



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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

Jan
Feb
2020

Join Us!

Dues information is shown in this newsletter on the back page beside your address label. Information is shown for paying by check or PayPal.

Social Media/Listservs:

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

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

Website: www.WCNAnews.com

Neighborhood Association General Meeting: February 25th

It's weeks away, so **mark your calendar** (and set computer and phone notifications) and watch for reminders on social media (Facebook and Nextdoor: Note: The Yahoo group has been made inoperative by Yahoo, who has stopped supporting groups). Then join us for the annual meeting of WCNA, your neighborhood association, at **St. Mark UMC's Lawshae Building** at **6:30 p.m.** This is the meeting where the board members who compose the "government" of WCNA are nominated and elected – or reelected as appropriate - and many of the activities from the previous year are discussed, including those you might want to bring up yourself. It's a great way to meet many of the folks who are active in our neighborhood and residents from across Walnut Creek Neighborhood, and learn

what WCNA has been doing for you - and what might be possible for you to do in turn.

Besides refreshments and learning about WCNA business/accomplishments, you will also hear one or more speakers from the city and/or county. In particular, a speaker is planned to provide a description and status of the project that will build a 12-foot wide, concrete-paved "mobility corridor" through our Walnut Bluffs Park. This is a big deal, which is discussed in an extensive article in this newsletter.

WE NEED YOU! **Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association** was organized in 1975, when we were still years away from being annexed into the City of Austin, in response to activities that were undesirable for a residential area. We had "adult" businesses wanting to operate in the neighborhood or on the periphery, a concrete company wanting to locate where the North Austin Muslim Community Center is now, and numerous other operations wanting to take advantage of our strategic location. In those days, our strength lay in our ability to mobilize a large number of neighbors to spend many hours attending the planning or city council meeting where the opposed project was being considered, and to convince some of these to sign up, stand up and speak up for or against same. This organizing ability was also key to establishing a strong reputation with the city which has persisted till today, thanks in large part to the effort and effectiveness of our presidents over the years.

WCNA was instrumental in establishing early plans for development for Austin and Travis County, including for sewer infrastructure (we unsuccessfully opposed putting the 54" line down Walnut Creek, likely for the better), and polled the neighborhood to determine that an "overwhelming" majority of residents were in favor of being annexed for limited purposes in 1984. Being limited-purpose annexed meant that the "crowd" at meetings was no longer needed and gave us our first direct input (including voting in city council elections) into zoning in our area; note without paying city taxes but also without getting city sewage (this ended when we were full-purpose annexed in 2000). Staying alert to attempts to locate or change zoning of existing properties in/around WCN is the primary work of the association, with new cases arising frequently. The primary goals of WCNA are maintaining the residential character of the neighborhood and encouraging establishment of "community" among the residents, including producing the newsletter and maintaining our social media sites, sponsoring group events, promoting safety, fighting Oak Wilt, and maintaining our green space (Walnut Bluffs Park, described later) and our interface with the surrounding environment (i.e., keeping our perimeter clean and well-maintained).

The Association and You: Why Should You Join?

Completely composed of volunteer representatives, WCNA continues to work to maintain the character of our unique neighborhood, a task which will become harder as the Land Development Code Rewrite progresses. We sponsor and/or promote a number of neighborhood activities each year, including garage sales, Neighborhood Night Out (or equivalent), the Tree Fair/Giveaway, Fourth of July Parade and Potluck, Christmas Caroling, and our annual General Meeting, as well as publication of the neighborhood newsletter. Promotion and support of spaying/neutering of neighborhood cats is also promoted through the Walnut Creek Cat Coalition (WCCC). None of the association activities produces revenue: all expenses are paid from member dues, which are the same now as when we were first organized. So your involvement is critical to what the association – with you – can do.

