



IN A Nutshell



No. 196

Newsletter of the City of Walnut Creek

WINTER 2021

Matt Francois begins term as Mayor

First-term councilmember Matt Francois was selected to serve as Walnut Creek's Mayor for the coming year at the City Council's December 7 meeting. Francois takes over for Kevin Wilk, who returns to a councilmember position, joining Cindy Darling and Loella Haskew. Cindy Silva will serve as Mayor Pro Tem; she has held a seat on the City Council since 2006. Every other year, the City Council adopts a set of strategic priorities, and the City's two-year budget is then developed to support those goals and initiatives. For this year and 2022, the Council has put the primary focus on the following priorities:

- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Economic development and COVID recovery
- Environmental sustainability and climate action
- Infrastructure and facilities
- Social wellness and public safety

In Walnut Creek, councilmembers are elected at large for 4-year, staggered terms; the next election will be held in November 2022.



Sam Perry, *Basket*, 2021, wood, 29 x 38 x 23 inches.

Now On View at Bedford Gallery

If A Tree Falls: Art of the Boundary Oak
Available through February 13, 2022

This exhibition memorializes the City of Walnut Creek's signature Valley Oak, which tragically fell at Boundary Oak Golf Course during a windstorm in October 2019. As a tribute to the tree's long life and rich history, which spanned 325 years, 64 Bay Area artists created artworks from its wood, offering this monumental being a second life.

COLOR BURSTS ONTO THE WALNUT CREEK MURAL SCENE

Artist/storyteller Berk Visual has livened up downtown Walnut Creek, with his latest creation topping the old Mel's Diner location. Work underneath it is turning the site into a "World Famous Hotboys," specializing in chicken sandwiches.



WALNUT CREEK TAKES TOUGH STAND ON CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

The brazen flash mob style robbery that took place at Broadway Plaza's Nordstrom last month resulted in quick action by the Walnut Creek City Council to decrease the potential for another organized retail theft. Within days of the event, the City Council approved \$2 million in spending devoted to enhancing public safety. Five new police officer positions were added to Walnut Creek Police Department. Those officers will be staffing a new downtown patrol beat. Since it takes time to recruit, hire and train new officers, the Police Department's overtime budget was immediately increased through the end of next June to allow current officers to work extra shifts, expanding the police presence downtown and in other high-risk areas. Additional security cameras will be placed where they can provide the most value, and a tether drone will be added to the Police Department's toolkit to better monitor developing situations.

The entire event at Nordstrom took place over the course of just a few minutes. About 90 people arrived all at once and entered through 3 separate doors at the store shortly before closing time. They were inside for no more than a minute, grabbing

more than \$125,000 in merchandise and fleeing the scene moments later. A quick response to 911 calls by the Police Department resulted in three people being arrested. They are charged with a variety

of felonies, including conspiracy, organized retail theft, robbery, possession of stolen property, and illegal possession of a firearm by a felon. Additional arrests are expected.

The City Council also sent letters to the Governor, Attorney General, and State legislative delegation urging lawmakers to devote more funding to combatting this recent wave of organized retail thefts, and to ensure the consequences for those crimes are severe. "We want

the community to know these crimes are taken seriously," said Police Chief Jamie Knox. "The filing of multiple felony charges should send a signal that Walnut Creek won't tolerate this kind of criminal activity." The City's decisive action is just part of an effort to bolster public safety initiatives, including a focus on mental health crisis response, homeless outreach teams, improved crisis intervention and increased communication regarding these important issues.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Check cable listings or walnutcreektv.org for the full schedule of shows.

For original programming, community events and more, visit the City's YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/CityofWalnutCreek](https://www.youtube.com/CityofWalnutCreek).

Veterans Day Ceremony

The Lesher Center opened its doors to veterans and their families for the return of our traditional Veterans Day commemoration. Enjoy the patriotic music from the Walnut Creek Concert Band and hear from keynote speaker Mike Conklin from Sentinels of Freedom.



Walnut Creek Concert Band Holiday Concert

A tradition returns! The Walnut Creek Concert Band kicked off the season with its annual concert of music that puts the holiday spirit in everyone.

Walnut Creek Homelessness Task Force Community Forum

The 2021 forum was held in November; you can find out details about the event on page 4 of the Nutshell.

