

Downtown Houston Market Update

Central Houston, Inc. and Houston Downtown Management District

Downtown Houston marked several milestones during the final months of 2020. The office market saw 8.6 million square feet of new renovations completed throughout ten buildings and TC Pipelines signed a lease extension in the 56-story TC Energy Center of more than 320,000 square feet in one of the largest transactions of the year. New restaurant openings were announced for 2021 including The Palm at GreenStreet and The Nash in the upscale Class A multifamily residential property, The Star, while Downtown's hospitality scene will get a boost with the rescheduled Offshore Technology Conference which brings approximately 60,000 attendees to the nearby NRG Center and other conferences making similar announcements such as American Mensa who will host its annual gathering at Downtown's Hilton Americas-Houston this summer.



Post Houston Construction

With many of the challenges that defined 2020 still with us as we start 2021, cautious optimism is gaining more steam as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued emergency use authorization in December for two different COVID-19 vaccines and Houston saw more sites open to deliver them.

Central Houston, Inc., and the Houston Downtown Management District will be your 2021 go-to resource for any questions on Downtown activity. Our Downtown Houston and Central Houston websites feature the most up-to-date articles, announcements, statistics and reports in addition to our monthly [Downtown Economic Recovery Update](#), in which we gather a collection of COVID-driven statistics and updates on commercial real estate, residential, retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

Market Overview

OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

51,469,131 sf

office inventory

1,251,856 sf

under construction

603,629 sf

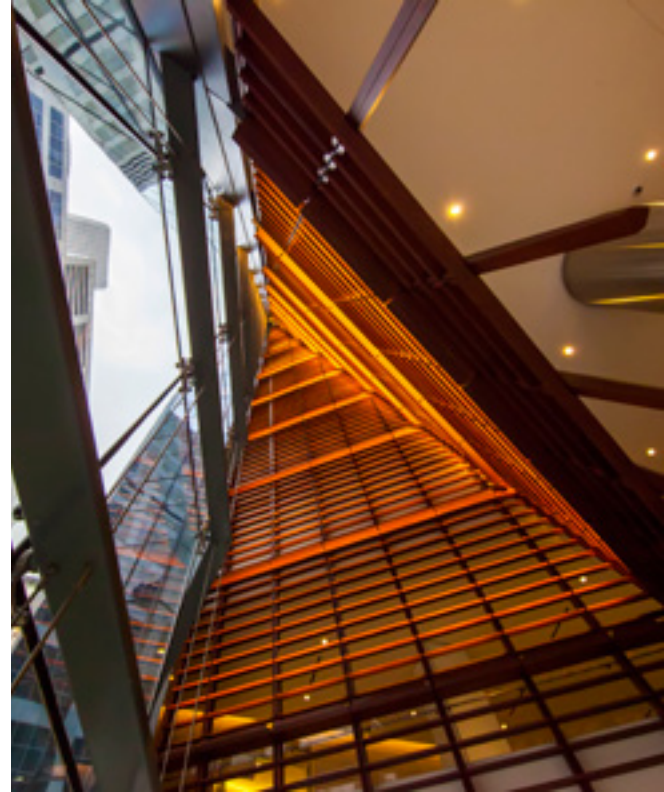
planned

OFFICE

Working from home became the norm with the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result, Downtown's office sector workforce occupancy ended the year with a daily workforce approximately 16.1 percent as measured by Central Houston, Inc.'s monthly office building survey. The survey includes Downtown employers and stakeholders, leasing and property managers and building owners and covers more than 25.9 million-square of competitive leasable space, or more than 50.4 percent of all Downtown office space. But even with social distancing and staggered work schedules, Downtown's office market saw 8.6 million square feet of new renovations completed throughout 10 buildings and another four ongoing and five more planned. Meanwhile, Texas Tower, Houston-based Hine's new 47-story Class A 1.1 million square foot office tower, which is nearly 40 percent pre-leased, is scheduled to deliver during 2021 along with Houston-based Lovett Commercial's mixed-use Post Houston opening 150,000 square feet of office and flex space later this year.

Still, in the wake of the pandemic, Downtown's office sector, like other major urban U.S. markets, is facing a challenging leasing year as the balance of workplace culture, productivity, employee engagement, cost and health and safety are being weighed by landlords, tenants and developers nationwide. Co-working space, office suites, short-term leases and flexible office space options will have a growing appeal to companies looking for workplace options in the new year with companies planning to explore more broadly using office workplace-as-a-service in 2021 with more employees preferring assigned workspaces and private offices. Downtown office leasing activity, which was nearly 2.2 million square feet in 2020, is expected to remain below pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels for the first six months of 2021, as tenants determine changing office dynamics and future space needs. However, according to fourth quarter 2020 industry reports, pent-up activity is expected to positively impact Houston's largest office submarkets, including Downtown, in the latter part of 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic impact subsides.

Houston-based **Hines** and **JPMorgan Chase** successfully refinanced Downtown's 48-story **609 Main at Texas** Class A office tower with a principal amount of \$260 million. A joint venture between global developer Hines and the **California Public Employees Retirement System** (CalPERS), had originally listed 609 Main at Texas on the investment sales market last fall which drew interest from several foreign investors and a prospective buyer was selected in early March with the transaction expected to close in the summer, however, the prospective buyer cancelled the sale during the hectic months



609 Main at Texas

of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sale cancellation was not uncommon at the start of the pandemic when many would-be buyers were concerned by the combination of the economic uncertainty and the pandemic. According to Maryland-based **CoStar Realty Group**, more than 17 percent of U.S. investment sales scheduled to close in April were canceled. ([CoStar](#))

Post Houston (401 Franklin), a mixed-use project in Downtown Houston being redeveloped in the former Barbara Jordan Post Office by Houston-based **Lovett Commercial**, is expected to deliver 150,000 square feet of office and flex space in late 2021. The 550,000 square foot project, located on 16 acres, will be transformed with a live music venue, restaurants, retail, an international market hall, creative workspace and a 210,000 square foot rooftop garden, farm and event space. Future expansion plans include a boutique hotel. Post Houston was originally slated to open to the public in 2020, but public health concerns and tenant fit out have deferred the opening to the fourth quarter of 2021. ([BisNow](#), [Chron](#))

New York-based **Brookfield Properties** completed its extensive renovations to the lobby of its 40-story, 1.02 million square foot Class A office tower **2 Houston Center** (909 Fannin) during the fourth quarter. The renovations saw the addition of a three-story glass curtain wall, new elevator cabs and a tenant conference center that includes two boardroom-style meeting rooms and two huddle rooms. The renovations, which have been underway since early 2019, are part of a significant milestone for the redevelopment of the 4.2 million-square-foot Houston Center campus, which will eventually include a range of additional amenities, a revamping of the 46-story, 1.07 million square foot **LyondellBassell Tower** (1221 McKinney), new restaurants, retail and greenspaces. 2 Houston Center's new meeting rooms can accommodate between six and 14 employees at a time. Additionally, the reopening of the 2 Houston Center lobby and the

OFFICE (CONTINUED)

