

READ MORE INSIDE ON PAGES 29-31

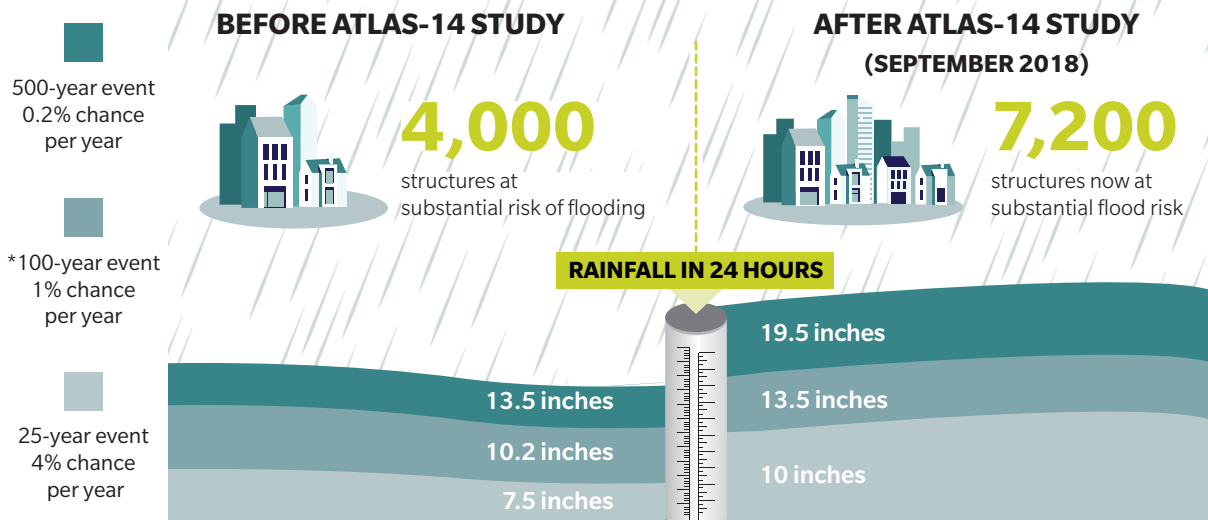
FLOOD RISK RISING

The Atlas-14 rainfall study—the first such federal study since 1961—shows the Austin area is at a higher risk of flood due to intense rainfall than previously thought.

WRITTEN BY SALLY GRACE HOLTGRIEVE AND CHRISTOPHER NEELY

“ANY FLOOD-[MITIGATION] INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE ENTIRE CITY IS CURRENTLY UNDERSIZED. EVERY BIT OF IT.”

— KEVIN SHUNK, AUSTIN WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT FLOOD PLAIN ADMINISTRATOR



*CITIES, AUSTIN INCLUDED, REGULATE FOR AND BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE BASED ON 100-YEAR EVENT FLOOD RISK. SOURCE: CITY OF AUSTIN/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Travis County aims for public defender's office

Attorneys would handle 30% of indigent cases, build on criminal justice reforms

BY EMMA FREER

Austin is the largest U.S. city without an all-purpose public defender's office to represent indigent clients, or those who cannot afford private counsel. After decades of piecemeal progress, Travis County is on track to change this.

Experts attribute this newfound momentum to an opportunity to fund the office through a grant, bipartisan support for criminal justice reform and increased activism.

The Texas Indigent Defense Commission, a state agency, provides grants to counties seeking to strengthen their indigent defense systems.

CONTINUED ON 32

An imbalanced DEFENSE

Most indigent clients in Travis County are appointed to private attorneys, who are paid a flat fee.



SOURCES: Travis County District Attorney Review of Drug Possession Case Dispositions 2016-17 and Recidivism Analysis 2014-15/Community Impact Newspaper

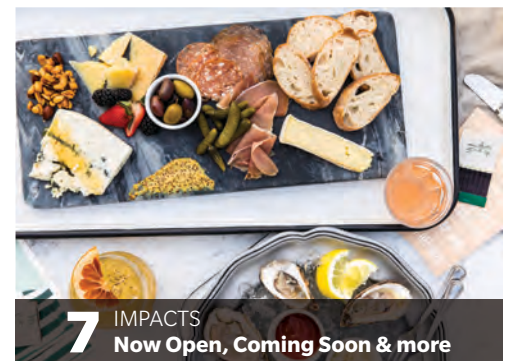
CENTRAL AUSTIN EDITION

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CI COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM

SPECIAL REPORT

Community Impact Newspaper reporters Sally Grace Holtgrieve and Christopher Neely began their work on this project in the fall. Their reporting process included conducting dozens of interviews and analyzing existing floodplain data and information spanning multiple decades.



7 IMPACTS
Now Open, Coming Soon & more



12 TO-DO LIST
Find a community event



25 BUSINESS FEATURE
Thinkery



27 DINING FEATURE
Siena Ristorante Toscana

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Then we helped save
his life's dream.



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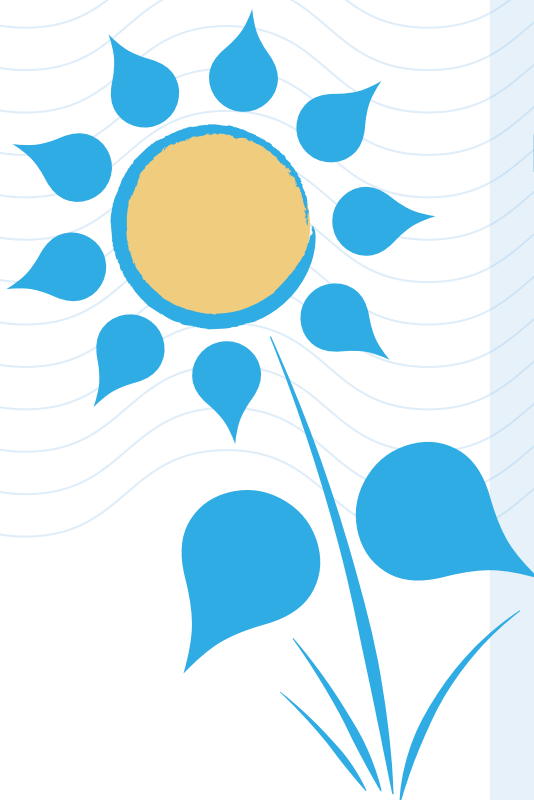
SPRING TUNE-UP Lawn & Garden

Check List

Spring is just around the corner and yard-of-the-month is in your sights.

Austin Water has many rebates and programs to help you maintain a beautiful lawn and garden while eliminating water waste and lowering your water bill!

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John and Jennifer Garrett began *Community Impact Newspaper* in 2005 in Pflugerville, Texas. The company's mission is to build communities of informed citizens and thriving businesses through the collaboration of a passionate team.

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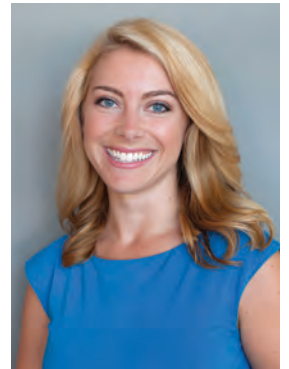
How weather affects us all

When I moved to Austin from Oklahoma City, I remember thinking how nice it would be to live somewhere without constant extreme weather. Now I realize while there is far less severe weather here, we certainly aren't immune. As a TV News Reporter in Oklahoma, I covered tornadoes, wildfires, even earthquakes frequently, but my first experience reporting on deadly flooding was in 2013 when heavy rains pounded Onion Creek in South Austin. Two years later to the day, it would happen again – another major flood in the same neighborhood.

In our cover story this month, our reporter Christopher Neely shares the likelihood storms like these will happen

in the future by breaking down the findings of a new federal study. The study called Atlas-14 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) explains the differences in a 25-year storm versus a 100 or 500-year storm in terms of rainfall chances. On pages 29-31, you can also see a timeline of major flooding events in Austin and how they stagger themselves among our record droughts.

We hope this story not only shows you how our weather patterns have changed since the last time rainfall was studied in this way back in 1961, but also explains how this data will affect future developments and homeowners in our capital city.



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ASK THE EDITOR



Jack Flagler
Jack Flagler
EDITOR
jflagler@communityimpact.com

Do you have a question about how local government works or something going on in town? Send it to ctafeedback@communityimpact.com

How do you select local businesses and restaurants to feature?

Part of our mission at *Community Impact Newspaper* is to help local businesses thrive, and one of the ways we work toward that goal is by profiling one local restaurant and one local small business in every monthly edition.

These profiles paint the picture of Central Austin's local business community by highlighting business owners, restaurateurs and chefs, each of whom has a different story to tell about their inspiration.

We find our subjects by getting out in the community, listening to our neighbors and our readers, and always looking out for new local spots we can add to our list of possible features. We do not accept payment for the stories, and we require that businesses be locally owned, in operation for at least one year, and have brick-and-mortar locations. What are your local haunts that you think we should feature? Whether it's an under-the-radar restaurant or a quirky shop, we are always open to suggestions.

FEATURED STORIES

7 IMPACTS

Now Open, Coming Soon & more

12 TO-DO LIST**16 DEVELOPMENT UPDATES**
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Siena Ristorante Toscana**35 IMPACT DEALS**

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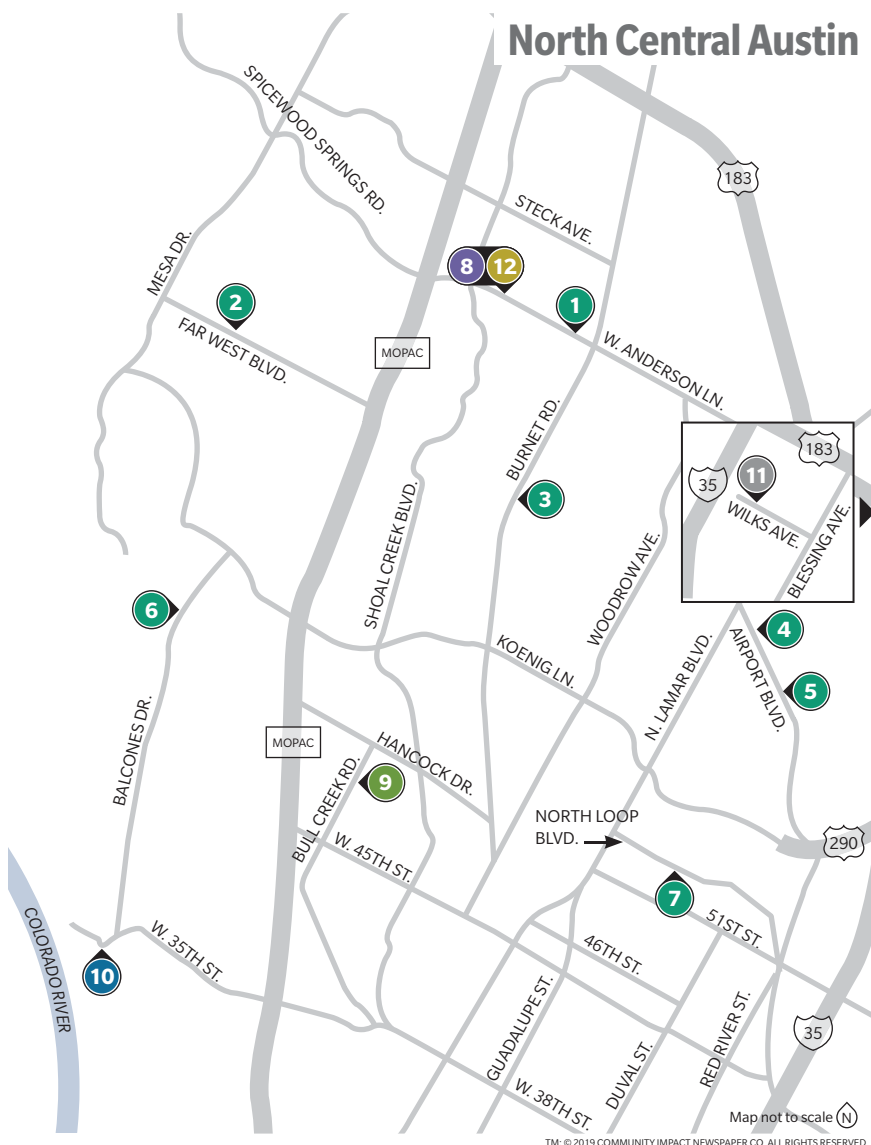
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NOW OPEN

- 1** National chain **Jason's Deli** opened a new location at 2438 W. Anderson Lane, Ste. D5, Austin, in early March. The counter-service deli serves hot and cold sandwiches, wraps, soups and pastas as well as a salad bar. The restaurant also offers vegetarian and gluten-free options for customers. 512-419-9128. www.jasonsdeli.com
- 2** **The Medspa** at NW Hills opened at 3918

Far West Blvd., Austin, on Jan. 15. The business, which also has a location in Westlake, offers cosmetic procedures, such as laser hair removal and fillers. 512-640-8111. www.themedspaaustin.com

- 3** **Austin Kolache & Koffee Shop** opened March 19 at 7113 Burnet Road, Ste. 112, Austin, in the space previously occupied by Kolache Creations, which recently closed. Owner Debra Ford also owns Cleopatra's Salon next door. 512-551-3115.

