Brazos River recreational developments take shape

Proposed projects call for boat launch improvements, new trails and additional park space

After months of gathering community feedback, local nonprofit Fort Bend Green has identified nearly 20 projects along the Brazos River corridor that are slated to be implemented in the next two to five years. These projects are expected to establish the river as an outdoor recreational attraction and paddle trail in Fort Bend County.

By John Rigg

Stretching more than 800 miles through the center of Texas, the Brazos River is one of the longest rivers in the U.S. and played a major role in the early settlement of Fort Bend County. Today it offers several miles of undeveloped land in Sugar Land and Missouri City—prime real estate for parkland, green space and recreational opportunities.

In an effort to preserve the natural habitat along the Brazos River corridor while bringing new outdoor amenities to the community, local nonprofit Fort Bend Green—in conjunction with a handful of community partners—has spent the past three years creating a recreation plan for the Brazos River corridor. Drafting the master plan started with a grant from the National Parks Service. After several years of community engagement, Fort Bend Green presented its master plan in May.

“This plan is a living document,” said Kim Icenhower, community relations specialist with Fort Bend Green. “Fort Bend Green will continue to seek ideas and feedback and revise ongoing work as needs and desires of the community change.”

Overall, the plan outlines 17 projects for the Brazos River corridor—including six major projects in Sugar Land and three near Sienna Plantation in Missouri City—that will be completed in the next two to five years. These projects are expected to help develop the corridor as a destination outdoor attraction, said Lisa Cox, recreation director with Sienna Plantation.

“You can start in the Richmond and Rosenberg area and float through Sugar Land, Missouri City, a small segment of Arcola and into Brazos Bend State Park,” she said. "Depending on the flow, it can take up to two days. One of our goals is to identify day trips and half-day trips.”

**Sugar Land projects**

Of the more than 3,600 acres of floodway property in Sugar Land’s city limits, the city has acquired about 1,000 acres for development. The city purchased 15 of these acres, while the rest was donated—including a 420-acre donation of former prison property along Hwy. 59—from the state of Texas.

Sugar Land’s transformation of the Brazos River corridor began in 2012 with a grant from the National Parks Service. After several years of community engagement, Fort Bend Green presented its master plan in May.

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**Cities focus on public safety efforts**

Growing departments make the call for upgrades, construction

By Abigail Allen

Public safety entities in Missouri City and Sugar Land are trying to ensure they are meeting the public’s needs by adding to or altering existing facilities and considering new construction.

Residents in Missouri City will soon see a new fire station and could also see an expanded Public Safety Headquarters. The public safety facility improvements were approved by voters in the May bond election.

“In 1989, there were close to 1,360 residents living in Missouri City; there was limited commercial business and there were approximately 35 police officers in the MCPD,” Missouri City Police Chief Mike Berezin said. “Missouri City now has 99 police officers who serve a population of about 68,000 residents, and the city has a considerable amount of commercial business activity.”

In Sugar Land, city officials are comparing notes on a proposal for a new public safety training center that could be used by all of the city’s first responders.

“The idea is to look at [other locations] and see what would be something that would be a good fit for the city of Sugar Land,” Sugar Land Fire Chief Juan Adame said. “We would draw best practices and best facilities to meet commercial business and there were approximately 35 police officers in the MCPD,” Missouri City Police Chief Mike Berezin said. “Missouri City now has 99 police officers who serve a population of about 68,000 residents, and the city has a considerable amount of commercial business activity.”

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Together we’ll go far
As new commercial and residential developments crop up around town, it becomes increasingly important to protect the natural plant and wildlife habitats around the area as much as possible.

In an effort to enhance the outdoor recreational amenities available to residents while limiting the adverse effects on the environment, Sugar Land and Missouri City officials are working with Fort Bend County and the National Parks Service to look at various projects along the Brazos River corridor.

Over the next few years, residents can look forward to watching a wild floodway corridor transform into a destination outdoor attraction. Our cover story continues on Page 18, so be sure to see what projects are planned and what it means for your area.

Remember to practice safety first when traversing the Brazos River. A strong undertow, rising water levels and large debris from heavy storm events can pose risks to visitors. The river will not be developed as a tubing or swimming destination.

Last month, the community unexpectedly lost a valued member and local entrepreneur.

Our thoughts go out to the family and friends of Missouri City native Donald Leonetti. We had the privilege to speak with Donald about his business, Leonetti Graphics, earlier this year. His passion for the work and love of the community was clearly shown through the course of our conversation. Thank you for your years of hard work and dedication to your community, your partners and your family.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

TAKING THE POLL
Sugar Land and Missouri City are forming partnerships with local and national entities to transform the wild Brazos River corridor into an outdoor recreational attraction. Several projects will bring safer access and additional park space to the river.

Which projects would you like to see developed along the Brazos River?

