

Leveraging Anchor Institutions for Urban Success

Background

It has become abundantly clear that partnerships and creativity are necessary to leverage existing resources to stimulate vibrant cities. All that is required to make cities great does not rest in one place. Government, at any level, does not possess the dollars, thinking and capital needed to navigate the complexity of today's cities. However, most U.S. cities have extensive civic, cultural and intellectual assets – assets often embodied in what we know as anchor institutions – that can be put to work on behalf of cities.

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Universities, community colleges, museums, libraries, municipal enterprises, hospitals, parks, performing arts centers and sports arenas are all included in the array of institutions that can contribute to the culture, economy and vitality of cities. Some are supported by public funds. Others are not. But these so-called “anchor institutions” represent “sticky capital” in cities. They cannot easily pick up and leave the community. So they have special importance to the re-making of a city and its future, and they have special reason to want to be instrumental in shaping their city's future (although all will not choose to do so).

On May 1 and 2, 2007, in San José, California, CEOs for Cities convened an unprecedented discussion among urban leaders around strategies to leverage anchor institutions for urban success. This conversation intentionally crossed sectors with the aim of forging a unified voice on the potential for anchor institutions to make maximum contributions to their cities.

The idea of a cross-sector perspective on how to leverage anchor institutions is no small feat in itself, as different industries have tended to engage in their own dialogue around how they partner and the roles they play in their cities. Each industry has its own culture, pace, approach and set of priorities.

CEOs for Cities' first major paper, *Leveraging Colleges and Universities for Urban Economic Revitalization* (2002), focused on a specific anchor institution industry – higher education. In that paper, Michael Porter documented the job generation power of the “Education and Knowledge Creation” traded sector to the U.S., with the sector adding more than 500,000 jobs between 1990 and 1999, second only to the Business Services sector. Porter also highlighted a variety of other contributions that institutions of higher education bring to their cities, including employment and purchasing. The paper was written when numerous institutions of higher education were becoming far more aware of the interdependency between their direction and strategies and the health of their neighborhoods, cities and regions.

The conversation should develop into a broader discussion about how to network various institutions in particular cities, stimulating citywide collaboration toward unified ends.

Several decades of creative higher education external partnerships in cities provide a number of lessons that may be transferable to other industries, as other institutions ponder their roles in their host communities. The San José convening attempted to highlight some of those lessons to stimulate discussion, not only about how colleges and universities can continue to contribute to their cities but also the ways in which other anchor institutions can help create urban success.

We note that, especially in cities dependent on property taxes, tensions are increasing over what tax-exempt anchor institutions “owe” their communities in exchange for their favored tax status. We hope that as the contributions of anchor institutions to urban success are more widely recognized and more broadly leveraged, these tensions will be resolved.

As a network of urban leaders, CEOs for Cities hopes to engage a wide spectrum of urban institutions and industries on the variety of strategies that can contribute to urban success. Ultimately, the conversation should develop into a broader discussion about how to network various institutions in particular cities, stimulating citywide collaboration toward unified ends. This paper and the outcomes of the San José convening represent an early evolution of a strategic dialogue that begins with the role of higher education and culminates in citywide multi-institutional strategies.

Summary of Learnings

The following has been learned from the experiences of colleges and universities and also from examples shared during the San José dialogue:

Anchor institutions can have impact beyond their walls.

- Anchor institutions that think of themselves as institutions whose success depends, in part, on the success of the communities in which they reside (and vice versa) will be in the best position to contribute to urban success.
- Anchor institutions affect the local economy at minimum through employment, purchasing, real estate development and design, which can, in turn, affect nearby real estate values. They can also stimulate the development of related industries or industry clusters.
- Anchor institutions should be particularly imaginative and thoughtful about how their real estate, architecture, landscaping and design investments can lead to increased desirability of the surrounding neighborhoods and the creation of great cities.
- At the same time, to the extent that an anchor institution can anticipate increases in the value of the surrounding neighborhood, its leaders should work with city leaders to mitigate potential negative effects on those in the neighborhood or, better, prepare them to take advantage of the changes.
- Anchor institutions often shape the brand of a city and vice versa. It is one more way in which the interests of a city and its anchor institutions are inextricably tied.

Anchor institutions can have impact beyond their portfolios.

