



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

May
June
2018

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A Very Informative General Meeting in April

We enjoyed a good turnout with an excellent mix of “old” and “new” neighbors for the WCNA Annual General Meeting on April 11th. A voice vote resulted in us having the same board members for another two years, and we still have room for a couple more if you’re interested in contributing to protecting and making our community better (talk to any board member or officer, contact information herein).

We also had a very good interactive presentation by Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) about relatively near-term highway/street projects, and we discussed some “issues” residents are having around the neighborhood.

More than 60 neighbors showed up for this meeting which fulfills a requirement of the bylaws of the Association (and perhaps a state requirement as well). With the folks from TxDOT and other visitors we had a near-full house. (And also good refreshments; You shoulda been there!)

President Robert Meadows opened the meeting at the scheduled start time of 6:30, and after a brief preview got right into the business at hand: Election of WCNA board members for the next two years. With no additional nominations, the current board was nominated and elected to renew their terms by voice vote. These board members are: Robert Meadows, Theresa Jones, Pat Pitt, Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell (joint members), Jill Leberknight, Tasha Bowser, Sharon Porter, Christian Ninaud and Clay Chip Smith. At the board meeting on May 3rd, the current officers were re-elected: Robert Meadows (President), Theresa Jones (Vice-President) and Pat Pitt (Treasurer).

Following the official business, Melissa Hurst from the Texas Department of Transportation was introduced and she introduced other TxDOT representatives present. She (Melissa) then presented the current plans for projects in our area under a program called Mobility 35, which encompasses the 33-mile stretch between Round Rock and Buda. Cool videos which visualize current concepts for projects in planning or starting on intersections along Interstate 35 can be seen at www.my35mobility.org, where the massive changes we might see “in our lifetimes” are made much more understandable than with only the usual drawings seen on news sites or in newspapers. The one already happening is the exchange at I35 and US183, where the awful tangle now experienced at the northbound exit to the flyover onto northbound 183 causes long backups and frequent crashes near and during rush hours (which last most of the daylight hours these days). To see projects closest to us click on “Projects” and choose “Travis”, then scroll down to the video on the right labeled I35 from Rundberg to US 290. The nomenclature can be confusing, and the drawings shown at the end need labeling, but staring at them long enough can give you a good feeling for what that interchange will look like within perhaps 5 years.

Ms. Hurst also described expected improvements at Braker and our nearby I35 over/underpasses. U-turns on the bridges to eliminate having to go through lights to reverse direction on the interstate are likely to be included on most or all of them, especially on Braker. The TxDOT group set up a table with maps and brochures and solicited comments from attendees about what kinds of improvements we felt were needed at the I35 intersections and to the highway itself. By far the loudest complaints from residents concerned the noise levels in the neighborhood caused by traffic on I35. Gary Brewer used a sound level meter to measure noise levels at his residence on north Oakwood in years preceding the last “upgrade”, which included the barriers in the middle of the highway and the improvements at Yaeger and on the access road. His noise levels after the improvements were on the order of 10 dB higher, although they were expected to be reduced by the barriers. TxDOT says much of that noise probably follows the creeks, so enters at the Walnut Creek bridge and propagates into the ‘hood up the various tributaries. This would be difficult to mitigate, but lowering the roadbed – and reducing the grade – on the hill past the bridge would reduce both that noise and the direct tire-generated noise all along our east side (by “burying” the road deeper into the earth - creating earth baffles on the side – and reducing the need for trucks to shift gears downward on that grade). It is likely that the Braker bridge will be totally replaced in any case, Melissa indicated. Thus, Good news: Big improvements coming; Bad news: The intersection will be a mess for a long time when it starts. With most of the money needed not yet in hand, it will likely be several years before any dirt will be moved.

Significant time was spent discussing two property situations: The “transitional” house at 706 Wren and the old 5-acre parcel between Cherokee and Cedar Valley Cove. Serious drainage issues, especially along West Caddo, were also described. Possible strategies for alleviating some of the distress being caused by these issues were discussed.

It's time: Mark Your Calendars for the Seventh Annual Walnut Creek Fourth of July Parade and Potluck Picnic!

