BULLMAN WITH BULLDOG ARRIVES

“Bullman with Bulldog” arrived at the corner of North Main and Mt. Diablo Boulevard on May 11. The life-sized cast bronze sculpture by artist Gerald Heffernon is a gift to the City’s public art collection from Brian Hirahara of BH Development.

CHEVRON FAMILY THEATRE FESTIVAL

The Chevron Family Theatre Festival returns on Saturday, July 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Lesher Center for the Arts. With free events outside and ticketed shows for just $5 each, it’s a day full of affordable magic. Go to lesherartscenter.org.

ART & WINE FESTIVAL

The Walnut Creek Art & Wine Festival comes to Heather Farm Park on Saturday, June 3 and Sunday, June 4. Free admission, live entertainment, more than 250 arts and crafts booths, and of course, wine! For details, go to artwinefestivalwc.com.

CHAT WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS

For a low-key way to connect with City Council members, drop by the Council’s Farmers Market booth on Locust Street, most Sundays between 10 a.m. and noon. Parking is free for the first hour at the Growers Square and Lesher Center garages.

Larkey Swim Center to open with a splash

Join us in celebrating the new Larkey Swim Center (2771 Buena Vista Ave) on Saturday, June 10 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The renovated swim center includes a new pool with deeper water and an all-abilities splash playground. Admission is free on June 10, and there will be family-friendly activities throughout the day.

Beginning June 11, Larkey Swim Center will be open for recreational swimming and ongoing private and group swim lessons, as well as birthday party, day camp, and school trip rentals. To register for swim lessons, visit walnuteegreecc.org. For information on rentals and special events, contact Steven Thomas at sthomas@walnut-creek.org.

Discounted summer recreational swim passes will be available for purchase at Clarke Swim Center through June 10. These passes are valid for unlimited recreational swimming at both swim centers from June 12 through Sept. 4.

Walnut Creek Police launch Project Lifesaver

Walnut Creek residents caring for loved ones who wander due to conditions such as Alzheimer’s or autism are invited to learn more about Project Lifesaver. Those who meet the eligibility requirements can be fitted with a wrist or ankle band that would allow the Walnut Creek Police to track them should they become lost. Nearly 95 percent of Project Lifesaver participants who go missing are located in less than 30 minutes.

The cost is $300 for the first year, and $25 each subsequent year. There are a limited number of sponsorships to help those who cannot afford the cost. Learn more by calling program manager Lauren Gehring, 925-943-5898, or by visiting walnutcreekpd.com.

www.walnut-creek.org
Summer Sounds
DRAA brings this popular series of free concerts to the outside plaza at the Lesher Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. All shows are 3:30 - 7 p.m.

Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra featuring Frank Bey - June 22
The Frank Bey and Anthony Paule Band earned two Blues Music Award nominations and an invitation to perform at the prestigious awards ceremony.

Dirty Cello - June 29
Dirty Cello brings a high energy and unique spin on blues and bluegrass, led by cross-over cellist Rebecca Roudman.

Here’s what’s happening
Summer Sing-a-Long
Join the Walnut Creek Chorus for a summer sing-along on Thursday, July 27 at 7 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 2317 Buena Vista Ave. Sing along to music from Broadway shows and Disney movies. Tickets are $20 for adults, free for children under 12; price includes music and refreshments. Visit walnutcreekchorus.com for details.

Raffle highlights Friends of Walnut Creek membership drive
Join the Friends of the Walnut Creek Library this summer and be automatically entered for the annual $100 and $50 “members-only” raffle on Aug. 31. An annual membership is $25 or $15 for seniors and students. Proceeds raised through the membership drive help fund library materials and programs. Go to www.WCLibraryFriends.org or visit the Friends’ bookstore at the library.

Submit for short film competition
Mountain Shadow Film Society will hold its 3rd Annual Short Film Competition at the Las Lomas Theater the weekend of September 15-16. From hundreds of submissions, seven to ten Finalists will be selected to present their films in person for audience cash awards.

Altar Boyz
Through July 1
Full of sharp parody, sinfully spectacular dancing, and irreverent humor, this spoof about a heavenly guy-group is adored by audiences and critics alike. With an extraordinary mix of side-splitting songs convincing enough to be played on MTV, uncontrollable laughs and lighthearted fun, this award-winning and totally original new musical is 90 minutes of pure delight that’s suitable for all ages and will have the whole family laughing and singing along. Tickets are available at lesherartcenter.org or 925-943-7469.
“Sweet n Low” explores the genre of cute – from cuddly and precious to creepy and kitsch. The show will also feature works by legendary artist Margaret Keane, famous for her big-eyed waifs and animals such as “Girl with Cat,” above. “Sweet n Low” was juried by Evan Pricco of Juxtapoz Magazine and Susannah Kelly & Neil Perry of Antler Gallery, Portland, Oregon. Visit bedfordgallery.org

Outdoor movies June through September

Movies under the Stars is back! Enjoy monthly family-friendly outdoor movies in Walnut Creek parks. This year, “Movies Under the Stars” heads to Tice Valley Park for the first time, along with Heather Farm and Civic parks.

