

The
FRONT PORCH FLYER

The Mueller Neighborhood Association Newsletter

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Cover photo by Saamiya Seraj

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Welcome to our first Front Porch Flyer of 2024!

By Sarah Seraj, FPF Editor and MNA Chair

After a successful relaunch of the Front Porch Flyer (FPF) in 2023, we're pleased to be able to continue to deliver the newsletter to your mailboxes this year! The FPF is the only physical publication in Mueller with news on issues that affect our community, as part of the community-building mission of the Mueller Neighborhood Association (MNA). The publication is completely volunteer-led, so a big thanks to the dedicated MNA members who help out with each issue. Send me a message at fpf@muellerneighborhood.org if you want to join this vibrant team.

If you're not familiar with the MNA, we're a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots initiative committed to community building through outreach, education, and dialogue. Despite the presence of other governing bodies like the Mueller Property Owners' Association, one way in which we differ is that we advocate for everyone in the neighborhood, not just property owners. Whether you're new to the neighborhood or have lived here for many years, we hope you'll consider joining us this year to help with our community-building efforts. You can join with an annual membership fee of \$5. More details at: <https://www.muellerneighborhood.org/membership>

Last year, the MNA's focus was on rebuilding our community after a period of reduced activity during the pandemic where we couldn't meet in-person or host large events. Many reported feeling a loss of connection with their neighbors during that time. To combat that, the Block Captain's Network launched a series of Coffee Chats at Quacks where neighbors could meet and get to know each other. After a highly successful launch, Coffee Chats will continue this year, with the first one slated for Jan 24th (7 pm at Quacks). This year, in addition to our carnival-style events like Fall Fest that we're known for, we're also planning to have more intimate community gatherings where we can get to know each other better. Of course, the signature events will also continue with the first one slated for April 20 with our annual Eid celebration event.

If you want to be more involved in our community but don't know where to start, come attend our monthly general meetings, where you can learn more about our upcoming initiatives. By the time you receive this newsletter in your mailbox, the first general meeting of the year will likely already have passed, but we have another one on February 17th, Saturday, 10 am at the Austin Energy Building, where we will also be celebrating the Lunar New Year! Hope to see you there.



MNA UPCOMING EVENTS 2024

JAN 13	1ST MNA MEETING OF THE YEAR TIME: 10 AM VENUE: AUSTIN ENERGY BUILDING	JAN 24	COFFEE CHAT HOSTED BY BLOCK CAPTAIN NETWORK TIME: 7 PM VENUE: QUACKS
FEB 17	2ND MNA MEETING OF THE YEAR TIME: 10 AM VENUE: AUSTIN ENERGY BUILDING	MAR 16	3RD MNA MEETING OF THE YEAR TIME: 10 AM VENUE: AUSTIN ENERGY BUILDING
MAR 20	COFFEE CHAT HOSTED BY BLOCK CAPTAIN NETWORK TIME: 7 PM VENUE: QUACKS	APR 20	MNA EID CELEBRATION TIME: 11 AM - 2 PM VENUE: TSO

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MNA's End-of-year Potluck

We had a lot of fun at our end-of-year gathering in December, with a great turnout of members. Since it was a potluck, many members also got a chance to show off their culinary skills. See below for a collection of photos from the event!



Photos taken by Sally Acevedo and Sarah Seraj



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Birds of Mueller

By Amy Adams

Do you ever hear birdsong while taking walks in the neighborhood and wonder what kind of bird it is? Or perhaps you're curious about the unusual sounds our grackles make.

Mueller is birdy. From the Black Bellied Whistling Duck to the Great Blue Heron to the Monk Parakeet, Mueller is a bird's paradise. We are swarmed with birds here and they are hiding in plain sight!

AND, we have our very own birding expert right here in Mueller! Her name is Judith Bailey and she has been watching birds as a hobby for decades. After taking birding classes from the Travis Audubon Society in the 2000s, she started leading field trips for beginning birders and is now one of Austin's resident bird experts. I decided to chat with her for this article so she could tell us non-birders about how to start learning about our feathered friends.

Judith started being curious about birds as a child in Liberty, Texas when she and her mother would walk around and look for what was making pretty songs in the trees. That started a life-long habit.

What do you need to get started birdwatching?

Judith says that just one thing is needed to get started as a new birdwatcher: curiosity. Well, and your eyes and your ears. Of course it helps if you get some binoculars and a bird guidebook. Judith recommends any small 8 x 42 binoculars and The Sibley Guide to Birds 2nd edition, but all you really have to do is walk slowly and look. Maybe get comfortable on a bench or a rock and just stare at a tree and see what you see and hear what you hear. They seem hidden but they are there if you look and listen.

