



# Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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July  
Aug  
2024

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## The 12<sup>th</sup> WCN July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade and Potluck Picnic: Is it going to get hotter every year now?

On a day when it was expected to be 120°F in mid-California and the same heat dome covered most of the country, nearly 100 folks showed up for Kay and Joel Klumpp's annual parade and potluck picnic! And that was without many of the old-timers who apparently decided 101°F / 107°heat index was too much.

Many first-timers joined the fray, and most of those present at 10:30 actually followed bagpiper Philip Bates\* around the one-plus-mile parade route. You can find many



Philip Bates Led the Parade Again  
Photo Kay Klumpp

pictures from the event on the neighborhood Facebook group site -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wcnanews>.

The picnic following the parade was, as usual, amazing! You always can find something that fits your eating preferences, and it's always good. Thanks to all for their offerings, and to the folks who helped with setting up and serving, and most of all to Joel and Kay, joined by Adrienne Arter, for inviting us once again: extraordinary hosts!

We were joined this election year by two candidates running for City Council seats: Pierre Nguyen – a neighbor running for Place 7 to replace Leslie Pool, and Monica Guzman, running for District 4. It's obvious why Pierre would be there, but Monica came because she feels like all Austin residents should have a sense of all council members characters and personalities. Both added a sense of civics to the celebration.

The exuberance of the occasion was tempered by the absence of one of the neighbors who has been there from

the first: Les Griffin, the Klumpps next door neighbor since they bought their home. Les helped with the enterprise every year until she moved into an assisted living facility in May of 2022. She always added a lively – and sometimes spicy - spirit to the enterprise, even (especially?) in her ninth decade. She passed away on June 5<sup>th</sup> at age 95, leaving relatives and friends in the neighborhood greatly saddened. But her memory will remain at future "Fourths", as it did at this one, because she donated a treasured article, a tablecloth made by her mother, to the Klumpps' project. It's shown in the picture here.



Les at home with her cat Kramer in ~2021

Photo Adrienne Arter



Now a regular fixture of the picnic, Les' mother made this tablecloth many years ago.

\*Philip belongs to the non-profit **Capitol City Highlanders**, Austin's original Pipe and Drum Band established in 1980.

## Action in the Park!

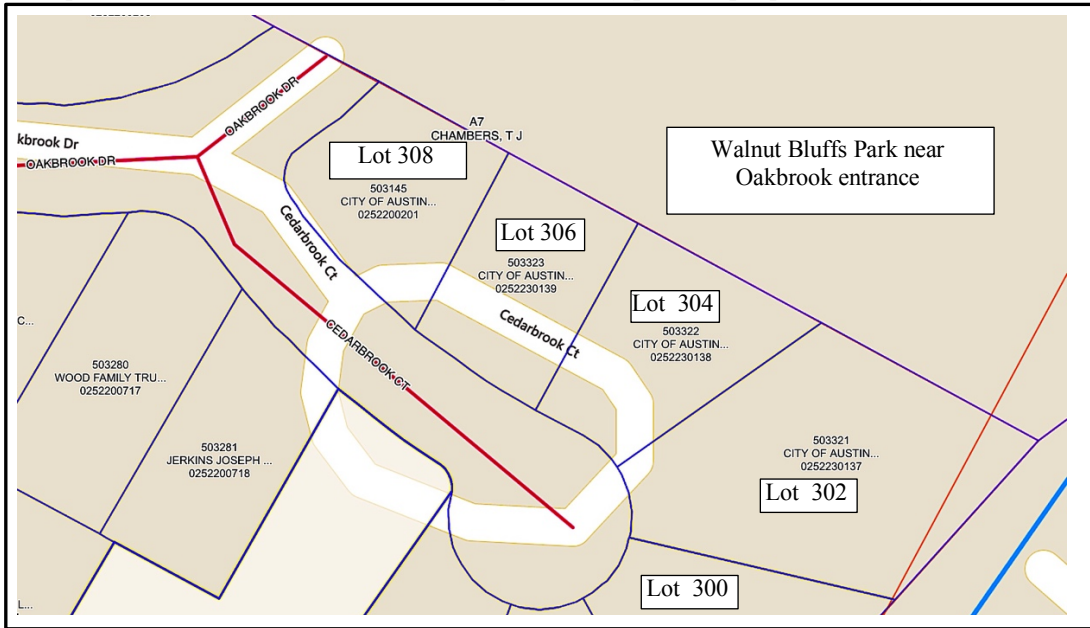
**The Natural Kid Play Elements** discussed in the May-June 2024 issue have been "installed" in their designated area and positions in the park. These elements consist of boulders, large logs and a mulch mound. As Tasha Bowser describes in that issue, research indicates that direct experience in the natural environment can have significant mental and physical health benefits, enhance self-esteem and self-confidence, and provide opportunities for spiritual development. These elements are intended to provide that opportunity for kids of any age and background.

