

City CURRENTS

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SUMMER 2012



A NEIGHBORHOOD
CITY INCORPORATED
IN 1925

Street Parking Traffic Study — Status Report

The City of West University Place hosted three town hall-style meetings this spring on April 9 and April 12. At these meetings, City Council and City staff, including personnel from the Fire, Police and Public Works Departments, as well as West U's consulting traffic engineer, Traffic Engineers, Inc., listened to taxpayers to get their perspective on whether they saw a problem with street parking within West U. And, if so, where street parking seemed to be a problem and what they thought would be a good resolution.

Staff gathered feedback from individuals who spoke at the meetings and from comment cards collected after each meeting. Comments were also collected via messages sent to the email address established to obtain further feedback, streetparking@westutx.gov. The collected and sorted data is now undergoing further analysis by all City staff. In addition, documentation of these meetings was posted on a dedicated webpage, www.westutx.gov/streetparking, which is reached on the West U website by links from the "In the Spotlight" section.

The data analysis will identify problem areas, the geometry of the streets in those areas, the individual citing the problem, and that individual's suggested resolution. The information is currently being processed to appear in a narrative format as well as a graphic format, so as to clarify the location, type and surrounding conditions of a given parking problem. Once a precise characterization of the problem is available, solutions can be structured in a clear, consistent and enforceable manner. The analysis will ensure all resolutions are consistent with best management practices and generally accepted traffic engineering practices, and in compliance with existing ordinances and the State Traffic Code.

Upon its completion this summer, a report will be presented to City Council for review.

Although the Police and Fire Departments have not reported any incidents where parking issues kept them from responding to a call for service, current conditions can pose parking challenges. Those parking their vehicles should be conscious of these factors, as well as generally being considerate of their fellow motorists and neighbors. Some residents have suggested that the City instigate a program of "absolute

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Parking too close to a driveway



Parking too close to an intersection



Parking too far from the curbline



Parking on the wrong side of a two way roadway



Obstructing Sidewalk

From The Mayor's Desk



by Mayor Bob Fry

For over 25 years, West University Place, along with 14 of the 30 other small Harris County cities, have forfeited half of their annual sales tax to Metro. Today this equals about \$1 million per year for West

U. These cities, along with the City of Houston and Harris County also receive approximately one quarter of this amount back from Metro to use for local transportation projects. West U uses these funds for mobility projects such as road repairs and reconstruction, sidewalks and bike lanes within our city limits. Metro is now trying to terminate this agreement and keep all of the one-cent transit tax for itself. If it succeeds, the City will have no choice but to raise taxes to cover the loss of these mobility and capital improvement funds.

Metro has made more promises than it can keep. It finds itself without the money required to continue its ambitious rail projects. It is searching for any method possible to raise additional funds that can be leveraged for more debt to continue to build its rail lines. The situation is complicated by the fact that some of these rail projects are highly controversial with residents and businesses along the proposed routes. As

Congressman John Culberson told the Metro board recently, the era of unlimited funding from the federal government has passed. Metro needs to cut back on what it would like to do, he said, and focus on its core competency — buses.

Without this long-standing mobility funding, the 14 small cities now receiving assistance will not be able to maintain streets within their borders without raising taxes. Metro certainly will not maintain them. For this reason, we argue that Metro must continue the general mobility funding to these cities for road maintenance and improvements.

Here in West U, we have done the right thing in rebuilding our worn-out infrastructure. We took on debt to do it, but only the amount of debt we could comfortably afford. In the process, we have maintained our AAA bond rating — a rarity in municipal government today. We use the mobility funds to maintain our rebuilt streets, which serve both us and those that transit through our city. That includes Metro's buses.

For the foreseeable future, automobiles and buses will remain the primary modes of transportation in the greater part of the Houston area. Citizens relying on our streets will demand that they be maintained properly. West U should be able to use the tax revenue that our local businesses generate through sales to accomplish this. It is a matter of efficiency and fairness.

From Council Member Dick Yehle



The cover story of this edition of *City Currents* recaps the recent town hall meetings about parking. It seeks to launch a dialogue about existing street parking laws and the proposals that City Council is weighing to address the issue. West U is small

enough to conduct such a citywide exercise, but big enough that any action taken is sure to please and displease different residents — even doing nothing at all will draw a strong reaction. Although Council is just beginning to digest the findings of the town hall meetings and the traffic engineer's report, one conclusion can now be reached, best captured by Pogo creator Walt Kelly when he wrote, "We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us." If no one parked in the street, or if all those parking did so in a way that did not create impediments to easy traffic flow, there would be no issue. The fact that our streets are full of parked vehicles day and night, often parked according to personal whims and

necessities, makes consideration of new parking rules necessary.

