


BERKLEY V. AND VINCENT M. DAWSON PARK INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE PACKAGE

HISTORIC TIMELINE WALK SIGNAGE




1910


Bridge Relocated to San Antonio, Texas, as a Viaduct over the Railroad

The Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad sought to expand westward and requested permission from the City of San Antonio to cross the East Side streets with their mainline tracks.

The City wanted to ensure that East Side residents had access to downtown, requiring the railroad to build a bridge over the tracks.

The Phoenix-Whipple wrought iron truss bridge was built in 1881 in Atchafalaya, Louisiana, then transported west past Uvalde, Texas, and erected over the Nueces River before being relocated to San Antonio in 1910, where it was renamed the Hays Street Bridge. The bridge was designed for use by both horse-drawn carriages and motorized vehicles, and it remains one of the few metal truss bridges still in existence in the state.





1982


Hays Street Bridge Closure


As traffic significantly increased due to the rise in motorized vehicles, the Hays Street Bridge began to deteriorate and was ultimately deemed unsafe.

The deck and beams of the bridge's approach spans exhibited 80 percent deterioration, and the retaining walls had settled. As a result, the concrete approach spans were considered to be in such poor condition that their preservation was not deemed possible.

Due to these conditions, the bridge was officially closed.

After closing the Hays Street Bridge to vehicular traffic, the City of San Antonio considered demolishing it. However, local efforts to preserve the bridge raised awareness of its historical significance, leading to its preservation without enhancements for several years.





2010


Hays Street Bridge Reopened to the Public


In 2001, the Hays Street Bridge was recognized as a key component of a hike-and-bike network linking downtown San Antonio and the River North/Museum Corridor to East Side cultural attractions and the Salado Creek Greenway.

In 2009, the bridge rehabilitation included the removal of deteriorated structural elements. The new bridge approaches were designed to maintain a similar profile to the 1910 approaches, with modifications for accessibility.

The Hays Street Bridge Rehabilitation project, which cost \$3.7 million, also replaced the original wooden deck, which had been overlaid with asphalt and other paving materials over the years, with new wood to restore its original character.

Additionally, the rehabilitation project included upgraded lighting, landscaping, artwork on the handrails of the approaches, and interpretive signage. In 2010, after Union Pacific transferred ownership, the bridge was rededicated and reopened to the public as a pedestrian and bicycle gateway.






2012


Community Support for the Park

Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson, the donors of the land, specified that it be transformed into a public park and named in their honor.

The community, comprised of neighborhood residents, advocates, and preservationists, did not support transferring land for private development rather than fulfilling the community's long-envisioned park as part of a larger bridge restoration project.

In response to concerns about the private use of the land and commercialization of the bridge span, the community rallied together, organized public demonstrations, and collected more than 2,800 petition signatures, culminating in a Texas Supreme Court ruling. Through the collective efforts of the community, the 1.69-acre parcel was successfully reclaimed as public park space. This victory solidified the park's role as a community hub and preserved its cherished view of the historic Hays Street Bridge.





2019

Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Becomes a Reality


Design concepts for the park, which included a thorough community engagement process, began in August 2019. This outreach effort confirmed all the features seen today, top among them the construction of skateboarding elements, which attract skating enthusiasts from all parts of the city.

The project transformed a blighted site into a vibrant urban green space and is now part of a network of green spaces, including the Museum Reach of the San Antonio Riverwalk, Maverick Park, and Lockwood-Dignowity Park.

The Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park and the Hays Street Bridge have been transformed into symbols of community resilience and cultural revival for the surrounding community and truly are a place for all.

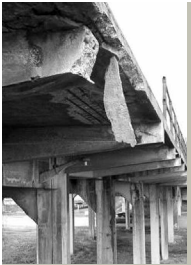


HISTORIC TIMELINE WALK SIGNAGE



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Bridge Relocated to San Antonio, Texas, as a Viaduct over the Railroad



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Hays Street Bridge Closure

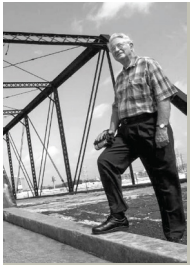
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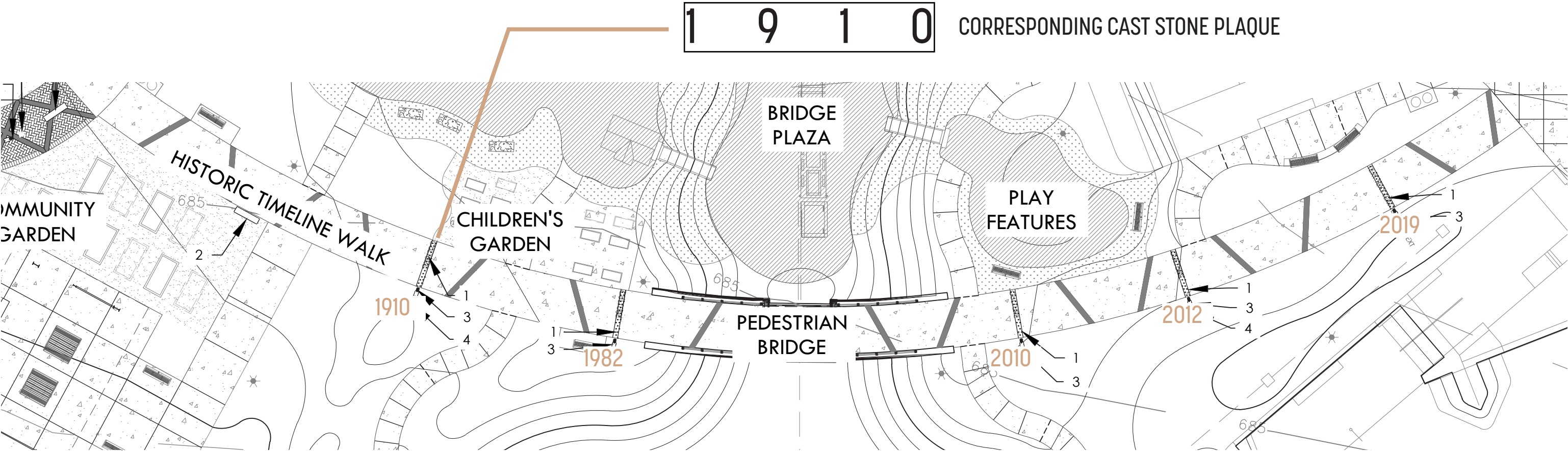
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Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Becomes a Reality



