



## Spending More Time at Home?

*It's a great time to get caught up on home safety.*



*NWACA Board co-president Robert Nash attempting to keep the sidewalk free for passing pedestrians*

Finding ourselves at home more than we might have imagined a few months ago, many of us may be culling through closets, creating a workout station in the garage, doing a bit of gardening, or fixing this or that problem we previously had put off.

As long as you're still at home, you may want to follow through on some safety preparedness tips described within this newsletter.

We're proud to roll out a new free "reflective curb address" program for the first 100 NWACA members who reply – either for themselves or on behalf of an elderly neighbor. Having a clear, easy-to-read address can save precious minutes in the event an ambulance is trying to find you.

To be safe in this wildfire season, there are two additional preparedness steps you'll want to take, if you haven't already. As you'll see in the Firewise article about alerts, only 4.5% of us are registered for the emergency warnings that include evacuation advisories in case of wildfire. For the sake of your family and our whole community, we need to improve on that – please follow steps outlined in the article. Also, if you haven't already

had a free home wildfire risk evaluation, go to [www.nwaca.org](http://www.nwaca.org) and sign up to have one. The evaluation is done with safe social distancing, and it will guide you in how to make your home resilient to wildfire.

Finally, now that more neighbors than ever seem to be walking, jogging, cycling, and scooting, we're happy to present information regarding homeowner responsibility to maintain a safe right of way, with appropriate tree and vegetation trimming.

Safety is important, but so is your health. To help you get out of the house, look for the comprehensive listing of walkable green trails that may be new to some of you. Get out and explore the vast array of green spaces that can be found in the NWACA area. Note that Bull Creek District Park has had some renovations that made it easier to access the park's amenities.

So as the scorching (and very odd) summer of 2020 begins to tilt toward fall, keep walking, keep waving and smiling, and think about including some home safety projects in your quasi-lockdown list of to-dos.

## 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

## 2020-2022 NWACA Board of Directors

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Each of the Board members can be reached at:  
[info@nwaca.org](mailto:info@nwaca.org)

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, except December. Please visit our calendar at [www.nwaca.org](http://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 put 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

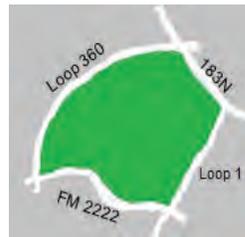
Please support the advertisers that make the NWACA News possible. If you are interested in advertising, please contact THE PEEL sales office at 512.263.9181 or [advertising@peelinc.com](mailto:advertising@peelinc.com). The advertising deadline is the 8th of the month prior to the issue.

# New to the Neighborhood?



## Welcome to NWACA!

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](http://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?

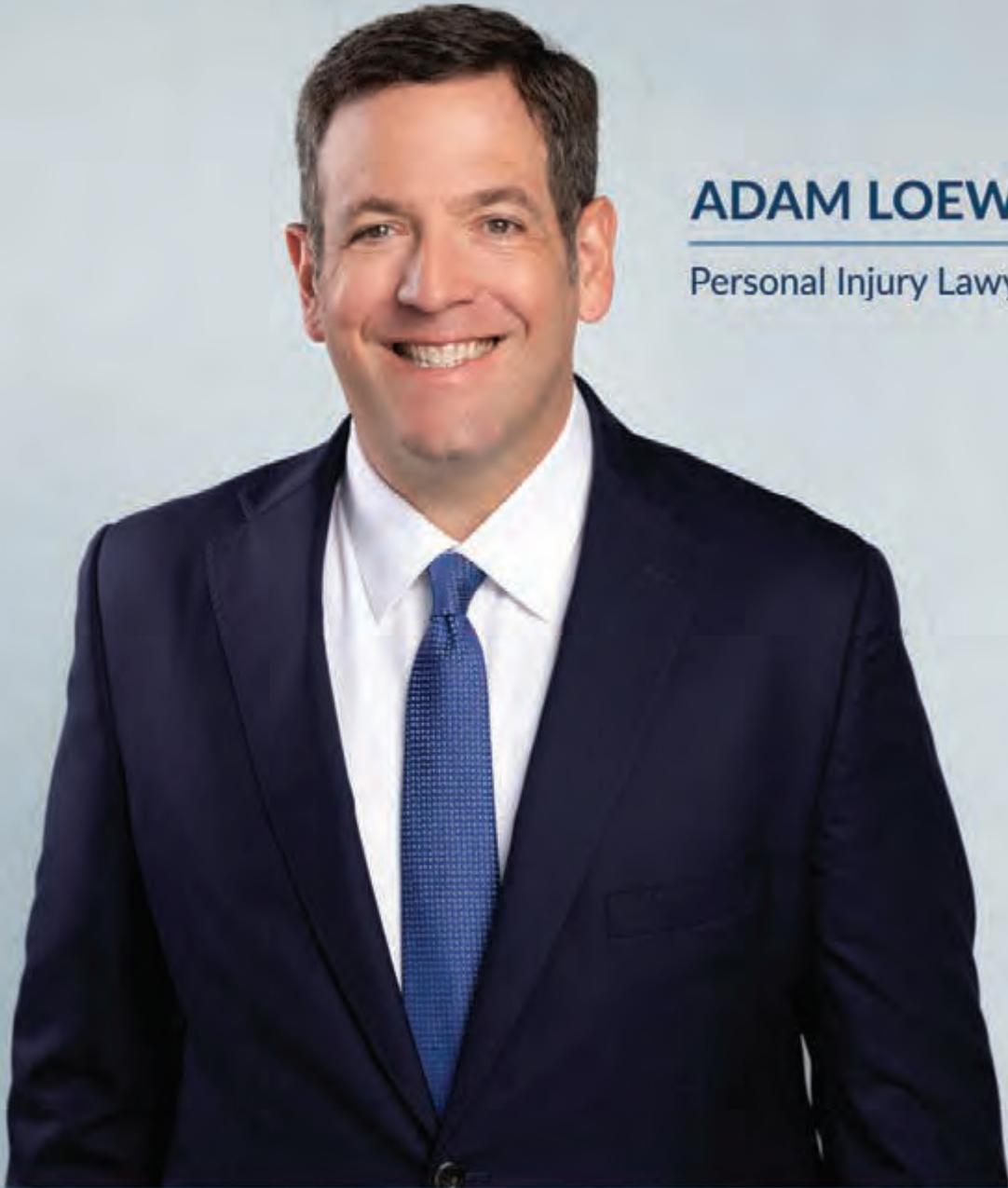
Receiving the newsletter does not guarantee membership.  
Not sure? Visit [nwaca.org](http://nwaca.org) to confirm!