- Anchor institutions should take deep and imaginative inventories of their assets and their needs, then take the broadest possible view of how to act in their own interests and, at the same time, act in the interests of their communities.
- Anchor institutions at their best have the opportunity to energize an entire city.
- Stimulating new ideas, providing places to meet and share those ideas, gaining acceptance and “pick up” of ideas, and cultivating a culture of risk-taking are critical to innovation. Anchor institutions can play a lead role in providing and encouraging these critical conditions.
- Anchor institutions that encourage participation and making choices are a reflection of and prepare us for democracy.
- There is tension between the ideal of equal access and the desire for orderly public places. Anchor institutions are often on the front lines of balancing this tension. To the extent they can show us the way toward meeting both goals, and further, to make equal access a strength rather than simply an ideal, they will strengthen the broader community.
- Mayors need partnerships to achieve their goals and should look to anchor institutions as resources both to help shape their goals and achieve them.

Anchor institutions are particularly local institutions.

- Anchor institutions are often unusually local institutions. Therefore, they and their leaders

can play a special role in representing a uniquely local perspective in a wide range of civic discussions and plans.

- Anchor institutions will increase their relevance by using resources and leadership to address challenges and opportunities facing their cities. Anchor institutions should be willing to ask where their cities need help and respond imaginatively.
- Anchor institutions can play an especially important role as common or neutral ground in a community.
- Anchor institutions often anchor little-recognized cultural, educational, social and even economic ecosystems. It is important to understand these ecosystems, their participants and their dependencies so that they can be optimized to their full potential and revealed to other urban leaders.

Anchor institutions can be sources of civic leadership.

- While many anchor institutions are unusually local, others operate at a global scale, recruiting faculty/employees, guest lecturers and artists, and students/consumers worldwide. Leaders of these anchor institutions can be particularly useful in contributing to the civic dialogue a global perspective on local competitive conditions.
- By their own ambitions, anchor institutions can project ambitions for their cities. Leaders of anchor institutions can be much-needed sources of broader ambition for cities.
- Anchor institutions and their leaders, along with others, should strive to make local commitment and involvement appealing (even sexy) again.

- There is a tension between the need to make an anchor institution “levitate” and move fast to lead civic success and the need to lead without bullying.
- Anchor institutions and their leaders should contribute meaningfully to making their cities talented, connected, distinctive and innovative places.

Anchor institutions must move from outreach to engagement.

- Anchor institutions must move beyond “outreach” to “engagement.” That is, anchor institutions cannot simply make their offer and “sell” the community hoping they will buy it. Anchor institutions must engage with the community to shape the offer itself.
- The political landscape can often be messy and challenging to understand for those who are not part of it. Mayors should help their prospective partners understand how to negotiate the political landscape without getting mortally wounded.

The Proceedings: Lessons from Higher Education

As San José State University President Don Kassing said at the May 1-2 convening, “Great cities have great universities.” Many universities carry the name of their host cities. Universities help shape their cities’ identities. In fact, in San José and the Silicon Valley, higher education helped foster the growth of major industries. Indeed, the significance of higher education in cities has been on display in recent years.

It is difficult for most [anchor] institutions to simply pack up and move.

As numerous cities have, to varying degrees, experienced the flight of capital and corporations, colleges and universities remained. As some cities declined, the interdependency between institutions of higher education and their cities became starkly apparent. Colleges and universities depend on their surroundings to serve their overall purpose. They require a degree of vitality in their host cities to attract faculty and students and to provide environments conducive to teaching and learning. Simultaneously, cities depend on universities to bring vitality, not to mention a competent workforce and intellectual stimulation.

Compared with other institutions, it is difficult for most institutions of higher education to simply pack up and move. Colleges and universities are rooted in their surroundings and have a longstanding vested interest in their neighborhoods and cities. Additionally, institutions of higher education, occupying vast acreage, invest in landholdings, creating a relatively unique physicality in their bond to the cities in which they are located. Indeed, the identity of most universities is tied to their locations.

Institutions of higher education are economic engines in their cities. In the 2002 study, CEOs for Cities and Harvard Professor Michael Porter explored the range of roles that higher education institutions can play in urban revitalization – as employers, purchasers, real estate developers, incubators, advisor and network builders, and workforce developers. The Porter study shed significant light on an often-underappreciated role that higher education plays in driving urban economies.

These dynamic institutions uniquely bring to the table a range of capital – intellectual, physical, economic and human.

