



Above: A jazz trio — Justin Oldham on bass, Danny Reyes on drums and local guitarist Keith Hasselbach — entertains neighbors on Kerrybrook. See story **PAM** on page 10
Photo courtesy of Pamela Ferguson

Left: An uplifting chalk art message on a neighborhood fence.
Photo courtesy of Amelia Cobb

Staying neighborly despite changes wrought by coronavirus pandemic

By Sharon Justice, newsletter editor

The coronavirus pandemic seems to be changing almost everything, and this newsletter is no exception. It is arriving by mail rather than being distributed by our neighborhood volunteers. In a superabundance of caution, we chose to use the US Postal Service for this issue.

I want to assure all our delivery volunteers that we love and appreciate you. We hope that, when our September issue is ready, we can go back to our traditional door-to-door delivery.

Stay-at-home orders and social distancing make it more difficult to maintain neighborhood connections, but human ingenuity has a way of finding its way past obstacles. We begin this issue with photos showing some of the creative means neighbors have found to brighten up our lives and inject a bit of humor into our neighborhood despite the pandemic. The theme continues on page 3 with the debut of Pam Ferguson's new reg-

ular column of neighborhood observations, "Pedaling Around With Pam."

We also want this issue to remind North Shoal Creek residents that our neighborhood association, while currently "hibernating" until we can resume group meetings and events, is otherwise alive and working. Our association's greatest need is for more volunteers, to help with the events that NSCNA sponsors and to serve on association committees. We hope that reading Lyrica Johnson's piece on page 11 — which describes what her neighborhood volunteer work has meant to her — will inspire you to join our association.

Finally, in addition to reports on restaurant closings (page 8) and our real estate update (page 11), we summarize what's happening with the Land Development Code rewrite (page 4) and describe new projects affecting Pillow Elementary School (pages 6 and 7). We hope you enjoy this issue.

Neighborhood News June 2020

A quarterly newsletter of the North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association (NSCNA)

Editor: Sharon Justice

Contributors: Amelia Cobb, Amy Culbertson, Donna Eagar, Pamela Ferguson, Anna Hobbs, Lyrica Johnson and Kenneth Webb.

Color edition of newsletter available at www.nscna.org.

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The panoramas at 'the Pink House' on Rockwood change often but all have one thing in common: They're hand-made by homeowners Anna Hobbs and Randy Hidalgo.

Left: The Easter "Peeps" show.
Photo courtesy of Anna Hobbs

Right: A heartfelt thank-you to essential workers
Photo courtesy of Pamela Ferguson



Above: A new neighbor — his name is Cluck Kent — takes up residence in a front yard on Briarwood.
Photo courtesy of Gayle Rodriguez-Castillo

Right: One of a line of socially distanced and properly masked flamingoes on Briarwood.
Photo/caption courtesy of Pamela Ferguson



Finding ways to connect in a time of uncertainty

By Pamela Ellen Ferguson, Kerrybrook



Pedaling Around With Pam

Editor's note: Longtime resident Pam Ferguson is the kind of person who puts the "neighbor" in neighborhood. There are few folks in North Shoal Creek unacquainted with Pam, who can often be seen pedaling about the neighborhood on her yellow bike. We're very pleased that she has agreed to write a column for our newsletter, sharing her observations and her takes on neighborhood life. Pam has authored 10 books published in the United States and Europe and is currently working on her memoirs, titled "Cornish Cactus." Her website is www.pamelaferguson.net. Email her at Pamelacudot@gmail.com.

Our North Shoal Creek neighbors are finding new ways to connect and entertain themselves during this time of isolation due to concerns about the coronavirus pandemic.

I find it wonderful to see so many folks cycling and walking the neighborhood with dogs and kids, or on solo rambles. I meet a splendid array of old and new friends as I pedal my yellow bike between Burnet and West Anderson, relishing the cleaner air and minimalized traffic. I've enjoyed seeing neighbors play ping-pong in their front gardens or hold candlelight dinners on their patios or craft chalk art with messages of hope along sidewalks.

