



nwaca NEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

JUNE 2021

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 06

Roll up your sleeves and join us!

NWACA Looking for Board Members and
Committee Volunteers



At press time, the CDC just announced that fully vaccinated people can take off their masks in most situations and get back to something resembling normal life. So we can't imagine a better moment to put out a clarion call to our friends and neighbors to get

involved.

We can now plan and organize many of our wonderful traditions which had necessarily been on hold. While at the time we had to make a decision public health guidance prevented us from moving forward with planning our July 4th parade, we did resolve to do something extra special this fall.

To do this, and more, we need your help and involvement. NWACA board or committee service will be a great way to reconnect with neighbors and be of service to the community as we re-emerge from what has been such a strange time. Specifically, we are looking for these.

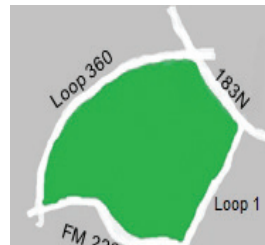
- Communications Committee members are needed to help manage our Facebook group, write articles for this newsletter, and help spread the word about future events.
- The Transportation Committee needs neighbors who have a keen interest in changes coming our way in our streets, highways, and mass transit.
- Business Membership Committee members are needed to liaise with businesses old and new across the NWACA area and see how they can get involved and connect with our community.

Continued on Page 3

**Wait until July to prune
your oaks. Don't be a
disease spreader!**

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 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/MEMBERS

Bicycle Accidents

Boating Accidents

Car Accidents

Dog Bites

Drunk Driving Accidents

Injuries to Children

Motorcycle Accidents

Slip and Falls

Truck Accidents

Wrongful Death



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Key Contacts

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 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:
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Each of the Board members can be reached at:

info@nwaca.org

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 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)

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Continued from Cover

- Tree, Wildlife, and Environment Committee members get to help with events like the upcoming June 26 Batteries, Oil, Paint, and Antifreeze recycling event.

- The NWACA Board, which has several open slots that can filled right now, needs people willing to deal with the challenging issues that affect our community as well as help plan and host community events ranging from the return of Austin’s biggest and best July 4th parade in 2022 to a big, special TBD event this fall, neighborhood garage sales, National Night Out and more.

Service on the NWACA board can be immensely rewarding. Just one example of that was spotting the new Anderson Band trailer being outfitted by band leaders, parents and other volunteers, enabled in part by a NWACA Special projects grant.

So, reach out to us at info@NWACA.org and join us in whatever capacity you can. We look forward to greeting you in person and working with you to keep NWACA one of the best parts of Austin to call home.



NWACA Events Calendar

These events are as planned on May 15. As you consider participating in one of the events listed, please check first with the organizer.

June 8th, 6:30pm

NWACA Board Meeting

Virtual

June 17th, 7:00pm

Parks Committee

Virtual

June 19th, 9:00am-Noon

Monthly cleanup at Bull Creek District Park – Sign up at

<https://austinparks.givepulse.com/event/225432>

Bull Creek District Park

June 22nd, 5:00pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees Joint

Meeting

Virtual

June 26th, 10:00am-Noon

Batteries, Oil, Paint, Antifreeze, Styrofoam Recycling; also accepting used toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, and razor blade cartridges (see article for details)

St. Matthew's Mesa Parking Lot

July 17th, 9:00am-Noon

Monthly cleanup at Bull Creek District Park – Sign up at

<https://austinparks.givepulse.com/event/225432>

Bull Creek District Park

July 18th, 2:00pm

Tree, Environment, and Wildlife Committee

Virtual

July 20th, 7:00pm

Parks Committee

Virtual

July 27th, 5:00pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees

Joint Meeting

Virtual

BOPA-Plus Collection Event **June 26, 10 AM to Noon**



Start gathering those leftover cans of paint, used oil and oil filters, and dead batteries. On Saturday, June 26th from 10 AM to noon (new time), NWACA will be hosting a BOPA Collection Event for NWACA members at the Mesa Drive parking lot of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Drive. If you're not a NWACA member, you can join at the event. Just roll up in your car or truck, and volunteers will unload for you.

For BOPA, we will accept only: batteries, oil, latex paint, and antifreeze. We cannot accept other household hazardous wastes including these: oil-based paint, paint thinner or stripper, cleaning chemicals, pool chemicals, pesticides, or light bulbs.

