

# Parks & Open Space 2025 Updated Master Plan

City of West University Place



**FRIENDS PARK**  
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN F. BROWN AND HIS WIFE  
MARGARET BROWN  
DECEASED IN 1917  
BY THE CITY OF WEST UNIVERSITY PLACE  
CITY MANAGER  
PAULINE STELLA  
CITY CLERK  
MARGARET BROWN  
CITY OF WEST UNIVERSITY PLACE  
PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
NORTH DALLAS COUNTY  
DALLAS, TEXAS  
FRIENDS PARK

# Parks & Open Space Master Plan 2025

City of West University Place

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# Parks & Open Space Master Plan 2025

## City of West University Place

### Introduction

West University Place prepared its first Parks & Open Space Master Plan in 1989 by Tapley-Lunow Architects. A second plan was developed in 2000 by White Oak Studio, which provided guidance during a time of dramatic improvements to the West U parks system. In 2015, a volunteer citizen task force, aided by City staff, City Council liaisons and White Oak Studio, worked for over a year to assess existing park conditions and opportunities related to outdoor recreation in the community, as well as the recreation needs and preferences of West U residents. The task force conducted public meetings to secure additional citizen input concerning the future direction of outdoor recreation resources in the community. The extensive plan is still relevant but needed updating as conditions have evolved. With input from the Parks and Recreation Board, City staff and City Council Liaisons, this 2025 master plan focuses on the following:

- Updated demographics and survey information
- Updated park assessments/inventories and included park classifications
- Analyses and recommendations for lighting and shade in parks and greenspaces.
- Identifying potential locations for pickleball courts and displays of public art
- Exploring connectivity to Braes Bayou and Memorial Park trails
- Advocating for safe railroad crossings at Bellaire Blvd. by the Recreation Center and also safe pedestrian access to parks

This report should be considered a planning tool that can be used by current and future West U residents and leaders to make decisions regarding the wise use of monetary and physical resources and providing for outdoor parks and recreation facilities. Factors and conditions will change over time; staff and community leaders must remain in touch with the needs and wishes of West U residents. An entirely new Parks and Open Space Master Plan is recommended in 2030.

# A Look Back

Since 2015



# Parks Highlights

Since 2015



Front Porch in Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park

Established Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park

Established the Edloe Street Pathway

Redeveloped Wier Park

Made upgrades to Judson Park

## Colonial Park Improvements

Challenge course,

Development of the West End of Colonial Park,  
new water slides and play features to pool area, new shade  
area by pool house, separation fence for year-round use,  
replaced decks, new site furnishings, and artificial turf  
transforming barren areas to useable spaces for residents

## West U Recreation Center

Track rubber resurfacing

Addition of outdoor exercise equipment

# A Look At Today

## Current Conditions



# Public Involvement

## Citizen Surveys

### 2025

The Parks and Recreation Department partnered with a data collection consultant, OnPointe Insights, LLC, to conduct an online survey for residents to provide input on potential improvements to the Recreation Center facility, as part of Phase 2 of the City's Facilities Master Plan, along with improvements to the tennis/pickleball courts. There were 1,250 respondents.

To view the 2025 survey results dashboard, please visit [Parks Master Planning | West University Place, TX - Official Website](#)

### 2020

A Parks and Recreation Department Citizen Survey was conducted in December of 2020 by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to obtain opinions from all West U residents about our outdoor recreation and park facilities.

The survey was conducted online and was publicized widely for several weeks beforehand. The City provided paper copies of the survey to residents who requested them. A link to the Survey format is included in Appendix A of this report. About 8.5% (1,268) of West U residents responded. Results of the survey are summarized on the following pages. The survey confirmed that 46% of West U residents use parks at least once a month.

To view the 2020 survey, please visit [Parks Master Planning | West University Place, TX - Official Website](#)

### 2014

To view the 2014 survey and results, please visit [Parks Master Planning | West University Place, TX - Official Website](#)

# Public Involvement

## Public Meetings

City staff began discussing the process of an update to the 2025 Master Plan in September 2024 with the Parks and Recreation Board.

## City Council

During the 2024 budget process, City Council identified it as a goal to update the Parks and Open Space Master Plan. They agreed that this could be accomplished in-house by City staff and the Parks and Recreation Board. The recommended updates were presented to City Council on October 27, 2025



# 2020 Survey Results

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

**The Citizen Survey indicated the following opinions about various service qualities. As with the 2015 Master Plan, it remains vitally important to West U residents to be able to walk safely to their parks.**

I feel West U Parks are safe – 90%

West U Parks are well maintained – 90%

West U playground equipment is well maintained – 69%

A West U park is within walking distance of my home – 94%

Overall, the City of West U has a “park-like” ambiance about it – 73%

Overall, I am satisfied with West U parks – 82%

Playgrounds, walking paths, and open spaces were consistently reported as amenities used in parks.

Participants reported spending time outdoors and time with family, as well as socializing and enjoying physical activity as key reasons for using parks in West U.

**Note:** *When the survey was conducted, it was in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were asked to gauge their answers with pre-pandemic usage.*

To view the 2020 survey, please visit  
[Parks Master Planning | West University Place, TX -  
Official Website](#)

# 2025 Survey Results

OnPointe Insights, LLC

**A total of 1,250 surveys were completed. The survey was designed to help the City understand the following:**

Potential Recreation Center improvements that residents find most appealing

Which Recreation Center improvements residents prioritize overall

Satisfaction ratings and suggestions for improving the Recreation Center

Usage and membership statistics for the Recreation Center

Tennis and pickleball usage

Feedback on court reservation system

Statistics on tennis/pickleball memberships

Feedback on value of tennis/pickleball memberships and potential added benefits

Feedback on proposals for dual-use courts vs dedicated single-sport courts

# 2025 Survey Results

OnPointe Insights, LLC

**From the 1,250 surveys completed, we received this data:**

58% were Recreation Center non-members and  
42% were Recreation Center members

The Fitness Area (cardio, weights, stretching) was identified as the number one priority and 67% found the potential improvements to be very appealing or somewhat appealing. The survey found that 23% were neutral, and 10% found them to be somewhat unappealing or very unappealing.

**They were asked ‘Why use the Recreation Center?’ the top three responses were:**

- Physical activity or exercise (78%)
- Attend classes or programs (42%)
- Spend time outdoors (16%)

**When asked what amenities they used, the top three responses were:**

- Indoor pool (52%)
- Indoor weight equipment (47%)
- Indoor cardio equipment (46%)

To view the 2025 survey results dashboard, please visit  
[Parks Master Planning | West University Place, TX - Official Website](#)

# Park Acquisitions

In September 2019, a City Council workshop was held to gauge the appetite for parkland acquisition. Direction provided was not to actively seek parkland; however, if land becomes available that would allow for current park expansion, it should be explored at Huffington Park, Jennie Elizabeth Park and Whitt Johnson Park. In addition, properties in the shaded area are desirable, as this is the largest area without an effective walking distance of half mile\* to parkland due to traffic barriers.

