



nwacaNEWS

NORTHWEST AUSTIN CIVIC ASSOCIATION

JULY 2017

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 7

President's Message

Chris Hajdu

Many neighbors have expressed thoughts related to the speed bumps on Far West, and I'd like to speak to two things: First, the city program that was utilized in order to request the speed bumps and second, the style of speed bumps the city installed.

First, a request for speed mitigation was submitted by neighbors along Far West back in 2013 through the LATM (Local Area Traffic Management) program that is run by the city. After a request is submitted, the city performs a detailed analysis, taking into account speeds through the area, crash history, and other data. After a study period, the city ranks projects based on need. It's important to note that this section of Far West was the 6th highest rated request in the 6 years the program has been running. The initial request and the project rating were the reason speed bumps were approved and funded for this section of Far West.

Next, I'd like to talk about the type of devices the city used for the Far West traffic mitigation. I think it's fair to say that the type of device used is causing a lot of concern among our community. The current design is what the city is using for traffic mitigation today. The type of device used is a city decision, not a neighborhood decision. Traffic mitigation devices must support several requirements, including allowing the passage of emergency vehicles and recreational users, while slowing down standard traffic.

I want to reiterate that damaging these devices is a crime and will be investigated as such. There are other ways to handle situations like this and vandalism of city property is not the correct path to take. By the time this article comes out, the June District 10 Town Hall Meeting will have occurred. This meeting includes the "speed bump" issue on the agenda. Several neighbors and NWACA board

members will be in attendance, eager to ask questions and hear what our council member and City staff have to say on this issue. Please stay tuned for more on this issue.

Related to LATM projects, information about upcoming projects and their current status is available at the City of Austin website. It is worth mentioning that additional LATM requests have been made for Burney, Mountain Climb, Mesa and Greystone and a few other streets within the NWACA boundaries as well.

While on the topic of traffic, please review the results of the recent traffic study for the NWACA area. The newsletter has a brief overview; the full report is on the NWACA web site. This survey was conducted partly in response to a special project request by some concerned neighbors about implementing a program whereby an off-duty constable would patrol the NWACA area. This has been implemented by the neighborhood to our south (HPWBNA – Highland Park West/Balcones) and has been quite successful. It's important to note that NWACA has continued to lobby our APD District Representative and Councilmember to make them aware that our area needs more frequent APD patrols, but the reality with APD staffing is that problem areas with more violent crime statistics get more resources (especially during the big festivals that occur regularly throughout the year.) We continually evaluate options for improving the safety and security of the NWACA area.

With respect to NWACA board business, our board has convened our bi-annual nominating committee as we move forward with our election cycle. If you are aware of anyone who you think is a good candidate for a NWACA board position, please submit them to us

(Continued on Page 4)

New to the Neighborhood?

If this is the first time you're seeing our newsletter, welcome to the NWACA neighborhood! This newsletter is one way to keep up with what's happening here, but there's a lot more available, too. Check out the Quick Link For New Neighbors on our web site at www.nwaca.org

This map shows our boundaries – Mopac, RM 2222, Loop 360, and Spicewood Springs Road. There are about 4100 other households who are your neighbors and are happy you're here!

Welcome to NWACA!



NWACA EVENTS CALENDAR

JULY 4, 9 AM-11 AM
NORTH HILLS DRIVE AND
DOSS ELEMENTARY
4TH OF JULY PARADE AND
AFTER-PARADE PARTY

JULY 5, 8:30 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
CRIME AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

JULY 6, 8:00 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE

JULY 11, 8:00 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

JULY 15, 9AM - NOON
BULL CREEK DISTRICT PARK
MONTHLY PARK BEAUTIFICATION IN
THE PARK AND ON TRAILS

JULY 22, 5:30-8:00 PM
MURCHISON POOL
POOL PARTY! FREE PIZZA FROM MANGIA

JULY 25, 5:00 PM
TEMPLE BETH SHALOM, 7300 HART LANE
NWACA ZONING & TRANSPORTATION
COMMITTEE

AUGUST 2, 8:30 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
CRIME AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

AUGUST 3, 8:00 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE

AUGUST 6, 2:00 PM
KNEADED PLEASURES
PARKS COMMITTEE

AUGUST 8, 8:00 AM
KNEADED PLEASURES
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

AUGUST 19, 9:00 AM-NOON
BULL CREEK DISTRICT PARK
MONTHLY PARK BEAUTIFICATION IN
THE PARK AND ON TRAILS

AUGUST 20, 2:00 PM
KNEADED PLEASURES
TREE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