For the Plus portion of our collection, we will accept only:

- Clean Styrofoam® blocks, egg cartons, cups, and clean food containers. This is the type of foam made of tiny beads that can easily crumble.
- Used toothpaste tubes, toothbrushes, and floss containers,
- Used disposable razors, replaceable-blade cartridge units, and razor plastic packaging.
- We cannot accept dirty Styrofoam food or drink containers, packing peanuts, or plastic foam. Foam like the soft foam in pillows is not acceptable. It must be the easily tearable and crumbly type of foam.

We will close at noon to be able to get the materials to the City's Resource Recycling and Reuse Center and unload there at our afternoon appointment.

Want to help out? We always need volunteers for our collection events. We need folks to corral the cars, unload vehicles, load the collection truck, and assist with separating the collected materials. If you're looking for a great opportunity to help serve your neighborhood, meet your neighbors, and protect the environment, come join us! Any questions or volunteer sign-up can be sent to info@nwaca.org.

Got more than just BOPA? Austin's Recycle and Reuse Drop-off Center will accept other hazardous wastes like lawn chemicals, fluorescent bulbs and tubes, cleaners, solvents, insecticides, and electronics. Electronics are now accepted with the twice-yearly bulk pickup. All future NWACA recycling events will all be of the BOPA-Plus type described above.

The Drop-off Center mixes paint that has been recycled into three colors (light beige, dark beige, and dark green), which are free to anyone who wishes to pick it up.

The Drop-off Center in South Austin is open again, but only by appointment. More details and location info can be found at: tinyurl.com/Recycle-Reuse-Center.



Otto Wheeler, Author

A White Deer (Texas Panhandle) native, Otto graduated from Texas Tech in 1971 and went on to become a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) with an ABV (Accredited in Business Valuation) and a CFF (Certified in Financial Forensics) specialization. Attracted to Austin by the trees, water, and friends he'd met, he settled in Austin in 1973, founding his own accounting firm, Wheeler, Fairman & Kelley. He and his wife, Suzy, have lived in Northwest Hills since 1991, their children attending Doss, St. Andrew's, Murchison, Lamar, and Anderson.

In 1995, Otto was encouraged to write his first book, *The Greatest Game Ever Played... Maybe*. Both humorous and exciting, it's set in Memphis, Tennessee, where two football teams battle to win a junior college conference championship.

Writing this first book took Otto five years. After finishing the manuscript in 2000, he spent months looking for an agent, then turned to self-publishing. He followed the same route with his recently published novel, *Charitable Injustice*, which he wrote over the course of just a few months.

Otto Wheeler would never have predicted he'd become an author. In the late 1960's his writing nearly flunked him out of an English class at Texas Tech, where he was happy to finally earn a C on a paper. Though this was a slow start to his writing career, he certainly shone in other areas in his university days.

Otto places *Charitable Injustice* in the genre of women's fiction and describes its plot as divergent. He accurately predicts it's like nothing you've ever read. Set in Atlanta, the two main characters are women, Anne Wentworth, a happily married philanthropist and Becky Lynn Gregor, a down-on-her-luck young woman who approaches Anne for help.

Otto has chosen an omniscient point of view: thoughts and feelings shift to different perspectives never investing us in one character to the exclusion of the others. An unusual technique, it distances us from the emotional journeys of Becky Lynn, Anne, or even Anne's husband and keeps us wondering who the real protagonist is through many of the 389 pages.

Otto's expertise as a CPA has clearly influenced the financial issues that play out between the characters in the novel.

But I can't give away any more than that, the twists and turns of the story are surprising.

Otto is now working on a third novel, *Cattle, Oil and Money*, which he may be publishing quite soon.

The Writers League of Texas is having its annual Agents and Editors Conference in person this year. Once again, it will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, but will take place later than usual: September 17-19. Visit <http://writersleague.org> for more information.



What My Clients Are Saying

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6201 Ledge Mountain Drive
Seller Represented

*MLS data from Austin Board of REALTORS®
single-family homes sold from May 2020 to May 2021

Business Spotlight: Whit McGuire Photography

- Janice Green



Whit McGuire

"I'm not here for the perfect photo. I'm here for the photos with soul." This is the bedrock philosophy behind the photography of Whit McGuire.

Whit, her husband, and four daughters (actually one is still in the oven) moved into Northwest Hills from Seattle a year ago. When she was growing up in Florida, she always had a camera with her, and her point-and-shoot model was her prized possession in high school. Whit laughs about living in the world of "Little Women," but documenting their family fun was the spark that lit her skyrocketing career. A friend, a professional photographer whom she respected and admired, urged her to pursue her obvious talent. That vote of confidence led her to upgrade her equipment and develop her website.