location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE - PEOPLE

PEOPLE

The Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group

The Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group is a diverse group of community members dedicated to restoring the historic Hays Street Bridge. Formed in 2000, the group includes East Side residents, members of the city planning commission, conservation society representatives, and engineering professionals. H. Douglas Steadman, P.E., a founding member and civil and structural engineer, identified the bridge's historical significance and played a pivotal role in its preservation. Under his leadership, the bridge was successfully designated a historic landmark by the Texas section of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the City of San Antonio, the Texas Historical Commission, and the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Steadman also spearheaded efforts to secure grant funding and private donations to support the restoration. In 2012, the group was instrumental in the bridge's restoration efforts in collaboration with the City of San Antonio.

The Conservation Society of San Antonio

The Conservation Society of San Antonio, founded on March 24, 1924, by Emily Edwards and Rena Maverick Green, aims to protect the city's historic elements amid rapid growth. The Society was instrumental in funding the restoration of the Hays Street Bridge, contributing \$50,000 in April 2001 toward matching federal ISTEA-221 funds. In 2006, the Conservation Society of San Antonio helped secure a TxDOT grant for "Hays St. Bridge Park and Railroad Relocation." Their ongoing advocacy and support have been crucial in preserving San Antonio's landmarks, with their initial contribution serving as a catalyst for further restoration efforts.

San Antonio Neighbors Together Organization

San Antonio Neighbors Together hosts an annual event, formerly known as National Night Out, on the first Tuesday of October each year, focusing on strengthening relationships between local police and the communities they serve. In 2001, the Neighbors Together Organization and the City of San Antonio began a special study of future bridge uses and potential funding sources for the rehabilitation of the Hays Street Bridge.

Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association

The Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association is a group open to all residents and property owners in the Dignowity Hill area. It consists of an active group of neighbors striving to make a difference in the neighborhood. The Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association supported the City of San Antonio and the Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group in applying for the TxDOT grant for "Hays St. Bridge Restoration and Railroad Relocation," which included pedestrian and bicycle access. They have played a key role in the restoration of the Hays Street Bridge and continue to advocate for the Dignowity Hill neighborhood, a San Antonio Historic District.

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center

In 2011, the Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group asked the Esperanza to join the effort to complete the Bridge Restoration Project, culminating in the long-planned Dawson Park. The park was intended to provide a place from which San Antonio residents and visitors could enjoy the bridge and learn about its historic importance. Esperanza worked to expand community awareness through its "Cities of Hope" series, held on the bridge and throughout the city. Esperanza also recruited pro bono legal representation and facilitated community involvement in the lawsuit that was successful in the Texas Supreme Court.

The City of San Antonio

Over the years, the City of San Antonio has played a key role in the rehabilitation process, communicating with nearby residents of the East Side, families in the community, and supporters of Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park. The City of San Antonio convened and hosted meetings, shepherded the bridge restoration, and facilitated the park planning and design.

