

**Community, creativity, and innovation:  
The University District and the University of Washington**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the great potential of Seattle’s next-generation University District and the commitment of the University of Washington to help build a dynamic, sustainable community of discovery and innovation. In summary:

- Urban neighborhoods have become the hubs of innovation and jobs worldwide, and universities play critical roles as economic and cultural anchors in these places. In turn, universities themselves benefit from the physical proximity of a vibrant community. In today’s global knowledge economy, university-centered neighborhoods are positioned to have an enormous economic and cultural impact.
- Recent developments in and around the U District present tremendous opportunities, and the time to act is now. These include:
  - the City of Seattle’s designation of the area as an “urban center village” with more dense and diverse jobs and housing,
  - the growth of nearby South Lake Union as a complementary technology and research hub,
  - the construction of new affordable housing, dormitories and academic facilities, and
  - the future opening of two light rail stations.
- The experiences of other universities and cities across the nation highlight the great opportunities of university-community development – as well as the challenges other regions face that we in Seattle do not. The experiences of other places show us the critical importance of meaningful, long-range partnerships between university and community with the power to positively transform what happens both off and on campus.
- Broader global economic conditions and the lessons from other places point to an extraordinary set of regional advantages for the U District, Seattle, and the State: a growing technology economy; an educated workforce; a strong desire on the part of workers and firms for vibrant, interesting, sustainable communities. Thoughtful planning can capitalize on these assets.
- Three things drive UW’s commitment to building a better U District:
  - Continuous, meaningful **collaboration** with the City and community partners;
  - **Learning** from the experience of the most dynamic neighborhoods around the region, the nation, and the globe; and
  - Fostering growth that is **complementary** to other parts of the city and region, adding to overall economic and cultural dynamism of the State.

## **Community, creativity, and innovation: The University District and the University of Washington**

What's next for Seattle's University District? What is the University of Washington's role in positive and inclusive neighborhood change? What can we learn from elsewhere, and how can we leverage our unique regional strengths? This document takes on these questions and proposes some guiding principles for building a dynamic, sustainable community of discovery and innovation.

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### **The Context: Innovation and jobs grow in great places – and universities are often at the center of them.**

We live in a world where talented people and good ideas create jobs and opportunity. In an era when more than half the world's population lives in cities, vibrant and diverse urban neighborhoods are the places where these new ideas come from, and where entrepreneurs and skilled employees are choosing to live and work. The suburban office-park model is on the wane. The next-generation economy is taking root in places that are both lively and livable, with a robust mix of large and small businesses, research institutions, good transit connections, and gathering places where people can learn, collaborate, and create.

Universities are critical anchors for many of these communities – from San Francisco to Boston, Barcelona to Tel Aviv, Munich to Melbourne, Sao Paulo to Shanghai. Through commercialization of research, creation of jobs, and education of students, universities drive economic dynamism and regional competitiveness. The extensive research on innovation economies and high-tech clusters points again and again to the critical role that universities play not only in seeding research, but in driving positive urban change in the cities in which they are located. At the same time, universities have gained strength when they integrate the talents and resources of people, firms, and institutions in the community to find innovative ways to teach, to perform research, and to create professional opportunities for their students.

This has been a process underway over many decades, as old manufacturing industries shrank and globalized, and skills-driven service industries expanded to take their place. Starting in the 1950s, as more Americans attended college and the nation's scientific research capacity expanded, universities began to take a more significant role in the economic and political life of the nation – and especially in its cities.

Over one-third of the nation's most research-intensive institutions are in central-city neighborhoods of the 50 largest metropolitan areas; with large capital investments in their campuses, they remained rooted in place even during an era of "urban crisis" when many other employers and residents left for the suburbs. Across the U.S., universities became cities' largest employers, major drivers of consumer spending, and primary sites for the production of new ideas and educated human capital. The teaching hospitals and medical centers associated with many of these large urban research universities intensified their

economic impact. By the year 2000, “eds and meds” employed 550,000 people in the nation’s twenty largest cities – nearly 35 percent of all employed by each region’s ten largest employers.

