

City CURRENTS

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SPRING 2013



A NEIGHBORHOOD CITY INCORPORATED IN 1925

New Directional Signage Coming to West U

In late spring/early summer, the City of West University Place will bring another communication tool to City residents by installing new signage along Auden Street between University and Rice Boulevards. The signs will be based on the conceptual designs of NEC Signage + Architectural Products.

These “wayfinding” signs will prominently point to City facilities such as the Municipal Building, the Senior Center & Community Building and the Public Works Administration Building. The goal of the wayfinding signage is to direct City residents and visitors to the City’s facilities for conducting business and to other area attractions, such as the Library, Scout House and Recreation Center, in a manner that is both informative and attractive. “The new signs are key to making our city more navigable,” said Mayor Bob Fry.

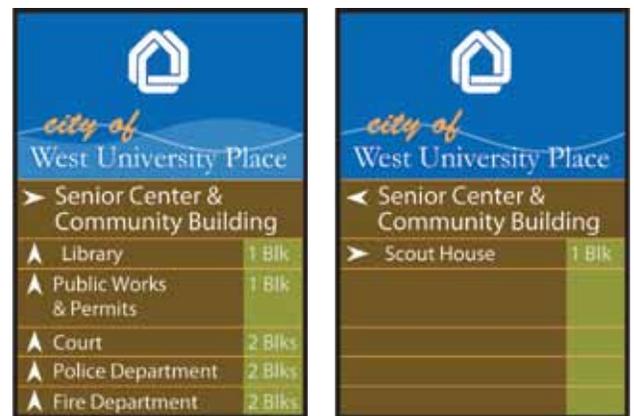
Three new signs will be placed along Auden Street: two larger vehicular signs and one pedestrian sign. The vehicular signs will be placed at the intersection of Rice and Auden and at the intersection of University and Auden. The pedestrian sign will be placed on Auden in front of the Municipal Building.

The pedestrian sign is different in that it will list all City facilities of interest and provide a map for viewing the course of travel to the destination of choice. The sign is designed so that pedestrians can easily view their starting point and locate their destination by searching the listed names and finding their corresponding locations on the map.

“I believe that the new signage is important for both visitors and residents of our city,” said City Manager Michael Ross. “We identified the most common directional needs of visitors to our City facilities and developed the conceptual

drawings based on these local needs.” These needs include directional assistance for the many non-resident visitors seeking municipal facilities to conduct business or deal with public safety-related issues, including Municipal Court. It also includes tourists, guests of City residents and residents who do not frequent City facilities on a regular basis.

The City is considering additional wayfinding signage for the extensive public park system. Future signage may include signs at the entrance of each park that provide visitors with park information and a map of the City’s full park system.



Renderings of planned wayfinding signs.

About NEC:

NEC Signage + Architectural Products is a Houston based architectural signage manufacturer/contractor. Originally founded in 1946 as Neon Electric Corp. NEC has a broad range of clients in multiple market segments including healthcare, retail, education, religion, sports, corporate, industrial, transportation and hospitality.

NEC’s products include exterior signage, channel letters, monuments, pylons, garage signage, wayfinding signage, interior signage/graphics, digital printing, transit shelters, specialty signs, and custom structures. Sign maintenance services are also available.

From The Mayor's Desk



by Mayor Bob Fry

Let's talk about parks. Recognizing that our City did not have adequate park space, West U voters in 2006 authorized \$2 million in bonds for the purchase of additional parkland. The area between Auden and Buffalo Speedway was designated as most underserved and thus the area where the funds should be expended. Over time the City Council has attempted to locate good parcels to buy for creating parks in this area, but for various reasons none of the deals has been consummated—despite the fact that every Council since that bond election has been vigilant in looking for opportunities for investment.

