

City Currents

Winter 2023 - 2024



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City Council Adopts FY 2024 Budget and Commits \$15.6 Million to Capital Improvements

During its September 25th meeting, the City Council unanimously approved the 2023 Property Tax Rate to support West U's \$51.3 million Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Operating Budget. This Budget reflects the City's commitment to allocating resources that support the community's priorities. From investing in critical infrastructure to enhancing neighborhood amenities, the Budget will fund the high service levels West U residents expect while also lowering the property tax rate for the sixth consecutive year. Additionally, West U continues to maintain one of the lowest tax rates in Harris County. For every dollar in property taxes paid, West U receives approximately \$0.157 cents to fund city operations, including payment on debt, while the other \$0.843 cents go to other taxing agencies.

While the Budget supports the top-of-the-line daily services on an annual basis, the 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is the City's five-year roadmap for how West U can fund and implement important capital projects. The Adopted Budget and CIP include over \$15 million for improvement projects across six key areas:

1. **Drainage (\$151,000)**
2. **Facilities and Technology (\$100,000)**
3. **Parks (\$780,000)**
4. **Streets (\$2.3 million)**
5. **Water Utilities (\$11.9 million)**
6. **Wastewater Systems (\$350,000)**

So, what projects will you see in 2024?

- The Facilities Master Plan will be in full effect with construction of the new Public Works Facility, located along Dincans St. and Westpark Dr.
 - With this new Public Works Facility underway, the City Council will turn its attention toward the design of a new library, community building, and senior center.
- 2024 will also be a big year for West U mobility. The City is investing \$1.2 million to repair, replace, and rehabilitate sidewalks.
 - This includes a \$400,000 grant award match from the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO).
 - In 2024, the City Council will also consider options to complete repairs to the remaining sections of sidewalks throughout West U.
- Park enthusiasts can also look forward to a variety of upgrades at Wier Park. Based on resident input, this project will include:
 - Replacing artificial turf to support fall zones
 - Repainting the playground equipment
 - Resurfacing and restriping the tennis and basketball courts
 - Expanding the green space, which will provide 6,500 square feet of new usable space

The City has accomplished a lot in 2023, and the 2024 Budget will continue to build upon those accomplishments.



From the Mayor's Desk



Mayor Susan Sample

With the year 2023 winding down, West University Place has been hard at work preparing for a busy 2024! From providing exciting upgrades to Wier Park, to delivering on the first phase of our Foundation for the Future program with improvements to our streets, drainage, and utility systems, West U's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget continues to focus on the priorities identified in our Citizen Satisfaction survey – priorities that focus on public safety, infrastructure maintenance, and service delivery.

I am proud of the hard work that our City Council and City staff have done over the past few months to prepare a budget that will maintain West U's service levels while also reinvesting in our infrastructure – all while maintaining one of the lowest property tax rates in Harris County!

Public Safety

Our West U Police and Fire departments account for approximately 44% of the City's general fund expenditures – making these services a top budget priority every year. Like many other communities across the country, public safety departments are facing unique staffing challenges that can lead to vacancies. This budget emphasizes recruitment and retention as a major goal for ensuring that our men and women in uniform are supported.

Investing in Infrastructure

Among other things, West U's infrastructure is one of the main characteristics that make our community stand out. Ensuring that our streets are clear of potholes, our sidewalks are pedestrian-friendly, and our water systems are state of the art is essential for maintaining the expectations of West U residents.

Streets and Sidewalks

West U's 2024–2028 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) calls for a nearly \$2.4 million investment in our streets and roadways.

- In March 2022, the City completed a pavement improvement study that outlines an eight-year pavement management plan to address the condition of all streets and roadways in West U. Construction on this plan is expected to begin in early 2024.
- With a \$400,000 METRO match grant recently received, West U will invest \$1.2 million in addressing issues with our sidewalks. In early 2024, our City Council will consider additional funding to speed up repairs to the remaining sections of sidewalk throughout West U.

Water Systems

West U purchases approximately 55% of our drinking water from the City of Houston. To ensure that West U can meet the needs our residents during extended interruptions in receiving water from the City of Houston, our City Council is considering the following improvements:

- Providing upgrades to existing pump rooms
- Replacing and updating distribution lines
- Improving water wells
- Continuing the Cast Iron Water Line Replacement Program

Facilities

- Phase I of the Facilities Master Plan is finally underway after the replatting of the property was approved by the City of Houston. Now the project is beginning the permitting process, and we expect construction to begin in the summer of 2024.
- Now that construction of the Public Works Facility is moving forward, our focus will turn to the start of Phase II of the Facility Master Plan, which includes the design for a new community building, senior center, and library on the site of the current Public Works Facility. The design process for these community-centric buildings will include an extensive community engagement process to solicit feedback from all of you on the look, feel, and function of these buildings that will serve our residents for the next 50 to 100 years. These new facilities will provide spaces for all generations to mix and mingle.

