



# NEWSLETTER

33 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

A PUBLICATION FOR AND BY THE MEMBERS OF THE WALNUT CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, INC. AUSTIN, TEXAS 78753

January - February 2009 Issue No. 1



## THE UNTOLD AUSTIN HOUSING MARKET STORY

*By Your neighbor  
Jill Leberknight  
Jill@kw.net*

The housing market and mortgage scene sure has received a lot of media coverage in 2008. It seems like conversations of home sales and market values has become as popular a topic around tables and bars as college football & politics, and that's saying a lot because this has been quite an exciting year for both.

Indeed a lot of drama has occurred in '08 that merits some hearty chit-chat but I believe the Austin media has unfortunately missed celebrating some rather unique and worthwhile perspectives on the local real estate front.

To start, did you know that Forbes.com ranked Austin #2 in their list of "Best Cities to Buy in the Country" and #1 of the "Fastest Growing Metros?" Forbes.com also listed Austin as one of the top cities in the country to see home prices rise

in the coming years and the Housing Predictor, an independent real estate market forecast group, ranked Austin #6 in the nation for the best market to watch in 2009!

Additionally – although KVUE or KXAN might not have a reason to share the 2008 home sales report for our very own Walnut Creek Neighborhood – our community STATS were just as newsworthy. Did you know that the price per square foot (PPSF) rose 3% in Walnut Creek Neighborhood in 2008? PPSF ended 2007 at approximately \$95 and rose to \$97.80 in 08 and up to \$101.56 in Eubank Acres alone with half of these homes sales occurring in the last quarter of the year.

We can also celebrate that the average days on the market for our entire neighborhood is 27 days below the Greater Austin average of 81 days and that inventory has maintained a relatively balanced rate with the average home sale price just shy of \$175,000. That's well within the target range for the average Austin buyer.

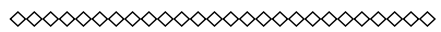
This is a remarkable story, I think, considering all the gloom and doom we are hearing on the news these days. Certainly, there have been some changes in the Austin market compared to this time last year but in the national big picture Austinites, and more specifically Walnut Creek Residents, are faring much better than most across the country.

*(Continued on page 3)*



## LAST CALL FOR DUES!

O.K. after this we'll get off your back about WCNA dues for a whole year! But seriously, your dues are what keeps our neighborhood association strong and keeps the lines of communication going all year. This newsletter, park maintenance, our annual Neighborhood Nite Out, support for appearances before governmental entities, postage, sign materials, etc., all are financed from WCNA dues. Support WCNA now by sending the coupon on the last page of this newsletter along with \$15.00 to WCNA, PO Box 82746, Austin, Tx 78708-2746.



## BRAKER/LAMAR CLEAN-UP

At the last WCNA board meeting, we decided that, since we do such a good job keeping up the appearance of our Walnut Bluffs Trail, we should see if we can spark some interest for doing the same along the major entrances to the neighborhood, Braker Lane and Lamar. So, some of your

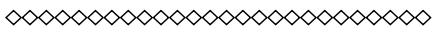
*(Continued on page 2)*



## AUSTIN HOUSING MARKET STORY

*(Continued from Page 1)*

So, in an effort to begin the New Year on a positive and hopeful note, I thought I would share this alternative, “untold” story with all of you and continue to tout that WCN is a great place to live and a great place to do real estate in this top ranked city of Austin, Texas. Feel free to call or email me if you have questions about any of this news or want to continue the conversation. I look forward to visiting with you in 2009!



## NEW TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTH CLINIC IS APPROVED

*The following was taken from an update by Francoise Luca, Gracywoods Neighborhood Association Media Representative*

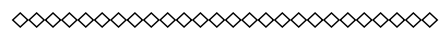
The TCHD Board of Managers voted “yes” to the purchase of 1210 W. Braker Lane. There was however an important amendment with specific direction to staff on the following:

- A North Central neighborhood and stakeholders advisory board and (or process) will be formed and a formal agreement (contract) be drafted to hold TCHD accountable for the development of the property per the joint recommendations from the advisory board and TCHD.
- The Board wants a formal review of all the costs of the project once the design of the building and functions of the building are finalized and before construction begins.
- A Northeast neighborhood and stakeholder advisory board and/or process will be formed to review the transition of patients to other clinics and how to provide services closer to that community if still needed. The

time line will be within two years from now, so that the Board can decide whether to give up the lease on the Northeast Clinic or not (notice due in two years/ lease is for five).

