



# George W. Bush Childhood Home Special Resource Study 2023



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

In 2019 Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior through the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Public Law [PL] 116-9) to conduct a special resource study (SRS) of the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas. The purpose of the special resource study is to evaluate the national significance of the study area, determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the national park system, and consider the need for direct National Park Service (NPS) management together with other alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation by the federal government, state or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations.

The legislation further requires that the study process follow 54 *United States Code* (USC) 100507 and that the Secretary of the Interior submit a report containing the results of the study, along with any recommendations, to the House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

## RESOURCE OVERVIEW

The Bush family, which includes two future Presidents—George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, and First Lady Barbara Pierce Bush, lived at 1412 West Ohio Avenue from November 1951 through November 1955. The George W. Bush Childhood Home is a Texas Historical Landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the 43rd President of the United States at an important and formative period in his life. The home is approximately 1,655 square feet and has been restored to its 1955 appearance. The nonprofit George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. (GW BCH Inc.) owns the Bush home and manages it as a historic house museum dedicated to the Bushes' connections to Midland. The organization also owns two neighboring properties: 400 Broadway Street, which houses the nonprofit's administrative offices and a visitor center, and 402 Broadway which is currently leased by the nonprofit as a profit-generating, single-family residential property.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

National Park Service *Management Policies 2006*, section 1.3, directs that proposed additions to the national park system must meet four legislatively mandated criteria: (1) national significance, (2) suitability, (3) feasibility, and (4) need for direct NPS management. Based on the analysis performed through this special resource study, the National Park Service concludes that the George W. Bush Childhood Home meets SRS criteria for national significance, suitability, and feasibility. It does not meet the need for direct NPS management due to interest from the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in acquiring the property and declaring it a state historic site.

### Criterion 1 – National Significance

The National Park Service finds that the George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, meets the national historic landmark (NHL) program's criterion for national significance. As the home of two future presidents of the United States—George H. W. and George W. Bush—the property meets NHL criterion 2 for being “associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.” While childhood homes are

usually not associated with the national significance or accomplishments of an individual, 1412 West Ohio Avenue meets the exception because the property is representative of a formative time for the Bush family, represents the family's home life as well as George W. Bush's upbringing, which he later touted as the cornerstone of his political identity on the presidential campaign trail. Therefore, the study area meets this SRS criterion for inclusion in the national park system.

### **Criterion 2 – Suitability**

The addition of the George W. Bush Childhood Home would constitute a suitable addition to the national park system as there is no existing NPS unit that primarily focuses on the lives, presidencies, and legacies of George W. Bush or his father George Herbert Walker Bush. The study area is associated with a period of both Bushes' lives that influenced the path to their presidencies. The site is suitable as an addition to the national park system because it represents a cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the park system (association with past president George W. Bush) and for its educational and interpretive potential for the 43rd president of the United States. The study area meets this criterion for inclusion in the national park system.

### **Criterion 3 – Feasibility**

The study area meets all the factors considered under the analysis of feasibility. It is of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment. Current land ownership patterns, economic and socioeconomic impacts, and potential threats to the resources do not preclude the study area from potentially becoming a new unit of the national park system. The site would not require substantial new infrastructure to support visitation and to meet the standards of a national park system unit. The National Park Service concludes that the George W. Bush Childhood Home is considered feasible for inclusion in the national park system.

### **Criterion 4 – Need for Direct NPS Management**

GW BCH Inc., purchased 1412 West Ohio Avenue in 2001 and restored the property to its 1950s appearance before opening the site to the public in 2006. In the nonprofit's decades of ownership and management, the group has successfully maintained the site as a historic house museum and has offered educational programming to visitors and school groups. GW BCH Inc., is currently providing sufficient resource protection, but opportunities for visitor enjoyment are limited by low staff and volunteer numbers and the management entity has concerns over its ability to maintain the historic structure in the future. The George W. Bush Childhood Home would benefit from additional support, technical expertise, and longevity provided by a larger preservation organization or government entity such as the National Park Service or Texas Historical Commission.

At the time of this study, 1412 West Ohio Avenue appears to meet the need for NPS management due to uncertainties associated with continued management under the existing nonprofit. However, the National Park Service does not represent a "clearly superior alternative" to future management as a Texas state historic site owned and operated by the Texas Historical Commission. The THC Historic Site Program can provide an equivalent level of resource protection and visitor services and the National Park Service recommends that the state historic preservation assume the lead management role due to its proven interest in the site and the site's connection to Texas history. Therefore, this study finds that the site does not meet the need for direct NPS management.

## A GUIDE TO THIS DOCUMENT

This special resource study is organized into the following chapters. Each chapter is briefly described below.

**Chapter 1: Study Purpose and Background** provides a brief description of the study area and an overview of the study's purpose, background, and process. This chapter also summarizes the NPS findings on the special resource study.

**Chapter 2: Historic Resource and Resource Description** provides a historic overview and site description of the George W. Bush Childhood Home and adjacent property.

**Chapter 3: Analysis of the Four Criteria for Evaluation** describes the evaluation criteria and findings of the special resource study. Criteria discussed include national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for direct NPS management.

**Chapter 4: Summary of Findings** provides concluding remarks for each of the special study criterion.

**The appendixes** include the authorizing legislation, management policies criteria, a compilation of public comments received during outreach efforts, and references used in the study.

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## **CHAPTER 1: STUDY PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

Chapter 1 describes the purpose and background of the study, including the criteria used by the National Park Service (NPS) to determine if a resource is eligible for designation as a unit of the national park system. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the study methodology and limitations.

### **PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY**

New areas are typically added to the national park system by an act of Congress. However, before Congress decides to create a new park it needs to know whether the area's resources meet established criteria for designation. The National Park Service is often tasked to evaluate potential new areas for compliance with these criteria and document its findings in a special resource study (SRS).

In 2019, Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior through the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (PL 116-9) to conduct a special resource study of the President George W. Bush Childhood Home, and adjacent property in Midland, Texas. The purpose of the special resource study was to evaluate the national significance of the study area; determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the national park system; consider other alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation of the study area by the federal government, state, or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations; consult with interested federal agencies, state, or local governmental entities, private and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested individuals; and identify cost estimates for any federal acquisitions, development, interpretation, operation, and maintenance associated with the alternatives. The legislation further required that the study process follow section 8(c) of Public Law 91-383 (the National Park System General Authorities Act) (recently codified in 54 USC 100507) and that the Secretary of the Interior submit the study findings and any recommendations to Congress within three years of the study's funding.

The purpose of this special resource study is to provide Congress with information about the quality and condition of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in Midland, Texas, and adjacent property, and their relationship to criteria for new parklands applied by the National Park Service.

### **BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA**

In 2012, US Congressional Representative K. Michael Conaway (TX-11) requested that the National Park Service conduct a reconnaissance survey of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in Midland, Texas, to provide a preliminary evaluation of the property as a potential new unit of the national park system due to its association with President George W. Bush. Completed by the National Park Service Intermountain Regional Office Heritage Partnerships Program, the finalized survey was released in 2015 and found that the home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue appeared to meet NPS criteria for national significance for its strong association with an exceptionally important and formative period of President George W. Bush's life. Based on the reconnaissance survey findings, the National Park Service author concluded that further study of the site through a congressionally authorized special resource study was warranted.

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination for the George W. Bush Childhood Home located at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas, describes the site as

“... a Minimal Traditional wood frame house built circa 1939 and occupied by the George H.W. Bush Family from 1952-1955. The wood siding, decorative brick chimney, and complex hipped roof are distinguishing features of the home. Included in the nomination is the entire lot on which the house and detached garage sit. The home is in the process of being returned to its appearance during the Bush occupancy. Under the preservation plan, non-historic aluminum siding has been removed and the horizontal wood siding, which is in good condition, will be painted as it was while the Bush Family lived there. The second bathroom and bedroom alcove addition and all porch roofs have also been removed, and the east facade is being returned to the way it appeared during the period of significance.”

The George W. Bush Childhood Home NRHP registration form states that the house is eligible under criterion B in the area of Politics/Government at the national level of significance as the childhood home of the 43rd President George W. Bush. The listed period of significance is 1952 to 1955, the time that corresponds with the Bush family living at the residence. At the time of its listing, the period of significance of the house was less than 50 years old distant, but the property met NRHP Criteria Consideration G for its extraordinary national significance because of its association with a president of the United States as the property that best exemplifies his childhood.

## **STUDY METHODOLOGY / PROCESS**

The special resource study process is designed to provide Congress with critical information about the resource qualities within the study area and potential alternatives for their protection. By law (PL 91-383 §8 [the National Park System General Authorities Act, recently codified in 54 USC 100507]) and NPS *Management Policies 2006*, potential new units of the national park system must fully meet the following four criteria for evaluation:

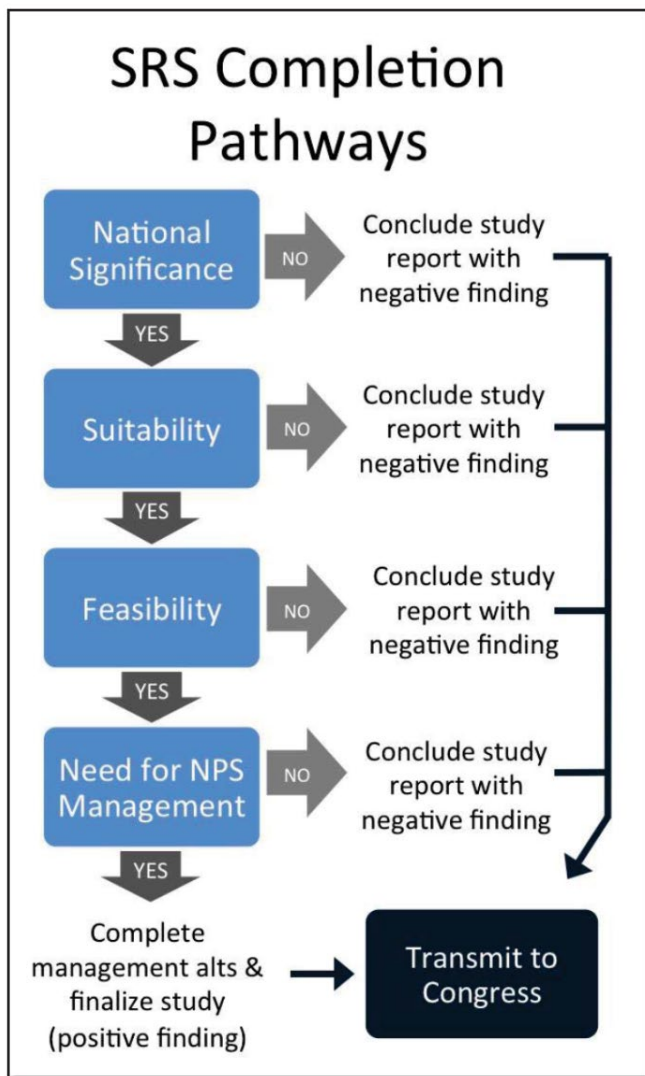
1. Possess nationally significant resources.
2. Be a suitable addition to the system.
3. Be a feasible addition to the system.
4. Require direct NPS management or administration instead of alternative protection by another governmental entity or by the private sector.

This study includes the findings for these four criteria and will serve as the basis for a formal recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior as to whether the study area should be designated as a new unit of the national park system.

The following methodology illustrated in figure 1 was used to conduct this special resource study and determine if the George W. Bush Childhood Home meets these criteria:

### **Step 1: Assess Public Views and Ideas about the George W. Bush Childhood Home**

Through a process called “scoping,” existing information about the study area and its resources is collected by the NPS study team. The study team consults current resource conditions and existing documentation, including historic designations and/or nominations and theme studies, throughout the development of the special resource study. Site visits to the study area may be conducted to assess resource conditions and provide additional information that could be used in the development of the study findings.



**Figure 1. Special Resource Study Completion Pathways**

During the early stages of the study, the team began the process of identifying the stakeholders, agencies, and individuals with a direct interest in the study area or with expertise that could assist the team; this facilitates planning for later stakeholder conversations and public outreach activities. Engaging the potential stakeholders in the scoping process allows the public; neighbors of the study area; local, state, and other federal government agencies; and other stakeholders to share insights about their issues, concerns, ideas, goals, and objectives for the area. This process also provides a way for the study team to gauge the level of interest and community support in designating the study area as a unit in the national park system. Information collected and research conducted through this scoping process was used in the analysis of the four criteria for evaluation.

## **Step 2: Evaluate National Significance, Suitability, Feasibility, and Need for Direct NPS Management**

To be considered for designation, potential new park units must satisfy all four criteria noted previously. Based on the nature of the study process, a sequential evaluation of these criteria is used. If the study area is found to be nationally significant, the study process continues to the evaluation of suitability. Note that study areas designated as national historic or natural landmarks are already considered nationally significant by virtue of designation. If the resource is found to be nationally significant and suitable, the study process continues to the evaluation of feasibility. If the resource is found to be nationally significant, suitable, and feasible, the study process continues to the evaluation of need for direct NPS management. The evaluation of the need for direct NPS management is done when an area has been found to meet all the first three criteria for evaluation. Once the fourth criterion is met, the study proceeds with developing alternatives. An option for a potential new park unit can be included in the range of alternatives only if the study has determined that direct NPS management is clearly superior to other existing management approaches.

If the study determines that the resource does not meet any one of these criteria, then the study process usually ends, and the study outcome is a negative finding. A brief description of preservation and management options (e.g., affiliated area) can be included as part of the findings, regardless of a negative finding for suitability or feasibility.

## **Step 3: Final Study Completion and Transmittal to Congress**

Following rigorous agency review and affirmation of the study findings, the final special resource study report is transmitted by the NPS Director to the Secretary of the Interior. The report and any recommendations from the Secretary of the Interior are then transmitted to Congress, which may or may not act on a study's findings. If legislation for the establishment of a new unit is drafted, it will usually draw from study findings. The time period in which Congress takes action is unspecified.

The final special resource study report is made available to the public following receipt by congressional members. This is accomplished by posting the study report to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. Study documents are not shared prior to their receipt by Congress, nor can findings be discussed with the public or with key stakeholders until their transmittal.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT**

The National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 requires each study to be “completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969” (42 USC 4321 et seq.) (54 USC 100507). This study complies with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, which mandates that all federal agencies analyze the impacts of major federal actions that have a significant effect on the environment.

A categorical exclusion (CE) was selected as the most appropriate NEPA pathway for this study.

The study is excluded from requiring an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement because there is no potential for impacts on the human environment without further legislative action by the United States Congress. The applicable categorical exclusion is in the category of: “Adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans, and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed actions which would cause no or only minimal environmental impact” (NPS NEPA Handbook, 3.2 (R)).

## **SUMMARY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

The National Park Service conducted public outreach related to the George W. Bush Childhood Home Special Resource Study through an informational newsletter (virtual and hardcopy); letters mailed directly to adjacent landowners and neighbors; the NPS project website; and a virtual public meeting. These communications directed interested members of the public to submit their comments regarding the study and the potential inclusion of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in the national park system electronically through the NPS project website or via mail. The 60-day formal public comment period ran from December 28, 2020, through February 28, 2021.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which precluded in-person meetings for much of 2020 and 2021, a virtual public informational meeting was held on January 26, 2021, via the Internet platform, Microsoft Teams. The meeting, which included a live presentation about the special resource study process followed by a question and answer session, was attended by 13 people. Meeting materials, as well as a recording and transcription of the live event, were uploaded to the project website and were available throughout the rest of the comment period for attendees and other members of the public to view online at their leisure.

In total, the study team received 25 individual correspondences. Of these, 22 were submitted directly to the PEPC website. The three letters sent via e-mail and by mail were manually entered into the PEPC website by NPS staff. Public comments were submitted from individuals in eight states. The comments represented a range of opinions and concerns related to the site, with some commenters in favor of establishing a new NPS unit dedicated to George W. Bush and others feeling that the site possessed local, not national, significance and should not be part of the national park system. The study team considered all comments when analyzing public support, one of the factors included under the SRS feasibility criterion. (The summary of the public comments received is included as appendix C.)

## **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

This special resource study incorporates best available information during the study period. A special resource study serves as one of many reference sources for members of Congress, the National Park Service, and other persons interested in the potential designation of an area as a new unit of the national park system. The reader should be aware that the analysis and findings contained in this report do not guarantee the future funding, support, or any subsequent action by Congress, the Department of the Interior, or the National Park Service. Because a special resource study is not a decision-making document, it does not identify a preferred NPS course of action.

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## CHAPTER 2: HISTORIC RESOURCE AND RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

### INTRODUCTION

Because Congress directed the National Park Service to investigate the George W. Bush childhood home as a potential new unit of the national park system, understanding its historical context, site treatment, and condition is essential. This chapter describes the Bush family's connection to Midland as well as the property's current condition. The information and research presented in this chapter were used in the analysis of the four criteria for evaluating the study area presented in chapter 3 of this study.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*“George W. Bush: A Childhood in Midland” from George W. Bush Childhood Home Reconnaissance Survey (2015)*

Although born in New Haven, Connecticut, on July 6, 1946, George W. Bush's first childhood memories began in the oil-rich country of West Texas. “My first memories are of Midland,” he recounted in his memoirs.<sup>1</sup> In 1948, when he was only two years old, his father, George H.W. Bush, set out for Texas the day after graduating from Yale University. Bush had been offered an entry-level job as an equipment clerk in the Odessa, Texas, warehouse of Dresser Industries (now Halliburton), making \$375 a month.<sup>2</sup> The offer came from Henry Neil Mallon, the company CEO who was a longtime friend and classmate of George H.W. Bush's father, Prescott Bush. Prescott Bush was a prominent business leader who held executive positions in banking and industry. He was also active in the Republican Party and, in 1952, was elected United States Senator from Connecticut.

