

COVID-19 closure coming?

48-year-old Roland's Swiss Bakery may close due to new coronavirus

By Savannah Mehrrens *STAFF WRITER*



Courtesy of Roland's Swiss Bakery

Roland's Swiss Bakery, which first opened in 1962, could close due to the new coronavirus if they do not have any business by April.

On a normal day, the first employee comes into Roland's Swiss Bakery at 4 a.m. to prepare everything needed for delivery that day to hotels, restaurants, coffee shops and caterers across the greater Houston area.

Since the new coronavirus shut down many businesses



Courtesy photo

John Ross is pictured at the Palmer Fine Art Gallery and Studio.

and operations, normal days are few and far between. Owner Elvira Schaefer said they had clients across the Houston area at centers like The Galleria and NRG Park, but with the recent restrictions and closures, they are down to hospitals and coffee shops for their clientele. The commercial bakery, which first opened in 1962, could see the end of its business due to the new coronavirus if they do not have any business by April.

Her drivers are all on leave now, so their customers will usually come and pick up the products from Schaefer or they have up to two deliveries

a day, if at all. They do not have a brick and mortar storefront for selling their product, so they will sometimes set up shop on the side of I-10. Although they are stable right now, the bakery will feel the impacts of the coronavirus later due to their payment process.

“Our business is 60-90 day payment, so we still have payments coming in but after the 60 days we will not have any income whatsoever,” Schaefer said.

Schaefer said they will be able to support the business until mid-April, but after that, she doesn’t know what they will do. According to data from a survey by the National Restaurant Association, one in 50 restaurants in Texas has gone out of business since the beginning of March, as reported by the Houston Chronicle.

“Well we’re trying to keep our employees as possible,” Schaefer said. “We will pay everybody vacation pay early this year, so at least they have something, and then we are applying for the SBA loan (to) see if we can help our employees this way.”

Elvira and her husband, Gerhard, took the business over from Roland Lanz in January of 1992 when they immigrated from Germany. Their two kids were born here. Now grown, Lina attends Houston Community College and Katarina was considering going to Germany.

“Us personally, we have one kid in college and one kid wants to go to Germany, which is probably not going to happen ... so they’re both at home and they are stressing out about it, so I really don’t know,” Schaefer said. “If nothing (happens) ’til the end of April we probably have to close our doors too.”

So far, Schaefer said they are lucky to have not needed any help from others yet, but noted that the Houston West Chamber of Commerce is sending emails for what businesses are still operating during the shutdown. She said they are hoping to get the Small Business Administration loan so they can keep their 17 employees.

“So we (are) hoping that we all get the SBA loans and that we can help our employees with that because we really worry about them,” Schaefer said. “They are basically (living) from paycheck to paycheck and if they don’t have any paycheck coming in, then there is no living for them, and most of them have small children so I’m really worried about my work family more than my business at this point.”

Roland’s Bakery has shifted its operations to also support the need for bread and baked goods that are becoming harder to find or make at home due to the coronavirus. Details of their menu and call-ahead orders can be found on their website, [www.rolandsswiss bakery.com](http://www.rolandsswissbakery.com).

“I just hope that everybody stays safe and that we’re getting over this as fast as possible so we can get back to our new normal,” Schaefer said. “Because nothing is going to be the same after this.”

Roland’s Bakery is located at 9434 Katy Freeway, Suite 310, Houston and their phone number is 713-785-4294. *savannah.mehrtens*

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