As shown in that May-June newsletter the elements are arranged to form a loop that runs southeast from near the righthand side of the Oakbrook entrance trail some 35 feet, around a tree at about a 90° angle and northeast toward the south side of the concrete circle. The picture shows the leg closest to the entrance, with the mulch pile down at the "corner" and one of the logs on the other leg of the loop.



The kids' natural play elements in Walnut Bluffs Park

**Walnut Bluffs Trailhead / Park** has effectively been enlarged a bit in the past few months. The city recently purchased the last remaining private property - Lot 306 - along the north edge of the cul-de-sac Cedarbrook Court. The figure below shows the current status, as seen on the Travis Central Appraisal District site. This plat from TCAD shows how all the previously private properties along Cedarbrook Court to the east and north



now belong to the City of Austin. Since these border Walnut Bluffs Trailhead (Walnut Bluffs Park), the size of the park has been increased by (approximately) their area. The houses – or what’s left of those being demolished – will soon be gone. This accomplishes the city’s purpose of eliminating these flood-prone properties from private roles, and eventually will improve the utility of the park to the public.

### Remember the “Kiddie Train” in Zilker Park?

After shutting down more than four years ago, the replacement Zilker train finally is here and in operation. It’s called the Zilker Eagle Miniature Train, and it operates more-or-less on the same route as the original train, the Austin Eagle. The original train was set up and started operation in 1961, and the owner decided to sell it in 1985. It was bought by the Beall family, who introduced two new trains named after their two daughters, Ashley and Jenny, in 1985. The history seems a bit fuzzy here, but the family operated the system until 1996, and “The Zilker Zephyr” was “commissioned”. It operated until parts of the tracks were seriously eroded by heavy rains, becoming unsafe in 2019. After it became clear that there was great desire from the public to get a train back in operation, a contractor bought track and engines, which proved too weak to pull the load. At some point, the contract was cancelled, the contractor took the trains and the track to another state, and the city commissioned **Austin Parks Foundation** to oversee the project. The Foundation ran a fund raising operation while finding a another contractor to produce a working system.

It has taken more than 4 years to establish a new operator for the train, but now the tracks have been laid – leaving out the dangerous section where the erosion stopped operation before, and an engine which can do the job has been thoroughly tested with near-full loads (about 50 passengers).



With all pieces in place, and including two passenger cars that are completely ADA-compliant (wheelchair accessible) the new operation opened to the public on June 12<sup>th</sup>. (Note that donors to the project were able to ride during the testing phase in the days before the public opening; see <https://www.fox7austin.com/news/zilker-eagle-miniature-train-returns-austin-texas>). The trains run about every 30 minutes, and the fare is \$6 per ticket, first come, first served. Tickets are obtained at the kiosk near the Barton Springs Bath House.

