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# Game Changer: Parks and Recreation Coming Soon

*City votes to buy land for two parks in Westchase District*



Oh, the possibilities! We don't have any conceptual drawings we can show you yet, but we're dreaming big about how to create first-class, attractive and vibrant parks in Westchase District. These are some examples of some of the potential amenities that may be included in the parks.

For all the rich amenities in Westchase District – unmatched mobility, award-winning beautification, superior public safety and convenient retail shopping just to name a few – the area historically has been park poor. That's about to change with the City of Houston's recent vote to purchase two plots of land in Westchase District for \$3.6 million to be used for city parks. One 3.4-acre parcel is on Wilcrest Drive just north of Richmond Avenue and the District's Library Loop Trail. The other 1.8-acre parcel is on Woodchase Drive just north of the Westpark Tollway.

The vote to purchase the land is the culmination of sustained efforts by the District to partner with

the City of Houston to acquire public green space. "This is a huge step forward in realizing a dream of ours to have not just one, but two public parks in Westchase District," said Jim Murphy, Westchase District's general manager. "Once the land is secured, we'll be spending millions in funds from our 380 Area Agreement with the city to equip these parklands with quality amenities for all to enjoy."

**"Tricked out"**

The District, Murphy said, will engage in a thorough process of evaluating what the best elements are to put into the park. "We want both parks to be first-class environments that are attractive and inviting," he said. "These parks will be fully tricked

out. I'm talking landscaping and lighting, ongoing security and maintenance, benches, dog park areas and walking paths that connect with other community amenities. I suspect we will see particular equipment that will cater to both the very young as well as to seniors, each of which are significant populations in and around the District."

Murphy added that these are the first public parks to be provided not just in Westchase District but in a much larger area around the region. "The ability to market these parks as part of our package of amenities will be enormously beneficial to our multifamily communities as well as to our employers and office properties," he said.

(Continued on Page 8)

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## INSIDE

- 2

New Board Member  
Jannetta Key
- 3

Farmers Market News
- 4

50 Years of Randalls
- 5

Martial Arts Options
- 6

Howdy to Neighbors Health
- 7

New Logo for District
- 7

Meet Officer Nam Nguyen
- 8

Landscaping Roundup



Westchase *TODAY* is published quarterly by Westchase District, a municipal management district funded by local property owners in a 4.2 square-mile area centered on the Sam Houston Tollway between I-10 and US-59 on the west side of Houston, Texas. We promote economic growth by enhancing mobility, beautification, public safety, planning and development of the District.



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# Parks Added to District Amenities Package

*Tremendous positive impact ahead*

The two parks underway are game changers. There is quite a bit of history to these projects. We can detail this in a future article but our focus now is on the path forward and in securing all the benefits that will come from these two parks – Woodchase Park and Wilcrest Park are their working names.

Once the City of Houston completes its purchases, Westchase District will start the planning process with substantial public engagement and research that will undergird the programming for the two sites. Programming answers the question of “What will people do there?” and is tremendously important. We’ll then move to design and construction, all of which you will read about in future issues. The parks will open in early 2019.

Parks are gathering places that serve the local community so expect to see different improvements geared to young children, seniors and even dogs. Each park is linked to our growing trail system so fitness and exercise facilities will be part of the mix but places to rest, cool down and connect will also be present.

The parks are a result of a partnership between the City and Westchase District. The City is using its Open Space funds generated from this community to purchase the sites. Westchase will use its 380 Area Program funds to design and construct the improvements at a budget that will far exceed the City’s land investment. Westchase District also has agreed to fund the maintenance and operations so that the parks will be safe, attractive and busy for years to come.

The parks will benefit the users and we expect that these parks will draw patrons from within and around Westchase District. The nearest public park and dog parks are miles away. We also expect that the 93,000 people who work in the District will take advantage of the parks, especially since they are directly connected to our trail system. Our trail system will soon connect Westheimer to Bellaire via dedicated, off-street trails. What’s more, work underway in the area around the District makes it



*Westchase District Board Chair Philip Schneidau and General Manager Jim Murphy.*

likely that our network will connect north and south making Westchase District the regional connection between the trails along Buffalo and Brays Bayous, connecting Cinco Ranch and Bear Creek to the Texas Medical Center.

