



City CURRENTS

FALL 2013

COMING

Commercial Zoning Regulations Review

A long-term goal of City Council is to complete a comprehensive review of the non-single family residential provisions of the City's zoning regulations. City Council has decided to formally adopt the initiative as a goal for 2014.

In order to perform the best analysis possible, the City will engage a professional planning consultant to perform an objective, comprehensive review of the commercial zoning district regulations in the city. This project will include a review of the zoning regulations of the districts located along Bellaire/Holcombe, Kirby and Bissonnet Streets, and the Town Center district. The comprehensive plan will reflect any updates necessary to create a cohesive zoning plan for the city.

The City's goal for this process is to fulfill the continued vision of the public and the elected City officials and to ensure that this vision will be accomplished both in the event of redevelopment or should it be necessary after a catastrophic event.

The City's Zoning Ordinance was comprehensively amended in 1987 and has sustained a variety of piecemeal amendments throughout the past 25



years. The majority of the zoning districts are residential with the commercial areas being relegated to the periphery of the City abutting three major thoroughfares. A one-block area within the heart of the City (Town Center) is also designated as commercial. The building sites located in the commercial districts contain antiquated structures, with many sites having acquired prior nonconforming status (being "grandfathered" in) at some

Continued on page 6

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Mayor's Desk2

Seasonal Festivities3

Parks & Recreation4

Public Safety.....5

Public Works6

Parks Master Plan to be Updated

The West University Place Parks & Recreation Department has enjoyed an incredibly successful decade. Thanks to the guidance of the 2000 West University Place Parks Master Plan, support from citizenry and leadership of the Mayors and Councils from 2004 through 2013, the city has effectively re-built and redeveloped the entire parks system and its recreational facilities. Highlights include:

- Construction of a new Recreation Center and Colonial Park Aquatic and Tennis Center
- Construction of Friends Park
- Remodel and upgrade of the Community Building, Senior Center and Scout House
- Complete redevelopment of all six neighborhood parks

Continued on page 4

From the Mayor's Desk



When a city reaches a population of more than 5,000, it can adopt a home rule charter. The charter establishes the city's government structure and distribution of the powers and duties among the various branches while limiting the powers of the Mayor, City Council and City Manager. West U has been governed by a home rule charter

since 1940. Our charter calls for a review every six years to ensure it meets new provisions enacted by the Texas State Legislature as well as any changes to make it more efficient or responsive to the residents. City Council normally appoints a committee of responsible citizens to perform this task. This year marked the 6th year, so it was

time for a review. Therefore, late last year your current Council appointed a committee of seven members and two alternates of very capable community residents, guided and advised by our city attorney, to take an in-depth look at our current city charter. They polled residents and staff, noted new state laws, and researched current practices of cities similar to West U in size and makeup. After several months of thorough and thoughtful work, the committee presented its proposed changes to City Council.

In accordance with our city charter, any changes made to the charter must be approved by voters. Accordingly, Council voted to put the changes suggested by the committee on the November 5, 2013 ballot. We have sophisticated residents in this city that take time to understand issues facing our city and make decisions accordingly. Whatever the vote on the proposed charter changes, our residents will have the satisfaction of knowing the result is the will of the majority of voters. I urge you to understand the proposed changes and vote on November 5.

Bob Jay

DO WE WANT ANOTHER PARK?



Does West U need another park? Does West U want another park? In July 2013, City Council set its goals for the next two years and updating the Parks Master Plan (PMP), first adopted in 2000, is one of these goals.

The City has engaged a consulting firm to update its PMP and the residents of West U will have the opportunity for input later this year. In October 2013, the consultant will conduct a survey of West U residents

and in the following months there will be town hall meetings to serve as a platform for further resident input.

Currently, West U has seven parks with recreational opportunities. Colonial Park and the Recreation Center are "Community Parks." Whitt Johnson, Wier, Judson and Huffington are "Neighborhood Parks." Friends Park is a "Pocket Park."

A new park will most likely fall in the "Neighborhood Park" category and will require 30,000 square feet of space. The City of Bellaire is currently developing the old Teas Nursery property into a major park.

This expensive land was gifted to the City and development of this four-acre property is projected to cost over \$16 million. The City of Bellaire is conducting a public fundraiser to help with this cost. A new park project in West U would be a modest comparison in size but proportionately expensive.

