



# City Currents

Winter 2017



As another year comes to an end, we look back and feel deep gratitude for the citizens and supporters of our extraordinary city. So as we transition into this New Year, from all of us to all of you, we wish you the joy and blessings of the season.



During the recent budget process and public hearings, many of you and your neighbors voiced concerns over maintaining our community's safety and security. We heard you, and City Council approved funding to provide two additional police officers, one additional telecommunications operator, the first phase of our security surveillance ring and upgrades to a new emergency alert system. The Police Department is also willing to come to your residence and conduct a safety survey, suggesting ways in which you can enhance your property's security.

With this in mind, we want to note another unsung hero in the battle against crime. Some of you may not know this, but the City is one of the few grandfathered municipalities that possess and offer a security monitoring service called Direct Link. We are in the process of sending information about Direct Link to all local realty companies for inclusion in their packets. We will also provide a new information card to all new residents as they set up services. We make these cards available at all points of service throughout the City as well; it is simply that valuable. Calls for emergency action do not go to a call center hundreds or even thousands of miles away; the alert goes directly to our dispatch center. When seconds count, our exceptional public safety response times may mean the difference between help and serious loss. Some other important points about Direct Link include:

- no contracts required
- service charge conveniently included on your monthly utility bill
- third party connection eliminated with calls going directly to our public safety dispatch center
- affordable at \$35 per month.

In the past we have seen a lot of misinformation regarding this service — what it can do and how it connects up with your personal security systems and alarms. Please take a moment and visit the webpage at [www.westutx.gov/217/DirectLink](http://www.westutx.gov/217/DirectLink). You can also call us at (713) 662-5860 or email us at [directlink@westutx.gov](mailto:directlink@westutx.gov) with your questions, and we will get you the answers.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah or Kwanzaa, each possesses its own tradition and history. But all share the outlook of a bright future, freedom and peace. What better gift to you and your family for the coming year than enhanced security and peace of mind. Investigate our Direct Link service as a step in that direction.

Wishing you and yours a most joyful and prosperous holiday season and New Year!

## Holidays and Package Thefts

Online shopping always tends to increase as the holiday season approaches and can remain preferable even after it has passed. The ease and convenience of being able to avoid the crowds and confusion of in-store purchases and returns has made these types of transactions a whole lot more attractive. However, and as we are all aware, with convenience comes a certain level of risk.

Historically, this time of year brings with it an upturn in the number of package thefts our community experiences. There is always an element of society that seizes upon this type of criminal opportunity and takes full advantage of it when given the chance. The following are just a few things we all can do throughout the year to ensure the safety of our deliveries:

- Check to see if you can specify a delivery time and date that will allow for you to be home to accept your package.
- Opt to require a signature upon delivery.
- Check to see if you can specify alternative points of delivery, such as with a neighbor, at your place of business or at a distribution center.

- Check to see if a delivery notification service is available that can provide you with advanced notice of a delivery just in case adjustments in delivery arrangements are needed.
- Request that packages be left at a back or side door of your residence or in some other designated space that is out of sight from the street.
- And finally, help your friends and neighbors. If you can see a package sitting out on your neighbor's doorstep in plain sight, so can the criminals. Do your neighbor and the community a favor and give your neighbor a call. Let them know about the delivery and ask if you can assist them in any way. If you do not know them well enough to have their phone number or if they cannot be reached, give the West University Place Police Department a call, and we will see what we can do. We are all in this together.

Individual efforts in reducing crime really do make a difference. By simply following these suggestions, you can contribute a great deal toward ensuring a safer community for us all.

Always remember, if you see something or someone that you feel is out of place or just out of the ordinary, immediately report the situation to the Police Department at (713) 668-0330 or, in the case of an emergency, dial 911.

# From Council Member Brennan Reilly

## West University Place Needs You

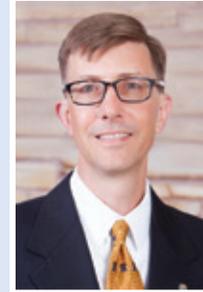
The City of West University Place needs a few interested and committed residents to run for City Council next spring. I hope you will consider doing so.

