



# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

Jan  
Feb  
2017

### Join Us!

Dues and P.O. Box are shown in this newsletter on the back page below your address label, along with the PayPal address for credit card payment.

### Social Media/Listservs:

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

NextDoor: <http://goo.gl/UbLiAu>

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

### Kids and a Hayride:

### Fifth Annual Christmas Caroling was a Kick!

After a bit of a weather scare, it warmed up to a perfect mid-50s temperature for the Caroling Hayride on the evening of the 21st of December. Kids, kids and more kids kept arriving for the trip, so many that many of the adults had to forgo the ride - or at least some of it - to reduce overcrowding on the "sleigh". And of course it was a noisy bunch, with and without the singing. Ultimately more than 40 showed up, participating in several ways: riding the sleigh, performing "escort duty" in personal vehicles, and walking, occasionally swapping with riders. This gives you an idea about the "sleigh speed"; More could participate by trading off.

As in previous years, neighbors contacted the organizer, Jill Leberknight, to let her know that they would like to be serenaded by the carolers if possible. This allowed the route to be organized to reach as many as possible given the constraints created by towing the long trailer and not being able to go out onto the major thoroughfares. Jill - aka Mrs. Victorian Caroler - also brought caroling books, jingle bells, and glow bracelets for the participants, and

with husband Damien Brown provided the PA system, aka Karaoke Machine with microphones and speakers. Theresa Jones provided the horses - under the hood of a 2014 Dodge pickup - and the trailer with hay. She festooned both with Christmas lights and tinsel, and provided the inverter necessary to power them and the PA system via the truck's electrical system.



Checking the setup before Santa arrives:  
Room for one more?

With high spirits and the list of locations in hand, Santa - aka Wayne Tobias - and his sleigh took off from the entrance to Walnut Bluffs Trail, with "Victorian" - and elf helper Sullivan - at his side and leading the caroling. The route went up Oakbrook to Tedford, then up the hill into the central blocks. Short sections of Hilltop, Scurry, Covington, and Caddo were traversed, along with longer sections of Tedford, Oakwood, Whitewing, Pollyanna and Hornsby. The trip covered less than half the total length of streets of the neighborhood, but the slow speed and the stop for refreshments in the middle took more than two hours.

And stop it did, at the home of Jill (Victorian), Damon and Sullivan to partake of cookies and hot chocolate and other goodies. Then the trip commenced with renewed enthusiasm, jingling, singing and laughing all the way.

From Jill: "It was so special to have folks come out to greet us in their yards and at street corners. It was great to meet new neighbors, connect with families, see the kids play together and discover neighbors with really great voices! I have met so many over the past few years that I am ready to start a "Walnut Creek Choir". If it works I would like to start rehearsing songs for next year and other holiday songs to share at our annual community events. Look for announcements about this on our social media."



A "Santa Selfie" with the  
"sleigh" loaded



Mrs. Victorian Caroler,  
Santa and Elf Sullivan  
leading the singing.

**Question: How many seconds are there in one year? See the bottom of the page for the answer.**

**Check it Out: Never Miss Your Curbside Pickup Again!**

You recently received in your actual, for real mailbox - probably along with dozens of other nondescript pieces of snail mail - one large card from Austin Recycles, the department that picks up "stuff" at our curbsides (such as they are). The card indicates that the city has made a **good effort to help us get our acts together!**

You can read the card or go to: [austinrecycles.com](http://austinrecycles.com) and do the following:

Look for *My Schedule* at the bottom and enter your address in the box, then click on the calendar.

The calendar for your address for the current month will show up further down the page (click on the arrows under the year to go to following or preceding months). Point to a collection day containing an icon and instructions for the collections on that day will pop up. Click on the "X" at upper right to close these instructions.

Clicking on the "What Do I Do With..." box beside "My Schedule" near the top allows you to enter a description of a "waste item" and get instructions on how to dispose of it if it's identified in the city's list.

Click on *Get a reminder!* and you can choose from several ways to help keep you from missing a pickup: You can have an email, "tweet" or text message sent to you at a time of your choosing; You can have the pickup dates put into your computer or phone calendar automatically (with pre-pickup day alerts if your calendar supports it); And there is an indication that you might even be able to get reminded by phone.

