

# Strengthening the Family - Bridging the Community- Developing the Arts

*Edison Arts Foundation making a major difference in the community through the arts and community revitalization*



Edison Arts Foundation Founder/Executive Director Charity Carter takes girls on field trip

By Jeffrey L. Boney, Associate Editor

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, Fort Bend Houston was a highly sought after middle-class area. Neighborhoods like Ridgemont, Blue Ridge, Briargate, and Ridgegate, became a landing spot for a significant number of middle-class African Americans who left the city of Houston to migrate and live in these newly constructed single-family home communities.

Between 2000 and 2017, home ownership in Fort Bend Houston sharply declined by 13%, primarily because many of the single-family homes became rental properties. This transition from home ownership to rentals also led to a shift in the business community in the area. One of the major businesses in the area was supermarket staple—Kroger.

Kroger was the anchor tenant in a high-traffic shopping center, and that shopping center had become the primary driver of economic and social value in the neighborhood. All good things come to an end sometime, as did this shopping center after Kroger decided to close its doors at that location, leading the shopping center to fall into disrepair and abandonment. In essence, the shopping center, which once was a positive community asset, became a prominent source of blight that dragged down the economic vitality of the community and its neighborhood character.

Under the leadership of former Houston mayor Sylvester Turner, Fort Bend Houston was one of ten historically under-resourced neighborhoods identified to be a part of his Complete Communities initiative that was launched in 2017. Mayor Turner created the initiative to focus on bridging the gap between equity and opportunity.

The Fort Bend Houston areas of focus relative to the Complete Communities initiative, consisted of the following zip codes and population: 77085 (7.5%), 77053 (40.5%), and 77489 (43.2%).

The former Kroger shopping center, located in one of those zip codes, became a focal point by two Fort Bend business and community leaders, who had their eyes set on revitalizing that location well before the Complete Communities initiative went into effect—Troy and Charity Carter.

The Carters are heading up a major revitalization effort in Fort Bend Houston, at the former shopping center located at Fuqua Street and Blueridge Road—The Edison Cultural Arts Center. The Edison Cultural Arts Center is a 12.5-acre mixed use, creative placemaking



Charity Carter, Founder and Executive Director of Edison Arts Foundation

development that blends arts and culture, entrepreneurship, job creation, affordable housing, healthcare, quality early education, outdoor green space, and public art uses to advance community wellbeing in Fort Bend Houston. The multi-phased development is already the talk of the town and has already changed the makeup of the deteriorated area.

Phase 1 of the development was completed in 2021, after breaking ground in 2019. It was the construction of the beautiful Edison Lofts, which has provided housing opportunities in the community via a 126-unit affordable, state-of-the-art, multifamily housing complex.

Phase 2 of the development began in September of last year, with the partial demolition of the old shopping center and the beginning of construction towards The Edison Cultural Art Center’s performing arts theater with over 400 seats; black box theater with 165 seats; dance studio spaces; after-school youth center with computer labs; health care facility; retail; restaurants; and community park with green space.

In 2013, Charity Edison Carter’s commitment to family, community outreach, education, and empowerment through the arts inspired her to the create the Edison Arts Foundation—a 501 (c)(3) non-profit fine arts organization established for the educational and charitable purpose of producing and developing cultural and performing arts programs for children, adults, and families throughout the community.

In honor of her parents, Robert and Bertha Edison, The Edison Cultural Arts Center—anchored by the 400-seat performing arts center—will be the catalyst for equity in the Fort Bend Houston community, with arts at its core. Charity’s vision is aligned with the strong connection to the arts that she has had since she was a young girl.

Charity was born and raised in Houston in 1974, where she attended Houston ISD’s Mirabeau B. Lamar High School. She has studied dance all her life, from elementary school through college.

