



# TEACHER'S TRAINING ANNEX

*Library Project*

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UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION 2005

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**1 Task Force Building Awareness and Partnerships for Library Project** In September 2004, after a decade of planning and investigation, the University Heights community got some good news regarding its hope to convert the Teacher's Training Annex 1 into the new home for its branch library. It turns out the Annex building, a community icon that has stood at the intersection of Park and El Cajon Boulevards for more than 90 years, remains sturdy enough to accommodate a retrofitting that would allow it to become a library facility.

For many years, and following cursory evaluations by the City of San Diego and a walk-through review by architects focused on historic preservation issues, the Annex was thought to be too structurally weak to support any alternative uses.

That thinking changed in September with the release of a comprehensive site study prepared by Fields Devereaux Architects & Engineers (FDAE). The FDAE team's report not only confirmed the Annex's structural integrity but also provided the community and officials at the San Diego Unified School District, current owners of the building, with a host of potential floor plans for both a library and community center operation.

In anticipation of the positive report, the University Heights Community Development Corporation (UHCDC) and University Heights Community Association (UHCA) convened a new Library Task Force to hear and consider the options described by FDAE.

On September 14, 2004, the Task Force listened as Robin Meierding and Chris Knell, project managers for FDAE, presented their firm's preliminary findings regarding the condition of Annex 1 and its suitability for conversion to neighborhood use. With funds arranged by Councilmember Toni Atkins, Fields Devereaux was selected by the UHCDC and the City to perform an assessment of the Annex focusing on the community's interest in a new library.

Meierding and Knell reported that, in their firm's estimate, the Annex building could be converted to use as a library facility. Task Force members quizzed the FDAE representatives regarding the cost estimates included in their report. These estimates showed that costs of transforming the annex for library use make it imperative to approach the project as a cooperative venture with as many partners as possible. A key



element of this approach will be working with the City and San Diego Unified School District to eliminate costs for transferring ownership of the now under-utilized building to the library development team.

David Manela, the City's project manager assigned to this effort, told task force members that though the school district remains interested in this effort, no formal talks about acquiring the building have begun. The Task Force, now in possession of FDAE's final report, is taking steps to inform District officials about the community's interest in doing just that.

Among many other points in the FDAE report are recommendations regarding the focus of redevelopment design efforts. The Task Force reiterated the community's support for focusing on the 1910 era of the annex's use as the dominant design guide. That focus and use of the Annex for a library facility is supported by each of the key community groups interested in University Heights including the Uptown Planners and the Save Our Heritage Organization of San Diego.

The Task Force, which has been meeting regularly since last year, has begun an outreach and education effort for key stakeholders in the potential redevelopment process. It will be informing community members of potential scenarios for using the Annex building and will be working with school district representatives to gain their support for the project.

*Anyone interested in learning more about the Teacher's Training Annex Library Project is encouraged to visit the UHCDC office at 4452 Park Blvd., Ste. 104.*

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**Support from Councilmember Atkins Much Appreciated** It has been a pleasure for me to work with the University Heights community on the exciting efforts to bring a historic and cherished landmark the *Normal School Teacher Training Annex Building* back into public use. The San Diego Unified School District, which owns the building, has also been a willing partner in allowing the city and the community to look into possibilities that might lead to the building's rehabilitation and adaptive re-use.

During the City Council's negotiations for the city-wide Library Facilities Enhancement Plan, members of the University Heights community made it very clear to me that they were interested in this building as a replacement site for the current University Heights Branch Library.

I was able to persuade Mayor Murphy and my

Council colleagues to designate up to \$250,000 for an in-depth engineering study of the Teacher Training Annex Building to determine the feasibility of doing an adaptive re-use that would include a library.

That study has now been completed, and I look forward to the continued partnership with the community and the school district as we work toward funding this exciting effort.



Councilmember  
Toni Atkins

### **Strong Support for A New Branch Facility**

Community support for a new branch library facility has been growing for well over a decade. The current library is one of the oldest and smallest branch facilities in the San Diego library system. Though it remains well-used, many University Heights residents have been forced away from the branch and toward other libraries better able to meet their research and reading needs.