Poor Farm Ditch

In October, West U, Southside Place, and Harris County approved an interlocal agreement for the Harris County Flood Control District's project to replace the section of Poor Farm Ditch between University Blvd. and Bellaire Blvd. This area has been the topic of discussion and studies over the last 20 years. To learn more about this project, and to sign up for notifications on project updates, please visit the City's website.

These are just a handful of items that our 2024 Budget addresses. The Budget will provide resources that will ensure that our community's quality of life is not only maintained but also set up for continued success for another 100+ years. This investment in our staff, services, and infrastructure will ensure that 2024 is a great year for West U!

I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season with friends, family, and neighbors – cheers to 2024!



*Council Member
Clay Brett*

A Message from Council Member Clay Brett

Dream Big, West U, and Remake Your Town Center

As the relentless summer heat gives way to idyllic fall and winter evenings in our city, many of our residents have emerged from their air-conditioned homes to once again enjoy the green spaces, parks, and community areas of West U. This emergence reminds me that we have wonderful opportunities in front of us to reshape some of the shared spaces in our community, specifically those around our town center between Auden and College streets. On this note, I will describe the challenges facing us, along with my vision for new investment into West U's community spaces, and will ask that you consider communicating your own views on this important City project.

Our City leaders have developed West U's Facilities Master Plan to improve the functionality of our community and government buildings in the town center west of the baseball fields and elementary school. This Plan is the product of town hall meetings and resident feedback regarding our goals for the next 50 years of our town center space.

The Plan addresses operational deficiencies in the town center area. Today, for instance, our Fire Department lacks space in its firehouse for modern equipment and fire engines, as well as decontamination areas. Our community center and library lack modern facilities, as well. Our Public Works buildings and Maintenance areas are inadequate, and they occupy valuable real estate on Milton and Amherst that could enrich our residential experience if better used. Our emergency operations command center is headquartered in a City Hall lecture room, and our Police, Fire, Finance, and administrative departments lack sufficient space.

These operational deficiencies hinder our city's ability to provide a high level of service to our residents and to maximize our overall quality of life in West U.

Looking east from Huffington Park or west from the baseball fields, the western town center and government facilities as a whole do not provide an inviting or recreational feeling whatsoever. The library and community center, while quaint, are aged and underutilized. We can do better than that. We can revitalize these spaces to deliver a new library and community center, while also creating functional greenery in our town center.

The community center and library can be rebuilt to face Huffington Park – creating an integrated, two-block recreational area divided by College Street. Co-locating the library with the community center will allow us to generationally connect young and old while incorporating both spaces into modern, mixed-use environments that will benefit everyone.

Imagine this library and community center fronted by an attractive green space to College Street, with new oak trees and landscaping, where today there is only capital equipment and concrete. In place of the current location of the community center, facing the northwest baseball fields, imagine a stately firehouse large enough to house our outstanding West U Fire Department, so it can adequately service its equipment and our safety needs. Moving the Public Works facilities off campus to the City's work locations on Westpark will make these new spaces possible.

Also, imagine transforming Amherst and Milton streets between College and Auden into pedestrian-first spaces, with greenery advancing from the current curbs and flowing, natural areas beside Huffington Park and the new library – creating green corridors between the elementary school block, the library, and Huffington Park.

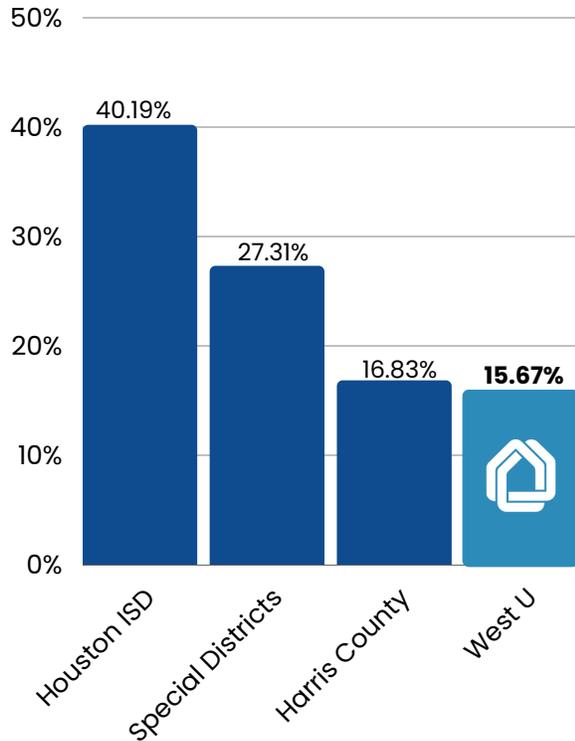
When I think about the best parts of life in West U, I am drawn to our close-knit sense of community. This is, in part, built by our enjoyment of shared recreational spaces, whether the space is a front yard, a park, or a community center. I believe in increasing the extent and use of these green spaces, embracing our title of Tree City USA, and modernizing our infrastructure to provide our citizens with the high level of services that we have come to expect from West U. To do this, we need to modernize our City facilities.

