

City CURRENTS

THIS ISSUE

- 2 From the Mayor's Desk
- 3 Community Message Board
- 4 Parks & Recreation
- 5 Public Safety
- 6 Public Works

FALL 2012



A NEIGHBORHOOD CITY INCORPORATED IN 1925

Democracy at Your Doorstep

The City of West University Place is deep in the process of reviewing its municipal structure. Back in June, the West U City Council appointed a seven-member group (with two alternates) to lead a review of the city's charter. As defined by the National League of Cities (NLC), a city charter is the document that lays out the organization, powers, functions and essential procedures of a city's government. A city charter is comparable to the Constitution of the United States or a state's constitution.

West U's Charter Review Committee (CRC) is charged with reviewing the city charter to ensure it meets the city's needs as well as state and federal requirements. During this review, the committee will take suggestions from City staff, the Mayor, Council and the public for changes to the charter that would foster more efficient or responsive government. Under the City's current charter, such committees have been convened every six years since 1988.

West U maintains a charter as one benefit of being a home rule city. West U became a home rule city in 1940. The Texas state constitution declares that any city with a population over 5,000 may adopt a home rule charter. Currently, 351 Texas cities have home rule charters. As a home rule city, West U is free to pass laws and ordinances as the City sees fit to further its operations, as long as those laws fall within the bounds of the state and U.S. constitutions.

In contrast to a general law city (cities with under 5,000 residents governed according to specific state statutes that prescribe its powers and duties), the structure of a home rule city is entirely up to local voters. Resident voters are free to decide on the:

- Form of municipal government
- Size and terms of its council
- Municipal administrative structure
- Establishment of city boards and commissions

West U's charter identifies the City's form of government as "Council-Manager": a five-member City Council (including the Mayor) is elected every two years, and the City employs a full-time City Manager to oversee day-to-day operations. Council-Manager is the most common form of municipal government in the United States; over 50% of U.S. cities use it.

The second most common form of government is "Mayor-Council." This form is used by the City of Houston. With a few exceptions, Mayor-Council government is found mostly in older, larger cities. The differences between the two forms of city government are distinct:

FORM OF GOVERNMENT	
Council-Manager	Mayor-Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council oversees general administration, makes policy and sets the budget • A professional City Manager (appointed by Council) carries out day-to-day administrative operations, including submitting an annual budget to Council for approval • The Mayor is typically elected but may be chosen from among the Council members on a rotating basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council members are elected, and Council maintains legislative powers • The Mayor is elected separately from Council, is typically a full-time and paid position, and serves as chief executive with budgetary authority • Council does not oversee daily operations

The Council-Manager form of government benefits the community in a multitude of ways. The International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) lists such benefits as:

1. Political power is concentrated in the entire governing body. The mayor and council share legislative functions.
2. Policy making resides with elected officials, while oversight of the day-to-day municipal operations resides with the manager. Elected officials are free to devote time to policy planning and development.

Continued on page 2

From The Mayor's Desk



by Mayor Bob Fry

As your Mayor, I find that much of my time is spent representing our City at various forums outside our borders. I am frequently struck by the respect and admiration we command among elected leaders and citizens in other jurisdictions. Over the past year, I have received numerous compliments ("You guys did it right!") on how we handled rebuilding our infrastructure.

Those of you new to the neighborhood may not know just how badly our streets, drainage system and recreational facilities had deteriorated after a long period of neglect. Some years ago, things had reached a point where something had to be done. The Council sitting at the time appointed a committee to study the issue of how to finance the needed improvements. Conventional wisdom was that we would have to fund the needed rebuilding in increments because of the large amount of money required to complete the whole project. No bond issue the size of the one needed to do it all at once had ever been attempted in this City.

And yet there were some very sound reasons for doing it all at once. It would be cheaper in the long run and less inconvenient to complete the project as fast as possible. So we proposed to do this, and our residents passed the bond issue handily even though it was the largest ever

attempted. Later, voters approved the improvements to our pools and recreational facilities that we are so proud of today, again financed with bonds.

