In front of over three, six, and zero flags on Houston City Hall’s lawn, Lucy Lugo Ekpanya shared the story of her husband’s death when he was struck by a drunken driver.

“Even though it happened in June of two thousand six, that happens every single day, every single morning for me, because I wake up with the reality that my husband, my best friend and the person that I was supposed to spend the rest of my life with, isn’t here anymore,” she said.

Each of the flags behind her represented a life lost on Texas roadways in two thousand eight. City and state officials and transportation leaders gathered Nov. eight to promote the Texas Department of Transportation “End the Streak” campaign, which raises public awareness for safe driving practices and dangers facing Texas drivers.

Brays Bayou could tap into new flood project funding

By Matt Dulin and Shawn Arraj

After more than 77% of voters approved Proposition 8—a state amendment creating the Flood Infrastructure Fund—Brays Bayou watershed residents and city and flood district officials are eager to tap into the $793 million in potential project money.

The Texas Water Development Board, which will manage the fund, released its draft guidelines on Nov. 15. It outlines a process to begin identifying priorities and levels of funding, which will be used for loans and grants.

What is Proposition 8?

Prop. 8 is a constitutional amendment that created a flood infrastructure fund, which will be used to help finance flood and drainage projects across Texas.

- Fund will be managed by the Texas Water Development Board
- Received $793 million from the state’s Rainy Day Fund

Sources: Texas Water Development Board, Stronger Texas, Joint House Resolution 4, Community Impact Newspaper

CONTINUED ON 22
One-Stop Access for All Your Health Care Needs

Houston Methodist in the Texas Medical Center is more than just a hospital. We offer a full spectrum of care, including:

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To find a doctor, visit houstonmethodist.org/more or call 713.790.3333.
New state and local policies to keep an eye on

The city of Houston has recently adopted Vision Zero, a policy to reduce traffic fatalities to zero over a 10-year time frame. In this issue, City Hall Reporter Emma Whalen explores what this policy entails and how it is intended to affect our city. We also examine other cities that have implemented similar policies.

As a follow-up to recent election coverage, we are including an extended Voter Guide to keep you informed on the runoff elections taking place Dec. 14 (see Page 13). You can find information on runoff candidates for the Houston mayoral race, District C and Bellaire City Council. The November election resulted in the passage of Proposition 8, which includes $793 million of state funds for a new flood infrastructure fund. These new funds will be used for a variety of flood-control projects across the state. City Editor Matt Dulin looks at how these funds could help the Brays Bayou watershed.

Part of our mission at Community Impact Newspaper is to help businesses thrive. Each month we feature a locally owned dining venue and business to tell their stories to the community. If you have a restaurant or local shop you would like to nominate, please email me with your recommendation. We love to hear from you!

What is going on with Houston ISD?

With the news in November that the Texas Education Agency will begin the process of taking over the board of trustees of Houston ISD, residents are wondering what this means and how it will affect their schools. We have provided some answers on Page 9, but the main takeaway is that, in the near term at least, the day-to-day operations of the school district are unchanged.

This takeover was triggered by several factors, all of which are being challenged by lawsuits filed by both the trustees and the teachers union, who argue that a takeover violates the Voting Rights Act by overruling the results of the trustee elections.

Meanwhile, the TEA is moving forward with the process of encouraging and vetting local candidates who could form the appointed board of managers. Officials have said they want this board to be representative of the entire district.

If the process moves forward after the legal battle, it is expected to take several months to implement, but would take several years to phase out.
A Memorial Hermann Urgent Care clinic opened Nov. 13 at 3501 W. Holcombe Blvd. near West University. The clinic serves patients of all ages, but it is the first urgent care in the Memorial Hermann system to offer specialized pediatric care for children and newborns, according to a news release. The clinic, open seven days a week, is staffed by certified pediatric and family medicine physicians, and can treat a variety of ailments including the flu, insect bites, sprains, fractures and other minor injuries. Patients can request appointments online, but walk-ins are also welcome. 713-814-2680. www.memorialhermann.org/urgentcare

Houston-native rapper Travis Scott reopened his store Space Village, 2408 Rice Blvd., Houston, on Nov. 10. It was formerly a pop-up shop that opened after his Astroworld Festival in 2018. Store hours vary. www.instagram.com/spacevillage

The food hall Politan Row opened Nov. 9 at 2445 Times Blvd. in Rice Village. The hall offers several chef-driven concepts, ranging from Thai to Mexican to Egyptian cuisines, as well as plant-based specialties. 713-489-2546. www.politanrow.com

New Orleans-based athleisure and lifestyle clothing brand Tasc Performance opened a pop-up store in Rice Village, 2503 Amherst St., Houston, on Nov. 1 in anticipation of launching a permanent location in 2020. Tasc produces its own apparel using a patented material, BamCo, composed of bamboo and organic cotton, to offer moisture-wicking and SPF 50-rated clothing that is not chemically treated. Originally a wholesale brand, Tasc opened its first storefront in New Orleans three years ago. 713-297-8312. www.tascperformance.com

Health care provider Iora Primary Care opened a clinic at 6613 S. Braeswood Blvd., Houston, on Nov. 5, its sixth in the Houston area. The primary care office caters to adults on Medicare with an emphasis on relationships and team-based care with doctors and behavioral health specialists on-site. Dr. Jung-Hoon Kim, board-certified in geriatric and internal medicine and a Braeburn-area resident, is the clinic’s lead physician. 281-975-2478. https://ioraprimarycare.com/braeburn

Goodsmith, a new home maintenance and repair services company, will open a new office on Jan. 1 at 2425 Bartlett St., Houston. The company, which currently serves the Bellaire and West University area, offers regular home maintenance services through a membership program, which includes at least a once-per-month check-in and on-call support. The company also offers preset rates and oversight of home repair and improvement projects. 877-909-2999. www.mygoodsmith.com

National pizza chain Marco’s Pizza will open at 9540 S. Main St, Ste. 120, Houston, in January. Based in Ohio, the chain marked its 40th year in business in 2018. 713-742-6668. www.marcospizza.com

Southside Commons, the mixed-use development under construction at 4191 Bellaire Blvd., has added two tenants ahead of its 2020 opening. The two will join the family-friendly dining and entertainment concept Palace Social, Center for ENT, and Greater Houston Orthodontics.

