San Marcos seeks solutions for affordable housing crisis

BY ANNA HEROD

Faced with the reality that thousands of San Marcos residents are severely cost-burdened, local leaders and community members are working together to try to solve one of the city’s biggest problems—its significant lack of affordable housing.

According to a recent housing assessment that was commissioned by San Marcos, 9,700 renters in the city, or 65% of renters, were cost-burdened in 2017 by housing expenses. As for San Marcos homeowners, 27% with a mortgage are cost-burdened.

The city has many more renters than homeowners.

San Marcos have to use more than 30% of their income to cover their housing costs. Of those renters, nearly 6,000 are considered severely cost-burdened, meaning they have to use half or more of their income for housing expenses.

CONTINUED ON 30

Kyle, Hays County: Railroad commission falls short of constitutional obligation to regulate

BY KATHARINE JOSE

Two years ago, Heinz Stefan Roesch bought a roughly 30-acre property along RR 1623, outside of the city of Blanco. His whole family is from the Hill Country, he said, and he had been saving all his life to buy something just like it.

Last fall, he started hearing about a natural gas pipeline that the company Kinder Morgan was planning, though in the initial routing his land did not fall in its path. In January, he noticed low-flying helicopters over his house. A week later,
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May 25th

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Congratulating graduates across Hays County

There’s a lot of excitement in the air! Soon, after years of hard work and sacrifice, thousands of students will walk the stage to receive their diplomas from high school and college. And for thousands more, this month marks the final days before summer vacation. We congratulate all students for their accomplishments as well as the families and friends whose support and encouragement is so vitally important to them.

In this month’s issue, editor Katharine Jose takes a look at the lawsuit in which several landowners have been joined by the city of Kyle and Hays County against the Texas Railroad Commission. At issue is whether it is a constitutional violation to not provide more oversight on the use of eminent domain by a private company. The plaintiffs are seeking an injunction and the institution of a more transparent public process involving pipeline routing.

Reporter Anna Herod examines the housing affordability crisis in San Marcos, where wages have not kept up with the rising population and housing costs. The city is looking for solutions and has a task force with the aim of creating an action plan by September for City Council.

We hope you enjoy this month’s stories and the many special offerings from our advertisers in this issue.

Do other cities get ‘Community Impact Newspaper?’

John and Jennifer Garrett launched Community Impact Newspaper in 2005 from their game room to provide hyperlocal, useful news to readers. Today, we continue to be locally and privately owned by the Garretts, focusing on news happening in your backyard, but we’ve also been fortunate to have grown to serve new communities over nearly 14 years.

In addition to this newspaper our team works to deliver into your hands each month, there are eight more editions in Central Texas. We also have newspapers in the Dallas and Houston metros, and recently, we ventured out of state—starting editions in the Phoenix and Nashville areas.

If you are interested in finding out more about what’s going on in other communities, visit our website at communityimpact.com and click the “Find Your Community” menu.

Do you have an idea for where we should go next? Give me a call at 512-615-1284 or write me an email.

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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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San Marcos - Buda - Kyle edition • May 2019

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RESULTS
Weight Loss & Med Spa
formerly known as Buda’s Protein Weight Loss Center

[Image of before and after weight loss pictures]
Barre will open this summer at 200 Springtown Way, San Marcos. The barre fitness franchise has more than 500 studios across North America, according to the company, and also offers online classes via streaming video. 512-222-6911. www.purebarre.com

Mensor, located at 201 Barnes Drive, San Marcos, will celebrate its 50-year anniversary June 27. The company develops and manufactures pressure instruments for global applications 512-396-4200. www.mensor.com

Omar Guerra DDS, located at 1305 Wonder World Drive, Ste. 303, in San Marcos celebrated its 25-year anniversary May 2. Dr. Omar Guerra has been doing dental work for San Marcos and the surrounding communities since 1994. 512-396-3727. www.omarguerradds.com

Patrick Duffy celebrated the five-year anniversary of Blue Moon Optical, 121 W. San Antonio St., San Marcos, on April 28. Certified as a dispensing optician for eyeglasses and contacts, Duffy’s eyeglass stock includes vintage and contemporary styles. 512-982-9242. www.bluemoonoptical.com

Owner Suzanne Riley celebrated the five-year anniversary of Salon Therapy on April 30. Riley opened the downtown salon, located at 226 N. LBJ Drive in San Marcos, after working as a stylist in San Marcos for over 25 years. The business provides men’s and women’s cuts, colors, highlights, updos and other services, and also offers on-site makeup and hair styling for weddings. 512-878-0674. www.salontherapysmtx.com

Regent Care Center of San Marcos was renamed Cypress Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center and came under the new ownership of Trustcare Management on May 1. The center, a rehabilitation and medical facility located at 1351 Sadler Drive in San Marcos, offers comprehensive rehab programs and nursing for its residents. Company officials said the majority of the center’s staff remained employees following the ownership change. 512-805-5000. www.trustcaremanagement.com

Don Japanese Kitchen opened at 829 N. LBJ Drive, Ste. 101, San Marcos, at the former location of Thai Thai Cafe on April 27. The Austin-based restaurant is open every day to serve dinner from 4:30-9 p.m. 281-725-3686. www.facebook.com/donjapanese2

Thai Thai Cafe, previously located at 829 N. LBJ Drive, Ste. 101, San Marcos, opened in April at its new location. Now located across from H-E-B at 1104 Thorpe Lane, San Marcos, the Thai restaurant serves Asian cuisine. 512-395-8424. www.facebook.com/thaithaicafe

P. Terry’s Burger Stand, an Austin-based burger chain, opened a new location in San Marcos on May 14. Located at 515 Springtown Way in San Marcos, the restaurant has a 1950s-inspired storefront. www.pterrys.com

A new luxury pet resort for cats and dogs is set to open in San Marcos this summer. My Buddy’s Pet Resort, located at 177 Coachman Drive, will offer overnight boarding, dog day care and a pet grooming spa. www.mybuddypetresort.com

Investcor, Bow River Capital and Integral Senior Living held a groundbreaking ceremony May 16 for Sage Spring Senior Living, a 90-unit, 74,000-square-foot luxury senior community. Located at 800 Leah Ave., San Marcos, the community is set to offer memory care, a movie theater, a bistro, a beauty salon, a chapel, a library, a dog park, a butterfly garden and more. The new housing project will also offer its residents daily activities, such as cooking classes and game nights. www.sllc.com

A new San Marcos location of Pure

San Marcos

Now Open

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Coming Soon

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6. A new San Marcos location of Pure

New Ownership

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The Times Higher Education’s University Impact Rankings, released in April, gave Texas State University high rankings. The rankings assess universities globally against the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, using indicators to create comparisons in the areas of research, outreach and stewardship. More than 450 universities were ranked from 76 countries. Texas State received one of the top rankings among 100 other universities, and it was one of three universities in Texas mentioned. www.txstate.edu

The Texas Bar Foundation announced May 8 that it has awarded a grant to the Court Appointed Special Advocates, or CASA, with the goal of recruiting and training more volunteers. “With these funds, our Collaborative Family Engagement services will empower more CASA volunteers to advocate for abused and neglected children and youth in Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe and Hays Counties. We are working toward a goal of providing a CASA volunteer to every child in state care to ensure they do not fall through the cracks of an overburdened system,” CASA Executive Director Norma Blackwell said in a statement. “I am happy that, with this support from the Texas Bar Foundation, we will be able to recruit and train more volunteers, helping us get closer to our goal.” CASA, which has offices in the Hays County Courthouse at 111 E. San Antonio Street, San Marcos, provides 42 hours of training to volunteers as well as supervision by a caseworker. www.casacentex.org

The Childbloom Guitar Program, located at 130 W. Holland St., San Marcos, began hosting guitar classes in May. The classes are offered to anyone age 5 and above. Classes are held in small groups of 2 to 4 students. The program is hosting an open house June 8 from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at the First Lutheran Church. The open house is intended to show the community what the program is like, and students will have a chance to be fitted for a guitar and take a 15-minute mini-lesson. 915-228-7807. www.hayschildbloom.com

Monkies Vintage & Thrift, located at 314 N. LBJ Drive, San Marcos, in April rolled out its new student happy hour. From 1-3 p.m. every first Monday of the month, students will receive an additional 20% off their purchase with a school ID. “I’m most excited about seeing how students will react to the idea and this new concept when they come in the shop and we tell them about the happy hour sale and what it is,” said John Autry, assistant manager of the thrift store. “It’s most definitely something new and fresh for the Texas State community that I think students will love.” 956-352-7511. www.facebook.com/monkiesvintage

Texas State University, located at 601 University Drive, San Marcos, is reconsidering a new proposed music building in hopes that it would enhance the south side of Texas State’s campus and continue to help transform the area into a performing arts district, a goal outlined in the university master plan. “It creates a nexus of creative and performing activities on that end of the San Marcos campus,” said Gene Bourgeois, provost and vice president for academic affairs, in a statement. www.txstate.edu
KYLE & BUDA

