



# City Currents

Winter 2019





Dear neighbors,

This year is the start of many wonderful things for the City of West U — most importantly, the start of design work for the replacement of Buffalo Speedway. This comes after four years of the City working to help offset a portion of this project by securing a federal grant that will pay \$9.26 million of the estimated \$11.9 million to replace the road surface of Buffalo Speedway.

The replacement of Buffalo Speedway will include another vital improvement that won't be as apparent as a new road surface. Underneath the street, the City will be improving the storm drainage by installing new pipe to add more capacity from Bissonnet St. south to the City's outfall on Poor Farm Ditch. This drainage improvement will help a portion of our city where approximately 65% of all homes reporting Harvey flood damage were located. We're currently seeking federal grant funds to help offset the estimated \$15.2 million in drainage improvements.

The Buffalo Speedway project is the first step in improving the City's overall drainage system. The next step, in 2019, will be finalizing the Citywide Drainage Study, which identified additional drainage improvements, and incorporating those improvements into a new 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The new 5-Year CIP will be used by staff and Council to establish a systematic approach to address needed improvements to our streets, drainage and utilities infrastructure.

The Council and I have been working tirelessly to build the foundation and strengthen our City to weather future Hurricane Harveys. The Buffalo Speedway replacement and drainage improvements is just the first step!



Councilman  
Bob Higley

The progress made by City Council in 2018 didn't happen by chance. As your elected representatives, Council balanced fiscal discipline with a service model not easily found elsewhere. I'm not the only one taking note of the City's performance, in fact, 24/7 Wall Street named West U the top place in America in which to live.

As we wrap up the holidays and welcome a new year, it's a good time to look back at a few of the high notes in 2018. For me, one highlight was an increased focus on drainage, brought about in part by weather events such as Hurricane Harvey. The City engaged in a comprehensive drainage study to identify areas that don't meet two-year flood requirements. From this study, we're building a multi-year Capital Improvement Plan to address improvements. The plan, coupled with increased building standards, will protect the property values of more homeowners.

2018 saw the City accomplishing its goal of adding green space to a quadrant lacking a neighborhood park. This was a dream come true for my wife, Laura, and me, since, in 1972, we bought our first home in the South East Quadrant. At the end of October, we cut the ribbon on the Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park, a quiet, peaceful community green space on land lovingly dedicated by long-time resident, Mr. James M. Hughes, and named in honor of his mother.

Also in October, the City Council passed the 2019 Budget, which maintained the same tax rate as in 2018. More good news is that this was done without increasing rates for water, sewer or solid waste as a result of this year's budget.

2019 will bring changes to our City, as every new year does. We'll see new faces on City Council, welcome a new City Manager and introduce new residents to our wonderful City. One thing that won't change, however, is the commitment of city leaders to improving the quality of life for our residents, while maintaining the highest standard of fiscal responsibility.

## Buffalo Speedway Replacement & Drainage Improvement Project Gets The Green Light!

The City has officially taken the first step toward the replacement of pavement along Buffalo Speedway. In September 2018, the City met with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) officials and received the green light to begin the design work on the project.

At the end of last year, you may have noticed surveying, mapping and geotechnical work happening along Buffalo Speedway between Bissonnet St. and just south of Bellaire Blvd. This work is crucial and helps provide the foundation for the replacement of the roadway and associated drainage improvements.

The City's design engineering firm (Freese Nichols, Inc.) will begin design work in January 2019 after the field surveying, mapping and geotechnical study is completed. The design work is expected to be completed by early 2020 with construction expected to begin in the fall of 2020.

### Project Scope & Cost

The \$27.1 million project is broken into two parts — road reconstruction and drainage improvements. The road reconstruction portion will replace the 65+-year old roadway from Bissonnet St. to Bellaire Blvd., while the drainage improvement portion will replace the drainage system from Bissonnet St. to the West U's outfall at Poor Farm Ditch.

The road reconstruction portion is estimated to cost \$11.9 million of which 80% (\$9.26 million) is reimbursed by the Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) grant and will replace the roadway for the most part in its current location. The drainage improvement portion is estimated to cost \$15.2 million, and the City is actively seeking grant funding to help offset this portion of the project. This work will include adding additional storm drainage pipes to meet a two-year storm event.

### Public Meetings

The City will be hosting a minimum of three (3) public meetings on this project with the first meeting happening in March or April of 2019. This will be the first public meeting for the City to provide more information on the project to residents, answer questions and solicit feedback regarding resident concerns and desires for the project.

