Southwest Austin area sees wedding economy boom

BY OLIVIA ALDRIDGE

As Austin fades from urban plots to rolling hills toward its southwestern edge, businesses adapt to the landscape. A growing destination for urban dwellers in Austin and beyond, the Southwest Austin area is cornering an angle of the tourism market: weddings.

According to Kim Hanks, CEO of both Dripping Springs-based event company Whim Hospitality and nearby wedding venue Camp Lucy, as venues have bloomed across the region, growing numbers of vineyards and similar businesses have given tourists reason to stay put in the Hill Country.

“It used to be they’d bus downtown to Austin,” Hanks said. “Now they’re not.”

While colder months are not the busy season for working professionals in the

So many places to say ‘I do’

The wedding industry is booming in Southwest Austin and Dripping Springs, from ceremony and reception venues to florists and caterers.

“[Wedding venues are] a great way to use our land without overdeveloping it.”

— Kim Hanks, CEO of Camp Lucy and Whim Hospitality in Dripping Springs

“We have a really awesome wedding vendor community in Austin.”

— Juliana Ross, director of events at Brodie Homestead in Sunset Valley

Public defender aims for better outcomes

Majority of adult defendants could qualify for new office, to open in 2021

BY EMMA FREER

On a sunny Wednesday afternoon in November, a 15-year-old boy was escorted into a windowless courtroom. He had been staying at the Gardner Betts Detention Center, just off South Congress Avenue, and was there for his arraignment.

Like 97% of children ages 10 to 16 charged with a crime in Travis County, he was unable to afford a lawyer and was therefore represented by the juvenile public defender’s office.

Because of legislative efforts by the office, the boy is guaranteed counsel and attends hearings unshackled. His lawyer is paid similarly to those in the district attorney’s office.

Most adults charged with crimes in Travis County are also unable to afford an attorney, but they lack

CONTINUED ON 34
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Feeling thankful during the holiday season

It’s easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle that is December and forget to take the time to reflect as we get caught up in Christmas shopping and closing out the year. As 2019 comes to a close, I can’t help but think about all there is to be thankful for this year.

I’m thankful for our community, which is filled with such a caring and diverse mix of volunteers, educators, business owners and citizens. I am so thankful that I get to be part of such an outstanding community.

I’m also thankful for what 2019 offered this year. Big news has occurred in Southwest Austin this year, such as the opening of SH 45 SW, Austin ISD school boundary changes, and lots of updates on area growth and transportation projects. I am also thankful that we were able to add Dripping Springs to our distribution this year and become part of their community.

And I’m extremely thankful for Community Impact Newspaper. I hope you have enjoyed our reporting this year and know we are always innovating to strengthen the quality of content and design. Keep your eye out next month for our Annual Community Guide and a fresh new redesign that you are sure to love!

I wish you all a joyful holiday season and a happy new year and look forward to a prosperous and great 2020 for you all.

How do I get rid of my Christmas tree?

City of Austin residents can recycle their Christmas trees starting Dec. 26 by leaving them on the curb during their regular curbside collection day. Residents should remove all lights, ornaments and tree stands from the tree and place it on the curb by 6:30 a.m. the day of collection. Trees that are over 6 feet tall should be cut in half, and trees should not be placed in a bag.

Residents who are not city of Austin curbside customers may drop off their trees at Zilker Park, 2100 Barton Springs Road, Austin, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Dec. 28, Dec. 29, Jan. 4 or Jan. 5. The city does not accept trees that have been sprayed with artificial snow.

Trees will be turned into mulch, which residents can pick up for free beginning Jan. 16 at 9 a.m. Residents will need to bring their own storage containers for the mulch.

For more information, visit www.austintexas.gov/departments/christmas-tree-recycling.
Businesses that have recently opened, are coming soon, relocating or expanding

**NOW OPEN**

1. **Maufrais**, a lifestyle store that sells custom-made hats, opened this fall at 1512 S. Congress Ave., Austin, in the space previously occupied by Uncommon Objects. It was previously a pop-up. 512-945-9905. [https://maufrais.shop](https://maufrais.shop)

2. Cosmetics brand **Morphe** is now open and hosted a grand opening event Dec. 14. Located in Barton Creek Square Mall at 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy., Austin, near the Dillard’s mall entrance, the business is marketed as selling affordable “professional-grade” makeup and cosmetics. 737-402-2047. [www.morphe.com](http://www.morphe.com)

3. **Pizzeria Grata**, a Neapolitan-style pizza joint, has opened at 4415 Menchaca Road, Austin inside of Beatniks. The pizzeria, which held its grand opening Dec. 6, offers takeout and delivery service, as well as limited on-site seating. According to Nathan Pearlman, an owner of Pizzeria Grata, the eatery “focuses on utilizing quality ingredients either imported from Italy or locally.” 512-505-8805. [www.gratapizza.com](http://www.gratapizza.com)

4. **W Nail Bar** opened Nov. 21 inside the Sunset Valley DSW at 5207 Brodie Lane, Sunset Valley. The national shoe retailer’s nail bar partner also opened a location at North Austin’s Arbor Walk shopping center, where a grand opening for both Austin locations was held Dec 6. 737-218-7461. [www.thenailbar.com](http://www.thenailbar.com)

5. **Gold’s Gym** is scheduled to open a new location at 8900 S. Congress Ave., Austin, in late January, a representative from the gym told Community Impact Newspaper in December. According to the business’s website, the facility at South Congress and Slaughter Lane will be the 19th Gold’s Gym location in the Austin area. 512-956-4490. [www.goldsgym.com/slaughter](http://www.goldsgym.com/slaughter)

6. A new H-E-B—which has been under construction since October 2018 at 8801 S. Congress Ave., Austin, near the corner of Congress and Slaughter Lane—is scheduled to open in spring 2020, according to the company. The future supermarket will have a 130,000-square-foot building, and is located on a 26-acre site. [www.heb.com](http://www.heb.com)

7. Department store **Neighborhood Goods** will open in 2020 at 1009-1011 S. Congress Ave., Austin. The company opened its first store in Plano in 2018 and stocks many brands, such as Draper James, Dollar Shave Club and Fossil. [www.neighborhoodgoods.com](http://www.neighborhoodgoods.com)

8. **Pinny and Trowel**, an instructional cooking and crafting business, will open a physical location in South Austin at 10415 Old Manchaca Road, Austin. Owner and operator Tamzin Cochrane said the opening date is tentatively set for Jan. 2. The business will offer cooking classes, craft classes, team-building activities, after-school programs and summer camps out of its new space, according to Cochrane. Events for dogs and dog owners will also be offered. 512-917-6721. [www.pinnyandtrowel.com](http://www.pinnyandtrowel.com)

9. **Rastegar Property** purchased a 1.77-acre property at 2209 S. First St., Austin, and will develop it as a mixed-use project. The company did not announce a construction timeline. The property, once known as “Slackerville,” used to be a shopping center. 512-729-7777. [www.rastegarproperty.com](http://www.rastegarproperty.com)

**COMING SOON**

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ANNIVERSARIES

10 Jack Allen’s Kitchen celebrated 10 years in business in December. The local chain—which started with the opening of its Oak Hill location at 7720 Hwy. 71, Austin, in December 2009—now operates four restaurants across the Austin area. Owned by chef Jack Allen Gilmore and Managing Partner Tom Kamm, the restaurant serves lunch and dinner seven days a week and features a weekly Sunday brunch buffet. 512-852-8558. www.jackallenskitchen.com

NEW OWNERSHIP

11 The property that houses Waterloo Records, 24 Diner and Amy’s Ice Creams in Central Austin was purchased Oct. 31 by locally based commercial real estate company Endeavor. The property is located at 600 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin. In a social media post, Waterloo Records said it will not close and that the store is “ready to face the future.” Endeavor Founding Principal Bryce Miller said in a media release the company would love to keep the tenants either on-site or somewhere nearby, such as the Austin American-Statesman property, which Endeavor is redeveloping. 512-682-5500. www.endeavor-re.com

NEW MANAGEMENT

12 Heart Hospital of Austin has announced Megan Drake as its new chief operating officer. Drake assumed the role of COO on Nov. 11, according to a company news release. Most recently, Drake served as COO for Shelby Baptist Medical Center, a 252-bed hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, where she oversaw hospital operations and capital projects. Located in Central Austin at 3801 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Heart Hospital of Austin is part of the St. David’s HealthCare system and provides cardiac health-centered medical services. 512-407-7000. www.stdavids.com

13 St. David’s South Austin Medical Center announced Kyle Landry as its new chief operating officer via press release Nov. 19. Landry has served in various leadership roles for St. David’s HealthCare since 2015, most recently as vice president of operations at St. David’s Medical Center. St. David’s South Austin Medical Center is located at 901 Ben White Blvd., Austin. 512-447-2211. www.stdavids.com

EXPANSIONS

14 Spokesman Coffee will open a new location in the forthcoming Crux Climbing Center at 6015 Dillard Circle, Ste. B, Austin. The location will offer coffee, tea, beer, other drinks and grab-and-go food items in a 1,000-square-foot space within the climbing center, set to open in early 2020. This is the second location for Spokesman Coffee in addition to the spot in South Austin at 440 E. St. Elmo Road, Ste. A2, Austin. 512-586-9657. www.spokesmancoffee.com

RELOCATIONS

15 Luxe Vision Care, located at 5601 Brodie Lane, Ste. 530, Austin, closed its doors Dec. 15. Business from the Brodie Lane location has relocated to the Bee Cave location of Luxe Vision Care. Located at 15511 W. Hwy. 71, Ste. 170, Bee Cave. 512-738-8830. www.luxevisioncare.com

CLOSINGS

16 Bealls will close its Southpark Meadows location at 9500 S. I-35, Ste. K, Austin. The department store carries clothing, shoes, houseware and electronics and is currently having a closing sale. 512-280-4063. www.stage.com/bealls

17 Winner Winner Rotisserie and Fine Foods, a restaurant located in a historic train car in the West Texas Train Station at 9300 W. Hwy. 290, Austin, has closed. According to the business’s Facebook page, the train car eatery closed at the end of October. 512-305-3700. www.winnerwinneraustin.com

COMPiled by OLIVIA ALDRIDGE and NICHOLAS CICALE

News or questions about Southwest Austin? Email us at swanews@communityimpact.com.

