

# The Whispers

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY BY NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS, INC. FOR THE WHISPERING OAKS HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

## Spreading Oak Wilt

### Where it is and the need to prevent it.

Each Oak Tree on your property is worth \$6,000-\$7000, so the loss in property value can be enormous.

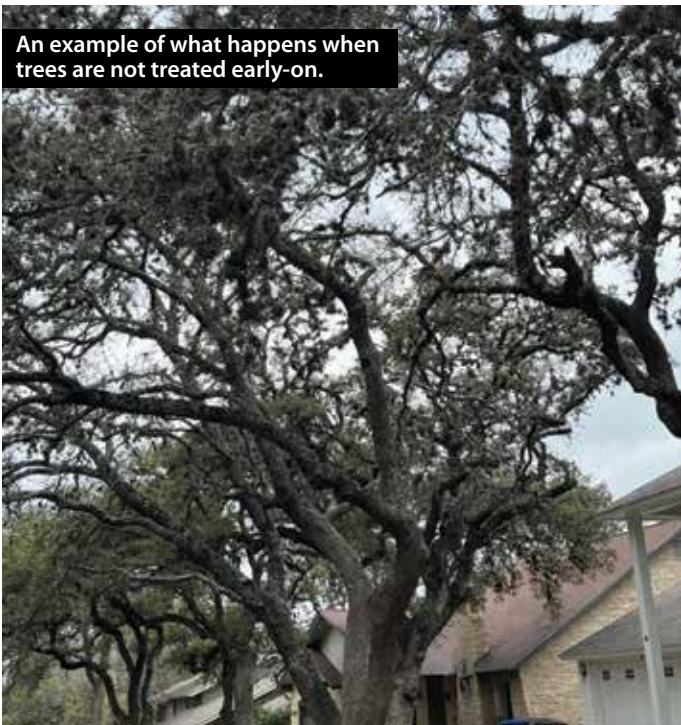


In 2023, the scourge of Oak Wilt disease will continue to spread through the native Live Oak tree forests in North Central and Northwest San Antonio neighborhoods. WOHA has advised homeowners in this new zone of potential spread of the need to take quick action to save their trees. Erin Davis, the Texas A&M Forester for this area, has identified recently infected trees and has mapped the latest zones of potential spread, primarily along Whispering Wind, Whisper Path, and Whisper Valley.

Ms. Davis will present this information, along with discussions of treatment methods and prevention techniques, at a public meeting on Tuesday, January 24, at 6:30 p.m. in the Hobby Middle School cafeteria, 11843 Vance Jackson. The program is open to all neighborhood residents in the D9 and D8 City Council districts.

For more information, contact WOHA at [board@whisperingoaks.org](mailto:board@whisperingoaks.org).

An example of what happens when trees are not treated early-on.



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### An Oak Wilt Contest

## **DON'T "WILT" BEFORE THE CHALLENGE, KIDS!**

*The Whispers* is running a contest to see who can create the most expressive drawing in the fight against Oak Wilt. But it's just for Elementary School-aged children. So stay out of it, Dad! **Whoever is judged to have created the best drawing will have his or her artwork appear in the next issue of *The Whispers* and will win a tee-shirt with the drawing on it and a \$25 gift certificate to Barnes & Noble.**

Some ideas are to imagine what Oak Wilt could look like as a kind of monster and then have a Live Oak battle it. Perhaps the Oak Tree could be sad or crying. Use your imagination!

But please submit on 8.5"x11" white paper only. The deadline is Sunday, 27 January, 5:00 p.m. Please note that this contest is limited to Whispering Oaks children only.

**Drawings are to be submitted at the home of the Editor, Dr. Richard Pressman, 11310 Whisper Falls.**

No more than two drawings per person, please. Judges are elementary school teacher Graciela Pressman and graphic artist Caleb Blount.



2023

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janiswoha@gmail.com

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*A message from* Simon Esparza

# Let There Still BE LIGHTS



The holiday season is ending. And soon all those beautiful lights will be taken down. But the lights installed at all our entranceway monuments will continue to brighten our Whispering Oaks nights—now that the last of them have finally been installed. So now every entranceway directly into Whispering Oaks has monuments that are illuminated for beauty, for safety, and for our security.

