



Our Wishes for You!

Joy

- 1) the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure; elation; delight
- 2) something or someone greatly valued or appreciated
- 3) the expression or display of glad feeling; festive gaiety

Hope

- 1) the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best
- 2) to look forward to with desire and reasonable confidence
- 3) to believe, or trust

Peace

- 1) a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relations
- 2) the normal freedom from civil commotion and violence of a community; public order and security
- 3) used to express greeting or farewell or to request quietness or silence

Love

- 1) a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person
- 2) a feeling of warm personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend

Rest

- 1) the refreshing quiet or repose of sleep, lying down, or relaxing
 - 2) to relieve weariness by cessation of exertion or labor
- We hope you take time to reflect on hope, peace, love, and rest. Enjoy this magical time of year with your neighbors, friends, and families and please enjoy this newsletter. We'll be back next month to share our vision for 2020.

Just for Fun - Holiday Lights Displays!

Please send us pictures of your favorite neighborhood holiday lights and other decorations. Send your photos to: nwacainfo@gmail.com We'll publish pictures of the four houses with the most entries in the newsletter. There will be a prize for the winners!

NWACA Membership - New System! Please join us!

We're switching to a new membership system in January 2020.

Now, you won't have to remember if you've paid your dues. All memberships will come due in January of each year; dues paid at any time during a year will convey membership until the end of that calendar year. And, we'll have an auto-renew feature that you may sign-up for, so you never have to worry about missing important NWACA happenings.

Individual memberships are available to anyone, 18 years or older, who lives within our boundaries -- RM 2222 to Highway 183, and MoPac to Loop 360. Those who live outside our boundaries can also join as supporting members. Your \$25 annual dues provide so much for the neighborhood! To join us, please go to: www.nwaca.org, and hit the green "Membership" button!

RR 2222 at Mt. Bonnell Road Changes

You may have seen some recent changes on these roads. At the request of neighbors and in conjunction with the Highland Park West Balcones Area Neighborhood Association, NWACA encouraged the City of Austin Transportation Department and TxDOT to improve safety after recent deaths due to traffic accidents. Brush was cleared from the side of the roads and medians were put in place to prevent left turns from RR 2222 on to Mt. Bonnell Rd.

Land Development Code (LDC) Revision

We hope you were able to attend the NWACA Town Hall meeting regarding proposed zoning changes across our area and throughout the City of Austin, so that you could learn how these changes might impact you. We encourage everyone to be involved. If you missed the meeting, the information is posted on our website: www.nwaca.org We will continue to provide updates as they occur -- we'll be sending them in our weekly email, NWACA Notes, and posting to our Facebook group, both available to members. If you are a member and aren't yet signed up for NWACA Notes, please send an email to nwacainfo@gmail.com and request to be added. If you're not yet part of our Facebook group, please go to the Facebook group NWACA-Northwest Austin Civic Association (with the Live Oak trees in the background) and request to join. First reading by the City Council to approve changes to the LDC is December 9th.

New to the Neighborhood?



If this is your first copy of our newsletter, welcome to the NWACA neighborhood! The map shows our boundaries – Mopac, RM 2222, Loop 360, and US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard). There are about 13,500 households who are your neighbors and are happy you're here!

This newsletter is one way to know what's happening in NWACA, but there's much more. Check out the quick link *For New Neighbors* on the home page at www.nwaca.org and visit our public Facebook page. Use the *Membership* button on the home page, or use the form at the end of this newsletter to become a member of NWACA. Members have access to the weekly **NWACA Notes** and the ability to join the NWACA closed Facebook group, to keep in touch with each other and with the latest news about NWACA.



ARE YOU A NWACA MEMBER?

Receiving the newsletter does not guarantee membership.
Not sure? Visit nwaca.org to confirm!

Here are 5 great reasons to join today!

- GREAT NEIGHBORS = GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD**
Together, we can continue to do great things for our neighborhood!
- STAY INFORMED ABOUT ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOU**
We are actively involved in our community and advocate for our residents.
- GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS**
We encourage friendships among residents through our events - July 4th parade, National Night Out, Recycling Collection, Garage Sales, and more!
- PROTECT AND IMPROVE OUR COMMUNITY**
Learn about fire safety, crime prevention, oak wilt, environmental concerns, park development, wildlife management, zoning/planning, and more!
- SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY**
We are deeply invested in building strong relationships within our business network to positively impact our neighborhood.

Together we can make a difference!
JOIN TODAY @ NWACA.ORG/JOINRENEW

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Shepherd of the Hills
Christian Church  Disciples of Christ

Come Celebrate Christmas
At the friendly church where all are welcome!

Christmas Party and Luncheon

Sunday, December 8th, 12:00 PM

Christmas Carol Service

Sunday, December 15th, 10:40 AM

Christmas Service

Sunday, December 22nd, 10:40 AM

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Tuesday, December 24th, 7:00 PM

6909 W. Courtyard Dr. Austin, TX 78730

At the top of Shepherd Mountain

www.shccaustin.org



(512) 343-7858

Key Contacts

Austin Citywide Information Center.....512-974-2000 or 311
Emergency, Police..... 911
Non-emergency (coyote sightings, compliance issues) 311
To check status, go to: <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/myaustincodestatus>
APD District Representative,
Officer Darrell Grayson...512-974-5242
District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter.....512-978-2110
Enroll in the District 10 monthly newsletter:
.....district10@austintexas.gov
.....www.district10austin.com

2019 NWACA Board of Directors

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Each of the Board members can be reached at:
nwacainfo@gmail.com

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, except December. Please visit our calendar at www.nwaca.org to see the specific time and location. If you wish to speak at a Board meeting, please send email a week before the meeting, so that we can get you on the agenda.