☐ More hike and bike trails
☐ Mixed-use parkland or athletic facilities
☐ More access points for canoes and kayaks
☐ More conservation efforts
☐ I would like the river to remain in its natural state.
☐ Other

*Take the poll online at impactnews.com/slm-poll*

Look for the results right here in next month’s print edition of Community Impact Newspaper.

LAST MONTH’S POLL RESULTS

Higher education is expanding with changes to the UH–Sugar Land campus, upcoming construction at HCC’s southwest campuses in Stafford and Missouri City, and plans for a new Texas State Technical College campus in Richmond.

Which developments in higher education would you like to see?

Specialized programs in technical education

![33.33%]

More dual-credit courses for high school students

![27.78%]

Industry-specific partnerships and training

![22.22%]

Additional undergraduate and graduate programs

![16.67%]

Results from an unscientific Web survey, collected 7/1/2014–7/29/2014

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Now Open

1. **Altus Hospice Care** opened a new location at 11352 Sugar Park Lane, Sugar Land, in late July. The Houston-based hospice program provider offers end-of-life and in-patient care along with grief and bereavement services. 281-493-9744. www.altushospicecare.com

2. **Boston Proper** held its grand opening July 18 at First Colony Mall, 16535 Hwy. 59, Sugar Land. The First Colony Mall store is the first Greater Houston location and the second in Texas. The women’s fashion retailer offers a range of apparel and accessories from business casual to beach wear. 800-243-4300. www.bostonproper.com

3. **A new CVS Pharmacy** opened in mid-July at the corner of LJ Parkway and University Boulevard. The company provides general merchandise and food items along with pharmacy services. www.cvs.com

4. **The Exchange at Telfair**, a new strip center at 13425 University Blvd., Sugar Land, welcomed new tenants this summer. www.newregionalplanning.com

5. **Brite Touch Cleaners** opened a location in Ste. 600. The business offers dry cleaning and laundry services. 281-207-9600. www.britetouchcleaners.com

6. **Comfort Dental Care** opened in Ste. 900. The practice offers general, cosmetic and restoration dentistry services. 281-240-0207. www.cdcsugarland.com

7. **Elements Massage** opens its Telfair location this summer in Ste. 300. The business offers a full range of massage therapy services including deep tissue, Swedish and sports massage. Wellness programs are also offered. 832-500-5950. www.elementsmassage.com/sugarland

8. **Royal Spa & Nails** opened in Ste. 200 this summer. The business provides manicure and pedicure services, facials, skin treatments and spa packages. 281-240-0831

9. **Super Cuts** opened in Ste. 400 in July. The hair salon franchise offers hair cuts and styling services. 281-494-0748. www.supercuts.com

10. **Family Eye Health Solutions** opened in July at 5201 Hwy 6, Ste. 700, Missouri City. The new office offers medical eye exams and emergency services along with treatments for eye-related issues. The business also sells glasses, contacts and accessories. 832-539-6448. www.familyehs.com

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**www.whhosts.com**

World Heritage is a public benefit, non-profit organization based in Laguna Beach, CA.

7 Several new business have opened at The Shops at Museum Place, a new strip center at 1226 Museum Square Drive, Sugar Land.

A Mr. Donut & Kolaches opened in Telfair this summer in Ste. 558. The eatery offers doughnuts, kolaches and fresh pastries. 281-491-0097

B Rita’s Ice Custard opened this summer in Ste. 600. The East Coast frozen dessert chain offers ice creams, custards and dessert ice. 281-494-7482. www.ritasice.com

C Serena Salon & Spa is now open in Ste. 200. The business provides manicure and pedicure services along with waxings, massages and facials. 281-313-3621

8 Which Wich Superior Sandwiches opened July 7 at 2587 Town Center Blvd., Ste. N, Sugar Land. The sandwich shop offers more than 50 customized sandwiches, including vegetarian options. Other menu items include salads, sides and desserts. Catering and delivery services are available. 832-532-0372. www.whichwich.com

Coming Soon

9 Bahama Bucks will open two area locations this year. A The Missouri City location at 5211 Hwy. 6, Ste. F, is slated to open by the end of summer.

B A Sugar Land location at 1226 Museum Square Drive, Ste. F will open this fall. The business offers shaved ice, smoothies and a variety of toppings. www.bahamabucks.com

10 Bella Spatique Nails & More will open in August at 5211 Hwy. 6, Ste. G, Missouri City. The business will offer manicures and pedicures, facials, eyelash extensions, waxing and spa package services. 832-421-0630

Brain Balance Achievement Centers will open a location at 2845 Cartwright Road, Missouri City, this year. The center provides learning and behavioral analysis and programs for children living with Autism, ADHD, dyslexia and other learning and processing disorders. 800-877-5500. www.brainbalancecenters.com

With four new locations slated to open in Texas, BodyBrite is looking to open its doors at its new Missouri City location in August at 6214 Hwy. 6. The location will feature IPL hair removal, skin rejuvenation, oxygen facials and teeth whitening. 281-778-2639. www.bodybriteusa.com

