

Willow Creek News & Views

Spring 2017

A publication of



WCHOA ~ Willow Creek Homeowners Association, Inc.

"Deed Restricted Single-Family Neighborhood" — www.wchoatx.com

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President's Message:

Dear Willow Creek HOA Members,

Hellooo Spring and Daylight Saving Time!!! And, of course, with some extra light at the end of the day, some gorgeous weather, and we've got the perfect conditions to inspire more of us to walk (and, for the more energetic among us, jog) through the neighborhood in the early evenings. Exercise helps relieve stress, helps keep muscles toned, and, if we're walking, it helps keep us engaged with our Willow Creek neighborhood. What a great opportunity to greet an old friend, meet a new one, or simply wave at those who drive by. And that simple wave can help motorists to see you better, keeping you safer, while it keeps our spirits lifted, reflecting the friendliness of our lovely neighborhood.

Speaking of roadway safety, as you've probably noticed, the City of San Marcos is conducting a traffic-speed study on parts of Stagecoach Trail, with the speed limit temporarily reduced from 30 mph to 25 mph. Please respect this change, understanding that no permanent changes have yet taken place. Any change would be based on a full analysis of the data being gathered, along with the input of our residents. You can let the city know your thoughts by calling the City of San Marcos Transportation Department at 512-393-8036. We'll keep you advised of any changes.

Special thanks to everyone – homeowners and customers – who helped make our annual neighborhood Spring Garage Sale so successful. It's one of the most anticipated and best-attended in town. And what a great way to make some room in the garage for some of those new garden or automotive tools you've been eyeing all year! The Spring Garage Sale is one of the benefits provided by the Willow Creek Estates Homeowners Association. By working together, as a group, we can provide more publicity to help bring more customers to your sale.



Now that we've made room in our garages and attics, it's also time to start thinking about our yards, our fences, and maybe a new "look" for our landscaping. Ol'man Winter, mild as he may have been this year, still left plenty of work for us: clearing brush, picking up downed branches and, for too many of us, losing trees that we expected to last for many more seasons. And if you're not sure about when to put out your yard waste, your recyclables, or your trash for collection, just check the [events calendar](#) on our web site.

But isn't it easier just to burn it? Well, maybe; maybe not. It all depends on where you live. As you're planning to get rid of winter yard debris, keep in mind that open burning is not permitted at any time within the San Marcos city limits. If you're a County resident, burning may be permitted, based on current weather and environmental conditions. You can [click here](#) for up-to-date information from the Office of the Hays County Fire Marshall. This helpful site also includes outdoor burn rules for Hays County.

If, like myself, you lost several trees over the last few years and plan to replace them, you might want to consider working with a local landscaper or arborist to pick the right ones. Native trees and plants have a greater chance to succeed in our challenging climate. Deer-resistant plants are ideal although deer will devastate almost any greenery if food sources are scarce enough. Some of our neighbors have built berms or stone barriers to help slow soil erosion. Build these with the use of landscape design experts to avoid flooding or soil erosion. Keep your neighbors in mind so that changes to your landscaping don't result in added water flow through their property. We want to stay on good terms with our neighbors (especially if they're planting a vegetable garden and have some extras to share at harvest time).

If you're planning landscaping changes, it's worth remembering that small rocks tumble faster than larger rocks in fast moving water. There are reasons for those larger-rock choices. Avoid using small, loose "glass" or bead-type decorations if you expect your landscape design to last longer than one season.