NWACA is bordered on the north by US Highway 183 (Research Boulevard), on the west by Loop 360, on the south by RM 2222, and on the east by Mopac (Loop 1)

PEEL advertising

Please support the advertisers that make the NWACA News possible. If you are interested in advertising, please contact THE PEEL sales office at 512-263-9181 or advertising@peelinc.com. The advertising deadline is the 8th of the month prior to the issue.

NWACA Events CALENDAR

December 1, 2pm

Parks Committee

Biderman's

January 5, 2 PM

Parks Committee

Biderman's

January 14, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

NWACA Board Meeting

Galaxy Cafe

January 19, 2pm

Tree and Environmental Stewardship Committee

Kneaded Pleasures

January 20, 4:30 PM

Communications Committee

Galaxy Cafe

January 28, 5pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committee

Temple Beth Shalom, 7300 Hart Lane

Recap of Fall It's My Park Day

– Louri O'Leary and Caroline Alexander

Twice a year, It's My Park Day brings together thousands of Austinites to improve and enhance parks in their communities. On Saturday morning November 2, 2019 more than 3,000 volunteers dedicated their morning to serving their favorite parks. Over the span of a few hours, they help preserve and maintain 80 different green spaces across the city.

NWACA neighbors attended events at two of our parks: Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve and Shinoak Valley Greenbelt. At Stillhouse Hollow, volunteers gathered trash and planted native habitat for birds and butterflies. Later in the day, more than 20 hikers gathered to explore the new Shinoak Valley trail. This trail was recently established through a partnership with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Texas Conservation Corps. The new trail winds a little over half a mile through the Shinoak Valley Greenbelt, which is near the base of Dry Creek Road. Photos are from City Park staff who led the hike and the Texas Conservation Corps who worked on the trail.

Check out our website for all NWACA Committee information at <https://nwaca.org/committees/>



Business Spotlight: Sentrel Salon

Janice Green

“Sentrel” is the phonetic spelling of “central.” It is also the business name chosen by Sarah Bensley and James Bryant, owners of Sentrel Salon on Mesa. It arises from their focus on what is central and essential to the personal care aspect of your well-being, minus negative impacts on you, your environment, and those with whom you share your life. These folks are introducing us to the world of Green Beauty.

The personal and business guideposts for Sarah and James are rooted in sustainable, environmentally friendly, and cruelty-free lifestyles and hair care, make-up, and skin care products. They joined forces to open a green salon not because it was trendy, but because their lives depended on it. James had major health issues and was facing stage 4 Hodgkins lymphoma. His path toward healthy recovery depended on what he was

putting in and on his body.

Hair salons produce a lot of waste. Being designated a Green Circle Salon, as Sentrel is, means that 90% of salon waste (hair coloring and other chemicals) are diverted from our public landfill and water system. Even hair clippings are passed on for use in buoys to aid in oil spills clean up. There's a lot of fearmongering about beauty products, but James and Sarah investigate and steer their guests through the green lifestyle information maze while avoiding extreme conclusions that all synthetic products are bad and that all natural ingredients are good.

(Continued on Page 6)



“Market Knowledge You Can Depend On!”

Connie Lundgren
ABR, CNE, CIPS, GRI

connie.lundgren@evusa.com

512.619.4101


ENGEL & VÖLKERS

"Business Spotlight..." (Continued from Page 5)

They are "beyond the days of baking soda shampoos and apple cider vinegar rinses."

James has been a hair stylist for 26 years, including successful ventures in Dallas, Houston, and now Austin. Sarah brings seven years of practice to their partnership. Northwest Hills is their business home due to the number of families who've developed green interests out of concern for their offspring's well-being. In addition, James's son attends Hill Elementary near the salon.

Sentrel is beautifully laid out with lots of natural light and absolutely no detectable odors that often accompany hair stylist shops. The storefront is filled with a selection of hair, make-up, and skin care products, many locally-made. James and Sarah have designed a space where people want to work and where guests feel good even before being seated at one of the three stylist stations.

Sentrel joins with other self-care businesses for special events and it sponsors in-house artist, creative clothing, and craft pop-ups. Every Friday from 12 to 5 p.m., through year end, they host Lip Service XO, an Austin-based custom blended lip bar. They'll mix any shade of lipstick or gloss that you desire, using non-toxic ingredients.

For holiday gift-giving there are beautiful Austin-made candles, gift cards for stocking stuffers, and a variety of personal care products. Resolve to explore a healthier lifestyle offered by Sentrel—a great way to start a new year.

