

# CASE STUDY

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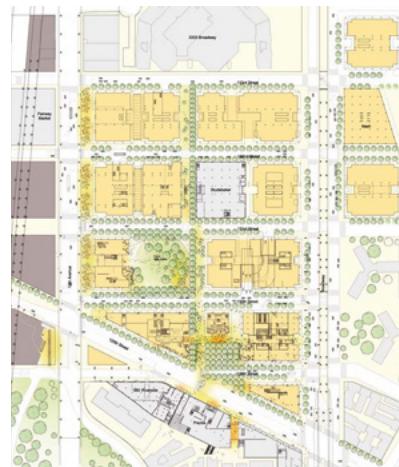
## THE US MODELS: UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA (PHILADELPHIA), NEW YORK UNIVERSITY AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY (NYC)

Global universities embedded  
in urban neighbourhoods and  
renewal processes

# Summary



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1. Columbia University, NYC, Manhattanville campus development: aerial view of existing site in West Harlem
2. Columbia University, Manhattanville campus site plan (showing Science Center bottom right). *Images courtesy Renzo Piano Building Workshop, architects in collaboration with SOM, urban designers*
3. New York University, NYC, approved Core plan. *Image courtesy NYU and Grimshaw/Michael van Valkenburgh Assocs Inc.*
4. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, aerial view showing extent of campus development, including recent eastern expansion. *Image courtesy University of Pennsylvania*

This case study presents a comparative view of three American global research universities located in two of its most important east coast cities – New York, an international hub for business, real estate and culture, with the biggest urban population in the country; and Philadelphia a regional centre for manufacturing, healthcare and health education, business and financial services – the University of Pennsylvania opened the first teaching hospital, medical and business schools in the country. It occupies around 300 acres of land in the University City area of West Philadelphia, where it has been engaged for two decades in neighbourhood revitalisation initiatives, and is now forging new connections with the city centre across the Schuylkill River. NYU, which became one of the country's largest universities in the early 20th century, and established a reputation for excellence particularly in the arts and humanities, occupies around 230 acres in the city and is currently engaged in re-shaping its central Washington Square Core campus as a symbolic anchor location for its global operation, along with a number of satellite locations dispersed beyond the city's central Manhattan Island. Columbia on the other hand, with a high profile in science and technology research, and approximately 300 acres at its disposal, is investing in a major project to develop a cohesive single campus within the central area by linking its two existing city sites (Morningside and Washington Heights) through a new development in Manhattanville – a former wharfside neighbourhood on the Hudson River. Each of these university expansion initiatives has raised key questions about the relationship between the institution and the city, and demonstrates similar approaches to resolving those issues which also highlight specific differences between the three cases.

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## Introduction: the US context

'A university has the power to be a great agent of change; ... It has the intellectual, financial, and human resources to take on the challenge of community transformation. It espouses values that embrace shared community, diversity, and engaged discourse. The efforts, however, are unlikely to reach these ambitious goals quickly or easily ... Today Penn celebrates its ongoing transformation into a world-class urban research university that is nourished by the neighborhood it helped to develop and revitalise'

*Judith Rodin, President of University of Pennsylvania 1994–2004 (Rodin 2007:182–3)*

For UK universities there are many lessons to be learned from their US counterparts, which have been drawing on a long tradition of 'public service' and community engagement in relation to their own initiatives around expansion and renewal. Many of the internationally-renowned American research universities are physically embedded in urban contexts and associated urban problems, and since the 1950s have both encouraged and been supported by a number of federal initiatives to respond actively as responsible and powerful actors to the needs of disadvantaged urban populations. Largely pre-dating significant efforts on the part of UK universities in this direction, the Campus Compact was founded in 1985 by the Presidents of three leading private universities (Brown, Georgetown and Stanford) to integrate the concept of civic engagement into campus and academic life and address specific problems in the areas of literacy, health care, hunger, homelessness, the environment and care for the elderly. This was followed in 1990 by the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities signed by 48 presidents and chancellors of public universities, establishing a national consortium with a commitment to addressing the problems of metropolitan areas through teaching, research and professional service and different kinds of partnership, at both the urban and regional level (Bromley 2006). This commitment has been interpreted in different ways among institutions over time, including a focus on the contribution to economic regeneration more widely as a fundamental part of the university remit. However, as we can see in the case studies (particularly Columbia's Manhattanville development), this argument has not always been accepted by local communities as an authentic response to localised urban problems, resulting in distrust and tensions which can become intractable in university-community relations.

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## Historical and policy contexts

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University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University are both among the US's oldest universities – two of the nine original Colonial Colleges founded before the American Revolution (1740/49 and 1754 respectively), and both part of the elite Ivy League group of eight universities. New York University was founded almost a century later in 1831, as a nonsectarian institution aimed at the city's middle-classes, which was modelled on the University of London. All three are now private, globally-focused research universities, acutely aware of the need to compete at an international level, and Columbia and NYU both operate a number of global academic centres located around the world as part of their academic mission. At the same time, they share a common interest in demonstrating the depth and breadth of their local engagement in tandem with urban and regional economic growth.

## Universities in a changing urban environment

1.1

The 1950s witnessed in many US cities ‘white flight’ from centre to periphery on a significant scale, leaving a vacuum at the heart of American urban life. As in the UK two decades later, empty and run-down properties in urban cores became home for poor and disadvantaged black, migrant, and ethnic communities lacking access to proper social infrastructure and services. Many of these increasingly derelict and insanitary neighbourhoods were cleared and replaced through large-scale urban renewal and social housing projects which were to create their own problems and in many cases intensify existing racial prejudices and divides. Between 1968 and 1974, a network of ‘urban observatories’ was sponsored by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to monitor and intervene in the problems of such neighbourhoods, until funds ran out.

Jane Jacobs’ seminal 1961 publication, the *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs 1961) charted these problems and offered a stinging critique of the urban planning policies that had swept away street life and neighbourhood relations in many local areas. During the 1960s, the Ford Foundation had actively supported university engagement to address a complex array of urban problems, where the very term ‘urban’ was often used as a euphemism for ‘black’ (Glazer 1988). But, as Glazer notes, there was a lack of any ‘marked success’, as universities themselves grappled with the changes in their physical environs - characterised by escalating rates of crime and phenomena such as a graffiti plague on the New York subway which ‘symbolised a growing loss of control of the social environment’ (Glazer 1988:173).

While some universities had long-standing traditions of urban engagement – such as Chicago, through its School of Sociology established in the 1930s to develop a focus on local, field-based urban inquiry - others did not. The University of Columbia was focused on leadership training (Bender 1988) and international research and reputation, while New York University (1832), was originally created to meet the needs of the city’s middle-classes (Glazer 1988). The University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia meanwhile was a ‘commuter university’ founded by Benjamin Franklin (1749) ‘to prepare students for lives in business and public service’ (Kromer and Kerman 2004:5).

Glazer recounts that in 1967 Columbia’s provost Jacques Barzun described the neighbourhood at its site in Manhattan’s Morningside Heights, located just above Harlem – “the capital of Black America” for generations’ (NYC DCP 2007:83) – as ‘uninviting, abnormal, sinister and dangerous’ (Glazer 1988:273), and unattractive to students and staff. The University’s response was to begin buying up and renovating buildings for its own use, evicting existing tenants and sowing not only the seeds of hostile relations with the local community, but also student opposition and dissent which erupted in 1968. The legacy of these policies can be seen today in the fight over the development of its new Manhattanville campus. NYU (New York University) on the other hand benefited from selling its McKim Mead White campus in the Bronx to address a financial deficit in the 1970s, as the area steadily fell apart under the impact of crime, drugs and arson. By contrast, its Washington Square site in bohemian Greenwich Village was sheltered from the city’s increasing social problems, and provided the opportunity for the university to invest in programs in arts, theater, and film (Glazer 1988). However the university’s presence also contributed to processes of local gentrification that continue to cause friction today in its project to expand its Core holdings.

The University of Pennsylvania played an integral role in state-funded urban renewal initiatives in Pennsylvania from the 1950s onwards, both as a key player and as a beneficiary (Rodin 2007), becoming strongly identified with radical clearance policies seen as detrimental to existing communities, and again arousing student opposition. In 1959 Penn, Drexel University, and other city institutions formed the West Philadelphia Corporation to

implement a scheme for a new University City zone at the eastern end of the campus – 151 buildings on an inner-city 269-acre campus bordered by residential neighborhoods to the north, west and south, and open industrial spaces to the east. In the 1960s the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority designated the University City Urban Renewal Area to promote institutional and economic growth: this involved property acquisition, tenant relocation, and clearance. The University's launch of a new Science Center on the site of 20 blocks in Black Bottom became the trigger for anti-racist demonstrations protesting that, notwithstanding the promise of jobs, 'urban renewal means negro removal' (in the term coined by novelist James Baldwin). But the University continued to expand its reach west and north through the 1960s, including the construction of a new Super Block on the site of Hamilton Village, displacing 1,220 local people (Rodin 2007), the university was sued by the Walnut Street community group over its planned demolition of this and Sansom Street – a projected loss of 3400 blocks. By the mid-80s, and in response to rising crime and social deprivation in West Philadelphia, the University was engaged in a major re-think of its controversial urban expansion policies which resulted in the launch of the West Philadelphia Initiatives in 1997 and forms the backdrop to its more recent Penn Connect and Penn Connect 2 development plans.