It took vision and knowledge for our citizens to see far enough into the future to understand the benefit of taking on bonded debt far above anything done in the past. That understanding has been rewarded. Other jurisdictions find themselves facing monumental infrastructure issues and look with respect and even envy at our success. In contrast, we enjoy superb infrastructure and a sound financial future as our indebtedness is paid off. As Councilman Heathcott explains elsewhere in this issue of City Currents, we enjoy a quality of life here in West U that has been repeatedly recognized by others. The wisdom and vision of our citizens are major reasons for that recognition. We are a blessed community.

Keep in touch with Mayor Fry as he shares news and comments with residents.

Visit www.westutx.gov/mayors-message for regular updates.

Keep in Touch
with Mayor Fry



Democracy at Your Doorstep Continued from cover

3. The manager carries out the policies established by the elected governing body with an emphasis on effective, efficient, and equitable service delivery.
4. Because decisions on policy and the future of the community are made by the entire governing body rather than a single individual, Council-Manager governments more often engage and involve their residents in decision making. Residents guide their community by serving on boards and commissions.
5. The form is flexible enough to adapt to local needs and demands.

At the end of their deliberations, the CRC will report back to the Mayor and Council next spring regarding any proposed changes. Residents will have the opportunity to review these changes. Should Council decide to move forward with any changes, residents will then have the opportunity to vote on them in the May 11, 2013, election. West U's city charter is accessible on-line at www.westutx.gov/citysecretary.

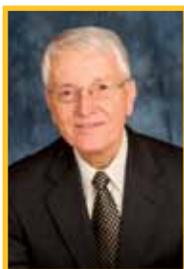
Information contained in this article came from the following sources:

ICMA: www.icma.org

NLC: www.nlc.org

Terrell Blodgett, Texas Home Rule Charters (Austin, Tex.: Texas Municipal League, 1994)

From Council Member Ed Heathcott



Silent, They Serve

In the last few years, West U has received national recognition in various articles declaring our community "one of the most desirable places in which to live." So much of what we citizens enjoy about West U is handled by our silent servants. Let me share with you what I have discovered.

In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison took out power for several days, and the City soon thereafter launched efforts to ensure basic functions could continue during future outages. In the last two years, West U has installed six backup generators at a cost of roughly \$1.25 million. Today during an emergency, the City will be able to deliver potable water and maintain sanitary sewers even during widespread power loss. The City Hall and Fire Station will be able

to provide full police and fire protection. The depth and detail of emergency planning for West U is extensive, including emergency alert systems. Perhaps you have seen our City workers immediately clearing major streets of limbs and debris after large storms.

Our City employees collectively have a wide range of skills and experience. A large portion of the landscaping at City Hall, including the concrete and paver work, was all planned and completed using City personnel. The Community Center was extensively remodeled last year using our workforce. Because this work did not need to be contracted out, project costs were reduced.

The seven park systems throughout the City require constant maintenance – replacing or repairing light bulbs, fences, artificial turf, and equipment of all kinds. The City has employees with the skills to meet these needs. An Urban Forester has served our city for 20 years, both identifying diseased and dangerous trees for

removal and recommending trees for long-term planting. All the signs in the city are cleaned at least once a year. Each week, every street is swept to keep our City looking nice.

City employees support many of West U's organizations/activities, such as Boy and Girl Scouts, baseball and soccer games, swim teams, extensive seniors' programs and even a Mom's Spa Day. Have you taken children or grandchildren, or gone yourself to Colonial Park Pool or to the beautiful new Recreation Center? Notice the ever watchful staff? They are there for you – ensuring your safety and worry-free fun.

The City of West University Place is two square miles and has over 14,500 residents. It provides its residents with a wide range of services not found in most communities. In 2009, my wife fell and broke her shoulder. EMS, fire and police personnel were at my house in less than five minutes! I have lived other places, but West U gets my vote as the best!

Community Message Board

Want to learn about local government?

West U is considering developing a Citizen's Academy to educate residents on the wide-ranging services and functions of the city. Please take a minute to complete a brief interest survey at www.westutx.gov/CA-survey.