### Project Webpage

There is a project webpage with information on the project. Please visit [www.westutx.gov/buffalo](http://www.westutx.gov/buffalo)

### Email Alerts

If you would like to receive email alerts on this project, please visit: [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov) and click the "Notifications" link on the left side of the home page. Under the "News Flash" section, please select "Buffalo Speedway Reconstruction — Project Updates."

If you have any questions on the project before the first public meeting this spring, please contact the Public Works Department at (713) 662-5839.



### Want to Stay in Touch on Buffalo Speedway Reconstruction Project?

#### Project Webpage

[www.westutx.gov/buffalo](http://www.westutx.gov/buffalo)

#### Email Alerts

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## Park Lovers' Ball La Fête du Jardin (The Garden Party)

Join friends and neighbors for La Fête du Jardin (The Garden Party) on Saturday, February 2, 2019 at the Hilton Americas-Houston at 7 pm. Invitations for the 28th Annual Park Lovers' Ball will arrive in mailboxes in early January. Event Co-chairs Jennifer and Scott Allison, Megan and Brian Cushing, Stephanie and Ryan Fleck and Caroline and Kevin Walter invite you to be part of this popular West U gala to help raise funds for the development and improvement of our beautiful neighborhood parks and green spaces. The gala will honor long time generous supporter Conway MacKenzie.



Some seats and tables are still available. Individual seats are \$300, couple seats \$600 and table purchases start at \$3,000 for a table for 10. Reservations and payment can be made online through the Friends website. For more information, contact Friends Executive Director, Donna LaMond, at (713) 662-7430 or DLaMond@WestUTX.gov, or visit [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org). The evening includes a seated dinner and dancing to the tunes of Doppelgänger, silent and live auctions and big board. The ever popular Wine Pull and Whiskey Blackjack game will be part of the FUNdraising and the Heads or Tails Game, sponsored by Claudette Toomey of Taylor Real Estate, will get the party cranked up following dinner. As usual, the gala will have some surprises in store for guests.

With something for everyone in the auction, be ready to bid on the special Fathers & Flashlights VIP package in the live auction, which includes a guaranteed preset campsite at the always-sold-out annual Fathers & Flashlights Fall 2019 campout along with a pass for Mom exempting her from volunteer duty at the event.

To become a sponsor, purchase seats or tables at the gala, donate to the auction or volunteer to help with the gala, visit [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org), or contact Friends Executive Director, Donna LaMond. Special thanks to our underwriters and sponsors at the time of this printing, including Cammarata Pediatric Dentistry, Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital, Jones Day, Kirkland & Ellis and Cara and Chad Michael, and to all of our underwriters, sponsors and auction donors for the event (see complete listing on website).

Friends fundraising continues year-round with business and community partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please visit [www.westuparks.org](http://www.westuparks.org) or call the Friends office at (713) 662-7430.

### Summer Camp Registration — Mark Your Calendars!

Summer will be here before you know it and West University Place Parks and Recreation Department has the perfect camp for every interest! Choose from Building Brains LEGO Camp, Dance Camp, iKids Camp, Tennis Camp, Kidventure, and more! Spaces are limited, so refer to below registration information to reserve your spot!

Please visit [www.westutx.gov/camps](http://www.westutx.gov/camps) for a complete listing of camp descriptions, dates and times, or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.

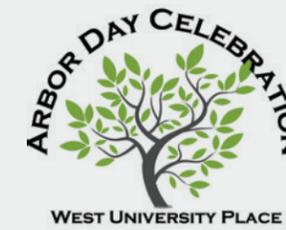
#### Camp Registration Information:

- Priority Registration: (2018 Campers are eligible) begins Tuesday, January 29 through Monday, February 4, 2019.
- Resident Summer Camp Registration: begins Tuesday, February 5.
- Non-resident Summer Camp Registration: begins Thursday, February 7.
- Kidventure Camp: Please visit [www.kidventure.com](http://www.kidventure.com) for more info.

# Things to Know

## Arbor Day / Annual Spring Celebration

Saturday, April 13, 2019 at 9 am  
West U Recreation Center



The City of West University Place will hold an Arbor Day Celebration on April 13, 2019 beginning at 9 am at the Recreation Center on Bellaire Boulevard. This celebration is being held in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department's Annual Spring Celebration, which also begins at 9 am. Residents are invited to come by the Recreation Center to meet and talk to the Urban Forester about diversification of the urban forest, adequate growth space and planting appropriate species. Complimentary trees will be available to the first 30 residents to visit the celebration.