NOW OPEN

1. After much anticipation, Buda’s Green Meadows Splash Pad, located at Green Meadows Park, 2537 Green Meadows Lane, Buda, opened to the public April 11. The 1,400-square-foot facility includes more than 19 spray features and is operated by the Buda Parks and Recreation Department. 512-523-1081. www.ci.buda.tx.us/289/green-meadows-park

2. Behavioral Innovations, a chain of autism treatment centers that offers both one-on-one and group learning, opened March 29 at 4221 Benner Road, Bldg. 2, Ste. 250, Kyle. The company has locations throughout Texas and in Oklahoma. 855-782-7822. www.behavioral-innovations.com

3. A new Kyle location of Mr. Gatti’s Pizza opened April 15 near downtown Kyle at 22510 I-35, Ste. 105, Kyle. It is the ninth location owned and operated by George Kash, whose mother was the first Gatti’s franchisee in 1972, according to the company. 512-399-2222. www.gattispizza.com

4. A new bilingual veterinary facility, Deep Roots Animal Clinic, opened May 6 at 902 Rebel Drive in Kyle. Veterinarian Dr. Steven Guzman offers a range of services, including examinations, vaccines, lab work, surgical procedures, dentistry, medical boarding and an in-house pharmacy, as well as mobile large-animal service. 512-967-1119. www.deeprootsvet.com

5. Gemstone Palace, a new venue for local events, opened for business in March at 1101 Bunton Creek Road, Kyle, and has so far hosted a quinceanera, a wedding and a banquet. 512-586-1967 www.facebook.com/gemstonepalaceclico

6. A new UltiMattress location opened in April in the new shopping center at 15550 S. I-35, Ste. 125, in Buda. The San Antonio- and Austin-based company has been rapidly expanding in recent months, opening stores in San Marcos and across the region. 512-344-9092. www.ultimattress.com

7. Hill Country Med Waste opened in late January on Purple Martin Avenue in Kyle. The medical waste-removal and compliance company will serve Austin, Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and surrounding areas, according to Hillary Burris, one of the owners. 512-551-4931. www.hillcountrymedwaste.com

8. A new sports complex, Sunfield Station, at Main Street and Campo Del Sol Parkway in Buda held its first event, a volleyball tournament, March 9. The facility is a multiuse sports complex and sports retail center, with a primary focus on indoor volleyball, basketball and other sports. 512-523-4053. www.facebook.com/sunfield-station-308313289960457/

COMING SOON

9. The newest Poco Loco, located at 1131 S. Loop 4, Buda, will open in May. The combination Hispanic food market and gas station has another location in Kyle and two in Kyle as well as one in both South Austin and Uhland. www.pocolocosupermercado.com

10. A new location of Extra Space will open in May at 2550 FM 967, Buda. The storage company has outlets across the country, but the Buda location is the first between Austin and San Antonio. 512-691-9093. www.extraspace.com

11. Gruene Cross, a small producer and retailer of cannabidiol, or CBD, products has leased a space at the under-development Windmill Center, located at 2141 I-35, Kyle. The company is currently waiting to begin construction on the shop and does not yet have a projected opening date. In addition to its original location in Bracken, Gruene Cross opened a New Braunfels outlet in January. www.gruenecross.com
ANNIVERSARIES

12 The Millberg Farm, located at 737 Opal Lane in Kyle, celebrated 30 years of certified organic farming in April. In addition to promoting water conservation, backyard gardening, urban farming and community gardens, according to owner Tim Miller, the farm operates the oldest community supported agriculture, or CSA, programs in the state. This year Miller will hold popup workshops throughout the year geared toward new homeowners in the area who are establishing backyard gardens. New classes, including the popular July fig workshop, will be announced via Facebook. www.facebook.com/timmillerkyletexas

13 Remington Pet Ranch, a veterinarian-owned and -operated pet resort, celebrated one year in business April 23. Located on 35 acres of land at 14025 S. Turnersville Road, Buda, Remington offers luxury and medical lodging, day care, a spa, transportation and outdoor recreation. 512-717-6797. www.remingtonpetranch.com

14 Shear Impressions Salon & Boutique, located at 209 San Antonio St. in downtown Buda, will celebrate 20 years in business in May. The full-service salon, which offers a range of services for hair, skin and nails, has previously been named Business of the Year by the Buda Chamber of Commerce. 512-312-2511. www.shearimpressionsbuda.com

15 The Budaful Hiker, 122 Main St., Buda, will mark its first year in business on May 26 and will hold a celebration June 1. The festivities will include a community hike at 8 a.m. followed by music, food, drinks and raffles. See the store’s Facebook page for more. Founded by Buda natives, the hiking store sells products from companies that either use recycled materials or give back to the community in some way. 512-202-5410. www.thebudafulhiker.com

NEW OWNERSHIP

16 After buying it from former owner Jeff Brown, Robert and Mary Gomez reopened the Old Town Buda Antiques Mall, 212 N. Main St., Buda, in the first week of May. Robert, a former planning and zoning commissioner for the city of Buda, said via email that new plans for the store include addition vendors for a greater variety of antique, vintage and collectible items and more use of social media and outreach events to get people interested in buying from local brick-and-mortar stores. “We want to influence and interest people to look at the past today as we go towards tomorrow,” he wrote. 512-423-8713. www.otbam.com

FEATURED IMPACT—NOW OPEN

Craig Barron, owner of Buda’s Shaggy Dog Market, a locally owned pet store selling high-quality food, treats and toys, opened a second location May 1 at 22510 I-35, Ste. 106, Kyle. The first location is located at 3420B FM 967, Ste. B104, Buda; the new location has a similar inventory as well as three fully closed-in dog-washing stations. 512-312-4339. www.shaggydogmarket.com

Starting annual mammograms at age 40 saves lives.

One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and one in six occurs in women ages 40-49. The fact is mammograms can find cancer before a lump can be felt and early detection saves lives.

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- Family friendly amenities
- Highly regarded Hays CISD schools
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- Nearby health care facilities and HEB

6 Creeks
Homes from the $300's

our builders

www.6Creeks.com Hill Country Views in Kyle, Texas
MAY

23 ADULT SPELLING BEE
Hang out at Aquabrew and cheer for your favorite team as they compete for the title of 2019 Spelling Champion Swarm of San Marcos. All funds raised will go to benefit the San Marcos Public Library’s book and digital collections as well as educational programs for children, teens and adults. 7 p.m. Free to attend. Aquabrew, 150 S. LB Drive, San Marcos. 512-393-8200. www.facebook.com/events/842981359377451

29 FROM MONET TO VAN GOGH: HISTORY OF IMPRESSIONISM
Becky Duval Reese and LifeLong Learning San Marcos bring a continued exploration of the artistic movement known as Impressionism, looking into the life and works of such artists as Bethe Morisot, Edgar Degas, Paul Gauginh and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. 10:30 a.m. Free. San Marcos Public Library, 625 E. Hopkins St., San Marcos. 512-393-8200. www.sanmarcostx.gov/586/Library

JUNE

01 BUCK’S BACKYARD THIRD ANNUAL BBQ COOKOFF
Buck’s Backyard hosts the friendly competition, sanctioned by the International Barbeque Cookers Association, to see who can make the best brisket, ribs, chicken and more. Prizes will be given out, and the event includes live music. Noon. Free (to attend), $175 (competition entry fee). Buck’s Backyard, 1750 S. FM 1626, Buda. 512-667-8063. www.bucksbackyard.com

01 RILEY’S TAVERN CAR MEET CLASSIC CAR EXHIBITION
See classic cars, hot rods, motorcycles and trucks at the old-fashioned tavern while listening to live music from The Georges and DJ Scott and feasting on plates of barbecue. 2 p.m. Free (admission). Riley’s Tavern, 8894 FM 1102, New Braunfels. 512-392-3132. www.rileystavern.com

08 NPR’S ‘FROM THE TOP’ LIVE
The grand finale of the Texas State International Piano Festival is a live taping of the NPR show “From the Top,” which celebrates young classical musicians. Featuring Simone Dinnerstein and nine players from the festival, the concert is meant to celebrate young people and the power of classical music. 7 p.m. $42. The Patti Strickel Harrison Theater, 405 Moon St., San Marcos. 512-245-3390. www.tslpf.com

08 KYLE MARKET DAYS
Local vendors, arts and crafts, farm-to-market items and live music converge in the historic square of downtown Kyle on the second Saturday of the month through October. 9 a.m. Free. City Square Park, 101 S. Burleson St., Kyle. 512-262-3939. www.cityofkyle.com

08 INaugural WilleJJoINT GOOD BBQ COOKOFF
Register to compete by May 27 in Willie’s Joint’s first-ever competition to make the best barbecue. 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Free (to attend), $175 (entry fee). Willie’s Joint, 824 Main St., Buda. 512-295-0483. www.williesjoint.com

