Dream City project moving forward, says Promiseland West

Local church aims for fall 2013 opening despite city’s initial rejection, land use questions

By Kate Hull

For two years, all that has stood on the vacant lot southwest of Hwy. 71 W. was a large green sign reading, “Dream City, a place where dreamers gather.”

Dream City, a proposed 11-acre community center on 53 acres owned by Promiseland West Bible Church, may soon be a reality.

Workers will break ground once the City of Austin approves the site plan. On Feb. 9, the city rejected a plan that the church submitted, but Promiseland West has until July 5 to address staff report questions.

Dream City would include a worship center, auditorium and amphitheater and is intended to serve nearby communities. Some neighbors have raised concerns about usage and noise.

The project is the brainchild of Pastor Randy Phillips, an Austin minister and member of Christian band Phillips, Craig and Dean. Phillips’ vision has been in the making since he first decided to open a church in Southwest Austin six years ago.

Serving the people

The church body—which currently does not have its own worship facility and meets Sundays at Westlake High School performing arts center—grew from 80 members to more than 1,200 people attending services weekly, Phillips said. Once interest grew, Phillips started looking for property to expand and began his dream to develop a community center.

People are not going to church that frequently in this area, Phillips said. The project included a place where dreamers gather. “We’ve been looking for a place where we can serve,” he said.

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Mayor seeks to realign council districts

Leffingwell proposes hybrid representation system for 2012

By Bobby Longoria

Southwest Austin community activists, who claim City Council has ignored the needs of their region, are raising their voices in support of single-member district representation in City Council in order to re-establish a connection between the city and neighborhood residents.

“Right now we are represented by everyone and by no one,” said Sandy Baldridge, a member of the city’s Zoning and Platting Commission as well as president of the Oak Hill Neighborhood Association.

Mayor Lee Leffingwell has proposed transforming the Austin City Council into a hybrid system that would include six single-member districts, two at-large seats and an at-large mayor. If approved by voters in 2012, his proposition will be successful where six others have failed in the past.

Baldridge—commenting as an activist and not as a commission or OHNA representative—said the council’s at-large member structure leaves parts of the Austin community, in particular the suburbs, ignored. She said most improvements and attention are given to the central core.

Having a council member who is accountable to Southwest Austin could help bring necessary infrastructure improvements, she said. Currently, no council members live south of Lady Bird Johnson Lake.

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‘My 35’ plan, others in play to ease I-35

Lack of funding may stymie broad-scope projects

By Bobby Longoria

When the I-35 Corridor Advisory Committee released its “My 35” comprehensive mobility plan in January, it included a proposal that would switch out aspects of I-35 and Toll 130, and redesignate each.

The Texas Department of Transportation appointed the committee more than a year ago to develop guidelines for improving congestion along the I-35 corridor in Texas.

Tim Brown, chairman of the I-35 advisory committee, described the effort as an attempt to broaden the reach of I-35 suggestions by eliciting community input as much as reasonably possible. Brown is a Bell County commissioner who served on the committee along with several traffic engineers, environmental planners, past and present city mayors and consultant groups.

“The problem we created here in Texas is we allowed our major urban centers to develop right around and over our interstate highways,” Brown said. “You can’t go back and undo the development that has already occurred. It’s much more economical to do something else. There is not any single answer.”

The group divided I-35 into four segments. The first includes the region of the Oklahoma-Texas border to I-20 in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Segment 2 runs from

See Transportation | 14

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General Manager’s Note

Now that spring is here, and change is the theme of the season, it made for good timing that Mayor Leffingwell recently delivered his State of the City Address. If I could summarize his speech with one line, it would be when he said, “The state of our city is strong and getting stronger every day.”

The full speech can and should be viewed online, but here are the highlights I took away: In 2010, the Austin area added in the neighborhood of 15,000 new jobs, our unemployment rate dropped to 6.8 percent, more than two dozen companies moved their headquarters to our city and “if there were a list of cities that appeared on lists, we would be on that list.”

For all the good, we no doubt have serious issues staring us in the face: Our traffic was recently rated as third-worst in the nation, an evolving school budget crisis, threats to our environment and more were all mentioned. But Leffingwell did say the city is “focusing on these issues.”

The good, bad and now the future. Nov. 6, 2012, will no doubt be a day that shapes our city for the foreseeable future. Going to a vote on this date are expected to be both a multimodal transportation bond utilizing urban rail, as well as a revised single-member district proposal that would reshape how City Council represents Austin.

If change is something you want to see more or less of within our city, I encourage you to plan now to vote on Nov. 6, 2012.

Travis Baker
tbaker@impactnews.com

Reader Feedback

How would you alleviate traffic at the Y at Oak Hill?

55.17% Widen the existing road

17.24% Build a larger road nearby

13.79% Better coordination of lights

6.9% Encourage more public transportation usage

3.45% Install a roundabout

3.45% Restrict traffic at certain times of day

0% Other

Results from an unscientific web survey, collected 2/14/11-3/15/11

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Dave Martin, Vice President and CFO
Dimensional Fund Advisors, Chamber Member

Austin Chamber of Commerce

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Now Open

1. In January, owner Adi Bereshkzsky opened Doors4Home. Located at 5446 W. Hwy. 290, the store sells a large selection of exterior and interior wooden doors and unique home products. 294-2747, www.doors4home.com

2. Evolve Personal Fitness and Gym, owned by Adam Lane, opened in February at 5716 W. Hwy. 290 in the Oak Acres Shopping Center and offers personal fitness training and classes. 358-8433

3. David Heckler combined his design/build firm and real estate company to form REsolve Group. Heckler’s daughter, Margaret, recently joined the firm. REsolve Group offers over 25 years of experience in design/build and real estate services throughout Austin. 777-1714, www.REsolvegrp.com

4. The state-wide nursing home company Senior Care opened a new location in Austin at 1700 Onion Creek Parkway, offering full in-patient and out-patient rehabilitation, skilled nursing and 125 beds. The director of Business Development John Robertson said their goal is improve the philosophy and momentum of nursing homes. 291-4900, www.seniorcarecentersltc.com

5. The locally owned restaurant Mandola’s Italian Market opened its third Austin-area location at 4301 W. William Cannon Drive, Bldg. E-1 March 7 in The Shops at Arbor Trails. Offering Italian cuisine and a variety of imported goods and wines, the restaurant is owned and operated by the Mandola family, who has decades of experience in culinary arts. 524-2222, www.mandolasmarket.com

6. Chris Herbert and Caleb Simpson opened Bearded Brothers, an organic, mostly raw, vegan-friendly, gluten-free snack food company that offers energy bars and seasonal nuts. The store is located at Community Renaissance Market, 6800 West Gate Blvd and is opened Wed.–Thu. 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri. 11 a.m.–7 p.m. and Sat.–Sun., 10 a.m.–7 p.m. 522-6161, www.communityrenaissancemarket.com.

7. Owner Sabrina Tarbou opened Cassiopeia’s Chains: Home of Velvet Rut Repertory at Community Renaissance Market, 6800 West Gate Blvd., in February. The shop is a vintage record store and theater company that presents one Shakespearean play each month by local actors and actresses. 522-6161, www.communityrenaissancemarket.com

8. Selling neo-Victorian apparel, The Mysterium owned by Sam Tyler opened at Community Renaissance Market, 6800 West Gate Blvd. in February offering a unique take on clothing trends in the “Steampunk” style genre. The store is open Wed.–Thur. 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri. 11 a.m.–7 p.m. and Sat.–Sun., 10 a.m.–7 p.m. 522-6161, www.communityrenaissancemarket.com

9. Port A Café, owned by Adam Gonzales of the Austin-area Serranos Tex-Mex restaurants, is now open at 9500 S. 1-35, Bldg. C in Southpark Meadows. The restaurant is a casual Gulf Coast–style seafood establishment offering seasonal seafood, po’boys sandwiches and other items. To view the menu, visit www.portacafeaustin.com

Coming Soon

10. The playscape recreational venue in the Sunset Valley Homestead shopping center located at Brodie Lane and Hwy. 290 is nearing completion and will be open in April. The $100,000 venue will have a 6,000-square-foot playscape located in a 1-acre plot of land behind Doc’s Backyard and nearby several other businesses in the shopping center with outdoor seating. www.sunsetvalley.org

11. Gatti’s Pizza has begun leasing a 1,410-square-foot location at 6800 West Gate Blvd. The Austin-based restaurant chain opened in 1964 and has grown to a

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national chain. Currently there are more than 50 locations in Texas. 459-2222, www.gattispizza.com.

