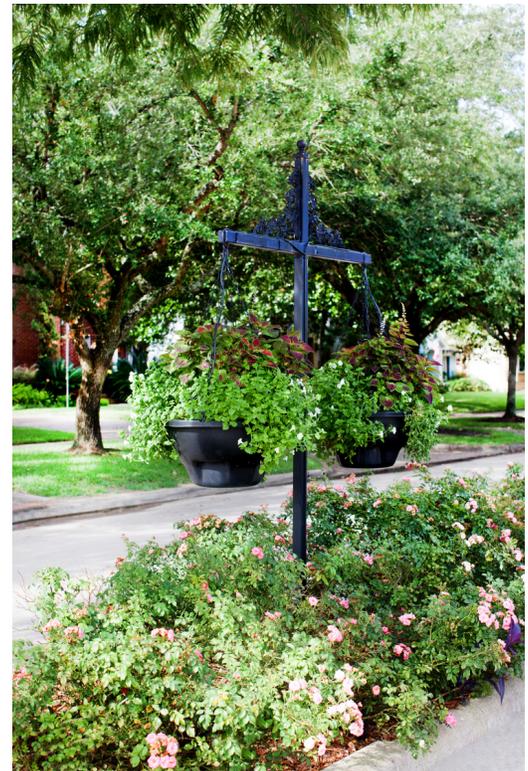


**West University Place Parks and Recreation Department strives to lead Texas as an active and healthy community**



## **City of West University Place**

**History of Park System and Recreation Facilities: 1924 - 2024**

**Updated: January 5, 2024**

# Table of Contents

<b>Park System Map .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Browning Parkland .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Colonial Park .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Community Center .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Edloe Street Pathway .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Friends Park .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Huffington Park .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Judson Park .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Liberty Hill Park .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Library Courtyard .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Recreation Center .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Scout House .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Senior Center .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Whitt Johnson Park .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Wier Park .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Reforestation .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Parks Master Planning .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Quotables from Notables .....</b>	<b>21</b>

Sources:

"Stepping Back in Time," June Begeman, 1999; City Council Meeting Archives, 1924- 2012

Staff Contributors:

Kimberly Rotett 2005 - 2008

Tim O'Connor 2004 - 2017

Susan White 1994 - Present

Jeremy Veld 2008 - Present

Charlotte Herling 2022 - Present

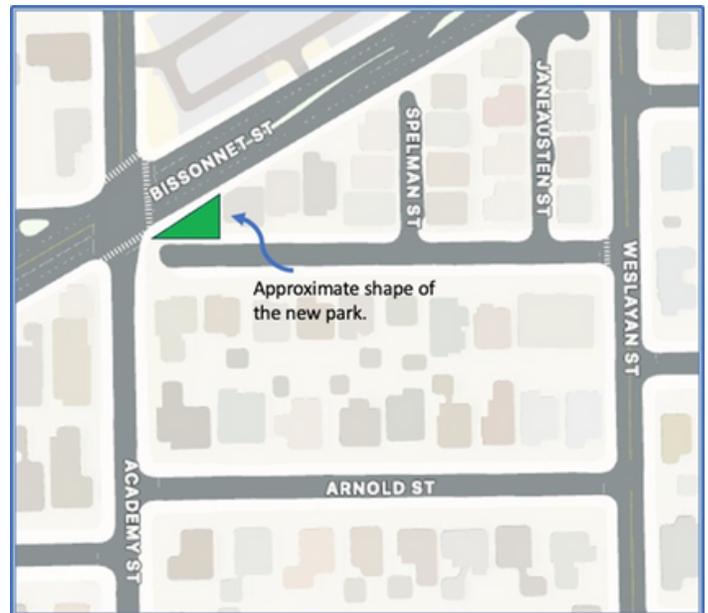


1. Judson Park
2. Colonial Park
3. Wier Park
4. Whitt Johnson Park
5. Friends Park
6. Community Center - Senior Center - Library
7. Scout House
8. Huffington Park
9. Recreation Center
10. Liberty Hill Park
11. Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park
12. Youth Athletic Fields & West U Elementary
13. Edloe Street Pathway
14. Browning Parkland

