



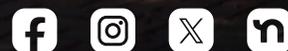
City Currents

WINTER 2025

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
CITY OF
WEST UNIVERSITY

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FROM THE CITY

Fiscal Year 2026 Adopted Budget

IN SEPTEMBER, the City Council adopted the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) budget and the 2026–2035 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to set West U up for another productive year. The FY 2026 budget also lowers West U’s property tax rate for the seventh consecutive year. With a tax rate of \$0.229441 per \$100 of asset value, West U continues to offer one of the lowest property tax rates in Harris County, while providing top-of-the-line municipal services.

The FY 2026 budget reflects the City’s commitment to public safety and quality of life services, increasing the funding for fire and police services by 7.4% and allocating

funds for enhancements to the Recreation Center. In addition, the 2026 CIP designates funds for various infrastructure improvement projects in the following categories:

- Water System Improvements - \$21 million
- Wastewater System Improvements - \$903,000
- Street Improvements - \$1.11 million
- Park Improvements - \$1.53 million

For more information about the annual budget, please visit www.westutx.gov/fy2026.

New Public Works Facility

Construction of the new Public Works facility located at 5004 Dincans Street is nearing completion and is on track for opening in early 2026! This new facility will house the core operational Public Works divisions as well as the Parks Maintenance division. Community development services, such as code enforcement and permitting, will continue to operate at their current location at 3826 Amherst Street.

Because the new facility on Dincans Street will be a hub for Public Works’ and Parks’ equipment and staff, the facility will be primarily closed to the general public to ensure safety, security, and operational efficiency. Stay tuned for project updates, and to watch the construction wrap-up live, please visit www.westutx.gov/phase1.

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Leveraging COs to Empower Our Infrastructure

BACK IN SEPTEMBER, our City Council put forth an intent to issue Certificates of Obligation (COs) for the purpose of funding key areas that are essential for supporting the City's infrastructure and utility systems. COs provide a reliable finance option for the City to address specific needs for strategic purposes – like necessary improvements to our water systems.

These COs are also helping us to:

- Continue the replacement of cast-iron waterlines around the city
- Provide improvements to increase the size of the Wakeforest Water Plant distribution lines
- Realize design funds to replace the Milton Water Plant Ground Storage Tank and Pump Room with a compact design and the addition of pump space
- Rehabilitate the Wakeforest Elevated Storage Tank (EST) and Ground Storage Tank interior and exterior surfaces to ensure proper maintenance

By leveraging the City's strong fiscal health, and careful budgetary planning, we can use COs to directly invest in infrastructure that keeps the water flowing into our systems so that the City can meet current and future demands.

As West U invests in our water infrastructure, I am happy to support this financing strategy to address immediate system improvements to our overall distribution capacity.

This slate of water system improvements will also assist us as the City Council considers long-term solutions to the Bellaire EST. The Bellaire and Wakeforest ESTs serve two primary purposes: applying consistent water pressure to our homes and storing water in order to balance demand during peak times and emergencies. The Bellaire EST was originally constructed in 1935, and, while there are no immediate concerns regarding this tank, the city must move responsibly to prepare for when this tank must be replaced and taken offline – which could impact our water pressure if we do not have other system improvements in place.

I look forward to sharing more updates on these important water infrastructure projects as their designs get underway over the next few months.



Mayor Susan Sample

A Message from Councilmember Clay Brett



Councilmember
Clay Brett

MANY RESIDENTS KNOW that intersections west of Auden Street flood during heavy rains, and some westside lots flooded during Hurricane Harvey. The City is evaluating an infrastructure solution that balances scale with fiscal burden—a decision that may prove the most consequential in West U's century-long history. The plan under study would install a new drainage system along College Street from Bissonnet Street to Bellaire Boulevard, discharging through a new trunkline along the railroad to Brays Bayou. While this could end lot flooding and intersection ponding, without state or federal aid, it could exceed \$200 million, doubling city taxes for two decades and raising residents' overall property tax bills by roughly 8-10%. Most of the costs involve the trunkline, and construction could span 10 years.

