



City Currents

Fall 2017





As we now transition into autumn and hence another budget season, a few developments are noteworthy. Recently the City of West University Place's City Council received its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from our independent auditors who, during the presentation, commented that our financial condition can be described as stable and healthy. Over the last two years, the City has also taken advantage of debt refunding opportunities, which will result in savings to the taxpayers of over \$1.2 million during the term of the debt. Like any living thing, a city cannot remain stagnant but must continually strive to make its tomorrows better than its yesterdays. With that being said, it is an excellent time to discuss two upcoming projects, which are efforts to do just that — make those tomorrows better days.

For several years the City has been working with the local council of governments and TxDOT to take advantage of the regional Transportation Improvement Program. This past year our funding proposal was selected, and we have entered into an Advanced Funding Agreement (AFA), which will facilitate the City's rehabilitating and upgrading of our section of Buffalo Speedway, a regional thoroughfare to and around entertainment venues and the Medical Center. This roadway is approximately 50 years old and has exceeded its estimated useful life. Further, with today's truck and bus traffic, it is due for an upgrade.

We are entering into the design phase and have timed this project so that any associated debt would be taken on only after a great portion of our existing debt is retired; construction is anticipated to begin in 2019–2020. This AFA provides for an 80% reimbursement of the cost of replacing the travel surface of this roadway. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity at a savings to the City, we are also exploring options to expand our below-ground drainage system under this roadway while it is already excavated, which will benefit the areas both east and west of Buffalo Speedway. Final decisions on the magnitude of the drainage portion of this project will only be made once the design options are explored and related costs are analyzed. At the present time, the travel surface alone is anticipated to cost approximately \$12 million, again with the City being reimbursed 80% of that cost.

Another project that has been anticipated for the last 15 years is the repair and replacement of the Poor Farm Ditch drainage feature between University Boulevard and Bellaire Boulevard. Although this piece of infrastructure is owned by the Harris County Flood Control District, it services parts of West U and all of Southside Place. Over time this drainage feature has begun failing in this stretch and losing efficiency, especially the portions of the ditch to the north and to the south. These improvements, with minimal cost to the City, will enhance the ditch's drainage efficiency from its current state of a less than 10-year storm conveyance to a 50-year storm conveyance, matching the efficiency of the portion of the ditch to the north. Construction of these improvements is anticipated to begin in the latter half of 2018. More details on both projects will be forthcoming.

These two projects will have a great impact on our City and progress us along the path of better tomorrows; however, as with so many things, we will have to go through a little ugly to get to a lot of beautiful.

From Council Member Wayne Franklin



It's almost fall in Houston! This is usually a time when our children are back in school, the weather starts to cool down (although sometimes it takes us a few more months to cool off in West University!), and we start to get back into our usual routine. Around West U, fall is also a time when families start to prepare for the annual Fathers & Flashlights event, a wonderful FUNdraiser that benefits the Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc., a non-profit organization that works to improve parks and green spaces in the City. Our parks are a big reason why we love living in West U. But, as I learned during my time on the Parks and Recreation Board, our West U parks need maintenance and care to keep them safe, clean and updated for our local residents. Fathers & Flashlights is a great way to give back to the West U community and to help our beloved parks. Also, it allows us fathers to spend quality time with our kids!

Initially started in 2007, this annual event will be held this year on Saturday, October 21. After fathers from around West U plan the annual campout with their children, they pitch their tents and create a “home away from home” for the upcoming night. The afternoon and evening are then filled with fun events for children of all ages (such as bounce houses, catch-and-release fishing, T-shirt tie-dyeing and stargazing). It is a time when fathers and their children can play outdoors and socialize in a safe environment. Then, after dinner, the camping begins as we and our kids break out the flashlights for some nighttime fun, and maybe even some ghost stories or dance parties. The event is truly a family affair — the mothers help out with the preparation, such as coordinating check-in and supervising play areas. But as soon as their “shift” is over, the West U mothers get to enjoy a well-earned night off!

The next morning, after some breakfast and donuts for the kids and coffee for the fathers, we take down the tent, pack up and then head back home. The annual event has become a ritual at my house, with both my sons asking by the end of the summer, “When do we get to camp out on the fields again?”

