



# City Currents

Spring 2016



City of  
West University  
Place

# From the Mayor's Desk

Mayor Susan Sample



After a 10-year hiatus, West U has begun recycling “green waste” again — all those grass clippings, leaves, flowerbed and hedge trimmings will be headed to the Living Earth facility to be turned into compost instead of going to the landfill. Not only is this the right thing to do, but also it will increase our diversion rate (material that is recycled rather than going to the landfill) to almost 45%. This diversion rate is anticipated to be one of the highest in the region. Thanks go to our Public Works staff and the Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Board for their ongoing efforts to help us all to be responsive stewards of our natural resources and good regional neighbors. This is a huge step forward for the *City That Recycles!*

# From Council Member Mardi Turner



With spring just around the corner, we are looking forward to the completion of our newest park. Thanks to the efforts of the Parks and Recreation Board, the Friends of West U Parks and our estimable Parks and Recreation Department, the quarter acre of space at the west end of Colonial Park has been repurposed to be a year-round venue with a new multi-level wood deck, barbecue grills and a new water fountain. This area will be fenced off from the main pool area during the off season, so that it can be used all year long. In addition, we will be adding a new 1,800-square-foot shade structure at the north end of the pool.

City staff has been busy on some other great projects as well. At the beginning of the year, Public Works instituted weekly curbside bulk trash collection, replacing our semiannual “Heavy Trash” days. Your pickup day for bulk trash is either Thursday or Friday, coinciding with your normal trash pickup day. Electronics can still be recycled at the semiannual paper shredding events in May and October.



# Spring is just around the corner

According to the National Weather Service and Punxsutawney Phil, we have turned the corner on winter and are heading straight for spring. With that turn comes the annual cries of spring and summer in Houston — “Why is my water bill so high? I couldn’t have used that much water!”

Spring means different things to different people — warmer temperatures and beautiful days, gardening, landscaping improvements, pool filling, to name a few. But higher usage of water comes into play with each of those activities, too. As you jump into the spirit of spring, make sure you do some preparation to lessen the impact on your household budget.

- Many residents will be turning their sprinkler systems back on. Before you turn on the valves full blast and walk away to enjoy other activities, check to see that your sprinkler heads have no leaks and that they are spraying correctly. Check out the sprinkler zones to ensure they are right. Make sure your timers are set properly. If needed, ask your sprinkler professional to check out your system. Leaking irrigation systems can quickly result in large water bills.
- Beautiful warm days lead many of us to our yards and landscaping. Planting new flowers, cleaning out beds and mowing yards can result in dirty clothes and dirty bodies. Washing up is another fast way to add dollars to your water bill so make a conscientious effort to take shorter showers, turn off water when shampooing, fill tubs to only six inches and make sure faucets and showerheads aren’t leaking. The single best thing you can do to save money while cleaning clothes is replacing old washers with high efficiency ones. If that is not in your budget plans, then use the shortest wash cycle you can for the degree of soiled clothes, select the smallest volume setting for the load you are washing, and do full loads only.
- Check your plumbing system, especially if you have an older home with exposed outside pipes. Look specifically at areas where the pipes enter the home. Be sure that all faucets are off and check your water meter for activity: this indicates possible leaks. Check toilets, ice makers, dishwashers, washers and tubs for leaks, which can add up quickly on your monthly utility bill.
- If you pressure wash your house, sidewalks or driveways, prepare to see the charges grow. Four hours of pressure washing using about four gallons/minute will add approximately 1,000 gallons to your monthly usage. Pressure wash only when needed.

Water is a precious resource. Summer droughts as we have experienced in some degree since 2011 taught us lessons ... financially and environmentally. Think conservation and energy savings as you use water around your home.

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## Sanitary Sewer: The Dos and Don’ts of Flushing

The City of West University Place has been experiencing an unusual number of sewer stoppages and sewer pump failures over the last year. After clearing a sewer stoppage, the city performs an investigation to attempt to determine the cause so that it can be prevented.