Contact Info: 8127 Mesa Drive, Suite B203, www.sentrelbeauty.com, 512.970.8681



Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz

In her ninth book, *Dr. Mütter's Marvels, a True Tale of Intrigue and Innovation at the Dawn of Modern Medicine*, Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz "rescues Mütter the man from undeserved obscurity, recreating his short life and hard times with wit, energy and gusto... A reminder that the course of human suffering and the progress of medical science are often messy, complex and stranger than can be imagined." *Wall Street Journal*

The Mütter Museum in Cristin's hometown, Philadelphia, is the nation's most popular museum for 18- to 34-year-olds. (<http://muttermuseum.org/>) For the city's children, it's somewhat a rite of passage. The young are too frightened to want to see the medical oddities collected by the doctor but being quite excited once old enough for a school field trip to the museum.

Amongst the many displays is the world's tallest skeleton and each Thanksgiving when Cristin returns to Philadelphia, she takes a photo of her young daughter next to it, to mark the little girl's growth.

Cristin's *Doctor Mütter* was on the New York Times bestseller list for three months, at the same time as her husband Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*.

"We have a mixed marriage: Ernest writes fiction, I write nonfiction." They both however write poetry, personal, parallel, and in concert with each other.

The 1998 National Poetry Slam here in Austin brought them together for the first time. Cristin was New York's representative, Ernest was Austin's.

Winner of three national championships in 1997, 2000, and 2003, Cristin was awarded a \$25,000 fellowship in literature from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2011; she decided finances would stretch further in Austin... plus her friend Ernest kept mentioning bowls of chili with melted cheese.

Good chili. By 2016 they were married.

Cristin's *The Year of No Mistakes*, published in 2018, is a collection of autobiographical slam poems about her transition from New York to Austin. Many of the poems were written at the Epoch Coffee House on North Loop.

Six of her other books are also slam poetry, the first ones starting out handmade, then early in the days of the internet, sold online. Later ones finally attracted the attention of the traditional press.

Cristin has written one other book of nonfiction, *Words in Your Face: A Guided Tour Through Twenty Years of the New York City Poetry Slam*. She is currently working on her third nonfiction work, a story set in mid-19th century America, a time of slaves and abolitionists. We look forward to its publication.

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NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS MARKET REPORT UPDATE



AVERAGE SALES PRICE
\$820,504



25
CLOSED SALES



SALE PRICE PER SQFT
\$294

DAYS ON
MARKET **20**

ACTIVE
LISTINGS **31**

NEW
LISTINGS **20**

SALES VOLUME
\$20,512,600



SOLD PRICE TO LIST PRICE
RATIO
95.5%



SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM OCTOBER 1-31, 2019 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES. BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY 360/2222/SPICEWOODSPRINGS.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

*From
Our Family
to Yours*

NEST'S TOP HOLIDAY EVENTS IN AUSTIN

Mozart's Light Show - FREE

3825 Lake Austin Blvd
Nov. 29 - Jan. 1 | 6:00pm - 11:00pm
mozartcoffee.com/christmas-lights-show/

Winter Wonderland at Circuit of Americas

9201 Circuit of The Americas Blvd
Nov. 29 | 6:00pm - 11:00pm
Dec. 30 | 6:00pm - 10:00pm
www.circuitoftheamericas.com/winter-wonderland

The Holiday Stroll - FREE

Congress Ave and 11th St
Dec. 7 | 5:00pm - 10:00pm
www.downtownaustin.com/holidaystroll

Austin Trail of Lights - FREE

Downtown Austin, Zilker Park
Dec. 10 - 23 | 7:00pm - 10:00pm
austintrailoflights.org

Movie Night at the Trail - FREE

Dec. 12 | 7:00pm - 10:00pm
austintrailoflights.org/movie-night

Santa's Ranch in New Braunfels

9561 I - 35 North, New Braunfels
Nov. 8 - Jan. 4
Fri. and Sat. | 6:00pm - 11:00pm
Sun. through Thurs. | 6:00pm - 10:00pm
santaranch.net

Lake Travis Lighted Boat Parade - FREE

Emerald Point Marina
December 7 | 6:00pm - 10:00pm
emeraldpointmarina.com/event/lighted-boat-parade

Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Trail - FREE

Various Locations | Nov 1 - January 1
doggonetexas.com/festivals/hill-country-lighting

Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Trail - FREE

Various Locations | Nov 1 - January 1
doggonetexas.com/festivals/hill-country-lighting

Ice Skating on the Rooftop - \$10/pp

525 N. Lamar Blvd.
Nov. 23 - Jan. 21 | 10:00am - 9:00pm
wholefoodsmarket.com/store/event/ice-skating

Gingerbread Village at Four Seasons - FREE

98 San Jacinto Blvd | Nov. 25 - January 1 | All day
fourseasons.com/austin



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REALTOR

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History Interview: Marsha Lyons-Gray – by Carol Jones

Marsha Lyons-Gray's family has deep roots in Austin. Her grandparents on both sides came from Småland in Sweden. They bought farms in New Sweden and Coupland. Her mother and father met at Austin High School and married at New Sweden Lutheran church.

Marsha is a native Austinite and grew up on East 32nd Street. As a child at Eastwoods Park, she would often feed the squirrels with author J. Frank Dobie, who lived nearby. She remembers a place on Guadalupe called 2-J's that had 29 cent hamburgers. She and her friends would go downtown to see movies at the Paramount and State Theaters, and then to Woolworth's to get a Coke float with whipped cream and a cherry on top.

