



**Report  
To City of Little Rock  
Board of Directors  
October, 2013**

The University District Partnership (UDP) engages both public and private partners, which fulfill roles and responsibilities essential for the revitalization of the 3.5 square-mile University District area. These public and private partners include the City of Little Rock, Little Rock School District, State of Arkansas, Pulaski County Government, banks, businesses, churches, neighborhood and property owners associations, private non-profit organizations and UALR.

**UDP Mission.** A Partnership for creating a dynamic urban place and improving the quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the University District area.

Incorporated in 2008, the University District Development Corporation (UDDC) functions as the operational arm of the UDP. The IRS approved the UDDC's 501 c 3 private, non-profit tax status in December 2008, qualifying it to receive loans and grants from private donors and public entities.

**UDDC Mission.** The UDDC will strengthen University District neighborhoods and improve the quality of life in the University District by increasing homeownership and the supply of affordable housing, making improvements to infrastructure, increasing business activity, and expanding employment and training opportunities for UD residents.

## **UNIVERSITY DISTRICT PROFILE**

The University District consists of 3.5 square miles centered on University Avenue from I-630 on the North to the Fourche Creek wetlands on the south. A map of the UD Study Area is enclosed. The following summarizes 2010 census population and demographic conditions for the UD.

- Population: 8,583
- Households: 3,367
- Racial & ethnic composition: Black, 60.3%; White, 31.5%; Other 8.2%
- Housing tenure: Homeownership, 52.4%; rental 47.6%
- Median Household Income: \$34,930
- Population living at poverty level or below: 26.2%
- Single parent households: 30.8%
- Children living at poverty level or below: 35.6%
- Population 65 years & older: 8.3%
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## REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

The UDP employs five basic revitalization strategies.

- **Partnerships:** Revitalizing urban areas requires complex community development initiatives that involve community and institutional partners. Initiatives must engage key stakeholder team approaches.
- **Community Involvement/Community Building:** Any substantive, meaningful community development initiative must engage directly the persons and organizations affected or influenced by the (condition and solution). Only through community involvement can the initiatives be sustained over a long period of time.
- **Comprehensive Program Approach:** Addressing complex urban conditions must be done comprehensively. The UDP seeks to identify and engage community resource organizations to serve the UD area and to make UD residents aware of services and programs available to them.
- **Communications:** The UDP seeks to inform University District residents and businesses of conditions, events and activities affecting the area and services and programs available to residents of the area.
- **UALR Roles:** As a major four-year public university, UALR invests resources in teaching, research and service programs. The UDP seeks to involve UALR colleges and departments, faculty and staff in every major revitalization initiative.

## REVITALIZATION REPORT

### Partners

The following public institutions, private organizations and groups fulfill partnership roles and responsibilities within the UDP.

- AARP
- Anchor Institutions
- Bess Chisum Center
- Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood
- Churches & Mosques
- City of Little Rock
- Neighborhood & Property Owner Associations
- Pulaski County Government
- Schools
- State of Arkansas
- UALR Colleges & Departments

## **Community Involvement**

The community and major stakeholders participate in the planning, development and implementation of all initiatives of the UDP and UDDC. Primary vehicles for community involvement include:

- Neighborhood resident associations and property owners associations that cover approximately 66% of the geographic area of the UD. The UDP and UDDC assist neighborhood areas in organizing associations appropriate for their needs.
- The University District Neighborhoods Association represents the leaders of the active neighborhood associations and property owner associations as well as other groups that represent some aspect of the UD.
- The University District Senior Network Steering Committee represents older adults who live in the University District and their families and caregivers.
- The Board of Directors of the UDDC represents residents and businesses of the University District as well as UALR. One fourth of the 15 member board is from UALR faculty, students and staff; one half of the board members reside in the University District area and the balance have some responsibility for serving the University District area.

