Happy Birthday

In just 10 short years, Market Square Park has exceeded all expectations

INNOVATION HUB

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THE PERFECT VACAY

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BY SANDRA COOK

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While you may not be able to travel like you used to, you can still find ways to unwind. And lucky for you, Downtown is the perfect destination for your next vacation. Or should we say safecation?
BY HOLLY BERETTO
When we look back at 2020, what will we remember? Certainly we’ve seen more than our share of social unrest and economic hardship. We know COVID-19 will continue to impact us for some time to come.

But we also believe in our future. We see beyond the struggles of today. We see resilience in the face of adversity, new openness to the experiences of others and tremendous innovation by business owners—both large and small—as they find success despite today’s challenges.

That’s why we choose to celebrate and look ahead with this issue. When we activated Market Square Park a decade ago, we hoped we were creating something that would define that part of Downtown. Mission accomplished. Starting on page 24, we count down 100 of our favorite things about this dynamic little green space and invite you to share yours! We’re also telling you more about the three new business incubators and accelerators in Amegy on Main. Their investment in Houston will pay off in new ideas, research and technologies for years to come. Read all about it starting on page 17.

If you need a change of scenery and are uncomfortable with travel, we’ve got a solution for you starting on page 41. Downtown Houston has plenty of beautiful hotels, and many of them are offering great packages this fall. Mix in lots of green spaces where you can practice your social distancing, and you’ve got a great little getaway.

Knowing how quickly our calendars are changing these days, we’ve decided not to publish datebook this issue. However, you can still visit us online at downtownhouston.org, where we always keep you up to date on what’s happening. And we did include our extensive listing of restaurants starting on page 45. Just be sure to call or check online before you make any plans!

And thank you for reading downtown!
There’s something new, interesting and unexpected arriving to the southwest corner of Market Square Park this season. Between the lawn and the dog run, visitors will encounter winding, organic forms with a surface that resembles a frozen river. Surrounding the raised forms, a new kid-safe surface also features organic shapes and patterns of its own, designed to engage visitors of all ages.
catch: to apply to the program, she had to have a portfolio—and Mihalic had never even taken an undergraduate art class. She started painting watercolors on the floor of her apartment and discovered a love of color and of painting as an art form. It would be several more years before Mihalic would think of herself as an artist, but from this point on, painting would be one of her life's central passions.

Mihalic went on to earn a master's degree in landscape architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design, and after graduating she worked at the firm of Mikyoung Kim, a renowned landscape architect who also produces site-specific environmental art. Though inspired by the work, Mihalic knew she wanted to open her own studio with a similar mix of projects, and on a whim, almost, decided to open it in Houston.

"Houston was geographically triangulated between my partner's family and my family, and I'd moved around so much that we were like, 'Let's try it.' So we arrived as visitors and we've been pleasantly surprised. Houston is better than I had imagined. It's a good place to be a small business owner."

This is Meander, a new work of public art created specifically for this historic site by local artist and landscape architect Falon Mihalic. It’s an homage to Buffalo Bayou, which itself meanders its way through Houston; the crux of our city’s origin story and now a valued slice of nature that coexists alongside Downtown’s glass and steel skyline. It’s a fitting piece from the inventive mind of Mihalic, who followed her own meandering path to both Houston and her career as a hybrid artist and landscape architect. Raised in Pensacola on the Florida Gulf Coast, Mihalic credits her childhood explorations of the beautiful coastal habitats as formative to her artistic vision. “Nature is my muse,” she says.

“I grew up as a free-range kid—I went swimming in the Gulf of Mexico, and was exposed to these beautiful beaches and forests,” says Mihalic. “My mom is an herbalist and a gardener and a painter, and I grew up climbing trees and loving being outside and being a daydreamer. My childhood consisted of me building my own forts and nooks in trees where I could exist all day, and that’s what my studio is now—it’s my place to dream.”

“**When I found the description for landscape architecture, it was a perfect fit—‘bringing nature to the built environment.’”**

Mihalic graduated from a small, liberal-arts college in Florida with a degree in natural sciences—think chemistry and entomology—as well as a desire not to spend the rest of her career looking through a microscope. She didn’t even know what a landscape architect was until she stumbled upon the degree description while searching for grad school programs.

“I had taken one class on the built environment, and it just blew my world thinking about sustainable development. When I found the description for landscape architecture, it was a perfect fit—‘bringing nature to the built environment.’ That’s what I wanted to do!” One
Since opening Falon Land Studio in 2013, Mihalic has successfully balanced the two sides of her career. To an outsider, the landscape architect portion of her practice might seem unrelated to her work as an artist—she takes on traditional landscaping projects like public spaces, plazas, gardens and landscape design for affordable housing. But Mihalic says her experience as an architect and her perspective as an artist inform everything she does.

“What I like about it is it helps bring precision to the craft that I create. For this project in Market Square Park, I have a structural engineer consultant and components fabricated by various people as well as by me. Concrete foundation, metal footing, all of that has to layer on top of each other. I don’t know how I’d manage that without some type of architecture or construction background,” says Mihalic.

“From the other direction, being an artist means viewing the world from a particular lens. It’s our job to see things a certain way, to have that vision and have a creative solution to bring together these different elements, be they social, cultural, or abstract. ... It’s been my business strategy to not get caught up in the conversation of ‘Is this landscape architecture or is it art?’”

Mihalic occasionally works with natural materials as an artistic medium—such as when she centered live plants within a large semi-circular sculpture covered in AstroTurf that doubled as unconventional seating, designed for athleisure brand Outdoor Voices’ new Houston store. But generally, she takes nature as a broader form of inspiration and then creates using a broad range of materials that will best help her execute her vision.

“Other artists put their medium first—they are a metal artist or a ceramicist, and they come from the perspective of, ‘What are the possibilities inherent in this clay?’ My work is more about the experience and the place,” she says.

That could mean a mix of blue mirrored acrylic pieces and acrylic paint combined to make Rain, a three-dimensional wall installation for a Downtown office building. It could be high-density foam, cut into simple shapes and covered in fabric for Playshapes, a temporary...
art installation designed to encourage kids to build and create their own temporary works along Houston’s East End Promenade. Or it could be simple birch outfitted with over 2,400 LED lights built into an undulating white structure that appears to rise organically out of Emancipation Park, emitting a soothing glow that changes color based on the temperature, as in her Climate Pulse.

For Meander, the Market Square Park installation, Mihalic has turned to poured resin in cast concrete to create elevated, serpentine shapes that mimic the bayou’s physical form and route, giving visitors a new view of this familiar body of water.

“It’s meant to be a space kids can crawl around, they can use it as a balance beam, they can play the ground is lava, and there’s a fun, concentric pattern around the play pieces that are laid out to interact with, so kids might discover they can hop between the ground elements,” says Mihalic. “One piece is the perfect bench height, so I’m hoping it’s embraced by families and anyone going to events at the park because it has a prime view of the lawn. And when someone’s just walking through the park and having an encounter, the resin top is very beautiful, it shines and has this pattern that looks like frozen water, that’s the natural element to it. It’s like taking a canvas and turning it into a frozen painting on top of a sculpture.”

Mihalic hopes that this new public art will not only create visual interest but also remind Houstonians of the role the park has played in Houston’s history. The connection to the bayou is inspired by Allen’s Landing, the site where the city was founded, and the only straight lines that carve through Meander reference the outline of the original City Hall, which once sat in the same plot as the park. It’s a beautiful way for Houstonians present and future to reflect on the importance of the past and appreciate the role of nature in our city. Where better to do that than in Downtown’s most historic park?

It’s a beautiful way for Houstonians present and future to reflect on the importance of the past and appreciate the role of nature in our city.
backstage.

Photo by Erick Velasquez

MAMMA MIA
THEATRE UNDER THE STARS
Downtown’s Theater District has been the cultural heart of the city for decades. A place where people of all ages, races and denominations have gathered together to experience vibrant, profound and fantastical works of art. Following Hurricane Harvey in 2017, the damage to many of the venues and organizations was devastating, but they came back stronger than ever.

**ALLEY THEATRE**

The cast at the Alley Theatre spent months preparing for the production of *1984*, which opened on a Wednesday evening last spring. By Thursday morning, as the virus loomed large, the city recommended that there be no gatherings of 250+ people, and the Alley canceled the remainder of performances.

Soon after, other theater organizations followed suit—canceled shows, canceled seasons, layoffs, budget cuts. One after the other we watched as the city’s largest performing arts venues went dark.

With 105 people employed, the Alley has more people on salary than most major theaters in the country and they are one of the only companies whose actors are getting paid during the pandemic. While these are huge positives, there are definite challenges as the 2020/21 season looms.

“The biggest challenge for us is what the virus is doing in Houston,” said Dean Gladden, managing director for the Alley. “We can’t perform until the positive rate for cases goes way down.”

Now, just a little more than two years later, COVID-19 has struck, forcing each organization to re-think the way shows are produced and executed. In today’s physically distanced way of life, the Theater District now looks to Houstonians for support, as their lights remain off and their stages dark. Despite all the challenges, the Theater District organizations continue to hold on to the mantra of resilience, something our city knows a thing or two about.

**RESILIENCY IN THE THEATER DISTRICT**

Organizations respond to pandemic with creative programming

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— Dean Gladden, Alley Theatre Managing Director

But perform again they will, hopefully by Thanksgiving. Gladden announced that the upcoming season will begin with a new production of *A Christmas Carol*, followed by five shows in the spring. All will be performed in the Hubbard Theater, making social distanced seating possible.

“We can be a little bit more flexible than our sister organizations because we have fewer people onstage,” Gladden said. The Alley is also able to successfully perform at just 35 percent capacity.

Gladden remembers the days of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, but with Harvey there was an end date. With the virus, theater companies have no control, and all of their options and plans continue to change as time passes. But Gladden is unfazed. After all, the Alley is heading into their 74th season and has survived their fair share of difficulties.

Approximately 50 percent of the Alley’s revenue is contributed income (donations) and the reason they’re able to stay open and employ so many without ticket revenue. The Alley is a producing company, so everything is done in-house. They employ a large number of artisans—scenery creators, painters, wig makers, stitchers and tailors—who are eagerly waiting to get back to work, but thankfully are still being paid.

“We don’t want all of these craftspeople to be out looking for work because they could leave town, and we need all of them when we’re officially ready to go,” Gladden said.

As for when that may be, Gladden says they hope to convene in late August to begin building for *A Christmas Carol*, followed by creating sets for their shows in spring 2021. And for those asking, you will absolutely see extravagantly decorated Christmas trees in the Alley’s lobby this holiday season.

**DACAMERA**

DACAMERA is one of the more unique organizations calling Downtown Houston home. Believing strongly that music transcends genre, DACAMERA inspires individuals and enriches communities through diverse and inventive musical experiences. DACAMERA is fortunate to have Artistic Director Sarah Rothenberg, who is a gifted pianist and performer, as well as their Young Artist program, a pre-professional training program for local musicians. Beyond that, the staff is relatively small, but after canceling the balance of their season in March they are facing the same pressure to stay afloat as others in the Theater District.

“The big challenge is engagement, retention and keeping our relationships,” said DACAMERA Executive Director Robert Leslie. “We’re fortunate to have such a wonderful group of board members and very loyal subscribers.”

DACAMERA launched an initiative called Home Delivery as a way for the organization to both support artists by allowing them to create content and to keep in contact with patrons. One of the recent editions is with Jeremy Denk, a pianist who was scheduled to perform in the balance of their canceled season. Denk produced a short video where he performs and talks about composers such as Bach and Beethoven. This video series is then delivered to subscribers via email and published on DACAMERA’s website. The best part? Home Delivery support artists during this difficult time.