*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!*  
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## NWACA Events Calendar

These events are as planned on September 15. As you consider participating in one of the events listed, please check first with the organizer, since the Covid-19 outbreak may affect the ability to conduct the event. Some may occur in a virtual fashion; others may be postponed or canceled.

### September 8, 6:30PM-8:30PM

NWACA Board Meeting  
*Virtual*

### September 13, 2PM

Parks Committee  
*Virtual*

### September 19, 9AM-Noon

Monthly park beautification in the park and on trails; sign up at: <https://austinparks.givepulse.com/recurring/804437?event=Bulletin+Creek+Park+Cleanup>  
*Bull Creek District Creek*

### September 22, 5PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Joint Meeting  
*Likely Virtual*

### October 4, 2PM

Parks Committee  
*Likely Virtual*

### October 13, 6:30PM-8:30PM

NWACA Board Meeting  
*Likely Virtual*

### October 17, 9AM-Noon

Monthly park beautification in the park and on trails; sign up at <https://austinparks.givepulse.com/recurring/804438?event=Bulletin+Creek+Park+Cleanup>  
*Bull Creek District Park*

### October 27, 5PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Joint Meeting  
*Likely Virtual*

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# AN UPDATE ON THE CONSTRUCTION HAPPENING AT OUR AISD AREA SCHOOLS

*Written by Sarah O'Brien of AISD Bond Communications Team and Teri Schock; photographs/renderings courtesy of AISD 2017 Bond Communications Team and AISD's website.*



*Aerial view of Doss Elementary School front of the building to date.*

## **Doss Elementary School**

The Doss Elementary modernization project was funded by the 2017 Austin ISD Bond Program. AISD is excited to announce that the finishing touches are now taking place. The new school will be ready for students when face-to-face instruction resumes.

A virtual grand opening ceremony will be held in the coming weeks so that the community to celebrate the campus and see the interior of school. More information on that event will be shared soon.



*Doss Elementary in the foreground and Murchison Middle School in the background*

## **Murchison Middle School**

As part of the 2017 AISD Bond Program, Murchison will receive a 6th-grade addition, renovated library and administrative offices, new roofing, and a new bus loop. The new admin space is almost complete and work continues on the 6th-grade addition and library. All buildings are on track to be ready ahead of the Spring 2021 semester, with parking and other site work completing by Summer 2021.

Recent drone footage of the Murchison and Doss modernizations can be seen at [AISDFuture.com/project-drone-footage-may-2020](https://AISDFuture.com/project-drone-footage-may-2020). Updated photos can also be found on the Murchison Mats Facebook page.

### **Project Timeline**



*\*Timeline and rendering subject to change*



*Rendering of the proposed new construction 6th grade wing at Murchison Middle School.*

## **Hill Elementary School**

Funded by the 2017 AISD Bond Program, this modernization project includes adding a two-story addition to increase capacity from 690 to 870 students. To date, the first-floor slab has been poured; the steel frame will begin going up soon. Bartlett Cocke, the general contractor, recently began work in the right of way; this work is expected to wrap up by the end of September. The project remains on schedule and should be finished by the 2021-2022 school year.