You can print a one-year calendar showing pickup information by clicking on that option in the list, whence a new window will open with a printable version displayed. You can also perform most of these options by clicking on *Get a Calendar* to the right of *Get a reminder!* The "Need help" button has actual helpful information.

Finally, you can call 311 to check your collection schedule and sign up for a reminder by phone.

**Tired of getting bombarded by Nextdoor emails? You don't need to quit...**

Nextdoor has relatively precise controls over what emails you receive from them. Here's how you exercise them: Click on your picture on the green bar at top right; This will show your current profile, which is whatever information you want people (some people, not necessarily everybody, as you'll see) to see if they click on your picture on one of your messages or in the "Neighbors" list. You can add or delete your information on this page. At the upper right is a "gear" symbol: Click on this and you'll see how to control what information other members of Nextdoor can view in your profile.

At the upper left you'll see the heading labeled "Email".

Click on "Email" and you'll see the controls for what posts you want to receive from Nextdoor at the top (you can also go to this page directly by clicking on "Settings" on the dropdown menu when you click on your picture). The "Some" category will result in you receiving a few "summary" emails like the ones you get occasionally now.

You can choose to get emails from any or all of the categories Nextdoor has and from a choice of neighborhoods by using the "Customize" button, but (apparently) can't choose only the summary emails in these categories.

The only other option is the "None" category, which is equivalent to "unsubscribing" to Nextdoor, except your profile will remain on record in case you want to switch back "on".

**Record Home Sales in November**

Pippa Lambert, Realtor in Gracywoods; [plambert@homecity.com](mailto:plambert@homecity.com)

*Pippa sent this derivation from a publication by her parent company, HomeCity.com, around Christmas. Besides some interesting statistics, the last link provides excellent information about Austin & Dallas properties for sale.*

The winter months are typically the slowest time of the year for real estate sales. However, November 2016 broke the mold. Single family home sales experienced double-digit growth across the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), in an unusual end of the year surge.

The Austin area's growth doesn't seem to be slowing down for the holidays, and this growth is fueling home sales throughout the region. Single-family home sales throughout the MSA jumped 15.8 percent year-over-year to 2,055 homes sold in November 2016. As for Austin-proper, home sales jumped 13.7 percent to 656 homes sold. Hayes, Travis, and Williamson counties also saw annual growth in the double digits as well.

Mark Sprague, State Director of Information Capital for Independence Title, told the Austin Board of Realtors in an interview that rising interest rates may be encouraging people to buy. Want to know more about how this impacts the market? We delve deeper into the statistics in our latest housing market update blog [HERE](#). Also, feel free to check our website [homes for sale in your neighborhood](#). Thanks, and happy holidays!

**Answer: 12 of them: January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd, April 2nd, May 2nd, June 2nd, July 2nd, August 2nd, September 2nd, October 2nd, November 2nd, December 2nd.**

### Signs of a Shifting Real Estate Market

By Jill Leberknight, Walnut Creek Neighborhood Real Estate Expert

Austin has been in a solid "seller's market" since late 2011 or early 2012. Multiple offers, price increases, cash buyers, & little-to-no buyer concessions have been common. With the center of Austin moving further north due to population growth and the continued commercial development around The Domain and the Apple campus, the Walnut Creek Neighborhood is emerging as a new player in the Austin real estate market. We were named in AUSTIN MONTHLY MAGAZINE'S annual Top 10 Hottest neighborhoods and are now regularly coveted by the Austin remodel professionals and home flippers who have worked through investment inventory in East Austin.

As the neighborhood expert I am asked a lot about the health of the market in Austin as well as here in our neighborhood. Over the past several years, statistics and my experience in the field were showing a steady and consistent increase in prices. In 2014 there was a slight dip due to an unexpected increase of poor condition inventory during a usually slow period of the year. But those properties were eventually bought up by the professional flippers, remodeled and then sold in 2015 for the highest prices we've seen in our neighborhood's history. (High price right now for a WCN home is \$348,750.) But for the most part there was no annual evidence of change. 2016 Walnut Creek Neighborhood activity, however, has created some new scenarios that I feel are worth noting.