# Browning Parkland

Staff were contacted by a townhome resident on Browning to learn who pays for the irrigation serving the adjacent greenspace west of 4040 Browning. Public Works confirmed that the City is the owner of the account. The plat shows the land west of 4040 Browning labeled as “Park Reserve” for the townhomes. However, after the legal team further researched county records, it was determined that the builder deeded this property and the area with the West U sign (Bissonnet at Wesleyan) to the City of West University Place in 1999.

Beginning on December 15, 2023 the City will take over landscaping and irrigation maintenance for the west property and continue maintaining the area with the sign. These properties were accepted by the City as parkland, so the public is allowed use of the space. Staff will be assessing the irrigation and landscaping to determine if future improvements are needed. The entry sign property is approximately 900 sqft, and the greenspace west of the townhome is approximately 2,140 sq ft.



# Colonial Park

**3.16 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1932**

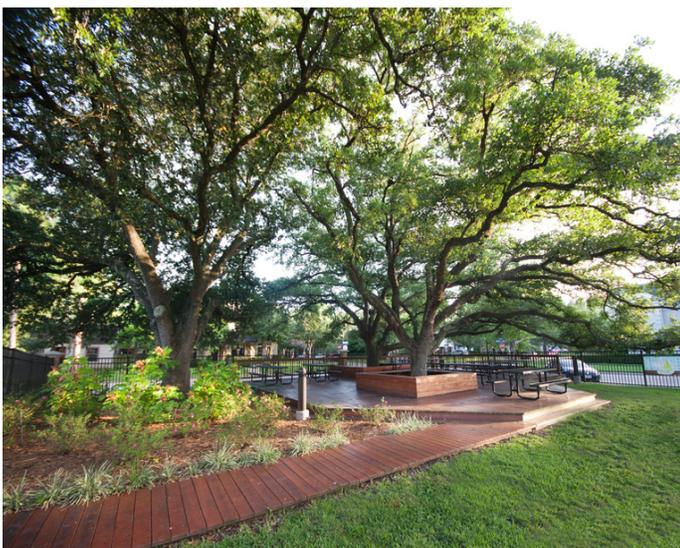
**Developed in 1948, 2000, 2010 & 2020**

**West End Redeveloped in 2016 & 2023**



Colonial Park Playground, *circa 2016*

Original 1.5 acres deeded by developers on December 28, 1932. Grantors stipulated the name “Colonial Park.” Improvements were made in 1937. Pool Bond election was approved in 1946, over objections from the immediate neighbors, and opened to the public in 1948. Park site was expanded eastward to Academy during the late 1980s and 1990s via the purchase of residential lots as they became available. Friends underwrote over \$500K in park developments in 2000. The Colonial Pool was refurbished and a recreation center was constructed at the site in 1978. Voters approved funding through a municipal bond election in 2008 which allowed for the construction of a \$3.6M family aquatic center – including a bathhouse and offices, along with two new tennis courts. The new Colonial Pool opened to the public in May 2010. Friends underwrote \$300K for the cost of the pool’s artificial shade structures and premier water play feature. Friends funded \$18.7K for four additional play features installed in March 2013. In 2014, Friends funded a \$26K turf replacement project for improvements to the open green space at the east end of the park and \$16K for new benches and picnic tables in the playground area and east end of the park. In 2015, the city’s first Little free Library was installed at Colonial Park. In 2016, Friends funded \$350K redevelopment of the west end of Colonial Park, allowing the greenspace to be utilized during the pool off-season for year-round enjoyment. Improvements include: 3500 sq ft wooden deck with built in seating, limestone and aluminum fencing, 600 sq ft shade structure with built in tables, dual grilling station, drinking fountain, LED deck lighting, eco paver walkway, and new picnic tables, bistro seating and deck furniture. In 2020, Friends funded \$398.8k to redevelop the playground area. This project included both existing play structures were updated with new play panels, slides, climbers and painted. The perimeter fence was freshened up by removing the panels and powder coating them. The pavilion was repainted and the wood ceiling stained. The sand volley ball court was removed and an age appropriate challenge course was installed with artificial turf safety surfacing, retaining wall and timer. Two trees were relocated in the playground area to accommodate the challenge course. Playground safety surfacing borders were replaced. Solar lighting was installed in the playground and along the walking path. In 2023, the West End Case Deck was refurbished. The City decided to remove half of the existing deck and was replaced with artificial turf, while the remaining deck space was rebuilt. The deck re-opened in June of 2023. In December of 2023 the West End Byron Deck was also rebuilt.



