

# 2020-21 Annual Report



# YEAR IN REVIEW

## EDGE CITY TRANSFORMING

This year was a year like no other—undoubtedly, one for the books. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis forced us to change gears, reimagining how we live, work, play and learn. Our community learned how to live and work in confined quarters with limited physical interaction and connectedness. Emerging from these constraints feels strange as we cautiously re-engage with our colleagues, neighbors and friends. And though some challenges still hover like an insidious grey cloud, UCP is buoyed by interest and unprecedented investment that is transforming our community.

Throughout the year, transformational projects like the new Centene campus in the University Research Park, the emerging entertainment district anchored by Topgolf University City, the UNC Charlotte Marriott Hotel and Conference Center and Waters Edge at University Place progressed with little disruption. Topgolf and the UNC Charlotte Marriott Hotel and Conference Center are now open for business, Centene topped off their first office building and Waters Edge at University Place is under construction. University City continues to lead the city in housing development and these investments will bring thousands of rooftops to our community every year over the next five years.

But building University City isn't only about new development, new businesses, and new road & transit infrastructure. It's about building relationships... and building a community. We are proud to add the University City Farmers Market to our community programming lineup, providing fresh, local produce and market goods, live music and fun family activities.

This year we unveiled a Vision Plan for University City that has been exceptionally well received by University City businesses, residents, developers, institutions, and community partners. The plan defines how we prioritize resources to complement the transformational development to build our greatest community. Four big ideas frame the vision: focusing density along an URBAN SPINE, investing in a GREENBELT for recreation and mobility, creating a 21st century MOBILITY system and building CHARACTER through placemaking and programming. We have identified ten projects to be executed in four years (the 10-4 projects), that will bring life to this vision and shape the University City experience. This is a strong plan of action connecting what is here already while looking forward to what will attract and sustain our future community.

Indeed, this has been a year like no other— a year of challenges, successes, growth and transformation.

Stuart Parks  
Chairman of the Board

Darlene Heater  
Executive Director





## BUDGET

In FY21, University City Partners invested \$1,134,445 of revenue in the community. The chart below illustrates the use of funds to implement the FY21 Program of Work. Audited financial statements are available on our website at: [www.universitycitypartners.org](http://www.universitycitypartners.org).



## WHO WE ARE

**Our Mission** - University City Partners is a 501(c)4 not-for-profit corporation. The organization's mission is to create, develop, sponsor and support projects, programs and initiatives that build and sustain the economic vitality of University City.

**Our Vision** - Charlotte's University City will be a vibrant place that is urban in scale and design. It will be energized by transit and will be a popular and accessible destination offering diverse and unique choices for living, shopping, working, learning and leisure. It will become a premier employment center in the region with sophisticated infrastructure and attractive amenities.

## PROGRAM OF WORK

**Business Recruitment/Business Retention** - Foster and support job and business growth, an active real estate market, retention initiatives, and efforts to enhance the live-work-play-learn environment.

**Investment in Centers** - Supporting private and public developments that are focused around the creation of strong connected centers.

**Marketing & Strategic Events** - Effectively brand University City, build awareness and promote an accurate, clearly defined image of its attractiveness.

**Envision, Plan & Develop** - Lead initiatives involving the community, UNC Charlotte, Atrium Health University, government agencies, developers, and other stakeholders in planning improvements to transportation, infrastructure, and amenities.

**Governance & Operations** - Manage the maintenance and operations of UCP in order to better support the growth and development of University City.

**Community Engagement** - Convene University City's various stakeholder groups to help University City Partners better understand community issues and needs, and build consensus to grow and sustain economic development in University City. Ensure University City's interests are represented in key decisions and investments.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Economic Development

This year was another year of remarkable growth in University City. Propelled by investment in transit, appealing investment opportunities and organic business growth, University City is Charlotte's fastest growing corridor.