Smaller-scale alternatives could replace the undersized two-year-capacity pipe around College Street, but, without a trunkline, these alternatives would require Harris County's cooperation for water egress through Kilmarnock or Poor Farm ditches, which could be uncertain prospects themselves. At this stage, residents hold the greatest power to shape their city's future. The Council seeks your voice, so review the West Side Drainage Improvement Project materials online and share your views. Representative government works best when citizens make themselves heard.



WINTER SUSTAINABILITY TIPS

AS THE COLD WEATHER APPROACHES, there are simple ways to help ensure that you are making sustainable choices at home this winter, such as:

- Sealing any gaps around windows and doors to conserve heat and help reduce your energy bill.
- Considering switching out your old holiday lights for LED lights, which can use up to 80% less energy compared to other bulbs.
- Participating in composting yard waste and food scraps to help reduce landfill waste.

2026 Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste Rate Increase

The adoption of the 2026 budget included an increase to solid waste fees and water and sewer rates. Solid waste fees will increase for regular customers by 7% (\$2.63/mo.) and senior/disabled customers by 5% (\$1.03/mo.). Additionally, there will be an increase and restructuring of water, sewer, and irrigation rates to encourage water conservation and achieve 25% cost recovery. For the average household, which typically consumes 9,000 gallons of water, this change will result in an increase of approximately \$5.58 per month.

These new rates will be reflected in your February 2026 utility statement.

The City reduces the cost of solid-waste collection for customers over 65 or disabled. To obtain this discount, senior residents are required to provide a copy of their driver's license or some other valid identification as age verification. Residents who receive a disability exemption

for property tax purposes also qualify to receive the discounted rate, as long as appropriate documentation is provided. No retroactive refunds will be given for any time before the application is filed.

To view the 2026 rates, please visit www.westutx.gov/utilityrates.

Christmas Tree Recycling

Each year, West U's Public Works Department collects live Christmas trees with yard waste to be recycled as mulch. To participate in this initiative, remove all decorations, lights, foreign objects, and stands from your tree and place them out during your yard waste collection day. Trees that are flocked or have foreign objects still attached to them will be collected with normal household trash and disposed of in the landfill.

The collection will begin on December 26 and run through January 9, 2026.

String Light Recycling

Through January 10, in conjunction with the Houston Zoo, West U will be accepting holiday string lights for recycling at the following locations:

- City Hall – 3800 University Blvd.
- Public Works Administration Office – 3826 Amherst St.
- West U Recreation Center – 4210 Bellaire Blvd.
- Community Building - 6104 Auden St.

State of the City Address

Mayor Sample will deliver her State of the City Address before an audience of residents and community leaders on Monday, February 16, at the Community Building located at 6104 Auden St. The Mayor’s presentation will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m.

This year’s address is expected to be engaging, as Mayor Sample will highlight updates on various projects and initiatives initiated by the City Council. Additionally, there will be opportunities for the public to interact with City Council members and city staff before and after the presentation.

Winterizing Your Irrigation System

As temperatures begin to drop, now is a good time to review the basics of your irrigation system in order to prevent damage to your pipes and your home caused by frozen pipes.

A simple precaution to prevent costly repairs and the wasting of water is to turn off your irrigation system at the backflow preventer and to make sure your irrigation lines are properly insulated. Additionally, be sure to drain your system and to turn off your sprinkler system at the control panel. Systems that remain charged or with water in the pipes can burst from the expansion of frozen water.

Most systems can be turned off by rotating the irrigation valve handle clockwise to the closed position. When closed, the handle will be perpendicular to the pipe.

Please remember that private irrigation systems are the responsibility of the property owner, and the city cannot work on private systems. If you’re unsure of how to drain your irrigation system, please consult your irrigation service provider, or you can also search “how-to” videos online.

Open



Closed



HOLIDAY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION TIPS



[West University Place Police Department](#)
[West University Place Fire Department](#)

THE HOLIDAY SEASON is upon us, and while it's a time for family, friends, and celebration, it's also important to think about the safety of your home – especially if you'll be traveling.

The West University Place Police Department encourages residents to take a few extra steps to secure their property during the busy holiday months:

1. Lock all doors and windows before leaving home, even for short trips.
2. Avoid leaving packages or gifts visible through windows.