West End Byron Deck, *circa 2016*

## Amenities

**Family Oriented, Zero-Depth Swimming Pool and Play Features • Youth Fitness Challenge Course • Concession Stand • Two Large Party Decks • Multi-Purpose / Party Room • Two Lighted Tennis Courts • Playground Equipment • Pavilion • Concrete Walking/Jogging Track (7 laps=1 mile) Little Free Library**

# Community Center

**Known as the "Community Building"**

**1.36 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1940**

**Developed in 1941**

**Renovated in 1955 & 2011**



*Auditorium, circa 2012*

Land donated with reversion rights by Dave Austin and W.D. Haden in 1940. The Community Center was constructed for a total cost of \$16,583.43 in 1941. Over the years many improvements were made possible by West University Garden Club and the Teen-Age Canteen. The building was air-conditioned in 1962. In 1995, the city facilitated a \$425K renovation. The Community Center was again renovated in 2011 at a cost of \$180K, funded through the 2008 Bond Election. The Community Center is home to the Parks and Recreation Administrative offices and the Senior Services offices and programs. When the Auditorium and meeting rooms are not being utilized for senior activities, the rooms are available for residents to rent.



*Community Center Entrance, circa 2016*

# Edloe Street Pathway

**.44 Acres**

**Developed in 2022 - 2023**



Pathway by Tiny's, circa 2023

As a result of Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, over 150 old-growth Oleanders died in this record freeze. These Oleanders, and numerous scrub trees on Edloe from Albans to the property boundary at Tiny's #5, have since been removed leaving an opportunity to improve the aesthetics and enjoyment of this area. Staff consulted with Terralab Landscape Architects to explore opportunities for a pedestrian trail and enhanced landscaping in this area.

Improvements were approved after the February 28, 2022, council meeting and construction documents. Initially, only one bid was received for the project, and it was rejected. At the October 10, 22 Council meeting, council approved rebidding the project. The City rebid the Edloe Street Pathway project in December 2022 and received nine (9) bids. The bids were more than anticipated primarily due to the rising cost of materials.

On January 23, Council authorized staff to enter into a contract with PMG Project Management Group, LLC, the low bidder, who also scored highest on the bid tabulation, to construct a pervious pathway along the east side of Edloe St. between Albans St. and Georgetown St.

Other work not included in the bid was the relocation of some CenterPoint Energy infrastructure and silt fencing installation, both of which were managed by the City.

The Friends of West University Parks Fund garnered donations for 8 benches along the pathway. Friends is a volunteer-based 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to raising funds for the development and improvement of parks and green spaces in West University Place.

In 2015, the city adopted the Parks and Recreation Department's Master Plan which recommended adding a walking path within West U, especially along Poor Farm Ditch. The city is excited to cross this recommendation off the list upon the completion of the project.



City Staff and City Council, circa 2023

## Amenities

**Pervious pathway using recycled materials • benches • drinking fountain with pet station • pet waste and refuse station**

# Friends Park

Known as the "Rice Park"

.17 Acres

Dedicated in 2007

Developed in 2007



Clock Tower, *circa 2007*

Property was purchased in 1995. Development options were debated for the next ten years. Total park expenses were \$407K, and the Friends contributed \$75K in funding towards the design and partial construction of the park. The park was officially opened and dedicated in December of 2007.



