

Sept



Oct

2013

# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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**Mark Your Calendar: 1 October, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m**

**30th Annual National Neighborhood Night Out**

**St. Mark United Methodist Church, 600 W. Braker Lane**

Another year has rolled around (or rolled over us), and its time to celebrate the Annual National Neighborhood Night Out. This is a nationwide party to promote networking in the neighborhood in order to get to know your neighbors as a defense against crime. In the Walnut Creek neighborhood, this event has become a neighborhood-wide party.

This year, the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (the local sponsor), is throwing a Pizza Party and Ice Cream Social. The Association will provide pizzas and fresh salad for the main course and Blue Bell vanilla ice cream and fixings for dessert in a build-your-own sundae bar. This is not a potluck event, but feel free to bring a little extra something (or not), or to bring your own toppings. **Low stress** is the operative concept.



Would you please bring one or more non-perishable food items for the St. Mark Food Pantry? St. Mark is extremely supportive of our Association, and a good showing here would do a lot to reciprocate the good will.

We have asked all the first responders (APD, AFD, and EMS) and Code Compliance to attend, so we hope to see a fire truck or ambulance at the event.

There will be a bounce castle for the kids. We will also have some contests for those in attendance: Oldest and youngest residents present and resident who has lived in the neighborhood longest will receive gift certificates to local restaurants. And “new” residents – those who have moved to the neighborhood since the last NNO – in attendance will receive door prizes. Come on down!

A silent auction will be held, and the proceeds will be donated to the Century Club of Central Texas. Last year's donation was very well received by the Century Club.

Michael Crawford (Theresa Jones' husband) is donating one of the famous Baby Raptors to the auction, and Theresa Jones is donating a Boyds "Ziggy the Duffer" Bear. Monica Meadows is donating some mosaic garden tiles and an antique mirror. One or two other donations would be appreciated.

The Neighborhood Watch and the Walnut Creek Cat Coalition reps will be there to answer questions and discuss volunteering. It will also be possible to join the Association (\$15/household per year), register to vote, sign up for the neighborhood garage sale (held on 19 October - see below), and sign up for neighborhood social media.

Volunteers to scoop ice cream also will be appreciated. Gary and Margaret Brewer will take a 30-45 minute shift, but we need a few more volunteers to cover the event. To donate to the auction or volunteer, please call or email Jean Ramsey (512-921-7762, [jeanram@gmail.com](mailto:jeanram@gmail.com)) or Robert Meadows (512-339-0229, [robertl@meadows.com](mailto:robertl@meadows.com)). This information and updates will be posted at our new website, [www.WCNANews.com](http://www.WCNANews.com).

At the last board meeting, two board members who resigned before the end of their terms were replaced through appointment by the President. Say “Hi” to your new board members Christian Ninaud and Sharon Porter. Also, our old website has been replaced by a new one: [www.WCNANews.com](http://www.WCNANews.com). The site is in the process of getting set up, but already has useful information on it. Suggestions can be made via [wca.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wca.contact@gmail.com)

## Faithful Neighbors

If you're like most of us in the neighborhood, you probably know little about the religion of Islam, despite having the largest Muslim center in Austin right next door. Imam Mossaad responded to an invitation to tell us a little about the North Austin Muslim Community Center just across Lamar at Little Oak with the article below. Leaders of our other faith center neighbors will be invited to do the same in future editions.



## Our Neighbor: The North Austin Muslim Community Center (Masjid Aisha)

Invited article composed by Islam Mossaad, Imam

In the Name of ALLAAH Most Gracious Most Merciful

Your neighbors at the North Austin Muslim Community Center, located at 11900 North Lamar Boulevard, aim to serve ALLAAH by reflecting the Light of ALLAAH both for our guidance and for the guidance of all of human kind. At the core of the activities of NAMCC is worship. This extends out to acquiring knowledge, service, and invitation to the willful worship of the One God – The God of Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and Mohammed (Peace be upon all of these Messengers of ALLAAH). Note that Muslims use the word ALLAAH as the proper noun for the one who is the MAKER and MANAGER of all that exists.