Movies begin at sunset; Civic Park movies include live music before the show. Movie dates and locations are:

- “Sing” on Saturday, June 3 at Tice Valley Park;
- “The Secret Life of Pets,” Friday, July 14 at Civic Park;
- “Finding Dory,” Friday, Aug. 4 at Heather Farm Park;
- “Finding Dory,” Friday, Aug. 4 at Heather Farm Park;
- “Finding Dory,” Friday, Aug. 4 at Heather Farm Park;
- “Grease,” Friday, Aug. 25 at Civic Park.

Bring a picnic and something comfortable to sit on, but please leave the pets at home!

“Movies Under the Stars” is sponsored by Walnut Creek Recreation and Walnut Creek Downtown. For further information, call 925-943-5858 or WalnutCreekRec.org.

Jazz at the Lesher - cool sounds for hot summer nights

It's not Chicago, New Orleans or San Francisco. It’s Jazz Experience @ Lesher Center. The Diablo Regional Arts Association is proud to present the all-American musical art, played in concert by some of the world’s most gifted exponents of the form.

The shows are presented on consecutive Saturday evenings in August in the 300-seat Margaret Lesher Theatre at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Tickets are $42; go to lesherartscenter.org or call 925-943-SHOW.

Here’s the 2017 line-up for the Jazz Experience @ Lesher Center:

- Terell Stafford Quintet
  Saturday, Aug. 5
  Virtuoso trumpeter Terell Stafford returns leading his own quintet, featuring saxophonist Tim Warfield and pianist Bruce Barth.

- Cyrille Aimée
  Saturday, Aug. 12
  As a child, Cyrille Aimée wandered the gypsy encampments around Samois-sur-Seine, falling in love with the gypsies’ music, life, freedom. Today, this jazz singer is internationally renowned for her wild and improvisational musical vision.

- Monty Alexander Trio
  Saturday, Aug. 19
  With the unmistakable rhythm and romance of the Latin side of jazz in his music and voice, Jamaican-born pianist Monty Alexander delights a global audience with his joyful melody-making.

- Warren Wolf/Edward Simon Quintet with special guest artist Tia Fuller
  Saturday, Aug. 26
  With his exquisite mastery of the vibraphone, one of the instrument’s brightest stars is Baltimore’s Warren Wolf. His technique continues the lineage of great vibe players Lionel Hampton, Milt Jackson, and Bobby Hutcherson.
Is it possible to be a successful Associated Press foreign correspondent; a collector of antique furniture and corkscrews; a person working for the CIA and the Secret Service; a gardener tending Sequoias and flowers; a member of the San Francisco Press Club; a gourmet cook; a vintner producing prize-winning wine; and, a pigeon keeper - all in one lifetime?

If you are James Pomeroy Howe, the answer is yes.

James Howe was born in Kansas in 1879. Before retiring to Walnut Creek in 1935, he traveled the world, interviewing Stalin, King George V and Gandhi, to name a few, and reporting on major events such as the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and World War I. His Walnut Creek estate, which he named “Gopher Gulch,” is now known as Howe Homestead Park, part of the City’s parks and open space network.

Learn more about this fascinating citizen of Walnut Creek with a special exhibit hosted by the Walnut Creek Historical Society at the Shadelands Ranch Museum, 2660 Ygnacio Valley Road, between June 11 and Aug. 20. The exhibit will be open Sundays and Wednesdays between 1 and 3:30 p.m. Go to walnutcreekhistory.info for more information, or call 925-935-7871.

History buffs are invited to volunteer as docents at the Shadelands Ranch Museum, 2660 Ygnacio Valley Road. The Colonial Revival house was built in 1902-03 for Hiram Penniman, one of Walnut Creek’s early settlers, and his family.

The house is administered by the Walnut Creek Historical Society and is open for tours Wednesdays and Sundays from 1-4 p.m.

Volunteer docents are needed to help preserve and pass on the fascinating story of the Penniman family and of Shadelands. Training is provided. Go to walnutcreekhistory.info for more information, or call 925-935-7871.

