

MY TAKE

Save Saint Edward State Park from inaction

*"I don't know what they have to say.
It makes no difference anyway.
It doesn't matter what it is
Or who commenced it;
I'm against it!"*

84 years after these Groucho Marx lyrics in the movie *Horse Feathers*, his words still ring true, both on the national political scene and with local politics. Especially poignant is the case of Washington State Park's four sequential efforts to save the center of Saint Edward State Park against well-meaning but pervasive local opposition.

Saint Edward State Park is a 316-acre wooded gem with ample trails surrounding an 80,000 square foot stone and brick building listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Superficially, it's tempting to look at the stone arched doorways and windows and believe that this timeless structure and surrounding wilderness sanctuary will always stay in their current form if we only rally together against any proposed changes.

But beneath the surface-level perspective of Facebook likes and internet petitions is the reality that our State Park system knows all too well: *St Edward State Park is already changing for the worse, and votes to do nothing about it are accelerating the pace of this decline.*

The problem is deferred maintenance—nearly \$10 million and growing. Underneath that awe-inspiring exterior is a building with so much required maintenance and water damage that it will become structurally unsound if necessary actions are not taken. At a time when state and local parks are asked to shoulder more of their own costs, our parks system doesn't have a discretionary \$10 million. Neither do most prospective tenants, like a nonprofit that some neighbors have actually suggested as a valid alternative.

So one of the park's possible futures, explicitly described in planning documents and now increasingly likely, is to simply put up a safety fence and let the Saint Edward Seminary fall down—creating exactly the kind of eyesore you don't want next door as the centerpiece of your local park. Rubble Park?

The current rescue plan is the best one yet, trading this structure and all its liabilities for nearly twice as much undeveloped adjacent land. The seminary becomes a scenic hotel, looking much the same on the outside because of National registry requirements, and the park gets 9.77 acres of extra wooded trails.

Saint Edward State Park is a gem. Protect it against decline by voting Yes.

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an organization focused on getting people outdoors and exploring the northwest.*

