Public urged to participate at GP workshops

Residents of Walnut Creek are invited to the first in a series of public workshops on the General Plan to share their thoughts and concerns on a vision for this community over the next 20 years.

Two workshops were scheduled this fall (see box for details of the next one) and several more are planned. Everyone is welcome to attend.

The workshops will give citizens an opportunity to weigh in on their ideas for Walnut Creek’s future. They are the first of several public feedback sessions that will be scheduled through 2005 as the City updates its General Plan.

The General Plan is a blueprint for development and conservation for the community. It was last updated in 1989.

A seven-member steering committee comprising members of the various City commissions and City Treasurer Ron Cassano has been meeting twice a month through 2005.

City Hall to be finished this fall

After more than three years of demolition, construction, and refurbishment, City Hall and the Police Department will be finished in early December and ready for City employees to occupy.

The City Hall parking lot, which has been usurped since September 2000 for construction use, has been refurbished as well and will be opened to the public at the same time.

The City Hall project has been completed in two stages. The first stage was to build the new, 35,000-square-foot addition to the City Hall and Police Department complex. That work was finished in October 2002.

Some City employees moved into their permanent quarters at that time, while other staffers were temporarily relocated.

WC police join battle to combat identity theft

This particular thief doesn’t use a gun or a knife to steal your most prized possession. In fact, all he requires is a mouse and a computer connection to take from you something far more valuable than jewels or money — your identity.

Now Walnut Creek police are partnering with the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce to open up a new front in the battle against identity theft. With the help of some of the world’s leading security experts, they have launched a new initiative called “Think Security First!,” the nation’s first community-based cyber security awareness program.

“It’s a nasty crime,” noted Neal O’Farrell, a San Ramon-based internet security expert who has helped the Chamber of Commerce create the www.thinksecurityfirst.net website.
Holiday festivities set in Civic Park, Broadway Plaza

The annual Holiday Tree Lighting will be on Friday, Nov. 28, 5:30 p.m. at Civic Park.

The event, sponsored by the Downtown Business Association and the City, will include music by the Walnut Creek Concert Band, Santa and Mrs. Claus passing out candy canes to all children, and Hospice of Contra Costa celebrating its Tree of Lights.

The Holiday Parade at Broadway Plaza will be on Thursday, Dec. 4 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Seniors’ Holiday Boutique Nov. 7-8
Start your holiday shopping at the Walnut Creek Seniors’ Club Holiday Boutique on Nov. 7-8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. Admission is free. Lunch is $2.50 and will be served 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Items for sale will include handcrafted holiday decorations, baby gifts, quilts, toys, wreaths, home accents, baked goods, and plants. Call 943-5851.

Borges Ranch Holiday Hoedown Dec. 6
Country holiday crafts and live bluegrass music will highlight this year’s Borges Ranch Holiday Hoedown Open House on Saturday, Dec. 6 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Old Borges Ranch, 1035 Castle Rock Rd. in the City’s Shell Ridge Open Space. Admission is free. Featured will be the “Trail Dust” Country/Western live band, line dancing, tours of the Borges Ranchhouse, farm animals, and free pony/horse rides for kids. Refreshments will be available for sale. Parking will be available at the ranch. Call 942-0225 for more information.

Children’s Holiday Breakfast on Dec. 14
Enjoy an old-fashioned family good time this yuletide season at the annual Holiday Breakfast on Sunday, Dec. 14, 9 a.m. to noon, at Heather Farm Park Community Center, 301 N. San Carlos Dr. “Reindeer pancakes” will be served, and seasonal music, arts and crafts, holiday videos and pictures with Santa will be part of the fun. Admission is $5 per person at the door (free to children under 12 months). This event is cosponsored by the City’s Recreation Division and the Walnut Festival Association. For details, call 943-5858.

All aboard for model train show

The intricately-detailed HO-scale model trains of the Diablo Valley Lines will be showcased at the Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society’s annual Holiday Show scheduled Nov. 21, 22, 23, 28, 29 and 30. Diablo Valley Lines is located next to Larkey Park at 2751 Buena Vista Ave. Admission is $2, ages 13 and up; $1, seniors and ages 6-12; free, under 6. For hours, call 937-1888.
Council approves 47-home Citrus Walk project in Woodlands

The City Council has cleared the way for converting a portion of the Woodlands Office Park into a 47-unit housing development on Citrus Circle just east of Oak Grove Road.

