

Point Park University

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

April 28–May 3, 2024



COVER: (ULI)

© 2024 by the Urban Land Institute

2001 L Street, NW | Suite 200 | Washington, DC 20036-4948

All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of the whole or any part of this publication's contents without the copyright holder's written permission is prohibited.

Point Park University

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

April 28–May 3, 2024



Urban Land Institute
2001 L Street, NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-4948
uli.org



ULI Pittsburgh
2001 L Street, NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
pittsburgh.uli.org

About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 84 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization,

demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Each year, thousands of events, both virtual and in person, are held in cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on [X \(formerly known as Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

About ULI Pittsburgh

ULI PITTSBURGH brings together real estate professionals, civic leaders, and communities across the region for educational programs, initiatives, and networking events to advance responsible and equitable land use throughout the region. ULI Pittsburgh furthers ULI's mission by locally delivering on the Institute's best practices in leadership development and by facilitating regional community service and enhancement of land use policy and practice. ULI serves the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines—from architects to developers, CEOs to analysts, builders, property owners,

investors, public officials, and everyone in between. ULI uses this interdisciplinary approach to examine land use issues, impartially reports findings, and convenes forums to find solutions. Eight advisory services panels have provided unbiased and independent solutions to the most complex problems facing our area over the years, including Pittsburgh Cultural District, Point Park University, the Pittsburgh International Airport, the Transit Authority, the East End communities, McKees Rocks, and the East Shore in the Monongahela Valley. Many of the recommendations from these panels have become implemented projects.

About ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES PROGRAM IS

to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day Advisory Services panel is tailored to meet a sponsor's needs. ULI members are briefed by the sponsor, engage with stakeholders through in-depth interviews, deliberate on their recommendations, and make a final presentation of those recommendations. A report is prepared as a final deliverable.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the

project under consideration, participants in ULI's panel assignments can make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

ULI Program Staff

Kelsey Steffen

Executive Director, Advisory Services

Lauren McKim Callaghan

Senior Director, Advisory Services

Barbra Gustis

Director, Advisory Services

Brittney Gilardian

Senior Associate, Advisory Services

Libby Riker

Senior Editor

James Neal

Senior Associate
Graphic Designer

Nicole Long

Traffic Manager

Craig Chapman

Senior Director,
Marketing Operations



**DISTINCTIVE
INNOVATIVE
EXPERIENTIAL
EDUCATION
STUDENT SUCCESS**

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

ULI

Acknowledgments

ULI would like to thank the leadership and staff at Point Park University for inviting ULI to study downtown Pittsburgh. ULI would like to thank President Chris W. Brussalis, Ted Black, and Margaret Hinnebusch for their excellent leadership and work framing the study.

Point Park University would also like to thank the foundations that made this study possible due to their generosity: The Benter Foundation, President Bill Benter and Executive Director Kathy Bueche; The Hillman Foundation, President and Director David K. Roger and Executive Vice President D. Tyler Gourley; and The Heinz Endowments, President Chris DeCardy and Senior Program Director, Community & Economic Development, Rob Stephany. ULI is also grateful to the ULI Pittsburgh members for their local guidance and input during the process. Finally, ULI would like to thank the more than 60 stakeholders who shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights with the panel.

**POINT
PARK**
UNIVERSITY

Contents

1

ULI Panel and Project Staff

2

Introduction and Panel Assignment

4

PPU: A Downtown Anchor

7

Neighborhood Revitalization

9

Public Realm and Connectivity

15

Housing

19

Downtown Events Center

21

Funding and Incentives

23

Implementation

27

Conclusion

28

About the Panel

ULI Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

Leigh Ferguson

Board Member, Consultant
LMF Holdings and JMB Companies
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Panel

Erwin N. Andres

Senior Principal and Vice President
Gorove Slade
Washington, D.C.

Eugenia Di Girolamo

Northeast Urban Design and Placemaking Practice Lead, Senior
Vice President
WSP USA
New York City, New York

Hal Ferris

Founder
Ferris Advisors
Seattle, Washington

Ashley A. Jones

Cofounder/Managing Principal
Springleaf Advisors
Atlanta, Georgia

Kelly Kline

Associate Vice President, Local Government Affairs
Office of Government Affairs, Stanford University

ULI Project Staff

Kelsey Steffen

Executive Director, ULI Advisory Services

Barbra Gustis

Director, Advisory Services

Brittney Gilardian

Senior Associate, Advisory Services

Emily Gaspich

Executive Director, ULI Pittsburgh



Introduction and Panel Assignment

ULI

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY (PPU) began as a small business training college in 1933. By 1960, the business school had grown to more than 800 students and moved into the building now known as Academic Hall, on Wood Street in downtown Pittsburgh. That year, it became known as Point Park Junior College and soon added programs in engineering technology, education, and journalism and acquired performing arts space at the Pittsburgh Playhouse in the Oakland neighborhood.

