

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

UNIVERSITY DISTRICT PURPOSE

The University District Partnership will redevelop the residential neighborhoods and commercial areas adjacent to the UALR campus, creating a dynamic urban place and improving the quality of life for all persons who live, work, shop, learn, play, socialize, and worship in the area. Partnership initiatives will attract more families into the area, strengthen existing neighborhoods, and improve markets for retail, restaurant, and other service businesses.

PRINCIPLES

University District will adhere to several principles to create a dynamic urban place. It will:

- Focus on areas adjacent to the UALR campus
- Employ an inclusive decision making process
- Build community partnerships and constituencies to own, support, and carry out University District initiatives
- Establish and follow urban design standards including guidelines for CPTED
- Emphasize diversity of people and experiences
- Emphasize new business and commercial forms
- Apply energy conservation measures in every endeavor

URBAN PLACE

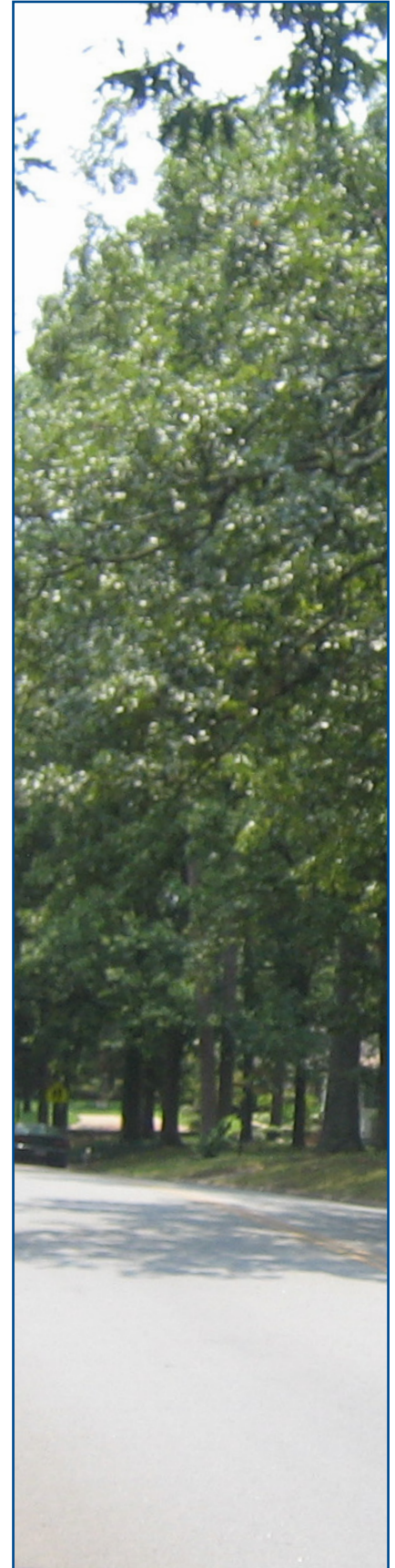
What will this urban place look like? Feel like? A place:

- Where a person can get a meal, buy a suit, walk a dog, buy fresh produce, ride a bike, work out, live safely and securely, earn a living, raise a family, entertain your friends, play, learn, take in a movie or a play, see an art exhibit
- Where UALR faculty and staff choose to live, play, and walk to work
- Where academic achievement surpasses national norms, where every child thrives, and every high school student graduates and has an opportunity to attend UALR
- Where every type of Little Rock household can find a suitable, affordable residence
- Where people are safe and feel safe in their homes and walking in their neighborhoods
- Where you can meet people from other cultures

PARTNERS

The following local organizations, groups, and enterprises may be engaged in formal partnership roles in the University District. Their potential roles are described in more detail for each goal.