For surrounding neighborhoods, there is still much to do. We need to organize and nominate representatives to the advisory board. We need to keep communication channels open between our neighborhoods and organizations. We also need to keep up the pressure for accountability and transparency on TCHD. And finally, we need to continue to seek legislative action on changing the appointment of Board members to an elected position.

Thank you all for your support, calls, emails, meetings, protest marches over these last few months. We have made great progress, affected change in our community, and made new friends.



## GOOD NEWS FOR NORTH AUSTIN!

Finally, action is being taken to crack down on the crime problem in neighborhoods to our south. A civil nuisance abatement lawsuit was filed against the owner of the Budget Lodge at Rundberg and IH35 on Dec. 1, and the owner was notified of the lawsuit on Dec. 2. We believe the next step will be

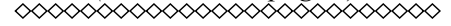
for the owner to answer to the suit and then most likely the attorneys will set an initial hearing date in District court.

Why is this important to you? For the past three years, Austin police have filed affidavits on this and four other properties. This is one of five properties in the I-35 and Rundberg area that harbor criminals and allow their activities on their property.

The District Attorney’s Office continually refused to act on APD’s request to have these properties shut down despite the crime that was being generated by these businesses. When asked why, the DA’s office stated ‘there was not enough public outcry’. For the past couple of years, North Austin neighborhood associations have stepped up the “public outcry” and have been putting pressure on the DA’s office and insisting that they file on these affidavits.

Our message is simple. If we want to get the crime cleaned up at I-35 and Rundberg, we need the DA’s office to insist that all business owners in this area abide by the City’s laws and codes. And we need the DA’s office to give our police officers back the power to shut down businesses that refuse to do so. Well, the District Attorney’s

*(Continued on page 4)*



## TEXAS TRIVIA



### QUESTION:

Where is the world’s largest brick?

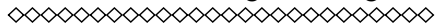
*(See page 4 for answer)*



## ZONING

(Continued from Page 4)

mentation should be late January or early February. Please contact a board member with comments or if you are interested in attending a meeting.



### SHADY OAKS GARDEN CLUB

Congratulations and a big “thank you” to the following neighbors for brightening our neighborhood during the holiday season. Award winners selected for Outstanding Christmas Display by the Shady Oaks Garden Club were:

**First Place:** The Kolbesons home at 700 Little Oak cast a spell with its wonderland of numerous sparkling Christmas figures. The house and shrubbery were also lighted and a star on the roof shone over all.

**Honorable Mention:**

- The Cannons at 11813 Tedford. Colored lights that neatly outlined the rooflines were very effective. The door and windows all had wreaths and glowed with greenery and colored lights. A conical tree of lights graced the lawn.

- The Kerr-Chappelow home at 11402 Indianhead. The roof and a long, raised planter were outlined in white lights. Red and white-lighted candy canes lined the curved walk and there were several sparkling Christmas trees on the lawn.

- The Espinosa residence at 11902 Whitewing featured a jolly Santa at the front door and the house glowed with flashing lights, all very neat and attractive.

Special Recognition was awarded for a second consecutive year to the entire 11803-11814 block of Cedar Valley Cove. Hopefully this will become a tradition so you can catch

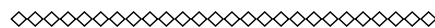


*Kolbeson's home at 700 Little Oak*

it next year if you've missed it.

Many others deserved mention in that they were very attractive and well done. It was difficult for the judges to select only a few.

Correction from the Nov./Dec. edition: Shady Oaks Nov./Dec. honorable mention address for Rodriquez is 11802 Indianhead.



### CITY SERVICES REPORT

Progress has been made since our last report on zoning and health violations. As of this Newsletter, two cases are outstanding.

- In the first, the owner of a commercial business on North Lamar will soon face legal action if he doesn't comply with the Office zoning.

- Another who was in the process of installing a used car lot close to Walnut Creek “just up and disappeared”, according to the inspector.

- A third violator, within the neighborhood, has yet to comply. The inspector is pursuing the case.

Complaint #08047747, for trash accumulation on Braker Lane. As of the publishing date of this newsletter, the complaint has still not been resolved. This complaint was originally called in back in the spring of 2008. At the time the last WCNA newsletter was published, Code Compliance Officers re-inspected the site and sent a letter to the property owner. Apparently, the property owner ignored the letter. Another complaint will be filed and results of that complaint will be reported in your next newsletter.

