



GENE WU

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ DISTRICT 137



Issue 24

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017

Dear Friends,

While three months have already passed since Harvey's devastation, many of our neighbors are still struggling to rebuild their lives after the storm. The road to recovery will be long, but if there is a silver lining to the effects of Hurricane Harvey, it's that we've rediscovered that the true strength of Texas is in the people who call our great state home.

The Texas Legislature has a substantial role to play in both current recovery and future preparation efforts related to natural disasters, and this is a major focus of our work this interim. Every committee is focusing on the various ways our state and people have been impacted by the storm, evaluating the response of state agencies, and discussing potential actions the state could take to aid recovery and preparation efforts. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Disaster Impact and Recovery we are examining the use of federal and state resources in recovery and response efforts, and identifying opportunities for state investment in infrastructure projects to reduce the impact of future natural disasters.



Gene and Sharpstown High School students volunteer to help clean up after Harvey.

Due to the historic level of damage caused by Harvey, I am a proponent of tapping our Rainy Day Fund to access emergency funding to help with the recovery and lessen the long-term economic impact of the storm, but we may be waiting until the 2019 legislative session to backfill Harvey-related costs. Between now and then, we will continue to advocate for disaster relief funds and keep you updated on our interim committee work.

For those affected by Harvey, the deadline to register for federal assistance is Thursday, November 30, 2017. More details are provided in our Disaster Assistance section. If you need any help, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

In This Issue...

- Disaster Assistance
- I-69 Southwest/I-610 West Loop Interchange Project
- TDHCA Affordable Rental Housing Development Proposal

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Texans who suffered damage and losses from Hurricane Harvey have until **Thursday, November 30, 2017** to register for disaster assistance.

Visit a **Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)** to speak with a recovery specialist about assistance and get help with applications. **The Bayland Community Center at 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX 77074 is serving as a DRC and open 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM.** To find other DRC locations, visit <https://www.fema.gov/disaster-recovery-centers>.

The graphic is titled "3 Ways to Apply for Disaster Aid" and is divided into three colored sections: ONLINE (green), BY PHONE (light blue), and IN PERSON (dark blue). The ONLINE section shows a smartphone and a laptop with the website "disasterassistance.gov". The BY PHONE section shows a telephone handset and lists the numbers "800-621-3362 (711/Video Relay Service)" and "800-462-7585 (TTY)". The IN PERSON section shows a bus icon and the text "At one of our Disaster Recovery Centers". The FEMA logo is in the bottom right corner.

- **FEMA Disaster Assistance**

All individuals who were impacted by the flood should apply for FEMA assistance, even if you are covered by insurance or have registered with other agencies. FEMA cannot duplicate insurance settlements or other benefits, but there are cases where insured survivors might still be eligible for FEMA help.



Apply by November 30, 2017:

- **Online** at <https://www.disasterassistance.gov/>, **by phone** at 1-800-621-3362 (TTY 1-800-462-7585 for the speech/hearing-impaired) or **in person** at a DRC.

- **SBA Disaster Loans**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is the federal government's primary source of money to help Texans recover from damage caused by Hurricane Harvey. SBA has approved more than \$1.2 billion in loans to more than 1,300 applicants. About 80% of these loans are for homeowners and renters.



The types of disaster loans available:

- **Homeowners**—up to \$200,000 for home, + \$40,000 for personal property including cars, start at 1.75 interest, up to 30 years
- **Renters**—up to \$40,000 for personal property including cars, start at 1.75% interest, up to 30 years
- **All size businesses (including landlords)**—up to \$2 million, start at 3.3% interest for up to 30 years
- **Private nonprofits (such as churches and charities)**—up to \$2 million, start at 2.5% interest for up to 30 years

Apply by November 30, 2017:

- Online at <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/>, request a paper application by calling 1-800-659-2955 (TTY: 1-800-877-8339), or in person at a DRC.



Photos from various Harvey-related recovery efforts in District 137.



Photos from various Harvey-related recovery efforts in District 137.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE *(continued)*

- **Disaster Unemployment Assistance**

- Workers who have lost jobs and self-employed individuals who have been unable to work due to Hurricane Harvey may apply for unemployment benefits through the Texas Workforce Commission. For more information or to apply online visit ui.texasworkforce.org or call 1-877-892-3896 (TTY: 1-800-735-2989).



- **Property Assistance**

- **Insurance claims** - The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) has advice on what to do if your home or auto was damaged by Harvey, the insurance claims process and contractor fraud prevention. Call the TDI consumer help line and call center at 1-800-252-3439 or visit <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/consumer/storms/helpafterharvey.html>.
- **Report home flood damage** - We want to identify every house that flooded in Harris County. Report home flood damage by visiting readyharris.org and click on the bright red link with an exclamation point!
- **Home Buyout Program** - Home buyouts are used by the Harris County Flood Control District to reduce flood damages in areas hopelessly deep in the floodplain. Interested homeowners should submit a "Notice of Voluntary Interest Form" and can find out more information here: <https://www.hcfdc.org/hurricane-harvey/home-buyout-program/>. For questions about the home buyout program, including eligibility criteria, grant application status, the buyout process, and relocation assistance, call the Home Buyout Hotline at 713-684-4020 or 713-684-4035.



