UCD Working with Gehl Studio to Study Opportunities to Improve Street Life in Eastern University City

University City District (UCD) works hard to create and sustain public spaces to build a stronger and more vibrant University City. In addition to our development of The Porch, the 40th Street Trolley Portal, parklets, and pedestrian plazas, we are now turning our attention to the burgeoning yet under-developed area between the Schuylkill River to the eastern fringe of Drexel University’s campus.

In an effort to improve the eastern gateway to University City and strengthen the link to Center City, UCD has partnered with Gehl Studio to develop a strategic framework for impactful and attainable public realm investments for the area, grounded in the observation and analysis of pedestrian behavior. The data we’ve collected confirms that this area largely (continued on page 7)

UCD Awarded Corporate, Philanthropic Funding

On Tuesday, December 2, University City District was one of nine local nonprofits to receive an IMPACT Award from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in recognition of exceptional achievements in contributing to a healthier Philadelphia. University City District’s award was given specifically for our commitment to building a healthy, vibrant University City through major investments in public space development, public maintenance, and public safety. (continued on page 5)

Become a Lasting Part of the 40th Street Trolley Portal

Over the past several years, we have worked closely with local residents, SEPTA, and the City of Philadelphia to develop a plan to transform the 40th Street Trolley Portal from a blighted concrete slab into a vibrant community park and transit hub that is safe, sustainable, and social. Thanks to the support of foundations, private supporters, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia, we are nearing our fundraising goal that will allow us to break ground on this project in 2015. But we still need your help. As of this writing, we are $3,000 short of our community donation goal, and we are asking you to join our growing roster of dedicated donors and give today. (continued on page 6)
**From the Desk of the Executive Director**

Daily News reporter Ronnie Polaneczky wrote of the decision to hold the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia: “Stuff tends to get fixed at my house when we know company’s coming... Well, Philly, company is coming.”

Amid the dialogue about what Philadelphia needs to do to prepare itself for an estimated 50,000 DNC guests in July 2016, as well as hundreds of thousands of visitors from outside the region expected to welcome Pope Francis to the Parkway this fall, we at UCD have been doing some thinking about University City’s part in rolling out a suitable welcome mat.

First, it’s clear that first impressions matter. Many of our visitors will make their way here by rail. Before they ever glimpse the Liberty Bell or Independence Hall, they will exit 30th Street Station and surmise what kind of city we’ve become.

For our part, we’ll spend the spring undertaking a “remix” of The Porch with an opportunity new splash of colors and amenities. We’ll find new ways to bring whimsy and wonder to The Porch, but we promise not to undo the authenticity and unpretentiousness that have made this space a welcome respite for thousands in the past three years.

We want the masses who speed over the Schuylkill in taxis [or, hopefully, on bike share!] to slow down a bit and admire the grandeur of the Market Street bridge, think more color and more vibrancy to draw westbound pedestrians toward The Porch and the train station, and eastbound traffic toward the bustle of Center City.

While we grapple with first impressions, let’s not forget about lasting ones. I once heard famed architect Laurie Olin say that Paris is a special place for all because it was built for Parisians, not for tourists. As we prepare to draw westbound pedestrians toward The Porch and eastbound traffic toward the train station, and eastbound traffic toward the bustle of Center City, we endeavor to extend the vocabulary of The Porch, as the new neighborhood emerging around us warrants Philadelphia’s sixth civic square.

So while we’ll make an important down payment on vitality today to impress our guests, it’s critical that we invest smartly in the long-term splendor of a place whose current growth promises to shape Philadelphia’s economy for decades to come. Political commentator and Philadelphia native Chris Matthews said of our DNC bid vis-à-vis the competition that we “will bring a spirit to the convention...that you don’t get in Columbus or Brooklyn.” While that spirit will be felt city- and region-wide, University City will play a special role in welcoming those who are here to visit, and an extraordinary part in shaping the 21st century metropolis for those who are here to stay.

Sincerely,

Matt Bergheiser
Executive Director
University City District

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**In the News**

Sidewalk Vitality and Neighborhood Businesses

From the Desk of the Executive Director

UCD Releases In-depth Report on Parklets

In 2011, University City District, working with the City of Philadelphia, installed the city’s first Parklets. These temporary seating platforms, placed flush with the curb, created an extension of the sidewalk by replacing just one or two parking spaces with a small new park. The Parklets have been remarkably successful at attracting users since the day they were installed. Seeking to provide both numbers-driven analysis and to serve as a guide for other cities considering turning parking space into temporary parks, UCD released its report The Case for Parklets: Measuring the Impact on Sidewalk Vitality and Neighborhood Businesses. The report seeks to quantify the Parklets’ ability to attract and retain users, the diversity of the users and uses, the impact on the sales at adjacent businesses, and the micro-scale environmental factors contributing to their success or failure. We intend for the report, with 12 pages of full-color charts, graphs, and photos, to serve as a blueprint for other organizations considering building and installing Parklets. You can download the paper at bit.ly/parkletreport.