The main question I get from residents when I encourage them to think about serving on City Council is about the time commitment. The answer is that it does not take as much time as you might think. City Council meets twice per month (generally the second and fourth Mondays of the month). Meetings last one to three hours and typically require one to two hours of advance preparation (reviewing the agenda and supporting documents). Budget meetings that typically occur during the month of October are more intensive and require more outside preparation. In addition to Council meetings, you will need to keep up with email from City staff and residents and occasionally meet with residents and staff. Most Council members also serve as liaisons to a City board or commission (such as the Parks Board or the Zoning and Planning Commission), so you will also need to attend one meeting per month with your designated board or commission. All in all, you can expect to spend about five hours per week (more during meeting weeks and less during non-meeting weeks).

The main job of City Council is to provide direction to, and oversight of, City staff regarding policy, including the City budget. You do not need to be a lawyer to serve on City Council. Having experience planning a budget, asking questions, and managing projects and staff is generally more useful than legal experience. Also important is a willingness to seek out the opinions of other residents. We're all busy, and local issues are not always well publicized, so sometimes the hardest part of the job is taking the time to inform residents and encourage them to participate in City decision making.

We need a variety of residents to serve on City Council. West University Place is diverse. We have seniors living on fixed incomes, baby boomers at the end of their careers and young families. We need representatives from all these groups to make sure that our decisions take into account their different perspectives. You do not have to be a current or past board or commission member or to attend a citizen's academy. You just need to be interested and committed to serving your fellow residents for two years.

You can pick up an application to run for City Council at City Hall beginning January 18. You will need to obtain signatures from 25 residents who are registered to vote. Applications are due February 17. The election will be held on May 6, and your term will begin June 1. If you have any questions regarding the process, please call City Secretary Thelma Gilliam at (713) 662-5813, and she'll be happy to talk with you.



## Looking Ahead to the 2017 General Election

Now that the presidential election is behind us, it's time to start looking ahead to the City's 2017 general election to be held on May 6 for the purpose of electing a mayor and four City Council members. The first day to file an application for a place on the ballot is January 18, and the filing deadline is February 17. As the election gets closer, browse the City's website at [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov) for more information or contact City Secretary Thelma Gilliam at (713) 662-5813 or at [tgilliam@westutx.gov](mailto:tgilliam@westutx.gov).

## City Council Meeting Audio

After completion of a six-month trial period, audio recordings of City Council meetings will now be regularly archived on the City's website at [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov). Located in the "Agenda Center" and indexed in the minutes according to action item, the archive allows listeners to select a specific item of interest without having to listen to the recording in its entirety. The recordings will be posted to the City's website the day following each meeting and all browsers and mobile devices are supported.

# Parks and Recreation



## Friends of West U Parks

The 26th annual Park Lovers' Ball will be held at the Hilton Americas-Houston on Saturday evening, February 18, beginning at 7:00 pm. You are invited to join your friends and neighbors for an evening of masquerade fun and surprises. Invitations will arrive in West U households in early January. Event co-chairs Sami and Jud Morrison and Peyton and Alex Popp invite you to be part of this popular West U gala, which raises funds for our beautiful neighborhood parks and green spaces.



Reservations for the ball are available with individual seats at \$250, couple seats at \$500 and table purchases starting at \$2,500 for a table of 10. If you have not already made your reservation to attend, please contact Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at (713) 662-7430 or [DLaMond@westutx.gov](mailto:DLaMond@westutx.gov), or visit [westuparks.org](http://westuparks.org). Reservations and payments can also be made online through the Friends website. There will be a seated dinner and dancing to the tunes of Dysfunction Junction, silent and live auctions, and a Big Board. We will have the ever popular Wine Pull and Whiskey Blackjack game again, and the Heads or Tails game will get the party started following dinner in the ballroom. Auction highlights include a spectacular one-week stay for up to 13 people in a luxury Breckenridge ski home; a stunning New Zealand wild game hunt; and a visit to the beautiful Limpopo Valley of South Africa for a big game safari for up to four hunters. Offering something for everyone, the auction will have a few new surprises for the sports enthusiasts and kids, as well as exquisite one-of-a-kind jewelry that is sure to catch the eye of that someone special. Spooky Party will be back for next October, but be on the lookout for a couple of new additions to the social lineup in the auction that are sure to be popular draws for years to come. Don't forget the special Fathers & Flashlights VIP package, which includes a guaranteed preset campsite at the always sold-out annual campout along with a pass for Mom exempting her from volunteer duty at the event. There are also a few early registration eligibility certificates for the campout in the silent auction.