15 ANNUAL FATHER’S DAY WEEKEND GOLF CLASSIC
Celebrate dad with a golf tournament hosted by the Knights of Columbus Council 8156 and benefiting local charities. Awards, an auction and door prizes will follow. 7 a.m. (registration opens), 8:30 a.m. (start). $100 (individual), $400 (team). Plum Creek Golf Course, 4301 Benner Road, Kyle. 512-892-2420. www.kofc8156.org

LIVE MUSIC

BUCK’S BACKYARD
1750 FM 1626, Buda
512-312-9459
www.bucksbackyard.com
May
31 Powell Brothers

CHEATHAM STREET WAREHOUSE
119 Cheatham St., San Marcos
512-353-3777
www.cheathamstreet.com
May
31 An Acoustic Evening with Lee Ann Womack

June
05 Kent Finlay’s Songwriter’s Circle

GRUENE HALL
1281 Grue Street, New Braunfels
830-606-1281 • www.gruenehall.com
May
26 Dale Watson and His Lone Stars
31 Jack Ingram

RIVER ROAD ICE HOUSE
1791 Huaco Springs Loop, New Braunfels • 830-626-1335
www.riverroadicehouse.com
May
24 Mothership Led Zeppelin Tribute
25 Eclipse Tribute to Journey
26 The Q (A Tribute to Queen)

SAN MARCOS PARK PLAZA
Summer in the Park Concert Series
206 N. CM Allen Parkway, San Marcos • 512-393-8400
www.summerintherparksm.org
June
06 Brave Combo
13 Beto and the Fairlanes
20 Bobby Flores Band

COMING UP

July 4 | Kyle Independence Day Fireworks
www.cityofkyle.com

July 4 | Red, White & Buda
www.ci.buda.tx.us

July 4 | San Marcos Summerfest
www.summerfestmxm.com

July 20 | Hill Country Kids & Family Triathlon
www.hillcountrykidstri.org

July 28-30 | inaugural River Jam
www.galleywinter.com/river-jam

Find more or submit San Marcos, Buda or Kyle events at communityimpact.com/sbk-calendar. Event organizers can submit local events online to be considered for the print edition. Submitting details for consideration does not guarantee publication.
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TRANSPORTATION

RECENT UPDATES

1 Main St. and FM 967 improvement
With the design phase of the Main Street at FM 967 improvement project nearly complete, in April, Buda City Council approved a supplemental work authorization to the professional services agreement between the city and the engineering firm RPS Infrastructure Inc. in order to proceed to the building and construction phase. Buda will receive $1.38 million in funding from the Texas Department of Transportation via the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and contribute $346,000 in matching funds from the 2014 Proposition 3 bond. The project will widen the roadway and provide dedicated turn lanes along with broader sidewalks, signage and pavement striping for better pedestrian safety. TxDOT is overseeing the project and anticipates beginning the letting process in August.
Timeline: project expected to be complete by 2020

2 Lehman Road reconstruction
Closures on Lehman Road have been extended from FM 150 to just south of Hiver Street as work continues on both the boring under FM 150 and the excavation of Lake Kyle. Though the project has closed off access to Lake Kyle, City Engineer Leon Barba told City Council that his department is working closely with the contractor to make sure there is access to Lake Kyle for the Pie in the Sky Festival, which takes place annually on Labor Day. The project is funded by the 2013 voter-approved bond and is expected to cost about $6.1 million.
Timeline: expected completion in January 2020

3 Student Center Drive closure
Student Center Drive between Matthew Street and the north loading dock of the Albert B. Alkek Library remains closed for the expansion of Texas State University’s LBj Student Center. The $31 million project will add more than 22,000 square feet to the facility, which was originally built in 1998. Service and delivery access to the library and Derrick Hall loading docks is available via Russell and Pickard Streets.
Timeline: closed until Jan. 21, 2020

4 Coers Street drainage improvement project
Coers Street between Old RR 12 and Owens Street will continue to have the southbound lane closed to traffic between 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m. as crews work to improve the area’s storm drain system. The project also includes the addition of 5-foot sidewalks.
Timeline: until Dec. 1

COMPLETED PROJECT

5 North Burleson connector
The new road that will connect the roundabout at North Burleson Street and Marketplace Avenue with the I-35 frontage road opened April 22. The stretch of road is part of the $8.5 million allocated for the North Burleson project in the $36 million bond that was approved by voters in 2013. Kyle City Engineer Leon Barba said at the April 16 City Council meeting that the city is in discussions with the contractor and the Pedernales Electric Cooperative about providing night lighting for the road.

All information on this page was updated as of 5/8/19. News or questions about these or other local transportation projects? Email us at sbknews@communityimpact.com.
Quality care without the commute.

The quality care you want for your family is closer than ever. From pediatrics to geriatrics, our clinics in Kyle and San Marcos — and coming soon in Buda — bring the experienced practitioners and specialists of Baylor Scott & White Health to your neighborhood. So you can get the personalized care you want, at a location that fits your life.

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San Marcos, TX 78666
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**ELECTION RESULTS**

**HAYS CISD DISTRICT 4**

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<tr>
<td>Esperanza OroSCO*</td>
<td>64.86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank Juarez Jr.</td>
<td>35.14%</td>
<td>156</td>
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Because the term for the Place 3 Kyle City Council seat was set to expire this year, it will be on the ballot again Nov. 5.

**KYLE CITY COUNCIL PLACE 3**

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<td>Robert Rizo</td>
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<td>Stuart Kirkwood</td>
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<td>Cody Desalvo</td>
<td>9.64%</td>
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<td>Michelle Carey</td>
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**HAYS CISD DISTRICT 5**

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<td>Meredith Keller*</td>
<td>79.16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Summers</td>
<td>20.84%</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
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Ribbon cutting held May 18 for toll road

By Nicholas Cicale

Construction on one of the region’s most anticipated transportation projects, SH 45 SW, is in its final stages, and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority hosted a ribbon cutting to celebrate the project’s completion May 18. SH 45 SW will open to traffic by the end of May.

SH 45 SW is a 3.6-mile toll road that includes two lanes in each direction and entrances at the south end of MoPac, at Bliss Spillar Road and at FM 1626. The toll costs $1 to take each way.

A shared-use bicycle and walking trail is included in the project alongside a nature-viewing area near Bear Creek.

The idea for the project is part of an outer loop of highways around Austin with SH 130 and SH 45 that has been around since the 1980s, Mobility Authority Executive Director Mike Heiligenstein told Community Impact Newspaper. After numerous lawsuits by environmentalists to stop the project and being passed around by different planning entities in the area, the Mobility Authority broke ground on the $109 million project in November 2016.

Heiligenstein said the benefits of SH 45 SW include added access to more affordable housing in Hays County. The toll should also give traffic relief to major South Austin roads such as Brodie Lane, Slaughter Lane and Manchaca Road, he said.

“Everybody realizes this has been a long time coming and the frustration of dealing with congestion, it’s so obvious this is going to create a whole new alternative [for drivers],” he said.

Who will use the road?

Heiligenstein said he estimates 20,000-30,000 cars will eventually take SH 45 SW each day. Predictive modeling shows SH 45 SW is going to capture Hays County motorists who were cutting through local roads in South Austin to get to MoPac, he said.

Hays County Commissioner Mark Jones said the new toll road will enhance the quality of life for current residents of Hays County.

“Right now we were spending an hour or more in traffic just to get anywhere in Austin, and this is going to cut a lot of people’s commutes in half almost, for a pretty inexpensive price,” he said.

Environmental Considerations

SH 45 SW is located over the Edwards Aquifer, so a key factor in its development was making it as environmentally responsible as possible and achieving “a water-quality standard that most road projects wouldn’t seek,” Heiligenstein said.

“It was not an easy project; the water-quality elements significantly complicated it,” he said. “We’ve built probably the cleanest roadway ever in the state of Texas.”

City of Austin conservation easements preserve some of the land around the project, and environmental features, such as Bear Creek, run underneath the road.

The wide shared-use path created along the road—which will connect to the Violet Crown Trail system that stretches north to Zilker Park in the future—will offer locals additional recreational opportunities and areas to overlook nature, said Heiligenstein.

Complementary projects

With SH 45 SW now operational, two additional South Austin transportation projects connected to MoPac are still on the way: the MoPac Intersections project and the MoPac South express lane project. Heiligenstein said each project is independently valuable to the region while also complementing one another and creating a continuous system from South Austin to downtown.

Organized by Texas Department Of Transportation, the MoPac Intersections project broke ground in January 2018 and is creating diverging diamond overpasses to take Slaughter and La Crosse Avenue traffic over MoPac. MoPac through lanes will take traffic under the overpasses, allowing motorists to pass without stopping at the intersections as they previously did.

“They will allow traffic to flow much better instead of having stoplights [on MoPac],” Heiligenstein said.

The first phase of the project, creating a diverging diamond overpass for Slaughter, was completed in November. Work on the La Crosse overpass began this past winter, and the project should be completed by 2021. When completed, through lanes will take MoPac traffic in both directions past the roads without stopping.

