

MARCH

Newsletter



CREATING A BETTER HOUSTON

Contents



Friends and neighbors,
Happy Spring! March is a fantastic month! Not only do we celebrate women locally , nationally, and internationally, but it is also time for celebration and observance for many of our communities in Houston.
This month many of our Christian families continued with the tradition of Lent which It started in February and will last 40 days. The beginning of March also saw our Hindu community celebrate Holi, the festival of colors. Our Muslim community started observing Ramadan, which will last 29 or 30 days, depending on the lunar calendar. Our Zoroastrian, Ismaili, Persian, and Afghan communities celebrated Nowruz, which marks the new year. Whether you celebrated or observed a religious tradition or not, I hope that you got to enjoy the signs of Spring in our beautiful city.
Our At-Large 4 office was busy this month with constituent concerns and many events. Read on to find out more!

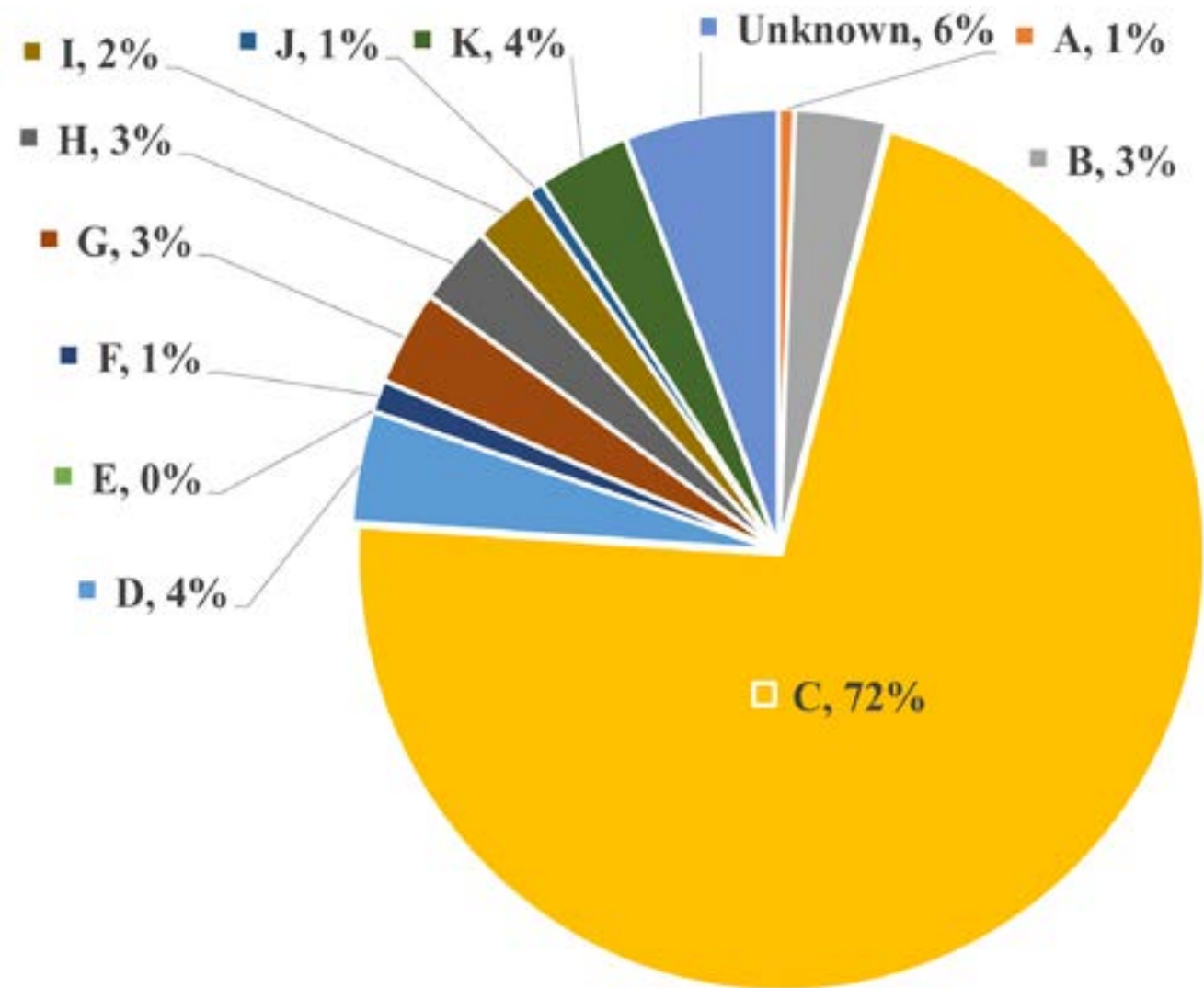
Sincerely,

Council Member Letitia Plummer, DDS
At-Large 4

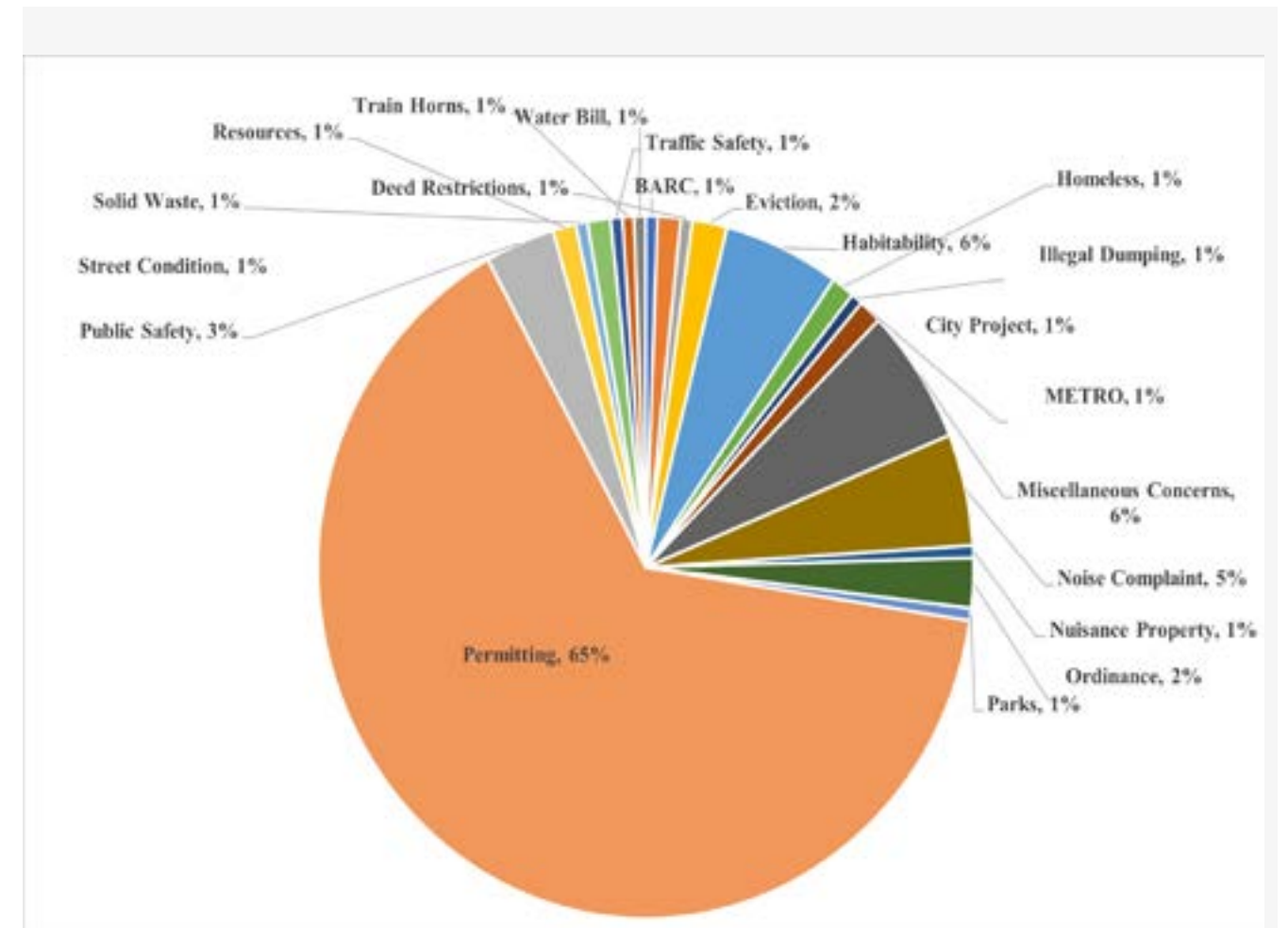
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CONSTITUENT CONCERNS: March