In light of the many questions the City has received regarding Sanctuary Cities, it is helpful to review the key points from the existing Police Department’s Policy on Immigration Violations, which can be found at walnutcreekpd.com.

First and foremost, the Walnut Creek Police Department is committed to protecting and serving the entire community and recognizing the dignity of all persons, regardless of their immigration status.

The WCPD does not proactively seek immigration status, nor does the department engage in sweeps to seek undocumented immigrants.

In addition to our commitment to human dignity, these kinds of actions cause problems in the relationship between the community and the police. Walnut Creek Police do not contact, detain, or arrest people based on their immigration status.

For the safety of the community, Walnut Creek Police retains the right to notify Immigration and Customs Enforcement if a crime has been committed.

For instance, if a person is suspected of committing a serious felony, the WCPD policy states that the arresting officer shall notify ICE for consideration of an immigration hold.

In addition, the police must able to work with ICE on issues like human trafficking, or major narcotic cartels.

A copy of the Walnut Creek Police Department policy on Immigration Violations is on the Police Department website.
Walnut Creek’s streets are on the road to improvement, according to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, or MTC. MTC rates the condition of Bay Area roadways every two years and assigns grades based on several factors. The score is known as the Pavement Condition Index, or PCI. For the past 10 years, Walnut Creek’s score hovered at or near the 72 mark. The latest survey showed a 3-point bump, to 75 points.

By comparison, Contra Costa cities scored an average of 69 points; Concord a 61, Pleasant Hill a 65 and Martinez a 51. The Bay Area average is 65 points.

What’s behind the improved score? Several factors. The City has become more strategic in its approach to pavement maintenance, thanks to a sophisticated computer system that calculates how different pavement strategies will impact roadway conditions. The program tells us what roadways we should be working on and what repairs we should be doing.

Public Works’ maintenance crews have also been integral to the improvement. Thanks to new equipment, they are able to increase the amount of crack sealing and pavement repairs they can do in a year. Keeping the water out of the pavement is one of the most effective tools for extending the life of the pavement, and to that end, significant crack sealing has occurred throughout the City.

Funding for pavement maintenance has also increased. The City has been successful in obtaining grants for roadwork on Geary Road, Buena Vista and North Main Street. Even lower oil prices play a role, as the lower cost of oil leads to a decrease in asphalt prices.

“Although we are proud that our work has paid off and our score increased, we know there is still much work to do,” said Public Works Director Heather Ballenger. “We are dedicated to maintaining our roadways into the future and determined to seeing our PCI score continue to improve.”

Lar Rieu Park, a 10-acre property given to the City by Miriam LarRieu in the late ‘70s, will soon have new walking trails and viewing benches, all the better to enjoy the peaceful property’s breathtaking views of Mount Diablo. The City Council on May 2 approved a plan for low-key improvements to the park. In addition to walking trails and benches, park plans call for picnic tables, a small parking lot, and a memorial garden honoring Mrs. Lar Rieu.

The park is also the base for a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) group; the team’s mission is to support the neighborhood in event of disaster.
Let’s talk about growth

We’ve got a great quality of life here in Walnut Creek – 95 percent of residents rate it as “Excellent” or “Good,” according to the 2017 Citizen Survey.

At the same time, people are concerned about the amount of growth taking place in Walnut Creek right now, with 75 percent saying our population is growing somewhat or much too fast. Traffic flow received a low 23 percent approval rating; parking was close behind with only 30 percent approval. The only factors to rate lower were the availability of affordable quality housing (16%) and the cost of living (23%).

Speed of Growth

The 2017 Citizen Survey asked residents to rate the speed of growth in Walnut Creek:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Too Slow</th>
<th>Just Right</th>
<th>Too Fast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>42%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

So let’s talk about growth – how the City plans for it, what is causing the current wave of growth, and what might be coming in the future. Over the next several issues of the Nutshell, we’ll dive deeper into some of the most pressing growth-related issues, from traffic congestion to the lack of affordable, quality housing. We’ll also highlight some of the major projects coming to Walnut Creek, such as the Walnut Creek Transit Village profiled on Page 8 of this Nutshell.

Most of all, we’d like to answer YOUR questions about growth and development. Send them to community@walnut-creek.org.

Fran Robustelli
Interim City Manager

MEET THE GENERAL PLAN

The City’s main tool for directing and managing growth is its General Plan. General Plan 2025 was adopted in 2006. Among its goals was to concentrate future development in the downtown, as shown in the map, below.

