



# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

A pdf version in color is available at [www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)

Sept  
Oct  
2021

### 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: <https://is.gd/3K9VnZ>

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

Website: [www.WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)

## Check Out the Brand-New

**Neighborhood Association Website!** *By Sara Brewer*

**The Refreshed WCNAnews.com is launching Sept. 15.**

**[Find the PO Box, send it in via the new contact form, and WIN!]**

There's an official Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association website that's been essentially dormant for several years. Starting September 15, that will change.

WCNAnews.com is relaunching with an up-to-date calendar of neighborhood events and details about the association. You spoke, and we listened! The Nextdoor site, official association Facebook page, and unofficial Facebook Group page will remain valuable ways to connect, as they have been. The WCNAnews.com site gives us

another official public channel to reach those who aren't on social media and an easy source for WCNA information.

We're starting with the basic association info, how to become a member and get involved, a contact form to reach the entire board, and an official neighborhood calendar. Feel free to submit your events for consideration. This is intended to be a community calendar.

Stay tuned for more features! Feel free to submit your events for inclusion in the calendar. Events do not need to be official association events, but they should be noncommercial. We are figuring out what works best for the neighborhood, so please share your thoughts! Go to [wcnanews.com](http://wcnanews.com) (> September 15) or email [wcnanews@gmail.com](mailto:wcnanews@gmail.com).

**Big thanks to the website committee: Tasha Bowser, Eric Shaughnessy, Karen Watkins, Sara Brewer, and IT consultant Colin Haymes.**

## Here's what to look for on WCNAnews.com after September 15<sup>th</sup>



### **CONTEST: BE FIRST AND WIN!**

Be the first to find the WCNA PO Box number on the new site and send it in using the new contact form to win a set of six hand-made postcards celebrating the Walnut Creek neighborhood, custom-made by neighbor Tim Mateer, and a dozen eggs from one of our Walnut Creek neighborhood chicken flocks!

[WCNAnews.com](http://www.WCNAnews.com)

(Current WCNA board members and website committee members not eligible to win.)

Don't forget to join!

<http://tinyurl.com/dueswcn>



# Walnut EEK! is back!

## Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

[www.walnuteek.com](http://www.walnuteek.com)

### **Mark your calendars for Halloween, because Walnut EEK! is coming back!**

And if it's anything like last year, we're in for a real treat.

For anyone who missed it, Walnut EEK! was the neighborhood's creative solution to celebrating Halloween pandemic-style, complete with spooktacular yard decorations and safe and socially distanced trick-or-treating. But that wasn't all. As usual, the amazing people of the Walnut Creek Neighborhoods did not disappoint. From theatrical interactive displays to a free photo booth to capture a pic of your creepy costume, the impressive creativity and artistic skill on display was a sight to behold. But what really made it such a special night was the welcoming and fun atmosphere – all the little front yard parties and impromptu gatherings that created some well-needed fun and sense of community during an isolating time and showed off why this neighborhood is such a great place to live.



A young Trick-or-Treater meets a Fortune Teller last year.

### **Come Get Spooky with Us!**

Because it was so fun, we're going to do it again! Walnut EEK! 2021 will take place on Halloween, which falls on Sunday (October 31<sup>st</sup>, of course), and everyone is invited to participate as they desire. Do a little or do a lot, the goal is just to have a ghoulishly good time. Once again, there will be a handy neighborhood map available – your guide to all the cool decorations and sources of candy so you won't miss a thing when you head out to trick-or-treat or just for a spooky stroll to check things out. For those who wish to decorate, there will be cool prizes from nearby businesses for randomly selected participants, so be sure to sign up on the website shown below! You don't have to stress about safety, as some of our awesome neighbors will be providing extra safety patrols to keep an eye out for the not-so-fun kinds of creeps. Activities will start before dark; Keep up with developments on the website.

Everyone is invited to visit [www.walnuteek.com](http://www.walnuteek.com) for additional event information, to volunteer or donate, and to sign up to get your house added to the map of hauntingly decorated homes and trick-or-treat stops. Are you doing something else you want the neighborhood to know about? Just sign up to be added to the map/calendar of events. And be sure to keep an eye on our neighborhood social media (Facebook and NextDoor) for event updates, collaboration opportunities, fun decorating ideas, and more!

