Development project near Circle C kicks off, available land becomes more sought-after

By Kate Hull

Standard Pacific, a national homebuilding company, began construction Nov. 12 on its 100-acre portion of the Avaña residential development located at the southeast corner of Escarpment Boulevard and Toll 45 SW. Standard Pacific purchased 163 lots within the 1,000 acre project in early November.

Over the past year, the project has filed for foreclosure, changed ownership and been threatened by the unstable market.

“Our portion of the property is part of the Circle C homeowners association,” said John Bohnen, vice president of land acquisition, planning and development for Standard Pacific. “Southwest Austin is an extremely constrained submarket that is highly desirable, which is why we are excited about this opportunity.”

Currently, the market for residential and commercial development projects in the Southwest Austin community is very sought-after by builders because of location and demand but is extremely limited in terms of available land.

Year in review: St. David’s expansion, Tarlton 360 Townhomes, 76 neighborhood code violations

By Kate Hull and Niamh Marnell

Key expansions, new developments and land-use questions marked 2010 in Southwest Austin.

Usable land is becoming scarce, but projects are still pushing forward from the Tarlton 360 project nearing approval to break ground to the large-scale expansion at St. David’s South Austin Medical Center, and the deadline is fast-approaching for Fairview neighborhood residents to receive permits from the City of Austin for violations given in April.

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Seton Southwest Hospital
A member of the Seton Family of Hospitals
seton.net/southwest
When I was a child, my two brothers and I used to have a pact: The first one to awaken Christmas morning had to wake up the rest of the family before he went into the living room to see his presents. Of course there were no rules as to how to do this, so it usually involved an opening of the door, a loud yell and footsteps sprinting quickly down the hallway.

While the excitement about Christmas may feel a bit different as we get older, I think it still can be exciting for us in our own adult way. I hope our years of growing up have taught us that it feels more rewarding to give, rather than receive. I feel that child-like excitement myself when I watch my mother open that gift I purchased for her. There is a special rush of joy that occurs when you watch loved ones open the gifts you chose especially for them.

If this sounds remotely familiar to you, there is no doubt you and I have lived a blessed life. Visit our 2010 Volunteer Guide on Page 16 to browse through a list of local organizations that could use your help. By offering a donation of time, money, food or clothing, someone in need might also be able to partake in that child-like Christmas excitement that they otherwise may not have had.

From all of us at Community Impact Newspaper, we wish you and your family a very happy and healthy holiday season.
1 Brodie Ranch Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center opened Nov. 12 at 2101 Frate Barker Road and held a grand-opening celebration Dec. 2. The new nursing home facility specializes in supporting those with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. “We have 17 residents and are adding up to 12 more each week,” said Blake Sakow, project manager. Call 444-5627.

2 A new dental practice, A Summer Smile, opened Nov. 1 at 8656 Hwy. 71 W., Bldg. D, Ste. 100 in the Cuesta Centre. The practice offers general dentistry services from Dr. Summer Rydel and is open Mon.–Thu. 8 a.m.–5 p.m., and Fri. by appointment. Call 382-1969 or visit www.youraustintxdentist.com.

3 The Holiday Store, a seasonal decoration and gifts store, opened in November at Community Renaissance Market, 6800 Westgate Blvd., just in time for the holiday season. Owned by Jeannie Manchaca and Virgil Hernandez, the shop is open Wed.–Thu. 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri. 11 a.m.–7 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.–7 p.m. and Sun. 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Visit www.communityrenaissancemarket.com.

4 Now serving Austin and surrounding areas, Osprey Pool and Spa Service, a licensed residential pool and spa service, repair and cleaning company, opened at...
A second location of Phil’s Icehouse opened Dec. 1 at the new Austinville 78704 development, 2901 S. Lamar Blvd. The restaurant is an extension of Amy’s Ice Cream, and serves burgers and fries. Burgers are made classically as well as atypically such as The Jardin Burger, a flat-top grilled burger with ham and bacon. The restaurant has a selection of beer, wine and milkshakes. Call 707-8704 or visit www.philsicehouse.com.

David Ansel, owner of The Soup Peddler, and Matt Shook, owner of Daily Juice, opened their new shop Juicebox & Soup Peddler Dec. 6 in the Austinville 78704 retail center at 2901 S. Lamar Blvd. The shop is the flagship retail location for The Soup Peddler and the first combined shop for Ansel and Shook. Call 444-7687 or visit www.souppeddler.com/juicebox.

In early January. The restaurant is an extension of Amy’s Ice Cream, and serves burgers and fries. Burgers are made classically as well as atypically such as The Jardin Burger, a flat-top grilled burger with ham and bacon. The restaurant has a selection of beer, wine and milkshakes. Call 707-8704 or visit www.philsicehouse.com.

Austine Pizza opened its newest location at 9900 S. 1-35, Bldg. M, Ste. 100 in the Southpark Meadows shopping center in late November. The 12th location for the local pizza chain, Austin's Pizza is open daily 11 a.m.–11 p.m. Call 795-8888 or visit www.austinspizza.com.

Owned by Kyle Ashley and Ben Sutterfield, Green Building Energy Services opened in late October and provides energy-efficiency services for homeowners and small businesses in Southwest and Central Austin. “We try to accomplish three things; reduce the impact on the environment, reduce energy consumption in the home or building and try to reduce utility costs for owners,” Ashley said. The office is located at 3709 Promontory Point Drive, but services are mainly offered out of office. Call 568-4147 or visit www.gbenergyservices.com.

Out of the final four choices, the new ACC Riverbat received more than 40 percent of 4,000 votes cast by the public and will be featured on ACC merchandise in the Austin area.

National Asian stir-fry chain Genghis Grill will open its first Austin location at 4477 S. Lamar Blvd., Ste. 400 in early January. The restaurant is an interactive style of dining where customers build their own stir-fry bowl that is then cooked over an open grill. Visit www.genghisgrill.com.

Since 1993, Oak Hill Printing and Copy Center, 6112 Hwy. 290 W., has offered printing, graphic design and other services. Owned by Mike Amaral and his wife, Oak Hill Printing has now expanded those services by adding the latest direct imaging technology. Call 892-3762 or visit www.oakhillprinting.com.

Relocations
Havertys, a national furniture store chain, will be moving in early 2011 from 4301 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. 800 to the building next door where Stein Mart is currently located at 4301 W. William Cannon Drive, Bldg B, Ste. 700. Call 358-8646 or visit www.havertys.com.

Name Change
Formerly CK Thai Cuisine, Im Thai Cuisine has officially changed its name and redesigned the restaurant with a renovated dining area, new staff, extended menu, kid-friendly room and other added amenities. The restaurant is located at 5207 Brodie Lane, Ste. 200 and open Mon.–Sun. 11 a.m.–10 p.m. Call 892-2744 or visit www.imthaiacuisine.com.

Closing the Doors
Lacks Stores Inc., a home furnishing company, has filed for bankruptcy and is closing more than 30 stores nationwide, including three in Austin. The South Austin location at 4001 S. Lamar Blvd. will be closing in mid-to late January, a store manager said. Call 448-0892 or visit www.lacks.com.

