

Downtown Houston Market Update

Central Houston, Inc. and Houston Downtown Management District



What a difference a few weeks can make. Downtown Houston began the year—and the final month of the first quarter—with a forecast of solid growth in line with the steady pace of prior recent years. The second half of March changed all of that. Terms and phrases such as PPE, N95 facial masks, testing sites, stay safe/stay home, social distancing and self-isolating are now part of the common American vernacular as the COVID-19 pandemic deals a series of repeated heavy blows to the U.S. economy and public. As the world's energy capital, Houston was hit particularly hard by the near simultaneous impact of the 70 percent collapse in commodity prices throughout global crude oil markets. And as the first quarter drew to a close, the end was nowhere near in sight.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Downtown Houston, though, is coming from a position of strength in the face of these disruptions. Central Houston, Inc. has created and will maintain a dedicated section on our Website (<https://www.centralhouston.org/doing-business/covid-19-resources/>) as a resource specifically for Downtown businesses, stakeholders and members. Here you will find valuable information on the recent legislation passed by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economy Security Act (CARES Act), as well as from organizations such as the America's Small Business Development Center Network, the U.S. Small Business Administration, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the International Economic Development Council to name just a few. In addition, statewide resources are provided along with material targeted for Central Houston partners and Downtown stakeholders is included such as ImpactHub, Gener8tor, MassChallenge, The Cannon and Alice.

The outlook is unclear and seems to change with each passing day. But this is certain: Central Houston's mission is to help Downtown businesses, stakeholders and members understand the resources available during these challenging times and at the same time, work closely with state and local officials to advocate on your behalf.

Because when you get right down to it, we are all **#InThisTogether**.

Market Overview

OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

51,469,131 sf

office inventory

1,101,856 sf

under construction

603,629 sf

planned

OFFICE

Downtown Houston's office market started 2020 on track for a year of moderate demand growth fueled by projected employment gains. Local economists were projecting those gains in line with historical averages in the range of 42,300 to 60,900 new jobs. Since these forecasts were made, the global economy has experienced two shocks that will pull all projections away from those baselines. The one-two onset and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic immediately paralleled with a nearly 70 percent drop in crude oil prices since the beginning of the year (from \$61.14/bbl to \$19.27/bbl on March 30, a price which, when adjusted for inflation, is below the lows reached during the oil crash of the 1980s) spell out a pragmatic new economic outline for the Downtown office market. Central Houston Inc.'s 2020 Office Story, an in-depth proprietary longitudinal analysis of the multi-tenant Downtown office market, shows that nearly half of all tenants are tied to the energy industry, which therefore means leasing volume is expected to decline sharply during the second quarter and remain low throughout the year as the Downtown market adjusts to these powerful headwinds.

With respect to Downtown office occupiers, most will likely experience some stress in the coming months but small and midsize tenants, who more often rent in Class B and C properties, will feel the impact more acutely. These

firms frequently do not have substantial cash reserves or enjoy the same access to credit markets as larger companies. Its reported by the brokerage firms that some landlords are already fielding requests from existing tenants for rent forbearance and other concessions as their tenants work to keep afloat into the second quarter. The coworking market, with short term leases and open environments un conducive to social distancing, will face a setback in the short run. Indeed, this disruption may cause some tenants to seek more agile workspace in the future as the ability to work away from a traditional office environment becomes vital to weathering the current COVID-19 pandemic. The general Downtown office leasing outlook now entails newly signed leases will be those currently close to being finalized while most activity will encompass planned renewals or necessary space expansions. Consequently, Downtown tenants have a strong advantage during the foreseeable outlook in lease negotiations.

Looking back on the first quarter, several transactions were completed worth noting. Houston-based Enterprise Products Partners renewed and expanded its more than half million square foot lease in the 55-story 1100 Louisiana which included a 22,000 square foot expansion; Downtown law firm DLA Piper signed for a full-floor, approximately 31,000 square feet, in Texas Tower, the 1.1 million square foot tower under construction at 845 Texas Avenue; and FC Tower Property Partners LP launched a \$20 million renovation of the 49-story 1001 Fannin and will feature new updates to an 8,000-square-foot fitness center and adjacent tenant lounge with new areas for entertainment, seating and gaming.

The headquarters for **Summit Midstream Partners LP** relocated from The Woodlands to Downtown in March 2020, occupying the 41st and 42nd floors of sublease in **One Shell Plaza** (910 Louisiana), and totaling approximately 48,600 square feet for an initially planned 100 employees. The midstream energy infrastructure company said in January it will close its Atlanta office, while keeping open its Denver location, and moving its finance and accounting functions into the new Downtown location. In September 2019 Houston-based Shell announced it would completely vacate the building with plans to move its Downtown employees to the company's campuses in west Houston. Since Shell's 2016 announcement, several tenants subleased space such as Houston- and New Jersey-based NRG Energy Inc. subleasing a record 431,037 square feet and more recently, Canada-based design and engineering firm, Stantec Inc., consolidated its Houston employees into 23,515 square feet on 26th floor in November 2019. ([HBJ](#), [prnewswire](#), [Community Impact Newspaper](#), [ConnectMedia](#), [CoStar](#))



One Shell Plaza

OFFICE (CONTINUED)

Houston pipeline company **Enterprise Products Partners** renewed and expanded its lease in the 55-story **1100 Louisiana**, the rose granite 1.3 million square foot tower the company purchased more than 15 years ago. The 512,845 square foot lease, including a 22,301 square foot expansion executed in the third quarter last year, is for floors 4 through 25. Enterprise plans to renovate the space. ([Chron](#))

King & Spalding, one of Houston's largest international law firms, moved forward this spring with construction permits from the City of Houston for an \$11 million update to its offices at **1100 Louisiana**. The renovation will affect a three-floor build-out totaling 70,500 square feet in suites 4000, 4100 and 4200 in the 1.3 million square foot, 55-story Class A tower developed by Houston-based Hines. King & Spalding has been in the building since 1995, choosing to renew its lease in May 2019. The firm has 94 local attorneys in addition to 20 offices globally with more than 1,000 law firm professionals worldwide. ([HBJ](#))

FC Tower Property Partners LP launched a \$20 million renovation of the 49-story **1001 Fannin**. The main lobbies of the 1.3 million-square-foot building have already been renovated with new escalators, artistic lighting, a coffee bar and various seating areas for tenants and guests. Moving ahead, the tunnel level, will have new updates to an 8,000-square-foot fitness center and adjacent tenant lounge with areas for entertainment, seating and gaming. The building, just west of The Shops at Houston Center, began renovation of its north and south exterior plazas facing McKinney and Lamar, respectively during January. The renovations are slated for completion in mid-2020, with a building conference center to follow in 2021. **Huitt-Zollars** is the architect for the project working with contractors California-based **DPR Construction** for the lobby and New York-based **Turner Construction** for the fitness center, both with Houston locations. **Forney Construction** will oversee construction of the plazas. The renovations are in line with premium office environment trends as new construction in competing buildings is completed. Longtime 1001 Fannin tenants such as **Waste Management** leased 284,000 square feet in the 2019 the 35-story **Bank of America Tower** (800 Capitol) in order to relocate and consolidate its Downtown headquarters and the **Vinson & Elkins** law firm is relocating to the 1.1 million square foot **Texas Tower** (845 Texas) upon its completion in 2022. The building is the latest to receive extensive renovation as owners modernize Downtown's 1980s era properties to compete. **Houston Center**, the four building 4.2 million square foot complex is also undergoing extensive renovations by owner **Brookfield Properties** including floor-to-ceiling natural



Wells Fargo Plaza and 1100 Louisiana

light enhancements, common area collaborative lobbies, outdoor work areas and rooftop green spaces with adjacent redesigned skybridges, indoor food and beverage options to be completed in 2021. ([HBJ](#), [Chron](#))