Neighbors are coming up with clever ideas to give walkers and cyclists interesting things to look at. Anna Hobbs and Randy Hidalgo's seasonal yard displays are a neighborhood tradition at the Pink House on Rockwood, and this spring's colorful Easter bunnies drew lots of visitors. And did you spot the lineup of masked flamingoes in a Briarwood yard close to Ashdale? Or the huge thank you sign outside the Pink House?

Several households in the neighborhood are participating in the nationwide Teddy Bear Hunt, placing stuffed animals in their windows for children to spy while walking by. (There's a listing of Austin participants, organized by neighborhood, here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X4MCsUXqIF4Mz9vKsEVBEUTX4arPo-kdxPaSKcr8U98/mobilebasic>).

To support local businesses, several of us are shopping loyally and well masked at Fresh Plus and other local businesses, or ordering take-out from local favorites such as San Francisco Bakery, El Dorado, Le Bleu, Sugar Pine and ShuShu, among others — and the owners are so appreciative.

See PAM, page 10



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City loses development code rezoning case, council votes to appeal ruling to state court

by Sharon Justice

The city is appealing a judge's March ruling that Austin property owners whose land was rezoned by the revised Land Development Code were illegally denied their right to protest the rezoning. Until the appeal is heard, however, the city must abide by the ruling.

After Travis County District Judge Jan Soifer ruled against the city on March 18, seven Austin City Council members voted April 9 to appeal. Council members Alison Alter, Ann Kitchen, Leslie Pool and Kathie Tovo voted against appealing.

Judge Soifer found that the city failed to give proper notice to property owners whose property was rezoned by the revised code and to property owners within 200 feet of rezoned properties. The ruling also voided council's votes on the first and second reading of the revised code, for failure to give the required statutory notice of the Planning Commission's public hearing. You can read the ruling at this link: <https://communitynotcommodity.com/wp-content/uploads/Acuna-v-COA-Final-Judgment.pdf>.

Judge Soifer's ruling remains in effect until the Texas Third Court of Appeals hears the case and issues its ruling, which could be a year or more. In the meantime, the City of Aus-

tin must abide by the March 18 ruling.

Here is what this means for Austin property owners:

- You have the right to protest the rezoning of your property and the rezoning of other properties within 200 feet of your property. The City of Austin must accept your protest.
- If you have already submitted protests against your property's rezoning or that of neighboring properties, your protests remain valid.
- If you haven't filed a protest but want to, go to **FileYourProtest.com**. Protests can be filed up to one week before the city council takes its final vote on the plan.

Why protest the rezoning of nearby properties? Because, when owners of at least 20% of the properties within 200 feet of the property to be rezoned protest, then a minimum of nine council members must vote in favor of the rezoning for it to be held valid. This applies even when the owner of the property to be rezoned supports its rezoning. It also applies to residential, commercial and industrial rezoning.

FileYourProtest.com can be used for these protests as well.

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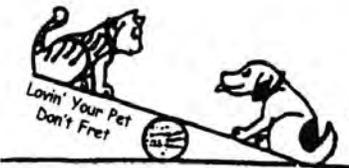
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City programs aim for safer, slower, healthier streets

By Sharon Justice

The City of Austin is looking at several approaches to make streets safer and more suited to residents' current needs.

Safe Routes to School Program

The city's Safe Routes to School Program aims to make it easier for students to safely walk and bike between home and school. The 2016 Mobility Bond included \$27.5 million for this program, divided equally among all 10 city council districts.

The good news is that Austin Public Works recently issued needs assessments of schools citywide. The bad news is the list contains 4,654 recommendations totaling \$825 million, so how far District 7's \$2.75 million will go in addressing Pillow Elementary's needs is anyone's guess.

