

March

April



2014

Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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IT'S IMPORTANT! (and there are refreshments!)

The WCNA Annual Meeting is set for

Tuesday, March 25th, 6:30-8:00 p.m.

**St. Mark United Methodist Church
601 W. Braker Lane**

Lawshae Building on southeast side

The Annual General Meeting of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association will be held on the last Tuesday in March starting at 6:30 pm. With two interesting guest speakers to follow the general business, it could last a little past the 8 p.m. ending time this year. This venue is within walking and biking distance for most of us, but there is also ample parking behind the church. The meeting is open to all, nonmembers as well as members of the Association. And would you please consider bringing a nonperishable food item for the food pantry at St. Mark's (a small gesture for all this church does to support our neighborhood)?

Free child care will be provided onsite; Refreshments will be served; Free WiFi will be available; A voter registrar will be in attendance and, if you've missed the opportunity so far, your \$15 annual dues may be paid at this event.

Business will start with election/re-election of Board members. Bunnie and Dorsey Twidwell (co-directors), Jean Ramsey, and Jill Leberknight are standing for re-election; Christian Ninaud and Sharon Porter are standing for election. If you would like to be on the Board or nominate someone to the Board (with that someone's consent), please contact Robert Meadows at 512 339 0229, robertl@meadows.com or through the social media.

The President's report on the Association's activities over the past year will be presented, followed by discussion of current issues facing the neighborhood and opportunities for the future.

An official from CapMetro will then describe Project Connect and Central Corridor investment projects, which study all aspects of local public transportation; i.e., the whole system of public transportation within the city and connecting to "feeders". Questions are welcome; Come learn all about the city's mobility systems and plans.

Then Michael Embesi, City of Austin Arborist, will tell us about issues with fauna that affect our neighborhood and the city at large. Again, questions will be invited, so we can learn everything about our trees as well as our rights and responsibilities for protecting some of our most precious assets.

Focus on Canopy

Walnut Creek Neighborhood has lost significant tree canopy cover in recent years. Efforts on the part of individual neighbors to plant trees to gradually recover that canopy, in addition to soil care to trees impacted by the drought and treatment of trees at risk of live oak decline, have helped reduce and/or off-set that loss.

During this year, the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association will develop a program and communication network of and for residents interested in development and protection of canopy in the neighborhood.

Michael Embesi, City of Austin Arborist, will speak to these issues at the Annual Meeting of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association on Tuesday, March 25th. The meeting is held at St. Mark United Methodist Church in the Community Hall from 6:30 to about 8:00 pm.

"Canopy Comments" is a tag line for postings that are developed in consultation with the City of Austin Arborist. Postings have been made on Nextdoor, and will be expanded to the Yahoo and Facebook groups in the near future.

Heritage live oaks (live oaks of sufficient age and/or size, not the Heritage species as seen at the corner of Oakwood and Covington) are an emblem of the neighborhood, and many significant specimens of these remain despite the devastation caused by Oak Wilt. This year we will call attention to these trees, and also provide information for selection of trees to fill gaps left by the disease in the neighborhood.

We look forward to hearing from residents about their interest in canopy preservation and recovery.

The Story Of Our Trail, and What's About To Happen To It

It's always amazing to find there are folks in the neighborhood who haven't been to our little section of the Austin Greenbelt along Walnut Creek (enter where Oakbrook and Cedarbrook Court come together). Except when flooded or "droughted" it's a wonderful place to spend an hour or a few making a connection with nature. It's not big enough to be a city park and too big to be a "pocket park". This is fortunate for us, because it functions as a park in many respects but doesn't draw visitors from around the city, county or state: It's "our neighborhood" park. We are looking toward having some kid-friendly facilities near the entrance in the (fairly) near future, but it's likely that this will have to wait until after the oncoming city bike trail "invades" next year. This invasion, discussed later, is the primary motivation for the article. For now, our Walnut Bluffs Trail will remain a great neighborhood resource for joggers, walkers, dogwalkers, bike riders, waders, and those interested in native flora and fauna.

This section of Walnut Creek was "occupied" by the hunter-gatherer Tonkawa Indians long before the first colonizers arrived in 1820. It's been reported (<http://fryr.tripod.com/cfhistwalnutcrcheology.html>) that somewhere in this area Josiah Willbarger survived being scalped in the first recorded conflict between Indians and settlers in August of 1833. The same document says that some accounts indicate that the "Archive War" incident happened somewhere nearby ("official" records say it was at Brushy Creek further north near Round Rock). Houston had a contingent trying to abscond with the state records from Austin intending to re-establish the capitol in Houston when a vigilante group of residents caught up with his men and took them back.