International law firm **DLA Piper** signed a full-floor 31,843 square foot lease in the 47-story **Texas Tower** (845 Texas), the 1.1 million square foot tower under construction by Houston-based **Hines** and Montreal-based **Ivanhoé Cambridge**. The firm will relocate from **Wells Fargo Plaza** (1000 Louisiana) in January 2022, occupying the entire 38th floor. The firm first entered the Houston market in 2008 and has expanded to 25 local lawyers. With the lease, **Texas Tower**, designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli, is 40 percent leased and near the two Hines' multifamily developments: the 361-unit Aris Market Square (409 Travis) and The Preston (414 Milam), a 46-story, 373-unit Class A tower slated to open in 2022. In terms of sustainability, efficiency and wellness, the new building will be certified with LEED Platinum, WiredScore and WELL Building Standards. ([Chron](#), [RNR](#), [HBJ](#), [CP Executive](#))

Mitsubishi International Corporation renewed its 45,838 square foot lease in the 46-story LyondellBasell Tower (1221 McKinney) on floors 34 and 35 of the Class A building. The renewal includes interior renovations to the space led by Houston-based Ziegler Cooper Architects expected to be completed by April 2020. The 1,061,000 square foot building is part of the four-building Houston Center complex owned by Downtown's largest landlord,

Market Overview

HOSPITALITY HIGHLIGHTS

8,228

hotel rooms

150

under construction

300+

planned

OFFICE (CONTINUED)

Brookfield Properties, which began in February 2019 a wide-scale multi-million renovation to include a new arrival experience along McKinney with a new central plaza and greenspace, monumental stair connection to landscaped terraces, two-story glass façade, and re-clad skybridges to foster street-level restaurant and retail activity. Construction is expected to be complete later this year. In addition to Houston Center, Brookfield Properties also has ongoing renovations in their other Downtown office buildings including Allen Center, Heritage Plaza, and Total Plaza. ([RNR](#))

Downtown Houston's commercial office sector ranked first in investment sales price per square foot in 2019 over Austin and Dallas, according to a new analysis by **Yardi Matrix** data and published by **CommercialCafé**. The analysis included a list of the 100 most expensive U.S. office submarkets in 2019 with Houston's Downtown office investment sales market ranked 47 on the list, with sales prices of \$364.50 per square foot last year with the second Texas market being Austin's northwest submarket, costing on average \$313.92 per square foot. A total of seven office submarkets in Texas made the top 100 compilation with the top ten U.S. submarkets in California, New York, Massachusetts and Washington state. ([BisNow](#))

Houston-based **Colvill Office Properties** has been acquired by Chicago-based **Cushman & Wakefield**. Colvill Office Properties currently directs leasing and marketing efforts for 17 million square feet of Class A office space throughout Houston, including more than 9.7 million square feet in Downtown. As part of the transaction, Chip Colvill, the founder and president/CEO of Colvill Office Properties, will become executive vice chairman at Cushman & Wakefield. Andrew McDonald, president of Cushman & Wakefield's west region, said the acquisition of Colvill will add to Cushman & Wakefield's investor services platform in Texas. Cushman & Wakefield already has a large presence in Houston which listed 50 licensed real estate professionals in the Houston Business Journal's (HBJ) 2019 rankings. For its part, Colvill Office Properties was among HBJ's Best Places to Work in 2019. Eleven real estate leasing professionals and nine employees from Colvill will join Cushman & Wakefield. ([HBJ](#), [BisNow](#), [Chron](#))

HOSPITALITY

With more than 8,200 hotels rooms, Downtown is the largest hospitality submarket in the Houston region and will be expanding further with the opening of the 150-room Hyatt Place Hotel in late-June. However, the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the travel industry has led to temporary employee furloughs, including the Hilton Americas-Houston, as conventions and other large events have been cancelled and employers restrict business travel.

At its core, though, the Downtown hospitality sector and international travel industry is vital to business—and to Houston—as it grapples with the big blow its being dealt with COVID-19 pandemic by closing indefinitely or severely reducing operations. For example, Marriott International's strategies to help its stakeholders and guests during the COVID-19 outbreak include helping to reduce cash outlays for owners, implementing corporate-level cost saving measures, providing emergency assistance for employees and maintaining flexibility with guest cancellations and group booking. But given its sheer size, diversity and location, Downtown, along with other business hubs such as Uptown and the Energy Corridor, in pair with vital specialty hospitality submarkets such as the Medical Center and NASA/Clear Lake, Houston's hotels in the urban center are a necessity for getting back to business as the recovery kicks-in to what economists are projecting to be a V-shaped one. Goldman Sachs has revised its COVID-19 projections, seeing the U.S. jobless rate topping out at 15 percent in the second quarter followed by a 19 percent rebound in the third quarter, which would be the highest on record according to the firm. And Downtown's hospitality sector is positioned to do the same. Indeed, this past quarter saw several notable enduring strides forward for Downtown hospitality: from its architecture wins and recent construction completions to its established signature spas and award-winning chefs. As a result, Downtown Houston's hotel sector will be crucial to the businesses, residents and visitors during the post-COVID-19 time period.

Three Downtown hotel spas were recognized among Houston's top 10 by *PaperCity* and includes **The Spa at The Four Seasons**, Downtown (1300 Lamar) noted for bringing its iconic luxury expertise into the spa. **The Spa**

Market Overview



The Spa at Hotel Alessandra

HOSPITALITY (CONTINUED)

by **Hotel Alessandra** (1070 Dallas), a new ultra-facility acknowledged for its seasonal specialty spa packages and bespoke treatments and last, **Pure Spa at the Marriott Marquis Hotel** (1777 Walker) and just last like the hotel that houses the world's only Texas-shaped rooftop lazy river, the spa brings plenty of extras such as 'hair architecture' and extensive Elemis biotec technology facials. ([PaperCity Magazine – Houston](#))

The *Houston Business Journal* revealed its real estate project finalists for the 2020 Landmark Awards this March which recognizes outstanding construction projects. Several Downtown hotels were recognized for the honor, including the 195-room **AC Hotel Downtown** (723 Main) in two categories, Historic Renovation and Hospitality. The hotel was redeveloped into the hotel by Dallas-based NewcrestImage. The building was first

built in 1914 as the headquarters of Gulf Oil and many elements were kept, from the facade to the doors leading to the guest rooms and features a 3,650-square-foot Zoe Ballroom formerly the site of a silent movie theater. Also, up for winning in Hospitality is the 354-room **C. Baldwin, Curio Collection by Hilton** (400 Dallas), the former DoubleTree Hotel, which had a complete renovation BOP Houston Hotel LLC which chose Rottet Studio as the interior designer. ([HBJ](#))

Hyatt Place Houston/Downtown (1114 Texas) is slated to open in June 2020 in what was the 1950 Southwestern Bell building, developed by iconic Houston builder Jesse Jones. Pride Management, which owns the building, will manage the 150-room hotel, and will feature a 16th-floor bar with views of the Downtown skyline. ([Chron](#))



AC Hotel by Marriott

Market Overview

RETAIL HIGHLIGHTS

450+
restaurants,
bars & clubs

12
opened

5
planned

RETAIL

Downtown's food halls and their chefs grabbed national and international headlines during the first quarter: James Beard semifinalists were announced, new restaurants opened in Underground Hall and Bravery Chef Hall plus additional dining options in the tunnels opened such as Adair Downtown in Wells Fargo Tower, and table-carved choices at Brasa's Brazilian Steakhouse came onto the scene. In a unique piece of news, property owner, Midway, announced a new leasing and management strategy for directing how to diversify their food hall options for patrons at Finn Hall at the Jones on Main. These healthy fundamentals are the reason why the Downtown retail sector, reeling from the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic by dining room closures and government stay-at-home and social distancing orders, is in a long-term advantageous position.

