



IMPACTS

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Hospital works to bring vaccines to marginalized

HEALTH CARE

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2021 LOCAL VOTER GUIDE

VOTER GUIDE

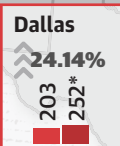
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POPCORN BLAST

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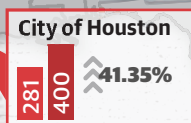
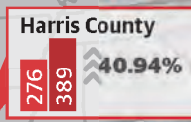
A NATIONAL TREND



Violent crime, including murders, is up in Harris County, but data from other large cities shows similar increases.

■ Murders in 2019 ■ Murders in 2020

*PRELIMINARY



[THE] SHARP INCREASE IN HOMICIDES IS PART OF A NATIONAL TREND THAT STRUCK MAJOR U.S. CITIES IN 2020 ... SOCIOECONOMIC PRESSURES FELT ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE CAUSING CRIME TO RISE ACROSS THE U.S.

COLIN CEPURAN, SENIOR JUSTICE RESEARCH POLICY ANALYST, HARRIS COUNTY JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY, CITY OF HOUSTON, DALLAS POLICE DEPARTMENT, CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT, LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

County officials take aim at increase in violent crime

Cy-Fair voices among those citing bail bond practices, sparking debate

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

A rise in violent crime in Harris County has local officials urgently seeking solutions to combat the trend. However, a debate over the origins of the increase—including a 43% year-over-year increase in murder and a 33% increase in aggravated assaults—has sparked questions of exactly what is to blame and what should be done.

Some law enforcement officials have attributed the rise in murders to a mix of the COVID-19 pandemic and bail bond practices in the county, a

group that includes Art Acevedo, former Houston Police Department chief. At the same time, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has made fixing what he called a “broken” bail bond system an emergency item during the 87th Texas Legislature, citing the increasing crime rates as evidence of a problem.

But when it comes to the actual bail reform to have taken place in Harris County, which has exclusively pertained to misdemeanors, data does not suggest a link to the increase

CONTINUED ON 32

COVID-19 leads to rise in anxiety, depression

BY DANICA LLOYD

Cypress-based Amy Wine Counseling Center has had a 35% year-over-year increase in new clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. CEO Amy Wine said she has seen elevated levels of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation amid a season of unknowns.

“Right now, a lot of times you’ve got to be in survival mode, which means do only what you’ve got to do to get through the day, and everything else can wait,” she said.

Residents continue to deal with financial instability, negative effects of prolonged isolation, changes in

CONTINUED ON 34

COPING WITH COVID-19

The Rice University-led COVID-19 Registry measures mental health symptoms reported by local residents. Data shown is as of mid-March.

Percentage reporting being bothered by:



SOURCE: RICE UNIVERSITY'S COVID-19 REGISTRY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

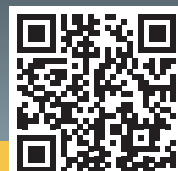


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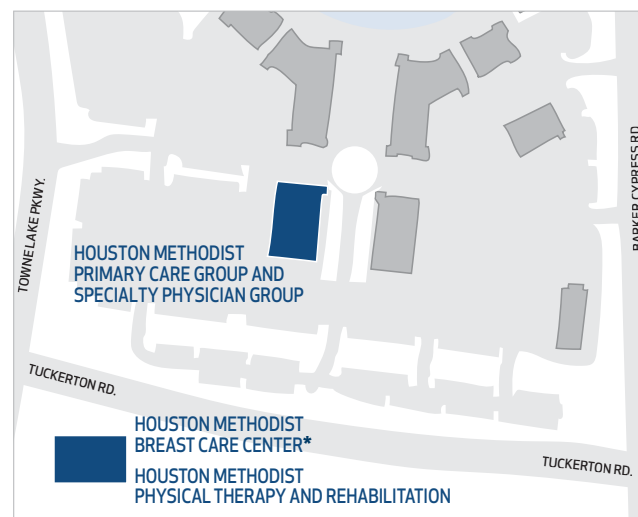


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Community Impact Newspaper teams include general managers, editors, reporters, graphic designers, sales account executives and sales support, all immersed and invested in the communities they serve.

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THIS ISSUE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS MONTH



FROM EMILY: Jersey Village residents will soon have the opportunity to vote in their city elections. Our Local Voter Guide features a sample ballot and candidate Q&As (see Page 22). We also summarize the history of Cy-Hope, which celebrated its 10th anniversary this spring (see Page 31). We hope you take time this spring to get outdoors and enjoy the many farmers markets, new businesses, restaurants and events happening in our community once again.

Emily Heineman, **GENERAL MANAGER**

FROM SHAWN: The effects of the coronavirus pandemic have been seen in many areas of life. Our stories this month take a look at two less obvious consequences: the toll taken on mental health and an upswing in violent crime. Crime trends have been seen in large cities across the U.S., but some local officials said bail bond practices are partially to blame. We take a look at the data, what criminal justice experts are saying and how the county plans to address the trend.

Shawn Arraji, **SENIOR EDITOR**



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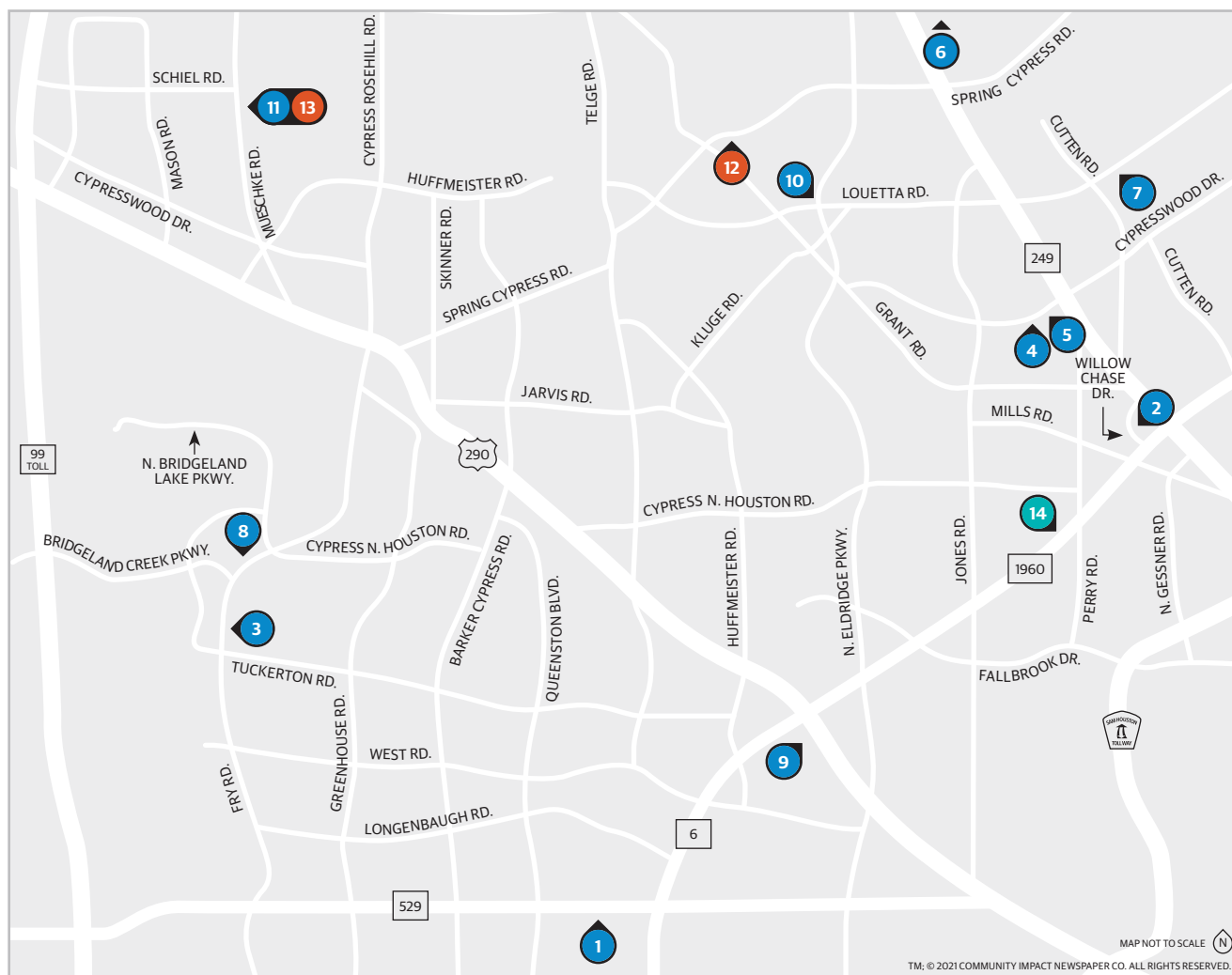
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NOW OPEN

- 1 Uptown Beauty Supply** opened a 12,000-square-foot store March 5 at 16317 FM 529, Ste. A, Houston, within a shopping center anchored by Dick's Sporting Goods. The beauty supply store carries a variety of products, including hair dye, hairpieces, skin care, makeup and hair styling appliances. 281-815-5098. www.uptownbeauty.co
- 2** The newest location of **Ogle School** opened Feb. 22 at 12974A Willow Chase Drive, Houston. Classes at Ogle School prepare students for careers in the beauty industry, and full-time and part-time

schedules are available. Financial aid is available for qualified individuals. Hair, skin and nail services performed by students and supervised by licensed professionals are available to the public. Due to COVID-19, appointments are required and are currently limited to haircuts, styling, hair color, highlights, chemical texturizing and skin care. 713-487-2060. www.ogleschool.edu

- 3** A new location of **Nothing Bundt Cakes** opened in early March at 9822 Fry Road, Ste. 170, Cypress. The bakery offers Bundt cakes in various sizes and flavors, including classic vanilla, chocolate chocolate chip, white chocolate raspberry, red

velvet, confetti, carrot, lemon, marble and pecan praline in addition to rotating seasonal flavors. Pickup and delivery services are available through online ordering. This is the company's first Cypress bakery. 281-671-0775. www.nothingbundtcakes.com

- 4** The fifth location of gourmet kolache and doughnut shop **Karma Kolache** opened March 6 at 10211 Cypresswood Drive, Ste. 100, Houston—the former location of Pin's Donuts. Kolache flavors range from cheeseburger and smoked brisket to boudin and pepperoni pizza. Cinnamon rolls, apple fritters, cake doughnuts, breakfast sandwiches and



Little Woodrow's

COURTESY LITTLE WOODROW'S

coffee drinks are also on the menu. 832-604-6670. www.facebook.com/karmakolachecypresswood

- 5 Kiddie Academy of Cypresswood** opened in late January at 13909 Mando-lin Drive, Houston, near the intersection of Hwy. 249 and Cypresswood Drive. The 10,500-square-foot educational child care facility is bringing 35 new jobs to the community and is expected to serve 187 students ages 3-12. Curriculum at Kiddie Academy of Cypresswood promotes intellectual, social, physical and emotional growth, officials said. 346-388-6600. www.kiddieacademy.com

- 6** Bar and grill franchise **Little Woodrow's** opened its eighth Houston-area location in Tomball on Feb. 23. Located at 11241 Timber Tech Ave., Tomball, Little Woodrow's offers a full bar with drinks, such as cocktails and Texas craft beers. The Tomball location offers beer from local Houston breweries, such as Karbach Brewing Co. and Saint Arnold Brewing Co. In addition to daily drink specials and food items, the location offers an outdoor patio. 281-516-9993. www.littlewoodrows.com

- 7 Bimbimbox**, an Asian grill and tea bar, had a soft opening March 31 at 10111 Louetta Road, Ste. 800, Houston. The new concept is based on the popular Korean rice dish bibimbap and will allow patrons to create their own Bimbimbox with their choice of savory grilled meats, hearty vegetables and homemade sauces. Fresh-brewed loose-leaf teas topped with boba will also be available in a variety of flavors. 281-789-0803. www.bimbimbox.com

- 8** A new location of **Kumon Math and**

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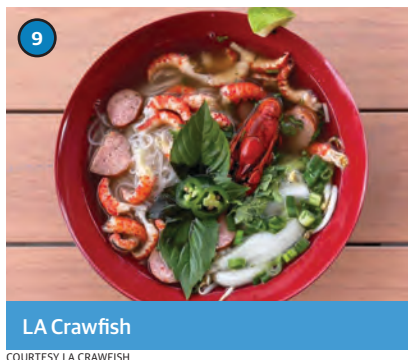
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LA Crawfish

COURTESY LA CRAWFISH

Reading Program is now open in the Bridgeland area at 10611 Fry Road, Ste. B2-200, Cypress. The education center offers an individualized reading and math curriculum for students from age 3 through high school. The new location can book eight students per half-hour with some flexibility depending on grade level. Staffers at the center are following COVID-19 safety precautions, and masks are required for in-person instruction. Online classes are also available. 936-931-4440. www.kumon.com/cypress-bridgeland

9 Vietnamese crawfish eatery **LA Crawfish** opened in February at 19841 Hwy. 290, Houston, near the FM 1960 intersection. In addition to live crawfish, the restaurant offers seafood items, such as po' boys, oysters, crab and shrimp, as well as Vietnamese dishes, such as rice, pho and noodles. Some fusion items are also on the menu, including crawfish pho and crawfish empanadas. 832-688-8755. www.thelacrawfish.com

10 Music school **Back to Rock** opened March 22 at 13215 Grant Road, Cypress. The business offers music lessons, including private lessons for individuals, group lessons and lessons for glee clubs and bands. The facility offers camps and can also host birthday parties. Owner Caroline Dabney runs the business with her mother, Barbara; both of them are pianists and piano teachers. 832-559-7047. <http://cypress.bachtorock.com>

11 Ayo Sopitan opened the moving service **College Hunks of Copperfield** on Feb. 19 at 16326 Mueschke Road, Cypress.



Back to Rock

COURTESY BACK TO ROCK

Services include junk removal and general labor, including furniture moving, packing and home staging. The business serves the Cypress, Katy and Copperfield areas. 281-645-6042. www.collegehunks.com/copperfield

Mobile exterior painting company **Spray-Net** began serving the greater North Houston area in February and early March of this year. The company offers exterior painting services for surfaces, such as aluminum and vinyl sliding, stucco and brick. In addition to exterior paint jobs, the company also services front and garage doors, windows and kitchen cabinets. Spray-Net operates in Cypress and Tomball, among other communities. 877-457-7729. www.spray-net.com

COMING SOON

12 Officials with **Farmer's Insurance-Williams Agency LLC** plan to start operating out of their newly constructed building at 13145 Spring Cypress Road, Bldg. 1, Ste. B, Cypress, in April. The team held a soft opening in March and will be working from home in the meantime. The full-service insurance brokerage firm offers homeowners, auto and business insurance as well as workers compensation, general liability and RV and boat insurance. 281-503-1988.

13 **The Market Home Decor, Gifts, DIY** is slated to open in April at 16326 Mueschke Road, Ste. E4, Cypress. This is the retailer's second location, having expanded from Market Street in Tomball. Products include farmhouse and vintage home decor and gifts, including The Round Top Collection, Scentsational Candles, Brumate, Tula Blue necklaces



House of Pies features an extensive menu of pie flavors and other desserts.