Also note that parking frequently is difficult in Zilker Park these days. This summer it might be better to take the free Zilker Shuttle, which runs between One Texas Center parking garage at 505 Barton Springs Rd. and Zilker Park: <https://www.austintexas.gov/event/zilker-shuttle>



The original Zilker Train; Austin History Center; Austin Public Library

**Space and Time Travel: Amarillo**

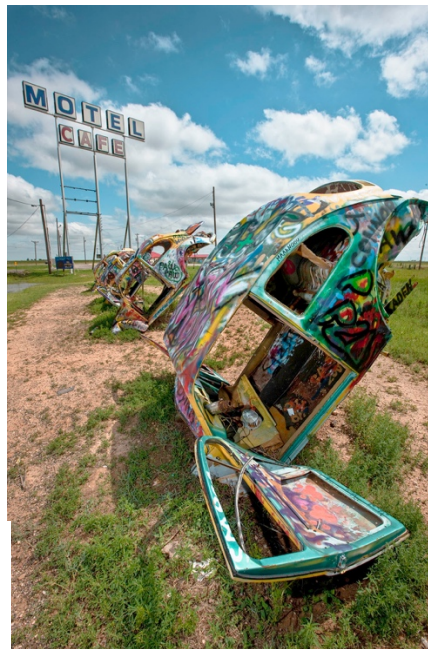
In case you missed it, we just celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of the “wonders(?)” of Texas, namely, the “birth” of **Cadillac Ranch**, just west of Amarillo on I-40 / Route 66. One of Stanley Marsh’s artistic brainchildren, it is a collection of Cadillacs from the “tailfin years”, 1949 to 1974, buried nose first several feet deep in the west Texas dirt, their rear ends sticking up in the air. An opening in the fence allows anybody who’s willing to stop on the I-40 access road to go in and do whatever they want to the old cars, and after years of graffiti and vandalism the models are almost unrecognizable. The fascinating history of this “art installation” can be read and/or heard on **The Texas Standard** on KUT-FM:

<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/amarillo-cadillac-ranch-photo-exhibit-wyatt-mcspadden/>

Not nearly as well known, a similar installation of “Slug Bugs” – aka Volkswagen Beetles – was assembled at the unincorporated community of Conway on the eastern edge of Amarillo starting in the late ‘90s. In this anniversary

year for *Cadillac Ranch* the VWs were dug up and moved a few miles west and replanted near the Big Texan Steak as a tourist attraction: **Slug Bug Ranch** (<https://texashighways.com/travel-news/roadside-oddy-slug-bug-ranch-in-amarillo/>).

The beetles have been treated similarly to the Caddies, i.e, spray-painted and suffused with graffiti. Both are weird folk art, historical, and can be visited easily on a single visit to sections of



similarly historical Route 66. In case you’re hungry while you’re at the Bug Ranch you’ll be within spittin’ distance of The Big Texan and can take the 72 oz. steak challenge!

Free if you can eat the whole meal in under one hour!



Ever wonder about how much land would be covered with solar panels in order to generate the power used by Austin? Or maybe by New York City? How about Texas? This graphic was generated to answer that question for much bigger areas and populations, namely continents. Assuming it was possible to achieve total efficiency – including transmission – similar to that of modern panels, it shows how much solar panel area would be required for the sun to produce the power used by various continents, superimposed on a map of Africa for scale.

Can this be true? The area indicated by the biggest red square is all that would be required to power all electrical usage in the world at this time. No clouds during every day is also assumed along with current conversion efficiencies, and the size of the squares would need to be increased to make up for any situational shortcomings. But the tiny percentage of the earth’s surface that receives a world’s worth of energy is startling!



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## TREES! A Scoop to Share: A letter to the Walnut Creek neighborhood

Matthew (Matt) Ottman, Owner / Operator of Ol'Fashioned Landscaping

Dear neighbors, friends, clients, and homeowners,

I have been blessed to be given the opportunity to share my knowledge with the Walnut Creek community. The reason for this article is to inform everyone as a group about the two fatal tree diseases that are present in the Walnut Creek neighborhood. I have been observing the progress of *hypoxylon canker* over the last few months and have also been watching the progress of trees with "oak wilt".