In pragmatic terms, the first 90 days since the COVID-19 orders were issued will be the greatest struggle for Houston's metro retail sector, which includes the retailer, landlord and property management company, as rents come due. Many are re-working and rearranging lease agreements including delaying payment for as little as two weeks or longer-range agreements pushing payment to later in the year, industry experts say. Retailers and restaurateurs are clearly contending with the collapse caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by shutting doors (where they physically conduct all of their business) and furloughing employees: the National Restaurant Association reports that since March 1, the industry has lost more than 3 million jobs and \$25 billion in sales, and roughly 50 percent of restaurant operators anticipate having to lay off more people in April. But the question of whether Downtown retail will rebound is not if, but when. Simply put, Downtown's primary retail fundamentals—168,000 employees, 4,300 businesses, more than 65,000 residents within two miles—are too strong.

Semifinalists for the prestigious 2020 James Beard Foundation restaurant and chef awards was announced in February and included several names throughout Downtown's food and drink venues. The foundation will recognize the finalists in late-March for the awards considered the most coveted culinary honor in the U.S. to be presented during summer 2020. This year's list marked the first time that Texas was established as its own regional category. Houston chefs scored five places in the Best Chef Texas, including Dawn Burrell of **Kulture** (701 Avenida De Las Americas) and newcomers Christine Ha of **The Blind Goat**, the Vietnamese restaurant located in **Bravery Chef Hall** (409 Travis) for Best New Restaurant. Additional Downtown restaurant spots include Kaitlin Steets, chef de cuisine at **Theodore Rex** (1302 Nance), located in Downtown's Warehouse District, who was

recognized as a semifinalist for Rising Star Chef of the Year, a category identifying the talents of chefs 30 or younger. In addition, chef-owner Justin Yu, whose efforts at Oxheart have been previously recognized by the Beard judges, found himself among the top honors in the Outstanding Chef category for his work at Theodore Rex. In all, the James Beard Foundation named 14 Houston semifinalists. ([Chron](#), [HBJ](#), [Houstonia](#))

Underground Hall (1010 Prairie), Downtown's newest food hall opened this quarter in the former Conservatory space which closed December 31. Behind the concept is restaurant industry veteran, Daut Elshani, the former director of marketing for the Salt 'N Pepper Group, the backers of Third Floor, Beer Market Co. and Pub Fiction. Elshani is also the director of hospitality for the recently opened Buffalo Bayou Brewing Co. brewery in Sawyer Yards. Two vendors were first announced in January: Heights-area pizzeria **Crisp**, an Italian American eatery with a location on Bevis Street in the Heights and **Beer Market Co.** which will have 30 taps that include local breweries and favorites from Louisiana and across the U.S. Meanwhile, Noble Rot wine bar has been rebranded as **Underbar** (situated



Christine Ha of The Blind Goat at Bravery Chef Hall

Market Overview

RETAIL (CONTINUED)

in the bar under the stairs) and serves not only wine but cocktails and spirits. Along with Crisp, additional new food venues now open include: **Don Juan Taco & Ceviche Bar**; **Wokker**, a permanent outpost of the locally well-known Tex-Asian food truck known for dishes such as brisket egg rolls, smoked chicken lo mein, and pork belly fried rice; **Treacherous Leches**, a former Conservatory vendor, will remain and continue to offer its decadent tres leches cakes; and **Hotline Burger**, Underground's burger spot. The quick renovation saw the addition of brightly colored, Houston-themed murals for both the entrance and the dining room as well as improved lighting throughout the dining room, and the addition of TVs to show sports and popular broadcast events. Like its predecessor, Underground is open for lunch and dinner daily beginning at 11 am. ([HBJ](#), [CultureMap](#), [Houstonia](#), [Eater](#), [CultureMap](#), [HBJ](#))

the street level, the tunnel system and the building's lobby. Breakfast options include avocado toast, breakfast tacos, chicken and waffles. Lunch features house salads such as the Thai chopped salad and citrus Caesar and entrees such as grilled pesto salmon with cilantro rice; chicken paillard with arugula salad and a New York strip steak sandwich on a baguette with peppercorn sauce. After lunch the space segues into its bar bites menu to pair with beer, wine and spirits. The bar menu includes tuna tartare, cheese board, sliders, bruschetta, fried calamari, caramelized Brussels sprouts, fried asparagus with cilantro ranch, beef tenderloin crostini, guacamole and chips, hot chicken with house pickles, and meatballs with garlic bread. The bar offers cocktails, an extensive collection of bourbon and scotch, wines and beer including local brews from 8th Wonder, Saint Arnold and Karbach. ([Chron](#), [HoustonFoodFinder](#), [HBJ](#), [Houstonia](#), [Culturemap](#))



Adair Downtown

A new dining destination, **Adair Downtown** opened in January at the tunnel level connected to Wells Fargo Plaza (1000 Louisiana) serving a chic menu that covers breakfast, lunch and after-work happy hour with a full bar offering wines and craft cocktails. The owners of the 71-story Class A building tapped Adair Concepts (Adair Kitchen, Eloise Nichols Grill & Liquors, Skeeter's Mesquite Grill, Los Tios Mexican Restaurants, Bebidas, and Betsy's at Evelyn's Park) to bring their restaurant expertise to the project designed by Gensler Architects and Houston-based McGarr Design & Interiors. The upscale 4,628-square-foot buildout on the southeast corner of the tower is washed with natural light by the adjacent to the existing outdoor patio that is accessible both from

Brasa's Brazilian Steakhouse (705 Main), a new two-story Downtown lunch and dining venue opened this winter offering salads, seafood and more. The steakhouse advertises that it will be serving up table-carved "unlimited 'all you can eat'-style" Brazilian dining with an exclusive salad bar and selection of over 15 cuts of meat, including chicken, beef, pork, lamb and seafood. Patrons can be continuously presented tableside with different cuts of meat by roving servers which includes a salad bar option offering more than 30 items. The steakhouse also has private dining, a VIP wine room and special accommodations for large parties. ([Chron](#), [KPRC](#), [JMGmags](#))

Understory (800 Capitol) saw the opening this spring of its sixth venue with Farro, a healthy new addition in the Bank of America Tower's food hall. Mona Italian Kitchen chef-owner Sidney Degaine developed Farro in response to customer demands who enjoy the flexibility of Mona's menu, but also seek a format they can eat multiple times per week. Farro is joining Mona, Mama Ninfa's Tacos y Tortas, Seaside Poke, Flip N Patties, and East Hampton Sandwich Co. in Understory which also contains an outpost of Boomtown Coffee and the Silver Lining cocktail bar. Like Mona's pasta bar concept, diners construct bowls, wraps, or salads from a range of ingredients. Each bowl starts with a choice of farro, heirloom rice, or quinoa as a base and from there, select among nearly two dozen toppings such as roasted vegetables (Brussels sprouts, beets, and carrots to marinated items like tahini kale and citrus cabbage slaw) in addition to fresh items that include avocado, tomato, and corn. Chicken, salmon, plant-based nuggets or eggs are protein toppings. Each bowl gets finished with one of seven seasonings such as miso-ginger, orange-tahini, or Thai chili. ([Culture Map](#))

Market Overview

RESIDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

6,278

residential units

888

under construction

893

planned

86.3%

occupancy rate

RETAIL (CONTINUED)