What this Council has found, as those that came before it since 2006 discovered, is that locating the right park site in the underserved area is difficult for numerous reasons. The most obvious is the scarcity of suitable sites. The area is completely built up, and now almost completely rebuilt, making assembling parcels big enough for an adequate park much harder to do. This also makes the cost of any suitable parcel almost prohibitively expensive, even with

\$2 million available. Beyond issues of availability and cost, Councils have encountered the problem that some neighbors do not want a park next to them. Additionally, potential sellers' desire for confidentiality has made it very hard to solicit citizen support before negotiations could be made public.

Our City was developed before the need for adequate public spaces was deemed essential for good town planning. We have done wonders catching up since then. Our pocket parks, Colonial Park and Pool, and Recreation Center all are justifiably praised and even award winning. But we also realize that by current standards we are still short of park space, especially in the area designated in the 2006 election. So while the task of finding additional park space has been arduous, this Council as well as those before it has never quit looking.

We should remain open to acquiring property suitable for parks. We should make every attempt to ensure citizen input in the process and to look for new and creative ways of doing so while respecting the seller's desire for confidentiality. And we must be ever mindful of our fiscal responsibility to spend the City's funds wisely. All of this points to a slow and tedious process, but a process worthy of the continued dedication of our City staff and elected officials.



Keep in touch with Mayor Fry as he shares news and comments with residents. Visit www.westutx.gov/mayors-message for regular updates.

From Council Member Susan Sample



The City of West University Place has been unique, compared to other cities within the state and region, in weathering the economic recession with little discomfort over the past few years. At the core of West U's economic stability are the

City's stable home valuations, which represent approximately 95% residential properties. Home prices in the City range from the \$300,000 to \$2.5 million and above, with the median home price around \$700,000.

West U has been fortunate in that while valuations may have fluctuated somewhat (1–2%) over the past few years, the overall citywide valuation has steadily grown for over a decade. Property values total \$4.2 billion, up 145.6% since 1999. It is anticipated that West U will continue to enjoy an enviably stable outlook. New construction and redevelopment of single-family homes have led this charge.

To find evidence of West U's strong residential development base, one only has to look at the numbers:

- Some 940 new home permits have been issued since 2001.
- The number of certificates of occupancy in 2011 and 2012 alone show 65 new residential and 11 new or expanded business units.
- Speculation (spec) homes are being built again. (In layman's terms, a spec home is a home that a builder constructs in the belief that someone will want to purchase it.) This is a recent reappearance within the market, which has seen almost no spec activity over the last three to four years.

Weathering the economic storm of the late 2000s in good shape, and supporting residential development in the process, can be attributed to the exceptional leadership of the current and previous City Council. Additional recognition is due to the carefully established financial policies of both the City Council and the City's executive team, led by the city manager. The City's consistent and conservative financial management has led Standard and Poor's to grant the City of West U AAA credit ratings on a year-to-year basis. This superior

Continued on page 4

2013 GENERAL ELECTION Vote – It's Your Voice

Registered voters of West University Place are encouraged to vote on May 11, 2013, in the General Election to elect a Mayor and four Council Members for a two-year term.

When to vote on Election Day

May 11, 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Where to vote on Election Day

City Hall, 3800 University Boulevard

PLEASE NOTE!

There will be only **ONE** polling location for all precincts on Election Day: City Hall, 3800 University Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77005

CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR

- ★ Bob Fry

CANDIDATES FOR COUNCIL (no particular order)

Vote for none, one, two, three or four

- ★ Dick Yehle
- ★ Ed Heathcott
- ★ Joan Johnson
- ★ Susan Sample
- ★ Sonny Brandtner

IMPORTANT DATES

April 11 LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE AND CHANGE ADDRESS

This is the last day to register to vote or make a change of address that will be effective for this election. Contact the Harris County Clerk's Office.

April 26 DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATION FOR BALLOT BY MAIL (in person by 5:00 PM)

May 3 DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATION FOR BALLOT BY MAIL (by mail by 5:00 PM)

Applications for Ballot by Mail should be delivered to:

Thelma Lenz, City Secretary
3800 University Boulevard
West University Place, TX 77005

April 29 – May 7 EARLY VOTING

You may vote early Monday – Friday by personal appearance in the City Hall Council Chambers (3800 University Boulevard). Hours of early voting are:

April 29 – May 3	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
May 6 – 7	7:00 AM – 7:00 PM

Para la información de Elección en español, contacta por favor a Secretario de Ciudad Thelma Lenz en (713) 662-5813.

