

Brackenridge Park: The Cultural Landscape Report



The Brackenridge Park Conservancy

“The Brackenridge Park Conservancy is a steward of Brackenridge Park’s natural, historic, educational, and recreational resources and an advocate for their preservation and enhancement for the benefit of current and future generations.”

A Unique Community Treasure



What's a Cultural Landscape Report?

A Cultural Landscape Report is a technical document grounded in multiple disciplines and research that

- Documents and analyzes a site's history, development, and current conditions
- Defines the cultural significance of a landscape
- Evaluates physical integrity of a landscape.

A CLR serves as a guide for preserving a cultural landscape and is the primary tool for long-term management.





Cultural Landscape Report Team

REED HILDERBRAND



Two nationally acclaimed landscape architecture firms, along with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, prepared this 772-page study of Brackenridge Park, beginning in June 2018 and ending in December 2019.

The CLR Development Methodology

The consultant's work ran from June, 2018 to December of 2019 and followed this structure.

1. Initial Site Reconnaissance
2. Wildflower Center Ecological Site Assessment
3. Historical Research and Ongoing Site Reconnaissance
4. Documentation of Existing Conditions
5. Site Context and History
6. Analysis and Evaluation
7. Development of a Treatment Plan

Not an "action plan", but an important recording of history and current conditions.

CLR: Historical Research

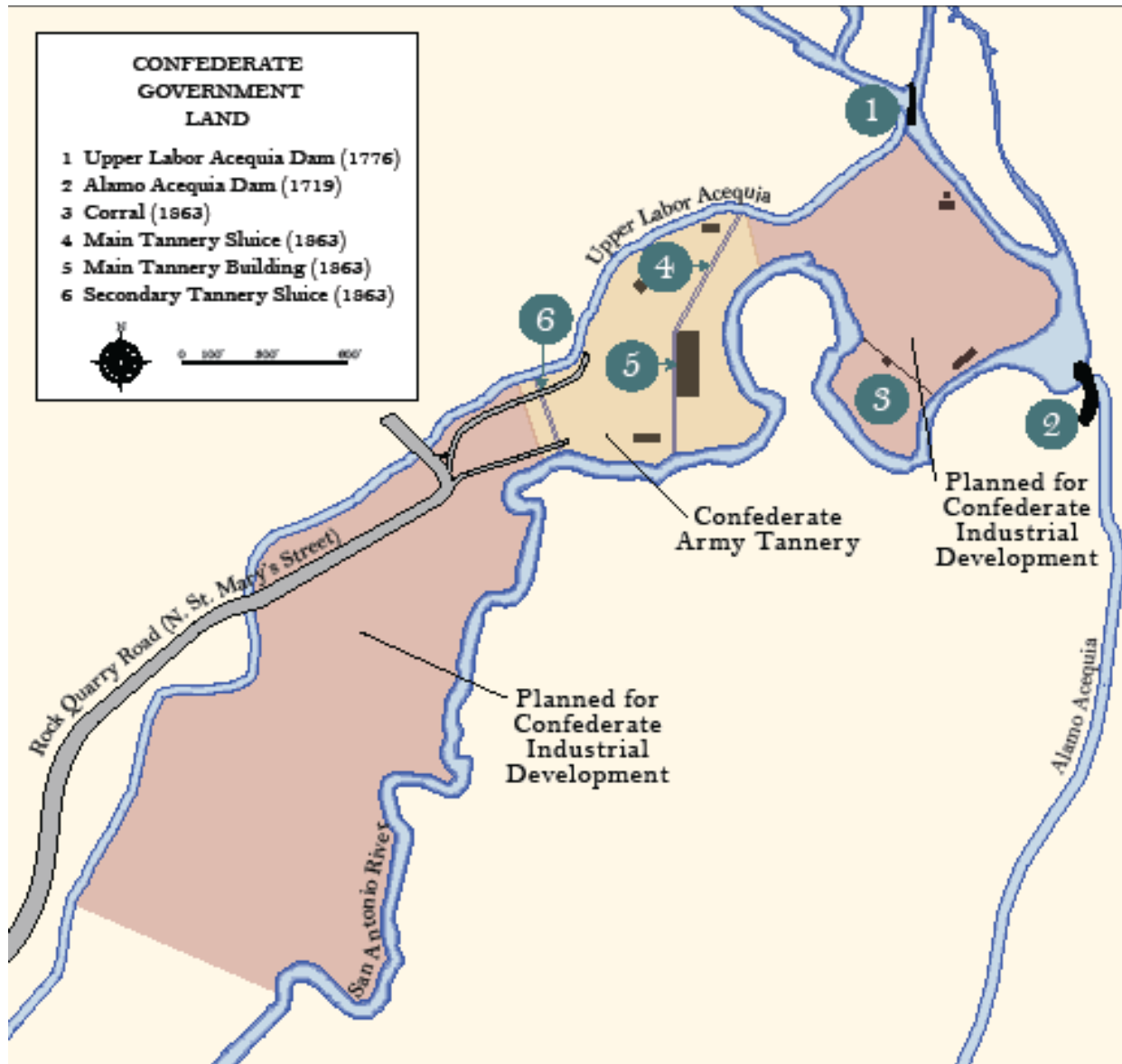
“As a municipal park, Brackenridge Park is unequalled in its layers of history. *It is one of the most culturally significant urban public parks in the United States.*”