Pillow improvements suggested in the assessment include adding sidewalks to North Shoal Creek streets that lack them and crossing improvements for Burnet at both Buell and Rockwood. Crosscreek is up for curb extensions, more lighting and signage, plus speed cushions between Shoal Creek and Rockwood. Protected bike lanes are included for Steck and a bike sidepath for Rockwood. You can see a map of the proposed improvements at <https://>

austintexas.gov/SafeRoutes. Click on the Safe Routes to School Improvement Projects link, then search the map for Pillow.

Slower streets

In an effort to reduce speeding and to lower traffic fatalities and serious injuries, Austin's Transportation Department has recommended that speed limits throughout downtown and on neighborhood streets less than 36 feet wide be dropped from 30 to 25 mph. Burnet Road's 40-mph speed limit would drop to 35 mph. The Urban Transportation Commission unanimously approved the proposal May 15; now it moves to City Council for approval June 11.

For more information, please see the Transportation Department's slide presentation — *Speed Management Briefing: Recommended Speed Limit Modifications for Urban Core, Residential, and Downtown Streets* — at this link: <http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=340469>.

Healthy Streets Initiative

With a goal of allowing residents to walk, run or bike while

See **STREETS**, page 10

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Pillow Park Project will add shade to school grounds

By Amy Culbertson

Coming soon: the greening of Pillow Park.

A collaborative project will be turning the Pillow Elementary School grounds in the heart of North Shoal Creek into a tree-studded park that will serve not only the school but the neighborhood.

Pillow and the Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center are the main players in the project, with grant support from the St. David's Foundation. Also lending support and input are the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin, the University of Texas Austin, Tree Folks, Camp Gladiator, Austin Independent School District and the City of Austin.

The final piece of the puzzle is you: Project coordinators are seeking input from North Shoal Creek residents on what neighbors want in a neighborhood park.

The project's collaborators have agreed on a few guidelines, according to Pillow Parent Support Specialist Raul Vallejo, who is coordinating the project on the campus level: The park must be sustainable and low-maintenance in terms of upkeep. You won't see elaborate landscaping or much additional hardscape (current structures and hardscape will remain).

Take the park survey: To add your input on what you'd like to see at Pillow Park, please take the survey at <https://westcave.org/pillowparksurvey>.

You will see more trees, many of them substantial, shading communal seating on limestone block benches. Vallejo says the goal is to provide naturalistic outdoor learning spaces that can be used not only by Pillow students but by community youth groups, families and the whole of the neighborhood.

Other possibilities include walk-through learning gardens and pieces by Austin artists. But, "by all means, we're open to other ideas," Vallejo said.

The pandemic has pushed back Pillow's timeline, so gathering and consolidation of input will continue over the summer, with trees and seating to be installed in fall.

In the works is an interactive map with drag-and-drop icons allowing users to virtually design the park configurations they'd find most appealing. Vallejo hopes to see that

See PARK PROJECT, page 10



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I value the relationships I have made in the North Shoal Creek area as an agent and neighbor. Now it is more important than ever for our community to stick together! I'm here to help if you have questions about how the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting Real Estate in our neighborhood. Please contact me!

Check out my Instagram video on how I show and sell homes in the age of COVID! www.instagram.com/atxagent/

Two popular local restaurants closing for good

By Amy Culbertson

Two restaurants popular with North Shoal Creek diners have announced they won't be reopening.

-- **Veracruz All Natural**, source of superior breakfast tacos and other Mexican specialties at 9003 Waterford Centre Boulevard since 2017, will be torn down for a condo development. Machine Head Coffee, which had a counter inside Veracruz, will be looking for a new home in the area, but there is unfortunately no indication that the owners of Veracruz will be seeking another North Austin site.

-- Owners Robert and Mary Martinez will not be reopening the Tex-Mex stalwart **Enchiladas y Mas** at 1911 W. Anderson Lane. They had already planned to close in June to retire. The Martinezes noted in a Facebook post, however, that family members are exploring the possibility of buying the business and reopening.

