

**Council for  
Higher Education  
in Newark**

## **A Force for Urban Progress**

### *The University Heights Story*



**Essex County College**

**New Jersey Institute of Technology**

**Rutgers, The State University  
Campus at Newark**

**University of Medicine and  
Dentistry of New Jersey**

**A PROGRESS REPORT**

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**TODAY  
AND  
YESTERDAY**

**U**niversity Heights is the academic-commercial-residential hub of Newark, New Jersey, enriching and enriched by four of the state's largest public institutions of higher learning. Its 700 acres form a strategically located neighborhood that rises above downtown Newark, enclosing Essex County College, the Newark campus of Rutgers University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The area is alive with stores, churches, schools and homes for middle and low-income families. Older multi-family frame houses stand alongside new modular structures, semi-detached homes, and elegant stone and brick-front town houses. Some clusters of new housing cover several blocks, others less than an acre.

**M**any area property owners are now investing in building improvements; a decade earlier they would not. Nor would anyone else: parcels of land stood vacant for years for lack of investor confidence.

**T**oday the area has two shopping centers, the first such enterprise in more than twenty years. Also on the drawing boards are a multiplex movie theatre, restaurants, retail stores, auto centers—the amenities of a stable community now re-emerging after more than two decades.

**A**n important catalyst in this dramatic turnaround was CHEN, the Council for Higher Education in Newark. With the help of a nurturing city government, CHEN sought to improve its neighborhood through planning, timing, and creating opportunities for investment in the area. Most importantly, CHEN proved that universities can be the catalyst in bringing a dormant city area to life.

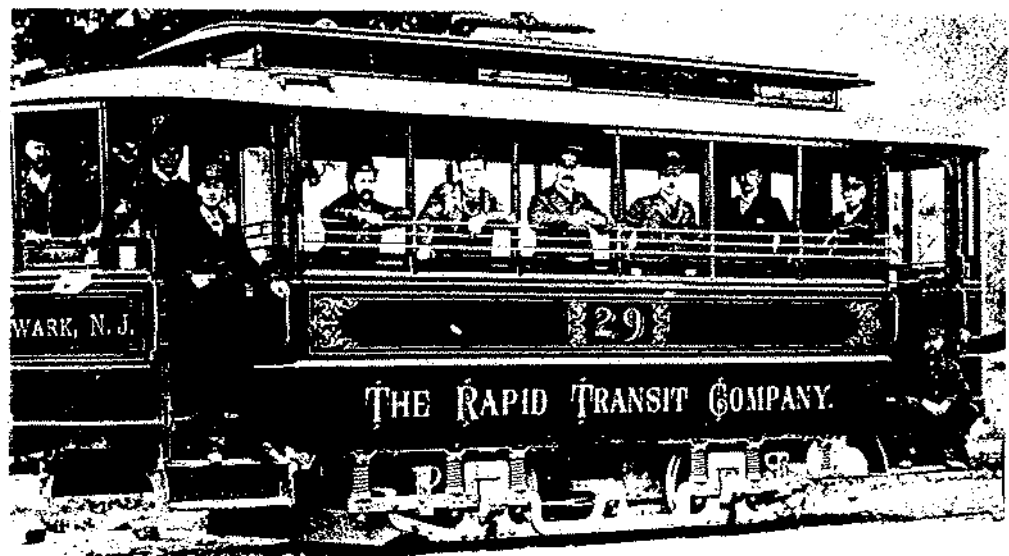
## THE OLD NEWARK

Newark was founded in 1666, but it was not until the mid-Nineteenth Century that the city became the state's center for manufacturing, commerce, finance and transportation. At the same time, it became the model of a flourishing American industrial city.

By 1967, however, the city was showing decay. Much of its middle class, and many of its jobs, had followed the new highways to the suburbs. At the same time, a massive migration from the rural South and the Caribbean had filled the vacated homes, and the new immigrants were competing for the few unskilled jobs left. Much of Newark's housing, frame structures built early in this century,

was in shambles. Public housing was newer but little better: living was hard and often dangerous in the high-rise projects. Newark's public schools, once among the nation's finest, were becoming increasingly ineffective.

Then, on a hot July night in 1967, Newark exploded in a bloody, four-day riot. As America pondered its urban dilemma, Newark suddenly found itself the metaphor for the decaying Eastern industrial city, groping to survive in an era of massive economic and political upheaval.