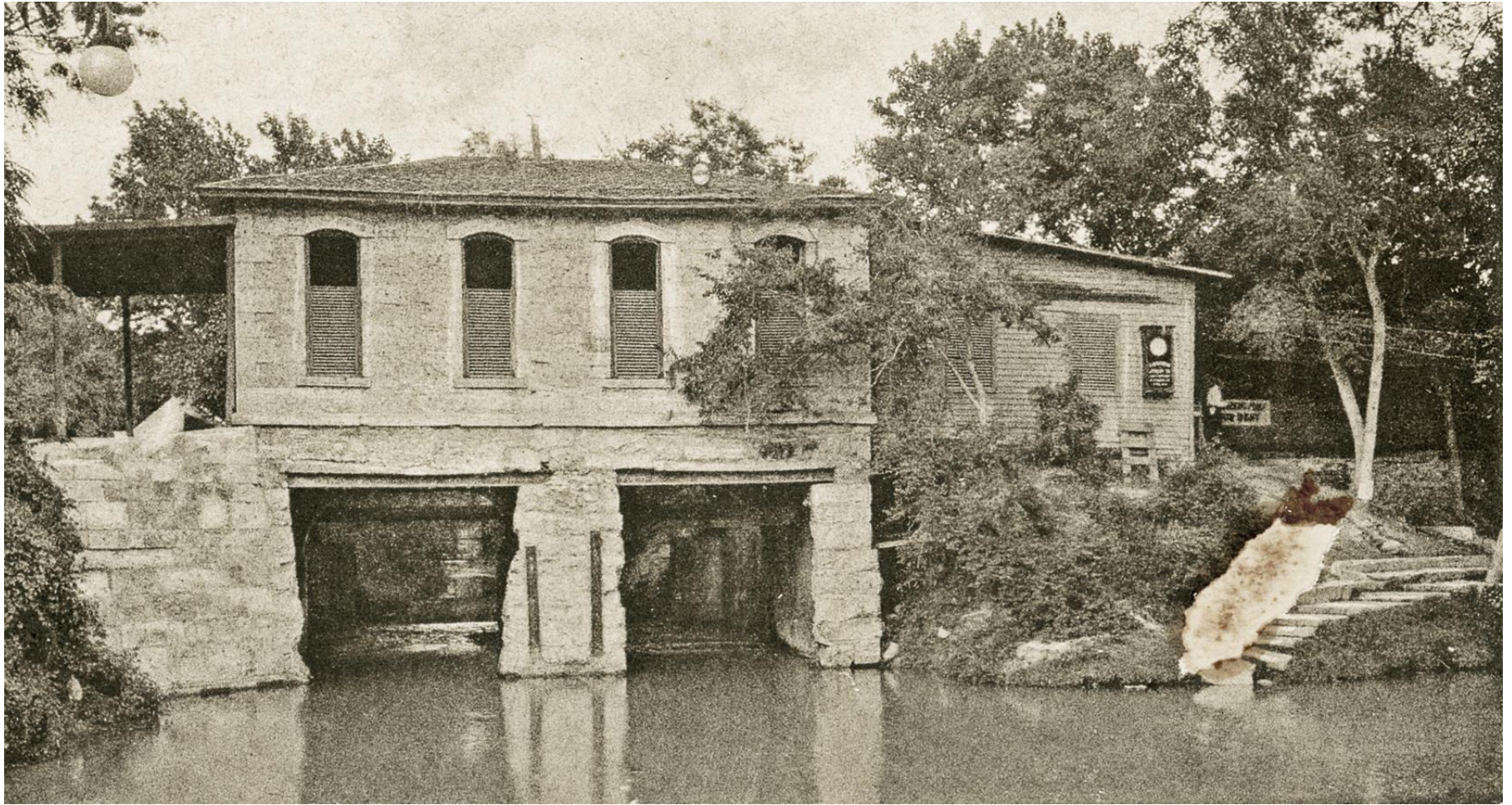
Brackenridge Park is SA's History



18th & 19th Century Water Works



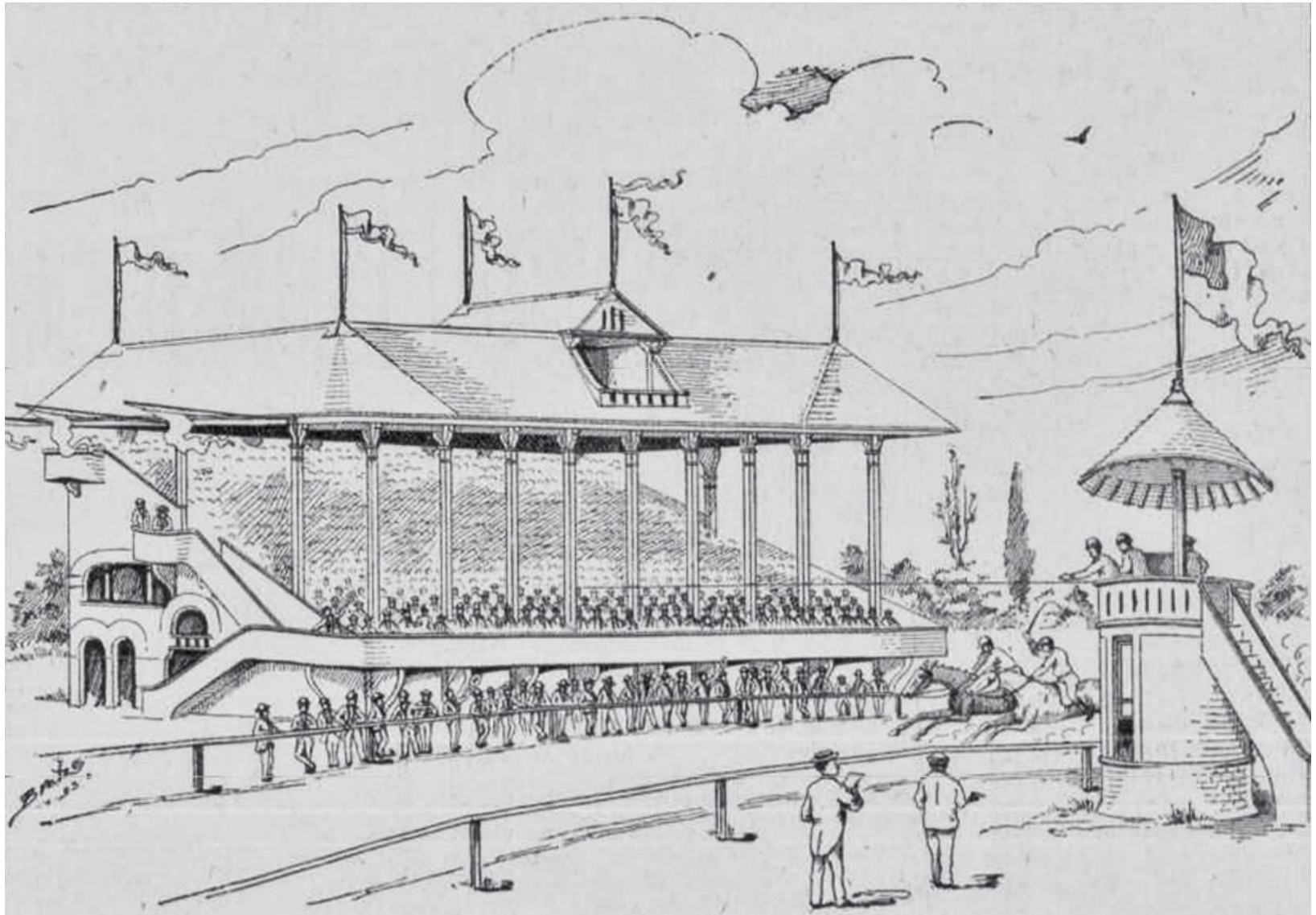
1878 Pump House



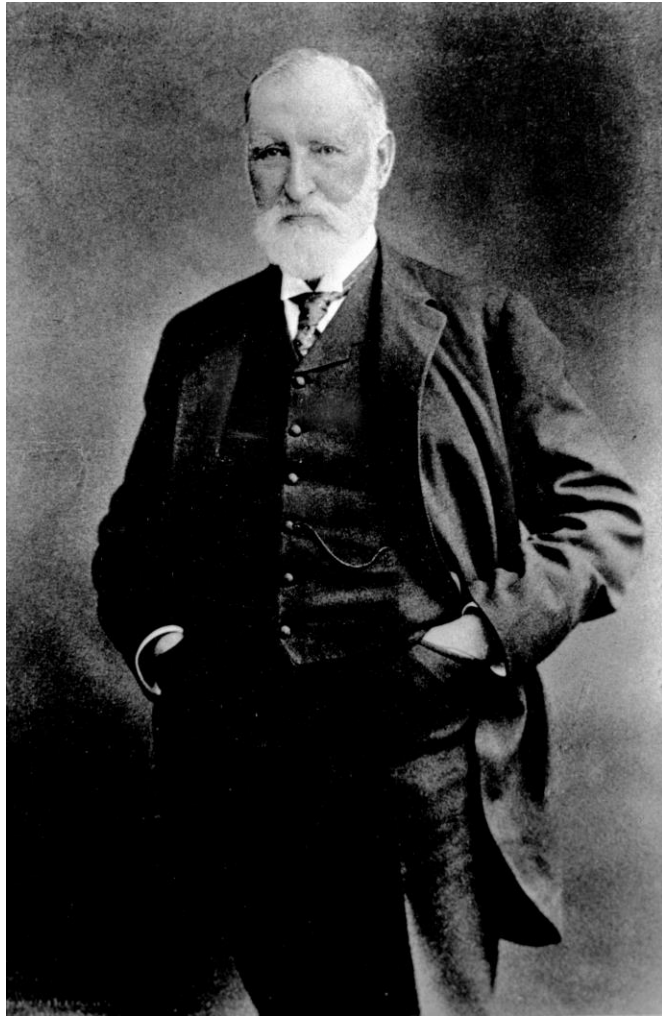
Alamo Roman & Portland Cement Co.



1890 Racetrack & Military Camps



Brackenridge & Koehler Donations



Ray Lambert, Parks Superintendent



1916 Japanese Tea Gardens



1916 Tillinghast Golf Course



1922 Borglum Studio



1926 Witte Museum



1930 Sunken Garden Theatre



1930's MiraFlores



1930's WPA & NYA Works Programs



Loving Our Park to Death



CLR Notes 8 Systems That Define the Park

Whimsical, Romantic and Uniquely San Antonio

1. River and Riparian Corridor



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- 
1. River and Riparian Corridor
 2. River Structures
 3. Vegetation, Soils & Hydrology

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1. River and Riparian Corridor
2. River Structures
3. Vegetation, Soils & Hydrology
4. Entry & Arrival Areas



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1. River and Riparian Corridor
2. River Structures
3. Vegetation, Soils & Hydrology
4. Entry & Arrival Areas
5. Circulation

