Urban University Revitalization Efforts

An Assessment of Comparative Case Examples

Christopher Diaz, PhD

and

Hunter Bacot, PhD

Institute of Government

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> *UALR anchors the University District with more than 13,000 students, 2,500 employees and an annual operating budget of $165 million. Its performing arts, cultural and sports events attract several thousand people to the area each year, making the campus the primary destination for the south mid-town area of Little Rock. Despite this, the 2007 Strategic Plan Update notes that no major public infrastructure investments have taken place in the area in two decades. Today, buildings are empty and space is underutilized across from the University.*[1]

This report briefly reiterates UALR's vision with regard to economic and community development in the neighborhoods surrounding campus, particularly in developing the University Village concept. This report also examines what other similarly-situated urban universities have accomplished with similar objectives to those of UALR. In particular, this report looks at what The Ohio State University, the University of Memphis, the University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, and the University of Cincinnati did to refurbish streets and neighborhoods adjacent to their campuses.

Introduction

The idea for a University Village came about as a result of the University of Arkansas—Little Rock's (UALR) revised Strategic Plan, entitled *Partners for Progress: Shaping the Future of the University District*, promulgated in 2007 and conceived during the Conceptual Design Workshop. This document emphasized the necessity of building strong neighborhoods around the University that would attract and retain students, faculty, and staff, while simultaneously protecting UALR's investment in its programs and facilities.[2]

The focal point of this research effort is the corridor of South University Avenue extending from the intersection of S. University and 28th Street south to the intersection of S. University and Asher (Colonel Glenn). This is the section of University Avenue adjacent to the UALR campus. The area of focus lies across the street from campus on the west side of University Avenue. On this side of the street there are two strip mall-style shopping centers, fast food restaurants, a bank, service stations, and a Shipley's Donut store. Most of the area, however, is dominated by parking lots, vacant storefronts in the shopping centers, and unsightly signage. In short, there is little enticing about this commercial area that would attract members of the University community to spend money or prospective investors to invest their resources here.

The University corridor's major impediment to the commercial prospects of the west side of the street is University Avenue. University Avenue is unsafe; it is not pedestrian-friendly, as evidenced by the tragic death of a UALR professor, Rhonda Sue Lewis, in 2003. It has been a decade since her death and still no improvements have been made to enhance pedestrian, bicyclist, or motorist safety on this section of University Avenue. This section of University Avenue averages 33,000 cars per day[3] and, although the speed limit on that section of University Avenue is 25 mph, motorists regularly drive at speeds above the posted limit. Speeding is

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Burden, Dan, et al. *Establishing University Village*. Report prepared for UALR (2012).

[3] http://www.metroplan.org/maps/ADT/2012ADT/lr_central_51.pdf

encouraged by the fact that South University Avenue has six lanes of traffic. There is only one pedestrian crossing (at W. 32nd Street and S. University) connecting the campus to the west side of University Avenue, which has the effect of discouraging foot traffic across the street, thereby isolating UALR from the adjacent area and neighborhoods. Since crossing the street is so difficult and dangerous, many in the UALR campus community do not venture across University Avenue. These issues create a vicious cycle of untapped potential for the commercial sector and UALR.

The Context of Community Development: The University Village Concept

According to the *Establishing University Village* report, the vision for the University District focuses on seven key themes that can be realized through the creation of the University Village. For the University Village concept to emerge, the University must catalyze its relationship with adjacent commercial areas along west University Avenue, as well as the neighborhoods on the west side of University Avenue. The University District themes addressed in focusing efforts along west University include:

- distinctive district identity,
- commercial vitality,
- strong and diverse neighborhoods,
- ample open space,
- safe and attractive streets, and
- clear pedestrian and transit links.[4]

The *Establishing University Village* report makes the best case for the University Village concept:

> University Avenue today is placeless. It is not a gateway to greatness, even though it is the front door to UALR. Instead, it is unattractive, uncomfortable and cannot prime the type of development desired unless new design treatments are utilized. The City of Little Rock, Pulaski County, UALR, Metroplan, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, and the State of Arkansas can work together to transform this road into a gateway to a world-class living, learning research center - surrounded by a vibrant business, entrepreneurial, and cultural district with thriving neighborhoods. By leveraging transportation investments to add value and diversity to land uses, Arkansas will have more corridor transformations to celebrate.
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> As a world-class learning destination, UALR students, faculty, staff and visitors should not have to contend with blighted conditions, overly-wide streets, unsafe transportation corridors, speeding vehicles and a lack of amenities. . . . Establishing place means raising our standards when it comes

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[4] *Ibid.*, p.4.

to street design and leveraging transportation investments to prime the development desired.

