Food trailers venture into Southwest Austin

‘Trailer parks’ may bring more mobile eateries south of Ben White Blvd.

By Joe Olivieri

Gourmet food trailers are plentiful downtown and south of Lady Bird Lake but become scarce south of Hwy. 290 and Hwy. 71.

Local food trailer operators said a lack of foot traffic and food courts may contribute to the limited options.

That may change after two new food courts open in Southwest Austin.

Oak Hill Food Trailer Haven is scheduled to open in late July near the Y at Oak Hill. Its first two trailers will be a fried seafood eatery and an ice cream vendor.

Farther south, the owners of the under-construction Moon-tower Saloon want to have three trailers on their Manchaca Road property when the bar opens later this year, co-owner Josh Bumb said.

“There is nothing [unique] around here in the way of lunch options,” Bumb said of Slaughter Lane, adding that the closest options were near MoPac or I-35. “Otherwise, it’s [fast-food restaurants].”

Austin ISD considers holding tax election

Officials say rate hike is needed for teacher salaries, programs

By Joe Olivieri

In August, Austin ISD will decide whether to hold a special election in November to raise its tax rate.

AISD’s board of trustees president, Mark Williams, said the district expects that expenses will outweigh revenues by $29.5 million next year, and the board of trustees has agreed to dip into reserves to make up the difference.

At the same time, district leaders want AISD to remain competitive with neighboring districts after two years of frozen salaries. AISD Chief Financial Officer Nicole Conley-Abram said the board has approved using reserves to give staffers a 3 percent raise for one year only, a $14.2 million expense.

Officials said that the district would need additional revenue to take on ongoing expenses.

The district would need to raise the tax rate to support its existing programs, make the raise permanent and follow up on stated priorities such as full-day pre-K, she said.

“It is a necessity. It’s not a matter of if. It’s a matter of when,” Conley-Abram said of raising the tax rate. “School districts are operating under a disadvantageous structure that is unlike the city or the county or other jurisdictions. As a result, we have had to be efficient. We have made dramatic changes in how we do business.”

“Over the last three years we have been cutting and trimming to the extent that is possible,” she continued. “We are only coming to taxpayers out of requirement.”

Development continues along West Hwy. 290

Multifamily housing units proposed in Hays County

By Joe Olivieri

The Hwy. 290 corridor between Oak Hill and Dripping Springs has been developing rapidly for almost a decade.

Homebuilders are still constructing single-family houses in Hays County, and new businesses are opening up to service a growing customer base.

Now developers are looking into adding multifamily housing to the area’s real estate landscape.

The City of Dripping Springs is reviewing a development agreement for apartments at Ledge Stone, and the city may see a site plan for Belterra apartments in September. Dripping Springs City Planner Jon Thompson said.

The apartments signal the area’s progression from the rural “Gateway to the Hill Country” to a suburb to more populated area.

“Dripping Springs is no longer a quaint suburban community,” Hays County Commissioner Ray Whisenant Jr said. “It is not as densely populated [as the Austin area], but we are approaching economic limits [in the current configuration].”

Single-family housing

The subdivision boom began in the 2000s. Belterra, Ledge Stone and Highpointe all set down roots in the last decade and have been building on lots ever since.

Ashton Woods Homes is building Ridgeview, a development

See: Tax election | 14

See Hvy. 290 | 15

Cattlelacs Chainsaw Art

Gallery I 19

Manchaca exhibit features carvings

Slaughter Lane I 24

The history behind the Southwest Austin road’s namesake

Spirit Reins I 23

Nonprofit offers horse therapy to children dealing with trauma

Ah La Cart I 21

Food trailer owners serve locally grown foods to their neighbors

‘Better to be overprepared’

Austin officials stress the need for preparedness, emergency services and organized transportation after visiting London to watch a Formula One event

Source: Austin ISD
At St. David’s South Austin Medical Center, we know that every second counts when a patient has a blocked artery. And that the time between when she arrives at our facility and when her blocked artery is opened is the most critical of all. We call it door-to-balloon time and while the ACC recommends 90 minutes or less, we average just 45 minutes. Cardiovascular disease is the #1 killer of women, regardless of race. That’s why we race to save their lives every day.

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Although Southwest Austin is home to many quintessentially “Austin” businesses and activities, there is one area where we fall short—food trailers.

We have a few spots dotting our landscape—see our profile of Ah La Carte on Page 21—but we have to drive north to enjoy a true variety of options.

One reason for this may be that we do not have many food trailer courts, places where many trailers can band together and benefit from strength in numbers.

Two new food trailer courts are planned for Southwest Austin. With them comes the promise of our own local piece of the food trailer scene.

This month’s front page story goes into more detail on the rise of food trailers, specifically what is planned for our own backyard.

Reader Feedback

Houses of worship expand reach in Southwest Austin

“It seems many churches in Austin aren’t content to be small. They seem geared toward outdoing each other with McMansion buildings or multiple sites, and they want me to pay for them. I’d prefer to spend my money feeding the poor, housing the homeless, taking care of widows and other social issues. I don’t care that much what the building I meet in looks like. It’s what’s on the inside that counts. I don’t understand why, if a church wants to grow, they can’t build up (add a second story to their existing building) or why they don’t add more church services perhaps with an additional preacher. And if they don’t already have a building, why not buy an existing building?”

— “Laura”

City working to close technology talent gap

“Quite honestly, there is not a talent gap here or anywhere else in the United States. The number of unemployed skilled engineers and developers is staggering. If truth be told, the only talent gap would be the ability to find enough foreigners who will work for sharply reduced wages. Those positions are being given to non-Americans here on H1B visas, or other mechanisms, over [unemployed], 100 percent U.S. citizens. Something is broken, and has been for a long time. It’s a dirty little secret in tech.”

— “S. Jones”

I encourage you to read Editor Joe Olivieri’s article, as he dives into the new sites, current vendors and the role location plays in the whole concept.

If that is not enough, I hope our story on taco stands on Page 13 will inspire you to try something new.

Businesses will go where there is a market for their services. If your favorite trailer is not in Southwest Austin yet, let them know that there are hungry diners waiting south of Hwy. 290. They might expand or relocate to our area.

Until then, here’s to seeing you at these new offerings!

