

Northwest Austin News

SERVING THE NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY

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Opportunities and Solutions!

By NORTHWEST AUSTIN
CIVIC ASSOCIATION BOARD

First, we have several opportunities to discuss. Independence Day is coming soon (details and map on page 17). In addition to entering your float in the parade, you'll also be able to purchase your 2024 t-shirt soon. Go to www.nwaca.org and use the green Donate/Shop button.



We have an opportunity for a rising high school junior to serve as a NWACA Board member. At its April meeting, the Board approved changes to its bylaws to allow for this position. Go to www.nwaca.org and follow the Hot Topics

OPPORTUNITIES, 2

Austin cuts minimum lot size, now less land is required to build a home

By AUDREY MCGLINCHY
KUT

More homes, less lawn. This was the pitch made by Austin City Council members on May 17 when, for the first time in 80 years, they voted to lower the amount of land needed to build one house.

The change allows property owners to build a home on as little as 1,800 square feet of land. This is a far cry from Austin's long-held minimum lot size, which required at least 5,750 square feet of land per single-family house.

"Creating giant, giant lots where everybody sprawls out ... we're all

trying to solve that problem," Council Member Paige Ellis said before the vote. The change, led by Mayor Pro Tem Leslie Pool, was dubbed HOME (Housing for Mobility and Equity) Phase 2.

Supporters of reducing minimum lot size hope it can entice property owners to build additional homes on their lots or carve up and sell off land. It has been marketed as both a way to build more homes in central neighborhoods and for current homeowners to create additional income.

The vote was 9 to 2, with Council Members Alison Alter and Mack-

HOMES, 2

Eight Anderson HS seniors are National Merit Finalists



Anderson High School has eight National Merit Finalists: Tula David, Emily Fletcher, Nell Frackowiak, James Hodges, Benjamin LeGrand, Alexa Meachum, Zoe Nagro, and Nhat Minh Nguyen.

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Democrat-backed Candidates Sweep First Travis Co. Appraisal Election

By AUDREY MCGLINCHY
KUT

For the first time, Texans living in counties with a population of 75,000 or more elected three people to their appraisal district board of directors. This is a result of the changes Texas lawmakers made to the tax code with Senate Bill 2, which was passed in the second special session of the 88th Texas Legislature, according to reporting by KVUE.

Three candidates backed by the local Democratic Party won seats to the Travis Central Appraisal District's board of directors, who help manage property appraisals.

Jett Hanna, Shenghao “Daniel” Wang and Dick Lavine soundly defeated three others backed by

HOMES FROM 1

enzie Kelly voting no. The decision came after a long day on May 16, where hundreds of people spoke for and against lowering the minimum lot size. By the time Mayor Kirk Watson ended the meeting at 1 a.m., those opposed had made clear their fears: making it possible to build more housing in central neighborhoods could sacrifice the look and the people living on these blocks.

Friday's vote represents a notch in a long campaign to change Austin's zoning rules. Elected officials have increasingly turned to land use amendments as a way to stunt swelling home prices. Since the 1980s, the city has accommodated its growing population by expanding its boundaries, doubling the geographic size of the city. The new solution is simple but contentious: make it possible to build more homes where they already are.

THE GOAL: BUILD MORE HOMES

Austin got its first minimum lot size restrictions in 1931. City leaders decided a single-family home needed to sit on at least 3,000 square feet of land. By 1946 that number had grown to 5,750 square feet, and it would remain the standard for nearly 80 years. These restrictions not only ensured residents of single-family neighborhoods got a slice

OPPORTUNITIES FROM 1

link for an application. We look forward to gaining insights from our younger neighbors and to providing a civics experience for a student.

Steck Valley Greenbelt offers us both solutions and opportunities. As the article on page 7 describes, we will finally be getting some City of Austin resources to make the trail in the greenbelt more accessible, augmenting our park space a bit. There will be volunteer opportunities to work on the trail. Meanwhile, we need everyone to be aware that fires are not allowed in the greenbelts; wildfire danger is extremely high for all of Austin.

This month, we introduce a new series of articles – Tips for Neighbors. Our inaugural article on page 18 is about eliminating noise and pollution from gas-powered leaf blowers. Check it out. And

the local Republican Party on May 4, including Matt Mackowiak, chair of the party in Travis County, and Don Zimmerman, a former Austin City Council member.

While the four-year volunteer positions are officially nonpartisan, the local parties helped candidates campaign.

“I look forward to helping all the people of Travis County understand this complicated tax system better and to help make sure the rules are followed to ensure transparency, fairness and ethical behavior,” Hanna, who beat Zimmerman in the Place 1 election, said in an email.

This is the first time voters in Texas have been asked to elect people to oversee the appraisal pro-

of yard, but also that as the population boomed in the ensuing decades the city grew to look more like a suburb than a metropolis.

During the May 16 public hearing on minimum lot size, attendees championed each other's testimony, clapping and cheering, while at times booing and, in at least one case, cursing at people whose testimony they disagreed with.

Land use changes have always been contentious in Austin. For more than a decade, the city has tried multiple times to amend its land development code, last rewritten in 1984. The latest attempt, an iteration of which was dubbed CodeNEXT, failed in 2020 when a group of homeowners successfully challenged the city in court. These same homeowners also beat the city in lawsuits over several other housing policies. The lawyer representing them said in December he was looking at potential legal grounds over which to halt more recent changes.

Until another court challenge, city leaders have moved forward. Nearly 300 people signed up to testify on May 16 about the minimum lot size changes. The split was almost even, with about two dozen more people speaking against than for.

if you have a tip to offer, send it to info@nwaca.org; yours may be the opportunity published next.

We're excited to announce that NWACA has recently placed the deed restrictions for the neighborhood subdivisions on the NWACA website. Go to www.nwaca.org and use the Resources tab to find the page of deed restrictions, or use the Deed Restrictions Database in the Hot Topics section of the home page.

At the NWACA Annual Neighborhood Meeting on May 15th, we learned about solutions in the works thanks to the effort of Councilmember Alison Alter's office.

- The intersection of Spicewood Springs Road and Hart Lane has been an awful hazard for many years. A traffic light for this intersection was promised and funded in 2017. A

cess. Each year, property owners receive an estimate of their property's value from the local central appraisal district. Taxing entities – including cities, counties and community college districts – then vote to decide what portion of a property owner's taxable value to collect.

While an increase in someone's appraisal seldom means a higher property tax bill, the appraisal is the first step in calculating someone's bill.

The process of calculating an appraisal can be highly contentious. Each central appraisal district, including the Travis Central Appraisal District, has a board of directors to help manage the process. In the past, TCAD's board has had 10 members, nine of whom were appointed by entities that collect taxes, including the city, county and public

A retired elementary school teacher in her 70s, Susan Wetmore, called in by phone. She told council members she lives in a small apartment and spends more than 40% of her monthly fixed income on housing.

“Your approval of HOME Phase 2 would allow my daughter to put a small additional home on her property for me to move into as I age,” Wetmore said. “Living so close to my daughter will allow me to be cared for by my family.”

If a homeowner in Austin has 8,000 square feet of land, which is close to the median lot size in the city, they could theoretically carve it up into four pieces of land. They would be permitted to build one home on each. Because of width requirements, though, city staff estimate it's more likely a property owner would be able to divide their land into only two or three plots.

In addition to reducing the amount of land needed to build a home, the council also voted to amend compatibility rules. These restrictions limit how tall a building can be within a certain distance of a single-family home or a piece of land intended for single-family use. Since the 1980s, that distance

misunderstanding at the City Legal Department impeded progress, but that's now been cleared up. We expect to get a schedule for the new light in several months; the next step is to get the detailed design completed.

- Parking along Far West Boulevard near the Murchison Middle School ball fields has been a long-standing practice, though not legal since that area is a designated bike lane. Recently, tickets have been issued, causing complaints. The planned solution is to restripe the south side of the street with both a bike lane and a parking lane. This will eliminate one of the two lanes of east-bound car traffic, which doesn't appear to be problematic. Implementation is expected this summer to be complete before the start of school this fall.
- We need more parks and playgrounds in the neighborhood. In addition to the trail de-

school districts.

But as part of a sweeping property tax bill passed last year, state lawmakers made some of these board positions elected instead of appointed. A change like that required amending the state's constitution and getting approval from voters to do so – approval they gave at the ballot box in November.

The board of directors, including the newly elected members, will continue to have the power to hire the chief appraiser, who oversees the appraisal office. Unlike before, they will now have the power to appoint members to the appraisal review board. This board handles homeowners' protests of their appraisals and members have the ability to lower values.

has been 540 feet, or the length of one and a half football fields. Council members lowered this to 75 feet, meaning a structure can gradually increase in height within this distance.

The vote on May 17 comes just months after another big zoning change. In December, council voted to let property owners build more homes on single-family lots. Since then, the city has received 62 applications to build under these new provisions, according to data compiled by a city department and shared with KUT. Roughly 11% of these applications include the demolition of a current home.

Both phases of HOME represent an attempt to get more housing and different kinds of homes built in a city where rents and home prices generally know no direction but up. Between 2020 and 2023, the average price of rent in the Austin area rose 25%. Prices have since begun falling, though not nearly as quickly as they rose, in part because of a boom in apartment construction. A trove of research suggests building more housing helps slow rising costs and even brings them down.

This story was produced as part of the Austin Monitor's reporting partnership with KUT.

velopment in Steck Valley Greenbelt, there's been a dream of putting a playground at the dead end of Hyridge Drive. The NWACA Parks Committee and several neighbors (especially Richard Grayum) have spent hours working on this with various City departments. At this point, there is still work to be done to get all relevant parties in agreement. As this matter approaches a solution, we'll keep you apprised.

