CY-FAIR EDITION

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 12 | AUG. 18-SEPT. 11, 2020





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CI DEALS New! **Federal loan** Find restaurant deals in a snap: Point your camera to the QR code or visit program helps local businesses communityimpact.com/deals Ó **BUSINESS** IMPACTS 8 **SWEET TREATS** 21 Cy-Fair ISD's board voted **SAVE THE DATE** June 21 to delay the start of CI SPECIAL REPORT the 2020-21 school year. June Sept. Aug. Banking 25 3 8 Deadline First day of Last day of on buyouts instruction instruction to change learning for students for students method selection The Harris County Flood Control District purchases homes in flood-prone SOURCE: CY-FAIR ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER neighborhoods to relocate families and make room for mitigation projects.

410 buyouts have taken place in the Cypress Creek watershed since 1985.

13,255 homes have flooded along Cypress Creek since 1985.

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

3 in every 100 flooded homes in the watershed have been acquired in 35 years.

241 buyouts have taken place in Cypress neighborhoods located along the creek.

The Harris County Flood Control District has bought out 18 homes to date in the Windwood neighborhood off Cypress Creek—most of which took place following Hurricane Harvey in 2017. (Danica Lloyd/Community Impact Newspaper)

Harris County buyouts lag in response to Cypress Creek flooding

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ, DANICA LLOYD & HANNAH ZEDAKER

Editor's note: This article is the second in a series looking at flooding in the Cypress Creek watershed.

When more than 2 feet of water flooded Sylvia McMillan's house during Hurricane Harvey, she knew exactly what to do, she said.

This was the second time her Norchester home had flooded in less than two years, so she had recently been through the same process of filing flood insurance claims and cooperating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

McMillan said many have asked why she chooses

to stay in a neighborhood where she has taken on so much damage out of her control, but the home her husband built nearly three decades ago is paid off. Now widowed, she said she does not want to leave behind the place where she raised her family and invested so much work.

"I'm a firm believer there's no secure place," McMillan said. "Things will come and go. A flood is devastating, but they're still material things. Now, will I take a third flooding? Maybe not. It's a lot of work."

CONTINUED ON 26

Safety measures planned to combat coronavirus

spread in Cy-Fair ISD

BY DANICA LLOYD

As Harris County health officials continue to confirm more than 1,000 new COVID-19 cases each day, Cy-Fair ISD officials are preparing to open campuses' doors to thousands of students and staff members this fall.

District parents have the option to either send their children back to campuses for instruction or have them learn remotely from home. As of Aug. 6, officials said 34% of students plan to attend in person, while 43% intend to engage virtually, but Aug. 25 will be the last chance for parents to change their selections until after the first grading period.

The school year was initially slated to start Aug. 24, CONTINUED ON 28

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WHO WE ARE

John and Jennifer Garrett began *Community Impact Newspaper* in 2005 in Pflugerville, TX. The company's mission is to build communities of informed citizens and thriving businesses through the collaboration of a passionate team. Today we operate across five metropolitan areas, providing hyperlocal, nonpartisan news produced by our full-time journalists in each community we serve.

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can continue to ensure citizens stay informed and keep businesses thriving. **COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM/PATRON**

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THIS ISSUE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS MONTH



FROM KIM: Next month, you will receive our newspaper Sept. 12 as we gradually move our delivery date from the third week of the month to the first week starting with the October issue. Continue to access our up-to-date news coverage at communityimpact.com, and subscribe to our daily newsletter at communityimpact.com/newsletter to stay informed all month long.

Kim Giannetti GENERAL MANAGER

FROM DANICA: Three years after Hurricane Harvey, some community members have moved to higher ground after going through the lengthy process of selling their homes to the Harris County Flood Control District. This month's front-page story takes a closer look at 35 years of home buyouts as one response to recurring flooding along Cypress Creek.

Danica Lloyd, EDITOR

THIS ISSUE BY THE NUMBERS



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CONTENTS

IMPACTS Now Open, Coming Soon & more



TRANSPORTATION UPDATES 11

8

Updates on Cy-Fair road projects	
ECONOMY High unemployment rates persist in Greater Houston area	13
CORONAVIRUS Testing at senior living centers	15
PUBLIC SAFETY Officials look to lower jail population	17
HIGHER EDUCATION Lone Star College prepares for fall	18
CITY & COUNTY The latest local news	20
DINING FEATURE Bananas Thai Cuisine	24
NONPROFIT HomeAid Houston	25
REAL ESTATE Residential market data	31
IMPACT DEALS Local coupons	35

CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

All content in this print publication, both editorial and advertisements, was up to date as of the press deadline. Due to the fast-changing nature of this event, editorial and advertising information may have changed. Please visit communityimpact.com and advertiser websites for more information.



NOW OPEN

 Houston Methodist opened its newest medical offices near the Boardwalk at Towne Lake in early June at 9915 Barker Cypress Road, Bldg. 5, Ste. 200, Cypress. Houston Methodist Primary Care Group and Specialty Physician Group offers cardiology, orthopedics and sports medicine, women's services and primary care. Across the street at 18121 Tuckerton Road, Ste. 180, Cypress, Houston Methodist Breast Cancer Center offers mammography services, and Houston Methodist Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation offers specialty services. 281-737-1555.

www.houstonmethodist.org/towne-lake

2 Doggy Dip & Clip Grooming opened June 1 at 16506 FM 529, Houston. The full-service pet grooming business offers baths, nail care, teeth brushing and pet sitting, among other services. Owners Eric and Patricia Rutherford have been grooming dogs since the early 1990s, previously operating as a mobile pet groomer until settling into the Cy-Fair-area storefront. 281-463-7387.

www.facebook.com/doggydipclip

COMING SOON

Officials with Crumbl Cookies said a

Lake, 9945 Barker Cypress Road, Cypress. The company is known for its weekly rotating menu featuring warm chocolate chip, chilled sugar and a number of specialty cookies each week. Some of the specialty flavors include Muddy Buddy, raspberry cheesecake, snickerdoodle, s'mores and orange creamsicle. Crumbl currently offers curbside pickup, delivery and shipping options. www.crumblcookies.com

4 The owners of **Mex Taco House** on Telge Road in Cypress have plans to open a second location around early September at 25410 Hwy. 290, Cypress, near the Skinner Road intersection. The new location will be double the square footage and will feature



a drive-thru. Officials with Mex Taco House said they are still working on the menu but are hoping to offer a larger variety of breakfast options. The original location of the eatery opened on Telge Road in 2019. www.mextacohouse.com

5 A new office, warehouse and showroom space for **Cubiture.com** will open by the end of September at 10707 Telge Road, Houston. The commercial-grade office furniture company specializes in commercial furnishings, new cubicle systems and remanufactured Herman Miller cubicle systems. Additionally, the business provides services such as custom millwork, relocation, storage and flooring. Due to COVID-19, the new location is being designed with new applications that use tempered glass to help minimize the spread of airborne pathogens. 713-460-1037. www.cubiture.com

6 Officials with RockBox Fitness are targeting September for the opening of a new Cypress location at 8196 Barker Cypress Road, Ste. 300, Cypress. The boxing studio specializes in one-hour, full-body workouts that incorporate boxing techniques. Presales for memberships began in August. www.rockboxfitness.com/cypress

7 Ground was broken June 24 on a new location of the educational child care center Kiddie Academy coming soon to 13909 Mandolin Drive, Houston, near the Cypresswood Drive intersection. The center, which will be known as Kiddie Academy Cypresswood, will be run by Cami Dinh and Taun Le and will open around early 2021. Dinh said the new location will use the Kiddie Academy Life Essentials curriculum, which focuses on the intellectual, social, physical and emotional growth of individu-





OURTESY KRAB KINGZ

al children. More than 280 Kiddie Academy locations exist across the U.S. 346-388-6600. www.kiddieacademy.com

8 A **7-Eleven** convenience store is under construction at 22610 Hwy. 249, Tomball. Slated to open in early spring 2021, the Dallas-based convenience store chain is known for its Slurpees and self-serve soda fountains, which are available 24/7. 800-255-0711. www.7-eleven.com

The first location of **Mint Express Car Wash** will open around late August at 8640 Barker Cypress Road, Cypress, across from the Berry Center. In addition to offering unlimited monthly car wash plans, the business will feature a selfserve pet wash. During its grand opening, the business will run a food drive in association with Cy-Fair Helping Hands to support families affected by COVID-19. www.mintexpresscarwash.com