Community Message Board

2013 Garbage / Recycling Holiday Schedule

Memorial Day, Monday, May 27:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

Independence Day, Thursday, July 4:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

Labor Day, Monday, September 2:

No curbside collection. Normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 28:

No curbside collection. Trash regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Friday (November 29). Please hold your recyclables until your next schedule recycle day.

Day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 29:

Normal collection of trash and recycling will be provided. City offices will be closed.

Additional Christmas Holiday, Tuesday, December 24:

Normal collection of trash and recycling will be provided. City offices will be closed.

Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25:

No curbside collection. Recycling regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Tuesday (December 24).

New Year's Day, Wednesday, January 1, 2014:

No curbside collection. Recycling regularly scheduled for this day will be picked up on Tuesday (December 31).

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

CLICK WEST U

Have a service request for the City? Submit it on-line through Click West U! Submit questions, comments and complaints: www.westutx.gov/clickwestu.

Keep in touch!

Choose how you get information from the City:

- Receive news alerts, meeting agendas and event info via email – sign up at www.westutx.gov/enotify
- Receive emergency notifications via phone, text or email – register at www.westutx.gov/codered
- “Like” the City of West University Place, TX, on Facebook
- Follow @CityofWestU on Twitter
- Bookmark www.westutx.gov on your smart phone for access on the go

Summer Registration Dates

West U summer programs are here! Are you continuing your current favorite programs into the summer? Then take advantage of priority registration, which starts Tuesday, April 9, at 5:00 AM at the West University Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd. If you are looking to try something new and you are a resident, then register as early as Tuesday, April 16, both at the Rec Center and on-line. If you don't live in West U, but you still want to try our amazing programs, come on over – we'd love to have you! Registration for non-residents starts on Thursday, April 18. Check out all our programs in advance by browsing through our website at www.westutx.gov/reg.

Party on the Patio Concert Series



Bring your lawn chairs and blankets, sit back and enjoy a fantastic lineup

of some of Houston's best-known bands! The concert admission is complimentary, but if you wish to swim, regular pool admission is required. Visit www.westutx.gov/events for a complete schedule. The Party on the Patio Concert Series is sponsored by Direct Energy and benefits the Friends of West University Parks Fund, Inc.

When: Fridays in June

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Where: Colonial Park Pool Deck, 4130 Byrom

June 7: Ezra Charles

June 14: Kelly McGuire

June 21: Route 66

June 28: Fab 5

www.westutx.gov



Music Under the Stars: Classical Concert Series

The music at these informal events is selected for newcomers and symphony enthusiasts alike. Bring along a blanket and picnic basket for an evening of relaxed dining and classical music in the park. You will be entertained by some of the finest classical ensembles in the Houston area. For more information, go to www.westutx.gov/events.

When: Fridays in April

Time: 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Where: Colonial Park under the Pavilion

April 5: River Oaks Chamber Orchestra

April 12: The Apollo Chamber Players

April 19: Texas Brass

Swim Team Tryouts

If your son or daughter is between the ages of 6 and 10 and would like to try out for the Piranha swim team, visit the West U Rec Center on Saturday, **April 27**, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, and on Friday, **May 10**, 6:00 – 7:00 PM. Below are some additional dates that may help you with your summer scheduling. All activities will be held at the Recreation Center pool. Good luck at the tryouts!

May practice schedule	May 13 – 30	M – Th	4 – 7 PM
June practice schedule	June 3 – 6	M – Th	4 – 7 PM
	June 10 – 27	M – F	7 – 9 AM
Swim Meets	June 7, 17 and 24		4 – 11 PM



Parks & Recreation

Colonial Park Pool

POOL OPENING

It's time to celebrate the sun once again! Join us at Colonial Park Pool on Saturday, April 6, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM, for the opening of the 2013 swim season.