DACAMERA is well known for their education and community initiatives that reach thousands of individuals through free community concerts and programs such as **Music Encounters**, a partnership bringing classical music and jazz into students’ core-curricular classrooms throughout Houston. In the same spirit, DACAMERA’s Young Artists have created video content that has been sent to local schools, Houston Methodist, and MD Anderson Children’s Cancer Center for people to enjoy, free of cost. As DACAMERA looks ahead, they hope to come back in the beginning of 2021 with live performances and are currently exploring potential outdoor performance venues in and around Downtown. But for now, Leslie urges the public to visit DACAMERA’s website, sign up for their email list, and connect with them online.

“Music is such a wonderful way to celebrate community and reach people,” Leslie said. “Our goal is to continue that as best we can in this environment, and hopefully look through the near-term pessimism to long-term optimism.” DACAMERA will be back and will be back strong.
“This pandemic is not the first time we’ve had to get creative behind the scenes so our dancers and production staff can make magic happen onstage,”

— Angela Lee, Houston Ballet
Marketing and PR Director
HOUSTON GRAND OPERA
The Houston Grand Opera took a direct approach when choosing to cancel their upcoming season through February 2021. With the largest orchestras and largest number of people onstage, from technicians to costume changes, HGO recognized early that producing an opera during the pandemic simply wasn’t possible.

“There’s literally no show that includes less than 150 people as part of the performance, which of course makes it very expensive and very complex to find ways to keep people safe,” said Managing Director Perryn Leech. “We knew early on that we would be taking an extended hiatus.”

HGO’s subscribers have been loyal supporters after having been subjected to a temporary venue for a year during Hurricane Harvey in 2017, and the organization felt the need to really take care of them during this shutdown by pushing their entire subscription money to next year—a move that makes HGO stand out among others. But their lack of virtual content hasn’t gone unnoticed.

The opera is extremely complex, and without the ability to perform to a recorded soundtrack, it’s difficult to provide virtual content without a highly executed plan, which Leech has been busy creating.

Beginning this fall, HGO will deliver digital programming twice a month. The first program will be a traditional concert format with one singer and a piano at the Cullen Theater, recorded live for subscribers. The second will be one-act operas of an hour or less, and HGO has been working diligently to develop protocols so these can take place.

“As it stands, we’ll do weekly testing for people who are recording, rehearsals in masks, and once we’re in the Cullen, the masks will come off for filming,” Leech said. After recording the content will be delivered first to subscribers, and later the general public.

As for financial stability, The Houston Grand Opera is in a better place than those who rely on their box office to pay wage bills and staff.

“Picture in your head short, medium and long term, because each one of us [in the Theater District] will have different issues, and for us it’s very much more medium and long term,” Leech said. HGO was grateful to receive a loan under the Payroll Protection program in the spring, but that was a short-term fix. Because opera is a very expensive art form, Leech said HGO is able to survive for a period of time, as long as they can hang on to their donors.

“We can’t do without audiences for too long without it starting to affect our donor base,” Leech said. “I’m much more worried about two years from now than I am two weeks.”

“As it stands, we’ll do weekly testing for people who are recording, rehearsals in masks...”

— Perryn Leech, Houston Grand Opera Managing Director
The upcoming season was planned well before the pandemic, but now TUTS is up against delivering on what they’ve promised, the best of musical theater, and producing the same titles they had announced. Financially, it may not make sense. As Knechtges says, there’s no making money in not-for-profit theater, the goal is simply to break even.

But TUTS is so much more than a musical theater organization. Each ticket supports various nonprofits around Houston like Dress for Success, New Hope Housing, the Wesley Center and Combined Arms. A portion also goes toward TUTS-founded programs like the Humphreys School of Musical Theater and The River, which provides affordable, accessible arts education to individuals with disabilities. Not to mention, TUTS also helps finance HSPVA’s musical theater program.

“Let’s try to create a bright spot in everybody’s day and share how we’re all being creative at home in our own ways.”

— Meg Booth, Society for the Performing Arts’ Chief Executive Officer

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For 52 years, TUTS’ mission as a nonprofit is built around community building and communal experience, making them eager to return to the stage as soon as it’s deemed safe. But they’re also re-thinking their programming during this time, where Artistic Director Dan Knechtges describes his biggest challenge as the fight between two viruses—one being Covid, the other being the social unrest and racism going on throughout the country.

“We are caught in a conundrum in terms of programming, because to change one virus [social unrest] we need to be back, but we can’t be back because of the other one,” Knechtges said. “We’re caught in this catch-22, how do we have action and how do we create art?”

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recognized a gap happening in the Theater District and felt called to bring more attention to artists in Houston. Booth believes “Downtown is for everyone” and the commissioning project is a way to close the gap, while also focusing on diversity and inclusivity.

Booth’s passion for the arts is a breath of fresh air amid a hurting community. Which is why, when asked about ways Houstonians can support SPA, she selflessly states that first and foremost it’s important to remember the value of the arts.

“For anyone who has experienced the arts, it is remembering that palpable exchange of energy between an audience and an artist, and how transformative it is to be in a live performance with your community,” Booth said.

Remembering those feelings and emotions may come naturally, and giving to your favorite arts organizations is one action to show support if you have the means. But Booth said it’s equally important to contact your congress people on behalf of the arts, an action that requires only passion and time. While some organizations received relief in the early stages of the pandemic, we’re now seeing how long it will take for everyone to be back on their feet. And Booth said including the arts in future relief packages is what will ensure the community withstands the difficulties this year has presented.

She closes with a note of promise, stating “We will be resilient, Houston is extraordinarily resilient; and we will see artists lead through this pandemic, but it’s not going to be without pain, and it’s going to take time.”

**HOUSTON SYMPHONY**

The Houston Symphony was among the first to ask ticket holders to donate their cost of tickets and quickly put virtual programming at the forefront of their planning.

As Houstonians dealt with the daily challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the symphony came to the rescue and provided soothing music every Friday evening through the appropriately dubbed **Living Room Series**, an hour-long livestream performance from artists’ homes. According to the symphony’s Senior Director Of Communications Eric Skelly, the performances (which cost a meager 10 dollars) were an immediate success.

“The smallest audience was about 400 screens,” said Skelly. “The most-watched performance was over 700 screens. We have no way of knowing how many people are behind each screen so that could be as many as a thousand people watching that performance.”

However, in a move crucial to ensuring its immediate survival, the symphony announced layoffs of 21 full- and part-time employees in early June, reducing their overall staff to 62.

Like others in the Theater District, the symphony received a loan under the federal Paycheck Protection Program, which helped for a period of time. But survival as an organization depends on budget cuts across the board.

Less than a month later, the orchestra found itself back on stage for a three-hour live-streamed performance in the Freedom Over Texas celebration. This performance gave way to **Live from Jones Hall**, a new series in which Houston Symphony musicians perform live, socially distanced of course, on stage each Saturday night.

“Without performing, my life has been fine—even pleasant in some ways,” said Principal Cellist Brinton Averil Smith. “But I’ve been missing this fundamental meaning that music gives us, (and) I can’t wait to sit again with my colleagues and bring music back to life.”

Each of these performances lead toward reintroducing small audiences back to Jones Hall as soon as it’s safe. Tickets for the Live from Jones Hall concerts can be purchased for $10. Purchasers will receive a private link to the concert, which begins at 8 p.m. every Saturday.

“I’ve been missing this fundamental meaning that music gives us.”

— Brinton Averil Smith, Houston Symphony Principal Cellist
REC ROOM ARTS

Rec Room Arts’ Artistic Director Matt Hune is one of the more visionary players in Houston’s theater scene. In spring the theater initially postponed performances, holding off on opening their third show of the 2019/20 season, until finally making the choice to cancel the season in June.

“In theater we’re always conditioned to think that the show must go on,” Hune said, and this motivation is one reason Rec Room canceled their season much later than their larger counterparts in the Theater District.

Hune has spent the last several months dreaming, re-imagining and cultivating ideas for Rec Room’s future. One of their upcoming projects is the Rec Room Writers Group—nine playwrights who have been working on writing new plays over the last six months that will be delivered audio-only, similar to a podcast.

“The silver lining of this pandemic is that we’re able to support these playwrights in ways we hadn’t previously planned, and they’re all local,” Hune said.

With directors and 43 actors, these are full-fledged productions perfect for the limitations Covid has placed on the arts industry. Rec Room Arts will release virtual catalogs that include information on the playwright, a synopsis, their process and how they got to this play, and finally, the audio version of the play being read.

Rec Room has always presented thought-provoking works and their next in-person season will be no different. Hune looks for stories that help push conversations further, lead viewers to ask questions, and ultimately, stories that help better the community.

“We’re not only reassessing Rec Room’s role in Houston theater, but also assessing theater’s role in Houston,” said Hune. “What’s the point of it and why do we do it?”

When asked about Rec Room’s biggest challenge today, Hune says it’s been the same since their inception, and will be in the future as well—financial support, but not specifically from individuals.

“Most companies survive from individual support, but I don’t think that’s sustainable... some countries have stronger support for social services, and I think the arts are an essential social service,” Hune said. “They develop a cultural identity and without that we’re sort of lost in the woods.”

Seeing the arts get pushed aside year by year, decade by decade, is difficult for all artists. Certain stories are life changing, cathartic and a celebration of sorts. To continue hearing those stories, Hune urges advocacy.

“Donating is great if you can, but if you can’t, support by voting for civic leaders who support cultural programs,” Hune said.

KINDER HSPVA

Kinder High School for Performing and Visual Arts launched into virtual learning when HISD closed schools in March. With well over 100 live performances each year, HSPVA was pleasantly surprised at the flexibility of their staff and students when determining how to proceed virtually. Seniors, who present a culmination performance or gallery show of everything they’ve done over the previous four years, had to find a way to share their work with the public.

“One of the benefits of it [virtual programming] was that more people ended up seeing those performances than ever would’ve happened if it was within one of our small, 150 person theaters,” said HSPVA’s Magnet Coordinator Jonathan Klein.

“In theater we’re always conditioned to think that the show must go on.”

— Matt Hune, Rec Room Arts’ Artistic Director
The best surprise was with visual artists. While the shows are typically held in a gallery over a period of time, hosting a show virtually allowed the students to talk about their work and describe what inspired them. “Visual artists also had to create new skills at the last minute, like creating video, which they might not have done throughout their four years of high school,” Klein said. Now the students have additional skills for their life after graduation.

Virtual programming was not on HSPVA’s radar prior to the pandemic, and it’s created new challenges that they continue to face looking forward. But their students are innovative, and Klein knows they will bring back a plethora of ideas for their teachers to try, making this a learning experience for faculty also.

“Everyone wants to get back to normal... how do we make sure that while this is a pain, and while people are still being negative about it, maybe this will elevate everything to a new level because of the opportunity,” said HSPVA Principal Scott Allen. The definition of normal isn’t how he’d describe HSPVA’s students and isn’t what Allen sees for the future.

Allen and Klein have been in discussions with Discovery Green and are looking at ways the students can socially distance in an outdoor area for live performances when it is safe to do so. They’re excited about how each department can use the park as a bigger stage for the kids.

HSPVA is now focused on enlisting public support for their students as parents have raised concerns about their emotional and social well-being since they’re not getting all of the in-person interaction they’re used to. Plus, performing on stage in front of a crowd is huge for their teenagers, who had so many performances canceled in the spring.