As board member Tasha Bowser wrote last year at this time:

Consider starting your New Year off right, contributing to the health of your neighborhood by joining the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association. Dues are just \$15 annually per household. The Association was established back in 1975, a full 25 years before the neighborhood was annexed into the City of Austin. At least three of the six founding members (Gary Brewer, Mary Hausmann and Tim Clark) are current residents. If you're wondering what the differences between a Neighborhood Association and a Home Owners Association, here are a few (Continued below):

Home Owners Association

- Membership is mandatory for all property owners. Non-owners who are residents (including tenants) cannot be members of the HOA.
- Membership is essentially perpetual and attaches to the lot, not the person(s) who own that lot.
- Each member is required to pay annual and special assessments, usually without regard to the quality or timeliness of maintenance services provided, and regardless of whether a member agrees with any future amendments to the CC&Rs.
- The Association dictates and has the authority to enforce various rules that affect (restrict) the use of your private property, with an emphasis on maintaining a certain level of attractiveness (subject to interpretation) and prevention of common nuisances.

Neighborhood Association

- Membership is entirely voluntary. Any resident of a neighborhood can join, including tenants.
- There is no common “ownership, and therefore no requirement to pay maintenance fees.
- The emphasis is on cooperative relationships, civic engagement, and social interaction among neighbors.
- There are no property use restrictions beyond City Ordinances in a neighborhood association (not to be confused with a *historical* association, a separate group that does have use restrictions).

Due to the limitations of a voluntary association, WCNA is bound by City Ordinances and does not have authority to enforce any additional measures. However, WCNA serves as a source of community advocacy and solidarity about protecting the neighborhood we live and have invested in. Overall, a Neighborhood Association lends itself to a unique, individualistic neighborhood with a minimum of restrictions.

In the November and January issues of this newsletter WCNA solicits new members or payment of dues by current members for the calendar year starting in January. A “coupon” – at the top of page 6 - guides the process and provides WCNA with a hard copy record of your membership. You can join/pay dues via check, money order or cash, and also contribute to any of the sponsored activities designated there (any undesignated donations go in the General Fund). You can also use PayPal to pay dues or contribute to the activities listed on the coupon:

To pay dues: <https://tinyurl.com/wcnadues>; To make other donations: <https://tinyurl.com/DonateChoice>

Click on a link or type it into your browser to authorize a payment, or you can use the QR-codes printed below the coupon on page 6. Note that a larger General Fund increases options for projects to improve the neighborhood!

WCNA Caroling Different This Christmas

For logistical, scheduling and other reasons, the caroling hayride wasn't possible this year, so our caroling founder and leader Jill Leberknight enlisted the help of WCNA President Robert Meadows and organized a more traditional event. With help from other neighbors they generated a list of potential homes whose occupants had asked for caroling to come to their homes in past years or who seemed likely to be receptive to a visit by carolers this time. Most of these residents were reached

by Jill or Robert to verify their “receptiveness”. Jill then reached out to the neighborhood via social media to look for carolers. Positive responses led a plan to proceed.

Robert and Monica provided irresistible refreshments before and after the caroling, so their driveway became the gathering point for participants. Jill brought the list of homes to visit and her songbooks, compiled over seven years of caroling in the neighborhood. Wondering if it



Some of the residents and caretakers at the Memory Center are “caroled”!

had been a good idea to stuff with doughnuts and hot chocolate before singing, the carolers piled into Jill's van and headed out from Robert and Monica's with understandable excitement. The route was established from the list of designated homes starting at the closest and proceeded from each to the next closest. This procedure kept the time well inside the scheduled 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 22nd. (Continued below)



Hosts for the holiday refreshments Monica and Robert Meadows are at left, with carolers Sara, Eric, Kari, Jill and Pat.

With Jill leading, the singing group included Sarah Breuer, Kari Lawrence, Eric Shaughnessy and Pat Pitt. Though it became clear that some pre-event practicing would have been useful, the group happily wandered through the neighborhood, stopping to sing two to four songs at each location (and getting a little better with each stop, we think). It was great fun for the singers and, based on their responses, the listeners as well.

This “traditional” Christmas caroling went well, and perhaps will become the model for the future. If you enjoy singing and seeing your audience respond positively, consider joining this annual event next year!