The MoPac South express lanes project has stalled over the past few years, but Heiligenstein said the environmental documents needed are nearly finished, and the team is waiting for “the green light to move forward.”

The project would add one or two tolled express lanes from Slaughter to the Colorado River to relieve traffic.

In Hays County, Jones said construction to make FM 1626 a four-lane road with turn lanes from Brodie Lane south to I-35 will likely be complete in September.
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San Marcos on track to offset 100% of municipal baseline greenhouse gas emissions by 2022

By ANNA HEROD

With its newly established sustainability committee, San Marcos City Council is looking to become a leading environmentally friendly municipality—a goal toward which the city is already making swift progress.

By 2022, the city of San Marcos as a municipality is set to 100% offset its 2017 baseline greenhouse gas emissions with the implementation of renewable wind energy in city facilities along with the use of other green practices.

The city entered into a wind power agreement with AEP Energy Partners in March 2018, according to Assistant Electric Utility Director Tyler Hjorth. San Marcos is set to begin using the energy, which is sourced from a wind farm located in West Texas between Abilene and Sweetwater, next year.

“I’m really excited and really proud of my city,” said Council Member Joca Marquez, who is a member of the sustainability committee that was established April 2. “I want us to be the leader. I want us to be the example. I want us to be the pioneers of sustainability in Texas.”

The council’s new committee is charged with advancing the city’s progress on its sustainability plan, which was created in 2013. According to city staff, 73% of the actionable items in the plan, which details ways the city can improve its sustainability, are in progress, ongoing or complete.

Some of the completed measures from the plan include the retrofitting of street lights with energy-efficient light bulbs and expanding the police’s bike patrol. However, the city has not yet made progress on some of the plan’s other items, such as creating and adopting an energy master plan and passing a green fleet policy that would require the purchase of hybrid or alternative-fuel vehicles.

Council Member Lisa Prewitt, who was also appointed to the sustainability committee along with Marquez and Council Member Mark Rockeymoore, said she believes both the community and the past and present City Councils have done a good job of being environmentally conscious.

“I know that we’ve talked about when we have development agreements and when we’re looking at any developments coming into San Marcos that fire and transit always have to be at the table of conversation,” Prewitt said. “Well, I think sustainability should probably … be at the table for conversation, too.”

Hjorth told Community Impact Newspaper in a written statement that City Council authorized staff in January to enter negotiations for a solar power agreement.

Since the wind project is already expected to fully offset the city’s emissions by 2022, that would mean any additional renewable energy contracts—including the proposed solar power agreement—could potentially give the city extra renewable energy to use as the city grows, and it can also be sold to the electric grid.

Jan Klein, the city’s conservation coordinator, said if the city is able to secure a solar power purchase agreement, staff estimates it would have the potential to provide the city with an additional 169.5% savings on its greenhouse gas emission baseline.

“In general, we are very interested in pursuing short- and long-term contracts that can add to our renewable energy portfolio while we also maintain our reliability, safety and fiscal responsibilities,” Hjorth stated.

Marquez said she believes residents of San Marcos are ready now more than ever for strengthened environmental practices.

“I want San Marcos to be known for something and that’s going to be sustainability,” Marquez said. “And that’s going to mean greener practices and responsible stewardship of the environment.”
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District cuts ribbon on new Buda Elementary campus

HAYS CISD Local residents, elected officials and Hays CISD board of trustee members gathered May 7 for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new campus for Hays CISD’s Buda Elementary School on Old San Antonio Road. The 115,000-square-foot building was funded by $33,925,000 allocated from the 2017 voter-approved bond, which also paid for the new Johnstone High School.

The first time a school was built on the original Buda Elementary site was 1885; in 1908, when more capacity was needed, a new two-story building was constructed across the street. That building, which was serving as Buda High School, burned down in 1928 and was rebuilt with some features of the original preserved. In 1967, when Kyle, Buda and Wimberley schools consolidated, Buda High School became Buda Elementary School.

A new campus was needed because part of the current site sits in the flood plain and has flooded twice in the past decade.

Residents and officials cut the ribbon on the new Buda Elementary School campus May 7, which will welcome students in August.

Elementary schools in the district are all built from a standard prototype that HCISD has been using for about 10 years, according to the district, but each time a new one is built improvements are made. Buda Elementary will have stained concrete floors, skylights to reduce energy costs, science labs and collaborative learning areas.

The new Buda Elementary will also have a capacity of 900; last year, Buda Elementary enrolled 581 students. The school will welcome students in August.

Potential donation of El Centro off the table

SAN MARCOS CISD The San Marcos CISD board of trustees canceled an April 15 public hearing regarding the district’s potential donation of land to Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, a community and cultural center.

Discussion about a potential land donation was first brought up during the board’s deliberation about whether to build a new central administration office on the district’s South LBJ Drive property, which is directly next to El Centro, or to build at a district property on Hunter Road.

Trustee Miguel Arredondo proposed at a March 4 meeting that the board consider a land donation to El Centro to ensure that it would be preserved.

Arredondo, who requested the item be pulled from the agenda, plans to recommend that the board postpone the decision until after the next Texas legislative session.

New band leader for Lehman officially hired

HAYS CISD The superintendent for Hays CISD announced May 1 that Lehman High School’s interim band director, Jose Valenzuela, has been hired as head band director.

Valenzuela began his time with Hays CISD at Simon Middle School in August before moving to Lehman High in January after Joey Lucita was hired as band director for the not-yet-open Johnson High School. Previously, he was the band director for Alexander High School in Laredo, a position he took after two decades at Donna High School in Donna, Texas.

He holds a bachelor’s in music from Sam Houston State University. In the 2016-17 school year, Valenzuela was a quarter finalist for the Grammy Outstanding Music Educator of the Year.

Administrator in HCISD wins David C. Wiley Award

HAYS CISD The Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy announced April 23 that it would give its 2019 David C. Wiley Award, which recognizes exceptional people who have made significant contributions to the field of teen pregnancy prevention, to Katie Campbell, Hays CISD parenting education program coordinator.

According to the organization, over the last 13 years Campbell has expanded the program to serve pregnant and parent students and created a new model that includes parenting classes for credit, child care and case management in collaboration with Early Head Start.

“Katie has shifted the focus and culture of the program from ‘at-risk’ to ‘positive youth development,’” the Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy wrote in a release. Teen pregnancy rates in the district have dropped dramatically in her tenure.

Campbell has also developed partnerships with Texas State University.
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**Following county’s lead, San Marcos City Council establishes its criminal justice reform committee**

**SAN MARCOS** Hays County recently renewed its focus on the local criminal justice system to address the jail’s soaring inmate population and steep operating costs—and now the city of San Marcos is following suit.

San Marcos City Council voted unanimously May 7 to establish a committee on criminal justice reform. The committee’s charge is to review the city’s ordinances and standard operating procedures relating to criminal justice and to come up with ways to make the city’s practices more fair and equitable.

Council members Ed Mihalkanin, Lisa Prewitt and Mark Rockeymoore were appointed to the committee.

Prewitt and Mihalkanin said that in addition to working with the Hays County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, the newly established City Council committee will also work to see how it can improve the local criminal justice system.

Prewitt said she would like the committee to consider measures such as diversion programs.

“When somebody gets picked up stealing something from the store,” she said. “Why are they stealing? Maybe they have an alcohol or a drug problem. Well, let’s treat the alcohol or the drug problem and not put them in prison.”

Mihalkanin, who initiated the establishment of the committee, said he wants the committee to bring forward some sort of actionable plan for the council to consider by the beginning of August.

Council Member Joca Marquez, who was originally going to serve as a committee member, gave her seat to Rockeymoore.

Rockeymoore said he ran for City Council on a platform of criminal justice reform, which is informed by his past encounters with law enforcement.

“All of these statistics that you’re bouncing around that are abstract are not abstract to me. That has been my life,” Rockeymoore said.

**Hays residents speak up on countywide polling**

**HAYS COUNTY** Officials from Hays County have submitted an application to the state that would allow it switch to countywide polling, allowing voters to cast their ballots at any county polling location not only during early voting, but on election day as well.

Both supporters and opponents voiced their opinions at an April 23 public hearing at Hays County Commissioners Court.

Hays County resident Sam Brannon was one of two people who spoke out against countywide polling.

“[Hays County Elections Administrator Jennifer Anderson] wrote in her presentation that one unanticipated finding is the much stronger and positive effect vote centers have on voter turnout among non-habitual voters,” Brannon said. “And you know, I can’t imagine how anybody could justify how that’s going to serve this republic.”

Anderson said in February that the program could also lead to fewer polling locations in the future as a cost-saving measure.

More than a dozen county residents came to the public hearing to speak in favor of a countywide system.

Nicholas Hoover, who served as a local election worker for multiple years, said he supports countywide polling.

“Working the polls, it is very discouraging to have to turn people away because they’ve come to the wrong precinct,” Hoover said.

