

THE RIVER REVIEW



February 2020

Volume 14, Issue 2

Photo by Mia Sanchez



NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF RIVER PLACE

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	911
Fire	911
Ambulance	911
Sheriff – Non-Emergency	512-974-0845
Hudson Bend Fire and EMS	
Emergencies	512-266-1775
Information	512-266-2533

SCHOOLS

Leander ISD	512-570-0000
Cedar Park High School	512-570-1200
Vandegrift High School	512-570-2300
Four Points Middle School	512-570-3700
River Place Elementary	512-570-6900

UTILITIES

River Place MUD	512-246-0498
City of Austin Electric	512-494-9400
Texas Gas Service	
Custom Service	1-800-700-2443
Emergencies	512-370-8609
Call Before You Dig	512-472-2822
AT&T	
New Service	1-800-464-7928
Repair	1-800-246-8464
Billing	1-800-858-7928
Time Warner Cable	
Customer Service	512-485-5555
Repairs	512-485-5080
IESI (Trash)	512-282-3508

OTHER NUMBERS

River Place Postal Office	512-345-9739
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NEWSLETTER PUBLISHER

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ARTICLE INFO

The River Review is mailed monthly to all River Place residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the River Review please email it to riverreview@peelinc.com. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

IN AND AROUND RIVER PLACE

Horned Owl Spotted in River Place: There have been multiple reports of a large horned owl spotted in River Place beginning back in mid-December. If you have small pets you may want to take some precautions if you let them out in your back yard.

Horned Owls in Texas can grow as large as almost two feet. They are known to be a consummate bird of prey and hunt primarily at night. An owl like this can most likely swoop down and pick up small animals up to about 20 pounds. Be on the lookout!

Travis County Buys 94 Acres Near 620 and Wilson Parke Ave: Near the 620 and Wilson Parke Ave. (where Chase Bank is) intersection, Travis County has purchased the SAS Institute tract of land, according to Leslee Bassman in an article in Four Points News. "According to Public Information Officer Hector Nieto, part of the tract's existing 3-story office building will be transformed into a Visitor Center for the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve, or BCP, which is partly managed by Travis County.

He said the facility will include "interpretive exhibits about the region's unique ecology and offer family-friendly educational programs."

"The grounds around the building will provide opportunities for nature viewing, hiking, education and special events," Nieto said. This sounds almost too good to be true! What an excellent addition for the Four Points area!

Vipers Lacrosse Girls Registration May Still Be Open: While practices start in February, games will be held March to May. Play will be scheduled for Sunday afternoons and Wednesdays after school. Where? Four Points Middle School, Lower Field. Register: www.ladyviperslax.net/youth-spring-registration

Defaults and Foreclosures Initiate Chapter 11 for 3M Campus: Things are not running smoothly for the sale and transfer of the local 3M property, located just across 2222 from River Place. On January 7 World Class Holdings filed Chapter 11 to avoid foreclosure on the campus by the current lender, Tuebor REIT Sub LLC, on the basis of continued payment defaults.

There have been six Chapter 11 filings since November to stave off foreclosures on World Class properties in Austin. Reportedly, back in August, World Class headquarters in downtown Austin were raided by both the FBI and The U.S. Department of Treasury.

The question remains on how all this will affect the proposed back access road planned to run from River Place Blvd. behind 3M to the Vandegrift school area.

TENNIS TIP OF THE MONTH: VOLLEY BASICS



Many of us nowadays like to hug the baseline, wearing down our opponents with deep groundstrokes and then passing them when they have the nerve to venture to the net. Practice for this style of play is simple and hitting those hard topspin crosscourts can be invigorating and confidence building. But what if you want to learn

to be a competent doubles player? Or you want more variety and aggression in your game, like when you're playing a pusher who gets every ball back until the point where you start to panic? These can be difficult times. Solution: Learn to volley effectively and move to the net to end those monotonous exchanges. Let's take a look at what we can do.

Tennis Tips:

The **correct grip** for the volley is the continental, like you're shaking hands with the racquet. The bottom of the V between your thumb and forefinger should rest on the small diagonal of the racquet handle. This allows you to hit a forehand or a backhand without changing grips, something very important for those quick responses at the net. It works great for overheads too!

The **ready position** requires you to keep your wrists up, keeping the racquet head up as a result. Your elbows should be out as if resting them on a ledge. These postures allow you to react quickly so you can hit the ball out in front of your body, creating power and angles

you wouldn't otherwise have. And doing so takes time away from your opponent as well.

To **control the swing** of your volleys, be aware of your racquet take back. If it leaves your peripheral vision while you're looking forward, you've probably taken it back too far. Step forward and across with the opposite foot if you can. This will allow you to reach out and into the shot, helping you to make good contact and add power to the stroke. Very often though, there is little time for a full step.