- Central Arkansas Library System
- Central Arkansas Transit Authority
- Churches and faith-based organizations





- City of Little Rock
- Federal agencies
- Financial institutions
- Little Rock Housing Authority
- Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Little Rock School District
- Neighborhood Associations
- Private businesses, corporations and investors
- Private nonprofit organizations
- Audubon Society
- Property Owners Associations
- Broadmoor Property Owners Association
- Fair Park Neighborhood Association
- Oak Forest Movers and Shakers (crime watch group)
- Point O'Woods Neighborhood Association
- Pulaski County Government
- State of Arkansas
- University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock

PRIORITIES

Attracting new private investment to the University District depends largely on increasing the number of middle-income families residing in the area. It means strengthening and emphasizing quality-of-life amenities, which principally include affordable housing and convenient access to major employment centers and public facilities. Stabilizing the population of the area and attracting additional families to the area requires expanded and improved affordable housing, high-quality public schools, and lower crime rates. These will be the top program priorities for the University District Partnership.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Successful revitalization programs reverse declining population and property values in areas by stimulating public and private re-investment in facilities, programs, services, and infrastructure. A revitalization program identifies the assets of an area and builds on them to attack barriers and constraints to reinvestment. It puts representatives of all the resource organizations together to share knowledge and develop a better understanding of problems and conditions of the area. It provides the framework for making more effective use of resources on hand and the energy and motivation for expanding the resource base.

The revitalization program will include initiatives to address:

- Historical character
- Affordable, standard housing
- Public safety and security

- Educational achievement
- Economic development
- Environmental quality
- Cultural identity
- Human services
- Use of broadband technologies

Historical Character. Most Little Rock residents associate the University District with the growth and development during the two decades following World War II. At the end of that, Hayes Street traversed the area in the north and south direction. A narrow two-lane road without curbs and gutters, it was renamed University Avenue and widened to a four-lane arterial street with a planted median in 1958. Before interstate highways were constructed, U.S. Highway 67 carried the east-west traffic from points north and east through Arkansas and west to Texas. Following a historic stagecoach road through Arkansas, U.S. Highway 67 was expanded to a four-lane thoroughfare and named Asher Avenue.

The intersection of these two high volume roadways became the focal point for commercial development in Little Rock because of the through-town traffic but more importantly because of the development of several suburban neighborhoods in the vicinity. Fair Park, Broadmoor, Point O' Woods, and Western Hills provided the underlying middle-income consumer base that fueled extensive commercial development at the University Avenue/Asher Avenue intersection. The residential and commercial area within a one-mile radius of the intersection was substantially built by mid-1960s.

Today, the post-war character prevails in much of the University District. Neighborhoods are stable, but population is declining as children grow up and move leaving smaller family households or individual households. New construction on the UALR campus has been the only significant public investment in the area for the past two decades. Traffic volumes remain high on the major arterial streets; however, most of the drivers who pass through the area do not live, work, or shop here.

With no growth in its middle-income resident consumer base, the area has not attracted large-scale commercial development in decades. Meanwhile, it encompasses attractive neighborhoods with housing that is affordable to middle-income families and within close driving distance to several major mid-town employers. At a time when fuel costs and traffic congestion make long distance commuting expensive and time consuming, the University District can provide an attractive living alternative to newer suburbs.





The above rendering of Place Properties will replace Coleman Dairy shown below to provide additional housing in the University District.



Goal. Establish the University District as a destination of choice that attracts new families and businesses.

Strategy. Use the historical character of the neighborhoods, affordable housing, and proximity to major employers as assets to attract more families into the area. Coordinate and focus new public investment and housing and school improvements to generate new economic activity. In the Revitalization Plan prepared by WRT, consider for adoption new development standards that emphasize:

- Pedestrian access, bicycle lanes, and green space
- Mixed land use; increased density and diversity
- Emphasis on aesthetics and urban design
- Public transit and transit-oriented development

Benchmark Indicators.