If it is approved, countywide polling will go into effect for the first time in November.

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**San Marcos - Buda - Kyle edition • May 2019**

**KYLE** Following traffic studies completed by the Texas Department of Transportation, Kyle City Council approved an ordinance April 16 to add a three-way stop at the intersection of Silverado Drive and Rebel Drive, and to reduce the speed limit from 55 to 50 mph on 1.46 miles of Rebel Drive, roughly between the Kyle Post Office and the intersection with Old Stagecoach Road.

The stop sign is needed in part because of increased traffic on Rebel due to the detour around work on Burleson Road.

Kyle Mayor Travis Mitchell expressed concern about the impact of the new stop on congestion, but City Engineer Leon Barba said he believes it is the best solution for the city.

“It’s going to take people a while to get used to it,” Barba said. “But this gives the people in Silverado a chance to get out without taking a dangerous action to try to get out of that subdivision.”

Barba said TxDOT is willing to reconsider the intersection’s three-way stop if it causes serious problems; the agency also said it will look at traffic patterns once the work on Burleson is finished.

“I do think it’s the best decision at this point in time,” Barba said.
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Oil or property rights: House panel clashes over which to favor as it weighs eminent domain reforms

BY KIAH COLLIER

A bipartisan—though largely Republican—group of House and Senate legislators whose districts have been targeted for pipeline construction amid a historic oil and gas boom have proposed several measures this year aimed at helping landowners and local officials negotiate with deep-pocketed energy companies eager to move fossil fuels to processing and export facilities on the Gulf Coast.

The reform push has put some Republicans at odds with an industry they typically champion—and one that donates significant dollars to their political campaigns—as well as members of their own party.

Perhaps the most controversial legislation—proposed by state Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham—would require companies to include specific provisions in agreements with landowners explaining exactly where they plan to construct pipelines and a promise that they will repair fences, gates or other infrastructure if they damage them.

Senate Bill 421—one of 11 eminent domain-related bills that the House Land and Resource Management Committee has considered—would also have a working farm that includes chickens, goats, and an alpaca!

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Signs demonstrating opposition to the Permian Highway Pipeline were on display at a February open house at Wallace Middle School in Kyle.

A bipartisan though largely Republican group of House and Senate legislators whose districts have been targeted for pipeline construction amid a historic oil and gas boom have proposed several measures this year aimed at helping landowners and local officials negotiate with deep-pocketed energy companies eager to move fossil fuels to processing and export facilities on the Gulf Coast.

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Senate Bill 421—one of 11 eminent domain-related bills that the House Land and Resource Management Committee has considered—would also require private companies to offer to pay landowners fair market value and hold public meetings if they plan to seize 25 or more tracts of land.

“It’s well-known that Texas property owners continue to struggle with the eminent domain process in a variety of ways, and it’s paramount that Texas property owners have greater assurance that the eminent domain process be fair, transparent, respectful,” state Rep. DeWayne Burns, R-Cleburne, who filed a similar bill in the House, told the committee at an April 25 Capitol committee hearing over the batch of bills designed to protect property owners whose land may be seized by private companies to build oil and gas pipelines.

Burns noted that the legislation, which also covers electric transmission projects, has been “heavily and painstakingly negotiated” with all stakeholders.

SB 421 bill easily cleared the Senate earlier in April on a 28-3 vote. A similar measure Kolkhorst proposed in 2017 passed the Senate, but not the House.

Yet officials from energy companies told the House committee that the measures—at least as written—would hinder pipeline construction at a time when it is needed.

Matt Thompson, governmental affairs manager for Apache Corp., told the committee that amid a crippling pipeline shortage in the Permian Basin, producers have two less-than-ideal options: flare off natural gas or shut down wells.

Producers are already flaring a historic amount of natural gas, which poses environmental, health and safety concerns.

Dave Conover, vice president of government relations at pipeline giant Kinder Morgan, whose Permian Highway Pipeline project has sparked fervent protests in the Hill Country, said he feared that environmentalists would use the new measures to thwart projects altogether and that he wanted to see provisions added to the bill that would prevent those tactics.

“This debate isn’t about pipelines versus landowners; it’s about preventing private stonewalling from killing public benefits,” he said.

He also expressed concern about a requirement in SB 421 that every landowner along a pipeline’s route agree to the sale of a pipeline, saying “We cannot give an individual landowner a veto over the potential sale of a billion-dollar asset.”

State Rep. Erin Zwiener, D-Driftwood, whose fast-growing Hill Country district has been targeted for Kinder Morgan’s pipeline, told the committee that the company’s proposed route was based on outdated maps and interfered with long-planned housing developments and road rerouting.

A bill she filed, House Bill 3327, is designed to prevent similar scenarios by requiring pipeline companies to offer to meet with local officials in counties where they want to build prior to contacting landowners; if officials accept, they would be able to share information on developments and environmentally and geologically sensitive areas that may impact routing.

If the bill had been in place before Kinder Morgan proposed its route, Zwiener said, “I suspect the Permian Highway Pipeline would be facing less opposition today.”

During the April 25 hearing, state Rep. Tom Craddick, R-Midland, a former House speaker who chairs the committee, asked reform proponents if they would be willing to abandon any future eminent domain reform efforts if they get their way this session.

“If we do a bill, I don’t want to have another next year and the year after,” he told Burns.

Burns said that if he gets what he wants, “I’ll forget how to spell eminent domain—not that I know how to now.”
Dolores Diaz had no formal training as a pastry chef when she decided to trade in her day job to open Sweet Cakes 4 U in 2013—at the time making cakes was a hobby.

“I started baking and decorating in my home, and then I started just providing it for friends and family,” Diaz said. “And then I just felt like, ‘I could probably do something with this.’”

Diaz, a Buda resident for 30 years, hoped that opening her own store would allow her to be near her three children.

“My main reason was so I could spend more time with my children,” Diaz said. “I could be on my own time—just spend more time with them even if they were here with me, here at the store.”

And they were often there. When she opened the shop, Diaz had only herself to rely on and acted as baker, decorator, supplier and clerk, but after school, her then-teenage daughter Victoria would run the cash register.

Today, Victoria, now 22 and a student at Austin Community College, still works at the store and handles all the Sweet Cakes 4 U social media. Business has grown, and Diaz now also employs two bakers, two decorators, a store manager and kitchen assistants who help her keep up with the growing business.

The shop specializes in cake by the slice, and at any given time it has up to a dozen flavors, including classics such as Italian cream, German chocolate, carrot and vanilla cream along with a “cake of the day” and “cake of the week” that are sometimes more unusual options.

“It’s all tried-and-true recipes. If I don’t like it, it doesn’t get sold,” Diaz said.

In addition, the store sells whole ready-made cakes and takes a limited number of special orders. Diaz has also added cupcakes, bars and other goodies to the menu. One of the newest additions is the mini key lime pies, which Diaz said “can’t stay on the shelf long enough.”

Sweet Cakes 4 U now also serves hot and iced coffee along with breakfast pastries, such as scones, muffins and coffee cake.

“Sometimes in the future we probably are going to get an espresso machine,” she said.

“My next goal is to open early in the morning.”

Diaz has seen some of her most loyal customers grow up over the years, and she plans to stick around for more—she just signed a five-year lease.

“We’re seeing customers from Day 1 still coming in, and now their little kids are big now, and we’re actually doing baby showers, and we’re doing weddings for their kids.”

Though most famous for cake by the slice, Sweet Treats 4 U now sells hot and iced coffee, whole cakes, breakfast pastries and lots of small baked goodies. Diaz also takes a small number of special orders.

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MEMBER FDIC

Sweet Cakes 4 U
Buda’s spot for cake by the slice still thriving on Main Street
Ivar’s River Pub
Owner aims to serve community and honor the San Marcos River

Ivar’s River Pub, originally named San Marcos River Pub when it opened in 1996, is the only privately owned restaurant on the San Marcos River—a fact that owner Curtis Gunnarson does not take lightly.

“I always call the San Marcos River the soul of the city because it is,” Gunnarson said. “It’s a blessing to be here, but it’s also a responsibility for us to be good stewards of the river. There’s a feeling of responsibility to be one of the caretakers of it.”

Gunnarson attributes much of the restaurant’s longevity to its location. He said that aside from the view it offers, the restaurant’s proximity to the river has connected the business to the community through a joint love for the city, its people and its natural resources.

“I don’t know if there’s such a thing as spirits, but you can feel the spirit of hundreds of years of community here,” he said. “The people have been living along this river for thousands of years, native people before the Spanish immigrated and people immigrated to Texas, this river was here.”

Ivar’s River Pub, which serves what Gunnarson describes as “homestyle comfort food,” offers traditional Southern dishes as well as options that have Cajun and Canadian influences. The pub is named after Gunnarson’s father, a Canadian immigrant who was a WWII veteran.

