Walk for a Day Trail construction planned for January, receives further federal funding

Proposed route through Southwest Austin

By Niamh Marnell

The Walk for a Day Trail, first announced in fall 2007, will break ground on phase one of the five-to-nine-year plan in January. U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett announced approval for $650,000 in federal funding for the trail Sept. 25.

The 34-mile Walk for a Day Trail, which will run south from Zilker Park, through Sunset Valley, past the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and into Hays County, will be one of the only regional trails in Central Texas. Regional trails are longer than most trails and are rare in Texas. The only longer trail in the state is a rail-to-trail conversion in West Texas where unused railroad was converted to a trail.

Following Doggett’s funding announcement in September, volunteers removed invasive plant species from the portion of the trail near Barton Springs that is slated to become the entrance to the first phase of the three-phase Walk for a Day Trail. The first phase will start in Zilker Park and follow the existing Barton Creek Trail to Gaines Creek, where it will turn southward to the City of Sunset Valley.

Doggett, who frequents Austin’s trails and walks rail-to-trail conversion trails with his wife in Washington, D.C., has taken a personal interest in promoting a longer regional trail here in Austin as well.

“Since I represent both Hays and Travis [counties], the idea of a trail that connects the two and provides relief for some of the congestion on trails like Town Lake’s trails and walks rail-to-trail,” Doggett said.

The proposal to build the Manchaca United Methodist Community Garden, which will fill a community garden void in the area, received church council approval Sept. 22. Eco-Faith Initiative, the Manchaca United Methodist Church group responsible for proposing the project, expects the garden to be completed in fall 2011. Plots will be open to the public, not just church members, for use before that date as they are completed.

Community gardens, which are most often used by people who do not have access to land with proper growing conditions and people who want to be more involved with their community, are rare in Southwest Austin. Sustainable Food Center, an Austin-based nonprofit, is aware of at least 24 community gardens in the Austin area, only two of which are in Southwest Austin. The new garden at the intersection of Manchaca Road and FM 1626 is a start toward filling that gap.

“Southwest Austin doesn’t have a whole lot of community gardens that we know of, and that is why this one that Bill [Palecek] is working on is going to be great,” said Jessica Guffey, co-director of Grow Local, an SPC program.

Bill Palecek, Eco-Faith Initiative co-vice chair, took advantage of resources from Grow Local’s community garden leadership training program when kick-starting the MUMC Community Garden. Through the program, Grow Local teaches schools and communities how to organize and build their own gardens and...

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General Manager’s Note

Two weeks ago I attended the Austin City Limits Music Festival. There was no way I was going to miss out on a three-day pass to one of Austin’s most iconic events. Throw in free parking close by, and that sealed my plans for the weekend.

I obviously took away some great new bands to download on my iPod, but it also helped to remind me why I moved to Austin seven years ago. This is a city where CEOs of public companies can walk barefoot across Zilker Park, and it offers a wealth of opportunities no matter the season.

While a large crowded festival may not be for everyone, I encourage you to check out our Community Events section each month on Page 7. Some events listed may be more family friendly than others so a bit of prep work is in order on what event you choose to attend.

The next event in Southwest Austin that caught my eye is the Seton Southwest Hospital Tree of Love Lighting Ceremony Nov. 18. The annual event will be accompanied by country singers and refreshments will be provided.

Finally, we now have a new way for you to submit online calendar events. If you have an event you would like us to consider, please submit it to the following link: http://impactnews.com/addevent.

Reader Feedback

Do you feel the City of Austin is correct in raising utility rates in order to keep up with current demands and costs?

Yes, I support the city’s move to raise utility rates. 35.21%

No, I do not support the city’s move to raise utility rates. 60.56%

I have no opinion. 4.23%

Results from an unscientific Web survey, collected 9/25–10/11/2010. See more poll results at impactnews.com/polls

Floods of the Colorado River Basin

more.impactnews.com/9801

“Flooding is not my major concern in as much as a lack of water. With what strikes me as an insane growth policy promoted by the Austin City Council, I have a grave concern of 1) what they mean by restrictions and 2) would Austin be able to survive a 1950s style drought and not end up a ghost town?” —Frank Berezovitch

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Now Open

1. Yoli Hair Salon, a new full-service hair salon, opened at 11600 Manchaca Road, Ste. E. Owned by Yolanda Rodriguez, the salon is open Mon.–Sat. 10 a.m.–7 p.m. and Sun. after 3 p.m. by appointment only. Call 494-5560.

2. Steve Doss, owner of Premier Martial Arts, opened his second fitness facility called Impact MMA Fitness at 3601 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. 50. The gym is an alternative fitness club that focuses on fitness with mixed martial arts training. It is open seven days a week on William Cannon Drive, Ste. 50. The gym is owned by Katherine and Michael Cain called Impact MMA Fitness, which opened his second fitness facility.

3. Vivero Growers, a new plant nursery owned by Katherine and Michael Cain that specializes in hard-to-find plants and trees, opened at 1200 A Hwy. 290 W. in time for the fall season. “We specialize in large specimen citrus and palms, hard-to-find natives such as golden ball lead tree and native Texas madrone, as well as new varieties of dyckia, echeveria and agaves,” Michael Cain said. Open all week 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Call 587-4476 or visit www.viverogrowers.com. Nationwide franchise, Baby Safe Homes, which offers professional baby proofing, opened in Austin. Owner Danny Kozelsky provides services for the surrounding area. Appointments are available by phone with same-day consultations and installations. Call 983-7233 or visit www.babysafehomes.com.

Louk launched their new online boutique, Collegiate Mommy, in late August, just in time for football season. “We cater to the off-campus professional woman,” Reeves said. Offering women’s and children’s clothing and accessories, Reeves has apparel for UT, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, OU and OSU. Visit www.collegiatemommy.com.

Kicking off the fall season, Don’s Grass and Landscape has opened its seasonal pumpkin patch at 6240 Hwy. 290 W. offering a variety of pumpkins. Open daily from 8 a.m. ‘til at least 6 p.m., the pumpkins will be for sale until late November. Call 892-5620.

Zorba Greek Diner’s second location is now open at the Grove at South Park Meadow at 9600 S. 1-35, Ste. 200. The Greek restaurant is open Mon.–Thur. 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri.–Sat. 11 a.m.–11 p.m. and Sun. 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Call 291-5050 or visit www.zorbagreekrestauranttx.food.officeLive.com.

After finding it difficult to locate activities for daughter Larissa in Austin, Parker and Christina Ragin launched the website Rissa’s List in September. The Web resource helps parents looking for family-friendly businesses and activities. In addition to calendar listings, the website provides a discussion forum, a section for finding restaurants where children can eat free and listings for movies, child care centers and healthcare providers. A mobile version of the website is also available. Visit www.rissaslist.com.

Coming Soon

6. HomeGoods will open Oct. 24 in the Sunset Valley Market Fair, 5406 Brodie Lane. This is the first Austin area location for the company, which has 300 stores throughout the country. The discount furniture and interior décor retailer will be in the former Circuit City building. Mon.–Sat., 9:30 a.m.–9:30 p.m. and Sun. 11 a.m.–8 p.m. Call 892-0486 or visit www.hogoods.com.

7. Local pet supplies business Tomlinson’s Feed & Pets will open a new location in Escarpment Village at 5900 W. Slaughter Lane, Ste. 245 in late November. Owned by Scott and Renae Click, the local shop began as a chick hatchery in 1946 and has developed into a premium pet supplies and food store but still offers a small amount of livestock feed as well. There are five other locations in the Austin area. Call 633-6004 or visit www.tomlinsons.com.

8. European Wax Center, a national chain of personal body waxing centers, will open a new location in Escarpment Village in November at 5800 W. Slaughter Lane, Ste. 320. For more information or to join the grand opening guest list, visit www.europeanwaxcenter.com or e-mail info@awscenter.com.
and books for children. She offers unique and educational toys.


Lions & Tigers & Toys, a local specialty toy and bookstore, will be opening in spring of 2011 at 4301 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. 220 in The Shops at Arbor Trails. Stacy Winegar says she offers unique and educational toys and books for children.