## Universities as drivers of community regeneration

1.2

'It is hardly likely that New York's universities and colleges will again be tempted to play a significant role in dealing with the problems of an enormous world city.... They will continue to do what they have done ... adapting to change rather than guiding it'

*Nathan Glazer (Glazer 1988:287)*

As Glazer's comment illustrates, the history of US university intervention in urban problems has been a difficult one, despite the support of national government for the integration of such an approach into universities' own development plans. Bromley points out that universities are often forced to see themselves as 'local stakeholders', simply because their assets and names are fixed in particular places and, furthermore, tied funding and named endowments often come with particular legal obligations (Bromley 2007).

During the 1960s and 1970s, calls were made for the precedent established by the 1862 land grant universities, built to serve rural communities, to be extended to the urban realm with funding made available for urban engagement; however the Urban Grant University programme (Title XI, 1981) was shelved under the Reagan administration. Under President Clinton from 1993, and following on from the 1985 Campus Compact, and the 1990 Declaration of Metropolitan Universities to accept broadened social responsibility and address a wide range of metropolitan issues, urban policy research was again promoted and the Community Outreach Partnership Centers programme established (four years of financial support to community partnerships at higher education institutions nationwide), with the Lempert's concept of the 'communiversity' entering circulation in 1996 (Bromley 2007). In 2001, the 'Building Communities' programme was set up by the Rockefeller Foundation, headed by David Maurrasse, and the concept of the university as 'anchor institution' in urban neighbourhoods promoted (Maurrasse 2007).<sup>1</sup>

Maurrasse summarises the ideal behind the programme, pointing out that previous work by universities with communities had tended towards both the punitive and the paternalistic, while treating communities as if they were primarily research subjects: 'academia has to work itself out of the *punitive* approach of ... policing urban communities ... Community partnerships are beginning to progress beyond the *paternalistic* approach ... Partnerships have been challenging the *lab* approach ...' (Maurrasse 2001:7). He also points

to another common problem: ‘the lack of cohesion within institutions of higher education may be generally understood by those within academia; however when partnering externally ... it can create confusion ... leaving neighborhood residents wary of even the most well-intentioned outreach efforts’ (Maurrasse 2001:7).

University development plans offer many different kinds of opportunity for community engagement and partnership, while also presenting ample scope for dissent and conflict – both within institutions and in their relations with neighbours and external partners. Columbia’s \$7 billion, 25-year Manhattanville project, its largest expansion in 100 years, is accompanied by a \$150 million community benefits agreement, locked in for 20 years, including a new secondary school sponsored by the University. In addition, the proposed 6.8 million sq ft of education, research, and cultural facilities in the former manufacturing zone (where over 50% of buildings lay in existing University ownership) is intended to provide an interface between the university community and its neighbours and job opportunities. Even so, Columbia has faced vocal opposition from community groups during the planning process, especially in relation to its use of the power of eminent domain (compulsory purchase by the state on behalf of the university) over commercial properties in the area which it needed to acquire to complete its holdings. In 2006, the lobby group WE-ACT (West Harlem Environmental Action) underlined the threat posed by the university to the existing community, and to the city’s cultural heritage more widely: ‘Columbia plans to satisfy its space needs by moving into an occupied neighborhood that is already vibrant with a unique synergy of ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity – one of the few such communities in the City’ (WE-ACT 2006:1). In response, the university has argued that ‘The Proposed Actions are intended to provide zoning and land use changes needed to revitalize this section of Harlem’, and that the Academic Mixed-use plan would both ‘Create a lively, welcoming urban environment for graduate students, faculty, other employees, and the community’ and ‘Promote employment opportunities for local residents’ (NYC DCP 2007:14).

Columbia’s approach has aroused particular opposition because it rode roughshod over an alternative plan for low-impact infill development prepared by Community Board 9. The University’s determination for its new space to be housed on one site within a comprehensive development plan framework implicated what the Center for an Urban Future (a New York-based think tank) described as: ‘an aggressive clearance and buildout to its entire projected space need literally decades hence’ (Hochman 2010:3). The University’s own online journal (published by the Undergraduate Writing Program) noted that ‘The residents of West Harlem question why the university insists on occupying all of the land in the proposed area’ (Huffman 2008). And as the CUF report points out, Columbia’s strategy contrasts with the approach adopted by NYU to its own expansion policy.



NYU: new facilities at Jay Street, Brooklyn. Image courtesy NYU

NYU, which describes itself as ‘a private university in the public service’ (NYU 2008), and was designated by the Carnegie Foundation in 2006 as a university that is ‘community engaged’ (with 15,000 student volunteers placed in various community organisations) (NYU n.d:16) has opted for a multi-pronged approach which combines development within its Core site at Washington Square with additional dispersed sites (to be identified) within the local neighbourhood, and further ‘remote’ locations beyond lower Manhattan. Of the latter, the key opportunities include Jay Street in Brooklyn, through an affiliation with Polytechnic University, Governors Island, and

the health corridor on First Avenue. The first of these is informed by a specific agenda around social and economic benefits to Brooklyn, where 190 NYU students already provide 30,000 hours of tutoring a year in reading and maths in 16 Brooklyn public (state) schools.

The Washington Square proposals are also strongly informed by the need to improve its relationship to the neighbouring community identified in the USPWG (University Space Priorities Working Group's) Interim Report of July 2013 (USPWG 2013:4), and which reached crisis point with two lawsuits brought by opponents of the Core Plan, one by tenants in protected tenancies in Washington Square Village, and another opposing new development on open public space between the University's existing Superblocks. NYU has therefore been engaged in an extensive outreach process involving a long list of community groups, and is committed to providing new space for community use as part of its development. The Office of Government and Community Affairs is responsible for building partnerships with local community groups and other organisations as well as providing regular updates and liaison on the University's development process.

At University of Pennsylvania, the launch of the Center for Community Partnerships located in the Office of the President in 1992 represented a formal commitment to a programme of community engagement that would run in parallel with research and teaching in the institution. The following year, the Penn Faculty and Staff for Neighborhood Issues (PFSNI) group was also formed and the university started working with an external partner, The Community Builders. On Judith Rodin's appointment as President in 1994, a strong lead was established towards the launch of the West Philadelphia Initiatives, which was specifically presented not as a masterplan for development, but as a roll-out of different initiatives related to neighbourhood safety and services, housing, local commerce, economic development, and education provision through a Penn-supported school. Rodin, who acknowledges the strong influence of Jane Jacobs' work on her thinking, documented the process and experience of implementing the WPI in an invaluable personal account published in 2007 (Rodin 2007). As a result of this experience, and accumulated expertise, the University was appointed by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2009 to co-ordinate, through its Institute for Urban Research, a national Task Force commissioned to investigate how the HUD could 'increase its impact and strategically leverage anchor institutions, particularly higher education and medical institutions ('eds and meds'), to improve communities and help solve significant urban problems' (MARGA 2010).<sup>2</sup>

## Universities as economic development engines

1.3

'Federal grantors now favor large-scale, interdisciplinary collaborations that integrate departmental silos and invite collaboration with industrial research and development (R&D) organizations. That's a tall order for campuses configured in the last century or earlier, so universities across the United States are expanding or – if landlocked, as Columbia is at Morningside Heights – are creating entirely new districts for overflow or relocation'

*David Hochman, economic development consultant (Hochman 2010:2)*

As Bromley points out, many US universities have commissioned studies to demonstrate to politicians and business leaders that, in terms of outreach, regional economic development is one of their main areas of impact (Bromley 2007). Addie Keil and Olds have also described the 'competitive dance' around economic growth in which 'urban regions and HEIs are partners' (Addie Kiel Olds 2015:29), highlighting the significance of the New York Applied Sciences competition of 2011, in which universities were invited by Mayor Bloomberg to compete to work as partners with the city in the creation of a new technology campus that would establish New York as a global leader in the technology and innovation industry. They argue, citing Friedman (2012), that the ecosystems of the new IT revolution are made up of cities and towns which also 'combine a university, an educated populace, a dynamic business community', but that universities' interest in the production of economic growth

may also override a concern for their impact on surrounding communities and social spaces: ‘space relations are largely treated as instrumental; innovation networks appear separated from the contingencies of place, or divorced from broader processes of contemporary urbanization’ (Addie Kiel Olds 2015:33).

NYU launched its first strategic physical space planning exercise, the 2031 Framework, in 2007 to coincide with the introduction of Mayor Bloomberg’s bold planning policies for the city. The Framework states that, ‘In the wake of 9/11, NYU decided to affirm aggressively its connection to New York’ and ‘has assumed a leadership role in promoting sustainability and public service’ (NYU 2008:9). It also pointed out that, in the absence of historic support from wealthy alumni, it had been dependent on ‘entrepreneurial academic initiatives’ (NYU 2008:7) to support its growth and achievements since 1981. From the city’s perspective, Mayor Bloomberg affirmed: ‘it’s very hard to differentiate where New York University stops and New York City starts. That is one of the real keys to NYU – the city goes right through it. NYU benefits from the city, and the city benefits from NYU ... if you are a student there, you are a citizen here’ (NYU n.d:4). The NYU Strategy document further underscores the key role of the university in contributing to the city’s future growth and prosperity: ‘By the middle of this new century, a small set of worldwide “idea capitals” will likely have emerged ... the capitals of a comprehensive and global knowledge-based enterprise, and they will be marked by the presence of great universities’ (NYU n.d:10). NYU’s plans for development at its ‘remote’ sites are specifically conceived as incubators for the city’s growing knowledge economy – notably its Jay Street site in Brooklyn, ‘which will serve as the home of NYU’s Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP), one of the City’s designated “genius schools” to help foster New York’s fledgling tech/innovation economy – [and] will also house NYU’s highly-regarded entrepreneurial incubators’ (NYU 2014), as well as its Urban Future Lab and Media and Games Network (MAGNET). This initiative is highlighted in the 2031 Framework as one which can enable NYU to be ‘a key engine of economic development for the local, regional, national, and global economies through promoting its capacity for invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship’ (NYU 2008:16).



