

# WESTCHASE DISTRICT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

(September 2016 – August 2017)

## Mobility

- We continue to coordinate with METRO to **enhance transit service** on Westheimer Road, including obtaining a transit corridor designation and the inclusion of features in the streetscapes project to support future bus rapid transit (BRT) service on Westheimer.
- We developed a list of short-term project recommendations (with TxDOT, HCTRA and the City of Houston) and will submit them jointly for **funding under the Transportation Improvement Program**. Meanwhile, HCTRA has assumed responsibility for two projects, which include a ramp reversal of the southbound Briar Forest entrance ramps and expanding the capacity of the northbound Westheimer entrance ramps. Both projects are under design and scheduled to start construction in June 2019.
- We are working with the City of Houston to reclassify some roadways as part of the City's **Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan Amendment Process**. The reclassifications will allow us to pursue federal funding for roadways otherwise ineligible due to their current classification.
- Design of the **Elmside-Woodchase Side Path** is underway. The enhanced path will include 8-foot-wide continuous sidewalks, street and pedestrian lighting, upgraded landscaping and street furniture. The project also will include a signalized pedestrian crossing at Richmond Avenue. When complete, this project will connect the Gessner Park & Ride, a trail, school, a future park, and transit routes.
- The City is designing the first phase of a project that will **widen Gessner from Richmond to Westheimer**. We are coordinating with the City to ensure that access issues are addressed accordingly.

## Marketing and Communications

- We produced a 30-second video commercial promoting Westchase District. Our **“What do you CHASE in Westchase” campaign** has run on the Comcast and UVerse cable networks, Pandora, Facebook and the Centro digital network. The video has been viewed more than 205,000 times on YouTube. As a result, our website traffic is up 500% from March 2016 to March 2017.
- We created **brand standards** that reflect proper usage of our new logo and have updated **Westchase Today**, plus our **welcome brochure** and **pocket folder** to reflect the new brand standards.
- **WestchaseDistrict.com** has been updated to reflect the new brand standards and new best practices in web design. The site is easy to update, responsive on any mobile device and has been re-designed so that any page is accessible within two clicks.
- We created a **stand-up banner** that can be displayed in apartment community lobbies promoting Westchase District. More than half of Westchase District apartment communities opted to receive this banner. It features the same images from the advertising campaign to tie-in to the “What do you CHASE in Westchase” campaign.
- We continue to **compile quarterly leasing, occupancy and contact information** for more than 300 properties. That market data is distributed in our information packets and posted to our website. We also notify brokers, via email, when our quarterly information is updated and available online. This is a great tool for alerting tenant rep brokers to available space in Westchase District and helps us identify emerging real estate trends.
- We continue to push our messages through our weekly **radio advertising campaign on AM 740 KTRH**, featuring live endorsement spots by talk show host Michael Berry. These spots give us a wide audience. Our ad themes are updated monthly and coincide with the messages we are promoting in our other marketing vehicles.

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- We purchased an iPad and “Padcaster” unit that allow us to shoot **high-quality video** for posting to YouTube, our Facebook page, website, etc. We aim to produce several videos a month and are developing an ongoing list of programming
- We extended our **social media presence** to include Instagram and Twitter, in addition to Facebook. By posting several times per week and consistently engaging with our followers, we’ve continued to grow our social media presence
- We are in the 19th year of publishing **Westchase Today**, our quarterly print newsletter. Westchase District staff members provide all editorial content in the newsletter. We print 8,000 copies. Half are mailed and the rest are distributed at more than 110 locations, including major employers, multi-tenant office buildings, apartment communities, hotels and restaurants/delis.
- We continue to distribute **The Wire**, our twice-monthly e-newsletter. Our subscriber list almost doubled this year to more than 22,000 email addresses.
- We developed a quarterly e-newsletter specifically for a commercial real estate audience. The “**News Nuggets**” is emailed to approximately 550 leasing agents, tenant rep brokers and CRE research professionals.
- Westchase District **was featured this year** in news stories on Houston Public Radio, and in articles appearing in the *Houston Business Journal*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *Houston Press*. Our growing trail network has also been featured on a variety of bicycling and recreational blogs.
- We hosted the **20th Annual Corporate Challenge**, which generated more than \$14,000 in contributions to the Westchase District Community Fund. A total of 45 businesses participated in the event as major sponsors, events hosts and teams.
- We co-hosted and helped organize the **13th annual Wonderland in Westchase** in December. Many Westchase District businesses and organizations contribute money and volunteers to this free, fun, family event. This event has grown over the years into a \$40,000 project that draws more than 6,000 people from our community.
- In its fourth year of operation, the weekly **Westchase District Farmers Market** continues to thrive. We received a \$1,000 grant from Capital Farm Credit. We hosted three “Farm-tastic Summer” events in June, July and August that boosted attendance and sales.