And, last, but not least, a solution we've been anticipating for a long time – a renovation of our Old Quarry Library! Many of you took part in a survey we did in 2020, asking your opinion about suggested changes. See the article on page 17 about June happenings at the library for more details about the timeline. Then, we'll all look forward to seeing the new space.

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Knox Lane Property Development Update

By KALI BRAMBLE
Austin Monitor

Efforts to redevelop a former ranch and summer camp in Northwest Austin have hit another snag with the city's Historic Landmark Commission, which has voted for a second time to postpone the convoluted case.

The house at 7304 Knox Lane first appeared as a demolition case last spring, when commissioners unanimously ruled to initiate historic zoning of the property, citing its historic associations, archaeological significance and landscape features. Now, the case is returning as a bid for the home's relocation, with aspirations to clear the way for a 13-lot subdivision in the Northwest Hills neighborhood.

The home in question is just one feature of the sprawling 5.77-acre property, which was once known to locals as Running Rope Ranch. For decades, former Army Capt. Warren P. Knox and his family opened their home to neighborhood youth, who enjoyed horseback riding, learning outdoorsmanship skills and swimming in the ranch's spring-fed pool.

While Knox's daughter-in-law remained at the home until her passing in 2022, new owner Jimmy Nassour says the road to redevelopment has been long and complex, due in particular to seven natural springs and evidence of past Native American mound-building activity throughout the site. After years of surveying and negotiating, Nassour has secured a 13-plot subdivision from the city of Austin, making Historic Landmark Commission approval his final hurdle.

Nassour, a real estate investor who recently made news purchasing the former Spider House Cafe, says his new development will set aside 3 of the 5.77 acres for environmental preservation, per restrictive covenants with the city.

"After 14 years of hurdles with the city of Austin, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, environmental boards and more, I've attained a 13-lot subdivision for this property. ... It will be 13 new homes, potentially 20 with (accessory dwelling units)," Nassour said. "The restrictive covenants we're having to put in place are mainly there to protect the spring and so forth. We'll have more setbacks and protections once the house is removed than there are now, for certain."

While Nassour is seeking to relocate the home outside city limits, landmark commissioners are hoping he may consider moving the structure elsewhere on the site, a simpler job that will keep the home in its original context. Nassour maintains that such a project would be impossible given the subdivision's restrictions.

Commissioners unanimously voted to postpone the case, which will appear for a consideration of historic zoning within the next 30 days. From there, commissioners may choose to recommend landmark status to City Council, though it will need a supermajority vote from the Planning Commission and City Council to supersede the owner's wishes.

Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve: Protecting History and Biodiversity

By JANELLE MEDRANO
Northwest Austin Civic Association

Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve is a special 19.8-acre green space located within the NWA-CA boundaries. Accessible from the intersection of Sterling and Burney Drives, the entrance is through a closed parking area where visitors can stow bicycles, gather information from the kiosk, and begin a walk along a 0.2-mile paved trail which ends at a deck overlooking a limestone box canyon and springs area.

Archaeological studies in the 1980's and 1990's documented pre-historic Native American use of the site beginning some 11,000 years ago and continuing until historic times. As a result, a portion of Stillhouse Hollow was designated a State Archaeological Landmark protected under the Antiquities Code of Texas.

In more recent times, it is thought to have hosted Native Americans such as the Comanche, and it was used to mine bat guano for production of gunpowder by the Confederacy. Prohibition-era bootleggers used the spring water for making alcohol at two still sites.

In 1992 the land was donated to the City of Austin which created the trail and wooden deck looking over the canyon. In 1996, Still-

house Hollow was added to the newly created Balcones Canyonlands Preserve System, one of the nation's largest urban preserves with more than 33,000 acres managed by both public and private partners to protect eight endangered animal species and 27 species of concern. Stillhouse Hollow Nature Preserve was then opened to the public with rules created to shield its endangered species and significant cultural history from harm.

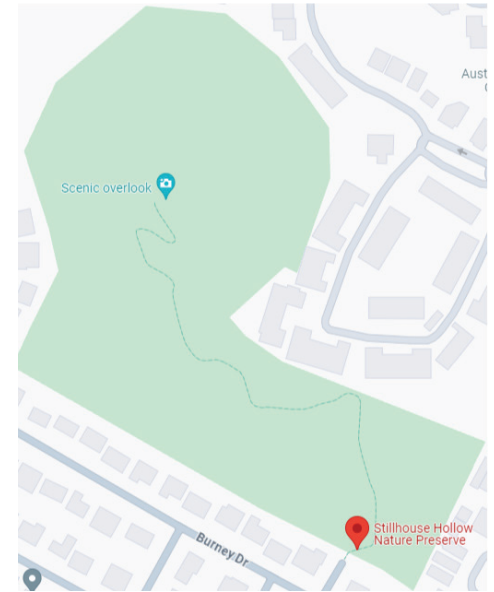
Today, anyone may visit the preserve and experience its tranquility, get some exercise, and view wildlife and wildflowers, trees, and other plants. Protecting its fragile habitat requires careful stewardship by everyone who visits or lives on adjacent property. It's not a park designed for mostly unlimited recreational use like many other green spaces in Austin. It's a culturally and biologically significant site that the City of Austin chose to share with us. Unfortunately, some visitors bring dogs, ride their bicycles along the trail, and leave trash behind. It's important for everyone to honor the rules, primarily to protect the integrity of the preserve's ecosystem, but also to avoid potential legal problems: City ordinance specifies a possible fine of between \$100 and \$500 for breaking the posted rules.

You may wonder what your dog could do

to harm the preserve. Studies have shown that dogs in natural areas significantly alter wildlife behavior. Wildlife view dogs as predators; a dog's presence and even its scent causes the wildlife to be stressed, to want to leave the area, to spend less time foraging for food, and can disrupt the feeding of young animals. Since this preserve is a relatively small area surrounded by development, wildlife cannot easily flee. Over days and weeks of the pretty constant presence of dogs, imagine what the stress level might be for the preserve animals. And, if wildlife does leave, there's less for us to enjoy in the preserve.

So, if you can't bring your dog (except service dogs), ride your bike on the trail, or wander off the trail, and there's no trash receptacle, how can you enjoy this green space? Some ideas:

- Walk quietly and listen for birdsong
- Walk energetically or jog the trail for exercise
- Take photos of the wildflowers and animals
- Spend some time on the deck with your yoga mat
- Take your child or grandchild on the trail and talk about the wonders of nature
- Make a game of who can spot the most animals
- Have a little picnic on the deck or at a bench along the trail and pack out every-



thing leftover to discard at home.

- Sit on a bench and think about what life might have been like for Native Americans living nearby thousands of years ago
- Contemplate a thriving, healthy ecosystem in the preserve for all to enjoy for generations to come.

Steck Valley Greenbelt – Development and Caution, Please

By CHARLIE UPSHAW, TERI SCHOCK
Northwest Austin Civic Association

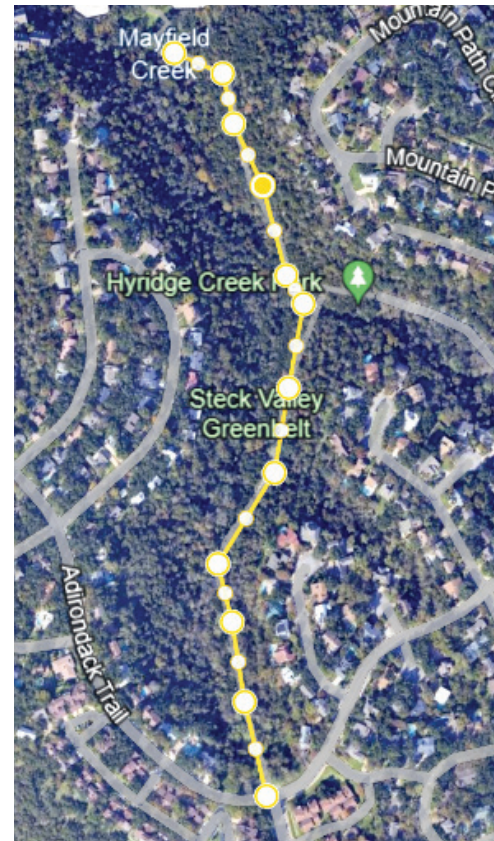
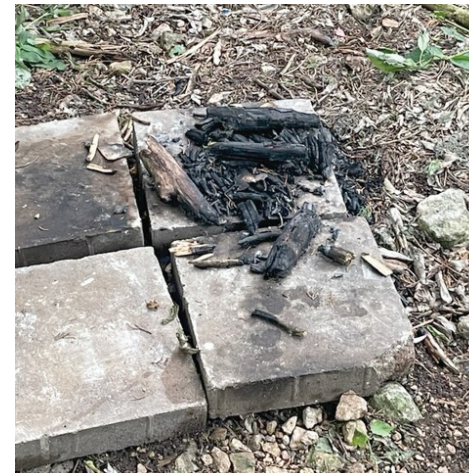
The Steck Valley Greenbelt is a narrow City of Austin unimproved greenbelt space that begins at the intersection of Steck Avenue and Adirondack Trail and continues North almost to Loop 360. There is a second entrance at the dead end

of Hyridge Drive. This tract of land has an informal hiking trail that has been established and maintained over the years by neighbors, but it has never had any official trail mapping from the City of Austin. The NWACA Parks Committee and resident Charlie Upshaw have been working together to get some additional support to clean up the trail and establish this greenbelt as a more friendly place for neighborhood hiking.

As of this spring, we have been officially approved for a Community Activated Parks Project (CAPP) from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department to improve this greenbelt through volunteer and contracted improvement projects. We are in the process of seeking funding from the Austin Parks Foundation and others to improve the trail access in several overgrown and/or hard to navigate spots, help clean up downed trees and branches along the trail, and clean up the trailheads at Steck and Hyridge to make them more open and welcoming to trail users. We will also need volunteers to support these efforts, so please reach out to the NWACA Parks Committee to ask how to get involved!