The Council approved the Citrus Walk project on Sept. 16 amid strong support from the neighborhood, which worked with the developer and City planners to make the project amenable to neighboring property owners.

The project will convert 3.89 acres of the office park from office use to multi-family residential use. It will provide a mix of duets and condominiums, 10 percent of which will be affordable to moderate income buyers. Additionally, the attached housing units will likely be priced below the average new single family home in Walnut Creek.

The developer, Trumark Companies, has agreed to provide $225,000 for schools attended by Woodlands children, upgrade the nearby Woodlands Cabana Swim Club at a cost of more than $300,000, and install a left-turn traffic signal at southbound Oak Grove and Citrus Avenue.

City’s Veterans Day ceremony to be
Nov. 11 in Civic Park

Local veteran Art Miller will be the featured speaker at the City’s Veterans Day Observance on Tuesday, Nov. 11 at Civic Park.

The ceremony will begin at 11 a.m. at the Civic Park gazebo.

Miller is quartermaster/adjutant of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8063, which represents service veterans from Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. He served as an Army master sergeant in the 92nd Armored Field Artillery in Korea in 1950-52. A 30-year member of the VFW, he is also chairman of the board of Lafayette War Veterans Inc., which oversees the Lafayette veterans memorial building.

The Walnut Creek Concert Band under the direction of Harvey Benstein will perform a concert following the ceremony.

In the event of rain, the ceremony will be moved into the Civic Park Community Center Assembly Hall.

Shadelands Museum holiday events

The annual Holiday Faire and Victorian Teas are returning to the Shadelands Ranch Historical Museum, 2660 Ygnacio Valley Rd. The Holiday Faire will be Nov. 22 through Dec. 7, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (closed Nov. 27-28 for Thanksgiving). Admission is free. Arts and crafts, holiday decor, toys, and jewelry will be for sale to benefit the Walnut Creek Historical Society. The Victorian Teas will be Nov. 29 to Dec. 7, at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. (reservations required). Cost is $20/person. Call 935-7871 for reservations.

EBMUD pipeline

A hydraulic-powered boring machine is carving 30-50 feet a day to create a 4,400-foot tunnel 80 feet below ground from Newell Avenue to the National Guard Armory on Carmel Drive to accommodate a 6-foot-diameter East Bay Municipal Utility District water pipeline. Work is expected to be done by late 2004.

More What’s Happening

Teddy Bear Tea and Boutique

The Gardens at Heather Farm’s Teddy Bear Tea and Boutique returns Dec. 6-7. Three seatings for tea will be on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 10:30 a.m. and 1 and 3:30 p.m., and two on Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Admission to the tea and associated festivities is $17.50 for adults and $12.50 for children; reservations are required by calling 947-1678. The boutique is free and will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. All proceeds benefit the Gardens at Heather Farm. For more info call 947-1678 or visit www.gardenshf.org.
The General Plan Steering Committee has been meeting twice a month since June in the Civic Park Community Center lounge to discuss General Plan topics and to hear from the public. An explanation of what a General Plan is, a public meeting calendar, and details on the meetings and discussions of the Steering Committee.

If you have any comments or concerns about what should be included in the new General Plan, you may contact Senior Planner Janice Stern at stern@walnut-creek.org or at 943-5899 ext. 213. To be added to a mailing list for updates on committee meetings, contact Carol Clark at clark@walnut-creek.org.

City wins top state award for teen website

RealWC.org, the City’s online magazine made by teens for teens, was honored with a top state award in October. The League of California Cities presented its prestigious Helen Putnam Award of Excellence to Walnut Creek in the category of community services and economic development.

The teen website, created in October 2000, is produced by a team of high school students to show area teens the various fun and healthy things they can do in Walnut Creek. The site receives more than 100,000 hits a month and has been featured twice on the national “Tech TV” channel, the Contra Costa Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Diablo and YM magazines.