Also, don't forget to register your summer party! We'll shout out your name during the party day so that everyone knows you're celebrating your birthday! Just speak to a Colonial Customer Service Representative for details.

SCUBA DAY

Come see how much fun scuba diving is during Spring Scuba Day at Colonial Park Pool. From 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM on Saturday, May 18, you can test out some of the gear and learn all about the art of scuba.



MOM'S SPA DAY

All West U resident mothers are invited to get a little R&R before their special day! Come to Colonial Park Pool on Saturday, May 11, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, and enjoy a kid-free day by the pool complete with massages, facials, breakfast, mimosas and more. Each mother will have the opportunity to win raffle prizes, and all will leave with their own Mother's Day gift courtesy of the West U Parks and Recreation Department. For information about registering for this event, please call (713) 662-7420 or go to www.westutx.gov/events.

Note: Colonial Park Pool will open to the public at 12:00 PM after the spa event.

CPP FATHER'S DAY

Hey, Dads! Got a silly tie? Wear your silliest one to Colonial Park Pool on Father's Day, Sunday, June 16, anytime between 12:00 PM and 7:00 PM, and get free pool entrance for the day.

SUMMER GAMES AT COLONIAL

Let the summer heat fire up your competitive spirit at Colonial Park Pool! Join us for fun games during our regular safety breaks on Tuesdays starting in June. Play games such as Floating Scramble, Cannonball Dive, Musical Guards and more. Be the winner and get a prize!

SENIOR SERVICES

"Fifty-Five and Alive!" These Thursday evening programs for "working Baby Boomers" begin in May. Evening Tai Chi, an excellent form of exercise, will be held in six-week increments with classes beginning at 5:00 PM. This course is designed for all levels and the fee is \$23 per six-week session. Evening Beginner Line Dance is a great way for couples to spend time together and get exercise! Or you could make it a girls' night out and end with dinner and drinks! Evening Beginner Line Dance begins at 6:00 PM and is \$24 per six-week session.

Looking for a new hobby or skill? Why not try a watercolor class or classic Mah Jongg lessons! The first develops the right side of your brain, and the second the left. You could also meet some new friends! Watercolor meets at 12:30 PM, \$31 for a six-week session. Mah Jongg lessons are taught by the wonderful Carol Goulet and held on Fridays, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM, \$35 a month.

Join us on Thursday, May 30, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM, for the Big Band Swing Dance featuring The Ziggy Band! Listen to some great music, sample some tasty hors d'oeuvres and enjoy all kinds of dancing. Please RSVP by calling (713) 662-5895.

Advanced registration for all activities is required and can be done at the Community Building, 6104 Auden.

Interested in meeting your neighbors in a social setting or learning about our other spectacular activities, exercise programs or lunch events? Call us at (713) 662-5895 or visit us on-line at www.westutx.gov/seniorservices.

Join the "Hi Neighbor" newsletter mailing list and never miss out on Senior Services news! Call (713) 662-5895 to be added.

From Council Member Susan Sample Continued from page 2

rating, the highest for a municipality and delegated to very few municipalities in the state, has resulted in our continued success in attracting favorable bond and bond refinancing opportunities, which have resulted in savings to our taxpayers. Furthermore, this favorable climate for West U has facilitated not only the upgrading of infrastructure but also the addition of long awaited amenities, which have both stabilized and given "added value" to the residential market; the result has been shorter real estate inventory turnover periods versus the regional market. As West U has received a number of accolades over recent years, including the Wall Street Journal Real Estate Edition's "Place to Retire in the Houston Metro

Area," a "Top Quality of Life Award" and a "Top Work Places Award," the region and the market recognize and confirm that West U is the place to live and work, further supporting the high level of services taxpayers get for their dollar.