City Phone Numbers

Emergency – Police & Fire: 911

Police Dept. Non-emergency:
(713) 668-0330

General City Information:
(713) 668-4441

Building Permits: (713) 662-5833

Code Enforcement: (713) 662-5831

Colonial Park Pool: (713) 662-7460

Community Building: (713) 662-5895

DirectLink Alarm Monitoring:
(713) 662-5860

Fire Dept. Non-emergency:
(713) 662-5835

Friends of West U Parks:
(713) 662-7430

Municipal Court: (713) 662-5825

Planning Department: (713) 662-5843

Police Dept. Crime Prevention:
(713) 662-5869

Public Works Information:
(713) 662-5839

Recreation Center: (713) 662-7420

Senior Services: (713) 662-5895

Urban Forestry: (713) 662-5313

Utility Billing: (713) 662-5824



QUIET HOURS

Weekdays (Mon – Fri), except holidays
Before 7:00 AM or after 8:00 PM

Saturdays, except holidays
Before 8:00 AM or after 8:00 PM

Sundays and on New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and the corresponding Friday or Monday on which the city observes that holiday
Before 12 Noon or after 8:00 PM

2012 Garbage / Recycling Holiday Schedule

Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 22:

No curbside collection; garbage regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Friday (November 23). Please hold your recyclables until your next scheduled recycle day.

Day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 23:

Normal collection of garbage and recyclables will be provided; City offices will be closed.

Additional Christmas Holiday, Monday, December 24:

Normal collection of garbage and recyclables will be provided; City offices will be closed.

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25:

No curbside collection; garbage regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up the day before (Monday, December 24). Please hold your recyclables until your next scheduled recycle day.

New Year's Day, Tuesday, January 1, 2013:

No curbside collection; garbage regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up the day before (Monday, December 31). Please hold your recyclables until your next scheduled recycle day.

Movies in the Park

When: Fridays, October 19 and 26

Time: 7:00 PM

Where: Colonial Park, 4130 Byron

Grab your picnic blankets or lawn chairs, bring the family, and enjoy an outdoor movie shown on a huge inflatable screen! The movie is free, and refreshments will be available for purchase.

October 19, *The Lorax*, Rated PG:

A 12-year-old boy searches for the one thing that will enable him to win the affection of the girl of his dreams. To find it, he must discover the story of the Lorax, the grumpy yet charming creature who fights to protect his world.

October 26, *Hocus Pocus*, Rated PG:

After 300 years, three sister witches are resurrected in Salem, Massachusetts, on Halloween night, and it is up to two teenagers, a young girl and an immortal cat to put an end to the witches' reign of terror once and for all.

www.westutx.gov

Haunted House Spooktacular Update

The Haunted House Spooktacular will not be held in 2012. The Parks and Recreation Board is currently evaluating the event. Please check the Special Events section on the City's website for information on upcoming Special Events!

www.westutx.gov/events

Second Saturday Concerts

October 13: 3 Penny Acre

November 10: Ben Bedford

Time: 7:30 PM

Where: Community Building Auditorium, 6104 Auden

Tickets to these acoustic, folk or bluegrass concerts are sold at the door: adults \$12, senior citizens (65+) \$8 and children under 12 free with adults. For more information, visit www.houstonfolkmusic.org.

Swimming Lessons

It may be cold outside, but Wally's Pool School is available year-round in West U's temperature-controlled indoor pool. Our swim lessons are conducted with certified lifeguards on duty at all times. Our trained swim instructors teach all ages, including babies, youth and adults, as well as those with special needs. Who knows? Wally the Walrus just might show up to check out your skills! Contact the Recreation Center for more information, (713) 662-7420.



Parks & Recreation

Friends of West U Parks

Fathers & Flashlights 2012

Campers are getting ready to pitch their tents for a fun evening under the stars as Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc. and the Parks & Recreation Department hosts its sixth annual campout on Oct. 6 and 7 on the fields surrounding West University Elementary School. Co-Chairs Sara and Chip Edgcomb and Amanda and JR McGee along with all of the wonderful volunteers will work their magic once again to insure that it is a memorable event for everyone. Highlights of the sold out campout include Jacob's Ladder and a new giant slide, Putt Putt golf, hamster ball races, Kid Fish and star gazing, just to name a few. Thanks go to all of our underwriters, sponsors, and in kind donors, plus the many volunteers and staff who have made the event possible. Thanks especially to our top underwriters for the event:



For a complete listing of ALL the generous underwriters and sponsors, please visit www.westuparks.org. Fathers & Flashlights continues to be a very popular and successful fundraiser for the Friends of West U Parks.

