

Jan



Feb

2014

Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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Hay! What a Ride!

The Second Annual WCN Holiday Caroling

All told, a couple dozen neighbors young and old got together on Saturday, the 21st of December for the SECOND ANNUAL WCN HOLIDAY CAROLING. The event added a new tradition this year: A traveling hayride that we hope to expand and improve in the future. Event organizer Jill Leberknight said "Hayrides are always a hit for little ones but I think the big kids enjoyed this one too".

Just before dark the group started to gather at Walnut Bluffs Trailhead, where Leberknight (left side in bottom right picture) set out the rules and provided the song sheets of Christmas music to participants (Stay seated when moving; Don't jump off or on the trailer without permission, etc.). She also provided the big "honker" horn seen on the hay in the photo below, which combined with the truck horn let folks keeping warm inside know that the sounds of Christmas were on its way.

With a near-full trailer the group trekked a course that took us through most of the neighborhood surprising neighbors along the way with songs, good wishes, & merriment that put everyone in that warm holiday spirit. On Oakwood we were treated with delicious warm pumpkin bread and oranges on Indianhead. Then Tina & Brian Vick welcomed us back at the end of the evening with hot chocolate & cookies. Thanks to those wonderful neighbors (Note for organizers: Include snacks on the trailer next year).



The Haywagon

Thanks also to Deborah Sharp for the hay, Pat Pitt for the Truck, Jill Leberknight for the trailer, Theresa Jones for her mad chauffeur skills, and a very special thanks to all the participants. We look forward to bringing this wonderful tradition back in 2014 with even more improvements & food, definitely more food! If you are interested in helping with this event contact Jill Leberknight at jill@agentjill.com or Tasha Bowser at bowser.tasha@gmail.com.



The Starting Bunch



Jill Organizing the Gathering

**Shady Oaks Garden Club
2013 Best Christmas Lights Awards**

Best Decorated - 702 WREN

Almost too much to take in! Red candy canes lining the front walk; silver Ferris wheel; two lighted reindeer; multi-colored large Zilker Park type tree; white & blue icicle lights hanging from the roof edge; and Santa in the window!

Honorable Mention - 11501 HORNSBY

Large multi-colored lights draped from the branches like giant necklaces adorning two large trees.

Honorable Mention - 102 W. COVINGTON

White icicle lights on roof edge, candy canes at front door. Multi-colored lights looped on bushes and in a tree.

Julie Berg's "Best Decorated" Extravaganza on Wren



Vote for Our Neighborhood Heroes!

Our neighbors (and long-time Board Members) Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell, have been recognized for their many years of volunteer work with the local non-profit service club, The Exchange Club of Austin, which founded and produces the Zilker Park Kite Festival each year. The Kite Festival raises money each year for local child abuse prevention charities, providing hundreds of thousands of dollars over its 70 years.

Recognize Good, a local philanthropic organization, has honored the Exchange Club for this work by awarding a \$1000 donation in Bunnie and Dorsey's name to the charity of their choice in March of this year. They naturally chose the Kite Festival.

This month, January 2014, the *Recognize Good* is running a contest called "Say Thanks" (to local volunteers), giving everyone in Austin an opportunity to say "Thanks" to their favorite volunteers while helping to raise money for the winning volunteer's favorite charities. The winner is determined by the number of votes cast for them via several methods. **We want our heroes to win this contest**, which would reward them with a cash award of up to \$10,000 donated to the charity they name. You can vote once each day via each of the several methods described at the *Recognize Good* website at <http://www.recognizegood.org/>. Voting methods include texting, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, using their web site, a mobile app, or a voting card.

New and Old Neighborhood Issues Rise (again)

Hot topic recently: **Cut-through traffic and fast drivers**. Both topics have been "sore spots" since before annexation into the city. Speed bumps seem to be opposed by as many as support, and most streets too narrow for traffic circles. Exploration of time-limited one-way street designation at one or more entrances is an active Board topic. Change in speed limit on some streets also a consideration. Any solution will need both city and resident buy-in. To be continued...

