

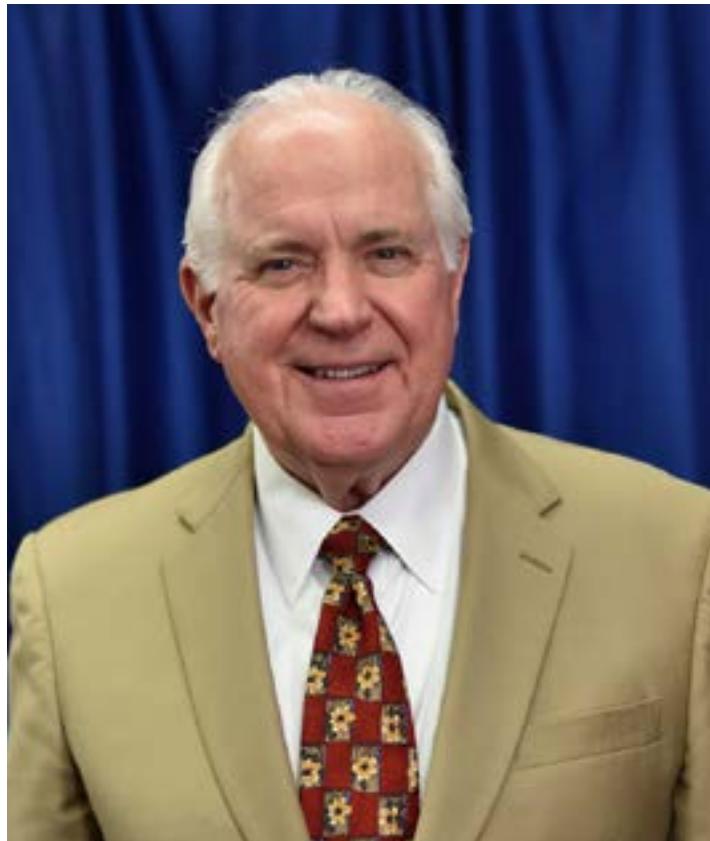


STATE OF TEXAS CAPITOL COMPLEX PROJECT PHASE II



Texas Capitol Complex Update

Progress updates on the Capitol Complex Project | **December 19, 2025**



Mike Novak, TFC Executive Director Retires

TFC “Tour of duty”
in public service is
complete.

All photos in this article are courtesy of the Texas Facilities Commission.

After serving seven years as Executive Director of the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC), and six years as a TFC Commissioner, Mike Novak is retiring from his ‘tour of duty’ and public service to Texas. During his tenure, he provided steady, results-driven leadership that strengthened the agency, expanded its capacity, and positioned TFC for long-term successes. His leadership leaves a lasting legacy of professionalism, accountability, and service to Texas.

Early Years

Born and raised in San Antonio, Novak learned the importance of connections in business and people. He embraced the Hispanic culture and loves using his conversational Spanish to connect. His Czech grandfather was in the masonry business and would take young Mike to jobsites where he was introduced to hard work and the construction business. Novak recalls his first construction jobs screening sand for the masons, spraying water on the burlap sacks used to cure concrete, and pulling nails from the wooden forms. He learned early on that every person and job matters.



Novak studied business and finance at St. Mary's University in San Antonio and planned to attend law school after graduation. However, destiny had other plans. Shortly after graduation, business associates recruited Novak to manage an industrial

construction project in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. The allure of international travel and an exciting opportunity to work on a challenging and complex construction project captured his attention.

Two years later, after completing the industrial construction project, Novak returned to San Antonio and continued to work in the heavy equipment and construction industry. Then, at the age of twenty-eight, he started his own construction company. Novak's enterprising spirit and recent construction management experience positioned his new company well.

Soon he landed other interesting construction projects, including the expansion of the sanctuary for the prominent Trinity Baptist church. He managed a major renovation of the historic Majestic Theatre

to accommodate Broadway theatre productions and constructed several administrative buildings on the Sea World campus in San Antonio. These high-profile jobs led to other interesting projects managing the building of a network of radar towers for domestic and international security programs. By this time, building communications towers had become a highly needed skill set, as the cellular industry was exploding. Novak's company soon landed contracts to build networks of cell towers domestically in Texas and New Mexico, and internationally in Chile, Brazil, and Venezuela, all in total about five thousand towers.

