



Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Harris County Precinct One

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NEWS RELEASE

Commissioner Rodney Ellis Announces Start of Construction on Five Soccer Fields Made possible by Qatar Harvey Fund

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Blue Ridge Park Fields in Precinct One Will Serve Dual Purposes of Recreation and Flood Relief for Southwest Harris County Neighborhood in Sims Bayou Watershed

Everyone deserves to live in a healthy, clean, and safe environment that allows them to thrive. Precinct One is proud to continue investing equitably in flood control and infrastructure to ensure our historically underfunded neighborhoods are protected and can gain from the many benefits of having green spaces in their communities. With a generous donation from the Qatar Harvey Fund, Precinct One has officially started construction on five soccer fields in Blue Ridge Park in Southwest Harris County, which will double as water detention basins along Sims Bayou.

“All of our communities need additional protection against flooding, but especially typically underserved neighborhoods. With this project, communities along Sims Bayou will now be able to benefit from both a new watershed detention basin and a brand new recreational space,” said **Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis**.

“On behalf of all Harris County residents, especially those near Blue Ridge Park, I would like to thank Qatar’s Ambassador to the U.S., **His Excellency Meshal bin Hamad Al-Thani**, and the State of Qatar for making this possible. The soccer fields will improve community health, build stronger social ties, and help us meet environmental challenges for Precinct One residents.”

In 2019, the State of Qatar, through its \$30 million Qatar Harvey Fund (QHF), announced a \$3.3 million gift for the construction of eight soccer fields in Harris County, five in Precinct One and

three in Precinct Four. The soccer fields also will be designed as water collection basins to mitigate flooding. Precinct One will provide about \$1.2 million for the project's design and some construction costs. Project is expected to be completed in late summer 2021.

Qatar's **Ambassador Al-Thani** said: "We are excited that work is underway to install five new soccer fields for communities living near Blue Ridge Park in southwest Harris County. These fields, as well as the three underway in Precinct Four's Alabonson Park, will provide athletic and recreational space for families living here and serve to mitigate future flooding. The Qatar Harvey Fund is proud to be a part of these community-building efforts and we look forward to completion of the Blue Ridge Park fields later this year."

The Houston Dynamo soccer team, which supports the Blue Ridge project and provided its BBVA Stadium for the 2019 announcement of the QHF grants, welcomes the news fields in hopes that they will increase popularity of the sports in the Houston area.

In a video statement, Houston Dynamo player **Marcelo Palomino** said, "I'm very excited to say that Blue Ridge Park is getting five new soccer fields courtesy of the Qatar Harvey Fund. As a Houston native, it's very exciting and I'm very happy to see the sport of soccer grow here in my hometown. Can't wait to see you there at Blue Ridge Park."

The soccer fields are among the first developments in the largely undeveloped Blue Ridge Park area, fulfilling a community need for accessible recreational greenspace. The work will include lighting for evening playing time, restrooms, benches, picnic tables, a pavilion and landscaping. There will also be 70 parking spaces utilizing permeable pavement that helps reduce the risk of flooding.

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About the Qatar Harvey Fund and the State of Qatar

Following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey in August 2017, the State of Qatar announced a gift of \$30 million for the long-term recovery of the storm's victims in Texas. The [Qatar Harvey Fund](#) was created to administer the gift, which included \$3.3 million for eight soccer fields in Harris County.

Qatar is an independent state in the southern Arabian Gulf. It has a population of approximately 2.7 million people, the majority of whom live in and around Doha, the capital. Diplomatic relations with the United States were established in 1972; in the same year, Qatar's first diplomatic mission in Washington, D.C. opened. The relationship between the two countries has always been friendly, highly productive, and reciprocal. Qatar is home to many Americans, and the United States is both Qatar's largest foreign investor and its largest source of imports. Qatar-U.S. relations are growing continuously in multiple areas: economic, political, military, educational, and cultural. Qatar is a close ally of the United States and a strong advocate of building a peaceful, prosperous, and stable Middle East. Qatar has provided significant humanitarian and development assistance to countries around the world, including the United States. In 2005, the State of Qatar announced the Qatar Katrina Fund, which provided \$100M in grants for housing, healthcare and education projects directly to local partners across Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to support long-term recovery in the region after Hurricane Katrina.