HOLIDAY CLOSURES. Most City facilities, except for public safety, will be closed Dec. 22 through Jan. 1, reopening Tuesday, Jan. 2 at 8 a.m. A detailed list will be posted by Dec. 14 on the City’s website, www.walnut-creek.org.

GET INVOLVED IN 2018. There will be vacancies on the Arts; Design Review; Park, Recreation and Open Space; and Planning commissions; and for representatives on the Contra Costa County Library Commission and Contra Costa Advisory Council on Aging. With the exception of a registered architect sought for the Design Review Commission, applicants must live in incorporated Walnut Creek and be registered voters. Applications will be available in January. Sign up to be notified when applications are available at walnut-creek.org/subscribe or contact City Clerk Suzie Martinez at smartinez@walnut-creek.org.

NEVER TOO YOUNG TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE — Quinn Schlunt, 3, with her mom Cari Ann, paints the Walnut Creek Equestrian Center fence. Quinn and her mom were among the 1,100-plus Community Service Day volunteers who helped make Walnut Creek shine, despite the rescheduling of all outdoor projects from Oct. 14 to Oct. 21 and 28 due to poor air quality from the North Bay fires. This year’s food drive included food for our neighbors up north, and netted a record 10,000 pounds. Community Service Day 2018 will be Oct. 13.

Road repairs get boost from gas tax

Oak Grove Road, North Main Street, and Ygnacio Valley Road will be the first Walnut Creek streets to benefit from the gas tax which went into effect Nov. 1. The 12-cents-per-gallon tax stems from the Road Repair and Accountability Act, or Senate Bill 1, which was passed by the state Legislature in April. It marks the first gas tax increase since 1994. The bill also raised vehicle license fees by $25 to $175 depending on the value of the car.

Walnut Creek normally spends about $2 million a year on road maintenance. The new gas tax will add another $1.2 million a year once it is fully implemented, which means more of the City’s 218 miles of streets can be taken care of each year.

To qualify for the tax revenue, the City had to identify specific projects. In 2018, the City plans to repave Oak Grove Road from Ygnacio Valley Road to Cedro, and from Mitchell Drive to the City limit.

Slated for repaving in 2019 are North Main Street between I-680 and California Boulevard; Ygnacio Valley Road between Civic and San Carlos drives; and Oak Grove Road between Ygnacio Valley Road and Mitchell Drive.

MARATHON ALERT. The Walnut Creek Half Marathon starts at 7 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 9 at Civic Park, and will make a loop from Treat Boulevard to Ygnacio Valley Road, returning to Civic Park. Traffic may be impacted between 7 and 10 a.m. Visit www.runwalnutcreek.com for details.
Holiday happenings

**Holiday Toy Drive**
Spread the magic of the season by donating new, unwrapped toys for underprivileged children. Bring the toys to the donation bins in the lobby of City Hall, 1666 N. Main Street before Dec. 12. The Walnut Creek Police Department will deliver the toys to the Marines’ Toys for Tots program. For more information, call Lauren Gehring, 925-256-3583.

**Jazz Band and Flock of Flutes Holiday Concert**
3 p.m. Dec. 10
Center for Community Arts, 111 N. Wiget Lane
Catch the Center for Community Arts Jazz Band and Flock of Flutes Annual Holiday Concert. Tickets at the door.

**CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ARTS**

**Handcrafted Holiday Sale**
Dec. 1-3
Shadelands Art Center, 111 N. Wiget Lane
The Handcrafted Holiday Sale at Center for Community Arts brings together handmade ceramics, glass, jewelry, fiber arts, photography, prints, and much more – all by Center for Community Arts teaching artists and students.

An opening reception on Friday, Dec. 1 from 5 to 8 p.m. offers entertainment and refreshments. The sale continues from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Dec. 2 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 3, with free treats and craft activities.

**Winter Ballet Gala**
December 8-9
Del Valle Theater, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd
Winter Ballet Gala is a performance rich in holiday culture from around the world. The array of music and dance embraces the celebrations of all people and many countries. Holiday favorites will be featured both in the classical and contemporary styles. Tickets: 925-943-SHOW, or at the door.

**BEDFORD GALLERY**

**Bg Craft Fest**
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 2-3
The best of the Bay Area’s crafters and artisans will share their wares at the Bg Craft Fest, now in its 10th year. Held inside the gallery, visitors can shop the Craft Fest and see the current exhibition, “About Abstraction: Bay Area Women Painters.” Craft Fest is free.