Seating area and Pergola, *circa 2009*



North end of park land, *circa 1995*

## Amenities

Designed specifically as a passive park, the park enjoys a lush landscape with ample seating

- several seating arbors
- a paved walkway
- a signature clock tower

# Huffington Park

**Known as the "Milton Street Park"**

**.61 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1989**

**Developed in 1996, 2009, 2021**



Playground , Circa 2016

Purchased in 1989 from the former JMH Grocery Store chain. Development completed in 1996 and named Huffington Park after a \$100,000 donation was made by the Joseph M. Huffington Family. Friends underwrote a \$198,00 park redevelopment in 2009, which included fencing the entire park and replacing all of the park amenities. In 2021, Friends approved up to \$200k for the redevelopment of the park. Improvements include a new ship play structure, expanded green space and artificial turf areas, two expression swings, powder coated fencing, new wooden fencing on the south side of the park, repainting of light poles and swing set posts, and West U's first rubber capped sidewalk that winds throughout the entire park.



Council Member Melanie Bell, *Park Re-Opening 2021*



Playground, circa 2021

## Amenities

**Playground Equipment,  
Picnic Tables, Walking Path  
and Shady Landscape**

# Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park

**Concept: Front Porch/Backyard**

**.34 Acres**

**Dedicated in 2018**

**Developed in 2018**



Front Porch Entrance, *circa 2018*

This park is made possible through the generous donation of property and \$200K earmarked to assist with the development from the estate of Mr. James Hughes. Mr. Hughes grew up in the home at 6446 Sewanee, and lived at the residence his entire life. His desire was for a quiet park to be named in honor of Mr. Hughes' mother Jennie Elizabeth. On June 27, 2016, a donation agreement was signed by Mayor Sample.

Total park design and development expenditures were \$495K, and the Friends contributed \$295K in funding to complete the design and development of the park. Development was completed in 2018 and the park was officially dedicated and opened in October 2018. The park features a front porch shade structure with rocking chairs, large open green space, stream bed with button activated water feature, and log bench seating.



Hughes Family Sign, *circa 2018*

## Amenities

**Covered "Front Parch" Shade Structure with Rocking Chairs • Large Open Greenspace • Stream Bed with Button Activated Water Feature • Picnic Tables • Log and Bench Seating • Little Free Library**

# Judson Park

**Known as Chimney Park**

**.73 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1940**

**Developed in 1940s, 1997, 2011-2012 & 2021-2022**



Playground, *circa 2010*

The College Court Addition originally earmarked what is now parkland for a recreation center. During this time, the developer constructed a tennis court. The City of West University Place added play equipment in 1940. In 1997, Friends funded a \$250K park improvement project. Friends underwrote a complete \$215K park redevelopment in 2011–2012 which included a new deck, playgrounds, park benches, picnic tables, outdoor grills and waste receptacles. Friends also funded the removal of the old asphalt tennis court, along with and the engineering and construction of a new concrete post-tension tennis court, state of the art lighting system, backboard, vinyl clad fencing, and site furnishings totaling \$166K. Friends provided funding up to \$137.5k in 2022-2023 for another redevelopment of the park. Improvements included repainting the playground equipment, fence and log play structures, clean the wooden deck, replace the artificial turf in the 2-5yr old play area, top-off the engineered wood fiber in the 5-12yr old play area, painting the post and gates on the tennis court, installing new windscreens and rally master backboard, gaga ball pit with artificial turf, solar lighting, Mexican white oak tree by the 2-5yr old play area, corner bed landscaping and defining the decomposed granite pathway. New site amenities were added in the form of all new benches, drinking fountain with bottle filler and barbeque pit. Pickle Ball stripes were added the Judson Park tennis court in 2022. In 2023, Friends agreed to fund the creosote pole removal at the eastern intersection of Judson and S. Judson. The old pole was replaced with a decorative streetlight. Lighting improvements were part of the original scope, but this light outside the park was not part of the original plan.



