

Redevelopment Potential Analysis Report

University of Arkansas at Little Rock
University District Partnership

May 2011



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Project Overview

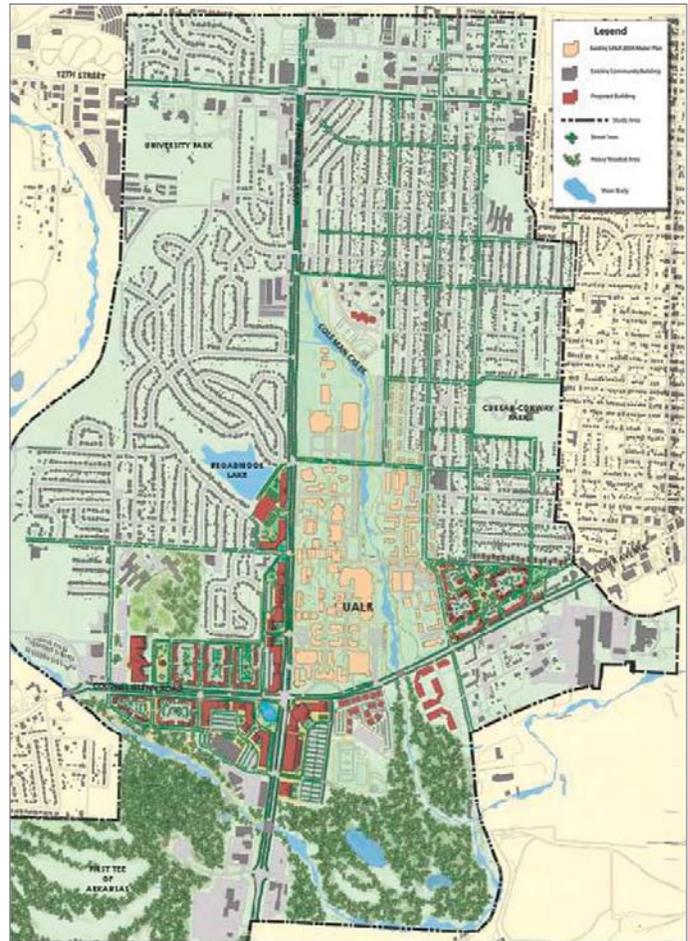


1.1 Purpose and Need

The last three years have brought about great economic upheaval at the local, state and national levels. Development and redevelopment opportunities have shrunk in almost all geographic markets and market sectors. In response to this profound shift in economic and market trends, the University District Partnership (UDP) and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) recognized the need to re-evaluate and update the priorities and redevelopment goals established in previous planning documents; especially those for the key intersection of Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue.

In 2004, the University District undertook a Visioning process to define the community’s 10-year goals and objectives. The needs and desires that emerged from this process were refined and advanced into concrete redevelopment plans detailed in the 2007 University District Revitalization Plan.

Four years later and in the midst of a very different economic and redevelopment climate, this Redevelopment Potential Analysis Report (Plan Update) will act as a supplement to, but will not replace, these prior planning efforts. The purpose of this effort is to establish critical next steps (Action Plan) to encourage redevelopment to begin within the University District.



University District Revitalization Plan, 2007.

“The art of life is a constant readjustment to our surroundings.”

-Kakuzo Okakura

1.2 Project Scope

Recognizing the fluid nature of the development climate, this Analysis Report focuses on near-term priority redevelopment areas within the larger University District, rather than on the district as a whole. While the original Revitalization Plan encompassed an area roughly over two miles in length and over a mile and a half in width, this Analysis Report focuses on the area immediately adjacent to the UALR campus and centered on the Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection.

The Plan update considers existing conditions and future redevelopment potential within an approximate half-mile radius from this intersection. The Analysis Report specifically seeks to identify alternate land use mixes and development levels viable in the current economic climate and compatible with the stakeholder and community vision for the area. The redevelopment options represent differing levels of development, ranging from modest redevelopment to an aggressive, multi-institutional research park scheme.

1.3 Stakeholders

This plan update was developed through the input and vision of numerous local residents, business owners, local organizations and institutions, clergy and community leaders, as well as university faculty and staff. The process was sponsored and guided by the University District Partnership, a coalition of UALR, neighborhood and business community leaders, as well as city, regional and state department and agency representatives.



Piedmont Triad Research Park.



An aerial of the study area.

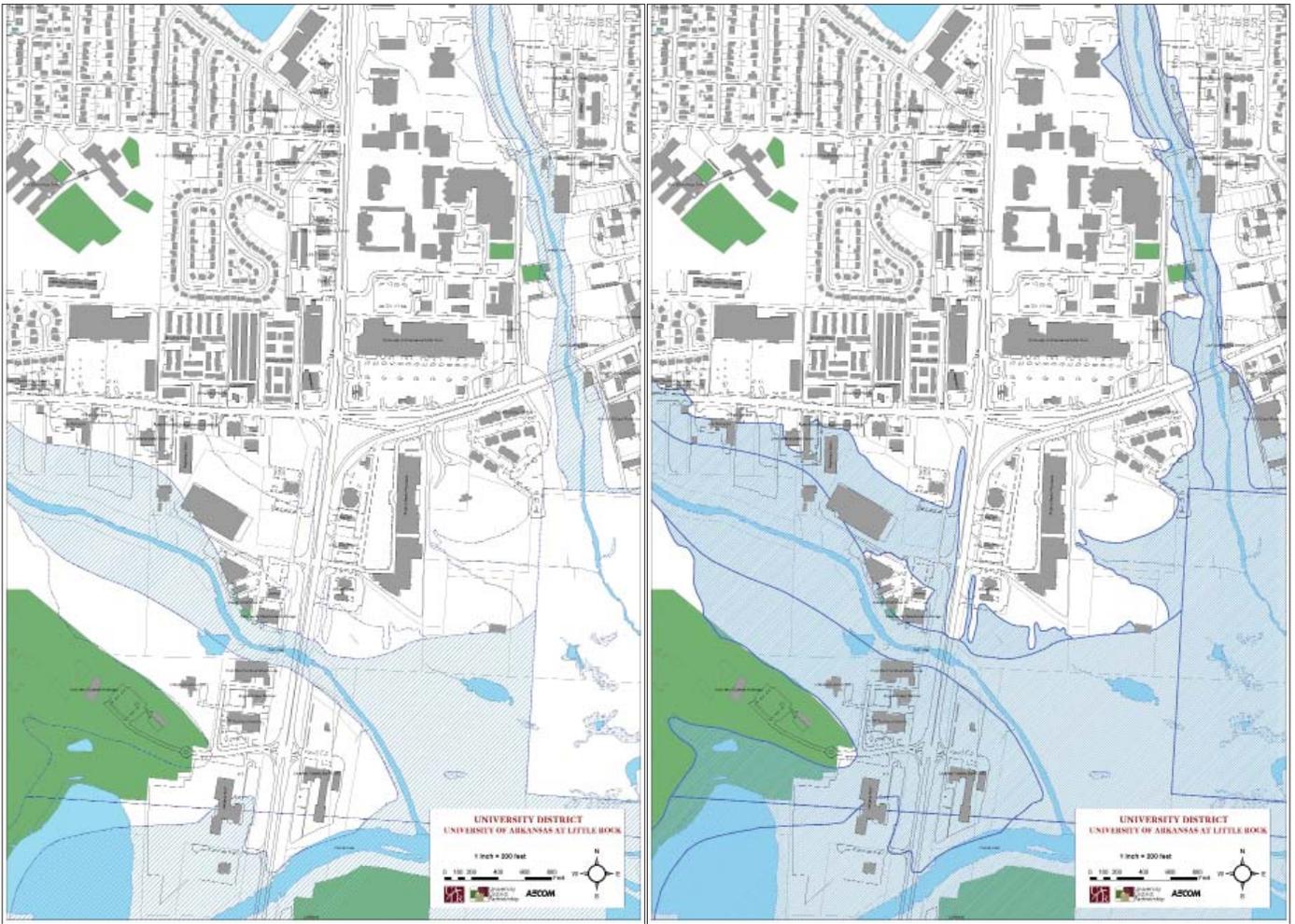
**UNIVERSITY DISTRICT
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK**

1 inch = 200 feet

0 100 200 400 600 800 Feet

W N E S

   University District Partnership AECOM



The floodway (left) and 100-year floodplain (right) of Rock Creek are significant constraints that need to be considered during the redevelopment process. The alternative redevelopment plans developed for this report reflect the floodway rather than floodplain to allow for exploration of potential redevelopment opportunities in the southwest quadrant.