There is much work still to be done on this Plan, and, in 2024, our City Council will be considering the new community center and library during public engagement sessions, in which we will discuss the design of these invaluable community spaces. Whatever the outcome of these sessions, I will be a voice to advance a vision of our shared sense of community in West U, which includes creating more useable green spaces and modern facilities for West U residents of all ages. I hope you will reflect on these opportunities and join me in shaping our city for the better.

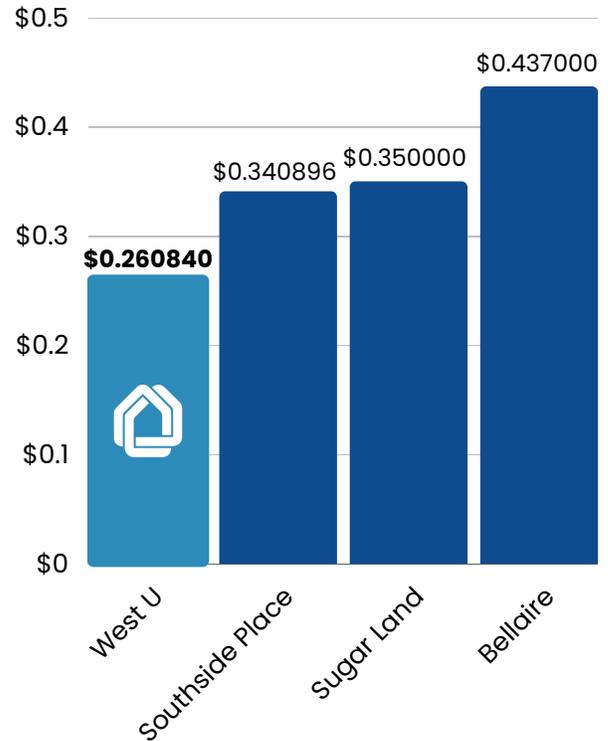
FY 2024 Budget at a Glance

The Budget at a Glance provides residents a simple overview of how the City's budget operates, and a clear understanding of where your tax dollars go. For more information visit, www.westutx.gov/2024budget.

Where Do Property Taxes Go?

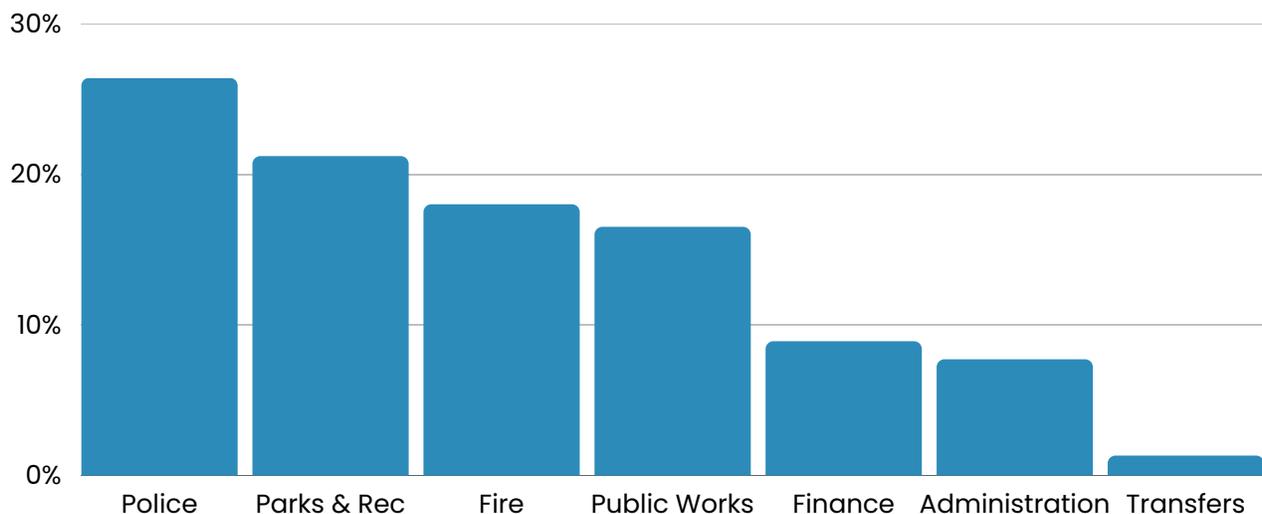


Comparable Property Tax Rates



General Fund Expenditures by Department

Total General Fund Budget - \$24,453,540



Resident Resources

Plan a Sustainable Winter

As the holiday season approaches, it's important to keep in mind ways to reduce waste and promote sustainability in your festivities, gatherings, and decorations. Remember the 3 R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Reduce – Energy consumption during the winter months can be reduced by checking your door and window seals for any air that may be coming in.

