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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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U.S. House rejects McCarthy again despite Trump plea for unity

WASHINGTON, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives struggled with a second day of division on Wednesday as a stubborn band of holdouts refused to back Kevin McCarthy's bid to lead the chamber, defying former President Donald Trump's call for unity.

Despite Trump's appeal, McCarthy fell short in a fourth vote for House speaker and was on track to lose a fifth vote as well, as roughly 20 Republicans on the party's right flank refused to back a candidate they saw as ideologically unreliable.

McCarthy, a congressman from California who has served as the top House Republican since 2019, weathered the first three failed votes on Tuesday. The last time the House failed to elect a speaker on the first ballot was 1923.

The leadership fight has provided a dismaying start for the new Republican majority in the House after the party managed to secure a slim majority in the chamber - 222-212 - in the November midterm elections. The internal struggle underscores the challenges the party could face over the next two years, heading into the 2024 presidential election.

Biden, McConnell Kentucky event is a roadmap for White House under new Congress
Biden wants Republican-led House to get its 'act together' over leadership
'Fearless' Special Counsel Jack Smith arrives in Washington to lead Trump probes
U.S. FDA allows abortion pills to be sold at retail pharmacies

McCarthy secured only 201 votes on Wednesday, as 20 Republicans voted for Representative Byron Donalds, a Florida Republican first elected in 2020, and one Republican declined to back a specific candidate. After McCarthy again fell short, the House moved toward holding a fifth vote.

"I think the path is very difficult right now for Kevin," Donalds told Fox News after the vote.

All 212 of the chamber's Democrats voted for their leader, Hakeem Jeffries. With a fifth vote underway, many of those holdouts again voted for Donalds.

McCarthy said he ultimately will prevail, though it was unclear what path - if any - he had to secure a majority.

"The conversation will continue. We'll get there," McCarthy told reporters before Wednesday's vote.

Opponents said the leadership fight could drag on for weeks.

"It's worth taking a few days or a few weeks to get the best possible speaker," said Republican Representative Bob Good, one of the holdouts.

The vote is also a rebuke of Trump, who urged fellow Republicans ahead of the vote to set aside their differences.



"It's now time for all of our GREAT Republican House Members to VOTE FOR KEVIN," Trump wrote on his social media site Truth Social on Wednesday morning ahead of the day's voting.

Trump remains an influential figure among Republicans and is so far the only announced presidential candidate for 2024. Some in the party have blamed Trump for Republicans failing to win more House seats in the midterms.

Hardliners called on him to take another tack.

"The president needs to tell Kevin McCarthy, 'Sir, you do not have the votes and it's time to withdraw,'" said Republican Representative Lauren Boebert said, referring to Trump.

The weaker-than-expected performance in the midterm elections contributed to the House leadership crisis by leaving McCarthy dependent upon the support of a small group of hardliners in his party. That group wants greater control over leadership and more influence over the party's approach to spending and debt.

HOUSE UNRUDDERED

Republican control of the House could empower the party to frustrate Democratic President Joe Biden's legislative agenda. But the leadership standoff raised questions about whether the House will be able to meet basic obligations such as funding government operations, let alone advance other policy priorities ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

"This is not a good look," Biden said of the House leadership struggle, speaking to reporters at the White House. "It's not a good thing. This is the United States of America, and I hope they get their act together." Trump paired his

endorsement of McCarthy with a racist insult of Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell's wife. McConnell was due to appear on Wednesday with Biden in Kentucky to highlight infrastructure investments included in a bipartisan bill passed in 2021.

The House hardliners have blasted such legislative compromises, raising fears about the ability of Congress to prevent default when the federal government approaches its debt ceiling later this year.

POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES

McCarthy's opponents on Tuesday selected conservative Representative Jim Jordan of Ohio as their candidate. Jordan backs McCarthy and said on Wednesday he has urged hardliners not to nominate him.

Incoming House Majority Leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana also was seen as a possible alternative for speaker.