Judson Deck, *circa 2021*

## Amenities

**Lighted Tennis Court • Playground Equipment • Picnic Deck • Concrete Walking Path • Landscaping • BBQ Grill • Game and Picnic Tables • Pickle Ball Courts • GaGa Ball Pit**

# Liberty Hill Park

**.17 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1924 & 1976**

**Developed in 1976**



Entrance Sign, *circa 2010*

Platted as a traffic circle in 1924 and formerly referred to as Mosaic Park. Dedicated as a park in 1976 as part of West University Place’s bi-centennial celebration. The park name was chosen due to the name “Liberty Hill” having historical significance in the first 50 years of the country. City Commissioners at the time felt it would be an appropriate name for a park dedicated during a bicentennial celebration.

Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc., funded the design and construction of a new entry point sign in 2017.



Children at Play by John Edgerton, *circa 2016*

# Library Courtyard

**Dedicated in 1963**

**Developed in 1962**



Senior Center Entrance, *circa 2016*

The West University Branch of the Harris County Library System opened on September 8, 1963. The City of West University Place funded the property acquisition and the \$76K construction cost of the building, while Harris County committed to funding the personnel, inventory, furnishings, and the technical equipment in perpetuity. West University Place maintains the building and pays all related utilities. In 2006, West University Place undertook a major renovation of the library and library grounds at a cost of \$50K. In December 2014, Eagle Scout candidate David Lane installed a gazebo in the courtyard and staff enhanced the project with benches and complimentary landscaping. The city is undertaking a \$300K upgrade of the library building with an anticipated completion in 2017. In 2023 it was decided that the residential-style gazebo, between the library and Community Building, is at the end of its expected life. It will be removed at the beginning of 2024.



Library Courtyard, *circa 2016*



Library Entrance, *circa 2013*

# Recreation Center

**Known as "Old YMCA"**

**5.53 Acres**

**Dedicated in 2010**

**Developed in 2009 - 2010**



Recreation Center Exterior, *circa 2016*

The Recreation Center sits on the original site of the Southwest YMCA (opened in 1948). The YMCA closed in 2000 upon construction of a new facility on Stella Link Rd. (Weekley Family YMCA). West University Place purchased the property in 2001, made \$350K in improvements, and reopened as the West University Place Recreation Center in 2004. Between 2004-2008, Friends raised \$500K and received a \$500K match from the Lewis Family Charitable Foundation, serving as a catalyst for further redevelopment. In May 2008, voters approved the sale of \$9.7 million in bonds for redevelopment. In August 2008, Hurricane Ike decimated the building. Design and construction of the new Recreation Center occurred from 2009–2010; the facility opened in March 2010. In late 2010, Friends funded a \$180K, 300 sq. ft. artificially shaded playground to the west of the building. In 2014, Friends funded a fencing project to enclose the playground in the amount of \$12K. The property also includes athletic fields that were developed and are maintained by the Tri-Sports Association. The indoor pool serves as home to the Piranhas Swim Team. Outdoor fitness equipment, backstop enhancements and additional overflow parking were added in 2016.



Rec Center Playground, *circa 2016*

## Amenities

**Heated, indoor fitness and instructional pool • Raquetball / Squash Courts • Cardio and Weight equipment • Group exercise • Enhanced leisure class offerings for children and adults • Walking / Jogging Trail • Children's Playground • Athletic Fields**

# Scout House

**.17 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1992**

**Developed in 1991**



Scout House Entrance, *circa 2016*

For many years, there was a Scout House located in the 4100 block of Byron. In 1946, a new Scout House was erected on school property facing Edloe, funded by Boy Scout Troop 510. In 1992 the Scout House was demolished and the City of West University Place built a new one in its place. In 2011, the City facilitated a \$25,000 renovation of the Scout House, which now serves over two dozen local scouting organizations. The Houston Independent School District owns the property and West University Place owns and maintains the structure. The two entities maintain a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that is renegotiated every five years. The current agreement is through June 2027. A Little Free Library and bench were added to the front porch in September of 2016.