## **Comprehensive Program Approaches**

**Affordable Housing.** The UDP pursues affordable housing initiatives aimed at providing diverse housing opportunities for all types of Little Rock and Central Arkansas households. Initial efforts focus on increasing and strengthening homeownership within the area. However, long-term goals will also address needs to improve rental-housing opportunities within the area.

- The UDDC has acquired 3 dilapidated brick cottages and substantially rehabilitated them and sold them to First Time Homebuyers using HOME Program funds through the City of Little Rock. The UDDC plans to construct three new homes during the next year and sell them to First Time Homebuyers using funds from the HOME Program.
- The UDDC has provided for home improvements for 33 owner occupants using the Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAP) funded by the Home Loan Bank of Dallas. The program provides grants of up to \$5,000 for elderly and disadvantaged homeowners needing major maintenance on their homes.
- Using its reserves, the UDDC has acquired one dilapidated house and is substantially rehabilitating it for sale with market rate financing.

- The UDDC in cooperation with the neighborhoods is undertaking a Landlord Initiative, in which all landlords will be contacted and introduced to the UDP efforts to improve housing in the area.

**Health and Wellness.** The UDP and UDDC have partnered with the UALR Department of Health, Human Performance and Sport Management to administer the Growing Healthy Communities Program in the University District. Funded initially with a \$20,000 state grant, the GHC program provides garden training and raised bed gardens to UD residents; wellness screening and UALR fitness center membership; and, cooking classes to UD residents and families. In its third year, the program has delivered the following:

- Garden training and raised bed gardens to 85 residents;
- Wellness fair screening and free UALR fitness center membership to 300 residents;
- Cooking classes to approximately 20 UD families, including elementary school age children.

**Older Adults.** In 2010, the UDP formed a steering committee with a goal of organizing the University District Senior Network (UDSN). The purpose of the UDSN is to engage older adult residents of the UD in events, activities and programs to benefit older adults and their caregivers. The UALR School of Social Work provided an MSW intern to staff the UDSN effort for two semesters and Social Work faculty participate on the UDSN steering committee.

In 2011, the Arkansas State Office of the AARP selected the University District as the location for its Community Presence Project. The Community Presence Project is an initiative of the AARP National Office to develop relationships with community-based groups. The goals of the Community Presence Project are:

- Improve walkability within the neighborhood and fitness of older adults.
- Overcome isolation of older adults through social connections
- Improve public safety within the neighborhood and security for older adults.

**Public Safety.** The UDP strives to engage University District residents and businesses through neighborhood and property owner associations, supporting crime prevention efforts throughout the area.

- **National Night Out.** The UDP works with the City of Little Rock and neighborhood associations to host the National Night Out celebration on the parking lot of the University District Building. In excess of 200 residents have participated in the event in 2012 and in 2013. Prior to 2012, the NNO celebration was held in Curran Conway Park.

- **Code enforcement.** The UDP works with neighborhood residents and the City of Little Rock housing and code enforcement staff to identify and address code violations.
- **Private Clubs.** Several private clubs, also known as ‘after hours clubs’ are located within the UD principally on Asher Avenue and Col. Glenn. The UDP works with neighborhood and business groups to identify and address public safety issues presented by late night & weekend crowding in these areas.

