Mayor’s Welcome

This publication summarizes the City's use of the funds we receive from you and your fellow residents. Listed and detailed are many of the projects and day-to-day efforts City personnel undertake to assure that University Park enjoys safe neighborhoods, high quality emergency services and beautiful parks and green space. Dozens of residents, who serve on numerous boards and committees, also play a vital role in keeping our community an ideal place to live, work and raise families. On behalf of the City Council and our dedicated and professional staff, thank you for spending a few minutes to review this report.

Mayor Tommy Stewart

Budget and Finance

Adopted in September 2020, the Fiscal Year 2021 budget totals $55,229,327, an increase of 0.5% from FY2020. Single-family home market values continued to climb in 2020, increasing 1.9%, from an average of $1,668,650 in 2019 to $1,669,817. Together with an increase in the tax rate of 6/10 of a penny per $100 of taxable value (from 25.8548 cents per $100 to 26.4750), the theoretical net increase in the city tax levy for the “average” single-family homeowner amounted to $149, a 4.3% change.

Non-property tax revenues such as sales taxes, franchise fees, building permit fees and interest revenue account for approximately 36% of General Fund income. While sales taxes and building permit revenues are expected to remain steady in FY2021, franchise fees will likely continue to decline due to legislative changes and evolving entertainment and communication options. Market conditions brought by COVID-19 resulted in a cut in interest income of 50% ($300,000) in FY2021. Sales tax, which is the largest component of non-property tax revenues, is budgeted to remain flat in FY2021. Comprised of both traditional sales tax and taxes on mixed beverages, the conservative estimate reflects both the uncertainty of face-to-face sales transactions offset somewhat by a pandemic-related uptick in online purchasing.

For expenditures, the FY2021 budget continued the longstanding “pay-as-you-go” approach for capital projects and increased yearly contributions from both the General and Utility funds by 5%. Continued contributions to the Equipment Services fund are meant to responsibly address the costs of future equipment replacements. The FY2021 budget anticipates hiring six additional crew members within the Utility Fund in-house Utility Construction Division to assist with replacement of water and sewer infrastructure. Hiring for this program was paused during FY2020, to reassess division goals and objectives. Lastly, after adopting a “market average” compensation philosophy in the prior year, the City reinstated merit-based increases for eligible employees in FY2021.
Texas Municipal Retirement System (TMRS) costs decreased in FY2021, as the funding rate charged by the system decreased from 10.18% of pay to 8.8%. The vast majority of City employees are members of TMRS, which is a hybrid joint-contributory retirement plan. Savings generated by the decrease in the TMRS contribution rate were then re-purposed to help fully fund the pension liability of the Firefighters Relief and Retirement Fund (FRRF). Unlike TMRS, the FRRF, which was closed to new entrants through state legislative action, does not fund on a “percentage of pay” basis. Instead, it has a fixed contribution amount over a 28.5 closed amortization period, after which no additional contributions should be necessary. Notably, while health care costs continue to rise, COVID-19 restrictions and a resulting drop in procedures and doctor visits helped generate a surplus in FY2020 that will be used in FY2021 so that City and employee contributions remain steady over the two-year period.

Rates charged to residents for both fresh water and wastewater processing remain the same in FY2021 as in FY2020. While the per gallon cost the City pays to the Dallas County/Park Cities Municipal Utility District (fresh water) will be decreasing by approximately 1.6%, that savings will be offset by an increase of almost 7.6% in wastewater treatment charges from the City of Dallas Water Utility. Combined with expected water sales (an average of the previous 10 years of actual consumption) and anticipated system input (based on winter average water sales) the increased rates from our service providers will result in a gross cost increase to the City of approximately $214,000. In order to maintain current rates, these costs are being offset by expense reductions and the transfer of alley usage fees from other funds. Residential and commercial sanitation rates increased by 5% across-the-board in FY2021. The increase was necessary to offset increased tipping fees, recycling fees and personnel expenses. It should be noted that FY2021 is the first year the City will be charged to dispose of “recyclable” materials. In previous years, these materials were either removed at no cost, or generated a slight income for the City.

The City identifies, plans, and funds capital projects through its Capital Improvement Program (CIP). These are defined as non-recurring, multi-year efforts whose costs exceed $50,000. Using the “pay-as-you-go” model since 2002, the City is debt-free and currently borrows no money to fund capital projects. CIP funding comes from a variety of sources, including operating and special budget transfers, one-time revenues, fund balance drawdowns, program and project reimbursements and interest earnings. As previously mentioned, operating budget transfers were increased by 5% in FY2021, from both the General and Utility funds.

Adopted by City Council in December of 2020, the FY2021 capital projects budget of $10,084,500 is the first year of the five-year CIP plan. New project spending authorized for FY2021 includes: Information Technology ($335,000), Parks ($390,000), Public Safety ($540,000), Public Works ($8,402,000) and a further strengthening of Emergency Reserves ($300,000). The capital projects budget is generally amended after adoption to allow the “rollover” of unspent project funds from the prior year. This rollover amounted to $7,445,094 for FY2021. The amendment process may continue throughout the year, resulting in the authorization or cancellation of projects identified and reviewed by the Capital Projects Review Committee.