Whit does not just photograph people. She photographs relationships. She describes her process as messy because her shots are not posed. She seeks the intimate, the vulnerable, the gritty, and the emotional. She wants to capture the sentiment that will mean more and more over time, and often that is found in those in-between moments. "I have to be trigger happy or else the moment will pass," she elaborates. The editing process, especially with digital photography, offers so many options. She loves black and white, but both with black and white and with color, light is always the key.

She wants people to enjoy a photo shoot; she urges them to ignore her camera clicking in the background. Sessions are fun, but modeling or posing are not in Whit's vocabulary. Whit provides encouragement and some vocal directives, but otherwise stays in the shadows.

Her website is a thing to behold, and it reflects Whit's range of talent. For example, there is a wedding party celebration chronicled in the sands of Palm Springs in front of a field of wind turbines, a Joshua Tree engagement, a wedding parade in Seattle's Pike's Place Market. There are the intimate and beautiful "Morning After" photos taken the day after the wedding. Whit captures the beauty of maternity and the thrill of a new arrival in a family. She also uncovers the meaning of home – whether moving into a first or a new home, or leaving a home. Her photos include a "Quarantine Renovation Dream," a couple finding themselves in a field of tulips, and a couple who celebrate their twelve years of marriage by roaming a familiar Hill Country terrain. And there's the humor of "A Night at the Austin Motel."

To journey through Whit's website portfolio is truly an adventure into her approach to photography. Her camera catches the beauty of a mother and son relationship, a child discovering the wonders of a Pedernales sunset, and a family exploring their footprints in the sand dunes – all of which exemplify Whit's focus on interaction rather than the frozen frame.

To contact Whit McGuire, go to www.whitmguire.com and start a conversation with her about your photographic project.

What to do with those Struggling Oak Trees?

- PSA from Texas A&M Forest Service



Oak Tree Stressed

Many of the oak trees in the neighborhood are struggling to put out leaves, many seeming almost dead. But are they? Or are they just delayed because their attempts to bud in the spring were nipped by the freeze? Experts at Texas A&M Forest Service recommend patience, to let the trees recover on their own for several more months, perhaps a year.

Quoting an article posted online at the Texas A&M Forest Service web site:

"[the trees have] been stressed, and they don't need any more stress," said Blevins. "So I'm telling people, when we get into the heat of the summer – especially if we have abnormal heat, like we're supposed to this year – one thing you might want to do is maybe give them supplemental watering once or twice."

Other than the occasional watering—and you don't want to overwater your trees, lest the roots be flooded with water and lack the oxygen they need to breathe—Blevins recommends patience. Even fertilization should be avoided unless the tree is experiencing a specific nutrient deficiency. Fertilization leads to growth spurts – and when a tree is putting its energy into growth, any energy that could be applied to defense goes down.

Insecticide and fungicide are tempting treatments as well – since stressed trees are more susceptible to disease and insect infestation – but again, Blevins and Riley counsel patience. There's no need for "preventative" treatments, and insect infestations and diseases should be treated on a case-by-case basis.

This information can be difficult for landowners and tree-lovers to absorb, since it is our tendency as stewards to want to do something. However, when it comes to our trees – especially our mature trees – often times, the more we do, the more harm we cause.

"The best thing to do with mature trees is nothing," said Riley. "Trees are very sensitive to change. And many of these mature trees may be a hundred years old. They've done really well without us, they've done their best to adapt to living around us, and most things that we would go in and do to them now are more stressful to them than helpful."

To read the full article, go to www.tinyurl.com/OaksMayRecover

NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS MARKET UPDATE



AVERAGE SALES PRICE
\$1,065,409



AVG LIST PRICE PER SF
\$395

16
CLOSED SALES



AVG SALE
PRICE PER SF
\$388



DAYS ON MARKET

4



SALES VOLUME
\$17,046,548



AVERAGE LIST PRICE
\$1,168,550

LIST PRICE RATIO
105%

SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM MARCH 1-31, 2021 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES. BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY 360/2222/HWY 183



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Gourmand's Corner:

Brewery Update

— Chris Hajdu

state of our local brewing scene. Since March 2019 several new breweries have appeared, many opening just before or during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since most breweries have outdoor seating areas, they are also a great way to soak up some fresh air, keep your distance, and stay safe. Also, many allow dogs and have food options (which are listed below along with details on location, when they opened and websites.)