In 1966, the college was granted four-year status, officially becoming Point Park College, and began awarding bachelor's degrees. Point Park's first graduate program (in journalism and mass communication) was established in 1981. Dance and theater programs were introduced, which laid the groundwork for Point Park's current Conservatory of Performing Arts. In 2003, Point Park achieved university status.

Today, PPU is a dynamic, urban university with a strong liberal arts tradition. Located in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh, PPU enrolls approximately 3,500 full- and part-time students in over 100 undergraduate, masters, doctoral, and certificate programs offered through its School of Arts and Sciences, Rowland School of Business, School of Education, School of Communication,

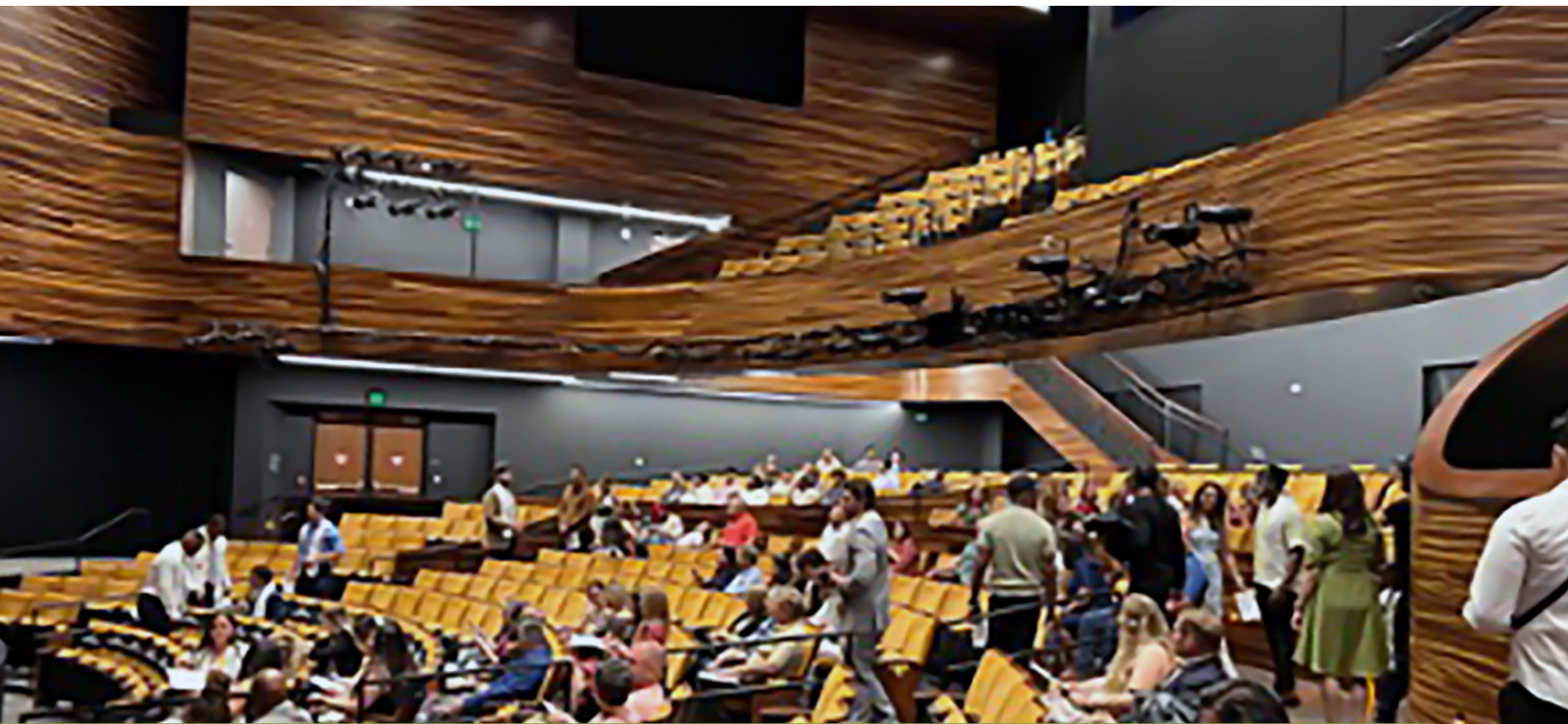
Conservatory of Performing Arts, and School of Continuing and Professional Studies. PPU students represent 48 states and territories and 44 countries. The student body is diverse in terms of age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, with 90 percent receiving financial aid.