But let us keep *other* lights shining bright in our lives. Let's continue to be the best neighbors to each other in our beautiful neighborhood that we possibly can. Let's continue to support the efforts of those who give of their time to keep Whispering Oaks a beautiful and a happy place to live. Let's be sure to join the HOA and, if we've a mind to, join the Swim & Tennis Club as well.

And let's volunteer to help on an HOA committee. There's the Social Committee, the Government Affairs Committee, the Technology Committee, the Government Affairs Committee, the Architecture Committee, the Code & Compliance Committee, the Newsletter Committee, and there's the Welcoming Committee—which is not to mention Citizens on Patrol to keep us safer. There is always so much to do.

Now, if you really don't have the time, surely, surely, surely you've got a mere \$10.44 a month to be a member of the HOA. That's just doing your part. But whatever you do, *do something*. Let's keep *all* the lights on all year 'round.

## NEW Board Members

At the January 13 meeting of the WOHA Board of Directors, **Ben Dilly** and **January Smith** were elected as new members to take the place of recent openings.

*Welcome!*

Even though It's about *The Whispers*

### It's No Secret...

We're considering changing the name of the newsletter 'cause it's too quiet! But there's no need to whisper that it's a contest! It's open to all residents of Whispering Oaks.

So no need to whisper; instead,  
shout it out to the Board at  
secretary@whisperingoaksho.org.com.

**The deadline is 1 February.**

## Updated Community Directory Coming Soon!

Watch your mailbox for the opportunity to verify how your household's information will appear. Residents who have recently renewed their WOHA Membership for 2023 will be acknowledged with a star next to their address. There's still time to send in your dues! Online payment options and mail-in forms are available at [whisperingoaks.org](http://whisperingoaks.org).



# City Denies Variance for Problematic Airbnb Property

—A WOHA Board Victory

Neighbors and WOHA Board members were successful in their recent lobbying of the City’s Board of Equalization to deny a permit variance application for a short-term rental property on Whisper Circle. Since becoming operational early last year, the property, which offered nightly rentals via Airbnb, had generated multiple complaints.

Short-term rentals are defined as properties offering accommodations of less than 31 consecutive days. The brisk real estate market has caused the number of short-term rental operators within Whispering Oaks to double in the past 24 months, and many are owned by out-of-state investors who delegate management to local real estate firms providing varying levels of diligence. The City generally does *not* regulate long-term rentals, rentals which generate far fewer concerns.

Complaints stemming from the Whisper Circle property involved alleged noise, trash, parking, and safety violations. Code Compliance and SAPD officers were called to the property on multiple occasions, and nearby neighbors were increasingly exasperated with the steady stream of new guests who were generating repetitive problems.

Last summer, WOHA discovered that the property was operating without proper permits and alerted the City, which limits some types of short-term rental permits. When cited, the operator then applied for a variance seeking to override the law. Testimony from residents and Board Members at the November 7 hearing persuaded the commissioners to decline the application unanimously. The owner may seek to appeal the ruling, but is prohibited from soliciting guests without proper permits in hand.

City staff has struggled to protect neighborhood integrity from the rise of these businesses operating within residential

communities. Those with outdoor swimming pools are more likely to generate noise complaints, since guests frequently rent the properties for large parties and family gatherings that can run late into the night. Affected neighbors quickly realize that citations for noise violations are rarely issued because most officers do not carry the decibel meters needed to verify an infraction.

Approximately 25% of Whispering Oaks homes have swimming pools; however, the Community Covenants that govern all properties—regardless of WOHA membership status—do not currently limit short-term rental businesses from operating legally. As a result, several residents have petitioned the Board to spearhead an amendment process and to evaluate strategies to curtail problematic operators. Accordingly, the Board has retained legal counsel. In the coming year, WOHA intends to convene a community meeting on the issue.

**Residents who have concerns regarding either short-term or long-term rental properties can contact 311 to verify if City ordinances are being violated. Parking and noise complaints should be directed to SAPD Non-Emergency at 210-207-7273.**



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## The Board Frolics... For Once

On Tuesday, 15 November, the WOHA Board of Directors, along with some recent and past members, gathered at La Fonda for a fine meal together. It was a rare occasion, indeed, for the Board has never taken the time to just be together. Some 17 folks, members, former members, spouses, and one visiting daughter enjoyed some of the best Mexican food in town on an excursion organized by the ever-competent Cheri Wiese, WOHA Treasurer par excellence.