The Austin area Japanese-inspired restaurant Zen Japanese Food Fast closed its southwest location at 5217 Brodie Lane in Sunset Valley. The owners, who have three restaurants in the city, are looking for a different location. Visit www.eatzen.com.

National fashion, home decor and seasonal merchandise store Stein Mart will close its location at 4301 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. B700 at the end of December. There are two other locations in the Austin area, and the store will not be relocating. Visit www.steintrmart.com.

The sister restaurant of local Mexican restaurant Manuel’s, Changos Taqueria closed its South Austin location at 3005 S. Lamar Blvd., Ste. 116 in November. The second location on Guadalupe Street is still open for business. Visit www.changos.com.

In the News

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In the News

South by Southwest announced in late November that it added the SXSW Technology Summit to its list of festival events for 2011. The summit, scheduled for March 16–17, will be open to all registered badgeholders and will bring together industry leaders from around the world for panel sessions on trends and usage patterns in various parts of the world. The SXSW Technology Summit will also offer a series of workshops that provide higher-level tips and analysis, allowing digital professionals and Web experts to take their career to the next level. Visit www.sxsw.com.

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

K&N Management, which owns Mighty Fine Burgers and Rudy’s Bar-B-Q, is the first local company to receive the national award for quality and business achievements.
Great Shopping
Sunset Valley offers three shopping centers to meet all of your Holiday shopping needs—clothing, jewelry, shoes, party supplies, sporting goods, groceries, home décor, pet needs, and more.

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Shop and stay in Sunset Valley, conveniently located at Brodie Lane and Hwy 290.

SUNSET VALLEY
Brodie & 290

Great Eating
With over fifteen restaurants and eateries, Sunset Valley offers a great variety of food choices—from fine dining to food on the go and catering, we have it all!

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Christmas Eve Services
Friday, December 24th

5 PM • Children Tell the Bethlehem Story
7 PM • Traditional Service with Candlelight
9 PM • Contemporary Service with Candlelight & Communion
11 PM • Candlelight & Communion Service

Hwy 290, just west of the Oak Hill “Y” (290 & 71), directly across from the ACC Pinnacle Building
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17–19 Holiday Wine Trail
The 27 Hill Country wineries, including the Duchman Winery, will host a guided tour of all the wineries. Participants will collect Christmas ornaments at each winery and use them to decorate a grapevine wreath at the end of the event. The wineries will be decorated with Christmas lights, and participants will taste selected wines at each vineyard and receive a 15 percent discount with the purchase of three or more bottles of wine. Tickets do not include the price of the tastings. Fri., Sun., hours varying at each location. • 60 866-621-9463 • www.texaswinetrail.com

25 City of Austin 44th Annual Zilker Holiday Tree
Austin residents are invited to come celebrate the holiday season and visit the Zilker Holiday Tree. The holiday tradition has been in Austin since 1965. The tree stands 155 feet tall with more than 3,000 lights shining nightly. Vendors will be selling holiday treats. Other activities will be available for families. • Lit nightly from dusk to midnight – Free • Zilker Park, 2100 Barton Springs Road • www.ci.austin.tx.us/zilker/zhtree.htm

Jan. 22
By Kate Hull
The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is hosting its annual Tree Talk Winter Walk to help local residents prepare for the spring gardening season. The event has been going on for more than a decade at the center and allows visitors to explore the gardens and trails of the center and learn about the benefits of growing Texas trees.
Visitors can participate in various guided walks led by local tree experts and arborists and will receive an exclusive opportunity to ask questions about native tree plants with professionals. Staff members from Texas Forest Service will also discuss wildfire awareness and the Urban-Wildland Interface.
After the discussions and guided tours, a special shop in the courtyard will feature trees and shrubs on sale for the event as well as select items in the store. The Wildflower Center will also be selling a specialty grown plant while supplies last.
The event is free and runs 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Jan. 22. The guided walks will be held 11 a.m.–2 p.m. For the month of January, admission to the Wildflower Center is free as well. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. Call 232-0100 or visit www.wildflower.org.

December

15–24 Holiday Photos with Santa
Children and families are invited to stop by the Hill Country Galleria to visit and take a holiday picture with Santa. • Mon.–Fri. 4–8 p.m., Sat. and Sun. noon–8 p.m., Christmas Eve noon–6 p.m. Free • Hill Country Galleria, 12700 Hill Country Blvd. • 263-0001 • www.hillcountrygalleria.com

15–24 Armadillo Christmas Bazaar
Both local and national vendors and artists will be featured at the 34th annual Armadillo Christmas Bazaar, an Austin holiday shopping tradition. The event will have 29 live musical performances throughout the week. The bazaar will be open on Christmas Eve for last-minute shoppers. • Daily 11 a.m.–11 p.m. • Free • Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Road 447-1605 • www.armadillobazaar.com

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January

27 2011–12 Economic Forecast

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.
Sarah Kerver
frozen produce, spices, flour, items, including fresh and a variety of local and imported store in October of 2009, sells opened the South Asian grocery triot could want. Owner Suresh everything a South Asian expa-

is a grocery store that aims to West William Cannon Drive Hollywood Video building on need for South Asian products in Southwest Austin. Suresh Sitapara, who was born and raised in India, opened Man Pasand Grocery in October of 2009 to fill a

...sitapara said. man pasand grocery offers items that customers cannot find in any of the other grocery and convenience Austin residents, Man Pasand store options for Southwest other stores, Sitapara said.

"We have success here because we are a totally different kind of grocery store," he said.

The store carries many fresh items that American customers may not be familiar with such as guavar, a type of green bean; snake gourds, an unusually shaped Asian gourd; and curry leaves, the hard-to-find leaves of the curry tree that are used in many dishes. Approximately 10 percent of the produce comes from local sources.

"The curry leaves are grown by someone in Mumbai," said Sitapara. "Local people bring a lot of gourds as well, because they also grow easily in backyards. Anyone who has extra [from their yards] can bring it here and sell it to me," Sitapara said.

Man Pasand’s success is also due in part to the deearth of South Asian grocery stores in Southwest Austin. Sitapara, who lives in Pflugerville, decided to start the business in the area for precisely that reason.

"People in Southwest Austin really needed this store. They were talking about how it would save them time and money because they wouldn’t have to drive 15 to 20 miles north to the Indian grocery stores in Northwest Austin anymore."

About 70 percent of Sitapara's customers are South Asian, he said, but about 30 percent are American and the number of American customers is growing. Americans are particularly drawn in by the frozen dinners, Sitapara said, because they may like Indian dishes but don’t know how to cook them and also because the ready-made meals are convenient.

The frozen section is one of Man Pasand’s greatest assets, Sitapara said. "No other Indian grocery stores in Austin have a 52-foot-long walk-in cooler, so other stores cannot carry as much inventory or variety as we can."

Customer Jayshree Rajender, a Southwest Austin resident who grew up in India, says the items throughout the rest of the store are a big draw as well.

"Most of the stuff is pretty current. I double-check with my mom in India and she would suggest a new product that came out in India that I should try. I let [the owner] know, and next time he has it in stock," she said.