Bush Ban Martial Arts & Fitness will open this fall at 7746 Hwy. 6, Missouri City. The studio provides karate lessons for children and adults along with kickboxing and self-defense classes. 832-833-0030. www.bushiban.com

West Coast franchise chain El Pollo Loco is slated to open a Missouri City location at 4514 Hwy. 6. The eatery offers a selection of quick-service Mexican cuisine. This will be the brand’s first southwest Houston restaurant. wwwelpololoco.com

Freddy’s Frozen Custard & Steakburgers will open its first southwest Houston location at 5325 Pointe West Circle, Richmond, this December. The restaurant offers a selection of burgers, hot dogs and sandwiches. Various flavors of frozen custard and other desserts are also available. www.freddysusa.com

Mattress One will open another Sugar Land location at 13425 University Blvd., Ste. 350, this fall in the Exchange at Telfair strip center. The business sells mattresses, pillows and sleep accessories. www.mattress-one.com

Rudy’s Country Store and Bar-B-Q is slated to open its newest Houston location in November at 20500 Hwy. 59, Richmond. The location will include catering services alongside a breakfast menu and barbecue menu. Items on the menu include brisket, sausage, turkey, ribs, chicken and pork. Rudy’s merchandise, including its “sauce” and signature dry rubs, will be for sale inside its country store. Beer, soda, candy and ice cream will also be available. 877-609-3337. www.rudysbbq.com

Salons by JC is moving to the area with a new location slated to open in Missouri City at FM 1092 and Hwy. 6 in November. The location will be situated in the Colony Lakes Shopping Center and will offer services from hair stylists, nail technicians and massage therapists. www.salonsbyjc.com

Salons in the City is opening a location at 2531 Cartwright Road, Missouri City, this fall. The salon will offer hair styling, extensions, chemical treatment and coloring services. 832-955-6302

Smart Financial Credit Union plans to open a Missouri City location at 10330 Hwy. 6. The company offers personal and business banking services. www.smartcu.com

PARTYlicious celebrates its first anniversary in August at 5748 Hwy. 6, Missouri City. The business offers party supplies ranging from balloons to custom banners to cake decorations. 281-969-5230. www.facebook.com/partylicious6

Women’s clothing retailer Coldwater Creek Inc. announced in April that it is seeking Chapter 11 protection and will be liquidating inventory, according to a news release. The filing will result in the closure of all stores, including its location at 16535 Hwy. 59, Ste. 1015, Sugar Land, in July. www.coldwatercreek.com

Pollo Campero has closed its Missouri City location at 6324 Hwy. 6.

A new inpatient facility, Altus Hospice, opened at 11352 Sugar Park Lane, Sugar Land, in late July.

Family Eye Health Solutions opened in July at 5201 Hwy 6, Ste. 700, Missouri City.

Irfan Tejani (left) and Sajjad Dawood opened Which Wich at 2587 Town Center Blvd., Sugar Land.

News or questions about Sugar Land or Missouri City?
E-mail slmnews@impactnews.com.

Compiled by John Rigg and Connor Hyde
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DEVELOPMENT

TI site redevelopment calls for retail, light industrial and housing options

By John Rigg

When Texas Instruments announced it would be moving from its long-standing headquarters in Stafford to a new facility in Sugar Land in 2012, officials with the city of Stafford launched a discussion about a redevelopment plan for the complex along Hwy. 59.

“One of the most enticing subjects in and around Stafford is the ultimate redevelopment of the iconic 192-acre Texas Instruments tract,” Stafford Mayor Leonard Scarcella said.

Texas Instruments plans to continue creating microchips at the Stafford site into 2016 but has been selling off the land to Dallas-based Street Level Investments for more than two years.

“City officials will be endeavoring to work with [Street Level] to bring about a highly desirable development, which will materially influence the future of our city,” Scarcella said.

Preliminary plans for the mixed-use development—The Legacy of Stafford—have been released by Street Level Investments, which has been working with Stafford for more than a year.

“Our mission here is to create an overarching, long-lasting development for Stafford,” said Dan Watson, principal with Street Level Investments. “This [development] will be the gateway to Fort Bend County.”

Construction of The Legacy of Stafford could begin in late 2015 and will blend together housing, commercial and industrial services. The project will house light industrial developments on the east side, a retail corridor along Murphy Road and 60 acres of multifamily housing and mixed-use retail in the center. In addition, an outlet mall with more than 400,000 square feet of space is planned for the west portion of the development.

“The project] has the components to attract not only the retail growth but residential and cultural developments as well,” said Jeff Wiley, president of the Fort Bend Economic Development Council.

The project will also provide new green space. Watson said. The northern portion of the site will feature a town center with two hotels, office space, restaurants and “Stafford Green”—a public space where visitors can gather.