George H.W. Bush could have remained in Connecticut where his family connections were strong, but he did not. “And one thing was for certain: He would be on his own,” George W. Bush wrote of his father. “Prescott Bush and [George H.W. Bush's grandfather] G.H. Walker cast a long shadow, but it didn't reach Odessa, Texas.”<sup>3</sup> Barbara Bush told how her husband headed for Odessa, Texas, “in a little, two-door, red Studebaker.”<sup>4</sup> She and her son remained behind at G. H. Walker's summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine, until her husband found a place for them to live.<sup>5</sup> In her memoirs, Barbara Bush remembered that her husband's decision to leave New England and move west came during World War II, while he was serving as a Navy pilot. The decision came after he was shot down by Japanese anti-aircraft fire over the Pacific on September 2, 1944, and rescued from the ocean by a U.S. submarine crew. “He told me he had thought about it a great deal while standing night watch on the submarine deck

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Bush, *A Charge to Keep: My Journey to the White House* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999) 15.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014), 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York: Scribner, Reprint Edition, 2003), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 42.

after being rescued. He had decided he did not want to work with intangibles; he wanted a product he could see and feel. I think that meant he did not want to be in the investment or banking business like so many of his family.”<sup>6</sup>

Odessa and nearby Midland, about halfway between Dallas and El Paso, were the principal communities in the semi- arid plains of West Texas when George H.W. Bush arrived in 1948. The towns sit atop the Permian Basin, a geological stratum formed more than 250 million years ago containing an incredibly rich reservoir of oil and natural gas. The Basin’s oil reserves were first commercially developed in the 1920s, then revitalized during World War II. During the 1950s, in a booming post-war America, the Permian Basin accounted for about 20 percent of America’s oil production. George W. Bush remembered vividly the West Texas landscape surrounding the two towns. “The ground was flat, dry and dusty. Beneath it sat a sea of oil.”<sup>7</sup> His father was intent on tapping into this sea and the newly vibrant oil industry in Texas.

The Bush family moved into a small apartment at 1519 East Seventh Street in Odessa, where, according to George W. Bush, they “shared a bathroom with – depending on whom you ask – either one or two prostitutes.”<sup>8</sup> Barbara Bush, who grew up in Rye, New York, recalled her first impressions of the small town. “We stepped off the plane – after a twelve-hour flight in those days – to a whole new and very hot world. Odessa is flat as a pancake and as different from Rye, New York, as any place imaginable,” she wrote. “Nothing comes easy to West Texas. Every tree must be cultivated, and every flower is a joy.”<sup>9</sup> Unlike Rye, which is on Long Island Sound and within an easy commute of New York City, Odessa and Midland were a day’s drive from any big city and even farther from any large body of water. Even the air was different. One night, Barbara Bush awoke to the smell of gas in their apartment. “Thinking the house was at risk of explosion,” wrote George W. Bush, “she grabbed me and hustled me out to the curb. A neighbor who witnessed the evacuation kindly explained that a shift in winds had brought the scent of oil fields wafting in.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite his family connections and degree from Yale, George H.W. Bush insisted on learning all aspects of the oil business from the “bottom-up.” He was not to be disappointed. His first boss, Bill Nelson, told him he was the “best warehouse sweeper-outer he had ever seen.”<sup>11</sup> Although brief, the “blue-collar” job made a lasting impression on the young and aspiring George H.W. Bush, as did the Texas lifestyle in general. “George and I learned a whole new outlook on life,” Barbara Bush recalled. “One day at work a man said to George, ‘Say, you’re a college grad, aren’t you?’ When George told him he had gone to Yale, the man thought a minute and said he’d never heard of it. He

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<sup>6</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 31.

mumbled something that sounded like, ‘Too bad.’ George got the distinct impression he felt sorry for him. So much for eastern elitism. It didn’t count much in West Texas.”<sup>12</sup>

The young Bush family moved around a lot in these years. During their brief stay in Odessa, they also lived at 1523 East Seventh Street and 916 East 17th Street. In 1949 George H.W. was transferred to California. Working as a traveling salesman for the Ideco division of Dresser Industries, an oil and natural gas development equipment company, he spent much of his time on the road selling Ideco drill rigs. Within a year’s time, the family lived in Whittier, Ventura, Bakersfield, and Compton, California. While living in Compton in 1949, the Bushes’ daughter Pauline Robinson “Robin” Bush was born.<sup>13</sup>

Still, the Bushes were intent on returning to Texas, where, George H.W. Bush later explained, “the oil boom was on.” Their hopes were fulfilled in 1950 when the elder Bush was transferred to Midland, a town he described as having “the money” in contrast to Odessa, which had “the muscle.” The town’s residents included a large group of mostly college-educated newcomers—engineers, geologists, investors, and speculators— who came in search of their fortunes. So many transplants came from New England that some of Midland’s new neighborhood streets, such as Princeton and Harvard avenues with their new, ranch style homes, were named after the Ivy League schools the residents had only recently left.<sup>14</sup>

Midland, in the 1950s, was the “white-collar” center of a booming economy. Every major oil company and so many smaller companies and new start-ups had located there that there was not enough office space to go around, and a downtown building boom was in full swing. Moreover, a huge influx of new residents needed homes, fueling a residential construction boom. Midland’s population grew dramatically, from under 25,000 in 1950 to over 60,000 in 1960. Laura Bush’s father, Harold Welch, was an independent contractor who built homes in Midland during this dynamic period. By 1960, Midland was one of the richest communities in the United States, per capita. It counted an estimated 600 millionaires when the average annual income in the United States at the time was \$7,000.<sup>15</sup>

While Midland was somewhat isolated, Laura Bush writes that it was “far from a cultural wasteland” in the 1950s. The community had a symphony and a theater that regularly staged musical performances, and people dressed up to go to church or out to a restaurant. But Midland also retained a small-town feeling: “It was a place of ice cream sundaes at the Borden dairy and Saturday morning pony rides.” The sky was extraordinary, arcing overhead “in one enormous dome of blistering blue,” Laura Bush wrote. And, with night, came the endless stars and “the piercing call of the train whistles

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>13</sup> George Bush and Victor Gold, *Looking Forward* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987), 56; Ronald Kessler, *A Matter of Character: Inside the White House of George W. Bush* (New York: Sentinel, 2004), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 21, 56; Christopher Anderson, *George and Laura: Portrait of an American Marriage* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 47.

as miles of freight cars rolled past Midland on the rails.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the wind and the sand were relentless. During the 1950s, Texas was experiencing the worst drought since the Dust Bowl years. All through the decade, Laura Bush remembered, “Acres of rough, reddish sand would blow straight down into Midland, riding in thick swirls on the wind. People latched their windows tight, not to keep out the heat or the desert cold, but to hold back the billowing sand.”<sup>17</sup>

George H.W. Bush continued working for Ideco as a local salesman after the family arrived in Midland in 1950. The Bushes briefly stayed in George’s Courts, a motel on Main Street, then purchased a small home for just under \$8,000. The house, at 405 East Maple Street, was in a brand-new suburban development in the Loma Linda subdivision. Built by an Arizona company, the subdivision was the first post-war suburb built in Midland. The Bush house, like most of the homes, was rather small at 840 square feet. Each home in the development, except for color and orientation on the lots, was quite similar. Local residents called the neighborhood “Easter Egg Row” because all the homes were brightly painted in different colors. The Bush family home was light blue.<sup>18</sup>

The neighborhood was close-knit. George H.W. Bush describes weekly neighborhood gatherings on Easter Egg Row as “straight out of Norman Rockwell: kids playing, dogs barking, and either a touch football or softball game to round out the festivities.” This sociability extended into the community where the Bushes found time for community service and grassroots political organizing. George H.W. Bush assisted in Republican campaigns in Midland and Odessa, but his political career would not begin in earnest until he left Midland for Houston.<sup>19</sup>

About this time George H.W. Bush decided to strike out on his own and start his own company. He went into business with his neighbor across the street, John Overbey. Educated as a lawyer, Overbey was the son of an oil field worker and had extensive field experience in his own right. In Midland, Overbey worked as an independent operator trading oil leases and royalties. Bush brought an equal measure of financial connections and sales experience to the partnership. The two friends named their new company the Bush-Overbey Oil Development Company, Inc.<sup>20</sup>

In November of 1951, the Bush family moved into a larger house for their growing family. Located at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, the new home was nearly twice as large as the one on Easter Egg Row. George W. Bush was five years old, and Robin was two. Their younger brother John Ellis “Jeb” Bush was born in 1953, while the family lived in the home.

The oil business proved a good fit for George H.W. Bush. He and Overbey expanded their operations in 1953 when they joined forces with the Liedtke brothers, the sons of

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<sup>16</sup> Laura Welch Bush, *Spoken From the Heart* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 16, 44.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 37; Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Bush and Gold, *Looking Forward*, 59; Anderson, *George and Laura*, 28-29, Jacob Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy* (New York: Random House, 2008), 43.

<sup>20</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 38.

the chief counsel for Gulf Oil. The four men formed Zapata Petroleum and decided to gamble \$800,000 on one tract of land. Hugh Liedtke was convinced that vast oil deposits were located under a section of dry soil known as the West Jameson Field, about 70 miles east of Midland. They spent all their money drilling the area, and every hole they drilled produced oil. By the end of the year Zapata Petroleum was operating 71 wells producing more than 1,200 barrels of oil per day. The lease eventually yielded 127 producing wells, making George H.W. Bush a millionaire before he was 30 years old.<sup>21</sup>

Midland left a deep and lasting imprint on George H.W. Bush's son George W. Bush. Years later, when campaigning for the presidency, whenever George W. Bush referenced the "American Dream," it was Midland that he had in mind. Among other things, his lifelong passion with baseball began on the windy and dusty sandlots of Midland. "My friends and I would play baseball for hours, hitting each other grounders and fly balls until Mother called over the fence in our yard to come in for dinner," he recalled later in life. His favorite team was the New York Giants. "To this day," George W. Bush recounted in his autobiography, "I can recite the starting lineup of the 1954 Giants team. Willie Mays was my hero."<sup>22</sup> His father, who had been an outstanding player and captained the baseball teams at Andover and Yale, often "came out to play." One of the proudest moments of George W. Bush's childhood came when his father fired a fastball, which he snagged with his mitt. "Son, you've arrived," his father said. "I can throw it to you as hard as I want."<sup>23</sup> When George W. Bush was running for President and an interviewer asked him about his fondest childhood memory, he did not hesitate with an answer: "Little League baseball in Midland," he replied. He played for the Central Midland Cubs, and his father managed the Little League team. A former teacher at George W. Bush's elementary school recalled how he was always ready to play baseball and, mitt in hand, organized games at recess.<sup>24</sup> Although never making it to the "Big Leagues," George W. Bush's passion for the game continued well into adult life. In April of 1989, he purchased a share in the Texas Rangers baseball franchise, serving as managing partner for five years. "Owning a major League Baseball team was a-dream-come-true," he later stated.<sup>25</sup>

George W. Bush attributed some of his later success in business and politics to his years playing baseball as a child in Midland. "To come to the ballpark every day, you have to believe you can win. Baseball is a pursuit for optimists, just like drilling for oil or running for office. . . To run for office, especially after losing, you have to believe you can win."<sup>26</sup>

George W. Bush acquired other lifetime interests and values while growing up in Midland. The family regularly attended the First Presbyterian Church, where both parents taught Sunday school. Also on the weekends, George H.W. Bush often took his

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<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 33; Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Carl M. Cannon, ed., "American President: George Walker Bush," The Miller Center, Charlottesville, Va. <<http://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/essays/biography/2>>.

<sup>25</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 201.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

son out to the oil fields surrounding Midland. “Those trips helped spark an interest in the oil business that I would later pursue by becoming an independent oil man in the mid-1970s,” recalled George W. Bush.<sup>27</sup>

It was while living at the 1412 West Ohio Avenue house that George W. Bush became a member of the Cub Scouts, for which Barbara Bush served as den mother, and the Roy Rogers Riders’ Club.<sup>28</sup> The clubs taught traditional values and mores that resonated with the future President, including honesty, compassion, hard work, patriotism, and an appreciation for faith, family, and friendship. George W. Bush felt surrounded by these values in Midland. “Midland was a small town, with small town values,” he later stated. “We learned to respect our elders, to do what they said, and to be good neighbors.” It was, he said, a town where people regularly went to church and where children felt safe to walk to school or ride their bike downtown to take in a movie. “Texas is a place where people hold fast to basic values,” he wrote. “Give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wages; don’t lie, cheat or steal, respect others, respect their property, and respect their opinions.”<sup>29</sup>

An important moral lesson was learned when George W. Bush was six years old and went with some friends to the Midland general store. A jar of plastic toy soldiers on the shelf proved irresistible to the youngster, and he pocketed them and walked out of the store without paying. That afternoon, when his father saw him playing with the toy soldiers, he asked where they came from. “After a little soul-searching, I confessed,” recalled George W. Bush. His father then drove him back to the store and ordered him to return the toy soldiers and apologize to the store manager. “When I got in the car, Dad didn’t say another word. He knew he had made his point.”<sup>30</sup>

His parents and neighbors also emphasized the importance of education. “Texas is a place where most people know they can improve their lives through hard work and education,” George W. Bush wrote in his autobiography *A Charge to Keep*. “Our homework and schoolwork were important,” and parents and their neighbors sought “to attract the best teachers to our schools.” In many ways, the education of George W. Bush followed closely that of his father. Like his father, George W. Bush attended the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and after graduation was accepted into Yale University. He carried a passion for education with him to the Governor’s Mansion in Austin, Texas, and later to the White House. As Governor of Texas, believing that new educational standards were needed in order to “make public education work for our kids and their parents,” Bush made reading a top priority.<sup>31</sup> As President, he successfully pushed for passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, which set standards and benchmarks for proficiency. The standardization required by the No Child Left Behind Act, he believed, would ensure that all children received the help they needed. It was an essential part of his “compassionate conservatism,” in which he “hoped to restore [to

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<sup>27</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 49.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 10, 18.

<sup>30</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18, 30.

America] the kind of small-town goodness he had experienced growing up in Midland.”<sup>32</sup>

The happy life in Midland was not immune from sorrow. When Jeb Bush was only a few weeks old, sister Robin woke up in March of 1953 complaining that she was too tired to get out of bed. A trip to the pediatrician’s office brought terrible news: Robin had advanced-stage leukemia. The doctor, predicting that Robin had only weeks to live, told the Bushes to “forget that [she] was sick, make her as comfortable [as possible], love her – and let her gently slip away.”<sup>33</sup> Barbara and George H.W. Bush had never even heard of leukemia. Believing the doctor “just had to be wrong,” they were determined “to do everything we could to save our beautiful child.”<sup>34</sup>

The day after Robin’s diagnosis, George H.W. and Barbara, with their daughter, boarded an airplane for New York City, where George H.W.’s uncle, Dr. John Walker, was the director of Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital, the premier cancer center in the nation at the time. When tests confirmed Robin’s grave condition, she was immediately admitted to the hospital and put on medication. Barbara and George moved into his grandparents’ New York City apartment, where they resided on and off for the next seven months until Robin passed away. During this time, the parents of George H.W. Bush sent a trusted family nurse down to Midland, Texas to care for the boys.

The ordeal was devastating. A few months after Robin’s diagnosis, George H.W. Bush wrote to his long-time friend Thomas “Lud” Ashley that he had “stopped asking ‘why’ [Robin became ill],” and that while a few “tougher days will probably lie ahead. . . I don’t believe many will be rougher than those first couple of weeks.” There was apparently a glimmer of hope in August 1953 when Bush optimistically wrote in a letter to another friend, Fitzgerald Bemiss, that “Robin is . . . making headway, or at least has not lost ground,” and that “[she] will [hopefully] come back to Texas in the next couple of days.” At the same time he understood the gravity of Robin’s condition by “[hoping] that she will have many more months of active life.” Sadly, this was not the case. Robin Bush died at Sloan Kettering Hospital on Columbus Day 1953, with her parents at her side.<sup>35</sup>

George W. Bush knew his sister was sick, but did not realize that she was dying. His parents, partly on the advice of doctors, kept the fact that Robin had leukemia a secret from her older brother. Returning from New York, George H.W. and Barbara flew to Midland and drove directly to George W. Bush’s elementary school to take him home and let him know that “Robin wasn’t coming home.” “To this day,” George W. Bush wrote, “I am certain I saw her, her small head rising barely above the backseat of my parent’s green Oldsmobile as it drove up in front of Sam Houston Elementary School. . . I got to the car, still certain Robin was there, but of course, she was not.” Her death

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<sup>32</sup> Dan P. McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>33</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 39-40.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 40, 46-47; Bush, *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Writings* (New York, Touchstone, 1999), 76.

stunned and saddened the seven-year-old. Years later, the tragedy remained “the starkest memory of my childhood, a sharp pain in the midst of an otherwise happy blur.” He suffered from nightmares for years after Robin’s death.<sup>36</sup>

Barbara Bush was devastated by Robin’s death. “I fell apart time after time during the next six months,” she remembered, “and George [H.W. Bush] would put me together again.”<sup>37</sup> “At 28 years old, her dark brown hair started to turn white,” recalled George W. Bush.<sup>38</sup> Young George also tried to console his mother. While his father was away on business, he recalled, “I spent almost all my time at her side, showering her with affection and trying to cheer her up with jokes.” One day, Barbara Bush overheard her son talking to a neighborhood friend who was asking him to come over to play. George replied that he wanted to, but couldn’t leave his mother because she needed him. “That started my cure,” Barbara wrote. “I realized I was too much of a burden for a little seven-year-old boy to carry.”<sup>39</sup> Even though George was exceedingly helpful to his mother at home during this time, his rambunctiousness could irritate his father, who wrote: “Georgie aggravates the hell out of me at times (I am sure I do the same to him), then at times I am so proud of him I could die.”<sup>40</sup>

Robin’s death brought mother and son closer. George W. Bush discovered that they shared much in common. “We like to needle to show affection, and sometimes to make a point,” he said. “We both have tempers that can flare rapidly. And we can be blunt, a trait that gets us in trouble from time to time.” During his gubernatorial campaign, he told people that he had his “daddy’s eyes and my mother’s mouth. I said it to get a laugh, but it was true.”<sup>41</sup>

The Bush family moved into their last Midland home in 1955 when George W. Bush was nine years old. Located in Midland’s most exclusive neighborhood, the new home was a testament to George H.W. Bush’s success. The house at 2703 Sentinel Drive was a 3,000-square-foot brick ranch with a swimming pool and two-car garage, both rare architectural attributes in 1950s Midland. The home backed up to a park where George W. Bush spent countless hours playing baseball and recreating.