Annuversaries

Physician’s Way Medical Weight Management, owned by husband and wife physician team Drs. Richard Kelley and Sherrill Kelley, is celebrating its fifth anniversary and has undergone a rebranding of the business. The weight-management clinic, located at 2416-B S. Lamar Blvd., focuses on teaching dietary, lifestyle and fitness concepts to create a change for patients. Sherrill does onsite personal fitness training, and Richard was recently awarded certification by the American Board of Bariatric Medicine. Call 440-1800 or visit www.physiciansway.com.

Closing the Doors

National fast-food chain Arby’s closed its location at 110B E. William Cannon Drive. Call 462-3100 or visit www.arbys.com.

Texas Discount Furniture closed its Southwest Austin store, 601 E. Ben White Blvd., at the end of September. The other two locations—at 7211 N. Lamar in Austin and 201 Buttercup Creek Blvd. in Cedar Park—will remain open. Call 219-5501 or visit www.texas-discount-furniture.com.

In the News

Cathedral of Junk, created and owned by Vince Hannemann, now has a building permit from the City of Austin that allows visitors to safely visit the art installation located at 4422 Lorena Drive. Hannemann said volunteers and architects helped him remove 30 tons of steel out of the cathedral, and it now has 40 to 50 tons of everything from steel bars to bicycles shaped into towers.

The City of Austin’s Grant for Technology Opportunities Program is now providing grant funding to area organizations that aim to use digital technologies. A total of $150,000 in grants will be awarded to organizations that meet the criteria set by grant reviewers. Organizations can apply at www.gtops.org by Dec. 2. Previous projects funded by the grant include a computer lab for at-risk youth and computer classes for non-native English speakers and the elderly.

The Paramount Theatre won a $25,000 grant as a result of the This Place Matters Community Challenge. The challenge was part of a national voting process where up to 55,000 people cast their votes for what historic venue they wanted to see receive funds to help preserve its character. The Paramount Theatre received 14 percent of the overall support with a total of 7,862 supporters. Call 472-5470 or visit www.austintheatre.org.

Relocations

Solomon Tax Services closed its office at 3301 Northland Dr., Ste 307 and opened a new office at 4801 Southwest Parkway, Bldg. 1, Ste. 100. The company has also employed a new director of tax services, Cameron Hollis, to head up its new product, Taxelope, which is a service that provides monthly bookkeeping, digital receipt storage and tax returns for year-end. Call 458-2274 or visit www.taxelope.com.

Lisa Gaynor plans to move Design It with Consignment from 4211 S. Lamar Blvd., Ste. A-23 to Northwest Austin sometime before the end of the year. The new 10,000-square-foot location for the furniture consignment shop will be more than twice as big and will be located at 3301 Steck Ave. The store offers consignments of upscale home furnishings and interior design for everyday living and to help homes appeal to prospective buyers or renters.

Open Tue.–Sat. 10 a.m.–6 and Sun. noon–5 p.m. Call 301-9800 or visit www.designitconsignment.com.

Dawn Rush Dotson, owner and loan officer of Onion Creek Mortgage, opened a new location at 4801 Southwest Parkway, Bldg. 1, Ste 100. The local company has been in business for 14 years. Call 280-6571 or visit www.onioncreekmortgage.com.

Community Impact Newspaper • impactnews.com

News or questions about Southwest Austin?
E-mail swanews@impactnews.com.

Don Farmer and his daughter Laura of Don’s Grass and Landscape have a seasonal pumpkin patch with pumpkins of all sizes and Halloween decorations.

Dr. Richard Kelley, Sherrill Kelley (center) and manager Neysha Batchelor are celebrating the fifth year anniversary of Physician’s Way Medical Weight Management.

The Cathedral of Junk, created by Vince Hannemann, is made of more than 40 tons of steel and metal objects and now has a permit from the City of Austin.
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what’s yours?
October 23 Vive La Vida Fest: 27th Annual Dia de Los Muertos Although Dia de los Muertos, the day of the dead, falls on Nov. 2, the Mexic-Arte Museum will coordinate a grand procession of Aztinities who will pay homage to friends, family and the revered on Oct. 23. Latino artists and entertainment are scheduled throughout the day and various foods of Latin influence will be at the celebration. The Grand Procession begins at 5 p.m. at Plaza Saltillo in East Austin. 2–10 p.m. Free • Fifth Street between Congress Avenue & Brazos Street • www.mexic-arteumuseum.org

31 Fall Fest The World Harvest Outreach Church’s annual Fall Fest will kick off the fall season with activities for all ages including live music, inflatables, prizes, games and more. • Free • 6–9 p.m. • WHOC is in the Cherry Creek Plaza • 5700 Manchaca Road • 444-5550 www.whoc.org

November 6 Most Powerful Voices Gospel Concert The Most Powerful Voices Gospel Tour will perform in Austin for an evening of empowering music fused with healthy lifestyle messaging. • 4 p.m. • PromiseLand Church • 1504 E. 51st St. • Tickets $15 through Oct. 27, general admission $20 starting Oct. 28 • www.mpowerfulvoices.com

7 Second Annual American Girl Fashion Show The Austin Metropolitan Circle of Friends presents the second Annual American Girl Fashion Show benefiting Dell Children’s Medical Center Foundation of Central Texas • 1–4 p.m. • Admissions the second Annual American Girl Fashion Show benefiting Dell Children’s Medical Center Foundation of Central Texas • 1–4 p.m. • Admission is $40 • DoubleTree Hotel Austin, 6505 N. I-35 www.childrensaustin.org/cmcf/american-girl

Parade of 100 Pit Bulls More than 100 pit bulls and friends will assemble for the south end of the Congress Avenue Bridge for National Pit Bull Awareness Day to parade up Congress Avenue, to Fourth Street and then to Republic Square Park. The parade is open to any leashed dog. There will be prizes for the best costumes. • 11:30 a.m. • Free • Congress Avenue Bridge • www.love-a-bull.org

9 Family Movie Night Family Movie Night at the Twin Oaks Branch of the Austin Public Library will be playing “Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief.” • Free • 6:30 p.m. • 1800 S. Fifth St. • 974-9980 • www.cityofaustin.org

10 Preparing for the Holidays Chris Beach will share do-it-yourself ideas for welcoming guests and ideas for seasonal table and home decor throughout the holiday season. 7–8:30 p.m. • Decorum Home + Design, Shops at the Galleria, 12815 Shops Parkway, Ste. 150, Bee Cave • 263-3434

10–14 “Celebrity Autobiography” Created and developed by Emmy Award–nominated writer-performer Eugene Pack and Dayle Reyfel, “Celebrity Autobiography” features a comedic ensemble performing from the memoirs of a wide range of celebrities. The passages run the gamut from the poetry of Suzanne Somers to romance tips from Tommy Lee. • Wed.–Thu. 7:30 p.m., Fri. 7 p.m., Sat. 4 p.m., 8 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m., 7 p.m. • Tickets start at $35 • The Long Center for Performing Arts, Rollins Studio Theater, Austin • www.celebrityautobiography.com

11–21 Edward Albee’s “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” The Mary Moody Northen Theatre of the St. Edward’s University Theatre Program is presenting Edward Albee’s 1962 play about a middle-aged couple involved in a psychological battle with a younger couple. The play is recommended for mature audiences. • 7:30 p.m. • Advance tickets ($25), students, seniors ($12), tickets at the door ($18) • Mary Moody Northen Theatre, St. Edward’s University, 3001 S. Congress Ave. www.stedwards.edu

12 Poochinis & Pet-icures Every second Thursday the 2nd Street District invites Austinites to head over to Lady Dog, a downtown pet store, for a complimentary Poochini martini from Tito’s Vodka and a nail clipping for your dog. Donations benefit a different local rescue group each month. • 6–8 p.m. • Donations accepted • Lady Dog, 403 W. Second St. www.2ndstreetdistrict.com

17 Champagne & Oyster Fest Chef Stark will prepare more than a dozen varieties of fresh raw oysters in different ways. A selection of sparkling wines and champagnes will be offered at an additional cost. • 6:30–9 p.m. • $35 per person • Paggi House, 200 Lee Barton Drive, Austin • 473-3700 • ck@paggihouse.com

