Wanted: Public ideas on public art

The City of Walnut Creek is improving its public art program and wants to hear from you! Everyone is invited to a community workshop at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 20 at Civic Park Community Center on the Public Art Master Plan.

Much of the artwork on downtown City streets was paid for by developers when they built new buildings. The City’s Arts Commission is reviewing the Public Art Master Plan to simplify the public art process and corresponding ordinances, where possible, and to realize more quality public art projects.

At the March 20 community workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to give input on aspects of the City’s Public Art Master Plan.

Look who’s turning 100!

Walnut Creek officially became a city on October 21, 1914, after residents voted 127-67 to incorporate. That means there’s a centennial to celebrate in 2014.

Planning is in the very early stages. The Centennial Steering Committee welcomes suggestions. Visit WalnutCreek100.com to share ideas, sign up for updates, and learn how to get involved.

Remember Memorial Day

The City will host a Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, May 27, beginning at 10 a.m. at the Civic Park gazebo. More information will be on the City’s website in early May.
Hot August nights with Jazz at the Lesher

Jazz at the Lesher Center, presented by the Diablo Regional Arts Association, returns this summer for a second season of phenomenal jazz performances.

The season kicks off August 3 with critically acclaimed pianist Cyrus Chestnut, left, whom Time magazine declared, “the best jazz pianist of his generation.”

The four-concert series continues with world-renowned jazz singer Stacey Kent (August 10), the sizzling Brazilian vocalist/pianist Eliane Elias (August 17), and a Stride Piano Summit featuring master pianist Dick Hyman (August 24).

All shows are Saturday evenings in the intimate Margaret Lesher Theatre at the Lesher Center for the Arts, with 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. performances. Subscriptions are $125. Call 925-943-SHOW or visit www.lesherjazz.org. Last year’s debut season sold out within days. Sale of any unsold single tickets will be announced at a later date.

Here’s what’s happening

Antiques appraisal event
The annual Antique and Collectibles Appraisal Event will be held Sunday, March 10 from noon to 4:30 p.m. at the Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive. The cost for entry and appraisal of the first three items is $15, plus $5 for each additional item. Call 925-947-1678 or visit www.gardenshf.org.

Renowned violinist at Lesher Center
Chamber Music San Francisco presents violinist Sarah Chang at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 10 at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Chang debuted with the New York Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, at the age of 8. To order tickets, call 925-943-7469 or visit chambermusicsf.org.

Walnut Creek Concert Band concert
“Songs and Dances” is the theme of the Walnut Creek Concert Band’s spring concert, to be held at 7:30 p.m. March 12 at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Tickets are $17 and $12; call 925-943-7469, or visit www.Lesherartscenter.org.

Artist’s Market & Clay Arts sale
Find original art in a variety of mediums at the Artist’s Market, March 22 - 24 at Shadlands auditorium, 111 N. Wiget Lane. March 22 hours are 5 to 9 p.m. with live music, hors d’oeuvres and beverages. The sale continues March 23 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and March 24 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Clay Arts Guild Warehouse Sale at their studio in Civic Park will be March 23 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and March 24 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The sale features original pottery including dinnerware, garden and wall art, and sculpture, along with demonstrations.

Eggstravaganza Egg Hunt
Walnut Creek’s annual egg hunt for kids of all ages will be hosted this year by the Equestrian Center of Walnut Creek with help from local youth organizations including Clayton Valley High School Cheer and Dance and Contra Costa County 4H. The Egg Hunt starts at 9 a.m. March 30 at Heather Farm Park, 301 N. San Carlos Dr.

Horse Faire 2013
Gallop on over to Horse Faire 2013 on Saturday, March 30 for free family entertainment, including the chance for kids to interact with miniature horses, horse riding demonstrations and activities for kids. The Horse Fair will be Saturday, March 30, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the back of Heather Farm Park, and is sponsored by the Equestrian Center. Visit www.ecwc.org.

Creek cleanup
The Friends of the Creeks annual creek cleanup will take place on May 11. Come to the Civic Park gazebo at 8:45 a.m. for continental breakfast. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Wear old sneakers and bring gloves.
The Arts Mean Business

By Barry Gordon
Director of Arts, Recreation & Community Services

Recently, Americans for the Arts, the nation’s largest arts advocacy organization, released the results of the Arts and Economic Prosperity IV Study. While many understand and appreciate the value of the arts, most do not view the arts as an industry, nor do they think about its impact on the local economy.

The study measured the economic impact of 22 Walnut Creek nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences on our community in 2010-11. It took into account the direct and indirect economic impact by these groups. Figures were derived by an econometric input/output model customized by project economists for our community.