Our lives get so busy that we often forget how fast our children grow up. Events like Fathers & Flashlights is a terrific way each fall for us to take that special time with our children. Not only do we get to be dads as we camp out, but we get to be kids ourselves!

Helpful Link: www.westuparks.org/events

Questions? Email: fathersandflashlights@westuparks.org

Friends of West U Parks



Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc. and the Parks and Recreation Department will host the 11th annual Fathers & Flashlights campout on Saturday, October 21, on the fields surrounding West University Elementary School. The Moorhead, Williams and Woody Families as co-chairs, along with all of the wonderful volunteers, promise another fun and memorable event.



Special thanks go to our Camp Founder, The Woman's Hospital of Texas Pediatric Center, the title sponsor for Fathers & Flashlights 2017.



Fathers & Flashlights co-chairs, The Woody, Williams, and Moorhead Families

The many fun activities at the campout will include catch-and-release fishing, bungee run races and a climbing wall just to name a few. As the daytime activities conclude, campers will be treated to a spectacular magician act and a DJ party sponsored by Heidi Dugan, Realtor, Greenwood King Properties. Thank you to ALL of our underwriters, sponsors, and in-kind donors, plus the many volunteers and staff who make this event possible. Our generous donors also include: Conway MacKenzie, Jones Day; Maggie Garza, Realtor/John Daugherty Realtors & Old Republic Title; Kristine Martinez, Realtor/John Daugherty Realtors; Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital; Fajitas A Go Go; Lauren DeFrehn Photography; Butler Cohen, LLC; Laura Mayer Cyprow, Realtor/John Daugherty Realtors; Anthology Counseling and Wellness; iKids; The Jackson-McClellan Team at Cornerstone Home Lending; Presmer; Rice Village Animal Hospital, and the Faulk Family, Freeman Family, and Sahely Family.



Park Lovers' Ball co-chairs, Jennifer Swallen and Jennifer Blum

For a complete listing of the generous underwriters and sponsors and more event highlights, please visit www.westuparks.org. Fathers & Flashlights continues to be a very popular and successful fundraiser for Friends of West U Parks. It is a neighborhood favorite.

Park Lovers' Ball will be held on February 10, 2018, at the Hilton Americas downtown. Event co-chairs Jennifer and Daniel Blum and Jennifer and William Swallen are planning a fun and festive evening on the theme of "A Night in Old Havana." Heading up the auction for the ball are Natalie Crossley and Kelly Beth Hapgood. If you would like to donate to the auction or know of a business that can donate, a donor form is available on the Friends website, westuparks.org. The underwriter/sponsor co-chairs are Wendy Cloonan and Elizabeth Love. Couple seats for the gala start at \$300 and tables for ten start at \$3,000. Seats and tables can be purchased online through the Friends website also. Look for your invitation to the ball to arrive in the mail in early January. Meanwhile, please visit westuparks.org, email Friends executive director at DLaMond@westutx.gov, or call (713) 662-7430 for information on becoming an underwriter, sponsor, auction donor or volunteer.

While Fathers & Flashlights and Park Lovers' Ball are the largest Friends fundraising events, there are other opportunities for involvement. Friends fundraising continues year round with the stork program to announce the birth of a baby, business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please visit westuparks.org or call (713) 662-7430.

Special Events

Movies in the Park

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

Dates: Fridays, October 13 & October 20

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Colonial Park Pavilion, 4130 Byron Street

Beauty and the Beast, Rated PG, October 13

Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" is a live-action retelling of the studio's animated classic, which refashions the characters from the tale as old as time for a contemporary audience, staying true to the original music while updating the score with several new songs. "Beauty and the Beast" is the fantastic journey of Belle, a bright, beautiful and independent young woman who is taken prisoner by a beast in his castle. Despite her fears, she befriends the castle's enchanted staff and learns to look beyond the Beast's hideous exterior, seeing the kind heart and soul of the true Prince within.

Despicable Me, Rated PG, October 20

A supervillain schemes to steal the moon from the sky, but his evil machinations are undermined by three orphaned girls who see him as a father figure, despite his diabolical intentions.

Full Moon Fest

The West University Place Parks and Recreation Department will host their fifth annual Halloween celebration, Full Moon Fest, at 5:30 pm on Friday, October 20, at the Colonial Park Pavilion, located at 4130 Byron. Join us for an evening of pumpkin decorating, costume contests, face painting and more. The costume contest will have different age categories, so make sure the whole family comes in their spookiest attire. Complete the evening by staying for "Despicable Me" (PG), part of the Movies in the Park series; showing begins at 7:00 pm!