1. Buyers are not as willing to foot the bill to repair or fix aging systems like plumbing, HVAC, electrical, and roof.
2. Buyers are not willing to pay top prices for a home that has not been completely updated both cosmetically and structurally/systemically.
3. Buyers are more willing to walk away from contracts when there are no compromises on repairs.
4. We are seeing longer days on the market, more price decreases, fewer homes achieving the same values as their professionally flipped counterparts, and lower price points on outdated homes.
5. I am starting to see trends towards a seasonal market in WCN for the "non-flipped" home. Historically, during this sellers market cycle, the best times to list and sell a property in WCN has been January through early May with the Valentine's Day through SXSW time frame being the hottest. Slow times have started to emerge over the past year around July through Thanksgiving.

#### **Now, on the positive side:**

1. Our homes are still of interest to potential buyers looking to buy in Austin. I see fewer fears about the location than I have seen in years past and a more positive perspective on the amenities of the area.
2. Our homes are perceived to have "good bones" and our lots have room to expand. I hear the flippers say this as well as the buyers, buyer agents and their contractors & repair professionals. It is easy to update our homes to modern floor plans or add on without adding "upward", which is more expensive.
3. Buyers comment regularly on the "quaint feel" of the neighborhood.
4. Home prices across all of WCN are continuing to rise for homes in good condition with quality features and amenities.

### The Big Picture

A slight shift is underway but nothing in comparison to the one we felt in '08. There is no evidence of a bubble or a crash but simply a natural and normal part of an evolving real estate market. It is my opinion that we are starting to get a little breathing room in the hot Austin market. Buyers are a bit tired of the fight to purchase here and are no longer willing to give away their savings for homes that require additional cash to improve. They are also willing to consider communities outside of Austin and I'm now seeing evidence of multiple offers and shorter days on market in suburbs around Austin. I predict that we will stay in a seller's market for many areas of Austin for homes below the median price point of \$275,250. I believe that January through May and maybe even June will remain a seller's market in the WCN. We might simply start seeing some light buyer market behavior during our non-peak times and for homes in need of work.

### **Probably too late to get your Christmas tree picked up, but the results are still available**

It's too late to put your tree out for curbside pickup (unless the service gets extended), but you can always cut the tree up and use the yard trimming bags or put it in the regular trash. Free mulch from trees collected at Zilker Park will be available on a first-come, first-served basis starting Jan. 19.

For more information and a list of other free drop-off locations: [bit.ly/2hZWpAQ](http://bit.ly/2hZWpAQ).

A Canadian psychologist is selling a video that teaches you how to test your dog's IQ.

Here's how it works: If you spend \$12.99 for the video, your dog is smarter than you.

Jay Leno

**You want weather, you got weather!**

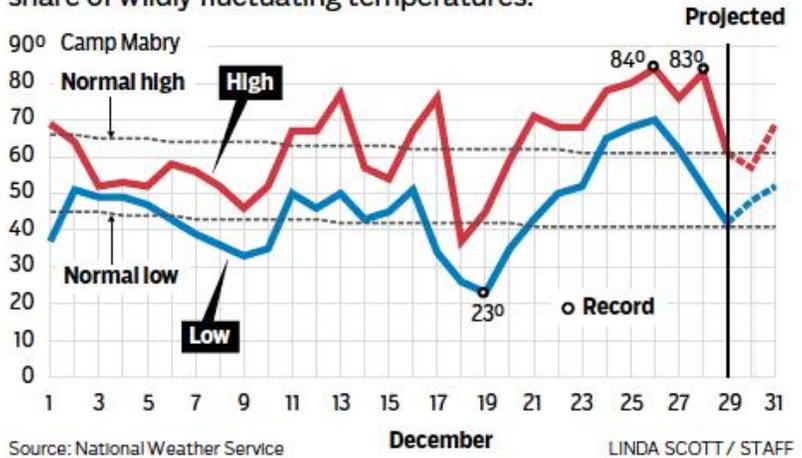
Whether it's a result of global warming, El Nino, La Nina or some combination thereof, the weather lately has been varying all over the "map". Exhibit A: The graph here of daily temperatures (degrees Fahrenheit) at Camp Mabry for the month of December. Both the high and low temperatures for the month ranged over almost 50 degrees F! And the total range over the month was 61 degrees. Insulated jacket and boots one day, sandals and shorts the next. If your thermostat doesn't automatically switch from heat to cool you gotta be fiddling with it almost every day. As they say, "That's Texas Weather", now on steroids!