PEOPLE



The Hays St. Bridge Restoration Group



The Conservation Society of San Antonio



Neighbors Together Organization



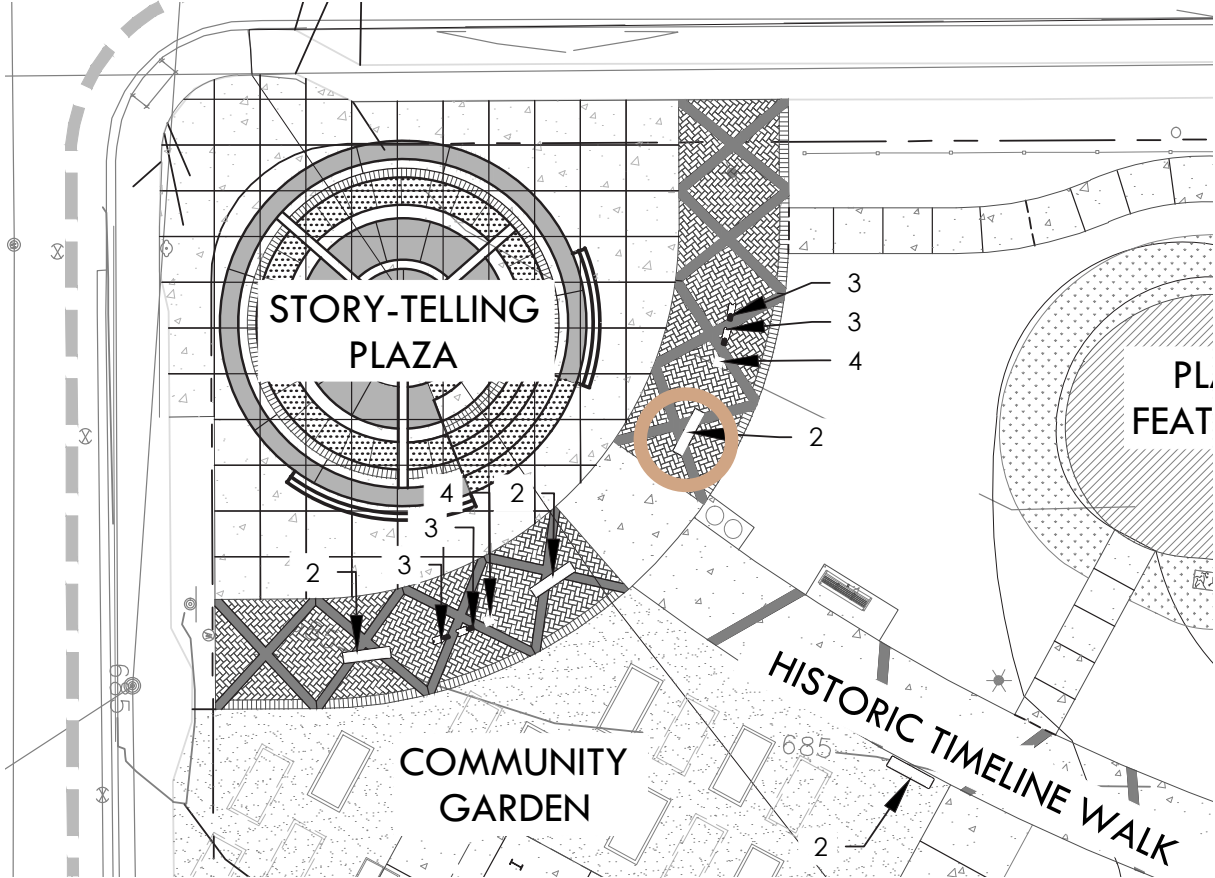
Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association



Esperanza Peace & Justice Center



The City of San Antonio



location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE

HISTORY

Railroad

San Antonio Railway Company

1850

The Buffalo Bayou, Brazos, and Colorado (B.B. & C.) Railroad is chartered and is the first railroad in Texas.

1865

The Southern Pacific is formed in San Francisco, California.

1870

Thomas Pierce, a trader in Texas products from Boston, takes over the bankrupt B.B. & C.

1873

B.B. & C. is renamed to Galveston, Harrisburg, & San Antonio (G.H. & S.A.), following the offer of \$500,000 from the City of San Antonio.

1877

On February 2nd, the first railroad train arrives in San Antonio. The G.H. & S.A. tracks stop at Hays Street.

1881

Under Southern Pacific control, the G.H. & S.A. railroad begins building toward the west.

1903

G.H. & S.A. railroad opens Sunset Station in San Antonio, a landmark that remains today.



An Eastside resident and Orta family member, who immigrated from Mexico in the early 1900s and worked on the railroad.



Sunset Station, early 1900s

Community

San Antonio East Side

San Antonio's East Side has long been a vibrant community, shaped by its rich history since the 1700s. After emancipation, it became home to the city's earliest African American settlements. The construction of the Hays Street Bridge in 1910 enhanced connectivity to downtown. Residents of the historically-Black East Side actively work to preserve their cultural and historical heritage through various community initiatives and advocacy efforts.

Neighborhood

Dignowity Hill

As San Antonio's first exclusive residential suburb, Dignowity Hill plays a vital role in the history of the Hays Street Bridge. Dr. Anthony Michael Dignowity, a distinguished physician and Czech immigrant, laid the foundation for this community during the latter part of the 19th century. Initially settled by prominent San Antonio merchants and business tycoons, the landscape of Dignowity Hill was adorned with opulent estates. Multiple ethnic groups have significantly shaped the neighborhood's identity. Today, designated as a local historic district, the neighborhood actively preserves and celebrates its multifaceted history, ensuring that the enduring narrative of ethnic diversity in San Antonio remains an integral and cherished part of Dignowity Hill's vibrant legacy.

"The bridge, to me, represented... an aspirational experience for me as a child growing up, and I never lost sight of that. I wanted to make sure that the generations to come would have that experience as well."

- Nettie Hinton, 2019, Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Historian and Activist

HISTORY

Railroad

The Galveston, Harrisburg, San Antonio Railroad.

This advertised line to all points in the NORTH EAST AND WEST "Sunset Route" Advertisement



G.H. & S.A. Map

Neighborhood



Harmony House



Emil Elmendorf House, 1884



732 North Olive Street, 1872

Community



Neon Drive Mural at Nolan Street underpass

location of signage on plan

STORY-TELLING PLAZA SIGNAGE

DESIGN

Skate Park

The public meetings drew strong community support for a skate park, with local skaters and nearby shop owners attending every session. Designed for skateboarders, the park features sections for both beginners and advanced users. As the first of its size on San Antonio's East Side, it aims to become a key destination for the community and the downtown Central Business District.

Story-Telling Plaza

In recent times, the Hays Street Bridge was transformed into a symbol of community resilience and cultural revival for the surrounding area, with its multitude of stories and history. The Story-Telling Plaza is a space that serves as a vibrant center for local engagements and celebrations, as well as the starting point for the Historic Timeline Walk, which showcases the Hays Street Bridge's historical significance.

Historic Timeline Walk

The site's history is vital to the surrounding neighborhood and San Antonio, with the Hays Street Bridge symbolizing the city's growth and connection between the East Side and downtown. The design process considered residents, visitors, cyclists, and local schools. Key goals include creating a timeline of the site's transformation into a park and providing information on the Hays Street Bridge, including its construction, evolution, and significance in the area.

