



ONE *for* ALL

OCTOBER 2020 | ISSUE #3



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HCP1.NET

MESSAGE FROM YOUR COMMISSIONER



Commissioner Rodney Ellis and staff distribute free masks at the Community of Faith, one of many events that continue throughout Precinct One to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Dear Friend,

A healthy community depends on everyone doing their part, and that includes participating in our democracy. This has never been more important than this year, when the election promises to be one of the most important of our lifetimes.

Our country is at a pivotal moment. This year has brought unprecedented challenges for every one of us. The leaders that we choose in November will determine how we navigate through these challenges—an ongoing pandemic, an economic recession, and a long overdue important and necessary racial reckoning. We must not forget what is at stake in this election.

The late Congressman John Lewis said, **“The right to vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have in a democracy.”** For living proof of this—we have to look no further than Harris County. Last year, we approved a historic settlement to overhaul Harris County’s unconstitutional and unsafe cash bail system. Following the killing of George Floyd, we pushed forward a new set of criminal justice reforms that builds civilian oversight of the police and invests in alternatives to policing that focus on public safety and the over-criminalization of our communities of color.

Building on these social and racial gains, and continuing to work for racial equity depend on Harris County turning out to vote. In 2016, just 60.5% of Harris County’s over 2 million registered voters participated in the election. **Don’t let others determine the future of your community.** Use that powerful tool to continue the fight for justice.

This November, we want every eligible Harris County resident to participate in our democracy. Your voice can help determine our future. Make sure it gets heard! If you are not registered to vote, go to HarrisVotes.org to learn how you can. If you are registered, make a plan to vote by finding your closest polling location. Then decide if you will vote early beginning on **October 13** or cast your ballot on Election Day, **November 3**. Experts are predicting record turnout so be sure to make your plan to vote today.

“To form a more perfect union. Explicit in those words is the idea that we’re imperfect. That what gives each new generation purpose is to take up the unfinished work of the last and carry it further than any might have thought possible.”

— President Barack Obama

Let’s form a more perfect union together. Vote.

Rodney Ellis

EIGHT MONTHS IN: COVID-19 Equitable Testing & Recovery



EMERGENCY DIRECT ASSISTANCE FUND



\$70 million

RENTAL ASSISTANCE



\$40 million

SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF FUND



\$40 million

It seems like a lifetime ago since the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in our community in March. In the eight months since then, our most vulnerable residents have been the ones who have been hardest hit. Our country's existing inequalities across socioeconomic status, race, and gender have been made worse by the combined public health and economic crisis, which is why we must step up to help working families weather this crisis.

Relief Programs

Every resident deserves to be able to sleep knowing that their basic needs are met. Because families have different needs during this time – from food to health care to mortgages – Precinct One has advocated for direct assistance to low-income families. With the creation of the \$40M **Emergency Direct Assistance Fund**, we have now allocated a total of \$70M in direct assistance to ensure that those who are most vulnerable don't go without basic needs like shelter, food, and health care. The program, which has already provided relief to over 20,000 households, will provide an additional \$1,200 to another 30,000 eligible households.

But we know that the need is even greater than the reach of these two programs, which is why we also allocated \$40M for **rental assistance** and are working to expand legal assistance to help prevent evictions. Having a place to shelter is always important, but during a global pandemic it can be the difference between life and death.

Small businesses are the backbone of Harris County's economy, and the pandemic has hit them especially hard. The **Small Business Relief Fund** was designed to provide grants of up to \$25,000 for the most vulnerable Harris County small and micro businesses that have been impacted by the pandemic. The program launched in July and will provide more than \$7.5M in assistance to small businesses in Precinct One.

Equitable Testing Strategy

The COVID-19 outbreak is compounding the existing financial, health, food, and economic challenges of low-income persons and communities of color. Many in these communities have had difficulties obtaining testing for COVID-19. As a result, Harris County Public Health is implementing a four-part Equitable Testing Strategy that prioritizes people and places with the highest risk of contracting COVID-19.

The strategy will focus on testing efforts in ZIP codes with higher infection rates; expand testing capacity through non-Harris County testing centers, including Federally Qualified Health Centers; increase community-level outreach and education with the help of faith-based organizations and other frequently visited community partners; and expand linkage to other resources within the community.