As Pittsburgh's only downtown university, PPU is at the center of—and will play a pivotal role in—its postpandemic identity. PPU seeks to be a catalyst of Pittsburgh's next renaissance, helping reimagine what a vibrant, forward-thinking, and community-centered downtown Pittsburgh will look like. To that end, PPU partnered with ULI Advisory Services to study the university and its footprint within Pittsburgh's Boulevard of the Allies and Wood Street corridors.

The Panel's Assignment

Point Park University requested that the ULI Advisory Services program assemble a group of multidisciplinary members to provide recommendations for a strategy for revitalization of downtown Pittsburgh's Boulevard of the Allies and Wood Street corridors as a connector between the city's current Cultural District and the university's campus. As a critical regional partner providing employment, housing, entertainment, and education in downtown Pittsburgh, Point Park University specifically asked the panel to answer the following questions:

1. How can Point Park University become a dynamic catalyst for downtown Pittsburgh's renaissance?
2. What combination of housing and urban amenities would drive the development of a more active, economically diverse, and inclusive neighborhood around Point Park University's campus?
3. How could Point Park University's proposed approximately 2,000-seat downtown events center on the Boulevard of the Allies act as a neighborhood centerpiece?
4. How can a more robust Wood Street corridor connect Point Park University's artistic training, arts, and entertainment accelerators, artists-in-residence, and arts-focused entrepreneurship to the Cultural District?
5. How can the Boulevard of the Allies and the surrounding area be reimagined to provide more green space and urban amenities?
6. What local, state, or national policy changes, resources, or financial incentives would most accelerate the area's economic development?
7. What benefits could be expected from implementing Point Park University's plan to develop the neighborhood surrounding its campus compared to other cities?



PPU: A Downtown Anchor

IN THE HEART OF PITTSBURGH'S BUSTLING DOWNTOWN LIES POINT PARK UNIVERSITY, a beacon of innovation, culture, and community engagement. As a cornerstone of the area, commonly referred to as the Golden Triangle, nestled between the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, PPU serves not only as an educational institution but also as a driving force for positive change within the city. There is no doubt that PPU is a downtown anchor that is viewed as a respected partner, value creator, and, as one stakeholder stated, an "agitator for good." But what does it mean to be an anchor? And for the purposes of this report, how is downtown being defined? PPU has the desire to step up and lead, and if this is done in partnership with others, the chances of success are high. The panel sees PPU playing the following roles as an anchor.

Contributor to Culture and Community

At the core of PPU's mission is its role as a cultural contributor and community pillar. The university's renowned Pittsburgh Playhouse stands as a testament to this commitment, with a vibrant array of productions drawing in audiences and aspiring performers. The Playhouse offers a platform for artistic expression while also providing valuable apprenticeships and journeyman opportunities, nurturing the next generation of theatrical talent.

Beyond the stage and in addition to the six schools, PPU students radiate out into the business community, seamlessly integrating classroom learning with real-world experience through internships and specialized programs such as the Sports, Arts, Entertainment, and Music Business major, the Center for Media Innovation, the Institute of Community Engagement, and the newly created Center for Experiential Narrative Technologies (CENT). This symbiotic relationship not only enriches the academic experience but also strengthens the bonds between the university and the wider downtown ecosystem.

Physical Connector and Activity Generator



Investment at Wood at Boulevard of the Allies can be a catalyst for change.

Physically, PPU serves as a vital connector and activity generator, with Wood Street acting as a central spine linking the campus to the Cultural District and surrounding neighborhoods. The university's presence along this street injects much-needed energy into areas that have suffered from disinvestment, revitalizing the streetscape with greenery and fostering a sense of vibrancy and renewal.

Downtown Steward

As a steward of downtown Pittsburgh, PPU takes its responsibility seriously, preserving and activating historic buildings that add charm and character to the city's landscape. Looking to the future, the university aims to further enhance downtown living by partnering with the private sector to develop affordable residential units, breathing new life into existing spaces and contributing to the city's third renaissance.

Partner and Leader for Downtown Pittsburgh

Under the visionary leadership of President Chris W. Brussalis and an energetic executive team, PPU continues to assert its role as a partner and leader for downtown Pittsburgh. With a can-do spirit and ambitious agenda, the university is poised to expand its footprint, reputation, and community impact, driving forward with a sense of urgency and purpose.

Provider of Current and Future Downtown Amenities



An amenity recording room within the Center for Media Innovation.