Klein said being present, being able to view the virtual content, is important to the kids. He encourages the public to follow HSPVA’s social accounts, watch their shows, and consume what they’re putting online, because that is what matters most to the students.

“Netflix, Hulu and Apple TV are all great ways to enjoy yourself when at home right now, but there’s nothing like enjoying students sharing their work and what they’re passionate about,” Klein said.
What does an IWA education look like?

Academics

Values

Spirituality

We prepare our students to

Excel academically

Live a life of faith and service

Lead with character, confidence and skill

Create life-long friendships

Learn More

www.incarnateword.org/downtown
Without a doubt, the challenges of 2020 have shown us that it pays to innovate. Daring to find a solution or to find smarter ways to do business, can launch new businesses, new industries and lift communities.

Sure, Houston has an impressive history of innovation. Think back to the 1960s: The Astrodome was the first-ever domed stadium, once dubbed the Eighth Wonder of the World when it was completed in 1965. Dr. Denton Cooley performed the first human heart transplant in 1968; the first artificial heart transplant in 1969. That same year, NASA’s Mission Control celebrated as Neil Armstrong radioed from the surface of the moon, “Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.”

Solitary dreamers didn’t accomplish putting a man on the moon, heart transplants or the debut of domed stadiums on their own. Building the Astrodome took three architecture firms, three engineering firms and a general contractor—plus the input and effort of an army of others—to become a reality. Any business or project leader will tell you: it takes a village.
Those types of iconic collaborations and innovations, though monumental and brag-worthy, did not create an innovation ecosystem in which entrepreneurs and fledgling businesses could flourish. It’s been more than 50 years since Houston was considered a center of innovation. Ways of doing business have changed. Some industries are shrinking, while new industries and business avenues are emerging. The business landscape is evolving.

**INNOVATION AWAKENING**

Around the time of Amazon’s high-profile hunt for its HQ2 in 2017, local business leaders realized Houston didn’t offer a supportive environment for entrepreneurs, startups and emerging businesses. For Downtown proponents, this awareness is not about missing out on companies like Amazon that could import jobs and attract a temporary spotlight to Houston. It’s about missing out on fostering and facilitating local, homegrown startups that would generate organic job growth and have strong ties to the local community.

Mayor Sylvester Turner challenged the local business community to help shape the vision for Innovation Districts, and today three separate innovation campuses have been announced along a greater Innovation Corridor anchored by Main Street, stretching from Downtown to the Texas Medical Center.

While well-publicized innovation campuses such as Rice University’s ION and the Texas Medical Center’s TMC3 were announced in 2018, these concepts are still in the works and they are dedicated to specific research and technology fronts. The ION facility is set to open in 2021 and TMC3 is slated for 2022.

Downtown was also in the process of establishing a thriving innovation ecosystem, and through the visionary leadership of Central Houston and funding through the Downtown Redevelopment Authority (DRA), a plan was hatched that could be put into action quickly.

**ASKING “WHAT IF?”**

Robert Pieroni, director of economic development for Central Houston, explains how and why Downtown’s innovation hub got started: “We said ‘what if…?’”

Other major cities have witnessed how cultivating a critical mass of business startups and research in a single area yields opportunities for advancement for those concepts as a result of the powerful collisions and frequent exchange of ideas that stem from ongoing innovation programs.

“What if we set out to enable and empower local entrepreneurs instead of bringing in entrepreneurs from other places,” Pieroni asked Central Houston and DRA staff and board members. “That’s how you produce true job creation, rather than importing jobs from other cities.”

**ALL INCLUDED IN ONE BUILDING**

A threefold vision of inclusion differentiates the Downtown innovation hub from others in Houston. Downtown Launchpad was conceived to be: 1) a vertical village with a range of support programs, resources, advisors and meeting space; 2) a place for a startup to scale, expand and mature all in one high-rise; and 2) a home where all types of Houstonians with all types of business models are embraced.

“We had inclusivity in mind from the beginning, because we have one of the youngest, fastest growing and most diverse populations in the world,” says Pieroni.

So, in 2018, Pieroni’s team used DRA grants and City of Houston support to recruit Boston-based MassChallenge, a top-10 nationally ranked accelerator that’s also a nonprofit. “We brought MassChallenge to Houston to be our spark plug and bring the world to Houston to innovate,” says Pieroni. “We then signed up gener8tor, another top-10-ranked accelerator out of Madison, Wisconsin to hyper-focus on local founders and entrepreneurs.”

With two well-established accelerator programs onboard, DRA opened a request for proposals (RFP) in September 2019 seeking a Downtown property with the capacity to house these accelerators and other similar programs. Within a month, Amegy on Main was selected as the location and construction began on Downtown Launchpad in early December 2019, just three months after the RFP went out.

Downtown Launchpad opens its doors this fall, and workshops and programming for cohorts and startups have already begun.

**LAYERS OF THE LAUNCHPAD**

Today, Downtown Launchpad lives on the 10th floor of Amegy on Main. The 17,000-square-foot space functions in conjunction with The Cannon, which occupies the top two floors of the building (and also operates entrepreneurial networking locations in West Houston and the Galleria area). The Cannon’s Downtown location, known as The Cannon Tower, hosts a network
of entrepreneurs, investors and advisors who can connect—or collide—with Downtown Launchpad founders.

The building’s 11th floor features a dedicated conference center/event space. The lobby of the building offers meeting rooms, a game room, workstations, a coffee bar and a deli for the convenient use of all Launchpad founders and members of the Cannon Tower. The idea is to induce a “right place, right time effect.”

MassChallenge and gener8tor kicked off cohorts earlier in the spring virtually. To help early stage companies get going, gener8tor also conducts a seven-week pre-accelerator program called gBETA, which is geared toward local entrepreneurs who are refining their business models and strategizing growth.

Seeking to provide another layer of services and support for entrepreneurs, Central Houston reached out to Impact Hub, a globally recognized nonprofit incubator that already had a presence in Houston and focuses on empowering startups to improve a wide spectrum of social injustice issues. “They will play an important role in the space offering education/continuing ed programs that will draw all types of business concepts and all Houstonians,” says Pieroni. Programming will include ongoing community events, including thought-provoking discussions, expert-led talks, hands-on learning opportunities and facilitated community conversations.

“With programs, such as coding, data science, software engineering, essentially we hope to up-skill and reskill people from our community who might become the first employees of the companies that will be floating within the vertical village,” says Pieroni. “We’re excited to build a continuum of lifecycle. With just the one main floor of Downtown Launchpad, we expect to accelerate 100 companies annually. With a 10-year lease, Downtown Launchpad could pipeline more than 1,000 startups into the Downtown ecosystem over the next 10 years.”
“We viewed Downtown as a hotspot for startups and tech companies, and of course, big corporations.”

— Lawson Gow, founder and president of The Cannon

MassChallenge

Headquartered in Boston, MassChallenge is a nationally ranked nonprofit accelerator, which means it takes zero equity from its startup participants.

masschallenge.org

CO-LOCATION, CO-LOCATION, COLLISIONS

Co-locating with The Cannon provides a convenient, pre-networked space for graduates and program attendees who need professional office space and resources. Lawson Gow, founder and president of The Cannon, says adding a Downtown location as their third site was a no-brainer. “We viewed Downtown as a hotspot for startups and tech companies, and of course, big corporations,” says Gow. “We wanted to provide a location with an existing cluster of companies and natural attraction of those affinity groups, so because of those resources a Downtown location was a priority.”

Gow remarks that after looking at various locations, two things emerged that locked in the location in Amegy on Main. “We saw Amegy as a like-minded real estate partner that could understand our vision and had a great history of giving back to Houston. And I discovered Central Houston were amazing resources. They were extremely supportive of what we were doing and almost immediately they were thinking more innovatively about this accelerator concept.”

“We are fortunate to have a forward thinker like Robert [Pieroni] running with this vision alongside us, because this could really transform the entire city,” says Gow. “I certainly don’t want to play favorites with The Cannon locations, we plan to offer amazing innovation hubs across the entire expanse of the Houston area, but this collaboration within Amegy on Main is a real “Dream Team” alliance, assembling an all-star cast in one space.”

GETTING A CRITICAL MASS

Nonprofit accelerator MassChallenge coaches, connects and lifts promising startups without taking an ounce of equity. MassChallenge coached more than 50 startups in their first Houston cohort—an intensive entrepreneurial bootcamp. The group hopes to work with 100 startups next year.

“MassChallenge’s ability to draw startups from all over the world and connect them with Downtown Houston’s business community and resources—like SMEs from related industries, legal, finance, accounting—brings crucial exposure to Houston and Downtown Launchpad,” says John Nordby, managing director for MassChallenge. “This benefits the local startup ecosystem by bringing in startups from all over the world, which brings in diverse perspectives and problem-solving strategies from a wide range of industries. These startups also have a lot of the same challenges as most startups, in terms of identifying customers, building teams and finding product-market fit, so being able to share varying perspectives is very valuable to them.”

KNOWLEDGE FLOWS BOTH WAYS

Nordby explains that as that expert community is developed and curated there is a mutually beneficial infusion of knowledge. “The local business experts are mentoring the startups about how best to access their industries and what’s really important to them,” he says. “And at the same time, the startups are educating those local industry experts on how these startups are developing and maybe how they treat their teams, and so on. The local experts in turn take that startup culture and creativity back to their organizations, which can shift how they think about working with startups or how they think about things like open innovation and internal innovation.

While MassChallenge is relatively new to Houston, Nordby is no new kid in town. He’s a native Houstonian and University of Houston grad who worked with Houston Exponential and the Greater Houston Partnership prior to joining MassChallenge.

Through his past roles he discovered how innovation ecosystems developed in other cities that were at a similar stage of innovation compared to where Houston is now. “We learned that when a city hasn’t had an innovation mindset in place for decades (like Seattle or San Francisco) that it’s challenging, but crucial to change the perception of innovation in your corporate community,” says Nordby. That sentiment may be difficult to measure, but Nordby suggests those cultural shifts will emerge over time as the established business community interacts with the startup community.

VELOCITY OF INNOVATION

“Companies are innovating much more rapidly than they were 10 or 15 years ago. And, certainly we’ve seen that increase dramatically during 2020’s challenges,” says Nordby.

Nordby explains two types of innovation: internal and external. Nimble companies can innovate from within, while less agile companies end up seeking external assistance to implement innovation. “Most companies are good at identifying problems, but they’re usually not as good at finding and implementing solutions. If they can find ways to take ideas from their R&D benches and put them in motion, that’s great, but corporate environments are often too big and too slow to accomplish these internally, so they have to find external sources to help them innovate.”

For all the groups collaborating with Downtown Launchpad, that circumstance of the corporate environment is an advantage, because a thriving innovation hub has access to innovation at a higher velocity than corporate giants ever could.
“And certainly some large companies can problem solve better than others,” says Nordby. “But with the opportunity for corporate executives to walk into this hub, witness the innovative thinking that’s already happening, talk to advisors and experts, and potentially get connected to startups in the field they are seeking—that’s an incredible asset for any city, but Houston, in particular, is in need of this.

“Our industries, in general, have quite frankly lagged behind other industries in external innovation for so many years, he says. “Our economy has been so strong for so long. Who takes the time to fix problems when they’re making lots of money? A lot of Houston industries have had that luxury.”

Why make the effort to foster an innovation ecosystem? Synergy. Nordby explains that when you can combine giving corporations access to innovation at a high velocity with giving startups access to industry knowledge that validates and informs their ideas you get a powerful synergy. “That’s when the funding comes in, you get more national attention, and your resources can snowball and pour into the ecosystem,” he says.

