



nwacaNEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2021

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 12

From the Board We are a Community

NWACA Statement of Solidarity with the Jewish Community

In light of recent antisemitic events across our community, the NWACA Board has issued the following statement repudiating such actions and expressing our full support of the Jewish community:

The Northwest Austin Civic Association (NWACA) stands with the Jewish community. Hate and anti-Semitism have no place in our community, no place in our city.

The display of a banner from the Far West/Mopac overpass by an out-of-town hate group, the suspected arson at Congregation Beth Israel, and other recent activities are meant to divide, but we are stronger than that. Inclusivity is one of Austin's core values and one of NWACA's core values as well.

In addition to standing against hate, NWACA will continue to focus on our values, including openly welcoming residents of all backgrounds, without discrimination.



L-R: Rabbi Neil Blumof of Congregation Agudas Achim, Rabbi Steven Folberg of Congregation Beth Israel, AISD At-large board trustee Arati Singh, Shalom Austin CEO Rabbi Daniel Septimus, Rabbi Alan Freedman of Temple Beth Shalom, District 10 Austin City Council Member Alison Alter, and Anderson High School student leaders Ford McCracken, Hannah Cukierman, and Riley Raab.

Community, Faith Leaders, Students Gathered at a "Rally for Kindness"

On a beautiful, sunny November day, people from all over Austin (including many from the NWACA area) joined together on the steps of the Capitol to hold a "Rally for Kindness." Council Member Alison Alter, along with Mayor Steve Adler, many faith and community leaders, as well as Anderson High School students spoke passionately of the importance of confronting darkness with the light we can each bring to the world. Representatives of many Austin communities pledged their support for Austin's Jewish community at a time that has seen a disturbing uptick in antisemitic actions. (See the short article inside about a group of Anderson High School students positive, creative response to vandalism at their school.)

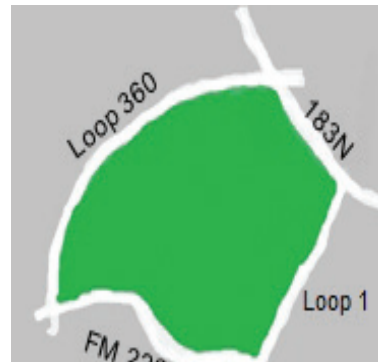
Thank you to a Contributor and our Business Community

The NWACA Board would like to sincerely thank Alan Carson, our 90-years-young neighbor who has contributed more than 30 newsletter articles helping people understand city code issues. See his latest piece within these pages.

Continued on Page 3

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!

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 To check status, go to: <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/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

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**Each of the Board Members can be reached at
info@nwaca.org, or by phone at 512-920-2973**

The NWACA Board meets on the 3rd Wednesday 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

Also, we extend the deepest thank you to NWACA business members for their continued support of our effort to build community. We encourage all readers to look for the names and logos of our business members in this issue and thank them in the weeks and months ahead with your patronage.

Your Involvement is Requested

Also, we invite you to read Connie Lundgren's article on crime statistics and provide your feedback as to whether you'd like to see this on a more regular basis.

Finally, due to popular demand, we are planning to hold our **NWACA Holiday Lights and Display Contest** again this year. The judging committee, led by former treasurer, Robyn Nunis, will drive throughout the area the night of December 14. The top three winners will be acknowledged with a special yard sign and other supply-chain-challenged appropriate prizes. So, get out those pretty lights and fancy figures, and give us a good show!

Happy Holidays, everyone!

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

December 4, 10:00am-noon

Batteries, Electronics, Dental, Styrofoam Waste Collection
 event for members

Mesa Parking Lot, St. Matthew's 8134 Mesa Drive

December 21, 7:00pm

Parks Committee

Virtual

January 16, 2:00pm

Tree, Environment, and Wildlife Committee

Virtual

January 18, 7:00pm

Parks Committee

Virtual

January 19, 6:30pm-8:30pm

NWACA Board Meeting

Virtual

January 25, 5:00pm

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committee

Virtual

NWACA Parks – Parks Committee

Did you know that there are 10 parks, playscapes, greenbelts, or preserves within the NWACA boundaries? We didn't either! Below is a list and description of these green spaces.



Allen Park

Westside Drive and Westside Cove, 78731

This county-owned 10-acre park is a limestone plateau covered by a Juniper/Oak woodland interspersed with small, semi-open grassland areas. The park offers a natural setting with panoramic views of the city to the east. It has a large picnic shelter and several wooded picnic areas with barbeque pits.