- Population growth
- Property values
- New public investment
- New private investment

Housing. The 2000 Census counted 2,708 housing units in the University District, with about 70 percent single-family houses and 30 percent multi-family developments. Approximately 54 percent of the housing units were owner-occupied and 46 percent were renter-occupied. Two-thirds of the units were constructed prior to 1970. Only 156 housing units, or less than 1 percent of the structures, were built in the 1990s.

Overall, housing conditions within the area are standard, although a high percentage of the single family homes need major maintenance and repair. On average, the homes in the area are smaller than houses being constructed in newer subdivisions, and the average cost per square foot is lower.

Housing in the specified area appears to be changing from homeownership to rental at an increasing rate. As homeowners age and their housing needs change, they are either selling their homes or conveying them to absentee family members who then convert them to rental stock. While the percentage of renters for the area in 2000 was only slightly higher than that of the city as a whole, the trend is to a much higher percentage of renter-occupied single-family houses. Research indicates a correlation between the higher percentage of single-family rental properties, deferred maintenance, declining property values and an increasing crime rate.

Goal. Establish the University District as a place where every type of Little Rock household can find a suitable, affordable home.

Strategies. Establish a CDC as a primary vehicle for implementing neighborhood housing initiatives. Work with affordable housing service agencies, banks, and the City of Little Rock to make full use of programs and resources currently available. Priorities will be on increasing the homeownership rate and preserving the existing housing through code enforcement and housing improvement programs. Major employers will be asked to consider adopting Employer Assisted Housing Programs (EAHP) to encourage employees to purchase housing in the area. In addition, property owners will be encouraged to make energy conservation improvements to reduce energy consumption, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and reduce utility bills. Measures must also be developed to ensure that affordable housing remains available so that lower-income residents are not pushed out of the area as improvements are made and property values increase.

Benchmark indicators

- Age of housing structures
- Housing density
- Energy conservation measures
- Homeownership/renter ratio
- Housing affordability index
- Housing structural conditions
- Housing supply
- Number of houses on city's unsafe property list
- Single-family/multi-family ratio

Public Safety. Crime and the fear of it likely inhibit the redevelopment of the University District more than any other factor. Criminologists attribute neighborhood level crime to destabilizing

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influences including deferred maintenance on rental properties, stagnant or declining property values, and transience. Business owners in the area point out that the District lies at the furthest point between two police substations, which they say increases law enforcement response time. The UALR campus has a very low incidence of crime when compared to other areas of Little Rock and to other metropolitan universities.

Goal. Reduce the crime rate and improve public perception of safety and security within the University District.

Strategies. The Public Safety Work Group recommended a concept of CPTED, which employs design approaches to reduce opportunities for crime to occur and to increase 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 this group's recommendations:

- Reinforce neighborhood stability and social cohesion of residents
- Take steps to ensure that rental properties are properly maintained
- Increase public safety and reduce crime by increasing public services, including policing and code enforcement
- 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 LRPD and UALR Campus Police

The Partnership will consider incorporating CPTED principles in new development guidelines, including design overlay districts.

Benchmark Indicators

- Crime rates
- Calls for police service
- Public perception of crime and policing in the University District

Education. Educational achievement levels of University District residents are lower than those of the city as a whole. The 2000 Census counted 3,614 persons in the District ages 25 and over. Of these, 79.4 percent were high school graduates or higher compared with 85.9 percent for the city as a whole. Also, 25 percent of persons 25 years old or older living in the University District had college degrees compared with 35.5 percent for the city. In the 2000 census, reported school enrollment included 1,957 residents three years and older. They included:

The Excellent School Work Group assessed conditions at Bale and Franklin Elementary Schools that serve the University District and noted the following concerns:



Bale Elementary

- Meeting needs of a growing Hispanic enrollment
- Improving student achievement in mathematics
- Increase the number of active parent and community volunteers
- Improving the physical appearance of the school facility
- Sustaining recent academic improvements Franklin
- Improving parental involvement
- Improving child health
- Upgrading in-school and in-home technology
- Development of a "consulting" faculty to assist with school improvement
- Encouraging faculty to live near the school
- Increased police presence in high-risk neighborhoods