3. Use timers for lights to give the appearance that someone is home.
4. Ask a trusted neighbor to pick up mail and packages if you'll be away.
5. Consider leaving a car in the driveway or having a neighbor park there to make the home look occupied. Remember to lock the vehicle doors and conceal valuable items to deter potential thieves.

In addition to these tips, the West U Police Department offers a free Vacation House Watch program for residents. For more information or to register your home for this service, please visit www.westutx.gov/police.

Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

Heating, holiday decorations, winter storms, and candles all contribute to an increased risk of fire during colder months. Home fires occur more in winter than in any other season, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Help prevent risks of fire and other hazards, including carbon monoxide poisoning, by following these tips:

- Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from anything flammable, such as curtains, furniture, or bedding. Be sure to plug them directly into wall outlets – not into extension cords.
- Have a professional inspect your furnace, chimney, and fireplace annually. To prevent sparks or embers, use a screen in front of fireplaces.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and inside bedrooms. Carbon monoxide detectors are recommended on every level of the home. Test these alarms monthly and change the batteries twice a year.
- If you use a portable generator during a power outage, keep it outside and away from your home windows, doors, and vents.

If you're unable to install your smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector, West U residents can contact the Fire Department for assistance by calling 713-662-5835.

Direct Link: Home Alarm Monitoring Exclusive for West U Residents

Tragedy can strike when you least expect it, so it is important to do what you can to protect your home. A good security system can provide you with peace of mind, but a great one will help you sleep well at night. The Direct Link home alarm service connects you directly with the West University Place dispatch center, instead of with a third-party center.

To sign up for services or for more information, visit www.westutx.gov/directlink.

- No middlemen
- Only \$35/month
- Simple billing



ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, the Colonial Park Pool will be open for swimming from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for those of you who are brave enough to endure cold weather and chilly water! This event will be

a great opportunity to purchase your 2026 membership! Members get in FREE! The entrance fee is \$8 for residents and \$14 for non-resident guests. For more information on this fun event, please visit www.westutx.gov/events.

Play West U Mobile App

The West U Parks and Recreation Department now has its own app! This is your all-in-one guide to parks, programs, and community fun. The app enables users to:

- Access and scan their membership card
- Check in for private swim lessons
- Reserve tennis/pickleball courts
- Search and register for classes and programs
- Find information on West U Parks & Recreation
- Review messaging channels to receive up-to-date news

So, recycle those plastic membership cards and download the app today!

To learn more, visit www.westutx.gov/pardapp.

Now Hiring: Customer Service Team Members, Lifeguards, and Swim Instructors

The West University Place Recreation Center and Colonial Park Pool are now accepting applications for part-time Customer Service team members, along with lifeguards and swim instructors. The Parks & 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.

For more information and to apply, visit www.westutx.gov/jobs.



Summer Camp Registration

Does your child need summer plans? The Parks and Recreation Department offers a variety of camps for every child's interest! Course offerings will be available in late December/early January. For more information and to register, visit www.westutx.gov/reg.

- Resident registration will begin on Wednesday, February 4.
- Non-resident registration will begin on Wednesday, February 11.

West U Pirhanas Registration

The West U Pirhanas swim team will begin accepting swimmers for the 2026 season soon! For more information, please visit www.westupirhanas.org.

- Returning swimmers will be eligible to register starting Sunday, March 15.
- New West U swimmers will be eligible to register starting Friday, March 20.
- New non-resident swimmers will be eligible to register starting Wednesday, March 25.

Swimmers must be registered to try out. Tryouts for new 2026 swimmers will be held on the following dates:

- Friday, April 10, from 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
- Sunday, April 12, from 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.



Walk West U:

On Monday, December 15, join the group for a morning stroll through the neighborhood. This group will meet at the Community Building at 7:30 a.m. There is no cost to attend.

Ugly Sweater Contest & Bingo:

On Friday, December 19, come dressed in your ugliest holiday sweater for the contest and try your luck playing Bingo! The ugly sweater contest will start at 2 p.m. and bingo will begin at 2:30 p.m. The cost to play will be \$4 at the door.

New Year, New You:

Celebrate the New Year with 50% off select January exercise classes for new residents! Inquire at the Senior Services office for more details.