Murchison Pool

3700 North Hills Drive, 78731

This is a small, pleasant, neighborhood pool, recently renovated with picnic tables, a pavilion, and shade cover.



Bull Creek District Park & Greenbelt

6701 Lakewood Drive, 78731

Bull Creek Foundation has 32 square miles of ecologically unique terrain to tend and protect. Bull Creek watershed includes limestone seeps, springs, and waterways; scenic cliffs and waterfalls; interesting archaeological and cultural features and more.



Shinoak Valley Greenbelt

3900 Dry Creek Drive, 78731

This trail is a short and sweet lollipop that can be picked up near the corner of Dry Creek and Mountain Climb. Cross over a wet-weather creek and head back into the woods to find a peaceful path.



Doss Elementary School Park

7005 Northledge Drive, 78731

Doss Park is a small park and playground at Doss Elementary School. It includes a running track and sturdy, colorful playground equipment. It is blessed with a lovely collection of oak trees, including a burr oak, and a good view of the downtown skyline. As the park is attached to an elementary school, there is no public access during the school day on weekdays.



Steck Valley Greenbelt

8403 Adirondack Trail or 4298 Hyridge Drive, 78759

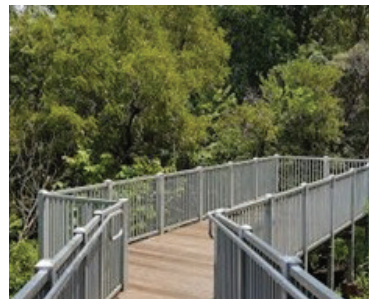
The trail starting at the end of Steck Drive at Adirondack is a bit more informal and at times appears little more than a path along the creek bed. From the end of 4298 Hyridge Drive, the trail is a bit more defined. From either direction, explore the elevation changes as you loop and wind through the woods.



Hill Elementary School Park

8601 Tallwood Drive, 78759

Hill School Park is a park and playground attached to Hill Elementary School. It includes fun playground equipment such as swings and slides, a basketball court, a volleyball court, and a multipurpose field. As the park is attached to an elementary school, there is no public access during the school day on weekdays.



Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve

7810 Sterling Drive, 78731

The Preserve's paved trail winds through a magical landscape of moss-covered junipers. Visitors are asked to stay on the trail, as the area is home to endangered plants and birds. There are benches along the trail and a recently-renovated observation deck at the trail's end.



Loewy Family Playground

3700 North Hills Drive, 78731

This playground is the only play area within NWACA boundaries that is open while school is in session. Opened in March 2020, it includes a playscape and features that appeal to children in a wide range of ages.

The final entry in our list is **Barrow Preserve** on Long Point Drive. This is a 7-acre preserve. It is currently closed to the public to encourage recovery of several rare plant species.

To find out more about these and other parks in the area, visit Austin Parks Foundation: <https://www.austinparks.org/parks/>



Spot Crime. Stop Crime!

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More info: email nwacainfo@gmail.com

Student Scoop: Winter Fun – Kayla Winer-Winkler

Happy Holidays! With the holidays right around the corner, winter activities are opening up. Here is a list of things to do this winter.

Starring mascots Pepper and Mint, Peppermint Parkway returns for the second year this winter. Taking place at Circuit of the Americas (COTA), attendees will view millions of lights paired with holiday classics, and wandering elves and other festive entertainers, all in the comfort of their car! Starting November 26, and ending December 26 (on selective nights), this 15-minute drive will follow Pepper and Mint to deliver letters to Santa. For more information go to <https://peppermintparkway.com/>.

The Trail of Lights is celebrating its 57th anniversary this winter in Zilker Park, with millions of lights that never grow old. They will hold their second drive through event from November 27 to December 31. To book tickets go to <https://austintrailoflights.org/>.

If you think sitting in a car is too stuffy for your liking, there are other options. Luminations at Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is a great way to breathe fresh air and get much needed exercise after being cooped up in our houses for the last 24 months. With thousands of luminarias lighting the trail, guests can also see Fortlandia bathed in light. Beginning December 2 and ending January 30 (on selective nights), visitors can enjoy seasonal food and drink as well as experience nature. For more details, you can visit <https://www.wildflower.org/luminations>.