Houston-based developer **Midway** is moving ahead with a new strategy for the Downtown food hall, **Finn Hall at The Jones on Main** (712 Main). Rather than having a master tenant handling individual leases with the eateries in the dining hotspot, Midway instead will oversee leasing space in the 20,000-square-foot food hall in order to vertically integrate leases with individual operators into its business. In its new strategy, Midway has hired David Buehrer to serve as Finn Hall's culinary director and will be charged with finding new restaurant concepts to bring into the food hall, as well as working to deepen Midway's relationship with the existing operators located in Finn Hall. Buehrer owns Greenway Coffee Co. and has help to develop several local establishments, including Tropicales, Blacksmith, Morningstar, Coral Sword and Prelude Coffee & Tea. Three new restaurant concepts have signed leases for space at Finn Hall since Midway took over direct leasing of the food hall, Buehrer reports, which include the opening in March of **Lit Chicken**, a fried chicken concept run by James Beard Award-nominated chefs Ross Coleman and James Haywood, formerly of Kitchen 713 and **Papalo Taqueria**, a Mexico City-style taqueria run by Stephanie Velasquez and Nicolas Vera, formerly of Underbelly Hospitality and Xochi; and in April, **Pho Binh**, which will mark the first downtown location of the highly regarded pho shop run by Kevin Pham and Di Nguyn. Seven other restaurants currently operate out of Finn Hall. Buehrer would like to add another one or two operators, with the aim of bringing in a top-tier, Michelin-level restaurant in the future. ([HBJ](#), [Houston Press](#), [PaperCity](#), [Houstonia](#))

Watever Fresh, a new food project from chef Martin Weaver (Kuu, Brennan's) opened in **Bravery Chef Hall** (409 Travis) replacing Atlas Diner in the popular Downtown food hall. **Watever Fresh** gives Bravery a plant-based concept balancing some of the more animal-focused offerings such as Cherry Block Craft Butcher & Kitchen and Kokoro Sushi. The menu offers a range of choices such as a grilled tofu burger, butternut squash soup and an arugula and beet salad. Over time, Weaver plans to expand the menu to include lean animal proteins such as HeartBrand and seafood low in mercury with additional new items such as cauliflower tikka masala and roasted vegetable tacos with gluten-free tortillas, to become staples, but the concept will be flexible and will be sourcing its produce from local farmers. ([Culture Map](#))

RETAIL—COMING SOON

Sweetgreen (820 Main) will open its third Houston location later this spring in Downtown, joining its two other locations in the Rice Village and Montrose areas. Founded in 2007 by then-Georgetown University students Jonathan Neman, Nicolas Jammet and Nathaniel Ru, Sweetgreen has grown to over 100 U.S. locations. Sweetgreen's success goes to its creative salad combinations such as its signature "Guacamole Greens" that offer "organic mesclun, avocado, roasted chicken, red onion, tomatoes, tortilla chips, fresh lime squeeze, and lime cilantro jalapeño vinaigrette." Seasonal salads in one current example features "miso-glazed root vegetables"—help keep the menu diverse and interesting. For example, Sweetgreen also partners with high-profile chefs for special bowls. In Houston, Chris Shepherd contributed a Caesar salad riff with a Southern twist of pimento cheese, pecans, and a vinaigrette made with Steen's Cane syrup. Recently, the restaurant introduced a bowl designed by celebrity chef David Chang that includes kelp and sweet potatoes. The company has also earned acclaim for its innovative use of technology as more than half of all its orders are placed directly via the Sweetgreen mobile app. ([Culture Map](#), [Eater](#), [Chron](#))

RESIDENTIAL

As the Downtown residential market adapts to the unprecedented economic headwinds surfacing in the final weeks of the first quarter caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some property owners have already announced certain ways they plan to work with residents. Landlords such as Camden Property Trust which owns the recently completed Camden Downtown, is waiving late fees and sending out renewal notices with no rent increases. Meanwhile, The Finger Cos., which owns 500 Crawford, reported that it is taking similar actions but also planning to work with each resident as needed on a case-by-case basis. What impact COVID-19 will have on Downtown's residential leasing market at this point remains unclear—especially as leasing offices are closed during the first weeks of spring which is a key leasing period for apartment managers and landlords. In the meantime, many multifamily properties are also taking precautionary measures such as restricting access to the properties as well as certain shared amenities such as pools and fitness facilities.

RESIDENTIAL (CONTINUED)

Still, Downtown is coming from a strong position with more than 6,300 multifamily units and where occupancy gains created an estimated population base of approximately 9,300 residents, an increase of 450 people since 2018. In fact, Downtown experienced net absorption gains of 94 residential units in the first 90 days of the year with these new move-ins and apartment developers to continue to expand Downtown's housing stock with new Class A projects. Camden Downtown, a new 271-unit Class A residential development owned by Camden Property Trust opened in early-March with new residents taking occupancy to pre-leased units. Located at 1515 Austin, this is Phase 1 of a 2-block, 2-phase, \$140 million 550-unit construction project. The 21-story building features studio, 1- and 2-bedroom units with the average size of nearly 1,200 square feet (approximately a third larger than the Downtown average of 971 square feet) and monthly rent of \$3,151 per unit, or \$2.75 per square foot, more than twice price per square foot for the Houston metro region. The Camden Downtown's building features include a 20,000 square foot amenity deck and rooftop pool and green space. Additional property features are a state-of-the-art fitness center, club room, Wi-Fi lounge, private dining, morning coffee lounge and a sky lounge on Level 20 with Downtown skyline views.

Also taking place during the first quarter, Fairfield Residential, which owns properties in 36 U.S. markets, began construction on the 286 rental units planned for its location at 1810 Main in January with an expected delivery date in late-2021 or early-2022. Currently two other Downtown residential properties are under construction.

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, The Preston at 414 Milam is delivering 373 units to the Downtown residential market in 2022 along with an additional 6,800 square feet of street level retail.

Looking ahead, owners are expecting renewal rates to increase sharply as residents hunker down for near-term while leasing managers and property owners are quickly embracing technology as a marketing tool. Downtown owner, Camden Property Trust for example has implemented 360-degree virtual tours to view different interior models and is arranging FaceTime or Skype tours with potential residents, where a leasing consultant can walk around the apartment and conduct a tour and has reported that it already has had requests.

Sovereign Properties will resume construction on a mid-rise apartment project two blocks north of Minute Maid Park in Downtown after securing \$49 million in new financing for construction loan provided by New York-based Acres Capital Corp. The 229-multifamily project, now called **Sovereign at the Ballpark**, is located at the northeast corner of Crawford and Commerce streets. Construction on the project, originally known as Regalia at the Park, appears to have halted in mid-2019. Construction halted after the bottom floors had been constructed for the six-story apartment project built over a two-level concrete parking structure. T.B. Penick & Sons will handle construction, which is projected to take 12 to 14 months to complete. The project resumes construction amid an increase in the number of multifamily units being developed in the nearby market, including 500 Crawford, Catalyst and 1414 Texas Downtown. Hines is developing The Preston, a 46-story tower catty corner from Market Square Park set for completion in 2022. ([Chron](#), [Multihousingnews](#), [globest](#))

Renovations are planned for the historic **Commerce Towers** (914 Main). The 132-unit residential property will undergo renovations to improve amenities, along with unit and building upgrades. Premier Towers LP has owned the Downtown Houston landmark since 1999 which was last renovated in 2004, the 25-story building, which is connected to the Downtown tunnel system, was built in 1928 by Jesse H. Jones. Premier Towers currently owns and leases 71 units, with the remainder owned by individuals. Construction timelines were not released but renovations will include updates to the lobby, improvements to amenities such as the rooftop pool deck and gardens, fitness facility and resident entertainment and party rooms in addition to exterior renovations. ([ConnectTexas](#), [RNR](#))



Commerce Towers

RESIDENTIAL (CONTINUED)

CBRE Group Global Investors Fund purchased the two Downtown multifamily towers at the end of 2019 from Atlanta-based **Novare Realty** for an undisclosed price. The properties include **SkyHouse Houston** (1625 Main), completed in 2014, and which was built in 2014 and **SkyHouse Main** (1725 Main) built in 2016. The two properties contained a total of 674 Class A rental units. The acquisition is reported to be of the fund's broader strategy of acquiring properties in their concept of 'Winning Cities,' referring to metropolitan areas seen as having long-term 'resilient' real estate growth, according to a statement from CBRE. Both SkyHouse towers were part of the city of Houston's Downtown Living Initiative, a program that offered tax rebates of up to \$15,000 per unit to developers to build more residential projects Downtown helping to transform Houston's urban core to an area with some of the city's best bars and restaurants. The two 24-story SkyHouse towers span 528,338 square feet, including two structured parking garages, according to CBRE, and are within walking distance to several restaurants, shops and entertainment venues, such as the Toyota Center, Minute Maid Park and Discovery Green. Each parking garage has a tennis court on its roof for residents. The two-tower complex also houses 10,173 square feet of ground-floor retail space that was 88 percent leased at the time of sale according to CBRE. ([globest](#))

INNOVATION

Downtown's Innovation Hub is a key component of the Innovation Corridor stretching from UH-Downtown along Main Street into Midtown, the Museum District and past Hermann Park to Rice University and the Texas Medical Center. This four mile corridor is an extraordinarily powerful social and economic convergence linked by light rail, bike lanes and sidewalks offering easy access to key industry and institutions along with an unparalleled array of amenities.