AUGUST 22, 5:00 PM
TEMPLE BETH SHALOM, 7300 HART LANE
NWACA ZONING & TRANSPORTATION
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 To check status, go to: <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/myaustincodestatus>
 APD District Representative, Office Darrell Grayson...512-974-5242
 District 10 Councilmember, Alison Alter.....512-978-2110
 Contact to enroll in the District 10 weekly newsletter:
district10@austintexas.gov
www.district10austin.com

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Each of the Board members can be reached at:
nwacainfo@gmail.com

The NWACA Board meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, except December. Please visit our calendar at www.nwaca.org to see the specific time and location. If you wish to speak at a Board meeting, please send email a week before the meeting, so that we can get you on the agenda.

NWACA is bordered on the north by Spicewood Springs Road, on the west by Loop 360, on the south by RM 2222, and on the east by Mopac (Loop 1).

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NWACA News

President's Message(Continued from Cover)

by August 1 at nwacainfo@gmail.com. NWACA members will vote on the candidates mid-October; you need to be an active member for at least a month to be able to vote. Please see our article this month for more information.

I'd also like to highlight some of the great articles we have in this month's issue:

- CodeNext – Learn how to discover your current property zoning and what your current zoning category means
- WildFire Maps – Learn about the risk and response to wildfire based on where you live
- NWACA Volunteers of the Year – Learn more about our volunteers of the year
- STR Update – What happened at the Legislature
- Bull Creek History Article – Learn about the connection between Bull Creek Road and Bull Creek

And, if you are interested in contributing your time to one of the many NWACA committees, please contact us at nwacainfo@gmail.com and we will put you in touch with the right folks. We are especially interested in people to assist with our Crime and Safety committee due to some recent departures.

Thanks, and we hope you are having a great summer!

NWACA Board Nominations Underway

–NWACA Board

The NWACA Nomination Committee is now gathering nominees for the NWAC Board for 2018-2019. The Committee includes both members of the current Board and NWACA members at large:

- Vicki DeWeese, NWACA Board Member
- Cuatro Groos, NWACA Board Member
- Joyce Statz, NWACA Board Member
- 3 members at large, yet to be named

Everyone is invited to identify candidates for the NWACA Board, sending email to nwacainfo@gmail.com or sending a letter to NWACA, P.O. Box 26654, Austin, TX 78755. Please submit your nominations by August 1. Thank you!



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Congratulations, 2017 NWACA Volunteers of the Year!

—NWACA Board

This year, the NWACA Board was pleased to recognize two outstanding volunteers for their service to the neighborhood, Jerry Levenson and Ben Luckens.



Jerry Levenson is known to many as the “Ligustrum Liquidator.” He’s been the ultimate Parks volunteer since retiring from IBM as a Data Analyst. Jerry has single-handedly removed tons (literally!) of invasive species from several of our parks and green spaces – ligustrum from Blunn Creek and

Allen Park, grapevine that was killing the trees at Murchison Pool Park, nandina and ligustrum from Bull Creek Park and elsewhere. He is one of the original founders of the Bull Creek Foundation, and he is an active member of our Parks Committee, helping with events and work days at the parks. Another of Jerry’s interests is preventing wildfire damage; he’s been a dedicated member of our NWACA Wildfire Home Risk Evaluators since 2013, one of the pair who did 55 out of 220 home evaluations done to date. He’s a great role model for our kids (NHS, Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts and more), a quiet, efficient, easy-going, great teacher!



Ben Luckens has deep experience in urban planning and zoning, was employed by the City of Austin in the past, and is now an independent consultant for zoning and planning. He’s been involved with NWACA for decades, serving as a Board member and now an active member of the Zoning and Transportation Committee. Ben encouraged us in 2014 and 2015 to consider the use of a charrette for the Austin Oaks PUD, and he led us through the process as our project manager. Other organizations would have had to pay him tens of thousands of dollars for this service, but our neighborhood got it pro bono. Ben worked throughout 2016 on the team that talked with the City and Spire to get as much of the charrette outcome as possible into the final plan. In short, Ben is dedicated, forthright, smart, and really cares about the neighborhood.

What does Bull Creek Road have to do with Bull Creek?

—Richard Denney

There is a question that Austinites sometimes ponder: Why is Bull Creek Road called that? It’s nowhere close to Bull Creek. Go to Google Maps and type in “Bull Creek Road, Austin, TX”. It will likely drop you near the intersection of Bull Creek Road and 45th Street. Close to Shoal Creek; miles from Bull Creek.

