

May



June

2013

Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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Spring Trailhead Potluck Brings Neighbors Together

The biggest crowd yet for our semi-annual trailhead potluck picnic suppers gathered on Sunday evening, April 28th to share food and fellowship. More than 30 neighbors of all ages, from wee babes in arms to neighbors who could be those babies' great-grandparents, gathered to share food they'd made and a few laughs.

Neighbors gathered around the tables covered with vintage tablecloths and loads of homemade goodies. Folks who've been in the neighborhood for decades traded stories with new homeowners who have been in the thick of moving in and remodeling.

Grilled chicken, sausages, potato salad, fresh green salad from a neighbor's garden.. and lots of brownies and cake for dessert!

What more could you ask for? Perfect weather? We had that too!



As for the Trailhead Potluck, the next one will be in November.

We encourage everyone to think about doing informal gatherings to meet neighbors and produce the kind of friendly bonds that create community for years to come.

**Lifelong
Walnut Creek
Resident**



Interested in a Fun and Productive Pastime?

As you might expect in a neighborhood as active as ours, new inquiries and ideas toward making the neighborhood more pleasant and inviting to live in are always bubbling up (not to mention the occasional problems which must be faced). Many of these are discussed by the board – many times with neighbors at the monthly board meetings – to decide on actions and priorities. Specific action is always determined by volunteers ready and willing to spend some time on the project or “issue”. The discussions about these activities are always lively and interesting, and usually educational and almost always enjoyable. Of course development and execution of a plan depends on someone leading the way.

WCNA is looking for neighbors to serve on the board and volunteers to help with research, development, planning and implementation of new and existing proposed projects. Enthusiasm generally is in plenty of supply; We're limited only by the willingness and time available from “us”. If you think you might be interested in being on the Board or getting involved with one or more of the projects waiting to be acted on, or introducing one yourself, just contact a board member or come to a board meeting (see page 6). You will be heartily welcomed!

SECOND ANNUAL FOURTH:

Join the Parade! (and picnic)

Last July 4th saw the first Walnut Creek Neighborhood Independence Day Parade, instigated and organized in large part by Kay and Joel Klumpp around “the peninsula” formed by Oakwood, Indianhead and Caddo (July-Aug 2012 issue). The whole, highly-successful process was executed in not much more than a week, including an amazing potluck picnic in the Klumpp's front yard. And they're planning a second version this year --think what a month or two of preparation could do! If you want to help in any way, contact Kay at kayklumpp@yahoo.com or 512 491-0934. As with last year's, the parade can be joined spontaneously at the start or on the way, and galleries along the way will be greatly appreciated.



SHADY OAKS GARDEN CLUB
Spring Most Attractive Yard Awards

First Place: 11306 HORNSBY

Several well-trimmed bushes, notably two which are a beautiful purple color, yellow bells and rose flower beds make this an outstanding yard.

Honorable Mention: 11303 HUNTERS

Interesting yard art, mingled with hanging baskets, well-shaped bushes and Spring flowers.

Honorable Mention: 11505 HUNTERS

Xeriscape plan of native and tropical plants along street side featuring yucca, agave, lantana and Central Texas flowers.

Honorable Mention: 11306 HUNTERS

White rock flower bed with colorful Spring flowers, climbing vine on house and large plants make a pleasant setting.

Most Improved: 206 W. COVINGTON

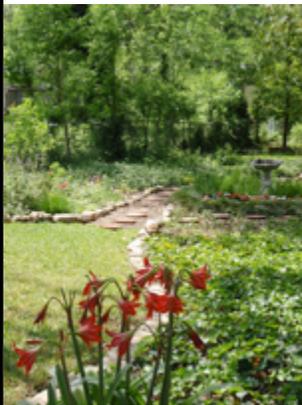
Stone beds outline a beautiful dark green lawn lending a nice contrast with yellow, pink and red flowered bushes, in circular beds.



**Walnut Creek Neighborhood Most Attractive Yard
Spring 2013**

NXNA Garden Tour raises funds for school gardens.

Two Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association gardens will be part of the first-ever North by North Austin Garden Tour Saturday, June 1st. These gardens join more than a dozen private gardens and several school and community gardens featuring everything from exotic cacti and succulents to a garden made completely with recycled materials.



Whitewing Garden

Tickets are \$10 apiece and proceeds will go to Austin Voices to fund the North Austin Coalition of Schools for garden projects at North Austin schools.