Westchase District has grown and prospered as a community without the amenity of parks. This amenity – whether for residents, visitors or corporations – is becoming increasingly high on the list, so their development comes at a very opportune time. But there is more than community curb appeal ahead.

There is also a growing number of studies documenting the positive impact of parks on real estate values. And it follows a gradient from connected to nearby to accessible in terms of location and correlates to the park’s size and impact. Our plan is to have these parks designed and developed to maximize their positive impact and spread it via our trail network and our enhanced streetscapes. By doing so, we’ll ensure that our community benefits now and in the future as these significant public investments are made here. **W**

# The Face Behind the Fab Four

*New board member Jannetta Key keeps things up-to-date at CityWestPlace*

Home to such companies as BMC Software, StatOil and ION Geophysical, the four buildings that make up CityWestPlace are some of Westchase District’s most outstanding, amenity-rich office spaces. Managing all four properties is Parkway Properties’ Jannetta Key. Earlier this year, Key became one of the newest members of the Westchase District Board of Directors. It’s a role for which she’s well-suited, given her vision for the 35-acre campus.

“I envision operating CityWestPlace much like a concierge at a boutique hotel,” she said. “I want to make life easier for our tenants. I want them to feel like everything they need is at their fingertips so they can focus solely on their businesses. It seems like Westchase District has a similar vision.”

## Amenities and anticipation

Originally from Midland, Texas, the Grambling State University graduate got her start in property management helping build multifamily student housing in various college towns. Key has lived in Houston for about 15 years and switched to commercial property management about 12 years ago. During her decade-long tenure with Boxer Properties, Key was a regional manager over 8 million square feet of office space at 76 properties. “It’s been quite a change to focus on just four properties,” she said. “But these four are some of the most amazing buildings I’ve ever seen.”



# Taste the Dom Perignon of Salsas

*Tomball’s Pain Train Salsa aims for excellence without agony*



After 17 years as a history teacher and track and football coach, Shane Novles started making fresh, all natural salsa as a way to spend more time with his three young daughters. “My oldest would help with the jars and we’d head to the Tomball farmer’s market together,” he said. “We made 52 jars for our first market and we sold out in 90 minutes. I’ve been blessed to have an avid following.”

### How Shane spells salsa

That early success encouraged Novles to retire from teaching to become a full-time salsa entrepreneur. As a defensive coordinator, he ran a drill called the pain train for his students and while his salsas aren’t painful

to consume, he decided the name had a catchy ring to it. “I didn’t start this to get out of teaching, but if I quit making salsa now there are some folks who will hunt me down. So I’ve kept at it for my own self-preservation,” he said, laughing.

From his commercial kitchen in downtown Tomball, Novles, his family and some former students cook about 600 pounds of raw onions, peppers and tomatoes every week. “We caramelize our tomatoes for a sweet taste so we don’t have to use sugar,” he said. “We add a few spices and that’s it. We don’t put anything in our salsa we can’t spell.”

### Champagne aspirations

Offering a two-pepper medium, a three-pepper “perfect heat” and a “Green-Go” creamy avocado for \$8

each, Novles said quality comes first. “It’s no good if a salsa is just hot,” he said. “With ours, first you taste the flavor then you get the heat. We put more avocado in our salsa than many of my competitors. We cook away half our product to get the right taste. I want to create the Dom Perignon of salsas.” While Dom Perignon doesn’t have a recycling plan, Novles offers a \$.50 discount for every empty jar a customer returns. The Hilton Americas-Houston hotel carries his salsa at their omelet bar and orders about 12 gallons every 10 days. “I’m proud of our product – I think it’s first-class,” he said.

His pursuit of superiority has led Novles to branch out into making homemade gluten-free tortilla chips, producing about 200 bags a week for \$5 each. “You’ve gotta have a good chip to go with salsa and I’d been looking for something worthy,” he said. “An old buddy showed me how to do it from scratch and I found the perfect complement.”

Come take a ride on the taste-bud-friendly pain train each week at Westchase District Farmers Market. To learn more about Novles’ work, visit [facebook.com/paintrainsalsa](https://facebook.com/paintrainsalsa).