The Nutcracker, a holiday classic, is a dance based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King." If a dance is a holiday dance, then why wouldn't you go watch it around the holidays? Exactly my point! Ballet Austin and Austin Symphony Orchestra will perform The Nutcracker live for the 59th time at the Long Center on select dates from December 4 to December 23 (with a 20-minute intermission between two 50-minute acts). Before the show, there will also be family-friendly activities. For tickets and dates you can visit <https://balletaustin.org/performances/thenutcracker/>.

Now we come to the end of the list, and I want to end it with my personal favorite, Mozart's Annual Christmas Light Show. With holiday music and synchronized lights, (don't forget the variety of hot chocolate flavors), Mozart's Light Show will take place at Oyster Landing on Lake Austin Boulevard, situated right next to the lake. The light show will be open from November 12 through January 6. To reserve a table, go to <https://mozartcoffee.com/pages/annual-christmas-light-show>.

One last thing you can do this winter is write a future article for the Student Scoop. Students can contact me at nwaca.studentscoop@gmail.com. Have a wonderful winter!



Mozart's Annual Christmas Light Show



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78731 Real Estate Activity

OCTOBER 2021 vs 2020

 Median Home Prices Increased 32%	 Average Days on Market 24
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If you bought your home last year, it could be worth 32% more today. In October, median prices for 78731 single-family home sales jumped from \$875K to \$1.295M compared to this time last year, and the average time it took to sell listings was 2 days faster. Interested in selling but not sure about your next move in this fast-paced market? I can help you find off-market listings, win against competitive offers, or introduce you to great REALTORS® anywhere in the world.



*MLS Data from Austin Board of REALTORS® for 78731 single-family home sales

Positivity Project at Anderson High School

— Lauren Ward

In a show of support for the high school and our neighborhood communities, over 120 volunteers contributed time on November 6th at Anderson High School. They repainted areas damaged during recent acts of vandalism, and painted a set of 12 picnic tables with positive messages and pictures of school and city pride. THANK YOU to everyone who donated time, money, supplies, and support for the event. It was a big success. A special thanks to the student planners: Ford McCracken, Riley Raab, Hannah Cukierma, and Carter Hull.

This Positivity effort will continue - we were able to raise over \$1100 from the community; with leftover money, we will be doing other things, including a small painting on the damaged shed. Stay tuned for future plans! Contact Lauren Ward at lauren.ward02@gmail.com for details and to be informed of future projects, or donate to @lauren-ward-26



Picnic Tables 2021

It's My Park Day a Big Success!

— Parks Committee



On Saturday, November 6, 14 dedicated It's My Park Day volunteers gathered at the Hyridge Drive end of the Steck Valley Greenbelt. During a busy morning, they filled a dumpster with brush and weeds, jumping on the debris several times to tamp it down to make room for more! They also gathered a mountain of trash, including a car

bumper, a plastic deck chair, several pallets, and an array of other things. This trash had been accumulating for years!

Now that the rubbish is gone, we hope the community does its best to keep the area clean. Steck Valley Greenbelt is a great place to take a hike in the woods! Thanks to everyone who helped in the cleanup!



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MARKET UPDATE

NORTHWEST
HILLS
AND
WESTOVER
HILLS



\$1,234,231
AVERAGE SALES PRICE



\$16,045,000
SALES VOLUME



\$441
AVG LIST PRICE PER SQFT



\$463
AVG SALE PRICE PER SF



\$1,217,889
AVERAGE LIST PRICE



10 DAYS
DAYS ON MARKET



13
CLOSED SALES

SOURCE: ABOR MMS INCLUDING ALL SALES WITHIN NORTHWEST HILLS AND WESTOVER HILLS, OCTOBER 1-31, 2023.
FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, BASED ON 100% OF THE SALES WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES.
MOPAC/HWY360 2222/HWY360

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A Brief History of Mopac, the Railroad — Richard Denney

One of NWACA's defining characteristics is the old Missouri Pacific Railway (technically the Union Pacific Railroad now) on our eastern boundary. It is the Missouri Pacific that gives us the name "MoPac" and those soothing far-off train sounds that waft through the air in the wee hours of the morning.