Carve American Grille opened at Lantana Place on Dec. 17. The Carve concept was created by restaurateur Chris Perry and “pull[s] inspiration from” Perry’s Steakhouse & Grille, according to a news release by the restaurant. Located at 7415 Southwest Parkway, Bldg. 1, Austin, the restaurant will offer lunch, dinner, happy hour and weekend brunch menus that include “new takes on traditional comfort dishes,” according to the release. www.carveamericangrille.com

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NOW OPEN

1. **Belterra Taekwondo**, a new martial arts studio located in the Belterra Village shopping center, officially opened Dec. 5. Belterra Taekwondo offers classes for all levels, beginning with classes for 3- and 4-year-olds. Women’s self-defense classes are also offered. It is located at 166 Hargraves Drive, Ste. C550, Dripping Springs. 512-829-8046. www.belterratkd.com

2. **Code 1 Concierge Care**, a practice offering a la carte primary care, urgent care and other services, opened Dec. 1 at 14101 Hwy. 290, Ste. 400B, Austin. 512-894-5050. www.code1concierge.com

3. **Flying Fish Swim Academy** celebrated its opening with an official Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce ribbon-cutting Dec. 10. Flying Fish Swim Academy offers swimming lessons to all ages beginning at age 6 months. The 7000-square-foot facility houses a pool that is kept at 90 degrees all year. 310 Sportsplex Drive, Dripping Springs. 512-470-9565. www.flyingfishswimacademy.com

4. **Infinity Ranch**, a gated community of tiny homes for nightly bed-and-breakfast rentals, held its grand opening Nov. 19. There are four tiny homes available for rental on the 10-acre property. Infinity Ranch takes online reservations through its website. Infinity is located at 651 Plant Lady Lane, Dripping Springs. 512-917-0855. www.infinityranch-ds.com

5. **Mercer St. Art**, an art gallery, hosted its grand opening Nov. 21 at 330 W. Mercer St., Ste. 6, Dripping Springs. The gallery also hosted a ribbon cutting Nov. 15. Mercer St. Art sells gifts and offers a variety of workshops: 512-894-2236. www.facebook.com/mercerstart

COMING SOON

6. A new restaurant, **Le Vacher**, will open in Dripping Springs in spring 2020, according to a news release by public relations firm Giant Noise. Located at 136 Drifting Wind Run, Ste. 1010, Dripping Springs, the restaurant will have a “French-forward menu with Texas influences,” according to the release. Jacob Euler is the restaurant’s executive chef and owner. www.levachertx.com

RELOCATIONS

7. **Moxie Gymnastics and Cheer** celebrated relocating to a new facility with an official Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting Dec. 3. The new facility is located at 31430 RR 12, Bldg. B, Dripping Springs. Formerly located at 16776 Fitzhugh Road, Dripping Springs, Moxie Gymnastics and Cheer serves children ages 16 months and up. 512-487-5178. www.moxiegymandcheer.com

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31 OBSERVE NEW YEAR’S EVE WITH MEDITATION AND MANTRAS
Kadampa Meditation Center hosts an alternative new year celebration featuring a six-session retreat that last 24 hours. Meditation in the sessions is geared toward forming connection with the female Buddha Tara. Participants may attend any number of sessions. Begins 7 p.m. Free, with $15 donation encouraged. 1918 Bissell Lane, Austin. 512-916-4444. www.meditationaustin.org

04 GO FOR A TIPSY TOUR
Hop on board a chartered introduction to some of Southwest Austin and the Hill Country’s notable wine, beer and barbecue spots with Texas Tipsy Tours. The tour begins at The Park on South Lamar and makes stops at Duchman Family Winery, Vista Brewing and Salt Lick BBQ & Cellars. A number of tours are available on dates throughout December and January. Noon-5 p.m. Starting at $55. The Park on South Lamar, 4024 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin. 512-593-1858. www.texastipsytours.com

09 CHECK OUT MUSIC AND ART
Cellar Sessions is hosted by (512) Brewing Co. and includes a night of live music by The Dropitines and also features a neon art installation by South Austin’s Ion Art. Tickets are available for patrons 21 and up and come with free beers and a souvenir glass. 8-11:30 p.m. $20. 407 Radam Lane, Austin. 512-707-2337. www.512brewing.com

12 EXPLORE AN ECLECTIC MARKET
Enjoy henna tattoos, tarot readings and face painting at Cosmic Coffee and Beer Garden, and check out the work of local artists and vendors. Food and drink trucks will be on-site. 1-6 p.m. Free. 121 Pickle Road, Ste. 11, Austin. 512-481-0694. www.cosmiccoffeebeer.com

17 UNPLUG FOR GAME NIGHT
Sentientia Vera Cultural Hub hosts its monthly game night, a bring-your-own board game event. In tandem, the venue also hosts an acoustic open mic night, inviting guests to bring an instrument and perform. 6-9 p.m. $10 (food fee). 512-633-4327. www.sententiavera.com

Find more or submit events at communityimpact.com/event-calendar. Event organizers can submit local events online to be considered for the print edition. Submitting details for consideration does not guarantee publication.

LAST MINUTE HOLIDAY PHILANTHROPY
Those looking for a way to give back during the holidays still have options in the Southwest Austin area, whether you are interested in supporting animals in need of adoption or incarcerated individuals.

Through Dec. 24: Tomlinson’s Pound4Pound Pet Food Drive
Participate in the final days of Tomlinson Feed’s Pound4Pound Pet Food Drive. Tomlinson’s accepts donations of pet food and doubles the donation “pound for pound” through the holiday season. This year’s donation goal is 160,000 pounds of food. All donations will feed animals at over 30 local shelters, according to Tomlinson’s. Donations are accepted at all Tomlinson’s locations, including in Belterra Village at 164 Belterra Village Way, Austin. During regular business hours. 512-452-1560. www.tomlinsons.com

Through Dec. 29: Holiday Blood Drive
Until Dec. 29, anyone who donates blood at a We Are Blood donation site receives a free Alamo Drafthouse movie pass. According to We Are Blood, the holidays are a time of heightened need for blood donations in Central Texas. Donate at any mobile or fixed donation hub, including at the Sears in Barton Creek Square Mall. Times vary. Free. Barton Creek Square Mall, 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy., Austin. 512-206-1266. www.weareblood.org

Through Dec. 31: Women’s Storybook Project Holiday Book Drive
The Women’s Storybook Project takes donations of children’s books through the end of the year at Barnes & Noble in Sunset Valley. Women’s Storybook Project volunteers take the donated books into prisons and record incarcerated mothers reading them aloud so that the recordings can be given to their children. The book drive has a goal of 1,000 donated books. Donations accepted during store hours. Sunset Valley Barnes & Noble, 5601 Brodie Lane, Sunset Valley. 737-701-2742. www.storybookproject.org

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**ONGOING PROJECTS**

1. **City of Austin gathers feedback for Bergstrom Spur corridor study**
   - The city of Austin and Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization held an open house Nov. 20 to discuss plans for Bergstrom Spur.
   - CAMPO and Austin Public Works have been reviewing options to repurpose Bergstrom Spur, which is an abandoned railroad track that connects South Austin with Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.
   - Possibilities include the creation of a trail that would connect south East and West Austin or the development of public transportation options, according to information from CAMPO. Work on the proposed corridor could begin for Bergstrom Spur.
   - CAMPO and Austin Public Works have been reviewing options to repurpose Bergstrom Spur. CAMPO is scheduled to produce a final report on its ongoing study of options for the spur in spring 2020.
   - **Timeline:** Fall 2019-TBD
   - **Cost:** TBD
   - **Funding sources:** 2016 Mobility Bond, CAMPO