Texas Instruments is expected to remain in 30,000 square feet of the tract through the end of next year as the transition to Sugar Land progresses. The company has finished work on the 160,000-square-foot Sugar Land campus along University Boulevard at Hwy. 59, and the company has begun to relocate.

“The new Texas Instruments facility will house employees that work in a variety of areas in our embedded processing business,” said Whitney Jodry, media relations and corporate communications manager for TI. “[The company] chose this location for its research and development facility after a regional search based on proximity to employees’ homes and local amenities.”

The Sugar Land campus includes an outdoor courtyard, basketball and volleyball courts, a fitness center and walking path. The campus will initially employ 375 people and has the capacity to grow to 425 employees, Jodry said.

Known as the valve capital of the world, Stafford has about 35 acres of green space, several large companies and a population of about 18,000 residents. The city has had no property tax since 1995.
TOP 10 Summer Fun List

...and Why We Moved to Sienna Plantation!

1. Ride my bike to the softball fields to play with friends at Camp Sienna
2. Hit the Sienna Golf Club driving range with Grandpa and hit a ball further than him
3. Show my little sis the frog slide at Brushy Lake pool while mom has aerobics
4. Score a goal in my lacrosse team game and win!
5. Go under the bucket and get drenched at Club Sienna Water Park
6. Go fishing and catch a bigger fish than Dad
7. Go down the slide 10 times at the Sienna Springs Resort Pool!
8. Check on the family of turtles at Brushy Lake Creek Park
9. Go to a concert at the amphitheater
10. Build a princess tree house in the backyard—we have some big trees!

...and we all really love our new house!

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...and we all really love our new house!


siennaplantation.com
facebook.com/siennaplantation
Sienna Parkway at Hwy. 6 281-778-7777

from $200s-Millions
City policy reels in community partnerships

**SUGAR LAND** City Council approved a policy July 15 that allows community-based organizations to participate in capital improvement projects. The policy states that up to $200,000 from the city’s 4B Corporation budget can be awarded to organizations to help complete CIPs each year.

“It is a new policy to City Council, but the 4B Corporation has had a similar policy since 2008,” said Stephanie Russell, business retention manager with the city’s office of economic development. “What is new about the policy is that it increased the funding for the program and set a couple stipulations.”

When the policy was first implemented, funding was capped at $100,000. Several projects in recent years—such as the new lighting at Eldridge Park—required a large amount of the available money.

“We have seen a spike in the use of the program in the past two years,” Russell said. “As we have seen this increase, the 4B Corporation wanted to increase the impact on the community as well.”

The updated policy stipulates that each application is able to receive 50 percent of the required money or up to $75,000—whichever is less—from the Sugar Land 4B Corporation. Any award more than $50,000 requires approval from City Council, and the 4B Corporation can recommend funding more than $75,000 for a single project.

The policy has a Jan. 1 deadline for submissions and is open to community-based organizations, such as homeowners associations, nonprofits and clubs.

City officials land on winning memorial design

**MISSOURI CITY** After more than six months of community outreach, design submissions and reviews, a winner has been selected for the city of Missouri City’s proposed veterans memorial.

From a total of six submissions, city staff chose a design by Lloyd Lentz, principal with LMA Design Houston. The design features a five-point star with a fountain and eternal flame at the center surrounded by several arched columns.

“The future memorial will honor veterans from the past, present and future and create a permanent tribute to the patriotic and courageous men and women who served this nation,” Parks and Recreation Director Larry Foos said.

The city is considering three possible locations for the memorial project, which will be funded through public and private donations. Potential locations include Community Park at 1700 Glenn Lakes Lane, American Legion Park at 4015 Lexington Blvd. and City Hall at 1522 Texas Parkway.
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(next door to C&C Dental)
Fort Bend County Judge incumbent Robert Hebert is a former business owner and U.S. Navy veteran. Hebert began his career in local government in the 1980s when he worked under contract as the city manager of Rosenberg. He was hired to address the city’s budget concerns during an economic recession, and since 1983, Hebert has worked as a consultant to the private and public sectors.

Before taking office as County Judge in 2003, Hebert served on several boards, including Alief ISD, the Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council and as director and president for the Brazos River Authority.

How has your experience prepared you for this role?
I have always been involved in both the private-sector business side and the government side both as a businessman working with government entities and as a consultant to government entities. I understand what government is about. When working as a consultant to get things done, you help solve complex problems. You get to a point where you really enjoy that. As County Judge, you have to build consensus to get things done.

How should Fort Bend County manage its growth?
Our court and department heads have been very innovative in coming up with ways to mitigate the problem. We will be working with the [Texas] Legislature this upcoming session to undertake the studies necessary to understand the problem of maintaining our infrastructure. We probably need to tweak the legislation we have [because] it is unclear who our partners should be and who is responsible for what.