**About Abstraction: Bay Area Women Painters**
Through Dec. 17

“About Abstraction” celebrates 16 Bay Area women artists who have worked in abstraction for years. Go to bedfordgallery.org for more information.

More holiday happenings, next page
Holiday happenings

LESHER CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Tickets are available at the Lesher Center Box Office, 1601 Civic Drive, online at lesherartscenter.org or 925-943-7469. All shows listed here take place at the Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive.

Walnut Creek Concert Band
Holiday Concert
7:30 p.m. Nov. 28
Ring in the season with holiday music, and celebrate the 30th anniversary of Walnut Creek’s official concert band.

A Christmas Fantasia by
the Diablo Symphony Orchestra
Dec. 17
Conducted by Matilda Hofman, choirs from Walnut Creek and Danville join the orchestra to present Christmas carols and symphonic works from around the world.

A Lemony Snicket Holiday by
the California Symphony
Dec. 23
The composer is dead, and someone in the orchestra is guilty! This fun mystery for all ages was written with text from Lemony Snicket and composed in the style of Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf.”

A Christmas Carol, presented by
Center REPertory Company
Dec. 7-17
It’s still THE “Christmas Carol” to see in the Bay Area. Join the thousands who make this theatrical event a part of their annual holiday traditions.

The Biggest Gift, presented by
Fantasy Forum Actors Ensemble
Dec. 14-17
Did you send your letter to Santa? Then why has he not received it? No letters – No Christmas. Join the fun and laughter as Tucker the elf and the toys set out to save Christmas.

Big Fat Year End Kiss Off Comedy Show presented by Worst of Durst
8 p.m. Dec. 30
A look back at the major news stories of 2017 using stand-up comedy, improvisation and sketches.

WALNUT CREEK RECREATION

Spirit of the Season
Center REP’s “A Christmas Carol” joyfully returns to the Lesher Center for the Arts Dec. 7-17.

WALNUT CREEK RECREATION

Holiday Puppet Show & Fun with Santa
For ages 0 -12
10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Dec. 16
Heather Farm Community Center
Be entertained with a holiday Animal Trainer puppet show performed by Jungle Joe. Take a picture with Santa, enjoy a holiday treat and make a holiday craft to take home. Puppet Show begins promptly at 10:15am. Pre-registration is required; tickets are $15 (siblings under 1 are free). Register for class #1672 at www.walnutcreekrec.org or call 925-943-5858.

BOUNDARY OAK GOLF COURSE

Breakfast with Santa
10 a.m. - noon Dec. 17
Come meet the Man in Red! $10 per person includes a pancake breakfast and a picture with Santa.

Sip – Savor – Shop: A fundraiser
Benefitting North Bay Fire Victims
6-9 p.m. Thursday Dec. 21
$50 per person includes Italian Buffet and Live Music. Additional fun: Live Auction and gift boutique for last minute shopping and stocking stuffers.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Holiday Faire at the Shadelands
and Victorian Holiday Tea
Nov. 25 – Dec. 10
The holidays come to the Shadelands Ranch Museum, 2660 Ygnacio Valley Road. The historic home will overflow with beautiful handcrafted items of every description. More than 30 vendors will be offering their items. The Faire will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Dec. 11; admission is free. A Victorian Holiday Tea will be served at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Cost is $35. Advance reservations are required. Call 925-935-7871.

New York New Year’s Strolling Dinner Party
6 p.m. - 12:30 a.m. Dec. 31
Watch the ball drop 2 times at Boundary Oak and ring in the New Year! Numerous culinary delights and an evening of dancing await you and your friends. Tickets are $70 per person and include wine, beer and soft drinks.
raigslist and similar websites make it easy for strangers to buy and sell goods. While the initial sale occurs online, in many cases the buyer and seller meet in person to exchange the goods. Here are some tips from the Walnut Creek PD for safely conducting these exchanges:

1 – Meet in a public place, such as inside Walnut Creek City Hall, which has a first-floor lobby staffed by Police department between 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

2 – Always meet during daylight hours in a place with plenty of people coming and going.

3 – Bring someone with you, and let the buyer/seller know in advance that you will not be alone at the exchange.