In addition to the self-guided tours on Saturday, June 1, there will also be gardening events Sunday, June 2 at the North Austin YMCA on Rundberg just west of Lamar (also called North Austin Community and Recreation Center).

Events run 10 am to 4 pm both days. See the Ad on the Advertisers Page (page 7).

More info at Lovenorthaustin/2013-garden-tour.htm and Nxntagardentour.blogspot.com

**You can buy tickets at nxna.ticketbud.com/nxnagardentour
or at these gardens the day of the tour:**

11922 Oakbrook Drive 1701 Pheasant Roost 8600 Bridgeport

Word on the Street

***** Spotlight: Diamonds in the Ruff *****

With summer rapidly approaching, it might be time to give your dog a new 'do. If you need to get your pooch groomed, I would highly recommend Shelly at Diamonds in the Ruff. It's a great (and cheaper) alternative to the big-box pet store groomers. Shelly is the owner operator and has a personal touch. My dog definitely does not like to be groomed, but Shelly is very cheery and helps both of us feel more at ease. Located on Parmer and Rampart, it is close to home, and I trust Shelly to take good care.

Spotted in a church bulletin:

"The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment, and gracious hostility."

Section 2 You and Your Home: Value, Beauty, Safety, Security, Health

LET THE NUMBERS DO THE TALKING by Jill Leberknight

I think the statistics below tell most of the story that I want to share with my neighbors. If you have read my posts on Facebook, NextDoor, and/or our Yahoo groups - and in the previous issue - you already know about the wild real estate scene we are experiencing in Austin right now. If you missed it and need a recap it goes something like this – unprecedented numbers of buyers flood the market at start of 2013, not enough homes to meet their needs, "Black Friday" style fighting ensues, and Austin sellers sweep up.

So what does this mean for WCN? It means average price per square foot and sold prices are up 15%. It means the average days on market for sales is down to a record low of five (only one in some areas of the neighborhood). It means our larger homes and extreme make-overs FINALLY are selling at Austin's average price per square foot for the first time in almost a decade. It means buyers are starting to give value to our large lots, mature trees, unique architecture & community atmosphere, as well as strategic location.

Basically, we are sitting on completely different investments today than we were at this time last year. ***WAIT***; but what about property values?! Well, the statistics below are for the 2012 protest tax year (1/1/2012-2/28/2013). I will be holding my annual protest planning meeting Tuesday May 21st at Santorini's Café. Come and join us to learn the ropes for fighting property appraisals here in WCN. There is hope and I will show you how.

Sales Statistics: 2012 Property Tax Year – 1/1/2012-2/28/2013

Note: Statistics for the limited number of sales since February are shown in **bold** beside last year's.

<u>Subdivision</u>	<u>Sales price per square foot</u>	<u>Avg. Sales Price</u>	<u>Days to sell</u>
Eubank Acres	\$100.13 / \$108.55	\$154,428 / \$205,000	42 / 1
Walnut Forest	\$98.01 / \$122.87	\$156,500 / \$200,000	22 / 8
Oakridge/Spanish Oakridge	\$95.94 / no available stats yet	\$180,250	28
WCN Combined	\$99.79 / \$115.71	\$156,047 / \$202,650	39 / 5

FREE SEMINAR: How to Protest Your Travis County Property Appraisal

Is my appraised home value too high? Should I protest? How do I protest and what do I need to succeed?

Join Jill on Tuesday, May 21st at 6:30pm at Santorini's Cafe to get answers as well as an overview of current market conditions for our neighborhood.

Non-Toxic Cleaning Solutions You Can Make Yourself Contributed by Lisa Todd

I started researching non-toxic cleaning alternatives several years ago as I have a sensitivity to scents which causes me to have headaches and triggers my asthma. What I found were solutions that not only worked well, but were generally much cheaper. I have collected many recipes over the years from a basic scrubbing cleanser to a vegetable wash. Because I have too many recipes to share in one article, I will start with a few of my favorites.

Your shopping list will comprise a few basic ingredients that are easily found in any grocery store. One of the first ingredients that you will need is Borax which is a granular powder found on the laundry aisle. Borax and baking soda are two of my favorite cleaning items because of their versatility. Another must-have ingredient is white distilled vinegar. I buy it in a gallon jug because I use it for so many things. Lemons are also an item I use because of their disinfecting and whitening capabilities. You can take a lemon and cut it in half and rub it on your counters and let dry to disinfect the surface.