By Niannah Marnell
Hidden behind the former Hollywood Video building on West William Cannon Drive is a grocery store that aims to supply Southwest Austin with everything a South Asian expatriot could want. Owner Suresh Sitapara, an native of India who opened the South Asian grocery store in October of 2009, sells a variety of local and imported items, including fresh and frozen produce, spices, flour, instant mixes, frozen dinners, snacks, English candy, Beverly movies, herbal supplements and health and natural beauty products.

Although there are many other grocery and convenience store options for Southwest Austin residents, Man Pasand Grocery offers items that customers cannot find in any of the other stores, Sitapara said.

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The store carries many fresh items that American customers may not be familiar with such as guavar, a type of green bean; snake gourds, an unusually shaped Asian gourd; and curry leaves, the hard-to-find leaves of the curry tree that are used in many dishes. Approximately 10 percent of the produce comes from local sources.

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Man Pasand Grocery
3601 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. 750 and 850
892-9600

Rajender is a regular customer who has been shopping at Man Pasand since it opened a year ago.

“I am a die-hard fan of this store. It is just fabulous. The owner has a great attitude. He is not about short-term profit but about keeping his customers happy,” Rajender said.

Homemade exotic cuisine
For those customers willing to venture beyond the frozen Indian dinners into the world of South Asian cooking, Suresh Sitapara is ready to help. Many customers come to him with the name of a dish from their favorite Indian restaurant but with no idea how to begin making it; he said. He keeps a recipe book at the counter for such occasions and is happy to offer cooking tips and help customers shop for the essential ingredients.

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The owners of Full English Cafe say they are less concerned with English authenticity than bringing simple, fresh British fare to the South Austin community.

Shadrach Smith and his wife, Alice Bachini-Smith, a United Kingdom transplant, opened the cafe Oct. 1 to offer bangers, butties and British BLTs to the Southwest Austin community.

After three years of working the Barton Creek, Sunset Valley and The Triangle farmers markets, the couple found a permanent home for their business at 2000 Southern Oaks Drive and filled it with a patchwork collection of couches, kitschy tables and chairs and decor Shadrach Smith describes as "Brit-cool."

Although the cafe oozes Britain, its heart is most certainly Austin. Not only does it remain a staple at all three farmers markets, but the cafe also supports Austin's all-things-local mentality by taking advantage of local producers for free-range pork, farm-fresh eggs from cage-free hens and organic ingredients for their sweets. Smith said they also produce almost no food waste.

"Keeping money circulating in our area and supporting local workers is important," Smith said. "It comes down to quality: the fresher the better."

Smith said patrons flock to the restaurant on Saturdays and Sundays for their alternatives to breakfast tacos called butties ($5), which are pastries filled with either lamb with red wine and rosemary, English cheddar or a traditional beef. Sweet treats include baked oat bars called flapjacks, fairy cakes, rock buns and various shortbreads.

"The plates usually come back clean," he said.

The all-day full English breakfast ($8) includes British-style bacon, homemade sausage and fresh vegetables.

By Taylor Short

Popular items:
- All-day full English breakfast includes British bacon, a homemade banger, mushrooms, roasted tomato, a fried egg and toast ($8)
- Full English breakfast on a bun ($8)
- Butties and sandwiches: Sausage with caramelized onion, bacon, fried egg or BLT ($3–$8)
- Iced and hot coffees, Tetleys tea, Earl Grey and other "fancy" teas ($1.50–$2.50)
- Flapjack: Sweetened and baked oat bars ($1.50)

Co-owner Shadrach Smith said he and his wife, Alice, want to share their favorite British foods with the Austin community.

The all-day full English breakfast ($8) includes British-style bacon, homemade sausage and fresh vegetables.
Someday, I will get into a new home.

Someday I will buy a new home. Sound familiar? If your current home is stopping you from buying the new home that you want, we may be able to help. We’ve assisted customers that have had homes to sell many times, and we may be able to help you too. Let’s talk!

We want to see how big your BUT is! Maybe you need your lease to end at your current place or you’re not sure you can afford another payment right now. Visit us now and see how we can help.
Mixed-use development utilizing ordinance revision moves forward

Tarlton 360 Townhomes, a 16-acre mixed-use development project near Barton Creek Square Mall, is nearing completion for approval to break ground as the first project to utilize a 2007 city ordinance allowing for redevelopment over Edwards Aquifer.

“City Council unanimously approved our project under the Leffingwell Ordinance—the revision to the Save Our Springs Ordinance,” said John Burnham, vice president of investments for Cypress Real Estate Advisors, which owns the property. “There has been a lot of support along the way for the project.”

Tarlton 360 Townhomes will have 89 townhomes and 140 condo units on the site as well as 80,000 square feet of office and retail space. Pending final approval of the site plan, Burnham said the project is slated to break ground in early 2011.

Cypress Real Estate Advisors purchased the property in early summer and will be the first to utilize a 2007 city ordinance that applies to redeveloping properties over the Edwards Aquifer. The project’s success would mean success for the 2007 ordinance and perhaps pave the way for other environmentally sensitive redevelopment projects.

“The project has been approved by the city regarding the environmental amendment and has a few more steps left,” said Sue Welch, case manager with the Planning and Development Review Department.

The final steps for the real estate company include getting the site plan approved from the Zoning and Planning Department and from the Travis County Commissioners Court because the property lies within a Hill Country Corridor, meaning it is 1,000 feet from a major area highway, Welch said.

“The Save Our Springs Ordinance was adopted by Austin City Council in 1992 and applies to new developments over the Edwards Aquifer but did not make any allowances for redevelopment projects. The ordinance puts restrictions on impervious cover on sites in Southwest and West Austin. The allowance for impervious cover, which refers to building or parking lot surfaces that do not allow water to pass through to the ground to reach the aquifer, ranges from 15 to 25 percent depending on the location in relation to the aquifer’s recharge zone. The ordinance also requires large water controls, such as ponds or catchment systems, so the water can be redirected to the soil.

Creation of the new amendment in 2007 arose to encourage redevelopment of existing properties while adding measures to improve water quality and watershed protection.

Burnham said the City of Austin will begin construction on a waterline project in early January that will upgrade the water service and existing pipeline to a larger line benefitting area residents as well as his property.

South Austin homes that received violations have until Dec. 31 to obtain permits with city

Residents in the Fairview neighborhood who received code violations from the City of Austin in early 2010 have until Dec. 31 to obtain a permit and begin taking appropriate actions on their homes.

A top concern for some homeowners was the added issue of their homes lying on the 100-year floodplain, which has extra rules for compliance with the city. However, Austin City Council granted the 19 homes a floodplain variance in August, which is a grant of relief from the requirements in floodplain management regulations. The variance is only one step in receiving an approved permit.

Of the initial 76 homes that received violations, 53 cases remain open in the Code Compliance Department’s database and are yet to be granted permits.

“Once a permit is approved, the applicant must then take the correct measures to fix the property,” said Melissa Martinez with the City Code Compliance Department.

The issues with the homes included garages converted into living spaces without a permit and carports too close to the street, a violation of city code. The problem was that many of the garage conversions and carports were created 30 to 40 years ago, before many residents even owned their homes.