Mayors Report

2021's Mayor Kevin Wilk offered a series of videos throughout the year updating the community on news you need to know. Catch the latest one covering November and early December on YouTube.

Public Meetings

Catch recent City Council meetings, as well as those of our many commissions, including the Design Review, Arts, Transportation, and Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commissions. Our public meetings are also broadcast live on YouTube, Walnut Creek TV and Zoom.

Here's what's happening

New Lesher Center Presents Series



As the Lesher Center emerges from closure, we are thrilled to bring to you a new series: Lesher Center Presents. Featuring headliner artists sponsored by Diablo Regional Arts Association, Center REPeratory Company's annual season of productions, the Lesher Foundation's acclaimed NEWSMAKERS: Lesher Speaker Series, and Bedford Gallery's stunning visual arts exhibitions, Lesher Center Presents is a curated experience of high quality art.



Jan 7

Visit lesherartscenter.org for tickets and more information.

- **Jan 5:** NEWSMAKERS David Axelrod and Karl Rove
- **Jan 7:** LeAnn Rimes
- **Feb 1:** NEWSMAKERS Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
- **Feb 4-26:** Center REP's Our Town
- **Feb 25:** Brian Stokes Mitchell



Feb 25

- **Feb 28:** NEWSMAKERS Mo Rocca
- **Mar 30:** NEWSMAKERS Her Majesty Queen Noor Al-Hussein
- **Apr 4:** NEWSMAKERS Maggie Haberman
- **Apr 15-May 7:** Center REP's Murder on the Orient Express
- **Apr 29-30:** Dance Theatre of Harlem
- **May 4:** NEWSMAKERS Adam Steltzner
- **May 6:** Joey Alexander Trio
- **May 27-Jun 26:** Center REP's BEEHIVE: The 60's Musical
- **Jun 7:** NEWSMAKERS Ruben Navarrette, Jr.
- **Jun 25:** Laura Benanti
- **Jul 9:** Ryan Hamilton
- **Aug 22:** NEWSMAKERS Nikole Hannah Jones

JOIN THE WALNUT CREEK ARTS + REC TEAM

We're looking for enthusiastic, creative, and community oriented people to join our team as: Summer Camp Counselors, Building Attendants, Gym Attendants, Professional Teaching Artists, Lifeguards/Swim Instructors, Preschool Co-Teachers, Ticket Agents/House Managers, Office Assistants, and Theater Technicians.



Part-time; flexible schedules; day, night, weekend and seasonal shifts available. Must be at least 15 years old at time of hire for some positions.



Visit walnut-creek.org/jobs to apply.

Save the Date for Arts + Rec Job Fair:

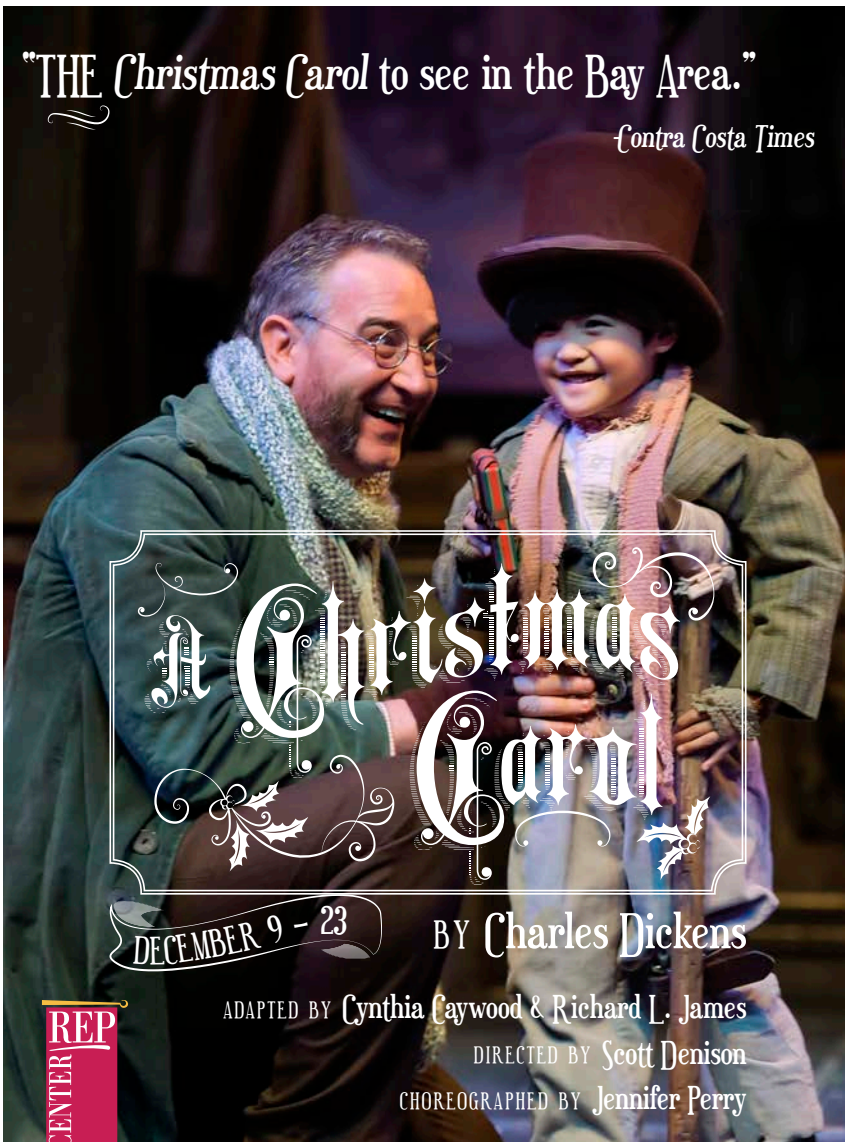
Thursday, February 3, 2022 from 4:30-7:00 pm at Shadelands Art Center.

