



Meints Construction and More
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Date: May 4, 2019
To: Genine LaTrice Perez
From: Katelyn Meints
Subject: Proposal for Improving the University District

Purpose

The purpose of my proposal is to present a viable option for improving a portion of the University District of Little Rock, AR which would both improve living conditions and bring economic growth to the area.

Summary

My proposal is to renovate South Grant Street, which is located within the University District. This residential street suffers from poor neglect and frequent flooding from the nearby creek known as Coleman Creek. This proposal seeks to introduce the idea of dredging Coleman Creek to cease the flooding of South Grant Street which will in turn make the area safer to start new construction on. I propose that the current properties located on this street be purchased, and either be extensively renovated, or torn down and built anew. On the northern end of South Grant, I believe constructing small businesses would encourage economic growth and would doubly help raise the prosperity of the surrounding area.

If this project were to be authorized, I believe it would play a key role in researching whether areas of neglect and poverty could be reformed into healthier and safer places to live. If the project worked, the same methods could be extended to other areas within the University District which are suffering from the same issues.

Introduction

The University District is home to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, along with several Pulaski County residents and various other commercial establishments. The University brings in thousands of students and commuters each year which boosts the traffic volume of the district. According to an online U.S. News report, The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) had 11,624 students enroll in 2019 (*U.S. News Report* 2019).

There is housing in and around campus, however, the school is mainly a commuter's destination. While UALR has been making attempts to improve living conditions around its campus – such as building student living apartments and working towards improving

surrounding neighborhoods – the area around campus still largely remains an unappealing place to live for Arkansas residents.

The question becomes, why is it that the area is so undesirable? Why do campus residents hesitate to live near campus and instead prefer to commute? According to *The 10 Most Dangerous Cities in Arkansas for 2019*, Little Rock is still considered the most dangerous city of Arkansas (Kolmar 2019). Within Kolmar's article, he states that Little Rock ranks #4 in violent crimes and #1 in property crimes above all other cities in Arkansas.

There is no exception to this in the University District. Many residents fear this violence and it often deters anyone from moving to the area. This fear, along with the poor living conditions of the area, makes the property far less valuable, and thusly cheaper to apprehend. Many of the area's residents live there simply because it is all they can afford.

My proposal is to renovate South Grant Street, which suffers from years of poor neglect and frequent flooding from Coleman Creek. Coleman Creek is the same creek that runs through UALR and often causes flooding at the University as well. The beginning stages of this renovation project would require the dredging of Coleman Creek to address the flooding issue.

According to the 2012 *Hazard Mitigation Plan* for Pulaski County, Arkansas, flooding in Little Rock is categorized as a "sever risk" hazard along with other natural disasters as in tornadoes, severe winter storms and wildfires ("Hazard Mitigation Plan" 26). Flooding is ranked as one of the top hazards for impacting vulnerable community assets. Living in a known flood plain severely impacts the value of that property for this very reason. As documented in the *Hazard Mitigation Plan*, the Little Rock School District is subject to riverine and flash flooding ("Hazard Mitigation Plan" 51).

As the University District is located in a documented floodway, it is important to take into consideration local waterways when starting new construction. South Grant Street is nearest to Coleman Creek which is why flooding is such an issue. My proposal suggests dredging the creek so that the water flows more smoothly throughout the creek basin which would both aid the surrounding residential neighborhoods as well at UALR itself.

South Grant Street is currently lined with older homes which have not aged well over time, especially considering all the flood damage. If the flooding was addressed, the street's proximity to UALR makes it prime real estate for renovated homes which could possibly house students or faculty.

The second portion of my proposal pertains to economic growth potential. According to William Fulton, a director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, the solution for helping change an area of poverty is not only making improvements to the physical environment, but also in creating more economic growth opportunities (Fulton 2015). "Strong economic growth advances human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth" ("Growth" 2).

According to the Department for International Development, a typical estimate from their cross-country studies is that a "10 percent increase in a country's average income will reduce

the poverty rate by between 20 and 30 percent” (“Growth” 3). Adding more job opportunities to the University District may just be the key to raising poverty levels. South Grant Street runs parallel to the very high traffic road known as South University Avenue. South Grant Street’s proximity to this road could make it a prime destination for small businesses once it’s safe to build there.

The central idea behind my proposal is to improve living conditions around the University and to bring in more businesses to spur on economic growth in the area. This growth should in turn help local residents who may be struggling to find decent jobs.

Proposed Tasks

In order to achieve the renovation my proposal is recommending, the following tasks would need to be completed.

Task 1. Notify current residents of the plans for their homes

This will perhaps be the most difficult challenge of my proposal. The whole plan hinges on the fact that current residents of South Grant Street would sell their properties to allow for the new construction. Once plans go into motion, offers could be made on the properties with the knowledge that they will go up in value before they actually do. I would suggest giving residents a 6 months’ notice.

Task 2. Dredge Coleman Creek

As any construction job would require, there would need to be bids sent out to local contractors for the work. Once a bid was selected, there would need to be a notification letter sent to the surrounding areas of Coleman Creek so that any residents or businesses that would be affected by the work would know what to expect.

Task 3. Demolish condemned homes

If Task 1 went according to plan, inspections would need to be done on each home. Whichever ones were condemned would need to be demolished to make room for new construction. Judging by the state of most houses on South Grant Street, I would assume most would be torn down to go with the new ascetic coming to the neighborhood.

Task 4. Start new construction

Once the land was cleared and Coleman Creek was maintained, new construction would begin. There would be both new homes and small businesses added. Perhaps they could even do a combination of businesses with living quarters above them.

Schedule

Below will be a rough schedule of tasks to be completed. The proposal is a yearlong process.

Tasks	Date of Tasks (by Months)											
Task 1: Notify current residents												
Task 2: Dredge Coleman Creek												
Task 3: Demolition												
Task 4: New construction												
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

Budget

Below, you will find the estimated budget for this project.

Task	Cost (estimate)
Property acquisition	\$80,000 per house
Creek dredging	\$ 750,000-\$1,000,000
Demolition	\$4-\$15 per square foot
New construction	\$100-\$150 per square foot

Experience

Meints Construction and More has over 27 years of experience in urban planning and development across the state of Arkansas. We have been in business since 1991 and are fully certified and licensed in both residential and commercial construction. We have taken on numerous projects pertaining to urban renovation of low-income areas. We pride ourselves not just in our work, but in the lasting positive impact we've been able to forge within our communities. Our goal is not only to help bring prosperity to those in need, but to help better their futures altogether.

Evaluation Techniques

This project would be another excellent example for researching the affects rejuvenation of a neglected neighborhood can have. If the plan works and lifestyles around South Grant street start to improve, the plan can always be extended to the surrounding areas. With time, the University District could become a hot spot of activity for residents and businesses alike.

References

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