## What a 'Racquet'!

Tennis, that is. Since 2009, Karen Mannheimer has created and run The Tennis Park, a part of Whispering Oaks. The Tennis Park has courts on both the east and the west sides, with two on the east side, by the swimming pool, and four on the east side, where there is also an office/store/lounge for the members.



**Karen Mannheimer**

When Karen took over, the courts were a mess, as were the parks alongside. But she went to work to make a first-rate facility—so much so that the United States Tennis Association (USTA) now runs competitions there. Today, The Tennis Park is busy place, offering lessons, both private and group; leagues, both men's and women's; and summer camp for children, which includes a refreshing dip in the pool. She's even taken kids in the program to Freeman Coliseum to see the pros play.

Karen's been at the game since she first picked up a racquet in 1972 back in elementary school at the encouragement of her mother, who was a regular player. She then went on to play for Texas Tech on a scholarship. And before establishing The Tennis Park, for 19 years she ran the tennis program at our local Jewish Community Center.

The Park may be a business, but it's certainly a love. And it shows in the pride she's taken, not only in the quality of the programs, but also in its appearance. All the surfaces are new, and the lighting is steadily being modernized—which is not to mention the beautiful playgrounds. Whether it's tennis or children just using the swings and monkey bars, it's a great place to play. All in all, Karen and her Tennis Park are a wonderful addition to our neighborhood.

## Leaves, Leaves Everywhere

### But Please, Not in the Street!

Call 311 for a Special Collection

Once again, it's time for the oak trees to shed their leaves, so once again comes the annual reminder not to blow or rake them into the street. Allowing leaves to accumulate in city streets to eventually end up clogging the drainage channels is a City Ordinance violation. Lawn maintenance workers and anyone observed blowing leaves into the street can be ticketed. All organic materials should be placed into the green organic cart for free collection every Wednesday. *Leaves placed in plastic bags will not be collected by City crews.*

If the leaf pile is too large for the green cart, they should be placed in the brown paper leaf bags available for purchase at HEB, Lowe's, or Home Depot. Up to 50 leaf bags may be placed on the curb for free collection by a City crew if scheduled through the 311 operator. Please note that the City provides this service to any resident twice a year free as part of the solid waste assessment on the CPS bill. But for any further pickups, there is a charge. So it's best to have gathered a large supply before scheduling.



# Winter Home Safety

by *Neighborhood News*

It's always better to be prepared when winter arrives. Better safe than sorry, right? A couple of years ago, even South Texas saw snow on the ground, which is a rarity. Winter storms can be dangerous with potential power failures and loss of heat. While being outdoors during winter can be dangerous, there are also some indoor dangers to be aware of.

## Heating Your Home Safely

**DANGER:** Never use your gas stove or oven to heat your home; it's not safe. If the power goes out in your home, garner heat from the following: warm coats, blankets, or sleeping bags. Using a gas oven or stove can cause carbon monoxide to fill your home and poison everyone inside.

### Fireplace:

- Use the fireplace only if it is up to code and has plenty of dry firewood.
- Check the fireplace now to make sure it is properly vented to the outside. If using a gas log fireplace, then ensure gas is not leaking from the flue.
- Get your fireplace checked out now by a professional to prepare for winter storms ahead.
- CAUTION: Never burn paper in a fireplace. Paper burns very quickly and can easily float up the chimney with the hot air. This is dangerous because flames that enter the chimney can ignite the creosote deposits in the flue. Additionally, pieces of burning paper can rise through the chimney and ignite the flammable materials outside the home.

### Electric Heaters:

- If you plan to use an electric space heater this winter, choose one with automatic shut-off switch and non-glowing elements.
- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from curtains, blankets, or any other flammable material.
- Remember never to place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.

- Ensure the cord of an electric space heater is not a tripping hazard; however, never run the cord under carpets or rugs.
- Plug a space heater directly into an outlet; never use an extension cord. If the electrical cord is damaged or produces visible sparks, do not use it.