It was clear from the meetings that we have widely divergent views of what constitutes appropriate parking and, to the extent there is a problem, how to solve it. Ideally, Council will approach the issue delicately enough that the cure will not be worse than the problem. Safety will be a major focus but not the only one. Ease of compliance, sensibility and enforceability will also have to be considered.

Council is always desirous and appreciative of input from the public on any topic. For example, a recent telephone survey about Recycling and Solid Waste Services reached out to the West U community for input. Responses from that sampling of public opinion will be an important factor as City staff and the Recycling and Solid Waste Board form and evaluate recommendations for improvements to the City's waste collection program. You are encouraged to take full advantage of future opportunities to offer comments on these and other topics coming before your City Council.

Street Parking Traffic Study Continued from cover

enforcement" for parking violations, which could mean redirecting the focus of police patrol units from personal and property protection, such as burglary deterrence, traffic safety at schools and overall traffic safety, to parking violation enforcement.

Please be reminded of the following parking laws from the Texas Transportation Code and know that violations may cost you up to \$75 per incident:

- You cannot park in front of a public or private driveway.
- You cannot park within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.
- You cannot park within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection.
- You cannot park within 30 feet on the approach to a flashing traffic signal or sign located at the side of a roadway.
- You cannot park within 20 feet of the driveway entrance to a fire station and on the side of a street opposite the entrance to a fire station within 75 feet of the entrance.
- You cannot park across the public sidewalk on a driveway (West U exception—if a car cannot physically fit between the garage door and the sidewalk without blocking it you are considered legally parked in West U)
- On a two-way street you must park on the right side of the road with the wheels of the car no more than 18 inches from the curb.
- On a one-way street you must park in the direction of the traffic movement with the wheels of the car no more than 18 inches from the curb.

Some examples of these violations are shown in the photos on page 1. Please understand that these laws apply to all motorists throughout every city and county in the State of Texas.



WEST UNIVERSITY PLACE

Community Message Board

Want to know what's going on in your city?

SIGN UP FOR ALERTS!

Did you know that the City provides an easy way to keep up-to-date on the latest changes to City services? It is easy to use—just visit www.westutx.gov/enotify.

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

Independence Day, Wednesday, July 4:

No curbside collection; normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

Labor Day, Monday, September 3:

No curbside collection; normal collection will resume on your next scheduled day.

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.



www.westutx.gov

Important Schedule Changes

July 4: The Recreation Center will observe abbreviated hours in honor of the Fourth of July holiday: 5:00 AM – 1:00 PM

August 26 – September 1: The Recreation Center will be closed for annual maintenance. The facility will resume its normal schedule and classes on Monday, September 3.

Colonial Park Pool Summer Hours

Effective: June 1 – August 26

Monday	4:00 PM – 8:30 PM
Tuesday – Friday	10:00 AM – 8:30 PM
Saturday	9:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Sunday	12:00 NOON – 7:00 PM
July 4 th	9:00 AM – 6:00 PM

For more information, call (713) 662-7460 or visit www.westutx.gov/colonial.

Summer Splash Series

It's hot outside and time to get wet at "Summer Splash Series" special events.

FAMILY DIVE-IN MOVIE NIGHT

When: Fridays, June 29, July 27, and August 31

Time: 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Where: Colonial Park Pool

MOM'S SPA DAY AT THE POOL

When: Sunday, August 12

Time: 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Where: Colonial Park Pool

For more information, call (713) 662-7460 or visit www.westutx.gov/colonial.

Independence Day Bike Parade

When: Wednesday, July 4

Time: Line up by 8:45 AM, Parade begins at 9:00 AM

Where: Meet at West U Elementary, 3756 University

To beat the heat, the time has been moved up from the previously advertised time by one hour.

Kids of all ages are invited to participate in the annual Independence Day parade by decorating their bicycles, non-motorized scooters, tricycles, wagons and strollers. Participants must line up in front of West U Elementary, 3756 University, by 8:45 AM to participate. The parade begins promptly at 9:00 AM, proceeding west on University, turning south on Academy, then heading west on Byron and ending at Colonial Park Pool, 4130 Byron. After the parade, festivities will continue with free admission to the pool, food (via the West U Rotary BBQ fundraiser) and fun for the entire family! Games and activities will wrap up at noon, and the pool will remain open until 6:00 PM. For more information, call (713) 662-7420.