Trashed out property, overgrown weeds, cars parked on lawns, etc. are all violations of city ordinances, and have a negative effect on property values. The city Code Compliance Office and/or the Austin Police Department are the enforcement agencies for ordinances. The enforcement of ordinances is complaint driven and citizens are required to call to report a violator. To report a violation, please call (anonymously if you prefer) 311 OR your APD District Representative Office at 974-5722.

## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS"?

(Continued from Page 2)

do a lot more complaining. If you feel that this issue is effecting your quality of life, contact any or all of your Councilmembers and the Mayor and tell them what you think. Email - <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/groupemail.htm> or call any or all of the following:

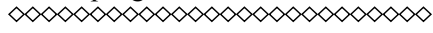
Concilmember Cole	974-2266
" Leffingwell	974-2260
" Martinez	974-2264
" Morrison	974-2266
" Shade	974-2258
Mayor Winn	974-2250
Mayor Protom McCracken	974-2256



## ONLINE CRIME STATS AVAILABLE

(Continued from Page 4)

having a good Neighborhood Watch Program and for just knowing your neighbors and keeping your eyes open for suspicious activity. Contact a WCNA board member if you'd like to get involved in our Neighborhood Watch program.



## CAPITAL METRORAIL UPDATE

Capital MetroRail is preparing for service to begin on the Red Line (substation will be located near Braker & Metric) on Monday, March 30, 2009. The Red Line will run on 32-miles of existing freight tracks between Leander and Downtown Austin. It will provide convenient service for suburban and central Austin residents. Future connections are being studied along existing Capital Metro freight tracks from Downtown to Manor and beyond. Future extensions along TxDOT's abandoned MoKan corridor are also possible.

## SCOOP THAT POOP!

The following appeal was taken off the WCNA News Yahoo Group Email:

*"Sorry for this email again this year. We have some maybe new dog walkers in the neighborhood who aren't picking up their dog's poop on their walk about the neighborhood. It's not fair to the neighbors who receive your dog's deposit, nor is it fun for us neighbors who take your same dog route and either ourselves or our own dog's step in your dog's poop. Please be responsible and bring a bag with you to collect your dog's deposits. You can go to petsmart and buy biodegradable bags to use for this to be even more responsible.*

*The latest offender(s) that we've noticed are on our route around Caddo, Oakwood and Indianhead -- and it's been occurring for the last couple of months almost daily and seems to be a medium-large sized dog...so could be a new neighbor walking or someone out walking again since the summer heat is over. We did see someone this am offend on Caddo, but we won't provide a description of this person as perhaps it was a mistake and they've gone back to pick it up. While we ourselves aren't perfect and sometimes forget our bag, we do however go back that same day and pick it up. So please remember to be a good neighbor dog walker and pick up your dog's poop!"*

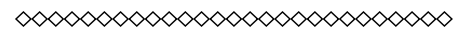
Note: Also, if you are conscientious enough to use pickup bags, you should take them with you and toss them in a trash can -- not simply leave them lying in the street.

## CHRISTMAS TREE DISPOSAL

If you've put off recycling that once beautiful Christmas tree, take heart - you can dispose of them the same way as other yard waste. Residents should use the following guidelines when recycling their trees:

- All trees six feet or taller should be cut in half
- Remove all ornaments, decorations, and tree stand
- Do not place tree in a "tree bag" before setting on the curb
- Only real Christmas trees may be recycled

For the 173,000+ Pay-As-You-Throw customers served by Solid Waste Services, recycling a Christmas tree is as easy as setting it on the curb. Solid Waste Services will pick up all trees with yard trimmings on regularly scheduled collection days. They are then recycled along with yard trimmings to make Dillo Dirt™.



## NORTH LAMAR COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA MEETING

While this study only pertains to the neighborhoods to the south of Braker Lane, you might want to attend just for your own enlightenment on the process. At some point our neighborhood will be asked to take part in our own study.

Mid-Process Open House, Saturday, January 24, 2009, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, St. Mark United Methodist Church, Fellowship Hall, 601 West Braker Lane, Austin, Texas 78753

Meeting Topics: The mid-process open house will give participants a chance to review topic chapters of the North Lamar Combined Planning Area neighborhood plan, and make comments.

Please complete and send to: WCNA, PO Box 82746, Austin TX 78708-2746

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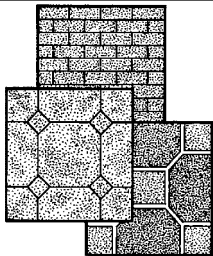
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COMMENT(S): \_\_\_\_\_

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