Travis Baker
General Manager
tbaker@impactnews.com
Now Open

1 Bikealot opened at 4418 Pack Saddle Pass in early May. Owner/mechanic Brad Wimberly services various types of bicycles and stocks commuter-style bikes as well. Parts and accessories are available for sale. 916-8574, www.bikealot aust in.com

2 Ivo Gruner opened Boxcar Bistro at 3600 S. Lamar Blvd. in the beginning of May. The trailer serves French bistro soups and sandwiches, such as its croque monsieur ham and cheese sandwich and apple tarragon chicken sandwich. 693-7885, www.boxcarbistro.com

3 Costa Rica–based coffee shop chain The Coffee Cup plans to open at the end of July at 9901 Brodie Lane, Ste. 110. Owner Alfredo Montoya said the shop is scheduled to hold its grand opening on Aug. 13. www.thecoff eecup.us

4 Coraggio Hunter/Jumper opened its new horse training and boarding facility at 12901 Trails End in June. Owner/trainer Paige Erwin has operated the business for about six years and offers lessons and competition training. 567-9723, www.coraggio.org

5 Honky Tonk Hot Dogs opened June 19 at 3600 S. Lamar Blvd. Owner Scott Angle named his hot dogs and sausage menu items after local country-western musicians and hosts live music on the deck in front of his food trailer. 761-8622, www.honkytonkHzodogsatx.com

6 Jewelry Studies International opened at 321 W. Ben White Blvd., Ste. 204 earlier this year. The jewelry school offers certifications in 3Design CAD/ CAM and jewelry arts. The school also prepares students for argentium instructor certification. 861-5785, www.jewelrystudiesintl.com

7 Juaniki Stewart, licensed marriage and family therapist, opened LiveWell Psychotherapy at 3530 Bee Caves Road, Ste. 217 in early May. Stewart is also a licensed chemical dependency counselor and specializes in relationship, individual and group therapy. 888-657-2377, www.livewellpsychotherapy.net

8 Optica Torre opened inside the Walmart at 5017 W. Hwy. 290 on June 1. The practice, run by Andres Torre, O.D., provides full-spectrum optometric services, comprehensive eye examination, contact lens fitting and visual analysis. This is the practice’s second location. 892-2015, www.opticatorrepc.com

9 Optimal Wellness and Chiropractic opened this spring at 3421 W. William Cannon Drive, Ste. 145. The practice offers chiropractic treatment and physiotherapy. 358-0325, www.optimalwellness.tx.com, Twitter: @optimalwc

Peer2Peer Tutors opened in May. Regional Education Adviser Jenny Phillips said the business is a local network of trained high school and college students who offer one-on-one tutoring and mentoring services for pre-K–12 students in academic subjects, study skills and test preparation. 517-4890, www.peer2peertutors.com, Twitter: @peer2peer


11 Tacos La Guera opened in April in the South Lamar Trailer Bazaar at 3600 S. Lamar Blvd. The food truck serves breakfast and lunch tacos. Delivery options are available. 797-2473, www.tacoslaguera.com

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Coming Soon

12 Dr. Daniel Shaddock plans to open Absolute Life Wellness Center in August at 1807 W. Slaughter Lane, Ste. 450. Shaddock offers sports chiropractic services, acupuncture and massage. 516-7558, www.atxwellnesscenter.com, Twitter: @atxwellness

13 Austin Lakes Hospital broke ground on its new treatment center, Austin Oaks Hospital, at 1407 W. Stassney Lane on July 11. Austin Oaks will offer psychiatric services including treatment of depression and anxiety. It is scheduled to open in spring 2013. www.austinoakshospital.com

14 Picous, an artisan pizzeria, plans to open in September at the former Cartwright’s BBQ location, 12005 W. Hwy. 290. Chef/Owner Joshua Kaner plans to serve wood-fired pizzas, San Francisco-style sourdough breads, house-smoked meats and homemade pies and pastries.

15 Stanley’s Farmhouse Pizza plans to open at 13005 Fitzhugh Road in October. The restaurant plans to serve artisan pizzas with vegetables and ingredients grown on-site. www.stanleysfarmhousepizza.com, Twitter: @cereospark

16 Food trailer Woodpile BBQ plans to open Aug. 11 at 9300 W. Hwy 290. The trailer will serve brisket, St. Louis cut pork ribs, pork sausage, sides, pie and ice cream. 669-5839. www.woodpilebbq.com, Twitter: @woodpilebbq

Relocations

17 The Natural Way moved from South First Street to 3801 S. Congress Ave., Ste. 101. The studio offers an infrared sauna, massage, pain management and skin care treatments. 551-0700, www.thenaturalwaymassage.com

18 San Juanitas Tacos moved from 5607 S. Congress Ave. to 4406 S. Congress Ave. in early June.

New Ownership

19 M Thaitown Cuisine opened in June at the former Subsin Thai Food location at 5517 Manchaca Road. 326-1619

Anniversaries

20 Business owner Joe Estrada celebrates the first anniversary of Austin Automotive Center in July. The business, located at 1114 Regal Row, offers various types of automotive repair. 762-7044

21 Sames Red Barn Motors will celebrate its first anniversary in August. Sames, located at 620 W. Slaughter Lane, sells and services used cars and trucks. 628-0500, www.samesrbm.com

22 Sitric House and Home will celebrate its fifth anniversary in August with an open house. The business, located at 3401 W. Slaughter Lane, specializes in remodeling, custom wood flooring and specialty painting. 291-0804, www.sitrichouseandhome.com

23 Thirsty Planet Brewing Co. celebrated its second anniversary in June. The brewery is located at 11160 Circle Drive. 579-0679, www.thirstyplanet.net

Closings

24 Cartwright’s BBQ closed at 12005 W. Hwy. 290 in June.

In the News

Entrepreneur Allison Schickel has begun selling the Brobe through her website, www.thebrobe.com. The Brobe is a combination bra-and-robe garment. Three versions are planned. Schickel currently sells a version that can be worn while recovering from breast surgery. 745-5597

Austin Real Estate Partners launched www.circlecanch.com on April 17. The site promotes events, amenities, nearby attractions and available homes for sale or lease in the master-planned community.

Mike Hesterson, co-founder of Ceres Park Ranch, shows off the new pizza oven at the under-construction Stanley’s Farmhouse Pizza.

Bikealot owner/mechanic Brad Wimberly offers a variety of road, mountain and touring bicycles at his Pack Saddle Pass shop.

M Thaitown Cuisine waiter Charchrist Phumtim stands outside the Manchaca Road eatery, which has new owners.

Sitric House and Home store manager Paula Campbell showcases a number of home furnishings available for sale.

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

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  12108 Rokeby Drive • 343-8393
- Auto Gals Austin
  4232 Industrial Boulevard • 444-4283
- B&B Muffler & Automotive Service Center
  3000 S. Lamar Blvd • 447-5581
- Ben’s Workshop
  4101 Pressler Street • 472-5555
- Brake Check #17
  205 E Ben White Boulevard • 448-1221
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  2502 W. Palmer Lane • 384-0640
- Bridgestone Firestone #43E2
  6412 S. 1st Street • 442-9388
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  6222 Manor Road • 443-2244
- Capital Chevrolet
  6200 S. Lamar Blvd • 444-8888
- Capital Metro
  2910 E. 5th Street • 389-7411
- Capital V Connection
  4201 S Congress Avenue • 441-1334
- Champion Toyota
  4600 S. 1st Street • 440-5500
- Charlie and Ann’s Exxon
  5400 Balcones Drive • 452-5422
- East First Grocery
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- E&J Seelos Garage & Body Shop
  4501 S Congress Avenue • 444-5555
- E-Z Food Store #5
  6400 S. 1st Street • 447-6825
- Flamingo Automotive
  3512 Guadalupe Street • 459-9917
- Goodyear Auto Service Center
  907 E. 41st Street • 459-6554
- Great Hills Automotive
  5346 Thunder Creek Road • 795-2995
- Infinity of Austin
  8140 Burnet Road • 453-0660
- Jiffy Lube #2926
  3704 Spicewood Springs Road • 345-1274
- Joe Angel Automotive Service
  4222 S. 1st Street • 444-6721
- Lamb’s Tire & Automotive Center #4
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  2313 Thornton Road #C • 445-6731

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**July**

27 Galactic Groove 2: A Night of Jamtronica
Ruta Maya Café hosts a night of live electronic music. Lord Pyro, Lux Divon and Lucidelic perform a mix of live instruments and DJing. 9 p.m. $5 cover. Ruta Maya Café, 3601 S. Congress Ave. 707-9837, www.rutamaya.net

27 Alamo Drafthouse presents ‘Babe’

29 12th Annual Candlelight Bowl
Dream of Hopes Ranch presents the 12th Annual Candlelight Bowl fundraiser. The event features a raffle, silent auction and bowling. Proceeds go toward completing a 3,063-square-foot work/social center in Buda. 1 p.m. $12 (children), $18 (adults). Westgate Lanes, 2701 W. William Cannon Drive. 441-2695. www.westgatelanes.net

31 Trailer Food Tuesday
The Long Center for the Performing Arts and blog “trailer Food diaries” host food trailers on the last Tuesday of each month. 5–9 p.m. Admission is free. Food prices vary. Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside Drive. 457-5100. www.thelongcenter.org

**August**

4 Mastery Series: Color
Teacher Ana Clerc leads a four-week mastery class on color theory in crafting. Clerc said the class studies the color wheel and how color and texture can affect crafts from small items to wall hangings. Those who are interested must sign up for all four classes. Registration comes with 16 balls of yarn and a color wheel. Aug. 4, 11, 18 and 25. 3–5 p.m. $145. The Knitting Nest, 8708 S. Congress Ave., Ste. 570, 291-8866, www.theknittingnestaustin.com

7 Mother/daughter book club

17 End of Summer Bash
Circle C Swim Center Pool screens the movie “Happy Feet” and offers face painting and a volleyball tournament. Ten percent of cafe sales benefit Hope 4 JD, 7–11 p.m. Free to residents, $3 guests. Circle C Swim Center Pool, 5919 La Crosse Ave. www.ccswim.net

18 Bubblepalooza
Children draw on the sidewalk, listen to kids’ rock music and play with bubbles. There are also water games on the lawn area. 9 a.m.–noon. Free. Long Center for the Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside Drive. 457-5100. www.thelongcenter.org

18 Crosby, Stills and Nash
Grammy award–winning singer-songwriters Crosby, Stills and Nash perform their hits, which include “Suite: Judy Blue Eyes” and “Marrakesh Express.” 6:30 p.m. doors, 8 p.m. show. $50–$146. Austin City Limits Live at the Moody Theater, 310 Willie Nelson Blvd. 225-7999. www.acl-live.com

18 2012 Back to School Bash and Safety Fair
Visitors can learn about Austin ISD services prior to the new school year. Community organizations that can help students are present at the bash. 9 a.m. Free. Austin Convention Center, 500 E. Cesar Chavez St., 414-3991. www.austinisd.org

18 ‘Austin Opera House: Way Down Texas Way’
The South Austin Popular Culture Center exhibits information and artifacts about the Austin Opera House. Tim O’Connor and Willie Nelson opened the venue in July 1977, and it stayed open for 15 years. Exhibit items include posters, photos, paintings, newspaper articles and personal stories, the website states. The exhibit ends Aug. 26. $5 suggested donation. South Austin Popular Culture Center, 440-8318. www.samopc.org

18 End of Summer Bash
Circle C Swim Center Pool screens the movie “Happy Feet” and offers face painting and a volleyball tournament. Ten percent of cafe sales benefit Hope 4 JD, 7–11 p.m. Free to residents, $3 guests. Circle C Swim Center Pool, 5919 La Crosse Ave. www.ccswim.net

July 28

By Joe Olivieri
Sunset Valley Councilman Forrest Arnold, a former president of the Austin Organic Gardeners Club, leads a composting class at The Natural Gardener. Arnold, former president of the Austin Organic Gardeners Club, will lead the next class.

**‘Composting’**

The Natural Gardener owner John Dromgoole, third from left, teaches a composting class. Forrest Arnold, former president of the Austin Organic Gardeners Club, will lead the next class.

**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. To have Southwest Austin events considered for the print edition, they must be submitted online by the second Friday of the month.

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Uncertainties remain as airport preps for Formula One influx

By Mitzie Stelte

Austin is no stranger to the global spotlight. In March the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference attracted several thousand visitors from about 80 nations.

With less than four months until the city’s first Formula One race, which is expected to draw 120,000 fans to Central Texas as never before, airport officials are certain unknowns.

In 2011, the Circuit of The Americas F1 event in November—hosted Formula One in the past [2000–07]—they ended up with between six and 11 charters depending which year it was.”

In order to accommodate passengers arriving by private and charter flights and large, international diversions from Houston or Dallas, ABIA suggested the construction of a nearly $5.5 million temporary customs facility to be paid for with airport revenue.

Council concerns
Mayor Lee Leffingwell asked about the benefits of passengers clearing customs in Austin and not other domestic cities, as is usually done.

“We’re asking them to go to another city, but we’re adding another four hours,” ABIA Chief Operations Officer Patti Edwards said.

Edwards estimated the average charter flight for the F1 race would generate about $9,000 in landing fees and fuel purchases.

However, City Council unanimously rejected the temporary facility.

“Don’t worry about the facility, but I worry about the peak in passenger totals because of SXSW departures. On March 19, there was a maximum wait time of 50–53 minutes around 5:30 a.m. due in part by SXSW departures.”

Joseph Olivieri contributed to this article
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www.austintexas.gov/commercialrecycling

WORK BEGINS ON PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

By Joe Olivieri

Austin Lakes Hospital broke ground on a new psychiatric hospital on West Stassney Lane on July 11.

When completed next spring, the 80-bed Austin Oaks Hospital will take pressure off of area emergency rooms, hospital CEO Ramona Key said.

“This facility will address an incredible need,” Austin Councilman Mike Martinez said at the ground breaking. “We have a lack of bed space in Austin. I cannot thank you enough.”

Key read a proclamation from the Austin City Council declaring the day in the hospital’s honor.

Hospital officials said the new 51,420-square-foot, $17 million hospital will treat children ages 4 to 17 as well as adults. Services at a 6,000-square-foot outpatient building will include partial hospitalization and an additional “second chances” program with social learning and behavior modification. The hospital rooms are able to be adjusted and partitioned to address day-to-day needs.

The hospital may also have anger management and summer programs for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. Officials expect the hospital to create more than 200 jobs and generate property taxes.

The new hospital will be built on the site of the former The Oaks Treatment Center, a children’s mental health facility that has been closed since 2009. The hospital building changed hands before being acquired by Austin Lakes Hospital’s parent company, Universal Health Services Inc., in November 2010.

Key said the hospital’s development has been in the works since January 2011.

Workers began demolishing the building in July. He said hospital designers worked to preserve and build around 88 oak trees on the property.

“We went through 14 models and prototypes to build around the 88 trees,” Key said. “It doesn’t look like any other facility.”

MORE HWY. 71 CONSTRUCTION PLANNED

By Gene Davis

Construction is expected to finish in late July on a 1.3-mile stretch of Hwy. 71 between Upland Ridge Drive and Southwest Parkway.

The $10.2 million project added center turn lanes on the highway. Texas Department of Transportation spokesman John Hurt said the added turn lanes are intended to help reduce traffic and the number of vehicle collisions on the highway.

“Whether it is north or southbound, it gets [drivers] out of the main lanes and drastically reduces the possibility of a rear-end collision,” he said. “It gives them a safe place to set while they are waiting to make the turn.”

At the beginning of the year, the project was estimated to be finished by April, but a wetter-than-expected winter pushed the completion date back several months, Hurt said.

TxDOT has been improving Hwy. 71 since 2005 to add center turn lanes from Hwy. 290 west to Pace Bend Road. A construction project to add a center turn lane between Thomas Springs Road and Covered Bridge Drive is expected to go to contract in August 2013. Construction is expected to take about 18 months.

An intersection improvement project on a stretch of Hwy. 71 from near Serene Hills Drive to near Hamilton Pool Road is expected to go to contract in August 2013 and take 18–24 months to complete.
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Commissioners Court to vote to raise own base salaries

Travis County Commissioners Court is scheduled to hold a public hearing July 31 on a plan to raise the base salaries of elected officials—including their own—who are not under a state-mandated salary cap by 3.5 percent.

The court voted 4-1 to move forward with the raise. Commissioner Karen Huber opposed, saying the commissioners needed to set an example.

The county conducted a market study and compared the salaries of its elected officials to those of others counties.

In background documents provided during the meeting, the current county commissioner salary is $92,362, while the market rate is $119,004.

A footnote attached to the background document noted that Huber requested her fiscal year 2013 salary remain at the 2011 rate of $90,109 if reelected.

The county judge’s salary is $111,038, while the market rate is $135,479.

Officials’ salaries are lower than their peers’.

County adopts Austin’s tax policy for historic properties

The Travis County Commissioners Court unanimously adopted the City of Austin’s policy for tax exemptions on historic properties as its own.

By doing so, the county institutes a cap on tax exemptions where there previously was not one. The cap would be whichever is greater—$2,000 or 50 percent of the structure.

The tax exemption for property owners older than 65 from $65,000 to $70,000.

The city’s policy exempts 50 percent of the assessed value of the land and 100 percent of the value of the structure on an owner-occupied or nonprofit-operated historic homestead.

Commercial properties receive 25 percent of the assessed value of the land and 50 percent of the structure.

Single-member district plan to appear on November ballot

Austin City Council gave final approval June 28 to place the all single-member district system—the 10-1 plan—on the ballot, while also passing the hybrid 8-2-1 plan on first reading.

Prior to the council meeting, the grassroots citizen group Austinites for Geographic Representation announced the group had gathered 30,000 signatures in support of the 10-1 plan, which would automatically place it on November’s ballot.

Many of the members decided to vote for both plans to allow voters to make a choice between the plans.

Councilman Bill Spelman—who said he supports single-member districts—voted for neither but encouraged AGR to ensure the signatures get validated in time to make the ballot.

The legal deadline to call November’s ballot is Aug. 20, and city staff has stated that 30 days are needed to validate the signatures.

Mayor Lee Leffingwell sponsored the 8-2-1 plan, a hybrid system of eight single-member districts, two at-large members and an at-large mayor, while Councilman Mike Martinez sponsored the 10-1 plan with 10 districts and an at-large mayor.

Austin Energy late fees return for July billing cycle

Austin Energy will reinstate late fees on bills nine months after temporarily suspending them. Beginning the July bill cycle, customers who do not pay on time will have a 5 percent fee assessed on the outstanding balance, which would show up on the next bill. The fee does not compound.

Prior to suspending the late fees, the utility provider collected $200,000 to $300,000 per month in late fees, Austin Energy spokesman Carlos Cordova said.

Meetings

- **Austin City Council**
  - Austin City Hall, 301 W. Second St.
  - July 31, Aug. 2, 16, 23, 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
  - Aug. 7 and 21, 6 p.m.
Food trailers

Continued from 11

Oak Hill

Oak Hill Food Trailer Haven is the brainchild of David Burkham, a broker associate with Market Maker Realty and Investments.

He started working with food trailers during last October’s Gypsy Picnic, a mobile food vendor showcase at Auditorium Shores. Burkham said the vendors offered such a variety of foods that diners could never become bored.

“I love Austin and I love food, so I knew I would like to do whatever I could to partake and enhance the culture and business of Austin food trailers,” he said.

Around the beginning of May, Market Maker authorized Burkham to develop a food court.

“When we looked for a location, Oak Hill stood out as by far the best choice,” he said, adding that 53,000 vehicles pass through the Y each day.

He set up shop on Oak Meadow Drive next to Donn’s Texas BBQ. He said he hopes to have four trailers on-site in July and four more in August.

Burkham leased his first space to Fishby Bizzness Seafood Co. owner Dennis White.

White’s family has been in the Texas seafood business for decades. After retiring from AT&T, he decided his next step was to serve up fresh, never-frozen Gulf of Mexico seafood to hungry diners. He serves fried fish and shrimp, as well as fish tacos.

He chose to open a food trailer because it was less expensive than opening a restaurant.

“My goal is just to have a lot of happy customers who return and like the product,” he said. “I live here [in Oak Hill], I’m people-oriented, and I have a lot of friends in South Austin.”

Moontower Saloon

Bumb said food trailers have not caught up to Southwest Austin’s growth and that there was a void to be filled.

Moontower Saloon could be described as similar to bars Weirdos and C-Hunt’s Ice House, he said.

He said it will be decorated in a “retro-chic urban industrial meets backyard garden” style and have picnic tables and Adirondack chairs from which to enjoy 3 acres of old-growth oak trees. A volleyball court is also in the works.

“When you’re out here on the property, the feel of it is so nice,” he said. “It’s densely shaded.”

Moontower’s owners are working through the city’s permitting process and hope to open the bar later this year.

“The idea is to have a trifold flier in the bar. One side will be our menu and the other side will be the menus of the three separate trailers. You could order [trailer food] from your server, and we’ll bring it to you.”

Location, location, location?

Aside from the obvious—good food and service—there is no recipe to create a successful food trailer, said Antonio Yamanaka, founder of Austin Food Trailer Alliance, a mobile food vendor industry group.

“You play to your strengths. You have to have an aspect of brand equity. You need strong recognition in your brand,” he said.

Yamanaka said some trailers can be off in a parking lot somewhere and thrive. Others are completely mobile and rely on websites and social media to connect with customers.

Spartan Pizza started out on South Congress Avenue near Slaughter Lane in October 2009 and moved to East Sixth Street a year-and-a-half later, General Manager Matt Portwood said.

Portwood said business was fine down south, and the trailer benefited from its association with Red Shed Tavern.