There are two issues that most frequently create stoppages. These stoppages are caused either by a grease buildup or by the formation of rag balls in the sewer. These two often accompany each other. All grease and cooking oil placed into a sanitary sewer system will coagulate (thicken into a solid) and attach to pipe walls and surfaces and often within pump stations. The resulting accumulation of grease will collect bits and pieces of fibrous material (most often single-use wipes) and form what is frequently referred to as rag balls. The results are all too often a plugged sewer that affects the flushing of toilets and causes slow draining fixtures. On occasion the plugging can be so severe that raw sewage may flow out of manholes and into the streets. The grease and/or rags also cause equipment problems when the material enters pumps and binds the rotating equipment so that it does not function properly.

Please be aware of what you place in the sewer, whether through the sink or the toilet. The sewer system is not intended to carry trash and fibrous materials such as baby wipes, counter wipes, insect repellent wipes and any other wipe not marked flushable. These should never be placed in a toilet or other sewer receptacle. Thank you for being aware and not putting grease or trash in the sewer system.

For questions or additional information, please visit our website at [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov) or contact your Public Works Department at (713) 662-5839.



# Parks and Recreation

## Friends of West U Parks

Over 700 guests attended the 25th anniversary celebration of Park Lovers' Ball on February 13, themed "Celebrating Our Parks." A celebratory ambience was prevalent throughout the evening as friends and neighbors enjoyed visiting with one another, sipping on cocktails, trying their hand at the new Whiskey Blackjack game, winning bottles of wine in the Wine Pull, placing their bids in the Silent Auction and getting their names on the Big Board. There was a lot of "winning" to be had as there were more than 166 fabulous packages and items in the Silent Auction, with 11 bigger ticket packages available on the Big Board. Attendees also made sure they had their "binky rings" for the must-play Heads or Tails game sponsored by Claudette Toomey of Taylor Real Estate. Everyone appeared to enjoy the fun and exciting vibe of this soldout popular community event.

This year's Park Lovers' Ball Co-chairs, Judy and Comfort Cheng and Michele and Paul Marvin, left no detail of the evening overlooked. The 25th anniversary décor was amazing. The Live Auction kept the excitement alive in the ballroom with bidding on a Houston Texans experience, a one-week stay in Milan, the Fathers & Flashlights VIP &

Mom's Night Out package, and a week's stay in Villa Las Colinas in Acapulco, Mexico.

The evening's program began with a special anniversary toast to the past Park Lovers' Ball Chairs in attendance at the event. They were the honorees for the ball and were presented with a special customized charm. The rest of the evening was spent dancing to the energizing tunes of Password. A grand time was had by all who attended, thanks to the hard work and passion of the event Chairs and their leadership committee.

Judy and Comfort Cheng and Michele and Paul Marvin would like to thank all who attended Park Lovers' Ball 2016. They would also like to thank all of the generous sponsors and underwriters, including Conway MacKenzie, Inc., Kroger, Janet and David Cunningham/Maggie and Dax Garza, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Jane and Harry Pefanis, Reed Smith LLP/Carol M. Burke, Audi Central Houston, Bracewell, and Cara and Chad Michael. For a complete listing of the sponsors and underwriters who helped us raise much needed funds for our parks, please visit the Friends website at [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org).

Next, get ready for summer with Friends of West U Parks and the annual Party on the

Patio Concert Series, which will take place on Friday evenings in June, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, at the Colonial Park Pool Deck located at 4130 Byron. Bring your lawn chairs and blankets, sit back and enjoy a fantastic lineup of some of Houston's best-known bands! Concert admission is complimentary. Please visit the Parks & Recreation Special Events page at [www.westutx.gov/events](http://www.westutx.gov/events) for a complete schedule.

Stay tuned for information on the annual Fathers & Flashlights campout on the fields surrounding West University Elementary School. Event Co-chairs Kelly and Sean Butler, Kristine and Joaquin Martinez, and Kara and Curt Schaefer are busy planning another memorable campout for fathers and their children. The date is set for October 1, 2016, and will be a 10th anniversary celebration of the always soldout event.

To stay current on Friends events and activities, please visit [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org). Sign up to receive Friends emails. Want to do your part for West U Parks? Get involved with Friends. Questions? Please call (713) 662-7430 or stop by the Friends of West U Parks office located in the West U Rec Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd.



## Music Under the Stars: Classical Concert Series

Each concert is an informal event designed for newcomers and symphony enthusiasts alike. Remember to bring a blanket and picnic basket for an evening of classical music in the park. You will be entertained by some of the finest classical ensembles in the Houston area. For more information call (713) 662-7420 or go to [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov).