How are some pressing issues facing the county?
In 10 years, our population is going to double and we better be prepared to work with the different populations and different communities. I can do it well. The county is growing whether we direct it or not. The people are going to grow whether we direct it or not. I have to be able to move here, I recognize that going in. I have to be able to work with various groups and leaders. There are different needs and different approaches to solve these problems.
CALENDAR

August

08 **Summer concert**
The Missouri City Parks and Recreation Department’s new summer concert series wraps up with a musical performance by Mango Punch!, a Houston-based band. The five-person, award-winning band plays Latin-flavored music, 6:30–8:30 p.m. Free. 1522 Texas Parkway, Missouri City. 281-403-8637. www.missouricitytx.gov

15 **Style show**
Candidates for the 2014 Fort Bend County Fair Queen participate in the 25th annual “Stylin’ in the Bend” fashion show at Safari Texas Ranch. In addition to the annual “Stylin’ in the Bend” fashion show whose families are living below the poverty line. Participating children receive a voucher for an opportunity to select a pair of shoes at a participating Payless Shoe Source store the day of the event. Visit www.payless.com for store hours. 281-238-3506. www.fortbendcountytx.gov

17 **“Walk with Pride”**
The Fort Bend County Department of Social Services hosts its annual shoe donation program to benefit local students whose families are living below the poverty line. Participating children receive a voucher for an opportunity to select a pair of shoes at a participating Payless Shoe Source store the day of the event. Visit www.payless.com for store hours. 281-238-3506. www.fortbendcountytx.gov

23 **NOLA Nights**
The Platinum Players—a zydeco, classic rock and R&B band—brings its Louisiana roots to Sugar Land Town Square. As part of the live music event, the Rouxpour restaurant sells small plates and Abita beer. The concert series is sponsored by Direct Energy. 7:30–9:30 p.m. Free. 2711 Town Center Blvd, 281-276-6000. www.sugarlandtownsquare.com

September

05 **Casino night fundraiser**
Blessed Be Hope for Three—a local nonprofit that supports individuals living with autism and their families—puts on its inaugural casino night at Sweetwater Country Club. The fundraiser features food, drink and dancing along with a Texas Hold ‘Em tournament. Participants can enter for a chance to win raffle prizes and door prizes. Benefits from the event support the organization’s mission. 6:30 p.m. (VIP party), 7 p.m. (player registration), $50 (non-player), $100 (player). 4400 Palm Royal Blvd., Sugar Land. 800-317-0787. www.hopefortthree.org/casino-night

09 **Aretha Franklin in concert**
Singer–songwriter Aretha Franklin—known as the “Queen of Soul” in the 1960s—comes to Houston’s Arena Theater for a live performance. The Arena features a stage-in-the-round experience and offer live events throughout the year. 8:30 p.m. $69.50–$119.50. 7326 Hwy. 59, Houston. 713-772-5900. www.arenahouston.com
Virtual courses help players beat the heat

By John Rigg

When John and Amy Parker opened REDeGOLF in Sugar Land in late 2012, the business brought more than 80 world-class golf courses to the community. Whether a renowned stateside course or a course in Japan, Costa Rica or Norway, patrons can play golf around the world all in the comfort of an indoor, virtual setting.

“John has always been a huge golfer,” said Troy Proffit, general manager of REDeGOLF. “Not being able to regularly play golf in Houston during the summer weather, they wanted to let people play golf in Houston during the summer.

At REDeGOLF, a player can shoot a full 18-hole course in an hour or so as opposed to the four to five hours it can normally take, Proffit said.

“The Parkers] just want more people to play golf and enjoy themselves,” he said. “They want players to be able to improve more in less time.”

REDeGOLF features technology that monitors a player’s performance and works as a teaching tool. As the player takes his or her swing, electronic feedback is given in real time. The system tells each golfer his or her swing speed and path as well as ball speed and spin. One of the location’s four golfing bays uses a slow-motion camera and software to offer direct playback after each swing.

“When you take a swing, you get instant feedback so you can monitor your swing speed, ball speed and balance, and use that feedback to improve your game,” Proffit said. “It is like having a private lesson but not having to find a coach with a slow-motion camera.”

Rates for golfing vary based on time of day. Each hour of golfing costs $30 before 4 p.m. and $40 after 4 p.m.

In addition to golf, the Par Tee room offers other virtual sports as well. Customers can test their skills against a goalie in soccer, throw a touchdown pass in football or even play a game of zombie dodgeball. Other sports include baseball, basketball, hockey and cricket.

In addition to dozens of courses, REDeGOLF features a full-service bar with a number of locally brewed craft beers, along with a full list of cocktails.

REDeGOLF in Sugar Land is the first location and is a beta store model, Proffit said, but more than a dozen interested parties from around the country have contacted the indoor golf club concept in recent months to learn more about franchise opportunities.

From the clubhouse

REDeGOLF’s head chef Pablo Hernandez has been working to expand the location’s menu and is adding more traditional clubhouse food this summer. Despite operating a smaller kitchen, much of the menu is created from scratch, and a wide range of fare is available, Hernandez said.