I have three years of schooling and 35 years of experience under my belt as an arborist. I learned on a forestry-size scale about tree diseases and the proper/successful methods for tree removal and disposal.

There is information out there, but not all of it is correct, and perhaps not everyone knows what to do. When tree diseases sporadically start "all of a sudden" popping up in a neighborhood, more often than not this is simply because tools have not been sterilized and cleansed of the bacteria or fungus. It is like a wound infection for trees: if tools are not cleaned after a job has been performed on a diseased tree, then every tree cut thereafter of the oak variety will become sick, with the end result being the death of those trees.

Oak wilt can be spread by a beetle that hosts on oaks. If the beetle feeds on an infected tree and then goes and feeds on your tree, your tree will get sick and die. If you have your tree trimmed and the cuts are not painted, then that same beetle can also infect your tree because your tree was not painted immediately after trimming, which leaves the "cambium layer" (blood stream) exposed, making the tree vulnerable. So factually, oaks can be trimmed year round, just make sure your company/operators are painting their cuts as they go. That simple! Never trim more than 50% of your tree. That can shock it and/or kill it.

Sterile tools, painted cuts, correct pruning procedures, hydration, and fertilization can be the best resistance you can give your trees to prevent them from getting sick.

**Hypoxylon canker is worse than oak wilt!!** When hypoxylon canker reaches its time to spread, the bark falls off in patches; the infected areas turn pinkish brown; when the wind blows, the hypoxylon canker spores become airborne; and any stressed trees can become infected. Hypoxylon canker prefers oaks for some reason. The reason a tree may be stressed can first be that the tree is not adequately hydrated. I can teach anyone how to hydrate their trees properly: contact me at (512) 318 4451.

If incoming infected tools are carrying the disease organism and are then used to trim your trees, your trees will not start showing signs for about a year with oak wilt. Hypoxylon canker does not take a break; it is aggressive and invasive. Residents who have trees with oak wilt or hypoxylon canker are spreading these diseases very quickly to other trees by not getting the diseased trees removed and hauled off. This has potential to be catastrophic.

My goal is to educate this community as a group, so this community can work together and with each other along with a company that can meet your needs. Then the community can terminate these diseases from spreading any further and can prevent property depreciation on each investment.

I have seen both diseases in parts of this community: between IH35, Braker, and N. Lamar up to Caddo@N. Lamar.

I need to scout the remaining neighborhoods soon, but I don't need to see more. These diseases have the potential to be very severe. I have seen massive destruction and miles of dead oaks in Liberty Hill, Anderson Mill, and Bastrop. If all the infected trees are removed, the diseases can be controlled inside of two months, before it gets hotter, which only accelerates the spread.

For individuals that can't afford to spend a penny because they are struggling with monthly bills, the community should consider pulling together to financially make it happen. If 600 residents gave \$2.00 each, that would be enough to remove a moderate-sized sick tree for a resident who can't afford it. If 60 residents gave \$20 each, that also totals \$1200. Sick trees cannot be left behind or these diseases will continue to spread.

I have seen other companies in your neighborhood working to remove a tree here and there. But I think this should be taken a step further in order to stop the "tree death" and preserve the healthy oaks left in the neighborhood. Some of the beauties in this area are huge, old, and provide oxygen for the community on a daily basis.

Everything that I have written here is knowledge backed by my education and 35 years of combined experience/hindsight. Everyone needs to be on the same page, and this knowledge needs to be available so the neighbors in the Walnut Creek neighborhood can decide and plan and work together.

Editor's Note: Matt has identified a hypoxylon hotspot on the northern end of Indianhead.

