

**BUSINESS | HOUSING**

## Housing shortage, soaring rents squeeze students

By **JANIE HAR**  
Associated Press

» **BERKELEY, Calif.**

College students squeezed by a massive housing shortage and surging rents are paying too much for moldy apartments, commuting long distances or sleeping in their cars to get an education — and that doesn't appear to be changing anytime soon.

For some colleges, the housing crunch was related to the pandemic, which muddied projections for who might want on-campus dorms when classes resumed in person last fall. But the lack of housing both on-campus and off has been a longstanding problem at other schools, including many in California, where homeowners and communities have sued to curb new student housing construction.

Nationally, 43 percent of students at four-year universities experienced housing insecurity in 2020, up from 35 percent in 2019, according to an annual survey conducted by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University. Students reported being unable to pay their rent or mortgage, living in overcrowded units, or moving in with others because of financial difficulties.

For the first time since it began tracking basic needs in 2015, the survey found an equal percentage — 14 percent — of students at both four-year and two-year colleges who had experienced homelessness in the last year.

"This is a function of rents rising, the inability of communities and institutions to build enough housing for students and other costs of college going up that create a perfect storm for students," said Mark Huelsman, the center's director of policy and advocacy.

Terrell Thompson, a sophomore at the University of California, Berkeley, slept in his car for nearly two weeks at the start of the school year last fall, unable to find an apartment in his price range. The university has limited dorms and competition is fierce for nearby off-campus units, which can start at \$1,600 for a 300-square-foot studio.

"Academically it was hard, because I'm worried about finding housing and I'm worried about my clothes and I'm worried about getting my car broken into all the time," said the 19-year-old Thompson, who now lives in an apartment he found last September. "I was anxious 24/7."

Nationally, rents have increased 17 percent since March 2020, said Chris Salviati, senior economist with Apartment List, but the increase has been higher in some popular college towns. Chapel Hill, North Carolina, saw a 24 percent jump in rents and Tempe, Arizona, saw a 31 percent hike.

In some cases, the rental increases have been exacerbated by a lack of on-campus housing.

Last fall, the demand for on-campus housing was so high that the University of Tampa offered incoming freshmen a break on tuition if they deferred until fall 2022. Rent in the Florida city has skyrocketed nearly 30 percent from a year ago, according to Apartment List.

Rent in Knoxville has soared 36 percent since March 2020, and it could get worse after the University of Tennessee announced

See **HOUSING** » C3

**BIZ BUZZ | LAURA ELDER**

## Developer acquires 500-slip Marina Del Sol in Kemah; \$86M Tiki Island development soon to rise



JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

Longtime island business J. Maisel's Mainland Floral in Galveston, has a new owner and name.

**STUART VILLANUEVA**  
The Daily News

Boats line a pier at Marina Del Sol in Kemah on Tuesday. Friendswood attorney and developer Jerome Karam has acquired the marina.



**COURTESY RENDERING**

Developer Legend Communities has named a general contractor for the 70-unit condominium development The Residences at Tiki Island. Work on the long-awaited project is scheduled to begin this summer.

Plus, longtime island floral shop gets new owner

**Sol patrol:** Friendswood attorney and developer **Jerome Karam**, a principal in **JMK5 Holdings**, continues to add to his ever-growing portfolio of commercial properties, this time snapping up **Marina Del Sol**, 1203 Twin Oaks Blvd. in Kemah. The marina features about 300 wet slips and 200 drystack slips for the boating public to rent.

Marina del Sol, on the southern shore of Clear Lake, spans about 19 acres of land and water. The general boating public rents slips at the marina, which also features a clubhouse.

The marina is a new venture for Karam, who arguably owns the most square footage of commercial real estate in the county. Among his many projects and developments in Galveston County is the transformation of the former Mall of the Mainland, 10000 Emmett F. Lowry Expressway in Texas City into a thriving entertainment complex called **Mainland City Centre**.