Recently, neighbors spotted several young men (perhaps high school age) pushing grocery carts with water and groceries toward the Steck Valley Greenbelt. When asked to leave the area, they appeared to comply, but later, the evidence of their bonfire was found in the greenbelt.

Parents, please explain to your families that fires are not allowed in the greenbelt – it's against the law, and it's terribly dangerous to the whole neighborhood, given all the wildfire fuel in our greenbelts.



741 Austin motorcycle crashes in 2023 result in 50 deaths

Nearly 600 people riding motorcycles were killed in crashes in Texas last year, and more than 2,400 riders were seriously injured. In 2023, there were 741 motorcycle crashes in the Austin area. These crashes resulted in 50 motorcyclist operator or passenger deaths and 211 serious injuries.

One of those hurt in the Austin area was Al Pererson, a Leander man who almost died a year ago this month when another driver turned left in front of him. Peterson was thrown 20 yards from his motorcycle and fractured several ribs, his left leg, pelvis, and suffered severe internal injuries. The crash nearly took him away from his wife and three sons.

The number of motorcyclists killed in 2023 increased by seven percent from 2022, and intersection fatal crashes increased by 21 percent.

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month. The Texas Department of Transportation “Share the Road: Look Twice for Motorcycles” safety campaign strives to protect motorcyclists and to remind all drivers of safe driving habits.

“It can be hard to judge the distance, size and speed of a motorcycle, which is why we need to pay extra attention when sharing the road,” said Marc Williams, TxDOT executive director. “We want everyone to get home safe, and that means drivers should be on the lookout for motorcycles and give them adequate space, especially when turning.”

To help prevent crashes:

- Check yourself. Always remind yourself to keep an eye out for any motorcycles nearby. This will help your eyes and brain

notice motorcycles on the road.

- Look twice. Use turn signals and check blind spots before changing lanes.
- Turning left? Avoid turning in front of an oncoming motorcycle. It can be hard to judge their speed and distance, so let them pass first and always use your turn signal to alert them.
- Pay special attention at intersections. More than a third of all motorcycle fatalities happen at roadway intersections.
- Make some space. Keep a safe following distance. Motorcyclists can reduce their speed by downshifting, which doesn't activate the brake light. Treat motorcycles like cars by giving them a full lane when driving or passing.
- Slow down. Obey posted speed limits and drive according to conditions.
- Stay alert. Give driving your full attention.



Al Pererson – a Leander husband and father of three sons – almost died last May when he was thrown 20 yards from his motorcycle after a crash that fractured several ribs, his left leg and pelvis.

Even a momentary distraction can have deadly consequences.

Multiple DWI, Theft , Harassment in Police and Sheriff’s Report

Recent Sheriff’s Office and Austin Police Department reports in the North-west Austin area include a variety of cases.	04/20/2024 10:50 AM 85XX CAPITAL OF TEXAS HWY FAMILY DISTURBANCE	04/22/2024 11:43 AM 57XX LAKEMOORE DR FRAUD	35XX FAR WEST BLVD AGG ASSAULT	04/29/2024 2:22 AM 35XX FAR WEST BLVD THEFT	05/05/2024 10:00 AM 41XX STECK AVE AUTO THEFT	05/08/2024 12:18 AM 35XX FAR WEST BLVD PUBLIC INTOXICATION	05/10/2024 3:03 PM 38XX SPICEWOOD SPRINGS HARASSMENT	05/14/2024 3:00 PM 53XX CEDRO TRL FRAUD
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WHITE GLOVE JEEP SERVICE



Madison Pharis compiled this report mostly from SpotCrime at www.spot-crime.com and also from CrimeReports.

As downtown sees slowing of development, new programs aim to promote activity

By CHAD SWIATECKI
Austin Monitor

In delivering its annual State of Downtown report that showed some slowdown in development efforts in the central business district, the Downtown Austin Alliance announced two new efforts intended to improve quality of life and bring more activity throughout the downtown area.

The announcements were part of the group's Future of Downtown event held on May 15, which included an award ceremony for groups and individuals recognized by DAA for their contributions to downtown character and impact. Following an introduction from Mayor Kirk Watson, CEO De-witt Peart shared that the DAA has created the Downtown Austin Space Activation program that will let local businesses and creatives activate underutilized commercial and other space downtown including vacant storefronts, plazas, alleyways and other areas.

Peart said the program is intended to bring more arts and music culture into the city core amid an affordability crisis that is threatening small businesses and individual creatives throughout the city.

"The very culture that has drawn people to our city is now under threat due to challenges with affordability. In short, what brought people here in the first place is putting at risk what makes us special," he said. "For downtown to thrive, its prosperity must be shared by everyone, especially those who laid the foundation for our city's cultural richness. We believe vacant spaces, when activated, can provide economic, social and cultural benefits for everyone. By supporting diverse communities in downtown, downtown itself sustains its vibrancy."

Peart also announced DAA will commit another \$2.4 million to its ambassadors program that provides cleaning and safety services throughout the area and also helps to connect those experiencing homelessness to social services and other assistance. The extra money will allow the program to expand to 90 full-time employees who will provide 24-hour service.

Among the data included in the latest report:

- More than 40 new developments were completed over the past three years, adding 13.7 million square feet of commercial, residential and other space.
- Last year, 11 projects were delivered accounting for 3.85 million square feet, with 16 projects

under construction – totaling 7.1 million square feet.

- The makeup of those projects were 22 percent office space, 38 percent mixed-use and 40 percent residential.
- Office vacancy rates increased slightly to 18 percent last year, while downtown employment has increased by 21 percent overall since mid-2020.

Peart said the slight slowdown in development activity will give residents and businesses in the area a chance to look at how to improve downtown as major projects such as the reconstruction of Interstate 35 and the Project Connect mass transit system bring major disruptions and opportunities.

"Like many downtowns nationwide, we're confronting economic challenges, rising interest rates and inflation. Social challenges are all casting a shadow of uncertainty over our future, as many downtowns are feeling the same challenges," he said. "As we navigate this market correction, we can't afford to be complacent. We must actively work to draw more people downtown, countering the impact of remote work and reduced consumer spending. ... We need a plan to ensure downtown's resiliency during the next decade of these large public work projects."

In looking at the impact of past efforts such as the Second Street retail district and the ongoing Waterloo Greenway public spaces district, Watson said the city needs to work to make downtown Austin as inclusive and coordinated as possible. "Those major transformations highlight what downtown does best, in my mind, and that is it brings people together. Downtown Austin is where people from all over Central Texas and the world come to share ideas, do business, have fun. It is the living room of our entire community," he said. "Some of the indicators aren't as strong as we've seen them in the past decade, but that's OK. We expect those types of fluctuations in such a vibrant, lively place. Downtown is one of the economic generators for our city. Having a healthy downtown is absolutely crucial to our success. As we confront what are going to be inevitable headwinds due to local and global challenges, we need to come together as leaders, partners and community members to plan a resilient and an inclusive future."

Austin Monitor, an online, nonpartisan, 501(c)3 nonprofit publication that covers local government and politics in and around Austin.

Funding freeze for I-35 expansion denied in heated CAMPO vote

By NATHAN BERNIER
KUT

An attempt to freeze funding for the Interstate 35 expansion through Central Austin until the project's impact on air quality can be more fully assessed was easily defeated on May 14 in a vote by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's planning board. The 22-member panel allocates billions in federal transportation cash throughout the Austin area.

The political clash saw a handful of City Council members – anxious about the environmental effects of the highway expansion – face off against elected officials from Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays and Williamson counties. The suburban politicians were backed by the Travis County commissioners on the CAMPO board.

"Both jurisdictions that this project passes through, the city of Austin and Travis County, have expressed concerns about the overall impact of the highway expansion on air quality," Austin City Council Member Alison Alter said, citing new EPA regulations that found previously acceptable levels of air pollution would no longer meet new rigorous standards. "Again and again, we have heard that air quality is a major concern."

A decade of construction starts this year on the I-35 expansion along an 8-mile stretch from

U.S. Highway 290 East to Ben White Boulevard. The project involves adding more lanes to the highway, including two "managed lanes" in each direction that would be restricted to vehicles with two or more people in them.

Alter's proposal would have made funding for the I-35 project contingent upon the completion of two air quality studies: CAMPO's Regional Mobile Emission Reduction Plan and the Austin MSA Climate Plan, both of which will take stock of existing emissions and suggest plans to reduce them.

Alter's measure also urged TxDOT to help pay for large decks over the main lanes, which will be lowered 30 to 40 feet below ground level through much of Central Austin. The city of Austin is seeking more than \$800 million to pay for installing those "caps" plus any amenities on top such as parks, fountains, trees or buildings. UT Austin plans to pay for installing caps from 15th Street to Dean Keeton Street.

"This project impacts all of our communities alike, both commuters and residents, so we all have a vested interest in ensuring that this is the best project as possible," Austin City Council Member Vanessa Fuentes said.

Their concerns were met with skepticism by suburban leaders, who emphasized TxDOT's commitment to integrate any air quality study results into the project plan – portions of which

won't start being constructed until 2026.

"We'll certainly incorporate those findings or best practices or whatever their recommendations could be," TxDOT's Austin District Engineer Tucker Ferguson told the board. It remained unclear if the recommendations could be implemented if they concluded the highway expansion's effects on air quality can't be mitigated, which is what critics contend.

"I understand the concerns. I know they're honest and real," Caldwell County Commissioner Edward Theriot said. "But I think it would be fiscally irresponsible to delay and jeopardize that funding."