She had a long, wonderful career as a teacher at middle and high schools all around Austin, as a principal at a middle school, and later as a school administrator. I asked Marsha what she used to teach. "Kids," she said. Throughout her years in education, she had a bedrock principle of teaching the child first, then the subject. She taught social studies, which included history, geography, and government.

She knew that kids will remember things more deeply if they actually get involved in the subject. If they only memorize facts and take a test, they haven't really learned. Marsha pointed out that science class has hands-on activities, so why not social studies? She had all kinds of creative teaching ideas. Her students would learn about the great explorers by holding a seance and having the "ghosts" of Columbus and Magellan come speak to them. They would burn the edges of their reports to make them look like authentic historical documents.

In her "School on Wheels," field trips became opportunities for applying learning to real life. On a trip to Six Flags, the students researched the actual journey of La Salle and compared it to the La Salle River Adventure for history class, calculated the mathematical trajectories of some of the rides for science class, and wrote narratives about the trip for their English class.

Marsha incorporated the State Bar of Texas Law-Related Education curriculum into the history and government classes she taught. She brought the Street Law curriculum to Anderson High School including



the police ride along, police academy, and mock trial competitions. In the Youth in Government Club, the kids wrote their own bills and held mock legislative sessions. She believes that hands-on education about history, the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and world geography is crucial for being informed voters and citizens.

Marsha still regularly visits with friends from her elementary school. Her 1964 Austin High School graduating class has a Christmas party every year, with about 75 - 100 people attending. Now that they're all getting older, driving is more difficult for some, and the party ends about 8:30 pm because the old folks gotta get to bed!

It was delightful to talk with Marsha Lyons-Gray! If you have stories or memories about Austin or Northwest Hills, please contact nwacainfo@gmail.com.



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City Code: Dog and Cats as Good Neighbors – Alan Carson

We love our dogs and cats, but it is important that our neighbors appreciate them also. Being a good neighbor means obeying Austin rules and regulations, which can be easily accessed with an internet search for Austin City Codes. Those of concern are under Title 3, ANIMAL REGULATION, in particular, Chapter 3-4, REGULATION OF DOGS AND CATS.

There are only two regulations that include both animals, with the most significant being 3-4-5, DOG OR CAT IN HEAT. For dogs, the owner or handler must be in physical control of the dog when in the street or a public place. A cat in heat must not be outside of a secure building or enclosure, unless the owner or handler is in direct physical control of the cat. Of course, if the animals are neutered, there will be no heat and no problem. The other regulation is 3-4-6 DEFECATION BY A DOG OR CAT. The owner or handler must promptly remove and sanitarily dispose of feces left on public or private property. When walking your dog, take along a small plastic sack and collect any feces for disposal back at home. Cats naturally prefer a litter box. You probably won't see outside cats defecate, as they are most active in early morning or late evening hours. Note that the potential fine for not picking up feces is \$500.

Everyone should know that dogs must not be allowed to run at large in Austin, as defined in regulation 3-4-1, UNRESTRAINED DOG PROHIBITED. However, you may not be aware of the restriction regarding use of a leash unless the owner or handler is holding the end of the leash. In other words, you can't leave your dog chained up outdoors. There are other requirements concerning restraint of dogs in this regulation as well. Regulation 3-4-4 PUBLIC AREAS WHERE RESTRAINT OF A DOG IS NOT REQUIRED lists locations within the city where dogs can run at large (such as a portion of Auditorium Shores).

Barking dogs can irritate neighbors. Regulation 3-2-5 NOISY ANIMALS prohibits the possession of an animal that makes frequent or long, continued noise that is disturbing to a person of normal sensibilities. If your dog is bothering your neighbors and you can't get it to stop, you had best keep it inside or find a new home for it, since the City may confiscate it.

Regulation 3-4-7 defines what constitutes a vicious dog and requires an owner or handler to take reasonable measures to protect the public from accidental contact with such an animal. A vicious dog may not be kept or permitted to be in the city; it will be impounded if reported.

If you raise dogs and keep them outside, Regulation 3-2-13 ENCLOSURE FOR DOGS may be applicable. You must provide an enclosure if there are six or more, other than puppies less than six months old. The enclosure must be at least 50 feet from an adjacent residence or business (other than that of the owner or handler), and it must have at least 150 square feet of space for each dog six months of age or older.

Does the city have enforcement authority? Regulation 1-3-2 AUTHORITY TO ISSUE CITATIONS TO APPEAR IN MUNICIPAL COURT states that it does, so know and abide by them for happy pets and happy neighbors.

If you have a question or concern about a City code that we haven't yet covered, send us email at nwacainfo@gmail.com, and we'll have Mr. Carson check it out. It may become the topic of an upcoming article.

Being Firewise in the Immediate Zone – Joyce Statz



Over the last several years, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has issued a series of fact sheets that help homeowners harden their homes against wildfire. The fact sheets issued to date are on the NWACA web site for you to peruse; go to www.nwaca.org and enter "fact sheet" in the search bar.

The National Fire Protection Association defined the "immediate zone" of your home as the space within five feet of the walls of your home. The home itself and this immediate zone are the places where homeowners need to put most of their focus, to minimize the potential destruction of their home from wildfire.