RELOCATIONS

10 The **Cy-Fair Fire Department and Harris County Emergency Services District No. 9** relocated their administrative offices from 9630 Telge Road, Houston, to 10710 Telge Road, Houston, in late July. The new 115,000-square-foot facility was renovated from a former mattress manufacturer warehouse and features meeting and training rooms, office spaces, a department operations center and a backup dispatch center. 281-550-6663. www.cyfairfd.org

EXPANSIONS

11 Zee Harrison, the owner of **Krab Kingz** food truck in Cypress, said the eatery is relocating to a brick-and-mortar storefront

at 12640 Telge Road, Ste. D, Cypress. The Cajun-style seafood restaurant will open in September after operating for more than a year from 11323 Barker Cypress Road, Cypress. While the new restaurant goes through renovations, the food truck has been stationed on-site and operational Thursday through Sunday since July 23. Menu items include crab leg clusters, shrimp, sausage, potatoes and sweet corn. 832-797-0530.

www.facebook.com/krabkingzcypress

NAME CHANGE

12 Magpies Gifts reopened in June as **The Brook Home & Gift** after Ally Haygood and her mother, Chrissy Hignett, took full ownership of the location at 12344 Barker Cypress Road, Ste. 160, Cypress. Officials said The Brook is similar to Magpies in its offerings, and all staff have been retained. The shop specializes in home decor items while also offering accessories; gifts; and clothing for men, women, children and babies. Other locations of Magpies Gifts continue to operate in Bellaire and Sugar Land. 832-653-3041.

www.facebook.com/thebrookhomeandgift

ANNIVERSARIES

13 The owners of **The Tutoring Cen**ter at 9814 Fry Road, Ste. 160, Cypress, said they will be celebrating the center's one-year anniversary Sept. 4 with a free open-house event. The event, which will follow COVID-19 guidelines, will allow families to tour the facility and learn about after-school programs, Creative Director Ankita Khanna said. The celebration will also include activities for children, prizes and raffles. 832-257-8997. www.tutoringcenter.com

CLOSINGS

14 After operating at 9955 Barker Cypress Road, Ste. 110, Cypress, since October 2016, **Breakfast Brunch Cafe** officials announced on Facebook on July 26 that the restaurant is permanently closed, effective immediately. The breakfast and lunch eatery also featured a full bar and coffee menu. The original location on Fry Road closed in April 2017. www.facebook.com/bbcboardwalk



FEATURED IMPACT

IN THE NEWS

Several eateries in the Cy-Fair area are participating in Houston Restaurant Weeks through Sept. 7. Diners can eat from special, multicourse, prix fixe menus, and \$1 per meal purchased will be donated to the Houston Food Bank, which will in turn generate three meals for individuals and families in need.

A Barcelona Restaurant and Lounge, 110 Vintage Park Blvd., Houston. 832-698-4155. www.barcelonavp.com

B BB's Tex-Orleans, 26010 Hempstead Road, Cypress. 281-369-4633. www.bbstexorleans.com

C Brick House Tavern & Tap, 17111 Hwy. 249, Houston. 832-912-1094. www.brickhousetavernandtap.com D Gauchos do Sul Brazilian Steakhouse, 126 Vintage Park Blvd., Ste. H, Houston. 832-953-2398. www.gauchosdosul.com

E Perry's Steakhouse & Grille, 9730 Cypresswood Drive, Houston. 281-970-5999. www.perryssteakhouse.com

F Saltgrass Steakhouse, 23852 Hwy. 290, Cypress. 281-256-1061. www.saltgrass.com

G Saltgrass Steakhouse, 17275 Hwy. 249, Houston. 281-477-0952. www.saltgrass.com

H Steamboat House Restaurant, 8045 N. Sam Houston Parkway W., Houston. 832-912-1845. www.steamboathousetx.com







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Business group calls for public-private mobility partnerships

With the state of Texas facing a projected budget shortfall of \$4.58 billion—which comes with the threat of declining mobility funds as key tax revenue sources are weakened—a new group has emerged, calling for more public-private partnerships to keep crucial mobility projects from being curtailed.

The group, Keep Texas Moving, was announced at a July 20 virtual press conference by the Texas Association of Business, an Austin-based advocacy group that pushes for pro-business policies.

With congestion levels worsening and a mobility crisis looming, TAB Vice President Aaron Cox said private partnerships could help advance projects such as optional toll lanes, which he said could be built faster and at no cost to taxpayers.

"We would love to build free roads, but the reality is our tax revenues are just not keeping pace with the need and the growth we are experiencing, especially now that COVID-19 and lower energy prices are really hammering the state and our transportation funding sources," Cox said in a July 20 virtual press conference.

The Texas Department of Transportation has engaged in similar projects in the past, Cox said—including on a project to expand Hwy. 288 in Houston—but the department's authority to enter into public-private partnership projects expired in 2017. However, individual projects can still be approved by the Legislature.

Texas voters approved a pair of statewide propositions—Proposition 1 in 2014 and Proposition 7 in 2015 that diverted portions of oil and gas



Officials with Keep Texas Moving cited a toll lane expansion project along Hwy. 288 as an example of how public-private partnerships can be used to address mobility problems. (Courtesy Brazoria County)

severance taxes, general sales taxes and motor vehicle sales taxes to the State Highway Fund, which is used in part to fund one-third of TxDOT's annual budget.

Funding projects

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar told state officials July 20 to expect a historic drop in state revenue by the end of fiscal year 2020-21, with motor vehicle sales tax revenue and severance tax revenue among the hardest hit. The highway fund is projected to get about \$1.1 billion in transfers this fiscal year based on collections from the previous fiscal year, Hegar said. However, next year's transfer–which will be based on collections from this year–is projected to fall to \$620 million, he said.

Cox said funding was insufficient to address gridlock on Texas roads even

before the oil price woes.

"The need for improving and expanding Texas roadways is outstripping available funding," he said. "That was true before Texas was hit by the double-barrel assault of COVID-19 and the worldwide fall in energy prices."

Keep Texas Moving is not advocating for any specific projects to be prioritized, a decision Cox said would be up to TxDOT and local metropolitan planning organizations, such as the Houston-Galveston Area Council.

He said a good starting place could be looking at the annual Most Congested Roadways report released by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

With overall state revenue on the decline, Cox said more private funding for road projects would also allow the state to preserve its tax dollars for other needs.

Jeshua,

blood recipient

ONGOING PROJECTS



Hwy. 6 bridge

The Texas Department of Transportation is building a four-lane flyover bridge that will connect Hwy. 6 and FM 1960 over Hwy. 290 from North Eldridge Parkway to Copper Grove Boulevard. The project is on track to be done by late 2020 with most related lane closures running through November.

Timeline: September 2019-late 2020

Cost: \$41.4 million

Funding source: TxDOT



Spring Cypress Road ramps

TxDOT is working to reverse the Hwy. 249 northbound entrance and exit ramps between Jones Road and Spring Cypress Road. According to TxDOT Public Information Officer Danny Perez, the project will reverse the existing entrance/exit ramp configuration to an exit/entrance configuration and shift the new exit ramp to the south.

Timeline: April 20-early September

Cost: \$2.2 million

Funding source: TxDOT

ALL INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE WAS UPDATED AS OF JULY 31. NEWS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE OR OTHER LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS? EMAIL US AT CYFNEWS@COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM.

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YEAR-OVER-YEAR PANDEMIC JOB LOSSES Weekly unemployment insurance		Job losses Net Job by industry March-May	NET JOBS Added: June-July	NET JOB LOSS PER INDUSTRY
claims in Harris County 2019 2020 Harris County residents	i The Greater Houston region saw 365,200 total jobs lost in March	Since the pandemic, WHOLESALE TRADE several of the -17K JOBS) +2.3K	•-14.7К
60KStatecontinue to make exponentially60KStatemore unemployment insurance50Kclaims each week compared to50Kthe same time frame last year.	and April, but it gained another 115,800 jobs in May and June.	industries in the Greater Houston area have started recouping losses.	+ 10.3K	e -21K
40K 30K Phase 1	12,331 claims the week ending July		+21.4K	💼 -6.3К
20K 10K 0 MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE	25, 2020 2,324 claims the week ending July 25, 2019	-41K JOBS	+27.5K	-13.5K
	JULY 23, 2013			

ECONOMY

SOURCES: GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP, TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Expert: Houston could spend years recovering pandemic job losses

BY HANNAH ZEDAKER

Despite gains made in early June, the Greater Houston area still has 217,400 jobs to recoup for the economy to return to its prepandemic state-a process that could take anywhere from two to five years, according to Patrick Jankowski, senior vice president of research for the Greater Houston Partnership.

