



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

*Inspiring Conservation through Birding*

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July 14, 2020

To the Planning Commission:

Travis Audubon remains in favor of MF-3 zoning for the property adjacent to Blair Woods, 5201 E MLK. We support the City of Austin and Stonegate Neighborhood Association's assessment that a lower-density zoning designation is more appropriate for the site.

We have gathered independent geological and hydrological assessments of both tracts. We now understand that increasing impervious cover to 65% at 5201 E MLK is unlikely (but not impossible) to affect the pond, wetlands, and drainages on our property. We continue to have concerns about other effects of high-density development adjacent to the restored habitat.

Travis Audubon will continue to stand for development at scale rather than maximal up-zoning; the City can provide protection for natural spaces and still provide housing in growing neighborhoods. We appreciate that Thrower showed several examples of MF-6 development in their discussion, but we would like to ask whether any of them are next door to a 10-acre nature preserve?

Blair Woods is the only greenspace within a 10-minute walk for almost 1000 neighbors in this community. That number will only continue to increase. Being sure that the preserve is protected as even more people move to this part of town benefits everyone. The Austinites who will live along MLK in 20 or 50 or 100 years will thank the Commission for having the foresight to balance development with protection for an important natural and historical site that future generations can enjoy.

We must think about and try to avoid potential unintended negative effects of such intense development so near the preserve. Travis Audubon's mission is to be good stewards of this habitat both now and in the future, and that requires us to support zoning no higher than MF-3.

Sincerely,

Nicole Netherton  
Executive Director, Travis Audubon

# 10-Minute Walk Impact Report

The Trust for Public Land

August 6, 2019

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THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

## Project Areas

Blair Woods

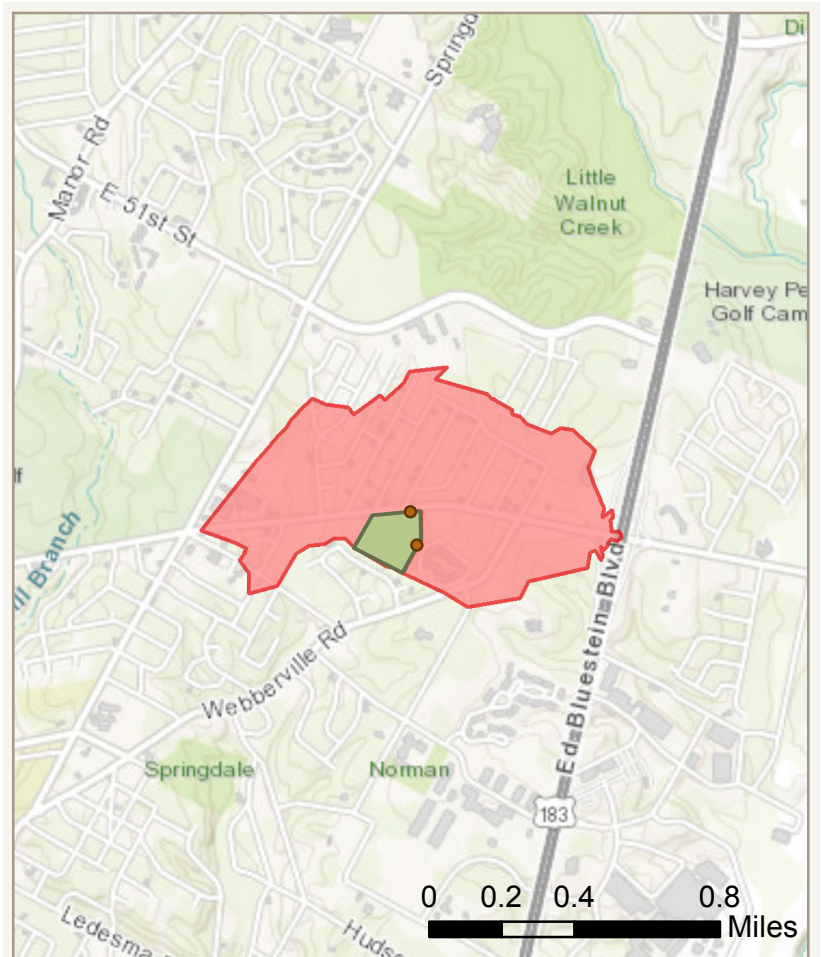
All statistical results are aggregated for the listed project areas and their service areas. Service areas are based on 10-minute (1/2 mile) walk times from project access points defined for each project area and based on the walkable road network. **Accuracy of demographic calculation diminishes outside of cities, where population served may be underestimated.**

For TPL staff only: Acres listed for Land Protection Projects are official from Finance, while Park Development Project acres are estimated based on GIS calculations.

