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Archaeological Investigations of the Monterrey Park Improvements, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

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Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8798

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Principal Investigator
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Prepared for:
City of San Antonio
Transportation & Capital Improvements
114 West Commerce Street, 6th Floor
San Antonio, Texas 78205

Prepared by:
Center for Archaeological Research
The University of Texas at San Antonio
One UTSA Circle
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Technical Report, No. 81

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Abstract:

On March 4, 2019, The University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), in response to a request from the City of San Antonio (COSA), conducted archaeological investigations in the form of exploratory backhoe trenching in advance of proposed improvements to Monterrey Park located in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The Monterrey Park Improvements Project was funded by the COSA and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). The project was located on COSA property, and therefore, it was conducted under the Antiquities Code of Texas. Archaeological work was performed under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8798. Due to federal funding received by TPWD for the project, compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was also required. The COSA's Office of Historic Preservation (COSA-OHP) and Texas Historical Commission (THC) reviewed the project. Paul Shawn Marceaux served as the Principal Investigator, and Antonia L. Figueroa served as the Project Archaeologist.

The archaeological investigations were concentrated along Zarzamora Creek. Archaeological investigations conducted by CAR resulted in the excavation of four backhoe trenches along the creek bank. During backhoe trenching, no cultural material or archaeological sites were encountered. CAR recommends no further work, and improvements in this part of the park can proceed as planned. All project related materials, including the final report, are permanently stored at the CAR curation facility.

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Acknowledgments:

This project would not have been possible without the support of several individuals and agencies. Thank you to Kay Hindes with the City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation for input during the field project and reviewing the final report. CAR staff member Peggy Wall aided with the fieldwork. Thanks again, Peggy—it was a brutally cold day! Dr. Jessica Nowlin and Leonard Kemp provided mapping and illustration support. Dr. Kelly Harris edited this report, and Dr. Paul Shawn Marceaux, CAR Director, aided with the project logistics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On March 4, 2019, The University of Texas at San Antonio Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) conducted archaeological investigations for the Monterrey Park Improvements Project in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1-1). The City of San Antonio (COSA) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) funded the project, which is located on COSA property. As public municipal property, undertakings that might affect archaeological or historical sites are subject to regulatory review by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) under the Antiquities Code of Texas. The project also required review by the City's Office of Historic Preservation (COSA-OHP) under the COSA Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634). Due to federal funding received by TPWD for the project, compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was also required. The project was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 8798. Antonia L. Figueroa was the Project Archaeologist, and Paul Shawn Marceaux, CAR Director, served as Principal Investigator for the project.

Figure 1-1. Location of the APE on Esri aerial imagery.

As no previous surveys had been completed in the project area, the goal of exploratory backhoe trench excavations was to identify and document any prehistoric and/or historic archaeological sites that may be impacted by any park improvements along Zarzamora Creek. During the archaeological work, CAR staff monitored the excavation of four backhoe trenches. No cultural material nor archaeological sites were observed or recording during CAR's investigations. CAR recommends park improvements along the investigated portion of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) can proceed as planned and further work is not recommended.

Project Description and Area of Potential Effect

The project area, Monterrey Park, is located west of downtown San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The park is 24.8 hectares (61.3 acres) and bound by Fortuna Street to the north and West Commerce Street to the south. The APE and archaeological investigations were concentrated along the west bank of Zarzamora Creek (Figure 1-2).