2. **I-35 at Oltorf Street improvements continue**
   - Construction continues along I-35 near Oltorf Street, as TxDOT works to improve I-35 main lanes, frontage roads and ramps.
   - Throughout November, TxDOT crews worked to reconstruct the shoulders for I-35 main lanes near Oltorf.
   - In October, a new U-turn lane on the Oltorf Street bridge opened.
   - **Timeline:** February 2017-mid-2020
   - **Cost:** $42.6 million
   - **Funding source:** Texas Clear Lanes Congestion Relief Fund

3. **Stassney Lane bridge reconstruction advances with possible early 2020 completion**
   - The Texas Department of Transportation installed new beams for the under-construction section of the Stassney Lane bridge on Nov. 20. I-35 main lanes and the Stassney bridge were closed in sections during construction that evening.
   - On Nov. 26, crews poured the deck for the new bridge. The bridge was closed to east and westbound traffic.
   - The bridge is being reconstructed as part of the larger ongoing project to make improvements on I-35 from north of Stassney to south of William Cannon Drive. The old Stassney bridge was demolished in August for the project, and construction is anticipated to take about six months to complete, according to TxDOT.
   - The William Cannon bridge was demolished in sections beginning in March 2018 and rebuilt by late 2018.
   - **Timeline:** July 2016–early 2020
   - **Cost:** $79 million
   - **Funding source:** Proposition 1 funds

4. **Recent update: Mopac Improvement could cut commutes**
   - A new U-turn lane opened on the Oltorf Street bridge in late October.
   - Environmental surveys, and Mobility Authority representatives are conducting coordination meetings with members of the Texas Department of Transportation.
   - “We hope that [cost] will be coming down, but right now that’s sort of the high-end estimate,” Word said, adding construction for the project could begin early 2021, and it could be open to traffic by mid- to late 2021.

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- $635,000
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University of Texas breaks ground on new Moody Center arena

A project to bring a new basketball arena to The University of Texas broke ground Dec. 3.

The Moody Center, which will hold 10,000 fans for basketball with the ability to expand to 15,000 for other events, is scheduled to open in 2022.

The university cleared the final governmental hurdle Nov. 14 when the UT Board of Regents voted to approve the university’s $38.5 million project to realign Red River Street around the new arena.

The project will straighten out Red River through the east end of the UT campus, connecting the pieces of Red River north of Dean Keeton Street and south of Martin Luther King Boulevard. Currently, Red River bends toward I-35 in that area around the LBJ Presidential Library and the Mike A. Myers Stadium and Soccer Field.

The new arena is set to be built just south of the soccer stadium in an area that is now a surface parking lot.

On Nov. 9, UT announced the arena would be named the Moody Center after the Moody Foundation awarded a $130 million grant to the university. A UT media release said the grant was the single largest gift from a foundation in the university’s history. The foundation previously contributed $50 million to support the Moody College of Communication.

The Moody Foundation was established in 1942 by William Lewis Moody Jr. and Libbie Shearn Moody, according to its website, and has awarded more than $1.5 billion in grants since. According to UT, it is the largest philanthropic foundation in the state.

In September, the city of Austin authorized an agreement with UT to allow the road project, which will be funded by the university, despite some concerns from Austin City Council members who felt the city did not receive as many benefits as it should have for expediting the deal.

“While I support moving forward with the stadium and the alignment, we still have a fiscal responsibility to our community to make sure we are capturing those community benefits. We do not have an obligation to underwrite this arena,” District 10 Council Member Alison Alter said at the time.

Architects unveil plans for new Walnut Springs Elementary School facility to Dripping Springs ISD

Dripping Springs ISD trustees heard a presentation by representatives from Corgan, an architecture firm employed by the district, revealing site and interior plans for a new Walnut Springs Elementary School facility at a Nov. 18 meeting.

The relocation of WSES from its current facility at 300 Sportsplex Drive, Dripping Springs, to a new facility on the campus of Dripping Springs Middle School is a project of DSISD’s $132 million 2018 bond program.

Erin Ortwein, a Corgan architect, presented site plans for the facility highlighting architectural opportunities for collaboration between the schools, a factor that the district has cited as a reason for relocating WSES to the middle school campus. Ortwein noted such features as a central amphitheater for students of both schools.

Angie Stutsman, an interior designer for Corgan, discussed the interior of the new elementary school and said designers had aimed for “kid-friendly” colors and features while still being mindful to create a design that would last as trends change.

However, board President Carrie Kroll expressed concern that the proposed designs might not do enough to provide truly collaborative spaces between the elementary and middle schools and encouraged the board to consider the issue before voting on the design.

“The middle school is sort of the redhead stepchild that’s just getting what’s left of the remodel,” Kroll said. “I have concerns that this isn’t the collaborative design we had envisioned.”

Interim Superintendent Nola Wellman said the level of campus collaboration between the elementary and middle schools was necessarily limited by the fact that DSMS was already built, in contrast to Sycamore Springs Elementary and Middle schools, which were built in tandem.

“I do think in the next few years you will see a lot of collaboration between these two faculties, but it will take a little more effort on the part of the leadership,” Wellman said.

The board was scheduled to vote on the proposed design at its Dec. 16 meeting, which was after the time of printing for this edition of Community Impact Newspaper. Wellman has also departed the district since the Nov. 18 meeting; new Superintendent Todd Washburn commenced his duties in late November.

Location: 111 Tiger Lane, Dripping Springs
Timeline: June 2020-summer 2021
Size: TBD
Apple breaks ground on $1 billion campus in Northwest Austin; expects to open facility in 2022

Apple announced Nov. 20 it broke ground on its newest campus, which is expected to be a 3 million-square-foot facility with the capacity to house 15,000 employees.

In December 2018, Apple unveiled it would build a second Austin campus at the Robinson Ranch property in Williamson County; portion of Northwest Austin and hire 5,000 new employees for a total investment of $1 billion. In the year since, the company secured its site plan permit and completed its traffic impact analysis.

Although Apple plans to initially hire 5,000 new employees—in addition to the 7,000 who already work in Austin—the new campus has the capacity to house 15,000 employees.

In September, Apple also announced it will continue manufacturing the company’s Mac Pro computers in the current Northwest Austin facility where the computers have been made since 2013. Apple reported in a news release that it and its manufacturing partners invested more than $200 million in the 244,000-square-foot Mac Pro facility for a complex assembly line. The first shipment of the company’s new computers were shipped out in December.

“Building the Mac Pro, Apple’s most powerful device ever, in Austin is both a point of pride and a testament to the enduring power of American ingenuity,” Apple CEO Tim Cook said in a news release. “With the construction of our new campus in Austin now underway, Apple is deepening our close bond with the city and the talented and diverse workforce that calls it home.”

Earlier in 2019, Apple completed its traffic impact analysis. The report indicates the site would generate more than 24,000 new trips per day and have four new driveways for vehicle access. Austin Transportation Department staffs are also requiring that Apple add $632,500 worth of transportation upgrades to accommodate the new trips.

As part of its long-range planning, Williamson County has proposed additional roads through the Robinson Ranch property where Apple will build the campus.

**Location:** 6900 W. Parmer Lane, Austin

**Timeline:** November 2019-2022

**Size:** 133 acres

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New brewery, taproom coming to South Austin

New brewery Meanwhile Brewing Co.—created by Portland Oregon-based Breakside Brewery’s Will Jaquiss and Nao Ohtera—will open a taproom on a 3.7-acre Southeast Austin property in April.

According to a Nov. 25 news release, the Southeast Austin property will include an indoor taproom with 250 seats and an entertainment space as well as an outdoor playground, a bocce ball court, a recreational soccer field, a stage and an area with hammocks. Food trucks will also be present on the site.

**Location:** 3901 Promontory Point Drive, Austin

**Timeline:** Fall 2019-April 2020

**Size:** 3.7 acres

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The Collective South Congress now built out

The team behind The Collective South Congress completed build-out of the six buildings at its property earlier this fall.

The project was developed by Spark Root Development & Construction and is managed by Equitable Commercial Realty.

The Collective offers its tenants flexible warehouse spaces for a variety of business types, including offices, storefronts, gyms and restaurants, according to Lee Ellison, Equitable Commercial Realty’s senior brokerage adviser. Each of the six buildings is divided into units, which tenants can customize the interiors to serve their specific needs.

The first businesses to open at The Collective were Forth, Moment Motor Co. and Patti Engineering.

Forth, Moment Motor Co. and Patti Engineering. The fi rst businesses to open at The Collective were

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Sunset Valley aims for new branding and increased economic development in 2020

BY NICHOLAS CICALE

The city of Sunset Valley—with a small population and a large retail center located within the city of Austin—is in the process of transitioning from its current marketing firm to develop a more robust brand and image for the city.

“I want Sunset Valley to be more of a destination, where people are not saying that they’re going to one store, but I’m going to Sunset Valley,” Mayor Rose Cardona told Community Impact Newspaper. “I can go have a nice lunch; I can sit at a nice patio; I can go buy my stuff here; and the kids can do some things.”

Sunset Valley City Council in October posted a request for proposals for new marketing services. Two eligible proposals—submitted by Hot Dog Marketing and Mindful Marketing—returned to City Council on Dec. 10, and the firms will make their final pitches to the city Dec. 17, after press time.

WHY NOW?