Questions?

artsrec@walnut-creek.org or 925-295-1490

HOLIDAY EVENTS WITH ARTS + REC

"THE Christmas Carol to see in the Bay Area."
Contra Costa Times



A Christmas Carol

DECEMBER 9 - 23 BY Charles Dickens

ADAPTED BY Cynthia Caywood & Richard L. James
 DIRECTED BY Scott Denison
 CHOREOGRAPHED BY Jennifer Perry

CENTER REP

The Resident Professional Theatre Company of the Leshar Center for the Arts
 Scott Denison
 MANAGING DIRECTOR

Welcome Home!
 Leshar Center for the Arts

Season Partner

 (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

For Tickets :
 (925) **943-SHOW**
 7.4.6.9

www.CenterREP.org

Through December 23: Center REP's production of A Christmas Carol at Leshar Center for the Arts. Tickets available at lesherartscenter.org.

Through December 23: Visit to the North Pole where you can meet Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Leshar Center for the Arts. Tickets available at lesherartscenter.org.



Jan 21: Family Movie Night in Civic Park featuring Ice Age.
 Cost: \$25 per family of 6. Register for course ID # 36875 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Feb 11: Couples Movie Date Night in Civic Park featuring The Proposal. Cost: \$30 per couple. Register for course ID # 37026 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Feb 12: Valentine My Lawn - have your yard filled with large conversation hearts and a special surprise treat on your porch! Cost: \$25. Register for course ID # 37019 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Feb 15: Pet PawLooza Benefiting ARF in Civic Park with games and pet costume contest. Cost: \$25. Register for course ID # 37276 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Feb 18: Family Movie Night in Civic Park featuring The Little Mermaid. Cost: \$25 per family of 6. Register for course ID # 36876 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Mar 18: Family Movie Night in Civic Park featuring The Muppets. Cost: \$25 per family of 6. Register for course ID # 36877 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

Mar 18-20: St. Patrick's Day Leprechaun Scavenger Hunt at Old Borges Ranch. Cost: \$10 per family. Register for course ID # 37280 at <http://bit.ly/ArtsRecEvents>.

ARTS AND RECREATION 2022 SUMMER CAMPS

Unleash your child's creativity next summer!

Youth ages 3-18 can explore art-making, sports, music, cooking, dance, STEM and more in our Arts and Recreation summer programming. Registration opens on January 12, 2022, but you can begin checking out your options online already.

Classes can fill up quickly, and there is something for everyone.

To learn more or register, visit www.walnut-creek.org/summercamp or call 925-295-1490.



Celebrate the Season in Downtown Walnut Creek

WALNUT CREEK DOWNTOWN HAS launched a month-long celebration full of holiday cheer this December. Through December 24, residents and visitors alike are invited to explore downtown businesses and take advantage of sales, special promotions, exclusive samples and more. Shop while enjoying holiday performances, sips & savors, carriage rights, caroling, letters to Santa and more. Begin or end your festive evening with dinner at one of our many fine restaurants. Happy Holidays from Walnut Creek Downtown.