4 – Never give out your home address, or other personal or financial information.

* Please note that Walnut Creek City Hall is only open on weekdays, and that the PD first-floor lobby is only staffed Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m.

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Prepared for anything
By Megan Stephenson
Emergency Preparedness Manager
The North Bay fires are on our minds. It’s hard to forget that our nearby neighbors, friends, and family were subjected to the worst fire ever in California history. City Hall was flooded with questions on how to donate and volunteer to support the fire recovery. Taking time to check your own well-being is just as important.

Today, think what you would need if you had to leave your home on a moment’s notice. Where would you go to meet up with your family and friends? Who would you call out of the area to tell them that you are safe? What would you carry in your bag, vehicle, or have saved online? How would you get critical life-safety information? These questions will get you prepared for anything - fire, earthquake, flood, or just a really bad day.

1. Write this down and save:
   - Where you will meet
   - Who you will call out of the area
   - Other critical numbers
   - Neighbors’ information

2. Start packing a go-bag:
   - Water and food
   - Flashlight and batteries
   - Warm clothes
   - Phone charger
   - Supplies for children
   - Supplies for pets
   - Copies of important documents
   - Cash in small denominations
   - Prescriptions and glasses
   - Tools
   - Sanitary supplies

3. Get critical safety information:
   - Make sure “government alerts” are on your smartphone
   - Sign up for the Community Warning System
   - Get connected to the City and the Walnut Creek PD on Twitter at @walnutcreekgov and @walnutcreekpd
   - Sign up for Nixle alerts by texting your zip code to 888-777 or go to www.nixle.com.

Get ready to make a difference in disaster
Calling all future CERTs: Ready to learn more about preparedness? Walnut Creek Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) classes will begin again in 2018!
   - CERTs are the City’s volunteer disaster service workers who are trained to safely respond to the needs of the community after disaster. CERTs also help with preparedness activities, and have been called out by the Police to help search for missing persons.
   - Join us to learn about personal preparedness, fire safety, first aid, light search and rescue, and more.

Spring classes begin on April 10 and will run for 7 weeks from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesdays. The graduation drill takes place Saturday, June 9 from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. There is a $25 fee. To learn more, and to register, go to walnut-creek.org/cert.

Have copies of your documents ready to go
Keep these in a waterproof, portable container or store electronically.
   - Your driver’s license
   - The deed to your house
   - Proof of insurance
   - Medical records
   - Passports
   - Social security cards
   - Vital records (birth, marriage, adopted, child custody papers)
   - Lease or rental agreement
   - Bank account records

Sign up for emergency notifications via email and cell phones
Walnut Creek is part of Contra Costa County’s emergency notification system. While listed and unlisted landline phone numbers are already included in the database and do not need to be registered, you must register to receive emergency alerts to your cell phone, email address or VoIP phone. Go to https://cwsalerts.com.
Startups coming to create in City Hall

City Hall conference rooms will be abuzz this winter with new visitors: startups working for 16 weeks as part of a Startup in Residence (STIR) Program. The STIR Program is hosted by San Francisco’s Mayor’s Office of Civic Innovation.

Each year, cities compete for the chance to collaborate with startups on creative solutions for real-world challenges. For 2018, Walnut Creek was selected along with Boulder; Houston; San Antonio; Washington, D.C.; Miami; Santa Monica; and Vallejo.

Participating cities propose projects that need solutions; startups apply for projects that they are suited to solve; and the selected startup delivers a prototype by the end of the 16-week program.

Walnut Creek’s proposals include an app to coordinate volunteers, a website to accelerate the start of City contracts, a traffic dashboard, and an online method for applying for residential parking permits. At the time the Nutshell went to the printer, no final decision had been made on which projects would be done.

The goal of the program is to give cities access to the best technology to solve critical challenges while giving startups new ways to collaborate with government partners.

Rebates available for home energy upgrades

Home Upgrade is an Energy Upgrade California® program that helps single family homeowners save energy and money while increasing the comfort of their home. A Home Upgrade Advisor can help homeowners receive rebates up to $5,500 for installing energy efficient upgrades for heating, air conditioning, insulation, water and more. Call 866-878-6008 to speak with a Home Upgrade Advisor or visit BayAreaEnergyUpgrade.org.
In a Nutshell  Winter 2017-18

Public works upgrades in parks, downtown

Our Parks division has been hard at work! Here are some projects currently under way or just completed.

