

RESULTS FROM THE UA LITTLE ROCK UNIVERSITY PLAZA SURVEY

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STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION 2020-2021

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UA Little Rock University Plaza Student Priorities- Survey Results

Introduction

Recently, Chancellor Drale announced a process to redevelop the University Plaza shopping center into a multi-use complex (community and campus). The University Plaza is located on the corner of Asher and University Avenues.

The Chancellor created committees to move forward with the redevelopment of a public-private partnership. Part of the process is understanding what is desired for the location. This includes surveying and discussing with different groups to gauge interest in the type of businesses or services that could be part of the redevelopment.

The Student Government Association released a survey to understand the interests of the student body on their priorities and foster redevelopment ideas for the University Plaza. This report is a summary of the findings from the survey.

Methods

To capture student opinions regarding the redevelopment of the University Plaza, the Student Government Association, in conjunction with the University Plaza Content Committee, created a survey on Google Forms. This survey consisted of thirteen (13) questions intended to gauge the opinions of UA Little Rock students regarding the University Plaza redevelopment.

An email was sent to the student body on March 29, 2021 that briefly introduced the University Plaza Content Committee and asked the students to complete the survey by 5:00 p.m. on April 16, 2021. A reminder to complete the survey was sent to the student body via email on April 13, 2021. The response rate for the survey, excluding the William H. Bowen School of Law, was 2.95%; including the law school, the response rate was 2.91%. The range of responses varied by question. Table 1 shows the response rate per question based on the total responses of the survey (234).

Table 1: Response Rate per Question

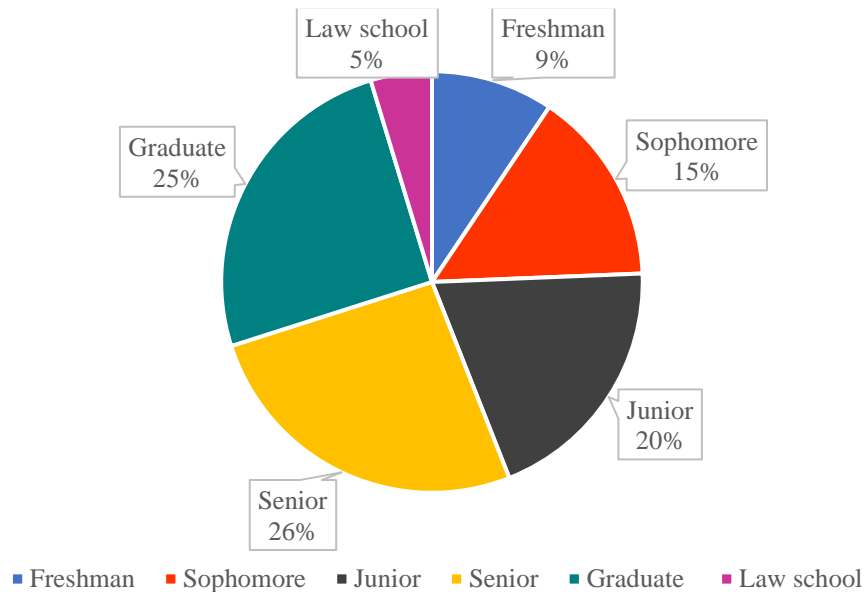
Question	# Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Demographic	234	100%
1	234	100%
2	234	100%
3	234	100%
4	160	68.3%
5	210	89.7%
6	138	60.0%
7	113	48.2%
8	107	45.7%
9	168	71.2%
10	80	34.2%
11	163	70.0%
12	56	24.0%

The findings were tabulated using the summary function in Google Forms. A content analysis was utilized for the qualitative data obtained through the open-ended response questions. Responses were coded and allocated into themes to quantify the responses. Once the data was coded, similar themes were combined until a concise number of categories were established. The authors (Snow & DeKay) cross-checked a subset of themes before a final interpretation was reached. This process improved consistency and reliability of the content analysis process through inter-rater reliability.

Sample

Graduate students were overrepresented in the sample (25%), while representing 17.6% of the student population. Juniors were overrepresented in the sample (20.0%); while representing 18.8% of the student population. Sophomores were overrepresented in the sample (15%) while representing 11.4 % of the student population. Freshmen (11.4% in the study versus 9% of the student population), Seniors (27.9% in the study versus 26% of the student population) and Law school (5.9% in the study versus 5% of the student population) were underrepresented within the sample. Graph 1 shows the representation of academic classifications.

