

# Archeological Resources Study Report

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Archeological Resources Study for San Pedro Huisache Phase III, Project SA-22, Bexar County, Texas

Prepared for the Bexar County Flood Control Capital Improvement Program



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San Pedro Huisache Phase III, Project SA-22  
Bexar County, Texas

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## Acronyms

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APE	Area of Potential Effect
THC	Texas Historical Commission
THO	Texas Historic Overlay
USGS	United States Geologic Survey

## Abstract

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An archeological file and historic map search were conducted for the San Pedro Huisache Phase III Flood Control Project by Prewitt and Associates, Inc. to see if any known or previously recorded archeological sites are present within the boundaries or Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the project area. The file and map searches did not find any previously recorded archeological sites. There are however, a number of structures 50 years old or older within the APE. The nearest known archeological site, 41BX19, is ca. 1.6 km south of the project area. It is the location of a former historic period Indian encampment known as "Yahaquana." The site is also the location of the earliest Spanish colony in San Antonio in 1718. A second site, 41BX171, ca. 1.6 km east of the project area, evidences limestone quarrying and is possibly the quarry that supplied the stone used in the construction of the Alamo. This site was also used later as an old city dump area.

Though an on-the-ground archeological survey of the project area was not conducted, it is highly unlikely that any intact and significant archeological sites are present in the APE given the level of development and urbanization across the project area. Because of this it is recommended that no additional archeological investigations are warranted.

# Introduction

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## Project Description

The project consists of the proposed construction of a storm drain system east of San Pedro Avenue between Agarita Street and Elsmere Place. The proposed project will convey storm water run-off into a storm drain that will tie into the existing storm drain system built as part of the San Pedro Huisache Phase III project.

## Description of the Study Area

The project area is located Bexar County, which straddles the Balcones Fault Zone, separating the Edwards Plateau from the Blackland Prairie of the Gulf Coastal Plain to the southeast (Arbingast et al. 1973:6; Bureau of Economic Geology 1983). The Edwards Plateau margin has been heavily dissected by stream downcutting and headward erosion, resulting in a rugged landscape of limestone hills and canyons, whereas the Blackland Prairie is typically rolling tall grasslands underlain by soft limestones, marls, and chalks.

The climate of the Blackland Prairie region can be classified as modified humid subtropical with Gulf-influenced hot summers and continental-influenced mild winters; the Edwards Plateau region is subtropical steppe with low summer humidity (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:10-12). Summer temperatures can exceed 100°F, and freezing temperatures can occur during the winter months, although such extremes are more frequent in the Edwards Plateau region. The mean annual precipitation for Bexar County is 29.1 inches (739 mm). Rain falls throughout the year, with slight peaks in the late spring and early fall months (Natural Fibers Information Center 1987:49).

Like the landscape and climate, the biota of Bexar County differs east to west, although there is geographical overlap of some species. The flora and fauna of the Edwards Plateau are defined as Balconian, while those of the Blackland Prairie are characterized as Texan (Blair 1950).

Urban residential use with landscaped ornamental vegetation characterizes the study area.

## **Environmental Setting**

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### **Geology**

The study area is situated on an area of upper Cretaceous Pecan Gap Formation and undivided Navarro Group and Marlbrook Marl (Bureau of Economic Geology 1983). This area is between the Leon Creek tributary of the Medina River on the west and the San Antonio River which flows east and southeast of the project area.

### **Soils**

Soils of the Austin silty clay series are mapped within the study area. These soils have 1-3 and 3-5 percent slopes and characterize broad, low upland ridgetops (Taylor et al. 1991).

# **Cultural History of Central Texas and Bexar County**

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The project area straddles the central Texas and south Texas archeological areas. A cultural chronology of these areas has been developed by Story (1985) and Johnson and Goode (1994) with refinements by Black (1989a, b), Collins (1995, 2004) and Hester (2004). Large-scale archeological projects by McGraw and Hindes (1987) and Thoms and Mandel (2007) have documented a detailed record of occupation for the Medina River and Elm Creek areas in the Late Paleoindian through Historic periods. Closer and more specific to the study area are the investigations at the Olmos Dam site (Lukowski 1988), which documented the remnants of a Late Archaic cemetery.

## **Paleoindian Period**

The Paleoindian period (ca. 11,500–8,800 years B.P.) is divided into early and late subperiods in central and portions of south Texas (Collins 1995, 2004). Each subperiod is characterized by distinct styles of lanceolate projectile points and other stone tool technologies. Early Paleoindian sites are characterized by Clovis or Folsom projectile points, with each associated with a subsistence pattern related to hunting extinct forms of large mammals, primarily mammoth for the earlier Clovis hunters and bison for later Folsom hunters. Each group also used a wide variety of other animal and plant resources. Late Paleoindian sites are also associated with a series of distinctive projectile point forms: Plainview, Golondrina, Scottsbluff, and Angostura. Evidence from central and south Texas indicates that these later Paleoindian groups were using a more generalized hunting and gathering subsistence pattern similar to that of later Archaic groups in the region. Early and late Paleoindian site types are similar and include open campsites, special-purpose sites for procuring specific resources, and kill sites for mammoth and bison.