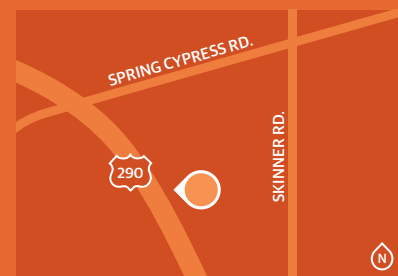
COURTESY HOUSE OF PIES

FEATURED IMPACT

COMING SOON

Officials with **House of Pies** confirmed the restaurant's fifth location is slated to open this fall at 25686 Hwy. 290, Cypress—the former location of PDQ. The eatery specializes in pies with flavors ranging from lemon icebox and strawberry cream cheese to sweet potato, buttermilk, coconut cream, German chocolate and French silk. Cakes, cheesecakes and other baked goods are also on the menu. In addition to specialty sweets, House of Pies also offers an extensive breakfast menu, burgers, sandwiches, and lunch and dinner options, such as chicken fried

chicken, fish and chips, grilled pork chops and steak. House of Pies has one location in The Woodlands and three in Houston. www.houseofpies.com



and Studio 67 Rugs. The business also sells DIY supplies and hosts workshops. 281-650-4099. www.themarkethomedecor.com

RELOCATIONS

14 Full-service sign company **Splendor Signs** has relocated from 11115 Mills Road, Ste. 113, Cypress, to a new, larger location at 9420 FM 1960, Houston. After lease space at the previous locations, company officials said they now own their own locations, which includes 8,000 square feet of warehouse space in addition to backyard and front yard areas. The family-owned company can create all kinds of signs, including printing, banners and car wraps. For customers who do not know

what they want, designers can produce designs on-site and give a free estimate. 281-970-8652. www.splendorsigns.com

ANNIVERSARIES

The Greater Houston LGBT Chamber of Commerce celebrated its fifth anniversary Feb. 24, marking half a decade of connecting LGBTQ allies and community members through business opportunities. The organization is open to all and serves members throughout the Greater Houston area. The newly formed LGBT Chamber Foundation raises funds for initiatives that address economic inequity within the LGBTQ community. www.houstonlgbtchamber.com

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Harris County sues TxDOT over I-45 overhaul proposal

BY EMMA WHALEN

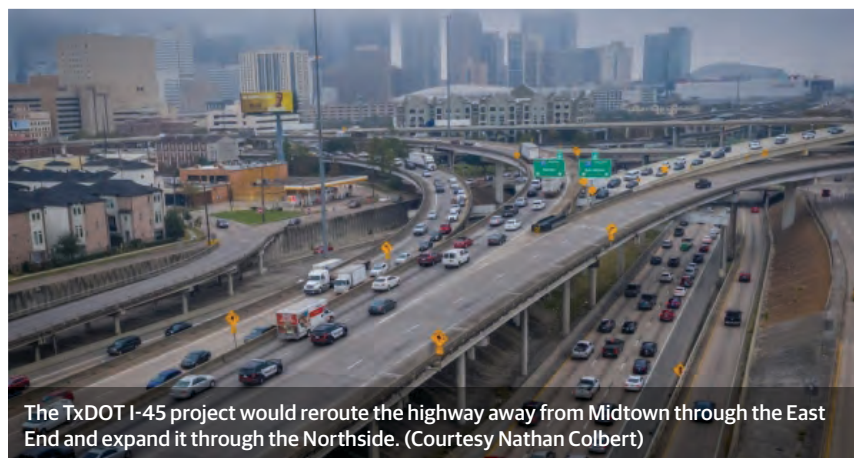
Turning a new page in efforts to influence the Texas Department of Transportation's planned \$7 billion overhaul of I-45, Harris County officials are suing the agency in federal court.

On March 11, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo and County Attorney Christian Menefee announced the action, which asks the court to revoke the agency's record of decision and to address concerns with the project. The lawsuit alleges TxDOT failed to adequately consider the full environmental ramifications of the project in its final environmental impact statement, which is a federally required step.

"We've been good-faith partners to TxDOT. We've done everything we could to move this project forward, but it has come time to pursue legal recourse," Hidalgo told reporters.

The announcement comes after over a year of advocacy from various groups, such as the Make I-45 Better Coalition and Stop TxDOT I-45. Both have expressed concern over the impact of the project on neighborhoods in the East End and Northside of Houston where the proposed reroute and expansion of I-45 will displace over 900 residences, 300 businesses, five places of worship and two schools, according to the agency's final environmental impact statement.

Local officials have repeatedly made attempts to influence the project. Beginning in 2019, the city of Houston led a separate public input process, which resulted in proposed alternatives to the plan, including



The TxDOT I-45 project would reroute the highway away from Midtown through the East End and expand it through the Northside. (Courtesy Nathan Colbert)

one in which the highway would be upgraded for safety improvements but maintain its current footprint.

A representative from Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner's office declined to comment on the county-led lawsuit.

After the agency's final environmental impact statement was issued in September, critics of the plan noted it failed to incorporate many of the recommendations identified through the city's public input process.

"The FEIS is 8,189 pages across three volumes. That would be impossible to read in the 30 days. At first glance, we don't see any major changes, especially ones of the magnitude that Mayor [Sylvester] Turner identified," Link Houston Director Oni Blair said in September. Link Houston, a nonprofit, advocates for equity in transportation policy.

Proponents of the project have said it will ease congestion, particularly for commuters; update the highway's safety; and mitigate flooding issues along its path.

Recently, efforts by the leaders of the Houston-Galveston Area Transportation Policy Council, a regional group responsible for contributing a portion of funds to the project, failed to produce an agreement with TxDOT about how to prioritize feedback on the project.

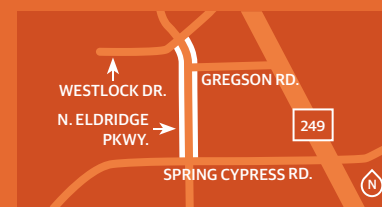
Throughout the process, TxDOT officials have said they will continue to accept and incorporate feedback.

"We were looking forward to continuing our work with stakeholders on refining the plans for the project, but these plans may now be in jeopardy due to the lawsuit," TxDOT Executive Director James Bass wrote in a statement to *Community Impact Newspaper*.

Those efforts, however, have failed to reassure county leaders, Hidalgo said.

"We have convened meetings. We've proposed a memorandum of understanding," Hidalgo said on March 11. "Time after time, TxDOT has done nothing but given us and our community lip service. They have bulldozed over us."

ONGOING PROJECT



North Eldridge Parkway widening

Harris County Precinct 4 previously anticipated sending a project out for construction bids in the fourth quarter of 2020, but the project timeline is now to be determined. The project will widen North Eldridge Parkway to four concrete lanes between Spring Cypress and Westlock roads. Traffic signals would also be added at Westlock Drive and Gregson Road.

Timeline: TBD

Cost: TBD

Funding source: Harris County Precinct 4

COMPLETED PROJECT



Queenston Road and Longenbaugh Drive intersection improvements

Harris County Precinct 3 finished a project in February to extend all left turn lanes at the intersection in addition to implementing pedestrian improvements and replacing all failed pavement.

Timeline: November-February

Cost: \$460,000

Funding source: Harris County Precinct 3

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Opportunity for All

Houston Methodist addresses vaccine access for marginalized

BY DANICA LLOYD

Forty-two percent of Black Americans said they planned to get vaccinated for COVID-19 compared to 61% of white Americans, according to a November survey from the Pew Research Center.

Dr. Ryan Neal, division head of hospital medicine at Houston Methodist, said the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated preexisting health care access issues among communities of color, the poor and the underinsured. For instance, local residents who were not connected to major health care hubs may have missed out on early vaccination opportunities.

“They were sort of left out on the periphery trying to get this vaccine—even if they were in Phase 1 and eligible,” he said. “You see that as one point of accessibility, but where this reverberates even larger is the fact that these are the same people who can’t get in for regular visits to a primary care physician.”

Barriers, such as insurance and transportation, have long been factors that disenfranchise certain populations from equitable health care opportunities, Neal said.

Another layer of complication that has become apparent during the vaccine rollout is inequity in access to technology. Neal said not everyone has access to a computer or the tech savvy to navigate websites where vaccine registration is taking place.

Because the vaccine remains unattainable for so many marginalized individuals who are often at the highest risk for COVID-19 complications, Houston Methodist has taken several measures to expand access.

“We sometimes underestimate just how hard it is for a 75-year-old lady who doesn’t drive to find someone to take them for an appointment where they might have to wait in line for hours,” he said.

Increasing access

One of the ways Houston Methodist has taken steps to make the vaccine more accessible for people of color is partnering with community organizations to identify vaccine-eligible individuals, Vice President of

Community Benefits Ryane Jackson said. This has included historically Black fraternities and sororities, the Latin Women’s Initiative, the Houston Food Bank, federally qualified health centers and religious groups.

For example, church leaders are holding Sunday Signup events where they inform their congregations how important the vaccine is in protecting themselves and others.

“All groups of people, regardless of your race or ethnicity, find value in their faith, but I do think there’s some historical rootedness in the African American community and in the Latino [community] with truly following the advice and feedback of their faith leaders,” Jackson said.

Individuals who sign up receive a text to either register themselves or call a designated phone number to have a Houston Methodist representative register them. They can also indicate transportation needs—which Jackson said about 10% do—and the hospital system can coordinate rides.

In addition to transportation issues, language and citizenship status can be major barriers in the Latino community. According to data from Harris County Public Health, the county’s population is 44% Hispanic, but only 31% of vaccine distribution has been to Hispanic individuals as of March 25.

Jackson said residents living in the country illegally may also be fearful of visiting major hospitals but are more likely to trust their smaller community clinics, so Houston Methodist has also leveraged partnerships with those agencies.

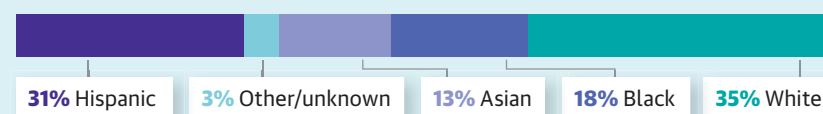
Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced March 25 more than 1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses had been distributed throughout the county. She commended Harris County Public Health for its efforts to reach vulnerable individuals, mentioning the importance of equitably vaccinating populations that traditionally lack access to health care.

“We need to make sure that everybody gets vaccinated from all communities not just because it’s the right thing to do, but because it’s the only way to reach herd

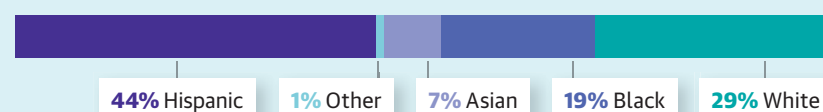
Distribution disparities

Hispanic individuals make up the largest portion of Harris County’s population, but the largest percentage of COVID-19 vaccines have gone to white residents.

HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH VACCINE DISTRIBUTION AS OF MARCH 25

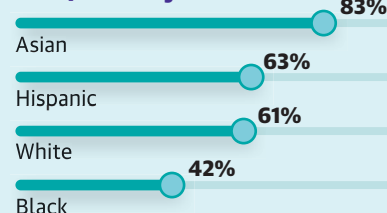


HARRIS COUNTY POPULATION

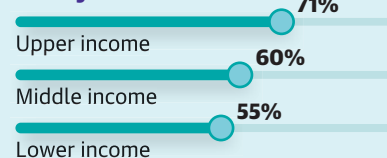


The data below represents the percentages of American adults who indicated in a November survey they planned to get a vaccine for COVID-19.

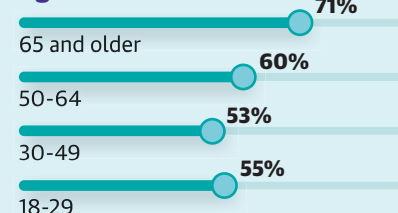
Race/ethnicity



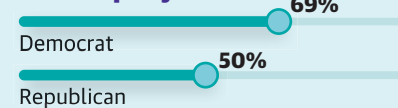
Family income



Age



Political party



SOURCES: PEW RESEARCH CENTER, HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

immunity,” she said.

County initiatives to increase vaccine access for marginalized populations include offering transportation to appointments, registering residents of homeless shelters and nursing homes, and setting up a vaccine hotline for individuals lacking the capabilities to register online.

Vaccine hesitancy

While there are practical ways to address the logistical challenges and fears underserved communities experience, Jackson said there are also historical issues of trust of the medical community in certain cultures.

This stems from unethical health care treatment of these groups such as the “Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male,” a 40-year study that misled and failed to properly treat hundreds of Black men, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Neal said there will always be some

suspicion from the African American community when governmental input meets recent medical research and the pharmaceutical industry.

“And I think, based on our history, that is sometimes warranted,” he said. “There’s caution from the perspective of, ‘Is this safe? Am I going to be unduly affected? Should I really be taking it? Can I trust what my political leaders are saying I should do?’”

Neal said he is hopeful at least 80% of the population will get vaccinated for the potential of herd immunity. However, those with comorbidities and high-exposure work settings face higher risks than others.

“People who work in public transportation, people who work in public-access facilities where they have to deal with people one-on-one, people even in the food services business have to consider themselves high risk because of exposure,” he said. “[They] should be looking at their first available opportunity to get the vaccine.”



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| LEVEL II | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can initiate definitive care for injured patients• 24-hour immediate care by general surgeons• Specialties in orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, anesthesiology, emergency medicine, radiology, critical care• Continuing education programs for staff |
| LEVEL III | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prompt assessment, resuscitation, surgery, intensive care and stabilization• 24-hour immediate care by emergency physicians• Provides prompt availability of general surgeons and anesthesiologists |

SOURCE: AMERICAN TRAUMA SOCIETY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Memorial Hermann gets trauma designation for Cypress hospital

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

The trauma center at the Memorial Hermann Cypress Hospital has officially been designated as a Level III center by the state, officials said in a March 16 announcement.

Teams have been working to obtain a Level III designation since 2018, a process that involved demonstrating the hospital can provide rapid emergency care for a variety of needs.

“This designation is important to Cypress and the surrounding community because it confirms our trauma team’s ability to provide access to high quality trauma care at a trauma center in a timely manner,” hospital CEO Jerry Ashworth said in a March 16 statement. “Timing is critical in saving a life.”

Key requirements include having 24-hour coverage of emergency medical physicians, a full schedule of general surgeons available who can arrive to the campus within 30 minutes and an anesthesiologist in-house 24/7, said Marci Holub, chief nursing officer with the hospital.

In addition, the hospital can transport patients to a Level II trauma center at the Memorial Hermann Woodlands Hospital and a Level I center at system’s hospital in the Texas Medical Center within 10

minutes via Life Flight air medical service, she said.

Reasons a person may need to visit a trauma center vary and can include car collisions, hip fractures and gunshot wounds, Holub said.

As the only Level III or higher trauma center in Cy-Fair, the Memorial Hermann center plays a vital roll in the Cypress and Waller areas, Holub said.

Part of achieving the Level III designation also involved working with emergency responders, including those with the Cy-Fair Fire Department, Waller Volunteer Fire Department and Rosehill Fire Department, Holub said.

