



July &  
August  
2015

# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

## Join Us!

Dues and P.O. Box are shown below your address

### Social Media/Listservs:

Yahoo: <http://goo.gl/vU5wjL>

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Facebook: <http://goo.gl/4G41rS>

Indianhead, Caddo and Oakwood. Of course the color scheme for the event was as predicted, making for a brilliant appearance for the whole event. The only thing missing was a drum major/majorette to lead the procession (which always gets a ragged start, usually prompted by some kids) and a brass band (maybe next year. Or at least a recorded brass band...?). And we could have been better encouraged by more streetside watchers; Perhaps the brass band will help with this.

Nevertheless, our highly diverse celebrants made the loop



in fine style (a little like herded cats). When they reached the home of Juan and Carmen Ramirez at the union of Oakwood and Indianhead the kids found candies being tossed into the parade (they knew to expect this from previous years), putting a new spring in the their steps as they approached even though they had been walking in the heat for some time.

Finally the paraders arrived back to the Klumpp's backyard, with hotdogs grilling and the usual spread of good stuff, including hot dogs and fixin's, salads of all kinds, watermelon and other sweet things (thanks to all who helped produce this pleasurable enterprise).

There was a very good mix of young and old folks and new and longtime residents, so many new acquaintances were made and stories swapped. And kids! Each year brings more kids, which is just as it should be! It's good to know the neighborhood is being



rejuvenated with an influx of "new folks". And then there are those who have been here for well over 50 years - a surprising number of such. For a prime example, the Browns from north Oakwood were there on their scooters, on which they participated in the whole parade. They recently celebrated their 75th anniversary, and both their daughters (Lynda and Les) were present to celebrate with them.

If you missed it, we hope you will be able to make it for the 5th 4th next year. And we're also hoping you bring your brass horn or major / majorette hat and baton!

## MoPac Completion Date Delayed a Year by Rainy Weather,

### **The Lake Austin Boulevard exit will open on Sunday, July 12th**

Completion of the current phase has been estimated to be the Fall of 2016 rather than the end of this year. Didn't it rain, indeed!

Meanwhile, on **12 July** the detour setup at the southbound 5th St / Cesar Chavez exit will change. A temporary exit about half a mile sooner will open, so be alert for the orange signs. The current 5th St exit will be closed until the express lane is finished in 2016.

## **Flooding in the Neighborhood: Help Protest Our Inadequate Drainage!**

**Didn't it Rain, Children! (Blind Boys of Alabama; <https://www.googl/mOfbDJ>)**

And on Memorial Day we were "overblessed" with one of the highest rainfall rates in the area - more than 10 inches per hour for about 10 minutes - ultimately resulting in more than 6 inches of rain in a couple of hours. And this occurred after 3/4" of rain the day before and regular rains during previous weeks. The peak rain-rate caused the most damage, as the *ad hoc* drainage "system" in the neighborhood couldn't carry the water coming down streets and side ditches at the rate that resulted and overran the (few) curbs and asphalt berms protecting downslope driveways and yards. Other houses were flooded from water coming from uphill properties behind them. From reports so far, dozens of houses in the neighborhood had some level of flooding and some had very serious levels inside homes and garages.



Elaine and John Dolecek on Oakwood began a campaign to try to get the city to fix our neighborhood drainage problems after three floods caused major damages to their home. Besides the effects of increased impermeable cover, runoff problems are exacerbated by lack of maintenance to the city's drainage easements all over the neighborhood, but especially on the Dolecek's property. In many cases the city argues that they cannot provide needed maintenance because of growth and changes that have taken place since the easements were established (when we weren't in the city) interfering with necessary equipment access. To put it in other words: It would cost too much relative to the taxes we pay. According to city estimates at the time we (finally) were annexed and then allowed to hook up to city sewage, the time required for just that project to be paid back through taxes was too long to estimate; i.e., perhaps never. With the huge increase in property taxes we're going through now, our case in that regard should be much stronger.

Because of the inadequacy of our drainage capability, WCNA is establishing a database of damage incurred from the recent flooding, and asking you to report your experience by calling 311 and also contacting either Christian Ninaud; 512 971-7628, [mtbrider007@yahoo.com](mailto:mtbrider007@yahoo.com) or Robert Meadows; 512 339-0229, [robertl@meadows.com](mailto:robertl@meadows.com).

If this keeps up we may have to join North Carolina worrying about shark attacks...

[By the way, did you know sharks are the only fish that can blink with both eyes?]