**Continued on Page 8**

# NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS MARKET REPORT UPDATE

LISTINGS	This Month			Year-to-Date		
	July 2020	July 2019	Change	2020	2019	Change
Single Family Sales	25	24	4.2%	134	160	-16.3%
Condo/Townhome Sales	17	16	6.3%	92	117	-21.4%
Total Sales	42	40	5.0%	226	277	-18.4%
Sales Volume	\$26,492,490	\$24,489,750	8.2%	\$148,777,631	\$157,910,084	-5.8%

AVERAGE	This Month			Year-to-Date		
	July 2020	July 2019	Change	2020	2019	Change
List Price	\$967,803	\$844,580	14.6%	\$932,415	\$848,932	9.8%
List Price/Sqft	\$344	\$296	16.2%	\$322	\$299	7.7%
Sold Price	\$845,212	\$816,490	3.5%	\$887,786	\$782,907	13.4%
Sold Price/Sqft	\$341	\$291	17.2%	\$320	\$293	9.2%
Sold Price/Original List Price	100.50%	99.80%	0.7%	100.00%	97.70%	2.4%
Days on Market	16	13	23.1%	25	46	-45.7%

MEDIAN	This Month			Year-to-Date		
	July 2020	July 2019	Change	2020	2019	Change
List Price	\$894,950	\$749,000	19.5%	\$859,950	\$749,000	14.8%
List Price/Sqft	\$334	\$292	14.4%	\$313	\$292	7.2%
Sold Price	\$850,000	\$737,500	15.3%	\$840,900	\$710,000	18.4%
Sold Price/Sqft	\$337	\$291	15.8%	\$317	\$289	9.7%
Days on Market	4	6	-33.3%	5	11	-54.5%

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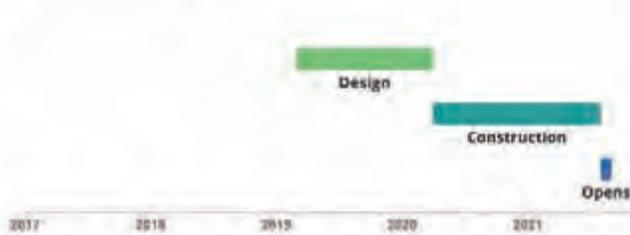
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"Continued from Page 6

### Project Timeline



\*Timeline and rendering subject to change



Rendering of Hill Elementary southeast view.

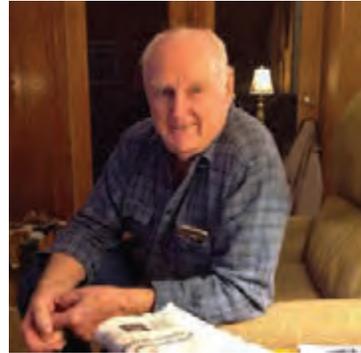


Rendering of Hill Elementary new construction

A virtual groundbreaking ceremony was held in May to celebrate the start of construction. You can view a recording of the full event at [AISDFuture.com/hill-elementary-groundbreaking-full-event-recording](https://AISDFuture.com/hill-elementary-groundbreaking-full-event-recording).

## History Interview: Aubrey Howe

-- Carol Jones



Aubrey Howe

Aubrey Howe has lived on his street the longest of any of his neighbors. He and his wife Beverly moved to Burney Drive in 1971, a year after the street was built. Their neighbors were families with kids, just like them. As the years went by, most of the original homeowners aged in place and moved on. Today, the pendulum has swung back. The neighborhood is once again mostly families with young children.

In 1971, Mesa Drive and Far West Boulevard had not yet been completed. The only way to get into this neighborhood was via either Mountainclimb Drive or North Hills Drive. Aubrey remembers looking at property up at the top of the hill on Mountainclimb. A salesman climbed with him up on a platform where you could see the lake from what could be your future house. Those lots were listed at \$20,000. Aubrey decided that was too expensive for just a lot, with no house on it. Instead, he and Beverly bought their home on Burney for \$35,000.

His kids used to explore the woods in the Stillhouse Hollow, finding arrowheads and fossils. With friends, they built a small "fort" out of rocks. Later the rocks fell and the fort crumbled. Years later, Aubrey saw a sign nearby indicating that the site was an Indian burial ground and chuckled to himself. "That's how history gets messed up," he told me.

Aubrey was born (in 1929) and raised in San Antonio, a "Great Depression baby." His father was a railroad engineer. At the time, the railroad went by strict seniority for available jobs. If someone else wanted your job and they had seniority, they could take it.

So, his father got bumped down to shoveling coal, which was a hot, difficult job.

Continued on Page 10



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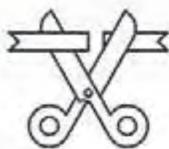


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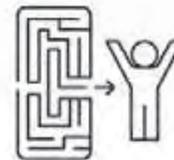
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# NWACA News

(Continued from Page 8)



*Aubrey Howe carved birds*

However, that coal burner job kept him working through the depression years. So, Aubrey's parents considered themselves lucky.