“Having this trauma center here also helps keeps our EMS providers in the area,” she said. “Once they are able to drop patients off quickly at our facility they can go back out to their routes instead of having to go much farther with an ambulance [to another hospital].”

With rapid population growth predicted for the Cypress area at the time the hospital opened, achieving a Level III trauma designation was always part of the plan, Holub said.

“We are very blessed to have system support and to have a dedicated trauma service line,” she said.



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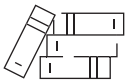


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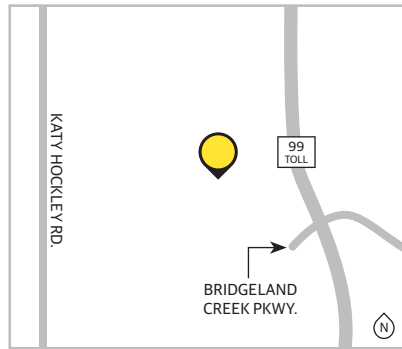
RENDERING COURTESY HOWARD HUGHES CORP.

PRAIRIELAND VILLAGE

Construction is underway on the third of four villages in the Bridgeland master-planned community. It will ultimately feature 7,000 homesites, recreational lakes, a lakefront pavilion, and hike and bike trails. Homebuilders will be announced in May, Howard Hughes Corp. officials said.

Space: 3,000 acres

Timeline: first homes available as soon as spring 2022



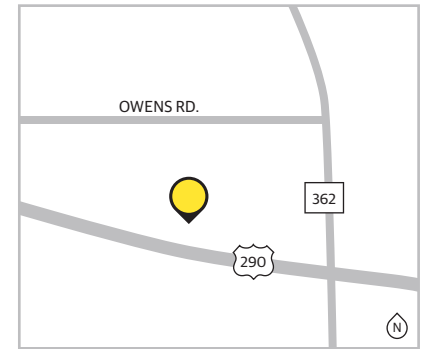
RENDERING COURTESY WOLFF COS.

BEACON HILL

Construction is underway on Beacon Hill, a master-planned community in Waller being developed by Wolff Cos. Plans include 870 single-family homes from Long Lake Ltd. and a business park along the future Hwy. 290 frontage road, which can accommodate light industrial and distribution, office, multifamily and retail.

Space: 564 acres

Timeline: slated to open in June



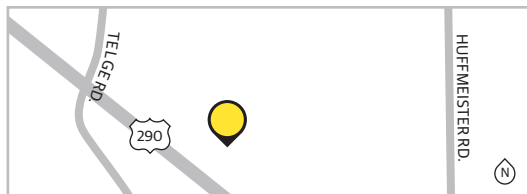
RENDERING COURTESY TRAMMELL CROW CO.

WEISER BUSINESS PARK

Land has been cleared for the Weiser Business Park by Trammell Crow Co., which will feature 1.7 million square feet of Class A industrial space.

Space: 1.7 million square feet

Timeline: early 2020-TBD



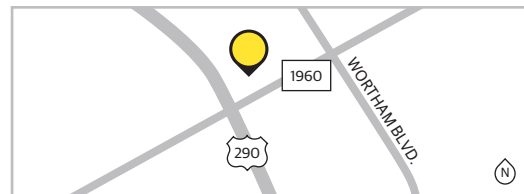
SHAWN ARRAJJ/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CYPRESS CROSSING

Construction is nearing completion on a Staybridge Suites at the Cypress Crossing development at the Hwy. 290 and FM 1960 intersection.

Space: 115 rooms

Timeline: work ongoing through 2021



SHAWN ARRAJJ/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

NEXCORE MEDICAL OFFICE

A structure is being raised at the site of a new medical office building by NexCore Group near the HCA Houston Healthcare North Cypress Hospital.

Space: 110,000 square feet

Timeline: August 2020-October 2021



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Cy-Fair ISD ramps up efforts to recruit, retain substitutes

BY DANICA LLOYD

CY-FAIR ISD The number of daily teacher absences in Cy-Fair ISD rose from 568 in January 2020 to 821 in January 2021, but the number of substitutes working each day decreased from 490 to 440 in that time frame, according to district data.

CFISD has 1,307 active substitute teachers as of late January, and nearly 600 have been hired so far this school year—up from about 300 hired in 2019-20. But officials said they would like to see the fill rate increase.

“In the fall of 2020 it was evident to us that we had a concern with regards to our substitute fill rate. We had a problem with increased teacher absences and a lower fill rate than the previous year, and we recognized the need to have more [active] substitutes accepting assignments,” said Onica Mayers, director of employee relations and professional staffing, at

the March 8 board meeting.

A survey sent to substitute teachers and paraprofessionals in the fall found 61% of respondents had accepted at least one job in 2020-21.

Mayers said 95% of those who were not accepting assignments at the time attributed it to COVID-19. Most reported they were reluctant or fearful to take jobs on campuses, and others said they had underlying health concerns, had children attending school virtually from home or were caring for someone else.

Based on survey responses, Mayers said an increase in pay would help incentivize substitute teachers and increase the district’s fill rate.

Melanie Dobney, assistant director of CFISD’s substitute office, said the daily pay rate for substitutes with at least a bachelor’s degree is higher in Fort Bend, Houston, Katy, Klein and Tomball ISDs, and increasing

the daily pay rate in CFISD from \$92 to \$105 would ensure the district remains competitive.

“And if we want to lead the area and really get the best of the best of our substitute teachers and have them choose Cy-Fair ISD to substitute, we need to go as high as \$115 per day in order to do that,” she said.

These proposed pay increases would cost the district an estimated \$1.2 million-\$2.2 million.

To attract more applicants, the district also modified requirements in February to allow individuals with a minimum of 48 college credit hours to apply. These substitutes are paid \$84 each day worked.

Previously, Dobney said the district was one of the few in the region that required substitutes to have a bachelor’s degree, and since changing the requirements about 25% of applicants have not had bachelor’s degrees.

SUBSTITUTE SHORTAGE

Substitute pay rates at districts throughout the region range from \$75-\$125 per day for nondegreed and degreed individuals. Most districts increase pay rates for certified teachers.

| | |
|--|--|
| Fort Bend ISD \$110-\$125 per day* | Katy ISD \$90-\$100 per day |
| Tomball ISD \$90-\$95 per day | Klein ISD \$83-\$95 per day |
| Cy-Fair ISD \$84-\$92 per day | Spring ISD \$90 per day |
| Waller ISD \$75-\$85 per day | *AN ADDITIONAL \$25 INCENTIVE WAS ADDED TO THESE RATES IN FEBRUARY. |
| Proposed substitute teacher daily pay rate: \$105-\$115 Additional \$1.2 million-\$2.2 million cost to CFISD | |

SOURCES: CY-FAIR ISD, VARIOUS NEIGHBORING SCHOOL DISTRICTS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



CFISD Exhibit Center’s seating capacity will be expanded for livestock shows among other events. (Rendering courtesy VLK Architects)

Plans for Cy-Fair ISD bond projects develop

BY DANICA LLOYD

CY-FAIR ISD VLK Architects officials said a nearly 9,000-square-foot

addition to Cy-Fair ISD’s Exhibit Center on Telge Road will increase seating capacity from 600 to 1,593.

This project and Middle School No. 20, among others, were included in the \$1.76 billion bond passed in 2019.

The new campus is slated to open in August 2023, completing the educational village with Wells Elementary School and Bridgeland High School off Mason Road in Cypress. A partition separating the cafeterias at Wells and the middle school will open up to a shared space for large events, and an outside courtyard will also connect the two campuses, IBI Group officials said.

Construction contracts have not yet been awarded, but the middle school and exhibit center projects

were estimated to cost \$97.4 million and \$9.8 million, respectively, when the bond was first proposed.

MEETINGS WE COVER

Cy-Fair ISD board of trustees

The next meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. on April 8 at 10300 Jones Road, Houston, and are livestreamed at www.cfisd.net.

Lone Star College System

The next meeting is scheduled for 2 p.m. on May 6 and will be livestreamed via WebEx. www.lonestar.edu/trustees

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Jersey Village establishes new tax zone

BY SHAWN ARRJJ

JERSEY VILLAGE A batch of homes in Jersey Village will be part of a new tax increment reinvestment zone, or TIRZ, with the goal of boosting investment in a flood-prone area.

Under the TIRZ, the city can take tax revenue generated from property within its boundaries and use it for projects within the TIRZ. In this case, the TIRZ is intended help the city specifically with “teardown-rebuild” efforts, a type of flood mitigation strategy that involves tearing down homes and building new homes in their place that are better suited to withstand flooding.

The TIRZ, formed following a unanimous vote by the Jersey Village City Council at a March 15 meeting, will encompass 32 homes on Jersey Drive, according to city documents.

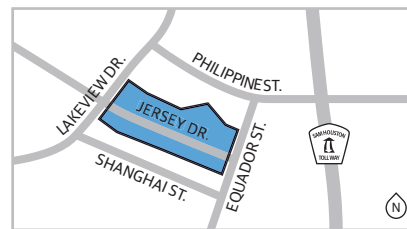
The city received a petition in February to form the TIRZ from home

owners from 18 homes, representing 57% of the total value in the area, meeting state requirements for TIRZ formation.

City Manager Austin Bleess previously said there is no strong financial incentive for builders to tear down and rebuild the Jersey Drive properties. With a TIRZ in place, the city will be able to purchase and raze homes from residents who want to sell and would have flexibility on offering incentives to builders to build new structures on the property.

The TIRZ is not expected to be self-sufficient at first, according to a plan submitted to the council March 15. Officials said once some redevelopment occurs in the area, it may begin to spur additional development without TIRZ assistance.

The city estimates it will spend \$5 million to purchase and demolish 19 properties over the course of five



years, although the plan is not set in stone. About \$2.7 million of that cost could come from the city’s general fund. The rest will mainly come from tax revenue and money made from selling land, according to the city’s plan.

The TIRZ will be governed by a nine-member board, which will include designees from state Sen. Paul Bettencourt and state Rep. Jon Rosenthal, as well as residents within the TIRZ boundaries and potentially representatives from local taxing entities.

The TIRZ will be in effect until 2041. The board will hold at least one meeting per quarter that will be open to the public.

Harris County names Barbie Robinson new director of public health

BY SHAWN ARRJJ

HARRIS COUNTY Barbie Robinson was named the next executive director of the Harris County Public Health Department at a March 9 meeting of the Harris County Commissioners Court.

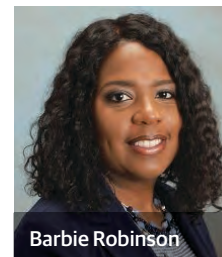
Robinson will take the reins from interim Director Gwen Sims, who took over following the resignation of Dr. Umair Shah in December. A date has not yet been given for when Robinson will take over the department, which covers areas such as veterinary public health, disease

control and prevention, and nutrition and chronic disease prevention.

Harris County launched a national search for Shah’s replacement in November. In a tweet, Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo welcomed Robinson to the county.

“We’re proud to announce Barbie Robinson as Harris County’s new Public Health Director,” Hidalgo said. “She was selected after an incredibly thorough search, and I’m confident she’ll tackle the toughest public health challenges in our region with ambition, mastery and creativity.”

Robinson currently serves as director of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services in California, where she has served since her appointment in February 2017. Her responsibilities have included supporting community efforts to address health disparities and community health improvement.



Barbie Robinson

CITY HIGHLIGHTS

JERSEY VILLAGE City residents who experienced pipe leaks during Winter Storm Uri in February will have their water bills affected by the storm preemptively adjusted to amounts representing their average water use. The Jersey Village City Council authorized the city’s finance director to move forward with the adjustments at a March 4 emergency meeting. The adjustments will be made for all residents whose bills were higher than average by 5,000 gallons or more, which officials estimated would affect just over 300 people. Others who did not reach that 5,000-gallon threshold can reach out using the typical system for adjustments if they had a leak.

HARRIS COUNTY New data presented to the Harris County Commissioners Court in March showed funding shortfalls for flood-control projects in several Cy-Fair watersheds related to a bond program enacted by the county in 2018. As of March, the Addicks Reservoir Watershed had a funding shortfall of \$135 million, while the White Oak Bayou Watershed had a shortfall of \$116 million. The Cypress Creek and Little Cypress Creek watersheds had smaller shortfalls of \$41 million and \$20 million, respectively. Some of the gap could be made up by state grants officials said could be awarded in late April or early May. Commissioners also plan to look at potentially shifting some surplus toll road revenue to projects that have joint flood-control and mobility purposes.

MEETINGS WE COVER

Jersey Village City Council
Will meet virtually at 7 p.m. April 19
713-466-2100
www.jerseyvillagetx.com

Harris County Commissioners Court
Will meet virtually at 10 a.m. April 13
713-698-1102
www.harriscountytexas.gov

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Mercer Botanic Gardens begins first phase of park's master plan rebuild

BY KELLY SCHAFLEER

Harris County Precinct 4 began construction in March on the first phase of a master plan to redesign Mercer Botanic Gardens, a roughly 400-acre park between Spring and Humble off FM 1960.

The garden, located at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, Humble, is on both sides of Aldine Westfield Road. The east side of the garden consists of the botanic gardens, at Baldwin Boettcher Library and several miles of trails. The west side is the arboretum with a playground, picnic areas, a bog, a swamp and walking trails.

Mercer Botanic Gardens Director Chris Ludwig said a master plan emerged after Hurricane Harvey brought 10 to 12 feet of floodwaters through Mercer in August 2017. In late 2019, the preliminary redesign for Mercer was completed, including flood-mitigation strategies and plans for the 40 acres the precinct acquired to the garden's south.

"We've always talked about that property south of us, so it's kind of exciting [after] all the years I've been here to be able to obtain it and start growing the gardens more," he said.

Construction on Phase 1 of the master plan began March 8 and will be completed in late September, Ludwig said. The \$4.98 million phase includes building a wet-bottom retention area and three new greenhouses and using the soil from the retention basin to elevate the property to the flood line of Harvey.

The new greenhouses, which will be south of the garden's future maintenance and operations center site, will replace the greenhouses in the Central Garden that were flooded by Harvey. Ludwig said the existing greenhouses will be removed and turned into a green space for events.

County officials have said they hope to return to the preliminary master plan in 2022 to determine future phases, build-out timelines and funding, he said.

A MASTER PLAN

Harris County Precinct 4 began Phase 1 of a master plan redesign for Mercer Botanic Gardens in March. The preliminary design for the 40-acre eastern expansion includes numerous new features, but they may change as development moves forward.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 New greenhouses (Phase 1) | 6 Japanese Garden |
| 2 Retention pond (Phase 1) | 7 Ziggurat (a spiral mound) |
| 3 Mercer Conservatory Center | 8 Outdoor amphitheater |
| 4 Oval Lawn | 9 Boardwalk |
| 5 Seven Sisters Greenhouses | 10 Community event barn |



SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY PRECINCT 4/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

RESIDENT FEEDBACK

Concerns, complaints and other feedback can be emailed to

PLAZA@CITYOFKATY.COM

The sod was laid down at the end of February, making the space more usable. (Courtesy Chris Harris)

Plaza 'one step closer' to completion

BY LAURA AEBI

The concrete is poured and the sod is down at Katy's Downtown Plaza as of late February. Inclement weather and inconveniently placed power poles both contributed to the project's more recent delays.

