

Entertainment

Arts scene expanding in northwest Houston

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The arts scene continues to blossom in northwest Houston.

Lone Star College-University Park will start construction this year on a new \$23.7 million arts building, which will include an auditorium and classroom space.

The new arts building will serve all three arts programs — music, fine arts and theater. In addition, it will have an art gallery to exhibit framed art and sculpture.

Construction will begin in late spring or early summer, said campus President Shah Ardalan.

"As part of our promise to build 'The community's college,' the art building will be designed to support and augment

Northwest Houston's rich cultural and artistic resources," Ardalan said.

"Our faculty will be very involved in designing the facility to serve the needs of the students as well as our surrounding communities," Ardalan said.

The arts building will open in late 2019 or early 2020.

As the population continues to grow, arts in northwest Houston have expanded as well, offering residents many cultural options close to home.

LSC-Tomball Performing Arts Center has an active theatre program. In addition, the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts offers area residents a free fine arts museum in the Cypress Creek Cultural District. And The Centrum performing arts

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Shah Ardalan, President of Lone Star College-University Park

theatre offers a variety of performances throughout the year.

Both The Pearl and The Centrum are currently closed due to extensive flood damage during Hurricane Harvey.

The world-class, 885-seat Centrum, on the campus of the Cypress Creek Christian Community Center on Cypresswood Drive in Spring, flooded with nearly 30 inches of water.

The Centrum has moved its 2017-18 season performances to other area locations, said Nanci Decker, executive di-

rector of Cypress Creek FACE, a non-profit performing arts foundation.

The Pearl will remain closed until repairs are complete. A Restore The Pearl campaign is underway to help raise funds for the repairs. The museum is expected to reopen in early spring, said Clara Lewis, the museum's director of development.

The Pearl is also working on a long-term plan to open a second museum at the intersection of Texas 249 and the Grand Parkway in Tomball. That new site is in the early conceptual stages, and it

will not open until 2020 or beyond, said Calvin Cobb, chairman of the board at the museum.

LSC-University Park has already begun to expand its arts program, ahead of the new arts building.

The campus has been expanding courses in theatre, music and fine arts as it works to meet the demands of a growing enrollment, now at more than 13,000 students, Ardalan said.

And the campus hired a full-time music professor last summer.

To meet its current needs, LSC-University Park has a Black Box theatre — a classroom transformed into a theatre. That will fill the void until the new theatre is open.

LSC-University Park

will have its first musical at the Black Box theatre this spring.

LSC-University Park is seeking input from the community as they design the new arts building.

The new theater, which will seat between 300 to 400 people, is for the community, as well as the campus, said Kathy Cecil-Sanchez, vice president of Instruction at LSC-University Park.

"Our faculty, staff, students, and administration are very excited about the possibilities and opportunities the art building can and will provide," Ardalan said. "As a comprehensive community college, we want to make sure our students and community are exposed to the very best in science, engineering, and arts."