17–21 A Christmas Affair 2010—Enchanted at Palmer Events Center The Junior League of Austin presents its 35th annual gala and fundraiser. More than 30,000 people are expected to shop with about 200 vendors from across the country during the four-day event. Attractions will include a black-tie event, ladies night, a tea room, silent auction, food, an open bar and a fireworks display. • $150 (black-tie event), $60 (private shopping) $12 (general admission) • Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Road, Austin • 467-8982, ext. 245 • http://www.jlaustin.org

November 9 Fashion Show at the Mexican Art Museum A Fashion Show featuring dog costumes, such as the colorful costume from last year’s show, will be held in front of the W Hotel. 10 Family Movie Night November Family Movie Night at the Twin Oaks Branch of the Austin Public Library will be playing “Percy Jackson and the Olympians: The Lightning Thief.” • Free • 6:30 p.m. • 1800 S. Fifth St. • 974-9980 • www.cityofaustin.org

10 Preparing for the Holidays Nov. 6 Family Movie Night By Kate Hull The fifth annual fundraiser showcases more than 28 dog-centric doghouses designed by local architects to benefit local animal rescue groups. The event will take place from noon to 4 p.m. and includes a silent auction of designer doghouses, a FashHound Show and shopping. All funds raised from the auction will benefit four local animal rescue groups: Blue Dog Rescue, Austin Dog Rescue, Wee Rescue and Austin Pets Alive. “This year’s event will be the biggest yet,” said Veronique Michalka, Barkitecture representative. “Our goal is to raise $30,000 or $40,000 from the proceeds of the doghouses and raffles.” In addition to the rescue groups, Emancipet, Town Lake Animal Center, Animal Trustees of Austin and Austin Humane Society will be attending to raise awareness about their programs and adoption opportunities in Austin. • Free • Parking is free until 5 p.m. in the City Hall Parking Garage on Lavaca Street. • Noon–4 p.m. Second Street District, Austin • 476-5050 • www.austinbarkitecture.com

12 Poochinis & Pet-icures November 12 Poochinis & Pet-icures by Kate Hull Every second Thursday the 2nd Street District invites Austinites to head over to Lady Dog, a downtown pet store, for a complimentary Poochini martini from Tito’s Vodka and a nail clipping for your dog. Donations benefit a different local rescue group each month. • 6–8 p.m. • Donations accepted • Lady Dog, 403 W. Second St. www.2ndstreetdistrict.com

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Calendar events must be submitted by the second Friday of the month. Submit events to impactnews.com/addevent and find our Central Texas calendar online at www.impactnews.com/calendar.
Business Profile | Red's Indoor Gun Range

By Niamh Marnell

After almost 20 years in business, Red’s Indoor Gun Range has built a strong customer base and appeals to all kinds of people from competitive shooters to rookies, said Red Hyman, co-owner of Red’s Indoor Gun Range, which has locations in Oak Hill and Pflugerville.

Hyman previously owned a gun store in Humble, Texas, but was lured to Austin by the prospect of owning and running a rare find in the world of gun ranges.

“When I took over this range and opened this door it was the only 100-yard indoor range open to the general public west of the Mississippi,” said Hyman, who reopened the doors as Red’s Indoor Gun Range Aug. 20, 1991.

Although there are more indoor 100-yard ranges today than there were twenty years ago, they are rare because of the high startup costs, Hyman said.

“The range is also unique because it is the only range inside the Austin city limits. It is against the law to discharge a firearm inside the city limits, Hyman said, but because Austin annexed the area when Red’s was already established, the law allowed the range to stay.

Austin residents appreciate having a range so close to the city center, Hyman said.

“They thank us all the time. They love it,” he said.

The range also attracts people from well beyond the city limits who often come from countries that do not have guns and who want that quintessential Texas experience, he said.

“This is the only range in the United States that is open to people from countries that do not have guns and beyond the city limits who often come from countries that do not have guns and who want that quintessential Texas experience,” said Hyman.

The range now has locations in Oak Hill and Pflugerville.

“I’ve met people who have actually changed the route of their vacation so they could come shoot at Red’s Indoor Range,” Hyman said. “I’m talking about people from Australia, England, Japan, everywhere.”

While Red’s 100-yard range is appealing to the experienced shooter, the range is also welcoming to beginning shooters.

Red’s co-owner, Karen Ziegler, a once inexperienced shooter who now shoots competitively, understands the importance of easing beginners into the gun world.

“If I have a new shooter, I will start them with a .22 calibre gun and allow them to do nice gentle shooting until they are ready to move up,” Ziegler said. “When you step them up, they build confidence and ability; they are very proud and do well.”

Ziegler has seen all kinds of shooters do well at Red’s, from older men and women to children as young as 5 years old.

Red’s offers the 4-hour NRA First Steps class for beginners, the concealed carry class required for a concealed carry permit and personal instruction.

The range also has a store that carries Benchmade and other knife brands, rifles, shotguns, handcuffs, optics, accessories, magazines, ammunition, stun guns and pepper spray.

Ladies’ Day

Ladies are encouraged to shoot at Red’s with special savings for women every Monday. Women shoot for $57.50 per hour. Shooters must purchase ammo but rental guns are free.

Austin Hot Shots – A group of women who started shooting on Ladies’ Day has grown so much that the group will now be moved to Wednesdays. Red’s will still extend Monday’s ladies’ day discount to this group of women who will soon be starting competitions within their group.

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By Tiffany Young

Most restaurant owners are likely to say it is their customers who keep them in business, and when José Flores is asked whether he knows any customers who can vouch for his family-run Tex-Mex restaurant, he begins speed dialing his restaurant in Lakeway to get Brad Gest and Theresa Beier on the phone. This couple takes their three children to the restaurant almost every day of the week.

“We are very much regulars,” Theresa said. “We come pretty much every day. If we tell the kids we’re going out to eat, they say, ‘Yay, Flores,’ because it’s pretty much the only place we go out to eat.”

Theresa said they like the consistancy of the food, the service and “the awesome drinks.”

And this family is not the only one willing to spread the word about the Tex-Mex restaurant that was started by the Flores family in Oak Hill in 1994.

During lunch hour at the Four Points location, José begins speaking to Mark Micus, a regular who also lives in Lakeway, eating lunch at the bar. He said he was one of the original customers of Flores, first trying the restaurant when it opened in Oak Hill.

“It was the only thing out there then—same thing when it opened a location in Lakeway off [RR] 620,” Micus said. “I love that they have many locations and they have great lunch specials.”

José, just one of the Flores members running the four restaurants, lives in Cedar Park and can often be found at the Four Points and Lakeway locations. He keeps a closer eye on them since they are the newest.

However, his father drives to each location daily to check the quality of the kitchen and the dishes being served.

“He works the hardest of any of us,” José said of his father, who has been in the restaurant business for more than 40 years.

The business was originally a taco truck, but the Flores family quickly had enough business to open a restaurant in Oak Hill. While that location is still at the same place, José said they have considered finding a bigger location when their lease is up in about a year.

“During lunch hour at the Four Points location, José begins speaking to Mark Micus, a regular who also lives in Lakeway, eating lunch at the bar. He said he was one of the original customers of Flores, first trying the restaurant when it opened in Oak Hill.

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**City of Austin**

**City of Austin announces anti-littering campaign**

The City of Austin is educating residents on the negative effects of littering through its new campaign Let’s Can It! The intention is to reduce the amount of litter that is scattered throughout Austin’s streets and creeks.

The new initiative’s goal is to reduce the 6,200 tons of trash that litter Austin roadways and the 250 tons of litter in the waterways, protect water quality and make Austin a cleaner place to live and visit.

The kickoff event was Oct. 7 at Lady Bird Lake and was sponsored by the City of Austin’s Watershed Protection, Parks and Recreation and Solid Waste Services Departments, Keep Austin Beautiful and The Trail Foundation.

“We have realized that even though we have fabulous volunteers around the city cleaning up, the essential part is that we need to attack the problem of people littering,” said Kathy Shay, water quality education manager with Watershed Protection.

The campaign features a new TV spot that will be shown regularly and is also featured on the City of Austin website.