For this article, I am assuming the citizens want a new park which is all about the money. I do not foresee West U having this significant amount of money in the next 10 years as the City is paying off existing bonds. Friends of West University Place Parks do an excellent job of raising money to maintain our existing parks. Their mission, up to this point, has not been to raise capital for new projects. I believe the City would need \$5 million, cash in hand, before any serious discussion of parkland acquisition can take place.

The City of Bellaire has modeled for West U the necessary approach to fund a new park. Significant private contributions, both large and small, would be required to make this vision a reality. Is this something the majority of our citizens want to undertake? We as a City Council need to know the answer to this question and greatly appreciate your participation in the upcoming survey and town hall meetings. Send your thoughts to me as well at ehathcott@westutx.gov.

Ed Heathcott

Seasonal Festivities

FULL MOON FEST – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25

The Parks & Recreation Department will host their second annual Halloween celebration, Full Moon Fest, at 5:30 p.m. on **Friday, October 25** at the Colonial Park Pavilion. Join us for an evening of pumpkin decorating, face painting and costume contests. The costume contest will be for different age groups so make sure the whole family comes in their spookiest attire. Stay after the event to enjoy the Movie in the Park. Show begins at 7 p.m.!

MOVIES IN THE PARK – FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18 (RISE OF THE GUARDIANS) AND 25 (OZ THE GREAT AND POWERFUL) 7:00 PM

Colonial Park Pavilion, 4130 Byron
Grab your picnic blankets or lawn chairs, bring the family, and enjoy an outdoor movie shown on a huge inflatable screen! The movie is free, and refreshments will be available for purchase.

SWIM WITH SANTA – SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Anyone can get a picture with Santa on a sleigh, in the mall, or even in the snow, but not too many people can get a picture with Santa underwater! You can be one of those lucky individuals on **November 2, from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.** at the Recreation Center. To make this event even more memorable, you will receive a gift bag to go with your photo. So, come out to get a unique and memorable photo of you swimming with Santa and his elves. **The fee is only \$10 with preregistration and \$35 on the day of the event.**



BIGGEST USER CONTEST – SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Need motivation to stay fit this holiday season? Let us help you! Starting in November and running through the first week of January, we'll reward the person with the most dedication to staying fit. Earn credits each time you come for a swim, run, weightlifting, personal training session or any West U fitness program. The person with the most credits will get a prize! Kickoff will be at our first annual West U Health Fair on November 2. Participants must have an active Recreation Center membership. *Winner will be announced on January 10, 2014.*

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY – MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

Come one, come all! Get into the holiday spirit with the **25th Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony** as the City heralds the season by lighting the Christmas tree. Join us with your camera in front of the Community Building, 6104 Auden, on **Monday, December 2**. Activities will start at 5:30 p.m. and ceremony of lighting of the tree will start at 6:30 p.m. Santa will be available for photos at the end of the ceremony!

SANTA'S NIGHT OUT – FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13 AND DECEMBER 20

Need a break from the kids? Let the Recreation Center help! On December 13 and 20, the kids can be entertained while you enjoy a night out on the town or finish last minute shopping. Santa's Night Out begins at 5:30 p.m. and ends at 11 p.m., so register your children for this fun-filled night full of activities that include swimming, movies, arts, crafts, games and tons of FUN! Of course, all activities will be in the

spirit of Christmas to help get the kiddos excited for the upcoming holiday. Kids must be between the ages of 5 and 11 years old. Bring your swimsuits, a towel, a change of clothes, and a BIG SMILE! **The fee is \$30 for residents and \$40 for non-residents.**

CITY HOLIDAY CLOSURES AND LIMITED SERVICE HOURS

Administration offices are closed the following days during these holidays:

Thanksgiving	Thursday, November 28
Day after Thanksgiving	Friday, November 29
Christmas Eve	Tuesday, December 24
Christmas Day	Wednesday, December 25
New Year's Day	Wednesday, January 1

The Recreation Center will be closed or open with limited hours during these holidays:

Thanksgiving Day	Closed
Day after Thanksgiving	5 a.m.-9 p.m.
Christmas Eve	5 a.m.-1 p.m.
Christmas Day	Closed
New Year's Eve	5 a.m.-6 p.m.
New Year's Day	Closed