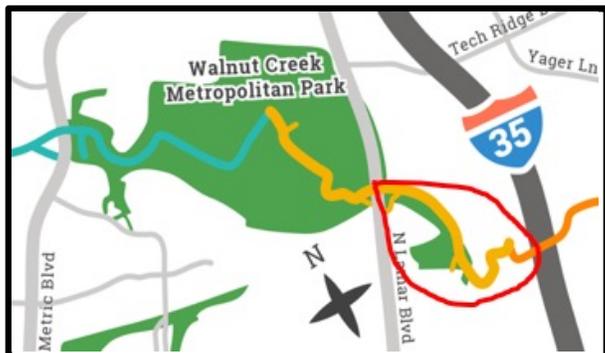
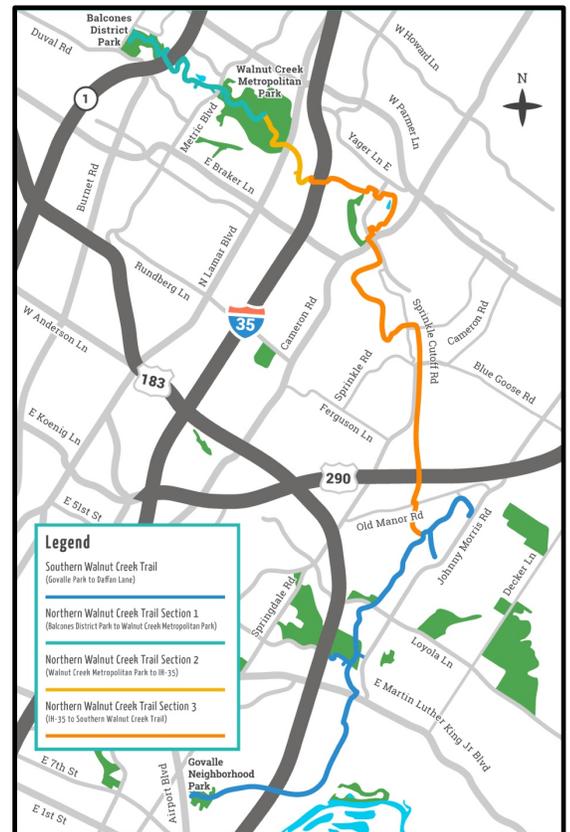
Big Change Coming to Our Trail, Starting This Year (2020)!



For the sake of new neighbors and “older” ones who haven’t discovered it yet, let’s take a brief look at recent history of what we refer to as “our park”: the little piece of Walnut Creek and nearby greenbelt that lies between Lamar and IH35 (best overseen using Google Maps satellite view). Most of the park land is on the south side of the creek, with the only current public entrance point (see left) at 11938 Oakbrook (an official address for emergency responders as of 2016). The park trails are used by a large number of residents of Walnut Creek Neighborhood (esp. from On The Green) – and a few from elsewhere – for exercise, dog walking (on-leash only), and just

enjoying nature. WCNA has been sponsoring maintenance of the half-mile-long area that rests between Lamar and IH35 for many years, mostly under the tutelage and oversight of Gary Brewer, using his personal machinery. Voluntary work parties are formed periodically to clear invasive or unwanted plant life, clean clutter and debris, spread ground cover (typically mulch provided by Austin Park Foundation) and any other tasks which beautify and make the trails easier to use (the principal of these being Gary’s mowing). PARD has (more or less) sanctioned our involvement using machinery because it greatly alleviates work that otherwise would need to be performed by them. Our involvement eventually led to the PARD designation of Walnut Bluffs Trailhead, with the “trailhead” terminology used because it’s not a “real city park” (our little secret?). We’ve adopted Walnut Bluffs “Park” instead of “Trailhead” as our own preferred terminology.

Meanwhile, programs/projects to provide safe bicycle mobility in and completely around Austin (and even between Austin and neighboring cities) have been in development since the late 1900s. Initiated by the bicycle community and continuously being incorporated into Austin’s mobility program, one primary purpose of the concept is to allow bicycle travel to become a significant part of the commuting public. The city has been able to leverage federal funds to augment many projects, including a program titled “Urban Trails”, which is currently building a concrete trail nominally 12 ft wide which will provide the north and east part of a “non-motorized” loop around the city. The trail following Walnut Creek is being built in segments from Balcones District Park off Amherst near MoPac and Duval – see the schematic map at right - following Walnut



This section of the map at right shows the connection of the completed NWCT1, in blue starting at the left edge running into WC Metropolitan Park, with NWCT2, in yellow. The Walnut Creek Neighborhood section is circled in red, ending at IH-35.