CLR Notes 8 Systems That Define the Park

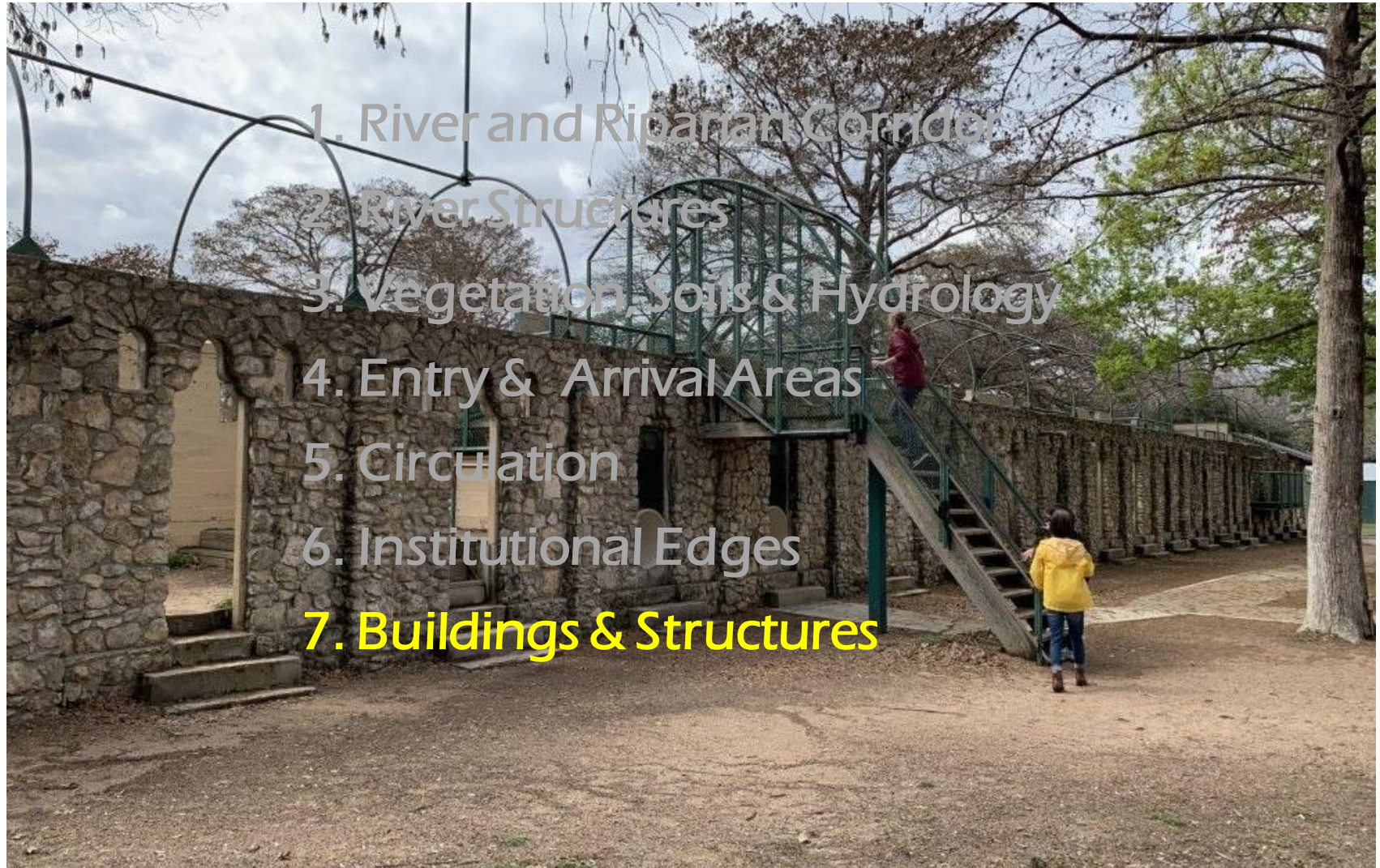
Whimsical, Romantic and Uniquely San Antonio

1. River and Riparian Corridor
2. River Structures
3. Vegetation, Soils & Hydrology
4. Entry & Arrival Areas
5. Circulation
- 6. Institutional Edges**