Chef recommendations
• Monterey chicken—Grilled chicken breast topped with Monterey Jack cheese, sauteed bell peppers and onions served with a mixed-green salad ($8).
• Nacho Burger—Topped with jalapeños, tortilla chips and nacho cheese ($11).

Par for course

Golf is a game of finesse, and even the most experienced golfers need to take time to improve their game, said Troy Proffit, general manager of REDeGOLF.

The location’s indoor golfing bays provide immediate feedback to players after each swing. Cameras, sensors and software shows each golfer his or her speed, direction, balance and swing performance.

Room for a Par Tee

In addition to its four golfing bays where visitors can play on courses from around the world virtually, REDeGOLF offers its Par Tee Room for private functions and large parties. In addition to playing golf, visitors can play other sports simulators, such as soccer, football, baseball, basketball, hockey, dodgeball and cricket in the private room. The room also houses a regulation shuffleboard and additional seating.

More than a game

This summer, REDeGOLF entered into a partnership with Wood & Olson Golf Performance Academy, a Richmond-based business that offers private lessons taught by PGA-certified instructors.

Classes are open to students of all ages. Those enrolled with the academy are able to take lessons at REDeGOLF and play for free at the location.
Old Hickory Inn
Barbecue joint incorporates Grecian roots

By Connor Hyde

Dripping slabs of pork loin and smoked brisket are the order of the day at Old Hickory Inn Bar-B-Que where customers are welcomed by employees on a first-name basis. The traditional, friendly atmosphere of Thomas Karnezis’s restaurant is what has kept Old Hickory Inn in Missouri City booming for the past three decades.

Serving East Texas barbecue with a Greek twist, Thomas incorporated his culinary training from college to establish a local barbecue destination in Missouri City about 30 years ago. Leaving a hint of Greek oregano sprinkled on pork, steak and the in-house dressings, Thomas tinkered with traditional barbecue recipes to bring a distinctive depth to the menu. About 10 years ago, the gyro was introduced to the restaurant’s traditional barbecue menu as a nod to the Karnezis’ Greek roots.

“[Thomas] definitely perfected barbecue when he got a hold of it,” said Ted Karnezis, Thomas’s son. “He is my dad, my business partner and my friend, so it really works out.”

With three locations in Houston, and Ted running day-to-day operations, Old Hickory Inn continues to grow while maintaining its original menu.

“[Missouri City] is home. Plus, I know almost everybody around here,” Ted said. “There is a good community feel. The businesses that have been here a while know we have to work together.”

Ted joined his father in the kitchen after graduating from Texas Tech University in 2001. Although he had a chance after graduating from Texas Tech University in 2001. Although he had a chance to pursue corporate opportunities, Ted opted to join the family business.

In Texas, barbecue has evolved into a popular and competitive subculture with each region of the state sporting a different style. In East Texas, barbecue is predominately chopped—not sliced—pork or beef drizzled with sauce. Old Hickory Inn Bar-B-Que’s menu features a diverse selection of cuts, including beef, ham, riblets, baby back ribs and poultry.

The restaurant’s barbecue plates ($11.25–$12.50) feature a choice of freshly sliced meat and sides. More distinctive items include fried catfish ($9.25) and the massive stuffed baked potatoes ($5.25–$9.25).

“Out of all our menu items, our brisket is the most popular, but we probably sell the most baked potatoes,” Ted said.

Old Hickory Inn’s brisket is cooked for 14 hours and absorbs its flavor from hickory wood in what Ted calls a “slow and low” method. In early July, Ted’s “slow and low” brisket sold more than 3,500 pounds of meat in one week. He also makes the barbecue sauce and ranch dressing in-house.

After pairing up with well-known local chef Frederic Perrier, Old Hickory Inn created a new concoction—its sweet jalapeño barbecue sauce.

Old Hickory Inn also offers a private party room for events, catering services and delivery. At the moment, Ted is focusing on renovating the restaurant’s locations in Meyerland and Mission Bend after wrapping up a renovation project at the Missouri City location a few years ago. Once renovations are complete, the Karnezis family is looking to expand with additional locations and restaurant concepts, he said.

Thomas has retained a pivotal role in the family’s other restaurant concept, Alexander the Great, which he opened nearly 10 years ago near the Houston Galleria.

Despite the fact that Thomas stays busy at Alexander the Great, Ted has framed a picture of his father inside Old Hickory Inn in honor of his father’s culinary roots forged in front of the smoking pits.
The George Foundation
Organization has early roots in the settlement of Texas

By Kelli Ainsworth

Since its creation in 1945, The George Foundation has given more than $160 million to hundreds of Fort Bend County nonprofit organizations and students.

“We support a broad spectrum of areas in need,” The George Foundation CEO Roger Adamson said. “We’re less focused on a specific area and more focused on where we can make an impact. The first and most important filter in our grant-making is making an impact upon the Fort Bend community.”