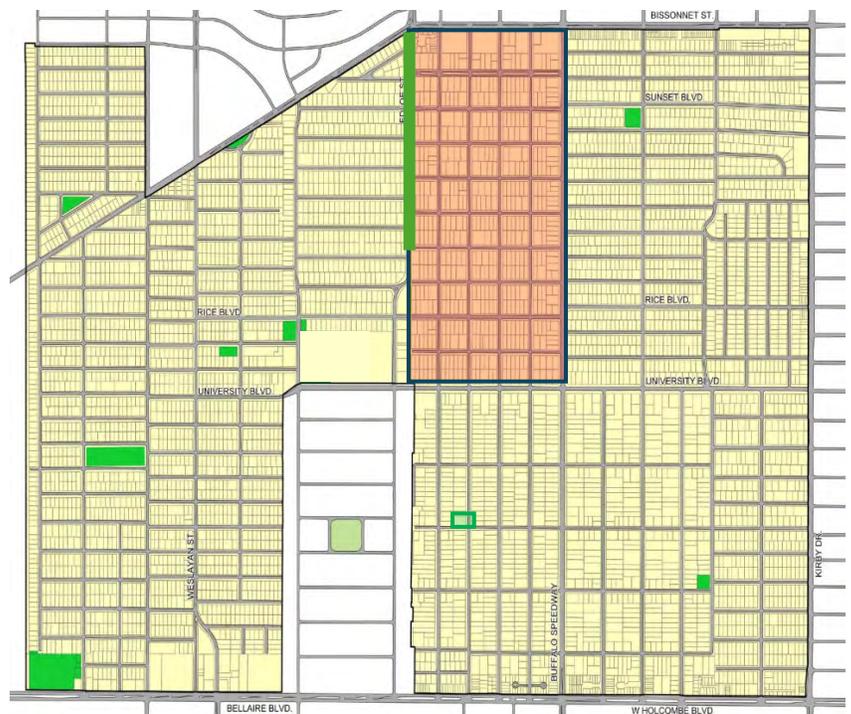
## Access to West U Parks

Adults living within a half mile\* from a park will visit parks and exercise more often. West U's recognized standard is a half mile radius for an acceptable distance to a park.

In 2020, 90% of our citizens indicated that members of their household could easily walk to a West University Place park. This is up from 82% in 2014, before Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park was added to the system.

In a survey, 46% of survey respondents reported using at least one West University Place park at least once a month.

Prior to the acquisition of Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park, the Master Plan identified the section between Buffalo Speedway and Edloe/Poor Farm Ditch as the largest area not within a half mile of a park.



## Parks & Open Space Master Plan Acquisition & Open Space Recommendations

- Explore ways to increase “unstructured open space” in existing parks.
- Seek opportunities to add unstructured open space to the park system (2020 survey priority).
- Pursue acquisition of additional park property for development as passive, unstructured open space with parameters.

\*Utilizing the Trust for Public Land standard of a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) from your home.

A photograph of a residential backyard. In the foreground, there is a stone water feature with several large, flat, reddish-brown stones arranged in a circular pattern, with water flowing over them. The water is clear and reflects the sky. Behind the water feature is a wooden fence made of vertical slats. In the background, there is a white house with a grey roof and a chimney. A green tree is partially visible behind the fence. The sky is blue with some light clouds. A blue banner with white text is overlaid on the middle of the image.

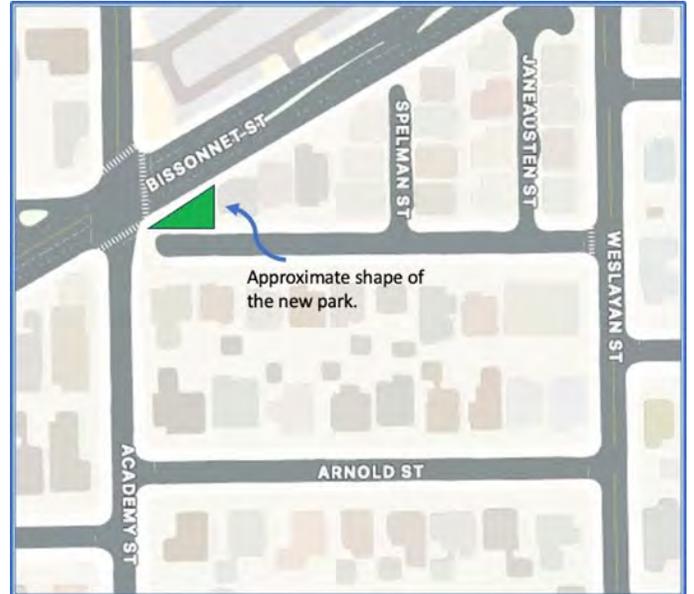
# West University Place Park System

# Existing Parks



West University Place has nine outdoor park properties and one pervious pathway. Planning for the future outdoor recreation needs of the community must begin with a clear understanding of the existing parks and the outdoor recreation opportunities they offer. A brief description is included on the following pages. For a detailed history of each park, refer to “History of the Park System and Recreation Facilities: 1924 – 2025” available on the City website.

# Browning Parkland



In 2024, it was discovered that a townhome builder had deeded property including an area with the West U obelisk at Bissonnet at Wesleyan to the City of West University Place in 1999. These properties were accepted by the City as parkland, allowing public use of the space. The entry sign property is approximately 900 square feet, and the greenspace west of the townhome is approximately 2,140 square feet.

Beginning in 2024, the City assumed landscaping and irrigation maintenance for the west property. The sign area was already being maintained by the City.

## Assessment Comments

- Conducive as a greenspace or landscape attraction
- Potential for public art and lighting improvements
- Sightlines limit plantings and structure heights

# Colonial Park

Community Park – 3.16 Acres  
Dedicated – 1932  
Expanded 1990 – 2000

## Redevelopment Projects

**2000:** Playground, lawn, pavilion and path

**2009–2010:** Pool, pool house, tennis courts

**2013:** Play features added/replaced

**2014:** East end lawn and site furnishings

**2020:** Playground refurbishment, youth challenge course, and new pool amenities

**2023–2024:** Byron and Case decks replaced

**2025:** Added turf around Byron deck to match the Case deck. Added vibrant Adirondack furniture and identity to Colonial West End.

## Facility Inventory

- Recreation pool
- Two tennis courts
- Playground
  - (for ages 2-5, 5-12)
- Pavilion
- West end decks
- Concrete walking trail
- Parking (52 spaces)
- Open play lawn
- Picnic area
- Youth challenge course



