

# money

## TRYING TO FIND HOPE Texas Gulf Coast fishing industry is struggling

Story, F-2



# High-income shoppers to boost holiday spending

### Spending expected to increase by 6% overall

By Alexandra Stratton  
Bloomberg News

High-income shoppers will fuel holiday spending in the U.S. this year, even as less affluent consumers keep their purse strings tight.

That's the finding of a survey released Tuesday by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The firm expects Americans overall to increase spending by 6 percent this season, but those with household incomes under \$60,000 will cut their outlays for both gifts and entertainment as they deal with stagnant wages.

"There's both an intent and ability for the higher-end consumer to spend extra this holiday," said Steve Barr, U.S. retail and consumer leader at PwC. There are times when shoppers with lower income levels are the growth engine in holiday spending, he said. "But under the current scenario it's really not possible."

cent to \$658.3 billion, according to the National Retail Federation. Online sales gains helped offset weak department-store traffic during the period, which spans the final two months of the year.

The National Retail Federation said Tuesday it expects holiday sales to increase between 3.6 and 4 percent in November and December. This forecast excludes automobiles, gasoline and restaurants, and marks the first time the company has used a range, due to uncertainty about how recent hurricanes will impact sales.

"We all know retail is not dead or dying," said NRF Chief Executive Officer Matthew Shay. "It's certainly transforming."

Most people will combine in-store and online purchases, with almost 90 percent planning to do some shopping in physical stores, the survey found. Though U.S. consumers won't defect from brick and mortar



Pedestrians pass in front of holiday decorations on display at the Saks Fifth Avenue department store in New York last year. High-income shoppers will fuel holiday spending in the U.S. this year, according to a new study. (Bloomberg photo by Mark Kauzlarich)

SHOPPING continues on F-2

# 925-home development closer



Construction is expected to start this month on the Lofts at Monroe, a 108-unit affordable apartment complex. Ground-breaking is expected in late October. (Source: TVC Development.)

Planning, permit stage complete; awaiting City Council approval



sunday notebook  
roger bull

I first wrote about Wells Creek a little more than two years ago. But the big project off Philips Highway has been in planning and permitting since then. Now it's before City Council for approval.

It's a big one — 850 acres — but a lot of it is wetlands and can't be developed. Current plans call for 800 single-family homes and 125 townhomes.

The townhomes have been added since the project first arose. Art Lancaster, vice president of Eastland Partners, which developed Bartram Park and Queens Harbour and is developing this, said they've done very well in Bartram Park.

Wells Creek, he said, is basically an extension of Bartram Park. Single-family homes will probably start in the \$250,000-\$280,000 range.

There's still some permitting to do, both environmental and building, but he said ground-breaking should be spring 2018.

It's on the east side of Philips Highway, about 1½ miles south of Florida 9B.

**Downtown**  
The land has been purchased and the building permit issued for **Lofts at Monroe**. Ground-breaking is now expected in late October for the five-story, 108-unit apartment complex going in on the block bounded by West Monroe, West Adams, North Davis and North Lee streets.

TVC Development is developing that one, along with **Lofts at LaVilla**, which is just about finished and expecting its first tenants in early December. Lofts at Monroe is expected



The site plan for Timberland Ridge at Nocatee. (Source: The Parc Group.)



Site plan for Green Hills in Riverside. (Source: Corner Lot Development Group.)

to be finished in December 2018.

Both complexes are partially funded with low-income tax credits from the state, and are considered affordable housing with lower rents and income qualifications.

The company paid \$1,550,000 for the 1.44 acres on West Monroe. The price tag for construction is expected to be \$12.4 million.

**Nassau Barnwell Manor** is a new development going into Nassau County, along Barnwell Road and just off Florida 200.

It's approved for 191 single-family homes, but David Smith, division president for AV Homes, said it could be a few less.

It's going to have 90-foot lots, which is becoming pretty unusual these days in new homes, where lots half

that size are not uncommon. Prices will start in the high \$200s and go into the \$300s, he said.

He's hoping to have models open by the end of the second quarter of next year.

The target market, he said, is the more mature buyer with either older kids at home or empty nesters.

"New homes on the island are a fairly limited resource," he said. "With this, you can be on Amelia Island in minutes and save 25 percent on the purchase price."

