

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Parque Zaragoza

Other name/site number: Zaragosa Park

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 2608 Gonzales Street

City or town: Austin

State: Texas

County: Travis

Not for publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this

(☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (☒ meets ☐ does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D



State Historic Preservation Officer

4/15/22
Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public/local

Category of Property: District

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
3	0	sites
4	6	structures
0	0	objects
8	7	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor recreation, Sports facility
LANDSCAPE: Park

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor recreation, Sports facility, Music facility
LANDSCAPE: Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification: No Style

Principal Exterior Materials: Concrete, brick, metal/steel

Narrative Description: See continuation sheets 7 through 11

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Ethnic Heritage-Hispanic (Mexican); Recreation/Entertainment; Social History

Period of Significance: 1931-1973

Significant Dates: 1931, 1933, 1941, 1973

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): N/A

Architect/Builder: CCC/NYA, Austin Parks and Recreation Department, neighborhood volunteers

Narrative Statement of Significance: See continuation sheets 12-24

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

See continuation sheets 25-27

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*, Austin)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government (Parks and Recreation Department Annex)
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: Austin History Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: approximately 15 acres

Coordinates

Datum: NAD83

1. 30.263330° -97.712389°
2. 30.262193° -97.708864°
3. 30.261077° -97.709220°
4. 30.261566° -97.710617°
5. 30.260896° -97.710938°
6. 30.261873° -97.713223°

Verbal Boundary Description: Parque Zaragoza is bounded by one- and two-story residences to the north, North Pleasant Valley Road to the east, restaurant and retail buildings to the southeast, Gonzales Street to the south, and Pedernales Street to the west. The nominated property is identified by the Travis CAD as two parcels: Property 192207 (ALL OF OLT 24 DIVISION A), and Property 192208 (6AC OF OLT 25 DIVISION A), with nominated parcel lines extending to street curbing.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes all property historically associated with Parque Zaragoza since its acquisition by the city of Austin in 1931, as well as an adjacent lot with associated historic use, officially annexed by the city for park use in 1970.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Kalan Contreras, based in part on draft nominations by Andrew Leith and Vangie Cheryl Ulila
Organization: City of Austin Historic Preservation Office
Street & number: P.O. Box 1088
City or Town: Austin, Texas 78767
Email: kalan.contreras@austintexas.gov
Telephone: 512-974-2727
Date: Jun. 24, 2021

Additional Documentation

Maps: See continuation sheets 28-30

Additional items: See continuation sheets 31-62

Photographs: See continuation sheets 63-80

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Photographs

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas
Photographed March 2022 by Gregory Smith

Photo 1
Bathhouse and Pool
Camera facing east

Photo 2
Bathhouse entrances
Camera facing east

Photo 3
Bathhouse west arched entrance
Camera facing east

Photo 4
Bathhouse east elevation
Camera facing northwest

Photo 5
Bathhouse south gated doorway
Camera facing north

Photo 6
South wing bathhouse interior
Camera facing north

Photo 7
Pool
Camera facing southwest

Photo 8
Baseball field, from east fence
Camera facing west

Photo 9
Baseball field, from west fence
Camera facing southeast

Photo 10
Baseball stands
Camera facing west

Photo 11
Baseball stands
Camera facing south

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Photo 12
Basketball Court and Bandstand
Camera facing south

Photo 13
Bandstand
Camera facing south

Photo 14
Creek with west bridge
Camera facing northwest

Photo 15
Creek with east bridge
Camera facing southeast

Photo 16
Creek with west bridge
Camera facing south

Photo 17
Picnic area
Camera facing east

Photo 18
1996 Recreation Center
Camera facing north

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Description

Parque Zaragoza in Austin, Texas, is a 15-acre public park at 2608 Gonzales Street, owned and maintained by the city of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. Nestled within an East Austin neighborhood, the park is surrounded by modest one- and two-story residences to the north, Gonzales Street to the south, North Pleasant Valley Road to the east, and Pedernales Street to the west. This neighborhood has been occupied by predominantly Mexican American families since its development in the early- to mid-twentieth century. The L-shaped property, bisected by Boggy Creek, comprises a large parcel to the north and a smaller one to the south.¹ Mature oaks shade green space, used for picnics and outdoor gatherings, to the northeast. The northwest quadrant contains a 1933 pool and 1941 bathhouse, both contributing elements to the historic district that retain a high degree of integrity. The pool remains in seasonal use. A playground, bandstand, basketball courts, and volleyball courts lie roughly in the park's center. The south parcel includes a baseball field and bleachers and a modern recreation center (built in 1996) with parking. A steel footbridge spans the creek northeast of the baseball field, while another links the recreation center to the park's northern amenities. A concrete and steel bandstand, located to the northeast and across Boggy Creek from the new recreation center and erected during the early 1970s, occupies the site of an earlier wooden bandstand donated from nearby East Avenue Park in the late 1930s.² Since its establishment as a City of Austin recreational area in 1931—after years of petitioning by Mexican American community leaders—Parque Zaragoza has continuously served the surrounding neighborhood, as well as Austin's larger Mexican American community.³ As physical evidence of Mexican American Austinites' successful advocacy against institutional racism, the park symbolizes the power of grassroots organizing and persistence. Today, it remains a recreation destination and venue for sports, civic activities, fiestas, and education.

Parque Zaragoza contains a variety of built resources in addition to public green space. The bathhouse, pool, basketball court, bandstand, and undeveloped picnic areas retain enough integrity to contribute to the historic district. While other park structures and objects have been replaced and added over the years as the community's needs changed, a few remain in the relative locations of earlier resources.

Swimming Pool and Pumphouse

Parque Zaragoza's swimming pool (contributing structure) was built in 1933 as a segregated public facility. Though it was one of the smallest city pools, it remained the only public pool open to Mexican Americans for much of the twentieth century, drawing record crowds to the park each summer. The concrete pool in the northwest quadrant of the park measures approximately 100 feet by 40 feet.⁴ A concrete sidewalk punctuated by depth markers and benches and edged by a grassy lawn surrounds the pool. Three-quarters of the site are enclosed by a chain-link fence topped with razor wire, with the northeast corner wrapped by the 1941 bathhouse. While the pool's interior has been resurfaced and its ladders, lifeguard stands, benches, and diving boards have been replaced, its design, location, and function remain intact.⁵ It receives regular maintenance to accommodate seasonal use. A shed-roofed CMU pumphouse and tank (noncontributing structure) are adjacent to the east sidewalk.

¹ Vangie Cheryl Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza," National Register of Historic Places nomination (Unpublished report, University of Texas, 2018), Section 7.

² Jen Massing-Harris, unpublished interview by author, Austin, February 2020; Amanda Covo et al., "The History of Rosewood Park," Austin Parks Foundation, February 5, 2020.

³ "About Parque Zaragoza Neighborhood Park," Parque Zaragoza Neighborhood Alliance, 2019, <http://www.zarogazaparkneighborhoodassn.org/parque-zaragoza-history.html>.

⁴ Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas*, University of North Carolina Press, 2011, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9780807877876_behnken; Nina Hernandez, "Austin's Pool System Will Collapse If We Don't Save It," The Austin Chronicle, June 1, 2018, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/news/2018-06-01/austins-pool-system-will-collapse-if-we-dont-save-it>; Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁵ Andrew Leith, "Parque Zaragoza," National Register of Historic Places nomination (Unpublished report, University of Texas, 2014), Section 7.

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Bathhouse

Parque Zaragoza's bathhouse (contributing building) was constructed around 1941 by community volunteers and National Youth Association program members with Parks Department support. It abuts the northeast corner of the swimming pool. In addition to its basic function as a restroom, shower, and changing area for bathers, the bathhouse—referred to as a “shelter house and caretaker's unit”⁶ in period documentation—was historically used as both the caretaker's residence and an all-purpose community center. Its character-defining features include expansive horizontal windows, low-relief brick coping and windowsills, long and low massing, and pointed-arch entrances on the pool-facing (west) elevation. The one-story L-plan building's shorter east-west wing measures approximately 47 feet in length, while the longer north-south wing measures 69 feet. It is 10'6” in height to its flat roofline.⁷ Its slab foundation meets a sloping sidewalk at each door, which have all been modified to meet ADA requirements.

The building hugs the fenced pool area, with parking areas to the north and west and a new (2017) playground across a grassy lawn to the east. Oaks shade the parking areas. There is evidence of an original gravel drive and small parking area in the lawn between the bathhouse and playground, adjacent to the current main entrance on the east façade. When community meetings or celebrations grew too large for the activity areas within the bathhouse, organizers often set up tables in this space; all were welcome to participate.

The bathhouse is long and low, clad in red street-paver-style brick with pale grey mortar in a running bond that highlights the building's horizontality.⁸ Brick coping at the parapet extends approximately one inch in relief, with replacement metal scuppers beneath it. Door and window openings are framed in steel and covered with painted steel grilles. What appears to be a structural steel C-channel spans each grille.

Most windows have low-relief brick sills that reflect the simple coping; however, two large windows at the east elevation have unadorned openings that sit only four brick courses—less than one foot—above ground level. To the right of these are a wooden door; a smaller vertically-oriented window of medium height with a missing sash; a painted metal door without grilles but covered by a flat-roof portico with two steel-pipe supports (non-original); and a long narrow window whose sill sits roughly halfway up the building, further emphasizing its horizontality.

The north elevation of the building's short (east-west) wing contains two high-sill horizontal windows on the left and two medium-height, vertically oriented windows on the right. Each window's dimensions match their counterparts on the east elevation. The east-west wing's west elevation has no openings.

At the interior corner of the L, two gated pointed arches provide access to the pool from the building's interior changing areas. The arched openings, facing west and south, are the building's most notable character-defining features. A long window extending almost to ground level lies to the left of the south-facing arch on the east-west wing, similar in dimension and placement to the two largest windows at the east elevation. Three identical windows adorn the east wall adjacent to the arch on the north-south wing. Each window has a simple brick sill to match the coping and sills on the building's smaller windows.

The north-south wing's south-facing end wall is obscured by a large, fenced plastic water tank, but it appears to have a door and a large window of similar proportions. All openings, save the small medium-height window on the east elevation and the arched entryway on the west elevation, are boarded up beneath their grilles.

⁶ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1941 Annual Report.

⁷ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁸ Ibid.

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The interior originally featured a large multipurpose activities room, a two-room apartment for a permanent caretaker, and restrooms. The caretaker's lodgings may have occupied what is today the northwest activities room. The interior of the pool house is made up of five main rooms. The first is a large 17'-8" by 39' activities room to the south. The primary point of egress in this room is to the east, a secondary point of egress [is] to the south, and an interior hallway [is] to the north. This room is open, and contains a small utilities closet in the southwest corner, two large east-facing windows, one south-facing widow, and three large west-facing windows that overlook the pool. The walls are exposed brick. A small central office (13' by 7'-4") sits just north of the south activities room. This space has an east-facing exterior window as well as north- and south-facing windows that may have been used for ticket collecting/admissions. A hall extends to the west of the office. The second main point of exterior egress opens onto a small porch with a flat concrete and steel awning that was likely a later addition. One restroom occupies the northeast corner of the building and contains window openings. Another] restroom along the north wall contains one long window. A small utilities closet is located along the east-west hall to the west is another deeper storage closet. Finally, the far northwest room is 18' by 19'-3". This space is painted red and features a built-in sink in the northern corner of the east wall. Two small windows (each 38" wide by 40" tall) are centered along the north wall and one large (75" wide by 53" tall) window is centered along the south wall, facing the pool. The opening into the room, on the south corner of the east wall, has been enlarged and remains unfinished.⁹

The interior floor is plain reinforced concrete, elevated approximately one inch above the natural grade line. The interior walls appear to recycle broken red bricks due to the varying dimensions and pattern. The low windows have a protruding concrete sill at the interior, which looks like a later addition. The ceiling on the longer wing is missing, while the shorter wing's ceiling is covered with plywood.¹⁰

The bathhouse's interior has been altered continuously throughout the course of its lifetime to suit the changing needs of the city and park patrons. The bathhouse shows signs of deferred maintenance inside and out, likely exacerbated since its 2015 closure. Aside from the missing eastern window, non-original portico, and replacement doors, the exterior building envelope is intact. It still clearly conveys its significance.