Graph 1: Academic Classification of Respondents



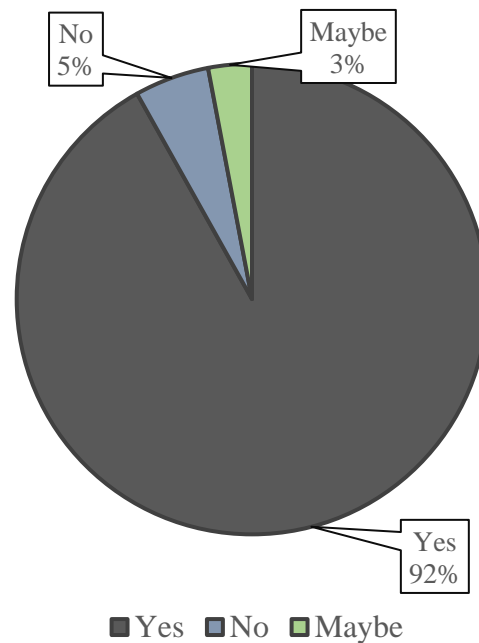
Findings

Each question asked included preset answers for participants to mark off plus an open-ended portion for the participants to suggest additional ideas. The preset responses are found in red font in each of the tables (1-10). The final question was an open-ended question. A summary of all of the responses is included in the various tables below.

Question 1

Question 1 asked “Have you heard of the University Plaza?” Whereas 91.9% of the respondents indicated that they have heard of the University Plaza, 5.1% of the respondents noted that they have not heard of the plaza, and 3% may have heard of the University Plaza. The results are displayed in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Have you Heard of the University Plaza?



Question 2

Question 2 asked, “What would you like developed in the University Plaza shopping center?” This question asked the respondent to check all that apply. This question also had the option to fill in a desired development. The results have been combined in Table 2. It should be noted that several responses (2.1%) highlight the security and safety of the area. Examples of the comments are listed below:

- “Nothing. Beef up security on campus instead.”
- “The corner is a haven for the homeless. Any UALR spaces would be impossible to secure.”
- “This is a high risk, low security area, exposed to Asher Avenue.”

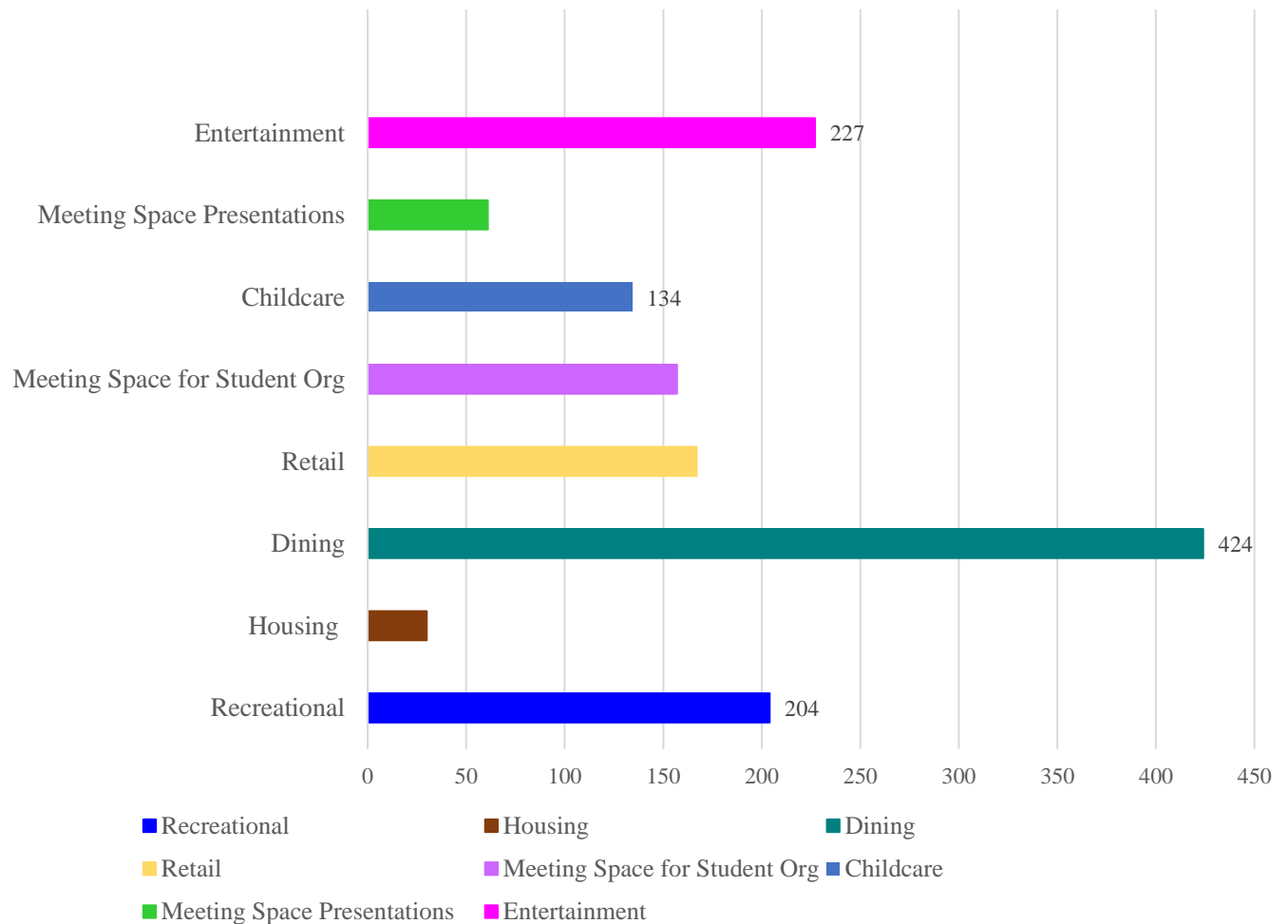
Table 2: What would you like Developed in the University Plaza

