

WALNUT GROVE HOMES ASSOCIATION

News In A Nutshell - Summer 2020 Newsletter

2020 Summer Social - Parade of Art



In lieu of the annual Independence Day Bicycle Parade, the WGHA is sponsoring a Parade of Art! Kids can display their creativity and artistic talents by decorating their driveways with chalk art for the whole neighborhood to enjoy.

To join in, visit Lynn and Charlie Morgan's home, 10 Colony Circle, on Thursday, July 2nd between 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm to sign up. We have 24 free packs of washable sidewalk chalk available on a first-come, first serve basis.

Have fun and complete your work by July 4th so that all Walnut Grove neighbors can walk by participating homes to view the art over the 4th of July weekend. Send a photo of your artwork to Social@WalnutGroveMadison.org and we will feature it on our website!

Have ideas for future social events? Email Charlie Morgan at Social@WalnutGroveMadison.org.

Modernizing Our Covenants And Bylaws

Almost 50 years after they were created, it is time to update and modernize our neighborhood covenants and bylaws. Our covenants and bylaws control many important aspects of our neighborhood and we want to make sure they're working for all of us. At our 2020 Neighborhood Meeting in January, the Walnut Grove Homes Association (WGHA) Board presented on the state of our neighborhood's finances and the challenges we are going to face in the future if no action is taken. An important first step to address those challenges is to update our covenants and bylaws, and approval was given at the annual meeting to begin this process. If you visit the WGHA website, you can see a [map of the eight plats](#) in the neighborhood (also included on page 2) and [copies of the eight original sets of covenants](#), as well as a [copy of the current bylaws](#). Each set of covenants for a particular plat had some covenants identical to those of the other plats, but there were differences as well, some important. A committee was formed in February of 2020 to tackle this project and has been hard at work.



For the WGHA, the covenants function somewhat like a constitution. They also put buyers of lots in Walnut Grove on notice of restrictions on lot ownership that serve to protect property values. This process can be confusing thanks to differences between the eight sets of covenants. One goal of this process is to make regulation of lots in Walnut Grove more uniform, without becoming more restrictive than under the current covenants. A second goal is to modernize the processes of (a) establishing WGHA's budget and (b) assessing annual fees (dues) payable by lot owners. This is not a short process, but the Board wants to ensure that all of our neighbors are informed and included.

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At Large Members

Kim Grimmer

Hayden McCann

Welcome to new Walnut Grove Residents!

Matthew & Mariana on North Westfield Road

Ethan on North Westfield Road

Pete & Sarah on Walnut Grove Drive

Natasha & Kenton on Walnut Grove Drive

Natalie & Patrick on Walnut Grove Drive

Melissa on Walnut Grove Drive

Matt & Allie on Farmington Court

Walk the Greenways

Our neighborhood greenways and Walnut Grove Park are a great way to stay active and social during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please observe appropriate social distancing and make sure to say "Hi!" to our neighbors as you are out and about. A map of the greenways is below and is also [available on our website](#).



Adopt A Plot

Many of you have either become acquainted with or spent more time in the forested areas of Walnut Grove Greenways recently. WGHA Greenway Committee is sponsoring "Adopt A Plot", a volunteer activity for WGHA owners and families interested in being outside near nature and contributing to the health of the Greenways this spring and summer. This project involves spending time volunteering for invasive plant control in a wooded area. Each volunteer selects an area which will be assigned to the volunteer to participate in removing four frequently occurring invasive plants. Each of these is either non-native or is competitive with desirable native woodland dwellers. The number 1 invasive target is Garlic Mustard (pictured above), a biannual plant which is invasive. Each mature plant is capable of producing 7,900 seeds. These seeds can remain viable in the soil for growth up to 10 years. This species is alleopathic, i.e. exudes a chemical that inhibits other species from growing which contributes to its undesirable character. Target species: Garlic Mustard, Dames Rocket, Burdock and Dodder, each of which are undesirable in a woodland.



Want to get involved? Contact David Phillip, Greenway Committee Chairman, at maddavie2@gmail.com and Hayden McCann, Greenway volunteer, at haydenmccann@yahoo.com so you can be assigned a plot and receive training on how to best maintain it. Together we can make a difference in the health of our shared forest asset and improve the growth of existing desirable forest dwelling plants. You are encouraged to take before and after photos of your assigned area to show off the result, and we hope that you'll visit the area through the seasons to monitor the forests' response. Thank you in advance for considering volunteering in WGHA, our neighborhood and home.



Modernizing Our Covenants And Bylaws

(Continued from page 1.) Under all eight sets of covenants, the WGHA has two predominate purposes: (a) an architectural review function designed to ensure relative architectural and aesthetic compatibility in term of structures and additions to lots; and (b) the establishment of an annual budget to fund the operations of the WGHA, with maintenance of the four Greenways in the plats being the largest expense by far. These Greenways are at the heart of the neighborhood, and they are a key part of what makes Walnut Grove a unique neighborhood in Madison. The ability of the WGHA to raise fees for its operations was modified in 2005, to increase the \$40 per lot annual fee assessment, which was capped by the original covenants, to an annual fee cap of \$75.00 per lot. Using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index (CPI) calculator, It takes about \$295 in 2020 dollars to have the 1968 buying power of \$40. It takes \$125 in 2020 dollars to have the buying power of \$75.00 in 2005. Thus, the cap on the fees assessed annually have not kept up with inflation or the costs of WGHA's operation.

One major change the Board is considering for the covenants is the elimination or modification of the cap on annual fees. One proposed approach would instead put the annual fee to a vote at the annual WGHA meeting, with the votes at the annual meeting serving as the limitation on the amount of the annual fee. This approach would provide that an annual budget would be circulated in advance of the annual meeting to afford all lot owners an opportunity for input to the Board before the annual meeting and encourage greater attendance at the meeting. Another approach would maintain a cap but increase it over time, either on a set schedule or tied to inflation. **Rather than guessing what the neighborhood would prefer to do, the WGHA Board will be asking for additional input as part of a neighborhood survey on the dues structures that have been proposed as part of the covenants review process.** We encourage all neighbors to review the options and cast their vote.



Another goal is to streamline how the covenants can be amended in the future, so that the WGHA is quickly responsive to its members' desires for governance. The current covenant amendment process is so arduous that the covenants have never been amended. The updated process is described in greater detail, along with an in-depth discussion of the proposed changes to the Covenants and Bylaws on the WGHA website, www.WalnutGroveMadison.org.

In order to make sure that this process is guided by neighborhood consensus, two information sessions were held in May to discuss the covenants and the committee's work. More than 40 neighbors attended the two sessions and provided thoughtful feedback on the covenants. The idea to poll the neighborhood came directly from these sessions, and we thank everyone who was able to attend. If you were not able to attend, [a video recording of one of the sessions is available](#).

After final approval from the WGHA Board and a thorough legal review, we will be reaching out to all neighbors to sign the new set of Walnut Grove Home Association Covenants. While this is a time consuming process, we hope that it will be one that allows us all to come together and keep our neighborhood thriving.