He also entered seventh grade at San Jacinto Middle School. Laura Welch, his future wife, attended the school at the same time, but the two never met. While living in the house on Sentinel Drive, Barbara and George H.W. Bush had two more sons: Neil Mallon Bush, born in January 1955, and Marvin Pierce Bush, born in October 1956. Their youngest child, Dorothy “Doro” Bush, was born after the family moved 550 miles to Houston in 1959.

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<sup>36</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 14; McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream*, 61-62.

<sup>37</sup> Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 45.

<sup>38</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 7; Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 46. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 44-45; Bush, *All The Best*, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 7.



George W. Bush was 13 years old when the family moved to Houston to be closer to the Gulf of Mexico where his father would manage Zapata's new offshore oil venture.<sup>42</sup> The family experienced mixed emotions as they left Midland. "My life changed after the seventh grade, when our family moved from Midland to Houston," George W. Bush wrote. The small-town boy was now living in a city of nearly one million residents, and the climate was dramatically different. The new house "was in a lush, wooded area that was often pelted by rainstorms," he recalled, "the exact opposite of Midland."<sup>43</sup> "It felt like living in a tropical jungle compared to our time in Midland," George wrote.<sup>44</sup> However, he soon made a new set of friends and found himself learning to play golf.

The move was more difficult for Barbara Bush, who told of having "a sinking feeling" when her husband suggested the move to Houston. "I loved Midland and our friends and did not want to leave that cocoon of warmth and love," she writes in her memoir. Even after the move, she "awakened several times feeling almost nauseated over leaving Midland."<sup>45</sup>

Unsettling as the move to Houston was for Barbara Bush and her 13-year-old son, it represented a progression in the life of George H.W. Bush, who would begin his political career there. The family lived at 5525 Briar Street, a custom home designed by George H.W. Bush himself. Everything about the new house and its one-acre lot was bigger than any of the Bush homes in Midland. The house had two stories instead of one, and the backyard was big enough for a baseball diamond. It was a fitting residence for a man who had found success in the oil industry.<sup>46</sup> The larger house easily accommodated a new child, Dorothy Walker Bush, who was born on August 18, 1959. For George W. Bush, the move to Houston represented more than a shift from a small town to a big city. Now, for the first time, he entered a private school, Kinkaid, one of the most prestigious private schools in Houston. Classes were held at the school's new 40-acre campus in the city's Piney Point Village neighborhood. George W. Bush spent only two years at Kinkaid – his eighth- and ninth-grade years – before his parents decided that he should enroll at Phillips Academy, a boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts, that his father had attended.<sup>47</sup> The school, established in 1778 and typically called Andover, is one of the most prestigious private residential schools in the United States.

George W. Bush began his academic career at Andover in the fall of 1961. His initial impressions of the school were not sanguine. He described the place as "cold and distant and difficult." He settled in, however, and quickly became one of the more popular students.<sup>48</sup> Bush attended Andover through his graduation from high school in 1964. He continued to follow his father's educational path by enrolling at Yale University the following fall. Majoring in history, he graduated in 1968. During these years, from 1961

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<sup>42</sup> Bush, *Portrait of My Father*, 63-64.

<sup>43</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Bush, *41: A Portrait of My Father*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 18-19; Bush, *Barbara Bush*, 52-53.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 18.

until 1968, when he was between the ages of 15 and 21, George W. Bush spent his holidays and summers in Houston and the rest of his time in New England.

During his senior year at Yale, George W. Bush faced a decision point in his life. The war in Vietnam had escalated, and President Lyndon Johnson had instituted a draft. Bush, whose father was a decorated World War II hero, remembered being faced with two choices: “join the military or find a way to escape the draft.” The decision was made quickly. “I was going to serve,” he later wrote. “I would have been ashamed to avoid duty.”<sup>49</sup> Just before graduation he enlisted in the 147th fighter group of the Texas Air National Guard. His commitment required two years of active duty and four years of reserve duty. He went through basic training and more than a year and a half of flight training. He felt proud when his father was invited to “pin on my wings.”<sup>50</sup> With his active duty commitment completed, George W. Bush met his reserve obligation and was honorably discharged from the Texas Air National Guard on October 1, 1973, and from the Air Force Reserves in November 1974.

From the summer of 1968 until the fall of 1973, Bush lived in an apartment building called Chateaux Dijon, a 400-unit apartment complex in Houston’s Galleria District that was marketed to the city’s single young men and women. Ironically, Laura Welch, who would marry the future President less than ten years later, also lived at Chateaux Dijon. But once again, their paths did not cross.<sup>51</sup>

George W. Bush returned to New England in 1973 to enter Harvard Business School, where he earned a Master’s degree in business administration (MBA) in 1975. After finishing his studies in Massachusetts, he decided to return to Texas. Rather than return to Houston, he moved to Midland, essentially retracing his father’s footsteps into the Permian Basin oil industry.

When he moved back to Midland, Bush rented space in a gray brick bungalow at 2006 Harvard Avenue and went to work for independent operators as an oil landman, scouring public records for mineral rights. Bush had \$15,000 left from a college fund set up by his parents and decided to begin investing in drilling prospects. His timing was fortuitous. The 1973 Arab oil embargo had sent the cost of oil skyrocketing; its price soared 800 percent from 1973 to 1981. George W. Bush, however, met with less immediate success than had his father. His first prospect oil well turned out to be a dry hole. His second prospect, while not spectacular, proved to be a bit more productive. The profits facilitated Bush’s entry into politics and his first bona fide business venture, Arbusto Energy, a company established to invest and trade oil and mineral royalties.<sup>52</sup>

George W. Bush also followed his father into politics. The elder Bush had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1966 from Texas’ 7th Congressional District, but lost his bid in 1970 for a Texas seat in the United States Senate. By 1977, George H. W.

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<sup>49</sup> Bush, *Decision Points*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 97-98; Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 62; Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 49; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 40-41.

Bush had served as ambassador to the United Nations, chairman of the Republican National Committee, U.S. Liaison in Beijing (then Peking), and director of the Central Intelligence Agency. That year of 1977, George Mahon, the incumbent congressman from West Texas's 19th District, announced his retirement, and George W. Bush decided to run for his seat in the House of Representatives. Bush was not inexperienced in politics. He had worked on three of his father's campaigns, as well as on the Republican Senate campaigns of Edward J. Gurney (Florida) and Winton Blount (Alabama). His father played no active role in his campaign for Congress. Running as a moderate Republican, Bush won the primary but lost the election in 1978. Texas was still a traditionally Democratic state in the 1970s, and his opponent characterized him as out of touch with rural Texas.<sup>53</sup>

That summer of 1977, when Bush decided to run for Congress, he also met Laura Welch, a librarian, at a backyard barbeque in Midland. By September they were engaged. "We had been dating only six or seven weeks but our childhoods overlapped so completely and our worlds were so intertwined, it was as if we had known each other our whole lives," she wrote in her autobiography. That November they were married. "I loved how he made me laugh and his steadfastness," she wrote.<sup>54</sup>

After a brief honeymoon, the newlyweds settled into a house George had purchased at 1405 West Golf Course Road in Midland. Four years after their marriage, George and Laura welcomed twin daughters Jenna and Barbara into their home.<sup>55</sup> The family remained in this house until 1985, and then moved to their final Midland residence at 910 Harvard Avenue. George W. Bush continued investing time and money in Arbusto Energy and, by 1979, his investments were showing solid returns. Indeed, the next two years were marked by steady growth. By 1981, the company had raised and invested \$3 million. After taking the company public in 1982, Bush decided to sell his shares of stock and use the money to start a "full-blown operating company" called Bush Exploration. In 1984, Bush Exploration merged with another energy development company, Spectrum 7, with Bush serving as chief executive officer.

Two years later, Spectrum 7 was acquired by Harken Energy. George W. Bush would serve on the company's board of directors as a consultant to the company.<sup>56</sup> The acquisition by Harken Energy marked another turning point in the life of George W. Bush. "My days of day-to-day management in the energy business were behind me," he later recalled.<sup>57</sup> His focus now shifted to politics.

The Bush family moved to Washington, D.C., in 1988 so George W. Bush could assist in his father's successful Presidential campaign, but their stay was brief. George and Laura Bush and their two daughters returned to Texas in 1989 and moved into a roughly 4,000-square-foot home at 6029 Northwood Road in Dallas's Preston Hollow neighborhood.

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<sup>53</sup> Weisberg, *The Bush Tragedy*, 51; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 42-43.

<sup>54</sup> Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 95.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 126.

<sup>56</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 201.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

Daughters Jenna and Barbara attended public school for a short time before enrolling in Hockaday School, a private school in Dallas.<sup>58</sup>

That same year, George W. Bush pulled together a group of friends and investors to purchase the Texas Rangers baseball team for \$80 million. “Buying the baseball team was a financial risk for me,” he recalled. “I put \$600,000 – almost a third of my entire net worth – into a team that had a twenty five-year losing streak. . . .” On the other hand,” he continued, “owning a Major League Baseball team was a dream come true.”<sup>59</sup> Bush would serve as the general managing partner of the Texas Rangers for five years. With his partner Rusty Rose, Bush developed a new business plan for the struggling franchise, while leaving player personnel to “baseball people.” Bush quickly became the public face of the franchise while spearheading the financial campaign to construct a badly needed new stadium. “I signed thousands of autographs, brought guests to the ballpark, and sat in the seats with the fans every night,” he recalled.<sup>60</sup>

Partly at the insistence of his advisors, including Karl Rove, George W. Bush entered the political arena as a candidate again in 1994. He entered the Texas governor’s race against incumbent Democrat Ann Richards and was not expected to win. The campaign was difficult and divisive, but Bush won with 54 percent of the popular vote to Richards’s 45 percent. The election victory was a turning point in Bush’s life. He sold the family home in Dallas, moved to the Governor’s Mansion in Austin, and onto the national political stage. Bush was almost immediately courted as a potential Presidential candidate, speculation that only became stronger when he won re-election as Governor in 1998 by a huge margin, garnering 69 percent of the popular vote.<sup>61</sup>

George W. Bush entered the United States Presidential race in June 1999, less than a year after his re-election as Texas Governor. He campaigned as a centrist. He promised to bring integrity to the White House, security to America, and opportunity to all Americans. He won the 2000 election by a slim margin, prevailing in the Electoral College but losing the popular vote. Bush won re-election in 2004, including both the popular and Electoral College vote.

In 1998, shortly before entering the race for the Presidency, Bush purchased the 1,600-acre Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas. The Bushes had previously owned a vacation home and guest cottage at Rainbo Lake, a private fishing retreat near the town of Athens in East Texas, where they purchased a membership in 1991. They sold the Rainbo Lake house and guest cottage in 2000. The Prairie Chapel Ranch is about two hours from the state capital at Austin. Originally a farm and owned by the same family since the mid-1800s, the ranch was being used to run cattle when the Bushes purchased it. George W. Bush had no intention of ranching himself and allowed the former owners to raise cattle on his property. George W. Bush and Laura envisioned the ranch as a

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<sup>58</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 159.

<sup>59</sup> Bush, *A Charge to Keep*, 201.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 202-203.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 179; Kessler, *A Matter of Character*, 55.

refuge from the stress of political office and campaigning. It was also a place where the Bushes felt they could “grow old.”<sup>62</sup>

When George W. Bush and Laura decided to build a new house on the property, they hired architect David Heymann to design it. Heymann, an architecture professor at the University of Texas at Austin, specializes in designs that incorporate built and natural landscapes.<sup>63</sup> The three-bedroom, 4,000-square-foot house is constructed of native limestone and incorporates large windows so the Bushes could enjoy some of the most picturesque views at the ranch. The windows also allow ample natural light to filter into the home. An underground geothermal system provides heat and air conditioning, while rainwater and gray water are collected and diverted to the ranch’s irrigation system.<sup>64</sup> The ranch also features a swimming pool, garage, guest house, and ten-acre, manmade fishing pond.

The Crawford ranch became known as Bush’s “Western White House” while he was President. Often accompanied by members of his Cabinet, Bush spent about 70 weeks at the ranch between 2001 and 2008. The President also hosted several world leaders and dignitaries there, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Saudi King Abdullah, Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun’ichirō, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Mexican President Vicente Fox, Spanish King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

In 2008, George W. Bush and Laura Bush purchased another home at 10141 Daria Place in Dallas’s Preston Hollow neighborhood, not far from the home they owned from 1989 to 1994 on Northwood Road. They moved into the house at the conclusion of his Presidency and split their time between their Daria Place home in Dallas and the Prairie Chapel Ranch near Crawford, Texas.<sup>65</sup>

## STUDY AREA RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

### George W. Bush Childhood Home – 1412 West Ohio Avenue

The George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland, Texas, is a one-story wood frame Minimal Traditional house built around 1939 and occupied by the Bush family from November 1951 to November 1955.<sup>66</sup> The wood siding (painted a blue-gray hue), decorative brick chimney, and complex hipped roof are the character defining features of the home’s exterior. The red brick detailing on the top of the chimney matches the red asphalt shingle roof. The exterior retains its original wood siding, brick chimney, and wood windows. The doors are not from the period of significance. The interior has been restored to its original configuration, featuring original

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<sup>62</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 203, 205; Bush, *Spoken From the Heart*, 429-430.

<sup>63</sup> Mitchell Owens, “Laura and George W. Bush’s House in Texas,” *Architectural Digest*, December 16, 2016, <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/laura-and-george-w-bush-prairie-chapel-ranch-texas-article>.

<sup>64</sup> Anderson, *George and Laura*, 205.

<sup>65</sup> National Park Service, *George W. Bush Childhood Home Reconnaissance Survey*, 1-16.

<sup>66</sup> Section is primarily informed by Dealey Herson “George W. Bush Childhood Home,” National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form #19901001, listed July 28, 2004.

cabinets and hardware, knotty pine, period wallpaper, “tile-look” wallboard, a phone niche, an original light fixture, and period shag rugs where it has been determined historically appropriate.

The home is in a modest residential neighborhood that was developed during the same era and featured similar Minimal Traditional designs with simplified form loosely based on revival style architecture. Like 1412 West Ohio Avenue, many of the homes are single story, featuring front facade chimneys, low-pitch hipped roofs, and flush eaves clad with wood siding as well as occasional stone or brick veneers. The setting is largely as it had been with a key exception. The expansion of Trinity Episcopal Church to the south of 1412 West Ohio Avenue has resulted in the demolition of some of the neighborhood homes on the southside of Ohio Avenue and farther up the street to make space for parking lots.

The home was purchased by the nonprofit Permian Basin Board of Realtors in 2001 with the intent to open it to the public as a historic site commemorating George W. Bush’s childhood in Midland, Texas. Between 2001 and 2005, the group spearheaded restoration of the house. In accordance with Secretary of the Interior’s standards for the treatment of historic properties, post-1955 additions, aluminum siding, and nonhistoric floor and wall coverings were removed and replaced by period-specific flooring, wallpaper, and fixtures. Additionally, the post-1955 additions to the home were selectively demolished to restore the property to the configuration and size that it had during the years of the Bush family’s ownership. Lead paint, asbestos, and mold abatement and roof repairs were completed before the nonprofit George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc., opened the house to the public in 2006.

The home’s simple and functional interior floor plan contains three bedrooms and one bath. As one enters the home, the dining room is on the left and the living room to the right. A central hallway leads directly to the kitchen and three bedrooms. George W. Bush’s bedroom was the first bedroom on the right of the hallway. Significant interior features include knotty pine paneling, stone fireplace, original cabinets, phone niche, “tile look” wallboard, and wallpaper from the Bush occupancy. Knotty pine paneling is found in the living room, den, and George W. Bush’s room (Bedroom No. 1). The cabinets in the kitchen, hall bath, and closet of Bedroom No. 3 are original with hardware intact. Five rooms in the house are furnished with period pieces similar to what the Bush family owned during their time at the property (November 1951–November 1955). Most of these items were acquired through local donations. The only item directly connected to the extended Bush family is the turquoise General Electric refrigerator donated by Jenna Welch, Laura Welch Bush’s mother.