Left: Columbia University, Science Center: 3D aerial view. *Image courtesy Renzo Piano Building Workshop*  
Right: Pennovation Works, overview. *Image courtesy University of Pennsylvania*

Columbia already counts itself as the seventh largest nongovernmental employer in New York City with over 14,000 employees, and a significant contributor to the New York economy – spending approximately \$2.4 billion annually (including more than \$1.25 billion in salaries), of which 70% is spent in the greater New York metropolitan area (NYU DCP 2007). Its Manhattanville site is intended to enhance that contribution, providing 17 new buildings (of which only six have designated uses to date) for university activities, and 6,000 permanent jobs (Hochman 2010). One of the buildings is the Jerome L. Greene Science Center for neuroscience including 70 labs, along with a Business School, School of the Arts, School of International and Public Affairs, and an academic conference centre.

The project involves the re-zoning of the site from manufacturing to mixed-use, again with an emphasis on kick-starting economic revitalisation in the area and beyond. Community objectors dubbed the University's proposed development an 'academic-biotech industrial complex' at odds with the community-generated West Harlem Master Plan, supported by the NYC Economic Development Corporation (WE-ACT 2006:1), and concerns have been raised about the hazards posed to the public by the science labs. However, the university's consent for re-zoning does not permit commercial research activities to take place on the site, and no such space is proposed, placing limits on the future of the site as a science or tech-based hub. It is anticipated that, alongside the university's research buildings, the main new uses would be retail, office and residential alongside a waterfront park and other public spaces, including interactive outreach facilities intended to foster citizen science.

At the University of Pennsylvania – already the largest private employer in the city with 24,000 employees and a 300-acre campus (Rodin 2007) – a Knowledge Industry Partnership was formed in 2002, and Keystone Innovation Zones established in the form of sites clustered around university facilities to promote the growth of new businesses with access to university facilities. Biotech research and entrepreneurship was established as a key element of the university's expanded operation on 14 acres of land acquired along the west side of the Schuylkill river, through a partnership venture with Drexel University and pump-priming funding from state and city sources aimed at promoting the biotech industry through university-industry collaborations (Lincoln Institute n.d). The venture was supported by the appointment of Penn President Judith Rodin to head the Mayor of Philadelphia's New Economy Development Alliance, which would take on as its first task the project of facilitating the development of the research centre, seen as 'having the potential to transform the Schuylkill riverfront into another Cambridge, Mass., abuzz with biotech entrepreneurs' (Lincoln Institute n.d). Since then, the University's planning vision for 2011–2030 (Penn Connects 2) has built on the acquisition of a further 23 acres of industrial land on the south bank of the river, which will host an alignment of university-related research functions with private business orientated towards tech-transfer development opportunities. The so-called Pennovation Works is described by the University as 'a fertile environment for entrepreneurial growth' geared towards business opportunities in the region,<sup>3</sup> while complementing the existing University City Science Centre.

## Universities in the fight to be competitive

1.4

'Universities all over America are now finding they have to plan expansion and growth, particularly in science'

*Kathy A. Spiegelman, chief planner, Harvard Allston (Viswanathan 2008)*

While US universities compete to prove their contribution to economic development at local and regional level, and for the associated funding offered through state and city programmes, they have at the same time been forced to focus their efforts on enhancing their international reputations and offers. As the NYU 2031 Framework notes: 'Until 10 years ago, a great river of faculty and student talent flowed from around the world to America's great research universities. Then, both Europe (which created an educational common zone) and Australia/New Zealand aggressively began to recruit foreign students (with Europe seeking parity with the United States in this regard). China is now building up to ten research universities each year and India also has begun intensive efforts to retain its faculty and students. After 9/11, the United States began to impose restrictions on faculty and students from abroad, ranging from visa screens to export rules. Thus, even if the number of foreign faculty and students coming to US Colleges and universities is relatively stable, the nation's share of the very best is diminishing ... all research universities will be forced to deal with this change' (NYU 2008:6).

Plans for expansion and growth, in order to provide new and up-to-date facilities for both academic and social purposes, along with good quality housing for staff and students, in an attractive physical environment, have therefore become fundamental to universities' strategies to secure their international reputations and the federal research grant funding awarded on that basis. Columbia's comprehensive approach to campus planning on its Manhattanville project is justified as essential to the maintenance of its position as a leading institution of higher education in the US, which could not be achieved through an ad hoc expansion over dispersed sites, without a cohesive identity: 'An interchange of ideas among various intellectual disciplines is greatly facilitated by having several schools in one place, and it is key to the accomplishments of the University's faculty, graduates, and students' (NYC DCP 2007:10). It will also provide a central location connecting the Morningside Heights campus south, and Medical Center site north as a cohesive university environment (NYC DCP 2007). Indeed, community objectors suggest that it is this need 'to compete with its elitist Ivy League peer institutions, such as Yale, Princeton, and Harvard', rather than a genuine desire to revitalise the neighbourhood, which is driving the project (WE-ACT 2006:1).

For NYU, the new physical expansion strategy was a response to a serious lack of space, including a 20-year backlog, which was viewed as a major obstacle to the university's growth and competitiveness: 'The aim is to provide the necessary square footage (est 6m sq ft) to advance NYU's academic trajectory ... serious challenges lie ahead both for research universities in general and for NYU in particular. The University will need to be especially creative and nimble if it is to realize an agenda of continued advancement' (NYU 2008:5). It points out that 'if Columbia at 230 gross sq ft per student rightly describes itself as "space deprived" vis a vis peers, NYU at 160 gross sq ft per student is space-starved' (NYU 2008:8). New faculty housing provision, especially larger units, is also viewed as a vital part of the offer, recognised as 'an essential strategic resource in NYU's recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, scholars, and practitioners' (NYU 2014: 35). Although the strategy is 'not a masterplan, for the university does not have a large contiguous campus over which it can exert control' (NYU n.d:18), it boldly promotes the idea of 'a major research university with no campus ... [which] overturns traditional notions of a university and perforates boundaries between diverse local and global communities' (NYU n.d:12), and further extends its reach to a number of additional international sites (eg Abu Dhabi). Redefining itself as 'a global network university' (NYU 2008:17), or 'global research university' of the future, it suggests that universities tied to a single location 'may limit their capacity to capitalize fully on highly fluid knowledge and talent markets' (NYU 2008:10), while acknowledging also that 'one of these challenges is how, as the University extends its locational endowment to sites across the world, to be in and of the place, while being in and of the whole' (NYU 2008:10).

In the case of the University of Pennsylvania, Judith Rodin's tenure as president (1994 – 2004) represented a period of dramatic growth in its research funding and endowment, and saw the University rise from 16th to 4th place in the national rankings for research universities by 2002. Rodin herself attributed some of that success to improvement of its relationship with the urban context in which it is embedded: 'Today Penn celebrates its ongoing transformation into a world-class urban research university that is nourished by the neighborhood it helped to develop and revitalise' (Rodin 2007: 182-3). In 2001 a new masterplan laid out a strategy for future university expansion towards the east that focused on creating new connections between the university and city centre and cementing the role of the university in the wider economic life of the city and region.

'Institutions of higher education, together with medical institutions, may be among the few stable private entities in some inner cities'

John Kromer and Lucy Kerman (*Kromer and Kerman 2004:9*)

As Kromer and Kerman point out, universities can be crucial allies for local government in processes of inner city renewal, valued for their fixed presence, long-term commitment and multiple resources – unlike government bodies subject to the vagaries of change in politics, policies, and funding streams. However universities also suffer from the uncertainties generated by changes in personnel, institutional re-structuring, and funding cuts, all of which play a major role in the success or otherwise of spatial development projects. Internal dissent and lack of leadership often become obstacles to progress and may compromise the delicate relationships between universities and other urban partners and communities – as highlighted by Maurrasse (Maurrasse 2001). Hence clear structures, processes and systems of accountability need to be put in place by universities embarking on such projects if they are indeed to function as 'anchor institutions' in wider urban renewal programmes.

## Avoiding 'death by consensus': Penn

2.1

Speaking of the West Philadelphia Initiatives, Rodin stated that: 'Only one entity had the capacity, the resources, and the political clout to intervene to stabilize the neighborhood quickly and revitalize it within a relatively short time period, and that was Penn' (Kromer and Kerman 2004:11). The University had considered forming a separate non-profit development body to run the Initiatives and raise funding, but instead decided to locate the leadership and management of the project within the university's own administration – described by Kromer and Kerman as 'a key defining characteristic of Penn's approach to neighborhood revitalization' (Kromer and Kerman 2004: 9). Hence 'the Initiatives were an administratively driven approach that was academically informed, led and managed by the University's President and senior administrators ...' – but 'not structured as an academic project or an assignment to a community affairs department or staff person. Instead, the Initiatives were made a top-priority University policy that widely engaged the institution ... Dr. Rodin chose to delegate responsibility and authority across the University's major administrative departments as part of a broad, decentralized reorientation of the University to this new priority' (Kromer and Kerman 2004:11), working closely with the Board of Trustees, the latter constituted as a standing Committee on Neighborhood Initiatives.