Playground, courts, and bandstand

The Parks and Recreation Department constructed a new playground and climbing structure (noncontributing structure) in 2018 to the southeast of the bathhouse. Beyond it lies an asphalt basketball court constructed during the 1940s (contributing structure), a volleyball court (noncontributing structure), and a 1970s bandstand (contributing structure). The bandstand is located just north of Boggy Creek on the site of an early twentieth-century wooden structure donated from East Avenue Park during the 1930s. Its painted-brick platform, rectangular in shape and around three feet high, sits atop a concrete pad. It is covered by a corrugated metal shed roof supported by painted steel pipes. Painted metal guardrails enclose three sides of the platform. A small brick storage room with a painted metal door and flat cement roof projects from the western side of the stage, flanked by concrete steps. Though the bandstand's construction date is estimated at 1973,¹¹ it contributes as a recent-past addition to the park for its continued use as a platform for Tejano and Conjunto artists, and as the last construction project during the cohesive era of community-led improvements to the park in the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, as one of Parque Zaragoza's community-initiated and city-implemented construction projects, it is likely that funding and approval efforts began prior to the fifty-year mark. The year 1973 represents a logical end point and less arbitrary date than the fifty-year mark. As it extends only one year beyond the fifty-year mark at the anticipated time of listing there is no requirement for meeting Criteria Consideration G.¹²

⁹ Adapted from Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

¹⁰ Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza."

¹¹ Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza."

¹² National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. "Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance within the Last 50 Years," 41.

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According to a community member with longstanding ties to the park, baseball games were originally held on the current site of the basketball court.¹³ The volleyball courts cannot be dated to the period of significance.

Picnic areas

Next to the courts and bandstand, the park's natural picnic area (contributing site) sprawls northeast. Over 400 mature trees¹⁴ shade this grassy meadow dotted with benches and picnic tables and crisscrossed by dirt walking paths. This site has been used as a gathering space for Mexican and Mexican American cultural celebrations since at least 1931. This natural landscape continues along Boggy Creek's meandering path to the west within an area annexed in 1970, which extends the park's usable space and retains enough integrity to contribute to the historic district.

Ball fields

In the late 1940s and early '50s, park advocates successfully campaigned for the construction of a baseball field (contributing site) in its southwestern quadrant. Today, the fenced field contains a 1947 grandstand (contributing structure).¹⁵ A softball field was originally adjacent to the baseball diamond, but it was removed to make space for the new recreation center in the mid-1990s. New fencing has been added to the baseball field to provide for continuous use, but it retains its original use and placement.

Boggy Creek retaining walls and bridges

Boggy Creek, a tributary of the Colorado River, bisects Parque Zaragoza. Its path has changed over time as floods, erosion, and human intervention have molded the landscape. Original wooden footbridges have been replaced by two arched steel truss bridges. One crosses the creek west of the baseball field, while the other abuts the recreation center at its north elevation. The creek bed has been reinforced with concrete; modern terraced rubble-fill retaining walls buttress its steep banks. The bridges and retaining walls do not contribute to the district.

Recreation center

After decades of lobbying by community advocates and residents, a new recreation center (noncontributing) was constructed on the site of the former softball field in 1996. Suggestions from the neighborhood incorporated into this project include outdoor restrooms accessible from the park. Construction of the project was a cooperative effort of the Department of Public Works and Transportation and Austin Parks and Recreation Department at a cost of \$2.3 million. The new center held its grand opening on May 5, 1996, during the Cinco de Mayo celebration.¹⁶ Accessed via Gonzales Street, this stone veneer building houses a gymnasium, classrooms and meeting rooms, offices, and a kitchen. Curved metal rooflines and clerestory windows add light and visual interest to the building's interior. Its main hall is ornamented with murals by local artist Fidencio Duran, whose work focuses on telling the stories of his family and community histories. Many of Duran's Austin murals honor the contributions of Hispanic East Austinites.¹⁷

¹³ "About Parque Zaragoza," PZNA

¹⁴ Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

¹⁵ Minutes of the City Council of Austin, Texas, January 23, 1947; "Survey Ordered for New Tennis Courts Given City," *The Austin Statesman*, January 24, 1947.

¹⁶ *Austintexas.gov*, <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/parque-zaragoza-recreation-center>

¹⁷ "Fidencio Duran," <https://www.fidencioduran.com/welcome.html>

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Summary of Resources

Map Key	Name	Type	Date	Integrity	Status
I.A.	Swimming pool	Structure	1933	Yes	Contributing
I.B.	Pumphouse	Structure	ca. 2000s	N/A	Noncontributing
II.	Bathhouse	Building	1941	Yes	Contributing
III.A.	Playground	Structure	2018	N/A	Noncontributing
III.B.	Basketball court	Structure	ca. 1940s	Yes	Contributing
III.C.	Volleyball court	Structure	ca. 1970s	No	Noncontributing
III.D.	Bandstand	Structure	ca. 1973	Yes	Contributing
IV.A.	Picnic area	Site	1931	Yes	Contributing
IV.B.	Picnic area annex	Site	1970	Yes	Contributing
V.	Ball fields	Site	ca.1947-1950s	Yes	Contributing
V.A.	Grandstand	Structure	1947	Yes	Contributing
VI.A-B.	Footbridges (2)	Structures	ca. 1996	N/A	Noncontributing
VI.C.	Retaining wall	Structure	ca. 1996	N/A	Noncontributing
VII.	Recreation center	Building	1996	N/A	Noncontributing

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Statement of Significance

For over eighty years, Parque Zaragoza has served as a gathering place for Mexican American Austinites to celebrate their cultural heritage, honor their civic accomplishments, and educate younger generations on the importance of cultural identity and community involvement. Established in 1931 after extensive grassroots activism by community leaders, the park is a physical reminder of the resilience and fortitude of those who fought for a uniquely Mexican American space during an era rife with segregation, institutional disenfranchisement, and systemic racism. The park's intact layout and contributing sites, building, and structures tell how community advocacy shaped East Austin's landscape and Austin's cultural identity throughout the twentieth century. As we acknowledge the struggles and triumphs of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Austin's tumultuous history, it is essential to honor their contributions to the city's civic, economic, social, and built fabric. Parque Zaragoza exemplifies these contributions and is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic (Mexican), Recreation/Entertainment, and Social History at the local level of significance. Parque Zaragoza's period of significance is 1931-1973, slightly exceeding the fifty-year point at the time of nomination; the year 1973 marks the last construction project in a cohesive era of community-led improvements.

Austin's Mexican Roots: Emigration from Mexico

Mexican culture flourished in Central Texas since long before the establishment of the Republic of Texas and subsequent statehood, but many Austin residents trace their roots to those who arrived from Mexico within the last 150 years. Generations of Austinites have struggled for representation in the face of societal prejudice and systemic governmental discrimination against people of color. Parque Zaragoza's story begins with those who fought for change in East Austin at a time when equality seemed impossible. The city's cultural landscape—and Parque Zaragoza's significance as a touchstone of Mexican American heritage within it—is entwined with their hardships and triumphs.

East Austin is located east of Interstate Highway 35 from downtown and north of the Colorado River. Before the Civil War, Anglo American farmers occupied most of the eastern outlots, land apportioned to settlers by the General Land Office.¹⁸ After the war, the outlots' population grew and its demographic makeup shifted.¹⁹ Post-war railroad expansion made Texas more accessible, bringing people, jobs, and building materials to Austin and its environs. A mix of native-born Texans, European immigrants, Mexican immigrants and migrants, and African American freedmen lived in East Austin by the 1870s. However, those who emigrated from Mexico often settled first in the "Old Mexico" neighborhood downtown, near present-day Republic Square.²⁰

In the early twentieth century, civil unrest in Mexico spurred a steady influx of new residents seeking stability in Texas. *Racial Dynamics in Early Twentieth-Century Austin, Texas* identifies the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as "the catalyst for, rather than the main cause of, the massive immigration occurring during the next two decades"²¹ and cites Texas' economic potential as the impetus for its sustained population growth. As Mexico's decade-long civil war wore on, "increased immigration from Mexico augmented the size of the existing Tejano community and invigorated it with an unadulterated dose of Mexican culture."²² The Chamber of Commerce encouraged Mexican immigrants to live and work

¹⁸ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., "East Austin Historic Resources Survey," City of Austin, 2016.

¹⁹ Martha Doty Freeman, "East Austin Multiple Resource Area," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985), Section 8.

²⁰ Ibid., I-26

²¹ Jason McDonald, *Racial Dynamics in Early Twentieth-Century Austin, Texas*. (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 25.

²² Robert C. Overfelt, "Mexican Revolution," Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqmhe>.

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in Austin to meet the expanding city's labor needs.²³ The 1910 census reported that Hispanic households represented around 2 percent of all Austin residents;²⁴ by 1930, they represented 13 percent.²⁵

Early Displacement and Intra-city Migration

While Austin's Old Mexico neighborhood remained an epicenter of Mexican American life at the turn of the 20th century, its conditions deteriorated as more people arrived and critical infrastructure and sanitation issues were ignored by the municipal government. Industrial growth spurred construction of railroad spurs and warehouses near Mexican American enclaves along the tracks at East Avenue and 3rd Street, obliterating residential blocks and pushing out their inhabitants. As churches and businesses moved east amid rising racism, displaced families often migrated east to be closer to these institutions, some taking advantage of new housing as the railroad boom facilitated residential development away from the city center. A series of bridges constructed throughout the 1870s linked downtown Austin to new neighborhoods east of Waller Creek, and the streetcar system extended east during the 1890s.²⁶ Travis County records indicate that, by 1924, one-third of Mexican American households lived in East Austin, with the rest residing in older Mexican and Mexican American enclaves or in rural settlements.²⁷

The wave of Mexican immigrants faced immense societal pressure as they struggled to build new lives in Texas. "The state was still ... grappling with an antebellum legacy of ... Jim Crow era regulations and the construction of identity as a binary of black and white,"²⁸ Andrew Leith writes, citing Ruth Allen's 1920s observation of "the temerity of a people who still insist upon a third element—Mexican Americans."²⁹ The ongoing threat of cultural erasure underscored the community's need for a space dedicated to the expression and celebration of Mexican heritage.

Public Spaces in 19th-century Austin

While Edwin Waller's 1839 plan for Austin included four public squares, all were occupied by non-civic uses such as markets, religious gatherings, and—in what would later become Wooldridge Square—a garbage dump.³⁰ During the 1870s, the railroad economy prompted construction of streetcars and bridges to accommodate the population boom. In 1875, Austin gained its first true public park when Governor E. M. Pease gifted 23 acres to the city for the express purpose of public recreation.³¹ However, a municipal park system did not develop until relatively late in Austin's history. Municipal funding was sporadically allocated to civic projects after the 1870s, depending on the indebted city's available resources, with varying success. The collapse of the 60-foot Austin Dam in 1900 further compounded the city's growing debt. Park acquisition, construction, and administration — like electric streetlights, pavement, sewers, and flood control—did not factor into early politicians' budgets.³²

²³ Ethan A. Raath and Jennifer E. Ruch, "Parque Zaragoza, 1931 – Present," (Unpublished report, Texas Historical Commission, 2014).

²⁴ Note that the census most likely left a significant percentage of nonwhite residents uncouned.

²⁵ Vivian Elizabeth Smyrl, "Travis County," Handbook of Texas Online, September 2, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hct08>.

²⁶ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., "East Austin Historic Resources Survey"; Greenhill, Sharon Edgar. *Impact of Central City Revitalization on East Austin—Austin, Texas*. (Austin: The University of Texas, 1980) 12-22.

²⁷ Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ McDonald, Racial Dynamics, 17.

³⁰ "Wooldridge Square," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/wooldridge-square>. Accessed May 27, 2020.