Parks & Recreation

55 and Alive Seniors Scene

The Senior Services Division of the Parks & Recreation Department provides classes, programs, trips, transportation, and special events specifically designed for active adults 55 years and older. The Senior Services office is located in the Community Building, 6104 Auden. For more information on Senior Services activities and services, please call (713) 662-5895.

Evening Programs

Line Dancing

Put on your dancing shoes! Line dancing is an excellent source of exercise while having a great time. Thursdays at 6:15 PM for six weeks. \$24.

Tai Chi

This healing martial art combines many martial art movements with energy, circulation, breathing and stretching. Practiced mainly for its health benefits, it can improve balance and circulation, reduce stress and tension, and increase focus. Join instructor Greg Illich as he guides you through this meditative exercise. Thursdays at 5:00 PM for six weeks. \$23.

Daytime Programs: Fitness and Other Fun

Drawing 101

This basic class is designed for those interested in tapping their creative side. Thursdays at 12 NOON for six weeks. \$30. Please call the office for the start date.

Early Risers

In this class specifically designed for an older age group, you will get your aerobic exercise along with some strength building. Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:00 AM. \$8 per month.

Hoop Dance

Join the latest craze in exercise. This enjoyable program will be sure to get you up and your body moving. You will use all your muscles, from your inner core to your shoulders to arms. Mondays from 12 noon to 1:00 PM. \$18 per month.

Mah Jongg Lessons

Want to learn the basics of the game? This class will have you organizing your own group in no time! Fridays from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM for four weeks. \$35. A minimum number of registrants is needed to offer the course, and class size is also limited. Please call for the start date.

Tai Chi

This martial art practice is said to improve balance and reduce stress. Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM for six weeks. \$45.

Water Aerobics

Join instructor Paula Feinman as she challenges you with water-resistance exercises. Great for joints, muscles and cardio workouts, water aerobics is no-impact, leaving you feeling great while you build a healthy body. Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 AM to 11:45 AM at the Recreation Center. \$45 per month.

Friday Water Aerobics

The same instructor offers the same class on Fridays from 12 NOON to 12:45 PM. \$23.50 per month.

Watercolor

Bring out your inner artist and learn the basics to working with watercolors. This class is designed for those just learning and those wanting to improve their existing skills. Thursdays from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM for six weeks. \$30.

Yoga and Strength Training

Improve your stability, build your inner core and increase your flexibility, all in a fun environment. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 9:00 AM. \$40 per month.

Zumba Gold

This Latin-inspired dance fitness class incorporates Latin and international music and dance movements in an easy-to-follow format. Zumba integrates the basic principles of aerobic interval training to maximize caloric output and total body toning. It's exercise disguised as fun! Please call for details on this great workout, as this is a new program we are trying to offer.

FALL CLASS REGISTRATION

Discover a new craft or polish a skill for great benefits without investing a lot of time or money. Most fall classes begin in September. They include dance, tennis, Pilates, yoga, swimming, gymnastics, chess, healthy cooking, CPR, and so much more!

"Some classes are small, and spaces may fill up quickly," said Brittany Bakes, Recreation Manager. "We encourage those interested in participating to register early. Prices are reasonable, and many sessions are available to choose from."

Priority Registration (for those currently enrolled in classes within the past 30 days):
Friday, July 27 – Monday, August 6, 8:00 AM

Resident Registration:
Tuesday, August 7, 8:00 AM

Non-Resident Registration:
Thursday, August 9, 8:00 AM

Complete your registration online at www.westutx.gov/reg or come by the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire, to sign up. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, personal checks, and cash are accepted. To view a copy of the fall "West U at Your Leisure" guide, visit www.westutx.gov/parks or call (713) 662-7420 for more information.



Parks & Recreation

Friends of West U Parks



Fathers & Flashlights 2012

“Fathers & Flashlights is our families’ favorite event of the year. Chairing this event is such an honor, and it is truly amazing to see our community come together to help our parks!”



say Sara Edgecomb and Amanda McGee. Along with their husbands, Chip Edgecomb and J.R. McGee, they are returning as the Fathers & Flashlights co-chairs for the upcoming October 2012 event. Campers can look forward to an afternoon of fun with live catch-and-release fishing, pony rides, an obstacle course, a rock wall, the ever popular Camp Russo and much more. The annual campout helps raise funds for the continued improvement and development of West U parks. Thank you to Friends 2012 Corporate Sponsor and the other underwriters and sponsors who make this event possible. For more information on being an underwriter or sponsor, contact the Friends office at (713) 662-7430, or email Friends Executive Director Donna LaMond at DLaMond@WestUTX.gov.