### Year-round market, year-round calendar

Having celebrated the third anniversary of the market on October 24, Westchase District is excited to debut the 2017 Westchase District Farmers Market Calendar, the first of its kind. Featuring profiles of a dozen vendors, at \$5 each the calendar makes for a great gift as well as a way to help spread the word about the market to friends and colleagues. Quantities are limited and the calendar is found only at the market each week starting at 3 p.m., so get on over and buy one today. **W**



**All that and a bag of chips:** *Shane Novles, owner of Pain Train Salsa, has your favorite fresh flavor whether it’s creamy, medium or hot.*

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[www.westchasedistrictfarmersmarket.com](http://www.westchasedistrictfarmersmarket.com)

Featuring such amenities as three first-class restaurants, multiple athletic facilities, an auto repair center, an on-campus dentist and a hair salon, CityWestPlace is one of the crown jewels of Westchase District’s office market. “I’ve fallen in love with the campus,” Key said. “Both the tenants and my team have been amazing.”

Provided people have some longevity with a property, Key said she believes management teams can cultivate a family-like bond. “Parkway is a forward thinking, dynamic organization that has allowed me to design and execute several ideas,” she said. “I’ve revamped all three cafes, created an Icehouse and we recently opened a 24-hour unmanned ‘smart market’ offering snacks and personal hygiene items.”

These new and renewed amenities will welcome the clients of new tenant TechSpace Holding Co., a co-working space provider that will soon occupy the first two floors of 2101 CityWest Blvd. “I’m looking forward to having them on board,” Key said. “I like the energy of the company and the design of their space. A tenant like TechSpace requires us to keep thinking ahead to anticipate what office users of all sizes want.”

### The Boardroom and Broadway

Key said she’s also been impressed with the energy of Westchase District’s Board of Directors. “I came to Westchase District not knowing much about the area and I’ve been struck by the level of leadership, transparency and engagement of the Board,” she said. “It’s refreshing working with a group of professionals who are so invested in the prosperity of the community. My husband and I are even considering relocating here ourselves.”

When not at CityWestPlace, Key and Anthony, her husband of 12 years, enjoy the arts and often plan vacations to New York to catch the latest Broadway shows. Her current favorite? “Definitely *Hamilton*,” she said. “Everyone in the cast is so talented!” **W**



**All Four, One:** *As senior property manager with Parkway Properties, Jannetta Key manages all four buildings of the prestigious CityWestPlace office campus.*



# A Westchase District Food Favorite Turns 50

## *As Randalls celebrates five decades in Houston, flagship store stays focused on the future*

In a volatile grocery industry, Randalls has stood the test of time, remaining a vital retailer and an integral part of the Westchase District community. Founded in 1966 in Houston, the company has been headquartered in Westchase District since 1989 at 3663 Briarpark. The grocer has 30 Houston-area stores, including one in Woodlake Square Shopping Center, 9660 Westheimer. This year, the supermarket chain has one eye looking back as it celebrates 50 years in the business and the other looking forward to the next big industry trends.



**Fifty years of freshness:** *Founded in 1966 in Houston, Randalls has been headquartered in Westchase District since 1989.*

### Personalized purchases

Being a community’s favorite neighborhood store for generations is no easy feat said Dawne Proffitt, Randalls community relations manager. “Robert Onstead, one of our founders, used to say, ‘We’re all pretty much selling the same can of green beans. So what’s going to make the customer cross the ditch to buy yours?’”

Proffitt said she sees Randalls’ competitive differentiators as the friendliness of the staff, the freshness of produce and the cleanliness of the stores. “Our employees aren’t just going to tell you what aisle a specific product is on, they’re going to take you to that item personally. That’s how each of our team members is trained.”

Steve Budd, store director of the 60,000 square-foot Woodlake Square store, is a 35-year employee with Randalls who oversees about 140 employees. Over the course of an interview, it became apparent that his favorite phrase is “You can’t beat that!” and is something he means sincerely. “All employees receive six hours of initial orientation as well as ongoing service huddles on the job,” he said. “I receive daily reports on customer feedback. If we’re not getting regular compliments from our customers, then I know something is up that I have to address.”

### A model example

Although many stores operate under the Flagship Randalls brand, Westchase District

customers benefit from their store literally being the flagship store for the company. Budd said because the store is closest to the corporate offices, the Woodlake Square location is often used for training senior management from other stores about seasonal displays or other promotions. “Our store is held up as the model for how all other stores should look, so our appearance always has to be top-notch.”