Lar Rieu Park renovation – Phase one was to start the first week of November (after the Nutshell went to the printer). Among the Phase 1 highlights: trails upgrades to make them accessible year-round; planting an olive tree orchard; creation of a parking lot; and a pad for the relocation of the CERT container to its new site. Lar Rieu Park is a 10-acre property given to the City by Miriam Lar Rieu. Located at 196 El Camino Corto, it has a stunning view of Mount Diablo.

Irrigation upgrade – The City is committed to reducing irrigation consumption by 20 percent by 2020, and two current irrigation replacement projects at Larkey Park and the Heather Farm Park meadow will help make that happen.

Downtown – Main and Locust are getting lit up! The twinkling tree lights needed ongoing maintenance and impacted the health of the trees, so we’re switching to Tivoli lights that can be strung from lamp post to lamp post.

El Divisadero Park improvements
Thanks to Community Service Day volunteers, we were able to complete installation of outdoor fitness equipment and wood balance beams at this park.

Free tax preparation

Our Parks division has been hard at work! Here are some projects currently under way or just completed.

It is now safer for kids at two Walnut Creek schools to walk or bike to school, thanks to a partnership between Walnut Acres Elementary, Foothill Middle School, the City of Walnut Creek and a dedicated team of parents and community members.

And on October 4, everyone came together to celebrate in honor of National Walk to School Day. Kids walking or biking to Walnut Acres Elementary or Foothill Middle School were greeted by parents, City and school officials, and StreetSmarts, Diablo Region.

It all began in November 2015 when parent Cherise Khaund created a change.org petition asking for pedestrian safety improvements. City engineers met with a small group of parents at a local bagel shop to hear their concerns and find ways to work together despite limited budget.

From there, ideas were evaluated by the Transportation Commission, with final approval by the City Council.

The “Safe Routes to School” project resulted in multiple improvements on Wiget and Cedro, including two new flashing pedestrian beacons, three new crosswalks, a new bike lane on Cedro, digital speed signs, and sidewalk bulbouts that slow down cars and create safer and shorter crossings for pedestrians.

“When I first sent out that change.org petition two years ago, I had no idea that nearly 200 people would sign it, and that City staff would work so closely with us to make our vision a reality,” said Khaund. “This truly is an example of how bringing community together is the way to get things done.”

Collaboration creates safer streets

California residents looking for health insurance can purchase coverage through the California exchange Covered California at www.coveredca.com. Open enrollment started on November 1 and continues through January 31, 2018. Learn about the various health insurance options available under the Affordable Care Act. Those with coverage may be able to save money with a new plan.

Telephone support is also available. Call Covered California at 1-800-300-1506. The TTY line for those with hearing impairment is 888-889-4500.

Walnut Acres school children and parents use one of the new crosswalks installed on Wiget Avenue as part of a “Safe Routes to School” project.

Free tax preparation is available starting in February, courtesy of AARP’s Tax-Aide and United Way’s Earn It, Keep It, Save It (EKS) programs. Service is provided by volunteer tax preparers who are IRS trained and certified. Both programs serve taxpayers of any age, and AARP membership is not required for Tax-Aide. Earn it, Keep It, Save It service is limited to those with incomes below $54,000; Tax-Aide does not have a limit.

Beginning Jan. 8, for Tax-Aide site information or appointments in Walnut Creek, call: 925-943-5851 for the Walnut Creek Senior Center site; 925-405-6278 for the Walnut Creek Grace Presbyterian Church site; or 925-979-5013 for the Walnut Creek St. Paul’s Episcopal Church site. For Earn it, Keep It, Save It sites, call 2-1-1 or visit www.earnitkeepitsaveit.org.

Health insurance available through January

California residents looking for health insurance can purchase coverage through the California exchange Covered California at www.coveredca.com. Open enrollment started on November 1 and continues through January 31, 2018. Learn about the various health insurance options available under the Affordable Care Act. Those with coverage may be able to save money with a new plan.

Telephone support is also available. Call Covered California at 1-800-300-1506. The TTY line for those with hearing impairment is 888-889-4500.
Seniors, single parents among most vulnerable

There is the 90-year-old woman who was evicted when she couldn’t pay her rent. Now she lives in a shelter.