JOIN WALNUT CREEK POLICE DEPARTMENT IN MAKING HOLIDAYS BRIGHTER

Feeling grateful for what you have this year, and wanting to help others who are in need? The Walnut Creek Police Department has kicked off its annual clothing and toy drive, and you can be a part of the effort to bring smiles to so many faces. The Department is collecting a variety of items for the Concord Family Justice Center, STAND! For Families Free of Violence, and Toys for Tots. Items are being collected in bins in City Hall's lobby, and you're invited to contribute. New, unwrapped toys and clothing are in demand for these organizations. While giving clothing might not seem as fun as a toy, many people using the services of the Family Justice Center and STAND! leave their family situations with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Each



organization has a purpose that is easy to support:

- The Concord Family Justice Center serves families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking.
- STAND! For Families Free of Violence is a catalyst for breaking the multi-generational cycle of violence, promoting safe and strong relationships, and rebuilding lives.
- Toys for Tots collects new unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to less fortunate children at Christmas.

The Police Department doesn't provide donation receipts. If you want to donate online or receive a receipt for your donation, you can do that through each organization's website.



Homeless Task Force hosts virtual forum

The Walnut Creek Homeless Task Force brought together a host of engaging experts and leaders in the field of homelessness and mental health in November, hosting its fourth Community Forum on Homelessness. Attended by a wide audience, the forum was designed to educate our community about issues surrounding homelessness and demonstrate the variety of resources available to homeless and at risk individuals through city, county, and nonprofit organizations. The full 90-minute forum, held in partnership with the City of Walnut Creek, is available for viewing on the City's YouTube page. Find out more about the Task Force by visiting its website at wchomelesstaskforce.org.

WALNUT CREEK CRACKS DOWN ON VAPING

Walnut Creek became the first city in Contra Costa County to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products and electronic smoking devices with a unanimous vote of the City Council in November. The ban also applies to candy vaping pens, menthol cigarettes and other tobacco products that are flavored. The goal of the new ordinance is to make it harder for teens to access the flavored tobaccos and vaping devices. Many of those devices are hidden in the form of office supplies, making it easy for students to use them even in a classroom. While it applies to residents of all ages, the clear intent is to try to stop the rise of nicotine use among our teenage residents. School district officials have said that educational campaigns and enforcement of school rules haven't done enough to curb vaping on campus, and called upon the City to do more. The City will begin enforcement in the spring. The ordinance closely models one approved by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, adopted in 2019, which only applies to unincorporated areas.



Veterans Day keynote speaker : CEO Mike Conklin

Veterans Day commemoration returns to the Leshner Center

THE WALNUT CREEK CONCERT BAND kicked off the day at the Leshner Center for the Arts on November 11, as the City of Walnut Creek resumed its annual tradition of saluting veterans with a special ceremony. Sentinels of Freedom founder and CEO Mike Conklin served as the keynote speaker. The Sentinels of Freedom provide services to severely wounded post-9/11 veterans, helping them transition back to non-military life. Then-Mayor Kevin Wilk narrated a special selection accompanied by the Walnut Creek Concert Band. The Band delighted the crowd with old favorites and new ones, highlighted as always by the playing of the anthems representing each branch of military service. If you didn't catch the ceremony in person or on Walnut Creek TV, you can see it by visiting the City's YouTube station.



Measure X funding supports emergency response



www.cccfpd.org

An additional \$2.5 million dollars will be spent annually in the County to mitigate the threats of wildfires. Measure X funding will support staffing and equipment for a year-round, 14 person hand crew program to address wildfire threats, both for fire responses during fire season, and for fuels reduction and hazard abatement during the off-season. Hand crews will be staffed several days per week during peak fire risk periods. An additional \$2 million was allocated annually for a variety of ongoing wildfire risk reduction programs throughout Contra Costa County. The crews will be part of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, which serves Walnut Creek.