Creek west and southward to connect to Govalle Neighborhood Park near Airport on Bolm Rd. The north and east sections of this project are called the North Walnut Creek Trail, and the first segment – North Walnut Creek Trail 1 (NWCT1) - is now complete, ending at Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park (WCMP), across Lamar from us). It’s about to continue our way this year, as Sara Breuer reported on Nextdoor and Facebook after attending a presentation at Walnut Creek Elementary in September (see [NeighborhoodTrail](#)).

NWCT2 will connect the current end of NWCT1 in WCMP to a sidewalk on the side of the IH35 access road near the Walnut Creek overpass, as seen circled in red on the map at left. And it will be coincident with most of our current Walnut Bluffs trail along the creek and will include the access trail to our Oakbrook entrance. Eventually we will be able to walk or ride non- (Continued below)

motorized vehicles from IH-35 or our Oakbrook entrance over to WCMP without ever having to deal with Lamar, as the trail will run under the Lamar bridge over Walnut Creek.

While this trail will make walking easier, it is clearly made for biking or other non-motorized vehicles, as 12 ft will accommodate even trucks if needed. And it certainly doesn't enhance the ambience of a woodland trail like ours. The spur from Oakbrook to the intersection with the main trail will be "only" 8 ft wide, which may reduce the impact. More importantly, no additional parking capability will be added, and no improvements will be made to the trail entrance or at the street. But there will be a bridge crossing the creek very near the Cedarbrook Court cul-de-sac and the residences there. These residents may have this thoroughfare running quite close to their homes and, understandably, are seriously concerned about amount and type of traffic to come.

Construction is expected to begin on NWCT2 in November of this year (2020), either in WCMP or at the Oakbrook entrance, and will take about two years to complete. Staging for construction on our side of Lamar is likely to be under the power lines, with equipment entering from Lamar.

NWCT3 is in initial engineering stage, and eventually expected to connect NWCT2 to the existing Southern Walnut Creek Trail (see the map above right), which was the first of the Walnut Creek segments to be built. No timeline is given for it, but it is expected to be finished within a decade assuming funds for construction can be identified.

As mentioned elsewhere, we will have a guest presenter from the city Public Works Dept. at the annual general meeting on 25 Feb who will update us on the status of this whole project - and answer your questions!. Meanwhile you can keep abreast at <https://bit.ly/2WP1tfA> (scroll all the way down to get to the email sign-up)

It May Seem Odd, but Walnut Creek Neighborhood Has a Wildfire Risk

by Sharon Porter: Canopy Comments

Texas has been designated as second only to California for risk of wildfire. One element of this risk is the urban interface with forest and grasslands.

Walnut Creek Neighborhood, within the city limits, is assessed as low risk of wildfire damage. However, low risk does not mean no risk. After a dry fall entering a dry winter, it is worth considering the measures fuel experts recommend for protecting your property from wildfire damage.

One source of risk is the interface the neighborhood shares with the greenbelt at our north boundary. While this might seem to threaten only homes on the greenbelt, consider recent news coverage on the California wildfires: the strong winds spread the fire by leaps and bounds by what is called an "ember storm" which carried the embers up to a mile or mile and a half, landing on dry, combustible material and starting a new fire, which then generated its own ember storm to create additional fires down wind.

By this scenario, a fire starting in the greenbelt, with a strong wind from the north, could carry embers well into our neighborhood, and threaten homes far from the greenbelt. Embers landing in dead leaves in gutters ignite rafters and trusses. Those falling in leaves or firewood stores next to wooden decks and firewood stacked against a house smolder and burst into flames. Those falling down ventilation ducts can ignite roof trusses and become known only after reaching catastrophic proportions. You get the picture.

