



Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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

Mar
Apr
2025

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

WCNA Annual General Meeting

Logical difficulties have delayed the date for our General Meeting, where we elect new board members for the positions which expire this year. We also review activities over the last year and plans for this one and have guest speakers while we celebrate with refreshments. It's been complicated organizing a venue, speakers and a suitable Saturday, complicated further by the unfortunate situation at St. Mark.

So keep an eye on the website or social media (see the links at left), or check your email if you're signed up for the group email (see the website) for updates on status of the meeting as well as plans for St. Mark. Prayers and fingers crossed...

Very Sad News: St. Mark UMC is Closing(?)

The congregation has found that it no longer can sustain operation at its current location, and the property will have to be sold or converted to another use. This is anticipated by the end of June, and possibilities for handling the property are under consideration at this point. This has been anticipated for some time, but still is a body-blow to many in Walnut Creek Neighborhood (WCN), including WCNA. St. Mark has supported the neighborhood in many, many ways over many years, especially by providing superb venues for many Association functions, for *We're All Neighbors*-sponsored events, and many other community-building activities.

Fine *It's My Park Day* (IMPD) at Walnut Bluffs on March 1st by Robert Meadows

It's My Park Day is a biannual, community-led day of service by volunteers who work to improve parks -- **Walnut Bluffs Trailhead** in our Walnut Creek Neighborhood -- by removing litter, mulching, removing invasive species, etc. Citywide, the event is run by the private Austin Parks Foundation (not the City Parks and Recreation Department), who supplies tools, mulch, and organization. Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (WCNA) sponsored a local IMPD event at Walnut Bluffs Trailhead on Saturday, 1 March 2025 from 9 am to 12 noon; Tasha Bowser was the project leader and Bunnie and Dorsey Twidwell provided breakfast tacos and coffee.

The event was well attended. Eighteen adults signed up at the Austin Parks Foundation website, and a rather large number of kids also attended. Almost all the volunteers were from the neighborhood, contrasting with recent IMPDs. Another positive development was that volunteers continued arriving throughout the 3-hour event, thus having the effect of reinforcing the early volunteers, who were deeply appreciative. And a nice concordance was that the kids ended up mulching the natural play elements where they play on visits to the park. Both kids and adults enjoyed a pleasant day while making our park more inviting!

The next *It's My Park Day* will be in **November**. Projects will include planting wildflowers under the highlines.



Some of the Early Arrivers at IMPD on March 1st

Our Next Opportunity to Beautify the 'Hood is *Keep Austin Beautiful* on April 12th Watch the WCNA website and social media for the announcement to sign up!

Activities will concentrate on the periphery of the neighborhood and some creek sites. **Make WCN Beautiful!**

If you receive an email or text that says you have an unpaid toll bill which you must pay immediately, delete it without responding. This is a known scam being spread widely!

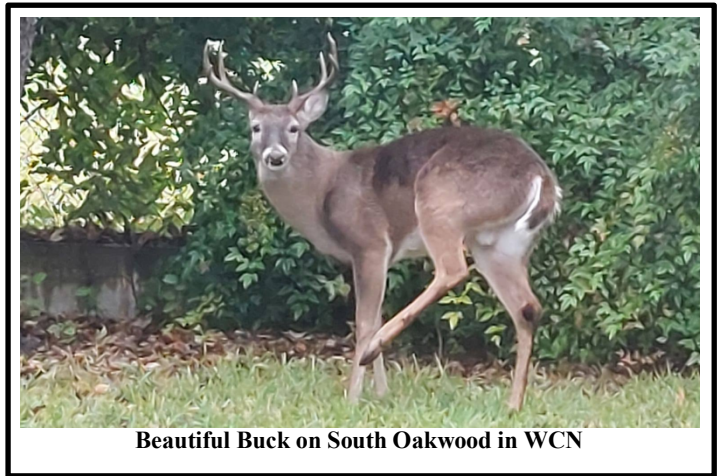
Need a smile? <https://www.facebook.com/reel/428399176910389>

Bette's Neighborhood Buck

by Bette Pritchett

On Monday, November 18th, a friend looked out the glass sliding door into my back yard (11400 Oakwood Drive) and by the back fence was the most beautiful 8-point buck deer we've ever seen this close. He is a film producer and captured this beautiful shot. Before I came into the room, he said there were two out there, but the other was gone by the time I looked out and this beautiful boy with his big antler rack was all I saw.

When I moved to Texas in '47, I looked to find a place where the "deer and the antelope played." Never would I have thought that after not seeing one this side of Fredericksberg in the 77 years I've lived in Texas that my first close encounter would be in my own back yard in Austin, Texas of all places!!!



Homestead Exemptions Now Must Be Verified Every Five Years!

Since a new law was passed in 2023, the tax break allowed for living in your own home, that is, claiming it as your "homestead", now requires that claim be verified at least once in every five years. In examining several situations in WCN where questionable activities were reported, WCNA has found that some owners were making this claim when it almost surely couldn't be legitimate: apparently this is not that rare. The state legislature has been using the homestead exemption as a method to reduce property taxes for several years, and has addressed this issue with a law which requires each claim to be verified periodically. Clearly this is a daunting task for our primary taxing authority (TCAD: Try to verify each homestead claim at least once every five years, and if the agency can't determine validity using information available to them, notify each such owner that they need to provide proof themselves. Fortunately, this won't be too hard: a notice of the requirement will be sent to the owner, whence he/she will need to submit a verification form along with a copy of a current driver's license or ID which shows the address in question. This can be done online, by mail or personally. The form and details are at <https://traviscad.org/verify> .

Short-Term Rental (STR) Rules Are Changing!