Area Statistics	Value
Project Area Count	1.00
Project Acres	9.80
Service Area Acres	205.87

## Map Legend

- Access Points
- User-Defined Project Boundary
- 10-minute walk service areas



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# 10-Minute Walk Impact Report

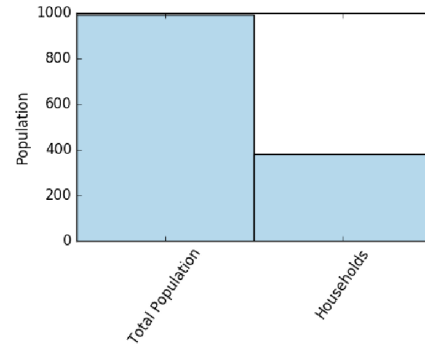
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August 6, 2019

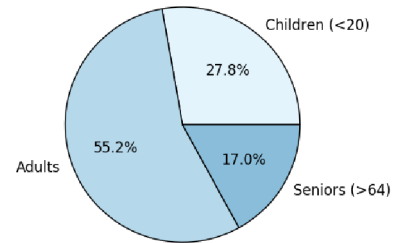
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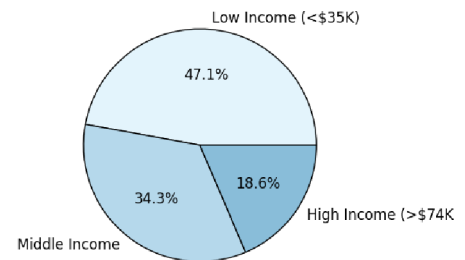
Population	Served
Total Population	993
Households	381



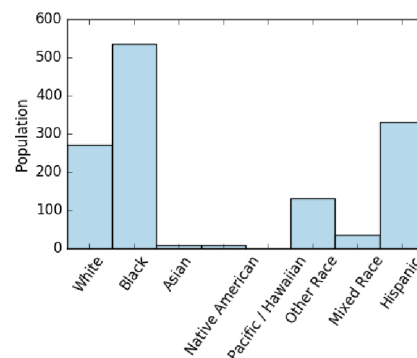
Age	Served	Percent
Children (less than age 20)	276	27.79
Adults (age 20 to age 64)	548	55.19
Seniors (age 65 and up)	169	17.02



Income	Served	Percent
Low (less than \$35,000)	180	47.24
Middle (from \$35,000 to \$75,000)	131	34.38
High (\$75,000 and up)	71	18.64



Race/Ethnicity	Served	Percent
White	271	27.29
Black	536	53.98
Asian	10	1.01
Native American	8	0.81
Pacific / Hawaiian	0	0.00
Other Race	131	13.19
Mixed Race	36	3.63
Hispanic *	331	33.33



\* US Census captures Hispanic origin separate from race

Demographic Information is derived from ESRI 2018 Demographic Forecast Block Groups data.

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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

June 17, 2020

To the Planning Commission

RE: C14-2020-0031.SH – E MLK Rezoning

My name is Mark Wilson. I am a member of the Travis Audubon Board, with Director responsibilities for Blair Woods Nature Preserve, located at 5401 East MLK Blvd.

First, I would like to affirm the Travis Audubon Board's unanimous support for the position outlined by our Executive Director, Nicole Netherton, regarding the zoning change request at 5201 East MLK.

Secondly, I want to bring the Commissioner's attention specifically to the historic Coleman Springs, located in Blair Woods. Listed in Brunnar's Spring of Texas, it is believed to have been an important water source along the El Camino del Real de los Tejas and the key spring for the 1830's Fort Coleman, located in the immediate area of the zoning change request. Coleman Springs is a gravel bed spring, different from the aquifer springs found in west Travis County. While the spring flow is certainly less than in historic times, it still emerges from the ground today, near an old well-house located in the preserve, replenishing the pond and wetlands. This flow depends entirely on surface rain infiltration in the local drainage basin. The proposed MF-6 zoning will allow up to 80% impervious cover on the adjacent property. This could well cause the end of this historic spring with all the detrimental effects you can imagine to the pond, wetlands and the habitat we seek to restore.

Blair Woods is an important community asset, providing green space in a natural setting needed by any thriving community. Many thousands of volunteer hours have gone into restoring the habitat. The proposed very high density development (MF-6) on the property immediately adjacent to the preserve is not appropriate. The City of Austin staff have wisely recommended a lower density zoning (MF-3) that will allow more housing without the extreme amount of impervious cover allowed by MF-6.

We support the recommendation for MF-3 zoning, as do most of the surrounding neighbors, and hope you will agree.

Respectfully,

*Mark Wilson*

Mark Wilson, RN, FNP-C  
Travis Audubon Board Member  
Austin, Texas