Houston Methodist Primary Care Group will occupy 15,000 square feet on the second floor, offering 30 exam rooms and staffed by internists and family medicine physicians, as well as physician assistants and will eventually be joined by specialists, www.houstonmethodist.org/pcc.

Houston-based restaurant Dish Society will open its sixth location, offering its heavily Texas-sourced farm-to-table fare. www.dishsociety.com

The Mathnasium River Oaks location moved to a new space near West University, 3361 Westpark Drive, Ste. 260, Houston, on Nov. 1. The educational service is staffed with specially trained math instructors to help children gain mastery of mathematics skills using an individualized approach. 713-697-6284. www.mathnasium.com

Nap Bar moved into a new pop-up location inside the Galleria, 5085 Westheimer Road, Houston, across from Peli Peli. Like its Rice Village-area counterpart, the shop will offer private suites.

Now Open

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Nap Bar moved into a new pop-up location inside the Galleria, 5085 Westheimer Road, Houston, across from Peli Peli. Like its Rice Village-area counterpart, the shop will offer private suites.
with organic mattresses and sheets and a customized sleep experience for $1 a minute, with membership plans available. The pop-up is scheduled to end Feb. 29, 2020. 832-699-4899. www.napbarnow.com

**EXPANSION**

11 New York Deli & Coffee Shop and The Bagel Shop Bakery, 9720 Hillcroft St., announced Nov. 7 it would expand with a new location in fall 2020 at 5422 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire. It will offer 12,000-square feet, enough room for up to 320 diners, including a private party room. The shop will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner and offer drive-thru window service. The space will also include a kosher bakery as well as a catering kitchen. 713-723-5879. www.nybagelsandcoffee.com

12 Less than two months after unveiling a new concept and expansion by adding a cafe and workshop, leather goods boutique The Gaspé Collection, 2413 Rice Blvd., Houston, closed its location Nov. 5. “We’re closing this store to focus our full attention to other parts of our business and mission,” a message posted on the shop’s front door reads. The shop will continue selling goods online. 713-750-9042. www.thegaspycollection.com

13 Citing rising rents, Dallas-based Half Price Books has announced it will close its Rice Village bookshop, 2537 University Blvd., Houston. The 11,300-square-foot store has been open since 1982 and will close on March 8, 2020. The company has looked for alternate locations but has not been able to find a suitable location in the same area, company spokesperson Emily Bruce said. “But that does not mean that could not change at some point,” she said. 713-524-6635. www.hpb.com

14 National discount home goods retailer Tuesday Morning announced it is closing its Meyerland-area location at 49 Braeswood Square. In a Nov. 1 financial report, the company said it planned to close 25 to 35 stores, open three and relocate five others as it looked to mitigate declining sales. 713-729-2297. www.tuesdaymorning.com

**CLOSINGS**

15 Houston ISD celebrated the opening of a first-of-its-kind community resource hub at Westbury High School, 11911 Chimney Rock Road, Houston, on Nov. 4. The Wraparound Transformation Center will offer students and their families services that address medical and mental health needs, food and clothing insecurity, housing needs and immigration services. The center also houses a laundry room, a toiletry and food pantry, three classrooms and dedicated spaces for service providers, including the nonprofit Change Happens, Houston Community College and Workforce Solutions. “We like to make sure we are doing everything and all that we can for our kids,” Westbury Principal Susan Monaghan said in a news release. “That’s what the Wraparound Transformation Center is all about—providing anything and everything our students need. No task, no problem is too large.” www.houstonisd.org

**FEATURED IMPACT — EXPANSION**

**The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston,** 1001 Bissonnet St., announced Nov. 6 that its multiyear campus expansion project will be completed in fall 2020 with the opening of the Nancy and Rich Kinder Building. It will be the museum’s third gallery space, joining the original Caroline Wiess Law Building and the Audrey Jones Beck Building. The redevelopment of the Susan and Fayez S. Sarofim Campus was funded through a $450 million campaign, raised primarily from local donors. The project has added a public plaza and two buildings to the campus, which will comprise 14 walkable acres when complete. 713-639-7300. www.mfah.org

**IN THE NEWS**

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**TO-D0 LIST DECEMBER**

**COMPIL ED BST MATT DULIN**

**DECEMBER**

**07 SHOP AND SUPPORT PET ADOPTIONS**
Houston Pets Alive Thrift hosts its monthly, pet-friendly Sip Shop Adopt! event. Guests can enjoy alco- holic beverages and snacks, meet pets up for adoption and shop with special discounts. HPA is a nonprofit animal rescue dedicated to saving pets at risk of euthanasia. Noon-4 p.m. Free. 2532 Nottingham St., Houston. 713-497-5650. www.houstonpetsalive.org

**08 BIOSCIENCE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE**

Homeowners have until Dec. 31 to complete repairs for reimbursement under the federal Harvey Homeowner Assistance Program. Homeowners can apply for funds after the deadline as long as repairs are completed and documented by then. Grant levels vary by income status, with maximums ranging from $20,000 to $80,000. 832-393-0550. http://recovery.houstontx.gov