What the study revealed is that the arts are a $32.5 million dollar industry in Walnut Creek. The industry supports 865 jobs and generates $2.8 million in state and local government revenue. Surprisingly, the median of similar study regions with populations of 50,000 to 99,999 people was only $10.8 million in annual expenditures.

As part of the study, audience members were polled from various arts and cultural events held at the Lesher Center for the Arts in 2010-11. We learned that Walnut Creek attendees spend $23.75 per person on average in our community beyond the price of a performance ticket. As one might assume, non-local attendees spent almost $6 more per person than local attendees.

The arts have been resilient in tough economic times. Walnut Creek, as it is with its shopping and dining, is a regional destination for cultural and arts activities. Over 30 percent of the Lesher Center attendees come from outside of the county. When asked if people would travel to another community for the cultural experience if it were not offered in Walnut Creek, 59 percent said they would.

The non-profit arts and culture industry is an economic driver in our community—a growth industry that supports jobs, generates government revenue, and is a draw for tourism. The arts mean business. Supporting the arts in Walnut Creek makes dollars and sense.
New way to weigh in on key issues
A new online citizen engagement tool gives people a way to weigh in on specific topics from the comfort of their own homes.

Recognizing that many residents do not have the time to come to formal meetings, but do have valuable feedback to share, the City has launched “Open Town Hall.” Participants are given the opportunity to share their opinions on a posted topic, or simply indicate support for another’s opinion.

In its first deployment, “Open Town Hall” served as a “virtual open house” for those wanting to weigh in on way-finding design topics and other media to make Walnut Creek more welcoming and accessible.

• A full copy of the Steering Committee’s report, including the proposed design and destination lists, is available on the City’s website.

The recommendations will go to the City Council for approval this spring.

Citywide sign system moves ahead
The City Council this spring will consider a plan to finance renovation of the Boundary Oak Clubhouse by issuing bonds that will be repaid through golf course and clubhouse revenues.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be $5.8 million. The golf course will remain operational during the renovation and golf course improvements will continue.

A staff report recommends using the City’s General Fund to secure the debt. It notes that using debt financing secured by the General Fund for Boundary Oak capital improvements has been successfully used since the golf course and clubhouse were built in 1969, and that the debt is consistently paid for through golf course and clubhouse revenues.

While the City owns Boundary Oak Golf Course and Clubhouse, they are operated as an “enterprise fund,” meaning that expenses are paid for by golf course and clubhouse revenues, rather than the City’s General Fund.

Join Walnut Creek’s disaster response team
Help your community during disaster while staying safe yourself by becoming a trained Community Emergency Response Team Member. CERT training classes will be held the third Wednesday of each month from 6:30-9:30 p.m. April 10 - May 15. There will be a final drill on the morning of Saturday, June 1.

Course topics include light search and rescue methods, first aid, search and rescue skills, and CERT team organization.

CERT graduates are sworn in as volunteer Disaster Service Workers for the City of Walnut Creek. In the event of an earthquake or other disaster, CERTs gather at pre-designated staging areas and work as a team.

Cost is $25 and pre-registration is required. Email cert@walnut-creek.org or call 925-256-3556. Learn more at www.walnut-creek.org/cert.

Wayfinding Committee member Jill Winspur looks at one of three proposed designs for a citywide wayfinding system.

Receive emergency alerts via text, phone, email
Sign up online to receive telephone, text and email emergency alerts for up to five Contra Costa areas or cities through the Community Warning System.

The system is managed by the County Office of Emergency Services and alerts people to imminent threats to life and safety in a specific geographic area. The website address is www.cocowarn.org. Residents without Internet access or needing assistance may call 925-313-9622.

WCPD strategy for next 5 years
The Walnut Creek Police Department will focus on seven goals over the next five years to maximize its resources, partnerships and crime-fighting abilities, according to a new five-year Strategic Plan.

The goals are: A Safe Community; Traffic and Pedestrian Safety; Information Technology and Infrastructure; Department Restructuring; Parking; Personnel Development; and Community Outreach.

While the department has produced strategic plans since 1973, today’s challenging economic times, changing demographics and sociological factors make the need for a new plan more important than ever, said Police Chief Joel Bryden.

Resources and staffing available today are less than they were five years ago, when the last plan was created. There were 81 authorized sworn positions in 2007, currently, there are 77 with an additional position authorized for the 2013-14 fiscal year.

Prison realignment and cutbacks in the county court system, partner law enforcement agencies and social services at the county and state level, are placing additional demands on the department, the plan states.