More information: [https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/calendar2019/hypoxylon-canker-on-sycamore/hypoxylon\\_oak/](https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/calendar2019/hypoxylon-canker-on-sycamore/hypoxylon_oak/) ;



H.Canker on an Oak Tree

## Recent Changes to the Land Development Code *by Robert Meadows*

The Land Development Code (LDC) of Austin determines the permitted use and physical configuration of each piece of property in the City. This is achieved through the zoning category assigned by the City (acting through the City Council) to a particular property. For example, the designation of SF-1 (single family residence large lot) for a parcel means that, prior to the recent changes, the parcel had to meet requirements of, among other things, a minimum lot size of 10,000 sq. ft., a minimum lot width of 60 ft., and a maximum number of residential units per lot of 1. According to City ordinances, the permitted uses for SF-1 were very limited, and this zoning designation was intended mainly for the large lots with one single family dwelling that predominate in the Walnut Creek neighborhood. There are 38 zoning designations in an old Zoning Use Summary Table provided by the City and dated 13 October 2015, and each designation has its own rules for the parcel configuration and its own set of permitted uses (generally categorized as residential uses, commercial uses, industrial uses, and agricultural uses). For example, a single family residence is a permitted use in SF-1 (subject to the physical lot requirements), but a community garden and urban farm are also permitted in SF-1 while animal production is not permitted in SF-1.

The City is thus able to implement its land use policies through zoning designations, i.e., an area where a standard tract subdivision was desired would be designated an SF-1 district, while the location of shopping and amenities for the subdivision community would be guided by the designation of commercial uses for those properties at the boundaries of the subdivision rather than in the interior of the subdivision.

The last major rewrite of Austin's LDC was 1987, and as time progressed into the 2000's much criticism of the old LDC began to arise. The LDC was said to be complex, fragmented, and hard to implement and was said to be overly car-centric and to impede efforts at promoting affordability. The Imagine Austin project, adopted by the City in 2012, set out the goal of having "compact, connected, and complete" communities within the City, and the CodeNext effort was begun in mid-2013 to carry out a major rewrite of the LDC in pursuit of this goal, among other outcomes.

The CodeNext effort was encumbered by confusion and substantial opposition and eventually collapsed. But efforts continued at a massive rewrite; these efforts were known as Next CodeNext, the CodeNext rewrite, and so forth, but the City preferred to call these efforts the LDC Draft 2 or LDC Draft 3. These efforts also came to nought regardless of the terminology.

Those interested in rewriting the LDC then took up the strategy of adopting changes to the LDC on a piecemeal basis rather than pursuing a single massive rewrite, and this piecemeal approach was started beginning on 20 July 2023 with Resolution 20230720-126 under Agenda Item #126 of the City Council meeting of that date. This resolution directed the City Manager to propose amendments to the LDC that, among other things, would -- for an SF-1, SF-2, or SF-3 parcel -- reduce the minimum lot size to 2,500 sq. ft. or less and enable at least three units per (reduced) lot without requiring existing structures to be preserved. These amendments were proposed and adopted under the overarching branding of "Home Options for Middle Income Empowerment" (HOME), often particularly associated with Councilmember Leslie Pool (District 7).

HOME Phase 1 was adopted by the City Council on 7 December 2023. This allows up to three units on one single family lot, e.g., SF-1; removes any restrictions on how many nonrelated adults can live in a home; facilitates the building of "Tiny Houses"; and reduces front and side setback requirements for two- and three-unit structures.

HOME Phase 2 was adopted by the City Council on 17 May 2024. This reduced the minimum lot size of an SF-1 parcel to 1800 sq. ft. and authorized the subdivision of existing lots. Also, the minimum lot width is now reduced to 15 ft. and the subdivision of properties with between one and three dwelling units has been facilitated. The combination of HOME Phase 1 and Phase 2 thus seems to authorize up to three residential units on an 1800 sq. ft. lot.

There are a number of other changes associated with these HOME changes. For example, minimum onsite parking requirements, except for accessible parking spaces, were eliminated for new development by the City Council at its 2 November 2023 meeting (see Agenda Item #28). This means that when a new residential structure is built on a lot, say, at 11504 Tedford, the developer will not be required to provide parking spaces on the lot itself, except for accessible parking spaces. Thus, depending on the developer's decision, residents with cars will have to park the cars on Tedford itself, which is narrow at that point.