Fannin Street entrance also marks the reopening of the building's access to Downtown Houston's tunnel system. The renovation also includes an updated entrance along McKinney with an elevated outdoor central plaza featuring greenspace, a spiral stairway connecting the landscaped terraces, a digital water wall, new fitness center and re-clad skybridges. Brookfield Properties acquired Houston Center in December 2017 with the purchase price estimated to be \$875 million which was also Houston's largest office investment sales transactions in 2017. The Houston Center transformation is just one of several renovation projects Brookfield Properties has underway in Downtown. The company recently completed renovations to the 844,000 square foot **Total Plaza** (1201 Louisiana) which created an open floor plan and utilizing natural light from the 35-story tower's all-glass facade. Brookfield Properties also kicked off an update during 2019 to Downtown's 1.2 million square foot Heritage Plaza (1111 Bagby). The 53-story office tower is undergoing renovations to its exterior, main lobby, tenant conferencing areas and the sky lobby. Among the larger elements of **Heritage Plaza** that will be upgraded during the remodel is the addition of a new glass curtain wall at the street corner of Dallas and Brazos along with updating the landscaping and paving in the building's atrium. Construction on Heritage Plaza is scheduled to be completed in December 2021. ([HBJ](#))

A redevelopment is in the works for the 17-story, 429,000 square foot **1111 Fannin** office tower, which has been acquired by **Triten Real Estate Partners**, with offices in both Dallas and Houston, and Taconic Capital Advisors, a New York-based global institutional investment firm. Chicago-based **HPA Architecture** has been selected to conceptualize the building. **JP Morgan Chase** has been the sole tenant of the building for more than twenty years and its lease expires in September 2021. The property was marketed by JLL Capital Markets. The sale of the Houston building will give appraisers a contemporary comparable sale in an urban core market that has changed significantly during the past year. 1111 Fannin building, built in 1971 is located at the corner of Fannin and Dallas, has the advantage of an abundance of nearby amenities such as being across the street from Houston-based **Midway's GreenStreet** (1201 Fannin), one block from **The Shops at Houston Center** (1200 McKinney) and a few blocks from the world-class **Discovery Green** park (1500 McKinney). Earlier year, it was announced JPMorgan Chase, the existing tenant at 1111 Fannin, leased 250,000 square feet of office space in Houston-based **Hines'** 75-story, 1.7 million square foot **600 Travis** building. The transaction was one of the largest Downtown leases in a number of years. ([RNR](#), [CoStar](#), [BisNow](#))

In one of the largest lease transactions of 2020, **TC Pipelines, LC** signed a 320,788 square foot office extension in the 56-story **TC Energy Center** (700 Louisiana), a 1.3 million square foot Class A building that had been known as Bank of America Center in recent years. A major redevelopment is underway on the lower levels of the Philip Johnson-designed tower which includes the second phase of a \$16 million renovation program to add a large tenant conference center, a coffee lounge and a fitness center. The improvements also include the addition of mezzanine space on levels two and three over the former banking hall, with full-height glass on the Rusk side of the building and new windows on the Louisiana side. Phase 1 of the program was completed earlier in 2020 that included the activation of the former Western Union building at the northeast corner of the project, a reception area for TC Energy as well as unique, creative office space on the second floor and a future restaurant space on the ground floor. Phase 2 is slated for completion in the third quarter of 2021. ([RNR](#), [BisNow](#))

JAMS ADR (formerly Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services, Inc.) leased 10,055 square feet in the 48-story **609 Main at Texas** and will occupy the 39th floor of the 1.1 million square foot Class A Downtown building. With this lease, 609 Main at Texas stands at 95 percent leased. Completed by Houston-based **Hines** in 2017, tower has been a benefited from the migration to quality trend which has prompted companies to upgrade to prime office space. Other notable tenants in the 609 Main at Texas building include **United Airlines, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, White & Case, Orrick, EnVen Energy, Royal Bank of Canada, Hogan Lovells, McKinsey & Company,** and **Russell Reynolds Associates**. Relocating 5100 Westheimer in from the Uptown submarket, JAMS was founded in 1979 and is the largest private provider of alternative dispute resolution services worldwide. ([RNR](#))

The densification of Houston is evident in the growing number of cranes and construction sites inside the 610 Loop for and the urban core, with a third of all new development underway occurring there according to Maryland-based **CoStar Group** and Downtown Houston accounts for 12 percent of all development regional activity. The largest submarkets by square footage under construction are Sugar Land/Missouri City with 3.5 million square feet, Downtown Houston topping 2.9 million square feet and the Texas Medical Center/West University submarket at 2.8 million square feet. As Houston's urban core densifies, the need for infrastructure and mass transit improvements will intensify as population growth and densification place emphasis on Houston's roads and utilities according to CoStar analysts. ([BisNow](#))

Market Overview

HOSPITALITY HIGHLIGHTS

8,228

new retailers

150

under construction



The Lancaster Hotel

HOSPITALITY

Downtown Houston's hospitality sector has historically been dominated by business and convention traffic which experienced a dramatic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As 2020 wound down, though, tourism officials anticipate a much busier convention season gaining momentum by mid-2021. Houston First, which operates the 1.9 million square foot George R. Brown Convention Center, is preparing for a busy season with such organizations as The International Quilt Festival booking its convention for October with more than 30,000 attendees and an economic impact of approximately \$20 million. On additional business and convention news, the Offshore Technology Conference has been rescheduled for August 2021 while Houston will also host Mensa International's U.S. chapter, American Mensa and the National Association of Black Journalists during late summer with both events expected to have 3,000 attendees and 4,000 attendees. Going a step further, Houston First also launched capabilities during 2020 for virtual events with a new 5,250-square-foot studio in George R. Brown Convention Center where event planners can hold virtual, in-person or hybrid meetings in the newly constructed Avenida Houston Virtual Studio inside the convention center. The virtual studio is a permanent broadcast facility capable of hosting a wide range of events, while still adhering to social distancing mandates. The studio includes the ability to hold prerecording panel

discussions between presenters online and can host live broadcasts between the presenters located in the new George R. Brown Convention and remote speakers in a hybrid-style format.

Meanwhile, Downtown's hospitality sector saw several renovation projects announced and completed during 2020. The Four Seasons Hotel Houston announced in December the unveiling of its multi-year guestroom renovation and extensive ballroom and event space transformation that will commence in January 2021. The guestroom redesign is part of a multi-phase enhancement project while the ballroom redesign highlights a reconfiguration of the space to create a new Grand Ballroom with 150 percent more gathering space. The Hilton-Americas Houston's \$54 million guestroom and meeting space transformation was completed during 2020 and the opening of Downtown's newest hotel, the 150-room Hyatt Place Houston Downtown, is expected early in 2021.