**09 ATTEND A TALK ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS IN HOUSTON**
Project Curate, a local collaborative bringing attention to social justice issues in Houston, hosts the last of its speaker series called “A People’s History of Houston,” with a talk at the Jung Center. 6:30-8:30 p.m. $30. 5200 Montrose Blvd., Houston. 713-528-0527. www.projectcurate.org

**10 LISTEN TO YOUNG OPERA TALENT AUDITION FOR A CHANCE TO MAKE IT TO NEW YORK**
The Houston Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions will have its ninth annual competition at Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music. Some 40 young artists will compete for $7,500 in prizes and a chance to perform on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera. Houston District winners will proceed to a regional competition Jan. 5, 2020 in New Orleans, followed by the final round on March 1, 2020 in New York. 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. 6100 Main St., Houston. 832-723-8983.

**11 CATCH THE NORMAN ROCKWELL ‘FOUR FREEDOMS’ EXHIBITION AT MFAH**
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston opens a new exhibition, “Norman Rockwell: American Freedom,” showcases the artist’s iconic paintings from 1943—“Freedom of Speech,” “Freedom of Worship,” “Freedom from Fear” and “Freedom from Want.” The exhibit also includes historical documents, photos, videos and other pieces of the time. The exhibit will be on display through March 22, 2020. Exhibit is included with general admission: Free (members and children under 12); $18 (seniors, military, students); $23 (adults). 5601 Main St., Houston. 713-639-7300. www.mfah.org

**12 WEAVE TREE BRANCHES INTO ART**
The Bellaire Nature Discovery Center will host a bring-your-own-workshop, where students will take tree branches and other sustainable supplies to create a piece of art. The event is for adults only, and registration is required in advance. 7-9 p.m. Free. 7112 Newcastle St., Bellaire. 713-667-6550. www.naturediscoverycenter.org

**13 TAKE STEPS TO BE MORE HEALTH CONSCIOUS**
The Hermann Park Conservancy hosts “Walk with a Doc,” where participants can join a practicing physician for a walk through the park as they ask questions and learn more about health and wellness. The walks are held the third Saturday of every month and start at the Miller Outdoor Theatre. 9-10 a.m. Free. 6000 Hermann Park Drive, Houston. 713-524-5876. www.hermannpark.org

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**17 VIEW PHOTOS OF A CHANGING CITY**
The Moody Center for the Arts will hold an opening night reception for “Changing Houston,” an exhibit by Geoff Winningham, a photographer and Rice University professor of visual arts, at The BioScience Research Collaborative. The exhibit will remain on view until March 17. 5 p.m. Free. 6566 Main St., Houston. 713-348-2787. http://moody.rice.edu

**18 WRAP UP HARVEY HOME REPAIRS**
Homeowners have until Dec. 31 to complete home repairs for reimbursement under the federal Harvey Homeowner Assistance Program. Homeowners can apply for funds after the deadline as long as repairs are completed and documented by then. Grant levels vary by income status, with maximums ranging from $20,000 to $80,000. 832-393-0550. http://recovery.houstontx.gov

**19 TAKE THE FAMILY OUT FOR SOME EXERCISE**
The Levy Park Conservancy will host two days of music, pop-up shops, dog-friendly activities, crafts, and food and drink by chef Tim Love’s Wood- shed Smokehouse and Love Shack restaurants. Noon-5 p.m. Free. 3801 Eastside St., Houston. 713-522-7275. www.levyparkhouston.com

**20 DECK THE HALLS PARADE**
Dec. 14: Organized by Westbury residents in 1998, the event mixes holiday traditions and New Orle- ans-inspired neighborhood parades with music and costumes as well as a toy drive. 5 p.m. Free. Parking is available at the Home Depot at 11500 Chimney Rock. 713-367-3782. www.deckthehallsparade.com

**BELLAI R E CHANUKAH FESTIVAL**
Dec. 22: The Shul of Bellaire hosts the annual festival, featuring snow activities, a giant menorah and more at Bellaire Town Center. 4-6:30 p.m. Free. 6104 Auden St., West University. 713-688-4441. www.westutx.gov

**SANTA AT THE GALLERIA**
Through Dec. 24: Parents can bring their children to meet and take photos with Santa at the Galleria on Level 1 of the Nordstrom wing. A session for children with special needs, in partnership with Autism Speaks, will be held 8:30-10:30 a.m. Dec. 8. Parents can register in advance for their Santa session online. Free. 5085 Westheimer Road, Houston. www.santaiscoming.com

**ZOO LIGHTS**
Through Jan. 12: The Houston Zoo decks out for the holidays with Zoo Lights, featuring large-scale light installations, including a 100-foot-long tunnel. 5:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m. $12.75-$29.95. 6200 Hermann Park Drive, Houston. 713-533-6550. www.houstonzoo.org
**TRANSPORTATION UPDATES**

**Greenbriar Drive paving and drainage**
Construction on Greenbriar Drive from Rice Boulevard to Holcombe Boulevard is over 80% complete, according to Houston Public Works, and is on track to be completed this winter. The intersection at Swift Boulevard has been finished, along with the segment from Rice to University Boulevard. The middle segment, from University to Swift, is the last phase of the project. Improvements include new pavement, larger underground water and sewer lines, crosswalks, upgraded storm sewers and wider sidewalks.