West U Halloween Dash and Kids Fun Run presented by Texas Orthopedic Hospital

Registration continues for the seventh annual West U Halloween Dash and Kids Fun Run on Saturday, October 28. The Dash is a chip-timed 5K race through the beautiful, tree-lined streets of West U. The Kids Fun Run is a non-competitive one-mile run or walk. All Fun Run finishers will receive a medal. Proceeds from the event benefit the West U Parks and Recreation Department.

Register at www.westutx.gov/funrun.

Swim with Santa

Would you like to add some excitement to your Christmas pictures? Change your holiday pictures this year by taking a picture with Santa underwater! Join us on Saturday, November 11, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at the West U Recreation Center pool, 4210 Bellaire, to have your Santa selfie or family photo taken in this unique setting. Registered participants will also receive a gift bag from Santa himself (courtesy of Oceanic Ventures). Register by November 8 to receive Santa's discounted rate of \$10 per picture. Fees the day of the event will be \$20. For more information, contact the West U Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420.

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

Come one, come all! Get into the holiday spirit with the 29th annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony when the City of West U heralds the season by lighting the Christmas tree. Join us with your camera in front of the Community Building, 6104 Auden, on Monday, December 4. Activities will start at 5:30 pm and the tree lighting ceremony will start at 6:00 pm. Santa will be available for photos at the end of the ceremony!

Winter/Spring 2017 Class Registration

Discover a new craft or polish a skill for great benefits without investing a lot of time or money. Most winter/spring classes begin in January. These include dance, tennis, Pilates, yoga, youth swimming, gymnastics, CPR and so much more!

***Priority Registration** (for those currently enrolled in classes within the 30 days before this date)

Tuesday, November 28

*online registration is not available

Resident Registration

Tuesday, December 5

Non-Resident Registration

Thursday, December 7

Complete your registration online when it's available at www.westutx.gov/reg or come by the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire, to sign up. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, personal checks and cash are accepted. To view a copy of the fall "West U at Your Leisure" guide, visit www.westutx.gov/parks or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.

Safety and Public Works

Tree Trust Planting Program

This fall and winter, West U once again will be sponsoring a tree planting program with funds from the Tree Trust. Residents who wish to apply to receive a complimentary tree can stop by Development Services at 3826 Amherst and fill out an application, or they can download the application at www.westutx.gov, fill it out and mail it in. The deadline for applications is Thursday, November 30.

Trees from the Tree Trust may only be planted in the street right-of-way. Please consider your available planting space when selecting the type of tree you want. City contractors will not plant tree species that mature into large trees beneath the canopy of an existing healthy tree or beneath overhead utility lines. Also consider visibility triangles at street intersections and at street and driveway intersections. Applicants who have the required growth space and are approved will receive a tree in a 65-gallon container at no cost. The tree will be approximately eight feet tall and three inches in caliper. City contractors will plant, stake, mulch and fertilize the trees. The applicant will be responsible for watering and maintenance after planting.

The Tree Trust was established as a means to ensure the regeneration and diversity of the City's urban forest. The Tree Trust is funded by those residents and contractors who removed trees for the construction of homes, garages, pools or other structures and did not have enough space on their lot to put in the minimum required replacement plantings. Contact Craig Koehl, Urban Forester, at (713) 662-5313 or cckoehl@westutx.gov if you have questions or would like additional information.

Green Up Your Holidays

Courtesy of the Recycling & Solid Waste Reduction Board

As you plan for the holidays with gift buying, decorating, card giving and celebrating, please consider some of the suggestions below to help you adopt a more sustainable approach. If everyone in the world lived like the average US citizen, it's estimated we would need FOUR earths to support our level of consumption. Even though the US makes up just 5% of the global population, we produce 40% of the world's garbage. During the holiday season, we produce 25% more waste than usual, 80% of which can be recycled or reused.

