

# KEY REVITALIZATION PROJECTS **4**

*OVERVIEW*

*CURRENT & PLANNED PROJECTS*

*PROPOSED PROJECTS*



Figure 4-1: Illustrative Revitalization Plan

## OVERVIEW

While the framework establishes recommendations and criteria that will guide overall district revitalization, this chapter identifies a series of specific revitalization initiatives that will eliminate pockets of blight and obsolescence and introduce an array of new housing types, as well as employment and commercial activities. Together, these initiatives will transform the character and inject new economic vitality into the UD over the next decade and beyond.

These initiatives are of two types; *Current / Planned Projects* are those that are already in the planning stage and which are likely to occur over the next five years; *Proposed / Long Range Projects* are more speculative in nature as they target areas that are already experiencing disinvestment, obsolescence and decline, or areas that are expected to experience such conditions in the coming years. Land use and development concepts depicted for them do not necessarily reflect current market realities. Rather, they represent the types and character of development which the UD needs to become the vibrant urban destination and community of choice reflected in the Vision.



*Artist Rendering of Place Properties Residential Development, courtesy of Place Properties*

## **1** Place Properties / Student Housing

One of the first encouraging signs of investor and developer interest in the future of UD was the purchase of the Coleman Dairy site by Place Properties, a national developer of student housing. Their approved plan depicts the phased construction of approximately 192 new dwelling units to be marketed primarily, but not exclusively, to UALR students.

The timing and success of this project is important for several reasons. First, its initiation, coinciding with the adoption and publication of the UD Plan will enhance awareness and confidence among businesses, residents and prospective investors and developers that the revitalization process has begun. For every area-wide revitalization effort, there must be a “pioneer” developer and project, whose success will reduce the perceived risk for those that follow. For this reason, the success of this effort is critically important, warranting the strong support by UALR and the City of Little Rock. Second, this project is important in its elimination of a blighted eyesore along Asher Avenue, one of the City’s older struggling industrial and commercial corridors. It will add confidence that other nearby deteriorated properties along this corridor may be redeveloped as well. Finally, the introduction of approximately 600 off-campus students (and their spending power) at this location will go a long way in supporting future off-campus retail development, specifically the proposed Fair Park Neighborhood Center located within walking distance to the north. (Fig. 4-4).

One significant obstacle to be overcome in order to fully integrate this development into the UD is its separation by the wide and heavily traveled Asher Avenue, a corridor which presents safety concerns for pedestrians attempting to cross. The immediately adjacent Coleman Creek, which is proposed for restoration as a greenway and pedestrian / bicycle corridor, represents an exceptional opportunity to connect this and other elements of the UD in a way that reduces reliance on the automobile and promotes public health. For this reason the assistance of the City of Little Rock and the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) is essential in expediting a modest raising of Asher at this location with a new bridge which will permit pedestrian /bicycle access along Coleman Creek beneath the road.