The existing design of University Avenue creates inappropriate behaviors by motorists and pedestrians. . . .[5]

One of the roles of an urban university such as UALR is to foster closer, mutually beneficial, relationships with the community they serve.[6] Like its peer institutions, UALR has committed itself to greater engagement in the Little Rock community, and has thus become "integral to the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of the community."[7] Friedman et al. (2014) underscore the importance of universities to communities' well-being, "[u]nderstanding that their fortunes are tied in part to those of their neighbors and physical surroundings, many have expanded their efforts to engage new partners and address pressing community issues."[8] Institutions such as UALR play active roles in shaping the physical and social environments of their communities. As urban universities are "grounded in place," their commitment to a place is long term and manifests itself in many ways, including real estate investment and development, promoting safety and an inviting ambiance, and engaging in transportation issues.[9] The last item is particularly important to urban universities such as UALR, which are "commuter dependent", i.e., most students, faculty, and staff commute to campus.

With the interdependence of urban universities and their surrounding communities, relationships between an urban university and its surrounding neighborhood must be complementary and symbiotic. An urban university is a significant contributor to a city's economy. These institutions are permanent economic fixtures in the community; as such, these are fairly resistant to business cycle fluctuations. [10] These universities attract revenue from outside the immediate area through tuition, endowment income, and state tax allocations. These institutions also tend to attract significant human capital—students, faculty, and staff—that contribute to the area's economic growth.[11] Given that UALR is the "anchor" and primary economic driver of the South University Avenue corridor, it is appropriate that it take the lead in enhancing the University Village area. It is well-documented that student, faculty, and staff activity, much of it occurring after regular business hours, can help to revitalize the community.[12] This holds even when the majority of a university's students are commuters.[13] Leaders of urban universities, meanwhile,

[5] *Ibid.*, p.5.
[6] Cox, David N. "Developing a Framework for Understanding University-Community Partnerships." *Cityscape: a Journal of Policy Development and Research*. 5(2000): 9-26.
[7] Friedman, Debra, et al. *The Foundational Role of Universities as Anchor Institutions in Urban Development: a Report of National Data and Survey Findings.* Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (2014).
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[10] Steinacker, Annette. "The Economic Effect of Urban Colleges on their Surrounding Communities." *Urban Studies*. 42(June 2005): 1161-1175.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 1161.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 1172.

have come to realize that the community environment surrounding the university has a direct effect on the marketability of their institutions as places to study, work, and invest.[14]

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[14] Shaffer, David F. and David J. Wright. *A New Paradigm for Economic Development: How Higher Education Institutions Are Working to Revitalize Their Regional and State Economies.* The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, University at Albany, State University of New York (March 2010).

Comparative Case Examples

Comparative case examples provide examples of similarly-situated urban universities in other locations that have taken a lead role in revitalizing the neighborhoods surrounding their campuses. These examples provide a useful point of comparison to what UALR envisions for the University Village project, and demonstrate what can be accomplished when a university acts in concert with state and local governments and business leaders to create a sense of place that benefits both the university community and the surrounding community it serves. Although urban universities often take the lead in neighborhood revitalization, they do not dictate how the process should unfold to the other community partners. Rather universities now catalyze connections to the community by utilizing their expertise, highlighting their community connections, and creating partnerships to address important community issues.[15] As such, several case examples demonstrate how universities have acted as community catalysts. The case examples explored herein are from these universities: The Ohio State University; the University of Akron; the University of Memphis; the University of Cincinnati; Case Western Reserve University; and, the University of Pennsylvania.

<u>The Ohio State University</u>

The Ohio State University's Campus Partners for Community Urban Redevelopment project has promoted neighborhood planning and consensus-building, and "has leveraged significant investment by the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to fight crime and disinvestment and improve life in the neighborhood around the university's campus. OSU's Communities Properties Initiative provides $100 million for housing preservation and neighborhood revitalization, and other improvements include a $152 million mixed-use project with retail, entertainment, residential, and commercial space."[16]

One project of OSU's Campus Partners in particular is very similar to that of UALR's University Village. In 2000, Campus Partners proposed *A Plan for High Street: Creating a 21st Century Main Street* to address the issues of blight and crime along High Street in Columbus, which abuts the eastern boundary of the OSU campus. The plan's overview describes High Street in many ways that resemble South University Avenue in Little Rock:

> As High Street and the University District struggled with the challenges that drained urban areas following World War II and faced the added stress of the Vietnam-era riots, the street lost much of its economic base and ability to serve the district's needs. With many new choices, the University District forgot its Main Street. The face High Street offered the world grew troubled.[17]

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[15] Trani, Eugene P. and Robert D. Holsworth. 2010.*The Indispensable University*. (Latham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers)

[16] *Ibid.*, p.37.