Since amicably parting ways with the tavern and moving northeast, Spartan has increased its hours and days of operation, and added the ability for customers to pay with credit cards, he said.

“We have the lunch rush, the dinner rush, and then all of the tourists and the bar crowd,” he said. “We’re on East Sixth, so people walk over from the bar.”

Portwood said that Spartan would go back to Southwest Austin if it opened a second trailer.

“That’s not lip service. We still have people visit from down there and say, ‘You used to be right down the street,’” he said.

Jarod Neece, co-founder of local taco review blog Taco Journalism, said some trailer owners believe in strength in numbers and try to pair up with complementary cuisine.

“Mellizoz [formerly Izzoz] Tacos paired with [donut trailer] Gourdough’s [on South First Street], so you can have a taco and then dessert,” he said.

Yamanaka said eating at food trailers is a communal activity, and it helps to have choices so each member of a group might find something he or she wants to eat.

The South Lamar Trailer Bazaar is just north of Hwy. 290 and within walking distance from iconic venue The Broken Spoke. Honky Tonk Hot Dogs trailer owner Scott Angle names his hot dogs after local country western musicians and posts announcements when they play the Spoke. Angle also offers live music and plans to set up a small dance floor in front of his trailer.

Angle’s neighbor at the Trailer Bazaar is gourmet burger trailer Collie’s. Trailer owner Rob Collie said trailers downtown get more foot traffic from bar-goers, but have much higher monthly rents.

“If my costs were double what they are, I wouldn’t be in business,” he said.

He said he liked the challenge of building a business from scratch.

“I’m confident about my location. I have a decent product. It was slow going at first, but each week is better than before.”
Tax election
Continued from page 1

The tax rate itself
School districts are facing increased pressure from limited sources of revenue and increasing costs, Conley-Abram said.

Types of tax rates
During the budget process, the district publishes two possible tax rates: the effective tax rate and the rollback tax rate, according to the state comptroller’s website. Both are measured in cents per $100 of property valuation.

The comptroller’s office explains that the effective tax rate is the rate the district would need to tax citizens to bring in the same amount of revenue it did last year. The rollback tax rate is the rate the district needs to maintain and operate (M&O), and interest and sinking (I&S), which covers long-term debt and contractual obligations.

In 2006, the state implemented the “target revenue” system, which limits the M&O part of the tax rate. This “essentially freezes all districts at their 2005–06 funding levels,” according to an AISD presentation.

The current M&O rate is capped at $1.04 per $100 of property valuation. A TRE can raise the M&O rate to a maximum of $1.17 per $100 of property valuation.

Joe Smith, former Hudson ISD superintendent and editor of education website www.texasisd.com, said that in the last seven years, 366 Texas school districts have held TREs. Of the 424 elections held—some districts have held more than one—304 passed.

During the 2011 legislative session, the state government slashed $4 billion from education funding for the next two years. AISD lost $35.6 million in funds in 2011–12 and anticipates losing $26.4 million in 2012–13.

To help close a shortfall for the 2012 fiscal year, AISD cut 1,153 jobs. Several school districts are suing the state to change how funding is provided.

On the expense side, the district has had to absorb six years of inflation and rising costs of basic needs such as water and electricity, Conley-Abram said.

Making their case
Several board members support offering the raise for district employees but were unsure about a TRE during the June 18 board of trustees meeting.

The board’s next step is to decide before Aug. 31 whether to hold a TRE this fall to add 5 to 9 cents to the tax rate.

It is unclear what the Legislature will do with school funding during the 2013 legislative session.

“We are operating at core levels right now. If I had to cut anything, it would be things that are really going to hurt,” she said.

When a TRE fails
Hutto ISD and Dripping Springs ISD held unsuccessful tax ratification elections, or TREs, in 2011.

For Hutto, the main takeaway was that voters needed to understand what was at stake, Public Information Officer Emily Grobe said.

“We heard back [from residents], ‘We didn’t realize what not passing the extra 6 cents meant,” she said. “They did not realize that if it did not pass, programs would go away.”

Hutto ISD has cut its budget to close shortfalls, eliminating positions in its music, library science and art departments. The district also raised its extracurricular/co-curricular activity fee to $100, among its actions.

Another takeaway was to ask voters for the maximum amount possible—an additional 13 cents on the tax rate—rather than asking for less twice. Hutto plans to ask voters to support a larger TRE this year.

Grobe said this time around, a political action committee has been formed, and there has been a lot more parent involvement. Voter registration has increased as well.

“We learned that people are busy. We’ve gone out to them. We held a meeting in someone’s garage at 7:30 p.m. because that’s when [some voters] were able to meet,” she said.

Dripping Springs ISD officials held no formal discussions analyzing what happened after voters opposed the district’s 13 cent TRE, Public Information Officer Dale Whitaker said.

The district will need to draw $1.17 million from its fund balance to fund its 2012–13 budget. It will need to cut 25 positions.

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of 194 single-family homes east of South View Road.

Chris Werth, Ashton Woods Homes’ Austin division president, said that southern Travis County has had a high demand for single-family homes for many years.

He said most people who are interested in houses along Hwy. 290 are Austinites looking to move up to homes with more square footage or amenities.

“Typically, there have been more luxury offerings going in,” he said. “The land price dictates the type of house. The more valuable the land, the more difficult it would be to build a home that would appeal to a first-time homebuyer.”

DH Investment Company represents Ledge Stone. DH Investment Vice President Mike Schoenfeld said there has been phenomenal growth in the area since 2005.

“The southwest market area has done very well. After a slowdown in 2008, things have started to come back,” he said.

One reason for the growth is that it is easier to build in Hays County than in Travis County, he said.

Travis County has conservation easements and water and wastewater connectivity issues, so builders have been crossing the county line to build in Dripping Springs’ extraterritorial jurisdiction, or ETJ.

The actual city of Dripping Springs is a small area, but its ETJ—areas not in city limits but under city control—is quite large.

The 2010 U.S. census states that 1,788 people lived in Dripping Springs when the census was being compiled.

Dripping Springs’ ETJ was estimated to have 15,170 residents in 2009, according to ESRI Business Analyst data cited in the city’s 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Commercial properties

As residential real estate has grown, so have the commercial properties that support it.

Even as recently as 2002, there were not many other full-service restaurants along Hwy. 290 when Mike Farr purchased Nutty Brown Cafe.

Over the years, Farr saw new competitors vying for Nutty Brown’s diners. He adapted by shifting his focus to live music and said he now generates much more revenue from the concerts than he does selling barbecue.

“When you start to see the rooftops multiply in number, you create a need for supporting retail and commerce—you gas stations and convenience stores,” he said.

Lone Star Bank, a boutique bank dealing with construction and real estate, opened in April. Brent Gibbs, senior vice president of the Hwy. 290 branch, said bank officials chose their new location because of the area’s growth.

Trudy’s Four Star opened in November. Operations Manager Chance Robertson said the restaurant has been based in South Austin for 35 years and wanted to branch out farther south and west.

“We did traffic counts, and with the heavy development and people moving there, we thought it would be a good deal,” he said.