Nearly 50,000 of those claims have come from the Cy-Fair area, according to the Texas Workforce Commission.

"Ultimately, the virus will determine the timing of the recovery," Jankowski said during a July 22 webinar. "The economy won't fully reopen until the COVID-19 virus is no longer a threat to public health."

According to Jankowski, while the U.S. has recovered 7 million jobs between May and July, the country is still down 15 million jobs-nearly twice the number of jobs lost at the peak of the Great Recession. The national economy has lost six years

of job growth, he said.

Likewise, while the unemployment rate in the U.S. peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic at 14.7% in May and has since dropped to 11.1%, that rate is still three times the country's prepandemic unemployment rate. Since the pandemic began in March, Jankowski said more than 51 million Americans have filed initial claims for unemployment insurance.

"Probably what's most disturbing ... is that we're still well above 1.3 million [initial] claims every week," he said. "You would hope that as we've opened the economy and employers have started hiring or started calling people back, that those initial claims would be trailing off or be below that, but the fact that we're still having 1 million or more people file claims for unemployment insurance every week shows that the recovery is on very, very wobbly legs."

In the Greater Houston area, initial claims for unemployment insurance-while still high-have likewise

decreased from 76,007 claims filed the week of April 4 to 29,867 claims filed the week of July 4, according to TWC data. After business restrictions were tightened again in June, claims temporarily trended up again.

"So maybe the reopening is having fits and starts ... especially [as it relates to] Gov. [Greg] Abbott scaling restaurants back from 75% to 50% operating capacity," Jankowski said.

Between March and April, the Greater Houston area lost 350,200 jobs; between May and June, while the area added 133,200 of those jobs back to the economy, thousands remain to recoup.

For continuing claims, the Greater Houston area is still well above where the region would be under normal circumstances, Jankowski said.

"In June we still had close to 260,000 workers ... that are continuing to ask for assistance from the government because they are out of work and are not collecting a paycheck," he said. "They've been out of work two or more weekssome of them probably been out 10 or 12 weeks, considering this started in March. At a normal level, you would expect to have maybe 20,000 or 30,000 claims."

However, despite the progress that has been made over the last couple of months, both in the U.S. and local economies, Jankowski said the recent surge in COVID-19 cases could derail the current trajectory.

"In the very first early stages we started to see a little bit of a hint of a bit of recovery with reopening, but that was prior to this recent outbreak of COVID-19, so we'll see how that impacts [the economy]," he said. "As COVID-19 started surging, we see that optimism dropped to maybe just a little bit of a pickup, but now we definitely don't see the same level of optimism that we saw in early June for the economy."

Danica Lloyd contributed to this report.

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Caldwell

CORONAVIRUS

Assisted-living facilities paying heavy price for pandemic despite few cases

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

Staff at Eden Memory Care, an assisted-living facility on Grant Road in Cypress, has spent the past four months doing everything they can to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within their facility.

So far, they have been successful, Executive Director Raquel Medina said, and no cases have been confirmed among staff or residents.

"Everybody is coming together and doing their best and taking things one day at a time," Medina said.

Across the 23 Cy-Fair area facilities that have self-reported data to the Texas Department of State Health Services, four have reported active cases among residents, and two reported cases among staff only.

Despite the low case counts, the pandemic has still come with a large price tag for assisted-living facilities, said Kevin Warren, the president of the Texas Health Care Association, a public policy group that advocates on behalf of long-term health care providers.

Expenses are increasing because of overtime pay, the

cost of personal protective equipment and the overall effort to maintain staff, which was a premium even before the pandemic. At the same time, revenue is down as admissions have dropped, Warren said. Not only do local public health orders restrict admissions for facilities that have had COVID-19 cases, but people are also less willing to keep family members in these communities, he said.

"Families are concerned," Warren said. "We've been on visitation restrictions since March, so families don't want to admit to a facility and then turn around and not be able to visit them."

Relief for facilities

As the toll on these facilities increases, a movement has developed at the national level calling on U.S. Congress to provide relief funding for assisted-living facilities in the next stimulus package, which was still being negotiated as of early August. Although nursing homes have gotten some relief in past packages, including a temporary rate increase to Medicaid payments, assisted living has so



CREATING THE BUBBLE

Since March, assisted-living facilities in Harris County have been tightly restricting access in an effort to prevent the spread of the coronavirus within their walls. As a result, most Cy-Fair facilities have reported zero cases so far.

No cases reported Active cases (residents and/or staff) Active cases (staff only)



far been left out, Warren said.

At Eden Memory Care, the amount of money Medina said she spends on housekeeping supplies has tripled since the pandemic began. She argued that assisted living facilities deserve some relief in the next stimulus to help pay for expenses that normally are not included in budgetary planning.

"If this [pandemic] goes on for a long time, it could put us in jeopardy," Medina said. "But no matter what the expense is, we'll do what we need to do to keep everyone safe."

Cases in nursing homeswhich differ from assisted living in that residents receive 24/7 care-more than doubled in the Greater Houston area in July, according to state data, from 1,766 cases July 1 to 3,889 on July 28. Over that time, cases in assisted-living facilities grew from 255 to 628.

The state announced a voluntary testing effort in July, which Medina said Eden Memory Care took advantage of in late July to bring another round of testing to residents and staff. Like many industries in

the age of COVID-19, the future is hard to predict, Warren said.

Even if stimulus money is provided to assisted-living facilities, it may not be enough, depending on the scope of the relief and how long the pandemic lasts.

"If people are still reluctant to have their loved ones go into a facility, yet the testing and supplies requirements continue, that will pose a significant risk of closures and long-term financial ramifications for these providers," Warren said.







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PUBLIC SAFETY

Backlog of cases grows as officials explore lowering jail population

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to cause delays in the Harris County court system, the backlog of criminal cases awaiting trial continues to grow. At the same time, some officials and advocates are calling for a reduction in the number of inmates being housed in the Harris County Jail.

The cluster of COVID-19 cases in the jail represents the fourth largest in the U.S., according to officials with the Justice Management Institute, a Virginia-based criminal justice research group that has worked with the county for the past five years to help guide criminal justice reform.

JMI first presented its report to commissioners in early June, warning commissioners at the time that the jail was on the brink of collapse.

"The jail population is growing by more than 115 individuals per week because the number of people coming into the facility is outpacing the number of people released," JMI President Elaine Borakove wrote in a June 1 letter to commissioners. "The accelerated jail population is clearly an indication that your criminal justice system is quickly faltering."

Since then, district court judges have been granted access to courtrooms again. However, the backlog of felony cases is still growing, she said, estimating around 41,000 cases awaiting trial, up from around 36,000 in June. Meanwhile, jury trials will continue to be suspended through at least Sept. 1 under an order by the Texas Supreme Court. "Dispositions are starting to rise, but that won't significantly impact the backlog in short term without changes," Borakove said at a July 28 meeting of the Harris County Commissioners Court. "We can't wait until September and hope the courts open up for jury trial. We have to get people interacting with the docket now."

Jail capacity

There were 8,042 inmates in the jail as of July 28, and 1,099 active COVID-19 cases were confirmed at that time, said Ericka Brown, who was brought on board by the sheriff's office to monitor the spread of the virus at the jail. The jail is capable of holding between 10,000-11,000 inmates under normal circumstances. Around 6,000 total tests have been given, and about 1,500 inmates have tested positive.

Brown said she believes the jail has enough space to meet current quarantine needs.

"Given space constraints, we are able to quarantine all positive [cases] in isolation or in the infirmary for those who are symptomatic," she said at the July 28 meeting.

The debate over the jail's capacity is taking place several months after Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo issued an executive order to allow the sheriff to temporarily release some nonviolent inmates from the jail during the pandemic. That order was blocked by a Harris County administrative judge.