These jobs and community outreach activities concentrate in the neighborhoods around university campuses, presenting extraordinary prospects for university-driven economic development. They also offer unique opportunities to build sustainable and creative communities that bring the best of the university out into the community, and that bring the best of the community into the university. Neighborhoods that are anchored by universities and colleges are denser, transit-heavy, and have vibrant retail corridors and street life. Teeming with educated young people and having a round-the-clock urban energy, such neighborhoods have distinctive place-based assets that have become particularly valuable in the global knowledge economy.

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**The Opportunity: Change is coming to the U District. Let’s plan for it.**

Seattle’s University District already benefits from the economic impact of university research and teaching. University and related activities occupy 4 million square feet of the neighborhood’s existing 12 million square feet of real estate. Home as well to thousands of students and to a diverse retail mix, the U District is a lively, transit-oriented community that holds a distinctive niche in Seattle’s economic landscape.

Yet the U District has long struggled to be a neighborhood that people from a range of incomes and life stages might call home. The limited commercial real estate options have kept out the job-creating, research-intensive firms that work closely with UW faculty and students. An uneven and sometimes incoherent social and physical infrastructure – from youth programs to green spaces – has not been adequate to serve the many populations who live, work, and study here. While the UW’s presence is felt throughout the area, walls along and overpasses across 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue create a stark physical dividing line between city and campus.

A number of game-changing developments in recent years, however, are making the U District a different place – and present a remarkable opportunity to leverage the opportunities of a globalized economy and an evolving university. The City of Seattle recognized the U District’s untapped potential for job creation and new housing back in 1998, designating the neighborhood an Urban Center Village and establishing a plan to make the area a significant, transit-oriented jobs and housing center. And over the same period, the colleges and schools of the UW have been planning strategic development of university-owned land that will not only meet the need for cutting-edge teaching and research facilities, but support increasing engagement of academic programs with local businesses, non-profits, and other research institutions. Perhaps the most significant game-changer of all is the scheduled opening in 2021 of the Brooklyn Station of the Sound Transit’s North Link light rail system. This will be an extraordinary spur for new jobs, housing, and private investment.

Transformation already is underway. When the UW took occupancy of the UW Tower in 2008, it brought thousands of university employees west of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and into the neighborhood. The opening of new student residences will add over 2000 more UW undergraduates and graduates into the neighborhood by 2015. Coming development of UW-owned land south of Campus Parkway will move the academic axis westward, creating a precinct whose collaborative research and education spaces integrate what students learn in the classroom with the work of innovative startups. The Center for Commercialization is providing seed money and space to help turn researchers into U District-based entrepreneurs.

Such changes not only bring creative energy and jobs to the area, they are enhancing its livability and accessibility to a wider range of people. The College of Arts and Sciences is leveraging the conversion of the Neptune Theatre to a live performance space to encourage growth of an arts corridor extending westward from the galleries and performance halls on the UW campus, making the U District a unique and affordable regional arts and entertainment destination. A new park is being built on university property along the north edge of Lake Union. More construction of middle-income housing is further diversifying the residential population and invigorating the retail environment.

This is an extraordinary opportunity to knit together campus and city and create a next-generation U District that follows through on the City's University Center Urban Community Plan. Imagine coming off the north end of the University Bridge onto a lively avenue lined with high-tech and biotech startups. Imagine green spaces and parks laced throughout the U District, with better bike, pedestrian, and transit access. Imagine The Ave that maintains its rich history and its diverse retail mix, while adding new local businesses, spaces for art and artists, and restaurants and entertainment that appeal to students, alumni, and visitors of all ages and incomes. Imagine a neighborhood of many different kinds of housing, filled with families and professionals as well as students of all ages and stages. Imagine a UW campus where local employers, entrepreneurs, and nonprofits become integrated into research and student learning, from the undergraduate project to the PhD. Imagine a U District that reclaims and retains the best of its past, while creating a place that serves present and future students, residents, workers, and entrepreneurs.