- 4** Plastic surgery clinic **Mia Aesthetics**

opened its first facility in Texas at 6929 Airport Blvd., Ste. 103, Austin, in January. This is the third location in the nation for the clinic and its first outside of Miami. 512-377-9054. www.miaaesthetics.com

- 5** Restaurant **China Family** opened Feb. 1 at 6801 Airport Blvd., Austin. The location used to be Korean fried chicken restaurant Jang's Chimac Cafe. 512-520-4171. www.chinafamilytx.com

- 6** **The Westwood Gastropub**, a locally owned and operated restaurant at 5308 Balcones Drive, Austin, opened March 11. It serves craft cocktails, tapas, fresh seafood, steaks and burgers. 512-551-3494. www.thewestwoodtx.com

- 7** **The Commune**, a coworking space geared toward artists and creative professionals, opened in late April at 101 E. North Loop Blvd., Austin. It features seven private studios, 10 dedicated desks, mess sinks, canvas storage and a photo studio. Owner Lauren Cunningham is a local artist and designer. 512-905-5182. www.thecommuneatx.com

RELOCATIONS

- 8** **Goodwill of Central Texas** will relocate to 2900 W. Anderson Lane, Austin, from its current location at 7727 Burnet Road, Austin, early this summer. The new 24,000-square-foot location was previously occupied by Stein Mart. 512-637-7100. www.goodwillcentraltexas.org

NEW OWNERSHIP

- 9** Local Austin dentist Michele Strait took over the practice of Teresa Knobles at 5017 Bull Creek Road, Austin, on April 5. Strait has renamed the practice **Strait Smile Studio**. Knobles retired after 34 years in practice, including 29 years at the Bull Creek Road location. 512-459-7811. www.straitsmilestudio.com

EXPANSIONS

- 10** **The Contemporary Austin's Laguna Gloria campus**, a 14-acre sculpture park in West Austin, debuted a new pavilion and visitor center May 11—which includes an artist-designed museum shop and a cafe from the chef and owner of the Rosedale

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restaurant Epicerie—at 3809 W. 35th St., Austin. 512-458-8191. www.thecontemporaryaustin.com

IN THE NEWS

- 11** **St. John Park**, at 889 Wilks Ave., Austin, underwent a complete redevelopment and reopened March 20. The project was funded with grant awards from the Austin Parks Foundation and by the city's 2012 bond, among other sources. The park now features an entry plaza, information kiosk, water foundation, pavilion, playscape, swings and a looped walking trail. www.austinparks.org

ANNIVERSARIES

- 12** **Benold's Jewelers**, which specializes in bridal jewelry and is located at 2900 W. Anderson Lane, Austin, is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. The business opened on Sixth Street in 1929 under the name Laves Jewelry and then became Laves-Benold's before settling as Benold's Jewelers. It relocated to its current space in 1997. 512-452-6491. www.benolds.com



COURTESY ADRENNE DRIVER



COURTESY BENOLD'S JEWELERS



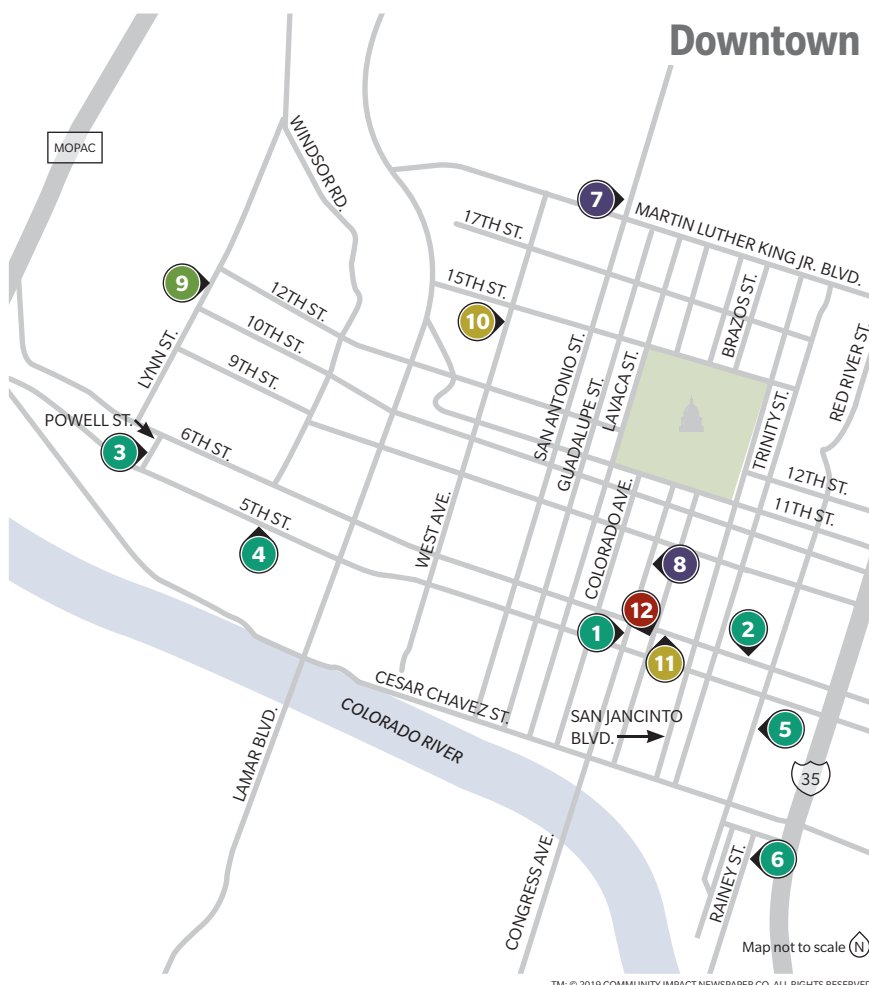
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IMPACTS

Businesses that have recently opened, are coming soon, relocating or expanding



DOWNTOWN

NOW OPEN

1 Rios Clementi Hale Studios, the Los Angeles-based design firm behind the Hollywood Bowl and ACL Live at the Moody Theater, opened a second office at 600 Congress Ave., Austin, in March. Founded in 1985, the company works across disciplines, including architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, graphic design and branding. 512-222-9392. www.rchstudios.com

2 Flamingo Hemp Bodega, which sells CBD oils and products while doubling as a

full-service coffee shop, opened March 6 at 515 E. Sixth St., Austin, in front of Flamingo Cantina. www.flamingohemp.com

3 Frog, a micromobility company headquartered at 508 Powell St., Austin, launched its scooter services April 9 in test markets Lisbon, Portugal, and Valdivia, Chile. It is not yet operating in the city of Austin, which paused issuing permits to new operators in January, but hopes to do so soon, a company spokesperson said. www.gofrog.city

4 The Riveter, a coworking space designed for women, opened a new location at 1145 W. Fifth St., Austin, on March 18. This is the sixth location for the company,

which also has spaces in Seattle and Los Angeles and plans to expand nationwide. 833-474-8383. www.theriveter.co

5 Central District Brewing opened March 9 at 417 Red River St., Austin. The small-batch brewery was founded by husband-and-wife teams Angela and Adam Duley and Julie and Joe Ballato. It will begin to serve its own beers by late April. 512-993-4511. www.centraldistrictbrewing.com

6 Stagger Lee, a new bar, opened March 1 at 87 Rainey St., Austin, in the space previously occupied by restaurant No Va. It is owned by locals Matt Luckie, Max Moreland and Mike Joyce—who have been involved in opening spots such as Lala's Little Nugget and Star Bar. 512-220-9007.

COMING SOON

7 The Otis Hotel and AC Hotel Austin are scheduled to open at 1901 San Antonio St., Austin, in February 2020. Together, the hotels will provide 347 rooms and 7,500 square feet of meeting space as well as a restaurant. Ownership company White Lodging will have 13 hotels in Austin when the hotels open. www.otishotel.com. www.ac-hotels.com

8 Hyatt Centric, a new boutique brand from the hotel corporation, will open a location at 721 Congress Ave., Austin, in mid-2020. It will have 233 rooms, according to a company news release. www.centric.hyatt.com

NEW OWNERSHIP

9 Zocalo Cafe, at 1110 W. Lynn St., Austin, closed March 29 and reopened as a Taco Flats on April 1. Zocalo Cafe owners Chris Courtney, Kelly Chappell and Jay Bunda sold the spot to Simon Madera of Taco Flats. In a Facebook post, Zocalo Cafe's owners said they will focus on the expansion of their other restaurants, Galaxy Cafe and Top Notch Hamburgers. 512-472-8226. www.zocalocafe.com

ANNIVERSARIES

10 Nonprofit organization Austin Junior Forum marked its 50th anniversary March 28. Its headquarters are located at the his-

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toric Daniel H. Caswell House, 1404 West Ave., Austin. The organization supports women, children and the elderly in the Austin area through community service and fundraising. 512-472-0779. www.austinjuniorforum.org

11 Sixth Street gaming bar Buffalo Billiards celebrated its 20th anniversary March 10. Located at 201 E. Sixth St., Austin, in a building that was originally constructed in 1861, the spot features pool tables, darts, shuffle board and pinball machines. The bar will be hosting a celebration concert with radio station 101X on April 27. 512-479-7665. www.buffalobilliardsaustin.com

CLOSINGS

12 The Refinery, a coworking and social community space for women at 612 Brazos St., Austin, closed March 31. The location opened in 2017. In a Facebook post, founder Hayley Swindell said the Refinery built a strong community "but as a business we are not well positioned for the growing market need." 512-662-1568. www.therefineryatx.com



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South Central Austin

Map not to scale

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Banister Lane, Ste. 235, Austin, on March 8. Bryan's office was previously located at 6001 W. William Cannon Drive in Southwest Austin. 512-494-4738. www.edwardjones.com/jonathan-bryan

EXPANSIONS

7 The Macy's location at Barton Creek Square Mall, 2901 Capitol of Texas Hwy., Austin, has expanded to include a **Macy's Backstage**, which sells discounted merchandise, on the second floor of its existing store. The 14,000-square-foot Backstage space opened April 13. 512-329-2300. www.macysbackstage.com

ANNIVERSARIES

8 TOMS celebrated the fifth anniversary of its second retail store in the country, at 1401 S. Congress Ave., Austin, on March 12. The shoe company is known for matching each purchase by donating a pair to a child in need. Its Austin store also features TOMS Roasting Co., a coffee operation specializing in seasonal roasts. 512-350-2115. www.toms.com

9 Loro, the Asian smokehouse from Tyson Cole of Uchi and Aaron Franklin of Franklin's Barbecue, celebrated its first anniversary April 7. The restaurant, at 2115 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin, features a large outdoor patio with a canopy of hundred-year-old oak trees. 512-916-4858. www.loroaustin.com

10 South of Everywhere, a high-fashion and streetwear retail concept space, celebrated its first anniversary March 17 at 2324 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin. The store was founded by Bryan Jordan, Cade Wilson and Emory Blake; it also serves as a platform for art, music and design. 512-788-0898. www.southofeverywhere.com

CLOSINGS

11 Joe's Crab Shack, at 600 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, was closed due to unpaid rent and property taxes, according to a notice posted Feb. 28 by The Deitch Law Offices. The lakefront property, which is nearly 2 acres and includes more than 100 parking spaces, is owned by Endeavor Real Estate Group, which is advertising the site as available for lease. www.joescrabshack.com

SOUTH

NOW OPEN

1 High Note, a health-conscious restaurant from Kerbey Lane Cafe CEO Mason Ayers, opened April 16 at 300 S. Lamar Blvd., Ste. A, Austin, in the space previously occupied by Barile restaurant. 512-879-2822. www.highnoteatx.com

2 Marine Layer, a California-based clothing brand, opened a new store March 12 at 1333 S. Congress Ave., Ste. 130, Austin. The company, which sells "absurdly soft clothes" for men, women and children, also has a location at the Domain. 512-291-7010. www.marinelayer.com

COMING SOON

3 TruFusion will open a five-room fitness studio in late April in the Lakehills Plaza at 4211 S. Lamar Blvd., Austin. The facility also

features a smoothie bar and retail shop. Franchise owners and local residents Morgan and Jeremy David plan to open several more TruFusion locations in the Austin area. 512-893-3878 www.trufusion.com/southaustin

4 Nomadic Beerworks, a new brewery and taproom from co-owners and brothers Bryce and Daniel Tyranski, will open in early May at 3804 Woodbury Drive, Austin. The tap list will include its West Coast IPA and Export Stout. 512-587-9669. www.nomadicbeerworks.com

5 Pinhouse Pizza will open a fourth location at 2201 E. Ben White Blvd., Austin. No opening date has been announced yet. The locally owned brewpub also has locations on Burnet Road, on South Lamar Boulevard and in Round Rock. www.pinhousepizza.com