Charity tells the *Forward Times* what inspired her to make dance a major part of her life. “Dance was offered in HISD as a PE class and as a Fine Arts class,” says Charity. “I was introduced to dance in HISD at Kate Bell Elementary School by my beautiful, brown PE teacher by the name of Ms. Body. It was the first time that I learned dance as both physical education and as an art. It was at Welch Middle School where I got to experience dance and study it as a fine art; learning different styles and genres from ballet, tap, jazz, and modern as well as various professional dancers. I continued through high school and college, and I knew by high school that I wanted a career in dance.”

Charity went on to earn her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance from Sam Houston State University, with a teaching certification in dance, and a minor in business and education.

In 2007, she established the Fort Bend Academy of Arts and Dance (FBAAD) to provide traditional dance classes, Summer Dance Camps, and an After School Dance Conservatory, becoming a pioneer for after-school dance in Fort Bend Houston. Throughout her career, Charity has cultivated arts education programs and fostered community outreach through contract partnerships with many local schools, school districts, organizations, and more.

Relative to the Edison Arts Foundation and the vision that has led to this major redevelopment in Fort Bend Houston, Charity credits her family as the inspiration on her life’s journey.

“It was my father’s suggestion that I teach somewhere so that brown girls and boys that look like me could have an opportunity,” said Charity. “As I saw an economic shift in the community, I also saw the need for financial assistance. I needed to bridge the gap for students and families in the community to be able to afford high-quality fine arts programming. And so, the Edison Arts Foundation was birthed with 3 core values: Family-Community-Arts (Strengthening the Family—Bridging the Community—Developing the Arts). After becoming a community staple at a strip center in Missouri City, the time had come to expand and relocate. One of our after-school parents, Mr. Claude Foster, who worked for the City of Houston knew that we were looking to expand and relocate. He brought the old Briargate/Willowridge Commons Shopping Center to our attention. I discussed it with my husband (Troy), who was always encouraging and supportive of my professional leadership and vision, sustainability for the arts, and comprehensive collaborative approach to community revitalization with arts as its catalyst. I called my father and convinced him of our master plan for this 12.5-acre property and he gave me the earnest money to put down. That began the journey we are on now.”

Her husband, Troy Carter, has played a major role in helping Charity’s vision come to fruition and continues to provide direction and support to her and the Edison Arts Foundation board and leadership on matters of community building and strategic planning.

Born in 1964, Troy is a native of south Louisiana, who was raised by a single mother and was heavily influenced by his grandparents. As a proud HBCU graduate (Grambling University), Tory studied Business Marketing and has had stints in corporate America and in the education field as a middle school teacher, before becoming an entrepreneur. His entrepreneurial journey in the long-term healthcare arena led to him receiving appointments to national and state boards in both network design and policy development.

Troy has worked with the organization to raise over \$23 million for the The Edison Cultural Arts Center and now they are seeking additional funds to reach their \$31 million goal, which has gone up due to construction issues and inflation.

The Carters explained to the *Forward Times* what challenges they have faced while seeking to revitalize this dilapidated area of Fort Bend Houston and seeking to bring something vibrant and sustainable to the area.

“With any project of this magnitude there will be challenges,” Troy tells the *Forward Times*. “From community buy-in to funding. It all comes down to staying focused and not giving up.”

Charity was simple and straight to the point with as real of an answer as can be given. “POLITICS!!!!!!!! Need I say anymore.....” Charity emphatically states.

To help raise funds for their efforts, The Edison Arts Foundation recently held their fifth annual Tutus & Tuxes Fundraising Gala at the Landmark Community Center on April 27<sup>th</sup>, where they honored Miss Texas Ellie Breaux, national recording artist MAJOR, and Black Angels Collective Director/Choreographer Carmen Jones-Marigny. The evening also featured captivating performances by local artists, including mesmerizing ballet routines from the Lauren Anderson Ballet Masterclass scholarship recipients, live music, and immersive art experiences.

Both Troy and Charity want the community to support their ongoing fundraising effort as they deal with inflation cost increases in construction moving forward with the project.