# Colonial Park



# Colonial Park

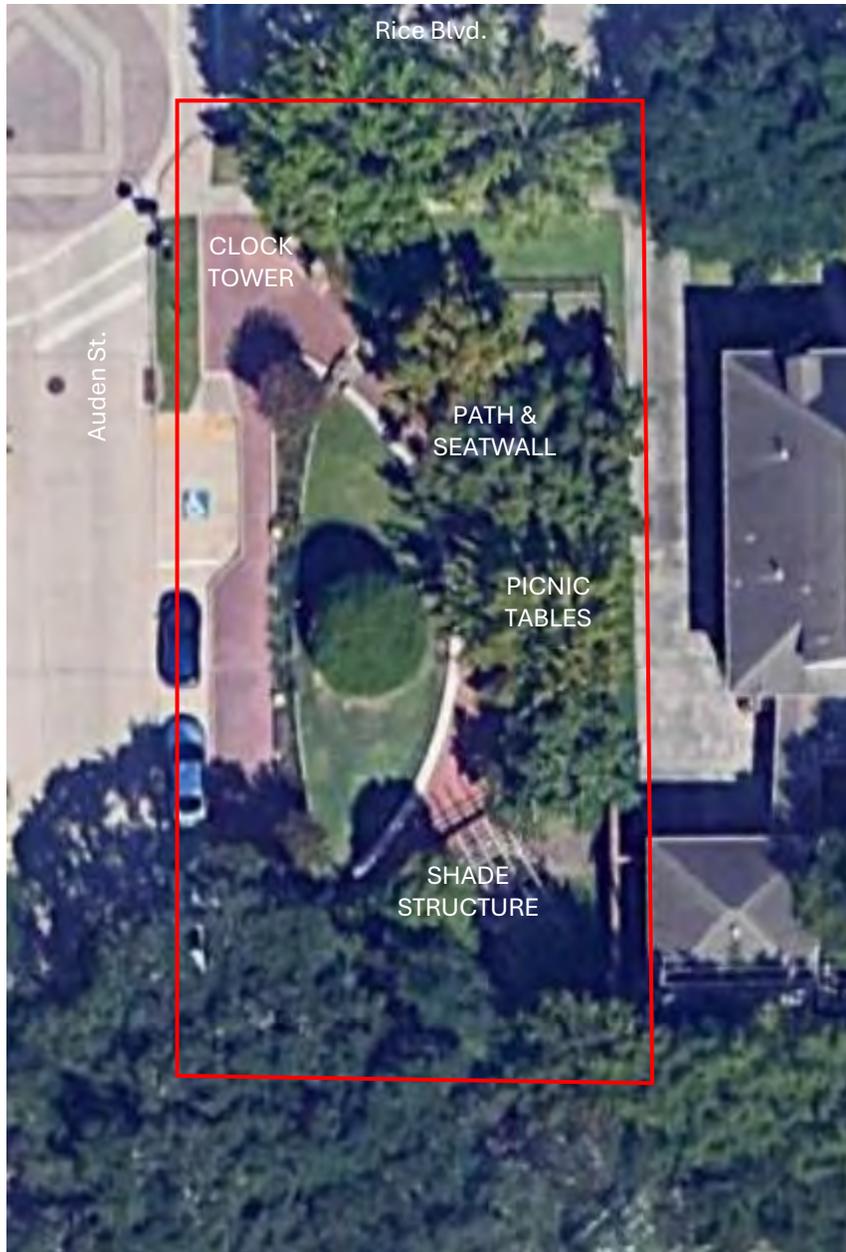


# Colonial Park



# Friends Park

Pocket Park -.17 Acres  
Dedicated - 2007



## Facility Inventory

- Picnic area
- Shade structure
- Parking (3 spaces)
- Clock tower
- Path and seat wall

## Assessment Comments

- Pocket park
- Civic landmark
- Planting and clock tower enhance streetscape
- Large tree has overtaken green space within the park; consider moving ceremonial tree to a different location to allow for usable space

# Friends Park



# Huffington Park

Neighborhood Park – .61 Acres  
Dedicated – 1989

## Facility Inventory

Playground (ages 2-5)  
Swing set  
Picnic area  
Shade structure  
Walking paths  
Entry landscape

## Redevelopment Projects

**2009:** Redeveloped park  
**2021:** Removed arbor, increased  
greenspace, added walking path,  
and upgraded play equipment

## Assessment Comments

Excessive shade limits lawn growth  
on east side of the park



# Huffington Park



# Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park

Neighborhood Park - .34 Acres  
Developed & Dedicated - 2018

## Facility Inventory

- Covered "front porch" shade structure with rocking chairs
- Large open greenspace
- Stream bed with button activated water feature
- Picnic tables
- Log and bench Seating
- Little Free Library

## Assessment Comments

Consider additional tree plantings and shade opportunities



# Jennie Elizabeth Hughes Park



# Judson Park

Neighborhood Park - .73 Acres  
Dedicated - 1940

## Facility Inventory

One Tennis/Pickleball Court  
Playground (ages 2-5)  
Playground (ages 5-12)  
BBQ area  
Parking (8 spaces)  
GaGa ball pit

## Redevelopment Projects

**2011:** Playgrounds

**2012:** Wood deck and game tables

**2014:** Tennis court, replaced lighting system, fence

**2022:** Shade over area for kids ages 2-5, replace turf, added gaga ball pit

## Assessment Comments

- Park functions well as a traditional neighborhood park
- Separation between the two playground areas limits caregiver supervision ability
- Picnic deck and “unstructured open space” are well-liked.



# Judson Park



# Liberty Hill Park

Pocket Park - .17 Acres  
Dedicated - 1924

## Facility Inventory

City sign and landscaping,  
lawn and trees

## Assessment Comments

- No recreation facilities
- Primarily serves as city identification sign and buffer for homes from Bissonnet St.
- Explore ways to make the park usable and safe for recreation, or consider reallocating the land as landscape amenity space, not designated for recreation use
- Outdated landmark sign
- Trees provide lots of shade



# Liberty Hill Park



# Recreation Center

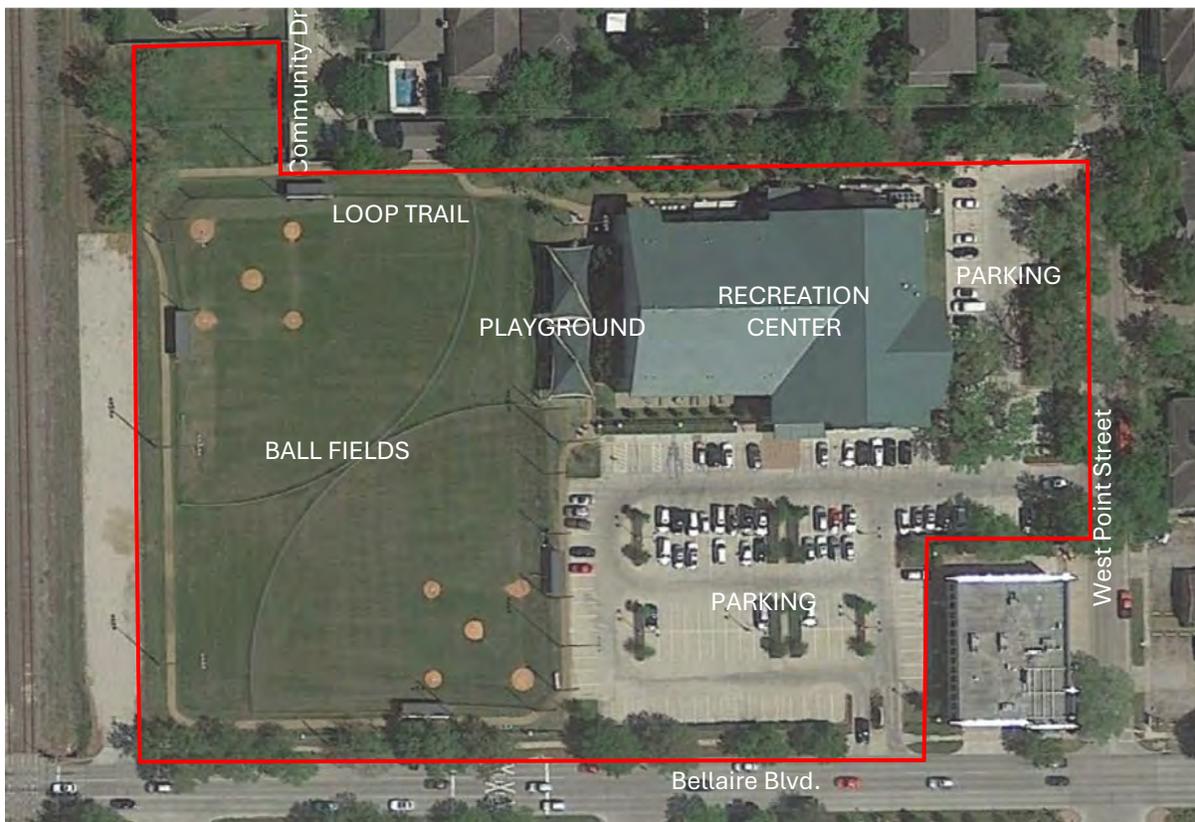
Community Park – 5.35 Acres  
Acquired and Dedicated – 2003  
Reconstructed – 2010