Muslims are a very diverse group. Masjid Aisha (Masjid is the word Muslims use for Mosque) has congregants of recent immigration from more than 75 different countries of origin. In addition, our congregation includes Americans who became Muslim as adults or whose families have been here in America for several generations. What unites all Muslims is their shared conviction that only ALLAAH is to be worshipped, that we ascribe no partners to Him; and that Mohammed (Peace be upon him) is HIS final Messenger to all of human-kind. Starting Wednesday September 25 at 7 pm we offer our neighbors and the broader Austin community a free course, titled “Islam 101”, which goes into more depth (without being either confrontational or proselytizing), into the basic practices and beliefs of the religion of Islam. You can find more information at <http://namcc.org/islam101> link.

As Muslims we offer a formal prayer called Salah in the language of Arabic and we do so five times a day. Masjid Aisha is therefore punctuated with activity throughout the day – every day of the week – at dawn, in the early afternoon, in the late afternoon, after sunset, and after dark for the late night prayers. In Ramadan, the month of fasting and night prayer vigils, you will see a pinnacle of activities – including congregants keeping the vigil all night and all day. Throughout the year, the main congregational day for Muslims is Friday. Since we have 1,000+ who attend and meet in our multi-purpose hall that accommodates 348, we have three separate Friday services at 12:15, 1:30, and 2:30.

The Messenger Mohammed (Peace be upon him) said, “Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim.” As such, there is much education that takes place at Masjid Aisha. We have Quran reading and memorization classes for children and adults, weekend school, and summer school. We hold talks and gatherings that intertwine faith with character, history and contemporary challenges, family and youth issues, and knowledge that benefits us in the next life – the life after our death.

The Masjid Aisha facilitates marriages, burials, various areas of counseling, social and recreational activities. We are looking to grow our involvement (if ALLAAH wills) to other areas of service and education beyond 11900 North Lamar. The Qur’an instructs us to be an instrument of good towards all with the understanding that the most beloved to ALLAAH is he or she who is most beneficial to people.

The current property for the Masjid Aisha was purchased in 1996. We are a registered non-profit organization. The property came with 3 small buildings. In 2007 the congregation completed the multi-purpose hall; and in 2010 completed one level of underground parking. If ALLAAH wills, we will start construction of our proper prayer hall sometime between 2013 and 2015, once fully funded. Thanks be to ALLAAH that we have the North Parking land for future parking to accommodate future additional congregants.

We are happy to be part of this uniquely Austin neighborhood, Walnut Creek. Thanks and Praise to ALLAAH for the support that the splendid residents in the neighborhood give us. We look forward to even more positive and heart-warming experiences with our neighbors.

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Imam Islam Mossaad delivered the invocation before the Texas House of Representatives on January 31, 2013, as shown on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD28ws3kvBM>. He was born and raised in the U.S. and attended U.T. Austin, as described in the introduction there (where it also is reported that he is a devout Longhorn fan).

## Neighborhood-Wide Garage Sale on Saturday, 19 October



The annual Autumn WCNA yard sale will run from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm (of course “early birds” will show up well before then).

This date was chosen because: It is the first Saturday after a payday; It does not conflict with UT football; And the relatively earlier date does not conflict with the large number of other neighborhood yard sales that were held in North Austin in late October in 2012.

The event will be advertised in the Statesman and Chronicle (the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before the sale) and on Craigslist and Backpage. The "sandwich-board" signs will be posted at the entrances on the Friday afternoon before the sale, and other small red-and-white signs will be strategically posted throughout the neighborhood. The sale will also be advertised at the neighborhood's new website, WCNAnews.com. Tips for having a yard sale

will be posted in the social media and at WCNAnews.com (for example, combine your sale with a neighbor if you have few items).

