



November
December
2015

Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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largest yearly event for WCNA. It was held at St. Mark UMC on Braker.

Some disappointment was expressed by not being able to get Blue Bell ice cream this year, but there was plenty of food for everyone and comments were generally quite favorable. Further comments and suggestions are welcome, and in fact solicited: Call or email a board member (see page 6).



Longest in the Neighborhood: Edith Scott, since July 1957

The usual contests among attendees were held, with gift cards as prizes. The categories were oldest and youngest, and longest and shortest residencies in the neighborhood. As has frequently happened, the oldest present was

John Brown at 95 years of age, whose young 94-year-old wife of 76 years, Myrtle, was with him, from Oakwood. The longest residency was by Edith Scott (also on Oakwood), who moved here in July of 1957. This was a ridiculously close contest with the Hans, Anna and Harold (on Whitewing), who came here in November of 1957. How incredible is that?

The youngest present was the happy Lena Olivia Spriggs, eight months, who was attending with her parents Sara and Steven from Tedford. And the most recently arrived were Shaun and Priyanka Rao on Hornsby. Congratulations to all!

As in recent past NNNOs, a silent auction was held to support the 100 Club, a nonprofit organization whose benefits go to the survivors of first responders who die in action. Theresa Jones organized the process, collecting items from more donors, including crafts people and artists, than in any previous NNNO. The auction raised almost \$350 for the cause.



Oh, What a Night: The NNNO Block Party!

The weather couldn't have been better on the 6th of October. And perhaps a hundred of us - adults, children and in-betweeners - took advantage of this weather and the availability of free pizza and ice cream to join our neighbors at the annual National Neighborhood Night Out (NNNO), held in Austin as in almost all of Texas and some other southern and western states on the first Tuesday in October. This nationwide event is motivated by the desire to improve protection of us, our neighbors and our neighborhoods across the country, but also provides our

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association the opportunity to throw a neighborhood-wide party each year. In fact, this is usually the



Oldest Present: John Brown, 95, with the second oldest there, his wife Myrtle, 94. Married 75 years!



From left to right:
Newest in the Neighborhood: Shaun and Priyanka Rao
Youngest: Lena Olivia (8 months), with parents Steven and Sara Spriggs
Runners-up for First in the Neighborhood: Anna and Harold Hans, since November 1957

Of course the kids had their bounce castle and the fire truck from the station on Braker to go with the pizza, ice cream, and bubble machine. Personnel from the engine company took time to show interested kids (some of them pretty old kids) the tools and techniques of a modern firefighter.

Make a note: Ya gotta go next year!

Relief From Cut-Through Traffic? It Could Happen Soon

Mr. Larry Peel, an "old-time" Austin builder, met with WCNA board members and other neighbors on November 3rd to present the status of his newest large-scale apartment complex just across Walnut Creek and adjacent to Lamar. The project will comprise 283 apartment units, ranging from 600 to 1800 square feet, in a gated complex called Walnut Park (<http://larrypeel.com/future-properties/>). Construction is expected to start immediately, with completion of much of it expected within a year.

There will be good and bad impacts on our standard of living (and driving). Possibly adding four or five hundred more cars on the arterials will certainly make rush hour congestion worse. Adding two more intersections of cross streets with Lamar will certainly increase the potential for accidents.

The greatest impact on our standard of living, however, is likely to be effected by the completion of a two-lane street between Park 35 Circle and Lamar, connecting Walnut Park Crossing and the gated, unimproved Dillingham Lane, a short "road" off Lamar near where the old concrete guitar sign used to be (look closely for the gate and you'll see it, just south and across from the Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park entrance).



The map on the next page shows how the road will be constructed to incorporate these old roads, thereby providing a significant "escape" route to Lamar from businesses south of Yager and north of Walnut Creek. The major part of the cut-through traffic we have suffered in the last twenty years has been associated with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), though increasingly more of it has been coming from other businesses near TCEQ, as well as from traffic exiting IH35 who want to avoid the backup - sometimes down to Meadow Lark - turning at Braker. From contact with the city, we have been pushing for and expecting this crossing to be built for many (some say forty) years or more, **and now this shortcut will exist within a year!**

Cut-through traffic has been the hottest issue for the neighborhood for more than ten years, and has steadily gotten worse as traffic has increased on the IH35 access road with no dedicated right turn lane at Braker. Such lanes at Braker and IH35 and on all corners at Braker and Lamar were designed and given top priority in the 2012 Transportation Bond Election, but have slipped through the cracks as "our" share of the funding decreased.