JMK5 Holdings also transformed the **Falstaff Brewery**, 3303 Church St. in Galveston, into an event center, storage facilities and future site of a boutique hotel. And last month, he generated buzz for acquiring the idled **Gulf Greyhound Park** with plans to transform it into a 12,000-seat A-list concert venue.

**Building buy:** Meanwhile, Karam is expanding commercial holdings in Harris County, where late last year he acquired the 365,000-square-foot office at 600 Gemini Ave. in Webster.

JMK5 Holdings is dividing the building into four pods, with each building featuring its own

See **BIZ BUZZ** » C3

**BUSINESS | INFLATION**

## US consumers still confident in April, but slightly less so

By **MATT OTT**  
Associated Press

» **WASHINGTON**

U.S. consumer confidence dampened slightly in April but remains high even as inflation continues to cloud their optimism about the rest of the year.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index — which takes into account consumers' assessment of current conditions and their outlook for the future — edged down to 107.3 in April, from 107.6 in March.

The business research group's present situation index, which measures consumers' assessment of current business and labor conditions, also dipped modestly this month to 152.6 from 153.8 in March.

The expectations index, based on consumers' six-month outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, ticked up to 77.2 in April from 76.7 in March. It stood at 80.8 in February and remains a weak spot in the survey.

"Purchasing intentions are down overall from recent levels as interest rates have begun rising," said Lynn Franco, the Conference Board's senior director of economic indicators. "Meanwhile, concerns about inflation retreated from an all-time high in March but remained elevated."

Franco added that inflation and the war in Ukraine will continue to eat into confidence and may further curb consumer spending through this year.

Inflation soared over the past year at its fastest pace in more than 40 years, with costs for food, gasoline, housing and other necessities squeezing American consumers and negating their pay raises.

According to the index Americans have scuttled some vacation plans, but slightly more intended to make big purchases like a car or major appliance.

The Federal Reserve raised its main borrowing rate by a quarter point last month, the main mechanism for combatting inflation. Multiple rate hikes, with the possibility of half-point in-



NAM Y. HUH/AP file photo

A woman presses button to fill up a gas tank at a gas station in East Dundee, Illinois, on March 19.

creases, are expected this year.

The Labor Department said earlier this month that its consumer price index jumped 8.5 percent in March from 12 months earlier, the sharpest year-over-year increase since 1981. Prices have been driven up by bottlenecked supply chains, robust consumer demand and disruptions to global food and energy markets worsened by

Russia's war against Ukraine.

Consumers were slightly less optimistic about the labor market, even as U.S. employers have added at least 400,000 jobs for 11 straight months, pushing the unemployment rate down to 3.6 percent. That's the lowest rate since the pandemic erupted two years ago and just above the half-century low of 3.5 percent that was reached two years ago.

## BUSINESS | WORK FROM HOME

# Remote meetings dampen brainstorming, study says

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**  
Associated Press

Video meetings dampen brainstorming because we are so hyper-focused on the face in that box that we don't let our eyes and minds wander as much, a new study found.

Staring isn't good for creativity. While it's rude to stare at someone in real life, it's expected when on a video call, researchers said.

When it comes to evaluating those new ideas, though, that focus, at least in one-on-one chats, seems to make remote meetings slightly better than in-person chats, Wednesday's study in the journal *Nature* said.

Researchers watched 745 pairs of engineers in five different countries try to come up with creative ideas for using a Frisbee or bubble wrap. Those in the same room generated on average one more idea, which is about 17 percent more than those in remote meetings. And those in-person ideas were judged by outside experts to be more creative, the study found.

Study author Melanie Brucks, an applied psychology professor at Columbia University's business school, said it was the outcome she expected — but not the reason she expected.

At first she figured it had to be the social and physical distance — maybe the two people just didn't connect as well or people didn't know who speaks



**MARTIN MEISSNER/AP file photo**  
A webcam is photographed on Nov. 11, 2009, in Muenster, Germany.

when. But several different tests for social connectedness found that the remote meeting pairs were connecting with each other in the same way as people in the same room.