But institutions of higher education can contribute to their cities in other less quantifiable ways as well. These dynamic institutions uniquely bring to the table a range of capital – intellectual, physical, economic and human. Because of their diverse offerings, institutions of higher education touch numerous industries and can position them to contribute to the growth of cities in their priority areas. Many institutions of higher education own hospitals and provide medical care and training.

In the realm of research, institutions of higher education bring significant expertise and impartial fact-finding and analysis. Faculty research can be applied to issues of importance to cities. Coursework can be tailored to address local needs. In-service student volunteers can bring significant local contributions including a sense of belonging that may lead to students remaining in the area after graduation.

Historically, the initial approach of some institutions of higher education to decline in their urban surroundings was separation. Towering walls became symbolic of the desire of some colleges and universities to preserve their internal environment.

However, insulation from host cities was never realistic due to the substantial interdependence between cities and their colleges and universities. This reality helped spawn far more open and collaborative attempts among institutions of higher education to engage their communities. Campus Compact, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and numerous higher education associations promoted and highlighted the virtues of “engaged” campuses. This national framework supported the growth of the efforts of numerous colleges and universities to creatively contribute to their cities.

It is important to ensure that the engagement of institutions transcends rhetoric and demonstrates capacity to execute.

The University of Pennsylvania has become perhaps the most well-known example of a major university that expanded its engagement in its host neighborhood and city in a manner that fueled its own growth and reputation as well as revitalized its surroundings. Omar Blaik, CEO of U³ Ventures and formerly of the University of Pennsylvania, identified various lessons that are important to consider in university partnerships.

First, the nature of the engagement should be comprehensive. Institutions of higher education are multi-dimensional institutions comprised of numerous semi-autonomous units. Some of the units can be engaged in cities, but is engagement in the city truly institutional? With so many parts, internal persuasion and partnership in higher education may be just as complicated and labor intensive as external partnerships. Consequently, institutions of higher education may not be positioned to move as quickly as some other institutions.

Second, it is important to ensure that the engagement of institutions transcends rhetoric and demonstrates capacity to execute. Third, clear understandings of the definition of community and the degree of commitment to a particular identifiable area – an immediate neighborhood or beyond? – are necessary. Where does an institution wish to make its greatest local contributions? In the case of the University of Pennsylvania, incentives for University faculty and staff to live in the immediate neighborhood, West Philadelphia, became a core aspect of engagement. Increasing faculty and staff members' personal vested interest in the neighborhood became central to expanding the institution's commitment to the area.

The experience of higher education, according to Blaik, is also instructive around the complexity and risk associated with partnerships. External parties in cities may not agree with the aims of institutions. Institutions, invariably, must compromise in order to be effectively engaged in any form of external partnership. One issue that has proven controversial in higher education, and even in the discussion at the San José convening, is the effects of university expansion in cities. While universities in their expansion efforts might redevelop areas that are not receiving adequate attention, the potential for displacement of local residents and businesses often looms. University expansion is often viewed with suspicion, particularly in lower-income communities.

How decisions get made and who takes leadership in decision-making seems to consistently influence the character and quality of engagement.

How decisions get made and who takes leadership in decision-making seems to consistently influence the character and quality of university engagement. Kassing identified "listening" as an essential lesson in San José State's engagement. He cited the

institution's strong relationship with City of San José planners and regular conversation with them as essential to involvement in San José. Indeed, as a public university, San José State is more directly accountable and tied to local government than a private institution like the University of Pennsylvania. Among the many lessons that higher educational engagement teaches for leveraging other anchor institutions is that there are numerous differences based on the type of institution, and there is no "one size fits all" strategy.

Regardless of the type of institution, leadership is essential to success in partnerships.

Regardless of the type of institution, leadership is essential to success in partnerships. Especially because of the decentralized nature of colleges and universities, institutional leadership is the only sphere responsible for the whole of the institution. It is difficult to demonstrate any kind of truly institutional commitment to a strategy for partnership and engagement without the support of senior administrators and trustees. How do institutions of higher education move from fragmented approaches to engagement to "concentrated" strategies? While complex institutions like universities stand to bring about greater success by leading, they must avoid being local "bullies." The great challenge for higher education is to partner within and without – forging clarity of vision internally and collaborating externally.