At the July 28 meeting, Hidalgo maintained her order could have

CLIMBING CASELOAD

The number of people awaiting trial for felonies and misdemeanors has been rising since Hurricane Harvey. Many people awaiting trial are being held in the county jail.



RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

At a July Harris County Commissioners Court meeting, the Justice Management Institute laid out recommendations to deal with the backlog and reduce the number of inmates.

- Implement docket reviews and case reviews to determine which cases can be diverted, dismissed or plead.
- Expand diversions and remediation on low-level, nonviolent felonies.
- Implement scheduling orders and docket control orders.
- Schedule attorney appearance for bail reviews

SOURCE: JUSTICE MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

helped lower the jail population.

Gavin Yamey, a Duke University professor who has studied the virus's effect on prison populations nationwide, agreed with the recommendations from JMI to release certain pretrial inmates.

"We have to take the valve off. It's a pressure cooker," he said to commissioners at the July 28 meeting. "That

- Create specialized tracks and judicial assignments to hear older pending cases and a separate track for new incoming cases.
- Increase technology use for appearances.
- Change fee schedule for appointed counsel to a flat fee to incentivize more expeditious cases.

makes us all safer."

Despite disagreements on how to address the issue, Borakove told commissioners that all stakeholders were in agreement that the current volume of cases is troublesome. JMI officials said they will continue to meet with stakeholders moving forward. No action was taken on the item during the July 28 meeting.



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EDUCATION

Lone Star College System forms strategy to safely reopen in fall

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN

Lone Star College System is planning a combination of online and in-person classes for the upcoming fall semester, with classes beginning online-only Aug. 24.

"We understand there continues to be uncertainty, but it is important for students to know their safety is our number-one priority," LSCS Chancellor Stephen Head said in a news release.

According to a press release from LSCS, the fall 2020 semester will consist of 50% online classes, 25% a combination of online and face-toface courses, and the remaining 25% face-to-face classes.

The buildings open in the fall beginning Sept. 8 will be limited to students who are taking classes with face-to-face instruction, officials said. Students and instructors will be required to undergo a temperature check, wear a mask and complete a health questionnaire when entering a building.

"We have asked the college presidents to be creative and innovative in their planning by offering block scheduling, afternoons, nights, Friday, Saturday and, where needed, Sunday classes to meet the needs of our students," Head said. "We are also preparing contingency plans to shift back to 100% online classes if the situation warrants in the fall."

Kyle Scott, vice chancellor of strategic priorities, said other precautions include designated entrances and exits and distribution of face masks for students who do not have them. The college has \$4 million budgeted for masks, officials said.

"There are going to be certain programs, like vet tech, that would require more [personal protective equipment], but those would [be required] in a non-COVID[-19] situation anyways," Scott said.

Scott said the 24 buildings that have been reopened across LSCS have been thoroughly cleaned, and if a student or staff member tests positive for coronavirus, the building the individual was in will be closed for further sanitation.

LSCS is also using stimulus funding to provide 5,000 loaner computers to students in need that can be checked out through the LSCS Office of Technology Services. LSCS received \$30 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act funding, which can also be used to provide grants to help cover student expenses due to coronavirus disruptions.

As of mid-July, LSCS officials said they were unable to determine how the coronavirus has affected enrollment numbers for the fall, as numbers are not publicly available until an audit and verification is completed.

LSCS Media Relations Manager Bill Van Rysdam said the report will be complete in September.

Information from LSCS states the college had 87,656 students for the fall 2019 semester—a decrease since 2018, although enrollment was up in the spring year over year.



REOPENING PREPARATIONS

Lone Star College System has prepared to open 24 buildings for the fall semester, when both in-person and online instruction will be available.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS



markers







g Cleaning/sanitizing buildings

anitizing Temperature ngs checkpoints

Masks provided for students

ENROLLMENT OVER THE YEARS

Lone Star College System tracks annual student enrollment, which showed yearover-year growth in spring 2020 despite the pandemic.



Half of Lone Star College System classes will be online only this fall.

FALL OPTIONS

50% Online 25% Online/ in-person

25% In-person

hybrid

SOURCE: LONE STAR COLLEGE SYSTEM/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

*FALL 2020 ENROLLMENT DATA IS NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL SEPTEMBER. SOURCE: LONE STAR COLLEGE SYSTEM/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



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BUSINESS

Thousands of local businesses benefit from federal PPP loans

BY DANICA LLOYD

Millions of businesses faced new challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis this spring. In response, the U.S. Small Business Administration implemented the Paycheck Protection Program, a provision included by the federal government in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act this March.

The PPP was designed to help keep America's workforce employed during the pandemic, and the program is accessible to small businesses, independent contractors, self-employed individuals and nonprofits, among other businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The SBA will forgive loans if employee retention criteria is met, according to SBA documents.

As of Aug. 6, more than 5 million loans totaling \$523.4 billion were dispersed, including \$41 billion in Texas. Tim Jeffcoat, district director of the SBA in Houston, said the program has been successful in retaining jobs but believes it is not enough for many businesses.

"Nobody knew when the CARES Act passed that [the coronavirus pandemic] was going to be something that went on for potentially a year or more. It was envisioned that 'Hey, we're going to give everybody two months' worth of payroll to get through this thing, and then we're all going to be fine.' That obviously didn't happen," he said. More than 6,700 organizations in the Cy-Fair area received loans from early April to late June, which saved more than 87,500 jobs, according to the SBA. By comparison, at least 50,000 local residents have filed for unemployment insurance benefits through the Texas Workforce Commission since mid-March.

Top recipients in Cy-Fair included Kilgore Industries, Noram Drilling Co., Clearwater Utilities, Pappas Restaurants and Luby's–all reportedly receiving between \$5 million-\$10 million.

Nearly 500 accommodation and food service businesses received loans in Cy-Fair, retaining more than 10,000 local jobs, including at Locatelli's, Local Table, Del Pueblo Mexican Restaurant, French Quarter Cajun Seafood, Floyd's Seafood and Ambriza Cypress.

Jeffcoat said it is important for businesses of all sizes to pay attention to what their customers are doing now because habits formed at this point may not change even after the pandemic.

"What we worry about is the business that says, 'I have a restaurant with 20 tables; I have a kitchen, but if I don't have people to put at those tables, I can't be open,'" Jeffcoat said. "Yes, you absolutely can be open. There's 100 different ways those meals can leave your kitchen and get into people's hands and have them put money in your pocket."



102 businesses \$150,000-\$999,999: 817 businesses \$50,000-\$149,000: 1,291 businesses \$10,000-\$49,000: 2,927 businesses

SOURCE: U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER CY-FAIR EDITION • AUGUST 2020 8 MEETING, TRAINING, & CONFERENCE ROOMS

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BACK-UP

Harris County prepares for potential eviction surge

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

HARRIS COUNTY Harris County commissioners unanimously voted to pump another \$10 million into a rental relief program at a July 28 meeting in an effort to prepare for what some housing advocates said is a burgeoning evictions crisis.

The new rental relief is enough to help roughly 6,000 additional renters, Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia said. The cap on the program was also raised from \$1,000 per recipient to \$1,200 per recipient, putting it closer to the average rental cost in the county, he said.

"I've heard from far too many of our neighbors who are hurting right now. I've also reached out and connected with the Houston Apartment Association, and all sides agree: these changes are the right way to go," Garcia said in a statement.

A federal moratorium on evictions

expired July 25, allowing landlords to resume evictions on federally backed rental properties, of which there are an estimated 501 in Harris County, according to the Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation.

Meanwhile, enhanced unemployment benefits expired Aug. 1, meaning anyone collecting unemployment is receiving \$600 less with each weekly payment. The boost was provided as part of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. U.S. Congress is working on a second stimulus package that could include a similar boost, but the details of when that could come to fruition are unknown.

In Harris County, more than 6,000 evictions have been filed in courts since the moratorium went into effect March 27, according to court data being collected by January Advisors, a data research firm. The county is also looking into investing into a legal defense pilot program to provide legal aid to renters facing eviction. However, the county's hands are tied when it comes to halting evictions entirely, and housing rights advocates said more needs to be done and that it needs to be done quickly.

TRACKING EVICTIONS

Evictions filed in Harris County courts declined at the start of the coronavirus pandemic but have been increasing in recent months.