Franklin

- Improving parental involvement
- Improving child health
- Upgrading in-school and in-home technology
- Development of a "consulting" faculty to assist with school improvement
- Encouraging faculty to live near the school
- Increased police presence in high-risk neighborhoods

- 146 in pre-school
- 92 in kindergarten
- 521 in elementary school
- 356 in high school
- 842 in college or graduate school

Goal. Raise academic achievement at every educational level within the University District population to equal or exceed that of Little Rock's populace.

Strategies.

UALR either provides or leads three major efforts to improve academic achievement and public school improvement within the University District.

- Children International provides services to young children and their families aimed at improving learning opportunities. Children International is implementing a college preparation program for area middle and high school students.
- The College of Education provides mentors to K-12 students and in-service training programs for public school teachers.
- The ERZ plans and promotes school improvement initiatives for some of the LRSD schools that serve the University District.



The University District Partnership will work with these initiatives and the LRSD to expand learning opportunities for every person in the University District who is enrolled in school or wants to be enrolled in an educational program.

The Excellent Schools Working Group made the following recommendations:

- Community representatives and organizations partner with the schools to provide financial resources and volunteers and support approaches for increased parental involvement
- Work with the public safety 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 the public schools in the area to the general population
- University faculty, students, and staff volunteer as tutors and mentors for students, as trainers and professional development support for teachers and administrators, and to conduct research and assist with grant seeking. 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

Benchmark indicators

- Academic achievement levels
- College-going; remediation and completion rates
- GED enrollment and completion
- High school completion rate
- High school drop-out rate
- Literacy rate
- Rate of participation in early childhood development programs
- School enrollment
- Truancy

Economic Development. The University District comprises less than 5 percent of the city's land area and population and less than 1 percent of the metropolitan area's land and population. While economic conditions within the District depend largely on the metropolitan area economy, neighborhood level economic conditions and activities drive regional development decisions and determine several quality-of-life factors for households and businesses. The University District population has lower median family incomes and higher poverty rates than Little Rock as a

whole. The reduced buying power of the families within the area is the principal reason that many regional retail and service outlets have closed.

However, within the city and metropolitan area, UALR's economic impact benefits the University District in several ways. First, UALR has an annual operating budget of \$132 million in 2007-2008. It supports a payroll for 2,500 faculty and staff and procures educational goods and services for 12,000 students. UALR faculty, students, and staff also live and shop within the University District. Second, and potentially as significant, within the next few years UALR will stimulate a number of joint ventures with private corporations to bring products developed by UALR researchers to market. These ventures hold the promise of generating a large number of high-paying jobs for the area.

Goal. Improve the economic well-being of families, individuals, and businesses within the University District.

Strategies. The Partnership will pursue two strategies. One will be to make full use of existing economic services and programs for families, individuals, and businesses within the District. The Partnership will identify programs and services that are available, the extent of their use, and how best to promote their use within the District. Some of the existing programs for businesses include the Arkansas Small Business Development Center (UALR) and the Empowerment Zone (Downtown Partnership). The second will be to develop space within the District for an Innovations Center that will provide business incubator facilities and services to start up high-tech companies. Then, for the longer term, the Partnership will develop a more complete and comprehensive analysis of the District's economic factors and research models for neighborhood based economic development programs.

Benchmark indicators

- Start-up business ventures and related commercial activity
- Commercial business activity (other than retail)
- Employment/unemployment of University District population
- Median family income
- Bankruptcies and foreclosures
- Property value trends
- Retail trade within University District





Environmental Quality. The University District lies within the heart of the most heavily urbanized area of Arkansas. However, about 10 percent of the District's area lies within the Fourche Creek wetlands. The intersection of the urbanized area with the wetlands provides a unique environmental setting for the University District. Also, this space is completely "built-out." Few large undeveloped parcels are available for new development. Most large-scale new construction must be on redevelopment sites.