Friends of West U Parks

FATHERS & FLASHLIGHTS 2013

This highly anticipated event is another sellout as campers gear up and set up tents under the stars as the Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc. and the Parks and Recreation Department host the seventh annual campout on October 5 and 6 on the fields surrounding West University Elementary School. Co-Chairs Judy and Comfort Cheng, Dee Dee and Jamie Gilder, and Ashley and Sam Gumbert, along with all of the wonderful volunteers, will ensure that it is a fun and memorable event. Highlights of the campout include Jacobs Ladder and a giant slide, Putt Putt golf, Kid Fish, and star gazing just to name a few. Thank you to ALL of our sponsors and in-kind donors, plus the many volunteers and staff who help make the event possible. Thank you especially to our top underwriters for the event:



Russo Services, Frost Bank, Goode Co Taqueria, Oppenheimer, Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co., Edloe Street Café and Catering, Maggie Garza, Realtor Keller Williams Realty Metropolitan/Old Republic Title, Cadence Bank, Cammarata Pediatric Dentistry.

23RD ANNUAL PARK LOVERS' BALL

The gala will be held February 8, 2014, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel. Event co-chairs Megan and Drew Morris, Nancy Kate and Mark Prescott, and Kara and Dax Sanders are planning an unforgettable evening of fun and surprises. The gala will honor long time parks supporter Cecelia Bining McCann. According to Cece, "Park play is development of mind and body and we are privileged to have a way to support those. West U parks were and are here for me and my family. Working with Friends is a great vehicle to give back to our community."

Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond says, "Without the wonderful event chairs, the organization's fundraising goals could never be met." Invitations will be mailed in early January 2014.

OTHER NOTES FROM FRIENDS:

- Friends is excited to announce that Direct Energy is continuing as the Friends Corporate Sponsor for 2014. Direct Energy has been very generous to Friends and we are grateful to have them as a Corporate Sponsor since 2012. A check for \$50,000.00 will be presented to Friends at the 2014 Park Lovers' Ball.
- There are other opportunities for involvement with Friends! Fundraising continues year-round with the stork program, business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches, and tree sales.

For more information about Friends, volunteering, or any of the events listed here, visit www.westuparks.org or call 713-662-7430.

& Health & Wellness

Health & Wellness Fair

The Parks & Recreation Department is dedicated to promoting healthy bodies and minds. Join us to learn about health, from prevention to care, with interactive stations, information tables and healthy food tips. First annual event is **Saturday, November 2, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Parks Master Plan

Continued from page 1

The total cost of this 10-year effort was approximately \$15 million, funded by means of a Municipal Bond Election (\$13 million) and contributions from the Friends of West University Place Parks Fund (\$2 million).

In order to ensure that West U parks and facilities are kept current, City Council has directed staff to update the 2000 West University Place Parks Master Plan by May 2014. The master planning process will be led by staff and members of the citizen boards. We endeavor to be 100% transparent in the process and will depend upon significant citizen involvement, specifically by means of a citizen survey and public meetings.

The element of the master planning process that will be addressed ahead of all others is to gain the consensus of residents regarding:

1. Whether a majority of residents feel there is a need for additional parkland; and
2. If yes, would they support a tax increase to pay for the purchase of parkland and the development of the same, or would they support the acquisition and development of new parkland only if funding was through charitable donations and/or grants.

City Council and staff welcome the opportunity to address any questions in regard to the park master planning process from residents. Please send your comments or questions to myparks@westutx.gov or phone 713-662-5894.



The CRIMINALS Who Frequent Our City

The West University Place Police Department would like to provide residents with a look into the backgrounds of some of the people captured while committing crimes within our jurisdiction. This information is being shared to make people aware of the criminal element that frequents our city on a regular basis looking to commit crimes of opportunity and further, to instill the importance of **reporting suspicious activity the very moment it is observed.**

From January to August of this year, West U officers have apprehended 216 subjects for offenses ranging from Class "C" traffic violations to Aggravated Assault. Of those arrested, a large majority of major offenses committed were in the form of thefts and/or burglary of habitations, buildings or vehicles. The following are a few examples of the persons encountered during these incidents:

- **Suspect 1 (5 total arrests):** Offenses - Felony Evading-Burglary of Motor Vehicle, Possession of Drugs, Assault
- **Suspect 2 (4 total arrests):** Offenses - Burglary of Motor Vehicle Repeat Offender Criminal History, Felony Evading, Burglary of Motor Vehicle, Felony Theft
- **Suspect 3 (5 total arrests):** Offenses - Felony Harassment, Theft by Check, Felony Theft, Felony Possession of a Controlled Substance
- **Suspect 4 (3 total arrests):** Offenses - Burglary of Building, Burglary of a Habitation
- **Suspect 5 (8 total arrests):** Offenses - Felony Forgery, Criminal Mischief, Felony Possession of a Controlled Substance, Theft and Prostitution.
- **Suspect 6 (17 total arrests):** Offenses -Prostitution, Theft, Possession of a Controlled Substance, and Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle
- **Suspect 7 (25 total arrests):** Burglary of Motor Vehicle, Prostitution, Theft, Unlawful Carry of a Weapon, Unauthorized Use of Motor Vehicle, Possession of Marijuana, Possession of a Controlled Substance, and Criminal Trespass