After just looking at birds for a while Judith started to notice differences – things like the shape of the wings, the color on the breast of the bird, the color of the beak and whether it was long and pointy or short and fat – that she would check against her bird guide books.

A few (out of over 100 kinds!) birds to look for in Mueller



House Sparrow – Supposedly this bird species came over to the states from England around 1851 and set up nest in Brooklyn, and then headed West over the next century. They are common in

Mueller. This is a picture of a breeding male. The females are a little lighter in color.



Blue Jay – Everyone knows these beautiful cheeky guys but did you know they are very intelligent and have tight family bonds? And that they love acorns so much that they are credited with spreading oak trees after the last glacial period.



Northern Mockingbird – They like to perch high in a tree or run low on the ground and are known to mimic other birds.



Great-tailed Grackle – The unofficial mascot of Austin, hooting and screeching and being weird and stealing tacos right out of your hand. Fun fact: when they look kind of bedraggled and bald and frankly, half dead, around autumn, it's because they just molted and are growing all new feathers.



Cooper's Hawk – These are the kind of harsh and scary guys but also cool and fierce, that zoom down from the air and kill pigeons on your back porch. That can be annoying as a human but it's just a day of work for them. They are common but can be hard to spot because they are very sneaky.



White Winged Dove – No not from Stevie Nicks! If you look closely you can see their blue "eyeshadow."



Mourning Dove – This is the one you see on the top of a house across the street sadly saying "wooo woo" in a mournful voice or walking small-headedly in front of you as you traverse a sidewalk. Very common with a voice like a lament.



European Starling – Another pond-jumper, this one started showing up from boats heading into New York from Europe around the 1890s, first seen in Central Park. Now they are one of the most common birds in the U.S. with white spots in the winter and glossy black feathers in the summer. Tend to be loud.



Monk Parakeets – Urban legend has it that a breeder or pet owner let a few of his pets fly free and they bred the huge group of these South American natives in Austin years ago, and now you can find them in huge groups all over the city. So far, these colonies have not had a negative effect on the local ecosystem.



American Bittern – Prized among bird-watchers, this bird is very uncommon and secretive and has been seen in Mueller ponds for about a year. Many Travis County birders come to Mueller just to see this bird.

Note: All images are from AllAboutBirds.org

Bird Classes

The Travis Audubon Society offers educational opportunities on bird identification and habitat awareness for all ages. For more information email info@travisaudubon.org or check out their website: <https://travisaudubon.org/>.

The Mueller Neighborhood Association presents
Mueller Eid Celebration

Date: April 20, 2024 (Sat), 11 AM - 3 PM



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Exploring Together the Green Heart of Mueller

By Sally Acevedo

As residents of Mueller, we may feel extremely familiar with most that our neighborhood has to offer. But whether you're a newer resident like me or a seasoned veteran, a review of our outdoor spaces can be helpful once in a while.

Here is a list of 10 must-visit places in Mueller for outdoor activities, ideal for families, friends, or spending time alone within nature.

1. **Lake Park:** This 30-acre park, located near the Mueller information center, features a 6.5-acre lake, an outdoor amphitheater, an interactive play area, a picnic peninsula, a loop trail, and public art.
2. **Ella Wooten Park:** Situated in the heart of Mueller's first neighborhood, this 2.5-acre park includes a playground, an extensive lawn, and a junior Olympic-sized pool with an adjacent pool for children.
3. **Northwest Greenway:** Near Mueller's retail center, this green space offers a 10-foot-wide walk and bike trail, an accessible play area, and a picnic area with shaded trellis.
4. **Paggi Square:** Located next to Mueller's Shop Houses, this 1/3-acre park has a multi-sport court for games like pétanque and bocce and a grassy spectator hillside.
5. **Southwest Greenway:** Near the first neighborhood of Mueller, this park features a restored prairie with native plants and trails for walking and biking.
6. **John Gaines Park:** With 132 plots for community gardens, this park also offers a play area, a large lawn for sports, and a community pool with swim lanes and a separate pool for children.
7. **Mary Elizabeth Branch Park:** This 3.5-acre space near Dell Children's Medical Center includes beach

volleyball courts, a dog run, and an open area for social games like Bocce.

8. **Jessie Andrews Park:** This park features an outdoor dining area, a nature-inspired play area, shaded strolling paths, tables for board games, and a space for live performances.
9. **Mueller Greenways:** These trails surround the neighborhood and connect to other Austin parks, offering a wide network of paths for walking and biking.
10. **5-Mile Walk and Bike Trail:** Upon completion, this trail will offer a circular route to enjoy the local scenery and nature.