SUPPORT THE LOCALS
While MassChallenge propels startups that are well organized and preparing to scale, Madison, Wisconsin-based gener8tor offers its gBETA program through Downtown Launchpad. “Our gBETA pre-accelerator is a seven-week program that can equip founders and startups with a path forward and network to start up their business,” says Abby Taubner, a partner with gener8tor.

Eleanore Cluzel, director of gener8tor’s gBETA Houston program, heads up gBETA’s 7-week cohorts, workshops designed to help entrepreneurs refine their business models, meet mentors, strategize their growth, gain customer traction and pitch investors.

“People come in for the seven weeks and our goal is that as they move forward they have the resources and the network to help them succeed,” says Taubner. “Our hope that anyone can come to us, even if our seven-week program isn’t a fit for them, we want to help plug them in with people who can help them grow.”

Cluzel says she appreciates working with the close-knit community of Downtown Launchpad. “I always see support, availability and flexibility
“It takes a village to raise an entrepreneur; and now we have that village with the infrastructure and community to raise generations of diverse innovators.”

—Grace Rodriguez, CEO/executive director of Impact Hub

GREATER IMPACT

What is social innovation? It’s about creating ideas for change and the intended social impact, whether that is housing for the homeless, a cleaner environment, improved access to health care, more effective education, reduced poverty, protection of abused children, deeper appreciation of the arts or some other social improvement.

Impact Hub’s mission is to inspire, connect and empower people working to solve some of society’s most pressing problems in the Greater Houston area and beyond. “Building a seamless pipeline for impact innovators and social entrepreneurs is vital,” says Grace Rodriguez, CEO/executive director of Impact Hub. “It takes a village to raise an entrepreneur; and now we have that village with the infrastructure and community to raise generations of diverse innovators. It’s another exciting step towards our goal to build an authentically inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem that looks like Houston and works for all in our region.”

Impact Hub

Impact Hub functions as an innovation lab, business incubator and a social enterprise community center.

> Globally recognized nonprofit is active in 50 countries
> Focused on improving a wide spectrum of social injustice issues
> Offers accelerator programs for Spanish speakers, female founders and youth entrepreneurs
> Provides range of courses and programming that complement the accelerators with the Launchpad

houston.impacthub.net
The Downtown Experts you can trust.

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The current version of Market Square Park has been a long time coming. Since the founding of Houston in 1836, this patch of land has played plenty of roles, but the ones we celebrate in 2020 mark it as the heart of a neighborhood, a catalyst for rebirth, a tranquil green space in the center of Downtown and an activated space full of life and culture. There are as many ways to describe it as there are ways to love it, but just for fun—and in commemoration of its 10th birthday—here are 100 reasons to love Market Square Park.
**A rich history that follows the ups and downs of Houston itself.**

**THE ABRIDGED VERSION:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.1</th>
<th>It’s located just blocks from Allen’s Landing, which is also known as the birthplace of Houston.</th>
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<tr>
<td>No.2</td>
<td>For a full century, it was home to four different city halls and open-air markets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.3</td>
<td>In the 1960s, it transformed into another hub: A parking lot for Downtown partiers looking for a good time in the surrounding nightclubs and restaurants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.4</td>
<td>The Junior League of Houston was instrumental in helping transform it back into a green space in the 1970s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.5</td>
<td>This area of the city did not fare well in the oil bust of the 1980s, nor did the square, which meant it was ripe for a comeback when the reimagined park was unveiled in August of 2010.</td>
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Plenty of shade on a warm spring or summer day.

**№7–9**

Picnic space galore: Soft grass, an open lawn, endless possibilities.

**PERFECT PICNIC SCENARIOS—**

**OPTION 1**
Start at Phoenicia. Fill your basket with goodies like cheese, cured meats, house-made pitas, fruit, hard-to-find international sodas (or juices) and red-pepper dip. Bike or walk less than a mile to Market Square Park, spread out your blanket and enjoy your feast under the shade.

**OPTION 2**
Let Niko Niko’s do all the heavy lifting. Order at the window, grab a seat at one of the tables and enjoy. You can’t go wrong with a chicken & spinach gyro.

**OPTION 3**
Grab to-go from multiple restaurants within a stone’s throw and make it a progressive picnic: Frank’s Pizza, Barnaby’s, La Fisheria, Bravery Chef Hall, Batanga and Hearsay are just a small sampling of your choices that are within a block of the park.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Outside alcoholic beverages are not allowed inside the park, though they can be purchased at Niko Niko’s and enjoyed onsite.
The people, companies and organizations that brought the idea of Market Square Park to life:

A successful public space both reflects and informs the community surrounding it. As the center of Houston’s Historic District, Market Square Park needed to represent the city’s past while also serving the modern needs of a thriving, diverse Downtown community. This task could only be met with the right group of people leading the charge, and the following contributors made that vision a reality:

**PARK PROJECT SPEARHEADS:**
The Downtown Redevelopment Authority/TIRZ #3, City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Houston Downtown Management District and community stakeholders made the park possible through funding, planning and project management.

**PARK DESIGN:**
Lauren Griffith Associates, a Houston-based landscape architect, led the design, with Ray + Hollington Architects, Kerry Goelzer and Tribble & Stephens consulting on the project. Together they designed an active, urban green space that represents the city's future and acknowledges its past historical significance.

**PARK OPERATIONS:**
Since reopening in 2010, the Houston Downtown Management District, led by President Bob Eury, has operated the park on behalf of the City of Houston.
Grand Opening Neighborhood Shindig

AUGUST, 2010

Among the highlights of this magical day and evening were the plate breaking to honor Niko Niko’s kiosk (instead of a traditional ribbon-cutting ceremony) and then-Mayor Annise Parker’s remarks about Market Square Park’s status as a perfect park. “It has history, it has green space, it has food, it has places for the pets, it has places for kids to play, it has art—this is going to be the heart of this area—and the events that we do here are going to be that heartbeat!”

Houston’s 175th Birthday Bash

AUGUST, 2011

Celebrating one century and three-quarters, it was a hot but special day as revelers gathered at Market Square Park to cheer on the founding of the city itself. There were tunes from the High School for Performing and Visual Arts jazz band, a performance by an interactive theater company about the founding of the Bayou City, $1.75 gyros from Niko Niko’s, $1.75 birthday cupcakes and plenty of Saint Arnold beer on tap. At the end of the program, everyone gathered for a massive My Houston Is Here photo op as part of a citywide campaign celebrating Htown’s bday.

Lauren’s Garden Dedication and September 11 Memorial

SEPTEMBER 2016

A commemoration of Lauren’s Garden, an art installation in the park honoring the life of Lauren Catuzzi Grandcolas, who died on United Airlines Flight 93, marked the passage of 15 years since the terrorist attacks of September 11. As a celebration of Lauren’s life and a remembrance of all those lost that day, the Lauren Catuzzi Grandcolas Foundation developed a Sept. 11 Essay/Scholarship Contest to give high school students the opportunity to research and write about how the event changed the course of our nation. The winners were recognized at this commemoration ceremony.

Cello Fury Performances

“Rocking out” and “cellos” don’t always go together, unless of course, you’re talking about Cello Fury—a quartet from Pittsburgh featuring three classically trained cellists and a single percussionist. Debuting in Houston at Market Square Park in 2012, they always attracted huge crowds and have been a guest at park events multiple times in the last decade.
Blanket Bingo
Fewer things are more gratifying than sitting on a blanket, munching on snacks on the soft green grass of Market Square Park’s lawn (or in a camping chair, if your hips need more support) and yelling “BINGO!” This sleeper hit is one of the only outdoor bingo games in the United States and has been one of the park’s most popular recurring events to date. The success is due to great partners such as Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Bingo MC John Mills McCain and music curators Fistful of Soul.

The Sounds of Louisiana’s Best Musicians
Music and live performances have always been a big draw, and some of Louisiana’s finest have played their hearts out in the park over the years, including legends like John Cleary, Bonerama, Pine Leaf Boys, Walter Wolfman Washington, Steve Riley and Corey Ledet.

Doomsday Wrestling
Sounds like a metaphor for 2020, right? It may well be, but it was also one of the wackiest, most memorable Market Square Park events of the last decade. Drama between wrestlers (they all have unique storylines), actual wrestling and smack talking meant tons of live entertainment unfolded during this big-time match. Can’t pass up mentioning a few of our favorite characters such as Texas Lonestar, Top Banana and Hot Flash (aka menopausal mama).

A Night at Market Square
A block party to be remembered, this neighborhood event series offered a view into the future of what Market Square could look and feel like on a regular basis. Twinkle lights, lawn games and an energy of optimism and opportunity set the stage for the exciting chapter of growth, development and activation that followed.
Both dog runs were dedicated in the name of Holly Anawaty, a Houstonian deeply involved in many civic efforts and proud dog mom to Bessie and Pete. She passed away in 2006, but friends and family helped raise funds to make the Bark Park a reality, working closely with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

I love the bingo nights in the park. It’s a great way for friends or family members to get together and do something low-tech. It’s also fun to be able to picnic Downtown while you play. Bonus is having Niko Niko’s there if you forgot food.”
—Betsy Denson, park visitor and Houston resident

Dogs have played a central role in Market Square Park since its two dog runs were dedicated to Holly Anawaty in 2011 by then-mayor Annise Parker. With one for large dogs (taller than 15”) and another for small dogs (15” and below), each enclosure comes with access to water to keep the pups hydrated as well as water features that keep them entertained.
Flower beds bursting with color year-round.

Plenty of places to sit and enjoy a quiet conversation with a friend:

No. 53
Umbrella-shaded tables and chairs on the plaza.

No. 54
Blankets sprawled out on the soft grass on the lawn.

No. 55
Mosaic benches overlooking peaceful fountains on three sides of the park (and one on the fourth side in front of the dog runs, sans fountain).

No. 56
The edges of the water feature surrounding the Points of View sculpture.

No. 57–58
Acting as a magnet, rallying point and programmed with frequent, thoughtful events, Market Square Park has been a catalyst for lasting economic growth and development.

“Market Square Park has been a huge influence on all the local businesses and residents. Their work to get businesses and locals to interact through programming is amazing. What used to be a space that was an afterthought has been a great destination for residents and others alike. Concerts, bingo nights, street markets and their movie series are just a few examples. They have done a fantastic job.”
—Brian Fasthoff, owner at Batanga

“For me, Market Square Park is a green oasis among the concrete and glass that once defined Downtown Houston. The park can be a place to relax and enjoy quiet time among the trees and fountains, or it can be a place to celebrate with live music, shopping, and throngs of people. The renovation of Market Square Park marked the resurgence of Downtown living, and I view it as the anchor for new residential and commercial entities here. (It’s the rug that ties the room together.)”
—Shannan Eades, Downtown resident and park supporter
It’s probably been a while since we’ve seen each other. But we just wanted to say that we haven’t forgotten you. We know you’re out there, putting in the work and staying Houston strong. It’s that resilience that defines us.

From us to you, here’s a little something that’ll bring some Downtown to wherever you are.

♥, Downtown Houston
Because it feels like one of the places in Houston where you’re living in a big city and taking it all in:

- Closing your eyes and listening to the whirring traffic.
- Basking in the surrounding cityscape.
- Watching the birds milling around the fountains.
- Catching side glances at the couple enjoying an alfresco date night in the plaza.
- Admiring the twinkle lights over the lawn.
- People-watching on a breezy fall evening.

Convenient Parking Options:

- No. 59: Free street parking on Sundays!
- No. 60: Easy-to-find street parking on most days.
- No. 61: Easily accessible lot and garage adjacent to the park at 800 Preston at Travis.

