

## The City Uses GIS to Enhance Community Livability

City of West University Place, Texas



The small City of West University Place is considered one of Houston's hottest, trendiest neighborhoods, and the city's leaders are using GIS to make sure it stays that way. The city is located inside Houston's loop, in the shadow of Rice University and the world-renowned Texas Medical Center. The average home price approaches \$1 million.

"As you can imagine, our residents are sophisticated and demanding, said Ron Wicker, they expect it. We're a very service-oriented agency."

Protecting property values is a key concern to residents and city officials, and GIS technology supplied by Geographic Technologies Group helps the city deliver efficient, above-and-beyond services that ensure the quality of life in West University Place will exceed expectations.

The city uses GTG's Looking Glass Viewer and Looking Glass Web and has contracted with the company to develop its GIS implementation plan and to collect GPS data. "We're power users of GIS data," Wicker said of the city's 120 employees. "We use LGviewer and LGweb throughout the city—in our fire department, in the police department, in public works. We've used LGviewer to manage our work orders for the past two years. We can pull up a parcel and see what activity has occurred there historically. We make use of every piece of data we have.

"Wicker was coaxed out of retirement in 2002 by City Manager Michael Ross. "When I came back to city government, we were just starting to use GIS. I had 40 years experience in public works, but this technology has revolutionized the way we all work. Having up-to-date data is a priority for us, because we depend on the information it generates. GIS gives us so many innovative ways to enhance the quality of life in our community."

One of the things the residents love about their city is that its system of sidewalks allows easy travel among neighborhoods and encourage walking, jogging and bike-riding.

"We recently worked with GTG to do an inventory of our sidewalks and to document their plan to replace and upgrade our sidewalks," Wicker said. "Sidewalks are one of the things that make a community livable, and that's a priority for our citizens. And if it's a priority for our citizens, it's a priority for us."

"These are the kinds of things you can do with GIS—the kinds of details that set us apart," he said.