RELOCATIONS

6 Edward Jones financial adviser **Jonathan Bryan** relocated his office to 4009

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COURTESY HIGH NOTE



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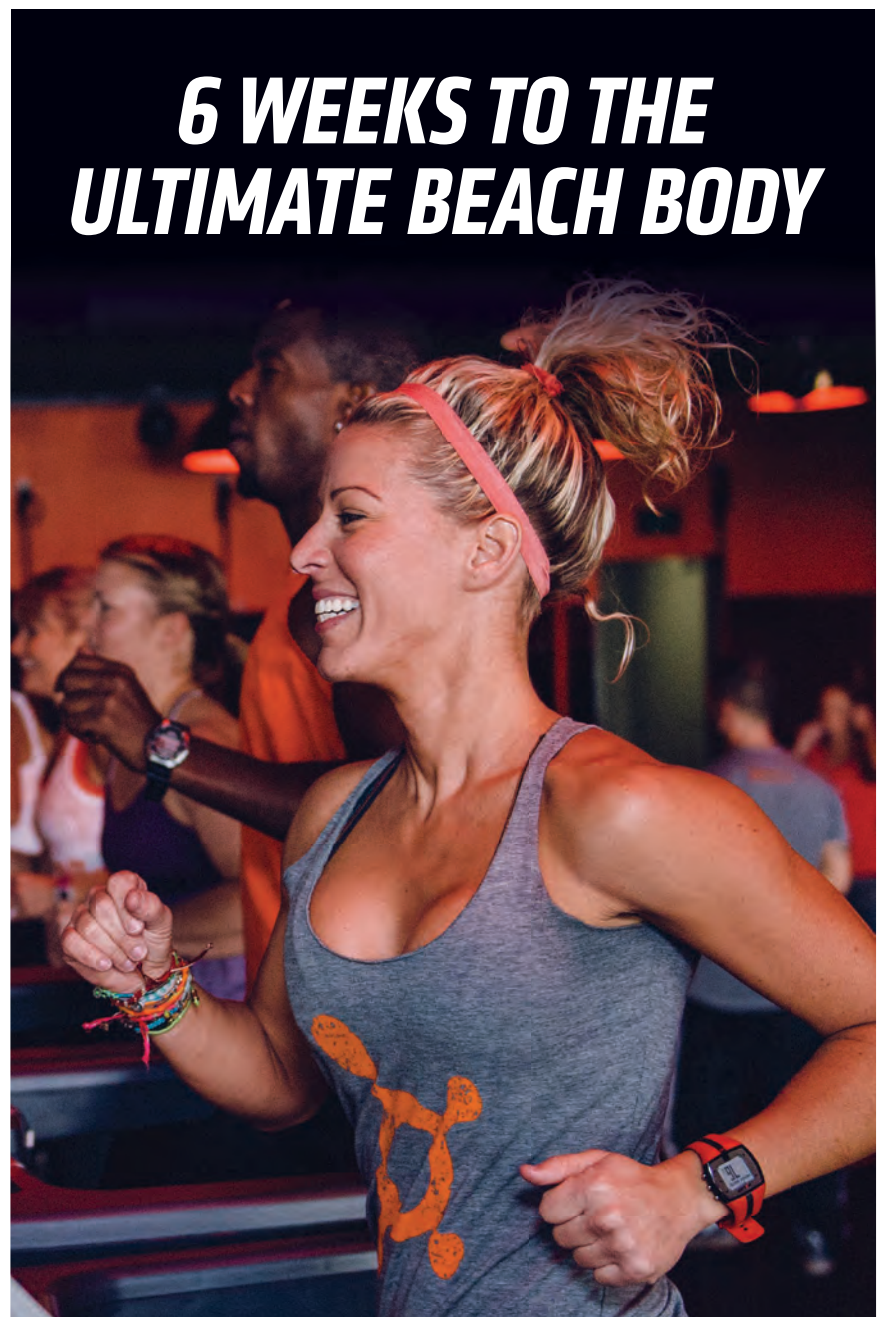
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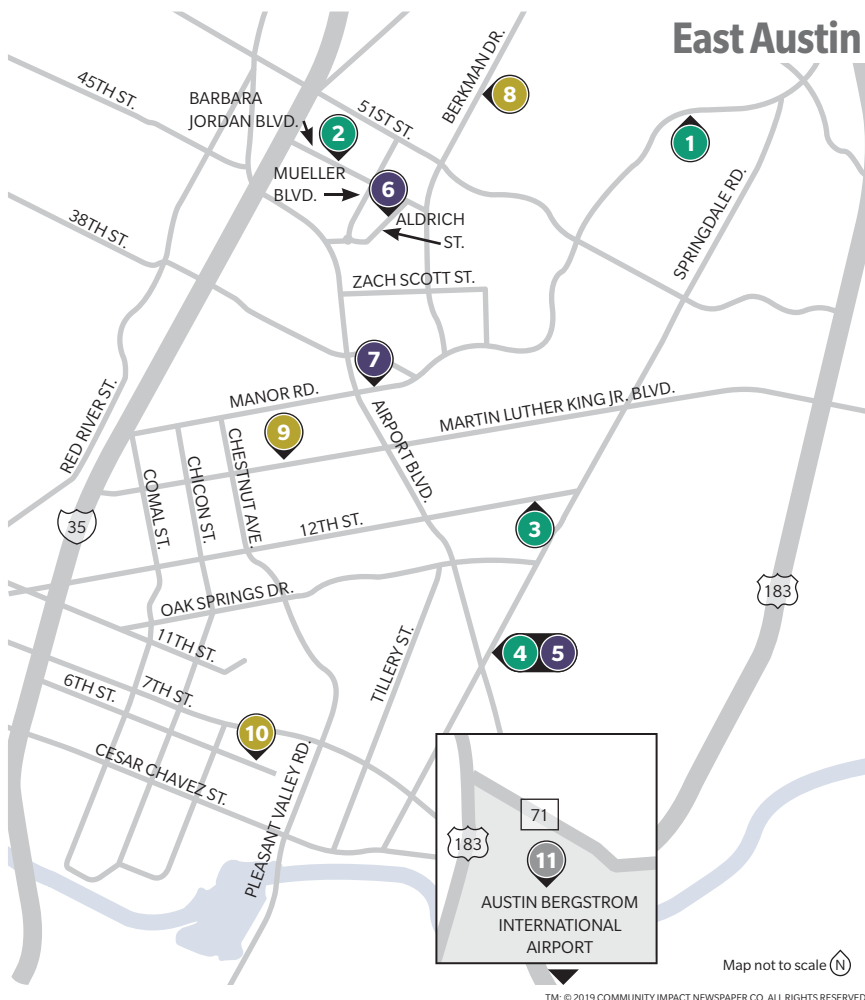
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IMPACTS

Businesses that have recently opened, are coming soon, relocating or expanding



EAST AUSTIN

NOW OPEN

1 Fowler's Smokin Soul Food opened Jan. 12 at 5811 Manor Road, Austin. The locally owned, family-style barbecue and soul food restaurant is run by Kevin and Yvonne Franklin. 512-300-0226. www.fowlerssmokinoulfood.com

2 Halal Wings, a fried chicken restaurant, opened in mid-February at 1200 Barbara Jordan Blvd., Ste. 340, Austin, according to its Facebook page. It is owned by the same team behind next-door spot Halal Corner and Mediterranean restaurant Kismet Cafe in the Hancock Center. 737-300-1000. www.halalwing.com

3 Pawstive Dog Daycare opened March 11 at 4613 E. 12th St., Ste. A, Austin. The local business offers day care and overnight services to pet owners. Owner and dog owner Wendy Hernandez left her corporate job to start the business. 512-361-1606. www.pawstivedogdaycare.com

4 The Front Page, a restaurant and bar, opened in the Springdale General development at 1023 Springdale Road, Bldg. 1, Ste. F, Austin, in March. Brothers Shafer and Dick Hall, along with Andrew Porter and Ben Fordham, own the restaurant. Its menu includes bruschetta, house pickles, salads and sandwiches. www.thefrontpage.pub

COMING SOON

5 Uroko, a new restaurant from Kayo and Takehiro Asazu of Japanese restaurant Komé and Uchi alum Masazumi Saio, is expected to open in late April in the Springdale General development at 1023 Springdale Road, Bldg. 1, Ste. C, Austin. The new spot focuses on temaki, or hand-rolled sushi, and a chef's choice concept called omakase and will also offer sushi-making classes. 512-520-4004 www.urokoatx.com

6 Rebel Cheese Vegan Deli & Wine Shop will open this summer in the Mueller development at 2200 Aldrich St., Ste. 120, Austin, in the Texas Mutual building. Husband-and-wife team Kirsten Maitland and Fred Zwar relocated to Austin seven

COMPILED BY **JACK FLAGLER AND EMMA FREER**

News or questions about Central Austin? Email us at ctanews@communityimpact.com.

years ago; their plant-based cafe will be the first of its kind south of the Mason-Dixon line. 512-871-0845. www.rebelcheese.com

7 Batch Brewery will open in June at 3218 Manor Road, Austin, next door to Batch Craft Beer & Kolaches. It will focus on table beers, India pale ales and barrel-aged sours, among others. Brothers Noah and Josh Lit own the kolache bakery, taproom and retail craft beer shop. 512-401-3025. www.batchatx.com

ANNIVERSARIES

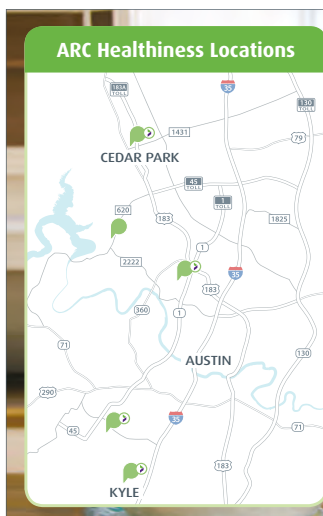
8 Windsor Park restaurant Hank's Austin, at 5811 Berkman Drive, Austin, marked its one-year anniversary with a celebration and crawfish boil April 6. Ten percent of profits from that day were donated to Austin Pets Alive. 512-609-8077. www.hanksaustin.com

9 Longhorn Meat Market, at 2411 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Austin, will celebrate its 50th anniversary this June. Founded in 1890 under a different name, the family-owned business became Longhorn Meat Market in 1969; today, it is led by James Jackson Leach, the fifth-generation owner. 512-476-5223. www.longhornmeatmarket.com

10 BLK Vinyl, a record store owned by local musicians John Brookbank, Keith Lough and Jason Kuntz, will celebrate its first anniversary May 4 at 2505 E. Sixth St., Ste. F, Austin. The store specializes in used and collectible records and offers guitar lessons on site. 512-220-6536. www.blkvinylatx.com

IN THE NEWS

11 European green bus startup Flixbus added Austin routes to its southern network on April 4, departing from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and connecting directly to Houston, Dallas and San Antonio. The company, which launched in the U.S. in 2018, offers free WiFi and power outlets at every seat. www.flixbus.com



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APRIL 26-28 GET A TASTE OF AUSTIN LOCATIONS VARY

Local restaurants Olamaie, Grizzelda's and Yuyo will be featured at this year's Austin Food + Wine Festival, which includes tastings, demonstrations and live music. Times vary. \$250-\$625. Vic Mathias Shores, 900 W. Riverside Drive; Fair Market, 1100 E. Fifth St. www.austinfoodandwinefestival.com

COURTESY AUSTIN FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL

TO-DO LIST April - May

COMPILED BY **EMMA FREER**



APRIL 27 RUN THROUGH A HAZE TRAVIS COUNTY EXPO CENTER

Participants wear white to The Color Run, an untimed 5K, and are doused with a different colored powder at each kilometer mark. A party awaits at the finish line with music, dancing and more color throws. 9 a.m. \$14.99-\$54.99. Travis County Expo Center, 7311 Decker Lane. www.thecolorrun.com

COURTESY THE COLOR RUN



MAY 5 SIGN UP FOR THE ROOKIE TRI LOCATIONS VARY

This triathlon hosts separate waves for rookies and veterans of the endurance event. The end of the course marks the beginning of the finish line party. 8 a.m. \$40-\$165. Walter E. Long Park, 6620 Blue Bluff Road. www.therookietri.com

COURTESY ED SPARKS

APRIL

26 THROUGH 31 TOAST TO YOUR PUP

Local pet therapy nonprofit Divine Canines hosts its sixth annual Barks for Beers fundraiser. Attendees purchase a special pint glass and an accompanying "pawspport" and bring them to 22 participating craft

breweries around town for a free pour. Times vary. \$30 plus tax. Locations vary. 512-655-3645. www.divinecanines.org

27 SEE SHAKEY GRAVES AT A BENEFIT SHOW

The Austin-born musician will be performing at Live from the Heart, with all proceeds benefiting MyMusicRx. A program of the Children's Cancer Association, MyMusicRx

sets up in-hospital concerts at the bedside of kids in St. David's Children's Hospital and Dell Children's Hospital. 6:30-9:30 p.m. \$250. Gibson Showroom, 3601 S. Congress Ave. 503-244-3141. www.mymusicrx.org

27 CELEBRATE EEEYORE

This 56th annual fundraiser, called Eeyore's Birthday Party, benefits local nonprofits and features a meet-and-greet with

the honoree. Attendees are encouraged to wear their favorite costumes. The event is hosted by the Friends of the Forest foundation; past beneficiaries have included Austin Pets Alive, Hospice Austin and Mother's Milk Bank. 11 a.m.-dusk. Free. Pease Park, 1100 Kingsbury St. www.eeyores.org

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COURTESY PECAN STREET FESTIVAL

MAY 4-5 STROLL DOWN SIXTH STREET

The twice-annual Pecan Street Festival is one of the largest arts, crafts and music festivals in the country. 11 a.m.-10 p.m. (Sat.), 11 a.m.-8 p.m. (Sun.). Free. Sixth Street between Brazos Street and I-35. www.pecanstreetfestival.org



COURTESY SUSAN LAMARCA

MAY 11 ATTEND A CONCERT ON THE CREEK

Waller Creek Conservancy and KMFA host an outdoor exploration of music in celebration of National Bicycle Month. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Free. Waller Delta, 74 Trinity St. 512-541-3520. www.wallercreek.org



COURTESY ALISON NARO

MAY 23-26 TEST YOUR LUCK LOCATIONS VARY

Celebrate Memorial Day at the Hot Luck Festival, a chef-driven, live music and food event created by local pitmaster Aaron Franklin and Mohawk owner James Moody. Times vary. \$10-\$550. Locations vary. www.hotluckfest.com

MAY

01 FEAST FOR CINCO DE MAYO

The Mexic-Arte Museum hosts its annual culturally conscious and historical celebration of Cinco de Mayo—Taste of Mexico—which features more than 50 local restaurants, food trucks and beverage purveyors. This year's event will focus on the influence of the state of Puebla on Mexican cuisine. 6-9 p.m. \$55-\$80. Brazos Hall, 204 E. Fourth St. 512-480-9373. www.mexic-artemuseumevents.org

01 THROUGH 05 WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILMS

The Cine Las Americas International Film Festival returns for its 22nd year, presenting a wide range of film and video selections from Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. Entries range from documentary features to music videos. Times vary. Free-\$125. Locations vary. 512-710-9544. www.cinelasamericas.org

04 SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The 17th annual Violet Crown Festival includes crafts and fine arts booths, live music from the Johnny Fury Band and Stone Wheels, food trucks and children's activities. The event benefits Violet Crown Community Works, a nonprofit that supports the Brentwood and Crestwood neighborhoods. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Brentwood Park, 6710 Arroyo Seco. www.violetcrowncommunity.org

04 PARTY AT THE ZACH

The Zach Theater will host its "Happiest Ever After Party" with dancing on stage, a themed photo booth, an open bar and more entertainment. Ticket proceeds benefit the Zach Theater's artistic and education programs. \$100.