Barkley’s The History of Travis County and Austin states “The Mormons are credited with construction, in 1846, of one of Travis County’s oldest roads to the northwest, the one that today [1963] is a scenic drive along Bull Creek to the Spicewood Springs Road, and which then led to a mill on Bull Creek used after the Mormon Mill [at the base of Mt. Bonnell on the Colorado River] washed away.” Yes, there were water-powered mills on Bull Creek, but that’s another story.

Back in the day, before roads had numbers (I-35, Loop 360, US 183), folks named roads for where they went; their destination. If you were living in early Austin and someone built a road that took you out to Bull Creek, what would you name it? Bull Creek Road! That naming convention had flaws which eventually led to the modern convention of road numbers, but Bull Creek Road is an old road based on that old convention from the early days of Austin.

So Bull Creek Road was the way to get to Bull Creek from Austin. But how? Go back to Google Maps and this time type in “Old Bull Creek Road, Austin, TX.” What you’ll see is a little side road that detours off present day RM 2222. Guess what 2222 used to be called? You got it, Bull Creek Road.

Of course, as with all roads, tweaks in the route were made over time. Austin’s first dam, “The Great Granite Dam,” was completed in 1893. That same year a committee was appointed to investigate reports that Bull Creek Road was impassable. They reported: “We have visited the creek ... the road and crossing known as Bull creek road (sic) has been submerged by the back water from the city’s dam ... the pontoon bridge erected by the city at the said crossing has been carried away...” Rather than replace the pontoon bridge with another, their recommendation was the “erection of a substantial and permanent bridge over Bull creek and the cutting out of a road from said creek to the Mount Bonnell road...” Modern 2222 was taking shape.

On some maps RM 2222 was labeled Bull Creek Road all the way

(Continued on Page 6)

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NWACA News

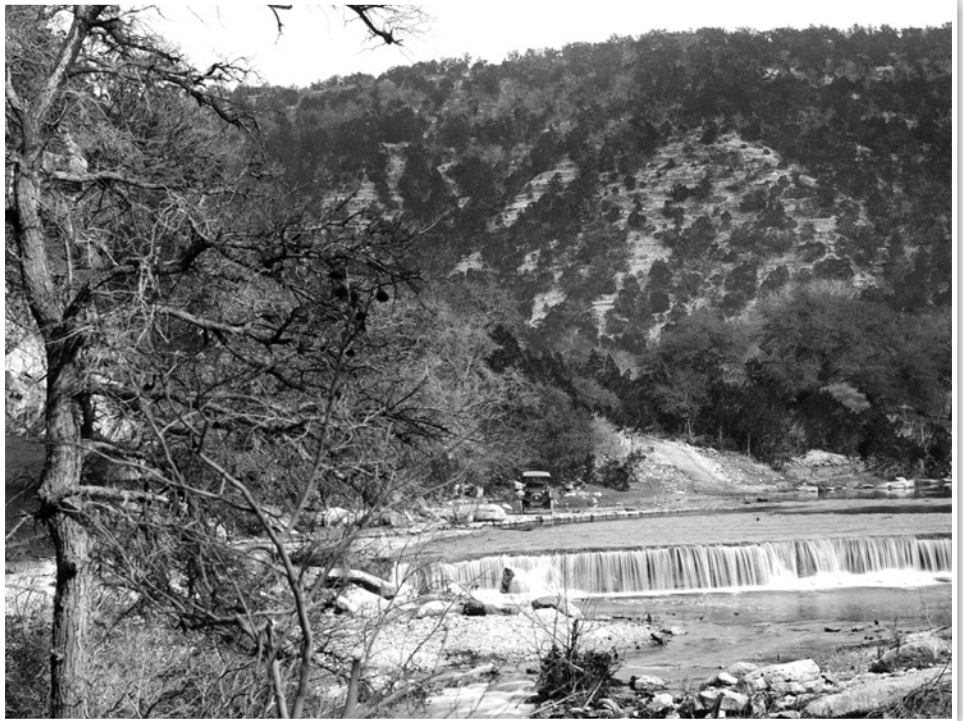
(Continued from Page 5)

to FM 620, but initially it probably just ran to Bull Creek, taking a right turn on what is now Lakewood Drive. That's right, Lakewood Drive used to be Bull Creek Road. And as described by Barkley, it then ran up the creek to intersect with what is today Old Spicewood Springs Road.

One final twist. What is now Spicewood Springs Road north of Loop 360 was the final stretch of the original Bull Creek Road. It was up this stretch the Mormons probably built their mill. County road maps from 1898-1902 show it continued on past Oak Grove Cemetery turning left on today's Old Lampasas Trail, terminating near the original site of old Oak Grove School.