Short-term rental units, defined in Austin as dwellings rented for fewer than 30 days, produce disparate situations in residential neighborhoods. They can, by providing income from the property, reduce the cost of living for property owners in situations where they're legal, and they can provide less expensive stays in attractive environments (like ours) for folks who prefer a quiet, easier-to-navigate stay than experienced in most hotels or motels. The recently-adopted land use laws (e.g., <https://bit.ly/3DsgbTI>) in Austin have made it easier for residents of neighborhoods to provide this type of accommodation, as they allow building "Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)" on existing lots, with fewer restrictions on lot size and weaker access requirements. This change to our mostly single family-zoned lots has been disturbing to many residents of WCN, since an ADU can be built in a very small part of your neighbor's lot and very close to your property line. Note we have some STRs in the 'hood but they're in the original homes, not ADUs.

The other side of the equation is the potential for abuse of such facilities, e.g. large, loud parties and late-night activities involving many participants with, corresponding numbers of vehicles and resulting overflowing waste receptacles. These are some of the reasons neighborhoods have fought their legitimacy.

Regardless of the above, STRs are proliferating, and several already exist in WCN, e.g. as Airbnbs. To be legal, such units already are required to be licensed by the city and are required to pay Austin's Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) on rentals. However, the city apparently does a poor job of keeping up with these units, making it impossible to realize the income or enforce existing rules. Austin's first attempt to more strictly regulate STRs (in 2016) were rebuffed by a federal judge, leading to new proposals which would take the ruling into account. These proposals were scheduled to be considered by the City Council in February, but meanwhile the state legislature ("the Lege") has taken up the issue this year, with multiple bills submitted for consideration in the ongoing session. As reported by our District 7 council member Mike Siegel in his recent newsletter, the Council is postponing further consideration until after the legislative session ends (sometime after early June), with the exception of one change: Collection and reporting of the HOT will be required of the "operator" of the STR, which is frequently a commercial enterprise like Airbnb or Vrbo; this currently is a responsibility of the owners. These companies are accustomed to recording rental properties and collecting the HOT from the renters, and Austin is hoping that the requirement will provide a much better accounting of the number and location of STRs. Estimates currently are that fewer than a third of such are licensed, and thus enforcing rules is severely limited and city income from STRs is much lower than intended.

Coming: Fines for Parking in Bike Lanes and Vehicle Charging Slots

The City Council has approved establishment of three new parking infractions:

- (1) **Parking a vehicle in street lanes designated for bicycles.**
- (2) **Parking in a space designated for charging electric vehicles without charging your vehicle.**
- (3) **Parking in an area designated (and closed off) for special events.**

The “bad” news: The fines for these violations will be **\$75 for (1), \$50 for (2), and \$250 for (3).**

The “good” news: The city won’t start enforcing these new laws until about mid-May to allow for the changes to become well known. During this interim period violators will receive a warning and/or educational material about the changes in the law. Ostensibly the end of this “safe” period will become well known before it happens!

Before the bicycle lane law was passed, **No Parking** signs had to be posted to make it illegal to park in a designated bike lane. Most of us have experienced situations where the presence of a bike lane itself seems risky because of the narrower lanes required for both cars and bicycles in order to accommodate the additional lane. Further, bicycles having to swerve into the adjoining car lane to avoid a parked car is clearly dangerous. It’s clear that if bicycle lanes are going to exist, cars should not be allowed to park in them.

↔↔↔↔ The WCNA Spring Garage Sale will be on 19 April: Make Plans Now! ↔↔↔↔

The event will be advertised in the Statesman and Chronicle (the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday before the sale) and on Craigslist and Backpage. The "sandwich-board" signs will be posted at the entrances on the Friday afternoon before the sale, and other small red-and-white signs will be posted throughout the neighborhood. To have your site put on the **shopper’s map**, contact Robert Meadows at 512 339-0229 or 633-1459, or robertl@meadows.com.

You can use PayPal for both dues & contributions.

PayPal is a popular way to become – or remain – a member, or to make a donation toward WCNA projects (shown on drop-down menus on the Donate site). You can use any credit card to make a payment via PayPal through the “join/donate” page on the WCNA website, <https://www.wcnanews.com/wcnamembership>

Austin City Council

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 Marc Duchon, 512-978-2110. Dist 10
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EMERGENCY: Police, Fire, EMS, Animal Control: Call 911

The National Suicide/Mental Crisis
Hotline: 988

Trans Hotline: 877-565-8860

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

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

Office of Police Oversight
policeoversight@austintexas.gov

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Walnut Creek Neighborhood

Association membership is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within its boundaries:

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:
<https://wcnanews.com/membership/>

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

To contribute content to the newsletter: wcnanews@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

Mar	14-29	Austin Rodeo - https://rodeoaustin.com
	17-22	AISS Spring Break
	17	St. Patrick's Day
	20	First Day of Spring
	26	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
Apr	5	Austin Kite Festival - https://www.abckitefest.org
	6	Cap10k - https://www.cap10k.com
	8	Great American Eclipse between 1:35-1:40 p.m.
	9	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	12	Keep Austin Beautiful Day: Check at https://www.wcnanews.com/
	15	Tax Day
	19	WCNA Spring Garage Sale! See announcement above
	20	Easter
	23	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	26	Take Back Drug Day
May	3-4	Pecan Street Festival - https://pecanstreetfestival.org
	5	Cinco de Mayo
	7	Blue Recycle Container Picked Up: Curbside by 7:00 a.m.
	10	UT Commencement
	12	Mother's Day
	17-18	Austin Spring Home & Garden Show https://www.txhomeshows-pm.com/about-the-show