Well-maintained and cared for by the Downtown District Street Team.

Easy BCycle access:

With a dock in the corner of the park, BCycle makes it easy for anyone to get around on two wheels. How does it work? BCycle is a bike-share program with docks strategically placed throughout the city. Grab a bike at any dock (Market Square Park or not), unlock the bike using your credit card—the fee is $3 per every 30 minutes of use—a smartphone app or an RFID card. There are monthly and yearly memberships available with various perks of each. When your joyride is over, simply find a docking station and return the bike for the next rider to start the process all over again.
Provides a great rallying point:

For UH-Downtown students looking for a place to relax and gather in a comfortable greenspace.

For Downtown office workers enjoying a moment of sun and breeze on their lunch breaks, stretching their legs and getting some exercise.

For families from different parts of Houston meeting up for an outside dinner where the kids can enjoy the freedom of the lawn on a cool spring evening.

Market Square Park and the surrounding neighborhood offers excellent backdrops for photos.

**NEED INSPO FOR INSTA? HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS INSPIRED BY ACTUAL PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM.**

**No. 70 to 73**

Pastels and mosaics make for a pop of color and a feeling of good vibes all around. Check out the multiple mosaic benches and pick a favorite (or a few favorites) to snap your new headshot.

 Feeling more down-to-earth? Like, literally? Make sure to visit in the spring to get down, but not dirty, for the coveted “flowers blooming beautifully in the background” shot at one of the stunning, well-manicured beds around the park.

Iconic, loud, beautiful, vibrant, massive. It’s not a description of your Instagram profile (though perhaps it could be), but of the Houston Is Inspired mural at the corner of Travis and Preston. Created in 2013 by graffiti artist Mario E. Figueroa, aka, GONZO247, it’s been a staple of Market Square, Downtown and the city at large for seven years as well as the location of innumerable photoshoots.
Texas’ biggest mistletoe makes an appearance just in time for the holiday photo ops and well... smooching ops, if that’s something that interests you (and your smooching buddy). The 150-foot ball of festive greenery twinkles with golden lights and is hung from a candy-cane-striped pole for full effect. Check out #XOmistletoe for real-life photos and inspiration for your future photoshoot.
Diverse array of permanent art installations created by talented artists:

**MALOU FLATO**

Nestled on the park’s southwest border, vibrant, hand-painted ceramic tiles cover a fountain flanked by similarly adorned colorful benches. Artist Malou Flato created the piece for the park in 1991 and expanded her work in 2000. Using impressionistic scenes of the original market, the work is meant to evoke the feel of Market Square during the late 19th and early 20th century.
RICHARD TURNER
Artist Richard Turner paved a literal path to discovery of the city’s history with his History Walk near the park’s northwest edge in 1992. Using salvaged masonry materials from historic Houston buildings, Turner alternated sections of brick and concrete with various tiles placed in haphazard positions within larger squares.

JAMES SURLS
In 1991, the park became home to Points of View, an abstract sculpture from artist James Surls. The name references both the tips of treated pine jutting out at different points of the painted steel, and the sun’s direct light bearing down on the sculpture itself. A small, sleek square fountain grounds the sculpture where it sits in the southern portion of the park.

KETRIA BASTIAN SCOTT
Lauren’s Garden, located off Congress Street, invites quiet contemplation with an open seating area, landscaped grotto, and peaceful waterfall. To create an intimate space for the memorial dedicated to victims of 9/11, artist Ketria Bastian Scott was commissioned to create “organic poetry.” In collaboration with the landscape architect Lauren Griffith, Bastian Scott designed the waterfall to cascade down a stepped wall into a shallow pond of rocks and boulders. Cast bronze pieces on either side resemble vine-like, gnarled trees that reach out toward each other in what the artist calls “a gesture of endurance, strength and hope.”

PAUL HESTER
A longtime contributor of art to the park, Paul Hester’s historic and contemporary photographic images of Houston are baked into industrial tile that lines the concrete walls of Richard Turner’s History Walkway. Hester’s newest creation is a sculpture of the city’s skyline in steel cutout form, installed along the fence of the dog park.
THE Best DINING AND DRINKING OPTIONS IN THE CITY:

SIP AND SAVOR AT HISTORIC MARKET SQUARE

Whether you’re toasting to the 10th anniversary of Market Square Park or celebrating another special occasion, these restaurants and bars are perfect spots to dine and drink Downtown. Many offer outdoor seating or other accommodations for COVID-19 safety precautions—guests are encouraged to check online or on social to confirm hours and capacity.

Cozy atmosphere at La Carafe

As the oldest bar in Houston, La Carafe is an unassuming treasure that was on the scene long before Market Square Park was developed. Extensive wine and beer lists and a romantic feel make this quaint bar ideal for intimate dates. Low-key jukebox tunes, a functioning antique cash register and beautiful balcony views are notable parts of the La Carafe experience.

ADDRESS: 813 Congress

Tailor-made drinks and suits at Char Bar

Known for its martinis among young Downtown professionals, Char Bar leads a quirky double life: it’s also home to the Duke of Hollywood Tailors who perform alterations and shoe shining on-site. Historic and nostalgic, the interior decor includes old photographs and fabric scraps collected over the years.

ADDRESS: 301 Milam

Familiar diner fare at Barnaby’s Cafe

Looking for a lunchtime spot with salads, sandwiches and hearty burgers? Try Barnaby’s Cafe, a funky Downtown diner across the street from Market Square Park. Opened in 2012, the restaurant is one of six Barnaby’s locations whose namesake is the owner’s lovable sheepdog, featured in interior artwork and doggie-themed signage.

ADDRESS: 801 Congress

Pan-Latin inspired vibes at Batanga

With a sprawling 3,600-square-foot brick patio decked out with umbrella-covered seating and twinkle lights, Batanga is a hotspot for tapas and cocktails in Downtown. Lively Latin music and bold pan-Latin flavors turn what was once an 1880s saloon into a vibrant al fresco atmosphere.

ADDRESS: 908 Congress

Chic gourmet concepts at Bravery Chef Hall

A 9,000 square-foot food hall, Bravery Chef Hall is located at the Aris Market Square—a 32-story luxury high-rise located directly across from Market Square Park. Five distinct restaurant concepts are housed in Bravery Chef Hall: The Blind Goat, BOH Pasta & Pizza, Cherry Block Craft Butcher + Kitchen, KOKORO Sushi and Yakitori, Bravery Wine Bar, Lockwood STN, and Secret Garden Coffee & Cocktails.

ADDRESS: 409 Travis

Drinks on the patio at Secret Garden Bar

Housed in a transformed greenhouse in the 2,000-square-foot backyard patio space at Bravery Chef Hall, Secret Garden Bar offers coffee and handcrafted cocktails in a whimsical urban garden setting. It can be accessed from Bravery Chef Hall and from a separate entrance on Main Street.

ADDRESS: 409 Travis

Greek to-go at Niko Niko’s

A sister location to the Montrose flagship, this walk-up window cafe in Market Square Park has grab-and-go Greek classics like gyros, kebabs and hummus as well as various coffees and breakfast pitas. There are multiple outdoor seating areas within the park where patrons can sit to enjoy their meal.

ADDRESS: 307 Travis

Friendly faces at Warren’s Inn

The ‘Cheers’ bar of Houston, Warren’s is a favorite local hangout among Downtown regulars and industry workers. Its bright turquoise exterior is hard to miss, and its longtime, strong-cocktail-crafting bartenders contribute to the charm factor for this relaxed dive bar across the street from Market Square Park. If you’re at a loss for what to order, go for their martini.

ADDRESS: 307 Travis

Chill on island time at Kanaloa

Chill on island time at this fun, colorful tiki bar. With fruity cocktails and ample patio space, Kanaloa offers a tropical experience right in Houston’s historic Market Square. Its inventive menu features Korean-Mexican fusion food that enhances the bar’s exotic feel.

ADDRESS: 311 Travis

“I love Kanaloa on Market Square! They have a hidden shaded back patio that’s an oasis in the city. Plus, if you order a shared drink, they play a thunder and lightning sound for a multi-sensory experience. So fun!”

—Ham A. from Facebook

Grab a slice at Frank’s Pizza

Craving New York-style pizza? Frank’s offers giant slices and whole pies with signature hand tossed and scratch-made dough. It also serves wings, burgers and salads along with limited beer and wine—the perfect stop to fuel up before or after a walk at the park.

ADDRESS: 417 Travis

Tequila o’clock at El Big Bad

This rustic two-story gastro cantina known for creative taco flavor combos sits within walking distance of Market Square Park on the corner of Travis and Prairie. El Big Bad is a casual Tex-Mex restaurant and tequila bar that serves infused tequilas, specialty margaritas and craft beers.

ADDRESS: 419 Travis

El Big Bad is the world’s largest infused tequila bar and serves 70+ varieties of infused tequilas made in-house, ranging from sweet and savory to herbal and spicy.

ADDRESS: 419 Travis

La Carafe is located in the historic Kennedy Bakery—the oldest commercial building in Houston. It was entered in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and became a Texas Historic Landmark in 1980.
A beloved space for Downtown residents, business owners and supporters to enjoy for years to come.

"When I landed in Houston in the early ’70s, the Market Square neighborhood was my go-to destination for fun. I opened a business across the street from the park in the late ’70s and watched the park go through several changes, each an improvement. I also live in the area, so Market Square Park has been the center of my Houston life for over 40 years. Sometimes I cannot believe the positive changes to this neighborhood that I have witnessed. I’m proud to have been a part of this.”

—Dan Tidwell, Downtown resident, Market Square Park champion, co-founder of Treebeard’s

For over 40 years, Treebeard’s was a Market Square staple at the corner of 315 Travis, reliably serving up one of Houston’s most comforting plate lunches every weekday. Not only did the Louisiana-inspired food bring in the locals, so did the atmosphere, which felt lived-in, loved-on and down home. We’ll miss eating The Rookie: an off-menu combo of red beans, rice and sausage nestled next to their famously buttery shrimp etouffee on the upstairs balcony, watching the comings and goings of Downtown Houston traffic. But before you start the second line down Travis, be comforted in the fact that Treebeard’s is only leaving this one location—its original spot—staying put in four additional locations Downtown, with another outpost opening in Spring Branch soon. Stay hungry for that cornbread, meatloaf, butter cake and gumbo—they’ve got plenty more to serve, just not at 315 Travis.

We loved hosting Buster for the last decade, courtesy of artist James Philips, but 2020 marked his last hurrah. May he enjoy comfortably napping in retirement as he recalls all the fond memories of his time greeting pups and humans on Market Square Park’s west lawn. (for info on the park’s new playscape, visit page 3)

He was a good boy
Curled up in the park
Watched over us all
With nary a bark
But wind, rain and sun
Mean his tenure is done
It’s time that dear Buster Depart

Fill in your own reason(s) here and let us know why you love Market Square Park on social media.

#HBDMarketSquare
Remember the staycation craze? When the economy tanked nearly 10 years ago, they were all the rage, allowing those who saw their incomes shrink to become explorers in their home towns, enjoying sights and sounds they may have taken for granted.

Move over, staycation. Meet the Safecation.

Similar to its explore-your-hometown cousin, the safecation offers an in-town getaway option for people who are tired of being cooped up at home during the pandemic, but don’t want to find themselves on crowded airplanes. Earlier this summer, the Centers for Disease Control reported that cases of anxiety had doubled since 2014, due in large part to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 crisis. Add to that the fact that many people still find themselves working from home and having their children learning online as opposed to in school. It can be overwhelming.