The Cathedral of Junk owned by Yince Hanneman was among the houses that received violations, but as of Nov. 19, Hanneman and the City of Austin reached an agreement that will allow the more than 40-ton steel art installation located at 4422 Lareina Drive to remain on the property. The permit states that Hanneman must maintain the property’s use as a single-family residence and cannot promote the structure as an event venue or tourist attraction. On-site events can be held, however, with the proper permits prior to the event.

Once the remaining properties receive permits, they will have 180 days to complete the necessary changes and then be issued a certificate of compliance with the city.

Read the original stories and more information at more.impactnews.com/10911
Texas House districts before and after 2001 redistricting

Texas' 2010–11 budget

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Biennial total $128 billion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prisons</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>$3.84 billion</td>
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<td>Highways</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Property tax cut</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>$15.36 billion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K–12 education</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>$17.12 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>K–12 education</td>
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<td>$17.12 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other education</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>$7.68 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
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Highways

Property tax cut

Higher education

K–12 education

Other education

Federal

Estimated 2009 percent change in county population

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<thead>
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<th>Percent change</th>
<th>County</th>
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<tr>
<td>-20.0 to -32.8</td>
<td>Travis County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-40.0 to 88.9</td>
<td>Williamson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Legislative Redistricting Board

by Andrea Leptinsky

As Texas’ next legislative session starts Jan. 11, two topics will be looming over at the Capitol: the budget and redistricting.

According to state legislators, the outcome of the 2010 elections have drastically changed the anticipated outcome of both.

"Clearly we had a huge change in the makeup of the House," said Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin. "We know very little about these new people coming into the Legislature."

The 82nd Legislature includes two new senators and 37 new representatives, all of whom will likely to need to be educated on topics, including mental health funding, border security and water quality issues. The fact that some previous legislators who worked on these issues are now gone results in a significant loss of "institutional memory," Howard said.

Of the 150 representatives in the House, 99 of them are Republican, creating one of the largest party majorities in state history. Republicans won 22 seats from the Democrats in the November elections.

Aside from balancing the budget and redistricting, the next Legislature can expect to see some new bills brought up as a result of the majority shift, said Steve Munisteri, chairman of the Republican Party of Texas.

"I'm 99 percent convinced we'll see a voter ID bill ... and one on border security," he said. "And the Republican Party would lose total support if they raised taxes." Ironing out the budget

The 2011 budget includes $80 billion in general revenue funding that goes toward health and human services, education and other state agencies. With health and human services and education taking up roughly 80 percent of the budget, only $16 billion is left to fund highways, prisons, mental health services and other state needs.

Though some lawmakers say budget cuts will require cutting "into bone," the actual projected shortfall will not be fully known until January. Current projections estimate the shortfall could be as much as $28 billion.

In a November meeting of the Legislative Budget Board, Republican Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and House Speaker Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, agreed Texas will be in the hole by at least $4 billion based on lower-than-expected sales tax revenue and the results of fiscal year 2010.

Some legislators say the restructing of the franchise tax is one reason why the state may be in for a large shortfall. The tax is defined as "a privilege imposed on corporations, including banking corporations and limited liability companies that are chartered in Texas." Out-of-state corporations that do business in Texas are also taxed.

In 2006, legislators changed the franchise tax's base, lowered its rate and extended coverage to active businesses receiving liability protection, under state law. The move was projected to bring in $6.8 billion in additional revenue in 2009, but instead only brought in $3 billion, said Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, D-San Antonio.

Redistricting Texas

Once population numbers are released next year by the U.S. Census Bureau, legislators will also face the task of redistricting, which is expected to create an additional three or four congressional districts based on population growth.

State legislatures are required to redistrict every 10 years, after census numbers are released. But they are not limited to doing so just once a decade, as shown in 2003 when Republicans led a redistricting effort that split Travis County into three districts. Steve Bickerstaff, a professor at The University of Texas School of Law, said he expects 2011’s redistricting initiative to be no different than those of decades past, especially now that Republicans have the majority in the Legislature.

“From my standpoint, it’s not going to likely be different in terms of partisan outcome because the Legislature is unlikely to adopt redistricting plans for the House and Senate,” Bickerstaff said. "Instead, as in three of the past four post-census redistricting sessions, efforts to remap boundaries will fall upon the Legislative Redistricting Board, composed of the lieutenant governor, comptroller of public accounts, commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, speaker of the House and the attorney general. The LRB has the final vote in redistricting when the Legislature fails to pass its own redistricting plan, or its plans are found to be invalid."

“The shape of your government for the next 10 years will be defined by what happens in a process in which you are not included,” said Harvey Kronberg, editor of “The Quorum Report,” a publication on state politics. "Every two years, voters get to pick their elected officials. Every 10 years, public officials get to pick who voters for them.”
City of Austin

City going forward with new emergency traffic signals in Southwest Austin

The City of Austin approved an interlocal agreement with the Travis County Emergency Services District at the City Council meeting Nov. 18 to go forward with the installation of emergency vehicle pre-emption systems at various traffic signals in Austin. The new systems will change the traffic signals at intersections to allow oncoming emergency vehicles to receive the right of way during an emergency. The agreement will help to reduce response time to emergencies in Southwest Austin from the surrounding areas.

Austin's Planning and Development Review Department launches website

To improve transparency within its operations, the City of Austin Planning and Development Review Department has launched a new website to offer residents easier access to planning and zoning resources, boards and commissions updates, geographic information system data and current planning studies.

At www.cityofaustin.org/planning, users can search for development activity by address, project name, permit or case numbers and permit type.

The site also includes information on departmental news and events that can be e-mailed to subscribers automatically.

City approves $299 million for water treatment plant construction

Austin City Council authorized the negotiations of several contracts with MWH Constructors Inc. Nov. 18 related to the construction of Water Treatment Plant 4 that will total approximately $299 million. The items were approved 4–3 after several hours of public comment.

Austin Water Utility Director Greg Mezaros said the authorization will help the project remain on time and on budget by allowing the utility to complete contract negotiations without having to return to council for approval for each smaller contract during the course of construction.

Council's authorization goes against the recommendations of the Water and Wastewater Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board, which requested additional environmental studies from the utility that have not been completed, said Eric Deal, president of The Mountain Neighborhood Association near the Spicewood Springs shaft site.

"I am not against developing. I know Austin is going to grow—I am for accountability—Austin Water Utility and City Council, in particular, are not being accountable to Austin," Deal said.

Councilwoman Sheryl Cole, who voted for the authorization, requested that the Austin Water Utility report quarterly to the Audit and Finance committee, composed of five councilmembers.

"The issue was a solid recognition that when we embark on a project of this magnitude, it costs money, and we have to be as transparent as possible," Cole said. "Although we might disagree about the timing of this plant, we are firmly committed to keeping the city on solid financial footing."

Environmental work for the treatment plant is expected to be an ongoing process.

Council accepts grant funding to support work with youth, gangs

The City Council voted Nov. 18 to accept grant funds to provide juvenile casework to support the Austin Police Department Gang Intervention Team. These funds, provided by the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office, will allow the police department's gang intervention coordinator and a designated caseworker to work directly with gang-involved youth.