Breakdown by District



Breakdown by Issue



Taking Care of our Constituents

At-Large 4 that takes great pride in taking care of Houston residents. Representing the entire city, At-Large 4 has a unique responsibility to take care of its constituents across all neighborhoods and communities. This includes everything from ensuring that city services are provided equitably to advocating for policies that promote economic opportunity and social justice.

One of the key ways that At-Large 4 takes care of its constituents is by listening to your concerns and responding to your needs.

Please call: 832-393-3012 or email: atlarge4@houstontx.gov and one of the staff will take care of you.

FOOD SECURITY



For several years now, I have been working on Food Security for our constituents. Due to my work and commitment, I was invited by the leaders of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints (LDS) to Utah to see Welfare Square and how LDS has been working to create food security in different parts of the country. Welfare Square in Salt Lake City is a remarkable example of how a faith-based organization can positively impact the lives of individuals and families in need. The complex, which covers an area of approximately 21 acres, is the headquarters of the LDS welfare program. The program is designed to provide food, clothing, and other basic needs to those in need, regardless of their religious affiliation.

One of the main components of Welfare Square is the Bishop's Storehouse which is a vast distribution center that manages the logistics of providing goods to local LDS Church welfare locations, as well as providing emergency supplies during natural disasters and other crises. The storehouse provides a wide range of products, including food, clothing, and household items, to those in need and is also one of the sources where the Houston Food Bank receives its food from on a weekly basis. The storehouse is staffed by volunteers who help to sort and distribute the items to those who require assistance. The storehouse also provides job training and other services to help individuals become self-sufficient. This should be the goal of every welfare organization!

Another vital component of Welfare Square is the Cannery and Bakery. These facilities produce and distribute food to individuals and families in need. The cannery produces canned fruits and vegetables, as well as dry goods such as rice and beans. The bakery produces bread, rolls, and other baked goods. The products are then distributed to Bishop's Storehouses and other welfare locations throughout the United States, including Houston, and around the world. The cannery and bakery also offer opportunities for volunteers to help with production and packaging, and the facilities have become a popular location for community service projects.

Welfare Square also includes a thrift store that sells gently used clothing and household items at affordable prices. The thrift store is staffed by volunteers and is open to the public. The store offers a wide variety of items, including clothing, furniture, and appliances. The proceeds from the store are used to support the welfare program



and provide additional resources to those in need. There are 46 thrift stores that the LDS owns to assist people. Job training is provided at the thrift store location.

In addition to the Bishop's Storehouse, Cannery and Bakery, and thrift store, Welfare Square also includes a large orchard and garden. The orchard and garden provide fresh fruits and vegetables that are used in the production of food products distributed through the welfare program. The orchard and garden are managed by volunteers who help to plant, cultivate, and harvest. Welfare Square is an essential part of the LDS Church's commitment to aiding those in need. The program has been in operation for over 80 years, and its facilities have become an integral part of the Salt Lake City community. The program's success is due in large part to the dedicated volunteers who staff the facilities and provide support to those in need. The program is an inspiring example of how faith-based organizations can make a positive impact in their communities, and it serves as a beacon of hope for those who require assistance. I look forward to working with them.