The measures wildfire fuel experts recommend are based on extensive study of the ways in which catastrophic wildfire damage happened. These are measures each resident of our neighborhood can take to further reduce the possibility of property damage or loss:

1. Remove dead vegetation in proximity to wooden decks, fences, and directly adjacent to homes.
2. Install non-flammable screens over vents and skirting decks to keep sparks out.
3. Remove branches from underneath eaves and within 10-15 feet of chimneys.
4. Store firewood and combustible material as far away from the house as possible.
5. Remove needles and leaves from roof and gutters.

The COA fuel expert who assessed our neighborhood worked with the Bastrop Fire Department to contain the 2011 wildfire that damaged so much of that area. He cited examples from that experience in pointing out practices in our neighborhood that could cost a resident their home if threatened with an actual wildfire.

Irony from Reader's Digest

Every year ABC cuts down *A Charlie Brown Christmas*—a movie about the over-commercialization of the holidays—to **make room for more commercials!**

2019 Walnut Creek Real Estate Year In Review

By Walnut Creek Real Estate expert, Jill Leberknight

2019 was another record-breaking year in Austin AND in our own Walnut Creek Neighborhood. Austin saw the median price jump over the \$400,000 mark for the first time in history and Walnut Creek Neighborhood also set another record topping the \$200 average price per square foot range. While the number of sold and flipped properties remained the same as last year we hit a record high for average sales price at \$323,753 and price per square foot at \$202.88. The most remarkable story of our 2019 real estate season was the high performance of our moderately updated homes. The highest sales price for our community in 2019 had modest updates. In fact, three of our homes that landed in the top five for sales price in our neighborhood all had modest updates.

The biggest challenge our Walnut Creek homes face right now is aging cast iron plumbing. 2019 saw noticeable increases in replacement costs with local companies charging between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for a full replacement. Local companies are starting to provide financial options to tackle these big repairs, but having your plumbing system upgraded is now becoming more important than ever before. 80% of the homes I worked in our community this year faced full home replacement prior to selling, and I'm sure it will come as no surprise that the City of Austin permitting process is not making this a quick and easy procedure.

The City of Austin has also changed permitting requirements for the replacement of Federal Pacific Electric Panels which many of our mid-century homes still have. This replacement used to cost between \$900-\$1,200 but is now between \$3,000 - \$5,000 due to permitting and code requirements.

All of this is to say that system improvements are now just as important in our mid-century homes as flooring or countertops. Home inspectors now have extensive education in reports about cast iron plumbing and Federal Pacific panels so the questions and topic will likely come up during the sales process. I am seeing home appraisals and home prices giving significant value to improvements in these systems.

Agent Jill's 2020 Real Estate Predictions

- Early Hot Market – low interest rates and fear of national election year distractions means our Spring market has already erupted with multiple offers and higher than normal buyer traffic. If you're working with me to sell, I'm telling folks to try and list before May this year.
- Continued inventory shortage which will lead to increased prices.
- Continued interest and increased value of our moderately updated but solid condition homes.
- The Apple Effect (expansion NW near Parmer) and new soccer stadium at Braker/Burnet will shine a new spotlight on our community. I'm already seeing the Apple Effect play out in offers in our area.
- Continued need for community collaboration on best resources for local repairs to our aging systems. Let me know if you have experiences good or bad so we can inform each other!

WALNUT CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD 2019 HOMES SOLD STATISTICS

SUBDIVISION	# SOLD	AVERAGE PRICE PER SQUARE FOOT	AVERAGE SALES PRICE	AVERAGE DAYS ON MARKET	% Price Change
Eubank Acres	10	\$210.75	\$311,644 (\$362,000 Highest)	31	3.5% ↑
Walnut Forest	4	\$209.65	\$295,980 (\$345,000 highest)	20	2.6% ↓
Oak Ridge	12	\$194.06	\$345,638 (\$400,000 highest)	28	8.9% ↑
Spanish Oak Ridge	0	-	-	-	-
Entire Walnut Creek Totals	26	\$202.88	\$323,753 (\$400,000 highest)	28 (84 days longest)	7.2% ↑
WCN "Flips"	6	\$234.26	\$373,400	54	3.9% ↓

An OXFAM study indicates that the average Briton produces more "greenhouse carbon" in two weeks than the average person in a large percentage of African countries produces in one year!

