



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

A pdf version in color is available at www.WCNAnews.com

Nov
Dec
2019

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Neighborhood Day Out: Planning and Planting for the Future

It was a very chilly, windy and damp morning, but an hour before the scheduled start time for the first WCNA Neighborhood Day Out and Tree Fair (NDO&TF), cars and trucks filled up the parking lot on the side of St. Mark UMC, the waiting area for people wanting to pick up a free tree. The NDO&TF was a joint effort between WCNA, the City Urban Forestry Program, and TreeFolks, for whom this was their first tree distribution event of the new fiscal year, which they called NeighborWoods 200 Tree Adoption at Walnut Creek.



The tree adoption line formed early beside St. Mark UMC.

Moving our Neighborhood Night Out (NNO) event to Saturday during the day to become Neighborhood Day Out was an attempt to encourage more participation, in particular from residents who might find it difficult to venture out on a Tuesday evening, and to allow for more event time, especially daylight time for kids.

The National Night Out is something we've participated in for years. It's a way for neighbors to get together and socialize, to build a stronger community and to hear from first responders about safety and security. It is held in Texas the first Tuesday evening of October, and this year we decided to make these changes to accommodate busy schedules and incorporate the tree event.

But possibly because of the "less than perfect" weather and schedule overlap with some "big" Austin events, we actually had fewer folks in attendance than usual. So we will be making some adjustments to insure we're offering a wonderful event for our wonderful neighborhood. And we want to know what you want to experience at one of the biggest events WCNA sponsors, so look for surveys and/or questionnaires seeking your input.

Those who did attend enjoyed the opportunity to adopt trees to plant in our landscapes for beautification and/or to replace the mature trees we love but that are nearing the end of their lifespans. And—the ever-popular bounce house, sandwiches and other tasty snacks, along with a chance to win a "security" door prize: a Ring doorbell camera. Congratulations to longtime WCNA supporter Jim Letchworth, who won the prize. Beware all package thieves visiting the Letchworth home!



Troubadour Jim Nosler, and Jim Letchworth with his tree; he also won the door prize doorbell



New St. Mark Pastor Rosemary Gratton (Rosie) with current (left) and former WCNA presidents.

A huge thank you to our leader, WCNA President Robert Meadows, for all he did to organize the event. And to Jim Nosler, surely one of our most talented neighbors, for his generous musical performance including many classics featuring trees! He taught a weeping willow how to cry. And definitely to our main organizer/motivator/author Sara Breuer.

Sharon Porter was the inspiration for the event, with her devotion to trees and critical work to monitor and motivate preservation of our canopy that makes this such a special place to live.

And the event would not have been possible without the incredible work of Sara Merrell, who made the connection with TreeFolks and brought in arborists, including Jason Derks of Derks Tree Works, who gave an amazing demonstration on how to plant a tree to ensure fast and strong growth (see below). If you need an arborist, Jason's a good contact: jason@derkstreetworks.com.

A special thanks to St. Mark for being - as for so many times before - such a welcoming host, providing the amazing space and infrastructure to support this wide-ranging event.

The next major event for WCNA is the annual meeting in late January or early February. Watch for announcements in the next newsletter, on social media, and signs on streets around the neighborhood.



Of course the weater was insignificant to many kids, who headed straight for the bouncehouse.

We had heard that it was going to happen, but we blinked and it was gone and we were shocked!

Aaron and Samia Burns acquired and completely remade their home at 201 E. Covington after a long and unfortunate occupation by the previous occupant. The house had endured a “self-inflicted” fire during that time, but the Burns had restored it to a splendid state. Then in June a recessed lighting fixture failed, dropping sparks on the rattan chair below resulting in flames quickly getting up into the attic, where the east-west wind rapidly pushed it through the whole structure. Very little of the house was untouched by the fire, according to Mr. Burns. Estimates to restore it were much higher than demolition and rebuilding, and starting on Oct 30th the first of these actions took place. The structure was leveled in less than two hours, and most of the superstructure was gone from the site before the day was over. Seven days later the concrete was gone as well, leaving the site ready for a new start. The fire caused enough damage to the live oak trees around the house that many limbs had to be removed to prevent disease, and you can see the resulting woodpile in the SW corner.