A teenager during WWII, Aubrey remembers doing scrap drives, collecting metal for the war effort. His three brothers were in the war. His brother Robert survived the sinking of his ship and has a plaque at the Pacific War Museum in Fredericksburg. His twin sisters used to go to United Service Organizations Inc. (USO) facilities and perform tap and Spanish dancing for the soldiers.

He was on the track team at Brackenridge High School in San Antonio and has fond memories of beating Austin High School. After two years in the Army, he met Beverly on a blind date and married her two months later. They were happily married for 60 years, until her passing in 2014.

Aubrey worked for the telephone company as an unlocated lineman, starting out at \$31 a week in 1949. He climbed lots of telephone poles in his career, putting up iron and copper wire in small Texas towns. Later, he had numerous management jobs with the phone company. In Austin he was kept busy trying to keep up with the communication needs of the city's booming growth.

He has always been quick to help others. He received the humanitarian Vail Award from Southwestern Bell for his quick action in saving a neighbor's life. His neighbor had been stung by a wasp and was unresponsive. Aubrey quickly drove the neighbor to the emergency room, where a nurse performed CPR on his neighbor in Aubrey's car.

He was proud to lead Boy Scout Troop 54, taking them on canoe trips and an adventure at the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. Years later, Aubrey received glowing letters from some of his former scouts. Now that they were grown with kids of their own, they told him how much they appreciated his leadership and their scouting experience.

At 91 years old, Aubrey is fit and in good health. In retirement, he taught himself woodworking. He carves and paints beautiful birds with intricate feathering. He walks the Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve trail near his home every day. Until the pandemic this year, he enjoyed ballroom dancing at the Senior Activity Center at 29th and North Lamar. He was planning to go on a cruise in March, but it was cancelled. The cruise company gave him a voucher for future travel. Aubrey joked, "Do you think they know how old I am?"

Through genealogical research, Aubrey discovered that his ancestor, Reverend John Lothrop, founded Barnstable, Massachusetts. Aubrey is related to many famous families, including the Bushes and Romneys. He has great stories about his ancestors, that I wish I had space to share here.

It was delightful to talk with Aubrey! If you have memories to share, please contact [info@nwaca.org](mailto:info@nwaca.org)

## If You Needed an Ambulance, Could It Find You?

– Robert Nash

**NWACA offers 100 members free curb addresses, with focus on helping elderly neighbors**

As NWACA member and Westover Hills neighbor Kristy Osmun pointed out to us recently, if you take note of the curbs during your increasingly long pandemic walks, you'll notice that many curb addresses are faded beyond legibility. And, because some house addresses can be hard to see at night, having a clear, easy-to-read curb address can be very helpful to EMS personnel in the event of an emergency.

That's why NWACA is glad to announce a limited, free curb addressing program, especially focused on reaching elderly neighbors who might be at greater risk for needing an ambulance. (Our elderly neighbors do not need to be NWACA members to benefit from this offering.)

Here's how this program will work. The first 100 NWACA members who have a faded curb address (or who want to help an elderly neighbor with a faded curb address) can go to <https://www.austincurbservice.com/nwaca> and sign up to have their or their elderly neighbor's curb address refreshed. Austin Curb Service will be using a "reflective curb wrap," which is brighter, clearer, and easier to read than paint. The curb wrap will come with a one-year warranty.

While some of NWACA's annual traditions have been put on hold due to local health and safety regulations, we remain committed to finding ways to serve our members and enhance our shared safety and sense of community. Of course, if NWACA members or non-members like the look of the "reflective curb wrap" addresses but aren't among the first 100 to sign up, they can go to [AustinCurbService.com](https://www.austincurbservice.com) directly to order their own at a discount, using the coupon code NWACA. Thank you for the great suggestion, Kristy Osmun. And, if any readers have an idea for community enhancements they'd like the NWACA board to consider, send them along to [info@NWACA.org](mailto:info@NWACA.org).



*Old House Number*



*New House Number*

# The 1866 Esperanza School at Spicewood Springs: So Where Was It Exactly?

-Richard Denney

In a past newsletter I wrote about the Esperanza School, an early a one-room log cabin that is now located in Zilker Park, but whose original location was near Spicewood Springs in our neighborhood [1]

The historical marker in front of the cabin reads:

*Esperanza School Building. One of earliest one-room rural schoolhouses in Travis County, this cabin was built on property of Richard McKenzie in 1866. It was known as Esperanza School and served children from neighboring farms in the period before public education. In 1893 when a larger Esperanza School was built at another site this original log structure was put to other uses.*

The Austin Weekly Statesman in 1888 reported attendance of various county schools and put "District No. 7 - Spicewood Springs" at 48 children. If you ever make a trip to Zilker Park to see the cabin, peer inside and picture a teacher with 48 students. It gives you a new perspective on school overcrowding.

Over the years the old school building changed owners, locations, and purposes. But where exactly was the one-room log cabin school originally located? The Esperanza School Building historical marker application gives us the answer.