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Project Rehab: Update on 31 N. Preston Street

Project Rehab, UCD’s program that works creatively and comprehensively to unlock the economic potential of vacant and underutilized properties and to leverage private investment in their redevelopment, continued helping local property owners this fall. Last summer we told you about 31 North Preston Street, a two story, 3 bedroom single family home that sat as a vacant shell for years due to delays in funding. Project Rehab got involved in August of 2012 and has helped the owner secure the necessary funding from East River Bank, select a contractor, and receive an accurate appraisal, turning a run-down house purchased at a sheriff’s sale for $23k into a property appraised for $465,000. The house’s rehabilitation has begun, including digging out and installing a new foundation and demolishing specific portions of the building. We expect the property to undergo significant cosmetic changes in the coming year.
UCD Offers Assistance to Neighborhood Businesses

Have you noticed improved storefronts in the neighborhood recently? Are you a business owner who would like help upgrading your facade or signage? UCD supports neighborhood commercial corridors throughout the district by offering technical assistance and other incentives related to business recruitment and retention, and works closely with property owners and real estate brokers to recruit businesses for their properties. We’ve helped existing businesses obtain grants from the Philadelphia Commerce Department’s City’s Storefront Improvement Program and The Merchants Fund, providing much-needed funding that made critical improvements possible.

After working with UCD to make physical improvements to his business, Scott Lee, the longtime owner of Lee’s Deli at 47th and Baltimore, told us, “The overwhelming support I have received from the University City District has given me the strength to continue my work at Lee’s Deli, and for that, I am forever grateful. I believe in the power of small businesses to positively impact the community in which they serve, and I believe that change is always more doable when people work together.” To learn more about the program, please contact Jon Potter at jon@universitycity.org.

Businesses UCD has assisted with storefront improvements:
- Lee’s Deli at 47th and Baltimore
- Nick’s Discount at 47th and Baltimore
- Fu Wah Mini Mart at 47th and Baltimore
- Ush Gallery at 55th and Baltimore
- Sino’s Fresh Donuts at 48th and Market

New Business Spotlight

Retailers continue to build their brands in University City and add to an already robust commercial scene. Here is a recap of what has opened recently:

- 8 Limbs Academy: Muay Thai Kickboxing Gym
  452 BALTIMORE AVENUE
- 48th Street Grille: Caribbean & American Cuisine
  310 S. 48th STREET
- Chattime: Japanese Food
  3408 CHESTNUT STREET
- Hai Street Kitchen: Contemporary Japanese
  125 S. 40th STREET
- Hello World: Clothing and Home Goods
  3160 SANSOM STREET
- Hotbox Yoga: Yoga Studio
  3537 LANCASTER AVENUE
- Jake’s Sandwich Board: Sandwich Shop
  125 S. 40th STREET
- Nom Nom Ramen: Hakata-Style Tonkotsu Ramen
  3401 WALNUT STREET
- Pedego: Electric Bike Sales and Rentals
  3100 SPRING GARDEN STREET
- Recap’s Corner: Tabletop Gaming Store
  4812 BALTIMORE AVENUE
- Repair the World: Jewish Volunteer Group
  4029 MARKET STREET
- Santanders: Bank
  3802 CHESTNUT STREET
- United by Blue: Coffee Shop & Outdoor Apparel
  3421 WALNUT STREET
- The Bar(n) on Baltimore: Bar & Night Life
  4901 CATHARINE STREET
- Wahoo’s Fish Taco: California-Style Mexican Food
  3180 CHESTNUT STREET
- William Street Common: Beer Garden
  3900 CHESTNUT STREET
- Zesto Pizza & Grill: Pizza and American Food
  125 S 40th STREET

Win-Win Challenge Planning Grant from Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN), a partnership of funders—primarily philanthropic organizations and the public sector—who come together to support innovative, creative job training projects. We were awarded the planning grant for our University City Landscaping Trades Social Enterprise, a new program that will leverage the accomplishments of our West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) and our depth of experience maintaining the physical vibrancy of University City to develop in-house horticulture services.