Figure 2. Aerial View of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas



Figure 3. 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Facade Facing Ohio Avenue



Figure 4. Living Room and Dining Room; Front Door that Leads to Ohio Avenue is at the Center of the Photo



Figure 5. Living Room; Hallway to the Bedrooms is on the Left, the Enclosed Sunroom is Through the Doorway at the Center of the Photo





Figure 6. Enclosed Sunroom



Figure 7. Bedroom 1, Furnished as George W. Bush's Childhood Bedroom



Figure 8. Bedroom 1, Furnished as George W. Bush's Childhood Bedroom



Figure 9. Bedroom 1 Interpretive Panel About Room's Restoration



Figure 10. Bedroom 2 with Baseball Exhibits



Figure 11. Bedroom 3 with General Exhibits About Midland and the Bush Family's Time at 1412 West Ohio Avenue



Figure 12. Bathroom



Figure 13. Dining Room Exhibits



**Figure 14. Kitchen**



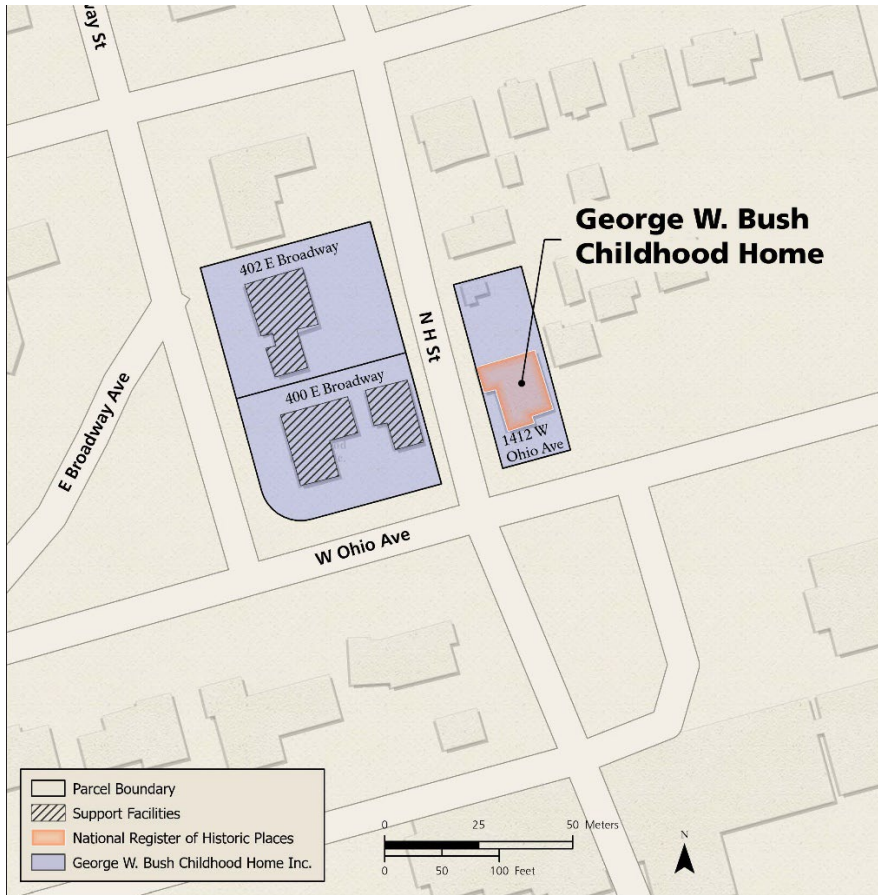
**Figure 15. Kitchen Featuring the General Electric Refrigerator Donated By George W. Bush's Mother-in-Law, Jenna Welch**



**Figure 16. View of 1412 Ohio Avenue, Looking from North H Street (Google Maps)**

### **Related Resources**

The nonprofit George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. (GWBCH, Inc.) owns two additional properties on the east side of North H Street: 400 East Broadway and 402 East Broadway. These properties were not owned by the Bush family and are not included in the legislated study area but are connected to the current management of the childhood home.



**Figure 17. Map of George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc. Properties**



**Figure 18. View of 1412 West Ohio Avenue and 400 East Broadway Looking North from Ohio Avenue**





**Figure 19. View of 1412 West Ohio Avenue and 400 East Broadway  
Looking West from Neighboring Property**

The GWBCH Visitor Center and Administrative Building – 400 East Broadway Street

The parcel at 400 East Broadway Street consists of a single-family residence and detached garage. Both support operations at the historic site.

The garage sits on the western edge of the parcel and has been repurposed as the GWBCH visitor center. The building is a single-story, slab-on-grade structure of approximately 1,000 square feet with painted CMU exterior walls, wood roof framing, and a hipped composition shingle roof. Wayfinding signage guides visitors from the sidewalk on North H Street through a gate and into the walled courtyard that sits between the residence and garage. A door on the west side of the garage provides entry into the visitor center, which consists of a reception area, gift shop, and visitor restroom. The northern portion of the building retains its overhead metal garage doors, concrete floor, and unfinished interior used for storage.



**Figure 20. View of 400 East Broadway Garage from 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Looking West Across North H Street. The Site Visitor Center is Housed in the Southern Portion of the Building (photo from THC Phase II Report, April 2022).**



**Figure 21. Entrance to GWBCH Visitor Center in Repurposed Detached Garage at 400 East Broadway Street, Looking East from Courtyard**



Figure 22. Welcome Desk in GWBCH Visitor Center



Figure 23. Bookshop in GWBCH Visitor Center

The three-bedroom, two-bathroom residence at 400 East Broadway Street houses administrative offices and additional support space. The building is a one-story, slab-on-grade house of approximately 1,700 square feet, with painted CMU exterior walls, wood roof framing, aluminum windows, and a hipped composition shingle roof with exposed rafter tails. A central fireplace is served by a brick chimney. Visitors enter this building via a pair of French doors facing the patio in the courtyard. The doors are served by a temporary ramp that provides an accessible route. Immediately inside the doors is Robin's Reading Room, where community reading programs are held. This room is contained in a former porch, clad in simulated board-and-batten siding. The original kitchen is intact and is used as such. The three bedrooms and one of the two bathrooms are used for offices and storage, with the remaining bathroom serving the staff and visitors.



**Figure 24. Walled Courtyard at 400 East Broadway Street; Photo Shows the Visitor Center/Garage in Relation to the GWBCH, Inc., Administration Building/Residence**



**Figure 25. Courtyard Entrance to Residence at 400 East Broadway Street that has Been Repurposed as Administration Space; Double Doors Lead into "Robin's Reading Room"**



Figure 26. Main Room at 400 East Broadway Street



Figure 27. "Robin's Reading Room" at 400 East Broadway Street



**Figure 28. Mural on Exterior Courtyard Wall Facing Ohio Avenue, 400 East Broadway Street**



**Figure 29. Staff Entrance to 400 East Broadway Street, Looking Southwest from Broadway Street (photo from THC Phase II Report, April 2022)**

**The GWBCH Residential Rental Property– 402 East Broadway Street.**

The residence located at 402 East Broadway Street is used by GWBCH, Inc., as an income-generating rental property. It is not open to the public.

The building is a one-story, pier-and-beam house of approximately 1,675 square feet with an adjacent 275 square foot slab-on-grade garage. The two structures were connected at some point by a fully enclosed and conditioned addition. The house is clad in painted, wire-cut brick with double-hung, divided-lite wood windows and a combination hipped and gabled composition shingle roof. Fascia and rake trim are wood. Gable cladding is composite lapped siding. The front facade features two large plate glass windows. One side of the garage retains an operable overhead door, while the other garage door has been infilled with framing and wood siding to allow that bay to be used as storage.



**Figure 30. 402 East Broadway Street Looking East (photo from THC Phase II Report, April 2022)**



**Figure 31. Courtyard Entrance to Residence at 400 East Broadway Street, Which Has Been Repurposed as Administrative Space; Double Doors Open Into "Robin's Reading Room"**



**Figure 32. View of 402 East Broadway Street and Residence at 400 East Broadway Street, Looking Southeast Down Broadway Toward Ohio Avenue (Google Maps)**



## CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE FOUR CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

This chapter presents the evaluation of the four criteria that must be met for a study area to be considered for designation as a national park system unit. The application of these criteria follows agency and legislated guidance outlined in section 1.3 (Criteria for Inclusion) of *NPS Management Policies 2006*, as well as the National Park System New Areas Studies Act (Title III of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998, PL 105-391; 54 USC 100507). For a study area to be considered for designation as a potential new unit of the national park system, it must fully meet the following four criteria for evaluation:

1. possess nationally significant resources
2. be a suitable addition to the system
3. be a feasible addition to the system
4. require direct NPS management or administration instead of alternative protection by other agencies or the private sector

These four criteria are analyzed sequentially, and several pathways exist for concluding the study process based on individual criteria findings. The study process may be truncated if a negative finding is made for any one of these criteria. The findings presented in this chapter will serve as the basis for a formal recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior to Congress as to whether the study area should be designated as a new national park system unit of the National Park Service. A summary of these findings can be found at the end of this chapter.

### EVALUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of national significance for a study area is the first step in the special resource study evaluation process. To determine their national significance, historic places or sites being studied for their outstanding cultural resources are evaluated using established NHL criteria. More rigorous than the National Register of Historic Places nomination process, NHL designation serves as official recognition by the federal government of the national significance of a historic property or site. Outlined in 36 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) Part 65, the NHL designation process for determining national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess

- exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture; and
- a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

In addition, to be eligible for designation, an area must meet at least one of six “Specific Criteria of National Significance” contained in 36 CFR Part 65:

- **Criterion 1:** be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or

- **Criterion 2:** be associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or
- **Criterion 3:** represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or
- **Criterion 4:** embody the distinguishing characteristics or an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for the study of a period, style, or method of construction, or represent a significant, distinct, and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- **Criterion 5:** be composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historic or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or
- **Criterion 6:** have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation of large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts, and ideas to a major degree.

The use of the NHL criteria to determine national significance is the only link between the special resource study process and the NHL program regulations. Usage of these criteria does not confer landmark designation; separate designation processes, governed by other regulations, exist for the NHL program.

## National Significance Evaluation

**Criterion 2:** *(Properties) that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.*

NHL program guidance explicitly addresses childhood homes. This type of resource is usually not considered eligible under Criterion 2 because properties associated with the childhoods of national significant historic figures are typically not associated with the accomplishments and contributions for which they are significant. However, there are examples of presidential childhood homes that are designated national historic landmarks.<sup>67</sup>

The 2015 reconnaissance survey of the childhood home acknowledges this guidance and provides support for considering 1412 West Ohio Avenue as an important property:

“The President’s own memories of childhood are also considered in varying degrees, especially in the Presidents Clinton, Nixon, and Johnson documentation. Presidents Nixon, Clinton, and Johnson all clearly stated that the time spent in the homes were formative to their future political careers.” (x)

National Historic Landmark evaluations and National Historic Site designations focusing on the childhood homes of Presidents address the individual’s history prior to that person achieving national significance. Specifically, the evaluations address the ways in which time in the childhood homes formed the character of future Presidents.” (ix)

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<sup>67</sup> A recent example is the Woodrow Wilson Boyhood Home in Augusta, Georgia, which was designated a NHL in 2008.

“During the childhood of George W. Bush, the Bush family moved a remarkable number of times. During his first 18 years, George W. Bush lived in at least 14 different homes, three different states, and eight different cities. The home on West Ohio Avenue in Midland is the one where George W. Bush lived the longest (four years) during his childhood, and is the home most frequently mentioned in family memoirs.”<sup>70</sup> (iii)

Aside from analysis of NHL criterion 2’s applicability to presidential childhood homes above 1412 West Ohio Avenue is further unique because it was the home of two future presidents. Reflective of myriad familial dynamics, the home is representative of George H. W. Bush’s early career in the oil industry and his family life with his wife Barbara and their children. As a part of that dynamic, it was also the childhood home of George W. Bush and tied to his upbringing in Texas, which he touted on political campaign trails as the foundation of his “compassionate conservative” identity. It is difficult to overstate the formative influence of one future president raising another future president in the same household, or the impact of their mutual family members such as Barbara Bush or Robin Bush, or both.

In light of the Bush family’s 14 residencies during George W.’s 18-year childhood, 1412 West Ohio Avenue is the property most strongly associated with the family of George H. W. and George W. Bush. Additionally, it is most representative of President George W. Bush’s personal and ideological development as a child. As the reconnaissance survey notes, in many instances Midland, Texas, was important to George W. Bush’s development. In Midland, “George W. developed his personal identity as a Texan” as well as “a set of fundamental principles that shaped his adult life and his path to the presidency.”<sup>71</sup> Additionally, despite living at 1412 West Ohio Avenue for less than five years, his time there “was exceptionally influential in the development of his character and political philosophy, and it is here where the ideological foundations of his Presidency took root.”<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps as important as the formative impact of his experiences at the West Ohio Avenue home on George W. Bush as a child, Midland is also the place that the former president publicly recognizes as the roots of his Texan identity. In his memoir, *Decision Points*, Bush stresses that the “seeds” of his decision to run for President were “planted in the dusty ground beneath the boundless sky of Midland, Texas.”<sup>73</sup> The reconnaissance survey similarly emphasizes that George W. Bush has “always stressed the importance of his identity as a Texan.”<sup>74</sup>

A July 2021 Scholar’s Roundtable hosted by the NPS study team focused on the 1412 West Ohio Avenue house echoed the reconnaissance survey’s sentiments with a bit more nuance. The panel of experts agreed that the Bush home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue was historically significant and closely associated with the Bushes’ significance for several reasons. The scholars pointed out that the Bush family has repeatedly indicated the importance of their time in Midland, and that George W. centered his political identity as a Washington outsider with traditional family values on his upbringing in Midland. Additionally, 1412 West Ohio Avenue was the Bush home at the time that Robin tragically died of leukemia at the age of three, which was an influential and formative experience for the entire family and George W. in particular. Finally, given the Bush family’s emphasis on Midland, the scholars agreed that 1412 West Ohio Avenue had the strongest historic association with the family’s lives (and George W.’s childhood) in that broader place and time.

Given the home’s restoration to the period of significance and retention of many original materials, 1412 West Ohio Ave retains its integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and association. Additionally, located in its original Midland neighborhood that largely remains as it was in the 1950s, the property retains its integrity of location, setting, and feeling. The property retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance as George W. Bush’s childhood home from November 1951 to November 1955.

## **National Significance Finding**

The study team finds that the George W. Bush Childhood Home—1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas—meets NHL Criterion 2 for its association with two former presidents of the United States, George H. W. and George W. Bush. While childhood homes are usually not associated with the national significance or contribution of an individual, 1412 West Ohio Avenue meets the exception because it was the home of two future presidents, and is representative of the Bush family’s home life, as well as George W. Bush’s upbringing, which he later touted as the cornerstone of his political identity on the presidential campaign trail.

## **EVALUATION OF SUITABILITY**

As stated in NPS *Management Policies 2006*:

“A study area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies, tribal, state, or local governments, or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined by comparing the study area to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. This comparative analysis should also address the rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the study area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.” (Section 1.3.2)

Based on this determination, a finding on suitability is made. The following methodology was used by the study team to evaluate the suitability of the George W. Bush Childhood Home and adjacent property study area:

1. Define the type of resource represented by the study area.
2. Identify the theme or context in which the study area fits.
3. Identify sites that represent the resource type within the national park system and similar sites protected by other agencies, state, local or tribal governments, and the private sector.
4. Through a comparative analysis, describe how the resource type is represented.
5. Consider the adequacy of representation and determine whether the resource will duplicate, enhance, or expand opportunities for visitor use or resource protection.
6. Prepare a concluding finding on suitability.

## **Type of Resource Represented by the Study Area**

The resource under consideration is the Midland, Texas, home where future US Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush, and future first lady Barbara Bush lived from November

1951 through November 1955.<sup>68</sup> This resource is nationally significant due to its association with the Bush family and Midland's close association with George W. Bush's political image. Though the Bush family owned 1412 West Ohio Avenue for a relatively short period, the three years spent at the house shaped the personalities of George H. W., Barbara, and George W. Bush and the values and experiences George W. Bush associated with his childhood in Texas became the basis of his public persona and political platform. The house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is the best physical representation of the family's years in Midland.

### **Theme or Context in Which the Study Area Fits**

In evaluating the suitability of cultural resources within or outside the national park system, the National Park Service references the 2017 NPS System Plan, as well as its 1994 thematic framework, "History in the National Park Service: Themes and Concepts" for history and prehistory. The NPS System Plan built on the 1994 framework and examines the special places, stories, ecosystems, and recreational opportunities that the National Park Service currently protects, while identifying gaps and opportunities to seek new ways to protect important natural areas and cultural heritage in the national park system and beyond. The 1994 framework provides additional guidance for the National Park Service related to historic resources and serves as an outline of major themes and concepts that help to conceptualize American history. The framework is used to assist in the identification of cultural resources that embody America's past and to describe and analyze the multiple layers of history encapsulated in each resource.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue contributes to the understanding of the following themes:

III. Expressing Cultural Values

IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

V. Developing the American Economy

The most apparent theme, "Shaping the Political Landscape," is connected to the house because, from late 1951 to 1955 it was the home to two future United States presidents from the same family—George H. W. and George W. Bush. Reflective of myriad familial dynamics, the home is representative of George H. W. Bush's early career in the oil industry and his family life with his wife Barbara and their children. As a part of that dynamic, it was also the childhood home of George W. Bush and tied to his upbringing in Texas, which he touted on political campaign trails as the foundation of his "compassionate conservative" identity. Uniquely, it is difficult to overstate the formative influence of one future president raising another future president in the same household, or the impact of their mutual family members, like Barbara Bush, on both. After living at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, both Bushes would go on to have significant impacts on the political landscape and country as presidents of the United States.

The modest house at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is not only a representation of the Bush family's time in Midland, but a representation of America during the post-World War II years and the nostalgia associated with the 1950s that supports the historic theme of "Expressing Cultural Values." The home is the embodiment of the mid-20th century "American Dream," considering its suburban setting, garage, and private yard. The family's move from blue-collar Odessa to the middle-class community of Midland showcased George H. W.'s growing success in the oil business. The Bush home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue also represents the traditional values associated with the

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<sup>68</sup> John Ellis "Jeb" Bush, George H. W. and Barbara's second son, was born in Midland on February 11, 1953, and lived at 1412 West Ohio Avenue until the family's move in November 1955.

Eisenhower years. The home is the embodiment of the material success that young, educated white Americans hoped to achieve after returning home from World War II. Furnishing and knickknacks in the younger Bush's recreated childhood room capture the pop culture and trends of the time and are easily recognizable to members of the Baby Boom generation.

Finally, the suburban Midland house and neighborhood also illustrate the theme, "Developing the American Economy." The house and the Bushes' habitation of it, were both connected to the oil boom in west Texas. Midlands sits atop the Permian Basin, a geological stratum formed more than 250 million years ago and containing an incredibly rich reservoir of oil and natural gas. The Basin's oil reserves were first commercially developed in the 1920s, then revitalized during World War II. During the 1950s, in a booming post-war America, the Permian Basin accounted for about 20% of America's oil production. The local oil industry fueled the area's demographic and economic growth, creating the context for the home's initial construction in 1939, as well as George H. W. Bush moving his family to the area to successfully pursue a career in the industry in 1948. This context informed George W. Bush's later career in the fossil fuels business, as well as both presidents' domestic and international oil policies while in the White House.