Sunset Valley has contracted marketing services with Austin-based White Hat Agency since 2016. According to city documents, White Hat has handled promotion of the city’s holiday, spring and back-to-school campaigns; annually updated the city’s business map; and advertised events and promotions online, through direct mail and radio.

However, the city’s community and economic development committee, or CED, has been working in recent years to develop a branding strategy for the city, with the goal of making Sunset Valley a local destination for shopping, entertainment and recreation. The committee hopes a new marketing team can help pull the city’s ideas together.

“(CED) had been working very diligently in branding Sunset Valley,” CED Chair Penny Cedel said. “We realized that we in Sunset Valley do things well, but we do it in a stealth mode. To grow any further we had to come out of that shell.”

Cardona said that once Council Member Phil Ellett became the liaison for the committee in 2018, CED work began taking the forefront more often. She said it showed that CED and the city were ready to take the next steps in marketing.

“For me, I’m ready for a change because I haven’t seen much change in our shopping district for the last few years in terms of marketing and branding,” Cardona said. “There are a handful of things that showed me that we need somebody new [as a firm].”

BRANDING AROUND ASSETS

Ellett said that he is hoping a firm will create a strategy that uses all modern marketing tools available.

“What I’m looking for is [a marketing firm] that creates something that touches all tools available—digital, social media, print for some things—is creative and excited to work with us,” he said. “Not abandon what we have [now], but to take it to the next level.”

However, Ellett said a marketing campaign “is the beginning” of creating an image that works for the city and its retailers, and promotes city assets.

“We have a great selection of stores; we just need to know how to bring it all together in a way that identifies Sunset Valley,” Ellett said.

According to Cardona, some of those assets include city green spaces, the farmers market and the city’s relationship with the Violet Crown Trail—which could link users from Austin to Sunset Valley’s retail center.

She said she hopes a marketing firm will help develop ideas to promote the trail, which could also lead to future development that fits in with an overall image of the city.

THE FUTURE OF SUNSET VALLEY

Cardona said that while the city has great tenants, the shopping centers as a whole leave much to be desired. Future development, tenants and renovations could help modernize the centers.
The 2040 Master Plan is in its early stages after approval in 2018

BY JACK FLAGLER

The Austin-Bergstrom International Airport recorded its third-busiest month in history this October, as airport data showed 1.57 million passengers traveled through it during the city’s fall festival season.

Between January and October 2019, more than 14 million customers traveled through the airport, and by the end of the year, after the flurry of busy holiday travel, the airport’s Executive Director of Aviation Jacqueline Yaft said that passenger number is expected to reach 17 million.

For now, Yaft said, the airport is equipped to handle all the passenger traffic and provide customers with a good experience. It added nine gates this year in a $350 million project to increase capacity, along with a parking garage with 6,000 spaces.

However, the population growth in Central Texas is not expected to slow down, and the airport needs to keep up with that growth if it is going to continue serving Austin residents and tourists effectively, Yaft said.

In November 2018, Austin City Council approved the airport’s 2040 Master Plan, a document that lays out a $4 billion vision of the airport’s expansion over the next two decades, from added gates to roadway improvements that will help ease traffic in the area.

Now that the framework has been established, Yaft said the airport has to get into the nuts and bolts of the capital improvement plan. An executive advisory consulting team has been brought on board to prioritize construction projects and lay out a phased plan in order to stay on track to reach the goals the master plan has laid out.

“We definitely want to be aligned with the city’s growth and not be behind the ball of not having the capacity of being able to serve that business,” Yaft said. “Sometimes you see airports that are behind on making the decision to expand, and we definitely don’t want to be there.”

Yaft said meetings with the consultants and stakeholders will likely run through early or mid-2020, at which point the airport will be ready to send out requests for proposals and solicit bids on some construction projects.

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Equity report calls school closures ‘short-sighted’; questions timeline and community engagement

**AUSTIN ISD** The district released an equity report that analyzes the School Changes plan and school closures approved by trustees in November.

In the report—which was developed by Chief Equity Officer Stephanie Hawley prior to the approval of the School Changes plan but not released until after the vote—Hawley calls the plan to close four campuses “short-sighted” and states that it would “once again place the burden” on East Austin communities.

The report also questions school closures as an effective money-saving and reinvestment strategy.

Hawley states that closures are not an equity strategy because money saved from closed schools “are seldom reinvested” in the original school communities.

“The proposed closures as drafted would extend the district’s more-than-a-hundred-year history of racial and economic segregation,” the report states.

The report states that the process’s short timeline limited opportunities for community engagement and co-creation of alternative plans prior to the board’s final vote. It also states that school leaders believed “closing schools is the only answer” to the district’s financial and enrollment challenges and that leadership cannot see a “way of problem-solving with communities over time.”

“The district must consider and support actually co-creating solutions with the goal of eliminating school closures as an option for the city’s most vulnerable communities,” Hawley states in the report.

Overall, Hawley states that the process exposed the community’s “lack of trust” in the district due to ambiguity in communication and in the methodology used when selecting closing schools.

Long-range facility planning committee reconvenes

**DRIPPING SPRINGS ISD** The district’s long-range facility planning committee has reconvened, holding its first meetings for the current school year on Nov. 7 and Dec. 12. According to the DSISD website, the 70-member group is tasked with “planning for the next 5-10 years of student growth in Dripping Springs ISD.” The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the board of trustees.

Former interim Superintendent Nola Wellman announced the committee’s reinstatement at the board’s Oct. 30 meeting and said that a focus for the group would be deciding the size of future middle schools in the district.

“I was a middle school principal, so I will just honestly tell you that having a middle school of 800 is wonderful,” Wellman said. “[But] you have to think about the fact that you’re building schools continuously for a decade.”

With a growing district, Wellman said, building smaller schools could mean more construction and a heavier burden on taxpayers.

However, trustee Ron Jones emphasized that in the past, the community had expressed “absolute consensus” in their preference for smaller schools with a capacity around 800 students.

The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 16.

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Discount Home Improvement Store and Donation Center

Open to the Public

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Dripping Springs City Council reappoints member John Kroll after 3 absences result in vacated seat

Dripping Springs City Council reappointed one of its council members to his post Dec. 10 after a series of absences created a vacant seat.

According to Section 22 of the Texas State Statutes for Local Government Code, if a city council member is absent “for three regular consecutive meetings, the member’s office is considered vacant unless the member is sick or has first obtained a leave of absence at a regular meeting.”

John Kroll, the council member representing Dripping Springs Place 4, missed three consecutive council meetings in April and May of this year, according to recorded city minutes.

Mayor Pro Tem Bill Foulds said the council was aware that Kroll would miss the meetings in question due to his job taking him out of town.

Both Foulds and Mayor Todd Purcell said that they had not realized that Purcell’s absences equaled three consecutive meetings and also had been unaware of the Texas statute outlining the rule.

“For the record, I didn’t know this existed,” Foulds said.

Purcell said he was only clued in that there might be a problem when another council member, Taline Manassian, approached him about receiving a formal excuse for a potential third consecutive absence from council.

Kroll, too, said he had not been aware of the rule.

Since the vacancy of Place 4’s seat was formally created after Kroll’s May 21 absence, the council has held 13 regular meetings, all but one of which Kroll is on record as attending. According to Assistant City Attorney Laura Mueller, the votes and motions Kroll has made at those meetings remain valid.

City Council voted to reappoint John Kroll (second from right) on Dec. 10.

City Council gives initial approval to updated land-development code

AUSTIN After three straight days of deliberation, which followed more than seven years of work, City Council, in its first of three votes necessary, approved the proposed overhaul of the city’s land-use rules and moved Austin closer to a complete rewrite of how the city governs development within its boundaries.

City Council approved the proposal 7-4 on Dec. 11, with City Council Members Kathie Tovo, Ann Kitchen, Alison Alter and Leslie Pool dissenting. The vote marked a watershed moment for Austin, which, as a community, has been working since 2012 to completely rewrite its rules governing what can be built in the city and where—rules which have not had a comprehensive revision since 1984. Many officials project that when 2020 Census data is calculated, Austin will be the 10th-largest city in the United States.

It was officially the first vote City Council has taken on proposed substantive changes since the process began seven years ago. City Council is expected to take its second vote in early February, while city staff and council members project a third and final vote will arrive in March.

“This code is a really big deal, and this day is a really big deal,” Austin Mayor Steve Adler said.

The mayor emphasized that the city’s issues of affordability, equity and segregation are not solved exclusively by the land-development code, but said “those issues are not solved without a comprehensive revision of the land-development code.”

City delays second hotel-to-homeless shelter plan due to zoning concerns

AUSTIN The city will have to wait a little longer before moving forward with a second hotel/motel purchase to house the homeless after City Council said it would pause its pursuit of a 71-room hotel near the airport because of a zoning issue.

To more rapidly address its homelessness challenges, the city has teamed up with the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, or ECHO, to purchase hotels and motels for conversion into low-barrier homeless shelters. After greenlighting negotiations for the Rodeway Inn at 2711 S. 1-35 on Nov. 14, the city set its eyes on the 71-room Microtel Inn and Suites at 7705 Metro Center Drive in Southeast Austin.

