

REAL ESTATE



2020 EDITION

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REAL ESTATE DATA

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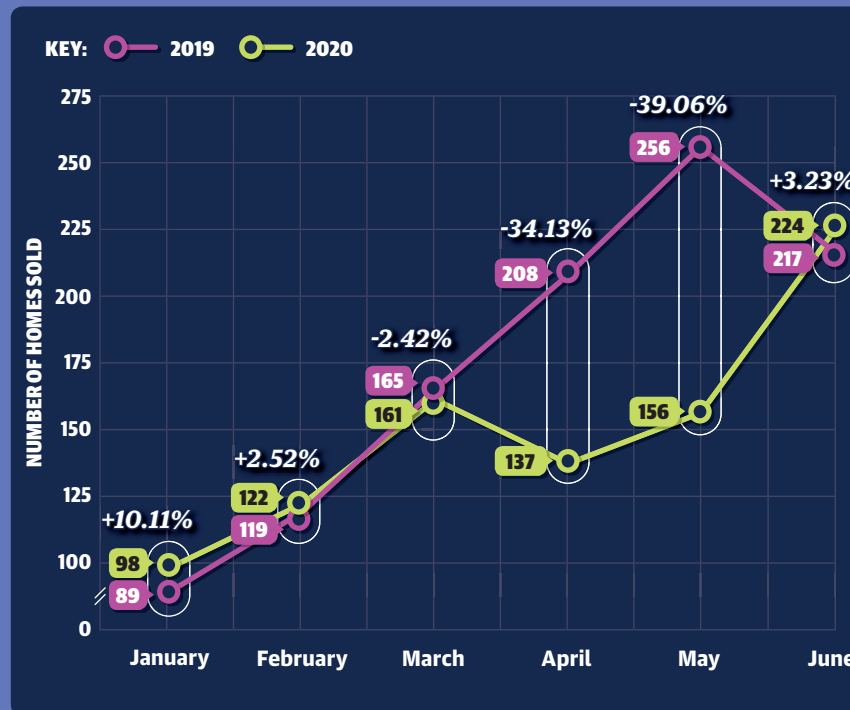


AVANTI ITALIAN KITCHEN

57

SALES TRENDS STABILIZING

After peaking in March, home sales in The Woodlands fell by more than 30% year over year in April and May but exceeded 2019 levels in June.



SOURCE: RE/MAX THE WOODLANDS & SPRING/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

COVID-19 slows real estate sales in The Woodlands

BY BEN THOMPSON

Industry experts said they believe the real estate market in south Montgomery County may have stabilized in June after a decline in home sales and listings this spring due to COVID-19. But the continued spread of the coronavirus has clouded the market's outlook in 2020.

Like many other economic sectors, the real estate industry felt the effects of the pandemic, stay-at-home orders and shifts in consumer activity. However, real estate agents in The Woodlands

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Protesters, police speak out after George Floyd's death grips nation

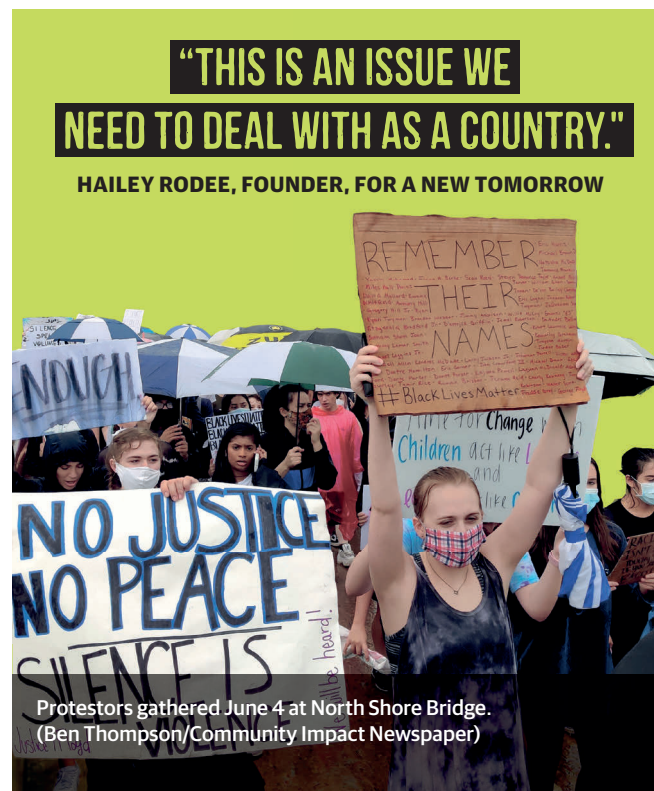
BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN

Peaceful protests took place across The Woodlands area in June, which organizers said were intended to bring awareness to racial injustice following the death of George Floyd in the custody of the Minneapolis Police Department on May 25.

Area law enforcement officials with Shenandoah, Oak Ridge North and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office responded by indicating a willingness to examine their use-of-force policies and other changes their departments might be able to make.

"There is a lot of work to be done to ensure we have the right language so we give our deputies the correct guidance on how to proceed in certain instances ... and also protect our citizens that we might be in an altercation with," Montgomery County Sheriff Rand Henderson said at a June 18 The Woodlands Township meeting.

CONTINUED ON 62



Protestors gathered June 4 at North Shore Bridge.
(Ben Thompson/Community Impact Newspaper)



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WHO WE ARE

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

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THIS ISSUE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS MONTH



FROM NICOLE: Summer has arrived and so has our 2020 Real Estate Edition. In this issue we look at the The Woodlands and surrounding cities' housing markets. We hope homeowners and renters find this issue useful to stay up to date on the latest market data, which direction prices are trending, whether it is a buyer or seller's market and where to find the newest multifamily developments (see Page 39). I love reader feedback, so don't hesitate to drop us a note.

Nicole Preston, **GENERAL MANAGER**

FROM VANESSA: After Memorial Day, the nation responded to George Floyd's death in police custody in Minneapolis. The Woodlands area was no exception, with peaceful protests organized throughout the area. In one of our front-page stories, we look at how both protesters and local police have responded to recent events, changes evolving in community policing and what could come from the next legislative session.

Vanessa Holt, **EDITOR**



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64



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8



New businesses

6



Community events

3



Development updates

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MONTHLY COMMENTARY FROM THE DESK OF JIM CARLTON

You may be asking yourself, how is it possible to invest in an environment where things seem to go from bad to worse on a daily basis? Admittedly, there is some faith involved at times like these- faith that our medical community will provide therapeutics and vaccines soon, faith that we will come together as a people and do the right things, and finally, faith that the American democratic capitalist system will prevail and thrive in the end. But, remember, we don't invest for today; we invest for tomorrow and our family's future. And, the best time to invest for the future is now when the picture may not be so clear. We can help you stay focused, take advantage of opportunity and prepare for your family's future. Stay safe everyone.

For our daily commentary and all disclosures, visit www.chjwealthmanagement.com
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Especially now, when our community continues to battle COVID-19, you need to know that there's a hospital ER that's open, ready, and safe for you and your family. And we are. **For more information, visit us at StLukesHealth.org/Here-Always.**



St. Luke's Health

Here, always.

UPDATE ON THE MARKET AS WE NAVIGATE A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC

These are difficult times for most of us with so many moving parts and so many obstacles to overcome. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones and our prayers to those who are fighting the virus.

Along with the pandemic, we have oil prices fluctuating around the lowest prices per barrel in the history of the oil business. We also have an election year and other issues that divide the country at a time we need to be united.

As far as real estate in the Woodlands, it is booming. Why, we all ask? Honestly, it is an enigma that is hard to understand. After 38 years in the business, I have a few theories but don't completely understand it myself.

The inventory of homes for sale is lower than normal. This could be that we are "hunkering down" in our homes and hesitant to open up to buyer and agent traffic coming through. This situation has created a flood of buyers competing for the brightest and best homes, many with multiple offers, and selling above list price in days or even hours.

Along with low interest rates, families are moving out of the city environment to the suburbs in hopes of a more quiet life with less fear of contracting the disease or being caught-up in a divisive situation in the inner-city areas. It has been forecasted that 14%-20% of city dwellers will move out to the outskirts of town.

Last, but not least, I believe that families feel like a home is their security at any time, especially in troubled times, like we are in now.

Our business at Beth Ferester & Company has been non-stop since the quarantine started. We have learned to have virtual showing

via Facetime, virtual open houses, and remote closings. At times, we have had to close in title company garages or parking lots, when buildings are closed to the public. We have learned to tolerate masks and gloves and even foot covers while showing homes.

At our coffehouse, next door to our office, the results of the pandemic has cut into our business more than 50% making it difficult to keep staff working and ordering the right amount of food each day. Having built the coffeehouse cafe to give back to charities, we have continued to "weather the storm" and stayed open, even giving to several charities during the entire quarantine. Many other small businesses have suffered the same so we urge all of you to support local businesses. We would certainly love for you to support Lovebeans. :)

In conclusion I would just reflect on a song released by Thomas Rhett and other corroborating musicians entitled "In a world full of hate, be a light". Listen to it sometime and take to heart the other lyrics below

"In a time full of war, be peace
In a time full of doubt, just believe
Yeah, there ain't that much difference between you and me
In a world full of hate, be a light
When you do somebody wrong, make it right
Don't hide in the dark, you were born to shine
In a place that needs change, make a difference
In a time full of noise, just listen
"Cause life is but a breeze, better live it"
Let's all work together to navigate these trying times

By Beth Ferester



BETH FERESTER HAS BEEN NAMED ONE OF THE TOP TEN AGENTS IN HOUSTON, TEXAS IN SALES, FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS AT THE ANNUAL HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL AWARDS BREAKFAST

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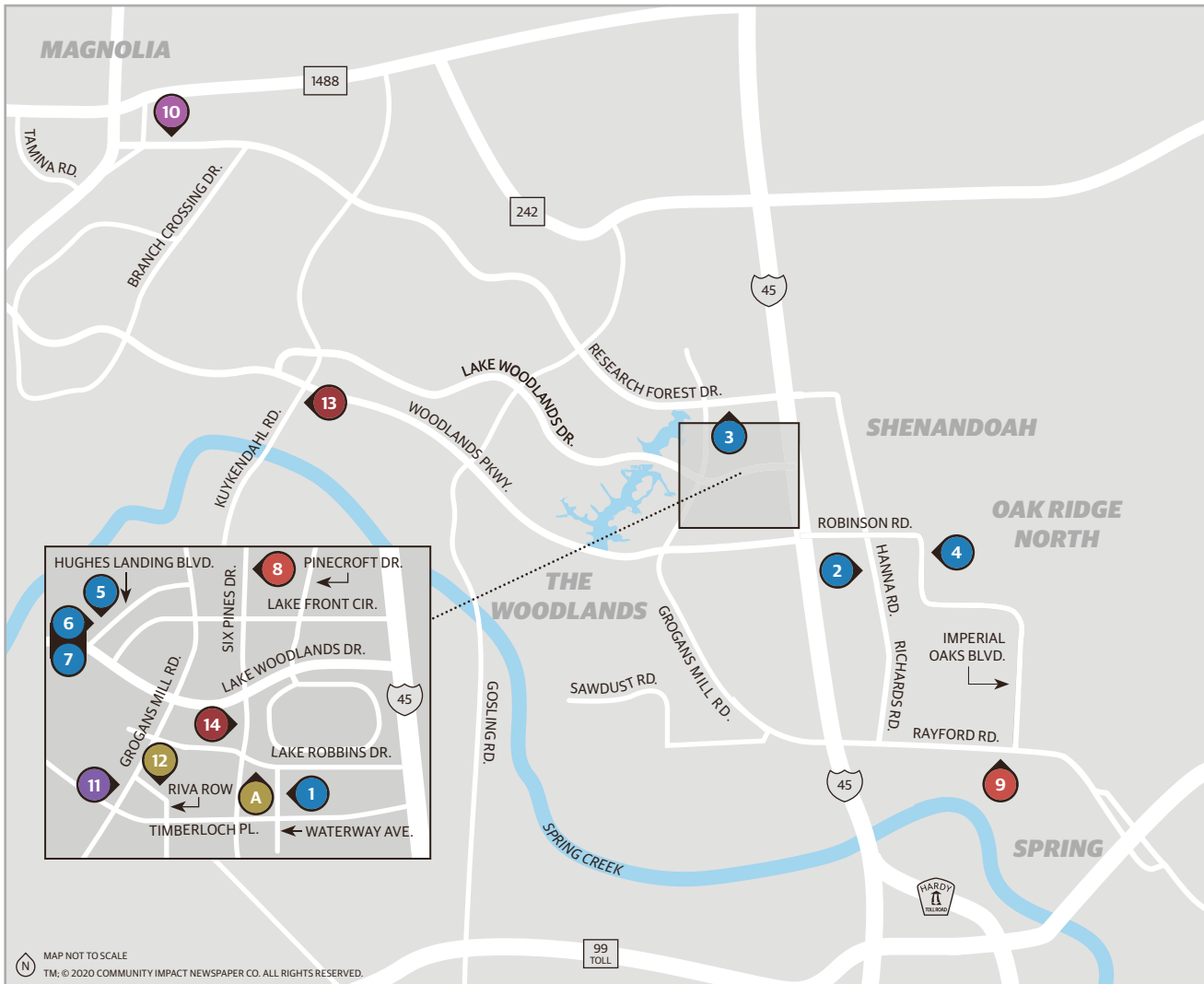
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NOW OPEN

1 Southern California-inspired Mexican eatery **Baja Cantina and Fiesta** opened May 19 in The Woodlands Town Center at 24 Waterway Ave., Ste. 160. It features a food and drink lineup inspired by Mexican and Latin American cultures, including Baja California. Baja Cantina serves breakfast items, appetizers, salads, tacos, tortas and desserts alongside a variety of cocktails such as margaritas and mojitos. Social distancing and sanitary precautions are also in place. 832-432-2252. www.eatbaja.com

2 **Trigger Point Stretch Studio**, a new body work studio located at 26797 Hanna Road, Bldg. 1, Ste. 5, Oak Ridge North, is open and accepting clients as of June 29. Co-founder Brandon Hanlon said the business originally opened May 18 but had to close due to the coronavirus. The business uses a combination of body work techniques to stretch and strengthen clients. 281-362-5765. www.triggerpointstretch.com

3 Texas-based **PlainsCapital Bank** opened its newest branch June 2 at 1699 Research Forest Drive, Ste. 100, The Woodlands. The new location is the

bank's sixth in the Houston area and the first to launch outside the city. In addition to personal and business banking, The Woodlands PCB branch offers safe deposit boxes, currency exchange, cash advances and ATM services. 281-517-3380. www.plainscapital.com

4 A new location of the national signage services company **Signarama** opened east of Oak Ridge North in early May. The new store, Signarama—The Woodlands (South), is located at 28131 Robinson Road, Ste. D, Conroe. Signarama offers custom graphic design and sign printing services. Available



Trigger Point Stretch Studio

COURTESY TRIGGER POINT STRETCH STUDIO

signage products include vehicle wraps, banners, digital signs, trade show displays, and yard and real estate signs. 409-904-0550. www.signarama.com

5 Houston-based title company **InterAmerica Title Group** expanded to The Woodlands on July 1 with a new office in Hughes Landing. The title company will occupy a space in the Two Hughes Landing building at 1790 Hughes Landing Blvd., Ste. 100, The Woodlands. InterAmerica offers step-by-step guidance through the closing process for both residential and commercial properties and services including support related to 1031 exchanges and the Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act. It features a multilingual office with translators for several languages. 832-418-3704. www.iatgs.com

6 The rowing-based fitness studio **Row House** launched its newest location in Hughes Landing in The Woodlands on May 18. The full-body cardio workout studio, located in the Two Lakes Edge building at 2000 Hughes Landing Blvd., Ste. 400, The Woodlands, offers low-impact rowing workouts for all experience levels. According to Row House, its lineup of rowing workouts is designed to help participants build muscle and endurance. Memberships and class packages are available. 346-220-6099. www.therowhouse.com

7 **StretchLab**, a wellness studio providing assisted stretching services, opened its newest location at Hughes Landing in The Woodlands this spring. StretchLab offers both individual and group stretching sessions, including both static and active stretches, which the company said are designed to increase flexibility,



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Zanti Cucina Italiana

COURTESY ZANTI CUCINA

athletic performance and posture while reducing pain and stress. StretchLab opened May 18 in the Two Lakes Edge complex at 2000 Hughes Landing Blvd., Ste. 300, The Woodlands. 346-220-4375. www.stretchlab.com

Point Real Estate, a new full-service real estate firm comprising several local Realtors, launched in The Woodlands on May 16. Agent Greg Flory said the firm has chosen a local office space to occupy in the future but will continue working with clients remotely until late 2020 or early 2021. 832-938-0411. www.pointrealestate.us

COMING SOON

8 Killen's Barbecue has purchased a second property in The Woodlands and plans to open later this summer at 8800 Six Pines Drive, The Woodlands. According to a press release from NewQuest Properties, the 4,249-square-foot structure, which is currently a Culver's restaurant, will be completely renovated prior to its opening. The new building will offer a permanent home for the pop-up barbecue pit, which is currently only available on the weekends. The Woodlands location will be the second in the area for the barbecue restaurant, with the original being located in Pearland. www.killensbarbecue.com

9 Off The Hook Seafood, a new seafood restaurant located at 2222 Rayford Road, Spring, announced it plans to open in July. According to the restaurant's Facebook page, guests can enjoy fresh seafood daily, including mahi mahi, red snapper, oysters, shrimp, crab and more. www.facebook.com/offthehookrayford



Boardwalk at Town Center

COURTESY TOM LOUGHRIDGE

ANNIVERSARIES

10 Zanti Cucina Italiana, located at 10000 Research Forest Drive, The Woodlands, celebrated its first anniversary June 24. According to a Facebook post from the Italian restaurant, more than 14,000 pizzas, 13,000 bottles of wine and 39,000 pasta dishes were ordered in the first year. As of press time, the restaurant was open for dine-in at 50% capacity through reservations only. Curbside and delivery options are available as well. 281-259-1300. www.zanticucina.com

NEW OWNERSHIP

11 AXIOS Industrial Group LLC, headquartered at 10077 Grogans Mill Road, The Woodlands, announced its agreement for a merger with the Deer Park-based A&L Industrial Services was effective June 5. Following the merger, the new company will be named AXIOS. Both companies offer soft craft services such as scaffolding, insulation and abrasive blasting for industrial clients in the energy, pharmaceutical and agricultural sectors, according to the statement. 713-352-0633. www.axiosindustrial.com

RENOVATIONS

12 Boardwalk at Town Center, a 450-unit apartment complex located on The Woodlands Waterway, announced in June that a nearly two-year renovation of the complex was complete. An exterior facade update and interior renovations had been underway at the property at

FEATURED IMPACT

RENOVATIONS

A A full renovation of **The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center's** 345 guest rooms is expected to be completed mid-July, according to hotel management.

General Manager Fred Domenick said the \$9 million room renovation is the first to take place at the hotel since it opened in The Woodlands in December 2002. The new project includes updates to each unit's furniture, fixtures, wall vinyl, carpets, draperies, paint, lighting and thresholds as well as hallways throughout the hotel.

"At the end of the renovation, every guest room will have a king bed in it. So that will give us tremendous flexibility and it's kind of cutting edge not only in our brand but in our industry," Domenick said.

The hotel's convention center was updated earlier this year. The hotel reopened to guests July 1.