But before it was the Missouri Pacific, it was the International & Great Northern (I&GN) Railroad. Now you know how Great Northern Boulevard, the street which runs along the east side of the tracks got its name! Here's a bit of railroad history to put it all in the larger perspective of Austin history.¹



I&GN Locomotive, Round Rock, 1904. Source: *The Portal to Texas History*, UNT

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On Christmas Day 1871, Austin got its first train. A work train, it entered the city through East Austin across Waller Creek on the Pine Street bridge (now 5th Street) and stopped at the public square located between Neches and Trinity Streets. The Houston & Texas Central (H&TC) Railway had arrived. Thousands gathered to celebrate the driving of the last spike.

The arrival of the railroad brought with it a new prosperity. By becoming the westernmost railroad terminus in the state and the only railroad town for miles around, Austin was transformed into a prominent trading hub for a vast area of Central Texas.

In a few short years, however, Austin's new-found economic vitality took a turn for the worse; the city's robust system of commerce ground to a halt until the arrival of Austin's second railroad turned things around. The International & Great Northern (I&GN) Railroad steamed into town on December 28, 1876. A news article from 1876 reported railroad crews camped at Spicewood Springs during final construction of the segment to Austin. The I&GN rolled in from the north, down the western side of town, then eastward into downtown along Cypress Street (now 3rd Street) up to Congress Avenue.

Although the I&GN was not the first railroad to serve Austin, it was the city's major rail line for many years. Its depot was one of the busiest places in town. An article from 1880 advertised outings to Spicewood Springs aboard the I&GN; the train would leave the depot in Austin at 9:30 A.M. for a day at "this most rugged and romantic spot, affording clear, cool water," returning to Austin that evening at 6 P.M. after supper at the springs. Poet and writer Martha Elizabeth (Hotchkiss) Whitten wrote the poem "The Picnic at Spice-wood (sic) Spring" in 1880, where she describes riding a steam locomotive ("fiery-tongued steed") from Austin to Spicewood Springs for a day of recreation. The town of Duval (the road's namesake) a few miles north of the neighborhood was also a stop on the I&GN.

For 60 years, the I&GN, and its successor the Missouri Pacific Railroad, better known by railroaders as the "MoPac," operated trains through Austin, the most renowned of which was the luxurious Texas Eagle. By 1881 the I&GN had completed the first bridge across the Colorado, allowing rail service to San Antonio and Laredo.

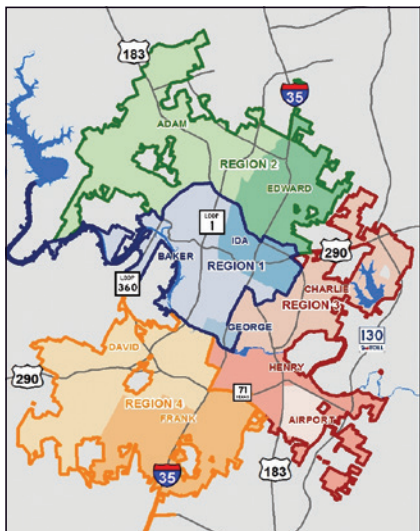
Austin's third railroad was the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T) Railroad (the "Katy"), which entered Texas with regular train service on December 25, 1872. The Katy entered the city from the east side of town and stopped at Congress Avenue and Cypress Street where it served passengers at the H&TC depot. The Katy didn't provide service to Austin until about 1905.

The history of railroading is interwoven with the development of Austin. The railroads aroused a sleepy town and transformed it into an urbanized city. The arrival of the H&TC, I&GN / MoPac, and the Katy set Austin on a path to become one of the South's most booming communities. Now you know who in part is to blame!

Richard Denney is Vice-Chair of the Travis County Historical Commission. For more on this topic and other local history, visit <https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/>

¹ This is largely based on an article written by TCHC's railroad expert, Larry McGinnis. More at <https://traviscountyhistorical.blogspot.com/2019/10/general-history-of-railroads-in-austin.html>

Crime Statistics Comparison – Connie Lundgren



So, what exactly does crime in Austin, and in our neighborhood, look like? Austin is divided into patrol sectors. The area served by NWACA is located in the Baker Sector and Officer Darrell Grayson is our District Representative. The APD Chief publishes a monthly report with crime in three categories: crimes against persons, crimes against property, and crimes against society.

A comparison of city-wide crime statistics with those of Baker Sector shows

we live in a relatively safe community. However, that does not mean we can let our guard down. Criminals know the police department is short-staffed and unable to respond to most of the calls received. Officer Grayson has repeatedly pointed out that criminals will brag when they are successful, motivating others to come and do the same. He suggests practicing “The 9 PM Routine” to keep your home and our neighborhood safe. Simply stated, at 9:00 PM, remove valuables from your car, lock your car, turn on outside lights, and lock up your home. This will discourage thieves and would-be criminals.