Reuse – Do you have old shoe boxes, shipping containers, or holiday gift bags? Reuse the supplies that you already have on hand to prepare gifts for your loved ones.

Recycle – Stick to recyclable items when planning your festivities, such as using gift paper without metallic or glitter designs, along with cardboard boxes and cartons, and glass containers.

Christmas String Light Recycling

November 21 - January 13

In conjunction with the Houston Zoo, West U will be accepting holiday string lights for recycling at the following locations:

City Hall – 3800 University Blvd.

Public Works Administration Office – 3826 Amherst St.

West University Place Recreation Center – 4210 Bellaire Blvd.

Christmas Tree Recycling

December 27 – January 12

Each year West U's Public Works Department collects live Christmas trees with yard waste and takes them to a local composter to be recycled as mulch. To participate in this program, remove all decorations, lights, foreign objects, and stands from your trees and place them out during your yard waste collection day. Trees that are flocked or that have any foreign items still attached to them will be collected with normal household trash and disposed of in the landfill.



West University Place Alerts

The City has two subscription groups you can be a part of to stay in the know!

NotifyMe is the City's day-to-day notification system that allows residents to customize what notifications they receive.

West UREADY is the City's emergency notification system that is only used during situations that pose an immediate danger to life, property, or safety.



Residents must opt-in to both systems. To sign up, or update your account, please visit www.westutx.gov/notifyme or www.westutx.gov/westuready.

2024 Water, Sewer, and Solid-Waste Rate Increase

The adoption of the 2024 budget included a 3.5% increase on all solid waste rates, increasing the over 65 and disabled rates to \$18.47 and the regular rates to \$36.38 without tax. In addition, water and sewer rates increased 6% and 3% respectively, thus increasing the average household using 9,349 gallons by \$5.11 per month.



Since West U bills in arrears, these new rates will be reflected on your February 2024 utility statement.

If you are over 65 or disabled you may be eligible for the Senior & Disabled Solid-Waste Discount. The City reduces the cost of solid-waste pickup for customers who are over 65 or disabled. To obtain this discount, senior residents are required to provide a copy of their driver's license or other valid identification as age verification. Residents who get a disability exemption for property tax purposes qualify to receive the discounted rate as well, as long as appropriate documentation is provided. For assistance, contact Utility Billing at 713-662-5824 or billinghelp@westutx.gov.

Harris County Flood Control's Poor Farm Ditch Project

In June 2023, Harris County notified the cities of West University Place and Southside Place that it secured funding to complete the \$31.3 million project. Thanks to the efforts of Congresswomen Fletcher, Senator Huffman, Senator Whitmire, and Representative Johnson in securing the remaining \$26.59 million in funding.

Although this project will be managed by the Harris County Flood Control District, the City of West U is committed to providing information to its residents over the course of this project.

To learn more about this project and to sign up for alerts, please visit www.westutx.gov/pfd.

FEMA Risk Rating 2.0

The City of West University Place wants to remind you that it's important to take the time to review your home's flood insurance coverage to ensure that it is up to date. FEMA's new Risk Rating 2.0 for flood insurance aims to bring structures to their actuarial rates based on individual risk. This program may have a direct impact on your flood insurance premiums. West U works hard to protect its residents by participating in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS). The CRS is a voluntary, federal program that rewards communities for implementing higher standards in exchange for discounts on flood insurance premiums for citizens.

For more information, contact your flood insurance provider or visit www.westutx.gov/floodinsurance. For assistance from the West U Public Works Department, you may call 713-662-5839, email pwinfo@westutx.gov, or visit the Public Works offices located at 3826 Amherst St.

A Century in the Making

Celebrate West University Place's 100th Birthday!

Founders' Day Social

Thursday, January 18, 2024
City Hall at 6:00 p.m.

Join us as we celebrate a momentous occasion, the Founders' Day event, honoring the visionaries and trailblazers who laid the foundation for a thriving community.

The event will be a grand affair, filled with fellowship, nostalgia, and the opening of the time capsule!

Whether you are a long-time resident or new to the community, this Founders' Day event promises to be an unforgettable experience that will honor the past, celebrate the present achievements, and set sights on a future filled with boundless possibilities.

Centennial Celebration Festival

Saturday, May 4, 2024
Colonial Park at 4:00 p.m.

Be part of a once-in-a-lifetime experience at the Centennial Celebration Festival! We are thrilled to bring the community together for this historic event commemorating 100 years of achievements and progress.

Prepare to be highly entertained as the Hybrid-7 band takes the stage at 4 p.m. to play the best of the oldies and today's hits! And come hungry – we will have some of the best food trucks in the Houston area, and they will be ready to serve a variety of savory and sweet treats.

Honoring West U's commitment to reducing waste, the City will be providing water refill stations, so don't forget to pack your reusable water bottles! Residents are also encouraged to walk, bike, or carpool to the event.