Visioning





2.1 Outreach Sessions

The Redevelopment Analysis team conducted two days of stakeholder interviews and focus groups on December 6 and 7, 2010. The team spoke with community members, the City Manager, business owners and residents, and university staff and faculty. Team members asked stakeholders to identify both positive and negative elements of the existing university area: things they like, things that work well, things that provide amenity or unique district character, as well as conditions which hamper mobility, discourage retail or commercial activity, and other elements which detract from community character. After establishing this baseline of existing conditions, stakeholders were then asked to look to the future and describe their vision for the area: community 'feel', new types of business or land use, distribution of land uses, parks and open space.



Stakeholder interviews.

2.2 What We Heard

Stakeholder concerns covered a range of topics, with issues of safety and security, district identity and character, retail consolidation and revitalization, and public-private coordination topping the list. On the first issue, safety and security, community members were concerned about the modal interface between vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists, noting that the current design of the major community thoroughfares of Colonel Glen Road, Asher and University Avenues heavily favor vehicular movement at the expense of pedestrian and bicycle safety. In a related topic, participants were also concerned about the perception of personal security—feeling comfortable walking around the area alone and at various times of day.

On the subject of identity and character, participants had very positive feelings about the existing person-to-person relationships between the university and the larger community, but felt that UALR needed to establish a stronger sense of place on its campus and within the neighborhood. Similar desires for a stronger district identity, including a more detailed and unique public realm, were also expressed.

A number of issues were identified with existing community retail, including low occupancy, oversupply and dated layout and facilities. Stakeholders suggested that consolidation of current retail interests into a single node would strengthen existing businesses and offer potential for attracting new ones.

Finally, participants stressed a need for close coordination between the area's varied jurisdictions, including city, county, state, university and local neighborhood groups and organizations.

2.3 Stakeholder Summary Comments:

Below is the list of stakeholder comments generated during the interview process. These comments are focused on redevelopment issues and opportunities as they relate to the Colonel Glenn Road/ Asher Avenue and University Avenue study areas.

Study Area Redevelopment Issues and Opportunities:

- Improve ‘perception’ of safety
- Overabundance of retail/commercial space, most of which is vacant and the design of which does not attract tenants desired by the community.
- Existing retail space is out-dated and does not meet current standards/needs to attract desired tenants
- Would like to see an increase in the amount and types of housing to attract students, young professionals, UALR faculty and others.
- The following improvements are desired for the Colonel Glenn/Asher/University intersection:
 - Reduction in pedestrian/ vehicular conflict
 - Better access to mass transit/bus service
 - Improved Pedestrian movement including cross-walks, signalization, etc.
 - Enhanced street environment with street trees, pedestrian-scaled lighting, better sidewalks, reduction in curb-cuts, etc.
- The area is currently not a destination, would like it to become one.
- Current rent rates potentially do not support upgrade or redevelopment. What would spur real estate development?
- Need entire University District in one police district rather than two. Currently there are slow response times and little patrol reduces the perception of safety.
- University District needs to develop a brand that can be incorporated into improvements in the study area.

- Retail should be consolidated into a viable cluster and former retail areas should be re-purposed or redeveloped.
- UALR needs to accelerate thinking regarding University Plaza. Many feel that the University needs to take the initiative in order to attract additional redevelopment in the area.
- Coordinate thinking/goals/actions of UALR with major property owners so that there is a higher likelihood of redevelopment success.
- Development of a research park could help create a ‘sense of place’ for the University District.
 - Opportunity for multiple sites focused on institutional ‘areas of excellence’
- Better understand existing retail/commercial/ housing inventory to determine what can best be developed.
- The University District should be more urban in character and quality and less suburban in feel.



Colonel Glenn Road, looking east toward University Avenue.

Redevelopment Options





“In Chicago’s high-income neighborhoods retail strips are economically healthy. These healthy strips, however, have created a false hope in middle- and low-income neighborhoods that all neighborhood strips can be restored. A more realistic strategy calls for concentrations of retail into activity centers and the conversion of old retail corridors to housing.”

Tom Smith, Rezoning Urban Retail Strips to Create Neighborhood Centers,
ZoningPractice: American Planning Association

3.1 Redevelopment Options - Common Themes

This section of the report presents three potential redevelopment options for the half-mile study area around the Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection.

Based on discussions with the stakeholder groups, the AECOM Team thought certain ideas were critical enough to the community to incorporate them into all three alternative plans. These concepts are described briefly below and then in further detail in the discussion for each alternative.

1. **Redesign of the Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue Intersection.**

The intersection is redesigned to improve pedestrian accessibility to the area. This includes narrowing the distance pedestrians need to cross by removing the 'free-right' turn designed to allow vehicles to turn right onto Asher Avenue from University Avenue at full-speed and improving crosswalks and signalization. The reconfigured intersection also frees land for additional development.

2. **Consolidation of retail space into viable spaces.**

Underperforming retail spaces are either consolidated into existing retail spaces to improve commercial viability or are relocated into newly designed buildings that front the street to improve visibility and pedestrian access.

3. **Improving the streetscape along Colonel Glenn Road, Asher and University Avenues.**

The streetscape is improved along all major thoroughfares through: (1) the addition of street trees; (2) reduction in curb cuts; (3) improvement or addition of sidewalks (preferably detached); (4) incorporation of benches, trash receptacles and bike racks; (5) addition of pedestrian-scale lighting; and (6) improved and preferably University District

branded signage. The incorporation of all of these elements will help attract and retain quality retailers desired by the University District community.

4. **Redevelopment of University Plaza by UALR is viewed as a critical first step to the redevelopment of the other parcels in the study area.**

University Plaza is redeveloped to include university functions that draw the general public, such as a bookstore or the relocation of the performing and visual arts center. Buildings are developed at the intersection of Asher and University Avenues to help anchor the corner. The redevelopment of this parcel will also help create a strong southern gateway to the UALR campus.

5. **Increase in the number of housing and diversity of housing types.**

Additional housing is developed in all of the options either as part of the UALR redevelopment of University Plaza or in other locations within the plan. The development of high quality, diverse housing options is seen as essential to attracting the type of residential population needed to support high quality retail in the area, while also helping to increase the vibrancy of the University District.





3.2 Option A: 'As Is'

Vision

Option A focuses on modest redevelopment options within the framework of existing retail/commercial development and UALR's 2005 Campus Master Plan.

This scenario strengthens the university presence at the important Colonel Glenn/Asher/University intersection, and provides flexible mixed-use space to support community revitalization.

Institutional related mixed-use.



A park as a gateway.

Roadways

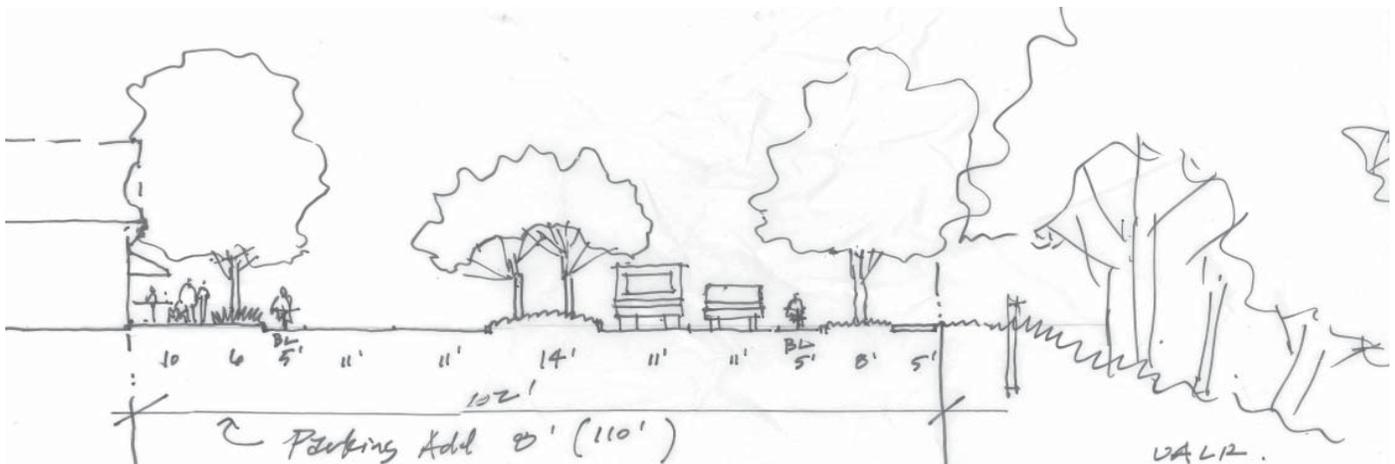
The most significant move in this scheme is the redesign of the Colonel Glenn/Asher/University intersection. The current configuration of the intersection maximizes vehicular movement and efficiency at the cost of pedestrian movement. This scheme removes the 'free-right' movements on east-bound Colonel Glenn and northbound University, restoring a traditional four-legged intersection. This reduction in physical infrastructure frees additional land for development, and facilitates simple, intuitive pedestrian movements. Requiring all vehicles to proceed through a controlled intersection also provides a natural traffic-calming effect, slowing traffic to a speed more appropriate for a community street.