Bridge Plaza

The Bridge Plaza is a vital component of Hays Street Bridge Park, highlighting the significance of the Hays Street Bridge to San Antonio and offering direct access from the park. Designed for a diverse range of visitors, it features amenities such as a bike repair station, restrooms, bike racks, seating areas, and informative signage. This dedicated space celebrates the bridge and its construction, enhancing the overall experience of the site.

Garden Plaza

East San Antonio currently faces a lack of healthy food options and public gardens, resulting in "food deserts." In response to community interest, a Garden Plaza has been created to provide healthier alternatives and a community garden for locals, visitors, and schools. Featuring a pavilion, the plaza supports diverse activities and offers educational opportunities in garden care and cooking classes, promoting a healthier neighborhood through the cultivation and sharing of edible plants and trees.

Play Features

The neighborhood expressed a desire for a play area that also honors the site's history. The playground reflects the connections of the Hays Street Bridge to the community, downtown, and the railroad. Designed for children of all abilities, it prioritizes safety and ADA compliance. Its inclusive design philosophy is central to the playground's features, which thoughtfully highlight the area's culture and history, preserving a meaningful part of the East Side and Dignowity Hill's past.

Open Green Space

Community members emphasized the importance of open green space in the park, which fosters a vibrant environment for various activities. Designed for residents, visitors, vendors, and families, the space offers a place of respite with views of the Hays Street Bridge and the city skyline. It includes sloped areas along the lawn for seating, making it perfect for activities such as reading or hosting community movie nights.

DESIGN

1st Public Meeting



Skate Park



Story-Telling Plaza



Historic Timeline Walk



Bridge Plaza



Garden Plaza

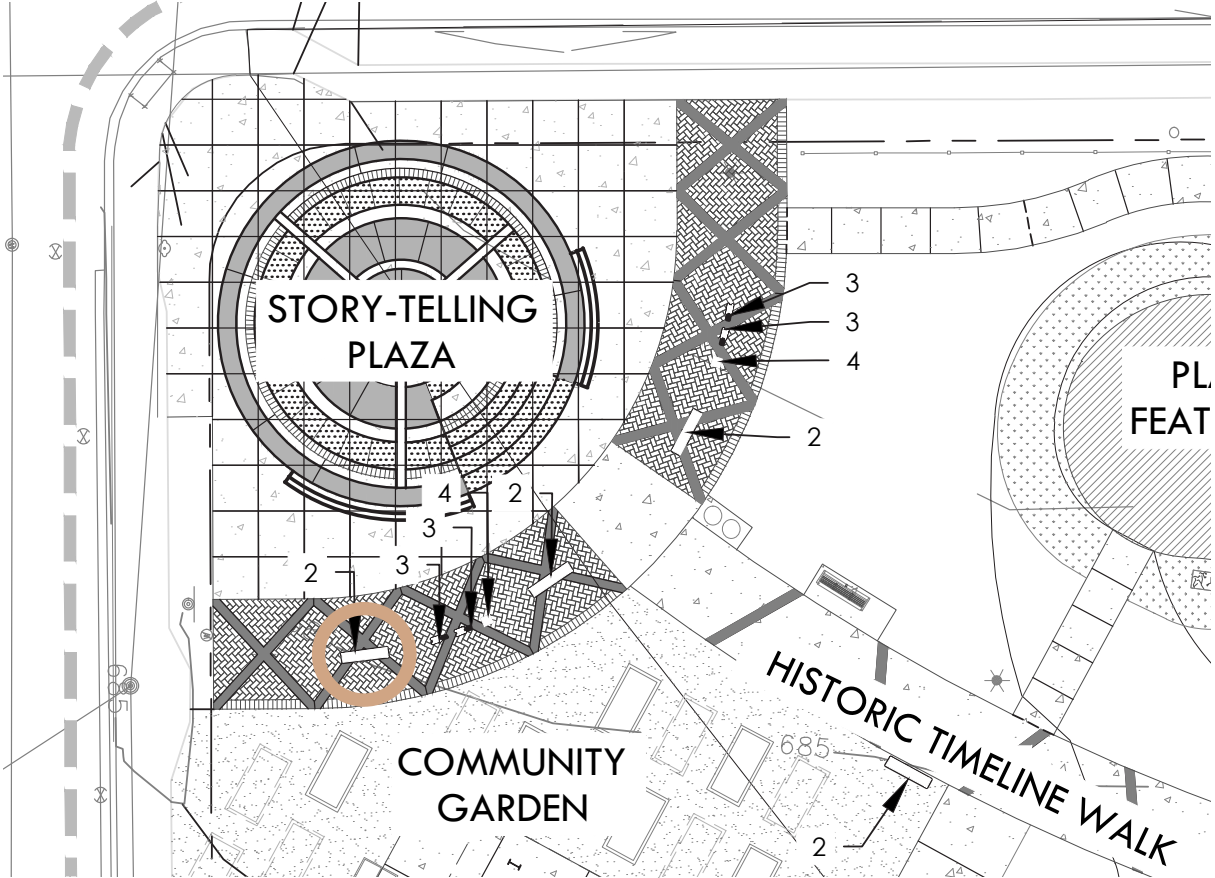


Play Features



Open Green Space






location of signage on plan


ENTRY MONUMENT & BLADE SIGNAGE

HAYS STREET BRIDGE

est. 1881



1881 1910 1982 2010 2012 2019 2023



1881

1910

1982

2010

2012

2019

2023

Construction of the Phoenix-Whipple Truss Bridge over the Nueces River west of Uvalde, Texas