Then the eyes gave it away. When Brucks tracked eye movement she found that people in the same room gazed away more often, looked around. But the remote meeting pairs didn't.

"They were too focused on specifically the task at hand and that made them narrower in their thinking," Brucks said — in an interview over Zoom.

This makes sense because faces draw our focus, said Georgetown University psychology professor Adam Green, who wasn't part of the research.

"Faces really matter to our brains and we devote a lot of attention to looking at faces," said Green, president of the Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity. "When we are with someone in person, it is not considered polite to stare

directly at their face for an extended period of time."

Remote meetings work otherwise, Brucks said.

"It's not that Zoom's bad, everything's worse. It seems like (the problem) is unique to the more generative, creative process," Brucks said.

When it was time to evaluate those options, the remote meeting engineers picked out the better choice — as judged by a team of outside experts — slightly more than those in person, the study found.

The experiment started before the pandemic and was done using WebEx with one company in offices in Portugal, Israel, Finland, Hungary and India. The results were about the same across the different locations.

"When I brainstorm now on Zoom, I turn off my camera," Brucks said. She notes that's no different than talking on the telephone, except she establishes a personal connection by starting with the camera on.

## FROM THE BUSINESS FRONT

## HOUSING

Continued » C1

a new lottery system for its dorms this fall, saying it needs to prioritize housing for a larger freshman class.

Even two-year community colleges, which have not traditionally provided dorms, are rethinking student needs as the cost of housing rises.

Last October, Long Beach City College outside of Los Angeles launched a pilot program to provide up to 15 homeless students space in an enclosed parking garage.

They sleep in their cars and have access to bathrooms and showers, electrical outlets and internet while they work with

counselors to find permanent housing. Uduak-Joe Ntuk, president of the college's Board of Trustees, hesitated when asked if the program will be renewed.

"I want to say no, but I think we will," he said. "We're going to have new students come fall semester this year that are going to be in a similar situation, and for us to do nothing is untenable."

UC Berkeley and other UC campuses are fighting homeowners who oppose campus expansion plans, even as the schools accept more students.

Most students have no idea of the housing situation when they choose to attend UC Berkeley, said 19-year-old freshman Sanaa Sodhi, and the univer-

sity needs to do more to prepare students and support them in their search.

The political science major is excited to move out of the dorms and into a two-bedroom apartment where she and three friends are taking over the lease. The unit is older but a bargain at \$3,000 a month, she said. The housemates were prepared to pay up to \$5,200 for a safe place close to campus.

"You don't honestly know the severity of the situation before you're in it," she said, adding that landlords hold all the cards. "They know that whatever price they charge, we'll inevitably have to pay it because we don't really have a choice except maybe to live out of our cars."



**STUART VILLANUEVA/The Daily News**

Friendswood attorney and developer Jerome Karam, a principal of JMK5 Holdings, has acquired the Marina Del Sol in Kemah.

## BIZ BUZZ

Continued » C1

entrance. Office space will be available for sale or lease at starting at 3,000 square feet.

**On the rise:** The \$83 million condominium and marina development long-planned for Tiki Island — the first new-build residential project on the island in 11 years — is getting nearer to reality. Developer **Legend Communities** this month announced **Ludlow and Associates Construction** is general contractor of **The Residences at Tiki Island**, a high-end mixed use development of 70 condominiums, with future phases of eight villas, a marina with a restaurant and a barn for about 200 boats.

"We are confident that Ludlow and Associates Construction will be a great asset to the team," said **Bill Hayes**, chief operating officer of Legend Communities. Ludlow, which most recently completed **The Revere**, a boutique condominium development in Houston, stood out for its attention to detail, Hayes said.

The top floor of the condominium development will feature two-story penthouses with elevators included in the founding members' residences — the development is offering founder's incentives for early buyers.

Elevators will be offered as an optional feature to floor plans for buyers outside of the founder's incentive. Owners will have access to a fitness center, resort-style pool and outdoor kitchen area, among other amenities. Legend Communities

expects to break ground this summer on The Residences at Tiki Island with completion planned for summer 2024.