12 The take-and-bake pizza company Papa Murphy’s leased a 1,360-square-foot location in the Westcreek Shopping Center at 4404 W. William Cannon Drive. The store, which currently has three locations in Austin, will be opening in early summer, according to the property representative. www.papamurphys.com

13 Texas Cycle Werks, located at 5300 S. MoPac, Ste. 501, will open in mid-April and hold a grand-opening May 21. The shop caters to all levels of cycling enthusiasts from commuters to mountain bikers and offers cycling services and tune-ups. “The idea is for us to be your go-to local bike shop,” owner Phillip Puzzo said. The shop is open Mon.–Fri. 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sun. 11 a.m.–5 p.m. 892-2453, www.texascyclewerks.com

Relocations

14 Storied Firearms, a gun store selling antique, collector and modern guns among other items, relocated from 11183 Circle Drive, Ste. C to 9300 Hwy 290 W. Owned by Charlie and Cherie Harris, the shop has moved into a restored train depot built in Southwest Austin in the early 1900s. 394-0125, www.storiedfirearms.com

Anniversary

15 Sisters Esbeida Lopez and Carolina Haygood, along with their husbands Randy Lopez and Joel Haygood, are celebrating the 14-year anniversary of La Familia Mexican Restaurant, 3601 W. William Cannon Drive Ste. 900. The restaurant combines authentic Mexican dishes like Mole Estilo Bejucos, Menudo and Tacos Al Pastor with Tex-Mex and is open from Mon.–Thu. 6:30 a.m.–9 p.m., Fri.–Sat. 6:30 a.m.–10 p.m. and Sun. 8 a.m.–9 p.m. 892-1311, www.lafamiliaaustin.com

In the News

16 Bryce Gilmore, owner of Odd Duck Farm to Trailer and Barley Swine restaurant, competed in Food and Wine Magazine’s The People’s Best New Chef contest. Website visitors could vote for their favorite chefs in 10 regions between Feb. 15 and March 1. Barley Swine restaurant is located at 2024 S. Lamar Blvd. 394-8150, www.barleyswine.com

17 The Austin Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure has named Monica Saavedra as its director of Mission Services. She will manage relationships with the Komen Austin affiliate service area providers, including the local Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Center, located at 3508 S. Lamar Blvd., as well as help fix gaps in services. www.komenaustin.org

18 The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave., has named Alice Nance as the education manager for the center. Nance is the former conservation program coordinator for the City of Austin and has more than 10 years of experience promoting conservation through education, most recently with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. The Wildflower Center’s mission is to help maintain the plants and landscape of Texas through education and conservation. 232-0100, www.wildflower.org

State, county and local first responders conducted a search and rescue exercise in Sunset Valley March 5 and 6. Invited groups included teams from the Austin Police Department, Travis County and Hudson Bend Fire Department K-9. Some of the skills that were used and evaluated were Incident Command System, Search and Rescue Skills, First Aid, and K-9 scent detection.

After more than a decade of business, the owners and staff member Laura Vera of La Familia Mexican Restaurant are celebrating 14 years in Austin.

The Austin Affiliate of Susan G. Komen named Monica Saavedra the new director of mission services for Austin and the surrounding area.

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

26 Jardín De Niños open house
Jardín De Niños, an Austin-based Spanish immersion school, will again offer Spanish immersion summer camps for children ages 2 to 12 beginning June 8. The group is hosting open houses at its north and south locations for families to learn more about their summer camp program. 10:30 a.m.–noon • Free www.austinbilingualschool.com

8 Randy Rogers Band at Nutty Brown Café
The Randy Rogers Band, a country group of Texas natives, will perform at the Nutty Brown Café. Table seating is limited, and VIP tickets that include full service dinner and drinks can be purchased. General admission will have access to self-service bars and concession stands. Guests are allowed to bring one folding chair per person because seating is limited. 7:30 p.m. • $15 general admission, $62.50 VIP table • Nutty Brown Café, 12225 W. Hwy. 290 301-4648 • www.nuttybrown.com

9 Arbor Day
Sunset Valley is celebrating Arbor Day with a presentation will also include refreshments and activities for kids as well as refreshments and door prizes. 10 a.m. • Free www.sunsetvalley.org

9 Girl Scouts present Eco Fair
Girl Scout Troop 895 presents Eco Fair, focusing on recycling, conservation and sustainability education. The event will include a variety of presentations on topics and activities for kids as well as refreshments and door prizes. • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. Free Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Road 891-9103 www.sunsetvalley.org

16 Clayton Elementary Fun Run
The annual fun run benefiting Clayton Elementary School will be held at the school with proceeds going to the creation of an outdoor science center. Students from pre-K to sixth grade at area schools are eligible to participate. • 3–7 p.m. • Registration prices vary, discounts available for some students Clayton Elementary, 5913 La Crosse Ave. www.claytoncardinals.tx

April

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9 Cedar Park Heritage Festival and Parade
The Cedar Park Heritage Festival features dancing, a hamburger cook-off, a washer tournament, pony rides, carnival games, petting zoo, concessions, face painting, corn-on-the-cob eating contest and live country music by the A.C. Bible Band and headliner Jason Allen. The parade runs from 1–2 p.m. at Heritage Oak Park, 875 Quest Parkway. • 4–9 p.m. • Free • Elizabeth Milburn Park, 1901 Sun Chase Blvd., Cedar Park 401-5506 www.cedarparktx.us

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Plant Sale and Gardening Festival
The annual Plant Sale and Gardening Festival at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center features more than 270 species of native Texas plants to purchase.

April 9–10
By Kate Hull
The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is hosting the annual Plant Sale and Gardening Festival from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday to encourage locals to grow their own flower and vegetable gardens. The event also features artists and authors signing their works in the center’s store, guided walks and talks and tips for your garden from experts.

The sale will include more than 23,000 plants from 270 species of Texas native plants, including Texas buckeye, Louisiana Canna, French mulberry and others suited to prosper in the Central Texas climate and soil.

The event is open to the public on Saturday and Sunday, but on April 8, members of the center can attend a preview sale for free to have first pick of the plants. Patrons intending to purchase a large amount of plants are encouraged to bring their own wagon to haul items.

For nonmembers, the event is $8 for adults, $7 seniors and students and $4 for University of Texas faculty, staff or students with identification. The plant sale is located at the Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. Call 232-0100 or visit www.wildflower.org.

March 26, April 2, 19, 16
Sunset Valley Farmers Market
Every Saturday, rain or shine, the Sunset Valley Farmers Market is held at the Toney Burger Activity Center as part of the Sustainable Food Center farmers markets. The mission of the market is to cultivate a healthy community by strengthening the local food system and improving access to local, nutritious and affordable food. The Sunset Valley location is one of three markets in the Austin area with more than 110 farmers and vendors. • Sat., 9 a.m.–1 p.m. • Free • The Toney Burger Activity Center, 3200 Jones Road. www.sfcfarmersmarketsunsetvalley.org

Online Calendar
Find more or submit Southwest Austin events at www.impactnews.com/swa/calendar.
For a full list of Central Texas events visit www.impactnews.com/austin-metro/calendar.
To have Southwest Austin events included in the print edition, they must be submitted online by the second Friday of the month.
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Austin

Council votes to reduce free parking throughout city

Austin City Council approved an ordinance March 3 to extend parking meter hours throughout the city from 5:30 to 6 p.m.—including Saturdays—and throughout downtown to midnight.

The city’s Transportation Department defines the enforced downtown area as Lamar Boulevard to the west, I-35 to the east, 10th Street to the north and Lady Bird Lake to the south.

Councilwoman Laura Morrison voted against the ordinance. She said she favored an ordinance that provided free parking for areas north of Seventh Street.

Austin achieves 92 percent live animal outcome; reaches no-kill status

City of Austin officials announced in March the city reached no-kill status by achieving a 92 percent live-animal outcome for all animals that enter the Town Lake Animal Center.

Council approved the city’s No-Kill Implementation Plan in March 2010. The plan sought to reduce animal intake and increase live animal outcomes by closing animal night drop-off boxes, adding a full and part-time veterinarian, enhancing the foster care program and providing a low-cost and free spay and neuter program.

The city was at a 77 percent live animal outcome rate in March 2010.

Mobility bond’s Oak Hill project sees first of redesign plans

Transportation officials are moving forward with interim improvements to the Y at Oak Hill that will be completed by 2012 and will lead toward larger wide-scale improvements to Hwy. 290 as part of the CAMPO plan.

The redesign is part of the 2010 Mobility Bond Program, a city bond approved by voters in November. The adjustment would cut morning and evening eastbound delays by roughly half, officials say, and should have similar effects on evening westbound traffic delays.

The City of Austin will pay for $4 million of the $5.58 million cost. Travis County will provide $1.5 million and the remaining $87,000 will come from a TxDOT, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and Capital Metro collaboration.

