



**TRAVIS
AUDUBON**
Listen. Look. And Learn.

Inspiring Conservation through Birding

3710 Cedar Street, Box 5
Austin, TX. 78705
512.300. BIRD (2473)
www.travisaudubon.org
info@travisaudubon.org

June 9, 2020

To the Planning Commission:

My name is Nicole Netherton and I'm the Executive Director of Travis Audubon Society here in Austin.

Travis Audubon was founded in 1952 by Central Texas birders who were interested in conserving habitat for the birds they love. In 1985, preeminent University of Texas at Austin zoologist Dr. Frank Blair gifted the Society his property at 5401 E MLK, we believe at the request of his wife Fern, who was an avid birder. Travis Audubon has since set those 10 acres aside as a nature preserve in a rapidly developing part of Austin. Blair Woods, as it has come to be known, is one of three sanctuaries that Travis Audubon owns and maintains.

Since 1985, Blair Woods has been the site of woodland habitat restoration and more recently, has been the focus of our youth education programming. We see the preserve as a community asset that we hope to share with children and families in a relatively nature-deficient part of Austin. As part of the "Cities Connecting Children to Nature" initiative, in-depth GIS mapping identified nature deficits for communities in 78721 and 78723, the zip codes adjacent to Blair Woods, which received scores of 7 out of 10, indicating high levels of nature "need." Blair Woods serves an important role in its community.

Because it is an important part of our mission to conserve this land, restore and manage wildlife habitat, and provide environmental education, Travis Audubon opposes the request for the adjacent property at 5201 E MLK to be developed with MF-6 zoning. We support the City of Austin and Stonegate Neighborhood Association's assessment that a lower-density zoning designation would be more appropriate for the site, and we agree with their opinion that MF-3 is a more suitable choice.

Our main opposition to MF-6 concerns the high density and impervious cover allowances for surface parking. Blair Woods is home to Coleman Springs, named after the Republic of Texas Fort that was adjacent to the property. The possibility of flooding and pollution of this water source from runoff from the proposed 80% impervious cover is a huge concern for the overall health of the preserve. Damage to the springs would have detrimental effects to the wildlife and habitat at Blair Woods. We can support increasing the density above SF-3, and do support the affordable housing .SH designation, but think MF-6 is too aggressive for this site. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Nicole Netherton
Executive Director, Travis Audubon