Street sweeping keeps leaves out of drains

As the leaves of autumn fall from Walnut Creek trees into Walnut Creek gutters, the City’s street sweepers are gearing up for their heaviest season.

Residents in the low-lying areas know just how important it is to keep gutters and storm drains clear of leaves and other debris as the rainy season approaches. Last year’s heavy rains caused flooding in some areas and City crews worked round the clock on those days to clear storm drains of leaves.

The City has two full-time operators working year-round to keep Walnut Creek’s 386 curb miles of streets clean. They stick to a rigorous street-sweeping schedule between the hours of 4 a.m. and 2 p.m. All residential streets are cleaned once a month, major arterials such as Ygnacio Valley Road are swept once a week, and downtown streets are swept three times a week. Street sweeping is required by state law and paid for by property taxes.

Keeping storm drains clear not only prevents local flooding but prevents untreated debris from contaminating our natural waterways.

Property owners need to do their part by cleaning leaves out of the gutters in front of their homes and putting them in a recycling can for curbside pick-up.

The City has a handy street-sweeping schedule online at www.walnut-creek.org under “quick hits” that gives the precise day of the week your street is scheduled to be cleaned. If you don’t see your street on the schedule, call 943-5855.

How We Do What We Do

City sweepers clean residential streets monthly.
Parking just got easier in downtown Walnut Creek. Along with the influx of new stores, restaurants, and movie theaters that opened earlier this year, new off-street public parking has been created that brings to over 7,000 the number of spaces to be found downtown.

Two recent retail projects — Plaza Escuela and Olympia Place — created 1,224 free parking spaces in three parking structures that line Locust Street near Olympic Boulevard. That means there are now nearly 5,300 spaces of off-street parking (which doesn’t include individual parking lots on store properties, such as Barnes & Noble and Ross, or metered parking lots such as the library and the City-owned lots).

Broadway Plaza and Broadway Pointe (Pottery Barn, Il Fornaio, etc.) already offer a total of 2,625 free parking spaces to its customers.

Additionally, the City of Walnut Creek operates three public garages with a total of 1,378 spaces (see box at left).

Parking is 50 cents/hour (up to a maximum of $3) before 6 p.m. Users entering all three City garages after 6 p.m. will pay a $2 flat fee. If parking for less than one hour after 6 p.m., the rate remains 50 cents/hour. Holiday hours for all three garages are the same as Sundays unless otherwise posted. Validated parking is available from many downtown businesses.

For off-street parking, try a City public garage

Locust Street Parking Garage (664 spaces)
1625 Locust Street (next to the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts)
Hours: Monday—Friday, 5 a.m. - 1 a.m.; Saturday, 7 a.m. - 1 a.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. - 1 a.m.

Broadway Parking Garage (464 spaces)
1390 No. Broadway (at Cypress Street)
Hours: Monday—Friday, 6 a.m. - Midnight; Saturday, 7 a.m. - Midnight; Sunday, 8 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

South Locust Parking Garage (250 spaces)
1350 Locust Street (between Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Cypress Street)
Hours: Monday—Friday, 6 a.m. - 1 a.m.; Saturday, 7 a.m. - 1 a.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m. - 1 a.m.

Packing is 50 cents/hour (up to a maximum of $3) before 6 p.m. Users entering all three City garages after 6 p.m. will pay a $2 flat fee. If parking for less than one hour after 6 p.m., the rate remains 50 cents/hour. Holiday hours for all three garages are the same as Sundays unless otherwise posted. Validated parking is available from many downtown businesses.
City Council Update

City’s mid-year budget healthy
The City continues to maintain a healthy budget despite a significant decrease in investment earnings and a reduction in vehicle license fees (VLF).

That was the message delivered to the City Council Sept. 16 by Administrative Services Director Rosie Coan as the City marked the mid-way point in its two-year operating budget.

The revised revenue estimate for FY 2002-04 is $89,734,251, which represents a $450,000 increase due to an unanticipated increase in sales tax revenue.

The City’s reserve fund has been adjusted from $15.8 million to $1.5 million to reflect the Council’s decisions to designate $13.3 million for a new downtown library and $929,920 for the General Plan update.