**Timeline:** spring 2018-winter 2019  
**Cost:** $8.6 million  
**Funding source:** city of Houston

**Spruce and Fifth improvements**
Work is progressing along the 5100-5200 blocks of Spruce Street and the 700 block of Fifth Street, with most of the underground work complete. Crews are pouring concrete at the Fifth and Cedar street intersection and placing formwork for concrete paving on Spruce. Installation of storm sewers along Spruce was underway in October. The project is adding public parking, replacing road surfaces, improving drainage and adding sidewalks beautification features. The city plans to hold a meeting with business owners in December to provide further updates.

**Timeline:** April 2019-February 2020  
**Cost:** $2.5 million  
**Funding source:** Bonds for Better Bellaire

**Imperial, Mayfair, Linden and Willow street improvements**
By the end of October, crews were completing minor restoration work on Imperial and Mayfair streets on the north side of Bellaire as well as on Linden Street in central Bellaire. On Willow Street, crews have finished laying asphalt transitions at the ends of the street and installed sidewalk ramps. The neighborhood street project is on track to finish in December.

**Timeline:** fall 2018-December 2019  
**Cost:** $4.8 million  
**Funding source:** city of Bellaire, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County’s General Mobility Program

**Bellaire FY 2019-20 pavement management program**
The Bellaire Public Works Department’s Pavement Management Program includes funding for street overlays and sidewalk repairs, as identified through residents’ reports, reviews by city staff and the city’s 2015 pavement condition analysis. According to planning documents, this year’s program will focus on patching or replacing concrete panels on major arterial streets with substandard or failing concrete. The program does not fund complete reconstruction of streets, which would be handled by a capital improvement project.

City officials said they were developing a bid package in November and expect to have a contract for the program ready for council approval in early 2020.

**Funding sources:** city of Bellaire, Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County’s General Mobility Program

**Timeline:** fall 2019-fall 2020  
**Cost:** $1.47 million

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**HOW IT WORKS**

**When are train conductors required to sound horns at an intersection?**

Federal law sets various requirements in regard to train and railroad operations in Texas, including how often and when trains have to blow their horns. For example, train operators are required to sound horns at least 20 seconds before they approach a public road crossing, according to the Texas Department of Transportation. Residents may also wonder why train conductors are required to blow horns when there are already automatic warning signals at the intersection. Law requires engineers to blow the horn as the train approaches and goes through the intersection, according to TxDOT.

However, there are potential restrictions or loopholes. Certain communities may apply for quiet zones if Federal Railroad Administration requirements are met, and therefore trains will not be able to sound their horns when passing through the zone, according to TxDOT. Some cities may also use wayside horns, which are mounted on the traffic signal at an intersection and would be directed at traffic in the street and potentially less disruptive, according to TxDOT.

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*These scholarships are not need-based.
Health study reveals 24-year lifespan variance

HARRIS COUNTY

A study by Harris County Public Health found while Harris County’s average life expectancy is 78.7 years, which is on par with state and national averages, life expectancy in Harris County alone varies by nearly 24 years depending on where a resident lives.

HCPH released “Harris Cares: A 2020 Vision of Health in Harris County” to the public and presented its findings to the Harris County Commissioners Court on Nov. 12.

The 10-month study was approved by Harris County Commissioners Court in January and is a result of HCPH’s request to review public health and prevention and to make recommendations on improving Harris County health. In April, the court requested HCPH add health care delivery to the assessment.

One of the major themes found in the report was a nearly 24-year range in average lifespan that varied across the county from as low as 65 years to as high as 89 years. According to the report, the Memorial/Bear Creek area has the highest average lifespan, while the East Little York/Settegast area has the lowest.

“I take it personally because my precinct doesn’t live as long as [Precinct 4], and we’re talking about real lives,” Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia said during the meeting.

Additionally, 1 in 3 residents ages 12-17 is overweight or obese, while some communities in Harris County have more than 50% of adults who are classified as obese, according to key findings included in a Nov. 12 press release about the study.

Other key takeaways were that approximately 1 in 5 Harris County adults lacks health insurance, with some communities having 1 in 3 adults lacking health insurance. While Memorial Park/University Place had the lowest uninsured population, Gulfton/North Sharpstown had the highest.

Houston approves Westbury-area library contract

HOUSTON

Over two years after Hurricane Harvey flooded the building, the Meyer Neighborhood Library remains closed, but a new library in a new location is poised to replace it.

Houston City Council approved a $1.4 million contract to begin designing a new Westbury Neighborhood Library, a part of the Houston Public Library system, to replace the Meyer Neighborhood Library. It will also house the Frank HPL Express Library, which currently occupies a leased space.

District K Council Member Martha Castex-Tatum said residents in her district are looking forward to having a new library, which would be located at 5505 Belrose Drive, Houston.

“Many of us know that we have been waiting for the library in the Westbury area to move forward,” she said. “We have been without a true library in the area since Harvey. ... We are making progress, and I’m happy to see great architecture here. The firm we selected was the 2018 American Institute Architects Houston firm of the year.”
Brays Bayou detention sites receive the go-ahead

The Harris County Flood Control District has been given the go-ahead for construction of three connected stormwater detention basins located along Braeswood Boulevard at Loop 610. Work is expected to begin soon and take about four months to complete, the Harris County Flood Control District said.

The basins, located between Endicott Lane and South Post Oak Road, will primarily collect stormwater from area streets and control runoff into Brays Bayou, said Gary Zika, a project manager for the flood district. The project is a partnership between the county’s flood control district and the city of Houston, which provided the land for the project.

Bellaire City Council is considering new drainage criteria for prioritizing capital road projects

As the city considers new criteria for prioritizing future road projects, Bellaire Mayor Andrew Friedberg said the city should break with tradition and assign greater value to drainage benefits overall.

“For years I have actually questioned the 60-40 split,” Friedberg said, referring to the 60% weight given to drainage factors versus the 40% for road conditions. “70% is kind of the starting point, minimum, for me. I certainly could entertain going higher than that.”

