

WEST U CITY CURRENTS NEWSLETTER – FALL 2019

A Message from Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Trautner

As we all know, West U is a gem, our gem, our little slice of heaven inside the nation's fourth largest metropolitan area. In order to maintain or slice of heaven, Councils both past and present have to consider a myriad of issues that are staring us in the face and some that may not materialize years down the road, which are the toughest ones to address.

Decisions that we make to address those issues staring us in the face are the easiest to justify, because we can point to it and say we did this. The ones down the road are the tougher to justify because we can't point to it and say there. We are basing decisions of today on issues of tomorrow. An example of long-term decision was done in the 1990's, the City Council had the for-sight to undertake the Infrastructure Program which relocated water and sewer lines out of the rear yards to the front and replaced the majority of the City's streets. Back in the 1990's the \$120 million spent of this project was a huge investment in the City's future and it was also a major hit to the tax rate. That foresight and investment paid itself back and then some, because of the condition of the infrastructure, services West U has become a city of choice for families looking to establish roots. Additionally, the improved infrastructure has helped us weather storms over the years, most notably with Hurricane Harvey where we had 102 properties flood.

A good example is to look at our neighboring cities to the west and south. Bellaire experienced approximately 2,300 flooded properties, while the Houston neighborhood of Breaswood Place experienced significant flooding. I believe the biggest difference in our experience during Harvey as compared to our neighbors is the resolve of the West U to reinvest in its infrastructure and services to maintain that infrastructure.

This brings me to the present day. In 2021, the large majority debt from the 1990's will be paid off and this City Council finds itself in a very tough but enviable spot. We have the opportunity to invest in West U's future with minimal impact to our debt portion of the tax rate or allow the tax rate to lower. Over the next few months the City Council and staff will be discussing improvements to our infrastructure, namely drainage improvements and what we can expect from those improvements and most notably how to pay for these improvements.

I would be remiss if I did not say, that I am proud to be working with this hard-working Council and staff and the recently approved 2020 Annual Budget. This budget lowers the tax rate for the first time in 3 years while continuing to invest in our infrastructure and services to improve the overall quality of life for our residents.