"Even during a downturn in business, we took this opportunity to enhance our product offerings," Domenick said. "We're just going to be very proud to have the newest product in the market."

The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center

1601 Lake Robbins Drive, The Woodlands
281-367-9797
www.marriott.com

2203 Riva Row, The Woodlands, since fall 2018. Existing community amenities include a billiards lounge, a club room, a rooftop terrace, a business center, and two swimming pools and hot tubs. Leasing is currently available for the renovated units at Boardwalk both virtually and in person by appointment. The property features eight one- and two-bedroom floor plans ranging from 558 to 1,608 square feet. 866-629-8204. www.boardwalkliving.com

CLOSINGS

13 National fitness chain **24 Hour Fitness** announced June 15 that it filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy due to effects from the coronavirus pandemic. The news



Furniture was updated in every room as part of the hotel renovation.



Suites with two double beds were upgraded to king-queen beds.



The hotel's hallways and carpeting were also included in the renovation.

release stated the company has permanently closed more than 100 gyms across the U.S., including the West Woodlands location at 10860 Kuykendahl Road, The Woodlands. www.24hourfitness.com

14 Berryhill Baja Grill announced it closed its Market Street location at 9595 Six Pines Drive, Ste. 250, in The Woodlands on June 8. In a June 9 Facebook post, the Mexican restaurant announced it will not be able to feasibly reopen the location due to complications caused by the coronavirus. A response from Berryhill Baja Grill's corporate team said the cancellation of the concerts at the nearby Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion hurt the business. The Facebook post said the remaining locations in Houston will remain open. www.berryhillbajagrill.com

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BETTING ON THE WRONG TEAM... DOES YOUR WEALTH MANAGER HAVE THE RIGHT PLAYERS?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN -- "THE RIGHT PLAYERS?"

A recent industry survey of the top 50 independent broker-dealers highlighted the number of CFP® practitioners relative to the total licensed brokers (those selling products or giving advice) at these firms. The percentage was under 25% for most, far below our number at L&W (70%+). The majority of our advisors have multiple credentials, including CPA, JD, and other advanced designations.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD FAMILIES LOOK FOR BEYOND CREDENTIALS?

Deep experience. Firms with less real-life experience tend to offer the "standard prescription" or template solutions when addressing client needs. Tried and true is great, but only the experience of living with the ultimate outcome of advice develops the perspective needed to create client-centered solutions families have a right to expect. It is (borrowing the famous book title) "What They DON'T Teach You at Harvard Business School."

IS IT HARD TO FIND EXPERIENCE OUT THERE?

Unfortunately, many advisors with deep experience are within the big Wall Street

banks, and conflicted by business models that involve the sale of investment products. They do not adhere 100% to the fiduciary legal standard of placing the client's interest first. (Families should *never* compromise regarding 100% fiduciary compliance.) Even in fiduciary firms, experienced investment managers may try to broaden advice by hiring young CFP® practitioners, but the experience is nonetheless confined to investments.

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Lantz Bowman and Phillip Hamman discuss the importance of having a team of professionals to determine the right choice for you. (Left to right: Lantz Bowman, CFP®; and Phillip Hamman, CFA, CFP®)



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Linscomb & Williams is not an accounting firm.



BOAT HOUSES TEMPORARILY CLOSED RIVA ROW BOAT HOUSE

The Woodlands Township announced Riva Row and Lakes Edge boat houses were closed due to an employee being diagnosed with the coronavirus. The facilities were closed for sanitizing until further notice. Information about the facility reopenings will be announced on the township website. 281-210-3800. www.thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov (Courtesy The Woodlands Township)

JULY

18 TRAIN FOR A MARATHON

The USA FIT Woodlands Annual Training Program for marathon and half-marathon preparation kicks off July 18. USA FIT coaches lead a 33-week, goal-oriented training program following an initial placement run in July. Schedule TBD. \$150 (returning member), \$180 (new member). Fleet Feet, 1925 Hughes Landing Blvd., The Woodlands. 281-969-3820. www.usafit.com/woodlandsfit

18 ATTEND A COMEDY SHOW

GenuWine Tasting Room presents its first stand-up comedy shows with a set of two performances. Houston comic Royce Moore hosts both events, which feature comedians John Wessling and Ted Vincent. 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. \$20. GenuWine Tasting Room, 6503 FM 1488, Ste. 401, Magnolia. 832-934-2675. www.mygenuwine.com

25 SUPPORT MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS

The Texas nonprofit Boot for Troops presents author and Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell as a speaker at its Boots & Suits Gala. The nonprofit was founded to support morale and mental health by providing care packages, including boots, for service members. 6 p.m. \$250-\$3,000. The Woodlands Resort and Conference Center, 2301 N. Millbend Drive, The Woodlands. 281-789-7567. www.boots4troops.org

25 LEARN ABOUT ORGANIC GARDENING

Gardening expert Bob Randall will share advice on organic vegetable gardening during a three-hour video seminar. Advanced registration is required. 9 a.m.-noon. Free. 281-210-3800. www.thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov

27 THROUGH 30 JOIN A SOCCER CAMP

Coaches from the Houston Dynamo/Dash Youth Soccer Club host a skills-based soccer camps featuring a variety of training and games. Two camps are open for children ages 3-5 and ages 6-12. 6:30-7:30 p.m. daily. \$90-\$185 (resident), \$100-\$195 (nonresident). Bear Branch Sportsfields, 5205 Research Forest Drive, The Woodlands. 281-210-3800. www.thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov

AUGUST

15 ATTEND A HAWAIIAN BALL

The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce's annual chairman's ball features a Hawaiian theme for the 2020 celebration. The event includes dinner, music and recognition of chamber board Chair Jeff Garrett. 6 p.m. \$200. The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, 1601 Lake Robbins Drive, The Woodlands. 281-367-5777. www.woodlandschairmansball.com



Six The Woodlands Township pools are open with limited hours. (Courtesy The Woodlands Township)

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Go for a swim

Pools across The Woodlands area reopened for the 2020 summer season in June.

THE WOODLANDS

The regular pool season runs through Aug. 11.

Open every day, noon-6 p.m. \$5 (resident), \$10 (nonresident):

- **Alden Bridge Pool**
7725 Alden Bridge Drive, The Woodlands
- **Creekwood Pool**
3383 S. Panther Creek Drive, The Woodlands
- **Forestgate Pool**
7505 S. Forestgate Drive, The Woodlands
- **Sawmill Pool**
2200 Millpark Drive, The Woodlands

Mon.-Fri. 2-8 p.m., Sat.-Sun. noon-6 p.m.

- **Bear Branch Pool**
5200 Research Forest Drive, The Woodlands
- **Wendtwoods Pool**
8950 Creekside Green Drive, The Woodlands

SHENANDOAH

Regular season through Aug. 9, postseason hours also available Tue.-Sun. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Free (resident).

- **Mary Pat Case Municipal Pool**
1619 Wellman Road, Shenandoah

OAK RIDGE NORTH

Tue.-Thu. noon-6 p.m., Fri.-Sun. 10 a.m.-8 p.m. \$4 (daily), \$2 (age 55 and older).

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Events were confirmed as of press time July 7 but are subject to change. Find more or submit The Woodlands-area events at communityimpact.com/event-calendar. Event organizers can submit local events online to be considered for the print edition. Submitting details for consideration does not guarantee publication.



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Weekly live outdoor music performances start July 16 at Hughes Landing. (Courtesy The Woodlands Township)



JULY 29 **JON WOLFE**
MAIN STREET CROSSING

Singer-songwriter Jon Wolfe brings his brand of country music to the Tomball venue. (Courtesy Jon Wolfe)



JULY 15 **DEEP BLUE SOMETHING**
The 1990s band will play at Dosey Doe. (Courtesy Deep Blue Something)

GLADE CULTURAL CENTER

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JULY

- 15** Live jazz
- 17** Alternative/cover band
- 18** Live jazz
- 22** Live jazz
- 24** Alternative/cover band
- 25** Live jazz
- 29** Live jazz
- 31** Alternative/cover band

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JULY

- 16** Ripp Tackett, 7 p.m.
- 23** Brenda Guy, 7 p.m.
- 30** Vinyl Stripes, 7 p.m.

AUGUST

- 06** Mechanix, 7 p.m.
- 13** The Goods, 7 p.m.

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JULY

- 31** Ken Gaines, 7:30 p.m.

AUGUST

- 01** Louis Lamb and the Gentle Lamb Experience, 7:30 p.m.

MAIN STREET CROSSING

111 W. Main St., Tomball
281-290-0431
www.mainstreetcrossing.com

JULY

- 14** Texas Flood, 7 p.m.
- 15** Texas Flood, 7 p.m.
- 16** Vince King, 8 p.m.
- 18** Nightbird, 8 p.m.
- 19** Marty Haggard, 5 p.m.
- 19** Merle Haggard, 8 p.m.
- 23** Blues Brothers Tribute, 8 p.m.
- 24** Johnny Rodriguez, 8 p.m.
- 25** Already Gone, 8 p.m.
- 26** Van Halen Tribute Band, 8 p.m.
- 29** Jon Wolfe, 8 p.m.
- 30** Led Zeppelin and Rush Tribute, 8 p.m.

FEATURED VENUE

Live music venues have begun to open in The Woodlands area following the state loosening some coronavirus-related restrictions. Among the venues, Dosey Doe will follow social distancing guidelines for 50% capacity recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Gov. Greg Abbott's orders, which includes a screening process for attendees. Guests will be asked questions about whether they feel sick or were near coronavirus patients.

Dosey Doe is scheduling shows in July and August unless other restrictions are announced by the state. 7:30 p.m. (July 15) \$18-\$24 (July 15).

DOSEY DOE

25911 I-45 N., The Woodlands
281-367-3774
www.doseydoe.com

JULY


- 15** Deep Blue Something, 7:30 p.m.
- 16** Zac Wilkerson, 8:30 p.m.
- 18** Micky and the Motorcars, 8:30 p.m.
- 23** Sam Riggs, 8:30 p.m.
- 24** Jason Cassidy, 8:30 p.m.
- 25** Texas Flood, 8:30 p.m.
- 26** Gary Kyle, 7 p.m.
- 27-29** Sarah Kelly Music School Showcase, 6:30 p.m.
- 30** Walt Wilkins, 8:30 p.m.
- 31** Lee Deweyze, 8:30 p.m.


August

- 01** Junior Gordon, 8:30 p.m.
- 06** Curtis Grimes, 8:30 p.m.
- 07** Carolyn Wonderland, 8:30 p.m.
- 08** Glen Templeton, 8:30 p.m.
- 12** Chris Knight, 8 p.m.

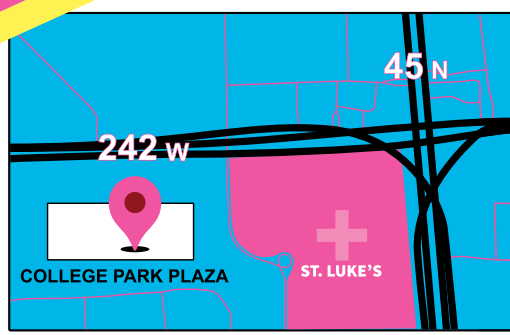

Events are scheduled as of press time based on existing coronavirus restrictions but are subject to change. Attendees are advised to contact the venues individually.

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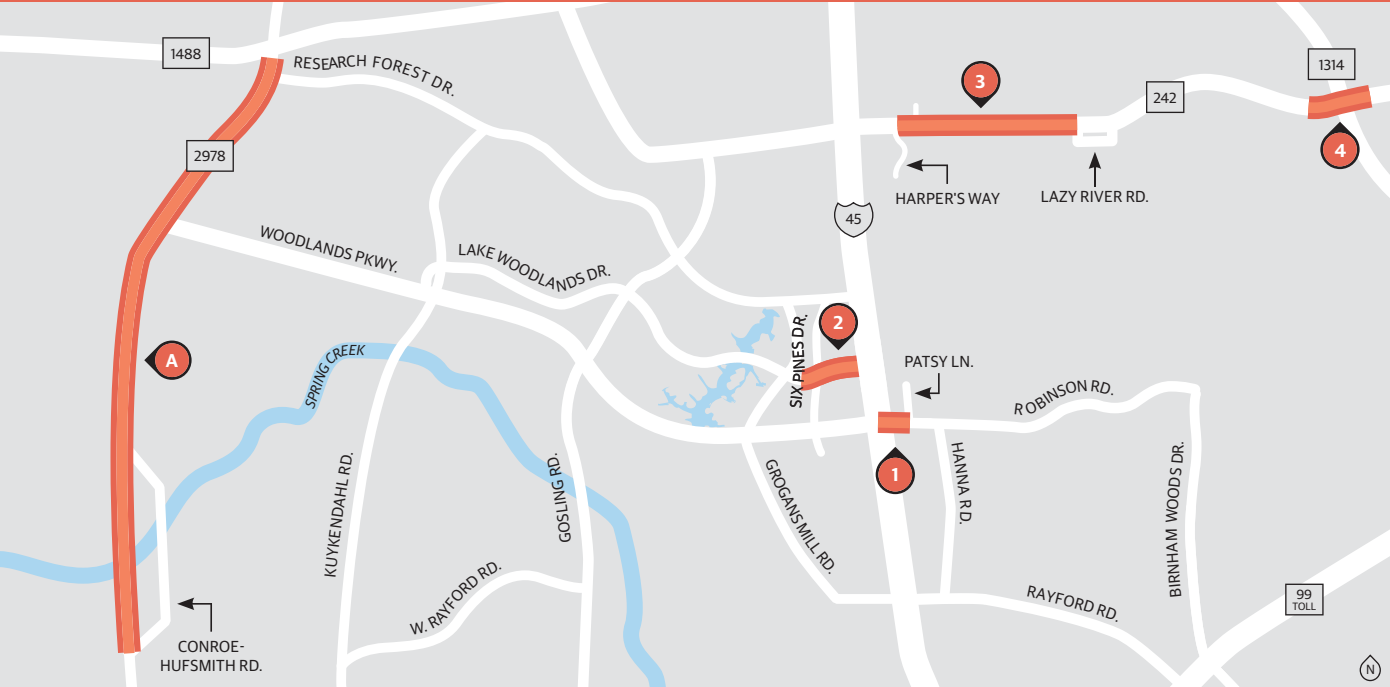
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Road work on FM 2978 began in 2018.

KELLY SCHAFER/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

REGIONAL PROJECTS

A FM 2978 widening

A project to widen FM 2978 that began in early 2018 will begin to see completion this fall, according to the Texas Department of Transportation.

TxDOT Public Information Officer Danny Perez said although the project has experienced several setbacks, the project is within the timespan originally allotted for the work.

"Throughout the project we have experienced an array of issues that impacted the construction including utility relocations and changes to design," Perez said. "We also incorporated additional elements to the project that the community wanted such as detention ponds, additional right turn lanes and a signal at Tamina [Road]. Still, the project is within the allotted timeframe."

The project will widen FM 2978 from two to four lanes with a center turn lane from FM 1488 to south of Dry Creek in Phase 1 and from south of Dry Creek to Conroe-Hufsmith Road in Phase 2. The existing bridge over Spring Creek will also be widened.

Timeline: September 2018-second quarter 2021 (Phase 1), January 2018-third quarter 2020 (Phase 2), October 2018-third quarter 2020 (bridge)

Cost: \$21.3 million (Phase 1), \$12.9 million (Phase 2), \$7.6 million (bridge)

Funding sources: TxDOT, federal funds

ALL INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE WAS UPDATED AS OF JUNE 23. NEWS OR QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE OR OTHER LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS? EMAIL US AT WDLNEWS@COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM.

ONGOING PROJECTS



1 Robinson Road widening

Work began in March on a project to improve I-45 frontage road access at Woodlands Parkway and Robinson Road and to widen Robinson at Patsy Lane and Westwood Road. The widening work extends from about 350 feet west of Patsy and Westwood to 550 feet east of that intersection.

Joe Sherwin, public works director for Oak Ridge North, said June 9 the widening of Robinson at Patsy Lane is continuing on schedule, and engineering plans for the potential future realignment of Robinson at Hanna Road to the east would be sent to the city, county and Union Pacific Corp. for review in mid-June.

The project includes signalizing the Woodlands Parkway-Robinson overpass at I-45 and aligning lanes on the interchange between the frontage roads. The project is expected to be complete by the end of the year, according to Montgomery County Precinct 3 officials.

Timeline: March-late 2020

Cost: \$2.4 million

Funding source: Montgomery County Precinct 3

2 Lake Woodlands Drive widening

Montgomery County Precinct 3 is widening a 0.17-mile section of Lake Woodlands Drive from west of Six Pines Drive to the western side of I-45. The project includes adding a third westbound lane between I-45 and Pinecroft Drive and making the inside lane a left turn lane. The project is funded through the 2015 Montgomery County road bond and will be completed by late summer or early fall, Precinct 3 officials said. As of mid-June, work at the Pinecroft Center and The Woodlands Mall was almost complete, and signal poles were installed.

Timeline: April-early fall

Cost: \$1.5 million

Funding source: Montgomery County Precinct 3

3 Hwy. 242 landscape development

The Texas Department of Transportation began work on a landscape development project on Hwy. 242 from Harper's Way to Lazy River Road in October. The project was 48% complete in mid-June, and completion was expected in the second quarter of 2020, according to TxDOT.

Timeline: Oct. 14, 2019-second quarter 2020

Cost: \$1.72 million

Funding source: federal funds, TxDOT

4 Hwy. 242 overpass at FM 1314

The project will construct a grade separation along Hwy. 242 from west to east of FM 1314. This is the first of four projects to construct an overpass at Hwy. 242 and FM 1314. The project was 75% complete as of mid-June.

Timeline: July 2018-third quarter 2020

Cost: \$23.7 million

Funding source: federal funds, TxDOT

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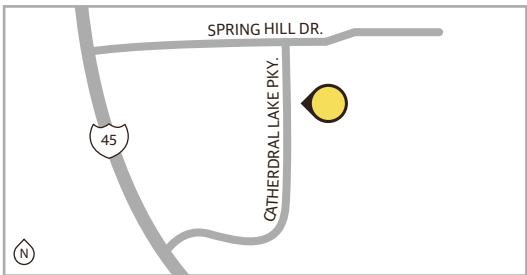
PHOTOS BY BEN THOMPSON/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

ALTA CATHEDRAL LAKES

Construction on Alta Cathedral Lakes, a new multifamily residential community, is continuing at the 150-acre master-planned, mixed-use Cathedral Lakes development off I-45 in Spring. The 300-unit luxury complex by Atlanta-based Wood Partners will include one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and various community amenities.

Space: 150 acres

Timeline: expected completion by fourth quarter 2020

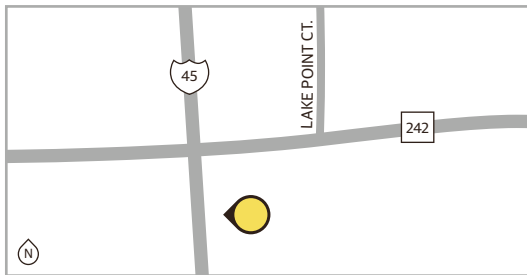


HOUSTON METHODIST THE WOODLANDS HOSPITAL

The \$250 million expansion of Houston Methodist The Woodlands Hospital, which will add a new tower with 100 beds, is proceeding on schedule as of early July, according to Trent Fulin, vice president and COO of the hospital. Construction on a new 880-space parking garage included in the project will begin in October, Fulin said.