SOURCE: JANUARY ADVISORS/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Jersey Village funds City Hall, pauses convention center in budget talks

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

JERSEY VILLAGE The city of Jersey Village is considering a budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year that cuts expenses by nearly 20% to \$16.9 million, down from \$21 million in 2019-20.

City staff and council members gathered July 20 to begin preliminary discussions about the budget. City Manager Austin Bleess said the city remains in good financial shape despite the coronavirus, but he still asked department leaders to keep budget requests down this year given the uncertainty of the future.

"Even as we grapple with a pandemic and economic uncertainty that has not been seen before, our budget funds our priorities," he said.

The city plans to move forward with an \$8 million capital improvement project to build a new City Hall south of Hwy. 290 in the upcoming Village Center development. However, plans have been temporarily paused for a golf course convention center project. The city previously hired the engineering firm PGAL to come up with a design but sent the project back to the drawing board in November when the cost estimate came in higher than expected.

Bleess said council members still expressed an interest in taking the project on, but said conversations will likely stay paused until after the city sells a tract of land within the Village Center.

The city is not likely to suffer any budget shortfalls for the current fiscal year, Bleess said.



"PEOPLE MAY BE ABLE TO FIND WAYS TO PAY OTHER BILLS, BUT IF THEY LOSE THEIR HOMES, IT LEADS TO A SPIRAL AND A CYCLE THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESCAPE."

RODNEY ELLIS, HARRIS COUNTY PRECINCT 1 COMMISSIONER

LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

Harris County Harris County officials collected feedback in July on a proposal to shift the county's existing flood control task force into a community resilience task force. The Community Resilience Task Force will collaborate with the proposed Infrastructure Resilience Team and provide a formal mechanism for community input on resilience issues in the county. As of press time, commissioners were slated to pick up the discussion and possibly have a vote of approval on the task force at an Aug. 11 meeting.

Jersey Village As of press time, the city of Jersey Village is preparing to host a public hearing on the fiscal year 2020-21 budget for the city's Crime Control and Prevention District on Aug. 17. The \$1.9 million preliminary budget includes \$223,000 in supplemental expenses.

MEETINGS WE COVER

Livestreams can be accessed via websites.

Jersey Village City Council will meet at 7 p.m. on Sept. 21. 713-466-2100 www.jerseyvillagetx.com

Harris County Commissioners Court will meet at 10 a.m. on Aug. 25. 713-698-1102 www.harriscountytx.gov





BUSINESS FEATURE

CUSTOM CREATIONS

Ice cream sandwiches range from \$5.50-\$8.50 depending on the number of bases, ice cream scoops and toppings.

Step 1: Choose a base

Sandwich base options include fruit pebble rice crispy treats, brownies, churros and cookies including chocolate chip, red velvet, oatmeal raisin and snickerdoodle, among others.

Step 2: Choose ice cream

Blue Bell ice cream flavors include options such as Krazy Kookie Dough, Sea Salt Caramel, Cookies 'n Cream, Buttered Pecan, Mint Chocolate Chip and Rainbow Sherbet.

Step 3: Choose toppings

MUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

From gummy bears and chocolate syrup to Snickers, Kit Kats and M&Ms, Gooey's offers a variety of candy, cookies, nuts and cereals to top everything off.



Gooey's Ice Cream Sandwiches

Cypress family serves up unique sweet treats, carnival food

here are no rules when creating custom desserts at Gooey's Ice Cream Sandwiches. With colorful options such as mint chocolate chip ice cream served on a warm brownie topped with a red velvet cookie and chocolate syrup, the Cypress shop offers new twists on a classic frozen treat.

"That's what makes it fun—the whole family can get something totally different and unique to their tastes and styles," said Ginger Jones, who owns the shop with her husband, Terrell.

After working in the hospitality industry for her entire career, Ginger said she was ready for something different, so she and her family embarked on the new venture in their own neighborhood. The goal has been to try different menu items that are not offered elsewhere in Cypress, the couple said.

Terrell continues to work in the oil and gas industry full time, helping out on the weekends, and their daughter also works at the shop during the week.

"Our kids are older now, so we were willing to take a little bit of a risk, and we came up with Gooey's," Ginger said. "We really want it to be an experience for the whole family. Everybody loves ice cream, and so we wanted to do a little twist on the ice cream sandwich and bring in fresh-baked cookies."

In addition to creative ice cream sandwiches with cookies, rice crispy treats, brownies, churro and bubble waffles as base options, Gooey's offers milkshakes, floats, and doughnut sundaes as well as fried treats including funnel cakes, Oreos and ice cream.

"Instead of having to wait for the rodeo to come

into town, you can have it year-round," Terrell said of specialty carnival food items on the menu.

Ginger said she hopes to experiment more with items such as edible cookie dough. Ultimately, she said she would like to expand Gooey's to nearby suburbs and eventually open a hot dog and potato bar with extensive topping options.

But the Joneses have not been immune to typical challenges businesses face in the first year of operations, including delays in the construction process and ongoing marketing issues.

"We're still getting people that are saying, 'Oh, I didn't know you were here,'" Terrell said.

On top of these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a drop in business.

"[During] spring break we totally ramped up and thought this was what summer was going to be like—busy every night," Ginger said. "And then nothing. We were hoping to pick up some ground this summer, but COVID was pretty devastating."

While Ginger said it was difficult for the business to survive solely on takeout orders, foot traffic at the shop began to pick up slightly once state restrictions on businesses started being lifted. Gooey's customers can take their treats to go or enjoy them inside at socially distanced tables.

The Joneses are committed to not only serving tasty treats, but they said they also prioritize giving back to the community by sponsoring local teams and through fundraisers for charitable causes.

"Our kids have been on various teams, so we know that fundraising is always a big part of that," Terrell said.



Ginger and Terrell Jones own the Cypress shop. (Danica Lloyd/Community Impact Newspaper)



The local shop offers carnival-style food. (Courtesy Gooey's Ice Cream Sandwiches)



Sandwiches are built with cookies, brownies and more. (Danica Lloyd/Community Impact Newspaper)

OTHER OPTIONS

In addition to creative ice cream sandwiches, Gooey's offers several other sweet treats including:

- funnel cakes and fried Oreos
- doughnut sundaes
- cookies and brownies
- milkshakes and floats

Gooey's Ice Cream Sandwiches

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DINING FEATURE

Orange chicken (\$10.95): Golden battered fried chicken is topped with an orange honey sauce. (Shawn Arrajj/Community Impact Newspaper)

Bananas Thai Cuisine

Menu at Cy-Fair eatery traced back to family recipes

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

hen Brodhi Atley goes grocery shopping to pick up supplies for the restaurant he manages—Bananas Thai Cuisine on FM 529 in Cy-Fair—he said his shopping cart looks a little different from the rest of the customers.

"When I walk out of the store, a lot of people will have carts filled with cans and boxes of stuff, and I'm just there with fruits and vegetables piled up," he said. "That's the basis of how we make our sauces."

Bananas Thai was founded in 2016 by Kay Munoz, Atley's mother, and the recipes are inspired by her upbringing eating authentic Thai food prepared by her Thailand native family, Atley said. Atley's grandmother grew up in a small village called Taling Chan, where the original Thailand floating market is held.

"We all kind of grew up eating her food," Atley said. "A lot of her recipes are carried down to what we're doing here."

Prior to moving to Houston, Munoz ran two other Thai restaurants in California, Atley said. The California restaurants were run with partners in ownership, whereas Bananas Thai is owned and operated entirely by Munoz, he said. "Here, she's able to really take that style that she learned from her mother and pass it down to all our customers," he said.

The expansive menu includes popular dishes that can be found at most Thai restaurants, such as drunken noodles, pad thai and a variety of curries. Atley said his family also endeavors to feature more distinct dishes, including pork spare ribs; spicy basil fish; and brown forest curry, a dish made with bell peppers, green beans, baby corn, bamboo shoot, broccoli, zucchini, eggplant, straw mushrooms, snow peas, carrots and cabbage in a housemade spicy plant-based curry paste.

"Whenever we're not serving customers, we're back chopping and making the pastes," Atley said. "Everything is made from scratch. That's where we're able to make our taste unique as well because we can really modify the ratios of what we put in."

The coronavirus pandemic has forced the eatery to adapt, but a drop in lunchtime traffic caused by the closure of nearby offices was offset by more people now working from home, Atley said. The restaurant is open for dine-in service, contactless delivery, takeout and curbside pickup, he said.