Tuesday's session, which involved about five hours of failed votes, made Republicans a target of ridicule by Democrats. McCarthy drew only 202 votes on the final ballot before the House adjourned.

The right-wing rebellion ratcheted up frustrations among other Republicans, who said McCarthy's opponents were stalling plans to investigate Biden and his administration and advance legislative priorities on immigration, energy and other matters.

Some Republicans said continued obstruction could lead them to work with Democrats to elect a moderate Republican as speaker. Jeffries told reporters that Republicans had not approached Democrats about that option.

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

01/03/2023

Limited TikTok Ban In The U.S.

President Biden approved a limited TikTok ban when he signed the pending bill into law. The ban prohibits nearly 4 million federal government employees from using the TikTok app on devices owned by the government.

Given the increasing scrutiny on this social media app, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, it could be just the beginning of more challenges to come for the widely popular app.

TikTok employees improperly tracked the locations of three magazines' journalists and imported the files to

the company which amounted to spying. One of their executives resigned and another was fired.

Since Trump came to power in 2020, he had tried to ban TikTok, but his efforts were rejected by the court.

We would like to express our disappointment on this and we hope that future court action will be the solution to help solve the problem.

At the present time there are billions of people in the world who are using TikTok and its use in the United States has



also surpassed many of the other social media formats.

Our world has really changed. There are more and more growing suspicions between China and the United States including in technology, space and finance which have gradually heated up and fueled the fierce competition. We foresee that the world of the future will divide into two distinct parts. Whether it will be a blessing or not, only time will tell.



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Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



A screen grab shows a selfie of actor Jeremy Renner on a hospital bed, posted on Instagram with a caption reading, "Thank you all for your kind words. I'm too messed up now to type. But I send love to you all" in this picture obtained from social media. Jeremy Renner via Instagram



WASHINGTON, Jan 4 (Reuters) - Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives struggled with a second day of division on Wednesday as a stubborn band of holdouts refused to back Kevin McCarthy's bid to lead the chamber, defying former President Donald Trump's call for unity.

Despite Trump's appeal, McCarthy fell short in a fourth vote



A limousine carrying Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla leaves RAF Northolt, near London, Britain. REUTERS/Paul Childs



Patients lie on beds and stretchers in a hallway in the emergency department of a hospital, amid the coronavirus disease outbreak in Shanghai, China. REUTERS/Staff



U.S. House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy reacts to the cheers of his Republican colleagues as he is reintroduced as a Republican candidate for a second round of voting in the race to be the next Speaker of the House during a vote in the House Chamber on the first day of the 118th Congress at the U.S. Capitol in Washington. REUTERS/Evelyn Hockstein



A soldier from Carpathian Sich international battalion fires an RPG while conducting maneuvers near the front line, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, near Kremenna, Ukraine. REUTERS/Clodagh Kilcoyne

The Center Has A Goal Of Fostering Intergenerational Connections

New Alief Neighborhood Center Is The New Model For What A Community Center Can Be

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Alief Neighborhood Center



The main entry at Alief Neighborhood Center features bleacher seating, expansive views of the park, and artwork from the Red Thread Collective.

Key Point
The New Alief Neighborhood Center Amenities Include A Skate Park, Health Center, and Library That Will Open Under One Innovative Roof

A grove of 22 mature live oaks is about the only thing left from the old Alief Community Center in Houston. The building and the rest of the site were scrapped to make way for a new, multipurpose neighborhood center and park, but the value of old-growth shade in Texas is on display in the front yard of the two-story building that's nearing completion after two years of construction. An entry drive swoops up and around the grove, in deference to the trees, and meets up with a first level that's been elevated above the five-hundred-year flood mark. A soaring roof covers the massive entry patio. Jonas Risen, lead designer for the building's architect, Page, calls it "the biggest front porch in Texas." Sixteen-foot tall aluminum letters hang above that porch, spelling out "ALIEF" like a welcome sign to the surrounding neighborhood, announcing the structure to Texas as the first multipurpose center of its kind.