Space: 260,000 square feet

Timeline: early 2022 completion

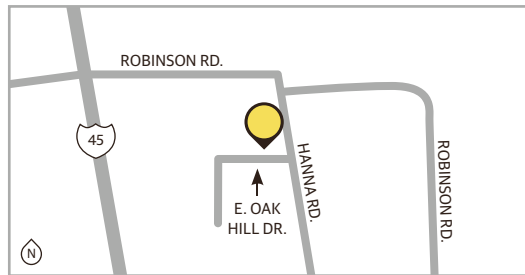


EAST OAK HILL DRIVE PLAZA

Construction is ongoing on a 6,600-square-foot retail center at 527 E. Oak Hill Drive in Oak Ridge North. The approximately 1-acre site will include a 4,800-square-foot convenience store and deli as well as 1,800-square-foot of retail space, according to ArchPoint Ventures.

Space: 8,650 square feet

Timeline: completion in late 2020



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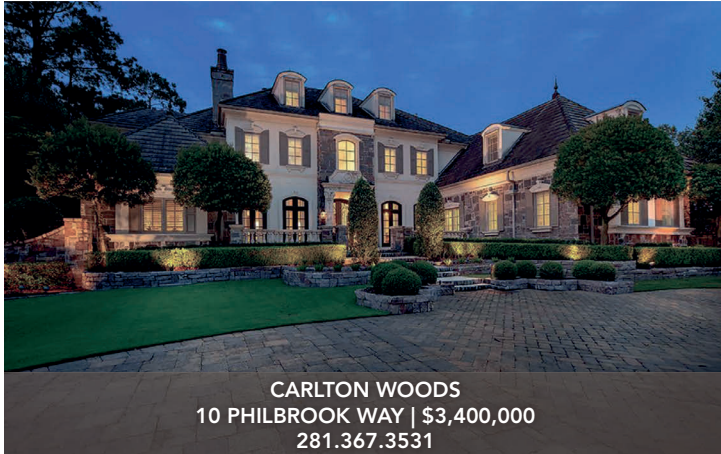
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Children's museum temporarily closes after June reopening

BY VANESSA HOLT

About three months after it closed during the initial pandemic shut-downs in March, The Woodlands Children's Museum reopened to the public June 15 with new procedures in place to promote safety.

However, two weeks later it decided to close once again after Gov. Greg Abbott scaled back the phased Texas reopening plan, Executive Director Angela Colton said.

Although it will close for most activities, its scheduled summer workshops will continue on weekdays through early August, Colton said. The facility will keep its occupancy to 10 people during those time periods, she said.

During the time it was open to the public, the facility underwent a deep cleaning and it will also be cleaned for the next six months with a nontoxic antimicrobial film used in children's museums, she said.

Workshops are available for various age levels on topics such as Legos, superheroes, science and the arts.

Although the museum will continue to offer weekly online story-time and puppet shows this summer, the shutdown effectively eliminated its revenue streams for much of the year so far, Colton said. Aside from donations, the museum relies on birthday parties, admissions, field trips and memberships.

"Our numbers were increasing, but once the end of January hit everything went down," Colton said of the museum's admissions. "We probably

lost \$250,000 in revenue."

However, it was able to secure a Paycheck Protection Program loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration to cover some costs during that time period. The museum employs 34 people. Colton said the loan will help ensure employees do not face hardship due to the closure.

"We're a family here, and to think that our family wasn't getting taken of financially—it was bothering me," she said.

Before the shutdown, Colton said the museum expected to have 125,000 total visitors this year.

The museum will still honor several scheduled birthday parties within its limited occupancy and events later this year are expected to proceed if a reopening is possible, including Halloween and Christmas events, so staff are preparing for those possibilities, Colton said.

She said the museum will be increasing its efforts to garner support through donations now that it will need to be closed until further notice and missing revenue from most of its services.

"If you just think about little things—if 1,000 people each donated \$25, ... if more could become involved and have a stake, that would be fun," she said.

The 11,164-square-foot museum is an independent nonprofit, and it has operated in the Panther Creek Shopping Center since 2010. A virtual 10-year anniversary party was held July 10.

MUSEUM MAKEOVER

The Woodlands Children's Museum will hold summer workshops and online events while remaining closed until further notice, officials said in July.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS

The Woodlands Children's Museum will continue to offer summer workshops with limited capacity.

Visitors can register for weekday workshops through August:

July 20-24

July 27-31

Aug. 3-7



PHOTOS COURTESY THE WOODLANDS CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The museum is asking for donations and other forms of support during the time it is closed.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The museum will limit its occupancy to **10 PEOPLE** for the summer workshops.

Staff will **WEAR MASKS.**

Staff answer a **DAILY QUESTIONNAIRE** about their health.

The facility has **INCREASED CLEANING** and uses a nontoxic substrate to protect against germs.

The facility recommends **VISITING ADULTS WEAR MASKS.**

THE WOODLANDS CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

4775 W. Panther Creek Drive,
Ste. 280, The Woodlands
281-465-0955

www.woodlandschildrensmuseum.org

Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-noon, 1-4 p.m.
(workshops available by appointment only with limited capacity)



The Woodlands Children's Museum offers video activities on its website while in-person activities are suspended.

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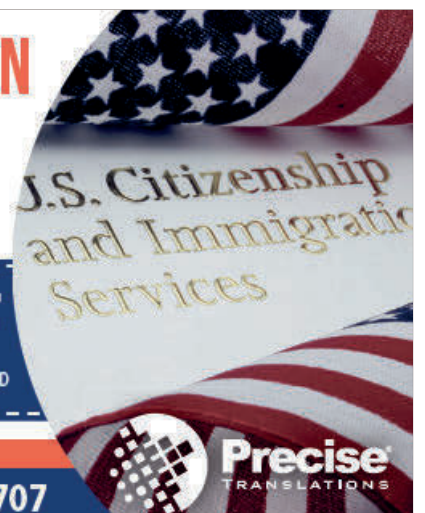
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Bars, restaurants react to state's changing positions on reopening

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN & BEN THOMPSON

Weeks into the phased reopening of Texas, the owners of some bars and restaurants in The Woodlands area said they were working to recover from the loss of regular business and income caused by shutdowns during the coronavirus pandemic.

Capacity limits for eateries and watering holes across the state increased to 75% June 12. However, that was scaled back to 50% with a new order from Gov. Greg Abbott that went into effect June 29. The order also closed bars.

The losses incurred this spring and a reported spike in coronavirus cases in late June left some business owners apprehensive.

"For all restaurants, the profit that we were going to make this year is gone for the rest of the year. We've already written off 2020," said Andrew Neidert, the owner of Tapped DraftHouse & Kitchen, which has locations in Conroe and Spring.

Business returns

Neidert said the first full month of closures was especially hard for Tapped, which offered to-go and curbside orders during limited hours while dine-in services were prohibited. He said sales were down 20% in June compared to 80-85% in March.

"Less people are out and about, so there is a decrease in sales," Neidert said after capacity was reduced to 50% on June 29.

Brian Corder, the owner of The Draft Sports Bar and Grill on FM 1488, said he attempted a similar transition to to-go ordering while his doors were closed but was not able to justify the costs of such limited operations. As of July 7, the restaurant was open to 50% capacity.

"People want to go out, but all they hear on the news is you're supposed to stay home. So it's kind of difficult," he said.

The Blue Lion Pub, which celebrated its grand opening in the Grogan's Mill shopping center in The Woodlands days before the first coronavirus-related orders were signed in Montgomery County, was forced to scrap initial plans for food

service offerings during the shutdown given its lack of an established menu. Owner Wesley Cordova said the new pub's finances were almost exhausted by the time reopening began, although business gradually ramped back up again into June and it remained open at 50% capacity as of July 7.

"By the time we were reopening we had \$15 left in the bank," Cordova said. "It's been a challenge, but it's a good challenge, a good problem to have."

Todd Hayden, the owner of Hop Scholar Ale House on Rayford Road in Spring, said he understood the need for the widespread closures, but the initial shutdown period was the most stressful and uncertain time he has experienced with the bar.

"Whether you want to [shut down] or not, I think it was the right thing, but you feel that you're going to go out of business," he said.

Adjusting operations

Capacity restrictions remained in place at bars and restaurants throughout the state in June, along with several sanitary guidelines for restaurant staff and customers. Gregg Harper, general manager of The Westin at The Woodlands hotel housing both Sorriso Modern Italian Kitchen and Como Social Club, said menus and workflow were restructured at the facility in accordance with the new capacity limits and distancing requirements.

However, Como had to close in accordance with state guidelines on June 29, said Scott Spann, vice president of hospitality for Howard Hughes Corp., which owns The Westin at The Woodlands.

Noel Petrin, vice president of food and beverage at CRÚ Food & Wine Bar, said customers at The Woodlands eatery have continued to return after a six-week period of solely to-go sales. CRÚ reopened May 1.

Future operations

At Gadela Winery, located in Creekside Park, owner Franco Knoepffler said in June he anticipates a full return to operations

Moving toward a FULL HOUSE

After restaurants were ordered to suspend dine-in service March 19, a gradual reopening has taken place starting May 1.



MARCH 10

Montgomery County reports its **FIRST COVID-19 CASE.**



MARCH 13

Montgomery County sets a **250-PERSON GATHERING LIMIT.**



MARCH 16

Montgomery County sets a **50-PERSON GATHERING LIMIT.**



MARCH 19

Gov. Greg Abbott issues order advising **10-PERSON GATHERING LIMIT.** Montgomery County limits restaurants to delivery, to-go and curbside service.



MARCH 27

Montgomery County issues a **STAY-AT-HOME ORDER.**



MAY 1

Abbott permits restaurants to reopen at **25% CAPACITY.**



MAY 22

Abbott permits restaurants to operate at **50% CAPACITY.** Bars, wine tasting rooms and breweries reopen at **25% CAPACITY.**



JUNE 3

Abbott allows bars to operate at 50% capacity, and restaurants can expand maximum table size from six to 10 seats.



JUNE 12

Gov. Abbott permits restaurants to operate at **75% CAPACITY.**



JUNE 29

Abbott order to reduce restaurant capacity to **50%** and to close bars goes into effect.

SOURCES: GOV. GREG ABBOTT'S OFFICE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

this year but has remained cautious with his facility. As of June 26 the winery announced it was closed for on-premise consumption but was continuing to offer curbside and delivery services.

Hayden said business at Hop Scholar was on track for a return through the rest of the year before the closings.

"I don't think Houston will be back to 100% normal until there's a vaccine," he said. "I honestly don't think politicians will close us again in Texas; I think other places might, but I don't think Texas will, and if they do I don't think Montgomery County will. Fortunately being north of Spring Creek helps us; we have politicians that want to keep us open."

On July 3, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said he had written a letter to Abbott calling for lenience in the recent order shutting down bars, particularly for establishments he said are important to farming business in the state.

J.J. Hollie, president and CEO of The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce, said the closures are going to be damaging to the local hospitality businesses.

"[They have really taken the brunt of this slowdown]," Hollie said. "But you can't ignore that we have taken this dramatic rise of coronavirus cases, and we need to do what we can to control the spread." *Shawn Arrajj contributed to this report.*





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Tourism bureau sees gains despite shutdown

BY BEN THOMPSON AND VANESSA HOLT

Despite the closure of most hotels in March and April, The Woodlands Township's convention and visitors bureau, Visit The Woodlands, saw enough operational savings this spring to offset some losses, officials said in a June 17 meeting.

Although Visit The Woodlands' annual revenue was nearly 22% under budget through April, expenditures came in 23% below budget, according to Monique Sharp, the township's assistant general manager for finance and administration. Sharp said the bureau saw an overall \$18,569 favorable variance, or gain, through April 30.

Visit the Woodlands President Nick Wolda said in an email the agency had pulled back some advertising and all travel during the March shutdowns, among other cost savings. Wolda said the bureau is confident that its lost business will be recouped.

"Many planners have opted to rebook later in 2020 and the first quarter of 2021," Wolda said.

In addition to reducing some expenses, Visit the Woodlands also held off on the planned hiring of a new sales specialist, Sharp said.

Due to extended closures at most of the township's hotels, May hotel occupancy tax deposits, which cover April activity, fell 95% from their budgeted projection, Sharp said. Year-to-date

deposits fell by more than 37% compared to 2019 and by 40% compared to the 2020 budget, although those figures are expected to rise this year as hotels and businesses continue to reopen.

Visit The Woodlands Chair Bruce Rieser said he believes the worst financial effects on the area's tourism industry from recent stay-at-home orders and business closures are likely over.

"Anything short of a 40% shortfall in the hotel taxes we can handle fairly easily," he said.

Members also noted hotel occupancy tax deposits are spaced unevenly throughout the year.

"The real key is the last six months [of the year]," Rieser said. "If we can just get about 35% of the budget in the next six months, which is I think doable, then we're only facing a shortfall of about \$3 million, and we can manage that with the reserves."

Wolda also shared a presentation on the bureau's 2021 financial plans, including two proposals that would reduce its budget for fiscal year 2020-21 by either 15% or 40% from the original budget.

The board unanimously voted to continue planning for a 15% reduction to next year's budget with the option to shift to the 40% plan if shortfalls continue.

Director J.J. Hollie, who also serves as president

SHUTDOWN

SAVINGS

Despite lower revenue during the spring business shutdowns due to the coronavirus, Visit the Woodlands saw net gains by cutting some of its expenditures.



VISIT THE WOODLANDS (through April 2020)

Expenditures		Revenue	
Budget	\$1,099,000	Budgeted	\$1,078,441
Actual	\$844,419	Actual	\$842,429
Budgeted expenses exceeding revenue		Actual expenses exceeding revenue	
\$20,559		\$1,990	
		Net gain	
		\$18,569	

SOURCE: VISIT THE WOODLANDS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

and chief executive of The Woodlands Area Chamber of Commerce, said he favored the smaller reduction to allow the bureau to continue its regular operations, given that further economic shutdowns are unlikely.

"The appearance that we are moving forward—that we are doing it in a safe and logical way—is a much better visual than running for the hills," Hollie said.



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Conroe ISD braces for potential new TEA guidelines for students on campus

BY ANDY LI

The Texas Education Agency has announced guidelines for school districts requiring students to return to campuses in the fall, and while Conroe ISD students can expect to return to classrooms, officials said there are several unknown factors.

Guidelines released by the TEA on June 23 require options for in-person or online classes, among other measures.

"We've been planning all along to have a face-to-face option as well as an online option," CISD Superintendent Curtis Null said.

Virtual sessions

Null said during a YouTube livestream June 29 the recent surge in positive coronavirus cases has contributed to the unknowns surrounding schools reopening in the fall. However, with the guidelines the district has so far, he said the district is planning on offering in-person and online options in the fall if allowed. Online instruction will be much more rigorous than distance education in the spring, Null said. He said in the spring materials were condensed, but in the fall online education will mirror in-person instruction, and students will be graded the same way.

"It will be a full slate of all the curriculum, all the assignments with the same grading policies that our face-to-face learners have," Null said.

District staff are anticipating a drop in student academic performance due to the distance education in the spring, according to Null. State testing will resume in the next academic year.

Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath on June 30 told the State Board of Education that the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness will be required in 2020-21.

Morath said he believes testing is important to distinguish academic progress because school closures have led to what education officials are calling the "COVID slide," in which students did not progress in some courses at the same pace as normal.

Looking for logistics

However, there are still many unanswered questions from the TEA and the state, Null said. For example, Null said if limited-capacity bus rides are mandated, the district will have to find a way to deal with that burden. The district has also been stockpiling personal protective equipment.

These logistical concerns are shared by other groups. Statewide education union The Texas American Federation of Teachers asked districts to include teachers in discussions for reopening, including topics such as mandating face masks for students, staff and visitors. Currently, mask wearing is a recommendation—not a requirement—under

the TEA's guidelines.

"Right now I have a healthy sense of skepticism about reopening school buildings in August," Texas AFT President Zeph Capo said. "The state has given little guidance and left us with more questions than answers. Individual school districts now have to rely on putting together a plan that works for their community based on their trajectory of COVID cases and their ability to provide a safe and healthy environment."

Null said the district has formed a task force to consider aspects of reopening, including student nutrition, instruction and transportation. The task force is made up of administrators, teachers, parents and community members.

Into the unknown

During the June 29 livestream, Null said the district has seen positive test results even with only 10% of staff and students on campus.

James Campbell, the Montgomery County Hospital district chief of emergency medical services, and MCHD Medical Director Robert Dickson joined Null and urged viewers to wear masks, practice social distancing and sanitize their hands. Null said complying with these health initiatives is vital in the effort to bring students back to campuses.

When the district has a positive case on a campus, Null said it sends an email to everyone who was on campus. Then, Montgomery County officials come to the campus to do contact tracing and reach out to those who interacted with the person who tested positive. However, Null said it is unclear if this will be the system put into place in the fall.

"It's a mathematical certainty that we will have positive tests and so, as a community, we're all going to have to anticipate that and be ready and understand that we're going to have to be ready to be flexible at a moment's notice," Null said.

Null said he expects further guidelines from the TEA by July 10, after press time.

Kelly Schafner contributed to this report.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Conroe ISD Superintendent Curtis Null said the district conducted a survey of families in the district in mid-June. Null said a total of 26,176 CISD community members, about half of the district's population, responded to one or more questions. The survey asked about experiences with distance learning.

SELECT SURVEY QUESTIONS

How would you rate the March-May distance learning experience for you as a parent?

Positive: **26.62%** 6,818

Negative: **17.77%** 4,552

Mixed: **55.61%** 14,244

How would you rate the March-May distance learning experience for your child(ren)?

Positive: **24.68%** 6,322

Negative: **20.69%** 5,299

Mixed: **54.63%** 13,993

If state law allowed school districts to give parents a choice about the type of schooling their child receives for the 2020-21 school year, what type would you pick?

Traditional: **75.48%** 19,150

In-person school week and calendar

Distance learning: **24.52%** 6,220

Full-time rigorous distance-learning/online model (minimum of 420 minutes of daily instruction/activities)

For the start of the 2020-21 school year, which pose the greatest concern(s)? Select all that apply. (The top three concerns are listed here.)

Hygiene/access to hand sanitizer: **64.55%** 16,148

Bathroom/water fountain cleanliness: **58.87%** 14,726

Class size: **57.95%** 14,497

SOURCE: CONROE ISD/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

PANDEMIC EFFECTS ON TESTING

ADJUSTMENTS TO TESTING

STAAR will take place in 2020-21 regardless of if students are learning in person or remotely, Morath said. Adjustments could include:

- longer testing windows of 30 days
- altered way of calculating A-F ratings

SOURCE: MIKE MORATH, OPPORTUNITY INSIGHTS, HARVARD UNIVERSITY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath said on June 30 that students will take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness in the 2020-21 school year. Morath said testing helps measure progress and prevent lower-income students from falling behind.

MATH PROGRESS DECLINE DURING COVID-19

Total student participation in online math coursework in Montgomery County declined each month this spring compared to January.