## **City on Track to Allow "Granny Flats"**

CoA is now promoting and planning for "affordable housing", which can mean a variety of things. One method for producing more housing without generating more sprawl is to increase the number of people living in the current boundaries; i.e. "densification". This is one of the primary goals of the CodeNext project to revise the city's land development code (esp. zoning). One method of achieving this is allowing, and making easier to construct, additional living accommodations on existing single-family properties. The City Council commissioned a study to make recommendations on this subject in 2014, and these have been reviewed by the Planning Commission and been through the current council's Planning and Neighborhoods Committee chaired by Greg Casar, District 4. The resulting ordinance was passed on "first reading" by the council in June; A final vote will be taken in the Fall.

The ordinance will make it easier to build "secondary" dwelling facilities on your property by making the permitting easier and easing other restrictions. Such "accessory dwelling units", or ADUs, can take the form of garage apartments as well as secondary buildings not to exceed 850 square feet. The intent is to produce more affordable living spaces inside Austin and also to supplement the income of property owners, thereby reducing their cost of living in the city. This ordinance clearly has profound implications for our neighborhood, especially with the unusually large lots under many of our homes (lots must be at least 7000 sq. ft.) and the rapid increase in property taxes with the current housing boom. While most WCN residents who have commented on this phenomenon have opposed the idea, the financial pressures we're encountering and the costs to new residents are likely to lead to such structures when implementation becomes easier.

Already included in the recommended ordinance are reducing required separation between structures to 10 feet from 15; Allowing entrances within 10 ft of the property line; Eliminating the current requirement for multiple off-street parking spaces or for a driveway leading to the added apartment; And prohibiting the apartment from being used for short-term rentals. This last issue is still being discussed and may be modified to accommodate some special cases. Also to be determined is whether new units will require a separate water meter, which can sometimes be very expensive, or some form of "submeter" can be employed. Also it's not clear how homeowner association restrictions may work, since it's not addressed.

To be noted is that numerous complaints about illegal use of short term rentals has been taken up by the City Council, with Sheri Gallo (Dist. 10) taking the lead. The initial action is instruction to Code Enforcement to start investigating the mostly late-night complaints to determine the extent of compliance.

**PUBLIC, AND CHARTER, AND PRIVATE, OH MY!****Navigating the Forests of Austin Schools** by Jill Leberknight

5 years ago we were faced with a big decision: where to send our son for elementary school. I say "big" because to me it suddenly felt as life-changing as choosing a college or a career. I grew up in Pennsylvania in the 70's & 80's where there were only two school options: Public & Catholic. It's now a whole new ballgame!

Today, I'm no stranger to education options. Before moving to North Austin I taught high school at St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Westlake. Before that I was the head of drama and dance at a private girls' boarding school outside of DC where I also served as a dorm mother. I've taught at youth arts programs across Austin and was an instructor and youth organizer throughout my college and high school years in the northeast.

But choosing an elementary school for my own son? Now THAT was a different story.

**The Austin Education Landscape** In addition to our AISD public schools (and transfers between them) there are also numerous small and large private options including day and boarding schools that range from affordable to expensive. One of our city's largest (and some say most affordable) private schools is right across the street from us, Brentwood Christian.

In more general terms, we have religious-affiliated schools, and we have schools that focus on styles of teaching like Waldorf & Montessori. We have a variety of charter schools including some nearby like NYOS. Charters are funded like the public school system, but have more flexibility and alternatives in curriculum. Charter schools are still subject to state mandated high-stakes testing just like public schools, however.

We have home schooling and home school co-ops. We have parent teacher co-ops. We have schools that focus on gardening, schools that focus on the arts, schools that focus on math and science and even an elementary school that focuses on building entrepreneurs of the future.

**Education in Walnut Creek Neighborhood** WCN hosts the Walnut Creek Elementary public elementary school and recently one of our neighbors, David Goss, sent out a survey about our local public elementary options online via Nextdoor. He received a good response from neighbors and a Nextdoor group has been started to continue the conversation. I know and work with many educators who live in WCN and this community is passionate about education! Whether you have students enrolled there or not, Walnut Creek Elementary plays an important role in our neighborhood and as stakeholders in its success it's important we all stay involved.

**So What Does This Mean?** The education decision for our families and young people can be complex and it may mean that you have to start early in the planning process. It also means that it's more important than ever for our community to talk to each other about education and the role it plays in our neighborhoods. It is wonderful that Austin has the education opportunities that we have but navigating all of the information can be overwhelming! WCN has many young families moving into our area and parents are ready for an honest discussion about our school options. If you are on Nextdoor and interested in this, enter <https://www.wcna.nextdoor.com/groups/798640> in the search window of your internet browser and click on "Join." To join Nextdoor, click on the link at the top left of the first page above, or contact a member of the Board of Directors of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (see WCNA Board and Officers on page 6) for an invitation, or go to the home page and request to join. Membership does require a home address in Walnut Creek Neighborhood.

