

**GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME
SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY**

PUBLIC SCOPING REPORT

JULY 2021

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GEORGE W. BUSH CHILDHOOD HOME SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

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 W. 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 W. 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, email, and mailed correspondence.

PUBLIC INTEREST

A total of 13 people attended the virtual public open house meeting on January 26. During the event, members of the public were invited to submit comments to the PEPC website or to email 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 email and by mail were manually entered into the PEPC website by NPS staff. Public comments were submitted from individuals in 8 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 1. 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

State	Percentage	Number of Correspondences
	Total	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 1950's. 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-1950's 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. Commentors 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. Commentors 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 commentors 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 lead a nation. An example of these values was his choice to keep reading to schoolchildren after hearing about the attack on the Twin Towers during his visit to an elementary school on the morning of September 11, 2001.

Inspiration. Many commentors 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 resource for teachers to show 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 commentors 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 commentor 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 commentors 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 commentors 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 commentors 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 was 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 1950's
 - 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 commentors expressed concern that 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 NPS unit. Some suggested that, if this home were to be added to the national park system, the childhood homes of other presidents should be receive NPS designations as well.

Others identified concerns with the site itself. Several commentors 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, commentors 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 commentor 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. Commentors noted a possibility of forming a neighborhood advisory board to establish positive relationships.

Question 4: Other Ideas or Comments

Many commentors 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 commentors expressed excitement about the idea of national park unit designation. Further, some also shared a general hope that other president's 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 unit through legislation).

Against Designation. Several commentors 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 commentor suggested instead considering George W. Bush's residence in Crawford, Texas, as a potential national park unit due to the many decisions that were made at that site while Bush was president.

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