- **Local Assistance - Call 2-1-1**

- The **Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund** is focused on immediate and long-term relief efforts in Harris County and Houston. Because of the immense need, this Fund is dedicated to filling the gaps that are not met by local and federal efforts. Mayor Turner and Judge Emmett established the fund with a 12-member advisory board, which includes five members appointed by each the city and the county. The Fund has so far raised over \$100 million and are distributing the money in phases to local non-profit organizations to provide services and support to flood victims. **If you are an individual seeking assistance, please call 2-1-1 to be connected with local disaster assistance organizations offering relief efforts to Harvey victims.** Many of the grant recipients are well-known non-profits in District 137!

Keep up with updates and resources by visiting our local disaster recovery websites:

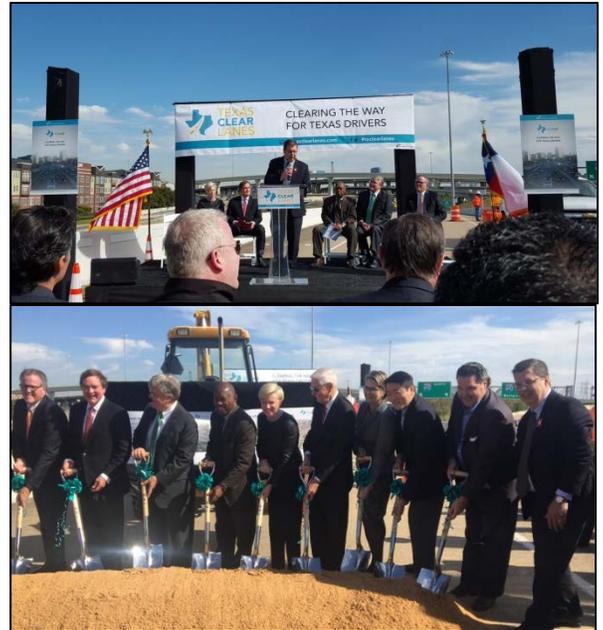
- **City of Houston** - HoustonRecovers.org
- **Harris County** - HarrisRecovery.org
- The Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management created a **Harvey Recovery Guide** that we've been using to help constituents in need. The guide is available in English and in Spanish and can be found on the home page of their website at readyharris.org.

I-69 SOUTHWEST/I-610 WEST LOOP INTERCHANGE PROJECT

The Texas Department of Transportation held a groundbreaking ceremony to announce the beginning of construction improvements for the number one most congested segment of roadway in Texas: the I-69 Southwest/I-610 West Loop Interchange. Rep. Wu joined federal, state and local officials to celebrate the project to improve safety and mobility and reduce congestion.

The upcoming interchange rebuild was accelerated by voter-approved transportation spending in 2015 as part of Proposition 7. The I-69/I-610 interchange is a major connection point of two extremely busy highways serving the Greater Houston area. The \$259 million project will improve safety and mobility while reducing congestion by widening the connector ramps to two lanes, increasing sight distances, and providing remedies to eliminate weaving. The project also calls for adding shoulders on the I-610 West Loop mainlane bridge over I-69 and adding detention ponds.

Utilities work has already started, with construction and detour and major lane closure activities set to begin in February 2018.



Questions/Comments? Email: HOU-PIOWebMail@txdot.gov or call TxDOT Houston Office: (713) 802-5076.

TDHCA AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL



The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) received an application from Dalcor Gessner, Ltd for the Private Activity Bond and Housing Tax Credit (HTC) Programs for the development of affordable rental housing at Vista on Gessner Apartments, 6005-6525 S. Gessner Road, Houston, TX 77036.

Visit TDHCA's website for information about 4% Housing Tax Credit and Private Activity Bond Programs: <https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/multifamily/bond/faqs.htm>

TDHCA works with neighborhood groups, cities, and private developers to enhance affordable housing choice throughout the state. While the State of Texas does not build, own, or manage these properties, TDHCA does have long-term oversight for a minimum of 30 years. Keeping properties as a nice place to live and an asset to the community is a priority. Safe, decent and affordable housing is a basic necessity and our growing population of working, retired, and elderly households deserve increased housing choices.



TDHCA held a public hearing on November 14th in District 137 to discuss the development proposal and the issuance of bonds. Rep. Wu and staff were in attendance to hear community input and learn more about the development, multifamily financing and affordable housing choices for our residents. Built in 1978, Vista on Gessner is an existing development consisting of 805 units that sit on 20.5 acres. If approved, the property would be purchased and rehabbed with an investment of approximately \$30 million for significant exterior and interior upgrades.

TDHCA welcomes and encourages written public comment by December 5th. The TDHCA Board will meet on December 14th in Austin to make a decision on the Vista on Gessner proposal. Please submit comments to Teresa Morales, Multifamily Division Manager, P.O. Box 13941, Austin, TX 78711-3941 or submit by fax to (512) 475-1895. Questions or requests for additional information may be directed to Teresa at (512) 475-33344; and/or teresa.morales@tdhca.state.tx.us.