Colonial Park under the Pavilion  
April 8, 15 and 22, 7:00 – 9:00 pm.

## Lifeguard Certification Courses

Are you age 15 or older and looking for a great summer job, after-school activity or a challenging career in aquatics? Lifeguarding puts you in an exciting position, working as part of a team to help people safely enjoy the water. Lifeguarding will help you develop skills and experiences that will be valued by colleges and future employers. All participants must pass a pre-requisite skills swimming test prior to taking the class; the test will be administered a week before class starts. Three class sessions will be offered on Saturday and Sunday.

April 16 – 17, 8:00 am – 6:30 pm  
(prerequisite April 9, 8:00 – 11:00 am),  
May 14 – 15, 8:00 am – 6:30 pm  
(prerequisite May 7, 8:00 – 11:00 am),  
May 21 – 22, 8:00 am – 6:30 pm  
(prerequisite May 13, 6:00 – 9:00 pm.)

The price is \$170 for residents and \$195 for non-residents, plus a \$35 online fee required by the American Red Cross. For more information about this class, please visit our website [www.westutx.gov/reg](http://www.westutx.gov/reg) or call the Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420.

## Summer Registration Dates

West U summer programs are here! Are you looking to continue your favorite programs that you have participated in within the past 30 days? Then take advantage of priority registration, which starts April 5 at 5:00 am at the West University Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd. \*(Priority registration is not available online.) If you are looking to try something new and you are a West U resident, registration opens April 12, 5:00 am. If you don't live in West U, but you still want to try our amazing programs, then come on over; we'd love to have you! Registration for non-residents starts shortly after, on April 14, 5:00 am. Both resident and non-resident registration is available either in person at the West U Rec Center or online! Check out all of the programs in advance and register at [www.westutx.gov/reg](http://www.westutx.gov/reg). Space is limited in many classes, so be sure to mark your calendars!

## Looking for a summer job?

The West University Recreation Center is hiring part-time employees. The positions available are Customer Service Representative, Swim Instructor and Lifeguard. If you are interested in great starting pay, flexible schedules, a team atmosphere, the potential for advancement and a fun place to work, then West U is the place for you! For more information call (713) 662-7420, visit [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov), or pick up an application at the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd.

# Colonial Park Pool



Colonial Park Pool opens to the general public for weekends on Saturday, May 7. Don't forget your swimsuit!

For a complete operational schedule of Colonial Park Pool spring and summer hours, go to [www.westutx.gov/colonial](http://www.westutx.gov/colonial).

## Members' Only Weekend at Colonial Park Pool

Join us for a special Colonial Park Pool Members Only weekend! Welcome the start of the spring/summer 2016 pool season by attending this special weekend dedicated to our VIP customers. You must have a Colonial Park Pool 2016 membership to join the kickoff party on Saturday, April 30, from 10:00 am – 7:00 pm and Sunday, May 1, from 12:00 pm – 7:00 pm.

Games, entertainment and exclusive access make a day at the pool much more extraordinary. Don't have a membership yet? Purchase your membership in advance at the West University Place Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd (pre-sales available now) or at the door to get into the party!

## Mom's Spa Day

All West U resident mothers are invited to relax and enjoy a special day out at Colonial Park Pool on Saturday, May 14, from 9:00 – 11:00 am! Come out to enjoy a kid-free day by the pool, complete with breakfast, facials and mimosas. Each mother will get the opportunity to win raffle prizes, and all will leave with their own Mother's Day gift courtesy of the West U Parks and Recreation Department. The event is limited to the first 60 registrants. Priority and complimentary registration for 2016 Colonial Park Pool members begins April 1. General registration begins April 15. Event is \$10 for resident non-members and \$15 for non-resident guests. For information about registering for this event, please call (713) 662-7420 or go to [www.westutx.gov/events](http://www.westutx.gov/events).

Note: Colonial Park Pool will open to the public at 12:00 pm after the event!

## Ice Cream Social

Colonial Park Pool members are invited to enjoy the end of the 2015 – 2016 school year at Colonial Park Pool on May 27 from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Celebrate with music and complimentary sundaes after your last day of school. This event is exclusive to 2016 Colonial Park Pool members, no exceptions.