## Lighting Your Home Safely

### Power Failure:

- Stock up on battery-powered flashlights or lanterns instead of candles. Remember, most house fires are caused by candles.
- If you must use candles to provide light inside your home, never leave lit candles unattended.
- Check your generator to ensure it is in good working condition. If a generator is used due to a winter storm, use it safely by moving it outside the home and at least 20 feet away from doors, windows, or vents and in a space where rain and snow will not reach them. Remember: Generators exude carbon monoxide. Never use a generator in your garage or basement: the fumes can be deadly.
- Prepare by getting and installing a carbon monoxide detector now. This may save your life.

If you would like more on this topic, please visit:

[www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/indoorsafety.html](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/duringstorm/indoorsafety.html)

## Cell Phone SCAM Alert

A text reads, "Hi, Mom, I've damaged my cell phone, so this is just my number while it's getting repaired at the phone shop. Message with a reply to let me know you got this." The texter will then wait for your reply and then try to engage with you in conversation to ultimately scam you out of money. Don't reply. Call or Text your family directly if you even suspect it might be legit—it's not.

## Whispering Oaks Online Communications

Did you know Whispering Oaks HOA is on social media? Please join our Facebook page and Nextdoor Whispering Oaks HOA group for up-to-date information on events and other important news about our neighborhood.



### Facebook:

Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association SA



### NextDoor:

Whispering Oaks Homeowners Association group

Also, don't forget about the Whispering Oaks HOA website! You can contact the HOA board and join the HOA here. <https://www.whisperingoaks.org/>

*"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."*

—Henry Ford

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# New Year Clean Yard!

City crews will be picking up tree limbs, brush, and shrub cuttings starting on Monday, the 23rd of January, a twice-yearly service covered in our CPS bill.

- Debris should be placed adjacent to the curb, but not in the street.
- Only organic material will be picked up; bulky trash is collected in April.
- Piles should be placed where there is at least a 15-foot clearance overhead for the truck and crane to operate.
- Oak tree pruning should be done only by a city-licensed contractor who uses sealant on every cut—no matter the size—within 30 minutes. (City ordinance!)
- To eliminate the possibility of spreading the Oak Wilt disease, all Oak trees should not be pruned from February until the end of June.

Now's the time to clean up those yards and cut back all those damaged shrubs and plants killed in last year's heavy freeze. If plants did not resprout this past year, they are certainly dead now. Please take the time to make your yard ready for Spring 2023! *Help keep Whispering Oaks beautiful!*



## WHISPERING OAKS Yards of the Month



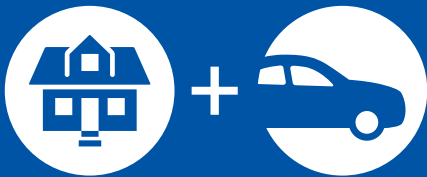
**Yard of the Month for November**  
Mary & John Russell, 2731 Oak Bluff



**Yard of the Month for December**  
Laurie & Donald Harris, 11211 Whisper Falls



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## WHISPERING OAKS GARDEN CLUBBING

*"I like gardening—  
it's a place where I find  
myself when I need  
to lose myself."*

— Alice Sebold

*"To forget how  
to dig the earth and  
tend the soil is to forget  
ourselves."*

— Mahatma Gandhi

# Goodbye to the Old & 'Hello' to the New



The WOGC Field Trip to the Japanese Tea Garden on October 20th was lots of fun and informative as well. The 14 stalwarts had perfect weather for the adventure. Mark Lawson, our guide, has been with the San Antonio Parks & Recreation Operations for 34 years, and obviously, he is a very knowledgeable horticulturist. Mark's personableness made the tour fun. It was then followed by a picnic lunch at the WO Swim Club's poolside pavilion.

Then, 2022 ended well for the Garden Club, thanks to the efforts of Club officers and members who graciously opened their homes to us. Thanks also to several brand new members and many faithful "re-newers."

In November Mark A. Peterson, Conservation Project Coordinator for the San Antonio Water System, gave us an entertaining and informative presentation on winter gardening. His advice was to "Spend more time prepping the lawn and less time planting and watering." Mark passed out two useful booklets, compliments of SAWS: *San Antonio Landscape Care Guide and Garden Style San Antonio*.