The photo here is extracted from an original at the Austin History Center, showing an early Ford about 1920, parked on what is now Lakewood Drive by Bull Creek District Park. To see a "then" and "now" photo of this location, check this web site: <http://tinyurl.com/roadThenAndNow>

For more on this topic and other local history, visit Richard Denney's blog at <http://txcompot.blogspot.com/>



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Let's build the Murchison Playground!

—Stephannie Behrens and Caroline Alexander



For years, we've wanted a playground here in Northwest Hills where little ones could play during the school day, when Doss wasn't open to them. We've wanted a playground that's available for siblings and friends of

kickball players using the fields next to Murchison. We've wanted a spot next to the pool, where people could relax and play between their swimming adventures. And... we've wanted some new playthings.

The NWACA Parks Committee has been working with the City for over a year to create an all-ages playground outside the fence at Murchison Pool. It will be open all day, every day for everyone in our community to use. And it is going to be amazing.

The plan was designed by Charles Mabry of PARD. Climbing structures, swings, spinners (both large and small), and free play balance logs will create a dynamic playground. There will be shade structures to help block some of that strong Texas sun, and a drinking fountain to keep everyone hydrated. There will be tables with seats to accommodate anyone who might want to play a game or have a cup of coffee. With a beautiful stone seating wall for parents and children to enjoy.

To build this, we will need your help. It's a big project, and we need to raise a lot of money to make it happen. We have a goal of raise \$100,000 from the neighborhood, and we are working on grant applications to fill in the rest of the funding gap. We'll be out at the Fourth of July Parade selling signs and spreading the good news. Come and find us!

Information and a link to make donations are at <http://nwaca.org/lets-build-murchison-playground/>

For more information or to get involved, contact Stephannie Behrens at stephannie@gmail.com

Don't be the Next Victim!

—NWACA Crime and Safety Committee

We've had a spate of property crimes recently, mostly car break-ins and some home burglaries. In many cases, it's been entirely too easy for the thieves to get to our stuff; we've been forgetful or careless or just too trusting in the stranger. These things make it too easy... don't do them:

- Leaving garage doors open
- Leaving houses unlocked when we're not there
- Leaving the house without setting the alarm
- Leaving cars unlocked and on the street
- Leaving our house keys in the car
- Leaving valuable out in the open in our car – whether locked or not

As one of our committee members is fond of saying – the thieves will keep coming back to the ice cream truck, once they find it has ice cream!

To monitor crime in areas near your home, here are some web sites you might use:

<https://spotcrime.com/>

<http://www.krimelabb.com/>

Providing your address, you can see recent data on various types of crime in the nearby area.



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NWACA Traffic Survey Results

—Joyce Statz

During the month of May, NWACA conducted a neighborhood survey concerning traffic issues. The impetus for the survey was a proposal from a pair of neighbors, that they would help pay to engage a Travis County Constable part-time to enforce traffic laws in order to see if this would reduce problems with speeding and other traffic violations. The proposal arose after learning about how the work of a constable in another neighborhood area was showing good results.

Survey responses identified traffic issues at about a dozen intersections and on 9 primary streets. There is also agreement that speeding is the primary issue, with running stop signs, texting, and various types of careless driving also cited as problems. A segment of respondents doesn't think traffic is a problem – they don't see streets with speeding issues; no intersections represent dangerous situations; there are no problems with or for cyclists; there is no interest in employing a constable.