Response	% of Respondents
Retail (specialty store, department store, boutique)	45.3%
Dining (fast food, sit-down restaurants/grill, coffee shop, campus dining)	82.1%
Meeting space for student organizations	40.6%
Childcare and/or Early Childhood Education Center	35%
Meeting space for presentations/lectures (guest speakers, faculty, student)	24.8%
Entertainment (movie theater, arcade, escape room)	61.1%
Housing	14.1%
Recreational Space (basketball court, park, green space, picnic tables, intramural space)	58.1%
Community Centre (includes youth programs & homeless)	2.1%
Green Space	2.1%
Esthetically pleasing buildings incorporated into the current campus space	2.1%
Expanded fitness centre (yoga studio & fitness classes)	1.3%
Grocery Store	1.3%
Bar for 21+ and live music	1.3%
Health Services- for campus and community	1.3%
Student Lounge	1.3%
Office space for admissions & offices to lease out	1.3%
Parking	1.3%
Event/Creative Space for fine arts students	.4%
Homework/study space	.4%
Greek Row	.4%
Podcast production studio	.4%
Study Spaces	.4%

Question 3

Question 3 asked “Based on the list of potential developments above, please select what three developments you would like to see the most. Out of these three developments, please rank them from 1-3, with 1 is being most desired choice.” For this question, the answers were weighted to determine their total scores. For the most desired choice, the total value given was three (3); for the second most desired choice, the total value given was two (2) and for third most desired choice, the value was one (1). Based on the weighted totals, the most desired uses of the space are dining, entertainment and recreation. The results of this question are shown in Graph 3.

Graph 3: Weighted Total for Each Category



Question 4

Question 4 asked “If you chose retail, what store options would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were able to select multiple categories. The question also allowed for a write-in response. The responses are captured in Table 3. Note the total respondents for this question was 160. There were multiple mentions of security of the location in the open-ended section of question 4. In addition, a majority of the respondents noted that they would like to see locally owned small businesses (81%), followed by specialty stores (41.9%), department stores (35%), and boutiques (25%). A small percentage of students indicated that they would like to see a grocery store (2.5%).

Table 3: Retail Space Responses

Response	% of Respondents
Locally owned small business	81.0%
Specialty store	41.9%
Department store	35.0%
Boutiques	25.0%
Grocery Store (fresh produce)	2.5%
Thrift/Antique shops	0.6%
Walmart campus store	0.6%
Liquor store	0.6%
Convenience store	0.6%
Student entrepreneurial store	0.6%

Question 5

Question 5 asked “If you chose dining, what dining options would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were once again able to select several categories. The question allowed for a write-in response. The responses are captured in the Table 4. Note the total respondents for this question was 210. The most popular answer was for dine-in restaurant (71.4%), followed by coffee shops (70%), fast-food (48.5%), additional campus dining options (43.8%), and a sports bar/pub (42.8%). Additional responses included local restaurants, wings, a craft beer bar, an ice cream parlor, a pastry shop, and parking space for food trucks. Also, several respondents noted that the dining options should accept Trojan flex dollars and meal plans.

