A look back
THE PROJECTS THAT SHAPED AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

Downtown real estate development has changed over the past few decades, thanks in large part to an emphasis on placemaking. The dozens of projects that kicked off or wrapped up in 2018 are a testament to that evolution.

BY SANDRA COOK

WHO NEEDS SNOW?

While a heavy frosting of the white stuff isn’t in anyone’s forecast, Downtown Houston always does a pretty awesome job of making the season bright. We wrap up the best of it—from the toastiest mug of rich hot chocolate to a jumbo-sized ball of mistletoe just made for Instagram. You’ll find what you need to beat away the doldrums of winter.

BY LAUREN MCDOWELL, LAUREN PATTERSON, AND AMBER AMBROSE
And a Happy New Year!

We love this time of year. Downtown is dressed in its holiday finery. Neighbors and colleagues greet each other warmly. And the calendar is bursting at the seams with activities. So we wanted to take a moment to say thank you. Thank you for all you do as a member of our Downtown family. Every time you grab lunch or coffee at your corner bistro, meet friends for a quick drink after work, bring family members (both the two-legged and four-legged variety!) to Discovery Green or Market Square Park, you weave yourself into the fabric of our evolved city center.

With that in mind, we thought we’d make being part of Downtown even more fun by gathering up some of the things that make winter so special. We’ve got our favorite treats, classic shows, festivals and more all starting on page 19.

We also wanted to take a look at just how much our commercial real estate landscape has changed and what’s on the horizon for the business community. As writer Sandra Cook notes, “today’s office market demands a rich and appealing environment, not just a shiny corporate fortress.” Downtown responded with plenty of projects that appeal to a diverse and dynamic cross section of Houstonians. Read our roundup starting on page 10.

If you’d like to visit some of Downtown’s newest culinary hotspots, now is the time. Plate, our rundown of restaurants, starts on page 33 and includes a wrap-up of Lucienne, the fabulous and inventive new standout at Hotel Alessandra. As always, you’ll find our extensive calendar of events and activities in datebook on page 43.

Of course, be sure to visit us online at downtownhouston.org, where we always keep you up to date on the latest when it comes to our city’s center. And let us know what you think about downtown. We’re more than happy to take your comments and suggestions.

Bob Eury
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

Angie Bertinot
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING
DOWNTOWN DISTRICT
backstage.
A Story of Coming Home

When Hurricane Harvey pummeled Houston more than a year ago, it took out countless homes, roads, and businesses. It also devastated one of Houston’s greatest cultural gems: the Downtown Theater District. Though all five performing arts venues were flooded, one building had noticeably more damage than all the others, remaining closed for over a year.

The Wortham Theater Center is home to the Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ballet, Da Camera, Society for the Performing Arts, and many other smaller performing arts companies. Like many Houstonians, they were uprooted by Harvey and faced with challenges they never expected. But in the spirit that reflects the city they represent, all the arts groups persevered and rebuilt. Building repairs cost approximately $100 million, and the loss of revenue from the unprecedented season will impact the performing arts companies for years to come. By some estimates, it will be another three years until the groups are fully recovered.

But after 229 canceled or rescheduled performances, 12 feet of water, and $100 million in renovations, the Wortham Theater Center is finally back in action. Members of Houston Grand Opera, one of the venue’s resident performing art organizations, reflect on the unusual and unprecedented year away from home.

“ALL YEAR IT WAS A DAY-TO-DAY PROCESS OF FIGURING OUT AS WE WENT AND SOLVING EACH PROBLEM AS WE HIT IT,”

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

With their home theater out of commission, Houston Grand Opera scrambled to find a suitable replacement venue for their 2017–2018 season. Because of scheduling conflicts, as well as the specific needs of a full-scale opera production, no other space was able to accommodate the company. They decided to construct Resilience Theater inside the George R. Brown Convention Center as a temporary structure that would enable them to continue their season until the Wortham reopened—something they hoped wouldn’t take longer than a few months. The fluorescent lights, 20-foot ceilings, and stadium seats didn’t quite create the theatrical ambiance most opera goers are used to. However, Houston Grand Opera felt confident that they could make do in the new space until Christmas.

But as the Wortham’s reopening date kept getting pushed further back, the company recognized they may be away from their home longer than originally anticipated. “All year it was a day-to-day process of figuring out as we went and solving each problem as we hit it,” says Molly Dill, producing director for Houston Grand Opera. “When we realized we weren’t going to be in the Wortham, we had to start thinking through the impacts on rehearsals and performances.” Opera companies normally plan their performances and book artists years
in advance. They have every detail—from rehearsals to production logistics—mapped out months before the season even begins.

The Resilience Theater met the opera’s location and spacing needs, though the company would come to learn more about the specific obstacles of performing in a convention center: the automatic timers on the lights, escalators that would quit running on some mysterious schedule, and height limitations for much of the scenery. Not to mention, the Opera suddenly didn’t have access to all of the basic amenities that come with a theater venue. It meant thinking through every detail of every step for rudimentary needs they had previously taken for granted.

In addition to adjusting to the makeshift space, the company ran into another problem: they had no idea if they’d be able to stay in the George R. Brown after winter. Houston First, the company that owns both the Wortham and George R. Brown, had conferences booked in the exact space where Houston Grand Opera constructed their temporary theater. In the end, it all worked out.

“Houston First did heroic work to rearrange their schedule and all the conferences,” explains Dill.

Every day last year, the members of Houston Grand Opera’s team proved their grit, handling unforeseen challenges that came with performing in an innovative, but challenging space. “I don’t think any of us can say we ever worked as hard as we did last year to make it all happen,” recalls Dill. The enormous feat, to pull off everything they managed to do left the team exhausted, but exhilarated. Dill recounts the spirit of camaraderie the group shares now that they are on the other side of the ordeal. “We felt really proud, like we overcame this hurdle together and made it to the other side.”

**The resilience is part of who we are as Houstonians. “We knew we would get back, because that’s just who we are. We believe in one another,”—Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner**

**BACK IN ACTION**

Though the Wortham remained closed for an entire performing arts season, construction crews worked around the clock to ensure the looming deadline for 2018–2019 fall performances would be met. With much fanfare and excitement, Houston First officially reopened the Wortham on Sept. 25, welcoming back stage crews, ushers, singers, dancers, and all those who call the Wortham home.

“I don’t think anyone will ever know the miracles the stage crew, the design team and the construction team pulled off in a short amount of time,” says Sheila Turkiewicz, chief operating officer of Houston First’s Theater District operations.

With the amount of flooding and damage done to the massive building, many in Houston speculated if the fall reopening date was even feasible. But Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner and other city officials were instrumental in the recovery process. “Not getting back for this season was just not an option,” Turner said at the Wortham’s grand reopening event. He equated the struggle to get back into the theater with the challenges many across the city face in rebuilding their homes. The resilience is part of who we are as Houstonians. “We knew we would get back, because that’s just who we are. We believe in one another,” Turner reflected.
On Oct. 24 Houston Ballet became one of the first ballet companies to perform on the Dubai Opera stage, staging six performances of Artistic Director Stanton Welch’s Swan Lake. Touring a production of this scale is a landmark achievement that presented many unique challenges. Associate Production Manager Mary Elsey explains how exactly her team was able to move a full production, and full ballet company, across the world for the historic tour.

Honey, We’re Home

For Houston Grand Opera, the building is truly a home. Like others who were dislocated during Harvey, finally returning after so much time away was an emotional experience. “It’s the idea of the Wortham that’s special to me. It’s something that HGO took part in building. It’s just our home,” Dill explains.

“Our technical load-in began on Sept. 22, and it felt wonderful to be back in the theater. There was a combination of relief and joy from our crew and staff as we got to know our space again. When we added the orchestra for our first rehearsal on the Brown stage in over a year, I think there was another wave of relief and excitement on the part of the musicians to be back. The performance went extremely well, and it was an amazing feeling to have a packed house to welcome us back—there was definitely a shared sense—from front of house to behind the scenes—of being home again.”

Although the stages are officially back in operation, it will be some time before the basement and rehearsal rooms are ready. “We are just kind of thinking though the very basic day-to-day needs so that we make sure to prepare ourselves. You get used to having to think on your feet.”

Artists of Houston Ballet as Cygnets in Stanton Welch’s Swan Lake. Photo by Amitava Sarkar

All the World’s A Stage

Houston Ballet enchants audience on historic tour to Dubai, United Arab Emirates

BY RYANN ROUSSEL

On Oct. 24 Houston Ballet became one of the first ballet companies to perform on the Dubai Opera stage, staging six performances of Artistic Director Stanton Welch’s Swan Lake. Touring a production of this scale is a landmark achievement that presented many unique challenges. Associate Production Manager Mary Elsey explains how exactly her team was able to move a full production, and full ballet company, across the world for the historic tour.
What was your initial reaction when you learned the company would be touring to Dubai?

I was super excited and ready to face the challenge that comes with bringing a full production to another country. I’ve never been to Dubai though I’ve done a lot of traveling personally. Bringing theater to Dubai and performing for those audiences is a really special treat. It’s a very international city with an eclectic audience. We were very excited to bring a few Houstonians with us too—members of our Houston Ballet family and some of our prominent donors.

Logistically, what is required in bringing an entire production to a new country?

We do a lot of prep work. We had the ground plans for the venue and worked on fitting Swan Lake into Dubai Opera house for almost a year. We packed up four whole shipping containers and sent them on a boat to Dubai weeks before the performance. There was a very long process of double checking all of our lists and packing everything we needed to take. We brought everything from the costumes, wigs, and our own Marley floor, so if we forgot something it’s not like we could just throw it in our suitcase! We also took the entire set and some lights. We even had to take our office supplies too—things like printers and the signs we put up to tell the dancers where stage left is, or their dressing rooms.

Tell us a little bit about the Dubai Opera, where you’re performing.

It is right in the center of Dubai in front of the Burj Khalifa and surrounded by beautiful fountains, kind of like the Bellagio in Las Vegas. It’s a really vibrant part of town. The facility is brand new and state of the art. It has all of the latest forms of technology. For example, the rail system that allows scenery to fly in and out is fully automated. Instead of stage hands pulling ropes to move sets manually, they use a system run by a computer. We actually had to create new forms of paperwork to send over ahead of time so they could program those cues into the computer before we even get there.

Having just done Swan Lake at Jones Hall, what is it like trying to move the same production into a different venue? Does it all fit?

We actually got a lot of experience with that this last year, dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. And we just took Swan Lake to Minneapolis on a tour so we’re getting pretty good at configuring the scenery in different ways to make it fit. We have certain parameters dictated by the choreography about how much space they need. We start there and adjust the scenery to fit into the space. It’s interesting to see the same show at different venues. The whole ambiance of the theater and spacing of the scenery can change the perspective of the show. It’s like a living, breathing picture that we get to play with. It’s sort of fascinating.

Is this the farthest the company has ever traveled for a tour? Has that presented any interesting challenges?

Part of our mission is to bring exceptional ballet to the world stage, so Houston Ballet does a lot of touring, both domestic and internationally. This one definitely felt pretty far. We had to be very particular because Dubai customs has a whole set of strict regulations around certain chemicals they allow through their borders. So we had to go through all of our makeup and cleaning materials to make sure they’d clear customs. Then we put together a whole list and sent that with the shipping container so they could check the items.

Does the entire production department travel when the company is on tour?

We took most of the production department, our technical director, the lighting designer, two stage managers and myself. We also brought five local crew guys who helped lead the crew in Dubai.

Did you do any sightseeing?

We had one day off between when we landed and when we started load-in. A couple of us planned to go on a camel safari through a tour company. We got to ride ATVs and camels around the desert. Then there was dinner and belly dancing! We didn’t have much time to travel around so time was of the essence. We decided to embrace the ‘touristy’ attractions and just go for it!
There’s one thing for certain—Houston is like nowhere else. It’s got that energy, that intangible something—something you have to experience to understand. And at its center lies our city’s heart.

MEET DOWNTOWN. It’s where all the things that make Houston, well, Houston come together in a vibrant fusion of people, culture and movement. Neighborhood identity isn’t something imposed. It’s a reflection of each of us, our style and our stories that splash and collide to build something bigger. Downtown is us and what we make it. Downtown is you and the things you love.

The sports fans. The METRO riders. The nine-to-fivers and apartment dwellers. The parents chasing after kids sticky with melted popsicle on Discovery Green. The Saturday night bar crawlers. The things we care about and the things we do are creating a unique picture of Downtown, one you can see through the new, wildly colorful illustrations and quotes all over the Downtown area.
Meet Downtown(e)rs

From natives to new residents, we talked to a few Houstonians to hear what it’s really like to live, work and hang out in Downtown.

→ To read the full interviews, visit our website at downtownhouston.org/news.

Sallie Sargent
Company President
@sallie.sargent
Houston is the fourth-largest city in the United States, so you feel right in the middle of everything going on in the business industry. I’ve been working in Downtown for five years and usually walk to work. Initially [I moved] for proximity, and then I realized how cool it was Downtown. And what’s been incredible is watching Downtown grow up around me.

The best thing about Downtown is the fact that you don’t need to have a car. I think that’s freeing. I can easily walk to the Convention Center or to Discovery Green and enjoy 12 acres of beautiful landscapes and art installations.

K. Cody Patel
Healthcare Technology Entrepreneur
@TheKCodyPatel
We decided to move Downtown because we love high-rises. Typical raised-in-Houston mentality, we wanted to find a place that represented a crossroads of differences. Economic differences, social differences, cultural differences. It gave us the ability to be in the epicenter of all the things that are happening. Every single weekend you go, you’ll find something. A street fair, market, an art gallery, a concert. Just being around that—especially for my 5-year-old—her ability to understand the diversity of life through this living experience is important.

It’s always vibrant. It’s always being built. It’s no longer anyone’s city—it’s everyone’s city. So many people here are from somewhere else—outside the city, or outside the country, but they’re here making it. We’ve built this city. We’re building it together.

Martin Rodriguez
Architectural Designer
@playam0de
Working Downtown makes me feel like I’ve made it. I’ve come a long way in my education and my career, and I’ve worked hard to get where I am. I feel successful and proud to say I work in Downtown.

When I lived in the Heights, I actually took the Red Line into Downtown, which was great. One of the best views of Downtown is taking the train south into the city.

I love seeing the bright lights of tall skyscrapers full of hardworking Houstonians crunching in the late-night hours. As a teenager, I had always wanted to work Downtown and be involved with this great city. Now I am one of those voices.

Christina Andrick
Field Director
@christuna
There are so many hidden gems [in Downtown Houston]. Some of the coolest bars I’ve been to are in Downtown. Plus, we have access to world-class theater and so many great places to have a picnic, right in the middle of the city. There’s really a mix of everything.

“Welcome 2 Houston” by Slim Thug is meant to be listened to when you’re cruising Downtown.

There’s always something exciting happening. From music to art to festivals, I feel like I can turn a corner and find a party happening somewhere.

We need your voice, too.

Tweet or post using #DowntownHouston to be part of the big, crazy love we’re showing for our one and only: Downtown. Those sweet things you say might even end up on a billboard or bar coaster.

So tell us—
Why did you first fall in love with Downtown?
When you describe Downtown to an out-of-towner, what do you say?
What’s your ideal day (or night!) in Downtown?
A YEAR IN REVIEW

An ever-evolving mix of culture and innovation enliven Downtown’s once-gray grid.

BY SANDRA COOK
You might call it “quality of lifestyle.” Downtown’s transition from a purely commercial real estate-driven skyscraper chessboard into a multi-hued mosaic of urban life is undeniable. Restaurants, retail, public art, green space, and appealing street-level architecture continue to draw residents, business and foot traffic to Downtown’s densifying blocks.

“This is a trend that’s transforming cities large and small across the entire country,” says Sanford Criner, vice chairman at CBRE. “For some perspective, back in 2000 there were only 1,800 hotel rooms Downtown,” says Criner. “Today there are more than 8,000.” Downtown has also seen the number of residents grow from approximately 2,500 in 2000 to 8,700 in 2018.

While large commercial buildings still occupy the majority of Downtown’s more than 250 blocks, today’s office market demands a rich and appealing environment, not just a shiny corporate fortress. “The office market now requires residential, retail and entertainment, such as civic spaces, to be onsite or in the immediate proximity,” says Criner.

Criner explains that office projects in the 1970s and ’80s, such as the Humble Building (later Exxon) and Shell buildings, started a “one block, one building” development trend that lasted for decades. “That resulted in a lot of very handsome buildings, but they were not built to attract people,” says Criner. “In fact, they were built strictly to house office tenants and, frankly, to keep the public out.”

“While the one block, one building concept persists, the make-up of the first floor of buildings, both commercial and residential, has evolved to be more transparent and inviting,” says Criner. He cites 609 Main, Skanska’s Capitol Tower, and Hines’ 47-story building planned for the former Houston Chronicle site as prime examples.

“The new standard is to have wonderful, inviting ground-floor spaces,” says Criner. “It’s all about people.”

He explains that trends are changing from the model of one person, one car, going into the garage, going up the elevator to the office, who doesn’t do anything else outside the office except go down to the tunnel for a quick bite. “People are expecting a much richer life, venturing out during the day and staying after work to enjoy the greater variety of experiences Downtown,” says Criner.

During 2018, Downtown saw construction begin on one major class A building and the announcement of another. “These are two very large, extremely high-quality, very expensive buildings,” says Criner. “Seeing these new projects at a time when class A space Downtown is at 80 percent occupancy, and thus 20 percent availability, is remarkable. I’ll tell you that in the past 35 years, since the mid ’80s, that would never happen. In the past the real estate drivers would focus on office vacancies. But today, there are companies that have realized it’s their people that are important, and that the real estate needs to support their people. It needs to attract better people and help them retain better people. That’s where the real value is.”

Criner suggests that if Downtown had the exact same economic environment, but without all the residential, retail, entertainment and restaurant development that has happened in recent years, then those recent class A projects would not have been built and new ones would not be in the works, because there would be no potential tenants willing to lease those spaces.

“The interesting part is that today it’s the non-office development that is in a sense underwriting the success of the new buildings office market,” says Criner. “Office buildings aren’t causing residential, retail and entertainment to move into an area, it’s the other way around.”