Back in San Antonio, Novak's business connections encouraged him to run for a seat on the Bexar County Commissioners Court. Utilizing his business and people skills, Novak served as Bexar County Commissioner of Precinct 4, from 1994 to 1998.

Novak's commitment to public service has been the cornerstone of his career. He has served on numerous local boards including chairing the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce in 2004. Another notable role in his civic career was presiding as tri-chair of the high-stakes

Military Transformation Taskforce (MTTF), an initiative to consolidate medical missions and facilities, and establish San Antonio as the center for all U.S. military medicine.



TFC Career

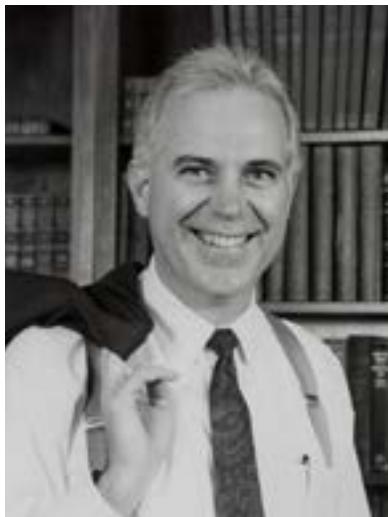
In 2011, Novak was appointed to serve as a commissioner for the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC). At that time, TFC was a small administrative agency with an operating budget of approximately \$400 million managing mostly custodial and maintenance projects for state facilities. The leadership at the agency and composition of the TFC commission

was evolving and leaders in state government were looking for a new vision for the agency as it would soon be embarking on the development of a new master plan for the Capitol Complex.

Novak recalls reluctantly taking the invitation for a meeting to discuss a commission position. The commission was poised for growth as the Texas economy was growing and state government would also need to expand its construction program to meet the business needs and services to citizens. The challenge appealed to Novak, who has always been committed to using his expertise and talent for public service. In 2011, Novak accepted the appointment to a seat on the Texas Facilities Commission.

During his tenure as a Commissioner, Novak worked with the TFC leadership team to review major projects including the master plan for the future of the Capitol Complex, and operational challenges of the agency. One of his favorite initiatives was the implementation of an energy management program to reduce utility costs in state facilities. "It's the gift that keeps on giving," Novak said about the energy savings program, "as once the investment is in place the cost savings continue to accrue."

In 2018, the Commissioners were looking for a new strategic direction for the agency and staged a carefully planned change of the agency's executive leadership. The executive director and key management staff positions became open, and a search committee was established to look for new talent. Finding an experienced leader with both construction expertise and political savvy was more difficult than expected. Ultimately, it became clear to the Commissioners that Novak's background in commercial construction and public service would



provide the agency with the leadership needed for true transformation and asked him to step into a new role – Executive Director. Novak accepted the position of Executive Director in November 2018.

Novak quickly recruited a new leadership team to help refine the agency's strategic vision and to set a plan in motion that would steadily grow the agency.

Key TFC Programs and Projects

Driven by Novak's charismatic leadership, TFC has grown in skilled staff, administrative capacity, and technology expertise in every area of the organization. Novak's entrepreneurial spirit and focus on "earning your reputation" and "promoting your brand" has transformed TFC into a top performing construction and development state agency. Today, TFC has a ~\$6-billion-dollar project portfolio and a staff approaching five-hundred full time employees.

Many projects in the agency's project portfolio are not high-profile but are critical to business continuity and the safety and security of state employees and the constituents they serve. Large or small, Novak reminds team members to be good stewards of public funds and to make tough, common-sense decisions to best serve the citizens of Texas.

An example of a common-sense decision was to divest underperforming buildings and assets from the TFC portfolio. Once a facility has served its useful life and becomes a cost burden to the state, the logical decision is to sell the property. Novak called this play twice at the helm of TFC. The first time was to sell the severely deteriorated Sutton building in San Antonio. The building had been vacant for years due to structural instability and renovations were too costly.

The second instance was putting the Hobby building up for sale. The aged Austin building had originally been purchased from a commercial developer and was not designed for the 100-year longevity standards of state facilities. The building was no longer suitable for the business needs of the state and was draining resources from the TFC real estate portfolio. Novak

coordinated the plan to sell this unperforming asset and use the proceeds to complete the Capitol Complex project which required statutory approval by the legislature.