There is the single mom with two teen-aged children whose landlord just increased the rent by 50 percent. Now they may have to move away from the town they call home.

These are just two faces of the housing crisis in Walnut Creek.

Our affordability gap – the difference between median housing costs vs. median income – is growing ever wider. Rents are up by more than 55 percent since 2011, while incomes remained relatively flat.

The people who make our bustling downtown thrive – office workers, sales people, restaurant workers – cannot afford to live here. Neither can most teachers, or paramedics, or social workers.

Instead, they are forced to make long commutes to and from work each day, adding to traffic congestion, and eroding their quality of life.

As a community, we’ve said this issue matters. In fact, 73 percent of those taking the 2017 Citizen Survey said it was essential or very important that Walnut Creek focus on the affordability of housing. The City Council selected improving the affordability and availability of housing as one of their four priorities for 2017-18.

In this special report “California’s Housing Crisis Comes Home,” we explore what is causing the crisis, why it matters, and what the City is doing about it. We also highlight two current programs created to help those without a home.

We are not going to solve the housing crisis overnight. But the more we understand its causes and its consequences, the better equipped we are to work together toward solutions.

Margot Ernst
Housing Program Manager

CALIFORNIA’S HOUSING CRISIS COMES HOME

The Affordability Gap Grows

High Demand

819,663 jobs added in California 2010-2015

Limited Supply

63,465 homes built in California, 2010-2015

Housing Costs Increase

Median Income Increase
Contra Costa County
3.5%

Home Sale Price Increase Walnut Creek
27.5%

Rent Increase Walnut Creek
55.1%

Household Income Needed to Afford Walnut Creek

$111,440
Household annual income or hourly wage of $53.48 needed to afford a median two-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek. (Housing that is affordable is 30% of income)

Source: Analysis of Rent Jungle, Aug. 2017

$170,000
Household annual income needed to afford a median priced home in Walnut Creek. (with 20% down payment of $154,000)

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2016

What is Affordable by Income Level?

An example of some households that might be priced out of affording to live in Walnut Creek. Affordability is based on a percent of household income, 30% for rent and 35% for home ownership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Affordable monthly rent 30% of income</th>
<th>Affordable monthly housing cost, including mortgage, 35% of income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely low annual income, household of 3</td>
<td>$28,200</td>
<td>$705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low annual income, household of 3</td>
<td>$56,340</td>
<td>$1,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate annual income, household of 3</td>
<td>$105,200</td>
<td>$2,630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CALIFORNIA’S HOUSING CRISIS COMES HOME

Why We Need Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing in Walnut Creek

Affordable Housing is defined as housing costs at or below 30% of a resident’s income. In the current housing climate in Walnut Creek and the Bay Area, it is difficult for people to find housing that meets this affordable threshold.

Why is there a need for affordable housing in Walnut Creek?

Communities thrive when residents have safe and stable housing; when they live near their jobs, good schools and amenities and when families build roots in a culturally rich, diverse city.

Who benefits from affordable housing?

Rebecca Waggoner’s ties to Walnut Creek run deep. During her 22 years here, she’s served on the City’s Civic Arts Advisory Committee, launched a promotional products business, and volunteered for numerous school fund raisers and special events. Her daughter graduated from Las Lomas High, and her son is still a student there.

But Waggoner may soon be moving. A sudden 50% increase in rent is making it unlikely that she and her family will be able to remain in Walnut Creek.

“It’s scary,” she says. “I don’t know where we’ll go.”

Waggoner is hardly alone. As Walnut Creek rents soar – 55 percent over the last 5 years - long-term renters are likely to find themselves priced out of their home town.

A household would need an income of more than $110,000 a year to be able to afford an older 2-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek, given the median rent of $2,786, and following the “housing is 30 percent of income” guideline.

Persons in “helping professions” such as teachers, paramedics, police and firefighters are often priced out of that equation. So are many senior citizens. In fact, 65 percent of those 65 and older cannot afford even a one-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek.

Affordable housing would provide much-needed security and continuity for her family and others, says Waggoner.

“We’ve contributed financially, civically and socially to the community for 22 years. We would be devastated to have to leave.”