9 p.m.-midnight. 202 S. Lamar Blvd., 512-476-0541. www.zachtheatre.org

04 ATTEND A MUSIC FESTIVAL

The JMBLYA festival returns to Austin for its seventh year with headliners Travis Scott and Lil Wayne. Gates open at noon. \$109-\$549. Circuit of The Americas, 9201 Circuit of The Americas Blvd. www.jmblya.com

05 COURSE THROUGH DOWNTOWN

The Sunshine Run includes different races—timed 5K and 10K runs, fastest dog in Austin, an untimed 5K walk and a free kid's 1K run—and supports Austin Sunshine Camps, an organization that connects low-income families with summer camps. 6:45-11 a.m. \$25-\$55. Vic Mathias Shores, 900 W. Riverside Drive. 845-559-3209. www.ymbgliving.org

09 LEARN ABOUT THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Austin Community College and the city of Austin will partner to host a panel discussion featuring some local fashion startups and small businesses. Noon-1 p.m. Free. ACC Fashion Incubator, 6101 Highland Campus Drive. 512-223-7000. www.austincc.edu

11 THROUGH 25 CHEER FOR GRADUATES

Huston-Tillotson University and St. Edward's University kick off graduation season with May 11 ceremonies, followed by Austin Community College's commencement May 17 and The University of Texas at Austin's on May 24-25. www.htu.edu, www.stedwards.edu, www.austincc.edu, www.utexas.edu

11 THROUGH 19 TOUR WEST AUSTIN STUDIOS

Big Medium hosts its West Austin Studio Tour, a self-guided art event held over two

weekends May 11-12 and 18-19. Hundreds of artists and studios participate, inviting attendees into their creative and exhibition spaces. 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Free. Locations vary. 512-939-6665. www.west.bigmedium.com

12 BRING THE FAMILY TO THE UMLAUF SCULPTURE GARDEN

On the second Sunday of every month, the Umlauf hosts family days with a lineup of scheduled activities, including crafting and yoga. Umlauf Sculpture Garden, 605 Azie Morton Road. Free. Noon-4 p.m. 512-445-5582. www.umlaufsculpture.org

17 BIKE TO WORK

Bike Austin, the city's largest bicycling advocacy organization, hosts this annual event, which encourages residents to bike to work with group rides, "fueling stations" that provide free coffee and snacks, and a free bike home from work after-party to celebrate. All day. Free. Locations vary. www.biketoworkaustin.org

22 WELCOME BACK BLUES ON THE GREEN

Local radio station KGSR hosts the first Blues on the Green concert of the year. The summertime series continues on a monthly basis through August and attracts thousands of attendees. 8-10 p.m. Free. Zilker Park, 2100 Barton Springs Road. www.austintexas.gov/events/blues-green-12

23 PARTY LIKE IT'S 1942

Paramount kicks off its 44th annual Summer Classic Film Series with a screening of "Casablanca." This year's program features more than 100 films, including "When Harry Met Sally" and "My Fair Lady." 7:30 p.m. \$8-\$13. Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. 512-472-5470. www.austintheatre.org



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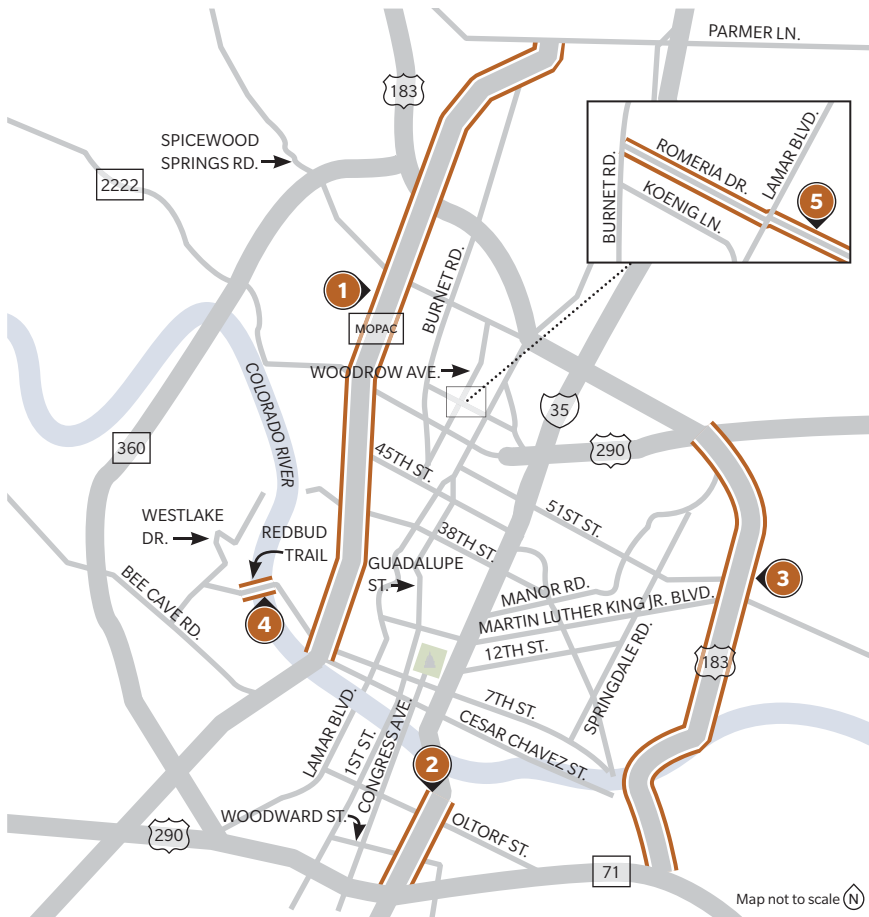


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RECENT UPDATES

1 MoPac improvement project

Work on the MoPac express lane project finished in March, more than three years after the original proposed completion date. The project added one managed toll lane between Parmer Lane and Cesar Chavez Street, which is variably priced. The final completion does not include a separate approximately \$4.5 million project that McCarthy Building Co. is finishing, which includes work on the sound walls by the Westminster senior living center. That work is scheduled to finish by July.

Timeline: October 2013-July 2019

Cost: \$230 million

Funding sources: various local sources

2 I-35 at Oltorf improvements

The new on-ramp to southbound I-35 between Woodland Avenue and Oltorf Street opened April 1. Crews are also working on a new southbound entrance ramp to I-35 between Oltorf and Woodward streets. The new exit and entrance ramps in the area will allow vehicles to have longer distances to merge off and on the main traffic lanes.

Timeline: February 2017-mid-2019

Cost: \$42.6 million

Funding source: Texas Department of Transportation

3 183 South project

This project will include a new tolled expressway with three lanes in each direction on the stretch of US 183 between US 290 and SH 71. A series of traffic shifts are com-

ing soon near the US 183 bridge over the Colorado River. Those changes will allow northbound US 183 mainline traffic to shift, setting up demolition and reconstruction of the old northbound bridge over the river. The northern half of the 183 South project is scheduled to be completed in summer 2019, with the full project opening to follow in 2020.

Timeline: 2016-2020

Cost: \$743 million

Funding sources: Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority toll revenue bonds, federal loans, TxDOT loans

4 Redbud Trail Bridge replacement

The city says Redbud Trail Bridge, built in 1948, is outdated and needs to be replaced. Austin City Council on March 7 approved \$1.1 million for a second phase of preliminary engineering work, which will include engineering firm URS Corp. developing a concept for a replacement bridge. The funding for preliminary engineering was available through 2012 bond funds. The city also has \$50 million in 2018 bond funds earmarked for the project.

Timeline: TBA

Cost: \$50 million

Funding sources: 2012 bond funds, 2018 bond funds

5 Highland neighborhood bikeway

The Austin Transportation Department completed a bikeway along Denson Drive in front of Reilly Elementary School in North Central Austin's Highland neighborhood in January, along with new sidewalk connections, improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings and new traffic signals. Work has also finished to install an additional ramp and to conduct repair work near Denson and Guadalupe Street. As part of the project, a neighborhood bikeway is also planned for Romeria Drive between Burnet Road and North Lamar Boulevard.

Timeline: completion by June 2019

Cost: \$431,000

Funding sources: 2016 Mobility Bond, Capital Metro Quarter-Cent Fund



HOW IT WORKS

Proposal would double traffic fines on dangerous roadways

A bill in the Texas Legislature could set up traffic safety corridors and increase traffic fines on Texas' most dangerous roadways. According to the Texas Department of Transportation, there has been at least one fatality from motor vehicle crashes on Texas roadways every day since Nov. 7, 2000. More than 60,000 deaths have occurred on Texas roadways during the streak.

State Rep. Vikki Goodwin, D-Austin, introduced House Bill 2841 to the Legislature on March 1. The proposed bill would allow TxDOT to designate areas with high traffic fatality rates as safety corridors.

TxDOT would determine the zones based on data, according to Goodwin. A sign would be placed at both ends of the corridor and fines related to traffic violations within those areas would be doubled for motorists. Revenue collected would go back to supporting law enforcement efforts in the corridor.

TxDOT statistics show 94 percent of crashes are due to driver error, with distracted driving, speeding and drunken driving the top three causes of deadly crashes.

All information on this page was updated as of 4/15/19. News or questions about these or other local transportation projects? Email us at ctanews@communityimpact.com.

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35-story office tower proposed downtown

RENDERING COURTESY OF LUCAS PELL ARCHITECTS/STUDIO DESIGN TRAMMELL CROW CO.



The project would neighbor Austin Central Library and the forthcoming Austin Proper building.

Block 185—the redevelopment project at 601 W. Second St., Austin, which was previously the site of the city's Green Water Treatment Plant—will house a 35-story office building with a distinctive sail-like shape. Dallas-based developer Trammell Crow Co. broke ground on the mixed-use project in February; it will be completed in May 2022. There are reports that Google has leased the office space in the building; a spokesperson for Trammell Crow declined to comment. There will also be 16 floors of parking and ground-floor retail space.

New project breaks ground on South Central Waterfront

RiverSouth, a 15-story office building with ground-floor retail and dining at 401 S. First St., Austin, broke ground March 13. The project, developed by Stream Realty, is scheduled to be completed in 2021 and will be the first development built under the city's South Central Waterfront Plan, which Austin City Council adopted in June 2016. The plan aims to



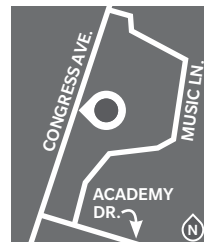
The new office building is taking over the lot that previously housed Hooters.

create a districtwide network of connected green streets, parks, trails and public open spaces as well as to add 20 percent new affordable housing units in the area.

South Congress mixed-use project takes shape

Music Lane, a two-acre development at 1009-1123 South Congress Ave., Austin, is under construction. The five-building project will have 51,775 square feet of office in addition to separate buildings for Equinox, an upscale gym, and Soho House, a London-based, members-only club. The first phase is expected to open in October, according to developer

Endeavor Real Estate Group's website. Other retail tenants include local business Gelateria Gemelli, that opened its first location in East Austin in 2015, and Dallas-based restaurant Velvet Taco.



Rainey Street district revolution underway



The development boom on Rainey Street will bring new towers to the area.

Four new high rises are in various stages of development. Residents began moving in at 70 Rainey, a 34-story condominium, in April. Residential building 44 East will begin construction in 2020 and open in 2022. The property owner applied for the city's density bonus program on Feb. 22, which would require zoning variances. The Quincy, a 30-story mixed-use tower at 93 Red River St., broke ground in March and will open in 2021. And a 51-story tower planned for 90-92 Rainey St. could incorporate existing tenant Container Bar, developer Kevin Burns said.



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New Austin Convention Center expansion report sparks conversation about future of downtown

BY **CHRISTOPHER NEELY**

The questions of whether and how to expand the Austin Convention Center, located at 500 E. Cesar Chavez St., have fluctuated from top of mind to backburner for city leaders since before 2015.

Now, a comprehensive study published by the University of Texas' Center for Sustainable Development on March 29 not only pushed the questions back to center stage, but it has also taken a shot at answering them.

Austin City Council commissioned the university as a nonpartisan entity to examine the expansion questions in late 2017 after momentum around the potential project began picking up—highlighted by a council-commissioned task force's recommendation to expand Mayor Steve Adler's "Downtown Puzzle" proposal, which tied an expansion to funding for homelessness initiatives.

Unlike previous reports that examined only the facility itself, the UT study took a long view of the future of downtown Austin and imagined the Austin Convention Center's place in a rapidly growing and modernizing urban environment.