Break-in burglaries have increased in recent weeks, esp. here and in Gracywoods. An active Neighborhood Watch program can help. Mary Rudig (Gracywoods) will be teaching effective strategies in the very near future: Watch on the social media (esp. NextDoor). Meeting/knowing your neighbors (their vehicles and phone numbers) and daytime patrols have been found the most effective actions.

Mail and package delivery and theft also have been on the media. A massive case of mail theft from Bastrop mailboxes was reported in AAS recently, so this may be an increasing problem. Our near-random delivery schedule makes minimizing this difficult; The postal service says it's making changes to try to make it more predictable and to finish all routes before dark.

We've been "Districted"! (almost surely)

Now, in addition to having to remember you're in Precinct 211, U.S. House District 10, State Senator District 14, State Representative District 50, County Commissioner Precinct 2, Justice of the Peace and Constable District 2, AISD Subdivision 3, and State Board of Education District 10, you need to know that you're in **Austin City Council District 7**. The Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, selected under the "10-1" ordinance passed last November, worked all summer and into the Fall to generate district boundary definitions, with the results shown on the interactive map at <http://goo.gl/LvDcl7>. After many public and private meetings and consideration of alternative maps submitted by various groups, the commission ultimately developed a preliminary version of their own, then modified it based on reactions from groups who strongly disagreed with the makeup of their proposed district. The near-final definition of the city council districts is shown on the map; Only small changes are likely at this point.

As it turned out, our district (7) was the most problematic in the "semi-final" map: It put us together with the precinct containing Tarrytown, along with many others between us and them. The modified version seen in the current map (link above) drops Tarrytown but leaves us with most of the neighborhoods in between. Importantly, it puts most of the neighborhood associations in the North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods in the same district. To discuss issues around these developments a town hall meeting of residents of these neighborhoods is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. at St. Alberts Community Hall, Metric and Bittern Hollow on Tuesday, January 28th.

Final changes have been – or are being – made and submitted to the federal government to assure they comply with the Voting Rights Act (mostly having to do with fair minority representation). If everything goes reasonably smoothly, we should be voting on our own City Council member – and also the mayor - in the November elections.

2013 Walnut Creek Neighborhood Home Sales Review

By Jill Leberknight, WC neighbor, WCNA Board member, and area real estate specialist

Look at the data below & you will see that 2013 was a transformation year for WCN. Yes that does read **41%**. **41%** increase of sales prices in Eubank Acres alone with a **36%** increase in the neighborhood as a whole. This story is not so different from the changing landscape in Austin but it was indeed a new environment from the outset. As someone who has been intimately involved in the real estate market of this neighborhood for 9 years the changes were big & felt immediately last January. Multiple offers & buyers waiting to get into homes in our neighborhood became the norm. Homes receiving offers in less than 4 days was common & homes appraising & selling with record high prices became a predictable pattern.

With all of this increased activity our neighborhood continues to remain a target for investors & flippers as well as first time home buyers looking to explore their HGTV home remodeling dreams. Please remain vigilant with scams & programs to buy houses unseen or with cash. We are seeing some homes sell below their potential because of owner lack of knowledge. Our biggest obstacles in this wild story are the aging systems of the home. As some of our homes approach 50 (some close to 60) key systems are falling victim to our current codes & safety cautions during home inspection. Stay tuned for my workshop on these in 2014.

Overall though, my formal prediction for 2014 is that this story will continue to expand & improve. Austin is still in a solid sellers market & inventory remains low in Walnut Creek & across the city. Be prepared to see the sights of home improvement across WCN & get ready to welcome more neighbors to our community in 2014.