Below are the APD Chief’s crime statistics for September 2021 (the latest available as we go to print) for the City and Baker Sector. As you can see in the accompanying map, Baker Sector encompasses more than the area covered by NWACA.

For a more comprehensive list of crime for this period and for other months, visit the APD Chief’s Monthly Reports at <https://www.austintexas.gov/page/chiefs-monthly-reports>

Chief’s Monthly Report for September 2021

City-Wide

Crimes Against Persons

	Sept.	All 2021
Murder	11	64
Aggravated Assault	267	2,527
Simple Assault	835	7,856

Crimes Against Property

	Sept.	All 2021
Robbery	101	776
Burglary	301	3,199
Burglary of Vehicle	551	6,738
Auto Theft	403	3,170
Vandalism	435	5,040

Crimes Against Society

	Sept.	All 2021
Drug Violations	199	1,830
Weapons	77	625

Baker Sector

Crimes Against Persons

	Sept.	All 2021
Murder	0	2
Aggravated Assault	6	30
Simple Assault	13	132

Crimes Against Property

	Sept.	All 2021
Robbery	5	31
Burglary	43	403
Burglary of Vehicle	108	1,303
Auto Theft	50	410
Vandalism	43	507

Crimes Against Society

	Sept.	All 2021
Drug Violations	13	129
Weapons	4	25

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Understanding City Code: Music and Noise

— Alan Carson

Austin is noted for its live music scene, and we have a code, CHAPTER 9-2 – NOISE AND AMPLIFIED SOUND, to keep it under control. As most of the 19-page document is concerned with the Sixth Street Warehouse Districts, and outdoor venues such as those along Lady Bird Lake, those of us in our mostly residential neighborhood are not greatly concerned.

There are a few definitions that we must be familiar with; the first is the decibel. It is the pressure of sound waves measured with a hand-held sound meter. Examples of decibel levels are 60 for normal conversation, and 95 to 115 for leaf blowers powered by gasoline engines. A decibel level of 85 becomes hazardous when it exceeds an eight-hour exposure, according to federal law. The Austin City Code defines limits on decibel levels and specifies the hours each day that they are applicable. Noise is sound that disturbs a reasonable person of normal sensibilities, although the code does not define how “reasonable” and “normal sensibilities” are determined. Violations of the code are a class C misdemeanor and can result in fines up to \$500.

Construction noise is covered by the code, including placement of concrete during off-peak hours. We in northwest Austin may have a gathering at our homes or other spaces suitable for an outdoor venue. If amplified sound will be involved, the host must conform to the code and obtain the appropriate permit.

One noise source that many object to is the gasoline engine-powered leaf blower. Although not specifically mentioned in the code, they do substantially exceed acceptable noise levels substantially. Some cities limit these blowers to a decibel level of 70.

What should one do if there is a noise problem in the neighborhood, as with a leaf blower, or if there are any questions concerning interpretation of the code? Just dial 3-1-1 and talk to a city employee with experience in the area.

Boxelder Bugs

—Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Boxelder bugs are dark brownish-black insects with reddish-orange markings around the edges of the thorax and wings. These bugs are about one-half inch long as an adult. Nymphs, or immatures, look similar to adults, but are smaller, and do not have fully developed wings, which allows you to see their bright reddish-orange abdomen.

While boxelder bugs typically do not cause damage to plants in the landscape or to structures, they can become a nuisance in and around homes from fall until spring. In the fall, adults and large nymphs gather in groups to overwinter. Boxelder bugs spend winter in cracks and crevices in walls, around door and window casings, in tree holes, and in debris on the ground. Sometimes they may try to move indoors to overwinter. On warm days from fall until spring, adult boxelder bugs emerge from their overwintering location to warm themselves in the sun.

If you repeatedly have problems with boxelder bugs each year, then removing female boxelder trees from the area may help to reduce bug populations. Hiding places can also be reduced or eliminated by removing debris such as boards, leaves, and rocks from the landscape and around the home as well as sealing cracks and crevices with caulk or expanding foam. If chemical treatment is desired, treat overwintering areas with a pesticide labeled for the area you are treating.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.