“With the ruins left by demolished buildings and other vacant spaces put back into service, we’ve restored much of the fabric of Downtown,” he says. “It’s no longer just a collection of office buildings. The focus on placemaking demands a streetscape that is consistent. You can’t separate a building from its environment—that applies to all types of development.”

Criner highlights projects such as the rebuilding of Bagby, and the revamping of Jones Plaza. “Those projects have nothing to do with office buildings, they have everything to do with quality of life.”

“People are expecting a much richer life, venturing out during the day and staying after work to enjoy the greater variety of experiences Downtown.”
HOUSTON’S FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH DOWNTOWN
With a presence Downtown since 2012, the megachurch unveiled the completed new facility at 1730 Jefferson in May 2018. The church purchased and redeveloped the former Communications Workers of America/Local 6222 Union building into a three-story, multi-purpose campus.

MAIN & CO.
The Zimmerman family, the group behind the historic Montrose hotel La Colombe d’Or, has completed a $5 million renovation of the historic Raphael and Dorrance buildings at 110 and 114 Main. The pair of buildings, rebranded as Main & Co, have been redesigned and restored to preserve much of the original interior character, while incorporating modern conveniences. The five-story mixed-use project now includes creative office space, a La Colombe d’Or Art Gallery, the new location of dance club Etro Lounge, and cocktail bars The Cottonmouth Club and Lily & Bloom.

KHOU SATELLITE STUDIO AT GRBCC
Opened in early October, KHOU's studio is situated on the ground floor of the George R. Brown Convention Center adjacent to Avenida Houston and Discovery Green. The studio’s vantage point, just across from Bud's Pitmaster BBQ, embraces the dynamic plaza and the scenic views of the Convention District. (KHOU expects to open their new studio headquarters in the Galleria area by early 2019.)

LANCASTER HOTEL RISES AGAIN
After flooding significantly during Hurricane Harvey, the historic hotel underwent a multimillion-dollar renovation and décor overhaul. The iconic hotel, at 701 Texas, reopened in October, complete with a stunning new vertical sign, walk-up espresso bar and plenty of elegant Regency style. The structure, originally built in 1926 as the Auditorium Hotel, has served as a hotel almost continuously for more than 90 years.

ALSO BACK AFTER HARVEY
Theater District icons The Alley Theatre and Wortham Theater Center both sustained substantial damage from hurricane flooding, but with the aid of many donations and countless hours logged by contractors, both venues have reopened. The Alley reopened in time for its 2017 run of Dickens’ A Christmas Carol, while the Wortham opened its doors in September. Buffalo Bayou Park made great strides to get up and running (yep, pun intended there) by the springtime, including removing 60 million pounds of sediment. Even independent businesses, such as La Fisheria (reopened in April 2018), rebounded from Harvey's wallop.
**BIG DEAL OFFICE ACTIVITY**

Downtown dominated the office leasing market for Houston during the past year, with robust leasing activity showing no sign of slowing. Downtown continues to attract and retain prominent national and global firms and outperform other Houston sub-markets.

**MAIN STREET AS STATUS SYMBOL**

Across the U.S., companies located along the most expensive streets in the country pay high price tags for their offices. Highlighting Downtown’s regional and national competitiveness, Main Street was named Houston’s most expensive street for office leases, and ranked No. 21 on JLL’s list of the most expensive commercial leases in the U.S., with average rents of $44.24 per square foot.

**CO-WORKING’S BIG NAME NOW ON MAIN**

The global communal workspace giant WeWork opened during summer 2018 within the historic The Jones on Main (at 708 Main). WeWork has been called the fourth most valuable startup in the U.S. just behind Uber, Airbnb and SpaceX. The Main Street location of WeWork boasts 82,236 square feet designed to support more than 1,400 members with private conference rooms, open space for large events and two outdoor terraces, plus private offices for clients with up to 120 employees.

**TWO LAYERS OF CANADIAN BANKING**

Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) moved into the 36th and 37th floors of 609 Main over the summer of 2018. RBC now occupies 54,000 square feet in Hines’ innovative office tower, after opting to consolidate offices previously located at Williams Tower and 5 Post Oak.

**HOMETOWN AIRLINE UNITES DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEES**

Downtown Houston’s 11th-largest employer, United Airlines, relocated 1,600 employees from 1600 Smith and 600 Jefferson into 225,000 square feet at 609 Main in early 2018. United now occupies eight floors of the 48-story tower, including the signature garden balconies on floors 12 and 13.

**RE-AFFIRMING THEIR POSITION**

Law firm, Sidley Austin, LLP signed a long-term lease renewal in July 2018, opting to expand its offices in Wells Fargo Plaza by 60 percent. Gensler has been tapped to redesign the larger space, totaling 80,000 square feet and occupying three and a half floors in the iconic tower at 1000 Louisiana.

**LIONSTONE HEADS TO THE JONES**

Houston-based real estate investment firm Lionstone Investments is relocating its 22,145-square-foot headquarters from 100 Waugh Dr. in the Washington Heights area to The Jones on Main at 712 Main, a property the firm purchased in 2013. Lionstone partnered with Midway Companies in 2016 to market 712 Main and 708 Main (owned by Midway) as The Jones on Main, a coupling of two historic office towers as a multi-dimensional destination featuring a food hall, retail, WeWork’s Downtown location, plus modern office space with historic character.

**HISTORIC LEED GOLD TOWER SOLD**

LEED Gold office tower, 1001 McKinney, a 23-story, 375,000-square-foot office tower was sold by Cameron Management and Silverpeak Real Estate Partners to TRC Capital Partners LLC and Amstar America LLC in July 2018. Built in 1947 as the City National Bank Building, the structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The extensively updated building’s new owners cited the historic character and proximity to transit as key factors in their purchase decision.
DEEP IN THE HEART
The iconic Bank of America Center, the ornate 56-story, 1.5 million-square-foot office tower at 700 Louisiana is undergoing a $20 million multiphase renovation, spurred by the anchor tenant’s announcement they are relocating in early 2019. The project will reclaim the space that was made void in the 1980s when the construction of the tower absorbed the two-story former Western Union building. The effort will add 25,000 square feet of new office and restaurant space, an additional floor of office space and a revamped lobby. M-M Properties expects to commence these renovations in February or March.

CENTER GETS ATTENTION
Brookfield Properties announced initial details of its $50+-million renovation plans for Houston Center, the 4.2 million-square-foot office and retail complex it acquired in late 2017. The complex includes three 40-plus-story office towers, the smaller 4 Houston Center and Shops at Houston Center, all built during the 1970s and ’80s. Plans include a revitalized mixed-use development with street-level retail, outdoor event spaces and restaurants.

A NEW TAKE ON 5 HOUSTON CENTER
Spear Street Capital launched a $6 million renovation of 5 Houston Center, the 581,000-square-foot, 27-story office tower located at 1401 McKinney. Built in the early 2000s, the tower’s renovation includes a lobby redesign by PDR, featuring a new coffee shop and cafe, a fine dining space, a fitness center, a tenant lounge and more, all taking advantage of views of nearby Discovery Green. Both Ernst & Young and Jackson Walker have signed expanded leases.

THE FLATIRON CODING SCHOOL
The accelerated programming school that inspired the coding bootcamp movement opened its fourth global campus in WeWork, with $250,000 in full scholarships from Facebook for the inaugural class. Partnering with Facebook and the Houston Area Urban League, Flatiron has committed to helping 25 aspiring Houston-based programmers obtain free enrollment in a Flatiron coding course.

BUNKER LABS
This national nonprofit was founded to help business-minded veterans and their spouses with inspiration, education and connections to help them start and grow their businesses. Created by veterans for veterans, Bunker Labs opened its Houston chapter in September. The organization partnered with WeWork to offer a Veterans in Residence program at their co-working space (708 Main).

CHEVRON TECHNOLOGY VENTURES
The longtime Houston-based venture capital arm of Chevron Corp. (started in 1999) just created its sixth fund. The new $100 million Future Energy Fund seeks to invest in research and innovation for new, alternative energy technologies (including those from Houston companies).
CAMDEN DOWNTOWN
Camden Property Trust broke ground on its $57-million, 21-story, 271-unit apartment tower at 1515 Austin in late 2017. This first phase of Camden Downtown, which includes the apartment tower and its parking garage, is expected to start leasing in the fourth quarter of 2019.

REGALIA AT THE PARK
Florida-based developer DLC Residential broke ground this past spring on a $54 million, 229-unit new apartment project at 100 Crawford. The property will offer units from studios to two bedrooms, plus a pool, yoga studio, fitness center and parking – all comprising the entire block bounded by Crawford, Commerce, North Jackson and Ruiz Streets. Regalia is estimated to be complete by the second quarter of 2020.

ROBUST INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN LIVING

1711 CAROLINE
Leon Capital Group completed this five-story, 220-unit residential building in March 2018. Fueled by the Downtown Living Initiative program, Leon Capital Group acquired a vacant block of land in 2013 (just south of Toyota Center) for the development of this six-story podium apartment project—a one-story concrete base structure with five stories of wood-framed apartments above.

MARLOWE
This stylish new 20-story, 100-unit condominium by Randall Davis is located at 1311 Polk (expected to be completed at press time). The tower features homes ranging from one-bedroom units starting at 695 square feet to penthouses with more than 2,900 square feet of living space plus two terraces.

SKANSKA
Skanska’s 35-story, 775,000-square-foot Capitol Tower topped out in April 2018. Pre-certified LEED v4 Platinum, the highest level awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council, the Gensler-designed tower at 800 Capitol is on track for completion in the second quarter of 2019. Bank of America has leased 210,000 square feet in the new high-rise, and will be among the first tenants to use the 35,000-square-foot community hub and culinary market on Capitol Tower’s tunnel level.

HINES
Hines began construction over the summer on its new 1 million-square-foot, 47-story tower on the former Houston Chronicle site. The tower will feature 36 levels of office space atop a podium of parking and street-level restaurant, retail and lobby space. Tenants will have access to multiple green spaces on site, including a wrap-around garden planned for the 12th floor, plus a series of atriums that will be exclusively accessible to tenants on specific floors. The tower is expected to be completed in 2021, when Hines plans to relocate its global headquarters from Williams Tower into 155,000 square feet of the new tower. Vinson & Elkins has also signed on to occupy 212,000 square feet.
**NOTABLE OPENINGS**

**THE RUSTIC ROCKS AVENIDA HOUSTON**
A new live music venue and indoor/outdoor bar owned by country musician Pat Green and restaurateurs Kyle Noonan and Josh Sepkowitz debuted in early November (music fans may be familiar with their Dallas and San Antonio locations). The 25,000-square-foot venue sits next the George R. Brown at 1836 Polk.

**RESTAURANTS AND BARS TO TRY**
Day or night, the choices continue to increase across Downtown. The past year welcomed Boomtown Coffee Main St. Café, Cellar 7, The Cottonmouth Club, Etro, High & Dry Rum Bar, Kulture, La Cantina by La Calle, Kanaloa and Sapporo Japanese Sushi & Bar.

**CVS PHARMACY AT HISTORIC MARKET SQUARE**
The drugstore giant opened a 13,000-square-foot "urban footprint"-scaled store on the ground floor of Market Square Tower, 300 Milam Street.

**SPIN STUDIO GETS CRANKING**
Houston’s original premium indoor cycling studio, RYDE, has opened in a street-front contemporary studio on the ground floor of the Esperson Building. Located at Milam and Rusk, the studio boasts top-of-the-line fitness equipment.

**FINN HALL FILLS ITS PLATE**
The 20,000-square-foot Finn Hall debuted this fall inside The Jones on Main (712 Main) with a total of 10 food outlets, a craft beer and curated wine bar, an art deco cocktail lounge and private event spaces. The many chef-based concepts include Cori Xiong and Chen Heng’s Mala Sichuan Bistro (individual-style menu items, presenting authentic Sichuan flavors and culture); Goode Co. Taqueria (tacos from its classic Tex-Mex menu); Low Tide from the owners of Harold’s Restaurant & Tap Room (a seafood and raw bar with ceviche, raw oysters and po’boys); Mr. Nice Pie, a concept from the owners of Moon Tower Inn, Voodoo Queen and Love Buzz (offering pizza slices as large as 30 inches); Oddball Eats (known for its falafel offerings at farmers markets); Sit Lo (a concept from the purveyors of Bowl’D Up food truck); Yong (Daniel Ajtai’s Korean fare) and Aaron Lyons’ Dish Society (a smaller version of its farm-to-table menu).
FLYING COLORS
The stunning Sky Dance mural by artist C. Finely causes passersby to pause and behold the brilliant colors and the leaping figures. The massive mural stretches 230 feet wide and 130 feet tall, and at 30,000 square feet it is Houston’s largest mural. Commissioned by WEDGE Group and completed last March, the mural is painted on the backside of the 1415 Louisiana Building and can be viewed from Clay Street between Louisiana and Milam, or any multi-story structure in the vicinity.

BIKE RACKS ROLLED OUT
The Houston Downtown Management District installed more than new 100 bike racks across Downtown during October. The bike rack initiative increased the number of locations of public bike racks Downtown from 45 to 68. Prior to their installation, the 45 pre-existing racks accommodated around 216 bikes. The additional racks increased the public bike parking capacity to 392. Locations for the bike racks include high activity areas near residential, park spaces and food and beverage options – many locations were selected in response to businesses requesting additional bike racks in their neighborhoods.

FARM-TO-TRUCK
The innovative mobile farm-to-table grocery concept Grit Grocery, which provides local, natural, and unprocessed food to urban communities, now serves the Historic Market Square neighborhood and EaDo. Find Grit Grocery in the 900 block of Preston from 4 to 9 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays; and at 2424 Capitol from 4 to 9 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays.

GREAT SOUTHWEST REDO
Dallas-based NewcrestImage is redeveloping the Great Southwest Building at 723 Main (also known as the Houston Bar Center) into a 10-story, 194-key European style luxury hotel under the AC Marriott brand. The rehab on the historic property, a Jesse Jones project built in 1914, got a boost from the Downtown Redevelopment Authority and is expect to be complete by summer 2019.

SPAGHETTI WAREHOUSE REBIRTH
A local development group purchased the former Spaghetti Warehouse building at 901 Commerce in the Market Square Historic District. The group plans to complete a renovation of the 15,000-square-foot structure, built in 1901. Their vision includes an open-air street market on the flood-prone first floor and a bar on the second floor.
COMING IN 2019

MORE FOOD HALLS AND BIG-TIME SCHOOL NEWS

KHSPVA OPENING

The much-anticipated Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts is set to open in time for the spring semester to begin in January 2019. The new five-story facility for the HISD magnet school sits on the full block bounded by Caroline, Capital, Austin and Rusk streets, just blocks from the Theater District. Passersby won’t be able to miss Gensler’s eye-catching main entrance, marked by sculpture-inspired oversized windows positioned at offset angles. The 168,000-square-foot school features classroom and program space, an 800-seat main theater with a balcony, a secondary studio theater, a black box theater, dance and music studios, and ample practice and performance space. The facility also includes two levels of underground parking.

UHD’S CAMPUS GROWTH

University of Houston-Downtown, after acquiring an additional 17 acres of land in 2016, is well underway on construction of its new College of Sciences & Technology Building, which topped out in August. The building is expected to be complete by fall 2019, and the first classes are set to begin in spring 2020. UHD has plans to begin a new student garage in 2019, while a new sports and wellness center has also been proposed.

MORE FOOD HALLS TO FILL YOUR BELLY

Opening at Hines’ Aris Market Square high-rise, Bravery Chef Hall has confirmed six notable Houston chefs and restaurateurs. MasterChef season three winner Christine Ha will open her first restaurant The Blind Goat. Ben McPherson, formerly of Krisp Bird & Batter, will debut a pasta restaurant called BOH Pasta. Andes Cafe Chef David Guerrero will reveal Nuna Nikkei Bar, a Japanese-Peruvian restaurant. Felix Flores will open a new spot called Cherry Block Craft Butcher and Kitchen. Richard Night, formerly of Feast and Hunky Dory, will offer an upscale diner called Atlas. (The final chef and restaurants concept was not available at press time.) The chef-driven hall will also include three bars.

Wrapping around the Lyric Center Building, the forthcoming Lyric Market food hall and marketplace will offer chic design inside and out, with plenty of outdoor seating for enjoying David Adickes’ cellist sculpture, Virtuoso. Developer U.S. Property Management expects to offer more than 20 chef-driven concepts in the 31,000-square-foot space. The venue is also expected to host frequent farmers markets, community events, and provide space for private events and meetings. Lyric Market is expected to open in the second quarter of 2019.

Setting itself apart from the other Downtown food hall concepts will be Understory, a 35,000 square-foot space located in the two-story lobby of the new Capitol Tower, with tunnel connection. Designed by Michael Hsu, the lively space will be home to a full-service restaurant, seven food stalls and a cocktail bar.
Houston has spunk. Which is great, because it almost never has snow. So, grab your light jacket (or puffy coat—no judgement here) and head Downtown. Your winter excursions await.

By Lauren McDowell, Lauren Patterson and Amber Ambrose
The Theater District heats up in the winter, with seasonal traditions and seven resident companies producing plays, musicals, concerts and performances deserving of the nation’s fourth-largest city (or any major city, for that matter). Keep your spirit warm with plenty of catharsis, denouement, jazz hands, tragedy, comedy, arabesques, suspense, thrills and culture to hold you over to sunnier days.

ALLEY THEATRE

A Christmas Carol—A Ghost Story of Christmas

Performance dates: Nov. 16–Dec. 30
Special notes: Ages 6 and older
Location: Alley Theatre

The veil between the living and the dead grows thin in this Victorian tale of greed, loneliness, regret and eventually, redemption. You already know the story of Ebenezer Scrooge’s one-night rendezvous with multiple specters, but you’ve probably never seen it like this. Special effects and a slightly more macabre filter than usual bring new life (and death) into an old tale. It’ll scare the Dickens out of you—in a good way.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA

Florencia en el Amazonas

Performance dates: Jan. 18–Feb. 3
Location: Wortham Theater Center

Embark on a journey along the Amazon on the El Dorado, a riverboat full of hopes, dreams, desires and more, heading down the river toward Manaus, Brazil.