Star Citizen Awards were presented at the May 2 Friends of West U Parks board meeting and appreciation luncheon hosted by the City of West University Place. Awards were presented to Sara and Chip Edgecomb, Maggie and Dax Garza, and Amanda and J.R. McGee for chairing Fathers & Flashlights in October 2011, and to Courtney and Scott Archer and Anne and John Freeman for chairing the 2012 Park Lovers’ Ball held in February. Together these events raised \$374,000 (net) for our parks.



Leah Ragiell, Chair of the Friends board, will be turning over the reins to Amanda McGee effective September 1. Leah has served as the Friends Chair for the past two years, and we are very thankful for her leadership. We look forward to Leah’s continued involvement as an Advisory Board member.



Friends fundraising continues year-round with the stork program, community and business partnerships, memorials and honorariums, pavers, benches and tree sales. For more information, please refer to the Friends website, www.westuparks.org; call (713) 662-7430; or stop by the Friends of West U Parks office, located in the Recreation Center, 4210 Bellaire Blvd.



ALCOHOL ORDINANCE Amended by City Council

In response to numerous inquiries from the public, the West University Place City Council has amended the city’s alcohol ordinance. West U adult residents now have the option of requesting a permit to serve and consume alcohol at private events held on the rented premises of the Colonial Park Pool and Community Building. Staff also can authorize the sale and consumption of alcohol at the annual Party on the Patio summer concert series and the Music Under the Stars outdoor classical concert series, both of which take place at Colonial Park. The amended ordinance also allows for the permitted sale and consumption of alcohol for official city functions at approved municipal facilities.

Staff has developed a Special Permit Application Form and a Rules of the City document specifically for residents requesting permits that allow for the sale and consumption of alcohol at the identified municipal facilities. At a minimum, the Application Form and Rules require the City of West University Place, Edloe Café Express at Colonial Park, Colonial Park Pool rental customers, Community Building rental customers and the Friends of West University Place Parks Inc. to:

- 1) Abide by the laws of the State of Texas regarding the sale, consumption or distribution of alcoholic beverages, including, without limitation, those laws prohibiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages by persons under 21 years of age;
- 2) provide that certified law enforcement officers are on duty during the rental period and at City-related special events where alcohol is to be provided and consumed as determined to be necessary by the City Manager or his designee, based on a recommendation from the Chief of Police or his designee; and
- 3) agree to indemnify the City, with the obvious exception of City-hosted events and activities, from any and all liability associated with the sale, consumption or distribution of alcoholic beverages in the public place during the duration of the special permit.

For further information regarding the permitting process for approved sales and consumption of alcohol on municipal property, please contact the Parks & Recreation Department Director at (713) 662-5894.

Public Safety

Hurricane Safety Checklist

Hurricanes are strong storms that cause life and property threatening hazards such as flooding, storm surge, high winds and tornadoes. Preparation is the best protection against the dangers of a hurricane.

What should I do?

- Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio for critical information from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- Check your disaster supplies and replace or restock as needed.
- Bring in anything that can be picked up by the wind (bicycles, lawn furniture).
- Close windows, doors and hurricane shutters. If you do not have hurricane shutters, close and board up all windows and doors with plywood.
- Turn the refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting and keep them closed as much as possible so that food will last longer if the power goes out.
- Turn off propane tanks and unplug small appliances.
- Fill your car's gas tank.
- Talk with members of your household and create an evacuation plan. Planning and practicing your evacuation plan minimizes confusion and fear during the event.
- Learn about your community's hurricane response plan. Plan routes to local shelters, register family members with special medical needs as required and make plans to care for your pet(s).
- Evacuate if advised by authorities. Be careful to avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges.
- Because standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding, it's important to have protection from the floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact the U.S. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program Web site at www.FloodSmart.gov.

What supplies do I need?

- Water—at least a 3-day supply; one gallon per person per day
- Food—at least a 3-day supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food
- Flashlight
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, cane)
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area
- Baby supplies (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowl)
- Tools/supplies for securing your home
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Extra clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- Rain gear
- Insect repellent and sunscreen
- Camera for photos of damage

What do I do after a hurricane?