Overall leadership was provided by the office of the President, through her direct participation and assignment of senior staff to deal with key responsibilities, and day-to-day implementation handled by the Executive Vice President. A new post of Vice President for Government, Community and Public Affairs, reporting to the President, was created to manage external communications and co-ordination with government and community representatives. Further official roles were assigned to the Deans and leadership of the Graduate School of Education, Center for Community Partnerships, and Penn Design. The Cartographic Modeling Lab – a joint venture between the School of Design and School of Social Work – provided access to neighborhood-level market and demographic data through its Neighbourhood Information System, which was an essential resource for staff working on the property side.

A new merged Office of Facilities and Real Estate Services was formed to consolidate responsibilities and integrate built environment and services across the five initiatives – neighbourhood safety and amenities, housing, local commerce, economic development, and education provision. The Vice President for Business Services, along with the Office

of City and Community Relations, developed an economic inclusion programme (Economic Opportunity Plan) that specifically included neighbourhood residents and businesses in procurement processes as well as home ownership programmes (including a mortgage programme and rehabilitation of empty houses), through The Office of Community Housing. The Division of Public Safety worked with ‘safety ambassadors’ employed by University City District (a special designated services district) and coordinated staffs with patrol officers from the Police Department (Rodin 2007).

Relations between the University and the surrounding neighbourhoods were mediated via monthly ‘First Thursday’ information exchange meetings with local community representatives, as well as scheduled updates, regular dialogue with the Mayor, and a series of ‘Third Thursday’ events which were also established to draw people to University City in the evenings, with various shopping and entertainment attractions. In addition Penn Praxis, a consulting practice based in the School of Design, helped to facilitate interaction between local people and university staff and students, and academic projects and design studios were established to investigate topics related to the Initiatives and relevant to neighbourhood priorities (Kromer and Kerman 2004, Rodin 2007).

As Rodin emphasises, it was considered crucial to establish a structure for the implementation of the initiatives that would be both flexible and robust enough to avoid ‘death by consensus’ (Rodin 2007:58). Managing the redevelopment programme as an internal leadership team was both more efficient, and permitted greater ease of access to investment capital from banks, contractors, and service providers. However, it was also understood that the Initiatives should not be conceived or put across as an imposed ‘masterplan’, but rather implemented gradually as a responsive approach to the complexities of the urban situation, based on a broad-based consultative process, and allowing for the emergence of a range of partnership arrangements with both community and business organisations. Indeed, as Kromer and Kerman note: ‘The formal publication of goals and strategies did not occur until implementation activities were well under way’ (Kromer and Kerman 2004:17).

By contrast, the subsequent Penn Connects planning initiative launched from 2005, under President Amy Gutmann, was directed by a Campus Development Planning Committee on the basis of a much more university-centered consultative process conducted through the following groups: Council of Deans, Faculty Senate, Academic Planning and Budget, Penn Alumni Society, University Council, University Council Committee on Facilities, Undergraduate Assembly, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly, Penn Professional Staff Assembly, Weekly Paid Professional Staff Assembly, Senior Planning Group, University Health System, and a University-wide Faculty Advisory Group.<sup>4</sup> This reflects the decision made by the University to re-focus development towards former industrial lands bordering the river to the east, with a view to generating stronger connections into the city centre, and away from the residential neighbourhoods to the west and north which had for so many decades felt the impact of the University’s presence and encroachment to both good and bad effect.

## Rallying the sceptics within: NYU

2.2

‘In September 2007 the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees asked that the University’s leadership submit to it a document describing the likely challenges to the continued development of the University’s academic mission over the coming decades and offering a framework for making the choices necessary to maximize that development’

*NYU Framework 2031 (NYU 2008:25)*

By 2012, NYU's Core Project proposal had been approved by New York City Council, allowing the university to construct new facilities within a revised 'zoning envelope' just south of its Washington Square site<sup>5</sup> in Greenwich Village, framed by its two southern residential 'superblocks' (Washington Square Village, two residential slab blocks to the north; and University Village, also known as Silver Towers, three Listed residential towers by I.M.Pei plus the Coles Sports Center to the south - both of which house a mix of university and non-university residents, with open space in between). This approval was granted through the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and on the basis of 'hundreds' of meetings between the University and local stakeholders, civic groups, faculty and students, and local officials.<sup>6</sup> It was conditional on the provision and maintenance of space for community and public use, with an option for the NYC School Construction Authority to build a school on the site, and an embargo on any construction on the northern superblock until 2022.

The project will extend to as much as 2m sq ft of development, a quarter to a third of which will be below ground,<sup>7</sup> and is projected to include 53% academic space as the main priority for the University, in addition to 17% student housing, 9% sports facilities, 6% faculty housing, 7% community (non-NYU) use; and 5% other (including retail and parking). Following the ULURP consent, an internal consultation across faculties and departments was established to ascertain the priorities for the space required. This was co-ordinated by a University Space Priorities Working Group made up of 26 representatives from the faculties, the Student Senators Council, Administrative Management Council and University Administration, and chaired by Professor Ted Magder from the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development. The Working Group met the deans from all the schools near Washington Square, as well as other relevant stakeholders and community representatives (NYU 2014b) and set up three subcommittees to deal with specific areas of concern. These were the Academic and Non-Academic Space Subcommittee, the Finance Subcommittee, and Stewardship and Quality of Life Subcommittee.

The Working Group was conceived as an open and transparent forum that would extend its reach to the whole university community, with a designated interactive website on which to share and solicit feedback on its reports.<sup>8</sup> It was presented as 'a model that advances the University's effort to re-imagine its mechanisms for governance' (NYU 2014b :7). It met 17 times and in Spring 2013 convened three Town Hall meetings to deliberate the concerns of each of the subcommittees, prior to submission of its report in May. The focus of its remit was to decide on the appropriate allocation and usage of existing and new space, and propose ways of managing the inevitable disruption caused by the building programme. In particular it recommended the provision of substantial new performance space as an integral part of the academic space requirement, as well as a new sports facility, and a flagship science building on a site to be identified in or near the Core. It also recommended the construction of 150,000 sq ft of new faculty housing, particularly larger units for families, and the consideration of other options for additional housing provision such as mortgage or rental assistance and shared equity programmes. The final report specified the need for 80 new classrooms, a proscenium theater and four workshop theaters and performing arts spaces, new student study and student life spaces, an athletic and recreation centre with an assembly facility for community emergencies, halls of residence for 500 first-year students, and housing for 100 NYC faculty families, based on four principles intended to 'balance the divergence of views and steer the Working Group's fact-finding and recommendations' (NYU 2014b:3):

1. *The University has an obligation to its students to provide adequate space for their educational purposes, including their interactions with faculty and staff.*
2. *The University has an obligation to advance improvements on the Superblocks, which directly affect NYU residents, community residents, the neighborhood, faculty, and students.*

3. Any construction project should leave the neighborhood a better place in which to live.
4. The University's proposed Capital Spending and Financing Plan should be fiscally responsible, and the process of planning and budgeting should be transparent' (NYU 2014b:3).

Overall responsibility for reviewing the Core Plan was invested in the University's President John Sexton and his Office, which accepted and passed on the Working Group's recommendations with its support to the Board of Trustees, while noting that 'The members of the group – some of whom were acknowledged skeptics of the University's proposals for the Core, most of whom were faculty, and most of whom live on the superblocks – took on this assignment at a time of significant fractiousness in our community; that requires great strength of character'.<sup>9</sup> The university community's decision to build on and densify its South Block site (specifically the Coles Sports Center) was not reached without ambivalence, partly due to concerns about the financial risk – opposition was spearheaded by FASP, Faculty Against the Sexton Plan, with the support of residents and architectural heritage groups. But as part of the deal to go forward, a new Superblock Stewardship Committee was established to oversee and monitor development in line with the recommendations of the Working Group. In addition, a number of community commitments were implemented, including space for a childcare programme and facilities for the elderly.<sup>10</sup>

One of the key problems for the masterplanners appointed to produce a feasibility plan for the project in 2012, Grimshaw, was the issue of territorial definition at the site, security, and the connection with surrounding areas. Very wide pavement setbacks on the east and west sides, created by a road widening scheme that never materialised, have subsequently been appropriated as informal public spaces including a community garden and playground. Furthermore, the I.M.Pei towers are listed as architectural landmarks and so cannot be significantly altered in their setting. The masterplanners' task was then framed as balancing and realigning contested understandings of ownership and occupation at the University's site. This has prompted a shift of new development to the edges of the southern site with a new, smaller block that would not compete with Pei's 300 ft tall structures (an earlier 'Pinwheel' scheme for a fourth tower was rejected by the architect), the redevelopment of the existing large sports center (Zipper), and enhanced pedestrian flow and community spaces between the buildings – as well as, in time to come, two new buildings on the east and west sides of the northern site.<sup>11</sup>

Key to the rationale behind the Core development plan is the fact that NYU already owns the land earmarked for development, which would significantly reduce its capital outlay. Faculty opposition to financial risk was strong, and the USPWG report underlined the fact that financial planning should be conservative and that capital costs should not be met through future adjustments to tuition fees or faculty, administrative, or staff salary projections. The Capital Spending and Financing Plan for 2013-22 (South Block only) amounts to \$3.01bn, almost exactly the same as in the previous 10 years, and it is proposed that this is financed with long-term borrowing of \$1.45bn, short-term borrowing (repaid before 2022) of \$360bn, fundraising \$136 bn, drawdown of cash \$130 bn, and reinvestment of annual operating surpluses during the period of \$399mn. With a credit rating of AA-, NYU is considered to be in a strong position to meet financial commitments; however if student registration does not increase between 2013 and 2022, or if MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and online education disrupt the tuition-based business model, then elements of the capital spending plan would have to be reviewed (NYU 2014b).