The first Spanish-language opera to be commissioned by United States opera houses, this Daniel Catán-composed score with libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain originally premiered in Houston in 1996. The tragedy and longings of passengers Rosalba, Florencia, Paula, Arcadio, Riolobo, Alvaro and Capitán return to their original stage, along with former Houston Grand Opera studio artist Ana María Martínez reprising her title role.

DA CAMERA

Chucho Valdés—Jazz Batá

Performance date: Feb. 8
Location: Cullen Theater at Wortham Center

You’re not supposed to yell “Fire!” in a crowded theater, but if Chucho Valdés has his way with the piano, it may be appropriate as he sets the ivories alight with his signature style of Afro-Cuban jazz. The Grammy award winner heats up the February evening for one night only.

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS

Disney’s Beauty & The Beast

Performance dates: Dec. 11–23
Location: Hobby Center

Bookish Belle and brutish Beast meet cute in this tale as old as time, featuring songs as old as rhyme. And if you’re not singing the song in your head by now, it’s probably not the show for you. If you are, please move ahead to the next few sentences.

This Disney classic gives fans a chance to revisit their favorite crooning candlestick and talking teapot on a grand stage, with costumes and sets as impressive as Belle’s ability to fall in love with someone in need of some pretty dramatic manscaping and table manners. Like #beastmode, but with singing kitchen utensils.
We are very excited to be able to return the Wortham Theater for our wonderful Nutcracker. We’ve been on the road for a while now and to get to be home and to bring that ballet back to its full glory on that wonderful Wortham stage is something that I can’t even begin to tell you how exciting that is for all of us.”

—Houston Ballet Artistic Director, Stanton Welch AM
Feel like the cold nights and darker days are starting to turn your heart into a lump of coal? It happens to the best of us. Stave off the winter blues by reaching outside of yourself and into the world (we need you here!).

**1. CONNECT WITH THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST**

**Star of Hope** assists homeless families by offering temporary housing, workforce development, food and clothing, school supplies, and resources for domestic abuse and substance abuse issues.

**How you can get involved**
Adopt a family through the Star of Hope Glad Tidings program. Volunteers are matched with a family to shop for gifts based on children’s ages and preferences. Volunteers personally deliver gifts, so it’s a great way to see the direct impact of your charity work. For more ways to donate or volunteer, visit sohmission.org.

**2. GO OUTSIDE**

The **Buffalo Bayou Partnership** is committed to creating a healthier environment while fostering a culture of stewardship for Houston’s bayou ecosystem.

**How you can get involved**
Everyone (ages 9 and up) is invited to help restore and protect Buffalo Bayou’s parks and trails by removing invasive plants, mulching, picking up litter and debris and keeping our green space looking tidy and inviting. To learn more about Buffalo Bayou volunteering opportunities, email volunteer@buffalobayou.org or call 713.752.0314 ext. 206.
Still looking for a nonprofit that speaks to you? Visit volunteerhouston.org. Volunteer Houston works with nearly 1,200 community partners annually to engage volunteers in meaningful projects to meet community needs.
Soup means comfort, even when outside temperatures barely register as “sweater weather.” If you’re looking to slurp for sustenance, here’s what to get and where to go.

**Haig’s Chili**
*MKT Bar, 1001 Austin*
It’s safe to say that Haig’s Chili at MKT Bar is not a bowl of Texas red—but that’s kind of the point. This chili, named for Haig Tcholakian, son of Phoenicia founders Arpi and Zohrab Tcholakian, and second-generation steward of the global grocery store—features ground chuck with onions, roasted peppers, fava beans and chickpeas topped with sharp white cheddar cheese, red radish, garlic, lemon zest, olive oil and scallion. Freshly made toasted pita chips complete the order.

**Pho**
The Pho Spot, 1010 Prairie
Whether it’s winter blues or a stuffy nose, pho’s savory beef broth is sure to cure what ails you. Head underground to Conservatory, Houston’s original food hall, and try the classic Dac Biet with beef meatballs, flank steak and brisket, or build your own bowl to suit your tastes.

**Gumbo**
*Treebeards, 315 Travis*
Gumbo is a contentious subject. Do you add okra? Tomato? File? Let someone else do the work and order cafeteria-style at Treebeards. The type rotates depending on the day of the week, so depending on when the craving hits you’ll have your choice of duck, chicken and sausage, and seafood.

**Sopa de piedra**
*Xochi, 1777 Walker*
Seafood soup heated with hot river rocks from the wood oven? At the Hugo Ortega restaurant Alison Cook named the best in the city? How could you say no?

**Chicken posole**
*Local Foods, 420 Main*
If chicken soup is balm for the soul, the chicken posole from Local Foods is equivalent to a great therapy session. The hominy-based Mexican stew made with green chilis and a hint of lime is topped with pumpkin seeds, and warms from the inside out.

**PRO TIP**
The jalapeño cornbread makes a great partner.
Few things translate to instant happiness better than hot chocolate, and thankfully, Downtown delivers. For steamy cocoa and all the cozy feels, head to these places when the craving hits.

**Bar Bardot**

1070 Dallas Street

The word on the street: there’s a boozy hot chocolate beverage at Bardot for a winter time treat. But you didn’t hear that from us.

**Boomtown Coffee**

300 Main Street

It’s no surprise that this serious coffee spot is no slouch in the hot chocolate department. Oh, and if you fancy a nightcap of the adult variety? They can do an alcoholic version, too.

**Brasserie du Parc**

1440 Lamar Street

Should you find yourself craving crepes at the authentic French brasserie, just say oui to the perfect complement: hot chocolate made with an in-house syrup.

**Xochi**

1777 Walker Street

Why settle for a cup of cocoa when you can order Hugo Ortega’s Chocolate Caliente, a small pitcher of Oaxacan hot chocolate? It’s foamed tableside, serves two, and comes with churros. The process starts by roasting cacao beans imported from Mexico on a griddle called a comal, after which the roasty beans are ground. Vanilla, sugar and cinnamon are added before a second grind of the whole mixture into a thick paste that is dissolved into milk for a decadent, flavorful version of hot cocoa.

**Niko Niko’s**

301 Milam Street

A drop of chocolatey goodness from this Greek staple will make you feel like a kid again. Whether you’re dining in or prefer a good cup to go, the blend of steamed milk and chocolate with homemade whipped cream on top is just the ticket.
Let’s Get Physical, Physical...

We might not get the classic snow-dusted landscapes from the Hallmark holiday films here in Houston, but we like that our 70-degree winters mean ample opportunities to get our blood pumping year-round, regardless of the weather.

BUST OUT YOUR SKATES

Have you heard? Rollerblading is back. With the abundance of parks and paths Downtown, outdoors enthusiasts across Houston are lacing up their skates and hitting the trails. Several miles of hike and bike (and skate) trails connect the Allen Parkway and Memorial Drive bayou trails to Sesquicentennial Park and the Northside Trail near the University of Houston-Downtown. The Buffalo Bayou Trail is fully paved and rated four stars for inline skating by the nonprofit traillink.com.

LACE UP YOUR SNEAKERS

You’ve heard of the 12 Days of Christmas, but what about the 12K of Christmas? Join the Houston running community on Saturday, December 22, 2018 for a Christmas-themed 6K or 12K. Starting and finishing at Sam Houston Park, this race has something for the whole family to enjoy, including a Kids K race division, hot cocoa, appearances by Santa and his elves, Christmas carolers and more. All participants will receive a t-shirt and finisher’s medal, and are invited to join the post-race party for food, drinks, music and holiday festivities. To register, visit houston12k.com.
ICE SKATING ON DISCOVERY GREEN

The outdoor ice rink at Discovery Green powered by Green Mountain Energy is back. Houstonians can enjoy family-friendly time on the ice through January 27, 2019 for just $14.00 per person (including tax and skate rental). In addition to the 7,716-square-foot main rink, you’ll find outdoor movies, a live DJ and a toddler-friendly Ice Box rink for the little ones. Individuals in wheelchairs are invited to participate using a non-motorized wheelchair and accompanied by an able-bodied adult. Visit discoverygreen.com for a schedule of winter events.

CYCLE THROUGH HOU

In addition to miles of bike-friendly paths and roadway bike lanes thanks to initiatives by the Houston Bikeways Program and Bayou Greenways project, Houstonians enjoy access to a thriving bikeshare and multiple indoor cycling venues. Which brings us to...

HOUSTON BCYCLE

This past August, Houston City Council approved a $300,000 expansion for the bikeshare program, Houston BCycle. The expansion included 31 new stations and 337 new bikes across Houston with concentrations in Downtown and near local college campuses. Which means, you’ll have easier access when you’re cycling Downtown this winter. For a map of stations or more information, check out houston.bcycle.com.

RYDE

If indoor cycling is more your speed, Ryde’s indoor cycling studio at 802 Rusk is modern and beginner-friendly. Memberships come with perks like a private locker and early booking. For folks who aren’t quite ready to commit to regular classes, there are pre-pay options for five, 10 and 20 sessions that are good for up to one year.

SAUNAS FOR THE SOUL

If you’re looking to sweat without moving much, a sauna is your best bet. The Tellepsen Family Downtown YMCA at 808 Pease offers a top-notch example. Citywide YMCA memberships cost $62 a month, with discounts available for seniors, students and young adults.

Warm up with romance when you share a kiss by starlight under Texas’s largest ball of mistletoe this holiday season. Visit Market Square Park at 503 Milam Street any day in December to get a picture with the 150-inch local legend. You’ll find it hanging from a lighted candy cane, conveniently positioned for a smooching selfie with your special someone. If you don’t do it for the spirit of the season, do it for the ‘Gram!

#xomistletoe
TAKE A Tropical Tour

If you’re sick of hearing Baby It’s Cold Outside, maybe it’s time for a quick trip to the tropics—minus the plane ride. Whether it is truly cold outside or a practically balmy Houston winter evening, the exotic flavors of pineapple, rum and falernum await to steer you away from the doldrums of darkness (that begins around 5:15 pm) and closer to the land where empty coconut shells double as glassware. You know what time it is: island time!

VIBE: TIKI AF

DRINK THIS
Painkiller—a tiki classic made from rums (yes, multiple variations!), coconut cream, orange juice and pineapple.

HOT TIP
Closed on Mondays. Offers large-format drinks for groups, aka rum punch meant to be shared from the same drinking vessel. Don’t worry, everyone uses a different straw (they’re wild, but they’re not heathens, y’all).

MOST LIKELY TO MAKE YOU Feel like watching The Endless Summer or break out into hula dancing.

NEED TO KNOW
Tuesdays are for tiki, with new drink specials and deals on party drinks that serve up to 10 people.
**Pastry War**

**Vibe:** OAXACA CHIC

**Drink This:**
Mezcal margarita, which is just like the classic you know and love, but—gasp—maybe even better? The smoky notes of the mezcal make for a sultry, complex cocktail ideal for lifting winter spirits.

**Hot Tip:**
Try the above-mentioned mezcal-a-rita with habanero-serrano flavorings for a real kick.

**Most Likely to Make You**
Book an impromptu January trip to Tamaulipas, Mexico with your extra airline points.

**Need to Know**
You won’t find pastries served here. It’s named for a historic conflict between France and Mexico. But there are tamales on the menu.

---

**Batanga**

**Vibe:** ROMANTIC SOUTH AMERICAN

**Drink This:**
Blueberry, jalapeño and cilantro margarita, made with their special infused tequila. Also available by the pitcher.

**Hot Tip:**
If you’re feeling brave, try a flight of infused tequilas. There are over 70(!!) to choose from.

**Most Likely to Make You**
Want to learn the samba.

**Need to Know**
Given Houston’s trend toward warmer winters, take advantage of their 3,600-square-foot patio, the largest in Downtown Houston.

---

**High & Dry Rum Bar**

**Vibe:** TASTEFUL TIKI

**Drink This:**
Ginger Flame, first of all, because it tastes delicious (overproof rum, reposado tequila, Campari and mango with fresh ginger and habanero Thai chili pepper tincture, anyone?) and second of all, because there’s fire involved in the process of making it, and that’s just cool...or hot?

**Hot Tip:**
Step out back to the patio, and enjoy its comfy seating and the soothing fountain.

**Most Likely to Make You**
Vow to find the vinyl collection of Bob Marley albums you stashed away in your parents’ attic after you left the nest.

**Need to Know**
It can be hard to find, but look for the staircase to the left of Little Dipper and head up to the second floor.

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**El Big Bad**

**Vibe:** MYSTICAL MEXICAN

**Drink This:**
Blueberry, jalapeño and cilantro margarita, made with their special infused tequila. Also available by the pitcher.

**Hot Tip:**
If you’re feeling brave, try a flight of infused tequilas. There are over 70(!!) to choose from.

**Most Likely to Make You**
Research ofrenda-making techniques.

**Need to Know**
If you need a bar snack, it’s not just the tequilas that come in flights. Try a flight of salsas to really heat things up.
In business for 18 years, the Main Street mainstay keeps patrons happy with a seasonal but diverse selection of beers, along with rare casks and unique-to-the-location brewery collaborations. Manager Joshua Justice says that although some patrons drink their favorite styles year-round (a preference the Saucer is happy to oblige), others shift to “darker, heavier and spiced beers,” as the weather cools.

If you’re hoping to stop in for stouts, porters, and barrel-aged craft beers, plenty of options await. We asked Josh for three recommendations to seek out when the weather dips.

**COLD BEER, WARM VIBES AT FLYING SAUCER DRAUGHT EMPORIUM**

**A winter warmer by style, this malty ale offers notes of toffee, caramel, and a little bit of warming alcohol, with raisin and plum flavors that bring it all together.**

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**ODELL BREWING COMPANY**

**Isolation Ale**

*When the air and the spirits are damp, a tipple or two is just the ticket—just ask the experts in the Downtown beverage world.*

**GREAT DIVIDE BREWING COMPANY**

**Speedway Stout**

This seasonal dry hopped “old ale” makes for a malty and rich brew that’s great for pairing with winter-spiced comfort food (like the Saucer’s seasonal house-made chili).

**ALESMITH**

The coffee imperial stout packs a punch at 12.5 percent ABV. The makers send variants made with exotic coffee beans specially to Flying Saucer, so customers get a one-of-a-kind taste even if they’ve had this beer in previous years.

**ODELL BREWING COMPANY**

**Isolation Ale**

A winter warmer by style, this malty ale offers notes of toffee, caramel, and a little bit of warming alcohol, with raisin and plum flavors that bring it all together.
This year we are working on a house recipe for a Hot Buttered Rum. This classic drink starts with the preparation of a compound butter mixture of things like brown sugar, nutmeg, and cinnamon. A bit of this mixture is combined with aged rum and hot water to create a rich and creamy warm drink.

Barrel Aged Vieux Carre is one of our favorites. We prepare a batch of this 1930s New Orleans classic—a mixture of rye whiskey, cognac, sweet vermouth, Bénédictine and bitters—and then age it in a charred oak barrel. The barrel aging gives the cocktail time to oxidize and round out the sharper alcohol esters, and interaction with the charred oak adds additional caramel and vanilla notes. Topped with an Italian black cherry, its complex flavor profile is a slow sipper sure to warm you from the inside.

Miss Baker’s Elixir

This summer we did a collaboration with 8th Wonder Brewery and used some of their beer to create a hybrid beer cocktail. We love their Rocket Fuel beer and ended up using it to create something that works very well in the winter. Dedicated to the first monkey to successfully return from a trip to space, Miss Baker, we combined a Bourbon cream (think Irish cream, with Bourbon instead of Irish whiskey) and delicious French banana liqueur with their Vietnamese coffee-inspired porter. It drinks much like the classic White Russian but with a distinctive and welcome twist. The main danger with this one: trying not to have too many of them.

Vieux Carre

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Hot Buttered Rum

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The inner looper’s guide to finding the right school

Learn Central 101:

- Detailed information on what kinds of questions parents should ask, how to enroll and a glossary of useful terms
- Individual descriptions of every school inside the loop, along with maps, school make-up and programs offered
- Snapshots of each neighborhood, including school listings, homes for sale and description of the community
- Transportation information and an interactive Commute Calculator
- Living in the loop amenities and attractions

Click around to learn more about the schools, neighborhoods, green spaces and cultural institutions that make living and learning centrally easier than ever before.

learncentralhouston.org
plate.

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learncentralhouston.org
Downtown diners are no strangers to high-end experiences. From clubby steakhouses to Hugo Ortega’s master turn over at Xochi, the food landscape in the city core is forever one-upping itself to bring guests experiences that transport and transform.

Newcomer Lucienne enters the scene as the centerpiece restaurant in the elegantly swish Hotel Alessandra. The GreenStreet anchor brings sophistication and stunning service to its corner of Dallas Street. Valencia Group conceived the hotel to embody the personality of a glamorous, refined and well-traveled woman with an unmistakable sensuality and sense of style. Lucienne lives up to the image.

An open space that effortlessly blends Art Deco touches with 1960s Mod character, the restaurant is a mesmerizing blend of Viennese vaulted café and NASA space shuttle. Its long, narrow room with rib-cage ceiling, walls of banquettes and herringbone pattern floor feels weightless above the green roofs of the mixed-use development below. The shades of sage and charcoal in the décor enhance the feeling of stepping into another world, and the windows’ ivory curtains with sketches of the Eiffel Tower and café culture serve as a reminder that Lucienne looks to Europe for its sophistication.

The menu is continental with Mediterranean touches. Executive Chef Jose Hernandez cut his teeth making pastry when he was just 14 and has spent the last two decades in some of the world’s great culinary capitals, including Mexico City and Manhattan. Houston diners will remember him from his winning turn at the Alessandra’s sister property Hotel Sorella, CityCentre’s Radio Milano restaurant, as well as Triniti, Philippe Restaurant + Lounge and Bistro Moderne.
“I crafted the menu to be able to give everyone a bit of what they’re looking for,” he said. “I want people to be able to interact with it, with their server and table companions. They can try new things and create their own experience.”