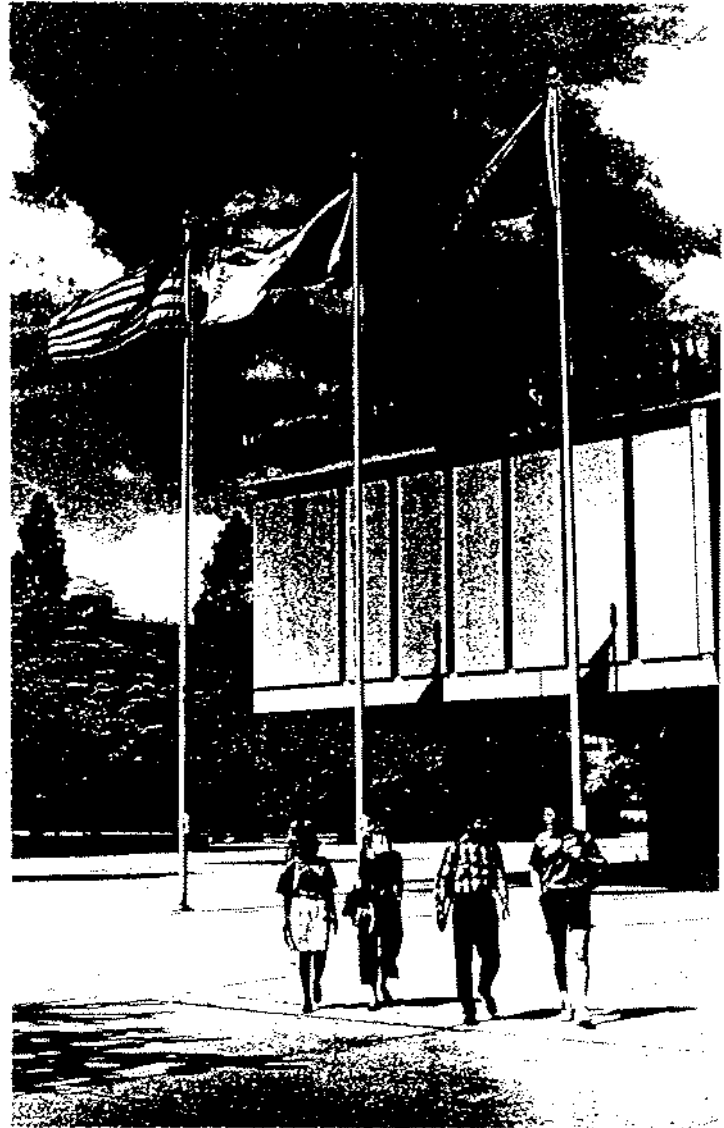
## THE PERSISTENT IMAGE

By the mid-1970s, Newark had made strides in its rebuilding, but serious progress was impeded by Newark's persistent negative image. That perception was so strong that few outside investors could accept the reality that the community was making real gains.

Many failed to take notice of the downtown building, expanded universities, or enlarged Newark Airport. Nor did they attach much importance to the thousands of added housing units, new and rehabilitated, by churches and individual homeowners, especially in Newark's Ironbound area. Downtown, the Prudential Insurance Company expanded its Gateway complex at the eastern edge of the central business

district. Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company had earlier built several new office buildings near its Washington Park home office.

By the early 1980s, community leaders began to urge an increase in the pace of development. Confidence in the city's future had risen; even residential real estate prices were up significantly for the first time since the Newark riots. Further, the universities were expanding their faculties, staffs, student bodies, educational programs and physical plants to become a more potent economic force in Newark.



CHEN-  
THE UNIVERSITIES  
BECOME  
INVOLVED

**I**n the early 1980s, the universities began to popularize the notion that Newark was a college town. Enrollment had risen to more than 27,000 and new buildings were rising at Essex County College, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rutgers-Newark and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Further, there was growing interest among students at Rutgers-Newark and NJIT to create a 24-hour campus life.

**A** problem was the surrounding area, described by The New York Times as "an urban wilderness of vacant and dilapidated buildings that were targets for vandals and refuge for drug addicts."

Its unemployment was double the state average.

Only 27 percent of its adults had finished high school.

Fewer than 40 percent of its families owned cars.

Its per capita income was down to \$5,026.

Its crime rate was 50 per cent higher than that of Essex County as a whole.

**A** medical school official pointed out to a Times reporter that "You had multi-million-dollar facilities

across the street from garbage-strewn vacant lots. UMDNJ alone employed 5,500 people, including high salaried physicians, and there were no restaurants or houses for them. We started asking ourselves why no one was putting those vacant lots to use.”

**P**rogress required an entity that could function as a catalyst, a mechanism for change. And, that was the role for CHEN, the Council for Higher Education in Newark. CHEN was formed in the early 1970s to foster cooperation among the schools and make Newark a significant American university center. As a vehicle for collaboration in both public service and education, CHEN increased the range of the universities’ programs and services, as well as the number of students served. The CHEN council was composed of the heads of the four schools: Dr. Stanley S. Bergen, Jr., President of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; Dr. Saul K. Fenster, President of the New Jersey Institute of Technology; Dr. A. Zachary Yamba, President of the Essex County College; and Dr. Norman Samuels, Provost of Rutgers-Newark. The institutions share a record of community service:

## ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE

Essex County College has deep ties to the community, delivering programs in English and Spanish, by day, night, and weekend to more than 6,000 students — 60 percent of whom live in Newark. Over 20 percent of its employees are also Newark residents. The college offers some thirty degree and certificate programs, many designed to provide immediate career opportunities to its graduates. Moreover, ECC trains and places thousands of residents for local jobs, aided by some \$7 million in various financial aid programs. It works with educationally disadvantaged children through a variety of Saturday and day camp pro-

grams. Its College in the Company program upgrades the skills of adults with on-site courses at downtown offices and its Women's Center Forum offers career planning, counseling and auxiliary services through a support system that encourages scholarship and leadership in the community. It also delivers a series of seminars for minority contractors.