## Facility Inventory

- Playground (ages 2-5)
- Playground (ages 5-12)
- Picnic area
- Shade structure
- Parking
- Ball fields
- Jogging track
- Indoor facilities

## Assessment Comments

- Well-used, successful facility
- Consider enlarging the cardio/weight room
- Outdoor recreation opportunities for general use are limited
- Potential West Side Drainage Project may create usage restrictions for lot at northwest corner



# Recreation Center



# Whitt Johnson Park

Neighborhood Park - .52 Acres  
Dedicated - 1973

## Facility Inventory

Playground (ages 2-5)  
Playground (ages 5-12)  
Swing set  
Picnic area  
Shade structure  
Two basketball half-courts  
Three parallel parking spaces

## Assessment Comments

- Well integrated park elements, such as columns, fencing, and furnishings
- Lacks significant "unstructured open space"
- Well-used park

## Redevelopment Projects

**2008:** Treehouse play structure

**2013:** Rebuild of play area for kids ages 2 – 5

**2018:** ADA compliant treehouse, lighting, GaGa ball pit



# Whitt Johnson Park



# Wier Park

Neighborhood Park - .88 Acres  
Dedicated - 1939

## Facility Inventory

Two tennis courts  
Four pickleball courts  
Playground (ages 2-5)  
Playground (ages 5-12)  
Shade structure  
Picnic area  
Basketball half-court  
Cirrus swing

## Redevelopment Projects

**2008:** Major redevelopment

**2024:** Major renovation

## Assessment Comments

- Well loved neighborhood park; heavily used
- Nicely shaded
- Park space dominated by two tennis courts
- Lacks significant “unstructured open space”
- Increased useable space by 6,500 square feet via improvements made in 2024



# Wier Park



# Wier Park



# Wier Park



# Wier Park

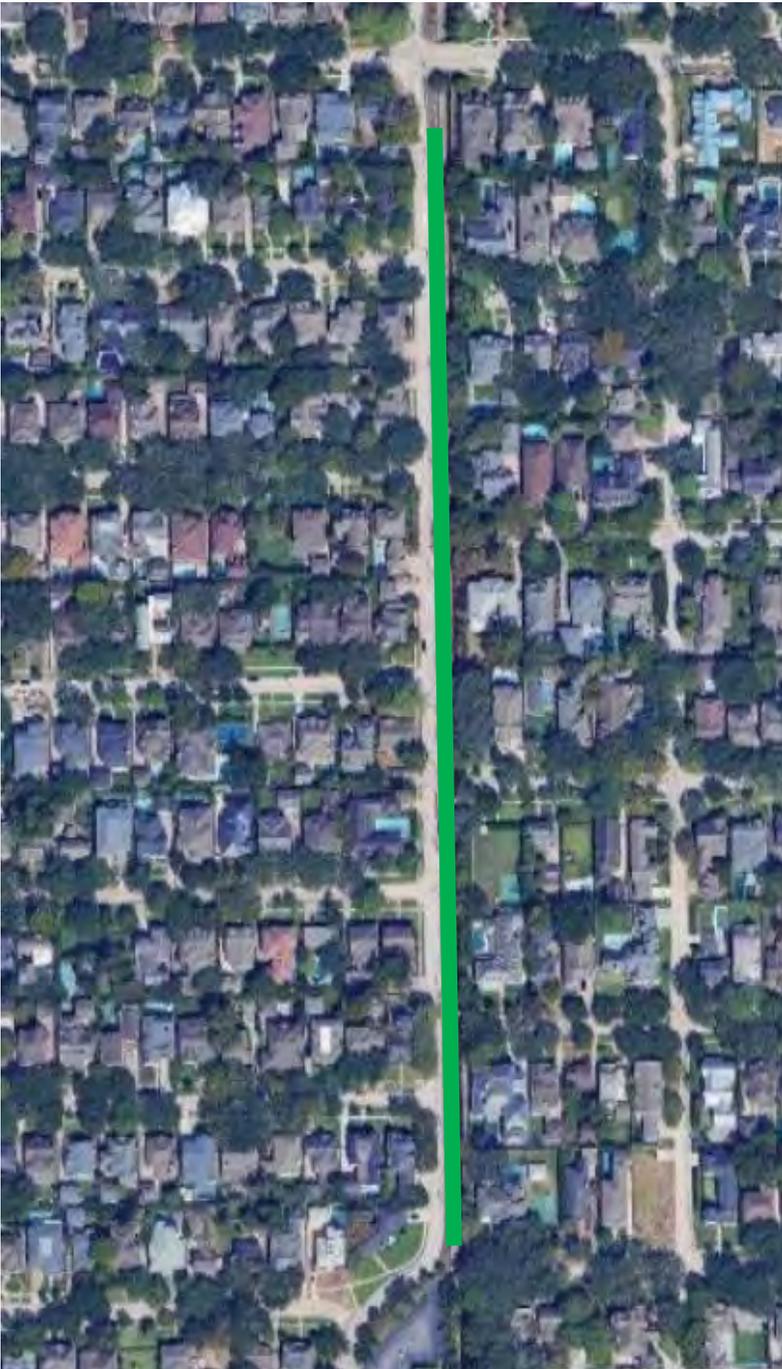




# **West University Place Green Spaces**

# Edloe Street Pathway

Walking Path – Approx. 1/3 Mile  
Developed in 2022-2023



## Facility Inventory

- Pervious pathway made of recycled materials
- Benches
- Drinking fountain with pet station
- Pet waste and refuse station
- Landscaping

## Assessment Comments

Improvements very well-utilized and pathway in good condition

# Edloe Street Pathway



# West U Demographics

## Population Estimate – 14,955

### Age

18 and under: ~ 4,655 (31.1%)

19 to 64: ~ 7,831 (52.3%)

65 plus: ~ 2,485 (16.6%)

### Housing

Households (2019–2023): 5,218

Person per household (2019–2023): 2.86

### Income

Median Household Income: \$250,000

### Race

White – 75.1%

Black – 0.2%

American Indian and Alaska Native – 0.3%

Asian – 11.4%

Hispanic or Latino – 6.9%

Two or More Races – 11.5%

Sources: 2020 Census and 2023 Census American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

# Demographic Issues

West U's population has been roughly stable since 2000 at around 15,000.

An increase in multi-family residences near West U may add pressure on park facilities.

City staff has observed a more diverse, global citizenry attending events and recreational classes.

## **Conclusion**

Changes in age, ethnicity, and mobility are resulting in changing recreational needs and practices.

# Residential Development

West U parks are open to the public, both city residents and non-residents from surrounding areas.\*

Multi-family residential development has recently increased outside the West U city limits, due to desirable location and great market demand. This can be expected to increase non-resident use of the parks, putting more pressure on park land, facilities, and upkeep of parks and facilities.

Restricting use of open parks is not practical without significant investment in additional staff to monitor each park. The open-park policy should be maintained.

\* Special facilities such as the Recreation Center, Colonial Park Pool, and tennis court reservations are only available to residents and to non-residents when accompanied by a resident.