The current library also falls short in meeting the needs of local children who would stand to benefit from better access to library services. Despite focused attention from library staff, the current facility cannot meet the needs of these children due to its limited capacity for new materials and its location far removed from local schools.

Even as it attempts to find a new home for the branch, the University Heights community works very hard to support the existing facility. The community maintains an active Friends of the Library group offering financial support and volunteer hours for the library and its staff. The community also supports numerous book clubs and literary "salon" events that rely on the library for materials and guidance. The community has also recently formed a Library Task Force dedicated to finding a new home for the branch in the sturdy and historic Annex No. 1 building now owned by the San Diego Unified School District.

Jeffrey Davis, Manager of the University Heights Branch Library, has been an active member of the Task Force since its inception. Mr. Davis and his staff at the library continue to provide the community with extraordinary service despite the limitations of the existing branch facility. His letter describes current conditions and how the University Heights branch might better service the community at large by relocating to the Teacher's Training Annex No. 1 building.

*The Library Department and the University Heights Community have long recognized that the small University Heights Branch Library is no longer adequate to serve the needs of this growing community. The amount and quality of service that we are able to provide to the children and students of the area is particularly limited. A small part of the library is devoted to children's collections, but there are no separate spaces for study, performances, or storytimes.*

*Class visits compete with adult patrons for space in the building. We are also cut off from our nearest public school, Birney Elementary, by the busy El Cajon Boulevard - Park Boulevard - Normal Street intersection and see very little use from Birney because of that.*

*The Teachers Annex site offers the library a unique chance to expand its service to schools and neighborhood children. The site is well situated to serve Birney Elementary, and would form with Birney and the SDUSD center, an attractive and inviting educational-cultural campus.*

*-Jeffrey Davis, Branch Manager  
University Heights Branch Library*

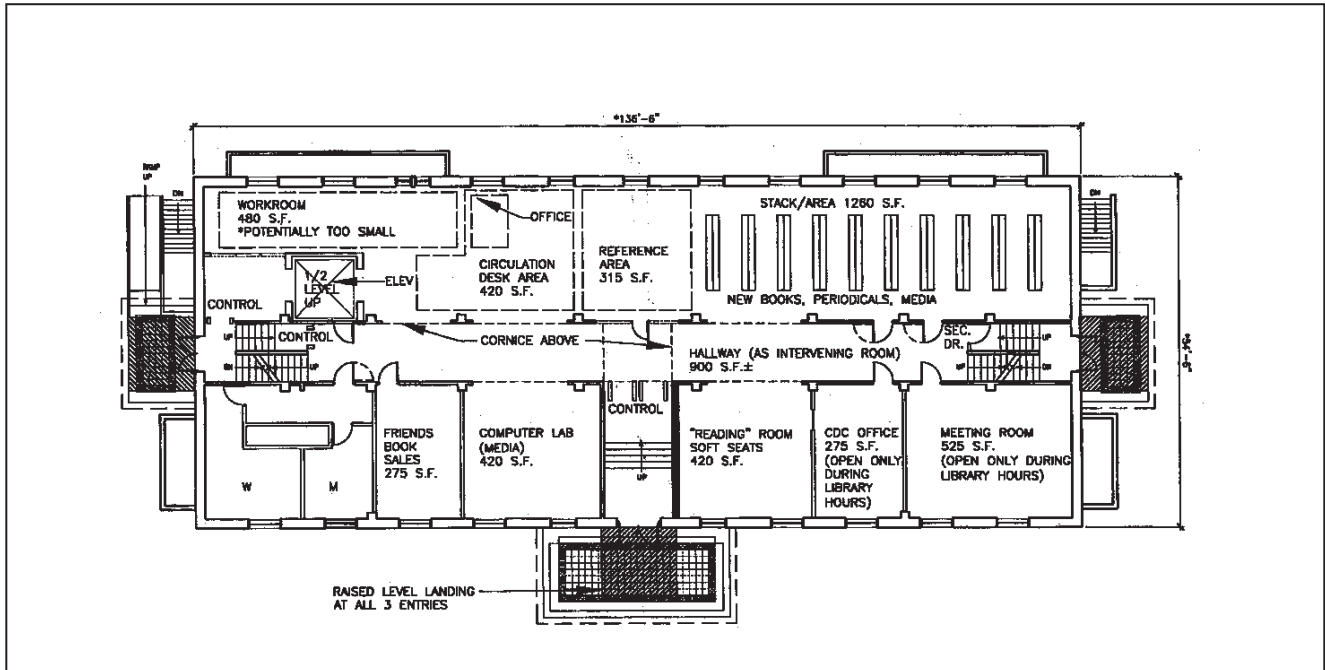
**The Library Task Force may be reached at:**