It's also worth noting that Walnut Creek Baptist may be the oldest church in (at least) the county still conducting services in its original location.

"Our" trail was simply a natural path alongside Walnut Creek which has been used by residents – especially kids – as long as there have been kids in the neighborhood (adults, too: Longtime resident Gary Brewer reports that he hunted and fished in the area in the '60s). And judging by the springs, caves and many artifacts found in the area, by native Americans for at least hundreds of years before that. In between, the property was long used as a dairy, so no doubt bovines used parts of it regularly for many years. The city and county, which now control the property through private dedication, easements and floodplain laws as well as some direct ownership, also still use it periodically for access to the creek (a main sewer line – to which ours connects - runs under this section of the creek) and greenbelt area. "The neighborhood" started using it in the '70s and decided to make it a more defined and maintained trail in the '80's. The Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association "adopted" the trail and surroundings in the '90s and started periodic maintenance – keeping the walkway clear of unwanted growth and trimming and/or clearing trees as needed. This activity has been performed by volunteers from the neighborhood, with Gary Brewer leading as diagnostician, planner, and primary executioner in the process of keeping it safe and beautiful. Regular "park" maintenance days are scheduled by WCNA two to four times per year, and anybody who wants to help is welcome. Watch for announcements on our social media list servers and website as well as the newsletter when the dates are known far enough in advance.

In the 2000's, the arrangement between WCNA and the city was more clearly defined: The area, which is not large enough to be a city park, would be designated a city trail – Walnut Bluffs Trail - with WCNA as the caretaker. Thus we work in tandem with the city. They provided the entrance sign, trash can and "doggy bags", and they haul away the residue from our clearing and cleaning operations here and on our neighborhood boundaries as well.

Look Out! Here They Come: We'll Be Connecting With "The Outside"

Since the 1980's it has been in the city's long term planning to construct a walking and biking trail along the Walnut Creek Greenbelt from the MoKan railroad right of way on the East side to West of MoPac and the IBM campus / Balcones Park area. Remnants of the wooden bridges that connect the West part of the IBM Campus (now National Instruments property) over the southwestern headwaters of Walnut Creek are still in place and are being used on the trail south of Duvall and west of MoPac to connect into Balcones Community Park at Duval. Representatives of WCNA followed development of this plan from its inception with both interest and concern for how it would affect our neighborhood, which generally was favorable to the concept. A map from Community Impact Newspaper (<http://impactnews.com/>) showing the current route on a large scale is shown below; This route is essentially the same as the corresponding part of the route just described (note that Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park did not exist at that time). The trail will allow walking or cycling from IH35 to Balcones Community Park west of MoPac, thus opening the "back" of our neighborhood to travelers from both east and west.

In 2009 the city submitted a plan to the federal government to combine this section with other planned sections around Austin to produce a trail on which a bicycle rider eventually could circle the city without getting on a major city street. This Austin plan was accepted under the economic stimulus program as a "shovel-ready" project which

could get started quickly to provide jobs in the area. The money became available quickly, but the start of the project was held up largely by design details and contracting requirements. Work started on the southern section in 2012, which is later than “North Phase 1” but has progressed relatively smoothly so that it is expected to be fully open to the public now or in the very near future

(<http://www.austintexas.gov/article/walnut-creek-trail-system>).

Work was started on the west end (“Phase 1” on the map) of the part of the trail involving us – the “Walnut Creek Trail” – in 2010, but ran into problems and eventually was stopped and awarded to a second contractor. Significant redesign is underway on parts of this section, which is now targeted for completion by the end of this year (2014). This represents a major delay in the original project schedule.