**MoPac/Hwy. 290 interchange project breaks ground, officials work to improve regional mobility**

The City of Austin, Texas Department of Transportation and state officials announced the start of construction of two flyover bridges at MoPac and Hwy. 290 Oct. 5.

State Sen. Kirk Watson and Texas Transportation Commission Chair Deirdre Delisi joined Mayor Lee Leffingwell in the groundbreaking ceremony.

“The completion of the MoPac and 290 interchanges have been a priority for area neighbors and commuters for more than a decade,” Leffingwell said. “The new interchange will provide greater connectivity for area residents and will reduce congestion, fuel consumption and carbon emissions.”

Bypassing traffic signals in either direction will save drivers an estimated 400 hours daily in travel time. In addition to convenience, approximately 44,000 gallons of gasoline is consumed annually, an output of about 340 metric tons of CO2, will be reduced through this initiative.

The project’s estimated cost is $8.4 million, well under the $13 million anticipated and was approved by the Austin City Council. The City of Austin has agreed to pay for the project under a Pass-Through Financing Agreement with TxDOT and will be reimbursed 80 percent of the project’s expected cost—about $10.1 million—over the next 10 to 15 years. The project is expected to be completed by December 2011.

**Mobility Authority secures $153 million commitment for Central Texas transportation projects**

The Texas Transportation Commission has approved two grants totaling more than $153 million to jump start a number of critical transportation projects in Central Texas.

The Texas Department of Transportation and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority will use the money to accelerate work on two major projects in Southwest Austin including the Oak Hill Expressway (Hwy. 290 W.) and Manchaca Expressway (SH 45) as well as projects in other parts of Austin.

The Mobility Authority is working with TxDOT and the City of Austin on improvements at the Hwy. 290 “Y” in Oak Hill. A study is already under-way to look at a short-term fix that would improve traffic flow at intersections in the area. The TxDOT grant money will be used to complete a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that would allow for construction of the Oak Hill Expressway, a permanent solution to traffic congestion that plagues that area.

The grant money will also fund projects in other parts of Austin including the Bergstrom Expressway (US 183 South) which has been undergoing a required environmental study that is nearing completion. TxDOT will use the grant money to finalize that environmental work, complete design plans and begin construction.

**City of Austin raises property taxes by 4.1 percent**

The Austin City Council unanimously voted Sept. 29 to increase property taxes by 4.1 percent for fiscal year 2010–11. The vote was one of the last steps in approving the city’s new budget.

Council members voted to remain with the city’s recommended and proposed rate—45.71 cents per $100 of assessed valuation—which is “more than a full penny below the maximum tax rate,” City Budget Officer Ed Van Eenoo noted earlier in the budget process.

Even though the proposed tax rate was not raised as high as city law would have allowed, residents spoke out against the increase during public hearings held throughout September asking council members to not raise property taxes, but instead give residents of the slow economy a chance to catch up.

**Travis County**

**Travis County Commissioners approve 2011 budget**

The Travis County Commissioners set the tax rate at 46.58 cents and approved the $705.9 million budget Sept. 28. The budget year began Oct. 1.

The county’s general fund, the operating budget, is $494.3 million.

Despite a drop in property values, the average homeowner in Travis County can expect a rise in tax bills. The budget uses a tax rate of 46.58 cents per $100 valuation.

The rate would increase the average tax bill by $46.17. The average home- stead property value in Travis County this year dropped from $287,732 to $273,177. The county has a 20 percent homestead exemption that brings the average taxable value to $218,256. There is also an additional $65,000 exemption for disabled residents and residents 65 and older.

The budget also includes $4.9 million to help cover increased health insurance costs and $6.67 million for compensation increases, including a 2.5 percent across-the-board increase for regular employees and elected officials and a 2 percent cost-of-living increase for retirees. The pay increase does not include judiciary salaries.

**History of property tax increases imposed by the City of Austin**

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<tr>
<td>2010–11</td>
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**Regional Clinic**

Last year, when my asthmatic son Jonah got the H1N1 flu...

See Jill’s video and read her story at MyARCstory.com

Reserve your flu vaccine today. Visit AustinRegionalClinic.com or call (512) 272-4636 for more info.
could have connected roads, visual building aesthetics and specific retail that benefit the surrounding neighborhoods.

“Trying to get a town center out here gives people some place they can hike, walk or bike to, work at, play at and shop at without having to get in their car, drive five or 10 miles just to get a loaf of bread,” said Sandy Baldridge, president of the Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods.

Discussions about the project have been in the works for years, but the hold up on action is largely due to the uncertainty of transportation at the Y.

“This project is a matter of showing landowners the potential of the area, and the biggest thing that most commercial people have trouble with right now is the uncertainty of Hwy. 290,” Baldridge said. “For example, H-E-B doesn’t want to do anything with the old Albertsons building ‘til we know what will happen to Hwy. 290.”

A possible fix would be the addition of roadways and transit opportunities that do not involve existing highways. Currently, Hwy. 290 separates the northern and southern parts of the neighborhood with few options for interconnected transportation to shopping centers other than using the highways. The town center would allow for developers to construct roads between the various areas, giving residents the ability to walk or bike to local retail areas.

“A town center that incorporates transit would be a win-win for anyone involved,” said Misty Whited, spokeswoman for Capital Metro. “We know the community recognizes the importance for transit and we want to be able to offer more service, but we are limited to what we can supply right now.”

The issue of available transit in Oak Hill is due to a lack of density, Whited said. But the continued growth of Austin Community College’s Pinnacle campus will help the problem.

“If we were able to work with local businesses or ACC to incorporate a transit center next to the businesses and share the facilities, that would be ideal,” Whited said.

ACC is developing a master plan for its seven existing campuses, including the Pinnacle campus, and hopes to complete the planning process by December.

“We think the town center definitely has potential, and we are interested because it would give our campus greater access to the community,” said Bill Mullane, executive director for facilities and operations at ACC. “Once you can get off on the right direction on which way we can go with the campus master plan, we are very willing to talk to other landowners. We just have to know what our needs are before we start planning.”

Mullane said a joint development project such as this would require additional roadways, a financial burden for developers.

“We have that responsibility to our taxpayers to spend the money only on the campus for our students. If we have to put anything more than is necessary for that, then we need to be able to demonstrate we are getting something in return, such as roadways,” Mullane said.

David Bodenman with Highland Resources Inc. said his company has been following the proceedings of the town center plans and will be participating with discussions and contributing ideas.

While landowners wait to move forward with collective discussions, the possibility for other businesses to move forward with their own town center plans is increasing.

The West Park PUD plans are under review by the City of Austin, said Sandy Rhoades, zoning case manager.

“It will be a mixed-use development which allows flexibility because the developer is expected to provide more than just a conventional development,” Rhoades said. “They are looking at providing a significant amount of open space to the tune of 51 acres.”

Local residents, however, are concerned the development is too far away from the center of activity at the Y and would deter from the need for development improvements.

Rudy Belton owns West Park PUD, 131 acres west of the Y on Hwy. 290 at FM 1826.

“During the planning process, a lot of people didn’t want West Park to be considered part of the town center,” said Maureen Meredith, senior planner for the Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Plan that was adopted in December 2008.

The neighborhood development planners kept the West Park PUD land as a part of the possible town center area left without a specific development use designation on the Future Land Use Map for the possibility of having a cohesive development. They felt the neighborhood’s vision for the town center needed the extra possibility for open space. Meredith said.

“Something cohesive could come about, but we are continuing to pursue our PUD because we think it meets the intentions of starting to create a town center for the area,” said Dowie Gullatt, one of Belton’s attorneys. “We are a part of the town center, not the town center.”

OHAN hosted a meeting in late August with Austin Mayor Lee Leffingwell, neighborhood residents, landowners and business owners to discuss what needs to happen to move the plans forward. Baldridge said she hopes the next meeting in early December will provide more definite plans upon which the community and the landowners can agree.

“OHAN, the neighborhood planning contact team and the business association are not in the position to dictate to a landowner what they can and cannot build. We are in a position to go ask if they will consider,” Baldridge said.
By Kate Hull

The season of giving for Central Texas starts one week before Thanksgiving thanks to The Junior League of Austin’s 35th annual holiday market, A Christmas Affair. The market is scheduled for Nov. 17–21 at the Palmer Events Center.