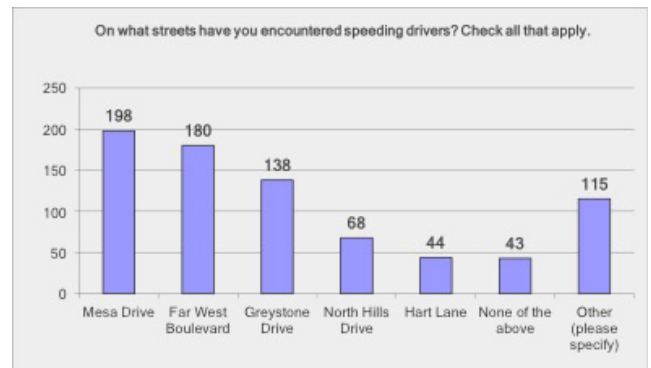
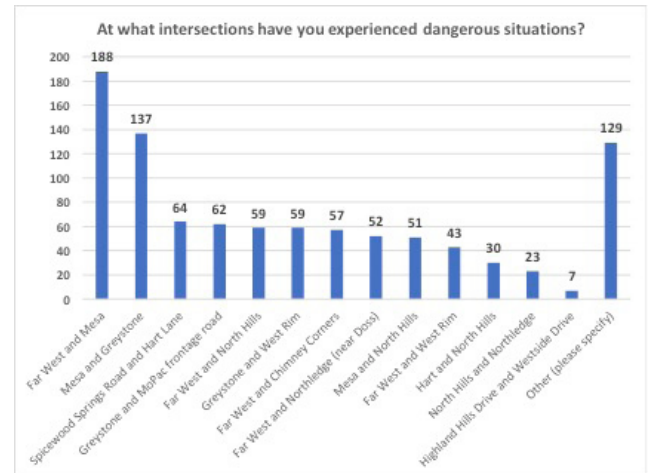
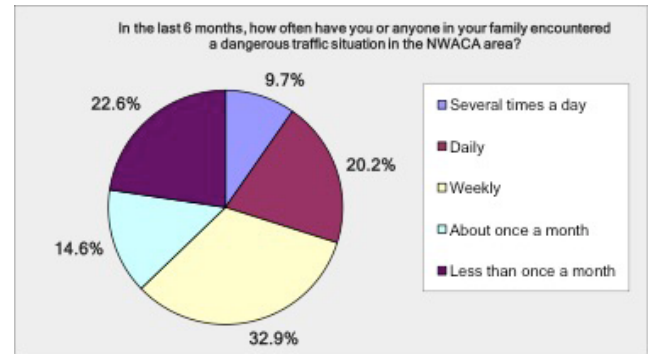
A majority favors running a 6-month pilot with a constable; but paying for it over the long term is an open question, with about a third willing to do so, a third not willing, and a third wanting to wait and see.

Here are some of the results of the survey. This summary is brief; the full report can be found on the NWACA web site, www.nwaca.org under the News and Updates section of the home page.

Among the 129 Other responses, these were the most prevalent (several cited more than one item):

- 17 – Greystone and Chimney Corners
 - 11 – Greystone and Hart Lane
 - 10 – Spicewood Springs Road and Mesa Drive
- Of the 115 Other responses, these were the most prevalent:
- 21 – Spicewood Springs Road
 - 14 – Valburn Drive
 - 12 – Burney Drive
 - 9 – West Rim Drive

(Continued on Page 10)



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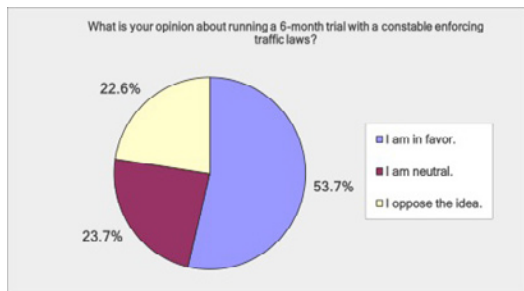
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NWACA News

(Continued from Page 8)



A question was asked about activities of bicyclists which resulted in traffic issues. While problems are often caused by drivers of cars

near the cyclists, the answers fell into these categories:

- 78 – ignoring stop signs and/or stop lights
- 32 – riding several abreast across the street
- 29 – cyclists are not a problem (or “none” as an answer)
- 20 – riding outside the bike lane, sometimes in the middle of the street
- 6 – riding in wrong direction, against traffic
- 5 – car drivers are the problem, not cyclists
- 5 – speeding, often down hills
- 4 – failing to signal
- 4 – lane splitting
- 4 – no night light and/or reflector and/or reflective clothing
- 15 – other items, with one or two citations

Keep the Leaves in Your Yard

—Joanie Arrott



All the nice rain has kept our yards lush and green, and that could mean more yard work and piles of leaves for some residents. While it may seem easy to blow or rake leaves and loose grass clippings into the street, this causes the debris to eventually wash into the storm drains. Once the leaf litter and other debris reaches the creeks, they decompose and can deplete the water of oxygen and potentially cause fish kills. Such an incident was recently reported in Matagorda Bay Nature Park, and thousands of fish died as a result.

Before stormwater runoff actually reaches a creek, it usually flows through a system of smaller ditches and drainage pipes. Austin has over 1,100 miles of such systems which includes over 900 miles of storm drains, over 30,000 inlets, and about 200 miles of drainage ditches. Leaves, trash and debris can easily clog storm drains and drainageways, causing them to back up and create localized flooding. Pollutant-laden dirt and sediment, full of weed killer and fertilizer, can also add toxins to our drinking water.