Some of the latest features that have been rolled out to customers are the Just for You smartphone app which serves up digital coupons and personalized sales to users. “We’re expanding our organic and natural foods as well as our beer and wine offerings and our grab and go meals,” Budd said. “I would expect to see some sort of online/home delivery service roll out in the near future.”

So is there anything that makes a Westchase District Randalls shopper different from other Houstonians? “One thing I’ve noticed over the years in general about customers in Westchase District is that they love to spoil their pets,” he said. “I mean, they take better care of them than some of their family members! And we’re happy to serve them with dozens of varieties of pet foods and supplies...at competitive prices. You can’t beat that!” **W**



**Pick Your Pepper:** *Randalls store director Steve Budd keeps things fresh and colorful at the Woodlake Square store in Westchase District.*

# Wings Over Westchase That Never Leave the Ground

## *New butterfly mural on Library Loop Trail latest addition to public art in District*

There’s more public art on display in Westchase District and this time mural artist Larry Crawford is thinking big. How big? Well, his latest mural depicting six butterflies is about 80 feet wide by 30 feet tall. “It’s the biggest single project I’ve done by myself,” said Crawford, owner of Mural Arts. “If you’re walking the trail, you won’t be able to miss it.”

The mural is painted along the District’s Library Loop Trail between Rogerdale Road and Walnut Bend Lane, just north of Richmond Avenue. At the junction where the flood control channel next to the trail turns south, the butterfly mural decorates the north concrete slope. Earlier this year, Crawford painted six city utility boxes in Westchase District with “muralitos,” of various animals and objects.

Minus weather delays, the project took about eight days to complete. For this mural, Crawford



**Winging It:** *Mural artist Larry Crawford works on a giant mural that now adorns the concrete slope along the District’s Library Loop Trail.*

estimates he used about 45 gallons of primer, paint and a clear coat finish. Any secret ingredients? “I simply use Behr Premium Plus outdoor exterior paint from Home Depot,” he said. “It stands up to the weather really well, plus I know people will be walking and sitting on the mural taking pictures, so the image needs to be able to take some abuse.”

Crawford said he’s not too worried about the mural being defaced by graffiti. “Throughout my career, I’ve found that most people who tag structures respect my art and what I’m trying to do and they leave it alone,” he said.

What’s next for Crawford? “I’ll be painting three more traffic signal control boxes in the District,” he said, “plus I’m redoing one that was ruined when the city replaced the box. It was a bummer to lose the artwork, but hey, at least it keeps me working.” **W**



# Hiya! No, make that Hiii-YAH!

## Martial arts offerings in Westchase District for all ages and abilities something to shout about

Whether you're looking to lose weight, stay in shape or simply try something new, practicing some form of martial arts can provide the push (or kick) you need to get into a more active lifestyle. Fortunately, Westchase District has more than a handful of businesses well-prepared to increase your strength and agility as well as help refocus your mind.

**Nations Aikikai**  
11392 Westheimer, 832-243-5758, [nationsaikikai.com](http://nationsaikikai.com)

Sensei Nelson Andujar, founder and chief instructor of Nations Aikikai, began training in martial arts in 1965. Accomplished in both Jiu-Jitsu and Aikido, he practices the art of Ki and inner movement instead of the power of muscle and force. The Yoga-like stretching motions of Aikido exercise and tone all major muscle groups and stimulate the circulatory system while relaxing the body. "I believe a good sense of timing and distance is as important as learning the fundamental basics," he said. Andujar adds that all are welcome to observe classes or try a class for free during evening classes four days a week.



**Tweak the technique:** Students practice their Songahm Taekwondo forms at West Houston ATA Martial Arts.

**West Houston ATA Martial Arts**  
11030 Westheimer, 713-532-2821, [westhoustonata.com](http://westhoustonata.com)

Chief instructor and sixth-degree black belt master Chuck Sears has taught martial arts for 20 years in Westchase District and said it's never too late to learn new skills. "I've taught students as young as six and as old as 94," he said. "No matter the power, strength or speed of a person's body, we're able to improve them as well as develop character qualities that carry over into all parts of one's life." As a member of the American Taekwondo Association, Sears said the forms and core methods of teaching are exactly the same at all ATA affiliates. "So if life takes you somewhere else, you can pick right up at another facility."