Since 1934, The Junior League of Austin has been a membership organization that brings together women in the community to promote voluntarism, fosters the potential of its members and gives back to the community through leadership and action. Members have the opportunity to learn skill sets and hold leadership positions at any of 26 community projects and nine Junior League programs including Coats for Kids, which provides children with warm winter coats.

“We are helping train women to learn about there community,” said Sandy Alcalá, president of The Junior League of Austin. “The goal is to take the skill sets we have taught you and go out in the community and make an impact.”

There are currently 2,184 women in the organization, 80 percent of whom hold full-time jobs outside of the home. Women age 25 and older can apply to be a member and are required to complete 70 to 100 hours of community service annually at a particular program. The league donates more than $800,000 to local nonprofits as well as provides volunteers.

The Junior League’s biggest annual fundraiser is A Christmas Affair. This year, the Palmer Events Center will be transformed into a holiday hub with 215 merchants from all over the country surrounding a 25-foot tree with elaborate decorations fit best into the categories that include clothing, antiques, gifts and Christmas decorations.

The holiday market costs $12 a ticket. Other special events are held during the week to bring something for everyone at the shopping extravaganza; prices vary.

The Junior League uses all the funds raised to complete 70 to 100 hours of community service annually at a particular program. The league donates more than $800,000 to local nonprofits as well as provides volunteers.

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A Christmas Affair chair. “The theme is very woodsy and outdoorsy but also with lots of snow.”

A Christmas Affair chair. “The theme is very woodsy and outdoorsy but also with lots of snow.”

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“Every year we have a different theme and this year it is Enchanted,” said Cathy Northcutt, A Christmas Affair chair. “The theme is very woodsy and outdoorsy but also with lots of snow.”

The Junior League of Austin is ranked No. 5 out of 294 different junior league organizations in the United States, United Kingdom and Mexico, according to league rankings. The Austin chapter’s event is one of the largest holiday markets in the country.

For this year’s event, more than 500 merchants applied to participate and were narrowed down to 215 by a committee that reviewed the products and decided which fit best into the categories that include clothing, antiques, gifts and Christmas decorations.

The holiday market costs $12 a ticket. Other special events are held during the week to bring something for everyone at the shopping extravaganza; prices vary.

The Junior League uses all proceeds from ticket sales and booth fees from the vendors to donate to various nonprofits.

“We buy, design and make all of the decorations for the purpose of reselling everything,” Alcalá said. “It enables us to do these beautiful wow decorations and put the money into them upfront because we know we can sell them all back.”
By Kate Hull

A large limestone outcrop towers above the area along Hwy. 290 W. just past where it intersects William Cannon Drive. This geological spot known as Convict Hill, the same namesake as Convict Drive, was abundant in the area. In 1881, after the Capitol of Texas building burned down on Nov. 9, a Chicago builder named Gustav Wilke took on the massive project of constructing what would become the current Capitol building. Wilke insisted on using Texas limestone to construct the outer walls. The state leased 1,000 acres from Oak Hill resident W.K. Becket, who owned the land that became the Oatmanville quarry. A railroad was built near by the Austin and Oatmanville Railway Company to haul the quarry to the construction site.

Once the construction began, however, Wilke and his team realized the limestone was not an appropriate stone to use because it contained iron particles that would discolor the limestone over time, said Chris Anderson, a technician at Austin Immediate Care, who researched the history of Oak Hill and produced a website for residents in the area. Wilke’s team decided to use the Oatmanville Quarry limestone for the foundation and basement walls, and red granite was brought in from nearby Marble Falls for the rest of the building.

The labor costs had risen significantly at the start of the 1880s, and to cut costs, the state opted for free convict labor to mine the quarry, a decision that was very unpopular by Austin-area labor unions, according to the online resource the Handbook of Texas. The convicts stayed at the site and were fed meager diets of cornbread, salt pork and coffee. Police and hound dogs guarded the workers at night to ensure prisoners did not escape.

Rumors spread in Oak Hill over the years that the reason the name Convict Hill stuck was not because of the use of convicts, but because during the strenuous labor, convicts died and were buried at the quarry.

Historians and geologists have surveyed the area using soil tests, however, to see if bodies were buried and have not found any proof that these rumors are in fact true, Anderson said.

The Capitol was completed in 1888, and shortly after, the railroad was abandoned. The town of Oak Hill continued to grow and add more development surrounding the quarry, but the quarry at Convict Hill no longer was in use.

Today, Convict Hill is the site of residential development.
The Livestrong Challenge Austin takes place in downtown Austin and Dripping Springs. The national event series includes a 5K run/walk on Saturday and a multi-distance bike ride with 10-, 20-, 45-, 65- and 90-mile options. The public can visit the Livestrong Village, a health and wellness expo with nonprofit, local and national vendors at the Austin Convention Center. Livestrong is a national nonprofit based in Austin that helps fight cancer with research, donations and education. Participants have to raise $250. To register, visit www.livestrong.org.

The Donkey Dash and Doggy Dash 5ks
The race, which starts and finishes at Doc’s Backyard in Sunset Valley, will include a race for participants’ four-legged friends. The course will take participants around Sunset Valley in Southwest Austin. Participants who bring their dogs are required to use a ‘doggy disposal bag’ to clean up after their pets. VCA Ben White Animal Hospital will be on-site to provide any necessary event-day veterinary care for the canine participants. This year’s race will benefit the Sunset Valley Elementary School. Parking is available at the Homestead shopping center off Brodie Lane. The dogs are treated just like runners and have their own chips, bibs, etc.

The 2010 Wurst Ride in Texas
The eighth Annual Wurst Ride from Austin to New Braunfels will take place Sat. Nov. 6 at 8 a.m. and benefit the Bob Woodruff Foundation, a nonprofit that provides resources and support to injured service members, veterans and their families. The 100K route will begin at the LCRA Credit Union at 3505 Montopolis. Registration is $20 for kids over the age of 12 and $10 for younger kids. Same-day registration is $5 more. San Gabriel Park, Lower Park Road Area G, Georgetown. Visit www.wurstride.com for more information.

Jingle Bell 5K
The 22nd Annual Jingle Bell 5K benefiting Mothers Against Drunk Driving will take place at The Domain, 11410 Century Oaks Terrace, along with live music, refreshments, kids’ games, photographs with Santa and a wellness fair. All events are included in the registration fee. Bells will be ringing as runners jingle their way through downtown Austin to celebrate the mission of MAAD that promotes life, hope and progress in Central Texas. Call 445-4976 or visit the hosts of the 5k, Red Licorice Events, at www.redlicoriceevents.com to register.

ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot
The largest 5 mile run in Texas, the 20th Annual ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot benefitting Cantus kicks off the Thanksgiving holiday at 7:30 a.m. at the Long Center for the Performing Arts at 701 W. Riverside Drive. Registration fees start at $18 before Oct. 31, $20 until Nov. 21 and $25 the week before the race. Prices differ for timed runners and one-mile routes. Call 524-42953 or visit www.thundercloud.com.

Susan B. Komen Race for the Cure
The 5K run and walk begins at 7:30 a.m. for timed runners at The Domain in North Austin, 11410 Century Oaks Terrace, to raise breast cancer awareness in Central Texas. Participants who are not racing will have a rolling start between 8 and 10 a.m. Registration fees are $30 online and $35 for mail-in forms. Visit www.komenaustin.org.

Pedal for Puppies
The first biannual Pedal for Puppies 25K urban bike ride benefiting Austin Pets Alive will take place at 8:30 a.m. at Continental Automotive Group’s Austin Subaru, 200 W. Huntland Drive. All proceeds, donations and adoption fees generated during Pedal for Puppies will be donated to Austin Pets Alive. Registration is $35 before Oct. 31 and $40 until the day of the ride. The course takes riders around Central Austin and is in the shape of a puppy. Visit www.pedalforpuppies.com.

Walk to Defeat ALS
The ALS Association is the only nonprofit organization fighting Lou Gehrig’s disease on every front. Walk as a team or an individual in the 5K charity walk at The Dell Diamond at 3400 E. Palm Valley Blvd. in Round Rock. Walk starts at 1:30 p.m. Proceeds go to programs and services for families challenged by ALS and global research. Visit www.walktodefeatals.org.

