

## **Virtual Gate System: An Innovative Approach to Public Safety in West U**

By Mayor Susan Sample

Public safety has long been a main goal in West U, as a small, family-friendly city in one of the country's largest urban areas. Over the past few years, many of you have probably heard about West U's Virtual Gate System. This is a system of automated license plate recognition technology and pan-tilt-zoom cameras installed around the perimeter of West U, providing both a deterrent and a crime-fighting asset for the City's police department. As this project was begun under my previous tenure as Mayor, during the 2017-2019 Council, it gives me particular satisfaction to announce that the Virtual Gate is scheduled to be completed in the coming month.



The deployment of the Virtual Gate has been a phased project, with forty different camera locations installed at different stages. Although the system will soon be fully operational, it has already been in use at those locations previously installed, and has paid dividends. The Virtual Gate cross-references license plates against various databases, including active warrants and stolen vehicle lists. By sharing these databases with the City of Houston, the City continues to build strong regional partnerships focusing on our common interests. Recently the system has alerted West U police to notifications of license plate "hits" in both the city limits and Houston, including stolen vehicles and missing persons.

While there are countless reasons to love West U, many of us choose to live here for its small-town feel. We enjoy walking with our kids to local parks or to grab a fresh cookie after school, and feeling safe jogging down the street in the morning. The Virtual Gate System won't be a replacement for dedicated law enforcement officers, but it will provide them with another tool to protect West U's families and their property. With the Virtual Gate, as well as the tireless work

of our police staff, all residents can feel secure in knowing that they live in a forward-thinking city that continues to prioritize public safety.