In addition to its existing amenities such as the Playhouse, Village Park, and Center for Media Innovation, PPU is actively exploring future enhancements to enrich the downtown experience. From a proposed downtown events center to a dedicated student union, the university remains committed to providing both current and future generations with the resources they need to thrive in the heart of the city. Whether through educational excellence, cultural enrichment, or community development, Point Park University stands as a shining example of the transformative power of an anchor institution dedicated to serving its home and heart.

SWOT Analysis of Point Park University

STRENGTHS

PPU can seek to leverage its strengths and capitalize on the downtown location’s historic charm and architectural beauty. The panel also recognizes PPU’s nationally recognized arts program and facilities such as the Playhouse, which draws in prospective students and boosts community engagement. Embracing the new leadership’s ambitious vision to foster active partnerships and enhance the university’s reputation is another strength that the panel recognizes. The panel also recommends nurturing the campus environment, which is already transit accessible and walkable, to support an increasingly diverse student body living on campus.

WEAKNESSES

PPU can address weaknesses by improving public access to university buildings, maintaining student safety, and enhancing campus visibility. IT can bolster its inclusive campus environment by addressing housing shortages for faculty, staff, and students and actively promoting diversity among its campus community. PPU can also collaborate with the city to expand proximate retail, food, and entertainment options to enrich student life and community engagement. Creating green spaces and river access will improve campus life and provide recreational opportunities.

OPPORTUNITIES

PPU can seize opportunities by strategically planning for increased campus residency, fostering a vibrant community atmosphere. The move to NCAA Division II sports will attract more students and build enrollment. Developing Wood Street, Smithfield Street, and the Boulevard of the Allies as focal points for campus improvement will enhance PPU’s appeal and functionality. Leveraging the university’s diverse career pathways and training programs can uplift the socioeconomic landscape of downtown. Strengthened partnerships with civic organizations will help drive downtown revitalization efforts collaboratively.

THREATS

PPU can mitigate threats by addressing public safety perceptions through proactive measures and community engagement efforts. Challenges posed by rising higher education costs and declining student enrollments in the Northeast can be mitigated by enhancing the value and relevance of PPU’s educational offerings. PPU should engage with city stakeholders and leadership to navigate fiscal challenges, ensure sustainable growth, and amplify university priorities, thereby expanding PPU’s regional and national recognition.

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY SWOT ANALYSIS STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS





Ashley Jones, ULI

Neighborhood Revitalization

AMONG THE MORE THAN SIXTY STAKEHOLDERS, the three most common descriptors of downtown culture were “misunderstood,” “underestimated,” and “inaccessible.” When asked how PPU can help with vibrancy, the response was, “Create more ground floor activation,” and that a vision for the process would be one that incorporates legacy residents and businesses in the planning process. In terms of safety, the majority felt safe but believed that downtown is the outcome of a lack of affordable housing. The “missing stakeholders” are K–12 education leaders and PPU students.

From Central Business District to Vibrant Neighborhood

Although commercial real estate is the asset class and economic development is the intent, PPU is embarking on a neighborhood revitalization effort. Decades of disinvestment, often caused by redlining and white flight, have caused irrefutable damage to inner cities, and Pittsburgh is not exempt. This inclusive and transformative project should be taken into consideration as a collaborative effort with partners, including educational institutions, from cradle to career. PPU can look to California’s new cradle-to-career system to illuminate student pathways (EdSource); housing options for workforce, affordable, and market

needs; small business development opportunities; and workforce enhancement and training.

For this redevelopment effort to be successful, PPU cannot evaluate its real estate needs only. It also must assess and affirm the diversity (“Do you see me?”) of its students, faculty, and neighbors as it relates to gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, etc. According to the study “The Cost of Economic and Racial Injustice in Postsecondary Education,” done by Georgetown University, the U.S. economy misses out on \$956 billion per year, along with numerous nonmonetary benefits, as a result of postsecondary attainment gaps by economic status and race/ethnicity.” PPU is known as an inclusive space for diverse groups, especially for the LGBTQ+ community. The panel also

recommends PPU continue to gain a thorough understanding of its community needs and desires (i.e., shopping preferences, health needs, etc.), continue to embed equity into its strategic planning efforts and the overall plan, and acknowledge and speak to the inequity of previous economic and community development efforts in the city, specifically, what hasn't worked and the unintended consequences.