"We made some good progress even though we had the big freeze," Matt Leblanc, lead engineer on the project, said at a March 8 council meeting.

Next steps include installing the pergola—an open air structure consisting of vertical posts and lattices—which is currently in fabrication and is scheduled for delivery in May, according to Leblanc. The anchor bolts for the trellis have been ordered, and the foundation for the structure has been installed.

"As soon as that's received, we will wrap up installation of it to complete that project," Leblanc said.

As for landscaping, the final grading and bed mulching are complete—and the irrigation system is nearly finished, Leblanc said.

"I know some of our plant [deliveries] have been delayed due to the freeze," Leblanc said. "That should wrap up that project completely."

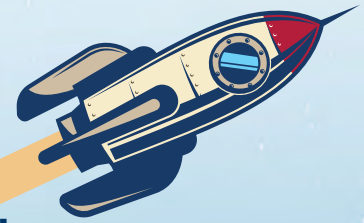
The council created an email address dedicated to resident feedback on the project: plaza@cityofkaty.com.

"I am exceptionally happy that we are one step closer to a usable family-friendly space in downtown Katy," Council Member Chris Harris said.

According to previous Community Impact reporting, the plaza is the third phase of a revitalization project for Katy's downtown. The project faced long-term delays brought on by Hurricane Harvey and the pandemic.

"This project has taught me never to give dates to the public when something will be done," Harris said at a Jan. 11 meeting. "I'm not going to be negative, but I'm just going to say: It's real unfortunate how this is all played out. Downtown businesses don't like looking at something under construction for four years."

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Voters line up to cast ballots in the November 2020 election at Juergen's Hall Community Center in Cypress. (Shawn Arraji/Community Impact Newspaper)

Bill to reform elections draws rebuke from county leaders

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

As a band of state lawmakers looks to move forward with a bill they said would strengthen election integrity in Texas, leaders in Harris County and members of voter rights organizations said the legislation is likely to make it more difficult to vote.

Senate Bill 7, jointly filed March 11 by 13 state senators, would prohibit polling locations from being open past 7 p.m., prevent local elections officials from sending out mail ballot applications unless requested by a voter, and prohibit drive-thru voting.

The 2020 presidential election in Harris County last November yielded record-breaking turnout. In that election, the county operated several 24-hour voting locations and drive-thru voting locations. Additionally, the Harris County Clerk's Office sent out mail ballot applications to all residents age 65 and older.

Under existing law, all Texas residents are allowed to vote by mail if they are disabled, and voters do not have to provide proof of disability. Among SB 7's changes is a requirement for those voters to provide medical proof of disability if they want to vote by mail.

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo blasted the bill at a March 15 press conference, directing particular ire at the medical proof requirement, which she called a poll tax.

"Senate Bill 7 and related legislation is a poll tax designed or

disguised as election integrity," she said. "It's clearly a direct response to the massive success we had in Harris County last year in terms of accessible and secure elections."

The bill has received the support of Gov. Greg Abbott, who named election reform an emergency item for the 2021 legislative session. At a March 15 press conference, Abbott claimed mail voting and drive-thru voting are vulnerable to abuse.

Abbott did not cite specific examples of voter fraud but claimed that the 2020 election featured "actions throughout our state that could risk the integrity of our elections and enable voter fraud."

The 24-hour polling locations were intended to help people vote who work unpredictable schedules, such as emergency responders and medical workers, Hidalgo said.

In a statement, officials with Move Texas, a nonpartisan voting rights group, said the 2020 election was "one of the safest and most secure elections in the state's history."

"We should be working together to make voting in the state easier and more convenient for Texans, not even harder and more confusing," Move Texas spokesperson Charlie Bonner said.

SB 7 would also direct the secretary of state to create an online tool voters can use to track mail ballots and applications and would require mail ballots to be counted separately.

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-Firefighter Michelle Owsley, Station 6 Volunteer

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LOCAL VOTER GUIDE

2021

GUIDE

COMPILED BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

DATES TO KNOW

April 19 First day of early voting

April 20 Last day to apply for ballot by mail (received, not postmarked)

April 27 Last day of early voting

May 1 Election day

May 1 Last day to receive ballot by mail (unless late-arriving deadline applies)

WHERE TO VOTE

Two City Council positions and city mayor are up for election in Jersey Village on May 1, where residents will also vote on seven ballot propositions. City residents can vote at Jersey Village City Hall, 16327 Lakeview Drive, Jersey Village.

SAMPLE BALLOT

JERSEY VILLAGE CITY COUNCIL

Mayor

Bobby Warren
Merrilee Rosene Beazley

Place 3

Michelle Mitcham
Ashley Brown

Place 2

Dell Humbert
Kamal Khan
Sheri Sheppard

Special election

Proposition A: To eliminate sections in city charter related to red light cameras

Proposition B: To amend sections of city charter to reflect gender-neutral language and require a majority vote for a candidate for City Council or mayor to be elected

Proposition C: To amend city charter to allow new ordinances to be posted on city

website in lieu of newspaper

Proposition D: To replace gender-specific language in various points of city charter with gender-neutral language

Fire control district

Proposition A: To create a Fire Control, Prevention and Emergency Medical Services District using one-half of one percent of sales tax revenue from a property tax relief fund that would be abolished

Proposition B: To allow City Council to approve ordinance appointing council and city manager to serve as directors of fire control district

Crime control district

Proposition A: To continue funding Jersey Village Crime Control and Prevention District for five years using one-half of one percent of sales tax revenue

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HDIE20K0019

COMPILED BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

Jersey Village mayor

MERRILEE ROSENE BEAZLEY

Occupation: nurse, educational consultant

Experience: 40+ year resident, 50+ years of work experience, certified school teacher, reading specialist, registered nurse and business owner with degrees in education, health care and business



BOBBY WARREN

Occupation: oil and gas compliance manager

Relevant experience: city of Jersey Village council member, Place 3 (2017-present), Mayor Pro Tem (2019-present)

713-515-2958, www.bobbywarren.org



| Why are you running to be Jersey Village mayor? | What do you think are the top challenges facing the city right now, and how would you work to address them? | If elected, what would be your approach to budgeting and tax rates in this year's budget session? |
|---|---|---|
| <p>I am running for Mayor of Jersey Village because we need to have fiscal responsibility. Fortunately, I am financially independent. It is about "we the people." It is important to have residents of Jersey Village be part of the process.</p> | <p>I think it is imperative for Jersey Village City Council to work toward the maximum tax benefits like other communities have, right now, for the residents. We need to control spending. We do not need to have extra projects like [tax increment reinvestment zones] that the residents are not aware of. We must keep addressing flood mitigation. We must address aging infrastructure.</p> | <p>When I am mayor we will make sure that all of the departments of the city of Jersey Village are fiscally responsible and [do] not overspend their budgets. We must look at the best practices with other cities our size. We must execute the building of the berm at the Jersey Meadow Golf Course, which was promoted decades ago. The first day that I am mayor I will hit the ground running to make sure that these issues are addressed.</p> |
| <p>Jersey Village is a great place to live. I am humbled that so many of my neighbors have encouraged me to run for mayor. With the challenges and opportunities facing our city in the coming years, we need a mayor who is ready to lead on their first day in office. My experience on City Council and as mayor pro tem uniquely qualifies me to lead our city as our next mayor.</p> | <p>Flooding is our greatest challenge. Since the adoption of our long-term flood recovery plan in 2017, we have successfully obtained \$10.2 million in state and federal grants. With this funding, we have elevated 17 homes and we will soon break ground on the golf course berm and Wall Street drainage project. As mayor, I will continue to work with the county, state and federal government to collaborate on flood mitigation projects in our city.</p> | <p>In 2019, I successfully led the effort to increase the residential homestead exemption in our city, the first such increase in more than 15 years. With the economy recovering from the impacts of the pandemic, I believe we will be able to provide further property tax relief while continuing to pursue important investments in public safety, flood mitigation, our streets and our parks.</p> |

Answers may have been edited for length. Read full Q&A's at communityimpact.com.



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Jersey Village City Council Place 2

DELL HUMBERT

Occupation: software engineer
Relevant experience: master's in chemical engineering. Experience in insurance, retail, big data storage, communications and real estate. Have formed and run businesses. I am a husband and father.
www.dhumbert.com



KAMAL KHAN

Occupation: business
Relevant experience: management and administration



SHERI SHEPPARD

Occupation: business consultant
Relevant experience: City Council Place 4, 2012-18; Crime Control and Prevention District Citizen Board Member, 2018 to present; Charter Review Committee Chair, 2020



Why are you running to be on Jersey Village City Council?

Because I love this city, and hope to help it grow into the future. I have a background in engineering and would be an asset to the City Council. I want more input from the voters in city decisions.

I believe I am the best candidate for this position because of my business background as well as my work on diversity, equity and improvement of quality of life. I always try to make things happen in [the] right way and right direction. I am running for City Council because Jersey Village is my home for [the] last 15 years and I bring a fresh, new perspective with a wide range of personal and professional experiences that will contribute greatly to the growth of our city of Jersey Village.

I'm very passionate about serving my community and I believe my experience is more important than ever to provide continuity and knowledge of current issues such as flood mitigation and key initiatives such as the comprehensive plan and parks master plan. I can make an immediate impact because I am familiar with the city, city staff and local governmental procedure.

What do you think are the top challenges facing the city right now, and how would you work to address them?

Flooding is the most urgent challenge facing the city right now. The currently enacted plans will help, but will not solve this issue; more solutions need to be found. Property taxes are too high. This can be addressed by cultivating additional revenue sources and protecting the city budget from future economic downturns. Renewal—I want to see some new (not necessarily expensive) things happening in the city to make it a more enjoyable and modern place to live.

My biggest concern is [the] safety of Jersey Village people—concern about aging people who live in our city [and] also street lighting improvement[s] to give residents more safety and security. Also [during] time[s] of any disaster, we can stand together as a family and address any issues as a family. Our govern[ment] has to do a lot of different activit[ies] to make life easy for ... residents. That is why I have choose my campaign slogan: "Together, we can make things happen."

Flooding continues to be a top challenge of the city. During my previous tenure on City Council we set a foundation for addressing flood mitigation. We are now seeing that work come to fruition having been awarded grant funding for the Wall Street project as well as home elevations. I will continue to work collaboratively with city staff, Harris County Flood Control and the state to ensure continued progress.

If elected, what would be your approach to budgeting and tax rates in this year's budget session?

Ensure the city budget is properly addressed with recurring income sources. Evaluate any upcoming flooding projects that need funding. Determine if the remaining recurring income can be used to reduce property taxes, via the home-stead exemption. Fund other projects as funds are available. Avoid debt if possible.

As long as my background is in business, we can implement different new concerns and technique[s] to implement them for budgeting [for] our city of Jersey Village. Regarding the tax rate, I do have [the] opinion any tax has to be reasonable [and] not [a] burden to the city people. I always believe in lower taxes so your hard-earned money can be used by you and your family.

I would consider myself a fiscal conservative and believe in a zero-based budget approach. I would 1) review the funding required to run and maintain the city, to continuously improve services such as police and emergency services, and to improve infrastructure and facilities, 2) determine overage/shortage of funding based on revenue estimates, and then 3) determine if adjustments to the tax rates are warranted.

Answers may have been edited for length and style. Read full Q&A's at communityimpact.com.

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SAM HOUSTON

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Jersey Village City Council Place 3

COMPILED BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

ASHLEY BROWN

Occupation: procurement



Relevant experience: Participated on the Park and Recreation Advisory Committee for two appointments and Charter Review Committee for one appointment. In college I interned for a year for U.S. Congressman Jim Turner
www.ashleyforjerseyvillage.com

MICHELLE MITCHAM

Occupation: CEO, speech language pathologist



Relevant experience: Relevant experience: 10-year Jersey Village resident, small-business owner for six years, co-owner of a local Jersey Village restaurant for one year, served as vice president of Post Elementary parent teacher organization

Why are you running to be on Jersey Village City Council?

Politics has always interested me as an adult and when I was a child. I minored in political science while at Sam Houston State earning my bachelor's of business administration in economics. I'm finally at a point in my life where I can dedicate the time and energy necessary to a position while living in a community I want to give back to. I want to help Jersey Village move forward while preserving the fundamental greatness of what makes [the city] a wonderful place.

Over the last 10 years Jersey Village has been on an upward trajectory in terms of quality of life, economic development and public safety, while property taxes have fallen. City leaders past and present have solved big problems by collaborating with county, state and federal agencies. I want to continue Jersey Village's upward trajectory, and I feel my experience as a CEO, local business owner and mother would be a helpful voice on council.

What do you think are the top challenges facing the city right now, and how would you work to address them?

Flooding is always a hot topic but, while I think it is high on the list, I think honesty and transparency need to be a focus. Lately it seems many decisions have been made unbeknownst to citizens and without votes or input from tax payers. An example of this is the move of City Hall across [Hwy.] 290 after purchasing the land as part of a settlement agreement in dealing with a lawsuit. I would like to see more collaborative efforts with the citizens to gauge the real wants versus needs of the city.

Flood mitigation is a challenge, and I will continue to support matching funds for grant programs to help pay for projects with long-lasting protection. Making sure our emergency services are well-funded and well-equipped as costs and salaries increase is a challenge. By investing in economic development efforts and resulting increases in our sales tax base, our police and fire department budgets are a direct beneficiary.

If elected, what would be your approach to budgeting and tax rates in this year's budget session?

I would like to see our tax exemptions given much more focus. In our modern times where income is so fixed for seniors and expenses are continuously rising, we need to reduce their burden. The 65 and older or disabled exemption would be my top issue. If the city has money stockpiled to spend on these exorbitant ideas, then we can give our elder citizens a tax break. The government's job isn't to turn a profit or save millions to spend on fun projects.

I will vote to increase the homestead exemption to 20% in my first year and increase the over-65 exemption and disabled exemption each budget to levels that help keep seniors' property tax bills flat even as property values increase. Our city has done a great job obtaining state and federal grants to help pay for major projects, preserving our 150-day reserve. I will continue to support this conservative fiscal approach to safeguard our city's future.

Answers may have been edited for length and style. Read the full Q&A's at communityimpact.com.

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Popcorn Blast

Family-owned shop brings creative pairings

For Mario Navarrete, one of the owners of Popcorn Blast on Hwy. 6 in Cy-Fair, coming to work everyday is similar to coming to work at a candy store. There are opportunities to be creative with flavors, bring joy to customers and see the eyes light up when children and adults alike walk through the door.

“The excitement even when grownups come in, it’s pure beauty,” he said.

The family-owned gourmet popcorn retail shop opened in September 2018 on Hwy. 6 in Cy-Fair. Navarrete runs the enterprise with his sister Yolanda Burks and her husband Dion Burks. Yolanda, whose passion drove the trio to open the business, said popcorn has a unifying effect on people.

“It’s something you can share with your family and all kind of enjoy it together,” she said. “It’s rewarding to be able to play even a small part in those moments for people.”

When they first started out, all of the owners underwent training where they learned how to infuse flavors into the popcorn, Navarrete said. They have since reached a point of expertise where they can experiment with different combinations, such as peanut butter and jelly, and “unicorn,” a flavor that combines white chocolate with vanilla and sprinkles.