The compatibility standards have been loosened. These standards were meant to lessen the height of development near residential properties. Under the new standards, taller buildings can now be built much closer to residential properties along N. Lamar, which in our area of town is designated a Future Core Transit Corridor. This might affect neighbors who live along Tedford, but also along Pollyanna due to the commercial lots along IH35.

At its 29 February 2024 meeting, the City Council adopted a so-called Density Bonus 90 (DB90) program; this grants an additional 30 feet of height to a development in a commercial area, up to a maximum of 90 feet, in return

for certain community benefits, such as affordable housing allocations. Again, this may be applied in order to build taller structures along N. Lamar or IH35 next to our neighborhood.

Another change is that some decisions with regard to the applicability and implementation of these changes will be made “administratively”. This means that City staff will make decisions without public input at a public meeting, such as a hearing at the Zoning and Platting Commission. I am unclear just how extensive this change is at this time.

The implementing regulations for some of these ordinances are still being written (see “Table of Active Code Amendment Cases – May 2024” from the City of Austin), so circumstances may change.

A cable repairman on the street today asked me if I knew what time it was  
I told him it was between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m.

### When Smart People Buy Dumb Phones

Kinda hard to fathom for us DoomScrollers, but many people have chosen to get away physically from the intentionally-designed-to-be-addictive apps on their smartphones by changing to a “dumbphone”. The true “drug-avoiders” are buying phones similar to the original cell phones, and especially “flip-phones”, with virtually no apps, i.e. except “phone” (remember those, from the late ‘90s and early ‘00s?). Thinking about how I use my smartphone compared to these causes a slight shudder. Then I remember that my phone’s app that monitors my usage frequently indicates I’ve used the damn thing an average of ~4 hours per day over the last week(!). That’s like wasting a work week doing none of the tasks I have lined up. How is this possible...?

While part of my problem is being a very slow texter, it’s primarily “click-bait headlines” that are grabbing my attention, and my inclination to read the blurb that follows, and this leads to another headline. Studies show that this process is highly addictive, especially when video is involved (think cat-videos), and it’s essentially the same as any other addiction.

The recommended way to stop addiction is to eliminate the temptation by removing the source from your presence. Enter the dumbphone. New ones can have no apps or your selection of apps up to a basic smartphone, though the intermediate combinations are fairly limited. For example, you can purchase one that adds only a camera to the phone, or perhaps that and Google Maps (check out the possibilities at <https://dumbphones.pory.app/>). The temptation to surf the web is thus gone, and (probably) you’re saving some money as well.



Verizon Flip Phone

It seems I have spent a lifetime of mouthing mechanically, “Say thank you. Sit up straight. Use your napkin.

Close your mouth when you chew. Don’t leanback in your chair.”

Just when I finally got my husband squared away, the kids came along.

Erma Bombeck *Publishers Hall Syndicate*

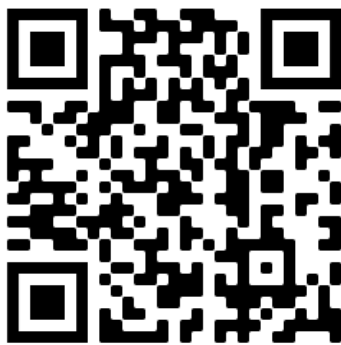
### COVID-19: Still Here; We May Know Why Some Get It and Some Don’t

Without the apparatus for reporting status that existed during the first few years of the pandemic, the status of Covid has greatly shrunk from public view. This is actually dangerous, as estimates of numbers of infections from the few sources of data indicate that in 2023 we experienced more than **900,000 cases requiring hospitalization**, with **75,500 deaths**, i.e., averaging about 1500 per week (Death rate for June 2024 is about 300 per week, about half the rate for the same period in 2023). For comparison, there were **~45,000 deaths from flu** in 2023. That the Covid hospitalization and death rate is still high is not surprising given that the current vaccination rate is below 20% for adults, with only 8% of children and 38% of folks older than 65 having received the latest vaccine.