So, mark your calendars to be at the Centennial Celebration Festival for a night that will go down in West U history.



Hybrid-7



Centennial Spotify Playlist

To get in the party spirit, you can go listen to 100 tunes of the most unforgettable songs of the century!

Create a free Spotify account and search *City of West University Place* to access the playlist.

Thank you to our generous Diamond Sponsors:



For more information about the Centennial Celebration please visit www.westutx.gov/centennial.

Public Safety

Holiday Shopping Safety

As the holiday season approaches, it carries with it shopping extravaganzas and the joy of giving gifts. While embarking on the quest for the perfect presents, don't forget the significance of practicing safety when out and about. Presented below are vital personal safety tips to help make your holiday shopping experience remains merry and bright:

- **Choose well-lit hours:** Whenever possible, shop during daylight hours in order to benefit from better visibility and reduced risks.
- **Be attentive:** To protect yourself and your personal belongings, stay vigilant and aware of your surroundings.
- **Park smartly:** Select well-lit parking spaces in busy areas to enhance your personal safety, along with the safety of your vehicle and belongings.
- **Stay together:** If you're shopping with friends or family, stick together to increase your collective safety.
- **Trust your instincts:** If something feels off, trust your gut and take necessary precautions.
- **Shop safely online:** When making online purchases, opt for reputable websites and ensure that the site's security features are in place.
- **Keep valuables hidden:** If you must leave purchases in your car, keep them concealed to deter potential thieves.

By incorporating these personal safety tips into your holiday shopping routine, you can enjoy the festive season without compromising your security. Remember, a little vigilance goes a long way in preventing someone from "stealing" your joy this time of year. .

Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

Heating safety is always on our minds at this time of year. In fact, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), more than half of all home heating fires occur during the winter months. To help prevent this type of disaster, you should have your heating system cleaned and inspected before the cold winter months. This allows the technician to check for system faults including carbon monoxide leaks and electrical and/or natural gas issues.

When using space heaters, always keep flammable materials at least three feet away from the unit. You also want to be sure that space heaters are plugged directly into electrical outlets and not into extension cords.

If you have not already done so, restock your emergency supplies from hurricane season. Have your essentials like water, batteries, flashlights, and portable phone chargers. Do not run a gasoline powered vehicle in an enclosed space to charge batteries or to get warm. This could fill your home full of carbon monoxide and have a deadly result to you and your family.

For more winter heating safety information, visit the NFPA website at www.nfpa.org.

Did you know?



Half of all home heating fires
occur in December, January and February

As you stay cozy and warm this winter, stay fire smart!



Plug only **1 heat-producing appliance** (like a space heater) into an electrical outlet at a time.



Keep anything that can burn **at least 3 feet** from any heat source.



U.S. Fire Administration



Direct Link – Home Alarm Monitoring Exclusive for West U Residents

Tragedy can strike when you least expect it, so it is important to do what you can to protect your home. A good security system can provide you with peace of mind, but a great one will help you sleep well at night. The Direct Link home alarm service connects you directly with the West University Place dispatch center, instead of with a third-party center. To sign up for services or for more information visit, www.westutx.gov/directlink.

With Direct Link, you can enjoy features that include:

No contract

No middlemen

Only \$35/month

Simple billing

Mobile app (at an additional cost)



Parks and Recreation

Polar Bear Pool Party

On New Year's Day, the Colonial Park Pool will be open for those who are brave enough to endure the chilly water! Come out on Monday, January 1 from 1 - 3 p.m. for the third annual Polar Bear Pool Party. This is the perfect opportunity to purchase your 2024 membership in advance of the regular season, because membership has its perks - you'll get in free! Colonial Pool members will get in free. For residents who don't yet have their 2024 memberships, the event fee will be \$6, and for non-resident guests, it will be \$12 (West U residents must accompany guests). Those who aren't made of polar bear material can enjoy eating poolside treats while watching family and friends take their chilly dip. For more information on this fun event visit www.westutx.gov/events or call the West U Recreation Center at 713-662-7420.



RecTrac Text Message Service

The West U Parks & Recreation Department is excited to announce its new text message service through RecTrac! This is an opt-in service for members and customers to receive immediate notifications regarding Recreation Center operational updates, events, registration reminders, and more.

To receive these text messages, please sign up through your RecTrac account and opt in to text message services.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the Recreation Center team at 713-662-7420.



Purchase your Recreation Center Membership today!

Scan the QR code to purchase online or visit the Rec Center located at 4210 Bellaire Blvd.

Book your 2024 Rentals Now!

Effective January 2, 2024, the Parks and Recreation Department rental fees will be increasing. Take advantage of the 2023 rates by securing your space today.

The Colonial Park Pavilion and Scout House are available to reserve online, at www.westutx.gov/reg.

If you have any questions about renting a facility please call the Recreation Center at 713-662-7420.

Edloe Street Pathway

The Edloe pathway is now open for use!