Green Gift Giving

- Give gifts of experience or service: spa treatments, theater tickets, sporting events tickets, restaurant meals, car detailing, a museum membership, lessons or music gift cards.
- Make a donation to a charity in honor of a loved one.
- Keep it simple: one thoughtful gift is better than six wrapped packages of unwanted gifts.
- Find unique gifts at antique shops, thrift stores and yard sales.
- While shopping use a reusable bag, and recycle the non-reusable ones.
- Give home-baked goodies in reusable containers.
- Give a gift from the heart: time or talent.
- Children can give coupons for their time: extra chores, cooking dinner, babysitting or caring for a pet.
- Purchase gifts that are durable and/or made from recycled material.
- Shop at local bazaars, farmer's markets and craft studios.
- Have a stash of unused gifts? Use them this holiday season or donate them to charities looking for gifts.
- Go battery-less or use rechargeable batteries for toys and gadgets.
- Reuse gift packaging. Recycle cartons, cardboard and paper. Take peanuts to local pack and ship stores.
- Turn old greeting cards into gift tags.

Trees & Decorations

- Lights not working? Make sure your next strings are "if one blows, the others stay on," or better yet LED lights.
- Recycle broken/nonworking light strands along with electronics.
- New decorations? Donate old decorations; don't trash them.
- Recycle your tree: remove lights, decorations and stand, then place at curb.

Greener Holiday Cards

- Be selective with your list.
- Consider eCards or "handmade" digital cards, including PaperlessPost, Smilebox (photo collage) and RedStamp (mobile postcards).
- If you must use paper cards, consider using cards with post-consumer recycled content or postcards. Avoid foil.
- Send used greeting cards (all occasions) to St. Jude's Ranch for Children for reuse.
- Recycle paper greeting cards and envelopes. Remove foil from foil-lined envelopes first.

New Year's Resolutions Worth Keeping!

- RECYCLE MORE curbside — paper, cardboard, paperboard, cartons, plastic bottles/lids and containers, glass bottles and jars, tin cans and aluminum cans — and WASTE LESS.
- Recycle with the City of Houston Westpark Consumer Recycling Center (between Chimney Rock and Fountainview): motor and cooking oil, block Styrofoam as well as Styrofoam cups and to-go containers, electronics, fluorescent bulbs and Latex paints (sort items).
- Reduce waste by purchasing durable goods, reusing, repairing, sharing, renting, buying in bulk if appropriate or donating instead of trashing.
- Recycle electronics and mattresses during West U's paper shredding events, first Saturday in May and November.
- Compost your yard waste OR place grass and leaves in approved plastic compostable/paper craft bags for curbside recycling along with un-bagged large pieces cut in lengths no longer than four feet.

Improper Maintenance of Vegetation Continues to Cause Problems in West U

The City of West University Place continues to remind residents of the following issues being caused by vegetation.

Note: property owners can be held liable for contributing to accidents when vegetation obscures a regulatory sign (i.e., stop sign) or interferes with or blocks a driver's visibility.

Regulatory Sign Obstruction

A good way to verify if the vegetation needs to be trimmed is to look at the sign from four (4) property lots away (approx. 200 feet). If the full sign cannot be seen, the vegetation needs to be trimmed. This may also mean that owners up to four lots away from a stop sign may need to trim vegetation as well.

Below are before and after photos of a stop sign sight visibility obstruction:



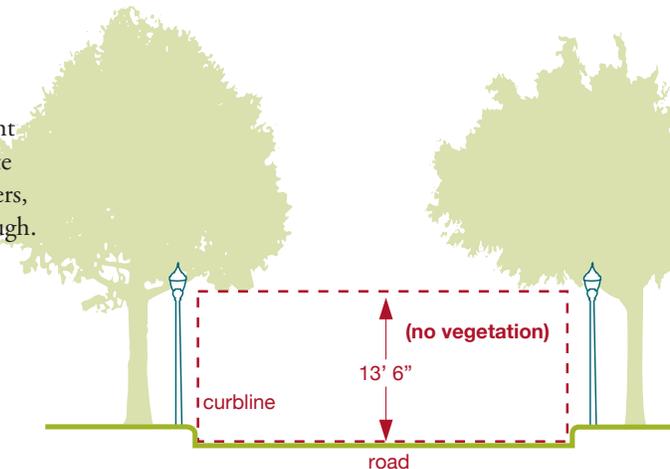
City crews provided a courtesy trimming at this location due to the severity of the obstruction, but it is up to property owners to conduct ongoing continual maintenance.