The map below shows how the two current dead-end roadways will be connected to provide access to Walnut Park and other new developments in the area between Walnut Creek and Yager lane. To meet city requirements for his development here, Mr. Peel must complete this thoroughfare before a Certificate for Occupation for the apartment complex will be issued by the city. Without unforeseen problems, groundbreaking should be going on at the time you read this. Construction of the road is likely to be finished well before the complex is built out, so effects on our traffic problem are imminent.

Cut-through traffic comes from every entrance into the neighborhood, and some of it is "us" (have you ever cut through to avoid the school or the corner at Braker and Lamar?). But the biggest problem by far - once measured at more than 1000 cars per day - comes off IH35 on Covington and goes out to Lamar via Caddo or Scurry. Much of this traffic originates at TCEQ, but recently it has increased due to increases in nearby businesses and in general traffic from IH35 wanting to reach Lamar. The portion of this traffic wanting to go north eventually will be eliminated by Walnut Park Crossing, but we will still get cut-through traffic wanting to go south or west.

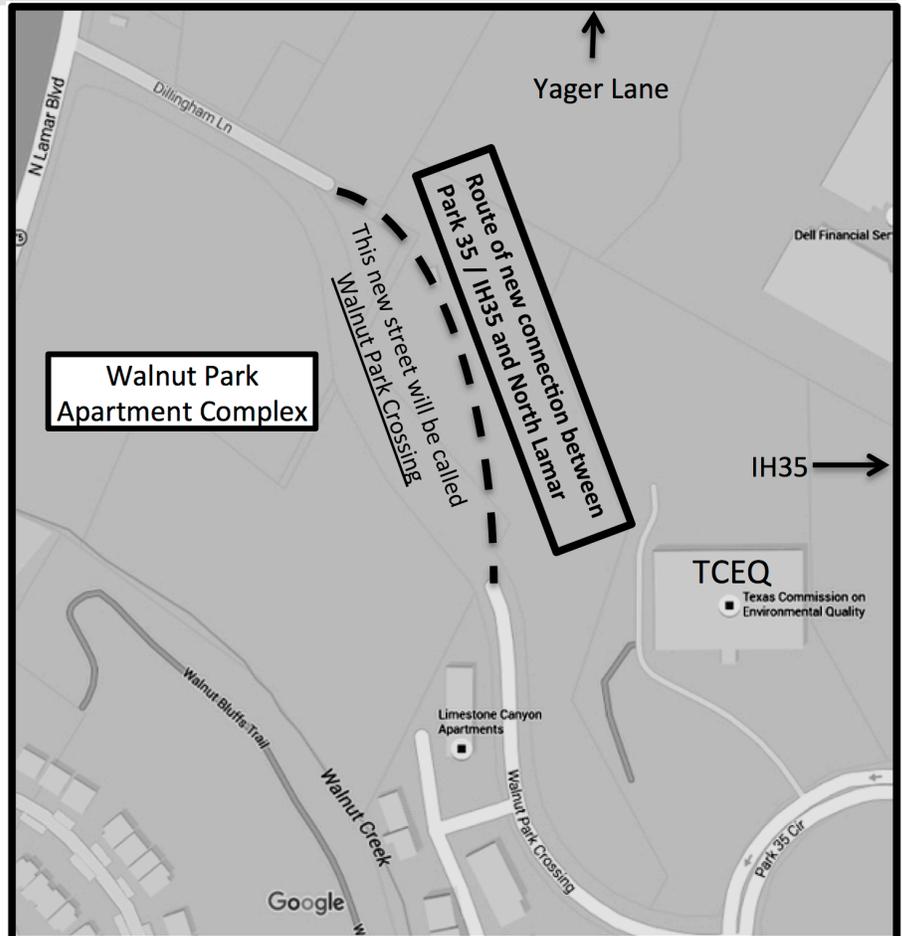
Thus WCNA will continue to consider any and all other methods to reduce the problem. Discussions recently on Nextdoor has mirrored discussions by the board and on our list-servers over many years. Various attempts at obtaining relief from our rush-hour cut-through traffic problem have been explored with the city, and some of the frustrating results have been noted in the conversation strings on Nextdoor. But past failures should not deter from current action, and herewith the board is soliciting your help.