Also closing permanently is **Chocolaterie Tessa**, the boutique chocolate shop at 7425 Burnet Road, another casualty of the pandemic.

A food hall for takeout

Though most restaurant openings have been put on hold during the pandemic, one new entry in the carryout and delivery market is uniquely suited to the current climate. It's **United Kitchen Mix**, a "cloud kitchen" concept

providing commercial kitchen space to autonomous local and national restaurant brands at 8023 Burnet Road in Wooten.

Assistant general manager Bridgette Gracia says the building has kitchen space for some 18 restaurants; customers will be able to order from any or all of them, mix-and-match-style, at www.kitchenunited.com/. At press time, Hawaiian Bros. Island Grill — a fledgling Kansas City chain serving a Hawaiian plate-lunch menu heavy on marinated and grilled chicken — was up and running, with dim sum, Indian, chicken sandwich, burger and hot dog concepts to follow shortly, she said. You can pick up your food curbside or at a kiosk in the lobby or have it brought to you through the major delivery apps.

One of the kitchens will be occupied by Keep Austin Fed, a community nonprofit that distributes surplus food, and Gracia said space will also be available to established Austin restaurants struggling to sustain a brick-and-mortar home.

Former restaurant critic and food editor Amy Culbertson writes about restaurant openings and other dining news of interest to the neighborhood. Send information and tips on openings and closings to her at newsletter@nscna.org, with the subject line OPENINGS.

NORTH SHOAL CREEK REAL ESTATE UPDATE

Statistics from 2/16/20 till 5/15/20 per Austin MLS

Smaller Homes 1278 – 1361 square feet

- # homes sold: 3
- Avg. # days of the market: 2
- Avg. square footage: 1320
- Avg. sold price per sq. ft.: \$314.
- Avg. sold price: \$414,720

Larger Homes 1619 -1754 square feet

- # homes sold: 3
- Avg. # days on the market: 44
- Avg. square footage: 1691
- Avg. sold price per sq. ft.: \$306.67
- Avg. sold price: \$518,283

Current inventory remains low with only 2 active listings for sale from \$365,000 to \$499,000 and 1 home pending listed for \$400,000



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I'm celebrating my 30th year as a Realtor in our neighborhood this year. 2020 is a challenging year globally but our little pocket of the world here in North Shoal Creek seems to be holding steady on pricing. Interest rates have not been this low in 40 years making our central north Austin area homes just as desirable as ever. Should you have a desire to sell your home, purchase another one or invest, I am always just a phone call away and would love the opportunity to discuss your real estate needs with you. Stay safe out there!

Austinites affected by pandemic can apply for help on utility bills from the City of Austin

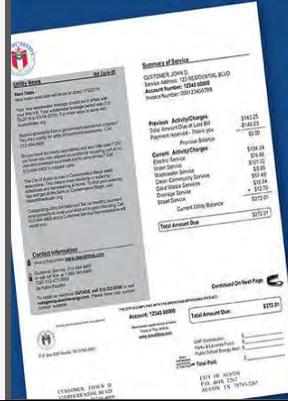
Concerns about financial hardship from the COVID-19 pandemic have prompted the City of Austin to expand eligibility requirements for its Emergency Financial Support Plus 1 Program.

Customers are eligible for financial assistance if they (or a member of their household) have experienced a financial hardship, loss of job or reduction in income related to COVID-19. This includes financial hardships based on illness, caring for a family member, shelter-in-place orders and the resulting closure of nonessential businesses, as well as school closures.

To apply, you can either fill out an application online at austinbillhelp.com or call toll-free at 512-765-9721.