HOUSTON CULTURE



Museum of Fine Arts – Art of the Islamic Worlds

The Museum of Fine Art recently opened permanent galleries for Art of the Islamic Worlds. The Museum's galleries for art of the Islamic worlds present a selection of Persian masterworks that convey the rich artistic traditions of Iranian civilization from the 7th to 19th century, in exquisite paintings, significant ceramics, precious inlaid metal ware, and finely woven silk fabrics and carpets. The new Afshar galleries nearly double previous display space for Islamic art. Hundreds of objects spanning more than 1,000 years reflect the breadth of historic Islamic lands, including present-day Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan.

New Beginnings Spring Festival

On Sunday, March 5th, the Museum of Fine Arts celebrated the opening of the permanent galleries for Art of the Islamic Worlds. It was a beautiful, inclusive event that reflected the diversity of our city. One of the most memorable parts of this festival



was a collaboration between Jones Family Singers (Gospel singers) and Riyaz Qawwali (South Asian Sufi singers). Their medley of Amazing Grace and a Sufi song praising God had everyone completely mesmerized. Such inspiring collaboration can only happen in a city like ours.

I was honored to give welcome remarks where I congratulated MFAH for such a momentous occasion as well as acknowledging Nowruz, the Persian New Year, which celebrated on the first day of spring. I shared some background on my maternal grandfather who was a Parsi (Zoroastrian) from Mumbai, India. When he lived with us, he would share Nowruz traditions with us.

I enjoyed participating in the many events at the Spring Festival and then visiting the galleries to see the historic collections. Some of the most notable pieces in the collection include the famous Lusterware ceramics from 12th-century Iraq, the ornate engraved 16th-century Turkish weapons, and the gorgeously detailed Persian rugs woven in the 19th century. The gallery is worth a visit to experience the beauty and complexity of Islamic art.

Diversity at its Best

MFAH- Proclamation

I was so impressed with MFAH's effort with the galleries and making them permanent as well as their inclusivity in the very well put together Spring Festival that I thought it would be apt to honor MFAH with a proclamation from Mayor Turner.

Lent

Lent is a Christian observance that begins on Ash Wednesday, which was on February 22nd, and lasts for 40 days, leading up to Easter Sunday. It is a time of repentance, self-denial, and spiritual discipline, intended to prepare believers for the celebration of Christ's resurrection. During Lent, Christians often fast, give up certain luxuries or habits, and engage in acts of charity and prayer. Some of my Council Colleagues and staff are observing Lent have given up various things for Lent.

Holi

The annual Hindu festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm by our Hindu community, as well as many people from different cultures who were eager to join in the colorful festivities. One of the events was at Bellaire-Zindler Park which featured live music, dancing, and plenty of delicious food. People of all ages doused each other in brightly colored powders and water, spreading love, happiness, and positive energy.

Ramadan

Ramadan started on the eve of March 22nd for our Muslim Community and will continue for 29-30 days. This is an important Ramadan time of the year for the Muslim population of Houston. As the fourth largest city in the United States and home to an estimated 400,000 Muslims, Houston embraces this holy month with immense conviction and respect. Many communal iftars take place during

Ramadan, including the Mayor's Iftar which will take place at the beginning of April.

Nowruz

Nowruz, which means "New Day" in Persian, is celebrated by millions around the world on the first day of spring to mark the beginning of a new year. In Houston, the Nowruz festival is one of the most vibrant and joyful celebrations. The Iranian community, Afghan community, Zoroastrian community as well as many others celebrate Nowruz. This year, I celebrated Nowruz with the Zoroastrian Community at the Zoroastrian Association of Houston where I shared my maternal grandfather's history.

My grandfather, Fremrose Bahramji Karai, was from Mumbai, India. When he moved to Houston to live with our family, he continued to observe the traditions of Nowruz which he shared with us. As a child, I remember the aromatic rice and cookies my grandfather would make for us and the stories he would tell about good triumphing over evil. This is one of my most precious memories of my grandfather.



COUNCIL MEMBER LETITIA PLUMMER

In the Community



Forum Park Ribbon Cutting: District J

I supported Mayor Turner and my District J colleague, Council Member Edward Pollard for the grand opening of improvements at Forum Park in the Alief-Westwood Complete Community. These improvements were to Forum Park through joint efforts of the 50/50 Park Partners Program, the General Services Department, and HPARD Facilities Management and include upgrades to the playground, a new illuminated parking lot with 16 spaces, new picnic tables, benches, BBQ grills, water fountains, and new park signage. Congratulations to the community; they will enjoy all the amenities and improvements for years to come.