Instead of directing staff to negotiate the $6.8 million purchase of the hotel, City Council announced it was pausing its plans for the hotel. City staff and others close to the issue said the problem was zoning-related and due to the hotel’s proximity to the airport.

The Microtel Inn and Suites is located in Southeast Austin.

The hotel is situated in the airport overlay, a zoning category that prohibits all residential uses in the area, according to the city code. Although the overlay allows for hotels and transitional housing, the restriction on residential uses is problematic for the city’s future plans with its hotel shelters, ECHO board member Mark Littlefield said.

City staff, Austin City Council and members of ECHO have said down the line, they plan to convert the homeless shelters into permanent supportive housing.

Economic analyst: Austin economy still strong, but growth has tapered off heading into 2020

AUSTIN Austin’s population is booming and its economy is growing, and the city’s unemployment rate is sitting near historic lows at 2.7%, according to the most recent data from the Austin Chamber of Commerce. Austin’s population has experienced historic growth in recent years and according to data from the city demographer is poised to surpass 1 million residents in 2020.

At the chamber’s annual economic outlook event held Dec. 5, Sara House, a senior economist and director for Wells Fargo Securities, said while that economic growth is continuing to expand at a solid rate, it is slowing down heading into 2020.

According to data House cited from the U.S. Department of Labor and Wells Fargo Securities, Austin’s year-over-year employment growth sat around 2.5%, just above the Texas average and behind cities such as San Antonio, McAllen, Dallas and Houston.

That job growth in Austin has slowed, according to House, compared to Austin’s growth in previous years, and the slowdown has been widespread across all industries. However, she noted comparatively, the Austin and Texas economies have performed well in comparison to national peers.

During the national economy’s expansion beginning in 2009 after the most recent recession, Austin’s economy has performed about three times better than the nation’s, House said, and the Texas economy has outpaced the U.S. economy 2-to-1. According to real gross domestic product numbers for the second quarter of 2019, Texas has grown 4.5% year over year, leading the nation.

Sarah House, a Wells Fargo Securities senior economist and director, speaks Dec. 5.
Austin City Council supports expansive investigation into police department

**AUSTIN** In a unanimous vote Dec. 5, City Council directed the city manager to initiate a widespread, independent investigation into the culture and practices of the Austin Police Department following an anonymous whistleblower complaint that an assistant chief had regularly used racist and homophobic language throughout his career at the department.

City Council also directed a separate independent audit of the police academy’s training practices. The results will be required by June 1, and City Council said no new cadet classes would be initiated after February until the audit is complete and any necessary changes are made to the academy’s training practices—a move that could cancel the scheduled June cadet class. A June cadet class is not typical, according to Austin City Council members, but was scheduled for 2020 to help address the ongoing shortage of Austin police officers.

City Manager Spencer Cronk also gained support from City Council for the separate third-party investigation he launched Nov. 7 into the specific allegations that former Assistant Chief Justin Newsom’s use of “racial slurs and epithets lasted over a period of many years with the knowledge of other leadership at APD,” according to a complaint. Cronk will publicize the findings to City Council on Jan. 23.

District 1 City Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison, who drew up the resolution, said it was time for the APD to do something “that’s really hard because it’s worth it.”

Commissioners delay RV park proposal near Hamilton Pool Preserve

**TRAVIS COUNTY** For the second week in a row, dozens of Dripping Springs residents filled the Travis County Commissioners Court chambers Dec. 10, prepared to speak in opposition to a proposed RV park at 401 Stagecoach Ranch Road, less than a half mile away from the Hamilton Pool Preserve.

Recent RV park proposals have prompted backlash from community members and led to a procedural change in which they are now considered as a special type of subdivision, similar to condominiums, and require commissioner approval to obtain a development permit.

The proposed Ventree RV Resort project would include 80 pad sites for recreational vehicles and a permanent office structure with a pool.

**RESIDENT CONCERNS**

Residents raised a number of concerns, including about groundwater supply, septic drainage, environmental impact, evacuation routes and safety.

Many residents raised concerns about the impact of the development on the nearby Hamilton Pool Preserve.

Others asked commissioners to consider the impact an RV park could have should there ever be a need to evacuate from the dead-end street.

**COUNTY PROVISIONS**

County staff, in considering the RV park’s application for a development permit, looked more closely at many of these concerns.

Staff wrote in a brief that water availability is not necessary because RVs can be moved easily to a location outside of the park where there is water.

As far as emergency plans, the proposed development meets fire code requirements. Unless instructed by emergency responders to evacuate, RVs are supposed to shelter in place.

**NEXT STEPS**

Commissioners decided Dec. 10 to delay voting on the agenda item, allowing more time for county staff to speak with the developer and develop assurances for both groundwater supply and an additional evacuation route.

**POSSIBLE LOCATION**

The proposed RV park at 401 Stagecoach Ranch Road is less than a half mile away from the Hamilton Pool Preserve.

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You’ll be glad you did.
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Find your Wastewater Averaging Period

1. Locate your Bill Cycle Number on your current water bill

2. Use your Bill Cycle Number on the schedule to the right to determine your Wastewater Averaging Period

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<th>Ending Date</th>
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</table>
As temperatures cool heading into the winter in Central Texas, pollen counts from Ashe juniper trees begin to climb, causing seasonal allergies referred to locally by residents as “cedar fever.”

According to the Texas A&M Forest Service, Central and West Texas is home to about 10 million acres of Ashe juniper—also known as a mountain cedar—trees. Female Ashe junipers have berries and cones, while male trees cause the airborne pollen, according to the service.

Sumit Bose, an allergist/immunologist with Baylor Scott & White Health, told Community Impact Newspaper on Dec. 6 that cedar fever is fairly unique to Texas due to the large concentration of the trees.

“The interesting thing is that, in most of the United States, and especially in northern United States where you don’t have a lot of cedar trees, people actually get some relief from pollen allergies in the winter,” he said. “But here in Texas people continue to struggle with pollen allergies just because of the unique cedar allergies that we have.”

CEDAR SEASON RUNS FROM DECEMBER-FEBRUARY

Bose said cedar trees pollinate for about three months out of the year, beginning in December.

“By the end of February cedar trees stop pollinating, so typically people stop having symptoms of cedar allergies by early spring,” he said. However, other pollen allergens are present in Central Texas throughout the year, including tree pollen in the spring, native grass allergies in the summer and pollen from weeds in the fall.

“It is not uncommon for patients to be allergic to multiple things,” he said. “We routinely see patients suffer from tree pollen allergies in March and April [after cedar is no longer present].”

SYMPTOMS MIMIC THE COMMON COLD

Bose said the name “cedar fever” is bit of a misnomer because typically people do not suffer from an actual fever but experience similar symptoms to a fever or cold. According to Bose, typical symptoms of cedar allergies include nasal congestion; sneezing; itchy, watery or puffy eyes; sore throat; coughing; and fatigue.

Winter is, however, still peak season for the common cold, the flu and other illnesses, and also brings with it an increase in dust allergies as well. Bose said those experiencing symptoms that are inconsistent with cedar pollen counts or inconsistent year to year could be catching colds or suffering from non cedar-related allergies.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES CAN HELP

Bose said many patients come in already suffering from severe allergies, when it could be too late for preventive measure to work. Taking an allergy-relief intranasal steroid spray prior to the season and “not playing catch-up” when pollen counts rise can help reduce or fight off symptoms.

“If people have a documented cedar allergy, they should start using their nasal sprays at least a week or two before cedar season,” he said. “Think of Thanksgiving as a reminder that you should start using your nasal spray regularly, and stay on it continuously through the season to be the most effective.”

SOME TECHNIQUES CAN REDUCE SYMPTOMS

Bose said he recommends that once cedar season begins, those prone to the allergen keep track of pollen counts and stay indoors when counts are high. If required to spend extended time outside, he said to change clothes once back inside and to shower before bed to remove any pollen, preventing exposure at night.

Nasal saline washes can help clean pollen out from nasal and sinus cavities, he said. Over-the-counter medications—such as antihistamines and intranasal steroid sprays—can be taken on an as-needed or daily basis, according to Bose.

Bose said that seeing a board-certified allergist could also offer additional solutions or help pinpoint if cedar or other allergens are causing symptoms. Allergists can conduct allergy tests that can review what a patient is allergic to. Allergists can also administer immunotherapy, which can help the body build up a tolerance to an allergen over time, according to Bose.

PEOPLE NEW TO THE REGION MAY NOT EXPERIENCE ALLERGIES RIGHT AWAY

Bose said in order for an individual to develop an allergy, he or she has to have enough exposure to the pollen for a few years. Because of this, those new to Central Texas may not feel symptoms the first few years they live in the region but could develop the allergy later.

“Sometimes we tend to hear that people who have moved down to Central Texas area initially don’t have any symptoms of Cedar Fever, and that’s actually true,” he said.

ALL ABOUT THE ASHE JUNIPER TREE

There are 10 million acres of Ashe juniper trees in the Edwards Plateau, which includes 41 of Texas’ 256 counties. That is 5.97% of the 167,624,960 acres in Texas. Here are facts about the tree and the allergy.