Financial information, documents now available to review online

Austin Finance Online launched in early November as a website that provides a clear view of city financial documents and contracts. By visiting the website, users can view purchasing contracts, unclaimed property and financial documents.

The new eCheckbook feature at www.cityofaustin.org/financeonline allows users to browse through all city contracts, search for specific contracts using keywords and view city payments for goods and services.

Additionally, users can visit the website for financial updates from all city departments. A link is also provided on the site for users who would like to make a public information request.

California-based company awarded funding for new operations center

The City of Austin announced Nov. 23 it will offer a new economic development incentive proposal that will provide $900,000 to SunPower Corporation in order to establish an operations center in Texas.

SunPower, a manufacturer of solar cells, panels, inverters and imaging detectors, said it will create nearly 450 jobs to staff the new center over a 10-year period. If approved in mid-December by City Council, the operations center would provide average salary wages at $70,000 a year.

“Clean technology job growth is important to our future,” Mayor Lee Leffingwell said. “This is the type of industry we aim to attract and the kind of jobs we want in Austin.”

The company would also receive a $2.5 million investment from the Texas Enterprise Fund to build the operations center.

SunPower is a publicly traded company based in San Jose, Calif., that was founded in 1985.

Upcoming Austin City Council meetings

Dec. 16
Jan. 13 and 27
Sessions begin at 10 a.m.
Austin City Hall, 301 W. Second St.
Meetings are broadcast on municipal TV cable Channel 6 and on 88.7 FM radio, starting at 11 a.m. Meetings are streamed live and available for reviewing on the Channel 6 website, www.ci.austin.tx.us/chann6. The video is also viewable by agenda item and presentation. Visit www.ci.austin.tx.us/council for more information, including transcripts, schedules, agendas and archived video.

Upcoming Sunset Valley City Council meetings

Dec. 21, 6 p.m.
Sessions begin at 6 p.m.
Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Road
Meetings are streamed live and available for reviewing on the Sunset Valley website. Visit www.sunsetvalley.org for more information, including transcripts, schedules, agendas and archived video.

City of Austin's SunPower proposal

$233: Amount awarded per job created, not to exceed $104,850 annually
$901,710: Maximum amount of incentive that can be awarded to SunPower

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We invite you to come and visit us in our new “home”!
Questions arose over City of Austin water quality Nov. 9 at Travis County Commissioners Court when Dr. Paul Connett, professor emeritus of chemistry at St. Lawrence University in New York, persuaded the court to take a serious look at Austin’s fluoridation policy. Attention to the issue has been growing since Austin’s Environmental Board requested an independent study from City Council in August 2009.

Water fluoridation is a policy endorsed by many national and global health organizations, most notably the American Dental Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC promotes community water fluoridation and in some states contributes funding and operational support for the practice, according to its website.

Controversy surrounding the practice has grown in recent years, however, as an increasing number of scientists and health professionals argue that fluoride in drinking water causes many negative health effects when looked at beyond dental health to the impact on the whole body.

“She very alarming data has been revealed today,” said Travis County Commissioner Ron Davis at the Nov. 9 meeting. “I feel that we should do something as a governmental body ... What I’m hearing here is that fluoride is another type of situation that may have been proven to pose a problem through drinking water.”

Davis said he would pass along a resolution drafted by Dr. Neil Carman, the Sierra Club Clean Air Program director who also spoke at the meeting, to Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services for assessment before deciding whether to send the resolution to the Austin City Council. The resolution urges the mayor and City Council to fully investigate and consider ceasing fluoridation of city water.

Dr. Philip Huang, HHS medical director, said he has not yet seen the request from Travis County but, without giving further details, said he would “respond appropriately.”

Huang also said HHS, which was one of the city departments responsible for responding to the environmental board’s request in December 2009, “responded appropriately,” providing the environmental board with the requested information. The board received a three-page report in response that contained no apparent research, yet concluded that fluoride levels were within safe limits, according to CDC guidelines, said Mary Gay Maxwell, chairwoman of the environmental board.

“We had enough concern about it and enough interest in it to forward it to the council, but it wasn’t taken seriously,” Maxwell said.

Huang responded to Maxwell’s comments. “We have looked at and done a conscientious review of the literature and information that is available,” he said. “I think we feel comfortable with the recommendations of the CDC, the ADA and others on this issue.”

The CDC decides Austin’s water policy
A change in Austin’s fluoridation policy requires two councilmembers to put it on the agenda and four to vote it out. Although the public voted to fluoridate in the early 1970s, the fluoridation referendum was put on the agenda by the council and not by public request, so another referendum is not required for the policy to change. But city and county officials who could urge the city to look into the issue and the members of City Council themselves all look to HHS for guidance on this issue. HHS in turn looks to the CDC.

Fluoride is qualitatively different from the other chemicals that Austin Water Utility puts in the drinking water. Most chemicals are added to treat the water, but fluoride is added to treat people. This puts fluoridation policies outside the purview of the water utility, said Jane Burazer, assistant director of Austin Water Utility.

“We’re relying on the Health and Human Services Department to make the determination [about health impacts],” Burazer said.

Travis County Commissioners are also depending on the medical expertise of HHS for direction on this issue. Davis will not move forward to make any recommendations to the City of Austin until he receives an assessment from HHS, he said.

“At this point we are consistent with the recommendation of the CDC and the ADA,” Huang said. “We are comfortable with the different standards that the water meets. We are comfortable that it is safe and effective, and we support those findings.”

HHS’s reliance on the CDC is problematic, Connett said, because the group within the CDC making the determination on the safety of fluoride is the Oral Health Division—a division consisting of about 30 people, most of whom have only dental qualifications.

Carman said that such a group does not have the scientific or medical training to address the effects of fluoride on the whole body.

“They are not trained in toxicology or epidemiology,” Carman said. “They are not medical doctors. Really the people who are pushing this are not qualified to do so.”

Comment at more.impactnews.com/10903

By Annah Marnell

Fertilizer byproduct in the water
Austin’s water is not fluoridated with natural fluoride but with fluosilicic acid, a controversial practice that is another cause for debate in questions on fluoride.

“It can sound really bad that [Austin’s fluoride] comes from the production of fertilizer,” said Health and Human Services Medical Director Dr. Philip Huang, “but it is a chemical reaction and [being produced from a chemical reaction] does not make it bad.”

Austin’s fluosilicic acid is a by-product of a phosphate fertilizer company, Lucier Chemical Industries, said Jane Burazer, assistant director of Austin Water Utility.

“The stuff they put in the water is not pharmaceutical grade. It is an industrial hazardous waste,” said Dr. Neil Carman, Sierra Club Clean Air Program director. “It does not just contain the fluosilicic acid. There is also elemental fluoride, hydrofluoric acid. There are also trace contaminants of heavy metals like lead, chromium 6, mercury, barium, selenium and radionuclides.”

The product is held to national standards by the American National Standards Institute and the National Science Foundation, Burazer said. The manufacturing process, ingredients and potential contaminants are reviewed annually by NSF toxicologists and minimum test battery for all fluoridation products includes metals of toxicological concern and radionuclides, according to the NSF fact sheet.