Burks said she is also happy

to take flavor recommendations from customers. In one instance, a customer who was pregnant at the time suggested combining dill pickles and cake batter. The combination has since been added to the menu with the name “the baby bump.”

“When you hear those flavors you think it sounds weird, but you would be surprised at how well they go together,” he said.

All popcorn is made on-site from scratch, Yolanda Burks said, and the team endeavors to use authentic ingredients wherever possible. For example, the Oreo-flavored popcorn is made with actual Oreos and the

colonels are coated with the Oreo interior.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Navarrete said the team often worked weddings and other events, where they would set up a popcorn

snack bar on site. The business can also create labels for the packaging that can be customized for specific occasions, Navarrete said, such as “Ready to Pop” for baby showers. He said he hopes to be able to start doing more of those gigs as the pandemic subsides.

In addition to buying popcorn in-store, customers can have it delivered or shipped, Navarrete said. Although the pandemic did hurt sales over the past year, he said they are hopeful about the future.

“The good thing is, we’re still popping in Houston,” he said.



Mario Navarrete, a co-owner of Popcorn Blast, mixes a batch of popcorn in a large mixing machine on-site. (Photos by Shawn Arrajj/Community Impact Newspaper)

FLAVOR FUSION

Popcorn Blast offers a wide variety of flavors. A small snapshot of examples can be found below.



CHEESY AND SAVORY

- Sour cream and onion
- Pizza
- Buffalo wild wings
- Bacon cheddar



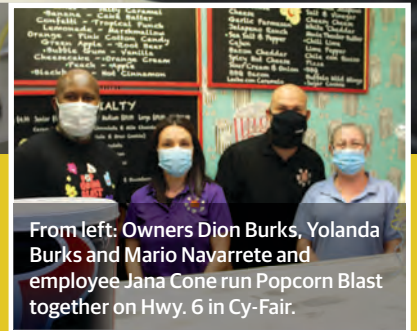
SWEET

- Watermelon
- Salted caramel
- Cheesecake
- Blue bubblegum



POPULAR MIXES

- Root beer float: root beer and vanilla
- Loaded potato: sour cream and onion, barbecue bacon and dill pickle
- Diablo: jalapeno ranch and spicy hot cheese



From left: Owners Dion Burks, Yolanda Burks and Mario Navarrete and employee Jana Cone run Popcorn Blast together on Hwy. 6 in Cy-Fair.



Customers who stop by Popcorn Blast can add a message to a chalk wall in the business.

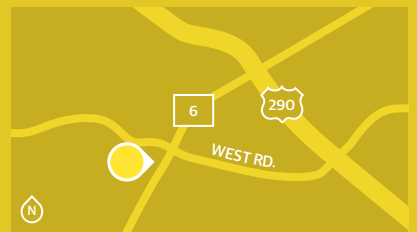
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3 dishes to try



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A traditional dessert consisting of baked layers of phyllo pastry layered with nuts, tossed with honey and spices

Athena's Greek & European Kitchen

Local eatery celebrates Mediterranean culture, cuisine

With more than 110 years' combined experience in the restaurant industry, Maria Stefanakis and Aristidis Varoutsos opened Athena's Greek & European Kitchen at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring.

The restaurateurs pivoted plans to focus on takeout and delivery options, and while many other local restaurants have closed over the past year, the FM 529 eatery is thriving, Stefanakis said.

"People like my food. My reviews [are] five stars everywhere," Stefanakis said.

Stefanakis, who moved to Houston from Greece in 1974, said she prides herself on the authentic Greek cuisine offered on the menu at Athena's—named for her home

country's capital, Athens. While her background is primarily in Greek and barbecue restaurants, she said Varoutsos has decades of experience in French cuisine.

Popular dishes include classic gyros, lamb chops, Greek fajitas and traditional kebabs. The menu features pronunciation guides for Mediterranean dishes such as kokkinisto, yemista and galactobourekio—a traditional beef stew, stuffed peppers and baked custard dessert, respectively.

Diners will also find Athena's is a place to celebrate Greek culture, said Sandra Simotas, a customer who enjoyed the food and atmosphere so much she decided to work for the restaurant.

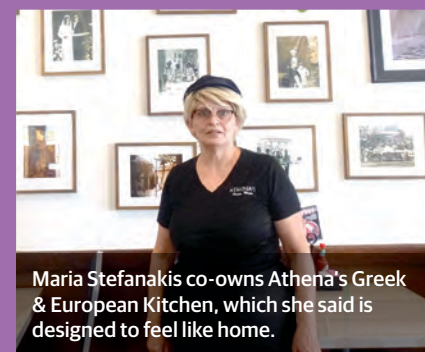
"We do the 'opa' thing, break

the plates. Sometimes the waiters and Maria and everybody will start dancing—a little bit of the Greek tradition," Simotas said.

In Greek culture, "opa!" is a common expression used at celebrations and in traditional dancing, and plate smashing takes place during festivities such as weddings.

Stefanakis said her goal is to make everyone who comes into her restaurant feel at home. The interior decor features old family photos from the owners' personal collections along with European artwork. She said she enjoys visiting every table herself and is known to encourage her customers to dance on Saturday nights.

"To come and eat here is like family," Stefanakis said.

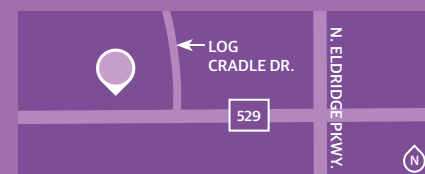


Athena's Greek & European Kitchen

13250 FM 529, Ste. A, Houston
832-328-5494

www.athenagreekkitchen.com

Hours: Mon.-Sat. 11 a.m.-9 p.m.,
Sun. 11 a.m.-8 p.m.

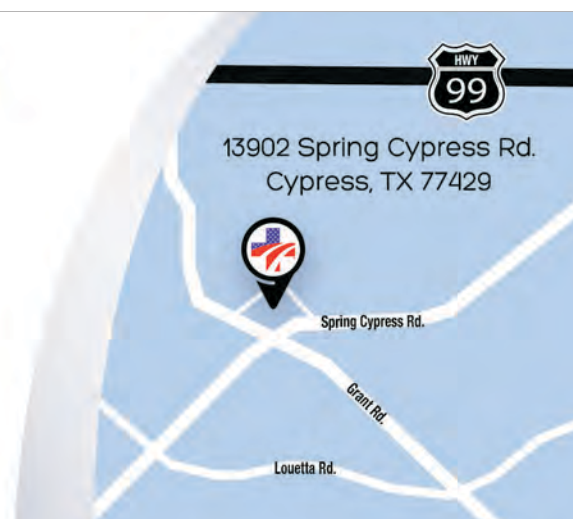


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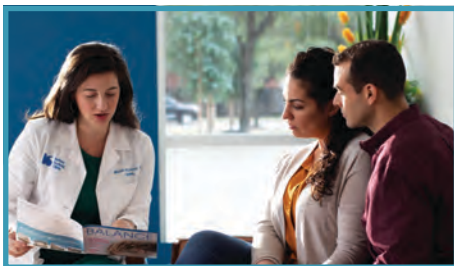
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HISTORY

Cy-Hope has offered thousands of underserved youth opportunities they might not have had otherwise—including trips to Camp Lemonade.

PHOTOS COURTESY CY-HOPE

Cy-Hope

Nonprofit reaches 10-year milestone serving local children

BY DANICA LLOYD

Godfrey Hubert was senior pastor of Foundry Church in late 2010 when faced with the question: “If your church ceased to exist today, would the community miss it?”

One of the pastoral staff members who pondered this question with him was Lynda Zelenka, who said the church did plenty of mission work but was not necessarily making a lasting impression on the community outside its members.

Alongside local leaders, they brainstormed local gaps, and the nonprofit Cy-Hope was born out of these conversations in 2011. Its mission was to make life better for kids in Cy-Fair—particularly those from low-income families.

“Our goal was to build a highway into the community and not just fill potholes,” said Zelenka, who has served as executive director since the organization launched.

Cy-Hope’s first initiative was the Backpack Program, which sends at-risk students home with a backpack full of food over the weekend through a partnership with the Houston Food Bank.

Roy Garcia, a Cy-Hope board member since 2011 and Cy-Fair ISD associate superintendent, said

economically disadvantaged students often rely on meals served at school, so the Backpack Program is a practical way to meet one of their most basic needs on weekends.

Hope Centers were also established that first year, giving students positive spaces to spend time after school and get homework help and activities in their own neighborhood.

Initiatives added later include the Providing Opportunities Program, which has funded more than \$554,000 in scholarships for dual-credit, Advanced Placement and certification courses.

“When a child’s able to take a dual-credit class, that’s taking root in their dream of going to college and having a career,” Zelenka said. “When we’re giving them what they need to get that certification, those are roots that are growing deep, and eventually they’ll flourish.”

Dierker’s Champs and Devine Virtuosos make baseball and music activities more accessible for children who otherwise might not be able to afford participation.

By 2013, Cy-Hope launched its counseling center, which operates on a sliding pay scale. The Hope Chest Resale Market and venue rentals at Cy-Hope’s headquarters also generate income for programs,

but the organization primarily relies on volunteers and donations.

“It’s a blessing, not just to that individual student or just to a family, but it ends up blessing the community because they’re our future leaders ... and we want them to have that good, firm foundation and that hope so they can extend that [to others],” Zelenka said.

The Cy-Fair Houston Chamber of Commerce named Cy-Hope as the 2020 Nonprofit of the Year for the organization’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included distributing more than 5.25 million pounds of food to local residents.

Future plans include opening a second and potentially third resale market location, building baseball fields for Dierker’s Champs and community use, and launching a Hope Center in Waller ISD.

About 55% of CFISD students are economically disadvantaged. Garcia said Cy-Hope helps set them up for a successful future.

“The phrase that we talk about frequently with our leaders and teachers in Cy-Fair is ‘Every life has a story,’” he said. “It’s finding out what those stories are and being able to meet the needs that they have, and that’s what Cy-Hope has provided us that opportunity to do.”

HOPEFUL HIGHLIGHTS

The timeline below shows when each Cy-Hope program launched and how many students have been reached since.

2011

- The Backpack Program started with 80 bags of food at two campuses and has served as many as 1,500 students at 69 campuses at a time.
- Multiple Hope Center locations, including a mobile STEM bus, serve as many as 200 students each week.



Dierker’s Champs started with 25 baseball players and has served 1,252 students since its inception.

2012

- Nearly 11,000 students have received scholarships through the Providing Opportunities Program.
- Cy-Hope has sent 736 students to Camp Lemonade, a traditional summer camp experience for underserved youth.

2013

- Cy-Hope Counseling has grown from two counselors to 17 and a speech therapist with more than 350 weekly clients.

2014

- Ambassadors of Compassion mentoring program has served 1,283 students since launching.



Nearly 300 musicians have benefited from Devine Virtuosos band camp. Private instruction started in 2018.

2016

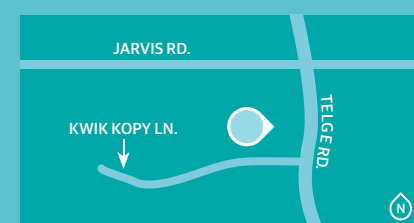
- The Hope Chest Resale Market opened with 54 volunteers and has grown to a group of 175 volunteers.

Cy-Hope

12715 Telge Road, Cypress

713-466-4673

www.cy-hope.org

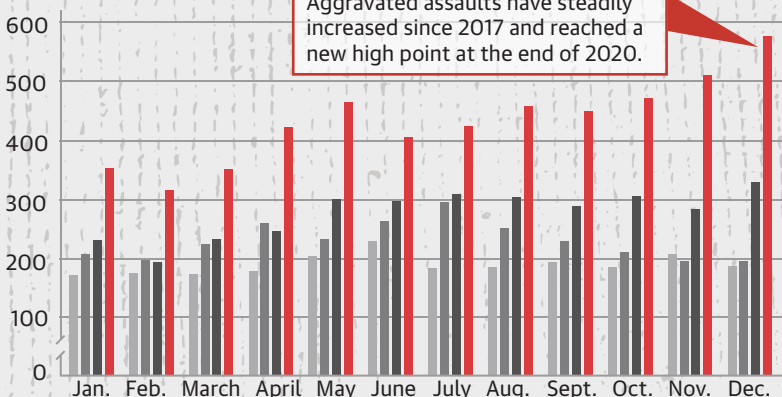


CRIME IN THE COUNTY

Murders and aggravated assaults are up in Harris County, although sexual assaults have decreased.

■ 2017 ■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2020

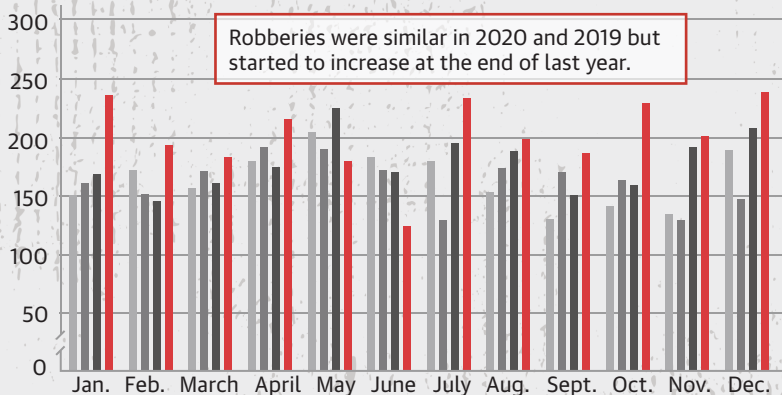
Aggravated assault



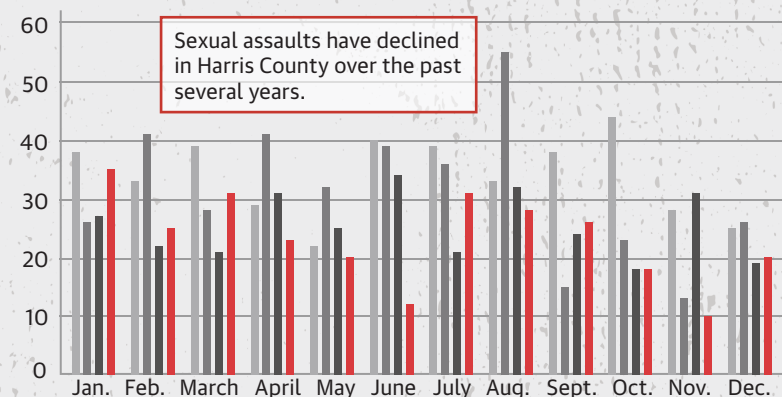
Murder



Robbery



Sexual assault



SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CONTINUED FROM 1

in violent crime, said Colin Cepuran, a senior justice research policy analyst with the Harris County Justice Administration Department. The department released a study in March that Cepuran said presents evidence there is no compelling relationship between misdemeanor bail reform and the violent crime trends.

“If you had to lead me to guess which way the relationship pointed, I would say ... there is some evidence that misdemeanor bail reform may have actually contributed to public safety during this unparalleled time of economic and public health deprivation in Harris County,” Cepuran said.

