

WEST UNIVERSITY MAYOR INSIGHTS

Tough decisions today pay dividends in the future

By Mayor Bob Higley

West U is our little slice of heaven inside the nation's fourth largest metropolitan area. To maintain our status, current and future West U city councilmembers will have to consider a myriad of issues that will come before them — some of these issues will be affecting the here and now, while other issues might not actually materialize until years down the road.

Our West U city councilmembers carefully consider all the issues that arise, with equal weight given to both short- and long-term issues — thus successfully avoiding falling under Parkinson's law of triviality, which observes that the human tendency is to devote a great deal of time to unimportant details while crucial matters go unattended.

An example of the City Council's effective long-term decision making occurred in the 1990s, when city management and the councilmembers had the gift of foresight and the intestinal fortitude to undertake the city's infrastructure program, which relocated water and sewer lines from West U backyards to the street side. The project also resurfaced the majority of the city's streets.

Thirty years ago, the \$100-plus million spent on this project was a huge investment in the city's future, causing a major increase to the tax rate. The community's investment in infrastructure and services, however, has propelled West U into an elite category as a city of choice for families looking for a community to call home.

Additionally, this improved infrastructure has helped us to better weather storms over the years, most notably Hurricane Harvey. Our hearts go out to those 102 homeowners who experienced flood damage in West U during this storm, but as a community, we fared very well compared to our neighboring cities to the west and south.

In 2021, a large majority of our indebtedness from the 1990s will be paid off. Rather than patting ourselves on the back for this upcoming feat, the city council finds itself at another crossroads vital to our future.

We have the opportunity to reinvest in West U's future, with minimal impact to the debt portion of the tax rate. So, over the next few months, the City Council and its staff will be discussing improvements to our infrastructure, namely drainage — deciding if the discussed improvements to our drainage system will be worth the cost, and how these improvements should be paid for if we elect to make the improvements.

I would be remiss in this column if I did not declare how impressed I am with our hard-working council and staff. They have worked long hours to pass a budget that will lower our tax rate for the first time in three years, while continuing to invest in the maintenance of our infrastructure and improving the quality of life for the taxpaying homeowners of West U. I want to say “thank you” to all these dedicated individuals who help ensure that West U remains a wonderful city for all our residents.

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