Try to **swing high to low** as you hit the ball to add underspin for control and to make the ball skid after it hits the opponent's court. The continental grip helps you to hit the underspin stroke from either side and, as necessary, take pace off the ball for the short, drop or angle volley.

Try to **hit approach shots aggressively**. Move forward on the short ball and slice under and through the ball to send it deep and make it skid low. Don't be afraid to use a little power (using forward body momentum) on this shot-you want depth. Then, to get in proper position, use the split step as your opponent swings to determine which direction to move toward the volley.

So there it is. You now have the volley basics to help you add a whole new dimension to your game, whether you're thinking doubles or singles. Remember though, practice does indeed make perfect and you cannot just start volleying effectively without first learning how to employ the basics covered here. But, given about 4 to 6 weeks of practicing, especially as you warm up, you may be surprised at how your game has improved!

If you have a question on these techniques, feel free to call or text me.

Walter: 512-497-9971

"Hustle and heart set us apart."

RIVER PLACE (MAYBE NOT SO) CLEVER QUIPS OF THE MONTH

The meaning of 'opaque' is unclear.

They say trying to eat your watch can be time consuming.

I was not going to get a brain transplant but then I changed my mind.

Police were called to the daycare center. A 3 year old was resisting a rest.

I used to have a fear of hurdles but I got over it.

I can't wait until I'm old enough to pretend I can't hear.

I'm sure glad it's not the old days when you had to hunt your own food. I don't even know where tacos live.

Know what you get when you combine a laxative with alphabet soup? It's called Letter Rip.

I have an eating disorder. I'm about to eat dis order of fries, dis order of wings & dis order of nuggets.

Sorry I sprayed that WD 40 in your mouth. But it did stop that noise you were making.

My doctor said, "Don't eat anything fatty." I said, "You mean like bacon?" He said, "No fatty, don't eat anything."

Boss: "Why aren't you working?" Me: "I didn't see you coming."

I pointed to two old drunks across from us and said to my friend, "That's us in 20 years." He replied, "You're pointing at a mirror."

To the teenager who shook your fist at me when I honked at you today, "Your cell phone is on top of your car."

Alternative facts are aversion of the truth.

Character is how you treat those who can do nothing for you.

Upeksha- "The price of freedom is simply choosing to be." ~ Buddha

THE GREAT OUTDOORS 6 Common Plants That Keep Bugs Away

Lavender: Moths, Fleas, Flies, Mosquitoes

Even though lavender is a smell often enjoyed by humans, lavender repels mosquitoes because mosquitoes dislike the scent lavender gives off.

Rosemary: Fleas, Ticks

Not only does Rosemary repel ticks and fleas, it will also repel flies and mosquitoes! It can also be used on your pets as a parasite repellent.

Peppermint: Spiders, Mosquitoes, Ants

The smell will keep spiders and other insects far away. You can also mix the oil with water and place in a spray bottle and spray the solution around your home.

Catnip: Mosquitoes

This perennial herb is related to mint, and grows readily both as a weed and a commercially cultivated plant in most areas of the US.

While catnip will repel mosquitoes in close proximity to the plant, some people apply crushed catnip leaves or catnip oil for more robust protection.

Marigold: Mosquitoes, Aphids

Marigolds are hardy annual plants which have a distinctive smell which mosquitoes find particularly offensive. Marigolds contain Pyrethrum, a compound used in many insect repellents.

Basil: Mosquitoes, House Flies

Plant basil around your house, Garden, or picnic areas and flies as well as mosquitoes will stay away.

BONUS

Eucalyptus Oil is a natural remedy for repelling snakes and mosquitoes.

(From theoutdoorwear)

HOMEOWNER'S CORNER: HOUSING TRENDS IN 2020

With the housing market stabilizing from the drama of the early years of home price recovery and the subsequent slowdown during 2019's home shopping season, we have a rare moment of calm to reflect on what housing might look like in the year to come.

If current trends hold, then slower means healthier and smaller means more affordable. Yes, we expect a slower market than we've become accustomed to the last few years. But don't mistake this for a buyer-friendly environment – consumers will continue to absorb available inventory and the market will remain competitive in much of the country.

Here are our bold predictions for the trends and styles that will dominate the housing market in the first year of the next decade.

The United States will NOT enter a recession in 2020

As recently as this summer, half of a panel of economic experts surveyed by Zillow said they expected a recession to come in 2020 – with another third saying they expected the economy to shrink in 2021. Ongoing trade volatility, the potential for some kind of geopolitical crisis to flare up and/or a stock market retreat from record highs were all cited as the most likely potential triggers for the next downturn...