Set up as a tasting experience, diners can choose four, five or six courses, with or without wine pairings. While the Italian touches that were so influential to Hernandez at Radio Milano are clearly on display, it’s obvious he’s nodding directly toward the Mediterranean. There’s an octopus paired with plump, tender gnocchi and Parmesan cheese. The faro risotto offers a heartier taste than traditional arborio, and for a little rustic flair, it’s topped with a quail egg. Cut-with-a-fork tender veal cheeks arrive over polenta, laced with rich hazelnut.

But Hernandez’s flavors reach further afield from the Italian Mediterranean. That French classic, foie gras, velvety and buttery rich, gets a zingy citrus punch from accompanying kumquats. The tuna appetizer gets a savory bang from teriyaki sauce, augmented by a tart dash of pickled onions. And the pheasant presents as an English countryside meets Provence mashup, the game bird served seasoned with lavender and accompanied by earthy turnips.

The inventive menu is adventurous enough for ever-curious foodies, but still provides comfort-food touches for those less prone to exploration. The New York strip is superb, with a decadent mushroom mousse; the halibut simply grilled and served atop a pile of couscous laced with zucchini.

“I started with the flavors of France and Italy,” said Hernandez, “and expanded to Spain and its African influences. I think there’s a lot here that people might never have tried before—like the frog legs—where they can say ‘what’s that?’ and then there’s still a lot of favorites. The octopus I brought with me from another restaurant; people have always loved it.”

Diners will also find the international influences from the wine and cocktail menu to be excellent partners to Hernandez’s fare. The Bardot Lounge, adjacent to the restaurant, is all cosmopolitan glamour and its cocktails are available in Lucienne.

Lucienne’s arrival on the Downtown dining scene is a welcome addition to an already global experience.
These listings are not reviews but are a guide to Downtown dining spots. "Recommended" restaurants are selected by downtown editors and are based on food quality, menu selection, service, ambiance and value.

★ RECOMMENDED

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<td>Biggio’s is not your average sports bar. The two-story sports haven named after the Houston baseball legend, Craig Biggio, boasts a large drink selection, upscale bar food, and seats that come with views of flat screen TVs as far as the eye can see. 1777 Walker, 713.654.1777. L &amp; D Daily. $★</td>
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★ BirdDog Saint

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<td>The spacious two-story bar is a great place to enjoy live music, sports, and mingle with friends. Opt for any of their savory gourmet pizzas, the BirdDog Burger, or sit at the raw bar and indulge in fresh ceviche. birddogsaaint.com. 711 Main. 832.767.5574. L, D &amp; LD Mon–Sat. $★</td>
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★ Birrapolett’s Italian

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<td>This Italian restaurant/ Irish bar is a Theater District staple. Their delicious pizzas continue to hit the spot, while items such as the chicken picatta and La Dolce Vita have become standouts. Enjoy a signature dessert to finish the meal. birrarestaurant.com. 500 Louisiana, 713.224.9494. L, D &amp; LN Daily. $★</td>
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★ The Bistro

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<td>The Bistro is a full-service restaurant serving up breakfast and dinner in a casual atmosphere. Courtyard by Marriott, 916 Dallas, 832.366.1600. B &amp; D Daily. $★</td>
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★ Blue by Massa Seafood

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<td>This upscale and elegant restaurant offers up a fine selection of American and Seafood cuisine. Among the esteemed list of favorites, the Lobster Bisque is a standout. Superior service and a great dining atmosphere allow guests to enjoy a memorable dining experience. Blue also offers occasional live entertainment and dancing is highly encouraged! masses.com. 1160 Smith, 713.650.0837. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $★</td>
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<td>Pusing the cuisines of India with pizza, innovative creations are served on a homemade, dense, thin and crispy crust. Try the saag paneer, which is topped with fresh spinach and four cheeses or the Gateway to India topped with cilantro, tandoori chicken, garlic and artichoke hearts. bombaypizza.co. 914 Main, 713.654.4444. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $★</td>
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★ Boomtown Coffee Main St. Coffee House Part coffee shop, part bar, Boomtown’s drink menu includes everything from specialty coffees and cocktails to healthier options like Kombucha. Satisfy your appetite day or night with their breakfast, lunch, dinner or brunch options. boomtowncoffee.com. 300 Main Street. 281.846.6995. B, L & BR Daily. $★ |

★ Bouray’s Burrito Bar Fast Food

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<td>Bouray’s offers made-to-order Mexican and Vietnamese food using ingredients that are prepared fresh daily. bourays.com. 609 Clay, 713.652.5999. L Mon–Fri. $★</td>
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★ Bovine & Barley American

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<td>Bovine &amp; Barley is a beautifully designed urban bar and eatery with a heavy focus on beef and beer. The space has an industrial feel which is complimented by warm wood accents and huge HTX letters that hang illuminated on an exposed brick wall. Highlights from the menu include brisket tacos, meatloaf muffins on top of jalapeno empanadas, to veal tongue and oxtail. The menu features large dishes, such as paella for up to 16 people, and tapas that range from the traditional such as gambas al ajillo (shrimp cooked in olive oil and garlic) and empanadas, to veal tongue and oxtail. The Bistro brings farm-fresh ingredients to the menu guarantee farm-to-fork freshness. Lamar, 713.739.8000. B &amp; L Mon–Sat; D Fri–Sat. $★</td>
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Conservatory Beer Garden & Food Hall
Conservatory Underground Beer Garden & Food Hall is the first food hall in Houston to showcase a curated list of food vendors, including Moku Bar, Arte Pizzeria, Easy Does It, Noble Rot Wine Bar, Treacherous Leches, The Pho Spot, and El Burro and The Bull each of which serve elevated yet casual cuisine. The food hall also features pop-up food carts serving specialty items every week and a beer garden with 60 beers on tap serving an eclectic mix of local craft breweries, foreign imports, and wine.

Corner Bakery Fast Casual
A bakery cafe, offering fresh breads, salads, sandwiches, soups and sweets in a casual atmosphere. Located right on Main Street Square, you can’t beat the people watching or just relax and watch the rail line and Main Street’s jumping fountains.

cornembery.com, 1010 Prairie, 713.398.7679.
B & L & LN Daily. $5

Coterie American
Coterie brings a cafe-style dining experience right to the Historic Market Square neighborhood. The luxury cafe is located on the ground floor of Market Square Tower and offers on-the-go pastries, Neapolitan-style pizzas, burgers, and other tasty menu items.
coterie.com, 737 Preston.
B, L, D Daily. $5

Cultivated F+B American
Cultivated F+B is the perfect spot for a meal with friends, a power breakfast or post-performance nosh. Dine al fresco on the patio or soak in the contemporary art indoors as you indulge in a sophisticated American menu that features braised short rib tacos, Fernando’s chilaquiles and other exquisite items.

thelancaster.com, 701 Texas Avenue, 800.231.0336.
B, L & D Daily. $5

The District American
The District offers classic American cuisine in a modern setting. Perfect for lunch or dinner before a show! The menu includes a variety of options like burgers, salads, pasta and small plates. There’s definitely something for everyone!

thedistricttx.com, 610 Main St. L & D. $5

Domino’s Pizza
975 McKinney, 713.227.3030.

The Downtown Aquarium Seafood
The menu features a huge variety and offers something for everyone. While dining, guests are surrounded by a 150,000-gallon aquarium. Enjoy the sights and a great meal at this family-friendly spot.
aquariumrestaurants.com, 410 Bagby, 713.223.3474.
L & D Daily. $5

Eats Mesquite Grill Classic American
Craving a burger downtown? Popular for its juicy burgers and great-tasting fries, Eats makes for a great lunchtime burger downtown? Popular for its juicy burgers and great-tasting fries, Eats makes for a great lunchtime

einsteinbros.com, 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4775.
B, L & LN Mon–Sun. $5

El Big Bad Mexican
Brought to you by the El Gran Malo crew, this casual Tex-Mex restaurant brings hand-crafted tequila infusions, specialty margaritas and craft beers to the table. The gastrocamin-inspired menu is chock full of tasty tacos with fresh toppings like pomegranate salsa, charred scallions, pumpkin seeds and more. elbigbad.com, 419 Travis, 713.229.8181.
L & D & LN Mon–Fri; D & LN Sat & Sun, BR Sun. $5

Fabian’s Latin Flavors Latin
Looking for dinner with a side of salsa dancing? If so, Fabian’s Latin Flavors is the place for you! From carne asada tacos and empanadas to popular Salvadorian beer and salsa nights, you’ll get a taste of Latin America at this Downtown hotspot.

fabianslatinflavors.com, 301 Main, 713.227.0440.
L & D Daily. $5

Flying Saucer Pub Fare
Offering more than 200 beers, almost half on draft, Flying Saucer is a beer drinker’s paradise. Excellent staff and tasty eats give the place an identity all its own. beerknurdom.com, 705 Main, 713.228.7468.
L, D & LN Daily. $5

Foundation Room American
Escape, indulge and elevate your nightlife in Foundation Room at House of Blues, Houston’s luxe downtown hideaway. Foundation Room features an elegant private dining room and plush lounge perfect for after-dinner drinks and socializing. From starters like seared jumbo shrimp in a Cajun lemon beurre blanc to the 16oz. cowboy ribeye, the inspired menu draws from seasonal and international flavors with a distinctively Texas twist hob.com, Greenstreet.
1204 Caroline, 888.402.5837. D Wed–Sat. $5

Frank’s Pizza Pizza
Home of the “late-night slice,” Frank’s Pizza has built a quality reputation for itself serving up delicious food in a great atmosphere. Not only can you grab a slice of pizza, Frank’s also serves up darn good hamburgers. Philly cheesesteak sandwiches, Buffalo wings, lasagna and salads. frankspizza.com, 417 Travis, 713.225.5656.
L & D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. $5

Grotto Ristorante Italian
This trendy Italian eatery is conveniently located on Downtown’s restaurant row—Avenida Houston! Enjoy spectacular views of nearby Minute Maid Park and Discovery Green as you experience a revolutionized take on Italian cuisine from small and shareable plates, to fresh salads and traditional dishes like Neapolitan thin crust pizzas and house made pastas.
grottorestaurants.com, 1001 Avenida de las Americas, 713.658.0752.
L & D Daily. $5

The Grove American Rustic
This two-story, ultra-urban restaurant is found at Discovery Green. The menu features rustic American cuisine such as Gulf Coast seafood, steaks and signature rotisserie dishes.
grovewest.com, Discovery Green, 1611 Lamar, 713.337.7321.
L & D Daily. $5

Guadalupe del Centro Mexican
This family-owned restaurant consistently serves up tasty food in a new, very cool environment. It’s the perfect place to bring the family or a large group of coworkers or family. Great happy hour specials.
guadalujarajahacienda.com, Greenstreet.
1201 San Jacinto, 713.650.0101.
L & D Daily. $5

Hard Rock Cafe Classic American
What do you get when you mix a music-themed diner with an all-American menu? Hard Rock is a great family-friendly spot serving up items such as burgers, nachos and chicken varieties.
hardrock.com, Bayou Place, 570 Texas, 713.227.1392.
L, D & LN Daily. $5

Hearsay Gastro Lounge New American
Located in a beautifully refurbished historic building, this upscale restaurant and lounge serves up delicious sandwiches, salads and entrées. They feature an extensive wine list, numerous beers on draft and bottle and premium liquors with a focus on Scotch whisky.
hearsayhouston.com, 218 Travis, 713.225.8079.
L Daily; D Mon–Sat; LN Fri–Sat. $5

Hearsay on the Green American
Located inside the Embassy Suites in Downtown’s Convention District, this upscale restaurant and lounge serves up the finest craft cocktails, New-American dishes and a chic dining experience. The drink menu features an extensive wine list, numerous bottle and draft beers and premium liquors.
hearsayhouston.com, 1515 Dallas, 832.377.3362.
L & D Daily; LN Fri–Sat; BR Sun. $5

Home Plate Bar & Grill Classic American
A great hangout spot before or after an Astros ballpark game. Enjoy a full menu of all-American favorites.

House of Blues Restaurant and Bar American
From daytime to playtime, House of Blues Restaurant & Bar draws inspiration from across the South, including iconic dishes, signature Southern-inspired recipes, as well as a wide range of burgers, sandwiches and salads. Enjoy live music most nights and don’t miss Houston’s best Jazz &’N Blues Brunch every Saturday! hob.com, Greenstreet. 1204 Caroline, 888.402.5837.
L & D Daily. $5

Hubcap Grill American Classic
Small but packs a punch. One of the best burger joints in town. 1111 Prairie, 713.223.5885.
L Mon–Sat. $5

Iurma’s Mexican
Iurma Galvan has been crowned Houston’s Tex-Mex goddess. This authentic spot is a longtime favorite among Houston politics and downtown business people. Traditional, home-cooked Mexican cuisine is served for breakfast and lunch on weekdays. 22 North Chenevert, 713.222.0767.
B & L Mon–Fri; D Thu–Sat. $5

Iurma’s Southwest Grill Mexican
Iurma’s second location is a hip spot to satisfy a Mexican food craving. Enjoy tasty foods and great drinks for lunch or dinner. Only a few short blocks from Minute Maid Park.
imassouthwest.com, 1475 Texas, 713.247.9651.
L & D Mon–Sat. $5

The Isles Eatery & Rhum Bar Caribbean
The restaurant offers flavorful Caribbean dishes including Mogongo and Ensalada Calamari de Pulpo, along with an astonishing collection of 56 plus island rum’s used to create custom cocktails rooted in the regional rhythms of the islands. isleseasteryandbar.com.
1515 Pease, 713.739.9039.
L, D, LN Tue–Sun. $5

Jackson St. BBQ Barbecue
This laid-back spot by renowned Houston chefs Bryan Caswell, Bill Floyd and Greg Gatlin offers smoked brisket, ribs, chicken, sausage and classic southern fixins like potato salad, baked beans, collar greens and cole slaw! Conveniently located across from Minute Maid Park, stop by this Downtown favorite before or after Astros games! jacksonstbbqhouston.com, 209 Jackson St., 713.224.2400.
L & D Sat–Sun. $5

Jason’s Deli Deli
Order to please, Jason’s will make your sandwich or salad exactly how you like it.
jasonsdeli.com, 901 McKinney, 713.650.1500.
B & L Mon–Fri. $5

Jimmy John’s Gourmet Sandwiches Deli
All subs...
are served on your choice of fresh-baked French bread or thick-sliced seven-grain bread or try the low-carb lettuce wrap: all the regular sandwich ingredients without the bread. jimmyjohns.com. 820 Main, 713.222.9995. L Mon–Sat. $  

**Kulture Caribbean** Dubbed “an urban comfort kitchen,” the restaurant explores food, spirits, art and music through cultural contributions of the African diaspora, including Caribbean and Southern cuisine and daily happy hour specials in a casually elevated, yet comfortable dining atmosphere. 701 Avenida De Las Americas. 713.528.8561. B & D. $$

**The Lake House Fast Casual** Offering family-friendly food, featuring burgers, Kobe beef hot dogs, salads, shakes, wine and beer. Located on Kinder Lake, there is a large patio where you can watch model boats race across the water or listen to some live music from the nearby stage. thelakehousehouston.com. Discovery Green, 1500 McKinney. L & Early D Mon–Sun. $  

**La Calle Mexican** Located in Downtown’s historic Market Square, this cozy restaurant serves authentic Mexican street tacos, tortas and tostadas. Your visit isn’t complete without an Agua Fresca or pit stop at the funky digs’ ‘lucha libre themed bar, La Cantina! In addition to the savory tacos, you’ll find plenty of Mexican beers, drafts, and frozen margaritas. localetacos.com. 909 Franklin, 832.735.8226. L, D & LN Daily. $  

**La Fisheria Coastal Mexican** Located in Downtown’s Historic District, La Fisheria serves authentic Mexican Seafood such as sweet shrimp tamales, perfectly prepared fish tacos and a variety of crudos and ceviches. lafisheriahouston.com. 213 Milam, 713.802.1712. B & LN Daily. $  

**La Palapa Fast Food** A Courthouse District favorite, there’s always a line at this free-standing pink concession stand for breakfast tacos and hamburgers. 1110 Preston, 713.228.6620. B & Mon–Fri. $  

**Last Concert Cafe Mexican** Tucked away in the Warehouse District, this Tex-Mex cafe was born in 1949 and still supplies tasty food and local music today. Spend some time on the leafy back patio and you’ll swear you’re in your neighbor’s backyard throwing back a cold one lastconcert.com. 1403 Nance, 713.226.8563. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sun; LN Fri–Sat; Bar & live music Tue–Sat. $  

**Line & Lariat Modern American** An award-winning dining experience located in the historic lobby of Hotel Icon’s landmark bank building. The intimate dining room is extravagant, and the exquisite dishes from the Gulf Coast and South Texas emphasize fresh ingredients. A contemporary lounge with modern setting for cocktails and an elegant after-work meeting place. hotelicon.com. Hotel Icon, 220 Main, 832.667.4470. B Daily; D Mon–Sat. $$$

**Little Napoli Italian** Theater and moviegoers can now enjoy these southern Italian dishes before the big show! The healthy options, such as whole wheat pizza crust and low-fat cheeses, are a nice touch. littlenapolinetx.net. 540 Texas, 713.225.3900. $  

**Local Foods American** Local Foods is a culinary expression of all things local. The scratch gourmet sandwich shop showcases seasonal salads, fresh soups, farmers market sides, home-made snacks for the taking, and a raw bar with ceviche and oyster shooters. houstonlocalfoods.com. 420 Main, 713.227.0531. L & D Daily. $  


**Luby’s, etc. American** Enjoy an incredible view of downtown along with 10 food stations offering a wide variety of goodies: a build-your-own salad bar, made-to-order grill, pizza by-the-slice, delightful deli, global café and traditional Luby’s cafeteria line with all the classic dishes. lubysetc.com. 1301 Fannin, 13th Floor, 713.759.9954. B & L Mon–Fri. $  

