

The Urban Mixed-Use Campus

As U.S. academic institutions think more entrepreneurially and see a future increasingly urban in feel, developers with vision and creativity will have more opportunities to work with them.



New buildings on the University of Cincinnati campus such as the Joseph A. Steger Student Life Center and the Campus Recreation Center increase density at the campus core and enhance the social aspect of the campus's MainStreet area.

THE CLASSIC IMAGE of the college campus in the American imagination tends to be the Thomas Jefferson–designed University of Virginia, for example, or Stanford University, both with large lawns, flower gardens, and stately quads creating a place separate from the cities they inhabit.

Times are changing, however, and as urban living regains appeal across all demographic groups, colleges and universities are creating environments that are more urban in order to attract students, faculty, and staff. Many institutions lacking dense urban areas near campus are constructing their own at the campus edge, originating mixed-use districts that blend retail, social, and academic activities to bring students together. This approach also creates amenities for the surrounding community, fosters town/gown connections, and often provides an additional income stream for the institution. In other cases, institutions are creating urban-style areas at the center of campus. In both cases, blending student housing with retail and other uses can help enhance safety by creating vibrant public spaces that are active 24 hours a day and strengthen students' connections to the life of the college by encouraging them to spend more time on campus.

A pioneer in creating urban environments near campus is the University of Pennsylvania in west Philadelphia. Blight had long been a problem in the surrounding area, with campus buildings turning their back on city streets. The university acted as its own developer to turn one of its parking lots into a 300,000-square-foot (28,000-sq-m) shopping center at 36th and Sansom streets. The \$90 million project, completed in 1999, relies on the 250-room Hilton Inn at Penn and the Penn Bookstore as anchors, complemented by shops and restaurants. Financing came from bonds, with retail revenue paying down the debt. The university also revitalized 40th Street, a few blocks away, with a new grocery store, a multiscreen cinema, restaurants, shops, and streetscape enhancements. The increased activity has helped improve safety in the area.

Academic institutions that get into the development business can often benefit from advice from the private sector. To bring in long-term revenue and relieve a parking crunch for students, Rollins College in Winter



The Penn Bookstore in west Philadelphia anchors a 300,000-square-foot (28,000-sq-m) shopping center, once the site of a University of Pennsylvania parking lot (left).

Dartmouth College is redeveloping an area of downtown Hanover, New Hampshire, called South Block, where it plans to add housing, retail space, and entertainment uses; 7 South Street, a mixed-use building in South Block, is within walking distance of the campus (below).

Park, Florida, developed a mixed-use project facing the town's main street retail area, including an 87,000-square-foot (8,000-sq-m) building with ground-floor retail space and offices above, plus an adjacent parking structure with room for 850 cars. The college brought in Trammell Crow Company to serve as development adviser and provide building management services after the project was completed in the late 1990s. Named SunTrust Plaza, the complex has served as a catalyst for renewed economic activity downtown.

The logistics of creating these campus/community places can be complex. In terms of funding, developing mixed-use buildings can present a particular challenge for state universities and colleges because states tend to provide universities with funds for buildings with a single use, such as classrooms, but rarely fund construction of parking structures or student centers. As a result, state universities are raising their own money for mixed-use projects, relying on endowments, foundations, bond sales, and private funds.

In its most recent strategic plan, San Francisco State University promotes its aspiration to become the nation's preeminent public urban university. Though the campus is located in San Francisco, the surrounding area currently has more of a suburban rather than urban feel. To attract students by providing a



DARTMOUTH COLLEGE REAL ESTATE OFFICE

denser urban experience, the university is in the process of revising its master plan to call for creation of "college main streets" on the north and south edges of campus, lining Holloway Avenue and Buckingham Way with housing, retail space, restaurants, entertainment venues, and social services integrated into a walkable community.

Some of the land for this development was bought for the university by the San Francisco State University Foundation, a nonprofit organization established to enhance the university's educational mission. Ownership has since transferred to the university, and landmark buildings are planned to mark the cor-

ners of the campus, including a creative arts complex, a gym/wellness center, and a conference center/hotel, intended to serve the campus and attract the public.

State colleges and universities also are drawing on local, state, and federal help to achieve their goals. In the mid-1990s, Ohio State University took steps to redevelop High Street, Columbus's blighted main street at the east edge of campus. The university created the nonprofit Campus Partners for Community Urban Redevelopment to spearhead the revitalization of the neighborhoods around the university by working with the city, community agencies, and neighborhood leaders.



West Village at the University of California at Davis will include housing, shops, education centers, transit, and parks located adjacent to the campus.

The organization served as the developer for South Campus Gateway, a 7.5-acre (3-ha) master-planned retail and entertainment project along High Street that opened in 2005 with an eight-screen cinema, a grocery store, and shops. The city contributed money for public improvements and exercised its power of eminent domain to assist with land acquisition; state funds helped pay for the parking garage. The project also relied on a mix of federal tax credits, bond sales, endowment funds, and conventional financing.

Collaborations between cities and academic institutions can lead to an outcome that benefits both parties. Dartmouth College purchased a site on Lebanon Street behind the school's Hopkins Art Center and helped the city of Hanover, New Hampshire, develop

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

San Francisco State University is in the process of providing a denser urban experience through the creation of college main streets on the northern and southern edges of campus; included will be housing, retail space, restaurants, entertainment venues, and social services integrated into a walkable community.