“We bring in a little bit of Canadian influence—that’s why we have the maple leaf on the logo,” he said. “And [the maple leaf] was also on my father’s business logo. So that maple leaf represents my Canadian heritage and also the business that we built here in San Marcos.”

Gunnarson was born and raised in San Marcos. And since he first opened the pub more than 20 years ago, he has seen the city experience exponential population growth and change as it develops.

“We’ve had many people who went to school here and used to come here, and they come back and bring in their children,” he said. “So I love that. In a very changing world, it’s nice to have some things that remain constant. I’d like to be that. It’s a great place to bring family and friends and just enjoy the beauty of San Marcos and this river.”

**TWO DISHES TO TRY**

**Bacon pesto pasta with blackened shrimp**

Ivar’s River Pub serves a bacon pesto pasta with blackened shrimp that comes with fettuccine and a vegetable medley.

**Chopped steak**

The restaurant serves a chopped steak dish that comes with garlic mashed potatoes and seasoned vegetables.
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Mermaid Society SMTX
San Marcos nonprofit advocates for mermaid capital of Texas designation

Mermaid Society SMTX, a nonprofit centered on celebrating local art and promoting river guardianship, has served as the catalyst for the city’s pursuit to become the mermaid capital of Texas.

San Marcos City Council announced at its April 23 meeting it intends to request passage of a legislative resolution to make the designation official. The city’s connection to mermaids harks back to the 1950s when the city had an Aquarena Springs theme park where the half-fish, half-human characters were a main attraction.

“The mermaid symbol is our connection to our past with Aquarena Springs and the Aquamaids,” Mermaid Society SMTX founder July Moreno said, referring to the characters that performed at the theme park. “And the new transformation of what was once seen as entertainment with the Aquamaids is now seen as a revival of the mermaid for environmental protection of our San Marcos River.”

In 2016, Mermaid Society SMTX established the city’s annual SMTX Mermaid Splash, a multi-event, 15-day festival. Moreno said the festival is designed to be a celebration of San Marcos’ creative community and river-centric culture.

“I’m a native San Marcan and very proud to have been born and raised in San Marcos,” she said. “And I just felt like there was an opportunity to see something creative for our community that would bridge the past to the present for the future.”

Moreno said she believes becoming the mermaid capital of Texas will present opportunities to everyone in the city. Local restaurants—including Industry, Ivar’s River Pub and AquaBrew—began serving mermaid-themed drinks following the inaugural SMTX Mermaid Splash Festival, while local artists have begun selling mermaid-inspired art.

“I think the more that we can help the community support this idea [of becoming the state mermaid capital], the better off we will all be,” Moreno said, noting the designation’s potential to boost the local economy and positively affect preservation of the San Marcos River.

Moreno said one of the most exciting things the organization has done this year was establishing a partnership with San Marcos CISD to bring “Mermaid Maya” into elementary schools to teach students how to be good stewards of the river.

“So much of our community is concerned about the health of our river—activists... are actively cleaning it and doing all the things to protect it so that future generations have this beautiful, pristine 72-degree river year-round,” she said.

Mermaid Society SMTX
1000 Prospect St., San Marcos
512-825-2819
www.mermaidsocietysmtx.com

Local artist Morgan Egan was commissioned by the city of San Marcos to design a 10-foot mermaid statue stationed at the corner of San Antonio and Comanche streets.

Grace Rowland Park designed a mermaid statue, which is located in Eddie Durham Park, covered in an abstract map of San Marcos.

The San Marcos Visitor Center is home to an eccentric mermaid statue, which holds a mer-pig. It was designed by local artist Cheryl Latimer.

San Marcos Visitor Center
1000 Prospect St.
512-393-1211
www.sanmarcostexas.com

Mermaid Society SMTX hosts its annual Splash festival for the first time in 2016.
RESIDENTS FALL INTO RENTAL GAPS

Relative to the number of low-income renters in San Marcos, the city, in 2017, had a shortage of about 5,950 affordable rental units. This means there were nearly 6,000 households that did not have any affordable rental housing available to them in San Marcos. The shortage has increased significantly from 2000 when there was a shortage of 2,963 affordable units.

CONTINUED FROM 1

“The major problem that we have here in San Marcos is we don’t have the housing stock,” said San Marcos resident Roland Saucedo, who was appointed to the city’s workforce housing task force when it was established in 2018. “We don’t have the diversity in housing stock. We have gone to where we’re doing either these high-rise apartments that are geared for the college students, or we’re building housing developments, community developments that are out of the [community’s] price range.”

Lack of affordable housing is not only a problem for renters—27% of homeowners with a mortgage and 19% of homeowners without a mortgage are cost-burdened. This statistic, according to Root Policy Research, indicates that the maintenance of homes can be just as costly as a mortgage.

“Once I received the housing assessment, I was blown away,” Saucedo said. “I couldn’t believe it. When I saw those numbers I thought, ‘This is so sad.’”

The assessment shows that much of the city’s housing problem also comes from the fact that San Marcos has experienced sharp home price increases since 2013, while the rise in the city’s median income has not kept pace.

According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data, 59,935 people lived in San Marcos as of 2017—a 24.1% increase since 2013. The median income in San Marcos is $34,748; and 37.5% of all San Marcos residents make less than $25,000 a year. Altogether, 65.9% of the entire San Marcos population makes less than $50,000 a year.

Adriana Cruz, president of the Greater San Marcos Partnership, said the economic development organization recognizes how much the local economy can impact the community’s quality of life.

“We are looking for high-quality jobs with good wages for our citizens,” Cruz said. “We really believe that good quality of life comes with a good-quality job and having the funds available to be able to afford your home and your rent and take care of your family, so that’s absolutely one of the things that we look at.”

THE STUDENT EFFECT

Census data indicates that 21,389 of Texas State University’s nearly 39,000 students live in San Marcos, contributing significantly to the city’s renter population.

An estimated 2,760 of the 5,950 severely cost-burdened renters in San Marcos are students—meaning approximately 3,190 of these renters are non-students, according to the housing assessment.

In recent years, San Marcos has seen steep increases in the development of non-university, purpose-built student housing, which caters and markets to students. However, when examining all of the city’s building permits between 2007 and 2018, it is evident that production of housing not necessarily geared toward students did not increase enough to accommodate non-student population growth.

“One of the huge problems that we have is since 2012, the majority of any and all development has been geared for purpose-built student housing,” Saucedo said. “And with that, it has attracted a lot of investment developers that are purchasing single-family homes, properties, vacant lots and stuff like that, and creating more [student housing] because they’re finding it to be more beneficial to rent by the room than to rent out a unit.”

Private sector student housing has been the city’s primary form of multifamily development over the past decade, according to the assessment. In fact, commercial student housing accounted for 62% of all multifamily building permits and 42% of all residential permits from 2007-18.

Saucedo noted that the saturation of rent-by-the-bedroom, commercial student housing affects students as well because, on average, housing geared toward students has higher rents than conventional developments. According to data from Apartment Trends by
Residents’ struggle to afford housing is due, in part, to the fact that the increase in home prices from 1998 to the present has significantly outpaced the rise in the San Marcos median household income, which has stayed relatively the same for decades.

Auston Investor Interests, as cited by the assessment, units that cater to students have an average rent of $1,827 per unit while non-student apartments have an average rent of $1,043.

“When you have all of these apartment buildings coming up, and the rents are anywhere from $900-$1,200 and even higher—when you’re actually playing with the numbers, and get technical and look at our median income level—these are not affordable options for our residents,” Saucedo said.

AFTERMATH OF 2015 FLOODS
San Marcos was ravaged by severe, historic flooding not once, but twice in 2015. Both floods caused significant damage to the little affordable housing inventory the city has.

Homes near the Blanco and San Marcos rivers experienced the most flood damage—with the most acute damage happening in the area of the Blanco Gardens neighborhood, where a majority of the households earn well below 50% of the city’s median income, according to the assessment.

City Council Member Saul Gonzales, who is a member of the city’s workforce housing task force that was established in 2018, is intimately aware of just how hard the floods hit San Marcos families who were already struggling to afford their homes. His mother was flooded out of her home after both 2015 floods.

The floods—which damaged 1,558 homes, costing tens of millions of dollars—led the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to give the city $25 million in disaster relief funds, according to the assessment. However, Gonzales said the neighborhoods are still struggling in the aftermath of the floods.

“And now a lot of those houses aren’t being fixed,” Gonzales said. “There’s still people that still aren’t moving back in. It’s tough. Some of those guys spent their life savings for their homes, and they’re still not up to par.”

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS A PRIORITY
San Marcos City Council, at the start of 2019, made workforce housing one of its top priorities for the second year in a row.

This prioritization by local leaders led to the 2018 formation of the San Marcos Workforce Housing Task Force, which is made up of community members, local stakeholders and three City Council members. Over the past year, the task force has been coming up with potential solutions that could help remedy the lack of affordable housing in San Marcos.

The task force is aiming to have an action plan drafted by September, which will then be presented to City Council along with recommendations on a path forward.