Arbor Day is a way to educate the community about trees and the environment. The National Arbor Day Foundation promotes local Arbor Day festivities through the Tree City USA award program. Sponsoring a community-wide celebration of Arbor Day is a prerequisite to receiving the Tree City USA designation. This marks the City's 28th year of participation in the program. Formal notification of designation is received in February of each year.

## DirectLink

Although West University Place ranks among the safest places to live, the safety of your home and family is always a priority. One simple and effective way to protect them both is to sign up for the City's "DirectLink" program. It's convenient, inexpensive and can tie into most home alarm systems.

DirectLink adds value and effectiveness to your home security system as it communicates directly with the West U Police Department. With a traditional system, when your alarm goes off, a private monitoring company, located somewhere else, receives the notification; they call your home to see if it is an error and then call our emergency dispatch.

With DirectLink, your system sends the information *directly* to the Police Department, so that police or fire services can be dispatched within seconds. Regardless of whether you are currently monitored by an alarm company, have not activated your system or don't have one installed, any West U household or business has the option of being converted to DirectLink.

DirectLink is exactly what its name says — a direct link between your home and police and fire services, shaving valuable seconds off response time.

Signing up is easy — visit the city's website at [www.westutx.gov/directlink](http://www.westutx.gov/directlink) to get the application. You'll be billed monthly on your utility bill, with no third-party contracts needed. Any licensed alarm company may perform conversions or new systems; however, the City of West U has received pricing and quality assurances from four preferred vendors. Each offers a free quote on a new system, connecting or updating your current alarm system.

For more information, you can visit the website listed above or call our DirectLink Coordinator at (713) 662-5860.

## Election News

The next West University Place election will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2019 to elect a mayor and four councilmembers to serve at-large positions for a two-year term. To be eligible for service, a person must be at least 21 years of age, a resident for at least 12 months immediately preceding the election and be a qualified voter of the City.

If qualified and interested in serving your community as a member of City Council, the first day to file an application for a place on the ballot is January 16, 2019. Applications and other related forms and documents may be obtained from the City Secretary's office in the Municipal Building, 3800 University Blvd., or on the City's website at [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov) beginning on January 7, 2019.

The last day to file an application for a place on the ballot is February 15, 2019 at 5:00 pm.

For more information, contact City Secretary Thelma Gilliam at (713) 662-5813 or at [tgilliam@westutx.gov](mailto:tgilliam@westutx.gov).

## Quiet Hours

### What You Should Know

The City has established "Quiet Hours" which means certain noisy activities are limited during these following hours:

Monday – Friday	8 pm – 7 am
Saturday	8 pm – 8 am
Sunday	8 pm – Noon
Holidays	8 pm – Noon



During these hours, unreasonable noise-producing activities and use of equipment, such as lawnmowers, compressors, saws, nailing, tree and plant trimming using power tools, edging and leaf and grass clipping blowing are prohibited.

**Please keep in mind — the term "quiet hours" might be misleading as all noises are not prohibited, just certain noises.**

Activities and work is allowed during quiet hours, it just can't be unreasonable noise-producing activities listed above. Activities such as talking, basketball bouncing, swimming, skateboarding or workers arriving on a jobsite, painting or setting up for the day or closing up at night are allowed.

The neighborly and considerate thing is to be aware of the noise levels your activities produce and adjust them accordingly.

## Senior Services and Perks

Did you turn 65 years old this year? If so, come by the finance office so we may verify your birthdate and receive a senior discount on your solid waste service!

## Customer Connect

A website the city offers and encourages residents to sign up for that allows them to:

- Review their daily consumption
- Check for leaks
- Sign up for alerts

Go to: [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)  
 Hover over Quick Links  
 Click on Customer Connect  
 Click on Register for New User

## Citizen Access

A website the city offers and encourages residents to sign up for that allows them to:

- Pay their utility bill online

Setup for recurring  
 Make a one-time payment  
 View their statements  
 Go to: [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)  
 Click on Online Billing  
 Click on Pay your utility bill online  
 Click on New User

- Important Reminders:

Keep in mind you are responsible for keeping your credit card up-to-date. Whether it be for a new expiration date or possible fraudulent activity, you will need to login and delete the current payment source. That will delete recurring payments that are tied to that credit card, the system will tell you that in a pop-up. Then add the new payment source, then reset yourself up for recurring payments.

Please make sure you have only one credit card on file.

