



midtown
HOUSTON

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MIDTOWN – As an illustration of just how markedly the Art in the Park event has blossomed since its humble beginnings in 2007, Cynthia Alvarado offered a humorous anecdote detailing its fledgling origins.

“It has just grown by leaps and bounds,” says Alvarado, Midtown Management District operations manager. “When we started we had 23 artists and I remember that very first day trying to set up and three of the artists went, ‘You know what? I’m not staying.’ And they left. Ha!

“It was a very, very small festival. We probably had 300 people there.”

Once modest in scale, the 10th Annual Art in the Park has grown into a robust showcase for some of the top artists in the region. Running from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, April 9 at Elizabeth Baldwin Park (1700 Elgin St.), Art in the Park has more than doubled in size since its debut nine years ago and will feature 50 artists representing a wide swath of mediums including abstract paintings, sculptures and woodworking.

But Art in the Park has expanded in ways beyond the number of participating artists. It’s now an eight-hour festival with live music, an array of food trucks, and installations serving both adults and children.

The Doors tribute band Soul Kitchen will perform as will Fred Rusk Zydeco. When the stage is clear, ambient music will bathe festivalgoers.

Back in 2007 there wasn’t a proliferation of food trucks available throughout Houston. Emblematic of change, the Art in the Park menu bursts with culinary options from Thai-Mex fusion (Pho-jita), kebaps (Crisp Döner Café), traditional Mexican (Los Tacos Hermanos), lobster rolls (Cousins Maine Lobster), and snow cones (FrioHana Shaved Ice).

While the kids are entertained by art projects presented via Imagination Campus, adults can imbibe at the Midtown Beer Garden, where ice cold beer and glasses of wine will be available. Patrons can paint their wine, martini and beer glasses via Wine Meadow sponsored by Central Bank.

Sponsors like Central Bank have played a significant role in the expansion of Art in the Park by providing the necessary undergirding.

“The quality of the artists represented has continually risen over the years,” Alvarado says. “We didn’t always have the money to have a band and stage; we do now.

Sponsors have helped tremendously. Central Bank has been with us almost since the beginning and we so appreciate that because it gives us a little extra bump to do some things.”

Those little bumps have enabled Art in the Park to claim rank as a marquee event. Elizabeth Baldwin Park, with its majestic collection of century-old oak trees, promises a picturesque backdrop with the accompanying weather forecast of sunny skies and temperatures in the mid-70s. Admission for fans of art and music and fun is, per usual, free.

While taking inventory of the strides made by Art in the Park through the years, what remains central to its creation is the celebration of art, artists, and those who fully appreciate both. Those fundamental tenets haven’t changed despite the rapid growth and its increasing popularity.

“At the end of the day for Midtown, because we are a cultural arts and entertainment district set up by the state of Texas, it’s (about) trying to make art accessible for people,” Alvarado says. “And instead of going out and buying a poster print, why don’t you spend an extra \$10 or \$15 to have a real piece of art that you can take back to your place, or a beautiful piece of glass or a sculpture or piece of woodwork or metal?”

“To me that’s important.”

For additional details and the latest updates, please visit <http://www.midtownartinthepark.com>.

About Midtown Houston

Midtown Houston is comprised of two organizations committed to making Midtown a model of urban living in the center of Houston, Texas. The two organizations are the Midtown Redevelopment Authority/Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 2 and the Midtown Management District. These organizations undertake projects with widespread benefit to the area that is beyond the ability of individual property owners or businesses within the district to provide. Both organizations share the common vision of shaping Midtown into a thriving, pedestrian-friendly urban community with distinct responsibilities. Midtown is the first district in Texas to receive the Cultural Arts & Entertainment District accreditation from the Texas Commission on the Arts. For more information about Midtown Houston, the Midtown Redevelopment Authority and the Midtown Management District, visit www.houstonmidtown.com.

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