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ICE buys East Side warehouse

Officials attempt to prevent sale of site to process migrants

By Madison Iszler

STAFF WRITER

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has acquired a warehouse on San Antonio's East Side to use for processing migrants, despite 11th-hour attempts by local Democratic officials to prevent the sale from

closing.

ICE completed the purchase of Oakmont 410, a vacant 639,595-square-foot facility at 542 S.E. Loop 410, in the last day or so, according to two sources who asked to remain anonymous in order to discuss the transaction. The seller was Atlanta-based Oakmont Industri-

al Group.

An internal ICE document obtained by the Dallas Morning News last month said the agency had been eyeing the warehouse for conversion to a 1,500-bed processing center — a facility migrants would go through before being transferred to a detention center and ultimately

deported.

It's unclear what the federal government paid for the property, which the Bexar Central Appraisal District values at \$37.6 million. Oakmont Industrial described the warehouse as the largest speculative industrial development in San Antonio, meaning it wasn't commissioned for a specific tenant, when the developer began building it in 2022.

It never had a tenant before the ICE acquisition.

Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Calvert, whose precinct includes Oakmont 410, lambasted the sale to what he called "one of the most disreputable institutions since World War II."

Calvert said Monday that it would be "a historic mistake" for ICE to open a facility in San Antonio. He urged Oakmont In-

Warehouse continues on A4



San Antonio Botanical Garden volunteers Nancy Alford, from left, Susan Lisk and Elia Keck process seeds from the river's banks. Robin Jerstad/For the San Antonio Express-News

Planting hope amid July 4 flood's destruction

S.A. Botanical Garden wants to restore 50K trees along Guadalupe River

By Liz Teitz

STAFF WRITER

Karen Wilson and Nancy Alford carefully picked apart bald cypress seed pods, releasing the triangular seeds inside, their blue gloves covered in sticky yellow sap as the piles in front of them grew.

The tiny seeds hold high hopes: They could eventually grow into towering trees along the banks of the Guadalupe Riv-

er.

The July 4 flood that killed 119 people in Kerr County also damaged and destroyed thousands of trees, wiping the riverbanks clear in some areas and leaving massive piles of woody debris in others. An initial assessment estimated at least half of the vegetation along the river's banks was lost.

The San Antonio Botanical Garden has set out to try to restore those trees, setting an am-

bitious goal of replanting 50,000 trees in the next five years. Staff and volunteers collected hundreds of thousands of seeds from areas near the river, and are now working alongside nurseries around the state to grow seedlings.

The project, Texas Recovery for Ecological and Environmental Stability, or "TREES," is laser-focused on not just planting trees, but specifically native species grown solely from seeds col-

lected from the flood-affected areas. The nonprofit estimates that the project will cost about \$5 million, and is working to raise that money.

"We know that over time, the river is going to heal and things are going to grow," said Andrew Labay, the garden's chief mission officer. Their goal is to help speed up that process and ensure that locally adapted plants are returned to the banks and

Trees continues on A4

Passage of the legislation marked the end point for one funding fight, but the start of another. That's because the package only funds the Department of Homeland Security for two weeks, through Feb. 13, at the behest of Democrats who are demanding more restrictions on immigration enforcement after the shooting deaths of Alex Patti and Renee Good by federal officers in Minneapolis.

Difficult negotiations are ahead, particularly for the agency that enforces the na-

Shutdown continues on A8

Bonham Exchange, other venues could face fire code fight with Jones

By Megan Rodriguez

STAFF WRITER

Three City Council members want to give more time to bars and nightclubs that have failed — for years — to install legally required fire sprinkler systems, but the representatives could be facing a fight with Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones.

In 2018, San Antonio ordered all nightclubs, bars and restaurants that serve alcohol and have occupancy limits higher than 300 visitors to install automatic fire

sprinklers by Oct. 1, 2023.

Industry Nightclub, Heat Nightclub, Nuevo Volcan, Club 727, I-10 Icehouse, Paper Tiger and the Bonham Exchange have yet to comply.

All those businesses, except for the Bonham Exchange, signed compliance agreements with the city that include patron capacity limits and fire watch requirements, allowing them to continue operating despite their lack of sprinklers.

The Bonham Exchange has refused to sign an agreement, argu-

ing that slashing occupancy limits from 650 to 300 people, as the city is demanding, would derail its business.

City Council is scheduled to vote Thursday on a resolution that could give the seven businesses until Feb. 1, 2027, to install sprinkler systems. Council members Sukh Kaur, Jalen McKee-Ro-

Safety continues on A8



San Antonio Express-News file

A crowd dances the night away at the Bonham Exchange in 2001. The iconic gay club has yet to comply with a new city fire code.

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