Condé Nast Traveler announced the results of its annual Readers' Choice Awards during October. Two Downtown luxury hotels were named to the Top 20 Hotels in Texas: **The Lancaster Hotel** (701 Texas) ranked sixth boosted by its recent multi-million-dollar renovation. ([Condé Nast Traveler](#))

HOSPITALITY (CONTINUED)

The **Offshore Technology Conference (OTC)** is slated to return to Houston in August at NRG Center after the pandemic prevented it from taking place in 2020. Houston tourism officials anticipate a busy convention season in the second half of 2021 after signs of progress have emerged on coronavirus vaccines. Organizers of the Offshore Technology Conference, the world's largest oil and gas trade show announced in November. The conference, which brings approximately 60,000 attendees

The **Four Seasons Hotel Houston** (1300 Lamar) announced in December the January 2021 unveiling of its multi-year guestroom renovation and extensive ballroom and event space transformation. The guestroom redesign is part of a multi-phase enhancement project which has already included updates to The Lobby, Front Drive, The Spa and Fitness Center. Guest room corridors were fully redesigned while the new guestrooms take inspiration from "Houston's Living Room" featuring a calming color palette of deep sky-blue fabrics complimented by warm undertones of dark oak wood, saddle leather and antique brass details. Custom guest room media walls with built-in storage, modern details and warm finishes also feature the addition of the custom-built MyBar station including a special selection of curated wines, spirits, mixers and a variety of cocktail glassware. New additions to the fitness center include a private workout space featuring a Peloton bike and interactive fitness MIRROR exclusively available in the Presidential North and South suites. Along with the guest room renovations, the ballroom redesign highlights a reconfiguration of the space to create a new Grand Ballroom with 150 percent more gathering space within the hotel. With the addition of sliding partitions, these rooms may now breakdown into smaller spaces to host concurrent events of varying sizes. Pre-function, ballroom and meeting spaces also act as an extension of the lobby level interiors. ([fourseasons-houston](#))



Four Seasons Hotel Houston

to Houston each year. In addition to OTC, scheduled for August 16–19, 2021, Houston is slated to host annual meetings for **American Mensa**, the U.S. arm of the international society whose members must score in the top 2 percent of a standardized intelligence test as well as one for the **National Association of Black Journalists**. American Mensa is expecting as many as 3,000 people at its six-day convention in August at the **Hilton Americas-Houston** (1600 Lamar). In addition, **The National Association of Black Journalists** convention is expected to bring as many as 4,000 journalists August 18–22 and Downtown's largest convention, **The International Quilt Festival**, is scheduled for October. These conventions will be a boon to Downtown Houston's hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues during the summer months. ([HBJ](#), [Chron](#), [HBJ](#))

The **National Rifle Association (NRA)** has committed to keeping its annual meeting in Houston in 2021. The NRA has booked the **George R. Brown Convention Center** (1001 Avenida De Las Americas) September 3–5 after previously scheduling event for mid-May according to the new dates posted on the organization's website. The meeting is expected to bring 850 exhibitors to Houston, including major firearm and accessory manufacturers. In all, the event will have 600,000 square feet of exhibits. Additionally, the NRA said the event has already resulted in more than 7,000 hotel rooms being reserved in 30 hotels around Houston, mainly in Downtown. ([HBJ](#))

Market Overview

RETAIL HIGHLIGHTS

400+
restaurants,
bars & clubs

9
opened

10
planned

RETAIL

Downtown's retail sector said goodbye to a taxing 2020 with its restaurants and hotels noticeably busy hosting New Year's Eve celebrations. Patrons gathered in upscale restaurants that recently reopened including Guard & Grace, Pappas Bros. Steakhouse and Xochi while four-star hotels such as the Marriott Marquis, the C. Baldwin, the Four Seasons – Houston welcomed staycation and holiday seasonal guests. New venues opened during the final quarter of the year – everything from fast casual to pop up concepts in food halls – while several new white tablecloth restaurants were announced with plans of opening during 2021, including The Palm at GreenStreet and The Nash at The Star. Meanwhile Post Houston revealed their first vendor lineup for its 55,000 square foot food hall, Post Market. So, despite the COVID-19 pandemic – which certainly took its toll on the food and beverage industry nationwide – Downtown Houston's food and beverage scene closed the year with a cautiously optimistic outlook especially as several versions of the vaccine are being made available in the first half of 2021.

Additional highlights during 2020 displayed the depth of resiliency Downtown restaurant operators demonstrated such as chefs and mixologists expanding summertime to-go menus and specializing in food items that travel and pack well for carry-out and delivery including alcohol sales. Special to-go packages, take-away picnic baskets and ghost kitchens opened – and Downtown welcomed during the third quarter the opening of Sweetgreen which completed a soft-open during mid-September offering Downtown's lunch crowd fresh, healthy and diverse choices with its creative salad combinations such as its signature "Guacamole Greens" and seasonal features such as miso-glazed root vegetables. Also, in September, Downtown's live music venue and restaurant, The Rustic, launched a lineup of intimate concerts billed as 'The Safe Sounds Music Series' is bringing musicians back to its stage, with wide COVID-19 safety measures in place.

Meanwhile, Downtown saw several openings in the spring during what could be described as one of the worst 90-day periods for the U.S. food and beverage industry. Food halls such as Finn Hall at The Jones on Main, Bravery Chef Hall, Understory and Underground Hall were most notably well-positioned during the early stages of the COVID-19 environment due to their lower capital and operating costs, available talent and price point making these venues competitive and viable.

Looking ahead, the food and beverage industry will be better and stronger for its patrons as many restaurateurs have permanently adopted new tactics such as



Ben McPherson with BOH Pasta & Pizza

sourcing biodegradable materials to reduce the waste of disposable cutlery and packaging, installing hand sanitizer stations, and widespread sanitization of high touch surfaces including tabletops, chair and chair handles, doorknobs and door handles.

Throughout Houston, chefs and restaurants are putting new efforts into the sandwich — as an efficient and inexpensive business model and a new revenue stream while the dining scene remains in flux. Sandwiches have become a smart side business for chefs such as Ben McPherson, who recently launched **Porchetta & Sandwiches** as a daytime sandwich project within his **BOH Pasta & Pizza** in **Bravery Chef Hall** (409 Travis). Meanwhile, Shannen Tune is a firm believer in the chicken sandwich. During the summer, the chef/owner of **Craft Burger** in **Finn Hall** (712 Main) launched a ghost kitchen concept, **Thick Chick**, specializing in fried chicken sandwiches, including a Nashville hot. Available on both the Finn Hall menu and through his cloud kitchen (for food delivery) location in the Third Ward, Chef Tune's chicken sandwiches at Thick Chick are becoming a happy disrupter within his own burger business. At **Cherry Block Craft Butcher & Kitchen**, chef/partner Jessica DeSham Timmons is breathing new life into po'boys, the quintessential Big Easy sandwich, including at shrimp remoulade with fried green tomatoes, and roast beef debris with cornmeal fried shrimp. Chef Timmons went to lengths to ensure the sandwiches at Cherry Block Craft Butcher & Kitchen would be both traditional and distinctive by engaging Tasos Katsaounis, owner of Bread Man Baking Co., to develop the special bread like the authentic long loaves used in New Orleans. ([Chron](#))