³¹ Smyrl, "Travis County."

³² Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., "East Austin Historic Resources Survey"; Smyrl, "Travis County."

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Emancipation Park and Republic Square Celebrations

In 1907, the Travis County Emancipation Celebration Association purchased five acres near Rosewood Avenue and Chicon Street to create one of the first parks in East Austin.³³ Thomas J. White, the Association's founder, believed that the annual Juneteenth celebration should be held on land owned by Black residents. As such, Emancipation Park was not only a prototype for Austin's future parks; it also promoted the idea of outdoor gathering spaces tailored to cultural celebrations, much like the traditional multi-day fiestas during Diez y Seis and Cinco de Mayo held in what is now Republic Square (prior to and during the mass displacement of residents from the surrounding Mexican and Mexican American neighborhood) from the 1870s onward.³⁴ Emancipation Park hosted civic events all year long, but the largest crowds arrived on June 19 each year to celebrate the end of slavery in Texas.³⁵ The park was seized thirty years later by the city via eminent domain to build Rosewood Courts, a segregated public housing project for low-income African American residents.³⁶

20th Century Changes

Austin made slow progress toward a public park system during A. P. Wooldridge's decade-long tenure as mayor. Elected on a platform of growth and reform after a complete government overhaul in 1908, Wooldridge funded substantial, long-overdue civic improvements. Wooldridge Square was cleared of trash, its drainage improved, and a bandstand erected; downtown streets were paved and lighted; public sewers were constructed; and Barton Springs and adjacent parkland were acquired for public use.³⁷

After another government reform established the current council-manager format in 1924, politicians turned their efforts toward city planning and beautification.³⁸ This ultimately led to their solicitation of Dallas planning firm Koch and Fowler and city council's adoption of their 1928 master plan. Though the Koch and Fowler plan had disastrous consequences for Austin's racial integration, some of its recommendations resulted in a \$4.25 million bond issue for civic improvements, including new parks and public pools.³⁹ In 1928, council established the Austin Recreation Department (now the Parks and Recreation Department, or PARD); within a year, the department calculated that 139,000 Austinites had visited the city's parkland and recreational facilities.⁴⁰

Displacement to East Austin and Institutionalized Racism

East Austin's Mexican and Mexican American communities grew steadily in the first decades of the twentieth century, a result of increased immigration, rising discrimination in other parts of the city, and displacement from the Old Mexico neighborhood. Racial tension escalated around the time of World War I, precipitating changes that physically and ideologically distanced East Austin's neighborhoods from downtown and from white enclaves to the west. By the end of

³³ Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Juneteenth," Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/lkj01>.

³⁴ Preservation Central, Inc., "Historic/Archeological Research on Republic Square: Draft Letter Report," March 4, 2002.

³⁵ Hasan, Syeda. "Staring Down Development, Neighbors Seek Historical Recognition for Emancipation Park," KUT.org, Jan 19, 2017, <https://www.kut.org/post/staring-down-development-neighbors-seek-historical-recognition-emancipation-park>.

³⁶ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., "East Austin Historic Resources Survey"

³⁷ David C. Humphrey, "Austin, TX (Travis County)", Handbook of Texas Online, October 23, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hda03>.

³⁸ Humphrey, "Austin, TX (Travis County)"; Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

³⁹ Ibid.; Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., "East Austin Historic Resources Survey."

⁴⁰ "Administrative History," Parks and Recreation Department Photo Negative Collection, 2014, <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/aushc/00409/ahc-00409.html>; City of Austin Recreation Department, 1930 Annual Report.

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the 1920s, white Austinites had begun to voice dissatisfaction with the population boom, and citizens of color faced discrimination daily.⁴¹

Institutionalized segregation—codified by Koch and Fowler’s 1928 city plan and Jim Crow laws and enforced by government denial of services and construction of physical infrastructure barriers—forced Austin into an era of cultural and environmental division. Jason McDonald describes the social changes that accompanied the city’s demographic shift:

“Prior to WWI Mexicans in Austin were normally viewed and treated as part of the white population. After the war Mexicans increasingly found themselves marginalized, and by the eve of the Great Depression they were largely viewed and treated by whites as an extraneous racial group.”⁴²

The 1928 Koch and Fowler plan was designed to thwart the 1917 Supreme Court ruling against segregationist zoning laws. It recommended restricting all government services for African Americans to East Austin, which previously held a more racially and culturally diverse mix of residents. Thus, African American Austinite residents were forced to move to a single area to access parks, schools, and other segregated municipal facilities and to receive the city utilities and residential infrastructure support for which they paid taxes. Immediately following the plan’s adoption, industrial zoning was allowed in the area and higher-intensity transportation corridors were planned, stifling residential improvements.⁴³

Though the Koch and Fowler plan did not explicitly segregate Mexican American residents, prejudice and racial barriers—such as racially restrictive deed covenants on west Austin properties and rampant municipal disregard for quality of life in East Austin—affected their daily lives. Even before the plan was officially adopted, churches and large employers of Mexican Americans relocated to East Austin as discrimination increased elsewhere. Property values in East Austin began to decline nearly a decade before the plan’s implementation as the city failed to provide essential services to the area.⁴⁴

The government’s refusal to provide services to communities of color extended to all aspects of daily life: African American and Mexican American schools, parks, and other institutions ceased to exist in west Austin, and essential services like sewers, paved streets, and electricity in East Austin were nonexistent or substandard. Utility and transportation lines were deliberately underprovided and poorly maintained, even as similar public amenities in west Austin improved. Residents could not avoid substandard services by choosing private utility providers, as those providers did not offer services to East Austin.⁴⁵

New Deal housing policies encouraged private covenants and deed restrictions to safeguard “good neighborhoods,” reinforcing the prejudiced practices already employed by white sellers in Austin. The federal government established the Housing and Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 to help homeowners avoid foreclosure during the Great Depression via low-interest mortgages. However, HOLC’s redlining policies—discriminatory classifications that equated lender risk with minority populations—made it harder or impossible to obtain mortgage insurance in neighborhoods with nonwhite residents.⁴⁶

In 1936 the Federal Housing Administration issued policy guidelines intending to increase homeownership and bolster property values, insisting that covenants were “an absolute necessity if good neighborhoods and stable property values are to be maintained.”⁴⁷ Of course, these “good neighborhoods,” as defined by the redlining maps of the era, were

⁴¹ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., “East Austin Historic Resources Survey,” I-63.

⁴² McDonald, *Racial Dynamics*, 6.

⁴³ Greenhill, *Impact*, 32; Hardy-Heck-Moore, “East Austin Historic Resources Survey.”

⁴⁴ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., “East Austin Historic Resources Survey,” I-22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I-29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I-77.

⁴⁷ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., “East Austin Historic Resources Survey,” I-78.

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characterized by the absence of “infiltration by foreign-born, negro, or lower-grade population”—that is, they were occupied by wealthy white homeowners.⁴⁸ To comply with the FHA guidelines, Austin’s city council decided to allow new subdivisions in north and west Austin to exclude African American and Mexican American buyers.

The Rise of Activism and *Comités Patrióticos*

Since East Austin residents could not depend upon the city to provide adequate public services, they looked to their neighbors for support. Enterprising Austinites of the post-World War II era strengthened already prominent non-governmental institutions, from churches to political organizations to businesses. Communities of color all over the nation drew from strong traditions of grassroots activism to effect change in their cities, and their efforts resulted in policy changes that laid the groundwork for correcting inequities in municipal services and facilities in the decades to come.⁴⁹

“At a time when the Hispanic population was denied the most basic of civil right[s] in America, unity within the local communities was an important means of preserving their cultural identity,” write Ethan Raath and Jennifer Ruch.⁵⁰ The League of United Latin American Citizens was established in 1929 by a group of Corpus Christi residents to advocate for better education, employment rights, and civic equality.⁵¹ Following LULAC’s lead, Ladies’ LULAC, the G.I. Forum, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and local civil rights chapters mobilized to combat political disenfranchisement and racial discrimination against Mexican Americans. Austin citizens recognized the need for local activism in order to facilitate these changes, including the right to express their culture in an outdoor space of their own.

During the 1920s, the Mexican consulate established statewide chapters of the Comisión Honorífica Mexicana in Texas. The commission, organized for the purpose of mutual aid to Mexican Americans, gave rise to many associated local *comités patrióticos* (“patriotic committees”). These local groups worked with the consulate to “promote Mexican patriotism and foster good relations”⁵² between Texas and Mexico. In 1932, Amador Candelas established Austin’s official comité patriótico.⁵³ Through community outreach, it helped Austinites stay informed on political issues, both in Mexico and the United States. Comités also sponsored educational activities and events celebrating Mexican culture, with the goal of cultivating “mutual appreciation of the cultures on opposite sides of the border.”⁵⁴ One of the comités patrióticos’ most visible roles involved planning, advertising, and fundraising for annual fiestas Diez y Seis de Septiembre and Cinco de Mayo, which “aim[ed] toward remembering the thirst for freedom the Mexican Americans and others who cherish independence celebrate every September 16th and May 5th.”⁵⁵ In a time when many struggled to assimilate to the dominant, often hostile Anglo culture in Austin, the comité patriótico encouraged Mexican Americans to take pride in their heritage, strengthening their cultural ties to Mexico while forming a tight-knit local community. Parque Zaragoza soon became a cultural center for the entire region under the auspices of the comité patriótico. In addition to Candelas, founding members included Macrino Ortiz, Ignacio Arriaza, Frank Morales, Ignacio Acosta, Pedro Cortez Sueiez, Severino Guerria, Frank Rios, and Frank Prado.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Home Owners' Loan Corporation, “Residential Security Map”; Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., “East Austin Historic Resource Survey,” I-77.

⁴⁹ Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc., “East Austin Historic Resources Survey,” I-94.

⁵⁰ Raath and Ruch, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁵¹ Cynthia E. Orozco, “League of United Latin American Citizens,” Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/wel0>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Raath and Ruch, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁵⁴ María-Cristina García, “Comité Patriótico Mexicano,” Handbook of Texas Online, August 4, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pqc03>.

⁵⁵ *The Austin American Statesman*, May 4, 1996.

⁵⁶ Parks and Recreation Board Meeting Minutes, 1931-1935, Austin Files AF_Parks: P1200(31)-(35): 203280, Austin History Center; Arnold Garcia, Jr., “Zaragoza Celebration a Grand Time for Community,” *The Austin American-Statesman*, May 4, 1996, A13; City of Austin Recreation Department, 1941 Annual Report.

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Founding of Parque Zaragoza

The 1928 Koch and Fowler city plan recommended allocating funding to public amenities, including parkland, as part of its strategy for segregating African American residents in East Austin. Rosewood Park, a segregated park for African Americans between Rosewood Avenue and E. 12th Street, opened soon after the plan's adoption.⁵⁷ Mexican Americans had been migrating to East Austin throughout the decade, but still had limited access to dedicated public space adequate for large outdoor gatherings. According to Recreation Department documents, a segregated park opened near Our Lady of Guadalupe church in 1929, called the "Lydia Street playground" or "Mexican Park" in contemporary planning documents. The Lydia Street park hosted City-sponsored recreational programming, but its lack of lighting limited evening activities. This playground remained in use until the 1930s, even after Parque Zaragoza opened.⁵⁸

Intensive lobbying by cultural advocacy groups, including founding members of Austin's earliest comité patriótico and community members, businesses, and affiliated organizations, finally convinced the city's new Recreation Department to purchase a plot of land for a new segregated Mexican American park in East Austin in 1930. In 1929, the comité organized a Diez y Seis de Septiembre gathering across the street from Parque Zaragoza's current location;⁵⁹ by 1930, the Recreation Department planned for a new "Mexican Park" to be built in the vicinity.⁶⁰ On April 23, 1931, W. S. Benson sold 9.27 acres on Pedernales Street to the city for \$5,250.⁶¹ In a 2014 interview, a senior community member described the parcel as "a small farm on the outskirts of Austin, with a house sheltered by live oak trees along Boggy Creek."⁶² Parque Zaragoza—known as Zaragosa Park⁶³ in early publications—opened later that year. Its name honored Mexican general Ignacio Zaragoza Seguin, who led his army to victory against French invaders at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. As soon as the city purchased the land, community advocates sprang into action, establishing the Zaragosa Park Board to organize activities, plan improvements, and lead park maintenance efforts.⁶⁴ Severiano Guerra, Amador Candelas, Frank Rios, Miguel Guerrero, and a host of neighborhood residents jump-started the board with tireless commitment, ensuring that the city maintained the momentum necessary for the park's completion.⁶⁵

Guerra was well known in the community. A veteran of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, he also founded a branch of the Cruz Azul (Blue Cross), a community-based welfare society that provided medical services to the residents of East Austin. Candelas was a business leader in the community [. . .] remembered fondly for the "midnight movies" he presented for Mexicans in downtown Austin. These men began the work of building the park, but the local comité patriótico cemented its place in Mexican American culture and history in Austin.⁶⁶

Early improvements

Neighborhood residents and Austin's larger Mexican American community repeatedly petitioned the city for park improvements, maintenance, and program funding for years after Parque Zaragoza's founding. Despite the city's historical apathy regarding East Austin, Parque Zaragoza's advocates made improvements—even when they had to rely on volunteer labor.

⁵⁷ Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁵⁸ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1928-1937 Annual Reports.

⁵⁹ Raath and Ruch, "Parque Zaragoza"

⁶⁰ Recreation Department Board Meeting Minutes, 1931-1935.

⁶¹ City Council Meeting Minutes, February 19, 1931, <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=89179>; Travis County Warranty Deed, April 23, 1931, Austin History Center.

⁶² Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁶³ The park operated under the incorrect spelling of "Zaragosa" until the Zaragoza Advisory Board petitioned to have the misspelling recognized and revised to Zaragoza in 1989. The petition was approved on June 19, 1989. Source: Leith, "Parque Zaragoza"

⁶⁴ Raath and Ruch, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁶⁵ Mark Forsyth, "Parque Zaragoza," *Texas Architect*, July-August 1996, 44.

⁶⁶ Alvino Mendoza, interview by Ethan Raath, November 18, 2014.

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Recreation Department minutes from the 1930s describe the park's development leading up to the construction of the 1941 bathhouse. After a June 4, 1930 pledge that the "Mexican park and playground [will] be purchased as soon as possible," the department allocated funding for improvements in 1931: \$2,000 for a playground, followed by relocation of the East Avenue Park bandstand to Zaragoza. In 1933, the department allocated another \$2,500 for the construction of a swimming pool.⁶⁷ In 1934, the Recreation Department recommended adding a tennis court, a fence, scum gutters and a walkway around the pool, a concrete bridge to replace one of the rustic cedar-and-rubble footbridges spanning Boggy Creek, and a dressing room for the pool. At the same time, the Department selected the "Mexican neighborhood committee" as the park's caretakers.⁶⁸ It would take the committee six more years and the promise of volunteer labor and additional funds to convince the Department to implement further recommendations.

By the end of the 1930s, park attendance consistently surpassed previous estimates. In 1941, the Recreation Department reported 8,890 swimmers and 9,000 "Mexican Celebration" (Diez y Seis de Septiembre) participants.⁶⁹ Continued programming and infrastructure improvements, spearheaded by the Zaragoza Park Board in conjunction with the Recreation Department, bolstered Parque Zaragoza's popularity.

This initial success sparked support from the Department for the addition of a bathhouse, referred to as the "NYA Construction Project" in Recreation Department records. The project's budget, augmented by extensive community fundraising, was finalized in early 1941. The *Austin American-Statesman* noted in a February 1941 article that profits from the previous year's fiestas patrias and "other entertainments sponsored by the Federation of Mexican Societies" were earmarked for park improvements: "A check for \$250 from the federation has been turned into the city's general fund, and the city [council] passed a resolution Thursday calling for an expenditure of that amount at the park."⁷⁰ In addition to forty-five National Youth Association workers, community volunteers and Recreation Department staff completed the bathhouse the following spring.⁷¹

A photograph dating to the 1950s identifies a later bathhouse improvement project: conversion of the caretakers' living quarters to a public multipurpose space. As outlined in Section VI, the converted rooms sheltered decades of community assemblies, educational activities, club meetings, health clinics, and board sessions.

Later development and Deferred Maintenance

A 2018 summary describes park development toward the end of the district's period of significance, paraphrasing contemporary Recreation Department publications and recollections of former administrators:

During the heavy rains of 1967, the community center suffered sewage problems and toilet overflows. A \$1.5 million improvement budget was allocated but got delayed due to the city's high debt...In the 1970s more structured activities were established. In 1973 the band stage and bathhouse-cum-community center were redeveloped with a grant from [the] Model Cities Program [administered by] the US Department of Housing and Urban Development [with] the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation of the Department of the Interior through the Parks and Wildlife Department. . .The outdoor stage was [replaced] while the community center was renovated...It became a three-room building that housed the table tennis and crafts area. During the winter months, the windows were boarded up with plywood for warmth. Additional acreage was added over the years. The US Army Corps of Engineers rippedraped Boggy Creek with

⁶⁷ Recreation Department Board Meeting Minutes, 1930-33; Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1941 Annual Report.

⁷⁰ "\$656,000 Bonds Burned: Paid-Off City Obligations Destroyed," *The Austin Statesman*, Feb 27, 1941; City Council Resolution 410227-4, February 27, 1941, <https://austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=87753>.

⁷¹ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1941 Annual Report.

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limestones [in the 1980s].⁷²

In 1970, the park's natural space was expanded to about 15 acres when the city purchased an adjacent 6-acre undeveloped parcel. Years of constant use and deferred maintenance by the Recreation Department had taken its toll on the bathhouse by the end of the period of significance. Year after year, the building deteriorated, and the sewer issues that plagued its plumbing system continued through the 1980s.⁷³ Multiple municipal budget crises scrapped City promises to fully refurbish it.

In 1996, after decades of petitioning by the Mexican American community, the new recreation center was constructed. While the 1941 bathhouse remained in use as a restroom and changing facility, its occupancy proved sporadic. It has been vacant since 2015.

CCC and NYA Contributions

In the wake of the Great Depression, Roosevelt's New Deal promise to "put America back to work" included efforts to construct public infrastructure, conserve natural resources, and enhance public access to America's outdoors, opening doors for tourism and bolstering economic viability for rural states. The Civilian Conservation Corps, a federal public works program active between 1933 and 1942, offered construction and maintenance jobs to the unemployed. In Texas, the CCC was instrumental in establishing and expanding state parks and their facilities, creating a network of accessible natural sites.⁷⁴

The CCC's iconic building style—horizontal forms constructed with native materials, simple structural techniques, and rustic ornamentation—was a product of its time, influenced heavily by National Park Service architects and administrators Herbert Maier and Thomas Chalmers Vint. Now called "National Park Rustic," this uniquely American style is also nicknamed "parkitecture" for its longstanding association with public outdoor spaces. Park designers drew inspiration from Texas' history and landscape, employing the Arts and Crafts movement's ideals, Frederick Law Olmsted's planning theories, and Frank Lloyd Wright's principles of organic architecture to align park buildings with the natural forms and phenomena surrounding them. To designers following Vint's precept of landscape preservation,⁷⁵ Texas itself provided the visual interest that drew people to parks; buildings should blend in while providing simple shelter to visitors.⁷⁶ Parque Zaragoza's rustic bathhouse, though modest in scale, clearly exhibits CCC-influenced design choices.

The 1941 bathhouse, historically the only enclosed structure in the park, was constructed by community volunteers and laborers from the National Youth Administration, a CCC affiliate under the Works Progress Administration. Funded by the National Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, the NYA supplied professional and trade-oriented training, as well as student financial aid, to U.S. citizens between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five.⁷⁷ Between 1935 and 1943, the NYA's

⁷² Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁷³ Ulila, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁷⁴ James Wright Steely. *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Texas State Parks*. (Austin: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 1986), 6; Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁷⁵ Linda Flint McClelland, "Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995), Section E.

<https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/82e96ca0-ee26-47fd-8d4f-aa60e4c6d023>; "Thomas Chalmers Vint:

Cornelius Amory Pugsley National Medal Award, 1955," Texas A&M University Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, 2006. <https://web.archive.org/web/20061019081818/http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/pugsley/Vint.htm>.

⁷⁶ Ethan Carr, "The 'Noblest Landscape Problem': Thomas C. Vint and Landscape Preservation," In *Design with Culture: Claiming America's Landscape Heritage*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Mary V. Hughes (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005) 157-177.

⁷⁷ Tally D. Fugate, "National Youth Administration," The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=NA014>.

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“out-of-school” program employed more than 75,000 unenrolled young adults.⁷⁸ Like the CCC, the NYA in Texas focused on projects with clear public benefits and connections to the outdoors: maintenance and development of highways, schools, and parks. It frequently collaborated with other federal agencies and CCC affiliates as well as local craftsmen.⁷⁹ The Recreation Department’s 1941 annual report states that “45 boys helped construct the new shelter house and caretaker’s unit” at Parque Zaragoza.⁸⁰

The bathhouse, a functional and harmonious—if simple—structure, originally consisted of two rooms for private living space, a public activity room, and combined toilets and dressing rooms. Vangie Ulila remarks in a 2018 analysis that the Recreation Department may have sourced the building’s masonry from a Congress Avenue paving project.⁸¹ Though the bathhouse is humble in scale compared to the park’s modern recreation center, it symbolizes grassroots achievement in a time of rampant inequity. Those who made the park and its facilities a reality during the Great Depression and determined suppression of Mexican American civil rights provided an outdoor space that would serve the community for the next eighty years.

Parque Zaragoza as a Cultural Hub

Throughout the years, the park has hosted thousands of community events. Its central location, nestled within majority-Mexican American neighborhoods and surrounded by schools, businesses, and homes, made it an ideal venue for formal and informal gatherings. From private weddings to political rallies, the park is as ingrained in local families’ histories and city and state legacies alike.

“Parque Zaragoza was *the* place. It’s where everyone in the Hispanic community met for fiestas, Cinco de Mayo, Diez y Seis, quinceañeras, and just for fun. It’s our place. There is a lot of history there. Families got started there, and they aren’t going anywhere—they pass places down father to son. We worked hard for it and we’re proud of it,”⁸² stated a former park supervisor in an informal interview. “There were big celebrations, rallies, patriotic activities, weddings and fiestas at Parque Zaragoza,” continues a senior neighborhood stakeholder. “All the neighborhood children knew one another and played together there. The men and women of the community created the park [;] cleared the land [;] built the pool house, bandstand, and sports courts [;] and made it theirs. This place is special and needs to remain a fixture in the community.”⁸³

Parque Zaragoza has played a pivotal role in the civic and cultural lives of Austin’s Mexican American residents since 1931. While most famous as the site of Cinco de Mayo and Diez y Seis de Septiembre celebrations, the park has hosted countless smaller gatherings that have shaped Austin’s cultural identity and sense of place. As a local space for recreation, civic engagement, and health advocacy, the park also facilitated access to essential services for the historically underserved citizens. Most of all, Parque Zaragoza has provided a place where Mexican American voices could be heard, whether raised in protest or lifted in song, declaiming with conviction or shouting with joy.

Fiestas Patrias

Parque Zaragoza was the nexus of local fiestas patrias, or patriotic holidays, for much of the twentieth century. Sponsored by the comité patriótico, the festivities began as simple park get-togethers where people could reunite, honor their heritage with music and dancing, and relax. As attendance soared, they grew into massive four-day celebrations featuring live music and packed dance floors, speeches by Mexican consuls, extravagant barbecues, and theatrical performances.

⁷⁸ Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., “National Youth Administration,” Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ncn04>.

⁷⁹ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁸⁰ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1941 Annual Report.

⁸¹ Ulila, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁸² Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁸³ Ibid.

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Though Tejanos had observed the fiestas patrias with parades, picnics, and speeches since the early 19th century, Parque Zaragoza's opening expanded Austinites' opportunities for celebration.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates General Ignacio Zaragoza de Seguín's victory over French invaders at Puebla de los Angeles on May 5, 1862. A Mexican national hero, Zaragoza was born at La Bahía del Espíritu Santo, a settlement near present-day Goliad. His parents moved the family to Matamoros during the Mexican Revolution, and—after brief stints in a seminary and as a mercantile—Zaragoza joined the army. He fought for a democratic and constitutional Mexico throughout the 1850s, honing his skills as a military strategist. At the Battle of Puebla, Zaragoza lost only 86 men, while the French lost between 476 and 1,000.⁸⁴

El Diez y Seis de Septiembre commemorates Mexico's independence from Spain. On September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla began the Mexican War of Independence in Dolores (near Guanajuato) by ringing the church bells before sunrise and urging the crowd that gathered to revolt in a speech known as the Grito de Dolores or Grito de Hidalgo.⁸⁵ In 1931, Parque Zaragoza's first official Diez y Seis celebration was organized by committee members Frank Rios, Emilio Davila, Luis F. Rivera, Lalo Gonzales, Juan Carillo, Miguel Arredondo, Ignacio Arriago, Gonzalo Hernandez, Lupe L. Brigido, S. Salinas, and Francisco Estrada.⁸⁶ Today, the three- to four-day celebration begins with el Grito in a traditional retelling of the early-morning revolution.

At Parque Zaragoza, the celebration displayed both formality and spontaneity, described in informal interviews by Raath and Ruch:

The fiesta operated on a “tribuna libre” basis, with impromptu speeches and poetry recitations celebrating Mexican culture and independence. The fiesta celebrated both Mexican and American patriotism. Attendees sang the anthems of both nations, and the queen's attendants dressed in the flags of the two countries... The Cinco de Mayo celebration followed much the same formula as the Diez y Seis fiesta, with music, dancing, speeches, and the crowning of the queen.⁸⁷

As the comités patrióticos of the United States were established under the auspices of the Mexican Consulate, consul representatives sponsored rallies, debates, and similar political events at Parque Zaragoza.⁸⁸

Sports

Neighborhood residents immediately mobilized to help make the new playground a safe and enjoyable place for their children. A 1937 report indicates that the playground had lighting and that a volunteer monitor had been elected.⁸⁹ As soon as the park opened in 1931, athletes organized a second Mexican American baseball league, replacing the original Lydia Street park's league.⁹⁰ Teams from all around the city gathered for games and tournaments at the park, accompanied by food and live music. Originally, the baseball diamond consisted of painted bases on a concrete slab attached to the bandstand.⁹¹ The Recreation Department logged significantly higher community attendance at these games

⁸⁴ “Zaragoza, Ignacio Seguin,” Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fza04>.

⁸⁵ “Diez y Seis,” In the Parks, September 16, 2015, <https://www.austintexas.gov/blog/diez-y-seis>.

⁸⁶ “Cry of Dolores,” Library of Congress, 2015, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/september-16>.

“Mexicans Complete Plan for Independence Party,” *The Austin American*, September 13, 1931, p. 2

⁸⁷ Raath and Ruch, “Parque Zaragoza.”

⁸⁸ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza”; “Prof Will Speak,” *The Austin Statesman*, June 18, 1940; “Latin Guests at Zaragosa,” *The Austin Statesman*, June 20, 1940; “Zaragosa Rally Slated Tonight For Candidates,” *The Austin Statesman*, April 1, 1953; “Workers march in support of D.C. rally,” *The Austin American Statesman*, Sep 6, 1977.

⁸⁹ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1937 Annual Report.

⁹⁰ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1931 Monthly Reports; City of Austin Recreation Department, 1931 Annual Report.

⁹¹ Raath and Ruch, “Parque Zaragoza.”

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than any other league in the city, and constructed bleachers for fans in 1947.⁹² In 1956, parkgoers rallied to move the field and grandstand to their current locations, adding a softball field along with fences, a scoreboard, and drinking fountains.⁹³

As park use increased—particularly after the pool was built—its spartan amenities proved insufficient. As area schools and playgrounds went undermaintained and underequipped by the city, Zaragoza community advocates planned athletics programs and petitioned the Recreation Department for installation of sports equipment. By the end of the period of significance in 1973, the park held courts for basketball and volleyball, fields for baseball and softball, swim clubs and lessons, and boxing competitions.

Arts, Music, and Education

The community center's popularity as an educational venue also grew. Sewing circles, art courses, and hands-on workshops attracted visitors year-round. At the end of each course or project, participants gathered to display their work. These were public events often accompanied by live music, food, and awards ceremonies.⁹⁴ Theatrical, music, and dance performances also showcased the arts. By learning traditional Mexican music and dance, artists learned, experienced, and promoted cultural cornerstones to their audiences. The park also hosted lecture series and reading groups, led by community leaders or academic professionals volunteering their time.⁹⁵ In addition to their primary goals of informing listeners and teaching useful skills, these activities brought the neighborhood together. During childcare courses, parents could come together, forming a network of people facing similar challenges, while their children played nearby. These opportunities for connection often proved as important to community enrichment as the information presented in formal courses.

Live music played a pivotal role in almost every large-scale community gathering held at Parque Zaragoza. The park has served as a nexus of live Tejano music since its establishment, rooting it in Austin's robust musical heritage. Gloria Mata Pennington, longtime Parks and Recreation Department staff member, explained the park's performance legacy: "Early on, Mexican celebrations and fiestas became an important part of the events at the park. Adding to the importance was the live music played by Mexican musicians, including icons of Tejano music like Lydia Mendoza and Manuel 'Cowboy' Donley.⁹⁶ Notable mid-century performers included Junior Gomez and the Sound Pounders, Johnny Gonzales and the Sensations, and the Alfonso Ramos Orchestra.⁹⁷ Bands from around the world traveled to Austin to play alongside local artists.

Conjunto, the predominant style of música tejana showcased at Parque Zaragoza, developed in the early twentieth century among working-class Mexican American musicians who sought to maintain their cultural identity amidst intense pressure to assimilate.⁹⁸ Conjunto is deeply intertwined with both the park's history and the history of its neighbors, and has even shaped the park's landscape: nearby residents and conjunto fans remember a time (probably during the 1950s) when a raised plataforma was installed as a dance floor at the current site of the baseball diamond.⁹⁹ Belinda Acosta described the

⁹² "Minutes of the City Council of Austin, Texas," January 23, 1947, <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=88634>

⁹³ Gloria Mata Pennington, "A Living Legacy: Honoring Our Past, Celebrating Our Present, and Creating Our Future – Austin Parks and Recreation Department 1928-2003," n.d., ftp://ftp.austintexas.gov/PARDPlanningCIP/McKnight_HistoricResources/East_Austin_PARD_resources/PARD_75th_ann_booklet.pdf; "Century Club, City Recreation Lead Baseball Planning at Zaragoza Park," *The Austin Statesman*, March 22, 1956.

⁹⁴ City of Austin Recreation Department, 1934-1942 Monthly Reports

⁹⁵ *The Austin Statesman*, 1940.

⁹⁶ Leith, "Parque Zaragoza."

⁹⁷ "Zaragoza Features 4 Bands," *Austin American-Statesman*, August 10, 1969.

⁹⁸ Manuel H. Peña, "The Texas-Mexican Conjunto," in *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999); Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Texas-Mexican Conjunto," *Handbook of Texas Online*, December 5, 2015, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/xbtpa>.

⁹⁹ Abel Salas, "Conjunto Pesado, not Pescado," *The Austin Chronicle*, July 14, 1995, <https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/1995->

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style in a 1995 *American-Statesman* article on La Pesado, a conjunto festival sponsored by arts nonprofit La Peña: “Conjunto music is a visceral, musically poetic response to the life and times of Mexican Americans in Texas. When one stops to think that many masters of the music—Ybarra, Jimenez, Austin’s Johnny Degollado featured at ‘Conjunto Pesado II’—are self-taught, one realizes the gravity of their task to keep and pass on this musical tradition.”¹⁰⁰

Other Holiday Gatherings

Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Fourth of July holidays attracted record-breaking crowds to Parque Zaragoza. Each November, nearby residents brought their signature dishes to the park to share a massive holiday potluck with their neighbors. While the Thanksgiving festivities were originally set up in the multipurpose rooms at the bathhouse, they eventually grew so large that partygoers had to sit at tables spread across the bathhouse lawn.¹⁰¹ Christmas brought a nativity pageant and other performances, while Easter was celebrated with a park-wide egg hunt for the neighborhood’s children.¹⁰² The Fourth of July drew crowds from around Texas for baseball games, track and swim meets, fireworks, and political speeches.¹⁰³

Community Health and Wellness

Along with recreation and civic meetings, the community space in the bathhouse provided a venue for health and wellness lectures, clinics, and screenings open to the public. According to community elder Alvino Mendoza: “A local doctor held routine medical clinics there, including lectures on tuberculosis...A philanthropic women’s group catering to the poor and infirm in the neighborhood also had headquarters in the park. For many years their dedicated service functioned as a primary form of health care in the neighborhood.”¹⁰⁴ For many Austinites, traditional healthcare was difficult to obtain and often viewed with suspicion. Groups that educated lecture attendees on public health issues empowered Mexican American residents to exercise agency when making healthcare decisions.¹⁰⁵

Within the context of community wellness, the role of casual recreation cannot be understated. A common thread unites many stakeholder interviews: perhaps among the most meaningful activities for community members that took place at Parque Zaragoza were the countless more intimate, day-to-day events. Walking in the park, swimming in the pool, watching one’s children play on the swing sets, evening baseball or volleyball games, family picnics on the lawn, weekend concerts, anniversary and birthday celebrations.¹⁰⁶ By providing a place to enjoy the outdoors with their families and neighbors, Parque Zaragoza’s founders granted East Austin much more than a parcel of land. In the era of segregation, when division and despair intruded upon the everyday lives of Mexican American Austinites, the park offered space for togetherness and belonging.

Conclusion

Parque Zaragoza fell victim to negligence during the late twentieth century. The wooded parkland became a haven for drug use and violent crime, compounded by inadequate policing. Deferred maintenance took its toll on park amenities,

07-14/533758/; “\$338,000 Play Funds Being Examined by City.”

The Austin Statesman, July 25, 1950.

¹⁰⁰ Belinda Acosta, “Conjunto heats up parque,” *The Austin American-Statesman*, July 22, 1995, C12. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.atxlibrary.idm.oclc.org/apps/news/document-view?p=NewsBank&docref=news/0EAD97A3989D852A>

¹⁰¹ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

¹⁰² “Easter Egg Hunt is Planned for Children,” *The Austin American*, Mar 20, 1932.

¹⁰³ “Mexican Celebration for July Fourth is Planned,” *The Austin American*, Jun 26, 1932; “Mexicans Plan for July 4 Fete,” *The Austin American*, June 25, 1939.

¹⁰⁴ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

¹⁰⁵ Lopez, interview by author, 2019.

¹⁰⁶ Leith, “Parque Zaragoza.”

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and visitor numbers diminished. Yet again, the surrounding neighborhoods mobilized to reclaim the park through repairs, cries for reform, public education campaigns, and the construction of a new recreation center. Today, Austinites enjoy Parque Zaragoza as a place to relax, play, swim, and participate in civic and wellness activities. Parque Zaragoza, an epicenter of recreation, togetherness, and grassroots activism in the twentieth century, presents a physical reminder of Mexican American Austinites' resilience. For decades, it was the most-used outdoor space for Mexican Americans in segregated Austin; today it serves the entire city as a testament to the strength of their voices in the face of systemic oppression. From its wooded landscape to its historic sites, building, and structures, Parque Zaragoza embodies the ideals of its founders, advocates, and volunteers: those who ensured that Mexican Americans in Austin would have a place to celebrate their heritage and preserve their cultural identity through the segregation era and beyond.