Subdivision	Number Sold	Average Price per Square Foot	Average Sales Price	Average Days on Market	% Change
Eubank Acres	15	\$112.97	\$210,443	9	41.45% 
Walnut Forest	5	\$111.19	\$186,780	10	19.34% 
Oak Ridge	2	\$94.75	\$206,000	8	14.2% 
Spanish Oak Ridge	1	\$86.34	\$220,000	63	10% 
Entire Walnut Creek Totals	23	\$112.43	\$215,000	4	36% 

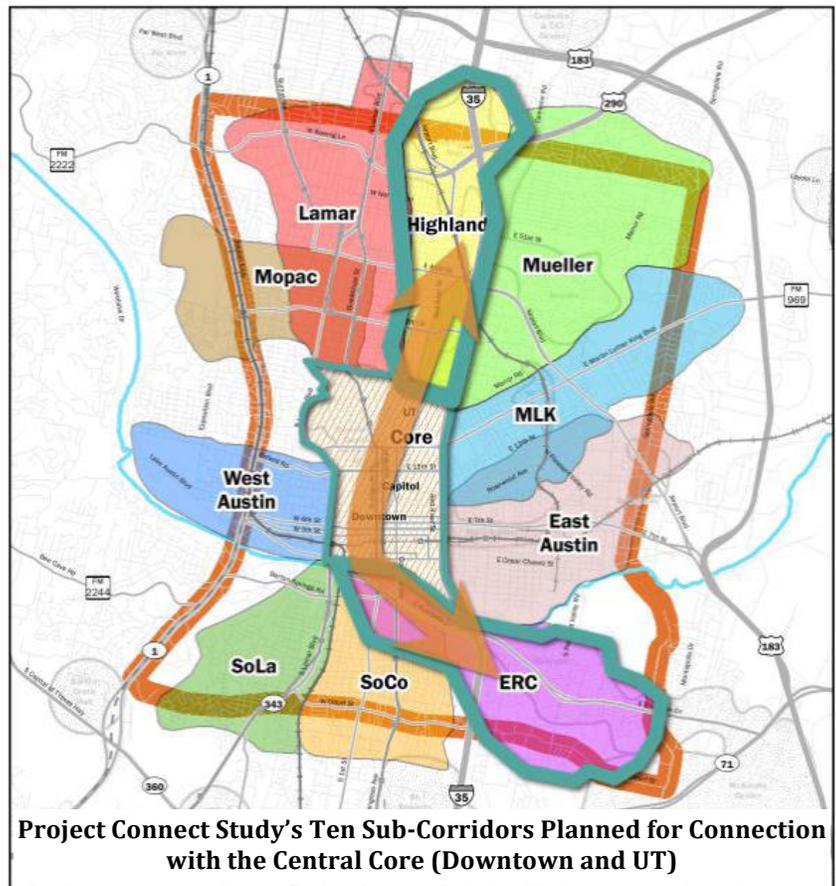
Free Seminar: Avoiding the Most Common Home Inspection Red Flags in WCN.

Join Walnut Creek Real Estate Expert Jill Leberknight on Wednesday, January, 29th at 6:30pm at Santorini Cafe to learn about common but hidden problems in our Walnut Creek Homes, how they impact home sales, & steps you can take to solve some right now. One of them is costing owners tens of thousands of dollars & is a growing item seen on Texas home inspection report.

Will Austin Get Urban Rail?

Notwithstanding strong opposition to it, the need for an efficient internal mass transportation system seems to have been accepted by a majority of (voting) Austinites. The continuing rapid growth of the population in and around Austin, with the result placing Austin among the worst commuting cities in the country, has made it clear that road construction and buses won't relieve the problem of rush hour traffic. The bus system runs on the same roads as the cars creating most of the problem, and may even make rush hour congestion worse on our narrow, old streets like Lamar and Burnet. An efficient local system needs its own "right-of-way" to be able to operate on a rapid and predictable schedule to continually compensate for increasing population. Rail systems are a demonstrated way to alleviate the problem. The city has had such an "urban rail" in its plans since 2006, when Capital Metro was designing and building the commuter rail (MetroRail) line to Leander and planning a connecting "streetcar" system which would run from downtown/UT to Mueller (the old airport) and to the new airport at Bergstrom. CapMetro "business" troubles prevented progress toward an election in 2008, and serious effort was not started again until after Lee Leffingwell – always a strong rail supporter – was elected in 2009. Since then the city has allocated a total of about \$10 million (about one-third has been spent to date) to develop a plan for this urban rail concept. The mayor commissioned a working group – Central Corridor Advisory Group (CCAG) - which envisaged a route between Mueller and downtown, and plans were made for an election in 2010.