Anchored on the north, Downtown's Innovation Hub is at the nexus of central Houston's corporate headquarters, financial institutions and professional service firms with a wide variety of cultural and urban entertainment venues that features professional sports, museums, parks and green spaces in addition to the one of the largest theater districts in the U.S. and a highly acclaimed culinary and nightlife scene.

To signify the growing importance of Downtown's Innovation Hub, Central Houston will feature these ongoing and new developments in this quarterly section with additional features and spotlights.

Wisconsin-based **genera8tor** announced in January that Eléonore Cluzel will lead its Houston gBETA pre-accelerator program as director and will be the point person for the region for both of its annual cohorts while opening applications for spring 2020. Two top accelerator programs premiers in Downtown Houston during 2019, genera8tor and MassChallenge. Both accelerator programs launched in Houston due in part to a \$1.25 million grant approved by the **Downtown Redevelopment Authority** (DRA). Previously, Cluzel worked for Business France mentoring French startups and small businesses. In her new position, she says she's excited to support founders across all industries and foster innovation. Currently, Cluzel has regular office hours out of **The Cannon's** space in the Downtown **Amegy on Main** (1801 Main). gBETA will co-locate with MassChallenge on a separate floor of the building, which is expected to open ahead of the start of the first cohort in April. gBETA aims to act as a funnel to other accelerator programs, Cluzel says; "We're looking forward to working cooperatively with other resources in town, such as Plug and Play, MassChallenge, The Founder Institute, Capital Factory, The Cannon, and other incubators, accelerators and resources." Cluzel further stated that since The Cannon is going to be among several coworking spaces in the Houston community, genera8tor and MassChallenge will be able to reach all areas of Houston, including Sugar Land and The Woodlands. The cohort begins April 30 and only five companies are selected insuring individualized support and programming from gBETA. The free program is designed to equip its participating startups with early customer traction and preparation for later stage accelerators. ([innovationmap](#))

MassChallenge Texas opened applications for its second cohort at an event in January in both Houston and Austin. The 4-month accelerator program is set to begin in June and online applications close March 9th. Prizes include six months of free office space and up to \$250,000 in equity free investment. Houston program benefits specifically feature the Space Commercialization Track which works with startups addressing challenges in commercializing the space industry through solutions including human health, performance, and recovery, materials science, analytics, advanced manufacturing, robotics and relevant technologies with an application in space. In addition the MassChallenge Houston Program Sports Tech Track that supports startups addressing challenges faced by professional and collegiate athletes, teams and leagues through solutions for human health, performance, and recovery, material science, analytics or fan experience and engagement. ([innovationmap](#), [MassChallenge](#))

Market Overview

INNOVATION (CONTINUED)

Leasing at **The Square** (717 Texas), Houston-based **Hines'** first move in the expanding coworking business, is off to a strong start. Annie Rinker, director of Hines' office of innovation, said tenants have already spoken for 25 percent of the space, which is capable of accommodating nearly 300 people and the expectation is that the 27,795 square foot location will be 30 percent leased at the end of March, the first month the new space has been open to tenants. Like many coworking concepts, The Square offers month-to-month memberships that will allow access to locations in other cities. Located on the 12th floor of the 33-story Hines-owned building, The Square had an estimated \$2.5 million build-out and features 66 offices, some of which can house up to eight

workers. Additionally, The Square offers unlimited printing, a fully stocked snack and beverage café, and 24-7 access. Tenants who lease space in The Square will also have access to the 717 Texas conference center, which comes equipped with a training room capable of seating up to 125 people, a boardroom capable of seating 16 people, additional conference rooms and a tenant lounge. Houston is the first city to have Hines' new type of coworking space but the company is also viewing it as an opportunity to evaluate what works—such as private phone booths or how to configure training rooms—before opening similar coworking spaces in Salt Lake City; Calgary, Canada; and Atlanta. ([HBJ](#))



Hines' The Square

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

PROPERTY NAME	TYPE	ADDRESS	SQUARE FEET
Novel Coworking	Coworking	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 Late 2019 to Early 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		
Regus	Executive Suites	Two Allen Center (1200 Smith)	23,350
The Cannon Tower	Coworking (+ event space on 11th Floor)	Amegy on Main (1801 Main, 13th Floor)	17,000
Downtown Launch Pad – Opening Early Summer MassChallenge Texas	Innovation Space Accelerator	Amegy Bank Building (1801 Main, 10th Floor)	17,000
Gener8or			
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
MassChallenge Texas (relocating to Launch Pad)	Startup Accelerator and Competition	GreenStreet (1201 Main)	5,000
Sources: Central Houston, Inc., CoStar			
GRAND TOTAL			540,953

Market Overview



Bagby Street Improvement Project Concept Rendering

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The **Downtown Redevelopment Authority** (DRA) began construction of the \$28.8 million **Bagby Street Improvement Project** in January. The Bagby Street Corridor is a project two years in the making which will reduce vehicular lanes to allow for wider pedestrian walkways, a bike lane, beautification elements, lighting and 79 new trees along Bagby from Franklin to Clay which includes City Hall, City Hall Annex, the Houston Public Library and two parks, Sam Houston Park and Tranquility Park. The corridor's storm sewer system will also be updated to meet current requirements. The improvements to the corridor will be conclude in December 2021. "Mayor Turner has tasked us with enhancing and bringing new energy to the west side of Downtown," said DRA President Bob Eury. "We see great potential

in transforming Bagby Street into a safe and engaging place for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles while linking the diverse civic, cultural and entertainment offerings along the corridor with adjacent neighborhoods such as the historic Fourth Ward." A separate project to reconstruct sidewalks around City Hall, led and funded by the City of Houston General Services Department, will begin in July and is expected to be completed in December 2021. Bagby Street, a major Downtown thoroughfare, is the first street encountered from the west and a two-way street serving as a gateway to the Theater District, City Hall, Central Library, Sam Houston Park connecting nine Downtown parks and cultural attractions. ([KPRC](#), [Chron](#), [KUHF](#))

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS (CONTINUED)

Jonathan Brinsden began his one-year appointment as the new board Chair at **Central Houston, Inc.** on January 1. As CEO of **Midway**, Brinsden has helped shaped several high-profile developments in Houston, such as CityCentre and the recently completed Buffalo Heights. Brinsden will continue to implement the **2017 Plan Downtown**, a 20-year vision plan for development in Downtown. "Every city in the world is fighting to attract and retain the best companies and talent for long-term economic vitality," Brinsden said. "In order to compete, it's crucial that Downtown stand out as a vibrant urban core and offer a quality of life that meets the ever-changing expectations of the modern workforce." ([BisNow](#), [Chron](#))



Jonathan Brinsden

Houston First enlisted CBRE in February to identify operators to lease the 8,547 square foot restaurant at the **Lynn Wyatt Square For the Performing Arts**, a redevelopment of the 1.5-acre Jones Plaza (600 Louisiana) announced by Mayor Sylvester Turner last fall. The project is named for Houston philanthropist Lynn Wyatt, who donated \$10 million toward the \$29 million capital campaign for the project. Houston First operates the plaza for the City of Houston. The two-level restaurant features a 1,241 square foot patio and green roof near Smith and Capitol Streets on the southwest corner of the plaza. The space will serve visitors to the park and Houston's Theater District. ([Chron](#), [RNR](#), [HBJ](#))