Walnut Blvd. walkway OK’d
The City Council on Sept. 16 awarded a $124,560 contract to Redgwick Construction Company to create a pedestrian walkway on the west side of Walnut Boulevard from Ygnacio Valley Road to Brasero Lane.

Walnut Boulevard is heavily used by Walnut Creek Intermediate School students. The walkway is part of the City’s Safe Route to School program.

Council to consider Heather Farm Master Plan
The Walnut Creek City Council will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, Nov. 4 to consider adoption of a proposed master plan for Heather Farm Park. The plan being recommended by the Park, Recreation & Open Space Commission calls for several changes at the 100-acre park located on North San Carlos Drive. Those changes include building a new skate park across from the Clarke Swim Center on Heather Drive, eventually eliminating the equestrian center at the north end of the park and relocating the basketball courts there. This map shows what the long-range plan entails. To study a larger rendition, go online at www.walnut-creek.org.

City Hall
From front page
into the new building until the older portion of City Hall was refurbished. A complete overhaul of the 23-year-old civic center includes new floors, ceilings, walls, lighting, and offices. Further, the Police Department side has been seismically reinforced and a new, 1,000-square-foot community meeting room will be available on the third floor of City Hall.

A public open house will be scheduled early in 2004.

Where your property tax dollar goes . . .

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| 9 cents | 44 cents | 25 cents | 22 cents |
Landscaping the right way

Choosing the right plants and landscape design can make a big difference in the amount of water, fertilizers and pesticides needed to keep lawns and gardens healthy.

Certain native plants are more pest resistant than others and, therefore, reduce the amount of pesticides needed. Proper irrigation techniques help, too. Avoid over-watering lawns and gardens, especially those that have been recently fertilized or have had pesticides applied as this causes the water to overflow into streets and storm drains.

Grasscycle to reuse what’s natural. Grasscycling involves using a mulching mower which double cuts lawn clippings. The clippings fall back to the ground, quickly decompose and then return valuable nutrients back to the soil, thus reducing the need for fertilizer. Also, less watering is needed because the clippings cover the soil and reduce evaporation of water from the soil.

Composting. Now is a good time to start a compost pile. They provide an excellent nitrogen source. With the Fall season nearing, you will have plenty of materials for your compost pile. Shred fallen leaves with lawn mower, chipper or shredder and use them as mulch on beds or around plants.

Remember to rake leaves away from the storm drain to prevent clogged drainage.
Identity theft

From front page

“There’s no crime like it,” he said. “Why is it America’s fastest-growing crime? Because it’s where the money is.”

Approximately 7 million Americans last year were victims of identity theft, in which an imposter will use someone’s personal information — a Social Security number or a credit card account — to obtain goods and services.

But these cyber thieves don’t just take your money,” said O’Farrell. “They steal a victim’s credit reputation by destroying their credit rating. They create a living nightmare for innocent victims who can be wrongly investigated, charged, or even convicted of a crime they didn’t commit.

“We get tons of calls on identity theft on a regular basis,” said Lt. Mark Covington. “We’re trying to keep people from becoming victims through education and technology.”

The key ingredients for a theft are customer credit card records and employee payroll/Social Security records. O’Farrell said in most businesses, those records are completely unprotected.

The Walnut Creek Police Department has had most of its officers attend identity theft training as part of the Think Security First program. But the main thrust is to educate the public.

“Our goal in Walnut Creek is not to make our city and community hack-proof, but instead to help our residents, businesses, and schools reduce their vulnerability to cybercrime by learning to Think Security First!” said Chamber President Jay Hoyer.

O’Farrell cautions people to improve their computer security, guard their privacy, don’t open e-mails with viruses, and check their credit rating often.

“If you think you’ve been a victim, report the crime and red-flag your financial institutions,” he said.

How to keep your identity safe

- Become informed. Visit the Think Security First website at www.thinksecurityfirst.net
- Guard your Social Security number, credit card number, bank accounts
- When purchasing over the Internet, always be sure the site is secured and uses encryption
- Make sure your home computer is protected by installing anti-virus software and firewalls
- For more information, contact WC Police Lt. Mark Covington, 943-5883