Standard and Poor's specifically recognized the City's sound financial policies and stable development environment in 2012 by stating, "The stable outlook [of West University Place] reflects our expectation that the city's economy will remain stable during the two-year outlook horizon, given the city's essentially complete status of development and the MSA's stable real estate market. In addition, we expect that the city's financial practices and policies will allow the city to maintain its very strong financial position."

Parks & Recreation

Park Lovers' Ball 2013

It was "Moonlight in the Park" for ball-goers on Saturday evening, February 2, at the Hilton Americas-Houston. Friends of West University Place Parks Fund, Inc., under the guidance of Event Chairs Kristine and Joaquin Martinez, delivered a memorable evening as guests were treated to scrumptious food, cocktails and entertainment against the twinkling backdrop of a starlit evening sky.

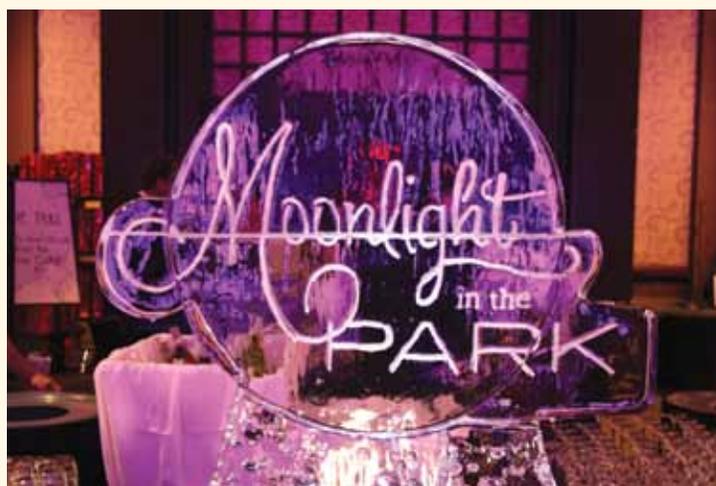
From the refreshment served by a strolling diva whose skirt held flutes bubbling with champagne, to the inaugural Man Cave offering scotch and cigars, to dancing to the lively tunes of The Grooves out of Austin, the evening was a complete success.

Guests continue to rave about how much fun they had at the ball, which included a pictorial presentation by Parks and Recreation Director Tim O'Connor, showing how West U parks and green spaces have benefited from funds raised by Friends. The ball also provided an opportunity to honor Janine and Michael Schueppert for their many years of service to the West U community. Their three beautiful daughters, Lily, Amelia, and Chloe, were also on hand to help with the live auction.

Friends is grateful to all who contributed to the event, including auction donors, underwriters and sponsors, as well as committee members and other volunteers, without whom the Park Lovers' Ball would not be possible.

We'd especially like to highlight the generosity of Direct Energy, Friends 2012 and 2013 Corporate Sponsor; Andrea and John T. Young, Jr./Conway MacKenzie; and Tudor, Pickering, Holt & Co. as Blue Moon underwriters. Thanks also go to ION Energy, Kristine and Joaquin Martinez, Reed Smith LLP, and Mary Margaret and Russ Schulze as Harvest Moon underwriters. The following Snow Moon underwriters contributed to the success of the event as well: AXA Advisors, LLC/Doug Quinn; Brian Donnelly and Valley Crest Companies; Nelson S. Ebaugh, P.C./Maureen O'Driscoll-Levy, M.D.; EPL Oil and Gas, Inc.; Mary and Jeth Jones; Janine and Michael Schueppert; Carolyn and Garry Tanner; and Wilson, Cribbs & Goren, P.C./Wilson and Groff Families.

The Park Lovers' Ball continues to be a highly popular annual event that brings friends and neighbors together to celebrate our lovely West University Place parks and raise money so that we can all enjoy our parks for generations to come.



STAY TUNED!

Information is upcoming on the annual Fathers & Flashlights campout on the fields surrounding West University Elementary School in October. Event Co-chairs Judy and Comfort Cheng, Dee Dee and Jamie Gilder, and Ashley and Sam Gumbert are working to make it yet another memorable event for fathers and their children, as well as the volunteer moms.