- The trees provide cover for 191 bird species and 64 mammal species in the region.
- Ashe junipers help slow erosion in the Hill Country.
- The trees stay green year-round, while the rest go dormant or lose leaves.
- The trees are drought-tolerant.
- In high concentration, the canopy formed by the trees absorbs rain and does not allow it to hit the soil, adding to drought conditions.
- As an area develops, the trees multiply at a higher rate.
- Fire is the only effective way to control the spread of Ashe juniper trees.
- The pollen from the male Ashe juniper may lead to several cold-type symptoms (“cedar fever”) and lead to infections if left untreated.

SYMPTOMS OF CEDAR FEVER

- Runny nose
- Itchy nose
- Drainage
- Sore throat
- Itchy eyes
- Watery eyes
- Sneezing
- Wheezing
- Exhaustion
- Low-grade fever

STEPS TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS

- Wear a face mask outside
- Get checked by an allergist for pre-cedar fever help
- Keep windows closed
- Wash clothing exposed to the outdoors
- Change to HEPA furnace/air filters and change often

30-DAY HISTORIC POLLEN LEVELS FOR AUSTIN

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pollen Level</th>
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<td>Medium-high (7.3-9.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11/19</td>
<td>High (9.7-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/19</td>
<td>Low (0-2.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: POLLEN.COM/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER
Private School Guide 2019

Private schools around Southwest Austin offer a variety of specialized instruction, from different religious affiliations to various types of curriculum. This guide features primary and middle schools with grade levels through eighth grade and high schools with grade levels through 12th grade.

COMPiled by OLIVIA ALDRIDGE  Designed by SHELBY SAVAGE

KEY
- Montessori
- Religion-based
- Traditional
- Waldorf

1 AESA Prep Academy
13730 W. Hwy. 290, Austin
512-774-4822
www.aesaprepacademy.com
Grades served: kindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 100
Tuition: $17,000

2 Austin Christian Academy
1010 FM 1626, Austin
512-292-7848
www.austinchristianacademy.org
Grades served: first-12th grade
Religious orientation: Christian
Enrollment: 75
Tuition: $4,200 yearly enrollment

3 Austin Montessori School
Administrative offices: 5006 Sunset Trail, Austin
The Sunset Trail Campus: 2904 and 2906 Jones Road, 5006-5016 and 4910 Sunset Trail, Austin
The Gaines Creek Campus: 5677 Oak Blvd., Austin
Grades served: 15 months-15 years old
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 352
Tuition: $10,900-$18,800, depending on age and enrollment choices

4 Austin OneHeart School
8601 S. First St., Austin
737-898-3318
www.oneheartschool.org
Grades served: kindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 12
Tuition: $13,000, with 50% sibling discount

5 Austin Waldorf School
8700 S. View Road, Austin
512-288-5942
www.austinwaldorf.org
Grades served: kindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 383
Tuition: $12,600-$15,800 (prekindergarten-kindergarten), $16,000 (first-fifth grade), $16,650 (sixth-eighth grade), $18,895 (ninth-12th grade)

6 Headwaters School: Elementary Campus (partially Montessori)
9607 Brodie Lane, Austin
512-804-2708
www.headwaters.org
Grades served: kindergarten-fifth grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 174
Tuition: $12,030-$12,380
*HEADWATERS SCHOOL HAS ITS MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS LOCATED AT 607 RIO GRANDE ST., AUSTIN, IN CENTRAL AUSTIN. HEADWATERS SCHOOL ALSO HAS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD CAMPUS LOCATED AT 6305 MENCHACA ROAD, AUSTIN.

7 Mariposa Montessori School
3338 Paisano Trail, Austin
512-428-4280
www.mariposamontessori.com
Ages served: 2 months-12 years old
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 170
Tuition: $10,600-$15,100, depending on age and enrollment choices

8 Parkside Community Montessori School
3207 W. Slaughter Lane, Austin
512-472-2559
www.parksidecommunityschool.org
Grades served: prekindergarten-sixth grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 140
Tuition: $9,850-$11,400 (rates may vary)

9 Regents School of Austin
3240 Travis Country Circle, Austin
512-899-8095
www.regensaustin.org
Grades served: kindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: Christian
Enrollment: 1,000
Tuition: $11,883-$18,964

10 Skybridge Academy
28450 RR 12, Dripping Springs
512-484-4976
www.skybridgeatx.com
Grades served: sixth-12th grade
Religious orientation: N/A
Enrollment: 58 students
Tuition: $14,500

11 St. Andrew’s Episcopal School
Upper School Campus: 5901 Southwest Parkway, Austin
Lower & Middle School Campus: 1112 W. 31st St., Austin
Grades served: prekindergarten-sixth grade
Religious orientation: Christian
Enrollment: 140
Tuition: $9,850-$11,400 (rates may vary)

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- Fine Arts
- Language Arts
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- Drama
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WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A PRIVATE SCHOOL

Parents should figure out what type of school they are interested in, such as religion-based, Montessori, Waldorf or college prep. Parents should research the mission of the school.

They should ask about the tuition costs and fees as well as whether the school offers financial aid, as many do.

Parents should ask what tests the school administers.

Parents should find out the school’s calendar, which may differ from area public school districts.

Parents should encourage the entire family to visit the school to get a feel for the atmosphere.

SOURCE: TEXAS PRIVATE SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

512-299-9700 (Upper School)
www.sasaustin.org
Grades served: kindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: Episcopalian
Enrollment: 959
Tuition: $23,616 (kindergarten-fourth grade), $27,192 (fifth-eighth grade), $30,354 (ninth-12th grade)

12 St. Gabriel’s Catholic School
2500 Wimberly Lane, Austin
512-327-7755
www.sgs-austin.org
Grades served: prekindergarten-eighth grade
Religious orientation: Catholic
Enrollment: 455
Tuition: $11,450-$15,570 (prekindergarten), $18,300 (kindergarten-fourth grade), $20,450 (fifth-eighth grade)

13 St. Michael’s Catholic Academy
3000 Barton Creek Blvd., Austin
512-328-2323
www.smca.com
Grades served: ninth-12th grade
Religious orientation: Catholic
Enrollment: 336
Tuition: $22,100

14 Strickland Christian School
7415 Menchaca Road, Austin
512-447-1447
https://stricklandschool.com
Grades served: prekindergarten-eighth grade
Religious orientation: Christian
Current enrollment: 178
Tuition: $2,460-$3,825, depending on grade level and enrollment choices

15 Veritas Academy
3401 Escarpment Blvd., Austin
512-891-1673
www.veritasacademy.net
Grades served: prekindergarten-12th grade
Religious orientation: Christian
Current enrollment: 662
Tuition: $3,565-$9,580

https://stricklandschool.com
www.veritasacademy.net

A HIGH SCHOOL THAT IS...
PERSONAL, not standardized
FOCUSED, not frenetic
EXPERIENTIAL, not cramming
CONNECTED, not fragmented
IN THE CITY, not stuck in the classroom
HUMAN, not factory-like
RELATIONAL AND JOYFUL, not impersonal

SIGN UP FOR AN EXPERIENCE DAY
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Wednesday, February 12th or
Thursday, February 20th
Reserve your spot at waterlooaustin.org
For more information: email learn@waterlooaustin.org

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Visit ProjectConnect.com for details.
Accomplice
Design firm fuses digital and physical elements

Ben McCraw of South Austin design firm Accomplice says great design is found at the sweet spot between physical and digital work. Accomplice, which McCraw co-founded, is a “brand experience design firm” that integrates different mediums of design into a brand’s story.

“Very [few] physical spaces that we build don’t have a digital element to them,” said McCraw, who is chief design officer of the business.

Accomplice has gained local and national brand awareness since the debut of a “Game of Thrones” installation called “Bleed for the Throne” it produced at 2019’s South by Southwest festival in partnership with Giant Spoon, another design firm. That project used immersive digital technology in coordination with physical set pieces.

“The idea that digital and physical are two different things, two different initiatives with two sets of priorities and two sets of teams and two sets of vendors is definitely coming to an end. It’s not the future,” McCraw said.

According to McCraw, Accomplice is “uniquely positioned” to accomplish that combination. Instead of being caught in the scramble to figure out the industry’s shift, Accomplice is already doing the work, a feat aided by the company’s acquisition of the St. Elmo area-based physical design company Design + Manufacturing two years ago.

Accomplice is already working on a project for next year’s SXSW and recently designed an elaborate showpiece for Barkitecture Austin, a custom dog house design show and auction in which Accomplice’s creation received the top bid. However, much of Accomplice’s work involves more permanent designs. Locally, Accomplice has done physical, digital and web design work for businesses including Kammok and Shed Barber and Supply in East Austin.

The company’s most common customers, however, are large national companies such as AT&T, Disney and Nike. Accomplice’s local projects only make up around 10% of its total output, according to McCraw, but those are some of the work he is most proud of.

“In Austin specifically, nobody is doing what we’re doing right now,” he said.
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Shore Raw Bar & Grill
Oak Hill restaurant aims to mix fresh seafood, art and music

Rick Wahlberg said he is a man with many interests and experiences, and Shore Raw Bar & Grill—the restaurant he opened in Oak Hill in early 2019—is a way for him to bring food, art and music together.