## Party on the Patio Concert Series

Bring your lawn chairs and blankets, sit back and enjoy a fantastic lineup of some of Houston's best-known bands! The concert admission is complimentary, but if you wish to swim, regular pool admission is required.

June 3: The Chromatics  
June 10: Dee Dee & Mike and  
the Moondance Band  
June 17: The Spinations  
June 24: The Fab 5

Please visit the Parks & Recreation Special Events page at [www.westutx.gov/events](http://www.westutx.gov/events) for complete details.

## Father's Day Fiesta

Calling all West U dads! Head out to Colonial Park Pool on June 12 from 9:30 – 11:30 am for your very own Father's Day party. Enjoy a morning at the pool with other West U dads that include a tasty breakfast, games and a relaxing poolside morning that you deserve. Registration is required. Event is complimentary to fathers with 2016 Colonial Park Pool membership, additional family members on the same membership as dad is \$10 (up to 4 additional family members), and \$20 for non-member residents for a family of five. Priority Registration begins on May 9 for members and opens to non-member residents on May 16.

# Safety and Public Works

## Fire & EMS



The West University Place Fire Department offers several community programs that could potentially save a life. One of the programs that we are excited to offer residents is the American Heart Association's CPR/AED certification training classes, which are taught by the West U's firefighters!

**Are you ready to save a life? Because an emergency can occur anytime ...**

"The American Heart Association's CPR and AED learning programs help increase survival rates by training people just like you to respond quickly. The sad truth is most people don't survive a cardiac arrest. Four to six minutes is the window of opportunity for someone to act before it's too late, but fewer than one-third of cardiac arrest victims get CPR from someone nearby.

"About 92 percent of sudden cardiac arrest victims die before reaching the hospital, but statistics prove that if more people knew CPR, more lives could be saved. Immediate CPR can double, or even triple, a victim's chance of survival."

For a list of available classes and registration information, go to <http://westutx.enrollware.com>.

For other questions about this program, please contact Brent Gorman, CPR Program Coordinator, [bgorman@westutx.gov](mailto:bgorman@westutx.gov).

Source: [www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRandECC/CommunityCPRandFirstAid/Community-CPR-First-Aid\\_UCM\\_001123\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/CPRandECC/CommunityCPRandFirstAid/Community-CPR-First-Aid_UCM_001123_SubHomePage.jsp)

## Water Pollution Prevention: A Homeowner's Guide

Frequently we hear the slogans and catch-phases that are intended to keep our focus on pollution prevention. Many of the slogans are accompanied by ads to prevent litter, keep motor oil out of the streams or just be a good steward of the environment.

One resource with good beneficial information is on the EPA website. The link below has several good ideas that could be put to use in and around the home. The hope is that you find this beneficial in helping to protect your family and community.

The website includes tips for pollution prevention at home, in the garden and in the car.

[www.epa.gov/p2week/pollution-prevention-tips-home](http://www.epa.gov/p2week/pollution-prevention-tips-home)

## Green Waste Recycling Program

The City is now collecting yard waste on a different truck and separate from household trash. Please take a moment to review the list of frequently asked questions in regards to the collection of yard waste:

### Is yard waste recycling optional?

Participation in yard waste recycling is not optional and all yard waste will need to be placed in approved bags.

### When is my yard waste collected?

Yard waste collection is scheduled once a week on your normal recycle collection day. For example, if your recycling is collected on Monday, your yard waste will be collected on Monday.

### What types of bags are acceptable and where can I buy them?

All yard waste is required to be bagged in either kraft paper bags or compostable plastic bags. Non-compostable bags are not accepted and will not be collected. Both types of compostable bags can be purchased at local grocery stores, home improvement stores, club stores and online.

### What is a compostable bag?



Compostable bags include kraft paper bags or compostable plastic bags. Compostable plastic bags are usually clear or tinted a translucent shade of green, white, or pink; however the color is not the sure way of determining the compostibility of a plastic bag.

Kraft paper bags are the usually large brown paper bags that may indicate yard waste, lawn and leaf on the package or on the bag itself. Smaller paper bags from grocery stores may also be used.

### How can I tell the difference between a compostable plastic bag and traditional black plastic bag?

Look for the word "compostable" on the box. The words "lawn and leaf" or "yard waste" that may appear on plastic bag packages do not guarantee that the bag is compostable and may not be accepted.