A new University Avenue cross-section reinforces this desired roadway character and provides a more pedestrian-friendly front-door feel to the university campus. Travel lanes are reduced from three to two, reclaiming right-of-way for a planted median and on-street bike lane. The west-side sidewalk is changed from an attached to detached condition, with a planted tree lawn to buffer pedestrians from traffic and to 'green' the street. The sidewalk is also widened to provide for outdoor dining and retail space. On the eastern edge, a



This segment of University Ave, at Broadmoor Dr, lacks sidewalks on both sides.

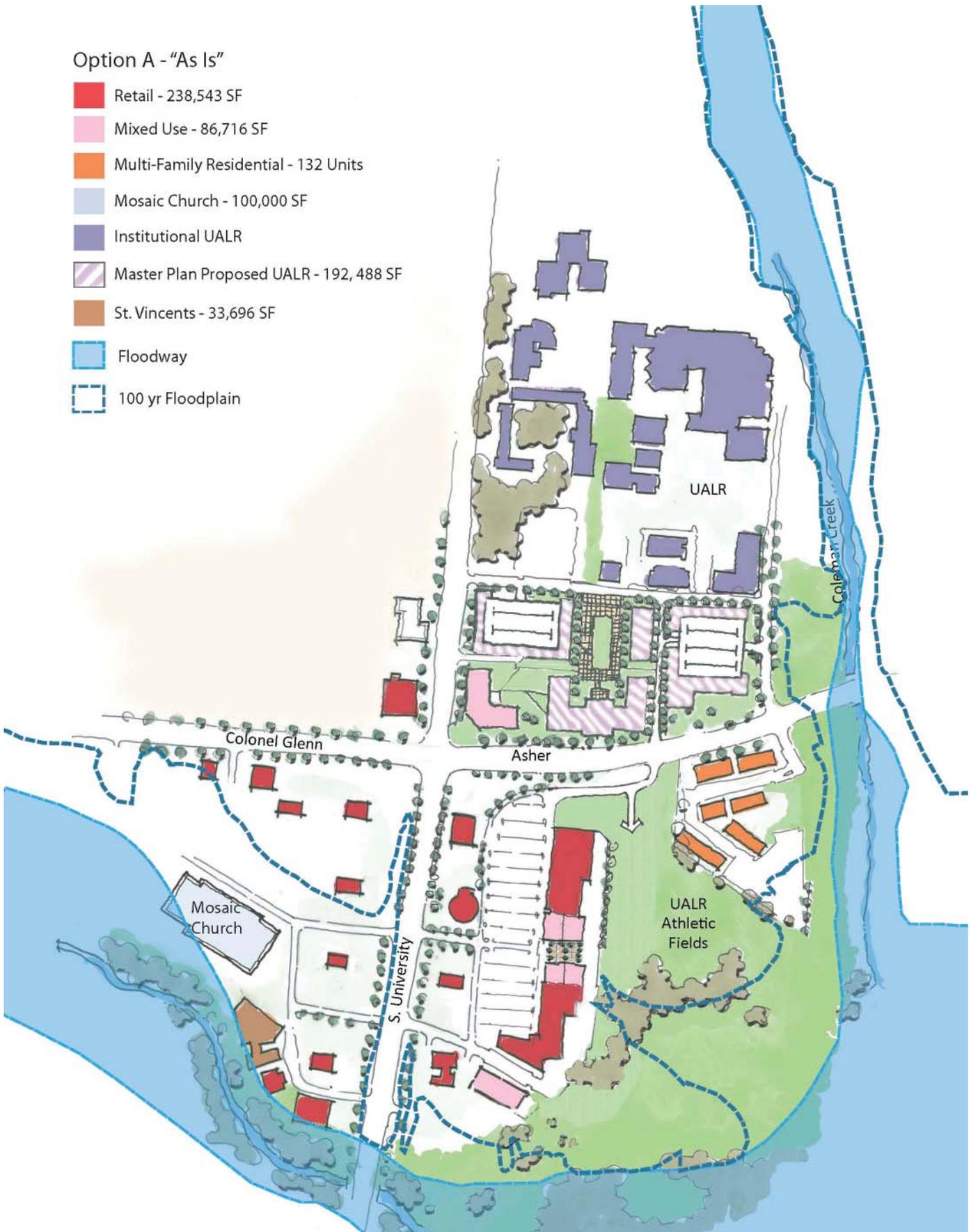
detached sidewalk is introduced at street level. Although not shown in the sketch, on-street parking to support retail functions and further buffer pedestrians could be added to the west side of the section, increasing overall width by eight feet.



A new University Avenue cross-section (above) introduces a planted median and provides space for outdoor cafes.

Option A - "As Is"

- Retail - 238,543 SF
- Mixed Use - 86,716 SF
- Multi-Family Residential - 132 Units
- Mosaic Church - 100,000 SF
- Institutional UALR
- Master Plan Proposed UALR - 192,488 SF
- St. Vincents - 33,696 SF
- Floodway
- 100 yr Floodplain



Land Use

Redevelopment focuses on the eastern side of University Avenue. University Plaza, currently repurposed for university functions, is redesigned to reflect the UALR Master Plan. Key changes from the Master Plan include bringing the buildings closer to Asher and University Avenues to create a stronger street edge, wrapping the proposed parking garages with university functions, and adding a mixed use building on the corner of Asher and University Avenues which could house uses such as a bookstore that would support the University while also attract community members.

Depending on demand, this new development may house a combination of university, retail or office functions. University use is anticipated to be more quasi-public and administrative functions, such as the existing public safety and welcome center, with limited academic space. Parking is internal to the block, in order to bring buildings to the street edge and offer the opportunity for a more visually prominent university presence at this busy intersection. Most importantly this new configuration helps create a southern gateway to the UALR Campus.



Behind-the-curb enhancements such as pedestrian lighting and banners contribute to a pedestrian-oriented street character.



The campus bookstore at Rowan University helps anchor a busy intersection and is used heavily by both the University and the public.

South of Asher Avenue, existing retail space in the Village Shopping Center is bolstered by the addition of mixed use buildings. The introduction of additional uses—potentially office or residential—provides more consistent daytime activity and expanded customer base for existing retail interests.

Open Space

The UALR athletic uses that are currently under construction south of Asher Avenue is the primary open space in this concept. The fields will be connected to the University by a proposed pedestrian bridge across Asher Avenue from the 'Trail of Tears Park' at Coleman Creek.

A direct visual connection to the fields is also made to the fields from the alignment of the new intersection onto the University Plaza site from Asher Avenue. The ability to make this a signalized intersection will depend on approvals from the state due to Asher Avenue's designation as a state highway (Hwy 67) which requires certain distances between signalized intersections.



The UALR athletic fields, currently under construction, can potential act as a amenity for the surrounding community .

Within UALR, the campus' central green spine is grounded and enhanced by a mini-quad at the southern end. The space will act as a gateway to the campus, with a new Welcome Center, as well as an entry court for the new academic buildings. The space will also provide space for informal, active park use.

Phasing & Parcel Assembly

The plan has three central elements: reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn/Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection; redevelopment of University Plaza for predominantly University uses; and addition of retail mixed-use space in the Village Shopping Center. As the predominant development shown in this option is the redevelopment of University Plaza, UALR will likely need to take the first steps at redeveloping their properties, in order for other development to occur. Timing of redevelopment will likely be initiated by University needs, or by public/private partnership between the University and the retail/commercial sector. Timing is also not necessarily dependent on the reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection.