The Burns homesite after an hour of demolition (left) and a week later (right).

They plan to build a single-story structure on the site, with a driveway coming off Hilltop (at bottom).



It started off “brisk”, but coffee and breakfast tacos helped “take the nip out” and fortify all for the successful annual **It’s My Park Workday** at the Walnut Bluffs Trailhead on Saturday, November 2nd. Trees were mulched, invasive species were removed and trash was picked up along the trail and in the creek.

Many, many thanks to the neighbors who came out to help, Gary and Margaret Brewer, Tasha Bower and son Roman, Jim Nosler, Meg Seidel, DJ Bass, Tim Entress, and Bunnie and Dorsey Twidwell. (If I have missed anyone, my sincere apologies.) And once again a great big thank you, once again, to the University of Texas Tae Kwan Do team for coming out to help with the mulching! This is the third year in a row we’ve had these young, enthusiastic helpers. In addition, we even had neighbors from surrounding neighborhoods come out to help.

If you missed this citywide event, you’re next chance to enjoy a morning with neighbors beautifying your local trail is the Spring Park Workday scheduled for Saturday, March 7, 2020. Hope to see you there! (by Dorsey Twidwell)

Tree-planting tip from a pro arborist

Arborist Jason Derks, mentioned above, showed a sizable group at NDO & TF the tools and techniques for planting nursery trees in containers. Besides the usual hole digging, setting, covering and mulching, he wanted to show us how to look out for and correct a fairly common problem found in such plants: “girdling” roots, i.e. those growing perpendicular to normal radial growth. Coincidentally, the tree he was using to demonstrate had at least three such big roots near the top of the root zone, seen in the picture at the arrow tips. These must be removed to prevent them cutting into the trunk as it grows, causing serious damage and even death of the tree. The damage would take time, but could explain why a tree you planted several years ago suddenly stopped growing and started to decline. So the time this might require before covering the roots not only could prevent loss of the tree in a few years but also will promote faster and more robust growth, (Note, always sterilize your cutting tool before working on these roots, or any other part of the tree.)

If you’ve ever handled any plants in containers you’ve probably seen the other form of girdling: the longest of the small roots start growing around inside the limiting container. Jason took a (sterilized) knife to these, slicing through the soil in a radial direction. Now you’re ready to cover and mulch, creating a taller ring a foot or so outside the hole diameter to help hold moisture near the tree, with an inch or more of mulch inside the ring. Water well after planting, then again once a week for several weeks, then once a month or so thereafter, as a general rule.



away from a corridor into a neighborhood. Mixed Use designations are employed on the corridors to allow local businesses and high density residential units to exist together. The logic is that as public transportation improves on the corridors, more residents will be able to utilize same, with a resulting decrease in numbers of cars on city streets. Further, establishment of businesses along/near these densified corridors will be encouraged, leading toward more “people-friendly” neighborhoods, where most everyday activities wouldn’t require using the major streets. The map showing “our section” of District 7 is seen at right. The dashed black line defines “our corner” of our district and the proposed zoning is indicated by color, with corresponding letter designations shown on some (Use the zone map link above to see the map in color or go to WCNANews.com to download this newsletter in color as a pdf). The highest-level descriptions for all the categories in our neighborhood are shown below.

Residential Zoning

Rural Residential (**RR**) zone is intended for large lots or lots with sloping terrain or other environmental limitations.

Residential 1 (**R1**) zone is intended to allow detached housing on small lots throughout the city.

Residential 2A & 2B (**R2A & 2B**) zone is intended to allow detached housing with accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or duplexes in a more suburban setting.

Residential 2C (**R2C**) zone is intended to allow detached housing with accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or duplexes on small lots throughout the city.