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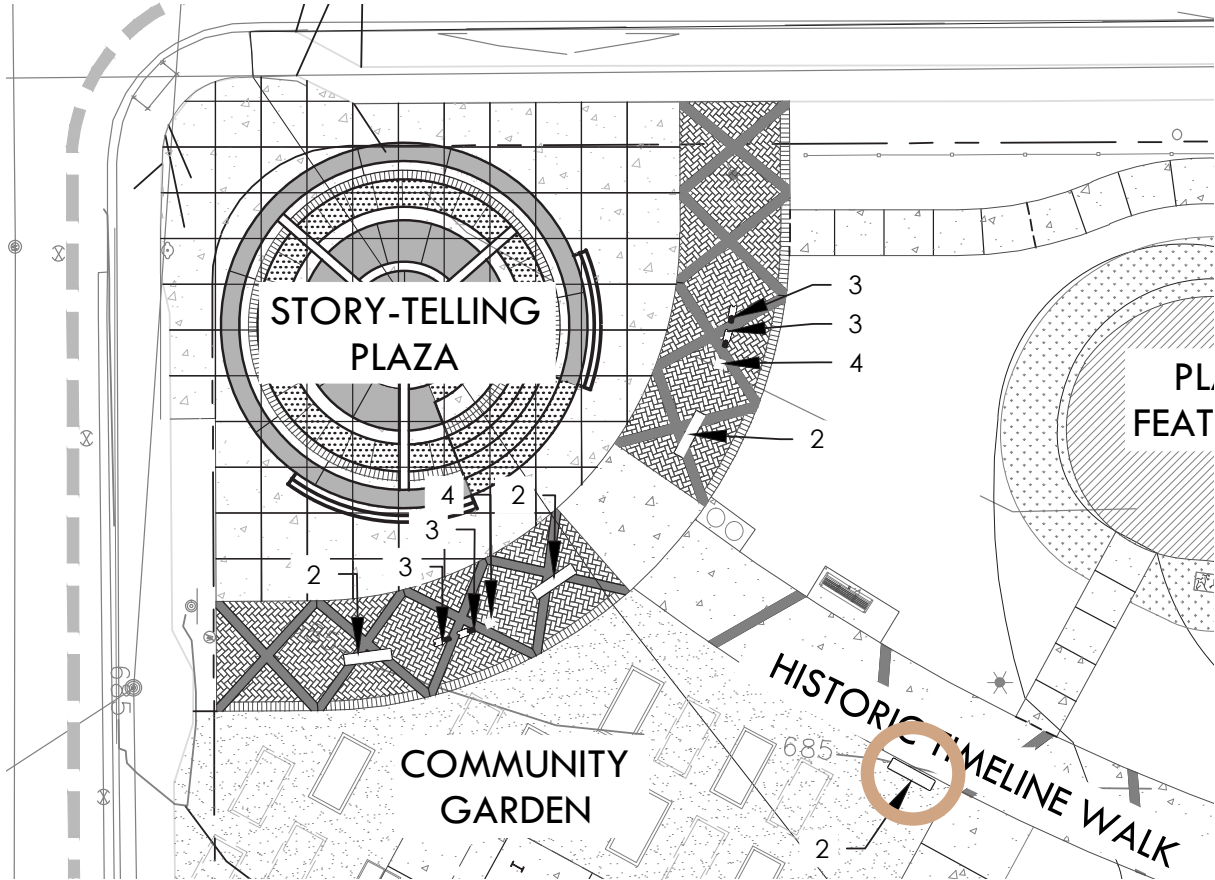
Hays Street Bridge Closure