Given that backdrop, who wouldn’t want to get away from it all, even for a little while?
ENTER:
DOWNTOWN HOUSTON.
Hotels in the city center have a whole range of offers and options to help those who want to choose their own adventures while still feeling safe and secure. From romantic weekend dates to family fun, this fall is all about finding ways to change your surroundings and keep yourself and your loved ones whole and healthy.

We’ve curated this list of Downtown hotel deals, tailor made to offer great fall escapes. Each offer something unique, and all of them are within easy reach of favorite Downtown destinations Market Square Park, Buffalo Bayou Park and Discovery Green, where explorers can walk, bike or paddle through some of the city’s most beautiful spots. Bravery Chef Hall, Phoenicia Specialty Foods and multiple Downtown restaurants offer take-out to make an outdoor outing more special. However, you enjoy Downtown this fall, know that the city’s hotels, restaurants, shops and parks are ready to welcome guests.

THE BIG BRANDS BRING THEIR A-GAME
Marriott Hotels announced this summer the corporation was upping its cleanliness and safety features to combat the spread of COVID-19. From electrostatic sprayers that provide hospital-grade disinfecting capabilities, to increased cleaning of high-touch spaces in its guest rooms, to social distancing signage and allowing guests the option of contactless check-ins and using their phones as room keys, the brand has been vocal in helping guests feel reassured.

See firsthand how those enhancements translate to a great stay with the AC Marriott’s Salut to the Weekend! package, running through Dec. 31. In addition to getting 50 percent off the room rate, the stay includes complimentary parking, a king room, two complimentary Starbucks refreshers and a 2 p.m. checkout. That gives guests extra time to enjoy the hotel’s Main Street location. Take a walk up to Market Square Park or grab a casual lunch to go from the Corner Bakery just down the street before heading over to Market Square or Discovery Green. Rates start at $129 a night.

Sister property the Marriott Marquis has two specials that inject a little luxury into these decidedly un-luxurious times. The Experience Romance package comes with a bottle of champagne for your room, along with 20 percent off a 50- or 80-minute spa treatment for one person, plus a take-home spa amenity. Rates start at $299 a night. Want something more indulgent? The Experience Spa offer includes a glass of champagne, a free 50-minute spa treatment and a spa amenity to take home. Available Sunday through Wednesday, rates start at $309 a night. Plus, up your stay by reserving a poolside cabana, the perfect vantage point to enjoy the Marquis’ Texas-shaped outdoor pool. Walk a few blocks over to Phoenicia, and you can grab an array of imported and house-made cheeses, baked goods, dips, premade meals and more for a picnic at scenic Discovery Green.

The Hotel ICON, one of the city’s chicest choices, located in the former Union National Bank Building is part of Marriott’s Autograph Collection. The boutique brand-within-a-brand makes for a one-of-a-kind experience. With the Any Day to Getaway offer, guests get complimentary parking and Wi-Fi and an in-room movie with popcorn and two sodas. That’s a perfect minibreak for couples or families seeking a change of scene. The rate is good through Dec. 31.
Lovers of luxury know The Four Seasons has always been synonymous with an indulgent experience. The organization partnered with Johns Hopkins Medicine to create a suite of health and safety measures based on medical best practices. The result is the Lead With Care program, which showcases enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures, along with additional food handling protocols and improved ventilation systems. Taken together, the front-end and back-of-house measures should give guests peace of mind along with a peaceful stay. The Four Seasons (1300 Lamar) is offering a Resident’s Retreat, giving guests 10 percent off room rates and complimentary valet parking, along with a daily American breakfast for two, and an in-room movie that comes complete with popcorn and two sodas. The offer runs through Sept. 7 (at press time, the hotel was considering expanding the package’s dates). Rates start at $346 a night. While Quattro, the hotel’s signature Italian restaurant, is temporarily closed, in-room dining in available, and the chic Bayou & Bottle bar is open for wine, cocktails and light bites Tuesday through Saturday from 5 p.m. to midnight.

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The Hotel Alessandra (1070 Dallas), one of Texas-based Valencia Hotel Group’s properties, prides itself on cosmopolitan elegance. The Spa and Relaxation package—a weekend of indulgent bliss. Included are luxurious accommodations for two, a $100 spa credit to indulge in a facial or body treatment, and a plush Alessandra monogrammed robe to take home. All services of 60 minutes or more also give guests complimentary access to Alessandra’s pool and fitness center. Guests can also opt for contemporary twists on classic cocktails from Bardot, Alessandra’s second-floor bar. Available for in-person drinks and light bites, as well as room service, Bardot adds beauty to an already luxe experience. Rates
start at $199 a night. And for those who decide to venture out, there’s a BCycle rental around the corner, where guests can hop on a bike and pedal around Downtown.

One of Downtown’s historic hotels, The Lancaster (701 Texas), lies in the heart of the Theater District. Luxury abounds, from the plush Frette bedding and Bulgari bath products to thoughtful details such as turndown service and double-pane glass on the windows to ensure insulation from the sounds of the city. The Romance package offers guests complimentary chocolate-covered strawberries and sparkling wine placed in their guestrooms upon arrival, as well as complimentary valet parking and a late 3 p.m. checkout. Guests can also enjoy a free gourmet breakfast buffet and 15 percent off all food and beverage purchases during the stay. Rates start at $259 a night, and the offer is good through Dec. 31. The Lancaster’s location provides easy access down to Buffalo Bayou Park for romantic walks, as well as easy take out from Bravery Chef Hall.

The Sam Houston Hotel (1117 Prairie) combines Downtown history with 21st century convenience. The 2020 Stimulus Package offers 50 percent off a two-night stay with the code STL, and rates starting at $59 a night. The offer is good through Jan. 10, 2021. Part of Hilton’s Curio Collection, the Sam’s restaurant, Pearl, is temporarily closed. But guests can find global take out just up the way at Bravery Chef Hall. Nearby Potente, with a menu of upscale Italian cuisine, is open with social distance seating as well as takeout and delivery.

The Whitehall (1700 Smith) is a relative newcomer to Downtown’s hotel scene, but it’s making a name for itself when it comes to effortless luxury. The hotel has a Stay & Play package available through Sept. 30 that includes deluxe overnight accommodations at 30 percent off and overnight valet parking. The stay also offers access to the second-floor rooftop pool with its cozy cabanas. Rates start at $104 a night. Hotel restaurants are temporarily closed, but the kitchen for its signature spot, Edgar’s Hermano, brings its Tex-Mex directly to guest’s rooms with in-room dining.

FOR MORE “SAFECATION” IDEAS, VISIT downtownhouston.org/staycations
plate.

THE GUIDE TO EATING DOWNTOWN

PLEASE NOTE!
Due to COVID-19, individual restaurants may change hours, service and menus. We recommend you call or check online before making plans.

GuARD AND GRACE
For a searchable database of downtown Houston restaurants by cuisine, location and price, visit downtownhouston.org and click on Guide.

1600 Bar + Grille American Located on the lobby-level of the Hilton Americas—Houston hotel, 1600 Bar + Grille brings farm-fresh ingredients to the menu for a just-picked flavor. Featuring locally-sourced seasonal fresh produce, plus Certified Angus Beef and Gulf seafood dishes prepared from scratch, you can guarantee farm-to-fork freshness. hilton.com, 1600 Lamar, 713.739.8000. B, L & D Daily. $5

Adair Downtown American Located at the tunnel level at Wells Fargo Plaza, Adair Downtown is a sophisticated, yet casual restaurant serving breakfast, lunch and a post-work happy hour. Breakfast options include avocado toast and chicken & waffles, while the lunch menu features a variety of fresh, vibrant salads and delicately stacked sandwiches. adairdowntown.com, 1000 Louisiana, B, L, H, Daily. $5

Andalucia Restaurant & Bar Tapas/ Spanish Dim lighting, large wooden tables and heavy iron accents provide for a cozy, rustic atmosphere. The menu features large dishes, such as paella for up to 16 people, and tapas that range from the traditional such as gambas al ajillo (shrimp cooked in olive oil and garlic) and empanadas, to veal tongue and oxtail. Such as gambas al ajillo (shrimp cooked in olive oil and garlic) and empanadas, to veal tongue and oxtail. birddogsaoint.com, 711 Main, 832.767.5574. L, D & LD Mon–Sat. $5

Ballpark Café American Enjoy the all-American cuisine and a variety of burgers, beer and draft beers. 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. birddogsaoint.com, 711 Main, 832.767.5574. L, D & LD Mon–Sat. $5

Benihana of Tokyo Japanese While some restaurants allow their guests to view the kitchen, this Japanese grill brings the kitchen to you. Benihana chefs set up shop right in front of your table. The meal is made from scratch, and you can witness the entire show. benihana.com, 1318 Louisiana, 713.659.8231. L & D Daily. $15

Biggio'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. $5

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. birddogsaoint.com, 711 Main, 832.767.5574. L, D & LD Mon–Sat. $5

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. birrarestaurant.com, 500 Louisiana, 713.224.9494. L, D & LD Daily. $5

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. $5

Blue Fish Sushi Japanese Not your typical Japanese restaurant. Don’t expect small, minimal décor. Be prepared for innovative sushi in a high-energy atmosphere at Bayou Place. thebluefishushi.com, 550 Texas, 713.225.3474. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $5

Blue Fish Sushi Japanese Not your typical Japanese restaurant. Don’t expect small, minimal décor. Be prepared for innovative sushi in a high-energy atmosphere at Bayou Place. thebluefishushi.com, 550 Texas, 713.225.3474. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat. $5

Birreria Saint American American

Buzz Barista Coffee House This full-service espresso bar offers much more than caffeinated beverages 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. $5

The Cafe American Located in the lobby of the Hilton Americas. An elaborate buffet is offered for breakfast, with a la carte selections from the menu available for lunch and dinner. Hilton Americas, 1600 Lamar, 713.739.8000. B, L, D & LD Daily. $5

Cafe 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. 708.890.2041. B Daily. $5

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 Leonel, 713.652.0745. L, Mon–Fri; D Daily. $5

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. $5

Brasca's Brazilian Steakhouse Steakhouse Open for lunch and dinner, Brasca's Brazilian Steakhouse brings an authentic churrascaria dining experience to Downtown. In keeping with tradition, the menu comprises various types of meat including beef, pork, chicken and seafood. brasshouston.com, 705 Main, L, D, Daily. $15

Brasserie du Parc French Located in the luxury high rise, One Park Place, the interior design and menu at this beautiful French restaurant were inspired by classic Parisian brasseries and offers include classic dishes like risotto, steak frites and crêpes. Along with delicacies such as escargots and chicken liver pâté. brasserie duparc.net, 1440 Lamar, 832.879.2802. L & D Daily. $5

Bravery Chef Hall Food Hall The first of its kind, Bravery Chef Hall is a next generation food hall with five chef-driven concepts and a Gaggenau Concept Kitchen with a rotating roster of guest chefs. Culinary options include Atlas Diner, The Blind Goat, BOH Pasta & Pizza, Cherry Block Craft Butcher & Kitchen and Kokoro. The chef hall also houses three bars including Bravery Wine Bar, Lockwood Station and Secret Garden. braverychefhall.com. 409 Travis, L, D, LD Daily. $5

BurgerIM Fast Casual BurgerIM is an Israeli-based mini-burger concept known for serving 3oz. patties in a mix-and-match format. Choose from options like dry-aged beef, chorizo, turkey, salmon, veggie and more. The unique eatery also offers two different bun options, nine sauces and 10 different toppings making for an extremely customizable burger experience. BurgerIM also offers chicken strips and wings, milkshakes, family boxes and a variety of sides including onion rings and sweet potato fries. burgerim.com. 800 Preston, L, D, LD, Daily. $5

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 & LD. $5

Buzz Barista Coffee House This full-service espresso bar offers much more than caffeinated beverages 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. $5

For a searchable database of downtown Houston restaurants by cuisine, location and price, visit downtownhouston.org and click on Guide.

