



# THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

July 16, 2024

## 2024-2025 Board Members

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Stuart Hair

Jesse Hite

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Programs Luther Moore



## *Keith Stanley, President & CEO, University City Partners*

by **Elly Clary**

A crash course on University City and the promotional organization for the 10-square-mile urban area around UNC Charlotte is what Keith Stanley delivered.

Stanley is president and CEO of University City Partners. He moved to Charlotte for that position in 2023, after starring in community development endeavors in Milwaukee.

"I came to Charlotte and I'm burning up," he chuckled in his loosened tie and sports jacket. (Outside temperature was mid-90s.) "I'm getting adjusted, embracing the golf polo and chino pants."

University City Partners (UCP), Stanley explained, is three organizations in one:

- A municipal service district that promotes arts and culture, connectivity and mobility, economic development, and marketing communications. It advocates for urban-scale design, with emphasis on affordable housing.
- The University City Foundation, which supports non-profit entities both inside and outside the district.
- Management for University Research Park (URP), which includes more than 10 million square feet of office space in 2,220 acres. At least 20 Fortune 1000 companies operate there.

University City is growing about 6.6 percent a year, Stanley said. A slide showed the average age of a University City resident is 30. The area's boundaries contain 159 apartment buildings, 25 shopping centers, 19 houses of worship, 12 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and nine business parks.

Cultural events promote diversity and a creative culture, Stanley said, and attract between 80,000 and 100,000 visitors annually. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library is building a \$40 million facility near University City's signature lake.

Importantly, light rail connects University City to Uptown, he said, and UCP emphasizes mobility and connectivity inside the district. Duke Energy is installing an eight-mile lighting project along a dark stretch of major artery, W.T. Harris Boulevard. Progress continues toward creation of a bridge across Interstate 85 to connect UNC Charlotte with University Research Park.

UCP is revisioning University Research Park, Stanley said, focusing on research and development, innovation, and prototype manufacturing. Synergy with UNC Charlotte is important since the school will soon attain R-1 research status, a category that includes only 4 percent of US colleges and universities. He called this another enticement for business recruitment.

Financial services firm Vanguard has purchased the vacant Centene office campus in URP and is projected to house 2,400 employees in a 700,000-square-foot building. This will dramatically reduce the University City office vacancy rate.

Still, Stanley said, UCP values the hundreds of small businesses within University City. It helps promote them and facilitates their access to capital.

UCP partners with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police, he said, because "safety is key to growth."

He's excited about University City's future, Stanley said, with continued revisioning of URP, adding public/private partnerships and further building the brand.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/985214312>

The program introduction begins at approximately 21 minutes.