Additional commercial retail and mixed use development in the Village Shopping Center will be largely market-driven, although the development of the University Plaza site and reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection will likely act as catalyst.



Pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

3.3 Option B: 'Mixed-Use'

Vision

Option B envisions the University District as a vibrant urban village, knitting the existing UALR campus into a larger hub of mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented activity. The redesign of University and Colonel Glenn/Asher Avenues is central to this scheme, bringing development to the street and internalizing parking. This simple but powerful change, coupled with active ground-floor uses and pedestrian-scale details, reclaims roadways as community corridors rather than community divides, making them comfortable places for both pedestrian and vehicular movement and promoting land use integration. Removing these hard 'edges' to the campus allows academic and residential activities to flow into the adjacent neighborhood, increasing residential choices and promoting town-gown integration.



Mixed-use development with sustainable storm water elements.

Roadways

As in Option A, the Colonel Glenn/Asher/University intersection is reconfigured to support modified neighborhood land use, with free right turns removed and a restored four-way intersection. The reconstruction of the intersection is vital to facilitating pedestrian flow between all points within the study area. Development at this important 100% corner will act as a key destination within the University District, and should be framed by iconic buildings with significant visual elements--such as towers, atriums, special materials--facing the intersection.

The new University Avenue cross-section, as described in Option A, is also applied here. Additional improvements including street trees and pedestrian lighting area also recommended along Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenues, to enhance the University District brand.

More frequent intersections occur along Colonel Glenn Road / Asher and University Avenues to provide easy and clearly defined entry points into new developments. A new intersection is also provided on Asher Avenue to link the redeveloped University Plaza Shopping Center with the new UALR athletic fields south of Asher Avenue. This will help create a strong physical and visual connection between the UALR campus and the surrounding community.

Land Use

This is the densest of the three alternatives, providing flexible mixed-use space fronting both Colonel Glenn Road/Asher and University Avenues. Buildings draw close to the street, in order to create a consistent street edge and to reduce the perceived width of the street, thereby slowing traffic and creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Parking is located behind the buildings, internal to the block. Development standards requiring build-to lines and ground-floor architectural detailing would accompany this change in development pattern.

These buildings would allow both vertical and horizontal mix of uses, promoting extended hours of activity and potentially decreasing land dedicated to parking by creating shared parking opportunities. Mixed-use development can bring additional advantages, including an increased sense of security – through more ‘eyes on the street’ throughout the day – and an increased sense of community, as people can meet many of their daily needs – and each other – within their own community.

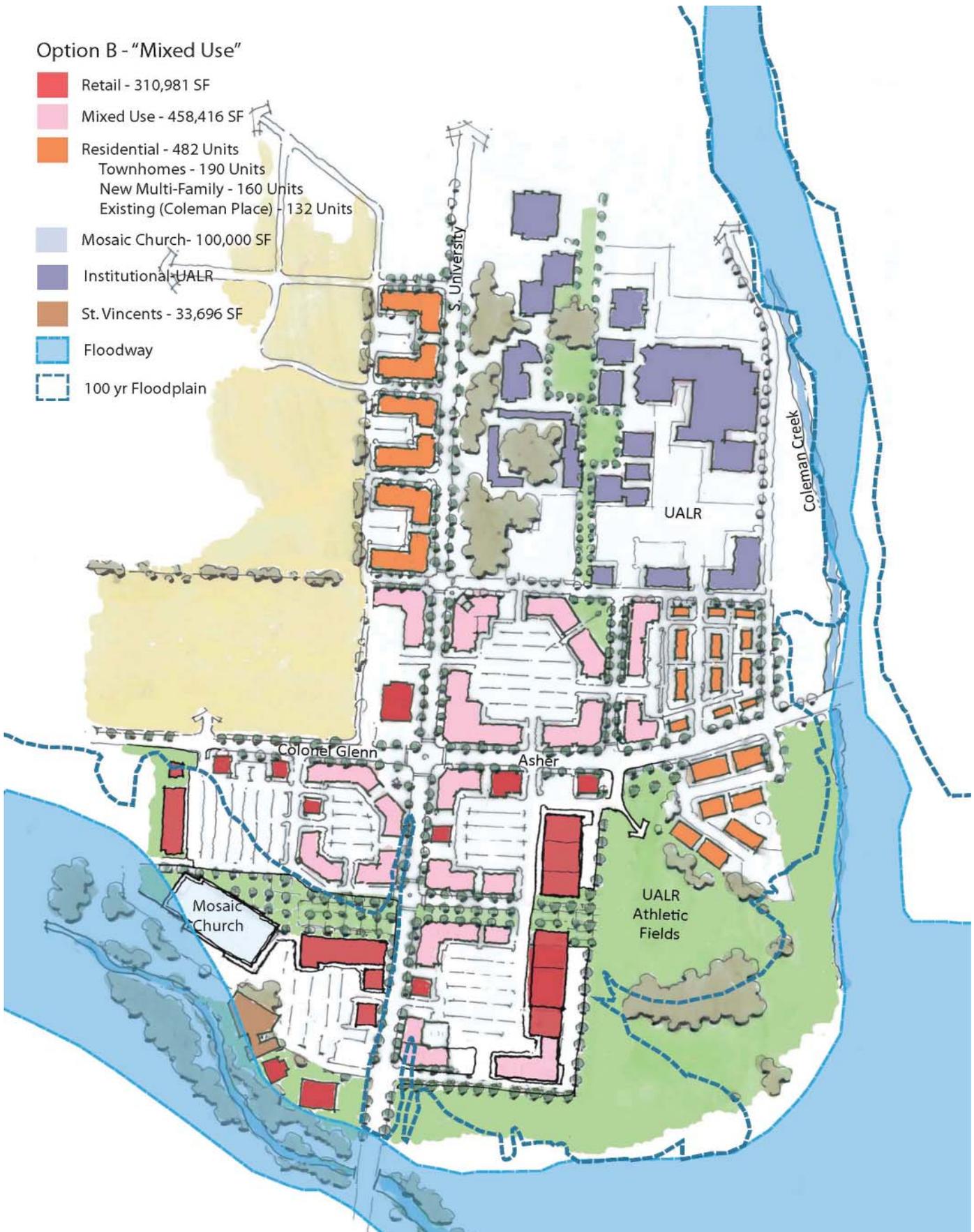
In the southwest quadrant, new mixed-use structures share parking with a former Kmart store, the new home of Mosaic Church; this structural re-use keeps an



Outdoor cafes, accommodated on a redesigned University Avenue, enliven the public realm.

Option B - "Mixed Use"

- Retail - 310,981 SF
- Mixed Use - 458,416 SF
- Residential - 482 Units
 - Townhomes - 190 Units
 - New Multi-Family - 160 Units
 - Existing (Coleman Place) - 132 Units
- Mosaic Church - 100,000 SF
- Institutional - UALR
- St. Vincents - 33,696 SF
- Floodway
- 100 yr Floodplain



important community anchor within the neighborhood, and promotes a sustainable approach to neighborhood redevelopment. The arrangement of uses is especially conducive to shared parking, with heavy weekday office demand dovetailing with heavy weekend church demand.

In the northwestern quadrant, existing strip-mall style retail uses north of UALR Campus Drive are replaced by multi-family housing. Replacement retail and commercial space is provided just one block south in the newly redeveloped and densified Colonel Glen/Asher/University node. This redistribution of uses promotes retail health and revitalization by clustering retail into an integrated mixed-use area, and provides opportunity for more appropriate use and density transition between the university campus and stable single-family residential neighborhoods to the west. Providing new housing along University Avenue will be potentially appealing for students or visiting faculty. From an urban design perspective, it will help soften the edge between campus and community and allow the university to begin integrating into the larger urban fabric.

In the northeastern quadrant, the existing University Plaza Shopping Center is reconfigured to create a new southern end of campus that allows for more permeability and flow between the campus and its surroundings. Existing strip retail stock, currently used by the university, is replaced by mixed-use flex space designed to accommodate a combination of academic, office and retail functions. Development hugs the roadway and parking is internal to the block, in order to create a consistent street edge and fine-grain scale to the public realm. University uses in this area are envisioned as 'crossover' quasi-public functions, such as the campus bookstore and welcome center, to integrate into the new pedestrian-scaled retail environment along this corridor. Combining the campus bookstore with a regular retail bookstore, a precedent seen on other urban university campuses, offers potential for even greater integration and community amenity. Mixed-use flex space gives way to multi-family residential or potential student housing to the east, mirroring existing multi-family housing to the south and providing a transition of roadway character moving east along Asher Avenue.

