Creative Spark
New HSPVA Campus Ignites Dynamic Energy Downtown

MASSCHALLENGE
Accelerator Boosts Tech Startups

A FOODIE TRAVELOGUE
NUIT BLANCHE & THE EASTER BUNNY
The good life

A self-guided tour of six Downtown properties

Saturday, March 30
10 am to 5 pm

$25 advance ticket purchase online
$35 ticket purchase day-of (Heritage Texas Properties, 214 Travis)

Ticket purchase includes cool swag and specials at Downtown’s favorite restaurants and bars!

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston.

For tickets and more information, livedowntownhouston.org
START IT UP

The arrival of MassChallenge, one of the world's top-five startup accelerators, signals an exciting new opportunity for innovative Houstonians looking for a way to make their ideas a reality. In less than a decade, MassChallenge has graduated approximately 2,000 startups operating across four countries.

BY SARAH NIELSEN

THE BIG DEBUT

Years in the planning, Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts has finally made its big move Downtown. The beautiful campus is sparking creativity for its students—and bringing a dynamic, fresh energy to the neighborhood surrounding it.

BY HOLLY BERETTO

FINN HALL—A TRAVELOGUE

If you haven’t had the chance to check out Downtown’s new dining hall, what are you waiting for? We’ve got all the inside information to help make your visit perfect—and delicious!

BY LAUREN MCDOWELL AND LAUREN PATTERSON
Creating a legacy

If it seems like we spend a lot of time talking about Downtown's growth, it's because thankfully, there's a lot to talk about!

The development we've seen over the past decade is no accident. It's the result of hard work, planning, and a significant investment of resources—the kind of investment like that taken by the new Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. The renowned high school, which for years operated away from the center of Houston's performing and visual arts organizations, has finally opened its Downtown campus.

Make no mistake; the arrival of one of HISD's most-respected high schools is a clear indication that Downtown has reached a next level when it comes to its evolution. The same can be said about the decision by MassChallenge to open their new location here. The startup accelerator will play an important role in the work to nurture Houston's tech culture.

New restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues are critical in attracting people to an area, but the entry of MassChallenge and the opening of a public high school signal an undeniable permanence to the changes we've seen. We're so proud to have played a role in those changes and thrilled to introduce you to our new neighbors, starting with MassChallenge on page 14 and HSPVA on page 18.

Finn Hall, the latest food hall, is another indicator that Downtown is where people want to be. Houstonians will be able to gather and enjoy the best of Houston's food scene in the beautiful space at The Jones on Main for decades to come. Read all about the options for dining there starting on page 9.

If you'd like to visit some of Downtown's other culinary hotspots, now is the time. Plate, our rundown of restaurants, starts on page 32 and includes a wrap-up of The Rustic, the food and live music venue just steps from Discovery Green. As always, you'll find our extensive calendar of events and activities in datebook on page 42.

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
A highly acclaimed international contemporary art event inaugurated in Paris in 2002, with iterations in major cities throughout the world.

Due to the enthusiasm and support of the local art and cultural community, Houston will host its first Nuit Blanche contemporary art festival in Downtown. With site-specific performances, projections and installations of light and sound and family-friendly activities, the festival will transform the city into an artistic playground.
HAKIMA EL DJOUDI
PARADISE AND THE WORLD IS YOURS
Lyric Market
In partnership with the Lyric Market

Hakima El Dijoudi depicts the multiform artistic symbiosis between cinema, video and installations. A true film buff, she works with old Hollywood movies, from which she isolates luminous cabaret signs. The artist looks into cult images of flashing signs that claim “Paradise” or “The World is Yours,” evoking the heyday of a society of leisure now gone and haunted by mythical gangster figures. Through a skilful montage, she gives new life to these places of perdition and games, in order to project them illusionistically into public spaces.

YONA FRIEDMAN
SPACE CHAIN AND AFRICAN TALES
Houston Public Library
In partnership with the Houston Public Library, Page Think and SteelCase

Laureate of the 2018 Kiesler Prize for Architecture and the Arts, Yona Friedman champions the inhabitant as designer and inventor of his own living space within a specific structure.

For Nuit Blanche Houston, children of Houston ISO will be invited to build a “space chain structure” with the help of art students and docents. Each installation, built using hula hoops, is assembled spontaneously, creating new variations of space with each turn.

Friedman’s second piece is African Tales, a series of 10 films produced by Friedman and his wife Denise Charvein, between 1960 and 1963. The animations in the films are constructed from wooden blocks, carved and assembled to create the different scenes. The soundtrack is taken from the UNESCO African music library, and each film is inspired by an ancestral African tale.

ART INSTALLATIONS

JR
INSIDE OUT PROJECT
for Nuit Blanche Houston
City Hall
In partnership with the Houston Center for Photography

Named one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people of 2018, JR owns the biggest art gallery in the world: the Street, where he exhibits freely, catching the attention of people who are not typical museum visitors.

JR’s Inside Out Project is a global platform for people to share their portraits and transform messages of personal identity into works of public art. The project has traveled from Ecuador to Nepal, from Mexico to Indonesia, inspiring group actions on varied themes such as hope, diversity, gender-based violence and climate change, to name a few. Over 300,000 people have participated in 138 countries.

Nuit Blanche Houston is partnering with local schools to give Houston’s youth a platform to express their voices through art. Their portraits will be pasted at Houston’s City Hall for the art festival and will then travel the world as part of JR’s Inside/Out project.

SECRET WALLS X HOUSTON
In partnership with Downtown District and Up Art Studios
Market Square Park

UP Art Studio and the Downtown District present Houston’s third installation of Secret Walls x Houston. This global series brings together the best artists in teams, which go head-to-head to each design a mural in 90-minutes. DJ BBC will keep folks moving while enjoying bites and beverages from Niko Niko’s and Houston’s favorite food trucks; plus shop a nighttime art market brought to you by The DoBo. Don’t miss this amazing feat of art, speed and talent!

WHAT ELSE?

FOOD AND DRINKS
Food trucks will be located throughout the event or explore the many restaurants and bars in Downtown’s Theater District and Historic Market Square neighborhoods.

KIDS ITINERARY
Nuit Blanche Houston team has created a family-friendly itinerary! Through a booklet of games, children will discover works of art scattered in Downtown and travel the world of contemporary art during this unique event.

The free, print-friendly map (along with information and activities for the entire family) will be available for download, along with a schedule of events, parking and getting around info, at www.nuitblanchehouston.com

PARTRNER EVENTS

MUSIQA
Location TBD

HGOco
In partnership with Houston Grand Opera and Houston First

Tranquility Park
Join HGOco in an exploration of 21st-century opera viewing with a new streaming series themed on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. Based on personal experiences, the project shares international stories produced into a standalone, operatic short film. In each episode, Bard aficionados will be able to catch a line direct from the Shakespeare text.

OPEN HOUSE
In partnership with Downtown District

Sam Houston Park
Open House is an interactive temporary public sculpture created by local artists, Dan Havel and Dean Ruck. Sourced from Cherry House Moving Company, the 1940s-era house has circular holes cut into the walls creating a “Swiss cheese” appearance, and collaged interior walls with vintage images sourced from family, friends and local resale shops that represent the city’s people, places and past. Visitors can walk through Open House, soaking in some of Houston’s history while viewing both the modern skyscrapers of Downtown Houston and the landscape of Sam Houston Park through the holes that have been carved out of the house.

TRANQUILITY PARK
In partnership with Houston First

Romeo and Juliet
Join HGOco in an exploration of 21st-century opera viewing with a new streaming series themed on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet. Based on personal experiences, the project shares international stories produced into a standalone, operatic short film. In each episode, Bard aficionados will be able to catch a line direct from the Shakespeare text.

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backstage.
An Opportunity for Change

SPA’s new CEO sees exciting new future for organization

Life has come full circle for Meg Booth

Two decades ago she was a young associate at IMG, the large New York agency that represents many leading theater, dance, and musical artists; and Society for the Performing Arts was a top client. Now, as the new CEO of SPA, Booth is working with IMG and others to secure outstanding talent for the Houston nonprofit’s 53rd season as she charts a new course for its future.

“Their known of SPA for 25 years. It’s got a great reputation,” Booth said. “SPA has been and will continue to really bring in a terrific eclecticism of high-quality artists to Houston. And I look forward to that.”

Booth comes to Houston from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., where she was director of dance programming, managing a multimillion-dollar budget and overseeing more than 80 performances yearly.

At SPA, where she was hired for the top job after an extensive national search, Booth’s task is to help the organization rebound from the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, which curtailed the current season to 30 performances. The new 2019-20 schedule, to be unveiled this spring, will be much more robust.

“There’s still a lot of building to do. SPA had to cancel so many performances and financially it hurt, and it hurt deeply,” Booth said. “In a way it’s a regrowth year.”

SPA was founded in 1966, the same year that Jones Hall opened as the city’s new performing arts center, to provide programming on the nights when the Houston Symphony and Houston Grand Opera weren’t on stage.

In its first season, the Broadway musical Hello Dolly! starring Carol Channing, was a big SPA hit. Over the years, the organization has hosted a wide array of exciting performers, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, best-selling author David Sedaris, and violinist Itzhak Perlman. Such classical music artists as Esperanza Spalding, Daniil Trifonov, and 2Cellos made their debuts in Houston with SPA and went on to illustrious careers.

“SPA has been introducing artists in their Houston debut for years,” Booth said. “I want to be able to tell that story a little better.”

SPA will continue to present an eclectic schedule with a variety of offerings. “People aren’t expecting to see the same thing every single time,” Booth said. “And we have baked into our organizational structure the opportunity for our patrons to see a holiday rock/jazz/big band concert.

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in Jones Hall all the way down to a very intimate chamber orchestra or solo recital of classical music and just about everything in between.”

Soon after arriving in Houston in December, Booth, her husband, who was raised in the Bayou City, and their two young daughters attended their first SPA performance—the Brian Setzer Orchestra 15th Annual Christmas Rocks!

Tour, a family-oriented holiday concert.

“It was a lot of fun to see Jones Hall completely packed and people dancing in the aisles,” Booth said.

In addition to offerings that Houston audiences have long supported, Booth plans to expand the offbeat and new.

“When you look at the spectrum of work that is being produced, the lines are increasingly being blurred. It’s not just classical music, dance, and theater any more,” she explained. “There is a broad range of artists who are spanning all of these spectrums and are putting out almost unclassifiable performances on stage that are a little bit of everything. We really want to lean into that and continue to create unusual performance opportunities and experiences for our patrons.”

Dance, which was Booth’s specialty at the Kennedy Center, will continue to be an important part of SPA’s offerings, along with a wide range of other performing arts as the organization adapts its mission for the 21st century. She plans to increase programming to Houston’s diverse audiences, with artists who perform in English and Spanish as well as other languages.

“One way or the other I want to focus on quality arts reflecting the Houston community—and it’s not just one community. It’s a plurality of communities,” she said.

“SPA’s strength is eclecticism and presenting multiple genres and multiple art forms and multiple cultures. I look forward to building a trust with Houston audiences. They will see a variety but it will be good.”

Also on her long-term agenda is reviving a fund to commission locally produced works and present Houston artists to the world.

“The arts industry and our society and culture are changing. New York isn’t the epicenter of everything any more. There is a lot of opportunity for SPA to reflect the very eclectic communities that live in Houston and put Houston on the map for participating in the national and international arts scene,” she said.

Even before taking the job, Booth said she was impressed with the Houston arts scene. But she didn’t expect the spirit of collaboration and support that the organizations exhibit toward one another under the umbrella of the Houston Theater District and Houston First.

“Maybe one of the things that surprised me is the camaraderie and how many touch points there are amongst the cultural institutions in Houston,” Booth said. “Without a doubt, what was unquestionably a draw is that SPA is not alone in the cultural map but has a terrific pool of resources and terrific organizations to collaborate with.”

She’s also been impressed with the city’s welcoming attitude. “From my very first interview, everybody I met, from the person who served me breakfast on my first day to the board members who were on the executive committee, have been so wonderful and delightful and welcoming. I think that is just baked into the culture of Houston to welcome newcomers.

“We have found that with the children as well. We have been welcomed with open arms and have really enjoyed all the people we have met. It’s been a nice experience.

“I’m really excited to be here. There’s just a lot of opportunity that’s going to be fun to explore.”

“There is a lot of opportunity for SPA to reflect the very eclectic communities that live in Houston and put Houston on the map for participating in the national and international arts scene,”
A Collaborative Spirit

Melrose, the co-founder of the edgy Cutting Ball Theater in San Francisco and an award-winning director of classic plays at many of the nation’s great theaters, including The Public Theater in New York, The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, and The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, quickly became hooked on Houston.

Houston is such an international city. It’s such a diverse city. It’s a city of many different cultures and that’s a good thing.

“It reminds me of what San Francisco was like when I first moved there when it was affordable, when it was funky and interesting and cool,” he said. “Houston is a city of possibilities. People can try out a new restaurant. People can be an artist here. I feel like this city has so much going for it.”

And the Alley is hooked on the gregarious 48-year-old theater veteran.

After a six-month nationwide search, Houston’s largest and oldest theater company selected Melrose as its new artistic director. He started the job at the end of last year and is quickly settling into his life here, delighting in the three-minute walk to work from his Downtown high-rise apartment with a swimming pool that overlooks his Alley office.

Melrose is busy planning the Summer Chills series, slated for July, and the Alley 2019-20 season, which will be unveiled in April and kicks off in October. In San Francisco Melrose was known for championing experimental theater, but at the Alley he plans a wide mix of productions that will appeal to longtime fans as well as draw in new theatergoers.

“It’s important that the new chapter brings everybody along who currently loves the Alley. I have no interest in doing a bunch of cool stuff one year and have nobody respond to it and pack my bags and go home. I’m wanting to take this audience where they are and widen the vista over the course of many years,” he said.

Broadening the audience means reaching out to Houston’s ethnic communities with work that is relevant to their lives, Melrose said. “And that’s something I try to bring to every piece. Surprise is an important part of going to the theater. I want people to be surprised, delighted, and blown away.”

He also plans to incorporate that element of surprise by adapting classic plays with a Houston theme.

“In San Francisco I did A Taming of the Shrew set during the Folsom Street Leather Fair, and I did Timon of Athens, which is about income inequality, set in my own theater’s neighborhood in the Tenderloin, which simultaneously has a homeless population and Google, Twitter, and Facebook (offices),” he said.

“The look of the play was set in San Francisco when it was funky and interesting and cool, when I first moved there when it was affordable, and allegations of misconduct by former artistic director Greg Boyd.

“One thing I’ve been pleasantly finding is just how many talented and confident people are here. I think I am going to benefit from them and they are going to benefit from a leader who doesn’t think, ‘I’m the only genius. I’m the only person who knows how to do things, and it’s my way or the highway.’” Melrose said. “I’ve spent my whole life collaborating and wanting to hear from other people, and so that’s going to be a big cultural change.”

Expanding new play development, creating more outreach programs to local schools, forging relationships with promising playwrights, and making theatergoing special are also among Melrose’s top priorities.

“If you are going to get out and travel to the theater and maybe have dinner Downtown and sit with a bunch of other people, there has to be something on the stage worth talking about,” Melrose said. “And that’s something I try to bring to every piece. Surprise is an important part of going to the theater. I want people to be surprised, delighted, and blown away.”

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DINING, DRINKING & DISCOVERING HOUSTON’S NEWEST DOWNTOWN DESTINATION

By Lauren McDowell and Lauren Patterson

Discover all the possibilities Finn Hall has to offer through this personal journal of adventures in the historic Jones on Main at 712 Main Street. A food hall with 10 independently operated eating establishments, plus two full bars, it’s a great place to grab a solo weekday lunch, or plan a group get-together for a grand weekend outing. It’s open for every meal (though different vendors’ hours do vary), opening at 7 a.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. on weekends, with different closing times throughout the week.
Today I took advantage of a 70-degree and sunny Friday to leave work a little early to grab some oysters on the half shell.

Though technically not a “summer” Friday, the happy hour and raw seafood bar at Low Tide definitely put me in that state of mind. Also, what a treat to have such easy access to fresh oysters. There was no way I was passing up an order of hush puppies studded with bacon and onion—and just to gild the lily—I went all out and tried the crispy crawfish étouffé balls. Went great with a draft beer I ordered and brought over from the St. Jac’s bar up front. Next visit, I’m going for a different vibe with fish ceviché and cured salmon.