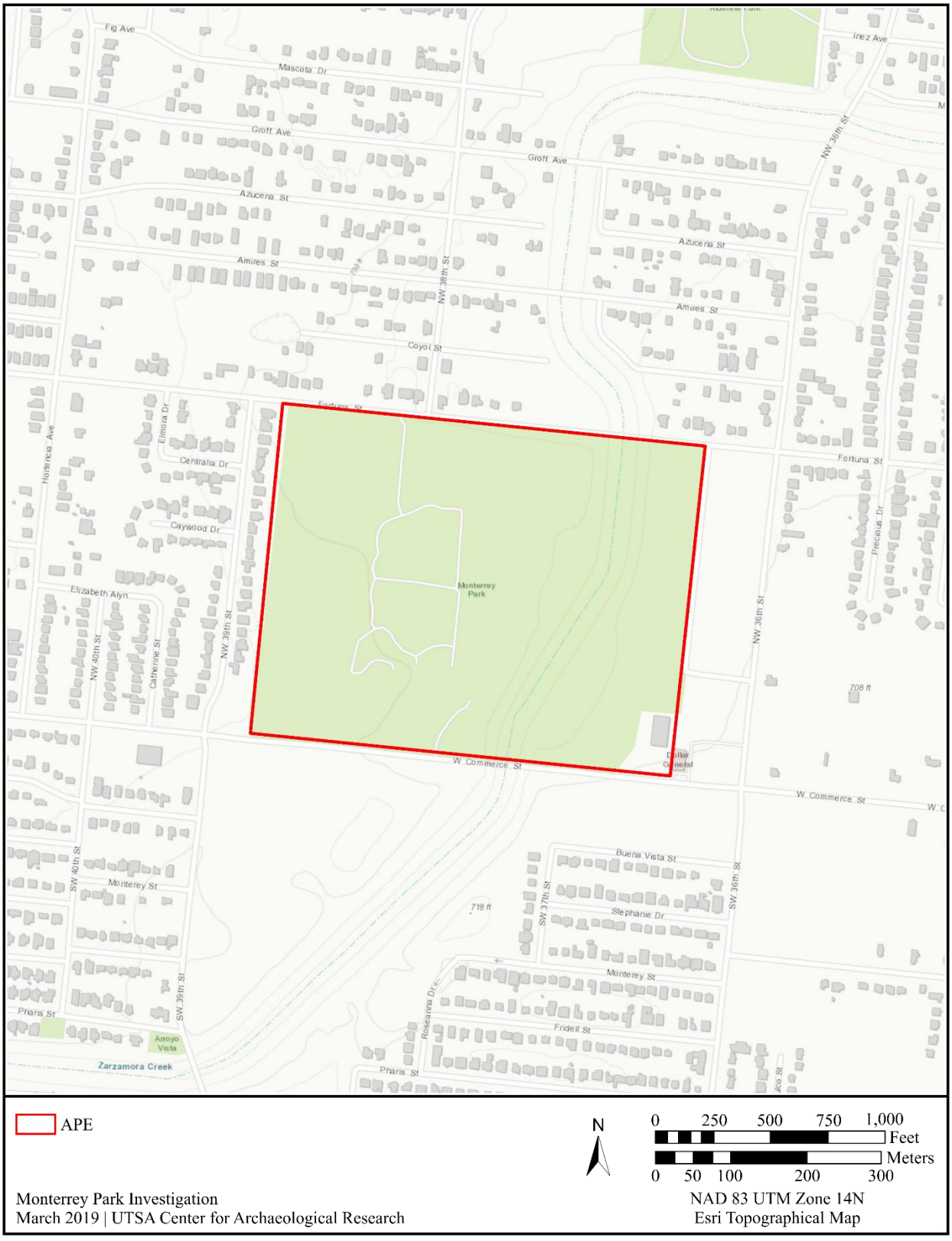

Figure 1-2. The APE depicted on an Esri Topographical Map.

Report Organization

The remainder of this report consists of four additional chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides the project setting. The field, laboratory, and curation methods for the project are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the archaeological investigations. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the project activities and recommendations made CAR.

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Chapter 2: Project Setting

This chapter presents a brief description of the project area's physical environment, including a brief summary of the climate and soils. Next, a short discussion of cultural resources represented along the Zarzamora Creek, including the one previously recorded archaeological site within 1.6 kilometer (km; 1 mile) of the APE is presented. A culture history was not included in this section of the report due to the lack of cultural resources in the APE.

Environmental Setting

The San Antonio region is described as a moderate, subtropical, humid climate with generally cool winters and hot summers (Norwine 1995; Taylor et al. 1991). The average high temperature reported for San Antonio in 2017 was 69.6° F, and the average low was 45.5° F (U.S. Climate Data 2018).

The soil series present in the APE are represented by the Tinn and Frio soil complex (Tf). This soil type is a clayey loam that occurs along flood plains (Natural Resources Conservation Services 2019). Zarzamora Creek runs along the eastern portion of the APE. The creek originates in northern Bexar County and stretches 12.7 km (8 miles) through the western part of San Antonio, where it terminates at San Pedro Creek (Texas State Historical Association 2010). The portion of the creek along the APE has been channelized (Figures 2-1 and 2-2).

Figure 2-1. Zarzamora Creek facing northeast towards Fortuna Street bridge.

Figure 2-2. Zarzamora Creek facing southeast towards the Commerce Street bridge.

Previous Archaeology and Cultural Resources

Because both prehistoric and historic cultural resources have been found along the northern reaches of Zarzamora Creek (Shafer and Hester 2011; Held and Murray 2010), there was the likelihood of encountering similar resources within the APE. However, the nearest prehistoric site 41BX46 is located over 6 km (3.7 miles) to the northwest of the APE (THC 2019), and the nearest historic site, 41BX2127, is 1.4 km (0.9 mile) south of the APE (Figure 2-3). Terracon Consultants recorded site 41BX2127 in 2016 (Yelacic 2016). The site was identified as a twentieth-century farmstead located between Zarzamora Creek and Leon Creek. The lack of cultural resources within the APE can possibly attributed to disturbances associated with the channelization of Zarzamora Creek.