More than 180 tests done by the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) last year showed that the immediate zone was extremely critical, especially at the home's corners. The corners are most sensitive "because at the same wind speed, wind blowing directly at a wall (90-degree angle) will result in taller flames and more radiant heat, while wind on a corner (45-degree angle) will result in longer flames that are closer to the ground."¹

In the immediate zone, homeowners need to be sure there is nothing combustible that will incubate embers into flames. The key culprit we see in home risk evaluations is wood mulch, which can ignite and quickly spread to the house. Also problematic are dry brush and woody plants that will sustain fire easily. Oily plants such as rosemary are especially volatile and dangerous.

To minimize issues in the immediate zone, homeowners should follow these recommendations.

- "Keep the corner areas of a building clear of combustible materials due to the higher probability of having direct flame touching the surrounding ground.
- Keep gutters free of debris; use metal gutters.
- Install hard surfaces, such as a concrete walkway, or use noncombustible mulch products, such as rock.
- Keep the lawn well irrigated and use low-growing herbaceous (non-woody) plants. Shrubs and trees are not recommended in the 5-foot zone.
- Remove dead vegetation and implement a maintenance strategy to keep the 5-foot zone clear of dead plant materials.
- Mitigating home ignition zones shouldn't stop at 5 feet from the building. It should be combined with the footprint of an attached deck and area that extends away from the building up to 100 feet or to the property line"²

A 2019 video showing how the research tests are done can be seen at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV7a1ejOqEc>

1, 2 See Wildfire Research Fact Sheet: Immediate (Noncombustible) Zone

GreenChoice Enables a Better Tomorrow – Joanie Arrott



A few months ago, the Energy Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) posted their monthly energy output reports for Texas, and wind energy surpassed coal in energy generation, holding second place to natural gas. As of August 2019, Texas produced 21.37%

of its energy from coal and 21.78% of its energy from wind. While this is a small margin for celebration, it shows the potential that wind energy, along with other forms of renewable energy, has in our great state.

Decreasing reliance on nonrenewable sources of energy has many benefits for current residents, but the net benefit for future generations should also be considered. NWACA area residents and businesses have convenient options for reducing their use of nonrenewable energy sources through the Austin Energy's GreenChoice Program.

GreenChoice is available to residents and business owners without a contract, as a continuous subscription service that may be canceled at any time. Business owners may opt for an Energizer-level 12-month contract at the same GreenChoice charges and qualify for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Green Power Partner Program and the City of Austin's Green Business Leaders Program.

GreenChoice gives customers the option to support renewable energy by ensuring Austin Energy purchases Texas wind energy to match 100% of your usage. Subscribers pay less than one cent (\$0.0075) more per kilowatt hour (kWh) for energy than non-subscribers.

Subscribing to GreenChoice means that Austin Energy can purchase wind energy instead of electricity produced from natural gas or coal-fired power plants. Relying less on fossil fuel combustion for energy means a reduction in both air pollution and wasted water in drought-prone Texas. In 2018, GreenChoice customers invested in more than 758 million kWh of Texas wind as an alternative to fossil fuels. That annual impact equals:

- Removing the same amount of carbon from the air as 6 million trees can;
- Removing carbon emissions equal to those of 74,000+ cars;
- Powering 72,000 homes for one year with wind energy instead of fossil fuels (based on 880 kWh/mo)

Purchasing GreenChoice energy supports growth of the renewable energy industry in Texas, which creates new jobs in the state and produces new revenues for school districts. Texas ranks first in the nation for wind energy capacity, and second in the nation for employment in the renewable energy industry. More information and sign-up can be found at: <https://austinenergy.com/ae/green-power/greenchoice/greenchoice-renewable-energy>.

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Questions from Neighbors

– Joyce Statz, aggregator

A reader asks: Who should I contact when my electricity keeps going out?

Several parts of the neighborhood have had electrical outages recently, some with repeated occurrences. A neighbor asked who to notify.

- 311 – they can convey the information to Austin Energy and get the problem dealt with, and they can monitor the number of calls to know the level of impact on neighbors
- Councilmember Alison Alter’s office – calling her office as well lets her know the extent of the problem
- Report any outage to Austin Energy at **512-322-9100**. You can also sign up to get text message alerts explaining what has caused an outage in your area. For more information see the Austin Energy web page <https://austenergy.com/ae/residential/report-a-problem>

If you have questions you'd like answered, please send them to us at nwacainfo@gmail.com.



RA

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NWACA

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Upzoning and Property Taxes

– Chris “Kaz” Wojtevicz

It's 2019 and the City is entering its 5th (plus) year trying to amend our land development code (LDC). Housing prices continue to increase squeezing the wallets of many and could exacerbate the number of people experiencing homelessness. The electorate overwhelmingly approved the City's largest affordable housing bond last November. In May, Austin City Council directed staff to jumpstart the land development code rewrite process. Staff published their first draft on October 4th.

As our city digs into this draft, there are homeowners worried that their property taxes are going to increase. To help put this concern in context, we need to analyze the current property wealth appreciation, without up-zoning. Per Zillow, the median list price for Austin homes has gone from \$234k in 2010 to \$399k this year, about a 70% increase. As properties values appreciate, tax appraisals increase also.

Up-zoning by itself doesn't raise a homestead's appraised value. Per Texas law, Tex. Tax Code § 23.01: (d) The market value of a residence homestead shall be determined solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence homestead, regardless of whether the residential use of the property by the owner is considered to be the highest and best use of the property.