Maps with locations of the participants will be distributed to garage-sale homes at the entrances to the neighborhood. If you want your sale listed in the map, contact Robert Meadows at 512 339-0229 or 633-1459, or robertl@meadows.com (or use Facebook or Nextdoor, preferably by a post, not a message). You should contact Robert as early as possible about the map, but he will not close the map until Friday morning, 18 October 2013. We need as many participants as possible in order to make our Statesman/Chronicle/map advertising look good.

Finally, please contact Robert if you are aware of any apps or other websites we should be using to advertise the yard sale, particularly mobile apps.

## Our Trail: Worth Visiting Often

Out of view along Walnut Creek and defining the north edge of our neighborhood resides “our little wilderness”, crossed by a trail maintained by neighbor volunteers. It’s actually a city park, but doesn’t qualify for the name; Instead it’s called “Walnut Bluffs Trailhead”. It’s truly a gem in our midst: The trail, which can be viewed on GoogleMaps (search “Cedarbrook”), generally runs along the south side of Walnut Creek and offers several openings through the trees where the creek can be reached easily. The “bluffs” part of the name comes from the high, sheer cliff that runs along much of the other side, (unfortunately now) topped by several apartment complexes. It’s quite scenic even with the “civilization” perched there, and the ambience is generally pastoral when walking the trail or in the creek itself.



Many residents use the park on a regular basis, walking pets (Note: On-Leash Only!), biking, or just strolling. The trail itself is generally open to the sky, but trees abound along the creek and in much of the large area on “our side” of the creek. The entry point and start of the trail traverse a shady grove with the only human-provided amenity: a bench for resting and greeting neighbors or just contemplating nature.

The trailhead entrance is just below the intersection of Oakbrook and Hornsby off Cedarbrook Court. There is a wide paved area right at the trailhead sign which can hold several vehicles off the Cedarbrook Court right of way. And it’s close enough to every home in the ‘hood so that most of us can walk to the park before walking the trails. From the entrance through the woods, crossing under the highline and following the trail down and along the creek to the end and back provides about a mile of travel. This distance can be increased by exploring some of the other clearly-worn branches of the trail, both at the end and near the entrance.

## Fall trailhead potluck: Sept. 22 at 6:00 p.m. [Share more than a covered dish!]

**Goal: to have fun with our neighbors.**

To join in, just bring a dish to share and a chair to sit in. We are also looking for folks who can bring paper plates, forks, cups and coolers for beverages, and nametags and markers. If we have a lot of people planning to come, we may also need additional tables!

To RSVP, offer help, or for more information call or email Sara Breuer 512-560-3278; [sarabreuer@mac.com](mailto:sarabreuer@mac.com)

**See you at the trail!**



A scene from April's trailhead potluck

## Walnut Creek / Walnut Bluffs Bike Trail Update

### Delays allow more chances to influence design By Sara Breuer

The WCNA leadership and interested neighbors continue to pursue information about the second phase of the north section of the Walnut Creek Bike Trail currently under construction northwest of Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park. The bike and pedestrian trail eventually is intended to circumscribe the city, perhaps supplementing bicycle transportation within the city limits. In our neighborhood, the 10-ft wide paved trail, funded in part by federal stimulus money, likely will follow most of the path of the current Walnut Bluffs trail that we, as a neighborhood, created and maintain. The west end of our trail will connect under Lamar with the trail coming from Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park, which is still some time away from connecting to the NW part under construction. In addition, preliminary plans include other access points and a 12-car parking lot in the woods near the current trailhead. That parking lot and the planned route that takes the trail extremely close to some homes along the creek, is what we are most concerned about and hope to affect during design.

There are some completed sections of the southern leg of the trail system from Delwau Lane to FM 969 in the east/southeast part of town. A trailhead is now open at the YMCA near 183 and Manor Road and portions of that trail are also open. But “our” part of the project continues to be pushed back. This means we have more time than we thought to get involved and influence the final design decisions.

If you want to stay informed of the trail’s progress, send an email to the Public Information Officer in charge – [Carolyn.perez@austintexas.gov](mailto:Carolyn.perez@austintexas.gov).