“We still have our capital campaign going, as well as naming rights opportunities and purchasing opportunities for seats, pavers, corporate sponsorship, foundational giving, and individual support,” says Troy. “It’s important as we attempt to transform a community that

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## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE

Triple 7 Movers Notice of Public Sale:  
Property is being sold to satisfy Triple 7 Movers of Texas lien. Customer #10140370 Cynthia Seymour unit contains household items and goods . Auction will run from 5/08/24 through 5/22/24 at 12:30 pm on [www.storagetreasures.com](http://www.storagetreasures.com) . Cash only at time of pickup at addressed facility on Storage treasures website.

### HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

**Request for Proposal – Houston-Galveston Area Council – Public Services – Emergency Medical, Safety, and Rescue Equipment – EE11-24**

H-GAC is soliciting responses for selecting qualified manufacturers, dealers, distributors, and service providers for Emergency Medical, Safety, and Rescue Equipment to make these types of products and services available to Customers of the HGACBuy Cooperative Purchasing Program under blanket type contracts.

To view the solicitation documents, visit <https://www.hgacbuy.org/bid-notices>.

**Response Deadline: June 13, 2024 @ 12:00 P.M. CST**

### LEGAL NOTICE

Application has been made with the Texas Alcoholic Beverage commission for a New Wine-Only Package Store Permit by Victory Yan LLC dba Victory Foor Mart, to be located at 2021 S Victory Dr, Houston, Harris County, Texas. Officers of said corporation owners are Mohammad Shaik, Ahamed Jani Shaik

### LEGAL NOTICE for IFB 24-20

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), is soliciting sealed bids with the intent to establish a fixed price contract with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder who can perform all the necessary construction-related work needed to facilitate the repair of trash chutes at Lyerly Apartments in accordance with the requirements and terms and conditions specified in Invitation for Bid (IFB) 24-20.

**Interested parties are highly encouraged (but not required), to participate in a Pre-bid Conference that will be held 10 A.M. Central Daylight Time (CDT), May 21, 2024 at Lyerly Senior Apartments, 75 Lyerly St, Houston, Tx 77022 of IFB 24-20 Replacement of Trash Chutes.**

**Interested parties who wish to respond to this solicitation must submit the required documents in a sealed envelope by 2 P.M. CDT May 31, 2024 to the Houston Housing Authority Attn: Katrina Heard, Subject: IFB 24-20 Replacement of Trash Chutes at Lyerly Apartments - DO NOT OPEN 2640 Fountain View Drive Houston, Texas 77057.**

IFB 24-20 can be obtained by going to the doing business with HHA section of HHA's website at [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com), or by sending an e-mail to HHA's Procurement Dept. at [Purchasing@housingforhouston.com](mailto:Purchasing@housingforhouston.com) with IFB 24-20 in the subject line.

☞ A Fair and Equal Employment Opportunity Agency. For assistance: Individuals with disabilities may contact the 504/ADA Administrator at 713-260-0528, TTY 713-260-0574 or 504ADA@housingforhouston.com

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Towers, LLC proposes to build a 251-foot Self-Support Communications Tower. Anticipated lighting application is medium intensity dual red/white strobes. The Site location is 26565 Highway 146 North, Cleveland, Liberty County, TX 77327], Lat: 30-22-53.73, Long: -94-45-50.34. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Antenna Structure Registration (ASR, Form 854) filing number is A1282762.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS – Interested persons may review the application ([www.fcc.gov/asr/applications](http://www.fcc.gov/asr/applications)) by entering the filing number. Environmental concerns may be raised by filing a Request for Environmental Review ([www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest](http://www.fcc.gov/asr/environmentalrequest)) and online filings are strongly encouraged. The mailing address to file a paper copy is: FCC Requests for Environmental Review, Attn: Ramon Williams, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554. HISTORIC PROPERTIES EFFECTS - Public comments regarding potential effects on historic properties may be submitted within 30 days from the date of this publication to: Trileaf Corp, Arjun Pai, [a.pai@trileaf.com](mailto:a.pai@trileaf.com), 2550 South IH 35, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78704 – 713.822.5688.