Crime in the Cy-Fair area has increased at a rate relatively slower to other parts of the county, with murders remaining largely flat and some areas along Hwy. 290 and FM 1960 seeing upticks in aggravated assaults.

Critics of the county’s bail practices said it has less to do with misdemeanor bail reform and more with bond decisions made by felony court judges. As some state legislators look to make it harder for certain offenders to be let out on bond, county officials are pushing for a more restorative approach to crime, including programs directed at helping crime survivors heal and intervening in violent crime before it can be committed.

The county’s efforts mirror a trend in criminal justice that can be seen across the U.S., said Chelsey Narvey, an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University.

“There definitely is, more generally within criminal justice, a trend toward a more restorative justice approach where we think about the victims, the causes of crime and what a specific individual might need in order to help them not commit a crime again,” she said.

Diving into the data

Violent crimes in the county such as murder and aggravated assault rose between 2019 and 2020, while robberies saw a smaller increase, and sexual assaults dropped, according to the justice administration department study.

Harris County saw 276 murders in 2019 and 389 in 2020, according to the study. Aggravated assaults increased from 3,284 in 2019 to more than 5,000 in 2020.

Harris County started to reform its misdemeanor bail bond practices in 2017 after a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction ruling the county

was unconstitutionally holding people in jail pretrial for being unable to afford bail. After a lawsuit was settled in 2019, the county was required to start releasing most nonviolent misdemeanor arrestees on general order bonds.

However, exceptions were made for those arrested for domestic violence, repeated DWI and arrests while out on bond.

The study showed similar crime trends taking place in Dallas, Chicago and Los Angeles—places where no bail reform has taken place.

A study of the timing of the crime increase, the coronavirus pandemic and the use of unsecured bonds further suggested the pandemic to be the main factor, Cepuran said. A separate report by a court-appointed monitor tracking the county’s misdemeanor bail reform efforts showed rates of recidivism were either steady or declined among misdemeanor offenders between 2015 and 2019.

“The socioeconomic pressures that Harris County residents [face] and increases in COVID-19 cases are both positively associated with increases in murders the next month,” he said. “The greater use of unsecured bonds—the principal effect of bail reform—actually is associated with a decrease in murders the next month.”

A complex problem

Among the critics of the county’s bail practices is state Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, who filed Senate Bill 532 in the state Legislature in February. Bettencourt, who represents the northwest Houston area, said the bill would prohibit judges from giving out personal recognizance bonds—bonds where no money is put up—to anyone arrested while already out on one or anyone arrested for a felony charge if they already have two or more felony charges pending.

At a February press conference to announce the bill, Bettencourt criticized felony court judges for handing out low-cost bonds “like popcorn.”

“This situation has to stop,” Bettencourt said. “While I’m filing a bill today ... I am calling on the judges in Harris County to stop this today.”

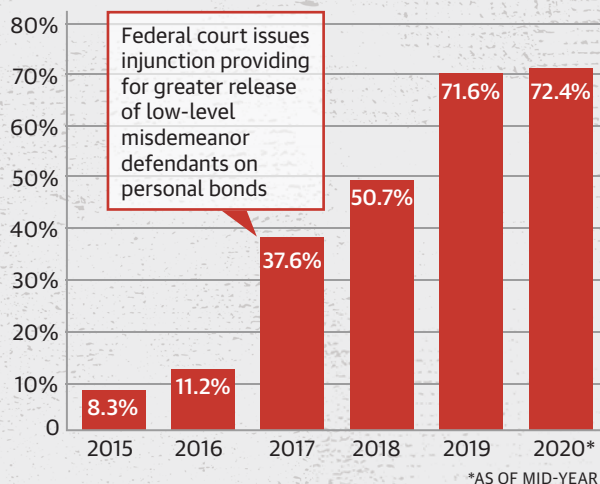
State Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, also filed Senate Bill 21, which would prevent those charged with a crime from being released on a personal recognizance bond if they recently were convicted of a felony or Class A or B misdemeanor. Cepuran, while testifying in a March 18 committee hearing on the bill, said he feared it would overwhelm Harris County’s jail

RATES OF RE-OFFENSE

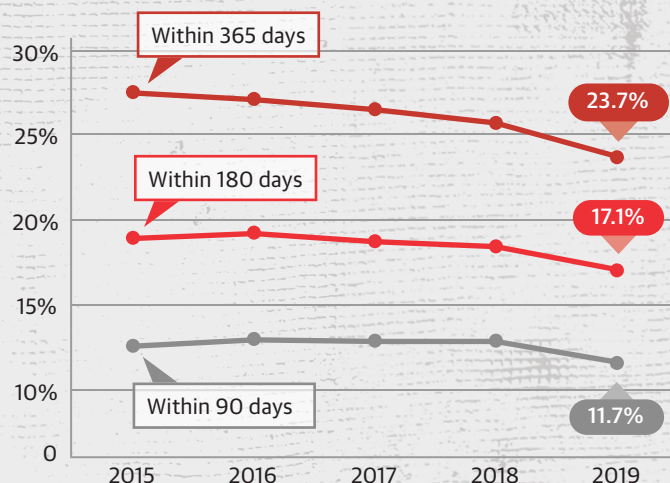
Recidivism rates have been stable or declining among those arrested for misdemeanor offenses between 2015 and 2019 in Harris County.

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY MONITOR'S REPORT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Percentage of misdemeanor cases to be released on general order or personal bond



Percentage of misdemeanor cases where a new offense was committed



and leave the county exposed to costly litigation such as the 2016 lawsuit over misdemeanor bail.

Huffman said the bill is a work in progress, and she expects the language to change throughout the legislative process to ensure compliance with federal court decisions.

Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg said she supported the “spirit” of SB 21 at the hearing, arguing too many repeat offenders in Harris County are receiving multiple bonds and committing increasingly more serious crimes. In 2015, roughly 3,200 people on bond committed 6,348 new crimes in Harris County, while in 2020, roughly 10,500 people on bond committed 18,796 new offenses, she said. Ogg also presented data showing 1,097 violent offenders were released on PR bonds in 2020, up from 239 in 2018.

“I believe in the concept and the constitutional right of an individual to be free, but it’s got to be balanced with the public’s safety,” Ogg said.

Harris County Precinct 4 Constable Mark Herman—whose office covers parts of Cy-Fair east of Hwy. 290—also said bail bond practices have led to more criminals on the streets.

“You’ve got judges down there giving these ridiculously low bonds. It’s like a revolving-door process down there,” Herman said. “We’re arresting someone for DWI, and then three nights later we’re arresting the same person again.”

JAD officials said the county is working to determine what information judges have available to them when deciding how to set bonds. Both Cepuran and Harris County Sheriff Ed

AS WE MOVE FORWARD AND THE ... REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMMING STARTS TO PICK BACK UP AGAIN, WE MIGHT HOPEFULLY SEE THAT THE RECENT UPTICK IN CRIME STARTS TO TREND DOWN.

CHELSEY NARVEY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND CRIMINOLOGY, SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Gonzalez said addressing a backlog in cases would also help cases be more successfully prosecuted.

People who work in and study domestic violence said a noted increase in incidents can likely be tied to the coronavirus pandemic. Although no academic research has been done in the Houston area, research Narvey conducted looking at the Dallas area has suggested a roughly 8% increase in incidents of domestic violence since the pandemic began last March.

Domestic violence and marital stress in general are also tied to unemployment, said Cortnee Wright, clinical director with the Cy-Fair nonprofit Shield Bearer, which provides counseling services. An uptick in mental health issues and substance use during the pandemic is also a factor, she said.

“When all those things combine, it’s a powder keg,” she said.

Violence interruption

In their March report, members of the county’s justice administration department also presented thoughts on how the rise in crime can be addressed.

The department’s programs in the works focus on violence interruption

and helping survivors of crime, methods that are intended to address the increase in violent crime at its roots, Deputy Director Ana Yáñez Correa said. She said strengthening infrastructure to make sure people have their basic needs met is a crucial part of addressing the issue.

“Instinctively, we think the way to stop a behavior from happening is by saying, ‘If you do this, this is going to be the consequence,’” she said. “If the threat of having a felony was as effective as people have instinctively thought, then we probably would not see the increase on these types of crimes.”

At the March 1 meeting where the report was presented, Precinct 3 Commissioner Tom Ramsey stressed the urgency of the situation.

“The single mom with two children in an underserved neighborhood, she can’t wait for us to do a two- or three-year program,” Ramsey said.

A study into violence interruption is nearing completion, Cepuran said. Programs will work to intervene at the moment individuals are most likely to experience or perpetrate violence and just after individuals experienced violence, he said.

COMBATING THE TREND

Harris County officials said they are looking at methods such as violence interruption and crime survivor outreach to address the increase in crime at its roots.

Survivor services

- Gap analysis will determine unmet needs for crime survivors
- Creation of trauma centers to give survivors of crime a safe place to heal

Violence interruption/prevention

- Report underway to identify best practices for violence interruption programs
- Potential development of county-level department dedicated to violence interruption

New U visa policies

- Examination of U visa policies to address backlog of applications
- Could benefit immigrant survivors of crime by helping them obtain visas that allow them to work with law enforcement without fear of deportation

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

“These programs make use of individuals who are, due to their social experience or background, going to be considered credible messengers,” he said. “And [they will] encourage those individuals who are potentially just about to perpetrate or have just experienced violence to desist from actually engaging in that violence,” Cepuran said.

From there, individuals will be connected to case managers and social resources to help address the longer-term social pressures that cause violence to be repeated, Cepuran said.

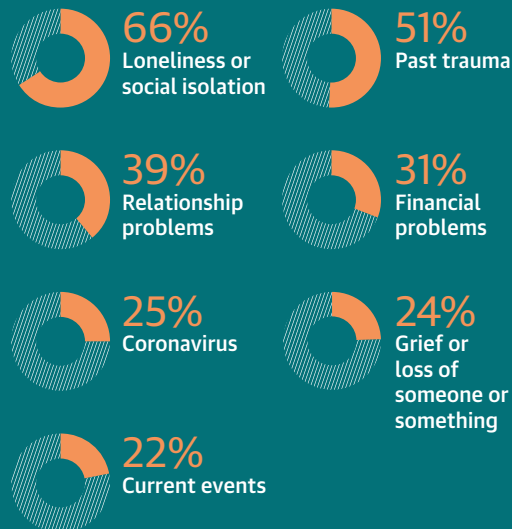
As more people are vaccinated, Narvey said the trend could also be alleviated by the resumption of face-to-face services for offenders and survivors that typically help steer people away from violent acts.

“As we move forward and the ... rehabilitation and treatment programming starts to pick back up again, we might hopefully see that the recent uptick in crime starts to trend down,” she said.

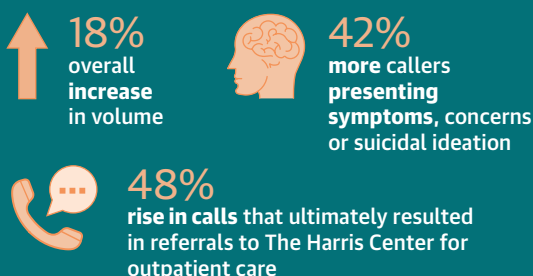
ASSESSING *The need*

Many continue to deal with the effects of COVID-19, and crisis call centers in the region have seen an uptick in volume during the pandemic.

Top factors contributing to mental health concerns among Harris and Fort Bend county residents in December



From March-February 2019-20 to March-February 2020-21, The Harris Center Crisis Lines saw:



SOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GREATER HOUSTON, THE HARRIS CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND IDD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CONTINUED FROM 1

relationship dynamics, loss and fear over the virus a year later, Wine said.

By December, Mental Health America of Greater Houston reported 66% of Harris and Fort Bend county residents screened were battling loneliness or social isolation; 31% were dealing with financial problems; and another 24% were experiencing grief over loss. The organization offers free online screenings for youth and adults to gauge their mental health.

“Even before the pandemic, a public health challenge existed as demand for services increased and access to care was difficult for many,” said Renae Vania Tomczak, president and CEO of Mental Health America of Greater Houston. “Here in the Greater Houston region we have had to deal with trauma as a result of devastating hurricanes, school shootings, the pandemic as well as the recent winter storm—and that’s just in the last four years.”

Local counselors may have seen a rise in demand this past year, but many people still face barriers in accessing care. Mental Health America, a national nonprofit that promotes mental health, reported 20.1% of Texas adults with a mental illness are uninsured compared to the national average of 10.8%.

Vania Tomczak said she has seen an uptick in mental health training and awareness in sectors such as law enforcement and public education in recent years as well as more funding allocated to support resources but that there is always more to be done to meet local needs.

Statewide, a projected \$8 billion—about 3%—of the 2022-23 budget is allocated for mental health initiatives across 24 state agencies. Gov. Greg Abbott has commended these agencies for creating a 24/7 mental health support line and establishing virtual access for behavioral services during the pandemic.

Managing mental health

Rice University’s COVID-19 Registry, an ongoing survey designed to gauge local effects of the pandemic with real-time data, reported 46% of Harris County residents are dealing with mild to severe anxiety. Vania Tomczak also noted significant

increases in alcohol and substance use; eating disorders; and youth at risk for emotional, attentional or behavioral disorders.

Experts said healthy coping mechanisms—limiting news consumption, connecting with loved ones, exercising and meditating—can lessen anxiety. Unhealthy responses include withdrawing from others, being self-critical, showing aggression or anger, and using alcohol or drugs to cope.

Michelle Wright, a local independent counselor specializing in youth and families, said many of her clients are failing classes due to mental health effects this year. She is also seeing some clients more frequently, and many parents have joined their children in counseling.

“The parents don’t know how to handle it, and when they don’t know how to handle it, it trickles down to the family,” she said. “Problems that were there before are exacerbated.”

Wine’s business also serves children and teenagers, but she said the greatest surge in demand has been from adults grappling with pandemic effects such as job insecurity.

“With the unknown of COVID[-19] and the unknown in the oil and gas industry, ... restaurants [and] most businesses, the level of suicidal ideation has dramatically [risen],” she said.

Cammy Hazim, South and Southeast Texas-area director for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, said it can be difficult to recognize when someone is struggling with their mental health.

She encourages going beyond surface-level conversations and asking about loved ones’ moods and sleeping and eating habits. If someone is exhibiting risk factors, Hazim said she tells people to ask directly if they are contemplating suicide so they can get help as soon as possible.