Mahjong Lessons with Lauren LeVasseur:

This is an introductory class that will use the National Mahjong League rules. Participants will be required to purchase their own Mahjong card. Choose between one of three, six weeks sessions held on Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays beginning in January. The cost of each program will be \$116.

AARP Tax Help:

Make your free appointment to receive assistance in preparing your taxes for the upcoming filing season. Appointments will begin in February, and will be available on Wednesdays and Fridays through April 15. You must pre-schedule your appointment with Senior Services. For more information and to schedule your appointment, please call 713-662-5895.

Vino & Vibes:

Make plans to attend an evening of Vivaldi, Vitali & Valpolicella! On Saturday, February 7, enjoy wines from Northern Italy, accompanied by the ravishing songs and madrigals, spirited chaconnes, and toccatas of 17th-century and 18th-century Italy. Presented by Ornamenti, Houston's new Baroque ensemble – featuring live in concert: Harpsicord Aficionado Molly Hammond, Soprano Julia Fox, and other special guest musicians. **Wine and light bites will be included with ticket purchases.** Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert will begin at 7 p.m. The cost will be \$15 per ticket or \$25 for two tickets until January 23. After that, prices will increase. This event is open to all ages, and tickets can be purchased online at www.westutx.gov/vinovibes.

West U Senior Services has a variety of exercise classes available at the Community Building. Try a sample class to see if it will be a good fit for you! A full listing of offerings is available in the *Play West U Activity Guide*.



PARK LOVERS' BALL

 [Friends of West University Parks Fund](#)
 [WestUParksFriends](#)

February 14, 2026 – Yes, Valentine's Day!

THE POST OAK HOTEL will be the setting for “Hearts for Our Parks,” the next annual Park Lovers’ Ball. Event co-chairs Michelle & Doug Huth and Stephanie & Bryan Magers are busy creating a memorable evening for gala goers. Underwriting and sponsorship co-chairs are Eliza Coleman, Meagan Glover, and Jennifer LaForge. Decor co-chairs are Sarah Barrett and Chea Kelly. The evening will include gala festivities such as the big board, silent and live auctions, dinner and dancing to the tunes of Password, plus some special surprises that are sure to add to the evening’s fun and fundraising.

Secure your tables and seats for the gala by scanning the QR code. Don’t miss out! We also have an array of sponsorship opportunities available. Park Lovers’ Ball table sales and seats can also be purchased via the Friends website www.westuparks.org.

The auction team is curating a great auction for gala attendees. If you have a wonderful item or experience to add to the auction lineup, we are still accepting auction donations.

For more information, please contact Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov.



Underwriting/
Table & Seats



Auction Item Form

Fathers & Flashlights

A tremendous thank you to the 2025 Fathers & Flashlights returning Camp Founder and Title Sponsor, Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital! The event co-chairs, Angela Androphy, Kelly Hill, and Deanna McQuade say that they couldn’t be more pleased with the success of the popular neighborhood campout held in November.

Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond also added, “On behalf of Friends of West U Parks, we are thrilled to continue hosting this great family fundraising event for our community each year.”

A big shout out to our Camp Hero Gibson Dunn and the many other businesses and families who generously supported this event: Kirkland & Ellis; Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics by Dr. Julie Longoria & Dr. Stephen Chen; H-E-B; Lexi Sakowitz Marek/Compass; Old Republic Title/Elizabeth Borski & Maggie Y. Garza/Compass; Texas Prime Insurance; A Friend of West U Parks; Sarah and Scott Barrett; Butler-Cohen Design Build; Heidi Dugan | Jeremy Fain - Greenwood King Properties; Kimberly Eads/Greenwood King Properties; iKids



GIBSON DUNN

Inc.; Neurosurgical Group of Texas: Drs. Jonathan Sellin & Dr. William Steele; Ty Kirk; Lafayette Street Friends; @AttorneyLopezTX; Rachael and John Montgomery; The Morrison Family; The Pierce Family; The Polky Family; The Solera Family; Supporter of West U Parks; The Thompson Family; Dentini Pediatric Dentistry; Frost Bank; Rice Emergency Room; Rockin’Pets, Rollin’ Vets; Shisler & Taylor Pediatric Dentistry; and The Winterholler Family.

