



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

Nov
Dec
2017

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A Spook-tacular Halloween in the Neighborhood!

Slowly over the month of October the "decorations" popped up all around the 'hood, perhaps the most ever in the end. At a resident's suggestion, the WCNA board decided to sponsor an annual contest to pick the best of the Halloween displays, with some sort of prizes to go along with the recognition. With the dry month the blooming displays were not drenched to any extent: Then came Halloween. The rain that came late in the day didn't do any significant damage, though, so the winners could be viewed for a few days afterward.

A panel from the board traversed every street, noting the locations and "scores" - arbitrarily established as the inspection progressed - for each. Because of the late starting time, displays which didn't employ lighting suffered some in the

comparisons, but visits before dark at previous times minimized that effect. The original intention was to select the top two, but that was changed to the top three before the inspection date. But the panel was surprised to find an unexpectedly large number of competitive presentations, and discussions weren't converging to a final three. In the end, with the board's acceptance, it was decided to select a "Top Seven", a group that seemed to stand apart from the rest in one or more aspects. But because attributes for rating the displays hadn't been determined before inspections, it proved impossible to rank the top displays among themselves, and it was decided to anoint each of the seven with the same title: Best Halloween Display of 2017, and award each a Starbucks gift card in recognition of their efforts in "spicing up the neighborhood" for the holiday.

For next year, criteria for judging displays will be established and announced well in advance of Halloween, and judging will be done during the week before both in daylight and at night.

The "chosen seven" for this year, in no particular order:

703 Jetta Court was impressive in daylight and spectacular at night: Pictures of both are seen at right. The Trick-or-Treating ghost seems to have gotten itself in a "tight" situation.



11811 Indianhead (above) had a truly scary spider/ghost arrangement near the street - best seen in daylight (on the left) and a clever window display on the front of the house which was best viewed at night (on the right).



11406 Oakwood - see picture at left - had a spectacular grouping of all kinds of ghoulish and creepy Halloween elements, with impressive lighting to make it even more spooky/spectacular at night. These folks have been seriously decorating for Halloween for several years, and this was one of their best. Unfortunately we didn't get a comparable night picture here.



11501 Hornsby also has been decorated for several years, with those two friendly ghosts highlighting the daytime view - at left - and the porch decorations the night - at right.



11922 Oakbrook (left) comprised a large number of "human" skulls, at least one of which was quite realistic. This made the display particularly spooky, especially at night, as seen here.



602 Little Oak (left and above) was the most elaborate, and the most elaborately lighted, of the winners. Many skeletons reposed in multiple settings (e.g. in a coffin on the right side). Lights alternated colors at night on the right side, as seen above.

103 W. Caddo, seen below, is one of the most reliable of the Halloween displays in the neighborhood. Giant spiders, skeletons, bats, tombstones, cobwebbs, you name it they got it.



Residents of WCN put on an impressive exhibition for the first Walnut Creek Neighborhood "Best Halloween Decoration" contest (whether or not it was for the contest), and the result was a lot of fun for everyone (and clearly a lot of effort by many!). We (WCNA) didn't have things quite "all together" for this first year's attempt, and clearly more forethought is needed to improve the entire process. For example, criteria for judging must be established and publicized well ahead of the date. A procedure for picking a panel of judges needs to be established, as well as the method for voting. And probably other things as well. Nevertheless: **Thanks for your participation, and let's do it again next year!**

Geez! They started putting up the "Zilker Tree" before Halloween, and we're not even close to Thanksgiving yet! The stores are full of Christmas stuff, but it's hard to find anything about our day of thanks. Could it be because "stuff" is more popular than appreciation?

It's Coming (The Christmas Holiday, That is)!