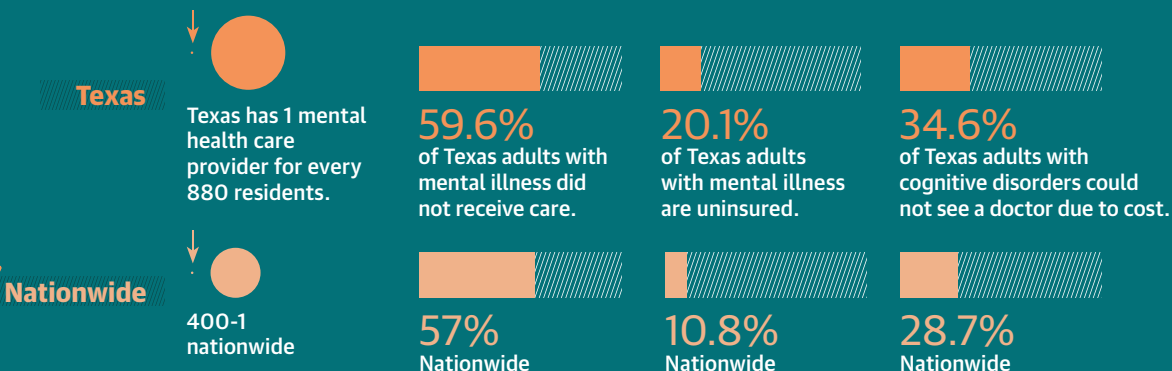
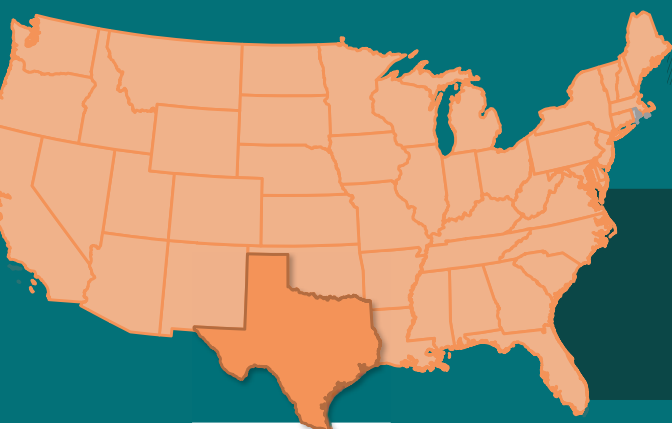
“It’s hard, and it’s uncomfortable. Most people would feel nervous about asking someone if they are considering suicide, but if ... they’re showing [risk factors] and if in your gut you feel that something’s not right, then absolutely you should ask,” she said.

Barriers to care

All demographics are vulnerable to mental health

BARRIERS *To care*

As the need for mental health services grows, many local residents cannot access treatment, experts said.



60 million Americans who have not sought mental health treatment would not know where to find it.

One-third of Americans have worried about others judging them for seeking mental health services.

42% of Americans say cost and poor insurance coverage are the top barriers for accessing mental health care.

SOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA, COHEN VETERANS NETWORK, NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

House Bill 1014

would require suicide prevention information to be included on student ID cards for those in sixth grade and up.

Senate Bill 1521

would create a task force to study mental health services provided at higher education institutions.

HB 515

would require health insurance providers to reimburse mental health care providers for telemedicine visits as much as they would for in-person visits.

HB 1144

would require school districts to include suicide prevention and other mental health training in staff development at least every two years.

issues, but local experts agreed some groups are less likely to receive treatment due to obstacles of insurance coverage, transportation, cultural stigmas and mental health workforce availability.

Hazim said insured individuals have taken advantage of telehealth therapy services more than ever before this past year, but those without technology or health coverage access do not have the same opportunity. Communities of color are less likely to have health insurance, and many do not have the option to work from home, she said.

"We know that disproportionate amounts of Blacks and Hispanics have contracted COVID because they're more likely to have a job where you have to go in," Hazim said. "If you are in construction or hospitality, you can't Zoom in. If you've got to show up every day no matter what or you don't get a paycheck, that affects your mental health."

Data from Mental Health America also shows some correlation across racial lines. While loneliness and isolation were the top contributing factors across all demographics nationwide in 2020, they most often affected the Hispanic and Latino subgroup's mental health.

White Americans were more likely to be concerned about current events, including the pandemic, than Black Americans—the group most likely to be dealing with financial problems.

"As you might expect, those who struggle in meeting their needs for a better quality of life are at a greater risk for mental health challenges," Vania Tomczak said. "Persons dealing with food insecurity, economic risk, unstable housing, lack of access to transportation and unsafe neighborhoods face impacts on their overall health."

Texas ranks below every state except Alabama when it comes to mental health workforce

availability with 1 care provider for every 880 residents, according to Mental Health America.

Access is not as limited in Cy-Fair as it might be in more rural communities, but navigating provider and payment options can be difficult, according to officials from Cy-Fair ISD's mental health team. CFISD families are encouraged to reach out to campus guidance counselors for assistance accessing mental health resources in the community.

Moving forward

COVID-19 vaccine rollout is underway, and state-wide restrictions have begun being lifted. Wright said people may face social anxiety upon returning to group settings after being isolated for so long as well as continued fear of the spread of the virus as individuals have become more aware of risks.

"It was hard for us to adjust to this, and now it's going to be really difficult to adjust back to everything being normal," she said.

Recovering from any traumatic experience occurs over time and in phases. Some individuals will take more time than others, Vania Tomczak said.

Experiencing other disasters along the way could interrupt the recovery process. For example, Wine said the February winter storm that caused thousands of Cy-Fair residents to lose power led to a spike in anxiety and depression.

Vania Tomczak said while she believes Texans tend to be resilient, continual trauma could make Houstonians consider leaving the area and cause others to avoid moving to the region.

"Certainly, I'm hearing from people in meetings that I'm having, 'Oh my gosh, how much more can we take?'" she said.

As people transition back to in-person activities



WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If multiple symptoms of poor mental health persist for a prolonged period of time, experts said it is important to seek help.

People should consider seeking help if they are:

- ✓ feeling sad, hopeless or worthless
- ✓ experiencing changes in eating and sleeping habits
- ✓ having low or no energy
- ✓ experiencing mood changes
- ✓ using drugs or alcohol more than usual
- ✓ losing interest in normally enjoyable activities
- ✓ thinking of harming themselves or others
- ✓ having difficulty concentrating
- ✓ withdrawing from others



WHO TO CALL

- **Harris Center Crisis Line and Crisis Text Line**
713-970-7000
- **COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line through Texas Health and Human Services**
833-986-1919
- **Treatment Referral Helpline through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**
1-877-726-4727
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
1-800-273-8255

SOURCE: MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA OF GREATER HOUSTON, AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

and some sense of normalcy, experts said it will be important to maintain routines, focus on things they can control and surround themselves with people they trust.

"We've noticed our vulnerabilities and also our strengths," Wine said. "Collectively, even the strongest of us have had to contemplate that we all have deep-seeded need for connection."



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It's always been a DREAM of mine to come back to my **very own** community to start a business that can create opportunities. The community has supported me throughout my high school, collegiate & NFL career. My family & I are excited to return home and provide a high-quality, 5-Star dependable service to an assorted business industry. I am proud to be a Cy-Ridge HS alum and a homeowner in the Cypress community until this day!

Russell Shepard, CEO



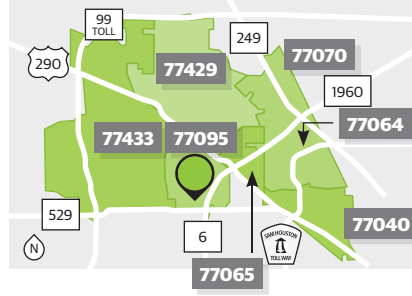
Paid Advertisement

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AND RECEIVE

\$50 OFF
YOUR FIRST RENTAL
RESERVATION

COPPERFIELD SOUTHCREEK VILLAGE, 77095

Copperfield Southcreek Village features 1,377 single-family homes and outdoor recreational options.



Median home value
\$210,409

Homes sold in the past year
19

Homes under contract
2

Median annual property taxes
\$5,302

Median price per square foot
\$104.82

Average days on the market*
63

Build-out year: 1988
Square footage: 1,360-2,910
Home values: \$199,995-\$292,995
HOA dues (estimated): \$610 annually
Schools (Cy-Fair ISD): Lowery Elementary School, Aragon Middle School, Langham Creek High School
Property taxes (in dollars):

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Lone Star College System | 0.11 |
| Harris County | 0.41 |
| Harris Co. Dept. of Education | 0.01 |
| Harris Co. ESD No. 9 | 0.06 |
| Harris Co. Flood Control Dist. | 0.03 |
| Harris Co. Hospital Dist. | 0.17 |
| Cy-Fair ISD | 1.37 |
| Port of Houston Authority | 0.01 |
| Harris County WCID No. 145 | 0.06 |
| Harris County MUD (average) | 0.29 |
| Total (per \$100 valuation) | 2.52 |

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA PROVIDED BY DEBBIE MARSHALL
 ROSS & MARSHALL REAL ESTATE, 12623 JONES ROAD, HOUSTON
 281-469-7677 • YDEBBIE23@GMAIL.COM



*AS OF MARCH 1

Recently sold homes in Copperfield Southcreek Village



7734 Springville Drive

3 bed/2.5 bath 1,646 sq. ft.
 Sold for \$185,001-\$215,000 on Nov. 2



7507 Highland Farms Road

4 bed/2.5 bath 2,619 sq. ft.
 Sold for \$285,001-\$325,000 on Dec. 11



7614 Evergreen Brook Way

4 bed/2.5 bath 2,464 sq. ft.
 Sold for \$250,001-\$285,000 on March 5



17019 Poplar Hill St.

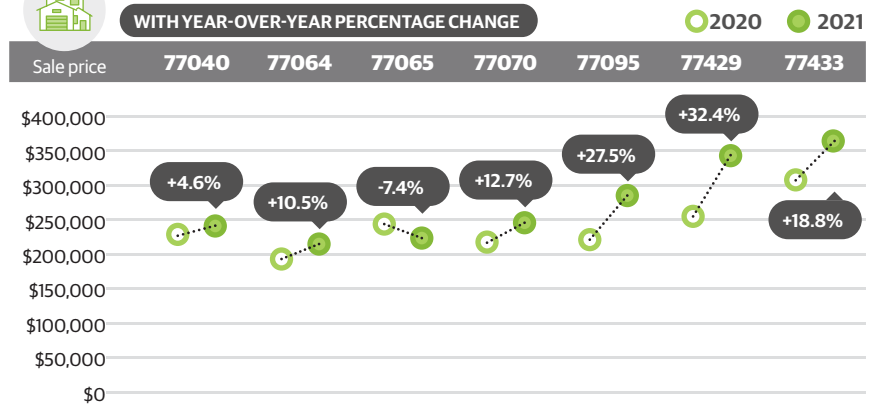
4 bed/2.5 bath 2,496 sq. ft.
 Sold for \$215,001-\$250,000 on Jan. 8

MARKET DATA FOR FEBRUARY

HOMES SOLD/AVERAGE DAYS ON THE MARKET

| | 77040 | 77064 | 77065 | 77070 | 77095 | 77429 | 77433 |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| \$1 million+ | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| \$800,000-\$999,999 | - | - | - | - | - | 2/105 | 1/108 |
| \$600,000-\$799,999 | - | - | - | - | - | 8/139 | 6/66 |
| \$500,000-\$599,999 | - | - | - | - | - | 2/28 | 13/51 |
| \$400,000-\$499,999 | 1/4 | - | - | 2/26 | 2/7 | 11/33 | 23/60 |
| \$300,000-\$399,999 | 2/34 | 2/33 | 2/13 | 4/12 | 13/25 | 28/28 | 34/60 |
| \$200,000-\$299,999 | 9/12 | 14/28 | 11/19 | 29/19 | 32/18 | 47/23 | 31/13 |
| \$150,000-\$199,999 | 3/29 | 10/6 | 2/4 | 7/7 | 3/9 | 5/8 | 9/16 |
| \$149,999 or under | 2/4 | 2/7 | - | - | - | - | - |

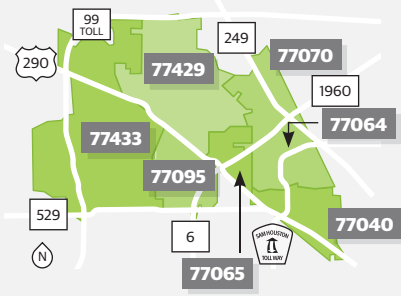
MEDIAN PRICE OF HOMES SOLD WITH YEAR-OVER-YEAR PERCENTAGE CHANGE



REFINANCE PURCHASE
FHA CONVENTIONAL VA LOANS

www.mortgageloansbyangela.com

15737 NORTH FWY, HOUSTON, TX 77090 | **281-435-6745** | SR. LOAN OFFICER: ANGELA MARTIN | NMLS#1223886



CY-FAIR MARCH 2021 COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE DATA

Industrial projects continue to break ground in Cy-Fair with the number of buildings under construction now at seven. One year into the coronavirus pandemic, retail vacancies have remained largely unchanged, up 1.2 percentage points from last March.

TOTAL SQUARE FEET OF SPACE

Q1 2020 As of March 23

OFFICE

10.5 million
10.5 million

INDUSTRIAL

37 million
39 million

RETAIL

19.5 million
19.9 million

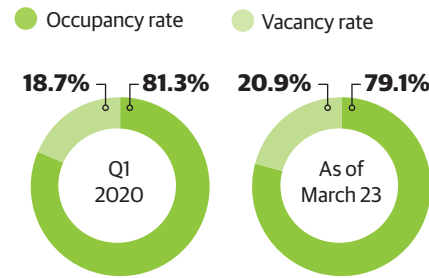


MARKET DATA PROVIDED BY CALDWELL COS.
7904 N. SAM HOUSTON PARKWAY, FOURTH FLOOR
HOUSTON, TX 77064
COLLEGE STATION | HOUSTON | THE WOODLANDS

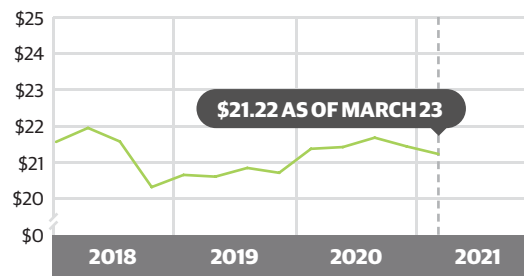
Although every effort has been made to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of this real estate data, *Community Impact Newspaper* assumes no liability for errors or omissions.