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2010-2011 PROSPECTIVE FAMILY EVENTS

PROSPECTIVE LOWER AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT OPEN HOUSES:
Tour groups are divided by grade: 1st, 2nd-4th, and 5th-8th
The Lower and Middle School Campus, 1112 West 31st Street
Tuesday, October 26, 9:30 a.m.
Tuesday, November 9, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, December 9, 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, January 20, 9:30 a.m.

PROSPECTIVE 6TH GRADE PARENT COFFEEs:
Tuesday, November 16, 9:00-10:30 a.m.
Thursday, January 6, 9:00-10:30 a.m.

6TH, 7TH, 8TH GRADE INFORMATION NIGHT WITH FACULTY:
Wednesday, January 12, 6:00 p.m.

PROSPECTIVE UPPER SCHOOL FAMILY INFORMATION SESSIONS:
The Upper School Campus, 5901 Southwest Parkway
Monday, October 25, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 9, 3 p.m.

Questions about our admissions events?
Lower and Middle School Admissions Office, 299-9802/dwilliams@sasaustin.org
Upper School Admissions Office, 299-9720/maycock@sasaustin.org.

Visit us anytime at www.sasaustin.org

The Junior League of Austin presents
A Christmas Affair
Enchanted
November 18 - 21, 2010
Palmer Events Center

MARKET DAYS
Thurs Noon - 9PM
Fri 10AM - 8PM
Sat 10AM - 7PM
Sun 11AM - 5PM
$12 per guest

For more information, or to purchase tickets, call 512-467-8982 ext 272 or visit www.jlaustin.org

St. David’s HealthCare
StDavids.com

We’re with you every step of the way.

Through the pace changes in your life,
St. David’s is a great resource for health issues that are of special concern to women.
Williamson County Tea Party Movement—which began in the spring of 2009—is primarily concerned with advocating for less government involvement. According to the movement’s mission statement, the group stands for three primary tenants: fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government and free markets.

“This movement is to try to get the federal government out of our lives,” Schumacher said.

Chief among the party’s more practical concerns is the combination of high taxes and high government spending. At the July 3 rally, the crowd hoisted signs with slogans including “Let me spend my money” and calls for a “fair tax” over income and sales taxes.

More recently, the movement posted a billboard—paid for through donations from several individuals—on I-35 just north of Jarrell. The billboard has a picture of four babies and reads, “Welcome to the world. You each owe the federal government $398,000.” Schumacher said the amount is how much each American would need to pay to eliminate the national debt.

And while the movement’s concerns are mostly conservative, supporters tend to play down any connection to the Republican Party.

“It’s not about Republican or Democrat,” said Pamela Zaccheus, vice chair of the Williamson County Tea Party Movement. “It’s about survival of the country.”

Even more telling, the Williamson County Tea Party Movement does not endorse candidates for office, though that may not always be the case. Schumacher said there is an internal discussion about revising that policy.

Schumacher said that any individuals interested in attending a Tea Party meeting can contact him by e-mail at wilcotaparty@gmail.com. More information can also be found at www.wilkoteapartymovement.org.

Early voting draws highest turnout in 2008 election, counties report

By Andrea Leptinsky

As Election Day nears, Travis and Williamson counties are preparing for the longest voting period of the election season—the 11 days of early voting that begins two weeks before Election Day Nov. 2.

“It’s been a trend statewide that the early voting numbers are getting better,” said Candi Zaccheus, Williamson County Elections Department GIS analyst. “A lot of times Election Day isn’t even changing any races.”

While Travis County saw a total of 403,000 ballots cast in the 2008 election, more than 300,000 of those votes occurred during early voting, alleviating some of the long lines and long waits on Election Day.

“In Travis County early voting reached an all-time high in 2008 with the presidential election,” said Mary Fero, Travis County Clerk Elections Division spokeswoman. “Seventy-five percent of the total turnout was in early voting.”

In Williamson County nearly two-thirds of the total number of ballots cast during the 2008 election—more than 150,000 votes—took place during early voting.

“(Early voting) is the biggest thing that we have to rely on when we need to start ordering supplies,” Zaccheus said. “More and more people are coming out for early voting.”

Travis County officials are gearing up for high early voter turnout by launching a “mega site” at the county’s main location at 5501 Airport Blvd.

“We will have multiple check-in stations with additional poll workers to help process people quickly,” Fero said. “Especially toward the last two to three days when the lines begin to get long, this mega site will be a good place to go.”

Early voting for both counties this year ends Oct. 29.

Nationally, there is no single “tea party” party. Pundits have largely struggled to define the movement as a whole, which emerged in 2009 largely as a response to government bailouts and took its name from the Boston Tea Party of 1773 that protested high taxation of the colonies by Britain.

“The name is an umbrella that encompasses many different groups,” Matthew Continetti wrote for the Weekly Standard June 28. “Under this umbrella, you’ll find everyone from the woolly fringe to Ron Paul supporters, from Americans for Prosperity to religious conservatives, independents, and citizens who have never been active in politics before.”

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**Statewide**

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$90 million transportation bond to go before Austin voters Nov. 2

By Bobby Longoria and Andrea Leptinsky

On Nov. 2, Austin voters will have a chance to vote on a $90 million transportation bond that includes a list of projects that will affect all of Austin and parts of the surrounding area.

The bond falls under half of the city’s total projected debt capacity and will not create any new taxes. It contains more than 40 projects including a $17.4 million boardwalk extension of the Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trail and an $8 million reconstruction of Third Street. Although the bond package has been endorsed by more than 30 local organizations, opposing groups believe the bond’s language is vague and not transparent, leaving voters with little choice on individual projects.

City Manager Marc Ott helped formulate the bond package and presented it as a multimodal approach to traffic congestion. It has several projects that will redevelop streets and highways and accommodate them for alternative transportation methods.

If the bond is approved, the city will seek bids by contractors in early 2011 for the various projects. City officials said one goal of the bond will be to recirculate the bond’s dollars back into the local economy by hiring local construction contractors.

What is a bond?

Bonds, or long-term debt sold to an investing organization, are a common way for school districts and government agencies to raise funds for expenses. In terms of municipalities, a city council must pass an ordinance declaring its intent to hold a bond election, as well as what it will go toward.

The government agency becomes the bond issuer, or the party applying for additional funds. The underwriter is the holder of the bond, typically a private bank or investment banker. When voters approve the bond, the issuer will receive a payment it can begin using in exchange for a promise or contract to pay the bond holder when the bond reaches maturity, or the actual due date.
Independent
A person who claims no party affiliation and is not registered as a Democrat or a Republican. Much campaign effort goes toward winning these voters, since they do not vote along party lines as those affiliated with a party tend to do. About one-third of voters describe themselves as independents. Independents are excluded from voting in closed primary elections, in which voters must vote within party lines.

Liberal
A liberal is someone whose beliefs are considered to be left of center on the U.S. political spectrum. Liberals tend to favor reform or progress in religion, education and socioeconomic conditions. They usually favor greater federal power to remedy social inequalities and support freedom of individual choice and behavior. The Democratic Party is generally considered to be liberal.

Libertarian Party
Liber-tarians support the rights of individuals, including liberty to property and of speech and action. They believe in minimal government involvement in the lives of individuals. The party does not condone the initiation of physical force. A Libertarian Party candidate has yet to be elected at the federal level.

Midterm election
A U.S. congressional election that occurs in the middle of a president’s four-year term in office. It determines one-third of the Senate and the complete House of Representatives. The results of the election are sometimes seen as voters’ reaction to the president’s first two years in office. This November’s election is a midterm election.

Primary election
An election in which a candidate is chosen to represent the party in the general election. Primaries are held before the general election and occur at all levels of government.

- Closed primary
A primary election in which voters must affiliate themselves with a party, and vote within those party lines.

- Open primary
A primary election in which the voter can vote for any candidate on the ballot, even crossing party lines.

Restricting
The redrawing of geographic boundaries for congressional districts. In the state legislature, the majority party usually controls the process, redrawing the boundaries to increase the party’s chances of winning future congressional elections.