**Eite Mixed Martial Arts**  
10640 Westheimer, 713-339-4662, [elite-mma.com](http://elite-mma.com)

Mixed Martial Arts, or MMA, is a full-contact sport that has exploded in mainstream popularity in the past 20 years with televised fights and enthusiastic promotion. A mix


of boxing, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, wrestling and other martial arts disciplines, the average Joe or Jane might feel a bit intimidated by MMA's intensity. But Dave Campbell said Elite caters to everyone, customizing workouts so that customers can pick and choose what they like. "It's simply an alternative to the gym that also teaches self-defense techniques while conditioning your body," he said. "Whether you want group classes or private lessons, we have 76 square feet of mat space in our remodeled facility and more than 50 classes each week." Oh, and Elite also has Trevin Giles, an instructor and 8-0 MMA competitor who has been featured on Axis TV, in case you want to grapple with a pro.

**Rilion Gracie Academy**  
9791 Westheimer, 713-471-0644, [riliongraciehouston.com](http://riliongraciehouston.com)

This facility is led by Rilion Gracie, the youngest male son of Grand Master Carlos Gracie, Sr., who is the founder of Gracie Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and the creator of MMA. Rilion often holds seminars for law enforcement and private security. It might sound like an imposing pedigree, but manager Andrea Lavina said you don't have to be tough to practice the "gentle art" of Jiu-Jitsu. "There's no pushing or kicking, it's about leverage so that a smaller, weaker person can successfully defend against a bigger and stronger opponent," she said. "You don't need special abilities." Free, week-long trials are available and participants can be as young as four years old.

**TITLE Boxing Club Kickboxing Workout**  
9630 Westheimer, 713-637-4246, [houston-westchase.titleboxingclub.com](http://houston-westchase.titleboxingclub.com)

While historically developed from Karate, kickboxing is also often practiced for general fitness. General manager Brittinity Maxwell said women make up about 70 percent of her non-contact, hour-long workout classes in which participants can burn up to 1,000 calories in a single session. "We also have a lot of participants with Parkinson's disease," she said. "Each exercise has been shown to work on a symptom of the disease and help patients with strength, endurance, flexibility and hand-eye coordination."

With so many martial arts types to choose from, how does one know which style is the best one to study? "Really all of them are great for self-defense, physical fitness, competitive sports and personal development," Sears said. "No one style is 'better' than another. The right martial arts style for you to choose is the one you enjoy the most and will be happy continuing to practice." 



**Getting a leg up:** TITLE Boxing Club general manager Brittinity Maxwell teaches kickboxing fitness classes for students from ages 8 to 76.



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# Howdy, Neighbors!

*Free-standing emergency room company Neighbors Health establishes corporate HQ at 10800 Richmond*

This summer, Westchase District welcomed new neighbors...Neighbors Health System, that is. The parent company of Neighbors Emergency Centers has occupied the entire building at 10800 Richmond Avenue. Relocating from Pearland, the company's new 100,000 square-foot headquarters initially will hold about 200 employees with room for expansion. Dr. Setul Patel, chief executive officer of Neighbors Health, said it's the next step in the evolution of a rapidly-growing company that's opening freestanding emergency rooms throughout the country.



**New Neighbors:** 10800 Richmond Avenue was recently 100 percent leased by Neighbors Health.

## ER = expanding rapidly

Neighbors was founded in 2008 by a group of eight emergency physicians who believed they could provide a more personalized experience than in the traditional hospital emergency room. "Our physicians spend way more time with their patients than with other ER doctors at busy hospitals," Patel said.

Beginning with a single facility in Bellaire, Neighbors now has grown to 29 locations in Texas alone (nine in Houston), with new sites opening in Colorado and Rhode Island. Last year, the *Houston Business Journal* named Neighbors the fourth fastest growing business in Houston. "There are about 600 freestanding emergency rooms in the country versus 10,000 urgent care centers so it's still a relatively new concept," Patel said. "Urgent care centers aren't licensed or regulated by the state while we are. We provide a higher level of trauma and emergency care and we're able to take some of the pressure off hospital ER rooms while still referring appropriate cases to them."