Under recommendations presented to City Council on Nov. 18 and developed through the Flood Hazard Mitigation Task Force, the city is recommending keeping the 60-40 weighting to balance drainage and road needs, but it is recommending adding more drainage-related criteria to the mix. The current criteria were implemented prior to the Bonds for Better Bellaire program in 2016.

“What we’re looking for is an objective, scientific approach to giving priority to projects,” Director of Public Works Michael Leach told Community Impact Newspaper. “It’s a tool to help us plan.”

Under one proposal, the city would apply a cost-benefit calculation that uses the age of the homes along a street and their average repair costs during Hurricane Harvey. These costs per structure range from $30,000 for homes built before 1980 on the low end to $80,000 for homes built between 1995 and 2004. Homes built after 2004 have lower damage costs at $50,000. These figures would represent costs avoided by implementing a street rebuild, officials said.

“This could be politically interpreted as, ‘Old houses are getting the short end of the deal, and new houses are getting more benefit’ ... whether it works out that way, I don’t know,” Council Member Pat McLaughlin said. “But perception is king.”

The criteria would only apply to future street reconstruction, not maintenance, overlays, potholes and other minor repairs, Leach said. But the criteria could be applied to an anticipated $970,000 in remaining bond funds as well as to a $4.3 million federal grant the city expects to receive in the coming months.

Other changes proposed include factoring in the number of structures flooded on a street and the number of structures served by a road’s underground storm sewer. However, the city recommended against using Hurricane Harvey rainfall data as part of its drainage benefit calculations.

Leach said the city would take council’s feedback and return the item for further review.

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The city has failed to adequately address necessary upgrades to our drainage system and infrastructure in District C. Among the bad news is that we have been building roads incorrectly since the ’70s. The good news is we now know how to do it right. As we are in the process of several street re-construction projects, we need to also address the sewer lines. I will also advocate for Houston to become a more walkable city with pedestrian activated crosswalks. We have several dangerous intersections in District C, and I’ve made it a top priority to make them safer.

How should Houston balance dense, urban development and neighborhood preservation?

The lack of affordable housing within the city is a threat to our future and economic development. I favor revitalization of vulnerable neighborhoods in a manner that maintains the character of the community and results in affordable housing with access to neighborhood amenities like grocery stores, restaurants, city services and public transportation. Young professionals, graduating college students and future innovators want a city where they can live, work and play. Prospective employers want to locate in a city that not only has protection from catastrophic flooding, but offers affordable housing, robust public transportation, green space and recreation areas.

Some days, it seems like the ground is shifting right under our feet—and with all the booming development and redevelopment, it literally is. I know residents who live near new highrises and new, dense developments who have seen their water pressure drop, their risk of flooding increase, and traffic in their neighborhoods become unmanageable. Established neighborhoods are changing rapidly, and the city needs to do a better job of responding. I am very concerned that neighbors are bearing the brunt of these impacts. I’m ready to start a serious conversation about correcting this imbalance.

What types of infrastructure improvements would you advocate for in your district?

How can the city address its growing unfunded liabilities and structural budget deficit?

We have made tremendous progress. I led the effort to reform our pension system for city employees that was costing taxpayers $1 million per day. We’ve cut our unfunded pension liability in half; from $8.2 billion to $4 billion. I’ve balanced four tough budgets without layoffs or significant service cuts. And after Hurricane Harvey wallowed our city budget, we are taking steps to address the structural budget imbalance. Starting next year, the city will move to a zero-based budgeting model that requires every expense to be justified.

As mayor, it is my job to address all our serious challenges. I represent more than 2.3 million people – every Houstonian is important to me and each has his or her urgent priorities. These are all important, and I am not inclined to leave any of these off the list or rank one above the other: flooding and drainage; jobs and economic development; public safety; street conditions and traffic; public transportation; infrastructure, neighborhoods and equitable distribution of projects; diversity, economic inequality and making the city work for all Houstonians; and the city budget.

What would be your most urgent priority if elected?

The city is broken. We have to stop the campaign money that is corrupting our government where the contracts are given to the same people, time after time. That’s job one.
“After graduating from Ohio State and finishing my football career with the Houston Oilers, I fell in love with the City of Bellaire and decided to open my office right in the heart of it. I love the people in this city and it makes me proud to be a part of this community. I like helping people and getting to know customers. Taking care of them is the best part of what I do.”

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**WINFRED FRAZIER**

**Occupation/experience:**
Retired manager/vice president with Walt Disney/ABC-TV, Inc.; licensed attorney and an associate with Paris & Associates Law Firm.

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**What is your position on Bellaire’s approach to zoning?**

I spent several years on Bellaire’s Planning & Zoning Commission, many of those years as chairman of Planning and Zoning. I support Bellaire's approach to zoning. The zoning code needs to continue to ensure the protection of residential areas. Zoning should not limit positive growth. Improved buffers and screening between commercial and residential areas are needed. Traffic studies need to be formalized and integrated into the development codes, not just for new development, but for increased use of property and Special Use Permits (SUP’s).

**How would you approach balancing the city’s budget amid state limits on property tax increases?**

The state limit is a 3.5% increase—much higher than current inflation. There is no reason Bellaire cannot live within these limits. In fact, the goal should not be 3.5%. The goal should be no increase with a steady year-by-year reduction in debt. Bellaire currently pays almost $10 million per year in debt service.

**NATHAN WESELY**

**Occupation/experience:**
Attorney, labor and employment law; Bellaire Board of Adjustments chairperson; president of a nonprofit corporation.