While the UW already owns the land it needs to accommodate future academic buildings, it is committed to building a stronger and healthier U District for a number of reasons. For one, more varied housing options and amenities are critical to attract and retain the talented people who study and work at this university. Giving faculty and staff members an opportunity to live near their work is economically smart and environmentally sustainable. A second reason is the great, untapped potential for the U District to be a regional job center that complements other research- and tech-driven neighborhoods like South Lake Union. Third, engagement in neighborhood revitalization is consistent with the UW's commitment of service to this State and its people. Our colleges and schools engage in a range of community outreach activities already, from community health centers to business incubation programs. A changing U District creates an opportunity to

focus some of these resources in ways that make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Providing a robust range of neighborhood services for a range of people will leverage existing economic spillovers to create positive, inclusive place-based change.

A shared community vision – reflecting the goals of a range of stakeholders – can turn the existing neighborhood plan into action. Thoughtful partnership and collaboration will help this neighborhood become a place that is an educational center and a job center, an innovation district and a cultural destination, and a critical contributor to the economic competitiveness of greater Seattle and the State of Washington.

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### **The Comparisons: What can we learn from other university-community collaborations?**

The experience of other places can help us better understand what might come next in the U District. Looking briefly how these initiatives work now, and how town-gown relations evolved over time, provides some perspective on the importance of meaningful collaboration in university-community development, as well as the many different scales at which this collaboration happens.

- *Context – three phases of university-community development*

University-driven neighborhood development has evolved in three distinct stages in the modern United States. The **first** involved campus growth without much community consultation. The 1950s and 1960s were a period of extraordinary growth in higher education, which prompted a massive campus building boom as institutions raced to erect the modern classrooms, labs, and dormitories required to accommodate new research activities and large student populations. At the same time, the areas around many big-city campuses were undergoing dramatic socioeconomic change. In cities across the country, universities partnered with local government to drive wholesale redevelopment of older residential and commercial areas and build new academic buildings, faculty and student housing, or university-affiliated industrial zones.

Little to no community consultation accompanied campus expansion during this early period. Universities and local governments sometimes established community organizations to facilitate neighborhood improvements, but in the urban renewal era the university’s “community” tended to be defined rather narrowly, restricted to university-affiliated people living and working in the neighborhood. As the bulldozers rolled in, poor and minority residents became displaced and disempowered, and the racial divide in many university neighborhoods grew even deeper.

The backlash against this approach led to a **second** distinct phase in university-driven neighborhood change, in which universities turned more of their resources toward ameliorating the social problems in the neighborhoods around them. By the late 1960s, the failures of urban renewal and the civil rights revolution had led to fierce community resistance to comprehensive redevelopment plans. At the same time, profound

transformations were underway on university campuses in the wake of the student protests of the Vietnam era.

As university curricula expanded to incorporate the study of minority groups and university research paid fresh attention to urban economic crises, new community outreach and service learning programs sought to bridge the divide between campus and community. Large-scale campus expansions continued in the 1970s and 1980s, but smaller-scale teaching and research programs sought to create more inclusive community partnerships and give university neighbors a stronger voice. Students and faculty were highly visible actors in these outreach activities, often continuing to place pressure on university administrators and local officials to forge more meaningful connections between campus and community.

In the last twenty years, university-community engagement has entered a **third** phase as the result of the growth of the global knowledge economy and the economic comeback of many large American cities. Both shifts placed urban universities in a position to make a tremendous impact on regional economies. In the era of urban crisis and mass suburbanization, urban universities were economically important to cities simply because there were among the few large employers left behind, and because of the associated retail and commercial activity they could generate in their surrounding neighborhoods.