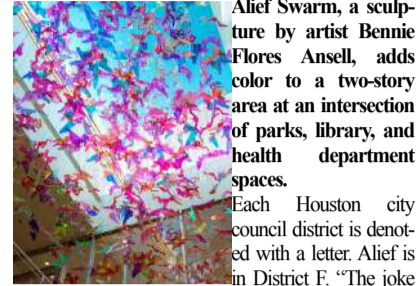
The 70,000-square-foot Alief Neighborhood Center combines the functions of the sixty-year-old recreation hall it replaces, with the added bonuses of a public library, a senior center, and a women, infants, and children (WIC) clinic run by the Houston Health Department. The strikingly modern building—clad in glass, battleship-gray aluminum panels, and brick that's a shade lighter than black—rises two stories above a 38-acre park. A public pool, a skate park, soccer fields, and courts for tennis, pickleball, and basketball are arranged around a massive playground behind the building.

"We hope that this will be a model that will be replicated across the city," said Richard Vella, assistant director of Houston's General Services Department (GSD), who conceived of the massive project and is overseeing its completion.

It might seem obvious to combine so many services for neighborhood residents in one structure, but it's a rarity for publicly funded buildings. The GSD manages the construction and maintenance of more than three hundred facilities in the city, from fire stations to city parks, but every entity requests its own funding for its own buildings to be renovated or rebuilt as they reach the ends of their useful lives. It's a process designed to be territorial rather than collaborative, and it isn't unique to Houston. But in Alief, the GSD recognized that three public buildings in the neighborhood were all due for replacement. Vella had studied the multipurpose MacBain Community Centre in Niagara Falls, Ontario, and he decided the time was right for a similar project in Houston—one in which the Alief WIC Center, the library, and the community center would join forces. "By combining those departments, we were able to be more efficient and provide more than we would have if it were three independent buildings," said Dimitri Karavias. He's the division manager of capital planning and operations for GSD, and he managed this project personally.

Of the three old buildings, it was the community center that had been ignored for far too long. "[Residents] advocated for this project for over twenty years," Karavias said. One of those locals was Tiffany Thomas. She grew up in the neighborhood, graduated from Alief Elsik High School, then went on to represent the next generation on the Alief ISD school board. In 2019 she won the city council seat for Alief. "One of my first votes was to authorize the funds for

the construction of the building," Thomas said of her participation in the unanimous vote in January 2020. There was no federal or state help for the \$59 million project, which was entirely supported by city funds. Thomas credits the Alief Super Neighborhood Council for keeping the pressure on the city to provide the funding, and said it felt good for her vote to help give Alief a win like that.



Alief Swarm, a sculpture by artist Bennie Flores Ansell, adds color to a two-story area at an intersection of parks, library, and health department spaces.

Each Houston city council district is denoted with a letter. Alief is in District F. "The joke is that the 'F' stands for forgotten," Thomas said. That's due somewhat to Alief's location outside the beltway, west of Sam Houston Parkway, but it's also because Alief is a low-income neighborhood with a majority-minority population. It is home to first-generation immigrants from across the world and to refugee communities, including those from one state over. After Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Louisiana natives sought shelter here, many permanently. Thomas's neighbors when she was growing up were from Vietnam, Guatemala, Iraq, and Ghana. More than eighty languages and dialects are spoken in Alief ISD schools.

"We are the cultural currency of the city," Thomas often says. It has become her tagline for the community she represents, and it's meant to remind people that Alief is a big reason Houston enjoys its much-celebrated cultural diversity. Thanks to the forgotten district, the city's residents enjoy experiences like traditional Chinese lion dance ceremonies in a local park, specialty foods imported to Wozobia African Market, and immigrant artwork exhibited at Alief Art House. There's also a diverse selection of restaurants, like the famed Crawfish & Noodles a block east of the neighborhood center and the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai restaurants that surround the Hong Kong City Mall. James Beard Award finalist and Texas Monthly Top 50 BBQ restaurant Blood Bros. BBQ is too far down Bellaire to be in Alief proper, but it's run by a trio of pitmasters proud of their Alief upbringings. Hell, Lizzo and Kelly Rowland both attended Elsik, the same high school as Thomas, and comedian Mo Amer attended Hastings, their rival high school in Alief. Still, she said, "no one has really championed us."