Our teams will keep working to find fair and equitable solutions to the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presents to our community and to help stop the spread.

RACIAL JUSTICE: RECKONING WITH OUR PAST & CREATING NEW SYSTEMS TO MOVE HARRIS COUNTY FORWARD

Systemic racism has plagued our country's institutions, policies, and programs for far too long. Across the country, people are mobilizing for racial justice, standing up to say **enough** discrimination, **enough** violence, and **enough** unnecessary suffering for people of color.

Precinct One stands in solidarity with those advocating for racial justice and is committed to creating new systems that move us toward a future with true equity and justice.

RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Racism impacts every social determinant of health and leads to inequities in life expectancy, wealth, incarceration rates, maternal and infant deaths, asthma, cancer and dementia, among other factors. Recently, Harris County joined more than 20 other cities and counties across the country to declare racism a public health crisis. This allows us to treat this problem with the level of urgency it deserves. We must consider how structural racism exists in our current policies and programs to ensure that we are advancing racial equity.

UNISON ROAD

Our nation is experiencing a watershed moment. In response to the protests and discussions that are occurring across the nation about systemic racism against Black Americans, monuments to Confederate leaders are being banned, removed and transformed as the country takes tentative steps forward in the pursuit to eradicate white supremacy.



Commissioner Ellis helps with installation of new signs for Unison Road.

Removing the vestiges of racism in our public sphere can also mean literally changing our street signs. A few weeks ago, the Precinct One team officially installed new signs for the renamed "Unison Road." The road was previously named after Confederate General Robert E. Lee, who led an army that fought

to protect the institution of slavery. We cannot move forward without removing symbols that honor the legacy of white supremacy.

OFFICE OF THE ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATOR

National elections experts agree that one county office solely dedicated to our democratic process is the best way to ensure that everyone's right to vote is protected, and that elections are properly run the best way. Following the 2020 election, Harris County will create the Harris County Elections Administrator office, **which will appropriately elevate the importance of elections and demonstrate the vital need to have those elections expertly overseen.** Our current elections system, which splits our county's election duties between two offices, the County Clerk and the Tax Assessor Collector, does not allow for streamlining the electoral process, and is a relic of Jim Crow when voters were required to pay a poll tax to the Tax Assessor-Collector before being allowed to vote. With the creation of the Harris County Elections Administrator office, our elections will be a year-round priority.



SAFE VOTE

S.A.F.E. ELECTIONS: PROTECTING YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE SAFELY

We know that in order for everyone to vote, we need to ensure that everyone can do so safely and securely. The right to vote should not put you or your loved ones at risk. We are expecting record turnout for this critical election, which is why we are working with different community partners to plan ahead and ensure that Harris County has SAFE elections this November. **Your Harris County Clerk, local election judges, clerks, and poll workers are providing an essential service for our democracy. Thank them for their service!**

The **S.A.F.E. Elections Plan** will make the 2020 general election **Safe, Accessible, Fair and Efficient** for all. The plan provides additional funding for **24 initiatives**, including **vote-by-mail outreach and support, expanding voting locations during Early Vote and on Election Day, drive-through voting options at some polling locations, PPE for election workers and voters**, as well as a **call center for voters** who have questions or concerns about how to cast their ballots.

Voting may look a little different this year, but rest assured that we are taking the steps so that you can stay safe while you exercise your right to vote in November. Thanks to the NBA for offering their arenas across the country as voting centers this year. In Harris County, the Toyota Center and NRG Arena will both be voting centers, offering drive-through voting to minimize the risk of COVID- 19. Be sure to look up the voting location that is most convenient for you. **Voting starts soon!**



- NRG Arena Blue Lot 16
- Toyota Center Parking Garage
- Fallbrook Church
- Kingdom Builders Center
- Houston Food Bank
- HCC West Loop
- HCC Alief/Bissonett
- Humble Civic Center
- Resurrection MCC



- NRG Arena
- Kashmere Gardens Multi-Service Center
- McGovern Texas Medical Center Commons
- East Harris County Activity Center
- Tracy Gee Community Center
- Juergen's Hall Community Center
- Victory Gardens

HarrisVotes.com

Voting Help Line (713)755-6965



- ✓ Free PPE provided at polling locations!
- ✓ More polling locations added!
- ✓ Vote by Mail if you qualify!
- ✓ Drive-thru voting!