Since about 1990, new infrastructure, falling crime rates, and increased demand for denser, walkable neighborhood environments and the amenities of city living have fueled a revival of urban places across the United States. College-educated middle class workers are choosing cities over suburbs for the first time in decades, and high-paying, high-skill jobs are coming with them. The flip side of this urban renaissance is that high housing prices have made some of the most dynamic and desirable urban destinations unaffordable to the average working family. Cities are booming, but some neighborhoods – including some university neighborhoods – are in danger of becoming playgrounds for only a privileged few.

Economic change has opened up new opportunities for university-driven development, and a few places around the country are beginning to tap into them. Campus expansion and community outreach continue, but they are occurring in a broader context of leveraging university resources – and educated human capital – to both fuel knowledge-economy growth and create more livable urban places. (In the Appendix, we take a closer look at three universities – the University of Pennsylvania, the Ohio State University, and MIT – whose stories reveal the opportunities and challenges presented by this current phase of university-driven development.)

- *Contrasts – the challenges others face that we do not*

One critical takeaway from these cases is that many university communities continue to face daunting challenges that the U District and the UW simply do not. In other large cities, university-driven development occurs in response to **neighborhood crisis so intense that it threatens university viability**. In cities like Philadelphia and Columbus,

university neighborhoods continue to struggle with high rates of poverty, crime, and deteriorated infrastructure; a safer neighborhood is essential to recruiting and retaining students and faculty. Even in cities like Boston and Cambridge, where the extraordinary resources of research powerhouses like MIT and Harvard easily attract high-tech economic development, university-driven development requires a huge outlay of resources to overcome the legacy of decades of urban disinvestment. This is far from being the case here; although the U District has its troubles, it is a fundamentally healthy place.

Another motivation for university-driven development is **a need for space**. Place-bound urban universities with limited room to grow have embarked on neighborhood redevelopment in order to expand their campus footprint. Once again, the U District is different. The UW already owns the land it needs to accommodate its teaching and research activities in the near future; we already are in the process of developing much of this property. The UW's stake in the U District is in making the neighborhood a more accessible, vibrant, and sustainable community that will both be a welcoming home for students, faculty, and staff – and be a generator of new jobs and retail activities that help drive a larger regional economy. Development will involve many property owners and a range of market-driven strategies.

A third rationale for university-driven neighborhood change is simple economic development – a desire to **build research-driven industry and knowledge-economy job base**. This drive has propelled university-community initiatives for over half a century, in both large cities and small university towns. Here, again, we have a set of regional advantages that set the U District and the UW apart from other cases. Small cities like Charlottesville, VA or Ann Arbor, MI, for example, have extraordinary university resources but lack the large regional economy and big-city amenities to fully leverage the economic potential of university research. Larger cities without robust tech-driven economies also have a harder time translating university-based research and teaching into significant knowledge-economy job growth. The U District, in contrast, is located in the heart of one of the nation's top technology economies. The UW already plays an integral role throughout this region's knowledge economy, seeding new companies, new innovations, and training talent in high technology and the health sciences. We have the economic capacity here. A place-based revitalization effort can harness this energy and spur even more job creation.

- *Connections – the lessons we can take from other places*

Even though circumstances in other places are quite different, there are some overarching themes that emerge. One thing that becomes clear is that university revitalization efforts may have been triggered by crisis – severe neighborhood deterioration, a particularly horrific crime – but that sustained success comes when efforts become more than simply defensive anti-crime or anti-bligh initiatives, but are **guided by a bold vision of what the next-generation neighborhood might become**. They are not about returning a neighborhood to past glory, but thinking about its future potential.

Another common thread is that successful efforts derive from **meaningful, sustained engagement** between university and community. In such partnerships, “community” is defined inclusively and expansively, bringing together all types of residents as well as property owners, business leaders, and local elected representatives. They create institutional channels for a range of stakeholders to have a continued voice in the process. Once again, history’s lessons are in play. The universities with the most thoughtful, deliberate community planning processes are frequently those whose past actions caused great community controversy.