- Family Member, Burglary of Motor Vehicle, Felony Theft

As a resident, you are the best judge of what is considered suspicious activity in and around the city. The feeling you get when you observe something out of the ordinary, be it a person or vehicle that just doesn't look right, or an open gate or door on the neighbor's house, is an instinct within all of us that tries to keep us safe and out of harm's way. The key is to follow these instincts and call the police to report what you see **immediately.**

Timely and accurate reporting of suspicious activity by residents plays a huge role in the number of apprehensions police make each year. No matter is too small to ask officers to investigate. We would much rather have the opportunity to look into these situations and have them turn out to be nothing than get no call and miss the chance to catch a crook while engaged in criminal activity.

We encourage each resident to assist us with our mission of keeping West University Place a safe place to live. Suspicious activity can be reported through our non-emergency line, 713-668-0330 or by dialing 9-1-1.

CPR/AED Certification Training

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

**Are You Ready To Save a Life?
Because an Emergency Can
Occur ANYTIME.**

The American Heart Association's CPR/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 less than one-third of cardiac arrest victims get CPR from someone near them.

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

The West U Fire Department will offer CPR/AED certification classes twice a month at various locations within the City. For a list of available classes and registration information, visit <http://westutx.enrollware.com/>

Adapted from www.heart.org CPR & ECC information.



Food! Games! Music! Green! – Second Annual West U Recycles Day



Yes, you read that right – green, as in Earth and money. The West University Place Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling Board invites all residents to the Second Annual West U Recycles Day on **Saturday, November 2, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at Colonial Park**. Bring your kids, your appetite and your thirst for knowledge, and be ready to have a great time while learning more about resource conservation. This event is held in conjunction with Shred-It, which will be at Colonial Park from 9 a.m. to Noon. West U Recycles Day is inspired by America Recycles Day, a program of Keep America Beautiful. America Recycles Day is a community-driven, national awareness initiative dedicated

to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States. West U Recycles Day is a local event where the residents of West U can learn how our community reduces solid waste, employing the spirit of reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Recycling is the easiest thing we can do every day to save energy, conserve natural resources, and create green jobs. Recycling is a multi-billion dollar industry that employs millions of Americans and helps advance our clean-energy economy. Across the nation, the value lost by discarding packaging rather than recycling it is estimated to be \$11.4 billion.

Last year, the inaugural West U Recycles Day was a great event, where citizens enjoyed a juried art contest, a local jazz band, delicious food, and informative presentations by local organizations and retailers. This year's event plans to be bigger and better, with a focus on fun and learning. There will be an art contest, fun music, green-inspired games, collecting of recyclables, food vendors, and exhibitors creating awareness of things you can do to reduce your waste footprint.

We hope to see you at West U Recycles Day. This event is the one day to:

- ⊕ Bring the community together to educate and motivate.
- ⊕ Get our neighbors, friends and colleagues excited about what can be accomplished when we all work together.
- ⊕ Make recycling bigger and better 365 days a year!



WEST U RECYCLES DAY
it's your world **RECYCLE**

WHAT WE WILL COLLECT

GENTLY USED HOUSEHOLD ITEMS FOR GOODWILL
(FURNITURE, CLOTHING, SHOES, TOYS)

BULBS • BATTERIES
CORKS • CELLS PHONES
EYEGLASSES
ELECTRONIC WASTE
(COMPUTERS, MONITORS, PRINTERS)
GREETING CARDS
MATTRESSES AND BEDDING
MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES
SPORTING EQUIPMENT

Commercial Zoning

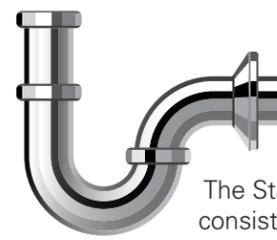
Continued from page 1

point. The most recent review of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning District Map was in 2000. There has been one rezoning request approved, involving a change from Townhouse designation to Commercial designation.