Plan ahead for any necessary yard work, and make sure to use right supplies for the job. Whether you do it, or a yard crew you hire does the work, the guidance is the same. Blow leaves back onto the grass or other vegetated areas. Or, vacuum the material instead of blowing, bagging the material for recycling during weekly brush collection. Bag yard debris in paper bags that can also be recycled. Also be cautious of solid objects that are washed into the storm drain such as trash and debris. These materials can also clog drains and cause flooding, and remember, you are responsible for polluting discharges you or those you hire create. Questions and concerns can be sent to: nwacainfo@gmail.com.



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Fire Risk Maps for NWACA Area

—Al Simmons and Joyce Statz

There are now two maps that help us as residents to understand the risk to our homes and property from wildfire or house fires near us. You can find them at www.nwaca.org Select the Resources tab, then Library, then select Wildfire Prevention from the Library Menu.

A NWACA Map of Conflagration Risk: This map shows each of the residences in NWACA, color-coded for their risk in a fire situation, based on proximity to other structures. The risk might be from a wildfire, a nearby house fire, or a fire started in the home itself. See the legend at the bottom of the map for what each of the colors represents.

A NWACA Map for WUI Response Index: This map shows an overall wildfire risk index for the NWACA area. The index values are color coded, as shown on the map legend. They are a composite of three components of fire behavior in the wildland urban interface (WUI): vegetation hazard, based on vegetation density; slope; and structure density of the area. As you can see from the temperature bar at the bottom of the map, about half of our neighborhood is at extreme or high risk in a wildfire event.

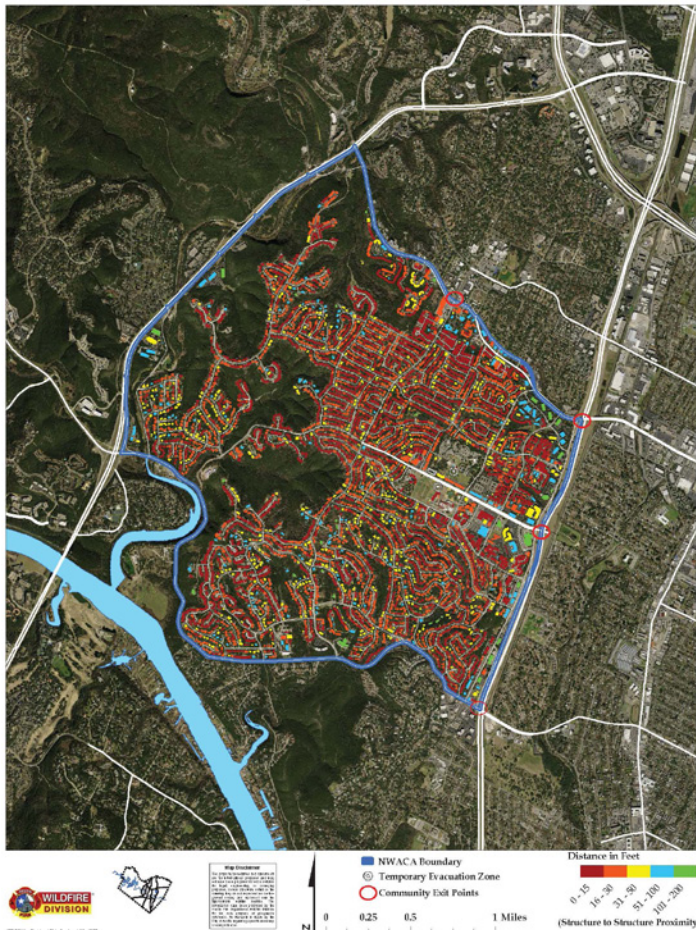
You will notice that many of the residences marked as extreme and/or high risk in both of these maps occur along the edges of the valleys in NWACA. Houses along the valleys are concentrated in very close, adjacent positions – dangerously close for transferring fires from one residence to another. The slopes at the edges of many of the valleys are generally steep enough to significantly increase the winds in that valley during a wildfire, driving the fire directly onto the properties at those edges. In addition, that high wind can drive flying wildfire embers higher into the air and further into the surrounding neighborhoods, affecting all of NWACA.

Making each residence fire-hardened is a demonstrated way to minimize wildfire risk. Ensuring that there is no flammable debris or vegetation on or within 30 feet of the residence minimizes the threat. Eliminating ladder fuels that can take fires into the crowns of trees beyond 30 feet is also necessary, if the residence is nestled within a tree-lined neighborhood. The goal is to keep the fire low to the ground, so it will burn out.