## **Archaic Period**

The Archaic period is subdivided into Early (ca. 8800–6000 B.P.), Middle (ca. 6000–4000 B.P.), and Late subperiods (ca. 4000–1300 B.P.) (Collins 1995, 2004; Hester 2004). The Archaic period represents a continuation of the generalized hunting and gathering lifeway that characterized the Late Paleoindian subperiod. Each subperiod is characterized by distinctive changes in lithic technology and projectile dart point styles and groundstone technology, some of which are regionally specific for central and south Texas. Changes in technology and broad changes in subsistence and site types are correlated with regional changes in climate and resource distribution through time. Some indication of increasing social complexity during the Middle and Late Archaic is evident by the appearance of regional cemeteries, distinctive burial practices, and the presence of various artifacts manufactured of nonlocal raw materials such as marine shell ornaments, bannerstones, and boat stones. Such artifacts imply participation in larger regional exchange networks, some of which have been traced to the greater

southeastern United States. Presence of established mortuary areas during the period is indicative of specific group territories and the existence of maintained, and in some cases defended, social boundaries among groups. A wide variety of site types has been recorded for the Archaic period. Although site types are rather comparable through the period, frequencies of different types of sites fluctuate over time and may be related in large part to continuing changes in environmental conditions and available resources. Site types include rockshelters, open campsites, and special-purpose resource extraction locations (burned rock middens, ring middens, lithic procurement areas), and mortuary sites or cemeteries.

## **Late Prehistoric Period**

The Late Prehistoric period (ca. 1300/1200–350 B.P.) in central and south Texas was marked by increased apparent social boundary differentiation and a continuation of the basic hunting and gathering subsistence strategy (Collins 1995, 2004; Hester 2004). Collins (2004) divides the period into an Austin and Toyah interval. Three significant traits—pottery, bow and arrow, and agriculture—also make their appearance during the Late Prehistoric. Austin and Toyah intervals have become hallmarks of the Late Prehistoric for central and south Texas. The Austin interval is associated with a technological shift from Late Archaic style dart points to smaller arrow points associated with initial use of the bow and arrow technology; otherwise, there is actually little change in terms of subsistence patterns from the preceding Late Archaic period. The Toyah interval is distinguished by one primary arrow point style, the Perdiz point. Other technological aspects of Toyah assemblages include end scrapers, prismatic chert blades, and large thin bifacial knives—all of which are interpreted as signatures of a bison, deer, or antelope hunting tool kit. It is significant that the traits of Toyah assemblages appear at about the same time across central and south Texas and beyond into East Texas. This distribution has led some researchers to question whether it represents the spread of an adopted technological system by multiple ethnic groups or the widespread presence of a single ethnic group (Black 1989a, b; Johnson 1994; Ricklis 1994). Late Prehistoric cemeteries or mortuary areas indicate a continuation of the territorial boundary aspect developed during the Middle and Late Archaic, but perhaps for different social objectives. Site types reflect a continuation of those identified during previous periods: open occupation or camp sites, burned rock midden sites and hearth features, shell middens, lithic procurement sites and rockshelters, caves, and sinkholes. Isolated burials, cemeteries, rock art sites, and artifact caches reflect special-purpose sites. Some sites have also had small ephemeral structures associated with them.

## **Historic Period**

The Historic period (beginning in ca. 350 B.P.) incorporates the initial encounters of Europeans and Native Americans in the region, and the subsequent demise of native populations following initial expansion of European explorers and establishment of European and later Anglo settlements. Collins (2004) has assigned early, middle, and

late subperiods. Archeological research and existing historic written accounts by Spanish, French, and Anglo writers has provided the basis for virtually all of our knowledge of this period. Written records provide a much more detailed glimpse into the lifeways and social aspects of native populations than exist for previous periods. The Historic period subsumes initial Spanish and French explorers, military, and religious expeditions into central and south Texas and subsequent establishment in the 1700s A.D. and demise of the Spanish mission system in ca. 1800 A.D. Native American populations were subjected to a dramatic influx of new ideas, new technologies, and diseases. Subsistence patterns continued to emphasize mixed hunting and gathering, primarily of bison, deer, and antelope with movement of native groups directed in response to game routes. Site types are similar to those observed documented for the Late Prehistoric and Protohistoric periods, but with the occasional use of European artifacts and materials as part of the technological system. Following the demise of the last mobile groups in the region, mainly the Comanche in central Texas, occupation and use of the area became dominated by Anglo-European and Hispanic farming and ranching and the development of urbanized areas.

## Methods

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The archeological file search consulted the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Archeological Sites Atlas to see if any previously recorded or known archeological sites are within the project area, or within 1 km of the project area. In addition, historic maps, including older USGS maps, from the Texas Department of Transportation's Texas Historic Overlay (THO) were consulted to see if any historic structures or buildings 50 years old or older are, or were, present in the project area.

## Results

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The results of the Texas Archeological Sites Atlas search determined that there are no previously recorded or known archeological sites within the project area. However, site 41BX19 is only about 1.6 km south of the project area. This site is the location of a former historic period Indian site referred to as “Yanaquana.” The site was also the location of the first Spanish colony established in San Antonio in 1718. Today it is the location of a city park and the site is a State Archeological Landmark. A second site, 41BX171, is about 1.6 km east of the project area and represents possible evidence of historic quarrying of limestone used for the construction of the Alamo. It was later used as an old city dumping area.

The historic maps of the THO revealed a number of structures or building 50 years old or older within the project area. The proposed project intersects the Monte Vista Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a historic district by the City of San Antonio.

# Archeological Resources Assessment

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## Summary

A file search of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory records and consultation of the Texas Historical Commission's Archeological Sites Atlas revealed no known archeological sites within the project area's boundaries. Historic maps of the THO revealed a number of structures along portions of the project that are 50 years old or older.

## Recommendations

The San Pedro Huisache Phase III Flood Control Project will not damage or impact any previously recorded or known archeological sites within the APE. However, there are a number of known historic structures 50 years old or older in the APE. Though an on-the-ground archeological survey was not carried out it is highly unlikely such investigations would encounter any intact significant archeological resource given the high level of disturbance due to development and urbanization with the APE. Based on this it is recommended that no additional archeological investigations be conducted.

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# Appendix A – Project Map