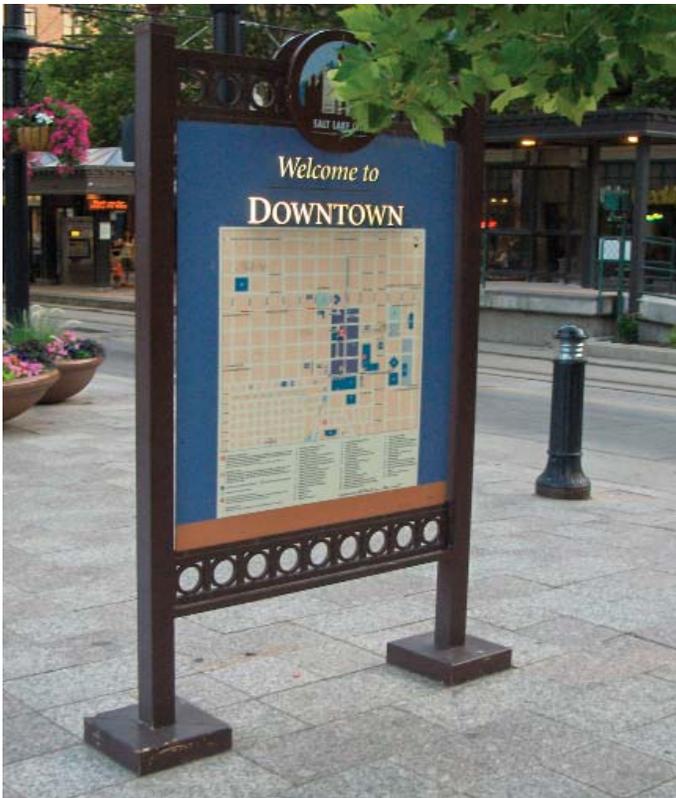


Mixed-use development addressing the street with retail, residential and office space.

Open Space

The UALR athletic fields, currently under construction, help anchor the new urban village and expand university function across Asher Avenue, with a controlled intersection east of the Colonel Glen/Asher/University intersection ensuring easy pedestrian and vehicular access between the campus and fields.

Enhanced streetscape and a linear park spine provide an organizing feature to the new mixed use developments south of Colonel Glenn and Asher Avenues on either side of University Avenue. The linear park spine also connects the athletic fields to the mixed-use development and relocated Mosaic Church to the west. This connection may help the athletic fields become a larger community park and help ensure robust park activity even outside of practice times.



Pedestrian-friendly signage and wayfinding.

Phasing & Parcel Assembly

Public investment often precedes private investment, in terms of necessary infrastructure as well as catalytic projects. Reconfiguration of the Colonel Glen/Asher/University intersection is a critical first step to the redevelopment vision; without this change the pedestrian roadway character underpinning the urban village concept cannot take place. Change in the University Avenue cross-section is closely related to intersection reconstruction, and is also an important foundation for introduction of pedestrian character.

With infrastructure changes in place, mixed-use redevelopment can proceed according to market demand and owner disposition. The projects shown are not predicated on specific development phasing, although initial development along University Avenue is preferred, with later phases expanding along Colonel Glenn Road and Asher Avenue. The availability of new retail space at the Colonel Glenn/Asher/University node may promote the redevelopment of existing retail along the northern portion of University Avenue into multi-family housing by providing places for businesses to relocate; this condition would be ideal but is not necessarily critical.



3.4 Option C: 'Research Park'

Vision

Option C creates community revitalization through academic expansion, bringing the UALR campus to Asher Avenue and providing space for a new, regional academic research park to the south of Colonel Glen Avenue. Employment and supportive retail uses are concentrated along Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue and University Avenues, bringing over 700,000 square feet of new office and research space and 70,000 square feet of new retail space to the community. The two complementary nodes of university and research park encourage pedestrian flow and academic exchange throughout the area, supported by a redesigned, pedestrian-friendly public realm.



Pedestrian-oriented amenities.

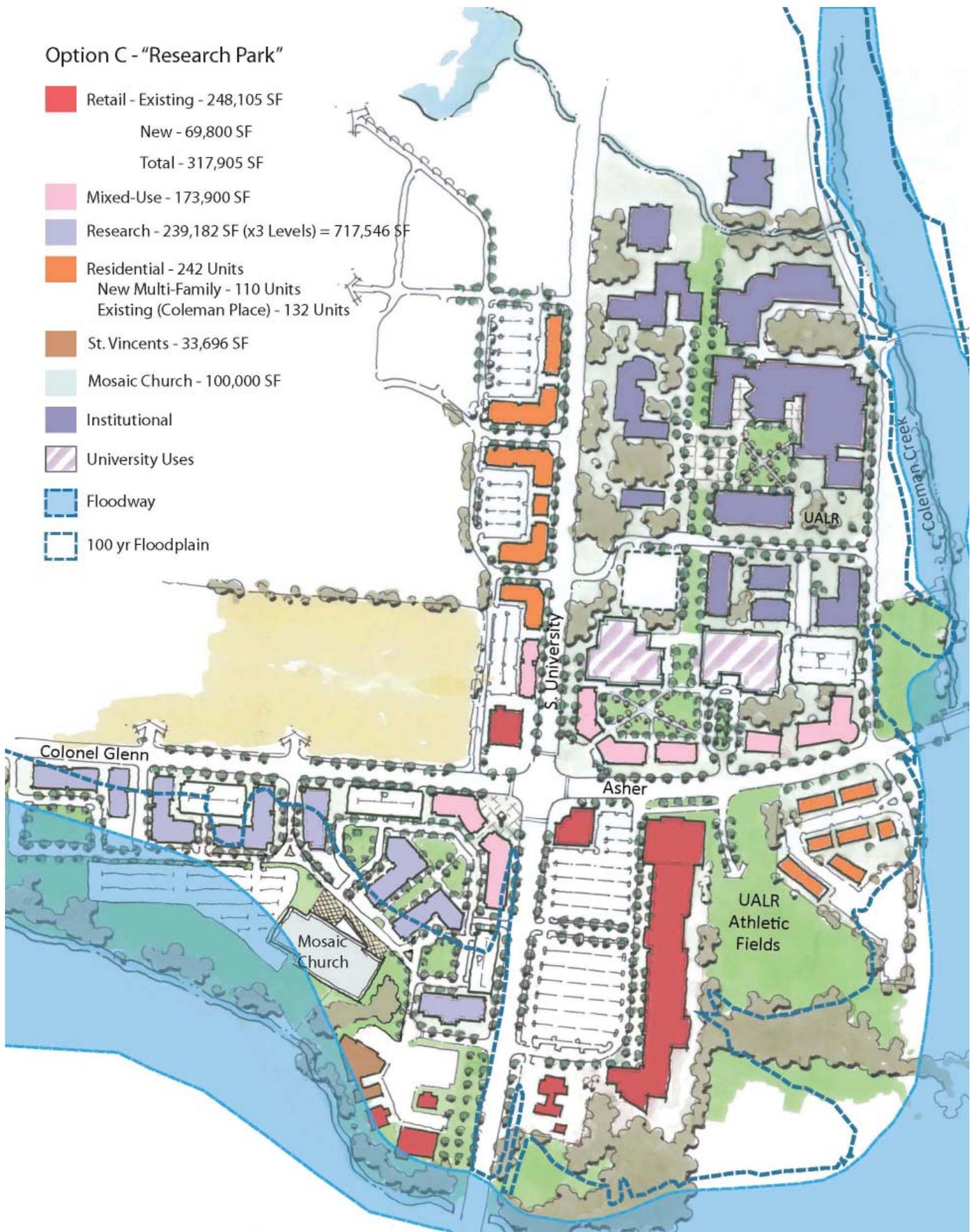


University related research park.