Crisis mental health response effort advances

CONTRA COSTA



You may not have heard of A3, but hopefully before long all county residents will identify that as the title of a unique program under development aimed at launching a safer way for behavioral health crisis response. The theory is that anytime, anywhere, anyone in crisis can get help. County taxpayers who supported Contra Costa County's Measure X will see that the funds raised will go directly to residents in need. The Board of Supervisors approved recommendations from the Measure X Advisory Board to dedicate \$5 million to building out the program, and \$20 million on ongoing funds to support the broader effort, including new staffing. The end result will be a comprehensive, countywide 24x7 response system for behavioral health crises.

Regional crisis response teams and the Miles Hall Crisis Call Center hub will be a focal point for ensuring safer response to people experiencing acute mental health crises. The City of Walnut Creek has been deeply involved in this effort since the beginning, when City leadership recognized gaps in the system of delivering mental health support following the officer-involved shooting of resident Miles Hall. In addition to working with the County, which is the entity that provides behavioral health services, the City has taken steps to bolster its own response with new crisis intervention training and the expansion of non-lethal weapons for the Police Department.

Live! From the Library: January and February events

Arrested Development

Tuesday, January 11, 2022 | 7:00 – 8:30 PM | Zoom

Navigating the social challenges of school were challenging even before COVID-19 turned classrooms upside down. Now that we're settled into a new year, a panel that includes educators and experts will identify the pandemic's ramifications on young people in our community and offer tools to support our schools and students as they adjust to a new normal. For more information and to register for this free virtual program, visit wclibrary.org/live/ or call 925-935-5395.



Rachel Howzell Hall: A Woman of Mysteries

Tuesday, February 8,
2022 | 7:00 – 8:00 PM |
Zoom

Meet award-winning mystery writer Rachel Howzell Hall, a prolific author of mystery novels that include a series featuring Detective Elouise "Lou" Norton, an African-American homicide detective, and her latest thriller, *These Toxic Things*. For more information and to register for this free virtual program, visit wclibrary.org/live/ or call 925-935-5395.



The Library Wants to Check Out Your Feedback in Walnut Creek Survey

The past two years have been challenging for the libraries in Walnut Creek. COVID closed both community libraries for months, and now there is major parking lot construction at the Ygnacio Valley Library holding up its reopening.

The Walnut Creek Library continues to provide services and programming in the meantime. Library leadership is looking for feedback on the services and programs provided. Please visit the Library's home page, <https://ccclib.org>, and select the "We want to hear from you" tab.

Project Second Chance: helping adults learn to read



DID YOU KNOW THAT ONE IN FIVE ADULTS in our region struggle with literacy? Walnut Creek residents can make a difference by volunteering to tutor an adult who wants help with basic reading, writing, and spelling through the library system's free adult literacy program, Project Second Chance (PSC). You will be trained and supported by PSC staff as you work with an adult learner twice a week, either in person or virtually. Or do you know an adult who might need a literacy tutor? You can help by letting them know that they can call PSC at 925-691-3960. To register for an upcoming Tutor Orientation session visit <https://ccclib.org/psc/> or call 925-691-3960.

Looking back at Arts around August



THE CITY OF WALNUT CREEK, ALONG with eleven of its community organizations and Walnut Creek Downtown, completed its first ever Arts Around August earlier this year. It was a month-long program to celebrate the performing, visual and culinary arts.

Thousands enjoyed free summer concerts at Broadway Plaza and on Cypress St. during First Wednesday Street Fests. Smaller groups strolled and sampled gourmet bites at four weekly Moveable Feasts, which featured some of Walnut Creek's best restaurants.

There were events for all ages. Families enjoyed sidewalk chalk art on Saturday mornings and four

performances of Cinderella on the plaza.

Music aficionados were delighted by opera performances and world-class jazz pianist Sara McKenzie, or could catch sidewalk performers at various Downtown Stages every weekend.

Art lovers visited the Bedford Gallery's on-going exhibit "Reclaimed: The Art of Recology," took a public art walking tour, or attended a plein air art festival called "Paint the Downtown."

Planning is underway to bring Arts Around August back in 2022, so watch for information coming soon; if you have questions or ideas, please contact Kathy Hemmenway at Kathy@walnutcreekdowntown.com.

Mountain Shadow Returns to In-person Shows for the 2022 Season



For its 9th Season, Mountain Shadow Film Society returns to 'live' in-person shows in Walnut Creek's downtown public library, beginning in January. All health and safety protocols will be followed, including proof of full vaccination and masks (duration to be determined.) Additionally, there is limited capacity in the Oak View Room, and four portable air purifiers are strategically placed in the venue. There are four screenings of one film each month, including one Friday evening show, two Saturday matinees, and a Saturday evening show.