At the same time, successful initiatives of this sort are ones where **the university and its leadership take a leading, highly engaged role** in neighborhood change. These universities are also often investing significant resources of their own in neighborhood infrastructure. Successful university-community partnerships elsewhere play out on a number of scales, from small-scale service learning activities to large-scale development of new buildings and infrastructure. They involve students, faculty, staff, and administrators. While having multiple moving parts, however, they operate within a broader, unified institutional commitment to community engagement. A commitment to neighborhood partnership comes from the top, with university presidents, provosts, and deans prioritizing resources and paying close attention to what happens locally.

Place-based investments also occur with an understanding of **how the neighborhood connects to the broader regional economy**, not only in terms of transit-oriented development but also in the way the area functions as one of many interconnected and complementary hubs of jobs and culture. In many of these cases, university-driven development takes a neighborhood that had been falling off the economic radar screen – because of poverty, disinvestment, and lack of an existing job base – and turned it into a viable regional job center.

They **build on core competencies** of the universities and the neighborhoods. These are not about building “another Silicon Valley” or even “another Harvard Square” but are focused on the assets that make their own universities strong and make their own neighborhoods great. They build on what’s there, and make it better.

The stories of these places remind us that positive, inclusive neighborhood **change takes time**. Deliberate speed and careful planning means that transformation can take years, decades, and generations – and this is a good thing. No one wants to return to the era of wholesale redevelopment.

University-community partnerships are about **making a neighborhood not just one thing, but many things**. As MIT discovered with Kendall Square, an area with nothing but industrial buildings lacks the vitality and warmth a university neighborhood needs. Successful plans incorporate housing, retail, and industrial development with academic functions. They are coupled with research and teaching programs that reach out into the community and that bring community knowledge back to the university. They are walkable, dense, and transit-oriented.

Last, we can see from examples past and present that collaborations are **not just about buildings, but people**. They are about faculty and staff working with communities to apply expertise, industry-academic collaboration, and service learning programs that let the university's resources spill out beyond campus walls. They are about the students who make these neighborhoods the most vital, vibrant, and forward-thinking places in any given city. And they are about the people beyond the university who come to these neighborhoods to work, to live, and to play.

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**Our Regional Advantage: Let's capitalize on greater Seattle's innovation DNA and an engaged and empowered university.**

When it comes to having the necessary ingredients for a competitive regional economy, the Seattle region is particularly fortunate. It is home to game-changing companies, large and small. It draws creative, high-skilled workers from all over the world. It has an extraordinary array of research institutions and philanthropic organizations. It is filled with lively neighborhoods and livable communities, amid an incomparable natural setting. The people here value sustainable, healthy places and have created a strong demand for transit-oriented environments anchored by a diverse mix of activities.

This region also has a great research university in its urban heart. The economic impact of the UW is tremendous: \$9.1 billion annually, responsible for 70,000 jobs and 7,600 new jobs. In the City of Seattle alone, 6% of the job base is higher education-related. Twelve thousand students graduate annually from the UW, and 74% of alumni stay in the state. Many stay in Seattle itself, particularly in the first years after graduation.

Greater Seattle and its University District are far different from Philadelphia, Columbus, and Cambridge. While the U District struggles with crime and deteriorated infrastructure, the challenges it faces are nowhere near the magnitude of the university neighborhoods in those other cities. The existing built environment of the U District has a diversity, energy, and job base that exceeds that of the other cases examined here. If university-community engagement emerged initially as a response to economic and social crises in other places, it emerges in response to great opportunity in Seattle's U District.