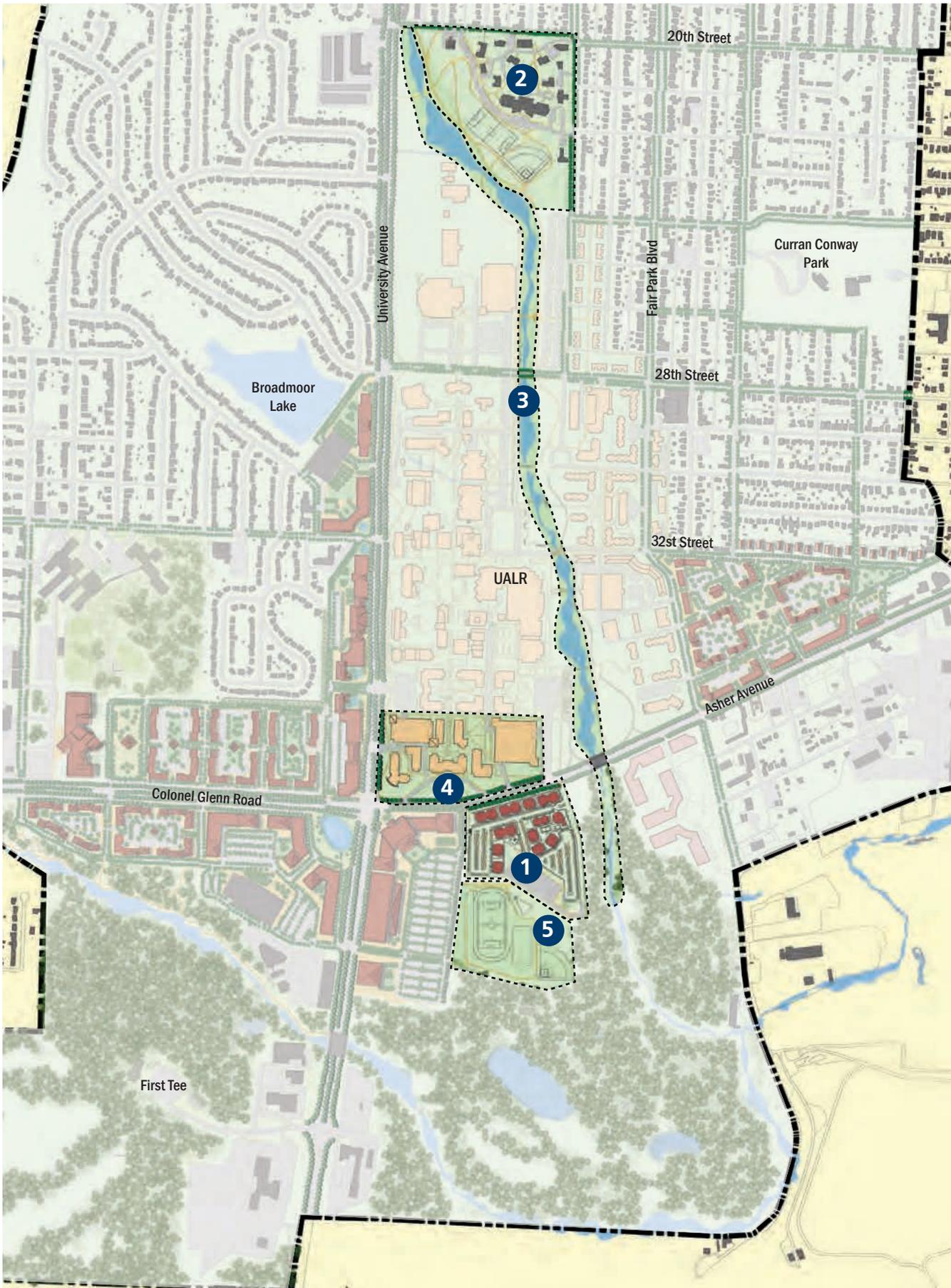


Figure 4-2: Diagram of Current and Planned Projects

## 2 United Methodist Children's Home

Established in 1899 as an orphanage by the Methodist Church, this facility has continued to serve children and families, particularly those affected by addiction and behavioral and psychiatric disorders. Arkansas Cares, a treatment program for addicted mothers and their families formerly run by UAMS, will remain a part of the United Methodist Children's Home (UMCH) complex. UMCH recently shared with the UD Partnership a proposed Master Plan for enhancements and improvements for the facility. Because of its nature as a facility with a regional and state wide service area, this facility and its plans will have limited direct impact on the UD.



United Methodist Children's Home Master Plan

### UALR Projects

Although UALR is not driving UD revitalization, it has an important role to play in advancing the cause and several of its planned projects which are peripheral to its core academic mission and/or outside its core campus, will have a beneficial impact

## 3 Coleman Creek Restoration

Initially proposed in the UALR 2004 Campus Master Plan, Coleman Creek represents a tremendous opportunity for the restoration of this stream corridor, not only to improve downstream water quality and demonstrate sustainable development, but as a community amenity. It also represents an opportunity to act as a unifying greenway that reintroduces nature back into a highly altered urban setting and becomes a key element of an integrated open space network that provides pedestrian and bicycle connectivity throughout UD.



Coleman Creek at Asher Avenue Existing Conditions and Proposed South Entry Enhancement Plan

## 4 University Plaza Redevelopment

This obsolete retail shopping center, long in decline is now owned by UALR. Although some existing formerly retail spaces are now occupied by various university functions, ultimately this center will be redeveloped as a new southern edge of the UALR campus. With a "signature" academic building at the corner of University Avenue and Asher Avenue, this will serve to beautify and reinforce the center of activity and identity of University Plaza, while concentrating larger scale community commercial activity on either side of University Avenue, south of Asher Avenue.