[17] *A Plan for High Street: Creating a 21st Century Main Street.* Proposal prepared for OSU Campus Partners and the City of Columbus, OH (August 2000).

The strategy to revitalize High Street includes five essential elements to revitalize the area adjacent to the university; these are (emphasis added):

1. *Take tangible steps to protect and enhance High Street's urban fabric.* This includes creating **development and design guidelines and a commercial zoning overlay** to ensure that improvements to the street contribute positive and mutually-beneficial change. It also envisions accelerating the pace of private investment in the roughly 1.3 million square feet of space on High Street to "house locally-owned businesses, entrepreneurial start-ups, basement bars, funky music stores, ethnic restaurants, and other uses that make High Street unique."[18]

2. *Form a parking management entity.* This includes creating 1,500 to 2,100 new parking spaces. It also involves implementing **critical traffic circulation measures** including reopening local streets, restoring curbside parking, and establishing an enhanced 11th Avenue connection to I-71 to make High Street a convenient and competitive commercial district.[19]

3. *Establish a special improvement district.* The purpose of this district is to **organize property owners and businesses** to better manage the commercial district "in a manner that promotes essential maintenance, security, and marketing to keep pace in a highly competitive, ever-changing, retail climate."[20]

4. *Support strategic redevelopment opportunities.* Among these redevelopment initiatives is to "energize" High Street with a "University Gateway Center" to **transform the street's most troubled areas** into a regional destination offering retail, entertainment, office space, and housing (totaling between 400,000 to 600,000 square feet) that attracts students, faculty/staff, residents, and visitors.[21]

5. *Improve the public realm.* This envisions **enhancing High Street's appearance** with new pedestrian lights, street trees, pedestrian crossings, and other streetscape improvements with the aim of strengthening the bonds between the university and the neighborhood. To that end, the plan calls for creating a "University Square" at 15th Avenue that crosses High Street to **create a gathering place at the point of greatest pedestrian activity, reinforces the traditional campus gateway**, and provides new links to the Wexner Center.[22, 23]
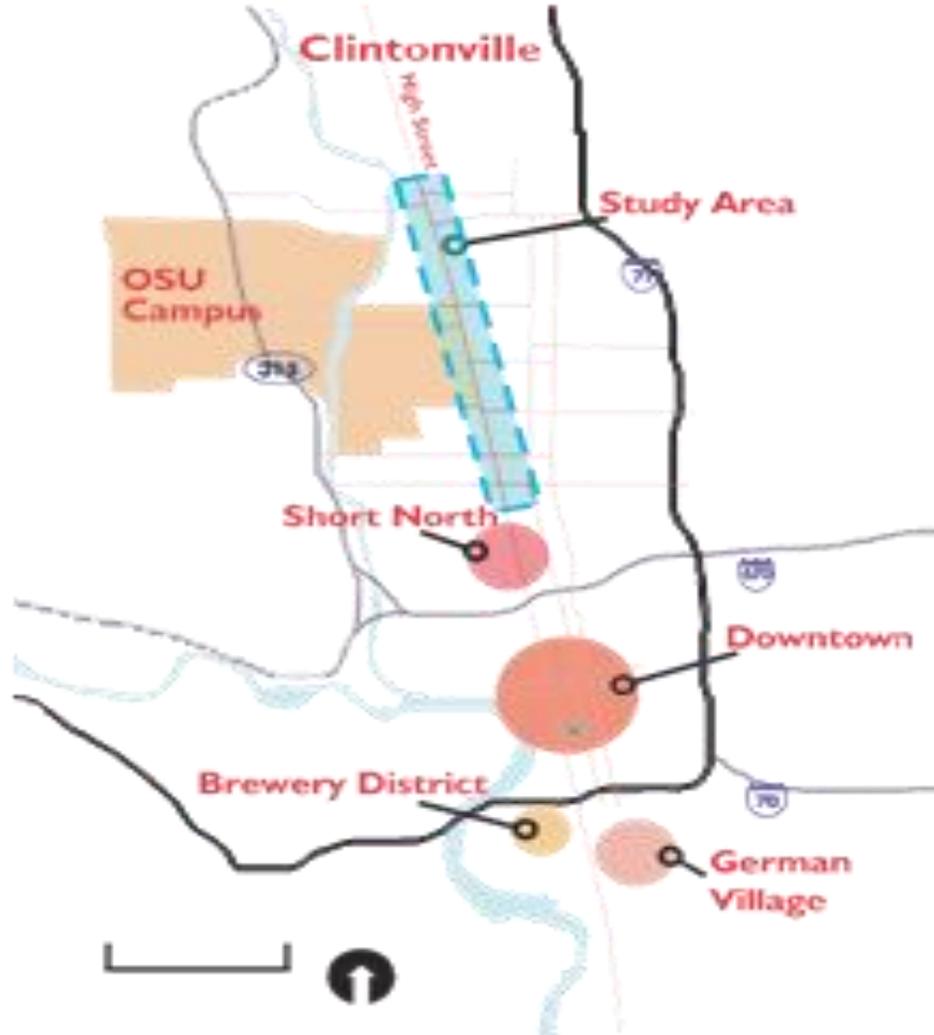
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[18] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[19] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[20] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[21] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[22] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[23] The Wexner Center is OSU's fine arts and performing arts exhibition facility (http://wexarts.org/).