## Beautification

- We are nearing 100% completion of **Brays Bayou Connector Trail**. This 1.92-mile trail connects the existing Library Loop Trail at Richmond Ave to Art Storey Park at Bellaire Blvd. The trail runs along the top bank of a north/south Harris County Flood Control District channel and offers **direct connection** points to Harwin Park and the Westchase Park and Ride. **Trail amenities** include landscaping, benches, water fountains, and an exercise station. **Wayfinding signage** includes trail entry portals with maps. Informational “spikes” along the trail inform users about the history, ecology and transportation aspects of Westchase District and mosaic art adds color to trail benches.
- Brays Bayou Connector Trail
- Our first ever **Trails Without Trash** event brought together more than 100 volunteers to clean up the recently completed trails. This event also provided added exposure to our trail system.
- We completed **artistic wraps and lighting** of 15 bus shelters and have established a plan to improve the remainder of the bus shelters in 2018.
- We partnered with Greenberg & Co, to **enhance the curb appeal at the southwest corner of Westheimer and Gessner**. The enhanced area provides visual appeal to this

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heavily trafficked area. We are underway with improvements at the corners of Richmond at Rogerdale and Richmond at Walnut Bend.

- We are working on the design for a **north/south path to connect Westheimer to Terry Hershey Trail**. The preferred alternative is a combination of shared-use and off-street paths. We will develop 30% drawings in 2017 to enable us to pursue federal funds for construction.

## Public Safety

- In addition to the vehicle patrols, Westchase District utilizes **bike and foot patrols** to increase visibility at properties considered hot spots. These patrols access areas where vehicles cannot go, such as apartment community sidewalks. The officers can also interact better with people than they can when they're in a patrol vehicle.
- We **monitor crime statistics** daily and monthly to interpret crime trends and patterns. This information helps us make optimal use of our public safety resources.
- Westchase District Patrol officers now have mobile technology at their fingertips. They carry **Westchase District-issued iPads** that allow them to report their case work, view area security cameras, access criminal records, and have quick access to contact information and gate codes for area apartments.
- Westchase District staff, in conjunction with HPD officers, **designate hot spots** based on the crime data analysis and feedback from stakeholders. Hot spots are given special attention by increasing patrols, coordinating site-specific task forces, and meeting with property managers.
- We currently have **31 Blue Star certified apartment communities**. Sixty percent of Westchase District apartment communities (vs 2.2 percent citywide) are now Blue Star certified.
- We deliver **crime prevention training** to stakeholders on various topics ranging from personal safety to auto theft prevention. We have made 21 presentations this year to area employers and property management companies.
- Westchase District Patrol officers visited 24 apartment communities sharing crime prevention information with residents and building community connections. This door-to-door **Knock and Talk program** has been well received by residents and community managers.
- We worked with 25 apartment communities to promote **National Night Out** in Westchase District.
- We are continuing to promote the use of **video surveillance** to monitor and deter crime at specific high-traffic locations. We currently have 36 locations that use video surveillance cameras. Twenty two of these locations have complete video systems with numerous cameras. Another 12 locations have mobile units or pole-mounted units. Retail centers, hotels and apartment communities are realizing the benefits of using video surveillance.
- We are partnering with other organizations in Westchase District and city-wide to promote an **anti-panhandling initiative** organized by the Mayor's office.