"We're here to serve our customers however they feel most comfortable," he said.



Yellow curry oxtail (\$19.95): Oxtail stew is served in a yellow curry sauce with steamed baby bok choy and white jasmine rice, topped with crispy fried onion. (Shawn Arrajj/Community Impact Newspaper)



Kay Munoz founded Bananas Thai Cuisine on FM 529 in 2016 with help from her son, Brodhi Atley. (Courtesy Bananas Thai Cuisine)

Bananas Thai Cuisine

15556 FM 529, Houston 281-463-4399 www.bananasthaicuisine.com Hours: Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-8 p.m., Sat.-Sun. noon-8 p.m.





NONPROFIT

BY DANICA LLOYD

HomeAid Houston

Builders partner to serve homeless population

rom veterans and victims of domestic violence to developmentally delayed adults and families with children, nonprofits across the Greater Houston area specialize in meeting the needs of homeless individuals. HomeAid Houston partners with these groups to supply materials and labor needed to build transitional homeless shelters.

The Greater Houston Builders Association, located in Cy-Fair, launched HomeAid Houston in 2003 to support the homeless through new housing opportunities and outreach programming. Since then, its projects have provided more than 20,000 beds for homeless individuals in the region, according to Executive Director Carole Brady.

"[COVID-19] has taught us that home right now means everything," Brady said. "If you were dealing with home insecurity now during this, that's a really frightening place to be."

HomeAid Houston typically does two large construction projects annually, which start with a nonprofit filling out an application. Officials then conduct a site visit, examine the health of the nonprofit's board and volunteer pool, and determine the financial sustainability of the project before making their final selections.

While nonprofits raise funding for these projects, builders offer discounted rates, helping to cut expenses up to 55%, Brady said.

HomeAid Houston also fundraises to conduct four smaller projects every year at no cost to nonprofits. These projects are valued at under \$10,000 and can include bathroom or kitchen renovations and food pantry expansions, among others.

With a background in working with homeless families for more than 20 years herself, Brady said she loves seeing nonprofits help their clients grow and become self-sufficient. During her first few weeks on the job, she toured one of the group's partner nonprofits, Boys and Girls County, a Hockley-based home for children whose families are in crisis.

"This little girl who probably couldn't be more than 10 walked up to me and said, 'Do you want to see my room? For the very first time in my life, I have my very own room,'" Brady said. "She said it was the safest place in the world, and I thought if that doesn't speak volumes about what we do and why we do it, I don't know what does."

HomeAid Houston has completed more than 55 projects for organizations, including the Houston Area Women's Center, United States Veterans Initiative, Mission of Yahweh and the Krause Children's Center.

"The nonprofits are so grateful. They're already working so very hard to keep things going," she said. "To have an organization come in and say, 'You know what, you're right—your flooring is falling apart, and you need new lighting, and you need more space. We're going to be able to do that for you,' it means they can serve more people and do more for the community."



HomeAid Houston partnered with Boys and Girls Country to open three cottages, including the Woodforest Charitable Foundation Cottage earlier this year. (Photos courtesy Boys and Girls Country)



Boys and Girls Country houses children whose families are in crisis.



HomeAid Houston supports nonprofits working to prevent homelessness.





Residents enjoy time in cottages built with the help of HomeAid Houston.

HELPING THE HOMELESS

Since launching in 2003, Home Aid Houston has:

- completed more than **55 projects** with the help of at least **50 builders**;
- added more than \$14.5 million in real estate to the Houston area; and
- provided beds for more than 20,000 homeless men, women and children.

HomeAid Houston

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INSPIRE EDUCATE TRANSFORM



CONTINUED FROM 1

Despite her choice to stay, dozens of Norchester homeowners have sold their flooded homes-some to investors intending to flip houses for a profit and at least 47 others since 1999 to the Harris County Flood Control District as part of its home buyout program.

The intent of the HCFCD's voluntary home buyout program since its inception in 1985 has been to purchase properties and replace them with community parks, vacant lots or natural wetlands. This allows families at the highest risk of flooding to relocate, eliminates future flood damage and allows the flood plain to store stormwater, according to district officials.

(N)

of directors. "[Home buy-

outs] are clearly a correction

The HCFCD's goal is to own

every property in neighbor-

hoods of interest, clear out all

infrastructure and preserve it

as open space, Wade said, but

this is difficult because of the

voluntary nature of the pro-

gram. In Cypress, Grantwood

has had the most buyouts at

135 between 1999-2019, and a

county park has been installed

The district has the option

to use eminent domain to

force homeowners out of the

flood plain if HCFCD officials

believe lives are in danger,

but federal grant funds are at

stake in that scenario, he said.

county, being neglectful to

allow folks to live in harm's

way in certain situations?

How can we allow them to be

in such a risky situation? It's

"At what point are we, the

in the neighborhood.

[to past mistakes]."

James Wade, the manager of property acquisition services at the HCFCD, said the district has purchased about 3,000 properties countywide that meet buyout criteria in the last 35 years, but another 6,000 remain on a list of properties they are interested in purchasing.

Of the 410 home buyouts the HCFCD has conducted in the Cypress Creek watershed, 241 have been in Cypress neighborhoods located along the creek, including Grantwood, Norchester, Lake Cypress Estates and Windwood. In the same 35 years, more than 13,200 homes in the watershed flooded, so about three buyouts have taken place for every 100 flooded homes, according to district data.

"Our buyout program focuses on areas that are several feet deep in the flood plain, ... basically places [that] should have never been built to begin with," Wade said.

The need for buyouts

HCFCD Deputy Executive Director Matt Zeve said when homes are situated low in the flood plain and no other flood mitigation projects will reduce the risk of flooding, home buyouts can be the best

CY-FAIR HOME BUYOUTS 1985-2020



a gray area," Wade said.

While home buyouts may help correct past development mistakes and offer an option to homeowners, local flooding experts agree it is not an ideal long-term solution for Cypress Creek's chronic flooding.

"A lot of folks have had repetitive flooding, but is it cost effective to buy, demolish the home, relocate the family, pay the relocation costs and whatnot-or could there be a project to ease the flooding?" Wade said.

Funding the program

Home buyouts can be completed through three different programs. Community Block Development Grants are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, while FEMA funds the Hazard Mitigation

Grant and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs. Wade said about 98% of funding for Harris County buyouts have come from FEMA grants.

Because more funding is available in the wake of a presidentially declared disaster such as a hurricane, Wade said large buyout waves are influenced by federal disasters. In response to Harvey, the HCFCD received a \$165 million federal grant with a local match of \$55 million, he said.

Home buyout funds were also included in the HCF-CD's \$2.5 billion bond Harris County voters approved in August 2018. It allocated \$46.8 million in local money for buyouts in the Cypress Creek watershed to help secure another \$140.5 million in federal grants.

Of the 4,000 or so county

residents who volunteered for buyouts following Harvey, only about 1,100 were eligible for a buyout, Wade said. Since Harvey, the HCFCD has purchased 106 homes in the Cypress Creek watershed, where at least 8,750 homes flooded during the storm.

Wade said by the time the HCFCD had secured funding after Harvey, about 30% of the 1,100 homeowners whose applications had been approved for buyouts had already renovated with flood insurance money or sold their homes to investors.

"A lot of investors come knocking at their doors, and they've got money in their pocket, and they're ready to close right then," he said. "Those investors are counting on desperate owners who want to get out of there, so the investors can pick it up

NAVIGATING THE BUYOUT PROCESS

Property acquisitions through the Harris County Flood Control District's home buyout process typically take one to two years.

SECURE FUNDING: 8-18 MONTHS

After a major flooding event, the HCFCD prepares and submits a grant application for the purchase and demolition of selected properties to the state. If approved, a HCFCD representative meets with each property owner to explain the process.

PROPERTY APPRAISAL: 2 MONTHS

Assigned real estate appraisers complete property inspections, assessing fair market value or preflood market value to determine how much can be paid.

AGREEMENT FOR SALE: 1 MONTH

The Harris County Real Property Division presents an offer to the property owner. This offer may be appealed at the homeowner's expense.

RELOCATION BENEFITS: 1 MONTH

The HCRPD estimates the amount of relocation benefits to be paid to the property owner. This can include moving costs and housing or rental supplements for a comparable property out of the flood plain.