The foundation is the legacy of Mary Elizabeth and Albert P. George. Although they established the foundation in the mid-20th century, its roots date back to the 19th century before Texas became a state.

Mary Elizabeth’s great-grandparents, Henry and Nancy Jones, came to Texas as a part of Stephen F. Austin’s “old 300.” As settlers in Austin’s first colony, the Joneses obtained a league of land near the Brazos River, which lies in present-day Fort Bend County. Their children and grandchildren worked to increase the family’s land and wealth, eventually owning 67,000 acres. This was, at the time, about 12 percent of the land in Fort Bend County, Adamson said.

The Joneses’ great-grand daughter, Mary Elizabeth—better known as Mamie—married Albert George in 1896, and the couple inherited the family’s holdings. Their fortune increased when oil was discovered on their land. However, the Georges had no heirs. Their only child, Davis, died of cholera as an infant, and niece Mary Jones also died young. In 1945, the couple decided to use their wealth to benefit the people of Fort Bend County by forming The George Foundation.

“[The Georges] had some tragedy in their lives, but establishing the foundation was a way they could truly benefit the community,” Adamson said. “It’s truly a remarkable feat, as the county’s changed and the world has changed, but their foresight has truly had a big impact on the county.”

The organization typically awards grants to local nonprofits. There are currently 124 active grantees, Adamson said, which include University of Houston, Catholic Charities, Boy and Girl Scouts and the Fort Bend Museum Association.

The George Foundation also provides an estimated $1.8 million in need-based scholarships to Fort Bend County students each year. These scholarships are awarded to both four-year university and trade school students enrolled in areas of nursing, social work and other service-based programs.

The George Foundation Organization has early roots in the settlement of Texas
Brazos River Projects

Last November, Sugar Land residents voted on three propositions as part of the city’s $50 million parks bond package. Voters approved propositions 2 and 3, which include the development of a 33-acre festival site along the river, the further development of the Brazos River corridor and about 10 miles of hike and bike trails throughout the city.

“The [proposals] that did pass I believe were seen as having a community-wide impact,” said Allen Bogard, city manager of Sugar Land. “We have agreed upon a conceptual plan that will be presented to City Council in their five-year capital improvement plan.”

City Council will review and approve the Capital Improvement Plan in late August or early September, and all of the projects outlined in the bond package are expected to begin construction in the next five years and will be completed within seven years, Bogard said.

Proposition 2 outlines Phase 2 of the Brazos River Park project, which includes more than 85 acres of additional green space. Proposed amenities include multipurpose trails, a boat house, picnic areas and athletic facilities. The proposition also includes the construction of a 33-acre permanent festival site and more than 85 acres of new park space. The $21.3 million project will feature multiple access points, a plaza overlooking the river and about 700 parking spaces.

Missouri City projects

Projects in Missouri City associated with the Brazos River are expected to build on existing and incoming developments.

Camp Sienna is a 160-acre outdoor sports complex and nature park in southeastern Fort Bend County that features nearly two miles of trails and athletic fields. The local park improvement district—which has worked to build the park—has plans to improve the park’s existing canoe and kayak launch point.

“The Brazos River is interesting because every launch is going to be different based on the access to it,” Cox said. “Camp Sienna is a floodplain. Because of the constant rise and fall, it is difficult to build suitable launch points. We are looking to create safe access while not spending money on something that could be washed away.”

A few miles north of Camp Sienna, an undeveloped piece of property owned by a private developer is used for sand production. The Brazos River Park master plan outlines a project that would turn the site into a public park called Missouri City Woods. A timeline for the project has not been set, but it

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• A student preparticipation physical is the best way to start your student’s season off safely. Join us on Saturday, August 9 from 9 a.m.–12 p.m. at Wheeler Field House for Student Physicals & Health Expo. For more information, visit houstonmethodist.org/student-physicals-sugar-land.

• Baseline concussion testing enables more individualized treatment of a student athlete in case of concussion. To schedule an appointment, contact Houston Methodist Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine at 281.690.4678.
is expected that a plan will be drafted over the next 10 years.

“It is a great location between Sienna Plantation and Riverstone,” Cox said. “With the size of it, it would be a great regional park.”

As Sienna South begins to develop, plans to create park space along the Brazos River are beginning to take shape as well. Since there is no infrastructure in the area, a plan for implementation is expected to take two to five years, according to the master plan.

“I would anticipate as soon as infrastructure is there, the levee district will want to start moving on this project,” Cox said. “As soon as it is accessible, they will jump on that development.”

**Corridor concerns**

The Brazos River Park master plan has taken into account several concerns associated with developing the floodway corridor, Icenhower said. When drafting the plan, Fort Bend Green implemented a steering committee to gather feedback from community stakeholders from October 2012–January 2013.

“We want to evaluate to see if we want to designate this as a national paddle trail,” Cox said. “We want this to be a community-wide project.”