Starting about 10:00 a.m. on July 4th, we'll gather at the home of Kay and Joel Klumpp at 11813 Indianhead and start to "organize" into a precision (kiddin') marching team! But first we'll set up (or down) chairs, blankets, tables and potluck dishes to go with the hotdogs that will be cooked and served up by Joel and Kay and family and cohorts (after the parade, that is). Water and other liquids also will be available.

First a signal for starting the parade will determined and "marchers" will gather on or near Indianhead waiting for it to be given. Then, as every year since 2011, we'll move out as able toward the top of the hill at Indianhead and Caddo. Then we'll turn left on Caddo and continue the route around "the Peninsula" – to Oakwood and left to Indianhead and left again to the Klumpps'. Since we'll comprise a wide range of ages, conveyances – from scooters and wagons to mini-motorbikes - and fitness, it's likely we'll be spread out along quite a stretch of the route when the leaders reach the starting point (perhaps 30 – 40 minutes), which is expected and adds to the fun. We might even have some parade watchers along the way, which is only about 0.6 miles but can be arduous for many, especially if the weather is typically hot.

So prepare appropriately and join the celebration of our neighborhood! The number and variety of dishes generally brought is amazing and always pleasing, and the camaraderie is always great!



WC Neighbor and piper Philip Bates led the parade in 2017.

Hallelujah, it has happened! Walnut Park Crossing Exists!

Long (very long) and anxiously anticipated in late April and now early May, the progress on Walnut Park Crossing between Park 35 Circle and Lamar has been agonizing to watch. This is going to be our traffic salvation, some think, by providing commuters a route between the commercial and state operations along I35 - north of Walnut Creek - and Lamar, thereby eliminating much of the rush-hour traffic that cuts through the neighborhood. Residents who live on Covington, Caddo and Scurry are painfully aware of this phenomenon, and board members and members of WCNA have been pushing to get some form of the road built for at least 30 years.

Well: It's happened! Here's what it looks like at the Lamar intersection on 10 May =>

It's been declared ready by the developer, Larry Peel, and now awaits permitting by the City. No predictions forthcoming, but our contact at Peel suspects it's likely to be July(!). It's going to be hard to wait while seeing it just lying there day after day...

A group of residents has been attempting to generate a reasonable estimate of how much effect having this



View of Walnut Park Crossing from Lamar Intersection

road finally open will have on our cut-through traffic problem. In the Sept-Oct 2017 issue of the newsletter we listed a set of traffic counts made during the busiest times of the day in late July/early August last year, when we were expecting to see the road completed before school started (guess we should have said "ended"). Our counts thus represented summertime traffic, whereas the effect was going to show up during the school year. So our most prolific member, Gary Brewer, carved out enough time to get an estimate in April, both to see how much difference the summer vacation period makes and to prepare for (perhaps) our first count after the road opens if it's before school lets out. It now looks like that won't happen, and also it may take a while for the traffic to build up to the ultimate traffic flow. So our summer counts likely are representative. Comparing the five different counts in 2017 to Gary's measurements in April, it's clear that the difference between summer and school-year is smaller than daily variation during the summer. In fact, comparing Gary's total count values for 2017 and 2018 indicate that the traffic may in fact be lower during school days: 1497 cars per day on 2017 vs. 1461 last month. This also means the difference between before and after "the road" needs to be at least 10% to the good to be meaningful. High expectations!

Canopy Protection and Development

Update on City Arborist for Oak Wilt by Sharon Porter

The City of Austin(COA) has hired April Rose to serve as Forest Health Coordinator. April will continue to monitor oak wilt and will also monitor other threats to tree canopy including drought, urban heat island, and other insects and diseases. Chris Dolan, the oak wilt consultant who has supported us with oak wilt screening services retired. April is in the process of reviewing Chris' processes and orienting herself to oak wilt and other issues that face Austin's urban forest.