Closing takes place upon receipt of title work and funding.

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

for pennies on the dollar and make money off of it. That's what we're competing against. ... A lot of people don't have the luxury of waiting."

A lengthy process

According to HCFCD officials, the home buyout process can play out years after a disastrous flood.

Wade said it only takes about four months to process the appraisal, negotiate the sale, pay out relocation costs and finalize the closing. However, before any of that can happen, he said securing funding can take up to 18 months.

While the funding programs may vary, homeowners who go through the HCFCD's home buyout program follow the same basic process.

After a property owner volunteers for a buyout, district officials determine eligibility by considering factors such as the source of the property's flooding, its location and depth within the flood plain, the cost effectiveness of the buyout as a solution, and the potential for future preservation or flood mitigation projects.

Once eligible properties are identified and funding is secured, a real estate appraiser assesses the property's preflood market value and presents an offer to the homeowner.

Dick Smith, the president of the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, said he sold his home to the HCFCD after it flooded six times between 1982 and 2017, despite being elevated specifically to limit the risk of flooding.

"After Harvey, we decided it was time to bite the bullet," he said.

Smith volunteered his home for a buyout shortly after Harvey and moved into a new home in July 2018. He said the biggest challenge was that his home had to be vacant upon closing.

"I had retired in 1996, so I had been on a fixed pension for 20-some years, and costs were going up this whole time, [and] we were having a financial crisis," he said. "So I couldn't go out and just buy







flooding, so this

The family from House A is relocated outside the flood plain, and the risk of future flooding is eliminated here.

frequently due to

The flood plain is restored to its natural function as stormwater storage, benefiting houses B and C.

Ready for a buyout? Harris County property owners can volunteer to be included in a grant application at www.hcfcd.org/homebuyout or 713-684-4020.

another house [without the buyout funding]."

Finding recovery solutions

Local legislators, nonprofits and other entities are making efforts to supplement HCF-CD's buyout progress.

U.S. Rep. Lizzie Fletcher, D-Houston, said constituents whose homes have repeatedly flooded and local government officials seeking federal funding have consistent frustrations about how long it takes to receive assistance.

Through conversations with the HCFCD, Fletcher said she learned about obstacles to securing disaster mitigation funding from FEMA that often delay needed recovery work. Legislation she proposed would allow certain mitigation projects, including land acquisition for home buyouts, to begin immediately following a disaster without the risk of losing potential FEMA funds.

The Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act passed in the U.S. House in December and has been referred to the Senate's Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs as of press time.

"A lot of what I've seen ... is that there are a lot of unintended consequences from the way that legislation is written or the way that certain rules are then implemented," she said. "But here with something like buyouts ... it's a real impediment for [homeowners] making a choice to move forward, [and] it's an impediment for communities not to be able to go ahead with projects like buyouts."

Three years after Harvey, recovery work is ongoing for families who did not have flood insurance and were ineligible for buyouts. Volunteers from local churches are still helping rebuild homes along Cypress Creek through Cypress-based nonprofit Hope Disaster Recovery, Executive Director Godfrey Hubert said.

"For the most part, there are not many people who are still thinking about Harvey, but we're still mucking and gutting homes from Harvey,"

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Eligibility depends on whether the Harris County property meets requirements from the federal funding source and these considerations from the HCFCD:

- the source of flooding; the location and depth
- within the flood plain;
 the cost effectiveness of a buyout as a solution for the property's flooding problem.
- the potential for future flood plain preservation and/or flood damage reduction projects; and
- compatibility with community and natural values.

he said. "There's still homes in Cy-Fair that are not rebuilt. They're still gutted. When you drive past them, you can't tell, but you go inside of them, and their sheetrock is still cut."

Hope Disaster Recovery's case managers find resources to help families in flood-damaged homes who could not afford flood insurance or who received FEMA funding for repairs but had to make tough decisions with renovation money.

The nonprofit has invested nearly \$13 million in unmet needs assistance for underserved populations since Harvey, Hubert said. Additionally, the group has done \$2 million worth of home repairs, having rebuilt 100 homes.

Hubert said for families living in poverty, selling their home and moving is not a feasible option.

"A family that has lived in a house for 90 years, they sell the house and get \$40,000-\$50,000 to move into an apartment where they have to pay monthly rent," he said. "Two years later, there's nothing left. But as long as they own that house, they can live in it for free. It's not as simple as just selling."

Tell us what you think. Comment at communityimpact.com

GETTING SCHOOLED DURING COVID-19

Students attending school in person this fall will notice several new health and safety protocols throughout the day.

SOURCE: CY-FAIR ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Before school

- Parents are responsible for screening children for COVID-19 symptoms, including cough, fever, and loss of taste or <u>smell.</u>
- Students must stay home if they show signs of the virus or have been in contact in the last 14 days with someone who has it.

Bus ride to and from campus

- Students must wear a face mask on buses and sanitize hands upon entering.
- Weather permitting, windows and roof vents will be open for ventilation.
- Drivers will disinfect seats and hightouch areas frequently, and buses will be fogged with disinfecting solution following afternoon routes.

Meals on campus

- Breakfast will be a grab-and-go option, and menu items will be limited during lunch.
- Cafeteria lines during lunch will be monitored and limited to reduce congestion, and self-serve options will not be available.
- Visitors will not be permitted at least through the first semester.

Classroom time

- Social distancing will be enforced in classrooms and common areas.
- Students and staff will wear face masks in classrooms as developmentally appropriate when social distancing is not feasible.
- Teacher desks will have plexiglass shields, and shields will be used for student desks when distancing is not feasible.
- When developmentally appropriate, students may be asked to wipe down their desks with disinfectant at the end of each class.
- One-way traffic may be implemented in hallways between class rotations, and class dismissals may be staggered.

After-school extracurricular activities

- All athletics equipment and surfaces will be disinfected before and after use.
- Fine arts students will wear masks when singing, acting, dancing and playing instruments. Performances will be livestreamed.

LEARNING OPTIONS

📯 In-person learning

- Students report daily to campus in a face-to-face classroom setting.
- If a student needs to stay home due to illness, he or she can tune in to classes virtually.

Cy-Fair ISD parents must make a final decision between two learning options for 2020-21 by Aug. 25, but they will be permitted to change their selections after the first grading period.

Both

- Programs offer the same curriculum.
- The same grading and attendance policies are in place.
- Students can participate in extracurricular activities.
- Special education, gifted and talented, English as a second language and dyslexia services are available in both platforms.
- High school students can meet semester exam exemption criteria.

Remote learning

- Students engage in twoway, live virtual instruction during school hours.
- Curbside meals are available for pickup, with the cost depending on eligibility.

SOURCE: CY-FAIR ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

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but the board approved postponing until Sept. 8 at a July 21 board meeting. Superintendent Mark Henry said delaying the start of in-person instruction will provide more time for the district to obtain devices and for the community to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

"I'll just tell you right up front there's no good answer," he said to parents and teachers who shared a range of concerns with both virtual and in-person instructional plans during the July 21 meeting. "If there was a good answer, if there were an easy answer, we would lay it out for you, and everyone would be happy. But there are no perfect answers."

Both learning methods include district curriculum that meets state standards; the same grading, attendance and accountability guidelines; required services such as special education, gifted and talented, and English as a second language; and the option to participate in extracurricular activities.

The Texas Education Agency has mandated public school systems offer on-campus instruction for all grades served by a campus for every student, but students may also legitimately earn credit through virtual instruction due to the pandemic.

"There will almost certainly be situations that necessitate temporary school closure due to positive COVID-19 cases in schools," TEA officials said in June 28 guidance for 2020-21 planning. "Parents, educators and school administrators should be prepared for this in the event that it occurs, while actively working to prevent it through prevention and mitigation practices."

New safety protocols

Several preventive measures will be in place for staff and students reporting to CFISD campuses, including social distancing in classrooms and common areas and daily health screenings.

Dr. Anu Seshadri, an internal medicine and pediatric physician at the University of California in Los Angeles, said because children who contract the virus do not often exhibit symptoms even when they have COVID-19, procedures such as health screenings might not always be effective.

As of Aug. 10, 10,696 Harris County residents

under the age of 20 had tested positive for COVID-19, and one child has died from the virus since March, according to Harris County Public Health.