**Lancienne Mediterranean** Not only will the chic brass accents throughout this glamorous gem impress you, but the French-inspired dishes like Gravlax with rye toast, caper berries, dill and mustard sauce will tempt your taste buds into coming back for more. You’ll find this glamorous gem sitting on the second level of Hotel Alessandra. hotelalessandrahouston.com. Hotel Alessandra, 1070 Dallas, Second Floor. 713.242.8555. B, L & D Mon–Fri; BR Sat–Sun. $$  

**Lucky Strike Lounges & Lounge American** Bowlers and patrons relax on sleek leather couches and enjoy floor-to-ceiling video screens that flash movie clips and music videos as DJs deliver danceable grooves. Delectable munchies are available lane-side and in the lounge. bowluckystrike.com. Green Street, 1201 San Jacinto, Level 3, 713.343.3300. L, D & LN Daily. $  

**Main Kitchen American** Named Main Kitchen to reflect its location on Main Street and the hopes of becoming a staple in Houston’s culinary scene, the restaurant seats 120 and boasts an exhibition kitchen providing guests with an insight into the chefs’ creative process. jwmarrriotthotelleisure.com/main-kitchen. 806 Main St, 713.400.1245. B, D, Daily. $$  

**Mango Tree Thai Bistro Thai** A casual Thai joint that keeps booths packed with hungry downtowners looking for eclectic dishes to satisfy their spice cravings. And there’s a pretty tempting happy hour for drinks and nibbles under $$5. mangotreethai.com. 914 Main Street, 713.659.1600. L & D Mon–Sat. $  

**Massa’s South Coast Grill Seafood** Like its sister restaurant, you can count on superior service and a great dining atmosphere. Conveniently located close to the convention center and Toyota Center, it’s a prime spot for lunch and dinner. massa.com. The Shops Houston Center, 1331 Lamar, 713.655.9100. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $  

**McAlister’s Deli American** This fast casual deli serves fresh salads, sandwiches, soups, and giant stuffed potatoes. mcalistersdeli.com. 1001 Avenida de las Americas, 832.940.0660. L & D Daily. $$  

**McCormick & Schmick’s Seafood** The extensive menu changes daily depending on each day’s fresh seafood deliveries. With more than 80 preparations on the menu each day, every guest is sure to find something to satisfy their palate. mccormickandschmicks.com. Green Street, 1201 Fannin, 713.658.8100. B & D Daily. $$$  

**McDonald’s Fast Food** 808 Dallas @ Milam, 713.651.9449. B & D Daily; Mon–Fri. $  

**Mia Bella Italian** You’ll enjoy an eclectic variety of Italian cuisine blended with a Mediterranean feel. A longtime favorite, this intimate little bistro’s menu offers an exquisite blend of Italy, Greece, and Israel. Mia Bella’s is a true gem located in the heart of Houston’s Little Italy. They have a wonderful selection of wines, including many local favorites. miablettahouston.com. 507 Main, 713.224.2777. B, L & D Daily. $  

**Minuti Coffee Coffee House** The coffee is created by a roast master in Italy, before making its way into the hands of talented baristas. This is the perfect place to bring the laptop and take advantage of Minuti’s free Wi-Fi. They also have beer and wine, which makes it a great pre/post theater spot. Be sure to sample some of the fresh-baked pastries and smoothies. minuticoffee.com. 909 Texas, 281.265.3344. B, L & LH Daily. $  

**MKT BAR International** Part of Phoenicia Specialty Foods, it’s the perfect place to stop when you need a chill moment. The bar offers coffee, pastries, wine, beer, gourmet pizza and other yummy nibbles for which Phoenicia is known. phoeniciafoods.com. 1001 Austin, 832.360.2222. B, L & D Daily. $$  

**The Moonshiners American** The Moonshiners Southern Table + Bar offers up a rebellious reprieve in the bustling urban backdrop of Downtown Houston. The restaurant celebrates and elevates southern culinary traditions serving up moonshine and whiskey in mason jars alongside generous portions of southern comfort foods such as fried chicken, shrimp and grits, and pulled pork sandwiches. 1000 Prairie, 713.226.7717. L & D Mon–Fri; LN Fri & Sat. $$  

**Morton’s Steakhouse** This award-winning steakhouse offers an outstanding menu. The downtown location features its new bar concept, Bar 12-21, which includes an impressive wine and martini menu along with its specially priced “bar bites.” mortons.com. 1001 McKinney, 713.659.3700. L Mon–Fri; D Daily. $$$$  

**Murphy’s Deli Deli** Indulge in a variety of sandwiches and salads. Hot or cold, Murphy’s specializes in creating your sandwich any way it’s ordered. murphysdeli.com. 601 Jefferson, 713.652.4939. 1900 Main, 713.650.3354. 440 Louisiana, 713.247.9122. 700 Louisiana, 713.547.0660. 1415 Louisiana, 832.663.6113. 500 Dallas, 713.654.0033. B & L Mon–Fri at all locations. $$  

**Niko Niko’s Greek & American** Houston icon Dimitri Petokolas opened his cafe in 2010 at Market Square Park. Favorites such as the gyro and kebob are on the menu along with new items such as the breakfast pita. Specialty coffee drinks, beer and wine also available. nikonikos.com. Market Square Park, 301 Milam. B, L & D Daily. $  

**Osso & Kristalla Italian** Osso & Kristalla serves up authentic Italian fare in a modern, yet relaxed atmosphere. The casual trattoria features housemade pastas, pastas, wood-fired pizzas and more Italian eats, along with wine, beer, cocktails and local Katz coffee. Enjoy views inside their open concept kitchen or on their breezy outdoor patio. ossoandkristalla.com. 1515 Texas, 713.221.6666. B Mon–Fri; L & D Daily. $$  

**The Oyster Bar Seafood** Housed inside Prohibition Supper Club, The Oyster Bar is a street-friendly, neighborhood-centric concept serving an extensive seafood menu including fried shrimp, fried oysters, Gulf Coast & East Coast oysters, pan roasted market fish, and roasted cauliflower & mushroom fettuccine. Get your seafood and burlesque fix all in the same place. prohibitionhouston.com. Prohibition, 1008 Prairie, 281.940.4636. D Daily. $$  

**Padthai Thai Restaurant Thai** A traditional Thai restaurant located at the ground level of the loft residence Hogg Palace. The warm and cozy atmosphere offers a great setting for a dinner escape and is a local favorite. padthaihouston.com. 401 Louisiana, 713.225.4900. D Daily. $
Prohibition American
Prohibition is the home of the Moonlight Dolls who dazzle audiences with their sexy yet fun burlesque performances. Beaming with glitz and glamour, this upscale supper club has an exquisite menu featuring fresh Gulf seafood and steaks cooked to perfection! prohibitionhoustontx.com. 1008 Prairie, 281.940.4636. D Thu–Sat; BR Sun. $$$

Quattro Contemporary Italian
Vivid colors, creative lighting and a unique design create a sophisticated and inviting ambiance for guests. Located in the Four Seasons Hotel, Quattro is one of downtown's best restaurants. Four Seasons Hotel, 1300 Lamar, 713.652.6250. B, L & D Daily. $$$

Quino's Fast Food

Rachel's Cafe American
Rachel's Cafe is an old fashioned hamburger joint inside the historic Loundale Building. This quaint little cafe has an extensive menu with lots of simple classics like burgers, fries, sandwiches and salads. It's all made fresh! rachelscafehoustontx.com. 421 San Jacinto, 713.229.7067. L & D Mon–Sat. $

Roma's Pizza Italian
Located just across from the Preston Station on the METRORail, Roma's Pizza offers New York-style pizza by the slice or pie, as well as a variety of salads, lasagnas, ravioli, and chicken dishes. 223 Main, 713.222.1184. L & D Daily. $

Russo's New York Pizzeria Italian
Inspired by the traditional Italian values of family, friends & food, this Houston original doesn't disappoint when it comes to fresh, delicious, homemade Italian meals. And they serve more than just pizza—try one of their specialty calzones, sandwiches or pastas! napizzeria.com. 604 Poik, 713.759.9800. L & D Daily. $

Salata American
This next-generation salad bar allows you to create your own, tossed-to-order salad or wrap complete with a variety of fresh greens, a large selection of veggies, fruits, nuts, cheeses and more. Top your order off with one of their signature dressings and your choice of chicken, seafood or tofu! salatam.com. GreenStreet, 1201 Fannin, 713.275.1088. L & D Daily. $

Sambuca New American
A hip, trendy and upscale restaurant right in the mix of Main Street. The menu includes a wide variety of favorites and combined with the live music, Sambuca is Houston's ultimate supper club. sambucarestaurant.com. 909 Texas, 713.224.5299. L–Mon; D & LN Daily. $$$

Sapporo Japanese Sushi & Bar Asian
Sapporo Japanese Sushi & Bar offers everything from sushi and yakisoba to shrimp vegetable tempura and smoked tajin yakisoba mignon. Daily happy hour favorites include hot sake, fried oysters and an assortment of sushi rolls. sapporohouston.com. 801 Congress, 832.491.0337. L, D, LN Daily. $$

The Shops at Houston Center Food Court

Shula's Steakhouse

Skyline Deli Deli
With their freshly baked bread, Skyline makes a great deli sandwich. 717 Texas, 713.571.0509. B & L Mon–Fri. $

Sol Cafe Mejicano Mexican
A family-owned cafe offering traditional Tex-Mex breakfast and lunch dishes made from fresh ingredients. 1205 Travis, 713.651.0049. B & L Mon–Fri. $
Walker St. Kitchen | American
Walker Street Kitchen serves the freshest offerings from the Gulf Coast, fusing cultural and geographical influences into a culinary feast. 1777 Walker, 713.654.1777.
B, L & D Daily. $$

Wimpy's Hamburgers | Fast Food
Wimpy's serves up a pretty good burger but they also have many other down-home favorites. 632 Polk, 713.652.0123.
B & L & Mon–Fri. $

Wokker at Craft Beer Cellar | Asian
Food truck favorite, Wokker, is now housed inside CraftBeer Cellar. Combining spices and cultures that blend harmoniously, Wokker is known for creating unique dishes that incorporate the wok, proteins and Texas cooking techniques. wokkerhtx.com. 907 Franklin, 713.227.0199. L & D. $ 

Xochi | Mexican
Named after Xochitl, the goddess of the flowers, Xochi specializes in the authentic cuisine of Oaxaca, the culinary capital of Mexico, and incorporates traditional Oaxacan herbs and ingredients throughout its menu. Highlights include the barbacoa de res de zaachila, lechon, and sopa de piedra, an ancient traditional fish and shrimp soup. ¡buen provecho! xochihouston.com. 1777 Walker, 713.400.3330. L & D Daily. $$$

Your Pie Italian | Your Pie is a “down-the-line” pizza concept offering customers the opportunity to build their own 10” hand-tossed pizza which cooks in a gas-fired oven in less than five minutes! Their bar menu includes 25 taps of craft beer and a selection of boutique red and white wines. yourpie.com. 1625 Main (inside SkyHouse Houston), 832.767.2544. L & D. $$

Zero's Sandwich Shop | Deli

Zutro Restaurant & Bar | American
Nestled inside Le Meridien Hotel, Zutro Restaurant & Bar offers reliable quality in a relaxed upscale environment. Tasty dishes are made with locally sourced ingredients and include favorites like Duck and Andouille Gumbo, Crab Gratin and Chicken Fried Pork Tomahawk. 1121 Walker, 346.330.3446.
B, L, & D Daily. $$

Zydeco Louisiana Diner | Cajun
This cafeteria-style Cajun joint brings Louisiana dishes to the Hospital District of downtown Houston. Traditional Cajun items such as po-boys, jambalaya and gumbo make Zydeco a great lunch stop. A casual atmosphere adds to the enjoyment. 119 Pease, 713.759.2001. L Mon–Sat; D Tue–Sat. $
806 Lounge | 806 Main
A favorite of the locals, 806 Lounge located inside the JW Marriott Houston Downtown, ignites the senses with sophisticated creations. Their mixologists are experts in creating cocktails, lively in conversation, and can recommend a favorite dish to accompany your handcrafted drink. Daily 11 am–11 pm
jwmarriottdowntown.com/806-lounge

1820 Bar | 1820 Franklin
This cozy bar little location is just one block north of Minute Maid Park. It’s the perfect place for a pre-game drink or a strong night cap during the week. Eighteen Twenty Lounge shares a door with Joystic Classic Games which is open on the first and last Friday of every month where $15 gets you all night access to practice your Pac-Man skills. Daily 4 pm–2 am. 1820lounge.com

Etro Lounge | 114 Main
Follow the bright lights and fun music flowing along Main Street to Etro Lounge! Known as a longtime staple in the Houston club scene, Etro spins the best in 80s dance and hip-hop as well as, contemporary electronic music. Tue–Sun 9 pm–2 am. etronightclub.com

Flying Saucer | 705 Main
Offering more than 200 beers, with nearly half on draft, Flying Saucer is a great place to hang out and enjoy a cold one. Check out the website for information on beer tastings, trivia night and specials. Mon–Wed 11 am–1 am; Thu & Fri 11 am–2 am; Sat noon–2 am; Sun noon–midnight. beerkurd.com

Frank’s Backyard | 413 Travis
Forget about ordering pizza to-go and enjoy a slice or two at Frank’s Backyard. Whether you take a seat at the beer garden’s nifty airstream trailer housing 40 beers on tap or enjoy a glass of bourbon on their upper level deck, this local hotspot will take your traditional “pizza night” to the next level. Daily 3 pm–2 am. franksbackyard.net

Henke & Pilott | 809 Congress
Where past meets present, drinks and dining blend in flawless harmony. Henke & Pilott is more than a dynamic Downtown cocktail lounge. Named after the Houston grocery store chain that occupied the space in the 800 block of Congress over 150 years ago, the simple yet sophisticated setting offers patrons patrons inspired cocktails that are paired with mouthwatering dishes. Wed–Sat 4 pm–2 am. henkehouston.com

High & Dry Rum Bar | 306 Main, Suite 200
Offering more than 50 different types of rums behind the tiki-themed bar, High & Dry is your go-to destination for all your rum-based cocktail needs. Order a classic or try out the bar’s upgraded infusions of the Mai Tai and Hurricane, or maybe both! Thu–St 4 pm–2 am. highanddrytx.com

Houston Watch Company | 913 Franklin
Houston Watch Company is located in the lobby of the Bayou Lofts at 913 Franklin and gets its name from the former timepiece company that occupied the space over 100 years ago. From its name to its drinks, Houston Watch Company is the essence of old-school. We suggest trying one of their four different versions of an old fashioned or the strawberry shrub cocktail made with fresh fruit! Sun–Tue 4 pm–midnight; Wed–Sat 4 pm–2 am. houstonwatchcompany.com

HTX Fan Tavern | 1800 Texas
HTX Fan Tavern is a sports-centric bar conveniently located across from Minute Maid Park. It’s the perfect place to pre-game before cheering on the home team or to celebrate after a big victory! htxfantavern.com

The Isles Eatery & Rhum Bar | 1515 Pease
Immerse yourself in this Caribbean hotspot and choose from an astonishing collection of 36 plus island rums used to create delightful cocktails rooted in the regional rhythms of the islands. Tue 4 pm–2 am; Wed & Thu 11 pm–Fri 3 pm–2 am; Sat & Sun Noon–2 am. isleseeteryandbar.com

Kanalos | 311 Travis
Bring on the mai tais, bamboo backdrop and vibrant island vibes! Kanalos brings a full-on tiki experience to Historic Market Square. Lay back with a pain killer cocktail in hand or bite into any of the delicious Korean-Mexican fusion menu items from Oh My Gogi. Tue 4–Midnight; Wed–Sat 4–2 am; Sun 2 pm–Midnight. kanaloshtx.com

La Cantina by La Calle | 909 Franklin
This authentic Mexican sports bar is draped in vintage lucha libre threads, and is the perfect hangout to throw back a few Micheladas, enjoy your fix of tacos and catch your favorite soccer, boxing or UFC match on one of their large 82” screen TVs. If you get too carried away, drop by La Cantina’s sister concept, La Calle the next morning or the perfect hangover cure—a big bowl of menudo or caldo! Mon–Wed 3 pm–midnight; Thu–Fri 3 pm–2 am; Sat 11 am–2 am; Sun 11 am–midnight. laclalletacos.com

La Carafe | 813 Congress
The oldest building in Houston, this dark and cozy hideaway boasts a great jukebox, moody atmosphere and an extensive beer and wine selection. Sit on the outside patio or balcony and look up in awe at the amazing downtown skyline. Cash only. Mon–Fri noon–2 am; Sat & Sun 1 pm–2 am.

Last Concert Café | 403 Nance
You have to knock three times on the red door to gain entry to the unmarked house in the Warehouse District (well, not anymore). With a backyard stage and sandpit, hoola-hooping and tiki bar, Last Concert has live music most nights. Thu & Fri 11 am–2 am; Sat 11 am–2 am; Sun 11 am–midnight.

Lawless Spirits & Kitchen | 909 Texas
Lawless Spirits & Kitchen is an establishment with flair. A place that gives rise to the iconic visions of Teddy Roosevelt, Mark Twain, Frank Sinatra or Steve McQueen leaning on the bar with a stiff, well-crafted Rye Manhattan. Lawless is detailed with gatsby style, featuring revolutionary cocktails accompanied by confortable finger foods and satisfying bites. Daily 4–11 pm. lawlessspirits.com

Lilly & Bloom | 110 Main St.
Located in the historically chic Raphael Building, this beautiful two-story lounge is known for its specialty cocktails and guest bartenders every Tuesday night. Prepare to be amazed! Daily 4 pm–2 am. lillyandbloom.com

Lobby Bar | 1600 Lamar
Lobby Bar inside Hilton Americas-Houston is ideal for relaxing conversations or a casual meeting. You can treat yourself to the finest in tequilas, your favorite martini or sip a glass of wine while enjoying a light bite. Mon–Fri 2 pm–2 am; Sat 11 am–2 am; Sun Noon–2 am. hilton.com

Lone Star Saloon | 1900 Travis
The Lone Star Saloon is a true classic Texas dive bar that seems misplaced in its urban setting. The crowd, half way twonies and half world-weary road dogs, are always willing to share have-been-to-hell-and-back stories. Daily noon–2 am.