ECC's job training programs prepare students for entry-level skills in business and office occupations, dental assistantships, electronics, and machine trades.



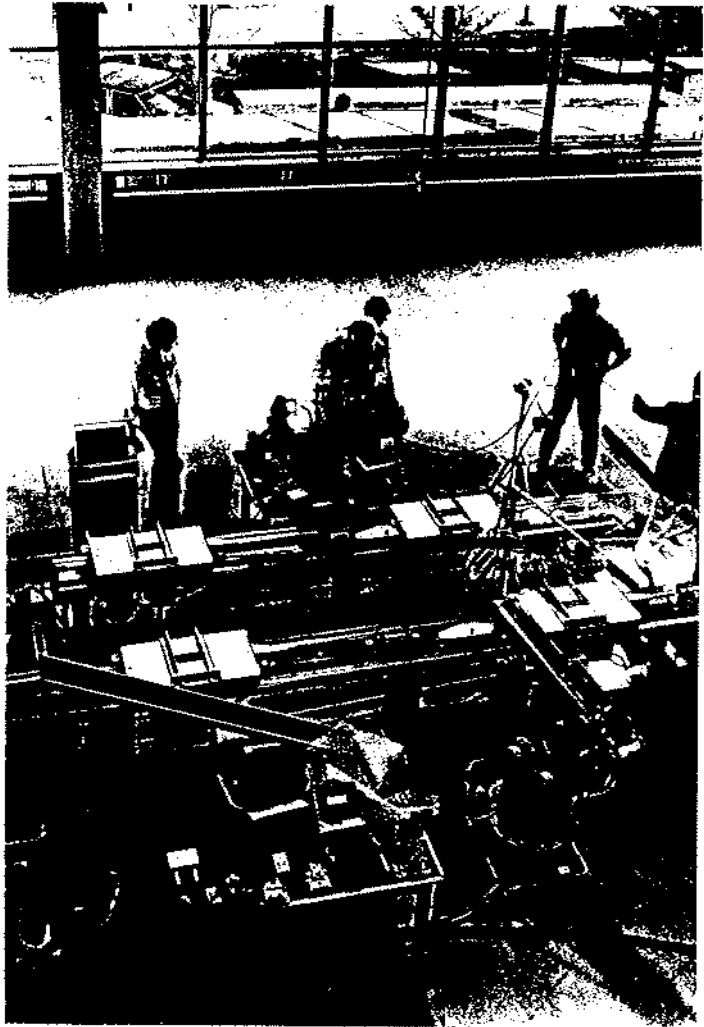
# NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

With 20 percent of its budget dedicated to research, NJIT is a major resource for design and applications related to environmental improvement, advanced manufacturing, transportation systems, small business development, jobs creation, technology transfer and affordable housing with direct implications for the growth of Newark and its surrounding communities.

Nationally recognized programs at NJIT promote the educational achievements of minority students, many from Newark. Thirty pre-college programs annually serve 3,000 elementary and secondary students and teachers from Newark and nearby cities. Tutoring, financial aid, rigorous preparatory classes and career development pro-

grams contribute to the eventual success of promising, yet previously disadvantaged college students of science and engineering.

As a comprehensive technological university, NJIT offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees to approximately 7,700 students. More than 900 Newark residents work and study at the university. Among the student body, faculty and staff, there are hundreds of volunteers donating time and experience to city agencies and community organizations.



## RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, NEWARK CAMPUS

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The Newark Campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey offers a comprehensive program at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Its graduate schools supply highly skilled professionals to the region in such areas as law, management, the life sciences, nursing and criminal justice. The campus' newest facility, the Aidekman Research Center, houses the Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, where an international faculty conducts intensive research on such brain disorders as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, dyslexia and stroke.

About 220 of the campus' 1,400 employees reside in Newark and 11 percent of Rutgers-Newark's nearly 10,000

undergraduate and graduate students are from the city. Its minority student enrollment — 40 percent — is the highest among the state's four-year colleges.

Rutgers-Newark's extensive pre-college programs help thousands of junior and senior high school students from Newark and nearby communities improve their academic skills.