When considering the ways in which this home represents the increasing wealth and abundance of middle-class America in the 1950s, it is important to consider other stories and themes that are not being told at the house, and how the Bush home only tells one aspect of 1950s America. One can also reflect that George H. W. Bush's financial achievements were enabled by his privileged background and family connections, which secured financial backing from family friends who enabled George H. W. to start the successful oil business that launched his career in the oil industry.

## **Comparable Sites**

To determine if similar resource protection and visitor opportunities are already offered by other NPS sites or other land management entities, comparable sites are examined. The following are some of the more representative examples of presidential homes and sites managed by the National Park Service and sites protected by other agencies, state, local or tribal governments, and the private sector.

The careers and lives of US presidents are commemorated by scores of sites, ranging from the humble to the palatial: birthplaces, residences, other buildings, inaugural sites, monuments, and tombs. Visits to these sites enhance understanding of the distinguished group of individuals who have led the nation; their ways of life; family backgrounds; locales and regions in which they were born or resided; eras in which they lived; and the social, economic, and intellectual influences that molded them.

NPS sites that broadly compare to the George W. Bush Childhood Home and represent themes described above ("Expressing Cultural Values," "Shaping the Political Landscape," and "Developing the American Economy") are:

- Adams National Historical Park
- President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site
- Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park
- the White House and President's Park

There are no current national park system units or national historic landmarks that focus on George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, or the Bush family as a political dynasty. The following comparison

focuses on various historic presidential sites within the national park system, as well as public sites associated with George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush:

- the Bush Home at University of Texas Permian Basin (Odessa, Texas)
- George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum at Texas A&M University (College Station, Texas)
- George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum at Southern Methodist University (College Park, Texas)

### **National Park Service Sites**

**Adams National Historical Park, Quincy, Massachusetts.** The only NPS site focusing on the shared family home of two presidents, Adams National Historical Park preserves, protects, maintains, and interprets the homes of the second US President John Adams (1735–1826) and his wife Abigail Adams (1744–1818); sixth US President John Quincy Adams (1767–1848) and his wife Louisa Catherine Adams (1775–1852); and subsequent generations of the family that included ambassadors, historians, and public servants.<sup>69</sup> The historical park includes the John Adams Birthplace and the John Quincy Adams Birthplace—two 18th-century structures approximately 75 feet from one another; the Old House at Peace field—the home purchased by John Adams in 1787; and the stone library built in 1870 to house the family’s book collection. Even though the birthplace homes were opened to the public as house museums as early as 1893, the homes continued to be owned by Adams’s descendants until the family donated the properties to the City of Quincy in 1940. Congress designated the site as a unit of the national park system in 1978; the site continues to preserve and interpret the homes as representations of the family’s contributions to the early republic and their lasting legacy of patriotism.

The historic properties at Adams National Historical Park were owned and occupied by four generations of the Adams family, including the presidential father and son, John and John Quincy Adams. As an intergenerational estate, the property was lived in by both Presidents Adams throughout their lives, including the colonial era, the period of the Revolutionary War, and subsequently formative years of the early Republic. The site is the only example of a national park system unit that preserves the home of two presidents from the same family.

**President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site, Hope, Arkansas.** President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site (WICL) preserves the place most directly associated with the former president’s youth and early development; interprets his family’s and community’s influences on Clinton’s education and the growth of his ambitions, as well as his sense of inner strength and dedication to purpose; all for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of the public in this and future generations. President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site was designated in 2010 and the National Park Service assumed operation of the site in January 2011. The site includes the Birthplace Home (at 117 Hervey Street), a visitor center in an adjacent historic home, and the Virginia Clinton Kelley Memorial Garden. The guided tours of the birthplace home provide self-guided interpretive materials in the visitor center and affords a place for reflection at the memorial garden.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> National Park Service, Adams National Historical Park Foundation Document, April 2019.

<sup>70</sup> National Park Service, “Summary of General Management Planning Requirements – President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site,” September 2018.

Future president Bill Clinton lived at the home with his widowed mother and her parents for four years after his birth in 1946. President Clinton identified the home for inclusion in the National Park Service as a property associated with his significance. The site is an example of a national park system unit that preserves and interprets a relatively briefly inhabited childhood home of a late 20th century president.

**Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, Johnson City, Texas.** The Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park preserves the birthplace, boyhood home, ranch, and other historic sites associated with the life of Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th president of the United States. Established in 1969 as a national historic site that protected Johnson's birthplace and childhood home in Johnson City, the national park system unit was designated a national historical park in 1980 and has since grown to include LBJ Ranch and additional parcels donated by the Johnson Family. The historical park offers the unique experience of seeing sites associated with the entire lifespan of a historical figure. Visitors can see the site where Johnson's grandparents first settled in the 1860s, the reconstructed LBJ birthplace cabin, the boyhood home the family moved to when Lyndon was five years old, and LBJ Ranch where Johnson spent a quarter of his presidency and retired.

Johnson's Texas roots were center to his identity as an individual and as a politician. As summarized in the park's foundation document:

“The purpose of Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is to protect the historic structures and Texas Hill Country landscapes linked to the ancestry, life, and legacy of President Johnson and provide opportunities for visitors to compellingly experience this places that shaped the personality, character, and political philosophy of Lyndon Johnson throughout his life and that served as the setting for a remote White House during his presidency.”<sup>71</sup>

Johnson lived at the boyhood home in Johnson City from the age of five through his high school graduation in 1924. President Johnson identified the boyhood home for inclusion in the National Park Service as a property associated with his significance. This Texas site is an example of a park unit that preserves and interprets the childhood home and retirement residency of a mid-20th century president.

**White House and President's Park, Washington, D.C.** President's Park, which includes the White House and the surrounding grounds, is in the heart of the nation's capital. George Washington selected the site for an executive mansion in 1791 and construction began the following year. The White House is a representation of democracy and the home of the executive branch of government and the first family. Starting with James Madison in 1800, all presidents and first families have lived at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House has become a national symbol. The 82-acre park is managed by the National Park Service. Members of the public may submit tour requests through their members of Congress.

George H. W. Bush started as Ronald Reagan's vice president in 1981, ultimately serving eight years in that role before becoming the first sitting vice president elected to the presidency since 1837. He and Barbara moved into the White House following George H. W. Bush's January 1989 inauguration as the 41st president of the United States. George W. Bush was sworn in as the 43rd president of the United States on January 20, 2001, becoming the second son of a former president to also hold the office. President George W. Bush oversaw renovations to the north lawn media press area and the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room in the West Wing terrace and started tee ball on the south lawn

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<sup>71</sup> National Park Service, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park Foundation Document, Feb. 2014.



to encourage child fitness and bring his love of baseball to the White House.<sup>72</sup> While members of the Bush family lived in the White House for over a decade and each president and first family puts their own personal touches on the residence, President's Park focuses on the office of the president than the individuals who have held that office over the years.

### **Sites Protected by Other Entities**

**The Bush Home – 916 East 17th Street, Odessa, Texas.** In 2002, the Presidential Museum acquired the Bush Home at 916 East 17th Street and relocated the home nearby. Odessa's Presidential Museum was created by prominent local residents in 1963 following John F. Kennedy's assassination and features memorial displays dedicated to the office of the president of the United States and the electoral process. The museum moved to the University of Texas Permian Basin campus in east Odessa in 2002, the same year it purchased and relocated the Odessa Bush Home. In 2010, the museum was officially folded into UT Permian Basin as the Presidential Archives and Leadership Library and became the home of the John Ben Shepperd Public Leadership Institute in 2011.

Open to the public, the museum features the Hall of Presidents, the Bush Odessa Home, and additional exhibits of presidential folk-Americana curated by Institute staff. Included among these exhibits are: the Dishong Collection of antique dolls in miniature replicas of first ladies' gowns; James B. Mason Collection of wooden mosaics capturing the likenesses of former presidents; Rainbo Collection of presidential portraits used to create 1970s promotional trading cards distributed by the Rainbo Bread Company; and the Chandler Collection of presidential and first lady portraits commissioned by sixth-grade history teacher Billie Trimble Chandler in the 1970s while she was teaching in Japan.<sup>73</sup>

**George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum – Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.** Opened in 1997, the mission of the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum at Texas A&M University is to preserve and make available the records and artifacts of George H. W. Bush, 41st president of the United States. The library promotes civic literacy and increased historical understanding of our national experience, and endeavors to foster a community of public service and volunteerism. Operated by the National Archives and Records Administration as one of 13 presidential libraries, the library includes the archival papers and noteworthy artifacts of George H. W. Bush while he was president of the United States. Additionally, the site includes a robust series of exhibits about his presidency, life, family, and career, as well as Barbara Bush. The library is also situated on expansive landscaped grounds that include a monument to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Barbara Bush Rose Garden and Presidential Pond, and the gravesites of George H. W., Barbara, and Robin Bush. Open to the public, the library and museum offers a wide variety of opportunities to study, learn about, and appreciate George H. W. Bush's presidency.<sup>74</sup>

**George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum – Southern Methodist University, College Park, Texas.** Opened in 2013, the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum serves as a resource for the study of the life and career of George W. Bush, while also promoting a better understanding of the presidency, American history, and important issues of public policy. Operated by the National Archives and Records Administration as one of 13 presidential libraries, it features the papers, electronic files, and artifacts associated with George W. Bush's presidency. Additionally, it includes exhibits associated with his presidency, life, family, and career. including a feature exhibit

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<sup>72</sup> "The White House," National Archives-George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed April 2022, <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/bush-family/presidential-places/white-house>.

<sup>73</sup> "Presidential Archives and Leadership Library," JBS Public Leadership Institute, <https://shepperdinstitute.com/presidential-archives/>.

<sup>74</sup> George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.bush41.org/>.

on the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The library and museum are situated in a 15-acre “Native Texas Park,” including Blackland Prairie, Post Oak Savannah, and Cross Timbers Forest. The site will also eventually include the final resting places of George W and Laura Bush. Open to the public, the library and museum offers a wide variety of opportunities to study, learn about, and appreciate George W. Bush’s presidency.<sup>75</sup>

## **Comparative Analysis and Adequacy of Representation**

This section compares the historic sites described above to the George W. Bush Childhood Home study area. In setting the stage for comparative analysis, it should be particularly noted that since the mid-1960s, the National Park Service has solicited and invited former living presidents (and in some instances their surviving families) to recommend which of their previous homes should be considered for both national historic landmark designation as well as inclusion as a unit of the national park system.

The property at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is a representative property of the Bush family’s Odessa–Midland years, when both future presidents—George H. W. and George W. Bush—lived there together. The home is also a strong example of mid-century architecture and material culture as a historically restored property and museum. The home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue has become the primary place to learn about the Bush family’s early years. Because of its connection with the family, the Bushes selected it as the place to house the George W. Bush Childhood Home Museum and tell the story of the family’s time in West Texas. Furthermore, the Bush family has indicated support for the NPS study of the home as a potential national park system unit.

Commemorative presidential sites managed by the National Park Service include residences associated with past presidents and/or their pre-presidential lives, but not the presidents for whom this resource study is focused: George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. The Johnson and Clinton sites are two of several examples of the precedent of inviting former presidents to select properties that are associated with their national significance for inclusion in the National Park Service, regardless of the longevity of their habitation. As the only example of a national park system unit associated with a father-son presidential duo, Adams National Historical Park illustrates the precedent of preserving and interpreting a family home shared by two future presidents.

The White House and the surrounding President’s Park is the only existing NPS site that protects one of the Bushes’ residences. However, since all presidents reside in the White House, this existing park unit more broadly interprets the history and significance of the presidency, the White House, and the presidents’ relationship to the American public and the republican form of government associated with the United States.

The two presidential libraries and the former family home at 916 17th Street in Odessa are directly associated with the Bush family, offering public opportunities to learn about the nationally significant themes associated with their presidencies and lives. While both presidential libraries offer high quality, rare, and robust opportunities for the public to learn about the Bush presidencies, the libraries commemorate their time in office, not the Bush family’s private lives. The libraries’ locations were selected by the former presidents. George H. W. Bush selected the campus of Texas A&M University after it was suggested by a long-time friend, while George W. Bush’s library is at Southern Methodist University, Laura Welch Bush’s alma mater, but neither is directly associated with their private lives, political campaigns, and personal ascendance to the White House. While the 916 17th Street Bush family home is a historic residence of the family and a rare resource that offers some

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<sup>75</sup> The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, <https://www.georgewbushlibrary.gov/>.

educational opportunities for the public, its historic integrity has been significantly diminished because the home was relocated in 2002 from its original location and neighborhood setting where the Bush family had resided.

Though the NPS System Plan identifies “US Presidents” as one of the most heavily represented themes in the existing system, there is not currently a site in the national park system or a comparably managed area dedicated to George H. W. Bush or George W. Bush. Further, the Bush home contributes to our understanding of the important themes “Shaping the Political Landscape,” “Developing the American Economy,” and “Expressing Cultural Values.”

The combined legacy of George H. W. and George W. Bush as two presidents from the same family is not yet represented and protected as a single entity in the national park system, or by any other federal agency. Several existing federal and privately owned sites interpret the Bushes presidencies, but none preserve historic properties associated with their lives for public enjoyment. Additionally, the site has been identified by the Bush family as an appropriate location to honor their family’s historical significance. Therefore, the resources in the study area are not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment and would enhance and expand existing resources in the national park system.

### **Potential Interpretive Value Associated with 1412 West Ohio Avenue**

The current use of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, including tours, education programs, exhibits, and recreation of the Bush family interior, has demonstrated that there are abundant opportunities for interpretation, education, and public use. The site is currently open to the public and a variety of interpretive programs have been designed for a range of age groups and interests. Beyond its current appeal, the site has many potential opportunities to tell more complex stories about American culture and the Bush family. These stories can connect multiple generations of visitors to the site and educate the public on topics that extend far beyond the five years the Bush family called the modest suburban house their home. Themes that may expand the interpretive scope of the home include:

- **The essential American myth of presidents rising from humble beginnings** – Although the Bush family came from a well-established and wealthy East Coast family, they determined that a more palatable site to locate their roots was in a modest home in West Texas. This decision and George W.’s emphasis on his Texas upbringing as the core of his political identity suggest the malleability of the personal past to match American cultural values and emphasis on self-made independence and bootstrapping social mobility.
- **Class and privilege** – As a family with wealthy East Coast ties, the Bush family enjoyed privilege and access that exceeded their neighbors, allowing George H. W. to locate investment capital for his oil ventures, the family to seek emergency medical treatment for Robin’s leukemia in East Coast hospitals, and George W. to attend elite boarding schools and universities in his late adolescence and early adult life.
- **The origins of a political dynasty** – As one of two presidential father-son duos, the Bush family is an example of a 20th-century American political dynasty. The Midland site offers opportunities for discussing the web of social, economic, and political connections that facilitate the rise of a family that includes both Presidents Bush, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush (1999–2007), and George H. W.’s father Prescott Bush who served as a US Senator from 1951 to 1963.

- **Gender roles in post-World War II America** – As a traditional post-war American family, George H. W. Bush was the family bread winner and Barbara Bush was a full-time homemaker and primary caretaker of five children. The home provides ample opportunities for analyzing and interpreting changing gender ideals, which have dramatically evolved in the more than half-century since the Bushes lived in the home.
- **Race and segregation in Midland, Texas** – Notwithstanding George W. Bush’s praise for his traditional upbringing in Midland, Texas, and his personal pursuit of the “American Dream,” Midland, Texas, was a segregated community in the 1950s. The site offers opportunities to interpret that reality and touch on the broader historical context of racial discrimination in America, which limited access to that “Dream.”

These themes suggest the potential to dynamically expand the educational possibilities at the site and the further potential value in preserving the property for public enjoyment and enrichment.<sup>76</sup>

### **Suitability Finding**

The addition of the study area to the national park system would substantially add to the NPS ability to tell the Bush story. There currently is no direct representation of Bush’s story or legacy in the system or that of his father George H. W. Bush. The study area is associated with a period of Bush’s life that influenced his path to the presidency. The childhood home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland, Texas, is suitable as an addition to the national park system because it represents a cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the park system (association with past presidents George W. Bush) and for its educational and interpretive potential for the 43rd president of the United States.

### **EVALUATION OF FEASIBILITY**

An area that is nationally significant and meets suitability criteria must also meet feasibility criteria to qualify as a potential addition to the national park system. To be feasible as a new unit or as an addition to an existing unit of the national park system, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the National Park Service considers a variety of factors, including

- size and boundary configuration;
- access; planning, and zoning;
- public enjoyment potential;
- costs associated with acquisition, development, and operation;
- current and potential threats to resources;
- existing degradation of resources;
- level of local and general support (including landowners); and
- economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as part of a unit of the national park system.

Although these factors are considered individually below, the evaluation of the feasibility of establishing a new national park system unit at the George W. Bush Childhood Home considers all of

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<sup>76</sup> Themes were identified during the July 2021 Scholar’s Roundtable hosted by the NPS study team.

the above factors in the context of current NPS management. Evaluation of these factors under criterion 3 must consider if the National Park Service can feasibly manage the proposed new park unit given current agencywide limitation and constraints.