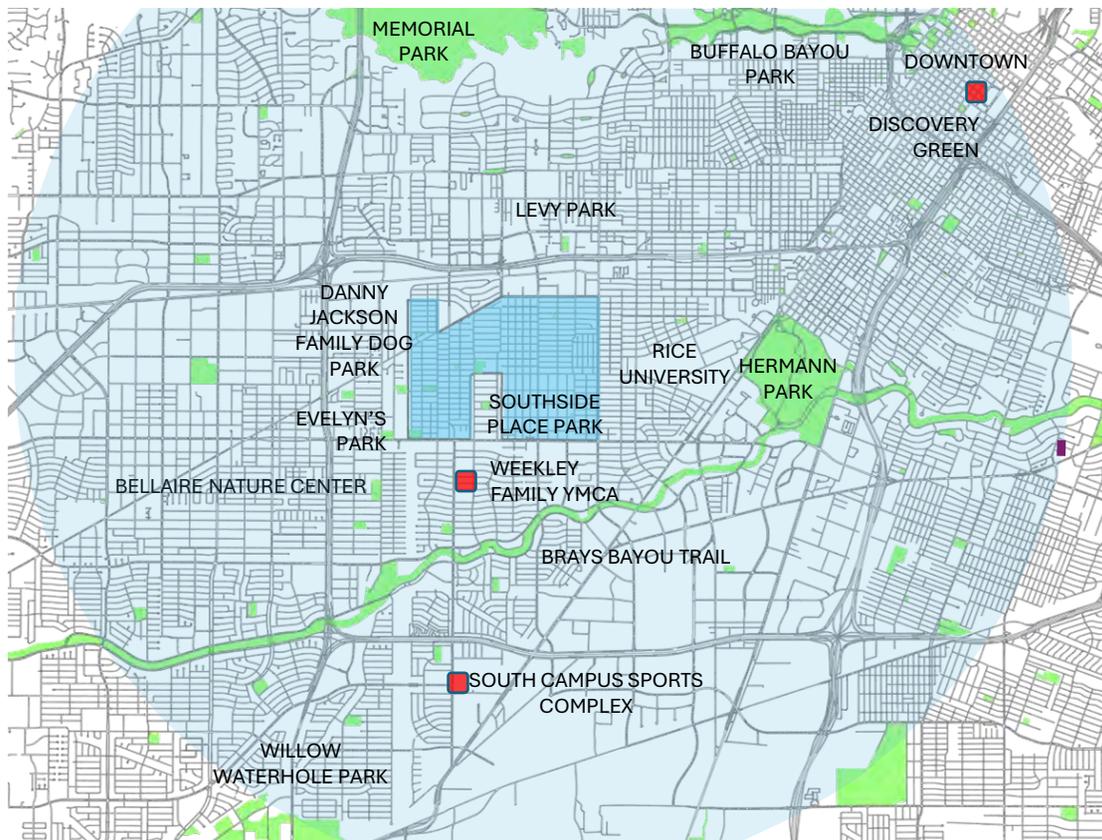
Recent Multi-Family Residential Development Near West U

# Nearby Park Resources

West U residents benefit from wonderful park resources in the surrounding metropolitan area. There are many parks within a short drive from West U that provide an array of outdoor recreational experiences, including hiking and bike trails, natural areas, and major urban parks.

Consideration of these resources should be included as West U plans for utilization of limited land and facilities within the city. Outdoor experiences that require large parcels of land, special facilities, or separation from residential properties should be left for venues outside of the city.

The availability of such parks allows West U to focus on providing neighborhood parks that are quickly and easily accessible for frequent use by West U residents of all ages.



# Parks Budget

## Parks & Recreation Department 2025 Operating Budget

Administration	\$ 763,490
Recreation Center	\$2,589,750
Colonial Park	\$ 571,050
Senior Services	\$ 632,350
Parks Maintenance	<u>\$ 822,800</u>
Total 2025 Budget	\$5,379,440
Estimated 2025 Revenue	\$2,327,600
Net Taxpayer Expense	\$3,051,840

### Funding for Capital Improvement Projects

Capital improvement projects are generally funded with taxpayer-approved City park bonds and with supplemental funds raised and donated by Friends of West U Parks. The Friends of West University Parks Fund (Friends) is a volunteer-based 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to raising funds for development and improvement of parks and green spaces in the City of West University Place. Since their creation, they have raised over \$9 million, which has gone toward park improvements.

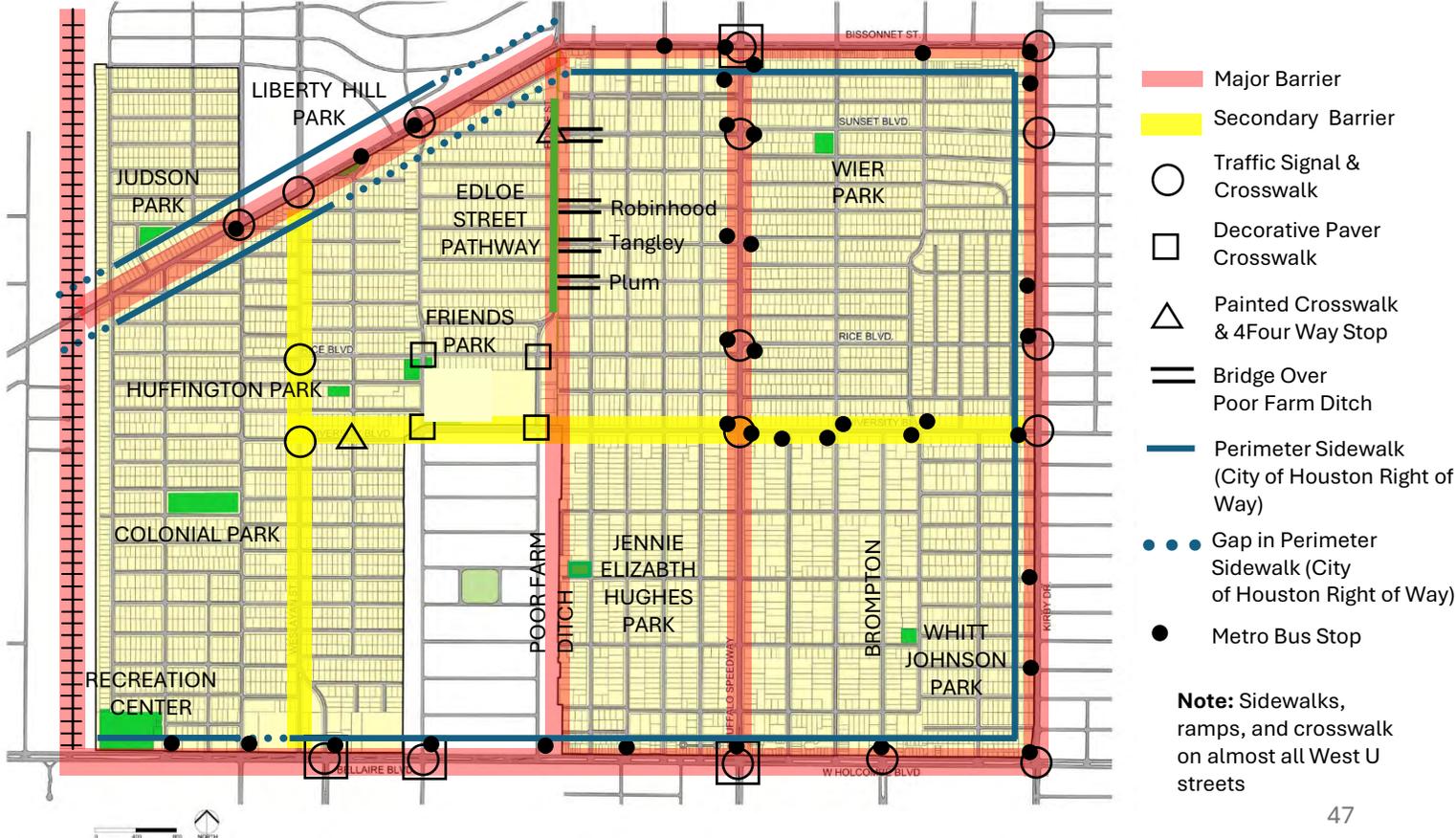
The City pays for capital projects with budgeted funds that may include bond proceeds.