## 5 Intramural Sports Fields

As proposed in the current UALR Campus Master Plan, this UALR owned property is planned for development as intramural sports fields. Its location immediately adjacent the planned Place Properties student housing should increase the marketability of student housing in this location.



*Rendering of potential Colonel Glenn residential community and “commons”*

## PROPOSED PROJECTS

### Residential Projects

Due to the significant out-migration of middle and upper middle income families and the overall dip in population that has occurred in the UD in the past decades, one of the most critical needs is to secure new “rooftops” emphasizing quality housing that will appeal to a broad range of household types and income levels. The projects below can add some 600 new dwellings (in addition to the 600 students who will be housed in the Place Properties development), including single family homes, town homes and low-mid rise multifamily apartment dwellings

### 6 Colonel Glenn Residential Neighborhood

This redevelopment site is presently occupied by the Mosaic Church (former Wal-Mart), aging and deteriorating multi-family housing and a mini storage facility. Although the existing uses provide a significant amount of affordable rental housing, the design and construction suggests that this property is likely to continue to decline, and following the planned relocation of the Mosaic Church, both properties could suffer from neglect. As depicted in Figure 4-3 the proposed development consists of approximately 200 dwellings designed with a traditional neighborhood street orientation and with a combination of townhouses and flats up to three-stories, ideally comprising mixed income units, both homeownership and rentals. Due to an abrupt grade change, it is not possible to create road or pedestrian connections to the single family neighborhood to the north. However, this grade change helps to ensure that structures as tall as three stories will remain visually compatible with the adjacent neighborhood. On the western most portion of the site is placed a community park, serving as a buffer to the proposed educational campus to the west.

### 7 Rock Creek Residential Development

At the southeast corner of S. Bryant Street and Colonel Glenn Road is a strip of aging and obsolete heavy commercial uses that make little contribution to the local economy, and which are unlikely to be redeveloped for a higher quality of commercial development due to the availability of nearby commercial sites with much greater traffic visibility and accessi-