Week ending March 15	Week ending April 19	Week ending May 17
↓ -22%	↓ -3.9%	↓ -37%



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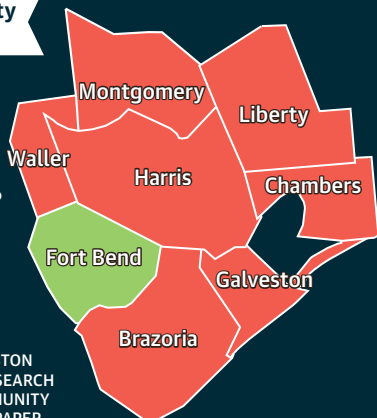
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MOBILITY RESUMES

As the state's reopening began in May, travel resumed, but Montgomery County was 10%-30% below typical levels of distance traveled as of May 31.

May 31 mobility reduction

- 10%-30% reduction in travel
- 30%-50% reduction in travel



SOURCE: HOUSTON ADVANCED RESEARCH CENTER/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

HARC continues COVID-19 mobility analysis

BY BEN THOMPSON

Staff at The Woodlands-based Houston Advanced Research Center is continuing to examine how mobility, air quality and electricity consumption in the Greater Houston area have changed during the coronavirus pandemic.

HARC researchers previously identified the effect stay-at-home orders had on regional travel in late March.

Gavin Dillingham, HARC's program director for clean energy policy, said in June that mobility remained low in April. HARC's mobility calculations are provided by Unacast data and measured against levels from January and February.

Dillingham said distance traveled in more urban areas in Harris and Fort Bend counties remained 40% to 50% lower than normal through April,

while more actively traveled, rural counties, including Chambers, Liberty and Waller, remained 20% to 30% below typical mobility levels. Montgomery County saw travel levels drop by more than 50% on April 4-5 and April 12. The state's phased reopening in May coincided with a rise toward near-normal levels of travel in some areas, Dillingham said.

A year-over-year analysis of CenterPoint Energy consumption data covering March 2019 and March 2020 and released in late May showed decreases in electricity use this March throughout the region's more business-centered or industrial zones, while suburban areas saw higher consumption through that month. Researchers attributed the location-specific shifts to business closures and many downtown workers' commute habits in March.

Nonprofit forms in the wake of local protests

BY ANDY LI

Amid the protests over the May 25 death of George Floyd, a new nonprofit formed in Montgomery County and launched with an event to register voters June 14.

Organizer and President LaDon Johnson said The Good Brothers and Sisters of Montgomery County hopes to encourage Montgomery County residents to participate politically and economically in the community.

"The Good Brothers and Sisters of Montgomery County is about coming together, striving together, get economic wealth for my community and get everybody on an even playing field," Johnson said.

Resident Andrea McWashington

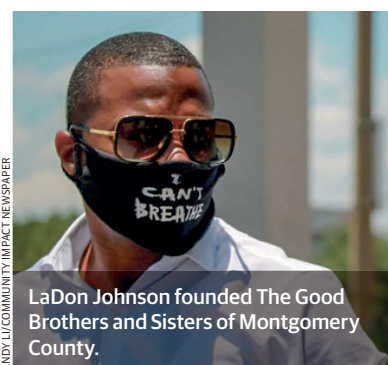
acts as the president of the nonprofit's women's chapter.

"It's not just for Black people; it's for anybody that wants to be empowered and encouraged to grow for the community," McWashington said.

McWashington said the group hopes to get residents to participate in local elections as well as state and federal ones. Johnson said the nonpartisan nonprofit will eventually endorse candidates.

Local activist Von Gardner leads the youth chapter of the group and said he hopes to turn online activism into real-world action.

The June 14 event focused on voter registration. Gardner said many of his peers were



ANDY LI/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

LaDon Johnson founded The Good Brothers and Sisters of Montgomery County.

politically inactive.

The nonprofit also hosted a Juneteenth event at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Park in Conroe on June 19, the unofficial national holiday marking the 1865 announcement of the liberation of enslaved people in Texas.

SJRA committee votes against rate increase

BY EVA VIGH

The San Jacinto River Authority will likely not increase its water rates for next fiscal year, pending final approval from its board of directors. The current groundwater pumpage fee is \$2.73 per 1,000 gallons, and the current surface water fee is \$3.15 per 1,000 gallons.

On June 22, the SJRA groundwater reduction plan committee approved a budget and rate order for FY 2020-21 that includes no rate increases. The budget will be considered by the board of directors Aug. 25.

Because the SJRA is not raising its rates, it will need to pull from its debt service fund to pay for increasing legal fees, SJRA Deputy General Manager Ron Kelling said.

The committee had originally outlined rate increases that ranged from 0.4% to 14.5%.

Texas Central eyes stimulus money for high-speed rail

BY SHAWN ARRAJJ

Officials with Texas Central are considering the use of federal stimulus money to help fund a high-speed rail project connecting Houston and Dallas.

In a June 11 email, officials with Texas Central said they have not yet applied for any federal stimulus funding or any funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economy Security Act.

Company officials named Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing and the Transportation

Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act as examples of federal programs that could be used. Officials did not respond to requests for comment on how much federal money they could seek or when they could make a decision to apply.

In an April letter from Texas Central Chairman Drayton McLane to state Sen. Robert Nichols, McLane suggests the project could end up costing \$30 billion, a higher estimate than was initially expected. As of June 11, the Texas Central website lists the project's total investment cost at \$20 billion.

Texas Central estimates the project will have a direct, cumulative economic impact of \$36 billion over the next 25 years.

WATER RATES UNCHANGED

The San Jacinto River Authority's groundwater reduction plan committee approved a budget with no rate fee changes to be voted on Aug. 25.

- Groundwater pumpage fee: \$2.73 per 1,000 gallons
- Surface water fee: \$3.15 per 1,000 gallons
- Proposed rate increases: 0.4% to 14.5% declined rate increase proposals June 22

SOURCE: SAN JACINTO RIVER AUTHORITY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



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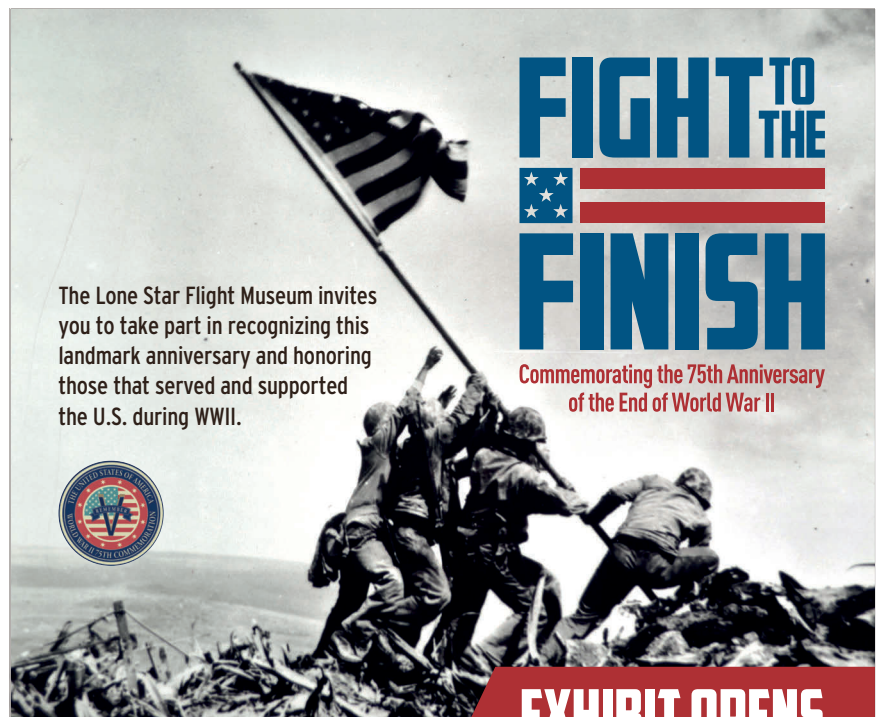
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Montgomery County purchases portable shelter ahead of expected wave of COVID-19 cases

BY EVA VIGH

As Montgomery County hospitals brace for an anticipated influx of coronavirus patients, county officials greenlighted the purchase of a portable shelter they said they hope to never use.

Commissioners approved the purchase June 23 to be used for overflow patients if hospitals reach full capacity. The cost is not to exceed \$500,000, and the shelter can hold up to 75 patients, said Jason Millsaps, the chief of staff for County Judge Mark Keough.

“When they push that panic button and call [us] for logistic support, this is a tool in the chest that we need,” Millsaps told commissioners.

Funding will come from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, which stipulates items purchased must be specifically related to COVID-19. The county

will be allowed to use the shelter for other purposes, such as shelter during flooding and fire, after it is no longer needed for reasons related to the pandemic.

The shelter will be put in a hospital parking lot, as requested by hospital officials, Millsaps said. By putting the shelter on-site, the county will not have to pay for hospital staffing costs. The specific hospital has not yet been determined.

“We’re not doing something like Harris County did where they set up a facility off-site away from the hospitals at a very large cost,” he said. “This kit can be set up in a matter of minutes by one person.”

As of June 23, county hospitals were under capacity, officials said.

As of July 6, data from the South-East Texas Regional Advisory Council recorded 184 total COVID-19 patients in Montgomery County hospitals and

807 total general beds in use out of 1,251 operational beds.

“We have seen an uptick in cases and in some of our critical beds. [In] the ICU beds, we are getting close to exceeding capacity in some cases, but our number of [ventilators] available—we have a great supply available,” Millsaps said.

But there will likely be an influx of patients from the Texas Medical Center in Houston. When the medical center begins to overflow in capacity, there will be some delay before it hits Montgomery County, but it will hit, Millsaps said.

“The hospital system as a whole within the region believes within the next two weeks the medical center is going to surge out, and that will cause patients to be moved up here to our hospitals until we run out of space, and then, we could potentially surge as well,” he said June 23.

SETTING UP A SHELTER



Montgomery County commissioners approved purchasing a portable shelter to be used for overflow patients if hospitals reach capacity.

- Purchase cost up to **\$500,000**
- Funded by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
- Delivery could take **4 to 5 weeks**
- Could hold up to **75 patients**
- Could be used during **COVID-19, flooding and fire**
- Will be located in a **hospital parking lot** to reduce costs

SOURCE: MONTGOMERY COUNTY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Montgomery County hospitals are regional hospitals, meaning they do not serve only county residents. The county does not have the authority to permit only Montgomery County residents into the portable shelter if it were to be in operation, officials said.

On June 23, Millsaps said it could take up to 16 weeks for delivery, but Millsaps said June 24 the vendor had confirmed an estimated delivery between four to five weeks.

Harris County ups restrictions as cases climb

BY DANICA LLOYD & ANNA LOTZ

Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo announced June 26 a stay-at-home advisory nearly identical to the order put in place in late March in an effort to bring the rising COVID-19 case curve down.

While county leaders no longer have the authority to issue “enforceable” stay-at-home orders, Hidalgo said she urges residents to stay home except for essential needs. Additionally, nonessential travel and business should be avoided as well as gatherings with individuals outside one’s home, she said.

“The eyes of not just the nation but the world are upon us, and history will remember the action we take,” she said.

This announcement came hours after Gov. Greg Abbott tightened business restrictions again, limiting restaurants across the state to operating at 50% capacity effective June 29, prohibiting outdoor gatherings of 100 or more people, mandating rafting and tubing businesses cease operations, and closing bars statewide. The state’s leader also announced June 25 he would pause further reopening plans to “help our state corral the spread” of COVID-19 and suspend elective surgeries in Bexar, Dallas, Harris and Travis counties to “ensure hospital bed availability for COVID-19 patients,” according to press releases.

Hidalgo elevated the county’s COVID-19 threat level from “significant” to “severe” on June 26, which is the highest threat level possible in the system. Hidalgo said data from local hospitals, new case numbers and the rising death toll informed her decisions to reinstate recommendations that helped flatten the curve in the past.

Hidalgo said COVID-19 numbers will continue to rise if community members do not stay at home.

On June 29, the day the governor’s order to close bars and reduce restaurant capacity went into effect, the county had confirmed more than 30,700 cases of the virus, including 19,952 active cases and 375 deaths, since March 1, according to Harris County Public Health. In comparison, on June 19, there were 27,493 confirmed cases, of which 16,791 cases were active.

Meanwhile, the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office on July 3 issued a statement that officers will take no action to enforce the governor’s order that Texans wear masks in public.

Montgomery County also will not restrict gatherings, Montgomery County Judge Mark Keough said.

Abbott’s July 2 proclamation granted mayors and county judges authority to limit gatherings of over 10 people, but Keough said on the same day that events in Montgomery County with more than 10 people can continue as planned.

REIMPLEMENTING RESTRICTIONS

Harris County and the state increased restrictions in late June to try to again slow the spread of the coronavirus. Montgomery County did not institute additional restrictions.

STATEWIDE

- Bars closed
- No rafting and tubing
- Restaurant capacity reduced from 75% to 50%
- Outdoor gatherings of 100 or more people prohibited without local permission
- Further reopening of the state is paused

HARRIS COUNTY

- Moved to Level 1 “severe” threat level June 26, meaning “stay home, work safe”
- Masks must be worn within businesses serving the public
- Gatherings of more than 100 prohibited

*The Harris County threat level is an advisory, not an enforceable order.

SOURCES: STATE OF TEXAS, HARRIS COUNTY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

“I am amazed and profoundly disappointed with the governor’s decision to remove the self-governance and personal responsibility from the people of the state of Texas,” Keough said in a video posted to Facebook July 2.

As of press time, the governor’s office had not responded to Montgomery County’s comments. *Eva Vigh contributed to this report.*

A close-up portrait of Dr. Ehab Hanna, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a white lab coat over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue.

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Conroe ISD approves cost-of-living raises for all district employees

BY ANDY LI

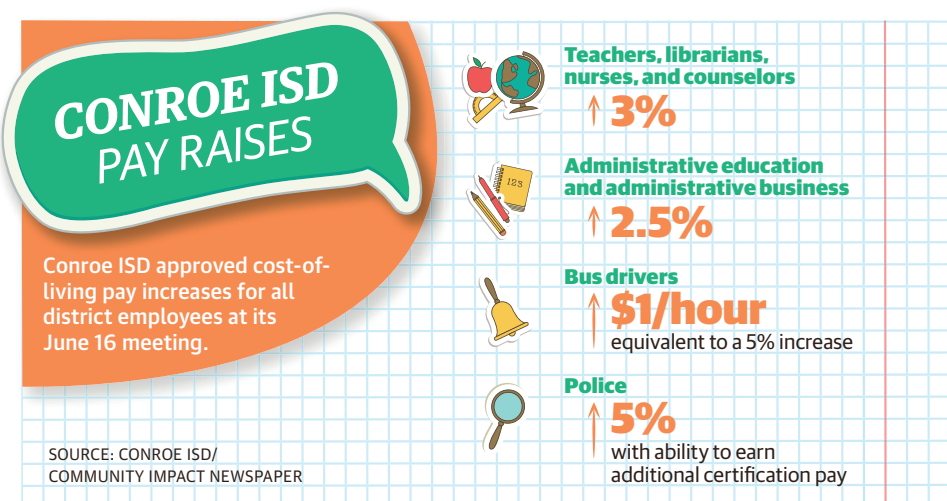
CONROE ISD The Conroe ISD board of trustees approved cost-of-living raises for all its employees June 16, including a 3% pay increase for teachers, librarians, nurses and counselors.

A 3% increase in pay at the midpoint for existing teachers is a flat increase of \$1,800. In addition to that, teachers with one to 14 years of experience get additional salary adjustments ranging from \$100 to \$900. Chief Financial Officer Darren Rice said these increases bring salaries above the Houston market median.

“We believe this recommendation will keep CISD competitive with peer school districts in the Houston area,” Rice said.

The raises include a 2.5% increase for administrative education and administrative business employees, a 3.5% increase for hourly support employees, a 5% increase for bus drivers, and a 5% increase and additional pay for certifications for police.

In total, the teacher raises increase teacher salary spending by \$7.7 million, and nonteacher salaries were increased by \$4.8 million.



Magnolia ISD names 3 to new leadership positions in 2020-21

BY DYLAN SHERMAN

MAGNOLIA ISD The district announced three new administrators at its June 8 school board meeting: a chief academic officer, executive director of teaching and learning, and an executive director of special services.

Brandon Garza, former principal of Magnolia West High School, will now be MISD’s first chief academic officer after the retirement of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Anita Hebert. MISD planned to slightly restructure its academic leadership, and Garza will help lead the instructional program, district officials said during the meeting.

Ben Petty, former associate principal at Magnolia High School, was named executive director of special services for the district, and Sarah Wright—the current director of teaching and learning at the Region 6 Service Center—will replace Garza as the executive director of teaching and learning, according to district information.

Lone Star College begins diversity conversations

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN

LONE STAR COLLEGE SYSTEM Diversity discussions at Lone Star College System will be aided with a webinar for its 1,900 employees, officials said during a June 18 board of trustees meeting.

“A lot of the discussions were about issues going on in the country,” said Stephen Head, Lone Star College System chancellor. “We are creating an advisory committee; we’ve had one on and off; but we need to go back and revisit it.”

Head said there will be both an internal and external committee to talk about diversity, inclusion and equity, which hopes to look at re-emphasizing employee training with greater diversity in mind. Head added the Lone Star College Police Department training is being examined as well.

“We want to make sure everybody is reminded of what is important,” Head said. “Campuses are setting up individual forums.”

Head said there will be two

major aspects of the discussions, which include messaging and actions that LSCS officials want to take. To better determine actions, Head asked the board of trustees to come back with recommendations at future meetings on how to best proceed.

“I want us to be a model at Lone Star College [System],” Head said. “The discussions we have had so far have been very positive.”

No additional action was taken during the meeting.

Tomball ISD approves \$157.7M 2020-21 budget

BY ANNA LOTZ

TOMBALL ISD The Tomball ISD board of trustees unanimously approved the district’s fiscal year 2020-21 budget June 9.

The budget totals \$157.7 million in the general fund, which is an 8.24% increase in expenditures over the previous year, according to information presented during the June 8 workshop meeting.

The budget includes a general pay increase of 2% and staffing costs associated with the opening of Grand Oaks Elementary School in August and other facilities anticipated to open during the 2020-21 year, Chief

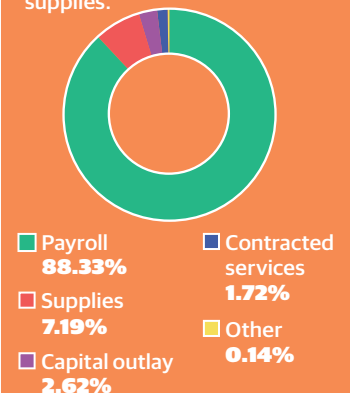
Financial Officer Jim Ross said.

The approved budget includes no increase in the district’s overall property tax rate of \$1.29 per \$100 valuation, Ross said. This includes \$0.94 for maintenance and operations, and \$0.35 to pay debt service.

According to the district’s formal notice of a public meeting to discuss the budget and tax rate, the average homeowner will pay \$130 more in taxes to the district this year despite the steady property tax rate, as the average taxable value of residences in TISD increased from \$292,040 to \$302,112.

Balancing act

The 2020-21 budget in Tomball ISD goes largely to payroll and supplies.



SOURCE: TOMBALL ISD/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

MEETINGS WE COVER

The Conroe ISD board of trustees meets at 6 p.m. July 21 at 3205 W. Davis St., Conroe. 936-709-7752. www.conroeisd.net

The Magnolia ISD board of trustees meets at 31141 Nichols Sawmill Road, Magnolia. A July board meeting is not scheduled. 281-356-3571. www.magnoliaisd.org

The Tomball ISD board of trustees meets at 310 S. Cherry St., Tomball. A July board meeting is not scheduled. 281-357-3100. www.tomballisd.net

Sales tax revenues continued to fall in April in The Woodlands area

BY BEN THOMPSON

THE WOODLANDS Sales and use tax collections for The Woodlands and other south Montgomery County entities continued to drop in April.