Measure Twice - Cut Once:

If you're going to replace an old fence that's seen its last winter, or getting ready to put up a new one – to keep the deer out or just for a little privacy – it's always a good idea to review your deed restrictions first. The same advice holds true if you're planning ahead for summer fun that may include a pool, a new patio, deck, pergola, greenhouse, garden or tool shed – even a berm or new paving or driveways. Different parts of Willow Creek Estates often contain different deed restrictions. What may be permitted on the property around the corner may not be permitted on yours. It's best to be prepared so your plans match your tastes, your needs, and community requirements. If you have a question, you can check architectural requirements for your section, share plans, and get approval by clicking on [the Willow Creek Estates HOA website](http://www.wchoa.org). If you have a question or a concern, send us an email at <http://wchoatx.com/contact-us/> or submit your [architectural request](#). We know how important your project is to you, so you can be sure we'll get back to you quicker than a Texas weather change. It's worth pointing out that *WCHOA Architectural Control approval is in addition to any required municipal building permits and/or municipal code requirements.*

Critters:

Thank you for keeping your pets confined to your property and on a leash when you walk them. This prevents dogs from running into trouble by running into traffic. Your pets, your neighbors, and everyone driving through Willow Creek appreciates it.

Despite our best efforts, our household pets sometimes hatch elaborate plans for successful "field trips" and it seems like a lot of lost dogs have been on the loose lately. Please make sure your fence is secure and your dog can't escape. Microchipping is a good idea but more importantly, have a collar with an ID tag. This is the quickest + easiest way to get a lost dog back home.

You never know when a pet is going to experience the call of the wild. But if your dog or cat does wander off, let us know, and we'll quickly post (along with a photo if you've got one) that information on our website. WCHOA has a great track record of reuniting critters with their owners. And if a dog or cat finds its way to your home and appears to be lost, submit your information using the [Lost and Found](#) form on our website and we'll get that information out as well. If you want to advertise for a pet sitter, post your requirements on our [Just Willow Creek](#) page.



Annual Meeting:

Our annual meeting is coming up on Sunday, June 25, from 3 pm to 5 pm, at the San Marcos Police Department on the west I-35 Frontage Road, between Wonder World Drive and McCarty Lane. If you have concerns, agenda items or are interested in serving on the Board as an elected director or an officer send a message to wchoa99@gmail.com or contact a current Board member directly. We always need help and will probably have at least one opening in June.

Being a Board member can be exciting way to support your local community. Your current board is a group of engaged individuals who work and speak on your behalf—and we can represent you best by understanding your needs and priorities. We need you to attend so we have a successful meeting. Let your voices be heard! We're asking you to support your HOA in other ways, too – such as submitting an item for

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City and School Board Elections:

So soon? Didn't we just elect a President six months ago? Well, yes, we did. And now it's time to go to the polls again, for purely local issues. On Saturday, May 6, the City of San Marcos is holding elections for the issuance of bonds for public-safety and library improvements. On the same day, the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District is holding elections for three single-member-district trustees and facility construction and improvement bonds.

The single-member school district trustee seats in this year's school-board election (Districts 1, 2 and 3) do not include the Willow Creek area, which is in District 4, and there are no at-large trustee seats at stake.

You must have been registered to vote by April 6 to cast a ballot in either of these elections. You must be a resident of the City of San Marcos to be eligible to vote in the San Marcos City bond election, and a resident of the area served by the San Marcos CISD to vote in the SMCISD bond election.

During the early-voting period, various dates and times from Monday, April 24, through the following Tuesday, May 2, you may vote at any of the combined City of San Marcos/San Marcos CISD voting sites. On Election Day, Saturday, May 6, you must vote at the designated polling location for our school-board district. For SMCISD District 4 voters, this is Crockett Elementary School, 1300 Girard Street, in San Marcos. There are no Sunday early-voting hours. Polls are open from 7 am to 7 pm on Election Day. Early voting locations and schedules are:

Hays County Government Center
First-Floor Conference Room
712 S. Stagecoach Trail, San Marcos

Texas State University, LBJ Student Center
601 University Drive, San Marcos

Hays County Health Department
401 A Broadway Street, San Marcos

Monday, April 24, 7 am – 7 pm
Tuesday, April 25 – Friday, April 28, 8 am – 5 pm
Saturday, April 29, 10 am – 12 pm
Monday, May 1, 7 am – 7 pm
Tuesday, May 2, 8 am – 5 pm

Monday, April 24, 11 am – 7 pm
Tuesday, April 25, 8 am – 5 pm

Wednesday, April 26, 8 am – 5 pm
Thursday, April 27, 8 am – pm
Friday, April 28, 8 am – 5 pm
Saturday, April 29, 10 am – 2 pm