The meeting at times grew tense as officials from different jurisdictions sparred over the merits of the highway expansion, a plan that has been navigating through funding approvals since at least 2013, when the CAMPO board first endorsed it.

"Madame chair, I'm going to call the question," Burnet County Judge James Oakley at one point declared, a move intended to cut off debate as Alter was asking TxDOT officials a series of pointed questions.

"Really? This is a major decision and you're not even going to let us ask?" Alter responded. Oakley turned away and held up his hand to her. Members in the audience, many of them

opponents of the highway expansion, began applauding.

Alter was allowed one final minute to ask questions before the vote. But her motion, which would have required a two-thirds majority to pass, was decisively defeated. Only fellow Council members Fuentes, Paige Ellis and Natasha Harper-Madison (voting by proxy) and Travis County Representative Amy Pattillo supported the measure.

The CAMPO board then voted to allocate about \$4 billion to the I-35 project through what's typically a routine bureaucratic action – amending CAMPO's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for 2025-2028. This list of federally funded projects, updated every two years, was CAMPO's most valuable ever, according to manager Ryan Collins.

The massive spending plan was open to public comment for a month starting March 15. CAMPO held six open houses and a total of 20 people attended. The agency said it received 355 comments in person and via email before the deadline. Another 250 comments came in after the deadline.

This story was produced as part of the Austin Monitor's reporting partnership with KUT.

Austin's airport is getting new concourse, 20 more gates by the 2030s

By NATHAN BERNIER
KUT

Austin-Bergstrom International Airport is gearing up to add at least 20 new gates, expanding capacity at the overcrowded airport as it struggles to serve millions more passengers each year than it was designed to handle.

The planned gates will be located inside a newly constructed building – temporarily dubbed Concourse B – linked to the main Barbara Jordan Terminal by an underground pedestrian tunnel equipped with moving walkways.

The new concourse isn't expected to welcome the public until 2030 at the earliest. Over the longer term, the concourse could be further extended to accommodate up to 40 gates, more than doubling ABIA's current capacity of 34 gates.

Concourse B has been in the planning stages for years, developed as part of a long-term strategy approved by City Council in 2018. That "ABIA 2040 Master Plan" plotted a trajectory for the airport to accommodate 30 million passengers a year by 2037.

Those projections were underestimated by a decade.

ABIA is already serving more than 22 million passengers per year and expects to reach 30 million by 2027. Since the last major expansion – the addition of nine gates on the east end of the Barbara Jordan Terminal in 2019 – ABIA has been equipped to handle only 15 million passengers annually.

Despite the heavy traffic, Concourse B has faced repeated delays. The building would have launched this year under the master plan timeline approved by Austin's City Council, but the airport expansion was grounded when the pandemic hit. Air travel



An illustration of the underground tunnel connecting the Barbara Jordan Terminal to a new concourse. City officials initially preferred an elevated walkway because it would offer more scenic views and avoid potential groundwater issues. However, the city's Aviation Department concluded that an overhead bridge would make it too hard for planes to move around. City of Austin.

from Austin had plummeted by 97 percent, choking off the airport's cash flow from airlines, restaurants, parking garages and car rentals – money crucial for funding the expansion.

Once travelers felt safe in planes again, ABIA unexpectedly started shattering all-time passenger records. Within months, the signs of strain were obvious. TSA lines would sometimes snake out the sliding glass doors and onto the sidewalk outside.

City officials scrambled to accelerate the expansion, hoping Concourse B could be ready within a few years.

An airport executive overseeing the project admitted the new concourse might be ready by 2030.

"That's -ish. I don't have the designer or contractor, so I can't promise anything," airport planning officer Lyn Estabrook said. "Maybe '31, '32?"

But ABIA is getting serious about hiring a designer for Concourse B. Three weeks ago, the city published a solicitation dangling a \$72 million offer to plot out the 635,000-square-foot facility – a building larger than 10 football fields.

And that's just a taste of the

could take longer to taxi to and from the runway.

The site of the planned concourse is on top of two existing taxiways, which are the roads that guide planes from the terminal to the runway. Those taxiways will need to be ripped up and replaced with new taxiways farther south before the concourse can be constructed.

The new taxiways will have to cross over Emma Browning Avenue, so the project includes two multimillion-dollar aircraft bridges strong enough to hold planes as heavy as the Boeing 777-300, the largest twin-engine passenger aircraft in the world.

Pushing the taxiways south to make room for Concourse B will obliterate the South Terminal – a separate facility for discount airlines Allegiant and Frontier – around March 2026. Austin forked out \$88 million in a legal settlement last year to claw back the South Terminal from a private equity firm that had signed a 30-year lease for the facility in 2016.

The decision to demolish the South Terminal was made after a series of meetings in 2020 with airport executives, the world's largest pilots union and the Federal Aviation Administration.

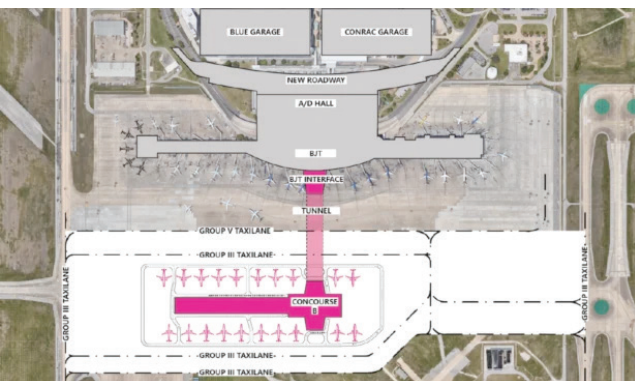
A consultant's memo, obtained through the Texas Public Information Act, shows officials were concerned that any layout attempting to save the South Terminal would render the new taxiways too costly and cramped, forcing planes to make more turns and take longer to reach the runways.

Designs for those \$324 million taxiways – including the aircraft bridges – are expected to be done later this month. Construction could start this fall and finish in 2027.

As for Concourse B, the project is still distant enough that the city hasn't decided how many gates will open at first. Mostly, it depends on what airlines want. They'll be the ones leasing the space.

"If they need 10 first, we will build 10 first and then build the other 10," Estabrook said. "We have to work closely with the people who are going to be occupying it and running that space."

This story was produced as part of the Austin Monitor's reporting partnership with KUT.



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MEDIAN SALES PRICE



\$30,969,615
SALES VOLUME



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MEDIAN LIST PRICE/SF



\$423
MEDIAN SALE PRICE/SF



\$1,295,000
MEDIAN LIST PRICE



41
MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET



23
CLOSED SALES



SOURCE: ABOR MLS INCLUDING DATA FROM APRIL 1-MAY 19, 2024 FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES. BASED ON NWACA BOUNDARIES: MOPAC/HWY360/2222/HWY 183

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Meet NWACA Board Member Ruven Brooks

By KEVIN KOTT
Northwest Austin Civic Association

Ruven Brooks has been on the NWACA Board of Directors since 2017. His many contributions include helping the board understand our neighborhood demographics and City of Austin transportation issues and how they affect residents. Readers can see his professional bio including corporate experience on the NWACA web site under the About tab, at Board of Directors.

Kevin: Ruven, from your LinkedIn site I see job titles like Senior Project Engineer and Senior Software Engineer at several highly respected technology-oriented companies. Also, software patents! Please explain how you transitioned from degrees in Psychology (University of Michigan) and Cognitive Psychology (PhD Carnegie Mellon) to being a software engineer.

Ruven: At Carnegie Mellon then, and to this day, the separation between the psychology department and the computer science department is at most a fine line. Cognitive

psychology, especially expert behavior and human problem solving, was my focus. I studied how programmers write code. What people now call Artificial Intelligence ("AI") is very much cognitive psychology. With AI, you try to make software operate in the same way that people's brains work.

Now, people think of AI as something very new. But in 1979, I presented a paper at the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence. Even then, AI wasn't new. What's happened in recent decades is that computers have gotten faster with exponentially larger memory capacity. Thus, what can be done has dramatically changed.

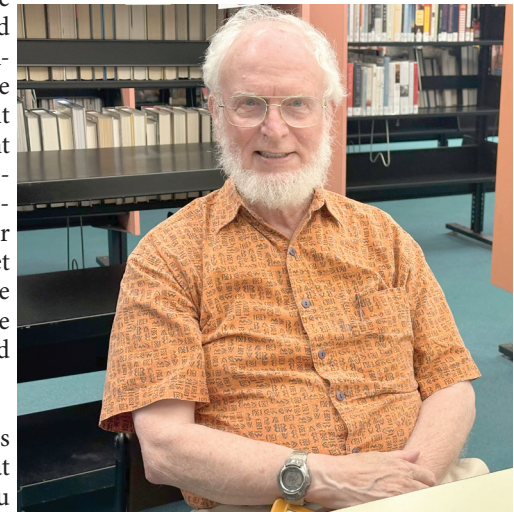
What skills did I bring to software development? I was better than average at looking at how people thought about problems and how they went about solving them. I practiced cognitive psychology, but, as part of the software development team. Even though I've been a cognitive psychologist throughout my entire career, sometimes I got paid for software development.

Kevin: So how have you been using your background to help NWACA recently?

Ruven: Since 2015 I've used my background to look at civic issues by analyzing census data. For example: the 2020 census showed about 27,000 people living in about 14,700 households in the NWACA area. Of those households 50% were owner occupied and 50% were renter occupied. Based on NWA-CA membership and board positions, we are challenged to proportionally represent the renters. This has driven us to implement a focused pilot program to seek more feedback from renters in the neighborhood. Other uses of demographic data - like number of household occupants - helps us to target activities to appeal to as many residents as we can. With future census data we may see the effect of millennials on Austin's growth and their impact on the city.

Kevin: Thanks for your many contributions to Austin and NWACA! I understand that you have some new activities to keep you busy over at least the next few years?