Outreach centers in Rutgers' Graduate School of Management, including the Small Business Development Center and the Rutgers Minority Investment Company, provide Newark business owners with training, counseling and other support services.



**UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE  
AND DENTISTRY OF NEW JERSEY**

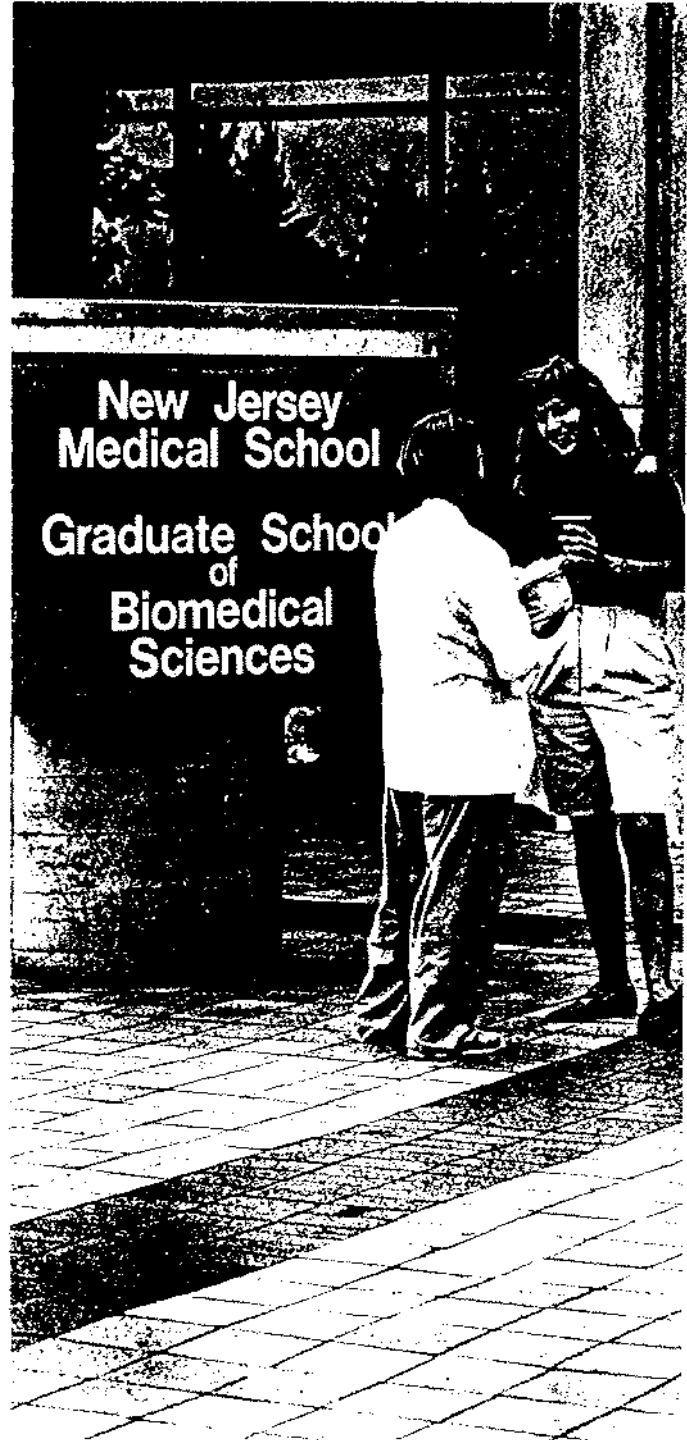
**UMDNJ** plays a major role in delivering health care and education and in providing employment opportunities to the citizens of Newark. The largest health sciences university in the nation, it provides a large proportion of the city's medical professionals and operates a regional emergency services network. Moreover, it provides health care regardless of ability to pay — totalling some \$44 million of uncompensated patient care, approximately 70 per cent of which was rendered to local residents during 1990.

Employing more than 1,200 Newark residents, UMDNJ is one of the largest employers in the city. The Newark campus has four schools, a teaching hospital, a

Community Mental Health Center, and administrative offices.

UMDNJ also delivers a comprehensive range of other health services, including mental health, alcoholism treatment, family planning and maternal and infant care.

Like all CHEN institutions, it offers summer enrichment programs to increase the number of qualified minority applicants to medical and dental schools. Since 1972, more than 1,500 students have been enrolled in these programs. In addition, UMDNJ offers year-round pre-college programs in grades Seven through Twelve. In 1991, over 900 students participated in these programs.



**CHEN**  
**ON THE MOVE**

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The CHEN institutions recognized that the future of Newark's higher education community was linked to that of their surrounding neighborhoods. But, as late as 1976, a major study indicated little likelihood for success; the time was not right. By the early 1980s it was.