The first recipe is for a non-abrasive, disinfecting scouring powder. Mix 4 parts baking soda and 1 part borax together and put in a shaker container. Just sprinkle this mixture anywhere you need a scrubbing powder and it works beautifully. Also, baking soda and borax are known for their ability to get rid of bad odors.

For an all-purpose spray cleaner combine 2 cups water, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon dish soap, 1 tablespoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon Borax. Pour into a spray bottle and shake before each use to clean any hard surface.

Homemade window cleaners tend to get a bad rap, but I use this recipe and find it works wonderfully for me. Mix 1/4 cup white vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon liquid soap and 2 cups water. Pour into a spray bottle. For polishing windows and mirrors, crumpled newspaper works really well. On hot days, clean windows in the morning to help prevent streaking.

I have two good solutions for cleaning the toilet. The first one the kids will enjoy. Pour 1/2 cups of baking soda and 1 cup white vinegar into the toilet bowl. Swish around and flush. Kids love to see the foaming reaction. Another easy way to clean the toilet is to pour 1 cup Borax into the toilet bowl, use a brush to swish around and then let sit for one hour. This will take care of odors in the bowl while cleaning.

As with any cleaning product, it is always a good idea to test a small spot in an inconspicuous area to make sure it doesn't cause any damage to the surface. Also, even though these ingredients are considered safe and non-toxic to the environment, they should be monitored and stored out of reach of children and pets.

I hope you find these recipes helpful. If you have any cleaning solutions you would like to share, I always enjoy finding new solutions.

Section 3

City-County News and Events

If you've received your water and wastewater bill from February, you can be excused for a bit of "frothing at the mouth". The rate was increased at the first of the year, but by only 5%. The larger effect was caused by changing to a five-tiered system of usage, though only the bottom three are likely of interest to us. As stated in the January Austin Energy Customer News, "if your usage is less than 6,000 gallons/month your cost likely will decrease. Above 6,000 gallons your cost will increase", e.g. by about 10% for 7,727 gallons, including a "Reserve Fund Surcharge" which is designed to assure "sufficient income in adverse conditions". For more details go to www.austintexas.gov/department/water. And/or you can check your bill using the calculator at http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wwaverage/wwaverage_calculator.cfm.

Watering Schedules in Austin

Lake Travis and Buchanan remain at very low levels, even at the end of the "rainy season". Thus we remain under Stage 2 restrictions for the foreseeable future. For residences this means no use of sprinklers between 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., and only on one day each week: Houses with even-numbered addresses on Sundays and odd-numbered addresses on Saturdays. Hand and drip watering can still be done anytime.

<http://austintexas.gov/department/stage-2-watering-restrictions>

STAGE 2 WATER RESTRICTIONS

RESIDENTIAL		COMMERCIAL		PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
Hose-End Sprinklers BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	Automatic Irrigation BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM	Hose-End Sprinklers BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	Automatic Irrigation BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM	Hose-End Sprinklers BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	Automatic Irrigation BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM
Even Address Sunday	Even Address Thursday	Even Address Tuesday		Monday	
Odd Address Saturday	Odd Address Wednesday	Odd Address Friday			

**One Day Per Week Watering
REPORT VIOLATIONS TO 3-1-1**

Burn Ban Lifted

As of 3 April, the burn ban which had been in effect in Travis County was lifted until further notice. To check restrictions on burning in the county see: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/fire_marshal/prevention/safety_tips.asp

County Commissioners Court

Sara Eckart, our Precinct 2 Commissioner, announced that she would vacate her position in order to run for County Judge in next year's election. Current County Judge Sam Biscoe will pick an interim commissioner within about a month, at which time she will step down. Biscoe will be retiring at the end of this term, making the position an open seat.

More Church Bulletins

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation. Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

School Bond Election

By the time you read this it is likely that the bond election on May 11th will be over. \$2,129,574 of that total is slated for Walnut Creek Elementary. Except for installation surveillance cameras and other technology, the money would be used for repair and replacement of infrastructure such as roofs, ceilings, plumbing and air conditioning, probably all from Propositions 1 and 2. None of the academic, fine arts and athletic money from Prop 4 is listed in the plans for WC Elementary shown via the interactive map at

<http://www.austinisd.org/bond/interactive-map>

Find the information for a school of interest by clicking on the symbol for the school on the map or from the drop-down menu under the headings directly above the map. Looks like whether the bonds pass or not the school will still be needing a great deal of help from volunteers in the neighborhood.