Table 4: Dining Options Response

Response	% of Respondents
Dine-in restaurants	71.4%
Coffee Shops	70.0%
Fast-food	48.5%
Additional campus dining options	43.8%
Sports bar/pub	42.8%
Local restaurants (businesses)	1.4%
Wings	0.5%
Craft beer bar	0.5%
Pastry shop or ice cream parlor	0.5%
Campus card and trojan dollars can be used	0.5%
Parking space for food trucks	0.5%
Fast casual (Chipotle)	0.5%

Question 6

Question 6 asked “If you chose meeting space for student organizations, what would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were able to select multiple categories. This question allowed for a write-in response. The responses are captured in the Table 5. The total number of responses for this question were 138. Developing a student organization lounge was rather popular (75.4%), followed by large rooms for organization events/meetings (57.2%), Greek life meeting space (31.9%), and organization storage/office space (22.5%). Additional ideas included a revenue generating space/leased small office space, public park space, public green space where students can meet, venue space available to creative students, and a multi-purpose space that isn't allocated for specific organizations. A number of comments were made about the space:

- “Organizations outside of Greek life deserve more attention. Our school lacks clubs because this school actually doesn't care, I mean no one even wants to advise a club either. If Greek life becomes the only thing, we push for students to join, then we have failed as a "diverse" campus.”
- “Don't see the need.”

Table 5: Meeting Space Responses

Response	% of Respondents
Student Organization Lounge	75.4%
Large rooms for organization events/meetings	57.2%
Greek Life meeting space	31.9%
Organization storage/office space	22.5%
Revenue generating space/ leased small office space	1.45%
Public park space, public green space where students can meet	0.7%
Regular student lounge	0.7%
Large art installations alongside gardens and benches	0.7%
Esports area	0.7%
Multi-purpose space that isn't allocated for specific organizations,	0.7%
venue space available to creative students	0.7%
Study space	0.7%

Question 7

Question 7 asked “If you chose Childcare and/or Early Childhood Education Center, what would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were asked to select all that apply. The total number of respondents for this question were 113. The results provided in Table 6. The most popular answer was a daycare/preschool (79.6%), followed by an early childhood education program (57.5%), low-cost childcare prioritizing students so they can continue their post-secondary education (2.65%), community center specializing in youth programs (.9%), and extended healthcare facilities.

Table 6: Childcare Responses

Response	% of Respondents
Daycare/preschool	79.6%
Early childhood education program	57.5%
Low-cost prioritizing students	2.65%
Community center specializing in youth programs	0.9%
Extended health care facilities	0.9%

Question 8

Question 8 asked “If you chose entertainment, what would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were asked to check all that are of interest for the plaza. The total number of responses for this question was 168. The most popular answer was a movie theater (70.8%) followed by an arcade (69%). Other popular responses included a performing arts theater (41.7%) and a comedy club (37.5%). There were a number of written responses including: an escape room, sports bar and a karaoke lounge. A number of additional comments/concerns were made about the space including:

- “We have a performing arts center maybe if you guys cared about the arts you would know bring back theater and dance.”
- “None of these seem sustainable on our campus or in this area.”

Table 7: Entertainment Responses

Response	% of Respondents
Movie theater	70.8%
Arcade	69.0%
Performing arts theater	41.7%
Comedy club	37.5%
Escape Room	3.6%
<i>Sports Bar type of venue with TVs, Pool Tables, Food/Drink</i>	1.2%
Karaoke lounge	0.6%
Group exercise (example cycling, dancing)	0.6%
A catch-all space that could host various forms of the above-listed options	0.6%
Podcast production studio	0.6%
Performance space for singers and rappers	0.6%

Question 9

Question 9 asked “If you chose housing, what options would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The respondents were asked to check all that apply. The total number of respondents was 80. The most popular answer was additional UA Little Rock student housing options (53.8%), followed by apartments (51.2%), townhouses (30%), condos (27.5%), and a conference center hotel (13.8%). Write-in responses included more single space housing options, housing for the homeless, and Greek housing. A number of additional comments were made about this option, which are listed below:

- “They should be market-priced apartments (NOT overpriced student housing) with approx. 25% set aside for subsidized/affordable rentals, and they should be ABOVE the retail options.”
- “Are we going to tear down the location for this? This will take at least two years to build.”