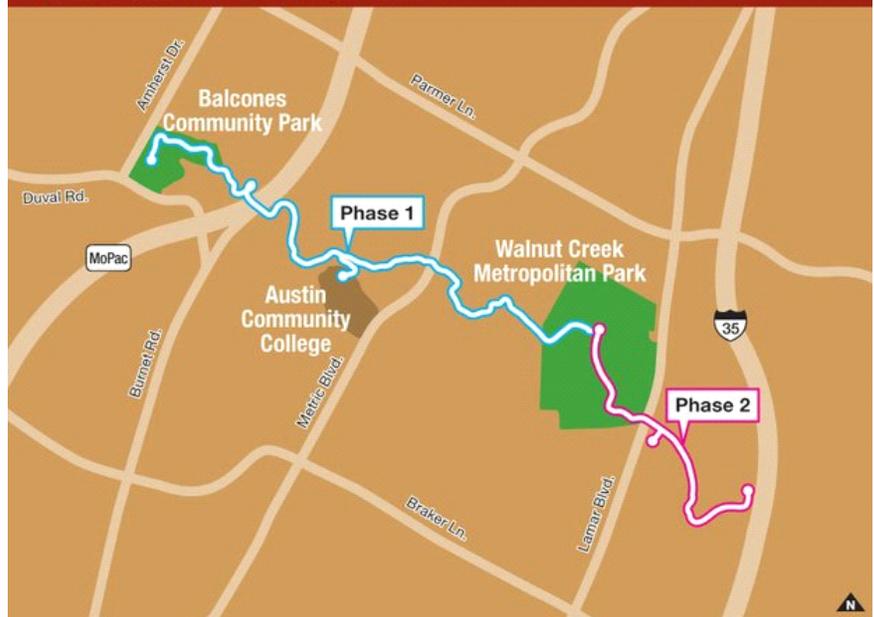
Because the phases are being done serially, the schedule for our section – Phase 2 on the map – has been slipping regularly. A preliminary design generated in the middle of last year and obtained by the board caused concern about several issues; especially: A 12-car parking lot was being considered inside the park close to the trailhead, a wide, concrete “spur” was planned between this parking lot and the trail, and the preliminary route took the trail within a few meters of neighbor’s houses. The greatest concern centered around making Oakbrook/Cedarbrook Ct. a “public destination” with subsequent detriment to the residential nature of this part of the neighborhood; i.e., risk of a massive increase in visitors vs. the reasonable traffic currently attracted by use of the park.

A public meeting was held on January 30th at the Little Walnut Creek Library on Rundberg, run by administrators from the Public Works Department, which - rather than Parks & Recreation - is in charge of this greenbelt project because this is a “mobility” (i.e., transportation) project. Approximately 50 neighbors attended and made the multiple concerns of the neighborhood clear. To see how the trail connects with Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park under the Lamar bridge and with IH35 access road, the section of the trail directly relevant to us from the “exhibit” used for the city presentations is shown in the figure on the next page (the proposed parking lot is not shown on the map).

The spirited discussions in the meeting seem to have led to modifications to the initial design. At this time the parking lot is no longer considered as a potential part of the plan, and the spur may be dropped so the path from the trailhead will become our and the city park department’s responsibility. The route had already been “squeezed” to maximize distance between the trail and residences while allowing it to cross the creek at the “optimal point”; I.e., the resulting east end of the bridge will allow the trail to make it up the hill to the outlet onto the sidewalk on the access road near the Girl Scouts of Central Texas parking area while maintaining a grade which meets Americans With Disabilities Act specifications (5% forward, 3% side-to-side), required because of partial funding from the federal government. Refinements in design will be made as the project progresses, with hope that the distances can be increased further. Also, methods to stabilize banks to reduce erosion may be employed which could mitigate negative effects of the bridge which will be required. This bridge will be designed to “withstand the hundred-year flood”, which would over flow the bridge by many feet (success would be a real engineering feat).

Expected timeline for the project currently calls for bidding and contract award around July/August of 2015, with construction requiring at least 18 months. Updates can be obtained as generated by requesting email notification at Carolyn.Perez@austintexas.gov, and WCNA will post important developments on the neighborhood Yahoo and NextDoor listservs as well as in future newsletters.

Walnut Creek Trail Phase 1 and 2



Phases 1 and 2 meet at the parking lot in Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park

Kerbey Lane is (probably) coming to the 'hood

Kerbey Lane has announced that it has bought the property to the east of Bluebonnet P.O. (“our” P.O.) with intentions of establishing a new location there within two years. It will be their seventh restaurant in Austin.



**Route of the Concrete City Bike Trail
Coming to Walnut Creek**

New Newsletter Keeps Up With District 7

Steven Zettner is the editor of “District 7”, a new information source initiated simultaneously with the final definitions of boundaries for the new city council districts. His publication is aimed at keeping us District 7 residents as current as possible on plans, schedules and events of direct interest. As the perfect example, the candidates who have signed up for the District 7 race are listed with their biographies and position statements (or links to them). Others who are seriously contemplating entering are also listed. The site intends to present continuing evaluations of the candidates as the race proceeds. Current announced candidates are Jeb Boyt, Ed English, and Alex Blum. At least three others are contemplating entering.