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Heating a Home Can Be a Wildfire Risk

– Joyce Statz

Last month we described how a home fire could spark a wildfire, and we examined the primary cause of home fires – cooking. This month, we look at the second leading cause of home fires and the third leading cause of home fire deaths – home heating.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that in recent years, fires due to heating equipment accounted for 14% of all reported home fires, resulting in annual losses of 500 deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries, and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage. Half of these fires were reported during the months of December, January, and February. More than 80% of home heating fire deaths involve space heaters.

Tips from NFPA to prevent fires from heating equipment:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment such as a furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have qualified professionals install heating equipment and water heaters in compliance with local codes and manufacturer’s instructions.
- Have a gas-fueled heater inspected and cleaned each fall before heating season.
- Turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Use the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer for fuel-burning space heaters. Refuel a kerosene heater in a well-ventilated area when the heater has cooled.
- Plug an electric space heater directly into an outlet, not an extension cord. Inspect the cord for a broken or cracked plug or a loose connection; replace the unit if the cord or plug is not sound.
- Never use or store flammable or combustible liquids near or in rooms with space heaters.
- Be sure a fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into a room. Be sure that ashes are cool before removing them from the fireplace and putting them into a metal container. Store the metal container a safe distance from your home.
- Burn only dry, well-seasoned wood that has been split, stacked, and allowed to dry for 12 months.
- Have chimneys of active fireplaces cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.
- Test smoke alarms (and heat alarms) at least once a month.

A cause of many home fires in December (especially Christmas Day) is lit candles. So please be extra careful about where you put the lighted candles and extinguish them if you leave the room in which you were using them.



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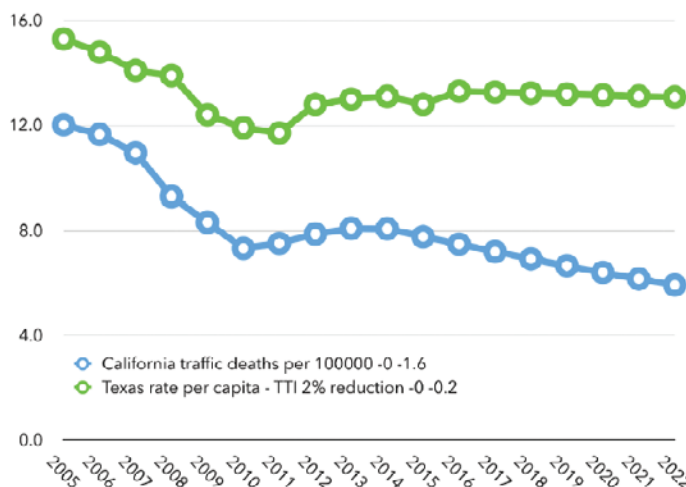
Vision Zero – A Principled Look at Safety

– NWACA Transportation Committee

On October 26, Jay Crossley, with Farm and City and Vision Zero Texas, gave the NWACA Transportation Committee a presentation on Vision Zero, traffic safety initiatives, and statewide transportation issues. Jay started the presentation with facts: Texas leads the nation in traffic deaths and has had almost twice as many traffic deaths per capita than California. These traffic deaths have a human and economic toll, with estimated comprehensive cost of crashes in our region at greater than \$10,000,000,000, just in 2017.

Next, Jay talked about how Vision Zero differs from the more traditional safety approach. Vision Zero starts with the belief that traffic deaths are preventable; other cities, states, and countries show that a systemic approach to traffic safety can result in a safer environment for everyone. In 2019, the Texas Transportation Commission directed the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) to work toward the goal of reducing the number of deaths on Texas roadways by half by the year 2035, and to zero by the year 2050. (This is important because more traffic deaths, per mile traveled, occur on TXDOT’s roads than on those controlled by local/county municipalities.) Moreover, more than 11 Texas cities and counties have adopted Vision Zero goals since 2019, including Austin.

Traffic Deaths per 100K in Texas & California w/ 2022 SHSP goals



In addition to the Commission’s direction to TXDOT, the Texas Legislature passed laws to make streets safer. Senate Bill (SB) 1055, signed into law during the last regular session, makes it illegal (a state jail felony) to drive a motor vehicle in a manner that causes serious harm to a person legally using a crosswalk. The new law also requires drivers to stop and yield to pedestrians in our path, instead of just rolling through and attempting to yield. Here is a summary of the bill passed:

Senate Bill 1055, the Lisa Torrey Smith Act, amends the Transportation Code to create a Class A misdemeanor offense for a person who, with criminal negligence, operates a motor vehicle within the area of a crosswalk and causes bodily injury to a pedestrian or a person operating a bicycle, motor assisted scooter, electronic personal assistive mobility device, neighborhood electric vehicle, or golf cart.

