

## *A Council That Listens*

West U is a special place in so many ways: lifelong friendships among its residents, along with its walkability, low crime rate, extensive parks and trees, and a plethora of recreational activities for seniors and children alike. It feels like one of the last urban communities in America where its residents are truly safe on the streets and regularly congregate together.

Over the past 18 months of my service on your City Council, however, one other amazing characteristic has emerged that makes me truly proud to live here and serve you:

You are governed by a City Council that earnestly listens to you.

Providing direction to the City is a constant process that occurs more frequently than elections. At each meeting and town hall event, we receive input from residents on the business of our Council. If you've attended these meetings, you have heard my fellow Councilmembers and myself hold dialogues with the residents who have joined the conversation. Below are some great examples of this during my term:

- Resident input on the location of the West U Fire Department led Council to direct the City to study plans that would leave our Fire Department where it currently sits. Council's direction upends a Facilities Master Plan published and approved by successive Councils for eight years. The public record indicates that the ultimate location of the Fire Department will balance the delivery of fire services to our residents, along with capital and operating costs, the critical needs of our Fire Department (which are currently not being met), and localized resident reception.
- Flooding concerns from residents west of Auden Street, including feedback following the recent Hurricane Beryl, led the Council to prioritize the West Side Drainage Improvement Project at the top of West U's Capital Improvement Plan. In response, to kick off this improvement project, we have initiated design work on the mitigation system and purchased right-of-way areas to Brays Bayou.
- There is an ongoing discussion regarding the timing and funding of equipment replacement at the wastewater treatment facility, including a false perception that our wastewater treatment service is somehow at immediate risk. In this discussion, citizens have informed both sides of the debate, and those citizens have had the benefit of hearing from the City's internal and external experts who expressed the view that no such risk exists. In the interest of the long-term health of our wastewater system, Council voted to move forward by rebidding the equipment replacement package in the near future, and will proceed with maintenance over several years.

There are myriad other examples of ongoing dialogue involving our West U residents, such as the work of our Boards and Commissions, as well as our Charter Review Committee; the improvements urgently required in our permit process; and the inclusion of a green screen on Virginia Court during Poor Farm Ditch repairs, all of which are the product of direct citizen input.

Difficult conversations are ongoing, many of which were written about on this page. We will not always agree, but, in a non-partisan government, we have a beautiful way of achieving

compromises. One thing will always be true with your current City Council: you will be part of this conversation, and your voice will be heard.