Option C - "Research Park"

- Retail - Existing - 248,105 SF
New - 69,800 SF
Total - 317,905 SF
- Mixed-Use - 173,900 SF
- Research - 239,182 SF (x3 Levels) = 717,546 SF
- Residential - 242 Units
New Multi-Family - 110 Units
Existing (Coleman Place) - 132 Units
- St. Vincents - 33,696 SF
- Mosaic Church - 100,000 SF
- Institutional
- University Uses
- Floodway
- 100 yr Floodplain



Roadways

As in the preceding Options, the Colonel Glenn/Asher/University intersection is reconfigured to support modified neighborhood land use, with free right turns removed and a restored four-way intersection. Although reclaiming land for development is not as critical to this option, intersection reconstruction is vital to facilitating pedestrian flow between the plan’s two central nodes, the UALR campus and the new regional research park. Development at this important 100% corner will act as gateways to both UALR and the research park, and should be iconic buildings with significant visual elements--such as towers, atriums, special materials--facing the intersection.

The new University Avenue cross-section, as described in Option A, is also applied here. Additional improvements including street trees and pedestrian lighting area also recommended along Colonel Glenn Road/Asher Avenue, to enhance the new ‘front doors’ to UALR and the research park.

Land Use

In the northeastern quadrant, a new consolidated Arts cluster - performing and visual arts - is accommodated in a combined adaptive reuse/new additions to the portions of the existing big-box buildings in the University Plaza Shopping Center. Other portions of the existing strip retail are cleared and replaced with new UALR academic, administrative and mixed-use buildings for UALR focused on community outreach programs. These new fine art and performing art facilities will provide a bridge between the University’s private/academic functions to the north, and the quasi-public functions on the redeveloped strip mall parcel. A gateway entry and drop-off drive connect Asher Avenue with the new arts buildings, providing drop-off access for concerts and performances. Structured parking is adjacent to the new buildings, screened from Asher Avenue by a lower scale mixed-use structure. South of these new large-scale buildings and fronting Asher Avenue, flexible mixed-use space provides for publicly-oriented, visitor and administrative university functions such as public safety, welcome center, bookstore and the like.



George Mason Arts and Design.



A mixed use node at an intersection.

The existing Village Shopping Center in the southeastern quadrant has multiple redevelopment options, ranging from pure retail, to mixed use, to multi-family residential. The first option, shown on the main concept diagram, centers on re-use and revitalization of existing retail. A new retail structure is introduced at the corner of University and Asher Avenues, in order to maintain pedestrian scale and create enclosure at this important corner. The central strip retail is retained, with a new anchor space at the northern end. This space is specifically envisioned as a replacement location for the existing Big Lots in the University Plaza Shopping Center north of Asher Avenue, in order to retain this successful business in the neighborhood. Other outbuildings are removed, providing expanded parking to serve the currently underparked retail.

Option C.1 shows an alternate, multi-family development occupying the former site of the Village Shopping Center. Supported by the previously-described roadway enhancements designed to slow traffic and promote pedestrian activity, this development is well-located to serve both the research park (depending upon actual tenancing and use) and the UALR campus, and could be an attractive option for students, faculty or staff and other community residents. The development provides internal, structured parking, with ground-floor mixed use (retail, office, or both) fronting the adjacent UALR athletic fields and open space.



OPTION C .1 - “MF RESIDENTIAL”

- MULTI FAMILY RESIDENTIAL - 264,400 SF
(x3 LEVELS)
- RETAIL - 76,000 SF

Option C.2 considers a hybrid retail/mixed use scheme, with flexibility to evolve over time in response to changing market and academic needs. A new retail site anchors the corner of Asher and University Avenues, with mixed-use buildings occupying the bulk of the site. Buildings with primary facades on University and Asher Avenues offer enhanced visibility, and will be most attractive to regional retail and commercial tenants, while buildings with primary facades facing the adjacent UALR athletic fields and park will be most attractive to residential and neighborhood-scale commercial uses.

In the southwestern quadrant, the new research park is fronted by a mixed-use gateway at the corner of Colonel Glenn Road and University Avenue. A green spine extends diagonally from the intersection, creating a central pedestrian promenade terminating at the Mosaic Church. Academic and office buildings within the research park are internally focused along several circulation corridors to create a campus setting, with structured parking concentrated on the periphery. Parking facades facing Colonel Glenn Road and University Avenue will be detailed and heavily screened with planting, to promote the desired pedestrian scale on these roadways.

In the northwestern quadrant, existing retail is retained to anchor the Colonel Glenn Road and University Avenue intersection. Retail north along University Avenue is redeveloped as multi-family housing, providing a more natural land use transition between university and single family residential. Retail in this location may be relocated to the redeveloped Village Shopping Center site in the southeastern quadrant, depending upon ultimate redevelopment pattern in that area. Clustering of retail uses in this manner promotes greater success of individual enterprises within the development, as opposed to stand-alone retail sites.



OPTION C .2 - "MIXED USE VILLAGE"

- MIXED USE - 205,600 SF
- RETAIL - 48,800 SF

Open Space

The UALR athletic fields, currently under construction south of Asher Avenue, provide amenity for both university and neighborhood. Redevelopment character of the adjacent retail node will influence this open space, and may promote development of a more formalized park, of which the athletic fields would be a part, or simply naturalized open space surrounding an athletic complex.

Within UALR, the campus' central green spine is grounded and enhanced by a mini-quad at the southern end. The space will act as a gateway to the campus, with a new Welcome Center, as well as an entry court for the new academic buildings. The space will also provide space for informal, active park use.

The research park enjoys a similar green spine and quad, grounding the campus and emphasizing the adjacent creekside amenity.



Urban research facility, Philadelphia.

Phasing & Parcel Assembly

Once infrastructure modifications to Colonel Glenn Road, Asher and University Avenues are in place, all four quadrants of the redevelopment area can be phased independently of each other, although redevelopment of the University- owned University Plaza parcel to the northeast is likely to act as a catalyst to promote activity in the other quadrants. In the Village Shopping Center redevelopment options, the east-facing mixed-use redevelopment shown in options C.1 and C.2 is unlikely to be realized without formal park development; in the absence of this amenity, this edge of development is likely to be additional residential (in option C.1) or to simply orient primary facades to the western parking lot (in option C.2).



Urban green spines at Northwestern University.

Market Observations





4.1 Market Observations

AECOM Economics participated in the conceptual redevelopment analysis process with the aim of anchoring the conceptual exercise in local market observations. It should be noted that this was a “conceptual development potential exercise” and not a full financial due diligence of a particular program. Such due diligence would be one of the first steps after adoption of a desired conceptual path.



The Kroger shopping center on Colonel Glenn Avenue.



University Plaza Shopping Center.

4.2 Target Market Clusters, Retail/Commercial Assessment

Recent (and continuing) increases in UALR population-students, faculty and staff - are a significant contributing factor for future retail and commercial development potential on and near campus. UALR population levels are approaching (or perhaps beginning to pass) a point at which greater levels of University and neighborhood-focused commercial and retail activity can be supported, enough perhaps for a clustering of such activities on or near campus.

During a brief review of the study area, the consultant team found it to be significantly oversupplied with retail and commercial uses, typically of a type that is not in demand by either the university population or area residents. Furthermore, the sort of spaces currently in the study area are older and not well suited to the needs of modern retailers. Although old, the retail/commercial spaces are not aesthetically-pleasing historic buildings fronting streets, which is a desirable retail typology near campuses. Rather, the majority of retail/commercial space has a strip-mall configuration with extensive parking between the street and building storefronts. This is not a retail typology desired by campus given their poor aesthetic character and lack of a vibrant pedestrian friendly environment.

Currently, market performance is marked by high vacancy and low rental rates. Given the area’s development growth pattern and roadway access, more desirable types of retail opportunities can be found closer to Interstate 630 along 12th Street, as well as Markham Street.

It should be noted however, that there are some fairly successful “junior box” retailers (including on the UALR University Plaza site) as well as some smaller retail uses in the study area. While the current supply and type of retail is misaligned with the existing market there does appear to be enough retail demand - from the campus and surrounding neighborhoods - to support a more targeted, concentrated and well-designed retail

development. Greater concentration of retailing activity in facilities more suitable to modern commercial/retailing needs may also allow for some new tenants in the area.