It is going to be "Moonlight in the Park" for the 22nd annual Park Lovers' Ball. On February 2, 2013, Joaquin and Kristine Martinez will transform the Hilton-Americas downtown

into an unforgettable fundraising evening full of fun and surprises. "We are honored to chair the Park Lover's Ball this year to help support one of the distinguishing amenities of West University Place. We have recently moved back to the area and were impressed with the quality of life that the parks add. Last year was our first Park Lovers' Ball, and the level of support from the community was overwhelming. We look forward to working with Friends and supporters to continue the tradition of giving," said Kristine Martinez. Janine and Michael Schueppert are the honorary chairs for the upcoming ball. Janine shared her thoughts: "It has been such an honor to be involved with the Friends of West University Parks and the Parks Board over the last 10 years. Our entire family has enjoyed seeing our parks and facilities transformed and our community bonds grow stronger."

"I am so excited to have these wonderful people to work with and honor as we continue to raise much needed funds for our beautiful parks," said Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond. Be sure you have February 2, 2013, marked on your calendar and get ready for "Moonlight in the Park." Look for your invitation to arrive in the mail in early January. Meanwhile, please visit www.westuparks.org or call (713) 662-7430 for information on becoming an underwriter, sponsor or auction donor, or how to volunteer.

A special reception honoring outgoing Friends Chair Leah Ragiel was held at the West U Rec Center following the Friends Board meeting on September 5. Leah will continue her involvement with Friends as an Advisory Board member. Amanda McGee replaced Leah as the Friends chair.

While Fathers & Flashlights and the Park Lovers' Ball are the largest Friends events, there are other opportunities for involvement. Friends fundraising continues year-round with the stork program, business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please refer to the Friends website or call (713) 662-7430.

Senior Activities

Please contact Senior Services at (713) 662-5895 for more information on the events and activities listed below. Activities meet at the Community Building, 6104 Auden.

5 Minutes a Day to a Less Stressful Life

Wednesdays, October 3 and 17, November 7 and 28, 2:00 – 3:00 PM, Free

The class goal is to reduce stress, be more relaxed, sleep better and remain calm even when things fall apart. You will learn new techniques, gain experience practicing them in class, and discover why these techniques are so powerful and effective.

Original Round Top Big Barn

Wednesday, October 3, 8:30 AM, \$12 (does not include lunch)

Antiques, antiques and more antiques! If you enjoy a day of browsing and trying to get a great deal, join us.

Pontoon Boat Ride

Monday, October 15, 5:30 PM, \$27

We are hoping to see the famous Waugh bats while cruising Buffalo Bayou. Bring bug spray and wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

Death of a Salesman

Tuesday, October 16, 8:45 AM, \$15

We will enjoy a student matinee of this Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony Award-winning play at the Alley Theatre.

Houston Ship Channel Tour

Monday, November 12, 10:30 AM, \$3

We will cruise the channel, learning about the history and workings of one of the busiest ports in America. Buffet lunch at Brady's Landing (pay them directly).

A Christmas Carol

Wednesday, November 14, 8:45 AM, \$15

Alley Theatre presents their annual performance of this classic.

55 and Alive Watercolor Showcase

Saturday, November 17, 3:30 – 6:30 PM, Free

Join us for some wine, cheese and wonderful works of art created by our very own watercolor class participants.

Continued on page 7

Christmastime Events

Please contact the Recreation Center at (713) 662-7420 for more information on the events listed below.

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony

Monday, December 3, 6:30 PM
Community Building, 6104 Auden

Come one, come all! Get into the holiday spirit with the 22nd Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony when the City of heralds the season by lighting the Christmas tree. Join us in front of the Community Building, and be sure to bring your cameras. Santa will be available for photos at the end of the ceremony!

