



September 24 PM – Jran Email

Dear Jran Community:

Today, we will go over the area's COVID19 metrics, what re-opening should look like, some good news from Tropical Storm Beta, a fresh push for the Ike Dike, and resources for turning hate into action.

COVID19

Harris County is continuing to report good news in our area's COVID19 data. According to the [Harris County data landscape](#), we are still hitting the levels for "Level 2 – Orange" in four out of five metrics. The one data point holding us back is the area's test positivity rate. Harris County officials would like to see it at 5% but we are currently hovering around 7.6%. Sources report that Harris County health officials will be discussing soon whether positivity rate should be holding us in the "red zone" or if it is time to move to orange.

The [Texas Medical Center's dashboard](#) is showing their key metrics—effective reproduction rate, daily new cases, and test positivity rate—all in or near green.

The [Houston Health Department's COVID19 wastewater monitoring project](#) is reporting a decrease in viral load in the city's 39 treatment plants. Scientists from Rice University and Baylor College of Medicine have been monitoring the city's wastewater since May in order to get a second method, other than testing, to track COVID19 in our community. The decrease seen today mirrors the decrease in testing metrics that we have been tracking as well.

[Texas A&M hosted Dr. Deborah Brix](#), White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator, to tour the university's campus and view its COVID19 vaccine production facility. Dr. Brix stated that Texas A&M has one of the lowest COVID19 infection rates she has seen during her fall tour of colleges.

Now that the data is indicating a decline in COVID19, area businesses and schools are looking forward to reopening and returning to in-person settings. The Greater Houston Partnership has teamed up with Baylor College of Medicine to provide [resources for schools and businesses](#).

During today's Interfaith Ministries/Greater Houston Partnership Faith Leaders call, Dr. James McDeavitt echoed the good news in COVID19 data and offered words of caution: opening must be done with safety measures in place so we do not see a resurgence of the virus. You can [read his most recent message](#) to the community which offers good advice on opening up. Upshot: all businesses should have measures in place that require social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing. If they do not, then it is probably not a safe place to enter.

It is important to remember that [Governor Abbott's most recent order](#) allowing businesses to further open only applies to areas where COVID19 hospitalization rates are less than 15% of all hospitalizations. If we relax on mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing, then we risk having to roll back our openings.

Hurricane Season 2020

Meyerland made the news after a major storm yet again, but this time in a positive light. Project Brays is being hailed the hero we all needed as Tropical Storm Beta dropped nearly a foot of rain in 24 hours in southwest Houston. [Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo spoke from the banks of Brays Bayou yesterday](#) praising the \$480 million dollar project. According to the City of Houston, there were zero reports of flooding within the city limits during the storm.

This year's abnormally active hurricane season, which last week brought five active storms in the Atlantic *at the same time*, has renewed calls to [build the Ike Dike](#) to further protect the Houston coast from powerful storm surges. As a site for major chemical refineries and trade, the Port of Houston is one of the busiest ports in the United States. Hurricane Laura's close brush with east Houston served as a wakeup call that more needs to be done to protect our refineries along the coast from potentially devastating storm surges.

Today's cold front could signal that [Houston's hurricane season has come to an end, according to Space City Weather](#). The forecast for the next few weeks looks downright pleasant. So, go out there (with your mask on) and enjoy!

Security

When it comes to security, most people think of armed guards and physical barriers. However, understanding where hate comes from and forming partnerships is an incredible tool we can use when it comes to protecting ourselves. The more allies we have in the community, the more power we will have to fight hate related crimes.

In case you missed it, our friends at the ADL presented a wonderful webinar titled "[Building Bridges, Becoming Allies – Personal Accounts of How Communities Come Together When Hate Hits Home.](#)"

[Interfaith Ministries will be hosting a webinar with Megan Phelps Roper](#), a former member of the Westboro Baptist Church. Ms. Roper will discuss why she left a life of hate and how we can engage across ideological lines. Her 2017 Ted Talk on the same subject has nearly 10 million views.

In Other News...(ear buds in, volume up!)

This weekend marks Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish year. One of the hallmark prayers we recite is Avinu Malkeinu, where we ask for forgiveness as we begin the new year. When Rabbi Benji taught his last class at Moriah College in New South Wales, Australia, he brought in over [1,000 students to sing this powerful hymn](#). It's incredible.

Take care today and continue to wear those masks so we can enjoy more of our wonderful city,

Jackie

Jackie Fisherman | Director of Government Affairs

[Jewish Federation of Greater Houston](#)

5603 S. Braeswood Blvd. | Houston, TX 77096

Main: 713.729.7000 ext 325 jfisherman@houstonjewish.org | www.houstonjewish.org