For those new to the Walnut Creek Neighborhood, we are considered an historic oak wilt neighborhood, and we have lost significant canopy cover over the decades that oak wilt has spread. We also have oak wilt survivor trees in our neighborhood, trees that had oak wilt and are still with us, but with reduced canopy. The COA services have helped us deal with oak wilt in three ways: (1) by conducting annual screening services to monitor further development (if any) of oak wilt, (2) engaging city resources to treat affected trees on city property, and (3) by providing updates about developments in oak wilt diagnosis and treatment strategies for neighborhoods to disseminate. We communicate this information in neighborhood social media and in this bi-monthly newsletter.

If you are concerned about oak wilt on your property and are considering hiring an arborist, note the distinction between "Certified" and "Qualified." "Certified Arborist" is the more general term, and is required before an arborist can earn the Oak Wilt Qualification. You may consider focusing your search on Oak Wilt Qualified arborists for the best advice and service in caring for your oak trees. The website www.texasoakwilt.org maintains a list of vendors with the Oak Wilt Qualification.

Oak wilt prevention and treatment is just one of the ways we protect the canopy in our neighborhood. You can never eliminate your risk of getting oak wilt but if you avoid pruning from February through June you can reduce the risk. If you must prune, spray all oak wounds immediately. Since oak wilt can spread underground through root systems it is important that neighbors communicate about suppression strategies to have the greatest potential impact when mitigating the spread of this disease. Replacement of canopy is another way to mitigate the impact of oak wilt. Assess your property and find a place to plant a new tree this fall, the optimum time to allow transplanted trees to develop roots before they face the challenges of our Texas summers.

Tree canopy is an investment in your property and our community; Proactive urban forestry practices can maximize that investment.

AISD Program Summer Meals for Children

See <https://www.austinisd.org/nutritionfoodservices/summer-feed-program>

Children need nutritious meals to learn, grow and thrive – even when school is out. Through the Summer Food Service Program, Austin ISD will continue to serve free breakfast and lunch to local children and teens ages 18 and younger, regardless of economic status and whether or not the child attends AISD. Participants enjoy meals without any registration or identification requirements. Kids simply show up at a participating site to receive a healthy meal.

The Summer Food Service Program will be available at more than 40 AISD schools. Federal regulations require the schools where the program is offered to have at least 50 percent of students during the regular school year that qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Families are encouraged to use the following tools to find a meal site statewide:

- Call 2-1-1 to speak to a live operator.
- Visit www.SummerFood.org for an interactive site locator map.
- Text FOODTX to 877-877

Reduction in rates at Austin Water Utility

No doubt you already know that water rates have been reduced for residential, multifamily, commercial and large-volume customers of Austin Water. The plan was approved by the Austin City Council in March. The average residential customer will see a \$2.40 reduction to the monthly bill.

Debt refinancing and paying off loans early allowed the utility to keep overall costs down and pass along the savings to ratepayers. Water use rates were unchanged in 2017 but now lowered midyear in 2018. These new rates are expected to stay the same through 2018 and 2019.

Meanwhile, Travis County has adopted a plan instigated by the city allowing use of recycled wastewater for HVAC chilling units. Four county buildings will take advantage of this and evaporative coil moisture recapture to save the county about \$136,000/year, thereby recovering the \$1.2 million cost in about 9 years.

It's been reported that Central Texas Food Bank will also be supporting meals for students this summer. Check at <https://www.centraltexasfoodbank.org/>

Dominos Starts a Trend (betcha): Get pizza where you are!



Pizza: Delivered to your door, right?. Now, though, Dominos will deliver it to you when you're at or near designated "hot spots" - Domino's Hotspots. Domino's drivers will now be able to meet customers at U.S. beaches, parks and landmarks to deliver pizza and other menu items. This also means at many popular Austin locations, including many on the Forty Acres (in one instance, right outside of a Pizza Hut), some locations in Dripping Springs, Zilker Park, multiple schools, Mary Moore Searight Metropolitan Park and McKinney Falls State Park. It's all done through their App which can be downloaded from <https://www.dominos.com/en/#/content/apps/> .

The App is available for phones from Apple, Android and Windows stores, and also for the iPad from the App Store.

Then when you finally master the thing you can order pizza and other items through the Dominos App whether you're at home or out and about. The App will tell you where the nearest hotspot to your current location is. It also saves your locations so the next order should be even easier. And you may be able to track it on the way as well!