Figure 1: Map of High Street Area (Columbus, OH) in Relation to OSU Campus

The University of Akron

Through its University Park Alliance (UPA), the university has invested $334.1 million for revitalizing 40 blocks of neighborhoods surrounding the university situated in central Akron. The university partners with the city, Summa Health System, and other community organizations to inject new life into the neighborhood surrounding it. In addition to real estate and business investments, UPA's community outreach arm serves the community with free health screenings, classes, tutoring, and other initiatives.[24]

The objective of UPA was to transform the downtown area of Akron, Ohio into an attractive place to live, study, and work by building on the area's existing assets. The approach of the UPA was to look at the downtown area from all points of view so that all the different interests would

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[24] Shaffer and Wright, p.37.

be included in the revitalization effort.[25] The UPA focused its efforts on three key streets in downtown Akron—Main Street, Market Street, and Exchange Street. These streets were chosen because of their historical significance and unique characteristics with the following goals in mind (emphasis added):

♦ *Main Street—*a **new and different Main Street**, one that builds on its heritage but, also adds new uses and buildings to enhance Main Street's role as the region's visitor destination.

♦ *Market Street—*a **renewal of Market Street's image** to become the prestigious front door and institutional setting for Summa. To the west, the plan envisions extending Market Street's established identity as a retail corridor to create a new neighborhood retail hub at the intersection of Forge and Market Street.

♦ *Exchange Street—*the **transformation of East Exchange Street** into the university address and the center of the university's growing student population.[26]

As an example of what the UPA planned with regard to Exchange Street, the UPA plan called for the following changes (emphasis added):

> East Exchange Street does not have a strong sense of character to build on. It also **lacks character** that reflects the presence of a university and any sense of interaction with the campus. Above all it is lacking a central place.
>
> The development principles for University Square are focused on strengthening the link between the campus to the north and the emerging 'College Town' district to the south. Critical to achieving these goals are to:
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> ♦ **Slow traffic down** on Exchange Street introducing concepts such as diagonal parking to make it **easier for people to freely cross** back and forth between the campus and the new 'village center.'
>
> ♦ **Make connections** to the north-south paths routes into the campus
>
> The first step is to create a catalyst that can **spur private investment in the adjacent blocks** along the south side of Exchange. This Plan envisions a new a new mixed use development focused around a public square. The new 'University Square' will be a managed environment that people will feel comfortable, but also open to the greater public. While the University will drive much of the demand for University Square, **the development needs to appeal to, and be supported by the wider market and will have to be self-sufficient**.[27]

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[25] *Akron Core City Vision Plan.* Akron, OH. University Park Alliance (May 2011).
[26] *Ibid.*, p.2.
[27] *Ibid.*, p.5.

The UPA proposed a combination of infrastructure improvements and public-private initiatives to bring new vitality to each of these neighborhoods. The plan proposed upgrading the public infrastructure of these neighborhoods with a network of multi-modal "green streets," allowing them to safely accommodate bicycles, slow-moving vehicular traffic, and pedestrians. A neighborhood street system that supports bicycles appeals to a university-related demographic, as well as to current residents.[28]

The UPA proposed a three-pronged approach to strengthening the existing neighborhood and for promoting new residential development that complements the area's existing character. The three prongs are:

- Infill development—two family homes, a type that fits comfortably on the neighborhood's empty lots and works well for first-time homebuyers.