*Rendering of Rock Creek residential community*

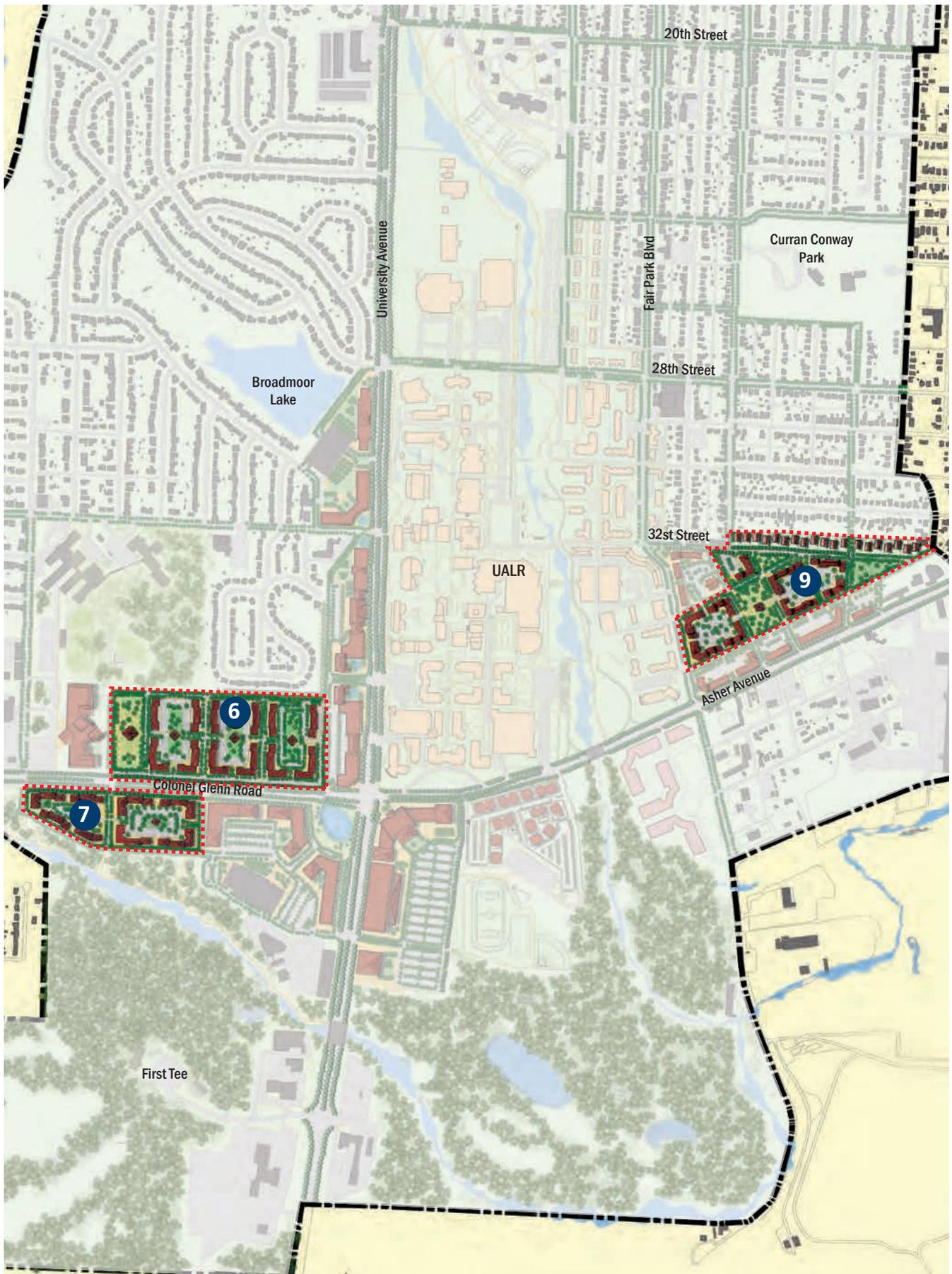


Figure 4-3: Diagram of Key Residential Projects

bility. Consequently, this site is depicted as a future opportunity for high density housing, of approximately 240 dwelling units in structures of four-to-five stories.

## 8 32nd Street Neighborhood

The triangular section of land south of W 32nd Street to Asher Avenue is a fragmented collection of deteriorated housing (South Oaks) and marginal retail and light-industrial uses along Fair Park Boulevard and Asher Avenue. Acting as both an eyesore and a destabilizing influence on the single family neighborhood to the north, this area is in need of redevelopment to more viable uses. The image below depicts a new residential development consisting of a variety of housing types and scale. Along the north side of 32nd Street are twenty-four single family homes intended to strengthen the Curran-Conway section of the Oak Forest neighborhood. On the triangular property to the south are three residential clusters surrounding a centrally located park. The northern cluster consists of two-story townhouses compatible in scale with the adjacent neighborhood. To the south are three-to-four story townhouses and flats. Residential units total approximately 150 dwellings.



*Rendering of potential 32nd Street residential community with “commons”*



*Rendering of view to International Village landscape “gateway,” looking southwest from University / Asher Avenue intersection*

## **Commercial / Mixed-Use Projects**

Commercial development has been in a slow decline in the UD for a number of years due to a variety of factors; namely, the decline in neighborhood population and income levels, obsolescence and deterioration of aging commercial structures, and increased competition from newer outlying suburban commercial centers. The projects described below will replace the existing array of commercial development incrementally as new rooftops are added and as investor confidence in the UD grows.

### **9 International Village Mixed Use Center**

This mixed-use center will replace an obsolete and under used strip shopping center located at the southwest corner of the University Boulevard / Colonel Glenn intersection. Inspired in part by the 21 nations and flags representing the multinational congregation of the Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas, as well as the newly arrived Mexican Consulate, the International Village will be the largest mixed use center in the UD. Occupying a refurbished former K-Mart, Mosaic Church is a central activity focus, and is flanked by two-to-three story mixed use structures that create an urban edge along University Avenue and Colonel Glen. The development program totals approximately 260,000 square feet, consisting of ground level retail and office or residential on the upper floors. At the corner of the property is a large landscaped gateway and water feature that opens up a view corridor directly to the entrance of Mosaic Church for traffic traveling southbound on University Avenue and traveling westbound on Asher / Colonel Glenn.