MKT BAR | 1001 Austin
Part of Phoenicia Specialty Foods, MKT BAR is a hip wine and beer bar offering light bites and an urban, yet relaxed setting to hang out with friends on the weekend or unwind with coworkers after a long day. The bar is a local favorite with DJs, bands and fun theme nights. Mon–Wed 7 am–9 pm; Thu 7 am–2 am; Fri & Sat 9 am–2 am; Sun 5 pm–8 pm. mktbar.com

Molly’s Pub | 509 Main
This classic Irish pub offers a variety of Irish whiskies and international beer and wines. Flags and coves lead you to the back, where pool and darts can be found and a second-floor balcony provides excellent views of Main Street and Downtown. Daily 11 am–2 am. mollyspubs.com

The Nightingale Room | 308 Main
The Nightingale Room—named for the famous songbird—also references Houston music legend Sippie Wallace, known as the Texas Nightingale during her prime in the 1920s. This entertainment-focused bar is a casual, comfortable spot to listen to vinyl during the week and will turn up the energy on weekends with live music—dancing is encouraged! Expect a variety of music from all genres. The drink menu features a small selection of house drinks, shots, as well as beer, wine and champagne. Tue–Sat 4 pm–2 am. nightingaleroom.com

Noble Rot Wine Bar | 1010 Prairie
Noble Rot is a laid back wine bar inside the Conservatory with a list of fantastic & easy drinking wines. The bar staffs a superstar team of stewards who are there to guide anyone that may not drink much wine to a glass that’s their perfect fit. Sun–Wed 11 am–midnight; Thu 11–1 am; Fri–Sat 11–3 am. conservatoryhtx.com

Notsou | 314 Main
The name is Houston spelled backwards. A bar full of random weirdness: Think grunge lounge and artsy. You’ll find people playing chess, and drinking beer, live music, lots of crazy, weird artwork and maybe walk in on a night of punk-rock karaoke. Live bands on weekends. Daily 8 pm–2 am. notsou.com

One-Armed Scissor | 208 Travis
Chill vibes, tempting libations, and an intimate experience will keep you coming back to this hotspot located in the Historic Market Square neighborhood. Tue–Thu & Sun 3 pm–Midnight; Fri–Sat 3 pm–2 am. onearmedscissorsbar.com

The Original OKRA Charity Salon | 924 Congress
Houston’s first charity bar is a true collaboration from Houston’s finest, including owners from Anvil, Paulie’s, Grand Prize and more. Expect classic cocktails and brews in a gorgeous historic building. Every drink purchase earns you a vote that can go toward select charities to win the bar’s monthly earnings. Daily 3 pm–2 am. friedokra.org
Part & Parcel | 1700 Smith
Part & Parcel is a trendy patio bar located at The Whitehall Hotel—it’s the perfect place to mingle, sip and relax under the Texas stars. Their menu includes classic cocktails, original libations, and small plates with big taste! Mon–Thu 4 pm–midnight; Fri–Sat 4 pm–2 am. thewhitehallhouston.com

The Pastry War | 310 Main
A Mezcaleria from Bobby Heugel and Alba Huerta that serves up agave spirits along with classic Mexican cocktails and beers in a festive and intimate environment. This specialty tequila joint not only accepts pesos, but is on a brave mission to serve the best margaritas in town. Salud! Tue–Sat 4 pm–2 am. thepastrywar.com

The Pearl | 1117 Prairie
The Pearl offers a large variety of innovative cocktails, unique craft beers, wines and spirits. Mon–Thu 6:30 am–11 pm; Fri 6:30 am–12 pm; Sat 7 am–12 pm; Sun 7 am–11 pm. pearlrestauranthouston.com

Pete’s Dueling Piano Bar | 1201 Fannin at GreenStreet
Two dueling pianos and a sing-along, clap-along, drink-along, have-one-helluva-good-time-along bar! Wed–Sat 7 pm–2 am, showtime @ 8 pm. petesduelingpianobar.com

Public Services Wine & Whiskey | 202 Travis
Nestled in the historic Cotton Exchange Building, Public Services Wine & Whiskey. Public Services isn’t just any cocktail bar, in fact, they’re the complete opposite. Here, patrons can find classic wines and a vast yet distinctive whiskey selection served straight, on the rocks, or with a small selection of mixers. Craft beer and cider help round out the carefully crafted drink menu. Mon–Sat 4 pm–2 am. publicservicesbar.com

Reserve 101 | 1201 Caroline
A whiskey and martini bar touting more than 220 specialty liquors that will make any cocktail aficionados mouth water. Stop by on Tuesday for complimentary tastings of special selections. Order up delicious bites from the new, chef-driven menu featuring tasty flatbreads, appetizers and sandwiches. Sun 5 pm–2 am; Mon–Sat 2 pm–2 am. reserve101.com

Saint Arnold Beer Garden & Restaurant | 2000 Lyons
Saint Arnold’s Beer Garden & Restaurant is a must-go-to destination combining beer, food, architecture, and art. Guests can enjoy a pint of any Saint Arnold beer along with an expanded lunch and dinner menu that includes a variety of shareable dishes, pizzas, sandwiches, salads, and world-class entrees. Sun–Wed 11 am–10 pm; Thu–Sat 11 am–11 pm. saintarnold.com

Shay McElroy’s Pub | 909 Texas at Rice Lofts
Dublin native and owner John McElroy created this space around a richly detailed, 19th-century bar he had shipped from Ireland. The crowd is an inviting collection of young professionals and not-so-young Merrymakers. Mon–Fri 11 am–2 am; Sat & Sun 1 pm–2 am. mcelroyspub.com

Sunny’s Bar | 901 Capitol @ Main
Laid-back place with a friendly atmosphere and great prices that keep the regulars coming back. Sunny will likely be behind the bar serving up the beer and cocktails and great conversation. Foosball, darts and shuffleboard are in the back of the house to keep you entertained. Mon–Sat 2 pm–2 am.

Tongue Cut Sparrow | 310 Main (upstairs)
Named after a Japanese fable, this 25-seat formal cocktail bar provides an extremely elevated experience from the tidy menu made up of 16 classic cocktails and a few select beer and wine options, to the bartenders clad in black bowties. Wed–Sat 4 pm–2 am.

Warren’s Inn | 307 Travis
This tavern is long known for its top-notch jukebox full of American classics, strong mixed drinks and its diverse crowd of customers. Mon–Fri 11 am–2 am; Sat noon–2 pm, Sun 2 pm–2 am.

The Wine Cellar | 540 Texas
Unwind and relax with more than 400 varieties of wine and imported beers. Wine tastings Mon–Thu, 2–7 pm. Daily 11 am–midnight. thewinecellarhouston.com

Z on 23 | 1121 Walker
Sitting on Le Meridien’s 23rd floor, this gem offers a light menu, craft cocktails, specialty beers, a unique wine selection and 360-degree views of Downtown Houston. Sun–Thu 4–10 pm; Fri–Sat 4–11 pm. lemeridienhoustondowntown.com

It’s okay to say no to panhandlers. THERE’S A BETTER WAY TO GIVE: meaningfulchange.org
datebook.
PERFORMING ARTS

THE NUTCRACKER
Through Dec 29
The holiday season reignites with Stanton Welch’s joyous production of The Nutcracker. Enjoy all the splendor of this timeless classic. Journey with Clara, Drosselmeyer, Sugar Plum Fairy, and the Nutcracker Prince as they embark on a magical adventure through a growing Christmas tree, interactive snow scene, and the whimsical Kingdom of Sweets. The music, costumes, and hundreds of delightful characters will bring out the child in everyone! Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

TALES OF A HARD NUT
Through Dec 29
Prohibition’s world-famous Moonlight Dolls are thrilled to present their holiday show Tales of a Hard Nut, a burlesque-inspired adaptation of the timeless classic, The Nutcracker. Through veils of glistening snowflakes and song, the Snow Queen guides Clara through the Land of the Sweets, discovering the original and far naughtier Nutcracker Land than the world-weary Rat King originally intended. 7 pm. Prohibition Theatre, 1008 Prairie. prohibitiontheatre.com

A CHRISTMAS CAROL—A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS
Through Dec 30
Houston’s seasonal favorite returns! A Christmas Carol—A Ghost Story of Christmas is a family-friendly re-telling of Charles Dickens’ classic story, which follows Ebenezer Scrooge’s journey with the three ghostly spirits who visit him on Christmas Eve. A Christmas Carol instills a powerful message about redemption and the spirit of the holiday season. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. 713.220.5700. alleytheatre.org

PEDRITO MARTINEZ GROUP
Dec 1
Cuban-born and New York-based Pedrito Martinez is a master percussionist and an irrepressible bandleader who has recorded with Wynton Marsalis, Paul Simon, Paquito D’Rivera, Bruce Springsteen and Sting, and has contributed as a percussionist and vocalist to more than 50 albums. Pedrito Martinez’s group possesses a rare level of virtuosity, but it never gets in the way of their ability to get a room moving. 8 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.524.5050. dacamera.com

OLHSSON PLAYS BEETHOVEN
Dec 1–2
Beethoven’s soulful and sparkling Piano Concerto No. 3 gets the superstar treatment from legendary pianist Garrick Ohlsson. Then, immerse yourself in the soaring musical world of Sir Edward Elgar as renowned conductor Edo de Waart—a master of grand-scale symphonies—leads the composer’s lavish, heartfelt First Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

HOUSTON’S URBAN NUTCRACKER
Dec 1–2
A modern twist on a holiday classic showcases the rich cultural diversity of a world-class city with a Texas-sized heart for the arts! Join Clare as she travels with the Nutcracker through the Bayou City. 3 pm. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

KPVU HOLIDAY JAZZ & GOSPEL FEST FEATURING GREGORY PORTER & AVERY SUNSHINE
Dec 2
KPVU 91.3 FM, Prairie View A&M University’s acclaimed Public Radio station presents a benefit concert featuring the return of one of Houston’s favorite Grammy Award-winning jazz vocal artists, international singer-songwriter Gregory Porter, along with soulful jazz and gospel songstress Avery Sunshine. 5 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 832.487.7041. worthamcenter.org

A LITTLE DAY MUSIC
Dec 5
A Little Day Music is the longest-running free concert series in Houston. The concert returns to the Wortham Center and features members of the Da Camera Young Artist Program. Noon. Free. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.524.5050. dacamera.com

HANSEL AND GRETEL
Dec 6–22
A dark take on the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tale set in a stunning wooded installation by artist Mina Gaber. Audiences of all ages will be captivated by this stripped-down English version of Humperdinck’s folk-inspired opera in Rec Room’s Back Room. 8 pm. Rec Room, 100 Jackson. recroomarts.org

HANS AND GRETEL
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A dark tale of the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tale set in a stunning wooded installation by artist Mina Gaber. Audiences of all ages will be captivated by this stripped-down English version of Humperdinck’s folk-inspired opera in Rec Room’s Back Room. 8 pm. Rec Room, 100 Jackson. recroomarts.org
**Latin Christmas**
Dec 7 The Houston Latin American Philharmonic presents its annual concert Latin Christmas to celebrate the happiest time of the year. The program includes Villancicos, Aguinaldos, Parrandas, Gaitas and special guest Gilberto Santa Rosa, plus more. 8 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonlatinphil.org

**VERY MERRY POPS**
Dec 7–9 Sleigh bells ring and jingle bells chime as the Houston Symphony’s beloved holiday spectacular returns. Gather with family and friends in a cozy winter wonderland for a sparkling celebration filled to the brim with traditional carols, festive favorites and heartwarming cheer. The fabulous Ali Ewoldt, who currently stars as Christine in Broadway’s The Phantom of the Opera, joins in the fun, performing unforgettable renditions of your favorite holiday classics. 8 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

**A Polar Express Christmas**
Dec 8 All aboard! Find your compartment and get ready for a magical journey to the North Pole on The Polar Express. Featuring the original storybook images projected on the big screen, this timeless tale of a boy who believes will have your young ones waiting for the sound of Santa’s sleigh. Plus, enjoy festive favorites like Frosty the Snowman and Let It Snow and lift your voices in a holiday sing-along. 10 & 11:30 am. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

**Beauty and the Beast**
Dec 8–23 Theatre Under The Stars helped usher in a new musical era 25 years ago with Disney Theatrical’s Beauty and the Beast right here in Houston. Just in time for the holiday season, this magical, funny, and moving tale of what it means to love and be human will return to our stage to enchant the entire family. Theater Under the Stars, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. tuts.com

**SiriusXM Presents the Brian Setzer Orchestra-Christmas Rocks! Tour**
Dec 12 The iconic guitarist, songwriter, vocalist and his 19-piece orchestra whip up a huge dose of retro holiday cheer with their Christmas Rocks! Tour presented by SiriusXM. The acclaimed show also features music from their latest Christmas album, Rockin’ Rudolph, their three other best-selling holiday albums, as well as original Brian Setzer hits. 7:30 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. spahouston.org

**Home Alone With Live Orchestra**
Dec 14 A true holiday favorite, this beloved comedy classic features renowned composer John Williams’ charming and delightful score performed live to film by the Houston Symphony. Macaulay Culkin stars as Kevin McCallister, an 8-year-old boy who’s accidentally left behind when his family leaves for Christmas vacation. Hilarious and heart-warming. Home Alone is holiday fun for the entire family. 7:30 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

**Potted Potter**
Dec 11–30 Potted Potter: The Unauthorized Harry Experience—A Parody by Dan and Jeff takes on the ultimate challenge of condensing all seven Harry Potter books (and a real life game of Quidditch) into 70 hilarious minutes. This fantastically funny show features all your favorite characters, a special appearance from a fire-breathing dragon, endless costumes, brilliant songs, ridiculous props, and a generous helping of Hogwarts magic! Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. houstonsymphony.org

**HANDEL’S MESSIAH**
Dec 21–23 This Christmas, be moved by Handel’s ever-glorious setting of the greatest story ever told. The Houston Symphony, chorus and guest soloists join forces to fill Jones Hall with joyous refrains and exultant arias, including the powerful Hallelujah Chorus. 8 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

**ANOMALY: THE MAGIC OF ROBBY BENNETT AND OTHER CURIOSITIES**
Dec 22 Within this spectacle of magic, acrobatics, comedy, and more, your perception of time will be altered and your impression of what is possible will be shattered. All of this and much more happens over the course of one show with the performer Free Press Houston calls “one of the most celebrated illusionists going.” Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 832.487.7041. worthamcenter.org

**AN EVENING OF JAZZ**
Dec 30 A pre-New Year’s Eve jazz show with Houston’s own Vel Lewis, contemporary jazz artist Paula Atherton, smooth jazz duo the Braxton Brothers, and the talented saxophonist, songwriter, and vocalist Walter Beasley. 7 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 832.487.7041. worthamcenter.org

**Baroque Razzle-Dazzle**
Dec 31 Ars Lyrica’s New Year’s Eve celebration shines on violinist Adam LaMotte and Ars Lyrica core instrumentalists, ringing in 2019 with three dazzling concertos. The first and third Brandenburg concertos are brilliant ensemble works for strings and winds. Baroque Razzle-Dazzle pairs these works with an equally extravagant violin concerto by Bach’s close contemporary Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello, who served the Württemberg court in Stuttgart. 9 pm. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org
GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE
Jan 4–6  Majestic as a city skyline, Rhapsody in Blue’s iconic opening and unforgettable melodies make it one of the most enduringly popular works in all of classical music. Hear the original jazz band version, alongside Ravel’s bluesy, dreamy Concerto in G as the phenomenal Jeffrey Kahane plays and conducts this program of symphonic gems with a French twist and a Jazz Age flair. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

TOTALLY '80S
Jan 11–13  Break out those Members Only jackets, stirrup pants and shoulder pads and hold on to your hairspray—we’re going Totally ’80s! Nicole Parker (Mad TV, Broadway’s Wicked) and Aaron Finley (Broadway’s Kinky Boots, Rock of Ages), bring you the greatest hits from the raddest decade around, including chart-toppers by Sting, Elton John, Cyndi Lauper, Phil Collins and Don Henley. Plus, relive the treasured film music from E.T., Back to the Future and Raiders of the Lost Ark. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

GOOGOOSH
Jan 12  Googoosh is one of Iran’s most enduring and infamous entertainers. Born Faegheh Atashin in Tehran (Iran) in 1950, Googoosh grew up with the support of her entertainer father. Her artistic aspirations were supported by her father so much that she was encouraged to perform at some of Tehran’s largest cafes and bars from the age of 3. Throughout the decades, she played in successful blockbuster movies such as Hope and Fear (1960) and The Runaway Angel (1961), a film by George Obadiah. 8:30 pm. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.315.2400. thehobbycenter.org

THE BOOK OF MORMON
Jan 15–20  This outrageous musical comedy follows the misadventures of a mismatched pair of missionaries, sent halfway across the world to spread the Good Word. Now with standing room only productions in London, on Broadway, and across North America, The Book Of Mormon has truly become an international sensation. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. thehobbycenter.org

PAULA POUNDSTONE
Jan 18  Paula Poundstone is a popular comedian and panelist on NPR’s No. 1 show, the weekly comedy news quiz, Wait, Wait...Don’t Tell Me! Her new weekly podcast Nobody Listens to Paula Poundstone, is a comedy field guide to life. Each week Paula and her co-host, Adam Felber bring on leading expert guests and use their unique comedic sensibility to help us navigate life in the 21st century. Along the way, Paula attempts to explain existence through her kaleidoscopic perspective, and Adam tries to interject some rationality. Wortham Center, 501 Texas 832.487.7041. worthamcenter.org

