

COMMUNITY



Photos by Westchase District

Camden Park, a 3.4-acre park on Wilcrest just north of Richmond, will be the second green space created by the Westchase District.

Westchase District breaks ground on a destination green space

Camden Park to feature an entertainment pavilion area, playground, dog park and more

By Diane Cowen
STAFF WRITER

Fueled by the success of Woodchase Park, the Westchase District has broken ground on a second green space, what will be the 3.4-acre Camden Park.

Named after its primary donor, Camden Property Trust, which owns and manages apartment communities around the U.S., Camden Park will be packed with features, including a 30,000-square-foot activity lawn, multipurpose pavilion, restaurant, children's playground, dog park, covered sky terrace, exercise stations, an outdoor reading room and room for food trucks or a farmers market. The park has a budget of \$13.7 million, and con-



Some of the park's features include a 30,000-square-foot activity lawn, multipurpose pavilion, restaurant, children's playground and a dog park.

struction is expected to get underway in January, finishing in late 2024.

"All of these projects take so long to get this far along. It's very exciting," said Sherry Fox, the district's vice president of communications. "The Westchase District had zero parks a couple of years ago, and soon we'll have two, with three dog parks and 5 miles of walking trails. To see our plan come to fruition is very exciting."

While the 1.75-acre Woodchase Park is a smaller neighborhood park, Camden Park will be a destination for those who live and work near its location on Wilcrest, just north of Richmond, and will likely draw others to its events. Its pavilion — described as a smaller ver-

Park continues on D6

WELCH AWARD

Prize-winning chemist has formula for success

By Andrew Dansby
STAFF WRITER

Between the early morning phone call in October alerting Dr. Carolyn R. Bertozzi to her selection for a Nobel Prize and her visit this month to Stockholm to receive that honor, the inventor of bioorthogonal chemistry traveled to Houston.

Here, the Welch Foundation presented her with its Welch Award for her work in chemical research.

The global renown of the Nobel Prize is difficult to place into a shadow.

But Bertozzi at the time spoke reverently about the Robert A. Welch Award.

"It's one of the most prestigious awards a chemist could ever hope to win," she said at the Post Oak Hotel. "And it's only about chemistry, so it's special that way. They don't offer a physics prize or one in biology. And the awardees are given the award for a body of work over their career, whereas the Nobel is about one big discovery."

So Bertozzi enjoyed an eventful late summer, earning such recognition



Dave Rossman/Contributor

Dr. Carolyn R. Bertozzi won both a Nobel Prize and the 2022 Robert A. Welch Award in chemistry.

for work she describes as the result of seeking an empty lane during a growth spurt in study of molecular biology in the 1980s. Bertozzi opted to study glycans and, more specifically, biopolymers, which was a neglected area in the broader realm of molecular biology.

Bertozzi refers to her chosen field of study as "a beautiful subject, fascinating ... there's a certain elegance to it."

She hopes there's also practical medical applications for this beautiful, fascinating and elegant work.

'A little rebellion'

Bertozzi grew up in Boston, one of three daughters whose father was a physicist.

"He fought pretty hard against that societal messaging that a girl might have heard," she says. "We all wore MIT T-shirts in preschool. When they asked kids in our classes what they wanted to be, you'd hear fireman, flight attendant and we were the ones who answered 'median energy nuclear physicists!'"

"There was a little rebellion that I did not go
Bertozzi continues on D2

PARK

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sion of Miller Outdoor Theatre — will be large enough to host concerts, plays and other events for a crowd of about 1,000 people on the lawn.

Although the Westchase District pays for the parks, their programming and maintenance, both are considered city of Houston parks.

The parks designers — the Office of James Burnett, known as OJB, and Natalye Appel + Associates Architects — also collaborated on Woodchase Park, with OJB handling the overall project and Appel's firm designing a structure with restrooms and storage. For Camden Park, Appel's firm will design the restaurant, performance pavilion and playground pavilion.

Parks have gained more attention in Houston since the 2008 opening of downtown's Discovery Green. After that, Buffalo Bayou Park sprang up, tapping into the city's natural waterways for scenic places to walk, run or bicycle. Hermann Park has had its own upgrades, and Memorial Park has undergone a massive upgrade that's still in progress. Even now, an eastward expansion of Buffalo Bayou Park is on the drawing board.

In comparison, Woodchase Park and Camden Park are tiny, but they're important to their neighborhoods, which were otherwise "park starved."

Fox said that Westchase District has always been interested in parks and quality of life issues but didn't have a funding mechanism until it got a Chapter 380 economic development agreement — similar to a Tax In-



Photos by Westchase District

Dog owners will be able to take advantage of an expansive park that caters to both animals and humans.

crement Reinvestment Zone — with the city of Houston. The district has paid for infrastructure projects, such as the Walnut Bend street reconstruction and Westheimer streetscape, with that funding.

Large live oak trees removed from Westheimer were used in the Woodchase Park, and several more will be used at Camden Park, along with bald cypress and bosque elm trees. Shrubs, ground cover and flowering plants will be Texas natives that are better suited to our hot climate.

"A higher quality of life affects businesses. A good portion of our residences are apartments, and people who live there want parks and outdoor experiences, too. In this post-COVID world, you hear about apartment complexes retrofitting green spaces and putting in rooftop gardens. Everything we do for that benefits our district," Fox said.

Success with Woodchase Park also helped



The new park will feature multiple play areas and an adventure path for children.

the district gather private donors, such as Camden Property Trust, and a long list of donors who added \$3.7 million to the project, allowing them to keep in amenities they otherwise might have had to live without. Those who gave \$25,000 or more will have naming rights to different elements. For example, Green Mountain Energy Sun Club will sponsor the botanical garden, BGE Inc. will sponsor the outdoor reading room and CenterPoint Energy is spon-

soring the kids playground water play area. Cynthia Dehlavi, associate director of Lab and Design at OJB, said that Camden Park will be created with high design: a combination of quiet passive areas, plus other areas where children or dogs can play, adults can get exercise or groups can gather. "We want to make sure we have something for every user. We want the elderly community to have something to do, we want little kids and their moms and young profes-

sionals who have a dog to interact and get to know each other as neighbors," Dehlavi said. "The park has lots of details intended to spark the imagination and tap into the way you feel about where you live. Our hope, obviously, is that it makes people feel better."

Curved pathways and organic forms are believed to be more restorative than straight lines, generating biophilic responses that help people connect with nature, as well as their own health and recovery, she said.

Camden Park will feature both one-of-a-kind play and unstructured play for children, said Chip Trageser, a landscape architect and partner at OJB.

"We want memorable things that don't feel off the shelf: an adventure path that takes you up 10 feet to a porch building and overlook that is also a circuit with a series of activities. There's a slide kids can go on with their best buddies and a



climbing wall connected to an adventure path and tunnels to go up and under," Trageser said. "It will also have something called 'messy play' — sand and water and play elements where kids create dams where water can flow or they open them and let water come down. It's creative, getting hands dirty in the earth and making your own play."

One more element that will be different from other parks is its materials. Rubber is no longer a material of choice; instead, they will use natural wood materials.

Sustainability elements include rain gardens that wrap around the north and east sides of the park, connecting to existing drainage ways. Those gardens will be filled with flowers and will help keep the park dry in a major rain event.

The park is across from the Robinson-Westchase Neighborhood Library and will connect to a trail system between it and Wilcrest Park to the east. A small bridge over a drainage ditch will help people get back and forth between Camden Park and the library.

"We are so excited about this park. It will have so many fun activities, and we think the community will embrace it," Fox said. "It is the park of our dreams — it will be exactly as it was designed and envisioned."

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