March on Crime: District J

The March on Crime is an amazing collaboration that brings together members of the community, law enforcement, and community organizations. It is an opportunity for everyone to come together and share ideas, take action and build stronger relationships. I was invited by District J organizations and community members who have worked with our office on many public safety related issues. The March on Crime is a reminder of the importance of taking proactive steps to reduce crime, and to work together as a community to create safer neighborhoods. It is just one example of the many ways that Houston citizens can work together to make a positive and lasting impact on their community.



Rodeo Consular Corp - District K

I was honored to join the Houston Rodeo Consular Core gala and meet leaders from different nations. The Houston Rodeo Consular Corp promotes cultural exchange and understanding among people from

different countries and is made up of consuls and other diplomatic officials who are based in Houston.

TEA Takeover of HISD: District B

In 2019, Texas Education Agency (TEA) Commissioner Mike Morath first moved to take over the district's school board based on allegations of misconduct and low academic performance at Wheatley High School. HISD sued and halted TEA's plans. However, recently Texas Supreme sided with TEA and cleared the way for a takeover.

Dr. Millard House II started as the Superintendent in the fall of 2021 and outlined six commitments which aligned to the district's goals. Between fall 2021 and now the, HISD made the following improvements:

- Made significant gains in student achievement outcomes, lifting 40 of 50 campuses out of D or F status.
- Every HISD student now has access to a librarian, nurse, and counselor on their campus.
- HISD teachers have one of the most competitive salaries in the Greater Houston area. It also filled 95% of its vacancies at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school.
- In the upcoming school year, all HISD students will have access to challenging, high-quality curriculum
- HISD has taken \$60 million out of a \$200 million deficit and is proposing a similar reduction for the upcoming fiscal year

The Tea takeover has caused much uncertainty for students and parents alike. Before the official takeover, I heard from parents and students at Wheatley and joined community leaders and elected officials in asking the TEA to reconsider its decision.

TSU Health Equity and Research Week: District D

Texas Southern University (TSU), one of the nation's largest HBCUs is addressing racial health inequities. It is one of eleven HBCUs to achieve the coveted Carnegie R2 research status as an institution with "high research activity." The University is poised to become one of the first HBCUs to achieve Carnegie R1 research status. TSU's Division of Research and Innovation (DRI) hosted Research and Innovation Week during March 27-31, 2023. The week was set aside to share findings, celebrate accomplishments, while continuing to engage the community as TSU positions itself to reach Research Tier 1 status. As part of RIW23, they hosted a Minority Health & Health Disparity Symposium/Luncheon, and I was honored to present a certificate to recognize their accomplishments.



The Black Family Wellness Expo: Districts J, K F

I was honored to participate in The Black Family Wellness Expo where I provided free dental cleanings and consultations. As Dentist I know how vital dental cleanings are to the overall health of a person.

Free dental cleanings are an essential service that can help address the oral health disparities experienced by the Black community. The Black community has historically faced systemic barriers to healthcare access, including dental care, which has resulted in poorer health outcomes. These barriers include a lack of affordable dental insurance, inadequate access to dental care providers, and limited knowledge about the importance of oral health. Providing free dental cleanings can help break down these barriers and improve access to dental care for those who may otherwise go without.

Regular dental cleanings can help prevent and detect early signs of tooth decay, gum disease, and other oral health problems. Without regular cleanings, these conditions can worsen and lead to more serious health issues such as tooth loss, infections, and even heart disease. By providing free dental cleanings to the Black community, individuals can receive preventative care and catch oral health problems early on, leading to better overall health outcomes. Additionally, free dental cleanings can help educate people about the importance of oral health and empower them to take control of their own healthcare. Overall, free dental cleanings can play a crucial role in addressing oral health disparities in the Black community and improving long term health outcomes.