The committee’s feedback included recommendations to use the corridor as a paddling river and not a swimming or tubing destination. In addition, stakeholders discussed potential traffic congestion, river safety and negative effects on wildlife and plant habitats. More than 750 residents responded to a citizen survey that asked what the priorities should be for developing the Brazos River corridor. Of the total respondents, the projects that moved to the top of the list included trails along the river, canoe and kayak launch points and additional restrooms. Leisure activities that received the most support included hiking and biking, wildlife education, and paddling the river. Respondents ranked cleanup of the river and riverbanks as the most important action for the corridor.

**Development timeline**

The proposed projects outlined by Fort Bend Green’s master plan are intended to be the first steps toward the development of the Brazos River corridor, Icenhower said. “Fort Bend Green will use all of this information in the months and years to come to work with all of our partners in government and the community to further our collective vision to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the Brazos River,” she said.

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**SAFETY ON THE BRAZOS**

The Brazos River may be a slow-moving river but it is a local floodplain, which can cause fast flooding events and strong undercurrents. Large debris, such as tree branches and vehicle parts, can be submerged.

The river should not be used for swimming or tubing, and visitors should use caution when paddling the corridor, said Kim Icenhower with Fort Bend Green.

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**IMPROVED ACCESS:** New and improved canoe and kayak launch points are expected to increase both participation and safety along the Brazos River.

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**IT CAN TAKE UP TO 2 DAYS TO PADDLE THE Brazos FROM ROSENBURG TO BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK**

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**BRAZOS RIVER MASTER PLAN**

**TRANSFORMING A CORRIDOR**

New trails and parks, a permanent festival site and improved access to the Brazos River is expected to turn the corridor into an outdoor attraction for Fort Bend County residents and visitors.

**Sources:** Fort Bend Green, city of Sugar Land, Sienna Plantation

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**Take the poll online at impactnews.com/slm-poll**

Which projects would you like to see developed along the Brazos River?
Public Safety

Continued from | 1

the needs of the Sugar Land [public safety departments] today and 10–15 years down the road.” Sugar Land officials are also gearing up for the city’s new emergency medical services transport system—a service typically provided by the county—which will begin Jan. 1.

Missouri City

In the last bond election, voters said yes to Proposition 3, which proposed $5 million for the city’s sixth fire station along Lake Olympia Parkway.

“The new station will reduce instances where fire trucks respond to calls outside of their district and will provide the city with an additional fire truck that will also serve as a ‘back up’ to the north part of Missouri City,” said Russell Sander, Missouri City’s fire and rescue services chief.

The location was recommended in a 2008 study, which also listed two others: one along Oilfield Road and one at Waters Lake Boulevard in Sienna Plantation.

“About 1 emergency responder for every 420 people.

*Population figures based on 2012–13 census data.
REAL ESTATE

Hunters Glen — situated near the Beltway 8 and Fort Bend Parkway Toll Road interchange in Missouri City — is home to an estimated 4,000 residents.

Hunters Glen Park sits at the middle of the subdivision and offers a variety of activities. Park features include hike and bike trails, a basketball court, football and soccer fields, a playground and a sprayground to help keep children and their families cool during the summer months.

Hunters Glen

730 Beechbend Drive  $110,000
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath  1,948 sq. ft.
Agent: Regina Hutchinson, Champions Real Estate Group 713-785-6666

1231 Whispering Pine Drive  $99,000
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath  1,854 sq. ft.
Agent: Samantha Maret, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Anderson Properties 713-668-8000

1718 Willow Mill Drive  $87,500
4 Bedroom / 2 Bath
Agent: Margaret Hall, Realm Real Estate Professionals – Sugar Land 281-690-5900

1006 Glenford Drive  $95,000
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath  1,948 sq. ft.
Agent: Janet Williams, Realm Real Estate Professionals – Sugar Land 281-690-5900

FEATURED NEIGHBORHOOD

Hunters Glen

Build-out year: 2007
Square footage: 1,351–2,788
Home values: $60,000–$150,000
HOA dues (estimated): $250 annually

Amenities: Basketball court, football fields, joggin trail, pavilions, playground, soccer fields, and sprayground

Schools: Hunters Glen Elementary, Missouri City Middle School, Marshall High School

Recent listings

730 Beechbend Drive  $110,000
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath  1,948 sq. ft.
Agent: Regina Hutchinson, Champions Real Estate Group 713-785-6666

1231 Whispering Pine Drive  $99,000
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1006 Glenford Drive  $95,000
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath  1,948 sq. ft.
Agent: Janet Williams, Realm Real Estate Professionals – Sugar Land 281-690-5900

Market Data

On the market (July 2014)

<table>
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<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Number of homes for sale</th>
<th>Average days on the market</th>
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Monthly home sales

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<th>Average price</th>
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<td>19/267,726</td>
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<td>73/285,933</td>
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<td>December 2013</td>
<td>88/323,979</td>
<td>33/291,504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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