### Here is the City’s description of Northern Walnut Creek Trail - Phase 2 (“our” section):

“This project consists of the design and construction of a new trail on the Walnut Creek Greenbelt. The trail will originate in Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park and end in the vicinity of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality offices, located at IH-35 and Walnut Creek. The Trail is approximately 1.8 miles in length and will consist of a 10’ wide concrete trail with 2’ shoulders. The trail will have approximately 4 creek crossings and 2 trail heads.”

In late August, after several requests for information from Richard Duane, the City of Austin project manager, we finally got an update on the project: The City finally has awarded a Preliminary Engineering Review to a design consultant and has received a report which cannot be released to the public because of easement acquisition issues and the fact that it is a draft only. Initiation of meetings with and solicitations of input from stakeholders have been conducted (a single brief “walkthrough” in our case). Applications have been made to “State and Federal Historical Commissions” to address some findings and insure that any proposed construction does not impact historical sites. Finally, the City will negotiate and award a design contract with the consultant mentioned above, who will include public meetings to solicit input. [If history can be a guide, it’s possible, if not probable, that design will be very close to being “frozen” by the time this happens.] Then the most important thing from our point of view is that design isn’t expected to be complete before October of 2014 and construction initiated about April of 2015. We hope to be able to make sure our concerns are injected into the process before actual specifications are produced, to make sure alternatives are considered where potential conflicts exist.

Meanwhile, current construction of the section between Balcones district Park and Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park is now expected to be completed in summer of 2014. Contact a WCNA Board member for more information about our concerns and what we are doing on your behalf.

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

### Neighborhood Security

Two of the truly useful City functions we get for our taxes are the Big Bulk and Big Brush Pickups, usually twice per year. It was noted recently that we tend to have an increase in criminal activity in the ‘hood around “Big Bulk”. The theory is that the event draws “outside” people - called “pickers” – who may just be “casing”. A very thorough treatment of these kinds of criminal-intent activities – as well as household safety information – can be found in a recent NACN newsletter at <http://www.icontact-archive.com/gV8wd5ityKfvqoWQQdiDT2GciMAJOGrb?w=3>.

### Robocalls: Danger!

Several references in the news recently advise not to respond to requests from the calling “robot” to enter a number to select an “option” offered in the message, unless you’re sure about the caller (Caller ID) and need to respond; e.g., your pharmacy. Many of these calls are “phishing” expeditions looking for calling information. Just answering the call provides the sending entity the information that this is a valid phone number perhaps found by random number-dialing. Entering data confirms a live person at the number.

**History in the Making!** By Jill Leberknight

According to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) report released by the Austin Board of REALTORS® (ABOR) on August 20th, the Austin housing market experienced its highest-performing month in home sales - the largest number of sales in the city's history. According to the report Austin-area sales for single-family homes totaled 3,135 which is 35% higher than July of 2012.

The board goes on to state that "The record number of sales in July can be traced back to Austin's job growth and strong economy. The expected rise in mortgage rates may have also encouraged buyers to act now. As home builders work to meet demand we can expect home prices to steadily increase, which could price many out of the area," said ABOR chairwoman Cathy Coneway.

So how does Walnut Creek fit into this story? Well, we have been making some history of our own. Our summer sales market is up 29% compared to last year. It has been more than a decade since Walnut Creek has seen this kind of price jump - 1998 to be exact - when the median price range jumped from \$89,500 to \$115,000. Also, our larger homes, larger lots, and extreme remodels are selling \$10 more a square foot and are finally within sight of the average Austin price per square foot, a first in more than 7 years. And finally, we have smashed the \$200,000 price ceiling that we have been fighting since the 2008 mortgage melt-down with several sales reaching the \$235,000 mark. With all the growth and development happening in north Austin, Pflugerville and Round Rock I expect this trend to continue in Walnut Creek and surrounding areas.

We're making history! But I am seeing a few common problems arise.

