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January 2022

Message from Van Zandt Properties:

I'll never forget the moment five years ago that we decided to move from Central Austin to the country and start our farm. I had rabbits that I had to hide from the neighbors, and our chickens were making trouble. Trying to run a mini-farm in the city wasn't working, and I had again been forced to get rid of my sweet birds. I looked out at my empty coop for the second time, and I knew. I glanced at my husband, and he knew as well. We were done. Sitting in the kitchen that day, we agreed to sell everything and move an hour away to paradise- Paige.

I love the movie The Lord of the Rings. There is a scene where Frodo's companions found mushrooms on the road and they, being Hobbits, were naturally hungry. Frodo is looking down the road, and a zoom occurs. First, the camera zooms in on the road, then his face. Frodo knew something was coming.

There was about to be a significant change. He yells, "Get off the road!" The viewer feels the anticipation knowing something is about to happen. The same effect occurs in The Last Jedi when Luke is staring down the forces of Kylo Ren, and there is a zoom onto Luke's face, showing his resolve. The effect in both scenes is called the dolly zoom. A zoom while the camera moves creates the impact of the background moving separately from the subject. The feeling it gives the gleeful movie-goer is one of great anticipation.

Just like the juncture where I decided to change my entire life and move, and the moments in these movies, we are all in a "Dolly Zoom" moment in Smithville. The town is on the edge of change. Well over 200 brand-new built homes are currently on the books to happen in a short amount of time. A mixed-use community currently planned will border the north side of Highway 71. There will be restaurants, stores, and even offices. Whole new subdivisions are coming. Even though all of this is about to happen, our real estate is still relatively affordable compared to nearby Bastrop, Elgin, and Austin. We are in an unprecedented moment of opportunity. The prices in Smithville are up .5% year over year, while Bastrop is up 48.6%. (<https://www.redfin.com/city/17537/TX/Smithville/housing-market>)

Am I, a local farmer/REALTOR®, happy about the coming change? Yes and no. Change is never easy, but the old quote says that the only constant thing is change. It's going to happen, and I am relieved that I already have my farm in some ways. There is a lot of hope that comes with change and many growing pains. We all love Smithville precisely the way it is, which, with a bit of luck, we will weather the growth without losing its charming personality. My hope is that we work together to capture and preserve the essence of what makes Smithville special. In that case, we may even enjoy the future more than the present.

My advice is this: Now is the time to secure your Smithville future. Call your favorite REALTOR® and look for the property that you know will serve you well in the years ahead. We are easy to reach and never too busy to chat at Van Zandt Properties if you would like.

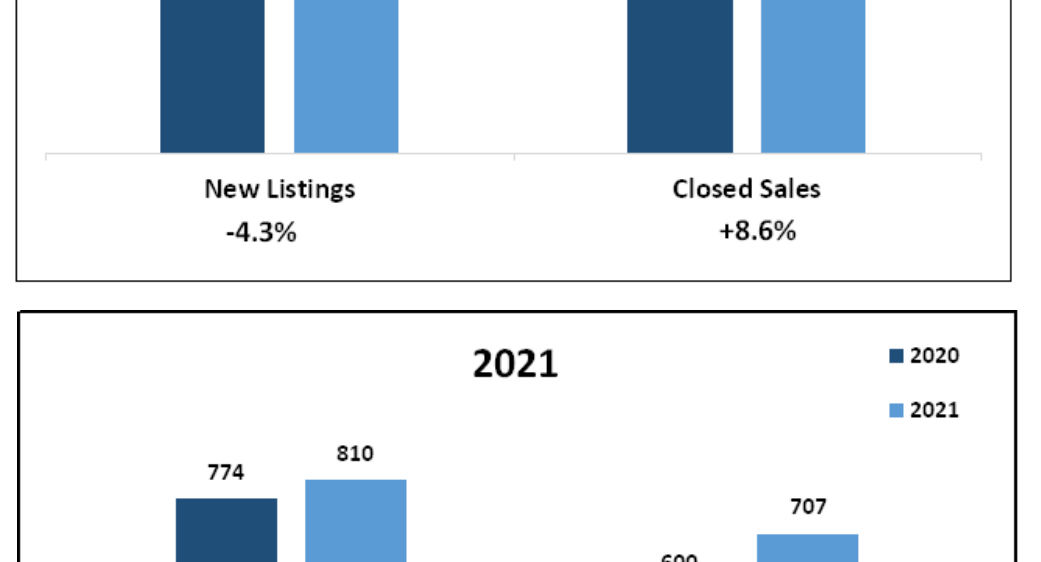
The Dolly Zoom is happening right now, and we all have decisions to make before the change begins.