Tea party
Varied local and state groups who have started a national movement protesting taxes and federal government spending practices. The tea party's name is a nod to the 1773 Boston Tea Party, during which colonists protested British spending practices.

Voting precincts
Areas within a town’s district that are separated for voting purposes. Precincts contain between 200 and 1,000 voters each. Each precinct appoints a party leader as a representative to the party committee in the city or county. The precinct’s party leader, or captain, promotes party membership and registers new voters.

Cost of campaign a factor for political candidates
By Rebecca LaFlure and Suzanne Haberman

Running for office is often an expensive undertaking, and this election season is no exception as candidates trying to reach growing numbers of Williamson County voters rack up campaign finance bills.

“Today, running for public office is a very complicated, expensive process,” said political consultant Charles Carter, who has been involved with about 60 campaigns during his 15 years in the campaign finance business.


Running for a countywide office can cost between $50,000 and $100,000, Carter said, and precinct races are only slightly less expensive.

“Those races can run anywhere from $10,000 to $80,000,” he said.

Campaign costs vary based on type of race, district size and how many candidates a district participates in. But whether in the form of direct mail ads or campaign signs planted outside supporters’ homes, the main goal of most candidates during election season is to get their message across to voters.

In a rapidly growing area such as Williamson County, raising money to communicate that message can be especially important.

“Even if you’re a longtime elected official, you have to introduce yourself to a whole new group of voters who have never heard of you before,” said Bill Fairbrother, chairman of the Williamson County Republican Party. “That message costs money.”

Candidates typically play a huge role in raising their own funds by soliciting contributions through letters and advertisements. The local party may also host fundraising events to help candidates get donations.

Luis Zervigon, first vice chair of the Williamson County Democratic Party, said while raising money to fund ads and other marketing tools is important, candidates must also be involved in the communities they represent.

“The main goal is to secure support, and this is done in a number of ways,” he said. “One way is spending money. Another way is being on boards and being out there in the community.”

Candidates do have to follow certain laws regulating the money they raise and how they spend it in their campaigns. Corporations in Texas cannot donate to a candidate’s campaign except for administrative uses, Zervigon said. Candidates are required by law to submit reports on all the financial activity related to their campaign, including income and expenditures.

Fairbrother said fundraising is not the lone deciding factor on whether a candidate wins or loses. He pointed to U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-District 31, who won the 2001 congressional primary, despite being significantly outspent by his opponent.

However, Fairbrother said generally the amount of money a candidate raises can be tied to the success of a campaign.

“If one candidate has all the money and the other candidate doesn’t have it, there’s most likely a reason for that,” he said.

Track campaign finances
Websites of organizations devoted to promoting confidence in and transparency of government provide information about campaign finances. These resources provide information on the origins of candidates’ funding and how the money is used.

www.ethics.state.tx.us
www.opensecrets.org
www.wlco.org
www.fec.gov

Political job descriptions

The most visible political offices are often hotly contested, throwing the candidates and duties of the office into the spotlight. However, some offices do not see quite the attention and, therefore, may be less understood by the public.

Comptroller of public accounts
(Pronounced con-troll-er when referring to a state position, pronounced con-troller in the private sector)

The comptroller is the chief steward of the state’s finances, acting as tax collector, chief accountant, chief revenue estimator and chief treasurer for all of state government. The Texas Comptroller’s office is the chief financial officer for the State of Texas, writing the checks, paying the bills and keeping the books for the multibillion dollar business of Texas state government.

Source: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office

The commissioner of the Texas General Land Office oversees more than 13 million acres of public land that earns hundreds of millions of dollars each year for public education in Texas. The Texas Land Commissioner also oversees Texas state veterans benefits, as well as acts as steward of the Texas coast. The Office of Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office is the oldest continuously elected position in Texas history.

Source: Texas General Land Office

Commissioner of agriculture

The commissioner of agriculture is responsible for:
• encouraging the proper development and promotion of agriculture, horticulture and other industries that grow, process or produce products in this state; • enforcing legal requirements, restrictions or prohibitions related to agricultural operations and other matters within the agency’s jurisdiction; • reporting on agricultural markets; • investigating important matters related to the viability of Texas agricultural and publishing public interest information pertaining to Texas agriculture.

Source: Texas Department of Agriculture

Railroad commissioner
A railroad commissioner has policy- and rule-making responsibilities for the commission, which, despite its name, no longer oversees Texas railroads. The commission now regulates the following:
• exploration and production of oil and natural gas, • compressed natural gas (CNG) safety, • pipeline safety, • surface mining, • gas utilities, • liquefied petroleum gas (LP-gas), • liquefied natural gas (LNG) and • propane marketing.

Source: Railroad Commission of Texas

District clerk
The district clerk keeps all records for the district court, including contract, real estate, consumer and some personal injury lawsuits, as well as divorce, child support, custody and tax collection cases. In Travis County, it also includes appeals from nearly all state administrative agencies.

Source: Travis County

County clerk
The county clerk maintains a library of records pertaining to property located within the county, as well as records pertaining to class A and B misdemeanors such as DWIs, thefts and assaults. The county clerk also files assumed names for new businesses and issues marriage licenses.

Source: Travis County

County commissioner
As a group, the commissioners and county judge are the chief policy-making and administrative branch of county government. Among their many functions, the court sets the tax rate, determines fees for many county services and determines how the collected revenues will be distributed among different county departments to provide services to the community. Each commissioner is responsible for ensuring the projects within his or her precinct are completed.

Source: Travis County

Justice of the peace
The justice of the peace handles both civil and criminal cases, including small claims court, justice court and administrative hearings (e.g. lawsuits over debts, evictions, car accidents, unlawful towing and property). Other duties include presiding over peace bond hearings, reviewing applications for mental or chemically dependent commitments, conducting uncompensated school attendance trials and giving warnings to juveniles required by law. Justices of the peace issue warrants for and conduct hearings concerning seizure and disposition of cruelty treated animals. Most justices of the peace perform marriage ceremonies as well.

Source: Travis County

Political glossary cont.

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Lynn Jones Eaton
Director Instructional Development,
UT Austin

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UT Austin

UFCU Member
Lake and that connects more schools, neighborhoods and shopping areas just strikes me as a very good investment,” he said.

The congressman has already helped secure more than $1 million in funding for the project and said he will continue to try to secure more federal funding for the trail in the coming years.

“We’re grateful to have the congressman’s personal support,” said George Cofer, executive director of Hill Country Conservancy.

With an estimated cost of $11 million to $19 million, the funding is essential to the HCC, the nonprofit coordinating construction of the trail. HCC has also received previous federal funding as well as funds and donations of services from other sources.

In addition to the recently secured $650,000, Doggett also secured $300,000 in federal funding last year through the House Appropriations Committee and $105,000 in stimulus money, which was used to construct a new trail crossing the Edwards Aquifer.

More than $500,000 in funding has come from in-kind donations from various public organizations including engineers, land design experts and lawyers.

“It’s a lot of heavy lifting done by the professional community,” Cofer said.

With HCC expecting to complete the whole trail approximately five to nine years from now, phase one of the project will be the first tangible product of the project in the near future. Completion of this phase will be made possible by funds from a $200,000 recreational trails grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The grant will be used to improve the Barton Creek Greenbelt trail with signage and restoration work and extend the trail beyond the end of the greenbelt where it meets Gaines Creek.

HCC has already routed and planned the connecting trail, which is less than a mile long, and only awaits permit approval to begin construction. HCC expects construction to begin by January and for the trail to be open to the public by early next year and no later than the summer.

HCC is excited to break ground on the project this fall and to begin taking steps toward the final vision, Cofer said.

“They are gorgeous lands to walk through,” he said. “There are recreational benefits, and there will be a big educational component to the trail system, too.”

There are some opportunities for history education with historical sites along the southern portion of the trail.

“There are some ranch lands down there that were working cattle ranches going back into the 1800s,” Cofer said. “One of the things that we want to do is to create interpretation centers at the trailheads. We want to train citizens to be trail docents and lead educational tours along the trail.”