The exterior children's area at Alief Neighborhood Center.

In February 2014, Thomas decided it was time for the community to champion itself. She had just won

the school board election, and she had some leftover campaign funds that she used for a robocall to neighborhood residents. "I want to invite you on Saturday to the Alief Community Center," she remembers recording. A hundred residents arrived, not knowing exactly why they'd been summoned, and she asked them for input on a new community center. It didn't yet have funding or an architect, but Thomas wanted the neighborhood to envision its own future. "We get to create what we want it to look like," she told them. Thomas is a natural at this sort of organizing. She teaches courses on community planning and development at Prairie View A&M University. That early meeting was the first of many, and they were eventually led by GSD and the architecture firm. "Their attitude was positive and enthusiastic," Risen of Page said of the residents he and his team worked with. (Risen was a classmate of mine at Tulane's architecture school.) "There was some concern, as you might expect, that they wouldn't be able to provide the services they were used to providing in a shared space," he said, but the design team was able to show how residents would have access to more services, not fewer.

Rethinking The Future AWARDS



The Alief Neighborhood Center combines three City of Houston departments (Library, Parks, & Health) to create a civic center at the heart of the redeveloped 37-acre urban park. Raised out of the floodplain, the building's elevated 'front porch' frames a space for the diverse community to come together, share ideas, and express an identity unique to Alief. The Center is a model for resilient design in a post-hurricane Harvey environment—a 'Lilly-pad' for those seeking shelter from the storm.

Rethinking The Future Awards 2020 First Award | Public Building (Concept)
Project Name: Alief Neighborhood Center
Studio Name: EYP Inc.
Design Team: John Smith, Jonas Risen, Peter Dregnon, Robert Burrell, Yuliana Hernandez, Guillermo Andrade
Area: 70,000 GSF
Year: 2021
Location: Alief Neighborhood, Houston Tx
Consultants: MEP Engineer – Collaborative En-

gineering, Fire Protection -Addleman, IT/AV/Security – 4b Technology, Landscape Architect – SWA, Cost Estimator – Project Cost Resources, Food Services-Worrell Design Group, Aquatics-Counselman Hunsaker, Structural Engineer-Daily, Skate Park Design-Action Sports Design

He gave me a few examples as we walked around the construction site: Parents waiting for WIC services downstairs could send their kids up to the library. Seniors could watch healthy cooking classes aimed at treating diabetes in the WIC demonstration kitchen. Children in after-school enrichment programs would have use of what's called the TechLink space, which has a green screen and video equipment for making films, audio-recording and mixing equipment for music, and a garment center with sewing and embroidery equipment for designing clothing and costumes. The hope is that by offering all these services in one place, the neighborhood center will be a home to residents of all ages. A dad who stops by for a pickup basketball game might return with his kids who want to record music, or a senior who comes to watch a grandkid play soccer might decide to take up pickleball. The building's plan is meant to foster real community connections between generations that would normally use separate facilities. The surrounding park's design was just as important as that of the building. Architects designed around the grove of oaks that shaded the front of the old building, which will remain a quiet outdoor space away from the sports facilities. The site was dead flat when design began, and the team searched for ways to create elevation. The building already had to be raised at least seven feet to meet new post-Harvey flood regulations, so the architects decided to put the parking lot underneath. (Athletes returning from the basketball court or the soccer fields to their shaded cars in summer will certainly applaud that decision.)



The views from the higher floors across the site are stunning. A climbing wall rises from behind the playground, with a skate park beyond. (Between the two is a crest that project leaders have dubbed Mount Alief, from which the full site can be surveyed. It's where Karavias said he starts all of his site tours.) A local skate shop was so excited about the skate park that it shared a drone shot of the park on social media. Local skaters arrived, but they were asked to be patient and wait until it was no longer a construction zone before perfecting their kickflips. Thomas was excited to tell the skate park's designer about the buzz he'd created, especially since he's her neighbor.