AV Homes paid \$2,765,200 for the 120 acres, said from Corner Lot Development Group, a Jacksonville company that's been getting more active in developing new projects like this.

Among AV Homes' other projects is Amelia Walk, off Amelia Concourse in Nassau County.

About 50 homes have been

sold there at an average price of \$340,000. It's also doing Old Still, a 124-home community on Baymeadows Road East in Jacksonville.

Prices there start in the mid-\$300s and the community is about two-thirds sold, Smith said.

**Riverside**  
John Merrill Homes has paid \$1,105,000 for 2.5 acres where **Green and Myra streets** dead end before the railroad tracks, and expects to start work on the first home there this week.

As I wrote in April, a new development called Green Hills is going into the property with 17 lots.

Corner Lot Development Group also put that project together, but John Merrill Homes is taking it from here, with homes starting at around \$350,000.

DEVELOPMENT continues on F-2

# Complex systems for infotainment put drivers at risk

By Charles Fleming  
Los Angeles Times

American drivers are demanding increasingly complex infotainment systems when they shop for new cars.

But a new AAA study says, not surprisingly, that they're putting themselves at risk if they use the systems while driving.

The news is worse for luxury car buyers. The infotainment systems that could prove most distracting are those installed in some of the most highly prized vehicles.

The Tesla Model S, Audi Q7 and Volvo XC60 are among models determined to require "very high" infotainment system demands on the driver, the AAA study concluded. So were the Honda Civic Touring and Ridgeline models, Mazda 3 Touring, Subaru Crosstrek Premium and Ford Mustang GT.

At the other end of the spectrum, said to require only "moderate" driver demand, are the systems on the Chevrolet Equinox, Hyundai Santa Fe, Lincoln MKC, Ford F250 XLT and Toyota's Camry, Corolla and Sienna.

It's all a matter of how much technology is available, and how intelligently it is deployed.

"Some in-vehicle technology can create unsafe conditions for drivers on the road by increasing the time they spend with their eyes off the road and hands off the wheel," said David Yang, executive director for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

Drivers are more at risk, Yang said, if the infotainment system isn't designed with safety in mind.

"When an in-vehicle technology is not properly designed, simple tasks for drivers can become complicated and require more effort from drivers to complete," Yang said.

In its study, the AAA asked 120 drivers ages 21 to 36 to help study 30 different 2017 model vehicles. Observing the subject drivers, researchers studied how long drivers took their eyes off the road to use infotainment systems, and

how much mental energy they expended.

A low level of demand was equal to listening to a car radio. Very high demand was the equivalent of trying to balance a checkbook while driving.

More demand means more time, which decreases safety. Programming navigation into a non-intuitive system can require 40 seconds for a driver to complete, the AAA study said. At 25 miles per hour, that driver could travel the length of four football fields while trying to enter a destination.

Auto experts have concluded that distracted driving is responsible for at least 10 percent of U.S. auto fatalities. A 2016 report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration concluded that 3,477 drivers and passengers lost their lives to distracted driving in 2015, the most recent year for which full-year figures are available. An additional 391,000 were injured in crashes that involved distracted drivers.

The AAA splits the blame for distraction behind the wheel between automakers that build complex systems and drivers who ought to know not to use them while their vehicles are in motion.

"Some of the latest systems on the market now include functions unrelated to the core tasks of driving, like sending text messages, checking social media or surfing the web — tasks we have no business doing behind the wheel," AAA President and CEO Marshall Doney said. "Drivers should avoid the temptation to engage with these technologies, especially for nondriving tasks."

But automakers are in a bind, said Auto-trader executive analyst Michelle Krebs, because buyers are seeking the best new onboard technology.

"Consumers tell us they want more and more of these features in their vehicles," Krebs said. "But accidents are going up, and exactly for this reason — distracted driving."

# Texas Gulf Coast fishing industry struggling

By Ileana Najarro  
Houston Chronicle

HOUSTON | Victoria Vo watched her father's calloused hands twist honey-combed wire into a commercial crab trap.

The Houston Chronicle reports with each strain of the pliers, Cong Tu Huynh's American tale grew fresh in her mind.