To keep current on all Friends' events and activities, visit www.westuparks.org.

Want to become involved with Friends? Have questions about Friends? Call us at (713) 662-7430 or stop by the Friends of West U Parks office located in the West U Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd.

Public Safety

Home Fires

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as two minutes to escape safely once the alarm sounds. Your ability to get out depends on advance warning from smoke alarms and advance planning—a home fire escape plan that everyone in your family is familiar with and has practiced.

BEFORE

- Install smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside each sleeping area.
- Test alarms once a month. Change batteries at least once a year. Replace alarms every ten years.
- Consider installing a residential automatic fire sprinkler system.
- Plan and practice your family's escape route. Make sure every room has two ways out. Make sure all doors and windows open easily.
- Remember to plan for your pets.
- Never use flammable liquids inside, and store them in approved containers in well-ventilated areas.
- Inspect your chimney regularly.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet from combustibles and away from open flames.
- If you smoke, smoke outside. Use large, deep, sturdy ashtrays.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen, turn off the stove. If you are simmering, boiling, baking or roasting food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking.
- Inspect and clean dryer filters and exhausts frequently.

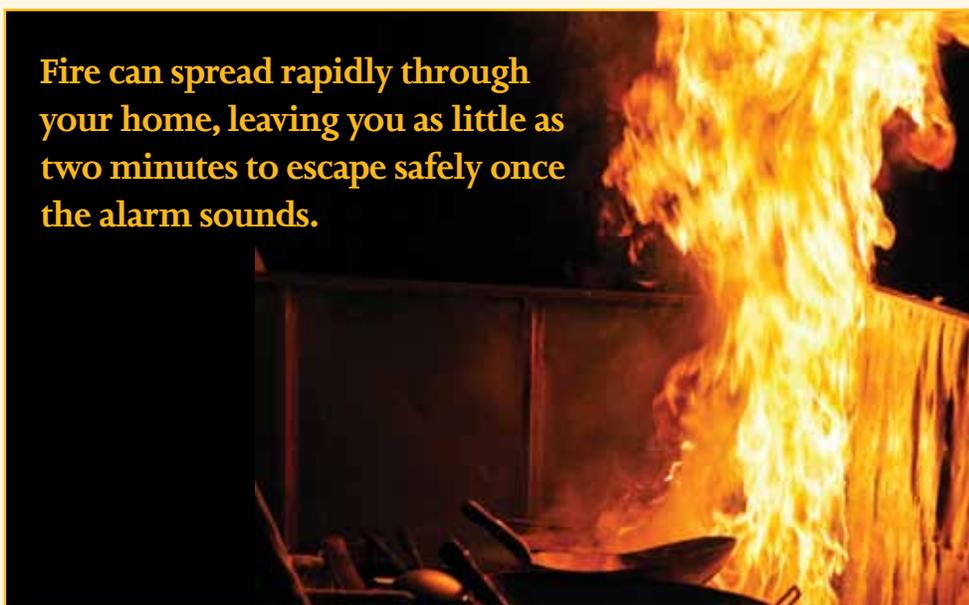
DURING

- Evacuate immediately if you detect heat or smoke in a fire-damaged building.
- Get out and stay out. Call the fire department from outside the home and do not return into the building until firefighters give the okay.
- If fire or smoke blocks your escape route, use your second way out.
- If you must pass through smoke, get low and go under the smoke. Close doors behind you.
- If you need to open a closed door, feel the door. If it's hot, use your second way out.
- If smoke, heat or flames prevent you from exiting a room, keep the door closed, call for help and wait by the window for rescue.

AFTER

- If you are a tenant, contact the landlord.
- If you have a safe or strongbox, wait several hours before opening it. It can hold intense heat and if you open it before it is completely cool, the contents could burst into flames.
- If you must leave your home after a fire because the building inspector has deemed it unsafe, ask someone you trust to watch the property in your absence.

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you as little as two minutes to escape safely once the alarm sounds.