Thank you to our in-kind donors: Skeeters; Chick-fil-A Holcombe & Buffalo Speedway; Frost Bank; Goodsmith; Hungry’s Kitchen & Bar; La Fresca Pizza; Little Matt’s; Raising Cane’s; Rice Emergency Room; Donut NV; Starbucks on Kirby; Tiny’s Milk & Cookies West University; Three Brothers Bakery; The Pit Room; and Zero Waste Houston.



Year-Round Fundraising

There are many ways to support West U parks and green spaces year-round!

For more Friends information, please visit www.westuparks.org.

Questions? Please call Donna LaMond at 713-662-7430 or email her at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov.



NEXT STEPS FOR SIDEWALK REPAIRS

LAST SUMMER, the city was awarded a \$400,000 grant in partnership with METRO to repair sections of sidewalks that connect pedestrians to public transit and amenities. As a condition of this funding, the city was required to adhere to the approved plans without any deviations. The METRO Sidewalk Replacement Project has been a successful initiative in reducing trip hazards and is anticipated to be completed within the first quarter of the new year. However, the city is aware that additional improvements are needed that were not included in this project's scope of work.

The city is committed to providing safe and accessible sidewalks, and in the new year, the Public Works Department will begin the next phase of sidewalk repairs. This will address sections that were not included in the METRO Sidewalk Project, as well as other areas in need of attention.

For more information about the city's ongoing sidewalk effort, please visit <http://www.westutx.gov/sidewalks>.

Milton Street Water Line Project

The city is pleased to share that this project is expected to be completed by the end of February. Within the past six months, the contractor has replaced pre-1939 cast iron pipes with approximately 3,000 linear feet of new PVC waterlines along identified sections of Milton Street, Auden Street, Rice Boulevard, Mercer Street, and Amherst Street. These improvements will enhance the reliability of the City's water distribution system and reduce the risks of leaks and breaks.

Throughout construction, crews have primarily used trenchless installation methods, which minimized

disruptions while allowing the new lines to be placed beneath existing infrastructure. After installing the new water lines, the system underwent thorough testing to ensure compliance with local, state, and regulatory standards.

This project is part of the City's Foundation for the Future initiative, which aims to improve essential infrastructure over the coming years. For more details about this initiative, please visit www.westutx.gov/foundation.



DON'T TAKE A HOLIDAY FROM RECYCLING

Americans generate more than 25% more waste during the holidays. That's about 1,000 pounds of extra waste per household between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. An easy way to reduce waste is to reuse as much as possible and to avoid purchasing items that cannot be recycled or reused.



NICE

→ *Recyclable*



- Cardbord (flattened boxes)
- Plain gift bags (no foil or glitter)



- Greeting cards
- Catalogs



- Paper-based packing material



- Food and beverage cans
- Plastic cider and eggnog jugs
- Glass bottles and rigid plastic containers (look for recyclables labeled 1 - 7)



NAUGHTY

→ *Trash*



- Bows and ribbons
- Tissue paper and cellophane



- Photo greeting cards
- Broken ornaments



- Flexible plastic packaging and air pillows



- Disposable plates and utensils
- Anything smaller than a credit card



This holiday season, help keep food from piling up in the landfill. Sign up for weekly curbside food waste collection. Scan the QR code to learn more about this initiative.

City Currents



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

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City Currents is a newsletter for the Residents of West University Place

CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

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For questions and comments about City Currents, contact Communications Manager Bianca Cuccerre at bcuccerre@westutx.gov or call 713-662-5350.

MEETING REMINDER FOR CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS

City Council

Meetings are the second and fourth Monday of each month starting at 6:30 p.m.

Building and Standards Commission

Meetings are the first Thursday of each month starting at 6:00 p.m.

Zoning and Planning Commission

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month starting at 6:15 p.m.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Meetings are the fourth Thursday of each month starting at 6:30 p.m.

Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Board

Meetings are the second Tuesday of each month starting at 6:30 p.m.

Parks and Recreation Board

Meetings are the first Wednesday of each month starting at 6:30 p.m.

Senior Services Board

Meetings are the second Thursday of each month starting at 2:00 p.m.

For more information on how to attend these meetings, please visit www.westutx.gov/agendas or call the City Secretary's Office at 713-662-5813.