The newsletter/blog is keeping current on the major issues we are facing – or soon to face – as well. The CodeNEXT process discussed on the next page is a good example: Positions of some of the strongest groups pushing and/or reacting to the process are summarized here with links. It also works with the North Austin Community Newsletter and solicits and accepts articles from any District 7 sources. It is a site well worth bookmarking and referring to frequently when looking for information on topics relevant to our neighborhood. The site is <http://www.austindistrict7.org>. Be sure to read the mission and policy statements under “About”.

City Council District 7 (us) and District 4 Town Hall Meeting: Info You Need!

The meeting was held at St. Albert (Metric & Bittern Hollow) on January 28th, led by Mary Rudig of Gracywoods / LoveNorthAustin / Neighborhood Watch /etc, etc., with a good turnout from both districts. Mary presented (download the PowerPoint presentation from <http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>) a comprehensive look at the joint area comprising the two districts, showing the characteristics which are common and emphasizing those which need the most attention. The idea is that we might want to act in a reasonably coordinated way when approaching the city, especially as we embody most of the primary issues that face Austin as it continues to grow rapidly. For example, the joint districts encompass from one of the most publicized crime areas – the Rundberg Lane/IH35 area – to some of the oldest and greenest subdivisions relatively recently annexed into the city (us and Gracywoods). Because of this we continually face the strongest effects of zoning issues, with a high number of grandfathered properties. We are arguably the most diverse area in Austin and connect directly to the most congested roadways into the “central core” (IH35, MoPac and Lamar/Burnet). Thus: we are future Austin.

What's Up with CodeNEXT?

CodeNEXT is an effort currently underway by the City of Austin to rewrite its land development code. This code sets the rules and procedures for land development, which includes zoning, subdivision, site plans, building permits, and inspection processes, as well as technical requirements for transportation, drainage, environmental protection, water & wastewater and building construction.

Why is this being done? One reason given is that Austin's current code has become highly fragmented and difficult to use, and in some cases internally contradictory. Another reason given is this: the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/our-plan-future>) seeks to provide a compact, connected, and complete city, and a new code is required in order to support the drive toward such a city. This process started in mid-2013 and proceeds through various phases to final code adoption by June 2016.

At the present time, CodeNEXT is involved in a listening and understanding phase and a diagnosis and outline phase. Part of the current effort is the so-called "Community-in-a-Box" or "Community-Character-in-a-Box" program. In this program, different neighborhoods of Austin are given maps of their area and are asked to note on the maps the problems and opportunities for their neighborhoods. The maps will then be forwarded to the CodeNEXT team for their use in the diagnosis and outline phase. Photos of neighborhood features (both desirable and undesirable) can be sent to dedicated email addresses provided in the "Community-in-a-Box" kit.

This "Community-in-a-Box" program has had a rough roll out in North Austin because a number of neighborhoods have been lumped together in a single reporting area, so the Walnut Creek neighborhood has been combined with Gracywoods, Lamplight Village, Scofield Farms, and others. We are sorting through this and will find a way for the voice of the Walnut Creek neighborhood to be heard. You should think about the land use-type problems you face (e.g., over-commercialization nearby, cut-through traffic) and the opportunities for development (neighborhood services, parks, preservation of big lots and trees) and have your feedback ready. The deadline for "Community-in-a-Box" submissions is now April 21, 2014, changed from March 22, 2014 due to the rough roll out.

One of the concerns from project skeptics is certainly relevant to us. The term "compact" indicates the desire of the city to "densify" - increase the number of people per square mile (or square foot?) - in order to reduce sprawl, transportation problems, and general infrastructure costs. Thus tall apartment buildings will be "encouraged" and possibly multiple residential units per property. This could represent opportunity if, for example, you wanted to build your mother-in-law a cottage on your property (perhaps encouraged by redefinition of zoning and easing of permitting and zoning modification processes), or danger from loss of "personal space". This is the idea: Make zoning and permitting processes more efficient for projects which point in the right direction and more difficult otherwise.