Principal investigator on the study and director of the graduate urban design program at the UT School of Architecture Dean Almy said his team saw the convention center as a "critical joint" to a quartet of major projects taking place downtown—Plaza Saltillo to the east, Waller Creek and the Innovation Zone to the north, the Seaholm District to the west, and the South Central Waterfront plan to the south as well as the various other free-market

developments popping up throughout the urban center.

"What's going to happen two decades from now when a whole lot of these projects come online?" Almy said. "We were conscious of how to reconcile these initiatives. You have to look at the convention center, in my opinion, as not one isolated problem, but something that is part of a larger ecosystem in which we can be strategic and get benefits across the city."

Historically, convention centers have been isolated from the fabric of cities due to their function and size. Austin's facility, built in 1992 and expanded in 2002, was built with its back to I-35 and Red River Street and provides no ground-floor function to pedestrians who are not attending conventions. The UT team focused on how a new convention center could engage with the entire city.

"The project needs to contribute to multiple civic goals and be good to visitors and residents alike," said Allan Shearer, the associate dean for research and technology at the UT School of Architecture.

Shearer emphasized the study was not making any recommendations, but providing information to better educate policymakers.

The report produced five scenarios, ranging from doing nothing to a \$1.3 billion, two-phase project to expand

"YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE CONVENTION CENTER, IN MY OPINION, AS NOT ONE ISOLATED PROBLEM, BUT SOMETHING THAT IS PART OF A LARGER ECOSYSTEM IN WHICH WE CAN BE STRATEGIC AND GET BENEFITS ACROSS THE CITY."

— DEAN ALMY, DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE URBAN DESIGN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

the convention center westward across Trinity Street, demolish the existing structure and replace it with a more compact facility and public open space. The scenarios also include opening up Second and Third streets,

currently taken up by the existing facility, to create "creek-to-creek" connectivity—Shoal Creek to Waller Creek.

Shearer said convention centers, as a rule, lose money—no convention center out

of the 27 they examined across the U.S. and Canada turned a profit. However, Jake Wegmann, assistant professor of community and regional planning at the architecture school, said the convention center's ability to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors per year trickles down to service industry

jobs and to businesses, bringing visitors during weekdays—otherwise the slowest time of the work week.

As for how the city can pay for such a project, Greg Hallman, finance and real estate professor at UT's McCombs School of Business, said cities in Texas can fund the project through hotel occupancy taxes, of which, he said, Austin produces a lot.

Adler called the nearly 300-page report the first step of an "exciting time."

"The conversation itself is really exciting when you start talking about placemaking in a city like ours, especially in a quadrant of town that has a lot of potential because it's not built out yet," Adler said.

City Manager Spencer Cronk said he would be meeting with council members one on one to listen to further questions they had. Cronk said he plans to schedule work session discussions on the issue in the coming months.



Researchers from the University of Texas presented five scenarios for the future of the Austin Convention Center to City Council on April 2.

CHRISTOPHER NEELY/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



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CONGESTED CORRIDOR

Nonprofit Congress for the New Urbanism included the portion of I-35 that runs through Austin as one of its “Freeways Without Futures” in a report released April 3.



TRANSPORTATION

FREEWAY FUTURE?

A rendering from Reconnect Austin shows what I-35 would look like through downtown if it was buried below ground and capped with a pedestrian-friendly boulevard.



PHOTO COURTESY JEREMY LOHR, RENDERING COURTESY RECONNECT AUSTIN

I-35 in Austin among nation's 10 worst highways according to 'Freeways Without Futures' report

A local proposal advocates sinking I-35 through downtown

BY JACK FLAGLER

The research around the portion of I-35 that runs through Austin tells many local drivers what they already know.

Between US 290 North and Ben White Boulevard, I-35 is the third-most congested roadway in the state for all traffic and the most congested in Texas for commercial trucks, according to a 2018 report from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

“It’s a disaster in every sense,” said Sinclair Black, principal at architecture firm Black and Vernooy and an advocate for changing the design of I-35.

That “disaster” has been elevated to a national level. On April 3, national nonprofit Congress for the New Urbanism, which advocates for what it calls “vibrant and walkable cities,” released its “Freeways Without Futures” report, a list of ten highways across the U.S. most in need of removal or significant change. This is the sixth “Freeways

Without Futures” list CNU has released since 2008, and the first time Austin has been included.

Lisa Schamess, communications manager for CNU, said many cities across the country are experiencing similar challenges to Austin’s, including Denver with I-70 and Dallas with I-345.

“People have lived the highway era and they’re tired of it,” Schamess said.

RECONNECTING THE GRID

The report focuses on a solution for I-35 from Reconnect Austin, a local effort started by Black and his daughter, Heyden Black Walker, to bury the section of I-35 between Cesar Chavez Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard below ground, then cover those lanes with a new boulevard.

The plan represents a shift in thinking, according to Black Walker, that rejects the idea of widening roads to

build a way out of highway problems, instead offering a more comprehensive solution.

According to the “Freeways Without Futures” report, the Reconnect Austin proposal would open up 30 acres of new land currently under the I-35 frontage roads, which would have a potential valuation of approximately \$3.3 billion. To fund capping the buried highway, the city could use an economic development tool called a tax increment financing zone, opening the area up for mixed-use development and potentially adding affordable housing units to address the city’s need.

‘A BIG BITE FROM A BIG APPLE’

The Texas Department of Transportation is currently in the midst of a yearslong project to improve I-35 in Williamson, Travis and Hays counties.

The project has not been fully funded, and as money has come in piecemeal, TxDOT has so far focused on smaller projects away from downtown. According to TxDOT Austin District Engineer Terry McCoy, work

on the corridor of I-35 between Ben White Blvd. and US 290 North would account for about \$6 billion of the \$8.1 billion total project cost.

“Once we get into downtown it’s not possible to do small projects. We’ve got to figure out how to take a big bite from a big apple,” McCoy said.

TxDOT said it is currently pursuing depressing I-35 throughout the center of Austin, and that proposal would be compatible with a locally funded cap that could cover the highway’s main lanes.

The Reconnect Austin vision goes further than what TxDOT has proposed, advocating for the frontage roads to be removed in order to create valuable property that could create tax income.

While TxDOT continues the process of searching for funding sources at the state Capitol and designing solutions through downtown Austin, the highway’s problems continue to worsen as the population in Central Texas grows. According to TxDOT, the 19-mile commute from downtown Austin to Round Rock could take as long as 2.5 hours by 2035.

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ACC will explore sale of portion of Pinnacle campus

AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE At the end of the spring 2018 semester, Austin Community College closed its Pinnacle campus. The college district said the Southwest Austin facility needed significant repairs and infrastructure improvements and that students and staff at Pinnacle would be disbursed to other campuses.

Nearly a year after the closure, ACC has started the process to evaluate selling the Pinnacle building and the 9 acres it sits on.

On April 1, the ACC board of trustees authorized President Richard Rhodes to post the building for sale.

ACC is not required to sell the piece of property. It will receive bids for the property, at which point the board could evaluate its options and make a decision as to whether to accept a bid or develop a different plan for the use



ACC's Pinnacle campus closed after the spring 2018 semester.

of the building.

According to the district, any revenue from the sale would be reinvested into development of the Pinnacle campus. In addition to the portion up for sale, ACC owns 46 acres of green space on the Pinnacle campus where new development could occur.



A Viking statue in the Lanier Early College High School Peace Garden includes a plaque mentioning the school's name.

Lanier Early College High School will be renamed

AUSTIN ISD Sidney Lanier Early College High School in North Austin will be renamed, despite an effort from District 3 trustee Ann Teich and some students and alumni to drop "Sidney" from the school's official name instead of undergoing a full name change.

Austin ISD trustees voted March 25 to rename the school after Juan P. Navarro, a U.S. Army sergeant and Lanier alumnus who died in 2012.

Lanier, located at 1201 Payton Gin Road, becomes the fourth school to be renamed since February 2018 due to ties the school's namesakes had to the Confederacy.

District staff said logistics and timing for the change have not yet been worked out.

Austin ISD honors four Teachers of the Year winners across district

AUSTIN ISD Two elementary school teachers and two secondary teachers received 2019 Teacher of the Year awards from Austin ISD on March 29.

Cynthia Ayala, a bilingual education case manager at Ridgetop Elementary School in north Central Austin, and Ashley Rivera, a special education teacher at Blazier Elementary School in Southeast Austin, were the elementary school award winners.

Kimberly Collins, an eighth-grade math teacher at Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, and Katye Howell, a high school biology teacher at Travis Early College High School, were the secondary school honorees. Both schools are located in south Central Austin.

MEETINGS

Austin ISD board of trustees

May 13, 6:30 p.m., May 20, 7 p.m.

Carruth Administration Center, 1111 W. Sixth St., Room B100, Austin

ACC board of trustees

May 6, 3 p.m.

Room 201, Highland Business Center, 5930 Middle Fiskvale Road, Austin



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Council members dive into policy positions on land use code rewrite

AUSTIN The city of Austin is once again undertaking the task of trying to rewrite its rules around where things are built as a response to its continued growth and its housing and affordability crises.

However, to save the city from a repeat of its previous failed attempt known as CodeNEXT, City Manager Spencer Cronk has asked Austin City Council members to weigh in on and provide policy direction on five contentious issues: the scope of the rewrite, level of housing supply, proliferation of housing types, compatibility requirements and parking minimums.

City Council members shared their positions on the City Council message board and then highlighted their preferences and positions in a council roundtable on the five issues at an April 9 work session.

With the exception of the absent District 1 Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison, here are the highlights of how Mayor Steve Adler and council members representing Central Austin weighed in.

Mayor Steve Adler



In a message board post, Adler said he wants to see a first reading of the new zoning maps and code by the end of October. The mayor said he would

prioritize affordability and mobility over everything else when conflicts arise and there are “forced choices.” Adler said he supports reducing parking requirements to a greater degree than offered in CodeNEXT’s third draft and admitted Austin’s transition from car dependency to transit reliance would be “awkward.”

District 3 Council Member Pio Renteria



Renteria said his goal in the land code rewrite is to completely eliminate Single-Family-1 and Single-Family-2 zoning districts—

essentially large-property, low-density

neighborhoods. He said he also wants to ensure all property owners have the ability to build an accessory dwelling unit on their lot. Aligning the city’s development goals with its mobility efforts—high-capacity transit, corridor reconstruction and road rehabilitation—will be a major priority as well, he said.

District 4 Council Member Greg Casar



In a message board post, Casar wrote he supports radical increases in housing supply and type and reductions in parking and compatibility

requirements. He said he wants to find ways to discourage demolitions that only result in a larger single-family home on the lot and wanted to explore ways to encourage construction of duplexes, triplexes or another form of missing middle housing instead. Although Casar said he supports getting something passed in 2019, he also said passage will not be the end of the process.

District 5 Council Member Ann Kitchen



Kitchen highlighted her concerns with larger, more expensive single-family homes replacing smaller, more affordable ones. She said

parking requirements need to be reduced, but she did not want to see neighborhoods with narrow streets and no sidewalks have no on-site parking. Although City Council’s goal of 135,000 new housing units by 2025 is an important one, Kitchen said the city would do better if it focused more on the 60,000 affordable units by 2025 goal instead.

District 7 Council Member Leslie Pool



Pool, along with some of her colleagues, emphasized the nuance and context specificity needed in the land development code

and zoning maps. She said she would be looking at the code through an environmental lens. While she said she is generally in favor of enhancing housing supply and type and reducing both parking minimums and structure compatibility requirements, Pool said she will be supporting action through small-area and neighborhood-planning strategies.

District 9 Council Member Kathie Tovo



Tovo urged caution on opening up zoning entitlements and reducing parking minimums as a means for more dense housing. She said she doubted

the market would produce affordable housing on its own, and increasing density entitlements and parking reductions would sacrifice key bargaining chips for City Council. She highlighted the need to listen to public comment, noting part of the issues the city ran into in the last process stemmed from the community feeling as though it was not being heard.

District 10 Council Member Alison Alter



Alter said she was focused more on “getting it right” rather than getting it done this year. With Tovo, she said she doubted the ability of the

market to produce affordable housing on its own and said the city would need bargaining tools to encourage developers to provide affordable housing. Although she said she appreciates the arguments for density as a means to fight urban sprawl, she said the city needs to focus even more on providing open space and parks.

Dockless scooter rules could come as late as May

AUSTIN Dockless scooter rider behavior will remain largely unregulated for now after Austin City Council and staff decided they needed more time to workshop the ordinance with the community.

Local policymakers were scheduled to vote on enforceable regulations for dockless scooter riders at the March 28 City Council meeting, marking a major milestone since the two-wheeled vehicles dropped into Austin in April 2018; however, the vote was pulled from the agenda at the start of the session. Council members agreed to set a deadline for the vote to May 23.

“Staff and council want more time

to develop this draft ordinance and go back out to community to make sure everyone understands the draft ordinance,” Austin Transportation Department spokesperson Marissa Monroy said via text. “The rules for all micro-mobility devices will remain unchanged until council takes this up again.”

Although certain practices are encouraged, such as staying off downtown sidewalks, no laws exist in city code around dockless vehicles. The ordinance proposed by the transportation department would have set rules that could result in fines or citations if not obeyed.

DOCKLESS DELAY

After Austin City Council postponed a March 28 vote, the city could be without enforceable dockless scooter rules until as late as May. Here are some of the new rules that were included in the postponed ordinance and are now on hold.



“Dismount zones” downtown where scooters would not be allowed



Riders under 18 years of age would be required to wear a helmet.