Santa's Night Out

Fridays, December 14 & 21, 6:00 PM
West U Rec Center, 4210 Bellaire

Need a break from the kids? The West U Rec Center can help! Let us entertain the kids while you enjoy a night out on the town or finish last-minute shopping. Drop off your children for this fun-filled night full of activities that include swimming, movies, arts & crafts, games and tons of FUN! Of course, all activities will be in the spirit of Christmas to help get the kiddos excited for the upcoming holiday. Santa's Night Out is for children ages 5 to 11 years old. Please bring a swimsuit, a towel, a change of clothes, and a BIG SMILE! Register by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 7. The fee is \$30 for West U Residents and \$40 for Non-Residents.

Swim with Santa

Saturday, November 10, 10 AM – 12 NOON
West U Rec Center, 4210 Bellaire

Anyone can get a picture with Santa on a sleigh, in the mall or even in the snow, but not too many people can get a picture with Santa underwater! Here is your chance to become one of those lucky individuals. To make this event even more memorable, you will receive a gift bag to go with your photo. So, come out to get a unique and memorable photo of you swimming with Santa and his elves. The fee is only \$10 with preregistration and \$35 on the day of the event.

Public Safety

Holiday Safety Reminders

Halloween

Halloween is a fun and spooky time of year for kids. Make trick-or-treating safe for your little monsters with a few easy safety tips.

- When choosing a costume, stay away from billowing or long, trailing fabric. If your child is wearing a mask, make sure the eyeholes are large enough so they can see out.
- Remember to keep exits clear of decorations, so nothing blocks escape routes.
- Dried flowers, cornstalks and crepe paper are highly flammable. Keep these and other decorations well away from all open flames, such as jack-o'-lantern candles, and heat sources, including light bulbs and heaters.
- If your children are going to Halloween parties at others' homes, have them look for ways out of the home and plan how they would get out in an emergency.



Thanksgiving

The kitchen is the heart of the home, especially at Thanksgiving. Kids love to be involved in holiday preparations. Safety in the kitchen is important, especially on Thanksgiving Day, when there is a lot of activity and people at home.

- Have activities that keep kids out of the kitchen during this busy time. Games, puzzles or books can keep them busy.
- Kids can get involved in Thanksgiving preparations with cooking tasks that can be done outside the kitchen.
- Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over kids, toys, pocketbooks or bags.
- Keep knives out of the reach of children.
- Be sure electric cords from an electric knife, coffee maker, plate warmer or mixer are not dangling off the counter within easy reach of a child.
- Make sure kids stay away from hot food and liquids. The steam or splash from hot vegetables, gravy or coffee could cause serious burns.



Winter Holidays

The winter holidays are a time for families and friends to get together. But holiday decorations also mean a greater risk for fire. Following a few simple tips will ensure a happy and fire-safe holiday season.

- Keep children and pets away from lit candles. Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet. Almost half of all home decoration fires are started by candles.
- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant. Half of holiday decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.
- Replace any string of lights that has worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini light sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Read the manufacturer's instructions for the maximum number of LED strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.



Active Shooter: What You Can Do

An active shooting can occur at any time or any place. During the past several years, the United States has seen active shooter incidents where citizens shop, exercise their freedom of speech, learn and work. An "active shooter" is an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.

Most active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Because most incidents are over within minutes, we must be prepared to deal with the situation until law enforcement arrives. Preparedness and awareness are the keys to helping us in accomplishing this goal.

Good Practices for Response

If you suspect an active shooter situation is unfolding, you must quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises. Always have an escape route and plan in mind. Leave your belongings behind, and keep your hands visible at all times.

If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors. Use heavy items to barricade yourself, if possible. Remember to remain quiet and silence your cell phone.

As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to incapacitate the shooter by acting with physical aggression. Throw items at the shooter or try to strike him with a heavy instrument.

IN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

Evacuate

- Attempt to evacuate
- Have an escape route and plan
- Leave your belongings
- Keep your hands visible

Hide

- Find a place to hide
- Block entry and lock doors
- Remain quiet and silence your cell phone or pager

Take Action

- As a last resort, try to incapacitate the shooter
- Act with physical aggression

Call 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO!

