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# San Antonio Express-News



# Chrispark's greenery growing

## Linda Pace's park to expand to more than an acre

By Steve Bennett  
STAFF WRITER

Once a blistering stretch of asphalt parking lot in an industrial zone just south of downtown, Chrispark has been a green and serene urban oasis for more than a decade.

"I often see couples come into the park and spread a blanket and just hang out, or people with their dogs, or mothers with their young children in strollers come into the park," said Kelly O'Connor, collection and exhibitions officer at the Linda Pace Foundation, the international arts organization that oversees the park and nearby Space Gallery, which are across the street from its Camp Street Lofts headquarters.

Bulldozers are currently moving earth to add more greenery and walkways to the park, expanding it westward by 7,500 square feet to just more than an acre.

"I think of it as a real neighborhood park, a family park, a place for kids," said Austin-based landscape architect Jon Ahrens, who designed both phases of Chrispark. "Last time I was there, I ran into a waitress who walks in the park on her way to work. And expanding the park will just allow more green space for people in the neighborhood to utilize."

A project near and dear to the heart of the late artist and philanthropist Linda Pace, the park — constructed in 2005 — honors her son Chris Goldsbury, who died in 1997 at age 24.

"She really wanted the park to be a celebration of Chris' life," O'Connor said. "I remember every year she used to have a birthday celebration for him in the park with paletas and a big cake and a bunch of kids.

She really wanted it to be a place where children could play."

Two of the kid-friendly features of the park are a tumble hill, a sloping berm for children to roll down, and a water feature in the central stone plaza with 35 jets that shoot water a few feet up out of the ground.

A metal arbor flanked by towering Texas Sabal palms draws visitors into the park on Camp Street just off South Flores Street.

A focal point of Chrispark is "Chris' Tree," a Natchez mock orange that blooms in the spring, infusing the air with the scent of citrus.

A 100-year-old pecan tree stands guard at the back of the park, which is especially verdant after the recent downpours with a mix of Texas and tropical plants such as Mexican mint marigold, mermaid rose, mountain laurel, salvia, lily of the Nile, purple cone flower, eyelash sage, Hong Kong orchid and variegated ginger. Tall stands of timber bamboo compete with bald cypress trees to provide the most shade.

"With the bald cypress, we wanted to reflect the nearby San Antonio River, which has so many majestic cypresses along its banks," Ahrens said.

Linda Pace once said she had "always been interested in how the ordinary can become extraordinary."

Woven into the landscape design of Chrispark are "visual experiences," works of art by Teresita Fernández including "Wednesday's Child," a stepping-stone series of colorful, illuminated glass pavers etched with text retelling a popular nursery rhyme (Chris was born on a Wednesday), and quarried stone "journal benches" inscribed with brief passages



The entrance to Chrispark is flanked by a couple of Texas Sabal palms.

Steve Bennett / San Antonio Express-News

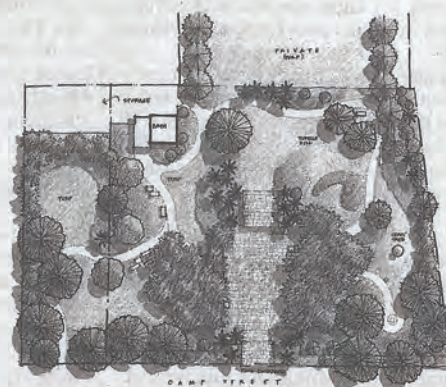
from Chris' journal such as "I hugged a friend."

Pace, who died in 2007, founded the downtown artist residency organization Artpace in an old Hudson car dealership, and her art collection forms the basis of the Pace foundation's repository of more than 800 works ranging from paintings to video installations by some of the world's most renowned contemporary artists.

That collection will find a permanent home in 2018, when construction is scheduled to be completed on Ruby City, a sparkling red building designed by world-renowned architect David Adjaye, whose other recent projects include the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History on the National Mall.

"Things are going great with Ruby City," O'Connor said. "We just got through the design phase of the project and are scheduled to break ground at the very end of 2016."

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Courtesy Madrone LDC

Chrispark's "tumble hill" is a fun place for kids to play while their parents sit on "journal benches."



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