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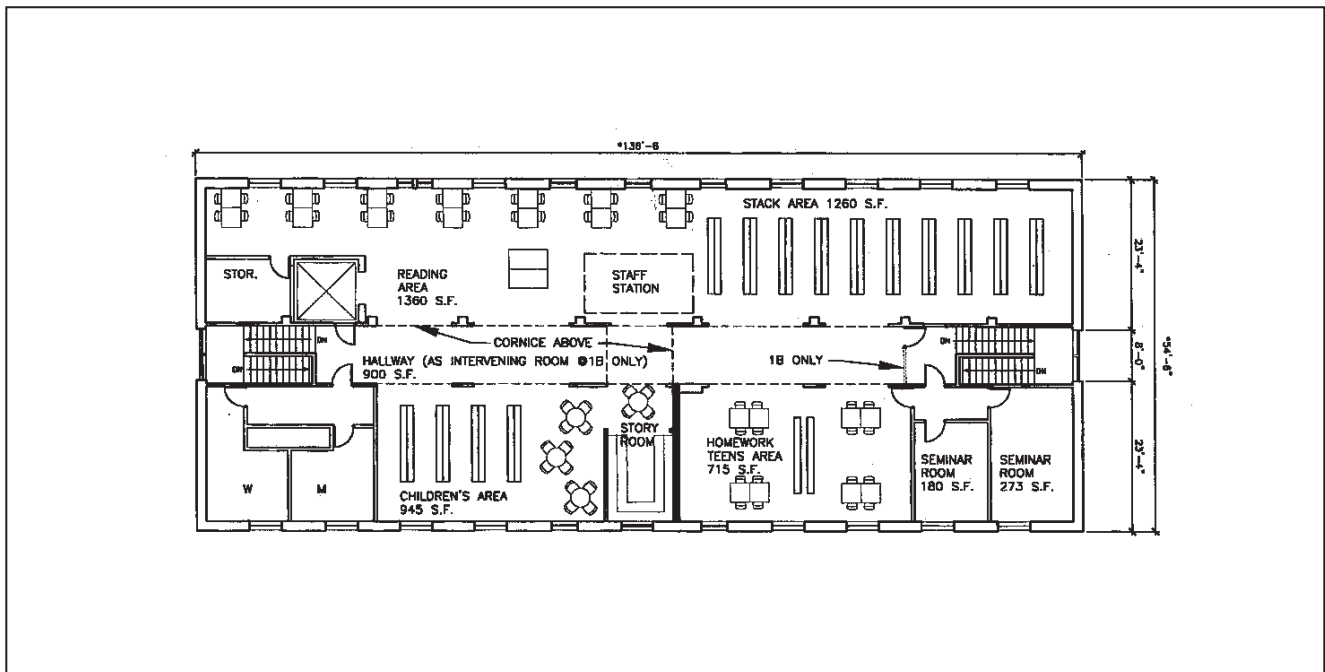
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FIRST FLOOR

*Fields Devereaux Architects and Engineers*



SECOND FLOOR

*Fields Devereaux Architects and Engineers*

The Historical Assessment and Adaptive Reuse Analysis of the Teacher Training Annex No. 1 conducted by Fields Devereaux Architects and Engineers includes conceptual designs for a branch library and a community center. The preliminary floor plans illustrated here clearly show how operations of the University Heights Branch Library could be incorporated into the redeveloped Annex No. 1.

