

Westchase District Brings New Amenities to Top Performing Real Estate Market

Parks and streetscapes benefit landlords and tenants

It was 2004 when a group of bold leaders from Westchase District met in a board retreat to go through a visioning exercise to imagine what Westchase District might look like 20 years down the road. As a result of that exercise, the Westchase District Board of Directors established the following Vision Statement:

“The Westchase community is a vibrant living and working community, with a high quality downtown. The Westchase community is perceived by residents as the safest in the region and has the highest (measured) mobility level in the region. The community is known for having entertainment/recreation amenities, and there are inter-connecting hiking, biking, and pedestrian ways, linking a set of community gathering areas.”

Since that vision statement was adopted by the board in 2004, it appears on the District’s website and at the bottom of every board meeting agenda, serving as a constant reminder of the Board’s vision.

Parks and greenspaces

This fall, Woodchase Park — the area’s first, fully-programmed park — will open at 3951 Woodchase Drive. Woodchase Park features a fenced dog park, children’s play area with a misting feature and climbing wall, a community garden, walking paths and exercise stations, plus a pavilion with restrooms and a covered patio available for events. The park will have a soft opening in early October, with weekly activities that include adult exercise classes, a children’s mobile library, and art and music activities for kids. Ten days of grand opening festivities will begin on Thursday, October 28, including a ribbon cutting ceremony with Mayor Sylvester Turner.

Woodchase Park connects to the Westpark Trail which connects to METRO’s Gesner Park & Ride. It’s just one example of the connectivity that has come to Westchase District. Westchase District’s trail system begins at Westheimer immediately east of Houston Community College and continues to Art Storey Park south of Bellaire. Multiple underpasses allow users to travel the entire 4-mile length of the trail with only three street crossings. The District will break ground at the end of the year on Wilcrest Park, which is immediately adjacent to the Library Loop Trail. Sidewalk enhancements and bike lanes now connect users to Terry Hershey Trail and other destinations throughout the area.

Streetscape improvements

The 2.25-mile CityWest/Deerwood Path features continuous 8-foot wide sidewalks along the west side of CityWest Blvd. between Westheimer and Briar Forest. At the other end of the path, a dedicated, two-way bike lane was built, which connects to a new, widened sidewalk that links to Terry Hershey Trail. Similar back-of-curb improvements have been completed along the east side of Elmside Drive and Woodchase Drive between Westheimer Road and Westpark Drive. This 1.25-mile path features wider, continuous sidewalks and improved landscaping, including new shade trees. Seat walls, concrete play spheres and bike racks further enhance the experience. Pedestrian lighting brightens the area at night and exercise stations have been installed at the intersection of Pagewood and Woodchase, next to Sneed Elementary School. This path connects pedestrians to Westheimer retail, METRO transit stops, and will connect to Woodchase Park when it opens this fall.



Above: Landscaping is being installed at Woodchase Park in anticipation of the park’s October opening, as seen from this aerial drone photograph. **Below:** New bus shelters in Westchase District are being installed on higher curbs, which mean that buses won’t have to “kneel.” That means boarding times are quicker and lane stoppages are minimized.



Transit improvements coming also

New custom bus shelters, made of aluminum and glass, are bringing a contemporary new look to the Westheimer streetscape. All are ADA-compliant and feature special paving, LED lighting, trash cans and upgraded signage, plus seat blocks made of a concrete blend with a glossy finish. The new shelters will

be installed at 34 locations on Walnut Bend, Westheimer, Elmside and Woodchase. The shelters, which are paid for in part by METRO, are part of Westchase District’s \$12.7-million project to make improvements to the pedestrian realm along Westheimer. The project also features new, improved sidewalks, landscaping, pedestrian lighting and curb ramps. Mast arms will replace span wires at all Westheimer street intersections within Westchase District.

These projects completely change the landscape of Westchase District, improving mobility and creating the community gathering areas that were envisioned more than 20 years ago. The parks and trails are adjacent to commercial office buildings and apartment communities, which add value to the owners of those properties.

Entrepreneur, best-selling author and leadership coach Farshad Asl said, “Vision leads to proper planning and proper planning leads to successful completion.” We have seen that adage at work in Westchase District and it has come to fruition in 2021.