Several state, regional, and local public agencies administer environmental quality regulations that govern air, water, and soil quality and solid waste management. Also, Audubon Arkansas is implementing a major project to restore and preserve the Fourche Creek wetlands. UALR has teamed with Audubon and the City of Little Rock to develop Coleman Creek green space as a major feature of the long-range development of the campus. In addition, faculty and students of the UALR Biology Department are working with the Audubon Society to catalog the flora and fauna of the Fourche Creek wetlands.



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A number of environmental factors influence the quality of life within the University District including:

- Air quality is affected by overall metropolitan area influences
- The Browning Ferris Industries Class I landfill is a major business enterprise with direct environmental management considerations and potential for adverse impacts
- Construction and demolition practices affect short and long-term air, water, and soil quality
- Heavy truck traffic has potential adverse air, water, and soil pollution impacts
- Older automobile-related commercial enterprises present potential for soil contamination
- Moderate use of residential and commercial garbage collection, recycling and composting services contributes to incidental accumulation of trash and debris and creates potential vector control (pest) problems
- Residential areas are wooded, but a preponderance of the same variety of trees makes the area vulnerable to widespread tree disease impacts
- Sanitary sewer system overflows contribute to area pollution
- Urban runoff adversely affects wetlands
- Wetlands provide important animal and bird habitat within the urban area

Goal. Improve the environmental quality of the University District.

UALR HAS TEAMED WITH AUDUBON AND THE CITY OF LITTLE ROCK TO DEVELOP COLEMAN CREEK GREEN SPACE AS A MAJOR FEATURE OF THE LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAMPUS.

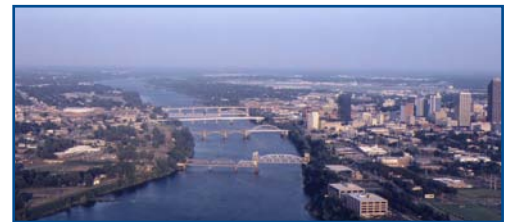
Strategies. The Partnership will work closely with ongoing environmental restoration and preservation initiatives and also look for opportunities to model “best-practice” approaches for redevelopment, construction, and demolition activities. In addition, the Partnership will work with local government agencies to encourage the full use of programs and services to enhance neighborhood environmental conditions.

The Environmental Quality Working Group made the following recommendations:

- Strengthen development standards in the University District
- Advocate, educate, and where possible ensure that construction activities at UALR and throughout the University District are conducted with the best environmental practices in mind
- Investigate and pursue environmentally sensitive standards for parking lot construction and storm water management
- Develop a greenway and trails system throughout the University District by enhancing existing natural areas and trails and creating new pathways to connect them to the city’s existing trails network
- 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 in the District
- Develop a tree replacement program for the University District area
- Oppose any permit renewal or expansion of the BFI Landfill on Mabelvale Pike and recommend that stakeholders stay abreast of information and procedures related to the landfill
- Include in the University Avenue widening project design planted medians, streetscapes that include greenery and sidewalks, lighting, and traffic calming approaches where pedestrians and vehicles intersect. The group recommended that a minimum number of trees be removed to accommodate

Benchmark indicators

- Air quality
- Flora and fauna prevalence
- Water quality
- Wetland preservation
- Environmental code violations cited and percent resolved



THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT POPULATION INCLUDES MORE RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY THAN MOST OTHER AREAS OF THE LITTLE ROCK METROPOLITAN AREA.



The Mexican Consulate located on South University Avenue serves five states in the region.

