Archaeological Survey of Five Acres at the Proposed Medina Base Road Park, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

by
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Texas Antiquities Permit No. 2821

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4. Principal investigator: Steve A. Tomka

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Abstract:

On May 22, 2002, personnel from the Center for Archaeological Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, conducted a 100 percent pedestrian survey and shovel testing of a five-acre portion of the proposed Medina Base Road Park in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, for the city of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department. The project area lies approximately 200 feet west of Indian Creek. The survey and shovel testing area represents five acres in the southwest corner of the 35 acres that the proposed park encompasses. The five surveyed acres represent the area to be cleared for the construction of: 1) a walking trail with picnic units along the alignment; 2) a new parking area and entrance on the south side of the park; 3) a new pavilion; 4) a new playground; and, 5) new park toilet facilities. This project was conducted under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 2821. No significant cultural remains were encountered and no further archaeological investigations are recommended for this project area.
Acknowledgments:

The author would like to acknowledge the consideration and assistance provided by the city of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department. I also would like to thank the following staff at the Center for Archaeological Research: Dr. Steve Tomka, Principal Investigator, and Dr. Raymond Mauldin for their assistance during the project; Kristi M. Ulrich and Carol Villalobos for helping with the fieldwork; Bruce Moses and Richard Young for drafting the figures; and Johanna Hunziker for editing this report.
Introduction and Project Area

This letter report presents the results of field investigations conducted by Center for Archaeological Research (CAR), The University of the Texas at San Antonio archaeological staff on May 22, 2002 within the proposed Medina Base Road Park in southwestern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1). The project area encompasses five acres in the southwestern portion of the 35-acre park; adjacent Medina Base Road and immediately north of its junction with Palm Valley Road (Figure 2). A 100 percent pedestrian survey and shovel testing was conducted in order to identify and protect any significant cultural resources which may be impacted by the proposed park construction within this five-acre area. This cultural resource survey was performed for the city of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 2821, with Steve A. Tomka serving as Principal Investigator.

The proposed construction and improvements to the project area entail: 1) a walking trail with picnic units along the alignment; 2) a new parking area and entrance on the south side of the park; 3) a new pavilion; 4) a new playground; and, 5) new park toilet facilities.

Figure 1. Location of project area.
Figure 2. Locations of shovel tests within the project area.
Project Area Environment

There are three major geographical regions in Bexar County: the Edwards Plateau, the Blackland Prairie, and the South Texas Plain (Rio Grande Plain). The project area lies roughly at the foot of the Balcones Escarpment, on the edge of the Blackland Prairie where it merges with the South Texas Plain (Dalbey 1993:22). The project area is characterized as a gently rolling upland overlooking Indian Creek located approximately 200 feet to the east (Figure 2). Typical south Texas vegetation inhabits the area, with an abundance of dense white brush (Lippia ligustrina), greenbrier (Smilax bona-nova), prickly pear (Opuntia chlorotica), and mesquite (Prosopis glandulosa; Vines 1960). Typically, soils in this area of Bexar County consist of Houston black clay and gravelly soils. Generally soil colors range from dark gray to black and have a blocky structure (Nickels et al. 1997).

Previous Research

Several archaeological sites with prehistoric and historical components have been located in the adjacent southwest lands occupied by Lackland Air Force Base (Nickels et al. 1997). Prehistoric sites consist of "open campsites and/or lithic quarries" (Nickels et al. 1997:i) dating from the Early Archaic to Late Prehistoric periods. Historical sites recorded within the nearby Air Force base dated to the late-nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries and were identified as farmsteads. At nearby Indian Creek there is one previously reported site, 41BX961. Unfortunately, no information was available on this site.

Fieldwork Methodology and Results

All portions of the project area were checked for surface material. Survey transects, running approximately in a north-south direction, were placed 30 meters apart across the five-acre area. Surface visibility was very poor throughout the project area due to dense vegetation (Figure 3). Much of the visible surface appears to be covered by chert pebbles, probably brought in by nearby Indian Creek. Power lines and a two-track dirt road run northeast/southwest through the approximate middle of the project area (Figure 4). The two-track road is two to three meters in width and has impacted a portion of the project area. No shovel tests were placed in this location.

Seven shovel tests (STs) were placed in order to achieve maximum coverage of the five acres proposed for construction (Table 1). All shovel test locations were recorded using a Trimble Geo Explorer II

Figure 3. Example of dense vegetation in the project area.
Global Positioning System (GPS) unit. All shovel tests were 30 cm in diameter and excavated in 10-cm arbitrary levels. Total depths ranged from 48 to 60 cm below the surface (bs). Soils from the shovel tests were screened through ½-inch mesh and all observations were recorded on standardized forms.

Four shovel tests (STs 1, 2, 4, and 5) were placed in the southern portion of the project area southeast of the power lines and the two-track road (Figure 2). Soil in the shovel tests consisted of clay loam with chert nodules and cobble inclusions throughout (Figure 5). One flake was found on surface where ST 2 was placed. Shovel Test 2 was positive and contained two heat spalls, recovered 30 to 40 cm bs. It is not possible to determine whether the two heat spalls are prehistoric, historic, or modern in age. An additional shovel test (ST 4) was placed just northwest of the positive test, but was negative. The placement of shovel tests south and east of ST 2 was avoided due to the project boundary line. Should archaeologists conduct future survey in the southeast portion of the 35 acres, they should be aware that the heat spalls from ST 2 may be indicative of a site.

Three additional shovel tests (STs 3, 6, and 7) were placed to the north and northwest of the power lines and two-track road (Figure 2). Soil matrix from the shovel tests consisted of clay loam to very compacted clay, with chert nodules and pebbles in the first 20 cm bs (Figure 6). No cultural material was recovered from this portion of the project area.

![Figure 4. Two-track road and power lines running through the project area.](image)

<table>
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<th>Shovel Test #</th>
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<tr>
<td>ST 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>ST 7</td>
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</table>
Conclusions and Recommendations

A 100 percent pedestrian survey was conducted on the proposed Medina Base Road Park, located in southwestern San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas, on May 22, 2002 by CAR archaeological staff. This work was conducted for the city of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department under Texas Antiquities Permit No. 2821. A total of seven shovel tests was excavated within the five-acre project area. Although one surface find (a flake) and two subsurface artifacts were encountered in ST 2, they do not represent an archaeological site. If future archaeological survey work is performed in the remaining portion of the 35-acre area, investigators should be aware that artifacts may extend beyond the five-acre project boundary to the south and east. Because no significant cultural material was encountered in the five-acre project area, the Center for Archaeological Research recommends that the project area warrants no further archaeological work and the proposed construction be allowed to proceed as planned.
References Cited

Dalbey, T. S.  

Nickels, D. L., D. W. Pease, and C. B. Bousman  

Vines, R. A.  