This new installment provides the longest contiguous pathway in West U and offers a valuable connection for the residents in the 3700 blocks and to the east of Poor Farm Ditch to get to the City Center with minimal street crossings. Some features along the pathway are benches for resting, a drinking fountain with a pet station, a pet waste and refuse station, landscaping, and a pervious recycled-material pathway.

Summer Camp Registration

Don't let the cooler weather fool you, summer planning is right around the corner! West U's Parks and Recreation Department has the perfect summer camp and activities for every child! Spaces are limited. Please visit www.westutx.gov/reg for a complete listing of camp descriptions, dates, and times, or call 713-662-7420 for more information.

Resident Summer Camp Registration

Wednesday, January 31

Open Summer Camp Registration

Wednesday, February 7

Wier Park

The Friends of West University Parks Fund Board (Friends) approved funding landscape architecture services for the Wier Park Improvement Project. On Monday, September 25, 2023, Council approved Friends' funding of the contract between the City and Burditt Consultants. The next phases of Wier Park are now underway including the preparation of the construction documents, bid specifications, and bid administration all the way through construction management. Construction is expected to begin in early 2024.

Many thanks to the Friends for their generous support of this project and so many others that have enhanced parks and greenspaces in West University Place! Since 1986, Friends has raised over \$8.7 million (plus another \$8.2 million in donations and in-kind services) for renovations and expansion of West U parks. Funds raised through events such as Park Lovers' Ball and Fathers & Flashlights were applied to renovations at Judson Park, Huffington Park, and Colonial Park East redevelopment including the Youth Fitness Challenge Course, and Colonial Park Pool improvements.

To view the conceptual design and for more information about this project visit www.westutx.gov/parkprojects, or contact Susan White, Parks and Recreation Director at 713-662-5894.

Fun Over 50

713-662-5896 | www.westutx.gov/seniors

West U Senior Services has a variety of exercise classes available at the Community Building. Try a sample class to see if it will be a good fit for you! A full list of offerings is available in the *Hi, Neighbor* newsletter and on the City's website.

Advanced Beginner Doubles Pickleball Lessons:

Learn how to play (indoors) more effectively with your doubles partner. Registering as a team is preferred but not necessary. There will be three, two-hour sessions on Fridays beginning at 11 a.m. on December 1. The cost of this program is \$130.

AARP Tax Help:

Schedule your free appointment to meet with a representative who will assist you to prepare for the upcoming tax season. One-hour appointments will begin in February and will be available on Fridays starting at 9 a.m. You must schedule your appointment through Senior Services by calling 713-662-5895.

Precinct Trip to Brookwood:

Join the group on Wednesday, December 5 as they travel to the wonderful Brookwood Community in Brookshire to shop for Christmas gifts and poinsettias. Lunch and dessert at the café on site will be included. The group will leave the Community Building at 10 a.m. Pre-registration will be required, and costs \$43.

Christmas Concert:

On December 10, come together for this annual family favorite Christmas Concert with the Concert Band conducted by Chuck Throckmorton. This show is free and it begins at 2 p.m. in the Community Building Auditorium.

Thursday Evening Classes:

The New Year is the perfect time to find a new hobby! Thursday evening programming at the Community Building is targeted to active adults who enjoy activities after 5 p.m. There are several options, from Tai Chi, to the Cha-Cha, Line Dance, Civic Clubs, and more.

Park Lovers' Ball

February 10, 2024



Park Lovers' Ball 2024 Co-Chairs, Jordan & Andrew Jewett and Sarah & Travis Covington and their children.

The elegant and glitzy Post Oak Hotel will be the setting for the next annual Park Lovers' Ball! Co-Chairs Sarah & Travis Covington and Jordan & Andrew Jewett have all the wheels in motion to create a memorable evening for gala goers. Per their "roots", the Covingtons and Jewetts are making sure to put their Texas touch on this year's gala with games including a Wild West Wine Pull where there's sure to be no "Dust On The Bottle" and a Terlingua Tequila Toss.



Be sure to dust off those dancing shoes or boots and be ready to kick up your heels to the tunes of the Texas Unlimited Band.

The chic country theme of this event will be reiterated throughout the ball with an opportunity to have a drink "Under the Neon Moon" and to "Check Yes or No" on your mobile bidding device. An "Aint Going Down" option exists for those who want to support the park but cannot attend in February. Both the Covingtons and Jewetts hope to raise a Texas-sized amount of money to benefit the many parks and greenspaces of West U! **We are pleased to announce that the event will honor Frost Bank for their many years of generous support.**

Our underwriting co-chairs Disney Harris, Lexi Marek and Elizabeth Scofield are busy selling tables and seats for the gala. Don't miss out! Be sure to secure your seats and tables via the link below. We also have an array of sponsorship opportunities available. For more information, please contact Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov. Park Lovers' Ball table sales and seats can also be purchased via the Friends website www.westuparks.org.