## Co-ordinating physical and academic planning: Columbia

2.3

'Acquiring the necessary approvals and planning for Manhattanville has been an enormous, sometimes hectic, undertaking of land acquisition, environmental study, fundraising, community relations and negotiations. During this phase, the physical planning naturally took precedence over academic planning'

*Campus Planning Task Force (Columbia University 2010:9)*

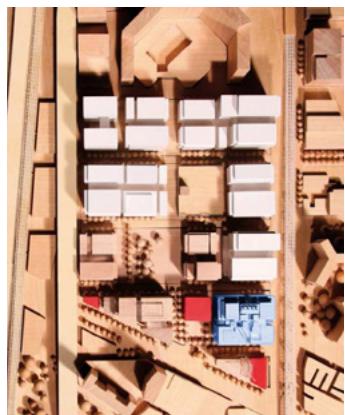
This quote underlines the extent of the work and organisation involved in getting university spatial developments off the ground even before any clear structures or direction for academic planning of desirable activities on the site have been put in place. However the latter may also be seen as a weakness or lack of clarity on the part of a university, especially when it comes to communicating a clear vision of its future operation to external stakeholders and consultees.

In 2003, the University created a Campus Task Force, chaired by Peter Marcuse (Professor Emeritus of Urban Planning) and Sharyn O'Halloran (Professor of Political Economics and International and Public Affairs), to oversee and coordinate processes towards the planning, design, and realisation of the Manhattanville Campus. This included design guidelines, consultation with architects and stakeholders, dissemination of information, and updates to the President, Lee Bollinger, and Trustees. The Task Force approved the plans for the Manhattanville development, while abstaining from expressing a view on issues where they felt they had been provided with 'insufficient information': notably, 'the desired uses of buildings...; the role of community and/or non-University uses in the model; the presence or absence of affordable housing connected with the development; and the mechanisms for making decisions as to uses and developments at the site during the interim phases before full build-out' (Columbia University 2010:26). It further requested information on the timetable for the academic planning programme, specifically the process for requesting and assessing proposals from the schools for their space requirements and planned activities on the new campus. It noted that planning already in hand for the School of the Arts and new science buildings could provide a model for further academic planning and that the information be shared more widely, 'including suggestions for a consistent form of response incorporating a grid dealing with student numbers, space needs, and academic objectives. We commend this A&S approach as a possible model for other planning efforts, including the responses of Columbia schools to the Provost's solicitation last fall. We stress the need for full involvement of faculty, students and staff in preparing these responses.' (Columbia University 2010:15). In addition, it stressed the need to consider the role of the school 'in relation to the University, the surrounding community, and the wider artistic community, as well as issues of space, cost, facilities, and, in particular, the challenge and use of future technologies' (Columbia University 2010:16). It also mentioned that the Business and Engineering schools had generated different planning models that could be useful for other schools just starting the process, including the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). This process had involved students and staff in assessments of the impact of their current space on their academic reputation, and of the benefits which might be derived from the provision of new space for specific purposes, including a financial appraisal of the likely costs and funding sources.

In 2007 the Task Force was formally asked to review and make recommendations on the relationship between physical and academic planning. Following consultations with the President and Provost, key administrators, and deans of different departments, it found that there was a significant lack of coordination between the two, and also within academic planning itself, which was often carried out either at departmental level with little reference

to the rest of the university, or conversely at central administration level with little reference to academic departments. Furthermore, different schools within the University manifested strongly contrasting levels of preparation and resource in relation to the opportunities presented by the Manhattanville campus. They concluded that: 'Successful long-term academic planning requires ongoing governance that enhances transparency, encourages participation, leverages existing institutional structures, and coordinates academic, fiscal and physical planning across units' (Columbia University 2010:10). As a result, the Senate's Physical Development Committee was expanded in 2010 to include academic planning (as the Academic and Physical Planning Committee) and absorb the Task Force itself, and provision made for the formation of a board of Trustees, faculty, students, alumni, staff and possibly outside experts to solicit and assess detailed proposals from the schools for activities on the new campus and their funding sources.

By 2011, Columbia had resolved the controversial legal issues around its ownership of the site and announced that the first buildings would be opened in 2016, with Phase 1 scheduled for completion by 2020, and the remainder by 2030. Architects were appointed for the individual buildings, including Renzo Piano Building Workshop, the masterplanner (with SOM), and Diller Scofidio Renfro, with landscaping by Field Operations. The Education and Libraries Committee recommended that buildings should be designed with a focus on 'the campus-wide use of walls and open spaces of the entryways, landings, atria and corridors of University buildings to broaden the intellectual landscape' (Columbia University 2010:30), as well as multipurpose common space, and an interactive neuroscience laboratory and other community outreach activities in the Greene Science Center. Digital media and simultaneous broadcasting of teaching sessions at multiple locations would support integration across the university's sites, while, as described on the University's website: 'new trees, lighting, street furnishings, public art and publicly accessible open space would invite people to the entire area. New buildings would not only be open to the public but would also look and feel open because of transparent glass at the street level' (Huffman 2008).



Left: Columbia University, Manhattanville site: masterplan model, with Science Center at bottom right (in blue). *Image courtesy Renzo Piano Building Workshop*

Right: Columbia Manhattanville, landscape proposals by Field Operations: artistic impression, large square. *Image Field Operations*

However, the university was strongly criticised for failing to set up adequate structures for debating these issues with the local community, and, especially, providing sufficient detail on how the new campus would actually benefit West Harlem except in the most general terms of new public space. CUF's David Hochman suggested that: 'Columbia has a superb design and engineering team working on a powerful and (to me) elegant physical plan, and it has signed a CBA [Community Benefits Agreement] that, whatever one may think of the process that produced it, does include many significant and useful

commitments to genuine university/community partnership' (Hochman 2010:3); but WE-ACT had earlier claimed that 'Although Columbia has claimed to be considerate of the community's concerns, it has never allowed the community any input into its proposed development'. Instead, 'it chose to conduct a series of "public meetings," hosted by CB9 [the local Community Board], where it gave grand presentations, lecturing residents about the "benefits" that the new campus would bring to the West Harlem community' (We-ACT 2006:2). Indeed, 'Chairperson of the local community board Jordi Reyes-Montblanc commented, "On a scale of 1 to 10, Columbia is a minus 5 in terms of trust"' (Williams 2006).

It was further reported that: 'At an August 2007 public hearing, Nellie Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council argued: "Columbia University's expansion cannot be viewed in isolation from the overall gentrification of Harlem ... The masses of Blacks, especially the poor and working classes are exacerbated, angry, demoralized and put off ... there is no political will from elected officials to provide a viable alternative to the powers-that-be including Columbia University's land grab that will permanently alter the ethnic, socio-economic and political demographics of West Harlem, and by extension the greater community of Harlem" (NBPC website)' (Huffman 2008).

In response to these 'toxic dynamics' and a demand for inclusive job development on the site (Hochman 2010:4), the University's External Relations and Research Policy Committee made a number of recommendations, including the co-ordination of a University-wide plan to raise community and media awareness of the benefits of the new campus, notably jobs and economic development; establishing a 'welcome center' on the campus where local residents can apply for jobs and obtain information about the construction programme; implementing best building practices and expanding its medical outreach programmes to ameliorate any impact on West Harlem's asthma epidemic; and promoting staff and student collaboration with the West Harlem Local Development corporation to implement the CBA, alongside organisations already involved in community outreach (such as Community Impact and the Gateways initiative) (Columbia University 2010: Appendix 4).

Nevertheless, Columbia has struggled to convince the local population that it will bring genuine urban renewal, not just gentrification, to the area. Public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact plan challenged the definition of West Harlem as blighted, and re-affirmed the feeling that financial rather academic interests are driving the scheme, while the University's imperative to remain competitive rests above all on its real estate strategy (NYC DCP 2007:21) – perceptions that the University will need to prove wrong as the scheme proceeds, if it is to regain local trust.