The evolving academic mission of the UW provides another set of advantages when it comes to university-driven neighborhood development. Our colleges and schools are teaching and conducting research in ways that already are breaking down old walls between university and community. Hands-on experience working for local companies is an integral component of UW's engineering curriculum. Community health centers sponsored by the health sciences disciplines bring UW student and faculty resources to underserved populations across this region and state. Students and faculty from the College of Built Environments engage with local leaders and citizens on a wide range of urban planning and design projects, large and small. Undergraduate research programs across the UW harness student ingenuity to address real-world problems – and give students skills for life after graduation. The resources of the community are already

flowing into the UW campus. Having a vibrant regional jobs and arts center next door will enlarge and enhance these opportunities.

The broad, international community of UW alumni and supporters is another asset for the next-generation U District. Employers from across the region, the nation, and the globe who already engage with UW faculty and students form a large and untapped market for future commercial and industrial development in the area – bringing new jobs at all skill and education levels. Alumni and supporters who come to campus for sports and cultural events provide a huge customer base for future retail and entertainment in the neighborhood. Faculty and staff who search in vain for affordable family housing within walking distance of campus create demand for new residential development. Most significantly of all, the students whose energy and creativity fuel this campus will help turn the U District into a hive of innovation and creativity.

The unique set of institutional assets here, and the existing mix of retail, housing, and jobs, provide a foundation for the U District to become a regional job center that is distinctly different from – and highly complementary to – other job centers in the city and region. The future U District will be very different from South Lake Union, but it can balance and complement that neighborhood’s strengths. Both places will share a transit orientation, a knowledge-economy job base, and a strong academic presence. But development will occur on multiple scales in the U District, building on an already dense and diverse urban texture.

If South Lake Union is home to Amazon, the Gates Foundation, and other large employers, the U District can be an environment for smaller startups, business incubators, or smaller research facilities of large regional institutions and employers. It can reflect the great diversity of disciplines and people found on the campus next door, being both an innovation district and an arts corridor, a housing center and a jobs center.

Simply put, the next-generation U District has the potential to become a national and international model for what a university neighborhood can and should be in the twenty-first century.

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**The Principles of Engagement: Success will require meaningful collaboration, bold ideas, and a broad array of community stakeholders.**

This year, the UW and the City of Seattle began to work in close collaboration to start a community conversation about what might happen next in the U District. As this moves forward, we at the UW will be guided by the following principles of engagement:

*Be part of a community-based collaboration that develops a shared vision for what the University District might become and outlines a plan of action to make this happen.*

*Use multiple partnerships and strategies to help create a vibrant, diverse neighborhood of different land uses, where people of different ages and incomes can live, work, create, play, and learn.*

*Find ways to support market-driven revitalization – particularly around new transit hubs – that reflects the community’s vision and capitalizes on its economic potential.*

*Let the landscape of the University District reflect and promote a reinvention of some of the ways we teach, learn, and collaborate with outside partners – whether they be large or small industries, non-governmental organizations, or governments.*

*Define innovation broadly, and define those who have a stake in it broadly: industry, NGOs, small businesses, landowners and developers, residents, workers, students, citizens.*

*Learn from the experiences of other university-anchored places around the world, while also building upon the resources and talents of this region and state. Recognize what makes the University District unique and vibrant, and conserve and build upon these qualities.*

*Align the goals of the schools and colleges of this University with those of the community, creating an integrated and vibrant ecosystem that tears down the walls between town and gown.*

*Recognize that this is a long-term process, and partnerships and collaborations must be built to last.*

The choices made in the next few years will determine what the University District will be like for decades to come. The shared values of the community and the university – for sustainable, vibrant, multi-use development – provide the strong foundation on which to act. Now is the time to bolster strong partnerships, enlarge the community of stakeholders in this endeavor, and identify what we need to do together to arrive there.

With thoughtful planning and partnership, the U District can become the place where university and community come together in ways that are greater than the sum of their parts. The community can and should become a place that thinks big and aims high, rising to its tremendous potential to teach, learn from, and empower the next generation of Washingtonians.

## APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES OF OTHER UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

### **The University of Pennsylvania and West Philadelphia**

A large, private research institution located in the center of one of America's largest cities, the University of Pennsylvania has been a highly visible player in all three stages of recent university-community history. Located in West Philadelphia, a neighborhood about a mile from downtown, the university's story has been closely intertwined with that of the city since the end of World War II.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Penn played a pivotal role in Philadelphia's comprehensive urban renewal efforts, partnering with the city in the wholesale redevelopment of working-class, increasingly minority district to the north of its campus. New academic buildings, faculty housing, and a university-anchored industrial complex grew where rowhouses once stood, but the effort to revive the neighborhood foundered in the broader context of Philadelphia's economic decline. Between 1950 and 2000, the city lost half a million people and most of its manufacturing base. High crime, disinvestment, and aging infrastructure worked against Penn's and Philadelphia's dreams of creating a vibrant middle-class enclave in West Philadelphia.

Community resistance and student protest that resulted from the redevelopment caused a chastened Penn to establish one of the nation's first and largest service learning programs and make significant investments in neighborhood-based institutions. It learned from its disastrous community relations, and by the 1980s and 1990s had become a national leader in community partnership, with many different parts of the university actively engaged in West Philadelphia projects.

Since the mid-1990s, Penn's engagement in the economic development of its West Philadelphia environs has gone into overdrive, fueled by the broader revitalization of cities like Philadelphia. Under the leadership of its former President, Judith Rodin, and its current one, Amy Gutmann, Penn has taken a leading role in developing expansive new retail and commercial spaces and worked with the city to improve neighborhood public infrastructure from streetlights to public schools. Programs to facilitate homeownership in the neighborhood have enlarged the number of faculty and staff who live nearby. A new urban research institute sponsors new scholarship on what makes cities economically dynamic – including the role of universities as anchor institutions.

Penn now has embarked on a comprehensive land use and urban design campus plan that it calls Penn Connects. While this is not the first time Penn has sought to enlarge its urban footprint, the plan is distinguished by its integration of building programs with urban infrastructure improvements, its desire to build a physical connection between campus and downtown, and its transit-friendly orientation. This major eastward expansion of its campus brings Penn into an older industrialized area that has seen little new investment for decades, converting old factories and warehouses into student

housing and academic buildings, and creating greenways extending to downtown and parks along the banks of the Schuylkill River.

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### **The Ohio State University and Columbus' University District**

Ohio State is a more recent arrival to the community partnership business, but it has made a significant impact in a short period of time. Like West Philadelphia, Columbus' University District was a nineteenth-century streetcar suburb whose middle-class character began to be challenged by the spread of the automobile in the 1920s, and further eroded by the age of mass suburbanization. By the 1990s, the neighborhood was pocked with vacant lots and empty storefronts. Its main thoroughfare, High Street, was a destination for bar-crawling students and little else.

After decades of disinvestment, it took a tragedy to jolt the community into action. The 1994 rape and murder of an OSU freshman abducted from an alley just off High Street prompted OSU and the City of Columbus to partner and create an independent nonprofit agency, Campus Partners, to spearhead comprehensive redevelopment of the neighborhood. The approach was market-driven, designed to attract both national and local retailers and create a more attractive environment for private-sector investment.

Both university and city put in significant resources to what ultimately became a more than \$150 million project. The money – drawn from university endowments, federal tax credits, city and state funds, and OSU-backed tax-exempt bonds – funded Campus Partners' purchase and redevelopment of over 300,000 square feet of retail and office space and construction of 200 new apartments. The resulting Campus Gateway development opened in 2005 with a Barnes & Noble bookstore and movie theatre as anchor tenants.