The App also allows voice ordering on Apple or Android phones. This concept sounds too obvious – and too simple to implement - not to be picked up by the other big pizza outfits.

The Armadillo, A Unique Animal

Judging from posts in the neighborhood media, you've probably seen the holes they made in your yard – mysteriously small and "pointy", and seemingly randomly placed. And they just appeared overnight. Strange, until/unless you learned that these are the signs of the armadillo – Spanish for "little armored one" - made by digging with their long front claws on short legs. This is the nine-banded armadillo, which is the state "small mammal" for Texas and the only member of 21 species which has made it here from South and Central America. And the nocturnal animals are searching for grubs, insects and similar food under your lawn.

"Our" species has some weird characteristics. For example, it can walk underwater for short distances, holding its breath for as long as six minutes, or, to cross larger bodies of water it is capable of increasing its buoyancy by swallowing air, inflating its stomach and intestines; The gestation period varies widely for the species, as it exhibits delayed implantation of the embryo depending perhaps on environmental conditions, and the young typically aren't born for perhaps eight months after mating; Birth almost always is given to four identical quadruplets, thus four males or four females; They have one of the lowest metabolic rates / body temperatures found in mammals, which led to them being a common carrier for the bacteria that causes leprosy (Hansen's Disease). Side note: We're responsible for them being carriers, as there was no leprosy in the new world until we brought it over and passed it to them. Obviously, it's not advisable to handle them or eat their flesh.



The 9-Banded (count'em) Armadillo
This is the only species found in Texas



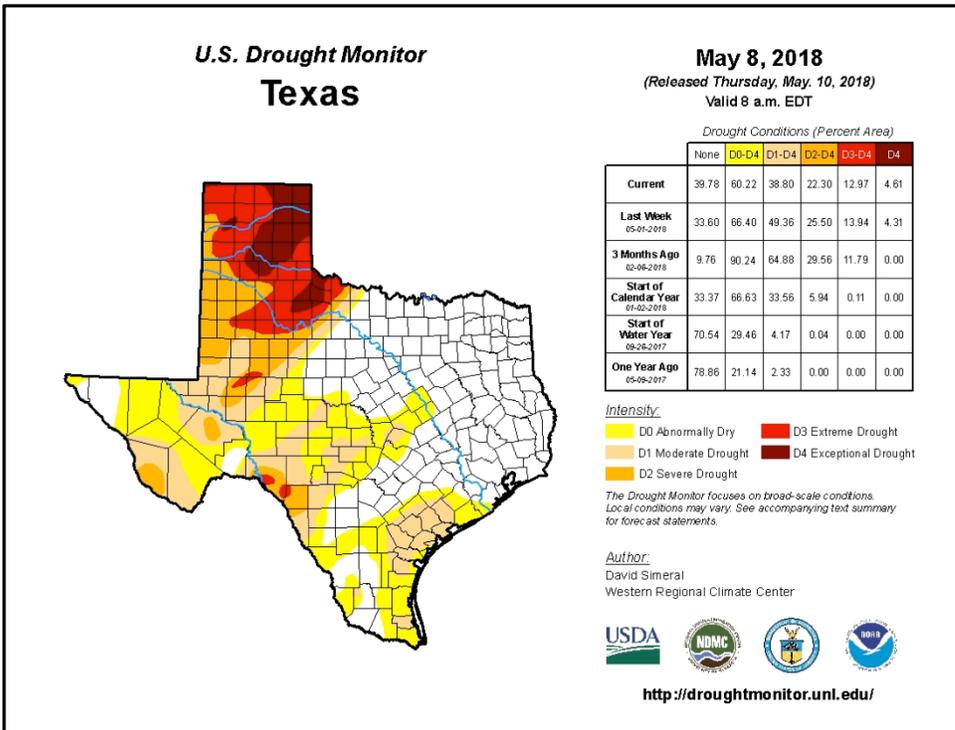
Three very young armadillos foraging for food near Skunk Creek in the 11400 block

They have very poor eyesight and will come right up to you if you stand silently, but good hearing and an outstanding sense of smell, which allows them to find their food underground. They have little defensive ability, though their armor protects them to some extent, and they can move surprisingly quickly on their short legs. Another apparent defensive act is to jump straight up into the air a foot or more, leading to their demise when an automobile is approaching or passing over. Their "innocence" and captivating grazing behavior is endearing to watch, and they're sometimes destructive digging can also be helping control some yard pests – and aerate your lawn to boot!