Neighbors Emergency Centers accept most major health insurance plans, though they don't accept Medicare and Medicaid. In an era of declining reimbursements, how does Neighbors stay profitable? "We're leaner with our resources," Patel said. "For example, we won't purchase a \$3 million CT machine when a \$1 million one will work for what an ER needs. We train our nursing staff to run labs so we don't have the overhead of an additional lab technician. We require less volume to sustain ourselves."


Patel said Neighbors also has a unique business model that allows qualified ER docs the opportunity to become shareholders in the organization. "The American dream of business ownership is available to emergency physicians in a turnkey package to our partners," Patel said.

## The right address

So why did Neighbors Health decide to relocate to Westchase District? "I think Westchase District is an outstanding business environment with lots of great office buildings," Patel said. "We're right near Richmond at the Beltway, so there's great access to airports and major roads. Also, as we become a larger, more prominent company, I think ZIP code and address is important. Couple an attractive area with a building that met our needs and I think it was a good business decision to relocate."

Patel equipped the building with a mock trauma area complete with patient rooms in which doctors and nurses can train. "It closely resembles the layout of the architecture of one of our freestanding ERs," he said. "It's designed to help staff manage patient flow and streamline protocol for maximum efficiency."


"Another unique thing about our building," he continued, "is there are five floors and each one reflects one of our five core values – the heart, the spark, the guardian, the smile and the window. Each floor is themed with colors and messages that correspond to a core value. We saw it as a unique opportunity to communicate our culture from an environmental standpoint and I think we've done it tastefully."

Neighbors' corporate culture, Patel said, is important to him. "For the last four years we've ranked in the *Houston Chronicle* as one of the top workplaces for mid-sized companies. *Entrepreneur* magazine ranked us #16 in the country for top workplace cultures. Everyone in the company is excited about getting into these newer markets and spread the gospel of what we're doing. We're about changing medicine, about the way that people access health care." 

**Neighbors Health**  
10800 Richmond Avenue  
713-436-5200  
nec24.com



**Chief Emergency Center Officer:** Neighbors Health CEO (or chief executive officer) Setul Patel, M.D., aims to change how people access health care.




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# A Night Owl and an Early Bird Working Double Shifts

*Westchase District Patrol Officer Nam Nguyen is all eyes, all the time*

In some countries, people labeled early birds are called “A-people” and those who are night owls are called “B-people.” But what about a man who works from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. and then takes on a second shift from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.? You might call him crazy, or you could call him Nam Nguyen. Nguyen, a Westchase District Patrol officer, regularly pulls 15-hour days working his regular gig with the Houston Police Department by night then turning right around to guard the District by day.

### From videotapes to vigilance

Born in Philadelphia, Nguyen moved to Houston when he was eight with his parents and two sisters. A 2000 graduate of Hastings High School, he was working as a clerk at a Hollywood Video store when he heard about openings at HPD. “I didn’t grow up with dreams of being a police officer,” he said. “I just saw a job opportunity and decided to go for it.”

Graduating from the police academy in 2007, Nguyen was assigned to Midwest Station working night patrol. It’s a duty he enjoys. “Some of my colleagues can’t wait to get off nightshift, but I love it,” he said. “I’ll drive about 40 miles each night making my rounds. I’m a night person and I find there are a lot of exciting calls and good action that can happen then. Plus, I enjoy the camaraderie with my fellow nightshift workers. We’re a close-knit bunch.”

### Beating the heat on the beat

Nguyen first learned about the Westchase District Patrol from several of his coworkers. “I heard good things about it and admired a lot of the officers who were



**Let’s Roll:** *You might see officer Nam Nguyen on bike patrol Wednesdays in Westchase District.*

a part of it,” he said. “Plus, when I heard there was an opportunity to be on bike patrol, I knew I had to inquire.”

A bike-certified police officer, Nguyen patrols on bicycle with his partner Zhen Wang every Wednesday. “It’s a good change of pace from my regular duties,” he said. “When I’m in a vehicle at night, I’m mostly moving and looking out for trouble. On bike patrol, Officer Wang and I make frequent stops to introduce ourselves to apartment managers, hotel managers and retailers. It’s a lot more interaction with people. Besides, in the summer it helps us get out of the heat for a bit.”