June net sales tax payments reported by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, which cover activity for April, were at least 25%

lower than figures reported in June 2019 for The Woodlands Township and the cities of Shenandoah and Oak Ridge North.

The June totals for April activity also cover the first full month of business closures mandated statewide by Gov. Greg Abbott.

In The Woodlands, the total June

net sales tax payment of \$2.96 million for April activity shows a decline of nearly 30% over the June 2019 net payment of \$4.19 million. This year's June figures include a \$1.59 million payment from The Woodlands Township and a \$1.37 million payment from The Woodlands Township Economic Development Zone, both of which collect a 1% sales tax across the same geographic area.

Year-to-date net sales tax payments are also down slightly for both The Woodlands entities, with a \$24.83 million combined total for 2020 representing a 1.69% drop over the \$25.26 million total recorded through the same period last year.

Shenandoah saw a 32% sales tax payment decline from June 2019 to June 2020, according to the comptroller's data. The city's June total of \$342,945 for April activity this year was more than \$161,000 less than its June 2019 net payment of \$504,220 for last year's April activity.

The city's year-to-date payments for 2020 are now down 8.39% over

2019 after decreasing from around \$3.01 million through June 2019 to \$2.76 million in June 2020.

Oak Ridge North also saw declining numbers for its payments based on April activity, according to information from the comptroller's office. The city's June 2019 net sales tax payment of \$173,541 decreased by around 26.95% to \$126,773 in June 2020.

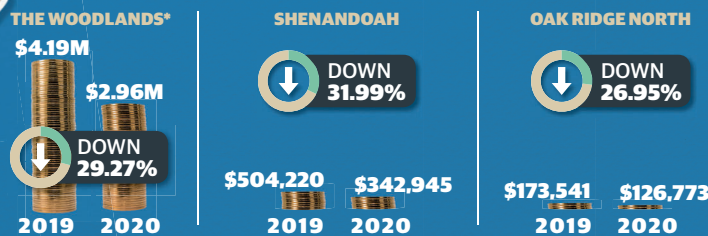
The city's year-to-date collections have fallen at a similar rate as Shenandoah's. Total 2019 net sales tax payments of \$1.37 million dropped to around \$1.26 million so far this year, an 8.36% decline.

According to the comptroller's records, the \$443.61 million total net sales tax payments recorded statewide for June 2020 represent an 11.1% drop from the \$498.99 million total net payments recorded in June 2019. The state's year-to-date payments experienced a slight annual rise of 0.37%, however, growing from around \$3.06 billion through last June to \$3.07 billion this year.

SALES TAX DROP

June data from the Texas comptroller's office shows net sales tax payments in The Woodlands Township, Shenandoah and Oak Ridge North each dropped more than 25% year over year from April 2019 to April 2020.

JUNE SALES TAX NET PAYMENTS



*INCLUDES THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP AND THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ZONE
SOURCE: TEXAS COMPTROLLER OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Shenandoah changes permit fee schedule

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN

SHENANDOAH Shenandoah City Council approved in a 4-1 vote several changes to permits for residential construction covering additions that will exempt existing properties during its June 10 meeting.

Language was added to the fee schedule to define an addition as "construction, which adds new air conditioned space to an existing property which has been issued a Certificate of Occupancy." For brand new homes, changes such as adding square footage are not considered residential, so the property would be subject to a permit fee. Fees for new residential homes will be \$300 plus 55 cents per square foot of air-conditioned space.

Council Member Michael McLeod said the changes are meant to be honest and up front regarding fees.

"The main point is to get people talking to the city ... because it

has to be done right and done to code so it is safe," McLeod said at the meeting.

Current residents wishing to remodel or add to their existing homes are not charged a fee for building or trade permits from the city. The changes are directed only at new homes within city limits.

The council also chose to waive fees for residential swimming pool additions that cost greater than \$100,000.

"I don't think it is a hit to our building department to give the benefit to our residents, especially with all of the commercial construction that is going on around our city," Council Member Ted Fletcher said. "This does not eliminate high-density residential projects."

Since January 2019, the city has received notice of two residential pools and four residential additions that meet the criteria of permit fees.

Home buyouts underway in Montgomery County

BY EVA VIGH

MONTGOMERY COUNTY Following flood events, such as the Tax Day Floods in 2016 and Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Montgomery County officials have been purchasing homes prone to flooding as part of the county's home buyout program.

As of June 15, the county has purchased 10 properties through its 2016 Flood Mitigation Award grant, according to information obtained through an open records request with the county. Of these, four are in Conroe; three are in Spring; two are in New Caney; and one is in Porter.

These properties total \$1.43 million, and there is about \$5.92 million in remaining grant funds, according to the county.

The county also has several other home buyout grants: a Flood Mitigation Award community development block grant totaling \$8.92 million—enough to purchase 32 properties—and a Hurricane Harvey Community Development

Block Grant totaling \$12.9 million for about 40 properties, said Jason Millsaps, chief of staff for County Judge Mark Keough.

On Jan. 27, Montgomery County Commissioners Court approved submitting an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for a \$10.41 million grant. If approved, the funds will be used to purchase 36 properties, Millsaps said.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S HOME BUYOUTS

Nearly \$6 million in 2016 Flood Mitigation Award grant money for home buyouts remains.

\$1.43M total cost of properties bought out

\$5.92M remaining funds

SOURCE: MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Montgomery County libraries launch virtual reference service

BY BEN THOMPSON

MONTGOMERY COUNTY A new one-on-one reference service provided by the Montgomery County Memorial Library System staff launched for patrons June 15.

The program involves scheduled virtual consultations with library staff covering a variety of topics. Library patrons may register for an appointment to receive book or movie recommendations, technical support or research assistance.

Virtual reference appointments must be scheduled 24 hours in advance and are held over GoToMeeting Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The library system's appointment calendar is available on its website.

All in-person library events remain canceled as of press time, although virtual programming for children and adults is available through the library system's Facebook page. County library lobbies also opened for pickup and drop-off service in May.

Jeff Jones named The Woodlands' new general manager, president

BY VANESSA HOLT

THE WOODLANDS The Woodlands Township board of directors named Jeff Jones its next president and general manager to replace Don Norrell, who has served in that capacity for 14 years.

Jones was named at the board's June 24 meeting.

Norrell was initially slated to retire April 30 but extended his time as general manager due to the coronavirus. The contract was extended through Sept. 6 at the June 24 board meeting.

Board Chair Gordy Bunch said the new general manager will start by Aug. 31.

"I'm very grateful, humbled and honored to be your next president and general manager. ... This is a tremendous opportunity to serve an amazing community," Jones said.

Norrell will have a consulting contract with the township during the transition time for a year after his departure.



Jeff Jones

QUOTE OF NOTE

"HAVING A HOME IS THE BEGINNING OF HAVING GOOD HEALTH CARE."

MICHAEL NICHOLS, COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS PRESIDENT AND CEO

CITY HIGHLIGHTS

The Woodlands The Woodlands Township board of directors on June 18 discussed what would be needed to return to in-person board meetings, but it decided to continue holding meetings remotely by videoconference as long as permitted by Gov. Greg Abbott.

Montgomery County

A June 23 interlocal agreement approved by Montgomery County Commissioners Court will provide \$100,000 to the county's hospital district for emergency equipment, medical supplies, diagnostic testing and other health care support.

MEETINGS WE COVER

Meetings may be held by videoconference

The Woodlands Township board of directors will meet at 6 p.m. July 16 and 22 by videoconference. 281-210-3800. www.thewoodlands-tx.gov

Shenandoah City Council will meet at 7 p.m. July 22 at 29955 I-45 N., Shenandoah. 281-298-5522. www.shenandoah.tx.us

Oak Ridge North City Council will meet at 7 p.m. July 27 at 27424 Robinson Road, Oak Ridge North. 281-292-4648. www.oakridgenorth.com

Oak Ridge North City Council considers funding for two new water lines

BY BEN THOMPSON

OAK RIDGE NORTH Payments related to the construction of two water lines were considered during the City Council's June 22 regular meeting.

Council first approved a reimbursement grant of up to \$60,000 for a new water line at Wood Ridge Plaza off I-45. The water line was proposed by CH Realty for a future tenant at the plaza. Once the project is complete it will be connected to the

city's infrastructure as a public water line, and the city's economic development corporation will pay back up to \$60,000 as a sales tax rebate to CH Realty.

Council members also considered several proposals regarding the construction of a water line and sewer line that would serve Copeland Gun Range, a new proposed facility within the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction. The range property is not currently eligible for annexation as it does not

connect to the city limits, although the owner said he hopes to be annexed in the future.

The new infrastructure would also provide a possible future benefit for Oak Ridge North as development continues along its eastern city limit.

"We're getting a water line in an area ... that is going to help us expand," Council Member Tom Coale said.

The cost of the new water line was estimated at \$174,000.

Montgomery County saw about 50% decrease in homeless count before the pandemic

BY ANDY LI

MONTGOMERY COUNTY Before the coronavirus, Montgomery County saw the number of homeless people cut in half, according to information released by the Coalition for the Homeless on June 23.

Every year, the coalition conducts a survey of homeless people. On Jan. 27, the coalition counted 145 individuals, a 51% decrease from the 298 in 2019.

Harris County and Fort Bend County, the other two areas the coalition surveys, both saw a plateau

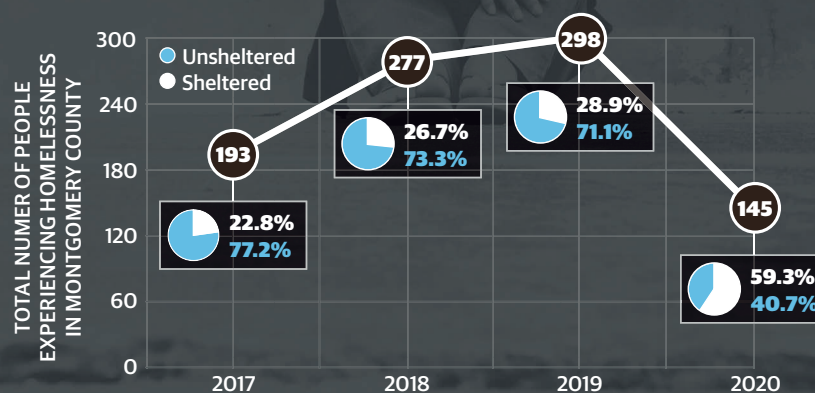
in the same time period, according to the coalition.

Because the count took place before the coronavirus pandemic, President and CEO Michael Nichols said the coalition will not know how many people were made homeless due to the pandemic until 2021.

"To limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community, it is incredibly important that we secure permanent housing for as many people as possible as soon as possible," Nichols said. "Having a home is the beginning of having good health care."

DRAMATIC DECREASE

The Coalition for the Homeless released its January 2020 data June 23. Although Harris and Fort Bend counties saw their numbers plateau, Montgomery County saw a decrease.



SOURCE: COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



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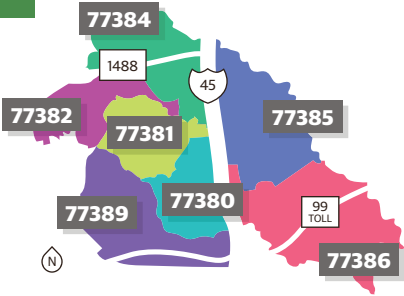
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MARKET SNAPSHOT

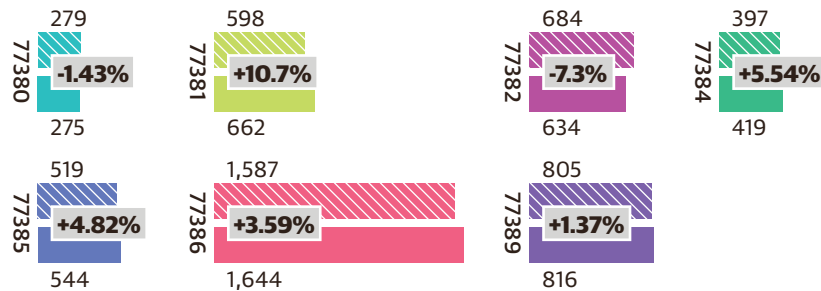
COMPILED BY VANESSA HOLT

2019-20 THE WOODLANDS REAL ESTATE MARKET AT A GLANCE

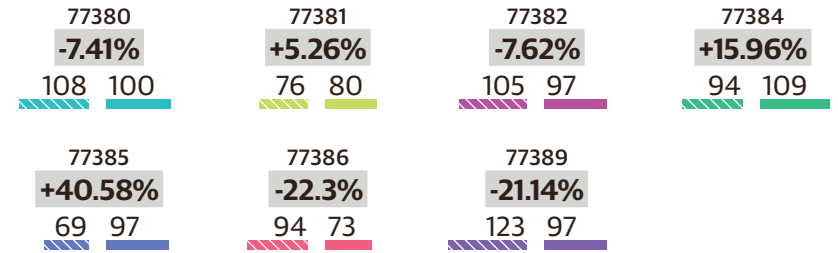
Home sales in most of The Woodlands area market increased from 2019-20 compared to 2018-19, with only two ZIP codes showing a decrease in the overall number of homes sold. The average sales price also increased in all but two ZIP codes, and it increased by as much as about 50% in the 77385 ZIP code, which includes parts of Shenandoah and Oak Ridge North.



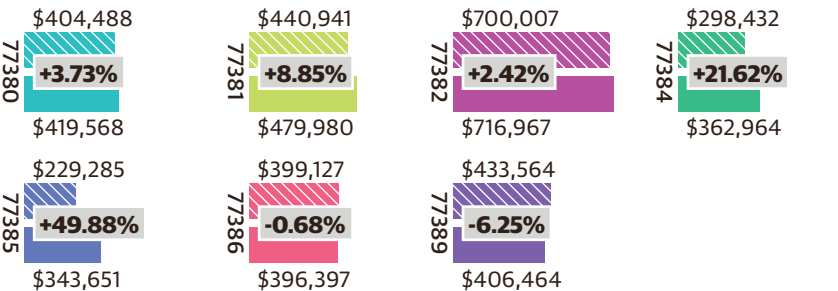
NUMBER OF HOMES SOLD



AVERAGE DAYS ON THE MARKET



AVERAGE HOME SALES PRICE



SOURCE: PAT MANICOM, BROKER, RE/MAX THE WOODLANDS & SPRING/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

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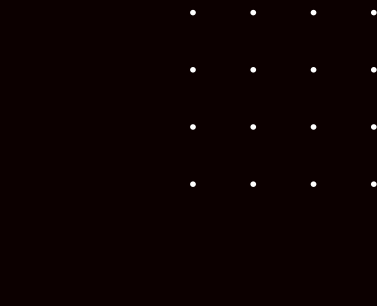
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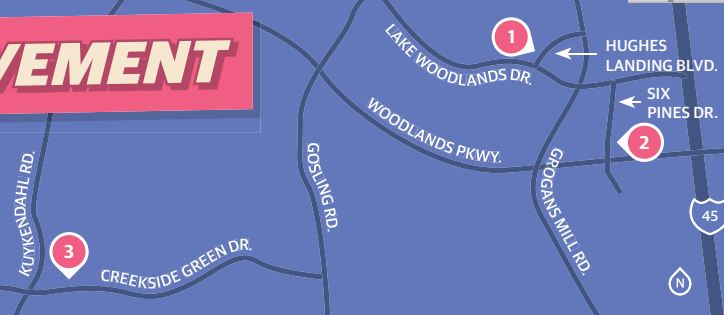
iatgs.com



MULTIFAMILY MOVEMENT

The Howard Hughes Corp. continues to focus on the multifamily residential market in The Woodlands. The developer opened Two Lakes Edge this spring with nearly 400 apartments and expects to add more than 500 new units within the next year.

SOURCE: HOWARD HUGHES CORP./COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



1 TWO LAKES EDGE

2000 Hughes Landing Blvd.,
The Woodlands

Opened **APRIL 2020**

386 unit luxury
apartment complex

2 THE LANE AT WATERWAY

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3 CREEKSIDE PARK PHASE 2

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The Woodlands

Opening **MAY 2021**

360 unit, six-building
multifamily community

Howard Hughes expands multifamily footprint

BY BEN THOMPSON

Work on several residential developments from the Howard Hughes Corp. continues in The Woodlands, including the opening of the new eight-story luxury residential complex Two Lakes Edge in Hughes Landing this spring.

The development company, which plans to move its headquarters to The Woodlands later this year, is nearing completion on several multifamily projects. Following the completion of Two Lakes Edge, additional developments planned to open in the next year include residences near The Woodlands Waterway and Creekside Park Village Center.

Two Lakes Edge

Crystal Bledsoe, national multifamily asset manager for Howard Hughes, said despite Two Lakes Edge's opening coinciding with the coronavirus outbreak this spring—leasing began March 1—the complex is now 10% occupied and 17% leased. Bledsoe said some operations at the complex were adjusted due to the virus, including a temporary halt to in-person visits, and new sanitary and distancing requirements.

"[It's] very, very challenging, but I think quickly we realized that things were going to change. But we wanted to be onboard and ahead, so we were all very involved with [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and [National Apartment Association], really respecting their guidelines," Bledsoe said. "For 2 1/2 months, we were open for online and FaceTime

and virtual tours only."

While limited tours and leasing activity has resumed at Two Lakes Edge, Bledsoe said the virtual tour option proved successful in driving engagement in the community. Despite initial reservations, the company plans to use similar virtual content for future facility openings.

"Once we got the virtual tours up ... people [started] actually going on and talking about our property, and the digital engagement increased by 25%," Bledsoe said. "The response was very, very positive."

The 386-unit complex features one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, including smaller studio spaces that Bledsoe said are not common in The Woodlands. Two Lakes Edge also features amenities along Lake Woodlands designed to be unique to the waterfront location.

Expansion in Town Center, Creekside Park

Howard Hughes' next multifamily project opening in The Woodlands is in Town Center. The Lane at Waterway, now under construction along Six Pines Drive, was designed to match the Waterway area's urban downtown character.

The 163-unit, seven-floor property is set to be completed this summer, with leasing set to begin in the fall. It will feature dozens of apartments but is built around a base of two-story, street-level townhomes resembling a city block, Bledsoe said.

Howard Hughes also continues to work in Creekside Park. Following the

company's launch of the Creekside Park West retail center last year, a new 360-unit multifamily project is under construction.

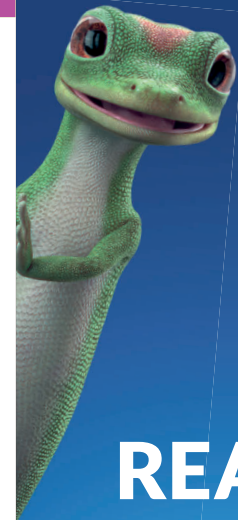
The Phase 2 apartment community was announced last November and will be Howard Hughes' second multifamily project in the village after Creekside Park The Residences opened in early 2019. It is slated to open next May, with preleasing to begin in early 2021.

Bledsoe said the community will complement The Residences with an open design, including a large outdoor pool area and backyard space.

