

## WEST UNIVERSITY MAYOR INSIGHTS

### Information is the key

**By Bob Higley**  
**with Susan White, parks director**

Whenever I meet a new resident, I'm curious to hear about what drew them to West U. Laura and I have lived in West U for 47 years, so it's great to hear a fresh perspective. The customary responses like proximity to work, great schools, and responsive police and fire departments always top the list. But you might be surprised to learn that parks are another high priority attraction to prospective homeowners, young and old alike.

This notion that parks are a major draw to homeownership in West U is not by happenstance; it was strategic planning by a group of forward-thinking leaders. In the '70s, a master plan was created identifying a need for more open space, improved parks and playgrounds, resulting in the acquisition of additional park land for West U.

One-by-one, homes on the east end of Colonial Park were purchased. Today, West U homeowners have an outstanding community park with a large open green space, pavilion and expansive playground. Huffington and Friends Parks were added to the system in 1996 and 2007, respectively. Then, the West U Recreation Center opened in 2010 with a state-of-the-art workout facility, indoor pool, and playground and ball fields.

Even with these wonderful additions, there were homeowners in West U, between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway, identified as lacking easily accessible parks. All that changed last year with the opening of Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park. Not only was this park an incredibly generous donation from longtime resident James Hughes, it was in the perfect place! With Hughes Park and the Spark Park at West U Elementary accessible from this area, every West U resident now has a park within about a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of their homes.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight the Friends of West U Parks Fund. This cadre of amazing, fun loving neighbors works directly with the City Council to make all of the park improvements possible! The next cycle of updates is underway. Whitt Johnson Park upgrades will be completed in October, and as parks are reevaluated, consideration will be given to increase open green space and explore the potential for expansion.

Now, lace up our sneakers, and I'll see you at the park!

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