

Great News for Our Area Drainage System – Funding Secured to Construct Improvements on Poor Farm Ditch

By Mayor Susan Sample

I know that many of you have read a lot about the recent development with the Harris County Flood Control District's project to replace Poor Farm Ditch between University Blvd. and Bellaire Blvd.

I am going to take a moment to add some additional context to the critical nature that Poor Farm Ditch (also simply known as the Ditch) plays in West U's drainage management. The proposed project will replace the section of Poor Farm Ditch that handles drainage for roughly a quarter of our city. This project is critical because, if you consider the Ditch in its entirety, it provides over half of West U's stormwater conveyance to Brays Bayou. In addition, the overall Ditch also plays a vital role for Houston and Southside Place residents.

Prior to my leaving office in 2019, the condition of the Ditch wasn't great, and it has needed replacement for some time. Over the last four years, the deterioration and overall condition of this section has worsened – to the extent that, when I returned to office in 2021, improving the condition of this section of the Ditch had become a priority for many of our elected officials at the local, county, state, and federal levels.

Over the last two years, Southside Place Mayor Andy Chan and I have been in constant consultation with our county, state, and federal officials on the need to do something now. This project, which has been discussed for over 20 years, could no longer be ignored. The need to get this project underway and completed has been a high priority for me and for our City Council.

Funding Now Secured for Poor Farm Ditch Improvements

I am beyond thrilled to announce that we have successfully secured over \$32 million in local, county, state, and federal funding to get this project done. The City could not have accomplished this enormous feat without the assistance and cooperation of State Senators Joan Huffman and John Whitmire, State Representative Ann Johnson, U.S. Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher, Southside Place Mayor Andy Chan, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, and the Harris County Flood Control District.

Moving Forward

Over the rest of this year, Southside Place and West U will work with Harris County to finalize the interlocal agreements that will allow West U and Southside Place to contribute funding to finalize the project's design, which is now 90% complete. Next year, work on this design will continue, and will include a public engagement process where residents will be able to learn more about this project and ask questions of the project engineer. Construction is currently planned to begin in 2025, but this is a very tentative schedule, and, once the details are worked out, this timeline will be further refined.

After over 20 years of dedication to finding possible solutions for this issue, we are now in the final stages of the collaborative Poor Farm Ditch project. I am excited about this project – and I remain committed to the improvement of our area's critical infrastructure, and to the safety and well-being of our residents.

