

MAMA Cancels Constable Program

MAMA was very disappointed that we were not able to raise enough funding to continue our Harris County constable security program through the end of the current contract year. As a result, the program, including vacation checks— which was originally set to run through September 30, 2025 —came to an early close on June 12, 2025.

We know this is not the outcome any of us had hoped for. Still, we want to express our deepest gratitude for your support. Whether you contributed last fall, this spring, or sometime in between, please know that your generosity helped provide valuable security services — including patrols and vacation watch — for you and our entire neighborhood for over seven months. Your support made a real difference. We only wish more neighbors had joined in to share that responsibility and make the program sustainable.

Over the past months, the board has explored several alternative options for neighborhood security, but unfortunately, none proved to be a good fit for our community’s needs or budget. After careful consideration, the board has also made the difficult decision not to renew the constable security program for the upcoming 2025–2026 year. MAMA remains committed to the safety and well-being of our neighborhood. If other viable security options arise, we will consider them with care.

If you have thoughts, ideas, or questions, we would love to hear from you. Together, we can continue to look out for one another and keep our community strong and connected.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

- Emergencies Only: 911
- HPD Non-Emergency: (713) 884-3131
<https://ehpdhouston.tx.gov/citizenalert/>
- HPD Storefront: (713) 284-8604 or
Centralpatrol1district@cityofhouston.net
- City of Houston Help: 311 or www.houston311.org or get the app HOUSTON 311 on your smartphone
- Non-Emergency MAMA Security Concerns:
security@mamahouston.org
- Mayor’s Office: (832) 393-1000 or
John.Whitmire@houston.tx.gov
- Council Member: Abbie Kamin
Office: 832.393.3004 or districtc@houston.tx.gov
- Animal Control: (713) 229-7300
- Solid Waste Management: (713) 956-6589

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E-MAIL

We are trying to stay in touch as much as possible by e-mail. We have many new neighbors whose e-mail addresses we are missing. In most cases we only have the e-mail addresses of MAMA neighbors who participate in the security program.

Please e-mail me @ president@mamahouston.org so we can create a comprehensive list.

Thank you for
sponsoring our newsletter



MUSEUM AREA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

FOR HOUSTON’S BEST URBAN EXPERIENCE, COME LIVE WITH MAMA



PHOTO CREDIT: HOUSTON MUSEUM DISTRICT

In January 2025, Ryan N. Dennis and Melissa McDonnell Luján took the reins as Co-Directors of Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH), located in the MAMA neighborhood at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet. Ryan formerly served as CAMH’s Senior Curator and Director of Public Initiatives and now serves as Co-Director and Chief Curator. Melissa, formerly CAMH’s Deputy Director, is now the Co-Director and Chief Operating Officer. Both Ryan and Melissa have deep roots in the Houston arts scene and beyond, and bring an abundance of experience to their new roles. Prior to joining CAMH, Ryan’s career has included curatorial positions and supporting institution building at Project Row Houses, the Mississippi Museum of Art, and other nationally recognized cultural organizations. At the same time, Melissa has held significant operating and project management roles at The Menil Collection and Ballroom Marfa, a multi-disciplinary contemporary art space in Marfa, Texas. Both Melissa and Ryan have lived in Houston over fifteen years and attended universities in Houston, Ryan for her undergraduate degree at University of Houston and Melissa for graduate school at Rice University.

CAMH has been an important part of our neighborhood since its current building opened in 1972, and as Ryan and Melissa begin to make their mark on this treasured institution, we wanted to ask them several questions about their vision for CAMH’s future. Hopefully their responses will entice you to visit and support our vibrant neighbor!

What do you see as CAMH’s role in the Houston visual arts community as well as on the national arts scene?

As a free non-collecting museum, CAMH’s place is to bring some of the most exciting voices in contemporary art to Houston. Throughout our over 75 year history, we’ve built a reputation for hosting first solo shows for rising artists, major survey exhibitions, and groundbreaking group exhibitions that are responsive to the time and artists ideas. CAMH hosted the first solo museum shows of Ernesto Neto, Cindy Sherman, and Barbara Kruger, as well as groundbreaking group exhibitions such as Dale Gais and Walls Turned Sideways.



Photo credit: Sol Diaz

What is CAMH's program and exhibition focus under your leadership?