Abraham Accords Young Leaders Visit: District C

I was honored to meet with the young leaders of Sharaka and had a great time showing them the MFAH Arts of the Islamic World galleries. The word Sharaka means 'partnership' and the initiative was founded by young leaders from Israel and the Gulf Region based on the Abraham Accords. Sharaka is a non-profit organization aimed at promoting partnerships between Israelis and people from the Gulf region in the areas of business, technology, and culture.



Business News

Washington, D.C. Fly-In

Each year, the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) organizes a D.C. Fly-in, which brings together business leaders and government officials to discuss issues of importance to the Houston region. I was honored to be invited to join the Greater Houston partnership for a three-day trip to Washington D.C. to advocate for our great city. The Fly-in is also an opportunity for elected officials to advocate for policies that will benefit the Houston community.

The February/March three-day event brought together members of Congress, the White House, federal agencies and key stakeholders with leaders of Houston's business community. During our visit, I met many of the leaders from our city's business community and heard some of what they were doing to contribute to Houston's overall economic health.

In addition, we heard from our congressional leaders on how Congress is working to ensure that our region has the funding needed to complete some important projects that will affect our community. We examined the challenges facing the energy sector and explored opportunities for growth and innovation, including energy transition. The GHP works with lawmakers to advance the region's energy competitiveness and secure Houston's position as a leader in the global energy transition.

Houston is home to one of the busiest ports in the world and is a critical transportation hub for the entire Gulf Coast region. We heard from our speakers about infrastructure needs and the exploration of opportunities for investment in transportation projects that will benefit the entire region. Additionally, many spoke about policies that will support economic growth and job creation in the Greater Houston area.

Business Recognition

The Combines Municipal Campaign (CMC) is a fundraising effort that allows city employees of to contribute to a single charity campaign and the

benefits of the CMC are many. By consolidating fundraising efforts, the CMC can reduce the administrative burden on individual departments and agencies, allowing them to focus on their core missions. The CMC also increases the amount of money raised by pooling the resources of multiple departments and agencies which helps smaller organizations that may not have the resources to run their own fundraising campaigns. By streamlining the fundraising process and pooling resources, the CMC can maximize the impact of charitable donations and make it easier for city employees to give back to the community.

I am extremely proud of our Houston businesses that donated items and gift cards for the CMC 2022 campaign, and I am even prouder of our city employees who participated, contributed and volunteered to create an impact in our city.



WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is Women's History Month and that means recognizing and celebrating women from all backgrounds and recognizing their achievements. On March 8th, people around the world celebrate International Women's Day. The stories behind Women's History Month and International Women's Day are both interesting and pertinent to women today.

Women's History Month

Women's History Month began as Women's History Week by the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women in 1978. They selected the week of March 8 to correspond with International Women's Day. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th, 1980, as National Women's History Week and in March 1987 Congress passed Public Law 100-9, designating March as "Women's History Month."

International Women's Day

The first National Woman's Day was observed in the U.S. on February 28. It was in honor of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York, where women protested working conditions. After World War II, the United Nations outlined freedom for all in its founding charter. Later, at the UN General Assembly in London, Eleanor Roosevelt read an open letter to the women of the world urging for their increased involvement in national and international affairs. She famously laid out four points:

1. To recognize the progress women made during the war and to participate actively in an effort to improve their standard of life in their countries and participate in the work of reconstruction so that there will be qualified women ready to accept responsibility when new opportunities arise.
2. To train their children, boys, and girls alike, to understand world problems and the need for international cooperation....
3. Not to permit themselves to be misled by anti-democratic movements now or in the future.

4. To recognize that the goal of full participation in the life and responsibilities of their countries and of the world community is a common objective toward which the women of the world should assist one another."

Celebrations in Houston

In early March, I recognized the Positive Women's network with a proclamation from Mayor Turner for their work for women living with HIV and for trans women. The local chapter has been instrumental in advocating for women's rights.

Many of our communities in Houston celebrated International Women's Day with much fervor. I was honored to be the keynote speaker at the Council of Progressive Pakistani Americans Texas on March 10th to celebrate women from all backgrounds and walks of life.