**Solar Power From Your Roof: Is it Time?**

Some of us can remember when we got charged the minimum monthly electric bill much of the year, and it was about \$50(!). At least one family in the neighborhood is having that experience once again! Allison Welch and Brian Marks recently installed a solar-electric system on their home on Rennalee Loop, and the effect is remarkable, even with the cloudy weather we've had much of this year.

Cost effectiveness: Costs have decreased to the point that PV systems can now produce electricity at rates comparable to gas-fired plants in many parts of the world. (In fact, about 51% of new generating capacity in the United States last year was solar, though solar represents only a small fraction of the total power generated here.) The best way to measure cost effectiveness for solar power is in "Years to Payback" for your particular situation. With the rebates currently available in Austin, this period is typically less than 10 years (in Germany it's less than 2 years because of the higher cost of electricity and higher government subsidies). Solar systems typically are guaranteed for 25 years with at least 80% of the initial electrical capability, so for at least the last fifteen years you're getting electricity for free if your installation meets the requirements of Austin Energy. In fact, if at any instant you're generating more power than you're using you get paid for it at the same rate that you're credited it (11.3 cents per kwh), further reducing your overall cost.

(Continued on next page)

Of course there are always "buts". In our neighborhood we have the fantastic advantage of a pretty dense, mature forest with some tall trees with large canopies. These can directly reduce energy costs in the hot months by shading roofs and windows. But to qualify for the Austin solar rebate your panels must receive a minimum amount of direct sunlight per day over the entire year, so these wonderful trees may limit the number of panels which qualify, which in turn could significantly affect the time to payback. In fact it's possible for the shade to make solar panels so inefficient that they're not worth while. This can be determined fairly quickly by most solar system installers, and that's likely the first thing to check for most homes in our neighborhood.

The other requirement to qualify for Austin subsidy is an energy assessment, assuming your house is more than ten years old (we don't have many that aren't) or you haven't already had one. The good news now is that the requirement for an energy audit, with the obligation to implement fixes for the shortcomings found in that process, has been dropped this year. An audit, which is still a good thing to do, involves a pressure test on the whole house and probable replacement of ductwork on older homes. Clearly this could have been a major impediment for many homes in Walnut Creek Neighborhood. Other good news is that the federal government provides a tax credit of 30% of the cost of the system regardless of these Austin requirements, so the reduction in the time to payback attributed to this offset always applies. **To Be Continued in a Future Issue**

### **Universal Design: Breakthroughs in Accessibility: The Bathroom** by Pat Barnett; CAPS, CR, UDCP

As we age and for other reasons many of us develop physical weaknesses and balance issues that make it difficult to function easily with many of the characteristics of typical houses. The bathroom is the number one room in the house for people to focus on when needing to improve such functionality. Bathrooms present a lot of hard and slippery surfaces. Many of us live in houses designed and built in the post WWII era (1946-1978, or so) and are all too familiar with very tight spaces, small doorways, high shower curbs, and inconveniently placed handles, accessories, and the like. A concept called Universal Design may be the answer.

Universal Design homes are intended to be beautiful, functional, comfortable, flexible, safe, and accessible. Looking beyond the requirements for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design - which is a predominately disability-focused movement - Universal Design brings openness, light, and ease to the environment. Unlike the majority of our existing homes that have physical barriers to mobility, UD homes improve the livability of the space, and not just for the elderly and the disabled, but for *everyone* – thus *universal*.

Quoting environmental gerontologist, Ester Greenhouse: If your home is not designed to meet your family's needs, you will not be able to live to your highest capabilities: daily tasks are harder than necessary to complete, and in some cases may be unsafe. Over time the gap between your needs and your home will act as a stressor which can bring about a decline in your abilities. For some, this means a repetitive use injury, or a fall or other injury which may temporarily or permanently change what they can do. For others, it means needing assistance from a family member or paid caregiver. And for some, it means moving out of their home and relocating to an assisted living or skilled nursing facility.

The good news is that the decline caused by this gap is preventable through good, informed design which meets your needs and abilities, and there are knowledgeable builders, remodelers, designers, and equipment specialists who can work with you to make sure your home is beautiful, safe, and enabling.

The temptation is to tear it all out and start all over, which is not economically feasible for everyone. One doesn't have to embark on a major remodeling project to incorporate UD principles and to make the home safer and more amenable to independent living. Here are some modifications that can be accomplished relatively quickly to facilitate graceful living with minimal expenditure.