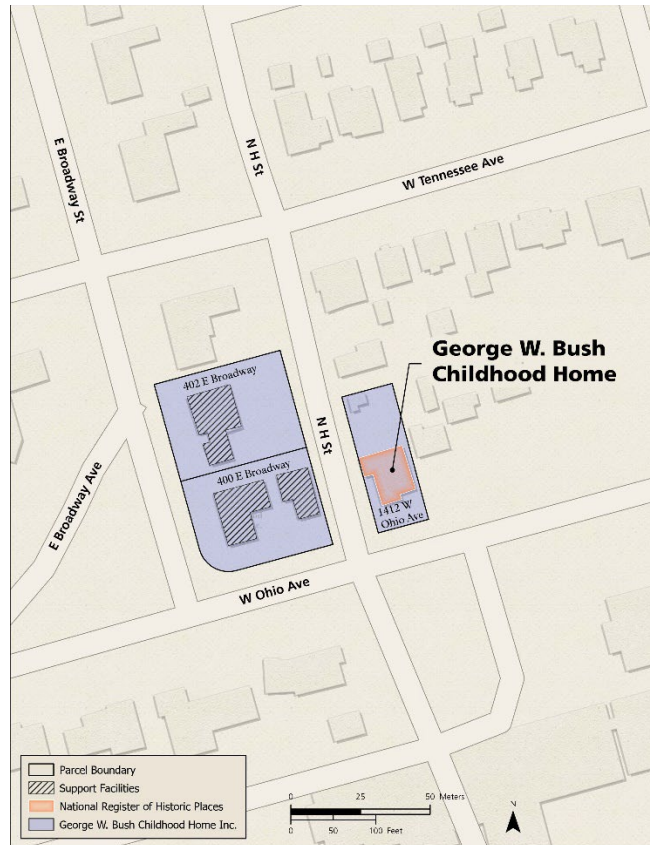
### **Size and Boundary Configuration**

Historic resources associated with the Bush family are contained in the approximately 6,500-square-foot lot at 1412 West Ohio Avenue. However, the home's complete 1950s restoration and the modest size of the home and lot does not allow space for historic site administrative or operational needs. GWBCH, Inc., the current owner of the site, converted 400 East Broadway Street into support space, with the site visitor center and bookstore housed in the detached garage and offices and special events space / reading room in the circa-1940 residence. The nonprofit also owns 402 East Broadway Street, which is to the north of the administration building and visitor center. Both of these adjacent parcels would be feasible additions to a potential NPS boundary. While the buildings at 400 and 402 East Broadway Street are not associated with the Bush family, they would provide much needed room considering the limited space for administrative and visitor services in the home and its surrounding residential setting.

The structures at the 400 and 402 East Broadway Street are of a similar age, style, and construction as the historic structure but function as support facilities. The former Bush family home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is across North H Street from the other two parcels. Only the property at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is considered nationally significant and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (#19901001). The home and garage at 400 East Broadway Street are the historic site's administrative building and visitor center, respectively.

Within the proposed boundary, the residential parcels are all currently owned by GWBCH, Inc., North H Street, which runs through the complex boundary, is owned by the City of Midland, Texas. Faced with funding difficulties, GWBCH, Inc., has indicated a desire to donate the property and furnishings to the federal government or the Texas Historical Commission so that the study area can continue to be maintained as a historic site and be operated by a larger, enduring organization.

Overall, the size and boundary configuration of the George W. Bush Childhood Home and adjacent properties is found to be feasible to be managed as a potential new national park system unit.



**Figure 33. Parcel Map of GWBCH, Inc. Properties: 1412 West Ohio Avenue, 400 East Broadway Street, 402 East Broadway Street**

### **Ownership and Land Use**

The GWBCH Inc., campus occupies three residential parcels covering approximately 0.75 acre of land and includes the former Bush family home and its detached garage at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, as well as the home and detached garage at 400 East Broadway Street, which has been repurposed as a visitor center and administrative offices. The single-family dwelling at 402 East Broadway Street is currently being used as an income-generating, single-family rental. The home at 402 East Broadway Street is a rental property providing funds to support the operation of the museum complex. The complex has been operated as a public museum and historic site since 2006 by GWBCH, Inc. The complex was first acquired to be operated as a presidential site by the Permian Basin Board of Realtors in 2001.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home is situated in a neighborhood that is mostly composed of privately owned, single-family dwellings. The two city blocks that include the GWBCH complex are largely single-family homes with the exception of two lots at 1400 and 1404 West Ohio Avenue, which have been converted to parking lots owned by Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Across Ohio Avenue to the south is the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church campus. Most of the area beyond the church campus is low-density residential housing.

The 2016 Zoning Ordinance for the City of Midland, Texas, designates zoning districts to restrict and regulate the location, construction, reconstruction, alteration, and use of buildings, structures, and land for residence, business, commercial, manufacturing, and other specified uses. The GWBCH complex and the surrounding neighborhood is zoned for single-family residences. The historic

home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue and the administrative facility at 400 Broadway Street have been issued variances to operate as a public museum. Additionally, West Ohio Avenue, North H Street, and West Broadway Street are all determined to be “local streets” under Midland’s 2016 Comprehensive Plan. Ohio Avenue, however, is frequently used by cars and pedestrians going to and from the hospital and the high school. Given that the George W. Bush Childhood Home has operated as a historic site since 2006, designation as a unit of the national park system would be consistent with zoning and planning, and the site should be considered safe for the predicted volume of pedestrian and automobile traffic.

GWBC, Inc., owns the oil and gas rights for the three parcels that comprise the complex. The mineral rights associated with the parcels are currently leased by a local energy exploration and production company and provide between \$600 and \$3,700 each month in royalties. GWBC, Inc., intends to use future lease fees and royalties to support the site’s preservation and formation of an official friends organization.

**Conclusion:** After analyzing the size, boundary configuration, land ownership, and land use of the proposed area, the National Park Service concludes the proposed boundary area is of adequate size to ensure the protection and visitor enjoyment of the resources associated with the George W. Bush Childhood Home. There is a clearly defined boundary for the site as it currently exists, which is delineated by three parcels that comprise the site.

## **Access**

The study area is in a residential area of the Midland-Odessa metropolitan area and only 23 miles from Odessa, Texas. The Midland-Odessa area has an approximate population of 300,000 people. Located on I-20, approximately halfway between Dallas and El Paso, Midland is 330 miles west of Dallas, Texas, and 305 miles east of El Paso, Texas. Midland is in proximity to the Midland International Air and Space Port, which is located between Midland and Odessa, with service from several major airlines. The home is about 1.1 miles west of the Downtown Midland Management District, which includes hotels, shops, and restaurants. Additionally, Midland has a variety of attractions including the Permian Basin Petroleum Museum, the Museum of the Southwest, the American Airpower Heritage Museum, the Blakemore Planetarium, and the Sibley Nature Center, among others.

Public transportation is available in Midland. The historic site is also just two blocks from access to the Midland EZrider public transportation bus system to the south on Illinois Avenue (line 3) or to the north on Michigan Avenue (line 2). These buses run every hour during the day throughout the week.

Visitors typically access the site using a personal vehicle. GWBCH, Inc., has a lease agreement with Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for use of the parking lot at 1400-1404 West Ohio Avenue to accommodate visitors to the historic site. This lot is not directly adjacent to the GWBCH complex, but includes 35 auto spaces, 4 pull-through spaces for RVs or buses, and 2 accessible designated spaces. The lot is paved and bordered with concrete curbs. There are accessible sidewalks and curb cuts on the street sides of the parking lot. The accessible parking spaces are on the south and face West Ohio Avenue. There are two residences between the parking lot and the historic home requiring 430 linear feet (lf) of travel from the accessible spaces and the front entrance to the visitor center. A little less travel to the bookstore (390 lf) and accessible entrance to the childhood home (365 lf). Additional parking is available on the surrounding neighborhood streets during the day, and by informal agreement across Ohio Avenue in another Holy Trinity Episcopal Church parking lot. Nearby churches and businesses have increased use during evening and weekends which doesn’t

interfere with visitation at the existing historic site. At the current time, there is adequate parking to accommodate current visitation.



Figure 34. Location Map of Midland, Texas

Accessibility of the site and properties were evaluated using Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) standards consistent with NPS guidance. Accessibility into the house is limited by its historic nature, but some barriers have been mitigated and there are opportunities for additional accessibility improvements around the complex. The front entrance to the historic home has stairs, but there is accessible access on the side elevation. The ramp, however, is more than 430 lf from the accessibility



spaces in the site's leased parking lot, and the accessible doorway threshold may be out of compliance. A longer threshold would correct this deficiency. The sidewalks around the site are in good shape and contain curb-cuts along H Street with ramps and tactile bumps for traction and warning indications.

The visitor center and administrative buildings have accessible entrances but require a variety of upgrades to allow adequate clearance for movement, including ramp landings, wider hallways, and accessible counter space and light switches. The visitor center restroom is accessibility compliant, but its approach is crowded by the entry door and front desk. The restrooms and the kitchen in the administrative building are not compliant, even for nonpublic use, and additionally require updates to electrical fixtures to meet accessibility requirements. The rental home is lacking any accessible entrance and would require many changes similar to those described for the administrative building in order to make it ABA compliant. Many of these challenges would need to be addressed to meet NPS accessibility standards for public and non-public uses but accessibility improvement is feasible with a reasonable amount of investment in these buildings.

### **Public Enjoyment Potential**

The GWBCH, Inc., administers and operates the site that commemorates the childhood of President George W. Bush through interpretation of George W.'s Midland upbringing in the family's restored historic home. The home is currently open to the public, offering guided tours of the restored residence, its exhibits, and period-furnished rooms. Beyond the historic home, the adjacent visitor center/bookstore and administrative building are also part of the site complex. Visitors go to the visitor center for orientation to the site and to purchase tour tickers. The administration building also includes an office and reading room to support its Laura Bush Literacy program. Beyond the tours and exhibits, GWBCH Inc., also hosts fundraising events, school group tours, and regularly scheduled reading programs. Annual visitation before the pandemic was approximately 7,000 visitors per year; during the pandemic visitation has been reduced to 2,500 annually.

**Conclusion.** The National Park Service concludes there is sufficient access to the study area. Although the entire site is not fully accessible, there are a range of opportunities to provide programmatic accessibility. The site is currently managed to facilitate a range of visitor use activities that demonstrate adequate access and public enjoyment potential to support the site if it were to become a unit of the national park system.

### **Existing and Potential Threats to Resources**

**General Threats.** Because the site is on a busy residential block, vandalism is a potential future threat to the resources. The historic structures, wayfinding aids, interpretive signs, and other visitor facilities could become easy targets for vandals. GWBCH, Inc., and nearby residents have stated this has not been an issue in the past, but increased in activity at the site may bring additional concerns that could threaten the resources.

Given the site's location and climate in western Texas, severe weather may impact the site and future guests. The historic house is susceptible to hailstorms and there is evidence of light hail damage on the property, particularly on the administrative building's siding. In addition to susceptibility to hailstorms, Midland, Texas, will also experience an increase in extreme heat. By mid-century, Midland could experience more than 50 days per year with temperatures over 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Extreme heat can increase weathering of structures, threaten park staff and visitor safety, and increase stress on heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems. Midland is also in the middle of an extended drought and is expected to experience greater drought frequency and intensity in the future.

**Structural Conditions and Degradation.** The structures within the boundary do not have an official resource condition assessment nor an archeological survey; however, the study team reviewed and noted the condition of each structure within the study boundary and the childhood home shows minimal signs of degradation. Additionally, the site has been the subject of approved phase I and II historic site evaluations by the Texas Historical Commission, which has additionally evaluated the site's condition during late 2021 and early 2022. Overall, the site is well-maintained and up to date on large maintenance items. The historic structures will require ongoing routine and preventive maintenance to maintain their historic integrity. Extreme heat and drought will also impact the landscape and could present challenges for maintaining historical landscaping. These threats may also be considerations for operating costs in the future related to heavy use of HVAC systems and maintenance of paint, roofing, and landscaping.

**Conclusion.** The National Park Service concludes that the site and surrounding property do not have any current or potential threats to the resources that would impact the significant value of the resources. The overall site is in good condition and relatively well-maintained.

### **Costs Associated with Acquisition, Development, and Operations**

Since the National Park Service has a legislated mandate to conserve resources unimpaired for public enjoyment, it could be assumed that the park units it manages would continue indefinitely into the future. However, designation of a new unit of the national park system does not automatically guarantee that funding or staffing to administer that new unit would be appropriated by Congress. Any newly designated national park system unit would have to compete with the more than 400 existing park units for limited funding and resources in a current fiscally constrained environment. Study areas that may be nationally significant, suitable, and technically feasible for designation as a new park unit may not be feasible in light of current budget constraints, competing needs across the entire agency, and the existing National Park Service deferred maintenance backlog.

In a special resource study, analysis of feasibility provides an initial opportunity to understand the magnitude of costs required for acquiring park lands and establishing park operations. The full costs to acquire and sustain the George W. Bush Childhood Home as a unit of the national park system are not known at present and would be affected by the level of visitation, requirements for resource preservation, and the desired level of facility development. Projects that would be both technically possible and desirable to accomplish for the new park may not be feasible considering the constraints noted above.

#### *Acquisition Costs*

Any future land acquisitions would have to consider larger agencywide and regional priorities for purchasing new park lands. The establishment of a new national park system unit by Congress does not guarantee funding or the purchase of lands, and any improvements would require further cost analysis and planning. Any NPS acquisition of private properties would occur only through donation or from a willing seller for the appraised fair market value.

Costs for land acquisition include the property boundary outlined in figure 2 above, which includes the George W. Bush Childhood Home and the adjacent properties at 400 East Broadway Street and 402 East Broadway Street.<sup>77</sup> In addition to the purchase price, the National Park Service would also incur expenses from conducting full title searches/insurance, completing hazardous material surveys, real estate appraisals, and preparing a legislative map of the property. Assuming that the entire 0.75-

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<sup>77</sup> At the time of this study, GWBCH Inc. is not interested in donating the subsurface/mineral rights associated with the childhood home; the nonprofit intends to retain these rights, regardless of NPS property acquisitions or transfer in surface rights.

acre property will be donated, the acquisition costs are estimated at approximately \$50,000 to complete the above title, survey, and cartographic work. Given the assumption of donation, predicated on the GWBCH, Inc.'s documented intention to transfer the site to the National Park Service or the Texas Historical Commission for its continued operation, the National Park Service has not performed detailed property appraisal research. Based on limited comparables, acquisition of the three adjacent properties at fair market value could total \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

Pursuant to Departmental Manual Part 602, Chapter 2 (602 DM 2), the National Park Service is required to conduct a Pre-Acquisition Environmental Site Assessment (PA-ESA) prior to acquisition of a property to determine the likelihood of the presence and extent of hazardous substance-related or other environmental liabilities. Due to the lead paint, asbestos, and mold abatement and roof repairs completed by GWBCH Inc., environmental liabilities associated with the areas of study appear to be minimal, if at all, but will require an outlay of funds to conduct the PA-ESA. Typical costs to conduct a PA-ESA on individual sites within the study area is approximately \$15,000. A PA-ESA may conclude that additional investigation (a Phase II ESA, costing approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000) is necessary and, potentially, may require remediation. Remediation costs can vary widely due to site type and complexity, contaminants, size, affected media, and other variables. Lower complexity remediation projects can cost approximately \$50,000, while higher complexity projects can be \$1 million or more.

#### *Development Costs (Initial Construction Costs) and Total Cost of Facility Ownership*

Development or initial construction costs of additions to the national park system vary widely, depending on the existing and desired conditions of the facilities. New national park system units and additions frequently require investment of time and money to inventory and document resources in the unit, develop management or treatment plans for those resources, develop educational and interpretive materials, and develop and improve facilities for visitors and park operations, including facilities that would meet legislative requirements for accessibility.

The condition assessment determined the buildings and grounds were generally well-maintained. Initial construction costs include general maintenance and repairs including window repair, painting, landscaping, interior reconditioning, rehabilitation of the visitor center garage as exhibit space, and other work, as well as legislatively mandated improvements for accessibility and safety. It is anticipated that additional development, fabrication, and installation of educational and interpretive materials would be included in the initial construction cost. The cost estimates represented in table 1 are based on the condition assessment conducted by the Texas Historical Commission in late 2021 and the National Park Service in early 2022, including design costs of 5% pre-design, 10% design, and 2% supplemental for a total of 17%. In addition, the estimates include an additional 5% for compliance, 8% for National Park Service management of the projects, and 10% construction contingency. Table 1 below shows a summary of the estimated initial construction costs by parcel. Initial construction costs are estimated to be \$1,860,768.

Total cost of facility ownership (TCFO) analysis estimates life cycle costs of a physical asset, including all activities that occur over its lifetime and the organizational resources and capacity required to perform those activities. The TCFO calculator estimates life cycle costs based on the square footage, current condition, number of systems in each building, and includes inflation rates for the life cycle. The estimated costs summarized in table 1 are based on the current condition assessment. The estimated costs assume the National Park Service would contract directly with construction firms for initial construction costs and the long-term maintenance of the buildings and grounds. In addition to initial construction costs, table 1 below shows the life cycle costs over a 50-year period yielding the \$14,026,579 as the 50-year total cost of facility ownership by site. The

estimated total costs of facility ownership under the proposed boundary of the site are \$280,532 annually for initial construction costs and under a 50-year life cycle.

**Table 1. George W. Bush Childhood Home Estimated Total Cost of Facility Ownership**

Site	Square Footage	Estimated Initial Construction Costs	50-Year Life Cycle Costs	50 -Year Total Cost of Facility Ownership
GW BCH	1,655	\$110,616	\$3,043,109	\$3,153,725
Visitor Center	1,000	\$245,000	\$2,331,338	\$2,576,338
Administrative Building	1,700	\$623,770	\$3,043,109	\$3,666,789
Rental Property / Rehabilitated Maintenance Facility	1,675	\$84,210	\$1,427,258	\$1,511,468
Landscape	N/A	\$161,672	\$2,271,587	\$2,433,259
Interpretive Media	N/A	\$635,500	\$50,000	\$685,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,860,768</b>	<b>\$12,166,401</b>	<b>\$14,026,579</b>

### *Operating Costs*

Operating costs vary widely among units of the national park system, depending on the types and quantities of resources managed, the number of visitors, the level of programs offered, safety and security issues, and many other factors. At a minimum, the operating costs of the George W. Bush Childhood Home would include grounds maintenance, utilities, communications, staffing personnel, and other miscellaneous expenses. Personnel would be required to design and deliver programming (e.g., personal interpretation, exhibits, special events), conduct maintenance of the facilities and grounds, perform administrative functions (budget, management, planning, and compliance), provide collections management and preservation of historic furnishings, complete law enforcement tasks (if necessary), and conduct outreach to the community and schools.