Ashley Jones, ULI

Before embarking on the actual development/construction process, PPU must conduct preliminary assessments leveraging the diverse stakeholders that it has already engaged who are inclusive of the voices of students, faculty, neighbors, and small businesses. Collaborating with the city and other partners is essential to assess the perceived and actual cultures of the neighborhood and campus, with the aim of forging a new, unified culture and identifying any gaps that exist. Intentional partnerships that prioritize the needs and desires of the community should be secured, and bold conversations on equity should be advocated for. Creative solutions, particularly benefiting marginalized populations, should be cultivated, and catalytic solutions capable of bringing about incremental yet lasting change should be promoted. PPU has already been a leader in inclusivity and diverse engagement and should continue to build upon that momentum.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC VITALITY

According to the [Atlanta Wealth Building Initiative Strategic Plan](#), shared prosperity is at the heart of building successful small businesses.



Cover images: City of Atlanta, AWBI

Growth and Scale

To ensure businesses are in a position to scale and hire additional employees, the growth and scale focus on (a) the development of anchor institution collaboratives, (b) the creation of a shared-services model that will allow small businesses to service large-scale contracting opportunities that may not otherwise be attainable, and (c) technical assistance to prepare businesses for procurement opportunities.

Workforce

The workforce strategy creates a pipeline of qualified employees by creating connectivity and training. It focuses on connecting residents who live within the communities where the businesses are located to new job opportunities.

Retention and Antidisplacement

To preserve community wealth, the retention and antidisplacement strategy supports strategic advising, advocacy, back-office support, pro bono business succession and estate planning, creative land use and acquisition, and employee-owned transition models for legacy business owners and scalable and established growth-stage businesses.

See:

[A Playbook for Equitable Economic Development](#)
[Building toward Abundance: AWBI Strategic Plan 2022–2024](#)



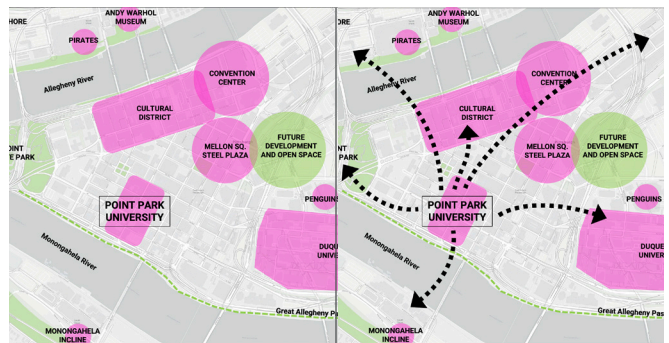
Erwin Andres, ULI

Public Realm and Connectivity

THE HEART OF A CITY IS where people come together. Pittsburgh's natural and urban structures converge in the Point. Downtown Pittsburgh is at the confluence of the rivers that have been instrumental to the city's prosperity. The many iconic bridges that frame views of downtown also connect the Golden Triangle to the rest of the city.

In the past several decades, the nature of downtowns across the United States has been shifting. Central business districts have become a vestige of the past; places designed with one user in mind and active only from 9 to 5 would be desolate when the workday ended or during the weekend. As the way we work is changing, today downtowns are aiming to be active throughout the day and night, offering a variety of activities, uses, services and amenities, and destinations.

The Golden Triangle is uniquely positioned to achieve this type of urban experience thanks to all its assets, including Point Park University. PPU can leverage its key location in Pittsburgh and its identity as a dynamic, urban campus to be an integral part of downtown's revitalization after the COVID-19 pandemic and be a connector between the other areas, districts, and activity centers.



Eugenia Di Girolamo, ULI

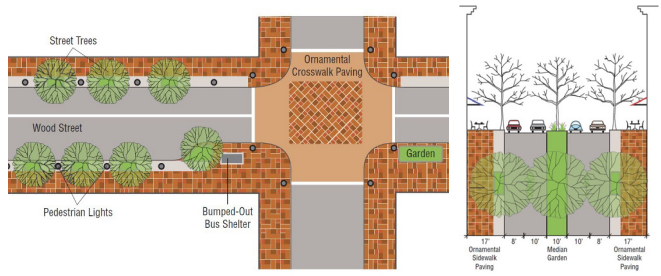
The image on the left highlights several destinations in downtown that are disconnected. The image on the right shows how PPU can leverage its key location to be an integral part of downtown's revitalization post-COVID-19.

Maintain Momentum

Downtown Pittsburgh is compact and well-served by a comprehensive multimodal system. Robust transit, walkable blocks, and growing bike infrastructure are all within a 25-minute walk. The city has also already developed and begun to implement several plans to promote connectivity and mobility throughout downtown Pittsburgh, including the following:

- Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership Mobility Plan,
- Planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) with the closest stop at Fifth and Liberty (Pittsburgh Regional Transit),
- Smithfield Street Reconstruction Project (Department of Mobility and Infrastructure [DOMI]),
- Bike (+) Master Plan (DOMI), and
- Allegheny Conference Downtown Vision Plan.