Redacted Image

Figure 2-3. Previously recorded sites within 1.6 km (1 mi.) of the APE on an Esri Topographical Map.

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Chapter 3: Field and Laboratory Methods

Field Methods

The fieldwork for the project consisted of exploratory backhoe trenching focused along Zarzamora Creek. Four backhoe trenches were excavated perpendicular to the creek and orientated east/west. The backhoe trenches were 5 meters (m) in length and 1 m in width. The trench excavations extended to a depth of 120-130 centimeters below the surface (cmbs). Archaeologists completed a standard form to record details about each backhoe trench. As walls within each trench revealed the same stratigraphy, measured profile drawings were completed for a representative 1-m segment of each backhoe trench. All backhoe trench locations were recorded with a Trimble handheld GPS unit and photo documented.

Laboratory Methods

All field notes, forms, photographs, and drawings were placed in labeled archival folders. Digital photographs were printed on acid-free paper and placed in archival-quality page protectors. All records generated during the project were prepared in accordance with federal regulations 36 CFR Part 79 and THC requirements for State Held-in-Trust collections. All project related materials, including the final report, are permanently stored at the CAR curation facility.

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Chapter 4: Results of the Field Investigations

On March 4, 2019, CAR staff conducted exploratory backhoe trenching within Monterrey Park along Zarzamora Creek (Figure 4-1). Four backhoe trenches (BHTs) were excavated during CAR's investigations. No cultural material or archaeological sites were encountered or recorded during the investigation.

Figure 4-1. Aerial image of the APE displaying backhoe trench locations.

Backhoe Trenches

As seen in Figure 4-1, four backhoe trenches were excavated along the west bank of Zarzamora Creek. The soil profiles were slightly different in each backhoe trench; therefore, a 1-m representative profile for each trench is displayed in Figure 4-2.

