

APPENDIX:

Summary of University District 2005 Working Groups Reports

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS WORKING GROUP

The Housing and Neighborhoods group recognized the tremendous influence and impact that UALR has on the adjacent areas. It underscored the importance of the University working in cooperation with neighborhood residents and the City of Little Rock for making improvements to housing stock and street and drainage infrastructure. The following summarizes the group's recommendations:

- Consider using redevelopment tools including CDCs, tax increment financing, zoning overlay districts, and nonprofit partnerships to develop affordable housing and neighborhood improvements
- Improve the condition of off-campus residential properties owned by UALR
- Improve traffic access and egress to the Jack Stephens Center and employ traffic calming devices on major thoroughfares in the area
- Initiate programs for preserving and improving the existing housing stock and developing higher density housing for both ownership and rental
- Open UALR facilities for neighborhood residents' use
- Promote existing programs like the Empowerment Zone Program to strengthen area businesses

EXCELLENT SCHOOLS WORKING GROUP

The Excellent Schools Work Group focused on assessing conditions and making recommendations for creating and supporting excellent schools at the three public schools within the University District: Bale Elementary, Franklin Elementary, and Southwest Middle School. The group recognized that education goals and actions should be interwoven into other area development themes including technology, safety, neighborhoods, and culture.

- **Bale Elementary.** The group noted concerns related to Bale, including meeting the needs of a growing Hispanic population, improving student achievement in mathematics, increasing the number of active parent and community volunteers, improving the physical appearance of the facility, and emphasizing that improvements in academic achievement be sustained after it is removed from the school improvement list.
- **Franklin Elementary.** Issues identified at Franklin Elementary included how to improve parental involvement and students' health, upgrade in-school and at-home technology, add consulting faculty, encourage teachers to live near the school, and place police officers in high-risk neighborhoods.





- **Southwest Middle School.** After the LRSD closed Southwest Middle School in Summer 2006, it was reestablished as an alternative school. The intention was to provide accelerated education for students in danger of failure or drop out but who do not have disciplinary problems in the sense of having been involved with illegal or violent activities that would have led to adjudication.

The Excellent Schools group adopted an overall goal of establishing a Schools Oversight Panel to monitor school impacts. The work group also recommended that the University District work closely with the Central ERZ partnership and the LRSD. Here is a summary of recommendations made by the Excellent Schools Work Group:

- Community representatives and organizations partner with the schools to provide financial resources and volunteers and support various approaches for increased parental involvement
- Work with the public safety work group to develop programs for safety and support for children in after-school hours, to upgrade in-home and in-school technology, and to promote public schools in the area to the general population
- University faculty provide students and staff volunteer as tutors and mentors for K-12 students, as trainers and professional development for teachers and administrators, conduct research, and assist with seeking grant procurement. Schools would benefit from UALR's continued development of technology infrastructure in the area
- School administrators, teachers, and staff work closely and cooperatively with community, business, and UALR representatives to make the most improvement with human and financial resources provided.

PUBLIC SAFETY WORKING GROUP

The Public Safety Work Group collected and analyzed data on crime incidence within the University District. The group applied CPTED. This concept employs approaches to reduce opportunities for crime to occur and increases the quality of life in the area. Group members considered factors that describe or measure neighborhood stability, or the lack of it, including changes in population, demographics, and businesses. The following summarizes the recommendations of the group:

- Create a distinctive identity within Little Rock and work to improve the University District as a desirable place for people to visit and live
- Reinforce neighborhood stability and social cohesion of residents

- Take steps to ensure rental properties are properly maintained
- Increase public safety and reduce crime through increasing public services that include policing and code enforcement
- Increase perception of area as desirable destination
- Embrace the international nature of the area with the Mexican Consulate, by promoting Latino and Asian festivals in the area and encouraging ethnic business ventures through an International Bazaar
- Address issues of vehicular traffic and flow of people in the area by emphasizing pedestrian safety measures, moderating the impact of widening University Avenue, and encouraging closer cooperation between the Little Rock Police Department and UALR Campus Police

CULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

The Cultural and International Work Group recognized that the University District includes more racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity than other parts of the Metropolitan area. The UALR students, faculty, and staff represent over 32 nationalities, and the neighborhoods and businesses include more Asian and Latino enterprises than most other areas of the city. Also, UALR provides a concentration of visual and performing arts exhibits and events as well as intercollegiate sporting events. The work group recommended that the District's distinctive identity be developed around an international cultural theme. The following summarizes the recommendations of the group:

- Sponsor festivals, (performing) arts events, exhibits, and displays emphasizing diverse cultural and ethnic themes and experiences
- Advocate and promote art education in the schools, recruiting highly qualified art teachers and recognizing achievements of students participating in the arts
- Sponsor or host Little Rock showings of national touring exhibits or performances
- Establish an arts advisory council for developing and promoting cultural programs in the University District
- Adopt architectural and urban design standards that reflect the diverse cultural and ethnic activities occurring in the University District, including a center of locally owned ethnic retail shops, restaurants, and family entertainment establishments
- Develop a physical plan to include open spaces that can serve as venues for outside entertainment and vendor events
- Develop a public relations program that promotes the University District as a destination for arts and culture, including a cultural information center and website that posts events calendars and schedules



ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE WORKING GROUP

The Environment and Quality of Life Working Group assessed options for addressing natural resource and day-to-day quality of life issues. Much of the work group output related to UALR and city plans for restoring the Fourche Creek Watershed and enhancing and restoring Coleman Creek

as a greenway corridor that traverses the University District. The working group emphasized the importance of sustainability, green building, and low impact development principles. The following summarizes the work group's recommendations:

- Strengthen public and private development standards
- Advocate, educate, and where possible ensure that construction activities are conducted with best environmental practices
- Investigate and pursue environmentally sensitive standards for parking lots and storm water management
- Develop a greenway and trails system by enhancing existing natural areas and trails creating new pathways to connect to the city's existing trails network



Rendering of Coleman Creek Greenway Project

- Establish an advisory committee to coordinate related greenway and parks facilities and recreation programs of UALR, the City of Little Rock, LRSD, and other University District partners. (The committee would oversee a Recreation Participation Preference Survey and preparation of a resource inventory of parks and recreation facilities.)
- Develop a tree replacement program

Members of the workgroup opposed any permit renewal or expansion of the BFI Landfill on Mabelvale Pike Avenue and recommended that stakeholders stay abreast of information and procedures related to the landfill. They also expressed concerns about widening University Avenue and recommended that the project include planted medians, streetscapes that include greenery and sidewalks, lighting, and traffic-calming approaches where pedestrians and vehicles intersect. The group also recommended that it be designed to remove a minimum number of trees.