To volunteer to help with the gala, become an underwriter or sponsor, or purchase seats at the gala, please visit [westuparks.org](http://westuparks.org), or contact Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at (713) 662-7430 or [DLaMond@westutx.gov](mailto:DLaMond@westutx.gov). To donate an auction item, please contact Jessica Breitbeil by email at [jessicawannemacher@yahoo.com](mailto:jessicawannemacher@yahoo.com). Donations can also be submitted via the Friends website. Gather friends and neighbors and put together a table for the 2017 Park Lovers' Ball. Special thanks to our underwriters, sponsors, and auction donors for the event.

Friends fundraising continues year round with the stork program to announce the birth of a new baby, business and community partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please visit [westuparks.org](http://westuparks.org), or call the Friends office at (713) 662-7430.



## Colonial Park West End Now Open!

Colonial Park Pool is closed for the season, but there are still plenty of reasons to visit the west end of the park! As part of the recently completed Colonial Park West End Redevelopment project, a new entry gate has been installed off of West Point Drive allowing year-round access to the green space; two wooden decks, picnic tables, benches, water fountain and grilling stations are available on a first-come, first-served basis until the pool opens on Saturday, April 29. For more information, please visit [www.westutx.gov/parks](http://www.westutx.gov/parks) or contact a Customer Service Representative at (713) 662-7420.

## Go Ahead, Take a Guess!

### How many eggs are in the Di-Eggo tower of eggs?

Di-Eggo, the giant egg tower, has gone through a renovation, and in the process the number of eggs has changed too. Come check out the new tower at the West U Recreation Center starting March 3. Take a guess how many eggs are in Di-Eggo and you might just win a prize! To participate, pick up a registration form at the Customer Relations Desk at the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd. Participants must be residents of West U to be eligible for a prize.

## Easter Spring Festival and Arbor Day

The City of West University Place Parks and Recreation Department will host an Easter Spring Festival, featuring an “eggs-tra” special visit from the Easter Bunny and our very own Wally the Walrus, on Saturday, April 8, from 9:00 – 11:00 am. This event will be held on the athletic fields at the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd. Craig Koehl, the city’s Urban Forester, will be on hand giving away new trees to residents. Admission to the event is complimentary and open to the whole family. Don’t forget to stop by the Recreation Center to submit your guess on how many eggs are in Di-Eggo for the possibility to win a great prize! Di-Eggo will be displayed starting Friday, March 3. The winners will be announced during Easter Spring Festival.

## Colonial Park Pool Opening for Members’ Only Weekend

This event is to honor our VIP customers: our Colonial Park members! Join the Parks and Recreation Department for a Members’ Only Weekend, held a week before the pool opens to the public. The pool will be open exclusively for our 2017 members on Saturday, April 29, 10:00 am – 7:00 pm, and Sunday, April 30, 12:00 – 7:00 pm. Don’t miss the celebration — you can avoid the lines by purchasing your membership at the Recreation Center (on sale now), or you can purchase a membership at Colonial Pool on the weekends starting April 29.

## Lifeguard Certification Courses

Are you 15 or older and looking for a great summer job, after-school activity or 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 is administered the first class day. Four classes are offered, to be held on Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. The four class dates are March 4–5, April 1–2, April 29–30 and May 20–21. The class fee is \$170 for residents and \$195 for non-residents plus a \$35 fee paid to the American Red Cross. For more information about this class, please call the Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420 or visit [www.westutx.gov/reg](http://www.westutx.gov/reg).