The use of signs of various kinds have been discussed in the past and in current media strings. We have been told by city officials in the past that it's quite possible - with sufficient grounds - to change the speed limit on some streets, and this might at least reduce the risk to neighbors and pets who use the streets personally. Brightly colored "Kid Alert" signs shortly will be deployed on Covington to attempt to accomplish the same purpose, hoping that slower throughput will discourage some of the cut-through traffic as well as helping to protect kids, pets, and the rest of us street users.

One relatively easy method to improve safety might be new or changed signage; e.g. "Stop", "Slow", or informational (dangerous corner, bump, etc). If you know of the need or desirability of such signs your recommendations will be appreciated. Four ways to get the word to the board: Post on Nextdoor or Yahoo social media; Email the president at RobertL@meadows.com; Email to WCNAcontact@gmail.com; or call Robert at (512) 339-0229.

Official changes require requests by residents who are directly affected by the problem being addressed. Whether signage or traffic-calming measures, owners of homes which are most affected must be included in the submissions.

Find information on traffic issues at <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/local-area-traffic-management> , and download the document with guidelines for procedures at https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/LATM_Guidelines_Procedures_-_Final_7-1-14_v2.pdf .Information about and pictures of possible methods for traffic mitigation are shown in this document: <http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Transportation/devices-speed-mitigation.pdf> .



Detox Center on Lamar Nears Opening

The property at 11711 N. Lamar is being developed as Briarwood Detox Center, a private, state-licensed facility for detoxification from chemical dependency (typically alcohol and/or opiates). The property is still in the construction phase, delayed by making the facilities and parking area comply with city codes, including preservation of trees, along with the usual design and development processes. Opening is anticipated in January.

The WCNA board met with Rena Cantrell (LCSW, LCDC), who will be onsite at the center as the Executive Director, and Marsha Robinson, a local marketing consultant who specializes in addiction recovery facilities and programs. Their clearly extensive knowledge and experience with all types of recovery operations was reassuring to the board members present, and they answered all questions with precision and patience. Ms. Robinson lives in Gracywoods and Ms. Cantrell will be supervising on-site full time, so both also have personal interests in the peaceful nature of the facility.

The buildings on the site have been remodeled to accommodate a maximum of fifteen clients, most of whom are referred by doctors or treatment centers. Ms. Cantrell will supervise nurses and counselors, with the facility manned 24 hours/day. Clients will remain on-site at all times (except in case of medical emergency) and visitors, other than immediate family, will not be allowed. A typical stay will range from 3 - 10 days, after which most clients will transition to local treatment facilities.

For more information about Briarwood Detox Center or other addiction/recovery-related questions, contact Marsha Robinson at marshar@briarwooddetox.com.

Ya Better Watch Out! You Know It's Coming... by Jill Leberknight

*'Twas December the 20 and in Walnut Creek,
All the talk of the evening was singing technique!
For the neighbors had gathered to Carol the streets;
They rode 'top a wagon, they held music in sheets.*

*So come out and join us! Bring your mittens and cap!
To share Holiday Carols we'll need singers and maps!*

OK, let me be clear – the Halloween décor is history, stores will only keep Thanksgiving out for a week or two, and it's almost **Caroling Time!**

The 2015, 4th annual Walnut Creek Neighborhood Caroling event is set for Sunday, December 20th. I'm going to let you all in on a little secret. I LOVE CHRISTMAS CAROLING! Most of my neighbors already know I go a little nuts over this event.