These listings are not reviews but are a guide to Downtown dining spots. “Recommended” restaurants are selected by downtown editors and are based on food quality, menu selection, service, ambiance and value.
Christian’s Tailgate American  Christian’s Tailgate has arguably one of the best burgers in town and you can enjoy them Downtown! The notable Houston burger joint in Downtown’s Historic District boasts daily food specials, 30 beers on tap, 40+ TV’s, a pool table, shuffleboard, video games and an awesome outdoor patio! christianstatlague.com. 1012 Congress, 281.556.1010. L, D & LN. $$

Corner Bakery Fast Casual  A bakery café, 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. $§

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 pastry favorites, Neapolitan-style pizzas, burgers and other tasty menu items. coteriehouston.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 exquisite 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 snapper 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 board, video games and an awesome outdoor patio! joint in Downtown’s Historic District boasts daily food offers up delectable lunch choices that include paninis, melts and pizza. Be an office hero and use the catering service to treat your work pals. einsteinbros.com. 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4775. B, L & LN 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 gastrocinatra-inspired menu is chock full of tasty tacos with fresh toppings like pomegranate salsa, charred scallions, pumpkin seeds and more. elbigbad.com. 419 Travis, 713.229.8811. L, D & LN Mon–Fri; D & LN Sat & Sun, BR Sun. $$

Fabian’s Latin Flavors Latin  Looking for dinner with a side of salsa dancing? If so, Fabian’s Latin Flavors is the place for you! From carne asada tacos and empanadas to popular Salvadorian beer and salsa nights, you’ll get a taste of Latin America at this Downtown hotspot. fabianslatinflavors.com. 301 Main, 713.227.0440. L & D Daily. $$§

Finn Hall Food Hall  The upscale food hall serves delicious cuisine from 10 independently operated eating establishments including Craft Burger, Oddball Eats, Dish Society, Yong, Amaya Coffee, Pizza Square, Lit Chicken and Papalo Taqueria. Come eat your heart out during breakfast, lunch, and dinner or enjoy a cocktail at either of Finn Hall’s elevated bars during happy hour. 712 Main, 713.357.5115. B, L, D, LD Daily. $$

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. B, 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 16oz. cowboy ribeye, the inspired menu draws from seasonal and international flavors with a distinctively Texas twist host.com. Greenstreet, 1204 Foundation, 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 cheesesteak 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. $$§

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The Grove American Rustic  This two-story, ultra-urban restaurant is found at Discovery Green. The menu features rustic American cuisine such as Gulf Coast seafood, steaks and signature rotisserie dishes. grovehouston.com. Discovery Green, 1611 Lamar, 713.337.3721. L & D Daily. $$§

Guard & Grace Steakhouse A take on the modern steakhouse, prominent Denver Chef Troy Guard’s first foray into the Houston dining scene features rows of wood-burning grills with a bright, airy atmosphere that differs from the usual dark tone of a steakhouse. Guard and Grace boasts a menu offering everything from charcuterie and sushi to pan-roasted halibut and a filet mignon flight for one deliciously contemporary dining experience. One Allen Center, 500 Dallas. 346-326-0789. LD, H, Daily. $$$

Hearsay Gastro Lounge New American  Located in a beautifully refurbished historic building, 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. 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. $§

Home Plate Bar & Grill Classic American  A great hangout spot before or after an Astros game. Enjoy a full menu of all-American favorites. homeplategrill.com. 1800 Texas, 713.222.1993. L & D Daily (may close earlier during off–season so call first). $§

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 & Blues brunch every Saturday! host.com. Greenstreet, 1204 Caroline, 888.402.5837. L & D Daily. $$§

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

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. 1473 Texas, 713.247.9651. L & D Mon–Sat. $$§

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. $§

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. Be an office hero and use the catering service to treat your work pals. einsteinbros.com. 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4775. B, L & LN Mon–Sun. $§

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 coworkers or friends. Great happy hour specials. guadalajarahacienda.com. Greenstreet, 1201 San Jacinto, 713.650.0101. L & D Daily. $$§

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Introducing Downtown’s bold new steakhouse

Houston’s dining scene is the gift that just keeps on giving. Every season we’re blessed with yet another renowned chef making their mark by planting roots in the Bayou City. The latest celebrity chef to hit the streets of Downtown is Troy Guard of TAG Restaurant Group.

Not only does Guard and Grace mark the restaurateur’s first concept outside of Colorado, but it also serves as the second location for the high-end steakhouse named after his young daughter, Grace.

Boasting 30-foot floor-to-ceiling windows, the sprawling 15,000-square-foot space at One Allen Center features two-stories, a partially open kitchen, a breathtaking installation made up of 4,600 thin bronze rods suspended from the ceiling and a menu unlike any other. With its sleek, contemporary look, Guard and Grace caters to meat and seafood lovers, adventurous foodies and those looking for a truly extravagant experience.

As you might’ve already guessed, this isn’t your average steakhouse! Inspired by Guard’s Hawaiian upbringing, the restaurant’s menu

Guard and Grace
One Allen Center, 500 Dallas
guardandgrace.com

BY VICTORIA REID
includes steakhouse staples with a twist on seafood and vegetables. Steaks are sourced from Texas, Australia and Japan, and are available as Angus, USDA Prime and wagyu. Choose from traditional cuts like filet mignon, ribeye and New York strip, then top it off with your choice of options such as crab Oscar, seared foie gras and our personal favorite, bearnaise. And because everything’s bigger in Texas, those looking to step up their steak eating game can take a stab at the aptly named Brontosaurus Steak, a prime axe-handled tomahawk with cipollini demi, foie gras and bone marrow butter.

Non-beef eaters are more than welcome here. Temptations include roasted Texas redfish on the half shell, Alaskan black cod, black truffle mac and cheese, Maryland crab cakes and an assortment of potatoes—four types, to be exact. Ready for a night of glitz and glam? Check out the seafood tower. Complete with oysters, shrimp, king crab and lobster, the starter is available in two varieties: pro and boss. If that’s not lavish enough for you, there’s always the much buzzed-about millionaire fajitas which consist of 24-ounces of wagyu ribeye cap and gold-flecked [yes, gold-flecked] tortillas—priced at a hefty $400.

Of course, no top-notch restaurant is complete without an equally compelling wine list, and Guard and Grace has exactly that. A temperature-controlled wine cellar includes lockers for guests to store their own bottles and has the capacity to hold over 6,800 bottles of wine. If you’re not much of a wine drinker, the full-service bar whips up some pretty delicious cocktails—we recommend the Garden Grace and the Down South.

With its sleek, contemporary look, Guard and Grace caters to meat and seafood lovers, adventurous foodies and those looking for a truly extravagant experience.
Jason's 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. $$

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

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

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

La Calle Mexicali
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. lacaletamex.com. 909 Franklin, 832.735.8226. L, D & LN Daily. $$

La Fisheria
Named a Houstonia favorite, thisTex-Mex cafe was born in 1949 Warehouse District, this Tex-Mex cafe was born in 1949 and daily happy hour specials in a casually elevated, yet appealing décor, makes it a downtown standout. hotelicon.com. 901 McKinney, 713.650.1500. B & L Mon–Fri. $$$

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 upstairs in Houston’s downtown. lucyseetc.com. 1301 Fannin, 13th Floor, 713.759.9954. B & L Mon–Fri. $$

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. Dazzling mummies are available lane-side and in the lounge. bowlluckystrike.com. Greenstreet, 1201 San Jacinto, Level 3, 713.343.3300. L, D & LN Daily. $$

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 Downtown, mademoisellelouise.com. 1715 Main St, B & L Sun–Fri. $$

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

Mango Tree Thai Bistro
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. mangotreethaihouston.com. 914 Main Street, #125, 713.659.1600. L, D & Mon–Sat. $$

McGovern & 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. mcgormandschmicks.com. Greenstreet, 1201 Fannin, 713.658.8100. L & D Daily. $$

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

Mendocino Farms American
California-based Mendocino Farms is a one-stop shop for gourmet sandwiches and salads. The fast-casual concept offers twists on classics like a Vietnamese Bahn Mi, Cuban, tuna melt and more. Drawing inspiration from both its homestate and many cities across the nation, Mendocino Farms strives to introduce everyone to unique ingredients in approachable adventurous foods. mendocinofarms.com. 609 Main, L, D Daily. $$

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, 832.319.6675. L & D Daily; BR & LN Fri & Sat. $$

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. $$

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

The Moonshiners American
The Moonshiners Southern Table + Bar offers up a rebellious repulse in the bustling urban backlight 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, 713.226.7777. L & D Mon–Fri; LN Fri & Sat. $$

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

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

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

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

Padthai Thai Restaurant Thai
A traditional Thai restaurant located at the ground level of the loft residence Hogg Palace. The warm and cozy atmosphere offers a great setting for a dinner escape and is a local favorite. padthaihairestaurant.com. 401 Louisiana, 713.225.4900. D Daily. $$
Pappadeaux This local favorite serves up some of the finest and freshest seafood with a Cajun twist! Start with the crispy fried alligator or a bowl of gumbo, try the Chilean Sea Bass or the pasta mardi gras, and top it all off with the praline bread pudding soufflé. [pappadeaux.com](http://pappadeaux.com), 1001 Avenida de las Americas, 713.654.5077. L & Fri–Sun; D Daily. $$$

Pappas BBQ Barbecue Voted one of Houston’s best year after year, this barbecue joint offers an excellent selection with Texas-sized portions. Traditional favorites such as brisket, ribs, sausage and ham are served with Pappas’ flare. Delivery and take-out are available. [pappasbbq.com](http://pappasbbq.com), 1217 Pierce, 713.659.1245. L & D Daily. 1100 Smith, 713.759.0018. L & D Mon–Fri. $$

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. [pappasbrothers.com](http://pappasbrothers.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](http://pappasitos.com), Hilton Americas-Houston, 1600 Lamar St, 713.353.4400. L & D Daily, $$

The Pearl Seafood The Pearl at the Sam Houston Hotel is a coastal-inspired restaurant with a passion for seafood and steak. The menu satiates guests with savory appetizers and salads, entrees like classic shrimp and grits, scallops carbonara and short ribs, and a la carte selections such as premium cuts of steak alongside simply grilled fish and shrimp dishes. [pearlrestauranthou.com](http://pearlrestauranthou.com), 117 Prairie, 832.200.8800. B, 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 market boasts an incredible salad bar, made-to-order shawarmas and pizzas, grab-n-go sushi, sandwiches and various meat and seafood entrees. This is a one-of-a-kind downtown destination where you can appreciate down-to-earth gourmet food prices and a unique variety of flavors. [phoeniciafoods.com](http://phoeniciafoods.com), 1001 Austin, 832.360.2222. B, L & D Daily. $$$

Potente Italian A sophisticated Italian restaurant, Potente is a dining experience like no other focused on using local products and only the highest quality ingredients. Menu items include daily seafood selections, steaks, homemade pastas and the signature veal osso bucco. [potentehouston.com](http://potentehouston.com), 1515 Texas, 713.237.1515. D Daily. $$$

Prelude Coffee & Tea Coffee House Get your coffee fix at this espresso bar located inside Hines’ 609 Main building and pair it with your favorite breakfast and lunch options from local favorite. [Prelude Coffee & Tea](http://preludecoffee.com) 609 Main, 832.382.3466. B & L Mon–Fri. $$

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


Shula’s Steakhouse Dark wood, sports memorabilia and menus hand painted on official NFL game footballs for 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](http://donshula.com), Hyatt Regency Hotel, 1200 Louisiana, 713.375.4777. B, L & D Daily. $$$


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](http://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 lotta Houston art. [stack-burger.com](http://stack-burger.com) 703 St. Joseph Pkwy, 713.651.0227. B & L Daily. $$

Starbucks Coffee Located in the new AC Hotel, this Starbucks location is accessible from both the street and the hotel lobby. Offering staples such as macchiatos, lattes and teas, the Main Street location also serves pastries, oven-warmed food and other light bites. [starbucks.com](http://starbucks.com), 723 Main, 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](http://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 Bistro 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 $2 mimosas all day on Saturdays and Sundays. [table7bistro.com](http://table7bistro.com), 717 Fannin @ The Club Quarters, 713.227.4800. B, L & D Daily. "$
**Tejas Grill & Sports Bar**  
American  
Located at The Shops at Houston Center, Tejas offers the perfect tailgate menu and full-service bar.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Treebeards**  
Southern  
A downtown institution for more than 30 years, Treebeards offers tasty Cajun dishes that are sure to satisfy. Favorite menu items include the chicken and shrimp gumbo, red beans and rice and etouffee. For dessert, try the famous butter bar.