Residential construction – In 2020, the number of one and two-family permits issued decreased slightly from 2019, and the previous three-year average. Fifty-six new single-family and seven duplex permits were issued. In 2020, the average floor area for single-family attached and detached dwellings remained at a little more than 6,000 square feet, and had a total calculated value of $42 million. Duplex structures averaged 8,000 square feet with a total calculated construction value of an additional $6.8 million. Major residential remodel and addition permits declined in 2020, continuing the sharp downward trend seen since 2019. Only 81 remodel/addition permits were issued, a decrease of 21 percent from 2019 and 30 percent lower than the previous three-year average. COVID-19 likely impacted the number of permit requests for occupied homes.

Commercial construction – In 2020, commercial permits issued and construction value declined sharply. SMU construction remodel and addition activity remained steady, contributing to the $36 million in the stated construction value of permits issued. The decline in permits are the result of HPISD’s bond projects, permitted in recent years, nearing completion and COVID-19’s impact on new commercial projects, tenant move-ins, finish-outs, and remodels.
1. **Major park improvement projects completed in 2020**
   - Holmes Aquatic Center pool re-plastering
   - Lovers/Preston Property Development – Shaddock Park (to be completed in February 2021)
   - Caruth Park Stormwater Detention Structure and Athletic Field renovations
   - Hillcrest/Daniel Median Landscape
   - Humann Park Landscape Improvements
   - 15 Year – Tree City USA reaccreditation by the National Arbor Day Foundation
   - Trees for Town – Over 4,017 trees planted since 1982

2. **Major park improvement projects scheduled for 2021**
   - Curtis Park (West) Improvements
   - Fountain Replacements
   - Williams Park Landscape Improvements
   - Germany Park / Roach Track
   - Curtis Park Tennis Court resurfacing
   - Park Furnishings Replacement
   - Goar Park Restroom Enclosure
   - New Reservation Software

3. **2020 Holmes Aquatic Center programming (limited by COVID-19)**
   - 2,400 Pool Passes sold
   - 4,670 Lap and Open Swim times booked

4. **2020 Park & Recreation special events**
   - Rainbow Trout Stocking
   - EggTober Event – 250 participants received toy-filled eggs delivered by request to their homes
   - Arbor Day – Four trees planted at Hyer Elementary with four families assisting with planting (Over 600 DIY Arbor Day activities provided for Hyer students - 124 Facebook Live views of event)
   - Drive-In Movie – Over 200 in attendance (40 vehicles) and livestreamed with 140 views
   - Snider Plaza Virtual Tree Lighting - Social media post reached over 5,600 viewers with performances and tree lighting by Mayor Stewart and Bennett Williams of McCullough Intermediate School (Toy drive collected over 100 toys)
   - Elena’s Children’s Virtual Tree Lighting - Streamed live via Facebook with 295 views
   - E - Letters to Santa - 57 electronic (email) request sent to Santa with personalized responses sent back

5. **2021 Park & Recreation special events calendar**
   - Monthly Virtual programs highlighted through Facebook
   - Eggstravaganza (3/27) – At Home Egg Hunt, one dozen candy and toy-filled eggs delivered to the first 250 registered participants
   - Children’s Fishing Derby (TBD)
   - Drive-In Movie (5/7)
   - July 4 Parade (TBD)
   - Community Night-Out (10/1)
   - Arbor Day Celebration (11/5)
   - Snider Plaza Tree Lighting (11/21)
   - Elena’s Children’s Tree Lighting (12/7)

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6. **PUBLIC WORKS**

   - The operational divisions of the Public Works Department consist of Engineering, Facility Maintenance, Infrastructure Maintenance, Sanitation, Traffic and the newly-implemented Utility Construction division.

   - **Engineering**

     During 2020, Engineering Division staff managed the planning, design, and construction of more than $5.5 million in capital projects. The City annually awards contracts for routine capital projects including in-place recycling of asphalt pavement, curb and gutter replacement, and sidewalk replacement. During the past year, crews were directly involved on these projects:

     - Replacement of sidewalk at various locations throughout the city
     - Installation of an underground stormwater detention system in Caruth Park
     - Design Phase 2 stormwater improvements
     - Design of the Snider Plaza utility replacement project

     The Engineering staff also conducted inspections for new water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer mains associated with redevelopment projects for HPISD, SMU and Highland Park Presbyterian Church.

   - **Infrastructure Maintenance**

     The division is responsible for maintaining and repairing the City’s 74 miles of street pavement, 40 miles of alley pavement, 89 miles of water mains, 63 miles of sanitary sewer mains, 25 miles of storm sewer mains, and 473 fire hydrants. In 2020, the division installed 48 water and sewer taps and repaired 35 water main breaks.
In 2020, the division completed the replacement of water meters and automated meter-reading infrastructure, and inspected more than 25,000 linear feet and cleaned more than 150,000 linear feet of sanitary sewer mains.