In the interval, and with little fanfare, a large number of garden apartments had emerged throughout the city. Most successful among the developers was the non-profit New Community Corporation, which built the first of 2,300 units of attractive, livable housing on the edge of University Heights; they were financed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency. Its founder, Monsignor William

Linder, also persuaded Pathmark, a major chain, to open a supermarket in the late 1980s—the first to be operated in Newark in decades—in University Heights.

St. Joseph's Plaza, also a New Community Corporation project, houses professional offices and a popular restaurant in what had been a Catholic church. Nearby are the modern low-rise apartments of Norfolk Square.

Neighborhoods of the Universities, a private corporation, developed the Lock Street Apartments in a building that housed the historic Newark Tannery, and built a number of new low-rise apartments. The project was based on concepts initially developed by faculty and students at NJIT's School of Architecture. Other major projects included Georgia

King Village and New Hope Village.

Even earlier, the Aspen Group had rehabilitated housing in the South and East wards. Downtown, near Rutgers, the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce had renovated a number of attractive brownstones into townhouse condominiums, James Street Commons.

By 1980, it was the University Heights area's turn. Much of the land was vacant and available. Nearly 49 percent of the 177 blocks had at least one vacant lot. Cleared and ready for sale, they were prime real estate sites, and most were owned by the City. As the area's population dropped from 50,000 to 23,000 during the 1970s, the number of housing units fell from 17,000 to 10,000. Further, vacancy and abandonment continued to rise in the early 1980s. In 1983, the area contained 300 of the city's



2,084 tax liens, offered for sale by the City, indicating continuing abandonment and deterioration.

However, a number of major institutions had already invested more than \$500 million in new construction and were planning more. In addition to the universities; they included hospitals, county government facilities, and several area-stabilizing major residential developments.

Many vacant sites had already been targeted for development, either by New Community or a university.

Three major health care facilities were also under consideration in the area: New Community Corporation's multi-story elderly care facility, UMDNJ-United Hospitals Medical Center proposal to share building space in the UMDNJ campus, and the UMDNJ Doctors Office Center.



### What CHEN Did

As development progressed in Newark's nearby central business district, it became clear to university officials that their neighborhood was ready for progress. So, in 1984, the urban affairs officials of the CHEN schools began work on a preliminary master plan for University Heights. The plan identified areas of potential development, both for the campuses and the surrounding community. Its primary purpose was to persuade others, outside of the universities, to invest in the area.

However, before CHEN had worked out the details or prepared the way for an announcement, the Newark Star-Ledger obtained a working copy and described it at length and in detail. Predictably, the Page One coverage prompted vigorous reactions from all sides. Many residents protested that gentrification would cost them

their homes. Developers — private, institutional and non-profit — denounced it as a land grab by the universities. Newark's political leaders, sensitive to their constituents, were drawn in. Their support was crucial; the City owned two thirds of the land in the area not owned by the universities.

CHEN moved quickly to organize a series of neighborhood meetings, designed to allay residents' fear of "urban removal" and suspicion that they might not have a voice in the planning. The first solid result was the creation of an ad hoc committee, whose members were selected at the meetings. Working independently, they developed their own program for University Heights, to be called the Community Plan.

At the same time, with Urban Initiative Funding from the New Jersey Department of Higher Education, CHEN hired a team of independent planning consultants: Gruzen/Berger, P.C., and the Atlantic Group — GB/AG — to



devise a coordinated plan for the growth and development of University Heights. This plan would include continued development of retail, housing and social service centers and the CHEN school facilities, while minimizing dislocation of area residents.

GB/AG was also instructed to involve and share its data with the Community Plan committee members and heighten coordination between local independent agencies and city government. High priority was given to balancing the interests of all parties concerned.

From an investor's point of view, GB/AG found the area's most important assets included available public land, existing infrastructure, public transportation services, and new construction sites. At the same time, they found serious

liabilities: poor quality and low capacity of public facilities, deteriorating buildings — and the chilling effect of Newark's continuing negative image.

Working with CHEN, GB/AG collected data — basic zoning, architectural and landscape conditions — and identified historic sites. Importantly, they reviewed regulations regarding Urban Enterprise Zones that were later extremely helpful to commercial development.

To analyze the area's demography they absorbed information from the Census, the Newark Planning Office, the New Jersey Office of Demographic and Economic Analysis, and numerous local groups. They surveyed local businesses and employees — their jobs, salary levels, places of residence, and means of transportation to and from work.

GB/AG worked to determine the kinds of services



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likely to locate in the area, as well as the types and sizes of retailers and service establishments. They examined the area's real estate market to identify potential and future space requirements of specific retail, real estate, residential and industrial development, and service sector businesses. A residential market study analyzed the area for viable types of housing, range of rents and prices — keeping in mind concerns about gentrification.

Their study also projected the area's residential populations to the year 2000 and reviewed University Heights' competitive ability to attract new business.