“I’ve been in Austin for 40 years now, and this is something that’s been a longtime dream,” he said.

Shore Raw Bar & Grill offers regional coastal cuisine, with influences from Louisiana, Mexico and Texas. The menu was created by Executive Chef Brandon Silver.

As a Texas eatery, Wahlberg said having a wood-fired grill was a must, with grilled lobster tail, fish plates and locally sourced fillets featured on the menu. Traditional Cajun foods, such as po’boys, etouffee and gumbo, are also on the menu, as are Southwestern classics such as fish, shrimp and rib-eye tacos.

Shore’s raw bar offers fresh oysters, chilled shrimp and crab, and fresh fish ceviche and crudo. The Shore Tower—a large, colorful multilayered structure that features each raw bar item—is a favorite for larger tables, Wahlberg said.

Art is integrated into almost every aspect of the restaurant. Custom designs can be found in the countertops, floors and even the wood cutting boards and serving trays used to present food, Wahlberg said. The murals and paintings on the walls were created by San Antonio-based artist Todd White, who in the late ’90s worked developing characters for the SpongeBob SquarePants cartoon, Wahlberg said.

“It’s not just about great, fresh oysters and halibut,” he said. “Every piece is a way to be unique. People don’t have to drive downtown to get this level of an experience.”

Food has been Shore’s priority in year one, but Wahlberg said he will introduce more music at the restaurant in the future. Shore already hosts a Sunday jazz brunch each week and live music on certain nights.

“Music is a big part of it,” said Wahlberg, who is the son of a pianist. “It’s a big part of me and Austin.”

Dining Feature

Executive Chef Brandon Silver assembles The Shore Tower, one of the restaurant’s signature raw bar items. The tower includes a level of chilled shrimp and raw oysters, a level of king crab legs, fresh fish ceviche and crudo served with tortilla chips; and a level of battered shrimp and french fries.

Dishes to Try

Caesar salad: romaine lettuce, croutons and Parmesan

Lobster roll: Maine lobster on a house-made roll

Seafood gumbo: Gulf shrimp, crab, sausage and rice

Po’boys: fried shrimp or oysters with a remoulade

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Todd Washburn gets set to lead Dripping Springs ISD and the larger community
A Q&A with the new DSISD superintendent

Todd Washburn officially assumed his role as Dripping Springs ISD superintendent Nov. 21. Formerly an associate superintendent with Eanes ISD, Washburn has lived in Dripping Springs since 2016. He sat down with Community Impact Newspaper on his second official day on the job to discuss his new role.

What drew you to live in the Dripping Springs community?
It was a fast-growing district with very high standards academically. It felt like the community had a very traditional focus, that community values were very important, and we just loved the area where Dripping Springs is. You have that appeal of being close to Austin but outside of Austin, kind of that small-town feel and flavor of Dripping Springs. Where I grew up, it was a very small town as well, so I guess that kind of led me to want to be relocated here in Dripping Springs. I just saw this as a great community to be plugged into and get engaged with.

What drew you toward the Dripping Springs ISD superintendent position?
What drew me as a prospective superintendent was the reputation of the district. The programs and opportunities that are being provided here in Dripping Springs are definitely appealing, and I would definitely say Dripping Springs is really one of the best destinations if you’re moving to the Austin area, with the fast growth—and the school system and the schools here are outstanding. I think it’s a great place to raise children, although I’ve already done that.

Do you have any ideas for new programming you would like to bring to the district?
I’m always looking at what some of the latest trends are and what the job market data is telling us to make sure we’re providing those opportunities for students to experience some of those ongoing trends so that they can be successful. I believe a lot of times, it’s important for students to experience it to know what they want to do but also what they don’t want to do. Providing those opportunities helps students sort out what kind of path they want to take beyond high school.

What is your mindset moving into this continued period of growth for the district?
Being in Leander for over 20 years, I had the opportunity to experience a rapid-growth school district and have personally been a part of opening multiple new campuses. I do know that as a school district and community grows, it’s important that you hold onto and value those traditions and community values and beliefs and that you honor the past but also prepare for the future.

What do you want the community to know about you?
My passion is education. My passion is working with students, teachers, parents and [the] community to develop a culture that is innovative, creative and collaborative. I’m excited to be here in Dripping Springs. I feel like it’s such a great opportunity for all of our stakeholders because we’re in a space and time when we’re going to see growth, and with growth creates greater opportunities for our students and opportunities to set the path for the future of Dripping Springs ISD and the Dripping Springs community. I’m excited to be a part of that.

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Wedding Bells in the Hill Country

Across Southwest Austin and Dripping Springs, wedding professionals work to harness the growing interest in Hill Country weddings, even closer to downtown. Canny marketing, diversified business offerings and explosive demand make the region's industry go round.

Sources: Camp Lucy, Whim Hospitality, Brodie Homestead, Mercury Hall / Community Impact Newspaper

Diversifying Appeal

Camp Lucy Marketing Coordinator Kim Hanks, of Whim Hospitality, said the venue has expanded its unique features to attract more wedding clients and general year-round business. Some brides and grooms choose Camp Lucy for the photo opportunities—including the chance to take pictures with alpacas.

During the offseason, Camp Lucy attracts business with a full-service restaurant and weeknight programming, including a music series and supper clubs.

“I always say more is more, not less is more.”
— Kim Hanks, CEO of Whim Hospitality

Appetite for Aesthetics

Brodie Homestead’s director of events, Juliana Ross, said her family’s Sunset Valley venue markets to those who want a Hill Country aesthetic closer to the city center. While the “urban barn” sits on a “much smaller footprint” than many Hill Country venues, the historic structure has a rustic feel, Ross said.

As an entirely indoor venue, Brodie Homestead can offer Hill Country aesthetics year-round, which boosts its business during wedding off-seasons.

“I think the look of the space is a big draw.”
— Juliana Ross, director of events at Brodie Homestead

Balancing Feasibility

Mercury Hall is a South Central Austin wedding venue that has received recognition from The Knot, Austin Wedding Guide and others. Recently, representatives for Mercury Hall announced the business would close by June 2021. Managing partner Daryl Kunik said high and unpredictable property taxes in the city of Austin are to blame.

Mercury Hall markets itself as having “Hill Country charm near the city center,” but property taxes are $0.30 higher per $100 of valuation in Austin than in Dripping Springs.

“We’re sad to close it. We all love it. It just doesn’t make sense with property taxes to continue.”
— Daryl Kunik, managing partner at Mercury Hall

The “Wedding Capital of Texas”

The tourism appeal of Southwest Austin and Dripping Springs is different from that of Central Austin, but tourism professionals such as Hanks said they have learned to market to the region’s strengths. Dripping Springs has strategically branded itself to tourists since 2005, when state legislature recognized it as the “Wedding Capital of Texas.”

Hanks was a member of the chamber of commerce board that brainstormed the title, which was intended to grow Dripping Springs’ reputation as a wedding destination.

“That’s when we decided we were more of a leisure town,” Hanks said.

Pam Owens, president of the Dripping Springs Visitors Bureau, said the brand has helped the city market itself not just as a wedding destination, but also as a spot for Texas “staycations,” a Hill Country getaway for natives of Austin, Houston and Dallas.

“Tourism has become a big economic indicator here,” Owens said.

At present, Hanks said she counts at least 36 wedding venues in Dripping Springs and Driftwood, up from the two that existed prior to the implementation of the “Wedding Capital of Texas” branding about 15 years ago. Hanks also credits the area with at least 28 wineries, breweries and distilleries, many of which wind up on the itinerary for wedding guests and parties or serve as venues themselves. Hanks said, however, that just driving through, the abundance of these businesses may not be apparent, because they are often nestled off back roads like “hidden gems.” That is part of their appeal, Hanks said, both for tourists and for the town.

“It was a great way to use our land without overdeveloping it,” she said.

Daniel Barnes, founder and CEO of Treaty Oak Distilling, a business he relocated from a small warehouse in North Austin to a Dripping Springs ranch in order to make it more of a “destination,” compared the area to one in California in terms of its attractive landscape and rising tourism profile.

“I kind of liken it to what you saw happen with Sonoma 30 years ago,” Barnes said. “Sonoma was kind of in the shadow of Napa to a certain degree, but as the food scene and the quality of everything started to raise, it almost took it over.”

Barnes said Dripping Springs has begun to make a name for itself separate from Austin’s with the proliferation of quality wineries, distilleries and barbecue joints—aided by Texas’ changing “distilling climate,” which went from being “the worst to one of the most liberal.” Hanks would add wedding and event venues to that list, and differs slightly from Barnes in her California comparison: She calls Dripping Springs “the new Napa Valley.”

Straddling City and Country

The draw of rustic Hill Country charm extends northeast toward Austin as well. Brodie Homestead, a venue in Sunset Valley, rests in a setting much more urban than its neighbor Dripping Springs. Its architecture and story as a large, preserved historic barn yields appeal for brides and grooms who seek Hill Country charm and downtown proximity, according to Juliana Ross, the director of events for Brodie Homestead.