YIKES! REGULAR CARS ARE GOING AWAY!!! It's been reported in national press recently – and written up well in the Cars section of the May 13, 2018 Austin Statesman - that all U.S. and many foreign car manufacturers are planning to eliminate almost all their sedan models within the next 10 years or so. Apparently too few people are choosing them over trucks and SUV-type vehicles for them to remain profitable to manufacture. You probably know several models that already have disappeared, and even popular and well-reviewed sedans like the Ford Fusion will be disappearing very soon. What's going to happen to automobile mileage then? **CAR DRIVERS UNITE!**

Major League Soccer Close By Us?

It appears that the site called “McKalla Place” (because this street runs alongside one corner of it) is the odds-on favorite to be picked by Ohio-based Precourt Sports Ventures and its investment group for location of its major league soccer stadium. This city-owned land – troubled by past chemical explosions but ostensibly remediated – is bounded by the railroad track between Braker Lane and the end of McKalla Place, McKalla Place, vegetation running from the south corner, a short stretch of Burnet up to Discount Tire, and an access road into the property in a slightly south of easterly direction behind the businesses along Braker. Clearly access would be an issue for the stadium, expected to hold about 20,000 fans. And operation of such a facility would affect traffic for us. The WCNA board has discussed this issue, with most members appearing to be positive toward this use of the land, especially in comparison to alternatives which can be envisioned. The new city manager, Spencer Cronk, has been directed to provide a detailed analysis of this use for the site in the near future, with access and affect on traffic being a major component. Public presentation on the project are being held around the city, and this looks to continue for some time.



If you can read the tiny print and the lines on the map you will see how we’re slipping into drought in Texas, with about 40% of the state in “Moderate Drought” status on 8 May, as determined by the United States Drought Monitor. Fortunately, the almost three inches of rain across the state this month changed Travis from mostly Moderate Drought to an equal mix of no drought, Abnormally Dry and Moderate, but the encroachment of “dry” continues. On paper it looks like a pretty tough summer. LCRA is predicting 25 – 30 days at 100 degrees or higher, and a near normal amount of precipitation. Lake Travis, is at ~667 ft, 14 feet below “full”, and Buchanan is within 4 feet of its full level, easily enough for the rest of the year.

What’s next for CodeNext?

A Council decision on CodeNext looks about as far away today as it did at the end of last year, with no clear end in sight. City staff released the third and final draft of CodeNEXT in February, containing more than 1,500 pages. Though the proposed code is scheduled to arrive at Council for a first read in June (last week Council approved public hearing dates of May 29 and June 2), numerous residents fear the latest draft is too complicated and doesn’t do enough to protect against displacement or offer enough much-needed housing. A petition to require adoption of the program to be made by ballot in November was submitted on 29 March, and certified to include enough legitimate signatures to force acceptance on 23 April. But there is some doubt about the legality of the petition under state law, and most of the council members are against even delaying their vote much longer, much less submitting it to popular vote. The most obvious reason is its complexity, plus the fact that every iteration generates more changes, making the probability of even the council understanding it in a short time pretty low, and the average time-limited citizen slightly longer than never. Nevertheless, most people who have examined the matter seem to agree that the current code needs to be updated, and millions of dollars have been spent developing the plan currently before the council. So, SNAFU Austin, as usual. At this point the council is deemed to have until 20 August to decide whether the issue will/must be put to public vote. (It is generally agreed that if this issue must be decided by public vote, all similar issues in the future also will face the same requirement.)

Interactive maps have been released with the last draft, and can be seen at <https://codenext.engagingplans.org/codenext-comparison-map>. It’s hard to find the details, but most of the council seems intent on not greatly disrupting neighborhoods as far away from city center as ours.