NOW ON STANDS: **downtown Magazine** Spring Edition. There is a new Downtown trend occurring across the U.S. where surface land lots are giving sway to new residential and commercial development and Houston is experiencing it in a significant way. Since 2010, 21 projects built on surface lots have been completed in Downtown including the **Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts** (790 Austin), **Partnership Tower** (701 Avenida De Las Americas) and the 1,000-room **Marriott Marquis**

(1777 Walker) among many others. The Spring edition covers how Downtown is changing with revitalizing and repurposing existing parcel and land sites. As such, the number of people choosing a Downtown Houston lifestyle has grown dramatically over the past decades. *downtown* examines the many options, and advantages, on making your home here which has never been easier. The recent issue also includes a look backstage at Houston's theater scene, Downtown's latest food hall venture, **Understory** (800 Capitol) and Downtown's spring calendar. ([downtown Houston Spring Magazine](#))

The **Houston Business Journal** revealed its real estate project finalists for the **2020 Landmark Awards** this March. Every year, numerous real estate construction and development projects are completed across the Houston area, impacting all industries in the metro. But there are always some that stand out above the others. As a result, the *Houston Business Journal's* Landmark Awards recognize real estate projects that make a significant impact on Houston and help sculpt the look, feel and image of the city. Its panel of judges narrowed down the finalists to 51 projects in 19 categories for this year's awards and several Downtown construction projects were included among them. In the Education category is the \$80 million **University of Houston-Downtown Sciences & Technology Building** (201 Girard). The 114,500 square foot building was designed by Kirksey Architecture and built by general contractor, Vaughan Construction. The 195-room **AC Hotel Downtown** (723 Main) was included in two categories, Historic renovation and Hospitality. The hotel was redeveloped into the hotel by Dallas-based NewcrestImage. The building was first built in 1914 as the headquarters of Gulf Oil and many elements were kept, from the facade to the doors leading to the guest rooms and features a 3,650-square-foot Zoe Ballroom formerly the site of a silent movie theater. Also, up for winning in Hospitality is the 354-room **C. Baldwin, Curio Collection by Hilton** (400 Dallas), the former DoubleTree Hotel, which had a complete renovation BOP Houston Hotel LLC which chose Rottet Studio as the interior designer. For Office Tower, Downtown's 1.5 million square-foot **Bank of America Tower** (800 Capitol) made the list. The 36-story building, designed by Gensler and developed by Skanska USA, was completed in June 2019. Rounding out the Downtown 2020 finalists are **2 Houston Center** (909 Fannin) for Project Lease on completing the details on Houston-based Direct Energy's relocation from Greenway Plaza in its new 105,578 square foot office lease with Brookfield Properties; the new 15,059 square foot **Guard and Grace** for Restaurant in One Allen Center (500 Dallas) designed by Boss Architecture; the 1,362 **Bike Vault at 609 Main**, the 48-story tower completed in 2017 by Houston-based Hines; and last, law firm, **Kirkland & Ellis LLP**, for its Workplace interior of 75,000 square feet designed by Rottet Studio located on floors 44-48 of 609 Main Texas. ([HBJ](#))

Q1 2020 Overview

MAJOR OFFICE LEASES (SORTED BY SF)

OFFICE LEASES

TENANT	TYPE	BUILDING TO	BUILDING FROM	FINAL SQUARE FOOTAGE
Enterprise Products Partners	Renewal/Expansion	Enterprise Plaza (1100 Louisiana)		512,845 (including 2019 expansion: 22,301)
Summit Midstream Partners	New to Downtown/ Sublease	910 Louisiana		48,632
Mitsubishi International Corporation	Renewal	LyondellBasell Tower (1221 McKinney)		45,838
Cheniere Energy, Inc.	Expansion	Pennzoil Place – North Tower (700 Milam)		33,127
DLA Piper	Relocation/Expansion	Texas Tower (845 Texas)	Wells Fargo Plaza (1000 Louisiana)	31,843
Chevron	Expansion	1600 Smith		23,699
Plains All American Pipeline, L.P.	Expansion	Three Allen Center (333 Clay)		23,172
Phelps Dunbar, LLP	Relocation/Sublease	910 Louisiana	One Allen Center (500 Dallas)	11,885
Set Solutions, Inc.	New to Downtown	Esperson Building (808 Travis)	1800 West Loop South	11,480
Kirby, Mathews & Walrath, P.L.L.C.	Renewal	Esperson Building (808 Travis)		10,511
Korn Ferry International	Relocation in same building	700 Louisiana		8,130
Jeff Diamont PC	Renewal	2 Houston Center (909 Fannin)		5,242

Sources: Houston Office – 2020 Quarterly 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
Adair Downtown	Wells Fargo Plaza (1000 Louisiana)
Brasa's Brazilian Steakhouse	705 Main
Finn Hall at The Jones on Main	
Lit Chicken	712 Main
Papalo Taqueria	
Underground Hall	
Beer Market Co.	
Crisp	
Don Juan Taco & Ceviche Bar	1010 Prairie
Hotline Burger	
Traacherous Leches	
Wokker	
Understory Food Hall	
Farro	Bank of America Tower (800 Capitol)
Watever Fresh	Bravery Chef Hall (409 Travis)
RETAIL	ADDRESS
Paloma Nail Salon	C. Baldwin Hotel (400 Dallas)

RESTAURANT & RETAIL COMING SOON*

BARS & RESTAURANTS	ADDRESS
Finn Hall at The Jones on Main	
Pho Binh	712 Main
Mendocino Farms Sandwich Market	Allen Center (1200 Smith)
Sweetgreen	820 Main
Understory Food Hall	
Common Bond Café & Bakery (April 2020)	Bank of America Tower (800 Capitol)
RETAIL	ADDRESS
The Argyle League	Bank of America Tower (800 Capitol)

*Based on known projects

Spotlight on Downtown Houston

LOCAL MEDIA

January 8, 2020

GETTING ONE'S KICKS AT ROSALIE: A LITTLE BIT ABOUT SHRIMP AND DESSERT AT THIS DOWNTOWN ITALIAN RESTAURANT

"Back during the Spring Southern Smoke Festival in 2019, I watched as chef Chris Cosentino basically dumped a bunch of humongous grilled shrimp on a platter. They were going to have a kick. "From the devil," he said, translating the key sauce ingredient "fra diavolo . . ." The rustic dish instantly relaxed me, though if I'm being fair, Cosentino's extremely casual nature helped a little, too. Rosalie, the chef's big Houston debut, expands on that personal, casual touch in a very cute setting—shelves filled with boxy televisions, poster-sized magazines, and other remnants of the 1970s—patterned after his grandmother's house in Providence, Rhode Island, which has one of the best Italian food scenes in America. You're getting the family sit-down experience, just in chic digs with a whole roulette of servers and professionals stopping by every few minutes to check in and chat. It's as homey as a sparkling downtown hotel's restaurant can be. There are plenty of dishes to highlight from the kitchen at Rosalie (helmed by executive chef Sasha Grumman), but I really enjoy that shrimp, hidden under a forest of herbs and curled red onions and lain atop a much thinner version of that spicy fra diavolo sauce that recalls Korean chili oil . . . Afterward, the well-balanced tiramisu from pastry chef Valerie Trasatti provides the perfect contrast. There are a lot of after-dinner drinks (even an after-dinner beer pairing), plus fun cocktails for before the meal. While it's in the ritzy C. Baldwin Hotel and looks marvelous, it's just a casual, homestyle restaurant that's doing a lot of things well ... with a little kick. —[Houstonia Magazine](#)