### More sleepless nights ahead

While he hopes to prepare to take the sergeant’s exam in the next few years, for now Nguyen is content to be a night owl with his eyes wide open on the streets of West Houston. “I could see myself on nightshift until I retire,” he said. “My job with Westchase District patrol

mixes things up so that I’m not bored or complacent.”

One thing Nguyen never gets bored of is dining out. His favorites in Westchase District? “Kasra Persian Grill and Café Pita + are great,” he said. A newlywed who enjoys traveling around the country and abroad, Nguyen is about to encounter a new challenge to his sleep schedule: he and his wife are expecting a baby girl in December. “Earlier this year, we squeezed in some trips to Utah, Mexico and Italy,” he said. “We’re grounded now with the baby coming. I think I’m going to get even less sleep than I do now. We’ll see how my body can handle it.” Call him crazy, but he’ll likely make it work. **W**

# Keeping Up Appearances

*Rather than a complete face lift, Westchase District nips and tucks its logo after 20 years*

Corporate logos are the visual faces of companies, integral to business’ identities and are one of the main things that make a business memorable. Just the mention of Coca Cola’s distinctive lettering or Shell Oil’s iconic red and yellow clamshell conjures up mental images of not only the companies, but their products and services as well. Strong brand logos often evolve over time, too; their incremental tweaks – from color choice to font size – keeping the brands vital and up-to-date.

After 20 years of the same logo, colors and fonts, Westchase District has taken the plunge (well, more like a dip) into the world of logo design and come up with more of a 21st century refinement rather than a dramatic overhaul.

### Time for an upgrade

“The good news is that there was nothing really broken about Westchase District’s logo or the brand that we needed to fix,” said Vicki Roy, principal with BQR Advertising, the Westchase District-based firm that created the District’s new look. “However, participants in focus groups held earlier this year told us that they thought the logo looked dated and that it faded into the background. One goal of a strong brand is to cut through the visual clutter and stand out in customers’ minds. Their responses signaled that it was time for an upgrade.”

Jim Murphy, Westchase District general manager, said the focus group feedback was an eye-opener for him. “I was surprised to learn the respondents’

opinions, but it makes sense that after 20 years, the visual identity of Westchase District has become taken for granted,” he said. “We’re a vibrant business and residential community that is firing on all cylinders and we want an image that reflects that.”

### Little by little

Roy and her team went to work on figuring out how best to improve upon the current logo. After submitting a dozen different options to the District, BQR fashioned a composite from preferred elements. They thinned out the logo’s black lines, lightened up the signature blue and green colors a shade and made the lettering more readable. “We didn’t want to squash the “W” element too much, but we shortened the height by about 20 percent,” Roy said. “It gives the logo a more balanced feel without departing from what made it special in the first place.”

Now that a new logo is in place, the job of slowly phasing it in begins. “We’re not about to throw out all of our letterhead, brochures, maps and everything else that has our old logo on it,” said Sherry Fox, Westchase District’s vice president of communications, “but as it comes time to reprint items, we’ll work the new logo into the design of things. We’re excited to show off our new look to the world, but think of it as more of a gradual coming out party for an old friend who became better looking over the summer.” **W**



**Before and After:** *Westchase District’s old logo (left) has received a subtle makeover (right) after 20 years.*



(Continued from Page 1)

Community support

Reaction from the community has been enthusiastic and positive. The Indonesian Consulate, located at 10370 Richmond Avenune, backs the District’s Library Loop Trail and will be just southwest of the park at Wilcrest. In a letter to Murphy, Henk Edward Saroinsong with the consulate wrote, “...we agree on the project because it is not only beneficial for the community but will also make the Indonesian Consulate become more strategic and will improve its property value.”

Legacy at Westchase Apartments, located at 10070 Westpark Drive, has 323 units and its residents will be a block’s walk from the future park off of Woodchase. “This will be a great feature for our families,” said Liz Romero, regional supervisor with ParaWest Management, the community’s management company. “We haven’t had any parks in the area so this is a welcome opportunity for our residents to get outside, walk their pets and enjoy some fresh air near home.”

“We’re excited to learn about these parks coming to Westchase District,” said Leo Tyler, campus pastor with First Methodist Houston, located at 10570 Westpark. “Playing and learning outdoors are healthy activities that can help strengthen families and build a sense of community. That benefits not only our church members but other members of the public to whom we minister. Our church’s motto is ‘Your Home in the City,’ and we’re committed to the spiritual wellbeing of the community. Parks are critical to the wellbeing of a city as well and to making an area feel like home.”

