

Welcome to the St. Mary's GATEWAY DISTRICT

by Nicolette Good, Associate Editor, and Candace Kuebker, Executive Editor

On warm summer afternoons, Jason rode his bike along St. Mary's sidewalks like they were an extension of his own driveway one block north of the University.

"St. Mary's was right there," recalls Jason Cox (B.B.A. '98). "It was part of the family, and it actually felt like part of our house."

University Park, the neighborhood that shares a fence with St. Mary's, had the right ingredients for years of many fond memories.

"We never locked our doors. Everyone just looked out for one another," Jason says.

When he visits his parents at home now, Jason still senses the neighborhood charm he witnessed as a child. But a newcomer might tell a different story.

Renters have replaced many of the original longtime homeowners; stray dogs rummage through morning trash in search of breakfast; and white picket fences are tagged with graffiti painted by school kids.

Now Jason's mother, Jo Cox, does more than watch out for kids

playing in the street, thanks to a powerful partnership among St. Mary's University and key players committed to revitalizing the neighborhood her family has known for decades.

The seeds of neighborhood revitalization were planted in 2002 when St. Mary's helped found the University Park Neighborhood Association (UPNA), of which Jo was its first president and current vice president. Ever since, the UPNA has held monthly meetings on campus where it can tap into the intellectual capital of St. Mary's faculty, staff and students.

A few years later, while President Charles L. Cotrell, Ph.D., drafted St. Mary's strategic plan, *Vision 2012*, he had revitalization in mind.

Vision 2012's goal to extend boundaries calls St. Mary's to become more active in community outreach, development and improvement. So in March 2007, Cotrell led the formation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Project with a Task

Force that would collaborate with neighbors on infrastructure and quality of life improvements, commercial transformation and housing rehabilitation.

The Task Force's greatest boon is its diversity of talents, resources and expertise. Chaired by Ramiro Cavazos (M.P.A. '03), president of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (SAHCC), its members include longtime University Park residents like Jo Cox, passionate individuals from the University and city government, and experienced community activists.



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Partnerships have been the hallmarks of the Project's success. With a nearly \$600,000 three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), St. Mary's hired Revitalization Project Director Steve Nivin, Ph.D.

Augmented by grants from the city, St. Mary's Alumni Association and foundations, the HUD grant helped Project partners plant trees, hold public meetings

and small business summits, publish a semi-annual newsletter for the Phase I area, and survey neighbors about desires for commercial redevelopment.

In 2009, things really started moving when the on-campus Neighborhood Center opened in the AT&T Center for Information Technology. It's now a place where residents and business proprietors access home ownership and credit counseling, home repair assistance, and

economic development resources.

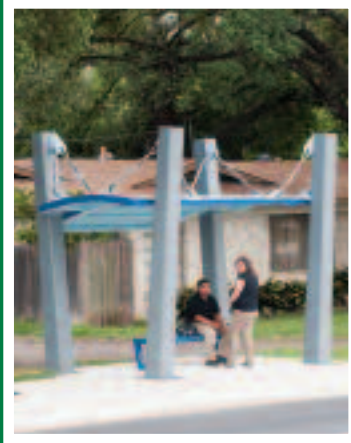
In the Catholic and Marianist spirit, St. Mary's asked the community first-hand what was needed. A Task Force committee surveyed nearby residents while the SAHCC – in conjunction with a University class project – conducted surveys of businesses along Culebra and Bandera Roads' commercial corridors. Another class donned their economist hats to gather consumer habits and commercial

Nivin directs the Neighborhood Revitalization Project, but he also puts his background as Chief Economist for the City of San Antonio to work as director of the SABER Research Institute. Learn how this bolsters revitalization efforts at www.saberinstitute.org



Curb Appeal

Residents along Woodlawn Ave. enjoy infrastructure improvements, like their newly paved streetscape, outfitted with uniform curbs, repainted lanes, and yards with fresh turf.



On a Roll

Residents wait at a new bus stop on the corner where the Revitalization Project hopes to pursue a second pocket park.



Bike Lanes

The Councilman's office constructed new bike lanes to promote a bikeable community.

38,151
people live in
all five
revitalization
areas

\$1.3 million
in tax returns came
back to the area
through St. Mary's
VITA program

30.8% of
residents are
renters

50% of residents
have Internet
access

5,646
are emp

interests of University faculty, staff and students.

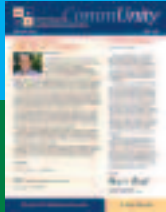
In 2010 alone, the Revitalization Project has seen tangible signs of its progress. A pocket park in University Park was completed in April, with the help of the city, UPNA, District 7 Councilman Justin Rodriguez and Preferred Landscaping and Lighting. This green space serves as a model for future parks that will entirely transform the street view.

Major infrastructure improvements near completion on Woodlawn Ave., Culebra Road and Bandera Road have already put a new face on the area. In addition, the Office of the Councilman is installing bike paths, crosswalks and a turning lane on NW 36th Street into the campus—projects that will make the vicinity safer and more accessible.

As the anchor of San Antonio's Northwest side, it is St. Mary's duty to use

its resources—time, visibility, skills, talents—to lead efforts that improve the lives of people who live, work, study and play here. Even in its fledgling stages, the Neighborhood Revitalization Project has reached many milestones and is poised to achieve many more.

It just goes to show that when people put their minds and energy together, great things can, and do, happen.



The UPNA newsletter encourages neighbors' participation in revitalization, educational and cultural activities. They clip out passes to St. Mary's athletic games, coupons to nearby retailers, and reminders for events like National Night Out.



Pocket Park

At the intersection of Cincinnati, Tulane and Stonegate, this one-time traffic island is the Project's first pocket park. Completed in April, it offers a beautiful green space for residents.



Eat Where the Locals Eat

La Estrella Bakery, run by a husband-and-wife duo, is a small business along on Bandera Road's bustling commercial corridor. The success of the more-established Lisa's Mexican Restaurant is testament to the opportunity that awaits up-and-coming entrepreneurs and business proprietors.



If You Lived Here, You'd Be Here by Now

"As a San Antonio Alternative Housing Corp. housing counselor, I help first-time home buyers get a foot in the door—literally," says Lita Avalos whose office is in the Neighborhood Revitalization Center. "Down-payment assistance, credit counseling and home repair classes are provided at no cost to the client." A lucky first-time homeowner is constructing a new home one block west of campus.

5 people employed here

\$370,000 was awarded for commercial revitalization over six years

846 businesses are located in the revitalization area

47% of residents attend Oyster Bake

32.1% do not have a high school diploma