Adapted from an article by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), www.nfpa.org.

DirectLink

The spring season is upon us, with summer right around the corner. This time of the year brings about many outdoor and family activities away from your home. And unfortunately during this time, criminal activity increases. Your home is left unattended and made vulnerable while you're enjoying quality time with your family. Give your family peace of mind by having your home protected with DirectLink. DirectLink sends an alarm signal from your home directly to the City's Emergency Dispatch Center. When seconds count, count on DirectLink!



DirectLink—

Stay Connected To West U Emergency Responders 24-Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week.

For about a dollar a day, added to your utility bill, you can have your home alarm system directly connected to West U police, fire and paramedics. By eliminating a third party alarm company, emergency responders can shave precious minutes off of response time, potentially saving valuables, homes and even lives.

Getting DirectLink is Simple—

just email DirectLink@westutx.gov

Public Works

Heavy Trash (and Treasure) Day

On the last Saturday in April, West University Place holds Heavy Trash Day, an opportunity for residents to drop off items that are generally too large or cumbersome for curbside collection. The City accepts just about everything except household hazardous waste. In addition to heavy trash, West U also collects electronic waste, scrap metal and useful items for recycling/reuse on this day. A truck from Goodwill (or a similar charity) is available for donations of useful items, and YMCA International will accept donations of mattresses and bed and bath linens. Heavy Trash Day typically fills over ten 30-yard containers with trash, provides a truck's worth of donations for Goodwill, and collects about 3,000 pounds of electronics and over 10,000 pounds of scrap metal. Landfill costs are avoided when your "trash" is recycled or donated for reuse. Goodwill and YMCA International will provide receipts for tax purposes.

When: Saturday, April 27, 7 AM – 3 PM

Where: 3826 Milton (enter northbound from College at University)

FREE and open to West U residents only; proof of residency is required (water bill, driver's license, etc.). City staff will unload materials.

ITEMS ACCEPTED

Trash	<p>Anything and everything except household hazardous waste.</p> <p><i>Household hazardous waste includes items such as oil-based paints, household cleaners, automotive products, pesticides, fertilizers and other yard products; words such as "warning," "danger," "toxic," "corrosive," "irritant," "flammable" or "caution" are found on their labels.</i></p> <p>Avg. cost per event \$10,000 – 12,000.</p>
Electronics	<p>TVs, microwaves, PCs, servers, keyboards, mice, laptops, game consoles, monitors, small kitchen appliances, memory chips, hubs and routers, printers, copiers, scanners, fax machines, projectors, rechargeable batteries, cable boxes, car batteries, telephones, cell phones, PDAs, tape drives, hard drives, cords, cables and cameras.</p> 
Scrap Metal	<p>Home/yard/garage scrap metal pieces, parts, or broken items...BBQ pits, tire rims, kitchen utensils, yard tools, metal furniture, pipe, etc.</p> <p>Freon-containing appliances (refrigerators, dehumidifiers, freezers and AC/s) can be accepted only with a certificate verifying proper recovery of the freon.</p> 
Goodwill Truck	<p>Useful items for Goodwill: new or gently used items like clothing, appliances, electronics, indoor and outdoor furniture, household items, bicycles, toys, etc.</p> 
YMCA International	<p>Mattresses, bed and bath linens, and pillows.</p> 

Trust but Verify

A memo from John Brown, Chief Building Official

I frequently receive calls and emails from residents who are frustrated with their contractors and/or service providers. Sometimes they feel overcharged; sometimes they have been quoted incorrect amounts regarding city fees and/or project costs. Sometimes they are unable to locate their contractor, or the company is no longer in business or nonresponsive.