*'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 caps!
To share Holiday Carols we'll need singers and maps!*

by Jill Leberknight

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

The 6th annual Walnut Creek Caroling and Hayride is set for Wednesday, December 20th, 2017. The hay ride wagon will be decked out in lights and our Victorian carolers already have their costumes in hand. We have jingle bells, glow sticks, and caroling books at the ready and with the assistance of Mr. Karaoke machine, microphones and speakers we are able to sing loud for all to hear. With a stop along the route to enjoy hot beverages and snacks the evening is sure to provide a special holiday memory.

Reserve your spot(s) on the trailer - and/or recommend a home to be caroled to - by email to jill@agentjill.com.

NEW THIS YEAR; The Walnut Creek Choir, now looking for new members to rehearse and perform at the event. Email Jill at <mailto:jill@agentjill.com> if you'd like to participate in our new community choir.

*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!*



Santa's checking the "sleigh" before heading out to carol last year.

**A Useful Mobile/Computer App for Water Usage**

Austin has joined with many other city water utilities around the country in using software by a company site called "Dropcountr". This application tells you how much water you've used in each charging period over the this and the previous year, and contacts you each month to let you know how much you've used even before the city bills you. You join the program by going to

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/water> and clicking on the "Austin Water MOBILE APP" window and following instructions to join (or login if you have already joined; The capability to join has been around for a while and it's now operational).

Once you join and fill in the necessary information (you'll probably need one of your utility bills to find this) you'll be barraged with information and links to other city programs. But mainly you'll get a graphic summary of your water usage over the last two years in an easy-to-interpret form. You also will see your best and worst usage years since the information has been kept, and comparisons to other residents with similar characteristics (number of people in the household, number of bathrooms, etc). You'll also see a large number of suggestions about how you can save water, which can be good reminders for when we forget these things (like in years when we get 50 inches of rain).

Four more lanes on IH35? This is now the plan for upgrading IH35 from RM1431 (think North North Round Rock) to Buda. Of course these would be toll ("managed") lanes. In combination with lowering the inner lanes through town and stuff like that. Since the part through Austin would be high priority, it's possible that this section possibly could be done by 2021, which might still beat completion of Walnut Crossing on the other side of the creek. But the redone Cap Metro bus routes could be up and running and back down and stopped by then...

You Can Now Text to 911

The Capital Area Council of Governments, CAPCOG, has established use of texting to 911 operators, intended for use only when talking is unsafe or not effective because of physical/medical reasons (e.g., hearing or speech impairment). The service is available in the counties of Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Hays, Lee, Llano, Travis, and Williamson to users of Verizon Wireless, AT&T Mobility, Sprint and T-Mobile services.

Usage is simple, just **type "911" in the normal phone number place**. Use only English and include the location and type of help needed using text only, with no abbreviations that could be misinterpreted. While texting must be in English, voice calls can be taken in multiple languages because CAPCOG call centers can provide interpreters.

NOTE: The Federal Communications Commission hasn't required cellphone service providers to guarantee the texting service, so it's possible that a 911 call center might not receive your emergency text. Confirmation is made via a return text from the 911 center. If you believe a text has not been received, voice call 9-1-1.

**Walnut Creek Book Club
Schedule Change for
November-December**



We will meet on the 4th Thursday for those months (30 November and 28 December).

Also because these two months tend to be packed with holiday activities, we elected not to assign a book. Please select your own book to read so that when we meet, each can share her/his interpretation with the group.

We will resume meeting on the 3rd Thursday of the month in January 2018.

Please contact one of the following if you want further details or have any questions.

Tasha Bowser <Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com>

Val Henson <ver_meer@sbcglobal.net>

Alison Louise Brown <s.pitt@earthlink.net>

Saturday the 4th of November was *It's My Park Day* in Austin

On the north edge of our neighborhood we have a beautiful asset we call Walnut Bluffs Park, running beside Walnut Creek from Lamar to IH35.



Park Workday Boss Tasha Bowser with visiting twin helpers.