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 activites 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
Steve.Adler@austintexas.gov
- Natasha Harper-Madison 512-978-2101 1
Natasha.HarperMadison@austintexas.gov
- Delia Garza, 512-978-2102 Dist 2
Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov
- Sabino "Pio" Renteria, 512-978-2103 D3
Sabino.Renteria@austintexas.gov
- Greg Casar, 512-978-2104 Dist 4
Gregorio.Casar@austintexas.gov
- Ann Kitchen, 512-978-2105 Dist 5
Ann.Kitchen@austintexas.gov
- Jimmy Flannigan, 512-978-2106 D6
Jimmy.Flannigan@austintexas.gov
- Leslie Pool, 512-978-2107 Dist 7
Leslie.Pool@austintexas.gov
- Paige Ellis 512-978-2108 Dist 8
Paige.Ellis@austintexas.gov
- Kathie Tovo, 512-978-2109 Dist 9
Kathie.Tovo@austintexas.gov
- Alison Alter, 512-978-2110. Dist 10
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

WCNA Board and Officers

- Robert Meadows, President
 512 339-0229 robertl@meadows.com
- Dorsey Twidwell, Vice President
 512 832-0404 dorseytwidwell@yahoo.com
- Pat Pitt, Treasurer
 512 837-6620 s.pitt@earthlink.net
- Jill Leberknight
 512 294-7296 jill@agentjill.com
- Dorsey and Bunnie Twidwell
 512 339-0412 bunnie@mail.utexas.edu
- Tasha Bowser
 512 731-6863 Bowser.Tasha@gmail.com
- Sharon Porter
 512 656-7586 sharonmfporter1@gmail.com
- Clay Chip Smith
 512 487-7777 clay@claychipsmith.com
- Sara Breuer
 512 560-3278 sarabreuer@mac.com
- Colin Haymes
 512 471-3992 djeveman@hotmail.com
- Meg Seidel
 512 773-1826 kegmeg@gmail.com
- Karen Watkins
 512 619-6195 kwatkins619@gmail.com

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When signing and dating legal documents, do not use 20 as the year 2020. March 3rd, 2020 being written as 3/3/20 could be modified to 3/3/2017 or 3/3/2018. Protect yourself. Do not abbreviate 2020.

Jill Leberknight

512.294.7296
jill@agentjill.com

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Call us to make reservations for Private parties and Meetings



Monica and Matt's "toned-down" (from last year) display on Covington



Birds line up in formation on cables over Parmer at IH-35

Don't Miss the WCNA General Meeting: St. John UMC, 25 Feb, 6:30p.m.

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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 to Yager Lane and North Lamar to IH-35.

To contribute content to the newsletter, send contributions via email to wena.contact@gmail.com or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

Calendar of Events

Jan	8	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	10-12	Austin Home & Garden Show: AusHome&Garden
	20	Bulk item Collection Begins until all is picked up.
	20	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday - AISD, banks and post office closed
	22	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	25	Chinese New Year
Feb	1-2	Children's Book Fair: WildflowerCenterChildrensBookFair
	5	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	17	Presidents' Day Holiday - AISD, banks and post office closed
	18	Early Voting in Primaries Begins
	19	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	19-22	Austin Energy Regional Science Festival: http://www.sciencefest.org
	22	Carnaval Brasileiro-Emo's: http://sambaparty.com/
	25	WCNA Annual Meeting 6:30 p.m. St. Marks
	28	Early Voting in Primaries Ends
29	Sherwood Forest Faire Begins - https://www.sherwoodforestfaire.com	
Mar	2	Texas Independence Day
	2	Large Brush Collection starts until all is picked up.
	3	Primary Election Day
	4	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	5-6	Amplify Austin Day - https://www.amplifyatx.org
	8	Daylight Saving Time Starts (set clocks one hour forward)
	13-22	SXSW