Scooters would be required to obey all traffic laws, such as avoiding use of mobile devices.

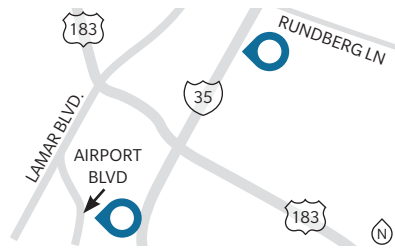


Fines would be \$40 for the first violation and \$80 for subsequent violations.



SOURCE: CITY OF AUSTIN/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

Career center to relocate this summer despite funding challenges



TRAVIS COUNTY Workforce Solutions Capital Area provided a timeline to Travis County Commissioners Court for the relocation of its North Austin Center from Airport Boulevard to Northeast Austin.

The organization, which supports workforce development for low-income clients, has signed a lease for the new space and is scheduled to relocate the week of June 21, reopening July 1, Lawrence Lyman, director of the county’s research and planning division, told commissioners at a March 26 meeting. The new 65,000-square-foot facility will allow Workforce Solutions to serve more clients because of its increased capacity.

The lease on the largest of the nonprofit’s three centers—the North Career Center, located at 6505 Airport Blvd., Ste. 101—expires this June, but rents are rising too rapidly for the organization to stay in the 38,000-square-foot facility, Workforce Solutions CEO Tamara Atkinson told county commissioners in January.

Travis County commissioners approved a one-time investment of \$496,000 in the organization in January to offset the moving costs and allow for an expansion of services down the line.

NUMBER TO KNOW

1/7

According to JP Eichmiller, Central Health director of strategic communications, 1 in 7 Travis County residents received health care services as a direct result of funding from the health care district, a figure Central Health had never met before.

CITY HIGHLIGHTS

AUSTIN City Council resolved March 28 to increase the no-kill commitment at the Austin Animal Center from 90% to 95%. Some current and former volunteers objected, saying the resolution should come with additional resources in order to improve quality of life for animals living for months or years with minimal interaction and engagement.

TRAVIS COUNTY According to the 2019 County Health Rankings for Texas, a report published March 19, Travis County is the seventh-healthiest county in the state. High numbers of physicians and several socio-economic factors contributed to the county’s high ranking.

MEETINGS

Austin City Council

Meets April 25, May 9 and May 23 at 10 a.m.
301 W. Second St., Austin
www.austintexas.gov/department/city-council

Travis County Commissioners Court

Meets Tuesdays at 9 a.m.
700 Lavaca St., Austin
www.traviscountytx.gov/commissioners-court

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Here's how three proposals in front of Texas lawmakers could affect property taxes for schools

BY ALIYYA SWABY, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

Top state leaders have toured the state promising Texans they will feel less financially cramped by oversized property tax bills after the legislative session. So far, the two legislative chambers have taken different approaches to keep that promise, meaning they will have to hash out an agreement this spring.

School districts levy more than 50 percent of all local property taxes in the state. A few proposals on the table would provide some amount of tax relief for residents with different home values.

How would those proposals affect you next year? It depends on where you live and what kind of home you own. Austin ISD's tax rate for fiscal year 2018-19 was \$1.192 per \$100 of valuation, meaning the owner of a \$332,000 home—the median home value in Austin—would pay about \$3,960 in school district taxes before factoring in an exemption homeowners are entitled to receive on the value of their home for school district taxes.

HOUSE BILL 3

The House's comprehensive bill on school finance and property tax reform, authored by Public Education Chairperson Rep. Dan Huberty, R-Houston, would lower school district tax rates statewide by 4 cents per \$100 of taxable value. It would

also further buy down property taxes for school districts with higher tax rates and limit their ability to immediately raise them. This would affect both homes and commercial properties in school district boundaries.

The original version of the bill would spend about \$2.7 billion on property tax relief. HB 3 passed out of the House on April 8 with a nearly unanimous vote.

SENATE BILL 5

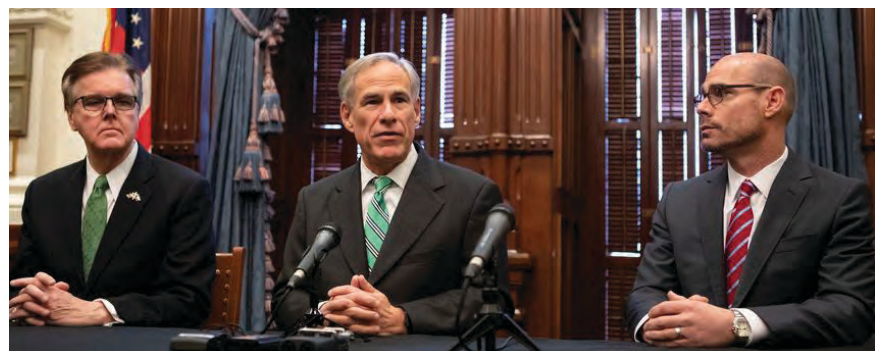
A bipartisan group of state senators, including the Senate's property tax champion, Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, has proposed expanding the homestead exemption from \$25,000 to \$35,000 if voters pass a constitutional amendment.

The legislation would make up the lost school district funding by using revenue from oil and gas production taxes. Because this bill would require voter approval, it probably would not kick in until 2021. It has a biennial cost of about \$1.5 billion.

Unlike HB 3, this bill would not affect school districts' ability to set tax rates. It has been heard in the Senate Property Tax Committee, which has not taken a vote.

HB 4352

The House Democratic Caucus has championed this bill by state Rep. Ramon Romero Jr., D-Fort Worth, as a key portion of its Texas Kids First



From left: Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, Gov. Greg Abbott and House Speaker Dennis Bonnen speak at a joint press conference addressing property tax reform Jan 31.

Legislative highlights

COMPILED BY AYAN MITTRA, THE TEXAS TRIBUNE

SCHOOLS COULD HAVE MORE ARMED MARSHALS

- The Texas Senate advanced a bill April 8 that would remove a cap on the number of school personnel who can carry firearms at schools. It is the chamber's latest tweak to the marshal program since last year's mass shooting at Santa Fe High School.

'BIG THREE' SUPPORT SALES TAX RAISE

- Texas' top three political leaders—Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and House Speaker Dennis Bonnen—threw their support behind a proposal April 10 to increase the sales tax by one percentage point in order to lower property taxes across the state.

SENATE BILL WOULD BAN GOVERNMENTS FROM PARTNERING WITH AGENCIES THAT PERFORM ABORTIONS

- The Texas Senate backed its first major anti-abortion bill of the session April 1—a measure that would prohibit state and local governments from partnering with agencies that perform abortions, even if they contract for services not related to the procedure.

VISIT COMMUNITYIMPACT.COM/CAPITOL FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Plan for public education. It would double the exemption homeowners are entitled to on their home values for school taxes, from \$25,000 to \$50,000, if voters pass a constitutional amendment.

The bill does not include language on exactly how it would reimburse

school districts for the lost funding. Like SB 5, it would not affect school districts' ability to set tax rates.

HB 4352 has a biennial cost of about \$3.4 billion, but would not kick in until 2021 because of the voter approval needed. It has not been taken up by a committee.



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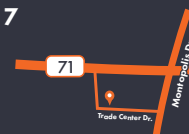
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MEMBER FDIC

Thinkery

Children's science center grows alongside city

When Thinkery opened at the Mueller development in 2013, it launched a new chapter in its decades-long history.

Founded in 1983 as the Austin Children's Museum, the organization was originally based downtown and operated as a conventional resource for families in the area.

When the museum rebranded as Thinkery and moved to a 40,000-square-foot building in East Austin, however,

there was "a definitive switch," CEO Patricia Young Brown said. The organization began

operating under a hybrid model that combines elements of a science center with a more traditional children's museum.

Thinkery incorporated learning around science, technology, engineering and math subjects in its exhibits. It expanded the ages it serves to include older children—up to age 11 rather than children age 6 or younger—and designed exhibits to help children both develop problem-solving skills and discover new interests.

"The whole idea is that we're not teaching content, right? We're teaching exploration," Brown said. "There's no right way to engage in anything; there's just engagement."

Visitors can create pipelines through which to send a ping-pong-sized ball careening or explore their shadow in front of a multicolor screen in the Light Lab. They can float a beach ball over an electric air blower and make their own stop-motion animation sequences.

Rather than teach a right way for children to complete an activity, Thinkery encourages inquiry-based play.

"It's about creating their own version of whatever the activity is," Brown said.

To serve as many children as possible, Thinkery works to make its space welcoming for all, providing sensory-friendly hours for children who have autism spectrum disorder and

hosting a community night on Wednesday evenings, during which admission is dona-

tion-based.

Before starting at Thinkery, Brown served as CEO of Central Health, which provides health care to low-income residents in Travis County. There, she learned how critical access to education was to one's quality of life.

In her role at Thinkery, she is able to help bolster this access.

"It's really working with families and children to make sure you're supporting them to have the kind of life that they want to create," she said.

The museum also hopes to establish a pathway for children who may not see themselves represented in fields such as engineering or technology.

"If we're going to have the workforce of the future, then we have to capture children and families now and say, 'This is a place for your learning, [and] there are areas of learning that you can be engaged in, too,'" Brown said.

"You have to lay a path for learning."

"THERE'S NO RIGHT WAY TO ENGAGE IN ANYTHING; THERE'S JUST ENGAGEMENT."

—PATRICIA YOUNG BROWN, THINKERY CEO

PHOTOS BY EMMA FREER/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



MARK YOUR CALENDARS



MAY 4, 10 A.M.-6 P.M.
GEOMETRIC BUBBLE EVENT

In honor of the National Math Festival, Thinkery hosts a celebration centered on three-dimensional bubbles.

MAY 16, 7-10 P.M.
THINKERY21



This game-themed event is for adults only and features a cash bar, special activities and local food trucks.



OPENS MAY 25
'EARTH, WIND, INSPIRE'

This forthcoming exhibit will focus on earth sciences, with hands-on activities exploring geysers, sandstorms and more.

1. Patricia Young-Brown became CEO of Thinkery in January 2017. She previously served as CEO for Central Health. **2.** Thinkery's backyard includes a stream lined with stone slabs. **3.** Visitors engage with hands-on exhibits in the Light Lab.

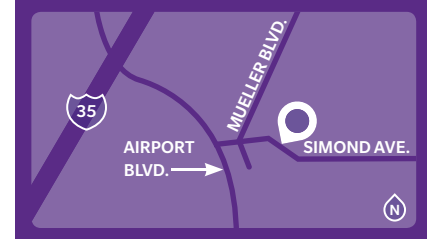
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DINING FEATURE

PHOTOS BY JACK FLAGLER/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER



Pork rib chop: \$27

This bone-in chop comes with black peppercorn, dijon and a truffle honey glaze and is served with potatoes.



Risotto: \$26

The spring rice dish is served with mushrooms, asparagus, peas and cherry tomatoes along with black truffle and pecorino cheese.



Tagliatelle: \$19

Pasta is made from scratch at Siena. This dish includes a Bolognese sauce and Grana Padano cheese.



Siena Ristorante Toscana

BY JACK FLAGLER

Chef Harvey Harris embraces Tuscan flavors and simple ingredients

When Harvey Harris traveled to Italy in 1998, he said he had to forget everything he knew about Italian cooking.

At the time, Harris already knew quite a bit about the cuisine. He had been the chef at Mezzaluna, a popular, now-closed Italian spot in downtown Austin. That led him to eventually connect with local restaurateur Stan Adams, who wanted to open a restaurant that looked like it was picked up in Tuscany and dropped into Texas.

To prepare for the opening of Siena Ristorante Toscana, Harris took part in a six-month program through the International School of Italian Cuisine for Foreigners.

"I was fortunate to go over there when I wasn't still arrogant and

thought I knew everything," Harris said. "Basically, what it did, it filled in the gaps in my education and polished everything else."

The program began with two months of classes followed by a four-month stint working in the kitchen of Il Pino, a restaurant in the small town of San Gimignano within the province of Siena. When Harris walked into that kitchen, the Sweetwater, Texas, native said the smells of "cantaloupes, leather, wood furniture, gun oil and cured meats" reminded him of his grandmother's house.

Harris brought the techniques and lessons he learned in Tuscany back to Austin, and in March 2000, Siena Ristorante Toscana opened near the intersection of Loop 360 and RM 2222.

Now, the kitchen is still baking fresh bread and cooking scratch-made pasta as the restaurant prepares to enter its 20th year in business.

Harris said the biggest lesson he has taken away from Italian food is that simplicity is key. While many Americans assume gourmet Italian dishes are all complex and heavily seasoned, some are lightly garnished with just salt or a little olive oil to let the fresh ingredients speak for themselves. In that way, Harris said, Italian food reminded him of some of the best meals he ate in Texas.

"You really want to use the minimum amount of ingredients to bring out the maximum amount of natural flavor that's there. Anything else is a mask," Harris said.

1: Owner Stan Adams opened Siena Ristorante Toscana in March 2000. **2:** Chef Harvey Harris traveled to Italy for six months in 1998 before Siena opened in Austin.