Over the years, membership in the non-profit film society has grown, bringing the best in international and independent filmmaking to our community. While it is a member-based cultural arts organization, a limited number of general admission tickets are always available. For more information about membership and everything else, go to: <http://mountainshadow.org> or contact Mountain Shadow's director, John Bennisson: jb@mountainshadow.org or 925-787-6965.



Looking for Online Access to "In a Nutshell?"

With Post Office delivery schedules stretched a bit longer than they used to be, you might end up with your "In a Nutshell" landing in your mailbox when some of the events listed have already come and gone! If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically before it is delivered to your home, visit the City's homepage at walnut-creek.org, and look in the upper right hand corner for eNotifications. Select that tab, and you'll be looped into all of the newsletters and news items you can have delivered right to your inbox.

In the case of the Nutshell, it can be viewed online often as much as two weeks before the hard copy arrives. Check out the other news and information items you can have sent to you from the City. Your "In a Nutshell" will still be delivered in the print version to your home, but if you want early access to events and happenings around town, consider registering to get an email heads-up when you can view the latest edition online.



WALNUT CREEK'S NEW GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs)

ADDING ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS, once known as mother-in-law units or granny flats, has become easier in Walnut Creek. In September, the City Council amended the municipal code to help simplify the process of getting approval and building the ADUs. Now in alignment with the State requirements, ADUs are generally permitted by right in any zoning area that allows for single family homes, duplexes or multi-family homes.

Walnut Creek's Community Development Department has secured grant funding to prepare a handful of pre-approved ADU unit plans that would be available for free to any applicant. The plans would reflect four different sizes to fit most residential lots in the City and would offer several different architectural treatments to reflect common styles of housing in Walnut Creek.

Survey Seeks Input From Residents on Future of County Animal Services Department

Did you know that the animal services in our area are provided by Contra Costa County's Animal Services Department? Long gone are the days of the "dog catchers," who would scoop up stray dogs and bring them to what was once known as "the pound." The emphasis today is on finding homes for any adoptable pet, and ensuring that pets are spayed or neutered, and that lost furry loved ones are quickly reunited with their owners.

The Animal Services Department is



currently surveying Walnut Creek residents to find out what services could be improved or expanded for City residents. Take the survey by visiting: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3XLXL3Z>

The County will use resident feedback to help shape future services.



KNOW YOUR WALNUT CREEK PARKS:

Larkey Park

WITH THE FEEL OF A neighborhood park and distinctive amenities that draw visitors from around the region, Larkey Park is an experience unique to Walnut Creek. At Larkey Park, one-of-a-kind facilities like the Lindsay Wildlife Experience, the Larkey Park Swim Center, and the Model Railroad Museum are paired with classic park features, such as picnic areas and playgrounds. With access to the Briones Regional Park and Mount Diablo Regional Trail, and connections to the Contra Costa Canal Trail and EBMUD Trail, Larkey Park serves as a gateway to some of our more beautiful nature spots.

Larkey Park has humble beginnings, dating back to when Buena Vista was just a dirt road. The park began very simply, with just a few picnic tables and an outhouse. In the late 1960s, the City began to install formal landscaping and the infrastructure to support it. Now, Larkey has a swim center, splash pad, two playgrounds, several picnic

areas, and courts for sand volleyball, basketball, and tennis.

Over the past several years, upgrades have been made to the numerous sport courts, including resurfacing of the basketball and tennis courts, and the addition of a sand volleyball court. In 2017, major improvements were made to the Larkey Park Swim Center, a two pool complex with a competitive pool and a children's wading pool. The aquatic center is known for summer fun and recreation, as well as competitive swimming. Other planned improvements to the park include irrigation systems upgrades to help conserve water and make the park more sustainable. Larkey Park's history and amenities make it an icon in its namesake neighborhood and throughout the region.

Larkey Park is located at Buena Vista Lane at First Avenue, and is open daily 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after dusk. Walnut Creek's parks and open spaces have something for everyone.




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Ronald Cassano

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ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The Nutshell Newsletter is published quarterly. For questions and comments, contact editor Betsy Burkhart, 925-943-5895 or burkhart@walnut-creek.org

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