

Get Involved in Your Community

By Mayor Susan Sample

Almost weekly, West U residents will reach out and ask me how they can make sure their voice is heard at City Hall. With policies being adopted, the budget being passed, and new projects being considered and started, it is important that City Council hears from our constituents on those topics that impact them.

I wanted to take some time this month to discuss the ways you can get involved with the ins and outs of West University Place. Here are a few ways you can learn more, provide feedback, and be a part of West U's decision-making process.

Boards and Commissions

West University Place has seven boards and commissions, which serve a variety of functions, from public education to fulfilling quasi-judicial responsibilities like reviewing zoning variance applications from residents. Members of these boards and commissions are West U residents who are appointed by Council to serve for two-year terms.

In many cases, the topics that City Council reviews are first deliberated in public meetings by the various boards and commissions, which work with staff, consultants, and members of the public to address initiatives. Recommendations from these groups are provided to Council, which then decides whether to take action on the topic, such as modifying or adopting policies.

When residents ask me how to have the biggest impact in their community, I tell them to get involved at the board and commission level, where issues are brought up and discussed long before they make it to the inboxes of Council Members. In addition to serving on these bodies, West U residents are encouraged to attend the meetings and provide public input on items being considered.

West University Place's Boards and Commissions include:

- Building & Standards Commission (BSC)
- Friends of West University Parks Fund Board
- Parks & Recreation Board
- Recycling & Solid Waste Reduction Board
- Senior Services Board
- Zoning & Planning Commission (ZPC)
- Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)

For more information on topics being discussed at the board and commission level, please visit www.westutx.gov/Boards

Town Halls

The City holds Town Halls focused on specific issues or topics to inform residents and gather public input. Earlier this year we held two Town Halls on the City's Facilities Master Plan, which is a multiyear process to construct and renovate facilities in the City Center, and in August our Public Works Department held a Town Hall on the East Side Drainage Project. Town Halls are a vital aspect of the public process, and provide all residents the opportunity to provide their input on important issues.

Town Halls are advertised ahead of time on all City social media platforms.

Citizens Academy

This month, West U staff will be welcoming 12 new attendees for this year's Citizens Academy. This annual, six-week program is an opportunity for residents to get a firsthand look at their City's operations, across all departments. Last year our participants enjoyed behind-the-scenes tours and hands-on demonstrations such as learning to use a fire extinguisher and practicing collecting fingerprints with officers from our Police Department.

West U's Citizens Academy is meant to introduce our residents to the wide breadth of operations taking place across the community, in addition to learning about those upcoming initiatives and projects that impact them. Council encourages anyone who may be thinking about applying for a board position, running for office in the future, or is just curious about what it takes to keep a city of more than 15,000 people running to apply to participate in the next Citizens Academy in the fall of 2023. Council is fortunate enough to see the important work that happens on a daily basis, and all of us at the City are eager to share these efforts and continue to engage with our residents.

To learn more about the Citizens Academy, please visit www.westutx.gov/CitizensAcademy

West U is many things to many people. It is a safe neighborhood, a convenient location, but most of all it is home. We encourage all of you to get involved in those issues that impact it, make your voices heard, and help to ensure that West U continues to be a great place to live.