

NORTH AUSTIN

SOUTH AUSTIN

# TURF WARS

[OPPOSITE PAGE] PHOTOS BY: BROKEN SPOKE, LEAH OVERSTREET, BOARDWALK, KATE LESUEUR; ICE CREAM, ANNIE RAY; DRIVE-THRU MENU AND HIGH SCHOOL, CORY RIVADEMAR; ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE, NICK SIMONITE. PHOTOS COURTESY BARTON SPRINGS PICNIC AND HOME SLICE. STORE PHOTO FROM WIKICOMMONS.

If you live in North Austin, chances are you've met über-hip South Austinites who "never go above the river." And why would they? They have Zilker Park, Barton Springs, ACL Fest and plenty of weirdness right at their doorsteps. And the opposite is true, too: There are Northerners who would rather walk over hot coals than get stuck in the crowds and traffic on the Southside. Plus, they've got stellar shopping at the Domain, hiking and biking trails at Walnut Creek Park, and have you been to Burnet Road lately? New restaurants are opening there every few months. It's the place to be. ¶ With this feature, we end the debate and determine which part of town really is the coolest. To settle the score, we're pitting the two sections of town against each other in nine categories—including history, real estate, schools, food, entertainment and more—to see which side has left the bigger mark or is currently booming more. May the best community win.

By MIKELA FLOYD KINNISON & SAM SUMPTER

# HISTORY

HOW DO THE NORTH AND SOUTH COMMUNITIES' PASTS MEASURE UP?



## When

Austin (originally named Waterloo) was founded in 1839, it was bordered in the north by 15th Street. Unless you were being checked into the State Lunatic Asylum—established farther out in essential isolation in the 1850s—you weren't likely to venture beyond that. All that changed a few decades later. With the river serving as a natural barrier in the south, it made sense that Austin would first grow north, explains Mike Miller, manager and city archivist at the Austin History Center. The real expansion began in 1891 when **Hyde Park**, Austin's first suburb, was plotted, and a streetcar line was built to ferry residents downtown. "As the need for housing grew, they would continue to add neighborhoods," says Miller, "then smaller businesses would pop up to support [the area]."

As iconic 'hoods, including **Brentwood**, **Allandale** and **Rosedale**, continued to grow and flourish, big business moved in. From **High-**



Landmarks (clockwise from left): Avenue B Grocery, State Lunatic Asylum and Broken Spoke

**land Mall**, Austin's first suburban shopping mall, opening in 1971, to huge tech hubs like **National Instruments**, founded in 1976, the area we know as Austin continued to stretch north. Fortunately, the community has managed to maintain the original "weird" essence that makes the city special—even in the face of growth, commercialization and oft-lamented condo construction. "I think this area has a great vibe because it's still Old Austin," says Bill Goodpasture, a longtime Austinite who is a vendor for Room Service Vintage on North Loop. "We're the last bastion—this is it."

AVENUE B GROCERY PHOTO BY LEANN MUELLER. STATE LUNATIC ASYLUM PHOTO FROM WIKICOMMONS.



SOUTH AUSTIN



## Former

*Austin Chronicle* editor Mike Clark-Madison called Southeast Austin "The Land the City Forgot" in 1998. And while it's true that things slow down a bit down South, there's no forgetting this booming section of town. "For many years, South Austin was neglected by the city, and the area developed a laid-back sense of identity," says Miller. "As Austin became a music town, musicians and other artists moved to different parts of South Austin because rents were cheap, and that creative culture just added to the vibe." During the past 20 years, the area—especially the super-popular 78704 ZIP code—became the place to live, rapidly increasing the area's property values.

**South Congress**—home of one of the city's earliest shopping centers, the 1950s-built **Twin Oaks Center**—has seen some of the biggest changes. Once a haven for drug dealers and prostitutes, SoCo is now a trendy shopping destination that features hip restaurants and boutique hotels. South Lamar Boulevard is now being revamped as well. Condos, retail stores and restaurants have started to move in, displacing existing businesses like Horseshoe Lounge—though the famous 51-year-old honky-tonk Broken Spoke still remains.



TIE. Both areas of town have fascinating histories.