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Here's the Key Information About the Initiatives on the May 6 Ballot:

San Marcos City Bond Initiatives - The two San Marcos City bond initiatives would increase the city property tax rate by a projected total of 8.37 cents per \$100 of valuation (based on current estimates and valuations), or \$125.55 per year for a \$150,000 home (the approximate average home value in San Marcos) if both initiatives were to pass. The initiatives are broken down as follows:

Public Safety: Projected tax rate increase of 5.3 cents per \$100 of valuation

- Police Department renovations (Capital costs \$5.5 million): These renovations will make improvements to the existing 911 center, add security and perimeter fencing, make parking lot improvements, replace existing HVAC equipment, and create new offices and functional improvements to the police station.
- Holland Fire Station #2 relocation (Capital costs \$5.2 million): This project will relocate Fire Station #2 to a new site recommended by the Task Force and replaces the 63-year-old structure that the station has occupied since its opening in 1954.
- Highpointe Fire Station #8 construction (Capital costs \$4.5 million, ongoing operating costs \$1.4 million): This contractually obligated fire station is being funded in part by the developer of the Highpointe community and will be located on the east side of IH-35, a section of the city that has not had dedicated fire resources for a number of years. The project includes the purchase of a fire truck for the station and includes \$1.4 million for personnel and station operating costs.
- Fire Training Field (Capital costs \$2 million, ongoing operating costs \$50,000): This facility will allow San Marcos Firefighters to conduct training including but not limited to residential and high rise live fire training, rope and trench rescue, confined space rescue, vehicle extrication, and fire, police, and EMS integrated response training. This type of training is not currently conducted since the nearest facility is in Buda and would take firefighters out of the City's area and unable to respond if needed.

San Marcos Library Expansion: Projected tax rate increase of 3.07 cents per \$100 of valuation

- The Library Expansion (Capital cost \$14.5 million, ongoing operating costs \$500,000) This project would expand the existing library by approximately 29,000 square feet and renovate the existing facility, which was built in 1994 and served 373,334 people in the 2016 fiscal year.

San Marcos CISD Bond Initiatives - The San Marcos CISD bond initiative calls for a \$107.3 million bond in a single proposition. The Board of Trustees does not expect the bond to increase the district's tax rate. This proposition calls for the following:

Recommended Facility Elements— Total of \$100 million

- One new elementary school -- \$30,500,000
- Renovations to all elementary campuses and Goodnight Middle School -- \$32,600,000
- Miller Middle School addition and renovations -- \$19,600,000
- Classroom additions to San Marcos High School -- \$17,300,000

Recommended Transportation Element – Total of \$3.8 million

- Addition of new transportation center and 10 new buses -- \$3,800,000

Recommended Safety & Security Options -- \$3.5 million

Additional energy management systems -- \$1,500,000

Additional technology and security infrastructure -- \$2,000,000



Code SMTX:

It's been a long road. The people have spoken – at presentations, meetings, and workshops. And the City of San Marcos has been listening. Now we're almost there, close to the finish line on our new Code SMTX, a modern revision of our Land Development Code. The City of San Marcos' existing Development Code was adopted in December 2002. Somebody starting first-grade in 2002 would be about a year away from college graduation today. Over those years, as the city's growth mushroomed, as roads became more and more congested, as apartment development continues to change the face of the city, and even single-family development is setting new records, it's become clear that we need a better process for more rational development. Heck, even the H-E-B, for all the disagreement resulting from its proposal to put up a third store at Wonder World and Hunter, recognized that a new and better store was needed on the south side of the City, an area poised for steady and focused retail, service, and single-family development. Going into the development of SMTX, the old Land Use Code was found to be inadequate to the City's current vision, as described by its Comprehensive Plan, adopted in April 2013.