## Now Hiring: Recreation Attendants, Lifeguards & Swim Instructors

The West University Recreation Center and Colonial Park Pool staff is now accepting applications for part-time Recreation Attendant, Lifeguard and Swim Instructor positions. The Parks and Recreation Department offers competitive pay, flexible schedules and a fun atmosphere! Certifications are necessary for some positions and quality customer service is a must for all. Be a part of a fantastic team! For more information, visit [www.westutx.gov/application](http://www.westutx.gov/application) or call a customer service representative at (713) 662-7420.

## Summer Camp Registration – Mark Your Calendars!

Summer will be here before you know it, and West University Place Parks and Recreation Department has the perfect camp for every interest! Choose from Building Brains LEGO Camp, Dance Camp, iKids Camp, Tennis Camp and more! Spaces are limited, so refer to the registration information below to reserve your spot!

Please visit [www.westutx.gov/camps](http://www.westutx.gov/camps) for a complete listing of camp descriptions, dates and times, or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.

### Camp Registration Information:

- **Priority Registration (2016 Campers are eligible):** begins Tuesday, January 24, and goes through Monday, January 30.
- **Resident Summer Camp Registration:** begins Tuesday, January 31.
- **Non-resident Summer Camp Registration:** begins Thursday, February 2.
- **Kidventure Camp:** Please visit [www.kidventure.com](http://www.kidventure.com) for more info.

# Safety and Public Works



## Simple Dos and Don'ts in Curbside Yard Waste Collection

The following is a quick reminder of curbside yard waste collection requirements. Not complying with the proper curbside placement requirements makes you subject to being assessed a special collection fee (minimum \$50).

### DOs

- Place yard waste curbside no sooner than 6:00 pm the day before and no later than 8:00 am the day of collection.
- Ensure you or your lawn care provider uses compostable plastic or kraft paper bags for all yard waste material placed curbside for collection.
- Place limbs curbside no sooner than three (3) days before the scheduled collection day.
- Limbs are to be:
  - three inches (3") or less in diameter  
*\*\*helpful tip: a traditional coffee cup has a diameter of three inches\*\**
  - properly stacked/bound in bundles no more than four feet (4') long, four feet (4') wide and three feet (3') high

### DON'Ts

- Placement of yard waste curbside earlier than 6:00 pm the day before and no later than 8:00 am the day of collection.
- Use of non-compostable bags (i.e., household trash bags) to dispose of yard waste.
- Mixing yard waste with trash, recyclables or any other non-yard waste material.

Please visit our website at [www.westutx.gov/greenwaste](http://www.westutx.gov/greenwaste) for more information.

For questions, feel free to call the Public Works Department offices at (713) 662-5839 or email us at [pwinfo@westutx.gov](mailto:pwinfo@westutx.gov).

### Make Good Use of Tree Waste

It is said that reuse, or repurposing, is the best form of recycling. This can be done with some tree-related items, such as cardboard containers, but a different kind of recycling is possible for tree or yard "waste," such as leaves, branches and trunks. Every part of a tree can be made into new and useful items or otherwise put into useful service.

1. Limbs of all sizes can be used for home or recreational fires, but should not be transported to other locations for burning.
2. Leaves can be composted or added to gardens to lighten the texture of soil and to provide a good habitat for worms.
3. Chips produced from trunks or branches can provide mulch for use around trees or as a weed barrier in beds.
4. Christmas trees can be repurposed as bird perches at feeders or for erosion control at a lakefront or beach.

A good New Year's resolution might be to let no tree or yard "waste" end up in the landfill. Happy recycling!

*Article information provided by Tree City, USA.*

### 2017 Arbor Day Celebration

The City of West University Place will hold an Arbor Day celebration on April 8, beginning at 9:00 am, at the Recreation Center on Bellaire Boulevard. This celebration is being held in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department's annual spring celebration, which also begins at 9 am. Residents are invited to come by the Recreation Center to meet and talk with the Urban Forester about diversification of the urban forest, adequate growth space and planting appropriate species. Complimentary trees will be available to the first 30 residents to come by for the celebration.

Arbor Day is a way to educate the community about trees and the environment. The National Arbor Day Foundation promotes local Arbor Day festivities through the Tree City USA award program. Sponsoring a community-wide celebration of Arbor Day is a pre-requisite to receiving the Tree City USA designation. The National Arbor Day Foundation formally notifies a city of this designation for the preceding calendar year generally by March 1. This marks the City's 27th year of participation in the program.