**We look forward to seeing you for a hauntingly good time celebrating Halloween in the 'hood at Walnut EEK 2021!** *By Sara Merrell*

### **You Can Help the Birds: Turn Off Exterior Lighting!**

The Fall period of heavy bird migration is underway and runs into October, and we (Austin/Central Texas) are right in the middle of the heaviest route to southern destinations (<https://birdcast.info/>). As reported in the July-Aug issue of WCN News, Austin has long subscribed to the Dark Sky initiative, and both Austin and Travis

County promote the Lights Out Program, both of which promote the reduction or elimination of nighttime external lighting, which can interfere with migrating birds' navigation capabilities, causing deaths of millions of birds every migratory season. You can help by following guidelines at <https://tinyurl.com/TravisAustinLightsOut>:

- **Please turn out all non-essential lights from 11 pm – 6 am every night from August 15 to November 30**, especially during the peak Fall migration period, September 5 – October 29 (Spring migration: March – May).
- **Report dead or injured bird sightings:** <https://travisaudubon.org/buildingcollisions>

## 2021 Austin Real Estate – A Year for the History Books

*By Jill Leberknight, WCN Real Estate Expert*

The first 3 quarters of this year's real estate market have been one for the books. Most economists and real estate experts have said we will likely not see another like it in our lifetime, and for many 2021 buyers they would be glad to never see the likes of it again. In my spring article I outlined the driving forces of this historic market. Those key ingredients were: critically low inventory, higher than normal housing demand due to historically low interest rates, and booster effects from out of state buyers along with the ever-growing increase of mega-employer relocations, like Tesla and Oracle, to the Central Texas area. Back in May there was no sign the outrageous multiple offer housing scene was going to calm but once Memorial Day hit, and it was safer to go out, buyers took off for postponed vacations and left the homeownership heartache behind. And with these trips came the opportunity to step back, revisit, and reset home buying strategies: what they were, and were not, willing to do to fight for Austin real estate.

According to the Austin Housing Report during our summer months we saw a significant reduction of multiple offers, and more importantly, a reduction of premiums over list price from \$65,000 in the Spring to a new low of \$29,000 over ask price currently. Right around July 4<sup>th</sup> we shifted from an *ultra strong sellers market* to a normalized *strong sellers market*. There has been a consistent 8-week decreasing trend of premiums over list price and signs of normal market cycles returning in terms of offers, days on market, and repair negotiations.

We will never return to pre-pandemic prices but it is more common now to see homes sell under original ask price, and homes sit if they are priced too high. The market shifted so quickly that many sellers simply did not have time to adjust. Some have been left wondering: are home prices no longer rising? Was that a bubble? Did I miss the chance to sell at the peak? Did I over-spend on my new home? I am asked these questions often and my best answer comes in a quote from a local Austin real estate forecaster and founder of Texas National Title. His reply? "You ain't seen nothin' yet." Tesla and Apple and the long list of new headquarters who announced expansions this year haven't even opened yet. We have a new city soccer team. We have a second city at the Domain just to name a few of our vast changes. In other words: Austin is a different city than it was a year ago. We are following more of a San Francisco/Diego/Jose trend and it will remain as a strong seller market for some time. Your own neighborhood Realtor, Jill, predicts another 3 year ride upward until our next phase - which I fear will be an exodus of longtime Austinites unless we find solutions to housing affordability which have a higher likelihood of affecting zoning options for larger-lot neighborhoods like Walnut Creek; i.e., multi-family units on our lots.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR 2021 REAL ESTATE MARKET

- ▶ POP GROWTH - TX leads the nation with annual population growth around 3%; TX pop growth runs around 1%.
- ▶ RECESSION - Was there one? According to agreed-upon economic formula & the standard definition of recession, there was a 2-month recession during COVID, that's all.
- ▶ BUILDING – US has been under-building for 10 years which has been a big contributor to the current shortage. New Builds have begun and will eventually catch up; however major hedge funds and investment funds are building to rent. This is contributing to the low for-sale inventory.
- ▶ CA vs. TX TAXES (see link below) Major driving force for relocations to Austin. CA has some aggressive tax proposals on the table that will drive more CA-to-TX migration.
- ▶ BUBBLE – "We are NOT in a bubble, not even close."
- ▶ HQ in ATX – including Samsung, Apple, Tesla, Google, & BAE Systems (defense) plan for Austin (see link below)
- ▶ TESLA IMPACT – Huge impact in automotive, energy, telecommunications, aerospace, AI, infrastructure, transportation
- ▶ MEDIAN SALES PRICE – up from \$370k to \$480k in one year making it much harder for first time buyers and the "working class" to find a home.

