



The Facts

COVERING BRAZORIA COUNTY ★ WHERE TEXAS BEGAN

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Things have cooled off at Polk Elementary

Temporary chiller, accelerated timeline address AC concerns

By GAYLA MURPHY
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RICHWOOD — Temperatures and frustrations have cooled at Gladys Polk Elementary School as the district has worked to solve the air conditioning problems there.

A temporary rented chiller has run on a generator outside of the school, said Monty Burger,

chief operator and technology officer for Brazosport ISD. It is connected to the handling units that tie into the main system to provide relief in the classrooms for students and staff, he said.

Although the district estimates a permanent chiller delivery around Nov. 11, it is ahead of the 2019 bond schedule that was approved to replace the entire HVAC system, Burger said.

The process to replace the system started a year ago but was not supposed to be implemented until February 2023, he

said. However, after last school year, the district became aware the need for a new system was more urgent than originally anticipated so they moved up the start date and brought in temporary units, Burger said.

"All the work that could be done was done over the summer," he said.

To bring relief to the current system as parts were replaced, they brought in standalone units for the kitchen and cafeteria to help take the load off the main unit, Burger said.

These changes made it better

than the year before, but the district wanted to make it even better, Burger said.

"What we want to do is make the building more comfortable," he said.

Issues stemmed from the fact that chillers have to be sized to a specific purpose and they are very complex systems, Burger said.

There is no duct work to tie in a traditional rental air unit due to the design. Individual equipment feeds to only two

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INSIGHT FROM LOCAL EXPERTS

STAGES OF MENOPAUSE FIGHTING ALZHEIMER'S

COMING WEDNESDAY



JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

Marty Merritt leads guests on a walking tour Saturday highlighting examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture in downtown Lake Jackson.

MID-MOD SQUAD

Lake Jackson's downtown architecture highlighted on weekend walking tour

By KENT HOLLE
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LAKE JACKSON

Many people would not spend a Saturday morning hiking through a warm, fall day to look at 70-year-old medical offices and telephone buildings.

There are a goodly number of architectural, historical and cultural enthusiasts who will, though, judging by the full house that turned out for the Lake Jackson Historical Museum's "Hidden in Plain Sight" tour of city buildings.

In a lot of cases, it's the same group of people who use the term

"MCM," will swoon at a Witco bar or a starburst pattern and who go pale every time a beautiful piece of '50s furniture is whitewashed on HGTV.

For those people, the walking tour Saturday to showcase the many examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture in downtown Lake Jackson, beginning with the office of Alden B. Dow, started their day right.

A presentation by Marty Merritt, who literally wrote the book — titled *After Alden* — on the town's many surviving Mid-Century Modern structures, began with a slideshow that explained the changes in the downtown area over



MERRITT



JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

The original iron adornments integral to Mid-Century Modern architecture can still be seen in front of the Champagne's Appliance store in downtown Lake Jackson.

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Angleton roads get overlays

Smoother surfaces coming through county agreement

By RAVEN WUEBKER
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ANGLETON — Residents can expect construction work throughout Angleton for the next few weeks as paving projects take place under the city and county's annual road work agreement.

Each year, Angleton and the county have an agreement for city roads to be repaved; the county provides the labor while the city pays for the materials. This year, only eight roads made the cut to get repaved because of inflation affecting material costs, City Manager Chris Whittaker said.

The \$250,000 budgeted by the city typically covers the asphalt and oil for the 2 miles of repaving covered by the agreement with the county. However, Whittaker said four streets were cut to stay within budget and surrounding construction.

"Some of the roads we cut out were around the county courthouse because they're doing all of that construction," he said. "We don't have to pave the road and then have it disintegrate faster than normal. The cost went up because of inflation and other things, so we're doing

■ See ROADS, Page 7A

OLQP festival raffle offers car, cash cards

By ANDREW TINEO
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RICHWOOD — The fundraiser to benefit Southern Brazoria County's lone Catholic school will be blazing a familiar trail this fall.

The Our Lady Queen of Peace Fall Festival will be from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 23 at the Lake Jackson Civic Center, 333 Highway 332, but entries to big-ticket prizes in the event's raffle have been on sale for weeks.

The grand prize is a 2022 Chevrolet Trailblazer, while

second-, third- and fourth-place winners will receive a Visa gift card of descending amounts.

For Jason Martin, Leo Martin Chevrolet general sales manager, the timing for the fundraiser's big raffle award couldn't have been better.

"This year will be a first for the all-new redesigned Trailblazer, which I'm certain will be a hit," he said. "We are looking forward to the winner being the next member of the Leo Martin family."

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JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

Freeport Fire Department firefighter David Olazaba and driver/operator Thomas Thornton respond to a fire Monday afternoon at Brazos Place.

Brazos Place fire quickly contained

By RAVEN WUEBKER
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FREEPORT — Nonprofit Brazos Place has a game plan to rebuild its recreation porch after cigarette remains sparked an accidental fire Monday afternoon, officials said.

A cigarette ended up falling in between the boards while a person smoked on the porch, sparking the fire, Brazos Place Executive Director Joe Gardzina said.

"We do have a game plan to get it fixed, and we should maybe get it fixed by the end of the week," Gardzina said. "The biggest loss was our ADA ramp, and we have to have that, so we'll get that rebuilt first."

Heavy smoke coming from outside prompted several calls about the fire, both from inside and outside the residential

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Tour

CONTINUED FROM COVER

the years and continued on the streets.