**www.bellaire2019.com**

**What is your position on Bellaire’s approach to zoning?**

Zoning is an important protection for property owners and developers. Zoning creates clear expectations for the type of development allowed on adjoining land. Those expectations translate into enhanced property values. Bellaire should encourage development that complies with its zoning requirements. Bellaire should not change zoning at the request of a developer. If it does so, there is no point in having the zoning in the first place.

**How would you approach balancing the city’s budget amid state limits on property tax increases?**

Reduce unnecessary spending, scrub the budget, and evaluate the need for increasing taxes. Review Mike Jacobs’ budget analysis postings on NextDoor, a guide to reaching a balanced budget without a tax increase. My opponent is a fine person and I appreciate that he was willing to make the sacrifice to serve the city the past 4 years. David and I come from a different business experience, a Fortune 500 versus a small business solutions firm. The voter has the opportunity to choose between us. A difference and not an echo.

**JIM HOTZE**

**Occupation/experience:**
Business owner of Patriot Group Ltd. in 1979 with wife, Cindy; Election Judge for Precinct 128 for 36 years.

**What is your position on Bellaire’s approach to zoning?**

The city has a in-depth comprehensive plan and great zoning. Business people should not be purchasing property in Bellaire expecting the city to change the zoning. I am not anti-development, and to the extent the developer follows Bellaire’s zoning, I will be supportive. I want to make one thing absolutely clear, I am opposed to introducing multifamily living developments.

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**DAVID R. MONTAGUE**

**Occupation/experience:**
Retired petroleum engineer; Bellaire City Council Member (2016–2020), Clerk of Session at ChristChurch Presbyterian and marketing manager for “Flags over Bellaire” fundraising program.

**What is your position on Bellaire’s approach to zoning?**

I fully support Bellaire's zoning ordinances, the comprehensive (land use) plan, the city's Planning and Zoning Commission and the two-step process necessary to make zoning changes. I offer as evidence my recent council votes supporting the Take 5 busineess at Bissonnet and Ferris and my no vote for rezoning the 4301 Bellaire tract. I am actively involved with what’s happening on the Chevron property, and I have had two meetings with concerned neighbors who live adjacent to the property.

**How would you approach balancing the city’s budget amid state limits on property tax increases?**

I actually presented such a plan to city council at our Aug. 26 budget workshop. Specifically, the city manager had earlier proposed a FY2020 General Fund Budget which required an 8% property tax increase. I, and some public speakers at council, said we shouldn’t be increasing property taxes at all. At this workshop, I presented the city manager a list of reductions, deferrals and some less conservative forecasting that, in total, would reduce the proposed 8% property tax increase to 3.5% (equal to the state of Texas limit on property tax increases).
Meet Your Maker Retribution hot sauce ($40), made from ghost pepper puree and powder, is the hottest item available at iBurn.

Josh Beck, owner of iBurn, handpicks all of the spicy products sold at the store.

iBurn
Hot sauce shop carries ‘the hottest things in the world’

BY JOHNNY PEÑA

The mural on Bellaire Boulevard sports a red heart-shaped pepper roasting on a fire fueled by two iconic hot sauce bottles. The imagery is almost religious, and iBurn, Houston’s only hot sauce store, has become a kind of mecca for the spice community.

The shop specializes in “all things spicy” and boasts an array of local and imported hot sauces, salsas, barbecue products, condiments, drink mixes and other items to spice up food, said Josh Beck, owner of iBurn, who is known as the “Hot Sauce Boss.”

“If you’re looking for the hottest things in the world, we got you covered. I always tell everybody, ‘Go to your usual grocery store for your meat, fruit, bread and basics like that. Then come to iBurn to get the stuff that makes everything taste better,’” said Beck, who attended Bellaire High School.

Meet Your Maker Retribution hot sauce, made from ghost pepper puree and powder, is the hottest item available at iBurn, at 6 million Scoville units. For reference, a jalapeno pepper is about 5,000 Scoville units, Beck said.

One popular offering is the Tabanero Agave Sweet and Spicy sauce, which Beck said uses Key lime juice as a base and adds just the right amount of habanero pepper.

“Balance is key. I want depth. I want complexity. There needs to be some kind of synergy in the ingredients,” Beck said. “You should be able to try a sauce, and if the sauce is doing its job, you should say to yourself, ‘Oh my gosh! This would be perfect on X.’”

Beck curates the store’s inventory—he still taste-tests every sauce—and he favors small producers.

“I would say 80% of the products we carry are produced by small businesses, and probably 90% of the products we carry can only be found here,” Beck said.

He began his business online after building a following writing hot sauce reviews for a blog, where he saw that he could help producers by providing good recommendations. In 2013, he opened iBurn, which he runs with the help of his wife, Amy.

“We have evolved from when we first opened from just being a hot sauce shop to be more of a grocery store now,” Beck said.

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GUAJILLO
1,000 to 10,000 SHU

BANANA PEPPER
100 to 1,000 SHU

BELL PEPPER
0 to 100 SHU

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New York Deli & Coffee Shop
Old-school deli and bakery balances tradition while preparing for growth

Ed Gavrila, co-owner of New York Deli & Coffee Shop and its adjoining bagel bakery, never seems to be in one spot for long. During busy hours, he is often sent in different directions, either on his own volition or because another loyal customer pulls him aside.

"Here I am, 45 years later making them round and putting a hole in them," Gavrila said. "We became a part of the community."

During one such lunch hour, four generations of Houstonians sat together in a booth and soon Gavrila greeted them by name, and delivered a cookie to the youngest of the family.