Table 8: Housing Responses

Response	% of Respondents
Additional UA Little Rock student housing options	53.8%
Apartments	51.2%
Townhouses	30.0%
Condos	27.5%
Conference center hotel	11.8%
More single space housing options	1.3%
Housing for the homeless	0.6%

Question 10

Question 10 asked “If you chose recreational space, what options would you like to see built in the University Plaza center?” The total respondents for this question were 163. Outdoor study space was the most popular response (71.8%), followed by outdoor eating-picnic tables (65%), green space-lawn (57.7%), parks (56.4%), a basketball court/tennis court and soccer field (38%) and intramural space (36.2%). Additional write-in answers included: disk golf basket space, an outside gym, and a volleyball court (grass or sand).

Table 9: Recreational Space Response

Response	% of Respondents
Outdoor study space	71.8%
Outdoor eating (picnic tables)	65.0%
Green Space (lawn)	57.7%
Parks	56.4%
Basketball court/tennis court/soccer field	38.0%
Intramural space	36.2%
Volleyball court- grass or sand	1.2%
Pool	0.6%
Expansion option for campus garden	0.6%
Disk golf baskets space	0.6%
Plants and green space w/ design intentionally benefiting neighboring Coleman creek and Fourche watershed	0.6%
Outside gym...Rope climbing, rock climbing, pull up bars, hurdles, monkey bars	0.6%
Green space and parks are essential for life balance, including an area friendly for dogs/dog park	0.6%
Space for fraternity/sorority life	0.6%

Question 11

The final question of the survey was an open-ended question for additional suggestions for what should be built in the University Plaza. A total of 56 respondents provided additional suggestions. Responses have been coded for prominent themes and are presented below.

Theme 1 - The space needs to encourage students to stay on campus (i.e., "campus life") (n=17)

Many of the responses suggested the University Plaza development may offer students a space to build campus life at UA Little Rock. The suggestions included student lounges, a safe place to rest between classes, entertainment (21+), and fun-stress relief center. The comments suggested the area should be clearly identifiable as a UA Little Rock space (using Trojan colors) and encourage students to stay on campus, outside of taking classes. Examples of the responses are provided below:

- “My recommendation would be to cater to your students. There are plenty of retail locations that are currently available in the area as well as fast food locations. This would cut into the "campus" feel being located on this corner of the lot. Create a place where prospective students will want to come and "live" on campus and not just "commute". We need a better campus life to draw students to our university!”
- “Anything that provides entertainment for student campus life. I moved off campus once I turned 21 because there is nothing near or on campus that encouraged me to stay.”
- “Make it a student support center, like childcare, or a fun stress-relief activity, or a workshop/lecturer/seminar learning opportunities (workshops could even be things like jewelry making/painting).”
- “Local businesses and job options for residential students! (note that I am NOT a residential student, I just think it would be a good idea).”
- “Ted talks or student talks, open mic (poetry, music, or comedy club or karaoke).”

Theme 2 - Safety of the area (n=14)

The theme of safety was prevalent in the open-ended responses. Students want the safety of the area to be addressed when determining what gets built in the University Plaza. They want safety to be a major priority even after the area is developed. A number of comments highlight the current crime levels along Asher Avenue. Simply put, safety needs to be dramatically increased for students to utilize the space. Examples of the comments are below:

- “You can build all kind of things to attract students, however if they do not feel safe on campus they are not going to come anyway. There are shootings near campus monthly. Someone was raped in the bathrooms at Stabler hall last year and yet you guys are worried about building a movie theater?”
- “Should be an option that invites the least crime to the area.”
- “I just worry about the safety of the area. We all know the history of Asher & how unsafe it can be. If we can build up the Asher area, & move out all the negativity, that would be better.”
- “I’m concerned about the level of violence and crime that occurs along Asher Ave. and will likely not be bringing my family there.”

Theme 3 - Development to help with the local community (n=10)

A number of respondents mentioned their desire to see the development benefit the local community in addition to UA Little Rock. The respondents spoke of the importance of creating a space for everyone to utilize. Examples of their suggestions include:

- “The space would ideally function best as a space that benefits not just traditional students, but the nontraditional students as well, which is why I believe childcare would be a great option. If we can actually get parents to take classes in-person/on-campus, that would be a beneficial way to begin rebuilding the campus community.”
- “Something that fosters community and university interactions.”
- “I would really like to see greenspace and public areas for all, I am concerned about the local homeless population that is right off Asher and Colonel Glenn, I do not want to see gentrification displacing these people or increased policing on unhoused people in the name of this project.”