"The difference is we're bringing in a more modern feel," she said. "The difference that we're doing in our amenity spaces is really having the main very large gathering spaces. We feel like what we're building and what we're trying to target, those demographics like the sense of community and sense of gathering."

Two Lakes Edge, The Lane and the new Creekside project will bring more than 900 housing units to The Woodlands in little over one year. As Howard Hughes moves toward residential build-out in The Woodlands, and despite uncertainty related to COVID-19, Bledsoe said the developer expects to continue adding to its local multifamily portfolio in the future.

"On the multifamily forefront, it's definitely a focus if the land makes sense and if the project makes sense for ... our land," she said. "We are very positive with what's going on. ... The same business plan that we had a year ago ... is where we stand."



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UNDERSTANDING REFINANCING

When interest rates are low, homeowners may look to save money by refinancing, which means getting a new mortgage with a better term or interest rate to lower payments. Mortgage rates have steadily declined since November 2018, according to weekly data from Freddie Mac, also known as the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.

Matt Frankel, a certified financial planner and mortgage analyst at The Ascent by Motley Fool—a general personal finance advice resource—shared advantages and disadvantages of the refinancing process.

A WORD OF ADVICE

"If you want to refinance but you're not in a giant rush to do so ... it could be a good idea to spend a few months working on your credit score because that can really make a big difference [in cost savings]."

MATT FRANKEL, MORTGAGE ANALYST
AT THE ASCENT

THE INS AND OUTS OF REFINANCING

Pros

- Can lower monthly mortgage payments
- May eliminate private mortgage insurance

Cons

- Can be costly, as homeowners must pay lender and closing fees again
- Paperwork

ANOTHER OPTION

A homeowner can also choose cash-out refinancing, meaning an existing mortgage is replaced with a new home loan totaling more than the remaining debt. The difference is paid in cash and can be helpful in paying other debts, as a mortgage is often the lowest-interest loan available, Frankel said.



WHAT TO CONSIDER

1. Is the current market rate **at least 1%** lower than your existing mortgage rate?
2. Are you planning to stay in the same home for **at least 5 more years?**

HOW TO START

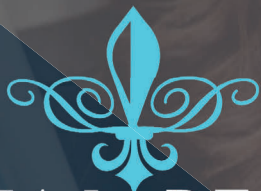
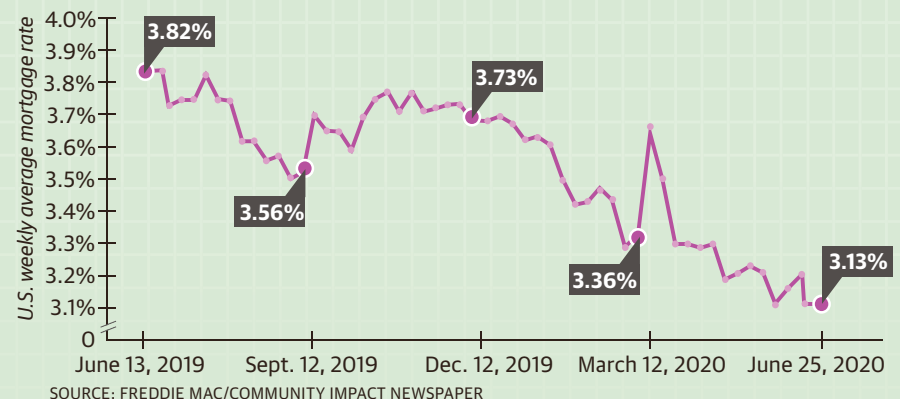
- **Always consult multiple lenders** to find the best mortgage rate. Start with a current lender.
- **Multiple inquiries** from mortgage lenders affect an individual's credit score **no more than a single inquiry**, Frankel said.

"Refinancing isn't free. ... It becomes a math problem of whether the savings you're going to get from your mortgage payment are going to be more than you're paying."

MATT FRANKEL, MORTGAGE ANALYST AT THE ASCENT

TRACKING MORTGAGE RATES

Although the U.S. weekly average rate for a 30-year mortgage is trending downward, mortgage rates vary by credit score, Frankel said.



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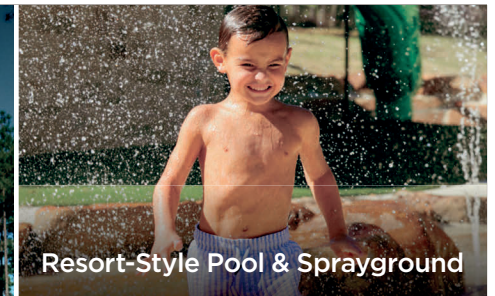
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HOME IMPROVEMENT & MAINTENANCE

Andee Parker, the founder and owner of Casa Bella Design Build in The Woodlands, provides building and remodeling services on both commercial and residential new construction.

Casa Bella has grown largely through referrals since 2007, Parker said.

"We stayed very busy locally with just word of mouth," she said.

Remodeling work has continued during the coronavirus outbreak because some work had been scheduled on empty or new homes, she said.



SIMPLE HOME PROJECTS

1 Deep cleaning the home

Homeowners at home during the coronavirus can declutter and donate items to charities. Now is a good time to go through garages, closets and attics as part of a deep cleaning, Parker said.

2 Build a garden

The current increase in homeowners' time at home is also ideal for starting a garden, which can be a fun project with children or a way to provide kitchens with fresh produce.

3 Brighten the home

A fresh coat of paint helps to brighten interiors, Parker said. Removing old drapes and painting with white paint creates a clean, appealing and open space for very little cost, she said.

4 Create a home office

Converting an existing space in a home such as a spare bedroom will allow for homeowners to create an uncluttered environment to allow them to concentrate on work. Painting an accent wall with a bold color, adding a rug and keeping a clock on the wall help to set the space off as an office environment.

5

Update the kitchen

Another effect of the coronavirus pandemic is people are spending more time cooking, Parker said. Backyards are also being revamped for a summer kitchen or dedicated grilling area. Many younger homeowners are opting for steam ovens instead of microwaves or using the area for additional counter or cabinet space.



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TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR CONTAINER

The bigger the better—larger containers allow for larger root systems and larger plants as well as holding more water for hot days.

CONTAINER TYPES CAN INCLUDE:

- half wooden barrels, buckets or baskets
- old bathtubs, galvanized metal tubs, or other tubs or troughs
- hanging baskets are a good use of extra space and can be used for plants such as herbs or cherry tomatoes

POPULAR VEGETABLES TO GROW

- zucchini squash
- radishes
- bush beans
- beets
- lettuce
- carrots
- cabbage
- peppers
- chards
- tomatoes



SOURCE: THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CARE TIPS



Watch and treat for insects as needed.



Support "climbing" vegetables with cages, twine or a trellis.



Liquid fertilizer should be "fed" to plants at least twice per month.



Add about an inch of coarse gravel in the bottom of containers to improve drainage.



Plants need at least five hours of sunlight per day and may need to be watered once or twice per day.



Q&A

CHRIS DEGEN FROM THE WOODLANDS HOME REPAIRS

6700 Woodlands Parkway, Ste. 230-274, The Woodlands • 713-927-9878 • www.thewoodlandshomerepairs.com



BUDGETING A REMODEL

- Price materials such as flooring/tile, appliances and fixtures.
- Get an estimate for the build from a contractor.

SOURCE: CHRIS DEGEN/
COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

WHAT ARE COMMON MISTAKES HOME-OWNERS MAKE WHEN BUDGETING?

There are several things that can present themselves during a remodel that are not planned, such as uncovering things that are not up to code or were built wrong to begin with. Sometimes we do not see these until we begin a demo. Also, if there is underlying water or termite damage that could not be seen.

DO YOU OFTEN SEE A DIVIDE BETWEEN HOME-OWNERS' GOALS AND THEIR BUDGET?

Most people have a realistic idea of what their remodel will cost, but I have seen where people under budget. A lot of times that is from watching DIY shows that inaccurately portray the costs. The best way to bring this in line is to get an estimate to see where things fall into place and adjust if needed.

WHEN ARE HIGHER-COST PROJECTS OR MATERIALS MOST WORTH IT? WHEN CAN HOMEOWNERS OPT FOR LESS EXPENSIVE OPTIONS?

If you plan to be in the home for a long time, that is when I would spend the extra money so you can enjoy it. If you are selling, opt for less expensive, which will still help the home sell but not kill the budget.

WHAT AREAS OF THE HOME COST THE MOST TO RENOVATE? WHAT AREAS CAN BE THE MOST AFFORDABLE TO IMPROVE?

New additions typically cost the most in remodeling. Kitchens and bathrooms are more affordable depending on how extensive the remodel.



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THE WOODLANDS 50s VILLA SERIES

The Woodlands 50s Villa Series consists of new homes developed by Taylor Morrison in the Village of Creekside Park. It includes several floor plans for three- to six-bedroom houses in a nearly 70-unit community on the western edge of The Woodlands.

Floor plans for the homes range from around 2,100-3,200 square feet, including one- or two-story options, two to five bathrooms and two- to four-car garages, with some homes located on waterfront sites. Home prices begin in the mid-\$300,000s.

Homes include energy-saving designs and appliances.

1 The Woodlands 50s Series homes in Creekside Park range from 2,094 to 3,179 square feet in three- to six-bedroom layouts.

2 Kitchens include granite countertops, ceramic tile flooring and backsplashes, maple cabinets and stainless steel appliances.

3 Additional interior features include brushed nickel door hardware, Kichler lighting and fans, and a choice of paint color palettes.

4 Bathrooms are furnished with ceramic tile floors and shower walls, maple cabinets and chrome faucets.

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Bruce McClenny

President of ApartmentData.com

BY HANNAH ZEDAKER

ApartmentData.com President Bruce McClenny has served with the company for the past 25 years. The organization, which has been in business since 1986, has a call center based in Houston that works to reach out to every apartment complex in its database on a monthly basis to get updated information on each complex's rental prices, occupancy rates and policies to provide information that accurately reflects the state of the industry.

Recently, McClenny spoke with *Community Impact Newspaper* about the state of multifamily housing in the Greater Houston area as well as about how the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has affected different aspects of the industry. Overall, McClenny said rental prices, occupancy rates and leasing activity is down across the board in the Greater Houston area, which is atypical for this time of year. However, he said he remained hopeful that as the economy continues to reopen and the unemployment rate goes down, leasing activity could pick up later this year during typically slower months.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED THE DEMAND FOR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING IN THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA?

Rental activity has slowed down even though housing is an incredibly important factor in everybody's life—we've got to have housing. So I think single-family and rental housing is going to hold up well because of the needs of individuals to have it, where, on the other hand, retail and commercial office are going to be under a lot of stress on a commercial real estate basis.

HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED RENTAL RATES ACROSS THE INDUSTRY?

The absorption is down. There's less people moving around. They're staying in place. So we're not seeing as many leases happen, so because of a lack of demand, people staying at home, in place—that directly impacts

rent, so we've seen rents come down, especially in the [Class] A spaces where there's a lot of availability. There's 21,000 [Class A] units across Houston that are in the leasing stage, so that brings pressure on the rents in the A spaces. We're starting to see the Class C—the affordable, workforce housing—rents flatten out.

WHAT TRENDS, IF ANY, DO YOU EXPECT WILL COME OUT OF THIS CRISIS?

I think renters will be looking for more single-family home styles as opposed to a denser apartment [-style dwelling]. I'm sure there will be adjustments made, design-wise, but it takes so long to design and execute building plans ... so I think it will be two or three years before we start hearing about architects even starting to make those changes [such as dedicated home office and study spaces in apartments].



Demand for multifamily housing in The Woodlands area has resulted in new construction, including the 163-unit The Lane at Waterway, slated to open in December.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC SUBURBS IN THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA WHERE MULTIFAMILY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS HAPPENING MORE THAN OTHERS?

Really, over the last several years, Katy and the outlying areas of The Woodlands and Spring have been leading the city in suburban development in terms of apartments, and I think that has to do with the jobs available and [the] desirable schools. I think development is just driven by where people want to live and raise their families.

HOW DO YOU FORESEE THE LOCAL MULTIFAMILY HOUSING INDUSTRY PERFORMING FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020?

I think unemployment and job growth will impact how much people can move around and have more choices for themselves to rent and buy. Right now, it's kind of a wait-and-see. We're in the third phase of reopening ... and we've just got to find the right balance between economic activity and the safety of

A LOCAL LOOK

Here is what is happening across The Woodlands area ZIP codes, according to a June report.

- A total of **987 new units** have opened since 2019 across four projects.
- A total of **1,015 multifamily units** are under construction in three projects.
- An additional **2,598 units** have been proposed by eight developers.

SOURCE: APARTMENTDATA.COM/
COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

the health care system. As people get back to normal ... some of these things are going to start happening in the season that's typically slow, so I don't know if that's going to be a reversal [of what we typically see]. Just like March and April—they're typically very fast and strong months but were very weak [this year]—maybe we get into August and September, and we've got this demand looming for people needing to make new housing choices. It could very well be just the opposite of what we normally expect.

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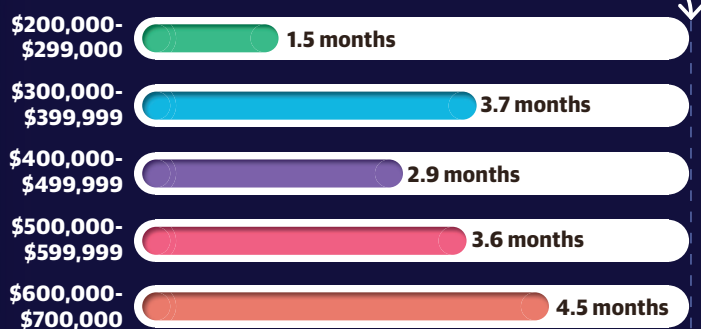
LOW inventory

Realtors said units priced at less than \$700,000 are under the six-month inventory level, which represents a balance between buyers and sellers.



INVENTORY IN POPULAR PRICE RANGES (\$200,000-\$700,000)

Months of inventory in The Woodlands area through early June | Balanced market: 6 months inventory



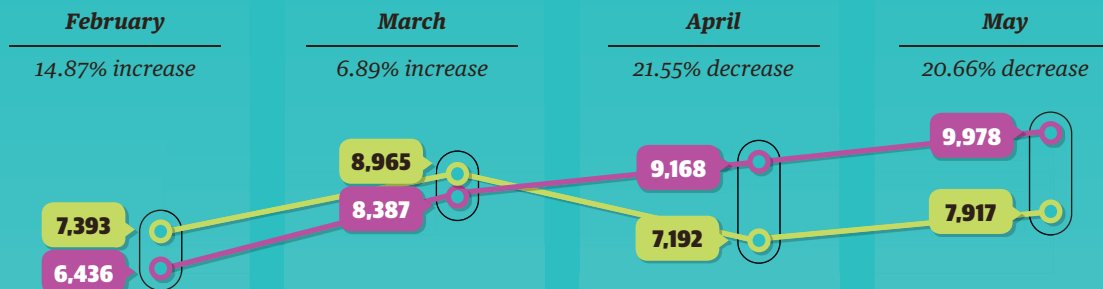
SOURCE: RE/MAX THE WOODLANDS & SPRING/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

REGIONAL crunch

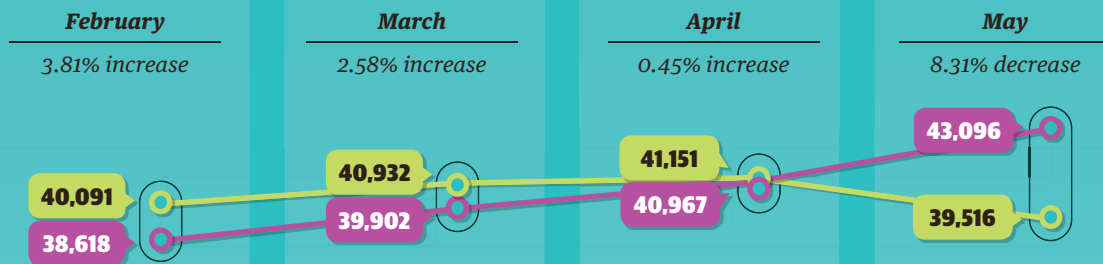
The number of home listings and sales throughout the Greater Houston area fell this spring as the COVID-19 pandemic continued.

PROPERTY SALES in the Greater Houston area

Key: 2019 2020



ACTIVE LISTINGS in the Greater Houston area



SOURCE: HOUSTON ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CONTINUED FROM 1

area said they have been able to carry on with business since March—with some modifications—as interest in local homebuying and selling gradually picked back up in June.

“At the beginning, people held off, but now with things starting to loosen up, people are buying homes, asking about it, getting prequalified,” said Brian Schweiker, a real estate agent with RE/MAX The Woodlands & Spring. “Their purchasing power right now is a lot more than what it was just a year ago.”

Market slowdown

Before the first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Texas and the Greater Houston area in March, local real estate agents said The Woodlands-area market was poised for a strong year.

Schweiker said local home sales in the first two months of the year were slightly above 2019 levels, a trend he expected to continue through the spring. Kim Vargas, a Realtor with the Houston Properties Team, also said she believed The Woodlands area was poised for a strong 2020.

Once businesses and government entities began responding to the outbreak with extended closures and stay-at-home orders through March and April, Schweiker said many homebuyers and sellers immediately halted their activity. However, those in the midst of buying or selling completed their transactions.

Still, he said the number of homes under contract in The Woodlands area this March dipped around 28% from March 2019 and by more than 24% over March 2018, while that figure for the month of April fell more than 48% since last year and 43% compared to 2018.

“March and April were hit pretty significantly in the way of listings, places under contract,” he said.

Vargas said her team also noticed a rapid slowdown in activity on both sides of the sales equation as Realtors were forced to quickly adapt their operations.

“When those [statewide gathering and local restaurant] orders came out on March 19, everybody just kind of froze. Buyers were nervous to purchase because they were hoping they could get a good deal. Sellers were nervous to list because they didn’t want people in their houses. [We] had to learn the proper protocols to take to make both of these parties feel comfortable,” she said.

Across the Greater Houston area, overall home sales saw a year-over-year increase in March before an April drop-off, according to the Houston Association of Realtors. Single-family home sales dropped by around 19% from April 2019 to 2020, all property sales fell more than 21%, and the total dollar value of all home sales fell more than 20% year over year.

“We were bracing for a rough report and we got it,” HAR Chair John Nugent said in a statement. “There is definitely no lack of consumer interest in real estate, as property listing views on har.com are up almost 60% from this time last year.”

Economists with the Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University also highlighted the year’s strong start before sharply declining, with February seeing a record high in existing homes sold statewide and the highest number of sales nationwide since 2007.

“A great beginning to the real estate selling season was suddenly awash in disruption,” said James Gaines, the center’s chief economist, in a statement.

Shifting strategies

While the effects of COVID-19 hit the housing market early this spring, industry representatives said they quickly pivoted to change their strategies. Realtors said their business shifted to a remote model that proved popular with many clients and residents.

“We are actually doing a lot of virtual tours,” Schweiker said. “We’ve had a number of people from other states make a buying decision based off of a video.”

Bob Kulpinski, vice president of sales and marketing for Taylor Morrison’s Houston division, also said the homebuilder has moved to incorporate new in-person safety protocols and virtual strategies. For those who do not wish to visit homes in person, services including web-based home tours, design selections and live walkthroughs are conducted via video apps. Even home sales have adapted with a curbside closing model for interested buyers, he said.