When Law Enforcement Arrives

The primary goal of law enforcement is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. As the first responders' primary responsibility is to eliminate the threat, they will not be able to stop to help injured persons until the area is safe. Officers may arrive in teams with tactical equipment, such as vests, helmets and rifles. They will need to take command of the situation, so expect to see officers shouting orders and even pushing individuals to the ground for their safety.

Knowing what to expect will help you assist law enforcement officials as they work to stop an active shooter. It is important that you do the following:

- Remain calm and follow instructions
- Avoid making any sudden movements
- Keep your hands visible at all times

Adapted from FEMA (IS-907 course) – "Active Shooter: What You Can Do"

Public Works

Do I Need a Permit?

Development Services hears this question all the time, and too often we provide the answer after construction has begun without the required permits. This stops work and increases permit fees. This helpful list is not all-encompassing, so for specific questions, call us: Josie at (713) 662-5834 and Mike at (713) 662-5833.

Should a contractor tell you, “You don’t need a permit,” or “Permits cost too much and slow down the project,” call us! ASK YOURSELF—why is your contractor afraid of city inspection?

YES, you need a permit for the following:

New Fence Replacing more than 10 ft. of an existing fence, changing height or location	New Roof Replace more than 200 square feet of an existing roof.	New / Replacement Windows	New / Replacement Water Heater Any type
New Electrical Work Includes relocating existing electrical	New / Replacement A/C Unit or Furnace Includes replacing coil, condenser, or ducts	New / Replacement Electrical Service or Breaker Panel	New Whirlpool Tub, Sauna and Shower
New Plumbing Only exception is replacing fixtures in same location	New Plumbing Includes relocating existing plumbing	New Outdoor Kitchens	Pouring / Placing Concrete Includes driveways, sidewalks, retaining walls, patios or landscaping wall
New or additions to Lawn Irrigation Systems	New Fountains	New Pool / Spa and many types of repairs	New Walls Over 6 inches high in front or side yards
New Decks or Patios Includes wood, pavers, stone and concrete	New Porches	New Gazebos	New Awnings
New Construction Removing or relocating a wall, door or window	New Construction Installing a new opening in inside or outside walls	New Kitchen Countertops Where additional length is added	Any New Construction: Any additions and any demolition
New Generators	New Solar Panels	New Drainage Systems	New Playground Equipment If not easily movable by hand.
Commercial Occupancy	Commercial Build-out	New or replacing Signs	New Siding

Any item meeting the following Zoning Code definition of a “structure” requires a permit:

Structure: Anything made by humans which: (i) is not readily portable; (ii) is usually left in one location for an indefinite period of time; or (iii) requires either permanent or fixed location on or in the ground or attachment to something having a permanent or fixed location on or in the ground for its use. Examples of structures, which do not limit this definition, are: sculptures; lampposts; sidewalks; driveways; playground equipment and facilities; buildings; flagpoles; antennas; and pools. A canopy or similar object designed or used to shelter a motor vehicle, a boat or similarly sized items is deemed to be a structure if it remains in substantially the same place for more than ten days, regardless of whether it is readily portable, frequently moved or unattached.

Tree Planting Program

This fall and winter, West U once again will be planting trees from the Tree Trust. Residents who wish to apply to receive a tree can stop by Development Services at 3826 Amherst and fill out an application, or download the application at www.westutx.gov, fill it out and mail it in. The deadline for applications is Friday, November 30. Trees from the Tree Trust may only be planted in the street right-of-way. Please consider your available planting space when selecting the type of tree you want. City workers will not plant tree species that mature into large trees beneath the canopy of an existing healthy tree or beneath overhead utility lines. Also consider visibility triangles at street intersections and at street and driveway intersections.

Applicants who have the required growth space and are approved will receive a tree in a 30-gallon container at no cost. The tree will be approximately 10 feet tall and 2 inches in caliper. Larger trees may be purchased at the rates included on the Tree Trust application. City workers will plant, stake, mulch and fertilize the trees. The applicant will be responsible for maintenance after planting.