MAP

## Drawing Lines

THE BOUNDARIES WE SET FOR EACH COMMUNITY

**NORTH AUSTIN:**  
45th Street to Parmer Lane  
(7.5 miles), Mopac to I-35

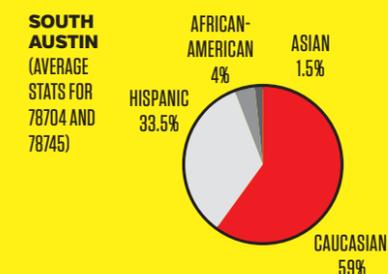
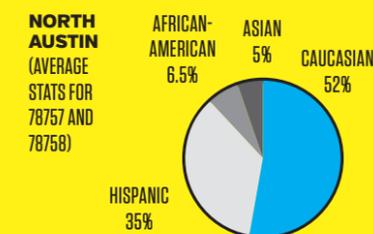
**SOUTH AUSTIN:**  
Lady Bird Lake to Slaughter Lane  
(7.5 miles), Mopac to I-35



POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

## All the People

WHO LIVES WHERE AS PER THE MOST RECENT AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY



## Curb Appeal

It's no surprise that real estate is booming in both areas of town. Here's how they stack up in home sales.

**NORTH AUSTIN**  
2006: Median price for a home was **\$190,000**.  
2016: Median price for a home is **\$375,000**, an increase of **97 percent**.  
Number of homes sold in past 10 years: **9,495**

**SOUTH AUSTIN**  
2006: Median price for a home was **\$160,000**.  
2016: Median price for a home is **\$299,900**, an increase of **87 percent**.  
Number of homes sold in past 10 years: **14,256**

**WINNER: TIE.** While the North's prices have increased by 10 percent more than the South's, nearly 5,000 more homes have been sold in the latter part of town. Stats are from January 2006 to May 2016 and are courtesy of Austin Board of Realtors.

PHOTO COURTESY BROKEN SPOKE.

# SCHOOLS

WHICH AREA OFFERS MORE QUALITY EDUCATION?



School Days (from left): ACC; Bowie High School



## Whether

you're planning your kids' futures or considering going back to school yourself, the northern regions of Austin abound with educational opportunities. There's no better place to cultivate a child's artistic abilities and encourage kids to embrace their individual qualities than **McCallum High School** (along with feeder school **Lamar Middle School and Fine Arts Academy**), which boasts robust, renowned and inclusive art programs, resources and opportunities that attract teenagers from all over the city. "Talking to the seniors reflecting on their experiences, they say that during a time when you're so shaky about your identity, here you can try anything on," says McCallum counselor Allison Hersh.

Meanwhile, **Anderson High School**, home of the Fighting Trojans since the '70s, has received accolades recognizing its staff, facilities and programs. Dubbed one of the nation's best high schools by *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast*, it boasts an impressive International Baccalaureate Program graduation rate and, thanks to the addition of the Applied Technology Center, it was named one of the only T-STEM academies in Central Texas last year. And the **Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired** is a public school for Lone Star State students ages 6-21 who are blind, deaf and blind or visually impaired.

For higher education, **Austin Community College Highland Campus** is a winning choice whether your goal is to scratch off prerequisites or actually earn a degree. The campus is housed in an unconventional setting—what was previously Highland Mall—but with a capacity of 6,000 students, it's safe to say the building has officially made the transition from a shopping to a studying destination.

**This** area of town is rife with educational opportunities. For teens looking to prep for college, **James Bowie High School**, which opened in 1988, is one of the city's best. Located on more than 60 acres in Southwest Austin, the school has received numerous Gold Performance and Recognized School Awards from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). If you're not quite so far south, **William B. Travis High School** has a lot to offer, and not just its history—when it opened in 1953, it was Austin's first high school south of the river. As the Austin Independent School District's newest Early College High School, Travis also offers its students a unique opportunity to earn an associate degree while still in high school. The school earned six out of seven academic distinctions from TEA in 2015, landing it among the top 8 percent of high schools in the state.

The state's hearing-impaired community has quite an ally in the **Texas School for the Deaf**, an expansive institution on South Congress Avenue. The school educates hearing-impaired students from ages 0-22, while serving as a statewide educational resource center on deafness. And while most of the city may ceremoniously bleed burnt-orange, **St. Edward's University**, a private Catholic institution established in 1877 that sits atop a hill in SoCo, offers 70-plus undergraduate and graduate degree programs and was named the 13th Best College in the West region by *U.S. News & World Report*.



TIE: Both areas of town have great schools—lucky us.

(THIS PAGE) BOWIE HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO BY STEVEN VISNEAU. STAIRS PHOTO COURTESY AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE. (OPPOSITE PAGE) BOARDWALK PHOTO BY KATE LESUEUR. PARK PHOTO COURTESY AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION.

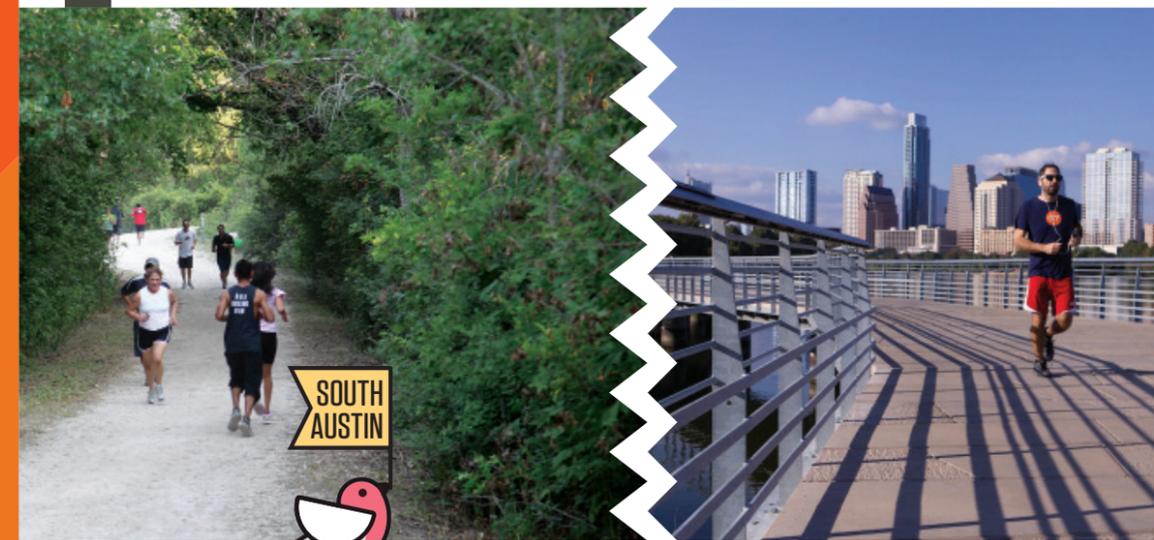
WHERE CAN YOU CONNECT MORE WITH NATURE?

# PARKS/OUTDOORS

## There's

no need to waste precious hours of your weekend fighting the crowds at Zilker Park or the swarms of tourists attempting to cross Barton Springs off their Austin bucket lists. "There are a lot of really cool neighborhood parks in North Austin: **Brentwood, Wooten, Northwest District Park, Quail Creek**," says Colin Wallis, executive director at Austin Parks Foundation. "They've got a real old-school feel, and they're all really accessible and great outdoor spaces to take your kids and have a picnic." And North Austin's outdoor amenities aren't limited to charming neighborhood spaces. The area is also home to the sprawling, 293-acre **Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park**, which Wallis describes as one of the best parks in the city.

In addition to rec fields and sports courts, picnic facilities, a pool, a playground and more, Walnut Creek features 15 miles of hiking and biking paths. And if you're looking for trails-less-traveled, not too far from the park is the **North Star Greenbelt**, which is relatively undiscovered and serves as a true urban oasis. "Even though you're in the middle of the city, you feel like you're in another world," Wallis says.



## From

true outdoorsmen to those seeking occasional recreation, there's something for everyone where South Austin's flora and fauna is concerned. "Within a very compact area, you have some of the most cherished open spaces in Austin," says Wallis. From the famous **Barton Springs** to the 350-acre **Zilker Park** to the southern part of the **Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail**, just to name a few, it's true that if you head south, you're flush with notable natural landmarks. Another local gem is the 809-acre **Barton Creek Greenbelt**, which begins at Zilker and heads south to the **Violet Crown Trail**. (The next 7-mile stretch leading to the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** just broke ground in August.) Another new addition in the South is the **Boardwalk** at Lady Bird Lake, completed in June 2014. It provides residents with seven viewing areas, an ADA-accessible pier and a new trailhead restroom along its 7,250 feet. Nearby Vic Mathias (formerly Auditorium) Shores offers Austinites of all ages a place to catch an outdoor concert during South by Southwest. In nearby Travis Heights, Little Stacy Park and Pool offers a shady playground and wading pool along Blunn Creek.

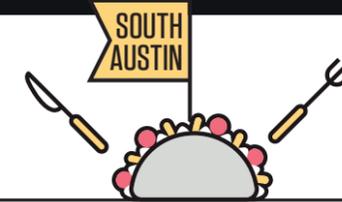


SOUTH AUSTIN You really can't top Zilker Park, Barton Springs and the Barton Creek Greenbelt.

Nature Valley (from left): Walnut Creek Park; the Boardwalk

# FOOD

WHO'S GOT THE BIGGER BUZZ ON GOOD EATS?



## While

many eateries may be opting for North Austin as their second locale, let's not forget that some of these food spots called South Austin home first. Tyson Cole's **Uchi** remains South Lamar's sushi staple and the epicenter of Paul Qui's pre-*Top Chef* fame. For Qui's latest venture, head to **Otoko**, a 12-seat Japanese restaurant located in the South Congress Hotel. If you're on the hunt for Tex-Mex, it's hard to deny the appeal of original South Austinite **Torchy's Tacos** or tasty hot spots like **Chuy's**, **Matt's El Rancho** and **Güero's**. If a burger and fries is your speed, swing by Barton Springs Road mainstay **Sandy's**, which boasts an under-\$5 lunch special on Thursdays and Saturdays.

In terms of finer fare, the newbies take the cake. Former farm-to-market trailer **Odd Duck** has cemented itself as a South Lamar favorite with its brick-and-mortar location, offering small plates ranging from pig face Parker House rolls to Wagyu rib-eye. Over on South First Street, **Elizabeth Street Cafe** serves up a unique twist on Vietnamese cuisine, featuring everything from traditional banh mi sandwiches to macarons for dessert. Next door at **Sway**, you'll find modern Thai fare made from scratch, with dishes like the Son in Law and Tiger Cry ranking among customer favorites. And if you're looking to make an evening of it, enjoy a three-course pre-fixe meal at **Lenoir**, where reservations are required.

And you can't forget all the options on wheels. South Austin is teeming with kitschy food trailers and trucks like **Hey Cupcake!**, **The Mighty Cone** and **Coat & Thai** that serve restaurant-worthy fare in the most casual of atmospheres. Even cooler: Several of the eateries have gone on to open successful brick-and-mortar locations, including the aforementioned **Odd Duck** and the ever-indulgent treats of **Gourdough's**.

### BUSINESS

## Setting Up Shop

COMPANIES THAT CALL THESE AREAS HOME

#### NORTH AUSTIN

- Golfsmith (1967)
- IBM (1967)
- Highland Mall (1971)
- National Instruments (1976)
- The Domain (2007)

#### SOUTH AUSTIN

- Austin American-Statesman (1871)
- Schlitzsky's (1971)
- Birds Barbershop (2006)
- Do512 (2006)
- Treehouse (2011)

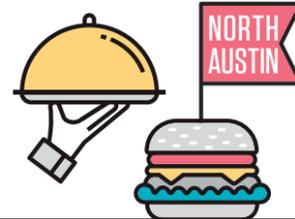


### TRAFFIC

## Hit the Road

Examining traffic on an average Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.  
 Driving from East Parmer Lane and I-35 to the Texas Capitol (10.7 miles): 12-22 minutes  
 Driving from West Slaughter Lane and I-35 to the Texas Capitol (9 miles): 24-45 minutes  
 Data from Google Maps for Sept. 7, 2016

**WINNER: NORTH AUSTIN**  
 Less time stuck in traffic, less stress in life.



## "The

dining scene up north is super vibrant," says **Bufalina** Chef-Owner Steven Dilley, who opened the second location of his popular pizzeria on the hopping food hub of Burnet Road. "It's really exciting to be a part of it." Dilley also points out that there is a great mix of old and new spots to choose from in North Austin. "You can get a burger at **Top Notch** or swing by **Peached Tortilla** for some Yamazaki 18; grab a classic diner breakfast at **The Frisco** or have a tasting menu blowout at **Barley Swine**," he says.

Indeed, there is no shortage of choices in this part of town. Indulge with award-winning interior Mexican fare at **Fonda San Miguel**, which has been open since 1975, or head to **Enchiladas y Mas** for down and dirty Tex-Mex and what might be the most potent margaritas in town. You can pile your plate with smoked meats at **Stiles Switch BBQ and Brew** or get your fish fix with oysters, crawfish and fried clams from **Quality Seafood Market**. Chow down with chopsticks at **Komé Sushi Kitchen** or head to **Titaya's** for delicious Thai dishes. Interested in authentic eats and edible imports from the East? Check out the **Chinatown Center**. Craving pizza? Hit up **Bufalina** for Neapolitan-style options, snag a New Jersey-style slice at **Little Deli** or grab a toppings-piled pie at **Pinthouse Pizza**—which, along with **Black Star Co-op**, also has your beer bases covered. Meanwhile, if you're in the mood for something hearty, the mavericks at **Noble Sandwich Co.** have creative combinations suitable for every meal.



Good Eats (clockwise from top left): Bufalina; Odd Duck; Sway; Top Notch; Fonda San Miguel and Pinthouse Pizza

PHOTOS BY: BUFALINA, ROBERT LERMA, MOITOS AND ODD DUCK, JENN HAIR, TOP NOTCH, CORY RYADEMAR; PINT PHOTO COURTESY PINTHOUSE PIZZA.

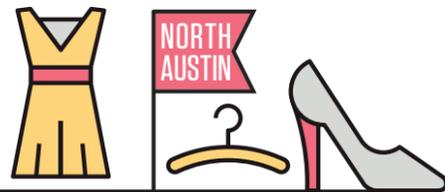
SWAY PHOTO BY JENN HAIR, NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS PHOTO FROM WIKICOMMONS.



**NORTH AUSTIN**  
 The South was hot for new restaurants for years. But the North, especially Burnet Road, has taken over the top spot to eat, drink and be merry.

# SHOPPING

WHAT PART OF TOWN PROVIDES BETTER RETAIL THERAPY?



## When

it comes to retail therapy, North Austin is a study

in contrasts. There are high-end shops stocked with designer duds and trendy accessories and an impressive selection of vintage stores with throwback items from past eras.

**The Domain** is where you'll find the former. A massive open-air mall featuring more than 100 shops and eateries, it's indisputably the city's premier destination for luxury goods. Fashionistas flock there to shop at Louis Vuitton, lululemon, Neiman Marcus, Tiffany & Co. and more, but don't be discouraged if you're in a slightly lower tax bracket—it's also the site of Austin's only H&M and Zara.

On the other side of the spectrum, North Austin provides options for those whose style mantra is "what's old is new again," with quirky stores peddling an ever-evolving selection of secondhand vinyl, clothes, accessories and furniture from decades past. On Burnet, you'll find **Top Drawer**, **Second Time Around**, **Uptown Modern** and more, while North Loop is a vintage mecca with shops including **Room Service Vintage**, **Blue Velvet**, **Revival Vintage** and others. And when it comes to legendary local businesses up north, you can't talk shop without mentioning adult boutique **Forbidden Fruit**, where—for the record—items are sold new.



Maya Star on South Congress

The Domain



If hip homegrown boutiques and "Keep It Weird" kitsch are more your speed, South Austin has you covered. On South Congress, shoppers can fill their costume party needs with a stop at **Lucy in Disguise** or scout out curious curios at **Uncommon Objects**. Fellas can head to **Stag** to stock their closets, while a stop at **By George** will benefit gents and ladies alike. Has wanderlust got you down? **Cove** is the perfect destination for travel-inspired style.

Just a few blocks west on South First Street, amplify your record collection at **End of an Ear**, or stock up on linen staples at **Esby Apparel**. And if you're on the hunt for a pair of cowboy boots, stop by **Texas Custom Boots**.