Ruven: I will be on the City of Austin Urban Transportation Commission through February 2025, and I will have a four-year term on the project Connect Community Advisory Commission. I'm really looking forward to having a positive effect on Austin's future transportation-related matters.



Ruven Brooks being interviewed at the Old Quarry Branch Austin Library.

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Travis County works to prevent overdose deaths as fentanyl ravages area

By STEPHEN SIMPSON
The Texas Tribune

When Travis County Judge Andy Brown got a phone call two weeks ago about a rash of overdoses that claimed at least eight lives in Austin over a span of 27 hours, he knew the dark day he had been preparing for had arrived.

“That day was absolutely horrible and something we haven’t seen before as far as I know,” Brown said.

When the dust settled, the number of deaths had climbed to nine, and at least 79 separate overdose incidents in the span of three days. The origin of the deadly spike in overdoses and the people responsible still remain a mystery.

However, in the back of Brown’s mind, he knew that if he hadn’t spent the past couple of years pushing for overdose reversal drugs like Narcan to be available to the public, specifically in restaurants and bars, the situation might have been much worse.

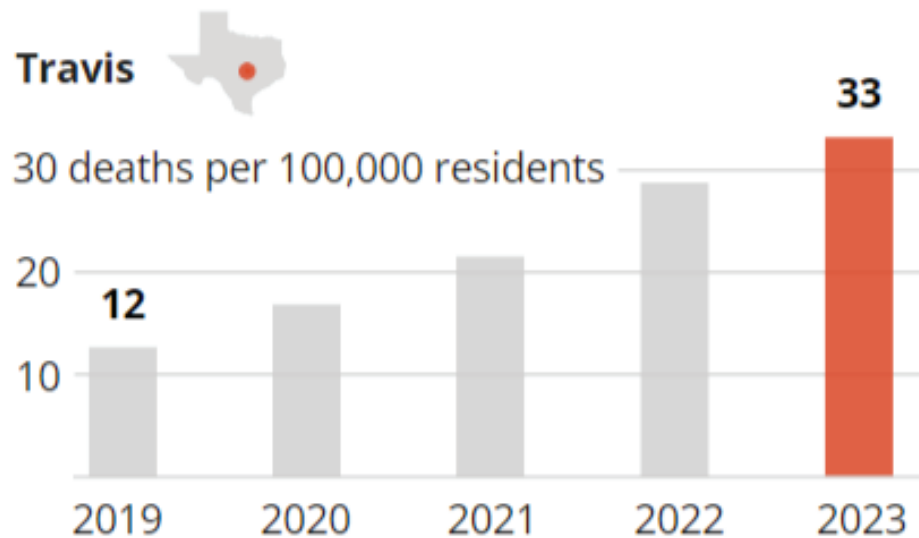
“The number of overdoses was extraordinary,” Brown said. “But dozens of people who overdosed didn’t die, and that is the only good I have seen come out of this because if this happened three years ago, the death toll most likely would have been much higher.”

Travis County is in the midst of a drug epidemic, and it doesn’t appear to be slowing down anytime soon as fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid often mixed with other substances, is ravaging the state’s capital city.

Texas Department of State Health Services data shows that overdose deaths in Travis County are higher than in other urban Texas counties.

In 2023, Travis County recorded 440 accidental drug-related deaths, or 33 deaths per 100,000 residents. That’s higher than Dallas County, which reported 25 deaths per 100,000 residents last year, Tarrant and Bexar counties, which saw 23 deaths per 100,000, and Harris County, with 21 deaths per 100,000 people.

The rise in both the illegal use of fentanyl and now the manufacturing of counterfeit prescription drugs that contain this lab-made drug has made this a particularly deadly problem across the nation.



From August 2022 to August 2023, there were an estimated 5,566 drug-related deaths in Texas, and 45% of them involved fentanyl, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Texas Health and Human Services reported last year that, on average, five Texans die every day from fentanyl poisoning.

The state’s drug overdose deaths increased by more than 75% in the past five years. The number of deaths involving fentanyl has steadily climbed since 2014, from 3.7% of 2,111 drug-related deaths to 44% of 4,931 drug-related deaths in 2022, according to a report from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The drug overdose death rate in Texas was at 17 deaths per 100,000 residents, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report in 2021, the last year with available data. This number is significantly lower when compared to similar states like California, at 27 per 100,000, and Florida, at 38 per 100,000.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is predicting record numbers of drug poisonings across the nation for 2023, with their latest estimate for the 12-month period ending June 2023 at 112,323 lives lost. Nearly 70% of these drug poisonings are from fentanyl.

Earlier this year, Texas launched “One Pill Kills,” a multimedia campaign designed to warn Texans about the dangers of fentanyl. Lawmakers last year also passed House Bill 6, increasing the penalties related to the sale

and production of fentanyl by classifying overdoses from the drug as “poisonings,” triggering murder charges for those convicted of giving someone a fatal dose of fentanyl.

Lt. Patrick Eastlick, for the Austin Police Department’s organized crime unit, said their department began conducting undercover operations and targeted enforcement to combat fentanyl dealing in downtown, North Austin, and portions of South Austin.

Eastlick said these operations uncovered that fentanyl is being mixed into crack cocaine, methamphetamine, and even marijuana by drug dealers to increase the volume of their product and their profit. He said when the synthetic opioid, which is 100 times more potent than morphine, isn’t mixed correctly, it can trigger overdoses.

“It’s concerning to us to see fentanyl not only being mixed with marijuana but all these substances that are being mixed with it,” Eastlick said. “And it’s a concern that all people should have when consuming narcotics.”

In its annual report, the Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office said this overdose spike was a growing trend. In 2022, 417 Travis County residents died from drug-related overdoses, or 31 deaths per 100,000 people. It marked the first time that overdoses were the leading cause of accidental death in the county since 2011.

That year, 27% of the accidental deaths were people in their 30s, and 21% were in their 20s.

“This problem affects all parts of Travis County. It affects the unhoused and the suburbs,” said Travis County District Attorney spokesperson Ismael Martinez.

In 2021, the district attorney’s office created a community-based strategy to raise awareness and provide funding and access to life-saving drugs like Narcan to bars and restaurants where overdoses happen regularly. The effort was eventually taken over by the county, and the City of Austin started to pitch in.

Brown said in his State of the County address in April that the state has failed to expand substance use treatment, leaving counties to tackle the problem. He said Travis County allocated \$860,000 last year to provide Narcan kits, methadone — a medication that reduces opioid craving and withdrawal — and peer support services. The money comes from the Texas Opioid Abatement Fund Council, formed in 2021 to ensure that money recovered from the statewide opioid settlement agreements is used to tackle the opioid crisis.

“We listened to the community when they came to us a couple of years ago and asked us to do more. And since then, we’ve given out almost 15,000 doses of Narcan around the county,” Brown said. “The city has done the same and more. While the number of overdoses is increasing, so are the number of overdoses that are reversed by Narcan.”

Brown said Travis County officials are focusing on preventing overdose deaths rather than trying to stop the flow of drugs.

“I really want to put our county’s efforts towards continuing to improve education about how every overdose death is preventable if you use Narcan or have Narcan available,” Brown said.

Brown also believes the best way to stem the opioid epidemic in Travis County is to address the lack of mental health resources in the area.

“Our community has a lot of unmet mental health needs, and unmet mental health needs and substance use disorder go hand in hand,” Brown said.

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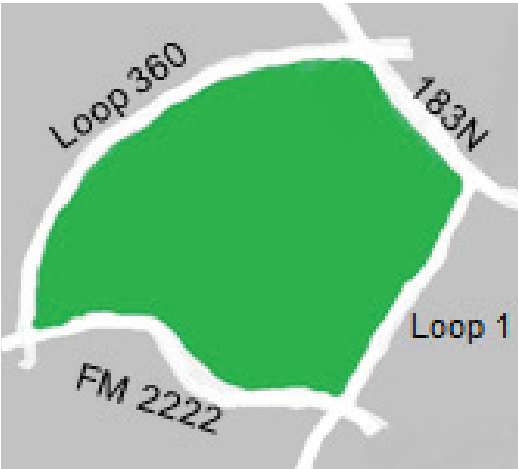
Key Contacts

Austin Citywide Information Center	512-974-2000 or 311
Emergency, Police	911
Non-emergency (coyote sightings, compliance issues)	311
APD District Representative Officer, Phillip Sparkman	phillip.sparkman@austintexas.gov
Austin Police Department Crime Report, internet search	APD Chief's Monthly Reports
District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter	512-974-2110
To get the District 10 monthly newsletter	bit.ly/d10newsletters
Northwest Austin News Publisher	512-483-1708
	Lynette@FourPointsNews.com
Northwest Austin News Co-Editors	Joyce Statz and Julie Rawlings

New to the Neighborhood?

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

This newsletter is one way to know what's happening in NWACA, but there's much more. Check out the quick link For New Neighbors on the home page at www.nwaca.org. Use the Membership button on the home page or use the form in this newsletter to become a NWACA member. Members have access to the weekly email 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.



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Each of the Board Members can be reached at info@nwaca.org or by phone at 737-235-7325

The NWACA Board meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month except July and 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 to info@nwaca.org, so that we can put you on the agenda.

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

Special Thanks to Members

NWACA Membership Committee

Northwest Austin Civic Association thanks members who generously contributed to the 4th of July Parade Fund, the Park Fund, and the Constable Fund, between April 20 and May 16, 2024.

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.

- Bill and Linda Jakobeit
- Dorothy Layne
- (and, apologies to anyone whose donation we might have missed!)



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Members, please request to join our **Facebook Group** and sign up for **NWACA Notes**, our weekly email.