News from the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative

UCD was also one of four local organizations to earn a Win-Win Challenge Planning Grant from Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN), a partnership of funders—primarily philanthropic organizations and the public sector—who come together to support innovative, creative job training projects. We were awarded the planning grant for our University City Landscaping Trades Social Enterprise, a new program that will leverage the accomplishments of our West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) and our depth of experience maintaining the physical vibrancy of University City to develop in-house horticulture services.
To make a secure, online donation to UCD, please visit: www.universitycity.org/donate

Gehl Study (continued from cover)

functions like a traditional central business district, where the majority of pedestrian activity is generated by people walking to and from work, with an additional peak of activity during the lunch hour. However, as new development takes place, there will be an increasing need for a vibrant network of public spaces to support it. Beyond the existing hubs of activity—at 30th Street Station, the new restaurants and residences at Chestnut Square, and around Drexel’s campus—there exist several underutilized spaces, presenting opportunities to provide more inviting spaces. We have also learned where the configuration and design of streets and paths present barriers to walking comfortably through the area.

Our upcoming report will present a series of strategic pilot projects, aimed at the following goals: through creative interventions, we want to expand hours of activity and invite new users to stay longer; we want to work toward a safe, comfortable, and stimulating walking environment with human scale and an authentic sense of place; and we hope to shift the area toward the dynamic and magnetic neighborhood it aspires to be. We look forward to sharing ideas as they become finalized.

New Upgrades on the Horizon for The Dirt Factory

UCD’s Dirt Factory, the city’s only free community composting facility, has recently begun work with a team of Senior Drexel Environmental Engineering students on plans to modify and improve the function of The Dirt Factory, as well as conduct site analysis and community outreach for a second facility in the neighborhood. They have also been meeting with the EPA and University City institutions to work on collective efforts to reduce food waste in our neighborhood. The Dirt Factory remains open for drop-offs of household food waste at 4308 Market Street on Wednesdays from 5-6pm and Saturdays from 10:30-11:30am. Check our website for a list of acceptable materials for drop off.

DONATION FORM

I have enclosed my check for _______ payable to University City District.

Name (please print) ____________________________

Company ____________________________

Address ____________________________

Expiration Date (MM/YY) ________

Security Code ________

I would like this gift to recur circle one Weekly Monthly Quarterly

Phone ____________________________

Email ____________________________

Signature ____________________________

Cut along the dotted line and mail this form to: University City District, 3940 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

I would like to honor a friend or family member , perhaps you would like to honor a friend or family member, as asphalt paver with a dedication message of your choosing. If you donate $250, UCD will thank you by etching an 8” x 8” seat walls bounding the butterfly garden.

This is an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate your love for our neighborhood as we build this new community asset together. To donate, please visit: universitycity.org/40th-street-trolley Portal-campaign or contact our Director of Development Sarah Davis at 215.243.0555 x 226 or sarah@universitycity.org. Thank you in advance for your support.

Trolley Portal (continued from cover)

If you donate $250, UCD will thank you by etching an 8” x 8” asphalt paver with a dedication message of your choosing—perhaps you would like to honor a friend or family member, or join together with neighbors to make a gift on behalf of your block. At higher gift levels, you can adopt and dedicate a native shade tree or have a plaque placed on the custom seat walls bounding the butterfly garden.

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Daniel Wolf accepted a position as Planner / Project Manager in October 2014 after spending time as an intern for UCD. In his new position, he will work to enhance the public realm in University City through placemaking and improving the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Originally from the Boston area, Daniel studied Psychology as an undergraduate at Tufts University, and he holds a Master of City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania. Daniel lives in Spruce Hill and enjoys experimenting in the kitchen, playing music, practicing Judaism, and exploring new places on his folding bicycle.

UCD Staff Updates

Tom Patterson, who has worked with UCD for ten years, has been promoted to manager of our Public Space & Maintenance division. In this capacity, Tom will coordinate and direct operations responsible for providing cleaning and maintenance of University City’s public spaces, will oversee fee-for-service contracts, and will research and implement opportunities to improve UCD’s clean and safe operations while responding to community concerns in the areas of public safety and cleanliness. Tom lives in South Philadelphia with his wife. He enjoys watching sports and is a lifetime fan of the Washington Redskins.

Shawn Ryan has joined UCD as our new Graphic Design and Web Development Manager. Prior to UCD, Shawn was Senior Designer for World Cafe Live in University City. Shawn graduated from Millersville University with a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. Aside from pushing pixels and crafting compositions, Shawn also enjoys traveling, bicycling, exploring Philadelphia, and endlessly searching for rare records.

Daniel Wolf

Shawn Ryan

Help us keep working for you. Support UCD. 

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SAVE THE DATES!

Baltimore AVENUE
DOLLAR STROLL

June 25, 2015
September 24, 2015

$1 Deals!

2015 UNIVERSITY CITY DINING DAYS

July 16-26, 2015

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