How he left Vietnam at 18, seeing no future for himself in a Communist state. How he boarded a boat full of refugees bound for the U.S. How his boat survived the journey across the Atlantic and four others did not. How he spent the next four decades on the water, providing for his family by catching and selling crab in Galveston Bay.

Now, the Yamaha motor on his battered teal work boat no longer sputters to life. Bright orange and white buoys lie in a tangled mess on his yard. More than 100 professionally made crab traps were swept away by Hurricane Harvey, with made landfall in South Texas on Aug. 25. With the bay closed, Huynh will struggle to repay the \$945 he borrowed to make the repairs, and he has no idea where he will find \$10,000 to replace the motor.

"It's hard to see my dad go through all this," Vo said, tears welling in her eyes. "He works so hard to take care of us."

Harvey devastated not only Galveston Bay's marine life but also the tight-knit group of predominantly Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants who ply the normally bountiful waters for a living. It's grueling work that supports a multimillion-dollar seafood industry, puts food on tables and lets Huynh, 57, send his

daughters to college.

In a normal year, commercial fishing and seafood processing in the bay would account for more than \$66 million in direct income. But this year, trillions of gallons of freshwater runoff pushed shrimp, fish and crab populations further out into the Gulf and wiped out the prolific local oyster crop.

Even if there were anything left to catch, the Texas Department of State Health Services temporarily closed the bay to commercial fishing, leaving many unemployed for the past month.

"I have the electricity bill to pay and other expenses," said James Tran, 65, a Dickinson shrimper. "But there is no work now."

## DIFFICULT BEGINNING

The Vietnamese fishermen living along the Texas Gulf Coast are no strangers to hard times. Houston was an official relocation site for refugees from the Vietnam War and its aftermath, and it now boasts the second-largest Vietnamese immigrant population in the U.S.

Many who arrived in the 1970s and '80s settled along the coast and took up jobs catching shrimp, crab and oysters. More than 400,000 died crossing the Atlantic. The survivors rarely discussed the horrors they witnessed.

In Texas, they have survived the Ku Klux Klan and weathered hurricanes and tropical storms. Many still recall how Hurricane Ike destroyed their homes in 2008. They don't divulge too many details.

The week after Harvey made landfall, Jannette Diep, executive director of Boat People SOS-Houston,

a nonprofit community service group, fielded up to 60 calls a day from fishermen in Anahuac, Galveston, San Leon and Texas City.

She expected questions about government aid. Instead, fishermen and their families overwhelmed her with stories of stress. We can't eat, we can't sleep, they said.

Seeking mental health services remains taboo in the Vietnamese community, Diep said. Yet for hours at a time, immigrants bared all.

"I've never seen such defeat on their faces before," Diep said.

## LOOKING FOR WORK

In the shade beneath his house on stilts in San Leon, Huynh tinkered with his boat's broken motor. The wrinkles on his forehead creased in frustration.

"Too much water," he said. "It was just too much."

Vo, who attends college classes in Webster, looked on helplessly. Her father never taught her the trade. Instead, he encouraged her and her U.S.-born siblings to pursue a degree and a career with stable pay.

The fishermen in San Leon belong to an older immigrant generation, Diep said. Many believe they have no other job options.

"I'm a 57-year-old man, and I don't speak English well," Huynh said. "What else can I do? Who is going to hire me?"

"I will be fishing until the day I die."

Earnings can vary. Primitivo Rojas, 57, who owns an oyster harvesting boat, said he can make about \$5,000 a month during the peak season in the fall. For shrimpers such as Duoc Ngo, 59, late August and mid-September should be prime



A crab fisherman stands by a ship dock in San Leon, Texas. Area fishermen lost shellfish traps during Hurricane Harvey. (Marie D. De Jesus/Houston Chronicle via AP)

catching weeks.

On Sept. 15, Ngo squinted at the idled shrimp boats lined up at a San Leon dock. Rusted metal jaws that collect the daily catch were sealed shut.

"Everything is going to die," Ngo whispered, scowling at the bobbing waves.

## SEEKING SALVATION

Co Mai, 59, said most of the smaller independent fishermen have licenses that are good only within the bay. He suspects there is still marine life in the Gulf, but if the Coast Guard catches them there without authorization they could lose their vessels.