Carlos Lopez, district engineer for the Austin district of TxDOT, said the improvements should help traffic for the next five to seven years. The improvements will redesign how left turns are made near the merger of Hwy. 290 and Hwy. 71, and should increase “green time” for drivers. Redesign should bring relief to the Hwy. 290 corridor between Joe Tanner Lane and FM 1826.

Court votes to widen FM 1626

The Travis County Commissioners Court voted to apply for partial state reimbursement to widen FM 1626 to four lanes. The improvements will take place between Brodie Lane and Manchaca Road. The vote passed 3–2, with commissioners Sarah Eckhardt and Margaret Gómez voting against it.

County discusses land acquisition

The Travis County Commissioners Court discussed acquiring land near Slaughter Lane and the proposed SH 45 extension. The court took no action and plans to seek feedback from the City Council.

Meetings

- Austin City Council
  Austin City Hall, 301 W. Second St., 974-2497, www.ci.austin.tx.us/council
  April 7, 20, 21, 27 and 28, 10 a.m.

- Travis County Commissioners Court
  314 11th St., Austin, 854-9425, www.co.travis.tx.us/commissioners_court
  Meetings are every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m.

- Sunset Valley City Council
  Sunset Valley City Hall, 3205 Jones Road, 892-1383, www.sunsetvalley.org
  April 5 and 19, 6 p.m.

Travis County
Delegates for Southwest Austin get key House, Senate committee posts

By Marcus Funk and Bobby Longoria

Voters in Southwest Austin now have representation on Legislature committees that wield significant clout over education and public health issues being debated at the statehouse, with area delegates being tapped for positions on key committees in early February.

On the House side, state Rep. Elliott Rodriguez, D-Austin, has been appointed vice-chairman of the Human Services Committee. The latter is the committee that will be looking at a lot of things relative to the prison population, as well as which prisons to close or how many beds to close, so it’s going to be a great learning process.”

As a first-timer on the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee, state Rep. Eddie Rodriguez, D-Austin, said he recognizes that there is a learning curve involved. The District 51 lawmaker also serves on the Calendars and Transportation committees. The latter is the committee that he said he expects to have the greatest effect on his local constituents.

Rodriguez has worked on transportation funding and looked into several options on how the state will deal with infrastructure shortcomings. He said he is going to pursue a handful of bills that will address transportation locally and statewide.

On the Senate side, Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, serves as vice-chairman of the Transportation and Homeland Security Committee. The District 14 lawmaker also sits on the Business and Commerce; Economic Development; Higher Education; and Nominations committees.

Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, has been appointed vice-chairman of the Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Committee. Wentworth, who serves District 25, also sits on the Higher Education; Administration; Intergovernmental Relations; and Transportation and Homeland Security committees, as well as a Select Committee on Redistricting.

“I requested Business and Industry because I’m a businessman. I’ve been in business for 37-plus years, and I look forward to working to make Texas a better place for business by encouraging level playing fields and reduced restrictions and regulations,” Workman said.

“Bot"m I’m also looking forward to being able to serve the state and the people of HD 47 on Corrections. [The committee] will be looking at a lot of things relative to the prison population, as well as which prisons to close or how many beds to close, so it’s going to be a great learning process.”

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Dream City
Continued from 11

community, Phillips said. “To simply build an auditorium and say come join us for worship would not get many people on our property,” he said. “So we want something more than a worship experience. Whether they come to church or not does not matter.”

Phillips said Southwest Austin is underserved in terms of available recreational activities for surrounding residents.

Some nearby residents, however, do not feel it will meet the neighborhoods’ needs.

“It is not clear what, if any, local community activities would take place there and what criteria the church may impose for use of its facilities,” said Robert Kleeman, a resident of Hill Country Estates, in an e-mail.

Along with the worship center, the facility would include a youth ministry center, administration and counseling center and a chapel. There will be acres of green space and recreational facilities as well.

“We want to be a community resource for Austin, but we also want to be a place where the community can come seven days a week and do whatever they want,” Phillips said, “whether that means using our hike and bike trails, counseling services, having weddings or funerals or attending concerts in the park.”

The $40 million project will be completed in phases throughout the next 10 years, Phillips said.

Of the 53 acres, Promiseland West can only build on 11 acres due to impervious cover regulations. Zoning regulations limit the acceptable amount of impervious cover—any changes that prevent the ground from absorbing water.

Site plan status
The official site plan was submitted to the city Jan. 12, said Sarah Graham, the case manager for the project, and rejected Feb. 9.

“The site plan is currently standing as rejected, but they have a time period of 180 days from original application date to make necessary changes,” Graham said. “They do have the option to request an extension for another 180 days past July 5, which makes this a year-long cycle.”

Michael Heflin, executive pastor at Promiseland West, said the church has begun the process of responding to some of the city’s site plan questions.

The Dream City project has been one of the more difficult site plans to work with because of questions regarding the land-use designation, Graham said.

Initial statuses of “rejected” are not uncommon for site plans, according to the city’s Zoning and Development Review Department.

The question, however, is whether the land distinction for the project is more in sync with a religious assembly or an outdoor-entertainment facility, which has separate noise ordinances and code enforcements.

The land falls within the Oak Hill combined neighborhood plan, adopted in December 2008, that designated land usage for East and West Oak Hill.

The neighborhood plan lists the plot of land as rural residential, which would allow for a religious assembly but not for an outdoor entertainment facility.

According to the staff report, Promiseland West must “clarify if the amphitheater is intended for religious assembly use only or if the applicant intends to use the structure in any other commercial way,” or if the site “is an accessory use of an outdoor-entertainment [facility] which is not allowed in the [current] zoning.”

“The only reason Promiseland is allowed to do anything under rural residential zoning is by virtue of there being a church constructed and it having a religious use,” said Charlsa Bentley, a resident of Hill Country Estates. “We have no problem with a church being built, but I am not sure that these other things beyond the church are true religious [assembly] additions.”

A religious assembly designation can be built on the land with permitted use according to the land development code, but if the land were actually an outdoor entertainment facility, it would be conditionally permitted and more difficult to gain site plan approval.

Moving forward
Apart from land usage concerns, questions have been raised by surrounding community members about Dream City’s effect on their neighborhoods.

“The quietness and wildlife of the area is what brought many of us here,” said Mike Conner, the secretary of the Covered Bridge Property Owner’s Association. A majority of the concerns for area residents, Conner said, are increased noise levels due to the amphitheater and a lack of clarification as to what Promiseland West is intending to build.

Dream City, although secluded from immediate neighbors, is near the Covered Bridge and Hill Country Estates subdivisions. Concerns have been raised regarding plans for an amphitheater, including noise violations, increased traffic and bright lights.

“I am planning on building a house on this facility and living here,” Phillips said. “I do not want my neighbors’ lives disturbed at all. What good are we going to do in the area if we make everybody mad? Our intention is to come in and be something that enhances our experience.”

The staff report presented by the city states that the case manager “has been contacted by many affected neighbors who have concerns about the proposed amphitheater.”

Promiseland West has been advised to “take into consideration any sound-reducing measures that could be made to lessen sound amplification” and to shield excess lighting from surrounding residential houses.

A nearby development, Covered Bridge Village, sits on 15 acres of undeveloped land near Oak Hill, at the corner of Covered Bridge Drive and Hwy. 71 W, and is a mixed-use development with plans for a neighborhood center, restaurants and recreational fields.

“Any area development will help my retail endeavors, but if I were more residential in scope, then I might agree with the local residents’ concerns,” said Bill Schultz, the owner of Covered Bridge Village development.

Kleeman, of Hill Country Estates said, “as long as the traffic impacts are properly addressed through improvements to Hwy. 71 and the church abandons its pursuits of a commercial outdoor music venue with amplified sound, I have no problem with the project.”

Phillips said his intention is to be a great neighbor and to add to the quality of living for the surrounding neighborhoods.

If the necessary site plan issues are fixed by July 5, Phillips and Promiseland West can continue with plans to have a worship center completed by Fall 2013.

For more information, visit www.promiselandwest.com.

Comment at more.impactnews.com/12012

The amphitheater is planned to hold more than 1,000 people with the capacity to host concerts, plays, ballets and other events.

To subscribe to Impact News, visit www.promiselandwest.com.

—Pastor Randy Phillips

“I do not want my neighbors’ lives disturbed at all. What good are we going to do in the area if we make everybody mad?”

—Bill Schultz, Covered Bridge Village owner
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A single-member council district system would be inherently more democratic, yet slightly less efficient, Leffingwell said.

Leffingwell's proposition

Leffingwell formally proposed five amendments to the city charter during his State of the City Address on Feb. 25.

He proposed a council of nine members that would encompass six geographic districts, two at-large members and an at-large mayor. Leffingwell also proposed moving city elections from May to November of odd numbered years, which he said could triple voter turnout, based on past election turnouts.