The Proceedings: Lessons from Other Anchor Institutions

Other anchor institutions in cities must continually consider their relationship to their surroundings, evaluating their vested interest in expanding their contributions to their cities. Universities are unique and bring particular capabilities, needs and expectations to their engagement. But all anchor institutions can emulate the lessons learned from such engagement by universities. More significantly, all anchor institution leaders have the potential to contribute their expertise and institutional resources to city success, particularly when they are connected as a network and focused on shaping that success beyond their institutional interests and walls.

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In a final panel asked to respond to the previous discussions at the May meeting, Martín Gómez drew out four points that resonated with his attempts to “Strengthen the Public Library as an Essential Part of Urban Life” (www.urbanlibraries.org) as President of the Urban Libraries Council:

1. To be an anchor institution, you need to be actively involved with building community, and that means having respect for the community that you serve, as well as fostering community involvement. And when I say building community, I'm not just talking bricks and mortar, I'm talking about actually building human capacity.
2. Anchor institutions...need to be involved with [their communities] at the highest level.
3. [Anchor institutions must] work successfully within a very messy political landscape.
4. [Anchor institutions must] recruit and cultivate leadership.... I firmly believe that the rules have changed. How do you engage, how do you govern and how do you develop your assets as an organization? The young people who are coming up now, I don't

think they necessarily want to run things the way that we run them. We're in gray hair institutions, many of us.

So what is it specifically about museums, libraries, community colleges, performing arts centers, parks, sports arenas, municipal enterprises and hospitals that can add to their cities' success?

Certainly, other anchor institutions, like colleges and universities, are purchasers of goods and services and employers. Similarly, they play a direct or indirect role in land development through which they can influence surrounding land value with building siting and design. In pondering how various anchor institutions can be engaged in their cities, it is important to address in what ways these institutions maintain a vested interest in their surroundings.

Anchor institutions also provide intellectual, artistic and physical stimulation that add measurably to quality of life. With their design and programming (and perhaps even ambition) anchor institutions contribute to a city's distinctiveness, vibrancy, character and identity. And to the extent they do that, they help attract and retain talent.

New York Public Library

Paul Holdengräber, Director of Public Programs/LIVE at the New York Public Library, wants to make the marble lions that stand before the library's entrance "roar." Charged by NYPL President Dr. Paul LeClerc with "oxygenating" the library, Holdengräber has set out to enliven it and make it relevant to thinkers and doers of new generations. In order to do so, Holdengräber has taken advantage of the New York Public Library's status as a substantive anchor institution. He has frequently wondered, "How much does the New York Public Library actually weigh? How many pounds does it weigh? It's a very heavy, heavy institution." But in order to maximize its

contribution to the city and make it successful in-and-of itself. Holdengräber has counterintuitively sought to make this heavy institution “levitate,” to make it “come alive.” He’s done so through innovative public programming that he sees as “another way of opening the door. It’s another way of welcoming people in the institution, creating a place also for people to meet. It’s one of my biggest obsessions: how do people meet, where do they meet and how do we provide them something to talk about so they come together?”

Holdengräber has made a significant contribution to the intellectual and social life of New York City and created a remarkably successful public program for the library with *LIVE from the NYPL*, a speaking series that features provocative luminaries discussing surprising topics (a recent event had film director Werner Herzog answer the prompt, “Was the 20th Century a Mistake?”). LIVE events sell out within hours of online announcements and draw several hundred people, a large percentage of whom have not been to events in the past; since Holdengräber has taken over, attendance at library programs has increased by 350 percent.

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The discussions and the receptions that follow provide opportunities for what the *Washington Post* called “intellidating,” a phenomenon resulting from the fact that in “urban centers...gray matter is the new black of the hip social scene” (*Washington Post* 04/16/07). As such, LIVE programs excite and motivate through ideas. They have contributed to a swelling of library memberships by 7,000 people, particularly young professionals. The *Post* article quotes Holdengräber and cites his impact: “Let’s face it, there really is nothing more sensual than caressing someone’s mind,” said Paul

Holdenraber... Two years ago, the average age at library lectures was 68. It is now 41 and falling.’”

Los Angeles Music Center

Centers for performing arts in cities are often viewed as stuffy, elite and inwardly focused. However, their potential to bring vitality and make numerous other contributions to their host cities is significant. The Music Center of Los Angeles County, created in 1964, includes the Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the Mark Taper Forum and the Ahmanson Theater. The center is in the heart of downtown Los Angeles and is a major draw to the area, bringing 2 million visitors per year to its more than 1,000 performances and 3,000 other events.