The Tree Trust was established as a means to ensure the regeneration and diversity of the City’s Urban Forest. The Tree Trust is funded by those residents and contractors who have removed trees for the construction of homes, garages, pools or other structures and did not have enough space on their lot to plant the minimum required replacement plantings. Contact Craig Koehl, Urban Forester, at (713) 662-5313 or ckoehl@westutx.gov if you have questions or would like additional information.

Pet Etiquette



The heat of the summer is behind us, and cooler weather encourages us to enjoy the outdoors, often bringing our pets

with us. Help keep your pet and our City safe by walking your pet on a leash. Besides being the law, using a leash prevents your pet from running into traffic or accosting other pets, and it keeps other people safe from unwelcome interactions with your pet. While out walking, please be sure to clean up after your pet to avoid spreading disease and waste.

You are also required to register your pet with the city’s Animal Control Officer. The cost is \$20 for a lifetime registration. Bring a copy of the pet’s rabies vaccination papers to the Public Works Building, 3826 Amherst, and fill out the registration form available there. You will receive a tag to keep as proof of registration. Your pet should wear the tag along with the rabies tag. It will help Animal Control identify your pets should they leave your yard or become lost. Periodically make sure that all enclosures where your pets are kept are secure. For more information or to ask questions, please contact the Animal Control Officer at (713) 662-5831.

Public Works

Reduce and Recycle — Even When Building and Renovating

Most of us try to do the right thing by recycling our paper, cardboard, bottles, metals and plastics, but what about when we renovate or build?

- Construction and demolition material accounts for 38% of the waste stream in the Houston area.
- Residential demolition produces 70 – 115 lbs/sq. ft. That means if a three-bedroom house of 2,500 sq. ft. is demolished, approximately 90 – 140 tons will end up in a landfill. In 2011, 59 houses in West University were demolished, resulting in approximately 8,260 tons for disposal or \$247,000 in landfill costs (based on \$30/ton).
- New residential construction also generates materials requiring disposal. Constructing a new 8,000 sq. ft. single-family home generates approximately 44 tons of waste, of which 40% is wood. In 2011, 45 new homes were built in West University, sending approximately 990 tons of material to landfill (based on an average house size of 4,000 sq. ft.).
- The Houston-Galveston Area (HGA) is building 36,000 homes/year and is projected to do so for the next 10 years. A 2005 study estimated that at that rate landfill capacity would run out in 2036, even if every new landfill expansion planned for the HGA were executed.

With a bit of planning, we can reduce the amount of material going to landfill when undertaking these projects. Reducing and recycling construction and demolition materials conserves landfill space, reduces the environmental impact of producing new materials, creates jobs and can even reduce overall building project expenses. This in turn saves money, conserves energy and resources, and reduces air, soil and water pollution.

“Deconstruction” is the process of building disassembly with an eye to material salvage. It is increasing in popularity due to the environmental and economic benefits. Depending on the nature and condition of the structure’s materials, deconstruction may be a small part of the demolition, or it may completely replace it. Appliances, metal, electric fixtures, wood timbers, flooring, tiles, windows, pipes, bathroom fixtures and architectural features such as moldings, doors, knobs, masonry, etc., can be salvaged for reuse. With careful planning, deconstruction can be cost competitive and even generate returns.

The City of Houston operates a Reuse Warehouse, which accepts donated construction materials from individuals, builders, supply companies, remodelers and contractors. The materials are then made freely available to non-profit organizations that are building housing for those in need. One such organization is Habitat for Humanity, which promotes affordable home ownership and aims to eliminate poverty housing by building and rehabilitating simple, decent houses with donated materials.

If you are planning a construction or remodeling project, there are a number of things you can do before you start:

- Design in a way that uses standard lumber sizes and drywall dimensions; consider alternative wood products, such as engineered wood, which can be ordered to exact sizes.
- Contact the Great Houston Builders Association (GHBA), Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) or Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). They can provide information on local recyclers.
- Consider whether deconstruction techniques can be used to prepare your site for renovation or construction.
- If demolishing an old home, contact a salvage company to take donated fittings and building materials in good condition, or to purchase them from you.
- Check with local salvagers before purchasing new products. You may find cabinets, doors, windows, and flooring that are in good condition for greatly reduced prices.