The roadsides along Hwy. 290 in Hays County are dotted with “for sale” and “coming soon” signs.

A pizzeria/bakery, gas station, Burger King and indoor archery range are among the businesses that are being developed along Hwy. 290.

Multifamily housing

Farr sees the proposed apartments as a logical next step; these new businesses’ employees need a place to live and often cannot afford the new single-family housing units.

Thompson said the Belterra apartments will be rented at the full market rate, while Cypress Creek at Ledge Stone Apartment Homes will be low-to-moderate income, rent-controlled housing.

The apartments are not Section 8 or government housing, according to the development’s website.

In an online letter, Stuart Shaw, president of apartment developer Bonner Carrington, wrote that some community members took issue with Cypress Creek seeking a tax exemption.

Shaw wrote that the complex will not pursue an exemption and plans to pay its taxes in full.

Planning

Officials are planning ahead to manage growth on both sides of the county line.

Local transportation authorities are working to lessen congestion along West Hwy. 290 by improving intersections at and near the Y at Oak Hill. The Texas Department of Transportation is adding paved shoulders and a center turn lane to Hwy. 290 from Circle Drive to Oliver Drive.

Aside from new subdivision rules intended to protect groundwater resources, there are no specific zoning requirements in unincorporated areas of Travis County.

Dripping Springs lifted an 18-month development ban in 2005. The city has been working with developers to get more rules in place to benefit everyone involved, Thompson said.

“For the community, the idea is to centralize development onto existing tracts that have good infrastructure and a dense population core in close proximity,” he said. “This and the encouragement of more development in the city’s core is what we believe has been a good approach to trying to get growth to occur in existing development rather than creating new, unconnected development.”
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Circuit of The Americas president

By Joe Lanane

Austin is not known as a racing destination—not yet, anyway.

Steve Sexton, president of the new Circuit of The Americas facility, seeks to change that when the new racetrack hosts the internationally popular Formula One circuit Nov. 18. Construction on the southeastern Travis County racetrack is still under way but is expected to be complete in time for the inaugural race.

In the meantime, Sexton and his staff are working to ensure Austin is ready to host tens of thousands of new visitors. Fortunately for Sexton, he has experience in crowd management, having previously served as president of Churchill Downs, site of the Kentucky Derby. The longtime horse racing executive said many parallels can be drawn between the Kentucky Derby and the upcoming F1 race in Austin.

From horses to horsepower—how did that happen?

I’ve spent some 25-plus years in the horse racing industry, and if you looked across my resume, you’ll see I’ve changed probably every five to seven years just because I like to take on new challenges. ... So, I was very intrigued by the Circuit of The Americas project. It’s definitely a challenge, but it’s also fun because you get to start from scratch. You’re not inheriting anyone else’s team, style, conditions, policies. You see it from the start, you build the whole thing, and you put the right people in place to help do that.

What will be the impact, you think, on the overall Austin metropolitan area?

Well, the economic impact study that was commissioned by the local organizing committee is in the $400 million range just for the Formula One event itself. ... The economic impact should be community-wide in terms of hotel spending, restaurant spending, airport, rental car and awareness. ... That hopefully is going to help spending, airport, rental car and awareness and positive image—not that we grow the entire marketplace in terms of hotel spending, restaurant spending, airport, rental car and awareness and positive image—not that we grow the entire marketplace in terms of hotel spending, restaurant spending, airport, rental car and awareness—not that we grow the entire marketplace in terms of hotel spending, restaurant spending, airport, rental car and awareness—but is expected to be complete in time for the inaugural race. ... ThatHopefully is going to help spend...

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Doug Moreland is fond of using a chainsaw to carve western art.

He has always liked creating. It was certainly a part of his childhood.

“What are you doing inside?” he remembered his parents fussing. “Get outside and build something. No watching television if the sun is up.”

So, true to their teaching, he built Cattlelacs Chainsaw Art Gallery in 2003 out of scrap materials on his grandparents’ property where his dad grew up. Their family has been in the area since the early days of Driftwood, but Moreland actually spent his childhood in Fort Davis in the 1970s and 1980s making things and playing on his fiddle.

As an adult, he had a band in Nashville, Tenn., and it was while on tour that he found the craft that would help support his music-loving ventures.

Moreland was traveling with his band in Ruidoso, N.M., in 1998 when he saw some friends who told him they carved bears with a chainsaw and were making pretty good money. “It was like a light bulb going off,” he said. “Holy cow, I could do that. [The chainsaw] was a big knife.”

Sure enough, before he even finished his first bear, it sold for $50. “Let me carve another one,” he told his friend. Again, it sold immediately.

He wanted to begin a third bear, but his friend told him to go get his own chainsaw and not to set up shop nearby. Moreland went back to his band. “We canceled all our gigs, and we all bought chainsaws,” he said. The band went back to Tennessee and carved in Gatlinburg for a year. He wanted to write music, so he came to play where he felt someone would care, and that was Austin.

Music could not provide his sole means of income, so he set up the chainsaw art gallery off of FM 1626 in Manchaca.

On Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., he hosts an open-to-the-public songwriters’ night and potluck.

He said the location on Austin’s southern limits away from major highways is not ideal for business, but he still draws customers. Sometimes children and their parents stop just to look at the outdoor display of cowboys, faces in trees and birds because they think it looks a bit like Disneyland, Moreland said.

“Sometimes children and their parents stop just to look at the outdoor display of cowboys, faces in trees and birds because they think it looks a bit like Disneyland,” Moreland said. "They would not be too far off. Since 2010, his shop has showcased the work of R.L. Blair, who has completed more than 500 pieces for The Walt Disney Co. "In the chainsaw world, [Blair] is considered one of the best there is in the world," Moreland said. “My carving has definitely improved tenfold just from being around him.”

Doug Moreland poses with a cowboy he carved using a chainsaw.
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Ah La Cart
South Austin food trailer feeds neighborhood locally

By Macy Hurwitz

Ah La Cart serves fresh, upscale food from local ingredients in a bright orange trailer located in a part of town where the competition is normally limited to taco trailers.

Trailer owners Ron Richison and his wife, Julie Sokol, wanted to give something back to the neighborhood in which they live, so they located the trailer on Pack Saddle Pass, just south of Ben White Boulevard.

“In South Austin, we have strip malls and fast food. I think South Austin needs healthier options so you don’t have to go downtown or to South Lamar or Congress to sit down in a very expensive restaurant to have the same meal,” Richison said.

Richison brings his extensive industry experience to the food trailer.

He started working in restaurants when he was 12 years old washing dishes. He worked his way up from there. After washing dishes for two years, he started work on a prep line. He started cooking in restaurants when he was 16 and enrolled in Le Cordon Bleu culinary academy in Portland, Ore.

“That was kind of my way of putting it on paper that I have a passion for this industry, and I wanted to move forward in this career,” Richison said.

After graduating from culinary school, Richison worked for a Provencal chef in Slydell, La., which he said was his reintroduction to fine dining.

He then returned to Portland and worked his way around the city, cooking everything from casual breakfasts to high-end dinners. Richison and Sokol moved to Austin two years ago in search of warmer weather.