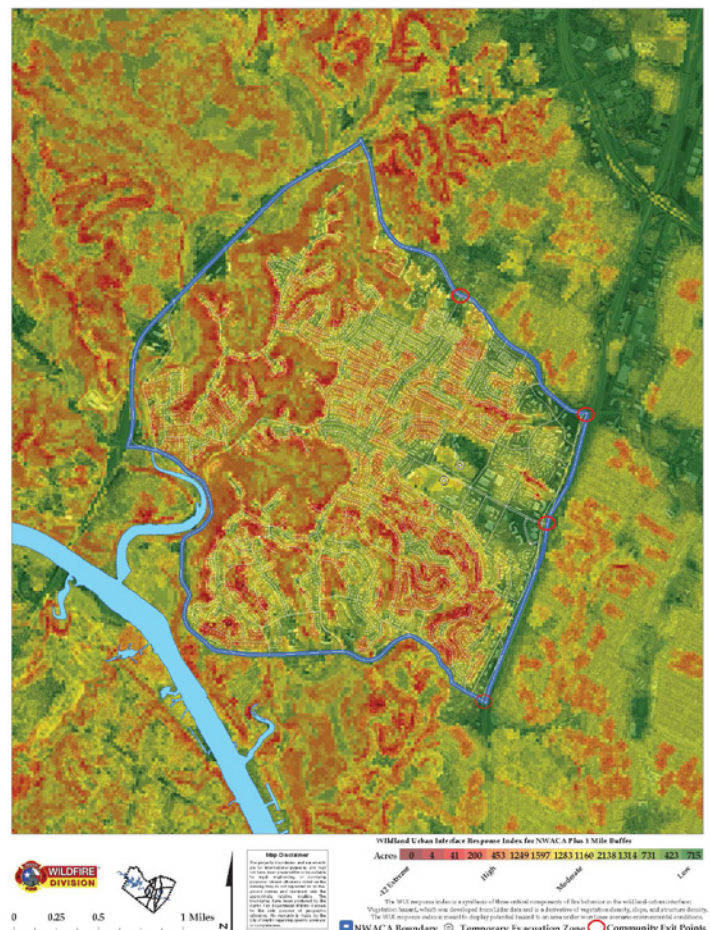
Our residents should be aware that the NWACA Wildfire

(Continued on Page 12)

NWACA Conflagration & Evacuation Map



NWACA Wildland Urban Interface Response Index Map



NWACA News

(Continued from Page 11)

Prevention Committee has been meeting with fire experts, forestry experts, and other qualified persons to explore various methods that have either been used in other locations or explored for use in our valleys and surrounding areas to protect our citizens, their properties, and our whole neighborhood. As we move through these activities, we will keep you informed.

Meanwhile, here two actions you can take now, to minimize your risks from wildfire:

- July 10 is Big Brush Pickup day for most of our area of Austin. It's a good time to clear out any dead branches, brush, and other debris that could provide fuel for a wildfire. If you are clearing out brush in a heavily treed area, be careful. This is "chigger" season and those little buggers love being in the thick brush and finding people in shorts (they bite from the ground up to above your waist, and they itch for about a week!!).

- If you haven't already done so, register your cell phone and land line for emergency alerts (voice, text, or email) at www.warncentraltexas.org. You will be informed of safety events such as severe weather, flood, and wildfire.

In the mean-time, have a great summer and enjoy the warm weather, swimming, picnicking and other fun things!

Learning About Your Property

—Ruven Brooks


How much do you know about a property you own? Do know how it is zoned? Do you know what public easements run through it? Do you know whether there are any storm water drains under it? In the past, you would pay someone else to find this kind of information, but now this information is available online from websites run by the City of Austin and other governmental units. This article is the first of several about these tools.

A good starting point is a new website from the City of Austin called the Property Profile. It's located at:


<http://www.austintexas.gov/GIS/PropertyProfile/>

To use it, wait for it to load – It takes a while before all of the buttons are available. Begin by clicking on the Address Search button in the bar across the top and entering your address. The map should zoom in to show your property.