**Bouquet buzz:** An island business with deep roots has a new owner and a new name. **Dan Hinson** has acquired **J. Maisel's Mainland Floral**, 2710 Broadway in Galveston. Hinson bought both the building and the business assets, but not the name; he'll call the shop **Mainland Floral**, he said.

Hinson worked in the commercial construction business for 30 years in various roles, including accounting and financing. But when he and his wife moved to Galveston, he was looking for an exit from that industry and an entry into something new, he said. He had an open mind about what business he wanted to buy, even exploring some local restaurants, he said.

He found a good match in the floral shop, he said.

Hinson set about researching and studying the business with the mentorship of former owner **John Maisel**, who is staying on in an advisory capacity in the transition, Hinson said.

The shop offers floral arrangements and plants-caping, which involves maintaining interior potted plants at hotels and other commercial enterprises.

All the designers and employees are staying on, Hinson said.

Maisel's father, **Charles**, founded Mainland Floral in June 1935 with \$1 he received as a high school graduation gift, according to family lore.

Initially the business was a bouquet shop. Island residents and the rest of the

nation were in the habit of displaying fresh flowers at their homes all the time, not just for special occasions.

At the time Charles's stepfather, **Ray Allen**, owned **Mainland Growers**, which was a primary floral grower in Houston. Mainland Floral got its original name because it was part of Mainland Growers.

**Devin Dickey** of island-based **Joe Tramonte Realty** represented Hinson in the real estate transaction.

**Mangiamo!** Fans of a longtime Texas City eatery have reason to celebrate. As promised, **Rosario Maira** has returned and opened **Grandpa Rosario's Pizza & Pasta**, 3202 13th Ave. N. in the longtime site of **Rosario's Flying Pizza & Pub**.

In about 2009, Maira sold the popular Rosario's Flying Pizza & Pub, including the name. But owners last year closed the Texas City restaurant with plans to open in the island's downtown. Maira missed his restaurant and wanted to bring it back to Texas City, he said.

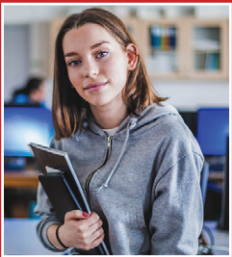
Maira, the oldest of seven who helped his mother, **Josephine**, in the kitchen growing up, opened the restaurant in 1978. When he married his wife, **Judy**, his recipe collection grew.

The **Texas City-La Marque Chamber of Commerce** will help Maira celebrate with a ribbon-cutting at 11:45 a.m. Monday.

**On the burner:** Read about more Texas City and mainland restaurant and bar openings next week in Biz Buzz.

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## ATTENTION All Teachers & Counselors NOMINATE A SENIOR STUDENT



### STUDENT OF THE WEEK



#### THE DAILY NEWS AND TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY AT GALVESTON ARE PROUD TO TEAM UP FOR THE STUDENT OF THE WEEK PROGRAM.

This program celebrates individual academic achievement as well as recognizes students who model superior character and citizenship.

To be nominated, the candidate must be a current high school student and exemplify at least two or more of the criteria listed below.

The Student of the Week will be determined by the high school.

A student cannot receive the award more than once within a year.

**The Student of the Week will be featured in every weekend edition of The Daily News.**

#### NOMINATION CRITERIA

- 1) A senior high school student who is working to his/her full potential (not necessarily achieving a high grade).
- 2) A student who displays exemplary leadership skills toward classmates and school staff.
- 3) A student who demonstrates excellent behavior inside and outside the classroom, is well mannered and respectful to peers and teachers, shows exemplary character through his/her compassion, honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, optimism and loyalty in creating a positive school environment.
- 4) A student who makes a contribution to the community through service and volunteering.
- 5) A student who demonstrates good sportsmanship.

To nominate a student, scan the QR code or visit [galvnews.com/studentoftheweek](http://galvnews.com/studentoftheweek)

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- Dustin Clare