

## UAHuntsville Completes Sanderson Subdivision Purchase

The Sanderson Subdivision was originally built in the mid-1950s and consists of 35 lots on Erskine Street, Tatom Street, and Austin Avenue. At the time of its original platting, the Sanderson Subdivision was nowhere near the then fledgling University, which was holding classes in Huntsville public schools. When UAHuntsville's first building, Morton Hall, was opened in 1961, the Sanderson Subdivision was considered little more than a close neighbor of the University. However, following Dr. Wehrner von Braun's famous address to the Alabama Legislature in 1961 and the opening of the University's second building, the Research Institute, in 1962, it began to be apparent that the Sanderson Subdivision might stand in the path of the continuing development of the Huntsville campus. So, it came as no great surprise when UAHuntsville's first President, Dr. Ben Graves, authorized the purchase of the first house in the Sanderson Subdivision. That purchase was finalized on April 25, 1974.

Although the University has the power of eminent domain, it elected not to use that power for economic and financial reasons, and also because it wanted to be a good neighbor to the Sanderson residents. Past Presidents Dr. John Wright and Dr. Frank Franz continued the same policy of buying houses in the Sanderson Subdivision when they could be acquired from the owners on the open market at a reasonable price. UAHuntsville has followed this practice for over thirty years.

Current President Dr. David Williams has now completed the long-standing program of acquiring the houses in the Sanderson Subdivision. All 35 of the houses are now owned by the University. The last few remaining residents are expected to vacate the Sanderson Subdivision this month.

As everyone familiar with the University campus knows, the existing houses are being moved and sold. Those houses that cannot be moved will probably be demolished. The University is in the process of vacating the subdivision restrictions and vacating the subdivision plat from the records of the Probate Judge of Madison County. Once the subdivision plat has been vacated, then the University will consider petitioning the City of Huntsville to vacate some or all the streets that run through the former Sanderson Subdivision.

Plans for use of the space formerly occupied by the Sanderson Subdivision are already under discussion and consideration. One possible use is the erection of a dormitory near the new Intermodal Center, probably financed by a bond issue. At a time when "change" seems to be the dominant theme in politics and academia, the University's acquisition of the Sanderson Subdivision is an example of the benefits of good policy, consistently followed and practiced over many years.