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Dear Client:

Some Austinites have been upset by the reduction of street parking – especially in the downtown area. Many retail merchants have been negatively impacted. Now, the City of Austin has published an elaborate handbook with detailed instructions on how to remove even more street parking. The stated purpose: to convert a parking space into a “street patio” or a “parklet.” And the handbook is being distributed free of charge.

Two brochures have just been made available by Austin’s Transportation Department: one outlines the **permitting process for setting up a sidewalk café, the other sets out guidelines for a “street patio.”** One permit applies to both. Austin City Council Resolution No. 20120322-067 directed the creation of the street patio program. Several street patios have already been authorized. **What’s new is the aggressive marketing process,** demonstrated this week by publication of the colorful handbook containing step-by-step guidelines.

“The new user-friendly handbooks contain a wealth of photos, illustrative drawings, and graphics,” boasts the City. “An updated, easy-to-use permit application also is available online.” If you want to personally check out the brochures, go to www.austintexas.gov/sidewalkcafe.

The City explains its action this way: **“A street patio (a.k.a. ‘parklet’) is a sidewalk café created in street space formerly devoted to parking.** It is permitted as a type of sidewalk café. **By converting street space to a use that serves people,** street patios can help make cities more welcoming and people-friendly.” Couple this with what it says about sidewalk cafés:

“Sidewalk cafés and street patios add vibrancy, amenities and people to Austin streets. They support local businesses, create a sense of place in neighborhoods and business districts, beautify the streetscape, and create walkable destinations for residents.”

There was no reference to impact on people who drive vehicles, when the City announced the availability of the handbooks. There was also **no indication of a limit on the number of parking spaces that could be converted to Street Patios,** except to say they were “temporary,” and because they were a form of sidewalk café, they could be limited to restaurants or other businesses that are licensed to serve food and beverages, including alcohol.

With Uber and Lyft bringing their ride-hailing models back to Austin this week, Capital Metro is sticking its toe into the ride-hailing tidal wave. Austin’s public transportation system, known for its buses that patrol city streets on a *schedule*, is issuing an app that lets select customers hail a ride *on-demand*.

Capital Metro is testing the on-demand waters on a very limited basis. Its service, called “Pickup by CapMetro,” is restricted to a northeast service area east of IH35, north from Manor Rd and Airport Blvd to Little Walnut Creek. **The service is available only on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays between 9 am and 6 pm.**

To get more specific, “Pickup by CapMetro’s” service area includes the **Mueller Development, Capital Plaza, Coronado Hills and University Hills, and Cameron Road near Dobie Middle School.** The pilot program begins Tuesday, June 6. For a limited time, this on-demand service by CapMetro is free.

If you download and use the app, or call CapMetro at 512-369-6200, **“we can be there within 15 minutes,” claims the public transit company.** The announcement didn’t mention the vehicle CapMetro would send to pick you up, but a graphic illustrating the service shows a van.

Step aside “Live Music Capital of the World.” Make way for “The New Barbecue Capital of the World.” After exhaustive research (see our last week’s edition), the bible of all things Texas, *Texas Monthly (TM)*, this week declared **“Austin has the greatest concentration of truly excellent barbecue of any city in the world.”** Who are we to argue?

In fact, *TM* drilled even deeper, narrowing it down to a barbecue lover’s zip code haven. **“The 78702 zip code alone features enough stellar barbecue – Franklin Barbecue, La Barbecue, Micklethwait’s Craft Meats, Freedmen’s Bar, Sam’s BBQ, and Kerlin BBQ – to make most other cities in Texas blush,”** *TM* noted.

TM went on to point out: **“Of course, there’s plenty of other great barbecue in the city as well, but sometimes it’s hard to navigate when and where to visit, or what to expect when you get there.”** Surprise, surprise. *TM* has published a “cheat sheet” that lists more than a dozen BBQ joints in Austin, including many off its Top 50 list of the best in Texas and including oldies but goodies such as Iron Works and House Park. “This guide,” it proclaims, will make “sure you have the best possible barbecue and the best possible experience eating it.”