CLR Notes 8 Systems That Define the Park

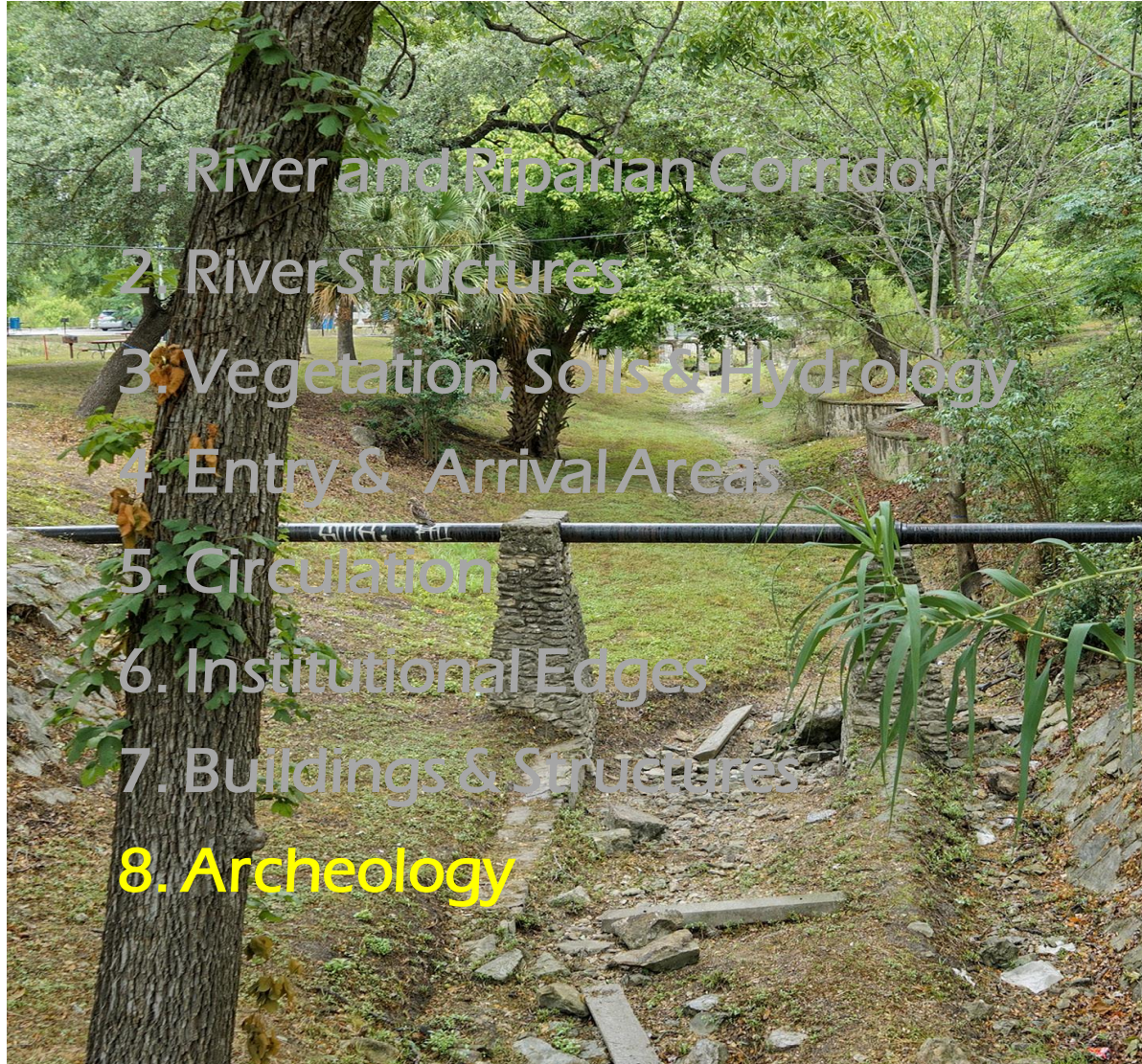
Whimsical, Romantic and Uniquely San Antonio



1. River and Riparian Corridor
2. River Structures