“Why would you want to put radioactive chemicals in the water at any level?” Carman said. “The only safe level is zero.”

The two water treatment plants serving Austin are the Albert R. Davis Water Treatment Plant and Albert H. Ullrich Water Treatment Plant. They obtain their raw water supply from two different locations on Lake Austin, according to the City of Austin website. The Ullrich plant, pictured above, serves all areas south of the Colorado River or Lady Bird Lake as well as central downtown and East Austin south of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Fluoride Free Austin, an anti-fluoridation group in Austin, is pushing for a warning on the water utility bill to increase public awareness of the risk to children.

HHS fluorosis warning
Health and Human Services posted a new warning regarding fluoride on its website in August 2010 based on a review of recommendations from the CDC and other health authorities. The City of Austin and Austin Water Utility also posted similar warnings on their websites.

Some children ingesting fluoridated water may develop enamel fluorosis, a cosmetic condition where faint markings or streaks may appear on the teeth, according to the HHS website. HHS suggests limiting fluoride intake in children by breastfeeding, using ready-to-feed formula or using some nonfluoridated water to mix with powdered or liquid concentrate formula.

Forty-one percent of adolescents aged 12–19 now have dental fluorosis, according to The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999–2004, from the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics. The study reports that the increase in dental fluorosis in America parallels the expansion of water fluoridation and increased availability of other sources of ingested fluoride such as fluoride toothpastes (if swallowed) and fluoride supplements.

For people who already have dental fluorosis, treatment usually requires veneers or crowns and costs between $900 and $1,600 per tooth, according to Austin dentist Griffin Cole, who treats mild to severe cases of dental fluorosis.

Fluoride Free Austin, an anti-fluoridation group in Austin, is pushing for a warning on the water utility bill to increase public awareness of the risk to children.
Demystifying the Bush tax cuts

By Andrea Leptinsky

President Barack Obama reached an agreement Dec. 6 with GOP lawmakers to extend the Bush-era tax cuts for all Americans through 2012, under GOP pressure to extend tax cuts for all Americans. As part of the deal, unemployment benefits would be extended for 13 months and the employee portion of Social Security payroll taxes would be reduced for one year.

The next step for the agreement, however, is to get the legislation passed by Congress, with the requisite Democratic votes, before the cuts expire Dec. 31.

“It’s a good deal for the American people,” Obama said in an address Dec. 7. “I know there are some who would have preferred a political fight, even if it would have meant higher taxes. I understand the desire for a fight, and I’m sympathetic to that. But I am opposed to the high-end tax cuts today as I have been for years. We can’t afford them, and I will fight to end them [in two years].”

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said she supports an extension of the cuts for all individuals, as it would continue to facilitate the United States’ financial recovery.

“In order to help jumpstart the economy and create jobs, it is imperative that tax cuts be extended for all Americans,” Hutchison. “There is no justification for failing to extend the 2001 and 2003 taxes.”

Sticking points

If the cuts were to expire Dec. 31, pre-legislation tax rates and provisions would be reinstated. Money that Americans would have otherwise pocketed would instead go back to the government in the form of re-established taxes.

“I strongly support extending tax cuts for middle-class families and ensuring no increased tax rates for 98 percent of Americans,” said U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin. “I do not favor incurring another trillion dollars in debt needed to provide another tax cut to the 2 percent of taxpayers who earn over $250,000 a year.”

“I have supported recently approved tax cuts for small businesses, the engines that help drive a strong economy. Limiting tax cut extensions to those over $250,000 will affect less than 3 percent of small businesses.”

U.S. Rep. John Carter, R-Round Rock, said tax cuts for all income earners should be kept because some of the reinstated taxes would be harmful.

“We keep talking about the graduated income tax that affects everyone, but the tax on dividends and capital gains—and the capital gains tax that will go up from 15 percent to 20 percent—means a lot to you, if you’re selling something,” he said. “The tax on dividends will go up from 15 percent to 39.6 percent—that’s a stab right in the heart for our retired people who are living on dividends.”

The estate tax expired in 2009 but is expected to resurface in 2011, if Congress does not address the topic by year’s end. That tax, in particular, would have a huge effect on Texans, Carter said.

“We are a landed group of people here in Texas, and land appreciates greatly,” Carter said. “If it’s in Pflugerville or Round Rock, that’s farm land that is worth a whole lot of money.

If someone dies, they may think they have a family farm out there, but it probably is a multimillion-dollar estate. The tax burden [on the family] will be horrendous.”

Background on tax cut debate


The legislation dropped income tax rates, eliminated the marriage penalty, raised the child tax credit, and lowered the estate tax rate, among others. According to the Tax Policy Center, a married couple with two children under 13 and a house-hold income of $75,000 saw about $2,600 shaved off their income taxes as a result of the tax cuts.

The Treasury Department estimates that making the tax cuts permanent for everyone will cost $3.7 trillion over the next 10 years. Congressional Budget Office Director Douglas Elmendorf told the Senate Budget Committee in September that extending the cuts, even temporarily, would give the economy a short-lived boost.

“A permanent extension of all those tax cuts, without future increases in taxes or reductions in federal spending, would roughly double the projected budget deficit in 2020,” Elmen-dorf said.

Additional reporting by Nicole Smith

Comment at more.impaactnews.com/10901

Contact information

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cornyn.senate.gov/public

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison
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300 E. Eighth St.
Austin, TX 78701
916-5834
hutchison.senate.gov

Tax cut highlights

Child tax credit
The tax relief legislation raised each family’s per-child tax credit to $1,000 from $500.

Marriage tax
The tax cut gave a married couple who filed jointly a standard deduction twice that of a single filer.

Capital gains and dividends
The maximum rate on long-term capital gains and qualified dividends were reduced from 20 percent to 15 percent as part of the tax relief legislation.

What’s at stake

Obama – GOP deal

- Extends Bush-era tax cuts for all income levels through 2012.
- Extends unemployment benefits for 13 months. Without this agreement, 7 million workers would have lost benefits in the coming year.
- Includes a 2-percentage-point cut in Social Security payroll taxes paid by employees in 2011.
- Keeps the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and American Opportunity Credit cuts from last year’s stimulus plan, totaling about $40 billion in tax cuts for families and students.
- Sets the estate tax at 35 percent for two years on assets of $5 million or more.
- Allows businesses to write off 100 percent of their capital purchases in 2011.
- Allows for a 2-percentage-point cut in dividend taxes.

Under the Bush tax cuts

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Source: White House, Tax Foundation
Marbridge provides opportunities for inclusive, healthy lifestyles

For more than 50 years, Marbridge has been a residential community for adults with intellectual disabilities that provides opportunities for individuals to learn, experience and achieve a new life.

In 1953, Ed and Marge Bridges started a ranch for young men with cognitive disabilities with a focus on providing training and improving self-esteem with increased independence. Today, the ranch has expanded to 170 acres, and more than 200 adults live on the campus. Residents participate in weekly training opportunities, sports, classes and community-building activities.