OCTOBER 13 – 30
Early Voting

Vote at any Harris County polling location!

FRIDAY • OCTOBER 23
Deadline to request a mail ballot

The application for Ballot by Mail must be received by the Clerk by October 23rd. It is insufficient to postmark it by that day. The application may be faxed to the Clerk by 5pm on October 23rd, but the original document with the applicant's signature must be received within four days after the fax. Fax: (713)755-4983 or (713)437-8683

TUESDAY • NOVEMBER 3
Election Day. Vote at any Harris County polling location!

Save these very important dates on your calendar and tell everyone you know!

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Structural racism and inequality continually pushes low-income, people of color, and women to the bottom rung of the economic ladder. In order to achieve true economic justice, we must ensure that minorities, women, and other disadvantaged groups have fair access to economic opportunity.

In Harris County, a disparity study commissioned two years ago by Commissioners Court revealed that minority- and women-owned businesses do not have fair access to county contracting and procurement.

The study found:

- **9.1%** of Harris County's contracts are with minority or women-owned businesses
- **4.6%** to Latinx-owned businesses
- **0.6%** to Asian-owned firms
- **0.5%** of contract dollars go to Black-owned businesses

The study also found disparities in wages, business earnings, and business formation rates for minorities and women in all industry sectors in the county's marketplace.

These results demonstrate the need for Harris County to create a minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) program.

MWBEs play a vital role in our community and are driving the growth of new businesses and jobs in our economy. Advancing fair and inclusive economic policies to bolster their long-term success will help create wealth and jobs across our entire community.

To create additional opportunities for underrepresented groups, later this year Harris County will open the **Office of Economic Equity and Opportunity**. The office will implement economic policies and initiatives focused on fair and equitable county contracting, workforce development, community business programs, community-based economic tax incentives, and workers' rights.

At the request of Precinct One, the Commissioners Court Analysis Office prepared a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) report to examine how different racial and ethnic groups are affected by a proposed action or decision. These tools will allow the County to reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequity across all of our programs and policies.

As our country grapples with systemic racism and inequality, we must address disparities across our county government, and ensure that we are being proactive to advance economic equity. Read the entire study at <http://bit.ly/DisparityStudy>



HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: SHARED STRUGGLES, SHARED POWER

The fight for equity and justice has always been a shared struggle. This has been made especially apparent during this pandemic, as both Black and Latinx communities continue to be the hardest hit during this public health and economic crisis. But shared struggles can also help us build shared power.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize and celebrate our many leaders of Hispanic/Latinx origin, who have fought for us to build that shared power.

People like **Dolores Huerta** and **César Chávez**, whose leadership in the labor movement secured important gains for every worker, and who will

be featured in Precinct One's Moving Monuments bus series, which you will be able to see moving around Harris County soon.

Of course, Hispanic/Latinx leaders are not just in our past, they are our present and future. From the art world, where muralist **Erik del Rio** alias

"Colors Oner" paints our streets with his colorful designs—to the nonprofit world, where people like **César Espinosa** are rising up to serve our community through groups like FIEL Houston. We are lucky to have so many outstanding residents of Hispanic/Latinx origin in Harris County.

Keep an eye out for the new Precinct One buses featuring Hispanic leaders Dolores Huerta & César Chávez.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Learn about Harris County preparations for a S.A.F.E. November General Election, our continuing COVID-19 relief efforts, results of our county-wide MWBE study and how we're fighting economic racism. You can also read our tribute to Hispanic Heritage Month.



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Facebook: facebook.com/CommissionerPrecinctOne

HARRIS COUNTY SERVICES:

Flood Control District
hfcd.org | 713-684-4000

Public Health
publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov | 713-439-6000

Tax Assessor-Collector & Voter Registrar
htax.net | 713-274-VOTE (8683)

County Clerk
harrisvotes.com | 713-755-6965
clerk.hctx.net | 713-274-8600

Appraisal District
head.org | 713-812-5860

Homeland Security & Emergency Management
readyharris.org | 713-881-3100

For a full list of Harris County Services visit:
[HARRISCOUNTYT.X.GOV](https://harriscountytexas.gov)

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