3. Vegetation, Soils & Hydrology
4. Entry & Arrival Areas
5. Circulation
6. Institutional Edges
- 7. Buildings & Structures**

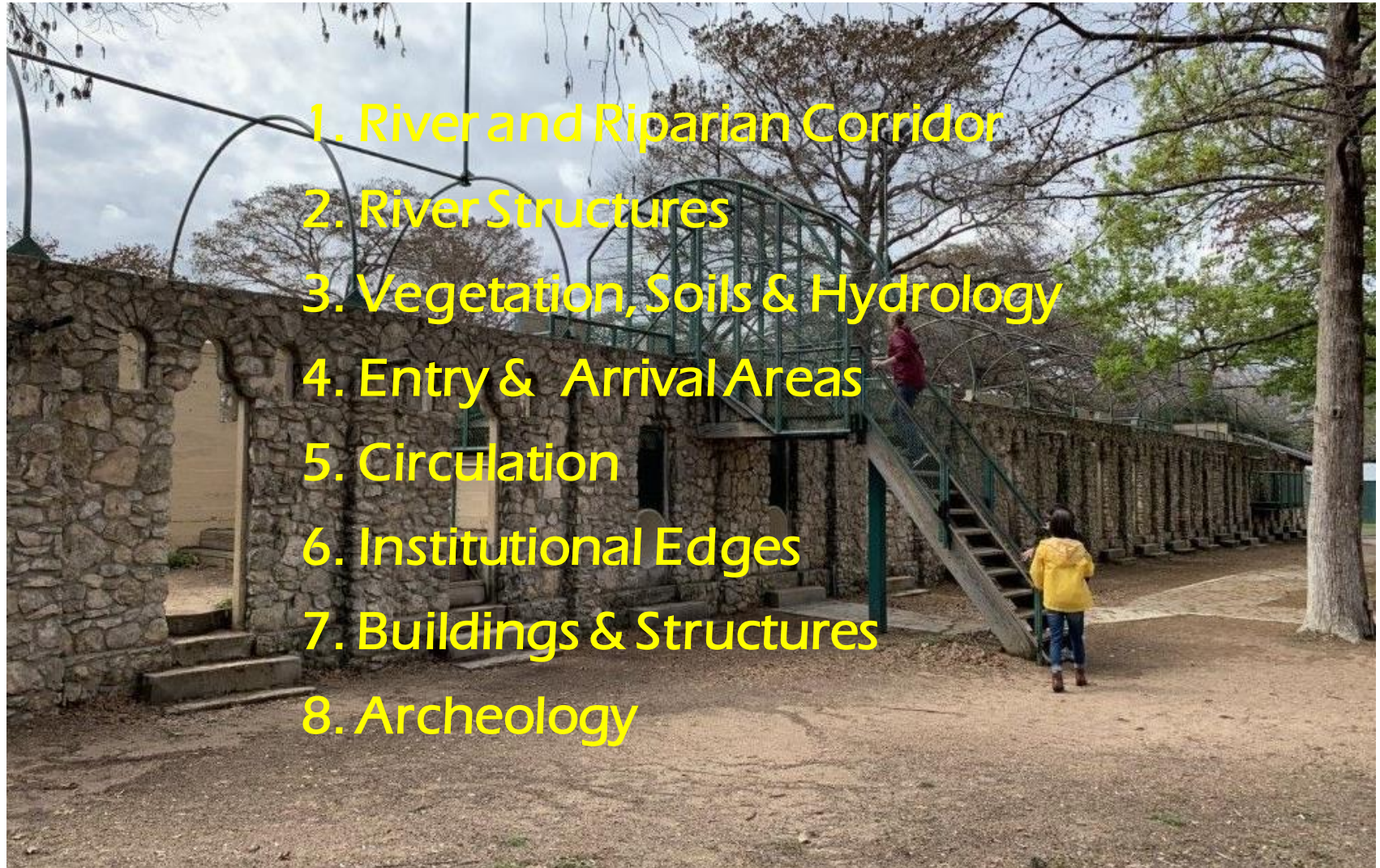
CLR Notes 8 Systems That Define the Park