Our WCN Caroling has explored several formats over the years. Lately we've grown fond of the hay-filled trailer-ride that glides throughout the neighborhood delivering musical cheer.

We're always trying to enhance the event so we need kids, families, and musicians/singers who are interested in participating and improving this neighborhood endeavor. We'd also like to compile a map of homes that wish for this dynamic crew to swing by and share holiday songs.

Shoot me an email at jill@agentjill.com or give me a call if you want to join the fun and/or if you have ideas or something to complement the event like speakers, instruments or a willingness to come accompany our carols, lights/decorations for the trailer/pickup, etc.

*We'll pause mid-way at the Meadows, and enjoy holiday treats.
Then we'll sing through the eve' and the Holidays greet!
And you'll hear us exclaim as we drive out of sight,
"Merry Christmas to all!"
Come and join us that night!*

Jill's Real Estate Corner by Jill Leberknight

Here are my **5 Things You Should Know** about the WCN Real Estate Market right now.

1. **Mail, Glorious Mail** – As you probably see from the weekly mailers you receive from investors, WCN is a popular neighborhood for “flipping,” (last issue I described “flipping” as a **real estate** investment strategy in which an investor purchases properties to resell them for a profit.) Right now in WCN the profit margin is high for what I call the “extreme home make-over,” so we're seeing a variety of investment parties reaching out with numerous investment and sales strategies. Before you jump in, always arm yourself with information, facts, and knowledge to ensure you protect your rights, your property and your investment. And of course as I always teach... **KNOW YOUR PROPERTY VALUE.**
2. **Bubbles, Inflated Prices or a Cooling Market** – as a real estate professional I'm a party to many discussions about these topics. Right now, the consensus and my professional opinion is that we are NOT experiencing a “Housing Bubble.” Our strong Austin employment scene keeps the market healthy and our higher home prices - although certainly surprising to see - are not inflated compared to other locations in the greater Austin area. There was a small “cooling” of the market this year in two areas affecting WCN: 1) Days on the Market and 2) The Price Point of “moderately updated” homes. This means it's taking our homes a little longer to sell right now and our moderately updated homes are not seeing the same prices at the flips or extreme makeover houses.
3. **Best ROI** – If you want to improve your curb appeal for sale or to protect your investment the best improvement “bang for your buck is in updated flooring, home systems, and interior/exterior paint and landscape. I often counsel my clients if you can't afford the “extreme home make over” then make your home “move-in ready” so a family could safely live there for a couple of years without pouring extra money into it.
4. **Annual Trends** – February through early June have statistically been our busiest times of the year in WCN with February through May being the times when we see our biggest price leaps.
5. **Highlights of 2015 So Far** – Sold Prices have risen 24.2% since last year, price per square foot is up 23.3%, Days on market/the time it takes homes to sell is also up 23.8% (this is the only “cooling” of the market that we are seeing), and highest sold price documented so far this year is \$330,000 which was one of our recent flips that sold in May.

As always, I welcome your questions or comments. I'm an educator at heart and I love both teaching and learning!

Median home price in Austin is easily maintaining its level far ahead of any other city in Texas, large or small. The current third-quarter cost is \$260,000 (up 7.2% over last year) compared to DFW at \$215,000 (up 10.3%), Houston at \$215,000 (up 6.5%), and San Antonio at \$195,000 (up 7.1%). From Texas Quarterly Housing Report

Flood Mitigation Task Force: You can help!

Neighbor and WCNA Board Member Dorsey Twidwell is on the city task force that is working to make recommendations to the City Council on citywide needs to mitigate residential flooding, which clearly is a serious issue in our and many more neighborhoods in Austin. The FMTF meets monthly and takes verbal input from residents via a "Citizen Communication" agenda item. A representative from WCNA could speak at any or all of these meetings. Think about your or another neighbor's problem and generate an outline to speak from - these presentations are casual and don't need any "polish" - and plan to attend one of these meetings. The task force has the mandate to produce a report to the Council by March of 2016. Dorsey will post schedules of upcoming meetings: If you can attend one of these contact Robert Meadows. Also continue to report problems through the 311 system, which is almost totally complaint-driven!