Auction co-chairs Catherine Hamilton, Amanda Commons and Elise Madry are curating a great auction for gala attendees. If you have an experience or another great item to add to the auction line up, we are still accepting auction donations.



2023 Fathers & Flashlights

A tremendous thank you to the 2023 Fathers & Flashlights Camp Founder and Title Sponsor Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital! The event co-chairs, Kelly Beth & Charlie Hapgood, Katy & Chris Turner, and Megan & Nick Nicodemus couldn't be more pleased with the success of the popular neighborhood campout held in early November.

"On behalf of Friends of West U Parks, we are so happy to be able to host this great family fundraising event for our community each year. Everyone enjoys it so much!" exclaims Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond.



A big shout out and thank you to our generous underwriters and sponsors!

GIBSON DUNN



**PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY
&
ORTHODONTICS**

by Dr. Julie Longoria & Dr. Stephen Chen

Kirkland & Ellis, Russo Home Renovations, Greater Houston Orthodontics, Maggie Garza/Compass Real Estate & Elizabeth Borski/Old Republic Title, Texas Children's, Heidi Dugan/Greenwood King Properties, Texas Prime Insurance, Butler-Cohen Design + Build, Dot's Place Direct Pediatrics - Marion E. Woerner, MD, Mary Frances A. DuMay/Compass Real Estate, Neurosurgical Group of Texas, The Goodman Family, Laura Mayer/Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty, the Morrison Family, the Androphy Family, Empire Behavioral Health - www.ebh.health, Houston Colon, ikids inc., Kristine Martinez/Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty, the Solera Family, Supporter of West University Parks, the Vetterling Family, the Kuhl Family, Rachael and John Montgomery and Reliant.

We are very grateful for our generous in-kind donors including Goodsmith Home Care & Repair, Chick-fil-A Medical Center, Hungry's, Tiny's No. 5/Tiny's Milk & Cookies West University, Rice Emergency Room, SCT Coffee, and Adair Concepts.

Please visit the Friends website to see the complete listing of our generous supporters at www.westuparks.org.

Friends fundraising continues all year with business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches, and tree sales.

To stay up to date on the Park Lovers' Ball and Fathers & Flashlights events, plus other Friends news, please visit the Friends website at www.westuparks.org and sign up to receive Friends emails. Volunteers are the backbone of Friends of West U Parks. If you are interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Friends Executive Director, Donna LaMond, at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov or 713-662-7430.

Public Works

Winterizing Your Irrigation System

One of the important lessons learned from Winter Storm Uri in February 2021 was how vulnerable the Gulf Coast is to cold and freezing temperatures. With this top of mind, now is a good time to review some basics about your irrigation system. Please remember that private irrigation systems are the responsibility of the property owner, and the City of West University Place cannot work on private systems.

A simple precaution to prevent costly repairs and the wasting of water is to turn off your irrigation system at the backflow preventer and to make sure that irrigation lines are properly insulated. Additionally, be sure to drain your system and to turn off your sprinkler system at the control panel. Systems that remain charged or with water in the pipes can burst from the expansion of frozen water.

Most systems can be turned off by rotating the irrigation valve handle clockwise to the closed position. The handle will be perpendicular to the pipe when closed. If your system has a separate isolation valve in the ground near the backflow preventer, it is a good idea to close that as well.

Remember to plan ahead, and to wrap all exposed pipes and outdoor faucets.

If you are unsure of how to drain your irrigation system, please consult your irrigation service provider. You can also search “how-to” videos online on how to winterize your irrigation system.



OPEN VALVE



CLOSED VALVE

Water Heater Annual Maintenance

Water heaters are one of those appliances that we rely on every day but don't think about until they don't work. Whether gas or electric, water heaters are generally very dependable and quiet. They can last for a decade, or more, and, with this simple three step annual maintenance plan, you can extend the life of your water heater even further and save money in the process.

Dial Down the Temperature

- Go to the temperature setting dial on your water heater (this will be a knob on the gas valve or a thermostat behind an electric water heater panel).
- Dial the temperature setting down, so it is between 115°F to 120°F.
- This lowered setting will protect the tank from overheating and will reduce the energy used to heat the water.
- Dialing down the temperature will help you save money on energy costs.

Test the Temperature and Pressure (T&P) Relief Valve

- To test the T&P valve, simply lift up on the lever part way, then let go and allow it to rapidly snap back.
- You should hear a gurgling sound as the valve allows some water to be released into the drain tube.
- If the T&P valve did nothing, however, then it is bad and needs to be replaced by a state-licensed plumber.
- This device although simple, in design, will protect you and your family from the devastation that can be caused should the water heater's T&P fail to function as designed.

Do a Mini-Flush

- Place a bucket under the drain valve, which can be found near the bottom of the tank.
- Some drain valves have a handle. Others have a short handle-less stem with a slot for a flat head screwdriver.
- Turn the valve counter-clockwise to release a few gallons of water into the bucket. A full tank flush is best, but this takes a while.
- Close the valve by turning it clockwise and empty the bucket.
- Performing a mini-flush will extend the life of the water heater.