Each of these scenarios has a similar theme: trusting a person or company without verifying that the information quoted is correct or that proposed action is industry standard operating procedure. Take charge of your building project by being an informed consumer. Here are some tips to help you make the best decisions when it comes to managing your project:

- **Trust but verify:** while a source of information might be considered reliable, be sure to perform additional research to verify that the information is accurate.
- Know what permits you need – and how much they cost.
- Solicit a minimum of three bids. Compare each bid for price and project completion timeline.
- Request references from the contractor or company – Better Business Bureau, verbal references and/or photos.
- Ask someone you trust if they know of, or have used, a contractor for a similar project.
- Contact the City to see if the contractor is already registered with us. If so, they may have performed work in the City before.
- If it sounds too good to be true, it just may be. This applies to a low price, quick project turnaround time and overstated level of craftsmanship.
- **DO NOT PAY IN ADVANCE!** If permits are required, then City inspections will follow; pay in stages of completion or upon a City-approved inspection.

Keep in mind that the City is not able to recommend any contractor for work; it is unethical to do so. Also remember that the City cannot require contractors to perform work to an exemplary standard; the City can only require that the work meet minimum code requirements. Electrical, plumbing and mechanical (cooling and heating) professionals are required by the state of Texas to hold a license for the work they perform. But that doesn't mean anything when it comes to quality workmanship and fair pricing.

Call me at (713) 662-5830 and I can remind you to obtain additional bids. And encourage you to do as much research as possible before spending your money. I hope this helps you with your next project!

City CURRENTS

A Newsletter for
the citizens of
West University Place
Spring 2013

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
or mross@westutx.gov

GENERAL INFORMATION (713) 668-4441

CITY WEBSITE www.westutx.gov
City Currents is a quarterly publication
and is printed on recycled paper.

City of West University Place
3800 University Boulevard
West University Place, Texas 77005

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE
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PERMIT NO. 134

8 City Currents Spring 2013

Don't Let Your Utility Bill Rise with the Temperatures

March 20 marked the first day of spring. With this change in season comes the surprised cries: "Why is my water bill so high? I couldn't have used that much water!"

Spring means different things to different people. Warmer temperatures and beautiful days turn thoughts to gardening, landscaping improvements and pool filling. And higher usage of water comes into play with each of those activities. As you embrace the spirit of spring, make sure you do some preparation to lessen the impact on your household budget:

- Check to see that your sprinkler heads have no leaks and that they are spraying correctly. Check out the sprinkler zones to ensure they are working correctly. Make sure your timers are set properly. If needed, ask your sprinkler professional to check out your system. Leaking irrigation systems can quickly result in large water bills.
- Planting new flowers, cleaning out beds and mowing yards can result in dirty clothes – and

dirty bodies. Extra bathing is a fast way to add dollars to your water bill, so make a conscientious effort to take shorter showers, turn off water when shampooing, fill tubs to only six inches and make sure shower heads aren't leaking. The single best thing you can do to save money while washing clothes is replace your old washer with a high-efficiency one. If that is not in your budget plans, then use the shortest wash cycle you can for the degree of soiled clothes, select the smallest volume setting for the load you are washing, and do full loads only.

- Pool filling is an annual rite of passage in West U and will affect your utility bill. Talk to your pool professional and find out how many gallons of water it takes to ready your pool. Then contact the Utility Billing Department at (713) 662-5824 or billinghelp@westutx.gov with the amount and the date of the pool filling. Your sewer portion of the bill for that time period will be adjusted on the next billing. For example, if you use 10,000 gallons of water monthly and you fill your 20,000-gallon

pool, you will see a bill reflecting the use of 30,000 gallons of water and the respective sewer costs, which are tied to water use. By contacting us, you allow us to adjust your bill to remove the sewer charges on the portion of water use related to filling the pool.

- Check your plumbing system, especially if you have an older home with exposed outside pipes. Look specifically at areas where the pipes enter the home. Turn off your main water valve and check your water meter for activity, which indicates possible leaks. Check toilets, ice makers, dishwashers, washers and tubs for leaks. These can add up quickly on your monthly utility bill.
- If you pressure wash your house, sidewalks or driveways, prepare to see the \$\$\$ grow on your bill. Four hours of pressure washing, using about 4 gallons per minute, will add approximately 1,000 gallons to your monthly usage. Pressure wash only when needed.