Mueller is home to approximately 14,000 residents currently (expected to be 17,000 when completed), reflecting the vibrant community that enjoys and benefits from these wonderful outdoor facilities. These spaces offer not only recreation and fun but also foster a sense of community and belonging among residents of all ages.

Now that you've discovered **Mueller's 10 most charming parks in Austin, Texas**, I encourage you to explore them. Whether alone, with friends, or with family, every corner of Mueller awaits your discovery. Share with us your experiences and discoveries; if you know of any other notable places in our community, do not hesitate to write to us at fpf@muellerneighborhood.org. Your suggestions are valuable and will help us enrich future editions of the *Front Porch Flyer*.



Mueller Lake Park by Saamiya Seraj



Walking in Mueller by Saamiya Seraj

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The Mueller Founding Goals

Andrew Clements, VP Mueller Mixed-Use POA

Is the Mueller Neighborhood truly unique among Austin neighborhoods...is it really all that different? Sure, its 711-acre site was once the city airport (closed to service in 1999). And the land could have been added to the University of Texas campus or used for the State of Texas' office buildings. But due to the concerted and combined efforts of existing neighborhoods surrounding Mueller, the 1984 Citizens for Airport Relocation (CARE) Plan, and the 1996 City Council appointed 16-member RMMA Redevelopment Process and Goals Task Force – a vision of a compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community was created. The vision, that offered alternatives to land-consumptive and automobile-dependent development patterns, articulated 6 clear Goals for the Mueller Master Planned Community:

- 1. Fiscal Responsibility:** Redevelopment must create a positive revenue stream that will fund on-site infrastructure and increase the City's tax base for the benefit of all citizens.
- 2. Economic Development:** The project should serve to reinforce Austin's role in an increasingly global marketplace and create a wide range of employment opportunities for a diversity of the community's citizens.
- 3. East Austin Revitalization:** The project must promote economic development opportunities within East Austin, giving local residents a direct stake in redevelopment.
- 4. Compatibility with Surrounding Neighborhoods:** Development must maintain and enhance the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods, providing complementary linkages, land uses, and transportation patterns.
- 5. Diversity:** Redevelopment must offer a wide range of housing choices in order to create a new community of socially and economically diverse residents.
- 6. Sustainability:** Development should be planned in a way that promotes energy and water efficiency, environmental quality, reduced auto dependency, watershed protection and green space preservation.

As 2024 begins, it has been 15 years since the first Mueller residents moved in – and we can step back to evaluate if the Goals are being met. The first two Goals undoubtedly have been and are being met; Mueller is outperforming all expectations in these categories. The third and fourth Goals are more difficult to gauge, and are somewhat “double-edged swords” in that Mueller's success and desirability (as a place to live, work, and play) certainly provides development opportunities but also contributes to East Austin gentrification and rising property values. In terms of economic diversity, Mueller's Affordable Homes program has provided an impressive 25% of total for-sale and for-rent residences for families earning less than the area's median income – but socially, unfortunately, Mueller is less racially diverse than the rest of Austin. Between 2010 and 2020, Mueller's census

districts lost Black and Hispanic residents, as a percentage of total neighborhood population. Austin's past history of segregation contributes, along with other institutional racism and biases. More work needs to be done both at the institutional and personal level to overcome this and work towards the diverse and equitable future envisioned in Goal 5. Finally, in terms of sustainability, Mueller is the first neighborhood in Texas to earn LEED for Neighborhood Development Stage 3 Gold Certification (a very big deal!).

2024 is a very important year for the Mueller Neighborhood. The Master Developer Agreement (MDA) comes to an end in December 2024 after which the property owners in Mueller become responsible for all the functions of managing our neighborhood. For example, think about the management of parks, pools, and common areas, and other property management issues, which are currently handled by Catellus Development Corporation and Associa (the current property management company). Maintaining and building a diverse resident population will remain crucial, as will participation of renters, who are half of Mueller residents. If you want to get your voice heard, you can get involved in Transition Planning (check out <https://muellerpoa.com/committees>). Much more information forthcoming!

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YOUR MUELLER EXPERT

Hello, Neighbor!

As a "Mueller Pioneer", I've been an active member of this wonderful community since 2008, and I like to think I know the real estate market in this neighborhood quite well. If you're considering moving in, out, or within Mueller - or anywhere in Central Texas - give me a call!

- Member of original wave of Mueller residents in 2008
- Former Chair of the Mueller Neighborhood Association
- Current member of the Mueller Commission
- Current elected resident member of the Mixed-Use Board of the Mueller Property Owners Association

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