Good News: I now have access to Mala’s amazing red oil dumplings EVERY DAY—thank you, Finn Hall.

Bad news: I now have access to Mala’s amazing red oil dumplings EVERY DAY and will have to find some discipline. Yesterday, I also tried something new and happy to report that the Kung Pao chicken hit the spot and a taste of my co-worker’s basil crispy chicken is exactly how I remembered it. I even had leftovers for this weekend. My lips are still pleasantly tingling. Szechuan peppercorns are fascinating.

It’s exciting to have quality coffee steps away from the office. With the single-serve coffee maker at work, I’d forgotten what a difference it makes to have fresh-roasted beans. It was a Monday, and I got a pour-over instead of my usual drip to help get my mind right for the week. It was worth the extra few minutes it took to brew. While I waited, the barista told me that Amaya sources coffee from Indonesia, Central and South America and Africa. They’re also the same roaster behind Catalina Coffee Shop, Giant Leap, and other shops around town.

REMINDER: looks like Wednesday will be a late night at the office, so break at 4:30 p.m. to grab an affogato.

I always knew Goode Co. for their barbecue and seafood, but tacos? I was intrigued. One week later, and I’m still thinking about the carnitas tacos and those pork and green chile guisada breakfast tacos. Headed back today for the 1836 salad because I’m feeling something fresh—and yeah, there’s bacon, corn and avocado in there, so I’m sold.

AMAYA COFFEE

MALA SICHUAN

GOODE CO. TAQUERIA

LOW TIDE
After a full day of Houston sightseeing, we decided to swing back by Finn Hall for a nightcap upstairs on the mezzanine full-service cocktail bar Swallow’s Nest. It was my first time checking it out and I was pretty stoked to find out that not only is it open until midnight on Saturdays, you can order from any of the vendors downstairs and they’ll bring the food to you. I opted for an ice-cold martini, which went well with a side of truffle mac ‘n’ cheese from Dish Society.

Everything is cashless, so bring some plastic.

Keep your phone handy—each vendor will send a text when your order is ready, so you’re free to roam. Grab a drink while you wait.

Free water stations with still or sparkling (fancy!) for your hydrating pleasure.

You can reserve a spot in the parking garage in advance for $7.50 (three-hour time limit applies) by hitting up their website finnhallhtx.com

Everything but the Swallow’s Nest—their mezzanine bar—is counter service.
After lots of wandering around the food hall admiring all the Art Deco details I’d missed on earlier visits, my co-workers and I ended up at YONG.

The Korean-fried chicken wings were calling to me, but I decided to go for the bulgogi bowl instead. I really enjoyed the generous serving of rice layered with smoky grilled pork, hot off the flame, plus egg and veggies. I’m usually heavy-handed with the soy sauce and Sriracha, but the gochujang sauce served here was perfect—I didn’t add a thing. My coworkers tried the tofu bowl and the kimchi & lamb soup and gave both a big thumbs up. We all joked about licking our bowls ... OK, maybe that wasn’t a joke after all.

My college friends finally flew home this morning. We had a blast, but too many nights out on the town took a toll on my bank account and, let’s be honest, my sanity.

In desperate need of some hangover food, I tried Craft Burger’s Morning After Burger. Instead of buns, the patty is served between savory waffles and topped with a sunny-side-up egg, candied bacon and smoked Gouda. Holy flavor, Batman. This was the perfect balance of sweet and salty to help settle my growing stomach. I was too stuffed to try the loaded sweet potato fries, but I’m sure I’ll be back to try some of the pork-, dairy- and gluten-free options anyway.

It’s been a long week, so I decided to meet up with some friends at the front bar.

They’ve got a great selection of local draught beers, plus wine on tap, too, which makes service really quick and easy—which was good, because it was starting to get a little crowded. It just so happened to be happy hour, which falls from 3–6 p.m. and 9–11 p.m. on weekdays, and 1–6 p.m. on weekends. I went for one of their $10 cocktails, frankly, because I liked the name. The DJ Screwdriver has grapefruit vodka, orange liqueur, Aperol, orange juice with a splash of sparkling wine.

BONUS: I felt really smug explaining who DJ Screw (RIP) was when my friends didn’t get the reference.
If you had told me a couple of weeks ago that I would become an “anchovies-on-the-pizza” person, I would have responded with an eye roll. Give me classic pepperoni and cheese, or maybe mushroom and ricotta. To quote the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – no anchovies! I didn’t think I could be swayed. But a friend brought over ‘stank nuggets’ from Mr. Nice Pie and I feel like a changed person. I’m not giving up my pepperoni roll any time soon, but this is definitely a new favorite. I just need to make sure I have no meetings after ordering these next time.

Note to self: when you’re feeling under the weather and head into work anyway, a bowl of pho bo from Sit Lo may be the only remedy. Though my go-to is the grilled tofu or the sun ga nuong, I just really needed that warm broth to get me through the afternoon slog. OK, and I couldn’t resist getting an imperial roll (that crunchy texture gets me every time).
HAS HOUSTON’S INNOVATION ECONOMY REACHED A CRITICAL MASS?

BY SARAH NIELSEN
However with Houston’s innovation ecosystem gaining momentum and a new partnership inked with MassChallenge, one of the world’s top-five startup accelerators, the city is betting big that risk takers can still thrive here. Bringing in the Boston-based accelerator is a major coup for the city and shows how effectively civic leaders have worked to make Houston a viable city for innovation in recent years. Founded in 2009 by John Harthorne and Akhil Nigam, former strategy consultants at Bain & Company, MassChallenge is the largest nonprofit startup accelerator in the world. In just under a decade, they’ve graduated about 2,000 startups from programs operating across four countries. Those startups have raised more than $4 billion in funding, generated more than $2.3 billion in revenue and created more than 121,000 jobs directly and indirectly. Harthorne calls it “a mission to restore creativity to the soul of the American economy.”

By operating as a nonprofit and receiving grants from government entities, corporate partners, and philanthropists, MassChallenge can boost startups that offer great potential to solve the world’s problems.

“In the typical accelerator model run by and for investors, they are thinking of it as an investment, so they typically focus on software, mobile-type investments that are quicker to mature and offer better returns,” says Harthorne. “It’s harder to support clean tech, for example, because it ties up capital for longer, so it’s riskier, but we are more interested in what impact [a business] would have on humanity.”

When it comes to attracting a startup community, in some ways Houston has been a victim of its own success. With a strong economy, there has been no existential threat to the city’s fiscal health that demanded immediate intervention. Houston hasn’t seen the kind of decline of a Pittsburgh or a Detroit, where empty industrial warehouses have been turned into low-overhead tech hubs. And Houston investors, conservative by nature, have spent the last 20 years reaping the rewards of one of the world’s biggest energy innovations —fracking—leading to less of an appetite to invest in riskier, harder-to-understand startup ideas.

And yet, “a focus on developing an ecosystem to develop and attract talent is crucially important to the vitality of Houston,” said Mayor Sylvester Turner, speaking at the January press conference announcing MassChallenge’s Houston location. “We have a lot going for us in Houston, but if we don’t meet their needs, we’ll lose the young talent to someplace else.”

He wasn’t just speaking theoretically. A handful of promising startups left Houston in recent years to find more talent and institutional support in San Francisco and Austin. In 2014, Schlumberger opened a new Software Technology Innovation Center not here, where the company is based, but in Silicon Valley.

To reverse this trend, Houston’s civic and business leaders made creating a viable innovation economy a top priority. That has led to a dramatic upswing in Houston’s startup infrastructure over the past five years. In 2014, the Texas Medical Center founded the TMC A century ago, Houston was a city of risk takers—wildcatters, we called them—who bet everything on the chance to strike black gold. The Houston Hustle is still alive and well—the city ranks among the top in the country for entrepreneurs—but when it comes to creating the next earth-changing technologies, the new generation of wildcatters tend to head to the West Coast.
Managing director of MassChallenge Texas—Mike Millard, momentum. It’s a community is rising and there’s positive economy, huge universities—plus Houston is a huge city. The tide is rising and there’s positive momentum. It’s a community that is hungry.”

“When you look at Texas there are so many ingredients, there’s a huge economy, huge universities—plus Houston is an international city. The tide is rising and there’s positive momentum. It’s a community that is hungry.”

—Mike Millard, Managing director of MassChallenge Texas

Inovation Institute, dedicated to translating medical discoveries into commercialized products through a number of highly regarded incubators, accelerators, and labs. Station Houston arrived Downtown in 2016, offering another technology incubator with the kind of partnerships and name recognition to attract venture capital. This spring, Rice University will begin renovation on the historic Sears building in Midtown, turning it into a 270,000-square-foot innovation center called The Ion that is planned as the centerpiece of a larger investment in tech and startup infrastructure in the area.

It’s these institutions and spaces that form the backbone of the Innovation Corridor, alongside Rice and the University of Houston—both of which have entrepreneurship programs ranked among the top five in the country—as well as the array of research institutions inside the Texas Medical Center. It’s the promise of these incredible resources that made Houston so appealing as a destination for MassChallenge.

“When you look at Texas there are so many ingredients, there’s a huge economy, huge universities—plus Houston is an international city,” says Mike Millard, managing director of MassChallenge Texas. “The tide is rising and there’s positive momentum. It’s a community that is hungry.”

Though MassChallenge’s physical footprint in Houston will be modest—they are opening a small office in GreenStreet, with the first cohort of hand-picked startups to arrive this summer—the impact to Houston’s Downtown is expected to be much larger.

“Corporations want to be around MassChallenge,” says Lung. “If you visit MassChallenge in Boston, it’s like a magnet. Reebok has moved their headquarters into that same area because of the feel that it’s created. There’s a sense of young creatives that are continuously flowing in and out of the building, and that’s what we want at GreenStreet.”

According to Harthorne, we can expect about half of the companies from the inaugural MassChallenge Houston cohort to hail from Texas, and the others to have chosen to join the Houston accelerator based on Houston’s particular economic profile—meaning that we should expect plenty of bright minds looking to shake up the energy industry, startups that would benefit from proximity to NASA, and businesses touching on the medical industry.

The partnership between Houston and MassChallenge is in many ways a natural fit, but that doesn’t mean it happened organically. The press conference announcement was preceded by eight months of conversations, with leaders from Central Houston taking on a key role in presenting the city as an ally for what MassChallenge is trying to accomplish in Texas.

This fruitful and active collaboration not only led MassChallenge to choose Houston over Dallas as its second Texas city (Austin launched in 2018), but also quickened the timeframe for expansion to 2019 from the planned 2020.

“Central Houston has been instrumental in introducing us to partners and community members,” says Harthorne. “In terms of our decision [to bring MassChallenge to Houston], it was because Houston is a great city, and because they opened their arms and welcomed us as a partner.”

The Ion that is planned as the centerpiece 270,000-square-foot innovation center called The Ion will begin renovation on the historic Sears building in Midtown, turning it into a building in Midtown, turning it into a

The most casual of these is COWorking SPACE, which is generally open to any kind of small business, not just startups, and offers individual office space plus extra amenities—meeting rooms, communal coffee, etc.—and the opportunity to network and socialize with neighbors.

The second level of startup community and support is an INCUBATOR. “You don’t have to be a startup. You can be an entrepreneur, a founder, someone with an idea, and you can become a member,” says Lung. “You don’t have to have a business plan—they’ll help you with it. They’ll teach you marketing, they’ll teach you the legal terms, show you how to incorporate, some of those fundamentals.

An ACCELERATOR is a fundamentally different environment. Instead of joining via membership or signing a lease, those with a specific type of business prototype apply, and a select few are accepted into annual “cohorts.” In exchange for three to six months of office space and intensive mentoring, most accelerators (though not MassChallenge) take a small amount of equity in the company. At the end of the cohort’s cycle, participants present their business concepts at Demo Days to an audience that includes venture capitalists and C-level representatives from Fortune 500 companies. Many come away with an acquisition or an investment—or at MassChallenge, with prize money sponsored by one of several corporate partners—that’s designed to get the company to the next level.
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Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts Makes its Downtown Debut

“There’s an energy to Downtown that’s fun. And on the flip side, we bring an energy here, too. It’s been exciting to be here. We have partnerships with most of the major arts organizations in the city, and I think our students will have new opportunities here.”

—R. Scott Allen, Principal

By Holly Beretto
Meanwhile, on the third floor, in Studio C with its spongy gray floor and mirror-lined wall, Jadelynn Ko, her dark hair in a neat bun and wearing a black camisole and dance leggings, wraps her arms around her slim shoulders, her fingertips peeking over her back as she listens to visiting choreographer Amy Miller from Gibney Dance in New York City.

“Check out your partner,” she says. “Think about where you are, your best day, your worst day. We’ll run through it again and then you’ll go to lunch or we’ll talk about astrophysics or something. You all are amazing.”
Some people might call all that activity special. At HSPVA, they call it Thursday.

From its new Downtown home in the block surrounded by Rusk, Caroline, Capitol and Austin streets, HISD’s brand-new building is a hive of activity where music literally rings through the halls, and the walls are covered in art. When it opened for classes on Jan. 7 this year, 750 students and 52 teachers moved into their new home. The school’s former building, on Stanford Street in Montrose, was beloved by generations of staff, students and alumni, so there was a tiny question of how the transition to the bright, beautiful space would be.

“It’s still a little surreal for me,” said Allen. “But walking through here now, with the kids in the hallways and seeing them in their art areas, it’s magical to see how they’ve just jumped in and gone from what they were used to, to this without missing a beat.”

The new school takes up 168,000 square feet, including an 800-seat main theater, 200-seat black box and studio theaters, a 150-seat recital hall, a recording studio, nearly a dozen sound-isolation practice rooms, costume and scene shops, a ceramics lab with a kiln, digital labs, a sculpture creation space, a creative-writing lounge, library, classrooms and plenty of space for open collaboration. It more resembles a hip office environment, with its chalkboard and whiteboard walls for announcements or doodling, cozy corners where students confer over scripts or books, and office space for the faculty. Designed by Gensler, HSPVA cleanly integrates the arts and academics.

“This is everything we wanted and more,” said Allen.
Mariah Adeeko cuts a serious figure, with her corkscrew curls fanning about her face, 1970s-style Gloria Steinhem shaded glasses and bright-red lipstick. But when she grins as she talks about writing, she looks more like the 15-year-old sophomore she is.

“Writing is a method of communication for me that can be translated in so many different ways,” she says reflectively as she sits in the space that serves as part office, part break room for HSPVA’s two creative writing teachers. “I’m a very eccentric person,” she offers with a giggle. “So, sometimes all the things I say don’t come out right. But with writing, I really get the time to think about what I want people to know about me and what to know about what I write. I want that message to sing for them.”

She came to HSPVA after getting serious about writing in the eighth grade. Her former school was a more conservative environment, one where she learned a lot, but didn’t necessarily feel totally comfortable expressing her views. A passionate promoter of social justice causes, she’s looking, in the future, to use her writing to tackle issues. Her current plan is to double major in journalism and something else, stepping stones she feels, toward a life of writing and editing.

HSPVA is unique in many ways, and one of them is the way it incorporates the craft of writing into its curriculum. Many high schools offer electives in creative writing, and teach writing as part of regular English classes. But at HSPVA it’s one of the school’s six disciplines. Freshmen and sophomores in the program progress through ancient texts, poetry, fiction, story and lyric structure, and playwriting, as well as acting and photography for writers, and screenwriting. They then spend their junior and senior years in advanced workshops, selecting a different focus area each semester. They might write fiction, or craft a play. Maybe they’ll write poetry or work on a screenplay. They’ll also take various technology courses that introduce them to ways they can not only publish their work in the digital age, but learn valuable workplace skills.

“A day in creative writing is heading into a room, receiving a lesson and then either doing exercises about that lesson or taking it and creating new work out of it, or getting a project and building off that,” says Adeeko. “It’s very active and you have to participate. You can’t just sit back and not listen to the discussion that’s going on or what other people are saying because all of it concentrates back on what you’ll be doing.”

Like every other program at HSPVA, students enter the creative writing program via audition. They must submit a portfolio of work, including short stories, poetry and scenes, and during the two-hour audition process are required to participate in a series of writing exercise. Students who pass the audition are invited to callbacks, which include an interview and another writing exercise.

Getting into the high school is not a cakewalk.

“It’s very active and you have to participate. You can’t just sit back and not listen to the discussion that’s going on or what other people are saying because all of it concentrates back on what you’ll be doing.”

—Mariah Adeeko, Sophomore
"I tell students at our first assembly to look next to them. For every seat filled, there were eight to 10 students who wanted to be here and aren’t."

—R. Scott Allen, Principal

The school divides the day for students into morning and afternoon blocks, where they typically spend three hours in their chosen study area. HSPVA has six arts disciplines: creative writing, dance, instrumental performance, theater, visual arts and vocal performance. After school, there are rehearsals and opportunities for students to further work on projects. Students might spend their mornings or afternoons in their creative disciplines, then the rest of the day in traditional high school classes. As a public school, HSPVA is required to meet all Houston Independent School District standards. One of those is that each Texas high school student must take one credit of fine arts.

"Ours kids take what amounts to two fine arts credits every semester," Allen says by way of comparison.

Students have access to honors and advanced placement courses, and take the same standardized tests as their peers in more traditional schools.

And they treat the academic work just as seriously as the arts. In many ways, students are like double majors in college, with a full load of academic and arts curricula. That kind of rigor is part of why HSPVA is a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School and received a Rockefeller Award for Excellence in Arts Education. The class of 2018 produced two national merit scholars and four national merit finalists, as well as six students named to the National Hispanic Recognition Program, 32 AP scholars and one AP international diploma recipient. All told, the class of 2018 was offered nearly $33 million in college scholarships.

"So many of our alumni come back after their first semesters in college to tell us it’s not that college is easier, but that they’ve really learned from us how to manage their time," says Allen.

Tyler Henderson sits at a baby grand piano in a fourth-floor classroom-cum-rehearsal space, playing Almost Like Being in Love, the Lerner and Lowe classic from the musical Brigadoon that has morphed over the decades into one of the most-known pieces of the Great American Songbook. He moves with the rhythm of the notes, closing his eyes from time to time, then concentrating on the keys, on the spin he’s giving a song written half a century before his birth.

"At the end of the second section," he plays, singing lightly, ...for the whole human race. It’s almost like being in love—I play that F sharp minor 6 instead of an E flat. It fits with the melody note and I think it sounds nice and then going back to E flat. It’s something I’ve practiced a lot, using the melody note and playing something completely different with it."

Henderson has been playing piano since he was five. When he was seven, his parents started him on formal lessons. He gravitated to the stylings of jazz, particularly Vince Guaraldi. Four years ago, his family moved from upstate New York to Houston, specifically so Henderson could attend HSPVA and its jazz program. He plays in the school’s jazz combo, as well as a larger jazz ensemble and performs at spots around Houston, including Café 4212 and Kohn’s.

"I love those songs," he says of the one he’s played and its 1940s and ’50s contemporaries. "They have beautiful progressions. His fingers wander across the keyboard picking out the notes the way someone might fidget with a pencil and smiles, showing the braces still on his teeth. "I play that one for auditions."
“I don’t usually stick to a medium,” says Calista Garcia, leaning against the long wooden counter that overlooks a staircase on the fifth floor. Behind her is a chalkboard wall that lists upcoming senior showcases. Over her right shoulder, a class about digital design is taking place. “I paint. I do ceramics. But I call myself a text artist.”

The curly haired senior is wearing jeans, combat boots and a Club Inferno sweatshirt. Her face opens into a wide smile as she talks about the opportunities she’s had here. “I’ve learned so much from being here!” She emphasizes the “so” happily, stretching it to two syllables. “I’ve learned every medium you can possibly think of. This program offers everything you could dream of, and they teach it to you and they’re like, if you want to, you can keep doing it. If you don’t, you don’t have to. It’s a really comfortable environment.”

She loves that she gets to spend three hours a day on art, which has helped her passion for the subject grow. While in middle school, her options for high school came down to auditioning for HSPVA or going to a private school. When she landed a spot in the high school’s visual arts program, it was like fate, she said. “This was the route I’m going down,” she said.

She’s currently wrestling with where she’ll go to college, trying to decide if she wants to go to art school or a traditional university with a graphic arts and design program. She likes the idea of art schools, but laments they’re far away from her Houston home. In the meantime, she’s got a senior show to work on.

Back in the dance studio, Ko moves with her dance partner, mirroring her actions, rolling her body up from her waist, putting her hand to her head, undulating back and forth with the music, a soulful rhythm punctuated with drum beats. As it changes, Ko leans onto her dance partner’s back and spins with her. They separate, Ko moving forward with other dancers, mouthing the count as she transitions to the next step. “Five, six, seven.”

She and the other six dancers in Studio C are working on something that may seem unusual anywhere else, but it’s part of the fabric of HSPVA. Amy Miller is a choreographer from New York, and she’s in Houston setting a piece for high school students. Inviting artists from around the country to share their time and talents with the students and give students exposure to what it means to be a professional artist is central to the school’s mission.

“Ballet technique and modern dance are the core of our program,” says Janice Carothers, chair of the school’s dance program. “And we do tap sessions, as well as teaching about nutrition and costume construction.”

The dance program—like others at HSPVA—gives students broad overviews while letting them find their focus in narrower areas. Each student takes survey and dance history courses, as well as serving on technical production crews, taking a semester of selections like West African dance or musical theater, courses in dance partnering and completing a senior project, a common denominator among all seniors. Dancers have a dress code that outlines exactly the kind of shoes, tops and bottoms allowed. Girls are expected to wear a black tank, camisole, short- or long-sleeve leotard and pink tights for ballet classes. Boys are expected to wear dance belts in all classes, white short-sleeve fitted T-shirts deeply tucked in. Students sign a contract that discusses expectations and conduct.

“I didn’t start dancing until I was 10,” explains Ko, who found out about the HSPVA program while she was a Johnston Middle School, and immediately told her mother she had to go there. Her four years of high school have allowed her to grow as a dancer and, she feels, as a person. “I’ve matured a lot and tried to let go of things I don’t see as vital to my well-being,” she said. “I think I’ve learned to decide what’s good for me and how to balance my workload and also be very independent. After I started driving alone, it was like, I have to drive myself to dance class and I have to drive to rehearsal and all that kind of stuff.”

Those survival skills are things she thinks will be useful for her this fall when she starts college. She’s attending George Mason University, ranked as one of the top 25 dance schools in the country. She’ll be going with one of her best friends, fellow HSPVA dancer Nell Klimas; Ko says the two plan to be roommates.

Back on the dance floor, Ko and her fellow dancers trade partners through the piece, forming duets and trios, seeming to float through the studio, becoming one with the music, which suddenly stops. “Blackout,” says Miller.
In Hune’s theater class, the yoga warmup is over and half of the students are moving across the floor, seemingly to a beat of their own choosing, alternating their steps with throwing Hune's tennis balls at each other. The others are seated on the floor, along the length of the seats, watching their classmates.

“Be open and available to catch multiple balls at all times,” he tells them. “If you drop a ball, both thrower and catcher are out.”

One girl skids on the floor as a ball comes toward her. There’s a collective gasp in the room. But she manages to both break her fall and keep the ball. “Marla’s the dodgeball queen,” someone calls.

The exercise is about trust and focus, but something more, Hune tells his students.

“It’s life, right?” he tells them. “We need to be aware enough to catch flying balls, even if there are bad throws because that’s what life is like all the time. And that’s a practical application for your scene work. Watch yourself when accidents happen. What do you do? I encourage you to keep going.”

Hune has an easy rapport with his students. He graduated from HSPVA’s theater program in 2003 and now not only teaches there but is the co-founder and artistic director for The Rec Room, a Downtown organization dedicated to developing groundbreaking theater and encouraging Houston artists. Growing up in Bear Creek, he says he had theater in his blood.

“But I wasn’t in theater until I got here,” he says. “I auditioned without even knowing what a monologue was.” At HSPVA, he found his tribe.

“These are my people, it felt like. This is where I need to root myself.”

He’s been on the HSPVA faculty since 2010, taking on a full-time role in 2016. He teaches levels one and two acting in the mornings, levels three and four in the afternoons, with crew work after school. He says one of the things he loves about the school is that it structures its curriculum in a similar way to college BFA programs.

“This is giving actual time to learning,” he said of the way classes at the school are set up. “And our students really do everything. “We teach them to pitch the shows that will be on stage, but they do the work. They create the set designs, make the costumes, and design the posters to promote shows. My job is to facilitate their learning so that when they leave, they’re ready to start a BFA program or work professionally.”

“Our students really do everything.”

—Matt Hune, Teacher
Of course, not every graduate will go on to work as a professional actor, dancer, musician or artist. Many will, certainly, like Chandra Wilson, the Emmy-nominated actress from *Grey’s Anatomy*, opera singer Camille Zamora and magician Jay Alexander. But being a performer or artist isn’t the point.

“Artists bring a different perspective to society,” said Allen. “I want every kid here to get what they need academically and artistically to equip them to go study law or be the next great novelist.”

In addition to having the faculty to help achieve that, and passionate students who want to learn it, Allen and HSPVA are assisted by the nonprofit organization HSPVA Friends. Headed by Executive Director Alene Coggin, a 2005 HSPVA alumna, the group helps raise funds for the school’s needs. Like every other HISD school, HSPVA receives a budgeted amount of dollars for its programming.

“But arts education is expensive,” she says. “And it’s very specific. Supplies need to be bought. Instruments need to be tuned. Sets and costumes need to be built.”

The Friends group solicits much-needed donations for it all, and the organization was instrumental in raising the $7.5 million gift from the Kinder Family Foundation, part of the eventual $88 million it took to build the school that now bears the Kinder name. HSPVA Friends raises nearly a million dollars every year for the school, both through private donations and grants.

Coggin sees the new high school as a continuation of the great work the school does in preparing artists and supporters of the arts, as well as a point of pride among the community.

“When I went to HSPVA, we were told, ‘you’ll graduate from a new building,’” she jokes. “It’s become kind of an inside joke among alumni—we were all told that. But now it’s here. The kids feel at home there; you walk around and you see dancers in class and rehearsals happening. Everyone seems to be standing a little bit taller. It’s the culmination of a 25-year dream.”
When the school opened in January, Pat Bonner became the first teacher to teach at all three of the school’s campuses. She started teaching at HSPVA when the school operated in a former synagogue, then moved with it to the Stanford Street location, and came along again when it opened Downtown.

“We are so happy to be here,” she says of the new building.

Bonner is legend among students and alumni. The much-beloved chair of the vocal music department is at once demanding of and a cheerleader for her students. She’s also a passionate advocate for the arts and arts education.

“The arts make us more civilized,” she says. “And I want our students to be good citizens and supporters of the arts.”

She knows that HSPVA’s vocal music department is special, not just because the opportunities for development it offers its students, but because it exists at all. Many schools around the country, citing funding issues, have cut back on their music and other arts offerings.

“Here, our students do solo and ensemble work. They learn how to work with others and be a contributing member of an ensemble.”

The proof of that was on display at the Winter Concert, which highlighted the work of the school’s madrigal singers, the Bella Voce group, concert singers, tenor-bass choir, the chorale and the AcaFellas a cappella ensemble. From familiar melodies such as *Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!* and *America the Beautiful*, to a range of art songs and barbershop standards, the ensembles showcased their velvet tones and ability to sound like a single entity, their voices lifting above the piano and, in the finale, charango, guitar and percussion. The concert officially opened the Ruth Denney Theatre, HSPVA’s main performing space considered by all to be the heart of the building. The acoustics, like other details of the new school, were exquisite, a tangible demonstration that this is a building built for artists.

Need further evidence of that? Just walk around.

“The arts make us more civilized. And I want our students to be good citizens and supporters of the arts.”

—Pat Bonner, Teacher
“We’re exploring how to be creative here,” says Hune. “There are smart, funny, compassionate people all around us. And this might sound cliché, but these students want to be here. Many have to be here; they wouldn’t thrive anywhere else. This is really a special place for quirky artists. It’s kind of like magic.”

Sitting in his fourth-floor office, where one bookcase shelf is lined with Playbill binders, and where a massive orange-and-blue neon-light Astros sign is above his desk, Allen contemplates that idea.

“Most of our kids are old souls,” he says. “And they are coming here to live their passion. They’re very tolerant and very accepting of each other, and they support each other’s creativity.”

He says it’s not unusual to find students working across disciplines with each other, or reading scenes or practicing in the halls. One of the things that happened organically at the old building on Stanford Street was that people collaborated in places outside the classroom not only because they wanted to, but because there weren’t really any other places to do it. When the new school was built, putting in collaboration spaces was on the list of priorities. But, some wondered, would that take away from organic happenings? Thus far, it hasn’t seemed to.

“The new building is beautiful!” says Garcia, flashing her smile. “It’s so clean and there’s so much space. Another benefit is that I’m seeing people now that I’ve never seen, and that’s really cool. There are so many kind-hearted people here, and passionate people who are driven and excited about their art. It’s so motivating, like I’m going to go make more art!”

The notes from a sonata flow from a double bass and float down the stairwell. At the top of sits a student behind a music stand. He runs the bow across the instrument, stops and heaves a sigh.

“The recital is in two weeks,” he says. He starts again.

David Waddell, a 1999 alumnus and now a visual arts instructor at the school, just smiles.

“Thafs what it’s like here. Every day,” he says.

Walking through the sculpture lab, which sits opposite the ceramics lab separated by a massive outdoor, concrete balcony that’s designed to allow students to work on larger projects that may involve spraying chemicals, Waddell stops to listen as another instructor and student rearrange a series of wooden blocks on a table. The structure is a mockup of a sculpture, and they’re discussing the best angles for how it should be laid out.

Back outside the digital design classrooms, Garcia is explaining what she’s thinking for her legacy project. Every visual arts student has to leave behind a project when he or she graduates. The pieces line the walls of the school.

“I kind of wanted my piece to be something about saying goodbye or I’ll miss you or something along those lines,” she said. “And it’s kind of a conversation between me and the building. Because I will miss the building a lot and I keep thinking about it lately. Like, I’m graduating, and it’s starting to freak me out. I’ll miss this environment and these people.”
“Downtown really feels like a neighborhood of arts and culture. And we’re a part of it.”

—Matt Hune

In the creative-writing lounge, students sprawl across a sectional sofa and the stools and chairs scattered about the space opposite the high school’s library. Some are reading on their laptops, ear buds in. Adeeko has her face buried in a book.

“We encourage them to just read,” says Judith Switek, chair of the creative-writing program. “So, we give them half an hour a week to do that, even though we want them to have more. It’s a chance for them to read whatever they want.”

That space to regroup and find their own interests is important to the program, as are partnerships with individuals and organizations. Earlier this year, the creative writing students took part in a project with the Alley Theatre, a workshop on issues of social justice and how to go about addressing them.

Adeeko loved the collaborative process, not only learning about problems, but talking with others and hearing opinions and discovering that she could be part of the solution.

It’s opportunities like that Allen and the faculty want students to have. He thinks being Downtown is a great way to help foster those opportunities. He’s already heard from some of the school’s neighbors that they can see the classrooms and rehearsal spaces from their offices, and it’s been interesting for them to see what the students are doing.

“There’s an energy to Downtown that’s fun,” he says. “And on the flip side, we bring an energy here, too. It’s been exciting to be here. We have partnerships with most of the major arts organizations in the city, and I think our students will have new opportunities here.”

Hune agrees.

“I think we can take collaboration to the next level here,” he said. “Downtown really feels like a neighborhood of arts and culture. And we’re a part of it.”
HSPVA is as much working space as it is learning space. Hune walks his students through how to be aware of themselves and their partners in scenes. Henderson sits at the piano, fine-tuning his compositions. Garcia contemplates how she’ll arrange text on the page to create an art piece to pay proper homage to her high school. Adeeko studies algebra II and looks for ways to express herself on the page. Ko joins the others in the ensemble, running through Miller’s choreography one more time. And in the recital hall, Bonner stands in front of a quartet of boys practicing a setting of Edmund Waller’s “Go Lovely Rose.”

The family-style Jam + Toast brunch is made up of locally sourced products and features smoked cheddar grits, their Butchershop Skillet and other southwestern favorites.
Bigio’s American  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 & D Daily. $$

BirdDog Saint  American  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. birddogsiamsaint.com. 711 Main. 832.767.5574. L, D & LD Mon–Sat. $$

Birraporetti’s Italian  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. birraarestaurant.com. 500 Louisiana, 713.224.9494. L, D & LN Daily. $$

The Bistro American  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 & D Daily. $$

Blue by Massa Seafood  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. massas.com. 1160 Smith, 713.650.0837. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $$


Bombay Pizza Co. Indian Fusion  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. bombaypizzaco.com. 914 Main, 713.654.4444. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $$

Booxtown Coffee Main St. Coffee House Part coffee shop, part bar, Booxtown’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. booxtowncoffee.com. 300 Main Street, 281.846.6995. B, L & D BR Daily. $$

Bouray’s Burrito Bar Fast Food  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. $$

Bovine & barley American  Bovine & 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 tags that hang illuminated on an exposed brick wall. Highlights from the menu include brisket tacos, meatloaf muffins on top of jalapeno mash, 1036 beer can chicken and a variety of burgers. Not to mention over 42 beers and six hand-crafted cocktails on tap! bovineandbarley.com. 416 Main, 832.742.5683. L Sat–Sun; D, LN Daily. $$

Brasserie du Parc French  Located in the luxury high rise, One Park Place, the interior design and the menu at this beautiful French restaurant were inspired by classic Parisian brasseries and offerings include classic dishes like risotto, steak frites and crêpes, along with delicacies such as escargots and chicken liver pâté. brasserieduparc.net. 1440 Lamar, 832.879.2802. L & D Daily. $$

Burger Theory American  Located at street-level of Downtown’s Holiday Inn, Burger Theory specializes in gourmet burgers, casual American fare and boasts a beer-centric bar. They also serve a mean breakfast! 1616 Main St. B, L & D & LN. $$

Buzz Barista Coffee House  This full-service espresso bar offers much more than cappuccinos for a morning fix. People on the go can grab fresh-baked pastries, Naked juices, yogurt parfaits and fruit cups along with their brewed delights. 811 Main, 713.228.3033. B & L Mon–Fri. $$


Café Cosmopolita Coffee House  Inspired by the cultural and gastronomical diversity in European cafes, this local coffee shop offers a surplus of coffee, pastries made from scratch, breakfast items, and natural smoothies. cafe.cosmopolita.com. 1625 Main Street, Suite A–1. 713.708.890.2041. B Daily. $$

Cafe Express Fast Casual  Need to grab a quick lunch? Cafe Express is an informal yet sophisticated choice. You can always find a variety of delicious entrees, salads and sandwiches. cafeexpress.com. 650 Main, 713.237.9222. B & L Mon–Sat. $$

China Garden Chinese  A popular Chinese restaurant, China Garden has been serving downtown for more than 30 years. Their egg rolls and lemon chicken have become favorites. 1602 Leeland, 713.652.0745. L Mon–Fri; D Daily. $-

Chipotle Mexican  Known for its large portions, this Mexican fast casual spot offers a variety of wholesome menu items. chipotle.com. 909 Texas, 713.225.6633. L & Early D Mon–Fri. $-

Christian’s Tailgate American  Christian’s Tailgate has arguably one of the best burgers in town and now you can enjoy them Downtown! The notable Houston burger joint in Downtown’s Historic District boasts daily food specials, 30 beers on tap, 40+ TVs, a pool table, shuffle board, video games and an awesome outdoor patio! christianstailgate.com. 1012 Congress, 281.556.1010. L, D & LN. $-

Conservatory Beer Garden & Food Hall  Conservatory Beer Garden & Food Hall is the first food hall in Houston to showcase a curated list of food vendors, including Moku Bar, Arte Pizzeria, Eazy Does It, Noble Rot Wine Bar, Treacherous Leches, The Ph 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. conservatoryhtx.com. 1010 Prairie, 713.339.7697. L, D & LN Daily. $$-
Strap on your boots, Houston. Downtown’s newest Texas-centric restaurant, The Rustic, has set its country roots at 1836 Polk and celebrates all things Texas in a go-big or go-home kind of way. The 25,000-square-foot venue boasts an open concept kitchen with wood-burning grills, an expansive backyard patio, complete with cornhole boards, a signature u-shaped bar, a retractable roof and a half-a-million-dollar sound system that accommodates anything from an intimate acoustic set to large acts. Décor wise, the interior stays true to its name with an attractive blend of wood and copper finishes, splashed with a dab of western accents.
The restaurant brings the Texas heat when it comes to their delicious selection of homestyle cuisine. Must-try items include their zesty wild-boar meatballs, the signature Rustic burger, and the Drunk Chick—a beer-can game hen, topped with jalapeño spoon bread and chile-lime butter. Trust us when we say that the presentation is as impressive as the entrée itself. If you’re feeling bold, order the Calf Fries with buttermilk dip. Just make sure to leave room for dessert.

A scoop of The Rustic’s house-made banana pudding or their enormous peanut butter pie (which feeds you and five of your friends) is sure to satisfy your sweet tooth.

Weekend brunch is also a must. The family-style Jam + Toast brunch is made up of locally sourced products and features smoked cheddar grits, their Butchershop Skillet and other southwestern favorites. Patrons can embrace the lively atmosphere while spending quality time with the family, so come hungry!

But a great experience goes far beyond the delicious food and friendly staff. Aside from a Texas-fueled menu, this locale offers an extensive selection of draft beer and hosts free live music seven days a week—two key ingredients that make this party destination unique. There is no bad seat in the house, especially during happy hour, when all beer, rosé and house wine is $3 at 3 p.m., $4 at 4 p.m. and $5 at 5 p.m. Revelers can choose from over 40 beers on tap or enjoy The Rustic’s Rimy Rita—a concoction of Dulce Vida lime tequila, raspberry liqueur, sangria popsicle and frozen margarita.

As for the music selection, on most nights, expect to sing along to the best Texas country, but don’t be surprised to hear indie-rock, gospel, soul, and bluegrass sounds lighting up the stage as well. The only thing better than that is grabbing a few of your closest friends and reserving VIP seats onstage for the ultimate rock star experience.

While The Rustic prides itself as being a restaurant first, the idea of fusing great food and drinks with entertainment became clear to restaurateur and co-owner, Kyle Noonan, during a fun bachelor party outing with his now business partner, Josh Sepkowitz. “We were sitting around the fire under the Texas sky, grilling food with some music playing when we had the idea,” says Noonan. “We wanted to replicate that same feeling of great music, food and drinks surrounded by great company.” Before bringing the fun to Houston last November, the dynamic duo launched their first outpost in Dallas back in 2013, followed by a second location in San Antonio. Texas country icon (and stakeholder) Pat Greene kicked off Houston’s grand opening in style.

According to Noonan, Houston is a leader as a Texas food city, and the native Houstonian was excited to bring The Rustic experience to Downtown. “Being surrounded by so many attractions like the Toyota Center and George R. Brown Convention Center brings in visitors and tourists,” confirms Noonan. “The live music, cold drinks and amazing food paired with great company makes for an infectious atmosphere. We know people will want to come back for more.”
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 Square’s jumping fountains. cornerbakery.com, 1000 Main, 713.651.0673.  B & L Mon–Fri. $  

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

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

Diana American Grill American Nestled inside the Hobby Center, this upscale restaurant is an ideal place for pre-show dining and Downtown lunches. Menu items include a lobster cocktail, red mapper with gulf crab, ribeye steak and other delectable dishes created by James Beard Award-winning chef Robert Del Grande. hobbycenter.com. 800 Bagby, 713.315.2562. L & D Tue-Sun. $$$

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! thedistricthtx.com. 610 Main St. L & D. $  

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. $  

Eats Mesquite Grill Classic American Craving a burger downtown? Popular for its juicy burgers and great-tasting fries, Eats makes for a great lunchtime spot. Guests can make their burgers exactly how they like them. 804 Milam, 713.223.3287. L Mon–Fri. $  

Edgar’s Hermeno Mexi-South Edgar’s Hermeno is a southern American restaurant with a Mexican-inspired twist located inside The Whitehall Hotel. It perfectly blends Houston’s native Tex-Mex cuisine with classic southern fare offering menu items like Texas corn cakes with pork chicharon and cotija cheese, mac and queso with chipotle-grilled Gulf shrimp, and award-winning southern fried stuffed chicken with masa grits and candied bacon jam. thewhitehallhouston.com. 1700 Smith, 713.739.8800. B, L & L Daily. $  

Einstein’s Bagels Deli Known as a great place to grab freshly-baked bagels and coffee for breakfast, they also serve up delectable lunch choices that include paninis, melts and pizza bagels. Be an office hero and use the catering service to treat your work pals. einsteinbros.com. 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4775. B, L & L Mon–Sun. $  

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 gastrocantina-inspired menu is chock full of tasty tacos with fresh toppings like pomegranate salsa, charred pumpkin, scallops and more. elbigbad.com. 419 Travis, 713.229.8181. L, D & L Mon–Fri; D & L Sun & Sat, BR Sun. $$  

Fabian’s Latin Flavors Latin American Located downtown? Popular for its juicy burgers and great-tasting fries, Eats makes for a great lunchtime spot. Guests can make their burgers exactly how they like them. L Mon–Fri. 804 Milam, 713.223.3287. 

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. beerkurd.com. 705 Main, 713.228.7468. L, D & LN Daily. $  

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 6oz. cowboy ribeye, the inspired menu draws from seasonal and international flavors with a distinctively Texas twist. foundationroom.com. 1204 Caroline, 888.402.5837. D Wed-Sat. $$$

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 cheese steak sandwiches, Buffalo wings, lasagna and salads. frankspizza.com. 417 Travis, 713.225.5656. L & D Daily; LN Fri & Sat. $  

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 sharable 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. $$$

The Grove American Rustic This two-story, ultra-lounge restaurant is found at Discovery Green. The menu features rustic American cuisine such as Gulf Coast seafood, steaks and signature rotisserie dishes. groveturner.com. Discovery Green, 1617 Lamar, 713.337.7321. L & D Daily. $$$

Guadalajara 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 co-workers or friends. Great happy hour specials. guadalajarahacienda.com. Greenstreet, 1201 San Jacinto, 713.650.0101. L & D Daily. $$  

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. $$  

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. $$  

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. $$


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. $$  

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

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

Irma’s Southwest Grill Mexican Irma’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. irmasouthwest.com. 1475 Texas, 713.247.9651. L & D Mon–Sat. $$  

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

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, collard 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. $  

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. $
**Kulture Caribbean** Dubbed “an urban comfort kitchen,” the restaurant explores foods, 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. L & D. $5

**The Lake House** Fast Casual  Offering family-friendly food, featuring burgers, Köbe 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–Sat. $5

**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. lacalletacos.com. 909 Franklin, 832.735.8226. L, D & LN Daily. $5

**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, 713.228.9620. B & L Mon–Fri. $5

**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. $5

**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 a 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. $5

**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. $5

**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. houstonlocalfood.com. 420 Main, 713.227.0531. L & D Daily. $5

**Louie Coffee Coffee House.** Louie Coffee is housed at Greenstreet with a menu that includes a variety of coffees, teas, breakfast tacos, sandwiches, yogurt parfaits and other sweet treats. This cozy coffee shop is the perfect place to sit back, relax and escape the bustling Downtown streets. louie.coffee. 1201 Fannin, 713.255.2363. B & L Mon–Sat. $5

**Lucienne 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. hotelalessandra-houston.com. Hotel Alessandra, 1070 Second, 713.242.8555. B, L & D Mon–Fri; BR Sat–Sun. $5

**Lucky Strike Lanes & 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. Greenstreet, 1201 San Jacinto, Level 3. 713.343.3300. L, D & LN Daily. $5

**Mademoiselle Louise Bakery Coffee House** In addition to a quaint European vibe, Mademoiselle Louise Bakery offers chocolate croissants, tarts, eclairs, a variety of freshly baked bread and other classic French pastries. Conveniently located on the first floor of Skyhouse Main. mademoisellelouise.com. 1715 Main. B & L Sun–Fri. $5

**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. jwmarrriott@hotelmainsquare.com. 806 Main St, 713.400.1245. B, L, D Daily. $5

**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. mangotreathisto.com. 914 Main Street, 713.659.1600. L & D Mon–Sat. $5

**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. mccormickandschmick.com. Greenstreet, 1201 Fannin, 713.658.8100. L & D Daily. $5

**McDonald’s Fast Food** 808 Dallas @ Milam, 713.651.9449. B & L Daily; D Mon–Fri. $5

**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 simple, yet appealing décor, makes it a downtown standout. bellarestaurants.com. Greenstreet, 1201 San Jacinto, 713.319.6675. L & D Daily; BR & LN Fri & Sat. $5

**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, too. minuticoffee.com. 909 Texas, 281.265.3344. B, L, D & LN Daily. $5

**MKT BAR International** Part of Phoenixia Specialty Foods, it’s the perfect spot to stop when you need a chill moment. The bar offers coffee, pastries, wine, beer, gourmet pizza and other yummy nibbles for which Phoenixia is known, phoenixiafoods.com. 1001 Austin, 832.360.2222. B, L & D Daily. $5

**The Moonshiners American** The Moonshiners Southern Table + Bar offers up a rebellious respite 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. $5

**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. $5

**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. murphysdellih.com. 601 Jefferson, 713.652.4939. 1900 Main, 713.650.3354. 440 Louisiana, 713.247.9122. 700 Louisiana, 713.547.0660. 1415 Louisiana, 713.863.6113. 500 Dallas, 713.654.0033. B & L Mon–Fri all locations. $5

**Niko Niko’s Greek & American** Houston icon Dimitri Fekotakos opened his cafe in 2010 at Market Square Park. Favorites such as the gyro and kebobs 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. $5

**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-Fri & L & D Daily. $5

**The Oyster Bar Seafood** House In downtown Banister 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. $5

**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. padthaihoustonrestaurant.com. 401 Louisiana, 713.225.4900. D Daily. $5
**Pappas Bros. Steakhouse** Steakhouse Pappas Bros. Steakhouse puts immeasurable care into everything they do, all to provide their guests with a dining experience like no other. They buy the highest-quality ingredients, use a timeless recipe, and cook it flawlessly each and every time. pappasbros.com, 1200 McKinney, 713.658.1995. D Mon–Sat.

**Pappasito's Cantina** Tex-Mex One of Houston's most popular casual Tex-Mex restaurants, Pappasito's specializes in sizzling fajitas, creamy queso and tortillas that almost melt in your mouth! The Downtown location offers six unique ceviches and crudos that can't be found at any of the other restaurants. pappasitos.com. Hilton Americas-Houston, 1600 Lamar St, 713.353.4400. L & D Daily. $$

**Perbacco Italian** An adorable little spot located at street level of one of Houston's skyscrapers, Perbacco serves up Italian cuisine in a modern and fresh atmosphere. Catering to downtown workers and the theater crowd, you always get quick and friendly service and tasty food. 700 Milam, 713.224.2422. L Mon–Fri; D Thu–Sat. $$

**Phoenicia Specialty Foods** International If you are in search of yummy food on the go, Phoenicia Specialty Foods is the place for you! This urban gourmet shop offers a wide variety of salads, lasagnas, ravioli, and chicken dishes. 223 Main, 713.222.1184. L & D Daily. $$

**Prohibition American** Prohibition is the home of the Moonlight Dolls who dazzle audiences with their sexy yet fun burlesque performances. Beaeming with glitz and glamour, this upscale supper club has an exquisite menu featuring fresh Gulf seafood and steaks cooked to perfection! prohibitionhouston.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 ambience 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** 1119 Commerce, 713.228.9000. L & D Mon–Sun. $**

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

**Roma's Pizza Italian** Located just across from the MetroRail Station, 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 pasta! nypizzeria.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 salata.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–Fri; D & LN Daily. $$$

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


**Shula's Steakhouse** Dark wood, sports memorabilia and menus hand painted on official NFL game footballs makes Pro Hall-of-Famer Don Shula's Steak House stand out from the rest. Become a member of the 48oz Club by finishing a 48-ounce Shula Cut. donshula.com. Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4777. B, L & D Daily. $$$

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

**Solo 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. $**

**Spindletop American** A favorite Houston seafood restaurant and fine dining experience ideal for birthday parties, family reunions, anniversaries and engagements. Perched on the 34th floor of Hyatt Regency Downtown, this glass-walled restaurant makes one revolution every 45 minutes, ensuring you'll enjoy 360-degree views of the city and all of its famous landmarks. houstonregency.hyatt.com. Hyatt Regency, 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4775. D Tue–Sat. $$$

**Stack Burger American** This Downtown burger joint is far from ordinary. Serving more than just your everyday burgers, Stack Burger also offers coffee, breakfast, fusion sandwiches and a whole lot Houston art. stack-burger.com. 703 St. Joseph Pkwy, 713.651.0227. B & L Daily. $**

**Sub Roc Fast Casual** Located inside 1021 Main you'll find Sub Roc, a quaint little space offering a diverse menu of breakfast and deli lunch options like soups and salads. Whether you're taking a coffee break or a grab and go sandwich in hand, Sub Roc strives to make every guest's experience pleasant with a smiling face and a relaxing environment. sub-roc.com. 1021 Main, Suite 200. 713.337.3530. B & L. $**

**Subway Fast Food** 405 Main, 713.227.4700. Daily. $**

**Table 7 Bistro American** Table 7 is a combination of an upscale, yet casual atmosphere. Weekday happy hour includes $4 well drinks and $2 domestic beers, and it's happy hour all weekend with $2 mimosas all day on Saturdays and Sundays. district414.com. 720 Fannin (@ The Club Quarters, 713.227.4800. B, L & D Daily. $**

**Tejas Grill & Sports Bar American** Located at The Shops at Houston Center, Tejas offers the perfect tailgate menu and full-service bar. tejasgrillandsportsbar.com. 1201 Lamar at The Shops at Houston Center, 713.739.8352. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $**

**Thai Cafe Asian** Make your way to the Historic District and treat your tastebuds to the authentic flavors of Thai fusion at this local hub. Menu favorites include a variety of Thai dishes including their Crispy Shrimp & Spicy Tamarind Sauce and Kao Soi. thaicafe917.com. 917 Franklin, 713.228.8424. L & D Mon–Sat. $**

**Theodore Rex American** Enjoy an intimate dining experience at James Beard Award–winning Chef Justin Yu's modern American bistro, Theodore Rex. Expect fresh local produce in your dishes coupled with warm hospitality as you walk in. trexhoustom.com. 1302 Nance St, 832.830.8592. D Mon–Thu. $**

**III Forks American** Upscale, warm atmosphere and impeccable service sets the stage for the sophisticated steakhouse. New York Strip and Filet Mignon, Bone-In Ribeye, Rack of Lamb, and a full range of steakhouse sides served a la carte. Seafood items include Chilean Seabass, Atlantic Salmon, Seared Scallops, and Lobster Tails. IIIforks.com. GreenStreet, 1201 San Jacinto, Level 1, 713.658.9457. Mon–Fri, D Mon-Sat. $$$$
Looking for a spot to go after a long day or for a fun night out with friends? Check out some of our favorites!