- Stabilization—grants to existing homeowners for home repair and energy efficiency measures.

- Rehabilitation—grants to new homeowners to renovate houses currently in danger of falling into abandonment.[29]

As with UALR's University Village plan, the UPA envisioned altering the transportation infrastructure to accommodate pedestrians and alternative modes of transit such as bicycles, bus, and rail to connect the downtown Akron area into a cohesive whole. These changes included traffic-calming measures such as diagonal parking and the introduction of multi-modal "green streets" to encourage bicycling and walking.[30]

The University of Memphis

With a history of previous conflict with its surrounding neighborhoods over its expansion plans and concerns over neighborhood degradation, the University of Memphis formed a coalition for private/public community development partnerships comprised of the university's administration, neighborhood leaders, and business owners. The goal of this joint venture was to maximize the university's economic and community revitalization impact on its core surrounding neighborhoods. To that end, the university helped pay for and staff a master planning effort that set a design, and a process leading to community buy-in, for private property uses where the university and the surrounding neighborhoods connect.[31]

According to the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute report on this revitalization effort (emphasis added):

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[28] *Ibid.*, p.11.
[29] *Ibid.*, p.11.
[30] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[31] *Ibid.*, p.34-35.

. . . the university built an expanded student residence hall and joined forces with a private developer on a $63 million mixed-use development. This includes more than 230 residential units and 100,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space **funded through tax increment financing, where publicly issued bonds** pay for infrastructure improvements (additional streetlights, sidewalk improvements, and a new parking garage) meant to increase property values and hence generate additional property-tax revenue, which then pays off the bonds. The success of this venture attracted additional private development, including a $13.9 million, 85-unit luxury student housing project, complete with fitness facilities, a 'cyber café' and entertainment room with a parking garage, and 2,510 square feet of retail, as well as a 40-unit condominium project built by a local developer. The University of Memphis law school, meanwhile, was moved into the old Customs House as part of an effort to create a more vibrant waterfront promenade in downtown Memphis. The law school represents a $45 million reuse of the building, and will bring 500 students and faculty downtown on a daily basis, as consumers and possible residents.[32]

The University of Cincinnati

The University of Cincinnati has invested over $325 million in neighborhood revitalization in the six neighborhoods surrounding its campus.[33] In one of the Cincinnati neighborhoods targeted for revitalization, Avondale, the University of Cincinnati collaborated with the Community Design and Development Center (CDDC) to create a revitalization strategy for that neighborhood. Among other things, the strategy included the following planks (emphasis added):

> *Establish which buildings will be kept* – create standards on which to base whether or not vacant buildings will be torn down such as the amount of deterioration that has occurred, whether the owner of the unit will promote the idea of destruction or rehabilitation. In which case, the owner may receive **tax breaks/incentives** on façade improvements, environmental cleanup of pipes, and lead based paints. Also, the buildings that have been community eyesores will not be kept due to the majority of the community members not supporting said unit.

> *Improve Facades* – as the first physical step in the process of redevelopment; it will require the least amount of funds and effort. It will be a sign to the community that the area is beginning to change for the better. Building owners will be contacted and tax incentives will be given to those who improve their building fronts. **Design ordinances** will be changed in order for the improvements to be uniform and conducive to the wants and needs of the community. These ordinances will include storefronts being colored, vegetated with baskets, proper signage, and upkeep through a community clean up once a month.

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[32] *Ibid.*, p.35.
[33] *Ibid.*, p.37.

Create Parking – the bump outs/chokers will be placed along Burnet Avenue to help **slow traffic and promote a walkable district**. The bump outs will also house street lamps, trees, and at various points a historical fact about the community and its future. The parking lot on the former gas station lot will then be created underneath the development. Also, parking will be provided under the development on the eastern side of Burnet Avenue housing many spots for those seeking to enjoy the facilities of a diverse and ethnic community.

Create infill and public outdoor mall – this is a major step of the revitalization process. This will include the tearing down of buildings and the creation of infill in the vacant lots and the outdoor mall behind the east side of Burnet Avenue. The **outdoor mall** will be created as new infill structures will be constructed. In addition to the new infill on Burnet Avenue new townhouses will be created off of Jay St. where there is a large vacant lot. These townhouses will be adjacent to outdoor mall.