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The “Meaningful Change Campaign” aims to reduce panhandling and provide help to homeless individuals who want to get off the streets.

## Planning & Development

- We secured recreational easements from two property owners to **develop an open space next to the HCC Campus Trail**. The open space will include a water fountain, exercise stations, benches and shade, all of which will complement trail use. The open space will also include a path west to connect to the sidewalk on Hayes Road.
- We partnered with the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and the City of Houston to conduct the **Westchase District Livable Centers Study**, which focuses on the District’s boundaries east of Beltway 8. The study will identify specific recommendations to facilitate the creation of walkable, mixed-use places that provide multiple transportation options, improve environmental quality, and promote economic development. The study will be complete in late 2017.
- We are evaluating options to build a **pedestrian bridge over Westheimer** to connect the Westchase District Trail System south of Westheimer to the north, ultimately connecting to Terry Hershey Trail. Feasible locations for the pedestrian bridge are being studied through the analysis of available easements, high conflict areas and points of vital connections that will maximize pedestrian usability. We expect to have final recommendations in late 2017.

## Westchase District 380 Area Agreement

- The \$20-million **Walnut Bend Reconstruction project** is underway. The reconstructed roadway, from just north of Westheimer to Westpark Drive, will include a generous pedestrian realm, continuous bike lanes, lush landscaping, upgraded street lighting, pedestrian lighting and other amenities intended to promote a friendly and accessible pedestrian environment. This project is being funded through a grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and 380 funds. Design will be complete in early 2018 and construction is expected to begin in Fall of 2018.
- Design for **Westheimer Road back-of-curb improvements** from Rocky Ridge to Kirkwood is underway. This \$17-million project proposes a complete reconstruction of the pedestrian realm to promote transit usage and to elevate Westheimer’s retail presence. This project is being funded through a FHWA grant and 380 funds.
- A \$1-million project to enhance traffic flow on Wilcrest, north of Westheimer is underway. The improvements entail **re-aligning median openings along Wilcrest** from Westheimer to Olympia to better serve the adjacent commercial driveways, modifying the turning bays to accommodate increased u-turn movements, and extending the southbound left turn lane to increase storage capacity and allow more through traffic to travel through the intersection.
- **Landscape improvements** of a 1.2-mile segment of Wilcrest, from Westheimer to Lakeside Place, are underway. The esplanades will feature custom green concrete pavers similar to those installed elsewhere throughout the District, lush

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landscaping, new trees, river rocks and moss boulders. This is the first project outside the Westchase District boundaries to be completed under the District's 380 Area Agreement with the City of Houston.

- We are nearing completion of the **Westpark Trail**. The first segment extends from Gessner to Briarpark, where it connects the Gessner Park and Ride to the future Woodchase park site and the Elmside/Woodchase Side Path. The second segment extends from the Brays Bayou Connector Trail to Wilcrest. These 8- to 10-foot wide trail segments add to a growing alternative transportation network linking several major bicycle and pedestrian trails in the area to commercial, residential, educational and government facilities.
- Earlier this summer, we completed construction of the **HCC Campus Trail**. This .6- mile trail is located within a CenterPoint transmission corridor and runs from Westheimer to Richmond. The trail connects HCC's Westchase District campus to several apartment communities, METRO's transit system and the Library Loop Trail.
- We worked in partnership with the City of Houston to secure a 3.6-acre parcel of land on Wilcrest, just north of Richmond for the **development of a park**. The park site is next to Library Loop Trail and the Robinson-Westchase Library. Conceptual design for the project site was completed this past summer. Final design will start in late 2018 and construction is projected to start in mid-2019. Park development costs, estimated at \$3.6M, will be funded through the 380 program.
- The City of Houston recently completed the **acquisition of a 1.75-acre site** on Woodchase for the development of a park. Design and development, estimated to cost \$1.7M will be funded through the 380 program. The park will connect to the Westpark Trail and the Elmside/Woodchase Path.