

BUSINESS

Houston Chronicle @HoustonChron

Houston Chronicle | Monday, September 5, 2016 | HoustonChronicle.com and Chron.com

Section B ★★

REAL ESTATE



The town's crown is up for grabs

MetroNational photos

MetroNational had the Memorial Hermann building's reflective blue crown created to be "the beacon of Memorial City." The developer built the tower for Memorial Hermann in 2009 but kept the "crown jewel" for itself.

MetroNational offers six floors inside a high-profile icon in west Houston

By Nancy Sarnoff

THE top six floors of the Memorial Hermann building at Memorial City make up one of the most recognizable sights in west Houston.

But what's inside this shiny, futuristic crown that sits atop the 33-story tower? Office space. And it's for lease for the first time.

Until recently, the space housed Houston-based megadeveloper MetroNational, which owns pretty much all the real estate in and around Memorial City — the mall, the office buildings, the undeveloped land.

MetroNational developed the building for Memorial Hermann in 2009 but kept the building's "crown jewel" for itself.

The company commissioned the reflective blue crown because it wanted the building at the southwest corner of Interstate 10 and Gessner to be an area landmark.



James Nielsen / Houston Chronicle

A meeting room with a view is among the spaces atop the Memorial Hermann building.

"The beacon of Memorial City," leasing director John Green said. "We also wanted this building not only to be the centerpiece, but to have people see it and talk about Memorial City."

The floors total 24,100 square feet and house a mix of offices, reception space, a fitness room and common areas. There are mini-kitchens throughout. The top floor is a 2,500-square-foot boardroom with 360-degree views.

Green said he expects the space

to lease for \$25 to \$30 per square foot.

Anslov Bryant, the construction company that built the structure, describes the crown as a series of custom aluminum-clad decorative fins that top 12 dormers. The fins project 12 feet out from the building. At night, lighting gives the crown a "sparkling jewel appearance."

nancy.sarnoff@chron.com
twitter.com/nsarnoff

The Crown at Memorial Hermann Tower

Number of stories: 6, floors 28-33

Square feet: 24,100

Year completed: 2009

Location: Gessner at I-10 at Memorial City

TECHNOLOGY

Is there no free speech on social media?

Legal experts say censorship might be price of admission

By Marissa Lang
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

SAN FRANCISCO — The world may never know what happened in the videos Korryn Gaines posted to her Facebook page before she was shot and killed by Maryland police. It may never get to read the questions more than 2,200 Reddit users would have asked of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump during a Q&A session on the site.

That's because in both cases, the social media sites blocked accounts or removed content, prompting complaints of censorship.

Experts say this is a misnomer: There is no such thing as free speech on sites owned by private companies, and censorship just might be the price of admission.

In recent weeks, Facebook, Twitter and Reddit have come under fire for pulling content, blocking accounts and cutting off conversation.

Twitter made headlines when conservative blogger Milo Yiannopoulos was banned after leading racist attacks against actress and comedian Leslie Jones.

Dozens of activist groups and hundreds of thousands of people sent CEO Mark Zuckerberg a letter recently demanding that Facebook adopt a new "anticensorship" policy. The signers expressed concern about the company's handling of the standoff Gaines had with Baltimore County police, much of which she broadcast on Facebook and Instagram before the police requested that her accounts be shut down.

The activists have asked that Facebook "stop this dangerous

Private continues on B2

STATE YOUR CASE

High (up to a point) consequences for not paying credit-card bills

The information in this column is intended to provide a general understanding of the law, not as legal advice. Readers with legal problems, including those whose questions are addressed here, should consult attorneys for advice on their particular circumstances.

Q: I own my home free and clear and get by on Social Security. I own nothing else. I can't get a reverse mortgage to pay off my \$50,000 in credit card bills due to a lack of other income. What can the credit card companies do to me if I stop paying the minimums?

A: If you stop making the minimum payments, at first you will be charged late fees. After a few missed payments, the credit card companies will report your delinquency to the credit bureaus.

Your credit score will likely drop significantly, and that means higher interest rates if you ever get another credit card, home loan or car loan (if you can even get any of those).

Your account will then be turned over to in-house collection people. You will be contacted in an attempt to get you to pay. If they can't talk you out of your plan to stop making payments,



RONALD LIPMAN

after a few more months, the credit card companies will probably give up on trying to collect from you, and they will turn your account over to a third-party collection agency.

But as you seem to understand, they can call you every day and even sue you, but they'll never have any success collecting. Your home is a protected asset while you are alive, and there's nothing else to get. Under the law, Social Security

payments are generally exempt from the claims of creditors.

Q: Is it better for a married couple to have wills or a Transfer on Death deed? Does the deed cover the house and car, as well as bank accounts, life insurance and any other assets? Are there particular situations where one option would be preferable over the other?

A: Transfer on Death deeds cover only real estate. They do not transfer cars, bank accounts, life insurance or any other assets.

As to which approach is best, it's impossible to say without learning more about your particular circumstances. You should meet with an attorney to find out what is best for you and your spouse.

Q: A townhouse near my home in Houston has been unoccupied for about nine months. It is an eyesore. The owner rarely visits, and when he does, he refuses to discuss his plans for the property. Is there anything that can be done by the neighbors about this?

A: You should call 311 or

go online to houstontx.gov to report the townhouse. Under the "Neighborhoods, Property and Construction" tab, you can find a link called "Dangerous Single-family Structure Open and Vacant."

This may not be the ultimate solution to your problem, but it would appear to be a good place to start.

Ronald Lipman, of Houston law firm Lipman & Associates, is board certified in estate planning and probate law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Email questions to stateyourcase@lipmanpc.com

HOUSTON CHRONICLE
HIRE HOUSTON
Career Spotlight

Houston's Top Companies are hiring

chron.com/hirehouston