BOYZ II MEN WITH THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY
Jan 18  Renowned for their smooth style and soulful hits, four-time Grammy Award-winning trio Boyz II Men joins the Houston Symphony for one night of musical magnitude. Redefining the genre of R&B by combining elements of a cappella and new jack swing, their expressive harmonies continue to captivate audiences decades later. From Motownphilly to End of the Road, relive the rhythms that dominated airwaves in the ‘90s. 7:30 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS
Jan 18–Feb 3  Love transforms. After leaving South America 20 years ago to pursue a music career, legendary opera singer Florencia Grimaldi journeys home to give a concert and to find Cristóbal, the true love she left all those years ago. Reality and fantasy come together for Florencia and her fellow passengers on the riverboat El Dorado as they travel down the mysterious Amazon toward uncharted fates. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. 713.228.6737. www.hgo.org
THE CARPENTER
Jan 18–Feb 10  This world premiere farce comes from the author of the Alley’s hit Hand to God. Dan is a self-made man from blue collar Houston while his fiancé is from Dallas—Highland Park, to be exact. As they arrive at her father’s palatial mansion for their wedding, Dan receives a startling revelation about his family, his father, and the secret everybody has been trying to keep. When the carpenter shows up to build the wedding gazebo, all hell breaks loose. There are mistaken identities, accidental partner swaps, an angry stripper and lots of laughs. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. 713.220.5700. alleytheatre.org

JAZZMEIA HORN SEPTET
Jan 19  Winner of the 2015 Thelonious Monk Competition, Texas-born vocalist Jazzmeia Horn has a name that speaks for itself. With an assured maturity and vocal confidence far beyond her years, the young singer arrives with her debut recording on Concord’s Prestige label, A Social Call, an album that reveals a talent ready to take her place alongside the best headlining jazz vocalists of today. 8 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.524.5050. dacamera.com

PRESERVATION HALL JAZZ BAND
Jan 24  Preservation Hall Jazz Band has held the torch of New Orleans music aloft for more than 50 years, all the while carrying it enthusiastically forward as a reminder that the heritage they preserve is a vibrantly living history. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

RAVEL’S LA VALSE
Jan 24–27  Filled with radiant warmth and dazzling flights into the stratosphere, Korngold’s Violin Concerto is one of the most treasured in the repertoire. In the hands of Latvian star Baiba Skride, “a passionate, heart-on-sleeve player” (The Guardian), it promises to be nothing short of extraordinary. A program tinged in the tumult of the 20th century ends with Ravel’s fiery showstopper, a hair-raising whirlwind that evokes old-world elegance waltzing on the brink of oblivion. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

THE PEARL FISHERS
Jan 25–Feb 8  A rarely performed gem of the opera world, The Pearl Fishers, is noted for its extraordinary musical beauty. Composed 12 years before Bizet’s masterwork Carmen, this opera tells the story of two best friends and the bond that is interrupted by the arrival of a priestess to bless the pearl harvest. This romantic love triangle between the best friends and the priestess lead to dramatic consequences. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. 713.228.6737. wwww.hgo.org

A VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR
Jan 26  The critically acclaimed production of created by Jonathan Rockefeller features a menagerie of 75 lovable puppets and faithfully adapts four stories by author/illustrator Eric Carle: Brown Bear, Brown Bear, 10 Little Rubber Ducks, The Very Lonely Firefly and of course, the star of the show—The Very Hungry Caterpillar. 1 & 4 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS
photo by Craig T. Mathew

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DORRANCE DANCE—ETM: DOUBLE DOWN
Feb 9 Dorrance Dance is an award-winning tap dance company based out of New York City, combining classic tap with more contemporary styles for more interesting and conceptual performances that aim to expand the audience of tap dancing. ETM: Double Down utilizes original tap instruments designed by 2014 Bessie Award Winner Nicholas Van Young, the score is not simply danced to, but danced BY the company. With the right programming, the sound of a single footfall can range from a snare drum to a note on an arpeggio.
Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

SCHERZI MUSICALI
Feb 15 Need a novel gift for your Valentine? Ars Lyrica offers an out-of-the-box treat: Claudio Monteverdi’s spirited Scherzi musicali (musical jokes). These game-changing publications from 1607 and 1632 gave life to one of the most famous debates in music history:
Monteverdi’s experimental style of vocal writing favored the words, whose careful expression justified the occasional compositional impropriety. Love in all its delicious colors is on the menu, as served up by soprano Dominique McCormick, mezzo-soprano Cecilia Duarte and baritone Brian Shircliffe. 7:30 pm. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.315.2400. arslyricahouston.org

THE ELLA FITZGERALD SONGBOOK
Feb 15–17 The Queen of Jazz. The First Lady of Swing. Lady Ella. No matter what you call her, Ella Fitzgerald’s sweet, silvery voice and scintillating scat improvisations are unmistakable and unforgettable. Celebrate Valentine’s Day with vintage Ella standards that never go out of style—romantic songs like Our Love is Here to Stay and Come Rain or Come Shine—sung with pitch-perfect verve by Broadway’s Capathia Jenkins, Montego Glover and N’Kenge. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

WAITRESS
Jan 29–Feb 3 Brought to life by a groundbreaking all-female creative team, this irresistible new hit features original music and lyrics by six-time Grammy nominee Sara Bareilles (Brave, Love Song), a book by acclaimed screenwriter Jessie Nelson (I Am Sam), choreography by Lorin Latarro (Les Dangereuse Liasons, Waiting for Godot), and direction by Tony Award winner Diane Paulus (Hair, Pippin, Finding Neverland). Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. thehobbycenter.org

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE IN CONCERT
Feb 1–2 Grab your broom and get ready for the tasks ahead! The Triwizard Tournament comes to Hogwarts in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire in Concert. Relive the magic of Harry Potter soaring across the big screen in high-definition and experience the Houston Symphony performing Patrick Doyle’s unforgettable score. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.227.4772. houstonsymphony.org

VIENNA 1900: IN THE GARDEN OF DREAMS
Feb 1–2 In this immersive Da Camera original production, spectacular dream-like visuals and powerful musical performances transport you to Vienna 1900. More than a concert, In the Garden of Dreams takes you inside an imagined Viennese music room where a solitary pianist playing Brahms’s last works gradually transforms into the symbol-rich garden of Schoenberg’s The Book of the Hanging Gardens. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. dacamera.com

CAPTURING THE VERY IMPOSSIBLE: FILMMAKER BRYAN SMITH
Feb 2 For extreme filmmaker Bryan Smith, the line between going for it and going too far is often blurry—especially when you’re exploring the earth’s most remote environments. In this edge-of-your-seat presentation, Bryan shows you what it means to adventure with purpose, and why he believes the best expeditions are the ones with a healthy chance of failure. 7:30 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

THE ELLA FITZGERALD
Feb 8 Winner of six Grammy Awards and three Latin Grammys, Cuban pianist, composer, arranger, and bandleader Chucho Valdés has been a key figure in the evolution of Afro-Cuban jazz for the past 50 years. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.524.5050. dacamera.com

QUACK
Feb 8–Mar 10 Millions of women across America rely on Dr. Irving Baer and his daytime talk show to help them lose weight, manifest their destinies, and take their health into their own hands. Then, a take-down piece of journalism goes viral, leaving his career hanging in the balance, his marriage on the rocks, and his carefully maintained public persona in peril. In the frenzy of crisis management that follows, one thing becomes clear … If Irving Baer is going to fall from grace, he’s bringing everyone else with him. Eliza Clark’s hilarious new comedy exposes the shaky foundations of the wellness industry, the fleeting nature of 21st century fame, and the relationship between the powerful men who dole out advice and the women who are supposed to receive it with a smile. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. 713.220.5700. alleytheatre.org

CHUCHO VALDES—JAZZ BATA
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photo by Joan Marcus
WILD, WILD WEST  
Feb 16  Grab your spurs and trusty steed, lil’ pardners—we’re gallopin’ back to the days of covered wagons and Wild West adventure! Do a do-si-do through Copland’s Hoedown and hold tight to the reins for Rossini’s William Tell Overture. Plus, hear fun favorites from Toy Story 2, Oklahoma! and more, and encounter a few special surprises on the western frontier. Yee Haw! 10 & 11 am. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org

MAMA MIA  
Feb 19–Mar 3  Audiences in more than 400 cities worldwide have danced in the aisles over Mamma Mia! This raucous, hilarious musical about a wedding on a Greek island tells the sweet story of love and heartbreak. Mamma Mia! is a juke box featuring all the hits you know and love from ABBA. Written by British playwright, Catherine Johnson, with music and lyrics by Benny Anderson and Bjorn Ulvaeus, Mamma Mia! is the ninth longest-running show on Broadway, and the longest-running jukebox musical in Broadway history. Theater Under the Stars, 800 Bagby. 713.558.2600. tuts.com

ARLO GUTHRIE—ALICE’S RESTAURANT  
BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND TOUR  
Feb 20  With a distinguished and varied career spanning almost 60 years, Arlo Guthrie has become an iconic figure in folk music. When he took to the road to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his seminal Alice’s Restaurant Massacre, he was incredibly moved by the feedback from enthusiastic fans. Alice’s Restaurant—Back By Popular Demand Tour will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the feature film Alice’s Restaurant, originally released in 1969 and starring Arlo as himself, directed by famed director Arthur Penn. 8 pm. Rec Room, 100 Jackson. recroomarts.org

SYLVIA  
Feb 21–Mar 3  Stanton Welch brings his own interpretation to the classic story of the strong mythological heroine, the huntress Sylvia, and her love for a mortal shepherd. The ballet follows her journey as she’s torn between her duty and her desires. Welch’s inspired work will showcase a constellation of figures from Greek mythology woven together in a tapestry of three love stories. This ballet is set to Léo Delibes’ famous score and provides an opportunity to see the classic story through Welch’s unique and creative narrative. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. 713.227.ARTS. houstonballet.org

BEIJING DANCE THEATER—HAMLET  
Feb 22  Beijing Dance Theater, one of China’s most distinguished dance companies, with its stunning dancers, returns to the U.S. with Hamlet. Don’t miss a ballet telling the story of Hamlet through the eyes of the melancholy prince, who struggles with power, family, revenge and love. 7:30 pm. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

THE WIZARD OF OZ  
Feb 23–24  The national Broadway tour of The Wizard of Oz is a spectacular celebration of the classic 1939 MGM film. Audiences young and old, seeing it for the first time or the fifth, will be dazzled by the brightly colored sets, charmed by its timeless score and enthralled with its breathtaking special effects. And whether it creates new memories or conjures them up from the past, everyone deserves to experience or relive the wonderful, whimsical and enduring story, The Wizard of Oz. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.227.4772. spahouston.org

ESCHENBACH AND JOSEFOWICZ  
Feb 28  Renowned for fiery, fearless performances that exude “the flair of a rock star” (Cleveland Plain Dealer), violin virtuoso Leila Josefowicz shines in Esa-Pekka Salonen’s acclaimed Violin Concerto. Written specially for Josefowicz, the concerto “covers as wide a range of expression as I could imagine,” says its composer. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. 713.224.7575. houstonsymphony.org
CITY HALL FARMERS MARKET
Wednesdays through Dec 19 The public can enjoy a variety of locally prepared ready-to-eat or packaged to-go foods, pick up farm-fresh weekly groceries and at the same time support sustainable food, all amidst Houston’s dramatic Downtown urban setting. Free. 11 am–1:30 pm. Hermann Square, 901 Bagby. urbanharvest.org

ART WALK
Dec 1 Learn about the exceptional public works of art at Buffalo Bayou in this new guided tour. Discover the meanings and muses behind specific pieces explained by the artists themselves. $10. 9:30–10:30 am. Buffalo Bayou Park. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

HOLIDAY BRUNCH
Dec 1 From a cookie-decorating station and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus to yummy brunch items including gingerbread chicken and waffles and classic holiday cartoons, there’s something for everyone at Phoenicia’s Holiday Brunch. 11 am–3 pm. Phoenicia Specialty Foods Downtown. 1001 Austin. phoeniciafoods.com

2018 ANNUAL INDONESIAN FESTIVAL HOUSTON
Dec 1 The festival will showcase Indonesian products, a batik fashion show, tourism and the cultural diversity of Indonesia as part of the rich international profile of Houston. Tickets $7. Kids under 12, free. 10 am–5 pm. Jones Plaza, 600 Louisiana. iacc–scu.org

HOLIDAY GINGERBREAD DECORATING CLASS AT PHOENICIA
Dec 1, 8, & 15 A festive event where kids can decorate gingerbread houses, enjoy holiday activities and a tasty seasonal brunch menu. There will be plenty of hot cocoa, holiday music and fun international holiday stories for all. Space is limited and registration is required. Ages 2–11. 10 am–noon. Phoenicia Specialty Foods Downtown. 1001 Austin. phoeniciafoods.com

CIGNA SUNDAY STREETS: MAIN STREET HOLIDAY EDITION
Dec 2 Now in its fifth season, this pedestrian and bike friendly street festival is spreading some holiday cheer in the heart of Downtown! Highlights of the Cigna Sunday Streets Main Street Holiday Edition will include street performances along the new route, specials at area bars and restaurants, live music at Market Square Park and ice skating at Discovery Green. Enjoy walking, running, dancing, skating or cycling down Main while enjoying the twinkle lights and decorations illuminating the city core. Free. 4–8 pm. downtowntownhouston.org

BRIAN REGAN
Dec 7 Regan made a scene-stealing cameo in Chris Rock’s film Top Five, and he was seen in Seinfeld’s Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee. But it is stand-up comedy that is Regan’s focus, as he’s visiting close to 100 cities each year, and selling out some of the most beautiful venues on the continent. Tickets $49–$59. 8 pm. revolutionmusiccenter.com

10TH ANNUAL GINGERBREAD BUILD-OFF
Dec 8 Architecture Center Houston will host the 10th Annual Gingerbread Build-Off at City Hall’s Hermann Square. Competing teams will create their masterpieces using 100 percent edible materials. More than 4,000 spectators are expected to attend and cheer on the teams, play in the kids’ construction zone, make their own gingerbread houses and take photos with Santa! All of that entertainment is free and open to the public. Free. 10 am–4:30 pm. Hermann Square, 900 Smith. aihouston.org

GUST: CELEBRATING A DECADE OF DISCOVERY
Through Mar 20 The interactive art installation is composed of nearly 2,000 custom-made pinwheels installed along the park’s Brown Foundation Promenade. The work is animated by fluctuating breezes as well as interactions with the public, creating a kinetic field of color under Discovery Green’s live oak alley. Open daily.

LOOP
Nov 30–Jan 6 A cross between a music box, a zoetrope and a railway handcar, this musical installation will energize Avenida Houston! Powered by large cylinders and human power, visitors are invited to sit inside LOOP and engage with the art. Just move the lever and let the music soothe your ears as you experience the illuminated light show. Daily, 8 am–11 pm. Free. Avenida Houston, 1001 Avenida de las Americas. avenidahouston.com

THE ICE POWERED BY GREEN MOUNTAIN ENERGY
Through Jan 27 Ice skating returns to Downtown Houston this holiday season! Lace up your skates and get ready for a memorable winter experience on the largest outdoor ice skating rink in the Southwest. Tickets start at $11. For schedule of events, holiday hours and more information visit discoverygreen.com/ice

WINTER FLEA BY NIGHT PRESENTED BY GREEN MOUNTAIN ENERGY
This popular flea market expands to a weekly event for the winter! The destination market features an array of artful kitsch, vintage items, repurposed objects and collectibles with live music, food trucks and more! 6–10 pm

TRANSFORMING THE SPIRIT IN SONG
Dec 15 Join members of the Houston Grand Opera Chorus in a holiday sing-along led by HGO’s music director and composer-in-residence, Damien Sneed. 7–8 pm.

BE THE ARTIST: HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP
Dec 19, Jan 30, Feb 27 Bring your camera or cell phone and learn how to capture spectacular images of lights, colors and movements of GUST from expert photographers. Class size is limited. 16 and older only. 6:30–8 pm.
RAINBOW ON ICE
Jan 11  The annual city-wide LGBT celebration returns to The ICE! Celebrate the season with the ultimate dance party with electrifying entertainment. 7–10 pm.

RUNWAY
Jan 26  Take a front row seat as GUST becomes a fashion runway by Houston artists. In collaboration with LAUNCH, this show features music by DJ Little Martin and designs by Chloe Dao, Spanglish Thredz and more. Party and artist market to follow. 5 pm.

HAZ TU PROPIO REGUILETE (MAKE YOUR OWN PINWHEELS)
Feb 10  Join Houston piñata and mache paper Catrinas expert Griselda Flores in a hands-on pinwheel-making workshop. Materials to make 400 pinwheels are provided free of charge until supplies run out. Presented in partnership with the Consular General of Mexico in Houston. 2–4 pm.

WEEKLY SKATE EVENTS

CHEAP SKATE NIGHTS
Mondays,  Glide around The ICE for half the price on select Monday nights! $8 per person or $15 for a pair. 5–10 pm.

GAME ON
Tuesdays,  Skating games are twice as nice when played on The ICE. Sign up to play hockey, broomball or a variety of games in the middle of the rink during a 15-minute intermission. 7–9 pm.

BREAK THE ICE DATE NIGHTS
Wednesdays,  Bring your date for a romantic night under the Downtown Houston skyline. This special date night features live music by Jawad on Dec. 12 and Jan. 16. 7–9 pm.

BANK OF AMERICA SCREEN ON THE GREEN
Thursdays,  Watch a great throwback movie from the hill or catch a peek from The ICE! 7 pm.
Dec 6  Home Alone (PG) 1990, 103 min.
Dec 13  The Nightmare Before Christmas (PG) 1993, 76 min.
Dec 20  The Polar Express (G) 2004, 100 min.
Dec 27  WALL-E (G) 2008, 98 min.
Jan 3  Justice League (PG-13) 2017, 121 min.
Jan 10  Ready Player One (PG-13) 2018, 140 min.
Jan 17  Show Dogs (PG) 2018, 92 min.

FUNFETTI FRIDAYS
Fridays,  Bring your friends and family for a perfect winter night on the ICE and skate along to your favorite jams by DJ Mohawk Steve while enjoying a light show and other festive element. 7–9 pm.

SKATE WITH SANTA AND MORE!
Saturdays,  Skate with Santa Claus before Christmas and some of your favorite characters after the holidays. 5–6 pm.

SKATING WITH THE STARS
Sundays,  Houston’s top figure skaters dazzle on The ICE. 6–6:45 pm.

