



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Fort Worth's Heritage Park Plaza Added to National Register of Historic Places**

*Work by Landscape Architect Lawrence Halprin is Only Site  
Developed in Fort Worth in Commemoration of the U.S. Bicentennial Celebration*

Washington, DC (May 20, 2010) – Heritage Park Plaza in Fort Worth, Texas, a seminal work of landscape architecture by Presidential Medal of Arts winner Lawrence Halprin, was added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 10, 2010. The park, dedicated on July 4, 1976 and opened in 1980, is the only site officially developed by Fort Worth in commemoration of the U.S. Bicentennial Celebration; and the site was once the location of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fort that preceded the city's founding. The news of this designation will further energize local efforts to revitalize this Modernist design, which has been closed to the public since 2008.

According to information in the nomination to the National Register (submitted by the Texas Historical Commission):

Heritage Park Plaza is a half-acre of “interconnected rooms constructed from concrete and activated throughout by flowing water walls, channels and pools; each room contains plant materials in a structured grid that includes upper and lower lawns. An elevated walkway over the bluff grants access to vistas across the Trinity River valley.

Heritage Park Plaza evokes the architectural ruins of the city's earliest days and provides an abstracted historical interpretation, with the vista of the [Trinity] river's confluence and subsequent urban growth as a magnificent backdrop. More than any other public park in Fort Worth, Halprin's Heritage Park Plaza is evocative and respectful of the city's past and simultaneously optimistic about its future, as expressed in its combination of modern building materials and methods with symbolic forms, native place species, and water.

“In addition to its significance to Fort Worth, Heritage Park Plaza is of national significance as the design precursor to the FDR Memorial in Washington, DC. All of the contributing design elements Halprin employed in Fort Worth – the sequence of outdoor rooms, the application of narrative art, and the use of water to move you through and animate the public spaces – are refined and incorporated into the FDR Memorial, which opened to the public 17 years later,” said Charles A. Birnbaum, founder and president of The Cultural Landscape Foundation. “Another reason this designation is important is that it substantially breaks through the National Register's tradition of not recognizing works of landscape

architecture less than 50 years of age. The ersatz ‘50-year rule’ is often ignored in designating works of architecture, but has been more rigidly adhered to for works of landscape architecture. This significant step in recognizing a work created in 1980 should open the door to the designation of other nationally significant landscapes from the recent past by Halprin and other post war designers.”

“The listing of Heritage Park Plaza at the National level of significance on the Register has elevated Fort Worth’s sophisticated landscape-on-the-bluff to the stature it deserved the day it was completed in 1980. The 1976 commissioning of Heritage Park Plaza as a gift to the country in celebration of America’s bicentennial has just been validated,” said Jerre Tracey, Executive Director, Historic Fort Worth, Inc.

“The Texas Historical Commission is thrilled to see Heritage Park Plaza listed at the national level of significance. The park represents a critical moment in Halprin’s career, and it marks the site of Fort Worth’s founding along the Trinity River. Heritage Park is a remarkable public space that we hope to see people enjoy for many years to come,” said Rachel Leibowitz, Ph.D., Historian, Federal Programs, History Programs Division, Texas Historical Commission.

**About The Cultural Landscape Foundation**

**The Cultural Landscape Foundation** ([www.tclf.org](http://www.tclf.org)), established in 1998, is the only not-for-profit organization dedicated to increasing the public’s awareness of the important legacy of landscapes and landscape features to help save and preserve them for future generations.

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