To estimate the potential costs of operating the George W. Bush Childhood Home as a new unit of the national park system, the National Park Service reviewed annual operation costs from units of the national park system that are of similar size and with comparable facility assets. These units include First Ladies National Historic Site, General Grant National Monument, John Fitzgerald Kennedy National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site, Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace National Historic Site, and William Howard Taft National Historic Site. The comparable sites listed below in table 2 have, on average, five to eight full-time employees with annual operating budgets ranging from approximately \$480,000 to \$1.1 million. These costs include staffing (part-time and seasonal employees), as well as programming, collection conservation, maintenance, security, communications, and administrative costs.

**Table 2. Fiscal Year 2006–2020 Annual Operating Costs at Comparable National Park System Units**

<b>Unit of the National Park System</b>	<b>Annual Operating Costs (2006–2020 Average)</b>
First Ladies NHS	\$1,042,000
General Grant NM	\$877,000
John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS	\$562,000
Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace NHS	\$708,000
Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural NHS	\$480,000
President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home NHS	\$620,000
William Howard Taft NHS	\$902,000

Source: 2006–2020 National Park Service Facility Management Data Set

The annual operating budget of the George W. Bush Childhood Home over the last five-year period (2016-2021) was on average approximately \$514,500 (THC Phase II). The GWBCH, Inc., conducts fundraising events, sells merchandise, operates rental property, maintains an oil lease, and has ticket fees for site visitors that account for approximately \$75,000 of revenue generated annually. GWBCH, Inc., requires professional staff to be present whenever the site is open to the public. The site is currently operated by one full-time, permanent staff member who manages the site’s educational programs, administrative duties, routine maintenance, fundraising, and community outreach. Part-time volunteers guide tours, assist with interpretive and educational programs, routine maintenance, and staffing the visitor center.

It is expected under NPS management, the annual operating costs would increase from the current levels under GWBCH, Inc. Additional staff would be required for management of the park unit and resources. Over a 50-year life cycle, the annual facility maintenance costs (TCFO) would average approximately \$280,532 per year. At a minimum, five full-time employees (FTEs) would be necessary, including a GS-11 site manager, GS-9 administrative officer, GS-7 education and interpretation coordinator, a GS-7 facilities manager, and a GS-5 facilities staff member for an annual estimate of \$246,539. Yielding total annual expenses for staffing and total cost of facility ownership, the annual operating budget could reasonably range from \$527,071 to \$700,000 based on the current condition of the assets and anticipated visitation.

While the estimated costs of acquisition, development, and operations associated with the George W. Bush Childhood Home would be modest in comparison to larger units of the national park system, any new expenditures would need to be carefully weighed in the context of the agency’s existing maintenance backlog and other fiscal constraints and in terms of potential future visitation.

#### *Partnerships*

If the site is transferred to the National Park Service, the GWBCH, Inc., has expressed interest in continuing to operate as a friend’s group for the park unit. The organization would participate in fundraising and volunteer coordination to support park operations. At present, the GWBCH, Inc., has an active board of seven members that are mostly oriented toward site operations rather than fundraising. The current management includes a close relationship between the executive director and the executive committee consisting of appointed members that assist with staff hiring, oversight,

and planning, such as approval of the annual operating budget and decision making regarding overall management and operations.

Additionally, there is interest from the Texas Historical Commission in being a partner at the site. The Texas Historical Commission is a state supported preservation agency that operated across Texas with a broader purview that includes administration of 31 state historic sites by approximately 175 staff members. The exact nature of a THC partnership at GWBCH is yet undetermined but has ranged from direct acquisition and operation of the site to an affiliation with the existing operators at the GWBCH, Inc., or the National Park Service. Affiliation could include technical support as well as partner programming, volunteer coordination, community engagement, and promotion.

To date the Texas Historical Commission has conducted both a phase I and phase II site evaluations and recommended to the state legislature that GWBCH be added to the THC historic site network. The Texas legislature will likely take up this issue in their next session beginning in January 2023, with the likelihood of adopting the THC recommendation.

**Conclusion.** As evidenced by the current repair backlog of the National Park Service, the agency has greater demands for cyclic and recurring maintenance than currently available funding. The addition of the George W. Bush Childhood Home would likely further dilute these funds; therefore, the feasibility of the National Park Service serving as the only entity managing the site as a unit of the national park system is dependent on the ability of NPS fund source managers to prioritize cyclic and recurring maintenance projects to meet the requirements of the facilities in this potential new unit. Further, the costs associated with acquisition, potential development, and operations of the GWBCH represent a reasonable investment considering the current management model under the GWBCH, Inc., where the site accommodates visitation. The site does not require substantial new infrastructure to be preserved and operated under the National Park Service. Annual funding would be used to support recurring maintenance of the properties as well as staff personnel. There are potential opportunities for the National Park Service to engage in partnerships with the GWBCH, Inc., and the Texas Historical Commission to support management of the site. The study area could be effectively administered by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost, depending on fund source availability considered feasible under this factor.

### **Level of Public Support**

To gauge the general level of support for a George W. Bush Childhood Home natural park system unit, the National Park Service solicited feedback during a 60-day public comment period (December 28, 2020 to February 28, 2021). Responses were mixed; some commenters expressed excitement about the idea of national park system unit designation for the Midland home while others felt that the home should not be added to the national park system.

Some commenters felt that, although current management is sufficient, NPS resources could be used to improve the site. Others stated that the National Park Service could provide the legislatively guaranteed highest level of preservation and protection of the site. Some expressed concern that the home will eventually fall into disrepair if the National Park Service does not protect the site. Some suggested that, if this home were to be added to the national park system, the childhood homes of other presidents should receive NPS designations as well. Many commenters who support the idea of a national park designation suggested ideas for programs and historical interpretation at the home. Some ideas are targeted for youth, either for smaller rural schools in West Texas or children in the community. Commenters also mentioned that the City of Midland should use the home as a local attraction.

Those that opposed the inclusion of the George W. Bush Childhood Home in the national park system voiced objections specific to the study area as well as general presidential childhood homes. Some commenters expressed negative appraisals of George W. Bush's decisions during his presidency and did not think it was appropriate to designate a site associated with the Bush family. Several commenters felt that the childhood home did not directly relate to the adult life and eventual presidency of George W. Bush. Other commenters generally supported the childhood home of a former president is worthy of preservation, but that such a site does not rise to the level of significance for designation as a national park system unit. The home would be more appropriate as a Texas historic landmark—it is not important to American history. Another commenter suggested considering the George W. Bush residence in Crawford, Texas, as a potential national park system unit due to the many decisions that were made at that site while Bush was president.<sup>78</sup>

The site's current operation by the GWBCH, Inc., since 2006 suggests a high level of local interest in the site and supporting its operation. Moreover, George W. Bush is regarded as Midland's first son and the former president continues to enjoy a relatively favorable reputation in the area. Funding was an issue. The THC Phase II evaluation notes that, "Midland is a very philanthropic community and there is good potential for building more support in the future. Fluctuations in the oil and gas industry will impact this future philanthropic planning." Many commenters expressed concern about the level of current and future funding for the National Park Service. Commenters who were against establishing a George W. Bush Childhood Home park unit either felt that NPS funding should support existing park units, or sites that are nationally significant for other reasons should be included in the national park system before a presidential childhood home is considered.

Comments identified concerns with the site itself as well. Several commenters cited concerns about limited and disconnected parking in the area surrounding the home. If visitor numbers increase with the home's designation as a national park system unit, commenters contended that larger vehicles would have nowhere to park or move around the site. Another concern involves the homes in the neighborhood adjacent to the site. One commenter considered the homes surrounding the site to be unkempt and expressed a hope those adjacent homes could also be preserved to add to the character of the neighborhood. Commenters noted a possibility of forming a neighborhood advisory board to establish positive relationships.

## **Economic and Socioeconomic Impacts**

The economic benefits of national parks are well established as the National Park Service preserves unique resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Nationwide, visitors to National Park Service lands purchase goods and services in local gateway regions and these expenditures generate and support economic activity in those local economies. Such visitor spending is far reaching, directly affecting sectors such as lodging, restaurants, retail, recreation industries, and transportation. The *2020 National Park Visitor Spending Effects Report*, showed park visitors spent an estimated \$14.5 billion in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands across the country in 2020. These expenditures supported an estimated 234,000 jobs, \$9.7 billion in labor income, and \$28.6 billion in economic output to the national economy.

**Conclusion.** While the impact on the local economy is uncertain, socioeconomic factors would not preclude the designation of a new unit of the national park system. Designation is not expected to result in negative economic impacts because minimal land and other resources would be diverted from their existing uses to establish the site as a unit of the national park system. The site would likely

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<sup>78</sup> Prairie Chapel Ranch in Crawford, Texas, was not named in the special resource study legislation and therefore, was not considered for potential inclusion in the national park system as part of this study or evaluated under SRS criteria.

generate a small economic benefit due to accommodations, food services, and retail spending as a result of increased visitation to the GWBCH. The overall socioeconomic impact of designation to nearby communities would likely be minimal.

Completion and transmittal of the study does not guarantee establishment of a unit of the national park system or future funding for any NPS actions at the George W. Bush Childhood Home. Even if a unit is established, while new national park system units share common elements, each unit requires a distinct organizational structure. The organizational structure may be influenced by the park unit's enabling legislation or proclamation, its size, resources, scope, and delivery of public programming, and its location. National park system units are not considered operational (prepared to welcome visitors, preserve resources, and provide programming and services on a regular basis) until they receive an operating appropriation from Congress, which can take years.

## **CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS**

The study area meets all of the factors considered under the analysis of feasibility. It is of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment. Current land ownership patterns, economic and socioeconomic impacts, and potential threats to the resources do not preclude the study area from potentially becoming a new unit of the national park system. The site would not require substantial new infrastructure to support visitation and to meet the standards of a national park system unit. The National Park Service concludes that the George W. Bush Childhood Home is feasible for inclusion in the national park system.

## **EVALUATION OF THE NEED FOR DIRECT NPS MANAGEMENT**

### **Need for Direct NPS Management Criterion**

The fourth criterion in the special resource study evaluation process addresses whether the study area requires direct management by the National Park Service instead of protection by another public agency or the private sector. *NPS Management Policies 2006* (§1.3.4) further requires direct National Park Service management not only to be needed but that its management be “the clearly superior alternative.” Inclusion in the national park system would provide a study area with the stewardship mandate defined in the National Park Service Organic Act,

“...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations...”

There may be a need for direct NPS management if current or potential management entities cannot provide opportunities for resource stewardship or public enjoyment. Unless direct NPS management is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the National Park Service recommends other existing organizations or agencies continue resource management responsibilities and the study area not be recommended for inclusion as a new unit of the national park system.

In the context of a special resource study, “direct NPS management” means the National Park Service owns or manages lands within an authorized park boundary and has lead responsibility for park operations, resource protection, and visitor services. This level of management provides NPS sites with a dual mandate of resource preservation while providing opportunities for visitor enjoyment. “Clearly superior” is understood to mean that the National Park Service could provide optimal resource protection and visitor opportunities when compared to current management or



other management scenarios. If other entities can provide an equivalent or superior level of resource protection and visitor services, the National Park Service would recommend that they assume the lead management role.

## **Summary of Existing Management**

As discussed above, the George W. Bush Childhood Home and adjoining support properties are owned by GWBCH, Inc. The organization's statement of purpose is *"to express and interpret the history of one of America's great families by telling the story of the Bush Family and the childhood of George W. Bush in Midland, Texas, and celebrating the lives of two presidents, two governors, and two first ladies."* Founded in 2001, the nonprofit is responsible for the management of the historic site and maintenance of the property. GWBCH, Inc., purchased 1412 West Ohio Avenue in 2001, restored it to its 1950s appearance, and opened it to the public in 2006. Currently, the house is in good condition and is well-maintained; recent maintenance includes painting and new flooring in the visitor center and a replacement of the childhood home's HVAC system. The nonprofit organization has designed and developed its own website ([www.bushchildhoodhome.org](http://www.bushchildhoodhome.org)) and created a printed brochure.

GWBCH, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by a board of directors who oversees site operations and determines policy. The annual operating budget for the George W. Bush Childhood Home, which has been approximately \$515,000 per year, allows for one full-time permanent staff member and one part-time employee who share responsibility for day-to-day operations. Grounds maintenance and minor repairs are completed on a contracted basis.

Under current management, on-site interpretive and educational services are provided almost exclusively by part-time volunteers. This situation has resulted in reduced operating hours, scheduling problems, and inconsistent educational and interpretive programs. The volunteer staffing levels are currently insufficient to support existing visitation, and often unavailable during certain periods of the operating hours of the historic site. The lack of a permanent interpretive staff has also hampered the George W. Bush Childhood Home from developing public educational programs and community activities. In addition, while the George W. Bush Childhood Home has set aside one room to store historic objects, it does not currently have a staff curator, curatorial facility, or professional curatorial program to accession and provide care for historic objects (NPS Reconnaissance Survey 38).

## **POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS**

### **Continued Management by George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc.**

GWBCH, Inc., protects and maintains the site. As discussed above, GWBCH, Inc., is currently providing sufficient resource protection but opportunities for visitor enjoyment are limited by low staff and volunteer numbers.

The current nonprofit entity has more flexibility in the management and development of the site than would be allowed to the National Park Service if the site was federally owned. The leasing of oil rights and the residential property at 402 East Broadway Street serve as primary continuing fund sources for maintenance and capital improvements, but the nonprofit's two employees have limited time outside their historic site responsibilities to manage a rental property and at the time of this study, the property was vacant. Fundraising events previously provided additional money for projects, but fundraising opportunities have been severely limited in the past several years due to the ongoing Covid pandemic. Grants from local, Midland-Odessa philanthropies have also boosted the

annual budget, but awards vary by year and can be impacted by the success of the oil and gas market, the primary economic driver of the region.

An NPS assessment of the site concluded that the George W. Bush Childhood Home is in good condition and well-maintained by the nonprofit managing entity, GWBCH Inc., yet several unmet needs exist. The organization has insufficient staff to develop a comprehensive interpretive program, provide regularly scheduled tours, or to professionally manage the collection of historic furnishings. GWBCH, Inc., initially envisioned restoring the entire interior of 1412 West Ohio Avenue and relocating the interpretive panels, visitor orientation area, and bookstore to an expanded visitor center at 400 East Broadway Street to allow the childhood home to fully represent the Bush family's home life in the mid-1950s and provide additional visitor opportunities. The organization has not been able to secure the level of funding needed for this project.

### **Management by State or Local Government Agencies**

The Texas Historical Commission is the Texas state agency for historic preservation and operates the state historic sites network. The agency's mission is "to protect the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations" and it is nationally recognized for its preservation programs. THC's Historic Sites Division currently oversees 34 historic properties throughout the state that exemplify the breadth of Texas history. The closest existing state historic site to Midland-Odessa is Fort Lancaster State Historic Site (Sheffield, Texas), one of the four military posts established in 1855 to protect the military route between San Antonio and El Paso. The THC protects and interprets the Eisenhower Birthplace State Historic Site in Denison, Texas, the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site located across the Pedernales River from Johnson's Ranch / Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, and several houses associated with politicians and statesmen from the Texas Republic and statehood era.

In September 2021, GWBCH, Inc., requested that the THC consider the George W. Bush Childhood Home for inclusion in its state historic sites program. The THC Phase I assessment completed in January 2022 found that "the George W. Bush Childhood Home is an important and historically significant site that can contribute to the understanding of Texas' significant influence on the political life of the nation, particularly in the later 20th century" and appeared to meet all phase I assessment criteria. The phase II assessment, which includes a more detailed evaluation of the context, interpretive potential, and potential operations under THC management, was completed in April 2022. If a state historic site is created, THC proposes a broader interpretive focus that would represent the Bush family's experience in Midland instead of focusing solely on young George W. Bush.

Based on the information gathered during both the phase I and phase II assessments, THC staff recommended that the site become a Texas State Historic Site. The site meets each of the criteria considerations including significance, interpretive theme relevant to Texas history not currently represented in the network, exceptional integrity, appropriate collections associated with the site, appropriate for use as a museum, property available without restrictions, financial resources available, and strong public support, including available partnerships. THC's determination was that the George W. Bush Childhood Home possessed all the necessary criteria for inclusion in the Texas state historic network.

The Texas legislature will meet in January–May 2023 to address THC's recommendations. If, at that time, the site is adopted into the network, the need for direct NPS management will be unnecessary.

### *NPS Affiliated Area / Indirect NPS Management*

NPS affiliated areas preserve properties outside the national park system that are linked in importance and purpose to the larger system. These related areas are established by Congress or through administrative action of the Secretary of the Interior under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935; however, unlike the majority of units of the national park system, these sites are not federally owned or directly managed by the National Park Service. The role of the National Park Service in the management and administration of affiliated areas is typically outlined in the designation legislation or secretarial action and vary from strong partnerships with NPS staffing to occasional programmatic assistance.

Federal funding for affiliated areas is determined on a case-by-case basis. Affiliated areas established through legislative means may receive base funding for staffing and/or interpretation and operations through the Department of the Interior. Areas established through administrative action may only receive direct federal funding if Congress specifically appropriates funding for that site. Other affiliated areas receive no federal funding; their primary connection to the National Park Service is through technical assistance.

The paths used to create affiliated areas are as varied as their approaches to federal funding. In some cases, sites such as Thomas Cole National Historic Site affiliated areas have been designated after the completion of a special resource study. Other historic sites that were designated affiliated areas were later redesignated as units of the national park system, as in the cases of Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial and the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument. Oklahoma City National Memorial was initially designated a unit of the national park system to be managed as a partnership park and was later redesignated as an affiliated area. Most recently, Parker's Crossroads Battlefield in Tennessee was established as an affiliated area by PL 116-9 in 2019.

To be eligible for affiliated area status, *NPS Management Policies 2006* guidelines state the potential area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the park service and the nonfederal management entity. This special resource study has determined that the George W. Bush Childhood Home is nationally significant and is considered suitable for inclusion in the national park system and thereby meets the first eligibility criterion for affiliated areas.