Actually, several weather models have been predicting this behavior, caused by the tendency of La Nina to cause frigid Arctic air masses to "pile up", followed by sudden, relatively short duration releases to the south that can sweep all the way down here.

The good news is that the relatively dry air in Texas associated with La Nina typically means the Arctic events produce little precipitation here, so we may dodge debilitating ice storms this season.

**December temperatures In Austin**

Central Texas has experienced a surge in above-normal warmth since Christmas, but the month has seen its fair share of wildly fluctuating temperatures.



**IT'S HERE! (Tips for Dealing with) CEDAR POLLEN**

Derived from Austin American Statesman, 29 Dec; Sources: Dr. Ross Tobleman and Dr. Douglas barstow

- Start taking a mild antihistamine, such as Zyrtec or Claritin.
- Use a nasal steroid, such as OTC Flonase or Nasacort
- Do nasal rinsing with saline solution.
- Drink juniper tea, which can help build up an immunity.
- Wash your hair before going to bed. This helps keep the pollen that has probably built up in your hair from smearing on the pillow on which you will sleep (or change your pillowcase daily).

This winter could be a particularly nasty season for cedar fever. Central Texas is coming off a year of rainy weather, which helps the vegetation but also means Ashe juniper — aka mountain cedar — is robust. Cedar pollen remains low at this point, according to Fox-7 and KVUE counts. But allergists say everyone should expect those nasty “smoke” clouds to start rising soon.

One in five Central Texans suffers from cedar fever, according to experts from Baylor Scott & White Health. To new Central Texans: beware, you might be susceptible to cedar fever and not know it. If you do have an allergy, you'll know it soon. Even people who have lived here for years without symptoms can suddenly develop them.

Cedar fever can feel like a cold or flu. The Texas A&M College of Medicine recently published a guide to identifying whether you've got allergies, a cold or the flu. The easiest way to tell if cedar fever is the cause of your misery is if you have particularly itchy eyes and bad coughing without deep muscle aches or a fever.

Cedar fever is a colloquialism; the allergy does not actually bring on a fever. Breathing can be difficult, though. “You can't function well if you can't breathe,” said Dr. Goddy Corpuz, a pediatrician at Baylor Scott & White's Cedar Park Clinic who often sees patients with bad allergies.

Cedar fever could kick in soon. The season tends to last from the start of December until March, though it has been known to persist into May. Those looking for treatment should fire up the DeLorean, find a nice flat stretch of country road on which to get it up to 88 mph and travel back to between six months and a year ago. That was the best time to start building up an immunity through steps such as allergy shots. Failing that, over-the-counter allergy medications can help, as can nasal rinsing.

For some, that will not be enough. Allergists can check for allergies through both the traditional skin tests and blood work.

“If a patient knows they have a history of sensitivity to cedar, we need to get them treated early, in some cases with allergy shots — the earlier the better,” said Dr. Rachel Osborne, a pediatrician at Baylor Scott & White Clinic-Georgetown Central. “If we can nip it in the bud before the season starts, we can keep things manageable throughout the season. But if you come in when you're suffering at the peak of cedar season, then we won't be able to do quite as much to help you.”

Those who have not had a flu shot probably should get one to avoid contracting both the flu and cedar fever, Corpuz said.

### Can you help with Austin's flood problems!

**They're** too modest to take any credit, but our own Dorsey Twidwell and wife Bunnie have worked arduously and tenaciously on the Austin Flood Mitigation Task Force to understand the overwhelming issues we (Austinites) are up against and to make recommendations for digging our way out (literally and figuratively). One of these recommendations is being acted upon, as the city is now seeking designers and developers to help redesign and update [ATXfloods.com](http://ATXfloods.com), a public safety resource site for Central Texas. This site shows locations where flooding is taking place during and after heavy rains, and can be accessed by computer or phone app: See the usual sources.

