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John Robbins **832-280-5815** Jun Gai **281-498-4310**

Publisher: Wea H. Lee **President:** Catherine Lee **Editor:** John Robbins

Address: 11122 Bellaire Blvd., Houston, TX 77072 E-mail: News@scdaily.com

Southern News Group

People gather as they look at Notre-Dame Cathedral two days after a massive fire devas-



Inside C2

Thursday, April 18, 2019

Southern Daily News is published by Southern News Group Daily

Southern

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Wisconsin governor says wants to renegotiate Foxconn contract

(Reuters) - Wisconsin's governor said on Wednesday he wants to renegotiate the state's contract with Foxconn Technology Group Ltd because the Taiwanese company is not expected to reach its job creation goals for the state.

Democratic Governor Tony Evers, who took office in January, inherited a deal to give Foxconn around \$4 billion in tax breaks and other incentives that was championed by Scott Walker, the state's former Republican governor.

Announced at a White House ceremony in 2017, Foxconn's 20-million square foot campus marked the largest greenfield investment by a foreign-based company in U.S. history and was praised by President Donald Trump as proof of his ability to revive American manufacturing. Foxconn, a major supplier to Apple Inc., has pledged to eventually create 13,000 jobs in Wisconsin, but said earlier this year it had slowed its pace of hiring.

"The present contract deals with a situation that no longer exists so it's our goal to make sure that the taxpayers are protected and environmental standards are protected and we believe that we need to take a look at that contract," Evers told reporters.

Foxconn representatives did not immediately comment.

The company has wavered on its goals for the \$10 billion project this year. Louis Woo, special assistant to Foxconn Chief Executive Terry Gou, told Reuters in January Foxconn was reconsidering plans to make advanced liquid crystal display panels. He said Foxconn would hire mostly engineers and researchers rather than the manufacturing workforce originally promised in Wisconsin.

Days later, the company said it would build the factory after Gou spoke to Trump.







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WORLD NEWS

France asks: should Notre-Dame's spire be rebuilt as it was?

PARIS (Reuters) - France will open the redesign of Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral's historic spire to international architects after Monday night's catastrophic blaze that gutted the centuries-old roof and sent the towering spire crashing through the vaulted ceiling.

The government's announcement on Wednesday added to a question many are asking as France grieves for its damaged national symbol - whether the familiar outline at the heart of the capital should be restored exactly as it was or given a modern twist.

President Emmanuel Macron pledged in a prime-time address to the nation on Tuesday that Notre-Dame would be rebuilt within five years. Tycoons, international firms, local authorities and individuals have promised financial and expert help - with a total of nearly 900 million euros pledged by Wednesday.

The cathedral was built over nearly 200 years starting in the middle of the 12th century, although it was only in the mid 1800s that architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc added the lead-covered spire during restoration work.

"The international competition will allow us to ask the question of whether we should even recreate the spire as it was conceived by Viollet-le-Duc," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said.

"Or whether, as is often the case during the evolution of heritage, we should endow Notre-Dame with a new spire that reflects the techniques and challenges of our era."

Monday's inferno devastated a world treasure, prompting an outpouring of collective sorrow and soul-searching in France over whether to recreate the destroyed oak-framed roofing and

spire or adapt the cathedral to the 21st century.

As Philippe spoke, firefighters were working to stabilise a fire-ravaged pinnacle that houses one of Notre-Dame's 13th-century stained-glass rose windows.

There was no immediate danger that the structure would topple but statues were also being removed to reduce the risk of movement, the fire service's spokesman said.

"Today, there is no risk of collapse. Our priority is to stabilise the pinnacles which are weakened, since they are no longer held up by the roof and its frame," Lieutenant-Colonel Gabriel Plus told Reuters.

People gather as they look at Notre-Dame Cathedral two days after a massive fire devastated large parts of the gothic structure in Paris, France, April 17, 2019. REUTERS/Benoit Tessier

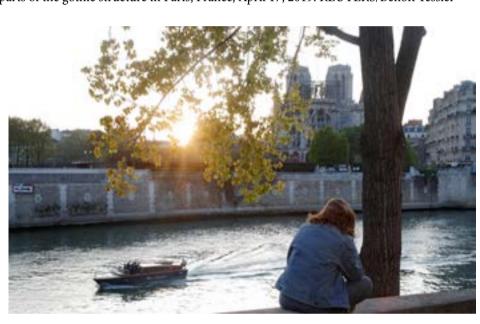
REPLICATE OR RESHAPE?
It was not yet known what caused the blaze.

