



EVELYN'S PARK

Conservancy

GIVE TO GROW CAMPAIGN

Case for Support Executive Summary

Background

Evelyn's Park comes from a rich history of beauty, community and nature. Before coming into existence, the Park's five-acre land was home to Teas Nursery, a celebrated institution that beautified Houston by planting over one million trees throughout the city during its 100-years in business. As the first business in Bellaire, the Nursery and its iconic flagship location was synonymous with the community itself. The site's significance is now cemented through its designation as an historical landmark by the The Texas Historical Commission and the richness of the past is echoed in the spirit of today's Evelyn's Park. Named in honor of Evelyn Rubenstein, a longtime Bellaire resident and philanthropist who shared a love for the outdoors and the simple things that make it beautiful, Evelyn's Park is a thriving and valued asset belonging to the entire community. Though publicly-owned by the City of Bellaire, the Park is privately operated and funded through Evelyn's Park Conservancy, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization—bringing the best of city resources, community philanthropy and combined passion together to ensure the mission of connecting people to the city, to their surroundings, and to each other is fulfilled. Every day.

Evelyn's Park Today—Vibrant and Vital

Nestled on five acres of greenspace, Evelyn's Park offers a place to relax, reset, and rekindle connections with the outdoors and each other. With beautifully designed spaces and engaging programming, the Park appeals to audiences of all ages and interests—it is at once a quiet refuge and a flourishing place for community, a fresh destination and a perennial part of our city's history. While connection with nature has always been an important part of a vibrant community, perhaps now more than ever a calming, serene and safe outdoor space is a valuable addition to our everyday life. It nourishes our soul, enriches our community, provides solace in times of distress, and connects us to one another.



Since opening in 2017, Evelyn's Park has quickly become a destination greenspace for residents in both the City of Bellaire and Greater Houston area. An estimated 267,000 people live within a 5-mile radius of Evelyn's Park, which includes the City of Bellaire and eight super neighborhoods including Braeswood Place, University Place, Greenway-Upper Kirby area, Afton Oaks-River Oaks area, Braeburn, Meyerland, Gulfton, and Sharpstown. With approximately 10,000 monthly visitors and 15-20 unique monthly programs, Evelyn's Park has woven itself into the fabric of daily life.

Programs, Partnerships and Milestone Moments

Evelyn's Park has strategically built its ongoing programs to enhance the surrounding communities by offering something for all ages, free of charge. Near-daily offerings fall into one or more of the Park's strategic program pillars: ***Health, Wellness and Fitness, Education, Arts and Culture***, and ***Sustainable Community***.

The Park's free programming is both purposefully sought out and pleasantly discovered, making the exploration of Evelyn's Park and its program offerings a dynamic, destination experience. Classes like Tai Chi, Line Dance, Boot Camp, Yoga, Pilates and Gymboree draw neighbors desiring Health, Wellness and Fitness in an outdoor setting. Signature events like the Local Music Festival, Friday Night Live Music, Earth Day Celebration or Evelyn's Bark draw visitors from the surrounding super neighborhoods and showcase the commitment to the program pillars of Education and Arts and Culture, while local vendor markets enhance our belief in building a sustainable community.

Arts and Culture, Education, Health, Wellness and Fitness each play a vital and multi-functional role in the Park. Evelyn's Park is home to art installations that are created by renowned artists as well as homegrown talent from the community. The distinctive *Alice in Wonderland*-themed sculpture titled "Move One Place On" is the only one of its kind outside Central Park. It is both beautiful and interactive, encouraging visitors to admire its artistry, climb on it, touch it and interact with it in order to find the over 150 elements amidst its beauty. The "Butterfly Wall" was crafted by a local artisan—part recognition for donors of Phase I and part community art project—it serves as art installation and community engagement. The multi-purpose intention of each Park element ensures the Park and its programming meet a variety of needs for the community and the Conservancy is a thoughtful steward of the resources provided.

Beyond scheduled programs and hosted events, the Park has become a "go-to" destination for everyday moments and major milestones. Whether it is friends meeting



for coffee at our onsite restaurant, Betsy's, a community candlelight vigil to find comfort and togetherness in a moment of despair, or planned celebrations like birthday parties, weddings and graduations—the Park welcomes a diverse array of groups and gatherings. Our unique spaces, onsite catering options and beautiful grounds make the Park a popular event venue and those rentals help sustain operations and support the mission-based program offerings.

Community partners and volunteers play a critical role in the execution of community activities, programs and sustainable operations. Local partnerships with Houston Family Magazine, Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, City of Bellaire and Texas Children's Hospital bring vital awareness to family-fun days and art-in-the-park series events, while the Houston Texans NFL football team hosts their Play 60 fitness program at Evelyn's Park to promote healthy lifestyles and choices for children. Evelyn's Park Conservancy is dependent on the investment of partners to help fuel progress. Our volunteers provide countless hours to ensure that programs and festivals are well organized and our Teen Ambassador Program draws teens in grades 7-12 from 10 zip codes who are eager for leadership opportunities.