Meanwhile the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) empowered an effort called Project Connect (PC) to study integration of all transportation issues in the region around Austin, from Georgetown to San Antonio. For the Austin urban rail part of PC's study the city was divided into a "core" area – downtown and UT - and ten sub-corridors, seen here on the map. [Note that the northern edge of these "high-priority" sub-corridors is below 183, so we're well north of this intra-city area at this time.] These sub-corridors were then intensively analyzed using "all the data they could get their hands on" to determine which two should have the highest priority for initial rail esconnection to the core, and thus the proximate routes for beginning implementation of the system. The report from this part of PC was presented to CCAG on 15 November, indicating that the Highland and East Riverside (ERC) sub-



corridors should be the first connected (as indicated on the map). The rationale for both choices was the current and – more importantly – estimated (controversially) future rates of growth anticipated in these areas.

CCAG's recommendations, which likely will determine the Council's initial routes for inclusion on the ballot, are anticipated sometime in January 2014. Also still to be determined are the form of the system (light rail, street car, etc.), how – and by whom – it will be operated, and how much it will cost. The working estimate is something over \$500 million, half of which is hoped to be federal matching funds). Initially it was hoped to get proposals to the Federal Transit Authority early enough to be ready for elections this November, but there is considerable doubt about the feasibility of this. The mayor is hoping it can be voted on before the new independent-district council elections in November, given the adjustments the new structure – and perhaps a totally new set of council members – will require.

Historical Cemetary in the Neighborhood Needs Care

WCNA is considering forming or joining an organization to help improve and maintain the historical Black cemetery on Braker Lane west of the Texan Market on the north side of Braker. This cemetery has a deed on record under the name Walnut Creek Church and School dated 1/24/1881, and another deed as a cemetery dated 1/1/1887. It is believed that this black church split from the Walnut Creek Baptist Church currently located across Lamar on Walnut Creek. Close to 100 documented burials exist in the Braker Lane location, the most recent in 2011 or 2012. The overseer, Milton Gooden, who is 96 years old, needs help keeping it in a respectable condition, including keeping vagrants from camping and littering the grounds. WCNA volunteers have helped clean the grounds in the past, and now, in conjunction with Black History Month in February, is looking to help secure the property and help with cleaning the grounds and searching and rescuing markers which have been buried or vandalized over the years. Watch for announcements on the Yahoo, NextDoor and Facebook group sites.

Standby (for two years) for MoPac Toll Lanes

Construction activity has started to add toll lanes on either side of MoPac (including some serious – and controversial - sound barrier installations), though the heavy work hasn't been evidenced yet. Initial lanes will run between Parmer Lane and Cesar Chavez Street, starting with construction between RM 2222 and US 183, then followed by the stretch south of RM 2222 and finally north of US 183. This is a complicated system, with some widening on the outsides and some on the insides of the current lanes and on-ramp and off-ramp access not clear to this writer (see <http://tollroadsnews.com/news/mopac-toll-express-lanes-on-the-way-to-downtown-austin>). Such construction obviously will impact our travel times to points south, but no lane closures are planned between 5:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. in order to minimize the impact on "rush hour" traffic. The lanes are being tolled "because the new lanes would just fill up like the current ones and have little impact". I.e., tolling will mean travelers will use the lanes only when it's important to get (for instance) downtown quickly (sounds like the tolls are likely to be pricey), and also will be available for emergency vehicles and buses. *Community Impact Newspaper* is a good source for keeping up with progress:

City and APD Adopting NextDoor for Neighborhood Communication

The neighborhood-oriented group website WCNA uses (one of three) is going to become a conduit for rapid communication between Austin agencies and neighborhoods who join. The appealing characteristics for this purpose are the usual quick and easy distribution of information pertinent to each neighborhood (or all if warranted) and the emergency alert feature, which broadcasts text to all mobile devices belonging to a group which have the application installed. If mobile notification is wanted, download the app via our group site. To join contact any current member (e.g. Board Members) to be invited, or go to <https://wcna.nextdoor.com/>.