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Google Earth Map
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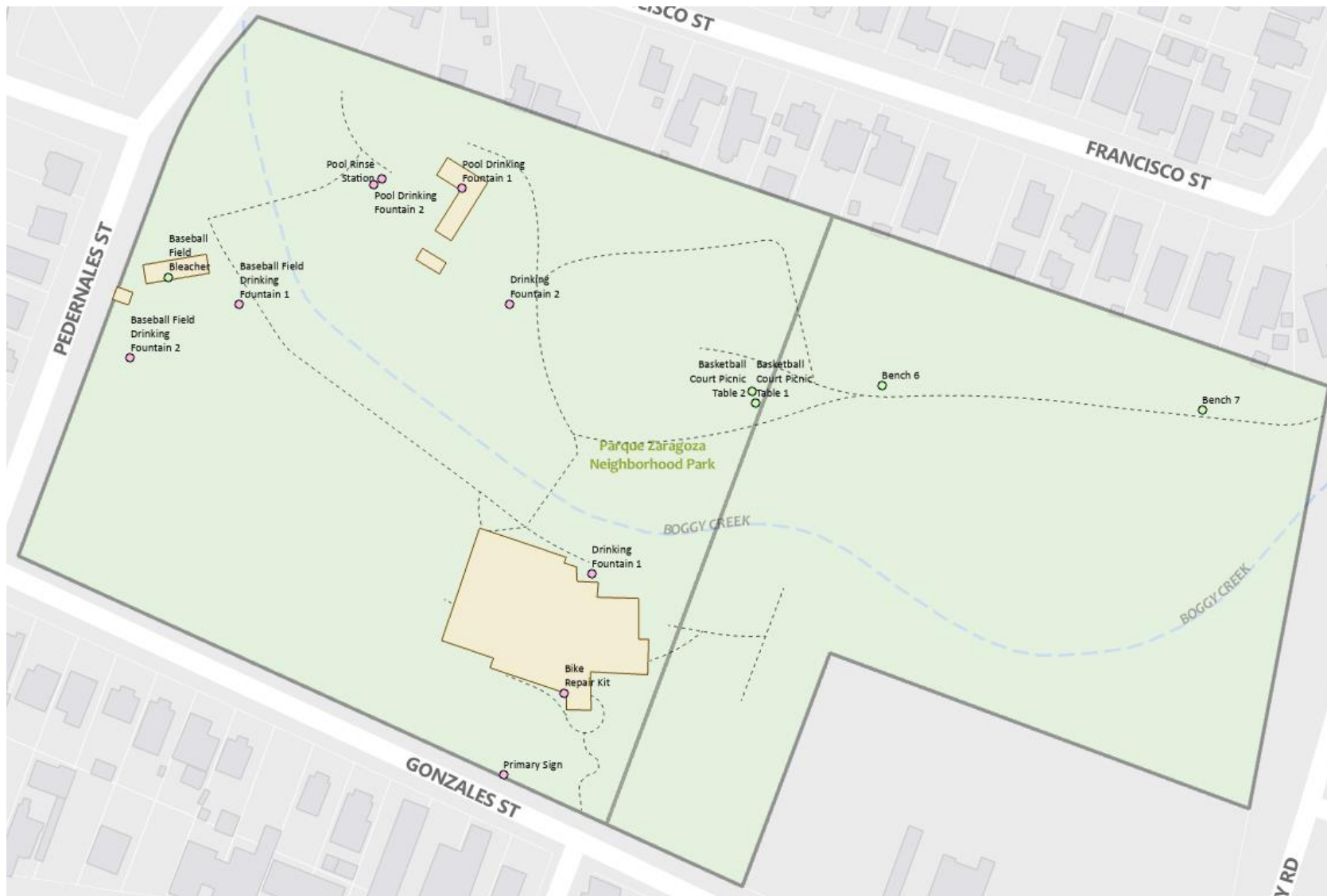
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Buildings and structures within parcel bounds. Contributing resource names are highlighted in red.



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Austin Parks and Recreation Department asset and trail map.



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Black and Mexican American Households, 1910 and 1940. City of Austin Human Relations Commission, 1979; from Austin Restricted: Progressivism, Zoning, Private Racial Covenants, and the Making of a Segregated City, Eliot M. Tretter



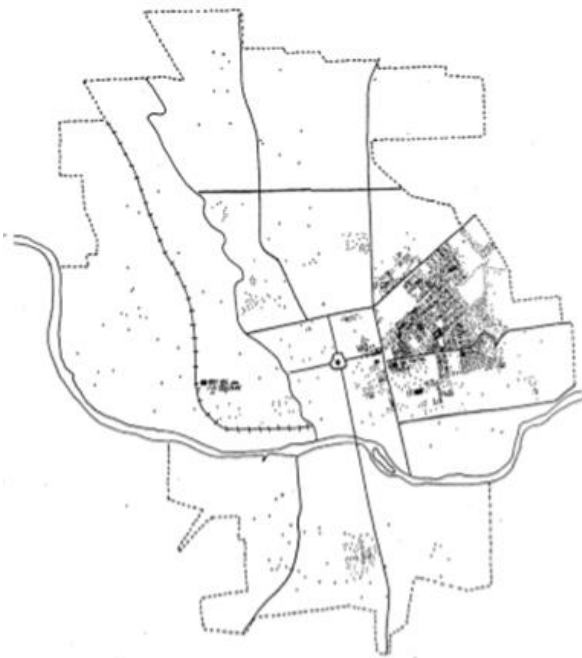
BLACK HOUSEHOLDS, 1910

Map 6 - Black Households 1910 (City of Austin Human Relations Commission, 1979)



MEXICAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS, 1910

Map 10 - Mexican-American Households 1910 (City of Austin Human Relations Commission, 1979)



BLACK HOUSEHOLDS, 1940

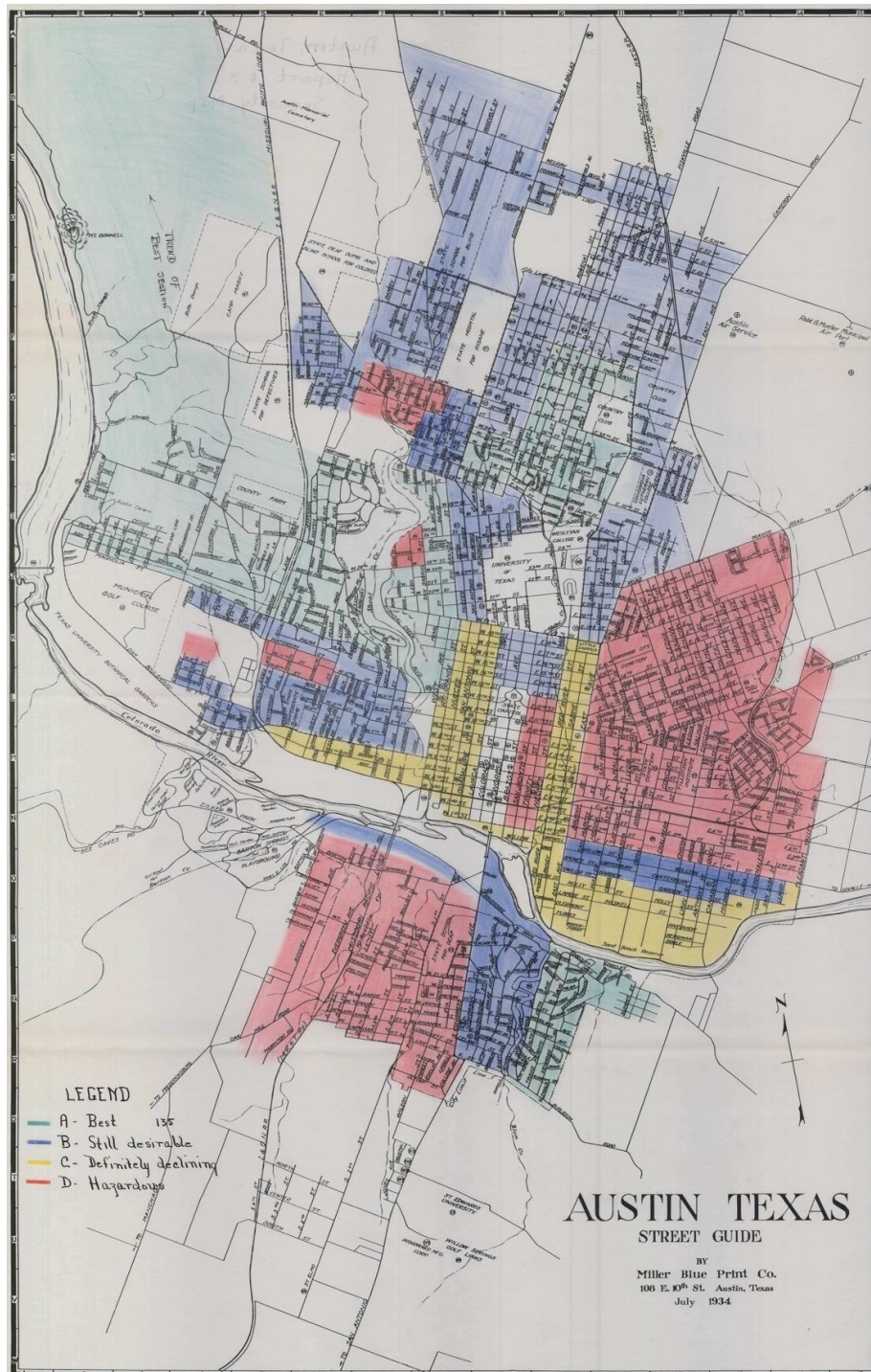


MEXICAN-AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS, 1940

Map 11 - Mexican-American Households 1940 (City of Austin Human Relations Commission, 1979)

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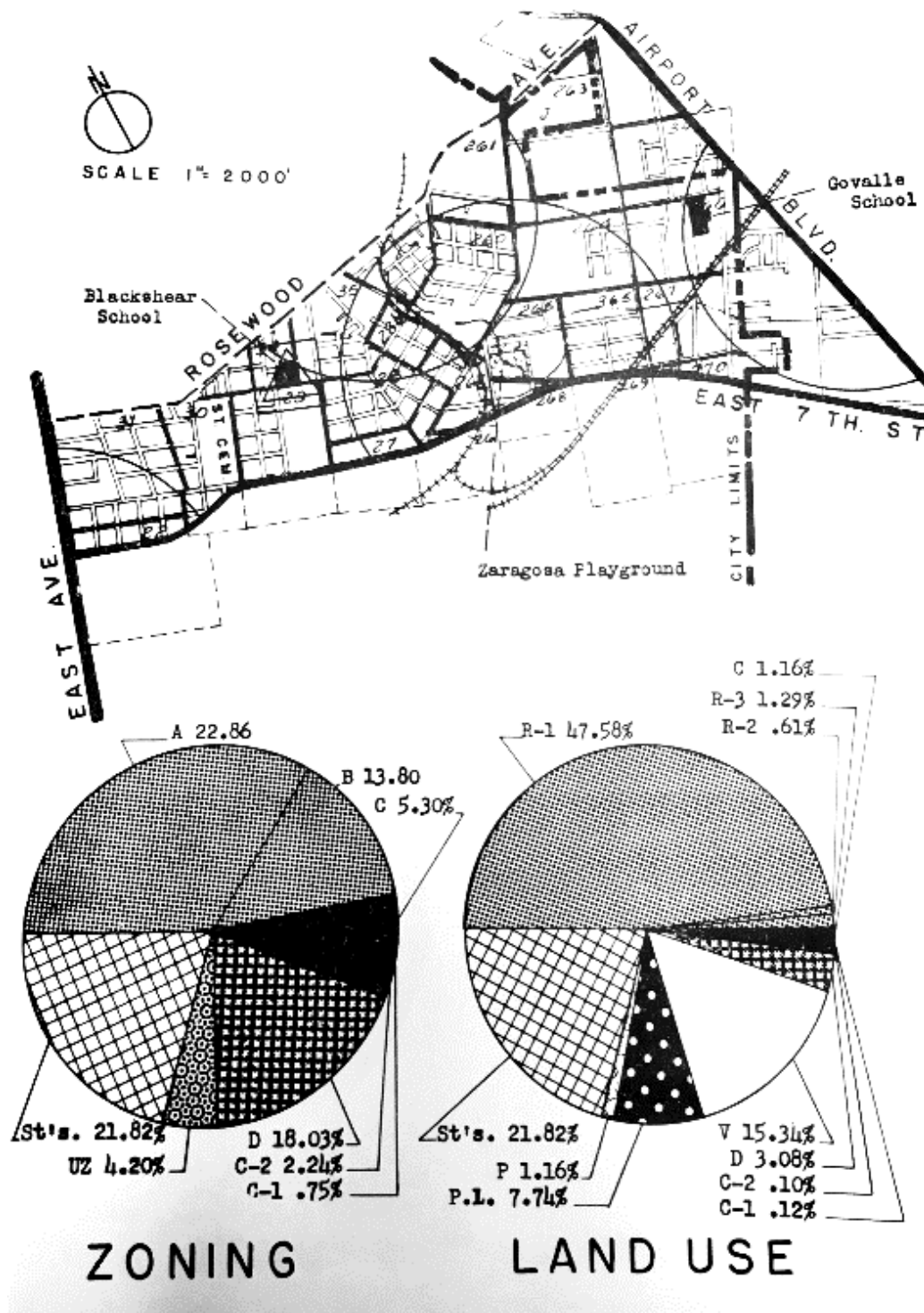
1935 "redlining" map. Home Owners' Loan Corporation, 1935. National Archives, Record Group 145, Austin Texas Folder, via the University of Texas Libraries, http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/historic_tex_cities.html#austin