RETAIL—COMING SOON

Houston franchisee, **Masroor Fatany**, will open his fifth **The Halal Guys** restaurant in the lobby level of Houston-based Hines' **609 Main at Texas** 48-story building. The Halal Guys is the famously known concept for fast-casual beef gyro sandwiches, falafel and chicken platters. The new restaurant located at 609 Main, which already has a **Mendocino Farms** location and **Prelude Coffee & Tea** take-away, is expected to open in the first quarter of 2021. This new location is expected to be a flagship with a new design, according to Fatany. The Halal Guys is celebrating its the 30th anniversary for the brand which began as a New York City food cart known for its authentic Middle Eastern and Mediterranean fare. ([Chron](#))

burger concept from the owners of Salt & Time that includes a classic cheeseburger, a vegetarian burger made with halloumi cheese and a birria burger; **Lea Jane's Hot Chicken**, a hot chicken concept developed by Chef Nick Graves currently operating out of Kung Fu Saloon on Washington Avenue in the Heights; **Taco Fuego**, a food truck from South Houston known for its charcoal-grilled dishes, including halal quesabirrias; **GELU Italian Ice**, a Colorado-based Italian ice shop serving over 30 flavors of frozen treats that are dairy-free, gluten-free, fat-free and cholesterol-free; and, **SOUPreme**, a Vietnamese concept from **Tuan** and **Thy Tran** that will serve pho and bun bo Hue based, which was created using family recipes passed down through generations. Salt & Time is the major headliner. Recently recognized as one of the top 100 butcher shops in America by Food & Wine, the butcher shop and restaurant from chef Ben Runkle and butcher Bryan Butler has become one of Austin's most acclaimed eateries. Overall, Post Market will offer a mix of more than 30 concepts from local, regional, national and international vendors. The food hall space will be organized from small to large, with diners able to choose from food stalls, counter-service kiosks, and full-service restaurants. Architecture firm **OMA** collaborated with Houston-based **LUCID United Collective of Independent Designers** to create a design that utilizes stainless steel eating, counters, kitchens and a floating mesh halo. Announced in 2019 and expected to open portions of the project in fall of 2021, Post Houston will transform the 550,000-square foot building with elements that include the Skylawn, its rooftop park, event space and sustainable organic farm, as well as a concert venue, retail, office and co-working space. ([Culturemap](#))



Common Bond Bakery Downtown

Houston-based **Lovett Commercial**, the developer of Downtown's extensive 16-acre mixed-use development site, **Post Houston** (401 Franklin), the site of the former Barbara Jordan post office building, revealed in December the first vendors that will populate its 53,000 square foot **Post Market** food hall. These include: **Salt & Time Butcher Shop**, an award-winning butcher shop from Austin known for locally raised meats, an extensive selection of in-house made sausage and charcuterie, and more; **The Butcher's Burger**, a recently introduced

Tilman Fertitta is bringing another legendary steakhouse brand to Downtown Houston. Houston-based **Landry's, Inc.** will open a second outpost of **The Palm** in the **GreenStreet** (1201 Fannin) development in the fourth quarter of 2021. Houston's original location of The Palm opened on Westheimer in 1978 that underwent a \$5 million revamp in 2013. Founded in New York in 1926, The Palm distinguishes itself from other steakhouses with a menu that includes Italian American dishes such as veal parmigiana, as well as giant lobsters from the East Coast. Adding The Palm to Downtown will give Landry's three high-end steakhouses in the central business district, including **Morton's** (1001 McKinney) and **Vic & Anthony's** (1510 Texas). ([CultureMap](#))

Market Overview

RESIDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

6,279

residential units

1,317

under construction

275

planned

82.6%

occupancy rate

RETAIL—COMING SOON (CONTINUED)

The Nash (1111 Rusk) is slated to open in early-January 2021 in the heart of Downtown. Located in **The Star** (1111 Rusk), formerly the Texaco Building, the restaurant will have a dog-friendly patio that seats 52 with the main dining area seating 105 patrons. **Chef Omar Pereney**, of Houston-based **A La Carte Consulting Group**, has created a broad range of dishes with an eclectic, modern American food menu that also pays tribute to Houston's diverse population and cultures. Its Downtown location and contemporary menu will appeal to area residents and office workers along with leisure and business travelers. Dishes include Korean-style bacon glazed with gochujang barbecue sauce, short rib papardelle in 12-hour ragu, and pizzas topped with prosciutto, bacon, and corn. Tequeños, or bites of dough-wrapped Venezuelan cheese served with an array of dipping sauces, are also on the menu. The Nash will be open for dinner daily from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. and happy hour on Monday – Friday from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., with lunch and brunch debuting soon after opening. ([Eater](#), [HoustonPress](#))

Camden Downtown Houston, Catalyst Houston and Aris Market Square, to name only a few, now offer virtual tours unit-by-unit replete with property site plans, online residential application processes and available live videos. Also included are 3D team member and self-guided tours with property representatives now being available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for scheduling or to discuss availability and pricing during the online leasing process.

Meanwhile, people continue to choose Downtown for urban living with five residential projects under construction by the close of 2020 containing more than 1,300 units and another 275 planned. The first expected to be completed during 2021 is the mid-rise Sovereign at the Ballpark, located at 100 Crawford, containing 229 units and, and the luxury 46-story high rise, Houston based Hines is delivering Brava, its 46-story, 373 Class A multifamily project located at 414 Milam the Downtown residential market in 2022 along with an additional 6,800 square feet of street level retail. New Downtown multifamily development during the final quarter of the year includes Block Companies beginning construction on its 130,000 square foot, 120-unit McKee City Living located on 2.1 acres in Downtown Houston's Warehouse District on the east side of McKee and north of Buffalo Bayou.

Downtown's overall multifamily occupancy in December was 82.6 percent which is in line with other urban Houston markets such as Midtown, Upper Kirby and Uptown, while commanding the strongest Class A asking rents averaging \$1.93 per square foot per month, holding steady during the active leasing periods in the summer and fall.

Houston-based **Hines** announced in November that name change of its 46-story, 373-unit Class A multifamily Downtown tower to **Brava** (414 Milam). Expected to open in the fall of 2022, Hines broke ground on the construction in April 2019. While the new Brava name was inspired by the nearby Theater District, similarly, the interior of the building aims to incorporate the elements related to visual and dramatic arts. The project is located in one of Harris County's 105 Opportunity Zones and will be the tallest residential tower in Downtown Houston. Additionally, the property will feature 6,800 square feet of retail and restaurant space on the ground floor. Other amenities include outdoor event space, 24-hour concierge and valet service, electric vehicle chargers, guest suites, pet spa and a wine-tasting room. Hines selected **Munoz + Albin Architecture & Planning** as the design architect and **Mayfield and Ragni Studio** (MaRS), as the interior architect, both companies are based in Houston.

([HBJ](#), [Chron](#))

RESIDENTIAL

During 2020, Downtown's residential market adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic briskly with emerging multifamily rental trends such as critical operational best practices for keeping communications with residents clear and open, limiting accessibility to leasing offices, recasting physical events as virtual ones if possible, and using technology to conduct prospect leasing tours, according to guidance released by the National Apartment Association. For example, Downtown multifamily properties such as



Brava at 414 Milam

RESIDENTIAL (CONTINUED)

McKee City Living LP has begun construction of a new 120-unit, 4-floor, \$29.9 million multifamily affordable-workforce residential project, named **McKee City Living** (625-650 McKee), located in the Downtown Houston's Warehouse District on the east side of McKee and north of Buffalo Bayou. Being developed by **Block Companies**, with locations in Houston and Baton Rouge, LA, the 130,000 square foot property's amenities will include a community activities space, business and fitness centers, courtyard pool, a pickup and drop stop and bicycle storage. The project is being developed as a joint venture between **The City of Houston**, Chicago-based **National Equity Fund** (NEF) Birmingham, AL-based **BBVA USA**, Houston-based **Covenant Neighborhoods, Inc.** and the New Orleans-based **Gulf Coast Housing Partnership, Inc.** ([City Of Houston Housing and Community Development Department](#), [Block Companies – McKee City Living](#), [COH Public Notice](#))

INNOVATION

In 2017, Houston has an innovation awakening, after Amazon's high-profile hunt. 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.