$2,786
Median market rate rent for an older 2-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek

$3,615
Median market rate rent for a 2-bedroom apartment built after 2010 in Walnut Creek

65%
The percentage of seniors 65 and older who cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek

73%
Percentage of Walnut Creek residents who indicated it was essential or very important that Walnut Creek focus on the affordability of housing in the 2017 National Citizen Survey.

16%
Percentage of Walnut Creek residents who rated the availability of quality affordable housing as excellent or good in the 2017 National Citizen Survey.

70%
Percentage of adults under 25 years old who cannot afford a 1-bedroom apartment in Walnut Creek
How does the City fund affordable housing projects?
The City subsidizes affordable projects that are being built
and managed by private developers and owners. Between 2005
and 2017, Walnut Creek contributed $21.6 million to eight projects that
resulted in 330 units.

Where does the money come from? The majority of it comes from
fees paid by market-rate developers, along with some state and federal
resources. The City collects that money and uses it as seed money
for an affordable housing project. Often, the City’s contribution is used
to buy the land. The affordable housing developer can then raise the
other funds needed to make the project a reality.

Finally a place to call home

Sandra Starr, 72, went from
almost being displaced
due to an apartment
complex upgrade to being
a homeowner, thanks to the
City’s housing policies. In
2009, the developers of 555
YVR agreed to include 5
below-market-rate condos to
comply with the inclusionary
zoning policy. When the
original owner one of the
condos moved out of the
area this year, 75 people
submitted pre-applications
to buy it. A random drawing
was held to determine the
order that applicants could
qualify to buy the unit; Starr’s
name was drawn first.

“There is a big group of wonderful people in this
community who can no longer afford housing. There needs
to be some very creative thinking to address this.” Sandra Starr

Walnut Creek’s Affordable Housing Programs and Policies
For more information about these programs, go to walnut-creek.org/housing or email housing@walnut-creek.org

Affordable Rental Opportunities
There are 450 affordable apartments in Walnut Creek.
The City works with developers
to create rental units with rents
restricted to be affordable to lower
income households.

Below Market Rate Homeownership Program (BMR)
There are 46 Below Market Rate
(BMR) homeownership homes
bought and occupied by low and
moderate income households.
These homes have sales price
restrictions so they are affordable
to low and moderate income
households.

First-Time Homebuyer Assistance Program (FTHB)
The City’s First Time Homebuyer (FTHB) Program helps low
and moderate income households
buy a house within Walnut Creek
by giving the household a loan to
assist with a portion of the down
payment. Interest-free equity share
loans are available to qualifying
homebuyers.

Home Rehabilitation Loan & Emergency Repair Program
The City contracts with Habitat
for Humanity to provide low-
interest rehabilitation loans and
emergency grants to low income
Walnut Creek homeowners for the
purpose of improving their Walnut
Creek Home.

Walnut Creek’s Affordable Housing Policies
Inclusionary Ordinance
This ordinance requires that
residential developers either
provide affordable housing as part
of their project, or pay “in lieu”
fees toward creation of affordable
housing elsewhere. The fees are
currently $15 per square foot of
livable space, and are increasing
to $18 in 2018. To put the impact
of in lieu fees in perspective, the
Brio project on Civic, near Ygnacio
Valley Road contributed nearly
$3.5 million in in lieu fees.

Commercial Linkage Fee
The Commercial Linkage Fee
Ordinance imposes a fee on new
commercial developments to
help fund workforce housing. It is
currently $5 per square foot.

Density Bonus
The Density Bonus Ordinance
provides incentives for the
production of housing for low and
moderate income, and senior
households. If developers agree
to dedicate a portion of their
residential projects for affordable
units, the City will allow them to
exceed the maximum number of
units allowed. There are various
types of concessions that can
be negotiated such as changes
in setbacks, height, and parking
spaces, or expedited permit
processing which may lower costs
for developers.

Affordable housing projects on the horizon

Riviera Family Apartments
58 units in two buildings
Status: Under Construction

St. Paul’s Commons
45 rental units plus church community
center Status: Approved

Habitat for Humanity – Las Juntas
42 ownership units
Status: Under review
With temperatures dropping, Trinity Center is preparing to run an overnight shelter at the Walnut Creek Armory from Dec. 4 through March 31. Those staying at the shelter are vetted members of the Walnut Creek-based non-profit. They are transported by van to and from the Armory; there are no drop-ins, nor any in-and-out privileges.