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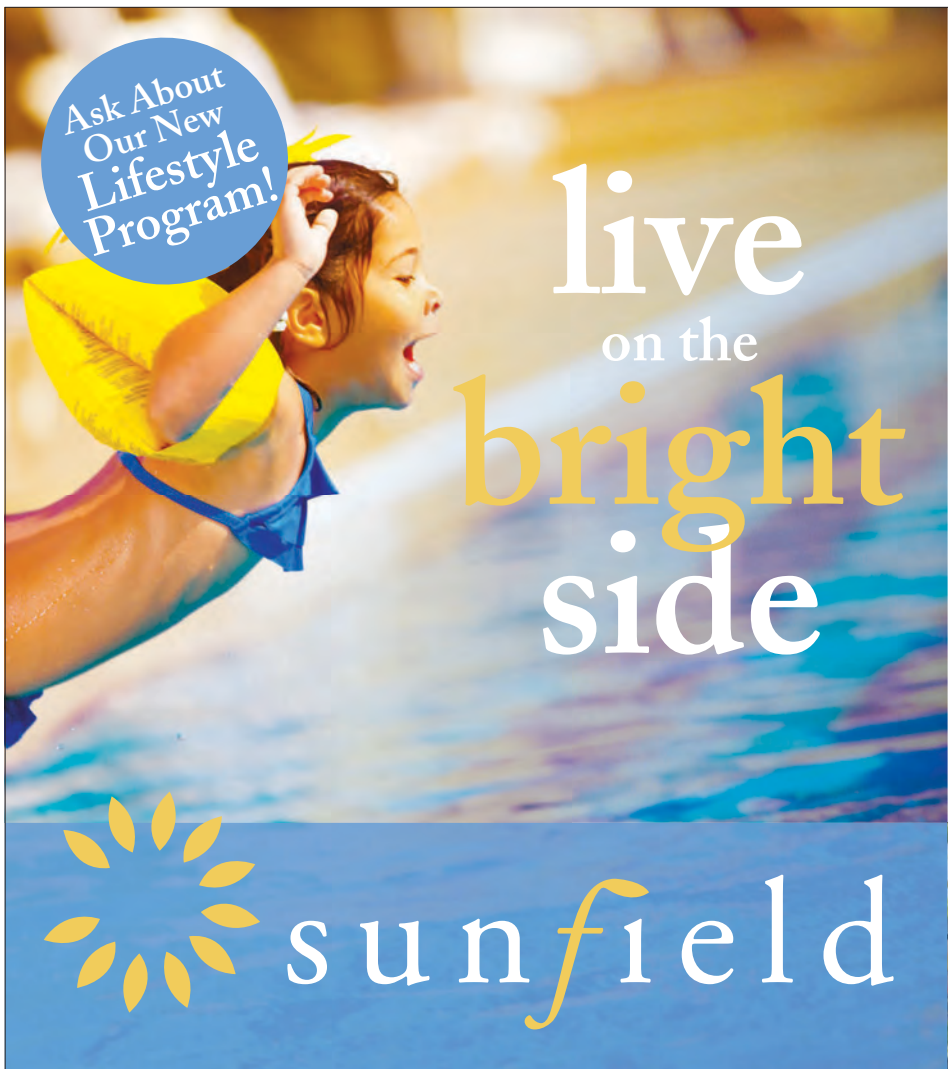
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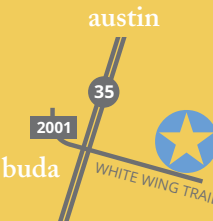


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Austin flood risk substantially expanded

New data shows 80% increase in structures within flood plain

Central Texas is already one of the most flash-flood-prone regions in North America according to Austin’s emergency management office. However, a new federal study shows more intense rainfall has exacerbated that threat in the capital city, nearly doubling the amount of structures in danger of flooding from 4,000 to 7,200.

Such changes are acutely felt in Central Austin. According to a *Community Impact Newspaper* analysis of the new proposed flood maps, approximately 694 properties previously thought to be out of harm’s way are now in the flood zone. Officials say the properties will likely be subject to flood insurance requirements, tighter development rules and property value reductions.

“Our understanding of flood risk has changed significantly,” said Kevin Shunk, flood plain administrator with Austin’s Watershed Protection Department. “There are more people and buildings at risk of flooding than we previously thought.”

The study—called Atlas-14—was conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and is the first of its kind since 1961. Shunk said the result is the most significant change to the city’s flood-mitigation efforts since flood maps were first introduced in 1983.

“Any flood-[mitigation] infrastructure in the entire city is now under-sized,” Shunk said. “Every bit of it.”

Although Austin is no stranger to deadly floods, officials, environmentalists and developers agree the changes to follow Atlas-14 will be costly, especially as the city grapples with its ongoing affordability crisis and rapid population growth. However, experts say defense against the forces of Mother Nature should be looked at as

a long-term affordability strategy, as doing nothing will come at a much higher cost in the future.

AUSTIN BUCKLES DOWN

Shunk said since the rainfall data was finalized last fall, his department has been scrambling to educate property owners on their new flood risk and tighter development restrictions coming down the pipeline.

Atlas-14 shows a roughly 33% increase in the amount of rain that could fall in a 24-hour period. As a result, the properties experiencing greater flood risk are those in close proximity to the city’s creeks, such as Shoal, Waller, and East and West Bouldin, since more intense rain means a wider spread of creek overflow. The area over which a creek’s floodwaters can reach is called a flood plain.

Flood plains are dictated by rainfall intensity and the likelihood that a storm with such rainfall intensity could occur in a given year. A 25-year storm has a 4% chance of occurring in a year; a 100-year storm has a 1% chance of occurring in a year; and a 500-year storm has a 0.2% chance.

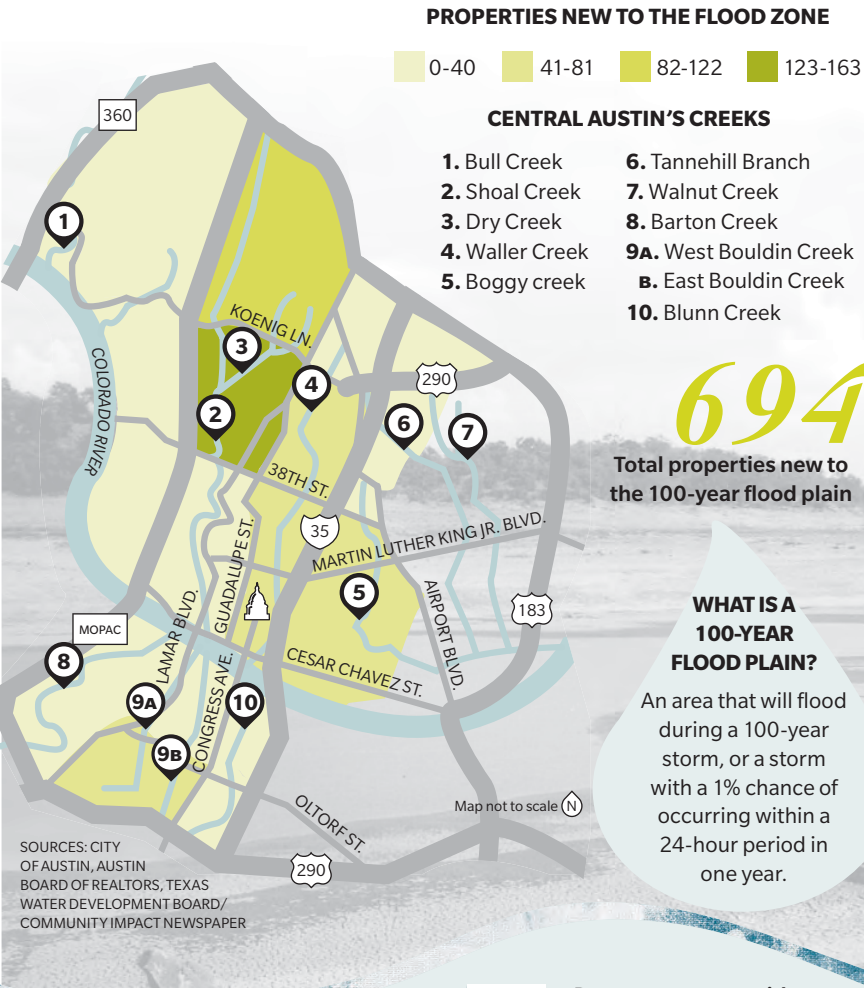
CONTINUED ON 30

KNOW YOUR RISK

DESIGNED BY **SHELBY SAVAGE**




The larger flood zones resulting from the Atlas-14 study encompass nearly 700 more Central Austin properties than before. Such properties will see tighter regulations and, likely, decreased property value, according to local real estate experts. The map shows the impact in different areas of Central Austin.




WHAT TO EXPECT

Along with a pair of new floodplain development restrictions proposed by the city, properties in the 100-year floodplain will be impacted in a variety of ways.


***PROPOSED BY AUSTIN'S WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT**




***All new construction must be raised 2 feet above the flood plain.**



***No additional dwelling units can be built on properties within the flood plain.**



Property owners with structures in the flood plain will have to buy flood insurance.



Realtors say property values typically decrease in the floodplain.



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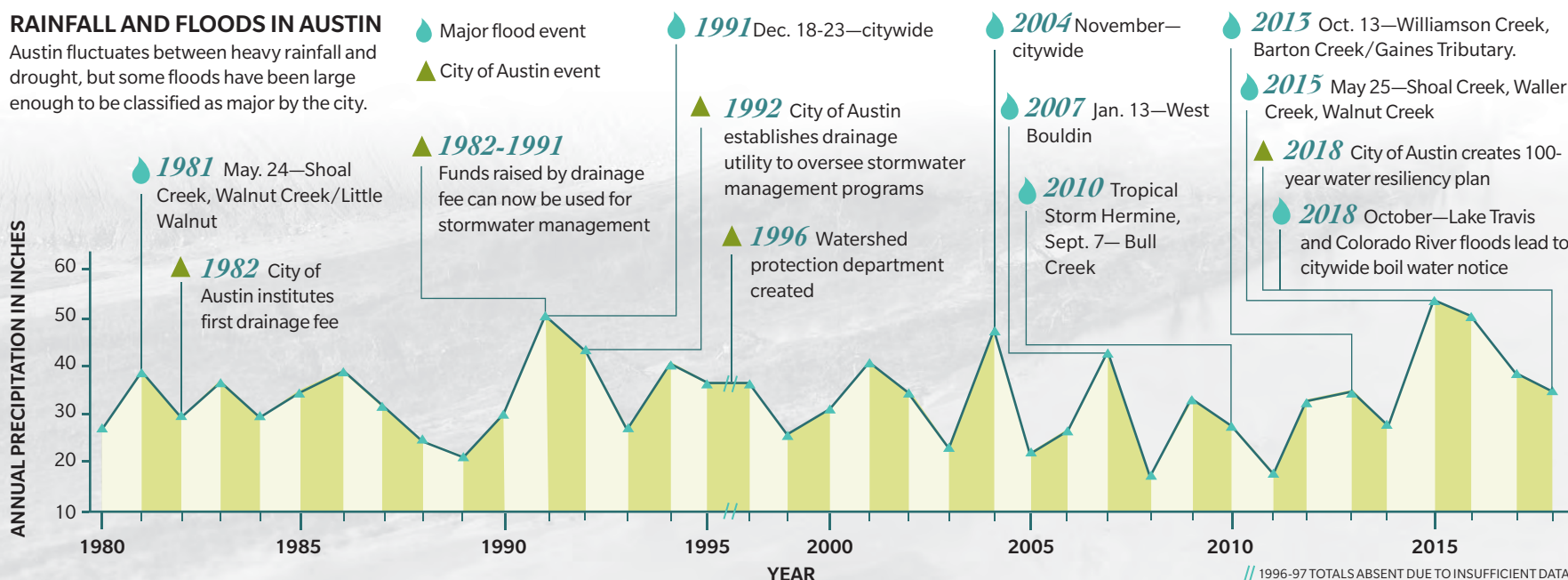


GROWTH IN A NATURALLY FLOOD-PRONE LAND

Because Austin is located in the state's "Flash-Flood Alley, flood management is a relevant and ongoing part of city operations and planning.

RAINFALL AND FLOODS IN AUSTIN

Austin fluctuates between heavy rainfall and drought, but some floods have been large enough to be classified as major by the city.



CONTINUED FROM 29

Before Atlas-14's findings, a 25-year storm brought 7.5 inches of rain in 24 hours; a 100-year storm brought 10.2 inches of rain in 24 hours; and a 500-year storm brought 13.5 inches. The intensity of these storms have since jumped. After the Atlas-14 findings, a 25-year storm would now bring 2.5 more inches of rain. Properties formerly in the 500-year flood zone are now in the 100-year zone, meaning a storm that drops more than 13 inches of rain in 24 hours is five times more likely to hit in a year than previously understood.

Cities like Austin design flood infrastructure and regulate land use based on 100-year storm levels. Now that the 100-year storm has jumped in intensity and the flood plain has expanded, the watershed protection department has proposed tighter development

restrictions, highlighted by a permanent moratorium on adding dwelling units in the flood plain and a requirement that the ground floor on any redevelopment or new construction needs to be lifted 2 feet above the flood plain.

The ordinance changes were initially scheduled for a City Council vote this spring; however, watershed protection officials wanted further public input before submitting the proposal. A vote is now expected for October.

David Maidment, professor of environmental and water resource engineering at The University of Texas, said the new efforts at mitigating flood risk are the city's way of ensuring no repeats of the destruction of residences along Onion Creek in the 2013 and 2015 floods and the \$100 million in tax money subsequently spent on buying people out of those properties.

"We've got to plan more appropriately

in the future than what was done in the past," Maidment said. "It's clearly a shock to people who are now going to be in a flood zone that weren't before, but it's just a recognition of the risk that exists."

A 'NEW NORMAL'

Local environmental experts say the findings of Atlas-14 only further the evidence of a shifting climate.

"We have to acknowledge that we've entered a new normal with extreme weather events," said Jo Karr Tedder, founder of the nonprofit Central Texas Water Coalition, which advocates for use of scientific data in water management. "We must use current data and science to better prepare for the future."