“What we have been able to come up with is astonishing, and I can’t wait for it to be revealed,” Saucedo, who clarified he does not speak on behalf of the entire task force, said. “Our community is so diverse, and our population has increased so much. And it’s going to continue to grow. So we have to be able to have the housing stock that meets the needs of the citizens of our community.”

Although the task force’s action plan is not final, Saucedo said members have been considering a broad array of potential solutions.

Saucedo said the city could potentially expand and protect its affordable housing stock by participating in a program in which houses repossessed by local government could be converted into affordable housing instead of being auctioned off to outside bidders.

The city could also benefit, Saucedo said, by incentivizing developers to build affordable housing in San Marcos.

Saucedo said at a recent housing equity conference in Austin he asked five major developers who have built multiple affordable housing developments in surrounding cities why they have not done projects in San Marcos.

Their answer: the stringency of the building codes in San Marcos.

“So that’s another thing the housing task force is talking about,” Saucedo said. “Because if that’s one of the things that’s keeping us from gaining our affordable housing stock, we need to be able to offer incentives the way we do for the large development companies; we need to be able to offer incentives and work with them through variances.”

Overall, Saucedo said he is optimistic that San Marcos can solve its affordable housing problem if the city acts on the task force’s plan once it is revealed later this year.

“We’ve come up with a lot of great strategies and initiatives,” he said. “As long as the city moves on [the plan] and takes the lead on this issue, then I think we’re off to a good start.”

For more information visit communityimpact.com
Though governments and utilities have a lengthy process of public meetings, notifications and disclosures when looking to exercise eminent domain, private pipeline companies in Texas do not have to release environmental reports, notify people that are not directly on the pipeline route or hold public meetings, though many of them organize open houses.

The company is not required to solicit public input before setting an initial proposed route or publicly disclose plans.

The Permian Highway Pipeline is classified as a gas utility.

The T-4 permit is a prerequisite to exercising the power of eminent domain. Kinder Morgan applied for the Permian Highway T-4 permit last fall.

THE LAWSUIT

The lawsuit filed April 22 against the railroad commission does not directly challenge the use of eminent domain by private companies, but it does challenge the manner in which that power is wielded.

Though the Texas Constitution gives the government an inherent right to use eminent domain under certain circumstances, private companies do not have the same authority unless it is delegated to them by the Legislature. According to the suit, oil and gas pipeline companies like Kinder Morgan are allowed to exercise eminent domain “in connection with constructing and operating natural gas pipelines.” But that code also requires that the exercise of those powers “must be subject to rules and policies adopted and enforced by the railroad commission.”

The rules the railroad commission has actually put in place, the lawsuit charges, require so little in the way of transparency or public process that the commission is not doing what the constitution mandates—it does not regulate pipelines in a meaningful way.

The primary permit that the developer of an oil and gas pipeline must obtain from the railroad commission is called a T-4. It is a few pages long and requires that a map of the route be attached. The company does not, however, have to hold any public meetings or release any analysis of the route. The lawsuit calls this process “perfunctory” and charges that the “Railroad Commission conducts no investigation, evaluates no alternative route, entertains no adversarial inquiry, provides no notice, allows no hearing, and considers no evidence.”

The T-4 permit is also the prerequisite to the exercise of eminent domain under the Texas Property Code. Even if that use of eminent domain is then challenged in court, the lawsuit states that “the courts have no authority to address pipeline routing issues, including the advisability of alternative routes, or in light of local concerns, needs, and environmental sensitivities.”

The suit claims that the railroad commission, “by implementing its current toothless rules and issuing a T-4 permit” has authorized Kinder Morgan “to exercise the legislative power of choosing the route and the property to be forcibly taken without any guiding standards,” which is a violation of several articles of the state constitution.
or receive from the railroad commission either a determination that there is a need for the pipeline capacity or prior approval to construct a pipeline and related facilities.”

A QUESTION OF PROCESS
Laurent said the incongruous thing about the use of eminent domain by private pipeline companies is that when the government uses eminent domain, the process is much longer and more involved. When the Texas Department of Transportation wants to widen a road, for example, it must produce an analysis of different routes and then invite the public to weigh in about why one route might be better than another—a process that could take anywhere from five years to decades, local officials and land use attorneys have said.

 “[Eminent domain] is a governmental power that’s been given to the pipeline companies, but they have it way easier than the government that gave them the power,” Laurent said. The lawsuit against the railroad commission asks the court for an injunction against the Permian Highway Pipeline eminent domain proceedings until a more rigorous set of rules can be put in place.

As far as what that public process for a private company might look like, TREAD Coalition legal counsel David Braun said that electric utilities provide a useful parallel. Like oil and gas pipelines, electric utilities are private companies with some authority to exercise eminent domain. However unlike oil and gas pipelines, electric utilities have to go through a fairly rigorous public process in front of the Public Utilities Commission of Texas. Braun referenced the large-scale wind farms that were built in West Texas over the last decade and the transmission lines that came with them.

“Those are massive industrial facilities, similar to pipelines,” Braun said. “And the route was chosen carefully on a mile-by-mile basis to have the least impact and the best cost-benefit possible. And lots of people got to present their point of view, and it was all analyzed and professionally considered in public with transparency.”

The process required of electric utilities building transmission lines includes soliciting information from local governments, compiling environmental reports that are made public, notifying residents in the vicinity of the line regardless of whether they own land directly on the route and holding open houses, among other steps. The public is then able to file a motion to intervene, after which they may be able to participate in an administrative hearing, or to formally register opposition. The staff of the PUCT then takes all of the information gathered and makes a recommendation to either approve the project or modify it.

Though pipeline companies generally do hold open houses for the public, they are not legally required to, nor are they required to make studies public. Only landowners directly on the route must be notified, and though they can challenge the company’s use of eminent domain in court, the cases are difficult to win.

A NEW SYSTEM
The plaintiffs in the case against the commission and their lawyers consistently point out that they are not trying to shut down or even oppose the oil and gas industry as a whole.

“We’re not trying to put them out of business,” said Lana Nance, whose husband’s family has owned several thousand acres in and around Kyle since 1838.

The Nances, along with other plaintiffs, are instead asking for an injunction against further use of eminent domain along the Permian Highway Pipeline route until a more rigorous public process is in place.

That means that even if they get what they want, it may or may not lead to the rerouting of the pipeline, though they are hopeful. Hill Country landowners and elected officials have been saying for months that the region is too environmentally sensitive for the installation of a pipeline, but they have been unable to convince Kinder Morgan to change the route.

Part of the complaint is the idea that if there were a more rigorous public process, Kinder Morgan might not have proposed the current path of the Permian Highway Pipeline.

“We don’t believe that this line—the Kinder Morgan Permian Highway Project—would survive any kind of real analysis,” said Elyse Yates, who runs a public affairs firm representing the TREAD Coalition.

Plaintiffs also say that they did not enter into the lawsuit without a great deal of thought. Though Hays County officials did not want to comment on the lawsuit in an interview, three of four commissioners attended the press conference announcing the suit, and Commissioner Walt Smith spoke.

“The decision to do this was not made lightly,” Smith said.

In an interview, Kyle Mayor Travis Mitchell said that the city joined the suit in part because officials believe that without a public process, Kinder Morgan has no incentive to cooperate.

“We realized the cards were stacked against us,” Mitchell said.

In a statement to Community Impact Newspaper, a representative for Kinder Morgan said that the “current Hill Country route is the best route from an environmental and constructability perspective.”

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE
Many lawsuits have been brought against pipeline companies that challenge their right to take land, but Braun believes that this is the first time a suit has questioned the obligation of the railroad commission to provide more regulation and transparency.

According to a report released by the investment bank Goldman Sachs on April 24—which acknowledges that Texas is “far different than other U.S. states in terms of the ease on developing and building new long-haul crude oil and natural gas pipelines”—if the lawsuit succeeds it “could create a broader impact, potentially, on pipeline development timelines and processes.”

But for now, planning for the Permian Highway Pipeline continues. If the court rules against the plaintiffs, Kinder Morgan plans to start construction in the fall.

Kinder Morgan filed a motion for summary judgment May 7 asking for dismissal and saying, among other things, that the plaintiffs assert no wrongdoing with regard to the Permian Highway Pipeline. Two weeks earlier, in a statement responding to the lawsuit, Kinder Morgan defended the route of the pipeline and said the plaintiffs only want the pipeline rerouted away from their own properties—that they are acting solely in their own self interest.

But Roesch said it is much bigger than that.

“It’s important to actually have some sort of voice for property owners and for the public,” he said. “It affects everyone. And if it is for public use and if it is eminent domain, the whole public should have a say in where it goes and how it benefits—and that just doesn’t happen.”

Under Article 1, Sec. 13 of the Texas Constitution, the state has the power to take private land for public use under certain circumstances—or to delegate that power to another entity—as long as the landowner is justly compensated.

WHAT IS EMINENT DOMAIN?

WHAT IS PRIVATE PROPERTY?