- Centene relocating to University Research Park after months of negotiations
- Conducted monthly meetings with Centene project managers for successful execution
- Old Republic relocating HQ to University Research Park (650 jobs); leasing entire building
- Supported construction, network and opening of Charlotte's SE Regional Carpentry Center
- Topgolf University City and new UNC Charlotte Marriott Hotel and Conference Center open for business
- Partnered with ED agencies on four business recruitment prospects
- Facilitated sale of URP cell tower
- Created new website with both commercial real estate and visitor/resident portals
- Conducted ½ day education meeting and market tour with City Economic Development team
- Partnered with City Economic Development Team on new Talent Assessment
- Responded to 37 inquiries for property investment and development opportunities
- Supported development inquiries, rezonings, site plans for 39 parcels active or under construction developments

## Planning & Development

Planning and Development has demanded a significant resource investment for University City Partners this past year and is likely to be so in the upcoming year.

- Completed University City VISION (100% funded by University City Partners) to provide compass for decision making; created implementation plan with priorities and funding needs
- Executing JW Clay Master Plan (2017) with new owners of Shoppes at University Place
- Advocated for new library location with University Place ownership, re-imagined to a standalone building
- Implementing URP Area Plan through development and projects including: new spec office building, 5 new residential properties, new multi-use trails, new traffic signals, new greenway connections
- Updated URP Area Plan with a 10-year scope of investments and transformation
- Advocated strongly for park investment in University City, Mecklenburg County purchased two parcels for community parks (25+ acres)
- Installed first greenway placemaking investment on Barton Creek
- Completed a student housing analysis with UNC Charlotte
- Updated University City Housing Study/Inventory
- Advanced signage program for wayfinding signage system including vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding signs; pending NCDOT/CDOT approval



Proximity Park

- Collaborated with CDOT and consultant to determine transportation projects most needed to mitigate congestion and support growth
- Created a transportation and mobility task force with business and institution stakeholders to create investment priorities and innovative solutions
- Responded to nine new development plans in MSD market area with active participation in planning and rezoning process
- Maintained a digital development “mapbook” for public use
- Executed Clean and Safe Streets program (litter clean up and aesthetics) with significant improvement results
- Convened City leadership in Columbus, Ohio to explore smart transit and first mile/last mile mobility solutions
- Raised private funding to execute a design plan for the future Doby Creek Greenway advancing to shovel ready; partnering with Park and Rec to execute
- Monitored built environment and right of way daily to address litter, yard signs, mowing infractions, abandoned shopping carts and other right of way and community detractions
- Supported 2040 plan development as participant on Ordinance Advisory Committee and Alternative Compliance Review Committee

## Marketing & Communications

UCP staff executes an integrated communications plan and a marketing plan that is creating a better brand and position for University City. Here are some of the successes achieved this year:

- Developed and executed marketing and communications kits for events (Charlotte Kids Fest, Street Eats, Food Truck Fridays, Night Market University City Wine Fest); executed advertising placements
- Secured and increased media (TV, radio, print, social media) coverage by 42% year over year for stories on good news, business success, diversity, events/ things to do, development stories and community service in University City. Positive stories increased by 14%.
- Created a communications plan with talking points for University City’s Community Safety Collaborative made up of University City institutions,

businesses and organizations.

- Maintained an editorial calendar to create and share consistent and relevant communications on owned and earned channels (social media, newsletter, media outreach)
- Managed e-newsletter content, distribution, and analytics with a 25.7% open rate (above the 20.3% industry open rate.)
- Produced community building events including: 2020 Charlotte Kids Fest (3,400 virtual views), 2020 Street Eats Food Truck Fridays (250 weekly attendance); 2020 Street Eats - University City Night Market (200 attendance); 2020 - 2021 University City Farmers Market (250 weekly attendance); 2021 Pop Up Roller Skating events; 2020 University City Wine Fest - (Spring event postponed to fall, 950 attendance); 2021 University City Wine Fest - (1,100 attendance, including out of town attendees); planning for a teen reading block party (Summer 2021) and Multicultural Arts event (Fall 2021)
- Provided in-kind communications support to UCITY Family Zone during (pandemic) stay home constraints
- Developed and executing communications plan for sharing University City Vision plan
- Executed 2021 Listening Tour to engage 150+ stakeholders, owners, businesses, residents in discussing growth and community priorities



University City Farmers Market Dot Mapping Station



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS cont.