...but it became clear as the year progressed just how resilient the U.S. economy has been to these and other economic headwinds:

- After slowing down late in the summer, consumer spending perked back up again in October and remains on a steady path.
- Healthy consumer spending is a sign of healthy consumer confidence – which, despite some modest declines lately, still remains at relatively high levels and points to continued growth in the near term.
- Employers continue to add jobs at a decent clip, and the unemployment rate is near record lows – which is helping to push wage growth up.

• After sluggish (at best) growth throughout much of the recovery following the Great Recession, wage growth has been at or above 3% per year in every month since October 2018.

Newly Built Single-Family Homes Will Continue to Shrink

After six years of uninterrupted growth through the early years of the recovery, the square footage of newly built, single-family homes began to shrink in 2016. We expect this downsizing trend to continue in 2020, driven by a confluence of economic and demographic trends. There are several 50,000-foot reasons why we expect this gentle downsizing to continue:

• Many of today's younger, millennial home buyers have expressed a preference for denser, more urban homes that are more walkable to shared amenities.

• Younger buyers are struggling to afford large homes built in prior decades

• Eco-consciousness is also growing broadly.

• Today's older homeowners are expressing a desire for smaller, less maintenance-heavy and more accessible (read: fewer stairs) homes as they age and move into newer homes. In 2019, 56% of new construction home buyers were 40 or older, according to the 2019 Zillow Group Consumer Housing Trends Report.

• Home builders are constrained by a shortage of buildable land in desirable areas. Prices on key building materials including lumber and steel are increasingly volatile. And competition for skilled construction labor is fierce, pushing wages up.

Home Value And Rent Growth Will Be Slower, More Stable and More Sustainable

Since hitting a recent high of 8.3% in December, annual growth in the median U.S. home value has been slower than the month prior in every month so far in 2019 – currently standing at 4.7% in October

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 4)

(the latest month for which data is available as of this writing). At the same time, annual rent growth – while largely stable – has crept up modestly in each month since June.

The median U.S. home value is expected to end 2020 up 2.8 percent from the end of 2019, according to the Q4 2019 Zillow Home Price Expectations Survey, a quarterly survey of more than 100 economists and experts sponsored by Zillow and conducted by Pulsenomics. That's down from the average prediction of 3.6% annual growth expected from the same panel by the end of 2019 compared to the end of 2018. Since 1996, the average annual pace of growth in the Zillow Home Value Index is 3.8%, so a slowdown from current levels would still represent a return to long-term norms.

On the rental side, annual rent appreciation has been on the rise since June and currently sits at about 2.3%. We expect this recent uptick in rental growth to continue through the start of 2020 before petering out sometime around the start of Spring. By the end of next year, we expect annual rent growth to fall below two percent, or about a half a percentage point lower than where they currently stand.

By keeping monthly mortgage payments within reach even as home prices rise, continued low mortgage interest rates will help ensure that rent growth doesn't again reach the highs experienced just a few years ago. Low rates will encourage more renters to pursue homeownership, further boosting overall homeownership rates that have been on the rise since 2016.

Mortgage Rates Will Stay Low, Keeping Housing Demand High
Mortgage rates fell markedly in 2019, and are expected to remain near their current, relatively low levels for the bulk of 2020. Softening GDP growth and investment, continued global weakness due in part to the U.S.-China trade conflict, and below-target inflation will continue to hold rates in check. Barring marked improvements in these indicators, the Fed will have no reason to return to rate hikes. If low mortgage rates persist, this will keep home purchase demand strong and continue to fuel decent price growth in the nation's most broadly affordable markets. In those high-priced markets, buyers will continue to fan out in search of more affordable areas.

Color Will Make a Comeback

Goodbye, Hygge (look it up). Hello, color! Fun will return to home design in the form of bold prints, lively wallpaper and brightly hued walls. After a decade of Scandinavian modern design that dominated retail and social media feeds as Americans embraced neutrals, minimalism and clutter-free living, expect a shift toward playful, creative design.

Look for color to be injected in unexpected ways in kitchen cabinetry and appliances, in lighting fixtures and on interior doors and moldings.

Home Sales will climb slightly and slowly

After bottoming out in January 2010 during the depths of the housing crash, overall annual U.S. existing home sales didn't consistently top 5 million until late 2014. By late 2016, a growing number of first-time home buyers drove the annualized rate of national home sales to bounce around 5.5 million for over a year.