# Pedestrian Mobility

Walking, running, and bicycling around neighborhood streets continue to be important and enjoyable forms of recreation and exercise in West U. Major street and sidewalk improvement programs over the last 15 years have made these activities safer and more enjoyable. Virtually every street within the city now has sidewalks and intersection curb ramps, accommodating young children on tricycles and bikes, along with walkers with strollers and wagons.

The map on this page evaluates key issues related to navigating West U on foot or via cycling. Major streets, railroad tracks, and the Poor Farm Ditch are identified as potential barriers to pedestrians. Traffic signals and crosswalks are noted.

While the vast majority of West U residents drive their own cars when traveling outside the city, some do depend on public transportation or walking – perimeter street sidewalks and Metro bus stops are indicated as key ingredients to those modes of transportation.

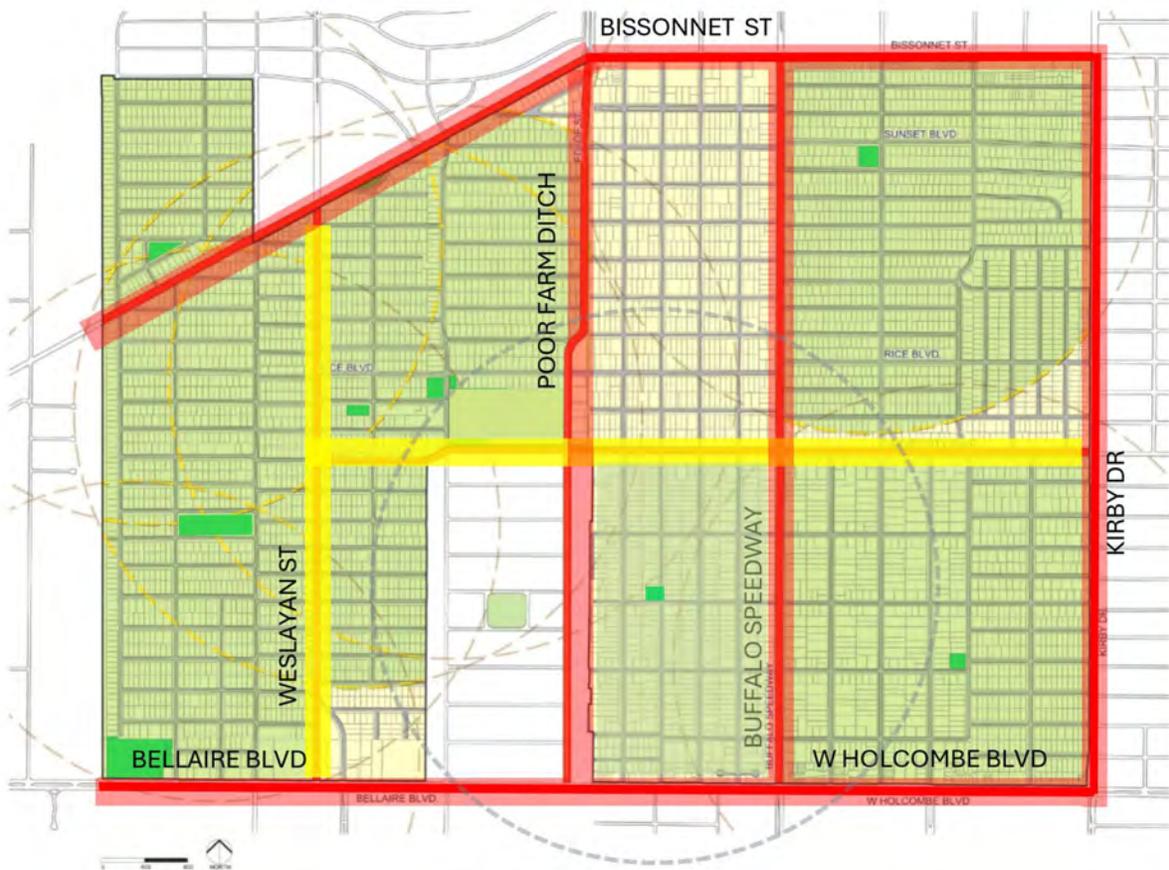


# Access to Parks

As barriers to pedestrians and bicyclists, major streets and Poor Farm Ditch affect access to West U parks. In the citizen survey, residents ranked “safe walking distance to parks” higher than any other open-space activity.

The 2000 and 2015 Parks Master Plans utilized an accepted standard half mile radius (about a 10-minute walk) from each West U park to evaluate proximity to parks. The map on this page demonstrates how streets and Poor Farm Ditch change the effective proximity of some residents to the closest park.

The area between Buffalo Speedway and Edloe St., north of University Blvd., remains the largest area that does not have a park within a half mile effective walking radius of residents.



# A Look at the Future

## Recommendations



# Recommendations Summary

- 1. Continue phased program to evaluate, design, and redevelop every West U park. As of 2025 all parks except Friends Park, Recreation Center Playground and Liberty Hill Park have been evaluated.**
- 2. Parks facilities should reflect the evolving needs and interests of the community.**
- 3. Explore ways to increase “unstructured open space” in existing parks.**
- 4. Pursue acquisition of additional park property for development as passive, “unstructured open space,” if parameters specified in this plan can be met.**
- 5. Explore ways to increase recreational use of underutilized spaces in West U parks and around the community.**
- 6. Explore ways to optimize residents’ ability to enjoy public spaces and to access parks on bike or on foot in coordination with Public Works.**

- 7. Include walking paths within West U where appropriate.**
- 8. Explore opportunities to create a north-south linear hiking & biking trail connecting to existing trails along Brays Bayou and Buffalo Bayou.**
- 9. Pursue street, sidewalk, and landscape improvements along Auden St.**
- 10. Continue key partnership with Friends of West U Parks.**
- 11. Explore cooperative arrangements with other agencies and nonprofit organizations.**
- 12. Develop a broad-based strategy to fund parks acquisition and capital projects.**
- 13. Create a new Master Plan in 2030.**
- 14. Conduct park lighting and shade assessments.**