From Jonathan Hiebert founder of Push, Pull, Open Close, The Mobile Hardware Store: "Door levers instead of door knobs allow egress for a person with advanced arthritis who has lost the ability to grasp or twist with their hands. Kitchen and bathroom cabinets can be designed with all drawers and pull out shelves below counter height that allow for greater functionality while minimizing the need to bend. Cabinet handles that are at least 4" wide allow for the full hand to be used to open and close doors, again minimizing the need to grasp or twist. "C" shaped pulls that don't have protruding ends to snag clothing are recommended. Faucets with single arm design allow for greater control over water temperature and flow."

Grab bars, a simple safety addition for the bathroom and other areas don't have to contribute to your home looking like a hospital. There are many very stylish shapes, finishes and colors of grab bars available today.

One of the most hazardous operations in our daily lives is stepping into and out of a bathtub. The high step over the side landing onto a slippery surface has led many an otherwise healthy person to fall and get injured. Simple inexpensive approaches such as non-slip bath mats and transfer benches can help. A more involved but safer, longer term, and more attractive solution is to replace the tub with a shower with a low or no curb and with the same footprint as the original bathtub. Many of these can be installed in the span of a few days.

There are myriad other developments to improve both the looks and the safety of the home (such as LED lighting, baseboard lighting, special cabinet hardware, etc). Universal Design is smart design. It's design that *enables* people of all ages and abilities to accomplish their activities of living with ease and grace, and with features that can be customized to meet special needs.

\*Pat is a neighbor and general contractor who recently has been specializing in homes for older folks and folks with physical impairments. He is the President of Ageless Spaces by PJB Contracting and an advertiser on pg 7.

A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time; To be exact, 1/100th of a second.

**Finally we can water our lawns whenever, right? NOPE!**

At least not yet. Despite the incredible amount of rain we've received so far this year - almost 40 inches at Mabry, whose recent average rainfall over several entire years has been less than 30 inches - and despite the Highland Lakes being essentially full for this time of year, we're not being considered safe from drought. The continuing inflow levels aren't exceptional and could become tiny again very quickly, though modeling indicates they should be better than in recent years. So LCRA (Lower Colorado River Authority) has been given permission to withhold water from downstream agricultural industry again if deemed necessary, and Austin has declared that it will maintain the Stage 2 requirements we have been under for years.

For residences, Stage 2 means **use of hose-end sprinklers only between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Sundays for houses with even-numbered addresses and on Saturdays for odd-numbered addresses.**

For automatic systems: **before 5:00 a.m. and after 7:00 p.m., on Thursday (even) and Wednesday (odd addresses).**

Hand and drip watering can still be done anytime.

For more explanation, see <http://austintexas.gov/department/stage-2-watering-restrictions>

On the other hand, as for several months now there is currently

**No burn ban in Travis County**

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			

**STAGE 2 WATER RESTRICTIONS  
WATERING ONE DAY PER WEEK**

**Factoid: Our eyes are the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing (nor does the hair therein).**

**Some Interesting / Useful Links**

<a href="http://www.austinwildliferescue.org/">http://www.austinwildliferescue.org/</a>	512 472-9453	They take most injured or abandoned wild animals
<a href="https://www.catalogchoice.org/signup">https://www.catalogchoice.org/signup</a>		Stop many unwanted mailings & phone calls
<a href="http://goo.gl/m2ijkE">http://goo.gl/m2ijkE</a>		Weather info for the 'hood. Current conditions, realtime precip & other data, forecast and history.
<a href="http://www.austintexas.gov/department/animal-services">http://www.austintexas.gov/department/animal-services</a>	512 974-2000	Austin's no-kill animal shelter, open 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. weekdays, 11:00a.m. – 5:00p.m. weekends.
<a href="http://goo.gl/9K1Qnq">http://goo.gl/9K1Qnq</a>	311	Trash, Recycle, Brush, Bulk pickup info & schedules
<a href="http://goo.gl/RdWNv2">http://goo.gl/RdWNv2</a>	512 474-1200	Bus and train info and schedules
<a href="http://propaccess.traviscad.org/clientdb/?cid=1">http://propaccess.traviscad.org/clientdb/?cid=1</a>	512 834-9317	Status, history and tax info on private properties in Travis County
<a href="https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/fire-marshall/burn-ban">https://www.traviscountytexas.gov/fire-marshall/burn-ban</a>	512 854-9020	Can you burn stuff outside or not?
<a href="http://library.austintexas.gov/">http://library.austintexas.gov/</a>	512 974-7301	Everything about your libraries
<a href="http://wcnanews.com/">http://wcnanews.com/</a>		Web site for WCNA, available, under development
<a href="http://goo.gl/UbLiAu">http://goo.gl/UbLiAu</a>		Main neighborhood social media site: Must live in the neighborhood to join.
<a href="http://goo.gl/vU5wjL">http://goo.gl/vU5wjL</a>		Original Yahoo neighborhood listserv, still available.
<a href="http://goo.gl/4G41rS">http://goo.gl/4G41rS</a>		Most extroverted and active Walnut Creek Neighborhood social media site
<a href="http://www.austintexas.gov/urbanforestry">http://www.austintexas.gov/urbanforestry</a>	512 974-9540	All about trees and related events in Austin. Subscribe to <i>Austin Treebune</i> , the online magazine.
<a href="https://www.austinisd.org/calendar">https://www.austinisd.org/calendar</a>		Calendar for AISD Schools