**Trophy**  
Continental  
Trophy’s menu is described as Continental with a Mediterranean and Latin flair and the ambiance is simple, yet sophisticated. Lunch buffets are available Monday through Friday.

**Zydeco Louisiana Diner**  
Cajun  
This cafeteria-style Cajun joint brings Louisiana dishes to the Hospital District of downtown Houston. Traditional Cajun items such as po-boys, jambalaya and gumbo make Zydeco a great lunch stop.

**Zoetrope**  
Bar American  
Nestled inside Le Meridien Hotel, Zoetrope Restaurant & Bar offers quality in a relaxed upscale environment. Tasty dishes are made with locally sourced ingredients and include favorites like Duck and Andouille Gumbo, Crab Grabit and Chicken Fried Pork Tomahawk.

**Xochi**  
Mexican  
Named after Xochitl, the goddess of the flowers, Xochi specializes in the authentic cuisine of Oaxaca, the culinary capital of Mexico, and incorporates traditional Oaxacan herbs and ingredients throughout its menu. Highlights include the barbacoa de res de zaachila, lechon, and sopas de piedra, an ancient traditional fish and shrimp soups.

**Wokker**  
Asian  
This underground basement club in Downtown’s Historic Market Square District, Underground Hall is the latest food hall to hit Downtown Houston. Offering everything from pizza and beer to tacos and tery leches, this foodie paradise truly has a little something for everyone. The casual establishment features locally known dining spots including Wokker, Hotline Burger, Birdhaus and Trescherous Leches.

**Understory Food Hall**  
Located at the base of Bank of America tower, this expansive 40-foot atrium which doubles as a lively food hall is fitted with natural light, an abundance of community gathering spaces and features diverse food and drink experiences such as Seaside Poke, Farro, Flip n’ Patties, Boomtown Coffee, MONA Fresh Italian Food, Mama Nina’s Tacos & Tortas, East Hampton Sandwich Co and Silver Lining Bar.

**Walker Street Kitchen**  
American  
Walker Street Kitchen serves the freshest offerings from the Gulf Coast, fusing cultural and geographical influences into a culinary feast.

**Wimpy’s Hamburgers**  
Fast Food  
Wimpy’s serves up a pretty good burger but they also have many other down-home favorites. 632 Polk, 713.652.0123.

**Wokker at Craft Beer Cellar**  
Asian  
Fast food favorite, Wokker, is now housed inside CraftBeer Cellar. Combining spices and cultures that blend harmoniously, Wokker is known for creating unique cooking techniques.

**Zoetrope**  
Bar American  
Located at the base of Bank of America Tower, Zoetrope is the perfect tailgate menu and full-service bar. L Mon–Fri; D Mon–Sat.

**Thai Cafe**  
Asian  
Located at The Shops at Houston Center, Tejas offers the perfect tailgate menu and full-service bar.

**Theodore Rex**  
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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. casablancahoustcom

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 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 bites 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 Reidro, 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 Commeron | 410 Main, Downstairs
Simple, straightforward. Cocktails, beer and wine. Mon–Sun 4 pm–2 am; Sun noon–midnight. thecommeronbar.com

Cottonmouth Club | 108 Main
For guests of The Cottonmouth Club, the cocktail experience will start before the first drop of liquor is poured. A brainchild of Reserve 101’s Mike Raymond, the bar combines its come-one-come-all atmosphere with world-class cocktails and private barrel-blended whiskey. Daily 4–2 am. cottonmouthhoustcom

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. deansdowntown.com

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. Fri–Sat 9 pm–2 am. divehtx.com

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 Joytixx Classic Games which is open on the first and last Friday of every month where $15 gets you all night access to practice your Pac-Man skills. Daily 4 pm–2 am. 1820lounge.com

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

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

El Segundo | 306 Main
Kick back at the bar with a spiked agua fresca, frozen mojito shush or any other delicios connection 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 10–2 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

Henke & Pilots | 809 Congress
Where past meets present, and drinks and dining blend in flawless harmony. Henke & Pilots 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. henkehouston.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! Thu–St 4 pm–2 am. highanddrytx.com

Houston Watch Company | 913 Franklin
Houston Watch Company is located in the lobby of the Bayou Lofts at 913 Franklin and gets its name from the former timepiece company that occupied the space 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. Thu–Sat 11 am–2 am. houstonwatchcompany.com

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

Kiland’s Live | 530 Texas Ave.
This underground basement club in Downtown’s Historic Market Square neighborhood boasts a high-end nightlife experience with a sleek, mysterious vibe. Guests can expect signature cocktails, world-class DJ’s, high-end VIP bottle service and more. Tue, Fri & Sat 10 pm–2 am. $5 KilandsLive.com

Kanaloa | 311 Travis
Kanaloa brings a full-on tiki experience to the heart of the city. DJ’s, high-end VIP bottle service and more. Tue, Fri & Sat 10 pm–2 am.

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

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

Last Concert Café | 403 Nance
You have to knock three times on the red door to gain entry to the unmarked house in the Warehouse District (well, not anymore). With a backyard stage and sandpit, hoola-hooping and tiki bar, Last Concert has live music most nights. Tue–Fri 11 am–2 am; Sat 5 pm–2 am; Sun 3–9 pm. lastconcert.com

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

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

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

Lone Star Saloon | 1900 Travis
The Lone Star Saloon is a classic Texas dive bar that seems misplaced in its urban setting. The crowd, half aging 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. mkbartx.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

Notsuchu | 314 Main
The name is Houston spelled backwards. A bar full of random weirdness: Think grunge lounge and artsy. Your best people playing their best bar, 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. notsuchu.com
Small businesses are the heart and soul of #DowntownHouston. We encourage you to continue supporting local. To stay in the know, visit downtownhouston.org
In light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, our hearts and minds are with the individuals and families affected, as well as the small businesses, arts organizations, event producers, hotels and others who are suffering losses. With health and public safety of the utmost importance, we hope that conditions improve as quickly as possible. We are cognizant of the global and local economic impact of the virus and will continue to do our best to respond and support business activity during this situation. With so much changing so quickly, we’ve chosen not to include the datebook in this issue of downtown magazine.

As we continue to work toward reopening our city, it’s important that we do everything we can to support those hit hard by this pandemic. Although Downtown organizations may be pressing pause on in-person events this season, you can help them come back bigger and better than ever! Whether that’s giving your time to a nonprofit, grabbing a meal from a local eatery or donating to the arts and theater organizations, your actions will make a difference in our neighborhood.

For the most up-to-date information regarding Downtown events—virtual and in-person—please visit DowntownHouston.org/Calendar.
With a fusion of culture, lifestyles and commerce, life around here is anything but typical. Look up and discover soaring skyscrapers designed by icons like Philip Johnson and I.M. Pei. Turn a corner and bump into Houston's historic past or uncover a piece of contemporary public art. Enjoy major league sports, world-class theater, innovative chefs, funky hotspots, movies in the park, sidewalk cafes, outdoor festivals, pontoon boat tours and more.

Welcome to Downtown Houston!

### Tours
1. Buffalo Bayou Boat Tours 713.752.0314
2. Heritage Society Historic Homes Tour 713.655.1912
3. Minute Maid Park Tour 713.259.8887
4. Saint Arnold Brewing Company Tour 713.686.9494
5. Toyota Center Backstage Tour 713.758.7715

### 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

### Eat & Drink
26. Ballpark District
27. Bayou Place/Theater District
28. Avenida Houston
29. Downtown Aquarium
30. Historic District
31. GreenStreet
32. The Shops at Houston Center
33. Warehouse District
34. Brevity Chef Hall
35. Finn Hall
36. Understory
37. Underhall

### Shopping
12. GreenStreet
13. The Shops at Houston Center

### Museums & Libraries
38. Houston Central Library
39. Julia Ideson Library
40. Heritage Society Museum
41. Houston Police Museum
42. Museum District (via METRORail)

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

### Parks
57. Allen’s Landing
58. Discovery Green
59. Halliburton Plaza
60. Hermann Square
61. Market Square Park
62. Root Memorial Square
63. Sabine Promenade & Buffalo Bayou Park
64. Sam Houston Park
65. Sasquatchenental Park
66. Sisters of Charity Park
67. Tranquillity Park

### Groceries & Conveniences
68. CVS/Pharmacy
69. CVS/Pharmacy Market Square
70. Phoenicia Specialty Foods
71. Wolfe’s Cleaners

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

### City, County & Federal
83. City Hall
84. City Hall Annex
85. Bob Casey Federal Courthouse
86. Harris County Court Campus

### Where to Stay
87. AC Hotel by Marriott
88. Aloft Hotel
89. Athens Hotel Suites
90. C. Baldwin
91. Cambrila Hotel
92. Club Quarters
93. Courtyard by Marriott/Marriott Residence Inn/SpringHill Suites
94. Embassy Suites
95. Four Seasons
96. Hampton Inn/Homewood Suites
97. Hilton Americas
98. Holiday Inn
99. Holiday Inn Express
100. Hotel Alessandra
101. Hotel Icon
102. Hyatt Regency Downtown
103. JW Marriott
104. Magnolia Hotel
105. Marriott Marquis
106. Lancaster Hotel
107. La Meridien
108. The Sam Houston Hotel
109. Westin Houston Downtown
110. The Whitehall

### Visitors Information
112. Houston Visitors Center

### Realtors
111. BHGRE Gary Greene

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METRORail Lines</th>
<th>North/Main</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>East End</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALWAYS BE AWARE OF PEDESTRIANS, DRIVERS, BICYCLISTS AND TRAINS WHEN NEAR TRACKS!</strong></td>
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HOUSTON B cycle
A great way to get form point A to point B or just explore downtown! You can purchase daily, weekly or annual memberships. [More info](http://houston.bcycle.com)
Public garages, surface lots and metered on-street parking are abundant in Downtown. Reminder: on-street parking is free after 6 pm Monday–Saturday and all day Sunday.
PARK.RIDE.NAP.

DREAMY COMMUTER SERVICE DIRECT TO DOWNTOWN.