Creation of new structures on the new vacant lots – the lots on which buildings were torn down will be the last step in the revitalization process. These new buildings will be constructed next to the infill.[34]

Case Western Reserve University

Case Western Reserve University's (CWRU) Arts and Retail District involves a mixed-use development of more than $100 million that includes retail stores, condominiums, apartments, and cultural arts.[35] As part of CWRU's Master Plan to physically unify its campus' sense of identity and create a stronger sense of place, the university set its sights on strengthening the visual and physical connections between its campus and the surrounding community. To that end, CWRU initiated several programs to foster its relationship with its neighbors, such as the Case Home Ownership Program and the Supplier Diversity Initiative.[36] With regard to fomenting connections between the campus and Cleveland's Arts and Retail District, CWRU's Master Plan called for constructing new residence halls for undergraduates on the north side of the campus as part of the North Residential Village, as well as new athletic facilities, adjacent to the Arts and Retail District.[37] Figure 2 below shows a map of CWRU's campus layout. By locating undergraduates on the north side of the campus (an area known as "The Triangle") with the surrounding four corners of the Euclid Avenue-Ford/Mayfield intersection, CWRU sought to create an ideal location for developing a vibrant, mixed-use urban center.[38] To quote the CWRU Master Plan: "Envisioned as a dense cluster of shops, restaurants, pubs, galleries and

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[34] *Avondale Community Vision: a Community Redevelopment Framework*. Avondale Community Council, Cincinnati, OH (2005).
[35] *Ibid.*, p.37.
[36] *Case 2005 Master Plan Summary*. Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH (2005), p.24.
[37] *Ibid.*, p.30.
[38] *Ibid.*, p.44.

entertainment venues, combined with various types of housing, the University Arts and Retail District will invigorate urban life along Euclid Avenue, directly adjacent to the Case campus, and strengthen our identity as an urban campus."[39]

Figure 2: Map of 2005 CWRU Master Plan
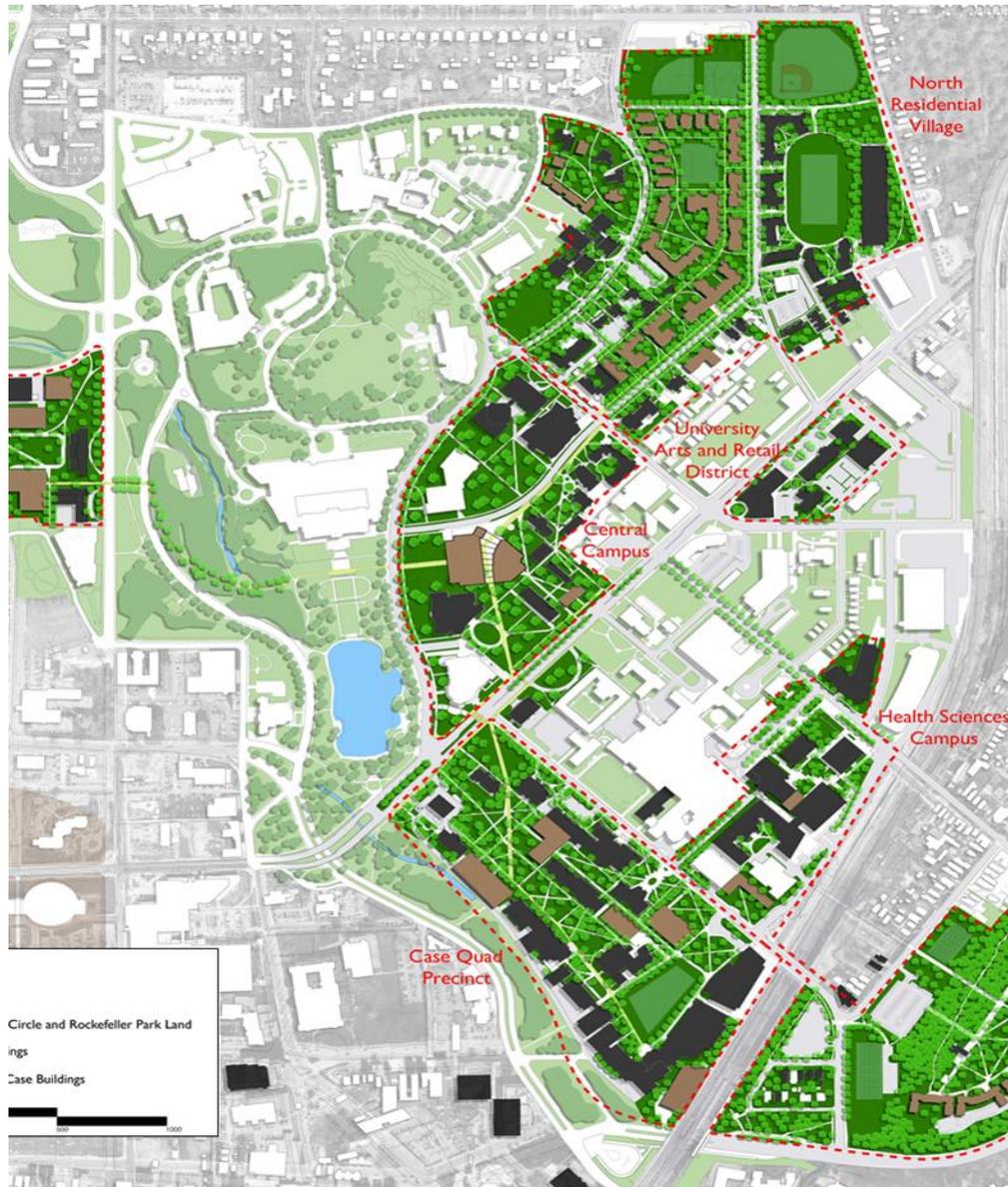
[39] *Ibid.*, p.44.