January 13, 2020

BEST OF DOWNTOWN© 2020: BEST GROCERY STORE, PHOENICIA SPECIALTY FOODS DOWNTOWN MARKET

"Downtown Houston isn't exactly a food desert, but any glimpse of a grocery store with fresh produce and protein selections might be a mirage if it's not Phoenicia Specialty Foods on Austin. There are options on the outskirts of the city center—a nearby Heights-area Kroger or Whole Foods and Randall's in Midtown—but Phoenicia has steadily been the walking distance, full-service market for downtown's denizens. The store's upside is more than location, location, location. It's family-run by folks who made their mark in an era when family-operated specialty grocers ruled Houston's retail grocery market. Its offerings are upscale enough for serious epicures and the place is homey for regulars who know the store's staff members by name. Phoenicia's Downtown Market boasts fresh produce, a butcher shop, an array of prepared foods, a delectable bakery selection and a catering service. It's also home to MKT Bar, a gastropub featuring international fusion foods, craft beer and wine, and expertly curated music events featuring some of the city's best-loved musicians. The store and bar make Phoenicia a hub for downtown Houston's rapidly growing residential ranks." —[Houston Press](#)

February 5, 2020

THE BEST NEW RESTAURANTS IN HOUSTON: #1. THE BLIND GOAT

"Chef Christine Ha's palate is so keen, her ingredients so carefully sourced that her affordable new Vietnamese gastropub fairly shines. Ha competed (and won) "MasterChef" as "The Blind Cook," wrote a well-received cookbook and traveled the world for the State Department as a culinary ambassador. Now she's home in a counter setting at downtown's sleek Bravery Chef Hall, supervising a talented young crew that looks like 21st-century Houston. Her dishes are a revelation, from the simplest, meaty pork-belly skewers to spring rolls swaddling Grant Pinkerton's smoked brisket, slivers of green apple and a stealth crunch of eggroll skin. The Vietnamese pizza—based on two sheets of charcoal-grilled rice paper, to be cut apart with golden scissors—is an entertaining idea Ha brought back from her last trip to Saigon, where "all the kids" were eating it. Want wine or beer? Hop across the aisle to Bravery's excellent wine bar. It all feels fun and refreshing—a shove against the boundaries of where and how serious food can be served. Better yet, in one frisky leap, the Blind Goat stretches the notion of what contemporary Houston Vietnamese cuisine can be." —[Houston Chronicle](#)

Spotlight on Downtown Houston

LOCAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)

March 14, 2020

FOOD HALL REPLACING CONSERVATORY IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON OPENED IN LESS THAN 2 MONTHS

"Between his stints as director of marketing for the Salt N Pepper Group and director of hospitality Buffalo Bayou Brewing Co., Daut Elshani is no stranger many parts of Houston's food scene. Now, he's heading something totally foreign to him: Houston's newest food hall. Underground Hall opened March 2. . . Elshani pivoted to the Underground project, which took over the former Conservatory space at 1010 Prairie St., immediately after Buffalo Bayou Brewing's massive new facility wrapped up. He went in with a very limited budget—\$75,000, which became \$100,000—and had to finish within seven weeks to not go over. That means limited renovations, hiring and training staff, adding food vendors and more all had to be done in less than two months. Underground Hall ended up with five food vendors in total, not including two Elshani-owned bars . . . Alli Genoway is the head bartender for the two bars. On Sundays, Conservatory used to have \$1 champagne shots, and Elshani will continue to the tradition thanks to strong demand. Underground Hall is a little under 7,000 square feet, with a patio upstairs. It has a 200-person seating capacity. Elshani has hired 12 people, mostly bartenders as well as bussers and janitorial. He's looking to hire more." —Houston Business Journal

March 26, 2020

HEALTHY-EATING RESTAURANT TURNS OVER A NEW LEAF IN DOWNTOWN'S FOOD HALL

"The greatest economic crisis in the history of American restaurants may not seem like an ideal time to open a new business, but Watever Fresh isn't an ordinary restaurant. Located in Bravery Chef Hall, the new project from chef Martin Weaver (Kuu, Brennan's) replaces Atlas Diner in the popular downtown food hall. Watever Fresh gives Bravery a plant-based concept to balance out some of its more animal-focused offerings like Cherry Block Craft Butcher & Kitchen and Kokoro Sushi. The menu offers a range of choices such as a grilled tofu burger, butternut squash soup, and an arugula and beet salad. Over time, Weaver tells CultureMap that he plans to expand the menu to include lean animal proteins such as HeartBrand and seafood that's low in mercury. Weaver says he intends for dishes like that, as well as items like cauliflower tikka masala and roasted vegetable tacos with gluten-free tortillas, to become staples, but the concept will be flexible. As its name implies, Watever Fresh sources produce from local farmers. If they don't have cauliflower available, Weaver will substitute a different Brassica in its place . . . For now, the concept is still in soft opening mode with a limited menu—it doesn't even have a presence on social media (yet). Diners can order it via the Bravery website for delivery or curbside pickup, and the food hall has been sending food to staff members at St. Luke's hospital who are treating patients with COVID-19. So far, the chef says the feedback has been positive." —Culture Map - Houston

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA

January 2020

THESE FIVE DEVELOPMENTS WILL CHANGE HOUSTON FOREVER A New Decade Means a New Look for the City

Houstonia.

"The Greater Houston area is changing at a rapid pace—so rapid, it's easy to lose the plot. These five major developments, all taking shape over the next couple of years, are set to change the face of the city . . . Downtown Launchpad. Location: Downtown. Major players: Central Houston, Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Gensler Architects. What it is: An anchor of the upcoming 4-mile Innovation District spanning downtown to the Med Center, this start-up incubator will take up the 10th floor of the Amegy Bank building. Why it matters: Hundreds of entrepreneurs will cycle through every four months to develop start-ups that could address climate change, advance medicine, and more. Why we're excited: We don't know what the future of tech looks like, but Houston aims to be a vital part of it between the Launch Pad, Rice's Ion, and the TMCx. Fun fact: Two of America's top accelerators, MassChallenge and gener8tor, were recruited to anchor the 17,000-square-foot Launch Pad. The Cannon Houston will also run two floors of co-working space at Amegy, a "virtual village" where start-ups can land post-Launch Pad. Construction status: Almost finished. Opening date: Spring 2020 . . . Lynn Wyatt Square for the Performing Arts. Location: Downtown Theater District. Major players: Houston First, Rios Clementi Hale Studios Architects. What it is: A \$29 million facelift for Jones Plaza. Why it matters: The square will anchor the bustling Theater District, host performances on its new lawn. Why we're excited: The dazzling water features, great for selfies. Fun fact: Wyatt donated \$10 million to the project—hence the naming rights. Construction status: Starts summer 2020. Opening date: Summer 2021." —**Gwendolyn Knapp**

January 2020

THE BEST PET-FRIENDLY HOTELS IN HOUSTON

Forbes

"With an expansive culinary scene (some studies claim that Houstonians eat out more than residents of any other city) and a permanent place in the hearts of space lovers everywhere, Houston has plenty to offer travelers. The country's fourth largest city, more than 22 million visitors head to Space City annually, and the number continues to climb each year. Though most of the city's top hotels are located in a centralized area, there's a Texas-size number to choose from; if you're bringing your pet along for your own urban exploration, use this list of the best pet-friendly hotels in Houston to make the most important decision of your trip. Hotel Icon: Inside the former Union National Bank [220 Main], converted in 2004 to Hotel ICON, this Autograph Collection property from Marriott is a symbol of Houston's successes in both business and hospitality (don't miss the original vault located behind the check-in desk). While here, cash in on the hotel's exceptional service and impressive bathrooms. For \$150 per stay, one dog or cat up to 35 pounds is welcome to join you . . . JW Marriott Houston Downtown: Immerse yourself in true Houston culture at the JW Marriott Houston Downtown [806 Main]. A Houston-themed restaurant and a collection of paintings and sculptures by local artists will envelop you in true Houston influence as you recharge in style within the city's first skyscraper (saved from uncertain fate by the hotel). Bring up to two cats and/or dogs along for this stylish stay for a \$125 per-stay fee." —**Brandon Schultz**

