



THE MUELLER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

the FRONT PORCH FLYER



A COVID JULY 4TH
in Mueller



Home Decorating
Contest
Participation
Award
- Nancy Riley



Engine 14 by Woody Lauland



Home Decorating Contest Participation Award
- Danielle Bryant



July 4th Procession
by Taylor Youngblood



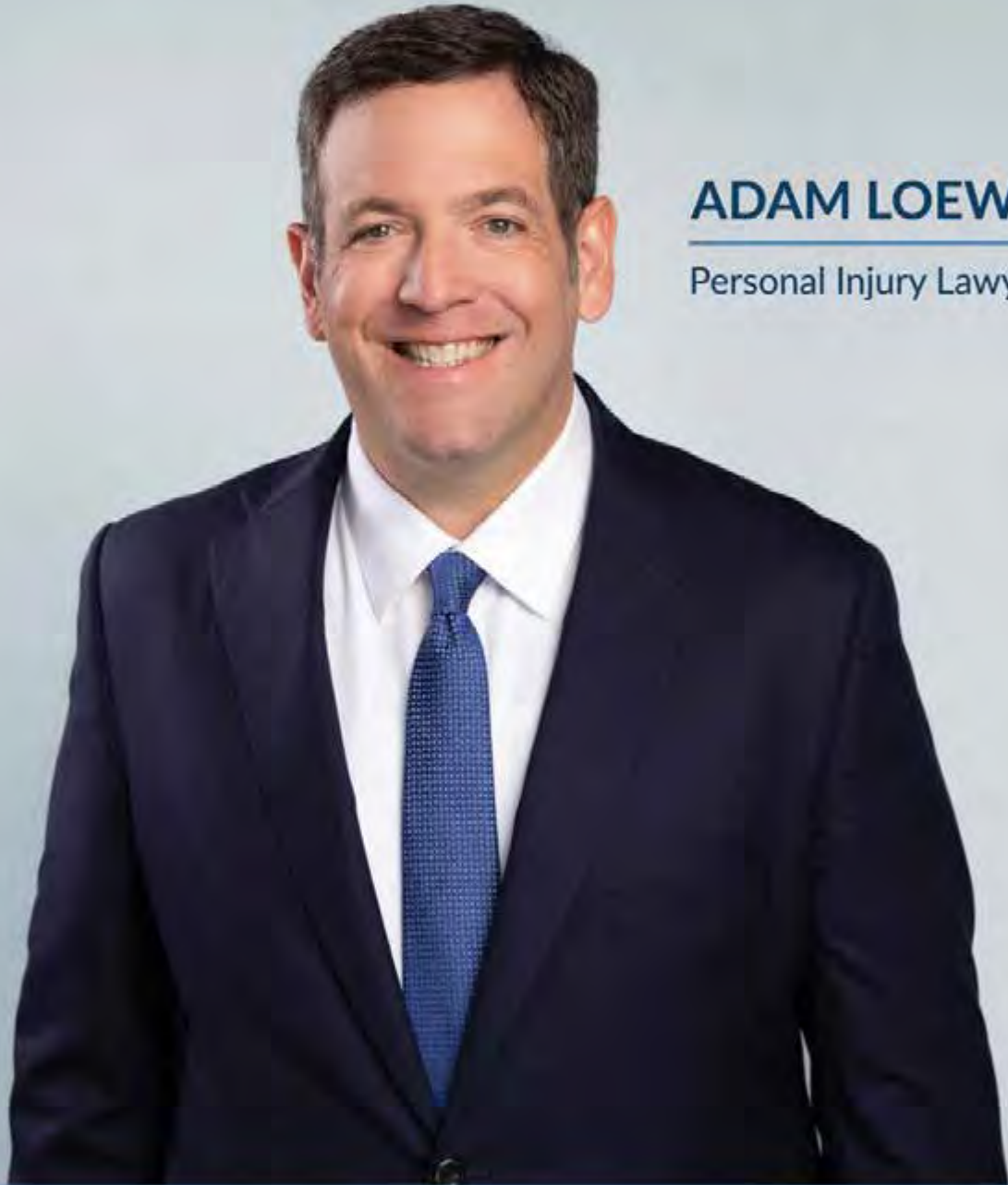
Home Decorating Contest 1st Place
- Snow White



Home Decorating Contest Participation Award
- Yeeland Chen



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Injuries to Children | Motorcycle Accidents | Slip and Falls | Truck Accidents | Wrongful Death



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Dear Neighbors,

COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the Austin area as I write this letter and local leaders are now weighing further closures and elevating the region’s risk level based on public health risk guidelines. The surge in cases indicates the need for each of us to do what we can to prevent the spread of this disease.