Residential 3 (**R3**) zone is intended for up to 3 units throughout the city. To maintain a house-scale aesthetic, private frontages are required.

Residential 4 (**R4**) zone is intended for up to 4 units in areas with good street network connectivity to provide a transition between low- to medium-intensity residential zones and higher-intensity zones. To maintain a house-scale aesthetic, private frontages are required.

Mixed-Use Zoning

Mixed Use 1 (**MU1**) zone is intended to allow residential and or service uses within walking distance of low-intensity residential neighborhoods, or to maintain an area with an existing pattern of commercial uses in house-scale buildings. To maintain a house-scale aesthetic, private frontages are required.

Mixed-Use 2 (**MU2**) zone is intended to allow residential, office, and commercial uses, including retail and entertainment, within walking distance of residential neighborhoods, or to maintain an area with an existing pattern of commercial uses in house-scale buildings. To maintain a house-scale aesthetic, private frontages are required.

Mixed-Use 3 (**MU3**) zone is intended to provide a mix of low to medium scale residential and commercial uses, including employment, shopping and daily services.

Park (**PR**) Very complicated, with specific conditions for individual parks.

Public (**P**) City-owned property

Braker Lane is a boundary of District 7 here, so is hidden by the dashed line near the bottom. As seen, all the properties south of Braker have mixed-use zoning. whereas on the north (“our”) side several R4 residential properties abut the street, interspersed with mixed-use lots. These residential properties are zoned to allow four dwellings on the lot, and this density goes 6 lots into the neighborhood (the depth number is one of the most hotly debated issues in the proposed changes). If/when this mandate were fulfilled the number of dwellings in the neighborhood would increase noticeably, with 24 homes where 6 currently are. In addition, every lot will be zoned to allow an Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU), so even the interior could double in number of residences.

It should be noted that the zoning allows these densities, but doesn’t demand a change of the existing situation on any lot. The process of densification is likely to be fairly slow at first as only a few of the lots sold each year likely would become multi-unit. But once the process gets going, it becomes much more likely that the increase will proceed more rapidly. This is the basis for the friction between the Urbanists and current residents.

Current plans are for recommendations being developed by the Planning and to be selected on Nov 12th, with the results considered by the Council on the 18th, and a possible first vote on the entire plan on Dec 9th. If this happens it will be the fastest progression in recent LDC history (which makes it seem unlikely).

Important and Timely Public Service Announcements!

If your HVAC system may need repair or replacement, you should check out [Refrigerant](#). Starting 1 Jan 2020 the R-22coolant you may be using will become very expensive. It also is ozone-depleting and bad for the climate, and your system costs more to operate than modern ones with better refrigerants.

You may be eligible for compensation for the huge privacy breach of Equifax in 2017, but you need to apply soon to find out. The initial claims deadline is 1/22/2020: See [Claims](#)

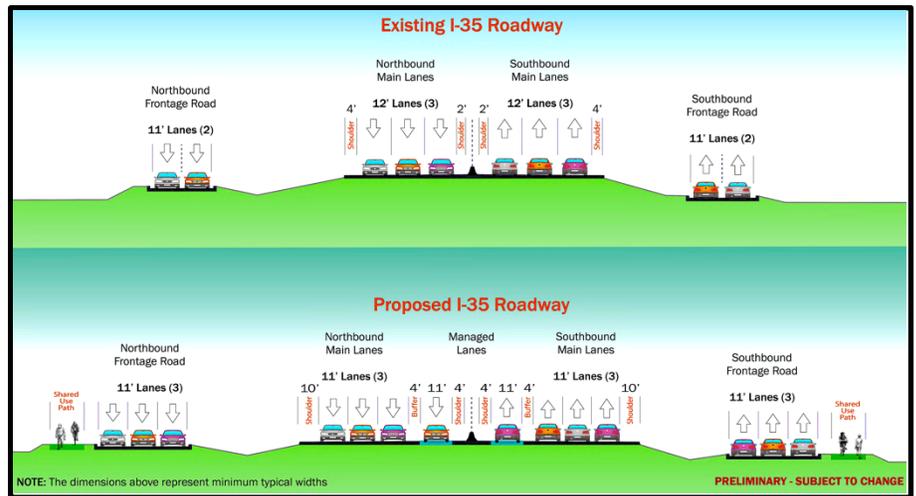
You surely have read about credit card skimmers in gas pumps in our area. There are phone apps that can help you detect one in the pump you’re about to use: For iPhones, Card Skimmer Locator works, but with a tendency to indicate a detection when there is no skimmer present. This makes it safe but might inconvenience you. For Android phones the app Skim Plus prevents false alarms but may miss a skimmer. There are many more options for both brands. But the safest approach is to pay at the desk.