The city's public prosecutor, Remy Heitz, said on Tuesday there was no sign of arson and it was likely to have been the result of an accident. Some 50 people were working on what would be a long and complex investigation, he said.

Passers-by laid flowers on bridges crossing the Seine River as Parisians gave thanks to see the bell towers standing valiantly after the fire. Notre-Dame is not the first French cathedral to suffer a devastating fire. Among past catastrophes, a 1972 fire engulfed the roof of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Nantes. Concrete was used in the subsequent reconstruction of gables and roof beams.



People gather as they look at Notre-Dame Cathedral two days after a massive fire devastated large parts of the gothic structure in Paris, France, April 17, 2019. REUTERS/Benoit Tessier



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Dr. Jeanie Ling completed her medical degree at Baylor College of Medicine and her residency in Ophthalmology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. She also completed her Fellowship in glaucoma at The University of Texas Houston Health Science Center at Houston. Her special clinic interests include diagnosing glaucoma, glaucoma surgery, eyelid and laser surgery.

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Editor's Choice



Sudanese health workers march to the Defence Ministry in Khartoum, Sudan April 17, 2019. REUTERS/Umit Bektas



A Sudanese demonstrator gestures while standing on a barricade erected at the sit-in protest outside the Defence Ministry in Khartoum



An ultra-Orthodox Jewish youth dips cooking utensils in boiling water to remove remains of leaven in preparation for the Jewish holiday of Passover, in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim neighbourhood



Sudanese military personnel are positioned near a bridge gate during a sit-in protest outside the Defence Ministry in Khartoum



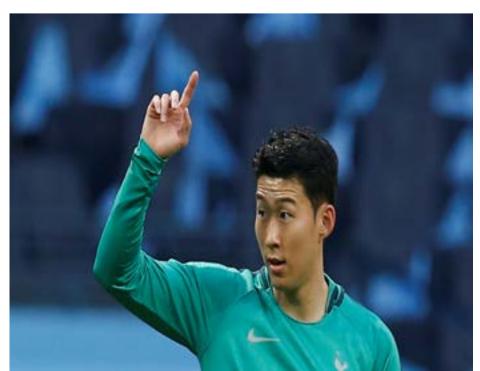
U.S. President Trump departs following conference with state, local, tribal, and community leaders at the White House in Washington



Champions League Quarter Final Second Leg - FC Porto v Liverpool



Members of the media gather outside Columbine High School as some Denver area schools have closed while police search for an armed woman in Littleton, Colorado



Soccer Football - Champions League Quarter Final Second Leg - Manchester City v Tottenham Hotspur - Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Britain - April 17, 2019 Tottenham's Son Heung-min during the warm up before the match REUTERS/Andrew Yates



COMMUNITY

Li-Shen Kline remembers the buzz around the attempted robbery in September. How a man broke the passenger window of a car. How he then slammed a woman to the ground. How it all happened just outside Chinatown's 85C Bakery Café.

Before that night, Kline, a real estate broker, knew the bakery would regularly have long lines for the lunch rush. When she stopped by around noon earlier this month, the store and its parking lot were near empty.

"I hate to see people losing business," Kline said.

Though crime statistics along the Bellaire corridor of Houston's Chinatown have gone down within the last year, the predominantly Asian community in the area continues to reel from a spike in robberies and burglaries of motor vehicles over the last few years. Word about local crime continues to spread across social media, and customers are choosing to avoid the area altogether, which hurts eateries and other merchants, Kline said. In an effort to support law enforcement and get the community involved in crime prevention, the Global Federation of Chinese Business Women in Southern U.S.A. held a community fundraiser earlier this year. Through donations and the group's own contributions, \$3,000 in total was given to three Houston nonprofits: the Houston Police Foundation, The 100 Club, and Assist the Officer. Another \$1.500 has been set aside for Crime Stoppers of Houston



Shen Kline, a real-estate broker who is working to increase safety and security in the Chinatown area, looks over her shoulder in the parking lot of a bank where her car was previously broken into. (Photo/houstonchronicle.com)

The organization, where Kline serves as chairwoman of the charity committee, is one of the first independent groups to

Chinatown Crime Continues To Worry Residents And Businesses

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



Kevin Khong, who own's Don's Cafe and Sandwiches in the Chinatown area, said some of his customers have been reluctant to contact police after robberies. (Photo/houstonchronicle.com)

contribute funds for safety efforts in Chinatown. Their hope, Kline said, is that it will spur others to strengthen work with law enforcement, an effort that kicked off last year.