## Visions and narratives

3

'An urban campus isn't defined by gates and walls, but by weaving the university into the fabric of city life'

*Columbia University/Manhattanville website*

'We saw that we could promote connectivity with the community and the city by taking walls and fences down and emphasizing visual transparency of buildings and accessibility to open spaces'

*Judith Rodin, President University of Pennsylvania (Rodin 2007:168)*

University spatial developments provide the opportunity for universities' visions of themselves, and what they represent to others, to be manifested as collections of facilities and spaces in which particular activities take place and communities assemble. Before that can happen, visions have to be created through collective effort in words, images and technical drawings – usually masterplans for real identified sites. Different institutions vary in their approach to how material the vision should be, and how far it should be shared with a wider public, but they all recognize the importance of conveying a public message which increasingly stresses the interconnectivity of university and city, and the necessity of minimizing the physical and psychological barriers which have defined university campuses in the past. Although this may not extend to a vision of the 'open university' as an institutional entity open to all, it does emphasise the place-based nature of the campus as one to be extended and opened up to a larger urban constituency with potential benefits for all.

### An incremental approach: Pennsylvania

3.1

'Penn Connects is an inspiring and achievable vision for the future of the entire campus and, in particular, the new and existing land in the east. It sets forth a vision rooted in the tradition and history of the campus; one which extends and enhances the successes of previous planning and design initiatives that have transformed the campus, such as the creation of Locust and Woodland Walks and Blanche Levy Park. The creation of concept corridors, or "Bridges of Connectivity," enliven the pedestrian experience and create opportunities for vibrant development'

*Penn Connects website*<sup>12</sup>



Left: University of Pennsylvania: Penn Connects 2 – a vision for the future.

Right: Penn Connects 2: Walnut Street axis re-visioned as gateway to the city centre.

*Images University of Pennsylvania, [www.pennconnects.upenn.edu](http://www.pennconnects.upenn.edu)*

The Penn Connects vision is grounded firmly in campus planning and urban design manoeuvres, presented through attractive CGI imagery on its website. 'Connectivity' is key to that vision, both the connectivity of campus, city and region, and the connectivity of cutting-edge medicine, academic facilities and research, with the world of commercial translation and the wider benefits that can be derived from that. Hence the development of 'Pennovation Works' (and its play on words) on a former industrial site, and other translational facilities on campus.

The Penn Connects vision is very visual and spatial, but by contrast the West Philadelphia Initiatives which form such a significant part of the campus's history and traditions in which it is rooted were embedded in a more incremental, but also holistic, vision which could not be transmitted so effectively via concrete plans and images. Indeed, this was not felt to be a desirable approach, and a clear decision made not to announce

a comprehensive masterplan to the public at the start, but rather to ‘roll out’ the Initiatives little by little, in recognition of ‘the impossibility of being truly comprehensive in urban planning from the start’ (Rodin 2007:55). As an unfolding narrative then, the Initiatives comprised several key components, including: shared planning principles developed by PennPraxis (the outreach, practice and professional arm of the School of Design)<sup>13</sup> for the development of the 40th Street corridor running along the residential western edge of the new University City District; established goals for economic inclusion, notably increased spending through purchasing relationships with community-based businesses and those owned by ethnic minority groups; the avoidance of gentrification as a principal of the university’s housing regeneration policy, by focusing on affordable rented housing, home ownership for smaller homes, and a mortgage scheme from which developers or investors were barred; and the revitalisation rather than fortification of the campus (Kromer and Kerman 2004:8).

As defined by Kromer and Kerman, there were two key messages which the University aimed to put across through the West Philadelphia Initiatives: 1. ‘The health and vitality of Penn and West Philadelphia are intertwined’, and 2. ‘Penn is deeply committed to West Philadelphia’ (Kromer and Kerman 2004:13). And these were aimed at the widest possible audience: local residents and their representatives, students and their families, university staff, alumni, local government officials, corporations and foundations, other academic institutions and the media. By reinventing the University’s domain (along with Drexel University) in the troubled West Philadelphia area as University City District they also effectively rebranded it as a specific amalgam of university and city, responsible for delivering particular services, amenities and opportunities to local residents and businesses. These include projects such as the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative launched in 2010, based on the following premise: ‘WPSI operates from the viewpoint that many of West Philadelphia’s unemployed residents are talented individuals ready and willing to contribute value to their next employer – given the right opportunity’.<sup>14</sup>

The West Philadelphia Initiatives are often cited as a model for university participation in urban renewal processes. However Penn’s implementation of its vision of university-neighbourhood integration has not escaped accusations of gentrification – especially in relation to the demographic data showing a diminishing black and growing white community – and questions about its real motivations. By 2000 and again in 2010, census data was analysed by the university to demonstrate reduced crime, and increased commercial development and local purchasing in the UC area.<sup>15</sup> But Harley Etienne, in an ethnographic study based on 42 neighbourhood interviews, suggests that Penn’s view of its own role in neighbourhood improvement is ‘somewhat overstated’ and that both crime reduction and increased housing values simply mirrored national trends. Moreover, while most local residents appreciated the University’s input, and felt they benefited from resources that other city institutions did not provide, they were also sceptical about its motives and found that ‘in dealing with area leaders and neighborhood groups, the university was not always fair or transparent’ (Edelman 2013:388). Comments of this nature point perhaps to the advantages of a clear and communicable vision over and above an incremental plan which may be perceived as implementation by stealth; while on the other hand, universities fear being held to a comprehensive masterplan which ultimately they cannot deliver due to complex evolving urban conditions beyond their control.

## Framework 2031: ‘NYU in NYC’

### 3.2

NYU unveiled a vision for its future development over 25 years in its Framework 2031, as a response both to its own crisis in space provision, and to Mayor Bloomberg’s request that all New York’s major institutions outline their long-term plans in relation to the city to inform

his PlaNYC 2030. NYU's vision rests on two principles of development – provision of space for growth and improved student experience, and an advancement of its institutional role as a globally networked university in the evolution of the city as an 'ideas capital' and hub of the knowledge economy. But these elements of the narrative are also anchored in a vision of space and place which hinges on the university's physical and symbolic Washington Square location and its existing architectural and urban identity: 'Its presence there is essential for its identity and mission and has only become more important as NYU's network extends globally' (NYU 2031 n.d:115).

NYU's expansion at the 'Core' is pinned to visions of modern urbanism which it aspires to fuse in its plans for new development, blurring the boundaries between city and university. The two slab blocks and the three towers built on the two southern superblocks between East 3rd Street and West Houston Street in the late 1950s and mid-1960s, are surrounded by open public space, exemplifying the modernist vision of the city as a rational organisation of dwellings and work-places set amidst open green space for leisure and exercise (NYU 2031 n.d:142).<sup>16</sup> The superblocks were created by New York City's slum clearance programme, which demolished buildings across the entire neighbourhood to create them, opening the way for the university to take their place. The new plans acknowledge the problems caused by this radical approach to city renewal, and the need to reinstate something of Jane Jacobs' vision of the city as a place of juxtaposed scales, textures, and activities that produce vitality through their friction: 'NYU's intention in this plan is to respect and bring into balance these conflicting visions that coexist in the community' (NYU 2031 n.d:145).

In line with this ambition, it has also engaged in the redevelopment of a city-owned, 'long-dormant', building on Jay Street in Brooklyn to provide a mixed-use academic centre that will focus on engineering and applied sciences, particularly in relation to urban issues. As the home for NYU's Center for Urban Science and Progress amongst other programmes and incubators, it will provide a physical base in which to explore the university's vision of itself in a close relationship with the city as 'laboratory and classroom'. Here it will promote research into issues such as resilience, renewable energy, and informatics, as well as developing entrepreneurship and innovation as part of its drive to become a key engine of economic development locally, regionally and globally (NYU 2014a).

Thus NYU's vision for its future development as a city-based university unconstrained by campus parameters, and fully engaged in contributing to urban vitality and prosperity, is manifested both in its architectural and academic plans. On the one hand, its proposed infill developments and enhanced community spaces on the two superblock sites evoke Jane Jacobs' vision of the street-level city; while on the other, its newly established presence in Brooklyn through a merger (with Polytechnic Institute) to create the NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering, and the various interdisciplinary urban programmes to be housed at Jay Street, represents a developing vision of the institution as outward-facing and engaged with urban communities and future priorities.

### Ivy League and West Harlem sharing space: Columbia

### 3.3

Columbia's vision of itself as an urban campus woven into the fabric of city life (see quotation above, Section 3) has been framed by the masterplanner's concept of the Manhattanville development as centered on a piazza, or talking place, which will bring people together on the university's territory. Columbia has a reputation less for openness than for heavy-handed security at all its campus sites, but *The Morningside Review* reported that: 'Piano [Renzo Piano Building Workshop, masterplanners with SOM] and the university aim to create a space where the Ivy League and West Harlem communities can share their day-to-day activities and thereby engage in a dialogue that will further human

understanding' (Huffman 2008). It is the university's physical expansion which can make this happen, producing new fields of interaction in the city that did not exist before, and generating new benefits for the urban population more widely – in the architects' words: 'The new campus will be a place of research and knowledge production integrated with the city, in close contact with its social reality, street culture and energy ... Unlike the gated campus just five blocks south at Morningside Heights, the Manhattanville development is designed to be part of the neighbourhood and open to all. University programs have been pushed up a floor or more above street level, creating what has been termed the "Urban Layer", whereby the ground floor of each building on the new campus will be devoted to public activity' (Renzo Piano Building Workshop).<sup>17</sup>



Columbia University Manhattanville campus, Science Center: rendering (left), and under construction (right). *Images courtesy Renzo Piano Building Workshop (left), Columbia University 2015 (right)*