Mrs. A.L. (Golda) Zinser acquired the property the school was located on in 1940. The previous owner was a Mr. John Krebs. The marker application (when approved in 1974, Mrs. Zinser's house was now on the property) states "Mrs. Zinser says that the Krebs family moved the old log cabin from the top of the hill (near where her house is at 3511 Starline) to near the intersection of the Spicewood Springs Road and Balcones Trail."

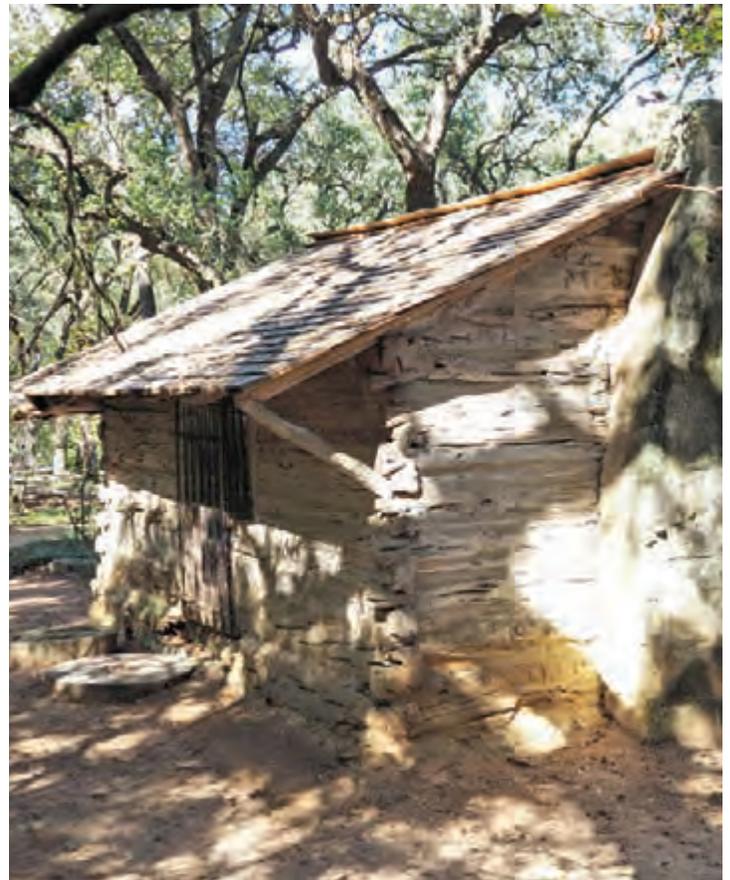
For the marker application a Mrs. Ed (Helen) Schneider was interviewed; she was 83 years old at the time. She recalled the old log cabin building while still on the Krebs' property atop the hill giving the location as "about 150 feet westerly" from the Mrs. Zinser's house.

A review of a 1940 aerial photo, the year Mrs. Zinser acquired the property and prior to her house being built, seems to back up the description of the original location, and the Krebs' move of the building from the hill. The aerial shows a large disturbed area at today's 3511 Starline Drive, and three small buildings in the northwest corner of the intersection of Spicewood Springs Road and Balcones Trail, today's southbound MoPac service road; one of those buildings is no doubt the old school.

So, while it lasts, the location of the old school, 3511 Starline Drive, is now a nearly one-acre empty lot providing you an opportunity to drive by and visualize what that spot might have looked like in 1866 when the school opened. And it's all for sale; maybe we could all chip in and buy it for a neighborhood park?

Footnotes

[1] Spicewood Springs main spring is located on maps in the creek at the intersection of Spicewood Springs Road and Ceberry Drive. Like many springs, Spicewood Springs may have been the name for a collection of springs in the general area. For more on the school, visit the Travis County Historical Commission blog: [https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/2017/02/1866-esperanza-school-and-spicewood\\_3.html](https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/2017/02/1866-esperanza-school-and-spicewood_3.html)





Shotguns  
Ready,  
a  
Neighborhood  
Band

On a cool day in early Spring (remember cool weather?) I was walking near Chimney Corners and Lamplight Lane and was suddenly drawn to the sound of live music.

The band Shotguns Ready had moved its rehearsal to the driveway of Matt McCarty, one of its four members. All dads living in our neighborhood, the four musicians have nine daughters among them; their girls the inspiration for the band's name.

Matt grew up in a household filled with music and musicians. At an early age he started playing the piano "just for fun" and when his brother took off for college, he picked up the guitar his sibling had left behind. He says instruments just called to him when he was growing up.

During high school Matt started playing in a few bands and by the time he enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin, he was performing in Captain Boomer's piano lounge as well. (Located on 183, it would later become Kerbey Lane Café.)

Moving to Northwest Hills twenty-one years ago, Matt sent his children to Doss Elementary School where they met the daughters of the other band members. Sometimes referred to as the Doss Dads Band, the group formed around 2010. It was at a crawfish boil that Matt, guitarist, got to talking with Ryan Perry, lead guitarist. After a few jam sessions, they invited Porter Wilson to be the lead singer, and subsequently, Jason Markey to be their drummer.