The Center Hall classroom building at the University of California at San Diego is on Library Walk, which forms an edge at University Center, the 24-hour neighborhood emerging at the heart of the campus.

an adjacent site in tandem, creating a three-story retail and office building over an underground garage linked to an above-ground parking structure.

The collaboration enabled the city to gain more parking space than it would have had relying only on its own site, while the college benefited by obtaining a building with more square footage than otherwise would have been possible. And, more important, the collaboration helped the city alleviate its parking crunch, which was affecting the public and campus community alike. Dartmouth now is redeveloping an area of downtown near campus called South Block, with plans to add housing, retail space, and entertainment uses, as well as another parking garage.

One of the most ambitious mixed-use academic projects underway is West Village at the University of California at Davis. The university is planning the new 208-acre (84-ha) neighborhood to include housing, retail businesses, civic uses, education centers, transit, and parks adjacent to the central campus. At the end of last year, the University of Califor-

nia board of regents approved the 120-acre (49-ha) first phase, comprising 312 single-family homes and townhouses for faculty and staff, as well as apartments for 2,000 students over ground-floor commercial space.

For campuses with no nearby town center, the problem can be compounded by the fact that students tend to drive off campus to shop, eat, and hang out, leaving the campus relatively deserted after classes are over. Universities in the center of the country have the added challenge of competing against their counterparts on the coasts, which tend to have stronger reputations for offering locations in dense urban areas.

For a long time, the University of Cincinnati lacked a vibrant area that brought people together after classes; students turned elsewhere in the city for their urban experience. So the university created MainStreet, a \$247 million urban area through the heart of campus that added buildings designed by high-profile architects and containing housing, retail space, recreation facilities, and modern offices for student organizations.

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects of New York City designed the Tangeman University Center, completed in 2004, which includes a cinema, a food court, the university bookstore, an 800-seat great hall, enter-

tainment venues, and meeting and event rooms. Santa Monica, California-based Morphosis designed the campus recreation center, completed last year; the building includes a recreation facility with membership available to all Cincinnati residents, as well as student housing, a convenience store, and eateries. Hargreaves Associates of New York City, in association with Cincinnati-based Glaserworks, created open spaces designed to encourage social interaction.

The University of California at San Diego lacked a traditional college town setting for its students. In its 1989 master plan study, the institution earmarked a 28-acre (11-ha) site at the heart of campus for redevelopment as University Center, an urban-style environment within walking distance of the west campus neighborhoods and close to public transit. The goal was to blend housing, retail space, academic uses, and parking to create a dense urban area that would be active night and day.

Community colleges are also creating urban environments on campus in order to become more competitive with four-year colleges. Skyline College, a public community college in San Bruno, California, that is part of the San Mateo County Community College District, is currently adding a wellness center and a student services center aimed at increasing com-

South Campus Gateway, the pedestrian-friendly retail and entertainment project at Ohio State University, was once the blighted High Street on the east edge of the Columbus, Ohio, campus.

munity use of the college, plus creating amenities on campus that are more urban in nature.

The college has found that its student body is getting older, a demographic shift caused by the high cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area, which has priced younger people out of the housing market. In addition, younger students have greater access to four-year colleges than they did 20 years ago. Both factors require Skyline College to become more competitive. Part of the institution's strategy to rebrand itself to appeal more strongly to younger students is to provide the social and cultural experiences traditionally associated with four-year colleges.

The college currently is considering the possibility of partnering with a commercial fitness club to operate the wellness center as a health club in the evenings and on weekends, which would provide a revenue stream for the institution as well as bring community members on campus at all hours. Providing community amenities strengthens an institution's relationship with local residents—the people who vote on bond measures and pay taxes to support these public institutions.

Not every campus expansion is urban. Sometimes local resistance and a lack of land force universities to locate new facilities away from the main campus. And sometimes the private sector ends up providing the opportunity, but not as an active partner.

In the competitive rush to develop scientific research labs, Yale University leapfrogged over the typical development process by announcing in July that it will purchase the 136-acre (55-ha) Bayer HealthCare campus, located seven miles (11 km) from its downtown New Haven, Connecticut, campus. This may point to a trend toward reusing large, obsolete commercial buildings near campus centers. For universities like Yale with large endowments, the challenge will not be the purchase price—the *New York Times* reported that Yale will pay about \$100 million for the Bayer campus—but rather making the campus feel like an urban center rather than a former office park.



Colleges and universities increasingly are thinking entrepreneurially and seeing a future that is more urban in feel, presenting new opportunities to developers with vision and creativity.

This involvement could take the form of turnkey development of facilities on campus, including financing and construction, or the operation of facilities, such as at Skyline College's wellness center. The private sector also might develop parcels adjacent to campuses to enhance the urban edge, blurring the boundary between town and institution.

Schemes for carbon sequestration trading could allow developers to finance improvements to open-space reserves on campus in exchange for open-space or carbon credits for nearby private development.

Institutions no longer see their campuses in isolation, and creative developers are crucial for the integration of campuses with the community and for providing the facilities to enrich student life. **UL**

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