<https://www.agentjill.com/sept-2021-atx-housing-update/>

The Walnut Creek Safety Team and WCNA are planning to hold a "Neighborhood Night Out", Covid-safe, in-person Event/Party on October 24<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Location and other details haven't been settled yet, so you'll need to watch our social media to get the word:

NextDoor: <https://is.gd/3K9VnZ>; Facebook: <http://goo.gl/4G41rS>

**Rose says "A chrysanthemum by any other name would be easier to spell..."**

## Mindfulness Moment from 'Kind Kids Company': Back to School Anxiety

*By Emily Shaughnessy*



Kind Kids Company is a Walnut Creek-born small business, co-founded by neighbors Emily Shaughnessy and Becca Sharp. We met through a neighborhood meditation group that sprang out of the pandemic and quickly bonded over our desire to build community, spread mindfulness, and empower the next generation to be kind and empathetic! We design monthly "Kindness Kits" for kids around this mission and assemble each month's box right here in our homes. We've also hosted interactive story times at the Walnut Bluff Trailhead and the Walnut Creek Spring Fest.

Regular meditation and mindfulness practices have been very important to both of us, especially during the past year. The pandemic has raised new fears and uncertainties for everyone, children included. Anxiety may be heightened with the return to school and new transitions. Common symptoms of anxiety in children include difficulty sleeping, mood swings and irritability, worrying often, difficulty concentrating, and refusal to participate in social activities. While mindfulness exercises are not a substitute for therapy or clinical treatment of anxiety, they can reduce symptoms of anxiety in children and help regulate their nervous symptoms.

If you notice your child is feeling apprehensive about school this semester, or is regularly worrying or complaining about feeling ill, here are some easy mindfulness practices that may help them (and you) feel more settled.

1. **Name and validate the fears.** It's important not to dismiss children's concerns, no matter how small they may feel to an adult. Acknowledging and accepting anxieties (instead of trying to fix them right away) can help create a sense of peace and calm.
2. **Breathing exercises.** Alternate nostril breathing, belly breathing, and other breathing techniques can help settle the nervous system. Even blowing bubbles or a pinwheel can have a relaxing effect. The best part is that breathing exercises can be done anywhere at any time!
3. **Sensory toys.** Playdough, fidgets, and other sensory toys can give children an outlet for anxious energy and provide a soothing, screen-free activity. Try creating a sensory bin or creating a "chill out" corner of your house so children know they have a place they can go to feel safe and calm.
4. **Exercise and fresh air.** Regular exercise is important for flushing the body of stress hormones and releasing stored tension. Yoga or stretching can be a great option, as can taking a walk in the cooler evening temperatures as a family. Exercising with your children can help them feel supported and connected. Even 5 minutes a day helps!
5. **Guided meditation.** Children as young as three or four can benefit from meditation and periods of stillness. Check out *Stop, Breathe, Think* on YouTube, the Calm app, or Insight Timer for free guided meditations for kids. Over time, children will be able to build the muscle of stillness and self-soothing without needing distractions and stimulation.



Emily and Becca Working

Times are tough right now. Remember to be kind to yourself and model self-care and self-forgiveness to your littles!

### Walnut Bluffs Park Workday on November 6<sup>th</sup>! (<https://tinyurl.com/FunWrk>)

Because of Covid, Austin Parks' *It's My Park Day* has become more restricted, and a little "iffy". While we have applied to join IMP (but haven't heard back at time of writing) we've decided to go ahead with our usual Park Work Day (with coffee and tacos) on that day regardless. Volunteers can sign up at the entrance on the 6<sup>th</sup> if you haven't been able to do so on the Parks site, and we'll do the same work either way.

With the *Northern Walnut Creek Trail* construction about to start - roughly following our main trail - use of that trail likely will be curtailed during work hours. Our intrepid trail developer Gary Brewer has laid out and partially cleared an "inner loop" of similar length which will allow continual use of the park during construction, and this route needs substantial clearing. This will be the primary task during the work day on Nov 6<sup>th</sup>. So you can sign up online if it works, or just show up at the Walnut Bluffs trailhead at 9:00 a.m. or thereabouts. And don't forget about those tacos and coffee...!