**From** the City and AAS: These paid positions will upgrade the city's central floods and emergency road closure system for compatibility with third-party way-finding software such as Google Maps, Waze and Garmin maps. The site displays road closure information for 1,674 low-water crossings in Austin and Central Texas, providing continuous updates help assure safe travel during weather emergencies.

A \$96,633.14 grant from the Texas Water Development Board will enable design updates to improve the experience of desktop and mobile visitors to the ATXfloods site during storm broadcasts, as well as TV viewers who see it on news broadcasts. To apply: [austintexas.gov/innovation-fellows](http://austintexas.gov/innovation-fellows).

### Deadline Approaching to Enter 2017 NXNA Garden & Artist Tour

**Gracywoods** residents Carole Goltze and E. J. Brown are organizing the *North by North Austin* tour of garden and art venues in our area for 2017, planned for Saturday the 13th of May. There's still time to sign up as a gardener, artist, sponsor, publicist and/or IT tech: Contact either [cgoltze@yahoo.com](mailto:cgoltze@yahoo.com), or [mizejbrown@gmail.com](mailto:mizejbrown@gmail.com). Artists can contact Stephanie Frogge, [stephaniefrogge@sbcglobal.net](mailto:stephaniefrogge@sbcglobal.net).

You can find the application at [www.lovenorthaustin.com](http://www.lovenorthaustin.com). Click on "NxNA Garden Tour" at bottom left and choose the category you're interested in.



### Thinking of trimming your live oaks because it is January?

Usually advice is to trim in January because temperatures are low enough that the vector spreading oak wilt is less active, and risk of oak wilt is reduced.

However, temperatures have been warmer than usual this winter. If you are considering trimming your live oaks and are not sure if this is a good time, remember that the City of Austin provides consultation from a specialist familiar with the history of oak wilt in our neighborhood:

Chris Dolan, Environmental Program Coordinator: Arborist for Oak Wilt Suppression Program

City of Austin – Development Services Dept.

Urban Forest Division

505 Barton Springs Road, 4th floor

512/974-1881



### Some Bus Fares Changed Sunday, Jan 8th: Downward!

Ridership has not lived up to expectations on the "premium" buses, the two-piece MetroRapid and the MetroFlyer, making the overall operation less used/less efficient than was expected. It's hoped that reducing these premium fares to the same amount as on all other local rates will induce significantly more usage. The premium service offers faster travel by limiting the number of stops on the busiest routes, Lamar, Burnet and from the airport and other outlying stops to downtown. It also provides more "plush" amenities. This will allow all local riders to use these "perks", as you'll be able to go more quickly to the closest "premium" stop, then transfer to a local for the final section for the same price as riding the slower, less "cushy", and (up till now) more crowded local MetroBus service. The premium services also provide free wi-fi and multiple-door boarding, and have the ability to "hold" green lights a little longer to improve overall speed.

See <http://www.capmetro.org/> for details, and <https://goo.gl/5MxSw3> for schedules.



The form below is meant to facilitate record-keeping for WCNA members. The "standard" \$15 dues year corresponds to the calendar year, so the form is included in the last newsletter issue of the previous dues year (this issue) and the first issue of the current one (Jan-Feb 2017). If you wish to include additional funds to support the organization in general, park/neighborhood cleanup/beautification, or the neighborhood Walnut Creek Cat Coalition (which performs Trap/Neuter/Return of feral/unhomed cats in the neighborhood) 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 at [www.goo.gl/5iQIk](http://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 \_\_\_

**Austin City Council**

Mayor Steve Adler, 512-978-2100

[Steve.Adler@austintexas.gov](mailto:Steve.Adler@austintexas.gov)

Ora Houston, 512-978-2101

[Ora.Houston@austintexas.gov](mailto:Ora.Houston@austintexas.gov)

Delia Garza, 512-978-2102

[Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov](mailto:Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov)

Sabino "Pio" Renteria, 512-978-2103

[Sabino.Renteria@austintexas.gov](mailto:Sabino.Renteria@austintexas.gov)

