

WEST UNIVERSITY MAYOR INSIGHTS

By Mayor Bob Higley

MOVING FORWARD – PROJECTS WORKING FOR WEST U

Since last June, your City Council and staff have been working together on major community improvement projects (CIPs) designed to benefit West U for years to come. As with any CIP project, this work might not always be visible to residents, but work is indeed underway as we continue to move West U forward.

Virtual Gate Project

The Virtual Gate Project will include cameras installed at entrances to our City. These cameras will have the ability to read license plates and provide video. They will be connected to state and federal databases to ensure that we are receiving the latest information on issues confronting our community.

- **Phase I** will install cameras at 15 locations in and around the City. The locations of the cameras will be strategically placed to minimize cost and the number of locations, while ensuring coverage.

Work is currently underway installing two of the 15 locations by the end of May that will be the Proof of Concept for the project; a safeguard to ensure the system is operating as designed before authorizing the installation of the remaining locations. Work on Phase I will be completed by the end of the year, if not sooner.

Prior to initiating Phase II, staff will present the results of Phase I to the City Council.

- **Phase II** will buildout the remaining 25 locations and complete the Virtual Gate project. The installations should be completed before mid-2021.

To learn more about this project, please visit: www.westutx.gov/1016/Virtual-Gate

Buffalo Speedway Reconstruction and Drainage Improvements

This project will replace the 65-year-old roadway surface from Bissonnet St. to Bellaire Blvd., and install a new stormwater drainage system from Bissonnet St. to the outfall on Poor Farm Ditch located behind St. Vincent's Church. The design phase shall be completed by fall and actual construction beginning earlier next year.

To learn more about this project, please visit: www.westutx.gov/639/Buffalo-Speedway-Project

Citywide Drainage and Modeling Study

Your City Council and staff have been working on solutions to numerous issues related to stormwater drainage. Estimates for citywide improvements to the drainage system are between \$70 million and \$90 million.

To help us all make an informed decision prior to spending tax dollars, the City Council has approved an update to our Citywide Drainage Study to include 2D software modeling of our current system to

determine its performance during a variety of rain events. Additionally, this study will identify and evaluate all options available to the City for stormwater detention.

This drainage model will allow the City Engineer to enter rainfall data that will illustrate the performance of the stormwater drainage system under a variety of conditions. This will help us estimate the hydraulic grade line (water level) before and after improvements. To complete this work, the City Engineer will enter information, such as size and slope of pipe, into a software model that replicates the City's drainage system. This model will include all drainage areas within the City limits, along with the respective outfalls that enter the Brays Bayou watershed.

All of the information from this study will help the City Council and its staff – and, ultimately, the taxpayer – to decide if the cost of the drainage improvements will be worth the benefits received. Work on this study will be complete by the end of this summer.

Other Projects / Studies Underway

- **Water Capacity Efficiency Study** – This study will evaluate our water distribution system to identify any issues in meeting our current and future water demands. In the next 5–10 years, major elements of the system (such as water tanks, water towers, and pumps) will need replacement. We want to ensure that, as we replace this infrastructure, we are meeting the future needs of our community and its taxpaying homeowner.
- **Wastewater Treatment Plant Floodwater Protection** – This project will identify measures to prevent future flooding and subsequent interruptions of sewer services during another Hurricane Harvey type of event.
- **Water Reclamation Study** – This study will identify the feasibility of reclaiming wastewater and making it a potable water source. This could significantly reduce the City's dependence on purchasing potable water from the City of Houston.
- **Citywide Speed and Safety Study** – The City is undertaking a speed and safety study to evaluate traffic-related issues in the City and options to address findings from the study.
- **Facility Condition and Vulnerability Assessments** – This study will take a comprehensive look at the condition of all City facilities, which will help us to determine future replacements, renovations, and/or improvements. It will also help us identify potential vulnerabilities in our facilities, and assist in future security enhancements to deal with threats both man-made and weather-related.

Work of these studies will be completed before the fall of 2020 and will be very valuable as staff and your City Council consider the annual budget for 2021.

Predicting Rain Doesn't Count, Building Arks Does - Warren Buffet

The studies that this City Council has approved will provide pertinent information that will help us all make better informed decisions about the use of our tax dollars for projects that will benefit the entire community. As the saying goes - experts aren't cheap, but mistakes are expensive. In order to eliminate or minimize these issues, the City hires industry experts to augment our professional staff. This ensures we maintain our lean City operations and only pay the cost for the experts when needed.

I am excited about the work that our City Council has delivered in the last nine months, but we could not implement any of our plans or policies without a dedicated, lean and innovative staff.

West U is a great place to live. Our job is to keep it that way!