

## **Foundation for the Future – Delivering on Our Commitment to West U**

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 the construction of a new Public Works Facility to improvements in our streets, drainage, and utility systems – all while maintaining one of the lowest property tax rates in Harris County!

I am also proud of the hard work that our City Council and City staff have done over the past few months to prepare and adopt our 2024 Budget that addresses our residents' concerns and priorities. Our 2024 Budget builds upon our successes in 2023 and supports our service levels, improves employee benefits to attract and retain employees, while also maintaining and reinvesting in our City's critical infrastructure (drainage, sidewalks, streets, parks, utilities, and facilities).

### **FY 2024 Budget Highlights**

- Property Taxes:
  - Who Do Your Taxes Go?
    - For every dollar in taxes paid, West U receives \$0.157 to fund our day-to-day services and pay off debt, while the other \$0.843 go to other taxing agencies like Houston Independent School District, Harris County, and special districts (Flood Control, Houston Community College, Port Authority, etc.).
  - Public Safety:
    - A priority and focus of both residents and Council is funding for public safety and the 2024 Budget allocates 44% of the General Fund to support Police and Fire services, while also focusing on recruitment and retention of our men and women in uniform.
  - Quality Infrastructure:
    - Another priority for residents is the quality of infrastructure, which is another reason our community remains a desirable place to live and raise a family. The 2024 Budget continues to focus on maintaining drainage systems, repairing the sidewalks and streets, and enhancing – our utility systems.
- Capital Projects:

The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) provides a roadmap for our communities investment in major projects, which are not supported by the City's annual operating budget. The CIP for 2024 includes over \$15 million for improvement projects across six key areas:

  - Drainage (\$151,000)
  - Facilities and Technology (\$100,000)
  - Parks (\$780,000)
  - Streets (\$2.3 million)
  - Water Utilities (\$11.9 million)
  - Wastewater Systems (\$350,000)

### **What projects are happening in 2024?**

- The Facilities Master Plan will be in full swing with the construction of the new Public Works Facility underway on our property located at Westpark & Dincans. and begin design work on a new community building, senior center, and library on the property where Public Works is

currently located. I am excited about the opportunity to reimagine this space and hopefully create a central home for our community.

- Sidewalks and pedestrian improvements continue to be a focus with West U entering the third of a five-year program to address issues with our sidewalks caused by our soil and tree roots. The City has committed \$1.2 million towards fixing our sidewalks of which \$400,000 is from a Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO) grant. Additionally, Council requested staff provide options in early 2024 to accelerate sidewalk repairs and complete the remaining portions of the City in 2024.
- Reinvesting in Parks is a top priority for our residents, and in 2024 improvements and upgrades to Wier Park will be underway. Based on resident input, this project will include:
  - Replacing artificial turf to support fall zones
  - Renovating existing playground equipment
  - Resurfacing and restriping the tennis and basketball courts
  - Expanding the green space by repurposing 6,500 square feet of new usable open space

Overall, the 2024 Budget reflects the City's commitment to maintaining West U's superior services, infrastructure, quality of life, attracting and retaining staff, and being one of the best suburban cities in the Houston metro area. By keeping our tax rate low, investing in critical infrastructure, staff, and reinvesting in our parks, West U is poised for an exciting 2024!

#### **Poor Farm Ditch**

On a final note, I wanted to mention that 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. While the initiative to enhance Poor Farm Ditch is a Flood Control District project, the City remains committed to relaying information to residents as project updates become available.

To learn more about this project, and to sign up for notifications on project updates, please visit the City's website at [www.westutx.gov/pfd](http://www.westutx.gov/pfd).