Fulfilling Our Vision, Deepening Our Impact

With proven success and growing demand, the Park is ready to expand and continue bringing our values of community, nature and family to life. The 2011 original master plan for Evelyn's Park included an abundance of shade structures, water features, and play places for kids of all ages. That vision has been reinforced through three years of community engagement and feedback.

In early 2019 the Evelyn's Park Conservancy Board of Directors began working with SWA Group, the international landscape architecture firm who created the Park's original design, to create Phase II of Evelyn's Park. The guideposts of Play, Shade/Seating and Water are quite clear in their immediate function, however each one also supports the Park's long-term goals of *accessibility*—creating a park that is open to all; *sustainability*—ensuring the Park's operations and facilities are financially secure; and *conservation*—achieving a net-zero impact on the environment.

Though the Park spans five acres and offers numerous amenities, it was thoughtfully designed to create a cohesive aesthetic that mimics an outdoor living room--a large space with many intimate vignettes that are unique and inviting. The intention is to ensure the Park is, at all times, a place for everyone. Whether you are seeking playful moments, quiet



solitude, wide open spaces or simple beauty, each element within the Park can be continually repurposed. The function of such deliberate design will allow for new opportunities to enhance our rental facilities in each part of the Park, contributing to the financial sustainability of the Conservancy and solidifying the future of the Park.

These elements—combined with new features in the functional areas of Play, Shade/Seating and Water—will fulfill the vision of Evelyn’s Park and bring vibrant, fun and engaging experiences to a vital Houston greenspace.



Aerial view of Evelyn's Park with outline of Phase II location



PLAY

The concept of PLAY is essential to the enjoyment of all visitors. Two marquee play structures—Discovery Hills and Mount Bellaire—are composed of multiple playground elements that are nestled within the larger footprint to ensure kids, parents and guardians of all ages and abilities can experience unstructured and interactive play in a new way each time they visit. Extensively researched and meticulously designed, all elements exist to develop fine and gross motor skills, core strength and balance.

Discovery Hills serves as the primary playscape for younger children. Based on research that encourages imaginative play to develop future critical thinking skills, Discovery Hills offers a world of fun--giant mounds to jump and play on, massive grass reeds, a fan slide and tunnel, a majestic wooden barn swallow, and towering lily pads. Play spinners and a sand pit provide multiple opportunities for parents to engage with their children, and numerous seating areas can accommodate a variety of needs and provide space for the whole family.



Mount Bellaire is designed with older children in mind. Still rooted in the research of imaginative play, Mount Bellaire offers more challenge and adventure. Complete with a giant mound to climb and explore, steppers, a double slide, and a log jam play structure--which was designed to mimic fallen trees you might find on a trip to a state park. A large shade structure keeps the slide cool as kids race their friends.





SHADE

The need for SHADE in Houston's summer months is unmistakable and the prioritization of shaded seating spaces is critical to year-round programming and the visitor experience. In the community feedback surveys, community members cited the need for shade and seating to comfortably watch kids or grandkids play or to simply congregate with friends to relax, eat and play games. Structures will incorporate environmentally sustainable practices and new trees will add beauty, sustainability and needed shade throughout.

As the most notable architectural shade structure at Evelyn's Park, the **Trevilion**--which is part trellis, part pavilion--offers a large shady seating space in front of the Great Lawn. Showcasing sleek painted metal, warm woods, and stainless steel metal cables, this architecturally engaging structure acts as a gateway into the park from Bellaire Boulevard. Bench seats attached to metal cables allow park guests to sway as they sit under the fans to create a comfortable, fun and cool space.



The **Solar Pavilion** is a shady refuge with a beautiful architectural character. Supporting 14,000 watts of solar panel power, the Pavilion keeps park visitors cool during the hot summer months in an environmentally sustainable fashion. In addition, water collected from the roof runs into a cistern which helps create water pressure for the irrigation system. The Solar Pavilion completes our quest toward net-zero status.





WATER

WATER is a key element in establishing Evelyn's Park as a city-wide, year-round destination. It is calming and serene, interactive and fun for the senses, and it is critical to the sustainable ecology of the Park.

The **Splash n' Play Area** is composed of an intricate paving pattern symbolizing the elements of a flower. With jets and lights, this space is a fun and engaging place for kids and families during the day and at night it offers unmatched aesthetic beauty. The Splash n' Play Area is centrally located within the Park and when the fountains are not in use, this dynamic space can also serve as a plaza for events.



The **Meadow Garden** is a perfect example of an element that serves multiple purposes—water, play, sustainability and conservation. It contains a lawn suitable for small gatherings, cultural events and performances. A diverse palette of meadow planting attracts wildlife, provides habitats for many species and promotes a wide variety of ecological functions. Water drains through a cobble swale and into plantings, purifying stormwater before it is returned to the soil. In addition, the entire lawn is sunken to collect and drain large volumes of water in a sustainable way.