Big Plans for IH35, Including Our Section! by Robert Meadows

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDot) is planning to upgrade/improve IH35 in the Austin area. TxDot has divided this large task into three projects: Capital Express South, Capital Express Central, and Capital Express North. The Capital Express North project concerns IH35 from US290 to SH45, and thus includes the stretch adjacent to our neighborhood. On Oct 24th, TxDot held an open house to present plans for this north section to stakeholders and interested parties.

The Capital Express North project involves adding a non-tolled managed lane (an HOV or high-occupancy vehicle lane) on IH35 in each direction from SH45 to US290 (aka Koenig where it crosses IH35), rebuilding some intersections, and other improvements such as continuous sidewalks.

At this Open House, TxDot provided a map of the entire stretch of the Capital Express North project, with the proposed changes marked on the map. I spoke at length with James Mitchell PE about the plans for the region adjacent to our neighborhood. The planned changes seemed to be uniformly positive for our neighborhood, as follows.



1) The new project will be built within the current right-of-way (ROW), with a caveat. The caveat is that perhaps 5 additional feet of ROW will be required for sidewalks (or “shared pathways”), which are being built continuously on both sides of IH35 from US290 to SH45. Thus, the project will not further encroach into our neighborhood. This is a relief, because the proximity of our neighborhood to IH35 makes any additional significant requirements for ROW highly problematic.

2) The bridge at IH35 and Braker will be rebuilt, with independent U-turns in both directions. This intersection will ultimately look like the Yager/IH35 intersection, but perhaps a bit more cramped.

3) The neighborhood will keep its onramps. Thus, the southbound onramp that serves the neighborhood via Wren and Meadow Lark will be retained. Our northbound onramp will also be retained. Now, these onramps are both being relocated about 100 feet to the south, and thus are referred to as “relocated ramps”, but merely as a technical terminology matter. Our northbound exit ramp for Braker will also stay the same.

I provided TxDot with a written comment that had two requests.

(a) Would TxDot please consider extra mitigation efforts during construction on IH35? Notwithstanding the efforts that TxDot will make under any circumstances, extra efforts are may be required in order to spare our neighborhood the traffic that will “self-divert” onto N. Lamar, Braker, Rutland/Rundberg, and Dessau upon encountering construction delays. Given the congestion that we already endure, such additional traffic could be overwhelming.

b) Would TxDot coordinate with the Austin Transportation Department to avoid major construction at the same time on corresponding segments of IH35 and N. Lamar?

A diamond interchange is planned for Wells Branch and IH35, to accompany the diamond interchange soon to be built at Parmer and IH35.

The project is funded (\$400 million). Construction will take about 1.5 years, and was said to start in 2020, although a handout at the Open House gives 2022 as the start date.

Christmas Caroling Event: It may be different this year!

The intensive logistics involved may preclude our usual hayride, though it's too early to tell at this (early November) time. Alternative approaches are being explored, ranging from having a “stationary” event, strolling as we did the first year, traveling and singing only to homes who request it, up to the full hayride that we've had for the last six years, and other approaches as well. Because of AISD getting out on Friday, Dec 20th, the most likely date looks to be Sunday, the 22nd. It's also likely we'll start earlier, meeting at 4:00 p.m. at a place dependent on the scenario. When the date and procedure are settled – with your help through social media – volunteers will be advised and the procedure will be announced via social media well in advance of the event.