**You may remember** that fairly early in the pandemic a number of brave British individuals volunteered to participate in a “**challenge trial**” to help understand the wide variation in the behavior of infections being experienced. These were young, healthy people who had not experienced infection and were willing to be infected under controlled conditions. This allowed direct comparative measurements of the virus and responses of humans to the virus. This type of test can produce statistically significant results from small numbers of participants where A-B comparisons can be made (analysis of the population as a whole requires immense numbers of test subjects, since the conditions vary so widely among the subjects). There were 16 volunteers for this challenge testing, and their conditions were carefully controlled. Each was infected with an “extremely small dose” of the original SARS-CoV-2 virus administered via a nasal spray (<https://theconversation.com/we-finally-know-why-some-people-got-covid-while-others-didnt-233063> , <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-024-07575-x>). (Continued below)

Apparently the researchers anticipated that all subjects would develop Covid, allowing analysis of the differences in progress of the disease as a function of the natural responses. Instead they were surprised to see them react in three distinct ways. A group of six developed the expected response: mild cases of Covid with cold-like symptoms persisting over several days. But three of the subjects developed only slight symptoms, requiring very little recovery. The other seven volunteers never tested positive and never developed any symptoms. The different groups can be described in terms of “marshalling of their immune system armies”: The first group took about 5 days to produce the strong deployment of their troops, ostensibly allowing the virus to establish a foothold, whereas the middle group deployed their forces after one day, resulting in rapid “routing” of the enemy virus. The researchers were able to identify a gene which was expressed more strongly in the group which quickly disposed of the virus, and so may be a biomarker for people who fall in this category. This would be valuable information in fighting the virus.

So the differences appear to be related to the individual response time and intensity between two of the types of people in the tests, and a genetic insensitivity to the coronavirus in the third type. The sample is very small so whether there are other “types of people” who would have different responses isn’t known. But this study strongly indicates that large numbers – and perhaps a large percentage - of people likely are not at risk of dying from Covid.



QR Code to pay dues or donate

### You can use PayPal for both dues & contributions.

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Alternatively, with your smart phone using a QR code reader you can go to the same page using the QR code at left.

*Note: You don't have to join PayPal to use it for payments.*

### Austin City Council

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**Trans Hotline: 877-565-8860**

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

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**Emery Sadkin**

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**Walnut Creek Neighborhood**

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Braker to Yeager and  
Lamar to IH35

**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 issues.

Payment also may be via PayPal:  
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**To check whether you've paid your dues for this or next calendar year, call or text Pat at 512 659-8132 or email [s.pitt@earthlink.net](mailto:s.pitt@earthlink.net)**

**To contribute content** to the newsletter: [wcnanews.contact@gmail.com](mailto:wcnanews.contact@gmail.com) and/or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620

**Note:**

Any opinions expressed in articles printed in this newsletter are the explicit opinions of the writer(s) and, unless explicitly stated, are not to be implied as the opinions of either the editor or the Board of Directors of Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.

**Calendar of Events**

July	14	Zilker Summer Musical continues - <a href="https://zilker.org">https://zilker.org</a>
	17	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	31	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
August	9-11	Texas Tax-Free Weekend: <a href="https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/98-490/">https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/publications/98-490/</a>
	14	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	17	Zilker Summer Musical ends
	20	AISD First Day of School
	25	Free Day of Dance - <a href="https://balletaustin.org/dance-fitness/come-dance/">https://balletaustin.org/dance-fitness/come-dance/</a>
	26	UT classes begin
	28	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
September	2	Labor Day - Banks and Post Office closed
	2	Free Day of Yoga - <a href="https://www.freedayofyoga.com">https://www.freedayofyoga.com</a>
	7	Bat Fest - <a href="https://www.austintexas.org/event/austin-bat-fest/372455/">https://www.austintexas.org/event/austin-bat-fest/372455/</a>
	11	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	16	Diez y Seis
	14-15	Pecan Street Festival - <a href="https://pecanstreetfestival.org">https://pecanstreetfestival.org</a>