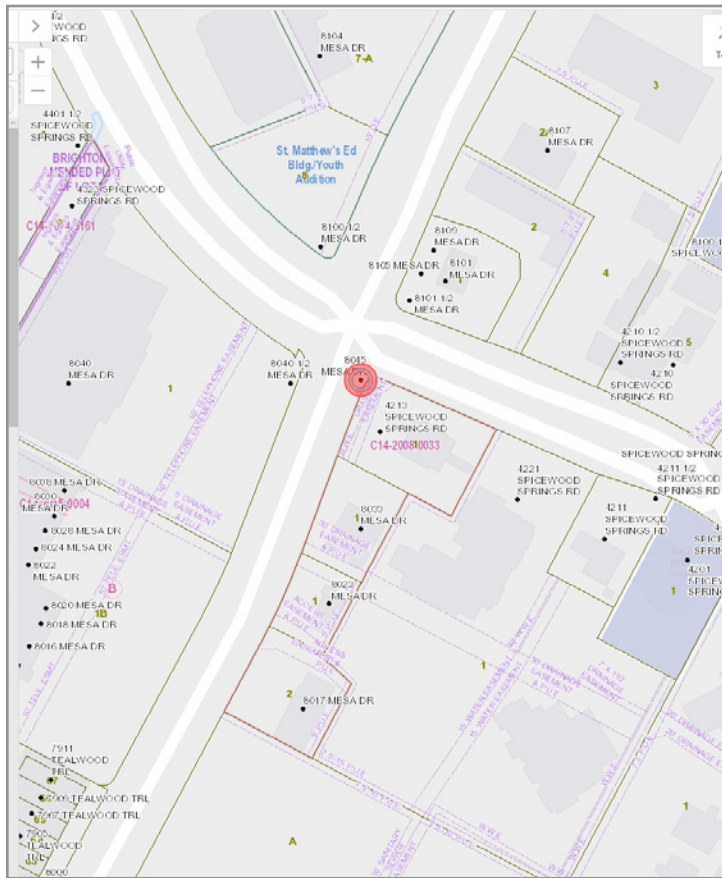
Next, click on the button in the tool bar that is labeled, "Show list of layers." What you will see is a tree of items with plus and minus signs next to each heading. If there's a square next



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to a heading, then clicking the square will cause that kind of information to appear on the map.

Property

If you expand the Property heading and then the Address information heading, you'll see check boxes next to Easement Annotation and Easement Lines. Clicking on these will show where on your property easements have been granted. In our area, these are mostly public utility easements (PUE), place where utilities have the right to use your property.

Lots and Subdivisions (under Property)

Expanding this heading will allow you to display lot and block information on the map. The same information is on your property survey but this is handier than figuring out where you put the paperwork.

Environmental

Items under this heading show whether your house is in a floodplain, whether it is in an Erosion Hazard Zone Review, a fairly common occurrence if you live near a dry creek, and other natural features such as springs, wet lands, and rock outcroppings.

Infrastructure

This is the heading you use to find out whether you have any storm sewers under your property.

Zoning

This has two headings under it, one called Zoning and the other named Overlays. The Zoning heading has subheadings for Zoning, Zoning Text, and Zoning Ordinance. Just checking the Zoning box will show you the base zoning for your property. The Zoning Text and Zoning Ordinance layers are only useful if the zoning has been changed from the original. While this layer will give you a quick look, there's actually a separate website devoted to just zoning.

If you want to get a head start, this document gives a basic introduction to current zoning: https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/zoning_guide.pdf For SF-3, the most common zoning in our area, a more detailed and up to date explanation can be found here: https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/CodeNEXT/Code101_CurrentZoningRegs.pdf

The Zoning Profile website is located here: <http://www.austintexas.gov/GIS/ZoningProfile/>



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Short Term Rental (STR) Update June 2017

—Mike Polston

We now have a summary of the status of STR legislation at the state level here in Texas. The legislature adjourned its regular session with no statewide STR laws in place. However, when the legislature reconvenes in two years, the STR legislation may come up again.

A brief summary of the 2017 STR legislation is below.

Senate Bill 451 (Business and Commerce) was passed on April 18, 2017. The votes were 26 voting Yes (seven Democrat, 19 Republican), and five voting No (four Democrat, one Republican).

House Bill 2551 was discussed in the House Committee (Urban Affairs), and it did not exit from the House Committee to the House Floor for a vote.

In the final few days of the session, an STR amendment proposed by Senator Hancock was offered on HB 2445. Hancock's amendment was:

Section 351.002, Tax Code, is amended by adding Subsection (d) to read as follows: "A municipality may not adopt or enforce an ordinance, regulation, or other measure that effectively prohibits more than 10 percent of the residential property located within the corporate boundaries of the municipality from being offered to a person under a lease, concession, right of access, license, contract, or

agreement described by Subsection (a), regardless of the homestead status of the property. [FA4] "

This requested STR amendment was not approved by the Conference Committee.

It is very clear that the STR industry has been and will continue to be very active in getting legislation that will protect them from local city control on STRs. They will continue to promote their agenda, and some of the Texas leaders believe this is a matter of "Property Rights." We should see further activity on this matter in the near future.



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