Whimsical, Romantic and Uniquely San Antonio



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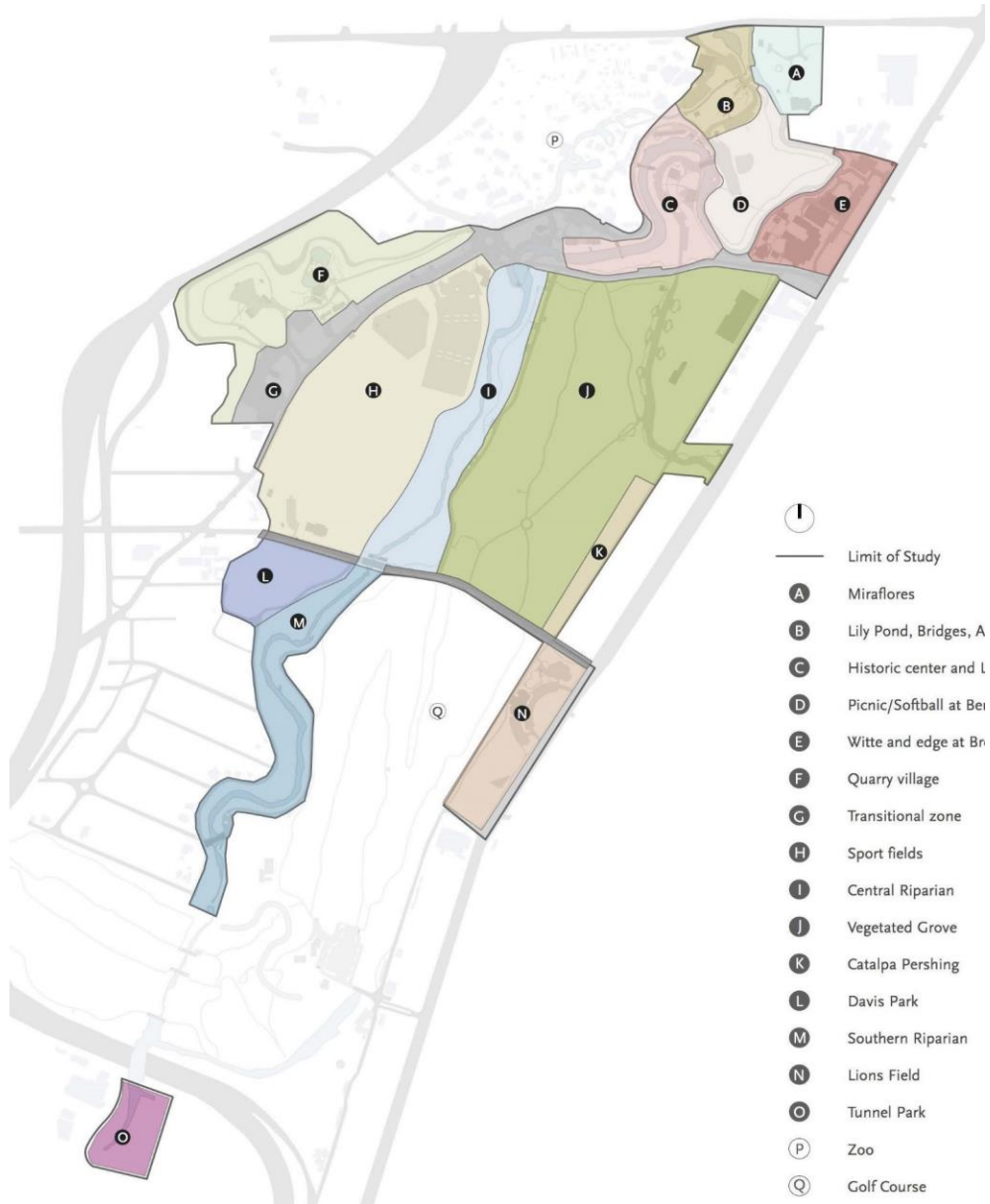
Whimsical, Romantic and Uniquely San Antonio