East Side Paving and Drainage Improvements

Great progress has been made as the contractor, Conrad Construction, has finished installing the new 60-inch pipe, along with the roadway paving on the northeast side of University Blvd. from Buffalo Speedway to Kirby Drive (Phase 1). Crews will continue to install storm sewer inlets and the paving portion of Phase 2 of the project. After completion of this portion, crews will begin restoring sod, irrigation, flower beds, and yard drains that were disturbed during the construction process. Phase 2 is anticipated to be finished by late summer in 2024.

Residents are urged to pack their patience during construction and to abide by all traffic safety laws. Construction can be disruptive however staff is working diligently with the contractor and engineers to mitigate issues and minimize disruptions whenever possible.

Residents are highly encouraged to sign up for news and alerts about this project. For more information, please visit www.westutx.gov/eastside.

If you have questions regarding the East Side Paving and Drainage Improvement Project, please contact Capital Project Manager Eduardo Barreto at 713-662-5848 or via email at ebarreto@westutx.gov.

West U Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Board

Recycling Myth Busters

What You Need to Know About Recycling in West U

1 **Recycling is a scam. It all just ends up in the landfill anyway.**

False! Approximately 88% of everything put out for curbside recycling, and nearly 100% of acceptable items, are recycled into useful products, and not landfilled. In fact, our recycler, Independent Texas Recyclers, which is located in north Houston, sells 95% of recyclable materials to companies in the U.S., with most of these materials staying within 500 miles of Houston.

2 **Most plastics can't be recycled. They just tell you that so you feel better about putting them in the bin.**

False! Our recycler can process plastics labeled with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 designations, and these plastics can be reused in many ways.

3 **Recycling just costs money, and there is little economic benefit derived from this activity.**

False! The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released an update in 2020 on the Recycling Economic Information Study that analyzes jobs, wages, and tax revenues attributable to recycling. The study found that in a single year, recycling and reuse activities in the U.S. accounted for:

- 681,000 jobs
- \$37.8 billion in wages
- \$5.5 billion in tax revenues

4 **I have to sort my recycling before I put it on the curb.**

False! Acceptable materials listed above can be placed in the same bin. This is called single stream recycling, and the recycler sorts everything once it arrives at their facility.



5 **I can put just about anything I want in the recycle bin because they will take it.**

False! It is important to recycle only items that can actually be recycled and reused. Acceptable items include:

- Aluminum and steel cans
- Paper
- Cardboard
- Plastic containers
- Glass

The following items are considered contamination and are not acceptable:

- Plastic bags, garment bags, and thin plastic sheeting (most grocery stores can accept these items for recycling)
- Straws
- Packing tape
- Cereal box interior liners
- Electronics and batteries
- Garden hoses
- Electric cords or string lights
- Clothes hangers
- Wood and lumber
- Syringes
- Styrofoam

The "West U Collects" app has all the information you'll need for solid waste and recycling.



6 **Texas doesn't do very much recycling. We have plenty of space for landfills.**

False! In 2019, the last year that data was collected, Texas recycled 12.9 million tons of material, which equaled a 27.5% recycling rate (information sourced from Texas Commission on Environmental Quality data).

In West U, we recycled 1550 tons in 2022, which equaled a 33% recycling rate. Our goal is to achieve a 50% landfill diversion rate, which can be attained with participation in food waste composting. Learn more about composting by scanning the QR Code



City Currents

Winter 2023 - 2024



City of West University Place
3800 University Blvd.
West University Place, TX 77005

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A Newsletter for the Residents of the City of West University Place

City of West U Officials

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Susan Sample
Mayor Pro Tem John Montgomery
Clay Brett
Shannon Carroll
Matt Hart

CITY MANAGER

Dave Beach
dbeach@westutx.gov

CITY SECRETARY

Thelma Gilliam
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City Currents is a quarterly publication and is printed on recycled paper.

For questions and comments about *City Currents*, contact Communications Manager Bianca Cuccerre at bcuccerre@westutx.gov or 713-662-5350.

Design by Minor Design

Meeting Reminder for City Council, Boards and Commissions

City Council *currently available in person and via Zoom

Meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month
Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Building and Standards Commission

Meetings are the first Thursday of each month
Starting at 6:00 p.m.

Zoning and Planning Commission

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month
Starting at 6:15 p.m.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Meetings are the fourth Thursday of each month
Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Board

Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month
Starting at 6:00 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Board

Meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of each month
Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Senior Services Board

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month
Starting at 2:00 p.m.

For more information on how to attend these meetings, please visit www.westutx.gov/agendacenter or call the City Secretary's Office at 713-662-5813.



Save the Date!

Mayor's State of the City Address

Wednesday, January 31 starting at 6 p.m.