The Texas Border Wall Project

In June of 2021, Governor Abbott issued an emergency declaration activating Operation Lone Star. Governor Abbott tasked TFC with building the border wall along Texas's southern border. This unique construction program involves installing permanent wall infrastructure in remote and often difficult terrain, using TFC project management and construction skills to complete a task once assigned to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Under Novak's leadership the program quickly engaged key business partners and developed an ambitious construction plan. Key decisions like continuing with the previous wall design and materials shorten the program's delivery times, prioritizing construction on state-owned land, and ramping up an outreach program to local landowners, fueled the momentum of the program. In just six months, from receiving the governor's directive, TFC had erected the first segment of the Texas border wall.

The TFC border wall program team has completed its mission for Operation Lone Star, and they are now assisting with the program's transition to the federal government to resume the responsibilities for constructing border barriers.

North Austin Complex



The North Austin Complex is the headquarters for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and its many programs. The campus sits at the corner of North Lamar and 45th Streets and across the street from the University of Texas intramural fields. During Novak's tenure a master development plan for the future of this campus was created, and the first of three buildings was constructed on this site.

A nine-story, 406,000-square-foot office building was completed in 2021. The project included an adjacent seven-story parking garage for approximately 1,850 cars. This new state office building exemplifies a new standard in efficient, modern office space, designed to support a technologically dependent workforce.

Capitol Complex Phase I and Phase II



Photo of Phase I of the Capitol Complex Project.

Most professionals will remember one project as the legacy of their careers. The Capitol Complex redevelopment project is Novak's most impressive legacy project. It began with the creation of a master plan for a government business campus that extends from 15th Street, on the south side of the capitol grounds to MLK Blvd, four blocks north along Congress Avenue. The intention of the master plan was to establish the best use of state-owned land, build modern and efficient office space to consolidate state offices into a central campus and reduce the cost of lease space. Another goal of the master plan was to create civic space with similar grandeur to the Texas Capitol grounds.

The Capitol Complex project is the largest project ever undertaken by TFC, and one of the largest projects in the Austin metro area. Phase I of the Capitol Complex projects was funded by the 85th Legislature, and appropriated \$895 million for the redevelopment of three city blocks, and the addition of 1.5 million square feet of office space to the TFC portfolio. The project included the construction of two new office buildings, above and below-ground parking for state employees, a new central utility plant, and three blocks of an urban green space now known as the Texas Capitol Mall. This massive project required careful planning and logistical coordination, along with the relocation of utility lines in the way of the 65-foot-deep excavation of Congress Avenue. Phase I of the Capitol Complex was completed in 2022, and over twenty state agencies

moved into the new George H.W. Building and the Barbara Jordan Building.



Rendering of Phase II of the Capitol Complex Project.

With the notable success of Phase I and the growing need for more state-owned office space, Phase II of the Capitol Complex master plan launched in 2023. This phase includes two additional state office buildings and the final city block of the Texas Capitol Mall. The first office building is at 1500 Congress Avenue at the gateway to the Capitol. It is a five-story 165,000-square foot building that will serve DPS and other state agencies. The second building is at 1501 Lavaca and will be 8-story tall and will provide office space for the Office of the Attorney General and the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations agency. Phase II will be ready for tenants in the summer of 2027.

"It's not just a project – it is a transformational re-imagining of our entire Capitol Complex," says Novak and adds, "this is an iconic project that will be a source of Texas civic pride for generations. My grandchildren and their children will enjoy this place."

Building a Culture of Excellence

Perhaps the most important impact Novak's leadership has had on the agency is fostering a culture of customer service and excellence. "At the end of the day, we are in the people business" is a notable "Novak-ism" heard in many internal meetings. He takes this to heart every day, as he greets staff by name each morning. His office is not lined with certificates, diplomas, and personal trophies, instead a large display

monitor rotates photos of agency staff activities, service awards, and memorable moments at TFC.

Novak is often heard reminding staff “we strive for perfection and will settle for excellence.” These words have done more than motivate TFC team members, it has permeated through the agency’s work and processes and created a true culture of collaboration and continuous improvement. Novak has left his imprint on the heart and history of this agency.