### **10 University Avenue Neighborhood Commercial**

Along the west side of University Avenue, south of W. 32nd Street lies a shallow band of small strip centers and fast food and other out parcels, with parking along University Avenue, as well as the sides of buildings. The present configuration is completely auto-dominated, with poor access management and disconnected parking in a generally pedestrian unfriendly environment. This site represents an opportunity to create a more consolidated pattern of neighborhood and University-related small retail busi-

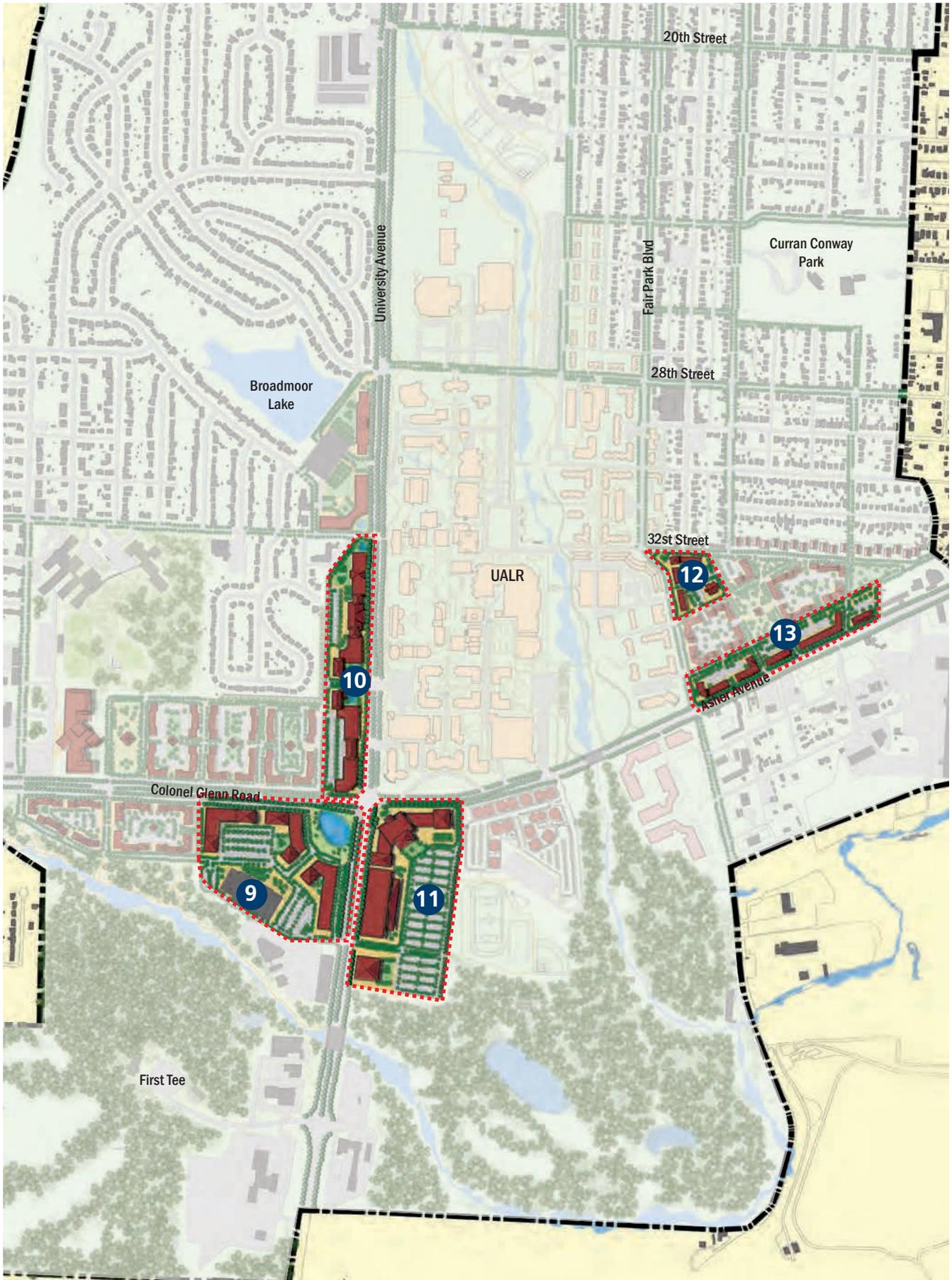


Figure 4-4: Diagram of Key Commercial Projects

nesses and restaurants with an improved pedestrian environment along the University Avenue corridor. The focus of this pedestrian destination is a “gateway” centered across University Avenue from University Drive, the primary ceremonial entrance to the UALR campus. Here structures will front on pedestrian plazas flanking a shared vehicular entrance leading to parking at the rear of the commercial structures. The development program totals approximately 160,000 square feet with retail on the ground level and (optionally) one-to-two levels of office or residential above.