As we have seen, however, this vision of shared space facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding has not been equally shared by representatives of the West Harlem community. Their vision was of 'a unique opportunity for Columbia to assume a leadership role in changing how development programs are planned and implemented in New York City. Indeed, this project can serve as a model for a revolutionary government-private interest-community collaboration in urban renewal and economic planning nationwide' (We-ACT 2006:1). This vision was laid out in the 197-a Plan produced by the neighbourhood Community Board 9 from 1991 onwards, which privileged affordable housing provision, and the retention of some light manufacturing activities alongside new job-intensive businesses to benefit locals – in addition to the provision of green space and social, cultural and economic opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

The co-existence of these two visions of how Manhattanville might be developed underline the reality of the area as a problematic and contested space in the city, while at the same time – and as emphasised by the University's own Student Coalition on Expansion and Gentrification (SCEG) – 'Almost no-one is against the expansion entirely' (SCEG n.d:3). Indeed, to outside observers, the initiative seems impressive – as enunciated in an anonymous post responding to *Columbia Spectator*'s announcement of the construction plans: 'Looks fantastic. Columbia continues to lead the way. Other universities will not be able to compete with these plans' (Vigeland 2011). And Columbia's vision has been ratified by the city's implementation of re-zoning legislation through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), in order 'To allow Columbia to fulfill its role as a leading academic institution that makes a significant contribution to the economic, cultural, and intellectual vitality of New York City' NYC DCP 2007:4). As buildings start to rise on the site, and clarification is sought over the dispersal of the \$150m community benefits fund, the University may need to enhance its narrative and communication channels to ensure that an attentive public audience can understand better how that will happen.

## Translation into place

The impacts of these university developments are both immediate and long-term, as they materialise on site and re-shape neighbourhoods. They raise strong concerns about the disruption and effects on public health caused by extended periods of construction activity, and about the loss of historic buildings and urban settings, along with social displacement and cumulative gentrification in the future. As discussed in section 1, these concerns often go back a long way, rooted in histories of perceived university encroachment on the city and an unequal pitting of community against university resources. In addition to the disappearance of homes and small businesses, one of the key issues is the securitisation of urban territory, as part of a more general trend towards the privatisation of public space in the city; another is the ‘studentification’ of residential neighbourhoods and services, at the expense of families and older people. However universities are also well-equipped with knowledge and know-how in the fields of planning, design and social sciences which should make them ideal partners in new development initiatives, if these resources can be effectively mobilised and coordinated both with estates and facilities programmes, and with local planning and urban renewal frameworks.

### Neighbourhood tactics and strategies: Pennsylvania

4.1

One of the key features of the University of Pennsylvania’s West Philadelphia Initiatives was the move to bring undergraduate students back to live in new accommodation constructed on campus, in order to mitigate against the effect of studentification in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Kromer and Kerman report that in 1990, 41.2% of the local population was white, 46.2% African American, and 11.2% Asian. The median family income was \$27,657, and 15.7% of families were registered as being below the poverty line (Kromer and Kerman 2004:8). There was a perception that the university had used development strategies over the years to separate itself from its neighbours through the construction of office and residential buildings for its own use on the sites of former homes and businesses, especially to the north. From 2000, the university set out to reverse this situation through a policy of acquiring and renovating dilapidated housing (of which 15% owned by absentee landlords), through its Neighbourhood Housing and Development Fund (1999), and returning it to the rental market for occupation by a mixture of university and neighbourhood tenants. The proportion of graduate students renting increased slightly, while the undergraduate population dropped, and the university opened a successful new public school (Penn Alexander) in 2001 for local families. The North-South 40th Street corridor, which was viewed by many as an unspoken boundary between university and neighbourhood to the west, became the focus of improvement strategies implemented by the 40th Street Action Team to create a more welcoming, well-maintained and integrated environment.

As Judith Rodin recounts, the university’s first priority was to implement a policy of ‘clean and safe’, ranging from relatively small tactics such as providing new rubbish bins, painting shops, installing new lighting, and cleaning at weekends, to larger strategies including the creation of the University City District entity. This was set up as a not-for-profit organisation involving 35 ‘safety ambassadors’, to organise arts and other events, and co-ordinate renewal schemes such as the farmer’s market, UC Green – an urban gardening collective – and LUCY (Loop through University City), a shuttle service. The UCD also met with representatives from Town Watch groups to co-ordinate public safety, and organised bicycle patrols of University police, and crime levels dropped significantly.

The University also developed three major projects to boost commercial development, including the \$19m Sansom Common mixed-use retail complex, comprising a hotel, cinema, and good quality supermarket, with support from banks and foundations.

It introduced sites on campus for existing street vendors to sell fresh food, and promoted small businesses along 40th street, including a mix of ethnic restaurants, galleries, a performance centre and free studio and residential space for artists. Its advisory committee on economic inclusion made a commitment to increasing the participation of ethnic minority workers and businesses as providers of construction, goods, and services to the university. Kromer and Kerman state that of \$550 million invested in all construction projects since the inception of the Economic Opportunity Program in 2000, \$134 million (24%) was spent with minority and women-owned businesses.

However, whether as a direct result of these improvements or following national trends, house prices in the neighbourhood rose by 154% between 1994 and 2004, house sales increased by two-thirds, and the new school provision proved to be a key attraction to incoming residents – all indicators of processes of gentrification that were perhaps inevitable and are still being debated. In more recent years, the University has turned its attention to less controversial territory to the east – redundant industrial land along the river ripe for re-use as ‘innovation zones’ and ‘knowledge neighbourhoods’. These development models for extension of the campus with mixed academic and commercial spaces will physically transform the river-edge landscape, and also update the initiative established by the older University City Science Center research park of 1963 – the first and biggest in the US, said to contribute \$9bn each year to the regional economy<sup>19</sup> – for the 21st century.

## Building trust with the community: NYU

4.2

‘The Superblocks have been a source of strain between NYU and the community for the past 50 years. Members of the community see NYU as repeatedly breaking promises and ignoring community needs. For their part, some NYU administrators feel NYU cannot make even minor improvements without being attacked as destroying the neighborhood. Partly, this is a matter of some ineffective public relations. Partly, this is due to an intractable history...’

*University Space Priorities Working Group, NYU (NYU 2014b:38)*

NYU has grappled with the issues presented by its site for many years, leading to delays and hesitation in maintaining and developing its estate due to various disputes over jurisdiction. Its decision to move forward with a substantial physical development plan has been accompanied by significant concerns over the actual process of translation into place, and the mitigation of negative impacts from the construction process – including measures such as installation of sound-proof windows to existing buildings, and sequencing of heavy-duty construction activity. Construction on the northern Washington Square Village block will be delayed until 2022 at the earliest.

Unlike Penn, NYU is not considering building a public school for the neighbourhood on the site. However the Schools Construction Authority was offered an option to build one on the site of an existing grocery store on the southern block, with no charge for the land. It must make a decision as to whether it wishes to proceed by the end of 2018, and if so, to start construction by 2020. This deal, including an extension of the original deadline by four years, has been welcomed by the local Community Board (CB2) as ‘a great victory for the community’ (Tcholakian 2014).

In Brooklyn, NYU’s initiative to embed the university’s presence in the area has been welcomed by Borough President Eric Adams: ‘I am pleased to support a project that embraces sustainable construction and energy efficiency, as Brooklyn looks to be a leader in these areas. Our borough will continue to benefit from the great ideas that will emerge from 370 Jay Street, from world-class education to creative entrepreneurship’ (NYU 2014a). The university has employed Mitchell Giurgola Architects to design the adaptive reuse of

the building both to provide suitable accommodation for its new functions, including a Citizen Science Centre, and as a model in itself for the practices of sustainable construction and energy reduction which will be among the areas of research. The university's rhetoric around the project responds to the perceived disconnection of institution and neighbourhood in Greenwich Village, by emphasising the fundamental connection and service of the building to the local neighbourhood as a process of 'Putting the building back to work for the borough' for the benefit of residents.

## Achieving positive economic outcomes: Columbia

4.3

'In the end we're making a campus, not just buildings – we're working on a small city'  
*Elizabeth Diller, Diller Scofidio + Renfro (Vigeland 2011)*

Columbia's translation of its Manhattanville vision into place has been facilitated by the rhetoric of articulate architects who have consistently emphasised the urban character of the new development and the importance of the spaces in between the new buildings as sites of social interaction. It has placed relatively little emphasis on the economic and social dimensions of the initiative as a place-based project. Indeed, Hochman for CUF noted in 2010 that: 'What's different about Manhattanville ... is that to this point the plan has included no discernable emphasis on jobs other than in the university itself and in retail or service businesses that mostly offer low wages and limited advancement potential. By contrast, many new campus plans nationally make it possible for businesses that are research partners of the university to operate cheek-by-jowl with new academic space, sparking the growth of a sustainable regional technology cluster and the creation of jobs that pay relatively well' (Hochman 2010:2).