Mike Novak and Former Deputy Director John Raff attend the bottoming out celebration for Phase I of the Capitol Complex with a view of the Texas State Capitol in the background.



Novak at ribbon cutting ceremony for Capitol Complex Project Phase I Central Utility Plant, the first facility completed in the Capitol Complex Project. Also shown from left to right are John Raff, William Allensworth, and Keith Hall.



Novak and the TFC Commissioners and the plaque dedication ceremony for the Texas Capitol Mall Phase 1.



Novak receives holiday cookies from the students of the School for the Deaf's Culinary Academy.



Novak points at the signed beam before it is placed at the topping out ceremony for Phase Two of the Capitol Complex Project.



Executive Director Mike Novak attends his last TFC Commissioner's meeting, October 2025.

Family: The next chapter

After a long and successful business and public service career, Novak’s next chapter will be about family. He and his wife have several trips abroad scheduled and plan to spend more time with their three sons and seven grandchildren.



Novak (center) with Joel Speight, COO and Marty Martinez, Director of Facilities Maintenance and Operations at TFC employee appreciation cookout.



Novak reviewing progress of the border wall program.



Novak addresses attendees at the Capitol Complex Project Phase 2 topping out ceremony August 2025.



Will McKerall named Interim Executive Director

On January 2, 2026, Will McKerall will become the new interim Executive Director of the Texas Facilities Commission.

Will joined TFC in October 2023 and has forty-five years of experience in engineering, construction, and infrastructure management. He most recently worked in an engineering technology firm he founded in Waco, Texas. Prior to that role, Will served thirty-two years in the U.S. Navy and Corps of Engineers in engineering and chief executive positions, directing annual project work exceeding \$2 billion and culminating his military career as Department of Defense Director of Infrastructure & Environment for Europe and Africa. He holds a master's degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M, is a Registered Professional Engineer in Texas, and has been published in the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and American Concrete Institute (ACI) Structural Journals.

Construction Progress Report - Year in Review

As we close out 2026, we reflect on the amazing construction effort happening on 15th Street in the Capitol Complex. Please enjoy the photo gallery of progress made by the Capitol Complex Project Phase II Team over the past year. Thank you to everyone working on this project.



March 2025 - Deck pours on the 1500 Congress State Office Building garage project.



April 2025 - View of the Capitol in the background during a 1500 Lavaca State Office Building project concrete pour.



June 2025 - Dismantling the crane on the Texas Capital Mall Extension project.



July 2025 - American Flag for the July 4th holiday.



July 2025 - One of the last columns poured on the 1500 Congress State Office Building project.



August 9, 2025 - 1501 Lavaca air handler units being flown to the appropriate floor.



October 8, 2025 - Moving the 1500 Congress generators into position.



November 2025 - 1501 Lavaca building curtainwall (skin) progression.

Current Project Progress



1501 Lavaca State Office Building

The project team is currently performing roofing, drywall, in wall and overhead MEP rough in, elevators, and the installation of the curtainwall system on Level 5.