**VOTE: Election Like No Other Coming November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The general election in November will be conducted under the laws passed in the Special Session of the Texas Legislature in August – about 666 of them by one count(!). There will be a number of propositions on the ballot, but the only one publicized so far was prompted by a petition submitted by the group *Save Austin Now* (SAN): <https://www.asafeaustinnow.com/>. Wording the City wanted to use for Prop A was stopped by SAN's petition to the Texas Supreme Court, which required the final wording to match SAN's petition, with the addition of the City's estimated cost of implementing the proposition. So the ballot in November will read:

*“Shall a petitioned ordinance be approved to enhance public safety and police oversight, transparency and accountability by adding a new Chapter 216 to establish minimum standards for the police department to ensure effective public safety and protect residents and visitors to Austin, and prescribing minimal requirements for achieving the same at an estimated cost of \$271.5 million \$598.8 million over five years.” (AAS, 3 Sep 2021).*

SAN's petition specifies a ratio of 2 officers per 1000 residents and references that number to the U.S. Justice Dept, without a link. I could not find this ratio in USDoJ documents with extensive searching. This value – and several others as well – can be found in many documents on the subject, but the more general agreement is that it isn't possible to specify such a ratio for every – or even any particular – city without detailed analysis of the situation in that city. In fact, Executive Order 13929 signed by Pres. Trump has resulted in a task force which meets with individual cities to work out such specifications in order to acquire certification required to receive federal funding. Details such as this ratio are to be agreed upon between the cities and the task force.

The SAN petition is a political document, evidenced by its assertion that Austin City policies have caused the increase in crime rates noted over the last several years. It doesn't mention that every large city in the country has seen similar increases and that policing varies greatly in these cities. Our neighborhood feeling of safety is related to the kind of crimes seen in our neighborhoods – property/car theft, break-ins and general trespassing, vandalism, etc. It's very hard to relate the level of these with number of police officers. In fact, the question of “how many police officers are needed?” has proven to be the most complicated one I've ever researched. A large part of this problem is lack of data, which itself is a long-time major issue. I know several people in SAN and respect their thoughtful involvement; i.e., this isn't meant to disparage the movement as strictly political.

Your choice on the ballot likely will be determined by how you personally connect these factors. So: Vote!  
You can find more than you want on the subject with a Web search; A couple of good starting places:

<https://tinyurl.com/LessOrMore> and <https://tinyurl.com/FewerMore>

**Hoped Not To Be Writing About This Again, But...**

**Yeah: COVID-19.** We thought it would be under control at this point, but highly-infectious “Delta Variant” arrived and **half of Texans still aren't vaccinated!** Come on, neighbors: We gotta get this under control! Too many of us are in a “defensive crouch” almost all the time. Somehow wearing a mask has become for some an issue of “freedom” rather than a public health and safety one. Politics are continually roiling the waters, now especially with respect to K-12 schools reopening (and sometimes closing because of Covid outbreaks).

I'll apologize in advance for presenting a few of the many statistics being generated every day. But I don't see any other way to get a feel for the effects of the surge we're witnessing, and which is again affecting employment.

**The virus and the incredible amount of research on it are creating a lot of confusion.** If you watch the reported status of many aspects of the research – and different sources for the same statistic – you see things changing daily, so you can lose track by missing one or two days of checking. There usually is good news in the mix, but it's typically not featured because it doesn't threaten us. For example, Travis/Austin reports that about 80% of those eligible (12-YO or more) have had at least one shot, and surely those who have had only one of their required shots will get the second one and raise the 68% who have had both up to 80% soon. Meanwhile estimates are that emergency approval for vaccinations for 6-to-11-YO kids will happen by the new year or shortly thereafter, and we'll see full – not emergency – approval by FDA for all vaccines used in the U.S. by then. We're also likely to see emergency approval for booster shots of all vaccines in that time frame.

Also: Latest reports from Travis/Austin show the number of hospitalizations have leveled and begun to fall, which is not true of all cities. Perhaps that 70-80% vaccination rate is the largest contributor...?

Staggering statistics for hospitalizations in Texas and U.S.:

Overall, unvaccinated people hospitalized at nearly 30 times the rate of vaccinated (CDC)

12-17 Years Old: Unvaccinated being hospitalized at about 10 times the rate of vaccinated.

Election day: **Tuesday, November 2**  
In-person early voting: **October 18-29**  
Last Day to Register to Vote: **October 4**  
Last Day to Apply for Ballot By Mail (received, not postmarked): **October 22**

**To check your registration status:**

[www.votetravis.com](http://www.votetravis.com).