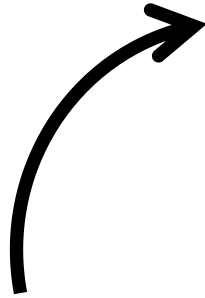
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7. Buildings & Structures
8. Archeology

Character Zones

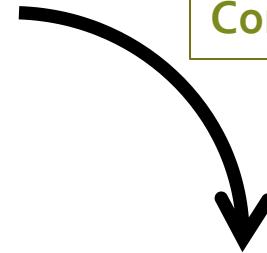
To better consider planning for the Park, the CLR suggests 15 character zones which in essence describe the historical use of geographic areas.



Interpreting for the Public



How will we
connect the
**System to the
Story to the
Community?**



NPS Standard Treatment Approaches

CLRs in general are built on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties and Cultural Landscapes. It prescribes four **general** treatment approaches.

1. Preservation requires "retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric, including historic form, features, and details as they have evolved over time."
2. "Rehabilitation "acknowledges the need to alter or add to a cultural landscape to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the landscape's historic character."
3. Restoration allows for "the depiction of a landscape at a particular time in its history by preserving materials from the period of significance and removing materials from other periods."
4. Reconstruction establishes a framework for "recreating a vanished or non-surviving landscape with new materials, primarily for interpretive purposes"

BP Specific Guiding Treatment Principles

1. Acknowledge and express favorable and difficult histories.
2. Connect people to the river's upper course—San Antonio's origin.
3. Honor and protect its defining vernacular character and spaces.
4. Heal and cultivate an ecology with which humans interact.
5. Foster collaboration and cohesion among the park's cultural institutions.
6. Unite the park with its surrounding community

Intended Outcomes of Our Work

The implementation of suggested Treatment recommendations is intended to support the park's ability to achieve eight targeted outcomes, listed below.

1. Impactful Interpretation
2. Seamless Inclusivity
3. Effective Circulation
4. Healthy Ecology
5. Multiple Landscape Experiences
6. Local and National Visibility (opening funding sources)
7. Exceptional Care and Maintenance
8. Dedicated Funding

Closing Thoughts

- The BPC is committed to a thoughtful, community inclusive effort that will allow Brackenridge Park to grow into its full potential as the Queen of San Antonio Parks. We welcome the help of this committee: we are ALL stewards of a landscape that takes on greater importance than perhaps previously imagined. It is not an exaggeration to think that we all are engaging in a Clara Driscoll type effort to restore, enhance and protect an irreplaceable part of San Antonio's culture and history.
- Make an effort to try and understand in more detail the valuable information of the CLR. PDFs are available at Brackenridgepark.org, along with many other useful resources.
- I urge this committee to establish the CLR as the primary and over-arching guide by which all future Park work must be judged. This not only establishes a guiding “north star” for future generations, but the certainty of our future direction might enhance our potential to raise private investment that will lighten the burden on our local tax base.
- On behalf of the BPC and the citizens of SA, I want to express our sincere gratitude for the work you have agreed to undertake on behalf of our grand Brackenridge Park. Thank you.