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

Frank Hamer and Maney Gault: NWACA's Connection to Bonnie and Clyde

By RICHARD DENNEY

You know the story of Bonnie and Clyde, right? Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, notorious outlaws on the run committing robberies of banks, stores, and gas stations. Their crime spree lasted from 1932 to 1934 during which they evaded capture multiple times, often with shootouts with law enforcement. Their story was famously told in the 1967 movie "Bonnie and Clyde" starring Warren Beatty as Clyde Barrow and Faye Dunaway as Bonnie Parker.

And you probably saw or heard about the movie "The Highwaymen." From the trailer's tease: "The Highwaymen follows the untold true story of the legendary lawmen who brought down Bonnie and Clyde. When the full force of the FBI and the latest forensic technology aren't enough to capture the nation's most notorious criminals, two former Texas Rangers (Kevin Costner and Woody Harrelson) must rely on their gut instincts and old school skills to get the job done."

Costner and Harrelson played former Texas Rangers Frank Hamer and Maney Gault, respectively, who tracked down and set an ambush for Bonnie and Clyde in Louisiana in 1936; Bonnie and Clyde were killed instantly in a hail of gunfire made famous in the slow motion scene from the



1934 photo of six-man posse that killed Bonnie & Clyde. Frank Hamer seated far right; Maney Gault, standing far right.

1967 movie.

But what I'd bet you didn't know: both Hamer (1884–1955) and Gault (1886–1947) are buried in Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, 2800 Hancock Drive, abutting the southeast corner of our neighborhood.

Hamer's story is too long for this article and has been written by many. Briefly, Hamer was born in Wilson County, Texas (just southeast of San

Antonio) and the family later moved to the Welch Ranch in San Saba County. He started his Ranger career in 1906 in West Texas and along the border, and finally transferred to Ranger Headquarters in Austin in 1921 where he was Senior Ranger Captain. Though future assignments took him across the state, Hamer made Austin his permanent home. Gault was a native of

Travis County. Gault's career as a Texas Ranger started in 1929 after being recruited by Hamer, his friend and neighbor here in Austin.

The two lawmen served together as partners until 1933 when Miriam Amanda "Ma" Ferguson was elected Governor. At that time many Rangers, including Hamer, resigned and Governor "Ma" Ferguson dismissed or fired the rest over allegations of corruption and excessive violence within the organization. Alternatively, it may have been in

retribution for the Rangers backing her opponent, incumbent Governor Ross Sterling. Or it may have been a bit of both. So, Hamer and Gault were not technically Texas Rangers at the time they were recruited to track Bonnie and Clyde in 1934.

Hamer's obituary (The Austin American, 11 Jul 1955) says that Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb used Hamer as a prime example in an account of the Texas Rangers saying Hamer's service covered a "period of transition in Texas from frontier simplicity to modern complexity." And if you know anything about Texas Ranger history starting from the Republic of Texas era forward, you know Webb's description is spot on.

Hamer and Gault are buried a stone's throw from one another in Austin Memorial, graves marked with the standard Texas Ranger cross. Established first as a private cemetery in 1927, the city purchased Austin Memorial Park in 1941 for the price of \$56,000, making it a public cemetery. Hamer and Gault are just a few of Austin's well-known citizens buried there.

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



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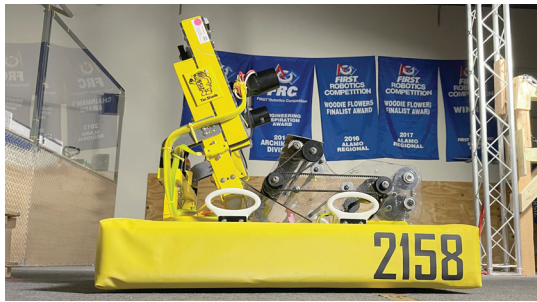


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Anderson Robotics Win District and Qualify for State, Worlds

The Anderson robotics program has a First Robotic Championship team and Vex robotics. FRC is organized into subteams: programming, CAD, manufacturing and business. VEX is composed of smaller, singular teams with several students.



VEX

Qualified 2158z for the World Championship

Qualified for the State tournament.

First Robotic Championship

- Won Waco District tournament
- Won an Imagery Award, which is in honor of Jack Kamen Dean's father for his dedication to art, illustration, and his devotion to FIRST. This award celebrates attractiveness in engineering and outstanding visual aesthetic integration of machine and team appearance.
- Qualified for the State Championship

"The program teaches technology on the surface. The real point is for the students to gain hands-on engineering experience," shared Joseph Ngo, AHS engineering and robotics assistant coach. "This gives an advantage to students when applying for college and future career opportunities."



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New Route for NWACA 4th of July Parade

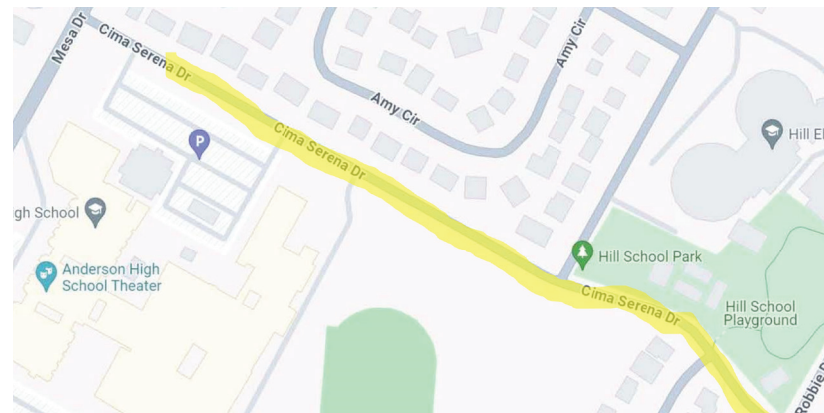
NWACA Board

We hope you'll join us in celebrating the 4th of July! This year, we're doing things a bit differently - the festivities will take place around Hill Elementary and Anderson High School. The parade kicks off at 9 AM on July 4th, starting at Robbie Drive and moving along Cima Serena Drive to Anderson High School, where our annual Freedom Fest will take place. Expect to see a fire truck, the Anderson High band, various dignitaries, and an array of interesting vehicles—including a centenarian



car! Don't miss the Lawn Chair Brigade or the float contest. We encourage all residents to participate—kids can decorate their bikes and scooters; we welcome dressed-up pets too! Have something special to add? Email us at info@nwaca.org

Following the parade, the Freedom Fest will feature music from the Anderson High band, a petting zoo, games for kids, and a delicious spread of tacos, donuts, watermelon, and more. Celebrate our nation's Independence Day and enjoy a morning filled with community spirit and fun!



Mark Your Calendars

These events are as planned as of May 16. As you consider participating in one of the events listed, please check first with the organizer.

May 18, 9 AM to Noon

Monthly cleanup at Bull Creek District Park

Sign up at <https://www.givepulse.com/event/dates/429602>

May 21, 7PM

Parks Committee – virtual

May 28, 5 PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees – virtual

June 1, 8-11 AM

Murchison Pool Park Cleanup
June 4th is opening day

June 8, noon – 2 PM

Celebrate Murchison Pool Opening
Pool Party with free Kona Ice!

June 15, 8 to 11 AM

Monthly cleanup at Bull Creek District Park
Sign up at <https://www.givepulse.com/event/dates/429602>

June 18, 7PM

Parks Committee – virtual

June 19, 6:30 - 8:30 PM

NWACA Board Meeting – Dell Jewish Community Center
Fridel Board Room

June 25, 5 PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees – virtual

July 4, 9 AM

Annual NWACA 4th of July Parade and Freedom Fest
Opening Ceremonies at Robbie Drive and Cima Serena Drive
Parade marches along Cima Serena Drive
Freedom Fest in North Parking Lot, Anderson High School

July 16, 7PM

Parks Committee – virtual

July 20, 8 to 11 AM

Monthly cleanup at Bull Creek District Park
Sign up at <https://www.givepulse.com/event/dates/429602>

July 23, 5 PM

NWACA Zoning and Transportation Committees – virtual

June Happenings at the Old Quarry Library Before Renovations Begin

By MARTHA MILLER
Northwest Austin Civic Association

The Old Quarry Library at 7051 Village Center Dr. will be closing for a full renovation on June 17. The last day it will be open is Saturday, June 15. Library staff at (512) 974-8860 can help you update your hold pickup location to avoid any interruption in service. The nearest locations are:

- North Village 2505 Steck Ave
- Yarborough 2200 Hancock Dr
- Spicewood Springs 8937 Spicewood Springs Rd

We look forward to welcoming you back to our beautiful new library sometime during the first quarter of 2025.

Please note: All Library locations will be closed in observance of Juneteenth on June 19.

Saturdays, June 1, 8 & 15 - **ESL class** - Come join us for free ESL Classes for 18 and older.

Tuesdays, June 4 & 11 - **Tech Time** - Tips on using our online resources like Libby and Hoopla!

Wednesday, June 5 - **For the Love of Books Club** (2 – 3PM) - Join fellow book lovers ages 18 and up to discuss and recommend books.

Wednesday, June 5 - **Talk Time** – (6:30 – 7:30PM) –Talk Time is a program for English conversation practice with other English language learners and English-speaking volunteers.

Monday, June 10 - **Just for Teens: Streaming on OBS** (3 – 4:30PM) Join APL's Innovate Digital Makerspace in learning how to live stream through Open Broadcaster Software.

Starting Monday, June 10 - **Father's Day Card Making** will be available as a "take and make at home" project!

Tuesday, June 11 - **Literature Live! Presents: Chicken Big** (2-3PM) Bawk! It's an elephant! It's an umbrella! No, it's a... chicken?! See how the chickens in this coop make room for a giant new friend in Literature LIVE!'s less-than-traditional puppet show production of Austin author Keith Graves' wonderful book, Chicken Big!