Bardot | 1070 Dallas
Perched on the second floor of Hotel Alessandra above the atrium, Bardot offers luxurious ambiance and menu options poised to please. Unwind with a hand-crafted cocktail at the end of the day, or start your evening with a glass of wine and a light bite sure to delight your taste buds.
Sun–Thu 3 pm–midnight; Fri–Sat 3 pm–2 am.
hotelalessandra-houston.com/bar-bardot

Bayou & Bottle | 1300 Lamar
Bayou & Bottle is a chic bourbon concept located in the lobby of Four Seasons Houston. The bar serves over 150 varieties of bourbons and whiskies along with flavorful cuisine inspired by Houston’s melting pot of cultures.
Mon–Wed 11 am–midnight; Thu–Sat 11 am–1 am; Sun noon–midnight.
fours SEASONS HoustoN.com

Boots ‘n Shoots | 506 Main
This Texas-themed bar conveniently located right off the METRORail, features a wide variety of whiskey. If you’re feeling adventurous, try out the super fun larger-than-life PLINKO board which decides your fate when the time comes to take a shot!
Wed–Sat 4 pm–2 am. bootshootshouston.com

The Boulevardier | 410 Main, Downstairs
This beautiful lounge provides an upscale yet comfortable respite to Main Street every Thursday through Saturday serving the finest craft cocktails.
Thu–Sat 6 pm–2 am. thecommonerbar.com/upstairs

Captain Foxheart’s Bad News Bar & Spirit Lodge | 308 Main
A fun and quirky bar that doesn’t take itself too seriously (hence the name), but the cocktails are seriously good. Patrons enjoy the speakeasy vibe and the patio terrace for prime people watching.
Mon–Sun 4 pm–2 am. twitter.com/badnewsb

Casablanca Lounge | 312 Main
This Guatemalan-inspired bar offers drink specials every day of the week, plenty of flat screen TVs to keep up with the latest sporting events and features live DJs on the weekends.
Tue–Sat 4 pm–2 am; Sun 4 pm–midnight. casablancahouStoN.com

Cellar 7 Wine & Bar Bites | 610 Main
From wine 101 classes and event tastings to enjoying cocktails with friends before a theater show, Cellar 7 is a go-to destination in the skyline district. Wind down after a work with a glass of wine or a Texas brew and pair it with a side of grilled oysters or any of the delectable bar bits on their menu. Daily 4–11 pm.
district7grill.com

Char Bar | 305 Travis
Char Bar offers stiff drinks alongside custom suits. Drenched in nostalgia, Char Bar is proud of its history, as reflected in the old photos of family members who have worked in the space since the 1930s. Enjoy the second floor balcony or chat it up with Weldon Renfro, who has a permanent shoe shine booth at the entrance.
Mon–Wed 10 am–midnight; Thu–Sat 10 am–2 am. twitter.com/TheCharBar

The Commoner | 410 Main, Downstairs
Simple, straightforward. Cocktails, beer and wine.
Mon–Sun 4 pm–2 am; Sun noon–midnight.
the commonerbar.com

Coterie | 701 Texas Avenue
The wine-centric bistro offers an extensive selection of wines, seasonal cocktails, coffee, and everything in between. Opt for a vintage wine from their walk-in wine tower, let the bartender fix you a cocktail at the bar, or get your espresso fix any day of the week.
Mon–Wed 6:30 am–11 pm; Thu–Fri 6:30 am–1 am; Sat 7:30 am–1 am; Sun 7:30 am–10 pm.
coteriehouston.com

Craft Beer Cellar | 907 Franklin
Located in the Historic Market Square neighborhood, Craft Beer Cellar is a bottle shop and bar with a full wall of local, national and international beer options. Stop by and have a drink at the bar or fill up a growler and take one to go!
Mon–Sat 10 am–10 pm; Sun 11 am–7 pm. houston.craftbeercellar.com

Dean’s | 316 Main
Under new ownership and with a new look and feel, Dean’s adds to the cool vibe found on the 300 block of Main. Great attention from the bartenders and the trendy crowd make it a unique place to socialize.
Mon–Thu 8 pm–2 am; Fri–Sat 5 pm–2 am.
dean@downtownmO

The Dirt Bar | 1209 Caroline
The non-venue rock ‘n roll lounge is a popular pre- and post-show destination spot that has become famous for its performer patronage. Drawing crowds and artists from every venue in the city has allowed The Dirt to host hundreds of memorable after-show events, including Lady Gaga, Foo Fighters and Kings of Leon. Daily 6 pm–2 am. dirtbar.com

The Dive | 809 Pierce
A dive bar built for good vibes, you get the best of both worlds at this lounge with a mixture of free play arcade games, drinks and music by some of the best local DJs and international artists.
Sat 9 pm–2 am. divethx.com

Your Pie | 108 Main
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

Zydeco Louisiana Diner | Cajun
This cafeteria-style Cajun joint brings Louisiana dishes to the Houston 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.

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. $
806 Lounge | 806 Main
A favorite of the locals, 806 Lounge is 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.

1820 Bar | 1820 Franklin
This cozy little bar is located 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 Joystix 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

New! 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

El Big Bad | 419 Travis
El Big Bad is a gastro-cantina that specializes in infused tequilas, fresh juice margaritas and cocktails, Mexican and Texan Craft Beer and scrumptious fare. Sun–Thu 11 am–midnight; Fri & Sat 11 am–2 am. elbigbad.com

New! El Segundo | 306 Main
Kick back at the bar with a spiked agua fresca, frozen mojito slush or any other delicious concoction at El Segundo for a fun night of boozing. If you get hungry, the bar’s $2.50 tacos along with their inexpensive burgers, fries, and quesadillas will fill you right up. Sun–Wed 10 am–Midnight; Thu 10 am–2 am; Fri–Sat 10–3:30 am

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. beerknurd.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, and drinks and dinner 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 inspired cocktails that are paired with mouthwatering dishes. Wed–Sat 4 pm–2 am. henkeandpilott.com

High & Dry Rum Bar | 306 Main, Suite 200
Offering more than 50 different types of rum 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! Thur–Sat 4 pm–2 am. highanddryhtx.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 & Thu 4–11 pm; Fri 4–2 am; Sat & Sun Noon–2 am. houstonwatchcompany.com

The Isles Eatery & Rhum Bar | 1515 Pease
Immerse yourself in this Caribbean hotspot and choose from an astonishing collection of 56 plus island rums used to create delightful cocktails rooted in the regional rhythms of the islands. Tue 4 pm–2 am; Wed & Thu 4–11 pm; Fri 4–2 am; Sat & Sun Noon–2 am. isleseateryandbar.com

Kanaloa | 311 Travis
Bring on the mai tais, bamboo backdrops and vibrant island vibes! Kanaloa 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. kanaloahtx.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 down with friends! Whether you’re a fan 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–Fri 3 pm–2 am; Sat 2 pm–Midnight; Sun 2 pm–Midnight.

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 1–2 am

Last Concert Cafe | 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, hula-hooping and tiki bar, Last Concert has live music most nights. Tue–Fri 4 am–11 pm; Sat 5 pm–2 am; Sun 3–9 pm.

Lawless Spirits & Kitchen | 909 Texas
Lawless Spirits & Kitchen is an establishment with 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–Fri noon–2 am; Sat & Sun 1–2 am

Lawless Spirits | 909 Texas
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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

Little Dipper | 304 Main
This spot is a cool, neighborhood bar with pinball machines, cheap bourbon and a bad-ass jukebox. Daily 4 pm–2 am. twitter.com/LittleDipperBar

LIVE Sports Bar & Grill | 407 Main
Located in Historic Market Square, Live Sports Bar & Grill makes you feel like you’re sitting at the game amongst all the action! Watch your favorite team on a number of TVs while you enjoy good eats and a drink from their ever-evolving selection of beer on tap. Daily 11 am–2 am. livesportsbarhouston.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, aging half townies 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 9 am–8 pm. mktbar.com

Molly’s Pub | 509 Main
This classic Irish pub offers a variety of Irish whiskies and international beers. Tables 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—who 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. conservatoryhxs.com

Notsuoh | 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. notsuoh.com

One-Armed Scissors | 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 Saloon | 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 | 117 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

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. mcelroypub.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. Pool balls, 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. lemeridienhouston downtowntown.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. petesduelingpianoabar.com

Public Services Wine & Whiskey | 202 Travis
Nestled in the historic Cotton Exchange Building, lies 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 aficionado 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 entrées. Sun–Wed 11 am–10 pm; Thu–Sat 11 am–11 pm. saintarnold.com

Z on 23
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. lemeridienhouston downtowntown.com

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Houston, Meet Bill Ferenc
Designer/Illustrator at The Black Sheep Agency
@beeborp
He is a tea lover, a cat hugger and a Downtown resident who pulls inspiration from everyday sightings to reflect the personality and culture of this place he calls home. Meet Bill, the man behind the illustrations popping up around Downtown.

What do you wish more people knew about Downtown that would make them want to visit?
I biked home along the bayou and saw a side of the city you can’t view anywhere else. It’s like being in the inner workings.

3 things you love about living Downtown?
1. I can walk or bike everywhere
2. Watching the Astros (marry me, Altuve!)
3. The options for entertainment (so many theaters!)

What’s your favorite thing to eat in Downtown?
You just can’t go wrong getting a slice of pizza at Frank’s.

Bill, can you give our readers a tutorial on drawing a dog?
1. Quick pencil sketch.
2. Ink the outline.
3. Clean up. Add details.
4. Make it “Houston.”

Want to check out Bill’s favorite spots? We’ve marked them for you on the Downtown map, page 56.
datebook.
TOUS LES MARTIN DU MONDE: JORDI SAVALL
Mar 1 Early music titan and visionary performer Jordi Savall leads Le Concert des Nations in music inspired by the 1991 film about gambist/composer Sainte-Colombe, which starred Gérard Depardieu as his upstart pupil Marin Marais. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. dacamera.com

SYLVIA
Mar 1–3 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. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

MAMA MIA!
Mar 1–3 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 jukebox featuring all the hits you know and love from ABBA. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. tuts.com

ON THE EXHALE
Mar 1–9 In this captivating, raw and riveting regional premiere, a senseless act of gun violence changes one woman’s life forever. Peering down the barrel of a uniquely American crisis, this hour-long play will have you holding your breath as you start to suspect that when it comes to gun violence, we all may be part of the problem. Rec Room, 100 Jackson. recroomarts.org

QUACK
Mar 1–10 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 takedown 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. alleytheatre.org

THE HUMANS
Mar 1–24 Hopeful, heartbreaking, and at times “blisteringly funny” (The New York Times), The Humans takes place on Thanksgiving as three generations of the Blake family gather at the youngest daughter and her boyfriend’s new apartment in Lower Manhattan’s Chinatown. As darkness falls outside the pre-war duplex, tensions rise and secrets are divulged. The hopes and fears of each generation—and the American middle class—are revealed. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. alleytheatre.org

MUTTS GONE NUTS
Mar 2 Canines and comedy collide in a smash-hit performance that’s leaving audiences everywhere howling for more. From shelters to showbiz, these amazing mutts unleash havoc and hilarity in a breathtaking, action-packed, comedy spectacular, featuring some of the world’s most talented four-legged performers. These dogs are sure to steal your heart, and your socks! Wortham Center, 501 Texas. spahouston.org

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE
Mar 2 Texas Medical Center Orchestra (TMCO) is one of the finest community orchestras in the nation. The mission of the orchestra is to provide fellowship for its members, contribute culturally to the community, and raise awareness for medical and other local charities through its concerts and other events. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

ESCHENBACH AND JOSEFOWICZ
Mar 2–3 Lively peasant festivals, knights on horseback, merry hunting scenes and mist-shrouded forests are evoked in Bruckner’s Fourth, which draws as its inspiration the imagery of medieval romance. Former Houston Symphony Music Director Christoph Eschenbach—an acclaimed Bruckner interpreter—returns to Jones Hall in a concert that also features fiery and fearless virtuoso Leila Josefowicz in a concerto written specially for her. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org
ANASTASIA
Mar 5–10 From the Tony Award-winning creators of the Broadway classic Ragtime, this dazzling show transports us from the twilight of the Russian Empire to the euphoria of Paris in the 1920s, as a brave young woman sets out to discover the mystery of her past. Pursued by a ruthless Soviet officer determined to silence her, Anya enlists the aid of a dashing con man and a lovable ex-aristocrat. Together, they embark on an epic adventure to help her find home, love and family. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

ROBBINS
Mar 7–10 The Houston Ballet will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Jerome Robbins’ birth with three diverse pieces. Robbins’ Fancy Free, will give a delightful glimpse into the lives of three sailors on leave during one hot summer night in 1940s New York City. The Cage, a lesser-known Robbins work will feature Houston Ballet’s brilliant female dancers as they transform into a troupe of abstract, insect-like creatures who hunt down their male prey. During the final Robbins piece, The Concert (or the Perils of Everybody), the Houston Ballet will bring back one of the great comedic ballets of all time. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

BELL PLAYS BEETHOVEN
Mar 15–17 Nine symphonies. Five piano concertos. One perfect violin concerto. A violin lover’s dream season continues as the incomparable Joshua Bell, hailed as “the greatest American violinist active today” (The Boston Herald), plays and conducts Beethoven’s sublime, supremely beautiful masterpiece. A blockbuster all-Beethoven program ends with the joyous and jovial Fourth Symphony. Jones Hall, 615 Louisianna. houstonsymphony.org

DEBUSSY’S LA MER
Mar 8–10 As sensuous and bewitching as the sea by which it’s inspired, Debussy’s La mer stands as one of the most stunning achievements in symphonic music. Acclaimed French conductor Ludovic Morlot returns to interpret this immortal masterpiece, music of majesty, mystery and primordial power. A luminous all-French program spotlights world-renowned mezzo-soprano Susan Graham in Berlioz’ poignant reveries of love and loss, Les nuits d’été. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

GEORGE HINCHLIFE’S UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN
Mar 17 The Ukulele Orchestra was formed in 1985 as a bit of fun, but the first gig was an instant sell-out, and they’ve been performing ever since. With thousands of sold-out concerts across the world, the Ukulele Orchestra will provide an evening of pure, delightful entertainment. 7:30 pm. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. saphouston.org