The final University Heights Development Program, incorporating the Community Plan, described the economic and demographic nature of the area and made a

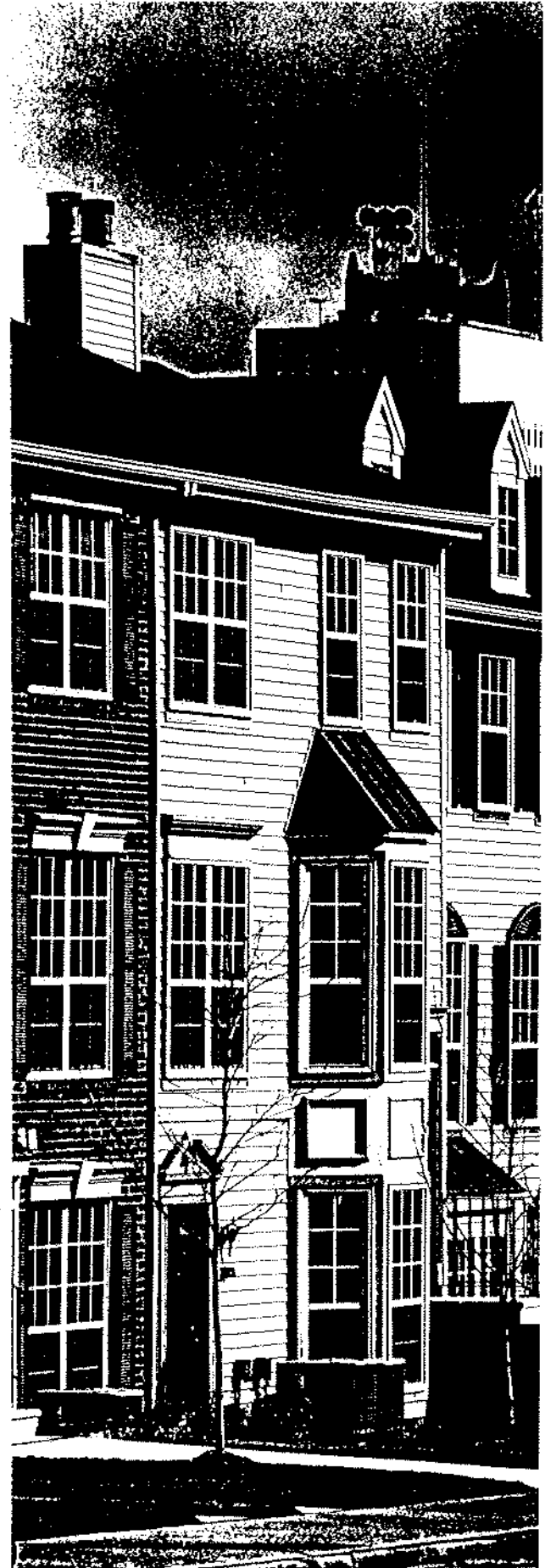
15-year forecast of the population, and the market for business, industrial and residential development in the area, offering specific recommendations for land use, density and acreages.

It reviewed transportation systems, recommending new routes, connections to existing highway systems, facility improvements, and parking. It suggested landscape designs — pedestrian walkways, public roads, treatment of development areas, and the architectural character of buildings.

It detailed needed utility services: sanitary sewers, water supply, and street lighting.

It contained a marketing plan to attract developers, businesses and new residents.

The collaborative University Heights Development Program had the full support of CHEN, and soon received the necessary, ultimate approval from the Newark City Council.



"Everyone benefited from the negotiating process," recalled NJIT's Saul Fenster. "In the beginning there was a misunderstanding about our intentions, but that was all it was."