As a result, council terms would increase from three to four years and staggered council terms would be eliminated. Leffingwell also proposed to increase the maximum campaign contribution for candidates running for citywide positions. Currently, the maximum contribution is $350. Leffingwell has not formally stated a maximum contribution limit in his proposal, but said it could be somewhere around $1,000.

Drawing the line

Over Austin's history there has been an unwritten “gentlemen’s agreement,” city demographer Ryan Robinson said, which has left reserved a council seat for an African-American and a council seat for a Hispanic council member.

Robinson said he would be required to adhere to the U.S. Justice Department’s rules, if City Manager Marc Ott were to request a new map for Leffingwell’s proposal. The rules dictate that no particular attention must be paid to race or ethnicity; however, districts cannot be drawn in a manner that results in a retrogression for a minority group to choose a candidate of their choice.

Robinson said this means, given recent census data, at least one district must be drawn with an African-American majority, and another with a Hispanic majority.

However, because of the size of the Hispanic population in Austin, there may have to be up to three districts where they have a majority. The other districts will be drawn according to social and political ideology—not ethnicity.

The districts will be drawn using new 2010 census data that was released in February. Robinson has not yet been directed by the city to create a single-member district map reflecting this data; however, he has noticed certain trends in population.

From 2000 to 2010, the Hispanic population in Austin has increased by about 38 percent from 200,579 to 277,707. The Hispanic population has increased its presence within the city, in particular the eastern and southeastern Austin.

In contrast to this growth, the African-American population in Austin has dropped by about 6 percent from 64,259 to 60,760. The African-American population at one time was concentrated in East Austin but has since dispersed throughout the suburbs of North and Northeast Austin.

Each district may have about 133,000 people, Robinson said. He said the African-American population has become so dispersed that it will be very difficult to draw a district with a majority for them.

Community identity

In creating a community of interest, Robinson said it is important not to split parts of town that have historically shared a common identity.

Areas like Circle C and Oak Hill would be drawn with separate districts.

The 78704 area has such strong shared political ideology that it, too, would help define a specific district, Robinson said.

Jason Bram, president of the Circle C Home Owners Association, said although Southwest Austin represents a large tax and voting base, residents feel discouraged to vote because they think their voice is being ignored by Central Austin interests.

Having a council member accountable to Southwest Austin would increase public participation, he said.

Old movement, new support

Peck Young, director for the Austin Community College Center for Public Policy and Political Studies, said the past six attempts at creating single-member districts all failed primarily because they were under-financed, received opposition from the business community and because political parties that were in power at large felt their influence could have dwindled in districts.

He said proposals have been made for as few as four districts in the 1960s to as many as 13.

By creating many smaller districts, candidates can rise up from within the community, he said.

Nelson Linder, president of the Austin branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is confident the city’s population will be more accommodating to single-member districts because of the balance between districts and at large seats.

“Times have changed now; you got almost a million people population, which is more diverse,” Linder said. “Let’s address that in a democratic way which would have more direct representation.”

Comment at more.impactnews.com/12013

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**six district scenario**

One idea, developed in 2007, splits Austin into six districts.

**Definitions**

Single-member districts

One person is elected from each district.

At-large districts

One person is elected to fill a council seat regardless of residence.

**eight district scenario**

This scenario further breaks up districts in Central Austin.

**Sources**

City of Austin, September 2007

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Transportation

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I-20 in Dallas-Fort Worth to the border between Williamson and Bell counties in Central Texas. Segment 3, which includes Travis County, begins at the Williamson and Bell county line and extends to I-10 in San Antonio. The fourth segment includes the region from I-10 in San Antonio to the Texas-Mexico border.

For Segment 3, the committee proposed converting one lane of I-35 in each direction to a dynamically priced managed lane, leaving at least two non-tolled lanes on either side between Hwys. 195 north of Georgetown and Toll 45 SE in Mustang Ridge. A dynamically priced managed lane would have a varying toll, depending on the time of day. Drivers who seek to travel faster during peak traffic periods would pay a higher rate than during low-traffic periods. The lane would also provide faster travel for high-occupancy vehicles, such as Capital Metro buses or carpools.

The group also proposed expanding Toll 130 to six lanes, from Hwys. 195 to Toll 45 SE, and removing the tolls. The expanded roadway would then be redesignated I-35.

Toll 45 SE would also be expanded along what is now Toll 130, from Mustang Ridge to I-10 in Seguin.

Any plan that would change tolls or add a managed lane to I-35 would need federal approval.

Austin's traffic woes

Carlos Lopez, district engineer for TxDOT's Austin district, stated I-35's problem very simply.

"We have too much traffic using I-35, and we don't have enough lanes to carry all those cars," Lopez said. "Too many cars, not enough lanes."

In 2010, the Texas Transportation Institute released its study of traffic trends across 101 metropolitan areas, including Austin, Los Angeles, New York, Dallas-Fort Worth and Washington. The study looked at travel time index, a ratio of travel time in the peak period of traffic to travel time in free flow, outside of peak travel time. Austin's travel time index ranked third worst among the 101 cities.

Austin's overall index in 2009 was 1.28, meaning an hour trip on average takes 1.28 hours during peak traffic.

Although Washington and Los Angeles had a higher travel time index, of 1.30 and 1.38 respectively in 2009, Austin ranked first overall because of its dramatic travel time index change since 1982, when the ratio was only 1.08.

In 2010, TxDOT ranked the 100 worst bottlenecks in the state. I-35 from Hwys. 71 to US 183 was ranked No. 4, with a travel time index of 1.45.

David Schrank, co-author of the 2010 Texas Transportation Institute report, attributed I-35's poor traffic conditions to an old design that has not been fully redeveloped.

"It is a function of road design from 50 years ago that is still in play today, with vehicles that are designed to perform at higher speeds and with less distance between cars than we might have had years ago when the road was built," Schrank said.

Funding at issue

Although the I-35 advisory committee has not estimated a cost for its I-35/Toll 130 project, state Sen. Kirk Watson, D-Austin, has said the project would never happen because of a lack of state funds.

"It's good the people are trying to come up with innovative solutions," Watson said, "but at a point in time when the state has failed in its efforts to keep up with finances, [in order to] provide the sort of transportation solutions that the people need and want, a proposal like that is probably not likely to happen."

Watson said the discussion of whether the proposal is a good or a bad idea would not even happen in light of the budget issues facing the Legislature.

"The truth of the matter is, for over a decade now there has been a lack of appropriate emphasis on how we are going to fund the growth of this state when it comes to transportation," Watson said. "The problems are now coming home to roost."

State Rep. Eddie Rodriguez, D-Austin, said although the project is an interesting concept, he is not sure if redirecting drivers from I-35 to Toll 130 would be received well by his constituents in Austin. Rodriguez represents District 51, which stretches between Central and South Austin along I-35.

In time, Toll 130 will also see increased traffic flow as the city grows, he said.

"Instinctively, I don't know if that will really work," Rodriguez said. "I think that is quite a bit of a diversion."

As state Rep. Larry Gonzales, who represents District 52, noted, it is important to keep in mind that the I-35 advisory committee's proposal is merely a recommendation for TxDOT and the Legislature to review, and there is no promise of any immediate construction.

"It's good in the sense that you have to look at it and you have to start prioritizing what it is you are going to do and how you are going to do it," the District 52 lawmaker said. "You have to have those conversations."

Lopez said the committee's recommendations would help guide TxDOT in improving the corridor.

"There is going to have to be a lot of vetting to go through these ideas," Lopez said.

Other traffic solutions

Part of the challenge with turning Toll 130 into a non-tolled highway would be paying back all the investors who helped get the highway built to begin with.

Lopez said it is more feasible for TxDOT to improve the parallel corridors along I-35.

On Feb. 24 the Texas Transportation Commission voted to lower toll rates for trucks on Toll 130 and Toll 45 SE. The new rates will go into effect March 1.

The toll rate change is expected to have a net neutral impact on tolled roadway revenue, but it should increase the number of trucks using the two toll roads. Lopez said the toll rate change should encourage Austin freight through traffic to use Toll 130 rather than I-35.

The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority plans to improve US 183 by upgrading it to a tolled freeway. The project is expected to begin in 2015 or 2016.

TxDOT is currently gathering public input for the MoPac Improvement Project, which may add new lanes to MoPac or redesignate existing lanes as HOV lanes. Lopez said a consultant company would soon be hired to study Loop 360, examining how traffic signals could be improved to increase traffic flow.

"Hopefully, all of that put together can help mobility through our town," Lopez said. Large-scale expansion and construction on I-35 is not possible, Lopez said, because of I-35's limited footprint and right of way. He also said TxDOT does not have nearly enough funds for such an overhaul.