In early December, twenty-eight Garden Club members and guests enjoyed a delicious holiday luncheon at Club Giraud. The Club is always beautifully decorated for Christmas and Hanukkah, this year being no exception.

We will start 2023 with our annual charity project for the Sarah Roberts French Home located near Woodlawn Lake. Then February through May will offer an educational presentation, the Quad-Club luncheon and style show at the Quarry Golf Club, a tour and food demonstration at the SA Botanical Gardens, and election of club officers at our "end of year" party.

**It's never too late to join us.**

For information, call President Pamela Harrison-Martinez  
at 210-690-2422.

*Wishing all good health and good cheer throughout  
the New Year. – Ann Parsons*

# It's Scary

## How Popular Is the Pre-Hallowe'en Bash



Over 200 people showed up and had a grand time at the Swim & Tennis Club and WOHA's annual Hallowe'en party. The pool was closed off and the grounds were opened to one and all, old and young...er, mostly young with their moms and dads, grandmoms, and granddads.

There were a number of games, all free, and refreshments, not free but cheap.

There were, as well, two contests, one for the two-person toilet-paper wrap: which pair can wrap a whole roll of toilet paper around his or her partner the fastest, another for the best costumes.

Whitlow Lewis, the Tornado, first place in costumes.



It's the ole double-rotation technique.

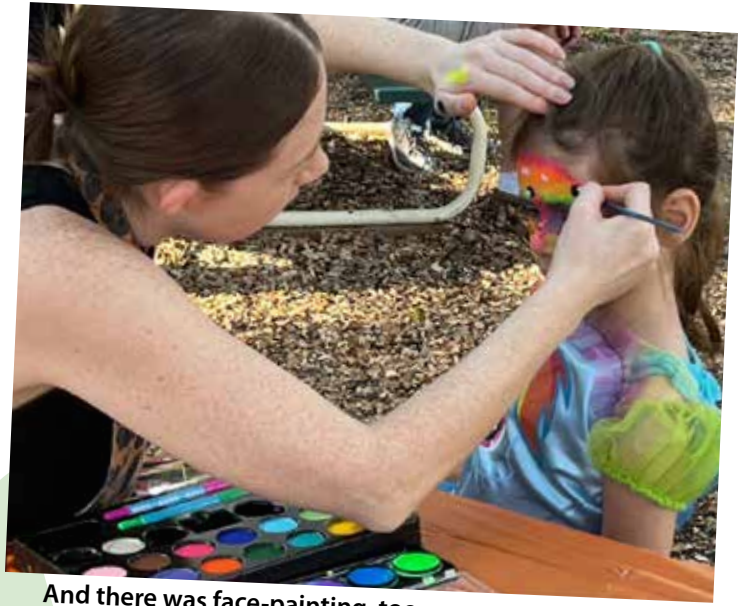


And lots of food, too, served by youthful, energetic volunteers.





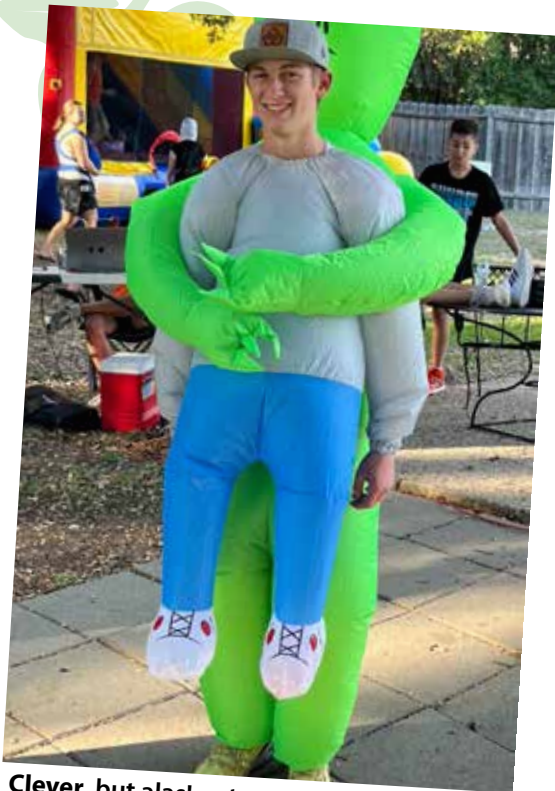
Samantha Foster is t.p.'d by her own husband. How cruel!



