

INTRODUCTION **1**

OVERVIEW

PURPOSE & PROCESS

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The area of Little Rock recently redefined as the University District (UD) was once one of the city's much desired residential and commercial areas, a community that offered quality single- and multi-family housing and a thriving center of activity with a variety of businesses and entertainment venues. Unfortunately, as investment and development/redevelopment was focused in the city's western suburbs and later, downtown business district, this once vibrant community experienced several years of decline and is no longer viewed as desirable and an important part of the city's economic vitality.

However, it is the premise of this revitalization plan that this mid-city district will become, over time, a desirable destination and key to the economic vitality of Little Rock, due primarily to three factors:

- The national trend to re-populate urban neighborhoods makes the UD eminently desirable due to its central urban location, which provides easy access to regional employment centers;
- The district is composed of several attractive traditional urban neighborhoods with significant housing stock attractive to both the empty-nester and younger first-time homeowners, and;
- The district is home to the metropolitan region's only major university, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), which is critical to economic growth and job development in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy.

PURPOSE & PROCESS



The intent of the University District Revitalization Plan (UDRP) is two-fold:

- To establish a revitalization framework that will guide both private and public realm new development and adaptive reuse of existing facilities, and;
- To identify logical revitalization scenarios that will address the evolving needs of the district's various constituents, and build a healthy and vibrant urban community.

The revitalization planning team—consisting of community planners, urban designers, landscape architects and market analysts—has worked to maintain an open, engaged, and collaborative process involving broad participation by the UD community, as well as civic, institutional and business leaders.

Throughout the year-long process, the consultant team met regularly with the University District Partnership (UDP), the UD management team, and local municipal department personnel. At every stage, the UDP was involved through workshops and presentation. In addition, the products of this collaborative process have been available for public view and comment on the UD's website.

At the outset of the process, the consultant team, in collaboration with the UD' Partnership and Management team, divided the planning process into the following four phases:

- **Project Orientation**—project initiation and data gathering, understanding the vision and goals, stakeholder interviews, and review of relevant studies and plans
- **Analysis of Existing Conditions and Trends**—assess current physical, regulatory, and market conditions, and identification of dynamics of change opportunities and constraints

- **Concept Development**—explore alternative revitalization framework concepts for land use, urban design, development/redevelopment prototypes, open space and circulation
- **Revitalization Plan**—refinement and documentation of a preferred revitalization framework and prototype projects, development principles, and implementation strategy