Scout House Interior, *circa 2011*

## Amenities

**Primarily a Scout meeting place during the week**

- Available for rentals on the weekends
- Little Free Library

# Senior Center

**Dedicated in 1986**

**Developed in 1986**



Fiesta Theme Meal, *circa 2022*

The West University Place Senior Center was funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, under Community Development Act of 1974. The grant funded an addition to the West University Place Community Center and opened in 1986 under the auspices of the City of West University Place. The Senior Center was completely renovated in 2011 for \$150K through the 2008 Bond Election.



Meeting Room, *circa 2016*



Senior Center Hallway, *circa 2016*

# Whitt Johnson Park

**Known as "Tree House Park"**

**.52 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1973**

**Developed in 1998, 2008, 2013 & 2018**



2-5 Year Olds' Play System, *circa 2016*

Named after Whitt Johnson, long time City Manager and former Mayor of the City of West University Place. The Park was developed through Friends funding in 1998. Friends underwrote the \$30,000 Tree House play feature in 2008. In February 2013, Friends underwrote the \$17,500 replacement of the 2 to 5 year olds' playground and refurbishment of the 5 to 12 year olds' playground. In 2018, Friends funded a redevelopment project of \$150k. Improvements include a modern rotating climber, standalone spinner, stepping pods, balance challenge and GaGa ball. The existing tree house unit was equipped with ADA access, as well as, new artificial turf (safety surfacing) throughout the play area that helps prevent injuries and green up the park. Other improvements include new benches, picnic tables and water fountain, painting the fence, light poles and remaining playground equipment, and installing new St. Augustine grass in the open green space. The two basketball half-courts were resurfaced with new backboards added, and one half-court now includes multi-use play options with foursquare and hopscotch lines.



Tree House Play Feature, *circa 2016*

## Amenities

**Playground Equipment • Picnic  
Tables • GaGa Ball Pit • Lighted  
Basketball Courts •  
Walking/Jogging Trail (Approx. 12  
laps = 1 mile)**

# Wier Park

**Known as "Sunset Park"**

**.88 Acres**

**Dedicated in 1939**

**Developed in 1940, 1995, 2008 & 2013**



Wier Park Tennis Courts, *circa 2013*

Donated by Robert W. and Thomas P. Wier in 1939. The first park amenities included a playground, tennis courts and open space. A full-court basketball court was constructed in the early 1970s and reduced to a half-court amenity in the late 1980s. In 1995, an \$80K park redevelopment was undertaken and funded by Friends. In 2008, Friends underwrote a \$200K redevelopment of the park that included the replacement of the two playground systems and all park benches, picnic tables and trash receptacles—installing cantilever shade structures on several of these units. In February 2013, Friends underwrote the installation of a \$65K artificial shade cover over the 5 to 12 year olds' playground. New, energy efficient tennis court lighting was installed in 2016. Pickle Ball stripes were added the Wier Park tennis courts in 2022. In 2023 we began the process for new improvements to the park. Construction is estimated to begin in February of 2024.



Playground, *circa 2016*

## Amenities

**Playground Equipment •  
Picnic Tables • Two Lighted  
Tennis/Pickleball Courts •  
Basketball Court**

# Reforestation

**Completed in 2014**

**55 New Trees Planted**

**Locations:**

**Community Building, West U Recreation Center, Judson Park, Colonial Park, City Hall and Wier Park**



Tree Planting, *circa 2013*

Parks Maintenance staff worked in conjunction with the city's Urban Forester to estimate the lifespan of city maintained trees in the parks, right-of-ways and facilities. In an effort to replace trees that were lost as a result of the 2009-2013 drought, and to look forward to future losses due to age, a reforestation plan was established.