Hays Street Bridge Reopened to the Public

Community Support for the Park

Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Becomes a Reality

Berkley V. and Vincent M. Dawson Park Construction Begins

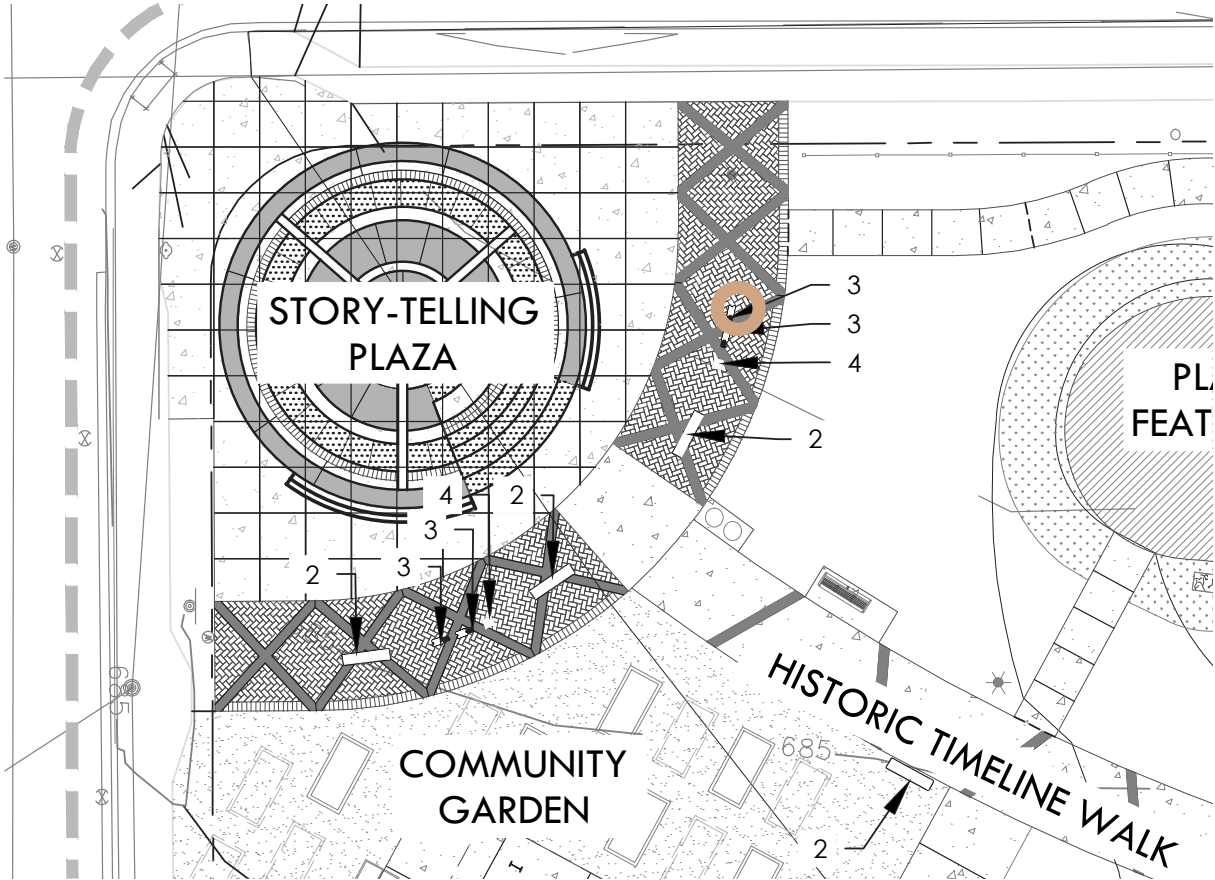


The diagram is a site plan of a park area. It features a large circular area labeled "STORY-TELLING PLAZA" with concentric circles and radial lines. To the right of the plaza is a curved path labeled "HISTORIC TIMELINE WALK". Below the plaza is a rectangular area labeled "COMMUNITY GARDEN". The plan includes various hatched patterns and numbers (2, 3, 4) indicating different sections or features. A dashed line runs along the left side, and a solid line runs along the top. A small rectangular area is labeled "PL FEAT" on the right side.