Anything not owned by the government:

WHAT IS PUBLIC USE?

Anything that will benefit the public, according to the government:

WHAT IS JUST COMPENSATION?

Includes: fair market value, damages

SOURCEs: TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE, TEXAS PROPERTY CODE/COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER
## RECENT PROPERTY LISTINGS

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<tr>
<td>78666</td>
<td>La Cima</td>
<td>117 Tulip Garden Trail</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
<td>$317,000</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>Kenneth Gezella</td>
<td>Gatehouse Properties</td>
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<td>124 Tulip Garden Trail</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$361,990</td>
<td>2,562</td>
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<td>Gatehouse Properties</td>
<td>210-637-8423</td>
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<td>78666</td>
<td>La Cima</td>
<td>125 Beautyberry Road</td>
<td>4br/2ba</td>
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<td>1,763</td>
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<td>78666</td>
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<td>516 Academy Oaks Drive</td>
<td>4br/3ba</td>
<td>$387,770</td>
<td>2,535</td>
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<td>78666</td>
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<td>520 Academy Oaks Drive</td>
<td>3br/2ba</td>
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<td>2,500</td>
<td>Kenneth Gezella</td>
<td>Gatehouse Properties</td>
<td>210-637-8423</td>
</tr>
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Residential real estate listings added to the market between 4/29/19 and 5/6/19 were provided by Austin Board of Realtors. Although every effort has been made to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of this listing, Community Impact Newspaper assumes no liability for errors or omissions. Contact the property’s agent or seller for the most current information.
DEALS THIS MONTH

DINING
- Cicci's Pizza - San Marcos ........................................ 37
- Ivar's River Pub .......................................................... 38
- Sakura Sushi and Steak ........................................ 36
- Thundercloud Subs ............................................. 37

MEDICAL
- Buda Health Center .................................................. 36
- Neo Dentistry ............................................................. 38
- San Marcos Gentle Dental .................................. 37

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- Cardinal Frame & Art .............................................. 36
- Premier Cuts Kyle .................................................... 35
- Rising Phoenix Martial Arts ................................ 36
- Hill Country Conferences ........................................ 38
- Smilin' Castle Productions ........................................ 38

RETAIL
- Silo Gallery & Glass Studio ......................................... 36

TRANSPORTATION
- Reliable Automotive .................................................. 39

ADULT HAIRCUT
- $9.95
- SAVE UP TO $7!

MYPREMIERCUTS.COM
- Kyle
  5401 South FM 1626
  Ste. #100F
  512-268-5500

- San Marcos
  1515 Aquarena Springs
  Suite 102
  512-878-2887

KID SPECIAL
- $6.95
- KIDS HAIRCUT
- SAVE UP TO $5!

Expires 6/15/19 Community Impact

"Your Family's Choice for Style"
NEWLY REMODELED

Sakura
117 Meiners St
San Marcos, TX 78666
(512) 757-8785 www.sakuratx.com

Buy 1 Dinner Entree, Get 1 Dinner Entree FREE

of equal or less value up to $20. Hibachi entrees and Hibachi table only. One coupon per table. Original coupon only. Expires 6/15/2019.

3D Fine Art Gallery
Fused Glass Supplies
Architectural Glass Studio opening in Spring

3D Fine Art Gallery
Fused Glass Supplies
Architectural Glass Studio opening in Spring
WWW.SILOGGLASS.COM | (512) 444-6494
7990 RR 12 SAN MARCOS/WIMBERLEY

Jeffrey Clark D.C.
203 Railroad St., #3C
Buda, TX 78610
T: (512) 295-4443
www.budahealth.com

Helping keep you on the field!

Treatment for:
Headaches • Neck Pain • Low Back Pain • Ankle Sprains
Shoulder Injuries • Muscle Tension • Tendonitis • Joint Pain
Plantar Fasciitis • Carpal Tunnel • Chronic Injuries • and more

FREE EXAM
Coupon must be present. Not valid with any other offer or special. Coupon not valid for Medicare, Medicaid, or Federal BlueCross patients. Expires 6/15/2019
50% of Americans Are Afraid of the Dentist
We Understand, and Cater to Your Fears

J. Robert Donnelly, DDS
John Drisdale, DMD
SanMarcosDental.com

50% of Americans Are Afraid of the Dentist

Welcome
Dental Exam & X-Ray
$29.00
New Patient Only
Some restrictions may apply. Call for details.
Offer good for 60 days.

CALL TODAY! 512-396-5225

At San Marcos Gentle Dental we offer many amenities to ensure that you are comfortable throughout your visit.

- Sedation & Nitrous Oxide
- Emergencies seen same day
- New Patients Welcome
- Cosmetic Dentistry
- Dental Implants
- Same Day Crowns
- No Drill Laser Dentistry
- Insurance Accepted & Filed for You
- Se Habla Español

San Marcos Gentle Dental
1337 Thorpe Lane
San Marcos, TX
512-396-5225

We have treated patients who have had:

- Negative dental experiences
- Problems getting numb
- No treatment for many years
- Needle Phobia

Kiss your dental fears goodbye!

ENDLESS PIZZA & MORE!

CRAVE ON
Save on!

FREE ADULT BUFFET PIZZA
WITH PURCHASE OF AN ADULT BUFFET
& TWO LARGE DRINKS

CARRYOUT
GET A $5 CHEESE OR PEPPERONI PIZZA

Offer Good for 60 Days.

San Marcos Gentle Dental
1337 Thorpe Lane
San Marcos, TX 78666
512-396-5225

50% of Americans Are Afraid of the Dentist

New Patient Cleaning, Exam & X-Rays
$69.00
New Patient Only
Some restrictions may apply. Call for details.
Offer good for 60 days.

We have treated patients who have had:

- No treatment for many years
- Problems getting numb
- Negative dental experiences
- Needle Phobia

Smart Food for Good People

Since 1975

City of San Marcos
1035 N State Hwy 123
(just E. of I-35 next to McDonald’s)
512-738-7213

DRIVE-THRU available

COUPON REDEEMABLE AT SAN MARCOS LOCATION ONLY
A New Way To A Healthy Smile

Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

165 Elmhurst, Suite A Kyle, Texas 78640
512-722-6131

EXEMPLARY GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK REVIEWS,
AND NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORHOOD FAVORITE

No dental insurance? Call about the Neo Dental Plan
Se Habla Español.

New Patient Special!
$99.99
Includes: Dental Exam, Digital X-Rays & Teeth Cleaning ($300 value)
*Not valid with any other offer or special. Cleaning is based on bone level health (periodontitis).
Expires 6/15/19
(restorative crown not included)

Dental Implant Services
starting at $1,600
FREE Second opinions
FREE Implant consults & Wisdom teeth consults

Like Us on Facebook for Patient Education & Promotions!

New Braunfels Home & Garden Show
2019

NEW BRAUNFELS CONVENTION CENTER
GOOD FOR ONE FREE ADMISSION $5 VALUE

EXPERTS FOR ANY PROJECT ONE WEEKEND ONLY
SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2019 - 10AM-5PM
SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019 - 11AM-4PM

The soul of the city

• Winner of 2019 Stars of San Marcos Best Patio
• Dog friendly garden area along the river with full bar and food service.
• Brunch served Saturday and Sunday from 11am-3pm
• Live music Sunday evenings 6-8pm (weather permitting)

701 Cheatham Street • San Marcos TX 78666
(512)878-0303 • www.riverpubtx.com
It’s Veteran’s Day Every Monday In June!
We Are Giving Back to OUR Community’s Vets

20% OFF ANY SERVICE
(up to $300)

Offer Valid on Any Monday in the month of June thru June 24th.
Excludes Tires and Batteries One Vehicle Per Household.
Must Present Coupon at time of service.

A/C SERVICE SPECIAL
ONLY $29.95
Includes Inspecting for Leaks, Pressure Testing, and Complete Visual Inspection of A/C System
Freon is extra. Cannot be combined with other offers. Shop supply fees may apply. Expires 6/30/19 AP0519

FREE ALIGNMENT
($89.95 value)
with the Purchase of 4 Tires
PLUS FREE LIFETIME Tire Balance & Rotation, Air Check and Tire Repair. Includes ALL Makes & Sizes.
0% Financing Available
Road Hazard Available

AUTO & TRUCK REPAIR SPECIALS

$15 OFF any repair over $100
$45 OFF any repair over $300
$75 OFF any repair over $500

$45.95
FULL Synthetic Oil Change
w/ 4 Tire Rotation & 52 Point Inspection

VISIT OUR STATE OF THE ART AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR FACILITIES

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512-361-3075
3420 FM 967
Buda, TX 78610

Coming Summer 2019!

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Kyle, TX 78640

SAN MARCOS
512-667-7390
1201 N State Hwy 123
San Marcos, TX 78666

Keep It Local, Keep It RELIABLE
Keep It Local, Keep It RELIABLE
Experience personalized Maternity Care.

Family-Centered Birthing Experience
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