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NEIGHBORHOOD E J			Table 11				
	Zoning Acres	Land Use Acres	Elementary Public Schools	Pupils			
				51-52	52-53	53-54	60
Residential	376.08	390.19	Govalle	908	990	800	600
Commercial	65.38	10.88	Blackshear (c)	776	830	720	720
Industrial	142.22	24.35					
Streets	172.12	172.12	PLAYGROUND	SIZE 9.27 acres			
Park Land		9.18					
Public Land		61.20					
Vacant Land		121.06					
Un-Zoned	33.18						
Total	788.98	788.98					
POPULATION per acre per dwelling dwelling per acre							
9,798	12.42	4.31	2.88				

COMMENTS

This neighborhood is heterogeneous in the make-up of its population. It is a fringe area between the principal residential areas of the Negroes and the Latin-Americans, and to the east the Govalle community begins. In the heart of this area lies Zaragoza Park and Playground. The circle around Zaragoza is on a half-mile radius, but much of this reaches into a Negro district. Zaragoza Park is more than a neighborhood playground; it has long been used by the Latin-American people as a center on which to hold their two big annual celebrations--Cinco de Mayo and Diez y Seis de Septiembre. The fact that it has a baseball diamond and a swimming pool increases its service area.

The Blackshear School play center is operated in the dummer during the morning hours. Blackshear is a Negro elementary school, the grounds of which are very crowded; hence, the program is limited to quiet games, crafts, singing games, etc.

The area of influence of the Govalle Playground reaches into this neighborhood to the east. The Palm Playground serves part of the west section. In the west section of this neighborhood is Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and School, which is the location of the Catholic Youth Center. This youth center serves the Latin-American population.

Recommendations: (1) Purchase the acreage to the east of Zaragoza Park as an addition to the existing grounds. This park needs to be beautified and fully developed; it is more than a neighborhood facility, for it serves a great portion of our population.

(2) Arrange with Tillotson College for the use of some of its land for play space. This is located across the street from Blackshear School play center and would enable the activities there to be increased.

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1940 aerial view of Parque Zaragoza.



1958 aerial view of Parque Zaragoza.



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

1965 aerial view of Parque Zaragoza.



1977 aerial view of Parque Zaragoza.



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

"Mexicans to Donate Labor on Playground," *The Austin American*, 1931, Austin History Center.

Mexicans To Donate Labor On Playground

Mexican residents of Austin will donate their labor free of charge in development of the new playground in East Austin, according to reports made by leading Mexican residents to James A. Garrison, superintendent of recreation. One hundred Mexican workmen will report at the grounds Monday afternoon, it was said.

"Zaragoza Park Billed for Opening This Week," *The Austin American*, May 28, 1933.

Zaragoza Park Billed For Opening This Week

Zaragoza park will hum with activity this coming week when swimming classes, Red Cross life saving classes and a playground baseball league all swing into action.

Registration for the life saving classes was held Saturday night, and the first class will be held on Tuesday at 7:30 p. m. Regular classes will be held each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday until the course is completed.

Officials of the swimming pool have announced that the following swimming classes will be offered every day after June 1:

Boys and girls under 15, 3 p. m.; boys over 15, 4 p. m.; women, 5 p. m., and men, 8:30 p. m.

A playground baseball league will be started at the park next week, and the team managers will meet Monday at 7:30 p. m.

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Monthly Report, May 1934. *Austin Parks and Recreation Department.*

	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Spectators</u>
<u>ZARAGOZA PLAYGROUND BASEBALL LEAGUE: (Mexicans)</u>		
First meeting for league organization has been set for June 5, at the Zaragoza Playground. It is expected that some eight or ten teams will be organized.		
<u>ZARAGOZA SWIMMING POOL:</u>		
The Zaragoza Swimming Pool was opened to the Mexican people May 1.		1000
<u>CINCO DE MAYO:</u>		
The Mexicans of Austin observed their usual three day celebration in observation of the National Independence Day of Mexico, holding a fiesta at the Zaragoza Park on the 4, 5, and 6 of May.		
Cinco de Mayo is one of the two big events of the year, and practically all of the Mexicans in Austin turned out for the three day program under the direction of the Mexican Patriotic Committee and the Recreation Department.		
Concessions were leased, and the Recreation Department received the usual ten percent of the gross sales of the concessions.		5,500
<u>ELECTION OF MEXICAN PATRIOTIC COMMITTEE:</u>		
The Mexican Patriotic Committee held a general election at the Zaragoza Park on the night of May 21, and by a general vote of the members of the Mexican colony present, Ernest Rios was elected President of the Mexican Patriotic Committee to serve during the year of 1934.		
On May 31, this committee met in the Recreation Department's Office and recommended the following people to serve on the Mexican Patriotic Committee:		
Ernest Rios -	President	
Hugh Salazar -	Vice-President	
Dario G. Lopez -	Secretary	
Frank Rios -	Treasurer	
Lupe Laguna -		

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"Mexican Groups Friday To Begin Observance." *The Austin Statesman*, September 14, 1934.

MEXICAN GROUPS FRIDAY TO BEGIN OBSERVANCE

Austin's and Travis county's Mexican colony will begin celebration of Mexican independence day at two scenes Friday night and at a third Saturday, continuing the observance until Sunday night.

The Mexican patriotic society, with Ernest Rios as president, is in charge of the three-day event at Zaragoza park. The Mexican patriotic committee, headed by Ramon Guerrero, is directing arrangements for an observance at Sixth and Chicon streets, and Mexicans of Travis county are expected to gather Saturday and Sunday for the third celebration on Onion creek near Del Valle.

Hundreds Expected

The coronation of Enriquee Daywood will climax the Zaragoza park event Sunday night following a series of dances and patriotic addresses. Herlinda Jimenez has been named queen of the celebration near Del Valle.

Hundreds are expected to be at Zaragoza park Friday night for the first of a series of dances; the Casino club orchestra will play for the opening event, starting at 8.

Saturday's program includes music and games at 5 p. m., a recreation hour at 6:30 and a formal address of welcome by Alberto B. Castanon, master of ceremonies, at 7:30. Ernest Rios, president of the society, will speak also.

The dance, which is to begin after the opening ceremonies, will be interrupted at 10:30 p. m. for a civic program at which Dario G. Lopez, secretary of the society, will read the Mexican declaration of independence. A series of addresses and other entertainment features will follow, and at 11:30 the traditional Mexican cry of independence will be given. Dancing will then be continued until about 2 a. m.

State Officials Invited

The coronation Sunday night will follow a reception for the queen and her court at 7 p. m. State officials have been invited to attend and Mayor Tom Miller has been asked to represent the city as one of the principal speakers.

State officials have also been invited to attend the event at Sixth and Chicon streets, and orchestras have been secured for a series of dances and balls.

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"Mexicans Plan Big Celebration: Festivities to Start Here Tuesday," *The Austin American*, September 13, 1936.

Mexicans Plan Big Celebration

Festivities to Start Here Tuesday

Three big days of festivities at the Zaragoza park will begin Tuesday at 8 p. m. Wednesday marks the day of Mexico's independence from Spain in 1810, but the celebration in Austin will last for three days.

The opening night will feature songs, dances, patriotic speeches, and a dance that will last until 2 a. m. Don Francisco and his band from Mexico City will play for the dances all three nights. Thomas Sandoval will sing popular Mexican numbers and a trio composed of Juan Galton, Francisco Cantu and Hilario Obergon of Monterrey will sing pioneer songs as part of the first night's program.

Individual numbers by Dolores Urrutia of San Antonio, Anita Renteria of Austin and Francisco Hernandez of Monterrey, and Maria de la Luz Magnon of San Antonio will be presented. Officials will make patriotic speeches just before the dance.

A baseball game between Nueces of Austin and Aztecas of Mexico City will be held at House park at 3 p. m. Wednesday to start off the second day's celebration. At 7 p. m. at the Zaragoza park, a song, speaking and dance program will begin. Among those to speak on the second night's program are Gov. James V. Alfred, Mayor Tom Miller, the Mexican consul from San Antonio, C. Leuro Izaguirre, Don Jose Vasconcelos of Mexico City, Carlos Castaneda, and Gloria Izaguirre. Following the speaking, a dance will be held until 2 a. m.

The closing day's program will include a band concert in the afternoon and a dance at night. The Mexican program committee has issued an invitation to the public to participate in the celebration.

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"Zaragosa Club Members Many," *The Austin Statesman*, June 24, 1937.

ZARAGOSA CLUB MEMBERS MANY

Demand for membership in the Zaragosa Sewing club was so great that after 53 had enrolled, the active membership had to be closed and a waiting list started.

The women are making quilts, aprons, and dish towels which will be shown in the regular exhibit to be held every month in conjunction with the girls' sewing club.

Those enrolled in the club, which meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 until 11 a. m., are as follows:

Airgail Acosta, Constannia Alba, Mamie Cortes, Agnes Besa, Lupe Castro, Loranza Castro, Henrietta Castro, Elmira Costillo, Trinida Domingo, Tesua Dominguez, Marla Evins, Espora Ruperta, Francisca Fenerla, Bacilia Guzman, Maria Guerrero, Ysabel Guerrero, Isabel Govea, Sally Gomez.

Soledad Guzman, Juanita Govea, Elizabeth Guerra, Lucy Gil, Teresa Gil, Porfiria Gonzales, Sabas Guerrero, Romona Guzman, Benita Hernandez, Audrea Mendoza, Felicianna Montoya, Susie Martinez, Ida Moreno, Juanita Montoya, Sara Olivarez, Dalarez Pena, Objentina Ojeda.

Gregoria Padilla, Enermencia Rios, Simona Roderiguez, San Juana Salazar, Virginia Sanchez, Fressia Sanchez, Eloiza San Migel, Ofilia Villapando, Alejandra Vasquez, Janie Vasquez, Canuta Vidal, Vidala Salazar, Ruth Gil, Yulla Gil, Bessia Resas, Ynez Ortiz Sara Ontivarez, Rosa Mendoza.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

"Mexicans Will Hold Big Fête: Thousands Expected for Dance," *The Austin American*, August 21, 1938.

Mexicans Will Hold Big Fete

Thousands Expected For Dance

Six to eight thousand Central Texas members of the League of United Latin American Citizens are expected here Monday night for an inauguration dance and entertainment program at Zaragoza park.