The University of Pennsylvania

In response to neighborhood decline and in an effort to stimulate neighborhood revitalization, the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) launched its West Philadelphia Initiatives in 1994. This initiative "sought to fundamentally improve the West Philadelphia neighborhood economy through a major commitment of University leadership, administrative support, funding, and academic resources, sustained over a period of years."[40] The intent of this initiative was to address five areas of concern (emphasis added):

- **Clean, safe, and attractive streets and neighborhoods**;
- Excellent school options;
- High-quality, diverse housing choices;
- **Reinvigorated retail options**; and
- Increased job opportunities through **economic inclusion**. [41]

As South University Avenue is to UALR, 40th Street in Philadelphia is the invisible boundary separating the Penn campus from the residential neighborhood to the west of campus.[42] Like South University Avenue in Little Rock, 40th Street in Philadelphia is heavily traveled, major arterial for pedestrians, cars, and buses. The similarities do not end with a boundary and traffic, as 40th Street had deteriorated into a corridor that,

> . . . did not offer a welcoming presence to either the campus or the community. South of Market Street, food markets, discount drug stores, a check-cashing agency, and a bar occupied deteriorating properties on blocks with numerous vacant storefronts. Farther south stood a large surface parking lot and an unattractive one-story retail strip with a poorly managed fast-food restaurant occupying the corner location.[43]

The neighborhood adjacent to the Penn campus had experienced the same urban decline as the rest of the city with the deindustrialization and suburbanization characteristic of major urban centers that occurred throughout the country in the 1960s and 1970s.

With this backdrop of deteriorating conditions in the surrounding neighborhoods and lingering resentment in these neighborhoods caused by Penn's expansion in the 1960s, the university could either isolate from the community or embrace it – Penn chose the latter option. By 1994 Penn faced two daunting challenges:

> (1) whether and how the University should take action to improve neighborhood conditions; and

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[40] Kromer, John and Lucy Kerman. *West Philadelphia Initiatives: a Case Study in Urban Revitalization.* University of Pennsylvania (2004).
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*, p.8.
[43] *Ibid.*, p.8.

(2) how to create a public environment with broad appeal and welcoming presence for all.[44]

Although Penn decided to lead the West Philadelphia Initiatives, it was by no means a top-down approach. From the outset, the initiative was deemed critical to University administrators and the leadership knew that instituting a system of communication and coordination with the community had to be established in order to guide design, organization, and implementation of this initiative.[45] To that end, the Penn administration determined that the following commitments would be made to the community surrounding its campus:

♦ The health and vitality of Penn and West Philadelphia are intertwined;

♦ Penn is deeply committed to West Philadelphia;

♦ Neighborhood revitalization requires efforts on many fronts simultaneously: schools, housing, economic development, retail development, and cleanliness and safety;

♦ Penn works in partnership with neighborhood groups, community organizations, and other local institutions to improve the West Philadelphia community and takes counsel and advice from community neighbors;

♦ Penn will not expand to the west to develop academic buildings or other institutional facilities. [46]

The decision to centralize leadership and management responsibility for the West Philadelphia Initiative within Penn's administration ensured greater access to investment capital.[47] There were also two additional benefits:

♦ Through Penn's participation in community partnerships, the University increased its communication with diverse neighborhood constituencies, improving opportunities for collaboration and reducing the risk of town-gown conflicts; and