The University Heights Library Task Force continues to explore the best configuration for a library facility in the historic structure. The Task Force and the University Heights Development Corporation will be working with the City of San Diego, the San Diego Unified School District and the community at large to create a partnership leading to the redevelopment of the Annex.

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**Connections with Birney School and the District Remain Strong** The history of University Heights begins with the promise of higher education. The community was founded in 1887 when local land owners banded together to provide the University of Southern California with a home for its planned San Diego campus. The community's connection with education has been strong ever since.

Though USC eventually decided against building in San Diego, the future of University Heights and its links to education were already set. By the 1890's the community was being developed as one of the first suburban neighborhoods north of downtown. It had direct street car service connecting it with the rest of San Diego and with the other cities surrounding San Diego Bay. And, with open land already intended for a university, it proved a perfect place for construction of the State Normal School teachers college in 1899.

The Normal School was a grand campus that would later become San Diego State College. The classic architecture of the school's main building was supported by a number of annexes built over time and reflecting the dominant architectural styles of their day. Many of the annex buildings, including the sturdy Annex 1 made of reinforced concrete, remain today as important examples of San Diego's architectural heritage.

Following the development of the "new" San Diego State College campus on Montezuma Mesa to the east, the Normal School was converted to other uses. In the

1950's the San Diego Unified School District began redevelopment of the property as the city's education center office facility. The District also developed Alice Birney Elementary School immediately to the north.

The University Heights community was quick to embrace both institutions and has continued its support for the Birney School with extraordinary fund raising and development projects ever since. Recent examples of the community's interest include cooperative ventures between the school, the University Heights Community Development Corporation and the City of San Diego to construct new fencing and ceremonial gates for the Birney play field. The gates, created to look like the trolleys that once ran up Park Boulevard near the school, face northeast and link the campus to the surrounding neighborhood.

The University Heights community has also served Birney by supplying members of the task force assigned to design new school buildings. The community was very active in the campaign to approve Proposition MM that led to funding for new campus facilities and has assisted the school and District in preparing grant application materials for efforts to create a well-maintained joint-use play area at the school.

Today, as throughout its history, University Heights is home to residents who value and support education in San Diego. It is a thriving and vibrant community working together to strengthen and expand its links to schools, libraries and other educational resources.

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### **More Than 20 Years of Strength and Success**

The University Heights Community Association (UHCA) and the University Heights Community Development Corporation (UHCDC) have been strong advocates for local planning efforts for more than 20 years.

Founded at a time when poorly planned development threatened to destroy the unique and historically significant fabric of its community, UHCA and UHCDC have become important voices in modern community planning efforts in San Diego. They created a host of very successful projects that have secured University Heights' place as one of the most vibrant communities in mid-city.

Both groups benefit from a large corps of highly active and motivated members. The UHCDC's experienced staff is among the most knowledgeable and longest serving of all those assisting San Diego's neighborhoods. UHCA supports the broadly distributed *University Heights News* publication offering in-depth coverage for a variety of important community issues. *The News* also serves as a recruiting tool for local residents interested in participating in projects and activities planned by agencies and organizations surrounding the community.

The UHCA and UHCDC began their decades long history of success by winning the fight to transform the old trolley maintenance buildings into a community park. Old Trolley Barn Park is now the centerpiece for community recreation and serves as home for the

very popular 'Summer in the Park' Concerts each summer. The groups also collaborated on the construction of the

celebrated University Heights community signs, the preservation of the Mission Cliffs Garden walls and a host of other improvement projects that have reinforced the community's historic character.

The groups have also proven a force in many other redevelopment efforts and have, since their founding, successfully limited outside plans that could have destroyed historic cottages and other single-family homes in favor of massive apartment complexes. The City, elected officials and other planning agencies now seek approval from the UHCA and UHCDC well in advance of any development effort.

With their members taking the lead, the groups have forged partnerships with businesses, foundations, museums, libraries and public agencies to create a complete urban village. The success of the UHCA and UHCDC reflects the best interests and dedication of neighborhood residents.