Calling All Butterfly Lovers

Elizabeth Hobson Cannedy has been a neighbor on Whitewing since 1985. She became interested in butterfly gardening through her son when he was 5 years old (quite awhile ago, she says). In 2004 she began breeding butterflies commercially and that led to becoming the Curator for the Butterfly Haus at Wildseed Farms in Fredericksburg. Widely known as "The Butterfly Lady" in those days, she operated at Wildseed from 2005 to 2010. During this period she also continued breeding and studying from her home, occasionally providing them to people for weddings, parties, etc while learning the intricacies of breeding species here in Austin. Then when Snoopers Nursery (used to be on the access road at Covington and IH35) moved their operation to Round Rock, she and husband Tommie established a flight house on their grounds on Old Settlers Boulevard after leaving Wildseed. She is now ready to open the facility – called **Flutterby Farm** - to the public on weekends starting mid-March. Here's your chance to have close encounters with the highly variable and colorful species Heliconius, found primarily in South America with a few varieties in Texas. At the exhibit you can learn about gardening specifically to attract butterflies and observe the butterfly life cycle. You can also enjoy the close proximity of the flying butterflies in the relatively small area, as the curious butterflies fly low and often very close to you.

Flutterby Farm is a working butterfly farm, open to the public on weekends from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The admission price is \$3, but if you're from the neighborhood you can get in free until the end of May. It is located at Snoopers Garden Center, 3602 E Old Settlers Blvd in Round Rock. Drive into Snoopers and loop to the left at the first road and curve back toward the front (closest building to Old Settlers Blvd.).



Section 4

Events and Contacts Lists

Mar	7-16	SXSW Festival (avoid downtown unless you're attending)
	12 & 26	Recycle (blue) containers will be picked up along with trash
	9	Daylight Savings Time began (set clock back 1 hour)
	15	Restore Rundberg "Home Away From Home" Event
	17-21	Large Brush Pickup
	20	APD free Auto VIN etching (anti-theft); 10:00 to 1:00; Arboretum Target (Research at Great Hills, used to be Home Depot)
	25	WCNA Annual Meeting; 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. St. Mark United Methodist Church, Lawshae Bldg.
Apr	1	Zoning & Platting Comm'n Hearing on property at Lamar & Scurry (SE corner): Requesting Commercial zoning(!)
	6	Keep Austin Beautiful Clean Sweep
	6	37th Capitol 10K (avoid downtown 'til afternoon, unless you're runnin')
	9 & 23	Recycle (blue) containers will be picked up along with trash
	10-14	Bulk Item Collection
	19	Funky Chicken Coop Tour
	20	Easter
May	2	No Pants Day (Now don't forget!)

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods January newsletter: <http://goo.gl/NbVkJVE> Good, important stuff!
 North Austin Community Newsletter: Also good, important and some funny stuff, overlapped with NACN
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

City/County Contacts:

Mayor Lee Leffingwell, 974-2250
lee.leffingwell@ci.austin.tx.us

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Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us

County Commissioner Pct 2

Bruce Todd, 512-854-9222
Bruce.Todd@co.travis.tx.us

EMERGENCY: Police, Fire, EMS, Animal Control: 911

City of Austin: All services, codes & code violations, animal reports: Phone: 311 Online: <http://austin-plcsrprod.cwi.motorolasolutions.com/Home.mvc/Index>

APD Burglary Unit
<http://www.facebook.com/APDBU>

Report abandoned/suspicious vehicles: 512 974-8119

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods Newsletter:
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

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 512 974 8143
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Sam Lindsey, County Constable (512) 854-4515
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O'Shay Garden, County Constable (512) 854-9697
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FREE WiFi INSIDE



Redbud Buds Are Here!

**Bradford Pear Blossoms Frozen (left)
Normal (below)
(Who ordered that last freeze?)**





Twidwell's Bradford Pear Tree on Cedarbrook Ct.

February Irises on Whitewing



About WCNA and the newsletter

WCNA membership is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within the boundaries, including perimeters, of the association.

Membership dues are \$15 per household for a calendar year. Send a check to: WCNA ; PO Box 82746; Austin, TX 78708-2746

Dues notices and payment envelopes are included in the Nov/Dec and Jan/Feb newsletters each year.

Payment also may be made using PayPal: See the membership coupon.

WCN News is sent to all members and every household within the boundaries represented by the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association:

Braker Lane, North Lamar, I-35, and Walnut Creek.

To contribute an articles to the newsletter, send contributions via email to wcna.contact@gmail.com or contact a board member.

The opinions expressed in articles printed in this newsletter are the explicit opinions of the writer(s) and are not to be implied as the opinions of either the editor or the Board of Directors of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.