Next steps

Once a design firm has been selected, the District will begin the planning process in earnest. “We’ll host meetings and actively solicit public input on what features the park should include,” Murphy said. “Design of the parks should take about 10 to 12 months with another year of construction, so I would expect us to open both parks in early 2019.”



A proper home for scooters and soccer balls: This 3.4-acre field just north of the Library Loop Trail on Wilcrest Drive will become one of two parks in Westchase District.

Easy on the Eyes...and on the Feet

Landscaping, mobility projects improve beauty and function of District’s roadways

While Westchase District has completed some highly visible projects during the past several months, they also are the kind of projects that can hide in plain sight from the average driver or pedestrian. To highlight some of our recently completed successes, here’s a roundup of how the District continues to stay beautiful and accessible.

Esplanade aesthetics

Landscaping crews are beautifying the medians along Richmond Avenue between Beltway 8 and Briarpark Drive after left-turn channels were installed in February. The left-turn lanes improve traffic flow for through-traffic on Richmond.

Among the species being planted are 30 gallon crape myrtles, pink drift roses and Asian Jasmine. “We chose them because they are low-growing and do not impede sight lines for motorists,” said Irma Sanchez, Westchase District’s vice president of projects. “At the same time, they add dashes of color and enhance the overall look of the esplanades, bringing them in line with the high standards we have for our other median strips.” She added that the Westchase Community Association shared half the costs of this project.



Lovely Left Turns: Left-turn channels along Richmond Avenue between Beltway 8 and Briarpark Drive are spruced up with a dash of color.

Beltway 8 Erosion Control

The District also installed more erosion control measures along Beltway 8, continuing the retrofitting where runoff from the West Sam Houston Tollway was washing plants and dirt onto the feeder roads. Just north of Westheimer Road on the southbound entrance ramp in front of the new Phillips 66 world headquarters campus, workers reduced the width of the flower beds, installing river rock and more compact plant material at the base of the greenspace.



Preventing a washout: The southbound greenspace between the West Sam Houston Tollway and Beltway 8 just north of Westheimer becomes more erosion resistant with strategic plantings.

“The river rock used in the beds not only slows the flow of water as it travels down the slope, but they filter debris from the water as well,” said Sanchez. “We strategically plant roses and

oleander on the greenspace slopes so to slow down runoff and reduce irrigation needs. The beds save us money on our water bill, plus it’s another creative visual addition to our landscaping,” she added.

Turning a different corner

At the southwest corner of Westheimer and Gessner, Westchase District is partnering with Greenberg & Company – property owners of 9703 Westheimer, the old Houston Shoe Hospital location – to maximize the curb appeal at one of the busiest intersections in Westchase District. Workers enhanced the corner with Asian jasmine and bulbine flowers to “green up” the intersection and create visual interest. A curb also was added to hold the landscaping in place to maintain a walkable sidewalk.

“With two METRO bus stops on either side of 9703 Westheimer, the intersection at Westheimer and Gessner is a highly traveled one,” Sanchez said. “These are not only aesthetic improvements to the pedestrian realm, but they will assist with public transit conditions as well.”

Safer, smoother sidewalks

Finally, during September, Westchase District and the Westchase Community Association II partnered to improve sidewalk conditions, improving pedestrian activity and easier connection to the District’s trail network.

Street crews jackhammered and excavated both sides of Richmond Avenue between Beltway 8 and Hayes Road, replacing all of the existing four-foot-wide concrete sidewalk panels with new five-foot sections. The new concrete levels out spots where the dirt beneath the sidewalk had subsided, creating dangerous, uneven surfaces.

“I tripped and fell on the Richmond sidewalks so many times on my evening runs when I was living in Westchase,” Justin Tardiff said via a Facebook message to the District. “The improvements will be much appreciated!”

Westchase District funded the professional design services for the project, while the Westchase Community Association II picked up construction costs. “A significant portion of our costs was in hauling the old concrete away,” Sanchez said.



Smooth Moves: All of the sidewalks on Richmond Avenue between Beltway 8 and Hayes Road have been replaced with wider, smoother paving.