University District Cultural Identity. The University District population includes more racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity than most other areas of the Little Rock Metropolitan area. UALR students, faculty, and staff represent over 32 nationalities, and the neighborhood and businesses include several Asian and Latino enterprises. In addition, the Mexican Government chose to locate its Consulate in the University District across University Avenue from the west entrance to the UALR Campus. The Consulate opened April 25, 2007 and serves all of Arkansas and Oklahoma and portions of Missouri, Tennessee, and Louisiana. The Consulate will serve Mexican nationals and U.S. citizens and businesses that have business and personal transactions in Mexico. The presence of the Consulate should bring even more Latino influence to the District. In addition to providing a focal point for ethnic diversity, UALR offers central Arkansas important cultural resources, including visual and performing arts, academic experiences, exhibits and events, and intercollegiate sporting events. These cultural resources are major assets for the University District.

Goals. Establish the University District as a primary international business, arts, and cultural destination within the central Arkansas metropolitan area.

Strategies. The Cultural and International Working Group recommended that the University District establish an arts advisory council for developing and promoting cultural programs in the University District. Other recommendations included:

- Sponsor festivals, (performing) arts events, exhibits and displays emphasizing diverse cultural and ethnic themes and experiences
- Advocate and promote art education in area 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
- 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 physical plan for the District 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 a website that posts events calendars and schedules



Benchmark indicators

- Population diversity of University District
- Number of international students and faculty at UALR
- Number of businesses owned and operated by ethnic and nationalities other than U. S.
- Number of activities and events with international cultural themes and participation levels

Human Services. The University District population includes a high proportion of dependent and special needs households. The limited information available indicates high incidence of:

- Elementary school children who qualify for the school lunch program, which is an indicator of poverty or special needs status
- Elderly persons living on fixed incomes at or just above poverty level
- Persons with disabilities who have work place physical, emotional, or mental limitations
- Youth in family situations which expose them to higher than normal juvenile delinquency risk factors
- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system
- Homeless individuals and families
- Persons with alcohol and drug dependency conditions
- Transit dependent population

Goal. Reduce dependency and improve living conditions for persons with special needs living in the University District.

Strategies. Inventory and facilitate the use of all available programs and services for dependent populations within the University District. Engage UALR departments in a needs assessment/analysis of families and households in poverty and with special needs. During the planning period, convene a working group consisting of state and local service agencies and UALR faculty to prepare a long term strategy for assisting special needs families and households within the area.

Benchmark indicators

- Persons with physical disabilities
- Persons with emotional and mental disabilities
- Social service usage levels
- Transfer payments
- Juveniles in the justice system

Technology. Public institutions and businesses located in the University District use broadband network facilities to provide conventional products, services and programs. Neighborhood residents have access to broadband services through conventional DSL or



The Methodist Youth Home is located in the University District.

UALR WILL BE PARTICIPATING IN THE NATIONAL LAMBDA-RAIL PROJECT, WHICH WILL GREATLY EXPAND BROADBAND AND RESEARCH CAPACITIES ON CAMPUS AND MAY LEAD TO COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES LOCATED IN THE AREA.

cable modem networks. UALR will be participating in the National LambdaRail project, which will greatly expand broadband and research capacities on campus and may lead to commercial enterprises located in the area.

Goal. Establish the technology infrastructure in the University District so residents and businesses can make full use of e-government and e-business services.

Strategies. Engage University District business and institutional partners in a demonstration project to provide community-based ultra broadband networking services to educational, governmental, research, arts, cultural, non-profit, and healthcare organizations in central Little Rock.

- Audobon Arkansas
- Churches
- City of Little Rock
- Little Rock School District
- Neighborhood residents
- Nonprofit services agencies
- State of Arkansas
- UALR
- UALR facilities served by broadband infrastructure also available to area businesses and residents
- UALR students and faculty researching and analyzing technology conditions in the University District

Benchmark indicators

- Wireless coverage and usage
- Percent telephone penetration
- Percent broadband access and use by area residents and businesses
- Percent broadband applications and usage by businesses
- Percent research applications and use