For a slide show from Lloyd Doggett’s funding announcement on National Public Lands Day, visit impactnews.com/10133

Help with the trail

For opportunities to get involved and help with the construction of the trail visit www.hillcountryconservancy.org.

Trail landscapes

The trail will take visitors through the variety of landscapes that run through Austin including:

- the six-mile Urban Wildlands phase, which will begin in the Barton Creek Greenbelt and travel through commercial and residential areas of Sunset Valley;

- the seven-mile Urban Villages and Neighborhoods phase, which will connect many shopping and residential areas with parks and open spaces and

- the Texas Hill Country Heritage phase, which will begin at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and travel 21 miles south, traversing water quality lands set aside to protect the water quality of the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer.
How much of a factor did your Texas roots play in accepting the offer to become Capital Metro CEO?

I love Texas, and it certainly was an incentive for me. I’d never lived in Austin, though, and after reading about the No. 1 spots that Austin holds in so many different magazines, it was very appealing to, first, move back to Texas, but especially to Austin.

How does Austin’s mass-transit system compare to the one you headed in Florida?

In Florida we operated in a three-county central Florida region of 2,500 square miles, but we didn’t have a dedicated funding source. It’s extremely difficult to do long-term planning when you’re in that kind of environment. We have dedicated funding here in Austin through sales tax, and it makes a big difference.

What is an example of a unique problem you’ve spotted in Austin that you did not have at previous agencies, or are the challenges universal?

Getting people to shift from the automobile to transit is challenging in this part of the country. I think it may be a little bit easier in Austin because of the traffic congestion, the dramatic growth we’re going to be experiencing and the numbers of people who have embraced transit.

What will it take for more Austinites to give up their cars?

I think people are frustrated with congestion, the cost of parking and really want to preserve the quality of life. As the community continues to grow and as we provide better service and do a better job of informing the community about convenient service, I think you’ll see more and more people move over to transit. It’s a challenge, but I think it’s a challenge that we can be successful on.

You inherited a transportation agency that’s not in the best shape. Where does a CEO begin to make improvements?

We’re instilling a new organizational culture for how we’re going to operate services and how we’re going to address issues. I can already see that some of the change process is starting to take hold.

The newly approved budget calls for increasing fares. What are you doing to address public concerns?

There is a value to the service we provide, and we need to make sure our customers across the board pay their fair share. We created a transportation needs fund with an initial $250,000 investment so that people who really need the service and can’t afford it can pay for their trips. The funds should be up and running when the fare increase goes into effect January 2011 [pending board approval].

What is the plan for increasing ridership on the Red Line?

We will start operating midday service on the rail line starting in January. One month during the year we will have Friday night service every Friday for that month. We haven’t selected the month yet, but we’ll do a marketing campaign and test the waters on how much Friday service might be used. If it’s successful, I think we’re looking at asking the board to approve it for every Friday night the following year.

What has the public response been for the new 466 Kramer route that connects rail riders with major employers and shopping destinations?

People are excited that we have better connections out there and we think it will help get people to their final destination. We think it’s going to be a benefit; we’ve had a positive reaction to it. We have very strong ridership at our rail stations in the northernmost areas of our service area.

You have mentioned an increase in transparency among your goals for improving Capital Metro. What can the public expect?

Right now, you can get every single audit that we’ve done for the last five years online. You can get all the audits that have been done. We have a very strong presence on Facebook and Twitter. If there are other ideas that come up, we want to hear them, and we’re more than happy to do what we can.

What improvements is Capital Metro considering for Southwest Austin?

Austin Community College bought some property in the southwest area, and we want to make sure we do a good job of serving that area. There’s been discussion about developing a town center at Oak Hill at the Y, which would be a great opportunity for good transit service and possibly a transit facility, so those are potential opportunities in the future.
Gardens
CONTINUED FROM 1

offers training and guidance.
SFC invests this kind of energy in community gardens because it is an all-around healthy choice where people can grow their own food without pesticides or harsh chemicals, and they can help the environment by eliminating the fuel required to transport their food across long distances, Guffey said. The gardens can also build community by providing people with a space to interact that they would not normally have, she said.

“IT’s been a real benefit,” said Betty Dunn, co-founder and treasurer of Sunset Valley Community Organic Garden, a community garden in Southwest Austin.

“It has developed community among people that didn’t live next door to one another ... and I think that’s what it’s all about,” she said.

The idea for the Manchaca community garden came from the Eco-Faith Initiative, a group within the church that focuses on environmental stewardship. The group began in early 2009 with a brainstorming session among approximately 50 church members who produced more than 200 ideas on how to foster sustainability in the church and the community. Group members narrowed the ideas down to three that they wanted to enact immediately, including eliminating Styrofoam from church waste, instituting a recycling facility and building an outdoor education facility, which ultimately evolved into the idea for the community garden.

Having the gardens as a gathering place for adults and children in the community and putting people in touch with nature is one of the primary goals of the gardens, Palecek said. Palecek, whose children help him raise chickens and grow produce on their own land, said that passing the ideal of a homesteading-type lifestyle onto the next generation is his passion.

“That’s what we want to do here, bring up the next generation growing gardens instead of going to fast-food restaurants,” he said.

The group also hopes to foster a sense of the wider community through the gardens by growing food that can be donated to the church’s food pantry, which supplies food to people in need in the community. The four pilot plots planted by Eco-Faith Aug. 15 will be used to grow food for the food pantry. Those using the other plots will also be asked to donate 10 percent of their food to the pantry or to a community member who needs it.

“We wanted to provide a place for people that like the outdoors and want to grow food, but we also want to try to push people toward community,” Palecek said.

The Eco-Faith Initiative expects to have 14 beds containing two plots each and measuring 3 feet by 25 feet ready by the end of December, providing approximately 1,000 feet of gardening space. It will add another 1,000 feet each season to have 4,000 feet of gardening space available one year from now.

The completed gardens will accommodate gardens for 120 families, who will pay between $20 and $40 per 18-week season in the fall and spring for a plot measuring 3 feet by 12.5 feet. The fee will help offset water and other costs associated with maintaining the gardens, which will be 100 percent organic.

The group also has plans for the approximately 2-acre grounds surrounding the gardening plots: a renovated gazebo adjacent to existing picnic tables and the pavilion where children play basketball, an orchard, a rainwater tank and a possible future trail around the property.

For more information on volunteering or signing up for a plot, call the MUMC office at 282-7274 or visit www.manchacaumc.org.

Bill Palecek, co-vice chair of the Eco-Faith Initiative at Manchaca United Methodist Church, helped direct the launch of the community gardens on the approximate 2 acres behind church.

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Residential Real Estate | Neighborhoods at a Glance

**78749 - Maple Run**

Maple Run is a wooded neighborhood near the greenbelt and other popular outdoor areas such as Dick Nichols Park. Sunset Valley shopping center is nearby with easy access to MoPac.

**Schools**
- Boone Elementary School
- Covington Middle School
- Crockett High School

**Featured homes**

8811 Ampezo Trail
4 Br/2.5 Ba | 2,570 sq. ft.
Agent: Samantha Soletti
Eanes Properties, Inc.
$239,900 263-7333

8102 Nairn Drive
3 Br/2.5 Ba | 2,279 sq. ft.
Agent: Joseph Lazeren
Team West Real Estate
$235,000 740-5639

8505 Copano Drive
4 Br/2.5 Ba | 1,924 sq. ft.
Agent: Sheila Fontenot
Coldwell Banker United
$200,000 797-3534

8614 Coastal Dr
3 Br/2 Ba | 1,532 sq. ft.
Agent: Patricia Vonne-LaRoche
PRIMA Realty & Investments
$165,500 461-6641

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**Market Data**

**On the market** (Sept. 1–30)

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**Monthly home sales**

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## Residential Real Estate

### Property Listings

**Southwest Austin**

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<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
<td>426-9800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78749</td>
<td>Maple Run</td>
<td>7724 Navarro Place</td>
<td>4br/2ba</td>
<td>$185,000</td>
<td>1,726</td>
<td>Regal Thronton</td>
<td>Austin City Living</td>
<td>825-3573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Additional residential real estate listings** | For additional residential real estate listings, visit more.impactnews.com/10112

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