Wednesday, June 12 - **Old Quarry Gardening Group** (11AM-12:30PM) – Join fellow gardening enthusiasts age 18 and up to hear about successes and challenges.

Saturday, June 15 - **Wood Slice Magnets** (1 – 2:30PM) Paint summer adventure themed, wood slice magnets. Supplies provided for crafters ages 18 and up only.

Humongous National Night Out Celebration in 2024

By NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION BOARD

Hey NWACA neighbors! Have you enjoyed a block party in our community lately? Imagine spending a relaxing evening on a neighbor's lawn, sharing dishes, stories, and laughter. These gatherings are more than just fun—they strengthen our community and are encouraged by police departments across the country. Neighborhood cohesiveness strengthens security – the reason National Night Out (NNO) was created.



This year, we're planning something special for National Night Out: a grand multi-block party on Sunday, September 15th, 2024. Can't make it on that date? No worries! Organize your block party anytime around September 15th to join in the fun.

Block parties are the perfect way to foster community spirit, whether you live in a single-family home, townhouse, or apartment. NWACA will provide an easy-to-follow guide for the event to each volunteer organizer. Instructions including "How to organize a Block Party," ideas to provide fun for children, all necessary information and useful forms – all in one place for your reference. In addition, NWACA will provide financial assistance to the first 50 volunteers to register.

Millions of neighbors take part in National Night Out across thousands of communities from all fifty states, U.S. territories, and military bases worldwide (Note: while this year Texas has an official NNO date of October 1st, NWACA has selected September 15 to avoid many major event conflicts in Austin)

Ready to be a part of this new tradition? Register your block party today by contacting Carol Dochen at CarolBDochen@gmail.com. Let's make our neighborhood safer, friendlier, and more connected. See you there!

Air Quality Tip for Neighbors: Not In Your Backyard

By PAUL HUGHES
Northwest Austin
Civic Association

One of the many things that brought our family to our beautiful neighborhood was the air quality. Thanks to the green preserves adjacent and throughout the community, in addition to the beautiful trees that provide bountiful shade, our neighborhood consistently has favorable air quality. However, nothing ruins your walk, your morning coffee on the patio, or your kids' lungs like the neighbor turning on their two-stroke gas-powered leaf blower, causing a flashback to the dust bowl of the 1930s.

While I appreciate a well-kept yard and don't encourage people to forgo lawn maintenance, I do ask that it be done in a way that's considerate to those without hearing or lung protection. Electric (corded and battery powered) blowers have been shown to be sufficiently powerful to accomplish the job (though they may not produce gale force

winds that tear off your topsoil). Two-stroke engines have a unique ability to produce an outsized amount of noise and air pollution - they pollute more in 30 minutes than an F-150 driving all the way to Alaska.

I don't think battery-powered tools will solve everything, and I'm not trying to say switching to electric-powered tools will save the planet. When the time comes to do maintenance on your gas-powered tools, however, just put that money into a corded or battery equivalent. Yes, gas-powered equipment lasts forever with good maintenance, but I've had the same electric weed eater for 15 years, and with a 100-foot extension cord, it covers my half acre with ease. The corded weed eater I use is \$55 at the box stores, and the leaf blower is \$49.

So, what if it's not you, it's your landscaper? Even easier - they work for you after all. I recommend simply asking them to use electric equipment where they can. If they're concerned about the cost of switching over,



Leaf blower image from Car and Driver

offer to cover it if they use it at your house (that's what you'd do if your cleaning company used a chemical you didn't like). They might even be able to charge their other customers more; several "boutique" companies fly the "all-electric" flag at a premium cost.

Think of this as another way of being a good neighbor, not just to me, your children, or your elderly neighbors with breathing issues, but also to the birds, both migratory and permanent residents.

What Can I take to Recycled Reads?

By MERRIESSA ANTON
Northwest Austin
Civic Association

We are doing a remodel on our home and had to take everything in the second-floor bedrooms to the first floor. While walking up and down stairs, we realized that only one third of the items, maybe less, needed to be kept. But what to do with the rest? I don't just throw things away, since I know that my trash can be someone else's treasure.

Recycled Reads Bookstore takes more than just books. They are happy to take CDs,

LP's, DVDs and Blu Rays, Art, some memorabilia, complete board games, puzzles, VHS tapes, and Audio Cassettes. Donated items need to be in sturdy bags or boxes that you do not need back. Two bags or standard size boxes are accepted per visit on a walk-in basis. You need to make an appointment if you have a larger quantity of items to donate. Appointments can be made at recycled.reads@austintexas.gov. They cannot accept magazines, moldy or insect-infested materials, or items abandoned at their front door. All donations must be made during business hours. Recycled Reads Bookstore is located at 5335 Burnet Road; their phone number is 512-

974-7460. They are open Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 10AM to 6PM. On Thursday they are open from 11AM until 7PM.

Recycled Reads is a part of the Austin Public Library System - they receive the weeded material from all the Austin Public Libraries plus donations from the public. They sell or recycle the items in the store, and all proceeds go to the Austin Public Library System. Most of the material in the store is priced at \$2 or under. Plus, like all our other libraries, Recycled Reads has a collection area for your batteries.

If you want to throw out old audio cassettes, please be aware that the plastic cases they come in can be placed in your blue curbside bin. To recycle the cassette tape, you must remove the tape and throw it in the trash, then place the plastic part in the blue recycle bin.

If you have questions about recycling, I will try to answer them. Email me at merriessa@gmail.com.

By WIZZIE BROWN
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Spring seems to have arrived in Central Texas and my mountain laurels are putting on blooms. If you're like me and enjoy going in for a good sniff of those grape candy smelling flowers, while you're there take a look around for caterpillars that may be munching on foliage. Genista caterpillars can be quite common on mountain laurel but may also be found on crape myrtle and honeysuckle.

These caterpillars can grow up to one inch in length and are greenish yellow to orange in

color with small black and white dots along their body. They have hairs that emerge along the body but are not densely covered. Genista caterpillars create webbing like that of webworms, but to a lesser degree. Larvae, or caterpillars, feed on leaves within webbing causing defoliation of the plant. Eggs are laid in overlapping clusters on the underside of leaves. Pupation occurs in a small, white silken cocoon that is attached to plants or structures. There are two generations per year.

Normally, genista caterpillars do not cause significant damage to trees, so no management is required. If you feel management is

needed because of a large population, it can be rather simple. If plant size allows, caterpillars can be hand-picked and either smashed or dropped into a bucket of soapy water. Other options may include insecticidal soap, horticultural oils, botanicals, spinosad, or *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, also known as Bt. *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* specifically targets caterpillars but does not distinguish between "good" and "bad" caterpillars, so be careful where you apply it, and be aware of drift that may occur. When using spinosad or Bt, good coverage of plant foliage is essential since the caterpillars need to consume a lethal dose. When using any

pesticide product, be sure to read and follow all label instructions.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at ebrown@ag.tamu.edu.



Westover Hills Club Welcomes New GM and Director of Rackets

By JESSICA MORROW
Northwest Austin Civic Association

Westover Hills Club is thrilled to welcome Thomas Westfall as their new General Manager. Westfall assumed leadership over all the club's operations in March and has steadily been making improvements. Having worked in the hospitality management industry for over 30 years, most recently at River Place Country Club, Tom hopes to bring a fresh, forward-thinking dynamic to the 54-year-old club.

Tom and his wife, Fran, moved to Austin to be closer to their two adult children in Austin and Dallas after stints as general manager at The Sioux City Country Club, The Nebraska Club, Wilderness Ridge Golf Club, and Hillcrest Country Club.

"We've been impressed with how well Thomas has taken the leading role with our entire team, how he has created structure, embedded standard operating procedures, provided strategic guidance, and has been extremely hands-on with the entire club in his first 90 days. We believe the entirety of the club will



also take notice quite soon if they haven't already," said Kevin Neumann, Westover Hills Club board president.

Tom takes a very active, hands-on approach to managing. He believes in the ACP Rule: Accountability-Communication-Presence. "At Westover, we seek to develop and expand recreational programs and facilities to enhance our members' and their families' lives. That's the reason I am here, and why I am so excited to be a part of the Westover Hills family," says Tom.

Westover Hills Club also recently promoted tennis instructor Jeff Guevara to Director of Rackets. Jeff will continue to expand on junior tennis and adult programming. The club will be hosting the first-ever upcoming



Thomas Westfall,
Westover Hills Club General Manager

Tennis Super Clinic and first-ever Regional Pickleball Tournament.

Westover Hills Club is a neighborhood member-owned recreational club; membership is open to anyone in the Austin area. The club offers summer camps, adult and junior tennis clinics and programming, lap



Jeff Guevara
Westover Hills Club Director of Rackets

and recreational swimming, pickleball, and basketball. The club also offers private event rentals. Amenities include four tennis courts, two pickleball courts, a swimming pool, a playground, and a basketball gym.

For more information, visit <https://www.westoverclub.com/>

Writer's Corner - HAAM's Corporate Battle of the Bands

By IDEE KWAK
Northwest Austin
Civic Association

One of our neighbors won Best Band in Austin's Corporate Battle of the Bands a few years ago.



The Corporate Battle of the Bands is a competitive performance that takes place yearly at the ACL Live Stage at the Moody Theater. The next event will be Wednesday, June 5th. Open to the public for free, this is a family-friendly evening with doors opening at 6PM. While the sponsorship tables on the floor have already sold out, there's lots of room on the mezzanine level available, no advance tickets needed.

The bands that compete are formed when Austin-based businesses pull their employees together to showcase their talents. The

contestants rock-out in 10-12-minute sets, playing not only to please the crowd but also to impress a panel of celebrity and music industry judges who give four coveted awards each year: best song, best stage presence, fan favorite, and best band.