Back in May’s Front Porch Flyer, I stressed how important it was to be a good neighbor. If anything, recent events have only seemed to amplify that call to action. As a community, we must stand in solidarity with one another and be responsible in the ways we respond to this pandemic. Please, follow the guidelines set forth by our local, state, and federal public health authorities. Choose to be a good neighbor.

Take care,
John Wooding

What is Impervious Cover and Why Do We Care?

By Bill Kirwin

*“Don’t it always seem to go
That you don’t know what you’ve got
Till it’s gone
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot”*

-Joni Mitchell

Joni’s 1970 description of impervious cover in the song “Big Yellow Taxi” is much more eloquent than the following definition (and is thought to be referring to Hawaii): “Impervious cover means a surface composed of any material that significantly impedes or prevents natural infiltration of water into soil. Impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, roofs, buildings, streets, parking areas, and any concrete, asphalt, or compacted gravel surface.” (Uncovered wooden decks and unpaved portions of driveways count as 50% impervious cover.)

The amount of impervious cover in an urban setting can greatly affect the amount of rainwater run-off that ends up in our streams, rivers, and lakes. Water quality in a geographic area generally starts to become impaired when impervious land cover increases. This leads to pollution and riverbank deterioration of our waterways.

To help mitigate this run-off, the City of Austin has set maximum impervious cover restrictions on typical residential development within the city limits. Depending on the zoned lot type these limits are currently set from 40% for “single family-1” classification up to 65% for “multifamily-3” classification.

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FRONT PORCH FLYER

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However, the Mueller Development Agreement includes the use of housing types that don't fit into the typical residential lot zoning classifications. The design principles for Mueller follow a "New Urbanism" approach that among other things features smaller lot sizes. Due to this, it isn't possible to achieve the construction of a typically sized house and also meet the impervious cover limits set for residential lots in Austin.

This table lists the Mueller housing types and the established impervious cover limitations for each:

- Yard Homes – Max 75%
- Garden Homes – Max 75%
- Garden (zero lot line) Houses – Max 75%
- Row Homes/Shop Homes – Max 95%
- Clustered Row Homes – Max 95%
- Mueller Houses – Max 75%
- Apartments/Mixed-use Buildings – Max 90%

As you can see, the allowable impervious limits are greater than what is set for typical Austin residential lots.

So, how are we doing our part in the effort to control the amount of run-off entering our streams and rivers? One answer is in the Mueller Southwest, Southeast, Northwest Greenways, and in Lake Park. The perimeter Greenways total approximately 75 acres of land and have been developed as broad parkways that provide a strong visual edge and abundant recreational opportunities.

The greenways also play an important environmental and ecological role, detaining and filtering stormwater before it re-enters the natural creek systems of the area and providing a rich habitat for birds and wildlife. In addition to the perimeter Greenways, the 35-acre Mueller Lake Park is designed to retain up to a 100-year flood event and allow for the slow release of excess water.

Another way to do our part is to be certain that any improvements to your lot or house result in a total impervious cover that is below the limits as shown in the table above. If an improvement requires a City of Austin Building Permit and/or a Mueller modifications approval, the calculation of impervious cover will be evaluated when the project is reviewed.

The rain that falls on our 700-acre piece of paradise that isn't absorbed into the ground makes its way to one of the perimeter greenways and Lake Park to be slowed down, filtered and released gently on down the stream.

Virtual Game Night

By Koreena Malone, Block 103 Captain

During this pandemic, many people are attempting to navigate the ongoing dilemma of staying connected or reconnecting as a community when we can't be within six feet of our neighbors. Reframing social distancing to include social interaction is a constant battle.