Downtown is continuing to make substantial headway on Central Houston, Inc.'s vision to establish an innovation hub that starts at the edges of technology and entrepreneurship, where cutting-edge ideas can quickly be explored, and future technology can become high-impact businesses. Located in Amegy on Main, the 17,000 square foot Downtown Launchpad was developed through a threefold vision of inclusion that differentiates the Hub from others in Houston. The innovation hub 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. Downtown Launchpad is one of the only hubs in the world anchored by two nationally top-ranked startup accelerators in Massachusetts-based MassChallenge, Wisconsin-based gener8tor, and globally recognized incubator in Impact Hub, and is also a place for idea incubation, entrepreneur boot camps, community events, workforce development, innovation labs, creatives, coworking and corporate innovation, enabling startups and entrepreneurs to move seamlessly through the stages of startup production, all in one space

During 2020, Downtown Launchpad resident tenant MassChallenge hosted 56 startups from 13 U.S. states and 13 countries in the year's virtual accelerator. These startups are rigorously vetted by a community of more than 500 expert judges and represent the top 11 percent of applications from around the world. Seven startups in the 2020 Houston cohort were awarded over a combined \$200,000 in prizes during the virtual ceremony held in October. Resident tenant gener8tor also wrapped up their 2020 locally focused cohorts receiving 168 applications, selecting 10 startups to participate. Additionally, gener8tor hosted two Houston Small Business Emergency Response Programs webinars with 317 attends, and 12 communitywide Lunch & Learns.

Downtown's new 17,000 square foot innovation hub, **Downtown Launchpad** (1801 Main) is open for business, bringing start-up boot camps and new business incubation to its location, **Amegy on Main**, a 13-story building at 1801 Main and Jefferson. "Downtown Launchpad innovation hub starts at the edges of technology and entrepreneurship where cutting-edge ideas can quickly be cultivated and explored," said **Bob Eury**, president of **Central Houston, Inc.** and the **Downtown Redevelopment Authority**, the driving force behind Downtown Launchpad. "We set out to recruit and develop partnerships with some of the nation's premier accelerators and incubators in order to build an inclusive vertical village with all the critical support functions just steps away. We are excited and look forward to the impact created by the hundreds of startups that will walk through our doors." Resident partners are nationally recognized startup accelerators Boston-based **MassChallenge** and Wisconsin-based **gener8tor**, along with global nonprofit

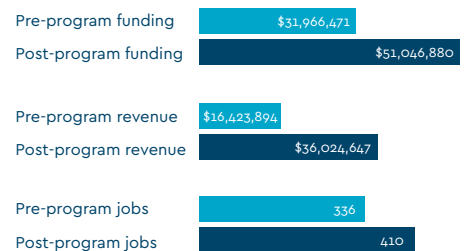
Downtown Launchpad current statistics and impact

1,741

Total Application

90

Startups





INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

incubator **Impact Hub Houston**. Operation partner, **The Cannon**, will be the space's community manager. In addition to space for accelerator and incubator program employees and participants, Downtown Launchpad will also be a place for idea incubation, entrepreneur boot camps, community events, workforce development, innovation labs, creatives, coworking and corporate innovation. This environment enables entrepreneurs to move seamlessly through the stages of startup production, all in one space. The project, announced in October 2019, is a collaboration between the Downtown Redevelopment Authority and Central Houston Inc. and has a 10-year lease for the space. ([RNR](#), [HBJ](#))

An early-stage startup accelerator with a national presence has announced its latest cohorts across the country. Five Houston companies have been named to the local class. The accelerator, **gBETA**, is a part of Madison, Wisconsin-based **gener8tor's** suite of accelerators, and announced its plan to launch in Houston in September 2019. The program's inaugural cohort premiered in May and conducted the first program this summer completely virtually. gBETA named 50 startups across 10 cohorts to its fall program including these: startups selected from Houston: **DOSS**, launched in April, uses artificial intelligence and data aggregation in the homebuying process; **Camelia Alise**, which creates gender-neutral skincare products to treat pseudo-folliculitis condition and has developed a specific spa curriculum for aspiring spa owners and specialists; **CaseCTRL**, a software management platform for surgeons, offers software-as-a-service technology using artificial intelligence (AI) and logistics to lower operational costs and simplify surgical planning; **Melanoid Exchange**, an online platform giving small minority businesses the opportunity to grow their business through eCommerce; and **ScalaMed**: which has developed a smart prescriptions platform providing care teams real-time information on their patients' drug management, and patients with an empowering tool that

helps them take control over the prescription process. The no-cost, equity-free program will last seven weeks and kicked off on October 1. ([Innovationmap](#))

Impact Hub Houston (1801 Main), the local chapter of a nonprofit focused on supporting startups in the social impact space hosted during November **The Houston Innovation Summit**, its fourth annual week of entrepreneurship programming as well as the second annual **Climathon**. Also, during the month, the Downtown organization, located in the new **Downtown Launchpad**, has also just launched a new business incubator program, **Accelerate**, a program that Impact Hub has offered across 17 international markets with its Houston chapter already having a number of Houston startups including **Potentia Workforce** and **McMac CX**. Structured as an ongoing accelerator with mentorship, education, and support, the program is currently accepting new members. Whether the Accelerate member needs one-on-one mentorship, specialized education, or more, the program match makes each member's needs. **EY** is a network partner and member companies have access to international experts through Impact Hub and its partners' networks. Potentia for example, is a startup that helps find jobs for adults with special needs, as well as educate corporations on how to work with and collaborate with these individuals. The company already has data and momentum, and the Accelerate program is helping the company to get to its next stage. Meanwhile, Impact Hub Houston's second annual Climathon has evolved since last year in a number of ways by first, now being completely and second, the event has several new partners, most of which didn't even exist in Houston last year, such as **Greentown Houston** and **Evolve Houston**. Last year's Climathon took place during October. With it moving to November this year, it coincided with **THIS**, adding even more events to the week-long, impact-focused summit. **THIS**, which was designed to run alongside **Global Entrepreneurship Week**, which included the event's themes: education, ecosystems, inclusion and policy. ([Innovationmap](#))

DOWNTOWN INNOVATION HUB: CO-WORKING, ACCELERATORS, INCUBATORS (SORTED BY TOTAL SF)