Schweiker and Vargas also said safety precautions such as increased ventilation throughout homes, sanitization stations, mask-wearing and reduced physical contact are in place to limit health concerns for in-person showings.

“With this, everybody has varying degrees of precautions that they’re taking,” Schweiker said. “We trained our agents to see where the comfort factor is with each person, but also then maintain the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines as well.”



Future outlook

Movement toward recovery in the real estate market was expected into summer, as Texas A&M analysts said May represented a trough in the sales slump caused by the pandemic.

"The month of May marked the housing market's deepest decline thus far during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," Gaines said. "Texas' existing-home sales plummeted 32% year over year on top of a 22% slide in April."

And while March and April proved to be tough on the market around The Woodlands, local industry members said a gradual return toward a more positive outlook was tracked through May.

"This pandemic has actually generated some sales," Schweiker said.

Realtors also noted the experience of extended periods of confinement at home may have helped the building industry as residents look to renovate or add to spaces.

Despite some favorable market conditions for builders and buyers, industry members said a surge in Texas COVID-19 cases from late May through June that prompted a pause on the state's economic reopening leaves the local market's outlook unclear through the rest of the year.

"We would love to see growth, but with the second wave coming here and things are starting to be on hold again, we really don't know," Vargas said. "I don't think we'll get to where 2019 was, but we're hopeful."

Realtors said factors such as historically low interest rates and the presence of quality new homes in The Woodlands area have also continued to attract buyers. According to the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp., or Freddie Mac, the June 25 national weekly average of 3.13% for a 30-year mortgage is the lowest mortgage rates have been since the company began tracking the data in 1971.

Individuals and families are also looking to expand to the suburbs after considering the value of having a larger house and property after months of confinement at home, industry members said.

"People have been in quarantine for two months, three months. They're realizing that, 'Look, we might not go back to work. We might have to work from home,'" Vargas said. "Right now, the market is

REMOTE *realty*

As business shifted online this spring, Realtors and property managers engaged current and prospective residents with remote contact and virtual offerings.

Realtors and property managers:



placed additional calls to clients and sent handwritten notes



prepared video updates on homes for sale and the state of the market



conducted Zoom meetings with buyers and sellers



held virtual tours of homes, properties and neighborhoods

COVID-19 *caution*

Local real estate professionals said new safety measures were put in place this spring for in-person showings due to concerns about the coronavirus.



Face masks, shoe coverings and gloves



Contactless showings



Sanitation stations and sanitary wipes



Additional guidelines for preparing a house (opening all doors, turning on fans)

SOURCES: BRIAN SCHWEIKER, KIM VARGAS/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

really strong between the [\$250,000 and \$600,000] price point, and it's because the rates are so low and people are needing more space."

New construction

One sector of the market that saw success this spring was new construction. Heath Melton, the executive vice president for master-planned communities at the Howard Hughes Corp., said this could be because homebuilders were considered essential workers, and some buyers wanted to visit new, unoccupied homes. New homes under development in The Woodlands are primarily in Creekside Park and East Shore.

"It did slow down during the months of March and April; however, in the month of May most of our homebuilders reported record home sales in a single given month," Melton said. "A lot of other developers experienced that as well as the market started to open back up."

Kulpinski also noted a slowdown of Taylor Morrison's sales in March and April but said May brought a sales rebound due to pent-up buyer demand that is expected to continue into the summer.

Despite decreasing space available for new developments within The Woodlands, Kulpinski also said new homes are better positioned in the real estate market than existing properties this year for several reasons, which could lead to a strong second half of the year for that market. Taylor Morrison and its subsidiary Darling Homes are currently operating in six The Woodlands communities and throughout Harmony in Spring, he said.

"Buyers want to move to less populated areas and are taking advantage of low interest rates. Master-planned communities especially continue to do well because of the increased quality of life," Kulpinski said. "Since people are spending more time at home, it has caused homebuyers to rethink their living situation. ... New construction can accommodate all of those space needs with plans that are more current."

Andrew Christman and Dylan Sherman contributed to this report.



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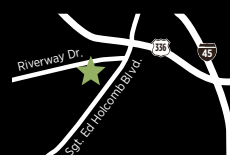
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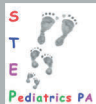


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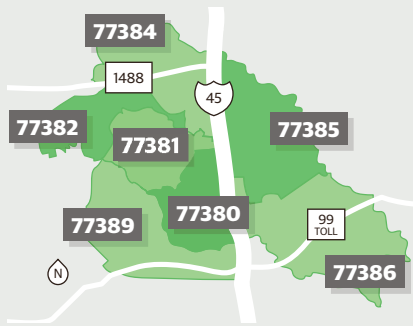
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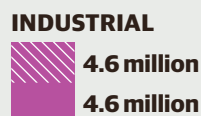
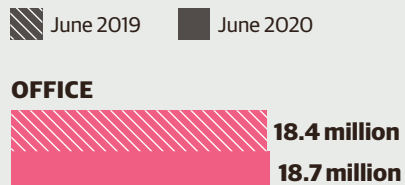
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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE DATA**
Vacancies in office, retail and industrial properties in The Woodlands area are higher in June 2020 than they were in June 2019. The median price of land per square foot has dropped by more than half in 2019-20 compared to 2018-19.

TOTAL SQUARE FEET OF COMMERCIAL SPACE



* FOR PRIOR 12 MONTHS
** AS OF JUNE 25, 2020

MARKET DATA PROVIDED BY CALDWELL COMPANIES

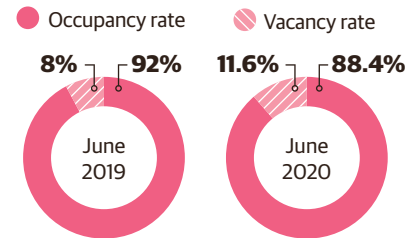


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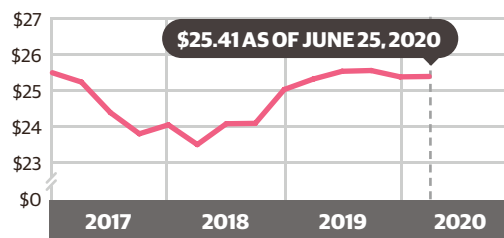
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OFFICE

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



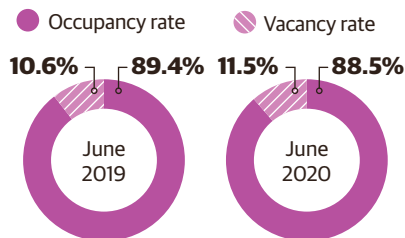
UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

737,938
square feet

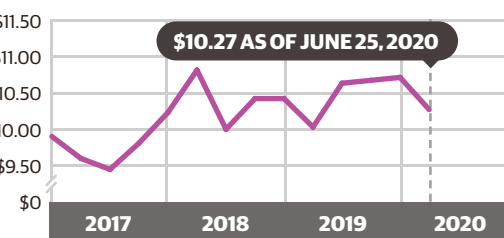
4
buildings

INDUSTRIAL

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



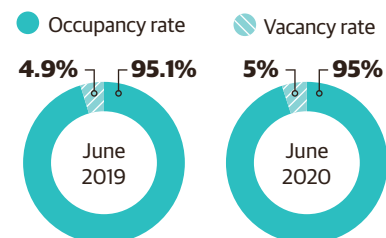
UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

0
square feet

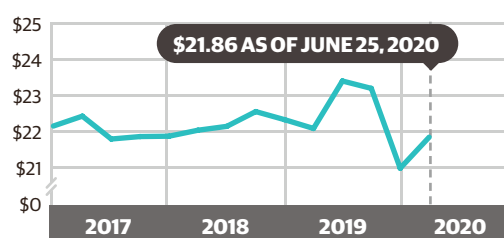
0
buildings

RETAIL

OCCUPANCY VS. VACANCY



RENTAL RATES PER SQUARE FOOT



UNDER CONSTRUCTION**

335,175
square feet

13
buildings

LAND

June 2019-May 2020
June 2018-May 2019

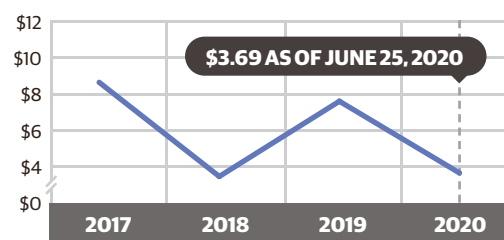
NUMBER OF LAND SALES



TOTAL ACRES OF LAND SOLD



MEDIAN PRICE PER SQUARE FOOT*



LAND SNAPSHOT**

1,487
acres of available land

3.8 acres
median land sale
size year to date



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2096 Laurie Darlin Drive
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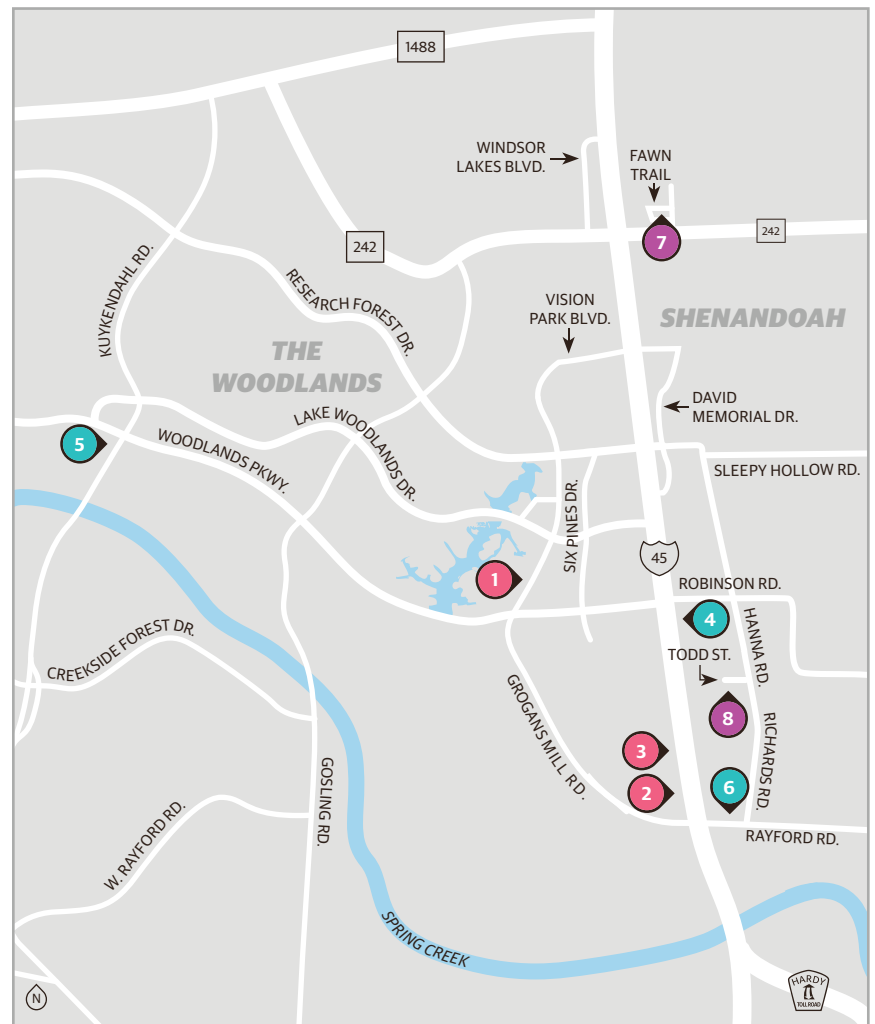
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"WHEN I WENT TO ESTHETICIAN SCHOOL [I SAID], 'INSTEAD OF JUST DOING MICROBLADING, I'D LOVE TO OFFER ALL THESE OTHER SERVICES THAT MY CLIENTS ARE WANTING.'"

LOGAN LOPEZ, PERFECT 10 BEAUTY BAR OWNER



BUSINESS FEATURE

Perfect 10 opened its new 1,400-square-foot salon in December. (Photos courtesy Trox Photography)

Perfect 10 Beauty Bar

Salon offers brow, skin treatments

BY BEN THOMPSON

Logan Lopez, founder and owner of Perfect 10 Beauty Bar, said she began developing her business concept after experiencing the benefits of microblading treatments—an eyebrow-enhancing process—for the first time and venturing into the beauty industry. Since Perfect 10's launch in 2016, microblading has become one of the salon's signature offerings, and Lopez said she has steadily grown her business to offer new services inspired by her passions and her clients' needs.

"Me personally, it started with eyebrows," Lopez said. "I realized how amazing the [microblading] treatment was and how it just helped me so much in the morning time and feeling confident without makeup. ... I had mine done, and I [said], 'You know what, why not try it?'"

Lopez said she established Perfect 10 with a background in the service industry, which she left to build her own salon.

Lopez initially built the salon around its central microblading service, an eyebrow enhancement involving a semipermanent tattooing process. Even with her own experiences with the treatment and its positive response, Lopez said she decided to further expand Perfect 10's scope.

"All my clients were coming to me asking for advice on skin," she said. "I always struggled with my own skin problems, so that's when I went to esthetician school and I [said], 'Instead of just doing microblading, I'd love to offer all these other services that my clients are wanting.'"

The salon has begun offering additional services such as eyebrow waxing and pinching, permanent lip and eyeliner treatments, facials, waxing, skin tightening, microneedling and dermaplaning.

Perfect 10 also has several skin care products available to purchase, and Lopez provides training courses for clients interested in both beauty strategies and entrepreneurship.

During the salon's closure from March 27-May 18 due to COVID-19, Lopez said she expanded her online product offerings and curbside service while continuing to add to her online training courses for clients.

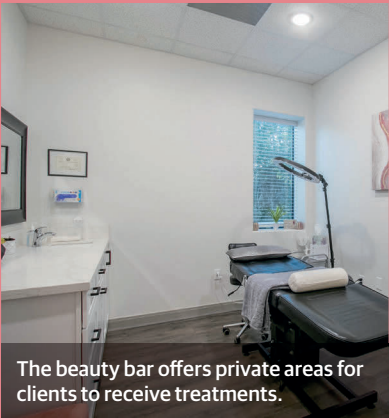
The salon now allows an extra 15 minutes between appointments for full sanitization and has several other safety measures in place, Lopez said. That includes maintaining strict appointment timing, placing hand-washing stations throughout the salon and requiring clients to wear masks.



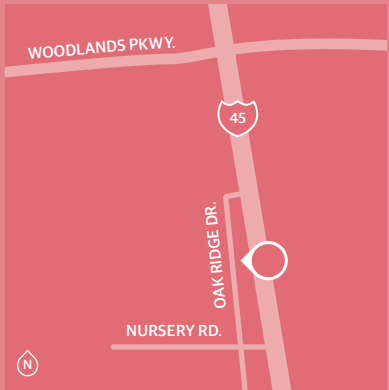
Esthetician Melissa Reyes gives a client a facial treatment.



Clients receive services including eyebrow treatments at the beauty bar.



The beauty bar offers private areas for clients to receive treatments.



PERSONAL TRAINING

Perfect 10 Beauty Bar owner Logan Lopez said she has spent years developing training courses for individuals interested in learning more about cosmetology. Perfect 10 Academy hands-on training instructional sessions are offered throughout the year.

JULY TRAINING SCHEDULE:

Three-day microblading courses

- July 16-18
- July 29-31

Two-day ombre eyebrows course

- July 23-24

SOURCE: PERFECT 10 BEAUTY BAR/
COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

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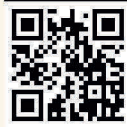
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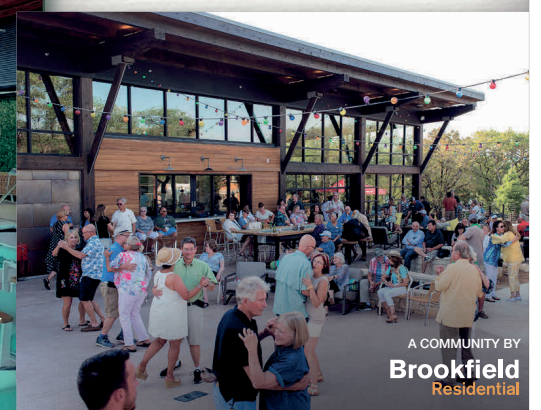
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Avanti Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar

New Italian eatery reopens after closure

After opening on Dec. 31, Avanti Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar was up and running for just over two months before being forced to close due to the coronavirus in March.

Owner Enrique Orioli, who also operates Via Emilia on Kuykendahl Road, said things are beginning to look up for the wine bar as more customers are beginning to return since key features, such as brunch and live music, are available again.

Bringing a taste of Italy

Orioli said among the major inspirations for bringing the wine bar to The Woodlands were trips to visit family in Italy, where they would often visit similar establishments.

"We always knew The Woodlands would have the perfect location for it," Orioli said. "I remember my father mentioning [the word] 'avanti,' which means 'forward,' so the name kind of stuck around."

The menu of Avanti features classic Italian dishes, including homemade pastas, fresh seafood and a variety of appetizers, although Orioli said each is given a more modern twist.

"We visited a lot of wine bars while we were in Italy," he said. "We took a lot of pictures and notes ... and a lot of menu items we got while we were there."

Among Orioli's favorite items on the menu are the branzino, or grilled Mediterranean sea bass; braised beef ribs; and the gamberi fra diavolo, which consists of a grilled jumbo prawn, bucatini pasta and San Marzano tomatoes.

"I cannot get tired of [the branzino]," he said. "I eat it as many times as I can."

Along with the Italian menu, Orioli said the focus of Avanti is its wine selection, which features a rotating menu of drinks from around the world. The idea, he said, is to be able to provide a place for people to learn

about wine by offering flights—an assortment of samples—and tastings. Wine dinners are planned throughout the year for enthusiasts as well.

Recently, Avanti acquired a liquor license following customer feedback that expressed a desire for cocktails, which have since become a part of the regular bar menu.

Orioli said being a family-owned and -operated Italian business sets Avanti apart, and he and his family put a lot of hard work into making sure food is made consistently with quality ingredients.

"For guests that have not had a chance to join us, we would love for them to have the opportunity to come and visit us," Orioli said. "Give us a chance to impress you."

Changes during the pandemic

Orioli said he tried to keep Avanti up and running when coronavirus restrictions were first announced for restaurants in March, but due to the restaurant still being new at the time, it did not have the customer base to sustain itself on only curbside and delivery options and had to close.

To reopen, Orioli said his staff have adjusted to new regulations, including checking staff members' temperatures, cleaning the restaurant more regularly and using disposable menus.

Orioli added because of the changes that have been made, he has felt comfortable enough to bring back live music performances on Fridays and Saturdays.

Orioli also brought back Avanti's brunch menu effective June 14, which he said was a popular option for guests.

"We have made a lot of changes," he said. "It has been a bit overwhelming, but there is a lot of positive feedback. It is all worth it when customers are happy and they are coming back. We are seeing a good atmosphere and a good ambience."

\$28



Braised beef short rib consists of parmesan polenta, cipollini onion, roasted baby carrots and red wine demi-glace. (Photos courtesy Avanti Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar)

\$18



Carpaccio di Manzo consists of black pepper crusted beef carpaccio, shaved parmesan, crispy capers, microgreen basil, truffle aioli and focaccia chips.

\$35



Gamberi Fra Diavolo consists of grilled jumbo prawn, oven-roasted San Marzano tomato, sautéed baby spinach, olives, toasted sunchoke and lemon.