We want to continue elevating the important work happening with contemporary voices in our galleries and beyond. Through partnerships with the Houston Independent School District and the Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy, we see how using our museum as a platform for dialogue, resource sharing, and highlighting the importance of people power and places in our city makes our work more impactful. The museum is more than just a space for great exhibitions; it serves as a bridge to meaningful engagement throughout the city. This work is ongoing! Staying attentive and responsive is a key focus area that we are excited to deepen.

What is CAMH's commitment to Houston-based artists?

CAMH has always been committed to amplifying the work of Houston artists, as well as that of artists nationally and globally. Through recent initiatives like CAMHLAB, our ongoing artist-in-residence program offering early-stage direct support to local artists, the Museum has been able to support artists outside of gallery exhibitions to provide resources, studio space, and connections across the city. For example, we've been able to support the work of Tay Butler and Lovie Olivia through CAMHLAB and exhibit the work they produced during their time in-residency at Houston First through our partnership.

In addition to the museum building, CAMH has assembled a number of adjacent properties on both sides of Bayard Street. What are the plans for the property and what opportunities do they present?

CAMH opened on Montrose and Bissonnett 53 years ago. Our iconic silver parallelogram building designed by Gunnar Birkerts remains an enduring and flexible space for exhibitions across two floors, but has limited space for other critical museum programs. Two years ago the museum acquired two properties across from the museum on Bayard. One space, the former Harris Gallery, was lightly renovated and was utilized for an artist studio residency this past spring. New to our roles, we are still in the early exploratory phase of how the buildings and property can best serve CAMH's mission, but we remain committed to our core value of community engagement, including with our neighbors, when a long-term plan is in development.

How can neighbors become involved with CAMH?

CAMH is open free of charge Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday 11am-6 pm and on Thursdays 11am-9pm. We encourage people to see an exhibition, participate in our drop-in art-making workshops on Saturday afternoons, enjoy an evening lecture, and experience our community days – a full day of programming. Additionally, our exhibition openings that occur several times of year are open to the public and offer a lively way to socialize among Houston's arts community. Membership at CAMH, starting at \$85 annually, allows individuals and families to get more involved including invitations to exhibition previews and programs that happen offsite, including visits to private collections and artist studios. There are many touchpoints to engage with CAMH for people of all ages and arts interests.

We are preparing for a lecture introducing ourselves as CAMH's Co-Directors on Thursday, September 25th, so please save the date. We hope to see you all there!



Bell Park

Sees Needed Improvements

A little over two years ago, Barbara Aksamit on Banks Street and Vassar neighbor Chaille Hutcheson pondered what they could do to spruce up and improve Bell Park (in the MAMA neighborhood on Montrose between Milford and Banks Streets). Opened in 1970, the park, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. C.C. Bell, Jr., had benefited from several neighborhood initiatives over the years – and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department (HPARD) provided basic maintenance – but from their perspective, the park deserved more attention than HPARD could give it. As a result, Barbara has led an effort over the last two years to provide enhanced maintenance and needed improvements under the direction of HPARD and with the help of a wide range of constituents, including Chaille and Autrey Street neighbor Bernice Kearney, other neighborhood volunteers, students from The Post Oak School and The Joy School, students from Rice University's Oshman Engineering Design Kitchen and MAMA rep Madyson Chavez. Early on, the team realized that the funds HPARD allocated to Bell Park were not enough to accomplish its goals so another important part of the initiative was soliciting donations to supplement the HPARD budget, resulting in generous grants from the River Oaks Garden Club and Garden Club of Houston and numerous individual gifts. Among the many upgrades, you will see:

- New lighting to provide for better security at night, thanks to HPARD;
- Refurbished footpaths with added decomposed granite;
- A tree canopy that has been opened and dead trees that have been removed;
- Repairs to the charming fountain, waterfall and bridges;
- A small garden and urn at the northwest entrance to the park on Banks Street;
- A new Joy School pollinator garden and monarch way station at the park's southeast corner (Milford Street and Montrose Boulevard); and
- The nine park beds replanted and regularly maintained

And the initiative has not just been about improving the park, it has also included structured learning experiences for the students involved in the various projects. None of this could have happened without the buy-in of HPARD and the dedication of Barbara, Chaille and the many neighbors, students and other volunteers who provided expertise and manpower.

So if you haven't visited Bell Park lately, we encourage you to check it out and to help fund the continuing initiative by donating at houstonparksboard.org/BellPark. There is much more to do and your input, participation and financial support would be appreciated. And a big thank you to all who have been involved!