PROPERTY NAME	TYPE	ADDRESS	SQUARE FEET
Novel Coworking	Coworking	Scanlan Building (405 Main)	85,000
WeWork including: Flatiron School	Co-working Coding School		
Veterans in Residence (VIR) /WeWork Bunker Labs	Coworking/Incubator	708 Main	78,063
WeWork Labs	Incubator		
Spaces (Regus) – Opening March 2020	Co-working	GreenStreet (1201 Main)	63,429
WeWork	Co-working	609 Main at Texas	56,000
Life Time Work – Opens 2020	Co-working	GreenStreet (1202 Main)	37,681
Accenture Innovation Hub	Innovation Space	1301 Fannin	37,487
Hines2 (Hines Squared), The Square	Co-working	717 Texas	27,795
Bond Collective – Opens Late 2019 or Early 2020	Co-working	Pennzoil Place – South Tower (711 Louisiana)	25,871
Station Houston powered by Capital Factory: BBL Labs (BBL Ventures)	Co-working Accelerator		
Founder Institute	Accelerator	1301 Fannin	25,412
Ion Smart Cities Accelerator (Microsoft, Intel)	Accelerator		
The Cannon Tower	Coworking (+ event space on 11th Floor)	Amegy Bank Building (1801 Main, 13th Floor)	17,000
Downtown Launch Pad – Opening Summer 2020 MassChallenge Texas	Innovation Space	Amegy Bank Building (1801 Main, 10th Floor)	17,000
gener8or	Accelerator		
Impact Hub			
Regus	Executive Suites	Pennzoil Place – North Tower (700 Milam)	15,200
Novel Coworking	Coworking	720 Rusk	15,000
Servcorp	Executive Suites	TC Energy Center (700 Louisiana)	7,065
Regus	Executive Suites	1001 Texas	4,600
Sources: Central Houston, Inc., CoStar		GRAND TOTAL	512,603

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Members of **Central Houston, Inc.**, the consortium of Downtown business leaders who first banded together for the city's benefit in 1983, conducted their annual meeting "virtually" to report on how Houston has stayed upbeat and progressive despite the all-encompassing COVID-19 epidemic. **Mayor Sylvester Turner** saying he preferred "the energy of a ballroom full of people," moved forward with high praise for Central Houston, not only for their assistance with his \$7 billion **North Houston Highway Improvement Project**, but for help and support with the city's struggle against homelessness that has outdone many other large communities in the nation. That topic was also the focus of the keynote address by locally and nationally known expert in the remediation of homeless issues, **Mandy Chapman Semple. Jonathan Brinsden**, chair of Central Houston, Inc. and CEO of **Midway**, a Houston-based real estate investment and development firm, summed up the perfect storm of 2020. "Houston, Downtown and COVID-19 collided with the already volatile energy market." The impact was enough to render the city center a ghost town as office workers, restaurant operators, retailers and shop owners headed for home. But Central Houston, an ensemble of folks who "get things done," said Brinsden, have worked with other interested parties to revive the community. The resurgence has begun. "More than 10,000 people are living downtown, and more than 70,000 live within a two-mile radius, with more residential construction coming. We have 28 hotels with nearly 8,400 rooms; more than 400 food and beverage options." "Many dollars have been spent on new office construction and renovation and many public spaces used by everyone, and more are on the way. Yes, COVID had an impact," he said. "But we feel confident about people's safe return to a Downtown that is a more exciting place." Brinsden is also a member of the **Coalition for the Homeless**. Continuing his address,

the mayor said: "Earlier this summer, **Harris County Court Judge Lina Hidalgo** and I announced a homeless initiative." Facing the pandemic's threat to the security of residents' dwellings, "the city and many, many partners" crafted a \$65 million "wraparound" program with services that include: The ability to serve 5,000 homeless or near homeless. rapid rehousing and rental assistance to 1,700 newly homeless. A permanent supply of housing for 1,000 Diverting 2,000 out of shelters by providing up to three months of rent. Expanding mental health case management Addressing unsheltered homeless living on the street. Mayor Turner also said construction of an emergency shelter for 130 homeless will begin in spring 2021. Houston has lowered its homeless numbers from 8,500 to about 4,000 in 10 years. In her speaking segment, Judge Hidalgo also cited the need to bring compassionate care to the homeless. She praised Central Houston for its innovation and ambition. "With your vision - and progress-making in the addition of public spaces, transportation and development, you keep us dynamic." Other priorities of Central Houston include: Maximizing civic enhancements related to the North Houston Highway Improvement Project, in active collaboration with its partners and **PLAN Downtown**. Advancing a re-envisioned regional commuter system and improved multi-model functionality of Downtown's street grid in the context of advancing technologies. Facilitating the creation of a technology and Innovation Corridor that includes **Downtown Launchpad** (1801 Main), The Ion in Midtown (4201 Main) and the **Texas Medical Center**. Initiating a three-year plan to recruit new employers to Downtown and improve two-way communications about the benefits and opportunities of being in the central city. Supporting the community's effort to end homelessness, known locally as "**The Way Home.**" ([RNR](#))



University of Houston-Downtown Student Wellness & Success Center

University of Houston-Downtown (1 Main) broke ground on its **Student Wellness & Success Center** in November with construction slated to begin in January and is scheduled to open in 2022. The new \$38 million, 72,393 square foot building will be located west of the school's **College of Sciences and Technology Building**. The center will replace the sports and fitness facility that opened in 1997, which was designed to serve a population of 7,000 students, **Renu Khator**, UH president and chancellor, said at the ceremony, and the university now has a student population greater than 15,000. Detroit-based architectural, engineering and planning firm **SmithGroup** is overseeing the project's design, and Texas-based **Vaughn Construction**, which has a Houston office, is the general contractor. In May 2019, the Texas Legislature authorized

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

(CONTINUED)

a dedicated student fee to pay for the new center at UH-Downtown. Students at the campus approved the fees for the project. ([HBJ](#), [Chron](#))

Main Street bar owners are expected to take to the streets now that the City Council approved the plans for the **More Space Main Street** program which will close the road to automobiles, allowing bars and restaurants to create outdoor seating spaces in the street. The program, which city officials approved as a pilot until March 2022, includes closing blocks along Main from Commerce to Rusk, depending on which businesses seek to participate. Barriers will be placed to close Main Street off to traffic, while allowing cross streets to continue for vehicle use. Many Downtown eaters have preferred to frequent places with outdoor tables with open, fresh air dining options. Aimed at helping the bars and restaurants weather the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan to close Main builds on the More Space program Houston's planning department created to allow restaurants to use their parking lots to provide al fresco dining. Main Street establishments do not have parking spaces, so business owners, City of Houston, METRO and the **Houston Downtown Management District** worked to utilize the street. ([Chron](#))

The **Theater District Houston Board of Directors** appointed **Jim Nelson** as its new Chairman. Nelson, Executive Director of Houston Ballet, will serve as the Chairman until September 2022. Nelson succeeds **Perryn Leech**, who served in the role since 2014. Leech will depart Houston in March 2021 to assume the General Director seat at Canadian Opera Company, per his November announcement. Nelson has spent nearly his entire career in the arts. Beginning as a professional dancer, he performed for 11 years with Cincinnati Ballet, Houston Ballet and Ballet de Santiago. After retiring from the stage, Nelson was named general manager of Houston

