

Austin, Travis County announce shelter-in-place orders to take effect at midnight



Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt and Austin-Travis County interim Health Authority Mark Escott attend a press conference on an Austin and Travis County shelter-in-place order March 24. (Courtesy Travis County)

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By **Olivia Aldridge** | 1:20 PM Mar 24, 2020 CDT | Updated 1:37 PM Mar 24, 2020 CDT

Travis County and the city of Austin announced shelter-in-place orders at a March 24 press conference. While not identical, both orders dictate that individuals should remain in their places of residence except to conduct essential activities and that nonessential businesses should have employees work from home. The orders take effect at 11:59 p.m. tonight.

"At the end of the day, what [this] means is that we're asking our community to stay home to the greatest extent possible," Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt said.

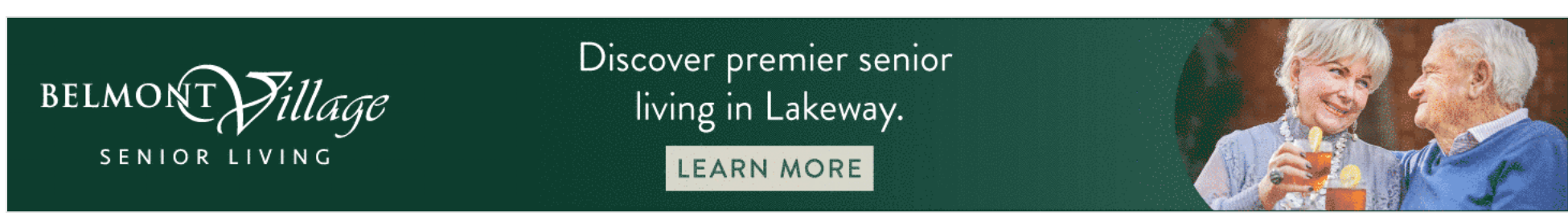
The orders come at the recommendation of Austin-Travis County Health Authority Dr. Mark Escott, who said the community should strive to reduce social contact by 90% in order to prevent the "unbridled growth of [the virus] spread." In the absence of a shelter-in-place order, Escott said statistic modeling suggests the community would require 20,000 hospital beds a day by May.

"That modeling suggests that in the short term, in the next three to four weeks, our hospitals could reach capacity," Escott said.

Adler echoed Escott and Eckhardt's "stay home, work safe" message, emphasizing the critical need to increase social distancing.

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"To the degree that you can, everybody should be staying home," Adler said.

According to **Austin's order**, essential businesses that are exempt from the order include health care operations, grocery stores, farms, social services and charitable organizations, gas stations, news media, financial institutions, hardware and supply stores, critical trades such as plumbers and electricians, mail and delivery services, laundry services, restaurants with takeaway operations, transportation, food delivery services, residential facilities and shelters, hotels and motels, moving supply services, home-based care, funeral services, educational institutions and child care facilities, and information technology services. Essential government services and businesses that offer supplies for those services are also considered essential.

Essential activities are defined as tasks related to health and safety, obtaining necessary services and supplies such as groceries, exercise that meets social distancing requirements, and caretaking duties.

In both Austin and Travis County, individuals experiencing homelessness are exempt from the shelter-in-place order, although they are encouraged to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet and to seek shelter if possible.

Williamson County also announced a shelter-in-place order at the press conference that largely echoed those that came from Austin and Travis County.

Community Impact Newspaper's coverage of Austin and Travis County shelter-in-place orders is ongoing. A story covering specifics is forthcoming. Any questions about the shelter-in-place order can be directed to aldridge@communityimpact.com.

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By **Olivia Aldridge** 📧

Olivia is the reporter for Community Impact's Central Austin edition. A graduate of Presbyterian College in upstate South Carolina, Olivia was a reporter and producer at South Carolina Public Radio before joining Community Impact in Austin.

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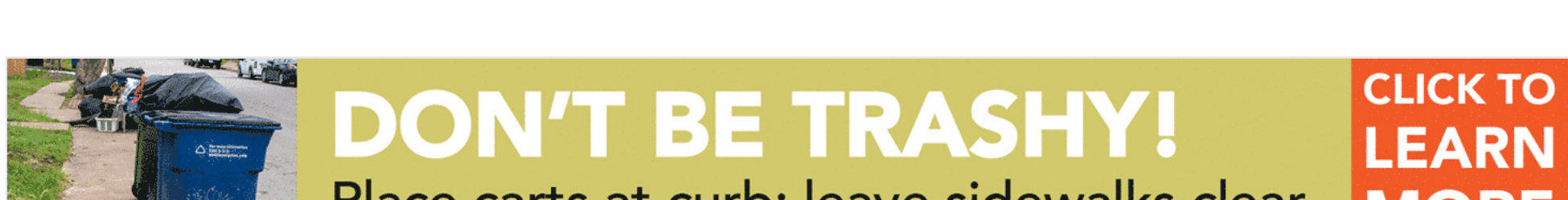
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Named after Amir's favorite pier in Port Aransas, Keepers will offer sustainably caught seafood from across the country paired with flavors from around the world.