The program will start at 8 p. m. Monday. Delegations will come to Austin from points as far away as Bay City, according to word received by Frank Garza, chairman

of the entertainment committee.

Officers and members of the Austin chapter of the "Lulacs" will be hosts for this program and dance. Dr. J. T. Saldivar is president of Council No. 85, Austin; Raul Del Rio, vice president; E. M. Acevedo, secretary. Committee chairman for this inauguration ceremony and for general activities of the patriotic organization include Lorenzo Aleman, publicity; Frank Garza, entertainment; Raynaldo Garza, education; J. A. Santos, Gabriel Martins and Vincent Valdes, finance; Genaro Briones, Frank Lopez and Julio Velasques, membership.

SCHOLASTIC CENSUS DOWN

Special to Sunday American-Statesman

ELGIN, Aug. 20.—The scholastic census enrollment for Bastrop county this year will be 6,007, a loss of 384 in one year.

"Latin Guests At Zaragoza." *The Austin Statesman*, June 20, 1940, p. 13.

Latin Guests At Zaragoza

Consul and Prof On Program

Zaragosa park will have three guests at its community night program this week, Playground Leader Dan Ortega announced. Fidencio Sorio B., Mexican consul, Dr. Vicente T. Mendoza of the University of Mexico who is serving as visiting professor at the Latin American institute in the University of Texas, and Professor Virginia Rodriguez Rivera have all been invited to take part on the program, which will be held from 8 to 10 p. m. Thursday night at Zaragoza.

Mr. Sorio will show several films of Mexico from his personal collection. Dr. Mendoza will give a talk on various influences which make up Mexican music, the Indian influence and the Spanish influence and the actual Mexican music which resulted. Dr. Mendoza will be aided by Professor Rivera who will interpret the selections in song. Monica Rodriguez will be accompanist on the guitar.

Horace Perry has offered the service of his public address system to augment the night's program.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

City Council Resolution 410227-4, February 27, 1941, <https://austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=87753>

410227-4
R E S O L U T I O N

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF AUSTIN:

THAT the sum of \$ 250.00 be and the same is
hereby appropriated out of the GENERAL Fund,
not otherwise appropriated, for the purpose of paying
for the cost of the construction of rest rooms and a shelter house
at Zaragoza Park. The above amount of \$250 was turned over to
the City of Austin by the Federated Mexican Societies of Austin
for the purpose stated above, the same representing the net profit
derived from the various festivities held by the Mexican population
of Austin during the year 1940.

Adopted. February 27, 1941

Approved: February 27, 1941

Attest:

Shelley McKeen Barwood G. Hall
CITY CLERK MAYOR Pro Tem.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

"Candidates Asked To Zaragosa Rally," *The Austin Statesman*, July 14, 1950.

Candidates Asked To Zaragosa Rally

Austin's GI Forum has arranged a political rally at Zaragosa Park for next Wednesday at 8 p. m. All candidates on the Travis County ballot are invited to attend and discuss their platforms.

The rally, said Forum President Pat Mendez, is part of the organization's campaign to promote interest in all elections this year. He said the forum will try to send speakers to meetings of other civic and social clubs to encourage attendance at the rally.

In case of bad weather, the meeting will be held in the Zavala School auditorium.

Plans for a fund raising dance at Zaragosa Park Friday at 8:30 p. m. with tickets at 50 cents a person also were made at the Forum's Thursday night meeting.

The Forum's next meeting will be held Thursday at 8 p. m. at the Pan American Center, 300 Comal.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

“Zaragoza Rally Slated Tonight For Candidates.” *The Austin Statesman*, Apr 1, 1953.

Zaragoza Rally Slated Tonight For Candidates

Busy City Council candidates have another rally on their full schedules Wednesday night—at Zaragoza Park at 8 p. m.

This rally is sponsored by the League of United Latin-American Citizens (Lulac)—a non-partisan educational and civic work organization.

All 10 candidates have been invited to attend. In event of bad weather the rally will be moved to the Zavala Elementary School auditorium.

Meantime, Ted Thompson's campaign—for Place 3—has gained new support from two directions—from a former Girl Scout executive, Mrs. Frank Spiller, and an East Side pastor, the Rev. J. H. Washington of the Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church.

On radio Tuesday Washington called Thompson a man of “convictions, foresight . . . and a clear knowledge of the city's needs.”

Speaking on the same broadcast, Mrs. Spiller credited Thompson with the spark which has put over civic projects, describing him as a man with “tenacity and far sighted wisdom.”

Also Tuesday Councilwoman Emma Long made a major campaign speech in which she attacked the supporters of the five candidates she opposes and charged the daily newspapers with treating her and members of her ticket unfairly. Mrs. Long withheld copies of her speech from the press.

In a speech to Negro voters Monday night she called for election of these candidates—Ben White, Travis Howard, A. B. Campbell, Charles Birdwell and herself.

Howard has disclaimed any affiliation with Mrs. Long's ticket.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

"Cinco de Mayo To Begin At Zaragosa on Thursday," *The Austin Statesman*, May 4, 1955.

Cinco de Mayo To Begin At Zaragosa on Thursday

One of two big fiestas celebrated each year by Austin Latin Americans—Cinco de Mayo—is scheduled for Zaragosa Park Thursday and Friday.

Festivities will begin each evening at 8 p. m. and will run until 12:30 a. m. The fiesta commemorates a decisive victory of General Zaragosa's outnumbered Mexican Army against the French on May 5, 1862. The other celebration—Días y Seis de Septiembre—commemorates the day Mexico won her independence from Spain—Sept. 16, 1862.

A true fiesta atmosphere has been arranged, with carnival booths, concession stands, dancing, speeches and the coronation of the queen climaxing the evening.

A dance, with music provided by Nash Hernandez and his orchestra, will start festivities. Mrs. Margaret Munoz, chairman of the program committee of the Mexican Patriotic Committee, said. At 10 p. m. a civic program will begin with a salute to the United States and Mexican flags. Alphonso Martinez and Abram Cuevas will be flag bearers. They will be accompanied by Miss Lillie Hernandez and Miss Rebecca Santa Anna.

Luis Guzman, a representative of the Mexican consul, will crown the queen, Miss Lupe Caballero, the candidate sponsored by the Century Club. Her court will include Miss Trine Garza, princess, and Miss Mary Gutierrez, duchess.

Following the coronation, Edi-

berto Retta will read the official declaration of the Battle of Puebla, the battle in which General Zaragosa distinguished himself. Luiz Guzman will then speak for the Mexican consul.

Miss Emma Trevino will sing the national anthems of Mexico and the United States, followed by a dance by Miss Carmen Ledesma. Robert Villanueva, master of ceremonies, will present guests, who will include city council members, other city officials, etc. Three dance numbers will follow—a solo by Miss Carmen Guerrero, a duet by Miss Julia Anna and Miss Leonore Pacheco, and a solo by Miss Carolina Lemon.

The Ricuerdo, a traditional dance of Mexico, by the queen and her court, will conclude the civic program. The Nash Hernandez dance will continue until 12:30 p. m.

The program for Friday will be a dance with the Hernandez orchestra providing music. The festivities have been arranged by the Mexican patriotic committee and Austin Recreation Department. Officers of the committee are Robert Villanueva, president; Jesse Guerrero, vice president; Ediberto Retta, secretary; and Marciso Gil, treasurer.

Organizations helping with arrangements are Century Club, Adult Lulacs, Junior Lulacs, GI Forum and Auxiliary and Alba Club. The recreation department is providing facilities, platform, chairs, etc.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

"Century Club, City Recreation Lead Baseball Planning at Zaragosa Park," *The Austin Statesman*, March 22, 1956.



Members of the Austin Century Club and other interested persons erect sheet strips on the fence around East Austin's Zaragosa Park. The Century Club and the city

recreation department mean to put Austin on the map once again as the statewide center of Latin-American baseball activity.

Century Club, City Recreation Lead Baseball Planning at Zaragosa Park

The Austin recreation department and the Century Club stepped out Thursday to make the Capital City once again the statewide center of Latin American baseball activities.

Goals of the joint venture:

1. A good field to play on.
2. Development of a good local ball club to attract top Latin American teams from throughout the state and Mexico.

Austin's Zaragosa Park, until recent years, was the site of a great

deal of Sunday afternoon baseball activity, weekly attracting some of the finest Latin American teams available.

But since the worn-out-delapidated wooden fence was taken down four years ago, there has been little or no baseball at Zaragosa for adults.

The aim of the Century Club and recreation department is to rebuild the field facilities and local team and schedule weekly games beginning later this spring.

Improvements planned for the field, some of which are already under way, include plowing up the field, enclosing the field with tin sheets on the present cyclone fence, installation of a sprinkling system for the grass, installation of public drinking fountains and other conveniences, and installation of a score board.

In addition, the club will operate a concession stand at each game.

Prospective ball club managers have already met this month, and will meet again March 29 at the recreation department office.

Foremen heading up the Century Club's activities are Mike Guerrero, Roy Guerrero and Clarence Guerrero.

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Comité Patriótico Mexicano. Standing, left to right: Pedro Cortez Suarez, Severino Guerra, and Frank Prado. Seated, left to right: Macrino Ortiz, Ignacio Arriaga, Frank Morales, and Ignacio Acosta. Dated April 3, ca.1930s. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza. PICA 20328.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Swimming pool construction, ca. 1933. Jen Massing-Harris, "Parque Zaragoza Neighborhood Park Pool & Bathhouse Caretaker Cottage Updates," September 24, 2019, <http://www.zaragozaparkneighborhoodassn.org/neighborhood-nose-sniffing-out-the-scoops-for-the-east-austin-parque-zaragoza-community>



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Boggy Creek and west footbridge, dated 1934. *Austin History Center: Austin Files - Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza. PICA 18241.*



Photo of Boggy Creek and east footbridge with original bandstand in background, dated 1934. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza. PICA 18242.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Park grounds dated April 3, 1939. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza. PICA 24231.*



Bathhouse construction dated February 7, 1941. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Crowd at Parque Zaragoza festival with food and retail stalls in background, n.d. *Austin History Center and University of North Texas, Portal to Texas History*, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph124548>.



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Bathhouse conversion to community center, April 1950. *Austin History Center: Austin Files - Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Play slab/basketball court dated April 8, 1950. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Aerial photo of East Austin, looking south, January 11, 1958. Parque Zaragoza is in the center-right foreground with baseball diamond and pool/bathhouse. *Austin History Center and University of North Texas, Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph19192/m1/1/?q=%22zaragoza%20park%22>.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Swimming pool and bathhouse, 1968. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza. PICA 37827.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Play slab and original bandstand, n.d. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, P1200(31), Zaragoza.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Original bandstand interior. Hanging linens may be associated with one of the community center's sewing circles. *Austin History Center: Austin Files – Parks, Zaragoza. P1200(31), PICA 20327.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Children's arts and crafts class, n.d. *City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.*



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Bathhouse interior gateways (2014 photo by Andrew Leith)



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Bathhouse interior, west room (2014 photo by Andrew Leith)



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photographs

Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas
Photographed March 2022 by Gregory Smith

Photo 1
Bathhouse and Pool
Camera facing east



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 2
Bathhouse arched entrances
Camera facing east



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 3
Bathhouse west arched entrance
Camera facing east



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 4
Bathhouse east elevation
Camera facing northwest



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 5
Bathhouse south gated doorway
Camera facing north



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 6
South wing bathhouse interior
Camera facing north



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 7
Pool
Camera facing southwest



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 8
Baseball field, from east fence
Camera facing west



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 9
Baseball field, from west fence
Camera facing southeast



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 10
Baseball stands
Camera facing west



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 11
Baseball stands
Camera facing south



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 12
Basketball Court and Bandstand
Camera facing south



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 13
Bandstand
Camera facing south



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 14
Creek with west bridge
Camera facing northwest



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 15
Creek with east bridge
Camera facing southeast



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 16
Creek with west bridge and baseball field
Camera facing south



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 17
Picnic area
Camera facing east



Parque Zaragoza, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 18
1996 Recreation Center
Camera facing north



- end -