1. Real estate investors & home flippers have us on their radar and are engaging in hard-sell techniques that limit owner knowledge of market value.
2. Sellers are pushing the boundaries and trying to list their homes too far above the market value. When this happens, they often lose valuable time and end up selling their property for much less than they could had they priced it competitively from the start.

The overall picture, however, is very attractive. Buyer interest in our community is very high right now – folks want to live in our neighborhood! Others who are leaving us for various reasons are sad to say goodbye and are really making great choices in property updates. This helps us enormously in improving the overall condition and property value of our Walnut Creek neighborhood. Plus, we just have a great community of residents! I feel blessed to live here and even more honored to be able to serve my Walnut Creek families and neighbors.

**Section 3****City-County News and Events****New Domain Whole Foods Nears Opening**

If you are an investor in groceries from Whole Foods (support your local institutions!) you may be happy to know: Not only will the new Domain "superstore" be opening soon – about mid-January – but the older one in Gateway (on 360 across from Sam's) will remain open, despite rumors to the contrary. The older store will close for perhaps a month for a revamp, then open up as a fully-stocked grocery store (no more Neti Pots?). The Domain might be a little closer, but probably take just as long to get there. And perhaps traffic at Gateway will decrease to the point that parking won't be such a risky venture...

**Travis County Burn Ban Remains in Effect**

The county burn ban that was lifted on 3 April has been reinstated through at least 25 September. To check current restrictions on burning in the county see: [http://www.co.travis.tx.us/fire\\_marshal/news/in\\_the\\_news.asp](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/fire_marshal/news/in_the_news.asp)

**Watering Schedules in Austin**

Lake Travis is approaching its lowest level ever, Buchanan remains at a very low level, and both will, barring highly unexpected near-term precipitation, fall significantly lower. 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**

If you're web-savvy, you can manage payment of any Austin utility through a single portal at [goo.gl/UVHTj](http://goo.gl/UVHTj)  
 Large Brush and Bulk Collection Schedules: <http://austintexas.gov/department/residential-curbside-collection-schedule>  
 Neighbor-generated file of criminal activity in the neighborhood: <http://goo.gl/N8H4i>

**Section 4 Events and Contact List**

**Don't Forget!**

**Large Brush Collection: Week of September 16**

**Fall trailhead potluck: 6:00 p.m. Sunday, September 22**

**10-1 "Districting" public meetings: Check at**

[http://www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards\\_commissions/meetings/2013\\_116\\_1.htm](http://www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards_commissions/meetings/2013_116_1.htm)

**Love your schools day: November 2** Workday for the 3 schools to be funded by NxNA Garden Tour

**Interested in helping patrol the neighborhood during the day? Contact Robert, our President** (See all board members contact information below right).

**Into fiber arts? Join the group at** <http://goo.gl/1a5dgP>

**Dues can now be paid via PayPal!:** <http://goo.gl/5iQlk>

**We have a new website!** Very recently "stood up" and in the process of growing:  
[www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)

**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](mailto:lee.leffingwell@ci.austin.tx.us)

Mike Martinez, 512-974-2264  
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Chris Riley, 512-974-2256  
[chris.riley@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:chris.riley@ci.austin.tx.us)

Kathie Tovo, 512-974-2255  
[Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:Kathie.Tovo@ci.austin.tx.us)

**County Commissioner Pct 2**

Bruce Todd, 512-854-9222  
[Bruce.Todd@co.travis.tx.us](mailto: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-plcsrprodwi.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/>

Angela Johnson, APD District Rep. (512) 974-5043  
[angelajohnson@austintexas.gov](mailto:angelajohnson@austintexas.gov)

Sam Lindsey, County Constable (512) 854-4515  
[sam.lindsey@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:sam.lindsey@co.travis.tx.us)

O'Shay Garden, County Constable (512) 854-9697  
[oshay.garden@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:oshay.garden@co.travis.tx.us)

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 Sharon Porter



Sept :: Oct 2013

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**The Ground Zero Memorial in Manhattan** →



**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 [wcna.contact@gmail.com](mailto: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.