PREMIERES
Mar 21–24 The range of Houston Ballet’s dancers is clear in a program entirely of premieres. Azzure Barton returns with Come In, a contemporary work for 13 male dancers. Following the tremendous response to Justin Peck’s Year of the Rabbit, Houston Ballet will welcome him back to create a world premiere for the company. Jiri Kylian will present Dream Time. As part of the choreographer’s iconic repertoire at Nederlands Dans Theater, this ballet captures the power of dance to transcend time and communicate across all barriers, beautifully danced to a gorgeous score by the legendary Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

ERIKA MOON’S CABARET FOLLIES
Mar 22 Indulge your senses in a world of glamour, seduction, comedy, and dance inspired by the Moulin Rouge. This beautiful production features Vegas-style showgirls, can-can dancers, as well as a pinch of classic burlesque, and the revival of traditional cabaret. With stunning costumes and elaborate choreography that embodies the timeless style of the authentic French cabaret, Erika Moon’s Cabaret Follies will celebrate the feminine spirit with class, elegance, and sophistication. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE-IN CONCERT
Mar 22–24 Experience Star Wars like never before! Jump in the Millennium Falcon and journey to Tatooine, Alderaan and beyond with a complete showing of Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope on the big screen at Jones Hall, with John Williams’ epic, unforgettable score played live by the Houston Symphony. Luke Skywalker leaves his home planet, battles the evil empire and learns the ways of the Force in the iconic film that started it all. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

PAW PATROL LIVE!
Mar 15–17 It’s Pirate Day in Adventure Bay and Ryder will need all paws on deck as he and the PAW Patrol discover a secret treasure map while on a mission to rescue Cap’n Turbot from a mysterious cavern. It’s up to Chase, Marshall, Skye and all their heroic pirate pup friends to save the day and find the pirate treasure before Mayor Humdinger finds it first! Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

LOVE & WAR: BAROQUE STYLE
Mar 16 For one night only, the extraordinary Rachel Barton Pine lends her sublime musicality and talent to Mercury as soloist and leader in a program of concertos for Baroque viola d’amore and violin. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. mercuryhouston.org

BRIAN SIMPSON & JAKIEM JOYNER
Mar 10 It’s a special night for the Bayou City Jazz Series with Brian Simpson and Jackiem Joyner. Simpson, a celebrated keyboardist, composer and studio musician, has been the go-to man for everyone from Janet Jackson to Dave Koz. He’s known for his ability to sculpt timeless love songs that stay on your mind. As a young Turk on the contemporary jazz scene, Joyner is far from complacent and staid in his style and sound. Together on one stage, both Simpson and Joyner will blow your mind. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. worthamcenter.org

SPAHouston's Orlando Overstreet and Leah Nikole in the world premiere of Year of the Rabbit, choreographed by Justin Peck and performed by Houston Ballet.
MARK GIULIANA SPACE HEROES
Mar 23  Mark Guiliana has become recognized as one of the world’s leading drummers, admired and in demand across the spectrum from jazz to rock to electronic music for his rhythmic sophistication, creative impulse, and individual sound. He has been in the vanguard of drummers creating a new vernacular on the instrument. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. dacamera.com

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC STRING QUARTET
Mar 29  This stupendous new string quartet is comprised of four virtuosi principal musicians from the vaunted New York Philharmonic, equally at home as concerto soloists with the philharmonic and orchestras around the world. Da Camera welcomes violinist Frank Huang, native Houstonian and former concertmaster of the Houston Symphony, back to the Bayou City, as the quartet makes its Houston debut. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. dacamera.com

CARMINA BURANA
Mar 29–31  Bold and bawdy, fiery and visceral, Carmina Burana is one of the most instantly recognizable pieces in music. Escape into this intoxicating ode to life, lust and all things earthy, an unforgettable concert experience that thrills with haunting medieval chants, dynamic spectacle and sheer sonic force. Plus, Principal Cellist Brinton Averil Smith takes center stage for d’Albert’s lyrical concerto. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA
Mar 30  This 1675 oratorio tells the story of the death of John the Baptist with great flair and vivid drama. The Houston premiere of San Giovanni Battista includes counter-tenor Jay Carter in the title role (John the Baptist), soprano Sherezade Panthaki as Herodiade (Salome), and bass-baritone Sam Handley as Herod. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. arslyricahouston.org

SECRETS & ILLUSIONS
Mar 23  Join master illusionist Ivan Amodei on an epic journey to discover the secrets of life in his brand new stage show, Secrets & Illusions. Set on the dark and deserted streets of Paris, you’ll enter the legendary Louvre Museum, where an enchanting musical muse escorts you through galleries while Ivan uncovers life’s greatest mysteries deep inside the priceless works of art, one dazzling illusion at a time. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

TCHAIKOVSKY AND RACHMANINOFF
Apr 4–7  Opulent and unabashedly beautiful, Rachmaninoff’s piano music speaks straight to the heart. Pianist extraordinaire Simon Trpčeski shines in the composer’s shimmering final concerto. Composed during a carefree summer in the Russian countryside, Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 3 features some of his sunniest and most delightful music. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS
Mar 25  Collecting rave reviews as they performed their unique live show of early Pink Floyd to sold-out UK and European audiences in 2018, the 28-date North American tour marks Pink Floyd co-founder and drummer Nick Mason’s first performances in North America since Pink Floyd’s July 18, 1994 Division Bell Tour. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. joneshall.org

MY LIFE’S JOURNEY: AN EVENING WITH C.S. LEWIS
Apr 4–7  The year is 1962 and C.S. Lewis, the famous British author, is hosting a group of American writers at his home near Oxford. They are about to experience a captivating evening with a man whose engaging conversation and spontaneous humor made him one of the great raconteurs of his day. Seated in his living room, he recalls the people and events that inspired his thoughts and shaped his life. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

AN EVENING WITH MARGARET ATWOOD
Apr 5  With her 1985 novel The Handmaid’s Tale back on best-seller lists and its television adaptation awarded eight Emmy Awards, it seems Atwood’s sharp eye is more necessary—and prescient—than ever. Atwood will speak on a wide range of issues relating to literature, social activism, political engagement, the creative process, the artist’s role in society, technology and art, and, of course, her own accomplished body of work. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. spahouston.org

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG
Mar 26–31  Welcome to opening night of The Murder at Haversham Manor where things are quickly going from bad to utterly disastrous. With an unconscious leading lady, a corpse that can’t play dead, and actors who trip over everything (including their lines), this play is sure to bring down the house! Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org
INDIGO GIRLS
Apr 10  The Grammy Award-winning Indigo Girls join the Houston Symphony performing folk-rock hits from their career spanning the past four decades. The duet has rewarded fans with hits including Galileo, Kid Fears, Closer to Fine and Making Promises. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

THE ROYALE
Apr 10–27  In this regional premiere, Jay ‘The Sport’ Jackson dreams of being the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. But it’s 1905 and in the racially segregated world of boxing his chances are as good as knocked out. Winner of two Obie Awards, an Outer Critics Circle Award and a Drama Desk Award, The Royale is inspired by the real-life story of Galveston’s own Jack Johnson, a boxer who at the height of the Jim Crow era, became the first African-American World Heavyweight boxing champion. Rec Room, 100 Jackson. recroomarts.org

DAVE DOUGLAS: DIZZY ATMOSPHERE
Apr 12  Trumpeter and composer Dave Douglas returns to Da Camera with a one-of-a-kind tribute to Dizzy Gillespie, with Gillespie’s repertoire as a starting point for improvisation and exploration. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. dacamera.com

PILOBOLUS-SHADOWLAND: THE NEW ADVENTURE
Apr 12  Pilobolus created Shadowland in 2009. The first show of its kind, it has since performed in 32 countries for over a million people. Now Pilobolus is proud to present an all-new Shadow adventure. Shadowland: The New Adventure uses Pilobolus’ exploration of mixed media to tell a love story about two people and their quest to save a magical bird. Tickets start at $35. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. spahouston.org

CRIMES OF THE HEART
Apr 12–May 5  Winner of the 1981 Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics Circle Award, Beth Henley’s first play brings you to the Mississippi home of the Magrath sisters. Babe has just shot her husband because she didn’t like his looks. This brings middle sister Meg back to town from Los Angeles, where she is unsuccessfully pursuing a music career. And poor Lenny, everyone has forgotten her birthday! Warm-hearted, irreverent, and imaginative, Crimes of the Heart teams with humanity as the sisters forgive the past, face the present, and embrace the future. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. alleytheatre.org

FINDING NEVERLAND
Apr 13–14  Finding Neverland tells the incredible story behind one of the world’s most beloved characters: Peter Pan. Playwright J.M. Barrie struggles to find inspiration until he meets four young brothers and their beautiful widowed mother. Spellbound by the boys’ enchanting make-believe adventures, he sets out to write a play that will astound London theatergoers. With a little bit of pixie dust and a lot of faith, Barrie takes this monumental leap, leaving his old world behind for Neverland, where nothing is impossible, and the wonder of childhood lasts forever. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. spahouston.org

RAGTIME
Apr 16–28  Based on E.L. Doctorow’s powerful book about immigrants and the fight for the American soul in the early 20th century, Ragtime is a magnificent and deeply moving musical. Featuring a Tony Award-winning score and book, Ragtime is set at a time when worlds and cultures are colliding on issues of race, class, gender equality, and politics. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. tuts.com

DANCE SALAD FESTIVAL
Apr 18–20  Famous in their own countries, classical, modern and contemporary dancers and dance companies share the Dance Salad Festival stage to form a mix of movement and compelling choreography. Come enjoy the art of dance and live music! Wortham Center, 501 Texas. worthamcenter.org

MUSIC OF LED ZEPPELIN
Apr 19  Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Led Zeppelin, the original heavy metal band, as the Houston Symphony covers a set list of all their best-known works! Rock out to all their acclaimed hits you know and love. Amplified by a full rock band, this event is sure to leave you believing that “all that glitters is gold.” Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

DON GIOVANNI
Apr 20–May 5  Seduction, passion, and guilt lead to a fateful end. The legendary womanizer Don Giovanni adventures across Europe with his resourceful servant Leporello to take advantage of women and indulge his hedonistic desires. In Seville, after abandoning his latest conquest, the playboy plans to seduce nobelwoman Donna Anna and peasant Zerlina. Unfortunately, his luck runs out. Devlin’s innovative, rotating set and Luke Hall’s cutting-edge projections transport the audience deep into the dark mind of a serial philanderer. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. hgo.org
Spring Calendar

All events free and open to the public.

ASTROWORLD MODEL AND EXHIBITION
Through May 31 Houstonians have fond memories of AstroWorld, the theme park that left Houston nearly a decade ago. Although long gone, the memories of the park are as strong as ever at the Houston Public Library. Celebrate the unveiling of the restored original 1967 model that was used to help visualize the park’s landscape during construction. Central Library, first floor.

STRESS RELIEF AND RELAXATION
YOGA SERIES
Mondays through May 20 Learn ways to de-stress and relive muscle strain through breathing exercises, yoga postures, and other techniques. Wear comfortable clothes that allow for easy movement. Noon-1 pm. Central Library.

CELEBRATING ARCHITECT BETTY JO JONES
Mar 7 The Houston Metropolitan Research Center (HMRC) is introducing the Betty Jo Jones Collection, currently its only architectural collection featuring the work of a female architect. Jones, born Betty Jo Lackey, was a 1947 graduate of the Rice Institute. Creating her own firm in the 1950s, Betty Jo Jones was one of Houston’s earliest female architects. This presentation will highlight some of her work in the area, as well as her role in a male-dominated field. 6:30 pm. Julia Ideson Building.

YEKWON SUNWOO
Apr 25 Gold medalist of the 15th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, 28-year-old pianist Yekwon Sunwoo has been hailed for “his total command over the instrument and its expressiveness” (San Francisco Examiner). Hobby Center, 800 Bagby.

ACADEMY SPRING SHOWCASE
Apr 26–27 Featuring the gifted young dancers of the renowned Houston Ballet Academy, the annual Academy Spring Showcase offers a glimpse into the bright future of the professional company. Hundreds of dancers grace the stage in a display of remarkable artistry, from beloved classical styles to innovative contemporary movements. Wortham Center, 501 Texas.
CIRQUE DE LA SYMPHONIE  
Apr 26–28  Be dazzled by world-class acrobats, aerial flyers, contortionists, strongmen, jugglers, and tumblers as Jones Hall transforms into a Cirque wonderland. Michael Krajewski and the Houston Symphony take care of the sonic thrills in this must-see concert event that's perfect for the whole family. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

THE PHOENIX  
Apr 26–May 10  Mozart’s notorious librettist is reborn. Lorenzo da Ponte led a scandalous life that rivaled the stories he committed to paper, including some of his most popular operas. Don Giovanni, Così fan tutte, and The Marriage of Figaro. After becoming a priest and poet in Venice, he was banished when it was discovered that he had connections to many brothels and a secret family with two children. This world premiere by composer Tarik O'Regan and librettist John Caird features Thomas Hampson and Luca Pisaroni playing the different ages of da Ponte as a group of actors come together to create a stage adaptation of this amazing story of redemption. Wortham Theater Center, 501 Texas. hgo.org

ONCE UPON A TIME  
Apr 27  Wave your magic wand and enter an enchanted land of glass slippers, mysterious witches and fairy godmothers as your favorite fairy tales come to life through music and dance. Ballet dancers will dazzle the senses as the Houston Symphony performs the treasured music from Tchaikovsky’s Sleeping Beauty, Prokofiev’s Cinderella, Stravinsky’s Firebird and more. Whether you get there by car, carriage or magic pumpkin, you won’t want to miss it! Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

BEETHOVEN’S EROICA  
May 3–5  Hear the symphony that changed it all as Andrés conducts Beethoven’s Eroica, a staggering musical vision too powerful to be contained. A monumental weekend also features the grand unveiling of Composer-in-Residence Jimmy López’ Violin Concerto, a stunning feast for the senses that combines light displays with musical luminescence to immerse you in the breathtaking beauty of the Northern Lights. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

CONSTELLATIONS  
May 3–31  One couple. Infinite possibilities. Science and romance collide in this spellbinding play that imagines what happens when boy meets girl. And when boy meets girl again. And again. Defying the boundaries of the world we think we know, Constellations delves into the universal truth of finding and losing love and questions the difference between choice and destiny. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. alleytheatre.org

EXPLORING MARS: KOBIE BOYKINS, NASA ENGINEER  
May 4  Few events in the last decade of space exploration have captured the world’s imagination like NASA’s ongoing Mars Exploration Program. Join NASA engineer Kobie Boykins for an engaging evening exploring the Red Planet with an update on the latest chapter in the ongoing story of Mars exploration. His boundless enthusiasm for unraveling the mysteries of outer space, and Mars in particular, is infectious. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. spahouston.org

MARIZA  
May 5  World-renowned fado singer, Mariza returns to Houston in support of her new Latin Grammy-nominated eponymous album. Mariza has risen from a well-hidden local phenomenon, known only to a small circle of admirers in Lisbon, to one of the most widely acclaimed stars of the world music circuit. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. worthamcenter.org

MISS SAIGON  
May 7–12  Experience the acclaimed new production of the legendary musical Miss Saigon, from the creators of Les Misérables. In the last days of the Vietnam War, 17-year-old Kim is forced to work in a bar run by a notorious character known as the Engineer. There she meets and falls in love with an American G.I. named Chris but they are torn apart by the fall of Saigon. For three years, Kim goes on an epic journey of survival to find her way back to Chris, who has no idea he’s fathered a son. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

RACHMANINOFF’S THE BELLS  
May 9–12  Edgar Allan Poe’s words meet the lavish opulence of Rachmaninoff in this powerful choral symphony, which Rachmaninoff himself cited as his favorite creation. The vibrant, jazzy rhythms of Gershwin and the blistering energy of Prokofiev are on full display as International Tchaikovsky Competition Silver Medalist George Li brings his “staggering technical prowess” (Washington Post) to Houston. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

MENDELSSOHN AND WEINBERG  
May 10  Da Camera’s Time Future Time Past season closes with a performance of two towering works. Polish composer Mieczyslaw Weinberg’s intensely personal 1944 Piano Quintet is a captivating wartime work, by turns melancholy, lyrical, manic and hallucinatory. Making their Da Camera debut, the Daedalus Quartet joins Da Camera favorites the Brentano Quartet for Mendelssohn’s sunny Octet, one of the most beloved works in all of chamber music. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. dacamera.com