Furthermore, the 2007 Point Park University ULI Advisory Services panel report highlighted public realm and connectivity recommendations that include identifying a hierarchy of roadways to fulfill different functions, focusing on Wood Street as an essential connector to improve the pedestrian experience and reimagining the Boulevard of the Allies as a grand avenue. All of which can still be pursued by PPU with their downtown partners and are updated and expanded upon in the following sections.

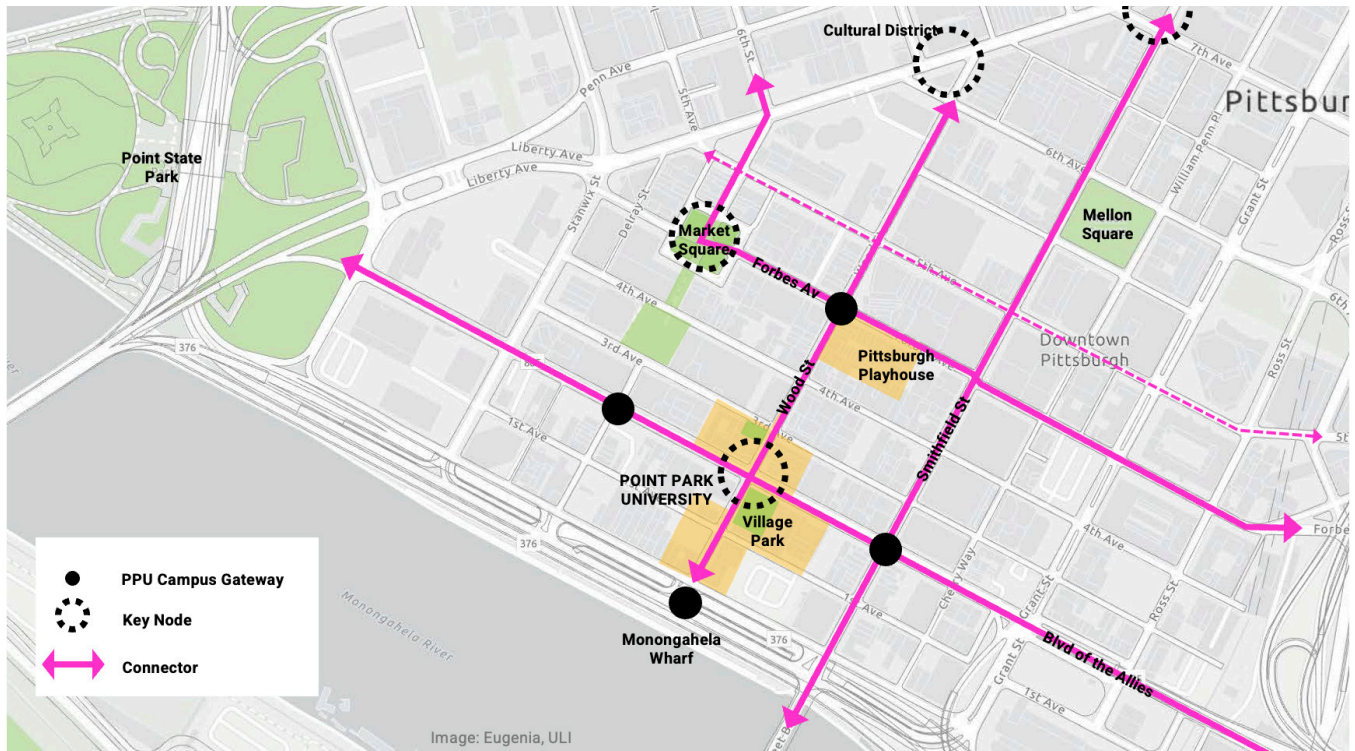


Come Together, Exchange Experiences, Build Experiences

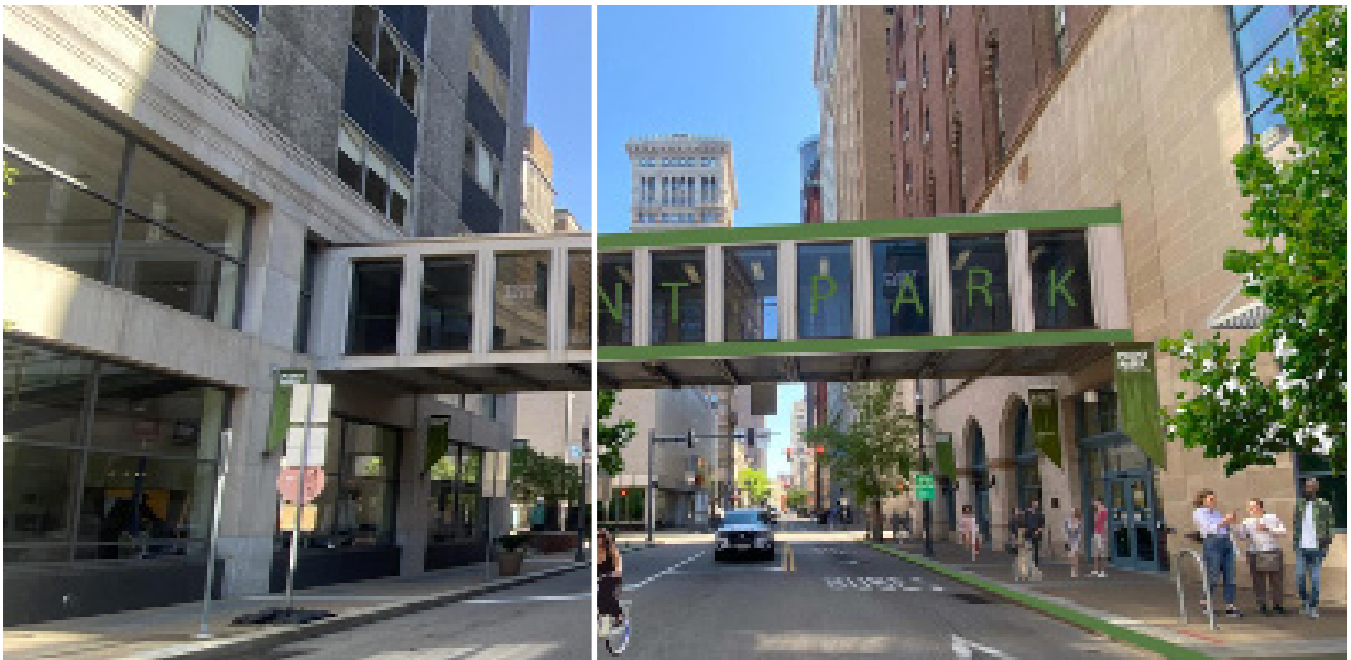
PPU can strengthen its identity as a dynamic, urban campus and its role as an anchor within the Golden Triangle of Pittsburgh by improving connectivity both within its campus and to the greater downtown and the rest of the city.

STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF PLACE: CAMPUS GATEWAYS AND NODES

PPU can enhance the sense of place in and around the downtown campus by incorporating elements that let people know they are on campus. PPU should focus on the following gateways and nodes around campus to strengthen the university's sense of place.



Proposed connectors through key nodes of PPU campus gateways.



Eugenia Di Girolamo, ULI