You will need **one of the following**:

- 1) **Proof of having applied for un-employment benefits**, in the form of either an approved unemployment claim from the Texas Workforce Commission or an application of unemployment claim from the Texas Workforce Commission.
- 2) **Or a recent pay stub** as proof of employment, plus **any one** of the following: communication from your employer about layoff or reduction in hours; confirmation of business closure, through a website or letter from your employer; or other reasonable documentation to show financial hardship or eligibility.



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PAM Continued from page 3

But — modern jazz on Kerrybrook?

I know many of you have met local guitarist Keith Hasselbach, as he walks our 'hood daily. Knowing he plays guitar, I invited him to give a mini-concert on our block. He brought bass player Justin Oldham and drummer Danny Reyes along for a full jazz trio.

I had spread the word to neighbors; on a fine Saturday evening in May, the trio set up on the Murpheys' slab mid-block on Kerrybrook. Some of us dragged our chairs to our driveways and front yards, while others set up folding chairs on the street. Yes, we all were careful to maintain healthy social distances of several feet.

We were blessed by beautiful weather. Couples and kids floated down from Stillwood, Donna Gail and Thrushwood to enjoy the music, a mix of modern jazz and bebop, from standards like Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are," to Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" and "Donna Lee" (made famous by Charlie Parker) to Wayne Shorter's "Footprints." Folks driving by paused to snap photos. A donation box allowed listeners to chip in to help support the musicians.

(Keith says he'll be happy to bring a trio to your block; his email is khasselbach@yahoo.com, and his website is <https://soundcloud.com/keith-hasselbach>.)

Gardening is another way many of us have been spending our shutdown time. Our household has been gardening with a frenzy. Several bins of invasive hackberry are hauled off every Thursday. We were sad to find that two of our hanging flowering baskets were stolen from a front-yard patch between my cacti. One vanished on Mother's Day. I can only hope it brought joy to someone's mama!

I wonder if it's the same person who dragged off our huge ceramic turtle last year. I've filled the space with an odd-looking hanging plant and masked it just to see if this tempts the scoundrels to take a fourth shot. Keep tuned.

Free drive-through public testing for COVID-19 is now available

No-cost drive-through COVID-19 testing is available at local Austin Public Health facilities for those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. You can use this free online assessment tool to pre-register and to schedule testing for you or a loved one: https://covid19.austintexas.gov/s/?language=en_US.

Please note: Testing sites are drive-through only. If you need to be tested and do not have access to a vehicle, please call the CommUnity Care COVID-19 Hotline at 512-978-8775 or go to the CommUnity Care FAQs page at <https://communitycaretx.org/coronavirus-updates/>

STREETS Continued from page 6

still maintaining safe physical distances from one another, Austin City Council on May 7 approved a resolution creating the Healthy Streets Initiative. The initiative allows some local streets to be closed temporarily to through traffic while still allowing local access to residents, deliveries and emergency vehicles.

The program is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed many aspects of how residents live and move throughout Austin. The initiative launched on May 21 with "soft closures" consisting of signs, traffic cones and barricades along three roadway segments in South Austin.

If you live on a street without sidewalks, especially one like Primrose or Ashdale that gets a lot of cut-through traffic, you might consider recommending your street for closure. You can do that, and find more information on the program, at <http://www.austintexas.gov/HealthyStreets>

PARK PROJECT Continued from page 7

online in June; meantime, you can follow updates on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/3SYDyur1pKI>), Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/pillowparkproject/>, @pillowparkproject), Facebook's Pillow Park Project page (<https://www.facebook.com/Pillow-Park-Project-104530104533360/>) and Twitter (@pillowparkproj). The project committee can be reached at PillowParkProject@gmail.com; if you'd like to play a more hands-on part in the planning process, email Raul.vallejo@austinisd.org.