The reforestation was completed in January 2014, and included fifty five (55) large trees. Thirty three (33), thirty-gallon and twenty two (22), ninety-inch spade trees were planted with the following in mind: future replacement needs, tree best suited for location, and esthetics in our parks and city facilities . The project also provided irrigation bubblers and tree guards to protect against damage to trees. This project was funded through the generosity of the Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc. totaling \$50K. The city commits \$15K annually towards maintaining the parks and facilities canopies.



City Hall, *circa 2014*



Colonial Park, *circa 2014*

# Parks Master Planning

**This report should be considered a planning tool, to be used by current and future West U residents and leaders to make decisions regarding the wise use of monetary and physical resources and providing for outdoor parks and recreation facilities.**



Colonial Park, circa 2016

**To view the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, please visit: [www.westutx.gov/parksmasterplan](http://www.westutx.gov/parksmasterplan)**

On Monday, March 23, the City Council adopted the 2015 West University Place Parks Master Plan at a regular council meeting. The approval was the result of an 18 month effort between a Council appointed Citizens Task Force, city staff, and landscape and architecture consultant White Oak Studio. City Council members Dick Yehle and Joan Johnson also served as Council Liaisons and contributed significantly to the overall effort.

Following a citizen survey facilitated by the AgriLife Extension Service of Texas A&M University, the city hosted two town hall open forum meetings to gather additional resident input. The West University Place Parks Board, Senior Board and Friends Board were also involved throughout the process and the city conducted several workshops with City Council during this period. The adopted plan provides the city with a strategic road map in further improving, expanding and maintaining the West University Place parks system and recreational facilities for at least the next decade.



Above: 2013-2015 Mayor and City Council presented the Parks Master Planning Task Force Members with appreciation awards on March 23, 2015.

# Quotables From Notables

"As a 50 year resident, I have observed and participated in the combination of West U's central recreation programs, coupled with our neighborhood park facilities, which has provided our community with outstanding recreational facilities for all ages and in all areas of the city. Our parks system has consistently grown and improved since the early 1960s, with continuing focus on current and future needs. We are lucky to live in such a wonderful city."

*John Neighbors, Mayor - 1970-72; Co-Chair, Senior Services Board - 2003-2013*

"As a fifth generation West U family, we have a unique history with our parks. As children, my sister, brother, and I enjoyed many sunny afternoons in our parks with our great grandmother, grandparents, and parents. West U has always been "home" and we are blessed to live in this wonderful community filled with award-winning parks, state of the art pools, amazing sports fields, and a recreation center that is second to none!"

*Joni Hruska Fichter, Chairman, Friends of West U Parks Fund, Inc. - 2001-2010 & volunteer since 1985*

"West U is a quiet and restful haven within the mega city of Houston. The trees and parks scattered throughout the City are especially valued as places to both play and relax. As a young and growing family our kids had nearby Colonial Park as a second home. Now as empty nesters we enjoy walking the neighborhood and especially like to stop and relax at a green space. We need more green space within walking distance of the underserved quadrants of our fine City (before all the lots are occupied by new homes)."

*Diane and John Wilkinson (Board Member)*

"Our two children were born and raised one half block from Weir Park on Sunset where we still live and they spent hours joyously playing at this Park. Now our two grandchildren, being raised by their parents in West U, are taking their turn at the same Park (with new and improved equipment). I am sure that our Parks system helped draw our daughter and her family back to West U!"

*Phyllis and Steven Segal (Former ZBA Member, West U Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Member and current member of the Good Neighbor Team, and Point of Contact for the West University Place C.E.R.T Team)*

"From the moment we moved to West University in 2002, our second home was either the park, the pool or the athletic fields. It sounds trite, but our family has made dear friends and created wonderful memories that will last a lifetime; and we couldn't have done any of that without the wonderful parks and recreational facilities of the City of West University."

*Gregg Thompson*

"I am proud of West U's parks and recreational facilities. They serve the individual needs of residents and their families, offer convenient gathering places, and are a positive representation of the quality of life in West U."

*Dick Yehle, City Council Member – 4 yrs; Zoning and Planning Commissioner – 6 yrs; Zoning Board of Adjustment – 2 yrs*