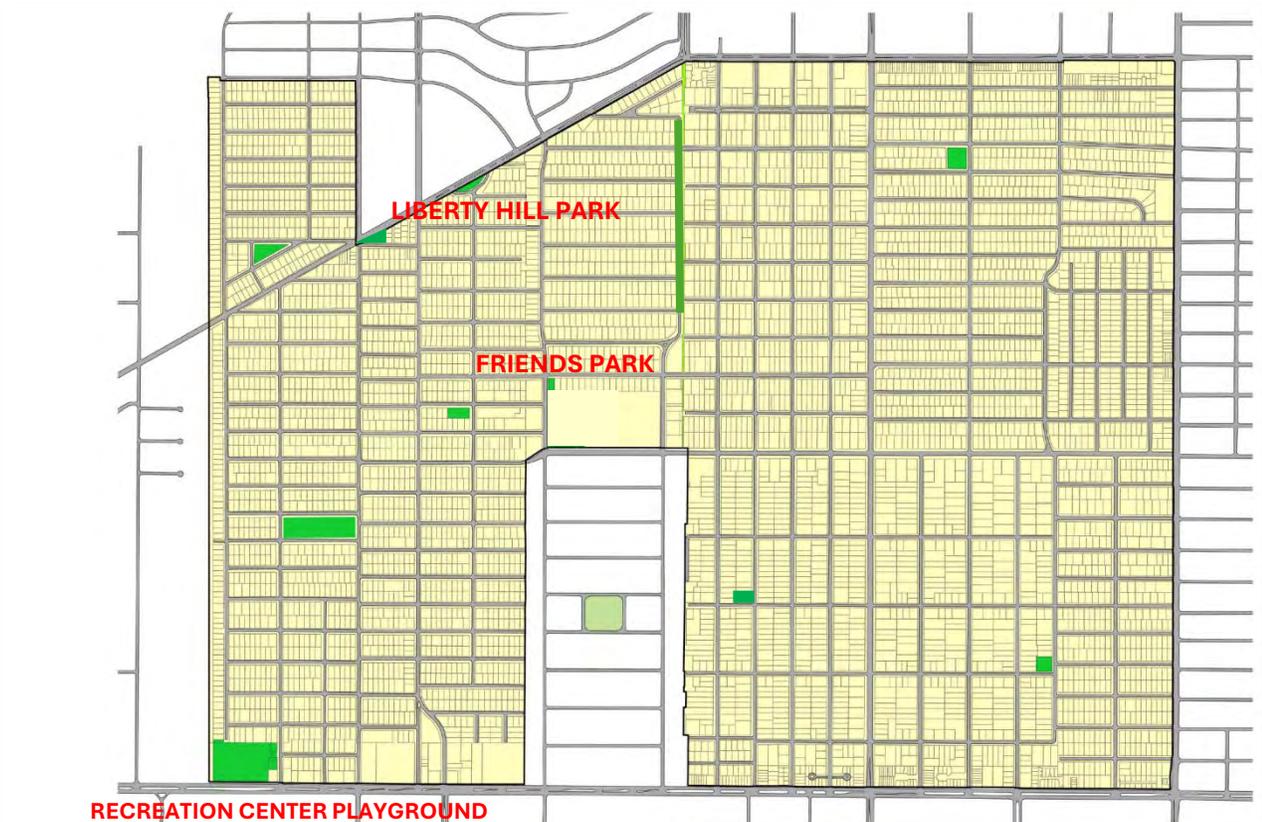
**Note:** Recommendations are numbered for convenience but are not ranked in order of importance.

# Park Redevelopment Program

## 1. Establish a phased program to evaluate all West U parks – design, revitalize, and redevelop parks as applicable to best serve the needs of the community.

Periodically, parks must be reevaluated and considered in a fresh light to ensure they serve the community as needed. This program will address fundamental issues at each park and will consider whether major, fundamental changes need to be made. It will not be focused on repairs or replacement of equipment but will address what amenities are provided, how they are arranged within the park property, and how the park relates to the surrounding neighborhood. Current park uses will be challenged to ensure they remain vital and appropriate for the limited space available.

**As of 2025 all parks except Friends Park, Recreation Center Playground and Liberty Hill have been evaluated.**



The above list should not be considered absolute. Circumstances such as new parkland acquisitions, equipment issues, and amenity additions may alter or supersede the prioritization.

# Park Redevelopment Program

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

- Residents around the park
- Resident park users
- Parks & Recreation Board – balanced view of overall park system
- Friends of West University Parks
- West U Senior Services Board
- Parks & Recreation Department Staff
- Design professionals
- West U businesses
- Surrounding schools and churches

## **PROCESS**

- Evaluate preferences of park users and community needs
- Determine conditions and performance of the park
- Study surrounding neighborhood conditions and pedestrian access
- Consider a variety of improvements – up to complete redesign as warranted

## **BUDGET AND FUNDING**

- Allocate major capital funding for each park depending on park size and project scope
- Work with Friends to determine target share for each

# Parks for the Next Generation

## 2. Parks facilities should reflect the evolving needs and interests of the community.

The population of West U is becoming more diverse and global. The city is home to families of professionals and businesspeople who move here from all over the world. Recreational needs and interests of these families may differ from those of a more homogeneous population of the past.

Interest and involvement in senior adult recreation has increased dramatically since 2000. Staff observes that West U seniors are more active and interested in fitness than in the past.

City staff should:

- Be proactive to encourage new and current residents to be involved and communicative about their needs and desires for outdoor recreation and programs.
- Continue informal staff observation and communication regarding public preferences and desires.
- Conduct a comprehensive survey in 2030 to obtain updated feedback for a new Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Consider non-traditional facilities and programs to supplement familiar park amenities.
  - Residents and guests may enjoy gathering with friends and family at large open-air picnics and events.
  - Classes and organized events can incorporate a variety of activities, such as tai chi.
  - People from many cultures value the opportunity to walk and exercise in natural surroundings.
- Public events are gateways to civic involvement. Continue parks-based events that engage new residents.
- Improve Recreation Center amenities with a focus on the cardio/weight room.
- Continue to monitor trends and evolving interests. The creation of four pickleball courts in 2022 and the addition of two more in 2025 are prime examples. Opportunities for public art should also be considered.

# Unstructured Open Space

Residents expressed a strong desire in the 2020 survey for open, unstructured green spaces. Open lawn areas provide places for a variety of recreational activities, as well as giving a sense of spaciousness to the park and the surrounding neighborhood. West U parks have limited acreage and to a large extent have been filled with recreational facilities, limiting the amount of unstructured open space available close to home.

### **3. Explore ways to increase “unstructured open space” in existing parks.**

As parks are reevaluated in the Park Redevelopment Program, consider opportunities to rearrange park layout to add more unstructured open space.

Consider expanding existing parks by acquiring adjacent lots as available.

**Note:** When “unstructured open space” is referenced, it is referring to the 2014 and 2020 survey terminology.

# Parkland Acquisition

While improvements have been made for walking access to parks for some areas of West U, residents between Edloe St. and Buffalo Speedway still are not within a half mile of a park.

As noted above, there is not community consensus about acquisition of new parkland. Accordingly, any pursuit of new land should proceed only under careful guidelines and full, open community involvement.

Public feedback indicates that passive, unstructured open space should be the focus, if new parkland is considered.

The community continues to be concerned about the ability of new parks to be “good neighbors” to the surrounding residents. Parking, safety, traffic, light, and noise are concerns.

## **4. Pursue acquisition of additional park property for development as passive, unstructured open space, if parameters specified in this plan can be met.**

- Within the target area between Edloe St. and Buffalo Speedway, both north of University Blvd.
- No tax rate increase
- Local neighbors’ support
- Address safety, traffic, privacy, noise, parking, and light issues

# Underutilized Spaces

## **5. Explore ways to increase recreational use of underutilized spaces in West U parks and around the community.**

It is important to take full advantage of all parks and open space available to the citizens of West U. The task force identified some areas that could be better utilized for outdoor recreation.