Ballet in August 2000 and in 2005, he was selected for and attended the Stanford University Graduate School of Business Executive Program for Non-Profit Leaders. Since assuming the role of Houston Ballet's Executive Director in 2012, Nelson has led the nonprofit through a period of transformational growth and acclaim. His tenure has included the pursuit of building large-scale, full-length ballets and expanding Houston Ballet's international exposure. Under Nelson's leadership, Houston Ballet has developed a partnership with Houston Methodist that provides both health and wellness services to its dancers and staff. This relationship has proven invaluable, as Houston Ballet and its Academy rely on the continued guidance of Houston Methodist during the ongoing pandemic. Houston Ballet's COVID-19 Crisis Relief Fund campaign has reached \$4.87 million of the \$5 million goal. ([houstonballet](#))



Theater District Houston Board of Directors Chairman Jim Nelson

Year-End 2020 Overview

MAJOR OFFICE LEASES (SORTED BY SF)

OFFICE LEASES

TENANT	TYPE	BUILDING TO	BUILDING FROM	SQUARE FOOTAGE
TC Pipelines, LP	Renewal/Expansion	TC Energy Center (700 Louisiana)		320,788
Mesquite Energy	Relocation	Pennzoil Place – North Tower (700 Milam)	1000 Main	20,458
WSP USA, Inc.	Renewal	Esperson Building (808 Travis)		17,507
JAMS ADR (formerly Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services, Inc.)	New	609 Main at Texas	5100 Westheimer	11,073
Bank of Texas	Expansion	5 Houston Center (1401 McKinney)		6,328
BVA Group	Renewal	Wells Fargo Plaza (1000 Louisiana)		5,467
Vetronix Corporation	New	Younan Square (1010 Lamar)		4,830

Sources: Houston Office – Fourth Quarter Market Reports (CBRE, Cushman & Wakefield, HFF, JLL, NAI Partners, Newmark Knight Frank, MadisonMarquette, Transwestern); CoStar; Houston Business Journal (HBJ); Houston Chronicle; Realty News Report; Bisnow; Central Houston, Inc.

RESTAURANT & RETAIL OPENINGS

BARS & RESTAURANTS	ADDRESS
Bravery Chef Hall	409 Travis
Porchetta & Sandwiches	
Day Six Coffee	910 Prairie
Underground Hall (pop ups)	1010 Prairie
Andes Café	
La Villa Tacos	
Naaco Bread. Co.	
Understory	Bank of America Center (800 Capitol)
Common Bond Pop-Up	

RESTAURANT & RETAIL COMING SOON*

BARS & RESTAURANTS	ADDRESS
The Halal Guys	609 Main at Texas
Mendocino Farms Sandwich Market	Allen Center (1200 Smith)
The Nash	The Star (1111 Rusk)
The Palm	GreenStreet (Former III Forks location, 1201 Fannin)
Understory Food Hall	Bank of America Tower (800 Capitol)
Common Bond Café & Bakery (late-2020 or early-2021)	

RETAIL	ADDRESS
The Argyle League	Bank of America Tower (800 Capitol)

*Based on known projects

Spotlight on Downtown Houston

LOCAL MEDIA

October 5, 2020

CHEVRON HOUSTON MARATHON GOES VIRTUAL AMID COVID-19

"The Chevron Houston Marathon will not hold its traditional race weekend events in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to an Oct. 5 press release. The weekend's events, which include the Chevron Houston Marathon and Aramco Houston Half Marathon, generate an annual economic impact of more than \$50 million for the region. Instead, the 2021 event will go "virtual" with runners completing their race distance anywhere and anytime between Jan. 8 and 17. All runners currently registered have three options: Participate in the 2021 virtual race, which includes a discounted registration for the Chevron Houston Marathon 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2022; Defer their entry to either the 2022 or 2023 race; or Donate the cost of their 2021 registration to the Houston Marathon Committee, the 501 c(4) nonprofit that organizes the annual marathon events and operates the Run for a Reason charity program, which has raised over \$32 million since its inception. Runners registered for both the marathon and half-marathon will receive detailed instructions for making that selection. All runners participating in the 2021 virtual events will receive a participant box filled with sponsor gifts and messages before the race, and finisher items will be mailed within two weeks of Jan. 17. . . . Chevron Houston Marathon Race Day is the largest single-day sporting event in Houston, drawing over 300,000 participants, volunteers and spectators, per the release. Although Houston has started allowing certain events to resume with 25% capacity, events in uncontrolled spaces or venues — such as parades, fun runs, biking events and festivals — are on hold now and likely will be through the end of the year, KHOU 11 reported last month. "The decision to cancel the 2021 Chevron Houston Marathon is incredibly disappointing for everyone, but it is the right course to follow because of the pandemic," Mayor Sylvester Turner said in the Oct. 5 release. "I know thousands of people from all over the world have trained for this race all year, and they were looking forward to qualifying for other races or beating their personal bests. They can still do that virtually. While the experience may not be the same, know that Houston will be cheering for the participants' every mile. We are a resilient city, and we are proud of the Houston Marathon." — [Houston Business Journal](#)

December 28, 2020

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY VICE PRESIDENT SELECTED AS SOLE FINALIST FOR UHD PRESIDENT

"Loren James Blanchard, currently the executive vice president for academic and student affairs at California State University, is the sole finalist for president of the University of Houston – Downtown. Blanchard is scheduled to take office March 15, though state law requires that 21 days pass before the UH System Board of Regents can finalize the appointment. At CSU, Blanchard oversees educational and student affairs for a 23-campus system. He also supports campus administrators of curricula, program design and student services, and is the designee for the system's Academic Senate. He leads Graduation Initiative 2025, which was implemented to increase graduation rates while eliminating equity gaps and preparing students for California's workforce needs. He got his bachelor's degree at Xavier University, where he later served as provost and senior vice president of Academic Affairs following Hurricane Katrina. He was also associate vice chancellor for Academic and Multicultural Affairs at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center – New Orleans. In addition, Blanchard has a master's degree from McNeese State University and a Ph.D. in education psychology from the University of Georgia. Antonio Tillis, dean of the UH College of Liberal arts and Sciences, has been interim president of UHD since Juan Sánchez Muñoz stepped down earlier this year. —[Houston Business Journal](#)

Spotlight on Downtown Houston

LOCAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)

December 31, 2020

INNOVATIVE DOWNTOWN SUITE SUPPORTS NEW HOUSTON WORKING MOTHERS

"As companies roll out back-to-work plans for the new year, one subset of workers' needs might be overlooked: new, breastfeeding mothers. However, one Houston startups is looking out for them with a new downtown location. Work & Mother Services LLC creates and manages a suite of breastfeeding rooms and support equipment — along with a booking smartphone app and has officially opened its new suite at Three Allen Center. The new facility has 10 private rooms, each equipped with a hospital grade pump, milk storage bags and other supplies; cleaning and sanitizing stations; lockers; refrigeration options; and more. Work & Mother takes a professional and spa-like approach to a daily, usually dreaded task new moms take on, while also allowing the employer a chance to provide its employees a necessary amenity . . . Per the Fair Labor Standards Act Section 7(r), companies with 50 or more employees are required to provide "a place, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public, which may be used by an employee to express breast milk." Companies that aren't in compliance with Section 7(r) — and lack the resources to do so — can either purchase individual or company memberships to Work & Mother. Brookfield Properties, which is the management company over Allen Center, has now helped its tenants have access to a facility that will help them be compliant . . . Work & Mother has opened other locations downtown, including one at 712 Main St., but the new location at Three Allen Center, designed by PDR Corp., is the latest.—[InnovationMap](#)