“At Marbridge we are trying to create a whole new life of opportunities for people,” said Cathy Cabrera, marketing manager. “That life can include opportunities that they wouldn’t have had otherwise in other settings and what they wouldn’t have had at home.”

Residents can live at Marbridge from 18 years old until the end of life with three different communities to be a part of: the ranch, the village and the villas. Residents at the ranch need an environment with more supervision and direct care. At the village, residents have the opportunity to leave the campus unsupervised, have careers and participate in more individualized activities. The newest aspect of the campus, the villas, opened in late summer and residents have the opportunity to leave the campus unsupervised, have careers and participate in more individualized activities. The newest aspect of the campus, the villas, opened in late summer and residents have the opportunity to leave the campus unsupervised, have careers and participate in more individualized activities.

The campus is in the process of completing a large-scale master plan including new state-of-the-art facilities, renovated dormitories, a new gymnasium and a renovated pool.

Community members who want to get involved can volunteer in a large spectrum of ways from becoming classroom teachers to spending time with residents. Staff are looking for personal mentor volunteers who can commit to regularly spending time with a resident and act as a positive role model. For more information on how to get involved, visit www.marbridge.org.
Austin State Supported Living Center is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with developmental disabilities. Volunteers at this site work with the residents and families. Office tasks, grounds, and animal care activities are needed.

The Autism Society of America, whose mission is to improve the lives of people on the autism spectrum, has a chapter office in Austin. Volunteers help with administrative tasks and interacting with visitors.

The Autism Society of Greater Austin is an all-volunteer chapter of the Autism Society of America, whose mission is to improve the lives of all affected by autism with a local focus on advocacy, information services, and family support. Volunteers help in many different ways, including as staff for the Autism Awareness Bike Ride April 13, 2011.

Blue Santa brings some Christmas cheer to families that might not otherwise have gifts and food. The organization was started by the Austin Police Department in 1972 and includes the Texas National Guard, the Austin Fire Department, Austin Parks and Recreation, and Austin Energy. Volunteer tasks vary.

Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum needs volunteers to help the museum in a number of areas, all of which help tell the story of Texas. Volunteers work in administrative duties, education, visitor services, special events, and with docents. Founded in 1999, the Texas State History Museum Foundation is a nonprofit organization that promotes statewide awareness and raises private funds to support the educational programs of the museum.

Capital Area Food Bank of Texas works to end hunger in the Austin area. Volunteers ensure donated food is suitable for distribution. 8201 S. Congress Ave., Austin 78745 • 282-2111 • www.foodbank.org

Dell Children’s Medical Center of Central Texas is the only dedicated pediatric hospital in Central Texas. Volunteers provide assistance to patients, families and staff and work in administrative, fund development, and program development.

Down Syndrome Association of Central Texas provides education, support and resources to individuals with Down syndrome, their families, professionals and the community, while building public awareness and acceptance of the abilities of individuals with Down syndrome. Volunteers help with fundraisers, educational programs, office tasks and more.

El Buen Samaritano Episcopal Mission has fulfilled a unique role in Austin as a provider of integrated health care, emergency food, advocacy, leadership, development and basic education for working poor Hispanic families since 1987. Volunteers help ESL instructors, work in the child learning center, give food pantry assistance and work special events.

EMANCPET is dedicated to preventing animal homelessness and putting an end to euthanasia as a means of population control by providing low-cost or free surgical sterilization of dogs and cats. Volunteers work as ambassadors in the clerical, appointment and clinic areas.

Family Service Agency of Central Texas is dedicated to making a difference in the lives of families and individuals. Volunteers help with administrative and event tasks.

Fostering Austin & Caregiving (FA&C) provides direct and indirect support to families of children with special needs. Volunteers help with transport, special events, office tasks and more.

P.A.W.S. of Austin (Protection for Animal Welfare Services) seeks to prevent cruelty to all animals by promoting humane standards through education and example, to provide care and shelter for homeless animals, aid in the reduction of domestic animal overpopulation and aid in the enforcement of laws, including the investigation of animal cruelty and abuse. Volunteers are needed to foster animals and help with other tasks.

Project Linus - Williamson and Travis County Chapter provides handmade blankets for children going through a difficult time in their lives. 11000 Paimoy Lane, Austin 78739 • 963-3015 • www.angieslist.com/austin/linus

The English Institute is dedicated to helping young children learn to read. Volunteers help with reading programs and special events.

SafePlace seeks to end sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing and prevention for individuals, families and the community. Volunteers work directly with families and individuals as well as provide assistance through indirect service, in more clerical or administrative roles. They accompany survivors to court, plan children’s birthday parties, deliver toys to SafePlace for clients for the Holiday Giving Program and more.

Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin Inc. provides dyslexic individuals with a proven research-based, multisensory approach for learning the basic language skills of reading, writing and spelling through the ongoing charitable commitment of the Scottish Rite Masons. Volunteers do project oriented activities, help with the annual book fair, work with drafting grants and various office help.

SafePlace of Greater Austin delivers safety, healing and prevention to individuals, families and the community. Volunteers help with administrative, event planning, phone support, office tasks and more.

Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin is dedicated to providing quality education for children with dyslexia. Volunteers help to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for students.

Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin Inc. provides dyslexic individuals with a proven research-based, multisensory approach for learning the basic language skills of reading, writing and spelling through the ongoing charitable commitment of the Scottish Rite Masons. Volunteers do project oriented activities, help with the annual book fair, work with drafting grants and various office help.

SafePlace of Greater Austin delivers safety, healing and prevention to individuals, families and the community. Volunteers help with administrative, event planning, phone support, office tasks and more.

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Plaza North Shopping Center at MoPac & Parmer

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Estimate your average household water usage with our online water calculator.

CONSERVE
Save water and track your savings using the graphs on your utility statement.

Don’t forget the 3Cs this holiday season.

Here are some tips to help you make your home waterwise:
• Add aerators to faucets
• Replace old showerheads with new low-flow models
• Replace old toilets with high-efficiency models.

If your home was built prior to 1996 you may qualify for our free toilet program.
Avaña

CONTINUED FROM | 1

available, usable space.

“Southwest Austin is a very attractive location to live in given the proximity to retail services,” said Bill Walters, owner of Walters Southwest, a development company that focuses on Southwest Austin. “Circle C has been a leading subdivision in the quality of life and amenities that are in the far south area.”

Walters said the land is difficult to develop on because much of it lies on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone and has environmental impacts. Those factors and the waning economy have led to issues in financing the Avaña project.

Despite these difficulties, the segment of the project purchased by Standard Pacific is the first to move forward, and Bohnen said he anticipates the properties to be ready for sale as early as spring 2011. The cost of each home will range from the mid-$200,000s to the low $300,000s.

The big picture for Avaña

The community known as Circle C consists of 5,000 acres with more than 4,300 homes. However, the properties are almost entirely bought out in terms of home purchases as the master plan reaches completion. With little opportunity for growth without moving into the surrounding cities of Driftwood or Dripping Springs, potential Circle C homeowners are looking to nearby developments such as Avaña with the possibility of including these developments within the Circle C homeowners association.

Dallas-based Transcontinental Realty Investors Inc. owns the entire Avaña property through its corporate entities JMJ Circle C East and JMJ Circle C West. The property was originally purposed as a second master plan community with 1,100 homes, an 18-hole golf course and a large-scale hotel.