Harris County District Attorney Kim Ogg, along with Houston Police Department officials and other leaders, met in August 2017 with more than 300 concerned residents at the Chinese Community Center. The residents were seeking a stronger push from law enforcement to address the crime sprees.

In 2017, robberies along the Chinatown Bellaire corridor numbered 40, with burglaries of motor vehicles at 93. By the end of November this year, robberies fell 45 percent to 22 and burglaries dropped by 16 percent to 78, according to HPD. **Lock, take, hide**

Michael Faulhaber, HPD Commander of the Westside division, said he's happy to see the numbers go down, but that burglaries in particular remain a concern in Chinatown.



Kenneth Li (right), chairman of the Southwest Management District, talks to Ying Lai, a former president of the Global President of Chinese Business Women, after a meeting about security in the Chinatown area, at a restaurant belonging to Dezhong Ding. (Photo/ housonchronicle.com)

"We try to tell people to be aware of their surroundings," Faulhaber said.

He added that residents must ensure they lock their vehicles, not place any valuable belongings in plain view like on the passenger seat, and to stay vigilant and not distracted on their phones.

Signs at businesses across Houston, including in Chinatown, urge drivers to

"Lock your car. Take your keys. Hide your belongings."

Yet, some of the more common prevailing crimes in the area include when someone enters a car through the passenger door and steals a purse or phone while the car owner is pumping gas, or when a team of burglars track when a potential victim goes to the bank and then steals belongings when the person stops at another location.

Past cases have also included men snatching purses from women putting away groceries in broad daylight.

Even as HPD continues to patrol the area and officers work overtime during the holiday season, Faulhaber said he's concerned about burglaries going unreported.

"Generally people don't want to participate in crime prevention until they're a victim," he said.



Kevin Khong, owner of Don Café Sandwich, said he recently had a customer coming in from the airport who left her bags in her parked car. Within a few moments of being inside the store, a vehicle pulled up to her car and passengers made off with her bags.

Kevin Khong (right), who owns Don's Cafe and Sandwiches in the Chinatown area, said some of his customers have been reluctant to contact police after robberies. Khong keeps an eye on his parking lot. (Photo/houstonchronicle.com) Khong, who saw it happen through his store's large windows offered to call police for the woman. She declined, he said. The time involved in reporting and following through with a burglary case can dissuade victims from coming forward, Faulhaber said. There's also the concern over what some residents consider to be lenient consequences for burglary cases. The Texas Legislature changed car burglary from a third degree felony to a Class A misdemeanor in 1994. Where burglars would face two to 10 years in prison, they now could face a fine of no

e more than \$4,000 and up to a year of jail time.

Yet both HPD and the Southwest Management District that oversees the Chinatown area urge all victims and bystanders to speak up.

The management district spends about \$350,000 a year on safety issues, said Kenneth Li, chairman of the district. They've hired S.E.A.L. Security Solutions to patrol the Bellaire corridor of Chinatown. They've also invited HPD commanders and other officials to regular community safety meetings.

Yet attendance from residents, and especially from local business owners could improve, Li said.



Businessmen and women who live and work in the Chinatown area arrange for a photo with a large check, for \$3000, which they gave to a police-related organization Tuesday, Dec. 4, 2018. (Photo/houstonchronicle.com)

"The voice has to come from the community," he said.

Karen Hsieh, former president and current adviser to the Chinese women business group, said crime has always been present in Chinatown, though it used to be concentrated near the Chinese Community Center.

"I think we noticed an increase in crime in the Southwest Chinatown area as the Asian community grew," Hsieh said. She and Kline both lament the damage

She and Kline both lament the damage done to Chinatown's reputation as talk of crime in the area continues online.

"There is a saying that crime has no address but people magnify it," she said. As HPD works to develop partnerships with local business owners to better tap into their stores' security cameras, Kline and Hsieh are urging groups like theirs to get more residents engaged in crime prevention, even meeting with business owners and police officers themselves.

"We don't want the robbers to take control of the streets," Hsieh said. (Courtesy houstonchronicle.com)



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BUSINESS

It's only April, but already this year more store closures — nearly 6,000 — have been announced than in all of 2018.

That surely isn't helping mall owners.

Foot traffic at some of the best shopping centers across the country peaked around August 2018 and has since started to fall, after rebounding for much of last year, according to a new report from data analytics firm Thasos, which uses more than 100 million mobile phones to track when consumers enter and leave certain trade areas.