Escaped Pets: There are Best Ways to Find Them

Anybody who’s on any of our social media sites has seen this: Someone’s cat or dog has escaped and the owner is desperate to get it back (In fact this is one of the best uses of this media). Many of us have spent a great deal of time walking the streets calling for a pet and/or putting the pet’s picture on posts or in flyers; It can be highly emotional.



It turns out that a great deal of research has been done into this subject; not surprising given the popularity of domestic pets now. A website that describes and summarizes what the research is showing recently was cited on Nextdoor when a neighborhood cat was found after several days:

<https://www.missinganimalresponse.com/lost-cat-behavior/> .

The resident providing the reference was Val Henson, who operates a dog rescue operation called Pack Team 4, and her trainer, Kat Albrecht, developed the approach and information shown there for purposes of training animal rescue people based on the research mentioned above. If you’re a dog or cat owner it would be well worth your time to peruse this and save it in case a time comes when you may need it.

The behavior of cats who escape depends on their situation: Are they indoor-only, outdoor-only or indoor-outdoor? Ultimately, getting them back may require the same technique, i.e, trapping. This is because cats who get into this situation are highly sensitive to the prospect of predators, and thus are likely to avoid being seen and unlikely to respond to calling, even highly socialized ones: A frightened cat will hide in silence. An indoor-only cat will be looking for someplace to hide immediately, and thus likely will not be far from home. For this cat the best way to recover them is to search every nook and cranny starting from home and spiraling outward. Look in and under every possible place a cat can hide, a difficult task because they are so good at this. Search such places at all the neighbors’, and ask them to watch for your cat (described by picture if possible) and alert you if spotted. Unless chased or otherwise scared out of their area the cat is likely to turn up within a few houses of home.

The story is similar for indoor-outdoor or outdoor-only cats, but the likely area increases by a factor of five because territorial cats usually won’t wander farther than “their” territory unless something interrupts their normal behavior. The same procedure as for an indoor-only cat should be used to start, but supplemented by posting and distributing brightly-colored flyers with pictures physically and on social media, especially on locally-based media.

The website describes the research findings and logic behind these techniques, and includes the quite different procedures for recovering dogs. You may find reading this of some comfort if/when your pet goes missing.

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

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

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

[Get the phone app: **Austin311** on
Google Play and iTunes]

APD District Rep: **Adam Soliz**
512 974-8143

Adam.soliz@austintexas.gov

County Constable, Pct 2

Adan Ballesteros, 512 854-9697

Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us

**APD Animal Cruelty Unit Tip
Hot Line: 512 978-0523**

North Austin Coalition of
Neighborhoods newsletter/blog
site: following general city &
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
512.294.7296
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Austin, TX 78753
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THE PURPOSE OF THIS NOTICE IS TO INFORM YOU THAT THE MEME YOU HAVE POSTED HAS BEEN SAVED TO THE MOBILE DEVICE OF THE PERSON(S) POSTING THIS NOTICE.
NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUIRED.



Star Jasmine on the cat sanctuary on Whitewing



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PHONE: (512)833-6000
Facebook: Santorini Café, Music & Entertainment
Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings

Meet peahen "Henny Penny", who roams the Skunk Creek area from near Braker to near Covington



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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.

May	13	Mother's Day
	16	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	17 - 20	Shakespeare in the Park http://www.austinishakespeare.org/the-merry-wives-of-windsor
	19	UT Commencement - https://commencement.utexas.edu/university-wide-ceremony/schedule
	24	Kerrville Folk Festival Starts: www.kerrvillefolkfestival.org
	26	Texas tax-free appliances weekend https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/96-1331.php
	28	Memorial Day (observed): Post Office and banks closed
	30	Last Day of Classes, AISD!!!!
	30	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	7 - 10	Republic of Texas Biker Rally: https://www.rotrally.com/
	13	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	17	Father's Day
	21	First Day of Summer
	27	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
July	4	Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association's 4th of July Parade & Picnic
	6	Zilker Summer Musical begins - http://zilker.org/all-shook-up/
	11	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.