I was also honored to be recognized and featured in the Winners of the World global magazine for making a positive impact in the world and culture.



COMMUNITY IMPACT

Attended the summit on "The Role of Design in Imagining Long-Term Futures" presented by University of Houston, Harvard University, Black United Fund of Texas (BUFTX) and Aecom

Volunteered at the Woori Juntos pop up resource and food drive at an apartment complex. Event sponsored by Council Member Plummer and other elected officials and organizations

Attended various meetings regarding HISD and TEA takeover to hear from constituents, and HISD staff and parents, including HISD State of Education event

Participated in the University of Houston lecture series on the North Highway Improvement Project (I-45)

Attended several sessions regarding the 88th legislative session and important bills that will impact Houston residents

Participated in County community engagement meetings

Engaged on a long term illegal dumping issue. Partnered with Sargent K. Miles of the Northeast Police Station, and Super Neighborhood President, Ms Huey German-Wilson to address this challenge, which was remedied it within 24 hours

Partnered with District B staff and Solid Waste for a vacant lot clean up

AT-LARGE 4



AL4 Up Coming Event



Fifth Ward Cancer Cluster Collaborative Townhall

The Fifth Ward/Kashmere Gardens area in Houston, Texas, has been the site of a troubling cancer cluster. Over the past few years, dozens of residents in this predominantly Black neighborhood have been diagnosed with rare cancers, including multiple myeloma and Hodgkin's lymphoma. The situation has raised concerns about environmental hazards and the potential impact on public health.

The situation in the Fifth Ward/Kashmere Gardens area is a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges of environmental justice. Low-income and minority communities are often disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards, and often lack the political power to advocate for their own interests. The cancer cluster in Houston is a tragic example of how these disparities can have real and devastating consequences for public health.

Moving forward, it is crucial that government agencies and community groups work together to address environmental hazards in a more equitable and effective way. This will require stronger regulations on industrial activities, as well as increased investment in monitoring and enforcement. It will also require greater collaboration between government agencies and community groups, to ensure that affected residents have a voice in the decision-making process.

For that reason, I have put together a that three day event that brings together government officials, impacted community members, advocacy groups and experts to listen and move towards a solution.

There are various events, some public and some private, over the course of the four days.

Event Flyer & Registration

CITY OF HOUSTON
Council Member
Letitia Plummer
TEXAS

FIFTH WARD CANCER CLUSTER COLLABORATIVE SUMMIT

APRIL 24 - 27 | SCHEDULE

Special Guest:

Dr. Stephanie Miles-Richardson
MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

24 MONDAY

- 1:00 - 3:00 PM: Leadership Lunch (*Private*)
- 3:30 - 4:00 PM: Press Conference (Location TBD) (*Public*)
- 4:00 - 5:00 PM: Community Sites Tour
- 6:00 - 8:00 PM: Townhall (*Public*)
Fifth Ward Multi Service Center
4014 Market St, Houston, TX 77020

25 TUESDAY

- 8:00 - 10:00 AM: Leadership Breakfast (*Private*)
- 1:30 - 2:00 PM: IMPACT Founder Proclamation (*Public*)
City Hall
900 Bagby St

26 WEDNESDAY

- 9:00 - 12:00 PM: Stakeholder Meeting (*Private*)
- 6:00 - 8:00 PM: Community Breakout Sessions (*Public*)
Fifth Ward Missionary Baptist Church
4300 Noble St, Houston, TX 77020

27 THURSDAY

- 8:00 - 11:00 AM: Final Stakeholder Meetings (*Private*)

USE THE QR CODES TO REGISTER FOR THE PUBLIC EVENTS

Townhall

Breakout Sessions

MAXWELLO DENTAL

TARSHA JACKSON
Houston City Council District 3

Sheila JACKSON LEE
Houston City Council District 11

MILES
Many Services for District 11

NAACP

MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Environmental Defense Fund

COCO
Center of Community Organization

IMPACT

BULLARD CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE JUSTICE
Texas A&M University

LONE STAR LEGAL AID

HOUSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT



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