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA

October 2020

INNOVATION SPACE IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON CELEBRATES ITS GRAND OPENING

innovationmap

"Almost exactly a year ago, Central Houston Inc. and the Downtown Redevelopment Authority announced the Downtown Launchpad to emerge as a "vertical village" of innovation space. Now, as of this week, the new space has been revealed at its official grand opening. The 17,000-square-foot innovation hub, which is located on the 10th floor of Amegy on Main (1801 Main Street), is home to Houston's MassChallenge Texas and gener8tor accelerators and global nonprofit incubator Impact Hub Houston. The Cannon Houston is the operation partner for the space. "Downtown Launchpad innovation hub starts at the edges of technology and entrepreneurship where cutting-edge ideas can quickly be cultivated and explored," says Bob Eury, president of Central Houston and Downtown Redevelopment Authority, in a news release. "We set out to recruit and develop partnerships with some of the nation's premier accelerators and incubators in order to build an inclusive vertical village with all the critical support functions just steps away. We are excited and look forward to the impact created by the hundreds of startups that will walk through our doors." The new space, which has been partially open since last December, celebrated the opening with a virtual event and panel on September 30. Mayor Sylvester Turner joined the programming to recognize the Launchpad . . . The space, which will be used for programming and events, features a communal ground-floor lobby area with meeting rooms, a game room, workstations, and a coffee bar and deli, according to the release. There's also a dedicated event space on the building's 11th floor. —[Natalie Harms](#)

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)

October 2020

READER'S CHOICE AWARDS 2020 RESULTS

Condé Nast
Traveler

"Our 33rd Readers' Choice Awards represent the first time that you, the voters, made your picks when almost no one was traveling. So the names in this year's edition are the ones that brought you comfort, that you still connected with long afterward, that got you through the months without travel. These are the enduring gems that can withstand the test of time and the vicissitudes of circumstances. So while it is always an honor to be on this list, in this strangest of years it is a special honor, indeed. Many readers have told us that when we emerge from this pandemic, they want to turn their attention to the classics, whether that means personal favorites or places they know have brought joy to others. . . . Top 20 Hotels in Texas: Readers' Choice Awards 2020 Condé Nast Traveler readers rate their top hotels in The Lone Star State . . . Lancaster Hotel (#6), Hotel Alessandra (#17)"—**Condé Nast Traveler**

October 2020

AN ORAL HISTORY OF NOTSUOH, HOUSTON'S MOST IDIOSYNCRATIC "WORK OF LIVING ART"

TexasMonthly

"For nearly a quarter century, this bohemian venue and "social sculpture" has been a gathering place for poets, performance artists, and even a rooster or two. Jim Pirtle would once claim that it was the center of Houston. The address of the venue and performance space—314 Main Street—was his evidence: 314 backwards spelled "PIE," he'd say, and pi, the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter, was 3.14. Pirtle would take people up to the roof and show them the downtown Houston surroundings that encircled the 1893 building: expensive lofts, the Alley Theatre, Jones Hall, and Minute Maid Park. It was a sign, he said. From this magical spot, all of Houston radiated outward; the location would offer a shelter for ideas and strange happenings. Pirtle felt the most appropriate name for such a place would be Houston spelled backwards: notsuoH... Over the past twenty-four years, the cavernous, three-story building—still bearing words from its forty's facade, "The Home of Easy Credit"—has become a legendary hangout for artists, mainly, but also business types and people experiencing homelessness, who sometimes play chess side by side. NotsuoH has hosted performance art, poetry readings, concerts, plays, musicals, and occasional uncategorizable events (e.g., a make-out night), and curious patrons who wandered in never knew what decor they'd encounter. They might find a room full of plastic jungle plants, a giant blow-up pool, an exhibit of paintings, or a series of fountains. Travelers may find bohemian gathering spots in cities across the world, but those hubs are often transient; rarely do they last for decades. From its inception in the mid-1990s, notsuoH has evolved through three main eras: first, as a coffeeshop from 1996 to 2003; second, as a secret party spot from 2003 to 2007; and finally, as a legitimate bar from 2007 to present. After closing in March for the COVID-19 quarantine, it reopened on September 19, temporarily as a retail store selling clothes and antiques. Each of these intervals bears a distinct personality, yet they all are quintessentially notsuoH. In this oral history with longtime owners, bartenders, and friends, we walk past the glass front door and enter the portal to underground Houston. Welcome." —**Katy Vine**

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)

November 2020

BUILDING INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS: HOW HOUSTON THOUGHT BOLD TO TRANSFORM STARTUP HUBS



"In order to harness the impact of entrepreneurs, of new technologies, and innovators, an ecosystem involving many parts is needed. Creating a group that is bigger than the sum of their parts is what can connect new ideas to economic development and social progress. How to build one is a question many municipalities and state governments ask experts and look for examples of . . . Now we can look to Houston as another prominent example of a city transforming itself to embrace innovation and collaboration. I recently had the chance to catch up with Robert Pieroni, Director of Economic Development at Central Houston Inc. and a MassChallenge Texas Board of Advisors member who is transforming Houston's downtown startup ecosystem. In our conversation, we covered topics including Houston's big vision for its ecosystem, their holistic approach, and advice for other cities seeking to build out their own innovation ecosystems. Here's what Robert has to say: Clara: . . . Robert: We took a very holistic strategy approach to developing the ecosystem. Entrepreneurial support organizations such as MassChallenge will fill a niche, but they won't develop the ecosystem alone. The question was how to build the ecosystem that enables everyone to scale acceleration and then get them to stay through wrap-around services? There needs to be an understanding of every mechanism that supports the innovation ecosystem in order to figure out the components and how they interact with one another. In addition to the scale MassChallenge would bring, I have always believed that you need to take care of who is in your backyard which is why we brought gener8tor's gBETA pre-accelerator program to focus on local rooted founders. We went from having no accelerators, to two top-10 ranked accelerators co-locating in one innovation hub here in Houston . . . There is still some background and understanding in order to get there, but if you identify which pieces you need and are strengths of your region, then you can build on it and everything else will come. Government buy-in; Financing; Pre-acceleration; Acceleration; Incubator; Real estate partner; Operational partner; Corporation buy-in; Take the risk and be calculated about it. If you believe you're doing it for the right reasons, building it the right way and for the right outcomes, be willing to be the collateral damage if you have to be." —Clara Scheinmann

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Resources

- [Downtown Residential Building List - January 2021](#)
- [Downtown Development Project List - December 2020](#)
- [December YTD 2020 and 2019 Year-End Lease Activity](#)
- [Downtown Development Map and Building Renderings - November 2020](#)
- [Downtown Residential Map - November 2020](#)
- [Downtown Hotel Building List - October 2020](#)
- [Downtown Buildings & Tunnels - June 2020](#)
- [Downtown Destinations - June 2020](#)
- [Downtown at a Glance 2020](#)
- [Central Houston's 2020 Downtown Office Story](#)
- [Downtown Hotel Map - October 2019](#)
- [Downtown Parking Map](#)
- [Downtown Bird's-Eye View - June 2018](#)

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