4.3 The Role of UALR

Pulling some UALR activity to the periphery of the south campus and towards the “four corners” intersection of Colonel Glenn Road, Asher and University Avenues would be a significant transformative move in terms of campus activity and identity, as well as a catalyst for redevelopment in the greater study area. Such a transformative move would be stronger still with a more concentrated, focused retail strategy adjacent to the campus corner. Pulling some key university activities to the periphery - especially those that attract and engage city and regional residents - would enable more synergies through adjacency to other activities and demand.

It is understood that UALR has strong research programs, with some immediate and longer-term space demands. Helping to pull in other potential demand related to research and development functions in conjunction with the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences could improve the viability and implementation of an overall research “cluster.” However, implementation of these facilities in the near-term could be complicated given the state of development in the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as current financial markets. To the extent possible it is encouraged that some of these academic research facilities be concentrated on and/or nearby the campus to achieve higher densities of development and greater concentrations of campus activity. These are key contributors to the viability of partnership models of development requiring a certain scale, as well as potential for ancillary uses that could be developed at market-rates - helping to offset the net financial cost of a project.

4.4 Real Estate Development Principles

The following real estate development principles were developed with stakeholders during the planning process. They should be considered during the assessment of future redevelopment opportunities in the University District.

- Create partnerships to help fund redevelopment projects. Potential partners could include Federal, State, and city agencies, UALR and foundations. Public-private partnerships (P3s) with the private sector should also be considered, where private developers provide substantial financing for a project in return for such things as long-term leases to guarantee annual revenues for a fixed period.
- Leverage the growth of UALR as a catalyst for redevelopment.
- Identify Areas of Excellence that can be leveraged to spur redevelopment. For UALR these areas could include nanotechnology, bioinformatics, and the biosciences.
- Maintain and enhance the existing strong town/gown relationship between UALR and the surrounding community.
- Look to community programs, accessibility, shared resources, and engagement when considering the viability of different development plans.
- Support development plans that promote affordability within Little Rock.



One of the expansive and underutilized parking lots in the study area.

Next Steps





5.1 Next Steps

In addition to providing guidance for the redevelopment options contained in the preceding section, the charrette also identified a number of informational and technical studies that are needed to move the master planning process forward. The reports, studies and coordination listed at right are relevant and necessary to all three redevelopment options presented in this report, and should be carried out regardless of the approach chosen. Detailed information on these action items can be found starting on page 44.



Formal Reports

- Update UALR Master Plan
- Prepare Revised Economic Study
 - Trend Analysis
 - Competitive Positioning Evaluation
 - Best Practices / Comparables
- Identify Possible Financing strategies
 - Explore successful models for Public-Private Partnerships (PPP or P3)

Technical Studies

- Undertake a University Avenue Corridor Study
 - Address Transportation and Land Use options along the Corridor to create a more vibrant spine to the University District.

Detailed University District Action Plan

- Identify Key Catalytic Projects
- Develop a Realistic Implementation Strategy
 - Identifying:
 - Responsible Party
 - Phasing
 - Costing
 - Design and Development Guidelines

Additional Stakeholder Coordination & Information Gathering

- Promote UALR and private property owner coordination
- Promote UALR level of engagement ‘beyond borders’
- Undertake site tours of successful comparable case studies that include industry/real estate/university projects, such as:
 - University City, Philadelphia
 - University District, Columbus
 - Gateway Park, Worcester
 - University District, Portland
 - LeDroit Park, Washington, DC

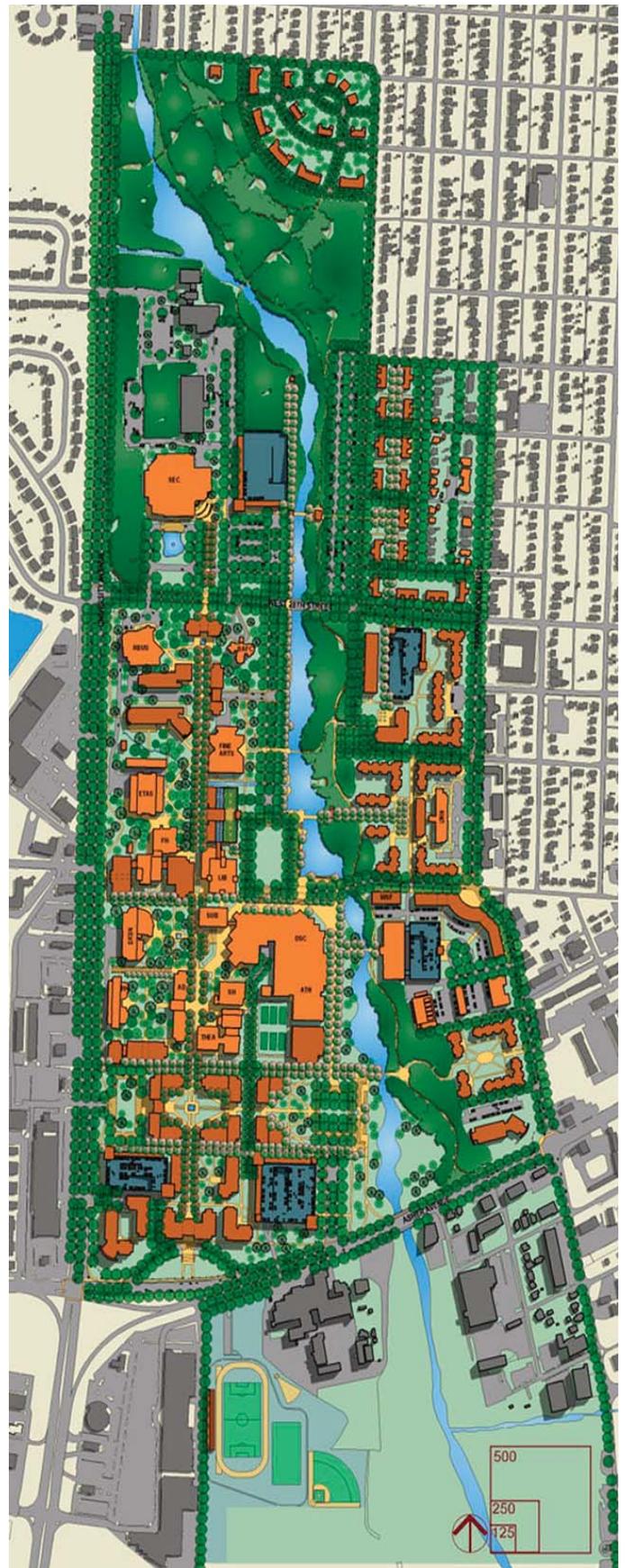
5.2 UALR Campus Master Plan Update

As mentioned previously in this report, the last three years have brought about great economic upheaval that is having a dramatic effect on colleges and universities. Prior to the 2008 recession planning and capital improvement budgeting had little relevance to conditions facing institutions today. Despite diminished funding, today's colleges and universities that offer a unique learning environment and robust educational value, are at a distinct advantage.

While an institution's academic programs remain the standard for measuring a school, the quality of facilities, environment and overall live-work-play experience is a key determinant in student and parent decision-making. Students want to know how they will meet new friends, interact with faculty, and how their day-to-day life will be enriched. This means that the campus and its facilities are integral in their relationship with the host community, and must be so in order to create a true and vibrant university community.

The information used to develop the 2005 master plan is no longer relevant - it was a snap-shot of a specific time and circumstance. Master Planning should not be static: infrastructure, demographics, academic programs, transportation, landholdings, open space dynamics, environmental dynamics, and public perception and opinion change over time. The key to a successful campus is a dynamic master plan that is flexible and capable of evolving to meet future needs.

As a result, this report recommends that the university undertake a master plan update to re-align the institution's short- and long-term goals for its facilities, open spaces, circulation and community engagement, as well as an assessment of potential new funding mechanisms.



UALR Master Plan Illustrative.

5.3 Revised Economic Study

The goal of the proposed Revised Economic Study is to develop a focused strategy and process for real estate development, through a focused analysis of regional socioeconomic trends and real estate market conditions, combined with a bottom-up analysis of University initiatives and businesses opportunities. It is anticipated that in addition to residential and retail uses, the study area could include sites for flexible use programs focused on high-technology/growth industry tenants that benefit from ties to the University.

The goal of the study is to develop market supportable, economically feasible, and cost-efficient use program options that can be implemented and are flexible enough to accommodate a range of uses over time. It is extremely important that the study establish a phased program that is based on realistic expectations of market conditions, tenant mix, construction scheduling, University needs, and financial returns. This study will be critical to creating a real estate development plan that will spur developer interest and promote economic development within the study area.