Central Austin

Holdout Brewing (opened May 2020) - 1208 West Fourth Street – With a head brewer who came from Real Ale Brewing, hopes are high for this Clarksville brewery, which is associated with the Better Half restaurant next door. Their stated goal is to produce beers perfect for drinking while sitting outside in Texas weather, so look for refreshing hop-forward pale ales and fruity beers. They also have a food menu that has burger options, hot dogs (including an elote and kimchi version,) salads, and even a kid's menu. <https://holdoutbrewing.com/>

North Austin

HopSquad (opened February 2020) – 2307 Kramer Lane – Located within walking distance of the new Austin FC stadium, this brewery is next door to Circle Brewing. I expect them to be very busy before and after games once Austin FC starts hosting home games in June. Also, it's located in short distance from fellow breweries, Austin Beerworks, 4th Tap, Oskar Blues, Celis, Adelbert's, and Circle Brewing. <http://www.hopsquad.com/>

North East Austin

Willard's Brewery (opened October 2020) - 2400 Patterson Industrial Drive, Pflugerville – Given that this brewery is in Pflugerville, I hesitated to put it on the list, but it's right on the border of Austin and it has received amazing reviews. It's located near the intersection of Dessau Road and Howard Lane, so when you're in that part of Northeast Austin, stop in and grab a pint. <https://willardsbrewery.com/>

East Austin

Central Machine Works Brewery (opened November 2019) – 4824 East Cesar Chavez Street – Built in a cavernous industrial building (the former Central Machine Works), this brewery has huge indoor and

This month we have an update on local breweries. It's hard to believe it's been more than two years since I last reviewed the

outdoor seating areas, along with an extensive menu including burgers, brats, sandwiches, pizzas, and more. They even have a special menu for the little ones. I recommend this brewery highly for a family outing. <https://www.cmwbrewery.com/>

South East Austin

Nomadic Beerworks (opened June 2019) - 3804 Woodbury Drive Suite A – Located near South Congress and Ben White, and close to 512 Brewing and St. Elmo Brewing, this brewery was started by two friends who, while travelling together for a long period of time, decided to open a brewery. Their passion for brewing beer shows through in the quality and breadth of beers they produce. My favorite is the Transatlantic – a Bourbon-barrel aged barleywine. They also have food options, including paninis and bar snacks. <https://www.nomadicbeerworks.com/>

Meanwhile Brewing (opened October 2020) - 3901 Promontory Point Drive – Built on a 3.7 acre site, which includes a soccer field and music stage, Meanwhile Brewing offers more than 20 rotating beers and ciders. They also have wine, low-proof cocktails, coffee, tea, and sodas, so there should be something for everyone. They also have three food trucks - Garbos, Craft Woodfire Pizza, and Puebla Vieja. This brewery was opened by two Portland transplants who formerly worked at the famous Breakside Brewery. <https://www.meanwhilebeer.com/>

Vacancy Brewing (opened April 2021) - 415 E. St. Elmo Road 1-D2 – This is the newest brewery on the list, so I'll share what I know so far. The brewery, which is located close to the St. Elmo brewery, has started off with a limited menu of three beers: a golden ale, an amber ale, and a pilsner. More beers will be added as they get more established. Right now, they have limited operating hours, so check online before heading over there. <https://vacancybrewing.com/>

As always, if you have any ideas for columns about local restaurants, breweries, distilleries, wineries, or anything else you think would make a good topic for this column, let me know at infor@nwaca.org.



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Horticultural Curiosities: Madrones

- Jon Plum



Texas madrone leaves and bark

There are many wild green spaces nestled in Northwest Hill and surrounding area. These preserves and parks retain much of the native ecology prior to human development, and they have some good lessons for regional horticulture. Success in the garden starts with a study of nature itself.

On a recent walk I came across one of my favorite plant species, the Texas madrone or *Arbutus xalapensis*. The Texas madrone is a rare and revered member of the Ericaceae, the heath family, and it is endemic to the Texas Hill Country, the Trans-Pecos, and parts of Mexico. Madrones are a member of the genus *Arbutus*. There are 12 accepted species in Europe and North America. If you have spent time in the Pacific Northwest, you may be familiar with its larger cousin, the Pacific madrone, native to some parts of the coastal region.