Their salvation rests with organizations such as Boat People SOS. One year after Ike, the group secured federal grant money to buy new traps, nets and boat engines. Recovery still took three years, Diep said.

Initial assessments show fishermen are once again in need of new equipment, tools to repair damaged homes and assistance in covering daily living expenses.

The plan is to seek a new federal grant, Diep said. But with recovery efforts underway in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, it's unclear how quickly such funds can be secured, if at all.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency funded Huynh's house after Ike. Yet he and others say the federal agency has so far denied their request for help with buying fishing equipment damaged by Harvey.

Cultural aversion to government debt has dissuaded many from applying for a federal small business loan.

With no crabbing to do, Huynh and his family have

been driving into Houston to volunteer with cleanup efforts. "My people have a saying, 'If you worry, you die,?'" Huynh said. "All I can do is do good and good times will come."

He remembers the first time he drove into Dickinson and passed a sign posted by the KKK that read, "No Blacks. No Mexicans." He remembers the lawsuit on behalf of Vietnamese fishermen that drove the Klan away.

He remembers welcoming Mexican immigrant families in the 1990s, inviting them to visit the local temple and ensuring they, too, receive aid in hard times.

He keeps a white porcelain Buddha hanging over his grassy driveway. The laughing figure is a symbol of eternal good luck. It glistened in the sun as Vo helped her father put away his tools.

## SHOPPING

Continued from F-1

tar entirely, they plan to complete half of their shopping online, saying retail pain points like slow-moving lines deter them, especially during the holidays.

"Companies are trying to ease friction points, bring tech elements into stores and combat some of the challenges of physical retail," said Liz Dunn, a retail

analyst. "A portion of our shopping will continue to shift online, and we'll see online growth outpace that of physical stores."

Still, online retailers are finding they have to step up their game to meet consumer demands, for instance, when it comes to delivery, the survey found.

"The e-commerce transformation has conditioned consumers to expect or receive most things in two days," Barr said. "Now the trends are going more toward

same day or even two-hour delivery."

To make that happen, some retailers have shifted focus from "behemoth distribution centers in the heartland" to "more nimble versions" with smaller footprints, close to population centers, according to the PwC report.

In addition to its annual holiday outlook, PwC conducted a separate study of young Gen Z consumers, ages 13 to 16, to ana-

lyze their preferences.

While that demographic most often finds out about products from social media, they still enjoy the in-store shopping experience, the survey found. More than half of those shoppers choose the mall as their favorite venue for holiday shopping.

"Consumers told us they would be far more likely to buy a product if an influencer they follow on social media links to a discount, shares a positive re-

view or wears or uses a product," according to the survey.

Barr said he attributes this year's estimated uptick in holiday spending to both economic and psychological reasons — at least for more upscale shoppers.

"It's highly influenced by consumer confidence. But there's also a psychology here where folks are ready to have a breakthrough holiday and not be encumbered by the difficult times," he said.

## DEVELOPMENT

Continued from F-1

Adam Merrill said he also purchased six lots on Ernest Street, just west of Stockton, where he plans to build similar homes.

He's planning two spec homes in Green Hills and two more on Ernest that should be ready for purchase and move-in by March.

### Nocatee

Three home builders have made large purchases of lots in **Timberland Ridge at Nocatee**. Providence Homes paid \$1,527,600 for 19 lots and Weekley Homes paid \$1,338,000 for 20 lots. ICI Home paid \$2,356,200 for 33 lots.

Homes are expected to be 1,800 to 3,200 square feet, with prices starting in the low \$300s. The first model homes are expected early next year.

The neighborhood is fully in Duval County off Valley Ridge Boulevard.

### Regency

**Crowley Maritime** has sold its headquarters building at 9487 Regency Square Blvd. to SunTrust Equity Funding of Atlanta for \$20,136,552. But it's going to lease the building back and continue to occupy it.