The Strategic Plan recommends streamlining or restructuring some programs and services so the Department can focus on its core functions of patrol and investigations.

Many of the recommendations have already been implemented, such as elimination of school-related programs like Character Counts and Every 15 Minutes, and restructuring the Community Policing Team to concentrate on issues relating to the downtown.

The Plan was to be presented to the City Council at its Feb. 19 meeting, after this issue of the Aisle оф went to print.

2012 crime rates show little change
After two years in which serious crime dropped a total of nearly 27 percent, the 2012 crime rate remained fairly steady. There was a slight increase (2.5 percent) in Part I, or more serious, crime (see chart right), and a slight decrease (5 percent) in Part II crime, considered less serious.

Of note in the Part II crime statistics are drunk driving arrests compared to 2011, dropping 11 percent from 2011 to 2012.

Chief Joel Bryden attributed the drop in accidents to proactive work by officers in arresting drunk drivers before accidents could occur.

He also credited the creation of a Downtown Policing Team in early 2012 with the slight drop in drunkenness and disorderly conduct for the year.

Bryden will be presenting the 2012 statistics on March 5 to the City Council.

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<th>Part I Crime</th>
<th>2010</th>
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<table>
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Walnut Creek TV features bomb squad
The Walnut Creek Bomb Squad serves all of Contra Costa County and responds to about 65 calls for service a year, ranging from a suspicious package to an explosive device.

Training and equipment for the bomb squad are paid for through federal Homeland Security Funds. Being a member of the bomb squad is a collateral duty, done on top of the member’s regular assignments. Walnut Creek TV spent some time with this highly trained group – to see the video, go to www.YouTube.com/cityofwalnutcreek.
Put butts where they belong!
City to embark on tobacco litter campaign

Aimed with special Clean Water program funding, the City is taking aim at an egregious source of water pollution: discarded cigarette butts. Butts tossed to the ground or crushed out on sidewalks eventually make their way into storm drains that lead to waterways.

Special “ash towers” will be installed in April at participating downtown bars and restaurants where patrons gather on outside patios to smoke. Outreach will include public service announcements created by Walnut Creek TV and informational graphics (see graphic, right). Data will be collected prior to the start of the anti-cigarette litter campaign, and again a few weeks later, to measure its effectiveness. Results will be included in the City’s annual report to the State Water Board.

Learn more about ways to keep creeks and waterways clean at www.walnut-creek.org/cleanwater.

Take the Sustainability Challenge

Take action and be counted! The weekend of May 18 – 19, thousands of powerful actions will be taken to grow food, save energy, and build a resilient community.

Let the Sustainability Challenge inspire YOU to do something you’ve been meaning to do for years. Whether you plant herbs, get a home energy upgrade, convert your lawn into a water-sipping landscape, or pledge to ride your bike twice a week – every action counts.

Find ideas about a project to take on and pledge your action at www.sustainablecoco.org.

Home composting for busy people

Learn how easy it is to compost at home at a free workshop sponsored by the Contra Costa County Solid Waste Authority. The 90-minute workshops are held throughout the year; there will be a workshop on March 17 at 3 p.m. at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, and on May 22 at the Contra Costa Times Community garden.

To register, and for information about locations and other workshop dates, call 925-906-1301 ext. 306 or visit www.wastediversion.org.

Diablo Valley Literacy Council recruiting volunteer English tutors for adults

The Diablo Valley Literacy Council is seeking volunteers interested in becoming trained to be English tutors. For some who cannot effectively speak English, simple tasks like reading product labels or talking to a child’s teacher can be intimidating. Tutors can make the difference.

The next three-part workshop will be held on Saturday, March 9 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesday, March 12, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; and Saturday, March 16 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. There is a nominal fee. Visit www.dvlc.tripod.com or call the hotline at 925-685-3881.

Sister Cities youth exchange program adds Noceto, Italy

After a successful debut year of YAE!! youth ambassador exchanges with Siofok, Hungary, Walnut Creek Sister Cities is adding Noceto, Italy to the 2013-14 program. Football Intermediate science teacher Margaret Elliott traveled to Noceto in February to visit schools and help establish the YAE!! ambassador exchange for eighth grade students.

In late March, the Sister Cities group plans to host a teacher from Noceto. Hungarian students from Siofok will visit Walnut Creek for a week beginning April 13.