Other common names for the Texas madrone are madrona, Texas arbutus, manzanita, xoxocote, and amazaquitl. This uncommon evergreen tree grows to a height of around 30 feet, but most are more shrub-like and smaller. It is slow growing with beautiful gnarled red, pink, and white trunks and peeling bark reminiscent of crepe myrtle and some species of eucalyptus. Small white or pink bell-shaped flowers are prolific and grouped on panicles. They are mildly sweet smelling and attract bees during the showy spring bloom. Bright green elliptical leaves are leathery and glossy on top with a more muted underside. Attractive

red and pink berries ripen in fall. The berries are about a third of an inch in diameter and borne in clusters.

A commonly cultivated European species, *Arbutus unedo*, or the strawberry tree, is larger and produces more showy edible fruit that somewhat resembles strawberries. The ancient symbol of Madrid is a bear standing on two hind legs eating fruit from a strawberry tree.

Growing a madrone in your own garden is tricky. Madrones, especially the Texas madrone, is notoriously difficult to transplant. Any disturbance to the small feeder roots will cause the transplants to dampen off and die over time. You don't see many for sale at local nurseries. There is evidence madrones have a symbiotic relationship with a soil fungus that must be present. If you have the time and inclination, and if you are lucky to locate one of these trees yourself, harvest fresh fruit in November and plant the seeds immediately about a quarter inch deep in native soil. I've seen a recommendation to also take about a cup or less of soil from the base area of the parent tree and include that soil when planting seeds. Madrones like to start in the understory where they enjoy shade or dappled light and grow up into the full sun when more mature. Well drained soil and limited water are essential, but soil type itself is less important.

If this all sounds too involved, try the less temperamental strawberry tree instead. Good luck in your summer garden!



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Understanding the Law: Auto Dealership Weekends

– Alan Carson

In this article, I describe a state law, not a City of Austin code. Texas does not have a law prohibiting car dealerships from being open on Sunday, however, it does have a law that a dealership cannot be open on both Saturday and Sunday. The law is a holdover of the “blue laws” from colonial times, which were meant to encourage people to observe the sabbath. Most blue laws have been repealed, and there are now only two blue laws in Texas, one prohibiting the sale of hard liquor on Sundays and the other requiring that car dealers can be open on only one day during the weekend.

This law will probably stay on the books, since dealerships say that customers don’t typically demand Sunday car-shopping, and dealers don’t believe they are missing out on potential sales. Some dealers are of the opinion that a seven-day sales week would not increase

sales but would just spread out the same sales volume over more days. Also, they point out that operating on Sundays is more complicated than other days because financial institutions do not work on Sundays. Dealers also note that requiring staff to work on Sundays can result in high employee turnover. A quick check on the internet shows that most dealers in the Austin area are open on Saturdays, with a few open on Sundays.

A related factor is that much of the car-shopping process is now online. Potential customers spend less time in a dealership examining the cars and listening to a salesperson than they used to; they already spent hours researching at home.

You can find out more by browsing for Texas auto dealership weekends on the internet.

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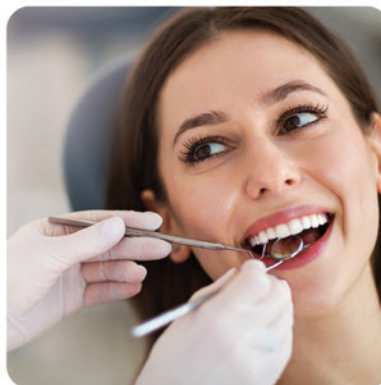
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Reimagining Public Safety and the Austin Police Department

— Connie Lundgren

It has been almost a year since the Reimagining Public Safety initiative for the Austin Police Department (APD) began, with participation of citizens, City staff, and City Council. A number of changes are underway, and a new cadet training class will begin June 7, 2021.

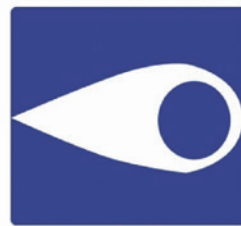
The 144th cadet class will consist of 92 cadets and will train under a pilot Reimagined Cadet Training Academy. The new training will emphasize officers being “guardians of peace” rather than “warriors” and will be evaluated intermittently for its effectiveness. The funding freed up by canceling the previous cadet class was redirected to services such as family violence prevention, assistance for the homeless, and substance abuse treatment.

Other changes to APD approved by City Council include the creation of the Emergency Communications Department to handle 911 calls involving mental health issues and emergencies, a new department outside of APD. This will reduce APD’s civilian work force by approximately 220 people. Forensics Services has also been moved to an independent City of Austin department.

