

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



HOUSTON LANDING LAUNCHES TODAY WITH A STORIED CEO AT THE HELM OF INDEPENDENT NONPROFIT NEWSROOM BACKED BY LEADING PHILANTHROPIES

VETERAN JOURNALIST PETER BHATIA TAKES TOP JOB AT NEW DIGITAL NEWS PLATFORM

HOUSTON, TX – (FEBRUARY 1, 2023) – Houston Landing – a new digital news platform that will provide essential and independent journalism – launches **today**, powered by a team of veteran journalists passionate about accountability reporting and telling stories that reflect the region’s diversity. With more than \$20 million pledged before its launch, Houston Landing is one of the most well-funded projects in a burgeoning industry of nonprofit news sites nationwide. The Landing begins with a newsletter at www.houstonlanding.org and will evolve into a full website later this spring.

Houston Landing derives its name from two important landings in the city’s history. Houston traces its founding to the **1836 arrival** of city founders Augustus “A.C.” Allen and John Kirby Allen at the junction of Buffalo and White Oak Bayous at a spot now called Allen’s Landing. In the 187 years since, the city has evolved from a swampy outpost into a thriving metropolis, a vibrant economic engine and one of the most diverse communities in the nation. The second landing occurred in **1969**, when American astronauts landed on the moon for the first time, propelled by NASA’s mission control center in Houston, solidifying the city’s reputation as *Space City*.

With that history as a predicate, the Houston Landing’s mission is to strengthen democracy and improve the lives of all Houstonians one story at a time. The Landing’s content will be free with no paywalls or subscription fees to ensure that its high-quality journalism reaches as many people as possible. It will also allow other news media to freely republish its content.

The project will be led by **Chief Executive Officer Peter Bhatia**, who helmed newsrooms that have won 10 Pulitzer Prizes, and **Editor-in-Chief Mizanur Rahman**, who has spent the past 15 years in senior roles at the Houston Chronicle. They are assembling a team of journalists to shine a light on injustices and solutions, give voice to the voiceless, hold the powerful to account, deepen understanding, elevate discourse and serve as a catalyst for positive change.

Funded with seed investment from three leading local philanthropies – the **Houston Endowment**, **Arnold Ventures** and the **Kinder Foundation** – Houston Landing was born out of a two-year study spearheaded by the American Journalism Project that found many Houstonians do not feel they have access to a trusted source for deeply reported stories that impact their daily lives. It will represent and reflect the region’s informational needs by tirelessly listening to its communities.

-MORE-

“Local news matters. As funders, we are delighted to bring more non-profit journalism to Houston using a tested, results-oriented approach,” said **Ann Stern, president and CEO of the Houston Endowment and chairperson of the board of the Landing**. “The dedicated group of journalists at Houston Landing will help Greater Houstonians stay informed about the issues that are most important to them and to the future of our community.”

The Landing will cover with depth and nuance the issues of greatest importance to Houstonians, including public safety, education and the diverse neighborhoods across the greater metropolitan region. The reporting will also focus on solutions to pressing problems in an effort to empower and engage individuals to work to forge stronger communities. Coverage will be available across multiple digital platforms and include watchdog journalism, guest essays, weekly columns and cultural coverage.

As chief executive officer, Bhatia joins the Landing after a decades-long career generating high-impact journalism and advancing digital content at news sites across the country. He will oversee day-to-day operations and strategy at the Landing, as well as fundraising. Bhatia has served as executive editor and/or managing editor of multiple local news organizations. In 2020, he won the prestigious Benjamin C. Bradley Editor of the Year Award by the National Press Foundation.

Bhatia was editor of The Oregonian in Portland, where he served as the first person of South Asian descent to lead a major daily newspaper in the U.S. when he ran the paper from 2010 to 2014. The Oregonian won 6 Pulitzer Prizes during his tenure. He later became editor and vice president of audience engagement at The Cincinnati Enquirer, which won the Pulitzer Prize for the local reporting of “Seven Days of Heroin.” In 2017, he joined the Detroit Free Press as editor and vice president.

“Helping launch the Landing will bring my journalism career full circle,” Bhatia said. “It’s a chance to return to Texas, a news-rich environment, and it brings me back to covering local news with the same robust staff and depth that readers had before the contraction of commercial journalism. We will generate content that improves the civic engagement of all Houstonians so that they feel better informed to make decisions about their daily lives — from accessing public services to participating in democracy.”

Rahman comes to Houston Landing after serving in top positions in the Houston Chronicle’s newsroom and previously as assistant metro editor at The Dallas Morning News and as an editor at The Virginian Pilot in Norfolk, Virginia. “Houston Landing is a launching point, a vessel — which we will strive to be — for the exchange of ideas, solutions, and stories,” Rahman said. “The diverse, multicultural tapestry that defines Houston has been landing in the region for decades.”

Managing Editor John Tedesco, an investigative journalist with 25 years of reporting experience across Texas — including as a member of the Houston Chronicle’s investigations team — rounds out the Landing’s editorial leadership.

A preview of the Houston Landing website debuts today, February 1. Those interested in in-depth news about Houston can sign up for weekly newsletters that will feature several columns until its full content platform is unveiled later this spring.

-MORE-

ABOUT HOUSTON LANDING

Houston Landing is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news platform with a mission to advance democracy and improve the lives of all Houstonians, one story at a time. Funded through commitments by three leading philanthropies – the Houston Endowment, Arnold Ventures, and the Kinder Foundation – along with financial support from the American Journalism Project and the Knight Foundation, the local news outlet is led by Chief Executive Officer Peter Bhatia, Editor-in-Chief Mizanur Rahman, and Managing Editor John Tedesco.

For more information and to subscribe to the free Houston Landing newsletter, please visit <http://www.houstonlanding.org>.

###

**MEDIA
CONTACT**

Mark Sullivan / 512-497-6177
Public Content
mark@public-content.com

Jonathan Babin / 713-557-5335
Public Content
jonathan@public-content.com