Weather You're Ready or Not

After the recent events Camp Mabry had accumulated over **53 inches!** of rain for the year through 5 November. Only two complete years have exceeded that amount: 1900 (53.99") and 1919 (64.68"). We're almost 24 inches above the "normal" for this date. It looks as if we could have two years of precipitation in one year. And of course this means the **Burn Ban is off until further notice**; i.e., until several months with no precipitation. Climate change 'R us.

So far the city has decided that these floods don't represent the end of the drought, so we will remain under Stage 2.

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 be done anytime.

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

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

The form below is to facilitate record-keeping for WCNA members. The "standard" \$15 dues year is the calendar year, so the form is included in the last newsletter issue of the previous dues year and the first issue of the current one. If you wish to include additional funds to support the organization in general, park/neighborhood cleanup, or the neighborhood Walnut Creek Cat Coalition (which performs Trap/Neuter/Return and maintains a sanctuary for unadoptable cats) please indicate the desired distribution on the form.

WCNA Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2016

This form is included in both the Nov-Dec 2015 and Jan-Feb 2016 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 and donations at www.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 ___

Neighborhood Beautification ___ Oak Wilt Abatement ___ Cat Coalition ___

'Tis The Season



by Sharon Porter

Ahhhhh, November!

Time to replace or create canopy. Check out your favorite nursery for trees resistant to oak wilt, like burr oak, Lacey oak, or chinquapin. Or look outside the oak species for trees like pecan.

Avoid risk of spreading oak wilt to your live oaks by postponing pruning of live oaks until the dormant period in January. Remember that losing your live oak to oak wilt costs twice: first, in the cost of removing the dead tree; second, in the loss in property value that a mature tree brings. Remember to use an oak wilt certified arborist to treat your trees. Avoid discounts and "bargains" that cost you more than you save.

Want advice about caring for your trees? Our COA arborists know our neighborhood well as an historic oak-wilt neighborhood, now quiescent. Let's keep it that way!

For contact and other information, go to <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/city-arborist>

Nov	11	Veteran's Day
	14 - 15	East Austin Studio Tour
	18	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	22	Austin Empty Bowl Project
	21 - 22	East Austin Studio Tour
	26	Thanksgiving Day
Dec	2	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	16	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	20	Neighborhood Christmas Caroling; Contact Jill: jill@agentjill.com or 512 294-7296
	25	Christmas Day
	30	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
Jan	1	New Year's Day
	25	Start of Bulk Pickup

Austin City Council

- Mayor Steve Adler, 512-978-2100
Steve.Adler@austintexas.gov
- Ora Houston, 512-978-2101
Ora.Houston@austintexas.gov
- Delia Garza, 512-978-2102
Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov
- Sabino "Pio" Renteria, 512-978-2103
Sabino.Renteria@austintexas.gov
- Greg Casar, 512-978-2104
Gregorio.Casar@austintexas.gov
- Ann Kitchen, 512-978-2105
Ann.Kitchen@austintexas.gov
- Don Zimmerman, 512-978-2106
Don.Zimmerman@austintexas.gov
- Leslie Pool, 512-978-2107
Leslie.Pool@austintexas.gov
- Ellen Troxclair, 512-978-2108
Ellen.Troxclair@austintexas.gov
- Kathie Tovo, 512-978-2109
Kathie.Tovo@austintexas.gov
- Sheri Gallo, 512-978-2121
Sheri.Gallo@austintexas.gov

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

Adan Ballesteros, County Constable, Pct 2 (512) 854-9697
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/>

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
- Kay & Joel Klumpp
491-0934 kayklumpp@yahoo.com
- Jill Leberknight
294-7296 jill@weemus.com
- Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell
339-0412 bunnie@mail.utexas.edu
- Tasha Bowser
731-6863 Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com
- Christian Ninaud
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656-7586 sharonmfporter1@gmail.com

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Nov :: Dec 2015



**Ghoul and Spider Plague
Oakwood and Covington
for Halloween**

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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 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.



**Cottonwood Saplings by Pond
on Whitewing Ave**