*Rendering off University Avenue neighborhood mixed-use with core plaza, looking west from College Drive*

## 11 Community Retail Center

Although recently renovated, the existing shopping center at the southeast corner of the Colonel Glenn / Asher Avenue intersection, this site consists of an older strip center along with a collection of disconnected out parcels. While it is expected to remain economically viable for the foreseeable future, this site represents a long term potential to develop a more modern and competitive community retail center of approximately 225,000 square feet. Uses will likely remain similar to the present mix, with a cluster of “mid-box” retailers including a supermarket and movie complex acting as “anchors” but designed as a more integrated “lifestyle center” rather than as a collection of disconnected uses and structures. With its orientation to University Avenue, such a structure along with a similar structure across University at the International Village, will function as a visual gateway



*Rendering of Fair Park neighborhood mixed-use areas with plaza, looking southeast*

to the UD, and may also have a traffic calming effect to slow vehicular speeds through the district.



*Rendering of Community Commercial area southeast of Asher/University Avenues*

## **12 Fair Park Neighborhood Commercial**

The southeast corner of Fair Park and W. 32nd Street, represents an ideal location for a small enclave of neighborhood retail with residential apartments above. With sidewalk cafes, restaurants and small specialty markets this site is a “walk-to” destination and a “people place” shared by the University community and neighborhood residents.

## **13 Asher Avenue Light Industrial**

Lining the frontage along Asher Avenue are up to 60,000 square feet in new industrial and warehouse / distribution structures, taking advantage of, and buffering this high traffic corridor from the 32nd Street residential development to the north. This project will act as a model for the assembly and redevelopment of under utilized and deteriorated heavy commercial and industrial uses elsewhere along Asher Avenue.

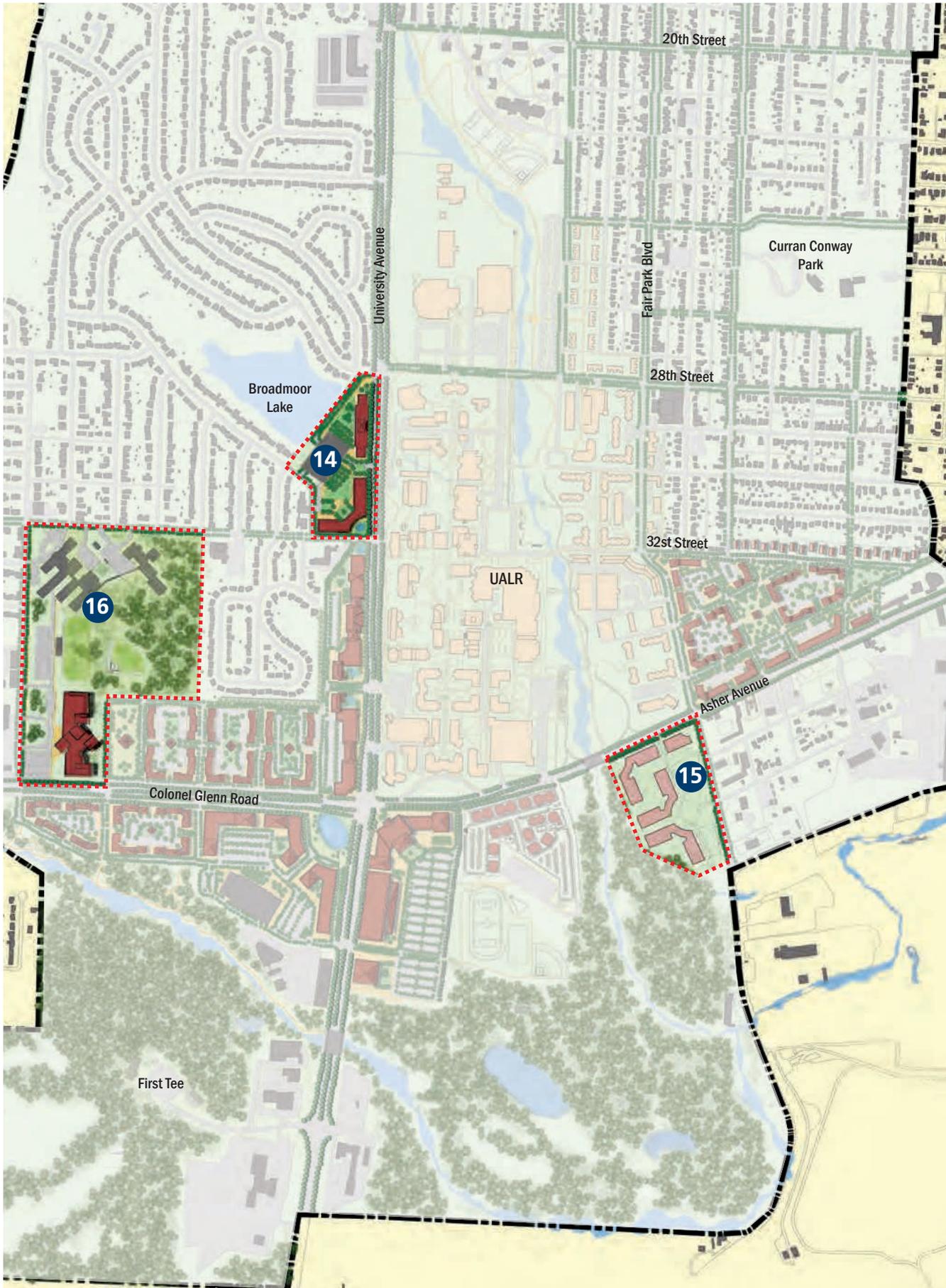


Figure 4-5: Diagram of Key Research & Education Projects

### **Technology / Office Project**

In addition to enriching on-campus student life and expanding student housing on and near the campus, one of the greatest contributions which UALR can make to the success of the UD is to support the synergistic development of research and technology businesses linked to university research activities and to its faculty and graduates. Not only will such facilities make the UD more of a regional destination, but it may add hundreds of well-paid and highly educated employees, many of whom may choose to live and shop nearby and otherwise help to activate the district.

## **14 University Research and Office Park**

Figure 4-5 depicts the future redevelopment of the Broadmoor Shopping Center as a University Research and Office Park. Ideally located directly across University Avenue from UALR science buildings, including the new Computer Information Sciences (CIS) facility, this is considered an ideal location for technology firms, research, and related office space. Depicted in the diagram in Fig. 4-5 are two, three-story office structures totaling approximately 200,000 square feet, along with a 5 level 900 space parking structure. To expand and improve the efficiency of this development site the Lakeshore Drive connection to University Avenue should be closed and diverted to W. 32nd Street, allowing a consolidation with the triangular property at the northwest corner of the W. 32nd Street / University Avenue intersection.

## **15 Proposed University Land Banking / Future Technology Park**

This section of Asher Avenue consists of highly fragmented properties that are economically marginal industrial and heavy commercial uses, along with a number of sites and structures that are virtually abandoned. While it is not the intent of the UD Revitalization Plan to disrupt or displace existing businesses, this area represents an opportunity to purchase, assemble and “land bank” properties as they become available. Future uses may include a Technology Park taking advantage of the amenity value of its frontage along a restored Coleman Creek and Resource Park. Depicted in Fig. 4-5 is a hypothetical technology park comprising four structures with a total size of 300,000 – 400,000 square feet.

## 16 University District Educational Campus

Immediately to the west of the existing Mosaic Church and proposed Colonel Glenn Residential Neighborhood, lies a small enclave of single family homes, many of which show signs of neglect and disrepair. Because of its complete isolation from any nearby neighborhood, it is not likely to attract new homeowners and is susceptible to decline. This site may represent an opportunity to create an expanded educational K-12 campus linking to the existing elementary and middle schools immediately to the north. Such a unique facility, with support from the education programs at UALR, could be a major incentive for future families to reside in the UD.



*Rendering of University Research and Office Park, looking northwest from University Avenue*