♦ Through Penn's participation in business partnerships, the University leveraged substantial investment capital to support neighborhood improvement activities. [48]

The University of Pennsylvania's overall approach was to collaborate extensively with community residents, local civic associations, elected leaders, Penn faculty, and Penn administration to consider ways of addressing issues such as P-12 education, homeownership, and retail development in West Philadelphia.[49] This open-dialogue approach resulted in a comprehensive revitalization strategy; this approach yielded a community plan built from those

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[44] *Ibid.*, p.8.
[45] *Ibid.*, p.9.
[46] *Ibid.*, p.13.
[47] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[48] *Ibid.*, p.15.
[49] *Ibid.*, p.16.

involved in the community and eventually became the basis for Penn's own agenda.[50] As a result, the process became a participative effort, thus, "[r]ather than publicly announcing the adoption of this agenda or entering into a full community review of this agenda as a whole, the University made a conscious decision to 'roll out' the West Philadelphia Initiatives individually; each activity was a proposed collaboration among Penn, community members, and other supporters."[51]

Rather than attempt to secure broad buy-in for an comprehensive development concept or implement an approach without community involvement, Penn's approach to neighborhood revitalization made it possible to engage in constructive dialogue with community members that led to challenges being confronted together through community conversations discussing specific individual program activities.[52] To that end, Penn's administration initiated and/or participated in regular meetings with community and civic organizations, as well as with elected and appointed officials.[53] Part of Penn's approach to the relevant stakeholders was based in part on perceived distrust of the university by the community and the likely criticisms and concerns of community interests. [54] Prepared through extensive planning, the University's overall approach to the West Philadelphia Initiatives emphasized five basic principles (which were established by the administration and the trustee committee) (emphasis added):[55]

- Clear identification of **investment priorities and return objectives**;

- Leveraging of Penn **resources with public, private, and civic support** systems;

- **Stimulation of market forces** to revive the housing and commercial climate;

- Ongoing consultation and sustained **dialogue with community members** prior to and during implementation, and a willingness to modify plans as needed in order to maximize community support; and

- Commitments to improvement activities that are sustainable, so that, after an initial commitment of resources over a period of years, the University could gradually reduce its role in neighborhood reinvestment to focus on its mission as an institution of higher education.

Though UALR differs greatly from the University of Pennsylvania, these institutions are both located in urban areas and thus, are inextricably intertwined with the surrounding community and neighborhoods. While in the past Penn believed it could afford to ignore the surrounding community, the university came to realize that the surrounding neighborhoods and its problems of crime, poverty, and marginalization could no longer be separated by its ivy-covered walls.

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[50] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[51] *Ibid.*, p.16.
[52] *Ibid.*, p.17.
[53] *Ibid.*, p.17.
[54] *Ibid.*, p.17.
[55] *Ibid.*, p.17.

The University of Pennsylvania realized it could no longer act unilaterally without being part of the neighboring community in which it was immersed.

Conclusions

What these case studies suggest is that urban universities such as UALR are vital to initiating and leading revitalization efforts in the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located. Moreover, these examples shed light on what the University Village project can accomplish on South University Avenue when compared to what other urban universities have accomplished in similar settings with comparable adjacent commercial environments. In reviewing these efforts of other universities, several notable topics find symmetry across these efforts and include the need to:

- establish associations with affected property owners and business/commercial interests, as well as engage their participation in the process and project;
- recruit or attract a commercial catalyst to spur private interest and investment;
- develop design guidelines and a commercial zoning overlay;
- address traffic circulation and promote walkable areas;
- create a central pedestrian location that provides a 'pedestrian point' of focus and can reinforce that location as a campus gateway that links the campus to the (revitalized) commercial area;
- address the area's image to establish an identity and defines the area as a retail corridor and neighborhood retail hub;
- transform the area into a community destination offering retail, entertainment, office space, and housing that attracts not only students, faculty, staff, and area residents, but also those who live in other parts of the community, as well as visitors; and,
- exploit the presence of the university to create a sense of a university community, or a university area.

A common thread of all of these projects is in creating a sense of place, not only for the benefit of their respective campuses, but also for the benefit of the community at large. Although these urban universities featured in these examples may have taken the lead in seeing these revitalization projects to fruition, these institutions would not have been successful without the involvement, cooperation, and buy-in of stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. Thus, the creation of the University Village must be a collaborative, concerted effort across a host of stakeholders if the success of this vision is to be realized.