QUALITY OF LIFE IN WALNUT CREEK

The 2017 Citizen Survey asked residents to rate the quality of life in Walnut Creek:

- Place to live: 95% Excellent or good
- Overall quality of life: 91% Excellent or good
- Overall quality of City services: 81% Excellent or good

Fran Robustelli
Interim City Manager
Between 2010 and 2016, the City saw the construction of about 790 housing units – most of them in the downtown. One of the best known is the Brio, a 300-unit apartment building on Civic Drive built where Longs Drugs headquarters once stood. The Brio opened in late 2015.

There are 1,450 more units in the “Project Pipeline,” including the 596-unit Walnut Creek Transit Village coming to the BART station.

Being in the “pipeline” means one of the following:

a. under review, but not approved; or
b. approved, but not yet constructed; or

c. under construction, but not yet completed.


did you know?

Most employed residents don’t work in Walnut Creek

26,387 51,399

Employed residents Employees working in Walnut Creek

3,462

Walnut Creek residents working in Walnut Creek

Top 10 cities where residents work

San Francisco (16%)
Walnut Creek (13%)
Oakland (8%)
Concord (6%)
San Ramon (4%)
Berkeley (3%)
Pleasanton (3%)
Martinez (2%)
Pleasant Hill (2%)
The Walnut Creek Transit Village is a mixed-use, transit-oriented development at the Walnut Creek BART station. It will include a new BART parking garage in addition to the existing garage; 596 apartments spread over four buildings, with underground parking for residents and customers; and commercial space on the ground floor of the residential buildings. The project was approved in 2012.

The Transit Village will be built in three phases over approximately 4 ½ years. There will be no loss of BART parking spots throughout construction.

**Phase 1: New Parking Garage**
August 2017 – Summer 2018
Construction of a new, five-level BART parking garage, along with a 15-bay bus terminal. (Note: the existing parking garage will remain; combined, the two garages will provide more parking spaces than currently available, despite the loss of surface parking)

**Phase 2: Two Mixed-Use Buildings**
Mid 2018 – Late 2020
Construction of two mixed-use buildings with a total of 358 apartments, ground-floor commercial space, and underground parking for residents and customers.

**Phase 3: Two Mixed-Use Buildings**
Mid 2019 – Late 2021
Construction of two mixed-use buildings with a total of 238 apartments, ground-floor commercial space, and underground parking for residents and customers.

**Focusing on the Future of North Downtown**

Increasing employment opportunities close to BART and the downtown is one of the goals of the North Downtown Specific Plan currently under way. While there are some sites earmarked for housing south of Ygnacio Valley Road, it’s offices and auto sales and service that are getting the lion’s share of attention. Connecting North Downtown with BART, Civic Park, the Iron Horse Trail and the traditional downtown is also a priority, with a special emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Other ideas include a Maker’s Row along Pine Street and an arts/entertainment/hospitality district near the Lesher Center for the Arts. Learn more at walnut-creek.org/northdowntown.
Most people know that recycling reduces waste and the impact on landfills, but did you know it can also lead to playground upgrades and other public amenities?

Here’s how: When people recycle, whether at work or at home, those recyclables are sold. The money is returned to the City in the form of a fund managed by RecycleSmart (our area’s solid waste authority). The money in this fund can only be used for certain products and services, all of which must further the goals of recycling and/or be made of at least 70 percent recycled products.

You recycle, the recycled products make money, the money comes back to the city and is used toward the purchase of recycled products or products that help us recycle more. Pretty cool!

The money we received in 2016 helped pay for the solar-powered BigBelly trash/recycling bins downtown. The funds also were used to help purchase park amenities made of at least 70-percent recycled products, including:

- Train set at Civic Park playground
- Shade structures at Larkey pool
- Drinking fountain at Northgate Park
- Heather Farm Dog Park amenities
- Sybertech trash cans at Larkey Park and Tice Valley Park

What are Sybertech trash cans? These special cans are 8 feet tall, with 5 of those feet buried underground. Thanks to the large capacity, they don’t need emptying as often, and they never fill to overflowing during weekend picnics and parties. The weight of the trash means it is self-compacting, and because it’s cooler underground, odors are less likely.

Keep on recycling, Walnut Creek!

Local businesses earn recycling awards

Congratulations to the following Walnut Creek winners of RecycleSmart’s 2017 Business Recycling Awards: Olympic Building (Gold winner in the office building category); 101 Ygnacio Plaza (silver winner in the office building category); and, panCoast pizza (silver winner in the restaurant category).
About CalPERS

The California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS) is the largest pension system in the country. Established in 1932, it is a defined benefit pension system. That means that employees who vest in the system – typically after five years of service – have a right to collect a monthly payment at retirement for the remainder of their life. CalPERS gets its funding from two sources: Employer/employee contributions, and investment returns.