1500 Congress State Office Building

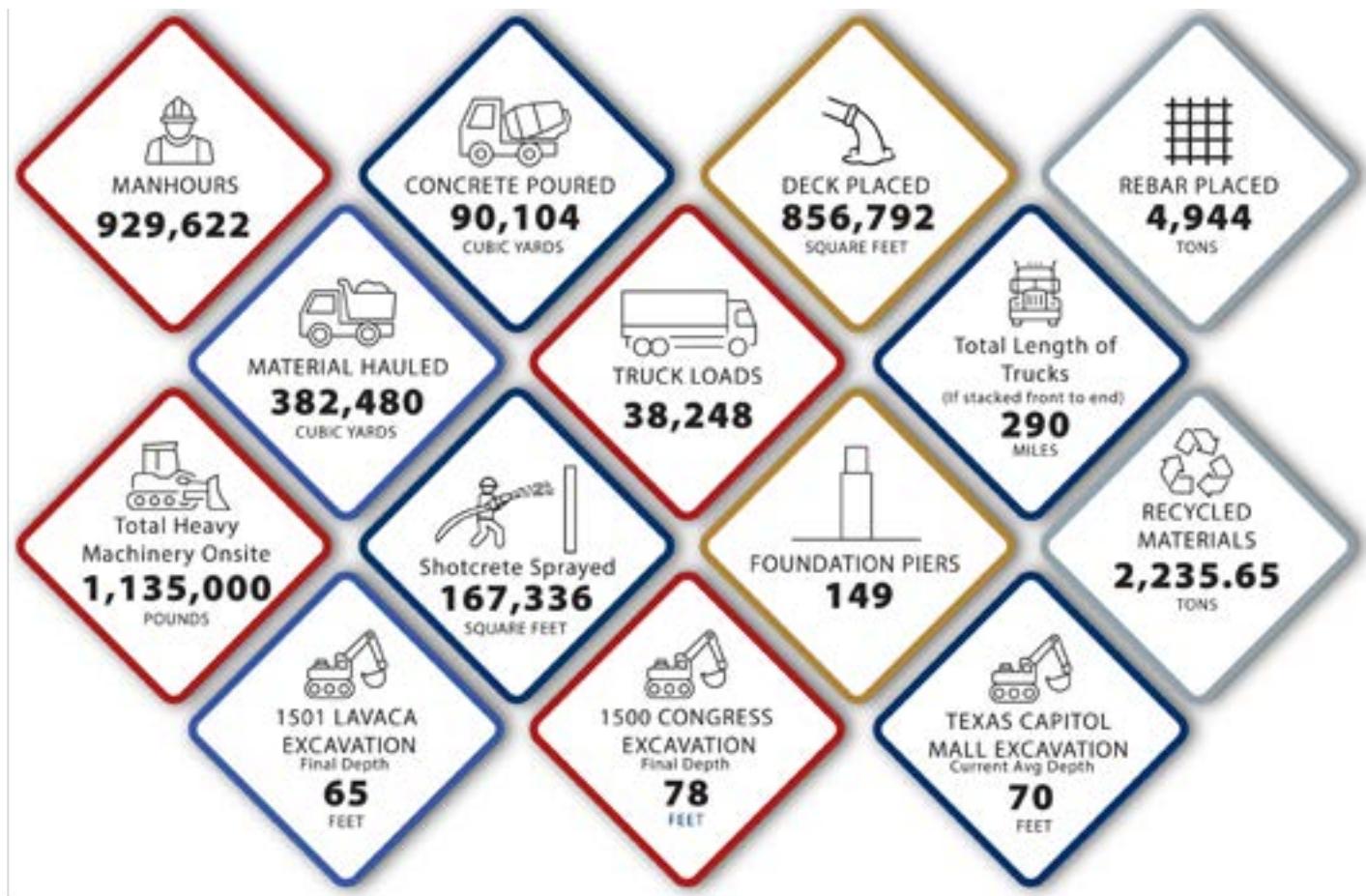
1500 Congress State Office Building Ongoing prep work for roofing, framing, in wall and overhead MEP rough in, and metal stairs installation. Installation has begun on the elevators and the installation of the curtainwall system will begin soon.



Texas Capitol Mall Extension

Current work includes concrete pours for site walls and prepping for paver subslabs, underground electrical, and soil backfill.

Project Statistics



Construction Traffic Updates

See the map below for closed traffic lanes around the construction site.

Capitol Complex Project Phase II Travel Map



Pedestrian Updates

All sidewalks and crosswalks adjacent to the construction zone are closed.

Please heed all safety warnings and follow the alternative safe sidewalk routes around the construction zone.

Closed Crosswalks and Sidewalks

CLOSED: North Side of 15th Street (next to the construction site). Use the crosswalks and sidewalk on the State Capitol side (south side of 15th Street).

CLOSED: East Side of Lavaca (next to the construction site). Use the crosswalk and sidewalk on the William P. Clements Jr. (WPC) Building side (west side of Lavaca).

CLOSED: South Side of 16th Street (next to the construction site). Use the crosswalk and sidewalk on the Garage E side (north side of 16th Street).

CLOSED: Colorado Street between 15th and 16th Streets. The street, sidewalks, and crosswalks, including the crosswalks across 15th and 16th Streets, are closed for the duration of the construction. To travel north and south, use the sidewalks on the west side of Lavaca Street or the covered sidewalk next to the Robert E. Johnson Building (REJ) building.

CLOSED: Congress Avenue between 15th and 16th Streets. Use the covered sidewalk next to the Robert E. Johnson Building (REJ) building. Cross 15th Street at Brazos Street.