And there was face-painting, too.



Lots and lots of socializing



Clever, but alas! not one of the winners.

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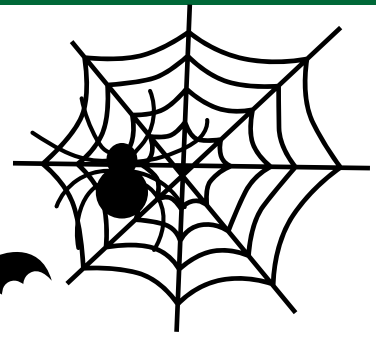
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And the winners are...  **SPOOK-EEEE** 



In the first annual WOHA Spooky contest, the winners were as follows:



**Grand Prize Winner: Debbie Salinas and her daughter, 2834 Whisper Fawn**



**Second Place Winner: Richard Shevlin, 2710 Oak Bluff**



**Third Place Winner: David Pate, 11302 Whisper Dawn**

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## Remodeling? Updating? Flipping? You Need a *Permit* First!

In the last year, dozens of Whispering Oaks homes have been sold, but many new owners are not intending to reside here. Instead, “flippers” and investors are gutting interiors, moving walls, and adding electric outlets and plumbing pipes—many without the proper inspections to ensure work is done safely and correctly. This work violates the City of San Antonio’s requirement that such renovations *must* have prior approval and be issued a permit, and inspected—all before residents even move in.

In general, permits are *not* needed when a homeowner wants to paint, re-tile, or update a kitchen sink, for example. However, permits ARE needed when plumbing lines, electric wires, or interior walls are moved—when the original locations of these aspects of a home’s interior are changed.

Direct questions about permits and when they’re needed should be addressed to the City’s Development Services Department, 1901 South Alamo, or call 210-207-1111. When selling a home here in Whispering Oaks, remind the listing realtor and/or buyer that Whispering Oaks is a Neighborhood Conservation District, which carries additional oversight by the City.

**Questions concerning the validity of work being done on vacant or recently sold homes should be directed to the CoSA Code Compliance Officer by calling 311.**

## Cold Weather Threatens Man’s Best Friend



Taking a walk or run on a brisk morning or evening is enjoyable, but it’s equally wonderful to go inside and enjoy a warm fire or a nice cup of hot chocolate. Animals, like people, need shelter in cold weather. Animal Control Services state that they will have zero-tolerance for weather related violations. They offer the following advice:

- The best option is to bring animals indoors.
- If that isn’t an option, purchase an insulated doghouse or build a protective enclosure that shelters your pets from the elements, giving them a safe, warm place to rest.
- No pets should be left outside in a storm.
- Protect pets from harmful chemicals, paints, and especially antifreeze (which is deadly) if you keep them in a garage.
- Some pets should never be left outside: very young animals, short-haired dogs, older pets, cats.
- Always provide fresh water and food for pets and check it daily.

Animals are vulnerable and depend on us to protect them. Violators of city ordinances can receive fines for their negligence. If you see an animal you believe is not being cared for, call 311 to report an animal ordinance violation.



### Real Estate Report

October–December 2022

Prepared by Jean Marie Ruffini,  
Resident Realtor®

	Price	Per Sq. Ft.
<b>Active listings – 6</b>		
High	\$550,000	\$207
Median	\$424,000	\$175
Low	\$269,900	\$134
<b>Sold listings – 2</b>		
High	\$402,000	\$180
Low	\$398,000	\$144
<b>Pending – 4</b>		
High	\$450,000	\$196
Low	\$269,900	\$142

“According to the San Antonio Board of REALTORS®, sales continue declining while prices rise.

The San Antonio area is seeing a decrease in home sales, according to the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Report from the San Antonio Board of REALTORS® (SABOR), which reports areas contained within the MLS. The month of October ended with 2,656 closed listings, a 19% decrease from a year ago. 2,053 of those sales were existing homes and 602 new construction homes.”

–San Antonio Board of Realtors



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