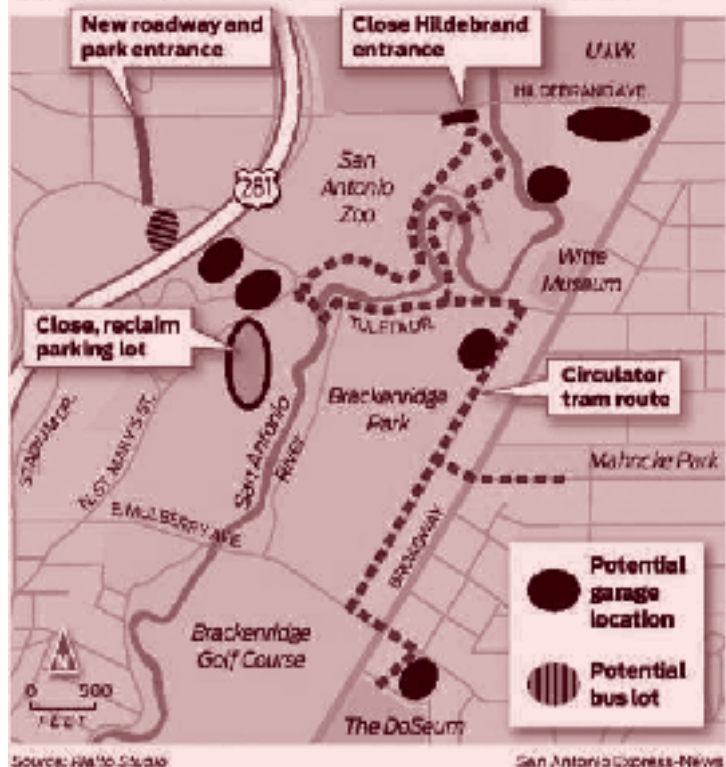
That Pape Dawson of Vista Ridge fame is also involved in another moneymaking endeavor gives me serious pause to say the least.

I have asked Councilman Roberto Treviño for more information and answers to my questions. I have heard from him and he will be responding.

I urge you to stay informed on this very critical issue for our community. Contact your council representative and

### Fewer cars planned for Brackenridge Park

The city plans to make the downtown park more friendly to people and the environment, while cutting down on vehicle traffic. It would close a central parking lot and replace it with at least three shared-use parking garages, with possible locations shown here. The plan calls for a rubber-tired tram that would shuttle people to and from their cars. A look at the plan:



ask for more public hearings.

If some of the proposed changes take effect it will mean that thousands of families who have used the park for generations will not be able to do so in the future. At the same time they have had no opportunity for input into the changes.

**Note:** "As the June issue of La Voz de Esperanza was going to press, I learned from Councilman Roberto Trevino of District I that in response to community concerns, there are plans for more public input that will be inclusive of other council districts. We will keep you informed." Check [www.esperanzacenter.org](http://www.esperanzacenter.org) for updates or upcoming meetings on Brackenridge Park.