But various sections within the property are being sold to different developers and are in the process of being rezoned to only contain residential development. In mid-October, the Dallas-based Liberty Bankers Life Insurance Co. purchased 200 acres known as Spillar Ranch within Avaña.

The land is still zoned to be a golf course and hotel, but is in the process of rezoning with the City of Austin, a process that could slow the project breaking ground.

Wendy Rhoades, a staff member for the City of Austin Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department, said if the development is to be used for single-family residences on the property, the developers have to apply to change directions since the existing zoning is commercial and does not allow for residential uses.

The supply of potential housing opportunities in the southwest region of the city is limited, and rezoning could help kick-start the market for buyers.

Cassie Gibson, senior vice president of research and consulting for Dallas-based Residential Strategies, said Southwest Austin is not a balanced market in terms of the availability of vacant lots for potential homebuyers.

In a stable market, Gibson said there should be a two-year supply of vacant lots, but the area is short by a month and a half supply of lots.

If the project can be rezoned to become residential housing, it would allow more leeway in the future for the area.

“In about all of the areas of Austin that can be developed for residential use, there are a lot on the northwest side of town, Cedar Park and Leander,” Gibson said. “But in Southwest Austin where communities like Circle C, Meridian and now Avaña are located, those areas are still considered desirable for residents because of great schools, ease of access to shopping and commuting to downtown.”

Looking ahead for property

Currently, only Standard Pacific and Liberty Bankers Life Insurance Co. have purchased sections of the property. These purchased portions of the land all lie within Travis County. However, an unpurchased section of Avaña lies in both Hays and Travis counties.

As more developers come into the picture, the question will surface of how to handle the Hays County properties in terms of proximity to schools for residents.

“For the Avaña properties that fall in Hays County, those children would go to the Hays Consolidated Independent School District, which is not really a negative in quality, but the location of the schools as compared to Avaña is really inconvenient,” Gibson said.

The discussion of school districts is not an uncommon problem, Gibson said, and it can be worked through as the project continues to move forward.

For more information on the development plans, visit www.coveredbridgevillage.com.

Read the original stories and more information at moreimpactnews.com/10912
return weekly in an attempt to show the importance of this project for Southwest Austin residents. “We will be here next week and we will be here the week after that and we will keep coming until we get relief. We will keep coming until the money is found to build SH 45 SW now,” said Carol Vance, president of the board of directors of the Shady Hollow Homeowners Association.

Although the coalition has been pushing for the road for more than 20 years and has so far been unsuccessful, this renewed effort is expected to be more effective due to increased organization, Daugherty said. In addition to pleading to bring the public voice to Commissioners Court, the group also meets regularly to strategize. It has garnered almost 1,000 public supporters through an online petition and has raised more than $6,000 in donations toward the cause.

Paul Workman, who was recently elected as state representative for District 47, ran on a platform in which transportation issues, specifically the Y at Oak Hill and SH 45 SW, were a priority, and he will help to push SH 45 SW through, he said. “I have made a commitment to the people along Brodie Lane to do everything I possibly can to get SH 45 built. I am already working on that and plan to continue to try to do whatever I can to get that roadway built,” Workman said.

**Opposition**

Travis County Commissioner Karen Huber, though not unsympathetic to the plea for reduced congestion on Brodie Lane, does not believe that SH 45 SW is the solution to the problem. “The traffic and safety issues on Brodie Lane are serious and need to be addressed, but I do not believe that the current plan for SH 45 SW will solve the traffic problems,” Huber said. “The traffic counts that have been done demonstrate that a short time after 45 would be completed that the counts would be higher than they are now on Brodie.”

Huber suggests trying a quicker and more inexpensive solution first, which would be to complete FM 1626 to Manchaca Road and complete the Manchaca Road improvements, giving Hays County residents another connecting route to MoPac and 1-35. “I think [these projects] should be addressed first before we build something that we do not know is going to solve the problem,” she said.

The environmental group Save Our Springs Alliance also supports the FM 1626 and Manchaca Road projects as the best solution for the congestion on Brodie Lane. The group opposes building SH 45 SW for environmental reasons and echoes Huber’s reasoning that the other projects will likely do a better job of clearing congestion on Brodie Lane.

Better alternative solutions, said Bill Bunch, SOS executive director, would be improvements on the FM 1626 and Manchaca Road connection, which could mean a significant improvement for commuters, and the regional rail, which is expected to happen over the next decade at much the same pace as building SH 45 SW anyway. “The [Edwards Aquifer] Recharge Zone is Swiss cheese,” Bunch said. “What runs off from the road development goes straight into the aquifer and flows very rapidly in underground passages to Barton Springs. It’s an extremely sensitive area. The alternative options [for relieving congestion] do not pose the environmental risk that building 45 does.”

None of the individuals opposing SH 45 SW denied that Brodie Lane is in need of congestion relief. Rather, the argument is about how best to relieve that congestion. For some people SH 45 SW is the simple answer, but Huber said the problem is there is no simple solution.

“I feel so sorry for the people along Brodie Lane because the dynamics are very complex and hard to understand, and the people just need a solution,” Huber said. “We are going to keep working, trying to do what we can to solve the problem, but it is a very complex one.”

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**Residential Real Estate | Neighborhoods at a Glance**

**78748 - Buckingham Estates**

Located between South First Street and Manchaca Road, Buckingham Estates provides easy access to Dittmar Park, Southpark Meadows and Brodie Park Shopping Center.

**Schools**
- Casey and Williams elementary schools
- Bedichek Middle School
- Akins High School

**Featured homes**

**7107 Barnsdale Way**
3 Br/2 Ba | 1,202 sq. ft.
Agent: Harold Patterson
$150,000
925-4663

**8519 Birmingham Drive**
3 Br/2 Ba | 1,315 sq. ft.
Agent: Kelly Loudenslager
$163,500
940-8873

**920 Wessex Way**
2 Br/2 Ba | 1,192 sq. ft.
Agent: Carolina Aceituno
$148,000
217-1218

**8900 Palace Parkway**
3 Br/2 Ba | 1,448 sq. ft.
Agent: Michele Milivojac
$159,900
786-6705

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**Market Data**

**On the market** (Nov. 1–30)

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**Monthly home sales**

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<td>22/$214,950</td>
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<td>Nov. 2009</td>
<td>50/$179,250</td>
<td>34/$222,450</td>
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<td>63/$171,415</td>
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**Market Data provided by Austin Board of Realtors**

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### Residential Real Estate Listings

#### Southwest Austin

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<td>3br/2ba</td>
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<td>1120 Winding Creek</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
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<td>1,240</td>
<td>Karen Brown</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
<td>512-356-6321</td>
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#### ZIP code guide

- **Southwest Austin**
  - 78735 Oak Hill / Southwest Parkway area
  - 78736 Oak Hill
  - 78737 Oak Hill
  - 78719 Circle C area
  - 78749 South of Ben White, Sunset Valley
  - 78748 Shady Hollow / Manor area
  - 78749 MoPac / William Cannon

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