The events listed are confirmed at the time of printing. For a full listing of Discovery Green’s winter events, please visit the calendar at discoverygreen.com

Blankets, lawn chairs and picnics are welcome; food, beer and wine are available for purchase at the Lake House. No glass containers or outside alcoholic beverages permitted. Most events are free, unless noted otherwise. 1500 McKinney.

FAMILY & CHILDREN EVENTS

RECYCLING SATURDAYS
 Saturdays through Jan 26  Bring your sorted glass, paper, plastic and aluminum to a recycling station at Discovery Green. 11 am–2 pm.

YOUNG WRITERS WORKSHOP
 Saturdays through Jan 26  Kids learn to express their thoughts and develop language skills, thanks to Writers in the Schools (WITS), HPL Express and Discovery Green in Houston’s only free and open writing workshop for kids. 10:30–11:30 am.

YOUTH PERFORMANCE POETRY SESSIONS
Dec 11 & Jan 8  Writers in the Schools (WITS) offers free writing and performance poetry workshops for poets ages 13 to 19. 6:30–8 pm.
55TH ANNUAL CANDLELIGHT TOUR
Dec 8  Stroll through the Heritage Society’s cozy historic homes this holiday season. From pioneer demonstrations to a fancy feast fit for the wealthiest man in town and a humble traditional German Christmas, you will see it all. Take a seat in the 1891 St. John Church and listen as the Houston Boychoir performs classic holiday songs and enjoy food and refreshments from your favorite food trucks. Advance tickets $10, $15 at the door. Children 5 and under are free. 5–9 pm. 1100 Bagby. heritagesociety.org

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA
Dec 8, 15–16, & 21–24  Families are invited to the Downtown Aquarium for a ho-ho-holiday breakfast with Santa. The buffet-style breakfast will feature an assortment of food, fun with Sharkey and an active Santa Claus swimming around in the tank with all the different marine life, taking photos with the guests. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby. 713.223.3474. downtownaquarium.com

BEERS & CHEERS HOLIDAY MARKET
Dec 9  Shop Local Market and Saint Arnold are joining forces to bring you the ultimate Beers & Cheers Holiday Market! Showcasing 25+ local artists and vendors, guest can shop ’till they drop, grab a bite, and treat the kiddos to delicious root beer floats while saying cheers! Don’t forget to wrap up your presents at the gift-wrapping station. Free. 11 am–4 pm. Saint Arnold Brewing Company, 2000 Lyons. saintarnold.com

HOUSTON’S 12K OF CHRISTMAS
Dec 22  Come out to Houston’s 12K of Christmas, a holiday-themed fun run taking place at Sam Houston Park. Bring the whole family and enjoy hot cocoa, appearances by jolly old Saint Nick and his elves, Christmas carolers and much more holiday fun after the race! Registration $45–$40. 7:30 am. 1100 Bagby. Houston12k.com

CHRISTMAS WEEK AT SAINT ARNOLD

TOTALLY AWESOME 90S NEW YEAR’S EVE PARTY AT MKT BAR
Dec 31  Party like it’s 1990 at MKT BAR for New Year’s Eve! Bust a move all night while enjoying food and drink specials, plus a fly bubbly menu. Limited VIP table reservations available for $25 per person. 9 pm–2 am. MKT Bar. 1001 Austin. 832.360.2222. mktbar.com

2019 CHEVRON HOUSTON MARATHON & ARAMCO HALF MARATHON
Jan 20  With more than 250,000 participants, volunteers and spectators, the Chevron Houston Marathon Race Day is the largest single-day sporting event in Houston. Watch the excitement on Congress at San Jacinto, where the race begins, or stake out a place along the route to cheer on the participants. chevronhoustonmarathon.com

TOM SEGURA: TAKE IT DOWN TOUR
Jan 25  Tickets start at $31.25. 7 pm & 10 pm. Revention Music Center, 520 Texas. 800.745.3000. reventionmusiccenter.com

ONE-POT SHOWDOWN
Jan 27  Saint Arnold Brewing Company’s annual anything goes cook-off will pit amateur chefs against each other in an effort to create the best beer infused dish. Tickets $40. 1 pm. Saint Arnold Brewing Co., 2000 Lyons. 713.686.9494. saintarnold.com

KEVIN HART
Jan 12  Laugh out loud with comedic rock star Kevin Hart as he returns to Houston for round two of his Irresponsible Tour. Tickets start at $49.50. 7 pm. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 713.758.7200. houstontoyotacenter.com

2019 CHEVRON HOUSTON MARATHON
SUPER BEEF SUNDAY
Feb 3 A barbecue master from Central Texas along with a couple of young guns will prepare their finest smoked meats at Saint Arnold’s 6th Annual Super Beef Sunday. Tickets purchased for the event include barbecue from all three restaurants, beer, and a Super Beef Sunday glass. There is an option to pre-order whole brisket and beef ribs at the time of ticket purchase. Tickets $50. 11 am. Saint Arnold Brewing Co., 2000 Lyons. 713.686.9494. saintarnold.com

CUPID CRUISES
Feb 14 Hop aboard Buffalo Bayou Partnership’s Spirit of the Bayou pontoon boat tour for a cozy cruise with your Valentine. Enjoy bubbly beverages and chocolate bites with spectacular views of Downtown Houston during a romantic evening boat ride. 5–7 pm & 7:30–8:30 pm. $40 per person. Departs at Allen’s Landing at Commerce and Main. 713.752.0314. www.buffalobayou.org

ROMANCE UNDER THE SEA
Feb 14 Bring your sweetheart for a romantic dinner for two at the Nautilus Ballroom. Reservations required. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby. 713.223.3474. downtownaquarium.com

PBS KIDS LIVE! REALLY BIG TINY ADVENTURE
Feb 15 Tickets start at $25. 4:30 pm. Revention Music Center, 520 Texas. 800.745.3000. reventionmusiccenter.com

EXHIBITS & VISUAL ARTS
CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ AT THE CISTERN: SPATIAL CHROMOINTERFERENCE
Through Jan A unique site-specific environment by world-renowned artist Carlos Cruz-Diez in the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern. The unique art installation creates a situation in space involving the dematerialization, transfiguration, and ambiguity of color through movement. By projecting moving chromatic interference modules on objects and people, these become transparent and virtually change condition and form. The spectator becomes both actor and author of a complete chromatic event, which evolves through space. Open Wed–Fri, 3:30–6 pm and Sat–Sun, 11 am–6 pm. $10 per person; $8 for seniors 65+ with ID, youth ages 9–17 and students 18+ with ID. Admission is free on Thursdays. Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, The Water Works, 105 Sabine. buffalobayou.org

MEXICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE IN 20TH CENTURY HOUSTON MURAL
Through Feb 28 Celebrate the many contributions of our city’s Mexican-American community. In the spirit of the great Mexican muralists, this vibrant collective artwork, Mexican Culture in 20th Century Houston, highlights the places, personalities, concepts and events that shaped the Mexican-American community and laid the foundation for the multicultural city we live in today. Most weekdays will feature artists Jesse Sifuentes and Laura Lopez Cano. Days and hours vary according to weather and artist availability. Free. 10 am–4 pm. 1100 Bagby. 713.655.1912. heritagesociety.org

CONCERTS
REVENTION MUSIC CENTER
Dec 1 Seven Lions
Dec 2 Celtic Thunder
Dec 4 Iggy Azalea
Dec 6 H.E.R
Dec 14 Black Presents From East Atlanta with Love Tour
Jan 24 Los Lonely Boys
Feb 1 The Fab Four
Feb 9 Bring Me The Horizon
Feb 16 Rainbow Kittn Surprise

Revention Music Center’s online calendar is updated regularly. Visit their website for more info and to purchase tickets. Revention Music Center, 520 Texas. 800.745.3000. reventionmusiccenter.com

HOUSE OF BLUES HOUSTON
Dec 1 Scotty McCreery
Dec 2 98° at Christmas 2018
Dec 3 Next Town Down
Dec 8 John Butler Trio
Dec 9 The Clairvoyants–Christmas
Dec 13 Ministry
Dec 20 Steven Wilson
Dec 21 Robert Earl Ken
Dec 28 Lyfe Jennings
Jan 10 Lindsay Ell
Jan 12 Calpurnia
Feb 8 Cavetown
Feb 22 Reverend Horton Heat

HOB’s online calendar is updated regularly. Visit their website for more info and to purchase tickets. House of Blues, GreenStreet, 1204 Caroline. 888.402.5837. hob.com/houston

TOYOTA CENTER
Dec 8–9 Elton John
Dec 21 Trans-Siberian Orchestra
Jan 22 Justin Timberlake
Jan 28 Disturbed
Feb 5 Fleetwood Mac
Feb 10 Marc Anthony

Toyota Center’s online calendar is updated regularly. Visit their website for more info and to purchase tickets. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 713.4HOUTIX. houstontoyotacenter.com
Be sure to follow Historic Market Square on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for special event announcements, weather-related updates and other happenings in the neighborhood’s eclectic dining and bar scene.
EXPOS

Dec 1–2 Premier Gun Show
Dec 15–16 High Caliber Gun & Knife Show
Jan 5–6 Houston Cat Club Annual Charity Cat Show 2019
Feb 3 Weddings and Quinceaneras Expo 2019
Feb 9–10 High Caliber Gun & Knife Show
Feb 24 Quinceanera Magazine Expo

The George R. Brown Convention Center’s online calendar is updated regularly. Visit their website for more info and to purchase tickets. George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida De Las Americas. 713.853.8000. grbhouston.com.

TOURS

MINUTE MAID PARK TOUR
Get a behind-the-scenes look at Minute Maid Park including historic Union Station, broadcasting booth and press boxes, Astros’ and visitors’ dugouts, luxury suites and much more. Tickets $15 adults, $12 seniors and $10 for kids 3–12. Mon-Sat, 10 am and noon. Minute Maid Park, 501 Crawford. 713.259.8887. astros.com

SAINT ARNOLD BREWING COMPANY TOUR
Visit Saint Arnold Brewing Company’s Brewery and get a behind-the-scenes look at the brewing process. Their knowledgeable staff will explain the history, ingredients, and equipment used to produce the freshest beer. Tours are available daily at 1 pm, 3 pm, 5 pm, and 7 pm. After the tour, guests are welcome to stay for a free tasting. Admission is free Mon–Fri and is $10 on Sat. No reservations required. All minors under the age of 21 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Saint Arnold Brewing Company, 2000 Lyons. saintarnold.com

SEGWAY TOURS OF HOUSTON
Like the rest of Texas, Downtown Houston is a pretty big place to walk around. There are a lot of things to see up close and from a distance. Experience the Bayou City, once the capital city of a sovereign country, from a walking perspective within a few hours while you have effortless fun on a Segway. $49. Daily: 10 am, noon, 2 pm, 4 pm and 6 pm. Meet at 901 Commerce. 866.673.4929. segwaytoursofhouston.com

DISCOVER HOUSTON TOURS
One of Houston’s oldest tour companies offering Historic Pub Crawl tours, Ghost tours of Downtown, Historic walking/ driving tours of Downtown and more. Only certified professional tour guides are used on Discover Houston Tours. Ticket prices vary. discoverhoustontours.com

WELLNESS WALKING TOUR
Dec 1 A wellness walk led by Laura Conely, founder of Urban Paths Wellness Coaching. Walk through the paths of Buffalo Bayou Park while discussing topics including mental and physical health as well as the benefits of being exposed to nature. Free. 9–10:30 am. The Water Works at Buffalo Bayou Park. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

NATURE WALKING TOURS
Dec 15 Enjoy a free walking tour in Buffalo Bayou Park highlighting the landscape and ecology of 19th century Texas that created Houston, as well as the importance of prairies in rebuilding this astonishing and all but vanished ecosystem. Free. 10:30–11:30 am. The Water Works at Buffalo Bayou Park. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

HERITAGE SOCIETY HISTORIC HOMES TOUR
Nestled among 19 acres in the heart of Downtown Houston, the Heritage Society boasts eight historic structures dating from 1823 to 1905. Each historic structure is authentically restored to reflect its original magnificence. Tickets $15 adults, $12 seniors, $6 children 6–8 and kids under 5 are free. Sam Houston Park, 1100 Bagby. Thu-Sat. Times vary. 713.655.1912. heritagesociety.org

WWE RAW
Dec 3 See your favorite wrestling stars Ronda Rousey, Roman Reigns, Seth Rollins, Dean Ambrose, Dolph Ziggler, Drew McIntyre, Alexa Bliss and others as the event is broadcasted live from Toyota Center. Tickets start at $20. 6:30 pm. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 866.446.8849. houstontoyotacenter.com

HOUSTON ROCKETS
Dec 1 Rockets vs. Chicago Bulls
Dec 11 Rockets vs. Portland Trailblazers
Dec 13 Rockets vs. Los Angeles Lakers
Dec 17 Rockets vs. Utah Jazz
Dec 19 Rockets vs. Washington Wizards
Dec 22 Rockets vs. San Antonio Spurs
Dec 25 Rockets vs. Oklahoma City Thunder
Dec 27 Rockets vs. Boston Celtics
Dec 31 Rockets vs. Memphis Grizzlies
Jan 7 Rockets vs. Denver Nuggets
Jan 9 Rockets vs. Milwaukee Bucks
Jan 11 Rockets vs. Cleveland Cavaliers
Jan 14 Rockets vs. Memphis Grizzlies
Jan 16 Rockets vs. Brooklyn Nets
Jan 19 Rockets vs. Los Angeles Lakers
Jan 25 Rockets vs. Toronto Raptors
Jan 27 Rockets vs. Orlando Magic
Jan 29 Rockets vs. New Orleans Pelicans
Feb 9 Rockets vs. Oklahoma City Thunder
Feb 11 Rockets vs. Dallas Mavericks
Feb 25 Rockets vs. Atlanta Hawks
Feb 28 Rockets vs. Miami Heat

For schedule info and tickets, call or visit website. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 713.758.7200. rockets.com
With a fusion of culture, lifestyles and commerce, life around here is anything but typical. Look up and discover soaring skyscrapers designed by icons like Philip Johnson and I.M. Pei. Turn a corner and bump into Houston’s historic past or uncover a piece of contemporary public art. Enjoy major league sports, world-class theater, innovative chefs, funky hotspots, movies in the park, sidwalk cafés, outdoor festivals, pontoon boat tours and more.

Welcome to Downtown Houston!

**Tours**

1. Buffalo Bayou Boat Tours 713.752.0314
2. Heritage Society Historic Homes Tour 713.655.1912
3. Minute Maid Park Tour 713.259.8687
4. Saint Arnold Brewing Company Tour 713.686.9494
5. Toyota Center Backstage Tour 713.758.7715

**Attractions & Sights**

12. Avenida Houston
13. Buffalo Bayou
14. Discovery Green
15. Downtown Aquarium
17. George R. Brown Convention Center
18. Historic District
19. Bayou Place
20. Main Street Square
21. Saint Arnold Brewing Company
22. Southern Pacific Steam Engine 982
23. Union Station at Minute Maid Park

**Eats & Drinks**

24. Ballpark District
25. Bayou Place/Theater District
26. Avenida Houston
27. Downtown Aquarium
28. Historic District
29. GreenStreet
30. The Shops at Houston Center
31. Warehouse District

**Recreation**

9. Buffalo Bayou (hiking & jogging trail)
10. Root Memorial Square (basketball court)
11. Discovery Green (exercise class, bocce ball & putting green)

**Institutions**

Education
37. Incarnate Word Academy
38. Kinder High School for the Performing & Visual Arts
39. South Texas College of Law Houston
40. University of Houston-Downtown
Medical
41. St. Joseph Medical Center
Religious
42. Antioch Baptist Church
43. Annunciation Catholic Church
44. Christ Church Cathedral
45. First United Methodist Church
46. Holy Cross Church
47. Islamic Dawah Center
48. Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral
49. Houston First Baptist Church
Spiritual
50. Hines Center for Spirituality and Prayer

**Parks**

51. The Acre
52. Allen’s Landing
53. Discovery Green
54. Halliburton Plaza
55. Hermann Square
56. Market Square Park
57. Root Memorial Square
58. Sabine Promenade & Buffalo Bayou Park
59. Sam Houston Park
60. Sesquicentennial Park
61. Sisters of Charity Park
62. Tranquility Park

**Groceries & Conveniences**

63. CVS/Pharmacy
64. CVS/Pharmacy Market Square
65. Phoenicia Specialty Foods
66. Wolfe’s Cleaners

**Museums & Libraries**

32. Houston Central Library
33. Julia Ideson Library
34. Heritage Society Museum
35. Houston Police Museum
36. Museum District (via METRORail)

**Film**

77. AMC Dine-In Houston (formerly Sundance Cinemas)

**Music Venues**

78. House of Blues
79. Revention Music Center
80. The Rustic

**City, County & Federal**

81. City Hall
82. City Hall Annex
83. Bob Casey Federal Courthouse
84. Harris County-Court Campus

**Where to Stay**

85. The Sam Houston Hotel
86. Club Quarters
87. Courtyard by Marriott/Marriott Residence Inn/SpringHill Suites
88. The Whitehall
89. DoubleTree
90. Four Seasons
91. Hotel Icon
92. Lemon Hotel
93. Magnolia Hotel
94. Holiday Inn
95. Holiday Inn Express
96. JW Marriott
97. Magnolia Hotel
98. Marriott Marquis
99. Marriott Marquis
100. Magnolia Hotel
101. Magnolia Hotel
102. Magnolia Hotel
103. Magnolia Hotel
104. Magnolia Hotel
105. Magnolia Hotel

**Shoppers**

67. GreenStreet
68. The Shops at Houston Center

**Visitor Information**

107. Explore Houston: GRBCC
Our new Google Map will help you find where you're going, where to park and what's nearby downtownhoustonparking.org

Public garages, surface lots and metered on-street parking are abundant in Downtown. Reminder: on-street parking is free after 6 pm Monday–Saturday and all day Sunday.
PARK. RIDE. NAP.

DREAMY COMMUTER SERVICE DIRECT TO DOWNTOWN.