Gas tax revenue

Lopez said TxDOT could only fund projects that the state allows, and right now the agency receives a bulk of its revenue from the gas tax and vehicle registration fees.

Over the years the gas tax revenue has brought in a steadily decreasing revenue for TxDOT. The gas tax is 20 cents a gallon in Texas, and 75 percent of its total revenue goes to the State Highway Fund.

Motor fuel taxes generated $3 billion in 2010, accounting for 3.6 percent of the state's total net revenue. In 2000, motor fuel taxes generated $2.69 billion and represented 5.4 percent of the state's total net revenue. From 1999 to 2000, the amount of motor fuel taxes generated changed by 3.7 percent; the percent change from 2009 to 2010 was 0.3 percent.

Lopez said the decreasing revenue brought in from the gas tax could be due to more fuel-efficient cars and alternative methods of fueling vehicles.

Lopez said he suspects this decreased-revenue trend to continue, which may require the Legislature to look at different
Segment 3 recommendations: I-35/Toll 45 SE/Toll 130 Alternative

The My 35 advisory committee proposed in January several recommendations for improving the entire I-35 corridor across the state. TxDOT officials said the recommendations will help guide their improvement efforts but are not guaranteed projects. Some improvements may require legislative approval. Any interstate re-designation would require approval of the Federal Highway Administration.

- Convert one general purpose lane on I-35 in each direction to at least one dynamically priced managed lane, leaving at least two non-tolled lanes in each direction from Hwy. 195 to Toll 45 SE. I-35 will then be re-designed as a non-interstate facility.

- Widen Toll 130 to six lanes from Hwy. 195 north of Georgetown to Toll 45 SE in Mustang Ridge, removing the tolls and redesignating this portion as Toll 130.

- Widen Toll 45 SE to six lanes from Mustang Ridge to I-35 northeast of Buda, remove the tolls and redesignate Toll 45 SE as I-35.

- Widen Toll 130 to six lanes from Mustang Ridge to I-10 in Seguin and remove the tolls; portion would remain designated as Toll 130.

- Improve the two north/northeastern San Antonio I-35/I-410 interchanges and the I-35/Loop 1604 interchange in north San Antonio as the second priority project for Segment 3; estimated cost between $500 million and $900 million.

- Upgrade Loop 1604 to a six-lane controlled access facility from I-35 NE in Live Oak to I-10 E. south of Converse for approximately eight miles as the third priority project for Segment 3; estimated cost between $300 million and $400 million.

- Upgrade US 183 to a four-lane, full freeway from Hwy. 290 northeast of downtown Austin to Hwy. 71 southeast of downtown Austin for approximately eight miles as the fourth priority project in Segment 3; estimated cost between $200 million and $300 million.

A past proposal

In the mid 1990's TxDOT proposed a model for I-35 with expanded lanes, lane elevation and fly overs into downtown.

The Downtown Austin Alliance was instantly unsatisfied with the model, said Sinclair Black, a local architect and a member of the alliance's board at the time.

Black proposed a model that would have increased the number of bridges over I-35, re-establishing a grid similar to what Austin had before the interstate was built.

However, I-35 would have to have been lowered from the lake north to about 51st Street. In this altered corridor, drivers would only be able to enter I-35 at the north border of the lake and exit near 51st Street.

He said re-establishing the grid would raise land value and reintegrate the city.

Black's proposal did not win widespread support, but he maintains that it is still viable.

"There is no reason why I-35 should be such a liability, such an albatross around the neck of Austin," Black said. "Especially when there is a vision that civilizes it. Makes it possible for the land uses of the city to grow back up around it—like healing a wound."

Austin's I-35 goal

HOV lanes have been suggested as an option for reducing the number of cars on I-35. A dynamically priced lane would not only help fund future efforts, but encourage people to drive during non-peak times, said Ginger Goodin, research engineer with the Texas Transportation Institute.

Active Traffic Management, a system that changes speed limits into a city’s core depending on time of day, could help smooth traffic and reduce sudden stopping and accelerating, Goodin said.

City of Austin Transportation Director Rob Spillar said the city recently began a $1.5 million study of the I-35 corridor. A consulting firm will be hired to look at ways to squeeze more capacity from the north and south into downtown, he said. All this would occur within I-35’s existing footprint—restriping the highway may be a way to accomplish this.

Spillar said the city would also look at how entrance and exit ramps could be reconfigured so that frontage roads were used more often.

I-35 was designed for a different age, and, in some ways, the original designers did not know to allot for future expansion needs, Spillar said.

"We made problems when we solved some problems. We can’t make them all go away—that’s the reality—but we can make some deliberate incremental improvements," he said.

The city is engaged in improving the 51st Street interchange, as well as the Y at Oak Hill. TxDOT will help partner in the design of both improvements but will not help fund or participate in the actual construction.

Transportation officials announced March 3 intersection redesign improvements for the Hwy. 290 corridor between Joe Tanner Lane and FM 1826. The improvements will change how left turns are made along the corridor and should increase “green time” for drivers, Lopez said.

The City of Austin will pay for $4 million of the $5.58 million cost with the rest being funded from Travis County. TxDOT; the Mobility Authority and Capital Metro.

Several other projects in progress will look at ways to improve roadways along the I-35 corridor, including Airport Boulevard, East Riverside Drive and Cesar Chavez Street.

An information system that alerts drivers of traffic conditions ahead of time, with suggested route alternatives, is also an idea the city is considering, Spillar said.

In order to improve the economic vitality of the region, transportation officials have said more must be done with what exists of I-35.

"We have I-35 and the city built around it, and it is what it is," Spillar said. "We may not be able to solve all the problems, but we can address some of the issues. Make mobility better, make life better."
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Gary Gattis
Spacetime Studios, President
UFCU Member
Local leaders discuss regional development

Compiled by Amy Deis

Editor’s note: Coffee with Impact is a monthly forum at our headquarters featuring leaders in various sectors who are making a difference in Central Texas.

In February, Gary Farmer, president of Heritage Title Company and co-founder of Opportunity Austin; Tim Crowley, regional president of Frost Bank and chairman of Opportunity Austin; and Dave Porter, senior vice president of economic development for the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, discussed Central Texas’ economic development and transportation.

Opportunity Austin is an economic development initiative, started by the chamber in 2004, to foster job creation in the region.

What do we need to be watching and be aware of with Austin’s economic development?

Farmer: Austin has prospered in times and suffered in times. Those swings were very radical back when we were a government and education community and just started in the tech biz. One thing we wanted to do was diversify the economy so it would become sustainable so we could mitigate these big ups and big downs. A big down time brought about the call to create Opportunity Austin [the economic development arm of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce].

What types of high-impact jobs in the technology sector have we lost, and what does our business community need to do to draw those types of jobs back in?

Porter: A lot of those [semiconductor] jobs just won’t be replaced, which is why we are working hard to diversify. We’re working more in life sciences to bring biotech, life science companies to Austin. The creative media is a huge growing tech sector, so we’re trying to diversify and bring more creative media, game developers to Austin. Clean energies—it’s probably the biggest and hottest sector that’s growing. So we’re trying to replace those lost jobs with the same type of skill set in different industry sectors.

How do you balance regionalism?

Farmer: What we’ve all come to understand is that if a company relocates in Georgetown, there’s an accretive benefit in San Marcos. If a company locates in Bastrop, there’s an economic benefit in Cedar Park. We’re going to rise and fall as a region. What the chamber does is try to put companies in contact with the communities where they might best be served. We’re agnostic as to where a company might go. We really don’t care.

What is the future of transportation in the Austin area?

Farmer: If we’re going to have roads in Central Texas in the immediate future, they’re most likely to be toll roads.

Crowley: [The MetroRail] is great if you want to get from Leander to downtown or the seven stops along the way. The real key is what do you do with those folks once they get to downtown Austin? Of course you’ve seen [Austin] Mayor [Lee] Leffingwell discuss having an urban rail package of some kind for voters in 2012.

The mayor’s plan … makes a lot of sense, and it’s going to cost a lot of money and a lot of short-term pain. Austin’s population is doubling every 20 years. We can’t continue to put another 25,000 to 40,000 cars a year on the road system we have.
AISD braces for increased budget cuts from the state

By Kate Hull and Joe Olivieri

After declaring financial emergency March 1, the Austin Independent School District is preparing to cut staff and expenses in anticipation of large cuts in state funding.

On March 28, the district’s board of trustees will vote to accept a task force facility master plan that administrators will use to create recommendations.

The board will host a community conversation March 31 to discuss how the preliminary budget affects the district at Bowie High School, located at 4103 W. Slaughter Lane.

At the March 1 meeting, the board continued discussions on the 2011–12 preliminary budget, which will not include school closures.