Traffic Division

The division maintains and repairs more than 6,000 traffic signs, 33 signalized intersections, 120 decorative street lights, school zone flashers, pavement markings, public parking areas, and miscellaneous traffic control devices. In 2020, the division distributed barricades and signs for 60 road closures. The division also oversaw the installation of traffic signal improvements at Preston and Colgate, Preston and Caruth and Hillcrest and Southwestern.

Sanitation Division

This division collects residential waste twice a week and residential recycling, brush and yard waste once a week. Commercial waste and recycling dumpsters are emptied up to six times a week. In 2020, crews collected more than 17,300 tons of material. Of that material, 25 percent was diverted from the landfill for recycling or composting.

Utility Construction Division

This division will initially consist of a Superintendent, Crew Leader, and five Utility Construction Operators. This crew is the first of four crews responsible for the replacement of water and sanitary sewer mains and alley pavement, work previously performed by contractors for the City’s “mile-per-year” program.

Traffic Safety - 80 traffic collisions were reported in 2019. UPPD continues to use targeted enforcement in select locations to help keep that number relatively small.

Other 2020 crime statistics
Robberies - 1
Business Burglaries - 10
Residential Burglaries - 28
Bike Thefts - 25

Direct Alarm Monitoring - Business and residential addresses continue to enroll in the City’s Direct Alarm Monitoring service that links alarm systems directly to the Police Dispatch Center. At the end of 2020, the City had 3,300 Direct Alarm customers.

Service Calls - In 2020 UPPD answered 18,976 calls for service. That’s nearly 3,000 fewer calls for service than the department recorded in 2019. Stay-at-home guidelines to contain COVID-19 are the most likely explanation for the reduction.

Community Services - The Department continues to provide an officer at McCulloch Intermediate School for the D.A.R.E. program and a School Resource Officer at Highland Park High School. The City of University Park and the Town of Highland Park jointly fund these worthwhile programs. The City partners with HPISD to provide crossing guard services at 14 locations throughout the city. The City continues to fund the program, and HPISD personnel oversee its day-to-day operations. Three new sworn officer positions have been added to provide for officers in UP Elementary, Hyer Elementary and a superviso with their workplace and the community they serve.
Fire Prevention/Community Education - Due to State and County orders and continuing social distancing efforts, the Department’s community outreach efforts were limited in 2020. In the interest of public health, the Department suspended child safety seat installations and smoke detector inspections and replacements. In March, the Department discontinued inspection activities. As the chart shows, this impacted Fire Code and Pre-Plan inspections. UPFD issued 247 construction or tent permits.

The Department’s involvement in various 2020 community events were also impacted by COVID-19 with the cancellation of the July 4 parade and local National Night Out activities. The virtual Snider Plaza Tree Lighting event did provide the Department with the opportunity to pass out fire prevention and education materials to passing motorists.

Santa Around Town - 2020 did not stop Santa from riding on a UPFD engine through our various neighborhoods. Over five nights, 1,600 residents tracked his progress using a GPS link.


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Activity Within University Park

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PUBLIC RELATIONS

The City provides timely information to the community through the website and social media. In addition to the Arbor and a mid-month UPdate, in response to the pandemic, the City implemented a weekly COVID-19 newsletter, which drastically grew our subscriber list. You may sign up to receive City news electronically at uptexas.org/newsletter-registration.

2020 Newsletter Analytics
212,071 sends
132,272 opens
16,722 clicks
+1,938 new subscribers

INFORMATION SERVICES

2020 Highlights

Staff partnered with various City departments on a range of projects. Here are the more noteworthy:

- Implemented asset management/work order system for Parks, Facilities and Sanitation
- Connected UP Public Library to the City’s fiber network
- Replaced obsolete data switches improving data security and network performance

Among projects slated for 2021

- Replace the Community Planning, Permitting, Inspection, and Enforcement software used by Community Development, Public Works, and Fire Department
- Migrate City on-site data to new servers to increase data security and reliability
- Complete the installation of the asset management/work order system by implementing Fleet and Warehouse modules
The City currently has 249 full-time employees. During fiscal year 2020, the City hired 17 full-time employees. Within the same budget year, 20 employees left the City resulting in an approximate turnover rate of eight percent, a one percent decrease over the previous year. During FY 2020, the City also employed seasonal employees.

The Human Resources Department completed and continued progress on various projects this year including implementation of additional resources for worker’s compensation injuries, drug and alcohol testing and pre-employment physicals.

The main focus for 2020-2021 is ensuring the safety of employees due to COVID-19, which includes the following:

- Implemented a COVID-19 Emergency Leave policy in accordance with mandates set forth by the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act
- Partnered with the Parks and Recreation Department to provide proper sanitation for City work spaces
- Coordinated with the Fire Department to develop protocols for COVID-19 testing for employees through a third-party clinic
- Coordinated with the Fire Department to develop ongoing protocols for employees who experience COVID-19 symptoms or have a COVID-19 exposure