## Establishing or Terminating Utility Services

If current or future residents need to start or terminate utility services:

- Please visit our website [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)
- Government > Finance > Utility Billing > Establishing/Terminating Services
- Complete the necessary forms, provide the documents and submit to the Utility Billing Department

## Utility Billing Service Period

- As a reminder, we bill in the arrears
- Review your statement for these dates  
 Bill Date — date the invoice was created  
 Billing Service Period — the timeframe we are billing you for  
 Due Date — the date the bill is due

# Cold Weather is Here Remember to Check Your Pipes

Say goodbye to the 100+ heat index days as we say hello to cold fronts and the potential for more freezing weather. So if you haven't already done it, now is a good time to do a little winter preparation to ensure your home and yard irrigation system are prepared for the cold days ahead.

Below are some helpful hints that can help save you time, money and misery in dealing with frozen pipes on your house and/or irrigation system.

- Reduce your irrigation system's watering time or turn it off and drain the pipes.
- Develop a freeze plan.
- If you will be leaving town for an extended period of time, consider turning off your water and drain the pipes.
- Wrap pipes in the attics and in exposed areas under your home.
- Install insulation on outdoor water fixtures, water faucets, patio kitchen appliances and fixtures, pool house and garage water lines.
- Ensure you know where your irrigation backflow preventer (picture below) is located and make sure it's insulated and protected from freezing.

During the freeze in January 2018, hundreds of backflow preventers all over town froze, which wasted a lot of water and caused expensive repairs for homeowners and higher water bills.

Surprisingly, a majority of homeowners were unaware that their irrigation system had a backflow preventer, where it was located or how to turn it off. Repairs to these necessary units can cost hundreds of dollars.

To protect your backflow preventer, insulate the pipes and make sure the metal valve is covered with a special insulation bag (available at most home improvement stores) or at a minimum with towels and plastic.

Lastly, if a freeze is coming, turn off your irrigation system at the control panel and shut off the water valves.

Taking a little bit of time now can save you countless hours and money in the future!

Enjoy the cold!



# Do I need a Permit?

The Most Common Question We Receive in Building Permits

Spring is around the corner, which is a time when homeowners considering doing a lot of projects start to get pricing from contractors.

The number one question we hear at the City: "Do I need a permit?" All too often we are asked the question after the work or construction has started, which can cause work to stop and increased permit fees.

Lastly, if you happen to have a contractor who tells you that you don't need a permit, that it costs too much or that it will slow the project down, ask yourself: What are they trying to avoid?

- Permits ensure the completed work meets current building codes; keep in mind that unpermitted work can affect your ability to resell your home.
- Most permits are issued within the same day, but if digging/trenching outside is required, it could take up to three days.
- There is typically a one-day turnaround for inspections.

If you do not see your item listed below, please contact the Public Works Department at [inspections@westutx.gov](mailto:inspections@westutx.gov) or (713) 662-5833 to check.

YES you need a permit for this type of work:

<b>FENCE</b> New or when replacing more than 10 linear feet of an existing fence, changing the height or location.	<b>PLUMBING</b> Except replacement of existing fixtures only at the same location.	<b>WATER HEATER</b> Any type, new or Replacement.	<b>COUNTERTOPS</b> Only if size is changed
<b>ELECTRICAL</b> New or relocating existing electrical line, new or replacement of electrical service or breaker panel.	<b>DECKS &amp; PATIOS</b> Wood, pavers, stone, concrete	<b>SOLAR PANELS</b> New or replacement of panels and equipment.	<b>ROOF</b> New or when replacing more than 200 sq. ft. of an existing roof.
<b>YARD DRAINAGE SYSTEMS</b> New or replacing existing drainage systems	<b>ANY OUTDOOR STRUCTURE</b> Call the City	<b>HEATING &amp; COOLING</b> New or replacement of AC or heating equipment, coils, condenser or ducts.	<b>PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT</b> Any non-movable structures
<b>CONCRETE</b> Pouring/placing concrete, including driveway/sidewalk/retaining or landscaping wall.	<b>CONSTRUCTION</b> Any new construction, additions or demolition. Removing, opening or relocating a wall.	<b>IRRIGATION/SPRINKLERS</b> New irrigation system or replacement of	<b>DOORS, SIDING &amp; WINDOWS</b> New or replacement.
<b>POOL/SPA, SAUNA, SHOWER, WHIRLPOOL TUB, FOUNTAINS</b>	<b>PORCHES, GAZEBOS, AWNINGS</b>	<b>OUTDOOR KITCHENS</b>	<b>GENERATORS</b>

## Zoning and Planning Commission Seeks Your Input on Exterior Lighting

The City of West University Place Code of Ordinances has provisions that regulate outdoor lighting in the front yard and side street yard areas. These regulations encourage the use of full cut-off fixtures and shields to help cut down on glare and light trespass to adjoining residences. The Zoning and Planning Commission (ZPC) is considering amending the ordinance to include provisions that would regulate lighting in the rear/backyard areas as well.