Armed with their first nine songs, they started playing fundraisers; soon after the received invitations to play for birthday parties and special events.

As their children proceeded to Murchison Middle School and Anderson High School, the band's repertoire grew, now over eighty-five songs. A nice mix of rock and roll, country, blues, and pop, they love to entertain people, get them singing along, and have them out on the dance floor. Four of their signature pieces are Neon Moon by Brooks and Dunn, Proud Mary by John Fogerty, I Melt With You by Modern English and Brown Eyed Girl by Van Morrison.

About three years ago, Ryan Perry learned of a block party on Burnet Road, and the band offered to play. There, the owners of the Little Longhorn Saloon heard Shotguns Ready. The saloon, known as the "honkiest tonkiest beer joint in town," invited them to play one Friday night and they accepted. It was a huge success. The band was asked back and signed up for the first Saturday of every month, 9 PM to 1 AM.

Then came Covid-19. With the Saloon shut to customers but bills still coming in, the band stepped in. They set up a Go-Fund-Me and in early August, performed to an empty dance floor, the video raising over \$6,000 for the Little Longhorn Saloon.

I hope you'll take an opportunity to hear Shotguns Ready. Their Facebook page is at that name and videos can be accessed there.

Perhaps we'll have cool weather again. Perhaps we'll have band rehearsals in driveways again. I sure hope so.

## Maintaining the Right of Way (ROW)

— Joanie Arrott and Louri O'Leary



These days people are walking near home more than ever. Are you doing your part to keep the rights-of-way clear?

The City of Austin and property owners have a shared responsibility in maintaining the right of way (ROW). Streets, sidewalks, trails, and alleys are for everyone's use as part of the ROW.

Overgrown vegetation limits the accessibility of these passages and blocks the view of traffic signs, signals, vehicles, and cyclists. Trimming vegetation and caring for trees that obstruct the ROW are effective ways to enhance neighborhood safety.

### City Responsibility

The City is responsible for repairs and maintenance of areas like public roads, alleys, sidewalks, and multi-use trails. The Public Works Department maintains "public trees"- trees with at least two-thirds of their trunk diameter in the ROW. When notified, the City will prune or remove dead, diseased, low-hanging limbs or limbs downed by storms that pose a hazard to the public. Crews and qualified contractors also routinely mow medians and prune public trees along selected routes.

### Property Owner Responsibility

Property owners are responsible for maintaining private trees and all other vegetation in the ROW next to their property. According to Austin City Code, section 10-5-21, it is a violation to neglect overgrown vegetation and private trees that obstruct the right of way. Furthermore, the City of Austin Sidewalk Plan and ADA Transition Plan identify overgrown vegetation and private trees as accessibility barriers for people with disabilities and therefore noncompliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Use the following guidelines to help keep your ROW clear:

- Sidewalks: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of and at least eight feet above sidewalks.
- Streets/Alleys: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the curb and at least 14 feet above streets or alleys.
- Grass and Weeds: Maintain grass and weeds at a maximum height of 12 inches throughout property and to the edge of the street or alley.
- Corners: Vegetation within ten feet of the curb should be kept at a maximum height of two feet.
- Fire Hydrants: Remove trees or plants within five feet of a fire hydrant.
- General: Trim or remove vegetation blocking signal lights and traffic and pedestrian signs.

For more information visit <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/right-way-maintenance-trees-and-vegetation>.

To contact the City of Austin about an issue regarding maintenance of the ROW, please call 311 and ask to refer the case to the Public Works Department.



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# Outdoor Adventures in NWACA

– Sandy and Carol Dochen

Northwest Hills was at the northwestern edge of Austin when development started in the early 60s. Unlike other more recently created subdivisions, it doesn't feature a large regional park. Perhaps the original developers figured that Beverly Sheffield Park in Allandale to the east and "the countryside" to the west (much of which is now developed) provided ample outdoor space.

But, even without a large park, Northwest Hills and adjoining Westover Hills now possess a unique "string of pearls," of varied natural experiences and recreation, that has evolved over the years. These outdoor amenities were created and are managed through multiple public-private partnerships (PPPs) that include City of Austin, Travis County, Austin ISD, Austin Parks Foundation, Bull Creek Foundation, Northwest Austin Civic Association (NWACA), and individual donors.

These facilities provide outdoor interaction for just about anyone. And, even if not always accessible, hundreds of species of flora and fauna are being preserved for our children and grandchildren. You can practice what the Japanese call "shinrin-yoku," or "forest bathing," simply spending time around trees or taking in nature. Some studies in Japan have shown that forest bathing can lower blood pressure, improve overall health, and provide a sense of well-being.

Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve: this forested oasis, approached from Sterling Drive off Burney Drive, is just under 20 acres and surrounded by houses and an apartment complex. The sun speckled gently sloped .6-mile trail to a well-constructed observation deck is a gathering place for neighbors and birders. Off the observation deck is a steep drop into the canyon of a creek that feeds into Bull Creek. That area provides habitat for endangered species and isn't open to the public. However, occasionally, NWACA, in coordination with the Austin Watershed Department and Travis County Audubon Society, offers a short tour of some of those less visited (by humans) areas.

Barrow Preserve: this 10-acre tract that starts at the end of Stepdown Cove isn't accessible to visitors. The family of David Barrow, Northwest Hills' original developer, donated this land along a small tributary of Bull Creek. Some original habitat is being restored so perhaps someday we'll be able to experience this preserve more on Mother Nature's terms.

Allen Park: a 10-acre park on Westside Drive near Hart Lane wedged in between a residential street and a church. The "back" lower portion fronts Balcones Drive paralleling the MoPac frontage road to the east. The Wilber Allen Family donated the land to Travis County in the 1940s when Austin's city limits ended several miles to the south. The lower portion has no amenities now and indeed was used to store county road equipment for decades. But, the upper part near Westside Drive, has a .7-mile sometimes hilly, loop trail with open areas and spring wildflowers, along with

an always thriving expanse of prickly pear. Allen Park features a small meeting pavilion, limited playground amenities, and several picnic tables. The eastern bluff picks up noise from MoPac, but it has a commanding southeast city view. By contrast, the bluff above Westside Drive affords a view of hills and houses to the west.

Shinoak Valley Greenbelt: this short, half-mile walking trail starts at 3900 Dry Creek Drive at an undermarked area just west of the intersection at Mountain Climb Drive. This trail was completed last fall through an innovative partnership between the City of Austin and the Texas Conservation Corps, associated with AmeriCorps and American Youth Works. This trail is set within a 10.5-acre greenbelt between multiple backyards of houses, a pleasant respite just a couple of blocks from busy RM 2222.

Bull Creek District Park and Greenbelt: the richness of this 48-acre park and 3.8-mile trail system sometimes features Henry Thoreau-like quiet; other times, families and dogs frolic in small but scenic waterfalls and swimming holes. And, then, there are trail spots just below busy Loop 360. The best time to visit Bull Creek is a few days after a rain when the creek is running, and every species seems to show appreciation for the moisture. You can stay dry on parts of the trail, including Inga's Trail off Spicewood Springs Road, just inside the loop. Or, wear hiking boots that you don't mind getting wet when crossing over or wading through the creek to connect to other trails. You may also catch a fish or two! The all-volunteer Bull Creek Foundation does an admirable job maintaining this trail system. And, during July and August, the City of Austin implemented the first part of the master plan (created with neighborhood input several years ago), installing trail and picnic area upgrades. Restroom upgrades in the plan will be delayed until next year, when they can be done along with other similar work. The greenbelt offers multiple creek accesses outside the boundaries of the park.

Steck Valley Greenbelt: located at 8403 Adirondack Trail at Steck Avenue, provides a good degree of slope into a canyon with a waterfall. It is accessible year-round. The official trail, along an often-dry creek bed, is .6-mile in length, but other converging smaller side trails can extend the length to more than a mile.

North Cat Mountain Greenbelt: steps away from the intersection of Far West Boulevard and Ladera Norte at 6740 Cat Creek Trail. This 20-acre space offers a view of a pond, especially after a healthy rain, with no trails or other improvements.

Kudos to the Loewy Family and dozens of other donors for the shiny new neighborhood playground next to Murchison Pool! When Murchison Middle School students aren't in class, the spongy walking/running surface adjacent to the school is a perfect outdoor exercise track. When the new Doss Elementary playground opens, it's bound to be a valued and improved neighborhood asset.

*Continued on Page 15*

*Continued from Page 14*

The Hill Elementary playground is always a magnet for young families. And, the open space and facilities at the Dell Jewish Community Center offer a variety of recreational experiences.

You can support these parks and outdoor features by joining the NWACA Parks Committee. You can also volunteer for “It’s My Park Day” cleanup days on the first Saturdays of March and November, and for cleanup days at Bull Creek District Park on the third Saturdays of the month from March through October. These efforts are coordinated by the city’s Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Austin Parks Foundation. Watch for these opportunities through NWACA’s weekly email notices and social media.

Many of the afore-mentioned trails have been improved or even created in recent years. As our neighborhood matures and evolves, we can ensure that these diverse outdoor areas continue to be protected for---and enjoyed by---ourselves and generations to come, as a lasting amenity for the neighborhood.

This article is reprinted with permission from the August 2020 issue of *The Northwest Hills*, a periodical magazine distributed in our neighborhood, published by Jerome Kubala.