The consultant will review the City's Zoning Ordinance as it applies to commercial properties located within and outside of commercial zoning districts, and recommend changes that will update the zoning districts to incorporate the most appropriate, highest and best use, while recognizing local conditions and the community vision. Specific tasks will include:

- How the code will define commercial businesses and address different types of businesses.
- Review current zoning district designations and determine the appropriate and best use of those districts, incorporating enhancements such as provisions for exterior building facades, buffering, parking, noise and landscaping (protective measures, especially transitions to residential uses).
- Evaluate the Town Center Retail District proposal and recommend refinements.
- Review the comprehensive plan for any required updates so that the zoning district regulations and the comprehensive plan are a cohesive document.
- Prepare a draft ordinance implementing the agreed upon revisions.
- Conduct public workshops, meetings and hearings with the community and present to City Council any proposed ordinance amendments incorporating public input into the process as appropriate.

Additional information about the comprehensive review can be found at www.westutx.gov/ZoningReview2013-14.



You Can Help with Proper Grease Disposal

The State of Texas, consistent with federal law and regulations, is increasing its efforts to reduce the polluting of streams, rivers and other water bodies. In the past few years, many efforts have been directed toward storm water run-off from urban communities. More recently, the focus of concern has been bacterial contamination in Brays Bayou, where the storm water from the City of West University Place flows prior to entering the Houston Ship Channel and then Galveston Bay.

Specific attention has been on the proper operation of wastewater treatment plants and the collection systems which feed them. These plants treat sanitary sewerage from homes and businesses and release the cleaned water into streams and waterways.

Given the current focus on bacterial contributions to pollution,

communities are looking at plans to reduce any polluting sources. One potential source can be an overflow of sanitary sewerage from the collection systems. Therefore, the West University Place Public Works Department is ever vigilant to maintain the sewer collection system in good condition.

Recently, we have experienced sewerage blockages from grease and fibrous debris which has been identified as being primarily composed of "flushable" and "non-flushable wipes." These products have become very popular over the last few years, and their use results in grease and oil solidifying in the cool waters of the sewers and collecting on wipes and other debris, in addition to collecting on pipe walls and fittings. The grease and debris eventually constricts the pipes, building into blockages which can be difficult and expensive to remove.

The City needs your help with reducing both grease and wipes from the sewerage system. Please dispose of used cooking oil and grease in containers and place them into the garbage for trash pickup. This includes grease and oil from all your cooking and not just frying grease. Scrape the scraps into the garbage, and wipe the pans with paper towels which can then also be placed in the garbage. This will reduce and possibly eliminate the contribution of grease, thus avoiding further back-ups into your residence. Please place all wipes, whether advertised as flushable or not, into disposable containers and place in the garbage.

These efforts will assist the City in maintaining the sewer and storm water run-off collection systems and keep them from being a hazard to our community and the waterways around us.

FALL HEAVY TRASH DAY

Saturday, October 26
7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
3826 Milton
(Public Works Maintenance Facility)

Clean out your home, recycle electronics and donate usable items at the Fall Heavy Trash Day.

We will accept almost any residential trash item, except for Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). Items that are not accepted for regular curbside trash pickup, such as, bricks, concrete, junk iron, lumber, etc. will be accepted. If you are disposing of

any items that have Freon (refrigerators, air conditioners, etc.), *you must provide a certificate indicating the Freon has been removed from the unit.*

Goodwill will be on site to accept usable items, such as, clothing, household items (working appliances, dishes, pots, pans, silverware), jewelry, linens (no stains or tears), furniture (no tears or stains), sporting goods, bed frames with all hardware, and working bicycles, working TV's and stereos

The City will accept e-waste such as computers, printers, cell phones, surge protectors, and uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) to be recycled.

City staff will be available to unload your vehicle. Please approach the event from the intersection of University & College Street. To learn more, visit www.westutx.gov/trash



SAVE THE DAY WITH FREE SHREDDING!

Saturday, November 2
9:00 a.m. - Noon
Colonial Park (4130 Byron)

Note the new location! This fall the Shred-It Event is being moved to Colonial Park in conjunction with the 2nd Annual West U Recycles Day.

Protect yourself from identity theft with **FREE** Document Shredding provided by the SHRED IT and West University Place. Staff will be on-site to unload vehicle and there is no waiting for shredding to be completed. Limit of five bankers boxes. To learn more, visit www.westutx.gov/recycle.

Events are open to West U residents only. Proof of residence is required. No business or commercial items accepted.