- “University Plaza has the potential to be an economic stimulator for the Asher and South University area. I am really excited for the future plans for this area!”
- “Build a subdivision that can house students and cater to the community with early childhood education and subdivision development.”
- “I think this space should be utilized to benefit the University District Neighborhood primarily and the university secondary. This should be a place that the youth & families of the University District could utilize FREE of charge and not to solely financially benefit the university.”

Theme 4 - Intentional planning to build the space into the campus and not a separate entity(n=10)

Many students discussed the importance of the future development being integrated into the campus but not be a separate entity. The space should represent inclusion with the main campus.

- “The intersection of University and Asher has long been one of the most dangerous, per capita, in the country. Whatever this space becomes, the area needs to be actually absorbed into the school, made safe and secure for students, and cleaned up to be visually appealing.”
- “I would like for it to be incorporated into the university space rather than the outlying streets. Make it feel inclusive of the university. It would also be nice to have a skybridge that goes across the road to connect the campus to the Coleman areas across the street to build some unity.”

Theme 5 - Use the space to build in academic experience (n=6)

The respondents suggested that whatever is developed in this space should have a dual purpose. The first purpose should address the need in the community and the second purpose should provide students with practical experience within their program. A number of examples are provided below:

- “I would love to see this space utilized to benefit the youth within the community that could provide educational, STEM, recreational, and health support. This could also benefit several departments (Social Work, Early Childhood Education, Health Sciences, etc.) of UA Little Rock who will require access to youth or community members to fulfill their internships or teaching practice. Having this space used as a community center could benefit UA Little Rock in more ways than just giving back. UA Little Rock students could gain experience coordinating programs, overseeing health management, and fulfill practice teaching. The youth who would directly benefit from the community center will have exposure to UA Little Rock and this could help with exposure and future enrollment efforts.”
- “There should be an after-school program for children within the community. This will help education majors to receive additional experience.”

Theme 6 - Greenspace (n=4)

The respondents suggested incorporating green space within the area for students to enjoy. The suggestions included: a water fountain, hammocks, comfortable seating and walkways.

- “I can but also greatly appreciate the ability to sit in green spaces.”
- “A river-market like food court w/ study spaces and private dining options. lots of small businesses and green space.”
- “I would personally like to see an outdoor area that looks like an area in the Argenta section of North Little Rock that provides a covered area for tables and porch like swings.”

Theme 7 - Study space (n=4)

A number of the respondents mentioned have access to study space and a place to work. Many of the students discussed the importance of the new development having Wi-Fi access, and a few mentioned having 24-hour access. They stated found having a 24-hour access was important due to their work schedules and family responsibilities which prevented them from using the library space during traditional hours.

- “Tutoring center.”
- “24-hour coffee shops with access to Wi-Fi. We have no place like that in all of Little Rock and it would allow students without Wi-Fi to have a place to stay and study.”
- “Coffee shops, and places with access to Wi-Fi that are also near the university. Being able to have a place that is not my house to study is a great option.”

Theme 8 - Childcare access (n=4)

The final theme was surrounding child care access for not only UA Little Rock students but for the local community.

- “We desperately need a childcare facility for drop-in childcare while students attend classes.”
- “There are currently no safe spaces for children within the community that caters directly to their educational or recreational needs without cost.”
- “Make it a student support center, like childcare, or a fun stress-relief activity, or a workshop/lecturer/seminar learning opportunities (workshops could even be things like jewelry making/painting).”

Summary

The findings from the UA Little Rock Student Government Association University Plaza Student Survey are telling. Students who responded to the survey want the redevelopment to include additional dining options, entertainment options, and recreational space. More specifically, as it relates to dining options, students who responded to the survey most want dine-in restaurants and coffee shops that accept Trojan Flex and meal plans. In regard to entertainment options, students who responded to the survey most want a movie theater and an arcade; however, other students noted that there should be entertainment options for students over the age of 21. Finally, on the topic of recreational space, respondents overwhelmingly wanted outdoor study space and green space/lawn that includes outdoor picnic tables.

An overarching concern of the student body in redeveloping the University Plaza stems from high crime rates in the area. Students who responded to the survey noted that they want the safety of the area to be addressed when determining what is built in the University Plaza, and that they want safety to continue to be a major priority even after the redevelopment. We encourage the University and its partners to review the findings of this report in detail and capitalize on the suggestions and priorities of the students.