Richison eased into the culinary scene in Austin by working at Fabi and Rosi European Kitchen, a German restaurant near Westlake, and by working as a personal chef for John Paul Dejoria, founder of Paul Mitchell hair products and Patrón tequila.

“That allowed me to meet some of the local farmers through the farmers markets and kind of figure out what the Texas food scene was like. Agriculture is quite different down here than it is in the Northwest,” he said.

The growing seasons are completely opposite. Up there right now, we’re just getting into lettuces and tomatoes and heartier greens. That already happened down here six months ago.”

Richison started planning for Ah La Cart about a year ago, and he opened the trailer Nov. 15, 2011. He said he and Sokol did not formulate any kind of a firm concept around the food itself and just decided on a seasonal, local approach to food and to share that with the neighborhood in a food trailer.

“It seemed to be the most accessible and financially approachable way to get into the industry and the culinary scene here,” Richison said.

He said the couple plans to open a brick-and-mortar location in the near future and will announce more about those plans in the coming months.

Ah La Cart
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www.facebook.com/ahlacart
Cash only

A diverse menu
Ah La Cart features dishes that accommodate a variety of palates and dietary needs, from vegetarian options to dishes loaded with pork.

• Goat-N-Greens salad has Texas pecan-crusted goat cheese, cranberries, fennel and lemon vinaigrette ($5)
• Smoked Mac-N-Cheese features whole wheat pasta, béchamel, cheddar and smoked salt ($4)
• The Plucker has oven roasted chicken, mustard, cucumber, chili and greens ($8)
• Pig-N-Melon features slow-braised pork shoulder, watermelon pickles, cheddar and mustard ($8)
• Veggie burger salad is a homemade patty crumbled and tossed with greens ($8)

Farm to table
Co-owner Ron Richison has relationships with many area farms and farmers, and he sources his menu with fresh, seasonal produce and other ingredients.

Local farms and suppliers:
• Johnson’s Backyard Garden
• River Bottom Farms
• Richardson Farms

The Happy Hippy features vegetables grown on area farms.

The Pig-N-Fig is made of slow-braised pork shoulder, fig jam, pickled apple and cheddar cheese ($9)
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Spirit Reins
Ranch offers horse therapy for children

By Christi Covington

A faith walk—that is how founder Rhonda Smith describes her story with Spirit Reins, an organization that helps children who have experienced trauma start healing through horse therapy.

Smith had a near-death experience in 1999 when she was part of a 12-car accident with an 18-wheeler.

“I walked away from an accident that I should not have survived,” she said.

For the next few years, she asked “Why me?”, trying to discover what she was supposed to do with her life. She was no longer content with corporate human resources, although she loved helping people. So one day, the lifetime horse owner quit her job and told a Realtor friend she wanted to buy a ranch.

Founded in 2003 in Liberty Hill, Spirit Reins started with experiential learning but evolved into a therapy-based program.

Rhonda Smith attributes program director Tim Jobe, and his wife, Bettina, who is the clinical director, with Spirit Reins’ growth.

During the last year, the program’s client base increased by 400 percent, which led to the opening of the second location of Spirit Reins off of FM 1826.

Often, Smith said, children blame themselves for the negative things they have experienced, but once they are out of those situations refuse to accept any responsibility for future relationships.

For each session, a licensed counselor and horse professional form the therapy team. The client chooses a horse to work with on his or her first day.

When the horses feel a rider has lost control, they are trained to misbehave safely in a way that frustrates the rider, such as trotting to the center of the arena.

Many emotionally fragile children struggle with the horse’s rejection of their commands.

“It’s a perfect opportunity to talk about why that is happening,” horse professional Rachel Winthers said.

At the same time, the horses offer instant feedback. That is the premise behind the Natural Lifemanship program used at Spirit Reins. Jobe developed the program, which evolved from equine-assisted psychotherapy.

When the rider changes what he or she was doing that made the horse insecure, the horse immediately responds.

Unlike a dog that offers loyalty, horses respond to actions in the moment.

“The only thing about a horse being unconditional is a horse will always be honest,” said Shelley Smith, a horse professional who is of no relation to Rhonda Smith. “If you teach them you are unsafe to be around, they will reject you.”

The staff includes counselors and horse professionals.
The Slaughter family
Family settled before Texas independence

By Christi Covington

Hidden in a clump of trees a hundred feet west of Mary Moore Searight Drive is a small gated cemetery. Inside, a few remaining tombstones acknowledge the lives of some of Austin’s earliest settlers, the Slaughters.

Slaughter Lane was named for Slaughter Creek, which in turn was named for the family who first moved to the area about the time Texas became a republic, according to city documents.

Stephen F. Slaughter arrived from Kentucky with his wife, Ann, and at least one child, Augustine, as other families with recognizable names, such as the Willbargers and Hornsbyes, also settled to the east.

According to the genealogy book “Austin Colony Pioneers,” Stephen F. Slaughter represented Mina Municipality at the convention of 1833 in San Felipe, an event that was a step toward the Texas settlers’ bid for independence. The Texas Revolution began two years later.

The government of Coahuila and Texas, then a state under the nation of Mexico, had recently formed Mina Municipality, as had Bastrop County, which in turn was named for the family who first moved to the area about the time Texas became a republic, according to city documents.

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A lawyer, Cunningham had come to Texas in 1833 himself and settled in Bastrop. It is recorded that he was one of the men who tried to relieve the Alamo in 1836, but could not get through Mexican lines, although he fought later in the Battle of San Jacinto. A future county judge, Cunningham married the widowed Ann Slaughter the year after he represented her late husband’s estate.

Stephen’s son, Augustine, later married a daughter of another local settler, Annie Page Eanes. Together they built their home on the family land. It was still a rugged area with the young city of Austin developing to the south. Annie documented her time there with her young children on Slaughter Creek. The seven-room home they eventually built had a large dining room and two porches.

A avid hunter and a member of Austin’s first Masonic lodge, Austin Lodge No. 12, Augustine left his home during the Civil War to fight as a captain for the Union Army. He died in 1866 and was buried in the small family cemetery that sits just south of Slaughter Lane.

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Texas employers face skilled labor shortages

San Macos/Buda/Kyle Among the economic issues facing Texas is a serious shortage of skilled laborers. When Susan Combs, Texas comptroller of public accounts, addressed business leaders in San Marcos earlier this year, one audience member brought that shortage home.

"Is there any priority or interest in the state for the kids who are not going to go to college?" he asked. "I'm a furniture maker, and I couldn't find an employee in this town if my life depended on it."

Skilled labor includes vocational and technical trades—plumbers, pipetters, welders, electricians, machinists—as well as nursing and technical fields such as semiconductor manufacturing.

Brandon Whatley, welding department chairman at Austin Community College, said the demand for skilled welders increases every year.

Much of the current job growth is in the energy industry, he said, with other high demands coming from the pharmaceutical, semiconductor and construction industries.