I attempted to integrate physical distancing with social interaction in a familiar ritual many families are doing these days - game night. Block 103 has eight buildings with four homes per building, a total of 32 homes. What would game night look like for families that have shared walls but couldn't be within six feet of each other?

On Saturday, May 15, 2020, block 103 had our very first virtual game night. Save the date flyers were delivered on May 1st and May 7th, promising four different game options and pre-packaged snacks and drinks to be delivered to families' front doors.



The game options families could choose from included a crossword puzzle framed around Mueller neighborhood facts, virtual Bingo, a Scrabble®-like word puzzle centered on the word "community," or any other game a family chose.

Six families participated with game night. Five families played virtual Bingo and one family chose the crossword puzzle. In total, ten people participated in Bingo as all family members were welcomed. Bingo required each player to make a grid with 16 boxes on a piece of paper. I used a random number generator to call the numbers and four in a row won.

Prizes included a \$10 HEB gift card for each Bingo game and a \$15 gift card for the crossword puzzle. Pre-packaged snacks like popcorn, oatmeal cream pies, crackers, cookies, and Italian soda were delivered to each family that day.

"It was fun and next time we need to get more neighbors included." – Block 103 family member

Cinderblock Backyard Gardening at Mueller

By Drew Harris

The Front Porch Flyer is profiling various backyard gardens in Mueller. If you are interested in sharing your garden, please email fpf@muellercommunity.org.

Like many of my Mueller neighbors, I decided to make use of my extra time at home during the quarantine to learn to garden.

Start Easy with Potted Plants

Before you commit a patch of your backyard as a dedicated garden, try using pots or other containers. Containers are much easier for starting out, as you don't need to worry about weeds or spacing. You can test out different spots in your yard to see how well your plant handles the sun or shade.

To get started, I went to Home Depot and bought various pepper, mint, basil, and rosemary seedlings. I also bought some pots and potting soil, and then set up the small container garden in the first photo.



For a Cheap Raised Garden Bed, Use Cinderblocks

When my potted plants began to thrive, I decided to take it more seriously with a raised garden bed. Aside from looking nicer, raised garden beds help with draining and avoiding soil erosion, as well as keeping weeds and pests away.

While there are various raised wooden garden beds that easily cost over \$100, a more economical approach is using cheap cinderblocks to frame your raised garden area. I bought all the cinderblocks for less than \$10. I dug up the grass, laid out the blocks, filled the area with garden soil, and then transferred my potted plants to the raised area.

The bell peppers and jalapeños thrived in the raised garden, while the mint (which, if unchecked, can grow into a spreading invasive pest) was successfully contained to a cinderblock cell. Eventually, I hope to have each of the cells (even the small ones) growing a separate plant.



In a short time, I went from a dull backyard, just of dirt and grass, into a small but fruitful cinderblock herb garden. I grew fresh rosemary for flavoring grilled steaks, and fresh mint to serve with fruit as a summer treat. Here are the steps I took and the lessons I learned.

Regular Watering Is Key

But planning and building the garden was little effort compared to the almost-daily watering I had to do for my plants to survive the Texas summer heat. Near the cinderblock garden, I planted zucchini seeds on the side of my house. With constant watering, the seeds quickly (over two weeks) blossomed into large flowering plants. But after neglecting to water them for two blistering sunny days, they quickly shriveled and have produced no edible food.



Right now my cinderblock garden is small, but I'm inspired by the more established examples found in the community gardens in Patterson Park. These impressive gardens show that you don't need a large wooden structure to have a successful raised garden. Best of luck with your gardening efforts!





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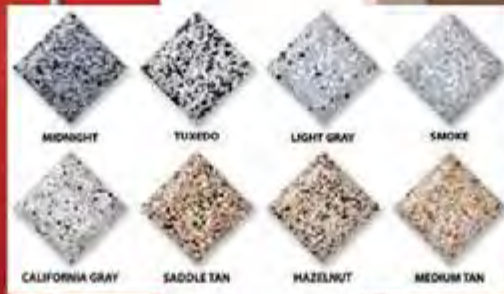
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