The good news for a lot of malls was that many retailers made a "comeback" and were able to draw in more shoppers by using promotions in 2018, John Collins, Thasos co-founder and chief product officer, said. "But if you're selling merchandise at a loss, you can only do that for so long."

As retailers are now starting to talk about pulling back on discounting, this could be one reason why traffic is dropping at malls, he said, in addition to the fact that some purchases are moving online. Another issue is landlords have been hoping that offering shoppers new experiences would make it more exciting to go to the mall, but the early evidence isn't showing a boost in activity.

ThasosResearch: Traffic has peaked at enclosed malls anchored by department stores.



U.S. retailers so far have announced they will shut 5,994 stores, while opening 2,641, according to real estate tracking done by Coresight Research. That's more locations slated to go dark than during last year. In 2018, there were 5,864 closures announced and 3,239 openings, Coresight said.

The planned closures include more than 2,000 from Payless ShoeSource, which filed for bankruptcy, hundreds from clothing retailers like Gymboree, Charlotte

"It's Likely That The Attack Will Affect The Process Of U.S. Retailers So Far Have Announced They Will Shut 5,994 Stores, While Opening 2,641 In 2019

U.S. Malls See Tsunami Of Store Closures And Falling Traffic



People walk through a nearly empty shopping mall in Waterbury, Connecticut. (Photo/Getty Images)

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

Russe, Victoria's Secret and Gap, and discount chain Fred's. Meantime, chains like Aldi, Dollar Tree, Ollie's Bargain Outlet, Five Below and Levi's are planning to open more stores.

On the closures front, however, the outlook doesn't appear to be getting any better, Coresight predicts. That's after 2017 was a record year for closures announced by U.S. retailers amounting to more than 8,000.

"I expect store closures to accelerate in 2019, hitting some 12,000 by year end," Deborah Weinswig, founder and CEO of Coresight, said. "The slowdown we saw in 2018 seems to have been a brief respite in what's a steady, long-term trend."

Mall and shopping center owners, looking for ways to fill empty space, have in turn been forced to negotiate on lease terms with tenants and settle on cheaper rents.



Retailers are abandoning malls all over the country.

"It's funny because none of the retailers [closing stores] are surprising," DJ Busch, analyst at commercial real estate services firm Green Street Advisors, said. "But when it happens in a wave, it disrupts negotiating power. It creates a soft point."

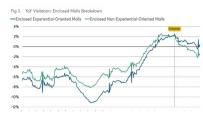
Then, landlords are turning to up-andcoming digitally native brands like shirt company Untuckit, glasses maker Warby Parker and mattress retailer Casper, which are opening hundreds of stores as a group across the country after finding success on the internet, to move into their properties. They're hoping adding tenants that provide unique experiences, like Legoland, Crayola Experience and Dave & Busters, will lure shoppers from their homes and out to the mall.

But Thasos' Collins said that might not be going as planned.

His firm found malls with so-called experiential tenants that aren't just focused on selling products, like Apple, Italian food hall Eataly and Tesla, haven't been drawing in extra traffic. Up until the final three months of 2018, indoor shopping malls with "experiential" tenants didn't benefit from greater

shopper traffic on a year-over-year basis when compared with indoor malls without any of those unique, nonapparel tenants, Thasos said.

Thasos: Experiential tenants not yet offering 'meaningful edge' to traffic like landlords thought



"This suggests [real estate investment trusts] are overpaying to bring in Tesla and Apple, and others, in order to drive foot traffic to the property," Collins said.

With more store closures likely on the horizon, consumers can expect to start seeing hotels, gyms, apartment complexes, more food halls and grocery stores at traditional malls, turning them into more like city centers. The new Hudson Yards mall, which opened in New York last month, is the perfect example of this mixed-use model.

Mall owners are also experimenting with spaces that let young brands rotate in and out frequently, where they sign short-term leases and gain access to data on foot traffic and shopping patterns. Macerich, the third-largest mall owner in the nation, has a business called BrandBox that it's rolling out at its centers across the U.S.

"I think this is a multiyear transition," Busch said. "Cleanse out some of these retailers that lasted longer than they should have. ... It's going to be tough. Anyone who thinks otherwise is too optimistic. But it doesn't mean this is a dead business. ... It can continue to be a good business as underproductive [retailers] go away, and the strong landlords invest."

Mall owners including Simon, Brookfield, Taubman, Macerich, PREIT, CBL and Washington Prime are expected to report quarterly earnings in the coming weeks and will offer a glimpse at the current leasing environment and how they're dealing with the latest wave of store closures. (Courtesy cnbc.com)





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