However, these impressive numbers do not tell the entire story about the value of the Center to the city, county and state. The center is the largest provider of arts education in California, working with 500 public schools and touching about half a million children per year. Additionally, the center employs 1,000 artists, making it the largest single employer of artists in the county and playing a special role in nurturing new actors, directors, and playwrights.

The presence of the Center and its popularity has leveraged changes in Los Angeles and within the arts industry. Because of the public interest stimulated by the Center, according to its President and CEO Steven Rountree, improvements in transportation and infrastructure have followed in downtown Los Angeles. In the arts industry, the Center has become somewhat of a “whale” on which smaller “fish” can feed. Many of those associated with the Center are involved in their own smaller arts organizations.

Josephine Ramirez, the center’s Vice President of Programming, forges avenues for people to be both producers and consumers – “prosumers” – by

providing opportunities for people to make art in their own lives. Her Active Arts programs get people to “play music recreationally, just to make music together.” This effort also includes Dance Downtown, free public open-air events where volunteer dancers teach others. In her view, these participatory events for artistic expression validate the cultural activity that already takes place in society every day. She sees her role as being one of updating an established institution for new realities. She asked attendees at the May meeting, “How do we meet the challenge of [making] arts and culture...reflect [today’s] participatory society? How do we start an ecology of practices that reflects more of what’s going on in society? Think about...mirroring democracy: what better way to symbolize a community that plays together by playing music together; what better way than by dancing together?”

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Thus even in its programming, the Center’s influence extends beyond the arts. That’s even more the case in the way the Center and its leadership conceive of its role within Los Angeles. In one of the May convening’s more striking moments, Steve Rountree described how he has moved the Center and its board to play an active and imaginative role in helping the city confront a broad range of public policy issues, many of which are not directly related to the Center’s mission but to all of which the Center and its leadership can make significant contributions. Rountree said,

“I began to ask myself, how can we and our board be divorced from issues like homelessness, transportation issues, housing issues, crime and residential housing in the community surrounding us? Can we as an institution stay up on the hill, be aloof, put on music at night, and pretend as if we have no real engagement with or involvement with the broader community? I have a board of 65 individuals who are

the leaders of major companies... And we began to have a dialogue about the fact that we had a responsibility and, in fact, a self-interest in making sure that our board and our leaders, the senior management of the Music Center, devote a significant amount of time and energy and effort to getting involved in the community. This is a shift in terms of what a leader of a nonprofit might do and what board members are expected to engage with. The challenge for the 21st century is how do we become a center for the people that is truly embraced by our community?"

Examples from both the New York Public Library and the Music Center of Los Angeles County demonstrate key aspects of the contributions anchor institutions can make to their cities and reveal how those contributions can bring them benefit, too. Leaders at these institutions have creatively devised programming to attract new audiences, especially younger people. Importantly, they have done so in a way that suits the new generation's desire for active engagement. The departures from tradition are notable in the experiences of these institutions, emphasizing connecting to their markets and their cities in new ways. Not taking mobility for granted, these institutions have made additional efforts to bring people to them by meeting people at their level of interest.

The concept of leveraging institutions for urban success is predicated on the ability of institutions to build upon their strengths – the core of what they provide – in a manner that contributes to cities in new ways. The New York Public Library in leveraging the exchange of ideas as a means of bringing people together, and the Music Center of Los Angeles County in leveraging artistic expression as an effort to draw in those who produce and consume arts, have done just that.

Citywide Strategies

Stories of the successful engagement of individual institutions from various industries are plentiful. The greater challenge is to develop effective coordination and cooperation across multiple institutions around common citywide direction. The San José convening launched a critical discussion highlighting some promising broader strategies.

Cleveland

Ned Hill, Cleveland State University's Vice President for Economic Development, seeks to make Cleveland the "Milan of the Midwest." Beyond the boldness of his vision, what's important to note is that, first, Hill is empowered by the university to think and act broadly on behalf of the city (not just the school), and second, Hill and others leading Cleveland's District of Design initiative have selected an aim and a method for their work that cross institutional and industrial boundaries.

The District of Design is "a concentrated area of Downtown Cleveland that is comprised of wholesale consumer product showrooms, design studios and the infrastructure to support world-class design and product development" (districtofdesign.com). It is the result of the ongoing efforts of more than ten cross-sector partners, including Cleveland State University, the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Downtown Cleveland Alliance, and corporate partners.

