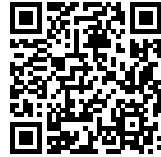




Ten Eyck Landscape
Architects + Clayton Korte
Pease Park

KINGSBURY COMMONS AT PEASE PARK

Posted on February 23, 2023 by martabuges



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Kingsbury Commons at Pease Park

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Situated along the banks of Shoal Creek in Downtown Austin, Pease Park is the city's oldest public park and one of its most loved. In 2014, the City of Austin adopted the Pease Park Vision Plan – developed by prime consultant Wallace, Roberts & Todd and Clayton Korte – to guide future use and care of the 84-acre park. With a focus on its built elements, historic features, and cultural resources, the plan included an inventory and analysis, and a developed set of conceptual alternatives.



The first phase of implementation based on this plan rehabilitated, preserved, and enhanced the park's southernmost tip, Kingsbury Commons, also affectionately referred to as the park's "recreational heart and cultural soul". This phase was realized as a collaboration between prime consultant Ten Eyck Landscape Architects, Clayton Korte, and Mell Lawrence Architects.

Framed by the historic stone archways at the intersection of Parkway and Kingsbury Street, a new limestone sign invites visitors to the park. Removal of telephone poles, an old splash pad, and a

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prefab restroom building opened up the lawn for everything from frisbee to yoga to soccer lessons, and it now offers sweeping interior views of the park and a connection to the adjacent creek. This welcoming front door, flanked by mature live oak trees, makes the park and its amenities more accessible to all visitors. The new park design weaves together the mature existing vegetation with a robust program of facilities and amenities comprising event rental spaces, new restrooms and storage facilities, a treetop observation pod, natural playgrounds, a basketball court, and an interactive water feature that recalls the karst limestone aquifers found in the Texas Hill Country. Existing features, including a densely wooded hillside, Civilian Conservation Corps-era picnic tables, and the historic 1920s Tudor Cottage, are preserved and enhanced to embrace the park's rich history.



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The spring restoration is an example of the green infrastructure practices integral to the park design. An inlet was placed along the gutter on Kingsbury Street at the site of an ephemeral seep that for years had been spilling down the street and into the city's storm sewer. Now, this water is directed below the street and emerges into the spring basin. From the basin, the spring makes its way downhill through a cobble and boulder-lined swale of native plants including bald cypress, roughleaf dogwood, switchgrass, and swamp milkweed, diverting this water from the underground storm system and feeding a vibrant ecosystem instead. Steel pedestrian bridges and limestone quarry blocks stepping through the landscape allow visitors to traverse the spring and interact with it.



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The park's recreational amenities are also designed to encourage interaction with nature and educate visitors about Central Texas geologic formations and water systems. An all-abilities new playground consists of climbing structures, swings, and balance elements made of natural wood beams and cargo netting that blend into the surrounding tree cover, carving out a place for play in a wooded landscape. Kids can get their hands dirty constructing play forts from logs and branches salvaged during park construction in the loose parts play area. Bocce courts and adult exercise equipment tuck under the canopy of existing trees within the riparian restoration zone. Only a thin scrim of nearly-transparent mini-mesh fencing – slowly being overtaken by vines – separates the basketball court from lush rain gardens



The park's location in a flood plain presented a particular set of challenges. Materials were chosen

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not just for proximity to the site or for their beauty but also for durability in major flood events. Architectural elements were intentionally designed to highlight rather than overshadow the natural setting. The treehouse observation pod, dubbed the Treescape – a two-level, roughly 40-foot diameter steel orb – lures park users into the treetops. Visitors can enjoy the thrill of rolling across the cargo net hammock stretched across the pod's center or gaze up at the clouds through the oculus at its top. Due to the significant grade change of the site, the upper level is reached via the hillside on an ADA-accessible bridge. The lower level connects to the decomposed granite trails below and serves as a cool, shady gathering place with ledgestone seat walls and Virginia creeper vines growing up the pod's twisted rebar skin.

The mature existing tree canopy underwent a similar rehabilitation, lending the new park elements a sense of permanence and place that only comes from hundred-year-old oaks and elms. Existing vegetation was carefully protected during construction, and both upland and riparian zones along Shoal Creek underwent ecological restoration and removal of invasive species. To support the rich tapestry of new native understory plantings, native soils were salvaged and stored during construction so that no soil was imported on site.

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