July	1	<b>CURBSIDE RECYCLE COLLECTION</b>
	4	<b>Walnut Creek Neighborhood 4th of July Parade &amp; Pot Luck Picnic</b>
	9,16,etc	Storytime, Thursdays at Little Walnut Creek Branch Library 10:15 a.m. - All Ages Storytime; 11:00 a.m. - Spanish Storytime (Cuentos en espanol); 2:00 p.m. - Paws to Read with Pablo
	15	<b>CURBSIDE RECYCLE COLLECTION</b>
	17	Ramadan ends at sunset
	22	Summer Reading Program: You are the Inventor; Little Walnut Creek Branch Austin Public Library; 2:00 p.m.
	29	<b>CURBSIDE RECYCLE COLLECTION</b>
August	1 - 2	<b>Pet Expo Palmer Events Center; Free Sat 10:00 - 6:00; Sun 11:00 - 4:00</b>
	7 - 8	<b>TEXAS TAX-FREE WEEKEND</b>
	8	<b>Lake Austin/Travis Hot Air Balloon Flyover (tentative, subject to change)</b>
	8	<b>Rubber Ducky Derby on Lady Bird Lake Begins 11:00 a.m. @ Congress Bridge \$5 for 1 duck; \$25 for 6; etc Benefits Austin Boys &amp; Girls Club Foundation</b>
	10-13	<b>Elementary School Registration Mon, Tues, &amp; Thur 8:30 - 5:00; Wed 8:30 - 6:00</b>
	10-14	<b>BULK CURBSIDE COLLECTION</b>
	12	<b>CURBSIDE RECYCLE COLLECTION</b>
	15	<b>AISD Back to School Bash 9:00 a.m.</b>
	24	<b>First day of school, AISD</b>
	22	<b>Bat Fest</b>
	26	<b>CURBSIDE RECYCLE COLLECTION</b>
Sept	7	<b>Labor Day</b>

**Curbside Recycling:** Now accepting “hard plastics”, such as plastic chairs, trays, etc.

**New, Improved Household Hazardous Waste hours!**  
**Mon – Fri 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Saturday from 7:00 a.m. - Noon**

**Austin City Council**

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

**City of Austin:** All services, codes & code violations, animal reports: **Call 311**

Online: <http://austin-p1csrprod.cwi.motorolasolutions.com/Home.mvc/Index>

Adam Soliz, APD District Rep (512) 974 8143  
[adam.soliz@austintexas.gov](mailto:adam.soliz@austintexas.gov)

Adan Ballesteros, County Constable, Pct 2 (512) 854-9697  
[Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us](mailto:Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us)

**Austin Police Department Animal Cruelty Unit Tip Hot Line: (512) 978-0523**

**North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods Newsletter is now a blog site, following a wide range of general city as well as neighborhood issues and events. Read and Comment: <http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>**

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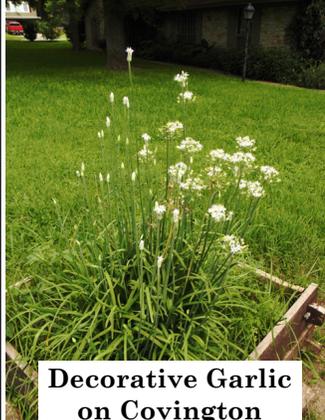


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Oak Tree Toppled by Wind on June 27th at Tedford & Caddo

July :: Aug 2015

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**Daylilies Blooming in July  
Whitewing Ave**

## About WCNA and the newsletter

**Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association 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: <http://goo.gl/5iQlk>

**WCNA 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 Yager Lane.

**To contribute** content to the newsletter, send contributions via email to [wcna.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wcna.contact@gmail.com) or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

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



**Sage Blooming in July,  
Indianhead**