BLADE SIGNAGE

BERKLEY V. AND VINCENT M. DAWSON PARK

803 N. CHERRY ST., SAN ANTONIO, TX



BLADE SIGNAGE



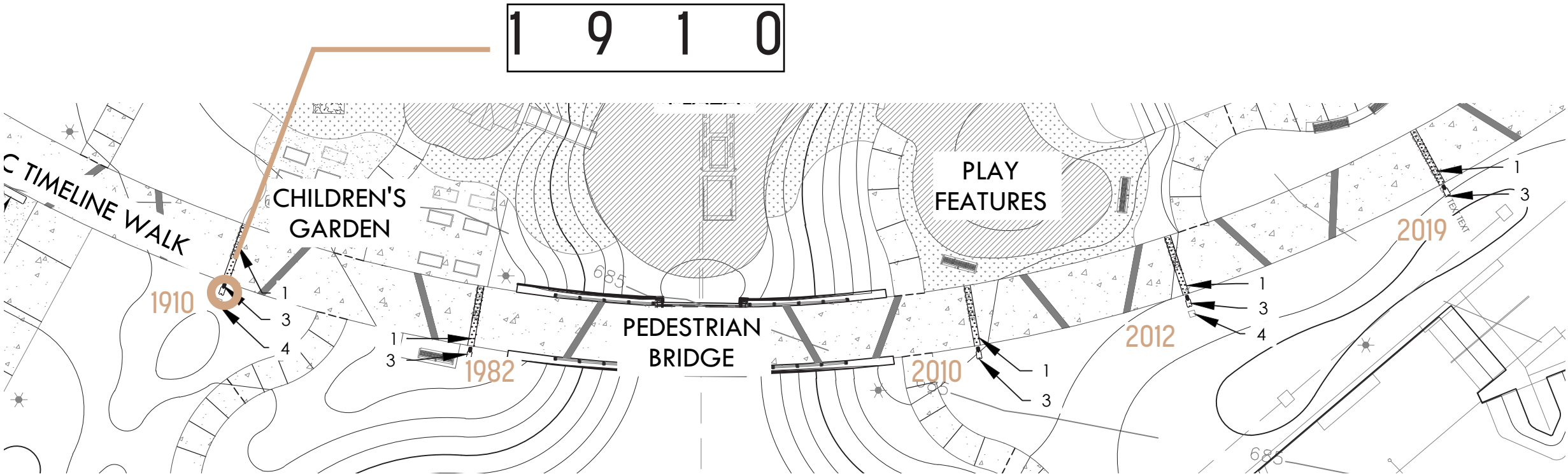
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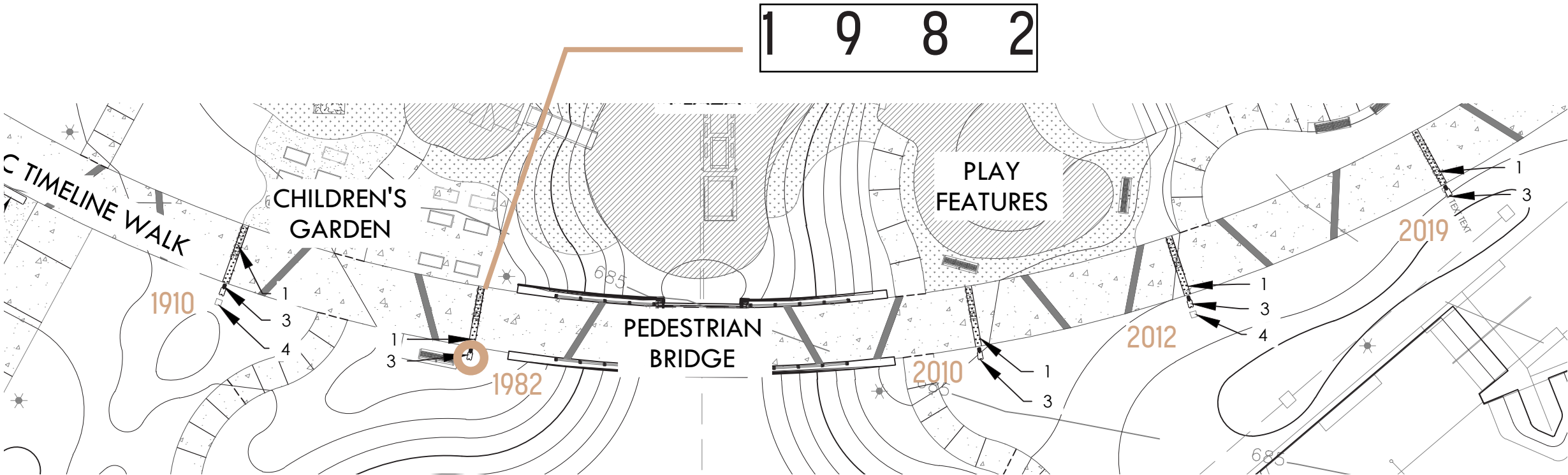
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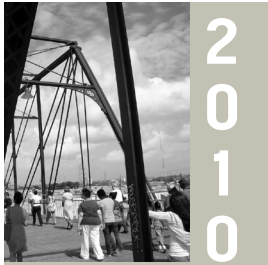
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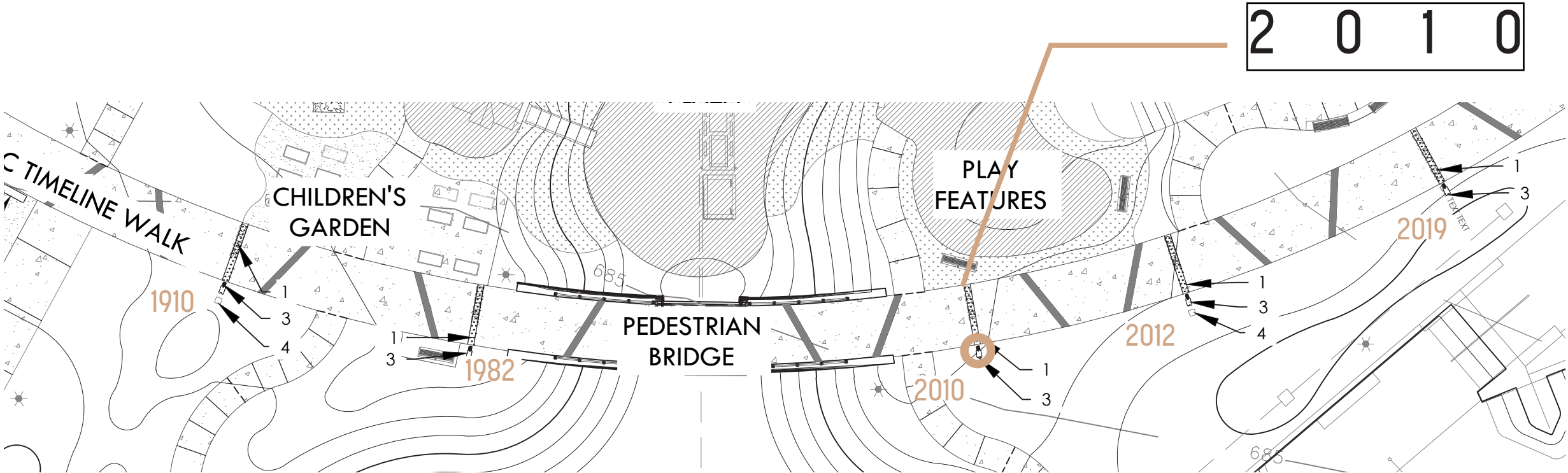
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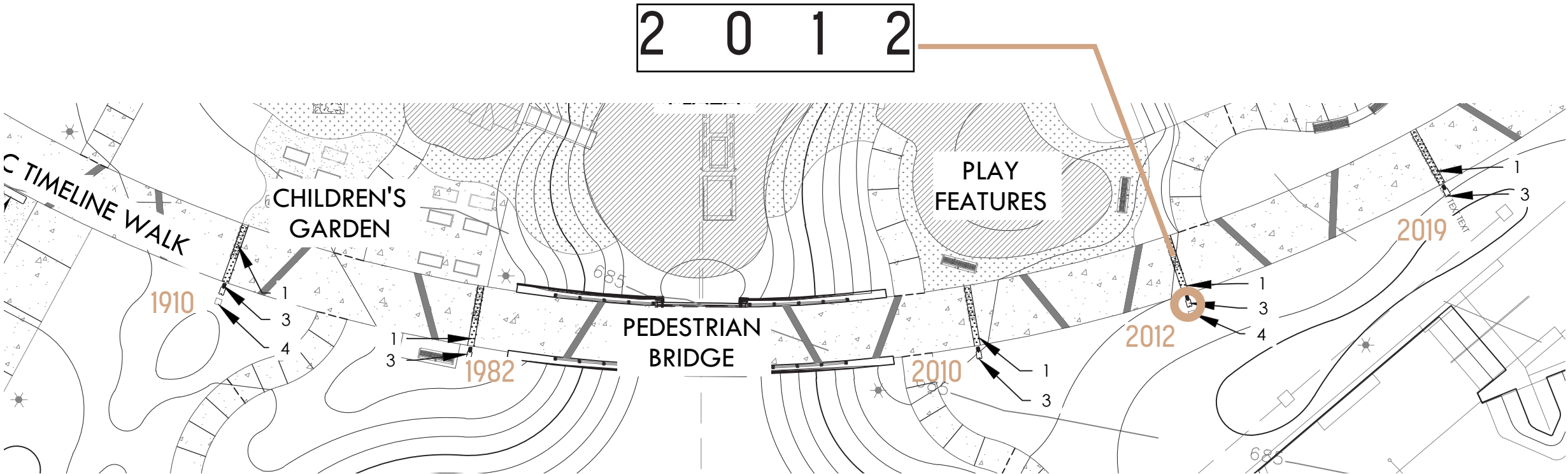