Greg Casar, 512-978-2104

[Gregorio.Casar@austintexas.gov](mailto:Gregorio.Casar@austintexas.gov)

Ann Kitchen, 512-978-2105

[Ann.Kitchen@austintexas.gov](mailto:Ann.Kitchen@austintexas.gov)

Don Zimmerman, 512-978-2106

[Don.Zimmerman@austintexas.gov](mailto:Don.Zimmerman@austintexas.gov)

Leslie Pool, 512-978-2107

[Leslie.Pool@austintexas.gov](mailto:Leslie.Pool@austintexas.gov)

Ellen Troxclair, 512-978-2108

[Ellen.Troxclair@austintexas.gov](mailto:Ellen.Troxclair@austintexas.gov)

Kathie Tovo, 512-978-2109

[Kathie.Tovo@austintexas.gov](mailto:Kathie.Tovo@austintexas.gov)

Sheri Gallo, 512-978-2121

[Sheri.Gallo@austintexas.gov](mailto:Sheri.Gallo@austintexas.gov)

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

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

**Get the smart phone 311 App:**

Austin311 on Google Play and iTunes

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/>

**WCNA Board and Officers**

Robert Meadows President  
339-0229 [robertl@meadows.com](mailto:robertl@meadows.com)

Theresa Jones Vice President  
832-0404 [tjones72@austin.rr.com](mailto:tjones72@austin.rr.com)

Pat Pitt Treasurer  
837-6620 [s.pitt@earthlink.net](mailto:s.pitt@earthlink.net)

Kay & Joel Klumpp  
491-0934 [kayklumpp@yahoo.com](mailto:kayklumpp@yahoo.com)

Jill Leberknight  
294-7296 [jill@agentjill.com](mailto:jill@agentjill.com)

Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell  
339-0412 [bunnie@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:bunnie@mail.utexas.edu)

Tasha Bowser  
731-6863 [Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com](mailto:Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com)

Christian Ninaud  
971-7628 [mtbrider007@yahoo.com](mailto:mtbrider007@yahoo.com)

Sharon Porter  
656-7586 [sharonmfporter1@gmail.com](mailto:sharonmfporter1@gmail.com)

Clay Chip Smith  
487-7777 [clay@claychipsmith.com](mailto:clay@claychipsmith.com)

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Facebook: Santorini Café, Music & Entertainment

Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings

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

Happy Hour  
Daily  
5-8pm




Spectacular Christmas light display on Hunters Lane

**Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association membership** is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within the boundaries, including perimeters, of the association described below.

**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/5iQIk>

**WCNA News** is sent to every household within the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association boundaries: 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 Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.

### Calendar of Events

Jan	9	Bulk Pickup begins - pickup though 13th as needed
	11	Blue Recycle Container Pickup - curbside by 7 a.m.
	13-15	Austin Home & Garden Show - <a href="http://show.technology.com">show.technology.com</a>
	16	MLK Holiday -- AISD, Banks and P.O closed
	25	Blue Recycle Container Pickup - curbside by 7 a.m.
	28	11th Clean Your Clutter Day - 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Bethany Lutheran Methodist Church; one carload per person; <a href="http://napoaustin.com/CYCD_2017">napoaustin.com/CYCD_2017</a>
Feb	2	Ground Hog Day
	4	12th Street End Black Heritage Festival <a href="http://ujamma_austin.org">ujamma_austin.org</a>
	8	Blue Recycle Container Pickup - curbside by 7 a.m.
	15-18	Austin Energy Regional Science Fair <a href="http://sciencefest.org">sciencefest.org</a>
	18-19	Children's Book Fair at Lady Bird's Wildflower Center <a href="http://wildflower.org">wildflower.org</a>
	20	President's Day -- AISD, Banks and P.O closed
	22	Blue Recycle Container Pickup - curbside by 7 a.m.
28	Mardi Gras	
Mar	2	Texas Independence Day
	4	It's My Park Day - Watch for details on social media
	5	Zilker Kite Festival; Zilker Park; 2100 Barton Springs Rd <a href="https://www.everfest.com/e/zilker-kite-festival-austin-tx">https://www.everfest.com/e/zilker-kite-festival-austin-tx</a>