“It is a very sad day in the history of public education in the state of Texas and even sadder in AISD,” trustee Vincent Torres said. “We are faced with a very difficult decision, and I can assure the public we all took this very seriously and the decision was not taken lightly.”

Declaring an emergency and stating the need for change and reorganization allows the district to terminate teacher contracts as part of addressing a $94.4 million budget shortfall.

“It is prudent and responsible, after a year of really talking about this, to take the action and ensure that our capital office has all the time to work one on one with the employees of our district,” AISD Superintendent Meria Carstarphen said.

The district has identified 1,153 full-time positions that may be cut. Of those jobs, 571 are teachers, 324 are classified positions in the district offices. Not all staff members have been notified as to whether they are on the list of cuts.

The superintendent said school closures are off the table for the 2012 fiscal year but are a part of the task force facilities master plan for 2013.

Eight elementary schools and one middle school were identified for potential closure.

Carstarphen said the preliminary budget has been in the works for more than a year. The board will take no official action on it until June.

“AISD spends more money than we bring in,” she said. “When we do not have enough money as we need to pay the bills, we are in a deficit. We have been addressing this every budget cycle since I have been here, but what makes it worse is the budget crisis across the state.”

Budget assumptions

The big questions going forward are how much state cuts will increase AISD’s budget gap, and how the district will make up the difference.

The budget crisis is due to “lower property taxes, loss of one-time federal funding and potentially up to $10 billion less in state funding,” according to the AISD budget presentation.

AISD administrators built the preliminary budget assuming the district could cut $62.8 million toward a $94.4 million projected shortfall over two years.

Chief Financial Officer Nicole Conley-Abram said the district “is exploring all options” to close the $31.6 million gap.

If state cuts to AISD exceed expectations, the deficit could rise from $94.4 million to $103 million.

For more information visit www.austinisd.org.

Comment at more.impactnews.com/11827

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Cafe Monet
Pottery painting studio offers creative space

By Joe Olivieri

Cafe Monet’s co-owners wanted their paint–your–own–pottery studio to be a supportive place where anyone could be creative.

At the studio, Jules and Charles Winson offer customers all of the tools and training they need and then allow them to make the space their own.

“It’s part of our business model,” Jules Winson said. “We wanted to create a place where you could just walk in. There are no 10-week sessions. You can bring in wine and cheese, or order in a pizza.”

The couple drew from Jules’ arts background and Charles’ business experience to open their studio at 4477 S. Lamar Blvd., near West Gate Boulevard, in 2000.

“We were always interested in being entrepreneurs, and doing something with art and helping people discover their creative sides,” Winson said.

“We’d seen studios in other cities and decided to open up one in Austin.”

Following popular demand, they opened their Central Austin studio, at 4700 W. Guadalupe St., Ste. 11, in 2009.

At both locations, customers choose one of 200 to 250 types of pottery, and listen to a brief painting tutorial.

“We recommend about one and a half to two hours [to paint], but there’s no time limit,” Winson said. “They can come back and finish a piece.”

Customers leave their painted pottery at the studio, and staffers fire the pieces in a kiln. They can pick up the pieces in about five days. Mosaics can be taken home the same day.

Pottery starts at $7, but the average piece costs about $20 plus tax. The price is all-inclusive; there are no extra charges for studio time, glazing and firing, she said.

“Mugs are very popular. We offer hand and footprints, platters and gifts for grandparents,” Winson said. “The kids like painting fairies, puppies and kittens.”

Cafe Monet hosts special events and welcomes community groups to take over its studios.

In February, Cafe Monet put on its third annual Death by Chocolate event, featuring a chocolate bar and door prizes. In April, the studio will organize a flower arranging and vase painting workshop.

The studio also accommodates birthday parties, bridal showers, story time and workshops.

“We’re always offering something new. We’re reaching out into the community,” she said.

Winson noted that Cafe Monet’s highest priority is making sure customers have fun and leave with a positive experience.

When that happens, Winson said, the smiles are rewarding.
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SetonHeart.com

*Region is Austin-Round Rock, TX, as defined by the federal government’s office of Management and Budget to include Williamson, Travis, Hays, Caldwell and Bastrop Counties. For more on Seton Austin’s rankings, visit seton.net/heart.
Madam Mam’s Noodle and More
Authentic Thai recipes draw Austin regulars
By Taylor Short

The owners of Madam Mam’s Noodle and More, a decade-old Austin institution, combined the skills of a Thai cook and the business sense of a retail veteran to create a series of successful restaurants.

The husband and wife duo now operate three locations, working to maintain consistency in flavors and friendly customer service to their loyal customers.

“We’re pretty serious about our cooking and the way we do things,” owner Sap Apisaksiri said. “We try to make it more affordable with the best ingredients that are available to us.”

The restaurant chain began with the reunion of Sap and Chatluang Apisaksiri, or “Mam” as she is known by friends. The high school sweethearts were separated when Sap moved from Bangkok, Thailand, to Austin to study chemical engineering at The University of Texas.

After working at a grocery store for nearly two decades, Sap persuaded Mam to move to Austin, and the couple married in 2000. The first Madam Mam’s, located on Guadalupe Street near the edge of the UT campus, opened in 2001.

While Sap trains employees and handles the business aspects, his wife uses her cooking skills and recipes learned from her mother and grandmother to create a menu of more than 100 authentic Thai items, he said.

The restaurant took off and after two and a half years, the couple began searching for the perfect spot to open their second location in North Austin.

Their search was unsuccessful at first. Sap Apisaksiri said many landlords were not interested in having a non-franchise restaurant in their shopping center.

In 2005, the couple opened their second restaurant on West Gate Boulevard, and generated enough interest to expand to a third location on Anderson Lane in 2009.

“Aafter opening [on West Gate], everybody wanted us to open there—Cedar Park, Round Rock, San Marcos—everywhere,” Sap Apisaksiri said.

Regulars flock to each location for favorites such as Pad Thai and Pad Sea-Ew—noodle dishes with vegetables and Thai spices, Apisaksiri said.

At the West Gate location in Southwest Austin, Apisaksiri cleans a fish tank in the crowded dining room, decorated by Mam with dozens of red, green, yellow and blue paper parasols hanging from the ceiling.

Instead of spreading themselves too thin, Apisaksiri said three locations are enough for now. He said maintaining three restaurants keeps him busy every day, but loves what he does.

“I believe in loyalty and everything we do here is very sincere and honest to the customer,” he said. “We try to make food come out fast and not expensive, and most of all, very delicious.”

Popular dishes
• Satay—an appetizer of skewered meats served with spicy peanut sauce ($5.95)
• Pad Thai—noodles stir-fried with choice of meat or tofu, egg, vegetables and sweet and tangy sauce ($7.50)
• Pad Ga-Tiam Prik-Thai—stir-fried flat rice, ground meat, vegetables, curry powder, soy sauce with fried garlic ($7.95 with chicken, pork, beef or tofu, $9.95 with shrimp or squid)
• Guay Teaw Kua Gai—flat rice noodles, stir-fried with choice of meat, egg, vegetables, soy sauce and lettuce ($7.95 with chicken, pork, beef or tofu, $9.95 with shrimp or squid)
• Sticky Rice and Mango—sweetened sticky rice served with fresh mango ($5.50)

Austin locations
• 2514 Guadalupe St. 472-8306
• 4514 West Gate Blvd. 899-8525
• 2700 Anderson Lane, Ste. 419 371-9930

The Madam Mam’s location near West Gate Boulevard is the restaurant’s second location, opened in 2005. Its original site is on Guadalupe Street near The University of Texas campus. The third location, on Anderson Lane, opened in 2009.
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Ellen Jefferson
Veterinarian works to make Austin a no-kill city

By Beth Wade

Ellen Jefferson’s love of animals has helped shape her career, inspiring her to start a private veterinary practice and later to become a leader for Austin’s no-kill movement.

“I always loved animals, and it seemed like a natural thing [to become a vet],” Jefferson said.

After earning her undergraduate degree from Trinity University in San Antonio, Jefferson earned her veterinary degree from Virginia Tech and then decided to settle in Austin.

“My mom grew up in San Antonio and was a school teacher in the ‘60s in Austin,” Jefferson said. “She spoke highly of it. It feels like home, even though as a military brat, I never really had a home.”

Jefferson founded Emancipet in 1999 as a low-cost spay/neuter clinic after volunteering at area animal shelters.

“I was just struck by how many animals in ’99 were dying no matter what their health condition,” she said. “It didn’t make a lot of sense for me to spend my time volunteering as a vet to help the animals at the shelter because they were just getting killed anyway.”

Emancipet was Jefferson’s way of helping lower the number of animals going into the shelters. The nonprofit grew and was able to hire an executive director and create a board of directors. Jefferson, who was upset by the number of animals still being euthanized, decided to step down and joined Austin Pets Alive.