- Continue listening to a NOAA Weather Radio or the local news for the latest updates.
- Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after the hurricane or tropical storm has ended.
- If you evacuated, return home only when officials say it is safe.
- Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company.
- Stay out of any building that has water around it.
- Inspect your home for damage. Take pictures of damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance purposes.
- Use flashlights in the dark. Do NOT use candles.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- Watch animals closely and keep them under your direct control.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If your community has experienced a hurricane, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org/SafeandWell to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call **1-866-GET-INFO** to register yourself and your family.

Know the Difference

Hurricane Watch

Hurricane conditions are a threat within 48 hours. Review your hurricane plans, keep informed and be ready to act if a warning is issued.

Hurricane Warning

Hurricane conditions are expected within 36 hours. Complete your storm preparations and leave the area if directed to do so by authorities.

Public Works

Drink Responsibly ... at home, at work, at school, at play, and on the go.

The Case Against Bottled Water

- Bottled water is not necessarily safer than tap water. Tap water is subject to more stringent regulations (the EPA regulates tap water vs. the FDA oversight of bottled water), while 70% of the bottled water sold falls under state regulations only, required to meet neither EPA or FDA standards.
- One gallon of bottled water is up to a thousand times more expensive than one gallon of tap water (and about twice the cost for a gallon of gasoline!).
- It takes three bottles of water and one-fourth a bottle of oil to produce one bottle of bottled water.
- 40% of the bottled water sold is simply filtered municipal water.
- People drink 80 million bottles of bottled water daily in the US. Yet only 25% of these plastic bottles are recycled. Plastic water bottles account for 1.5 million tons of waste each year. Producing those 80 million plastic bottles requires 47 million gallons of oil. Eliminating those bottles would be like taking 100,000 cars off the road and removing 1 billion pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- Plastic bottles take 500 to 1,000 years to decompose, if they are not recycled.
- Plastic water bottles not only pollute the Earth and use up precious resources, but the water in them can leach out chemicals, such as bisphenol A (BPA), from the plastic. These chemicals can pose health risks.
- 90% or more of the cost of bottled water goes to things other than the water itself.

Better Options

- If you insist on purchasing bottled water, forgo individual bottles and purchase your water in five-gallon reusable containers. Invest in reusable water bottles (stainless steel, glass, aluminum or plastic) and you're all set to go.
- Filter your own tap water at a fraction of the cost. You have many choices: "pour-through" filters, faucet-mounted filters, countertop filters, plumbed-in filters and point-of-entry (or "whole-house") filters. Use the guide referenced above to help with your decision and to see comparisons.
- Start a good habit by carrying reusable water bottles. They are great for home, work and when you are on the go...don't leave the house without one.
- Pack lunches with reusable drink containers.
- Push for filtered water options at work, school and recreation areas.
- Support the Texas Bottle Bill, which would add a 10¢ deposit on some bottled drinks. Based on the experience in other states, the bottle recycling rate can increase to 97% when a 10¢ deposit is required.

What you can't reduce or reuse, recycle curbside or at RecyclExpress, 5004 Dincans. West U recycles the following:

- Plastic bottles
- Glass bottles, all colors (remove the tops and corks)
- Milk jugs
- Gable-top cartons for juice and milk
- Aluminum cans and bottles
- Wine, soy, broth and juice boxes/cartons (i.e., aseptic containers)
- Plastic and metal lids/tops for all of the above

Just rinse the containers, if necessary, and place them in your blue bin. In addition to protecting the environment and conserving natural resources, recycling these items creates revenue for the City and lowers the rising landfill cost.

Recycle – Good Reuse – Better Reduce – Best

RESOURCES / REFERENCES

- *Tapped*, An award-winning documentary on the bottle water industry, 75 min., Available on HULU or from Netflix.
- *The Story of Bottled Water*, Video on YouTube, 8 min.
- How to Pack a Waste-Free Lunch, Go to www.wastefreelunches.org.
- How to Read a Water Quality Report, Also learn how to choose the best filtration system for your home. See "The Take Back the Tap Guide to Safe Tap Water" at: www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bottled
- Texas Bottle Bill: www.texasbottlebill.com
- West U Water Quality Report for 2011: www.westutx.gov. (Look under Public Works, Operations Division.)

West U Water

April, May, June... Whoa! Summer has come on us fast. We here on the Gulf Coast are experiencing relief from last year's worst drought of record for a single year. Today the grass is green, the plants are pretty, and the flowers are dazzling. What a wonderful alternative to last season, when the area was dominated by drought, burn bans and water restrictions.