As reported in 5 May AAS, at least four more spending measures are being considered in Austin and Travis County over the next year or so. They include revisiting of the “low-income housing” issue, new and renovated ACC facilities (including Highland Mall), a new county courthouse, and partial financing of the first phase of an urban rail system. The total amount of funds being considered is over \$2 Billion.

“Restore Rundberg Project”: Progress Report

Last year the City of Austin received a federal grant for \$1M to help remedy the crime and deterioration in quality of life in the Rundberg area between IH35 and Lamar. WCNA board members attended the kickoff meeting at Lanier H.S. in December (Jan–Feb issue) and signed up to stay involved with the program. Research into actions taken in other cities to alleviate similar problems has been ongoing since that meeting, and project personnel presented some of the results so far at a meeting at the new YMCA/Community and Recreation Center (behind the H.E.B. on Lamar and Rundberg). Three UT students described some of the “tools” developed for other cities that potentially are applicable to the target Rundberg neighborhoods, and thus also to ours and most others in Austin. The primary issue for this presentation was called “Problem Properties”. The researchers described varying approaches and procedures - called tools - used in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and several other cities outside Texas to deal with the same kinds of issues we find in Walnut Creek Neighborhood, and contrasted them with Austin’s policies and procedures.

Clearly, neighborhoods in all medium and large Texas cities face similar difficult situations with some properties, from single family residences to hotels/motels and apartments (the Budget Motel at Rundberg and IH35 was given as a prime example, along with failure of a landlord to provide basic maintenance on a rental unit in another city). All the cities cited had developed approaches – generally in the form of ordinances with enforcement support – to deal with some of these problems, and those that were described had gone well beyond what is available to neighborhoods in Austin.

The problems range from criminal activity to failure to maintain property, and of course the issues are not independent. The motel on our eastern boundary is a painful case in point, and we have several properties within the neighborhood boundaries that have or have had maintenance issues beyond “parking in the yard”, with code enforcement hampered by the number of field agents for Austin compared to the number of problem properties. So your representatives present at the meeting were “all ears”.

The term to describe tools for residential – especially multifamily – property problems is “Community Policing”. Methods used in other cities include “Rental Registration” and “Community Prosecutors”, working with code enforcement, to help address many of the kinds of problems encountered. Rental Registration involves developing a database for all properties rented or leased, including contact information for the responsible person (owner or manager). A fee may be charged to each rentee/leasee to maintain this database, which is available to enforcement personnel. A “Community Prosecutor” may be established to handle cases brought by “stakeholders” in a quasi-legal context to attempt to alleviate a problem without invoking typically slow legal procedures and associated costs. This method has shown good initial success in Dallas, and an effort is underway by North Austin Civic Association to initiate Rental Registration here, with concentration on the Rundberg area.

For hotels and motels the term is “Nuisance Abatement”. Costs for structures and personnel to apply procedures under this rubric could be paid for using the taxes collected by these institutions. They could also use Community Prosecutors in collaboration with the City Attorney.

Most of the tools described would require new ordinances, and the project includes close contact with APD and the City to develop Austin versions of such laws.

Aggie Joke From Reader’s Digest: Guy arrives at the hospital with two burned ears.

“How’d it happen” asks the nurse. “I was ironing my shirt and the phone rang,” he explains.

“Instead of the phone, I picked up the iron.” “How’d you burn the other ear?” “They called back.”

Section 4

Events and Contact List

Here you'll find dates of important events and notices of, and information about, activities important to the neighborhood. This section will also include the names and contact information of people who can provide help and information about neighborhood and city activities.

Don't Forget!

Austin Independent School District Bond Election: 11 May (did you vote?)

Clinic on reducing your property appraisal for 2013: 21 May at Santorini Café at 6:30

NorthXNorthAustin Garden Tour: 1 June (See page 2 and ad below)

Free APD Auto VIN etching at ACC Northridge (11928 Stonehollow Dr): 6 June 2013

Sign up to receive information about Google Gigabit Fiber: <https://fiber.google.com/cities/austin/>

Dues can now be paid via PayPal!: Just enter the entire URL below as one line in your browser:
https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=ZTNH2TAP75YVLxclick&hosted_button_id=ZTNH2TAP75YVL

WCNA Board Meetings are generally held on the first Wednesday of each month at Santorini Cafe. Everyone is welcome to attend, but check with a WCNA board member (see below) to verify that the date - and/or time - hasn't changed.