“I just felt like the number of animals that were still dying was still too high after 10 years of doing low-cost spay/neuter, and I felt like there must be more that could be done at the shelter level,” she said. “I kind of circled back to the shelter level and approached Austin Pets Alive to see if they would join me in trying to—since they had the original goal anyway—join forces and really push to make Austin a no-kill city.”

Jefferson is now executive director of Austin Pets Alive, which was founded in 1997 by a group of activists. Her goal is to increase the number of live outcomes.

“Everybody talks about euthanasia percent, but actually that’s not what we were focused on,” she said. “We were focused on live outcome numbers and how do we increase the overall live outcome number. We started working with Town Lake [Animal Center] to take animals that no other group wanted. We didn’t want to duplicate efforts because that would just displace [animals], rather than increase [live outcomes]. We started doing offsite adoptions for Town Lake and increasing the number of animals that were leaving alive.”

The group’s effort to make Austin a no-kill city were aided in March 2010 when the City Council adopted a plan to reduce animal euthanizations to 10 percent of the animal shelter population, which it officially reached in February 2011. The City of Austin later surpassed its goal and reached 8 percent.

“I think anybody can do anything,” she said. “It just takes standing up to opposition and going with what you believe is right. You can make a difference, not easily—it’s definitely difficult—but everybody has the power to make change and to do it.”

Beyond her work at Austin Pets Alive, Jefferson serves on the city’s Animal Advisory Commission.
Nonprofit

LifeWorks
Providing resources for youth, families in crisis
By Kate Hull

Each year, LifeWorks helps more than 10,000 families and at-risk youths make the transition from crisis to safety.

Soon, the nonprofit will be able to help even more people. In January, the organization broke ground on a 31,000-square-foot youth and family resource center in East Austin that will increase available services by 25 percent.

"Throughout everything we do—because we deal with populations and youth that have been through a lot—our central belief is that every youth deserves at least one adult who is going to be unconditionally supportive of his or her success," Executive Director Susan McDowell said.

LifeWorks originated in 1998 through the merger of four service-based nonprofits—Child and Family Service, Pathways Community Counseling, Teen-age Parent Council and Youth Options—to help people access all the services they need through one group.

According to its director, LifeWorks is known for helping three core populations: youths living on the street, children aging out of the foster care system and teenage or young parents.

LifeWorks helps these individuals by offering services ranging from crisis intervention counseling to GED courses and life training skills.

Its goal is to help individuals achieve self-sufficiency, provide support wherever necessary and strengthen families dealing with emotional distress by using inherent strengths.

McDowell, whose background is in adult education, said two inspiring things she sees daily are the resiliency of those who come to LifeWorks despite what they have been through and their determination to move forward with their lives.

"We are, at heart, a youth and family service organization that has a broad spectrum of services to support youth and families that are struggling in the areas of mental health, homelessness and education," she said.

LifeWorks is a local-only nonprofit, said Brett Barnes, director of development and external relations. "Everything that is invested in us through corporate or individual sponsors stays in our Austin community," he said.

LifeWorks has 170 employees working at nine buildings throughout Austin, including three youth and family resource centers in South, Central and North Austin, as well as an education center that focuses on adult education.

The nonprofit also has a street outreach center, emergency shelter, transitional living shelter, young moms and babies shelter, and two supportive housing centers located throughout the Austin area.

Executive Director Susan McDowell said the most inspiring part of her job is seeing people's resilience.
South Austin Civic Club
Group informs and advocates for residents
By Joe Olivieri

I f you have ever used a piece of infrastructure in South Austin—from paved streets to schools to major roadways—you may have benefited from the South Austin Civic Club’s advocacy.

Throughout its 76-year history, club members have encouraged development and educated residents about local issues.

Today, the club continues that tradition by hosting guest speakers and student government days.

“People are involved in their businesses or fields and their focus gets narrowed down,” Club President Melissa Connelly said. “Here, you can hear issues from other parts of the city and what you can do about them.”

Board member and former president Nan Clayton said, “We’re the only organization that represents the area of the county south of the river. We’re really a regional organization.”

To appreciate the club’s accomplishments, the climate in which the club was founded must be considered.

South Austin in the early 20th century was small and underdeveloped. Club records show that in 1911, workers were still grading roads with mule-pulled carts. In 1933, there were only two apartment houses and a horse trough on South Congress Avenue.

About 4,800 people lived south of the river by 1935. City limits stopped near Live Oak Street.

A group of about 60 businessmen believed City Hall was not doing enough to support their part of town. They formed the South Austin Civic Club in 1935 and elected a local plumber as their first president.

“Uncle” Ben Howell, nicknamed “the Mayor of South Austin,” led the club’s first lobbying efforts.

They joined with other organizations to call for paved streets, streetlights for South Congress and a bridge to be built over Blunn Creek. Howell also raised funds for school band uniforms.

Transportation and development issues dominated the club’s early years. The club made its voice heard at countless council meetings and regional board hearings.

Newspaper clips in the club’s archives describe “100 spirited South Austin residents ... who called for an east-west thoroughfare” and members taking elected officials to task for approving a telephone company rate hike.

“The civic club, the Lions Club and the Austin Chamber of Commerce lobbied to widen the Congress Avenue Bridge.”

“The roadway was expanded to 44 feet and the lanes were made wide enough for the modern automobile going to and coming from a new South Austin,” former Club President Ben White recalled in a 1950 letter.

As Austin grew, the club made sure South Austin grew with it. In the 1960s, the club endorsed a library branch and construction of Crockett High School and the Toney Burger Activity Center.

It also advocated to extend MoPac south of the Colorado River and add sidewalks near elementary schools.

The club began supporting the Greater South Austin Junior Football League.

By 1970, 50,000, or one-fifth of the population, chose to live in “the Sunny South,” according to a club promotional campaign.

The 1980s and 1990s brought new focus on state legislation and highway construction. The club welcomed Lockheed Martin and Motorola to the area.

Member Morton Crockett said the club fought for curbing on South Congress and Olford Street.

The club says it has always sought to live its mission: “to provide leadership, to inform citizens, to promote business opportunities, to encourage community involvement and to be an advocate for issues that affect the well being of South Austin.”

Today, the club runs a forum where South Austin High School students pose questions to political candidates. It also supports a school library project and Becker Elementary School.

The South Austin Civic Club invites community leaders to speak at its monthly meetings, which are open to members.

This month, Austin Independent School District CFO Nicole Conley-Abram discussed the district budget crisis.

“I think the most important function we serve is informing the public,” Vice President Chong Shin said. “It’s about getting involved in the process. Especially in these economic times, let’s not forget our civic responsibility.”

Members of the South Austin Civic Club meet in 1955.

**Sample of the club’s accomplishments**

- Influenced location of South Austin’s first post office
- Lobbied support for First Street, Lamar Boulevard bridges
- Influenced new school construction
- Influenced extension of water utilities
- Influenced Garrison Park development
- Supported hospital construction
- Supported funding for Toll 130 and Toll 45
- Lobbied to speed up interchange construction at I-35, Ben White Boulevard
- Purchased and donated Becker School property

**Membership information**

Learn how to become a member of the South Austin Civic Club by visiting www.southaustincivicclub.org/about_sacc

**Members of the South Austin Civic Club**

- Willie Kocurek and Frek Hannah attend the annual banquet in 1989.
- Willie Kocurek raises funds at the 1993 fajita sale.

**South Austin Civic Club**

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South Congress Avenue spans roughly seven miles from Slaughter Lane to the bridge over Lady Bird Lake, where it becomes North Congress Avenue.

A section of South Congress north of Ben White Boulevard is home to St. Edward’s University, a private Catholic liberal arts college. The area around campus contains a mix of established restaurants and small businesses as well as condominiums and retail properties.