Columbia however has no planning consent for commercial research space on the site, so its facilities will include mainly facilities for graduate and post-graduate education and research, along with a central Forum building intended to provide a meeting hub on the piazza. But the impact of these buildings on the local area has been questioned, not only from a social and economic point of view, but also in terms of their form. The proposed new buildings will range in height from 140 feet to 260 feet to the roofline and have large floor plates which were criticised in comments from the Harlem Community Development Corporation and Community Board 9 on the Environmental Impact Statement: 'Large floor plate buildings have a tendency to deaden streetscapes, which contradicts an important part of the plan. The EIS should explore alternative designs for research buildings' (NYC DCP 2007:77). Furthermore, it was noted that no public ground floor uses were proposed along the perimeters of the midblock passageways and private quad/square, which 'may reduce their attractiveness, safety and accessibility to the public' – to which the university responded that 'While Columbia has stated that its intention is to create the liveliest possible streetscape, the EIS reasonable worst-case development scenario will assume the "minimum," i.e., the required, public ground-floor uses only' (NYC DCP 2007:79).

On the other hand, the University has been applauded for aiming high in its environmental sustainability ratings, with the campus set to become the first LEED-Platinum certified neighbourhood plan in the city: 'While many people hate the constant construction and the whole expansion plan, Columbia is trying to do right by the environment, at least ... they are using extensive clean construction practices. Thirty-three buildings were demolished to make way for the mega-project, and about 90 percent of those materials have been saved or recycled'. In addition, 'All diesel construction equipment, running on ultra-low sulfur fuel, is equipped with particulate filters which release neither soot nor smell, and electric power is used whenever possible. To help create a dust free construction site, all construction vehicles have their wheels and undercarriages

washed down twice before they leave the site, and the water use is recycled for future washes' (Dailey 2012).

But the debate over the social and economic impact of the project on West Harlem continues. 'To develop the campus, most of the structures and people in the neighborhood will be displaced. Behind these walls is a community that has been sensitive to the threat of displacement since the '60s ... This West Harlem neighborhood is the frontier of a gentrification movement sweeping through New York City and other American urban centers', writes Huffman in *Morningside Review* (Huffman 2008). Local representatives state that the plans will not create jobs, but 'get rid of the jobs of 1,500 people who work for the small businesses in the area (storage companies, meat markets, auto repair shops, and so on). There will be some temporary construction jobs while Columbia puts up its buildings in the area, but there would be at least as many construction jobs if affordable housing was built for the area instead' (NYC DCP 2007:53). And expert critics have expressed doubts as to how the plan will create any jobs other than for professors, biotech experts and maybe some lab assistants, if there are no commercial partnerships in the picture.

'If done right, the end result will not just be a larger campus for Columbia, but a range of positive economic outcomes for the surrounding community: the university's own investments could prompt private companies based on advanced science and engineering technologies to set up shop nearby, boosting the city's long-faltering innovation economy while creating a range of high-value, fair-wage jobs for local residents', writes Hochman – but, 'we're still behind on understanding how to leverage Manhattanville for significant economic development ... The city's job is now to articulate and promote a vision under which development of private-sector job opportunity goes forward in a way that's compatible and even synergistic with affordable housing and other features desired by the community' (Hochman 2010:4).

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## Key issues and learning points

5

**Key drivers** all three universities had experienced growing concerns about urban degeneration in the neighbourhoods contiguous with their campuses, manifested in crime, even murder, graffiti, and various social problems, which was having a negative effect on the experience and perceptions of students, staff and observers. Furthermore, the universities faced criticism from local communities and stakeholders for their own appropriation and redevelopment of local real estate, and they recognized the need to improve university-community relationships, build trust, and make a more measurable contribution to the urban economy. At the same time, they needed to protect and enhance their global profiles by ensuring that university space standards, facilities and the surrounding environment were of a quality to recruit and retain the best international staff and students.

**Funding** Pennsylvania's decision to manage the WPI redevelopment programme as an internal leadership team permitted greater ease of access to investment capital from banks, contractors, and service providers. NYU already owns the land earmarked for development, and faculty opposition to risk has been strong, therefore its financial planning is conservative. Capital is to be generated through a mix of long-term and short-term borrowing, reinvestment of surpluses and fundraising. Columbia's financial plan includes some funding, towards a new Institute for Data Sciences and Engineering, from the 2011 Applied Sciences NYC competition.

*Location* both Pennsylvania and Columbia are capitalising on new acquisitions of proximate river-edge tracts of land formerly in industrial use, which in the latter case has been re-zoned for mixed-use. NYU by contrast, unable to expand on its historic site, is re-structuring its historic Washington Square base within a revised zoning envelope to consolidate and maximise its use as a central symbolic site for the ‘global network university’, along with a number of additional ‘remote’ sites dispersed across the city beyond Manhattan Island.

*Masterplan and design* while Pennsylvania avoided a comprehensive masterplanning approach to the West Philadelphia Initiatives it subsequently adopted the Penn Connects blueprint for land use and urban design which, like the Columbia and NYU strategies for campus development stresses the urban dimension – permeability and connectivity with the city, including green open space and facilities for commercial and/or public use. The viability of Columbia’s masterplanning approach has been dependent on the controversial use of eminent domain to secure land assembly. All three institutions have invested in high-profile international architectural practices to produce signature buildings within the masterplan framework, while NYU has had to address specific issues of new development and design within the context of listed modern architectural heritage.

*Academic programming* NYU includes substantial new performance space (a proscenium theatre, four workshop theatres and performing arts spaces) as an integral part of the academic space requirement, as well as a new sports facility, and a flagship science building on a site to be identified in or near the Core. Columbia’s programme includes new buildings to house several schools for Business, the Arts, and Engineering and Applied sciences, as well as the new Science Center and an academic conference centre. Penn Connects has seen the realisation and projected construction of extensive new medical research and clinical space and a nanotechnology centre, as well as the renovation and expansion of the Music Building and Public Policy Center.

*Non-academic engagement* Columbia has signed a significant community benefits agreement locked-in for 20 years, including a new public school, although it is still to win the trust of Harlem community. It will provide a ‘welcome center’ on campus where residents can apply for jobs and obtain information. NYU has been engaged in an extensive outreach process, and is committed to providing new space for community use as part of its development. Its plans for development at its ‘remote’ sites are specifically conceived as incubators for the city’s growing knowledge economy. Pennsylvania’s West Philadelphia Initiatives included a swathe of neighbourhood revitalisation tactics and strategies, and it further launched a Knowledge Industry Partnership in 2002, and Keystone Innovation Zones designed to encourage business use of university facilities.

*Specific assets* the West Philadelphia Initiatives brought about significant improvements in public safety, the neighbourhood economy, and local housing provision, facilitated by Penn Praxis in the School of Design – although they have also been criticised for stimulating gentrification processes. The next phase of development for the university under the Penn Connects vision will see the construction of a significant new innovation centre to boost knowledge translation and enterprise. Columbia has no planning permission for commercial research facilities on its Manhattanville site but is making a significant investment in innovative research buildings for applied science and neuroscience alongside sustainable, publicly accessible spaces for art, culture and community. NYU has placed a strong emphasis on the provision of new faculty housing in the development of its Core site, alongside new academic and sports facilities, recognizing that this is a key issue in

attracting and retaining staff. But it has also undertaken the redevelopment of its new Brooklyn facility to provide a home for its Center for Urban Science and Progress and other incubators, in order to explore a closer relationship with the city as 'laboratory and classroom', and help to address New York City's slow development of innovation clusters comparable to those around Stanford and MIT.

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## Notes

- 1 In 2014 the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) found however that only a handful of 70 anchor institutions interviewed were actually measuring their impact on the local community, and proposed a set of recommendations for gathering metrics <http://www.icic.org/connection/blog-entry/blog-strategies-for-measuring-the-shared-value-of-anchor-initiatives>
- 2 The Anchor Institutions Task Force is led by the University of Pennsylvania and administered by Marga Incorporated. The Penn Institute for Urban Research coordinated the development and publication of a series of task force reports
- 3 <http://www.pennconnects.upenn.edu>
- 4 See Penn Connects website, <http://www.pennconnects.upenn.edu> coordinated the development and publication of a series of task force reports
- 5 <http://www.nyu.edu/community/nyu-in-nyc/core-plan-commitments/nyu-space-planning-the-core-plan.html>
- 6 <http://www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/govCommAffairs/documents/nyu-in-nyc/core-plan-commitments/2014-10-15-Final-Coles-Renovation-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
- 7 <http://www.nyu.edu/nyu2031/nyuinnyc/growth/the-plan.php#Intro>
- 8 <http://www.nyu.edu/about/university-initiatives/space-priorities.html>
- 9 <http://www.nyu.edu/about/leadership-university-administration/office-of-the-president/redirect/speeches-statements/accepting-the-recommendations-of-the-university-space-priorities-working-group.html>, Mar 4th 2014
- 10 ibid
- 11 <http://grimshaw-architects.com/project/new-york-university-masterplan/>
- 12 <http://www.pennconnects.upenn.edu>
- 13 <http://www.design.upenn.edu/pennpraxis/about>
- 14 <http://universitycity.org/west-philadelphia-skills-initiative>
- 15 <http://www.icic.org/connection/blog-entry/blog-strategies-for-measuring-the-shared-value-of-anchor-initiatives> last accessed Mar 23rd 2014.
- 16 Cf Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse and Plan Voisin.
- 17 Renzo Piano Building Workshop <http://www.rpbw.com/project/73/columbia-university-campus-plan/>
- 18 197-a Plan, Community Board 9, <http://www.prattcenter.net/cp-cb9.php>
- 19 *Philadelphia Business Journal*, Sept 14th 2009, <http://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/stories/2009/09/14/daily4.html>

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