Other departments are slated to be moved within existing City of Austin departments. These include moving APD Human Resources to the City’s general Human Resources Department, APD Alarm Administration Unit to the City’s Development Services Department, APD Facility Maintenance to the City of Austin Building Services Department, APD Public Information to the City of Austin Communication and Public Information Office, and APD Finance to the City of Austin Financial Services Department.

For more information on this initiative visit: <http://austintexas.gov/publicsafety>

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Fire Watch Towers: Useful to NWACA? – Joyce Statz

In the annual NWACA survey in March, a neighbor suggested that we look into putting fire watch towers into our local green spaces to monitor for wildfire.

Wildfire monitoring has been done in many ways: people in watchtowers, cameras monitored by people in offices, people in aircraft, ground patrols, and people observing satellite images. While research continues into devices that can detect fire on their own, most approaches require intense observation by people to identify a real fire. False alarms are a common issue with cameras and other sensors, something for which artificial intelligence is being tried by some researchers.

In 2014 and 2015, the Cities of Austin and Westlake Hills ran a one-year pilot program with a camera-based wildfire alert system. To quote from their final report:

Initial installation consisted of three cameras/sensors covering a large area of Southwest Austin and Travis County including the City of West Lake Hills. In addition to the cameras a centralized monitoring system was set up in an office at the Wildfire Division located at 12010 Brodie Lane. For the pilot program, [vendor] agreed to train both city and county fire employees on how the monitoring system worked and how to process alerts including the discernment of what caused the alert and determining the location of any smoke detected.

Firefighters were trained to use the system, intending to deploy it weekly on Fridays, plus during high fire danger periods. Experience showed that false alarms were a significant problem for them, and it was difficult to find staff who had the time to monitor the system. The pilot project report concluded:

... to cover the entire city would require a significant investment in sensors and tower space, at a tremendous cost. More importantly, the City of Austin, a heavily populated urban and suburban area, does not have an issue with wildfires burning a significant amount time going unreported. Almost every person in the metropolitan area carries a cell phone and any fires or even smoke are most often reported quickly. Throughout the entire pilot program there was not a single example of a significantly early notification to a fire event. This includes the many days where [the developer] himself staffed the system both officially on the record, and remotely off the record. ... However, historically, the high fire danger days that pose the greatest risk are days that involve multiple and simultaneous fires. As such, the program would need to have increased staffing beyond what was originally anticipated and it is conceivable, if not predictable, that the system itself would be overwhelmed and ineffective during the days and events most critically needed.

While monitoring may be promising in the future, systems need to become more intelligent and autonomous, as well as much more affordable. For now, we need to count on using our eyes to detect fires and our phones to call 911!



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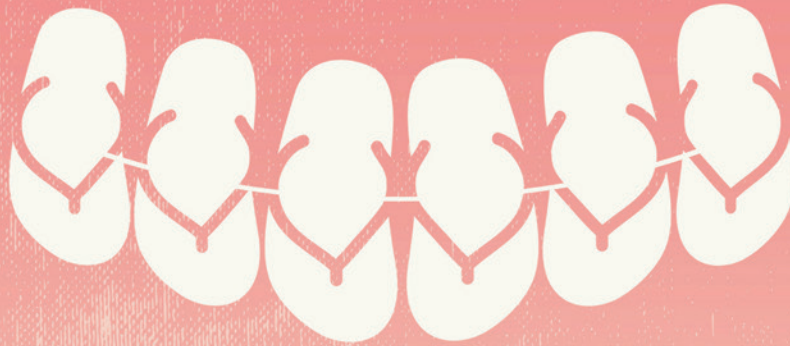
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“It is my pleasure to write in praise of Dawn Lanier! We recently closed on the sale of our home in Northwest Hills and still feel like we are dreaming.

We originally started the sales process with my cousin who’s a Realtor from Temple, but soon realized that we needed local feet on the ground in this Austin market.

We knew Dawn through our orthodontic practice and instantly loved her. She went above and beyond what we have ever known about Realtors - physically present at EVERY showing, inspection, and contractor requests for entry.

We had no idea the peaceful and worry-free experience this would make! Not to mention, her guiding and leading us through offers and counters, and all the Real Estate paperwork involved with a sale - she was even there through the closing process!

Needless to say, she was the secret weapon we had in our pocket and are forever grateful to have been so blessed.”

~ Heather and Brett Buckman



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