The ZPC is asking for your input. Are outdoor lights from neighboring yards an intrusion on your property? Do you believe this is a widespread problem throughout the City? Should the City enforce regulations where a non-conformity cannot be seen from the street? While most outdoor lighting issues can be resolved between neighbors (i.e. turning off lights after a certain time or placing outdoor lights on timers and automatic cut-off switches), the ZPC wants to determine occurrences that may require intervention by the City. Please let us know your thoughts by emailing [dscarcella@westutx.gov](mailto:dscarcella@westutx.gov) or calling (713) 662-5893. All comments and suggestions will be forwarded to the ZPC for further discussion and consideration at a future meeting.



# City Currents

A Newsletter for the citizens of  
City of West University Place

Winter 2019



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

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
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## CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

**CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS** Mayor Susan Sample  
Mayor Pro Tem Mardi Turner  
Kevin Boyle  
Kellye Burke  
Bob Higley

**CITY MANAGER** Chris Peifer  
cpeifer@westutx.gov

**GENERAL INFORMATION** (713) 668-4441

**CITY WEBSITE** [www.westutx.gov](http://www.westutx.gov)

*City Currents* is a quarterly publication and is printed on recycled paper.

For questions and comments about *City Currents*, contact Patricia Jett at (713) 662-5384 or [pjett@westutx.gov](mailto:pjett@westutx.gov).

Design by Minor Design

## Don't forget to download the West U Collects app!

Do you want to know your trash, recycling and yard waste collection schedule?

Do you want to know what you can recycle or where you can recycle it?

Want to receive changes in the collection due to holidays?

Then don't delay and download West U Collects app and enter your address.

Visit [www.westutx.gov/westucollects](http://www.westutx.gov/westucollects) for all the details.

### ACCESS and DOWNLOAD

#### via Internet



[www.westutx.gov/westucollects](http://www.westutx.gov/westucollects)

#### via Mobile



Search: "West U Collects"

### USE



#### Enter Your Address To:

- View collection calendars
- Set up service reminders
- Search the "What To Do With It" disposal/recycle guide

## 2019 New Years Resolution

**Recycle: Good Idea. Reuse: Better Idea. Reduce: Best Idea.**

**Q. What is even more important than recycling? A. Reducing and reusing!**

- During the last 35 years, the amount of waste each American creates has almost doubled from 2.7 to 4.4 lbs/day in 2016.
- In 2017, West U took 4,800 tons of trash to the landfill, recycled 1,943 tons of curbside recycling items and took 883 tons of yard waste to the composter. This means that each of the West U households put out an average of 1,811 lbs. of trash, which went to the landfill. In addition, the average West U household put out 733 lbs. of recycling curbside and 333 lbs. of yard waste, which went to the composter.

How can you help? In addition to recycling, if you really want to attack the waste problem in your household or office, you can focus on reducing the intake stream.

**Here are some suggestions on how you can reduce waste at home and work.**

- Replace disposable, single-use items with long-lasting, durable goods, e.g. coffee cups, napkins, grocery bags, razors, paper plates, plastic utensils, etc.
- Have your name removed from catalog mailing lists. Go to [www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org) or [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org).
- Try to repair something before making a new purchase.
- Donate usable items to local charities or place items in consignment shops.
- Plan meals carefully to avoid waste. Create a compost bin in your backyard and compost vegetable, yard clippings and fruit waste.
- Rent larger and "occasional use" items rather than making a purchase.

**Make purchases with the idea of reducing the amount of packaging.**

- Look for products without packaging tools, fresh produce, dry goods.
- Avoid individually wrapped portions (bottled drinks, cheese slices, juice, etc.).
- Favor products with high recyclable content, even if they cost a little more.
- Choose concentrated products in reusable containers and largest size containers.
- Buy in bulk. Take your own container/produce bag to the store to be filled.
- Check out [www.epa.gov/osw/wycd/catbook/alt.htm](http://www.epa.gov/osw/wycd/catbook/alt.htm) for alternative products.

Just a few suggestions to help you get started in 2019. Please try reducing this year.