



PATRONS *for* BELLAIRE PARKS

Bellaire's parks group needs help to earn \$250,000 grant

By Mandy Nathan, President, Patrons for Bellaire Parks

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On behalf of Patrons for Bellaire Parks, I would like to thank everyone who has already helped our effort to meet our \$250,000 Wortham Challenge Grant for Bellaire Town Square.

The rest of you? Please take a moment to read on.

We have only a few months more, until the end of June, to raise \$250,000 so that the Wortham Foundation will give an additional \$250,000 for Bellaire's new park.

It's all or nothing. If Bellaire supporters can't scrape together the money before June, Bellaire's parks get nothing – *nada* – from this challenge grant.

That's \$250,000 down the drain.

In case you haven't heard about Patrons, we are a volunteer-based, non-profit group that was started several years ago to raise money to improve Bellaire's parks.

Like many of you, we were concerned about aging parks and facilities. We wanted Bellaire's parks to continue serving as treasured gathering spots for families. We wanted Bellaire to be able to buy land for future parks and playing fields.

We were inspired especially by the vision of city leaders who took decades to painstakingly buy up the residential lots that eventually became Loftin Park.

Now, Loftin Park and adjacent Bellaire Park will merge into one large urban oasis called Bellaire Town Square, filled with unique recreational spaces in which residents can gather and take a break from hectic city life.

The good news is that people are already stepping up and taking action to bring about that vision. As of mid-February, individuals and businesses had donated or pledged a total of more than \$750,000 for Bellaire Town Square through Patrons.

These donations included amounts of \$100,000 or more from corporations like Centerpoint, Chevron and First Street Surgical, as well as \$50 through \$50,000 from community groups, businesses and individuals just like yourself.

This is a tremendous amount of money to have raised in such a short time.

But we need your help now more than ever to meet the Wortham Challenge and bring in that \$250,000 donation. Because we are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, your donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Just to remind you, back in 2004 the Bellaire City Council bought the last two residential lots bordering Loftin Park, bringing Bellaire's total investment in land for that park over the decades to more than \$1.1 million.

Then, with the help of an advisory parks board and professional designers, Council approved a conceptual plan for a space known as Bellaire Town Square, to be created by removing Laurel Street, reconfiguring parking and merging the adjacent Loftin and Bellaire parks.

The new Bellaire Town Square is designed to include an aquatics center with a family swimming pool, heated lap pool, diving well, pool house and an attractive water-play area.

Loftin Park will maintain its natural setting with a new playground, green space and trails, while Bellaire Park will feature an outdoor pavilion, events lawn and skate park, in addition to the existing baseball field and tennis courts.

Construction of the aquatics facility already is underway and scheduled for completion by this summer. Remaining features will be built as funding becomes available.

Although Bellaire voters approved a \$1.5 million bond referendum in 2005 to help fund the first phase of Bellaire Town Square, officials estimated that the entire project could take at least a decade if dependent solely on city funding.

That's where Patrons comes in. Our long-term goal is to raise \$3 million, hopefully in time for the majority of Bellaire Town Square to be completed by Bellaire's 2008 Centennial. More short-term, we need to contribute \$1 million for the aquatics center and pool house.

Super-short-term? We want that \$250,000 Wortham Challenge Grant.

The grant requires us to raise \$500,000 between June 2006 and 2007 for its match of \$250,000, and we already have about \$250,000 raised that qualifies. So we're halfway there.

But we don't get any of the money unless we meet the total challenge and raise \$250,000 more!

We support Bellaire and Bellaire's parks, just like you do, and we ask that you join your neighbors now in helping Bellaire meet this challenge. Please visit our updated website at www.bellaireparks.com or call 713-661-PARK(7275) for more information and donor forms. Send your pledge or donation to Patrons for Bellaire Parks, P.O. Box 3228, Bellaire, Texas 77402-3228.

Thank you for helping build a better Bellaire for our future!