# Current Requirements for Clearance

## Tree Height Clearance Over Roadways

The City requires property owners to keep the lowest branches of vegetation over the roadway at a minimum height of 13'-6" 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 services or simply passing through to undertake tasks elsewhere.



Diagram 1. Street Height Clearance

Not sure how high 13'-6" is? A good rule of thumb is if your tree growth is below the height of the streetlight globe located along your street, then it needs to be trimmed. The top of the light is approximately 15 feet above the street. Also remember to trim around the streetlights to ensure the street is well light at night.

## Sight Obstructions of Regulatory Signs

If there is a regulatory sign (stop sign, speed limit sign, school zone sign, etc.) located in front of your property, please keep in mind that regular trimming is needed to ensure that vegetation does not obscure the sign for the motoring public. A good rule of thumb when deciding if vegetation needs to be trimmed is if you cannot see the full sign from three to four property lots away (approx. 150 – 200 feet). If not, then the vegetation needs to be trimmed. Please see the before and after pictures here of a stop sign obstructed by vegetation.



If you have any questions concerning road, sidewalk or sign clearance, please contact the West U Public Works Department at (713) 662-5839 or email at [pwinfo@westutx.gov](mailto:pwinfo@westutx.gov)

## Low Hanging Vegetation Quiz

Can you properly answer the following questions?

1. **Who is responsible for the care and maintenance of the trees in the City's right-of-ways?**
  - a. Public Works Department
  - b. Harris County
  - c. Property owner
  - d. Mayor
2. **Who may be held responsible for any damages caused by low hanging tree limbs and vegetation over the roadway and sidewalk?**
  - a. The City
  - b. Drivers
  - c. Property owner
  - d. Others
3. **Who may be held responsible for knowingly allowing obstruction of a regulatory sign by vegetation that results in an accident or other damages?**
  - a. Harris County
  - b. Public Works Department
  - c. Property owner
  - d. Others

The answer to all the questions above is C. The property owner may be held responsible for all three (3) scenarios mentioned.

Now is a good time to look at the trees around your property that are growing over the streets and sidewalks to ensure that proper clearance is maintained and to trim any trees or shrubs now.

# City Currents

A Newsletter for the citizens of  
City of West University Place

Winter 2017



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

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
HOUSTON, TX  
PERMIT NO. 134

## 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](http://www.westutx.gov)

*City Currents* is a quarterly publication  
and is printed on recycled paper.

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

Design by Minor Design

## Dog Bites

As much as we try to control our pets by keeping them on a leash or in a secured enclosure while outdoors, occasionally a dog will escape the enclosure or become frightened while leashed and bite someone. If this happens with your dog, please be aware that whether your dog's vaccinations are up to date or not, state law requires that your dog must be quarantined for 10 days. This quarantine can be with a veterinarian of your choice or another chosen by the City. The Animal Control/Police Officer taking the dog bite complaint does not have discretionary authority in this matter. Please try and keep your dog leashed or enclosed at all times to help prevent these occurrences. For more information, please contact Animal Control at (713) 662-5831.

## Pet Etiquette

Help keep your dog and our City safe by keeping your dog on a leash or in an enclosure at all times. Besides being the law, using a leash prevents your dog from running into traffic or accosting other pets, and it keeps other people safe from unwelcome interactions with your dog. Even in your front yard, the dog must be on a leash.



While out walking, please be sure to clean up after your pet to avoid spreading disease and waste. You are also required to register your pet with the city's Animal Control Officer. The cost is \$20 for a lifetime registration. Bring a copy of the pet's rabies vaccination papers to the Public Works Building, 3826 Amherst, and fill out the registration form available there.

You will receive a tag to keep as proof of registration. Your pet should wear the tag along with the rabies tag. Doing this will help Animal Control identify your pets should they leave your yard or become lost. Periodically make sure that all enclosures where your pets are kept are secure. For more information or to ask questions, please contact the Animal Control Officer at (713) 662-5831.