Three critical components are required for the economic study: a trend analysis, competitive positioning evaluation and best practices / comparables analysis. These are described in further detail below.

Trend Analysis

Conduct an initial Trend Analysis that assesses socioeconomic and market factors and identifies existing conditions and market trends. The Trend Analysis may include, but not be limited to: *demographic trends / workforce characteristics; employment trends / major employers / industry clustering; real estate performance trends (development volume, sales, leasing, pricing, etc.); demand drivers (e.g., proposed transit improvements and linkages, airport connections, and specific target economic sectors); incentives / programs for business attraction and economic development.*

Competitive Positioning Evaluation

Identify and evaluate different factors that could provide competitive advantages or challenges, such as: UALR/ UAMS associations; access / transportation; retail availability; housing availability, and; zoning / planning framework.

Best Practices/Comparables Analysis

Conduct a case study analysis to identify factors critical to development success or failure of comparable sites (especially university-affiliated projects), including development strategies, management and operating structures, tenancy profiles, capital and operating structures and financial incentives. These will explore factors such as: *mix of uses; build-out plan; phasing strategy; corporate base (if any); pricing characteristics; operating structure; and, other financial characteristics.*

5.4 Identify Potential Financing Strategies *Public Private Partnerships (P3 or PPP)*

Conduct a study to determine if Public Private Partnerships would be a useful financing mechanism to initiate/realize critical “signature” projects within the study area.

Given the state of the nearby neighborhood(s) as well as current financial markets conditions, a pure, private-sector model of development for many of the proposed sites and concepts is unlikely. Thus, there are two alternative potential models for implementation:

1. a purely university led and financed effort, or
2. a university-backed effort led by the private sector through a Public Private Partnership (P3) model.

A P3 model has strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include lowering of total project costs because of service “bundling” or “integration,” as well as time savings, comparable costs of capital to the public/agency client provided there is a backing lease/concession payments, and most importantly transactions that typically do not impact the agency’s bond ratings and cost of capital.

The drawbacks are generally viewed as the entity/agency not having full control over the implementation process (agency/entity defines outputs of the process and does not make all implementation decisions), and the need for a long-term lease.

For its projects, however, the entity/agency is able to define a specific program at comparable cost of capital and potentially lower total development costs, thereby offsetting long-term lease payments in part or in-whole based on market-oriented elements of the development program.

5.5 University Avenue Corridor Study *Transportation and Land Use*

Conduct a study to craft a unified vision for the future of University Avenue—from 12th Street to Fourche Creek—and develop strategies to address short, medium and long-term transportation needs along the corridor as well as assess the impact of land use patterns in the study area.

The Plan should address transit, bicycle, pedestrian, land use and streetscape strategies to improve the operation and enhance safety and aesthetics of the corridor in the study area.



University Avenue roadway and adjacent conditions.

5.6 Detailed University District Action Plan

Develop a supplemental study to the 2007 University District Revitalization Plan that provides a detailed action plan for the realization of the redevelopment of the four corners of the Colonel Glenn Road / Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection.

The Action Plan should identify key catalytic projects required to achieve redevelopment success. The three predominant catalytic projects identified in each development option described in this report include:

- Reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn Road / Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection;
- Redesign of University Avenue; and
- Redevelopment of the University Plaza Shopping Center.

The Action Plan should outline a realistic implementation strategy pertinent to each of these projects. Such a strategy should identify the party responsible for leading this effort and the phasing and costing associated with project implementation.

For the reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn Road / Asher Avenue and University Avenue intersection and redesign of University Avenue, both the City and State would likely need to share some responsibilities in spearheading this effort as Asher Avenue and University Avenue south of the Colonel Glenn Road / Asher Avenue intersection are both classified as state highways, but are located within city boundaries.

The redevelopment of the University Plaza Shopping Center will need to be led by UALR (owner) and will likely need to be the first change to occur, thereby triggering other redevelopment opportunities in the study area.

The University Plaza corner is the largest redevelopment opportunity under single ownership in the study area, and UALR has already included a redevelopment plan of this parcel in its 2005 Master Plan. Furthermore, redevelopment of this corner is not contingent on the

reconfiguration of the Colonel Glenn Road / Asher Avenue intersection.

Timing of the redevelopment of this parcel will likely be triggered by UALR needs, which will require finding a suitable location for Big Lots in the immediate vicinity (Big Lots has a long term lease option), and identification of appropriate mechanisms to fund the University and related redevelopment.

The final component of this study should be the inclusion of design and development guidelines that will give the area a cohesive look and feel. Guidelines should include such aspects as lighting, signage, urban form, architectural styles and pedestrian furniture. Together, all of these elements will help create a signature brand for the University District.

5.7 Additional Stakeholder Coordination & Information Gathering

Additional coordination with stakeholders and information gathering is critical to gain stakeholder buy-in for the redevelopment of the study area. Coordination between UALR and surrounding property owners should be promoted to help move redevelopment forward.

It is also suggested that a contingent of key stakeholders visit comparable case study developments that include a mixture of industry, real estate and university projects in a distinct area. Suggested projects include:

- University City, Philadelphia
- University District, Columbus
- Gateway Park, Worcester
- University District, Portland
- LeDroit Park, Washington, DC



Appendix





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David Sink, Faculty/Researcher

University District Partnership

Ron Copeland, Director
Barrett Allen, Community Program Development
Officer

Counselors of Real Estate Group

University District Development Corporation

City Of Little Rock

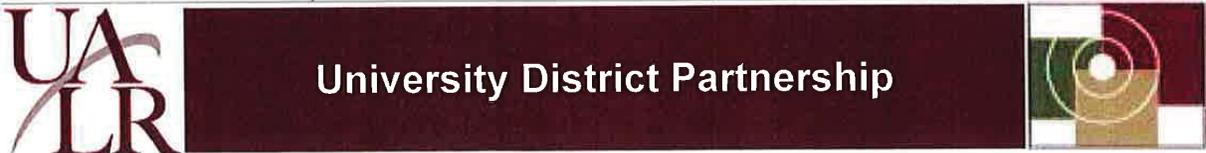
Metroplan

Local, City and regional civic and community leaders

Local and regional businesses

Sign-In Sheet

Name	Department	Phone	Email
Jim Carey	Lions World	664-7100	jcarey@LWSB.ORG
Joe Busby	Fair Park NEIGHBORHOOD	663-3597	jokuss41994@SBCGLOBAL.NET
Carl Schulte	Chateau	501.779.1333	CCSW@AOL.COM
Barrett Allen	University District	501-683-7361	BAllen@ualr.edu
WALTER MALONE	CLR PLANNING & DEV	371-6819	WMALONE@LITTLEROCK.ORG
Dickson Flake	Colliers Central Arkansas	372-6161	dickson.flake@colliers.com
Eric Meyerson	Transit	375-6717	emeyerson@eat.org
MARK DEYMAZ	MOSAIC Church	562-3336	MARK@MOSAICCHURCH.NET

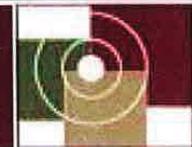


Sign-In Sheet

Name	Department	Phone	Email
JIM CAREY	LWSB	664-7100	JIM CAREY JCAREY@LWSB.ORG
Patty McDaniel	CATA	324-1447	Pmcdaniel@cat.org
Jim McKenzie	METROPLAN	372-3300	MCKENZIE@METROPLAN.ORG
Steve Mitchell	AHTD	569-2065	steve.mitchell@arkansashighways.com
Liz Mackenzie	UDDC-BOARD	773-5339	Liz@Lizmackenzie.com
Martie North	BANK OF THE OZARKS	478-2234	mnorth@bankoftheozarks.com
Marq Golden	CITY OF LR/UDDC	399-3442	mgolden@littlerock.org
Bill Vitek	AECOM	3/300 3530	bill.vitek@aecom.com
DAVID SINK	UALR	569-8548	dwsink@ualr.edu
Bill Walker	UALR	569-3186	WXWALKER@UALR.EDU
Joni Lee	UALR	569-3186	jclee@ualr.edu



University District Partnership



Councilors of Real Estate Group

(a sign-in sheet was not distributed in the meeting)

Attendees:

Dickson Flake

Jim Hathaway

Jim Irwin

Richard Stephens

Sara Stephens