This is the third winter that Trinity Center has operated an overnight shelter. While the impact on the surrounding neighborhoods has been negligible, the impact on those staying at the shelter has been profound. Of the 61 members who enrolled in the winter overnight program last season, 44 worked with a case manager. As a result, 19 obtained either part- or full-time jobs; 14 received temporary housing, and five were placed in permanent housing.

In addition to the winter overnight shelter, Trinity Center offers day services to the homeless and working poor. For more information, go to trinitycenterwc.org.

“Homeless people have hopes and dreams just like we do. They come from all socioeconomic backgrounds. For one reason or another, they fell off track.”

DONNA COLUMBO, Trinity Center

Reaching homeless where they are

When the City Council created a Homeless Services Fund this summer, they earmarked $70,000 to share the cost of a CORE Outreach Team with Concord. There are six CORE teams countywide.

CORE team members establish relationships with homeless persons by meeting them where they are - in the streets, in camps, and in shelters. As they build trust, they are able to connect clients to vital services.

To learn more about how CORE works, we talked with Jenny Robbins, who created CORE in her role as housing and services administrator for Contra Costa’s Health, Housing and Homeless Services Division.

What is a typical day like?

We start the day checking in with our CORE dispatcher, and make assignments from there. We work closely with the Police department as well, calling into their dispatch to find out what calls they’ve received, and going out to those locations. If there are no calls or direction from the police, then we start by visiting hot spots, encampments that have recently popped up or become an issue.

There are certain areas where people tend to congregate, like parks, or BART. Through continued engagement and ongoing visits, we get to the point where we know people by name.

As we talk with people, we begin to explore why they are homeless. As we gather this information, we can start to peel back the layers on why things are the way they are.

Are you seeing any trends?

Anecdotally, we see that many homeless individuals in Walnut Creek self-identify as being from the area. They may have grown up there, or went to school there. Oftentimes people who are homeless end up staying where it’s familiar, especially if they have a disability or other special needs. According to the 2017 Point in Time Count, 80 percent of people experiencing homelessness in Contra Costa lost their housing in Contra Costa.

A continued countywide trend that we’re following is the huge influx of elderly people becoming homeless. We see 90-year-olds who were evicted and now in shelters living with dementia.

What would success look like?

It’s a trajectory. CORE is planting the seed. We aren’t going to give someone hygiene supplies and have people immediately say they are ready to come inside.

So short term success is building trust, and getting buy in to see a doctor, or taking a shelter bed after being offered one multiple times.

In the long run, permanent housing in an environment that is best for the individual is what we are working toward and is our definition of success.
Meet the Youth Leadership Commission

The City launched a pilot Youth Leadership Commission in September with 15 enthusiastic high school students. The goal of the commission is to develop the civic and community leaders of tomorrow.

“This program gives me an opportunity to do something in MY community, FOR my community and WITH my community. I do not want to be one of those people that sits around talking about what others should do - I want to BE that person,” said Commissioner Carly Ortega.

The nine-month program is split into two semesters. During the first semester, Commissioners have been delving into topics such as traffic management and land use, touring City facilities, and getting a crash course in “Local Government 101.” Each session kicks off with a presentation by a City Council member.

This overview is intended to prepare the Commissioners for the second semester’s activity: selecting and completing a team service project that benefits the community, and presenting the results to the City Council.

Interest was high in the inaugural Youth Leadership Commission, with nearly 75 applicants. All Youth Commissioners are Walnut Creek residents. They attend one of the following schools, or are home schooled: Las Lomas, Northgate, Orinda Academy, Campolindo, Athenian, Carondelet, Bentley, College Park and De La Salle.

Nutshell editor retires after 17 1/2 years

Gayle Vassar, the City’s first Communications and Outreach manager to serve on the Executive Team, is retiring at the end of the year.

“Walnut Creek is an amazing place,” said Vassar. “It has been a joy to work on behalf of the community, and to build connections between our organization and the people we serve.”

In her 17 ½ years with the City, Vassar created Walnut Creek’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, led 19 Citizens Institutes, launched the City’s social media and television platforms, and served as project manager for the Centennial. She was the 2008 Employee of the Year, and the editor of the Nutshell since 2009.

“I was incredibly fortunate to be able to build upon excellent programs started by others, like the Nutshell and the Citizens Institute, and to have the support of City Council members and City Managers to try new things over the years,” she said.