But by spring 2018, things started to turn down again: The seasonalized annual sales rate dropped back to 5 million by December 2018, and the impact of rising mortgage rates and the increasing difficulty in saving for an adequate down payment were the talk of the town. As sales pulled back, available inventory started to swell and what had been aggressive home value appreciation began to slow. But 2019 brought another swing. Home value growth continued to soften, but mortgage rates came back down, what inventory that had accumulated was quickly scooped up and home sales rebounded. Looking ahead at 2020, we think home sales will continue to climb, but slowly. Why?

- Although a small fraction of overall sales, new homes sales grew significantly in 2019. That has helped buoy builder confidence and lead to some of the most robust permit and starts numbers in a long time.

- Yes, inventory is tight – but when we say that, we're really talking about the number of homes available to buy relative to demand from buyers. Sales can remain strong while inventory remains tight – and a sudden jump in the number of sales will result in a corresponding drop in inventory.

- What really matters is the flow of homes onto the market – the turnover or velocity of home sales, not months' supply or overall level of available inventory, that constrains home sales numbers.

- And we have reason to believe that turnover among a given segment of homeowners will be made more possible now in a way that it wasn't before. iBuyer business models, like Zillow Offers, are ultimately about lowering sellers' transaction costs. Economics 101 says that lowering transaction costs and making transactions themselves easier will mean those transactions will happen more often. (Article from Zillow, by Skylar Olsen, Dec. 2019)

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THE ORIGIN OF *Valentine's Day*

Many folks might think that Valentine's Day is just one of those Hallmark ideas created to sell cards and candy. But the legend is actually a bit more involved than that.

Did you know that Valentine's Day has a rather dark but lovely origin? As it's been told, back in the 3rd Century AD, Emperor Claudius II had banned marriage for soldiers because he felt married men, because of their family interests, made poor soldiers.

A priest though, named St. Valentine, disagreed with the emperor and secretly arranged marriages for soldiers, obviously going against the law of the land in those days. Eventually St. Valentine was found out and sentenced to jail and ultimately to death.

St. Valentine, while in jail, was served his meals by the jailer's daughter and surprisingly, because of her kindness and good heart, fell in love with her. When he was executed on the 14th of February, he managed to forward a note to her that said, "from your Valentine."

Happy Valentine's Day!

HEALTH AND WELLNESS 6 TIPS TO HELP YOU DRINK MORE WATER

Drinking water is not only good but absolutely necessary for a healthy body and mind. Although the benefits of being sufficiently hydrated are great, such as a healthier stomach and skin, weight loss and better control over diabetes, most people aren't able to consume the required amount of water. Many doctors recommend drinking 80 ounces (gulp) each day. Let us take a look at some tricks to make this a bit easier.

#1 Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Infusion

Try and mix it up a little! Instead of drinking plain water, try drinking differently flavored water every day. All you have to do is leave a few orange rinds or cucumber slices in a jar of water overnight. In the morning, you can have a cold and delicious glass of flavored water. What's more, certain kinds of infusion – like mint and lemon are believed to boost weight loss.

#2 Use a (paper) Straw

This may sound strange... but drinking from a straw actually helps drink faster! Before you know it, you will have finished your calculated water intake for the day. Remember to use paper and not plastic straws, so as to reduce your environmental impact.

#3 Keep a Water Bottle While Commuting

Since many of us spend a fair number of hours commuting, having a bottle of water handy ensures you never go thirsty while being on the move, especially in hot weather. Remember to use a reusable bottle to cut down on plastic wastage.

#4 Make a Water Wager

Gang up with your friends, co-workers and gym mates and set up shared calendars to ensure you are all on the same page. You can make it more interesting by making wagers – for example, the person who drinks the least treats everyone else to a meal!

#5 Get a High-Tech Water Bottle

If you want to monitor your water intake in detail, opt for a smart water-bottle. Some of those available on the market record the amount sip or drink and send the data to your cell phone through an app. They even glow to tell you to drink more water and the apps give information about your water-drinking habits.

#6 Sip Water Before Meals

It is generally considered good practice to drink a bit of water before every meal, since you tend to feel a little full and that, in turn, stops you from overeating. Drinking a glass about half an hour before a meal is also believed to aid digestion. (From Stay Healthy Mag)



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Jenny is running to be your next State Rep and hopes to earn your vote in the Republican Primary.

Jenny is for:

- ★ Limited Government
- ★ Low Taxes
- ★ Pro-Business Policies
- ★ Transportation Solutions that Increase Road Capacity Immediately

Jenny has the experience and background to get the job done:

- ✓ Former small business owner
- ✓ Attorney
- ✓ Native Austinite and lifelong Travis County resident
- ✓ Former Congressional staffer
- ✓ Foreign Affairs degree from Georgetown University and Juris Doctorate from Baylor Law

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Early Voting: February 18-28, 2020

Election Day: March 3, 2020

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