Continued on Page 12



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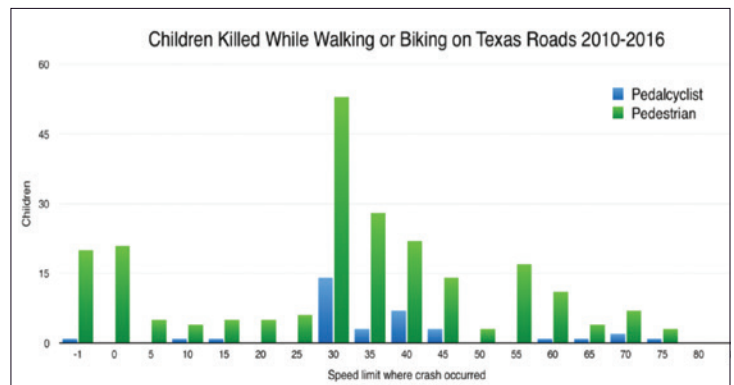
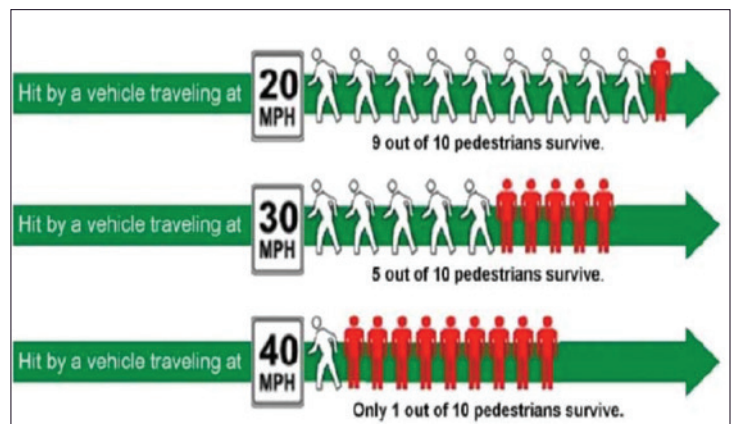
Continued from Page 11

The bill requires the operator of a vehicle to stop when yielding the right of way to a pedestrian in certain circumstances but prohibits a pedestrian from suddenly proceeding into a crosswalk in the path of a vehicle so close that it is impossible for the vehicle operator to stop when yielding.

In other words, drivers are now required to fully stop for people using crosswalks and other crossings, such as at intersections.

Jay also presented regional planning and growth trends that would favor a Vision Zero approach, focusing on future growth patterns that would allow people to more frequently use public transit. Increased transit use - in contrast to widening highways in the Hill Country and Blackland Prairies - is inherently safer.

We've included several charts here, but you can find Jay's full presentation at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/JaysTalk>



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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. Recently, 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.

Please Don’t Feed the Deer

– Public Service Announcement

As the deer walk through our neighborhoods, they graze on the plants they find – especially those that are non-native shrubbery and flowers. If you are new to this area and aren’t aware of what plants deer prefer and which they leave alone, review the City of Austin’s Native and Adapted Landscape Plants at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/COAplantguide>. However, realize that deer don’t read well, so they might nibble on things the list says are safe!

A general rule of thumb: Don’t feed the wildlife. It’s bad for them, and it leads to wildlife taking advantage of whatever feeding is being done. Feeding of deer is prohibited by City Ordinance; for details see Chapter 10-8 Intentional Feeding of Deer at this link <https://tinyurl.com/COANoFeed>. Experience shows that feeding deer (or raccoons, or whatever particular animal), also attracts coyotes, rats, and other unwelcome animals.

Another rule of thumb: If you have a problem encounter with wildlife, call 311 and report it. If a coyote attacks a pet or person, call it in. If you encounter an injured or dead deer, call it in. If you ever see a feral hog in the neighborhood, call and report it immediately. Problems with feral hogs have been rare in NWACA so far, but they have caused extensive damage in neighborhoods just west of Loop 360. We need to prevent them getting a toehold in the neighborhood.

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For more info email us at: info@nwaca.org



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