

Initiatives Working for West U Residents

By Mayor Susan Sample

Cooler weather is here, and many of us are taking time to be with our families after a long and difficult couple of years. The holiday season is a slower time for most residents, but the City remains busy with initiatives and projects working for West U. I thought I would take the time to highlight a few of the community priorities we are working on.

Public Safety

Since taking office, our Council has consistently emphasized the importance of public safety and the need to preserve our community's small-town atmosphere. In reflection of this, the 2022 budget devotes over 44% of General Fund expenditures to our City's exemplary Police and Fire Departments, in addition to implementing changes that will make it easier to recruit and retain highly qualified public safety personnel.

The City has also continued with the installation of the Virtual Gate, a system of license plate readers and cameras at 40 locations around the perimeter of West U. This system has already identified multiple stolen vehicles and assisted in locating missing persons. When fully completed within the next couple of months, the Virtual Gate will be an invaluable tool for dissuading criminals and solving crimes.

Improved Infrastructure

The City continues to reinvest in our infrastructure to uphold property values and quality of life, and many of our larger projects will be hitting important milestones next year. This includes:

- Construction design on improvements and floodwater protection at the wastewater treatment plant
- The redevelopment of Judson Park will be completed
- Work continues on Buffalo Speedway, which will provide significant drainage improvements for homeowners in the area
- Construction design on the citywide streets and drainage improvements to mitigate the impacts of severe weather on drivers and homeowners

Sustainability

Each one of us has an impact on and a responsibility for our city's future, and this Council has made the promotion of sustainability a priority. As such, we created West U's first Sustainability Task Force, which will build on existing initiatives and identify opportunities to adopt additional sustainable practices. We are all looking forward to receiving the Task Force's report in 2022.

Along these lines, we are also moving forward with the Wastewater Reclamation Project. This innovative plan will transfer treated wastewater for safe, non-potable use outside of West U, diverting almost a million gallons of wastewater each day that would otherwise be discharged into the Brays Bayou watershed, as well as lessening the demand on our region's drinking water. We look forward to continuing advancing this project towards completion, which will reduce our

city's environmental footprint while generating revenue that can be reinvested in the water and wastewater system.

I wish you and your families a happy and safe holiday season, and I look forward to more progress for our community in 2022.