COMPOSTABLE  
Biodegradable US 100% PLASTIC



The two logos pictured here mean the bags are certified compostable plastic and are acceptable for use.:

### Can I mix yard waste with other items like trash or recyclables?

Yard waste mixed with trash, recyclables or other materials that is not yard waste is not accepted. Mixing causes the material to be contaminated and is unacceptable for compost processing. Too much contamination can result in increased processing costs for the City.

### What if I chose not to bag my yard waste?

There are several free alternatives to purchasing compostable bags. Residents may leave their clippings on their lawn (grasscycling) or compost their trimmings for use in their yard. Yard waste cannot be thrown away with trash or left curbside in loose piles or plastic containers as it will not be collected.

### What happens if I do not use a compostable bag?

Yard waste material found in non-compostable bags will not be collected and left at the curb. Special collections fees may apply.

### I still have questions?

Please visit our website at [www.westutx.gov/greenwaste](http://www.westutx.gov/greenwaste) for more information. You can also call us at (713) 662-5839 or email us at [pwinfo@westutx.gov](mailto:pwinfo@westutx.gov).

# Don't Trash That Torn T-Shirt... Give It a Second Life!

**Recycle What:** Clean clothing or textiles in any condition (includes all clothing categories, shoes, laptop covers, small luggage, bags, wallets, accessories and jewelry, household linens, pillows, towels, shower curtains, drapery, mats, small rugs and stuffed animals).

**Recycle Where:** "Clothing & Shoes Recycling" dropoff bin located behind Walgreens (accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) at the corner of Bissonnet and Buffalo Speedway operated by Houston Area Community Services/American Textile Recycling Service (ATRS) or the "Clothing & Shoes Recycling" container located near the entrance to the Westpark Consumer Recycling Center (open Monday through Saturday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm). Or donate to a charity that takes the items you want to recycle. For more information about ATRS, visit [www.atrscorp.com](http://www.atrscorp.com).

**Benefits of Recycling Textiles:** Brings monetary benefits to charities and provides tax deductions; funds charitable work; aids disaster relief; reduces landfill waste; enhances sustainability and reduces carbon footprint; encourages economic development worldwide; converts waste products into value-added products; provides employment to semi-skilled or marginally employable U.S. workers.



**DONATE!  
RECYCLE!**

Don't Throw Away

The average U.S. citizen throws away **70 lbs.** of clothing each year

**95%** of textiles worn or torn can be recycled

yet only **15%** gets donated or recycled

**85%** [70 lbs. per person] goes to our landfills

That amount is equal to **21 billion lbs.** or 260,000 truckloads

3.8 billion lbs. of recycled textiles can generate **\$100 million** for charities from second-hand clothing sales!

Source: <http://www.smartasn.org>

# City Currents

A Newsletter for the citizens of  
City of West University Place  
Spring 2016

## CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

**CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS** Mayor Susan Sample  
Mayor Pro-Tem Bob Kelly  
Burt Ballanfant  
Brennan Reilly  
Mardi Turner

**CITY MANAGER** Chris Peifer  
cpeifer@westutx.gov

**GENERAL INFORMATION** (713) 668-4441

**CITY WEBSITE** www.westutx.gov

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For questions and comments about *City Currents*, contact Anna Evelyn at (713) 662-5812 or aevelyn@westutx.gov.

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West University Place, TX 77005

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## The Future of Water Utility Billing

The City of West University Place has installed electronic meters to track and monitor water flows to residences and businesses. These meters record and transmit flow readings using a built-in data logger and separate radio transmitter. These readings are transmitted over the private radio network to a secure server with connectivity to the internet. This occurs once a day after midnight with the midnight reading and the hourly flows for the day. The secure server provides readings for billing and for analyses of water consumption providing indications of water leaks and aiding in water conservation efforts.

As a part of the Automated Meter Reading Program, the City has added a Consumer Portal, which was released to the public in early March 2016 for general use. For information on accessing this tool, please visit the City's website at www.westutx.gov. Use the link to the Finance page under the Government tab and look to the top left of the screen for a link to Automated Meter Reading. Additional information will be available on the web page with details on the meter reading system and for gaining access to the "Customer Connect" application.