To bolster *TM*’s designation of Austin as the “Barbecue Capital of the World,” there are more than enough places to chow down on BBQ inside the city limits. But just in case you can’t get your fill here, don’t forget that within about an hour’s drive, you can also reach the **BBQ destinations of Taylor, Elgin, Lockhart, Luling, Llano and Lexington (TM’s #1 in Texas).**

One measure of Austin's vitality is the amount of investment money pouring into the area. And one segment benefitting from a heavy surge in investment is multi-family housing -- primarily apartments. There is no sign of the dollar influx slowing, even though apartments are being constructed at an impressive pace.

The Austin area's population continues to boom. Many of the people moving to Austin are in the millennial demographic. **This is a segment of the population that rents longer than previous generations**, according to GlobeSt.com. **As a result, multifamily development is in overdrive.**

In 2017, Austin joined by Houston and Dallas are slated to **top US rankings for scheduled apartment deliveries with almost as many as last year**, Yeun Yung, CEO of Casoro Capital, told GlobeSt.com. Casoro is a private equity firm that invests in multifamily properties and developments.

The perspective on this claim: **22% of the total estimated increase in inventory across the 50 largest US metros in 2016 was in Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio.** This is a huge share of the big US metro markets. And these apartment units are being leased at a respectable rate.

Yung reports **"American investors considering multifamily properties in 2017 are not alone. The market is attracting global attention as well as US-based capital."** Okay, which countries are financing multifamily properties in Austin and the other key markets in Texas? **"Much of the money is coming out of China, though Canada and Mexico are key players as well,"** said Yung

A little above average number of hurricanes are predicted for the 2017 Atlantic season that runs from now until December. More precisely, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts between five to nine hurricanes will form. Or to put it in meteorological language: there is a 45% chance of an above-normal season ... 35% chance of a near-normal season ... and only a 20% chance of a below-normal season. Let's break it down.

The average hurricane season has 12 named storms. Of those, **six are predicted to become hurricanes and three of those six are usually major.** Hurricanes have winds of 74 mph or higher, tropical storms have winds of 39 mph or higher. NOAA does not predict *where* the storms are likely to hit.

So there is no indication if any will hit the Texas Gulf Coast. However, it has been seven years since a hurricane slammed Texas, so weathercasters are now using the "overdue" word. If this is *the* year, **check out the next item for how the Austin area could be impacted besides with just wind and heavy rains/flooding.**

Hurricane season (6/1/17-11/30/17) started this week. Those new to Austin could be forgiven if they say “Hey, what’s the big deal? We’re a long way from the coast.” True, Austin weather is not impacted by a hurricane every year. But hurricanes do have an impact this far inland. And, frankly, Texas is long past due to be hit. The last Texas landfall of a hurricane was 2008.

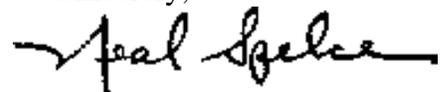
Longtime weather watchers will tell you that hurricanes, and lesser events such as tropical storms, have a way of **dumping major amounts of water on Central Texas – even triggering a tornado or two.** Gale-force winds usually die down as they traverse the land mass between the Gulf Coast and the Austin area, but they are still a bit of a factor.

Major rainfall is not to be casually dismissed, especially since the Austin area has a **well-deserved reputation for flooding (due to the hills and limestone bedrock), even without a major weather-maker like a hurricane.** But there is another impact that can be felt in the Austin area if/when a bigtime hurricane hits along the Texas Gulf Coast. **We’re talking about a “flood” of refugees fleeing the ravages of the storm.** This includes the likelihood of storm surges inundating coastal cities, knocking out power for weeks and forcing residents from their homes.

Just how big a deal is the potential refugee problem? A study by a University of Georgia professor found **sea-level rise (which is already occurring), whipped up by a hurricane’s storm surge, would force thousands from their homes.** You just have to look back at September 2005 for an Austin example, when an **estimated 10,000 refugees flooded Austin** after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and other coastal cities. Then-Mayor **Will Wynn** led the effort converting the **Austin Convention Center and Palmer Events Center to house evacuees. They were provided clothes, food, and bedding.** The Austin School District helped enroll students. Medical facilities were taxed. It was a massive undertaking. The effort to handle a surge of evacuees is not to be underestimated.

Dr. Louis Overholster says there’s nothing like a hurricane to make you realize what is important in life – internet access.

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher