

RESIDENT COUNCIL NEWS

CITY FOCUSED ON BETTER POLICIES TO SERVE OLDER ADULTS

On May 14th Mayor Pro Tem Vanessa Fuentes and Council Member Marc Duchon co-hosted a town hall event focused on the needs of Austin's aging population. The interest in the town hall exceeded initial expectations so much so that it prompted a change to a larger venue. The attendance was more than 120 and Vanessa Fuentes described it as "our biggest turnout yet!" She described attendees by saying, "they wanted to hear what the city had to offer in terms of services, information and resources...it really solidified the need for a policy direction from Council on the quality of life for our older adults."

According to the City of Austin, residents between the ages of 65 and 74 represent the fastest growing age group in Austin and the demand for services is outpacing the city's what the city has invested. There is also concern that the city's current efforts are lacking results. A 2022 report from the city auditor found that the city does not have an effective way to measure its progress serving older adults and older adults frequently mention a lack of awareness about what aging services exist.

After the May 14th town hall, Vanessa Fuentes sponsored a City Council resolution directing the city manager to



Mayor Pro Tem Vanessa Fuentes speaks at Older Adults Town Hall May 14 2025

take greater steps to ensure that all departments offer services aligned with the goals of the city's Age-Friendly Action Plan. With this latest move, City Council is reaffirming its commitment to the goals outlined in the Age-Friendly Action Plan originally adopted in 2016. Those goals are categorized into 8 domains of livability, such as housing, transportation, services, social participation, and outdoor space.

As part of efforts to better serve older adults, the City of Austin is conducting a first-ever Quality of Life Study on Aging. The goal of this study is to best understand the needs of older adults in Austin, their caregivers, and how best to serve them.

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MEET THE RESIDENT COUNCIL STEERING COMMITTEE



Willie Fletcher has lived at the Lady Bird since 2022. He is a very familiar face in Serafina Pantry, hosting cooking classes, and he is someone you will see out and about among neighbors. He came to the Lady Bird in search of a 55 and older apartment in a great location by Lady Bird Lake. As a resident, he always encourages good times and as a member of Resident Council he wants to make our community the safest and most beautiful it can be.



Sharon Stewart has lived at the Lady Bird since mid 2023, and moved to Austin from the North Texas area near Denton. She was drawn to the Lady Bird's beautiful gardens, parks and trees; its affordability; and by the opportunity to be part of an active and friendly senior community. She believes that with the development of the Resident Council, citizens of the Lady Bird and soon the Rebekah are bringing together resident voices which will guide and influence the quality and health of their lives, and of life in general at RBJ properties.



Janet Roberts has lived at the Lady Bird since 2022 and before that lived at the RBJ tower for 9 years. She views Resident Council as a vital part of her life and is interested in doing everything possible to help residents. She has seen growth in the past few months and thinks it is remarkable!



Ludy Zambrano has lived at the Lady Bird since 2022. In earlier years, Ludy's work responsibilities had brought her to visit residents at the RBJ Tower, so this place has always felt like home. Once retired, she was looking forward to a friendly, supportive, and active community. At the Lady Bird, the gardens were a magnet and the trail along the lake sealed the deal. As part of Resident Council, Ludy wants to help residents be heard and get their needs met.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



We thank Mary Apostolou for her service on the Steering Committee. Her contributions to help start up Resident Council and her advocacy were invaluable. We look forward to having Mary continue to join our monthly Resident Council meetings, and we wish her well as she focuses on family and other commitments. **More information will be shared about recruitment for a 5th Steering Committee member. Stay tuned!**

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Residents of RBJ are being specifically sought out for participation. In the past, local policymakers and researchers have described the many possibilities in aging services and identified RBJ as a particular site of interest to innovate.

Your voice can make a difference in this current effort to study the quality of life for older adults. For more information and ways to get involved, stop by the Resident Services office.

JOIN NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

After our first issue of Resident Council News was distributed last month, we received positive feedback and helpful suggestions to improve.

We are looking for 5 residents to form a new committee to help with the production of our monthly newsletter. Duties include:

- Attend 1-2 meetings per month.
- Source stories from fellow residents and news around town.
- Assist with editing, printing, and distribution of Resident Council News.

We are looking for storytellers, editors, or residents who just love to stay informed. Add your name to the interest list today!

GET YOUR FREE FAN WITH SUMMER FAN DRIVE

Heat is the #1 weather-related killer in the U.S., and children, older adults, and even pets are among the most at-risk groups.



The week of June 23 brought blistering and record-breaking temperatures across the northeast and southeast. CBS News reported that on Wednesday June 25 temperatures in the southeast were “10 - 20 degrees” above average, and with the heat index some areas are seeing temperatures that feel like 110. As summer temperatures rise, a simple fan can help protect your health and reduce energy costs.

