

2022 and Beyond: The Future of West University Place

By Mayor Susan Sample

It is a new year, and a time for hope and reflection about who we want to be in 2022. Many of us have made New Year's resolutions to try to improve ourselves or just make small positive changes in our lives.

This holiday season, I found myself thinking about West University Place, and the things that make it special; our neighbors, our quiet streets, the way that families gather for our annual Christmas Tree Lighting and Holiday Festival. In short— our community. All of us, residents, leaders, Councilmembers, have both an opportunity and an obligation to uphold those qualities that make our city unique, and continue to improve it for future generations. The following are some of the projects that are currently before Council that are looking forward for our community.

Sustainability

The future, long-term success of our community, require imagination and consideration of complex ideas such as sustainability and resiliency. As such, this Council created West U's first Sustainability Task Force, which will build on existing initiatives and identify opportunities to adopt additional sustainable practices. This task force, made up of dedicated volunteers from the community, will provide recommendations for the short-, mid- and long-term future of West U's sustainability. Council will be receiving an update from the group at our January 10th meeting, and we are all looking forward to receiving the Task Force's report this year.

Edloe Street Pathway

Many of you may recall the Oleanders that previously lined Poor Farm Ditch along Edloe Street between Georgetown Street and Albans Street, which unfortunately did not survive the winter freeze. While Oleanders had been there for many decades, Council challenged the City's Parks Department and Parks Board to reimagine the area to promote walkability in West U.

The new Edloe Street Pathway, to be completed this year, will redesign the area with a permeable walking path, landscaping, and bench rest areas, and comply with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Council will also be receiving an update on the designs for this project, to be completed this year, at our January 10th meeting.

Facilities Master Plan

The long-term success of West U requires us to consider the future of how we want to receive services from the City. Innovations in technology, such as the Virtual Gate, are just one example of how government is changing. This year, the City will be completing a Facilities Master Plan to determine the location and function of West U City facilities for the foreseeable future. Staff and Council are at the beginning of this process with many more public meetings with details on this initiative coming over the first half of 2022.

While living in West U, I have seen our community grow and develop in our own unique way for a community that is 99% residential. Living inside the Loop of the 4th largest metropolitan area in the US, while maintaining our small town feel is truly a blessing, especially when you couple it with our wonderful services and staff. West U is truly unique and the goal as Council is to continue to focus on today, while planning for the future and how to make West U even better.