Fence art for Pillow's 50th

To celebrate Pillow Elementary's 50th anniversary, art teacher Suzy Swingle is spearheading a project to decorate the fence around the school. Any individual, family or group may design and decorate a panel, starting at the Rockwood-Crosscreek corner and proceeding along Rockwood. To ensure social distancing, **Swingle has designated every other panel to be decorated; those panels are marked with pink tape.** Participants will provide their own designs and materials; anything goes except for paper, cardboard and plastic cups. For now, gloves, masks and 6-foot distancing are required. No sign-up is necessary, but questions may be directed to suzy.swingle@austinisd.org.

July 4 celebration canceled; ideas for substitute sought

From NSCNA Social Committee (with regret)

The NSCNA Board has decided to cancel our traditional Independence Day parade and celebration because of the coronavirus pandemic. We couldn't figure out a sure way to minimize risk and maintain social distancing. NSCNA's Social Committee hopes to sponsor a replacement celebration that we can enjoy as individuals or in small groups throughout the neighborhood. One idea under consideration is to set a time to invite neighbors to step out of their homes and do something together — sing, clap, play kazoos, etc. What do you think of this? What thoughts, ideas, suggestions do you have? Please email them to social@nscna.org or to directors@nscna.org ASAP so we can organize something before July 4.

ABOUT NSCNA

The North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association (NSCNA) serves the residents living in the area bounded by MoPac Expressway on the west, Research Boulevard on the north, Burnet Road on the east and Anderson Lane on the south. It is a Texas nonprofit corporation, and its purpose is to promote and protect the quality of life, safety, residential characteristics and property values of this neighborhood specifically and all neighborhoods generally.

Dues are \$15 per calendar year. Renters and property owners living in North Shoal Creek are eligible to join: Fill out the membership form on page 12, then mail it and your \$15 check to NSCNA / P.O. Box 66443 / Austin, TX 78766-0443. Or join online at www.nscna.org/join via PayPal. Or come to our next membership meeting and join there via cash or check.

The North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association holds five membership meetings a year, open to the public, on the first Tuesday of January, March, May, September and November. Meetings are held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Pillow Elementary School library, 3025 Crosscreek. Currently, meetings have been suspended until further notice due to coronavirus concerns.

The North Shoal Creek Neighborhood News is distributed four times a year. Newsletter ad prices:

- Business-card size, 3.5" wide by 2" high, \$30.
- Quarter-page, 3.5" wide by 4" high, \$60.
- Half-page: 7.5" wide by 5" high, \$115.
- 10% discount when three or more ads are purchased at the same time. To advertise, email newsletter@nscna.org.

Thoughts from our neighbors: the rewards of volunteering

From Lyrica Johnson, neighbor

North Shoal Creek has been a great neighborhood for my family and me. My favorite part is the celebrations that NSCNA organizes. They are reminiscent of the block parties we had when I was a kid, and they have gotten my son excited about volunteering and giving back!

We helped with the luminaria walk in 2018, and he announced the same evening that he wanted to do it again the next year. Even at age 7 my son could do some parts on his own. He was so proud to see the results — and of course to share in the cookies and cocoa! In 2019 we brought our wagon and did it again.

My son also has helped me to deliver the neighborhood newsletter the last couple of years since I volunteered for that, fully expecting to be on my own. Instead, it has been a time for us to talk and bond, and a great example of how helping others and giving back can be enjoyable and feel good. He already wants to take over my route on his own.

Thank you, NSCNA, for the joy and for these wonderful opportunities to share and grow!

Let us hear from you

We'd like to give our readers a platform in our neighborhood newsletter. Want to tell us what North Shoal Creek means to you? Want to air a comment about neighborhood issues? Want to alert the neighborhood to an upcoming event or suggest events or activities the neighborhood association might plan? Want to comment on an article you read in the newsletter, or suggest an article or an area of coverage you'd like to see in its pages? Send an email to newsletter@nscna.org and include your full name and the name of your street.



North Shoal Creek real estate

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7920 Rockwood	1-1	680 sq ft	\$187,000
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Weaving, Benbrook Drive, May 2020. Photo courtesy of Pamela Ferguson



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