More than seven years after that first meeting, Thomas will be there to help cut the ribbon when the doors open in late October. "Other districts are now saying, 'We want one of those,'" she said with a giddy laugh. She knows her neighborhood now has a jewel it'll soon be able to enjoy, as well as an iconic building that will draw people in from around the region. Being the envy of the rest of Houston is a position Thomas feels plenty comfortable with, and she hopes it will help change the negative perception of her home. She said simply, "It's what we deserve." (Courtesy Texas Monthly)

New Alief Neighborhood Center Represents Future Cultural Reality Of Area

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



The Alief Neighborhood Center combines three City of Houston departments (Library, Parks, & Health) to create a civic center at the heart of the redeveloped 37-acre urban park. Raised out of the floodplain, the building's elevated 'front porch' frames a space for the diverse community to come together, share ideas, and express an identity unique to Alief. The Center is a model for resilient design in a post-hurricane Harvey environment—a 'Lilly-pad' for those seeking shelter from the storm.

BUILDING AWARDS-
Rethinking The Future Awards 2020 First Award | Public Building (Concept)
The \$52 million, 63,000-square-foot multi-purpose facility at 11903 Bellaire will combine a health clinic, community center and library into one space. The structure, which will sit in 37-acre Alief Park, will consolidate the Hennington-Alief Regional Library at 7979 South Kirkwood and the park's existing community center, both of which are aging. It also will replace the area's Women, Infants and Children Center, which today leases space at 12660 Beechnut. City council passed one item appropriating \$4.8 million for contractor EYP Inc. to begin construction on the new center, and another item giving Manhattan Construction \$100,000 for construction management services.

The 70,000sf 2-story new building is elevated over a parking area providing convenient access to the building programs directly above. Health Department programs provided include W.I.C. (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), DAWN (Diabetes

Awareness Network) that provides support for a variety of chronic illnesses, and a Senior Center. The Parks Department programs include a full-size competition gymnasium with a perimeter elevated walking track above, a community fitness center and spaces to support youth after-school and summer programs.



The library, located on the second floor, and accessed through a grand 'stair-a-torium' in the lobby contains light-filled stack-space and reading

areas with expansive views both to the park to the south and to the existing grove of preserved trees on the north. Directly adjacent to the library, HPL's technology-rich TechLINK youth maker-doer program contains spaces for collaboration, the 'Tiny Techs' children's area, music recording studio, virtual reality stations, photo/video lab, and a maker space.

Site amenities include a competition soccer field, two full-size practice soccer fields, two futsal courts (fast-paced soccer played on a hard-surfaced smaller court) baseball field, skate park, tennis courts, children's playground, outdoor swimming pool facility, community gardens, a marketplace venue, and outdoor event space areas. The Alief Neighborhood Center is

scheduled to open in early 2022.

The Mission Of The Alief Neighborhood Center



To Foster A Culture Of Health



To Create A Heart For Civic Engagement



All In A Spirit Of Shared Collaboration



With The Biggest Front Porch In Texas!

Related

Community Resource Center Opens

Sponsored by the ITC Community Empowerment Organization with the collaboration of the SEONE Corporation, the Community Resource Center opens its door on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at the Southern News Group building. The mission of the Community Resource Center is to serve as a "one stop-shop" for the underserved minority population in the southwest area of Houston. The Center will provide members of the community with information that will empower them to improve their quality of life and to also serve as a way for participants to access the rich pool of resources avail-

able to them.



Southern News Group, Houston, Texas

Members of the community who have questions about any of the variety of issues the Center will address are encouraged to schedule interviews with the Center. The Center will link the person with a professional who can best address their needs.



Community Empowerment Organization's Community Resource Center

Building a stronger community through information and access to resources

The areas the Center will address include disaster assistance, loans and grants, small business development, tax information, immigration, legal issues, workforce, housing and renting, veterans issues, medical, healthcare service, education, skills development, children and child welfare and city services.

The Center's services will be led by senior educator, Dr. Tina Agosa and many other assistants.