"I'm going to talk more about brick than anyone has ever cared to know about brick," Merritt, a member of the group Houston Mod and the Lake Jackson Historical Association, said as he led the group away from the Masonic building.

WHEN MID-CENTURY WAS MODERN

The Alden B. Dow office building hails from 1943 and incorporates some style concepts at least a decade before their time. It was around this time that Dow was putting together Lake Jackson as a company town for his family's eponymous chemical company, which remains the city's legacy, even today, with more buildings from the 1950s and '60s than many other parts of the country.

Dow, a Michigan native, was one of the architects at the forefront of the modern movement and was responsible for designing much of the original planned community and individual buildings that still stand, though some have been heavily modified over the ensuing decades.

"It's lightly framed but survived Carla; it survived all the bigger storms that have come our way, and in this building, the designs for the city were created," said David Bucek, a supervising architect for the restoration of the office building.

"Those ideas are still with us today," he said.

The restoration effort included painting the building to match the original lively purples, greens and yellows that grabbed the eyes of visitors in the World War II era.

Another example of a building in the style is the Brazosport Dental building at 101 Parking Way, which Merritt explained remains largely in its original form on account of only having been owned by three different doctors. While the building doesn't match exactly, most notably in size, drawings for it were found dating from 1946.

Merritt described it as a "beautiful, elegant, little building," noting some of the hallmarks of the style — asymmetrical design, triple pipe columns and ribbon windows.



JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

Marty Merritt leads a walking tour of Mid-Century Modern architecture Saturday morning in downtown Lake Jackson. At this stop, he talks about the attention to detail in the brick formations.



JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

Marty Merritt, local architectural historian, presents "Hidden in Plain Sight: An Appreciation of Mid-Century Architecture in Downtown Lake Jackson."

"It's very, very evocative of Alden's style," he said.

Many of the telltale signs people can look for are masonry-based, like alternating light and dark bricks, accent and glazed brick and a combination of common bricks with thin "Roman" brick. Other things, such as stair step walls, recessed doors and windows and non-90-degree angles, can also be found if someone is looking.

'THE PLANTATION STICK'

In 1963, Dow returned to speak for the city's 20th anniversary and expressed a disappointment about the increasing variety of the architecture, indicating he had envisioned something more uniform.



JESSE MILLER JR./The Facts

Iron fixtures were common in the early days of building in Lake Jackson.

"Alden said, 'Well, things are beginning to look a little shabby and it looks like there's not a lot of architectural consistency and it should look more like Disneyland,'" Merritt said.

The city took this very seriously. Looking at the area's history, its senior business owners decided to take action and looked back at the antebellum plantation that inspired the name of the lake that inspired the name of the city.

The vision went into practice over the next decade with columns, balustrades, carriage lamps and greenery being used to connect storefronts and put a connected, shaded walkway in front of many stores. As Merritt put it, most of the buildings were hit with "the plantation stick."

While less of the plantation aesthetic survives than the original modern touches, there are still examples, such as the rod iron embellishments outside the Champagne's appliance store and the coach lights that still decorate some of the buildings.

For many of the storefronts, however, the embellishments are long gone or replaced with more modernized versions.

As an exception, Merritt pointed out the former A&P grocery store, remodeled in 1965, that is still white with full carriage lights and columns.

PRESERVING A RARE HERITAGE

Outside of Brazosport Dental at 101 Parking Way, Merritt gestured around himself.

"This little area, right here — everything you can see is kind of the big, Mid-Century enclave of downtown," he said.

To keep it that way, groups like Houston Mod are trying to raise the public awareness of these buildings and bring attention to what is now a classic style.

Houston Mod is a sister organization of the larger Docomomo, whose full name essentially stands for Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement. It works to preserve historic buildings of the period throughout the United States and the world.

Several of the board members of Houston Mod were in attendance to take a closer look at the bounty Lake Jackson had to offer them.

"Hidden in Plain Sight" referred to how many people

who have lived with Lake Jackson's brick buildings and unique angles may gloss over them after decades of passing by, Merritt said.

"I grew up down here and as I grew into adulthood, I realized that what we had here was special, and not only special but, for the most part, very well preserved, especially in terms of houses and churches and commercial buildings," he said.

When asked if he loved Mid-Mod because of Lake Jackson or vice versa, he said it's probably his Lake Jackson roots that planted the seeds for his appreciation.

"It wasn't really a conscious thing. The architecture looked familiar and comfortable, but interesting and it took me a while to actually make the connection that that's because I grew up with it," Merritt said.

When it comes to that preservation, the city has thankfully done some due diligence. Merritt praised the current downtown revitalization project's efforts to match the town's mid-century heritage with accents like glazed brick.

"Mid-Century Modern architecture is endangered in many places and mid-century buildings are frequently torn down and that's because to a lot of people my age or a little younger, it looks dated and they want something new," he said.

Houston Mod has monthly showcases of mid-century houses in the area to help find buyers who won't tear out their personality with renovations, Merritt said, and it has a mailing list people can join to find out about projects like the tour.

"Lake Jackson is quite different from Houston in that there's been almost no teardown pressure, thank goodness, except out at the lake," he said.

"There's not very much original Lake Jackson Farms housing remaining, but on Oyster Creek Drive, Oak Drive, Circle Way, the 500 block of Plantation, those should be historic districts.

"There's so much beautiful Mid-Century architecture there that's really cherished by the owners and most of the houses have not had many owners," Merritt said.

For a driving tour of Lake Jackson's modern buildings, people can scan a QR code at the Historical Museum, 249 Circle Way.



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