When Gavrila’s father-in-law, Shick Kornhaber, opened the bagel bakery in 1975, his goal was to cater to Meyerland’s Jewish population. "They chose this location where we’re at now because of its proximity to about five temples, and at that time, bagels were considered a kind of a Jewish soul food," Gavrila said.

Kornhaber was a transplant from New York City, where there were enough bagel bakers to form an official union, Gavrila said. He brought his recipe to Houston to start a bakery and ultimately opened a full-service deli. Forty-five years later, the shop is still serving staples such as bagels with lox, matzo ball soup, and pastrami sandwiches on rye.

In March, Michael Saghian joined Ed Gavrila and Shaun Leva, as the third co-owner of the business with plans to help grow the operation while maintaining its character. Gavrila said Saghian was an obvious hire because he is a Meyerland native who grew up frequenting the shop.

"Ed has been friends with my parents for the last 45 years, and so it’s like family, you know? It’s just special, and it was so natural," Saghian said of taking on the job.

Saghian began experimenting with new bagel specials, including a blue and orange Astros bagel during the World Series. Now, they plan to expand to a second location in Bellaire. No matter what changes come, however, Saghian said they will always listen to the customers.

"Talking to customers is more than my full-time job, but I would never change it," he said. "I love what I did."

BY EMMA WHALEN
JOINING A MOVEMENT

When Turner signed the executive order, the city became the fourth in Texas to join the international network of cities making the same promise. A vote from Dallas City Council to join the network is pending.

Texas’ car-dependent transportation infrastructure means the state had the highest number of traffic fatalities in the country in 2018, according to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In that same year, Houston saw 197 traffic fatalities, the highest number of any city in the state, TxDOT data shows.

CONTINUED FROM 1

The streak refers to the fact that since Nov. 7, 2000, at least one person has died on a Texas roadway every day, totaling over 67,000 lives lost. The department also committed in May to reduce traffic deaths on Texas roadways to zero by 2050, a goal known as Vision Zero. TxDOT pledged to spend $600 million for safety improvements over the next two years.

Committing to the same goal, Houston is in the midst of forming a Vision Zero Action Plan. Mayor Sylvester Turner signed an executive order in August pledging to reduce Houston’s traffic deaths to zero by 2030. City leaders, including Police Chief Art Acevedo and Fire Chief Sam Peña, and community transportation advocates, gathered for the first time in October to begin the planning process for the city’s Vision Zero Action Plan, set to be released in August 2020.

Both commitments represent a recent shift in thinking about transportation safety in Texas, said Robert Wunderlich, director of the Center for Transportation Safety at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. Simply committing to the goals, however, is only the first step.

“It’s one thing to say, ‘We have a Vision Zero city,’ whether that’s in Houston or anywhere else. I think we would all support that,” he said. “It depends on what actions you’re going to take at the end of the day. Zero means we’re going to look at things differently. We’re really going to try to implement a lot of safety countermeasures.”

“We are not willing to postpone,” TxDOT Commissioner Laura Ryan said. “I believe that the goal of zero deaths on our roadways is not impossible. It’s just like putting a man on the moon. People wonder why you’re an optimist, but it’s a different type of possibility.”

Looking to the other Texas cities in the Vision Zero network provides a roadmap for Houston’s foray into traffic safety policymaking.

In San Antonio, traffic fatality numbers have fluctuated since the city adopted Vision Zero in 2015 but had gone down 9% overall by the end of 2018, data from TxDOT shows. The city’s commitment to Vision Zero initiatives has included increased police enforcement and an $850 million city bond program passed in 2017 with $91 million already spent on road and sidewalk improvements.

“In Texas, public policy is changing sort of significantly, and it’s working,” said Jay Blazek-Crossley, founder of the transportation advocacy group Farm & City.

In Austin, however, an internal auditor’s report released in September found that the city will not reach its goal of reducing traffic deaths to zero by 2025 unless it makes changes to its approach. Key recommendations included better tracking of crash severity to help prioritize problem areas and the creation of a broader public awareness campaign. The city has spent $30 million in transportation bond funding collectively on Vision Zero-related projects, such as dedicated bike lanes with barriers, between 2016 and 2018, the audit reported.

“One of the big parts of what Austin is trying to figure out, as are a lot of cities—is there is not a lot of what they call a culture of improvements,” Blazek-Crossley said. “They just deployed a miraculous amount of resources just redoing an intersection with little white sticks. ... Some of the game is figuring out how to spend money on small interventions that are effective citywide.”
If Houston wants to learn from its Texan counterparts, the city needs a clear strategy and dedicated funding, transportation advocates said.

In Houston, support will come from a combination of the Houston Public Works budget, the Capital Improvement Plan budget and state grants, city and state officials said.

**UNIQUE CHALLENGES**

Vision Zero—first developed in Sweden in the 1990s—has four pillars: safe streets, safe speeds, safe vehicles and safe people. Most of these will require some amount of funding either through new sources or through redirected funds, Blazek-Crossley said.

Over the next six months, city transportation, public safety and government officials will meet with transportation safety advocates to form the city’s action plan by August. Enforcement will require input from Acevedo and a dedicated response from the Houston Police Department, which is already understaffed, a 2016 independent consulting report found. State grants currently help pay for traffic enforcement overtime, TxDOT officials confirmed. One member of the committee, Citizens Transportation Coalition Chair Dexter Hardy, said he is cautiously optimistic.

“Each of us has a part... It’s really simple. Wear a seat belt every single time. Slow down. Put the phone down, and avoid distractions,” he said. “Now we can all be sitting at the same table.”

Houston’s success may rely on how much funding the city can allocate to the committee, which may prove a challenge with Houston’s tax growth cap.