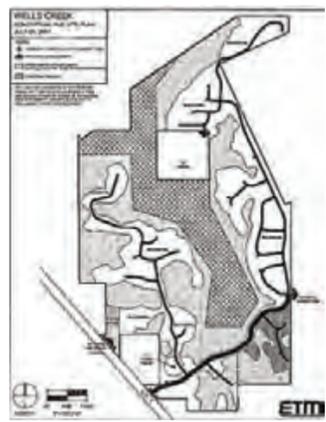
"Crowley is not in the office real estate business," said spokesman David DeCamp. "This was one of the few properties that we owned, and we decided to monetize the value of the building and use the proceeds to help fund our growth plans. This is something that we've been looking to do for quite some time. That said, we are committed to staying here. We have entered into a sale-lease back agreement for the property and will be located here for the foreseeable future."

About 950 of the company's 5,300 employees work in the building.

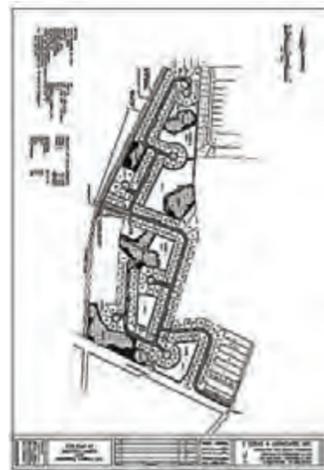
Crowley bought the five-story, 112,000-square-foot building from Aetna in 1993 for \$6 million.

### Beach

The first Florida location of **Define Body & Mind** has opened at **1822 3rd St. S. in Jacksonville Beach**. The Texas-based chain uses a four-point approach to health in four distinct classes — barre, indoor cycling,



The site plan for Wells Creek, an 830-acre project on Philips Highway just south of Florida 9B. (Source: Eastland Partners.)



Site plan for Barnwell Manor, along Barnwell Road in Nassau County. (Source: Corner Lot Development Group.)

yoga and meditation (called mind-hammock.)

The local franchise is owned by Kelly Kuntz and Julianne Klumpf.

### Permits

**1301 Riverplace Blvd.**, interior demolition on 27th floor for **Ameris Bank**, \$208,000, 17,000 square feet, Adams Interior Contractors.

**7067 Collins Road**, tenant buildout for **Pet Supermarket**, \$312,326, 6,500 square feet, J. Raymond Construction Co. **Pet Angels Animal Hospital** will also go into the new building under construction in front of the Walmart.

**5917 Roosevelt Blvd.**, tenant buildout for **Lucky Ducks Arcade**, \$11,300, 2,424 square feet, KLT Construction.

**7116 Owl Ridge Lane**, addition to **L'Arche Rainbow Workshop** with therapy pool, \$436,000, 1,426 square feet, The Angelo Group.

**20 W. Adams St.**, buildout of FSCJ cafeteria, \$1 million, 5,072 square feet, Danis Construction. Lerner Building at 20 W. Adams St. FSCJ is leasing the entire Lerner Building. The 90-seat cafe, which will be part of the school's culinary arts program, will be on the first floor with 20 apartments for students taking the top five floors. It's expected to open early next year with students moving in soon after.

**4931 River Point Road**, new

two-story home on the river in Empire Point off Atlantic Boulevard, \$1.1 million, 6,230 square feet, John Merrill Homes. The previous home, built in 1954, was permitted for demolition earlier this year after a fire.

**3460 Beach Blvd.**, demolition of former **Wendy's** restaurant, \$15,000, 3,005 square feet, Realco Recycling. **Demetree Brothers**, owners of **Southgate Plaza** plan an eventual renovation of the shopping center, but a spokesman said this is just a preliminary move before that.

**2305 N. Liberty St.**, demolition of warehouse leaving slab, \$69,465, 37,100 square feet, Burkhalter Wrecking.

**11362 San Jose Blvd.**, tenant buildout for **Cinnaholic**, \$50,000, 1,351 square feet, Andrian Hayes Inc. It will be the second location of the cinnamon roll chain in Florida and first in the area.

**4500 Salisbury Road**, tenant buildout for **RS&H**, \$92,172, 3,970 square feet, Emerald C's Development.

**7060 103rd St.**, tenant buildout for **The Glass Doctor**, \$48,547, 1,170 square feet, B. Hurd Realty Services.

**4674 Town Center Parkway**, swimming pool for **Ravella Town Center** apartments, \$172,500, The Loyd Group. The 306-unit apartment complex is

being built in The Strand.