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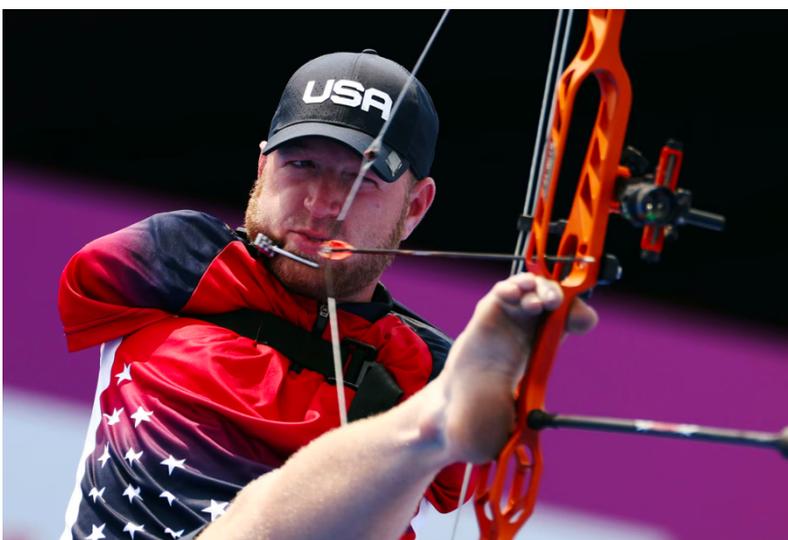
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U.S. Archer at the Paralympic Games (The Atlantic)



A collection of "Only in Texas" pictures from Yeah Motor:

<https://tinyurl.com/OnlyTexas>

Hurricane Wind Scale @LookBermuda

 Cat 1 74-95 mph	 Cat 3 111-129 mph
 Cat 2 96-110 mph	 Cat 4 130-156 mph
 Cat 5 157 mph or higher	 Cat 6 177 mph or higher

Be Safe: Know Your Hurricane Categories From Facebook

**THE SCIENCE BEHIND MASKS**

 COVID-19 1 TO 2.5 ONE PERSON CAN INFECT UP TO 2.5 PEOPLE.	 DELTA VARIANT 1 TO 6 ONE PERSON CAN INFECT UP TO 6 PEOPLE.	 WEARING A MASK 1 TO 0.5 ONE PERSON CAN INFECT UP TO 0.5 PEOPLE.
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IF YOU WEAR A MASK, THE INFECTION RATE DROPS BY NEARLY **75%**



From Auntie Anne's Corner of Life on FB

We've got to stop (them) meeting like this! Over 600 new laws enacted in the August special session of the Texas congress! Be careful, you may be breaking one or more right now!

**VOTE: Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>!**

**Bulk Pickup: October 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>**

PRSRT STD.  
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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 \$25 per household for a calendar year. Send a check to: WCNA ; PO Box 82746; Austin, TX 78708-2746

Dues notices 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 [wcna.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wcna.contact@gmail.com) or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

**Calendar of Events**

Sep	15	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	19	Talk Like a Pirate Day - AARRRRR!
	18-19	Pecan Street Festival Cancelled (Covid) - <a href="https://pecanstreetfestival.org">https://pecanstreetfestival.org</a>
	19	Austin Museum Day - <a href="http://www.austinmuseums.org">http://www.austinmuseums.org</a>
	20-25	Texas Tribune Festival (virtual) - <a href="https://festival.texastribune.org">https://festival.texastribune.org</a>
	22	Autumn begins
	28	National Voter Registration Day
	29	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
Oct	1-3	Austin City Limits Musical Festival 1st weekend
	8-10	Austin City Limits Musical Festival 2nd weekend
	11	*** Bulk Item Collection begins until all is picked up ***
	11	Indigenous Peoples Day/Columbus Day - Banks and Post Office closed
	13	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	23	Neighborhood Garage Sale: 8:00 a.m – 2:00 p.m. Notice in this newsletter.
	23	Take Back Drug Day - <a href="https://tinyurl.com/">https://tinyurl.com/</a>
	24	WCN Safety Team Neighborhood Night Out: 4:00 – 6:00 pm (see 3 <sup>rd</sup> page)
	27	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	31	WalnutEEK! And Halloween
Nov	2	Election Day: VOTE
	6	It's My Park Day: Walnut Bluffs Inner Trail Clearance (see 4 <sup>th</sup> page)
	7	Daylight Savings time ends (set clock one hour back; sleep one hour longer).
	10	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	11	Veterans Day - Banks and Post Office closed.
	11	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.