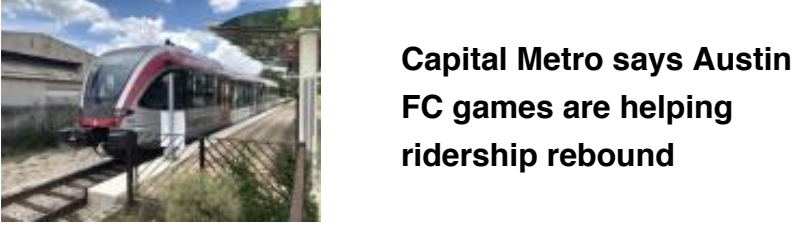


Maintaining no-kill status will require community support as intake outpaces adoptions at Austin Animal Center

As of June 30, Austin Animal Center was operating with negative kennel space for large dogs.



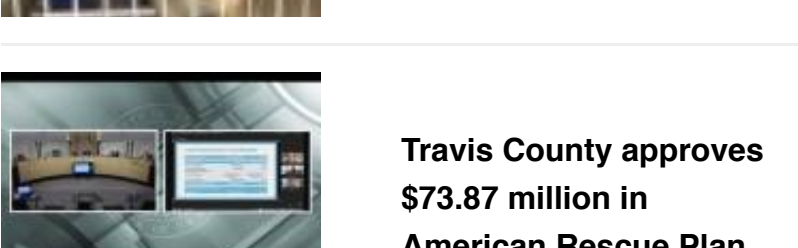
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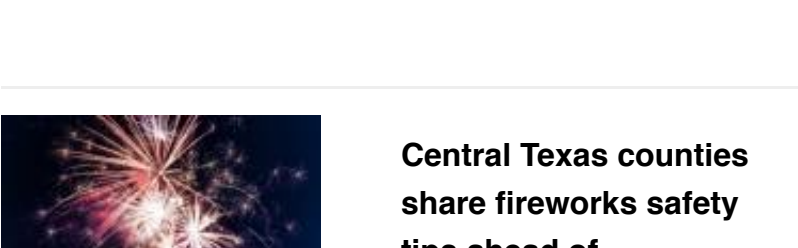
Capital Metro says Austin FC games are helping ridership rebound



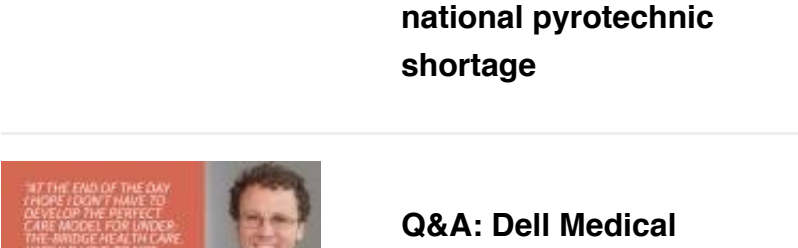
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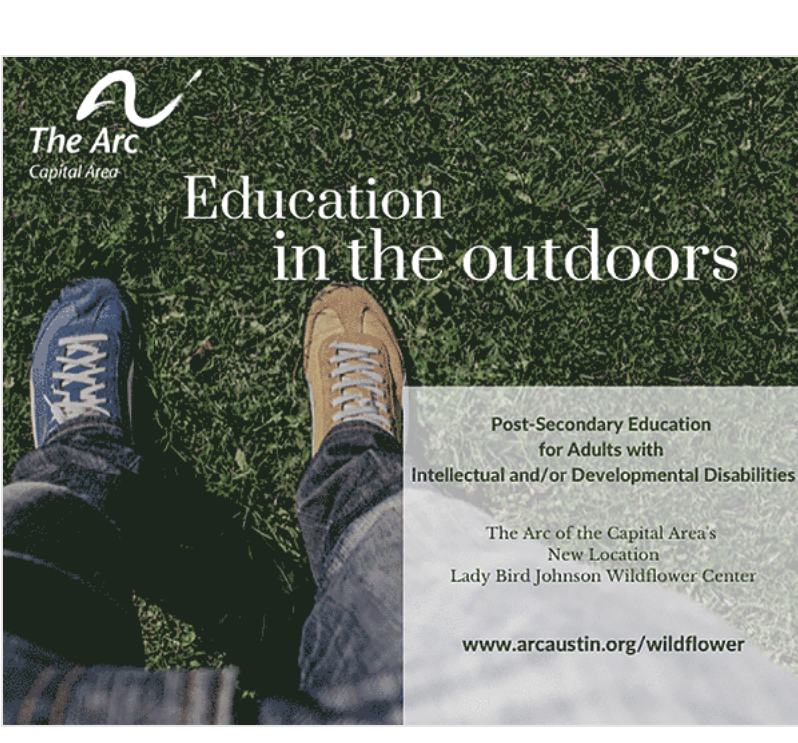
Travis County approves \$73.87 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding



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