### **Urban Development**

- **University Avenue.** UALR, the City of Little Rock, and the UD neighborhoods have for years recognized the need for redesigning and rebuilding University Avenue, from 19<sup>th</sup> Street, south to Fourche Creek. See “Establishing University Village” below.
- **Four Corners.** Commercial development in the University District centers on the intersection of University Avenue with Asher Avenue/Col. Glen. The Four Corners area includes approximately 40 mixed-use parcels, much of it characterized by obsolete buildings that draw marginal rents. Interspersed among the aging buildings are several new or rehabilitated structures. Public and private development efforts are underway to redevelop the area. Currently, the property owners have coalesced to address public safety concerns caused by large crowds gathering on weekend nights. The UDP convenes the group and facilitates meetings to develop a unified response to the problems.
- **Curran Conway Park.** Located on S. Harrison Street, Curran Conway Park consists of approximately 20 acres and includes the Oak Forest Community Garden and the Hogan Baseball Field where the UALR Trojan Baseball Team plays its home games. The Arkansas Interfaith Conference has adopted Curran Conway Park as a service project location and is facilitating clean up efforts as well as working with the City Parks and Recreation Department on improvement plans.
- **Coleman Creek Greenway Development.** The UDP Revitalization Plan anticipates the construction of bicycle and pedestrian paths along Coleman Creek from War Memorial Park south, through the UALR Campus, to connect with the Hindman Trail at University Avenue. The UALR Campus Master Plan identifies construction of the trail as a top priority. With funding from Pulaski County, UALR has completed construction of the trail through the campus from 20<sup>th</sup> Street south to Asher Avenue. The UDP is working with citizens and stakeholders, including the City of Little Rock to plan and develop the trail south and north of the campus.

- **Sidewalk Development.** The UDP has facilitated grant projects through the CDBG program and the Safe Routes to School Program to construct sidewalks on S. Harrison Street on about 12 blocks where sidewalks did not exist. The CDBG program constructed 7 blocks and the SRTS program will finance construction of the remaining 5 blocks to complete sidewalks on the east side of the street from 12<sup>th</sup> Street to 32<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- **Planning and Zoning issues.** The UDP monitors planning and zoning requests for locations with the UD and works with the neighborhood associations to ensure that information is distributed to those affected by the proposed developments.

**Planning & Programming.** Several urban planning and development strategies have been completed for the University District area. All are included on the UDP website.

- The University District Revitalization Plan, completed in 2007, sets a vision and goals for the physical redevelopment of the 3.5 square mile University District area. It includes a real estate market analysis for the area.
- The University District Strategic Plan, Partners for Progress, completed in 2007, describes the social economic conditions of the University District and sets long-term goals and strategies for improving social and economic conditions of the area.
- The University Avenue Plan, entitled “Establishing the University Village”, completed in 2013, applies “complete streets” principles to the University Avenue roadway from 20<sup>th</sup> Street south to the Asher/Col. Glenn Intersection.
- Four Corners Plan, entitled Redevelopment Potential Analysis Report, completed in 2011 describes the redevelopment potential for the real estate located in the four corners of the University Avenue/Asher Avenue/Col. Glenn Intersection.
- The Counselors of Real Estate completed a commercial development analysis of the University District in 2008.
- The University District Sidewalk Plan, completed in 2011, provides a framework for sidewalk development throughout the University District.

## **Communications**

The UDP pursues a communications approach that uses all available and affordable media to communicate with the various and specific audiences that live, learn work, and play in the University District area.

- The UDP and the UDDC maintain websites, posting documents and photographs and links to other resource organizations: [www.ualr.edu/universitydistrict/](http://www.ualr.edu/universitydistrict/) and [www.uddclittlerock.org](http://www.uddclittlerock.org).
- The UDP hosts a Facebook Page:
- Several University District neighborhoods use social media sites to communicate with residents and members.
- Email groups and electronic newsletters
- Business & Services Directory posted on the UDP website.
- Direct Mail to promote events such as Wellness Fair and National Night Out.
- KUAR public radio

## **UALR Colleges and Departments**

The faculty, students and staff from the following UALR colleges and departments have performed direct roles in UDP initiatives.

- Office of Community Engagement (service learning academy and assignments)
- Bowen School of Law School: (real estate class projects)
- College of Professional Studies: (engaged scholars project)
- Institute of Government (intern placement; cap stone papers)
- School of Social Work (intern placement; needs assessments)
- Department of Criminal Justice (analysis & presentation of crime data)
- Fraternities & Sororities (community service volunteers)
- Athletic Department (community service volunteers)
- Health, Human Performance & Sports Management (growing healthy communities project).