"When [children] do get infected with COVID-19, most of them don't even show any symptoms—at least for now," Seshadri said. "Of course, that will vary if the child is considered high risk, but the personal fear that I have is what they take home and who is at home."

Face masks will be required for students and staff on school buses, in hallways, in common areas such as cafeterias and in classrooms when social distancing is not feasible. Disposable masks will be provided for students who do not have them, officials said.

On July 21, the board also approved the purchase of plexiglass desk shields for every teacher in addition to shields for student desks and tables where needed. Soap and hand sanitizer dispensers will be located throughout all facilities, and student desks will be sanitized between class periods.

These and other provisions are included in the \$10 million set aside in the 2020-21 budget for COVID-19 expenses.

Students and teachers who test positive for COVID-19 will be isolated immediately, and the areas they contacted will be disinfected, according to CFISD Director for Health Services Christiane Bernal. She said whether students or staff would be required to quarantine would vary, and the district would consult with Harris County Public Health to assess what next steps were needed.

"[Quarantining procedure] depends on the prolonged contact that has occurred. Did the teacher wear a mask? Was there social distancing occurring? How long were they together?" she said.

District officials said they hope to receive more specific guidance from Harris County as they continue making decisions leading up to the 2020-21 school year.

"In the meantime, we're also hoping that our local health authorities will provide more concrete, specific metrics to school districts," CFISD Chief of Staff Teresa Hull said at an Aug. 6 meeting. "That's been a challenge. There has not been agreement among local health authorities across the state or across the nation."

cually.



IF THERE WAS A GOOD ANSWER, IF THERE WERE AN EASY ANSWER, WE WOULD LAY IT OUT FOR YOU, AND EVERYONE WOULD BE HAPPY. BUT THERE ARE NO PERFECT ANSWERS."

MARK HENRY, CY-FAIR ISD SUPERINTENDENT

Opting for virtual learning

Families looking to take advantage of the district's remote program, CFISD Connect, can expect to see improvements over the platform used during the spring semester, Henry said.

"Our virtual platform is going to be 10 times better than it was in the spring, and I know many of you are glad to hear that," he said.

The district's virtual learning program through a learning management system called Schoology offers real-time, live instruction during school hours. Depending on the students' schedules, some electives, such as welding and cosmetology courses, may require students to report to campuses for certain activities, according to the district.

CFISD Chief Technology Officer Paula Ross said the district will have enough devices for all students regardless of need and enough internet hot spots for students who do not have access otherwise by the end of the fall semester. The initiative to purchase 80,000 Lenovo Chromebooks and internet hotspots totaled \$44 million.

Due to the pervasiveness of the coronavirus pandemic countywide, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and Dr. Umair Shah, the executive director of Harris County Public Health, recommended local schools start the year off virtually and keep campuses closed until at least October in a July 20 letter to superintendents.

In an online survey released by *Community Impact Newspaper*, some parents said they are planning to opt for online learning due to health concerns, and others said they want to avoid having their children be part of a continuous cycle of schools opening and closing due to community spread of the coronavirus.

"My child will be learning virtually this year," CFISD parent Mary Guerra-Mendoza said via the survey. "We made this decision as she has already once before caught the virus, and it was hard to watch her go through it. ... Having all students learning remotely through virtual classes like they had them doing at the end of the school year I think was easier on both the students and teachers."

Parents, teachers share feedback

While district students have the option to conduct their work remotely, all CFISD teachers will be required to do their jobs on campus regardless of if they are teaching virtually, in-person only or a combination of the two, officials said.

In a survey of 210 CFISD educators published in the summer newsletter from the Cy-Fair chapter of the Texas State Teachers Association, 95% of respondents said they believed teachers should have the choice to work in person or remotely, and 89% said they do not feel safe teaching in person.

The organization's president, Donna Lord, who is also a CFISD middle school teacher, asked administrators and board members at the Aug. 6 meeting to be transparent when making decisions that will affect thousands of teachers in September.

"Many decisions have been made by the district reopening committee and shared with ... various members of the community—but not with the teachers," Lord said. "Teachers are hearing specific information from non-official sources about how our classrooms will run, yet most of our principals have not communicated with their staff."

Seshadri said older teachers and those with pre-existing conditions face added risks. Additionally, teachers have the new responsibility of enforcing social distancing and face mask policies, which could bring stress, she said.

"Personally, I think a teacher that is going to teach kindergartners or first graders are put in a little bit more of a difficult situation compared to one that

IN CASE OF COVID-19 🎘 🤇

The district plans to implement the following procedures in the case of suspected, presumptive or confirmed COVID-19 cases among students or staff to prevent community spread.



- If at home, the student will remain at home.
- If at school, the student will be cared for in an isolated space until picked up.
- Parents and guardians will be advised to seek medical care for their child.
- Designated staff will notify those who may have been exposed and isolate campus areas as needed.

Staff

- Staff will be instructed to stay home and seek medical care.
- CFISD Health Services will notify local or state officials as required by respective orders.
- Officials will notify those who may have been exposed and isolate campus areas as needed.
- Individuals must follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines before returning to work, including potential quarantines.

SOURCE: CY-FAIR ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

teaches 11th graders who understand social distancing and face mask policies," she said. "[Teachers] have to look at their own health status. If you're a kindergarten teacher and you're considered high risk, you might consider not returning to school."

Despite concerns shared by their peers, many parents in Cy-Fair are ready to return to school routines.

Cindy Schluter, the parent of a CFISD senior, said she supports the district's plan to reopen campuses and plans to send her child back to school.

"We do not have anyone in our household in an at-risk group, and I feel it is critical for kids to be back at school," Schluter said. "We need the school districts to make decisions based on data and not emotion. Data does not warrant a shutdown for schools."

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Build-out year: 1985

Homes sold in past year: 93

Square footage: 1,056-3,881

Home values: \$137,000-\$207,000

HOA dues (estimated): \$350 annually

Schools: Cy-Fair ISD (Bang Elementary School, Cook Middle School, Jersey Village High School)

Property taxes (in dollars):

Lone Star College System	0.11
Harris County Dept. of Education	0.01
Harris County	0.41
Harris County ESD No. 9	0.06
Harris County Flood Control District	0.03
Harris Health System	0.17
Cy-Fair ISD	1.37
Port of Houston Authority	0.01
Total (per \$100 valuation)	2.17*
*TOTAL DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR HARRIS COUN MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICTS.	NTY

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA PROVIDED BY DEBBIE MARSHALL





9927 Villa Verde 4 bed / 2.5 bath 2,493 sq. ft. Sold for \$160,001-\$185,000 on May 12



10123 Red Wolf Lane 4 bed / 2.5 bath 2,366 sq. ft. Sold for \$185,001-\$215,000 on July 24



9975 Burntfork St. 4 bed / 2.5 bath 2,659 sq. ft. Sold for \$185,001-\$215,000 on June 23



10031 Burntfork St. 4 bed / 2.5 bath 2,499 sq. ft. Sold for \$215,001-\$250,000 on June 11

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MARKET DATA FOR JULY

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HOMES SOLD/AVERAGE DAYS ON THE MARKET

	77040	77064	77065	77070	77095	77429	77433
\$149,999 or under	1/3	4/3	-	-	-	1/144	-
\$150,000-\$199,999	4/11	13/36	7/6	13/22	10/7	14/16	30/14
\$200,000-\$299,999	13/22	29/71	18/11	36/45	74/34	93/37	77/37
\$300,000-\$399,999	7/62	2/37	5/27	3/20	17/73	47/51	70/61
\$400,000-\$499,999	1/6	-	3/30	-	3/43	13/36	31/80
\$500,000-\$599,999	-	-	-	1/12	1/51	11/93	16/75
\$600,000-\$799,999	-	-	-	-	-	11/49	15/54
\$800,000-\$999,999	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/7
\$1 million +	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/136





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REAL ESTATE



AUGUST 2020 COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE DATA

The average rental rate per square foot has dipped in Cy-Fair's office market since the start of the year. Meanwhile, industrial construction has slowed, with three buildings under construction compared to 10 in April.

TOTAL SQUARE FEET OF SPACE



18.8 million 19 million



MARKET DATA PROVIDED BY CALDWELL COS. 7904 N. SAM HOUSTON PARKWAY, FOURTH FLOOR HOUSTON, TX 77064 COLLEGE STATION | HOUSTON | THE WOODLANDS

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