WCNA Dues and Contributions Form for Calendar Year 2020

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 <https://tinyurl.com/wcnadues> or make donations to the other sponsored activities at <https://tinyurl.com/DonateChoice>

Note: If you're becoming a new member it would help recordkeeping if you return this coupon in the envelope provided (or your own) with your name and whatever other information you wish to disclose.

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 with:

WCNA Board _____ Newsletter Production _____ Park/Beautification _____ Oak Wilt Abatement: _____



QR Code for WCNA dues payments.

To use your smartphone to pay dues or donate to Association activities through PayPal, you can use the "QR" codes shown on either side here. You'll need an app for your phone, and there are many choices for Apple or Android, so choose a highly-rated one. You can find instructions on how to use them – some with video – by searching for "how do I use QR codes" using your browser, but they tend to be simple enough using trial and error. They use your camera to capture the code, which is translated into the URL which takes you to the website which generated the pattern. Alternatively you can just click on the URLs shown in various places in this newsletter.



QR Code for Donations to WCNA projects.

Austin City Council

- Mayor Steve Adler, 512-978-2100
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- Natasha Harper-Madison 512-978-2101
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Alison.Alter@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

Emery Sadkin
CoA Animal Protection Officer, Wildlife
Call 311 or 512-974-2000

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods news/blog site:
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

Local Weather Station on Oakwood:
<https://tinyurl.com/OakwoodWeather>

Office of Police Oversight
policeoversight@austintexas.gov

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Facebook: Santorini Café, Music & Entertainment

Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings

Many of you know Pat and Ginger Barnett, who are/were long-time residents in the neighborhood. Pat has a construction and remodeling business which he formed and “officed” at his home on Hunters Lane - without generating any of the “unpleasant stuff” which can accompany such an operation. He was on the streets most mornings, walking his dog(s) and carrying big bags of trash he picked up along his routes. He also worked on many of our homes with great skill and integrity, and was always ready to help when we suffered emergencies or needed other immediate help. This will be their last ad, as they are moving to San Antonio to be closer to grandchildren. They will be sorely missed, though periodically back to see family here. They invite all to visit them when down south



Found on the internet at Halloween

Ageless Spaces
Universal Design & Home Remodeling
For the Time of Your Life!
512-719-4688
Same owners... New face
PJB Contracting, Pat & Ginger Barnett

11401 Hunters Ln info@ageless-spaces.com
Austin, TX 78753 www.ageless-spaces.com

Want to carol during the holidays? Call Jill at 512-294-7296!

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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.

Calendar of Events

Nov	11	Veteran's Day
	13	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	16	Austin ARMA Shred Day - http://www.austinarma.com/shred-day
	16-17	East Austin Studio Tour (first weekend): http://east.bigmedium.org
	20-24	A Christmas Affair - https://www.jlaustin.org/a-christmas-affair-2019/
	23-24	East Austin Studio Tour (second weekend)
	24	Austin Empty Bowl Project: 11a.m - 3 p.m.: https://www.austinemptybowl.org
	27	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
Dec	25-29	AISS Thanksgiving Holiday Break
	3	Giving Tuesday - https://www.givingtuesday.org
	7	Austin Holiday Sing-along and Downtown Stroll: https://tinyurl.com/AustinStroll
	11	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	13-24	Armadillo Christmas Bazaar: https://www.armadillobazaar.com
	15	Last day to enroll for Affordable Health Care
	20	AISS winter holiday break (20 December 2019 - 6 January 2020)
	21	Start of Winter
	22	WCN Annual Caroling Event: Contact Jill: jill@agentjill.com ; 512-294-7296
	24	Last day for Blue Genie Arts Bazaar & Armadillo Christmas Bazaar
Jan	25	Christmas
	26	!!Slide day pickup: Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.!!
	1	New Year's Day
Jan	6	AISS classes resume
	8	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.