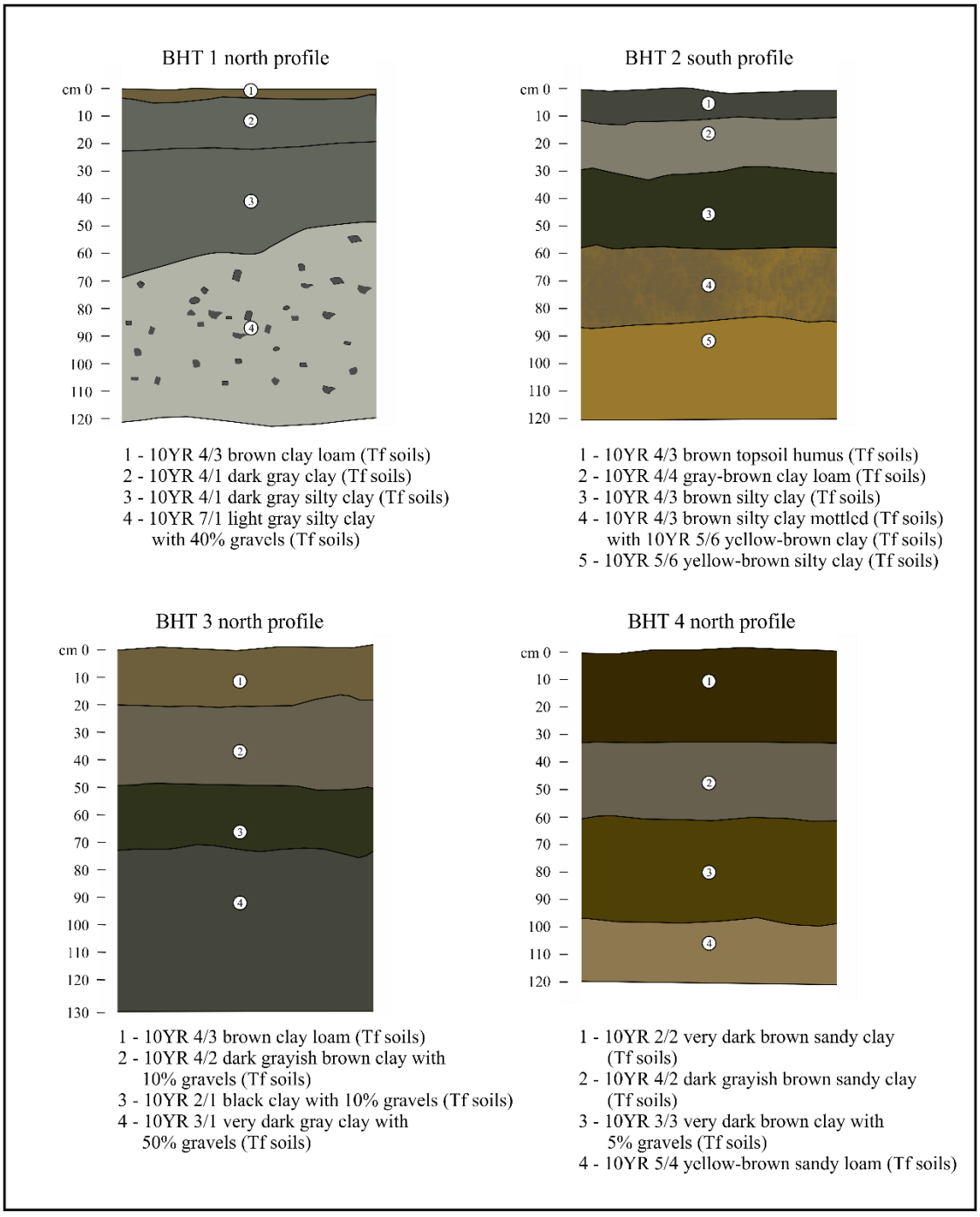

Figure 4-2. Soil profiles from BHT 1 (top left), BHT 2 (top right), BHT 3 (bottom left), and BHT 4 (bottom right).

Backhoe Trench 1 was excavated 70 m south of the Fortuna Street bridge that crosses over Zarzamora Creek. The profile of the north wall of BHT 1 revealed four stratigraphic layers (Figure 4-2, top left) representative of the Tinn and Frio soil complex (Tf). The first soil horizon observed was a thin brown clay layer that was 1-2 cmbs. Soil horizon 2 was a dark gray clay that extended to 22 cmbs. The third soil horizon was a dark gray silty clay that extended from 50-70 cmbs. The deepest and final soil horizon (71-120 cmbs) observed in BHT 1 was a light gray silty clay matrix that consisted of 40 percent gravels.

Backhoe Trench 2 was excavated 35 m south of BHT 1. Five soil horizons were observed in the south profile of BHT 2 (Figure 4-2, top right), all representing the Tinn and Frio soil complex. The uppermost soil horizon observed was a very dark top soil humus layer and extended 0-11 cmbs. The second soil horizon was a gray-brown clay loam that reached 12-32 cmbs. The third soil horizon consisted of a black silty clay that was 32-59 cmbs. The fourth soil horizon observed in BHT 2 was a black silty clay mottled with a yellow-brown clay that ranged in depth from 59-100. The deepest soil horizon observed in BHT 2 was 100-120 cmbs and consisted of a yellow-brown silty clay.

Backhoe Trench 3 was excavated 46 m south of BHT 2, and four Tinn and Frio soil horizons were observed in the north profile of the trench (Figure 4-2, bottom left). The upper soil horizon was a brown clay loam that extended from 0-21 cmbs. The second soil horizon observed in the profile of BHT 3 reached a maximum depth of 52 cmbs and consisted of a gray-brown clay matrix with gravels (10 percent). The third soil horizon extended from 53-71 cmbs. The matrix was a black clay and gravels made up 10 percent of the soil. This soil horizon varied in depth from 72-77 cmbs. A very dark gray clay with a high percentage of gravels present (50 percent) made up the remainder of the backhoe trench profile that terminated at 130 cmbs.

The final trench excavated was BHT 4 (Figure 4-2, bottom right). It was located 50 m southwest of BHT 3 and four Tinn and Frio soil horizons were observed in the north profile of the trench. The first soil horizon was a very dark brown sandy clay that reached a maximum depth of 35 cmbs. The second soil horizon consisted of a dark brown sandy clay extended to a depth of 61-65 cmbs. The third soil horizon observed was dark brown clay mixed with gravels (5 percent). The third soil horizon reached a maximum depth of 102 cmbs. The fourth and deepest soil horizon observed in the profile consisted of yellow-brown sandy loam that terminated at the bottom of the excavated trench at 120 cmbs.

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Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

CAR archaeologists completed exploratory backhoe trenching for the Monterrey Park Improvements Project on March 4, 2019. The project area is within the boundaries of Monterrey Park located just west of downtown San Antonio, Texas. The COSA and the TPWD funded the project, which is located on COSA property. Since the project is located on public municipal property, the project is required review by the COSA-OHP under the COSA Unified Development Code (Article 6 35-630 to 35-634), and it is subject to regulatory review by the THC under the Antiquities Code of Texas. Due to federal funding received by TPWD for the project, compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was also required.

CAR archaeologists monitored the excavation of four backhoe trenches along the western bank of Zarzamora Creek. No cultural material was observed during the investigations. CAR recommends no further work, and proposed park improvements can proceed as planned.

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