Homestead assessments do not happen in a vacuum. Even if the assessment for a single property is up-zoned to multi-family or mixed-use, and it remains a homestead, the demand in that geographic area could increase. This increase in demand, if associated with higher sales prices than would have occurred otherwise, would result in a higher appraisal. Another way to think of this scenario: when a school suddenly gets a higher rating or if the area gets a new amenity, there would also be an increase in demand. In contrast to the last two scenarios, up-zoning demand shocks can be minimized by broadening the area being up-zoned. The broader and less focused the up-zoning for multi-family and mixed-use, the more the demand will be spread out.

As an extreme outlier, we can look at what would happen if a single-family house was up-zoned to allow downtown zoning. This happened in Austin when Rainey Street was up-zoned to Central Business District (CBD) zoning in 2005. From 2005 to 2019, Rainey Street has grown substantially; there are now high-rises and entertainment venues where single family homes once sat, just blocks away from downtown. Where a dozen-plus families lived before,

now there are many more.

Even though Austin is a city that has faced population growth year over year since its inception, change still elicits angst. That angst was reflected in June when the last [single family] house on Rainey Street went on sale. One article noted “[the] family home at 71 Rainey St. was built in 1910 and bought by [the current owner's] grandparents in the 1940s.” Another story pointed out that “the house is listed online for \$2.6 million. Travis County appraised the property at \$1.1 million this year, almost four times the appraised value in 2014.”

Nearly 14 years after being up-zoned, one wonders what the property tax impact was to the owner. The property's assessed value, appraised value, and listing price were \$175k, \$1.1m, and \$2.6m, respectively at the time of the listing.

While the property's value skyrocketed in price, the property owner paid \$3k in property taxes in 2018. The 10% cap on appreciation insulated the owner - that's the system in place. Some would say the system worked, as the property owner paid less than many other people in the city with property valued at far less than \$2.6m dollars.

For this extreme example, as you can see in the TCAD records, while the property value increased substantially, the owner still paid on average only ~\$276 per month. Or ~\$9 a day. To be clear, this amount of money can be a significant burden to people, but rejecting up-zoning doesn't address that issue. If the policy objective is to help people choose to stay in their house as property taxes (and their wealth, according to appraised value) increase, should we somehow offer them direct assistance and financial tools to do so?

In addition to the Texas 10% cap on annual tax increases, there are other exemptions such as the homestead exemption and exemptions for seniors and veterans. It is also worth noting that Austin is a majority renter city, and these exemptions do not apply to them or to small businesses.

While homesteads in the city are eligible for such exemptions, the city is now required to go to voters if they adopt “a rate exceeding the 3.5 percent voter-approved rate.” Even if up-zoning increased housing demand in Austin, voters would still have to approve higher tax rates (that are actually lower than the rate increases seen over the past few decades.

Stay tuned; we'll continue to explore the property appraisal process and related subjects in upcoming issues.

(Continued on Page 13)

Values

(+) Improvement Homesite Value:	+	\$76,085	
(+) Improvement Non-Homesite Value:	+	\$0	
(+) Land Homesite Value:	+	\$1,027,814	
(+) Land Non-Homesite Value:	+	\$0	Ag / Timber Use Value
(+) Agricultural Market Valuation:	+	\$0	\$0
(+) Timber Market Valuation:	+	\$0	\$0
<hr/>			
(=) Market Value:	=	\$1,103,899	
(-) Ag or Timber Use Value Reduction:	-	\$0	
<hr/>			
(=) Appraised Value:	=	\$1,103,899	
(-) HS Cap:	-	\$928,623	
<hr/>			
(=) Assessed Value:	=	\$175,276	

Land

#	Type	Description	Acres	Sqft	Eff Front	Eff Depth	Market Value	Prod. Value
1	LAND	Land	0.1311	5710.08	44.61	128.00	\$1,027,814	\$0

Roll Value History

Year	Improvements	Land Market	Ag Valuation	Appraised	HS Cap	Assessed
2019	\$76,085	\$1,027,814	0	1,103,899	\$928,623	\$175,276
2018	\$76,539	\$1,027,814	0	1,104,353	\$945,011	\$159,342
2017	\$68,473	\$599,558	0	668,031	\$523,175	\$144,856
2016	\$68,473	\$456,806	0	525,279	\$393,592	\$131,687
2015	\$68,473	\$456,806	0	525,279	\$405,564	\$119,715
2014	\$61,205	\$342,605	0	403,810	\$294,978	\$108,832

Taxing Jurisdiction

Owner: CONTRERAS JULIAN ETAL
 % Ownership: 100.0000000000%
 Total Value: \$1,103,899

Entity	Description	Tax Rate	Appraised Value	Taxable Value	Estimated Tax
01	AUSTIN ISD	1.192000	\$1,103,899	\$150,276	\$1,791.29
02	CITY OF AUSTIN	0.440300	\$1,103,899	\$157,748	\$694.56
03	TRAVIS COUNTY	0.354200	\$1,103,899	\$140,221	\$496.66
0A	TRAVIS CENTRAL APP DIST	0.000000	\$1,103,899	\$175,276	\$0.00
2J	TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT	0.105221	\$1,103,899	\$140,221	\$147.54
3L	WALLER CREEK TIF	0.000000	\$1,103,899	\$175,276	\$0.00
68	AUSTIN COMM COLL DIST	0.104800	\$1,103,899	\$170,276	\$178.45
Total Tax Rate:		2.196521			
				Taxes w/Current Exemptions:	\$3,308.50
				Taxes w/o Exemptions:	\$14,473.97

Excluding Pests

- Wizzle Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service



When the weather turns toward autumn and leads into winter, many pests start looking for a cozy place, which can often lead them inside your home. By performing a thorough inspection, you can locate areas where these pests may enter and stop them before they become a problem.