On South Lamar, ladies looking to channel their inner biker-babe can complete their look at **Hoiden Supply Company**, high-end consignment outlet **MOSS** has Chanel on the cheaper side, while sister store **GARMENT** features simple closet staples with a modern twist. If your personal space is lacking pizzazz, stop next door at **Nannie Inez** for impeccably curated home furnishings, then head to **Mockingbird Domestics** for handcrafted rugs, furniture and art or swing by **JM Drygoods** and neighbor **Spartan** for that Marfa look.



**NORTH AUSTIN**  
The Domain and vintage havens of Burnet Road and North Loop represent a perfect blend of Old and New Austin.

(THIS PAGE) PHOTOS COURTESY MAYA STAR AND CATHEDRAL OF JUNK; THE DOMAIN SIGN FROM WIKICOMMONS; (OPPOSITE PAGE) PHOTOS COURTESY YARD BAR AND AUSTIN CITY LIMITS MUSIC FESTIVAL

WHAT AREA OFFERS MORE FUN THINGS TO DO?

# ENTERTAINMENT

From right: Yard Bar; Austin City Limits Music Festival



"I remember when we opened up as the Laff Stop in 1985," says Margie Coyle, general manager of what is now **Cap City Comedy Club**. "We thought this would be a hot area, and we rolled the dice." Fast-forward to 2016: There's no disputing the accuracy of that prediction, and North Austin offers an impressive array of options for both family-friendly afternoons and adults-only evenings.

For live laughs, Cap City is a famed entertainment staple that attracts some of the best comics in the business, while the original **Threadgill's** on North Lamar has been an Austin institution and a destination for brews, grub and live tunes for more than 80 years. **C. Hunt's Ice House** is a cash-only, open-air bar with a gang of jovial regulars, and **The Little Longhorn Saloon** is the home of one of Austin's weirdest weekend traditions—which is saying a lot—Chicken Shit Bingo.

When it comes to competition, **Dart Bowl** and **Highland Lanes** offer air-conditioned fun and the chance to channel your inner Dude, while **Top Golf**, a driving range on social steroids, is where you can challenge your friends, practice your swing and—most important—sip drinks while doing it. If you want to hit the town, the Domain Northside's **Rock Rose** is Austin's shiniest new nightlife destination, complete with cocktails and clubbing. As for fun with Fido, there's **Yard Bar** on Burnet, which combines dogs and drinks.

AND THE WINNER IS...



Technically, if you add up all the categories, it's a tie between the two neighborhoods. But with Barton Springs, Zilker Park, the Greenbelt and festivals galore, South Austin is home to the destinations that make our city unique. Plus, its weirdness factor can't be beat. North Austin is definitely gaining though. Watch your back, Southies.

## From

the honky-tonks to the theaters to the extensive outdoor show offerings at Zilker Park, it's hard

to deny that the epicenter of the city's culture lies south of the river. For line dancing and weekly two-step lessons, nothing tops **Broken Spoke**, which hails itself "Last of the True Texas Dancehalls," and has called South Lamar home since 1964. Over on South Congress, watch the nightly bat migration from under the bridge before heading over to **The Continental Club**, which offers a wide variety of live music, ranging from secret shows by artists like former South Austinite Robert Plant to local legend Dale Watson and his Lone Stars. (Fun fact: After 16 years of doing Chicken Shit Bingo up north, Watson recently brought the game and his Sunday night show south to **C-Boy's Heart and Soul** on South Congress.) For more local live music, **ABGB** on Oltorf serves up comfort food—fueled tunes, while at the **Saxon Pub**, Bob Schneider and Lonelyland still headline nearly every Monday night.

If drama is the leisure you're looking for, **ZACH Theatre** continues to bring top-notch talent to the stage, including actress Holland Taylor's recent turn as former governor Ann Richards in *Ann*. And after nearly 60 years, the **Zilker Hillside Theater** continues to charm audiences with its annual summer show—the longest-running free outdoor musical in the country. If festival fun is more your speed, get thee down South, because **Austin City Limits Music Festival**, summer concert standby **Blues on the Green** and the holiday extravaganza **Trail of Lights** all take the stage south of the river.



**SOUTH AUSTIN**  
With a plethora of venues and festivals, it's our city's entertainment headquarters.

Have an opinion on which side of town is better? Tell us what you think at [austinmonthly.com](http://austinmonthly.com).