CalPERS sources of funding

According to CalPERS, every dollar spent on public employee pensions comes from three sources:

- 62¢ CalPERS investment earnings
- 25¢ CalPERS employers
- 13¢ CalPERS members

For the City of Walnut Creek, CalPERS payments come from the General Fund

CalPERS has only 68% of funds to pay retirement benefits

Walnut Creek’s proactive steps

While Walnut Creek pension costs will increase, the City is in better shape than many, thanks to a history of fiscal conservatism. Here are some examples:

- The City does not provide medical benefits to retirees, saving millions.
- When other cities were providing enhanced retirement benefits to non-safety employees, Walnut Creek continued to offer the most modest plan allowed under CalPERS at that time
- In 2012, Walnut Creek adopted a “second tier” retirement plan for new employees, moving retirement age from 55 to 60 for non-safety employees, and from 50 to 55 for police officers.
- Also in 2012, the City negotiated agreements with all employee groups to pay the full employee portion of pension costs.

Why is there an unfunded pension cost increase?

- CalPERS has suffered significant losses due to poor investment returns.
- Beginning in Fiscal Year 2008, CalPERS became cash flow negative when it started paying out more than it collected. The gap – called the unfunded accrued liability – continues to grow.
- In addition, retirees are living longer. In fact, in Walnut Creek, there are more retirees receiving benefits than there are active employees paying into CalPERS.
- As of June 2016, CalPERS has only 68 percent of the funds required to pay estimated retirement benefits and this gap is expected to grow before it reverses. CalPERS wants to be fully funded.

- To close the gap, CalPERS is increasing employer contribution rates. For the City of Walnut Creek, this translates into higher pension costs in future years.
- Walnut Creek has a projected liability of $83 million as of June 2016, up from $73.4 million in 2015. Employer contribution rates are expected to increase through the year 2033.
Pension liabilities: Why it matters

Like most cities across California, Walnut Creek is facing steep increases in the amount the City is required to contribute to the California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS).

Costs are expected to balloon from $8.2 million in 2016 to $20.4 million in FY 2028.

How this impacts the community

1. CalPERS payments come out of the City’s General Fund – The same fund that pays for everything from parks to police ...

2. ... The more money taken out of the General Fund for CalPERS ...

3. ... the less money available for services to the public.

Financial challenges for Walnut Creek

The Estimated Employer Contribution is expected to increase from $8.2 million in 2016 to $20.4 million by 2028

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<th>FY 2016</th>
<th>FY 2020</th>
<th>FY 2024</th>
<th>FY 2028</th>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>$8.2 million</td>
<td>$12.6 million</td>
<td>$17.5 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund</td>
<td>10.8% of the General Fund</td>
<td>14.1% of the General Fund</td>
<td>17% of the General Fund</td>
<td>17.4% of the General Fund</td>
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Tools to address financial challenges

There are a number of options the City can consider to address the financial challenges created by the increased pension costs. These were presented to the Council at the April 18 study session for further consideration.

Pay down the liability
- Use surplus funds to pay down a portion of CalPERS liability.
- Use surplus funds to set up an irrevocable trust that would be used to pay a portion of the CalPERS liability in future years as needed.*

* Note: The Council on April 18 directed staff to move forward with this option.

Secure other forms of financing
- Pension obligation bonds
- Tax increase
- Other revenue enhancement options

Reduce expenditures
- Reduce personnel costs.
- Reduce non-personnel costs.
- Negotiate increases in employee pension contributions
Center REP celebrates 50 years of theater with a season to remember

Center REPertory Company, the resident professional theatre company of the Lesher Center for the Arts, is commemorating 50 years this upcoming season. Such a momentous occasion calls for superlative offerings, and indeed, that is what Center REP has planned for the 2017-2018 season.

Imagine a night where Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash all got together and jammed! It happened on December 4, 1956, and Center REP’s first show of the season, “Million Dollar Quartet,” relives that historical night. Broadway star and Tony nominee Hunter Foster will come from New York to direct this very special show.

A 50th Anniversary only comes once and we hope you will consider joining us as a subscriber. The season also includes “The Liar,” a sexy comedy romp set in 17th century Paris; “A Christmas Carol,” truly an annual holiday event; “Red Speedo,” a searing new play about the pressures and temptations of the Olympic trials; and the legacy revival of the one and only “Shirley Valentine,” with Kerri Shawn reprising her signature role. The season closes with a hit Broadway musical set on a Greek Island which serves as a backdrop for many ABBA songs — our Agreement precludes us from sharing the title right now, but you might guess the show!

For more information, please visit www.centerrep.org or call the Lesher Center for the Arts Ticket Office at 925-943-7469.