Inside the home, look around doors and windows and if you see light around them it's a sign there isn't a good seal, and weather stripping should be replaced. Inspect the attic for holes or entry points for small mammals such as rats, mice, and squirrels. Attic vents should be covered with stainless steel screening to block animals from entering. Outside, inspect the perimeter of the home for cracks and crevices in the foundation that should be sealed. Locate pipe and wire penetrations that enter the structure, and seal areas that allow pests to enter.

Ideas on how to exclude pests from your home:

- Trim back or prune any trees and shrubs that touch or overhang the home
- Seal pipe and wire penetrations with copper mesh, sealant, or expanding foam
 - Replace weather stripping around doors and windows if there is not a good seal
 - Repair or replace window screens that have holes
 - For homes with brick or stone facades, stuff weep holes with copper mesh
 - Clean debris from gutters to reduce harborage areas for pests
 - Inspect all furniture, boxes, and bags for pests before carrying them into the home
 - Inspect all plants for insect pests before bringing them into the home
 - Do not store firewood inside the home, against outside walls, or near doors
 - Use sheet metal, hardware cloth, or steel wool to seal any areas where animals have chewed to enter the home (but make sure animal is not in the home or you'll seal it inside!)

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzle Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

Special Thanks to Members

- Membership Committee

NWACA thanks members who generously contributed to the 4th of July Parade Fund, the Park Fund, and the Constable Fund, between September 15, 2019 and November 14, 2019.

Donations to the 4th of July Parade Fund help NWACA to host the best 4th of July parade in Austin! The Park Fund helps us do events in our parks and revitalize parks in the NWACA area. The Constable Fund helps us provide the patrol activities of the Travis County Constable.

- Carolyn and Mark Abernathy
- Jean Bohls
- Stan Brooks
- Mary Jane Burson and Mike Polston
- Johnny and Tina Cailleteau
- Maggie Dostal and Kevin Vaughn
- Adrian and Jill Gentry
- Avery and Doug Goodgame
- Michael Hickey
- Mary and Allen Hill
- Dorothy Howard
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- Maureen Powers and Scott McCown
- Lou Ann and Frank Newman
- Patricia Orlosky and Jerry Kilpatrick
- Kathy Smith-Willman
- Mike and Roberta Starbird
- Diane and Donnie Williams
- (and apologies to anyone whose donation we might have missed!)

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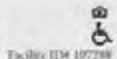


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Safety Around Coyotes

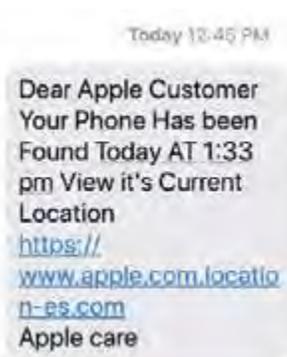
Travis County officials have provided this announcement regarding activity of coyotes during this time period. Please protect your pets.

During this time of the year, coyotes may be more active as pups get pushed out of the den and look for new food sources and territory. Denning season lasts from April to November. Coyotes are typically most active at dawn and dusk, though they may be seen hunting or traveling during daytime hours. We want to share space with coyotes, but not time. Hazing is a process that helps shape coyote behavior and encourages them to avoid contact with people and pets. It reinforces coyotes' natural wariness without harming them. You can haze by making loud noises and throwing things if needed. It is very important to haze, practice the best pet safety actions, and limit attractants that might draw coyotes and other wildlife in. The best ways to practice pet safety actions is to keep your pets on a leash at all times, be present with small pets while outside, and bring your small cats and dogs inside at night.

Please report any concerning activity to 311 so the Wildlife Officer can monitor behavior. With recent coyote activity in the neighborhood, please visit <https://austintexas.gov/department/coyotes-central-texas> for considerations regarding pet safety, hazing, and attractants.



PSA: Sharpen Your Skepticism About Clicking on Links – Carol Jones



At the ACL Music Festival this year, the son of one of my Facebook friends had his phone stolen by a pickpocket. After he bought a new phone, he got the text shown in the graphic, sent to him by the thieves. He knew that the link was fake, and he didn't click on it. If he had believed that it was the real

AppleCare writing to him, and clicked on the link, his new phone could have been vulnerable to malware or electronic viruses.

Be skeptical and don't click:

Thieves have many ways to quietly install malware on smartphones or computers, or to steal your identity. It's simply not safe anymore to click on links that have been sent via email, text message, LinkedIn, or Facebook Messenger. Even if they appear to be from a friend or acquaintance, it's best to be skeptical and never click on them. Instead, always open a new browser window and enter the genuine url for the company, whether it's AppleCare, PayPal, Netflix, or your own bank.

