

Conference teaches tips for small-scale development

By Shelby Fiegel

The UCA Small Developer Conference, held May 31 in Conway, provided participants with a “big-picture view” of small-scale real estate development.

“We all need places to: earn a living, learn a skill, share a meal, be a kid, and live your life,” said Matthew Petty, principal at the Infill Group and a Fayetteville city council member.

Petty and Allison Thurmond Quinlan, principal of Flintlock Architecture and Landscape, led the conference. Both are faculty members of the Incremental Development Alliance.

Small-scale development is important to Arkansas communities because it promotes infill development, eliminating sprawl that puts a strain on city services. When communities invest in creating a strong small development ecosystem they create a more resilient tax base that includes more tax revenue, wealth retention, and adaptable neighborhoods.



Allison Thurmond Quinlan works with participants at the recent UCA Small Developer Conference

Courtney Dunn, who is executive assistant and website administrator for the city of Maumelle, had some strong takeaways from the conference.

“It was helpful to hear the obstacles that developers can face when interacting with city government,” she said. “I learned that great things can happen when working together with a shared love of a community.”

Development needs are different in every community; in some areas there is a great need for infill projects on empty lots, in others there are homes that hold potential but need rehab, and in many areas affordable housing is desperately needed. Across our state there is a need for small developers who love their community and are willing to take on some risk because they realize that in most cases no one from the outside is going to come and fill in gaps in their neighborhoods.

There are many factors that go into creating a successful environment for small-scale development and becoming a small-scale developer, but Petty and Quinlan shared a few tips for people interested in pursuing small development:

- Understand key truths of small-scale development. Remember: Small scale equals small risk. Focus on small projects to reduce your risk. Plan for repeatability and create a development plan that can be used for several projects. To successfully revitalize our cities, we need to take development step by step and grow slow and steady. Most importantly, don’t fall in love with projects.
- Do your due diligence. Do your homework and don’t leave anything to luck. Even though it may be difficult, always be ready to walk away. Survey the property you are considering and inspect major systems. Sometimes estimates are wrong. Know how wrong.
- Leverage your strengths. You may lack certain skills and knowledge, but don’t try to learn everything all at once. To ease the learning curve, start out by taking on minimum viable projects. Also, be willing to share the strengths you do have, and reach out for help from others when you need it.

“Arkansas cities need more small-scale development because that’s how the best parts of all our cities will be built,” Petty said. “It brings in more tax revenue and the infrastructure costs less to maintain for the same amount of land. Our oldest neighborhoods, squares, and Main Streets were built one parcel at a time by many individuals. If we can change our laws to lower barriers to small-scale development, all of our cities will get stronger.”



Smaller scale means smaller risk, Matthew Petty, a Fayetteville City Council member and principal of the Infill Group, told conference goers.

Every city wants to create unique places their citizens are proud of and their visitors want to experience. Cities can strategically use small-scale development to connect people to the places they want to be. When this happens, cities see increased economic vitality. Quality of place is becoming more important when determining the success of our cities and towns, and small-scale development is a significant part of creating that place and improving our quality of life.



Shelby Fiegel is the assistant director of the Center for Community and Economic Development at the University of Central Arkansas. Contact her at sfiegel@uca.edu or (501) 450-5269.

GROWTH

“The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving.”
— Goethe

110 South 7th Street Van Buren, AR 72956 479.474.1227	211 Natural Resources Dr. Little Rock, AR 72205 501.374.4846
438 East Millsap Rd., Ste.107 Fayetteville, AR 72703 479.455.2206	403 Garrison Ave., Ste.101 Fort Smith, AR 72901 479.242.4685

www.hawkins-weir.com

HW HAWKINS WEIR
ENGINEERS, INC.

IT in a Box
A complete IT solution for city governments.

Cybersecurity and Computer Maintenance
24x7 Helpdesk
Data Backup and Disaster Recovery
Records / Document Management and Email
Policy & Compliance

Who guarantees IT services based on your expectations?

WE DO!

Website
Video Archiving
Vendor Management and Procurement

Guaranteed. If we don't meet your expectations, then cancel the service!

Dave Mims 770.670.6940 x110 davemims@sophicity.com www.sophicity.com	Chris Hartley 501.978.6106 chartley@arml.org www.arml.org
--	---

Powered by **Sophicity**