

Big first step to finding leaders

Building Project hopes summit will draw broad support

University City's population doubled to 100,000 over the last two decades. Growth that rapid often occurs without the natural support systems and leadership that need time to develop.

And University City has, at times, suffered as a result.

Consider how strong leadership might have affected the continued delays in getting parks and schools, or the decision to build our leg of the I-485 outerbelt 15 years later than Pineville's.

A local group hopes to change our position by identifying and supporting current and emerging University City leaders.

The first step is under way. The University City Community Building Project is inviting potential leaders to a Leadership Summit on Feb. 15

at the new Student Activity Center at UNC Charlotte.

The event is the first step in the University City Community Building Project's (UCCBP) Action Plan that was rolled out in 2004.

The summit, "Faces of Leadership," features keynote speaker Dr. James H. Johnson, Jr., distinguished professor of management at the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an expert on what he labels "the browning and graying of America." The main topics of the summit also include community growth, racial trust and University City's image.

The UCCBP was established in 2002 to research University City's identity and build upon the area's sense of community.

According to a two-year demographic study conducted for UCCBP, University City is the most ethnically diverse area in Charlotte and yet has a higher level of trust among races.

Those qualities of higher diversity and higher trust generally don't coincide, and the fact that they do here makes University City a special place, says Michael DeVaul, YMCA community vice president for north and northeast Charlotte and a member of the building project.

DeVaul and others on the UCCBP implementation team hope the summit will spark the interest of the area's corporations, places of worship, homeowner associations and civic organizations.

"We're expecting interest from corporate (groups) to grassroots organizations," said DeVaul. "I'm hoping that group presidents and others will come to this event, see what's next and get others involved."

A Leadership Academy is planned for a later date. Both the summit and

academy are supported by First Charter, United Way and the Foundation for the Carolinas and is conducted in collaboration with the University City Area Council of the Charlotte Chamber and the University City Partners.

"The concept around the Leadership Summit and Leadership Academy is to identify and train leaders who can develop University City with diversity as a foundation," says Jennie Crismore, the YMCA's Senior Director of Civic Engagement and coordinator of UCCBP. "We hope that University City will serve as a benchmark for the rest of Charlotte and other cities in North Carolina."

For more information about "Faces of Leadership," please contact Jennie Crismore at (704) 716-6792 or jennie.crismore@ymcacharlotte.org.

— Molly Thompson and Rich Haag contributed to this article

Many groups planning Leadership Summit

The Leadership Summit steering team represents many University City businesses, governments and communities.

Members are:

Laura Abiodun, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 Renee Alexander Sherrod, TIAA-CREF
 Jean Bradley, Harrisburg Town Council
 Ann Clark, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 Martil Cosper, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
 Michael DeVaul, University City YMCA
 Thereasea Elder, Rockwell Community Organization
 Timothy Hagler, Mayor, Harrisburg
 Norman Hill, United Way
 Jim Hipp, City of Concord
 Tony Hoppa, UNC Charlotte
 Leslie Johnson, Wachovia

Prasanti Khurana, ESI
 Juanita Lewis, A Sure Foundation
 Roslyn Maglione, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department
 Pat Martinez, Special Counsel
 Jeff Michael, UNC-Charlotte Urban Inst.
 Tuyet Ngo-Seethaler, International Health and Community Services
 Angeles Ortega, Latin American Coalition
 Scott Padgett, Mayor, Concord
 Willie Ratchford, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee
 Kit Rea, Vance High School
 Judy Rose, UNC Charlotte
 Bill Scurry, Allen Tate Realtors
 Kevin Toomb, First Charter Bank
 Annetta Watkins, Community Building Initiative
 Bill Whitaker, CPCC — Northeast Campus

Our growing diversity changing U. City, U.S.

The backdrop to the upcoming Leadership Summit is the realization that University City, North Carolina and the United States are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.

Whites made up three-fourths of the U.S. population in 1995. That will drop to about 50 percent by 2050, predicts the University of North Carolina's Kenan Institute.

Much of that change will come from new immigrants, and North Carolina will see the greatest growth of foreign-born residents among America's 10 most populous states — up more than 70 percent in the next 45 years.

Dr. James Johnson Jr. of the Kenan Institute, the leadership summit's keynote speaker, has studied immigration and its effects on society. At the summit, Johnson will discuss what the demographic

shifts mean for communities and the roles of leaders, especially in terms of social capital, or the connectedness between people.

Michael DeVaul of the University City Community Building Partnership says that the Summit will weave into its curriculum the ten indices of social capital: social trust, interracial trust, diversity of friendships, conventional politics, protest politics, civic leadership, associational leadership, informal socializing, giving and volunteering, and faith-based engagement.

DeVaul says leaders must prepare for the demographic changes already under way. "We aren't starting with an empty box," he says of University City's high levels of ethnic diversity. "We need to build on what we have. Our social capital is stronger than in most areas of Charlotte."