The Orioli family, including (from left) Carlos, Elda and Enrique, own Avanti Italian Kitchen and Wine Bar.

LEARNING ABOUT WINE

For those interested in learning about wine, Avanti owner Enrique Orioli offered a few suggestions to keep in mind when trying new types and flavors.

1 SENSE OF PLACE

Various components, such as sun exposure, soil in the vineyard and altitude, affect the outcome of a wine's flavor.

2 SENSE OF THE MOMENT

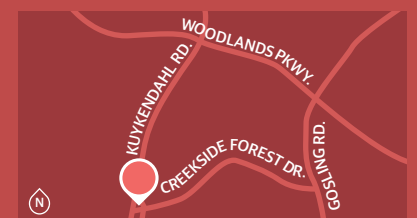
Timing and occasion are important for wine. The variety needed can differ between a warm afternoon, a night cap or a special occasion.

3 SENSE OF PEOPLE

The people behind the house producing the wine contribute to its personality with the unique techniques they use.

4 KEEP AN OPEN MIND

A taster's palate can be determined by the style of food they eat and drink. For example, Orioli said Coca-Cola lovers have a greater affinity for cabernet sauvignon.



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REGIONAL DINING FEATURE

A TASTE OF THAILAND

Patra's Thai Cuisine includes dishes native to various regions of Thailand.

Northeastern:

Larb salad (\$13.99)

Spicy minced meat, green and red onions, cilantro and long coriander

NORTH

CENTRAL

WEST

NORTH-EAST

EAST

SOUTH

Southern:

Panang Curry (\$13.99)

Coconut milk and kaffir lime leaves

Central:

Massaman Curry (\$13.99)

Coconut milk, potatoes, onions and peanuts

Northern: Khao Soi Gai (\$12.99) includes egg noodles, chicken, red onions, chili oil and pickled Chinese mustard.
(Photos by Dylan Sherman/Community Impact Newspaper)

Patra's Thai Cuisine

Magnolia eatery on FM 2978 introduces community to authentic Thai food tastes

BY DYLAN SHERMAN

Owner Yuwaree Staley opened Patra's Thai Cuisine in Magnolia last July, giving the community its first taste of Thai food, she said.

“Out here [there were not] any Thai restaurants,” she said. “So I [thought] a Thai restaurant would be a good option for the local people.”

As Patra's strives for authentic Thai food, Staley said she tries to get the flavors as close as possible. However, this can be difficult, as some ingredients need to be shipped in from afar, she said.

“[Food from central Thailand] where I come from is famous, or the reason why people around the world know Thai food,” she said.

Staley, originally from Kanchanaburi, Thailand, moved to Magnolia in 2011. She said she worked as a golf course manager in Bangkok and cites it as a reason for keeping her restaurant to a high standard.

As there are no other Thai restaurants in Magnolia, Staley

said she hopes Patra's will help bring some Thai culture to residents.

“A lot of customers here have been to Thailand, and they thanked me for having Patra's here,” she said.

Staley said the restaurant's curries are by far the most popular dishes.

“The main thing for me is to try to stay as authentic as possible and to try and make it to order,” she said.

When the coronavirus pandemic began in March, Patra's closed its dining room for two months, operating to go or through its drive-thru, Staley said.

“The drive-thru has helped me a lot,” she said. “I had the drive-thru before, but I never used it, because [the dining room] was packed every day.”

Staley said she hopes to launch a new menu around the restaurant's one-year anniversary.

“I work very hard, but I am very happy every day to see and cook and work in the kitchen,” she said.



Owner Yuwaree Staley (center right) moved to Magnolia in 2011 and opened Patra's Thai Cuisine in July 2019.



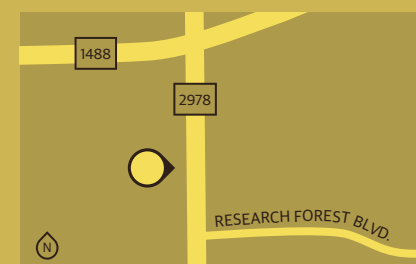
Mhu Bing (\$7.99) is a Thai-style grilled pork skewer.

Patra's Thai Cuisine

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RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

Community events in The Woodlands area

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN & BEN THOMPSON

CONROE ISD HOLDS GRADUATIONS AT WOODFOREST BANK STADIUM

Hundreds of The Woodlands-area Conroe ISD students in the class of 2020 marked their graduations across several ceremonies during the week of June 1.

The district's commencement events were initially planned for the week of May 21 at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion and were later rescheduled for June 1-5 at Woodforest Bank Stadium in Shenandoah.

The Woodlands High School students graduated in two ceremonies June 2, followed by two Oak Ridge High School ceremonies June 3 and two College Park High School ceremonies June 5 at the same facility.

Elsewhere in the district, Caney Creek High School

students graduated on June 1, and Conroe High School's ceremonies were held June 4, also at Woodforest Bank Stadium.

The ceremonies were held with social distancing restrictions in place, providing 6 feet of space between each ticketed family group in the stadium seats as well as on the field for graduating students. Attendees were also screened for potential signs of COVID-19 infection prior to the ceremonies.

As of June 22, Conroe ISD had conducted a community survey to gather feedback on how to proceed with reopening in the fall.



Oak Ridge High School held graduations at its home stadium June 3. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)



Oak Ridge High School held graduation for an audience of family members in two ceremonies with social distancing measures in place. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)



College Park High School graduations were held June 5. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)



Graduates were seated 6 feet apart at The Woodlands High School outdoor ceremony. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)



The Woodlands High School held graduation ceremonies in two groups on June 2. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)



College Park High School seniors in Conroe ISD awaited graduation exercises June 5. (Courtesy Conroe ISD)

GATHERINGS IN EARLY JUNE PROTEST GEORGE FLOYD'S DEATH

Protests were held in The Woodlands in early June including events June 3 and 4 that organizers said were meant to bring awareness to racial injustice following the death of George Floyd. Floyd died while in the custody of the Minneapolis Police Department on May 25.

The first protest, organized by Hailey Rodee, the founder of youth society For A New Tomorrow and a student at The Woodlands High School, took place June 3 at the North Shore Bridge, located at 2505 Lake Woodlands Drive. The event attracted several hundred participants. Another event, organized by Oponello Irving, a 2019 graduate of Oak Ridge High School, was held June 4 at Town Green Park on Lake Robbins Drive.



A group of protesters gathered June 4 at Town Green Park with signs bearing the words "I can't breathe," spoken by Floyd before his death. (Andrew Christman/Community Impact Newspaper)



Several hundred protesters gathered on the Lake Woodlands Drive Bridge in the rain on June 3 to protest the death of George Floyd in police custody May 25. (Ben Thompson/Community Impact Newspaper)

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The Woodlands Pride

LGBTQ group offers support for fellow nonprofit organizations

BY ANDREW CHRISTMAN

Since forming in 2018 to support the area’s LGBTQ population, The Woodlands Pride has hosted an annual celebration with thousands of attendees each year. However, due to concerns about the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, the nonprofit announced the cancellation in late May of this year’s September event.

The group is instead focusing efforts on supporting, promoting and partnering with other marginalized groups in the surrounding area, such as the Dallas-based counseling group Life Gets Better Together, which focuses on gender identity, and There’s Room at Our Table, which is a support group in The Woodlands area focused on creating a safe environment for its LGBTQ members.

The Woodlands Pride CEO Jason Rocha said the organization’s purpose is to foster relationships in the LGBTQ community, which he said is difficult to carry out when large gatherings of crowds cannot be assembled.

“We try to help them as much as possible,” Rocha said of other groups pursuing similar goals. “LGBTQ people have to apply the right to celebrate not being discriminated against at work. Just five years ago was the first time we could legally get married in this country on a federal level. It is very important to remember these milestones that are happening in our lifetime in recent years.”

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 15 that workplace laws against discrimination also apply to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Recently, The Woodlands Pride has also supported the Black Lives Matter movement by highlighting The Woodlands local branch of the group.

“One of the founders of the LGBTQ movement was a Black trans woman in New York,” Rocha said. “During this time ... we are going to use that voice to help our Black and brown brothers and sisters, regardless of sexual orientation. If you keep down one group, you are eventually going to keep down another group.”

Rocha said The Woodlands Pride also needs volunteers on a number of The Woodlands Pride committees with goals ranging from community outreach to event planning.

“Right now, we are looking for people who are interested in helping grow The Woodlands Pride,” Rocha said. “Basically, it would be a few hours per month helping.”

The group is also planning a virtual event later this fall, although Rocha said details had not been established as of press time.



The Woodlands Pride Festival is a celebration for the LGBTQ community and allies around The Woodlands area. This year’s event was canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak. (Photos courtesy The Woodlands Pride)

Helping The Woodlands Pride

The Woodlands Pride accepts volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Volunteers are organized by committees, and new ones are frequently added.

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

The committee helps to recruit new volunteers and maintain contact.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

The committee focuses on raising money for The Woodlands Pride.

FESTIVAL COMMITTEE

The committee plans events, notably the celebration in September.



Festivalgoers visit booths and vendors during the 2019 The Woodlands Pride Festival.



The Woodlands Pride Festival typically offers live music for participants to enjoy.

Pride celebration grows

Since its first celebration in 2018, The Woodlands Pride celebration has grown in attendance before being canceled this year, according to estimated numbers.

Festival attendance

2018	5,000
2019	6,000
2020	CANCELED

SOURCE: THE WOODLANDS PRIDE/ COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

PROTESTS AND EVENTS PROLIFERATE

Organized protests took place in the wake of the death of George Floyd on May 25, and a community event observed Juneteenth.



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JUNE 3

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ALEX GOMEZ, PROTESTER



TOWN GREEN PARK

JUNE 4

"IT'S NOT HAPPENING IN [PEOPLES'] FACES, ESPECIALLY AROUND HERE, BUT IF WE ALL START TO PROTEST, THEN THEY'LL UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN OUR COMMUNITY."

OPONELLO IRVING, PROTEST ORGANIZER



TOWN GREEN PARK

JUNE 10

"I WANTED A SYSTEM TO ELEVATE INDIVIDUAL VOICES ALONG WITH THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE."

HUZMA KHAN, PROTEST ORGANIZER



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JUNE 19

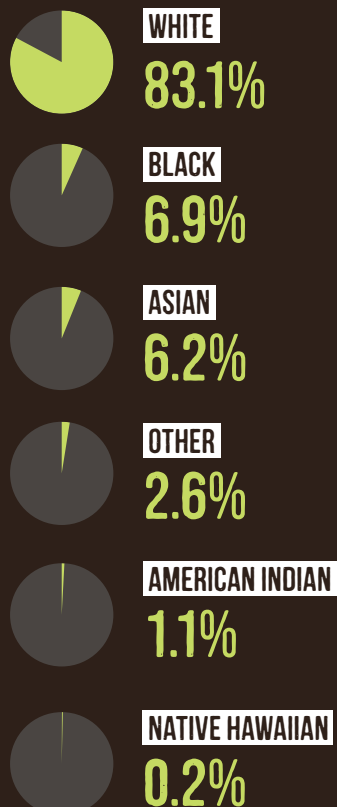
"THE REASON WE HAD THIS EVENT TODAY WAS TO EDUCATE THE YOUNGER CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY THAT MAY NOT REALLY HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT JUNETEENTH IS SO THEY CAN GET THE PERSPECTIVE AND THE REAL MEANING FROM SOMEONE THAT'S OLDER."

RITA WILTZ, EVENT ORGANIZER

THE WOODLANDS-AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

According to U.S. Census Bureau information, the majority of residents in The Woodlands area are white, with Black residents making up the second-largest demographic group.

POPULATION BY RACE



SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU/
COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CONTINUED FROM 1

Protesters speak out

Protests throughout the month of June were largely organized by young people from area high schools, who said they gathered to speak on racial injustice.

Hailey Rodee, the founder of youth society For A New Tomorrow and a student at The Woodlands High School, organized a protest at North Shore Bridge on June 3.

"This is an issue we need to deal with as a country, and I am proud to deal with as a young person who is grateful to grow up in a nation like the United States and have it be changeable by people like myself," Rodee said.

Rodee said she was in contact with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office prior to the protest, and the sheriff's office was cordial to protesters. Despite inclement weather, protesters at the June 3 event marched on the North Shore Bridge to distance themselves from the surrounding businesses.

Demonstrators at the march said they hoped to bring attention to various issues surrounding race and inequality in The Woodlands area. Avery Robertson and Allyson Brandenburg braved pouring rain at the intersection of Lakeside Boulevard and Lake Woodlands Drive. They said they attended the event

to bring attention to the voices of the area's Black community and to unite residents.

"I came to try to make a point ... because The Woodlands is a very bubbled area, and so we don't really stand up for anything. We all just kind of push it aside," Robertson said. "This is a very white-ish community. We still need to be representing the Black community in this."

Brandenburg said she was focused on accountability and solidarity. Information from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates in 2018 white residents made up around 83% of the total population in The Woodlands area. The same data states Black residents make up 6.9% of the total population of the area.

"I want to see accountability in our law enforcement; I want to see accountability in our community leaders [and] accountability in our community as a group, ... and I think we're not very united in that way. I think there could be more unison," she said. "We all bleed the same blood; we all come from the same place, and we're here to support our brothers and sisters."

A group of mostly young demonstrators also gathered in The Woodlands on June 4, holding signs and chanting at passing cars from Town Green Park on Lake Robbins Drive. Organizer Oponello Irving, a 2019 graduate of Oak Ridge High School, said the idea for the event spread across several area schools and was motivated by the racism she said she and her friends have seen.

Irving said she hopes her demonstration and others in the area can inspire students and their parents to candidly address the issue.

"There's going to be a lot of eyes

opening, and I hope that parents talk to their children and ask them, 'Is this happening in your school? Are there people who are bullying other people based on the color of their skin?' [I hope parents] call them out and [say], 'I hope you're not doing this. I hope you're not part of the problem,'" Irving said. "I hope that parents wake up and realize that it's not over yet."

Law enforcement response

Law enforcement officials also spoke regarding the nationwide effects of the death of Floyd. Henderson, who addressed the topic at a June 18 meeting of The Woodlands Township board of directors, said his office is looking at banning chokeholds.

"We do not train a chokehold. There is no maneuver that is in the policy that says a chokehold is appropriate," Henderson said.

According to Henderson, any and all uses of force within the sheriff's office are documented, with anything deemed excessive investigated both internally and by the district attorney's office. He said the process includes an early detection system, in which a warning is sent to a supervisor if an officer has a certain number of instances in a time frame, although Henderson did not comment on what the threshold is.

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement to most of The Woodlands Township under contract as well as other unincorporated parts of south

POLICE COSTS IN THE WOODLANDS

The Woodlands Township budgeted \$13.5 million for law enforcement contracts in 2020, which mostly funded salaries. The Woodlands does not have its own police department.

	TOTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT BUDGET IN THE WOODLANDS	CONTRACTED SERVICES*		
		HARRIS COUNTY CONSTABLE	MONTGOMERY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE	MOUNTED PATROL
2015	\$12 MILLION	\$829,214	\$6.9 MILLION	\$1.9 MILLION
2016	\$12.8 MILLION	\$891,277	\$7.5 MILLION	\$2 MILLION
2017	\$12 MILLION	\$1.1 MILLION	\$6.7 MILLION	\$2.1 MILLION
2018	\$13.4 MILLION	\$1.2 MILLION	\$6.9 MILLION	\$2.1 MILLION
2019	\$14 MILLION	\$1.3 MILLION	\$7.9 MILLION	\$1.7 MILLION
2020	\$13.5 MILLION	\$1.3 MILLION	\$8.1 MILLION	\$1.7 MILLION

*DOES NOT INCLUDE PRIVATE SECURITY OR SAFE HARBOR CONTRACTS, ADMINISTRATIVE OR EQUIPMENT COSTS
SOURCE: THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Montgomery County. The Harris County Precinct 4 Constable's Office is contracted for the Village of Creekside Park in The Woodlands.

Since 2015, The Woodlands Township board of directors has increased the budget for law enforcement services and contracts from \$12 million to \$13.5 million. In 2015, the total made up 11% of the township's total expenses.

In the approved \$13.5 million fiscal year 2019-20 budget, \$68,000 was set aside for training and conferences with Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, a 1,600% increase from the previous year's \$4,000, according to the budget.

However, while the budget for law enforcement contracts has increased since 2015, the 2019-20 budget did decrease by around \$457,000 from the previous year due to several one-time expenses the previous year, according

to information in the budget.

Shenandoah interim Chief of Police Troye Dunlap said he wants to see his officers receive more training to be more confident in their ability to de-escalate a situation. For the most recent budget, the Shenandoah City Council approved a total of \$50,850 for training, travel and training supplies for officers.

"We have a good budget for training; each officer is allotted a certain amount of money each year, so we allow them to go for certain training. The state also requires us to go through de-escalation training [and] citizen interaction training," Dunlap said. "If you train officers well enough and they get their confidence, they don't have to use that excessive force. A lot of problems officers get into is fear from not being comfortable to handle a situation. That's what I want to work with these guys on."

2015-20 PERSONNEL IN THE WOODLANDS

The Woodlands contracts law enforcement services with Montgomery and Harris counties. The contracts cover personnel, equipment and insurance costs for officers.

Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 4 (Village of Creekside Park)

PERSONNEL

2015 9 ↑ 2020 12

Montgomery County Sheriff's Office

PERSONNEL

2015 93.5 ↓ 2020 89

Montgomery County Constable's Office, Precinct 3 (Safe Harbor and Internet Crimes detectives)

PERSONNEL

2015 2 ↑ 2020 3

SOURCE: THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Tom Libby, the Oak Ridge North chief of police, said use of force from his department has been rare in the past several years, and the most common use of force was Taser usage when the city had more bars and clubs.

Chokeholds are also banned by the city's police department in its use-of-force policy, which was last updated in January 2019. Libby said the policies are re-examined and updated every two years.

"There are too many unknowns that could happen from a chokehold restricting someone's airway," Libby said. "Your brain obviously needs oxygen. If that oxygen is restricted from the brain, it obviously could result in death or serious bodily injury. It's just not acceptable here."

Legislative session ahead

Across the state of Texas, protesters have been calling for police reform and limiting funding to police departments to instead focus on social services. The Texas Legislature is scheduled to meet next spring, and the issue is anticipated to be up for debate then, experts said.

Brandon Rottinghaus, a political science professor at the University of Houston, said he believes criminal justice and law enforcement reform will appear as a focus for the 2021

Texas Legislature following nationwide protests.

"I definitely think that you're going to see [Gov. Greg Abbott] put some consensual items on the agenda to make policing more fair and just," Rottinghaus said. "I think that's likely to be a part, but exactly what he'll do we don't know. He kind of hinted at a couple things that seem like they would be acceptable, and it might not all directly relate to the policing issue; it may also be about criminal justice."

Rottinghaus added responses from large cities and local governments across the state, including Houston, often lead to a "trickle-up effect" that adds pressure to the Texas Legislature to follow along on reform.

"If enough local governments do that then you do see a cascade of movement towards codifying what many local governments are already doing, so I suspect that you would see movement in that direction," Rottinghaus said. "The other reason I think they are acting first is that they do not fully trust the Legislature or the powers that be in state government to do as they wish or alter what they want to do in ways they don't want."

Ben Thompson contributed to this report.



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