- The Recreation Center occupies a substantial parcel of land but currently provides limited outdoor recreation opportunities that are open for general use, outside of organized sports. The City owns an adjacent residential lot on Community Dr. that may offer opportunity as well. Explore options to increase and diversify recreation at this facility.
- Liberty Hill Park is small and surrounded by streets, including Bissonnet, a high-traffic street. Explore ways to make the park usable and safe for recreation or consider reallocating the land as landscape amenity space, not designated for recreational use.
- Study usage for Recreation Center racquetball/squash courts and determine if these space are better suited for other activities.

# Pedestrian Mobility

## **6. Explore ways to optimize residents' ability to enjoy public ways and to access parks on bike and on foot in coordination with Public Works.**

West U has limited parkland, and people of all backgrounds love to walk, jog, and bicycle along streets and other public areas. Evaluate opportunities to reduce barriers described above on page 47.

- Explore ways to enhance safe crossings along Buffalo Speedway.
- Evaluate opportunities to cross Poor Farm Ditch south of University Blvd. Involves cooperation with the Harris County Flood Control District.
- Ensure that bike racks are well-located within all parks.

# Linear Open Space



West U residents expressed a strong desire to have walking paths within parks and linear parks with trails. Currently, West U parks do not adequately allow for that activity, and residents must drive to be able to use major area trails.

## **7. Include walking paths within West U where appropriate.**

- Within parks
- Along Poor Farm Ditch

## **8. Explore opportunities to create a north-south linear hiking & biking trail connecting to existing trails along Brays Bayou and Buffalo Bayou.**

Linear tracts of land near West U offer opportunities for public trails.

- Coordinate with public agencies, nonprofit organizations and CenterPoint to create a public hiking & biking trail extending north-south along the CenterPoint right-of-way to Brays Bayou and to Memorial Park
- Consider constructing a hiking & biking trail along West U-owned Kilmarnock Ditch, south of Bellaire Blvd. toward Brays Bayou

# Gateways and City Center

The City Center is a vital area of West U, contributing to a unique small-town atmosphere and sense of place. Enhancement projects over the last 10 years have made dramatic improvements. The City Center must continue to be attractive and functional for pedestrians and drivers, children and adults.

## **9. Pursue street, sidewalk, and landscape improvements along Auden St. between Rice Blvd. and University Blvd.**

- Enhance pedestrian safety
- Improve appearance
- Reduce congestion
- Improve walkable and ADA accessible route to Community Community Building, Library and Senior Center.

# Partnerships & Cooperation

## **10. Continue key partnership with Friends of West U Parks.**

The Friends of West U Parks has been a major supporter of parks capital development projects for many years. In addition to financial support through their nonprofit status, the members lead community involvement in parks advocacy and engagement. The organization also offers opportunities through social events for all interested citizens to become actively engaged with community parks. This leadership role is invaluable and should be encouraged and cultivated by the City.



## **11. Explore cooperative arrangements with other agencies and nonprofit organizations.**

West U is integrated with the surrounding metropolitan area. There are opportunities to cooperate with other organizations on outdoor recreation initiatives that benefit the citizens of West U as well as others. With the assistance of the Friends group, the City should explore a variety of cooperative arrangements with nonprofit and governmental organizations.

- Joint-use arrangements
- Cooperative development
- Planning coordination

# Funding & Financial Resources

West U currently uses the Parks & Recreation Department annual budget for operations, repairs, and replacements. Major capital projects are approached in partnership with the Friends of West U Parks.

The Citizen Survey indicated a strong preference to avoid tax increases to pay for parks capital improvement projects.

West U has previously used bond debt to pay for major sidewalk, street, and lighting projects that have made substantial improvements for walking, jogging, and biking within the community.

West U currently has significant bonded debt repayment obligations; however, repayment of current bonds over the next several years will enable new bond debt without tax increases.

## **12. Develop a broad-based strategy to fund parks acquisitions and capital projects.**

- Include major park improvement projects in long-range planning for the City's annual budget.
- Explore grants and interagency assistance with:
  - Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
  - Texas Department of Transportation
  - Harris County Precinct Three
  - Harris County Flood Control District
  - Houston-Galveston Area Council
- Work with Friends of West U Parks to establish a structured, stable project strategy. Schedule major projects and set targets for Friends and the City to share.
- Consider strategy of bond financing for major acquisitions and/or development projects if needed beyond the City budget and Friends assistance.
- Explore private donations of property where appropriate.
- Consider the strategy of obtaining an option to purchase for properties of interest. This will help resolve timing constraints; the City typically cannot move as quickly as private developers to place a traditional offer on available property. The City can also utilize the additional time to ascertain community support, develop a use plan, and organize funding for potential park properties.

# 2030 Master Plan

## **13. Create a new Master Plan in 2030.**

West University Place prepared its first Parks & Open Space Master Plan in 1989 by Tapley-Lunow Architects. A second plan was developed in 2000 by White Oak Studio, which provided guidance during a time of dramatic improvements to the West U parks system. In 2015, the current Parks and Open Space Master Plan was adopted with updates by staff and the Parks and Recreation Board made in 2025. It is recommended that a new Master Plan be developed in 2030 to assess existing park conditions and opportunities related to indoor and outdoor recreation in the community, and to determine the recreation needs and preferences of West U residents.

# Park Lighting and Shade Assessment

## **14. Conduct park lighting and shade assessments.**

As part of the Capital Improvement Program, funding in 2026 has been allocated to perform lighting assessments in each park. Lighting in parks is essential because it significantly enhances safety, accessibility, and the overall visitor experience. Proper illumination deters mischief and encourages community members to utilize the park during evening hours, fostering a lively and inclusive atmosphere. The lighting installations should be sustainable and avoid spillage and nuisance issues with neighboring properties.

While natural shade from large trees is prevalent in many West U parks, there is an opportunity to add more shade on the west side of the Recreation Center playground and potentially additional park locations. Each park should be assessed and explored for opportunities to add fabricated or natural shade in parks and playground areas.

# Appendix A



# Special Thanks

We want to acknowledge the 2015 Master Plan Task Force and the 2013 – 2015 Parks and Recreation Board and their extensive work on the previous document. In 2015, a volunteer citizen task force, aided by City staff, City Council liaisons and consultants White Oak Studio, worked for over a year to assess existing park conditions and opportunities related to outdoor recreation in the community, as well as the recreation needs and preferences of West U residents. The task force conducted public meetings to secure additional citizen input concerning the future direction of outdoor recreation resources in the community. The 2025 Updated Parks and Open Space Master Plan is largely based on the 2015 document, but it was updated to reflect changing conditions.

## **2015 Master Plan Task Force**

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### City Council Liaisons:

Joan Johnson  
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## **2013 – 2015 Parks & Recreation Board**

Melissa Pifko, Chair  
Kevin Boyle, Vice Chair  
Mark Prescott, Friends Board Rep.  
Donald Armstrong  
Burt Ballanfant  
David DeAnda  
Wayne Franklin  
Tracy Larson  
Susan Reeves  
Moya Varner

# Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population area, or that serve a specific function or age group. Examples of amenities found in these mini parks include playground/tot lot equipment, benches, picnic tables, gazebos, and ornamental landscape features.

# Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks remain the basic units of the park system and serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Generally designed with a focus on informal active and passive recreation that serve neighborhood recreational needs, these areas are provided for recreational activities such as field games, court games, picnicking, and playground areas.

# Community Parks

Community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Their focus is on meeting the recreational needs of large sections of the community, along with preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities that are generally not feasible, or perhaps desirable, at the neighborhood level. As with neighborhood parks, they should be developed for both active and passive recreational activities, but Community Parks should have restrooms available.