Past winners include Knuckle Sammich - H-E-B; Noella Grey and The Imaginary Band - Ascension Seton; The Haptics, Union Jacked, and Our Suns- Cirrus Logic; The 'C' Notes - PNC Bank; Kings of the Night Time World - Wenzel Spine; Mag Stripes - Netspend; and Overclocked - Intel.

The Austin Corporate Battle of the Bands is a fundraiser for the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians or HAAM. This impactful non-profit organization provides access to affordable healthcare to low-income, working musicians.

Live music in Austin generates \$2 billion annually. As a cultural staple of our community, it draws tourists and companies looking to attract a talented workforce. Most Austin area musicians, however, are adversely af-



ected by our economic boom. The majority live on the edge of poverty, performing their music while working multiple jobs, struggling to pay inflating costs for food, clothing, rent, and healthcare. Eighty percent of HAAM musicians earn less than \$24,000 per year.

Since 2005 HAAM has helped 6,700 of these local artists access over \$144 million in services from routine dental exams, doctor visits, and prescriptions, to psychiatric counseling sessions, eye exams, and out-patient

procedures.

HAAM has headquarters at 3036 South Congress, a convenient navigation hub for healthcare assistance and for community services information. Access to internet and technology resources are offered along with private and public collaborative spaces for artists, staff, and community members. Musicians enjoy a stage as well as other performance areas.

If you're unable to attend on June 5th but still want to support HAAM, there's a Silent Auction online. Gifts range from concert tickets, trips, and hotel stays to music memorabilia and restaurant packages. Auction announcements and updates on competing bands are available at myhaam.org.

Let's help HAAM keep Austin the Alive and Healthy Music Capital of the World.

Oh. The neighbor who won Best Band? Check this space in your next issue.

Anderson Orchestra Earns Superior Rating in UIL



Anderson High School orchestra received a Superior rating on their stage performance and their sight-reading performance at the UIL Full Orchestra Concert & Sight-Reading contest on April 12th at the Austin ISD PAC.

“They committed themselves to crafting an experience beyond written notes and rhythms and really created an expressive musical soundscape in their performance,” shared Dana Wygmans, AHS

Director of Orchestras.

Trojan Times posted: “We are so proud of our musicians and director and want to recognize their hard work. Congratulations on your outstanding performance and representing AHS so well!”

Twelve students from Anderson performed at AISD Solo & Ensemble on April 27, walking away with nine “Superior” scores

and three “Excellent” scores. Scoring “Superior” were **Benjamin Cimics** in *Cello Solo*, **Lukas Goris** in *Violin Solo*, **Sam Gutierrez** in *Viola Solo*, **Brynna Cameron & Sam Gutierrez** in *Viola Duet*, and **Luke Kirkovits, Nancy Huynh, Amelia Perrin, & Adrianna Ullrich** in *String Quartet*. Scoring “Excellent” were **Ronan Johnston** in *Viola Solo* and **Henry Hoffacker & Jefferson Blacha** in *Cello & Bass Duet*. Special shout out to **Lukas Goris** (10th grade), who received *Best in Class* for his Class 1 Violin Solo!

Anderson Speech & Debate at State & Tournament of Champions

Over the course of the debate year, Anderson students qualified through a point system based on their finishes in local tournaments to participate in the Texas Forensic Association State event March 7-9 in Houston.

The Anderson Speech and Debate team sent 17 students in a variety of disciplines such as Public Forum Debate, Lincoln Douglas Debate, Extemp Speech, Congressional Debate, Duo and more.

The following students attended in 2024: Lucky Cantu, Lily Steinhauser, Sanayah Panicker, Kendall Meachum, Logan Marcum, Henry Dieringer, Gabi Avramova, Colin McGowan, Emmy Ward, Luke Schooler, Nate Watkins, Parker Benko, Rosemary Spindler, Nick Sharma, Sam Martin, Kaavya Yalamanchili, and Ananya Arora.

The Tournament of Champions is a national tournament for which you earn bids by placing at national level tournaments. This year, the Anderson Speech and Debate team sent six students. Henry Dieringer, Luke Schooler, Nate Watkins, Lucky Cantu, Lily Steinhauser, and Audrey Millard competed in the April tournament.

The Anderson Speech and Debate Showcase was held May 4 where Trojans shared with attendees in a Q&A.



With just 8 students participating in the Texas State German Contest, Anderson secured 9th place amongst large German programs in sweepstakes.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Level 3 - Isabelle Staecker 3 rd place
Level 4 - Ellie Nagle 9 th place, Lucy Collier 10th place

Sight Reading

Level 4 - Lucy Collier 8 th place

Grammar Test

Level 3 - Isabelle Staecker 10th place

Listening Comprehension Test

Level 3 - Isabelle Staecker 6 th place
Level 4 - Ellie Nagle 4 th place, Brynna Cameron 10th place

Reading Comprehension Test

Level 3 - Lukas Goris 1 st place, Isabelle

Staecker 2 nd place

Level 4 - Lucy Collier 1 st place, Ellie Nagle 4 th place

Spelling Test

Level 4- Lucy Collier 5 th place, Ellie Nagle 6 th place

Vocabulary Test

Level 4 - Ellie Nagle 8 th place

Poetry Reading

Level 4 - Daryna Prymak 7 th place

Prose Reading

Level 4 - Lucy Collier 7 th place

Digital Logo

Daryna Prymak 9 th place

Classical Ensemble

Benjamin Cimics, Brynna Cameron, Lukas Goris, Nancy Huynh 4th place

The Austin housing market is gearing up for its busiest period, offering a promising outlook for both buyers and sellers!

Looking to buy?

Explore luxury and potential in your next home, where extraordinary moments, growth, and connections come to life. In today's market, buyers have more negotiating power. Homes are taking an average of 83 days to sell, and new listings are up 45% year-over-year, which provides more options for you as a buyer.

Call me now to explore:

- Is now the **Right Time to Buy** for you?
- **Finding homes before they are listed.**
- Is a **Resale Home or New Construction Home** right for you?

Whether you're a first time or experienced home buyer, we'll partner with you to find the right home for you.

Looking to sell?

Let's discuss how to achieve your real estate goals with the power of Realty Austin | Compass. In today's market, sellers can benefit from increased median sales prices, and homes are selling close to their list price. Ask us how we can tailor the home selling process for your needs and save you time to do more of what you love!

Ask about:

- Our **Complimentary Staging** program.
 - **Compass Concierge** and how the cost of home improvement services can be paid at closing.
 - Listing your home as a **Private Exclusive** listing.
-

Looking to be a part of something bigger than you?

Ask me how you can support **Rebuilding Together Austin (RTA)**. RTA provides critical home repairs to low-income seniors, veterans and individuals with disabilities.



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Anderson Trojan Girls Lacrosse Finishes Most Decorated Season



Anderson girls lacrosse celebrated its end of season banquet on May 17 and another great season has come to an end.

“This is the most decorated team in our short history as a program, unprecedented success in Texas Girls Lacrosse,” shared Michael Murphy, Anderson Girls Lacrosse president.

Varsity Lacrosse
Coach Alex Ross
2024 Texas Girls High School Lacrosse League (TGHSL) Semi-Finalist
12-4 season record
USA Lacrosse Ranked #1 Public School in South, #11 Nationally
Lax Numbers Ranked #2 team in Texas



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Anderson Varsity Girls Lacrosse

Head Coach Alex Ross	18 Maison Van Den Bossche
7 Emerson Iles	2 Laney Owens
15 Harper White	23 Lucy Etheredge
3 Eliza Wilson	24 Madison Van Den Bossche
50 Sarah McKallip	14 Gabby Bien
21 Rebecca McKallip	16 Olivia Andrus
6 Katie Rich	20 Jane Ann Skaggs
28 Addie Nelms	19 Audrey Thompson
22 Chloe Page	8 Harper Jones
4 Saira Patel	11 Olivia Jestice
Assistant Coach Kylie Drexel	10 Jillian Murphy
Assistant Coach Kendall Bannan	Assitant Coach Hunter Adams

JV Lacrosse

Coach Kendall Bannan and Coach Madison Kochanek
2024 TGHSL Central District Champions
9-0 Undefeated Season in District

Katie Diwan	Addison Perkins
Talia Septimus	Ryan Carter
Julep Knowlton	Margaret Malek
Cate Stephens	Quinn Kitchen
Cameron Meyer	Vivian Dempsey
Natalie Cross	Tate Riley
Emily Schocket	Kate McGinnis
Cayla Winograd	Virginia Nash
Kinley Bunch	Olivia Jestice
Avani Thong	Hailey Heidmann
Wesley Hopkins	Addison Burke
Lucy LaChance	Vivian Fitzgerald
Meredith Trafton	Madison Melrose
Coach Alex Ross	Kate Jenkins
Maison Van Den Bossche	Coach Kendall Bannan

AHS Seniors

6 Graduating Seniors-All College Bound
and 5 playing college lacrosse
53-9 career record
4 time State Semifinalist
2022 State Champions

Katie Rich
Madison Van Den Bossche
Audrey Thompson
Harper Jones
Chloe Page
Addie Nelms

"I recently came to the conclusion to downsize to better accommodate my current life situation. About that time, I received one of Dawn's excellent marketing mailers. That mailer was far more professional than any other that I have received. So, I called Dawn to market my central Austin home and assist me in finding my next home.

Dawn carried out all of the necessary steps to transition me from one place to another with the utmost care, respect and professionalism that I could have asked for. In fact, some of the aspects of my new home are better than the old one.

Dawn could not have been more understanding throughout the entire processes of selling and purchasing. If all real estate agents could be like Dawn Lanier, we would be so much better off in our transactions." - Jim



DAWN LANIER
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