“For some of our clients, it’s like the in-town option they’re looking into,” Ross said.

On the flip side, Ross said that for some clients, Brodie Homestead is the farthest in-town option they’re looking into, and differs slightly from Barnes in her California comparison.
Having been in the Austin wedding scene since 2000, when her family opened Allan House, Ross has seen the industry transform in the region.

“It’s definitely changed a ton over the past few years,” Ross said, indicating that the number of venues and vendors—including wedding professionals such as caterers, decorators and florists—has exploded in the 2000s.

According to Ross, the growth has made for a better regional industry, one that puts “community over competition.”

“It’s making everyone raise their game,” she said.

Hanks, whose Whim Hospitality serves not only Dripping Springs but also Austin, similarly said she appreciates the industry’s growth.

“We want more,” said Hanks, “because that builds your brand and awareness of what you’re doing.”

Another venue in the Austin area has begun to struggle, but its executives say competition is not to blame. Representatives for Mercury Hall, a popular wedding venue in South Central Austin, announced in November plans to close by June 2021. Daryl Kunik, a managing partner for the venue, cited erratically rising property taxes as the culprit.

“Property taxes in general in Austin are just really going up, and not going up at a steady rate,” Kunik said. “You can’t continue to run that type of business in town on that big a piece of property.”

Mercury Hall, which bills itself as having “Hill Country feel in the heart of Austin,” is subject to Austin’s current property tax rate of $0.4403 per $100 of assessed value. Dripping Springs, by comparison, enforces a tax rate of $0.14 per $100 of assessed value. School district tax rates average around $1.12 per $100 of value in Austin versus Dripping Springs’ $1.42, however.

**MAKING IT WORK YEAR ROUND**

No matter the tax rate, venues throughout the metro area share another challenge: supporting business and employees through seasonal lags.

Ross said Brodie Homestead capitalizes on being a fully indoor venue to draw clients in during the coldest months of January and February, and the most sweltering—August. She also said that while the venue is best known as a wedding and wedding reception space, it benefits from weekday corporate and social gatherings, too—as well as events such as bar and bat mitzvahs and quinceaneras during wedding off-seasons.

Hanks said many of the venues she works with have made up for seasonal wedding lags by diversifying their business models. For instance, Dripping Springs venue Camp Lucy features its own vineyards on-site; a full-service restaurant, Tilly’s; and glamping-style accommodations. The venue also offers year-round programming, including a music series. Next up, Hanks said, will be a spa, with the eventual goal of making Camp Lucy a wedding-specialized resort.

“I am seeing this overlay of services, and I think it has to do with employment,” Hanks said. Hanks’ business, Whim Hospitality, alone, has expanded to 250 employees, up from the two it started with seven years ago.

In order to attract great full-time employees, Hanks said, she tries to bolster a year-round industry that can sustain them.
the same protections. In fiscal year 2017-18, the county found nearly three in four screened defendants to be indigent, or unable to afford an attorney. The threshold for indigence is 125% of the federal poverty line, or $15,612.50 in annual income for an individual.

But Austin is the largest city in the country without a public defender’s office to serve them. Instead, indigent clients are represented by contracted attorneys paid a flat fee—$600 for a typical felony case, less for a misdemeanor. The median hourly rate for full-time private attorneys in 2017 was $281, per the Texas Bar Journal. This system incentivizes attorneys to take on as many cases as possible, data shows.

According to state-commissioned guidelines, attorneys should carry no more than 236 misdemeanors or 174 felonies annually.

In 2018, one appointed attorney took on 628 cases, per the Texas Indigent Defense Commission. One in seven exceeded the maximum caseload of 236; nearly all had a mixture of misdemeanors and felonies.

“What’s different, I think, about Austin is that a significant part of the criminal defense community has a business model [in which] court appointments are an integral part,” said Kameron Johnson, director of the juvenile public defender’s office.

In contrast is the DA’s office, which hires salaried attorneys. Last year, the average caseload was 236.

“I don’t think that anyone would think that we could run a DA’s office better if we contracted that out,” Johnson said.

Things are starting to change, however.

In August, the county received a $48 million state grant—the largest ever awarded by the TIDC—to create a public defender’s office.

Advocates said the office will better serve defendants because its staff can build legal expertise, share resources and respond to oversight in ways that individual contractors cannot.

When the grant expires in 2024, Travis County will have a 67-person staff—about two-thirds attorneys—taking on 30% of indigent cases. The remainder will continue to be appointed private attorneys.

IN SEARCH OF A CULTURE

In late September, the Travis County Commissioners Court tasked a one-person oversight group—made up of legal professionals, local advocates and community leaders—with finding a chief public defender.

“We need somebody who has the softer qualities,” said Chito Vela, a criminal defense attorney and court judge.

“The group finalized a job description Oct. 15 and expects to interview candidates by December. Once hired, the new chief will need to build not only a staff but also a culture.

While the county was in the process of developing its proposal for state funding, some local criminal defense attorneys and criminal court judges pushed back against the new office, which they argued could threaten the existing system of appointments.
“It’s creating this new culture that doesn’t exist now,” said Maria Emerson, a member of Advocates for Social Justice Reform, or ASJR, a local organization that helped mediate the proposal drafting process. “It’s us and them, where we’re trying to really make it a we.”

**INVESTING IN PUBLIC DEFENSE**

Public defenders are salaried and have caseload limits guided by American Bar Association standards. These limits allow public defense attorneys to do more than just triage cases, Shearer said, and instead spend time with each client.

A centralized public defender’s office can also better identify trends and strategies.

“A private attorney coming into the courtroom may do one or two cases a year,” said Bradley Temple, an associate juvenile court judge. “They’re not going to develop that expertise and that specialization, nor are they going to form those relationships [with district attorneys and judges] that are really important.”

Public defenders also have more resources, including staff investigators and social workers.

In the mental health public defender’s office, staff meet twice a week to review ongoing cases, Shearer said. Teams of public defenders and social workers talk through their strategies and solicit feedback from their colleagues.

When the new office is up and running, these benefits will also extend to private attorneys.

“We’ve always embraced and supported the private bar,” Johnson said. “Because of the specialization and the expertise that we have, they will come to us when they have these juvenile cases.”

Both Johnson and Shearer’s offices host continuing education and training, open to public defenders and private attorneys alike.

Alex Bunin is the chief of the Harris County public defender’s office, which he helped found in 2011, as well as a member of the oversight group.

A 2013 evaluation by the Council of State Governments Justice Center found that the Harris County Public Defender’s Office saw better outcomes than assigned and retained attorneys.

This year, nearly 60% of the office’s felony clients were acquitted, dismissed or avoided a custody sentence, Bunin said via email.

**MOVING FORWARD**

The Travis County Public Defender’s Office will begin taking cases in 2021 and ramp up to representing 30% of indigent clients by 2024.

In the meantime, the chief public defender and oversight group will be tasked with building a system of checks and balances to make sure the new office fulfills its promise.

“I think one of the reasons why there was the disconnect [between advocates and private attorneys] early on is because anecdotes were substituted for data,” said Bob Batlan, a member of ASJR. “But until you have a measurement system, it’s all finger pointing.”

Additionally, members of the oversight group and advocates alike have expressed hope that the new office could eventually mirror the juvenile public defender’s office, which takes almost every indigent case—even as they acknowledge serious funding constraints and likely pushback from the private bar.

“My experience with [public defenders] is far superior representation,” said Rick Cofer, a criminal defense attorney who represents juveniles in cases where there is a conflict.

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Harris County has acquired about $4.5 billion in federal funds for flood prevention projects across the area, bringing the county close to solving its numerous flooding issues, officials said Monday. U.S. Rep. John Culberson, R-Houston, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett and Russ Poppe, Harris County Flood Control District executive director, held a press conference Monday at the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish...
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- We only source shrimp from the Gulf of Mexico, catfish from the southern USA, and crawfish from Louisiana
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- We serve eggs from pastured-raised hens during our New Orleans Brunch and in our desserts and salads
- Our farm-to-table partners include JBG Organic in East Austin and the many partner farms from Farm to Table, Austin.

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All day $2 Beer

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1/2 price bottles of wine all day

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2

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WEEKEND BRUNCH 10AM – 4PM
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KITCHEN OPEN ‘TIL MIDNIGHT
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TEXAS BREWS AND SPIRITS

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Cherry Creek Rd. @ Stassney Ln.
5712 Manchaca Road | 512-440-8810 | www.cherrycreekcatfish.com

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Join us for a special New Years Day brunch from 11am-3pm, 1/1/20!

Hyde Park Bar & Grill

Have you tried our award winning Hyde Park French fries? Our fresh-cut fries are made with buttermilk, black pepper, and spices, fried to gold brown perfection and served with our amazing Hyde Park sauce.
A consistent winner of ‘Best Fries in Austin’ by the Austin Chronicle, these are a MUST on your next (or first) visit!

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HPBnG.com

Bring in this ad for a FREE small order of our world famous fries! (With entree purchase. Valid until 1/28/2020)
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