MAHLER’S THIRD  
May 11  Texas Medical Center Orchestra, 2016–17 winners and 2017-18 second-place finalists of the American Prize in Orchestral Performance, are one of the finest community orchestras in the nation. The mission of the orchestra is to provide fellowship for its members, contribute culturally to the community, and raise awareness for medical and other local charities through its concerts and other events. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. thehobbycenter.org

BEETHOVEN’S FIFTHS  
May 11  Experience Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, an immense and soul-stirring exposition on triumph over tragedy. Joining Mercury is pianist Alon Goldstein, who brings, “a beautifully balanced approach to the score, refined yet impetuous, noble yet spirited” (New York Times). Wortham Center, 501 Texas. mercuryhouston.org

BLUEBEARD’S CASTLE  
May 16–17  Prepare for an extraordinary concert experience as the season closes with a complete semi-staged performance of Bartók’s riveting psychological thriller, in which a young bride slowly discovers the gruesome depths of her husband’s dark secrets. A dream cast featuring two of the world’s most sought-after opera stars joins Andrés Orozco-Estrada and the Houston Symphony for the must-see event of the season. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

COPPÉLIA  
May 17–26  Coppélia, a Houston Ballet treasure follows charismatic young lovers, Franz and Swanilda, as they encounter the dollmaker Dr. Coppélius and his creation, the beautiful Coppélia. This lighthearted three-act story ballet, with colorful and charming costume and scenic designs by the legendary Desmond Heely and a magical score by Léo Delibes, has long been a family favorite for Houstonians. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

JAD ABUMRAD  
May 18  Jad Abumrad is the host and creator of Radiolab, a public radio program broadcast on 524 stations across the nation and downloaded more than 9 million times a month as a podcast. Abumrad employs his dual backgrounds as composer and journalist to create a new aesthetic in broadcast journalism. He orchestrates dialogue, music, interviews and sound effects into compelling documentaries that draw listeners into investigations of otherwise intimidating topics, such as the nature of numbers, the evolution of altruism or the legal foundation for the war on terror. 7:30 pm, Wortham Center, 501 Texas. spahouston.org
FROM BRANDENBURG TO ESTERHÁZY
May 19 Ars Lyrica’s season finale travels from Brandenburg to Esterházy, with Bach’s two remaining concertos and a concerto by Franz Joseph Haydn. The second Brandenburg Concerto offers the set’s oddest combination of soloists—recorder, oboe, violin, and trumpet—while the fourth is a stealth concerto, ostensibly for violin and two recorders, though the violinist leaves everyone in the dust. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. arslyrica.org

SONG AND DANCE: THE BEST OF BROADWAY
May 24–26 Experience iconic moments from musical theater—everything from beloved overtures and dream ballets to electrifying full-company renditions featuring the Houston Symphony Chorus—in this blockbuster Pops season finale. Featuring music of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Leonard Bernstein, Jule Styne and more. Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana. houstonsymphony.org

JEROME ROBBIN’S BROADWAY
May 28–31 Jerome Robbins’ Broadway encompasses 10 shows, 13 musical numbers, a large, diverse cast, and countless character changes—all on one stage. The show features mesmerizing production numbers from some of Robbins’ biggest hits, including West Side Story, On the Town, Peter Pan, Gypsy and Fiddler on the Roof. Hobby Center, 800 Bagby. tuts.com

THE MERRY WIDOW
May 31 The Merry Widow returns to Houston Ballet with a delicious cocktail of witty and intriguing characters based on the famous 1905 operetta by Franz Lehár. This lavish story ballet is filled with rich music and sweeping drama as decadent lives intertwine in early 20th-century Europe. With gorgeous costume and scenic designs, The Merry Widow is sure to enthrall audiences with its humor and grandeur. Wortham Center, 501 Texas. houstonballet.org

THE THREE MUSKETEERS
May 31 All for one and one for all! A swashbuckling romp of romance, danger, and comedy, perfectly suited for the whole family. Alexandre Dumas’ timeless tale springs to life as the young D’Artagnan, joined by his sister Sabine, discovers honor amid intrigue and high-stakes adventure when he meets the famous Three Musketeers. Alley Theatre, 615 Texas. alleytheatre.org

FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS

CITY HALL’S FARMERS MARKET
Wednesdays It’s a food-lovers delight at City Hall’s Farmers Market. 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 amid Houston’s dramatic Downtown urban setting. The farmers market features more than 30 vendors, including fresh produce grown by local farmers, cheese, breads, roasted coffees, a variety of prepared meals, as well as food trucks. Free. 11 am–1:30 pm. Hermann Square, 901 Bagby. urbanharvest.org

AQUARIUM LIVE
Saturdays through May 25 Live bands will rock the Bayou all night long from the Downtown Aquarium Stage. Free. 6:30–9:30 pm. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby. downtowntaqua.com

MICHELLE OBAMA
Mar 2 Michelle Obama’s live U.S. book tour will feature intimate and honest conversations between Mrs. Obama and a selection of to-be-announced moderators, reflective of the extraordinary stories shared in the wide-ranging chapters of her deeply personal book Becoming. Attendees will hear firsthand Mrs. Obama’s intimate reflections on the experiences and events, both public and private, that shaped her, from her childhood on the South Side of Chicago to her years as an executive balancing the demands of motherhood and work, to her years spent at the most famous address in the world. 8 pm. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. houstontoyotacenter.com

47TH ANNUAL BUFFALO BAYOU PARTNERSHIP REGATTA
Mar 9 Compete in Texas’ largest canoe and kayak race—a 15-mile paddling excursion from San Felipe and Voss to Downtown’s Sesquicentennial Park. Not a paddler? Cheer on racers along Buffalo Bayou and join in the free finish-line festivities and awards ceremony at Allen’s Landing. 7:30 am–2 pm. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

DIY DOWNTOWN WITH POP SHOP AMERICA
Join the DIY movement and unleash your inner crafter with Pop Shop America’s DIY Downtown. Gather your friends, family and co-workers for a one-of-a-kind arts and crafts workshop at unique pop-up locations in the heart of Downtown Houston. Listen to music and snack on savory treats while making everything from terrariums to hand-dyed tea towels. $36. 6:30–8:30 pm

Mar 13 Social Graces Social Club Workshop: DIY Shibori Dyed Kitchen Towels
Apr 10 Local Foods Downtown Workshop: Layered Mason Jar Mixes with Recipe Cards
May 8 The Hines Center Workshop: Mala Bracelets

60TH ANNUAL HOUSTON ST. PATRICK’S DAY PARADE & CONCERT
Mar 16 Celebrate the luck of the Irish at the 60th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade, now with a new route in Historic Market Square. Continue the fun at Market Square Park after the parade with food, games and live music. Then head out in your green attire to the Square Park after the parade with food, games and live music. Then head out in your green attire to the Market Square Park for the finish-line festivities and awards ceremony at Allen’s Landing. 7:30 am–2 pm. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

77TH ANNUAL FORT BENNING IRISH PADDLE-OUT
Mar 17 Paddle for a cure! Inaugurate your St. Patrick’s Day weekend with Fort Benning Irish Paddle-Out, a unique paddle-athon to benefit the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby. downtownaqua.com

ST. PATRICK’S DAY FESTIVAL
Mar 17-24 Kick off the St. Patrick’s Day weekend with the 39th Annual Houston St. Patrick’s Day Festival, featuring 50+ vendors, 3 stages, and activities for the whole family. Downtown. 11 am–9 pm. downtownaquarium.com

RSVP TO JOIN US AT ONLINE.VISITHOUSTON.COM/ST-PATRICKS-DAY

Mar 17–24 It’s the luck of the Irish at the 39th annual Houston St. Patrick’s Day Festival! From night to day, get your green on at downtown’s 3 stages! Watch the parade, enjoy Irish music and dance, play games, and enjoy delicious food, drinks and activities for the whole family. Houston’s own St. Patrick’s Day celebration returns to the Bayou City. downtownaquarium.com

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DOWNTOWN AQUARIUM

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datebook.

photo by Matthew Murphy

photo by Lizzy Johnston
CANT MISS ART INSTALLATIONS

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.

SPECIAL EVENTS

THE RINK–ROLLING AT DISCOVERY GREEN
Mar 1–Apr 21 Show off your moves on Houston’s first outdoor roller rink. Visit website for weekly and special events and daily hours of operation. Tickets start at $10.

THE KINKS ARE THE VILLAGE GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY
Mar 9 Houston musicians from the FAB 40 pay tribute to the 50th anniversary of the celebrated LP by the Kinks by recreating the album note for note. Free. 7 pm.

FLEA BY NIGHT PRESENTED BY GREEN MOUNTAIN ENERGY
Mar 16 & Apr 20 Treasure hunt for all things vintage, handmade, recycled, repurposed and renewed. Live local music, food trucks and fun under the stars and twinkling lights. Free. 6–10 pm.

HOUSTON CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES
Mar 27, Apr 24, May 29 Bring your camera and learn how to capture spectacular photos from expert photographers. Meet at the Morgan Reading Room behind the Lake House Café. Free. 6:30–8 pm.

ART CAR SNEAK PEEK
Apr 11 Want to catch a glimpse of the zaniness before the big Art Car Parade? Discovery Green presents an evening of outdoor fun, entertainment, food, drink and live music. Free. 6–10 pm.

GREEN MOUNTAIN ENERGY EARTH DAY AT DISCOVERY GREEN
Apr 14 In partnership with the Citizens’ Environmental Coalition, Houston’s largest Earth Day celebration includes a farmers market, activities for kids, educational booths and demonstrations, recycling opportunities, live music, an eco-fashion show and short talks by dynamic environmental leaders. Free. Noon–5 pm.

ENTERTAINMENT

UNPLUGGED AT DISCOVERY GREEN
Sundays Formerly Canned Acoustica, this popular series challenges local bands to re-imagine and rearrange their songs using only acoustic instruments; resulting in unique, intimate and soulful performance. Free. 5–9 pm.

Mar 10 Matt Harlan
Apr 14 Quiet Company
May 19 Buxton

BANK OF AMERICA SCREEN ON THE GREEN PRESENTED BY ARANDAS BAKERY
Saturdays Beloved family movies under the stars and Houston’s skyline. Arrive one hour early for contests and activities. Kids are also encouraged to check out the book the movie was based on before the movie starts!

Mar 23 Wizard of Oz (PG) 1939, 102 min. 8:15 pm
Apr 6 The Princess Bride (PG) 1987, 98 min.
May 4 A Wrinkle in Time (PG) 2018, 109 min. 8:45 pm

The events listed are confirmed at the time of printing. For a full listing of Discovery Green’s spring 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.
KINDER HSPVA LUNCH CONCERTS
Wednesdays  Switch up your lunch routine with specials from The Lake House and The Grove and performances from HSVPA students. Free. 11:30 am–1 pm.

Apr 3  Jazz
Apr 10 Winds & Percussion
Apr 17 Musical Theatre
Apr 24 Strings
May 1 Mariachi

DA CAMERA JAM
Discovery Green and Da Camera of Houston present a series of free concerts to celebrate Jazz Appreciation Month in April.

Apr 5  HSPVA Jazz Combo, Thomas Helton Quartet and José-Miguel Yamal and friends. Free. 6:15–8:45 pm.
Apr 26  Sammy Miller and The Congregation. Free. 7–8:45 pm.

CINCO DE MAYO
May 5  Celebrate Cinco de Mayo at Discovery Green with ballet folklorico by Nueva Luna, HSPVA Mariachis and more performances. Bombón’s La Comadre (Mel Gomez) and DJ Gracie Chavez will emcee. Free. 3–5 pm.

HOUSTON ARTS PIONEERS: DEEP LISTENING: PAULINE OLIVEROS DAY
May 25  This new series honors the legacy of groundbreaking Houston artists. Studio Enertia, under the direction of Lisa E. Harris, celebrates the legacy of Pauline Oliveros with an interactive performance of Oliveros’ compositions and sonic meditations by local and visiting musicians. Free. 5–8 pm.

THURSDAY CONCERTS PRESENTED BY UHD
May 30  Family-friendly concert showcasing the best music of the Gulf Coast kicks off with the Queen of Texas Blues, Lavelle White. Concerts start at 7 pm.

FAMILY & CHILDREN EVENTS

YOUTH PERFORMANCE POETRY SESSIONS
Mar 1, Apr 5, May 3  Think on your feet! Writers in the Schools (WITS) offers free writing and performance poetry workshops for poets ages 13 to 19. 6:30–8 pm.

YOUNG WRITERS WORKSHOP
Saturdays through May 25  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.

SUNDAYS IN THE PARK
Sundays through May 26  Enjoy lawn games, activities and more. 3–5 pm.

STARGAZING WITH HOUSTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Mar 9, Apr 13, May 11  Join the Houston Astronomical Society (HAS) for a star party in the heart of Space City. Volunteers from HAS will be on hand with telescopes to show off the moon, other planets in our solar system, various deep-sky objects and maybe even the International Space Station and the Hubble Space Telescope. Visit website for full schedule.

FUNOMENAL SPRING BREAK
Mar 11–15  Celebrate Spring Break with five days of fun for the entire family. Activities include Mad Science shows, poetry and prose, hands-on crafts with Girlstart, Touch a Truck Tuesday and more. 9:30 am–4 pm.

TODDLER TUESDAYS
Tuesdays, Apr 2–May 28  Fun for toddlers and parents! Story time, activities, crafts and more with your favorite characters. 10:30 am.

FITNESS IN THE PARK PRESENTED BY SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET

No pre-registration required, but participants must sign a waiver upon arrival. Bring a towel and water, as well as a mat for yoga classes. Yoga mats can also be purchased at Discovery Green’s office between 9am–6pm. Free.

YOGA
Mondays, Noon–1 pm
Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm

HEARTFULNESS MEDITATION
Mondays, 1–1:15 pm

OFF THE COUCH
New General Fitness Class
Wednesdays, 6:30–7:30 pm

PARKOUR
Thursdays, 6:30–8 pm

HATHA YOGA
Saturdays, 9–10 am

HIT & RUN
New Self-Defense Class
Saturdays, 10:30–11:30 am

OTHER EVENTS

FRENCH CULTURES FESTIVAL
Mar 8  Celebrating French language and culture. 6–10 pm. frenchculture.org

PROJECT DANCE HOUSTON
Mar 16  Bust a move with Project Dance Houston at this family-friendly dance concert. 11 am–6 pm. projectdance.com

SPRINGWORLD INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
Apr 20  A premier international cultural and modern festival, known for bringing a variety of unique and emerging culture to one place. 10:30 am–5 pm. springworldfest.com

UTHHEALTH STOMP OUT STROKE FESTIVAL
May 4  The Stroke Festival features free health screenings, health education and entertainment. 9 am–3:30 pm. strokefestival.org

THE RINK-ROLLING  photo by Katya Horner
Bayou Park.

sign up and complete the online volunteer waiver.

Partnership. Help maintain and revitalize Buffalo Bayou.

sign up for a Volunteer Workday at Buffalo Bayou.

of local artists, crafters and creatives. The fun-filled.

Downtown Houston. Spend the day exploring the works.