City/County Contacts:

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

Mike Martinez, 974-2264
mike.martinez@ci.austin.tx.us

Laura Morrison, 974-2260
laura.morrison@ci.austin.tx.us

Sheryl Cole, 974-2255
Sheryl.cole@ci.austin.tx.us

Bill Spelman, 974-2258
william.spelman@ci.austin.tx.us

Chris Riley, 974-2256
chris.riley@ci.austin.tx.us

Kathie Tovo, 512-974-2255
Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us

County Commissioner,
 Sarah Eckhardt, 854-9222
Sarah.Eckhardt@co.travis.tx.us

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

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

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

The Austin Animal Center, at 7201 Levander Loop – left off Airport Boulevard just before the 183 intersection – provides **free/low cost spay/neuter, rabies vaccinations, and microchip** implants for eligible residents:
<http://austintexas.gov/department/animal-services> ; 512-974-2000

WCNA Board of Directors and Officers

Robert Meadows President
 339-0229 robertl@meadows.com

Theresa Jones Vice President
 832-0404 tjones72@austin.rr.com

Pat Pitt Treasurer
 837-6620 s.pitt@earthlink.net

Jean Ramsey
 921-7762 jeanram@gmail.com

Jill Leberknight
 294-7296 jill@weemus.com

Brad Wilcox
 947-9077 bradwilcox@live.com

Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell
 339-0412 bunnie@mail.utexas.edu

Tasha Bowser
 731-6863 Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com

Large Brush and Bulk Collection Schedules: <http://austintexas.gov/department/residential-curbside-collection-schedule>

Neighbor-generated file of criminal activity in the neighborhood:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0Aj5ZBhBXL3ydHpOYmw3Vm5menktSXFVTHhSbmNJaEE&usp=sharing>

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To place an ad, contact Jim Letchworth - jimletchworth@yahoo.com. The rate is \$90 for the full year (six bi-monthly issues).



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NXNA GARDEN TOUR

North by North Austin
Garden Tour

SATURDAY, JUNE 1
Tours of private, school and community gardens across North Austin

SUNDAY, JUNE 2
Demonstrations and workshops at the North Austin YMCA

\$10 FOR ALL EVENTS BOTH DAYS
www.northaustin.com/nxna/gardentour

Benefiting Austin Voices for the North Austin Community School Alliance's gardening projects at North Austin schools.
austinvoces.org





Texaco Food Mart * La Potosina Market 

- ❖ Breakfast & Lunch Tacos
- ❖ Meat Market
- ❖ Fresh Produce & Fruits
- ❖ Hot/Fresh Coffee
- ❖ Wine, Beer, and Imports
- ❖ Prepaid Phone Cards
- ❖ Gas and Diesel
- ❖ Texas Lottery
- ❖ Texas Lottery
- ❖ Check Cashing 1%
- ❖ Money Transfers (Western Union, Sigue)
- ❖ Money Orders \$0.59
- ❖ Lone Star Cards Accepted
- ❖ Open 7 Days A Week

11331 North Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX 78753 Tel: 512-836-6400

Braker Lane Christian Learning Center

11300 Hunters Lane
Austin, Texas 78753
Phone: 512-837-2268
Fax: 512-837-0815

Marianne Newberry, Director
Bill Newberry, Business Manager

abcde



SANTORINI CAFÉ
mediterranean cuisine
coffee & wine bar



11800 North Lamar Blvd, Bldg #1, Austin, TX 78753
PHONE: (512)833-6000
Facebook: Santorini Café, Music & Entertainment
Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings

Lunch Specials
Monday to Friday
11:00am - 2:00pm

Happy Hour
Daily 5-8pm



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www.texasfriendlydds.com

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Residential Remodeling & Repairs

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Cell: 512 748 7840
Fax: 512 719 4615
pat@pjbcontracting.com

*The WALNUT CREEK
Real Estate Specialist*



Ask about
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jill.l@kw.com



May :: June 2013

PRSR STD.
US POSTAGE
PAID .
AUSTIN, TX .
PERMIT #986

Spring in Walnut Creek Neighborhood - Oakwood



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 page 6 (Section 4)

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 to the newsletter, send contributions via email to wcn.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.

Presently in front of a house on Caddo, the lamppost at right originally was located in downtown Austin. The homeowner at the time salvaged and installed it in the '50s.