Lake Travis area eyes wildfire prevention

Lake Travis/Westlake As the threat of wildfires heats up with the summer months, a coalition of groups is working on a disaster prevention campaign aimed at the public in hopes that Central Texas residents will be better prepared for future potential disasters.

The Travis County Wildland Task Force Committee, which was formed after the Labor Day 2011 wildfires, is distributing a booklet called “Ready, Set, Go!” that instructs people how to prepare and respond to a wildfire.

"The ‘Ready, Set, Go!’ pamphlet is available at fire stations throughout Travis County and online at www.co.travis.tx.us/fire_marshal. It doesn’t mean that you have to take action, but if you have read the material and what you have to do, it makes that preparation a lot easier,” said Mike Elliott, chief of the Westlake Fire Department.

“The long-term weather planning says it’s a prolonged drought,” said Jim Linardos, chief of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 6, which covers Bee Cave, Lakeway and Steiner Ranch. “We will get little blips of positive [rainfall], but we’re still in a deficit. It’s going to take a lot to turn that around.”

Linardos and Elliott said they have been trying to let property owners know the importance of clearing brush and maintaining their property to reduce the threat of wildfires.

Full story by Gene Davis

Voting

County to use vote centers in November election

Lake Travis/Westlake With 96 percent of registered Travis County voters facing changes to their district or precincts, commissioners on May 22 approved the use of vote centers for the November election.

House Bill 758, passed in 2005, permits counties to offer vote centers, also known as super precincts, instead of precinct polling locations. Unlike a neighborhood precinct polling location that requires a voter to be registered at that particular location, these consolidated vote centers are open to any registered voter. Vote centers, however, are not permitted in primary elections.

"Enough precincts were affected [by redistricting] that we would have had to buy more equipment in order to cover the additional polling places added as a result of redistricting," Travis County Clerk Dana DeBeauvoir said. "That additional equipment would have cost about $500,000.

Redistricting maps for the U.S. Congress, the state House

Now Open

Central Austin Austin Rocks TX at 301 W. Willie Nelson Blvd. held a grand opening June 2. The boutique, owned by Wild About Music, sells Austin-centric and music-themed apparel and gifts.

983-0929, www.austinrockstexas.com

Lake Travis/Westlake

French-style bistro Blue Dahlia Bistro Westlake opened June 8 at 3663 Bee Caves Road. 306-1668, www.bluedahlia bistro.com

Lake Travis/Westlake The Snoring Center opened May 21 in the Westlake Medical Center, 5656 Bee Caves Road, Ste. C-100. Facility staff treat excessive snoring and sleep apnea. 855-377-6673, www.snoringcenter.com

Coming Soon

Central Austin J.T. and Brandy Egli plan to open a bar specializing in craft beer this fall. Craft Pride is to be located at 61 Rainey St. with 50 taps, all of which will feature beer brewed in Texas. Twitter: @CraftPride

Business

End of an Ear

Central Austin When End of an Ear co-owner Dan Plunkett and his business partner, Blake Carlisle, decided to open a shop together, they wanted to give south Austinites a spot to call their own.

They settled on a location at 2209 S. First St. Then they went on buying sprees to stock up on used music and called a few distributors Plunkett knew from his days at a record store he previously owned on Guadalupe Street, Thirty Three Degrees.

"When Blake and I first opened the store, we kind of followed what we’re into. Blake’s really into reggae, so we wanted to have a big reggae presence and have a deep catalog,” Plunkett said. “There’s stuff that everybody touches on, but we just try to go in-depth. So we have a lot of psychedelic stuff and a deep catalog in experimental. Other stores might have it, but we just have more than they do.”

Full story by Macy Hurwitz

Impacts

Lake Travis/Westlake

On May 18, Austin Ultrahealth moved from 806 W. 10th St. to the Westlake Medical Center, 5656 Bee Caves Road, Ste. D203. The office treats conditions from fatigue to weight loss. 383-5343, www.dramymyers.com
Featured neighborhood
Meridian, 78739

Overview

**Build-out years:** Not built out  
**Builders:** Newmark/Scott Felder, Weekley Homes, Standard Pacific Homes, Meritage Homes, Wilshire Homes  
**Square footage:** 1,820–5,777  
**Home values:** $268,500–$882,162  
**HOA dues (estimated):** $600, mandatory  
**Amenities:** Swimming pool, playscape and picnic pavilion  
**Nearby attractions:** Grey Rock Golf Club, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, shopping in Escarpment Village  
**Property taxes:**  
- Austin ISD: 1.2420  
- Travis County: 0.4855  
- City of Austin: 0.4811  
- Austin Community College: 0.0948  
- Central Health: 0.0789  
**Total (per $100 value):** 2.3823  
**Schools:**  
- Baldwin Elementary School  
- Gorzycki Middle School  
- Bowie High School

On the market (As of July 16, 2012)

| No. of homes for sale | 15 |
| No. of homes under contract | 9 |
| Avg. days on the market | 52 |

Home sales (July 2011–June 2012)

| No. of homes sold in last year | 55 |
| Square footage Low/High | 1,902/5,385 |
| Selling price Low/High | $268,500/$882,162 |

Featured homes

- **12404 Alcanza Drive**  
  6 Bedroom / 3.5 Bath  
  $489,000  
  4,151 sq. ft.  
  Agent: Claude Smith  
  657-3981

- **12317 Sundara Drive**  
  5 Bedroom / 4 Bath  
  $469,000  
  3,689 sq. ft.  
  Agent: Lyn Hollon  
  423-2193

- **7412 Wisteria Valley Drive**  
  4 Bedroom / 4 Bath  
  $419,990  
  3,438 sq. ft.  
  Agent: Vince Martinez  
  785-4288

- **7408 Wisteria Valley Drive**  
  5 Bedroom / 4 Bath  
  $419,000  
  3,484 sq. ft.  
  Agent: Michael Craig  
  870-7456

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**Read what just a few of our satisfied patients have to say:**

- **Vicky B, age 84**
  “I just wanted to put into writing how very much I appreciate all that you and your staff did for my husband and I during his stay with you. The compassion, empathy, kindness and dedication shown us are to be commended.”

- **Beth K, age 79**
  “Can’t say enough about your staff from start to finish. They made it a truly wonderful experience. The care that I received during my stay was truly exceptional. Thank you for all you did to get me back on my feet again.”

- **Victor S, age 64**
  “A nursing home was the last place I wanted to end up after my hospital stay but you folks were great; I will tell you it changed my opinion of what a nursing home is. Thanks for helping to get me strong again.”

Stop by and feel the difference at one of our communities.
REAL ESTATE

Market Data  Southwest Austin

On the market*  (As of July 2, 2012)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Number of homes for sale</th>
<th>Average days on market</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $148,000</td>
<td>14/50</td>
<td>13/26</td>
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<td>$150,000–$199,900</td>
<td>27/47</td>
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<tr>
<td>$1 million +</td>
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Residential real estate listings added to the market between 7/3/12 and 7/11/12 were included and provided by the Austin Board of Realtors, www.abor.com. Although every effort has been made to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of this listing, Community Impact Newspaper assumes no liability for errors or omissions. Contact the property’s agent or seller for the most current information.
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