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)

February 2020

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

A DESIGN LOVER'S GUIDE TO HOUSTON

EXPLORE THE CITY'S BEST HOTELS, THINGS TO DO, RESTAURANTS, BARS, AND SHOPS

"Locals joke that Houston is 15 minutes from Houston. But dig a little deeper and you'll find emerging neighborhoods, a thriving community of artists, swanky new hotels, and an incredible restaurant scene. "It's an exciting place to live because it's ever shifting and moving," says Diane Gelman, a local artist with a studio in the Silos at Sawyer Yards . . . The hippest new hotel, though, has got to be C. Baldwin, a member of Hilton's Curio Collection. Opened downtown in October, the property is named for Charlotte Baldwin Allen—Houston's unsung female cofounder, who made the city what it is—and her spirit pervades every detail. Two female designers, Lauren Rottet of Rottet Studio and Kate Rohrer of Rohe Creative, collaborated on the interiors. The signature restaurant, Rosalie, is dedicated to chef Chris Cosentino's grandmother. The hotel is even home to a soon-to-open women's membership club called The Parlor, which features a gorgeous design replete with crystal chandelier, floral-patterned bar stools, and a full bar for members and their guests . . . Discovery Green, a 12-acre park opened in 2008, hosts site-specific art installations like Paloma, a series of 200 aluminum origami-inspired birds illuminated by LEDs that hang from the trees . . . Denver's upscale steakhouse Guard and Grace recently opened a location downtown. Diners seated in the plush booths above the sunken open kitchen can watch as chefs deftly prepare sushi and steaks. Top Chef Masters winner Chris Cosentino recently made his Houston debut with Rosalie, the chic restaurant in C. Baldwin dedicated to his grandmother, a first-generation immigrant from Italy. In a vintage-inspired, homey space designed by Kate Rohrer, he serves Neapolitan pizzas, pastas, and other Italian comfort food." —**Laura Itzkowitz**

February 2020



HOUSTON GUIDE: WHERE TO EAT, DRINK, SHOP AND STAY IN SPACE CITY

"Houston, we have a problem. Or rather, we did have a problem. For years, outsiders dismissed the oil-rich Texas city as nothing more than a sprawling jumble of asphalt freeways, neat suburban homes and bland corporate HQs that only David Brent would get excited about. In recent years, however, the Bayou City has unbuttoned its shirt, polished its boots and started to have fun. The 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 lunar landings in 2019 brought a palpable buzz to the city. But Nasa's Johnson Space Centre, which acted as command-post for 1969's epochal Eagle-has-landed mission, isn't Houston's only claim to fame. It's also, lest we forget, the city that gave us HRH Beyoncé (in Downtown Queen Bey's lyrics adorn banners in the streets). And aside from that, the city has plenty of cultural charms to sample. Here are some of the best . . . Where to stay: Houston attracts lots of business travelers during the week, but this means hotel rates drop dramatically at weekends. Pick of Downtown digs is Hotel Alessandra, all fanatically polished marble decor, Art Deco furnishings and martini carts ordered to your room. The rooftop pool, with its sweeping skyline views and ledge-loungers that are semi-submerged in the water, offers a much-needed sanctuary from Houston's subtropical summers (in August the mercury surges to 35C). . . Hotel Magnolia was built in 1926 and was previously the HQ for the Houston Post Dispatch and Shell. Unlike other chic boutique lodgings, its complimentary bedtime cookies and convivial happy hour lend a welcoming vibe, as does its raffish library and billiards room." —**Christian Koch**

REGIONAL & GLOBAL MEDIA (CONTINUED)



February 2020

URBAN LAND INSTITUTE HOUSTON ANNOUNCES 2020 DEVELOPMENT OF DISTINCTION WINNERS

"Houston's most compelling and innovative real estate projects were recognized by the Houston District Council of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) at the annual Development of Distinction Awards presented by Wilson, Cribbs and Goren. In the Heritage Category, the 2020 award went to The Jones on Main, originally by Jesse H. Jones, and redeveloped by Lionstone Investments and Midway. At the beginning of the last century, the 700 block of Main Street was the most prestigious in downtown and The Gulf Oil building was its crowning jewel. The second act of the renovated 700 block of Main Street is in full swing and better than its first. With the addition of contemporary amenities, such as Finn Hall, historical features such as the great banking hall, and multi-modal access, the property has become one of the hippest places in downtown. Finn Hall, a food hall in the former Sakowitz department store space in 712 Main St., brought a vital component needed to continue downtown Houston's evolution into a 24/7 "live + work + play" place, operating 7 days a week, early morning to late night, bringing life to the street. In the For-Profit Category (large*), the 2020 award went to Bank of America Tower, by Skanska USA Commercial Development. Bank of America Tower, downtown Houston's latest high-rise office building, and the first building in the US to receive a LEED Platinum v4 core and shell certification, features a wide variety of first-class amenities including a light-filled triple-height space with next generation retail and unique restaurant concepts. The development offers its tenants, as well as all downtown Houston, a gathering space to meet, collaborate and work outside the office. The design element that has changed the fabric of downtown life is the Understory, the building's 30,000 SF public space and culinary market, open seven days a week, day and night." —ULI Houston

March 2020



MIKE YARDLEY: SKY-HIGH AND UNDERGROUND IN HOUSTON

"Everything seems bigger in the Lone Star State and Houston is no exception. It's a sprawling cosmopolitan metropolis with a serrated skyline of glittering high-rises. Basing myself in the Downtown District, my Houston roost was the charming Magnolia Hotel, a 22-storey old-timer, clad in Indiana limestone proudly towering over Texas Avenue . . . To shake off the jetlag, I stretched my legs on Main Street, ablaze in azaleas and the spring serenade of blooming tulips. I made my way through the historical district, abuzz with characterful bars, creative libations and designer mixology. Strolling through Market Square Park, giant colourful murals adorned the sides of many buildings. The following morning, the day dawned to swirling fog garlanding the skyscrapers. Houston's biggest boy, the 60-storey JPMorgan Chase Tower, had seemingly been cut in half. In a city swathed in an abundance of green spaces, I tootled down to Houston's crown jewel, Buffalo Bayou Park. It was dreamy spot to spectate the ongoing battle for supremacy between the tall towers and the curtain of fog. It's such an inviting park, laced in undulating trails, grassy plateaus framed by trees, bike and kayak rentals, and stacked with eye-grabbing art installations—from the Dandelion fountain to the six 4-foot-tall "Monumental Moments" sculptures along the Kinder Footpaths . . . In a city that has fostered a red-hot culinary reputation, admittedly I gorged myself on Houston You won't have to look far to get your fill of Texas barbeque. Houston falls into Southeast Texas style barbeque. Slow-cooked beef brisket, pork ribs and sausage, generally served with minimal sauce or none at all . . . Another stand-out was Lucienne, a relative newcomer to Houston's ever-evolving high-end dining scene. Situated in the sleek Hotel Alessandra, Lucienne has stamped its mark on the food landscape since opening just over a year ago. Sophisticated and stylish, Art Deco touches meet mid-century character in this elegant restaurant, suffused in chic European personality . . . Another new boy in town turning a lot of heads is Guard and Grace. Troy Guard's steakhouse debuted in Denver and branched out to Houston just before Christmas. The two-storey space is contemporary, welcoming and bathed in natural light . . . Air New Zealand flies six times a week to Houston, an ideal gateway into the American South . . ." —Mike Radley, AAP New Zealand

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[Downtown Development Map and Building Renderings – March 2020](#)

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[Downtown Residential Building List – March 2020](#)

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[Downtown Hotel Property List – January 2020](#)

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