**1185 Kraft Road**, new playground at city's baseball park, \$53,000, Scaff Builders.

**1856 Davidson St.**, foundation for **Splash Jax Swim School**, \$35,000, Lighthouse Construction of Northeast Florida.

**5130 University Blvd. W.**, renovation for **Pet Paradise Wellness Center**, \$94,358, 1,550 square feet, JW Building Construction.

**11380 Beach Blvd.**, tenant buildout for **Hot Pot** Asian restaurant, \$150,000, Fudin Construction.

**3935 Toledo Road**, tenant buildout for **Jax Golden Arcade**, \$19,500, 3,100 square feet, Prism Design & Construction.

**5287 Commissioners Drive**, new single-family home in **Pablo Creek Reserve**, \$1,210,000, 6,550 square feet, Marcus Allen Homes.

**9965 San Jose Blvd.**, repairs to **Loop Pizza Grill**, \$37,578, River City Construction Group.

**8221 Southside Blvd.**, repairs to **Loop Pizza Grill**, \$113,450, River City Construction Group.

**13940 Beach Blvd.**, new **Gate Express Car Wash**, \$1.3 million, 4,142 square feet, Auld & White Constructors. The company is planning about 20 car washes in the area. Two are already under construction: Collins Road in front of the Walmart should be open before the end of year, Nocatee should open the first quarter of 2018.

### Sales

Cherishome Living of Ontario paid \$48.6 million for the **Coventry Park** apartment complex at **6650 Corporate Center Parkway**. The 360-unit complex was built in 2009. Last year, Cherishome paid \$45,855,000 for the Waterford at Mandarin apartments on San Jose Boulevard.

Medproperties Holdings of Dallas paid \$16,023,000 for the three-story, 31,446-square-foot medical office building at **4549 Emerson Expressway**. It was built in 2009 and last sold for \$13.3 million in 2013.

Oro Capital Advisers paid \$15.2 million for **Cross Creek Apartments**, **1441 Manotak Ave**. The 292-unit complex was built in 1973 and last sold for \$8.7 million

in 2014.

Builders of the Faith Christian Center and Day Care Inc. paid \$990,000 for the former **Oak Crest Methodist Church**, **5900 Ricker Road**, consisting of four buildings on 4.9 acres.

GMC Hospitality LLC of Yorktown Drive, N.Y., paid \$9.9 million for the 88-room **Holiday Inn Express & Suites** at **4675 Salisbury Road**. It was built in 1998.

HPT IHG-2 Properties Trust paid \$8,275,730 of Newton, Mass., paid for the 112-room **Residence Inn by Marriott** at **8365 Dix Ellis Trail**. It was built in 1986 and last sold for \$4.6 million in 2014.

Hugh Joseph Cornyn Trustee et al of Newport Beach, Calif., paid \$4.8 million for the 16,827-square-foot **Caliber Collision** building at **7208 Golden Wings Road**, off Roosevelt Boulevard. It was built this year on 2.4 acres that sold for \$625,000 last year.

HSW Associates Inc. of Tampa paid \$3.5 million for the vehicle service building at **4237 Blanding Blvd**. It was built in 1974 and last sold for \$886,500.

OM Property Holdings of Forest Hills, N.Y., paid \$1,415,930 for the **MedExpress** building, **7720 Merrill Road**. The former Arthur Murray Dance Studio sold in February for \$550,000, and was torn down and replaced by MedExpress.

9055 New Kings Road LLC of Boca Raton paid \$2,407,500 for the **Wendys** building at **9055 New Kings Road**. It was built in 2012 and sold for \$1.6 million in June.

E&R Salisbury Properties of Jacksonville paid \$2.3 million for the three-story, 39,416-square-foot office building at **4401 Salisbury Road**. It was built in 1983 and last sold for \$1.45 million in 2011.

Gate Parkway Holdings LLC of Jacksonville paid \$2.2 million for 16.9 vacant acres on **Gate Parkway**.

2550 Mayport Road LLC of Millbrae, Calif., paid \$1.1 million for the 13,140-square-foot shopping center at **2550 Mayport Road**.

Dog River LLC of Jacksonville paid \$475,000 for the church at **4900 Baymeadows Road**. roger.bull@jacksonville.com, (904) 359-4296