Clearance Over Roadways

The City requires that vegetation over the roadway be maintained at a minimum height of 13 feet-6 inches, extending from curb to curb (see diagram 1). This ensures adequate clearance for all types of vehicles (fire trucks, ambulances, garbage trucks, street sweepers, etc.) that are on the road daily providing essential City services or simply passing through.

A good rule of thumb when determining if you need to trim your trees is to look at the streetlights. If the limbs are below the top of the light, then they need to be trimmed. The top of the light is approximately 15 feet above the street. Remember that the property owner could be held liable for damage to vehicles and equipment caused by low-hanging limbs.

If you have any questions concerning road or sign clearance or tree height, please contact the West U Public Works Department at (713) 662-5839.



The care and maintenance of all trees in the public right-of-way is the responsibility of the property owner.

Save the date!

What: Paper Shredding/E-Waste/Mattress Collection Event

When: Saturday, November 4, 2017

Where: 3826 Milton Street

Hours: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Shredding is limited to five (5) banker boxes per household. No business or commercial shredding is accepted. This event is open to West University Place residents only. Proof of residency is required.

West U Collects App

via Internet



www.westutx.gov/westucollects

via Mobile



Search: "West U Collects"





Enter Your Address To:

- View collection calendars
- Set up service reminders
- Search the "What To Do With It" disposal/recycle guide

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USE

City Currents

A Newsletter for the citizens of
City of West University Place

Fall 2017



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

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CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

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For questions and comments about *City Currents*,
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Design by Minor Design

Important Reasons to Follow the Leash Laws

West University Place has laws regarding animals running in City parks or “at large” within the city limits. Running “at large” is generally defined as the following: free; outside a secure enclosure; and without a securely attached leash held by a person of competent strength to hold and control the animal. Basically, the law requires any animal outside of a secure enclosure to be leashed. Further, animals are prohibited within the perimeter sidewalks and fencing of the City’s parks.

Here are good reasons to follow the City’s leash laws:

1. **It is the law.** There is a law that requires your dog to be leashed (and under your control), so put the leash on your dog and keep it on at all times.
2. **When your dog is under your control (on a leash), he’s less likely to get into something he’s not supposed to.** Off leash and romping unfettered, your dog can get into trash placed out for the night, enter your neighbor’s property and dig in the flower beds, or run into the street.
3. **Unpredictable situations.** The best-behaved dogs can react unpredictably in new situations, especially if they’re scared. Even if you’re alone on the walk, others can show up and change the scene in an instant. Children, vehicles, animals and even bad weather can cause a dog to forget what “come” means.
4. **Not everyone you meet on the walk is physically able to withstand a dog jumping on them, even a nice dog.** What if your dog encounters a family with children or the elderly? There could be a dog bite, scratches or even injury if your dog knocks down a person.

5. **People have the right to walk in public without being confronted by loose dogs.** In contrast, dog owners do not have the right to let their dogs run loose within the city limits. Every dog owner thinks their dog is the friendliest, greatest dog in the world, and that everyone else should love their dog the way they do. Remember, not everyone likes animals and they may react with hostility to a loose dog, which may cause the animal to become aggressive.
6. **Vulnerable leashed dogs.** It’s common for leashed dogs to feel vulnerable when approached by off-leash dogs. The result can be fearful or protective behavior, which may set off a “fight or flight” instinct in your dog. If your dog chooses “fight,” you could end up in hot water. Legally, you’d be held responsible for injuries to humans and pets and damage to property. If your dog really needs to run free, take her to an off-leash dog park. This helps ensure she only comes into contact with other friendly dogs who can handle themselves on their own.
7. **Protecting your dog.** Even if your dog has perfect recall and you can control their every move from 100 feet away — you can’t control the world around them. The leash is there to protect your dog from the world as much as it’s there to protect the world from your dog. A leash provides emergency control over your pet. Bad things are simply more likely to happen if your dog is running loose.

Being a responsible dog owner is more than just feeding your dog a good diet or debating positive training methods. If you own a dog, you should obey the laws or you will receive a ticket. Also remember to register your dog with the City and make sure your dog has a tag and a microchip with your current information. That way you can count on a quick reunion should you become separated. The intent of the law is to protect the health and safety of the public and to protect your pet. The use of a leash will benefit you, your neighborhood and your pet.