- Created key messages and a public affairs communications plan to help secure the Library at Water's Edge
- Refreshed and reorganized all copy on University City Partners website to reflect today's University City

### Community Safety

Community safety remains a high priority for our board and staff. We continue to work in partnership with our public safety collaborative, private security agencies, UNC Charlotte PD and CMPD to address issues and improve safety.

- Facilitated and lead community safety collaborative
- Created strategies in partnership with CMPD to address crime trends, hotspots and community safety issues
- Continue to pursue an alert safety app to allow community policing and enhance safety
- Working with Keith YMCA to enhance programming for teens especially during summer out of school time as well as during school year; including new events specifically for young teens

### COVID-19 Pandemic Pivot, Confronting Racism

The new year brought new challenges, globally and then locally, as our community evolved how we live, work, play and learn to contain the COVID-19 virus.

- Executed strategic communications to inform and educate by connecting to resources and information from municipal and institutional partners
- Developed "open for business" communications and media pitches
- In partnership with the UCITY Family Zone, identified community needs, gaps, etc., and worked to find and connect resources to the needs, including serving 7,000 meals a week

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Follow our story by visiting [www.universitycitypartners.org](http://www.universitycitypartners.org)

- Conducted monthly community food drives to fill five area pantries
- Activated the University City Faith Leaders Coalition to fill volunteer roles and other needs
- Launched University City Farmers Market as outdoor food resource
- Participated in City's "Street Eats" program producing Farmers Market dining, Night Market, and Food Truck Friday; all three programs are now in event programming lineup

### Administration

- Exceeded City benchmark for contracted services with small business enterprises (Target for 2021: \$10,700, Actual contracts and services: \$141,379)
- Successfully managed University City Partners, University Research Park and University City Foundation program of work and budgets, pivoting work to meet the challenges of pandemic
- Facilitated sale of URP cell tower to maintain cellular consistency and superior service in market.



Centene

# PROGRAM OF WORK PRIORITIES

University City Partners FY20-21 Program of Work includes initiatives and investments in marketing and branding, economic development, planning and development, convening, communicating and advocating for University City.

## Enable Transportation that Aligns with Community Vision

- Congestion Mitigation
- Mobility investments around URP and Innovation Park
- Improve arterials visually & functionally
- Last mile connectivity – Transportation on Demand
- Expand trails, multi-use trails, bike lanes, sidewalks

## Create Strong Centers

- Build parks & libraries as anchors
- Develop mix of housing
- Invest in public realm
- Develop and Implement wayfinding sign system
- Convene community through placemaking, events, programs and civic activities

## Sustain and Grow Business

- Continue to build data resources for CRE industry
- Inform/facilitate redevelopment
- Retain, grow and recruit business to support University City vitality
- Execute Clean Streets, Clean Community program

## Strengthening Safe Communities

- Community Safety Collaborative program
- Advocate and secure adequate resources
- Communicate intentionally to influence perception
- Use of technology and cameras

## Initiatives

- CIP Infrastructure Investment Advocacy
- Vision Plan Adoption
- Community Safety and Initiatives
- Farmers Market
- Transportation on Demand
- University City Brand Execution



Food Truck Friday

### STAFF

**Darlene Heater**  
Executive Director

**Tobe Holmes**  
Planning & Development Director

**Janelle Goodrich**  
Project Manager

**Todd Doane II**  
Planning & Development

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Azania Herron**  
Integrated Communications

**Third Rock Events**  
Events & Social Media



# 2020-2021 Board of Directors

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The Arden Group



**Vice Chair Elect**  
**Tracy Dodson**  
City of Charlotte



**Treasurer**  
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University



**Secretary**  
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**Governance**  
**Betty Doster**  
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Charlotte Chamber



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Keith Family YMCA



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District 4



**Shannon Dixon**  
Casto



**Taiwo Jaiyeoba**  
City of Charlotte



**Todd Dunn**  
Duke Energy



**Tom Creter**  
Fox Sports