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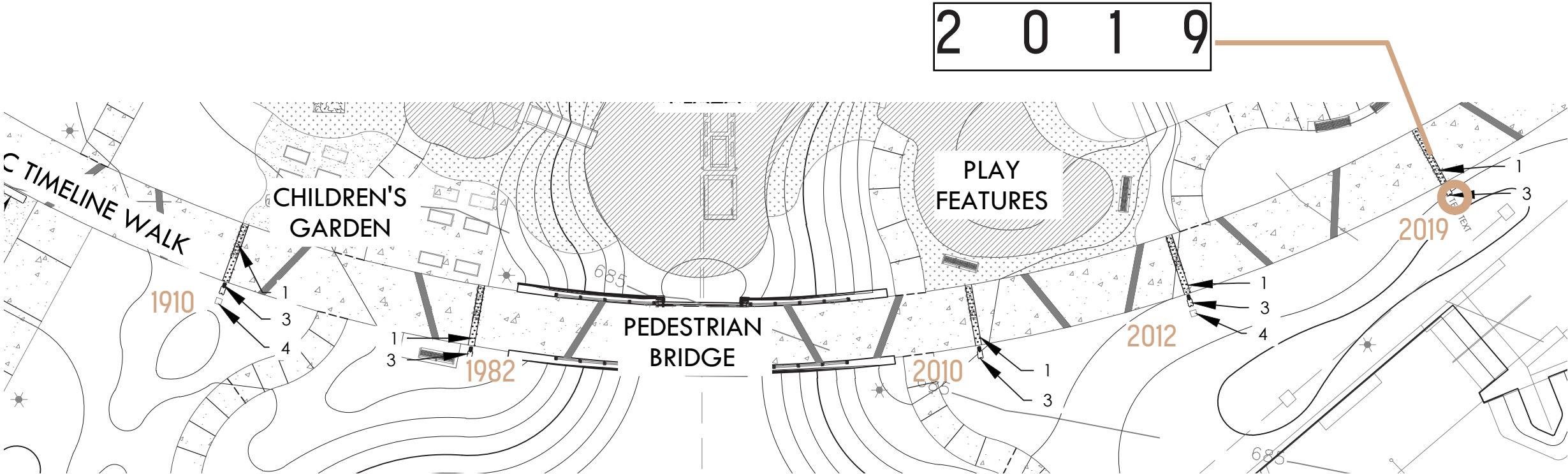
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BRIDGE PLAZA MONUMENT SIGNAGE

HAYS STREET BRIDGE

est. 1881

1881

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2012

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Pratt Truss

Bridge Spans 130 feet

Phoenix-Whipple Truss

Bridge Spans 225 feet

Pratt Truss

The Pratt Truss, designed in 1844 by Thomas Willis Pratt and his father Caleb Pratt, is an efficient structural system featuring horizontal, vertical, and diagonal members. This design allows it to effectively carry loads over longer spans compared to traditional beams.

Phoenix-Whipple Truss

The Phoenix-Whipple Truss is a modification of the Whipple Truss, developed by John Murphy of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. Its design features double intersections and horizontal chords, along with eyebar and pin connections, which permit longer iron bridge spans.

"The longer Phoenix-Whipple Trusses are not only rare, but they and the Pratt Trusses... were built in 1881 of wrought iron, which predates by about five years Eiffel's Tower of wrought iron in Paris, France. These ancient trusses deserve not only preservation but also our admiration and respect."

- H. Douglas Steadman, P.E., 2001, Civil and Structural Engineer and leader of the Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group, led the efforts for designation of the bridge as a Texas Historical Civil Engineering Landmark

TEXAS SECTION HISTORIC CE LANDMARK - 2001

In 2001, the Hays Street Bridge was designated a Texas Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

A detailed site plan of the Hays Street Bridge plaza area. The plan shows the bridge structure crossing a street. To the left of the bridge is a large area labeled 'BRIDGE ENTRY PLAZA'. To the right is a large area labeled 'SKATE PARK PLAZA'. A small rectangular area is highlighted with a black border and labeled 'BRIDGE ENTRY PLAZA'. A circular area is highlighted with an orange border and labeled 'SKATE PARK PLAZA'. The plan includes various street names, building footprints, and landscaping elements. A north arrow is located in the upper right corner. The plan is numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, indicating specific areas of interest.