Maidment said city planning has to take the shifting climate into consideration, and acknowledging Atlas-14's increased flood levels across the

community is a "step in the right direction."

Brian Zabcik, a clean water advocate with Environment Texas, said tighter development rules could not only mitigate flood risk but also provide water-quality benefits, as less development in the flood plain means less pollutive runoff entering the city's streams. Atlas-14, he said, was long overdue.

"If we build in flood plains, if we put more pavement over land that flows into our streams, we're going to increase flooding and make the problem worse," Zabcik said. "If we redefine our flood plains according to Atlas-14, we can pull back from streams and channels and reduce the runoff flowing into them."

In Austin City Council Member Leslie Pool's District 7, which stretches from Central to North Austin, many properties will enter the flood plain for the first time as a result of Atlas-14. Pool said her

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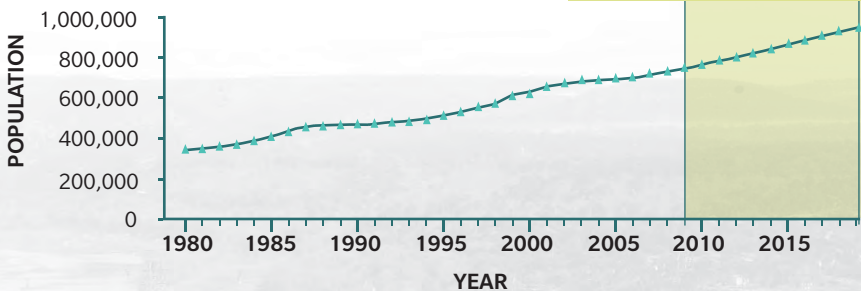
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THE AUSTIN POPULATION Amid its history with intense rain and deadly floods, Austin's population has continued to grow, placing more pressure on the city to bolster flood-mitigation efforts.

27% The increase in the city of Austin's population from 2009 to 2019. The city is expected to surpass 1 million residents in 2020.



6 additional square miles in Austin are now at flood risk following Atlas-14.

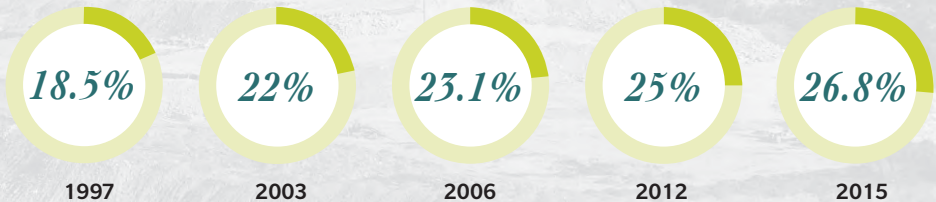
MANSFIELD DAM
The Mansfield Dam was built in 1937 and is part of the Highland Lakes chain on the Colorado River, which was created to manage floods and generate power.
COURTESY LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY



IMPERVIOUS COVER Replacing natural, ground cover with an impervious surface such as a building or road generates more stormwater runoff. The amount of impervious cover over Austin's land area has continued to grow with the city's population and development boom. The city has impervious cover data for the following years.



PERCENT OF IMPERVIOUS COVER CITYWIDE



SOURCES: CITY OF AUSTIN, NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

constituents have been talking about the potential flood plain changes for the last two years.

Pool said the 1981 Memorial Day flood that killed 13 people was a wake-up call for Austin and resulted in several property buyouts along Shoal Creek in what is now her district. She said something similar could happen again without proper preparation, especially as the region experiences more intense rainfall.

“My bottom line is I want folks to be safe and keep themselves out of dangerous situations,” Pool said. “We need to increase our resiliency and ensure our housing situation is more sustainable.”

BALANCING AFFORDABILITY

Felicia Foster is an architect and member of the Infill Builders Council, a group that advocates and educates on

infill development issues. According to Foster, many in the development community believe the pending regulations could “ruin” building in Austin.

Although Foster said she appreciates the city's efforts to educate the community about the upcoming changes, the new regulations—such as upgrading storm infrastructure to bigger pipes and on-site detention ponds on commercial projects to raising new homes 2 feet above the floodplain—will add costs for both the homebuyers and sellers.

David Glenn, director of government affairs with the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin, said the cost associated with requiring new construction to be raised 2 feet above the flood plain could run up to a few thousand dollars, which will trickle down to the listing price. Building an accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, on a property and renting

it out is a key way for both homeowners and renters to fight affordability challenges. However, the proposed density moratorium would prohibit ADU construction in the flood plains.

“We understand it's a good effort and you're trying to protect the area, but you have to look at the bigger picture and realize how this death by 1,000 cuts is killing affordability,” Glenn said. “Austinites love their things—trees, creeks, et cetera. The problem is, they don't have a clear vision of what the top priority is. What is the thing that Austin needs to sacrifice the most for? We think that's affordability.”

On the other hand, homes that are new to the flood plain and its regulations will likely take a hit to property value, especially if City Council approves the prohibition of additional density, said Gordon Gorychka, a

realtor with 40 years of experience in the Austin area.

“If it's a single-family unit now, it'll have to stay single-family unit; I think that will have a dramatic effect on property value,” Gorychka said.

However, Shunk said the proposed flood regulations are part of an affordability strategy, just one that takes more of a long view.

“We are, in a way, making things more affordable because we're limiting the flood damage that could happen,” Shunk said. “It's the flood damage that is hard overcome financially, so if we protect houses now then we make it more affordable in the future.”

Taylor Jackson Buchanan contributed additional reporting to this story.

For more information visit communityimpact.com.

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A right to COUNSEL

Travis County defendants who cannot afford private counsel access representation through a variety of departments. A public defender's office, advocates said, would provide more oversight, funding and infrastructure.

DESIGNED BY **SHELBY SAVAGE**

Indigent DEFENSE

In 2018, a majority of defendants in Travis County were ruled indigent and assigned counsel.

89%
were assigned
counsel

12,684
felony cases

26,260
misdemeanor
cases

57%
were assigned
counsel

SOURCES: AUSTIN/TRAVIS COUNTY REENTRY ROUNDTABLE, TEXAS APPLESEED, THE EFFECTS OF HOLISTIC DEFENSE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES, TEXAS INDIGENT DEFENSE COMMISSION 2018 FEASIBILITY STUDY, TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

CONTINUED FROM 1

Since 2001, the TIDC has helped establish 13 of the state's 20 public defender's offices.

"We've seen both in anecdote and in study after study after study that these public defender's offices tend to provide better representation," TIDC Executive Director Geoffrey Burkhart said.

A 2018 study by researchers at Rand Corp. and the University of Pennsylvania Law School found that a holistic public defense model—like the one Travis County is proposing—reduces the likelihood of jail or prison sentences by 16% and expected sentence length by 24%, leading to lower incarceration costs for local and state governments.

But challenges remain, including cost and pushback from private defense attorneys.

This fiscal year, Travis County allotted more than \$137 million—12.58% of its budget—to corrections and rehabilitation. The addition of a public defender's office would increase the county's indigent defense spending more than a third, from \$13.9 million in FY 2018 to \$19.3 million in FY 2020, as projected in a TIDC feasibility study.

The deadline for the grant, which would cover half of the new office's costs over four years, is May 10.

A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT

"Building a public defender's office is not about saving money or efficiencies," said Amanda Woog, executive director of the Texas Fair Defense Project, a nonprofit that advocates for the rights of low-income Texans within the criminal justice system, and chairperson of the county's indigent legal services work

group. "Both of those things can happen and, I believe, will happen. ... But this is about more than that."

In 2001, the Texas Legislature passed the Fair Defense Act, which required the state's criminal courts to adopt formal procedures for appointing lawyers to poor defendants and created what later became the TIDC to oversee the process.

Travis County has been working to improve defense for qualifying clients since at least 1971, when it created the state's first juvenile public defender's office.

More recently, in 2015, it replaced "bench appointments"—in which judges assigned indigent cases to private attorneys, raising concerns of favoritism—with a random system that is managed by the Capital Area Private Defender Service. It appoints private lawyers to represent indigent clients for a flat fee.

As proposed, the public defender's office would handle 30% of those cases. Private attorneys, through CAPDS, would continue to represent the remainder.

Despite progress on the public defender's office front, issues persist with CAPDS, including a problematic pay structure and overloaded attorneys.

"A flat rate creates perverse incentives," said Chris Perri, a criminal defense lawyer and member of the Austin Criminal Defense Lawyers Association board who supports increased funding for CAPDS. "And that incentivizes speedily resolving a case instead of quality resolving the case."

According to state-commissioned guidelines for indigent defense caseloads, attorneys should carry no more than 236 misdemeanors or 174 felonies annually to ensure effective representation—and fewer if the charges are more serious.

In 2018, the most indigent cases a private attorney in Travis County took on was 628, per the TIDC. Thirty-three of the 231 attorneys—or one in seven—contracted by the county exceeded the maximum caseload of 236; all had a mix of misdemeanor and felony cases.

Researchers at the Council of State Governments, a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank, found in a 2018 report that, controlling for all factors that could impact results, defendants charged with a drug possession felony were 16% more likely to be found guilty if they had been appointed an attorney than if they had hired one.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

In October, Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt spearheaded the creation of a 14-member indigent legal services work group, consisting of defense attorneys, activists, academics and county staff.

Its task is to explore paths to create a public defender's office, improve CAPDS and reform the pay structure for appointed counsel.

But the group has experienced some setbacks.

In February, two members affiliated with the ACDLA resigned, citing conflict with activist members, a rushed process and inadequate funding for CAPDS.

In March, the group missed a deadline to submit a letter of intent to the TIDC, whose board ultimately waived the requirement. The group members were unable to come to a consensus regarding the letter in time, and local criminal judges refused to sign off on it.

Deborah Fowler, executive director of the nonprofit Texas Appleseed, which helped pass the Fair Defense



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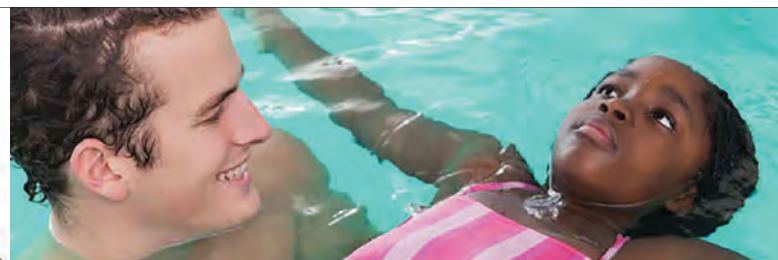
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Public defender's OFFICE

A Travis County public defender's office would handle up to 30 percent of indigent cases and comprise 66 staff. The office would practice a holistic defense model, in which attorneys address both the case at hand and issues such as substance use, mental illness, or housing instability.



Rising COSTS

Since 2001, indigent defense spending has increased dramatically. Per a TIDC feasibility study, a public defender's office would cost around \$19 million in its first four years.

TRAVIS COUNTY INDIGENT DEFENSE SPENDING

2001 **\$4,682,371**
2018 **\$13,882,414**

9.6%
State funding



90.4%
Local taxpayers

INDIGENT DEFENSE COST TO AVERAGE TRAVIS COUNTY TAXPAYER

\$6

2001

\$11

2018

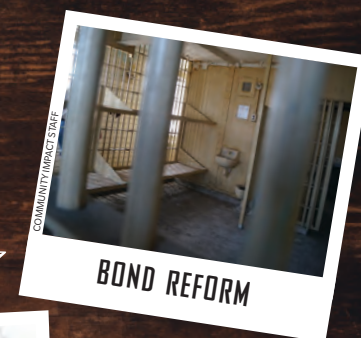
\$10

2018
State average

The BIG PICTURE

The push to create a public defender's office in Travis County is one of many ongoing efforts to reform the local criminal justice system.

For decades, the county has waived bail for those who qualify, saving millions in jail costs annually.



Due in part to diversion programs, including the new Sobering Center, jail bookings are down 28% since 2013.

In January, Travis County commissioners unanimously approved \$328.5 million to pay for a new courts facility downtown.



Act, said this type of pushback was to be expected.

"In a lot of the places where we worked, the attorneys who were part of the appointment wheels were very concerned that if you created a public defender's office, it would mean that they would no longer get appointed cases or at least [appointed enough cases] to continue to make a living," Fowler said.

This fear is unfounded, Eckhardt said, because the county's rapid population growth ensures there will be plenty of clients for private attorneys to defend.

Additionally, funding for a public defender's office is intrinsically tied up in funding for CAPDS.

"We have to bring up the private defense bar on an appropriate pay structure at the same time we bring up a public defender's office," Eckhardt said. "The reason why it has to be simultaneous is because otherwise we will break the budget."

While the startup costs of a public defender's office are significant, even with TIDC funding, the potential savings are even greater—and could help offset the costs of paying private attorneys an hourly rate.

WHAT'S AHEAD

The work group is finalizing its grant application, which will detail what a public defender's office would look like in Travis County.

Eckhardt said she is "extremely confident" its members will meet the May 10 deadline.

If created, the office would fit into a series of criminal justice reforms made at the local level, from the county's jail diversion programs to the city of Austin's Freedom Cities policies, which are intended to reduce racial disparities in discretionary arrests and to ensure police officers who ask about immigration

status inform people of their right not to answer.

"Much of the reform efforts nationwide had been focused on either the back end, which is to say prisons, or the front end, which is to say pre-trial and policing and things like that, and has really skipped over that middle bit, which is prosecution and defense," Burkhardt said. "If you're going to have criminal justice reform, you have to have public defense reform."

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