- A fan can lower the temperature in a room by up to 8 degrees.
- Using a fan instead of A/C can help reduce your electric bill.

Family Eldercare launched their annual Summer Fan Drive in May, and as an RBJ resident you are likely eligible to receive a free box fan.

Need a Free Fan?

The nearest fan distribution center is located at the East Austin Neighborhood Center - 211 Comat Street. Also visit www.summerfandrive.org for more information.

RESIDENT COUNCIL CHARTER

The Resident Council is a tenant-led group whose mission is to improve the lives of residents living at The Lady Bird. All residents who hold a lease at The Lady Bird are members of the Resident Council and can attend and participate in Resident Council meetings, events, and activities. In addition, a steering committee of five appointed residents take on additional responsibilities to help plan, coordinate, and support the continuity of Resident Council.

Our Duties / Why We Are Here

1. Communicate problems and other needs of the fellow residents to the RBJ Senior Housing Board of Directors.
2. Identify property improvements that may be needed.
3. Make recommendations to the RBJ Senior Housing Board of Directors for the types of services the nonprofit should be providing for residents.

Group Agreements

Group agreements are essential for creating a safe, productive, and collaborative environment. Resident Council members are expected to uphold our group agreements during meetings:

1. Raise your hand to speak.
2. Respect differences in opinion.
3. Try to be brief with your remarks to allow others time. Avoid interruptions.
4. Ask questions if there is something you do not understand.
5. Be open to new ideas, possibilities, and ways of thinking.

RESIDENT VOICES

BLUE KOI BOY

by Janet Roberts

As a bored Navy wife while my husband was at sea, I took on an exciting hobby. I was profoundly interested in a coffee table book on the art and science of raising koi fish by Chinese koi masters.



I was fortunate to contact a koi fish hobbyist and receive his guidance in raising exhibition koi fish. He advised me in the science of water balance, tank type, size, cleaning and fish for the tank. I bought, according to his advice, goldfish. Initially, I was put off by their dull, black color but reserved my judgement. Gradually the fish lost their dullness and became a brilliant orange gold color. One of them was lacking a dorsal fin but I figured it was a characteristic fish variation.

Over several years the koi fish took on amazing patterns and colors, their bodies becoming plump. There was one fish in the tank that I fell in love with. His color was grey blue with scales that shined like. His fins were diaphanous long scarves. I called him Blu Boi. He would stare at me through the tank glass. I would interact with him by wiggling my index finger. One day I noticed a growth developing over Blu Boi's head. I called the koi hobbyist about it. He stated that the growth would soon cover two thirds of the fish's body, a genetic variation. Ancient koi masters once called it a lion head. I felt very honored to have such a noble fish.

Then the Navy called. My husband and I prepared to move away. I sold Blue Boi back to the hobbyist as highly valued exhibition fish. I cried about the loss and considered having a tattoo of him made on my inner arm so he would always be with me.

Even today I miss Blue Boi.

Resident Voices is a new monthly column that features the writings, reflections, musings, and creative expressions of RBJ residents. From personal stories to poetry, opinions, and observations, this space celebrates the unique voices and lived experiences within our community.

NEW METHOD TO COLLECT FEEDBACK



RBJ staff introduced a new way for residents to submit their feedback and suggestions for improvement.

- Open the camera app on your smartphone
- Allow the barcode to come into focus, but don't take a picture.
- Wait for the link to appear on your screen and click it.

APD VISITS RBJ TO CONDUCT CRIME PREVENTION ASSESSMENT OF PROPERTY.



RBJ is continuing its partnership with Austin Police Department in an effort to improve safety at our community. A crime prevention assessment of our property was conducted on June 18 and the results will be shared with the community in July.

RBJ STAFF PRESENT AT JUNE COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING.

Shontell Gauthier and Dylan Lowery presented at the June Commission on Aging meeting to share details about the work underway at RBJ Senior Housing and the latest updates on tower construction. The presentation was well received and the Commission on Aging is excited to partner with us in the future.

ECC NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP REACHES OUT, ASK FOR RBJ RESIDENTS TO ATTEND MEETINGS.

The East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Contact Team meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month 6 pm at KMFA studios, just behind Lady Bird.

THE NEWSLETTER OF RESIDENT COUNCIL

Steering Committee Members

Janet Roberts, Ludy Zambrano, Sharon Stewart, Willie Fletcher.

RBJ Staff Support

Aly Tharp, Dylan Lowery

We want to hear from you!

Submit your letters, feedback, and essays to Dylan Lowery. Email to dlowery@rbjseniorhousing.org or deliver material to Resident Services office.

Issue II.