The "coupon" below is intended to be cutout and returned with your dues payment for the year 2014. The annual dues are \$15, and you also can choose to contribute to any of the ongoing projects listed or make a contribution to the general fund for use where needed ("General" contributions are included with dues money, so for bookkeeping purposes the excess from paying more than the \$15 automatically goes into this fund). Note that categories for which volunteers are almost always needed also are listed on the form. If you check one of these and don't hear from a board member or other volunteer in a short time, please contact one of the board members shown on page 6.

WCNA Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2014

This form is included in both the Nov-Dec 2013 and Jan-Feb 2014 newsletters, so please check to see whether you sent in your dues in November or December to prevent accidentally paying again with the January issue. Please make checks out to "WCNA" and return in the envelope provided or your own to

WCNA, P.O. Box 82746, Austin, TX 78708-2746

Note: You can use PayPal to charge dues at <http://goo.gl/5iQIk>

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

DUES (\$15 per year): \$ _____

DONATION: General Fund \$ _____ Walnut Bluffs Trails (park) \$ _____ Cat Coalition \$ _____

TOTAL INCLUDED: \$ _____

I would like information about participation as/in:

WCNA Board or Officer ___ Newsletter Production ___ Park Projects ___

Section 4

Events and Contacts Lists

Jan	2, 15, 29	Recycle (blue) containers will be picked up along with trash
	15	ANC CodeNext meeting 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Murchison Middle School, 3700 N Hills Drive
	15	Whole Foods in Domain opens
	23	Restore Rundberg Neighborhood Workshop 6:00 - 8:00 pm, Austin Revival, Deen Street Info: (512) 974-8199
	26	MetroRapid target date for start of service (not just practicing...)
	28	Town Hall Meeting: The New City Council Districts 4 & 7 7:00 p.m. at St. Alberts Community Hall, Metric and Bittern Hollow
	29	Free seminar: <i>Avoiding the 5 Most Common Home Inspection Red Flags in WCN</i> 6:30 p.m. at Santorini Cafe
	1 -> 2016?	MoPac toll lane construction; Lane closures between 9:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.
Feb	4	Commander's Forum – Region 2 6 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 4, 1000 W Rundberg Ln
	12, 26	Recycle (blue) containers will be picked up along with trash
	10-14	Bulk Item Collection 2014 Pickup schedules at http://goo.gl/xJkMQo
Mar	1	Park Work Day , coinciding with Austin's "It's My Park" Work Day Noon at Walnut Bluffs Trailhead
	17-21	Large Brush Pickup
	31	Last day for Austin Water Water Wise rebates http://www.austintexas.gov/department/water-conservation

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods January newsletter: <http://goo.gl/NbVkVE> Good, important stuff!

North Austin Community Newsletter Also good, important and some funny stuff, overlapped with NACN

City/County Contacts:

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

Mike Martinez, 512-974-2264
mike.martinez@ci.austin.tx.us

Laura Morrison, 512-974-2260
laura.morrison@ci.austin.tx.us

Sheryl Cole, 512-974-2255
Sheryl.cole@ci.austin.tx.us

Bill Spelman, 512-974-2258
william.spelman@ci.austin.tx.us

Chris Riley, 512-974-2256
chris.riley@ci.austin.tx.us

Kathie Tovo, 512-974-2255
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-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 2 Rep
for our area (512) 974-5043
angelajohnson@austintexas.gov

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

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

WCNA Board 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
Christian Ninaud	
(512) 971-7628	mtbrider007@yahoo.com
Sharon Porter	
(512) 656-7586	sharonmporter1@gmail.com

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Phone: 512-837-2268
Fax: 512-837-0815

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Jan :: Feb 2014

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On Meadowlark



Detail from Wes and Monique Sims'
"Honorable Mention" Lights on Covington



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 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.