Quiz: Would you be skeptical about the link shown in the graphic? How many different clues are there, that the url is NOT a real Apple link?

Answers:

- (1) There is a generic greeting instead of your name.
- (2) In the link, there are two parts that say ".com." There should only be one .com.
- (3) Forward slashes ("/") in urls are very important. There should always be a forward slash (/) after the main url such as "apple.com/" to separate the rest of the url. The addition of anything after the "apple.com" without a / in between, or adding anything before or after the main url without a slash / in between, is your biggest clue that this is a fake, malicious address.
- (4) "Apple care" should be spelled correctly as AppleCare.
- (5) There are usually grammar errors, such as misspellings, in fake messages. In this case, there are odd capitalized words, and "it's" should be "its."

Keep your smartphone and computer safe by being instantly skeptical of messages you receive. Be sure that the older folks in your life are aware of this, too. Seniors are most susceptible to such issues.



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Please check a committee on which you would like to participate:

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For more info email us at: nwacainfo@gmail.com

Water Conservation in the Winter Saves Money Year ‘Round

– Public Service Announcement – Jacob Johnson, Austin Water

Conserving water during late fall and winter saves you money on two fronts. First, you get a break from those landscape-induced higher summer water bills. Second, and just as important, conserving water during this time can keep your wastewater bills lower for the next 12 months.

There is no meter on your home’s wastewater line, so to determine residential wastewater volume Austin Water uses a process called wastewater averaging. Austin Water averages your water use during your three monthly billing periods between mid-November and mid-March. This average sets a cap on the wastewater volume you will be billed for the next 12-month period.

In late fall/winter, the typical landscape rarely needs supplemental water, pools don’t usually need to be topped off, and slip and slides have been packed away. Without all that outdoor water demand, this timeframe typically gives a good indication of how much water is being used indoors, going down the drain, and ultimately to a wastewater treatment plant. The lower that average water use is, the lower your wastewater charges can be.

Let’s say a family of four averages 6,000 gallons of water use monthly during their wastewater averaging period. As summer comes along, and their outdoor water use increases, they use 12,000 gallons per month. The family will be charged for 12,000 gallons of water, but because of their wastewater average, they will continue to only be charged for the 6,000 gallons of wastewater average cap.

Even after the wastewater average is set, wastewater charges can be lowered by using less water than the wastewater average cap. If the family with the 6,000-gallon wastewater average uses 5,000 gallons of water one month, they will be charged only 5,000 gallons for wastewater volume. Wastewater volume is billed at the wastewater average cap or at the same volume as the monthly water usage, whichever is lower.

A higher wastewater average will result when irrigation systems are left on or leaks are present during the 3-month wastewater average period, and this can be very costly. Turn off automatic irrigation systems and identify and repair leaks early.

To find your specific wastewater averaging period, check out the Utility News section on your utility billing statement. Customers must have at least 60 days of billed water usage during the wastewater averaging period to have a calculated wastewater average. Visit www.austintexas.gov/wastewateraveraging for additional information.

This winter, practice good water conservation behaviors, turn off your irrigation system, and see how low you can go!

Deer Rutting Season

- Wildlife Management Committee



November through December is deer mating season in Texas, also known as “rutting season.” During this time, we all need to use extra caution; deer are paying attention to one another and not to humans and cars. You’ll probably see more mature male deer than usual, and at times females will be scurrying ahead of them. Be careful, as they may dart in front of walkers, runners, cyclists, and moving cars. Give them plenty of space. Keep dogs on a leash at a safe distance from the deer.

Given the frequency with which cars and deer collide, it would be prudent to check your auto insurance to ensure you have adequate “Collision – Other” coverage, which applies to such incidents. Last year, an encounter with a deer on Greystone Drive required more than \$3,000 in repairs, though the apparent damage was small!

If you’re a gardener with a medium or large agave plant within a deer’s reach, you might want to put a barrier around it during mating season. Male deer like to rub the velvet off their antlers using the agave spines, destroying the plant’s big wide leaves in the process.

To report an injured or dead deer, call 311. Be prepared to provide a precise address where the animal can be located.



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When we called on one of Dawn's listings, we immediately discovered that she is very knowledgeable about the neighborhood and was more focused on serving us than trying to get us to sign a Buyers Representation Agreement. This quickly led to us choosing Dawn to exclusively represent us in our search and we are so glad we did.

Although we were always hesitant to use Dawn's time, she was always willing and eager to take our call, text with us, jump in the car to go show a house, pull comps, discuss strategies, etc. Throughout the whole process, she was focused on serving our needs and available to us 7 days a week from early morning to past dinner time.

No matter the conversation or topic, she always went over the top to find someone for us, put our needs in front of hers, and made sure that we were taken care of, no matter what. This led us to feel like she was the quarterback, we could completely trust all of her advice and knew she would manage the process, even when we weren't sure what was next.

On top of her service, her level of professionalism has got to be top 1% in the industry. She is clearly up to date on the legal and ethics issues that face the residential real estate business and wouldn't let me make a mistake - which, as a licensed broker who isn't practicing real estate, I appreciate very much. She represented us far beyond our expectations.

We have recommended her to others, will continue to recommend her, and look forward to using her again, both on the buy side and sell side of our future transactions."

-The Armstrongs



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