According to Hill, northeast Ohio has nurtured talent through top-tier industrial design programs but has not been able to retain talent. Excellent institutions and courses produce designers that seek more vibrant design cultures elsewhere. What's interesting is that Cleveland State's leadership understands this as the institution's problem, and sees a path to success in partnering with other city and regional leaders. Hill's job, in his words, is to "align the University to the [local] economy...because if there's not an economy in northeast Ohio, there's no place for our students, and the lifespan of our institution is fairly short."

Hill possesses a deep understanding of how the alignment between the cross-sector partners leading the District of Design initiative must be rooted in Cleveland's distinctive assets. Key among those is its historic and contemporary strength in all things design. From institutional to individual, educational to

corporate, the design assets in Cleveland and the surrounding region, Hill claims, are unparalleled throughout the U.S. It's natural, then, that a cross-sector group of leaders would aim their efforts at "making Cleveland the product design capital of the U.S.: By fostering a design culture, drawing on regional assets and capitalizing on the increasing design awareness, the region can position itself as a long-term leader in design and innovation."

The District of Design isn't replicable in other places—that's precisely the point and the power of its focus on local assets—but the logic behind its creation can be transferred elsewhere. When individual institutions recognize their interdependence and when their leaders collaborate on broad projects that match a region's past and present to a positive future, everyone benefits.

Phoenix

As Bob Bangham, Creative Director of RipBang Studios, explained to other CEOs for Cities members at the San José convening, anchor institutions haven't always lived up to their promises of positive impact on cities. This is particularly the case with sports arenas. But with their plan for the Jackson Street Entertainment District in Phoenix, Bangham and his firm have proposed new and innovative techniques for literally turning inside out institutions that currently face only inward. Their work is premised on the fact that thinking about institutions as individual entities, as opposed to considering their relationship to each other and to the surrounding community, limits everyone's success. Cross-sector collaboration yields surprising and productive uses for anchor institutions.

Phoenix, one of the fastest growing cities in the country, epitomizes sprawl. The city, though, has recently turned its eye toward enlivening its downtown and is investing in a new Arizona State University campus, a \$600 million convention center, a new bio-medical facility and a light-rail system there. The Jackson Street Entertainment District lies in the middle of downtown and touches these new anchor institutions. It also incorporates an existing ballpark and arena. As Bangham pointed out, these anchor institutions might bring 5 million people to downtown Phoenix every year, but they do so in short spurts: "the people come, they go to a game...they turn around and they leave immediately." Thus, these institutions—built with significant public funding—have had relatively little impact on the vitality of the downtown neighborhood or the overall city.

Bangham's plan for the Jackson Street Entertainment District seeks to make the area more vibrant and more conducive to sustained cultural, social and economic activity. His novel approach finds an asset—productive space—in what many other planners see as a barrier—the long, empty facades of sports arenas and convention centers and the great width of the streets separating them.

Bangham's plan will literally narrow Jackson Street by facing the anchor institution walls with mixed-use development. Where there once was only broad, blank space will stand retail, cultural institutions, hotels, and housing, all of which will line streets designed "for people and not cars." With the collaboration of civic, corporate and anchor institution leaders, Bangham's novel approach to adaptive reuse has the potential to transform the area from a destination for quick trips to a sustainable and lively downtown for the whole city.

Cincinnati

Cincinnati's Uptown area, consisting of seven neighborhoods, faces significant challenges but includes numerous anchor institution campuses. An impressive group has formed under the banner of the Uptown Consortium to develop and execute comprehensive revitalization strategies for the area. Their efforts represent a new take on the ways anchor institutions can contribute to classic development strategies for a part of a city that needs help.

The Uptown Consortium includes the leadership of the area's five largest employers: Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, The Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, TriHealth, Inc. and the University of Cincinnati. At the May convening, Tony Brown, the President and CEO of the Uptown Consortium, described how the neighborhood's significant needs are being met by these institutions, which he describes as an "oasis of economic impact ...surrounded by a sea of decay, poverty and despair." But while these institutions' financial contributions to the Uptown efforts have been significant, they've been matched by broader institutional commitments, particularly in leveraging expertise for new development strategies. Brown said they have "brought [their] intellectual capacity to the table [and together are] trying to create a sense of place and encourage employees and the workforce to be part of the Uptown Renaissance."