<http://pullenelectric.com>

The code determines the look and feel of our city through rules for development. Based on input from residents in every area of the city, Code SMTX includes updates to all regulations relating to land development that address items like building heights, building materials, required landscaping, street design, lot and block size requirements, parkland dedication, and storm water management. Ultimately, Code SMTX expands the portions of the city where walkable urbanism (as opposed to drive-only suburbanism) is the default.

Sometimes it could seem that the City as it developed under the 2002 Code was a collection of exceptions to the rule rather than one which uses as its baseline the City as it exists today, not the City as it existed 15 years ago. Here's a quick look at some of the Code's big ideas:

1. Streamline the development process

How: Adopt a code that is easy to navigate and provides graphic examples of the type of development required in each area of the city

2. Relieve development pressure on existing neighborhoods and the San Marcos River

How: Provide pre-approved locations for appropriate high density development in areas identified by the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Protect existing neighborhood character within areas of stability

How: 1. Complete Neighborhood Character Studies

Read more at [Code SMTX](#) – and share your thoughts and comments. The Planning and Zoning Commission and the Members of the City Council can make adjustments to the proposal before it is finalized. We'll share more information as Code SMTX proceeds.

New Interim City Manager and New Director of Neighborhood Services:

The officers and directors of the Willow Creek Estates Homeowners Association work closely and cooperatively with our City Manager on many issues that affect the safety, appearance, and cohesiveness of our neighborhood. In his short time in the job, we've been impressed with newly appointed Interim City Manager Charlie Daniels. Mr. Daniels is an experienced city manager who has worked in high-growth communities and understands the challenges of expansion and how it impacts existing neighborhoods and surrounding areas.



The City has also named a new director of neighborhood services, Jeff Caldwell. In his new position, he will oversee Animal Services, Environmental Health, Code Compliance, and the Park Ranger Program. He will also be responsible for licensing for Texas Commission on Law Enforcement certified employees of the Municipal Court. Caldwell has previous experience with the city of San Marcos, having served as the Park Ranger Program Director, a sergeant with the San Marcos Police Department, and park ranger. He was also the city administrator and chief of police for the City of Martindale. Caldwell has a bachelor of applied arts and science degree from Texas State University. The leadership of WCHOA looks forward to working with Mr. Daniels and Mr. Caldwell.

Annual Dues:

Dues! Dues! Dues! Dues is due! For \$20 annually, you help provide critical financial support for many services and support activities that take place in our neighborhood. There's the Spring Garage Sale, Neighborhood Night Out, Christmas Lights Contest, and our Annual Meeting. Day-to-day our Board members respond to architectural review requests, information requests, and help resolve deed restriction issues. We also work with the City and County services departments on all types of neighborhood support including pothole repair, streetlight replacement, signage, traffic enforcement and mowing public areas. We run a tight ship to make sure we get the most bang for your 20 bucks. So, please, help us in our work of making sure Willow Creek Estates remains one of the most desirable places to live in San Marcos. Either mail a check to WCHOA, PO Box 1883, San Marcos TX 78667-1883 or go to the [WCHOA website](#) and pay thru PayPal. A few clicks and it's done. So easy! And such great value! And we want to say a great big *THANK YOU* to the nearly 150 residents who have already become financially supporting members of WCHOA for the 2017 year. We are grateful for your support.



Traffic Blues:

Please observe the speed restrictions and traffic in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. The life you save may be your own or somebody you love. Whenever you drive, make it an opportunity to show your passengers how much you respect them.

Our Advertisers:

We want to acknowledge our great advertisers (all locally owned businesses located in southwest San Marcos). They all say they enjoy working with the great folks in the Willow Creek area. Their support provides partial funding for our WCHOA sponsored events, maintaining/upgrading our website, and distribution of newsletters. So please consider supporting our local businesses whenever possible. Our current advertisers (in alphabetical order) are:

- [**AirOne Heating & Air Conditioning**](#)
- [**Pullen Electric**](#)
- [**San Marcos Window Washing**](#)

We still have a limited number of ad slots available, so if you are interested in advertising with WCHOA, please contact our website facilitator using the [Contact Us](#) page on our website – wchoatx.com.