Planning is in process for the 2013-14 school year to exchange ten youth ambassadors with both Siofok and Noceto for a one-week home stay. The students will shadow a host student through their local classes and participate in field trips. Applications and interviews for interested 7th grade students begins in February. Selection of the 2013-14 ambassadors will be announced in April. The participants’ cost, estimated to be under $200, will be primarily air fare and insurance. The students will stay in host homes.

For more information concerning YAE!!, the Youth Ambassador Exchange, please call Walter Schick, 925-934-0656 or Karen Cassano, 925-944-1238.

Free tax preparation offered

Free tax preparation for the 2013 tax season is available from AARP’s Tax-Aide and United Way’s “Earn It, Keep It, Save It” (EKS) programs. All tax preparers are certified by the IRS. Both programs serve taxpayers of any age. Tax-Aide does not have an income limit; EKS can only serve individuals whose incomes do not exceed $50,000.

To make an appointment for the Tax-Aide sites serving the Walnut Creek area, call 925-943-5851 (Walnut Creek Senior Club site), 925-405-6278 (Walnut Creek Grace Presbyterian Church site); 925-979-5013 (St. Paul’s Episcopal Church site). For general information, call 925-726-3199 or email fparker@dvc.edu.

Projects sought for 2013 Community Service Day

It’s not too soon to begin thinking about sponsoring a project for the 2013 Community Service Day, set for Saturday, September 28. Last year, more than 1,200 volunteers worked on one of 45 projects. Project sponsors must be non-profits or government agencies (including schools). Projects should take no more than four hours to accomplish, and should be able to accommodate a range of ages and skill levels. For more information, email community@walnut-creek.org.

Find used book bargains and more at Friends of Walnut Creek Library store

Looking for a used bookstore in Walnut Creek? Come visit the Friends of the Walnut Creek Library Bookstore located in the downtown Walnut Creek Library and find a wide selection of current fiction, non-fiction, children’s books, cookbooks, Russian books, DVDs, and CDs for low prices and in excellent condition.

The Friends of the Walnut Creek Library, an all-volunteer organization, operates the bookstore with books donated by the community. The Friends donated more than $50,000 in 2012 to the Walnut Creek Library through bookstore sales, membership, online sales and quarterly book sales.


Bike news

An updated map geared for bicyclists in Walnut Creek is now available on the City website, at City Hall and the libraries. The map identifies bike routes in Walnut Creek, and specifies the type of route, from a dedicated bike lane to a shared route. The map also contains information such as location of bike parking, water fountains and restrooms, and contact information for local bicycle stores.

Visit www.walnut-creek.org or email Senior Planner Jeremy Lochrico at lochricor@walnut-creek.org.
News from the Bedford Gallery

Public Art
Walking Tours
The Bedford Gallery’s Public Art Walking Tours for adults return on April 20. The 60-minute docent-led tours explore Walnut Creek’s prime public artworks around the downtown. Tours begin at 11 a.m. the third Saturday of each month. The $5 admission includes a free pass to the Bedford Gallery. Meet in the lobby of the Lesher Center and wear comfy shoes! 

‘Peaceable Kingdom’

Peaceable Kingdom: Animals Real and Imagined is at the Bedford March 3 through May 19. This exhibition examines the complex role the animal kingdom plays in our cultural and artistic landscape. Art works from all media were selected by guest jurors Cathy Kimball, Executive Director and Chief Curator of the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, and Stephanie Cannizzo, Assistant Curator at the Berkeley Art Museum.

Crystal Morey, Predator and Prey, 2012

DRAA grant provides free school tours
Thanks to a generous grant by the Diablo Regional Arts Association, school tours at the Bedford Gallery are now free to all Contra Costa County schools. The tours are available weekday mornings, and are followed by a hands-on art project. Call 925-295-1416 to reserve a tour.

Volunteer at the Bedford
An information session for prospective Bedford Gallery volunteers will be held April 15 from 10:30 to 11 a.m. at the gallery. If you’ve ever wanted to become more involved in the world of contemporary art, this session will help you get started. Can’t make the session? Call 925-295-1416.

Public Art
From page one
to offer ideas and feedback on various aspects of the Public Art Master Plan, including:

• Identifying what role murals play in public art
• Exploring temporary public art installations and the role they play in our public art scene
• Identifying types and sizes of buildings that should have a public art requirement
• Reviewing how the public art fee is determined

Help build a strong public art program and bring dynamic new artworks to Walnut Creek! Learn more about the public art program and the Master Plan at www.bedfordgallery.org/publicart.

Armchair Lecture series
The docent-led Armchair Lecture series explores everything from the role of women in art to the rich history of public art in Walnut Creek and beyond. To register a group, call 925-295-1416. There is a $60 fee.