The property is under Parks and Recreation and officially named "Walnut Bluffs Trailhead". Regardless, it's "our park" which we maintain, and when the program "It's My Park Day", sponsored by the Austin Parks Foundation, APF, comes around we make a special effort to tidy it up. Under this program APF provides tools and issues t-shirts to volunteers who sign up and show up. WCNA provides breakfast tacos, coffee and other liquids and a manager(s) with plans. Board members Tasha Bowser and Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell organized and brought the goodies, Gary Brewer provided and operated the "heavy equipment" and led the work, and Sharon Porter recorded much of the effort via pictures. A good turnout for the day cleared up brush and debris left from Hurricane Harvey, cleaned and applied mulch around trees, pulled invasive



Park Entrance at 11938 Oakbrook

plants and Poison Ivy, and generally beautified the grounds. A special task by Gary and Jim Nosler involved repairing one of the entrance fence poles, apparently damaged by vehicle or vandal. also Rick and Barbara Tipple cleared growth obstructing the view across Walnut Creek at the old highway bridge near Lamar.

Sincere thanks to all who helped make our park beautiful!

Volunteers who earned T-shirts were:

- Tasha, Dorsey, Bunnie, Gary and Sharon
- Margaret Brewer
- Tim Entress
- Jim Damm
- Mike De Los Santos
- Sarah Tompkins and her twin kids
- Chris Rasmussen
- Steve and Vi Enfield
- Tim Mateer
- Sally Richardson
- Barbara and Rick Tipple
- Jim Nosler



Jim Damm and Mike De Los Santos pause, having made the area look really nice!



Tim Entress sports an *It's My Park* T-shirt from a previous year

Walnut Creek Real Estate Update Continued signs of a shifting market

By Jill Leberknight, WCN Real Estate Expert

Last year I wrote an article discussing the seasonal shifts that I was seeing in our WCN community and the typical slow and hot activity times of the year. Well, it looks like that seasonal shift was the leading edge of what is now being documented by our local online "sold" data as an apparent greater-Austin market shift. Across the city we are seeing increased inventory, increased days on the market and signs of a normalizing market. Real estate markets typically run in 7-year cycles and Austin is well past a typical 7 year swing, so this is not surprising. Our healthy jobs market is expected to keep the Austin housing market strong, but we are seeing signs of stabilizing and cooling values.

As an expert in Walnut Creek Real Estate, here is how I see what's happening in our community:

1. Our non-remodeled, good-condition homes are taking longer to obtain offers. Homes which once took a few days to receive multiple offers now are taking 30-45 days or longer to generate one prospect.
2. More buyer requests for contract concessions like closing costs and price reductions.
3. Less tolerance for high-dollar home repairs and upgrades like plumbing, roof, and foundation. This is the area that is most affecting sellers "net" and "sold" prices in our neighborhood.

Overall, I am seeing pickier buyers with a greater demand for recent updates. Current buyers seem to see through the smoke and mirrors of the professional flips that have clouded our market for the past 6 years, and if they are going to pay top dollar for a home they want quality work and healthy home systems. If they can't find it in Austin they are starting to look to outside communities like Hutto, Georgetown, Kyle or Dripping Springs where they can get more home for less money. I think the seven plus years of the Austin seller's market with multiple offers and dramatically increasing values has led to buyer exhaustion. And those buyers still interested or needing to buy in Austin are demanding more from the home and more from the sellers to make it happen.

Despite the signs of a shifting market we've had some highlights to our 2017 real estate year so far:

1. Quality remodeled homes selling over \$350,000.
2. Our first \$400,000 sale - one of our large lot properties with guest accommodations and a pool. If accessory dwelling units become a future addition to our new city zoning with Code Next I predict this may be a new value pusher in our community due to our large lots.
3. Shift from professional flips to owner-occupied, updated homes (with some original features) achieving our highest sales. This is a unique trend of the year and a noted sign of buyers choosing quality over the quick professionally-staged flip.
4. So for neighbors who might need to engage in this shifting market in 2018 I recommend the following.
5. Shoot to launch on the market between Valentine's day and Easter, with March/Spring break being the sweet spot. This has consistently been our hottest selling period. Buyer traffic starts to slow down by May (believe it or not) and almost comes to a grinding halt by July 4th. Fall sometimes perks up but we are still waiting for increased traffic as we head into Halloween.
6. Focus on systems (plumbing, electrical, roofing, etc) first if you think your home needs some updating. Those are the items that are draining sellers returns through repair concessions at closing.
7. If you want to explore remodeling projects to achieve top dollar for your home, my recommendations in order of priority are; flooring, interior/exterior paint, kitchen, and outdoor living spaces/landscaping. I have lots of design-on-a-dime suggestions for these, so reach out if you want me to come share tips with you at your home.

As always, please contact me if you have specific questions, and stay tuned for news of my community education series where we hope to provide more resources for home projects and repairs this year.

Looks like gold has been struck in Leander! Gold bullion, that is. Current plan is to build the only state gold repository in the U.S. there, in an undisclosed location which nobody could possibly figure out. So obviously nobody could rob it, right? The analytical thinking at the top of the political heap is just staggering...



Scary Halloween scene on Little Oak

A man takes his Rottweiler to the vet.
"My dog is cross-eyed, is there anything you can do for him?" the man asks.
"Well I'm not sure," said the vet, "let's have a look at him."
So the vet picks the dog up and examines his eyes, then he checks his teeth. Finally, he says, "I'm going to have to put him down."
"What? Because he's cross-eyed?"
"No, because he's really heavy."

Although around while all of this was developing, I can't vouch for this factoid from the November 3rd Austin Chronicle's *Mr Smarty Pants Knows*: According to economist Brad DeLong, if the computing power of the iPhoneX had been created in 1957 running on vacuum tubes, it would have cost **\$150 trillion in today's dollars**, taken up a **100-story building**, 300 meters high and three kilometers long and wide, and drawn **150 terawatts of power – 30 times the world's current generating capacity**.

WCNA Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2018

This form is included in both the Nov-Dec 2017 and Jan-Feb 2018 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

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

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

Jimmy Flannigan

Jimmy.Flannigan@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

Alison Alter, 512-978-2110

district10@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

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
Jill Leberknight		294-7296	jill@agentjill.com
Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell		339-0412	bunnie@mail.utexas.edu
Tasha Bowser		731-6863	Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com
Christian Ninaud		971-7628	mtbrider007@yahoo.com
Sharon Porter		656-7586	sharonmfporter1@gmail.com
Clay Chip Smith		487-7777	clay@claychipsmith.com

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Jill Leberknight

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Graves, spider and skeleton dog (chasing a skeleton squirrel?) on Oakwood



Skeletons and parts on Cedarbrook Cove



Black cats and pumpkins on Cedarbrook Cove

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Happy Hour Daily 5-8pm




Expansive spooky decorations on Covington

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, IH-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 Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.

Calendar of Events

Nov	10	Veteran's Day (Observed)
	11	Veteran's Day
	11-12	East Austin Studio Tour (first weekend) http://east.bigmedium.org
	15	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	18-19	East Austin Studio Tour (second weekend)
	19	Austin Empty Bowl Project http://www.austinemptybowl.org/event-info/
	20-24	AISD Thanksgiving break
	23	Thanksgiving
	29	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
Dec	2	Holiday Sing-along and Downtown Stroll http://www.downtownaustin.com/holidays
	13	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	14-24	Armadillo Christmas Bazaar http://www.armadillobazaar.com
	20	WCN Annual Hayride and Caroling 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Meet at Walnut Bluffs Trailhead; Contact Jill: jill@agentjill.com ; 512-294-7296
	20	AISD winter holiday break (20 December 2017-2 January 2018)
	21	Winter begins (but not necessarily cold weather)
	25	Christmas
	28!!	!!! Slide day pickup: Blue Recycle Container Picked Up on Thursday
Jan	31	New Year's Eve
	1	New Year's Day
	10	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.