## Firewise Alerts Are you Part of the 95.5%?

– Joyce Statz

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month, so it’s a good time to sign up for emergency warnings. In the ten Central Texas counties that are part of the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), we have an emergency alert system known as WarnCentralTexas.org. Registering is free of charge. You can be notified by text, cell phone message, and/or email when disasters or public safety events occur in your area. Note that this is a different service than the reverse 911 system that puts messages out to landline phones. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fewer than 40% of homes have landlines, so it’s important to have a complementary service like WarnCentralTexas.org. In addition, a message to a landline won’t be helpful if you are not home at the time of the disaster.

Signing up is easy.

- Go to <https://warncentraltexas.org/>
- Step One – Register. You’ll be directed to a page where you can create an account. If you already have an account, you can sign in and review your contact information, desired alert settings, and locations of interest.
- Step Two – Customize Alerts. You can choose the alerts you want to receive (My Subscriptions). Community Notifications include messages about wildfire or other disasters not covered

by the Weather Alerts. You can also identify times during which you do not want to receive alerts and provide a list of all the locations (home, office, the school your child attends, etc.) for which you want alerts.

During an emergency, the regional notification system is used by emergency managers to get necessary information to citizens, including instructions for evacuation or how to reach shelters, when appropriate. The message sender identifies recipients, which could be those living on a single street, in a neighborhood, or in an entire county; develops the message; and determines which types of devices receive the message.

Information put into this system is not shared or sold to any third party; it is solely for notifying those who have signed up to receive messages about emergencies in the identified locations.

Information about evacuations was important recently, when Horseshoe Bay had a brush fire that destroyed one home and damaged another. In this article, one of the homeowners describes how his family evacuated, even before evacuation orders were given: <http://cbsaustin.com/news/local/evacuations-underway-due-to-large-brush-fire-in-horseshoe-bay>

Over the years, we’ve advised neighbors to sign up for these alerts when we do home wildfire risk evaluations, as well as through articles in our newsletter. Curious to know if that message has gotten through, I checked in with the staff at warncentraltexas.org, and found that only 413 people from the NWACA area had registered their cell phones to get WarnCentralTexas notifications. Based on data provided by cell phone companies to CAPCOG, there are about 9250 cell phones within the NWACA boundaries, so fewer than 4.5% of us are signed up. That leaves a lot of room for improvement during this National Emergency Preparedness Month! Please do it, for your family’s safety!



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NWACA thanks members who generously contributed to the 4th of July Parade Fund, the Park Fund, and the Constable Fund, between June 15, 2020 and August 15, 2020.

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.

- Tom Coopwood
- Karen Pogna Johnson
- Kim Keeland
- Michael Keenan
- Thomas W. Kelly
- George Meador
- Jay Stewart
- Ann Trentin
- Margaret Van De Graff
- (and apologies to anyone whose donation we might have missed!)



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**To join:**

go to [www.nwaca.org](http://www.nwaca.org) and pay online via credit card or PayPal  
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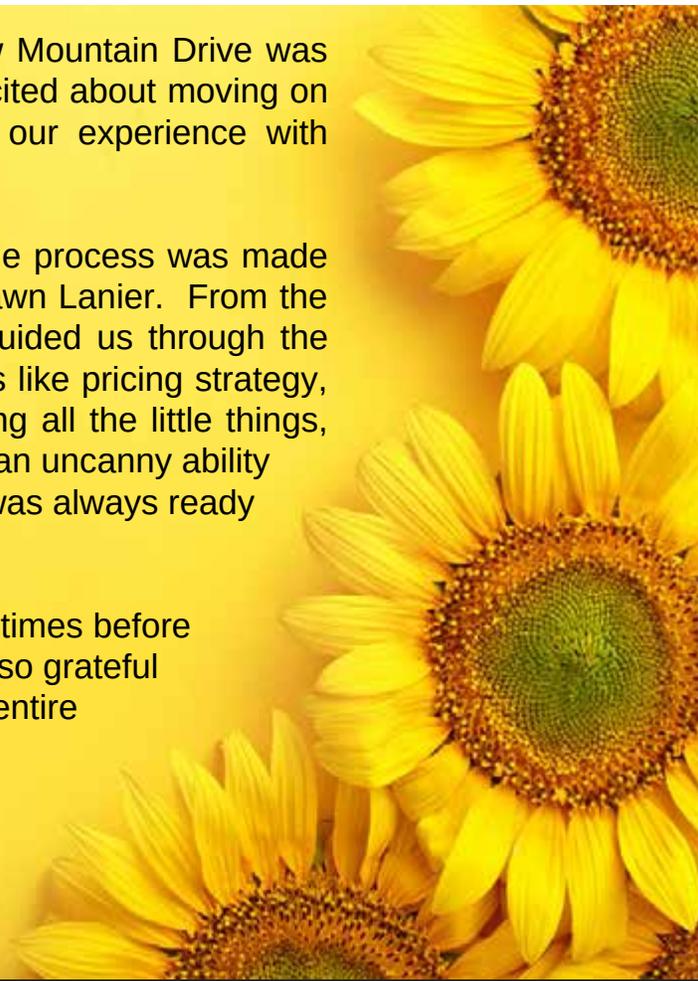
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