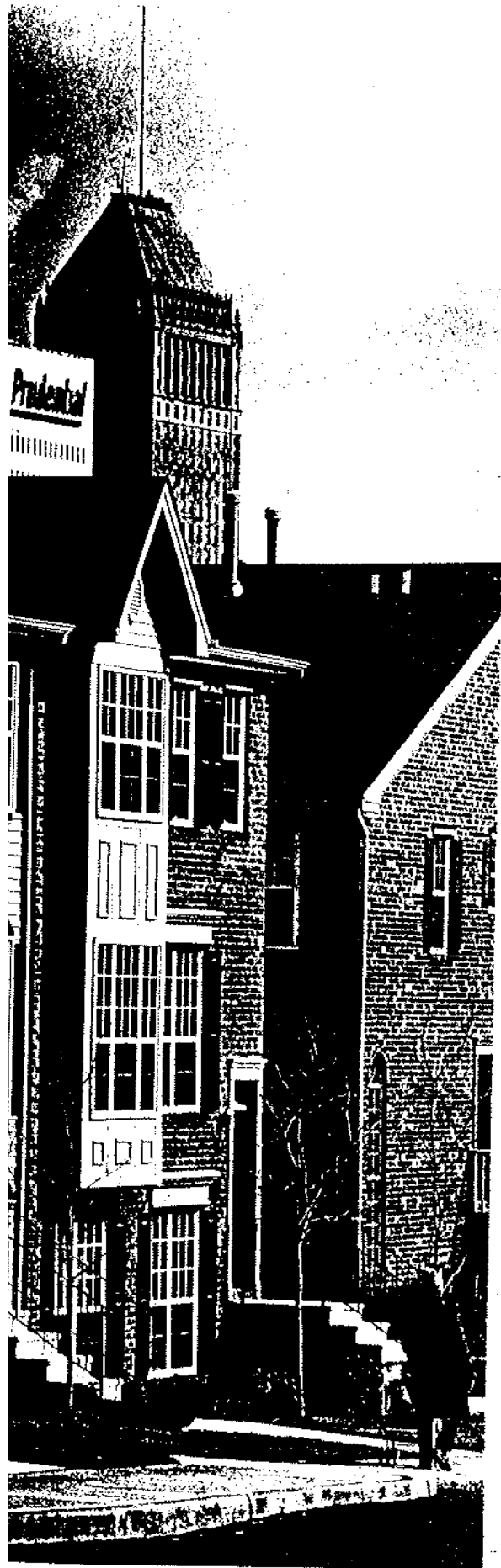
#### **Organizing for Success**

University Heights had achieved its critical mass of support; progress had begun. The next thing was to get more players involved — government, individual and institutional private investors, and the universities themselves.

The first job was to organize.

The University Heights Community Council was incorporated to coordinate activities. The Council then formed the University Heights Neighbor-

hood Development Corporation to initiate low income housing. UHNDC, which continues to meet monthly at UMDNJ, completed its first project, University Heights Housing, less than a mile from UMDNJ: a 70-unit block of colonial-style duplexes for low income housing priced between \$33,000 and \$58,000. Eligibility is based on income (between \$19,000 and \$28,000 depending on the size of the family). Its community-spirited residents soon formed a condominium association, and one of its first acts was to share the cost of a chain link fence to protect a common backyard as a playground for the children of the area.



## CHEN AS A CATALYST

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The first actual investors in University Heights were the institutions.

Rutgers erected classroom buildings, student life facilities and its first residence hall, the Malcolm Talbott Apartments, followed by a second dormitory.

NJIT opened several buildings, including the first two residence halls in the city of Newark, the Information Technologies Center, the Center for Environmental Engineering and Science, the Micro-electronics Center, and several offices and dormitories.

Essex County College opened its new athletic facility and a new parking deck for its commuting student body.

UMDNJ opened the New Jersey Cancer Center, a

kidney and gallstone center, expanded its Community Mental Health Center and built a large parking deck to accommodate its commuting employees.

However, CHEN members understood from the beginning that the measure of University Heights' success would be the development beyond the campuses. With its new dormitories, classrooms and parking decks, CHEN sought to create a new environment: an enhanced market for developers, builders, entrepreneurs, and investors. As UMDNJ's President Bergen put it, academia's role was "to encourage others to get grants and other sources of funds... to invest in the area."

It worked.

The first partner was the City of Newark itself — owner of much of the land in University Heights.

Without the City's support, development would have been impossible. Early on, Mayor Sharpe James, then a

City Council member, attacked the plan as directed at gentrification. But later, as Mayor, when he knew the interests of the residents had been properly addressed, he became one of University Heights' most vocal supporters. Calling the housing shortage the city's principal problem, he pledged his administration's support for University Heights, and made hundreds of City-owned lots available for development.

Crucial contributions to the success of the development also came from the State of New Jersey. The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency set aside \$3.7 million in mortgage funds for the buyers of the 70 University Heights condominiums.

Help also came from the federal government. The United States Postal Service announced plans to put up a new Post Office at the edge of University Heights. And business development was also aided by federal banking regulations, particularly Community Reinvestment requirements.

The federal government also gave an important boost to Newark's new supermarket, as well as its 200 permanent employees and its sponsor, New Community Corporation. Thanks to the efforts of CHEN, the area received designation as an Urban Enterprise Zone. One of the marketing benefits is that all businesses in the area are eligible to charge half the normal sales tax.

### **The Newest Investors**

Newark's first upscale development in decades, several blocks of tastefully designed townhouses with six-figure prices, rose in University Heights during 1986. Ironically, they are located off Springfield Avenue — the epicenter of Newark's 1967 riots. The first 48 condominium units were erected by Vogue Housing, with assistance and encouragement from the Newark Collaboration Group, working closely with CHEN representatives.

Adjoining this development, K. Hovnanian broke ground in December 1987 for Society Hill at University Heights. The first 168 condominium townhouses were located on six acres; another 562 were later put on 17 adjoining acres. The final 335 units are slated for a 21-acre tract that will also house a police annex and 115,000 square feet of commercial and retail space, including a food market and cleaners.