“It’s more than just adopting a philosophy. It has to be adopting philosophy and putting your money where your mouth is,” Wunderlich said. “The Texas Department of Transportation Commissioner has taken really aggressive steps to do that.”

The passage of the $3.5 billion Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County bond in November may help the city meet some aspects of the goal; however the commitment is long overdue, Blazek-Crossley said.

“An important element is that actually some of that money is planned to be spent on safe sidewalks and connections to transit, which I think is wonderful,” he said. “But it is just barely a start towards the kind of transit people deserve.”

The city could gain additional funds from state grants as well.

Even if most state funding does not go toward city roads, it could affect highways through Houston. This includes the controversial expansion of I-45, Blazek-Crossley said.

“‘I think it’s crucial that we fix and upgrade for better transit throughout. It’s crucial that we bring it up to safety standards,’” he said.

Focusing on only highways, however, will not make the most significant difference, Wunderlich said.

“The arterial roadways and the big intersections are sometimes very complicated and very difficult for us, and we get higher rates of traffic deaths there,” Wunderlich said.

However the city moves forward, it is important to remember the shared responsibility of making Houston’s streets safer, Lugo Ekpanya said.

“Each of us has a part... It’s really simple. Wear a seat belt every single time. Slow down. Put the phone down, and avoid distractions,” she said.
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OCTOBER SALES DATA

HOMES ON THE MARKET

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The fund is being established with a one-time injection from the state's Economic Stabilization Fund—more commonly known as the Rainy Day Fund. However, state lawmakers can choose to add more money to the fund in the future.

The Harris County Flood Control District is in the process of applying the criteria set out by the board to its own agenda of projects to see which could be a good fit for state funding. HCFCD Director of Operations Alan Black said.

“We have $2.5 billion in bond money, but we’re looking to leverage that up to $4 billion. ... We’re looking at this very closely for grant opportunities,” he said.

Bellaire and West University Place officials also told Community Impact Newspaper they would include the new fund as they develop flood project grant applications.

HOW IT WILL WORK

The Flood Infrastructure Fund will be managed by the TWDB. The board has also been tasked with developing Texas’ first statewide flood plan, expected to be finalized in 2024.

“We are making systematic changes in the state of Texas,” said state Rep. Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, who authored the resolution that put Proposition 8 on ballots. “We are finally going to get involved in flood mitigation for the first time in the history of the state.”

According to the draft Intended Use Plan released Nov. 15, cities, counties and other municipalities will be asked to submit a preliminary, abbreviated application by April to determine priority as well as eligibility for financial assistance. After another round of in-depth applications, the plan calls for funding projects by the end of 2020.

Communities will be able to qualify for a zero- or low-interest loan, or grant funding, Phelan said.

“There will be different buckets. Based on the workshops around the state, we’re going to try to figure out how that money is levied out throughout those different opportunities,” he said.

The proposed plan lays out the types of projects that can be funded as well as how a community’s economic status will play a role in determining whether a grant or loan is appropriate. A wide range of project types will be eligible for funding, from planning studies to construction projects to warning systems and public education and outreach initiatives. Each type of project has its own qualification criteria.

Officials said the process through which projects are prioritized will be data- and science-based, but Phelan said it is crucial for local entities to begin developing plans now in order...
Proposed funding process

Local entities, including the Harris County Flood Control District, are expected to be able to submit applications for state funding in early 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abridged application</strong></td>
<td>The Texas Water Development Board will collect the information to prioritize projects and determine the best source of funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target due date:</td>
<td>April 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invitation</strong></td>
<td>The TWDB will invite entities whose projects ranked within the program’s funding capacity to submit applications for financial assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target date: July 2020; applications due 30 days later</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2023-24</strong></td>
<td>Regional and statewide flood plans are expected to be finalized.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LOANS:** provided at below-market interest rates to cover basic project planning, engineering and grant costs

**Grants:** can be used as matching funds to help draw down federal dollars

**Prioritization & ranking**

The TWDB will prioritize projects according to the 10 funding criteria.

**April-July 2020**

**Financial assistance commitments**

TWDB staff will make a funding recommendation to the board in a public meeting.

**Target date:** Fall 2020

**OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES**

In the Brays Bayou watershed, the most heavily populated watershed in Harris County and the one most heavily damaged during Hurricane Harvey, not even the $480 million federally backed Project Brays, due to wrap up in 2021, will successfully remove every property from the flood plain.

That means there is more work to be done, and the flood district has been identifying some of those opportunities, Brays Bayou Association President Charles Goforth said.

“Areas that have been affected the most frequently, the repetitive loss properties, should be addressed first,” Goforth said.

David Abraham, a Rice University researcher who has studied the Brays watershed, said one opportunity that could be funded is the decommissioning of the Southwest Wastewater Treatment plant, located just inside Loop 610 near the Meyerland area.

“Decommissioning this facility will, one, prevent nearby communities from being inundated with fecal matter every time it floods. Two, it could also add 35 acres, or 271 acre-feet, of detention capacity,” Abraham said. “Lastly, it will send a message to Houston residents that the city is indeed doing everything they can to complement flooding reduction efforts by the HCFCD.”

With $793 million in the initial fund for projects, a significant funding gap remains. In the Texas Flood Assessment released in December 2018, officials concluded that statewide flood-mitigation costs over the next decade could exceed $31.5 billion, with around $18 billion in need projected among individual communities across the state—not including Harvey recovery and the proposed coastal spine.

“In a situation like this, more is always better. I don’t know what the magic number is in terms of dollars,” Goforth said. “But the faster we can resolve these issues, the faster the perception—that the surrounding area goes underwater every time there’s a sprinkle—is removed.”

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**Christmas at Faith**

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**10:50 AM** (Mandrin)

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