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Bastrop Area Monthly Statistics

Below are the current home statistics for the Bastrop Area. The average home sale price for December was \$446,200, which is up 43.8% from the previous year. The average home sale price for 2021 was \$356,380, which is up 29.5% from 2020.



Around Town



Upcoming Events

Jan 22nd—Big Chill Adventure Race

The "Chill" is the race that started it all. This year The Big Chill Adventure Race is going back to the piney woods of Texas and heading over to Buescher State Park in Smithville with running, biking and paddling. This area of Texas is rich with history. Expect a tough as nails race, awesome swag, cool special tests, and more. The race will happen rain, snow, or shine, so be prepared for any type of weather. Gather your team and choose the 3-6 hour sprint or the 12-hour Adventure Race. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

Jan 22nd—Art in the Park at McKinney Roughs

This series is a process-based art experience using nature for inspiration. Explore several topics, including en plein air, print-making, land art and pottery. Walk away with a hands-on appreciation and basic techniques of each art form. For more information, [click here](#).

Jan 27th—High Tunnel Workshop

Join Farmshare Austin, located in Cedar Creek, Texas, for a hands-on workshop at the non-profit teaching farm just southeast of Austin, on January 27th. Spend the day learning about high tunnel design, uses and installation. Lorig Hawkins from Middle Ground Farm will be guiding participants through the installation of a 30x60 foot "high tunnel" greenhouse. Lunch is provided. Arrive at 9 a.m. to get a tour of Farmshare Austin. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

Creating a Spa Bath

Everyone loves a relaxing trip to the spa, but not everyone loves how much that spa day can cost. A more affordable option may be upgrading your home's bathroom and creating your own personal spa. You'll be able to have a lavish experience from the comfort of your home by adding a couple pieces to your space and doing a few things to make your self-care time even more enjoyable.

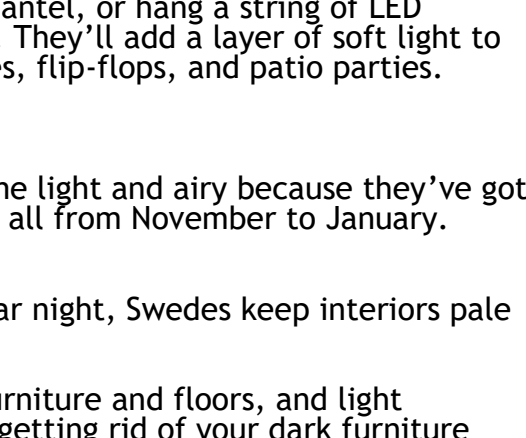


1. Invest in a towel warmer to make sure your linens are nice and toasty when you're ready to use them.
2. Add plants to spruce up the space. Aloe vera, bamboo, ferns, and orchids are a few options that thrive in a bathroom environment.
3. Get a bathtub caddy to improve your bathing experience. You'll be able to prop up your phone or tablet here to watch your favorite movie or TV show.
4. Candles are a great way to add a soft ambiance to the room while also adding pleasant aromas.
5. Add a light dimmer to set the mood. The candles you now have will provide a calming light for a dark room.
6. Keep your bathroom neat and tidy. A consistently clean space will make your self-care time more enjoyable.

10 Delightful Ways to Make Your House Brighter in Winter

By: Leanne Potts

Let more natural light shine indoors with these simple tips.



Fall and winter start cozy — who hasn't used the colder temperatures as an excuse to binge-watch Netflix while swaddled in a couch blanket? But come January, staying indoors can feel less like a treat and more like you're living in a cave.