Thanks to the rains this spring, we are in pretty good shape. However, it will not take much to send us right back to where we were in the summer of 2011. We need to be aware of the fact that drinkable water is precious and limited. Developing a water conservation-conscious community is very important to ensuring that we have water for our future as well as for the future of generations to come. The State Water Plan indicates that we will suffer severe water shortages throughout the state if we do not find more water. The least expensive water to be found is water saved through conservation. So, it might be a good time to take a look at your home and try to find a way to reduce water consumption with your family. Remember, every drop counts.

Outdoor water use in West University Place for the year of 2011 accounted for over 60% of the total water delivered into the distribution system. The City pumped over one billion gallons, an increase of approximately 25% over our average annual pumping.

You can do your part to conserve water outdoors by following the basic conservation tips given below:

1. Repair leaks promptly.
2. If you see or hear water running within your home, contact a plumber to identify the source of the noise.
3. Check your automatic irrigation system for leaks on a regular basis. Run the system through its cycles as you walk the yard, looking for water other than what is spraying from the sprinkler heads.
4. Install rain sensors to keep your automatic irrigation system from watering unnecessarily.
5. Plan new landscaping using plants native to the area that require minimal watering.
6. If you see water leaks outdoors that you feel may be the City's responsibility, please contact us immediately at (713) 662-5839; after hours, you can contact the Police Dispatcher at (713) 662-5850.

To help the City maintain a balance of daily pumping volumes, we are asking residents to adjust their automatic irrigation systems to the following schedule by resetting the days that their systems run:

- **Residents with odd-numbered addresses:** Water on any of these days – Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
- **Residents with even-numbered addresses:** Water on any of these days – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

So many irrigation systems are set to run on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at times between the hours of 5:00 AM and 10:00 AM that we are seeing high peak flows in those particular early mornings. Staggering the irrigation run times will help resolve the problem.

City CURRENTS

A Newsletter for
the citizens of
West University Place
Summer 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
or mross@westutx.gov

GENERAL INFORMATION (713) 668-4441

CITY WEBSITE www.westutx.gov
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West University Place, Texas 77005

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8 City Currents Summer 2012

Money Matters at Finance!

Budget time is around the corner. In the next few months, the Finance Department will be joining other City departments, the Mayor and City Council as the City prepares its 2013 budget for the fiscal year, which runs from January 1 through December 31, 2013. To track the budget process, check for information on hearings, council workshops and budget-related events made available on the City's website and its Facebook and Twitter pages.

Late fees on utility billings. City Ordinance 86-34 sets forth the requirements for utility billing. By ordinance, payment is due on utility bills on presentation, and bills become delinquent 21 days following the date they are mailed. The financial software purchased last year has allowed the Finance Department to input these ordinance-specified mailing dates as well as administrative dates into the system, which then generates the associated notices at the proper time. Gentle reminders of overdue accounts, warning letters of impending disconnection on severely delinquent accounts and even bills for late charges are now generated on the associated dates by the software. Because late fees are 10% of the billing amount, which

can greatly impact personal budgeting, we urge all residents to contact the Finance Department by the first of the month if you have not received your billing statement in the mail.

Start and stopping utility accounts. The City of West University Place does not transfer utility accounts. When you move into a new home as a renter or owner, you must start a utility account (or reactivate one, in the case of a landlord). When you move from a home, whether one you own or one you rent, you must terminate the service (or deactivate it, for landlords). It is the resident's responsibility to contact the Finance Department in either case. If you do not terminate your service, the responsibility for water consumed, sewer services used and garbage picked up is legally yours until someone else moves in or you contact the department. If you are selling your home, we understand that you want to make the transaction as smooth as possible for the new owners; but remember, if you close, for example, on Friday, May 1, but leave the account in your name until May 4 to ensure the new owners have water during their move in, you are responsible for ALL water used during that time. It is better to set your account termination

with your closing date—change ownership and utility responsibility at the same time. If you terminate your service on a certain date and the new owners do not contact us to start an account, the meter will have a final reading and be locked for your protection. Having no water forces the new owners to contact the department to set up service. Your consideration is better spent reminding them to call us at (713) 662-2824 about starting an account.

Please update your contact info. How many of you now use your cell phone as your home contact number? How many of you have changed email addresses in the past several years? Having current contact information allows us to easily contact you when a situation arises that needs your attention—no signature on a check, no check in the payment envelope, a lost utility bill in the mail, just to name a few! If we do not have a current phone number or email address, we have to reach you by postal mail, which is not the best method for a speedy resolution. None of your personal information is ever given to a third party; it remains with us. You may email us with your update at billinghelp@westutx.gov.