Neighborhood News

Texas State Capitol - Tours

The holidays are a great time to take family and visitors to our State Capitol building. Public tours will be hosted this month until December 23, Monday through Friday at either 10:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays at 1:00 p.m. After the tour, be sure to stop by the Texas Capitol Gift Shop for this year's Capitol ornament.



Bullock Museum - The Bullock Texas State History Museum

Make plans to visit the Bullock Museum this December for a variety of holiday and family-friendly events. Enjoy screenings of popular movies at the IMAX or be amazed at a massive life-sized model of a T-rex dinosaur at the exhibit T. rex: The Ultimate Predator. If lounging at home is on your to-do-list this month, check out the museum's virtual artifact gallery or discover more about Texas history through online Campfire stories and other resources.



Blanton Museum of Art - Blanton Museum of Art

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with more than 21,000 objects, many of which are available to view and browse online. The better experience is to wander through the galleries and gaze at the beauty of the pieces in person. Make plans to see this current exhibit: Contemporary Project 15: Betsabeeé Romero, Saturday, June 14, 2025 - Sunday, January 4, 2026. This internationally acclaimed artist brings the bright colors and symbols of Mesoamerican Indigenous cultures to the walls of the Blanton in a stunning multidimensional display.



Austin Scottish Rite Theater - 207 W. 18th Street

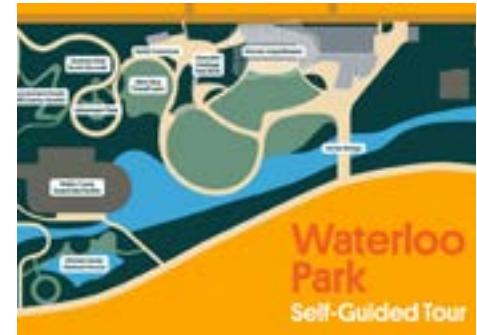
Presenting: Lara Stones and the lost Relics of St. Nick – Showing through December 21, 2025.

Bring the whole family to this heartwarming holiday comedy, as Dr. Lara Stone outsmarts sinister agents plotting to steal the magic of Santa Claus. For more show details and tickets visit: [Austin Scottish Rite Theater – Austin's oldest and dearest theater](#)



Waterloo Greenway Park

Looking for something to do with your holiday visitors? Consider taking a self-guide tour of the 11-acre Waterloo Park at East 15th Street and Trinity Street. This is not just an attractive urban park with trails and interesting bridges; it is a gateway to Austin's history and the remarkable ecological restoration story of Waller Creek that runs from north of University of Texas to Lady Bird Lake. Learn more at: [Waterloo Park Self-Guided Tour - Waterloo Greenway Conservancy](#)



Chuck Wagon Cafe - Holiday schedule

Located at 1601 N Congress in the Barbara Jordan building facing the Capitol Mall, the café's serving hours are usually weekdays 6:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The café will be closed for the holidays on Wednesday, December 24 (Christmas Eve) through Friday, December 26, 2025. The New Year's week schedule will be similar, with the café closed on December 31st and New Year's Day. Check the cafe's social media pages for more details. [Chuck Wagon Cafe](#)



New to the Neighborhood

W E L C O M E

The 1836 San Jacinto Building now has new retail tenants serving the food and beverages to state employees and visitors:



Capitol Cafe

San Jacinto Blvd Unit #110
1836 San Jacinto Blvd
Austin, TX 78701
<https://www.capitolcafe.com>

Serving coffee drinks, grab & go food items as well as hot foods like pizza, sandwiches, and salads. Enjoy your meal inside or on the patio at the northwest corner of San Jacinto and 18th Street. **Bonus: State employees receive a 20% discount on Fridays.**



Tapville Social

1836 San Jacinto Blvd
Austin, TX 78701
<https://www.tapvillesocial.com/austin>

Now open for lunch and dinner, as well as for Sunday brunch. This eatery offers beer, wine, as well as a full menu including appetizers, small plates for sharing, hot sandwiches and entrees, and a kid's menu.

Please share and encourage co-workers and friends to sign up for this newsletter at www.TexasCapitolComplex.org.

Visit the project website at
www.TexasCapitolComplex.org

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