OFFICE

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



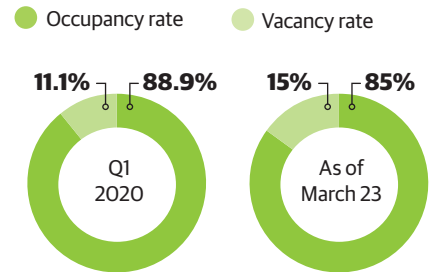
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

208,374 square feet

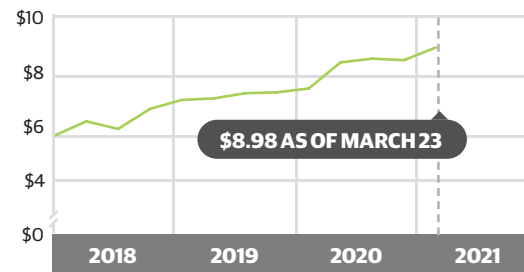
3 buildings

INDUSTRIAL

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



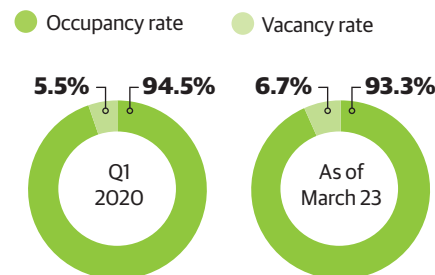
UNDER CONSTRUCTION

1.3 million square feet

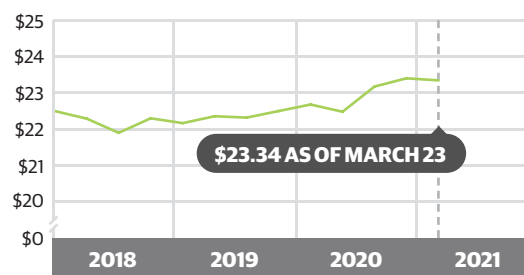
7 buildings

RETAIL

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

136,494 square feet

9 buildings



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RENEW

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No substitutions, 21 and over with valid ID, does not apply with lunch specials

Weekday Lunch Specials 11:30am - 3pm



OPEN HOURS

SUN - THU
11AM - 11PM

FRI - SAT
11AM - MIDNIGHT

HAPPY HOUR

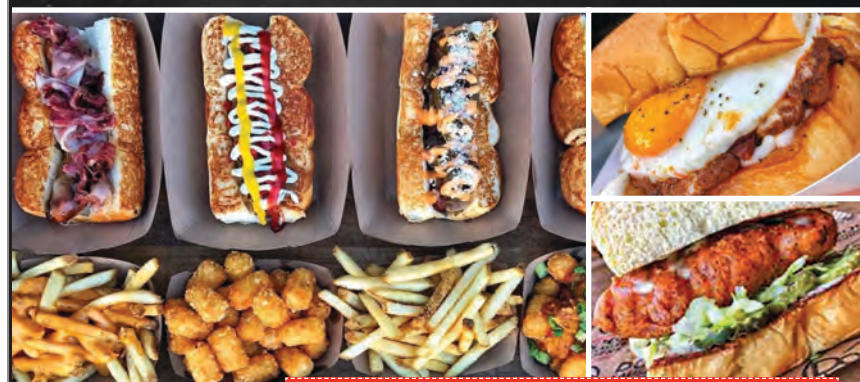
MON - FRI
2PM - 6PM

SUNDAY
2PM - 11PM

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COPPERFIELD

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DOGS SAUSAGES BURGERS



\$5 OFF \$20

EXP 5/5/21



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Plays twice a month on Saturdays
- Ladies Golf Association (LGA)**
Plays every Monday
- Ladies Rec group (less competitive)**
Plays every Wednesday
- Senior Golf Association (SGA)**
Open to anyone over the age of 60
Plays the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month

DRIVING RANGE RATES

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Small..... | \$6 |
| Medium..... | \$9 |
| Large..... | \$12 |
| Small Card (12 baskets)..... | \$60 |
| Medium Card (12 baskets)..... | \$90 |
| Large Card (12 baskets)..... | \$120 |
| Combo Card (6S 12M 12L)..... | \$225 |

Complementary short game practice area - balls supplied

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CAMPS INCLUDE

- 8 Hours of instruction
- Snacks and Drinks each Day
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- A Range card (6 buckets)
- On course Experience
- Loaner Clubs Available
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- August 2-5

8:30 - 10:30 am
\$150.00 per camp

8502 Rio Grande | Jersey Village, TX 77040 | 713-896-0900
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JERSEY VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET

EST. JULY 2017



The Jersey Village Farmers Market is held the **first and third Sundays** of every month

FROM 12:00 - 3:00 PM

The market is located in the parking lot of the **Jersey Village Civic Center, 16327 Lakeview Dr.**

Family-friendly event featuring locally grown food and handmade merchandise.
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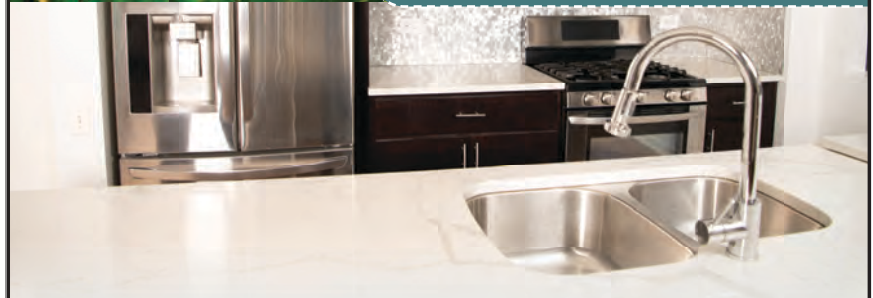
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- HUEVOS RANCHEROS

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TOPPED WITH MELTED MONTERREY JACK CHEESE & AVOCADO SLICES.
SERVED WITH POTATOES.

- CHORIZO, CACTUS, FRESH JALAPENO & ONIONS
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- GRILLED POBLANO PEPPER, BACON & ONION

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- CHORIZO & EGG
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- PECAN
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- BERRIES
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DRINKS

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FRESH SQUEEZED JUICE

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- GRAPEFRUIT

12OZ \$5 16OZ \$6

MIMOSAS

MADE WITH FRESH SQUEEZED ORANGE JUICE AND GRAND MARINER

GLASS \$6 PITCHER \$28

BLOODY MARY

GLASS \$7 PITCHER. \$28

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BOOKS • FURNITURE AND MORE!

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**ANGELS'
ATTIC
RESALE**

Benefiting Cypress Assistance Ministries

**MONDAY - FRIDAY
10:00 - 5:00,
SATURDAYS
9:00 - 3:00**

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11202 HUFFMEISTER, HOUSTON, TX 77065 • WWW.CYPRESSASSISTANCE.ORG

youth summer
ART camp
SCHEDULE

**SAVE \$15
USE PROMO CODE
IMPACT15**

JUNE

14-17TH

TEENS: 21-24TH

28-JUL 1ST

JULY

12-15TH

TEENS: 19-22ND

26-29TH

AUGUST

9-12TH

TEENS: 16-19TH

16718 HOUSE & HAHN RD | 832.653.7277
CYPRESS@ARWORKSHOP.COM

*Camp with your crew...
private camp
sessions available!*

REGISTER AT

www.ARWORKSHOP.com/CYPRESS

**KIDS EAT
FREE WEDNESDAY
5 PM-CLOSE
SATURDAY BREAKFAST
8AM-12PM**

12 & under. One free kids meal w/ each
adult entree purchased. Dine in only.

CHECK OUT OUR
WEBSITE FOR
OUR KID EVENT
CALENDAR



Drink all 42 Beers
and get your name
on the wall!

JOIN OUR BYG BREW CREW



**NEW COVERED
BEER GARDEN**

GREAT FOR OUTDOOR PARTIES

RESERVE IT TODAY!

**NOW
HIRING**

**SERVERS
AND
KITCHEN
STAFF**

MUDBUG MADNESS
SATURDAYS \$5 OFF REGULAR PRICE
FOR BOILING POT



BUY ONE ENTREE & 2 BEVERAGES AND GET
THE SECOND ENTREE 1/2 OFF (\$9.00 VALUE)

Expires 4/23/2021. The Backyard Grill - 9453 Jones Road, Houston, 77065

BREAKFAST

8am-Noon

Saturday & Sunday



thebackyardgrill.com

9453 Jones Road, Houston, 77065

281.897.9200



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EARN FREDDY'S.**

Download the Freddy's app to become a Fredhead today!





Freddy's
FROZEN CUSTARD &
STEAKBURGERS®



**GREAT FOOD.
FUN PEOPLE.**

JOIN OUR TEAM!

TEXT FREDDYSHOUSTON TO 242424

OUR DINING ROOMS ARE OPEN!

☑ DINE IN ☑ TAKE OUT ☑ DRIVE THRU

DELIVERY WITH **DOORDASH** and **Uber Eats**

FREE
ONE MINI FROZEN CUSTARD SUNDAE
{ WITH UP TO 3 TOPPINGS }



Good for one mini specialty sundae - no purchase necessary. Must present this coupon. Only valid at these Freddy's locations. One per guest, per visit. Some restrictions may apply. Expires 5/31/2021 FreddysUSA.com/locations

REGISTER COUPON BUTTON: IMPACT

BAYTOWN - 10520 I-10 E
DAIRY ASHFORD - 1111 DAIRY ASHFORD RD
FULSHEAR - 26806 FM 1093
HUNTSVILLE - 231 IH 45 SOUTH
JERSEY VILLAGE - 12407 FM 1960 W
KATY - 24433 KATY FREEWAY & 1705-B FRY RD
KINGWOOD - 4519 KINGWOOD DR
LEAGUE CITY - NWC 1-45 & FM 646
MAGNOLIA - 32910 FM 2978
NEW CANEY - 12007 N GRAND PKWY E
PASADENA - 4637 E SAM HOUSTON PKWY S
PEARLAND - 2620 PEARLAND PKWY
SPRING - 19370 IH 45 & 21420 KUYKENDahl RD
SUGAR LAND - 20450 SW FRWY
WALLISVILLE - 6125 E SAM HOUSTON PKWY N

CRAWFISH SEASON IS HERE!

CALL THE RESTAURANT TO CHECK AVAILABILITY

KIDS STILL EAT FREE ALL DAY WEDNESDAYS!

BUY ONE ENTREE GET ONE 1/2 OFF!

(With purchase of two beverages. Up to \$8 value.) One offer per table. Not to be combined with any other offer. Dine-In Only. Expires 5/5/2021



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MARGARITAS TO-GO

WITH FOOD PURCHASE, AVAILABLE ONLY DURING QUARANTINE RESTRICTIONS

COME FOR HAPPY HOUR
MON. - WED. ALL DAY
THURS. & FRI. 11 A.M. - 7 P.M.

CARRYOUT & TO-GO AVAILABLE

BREAKFAST BUFFET SUNDAYS
9AM-12:30 PM

FREE CHILI CON QUESO
WITH PURCHASE, CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS.

MIXED FAJITAS FOR 4 TO-GO \$49.95
WITH 2 MARGARITAS

KID'S EAT FREE WEDNESDAYS!
WITH PURCHASE OF ADULT ENTREE

GREENCREEK DR. 12015 Perry Rd., Houston, 77070
281-890-6200
Sun. - Thur. 11 - 9
Fri. & Sat. 11 - 10



DINING ROOM NOW OPEN!



bubble tea



egg rolls



banh mi



Buy One Chicken Pho Bowl, Get One **FREE**
(With purchase of two drinks. Must present coupon. Dine in only.)



PHO BO 2
VIETNAMESE NOODLE HOUSE
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ALL OF YOUR AUTO
NEEDS TO KEEP YOU
ON THE ROAD**



RELIABLE AUTO REPAIR



\$19.99

A/C Performance Check

We'll check for worn hoses and seal & test your system for pressure leaks or contamination. Additional charges may apply for eval & recharge or full diagnostic. Redeem coupon in the lobby not valid with any other offers.



\$5 OFF

SEMI-SYNTHETIC OIL CHANGE

-OR-

\$10 OFF

ANY FULL SYNTHETIC OIL CHANGE

Most cars/light trucks. With coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Redeem coupon in the lobby.



\$95 VALUE

**FREE DIAGNOSTIC
W/ REPAIR**

Most cars/light trucks. With coupon. Not valid with any other offers. Redeem coupon in the lobby.



\$7 OFF

STATE INSPECTION

Not valid with any other offers. Redeem Coupon in Lobby.

Two Locations to Serve You

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(281) 890-7100

12145 Perry Rd.
Houston, TX 77070
(281) 477-8300

www.reliableautorepairs.com



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BUY 2 GET 1 FREE



EQUAL OR LESSER VALUE
EXPIRES 4/30/2021

1 FREE DRINK

ANY 16OZ BEVERAGE



EXPIRES 4/30/2021



7025 FRY RD STE 100-CYPRESS, TX 77433•832-427-5857

HOURS OF OPERATION

MON- FRI 6:30AM-8:30PM, SAT-SUN 8AM-8:30PM

10% OFF YOUR FIRST ONLINE ORDER!
Order on: bluewaterseafoodonline.com
QUICK & EASY CURBSIDE PICK-UP FOR ALL YOUR FAVORITE BLUEWATER SEAFOOD DISHES!

**LIVE LOUISIANA
CRAWFISH
DELIVERED DAILY**

**TUESDAYS ARE
BUY 4LBS GET
1LB FREE
BOILED
CRAWFISH**

Can't be combined with
any other offer

**BLUEWATER
SEAFOOD**

1960/290
12914 FM 1960 W
Houston, TX 77065
(281) 894-9221

2920 SPRING
4921 FM 2920 RD
Spring, TX 77388
(281) 288-9222

CHAMPIONS
6107 FM 1960 W
Houston, TX 77069
(281) 895-9222

\$10 OFF \$50

Dine in only. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
one coupon per visit (Coupon Code: Community Impact)
Expires 4/30/2021

FREE APPETIZER

With purchase of an entree and beverage.
Dine in only. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
One coupon per visit. Max Value \$6.99
(Coupon Code: Community Impact)
Expires 4/30/2021

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WE ARE OPEN FOR ALL SERVICES!
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\$10.00 off
your first groom

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With a minimum purchase of \$25.00
Cannot be combined with any other offers.
Expires 5/4/21

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Expiration date: 5/5/21

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Now Available



DINE-IN OR TO-GEAUX

BUY ONE LOUISIANA FAVORITE GET ONE HALF OFF!
with purchase of two beverages
Up to \$9 Value. One offer good per order/table. Dine-In Only. Not to be combined with any other offers. Valid at Cypress location only. Expires 5/4/2021

1/2 OFF APPETIZER
Up to \$8 Value. One coupon per table. Dine-In Only. Cannot be combined with any other offers. Valid at Cypress location only. Expires 5/4/2021

Happy Hour
Monday - Friday
4-6pm

Daily Lunch Specials
Monday - Friday
11am - 4pm



EASTER EGG SURPRISE
APRIL 1ST - 4TH

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@thelostcajuncypressstx
24110 NW Freeway #100, Cypress, TX 77429 • thelostcajun.com



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Custard is better!



50% OFF
Buy any item* and get the second item at 50% off
*Any item except pints, quarts, pies and brownies and get the second item of equal or less value at 50% off. Discounted item must be purchased at time of regular priced item. One coupon per visit. Offer expires 5/15/21



Sundaes * Shakes * Malts * Concretes
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Creamier & Smoother than ice cream!

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HOUSTON 77065
PLAYING TUE, THUR, FRI, SAT
EARLY BIRDS 6:30PM
BINGO BEGINS 7:00PM
SUNDAY
EARLY BIRDS 5:30PM
BINGO BEGINS 6:00PM

\$5 OFF ELECTRONIC BINGO MACHINE
LIMIT ONE PER GUEST. NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. NOT VALID ON SPECIAL EVENTS.
EXPIRES 5/4/2021

281-257-2769 | WWW.TRIPLECROWNBINGO.COM

**WHAT DO HIPS,
KNEES, AND ELBOWS
HAVE TO DO WITH
GOING ONE-ON-ONE?
EVERYTHING.**



**If a bone, joint, or muscle condition is keeping you on the sidelines,
St. Luke's Health can help get you back in the game of life.**

There's nothing like a game of one-on-one...if your joints feel up to it. Remember, orthopedic pain doesn't get better by waiting. It's all about doing something now. And we can. Our specialists can address any bone or joint issue, from your neck to your toes. And it's all done by treating you the way you want to be treated, one-on-one.

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