Here's how to make your house lighter, brighter, and cheerier with more natural light indoors.

#1 Take the Screens Off Your Windows

You'll get 30% more sunlight shining indoors without screens on your windows.

Here's the best part: Sunlight warms your room and saves you money on your heating bill. It's solar power — for you!

Be sure to store your screens in your garage or basement, where they won't get damaged. In the spring you'll want to put them back on so you can keep that 30% of the sun out and run your cooling system less.

#2 Hang Outdoor String Lights Indoors

They don't give off a lot of light, but they're cheerful as heck.

Drape them around a window or a mantel, or hang a string of LED glimmer lights in a tall potted plant. They'll add a layer of soft light to your room and remind you of fireflies, flip-flops, and patio parties.

#3 Steal a Little Swedish Chic

Scandinavians excel at making a home light and airy because they've got that you thought the sun hadn't rise at all from November to January. And you thought you had it bad.

To adapt to weeks and weeks of polar night, Swedes keep interiors pale to reflect and amplify light.

Think white walls, light woods for furniture and floors, and light upholstery. To get the look without getting rid of your dark furniture and floors, put white or light gray slipcovers on your sofa and chairs, and put down light-colored rugs.

The fastest way to bring a little Sweden into your room is to paint it. Try creamy white, pale blue, or dove gray.

#4 Change Your Bulbs

Replace those incandescent bulbs and their yellowy light with LEDs, which produce a brighter, whiter light.

But get your bright right: The higher the K rating on the bulb, the cooler and whiter its light. For cool, white light, opt for a bulb rated 3,500K to 4,100K. For blue-white light that's closest to natural daylight, use a bulb between 5,000K and 6,500K.

Unless you live in Sweden (see above) you may want to leave the uber-high K bulbs for grow rooms and seasonal affective disorder therapy clinics — because they're as bright as real sunlight on a hot summer day at noon. You'll need sunglasses to read.

#5 Hang Mirrors

Make the most of that weak winter light by bouncing it around the room with mirrors.

If you don't want the distraction of seeing your reflection all the time, use a large, convex one — also known as a fish-eye mirror. It will amplify light better than a flat one. Another option: Hang a gallery wall of small mirrors.

#6 Replace Heavy Curtains With Blinds or Roman Shades

Fabric curtains, while quite insulating, block light and make a room feel smaller and more cramped, especially if they're a dark color or have a large print.

Try Roman shades or a simple valance paired with blinds to let in the maximum amount of natural light.

#7 Clean Your Windows

Dirty windows block a lot of natural light.

Admit it. Yours are kind of cruddy because who remembers to block out an afternoon to clean the windows?

So, get it on your list. Clean the glass inside at least once a month and the glass outside once a year. Your serotonin level will thank you.

#8 Swap Your Solid Front Door for One With Glass Inserts

A solid front door can make your house look and feel as dark as a dungeon.

Get rid of it and install a half-light or full-light door that lets the natural light stream in. For even more natural light, add glass sidelights and a glass transom.

A new entry security front door will cost about \$250 in fiberglass and \$975 in steel, including parts and installation. A new door will add curb appeal, which equals higher resale value. And coming home in the evening to the warm glow of light radiating out the glass panels in your front door is an instant mood lifter.

#9 Add a Skylight

It's the ultimate way to bring more natural light into your house. A window only catches sun for a couple of hours a day, but a skylight lets in the sun all day.

An indoor view of the sky makes the deepest January more tolerable. And feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin, light streaming from above, is liberating. A skylight, installed, costs between \$1,300 and \$3,000. A cheaper alternative is a tubular skylight, which costs \$500 to \$950 including installation.

If you're really good with tools, you can install a tubular skylight yourself. Don't even think about installing a full-blown skylight yourself.

#10 Add Plants

Putting pots of plants around your room will remind you that spring and green will return.

Match plants to the amount of light you have, because dead and dying plants are depressing. Tropicals that thrive in indirect light are usually the best choice. If you have a sunny window you've got more plant options.

Bonus points for adding a plant that blooms in the winter, like a kaffir lily or anthurium.

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