Why have these cross-sector institutions and leaders collaborated on this effort? Brown said that contrary to their initial assessments, they realized that their success was closely related to that of the Uptown area: "The University, as well as the hospital, felt that if they could create economic fortresses and control the customer experience on the campus, that they didn't have to worry about what happened in the surrounding area. But I think what they found...[was] that was a false premise. The University of Cincinnati was losing students. Parents would come to the campus and realize that the surrounding areas were not safe and were decaying. And...Children's Hospital...though they created an economic fortress, they did not create an environment where employees and visitors could walk out and stop and shop."

Uptown has a ways to go, but the Consortium has made significant strides so far. Brown says the key to their initial successes has been a creative and patient approach to place-making that is girded by significant cross-sector collaboration. The institutions in the Consortium see their role in broad terms and understand the broad benefits their efforts can bring about. But they also recognize that their hopes lie in intense collaboration with each other and with the city.

The Cleveland, Phoenix and Cincinnati examples, though none is yet complete and two are just getting launched, speak to the kind of creativity required for urban success. Dynamics and priorities shift, and cities change, so cities must remain aware of their assets and develop strategies to leverage them. City Hall cannot merely develop strategies and expect anchor institutions to follow. Cities must engage their anchor institutions in planning their collective future.

Questions and Considerations

A number of questions were posed during the final discussion that can guide further inquiry and action on this topic.

How can anchor institutions have maximum impact beyond their walls and their portfolios?

- How can anchor institutions enliven communities and make them more dynamic places that trigger people's imaginations, emotions and their desire to learn?
- How can anchor institutions make our cities more productive, more competitive and more equitable?
- How can we use anchor institutions to create a "post doctorate" for talent?

How can anchor institutions capitalize on the fact that they are place-based?

- How can anchor institutions amplify the distinctiveness of a community?
- How can urban success be both people and place-based, bringing both growth and equity?
- How can anchor institutions create great places, the places people like to go?

How can anchor institutions be more effective sources of civic leadership?

- What will entice anchor institution leaders to play to their full capacity and see their potential to contribute to citywide success?

- What will entice those who traditionally understand themselves as urban leaders to welcome anchor institution leaders to the table when setting citywide goals and making plans to reach them?
- What platform can bring a broad array of urban leaders, including anchor institutions leaders, together around a common agenda?

How can anchor institutions move from outreach to engagement?

- How can cities become “networked places” where various types of institutions are cooperating toward common ends? How can anchor institutions reconnect our cities?
- How can anchor institutions engage the new creators (the “creator class”), especially the young creators?
- What qualifies as an anchor institution? Should we think more expansively about the definition of anchor institution?

How can anchor institutions evolve over time to be effective contributors to urban success?

- How can anchor institutions retain or strengthen their institutional credibility and find new ways of opening their doors as generations and demographics change?
- How can institutional leaders build their personal credibility in the community to become better known and trusted? How can they become regular contributors and, listeners in the ongoing conversation about their cities broader goals?

- How can an institution demonstrate its relevance to the community and contribute its resources meaningfully to community challenges and opportunities?
- How can an institution and its leaders network with other institutions and leaders, moving the entire community forward?

What's Next?

We propose the creation of a Learning Network convened by CEOs for Cities composed of anchor institutions, civic and corporate leaders from three or four cities across the U.S. to explore and apply these concepts over an 18-month engagement. With consultation from CEOs for Cities as necessary, each city will undertake a new initiative or ramp up an existing initiative to increase the contribution a group of anchor institutions can make to the success of its city. The initiative will be structured according to the principles of high-level involvement, innovative approaches, surprising sources of mutual benefit and shared interest that this white paper outlines.

Taking a cross-city approach – figuring out the practical applications of the concepts together – will both accelerate the learning curve through sharing of ideas and collaboration between participating cities as well as provide broad-based examples and lessons that can be applied to all cities.

Participants in the national Learning Network will first convene in late 2007 and will meet throughout the 18-month project. In the interim, cities will set their own schedule for additional meetings. Bi-monthly conference calls for the whole network will enable sharing across the cities involved. CEOs for Cities will monitor cities' progress and provide guidance throughout.

At minimum, a participating city should have the active leadership of its mayor, participation by a leading business or business organization, and involvement of two or more anchor institutions. CEOs for Cities members interested in seeing their cities join the learning network should contact Kristian Buschmann at kbuschmann@ceosforcities.org or 312/553.4616.

Special Thanks:

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