A few blocks away, American Custom Homes created the first of a projected 125 units. Modular construction and on-site assembly helped minimize costs.

However, the investors who had the most to risk — and to gain — were hundreds of individuals, residents and business people, who literally bought in to the University Heights challenge. They are the ones who rehabilitated their homes and businesses, or opened new enterprises. Many new and old businesses already bear the name University Heights.

THE BENEFITS

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Time is proving that the effort to develop University Heights has benefited not only the universities and residents of the area, but the city of Newark.

The most obvious benefit of University Heights is the physical improvement; not only the new buildings but the old ones turned to new uses in innovative ways.

More subtly, a new sense of optimism and community spirit is evident in the area, traceable to the new housing and economic development, and to the way that the University Heights Plan brought the area's residents into the process.

For the Universities

Newark's college community, the catalyst for the entire devel-

opment program is a major beneficiary of University Heights' success.

As the neighborhood stabilizes and continues to grow, the area is attracting retail stores and services, amenities the universities need as they become 24-hour institutions.

Further, in the coming years, the modern campuses, surrounded by attractive neighborhoods, can be expected to enhance the schools' ability to attract top faculty and students, building the schools' reputations and attracting grants and contracts that create new economic opportunities.



A successful University Heights also strengthens the universities' case for continued expansion and upgrading of facilities to meet the educational needs of the community and the state.

#### **For the Community**

When University Heights was first announced, residents were angry because they were afraid they might be denied a role in shaping and participating in the change. However, CHEN's involvement with the area's residents in the process helped to allay the fear.

Along the way, economic benefits accrued to residents of the area. The new development brought income and services to Newark households.

With hundreds of units of affordable low- and moderate-income housing either completed or on drawing boards, the process has also captured the imaginations of builders for the upscale market, creating the first major movement of higher-income residents to Newark in more than a generation.

#### **For the City of Newark**

The success of University Heights further strengthens Newark's assertion that it is a "renaissance city." In 1991, when America's mayors chose Newark as one of the nation's most livable cities, it was clear that the contributions of University Heights were critical.



**IN THE  
FUTURE FOR  
UNIVERSITY  
HEIGHTS**

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Two key elements are yet to come in the development of University Heights: Newark's Science Park, and the Downtown Connector with nearby Interstate 280 that will speed automotive access to the area.

**Science Park**

Industries based on new technologies are a promising pathway for economic growth. These fields present two basic demands: access to research facilities and trained employees. CHEN's four closely placed institutions offer a unique resource. Recognizing this,

CHEN is working to develop Science Park.

NJIT, Rutgers and UMDNJ, with their faculties, graduate students and lab facilities, are developing research and producing technologically trained college graduates. ECC's training facilities are to be the launching pad for job-ready technicians.

The City of Newark is an active Science Park planning partner — selling land, improving the infrastructure and changing streets to accommodate the Park's design. CHEN will work with the Mayor's Office to provide training, both general and job-specific, for local residents. The neighborhood will also be represented on the management board, and CHEN has hired a planning consultant to address community needs.

In the proposal stage is a high school to be built in the Science Park area and closely linked with the colleges. It would have an innovative curriculum with a strong focus on science and mathematics and serve the needs of residents of the whole metropolitan area.

The new businesses that will come to Science Park are expected to create 4,000 permanent jobs for city residents — 600 of them from the immediate neighborhood. These new businesses are expected to increase the City's property tax revenues from the area by \$4 million, a more than

twenty-fold increase over a fifteen year period.

Because housing is a factor in attracting employees, many new rental units for low and moderate income families will be available to Science Park families. A day care center will also serve children of the entire area.

To enhance Science Park's attractiveness, its design features open spaces: three city blocks of park land, complete with playgrounds, and extensive planting of trees, shrubbery and grass.

#### **Downtown Connectors**

Another important feature of University Heights will be a downtown connector, easing the access to the area from nearby Interstate 280. Design-

ing the connector represents a challenge.

All parties — the community, the City and the universities — recognize the importance of safe and efficient access. The challenge is to design it without damaging the area.

A limited access highway might be the most efficient route to the downtown area, but it would require demolishing some important university and privately owned buildings.

A modification, the "boulevard" concept, is a better solution, calling for widened streets that are less likely to divide the community and would serve not only the central business district but University Heights as well.

Plans are still being worked out.



MEETING  
THE URBAN  
CHALLENGE

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CHEN launched University Heights with great hopes for the communities of Newark:

- ...neighborhoods could be preserved*
- ...new, affordable housing could rise on abandoned, city-owned land*
- ...the area's commerce could come to life, with opportunities for minority-owned businesses and job opportunities for area residents*
- ...the colleges could help improve Newark's schools.*

These goals are being addressed, with a good start.

As the CHEN leaders agree: "Universities in an urban setting have a responsibility to their environments and the people in their neighborhoods. We are fully conscious of that responsibility."

November 1992