**Dining**

1. Scoops, shakes and sundaes are showcased at **Amy’s Ice Creams**. The 3100 S. Congress, Ste. 3A branch is one of 12 in the Austin area. 851-2697, www.amysicecreams.com

2. **El Borrego de Oro**, 3900 S. Congress Ave., has been serving traditional Mexican fare since 1995. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers live music on Sundays. 866-609-1572, www.elborrogateoro.com

3. **Crow Bar**’s menu features specialty drinks and cold beers. 3116 S. Congress Ave., www.crowbaraustin.com

4. Fresh Mexican food is the focus of **El Gallo Mexican Restaurant**. The eatery, located at 2910 S. Congress Ave., offers a full food and drink menu and a party room that seats 90 people. 444-2205, www.elgallorestaurant.com

5. **Flacos Tacos Inc.** serves Mexican and Tex-Mex fare. 3632 S. Congress Ave., 444-2767

6. Cuban and Caribbean meals are available at **Habana SoCo**, 2728 S. Congress Ave. The restaurant, which opened in 2001, has happy hour specials in addition to its lunch and dinner offerings. 443-4252, www.habanaoaustin.com

7. **Opel Divine’s Penn Field**, 3601 S. Congress Ave., features popular American dishes. Brunch is available Saturday and Sunday. The restaurant has three locations in Austin. 707-0237, www.opaldivines.com

8. Coffee, drinks and pizza are served up at **Stomping Grounds Coffee and Cocktail Lounge**, 3801 S. Congress Ave. The lounge also holds karaoke nights, live music and special events. 394-6999, www.stompinggroundsaustrinas.com

Business


11. **Black Orchid Salon** offers hair coloring, styling, haircuts, shampoos and chemical services. Manicures and pedicures also available. 3801 S. Congress Ave., 326-1010, www.blackorchidalon.com

12. **Capitol Rubber Stamp** sells stamps, engravings and notary equipment, among other products. 3314 S. Congress Ave., 447-0335, www.capstamp.com

13. **Giant Media** offers public relations and marketing consulting to corporations and small businesses. 2900 S. Congress Ave., Ste. 106. 462-4666, www.giantmediallc.com


15. **Great Outdoors Nursery** specializes in seasonal and perennial plants and gardening necessities. Classes, organic products and gifts are also for sale. 2730 S. Congress Ave., 448-2992, www.gonursery.com

16. Fitness and dance studio **NiaSpace** offers Pilates, yoga, Zumba and bellydancing among its class options. 443-3013, www.niaspace.com

17. **Simply Austin Furniture** has sold home furnishings since 2009. Living room, dining room and bedroom furniture is for sale in a variety of styles and prices. 3405 S. Congress Ave, 447-5511, www.simplyaustinfurniture.com

18. The wedding planners and event coordinators at **Something to Celebrate** can create events to personal specifications. 2900 S. Congress Ave., 733-6130, www.somethingtocelebrate.biz


Healthcare

20. **Addiction and Psychotherapy Services** offers outpatient and psychological/psychiatric services for people addicted to opiates. 444-5092, www.austinmethadone.com

21. **Boarding, examinations, surgeries and preventative medicine can be scheduled through South Congress Veterinary Clinic, 3300 S. Congress Ave., 442-7444**

Compiled by Joe Olivieri

This is a sample of businesses and organizations in the area. The list is not comprehensive.
You might not immediately recognize some of the most innocent faces as hungry. The fact is that 1 in 3 people nourished by our Capital Area Food Bank is a child. And the need for food assistance among our neighbors has increased more than 60% in the past four years. Hunger is unacceptable. Especially in our own backyard. But we can solve hunger. With your help.

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* Qualified customers within the Austin, Sunset Valley, Rollingwood, West Lake Hills, Kyle and Cedar Park city limits can receive this incentive for both new installations and replacements in either new or existing homes.
Data compiled by
Robert McKenna
Austin Real Estate Partners
288-8088
www.austintreps.com

Overview

Build-out year: 1996 to 2001

Builders: Formerly Milburn Homes-Continental, later purchased by D.R. Horton

Square footage: 1,422–3,354

Home values: $176,000–$277,000

HOA dues (estimated): $396 annually

Amenities: Swimming pool, parks with walking/jogging/biking trails, children’s playground with grills, greenbelts throughout

Nearby attractions: Laid-pack Birdsong Wildflower Center, Escarpment Village

Shopping Center

Property taxes:

Travis County: 0.4658
Austen ISD: 1.2270
City of Austin: 0.4571
Travis County Hospital District: 0.0719
Austin Community College: 0.0951
Austin ISD: 1.2210

Total (per $100 value): 2.3169

Schools:

Bowie High School
Boone Elementary School
Cowen Elementary School
Covington Middle School
Miles Elementary School

Home sales (January 2010–December 2010)

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<th>No. of homes sold in the last year</th>
<th>Square footage Low/High</th>
<th>Selling price Low/High</th>
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<td>1,422–3,371</td>
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Home sales (As of March 4, 2011)

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<td>95</td>
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Featured homes

8938 Whiteworth
3 Bedroom / 2.5 Bath
Agent: Madeline Mansen
291-4400
Selling price: $259,900

8955 West Hove Loop
3 Bedroom / 2.5 Bath
Agent: Michele Blood
924-5511
Selling price: $240,000

4400 Corran Ferry Loop
4 Bedroom / 2.5 Bath
Agent: Mike Jones
632-0037
Selling price: $221,000

4416 East Hove Loop
3 Bedroom / 2 Bath
Agent: Amy Gandy
997-4602
Selling price: $210,000

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**REAL ESTATE**

**Market Data**  
Southwest Austin

**On the market**  
(As of March 3, 2011)

**Monthly home sales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>78745</th>
<th>78749</th>
<th>78739</th>
<th>78748</th>
<th>78737</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 2011</td>
<td>24/156,000</td>
<td>22/234,750</td>
<td>18/320,000</td>
<td>22/176,750</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 2010</td>
<td>30/167,950</td>
<td>39/228,000</td>
<td>20/332,500</td>
<td>40/177,450</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>78735</th>
<th>78736</th>
<th>78737</th>
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<td>Feb. 2011</td>
<td>7/5375,000</td>
<td>6/272,000</td>
<td>13/355,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 2010</td>
<td>17/328,000</td>
<td>8/192,250</td>
<td>11/299,200</td>
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*Market Data includes condominiums, townhomes and houses.

**Property Listings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Bed/Bath</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Sq. ft.</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Agency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>3212 Whites Drive</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>Bryan Webb</td>
<td>415-7379</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>7520 Escala Drive</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$2,475,000</td>
<td>6,556</td>
<td>Maureen Martin</td>
<td>689-0414</td>
<td>Coldwell Banker United REALTOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condominiums</td>
<td>7701 Rialto Boulevard</td>
<td>2br/2ba</td>
<td>$189,900</td>
<td>1,723</td>
<td>Marian Derks</td>
<td>658-1642</td>
<td>RE/MAX Capital City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>5717 Medicine Creek</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$370,000</td>
<td>2,946</td>
<td>Linnann Guest</td>
<td>297-6283</td>
<td>Moreland Properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>9205 Eddy Cove</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$769,000</td>
<td>3,842</td>
<td>Sharon Davis</td>
<td>413-1280</td>
<td>Coldwell Banker United REALTOR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>7601 Calibrum</td>
<td>4br/2ba</td>
<td>$149,900</td>
<td>1,968</td>
<td>Allen Narwood</td>
<td>289-9546</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>6718 Silvermine Drive</td>
<td>2br/1ba</td>
<td>$102,000</td>
<td>1,072</td>
<td>Kristi Larkam</td>
<td>914-8950</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>6718 Silvermine Drive</td>
<td>2br/1ba</td>
<td>$86,000</td>
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<td>Burt Dement</td>
<td>829-2004</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>11411 Austin Bend Road</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$238,000</td>
<td>1,640</td>
<td>Laura Gitre</td>
<td>633-8617</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>8501 Persimmon Grove</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$299,900</td>
<td>3,388</td>
<td>Terese Peabody</td>
<td>628-8554</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>321 Torrington Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>12317 Alcana Drive</td>
<td>5br/4ba</td>
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<td>301-8355</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>10825 Canfield</td>
<td>4br/2ba</td>
<td>$503,950</td>
<td>4,021</td>
<td>John Squires</td>
<td>970-1970</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>11828 Via Grande</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
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<td>2,775</td>
<td>Mark Miller</td>
<td>538-9515</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>3905 Lost Oasis Hollow</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$465,000</td>
<td>3,548</td>
<td>Cathy Trifilo</td>
<td>789-4917</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>1602 Sylvan Glade</td>
<td>2br/1ba</td>
<td>$192,000</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>Laura Nye</td>
<td>497-5946</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>2301 Remuda Trail</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$244,900</td>
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<td>Timothy Seeliger</td>
<td>679-7808</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>6810 Deasonhill Drive</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$129,000</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>Kari Cooper</td>
<td>420-0300</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>8912 Virgil Court</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$157,900</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>Michael Gracza</td>
<td>461-1110</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>8915 Hove Loop</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$240,000</td>
<td>2,319</td>
<td>Michelle Blood</td>
<td>924-5511</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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<td>Single Family</td>
<td>6805 Gaur Drive</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$269,900</td>
<td>2,223</td>
<td>Jeff Pierce</td>
<td>413-6758</td>
<td>Keller Williams Realty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ZIP code guide**

- 78749 Shady Hollow / Manchaca area
- 78745 South of Ben White, Sunset Valley
- 78737 Oak Hill
- 78736 Oak Hill
- 78735 Barton View

For more residential real estate listings, visit more.impactnews.com/11999

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