Market will host its fifth festival right in the heart of

Houston in this impressive parade powered by The

wheel-based entries will fill the streets of Downtown

Houston's historic neighborhoods, scenic districts and

parks. The Tour de Houston is a recommended training

ride for EP MS 150 and proceeds benefit funds for the

city's Reforest Houston program. City Hall, 901 Bagby.

tourdehouston.org

DOWNTOWN HOME TOUR

Mar 30

Discover why it’s great to live Downtown! This

self-guided tour lets you explore 10 unique properties

including apartments, lofts and condos. You’ll get a

firsthand look at new projects, hotspots plus favorite

mainstays. Tickets: $25 online; $35 on-site. Proceeds

will benefit Houston Coalition for the Homeless.

livedowntownhouston.org

HOUSTON CHILDREN’S FESTIVAL

Mar 30–31

This event is a child’s dream day filled with circus acts, celebrity appearances, six stages for entertainment and tons of fun activities. Tickets vary. Located in the area surrounding City Hall, Houston Public Library, Tranquility Park and Sam Houston Park.

houstonchildrensfestival.com

32ND ANNUAL ART CAR PARADE

Apr 13

250+ original decorated cars, bikes and other

wheel-based entries will fill the streets of Downtown

Houston in this impressive parade powered by The

Orange Show. Participating vehicles include entries

from all over the United States, Mexico and Canada,
making this the largest Art Car Parade in the world. Free. thehoustonartcarparade.com

ART WALKS

Apr 13 & May 18

Learn about the exceptional public works of art at Buffalo Bayou in this guided tour. Discover the meanings and messages behind specific pieces explained by the artists themselves. $10. 9:30–10:30 am. The Water Works at Buffalo Bayou Park.

buffalobayou.org

BREAKFAST WITH EASTER BUNNY

Apr 20

Families will enjoy more than just carrots with

Peter Cottontail, Downtown Aquarium’s Easter Bunny, while enjoying a delicious breakfast. Reservations required. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby.

downtownaquarium.com

EASTER SUNDAY BRUNCH

Apr 21

Celebrate Easter at the Downtown Aquarium

with an egg hunt, photos with the Easter Bunny and a
delicious buffet featuring more than 40 items. Reservations required. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby.

downtownaquarium.com

HEARTMADE ART MARKET

May 4

Back by popular demand! Heartmade Art Market will host its fifth festival right in the heart of Downtown Houston. Spend the day exploring the works of local artists, crafters and creatives. The fun-filled festivities will host a little something for everyone with live music, food truck fare and special experiential activities. Celebrate the Houston art community and some of its best ambassadors, all in one place. Free. 11 am–6 pm. Main Street Square, Main at McKinney.

heartmadehouston.com

HOUSTON DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

May 4

Competing for the revered Dragon Cup, corporate and community teams will race on a 250-meter stretch of Buffalo Bayou at historic Allen’s Landing in Downtown Houston. The festival also features Asian cuisine, music, arts and crafts and cultural performances for the whole family. Free. Allen’s Landing, 1005 Commerce.

texasdragonboat.com

COMICPALOOZA

May 10–12

The largest pop culture festival in Texas

returns to the George R. Brown Convention Center for

a weekend of comics, sci-fi, fantasy, new media, gaming, cosplay and more. Noon. $10–45. George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida de las Americas.

comicpalooza.com

LATIN BEATS

May 24

Wrap up your day and move to the beat! Enjoy free salsa dance lessons, a live DJ and salsa music, plus great food and drinks. No cover charge. Downtown Aquarium, 410 Bagby.

downtownaquarium.com

CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ AT THE CISTERN: SPATIAL CHROMOINTERFERENCE

Through Apr 7

A unique site-specific environment

by world-renowned artist Carlos Cruz-Diez in the

Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern. 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

REVENTION MUSIC CENTER

Mar 9

Kayzo Doghouse

Mar 14

The Avett Brothers

Mar 16

Oscar D’ Leon y Guaco

Mar 20

Amos Lee

Mar 29

The Revivalists

Mar 30

Hozier

Apr 3

Death Cab For Cutie

Apr 4

Kenny Wayne

Apr 18

Maren Morris

May 1

The Piano Guys

May 24

David Gray

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

SECRET WALLS

Apr 6

UP Art Studio and the Downtown District present Houston’s third installation of Secret Walls x Houston! This global series brings together the best artists in teams, which go head-to-head to design a mural in 90 minutes. Don’t miss this amazing feat of art, speed and talent at Market Square Park. Enjoy live entertainment by DJ BBC, bites from Niko Niko’s and your favorite food trucks, and shop our art market brought to you by The DoBo.

6–10 pm. Free.

BODY BY BROADWAY

Apr 9 & 23, May 14 & 28

In partnership with Theatre Under the Stars, the popular Body by Broadway is back at Market Square Park! Sing, squat and plank along to some of your favorite Broadway tunes. Enjoy an hour-long sweat sesh while unleashing your inner Broadway star at the park. 6:30 pm. Free.

PUPPIES FOR BREAKFAST

Apr 20

Join Market Square Park, Neue Creative, Modular Dog, Kriser’s Natural Pet, Natural Fuzz, and Can You Spot Spirit for Puppies for Breakfast—a unique outdoor festival, which brings all dogs-centric to one place in Downtown Houston. This year’s event will include 50 dog-industry vendors and artists, the world’s largest dog piñata, an area for four-legged friends to play in, music and much more! A few of Houston’s best food trucks along with Niko Niko’s, will be on-site serving breakfast and lunch throughout the festival. The event is free and open to the public, with a suggested $5 donation to help a local dog rescue. 10 am–3 pm. Free.

DOOMSDAY WRESTLING LIVE AT MARKET SQUARE PARK

Apr 27

Join us for an evening of headlocks and hi-jinks with the wackiest wrestlers you’ve ever seen. Similar to WWE but intentionally funny, Doomsday Wrestling has been named Best Comedy Show by the Houston Press and has been entertaining Houston with its unique brand of over-the-top comedy wrestling since 2003. Now the best little wrestlin’ show in Texas is set to body slam Market Square Park into submission 7–10 pm. Free.

CHEF’S CHALLENGE

May 5

Houston-area top chefs compete against one another to find out who can render the best possible cooking under less-than-favorable conditions. Stipulations include using pre-selected ingredients and non-perishable food items typically found in a survival preparedness kit and camp stoves to simulate food preparation conditions during a disaster. The Chef’s Challenge is part of the ongoing regional Ready Houston campaign to teach Houstonians to prepare for emergencies before they happen. 2:30–4:30 pm. Free. houstonchefchallenge.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.

Market Square Park is open daily from 6 am–11 pm. Blankets, lawn chairs, and picnics are welcome; food, beer and wine are available for purchase at Niko Niko’s. No glass containers or outside alcoholic beverages are allowed. Metered on-street parking is available and free after 6 pm.

marketsquarepark.com

MARKET SQUARE PARK SUMMER CONCERT FEATURING KALU & THE ELECTRIC JOINT + TOMAR AND THE FCS
May 10 Experience the best in soul music at Market Square Park. Kalu and the Electric Joint will blend the powers of psychedelic soul music and African rhythms, followed by headliner Tomar and the FCS. Kick back on the lawn for great tunes, play a round of cornhole, and enjoy cold beers from Niko Niko’s. 7:30 pm. Free.

SECOND SUNDAY REVIVAL
May 12 Sunday Funday just got more fun in historic Market Square Park. Join us for our new summer series, Second Sunday Revival, featuring a different experience each month through September. May’s Revival will kick off with the Bloody Brass Brunch—a showcase of Houston’s best Bloody Marys accompanied by some of your favorite brass bands. Noon-5 pm. Free.

BLANKET BINGO AT MARKET SQUARE PARK
May 16 This popular park favorite is back. Bring your blanket, lawn chairs or snag one of the tables at the park for a night of music and great prizes. $10 admission includes one bingo packet (approx nine games). Additional games and daubers can be purchased for $1 each. Benefits Market Square Park and Buffalo Bayou Partnership. Note: Blanket Bingo is a monthly event through October. 6-9 pm. Bingo begins at 7 pm.

MARKET SQUARE PARK PRESENTS THE QUIRKY & THE CLASSICS
Forget about trekking to the theater for your movie fix and come Downtown instead. Join us at Market Square Park for these fantastic films under the stars:

Mar 6 Mean Girls (PG-13) 2004, 97 mins. 7 pm
Apr 3 Exit Through the Gift Shop (R) 2010, 87 mins. 8 pm
May 1 Dazed and Confused (R) 1993, 102 mins. 8:30 pm

RECREATION

BAYOU BIKERS
Mar 3, Apr 7, May 5 Bayou Bikers meet at Market Square on the first Sunday of the month for 25- to 40-mile bike rides exploring the bayous of Houston. Rides are open to all. Mountain bikes or bikes with fat tires are necessary. This is an informal group whose purpose is to show Houstonians and visitors the beauty of Houston’s waterways. First Sunday of the month, 8 am.
**TOURS**

**BUFFALO BAYOU BOAT TOURS**
Mar 2 & 30, Apr 6 & 13, May 11 These 30-minute boat rides are a great way to spend the afternoon with your family. Escape from the city and enjoy the cool breeze as you glide along Buffalo Bayou’s waters. Look for graceful herons, jumping fish, and even an occasional alligator sunning on the banks. Adults $7, children (ages 4–12) $5, 10 am – 2 pm. Allen’s Landing, 1001 Commerce. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

**WELLNESS WALKING TOUR**
Mar 6, Apr 3, May 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

**FOODIE FLOATS: WINE TASTING WITH NICE WINERY**
Mar 13 & Apr 11 Soak in exceptional views of Buffalo Bayou’s lush landscape as winemaker and Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef Ryan Levy discusses all things wine. Limited seats are available. $70. 6–7:30 pm. Allen’s Landing, 1001 Commerce. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

**NATURE WALKING TOURS**
Mar 16, Apr 20, May 18 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

**LOOKING BACK HISTORY TOUR**
Mar 16, Apr 20, May 18 Take a look back with local historian and author Louis Aulbach to the late 1800s when Houston was founded. He will share stories about the Allen brothers and provide historical information to the late 1800s

**ARCH BUFFALO BAYOU WALKING TOUR**
Mar 16 & May 18 Explore the city from a vantage point most people don’t see: the waterway that gave Houston life and has been its backbone for 175 years. Stroll along Buffalo Bayou Parkway for an overview of Downtown Houston’s history and architecture from its beginnings in 1836 to the efforts to revitalize the central city today. Tickets $10. 10 am. Meets at 902 Commerce. 713.520.0155. aiahouston.org

**ROCK BUILDING STONES: DOWNTOWN GEOLOGY & MATERIALS TOUR**
Mar 23 This architectural and geological walking tour of Downtown goes beyond the typical architectural focus to include the provenance and geology of the buildings’ materials. These sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic rocks have come from all over the world and now call Houston home. The tour is inspired by similar walks in Europe and adapted from the Houston Geological Society’s 1995 tour, Houston Building Stones. $10. 10 am. Southeast corner of Austin and McKinney. 1001 Austin. 713.520.0155. aiahouston.org
SONGS ON THE WATER PRESENTED BY BBP AND HOUSTON OPERA
Mar 23–24 Enjoy a transformative 90-minute boat ride on Buffalo Bayou that includes a serenade by one of today’s premier interpreters of contemporary American opera—baritone Ben Edquist along with pianist Patrick Henry, selected wine by Nice Winery and light bites. $75. 4–7:30 pm. Allen’s Landing, 1001 Commerce. 713.752.0334. buffalobayou.org

PORT-TO-PORT BOAT TOUR
Mar 23, Apr 27, May 25 Cruise around from the old port of Houston to the new port with bayou guide Andrew Grocock as he takes a historical tour of the upper channel of Buffalo Bayou. The seven-mile-long trip will focus on the historical significance of this industrial stretch of Houston. $45. 10 am—Noon. Allen’s Landing, 1001 Commerce. 713.752.0334. buffalobayou.org

TOWERS & TREES DOWNTOWN WALKING TOUR
Mar 30 The Towers and Trees tour explores the magnificent architecture between Hermann Square and Discovery Green as well as the changing dynamics of our Downtown. We’ll look at the partially realized civic center plan surrounding Hermann Square, the historic backbone of Main Street, the ambitious 1970 proposal that would become Houston Center, the internationally recognized icons from the skyscraper boom of the ‘70s and ‘80s, and Discovery Green. Tickets $10, 10 am. One Shell Plaza, 901 Smith. 713.520.0155. aiahouston.org

URBAN ART (DOWNTOWN) WALKING TOUR
April 13 This series of tours will look at public art, architecture, place making and urban planning in Houston. Each new tour will focus on a small walkable section of Houston. Downtown Part 1 includes Market Square Park, Buffalo Bayou and areas West of Main Street. Artists featured on this tour include Mel Chin, Paul Kittleson, Louise Newson, Claes Oldenburg and Dean Buck. Tickets $10. 10 am. Meet at the northeast corner of Market Square Park, 301 Milam. 713.520.0155. aiahouston.org

WAUGH COLONY BAT TOUR
Apr 13, 20 & 27; May 11, 18 & 25 Guests will enjoy an amazing view of over 250,000 magnificent Mexican free-tailed bats as they emerge from underneath Waugh Drive Bridge. $30. Children under 4 are not permitted. Boat departs 30 minutes before sunset. Allen’s Landing, 1001 Commerce. 713.752.0314. buffalobayou.org

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. 713.259.8687. 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. segwaytourofhouston.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. discoverhoustonontours.com

US MEN’S NATIONAL TEAM VS CHILE
Mar 26 For the first time since 2012, the U.S. men’s national team returns to Houston for an exciting match against Chile. 7 pm. BBVA Compass Stadium, 2200 Texas. bbvacompassstadium.com

JJ WATT CHARITY CLASSIC
May 4 Houston Texans’ JJ Watt and his heavy-hitting defensive teammates square up against their offensive counterparts in a toe-to-toe matchup on the baseball diamond. All proceeds will benefit the Justin J. Watt Foundation, which provides after-school opportunities for children to become involved in athletics so they can learn the basic character traits of accountability, teamwork, leadership, work ethic and perseverance in a safe and supervised environment with their peers. $5–$200. 6 pm. Minute Maid Park, 501 Crawford. jjwfoundation.org

HOUSTON ASTROS
Apr 5–7 Astros vs. Oakland As (Home Opener)
Apr 8–10 Astros vs. New York Yankees
Apr 22–24 Astros vs. Minnesota Twins
Apr 25–28 Astros vs. Cleveland Indians
May 6–8 Astros vs. Kansas City Royals
May 9–12 Astros vs. Texas Rangers
May 20–23 Astros vs. Chicago White Sox
May 24–26 Astros vs. Boston Red Sox
May 27–29 Astros vs. Chicago Cubs
For schedule info and tickets, call or visit website. Minute Maid Park, 501 Crawford. 713.259.8000. astros.com

HOUSTON ROCKETS
Mar 8 Rockets vs. Philadelphia 76ers
Mar 11 Rockets vs. Charlotte Hornets
Mar 13 Rockets vs. Golden State Warriors
Mar 15 Rockets vs. Phoenix Suns
Mar 17 Rockets vs. Minnesota Timberwolves
Mar 22 Rockets vs. San Antonio Spurs
Mar 28 Rockets vs. Denver Nuggets
Mar 30 Rockets vs. Sacramento Kings
Apr 5 Rockets vs. New York Knicks
Apr 7 Rockets vs. Phoenix Suns
For schedule info and tickets, call or visit website. Toyota Center, 1510 Polk. 713.758.7200. rockets.com

HOUSTON DYNAMO
Mar 2 Dynamo vs. Real Salt Lake
Mar 9 Dynamo vs. Montreal Impact
Mar 16 Dynamo vs. Vancouver Whitecaps FC
Apr 3 Dynamo vs. San Jose Earthquakes
Apr 27 Dynamo vs. Columbus Crew SC
May 4 Dynamo vs. FC Dallas
May 15 Dynamo vs. Portland Timbers
May 18 Dynamo vs. D.C. United
For schedule info and tickets, call or visit website. BBVA Compass Stadium, 2200 Texas. 713.276.GOAL. houston dynamo.com
Welcome to Downtown Houston!

**Attractions & Sights**
- 14. Avenida Houston
- 15. Buffalo Bayou
- 16. Discovery Green
- 17. Downtown Aquarium
- 19. George R. Brown Convention Center
- 20. Historic District
- 21. Bayou Place
- 22. Main Street Square
- 23. Saint Arnold Brewing Company
- 24. Southern Pacific Steam Engine 982
- 25. Union Station at Minute Maid Park

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

**Music Venues**
- 80. House of Blues
- 81. Revention Music Center
- 82. The Rustic

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

**Shopping**
- 12. GreenStreet
- 13. The Shops at Houston Center

**City, County & Federal**
- 83. City Hall
- 84. City Hall Annex
- 85. Bob Casey Federal Courthouse
- 86. Harris County Courthouse

**Groceries & Conveniences**
- 67. CVS/Pharmacy
- 68. CVS/Pharmacy Market Square
- 69. Phoenicia Specialty Foods
- 70. Wolfe’s Cleaners

**Film**
- 71. AMC Dine-In Houston (formerly Sundance Cinemas)

**METRORail Lines**
- North/Main
- Southeast
- East End
- ALWAYS BE AWARE OF PEDESTRIANS, DRIVERS, BICYCLISTS AND TRAINS WHEN NEAR TRACKS!
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.

Our new Google Map will help you find where you’re going, where to park and what’s nearby downtownhoustonparking.org

Map Key
- Public Parking Garages
- Bayou Trail Access
- Historic District
- 24-Hour Accessible ATM
- Dog Parks
- Houston B-cycle
PARK. RIDE. NAP.

Dreamy commuter service direct to downtown.