Remember to RETHINK—talk to your architect and contractor about how you can REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE.



Information sources and useful links:

<http://www.habitat.org>
<http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/reuse.html>
<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/imr/cdm/index.htm>
<http://www.recycleinfo.org/2012-Recyclables/building.html>
http://www.tceq.texas.gov/assets/public/comm_exec/pubs/pd/020/04-01/reclaimed-x.pdf
<http://www.gdba.org/consumers/green-remodeling.html>

Senior Activities Continued from page 4

Christmas Star and Gem Show @ Houston Museum of Natural Science

Wednesday, December 5, 1:30 PM, \$16

The Burke Baker Planetarium presents a 30-minute film recreating the night sky and the story of the Star of Bethlehem. We will also tour the gem exhibit.

Navasota Day Trip

Thursday, December 6, 8:15 AM, \$20

Tour the Horlock Museum (known to be haunted) and antique shops, and enjoy lunch at the Filling Station.

Houston Concert Band Holiday Concert

Sunday, December 9, 2:00 PM, Free

Listen to the delightful music of this very talented band. Come early as seats are limited.

New Year's Eve Potluck

Monday, December 31, 11:30 AM, Free

Ring in the New Year with food, friends and fellowship at this social luncheon! Bring a dish to pass.

Six-Week Thursday Evening Programs

These classes offer you the opportunity to get some great exercise in an inviting and fun setting. No experience necessary.

Line Dance

September 20 – October 25, 6:00 PM, \$24
Classes resume in January 2013

Tai Chi

Begins November 1, 5:00 PM, \$23

City CURRENTS

A Newsletter for
the citizens of
West University Place
Fall 2012

CITY OF WEST U OFFICIALS

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS Mayor Bob Fry
Mayor Pro-Tem Susan Sample
Ed Heathcott
Joan Johnson
Dick Yehle

CITY MANAGER Michael Ross (713) 662-5810
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8 City Currents Fall 2012

Finance & Utility Billing

Annual Budget Preparation

Every summer, the West U City Council and staff begin to work diligently on a new annual budget and property tax rate. This fall we are working on the 2013 budget, which begins for West U on January 1, 2013. The property tax rate being set, however, is the 2012 rate, which is based on the property appraisals as of January 1, 2012. This rate will go into effect immediately after Council passes it. The Harris County Tax Office will use the rate to generate the property tax bills that you generally receive in November; the resulting revenue funds the 2013 budget. Much of the work on these items is conducted as mandated by Texas state laws. The public generally only sees the final aspects of that work: first the public hearings and then the Council's adoption of both budget and tax rate. State law specifies the following process:

- During **August**, department heads meet with their staff to determine what costs they must plan for in the new budget—all in light of the best value for the money. The City also receives the 2012 property tax appraisal rolls to begin calculations of the property tax rate.

- In **September**, department heads meet with the City Manager and Finance Director to prepare the proposed budget, which will be presented in a public hearing toward the end of the month. Council also holds the first of several meetings related to the adoption of the property tax rate. The setting of the rate is followed by hearings only if the proposed rate is more than the effective rate. The effective rate calculation is a way to compare tax revenue from one year to the next with all things (property) being the same—i.e., apples to apples.
- **October** is the month that all the work on the budget and property tax rate culminates. Two public hearings on the tax rate, if necessary, are held: one on October 8 and the second at a special meeting called by Council on October 15. The public hearing on the budget is held at the same special meeting called by Council on October 15. On October 22, the Council adopts both the 2013 budget and the 2012 property tax rate.

Watch for changes in online bill paying

When the Finance Department changed its financial software last year, one of the first areas impacted was the utility billing. By November this year, we hope utility billing will see another change: the new Citizen Access Portal, which will allow residents to look up information online regarding their accounts. At present, residents have to set up an account with a third party vendor to view their statements (the last three only) and/or pay their bills using a credit card. The Citizen Access Portal will allow reader-only access into our utility billing system directly, instead of through a third party. For those residents who have opted to receive paperless billing or who choose to pay online with a credit card, this will mean a change. As we get closer to implementation, we will tell you what you need to do to transition from the old to new. We are excited and think you will be, too!