The vision was bold, and the scale was daunting. With the national economic downturn, Campus Gateway struggled to fill its abundant square footage, and some of its retail capacity was eventually trimmed. Campus Partners and OSU have turned their attention to encouraging the growth of the University District as a cultural and arts destination. Vacant storefronts have been loaned for free to local artists. OSU has opened a temporary art gallery, Swing Space, to showcase university-sponsored exhibitions and faculty and student work.

Real estate development is one of several interventions in the University District by Campus Partners. The effort has worked to protect low-income housing and maintain diversity in the neighborhood even as it promotes comprehensive redevelopment. These measures have been coupled with new homeownership incentives for faculty and staff, the opening of community-based academic research facilities, and close collaborations between the university and local public schools. While the University District remains a work in progress, Campus Partners has created a neighborhood environment attractive to private developers, who are now taking a leading role in building the next wave of retail and housing in the area.

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## **MIT and Cambridge's Kendall Square**

Many places are trying to build university-adjacent commercial districts to attract research-based industry. The story of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is one where such a district already exists, and where city and university are working to inject the diversity and street life that make it a more desirable and sustainable urban destination.

If we want to understand the extraordinary power of top-flight research institutions to drive knowledge-economy job growth, MIT is case study Number One. The university's dominance in science and engineering disciplines has attracted high-tech firms and government research activity to the Boston area since the early Cold War. In the 1950s and 1960s, few of these jobs grew near MIT's campus in the aging industrial city of Cambridge, instead gravitating to the communities along suburban Route 128. Even as MIT and Harvard grew to become some of the world's preeminent research universities, Cambridge was joining other cities in a steep economic and social decline. As in Philadelphia, federal and local government officials used the tool of university-led urban renewal to try and reverse this pattern, designating a 42-acre parcel in and around Kendall Square, adjacent to MIT's campus, for redevelopment.

The strategy appeared to be working in 1965, when MIT successfully lobbied NASA to locate a major research facility in Kendall Square. Yet four years later, federal budget cuts caused NASA to scuttle their plans, taking the university and its neighborhood back to square one. It took another decade before redevelopment of Kendall Square got underway. This time, private-sector tenants were the focus of attention. Although firms and jobs came gradually, the urban comeback of Cambridge and a changing high-tech landscape lured back the kind of firms and people that once had migrated to Route 128. By 2011 Kendall Square was home to over 150 biotech and high-tech companies – a level of high-tech clustering that would be the envy of nearly any city worldwide.

MIT's research prowess and student and faculty talent drew firms to Kendall Square, but the development has been criticized as monolithic and rather soulless. The single-use character of Kendall Square, with few retail or other street-level amenities, is characteristic of many of the university-affiliated research districts and parks that sprang up in cities and in suburbs from the 1960s forward. Looking at the success of university research parks in places like Silicon Valley and North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, many places took the "if you build a research park, they will come" approach to research-driven economic development. Built during an era of urban crisis, the buildings of the square turned their backs on the beleaguered city, having the self-contained, single-use environment that characterizes many a research park.

In 2010, MIT proposed some preliminary ideas and planning principles for turning the area into a more diverse and lively urban neighborhood. New restaurants, retail, and academic buildings are already starting to shift the neighborhood's character and give the thousands of workers and students in the neighborhood a reason to live and play there.

The university's ownership of a great deal of property in the area makes it able to have a major influence on what the neighborhood will become next, and its actions recognize that a successful innovation district must also be a sustainable, diverse environment.

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These three universities are hardly alone. In post-Katrina New Orleans, **Tulane University** has made service learning and community engagement the central part of its academic mission, engaging in a range of projects across the city that bring students, teachers, and researchers out into the community to apply their knowledge to real-world problems. In San Francisco, the **University of California at San Francisco** is a critical health-sciences anchor and partner in the redevelopment of the Mission Bay neighborhood into a biotech hub. In New York, both **New York University** and **Columbia** are engaging in campus expansion projects that integrate next-generation academic spaces into mixed-use housing, retail, and commercial environments.