If the George W. Bush Childhood Home were designated an NPS affiliated area, the site's management entity would be expected to adhere to federal mandates and the high standards specified in NPS management policies, as stated in affiliated area eligibility criterion 3. The current management entity, GWBCH, Inc., may not be equipped or willing to assume the additional responsibilities connected to federal compliance and the management constraints associated with federal policies that are required for an affiliated area. GWBCH, Inc., could potentially require additional funding or direct NPS support to continue to offer visitor facilities and experiences that meet NPS standards and comply with federal regulations. The National Park Service could provide technical assistance to the site, but affiliated area status does not guarantee funding, staffing, or outline continued support. Any arrangements for continued NPS involvement and/or funding at the site would ideally be outlined in establishing legislation.

If THC assumes ownership and/or management of the George W. Bush Childhood Home, the state agency would be able to meet federal policies and NPS standards associated with historic sites and

visitor opportunities under eligibility criterion 3. However, the agency would have to demonstrate a need for additional NPS special recognition or technical assistance to meet affiliated area eligibility criterion 2.

Any action to establish the George W. Bush Childhood Home as an affiliated area would guide the development of any subsequent formal partner agreements between the non-federal site managers and the National Park Service necessary to meet eligibility criterion 4.

### **Direct Management by the National Park Service**

Under this potential management framework, Congress would establish the George W. Bush Childhood Home National Historic Site as a new unit of the national park system. The National Park Service would preserve the site and interpret the Bush family and the influence of their time in Midland, Texas, on their personal and political lives.

In theory, direct NPS management could expand resource protection, ensure the area is managed according to federal mandates and NPS policies, and expand interpretation, which could be beneficial for long-term site protection and management; however, developing a new unit of the national park system is a slow process. If the George W. Bush Childhood Home was established as a new unit, it may take over a decade for federally funded projects to be started or site-specific staff to be hired based on the precedence of other recently established units.

### **Conclusion: Summary of Need for National Park Service Management**

The home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue is in good physical condition and has been well-maintained by George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc., since the nonprofit purchased the property in 2001. However, the nonprofit organization has insufficient staffing to develop comprehensive interpretive programming and community activities, and to professionally manage and provide long-term care for the historic structure. In addition, the volunteer staffing levels are currently insufficient to support existing visitation levels and are often unavailable during some periods of the operating hours.

The George W. Bush Childhood Home would benefit from additional support, technical expertise, and longevity provided by a larger preservation organization or government entity such as the National Park Service or Texas Historical Commission. According to the THC Phase I and Phase II assessments, the property meets all criteria to be designated a Texas State Historic Site. If the Texas legislature decides to add 1412 West Ohio Avenue to the state's network of historic sites and accepts the GWBCH, Inc., offer to donate the property, the childhood home would benefit from THC technical support in terms of staffing, funding, preservation expertise, a dedicated state curation facility, and historic tourism. THC ownership and management would address the concerns about the nonprofit's longevity and ability to staff and interpret the site. Legislature approval and the designation of a George W. Bush Childhood Home State Historic Site could happen as early as the next scheduled legislative session that runs January to May 2023.

If the George W. Bush Childhood Home is added to the THC state historic site network and the state historic preservation agency assumes management of the site, there would be no need for NPS management of the site.

At the time of this study, 1412 West Ohio Avenue appears to meet the need for NPS management due to uncertainties associated with continued management under the existing nonprofit. However, the National Park Service does not represent a "clearly superior alternative" to THC management as a state historic site. The THC Historic Site Program can provide equivalent level of resource

protection and visitor services and the National Park Service recommends that the state historic preservation assume the lead management role of the George W. Bush Childhood Home.

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## CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis in this special resource study, the National Park Service concludes that the George W. Bush Childhood Home meets SRS criteria for national significance, suitability, and feasibility. National Park Service management of the site is not a “clearly superior alternative” to the proposed Texas Historical Commission management as a state historic site; therefore, the study area does not meet the need for direct NPS management.

**National Significance**— The study team finds that the George W. Bush Childhood Home—1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas—meets NHL Criterion 2 for its association with two former presidents of the United States, George H. W. and George W. Bush. While childhood homes are usually not associated with national significance or contribution of an individual, 1412 West Ohio Avenue meets the exception because it was the home of two future presidents, and is representative of the Bush family’s home life, as well as George W. Bush’s upbringing, which he later touted while on the presidential campaign trail, as the cornerstone of his political identity.

**Suitability**— There currently is no direct representation of George W. Bush’s story or legacy in the system or that of his father George H. W. Bush. The study area is associated with a period of Bush’s life that influenced his path to the presidency. The childhood home at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland, Texas, is suitable as an addition to the national park system because it represents a cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system (association with past presidents George W. Bush and George H. W. Bush) and for its educational and interpretive potential for the 43rd president of the United States.

**Feasibility**— The study area meets all of the factors considered under the analysis of feasibility. It is of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment. Current land ownership patterns, economic and socioeconomic impacts, and potential threats to the resources do not preclude the study area from potentially becoming a new unit of the national park system. The site would not require substantial new infrastructure to support visitation and to meet the standards of a national park system unit. The National Park Service concludes that the George W. Bush Childhood Home is feasible for inclusion in the national park system.

**Need for Direct NPS Management**— The George W. Bush Childhood Home would benefit from additional support, technical expertise, and the longevity provided by a larger preservation organization or government entity such as the National Park Service or Texas Historical Commission. THC’s Historic Sites Division has expressed interest in the site and has completed phase I (January 2022) and phase II (April 2022) assessments of the property to evaluate whether 1412 West Ohio Avenue meets criteria for designation as a Texas state historic site. Legislature approval and designation of a George W. Bush Childhood Home State Historic Site could happen as early as the next scheduled legislative session in January 2023. If the George W. Bush Childhood Home is added to the THC state historic site network and the state historic preservation agency assumes management of the site, there is no need for NPS management at the site.

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# APPENDIX A: LEGISLATION FOR THE GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY (PUBLIC LAW 116-9, SEC. 2005)

133 STAT. 722

PUBLIC LAW 116-9—MAR. 12, 2019

## SEC. 2005. SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY OF GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME.

(a) DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA.—In this section, the term “study area” means the George W. Bush Childhood Home, located at 1412 West Ohio Avenue, Midland, Texas.

(b) SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY.—

(1) STUDY.—The Secretary shall conduct a special resource study of the study area.

(2) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) evaluate the national significance of the study area;

(B) determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as a unit of the National Park System;

(C) consider other alternatives for preservation, protection, and interpretation of the study area by the Federal Government, State or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations;

(D) consult with interested Federal agencies, State or local governmental entities, private and nonprofit organizations, or any other interested individuals; and

(E) identify cost estimates for any Federal acquisition, development, interpretation, operation, and maintenance associated with the alternatives.

(3) APPLICABLE LAW.—The study required under paragraph (1) shall be conducted in accordance with section 100507 of title 54, United States Code.

(4) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are first made available for the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(A) the results of the study; and

(B) any conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary.

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## **APPENDIX B: NPS MANAGEMENT POLICIES CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION**

### **CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION**

In the National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970, Congress declared that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress. Several laws outline criteria for units of the national park system and for additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trails System.

To receive a favorable recommendation from the National Park Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must

(1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources.

### **NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE**

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is nationally significant. An area will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following criteria:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmarks criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65 (*Code of Federal Regulations*).

### **SUITABILITY**

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering

differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

## Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the National Park Service considers a variety of factors for a study area, such as the following:

- size
- boundary configurations
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- landownership patterns
- public enjoyment potential
- costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- access
- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- staffing requirements
- local planning and zoning
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

An overall evaluation of feasibility will be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values.

## Direct NPS Management

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the National Park Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status.

Studies will evaluate an appropriate range of management alternatives and will identify which alternative or combination of alternatives would, in the professional judgment of the Director, be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment. Alternatives for NPS management will not be developed for study areas that fail to meet any one of the four criteria for inclusion listed in section 1.3.

In cases where a study area's resources meet the criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the National Park Service may instead recommend an alternative status, such as "affiliated area." To be eligible for affiliated area status, the area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the National Park Service and the nonfederal management entity. Designation as a "heritage area" is another option that may be recommended. Heritage areas have a nationally important, distinctive assemblage of resources that is best managed for conservation, recreation, education, and continued use through partnerships among public and private entities at the local or regional level. Either of these two alternatives (and others as well) would recognize an area's importance to the nation without requiring or implying management by the National Park Service.

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## APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH

The National Park Service (NPS) solicited public feedback related to the George W. Bush Childhood Home Special Resource Study through an informational newsletter; the project’s NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website; and a virtual public meeting. The public scoping newsletter was distributed in late December 2020 to neighboring property owners, Texas state agencies, preservation partners, and related nonprofit organizations. The newsletter included a brief overview of George W. Bush’s childhood and his time at 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland, Texas; a description of the study; the criteria used in special resource studies; and an invitation to submit comments via the project website or mailed correspondence. The National Park Service sent a letter about the study and its process to local residents and to 50 neighbors who reside on the residential blocks that surround the George W. Bush Childhood Home on 1412 West Ohio Avenue in Midland.

A 60-day public comment period opened on December 28, 2020, and closed on February 28, 2021. The National Park Service held one virtual public meeting on January 26, 2021, using the Microsoft Teams live event platform. Meeting materials, as well as a recording and transcription of the live event, were uploaded to the project PEPC site and were available throughout the rest of the comment period for attendees to view online at their leisure.

Comments were received via the PEPC website (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/GWBush>), comment cards, the Q&A session during the public meeting, and e-mail and mailed correspondence.

### PUBLIC INTEREST

A total of 13 people attended the virtual public open house meeting on January 26, 2021. During the event, members of the public were invited to submit comments to the PEPC website or to e-mail the project manager, Carrie Miller. During the public scoping period, the project team received 25 individual correspondences. Of these, 22 were submitted directly to the PEPC website. The three letters sent via e-mail and by mail were manually entered into the PEPC website by NPS staff. Public comments were submitted from individuals in eight states. The following table provides the distribution of public comments that were submitted directly to the PEPC website or to the team directly (as of March 5, 2021).

**Table C-3. Geographic Distribution of Correspondences**

State	Percentage	Number of Correspondences
Texas	72%	18
New Mexico	4.0%	1
Virginia	4.0%	1
Connecticut	4.0%	1
Louisiana	4.0%	1
California	4.0%	1
Kansas	4.0%	1
North Carolina	4.0%	1
	<b>Total</b>	25

In addition to public comments, the National Park Service received an inquiry from Maria Cramer, a reporter for *The New York Times*, about the designation of the George W. Bush Childhood Home.

## **PUBLIC OPINIONS, PERCEPTIONS, AND VALUES**

The National Park Service sought feedback on the special resource study by asking the public to answer four questions:

1. *What is important or unique about the George W. Bush Childhood Home as it relates to the life of George W. Bush?*
2. *What is your vision for the George W. Bush Childhood Home? How would you like to see the site managed? What types of activities and experiences do you want to see as part of the site's future?*
3. *Do you have any ideas or concerns that the National Park Service should be aware of and/or address in the study process?*
4. *Do you have any other ideas or comments you would like to share with us?*

The questions were listed in the public scoping newsletter as well as presented at the virtual public meeting. The following is a brief overview of the comments made by respondents, broken down by the four scoping questions listed above.

### **Question 1: Importance or uniqueness of the George W. Bush Childhood Home as it relates to the life of George W. Bush**

Commenters provided a list of topics associated with the George W. Bush Childhood Home that were deemed important to provide context and share with the public. The most referenced topics include:

**Living in Midland in the 1950s.** According to respondents, the George W. Bush Childhood Home (the home) is a snapshot of George W. Bush's life and that history adds to the Midland community. The home sets the stage for what life was like in mid-1950s America. The home showcases working in the oil and gas industry and the community life that surrounded the Bush family. A commenter suggested that the area surrounding the site should be considered a historic district. Commenters also noted the home's impressive collection of toys belonging to George W. Bush as a child.

**Celebrating the Lives of Two American Presidents, Governors, and First Ladies.** Commenters stated that by preserving this home, the National Park Service would preserve the legacy of two presidents, two governors, and two first ladies for generations to come. The Bush family has had significant influence on the Midland area and the country, and their time spent living in Midland is important to understanding their lives. Although the 41st US president, George H. W. Bush, is not named in the study legislation or included in the name of the historic site, the elder Bush ultimately made the decision to move his young family to Midland, a choice that influenced the personal and professional lives of his wife and children.

**The Development of George W. Bush's Values and Identity.** Some commenters mentioned that this site helps memorialize the past and understand the upbringing of George W. Bush. This upbringing influenced the type of person he became and his values that eventually led a nation. An example of these values was his choice to keep reading to school children after hearing about the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City during his visit to an elementary school on the morning of September 11, 2001.



**Inspiration.** Many commenters noted the inspiration that George W. Bush provides to the Midland community and youth all over the country. One commenter wrote that the Bush home would contribute to the mission of the National Park Service by illustrating how a person born into humble surroundings can achieve a place of national leadership and service through opportunity, hard work, and family support. Some noted that most visitors can relate to the site and it serves as a tangible connection with an American political dynasty. Students can feel inspired to accomplish anything they set their minds to by seeing that a young boy who played baseball in Midland could grow up to become president of the United States.

**Not Nationally Significant.** Several commenters cited that nothing was important about the site as it relates to the life of George W. Bush. Some agreed that the childhood home of a former president is worthy of preservation but does not rise to the level of significance to be designated as a national park unit. Commenters suggested that the site might be appropriate as a Texas landmark, but it is not important to American history. Another commenter suggested that since the nation is in the midst of a pandemic, resources should be diverted elsewhere.

## **Question 2: Vision for the George W. Bush Childhood Home**

Several commenters stated that they did not think the site deserves to be a national park site and that NPS funds should be used elsewhere. At the same time, others stated that the National Park Service could provide the legislatively guaranteed highest level of preservation and protection of the site. Some expressed concern that the home will eventually fall into disrepair if the National Park Service does not protect the site.

**Business as Usual.** Some commenters shared that, although they felt that the current management (George W. Bush Childhood Home, Inc.) is sufficient, NPS resources could be used to improve the site. Commenters suggested community events to celebrate George W. Bush's birthday, which the management company previously held at the home. Commenters also stated that the site should be managed by the people who have a passion for the Bush family and the history of Midland, Texas.

**Experiences.** Many commenters who support the idea of a national park designation suggested ideas for programs and historical interpretation at the home. Some ideas are targeted for youth, either for smaller rural schools in West Texas or children in the community. Commenters also mentioned that the City of Midland should use the home as a local attraction. Ideas for the home include:

- Topics for Historical Interpretation
  - Life in the 1950s
    - Experience life at that specific time in history at the home
    - Preserve or restore historic items in the household
  - Community life
    - Gain a fuller understanding of the Bush's family life and their participation in community
    - Explore related nearby or distant sites, such as George W. Bush's place of work, churches, and/or schools

- Learn about George W. Bush and his involvement in the Cub Scouts organization
  - The Bush family
    - Learn about each member of the Bush family through individual exhibits and photographs
    - Inspire people by describing the Bush's American success story
    - Explain Texas's oil industry's influence on the Bush family using interpretive items such as a pump jack
  - George W. Bush and Midland
    - Link Bush's service in the Air National Guard with the Midland Army Airfield Museum
  - Oral history/audio recordings
    - Feature Bush family members' oral histories and their thoughts on the home
    - Record and feature neighbors' memories of the Bush family during their residence at the home
- Public Programs and Activities
  - Conduct tours of the home
  - Host talks or readings on the home's lawn
  - Accommodate school groups on field trips
  - Offer a walking tour of the neighborhood
- Additions and Acquisitions to Enhance the Home Site
  - Acquire adjacent lots to preserve the community setting surrounding the home
  - Develop a larger educational and historical facility
  - Accommodate food trucks or a café for visitors
  - Add a park and picnic areas
  - Add a playground or a walking track
  - Develop a library or a theatre
  - Offer a larger gift shop

### **Question 3: Ideas or Concerns that the National Park Service Should be Aware of and/or Address in the Study Process**

Many commenters expressed concern that the National Park Service's limited funding should be used elsewhere and the opinion that this site, the home, does not deserve designation as a new national park system unit. Some suggested that, if this home were to be added to the national park system, the childhood homes of other presidents should receive NPS designations as well.

Others identified concerns with the site itself. Several commenters cited concerns about limited and disconnected parking in the area surrounding the home. If visitor numbers increase with the home's designation as a national park unit, commenters contended that larger vehicles would have nowhere to park or move around the site.

Another concern involves the homes in the neighborhood around the site. One commenter considered the homes surrounding the site to be unkempt and expressed a hope those adjacent homes could also be preserved to add to the character of the neighborhood. Commenters noted a possibility of forming a neighborhood advisory board to establish positive relationships.

### **Question 4: Other Ideas or Comments**

Many commenters used this open-ended question to summarize their feedback for or against the designation of the home as a potential unit of the national park system.

**For Designation.** Some commenters expressed excitement about the idea of national park system unit designation. Further, some also shared a general hope that other presidents' childhood homes would be included as well. Another suggested that a national monument designation would expedite the process (presumably implying that the current US president should use his authority under the Antiquities Act to designate national monuments rather than Congress authorizing the establishment of a new national park system unit through legislation).

**Against Designation.** Several commenters expressed negative appraisals of George W. Bush's decisions during his presidency and expressed feedback that the home should not be added to the national park system for those reasons. Others stated that they would prefer that federal funds to be used for something other than a new park unit at the home. Another commenter suggested not considering George W. Bush's residence in Crawford, Texas, as a potential national park system unit due to the many decisions that were made at that site while Bush was president.

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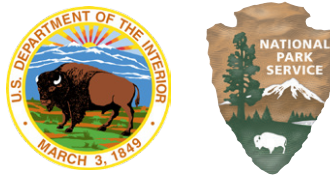
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As the nation’s principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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