On the left, a current image of the skywalk view between Lawrence Hall and Academic Hall. On the right, proposed additions of Point Park signage on the skywalk. The idea is to promote more green elements in existing pocket concrete plazas and along streetscape.

Wood Street at the Boulevard of the Allies: This is the heart of the PPU campus. PPU should capitalize on Village Park, a key asset on campus and a place where students and the community come together today. Wood Street is also the spine of the campus and should be the focal point of interventions and create the experience of bringing people through the campus. PPU should ensure that university building entrances are focused on Wood Street where possible.

Wood Street at Forbes Avenue: This is the north gateway into campus and a pivotal connection to the Pittsburgh Playhouse and Market Square.

Smithfield Street at the Boulevard of the Allies: This is the east gateway to the university and a key connector to the PPU Student Center and the existing retail corridor.

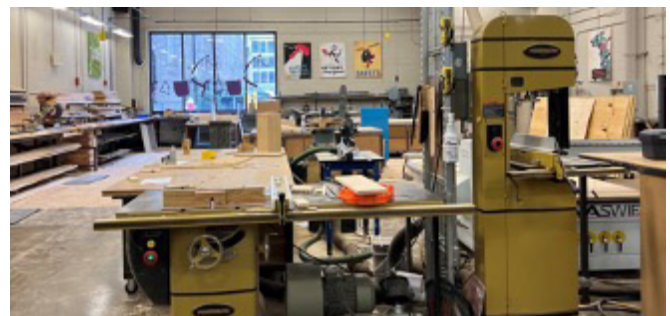
At each gateway and node, the university can incorporate wayfinding, streetscape, and other visual markings to help create a sense of place on campus. Some of these interventions can be done right away, such as adding more green elements on the street and sidewalks to denote the university. The images above depict an example of these proposed elements.

STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF PLACE: FOSTER A VIBRANT CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

Activate the street. Street design should prioritize pedestrians, and bike facilities should be enhanced along the corridor and branded by PPU. Ground floors must be active and engage the pedestrians to bring more “eyes on the street” and strengthen the

sense of safety. PPU should feel active even when people are not in school, and provide more opportunities to invite the community within the campus. The panel recommends avoiding additional sky bridges, as they take people off the street and can inadvertently contribute to the disconnect between PPU and the community.

Invite the community in. PPU is already implementing ground floor activation through their theater fabrication shops where windows face the street and spaces where the dancers rehearse. This could be further enhanced by programming and other activities that bring the community into these spaces to get to know the campus and university. PPU should also consider removing the turnstiles from the first floor of the buildings and moving them to the second floor. Moving the turnstiles and offering more community programming in the university’s spaces will help remove the invisible barrier that currently exists around the PPU campus. The panel heard from students and the community that they feel safe. The university should reflect that sense of safety by providing a more “open” campus.



Kelly Kline, ULI

Inside the Pittsburgh Playhouse woodshop. Large windows give passersby the opportunity to peek inside.

STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF PLACE: INCREASE OPEN SPACES

In addition to strengthening the visual identity of PPU, the university should strive to increase and improve outdoor spaces to create more opportunities for students and the community to linger and get together. Increasing greenery throughout the campus, along the Boulevard of the Allies, in existing pocket concrete plazas, and along the streetscape will enhance the possibilities for people to come to PPU as a destination. PPU should also evaluate opportunities to acquire buildings and sites that could enable building of more open spaces and pocket parks on the campus.

STRENGTHEN THE SENSE OF PLACE: INTRODUCE BOLD STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

Streetscape elements such as planters, tree pit grates, benches, bike racks, and other street furniture could be branded with PPU colors to create a visually cohesive experience and further delineate the campus within the urban fabric of downtown. They can also be considered functional street art, as PPU artists can create murals on large buildings in the PPU neighborhood.

Art can also be brought onto the street through installations, temporary activations including street closures for festivals and performances, “First Fridays,” and food trucks. PPU should also consider creating an amphitheater to support outdoor performances for their students and the community during the summer break. Lighting can also be used as an artistic installation and increase safety on campus.

PPU should advocate for raised intersections and crosswalks where appropriate in high pedestrian crossing areas on city streets without bus lines. The university can also brand them with paint or display student mural artwork. To help guide this, PPU should develop a framework for design guidelines for streetscape elements in and around the campus.

KNIT PPU INTO DOWNTOWN



City Lab

“One Big Table” in NYC where the table is an integrated solution allowing communities to host activities along commercial corridors in the city.

PPU can reinforce meaningful connections between the university and the rest of downtown by pursuing the following:

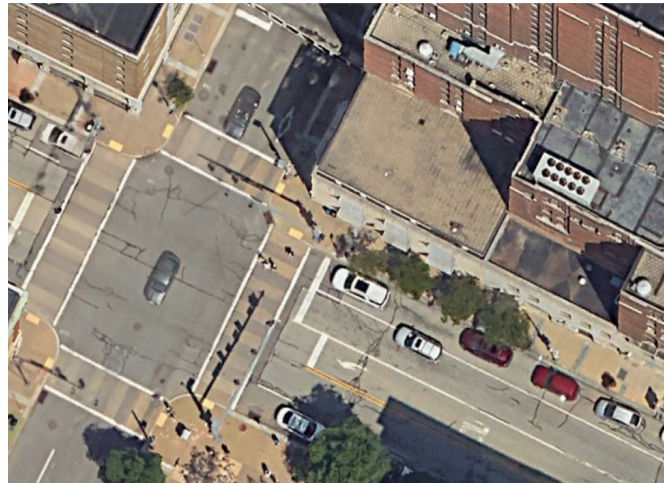
- Create an initiative to connect the Cultural District and destinations through physical features and programming.
- Better connect the creative talent pool of PPU students to the Cultural District.
- Link PPU to the Playhouse, Market Square, and the Cultural District/Cultural Walk.
 - Consider the development of an arts, culture, and entrepreneurship zone to accomplish this connection. PPU and its partners can pull recommendations from the [2023 ULI Advisory Services report for San Francisco, California](#), on developing this zone and provide an example from Detroit, Michigan.
- Promote creative pop-up uses in empty storefronts working with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP).
- Coordinate with the PDP to work with landlords to allow creative pop-ups, video screens, formal busking opportunities, and mini-street concerts.
 - Wood Street to Forbes and Market Square to Sixth Street.
 - Smithfield Street already has momentum, and DOMI has designed preliminary plans.
- Improve connections to the waterfront and trails at Monongahela Wharf Landing and Point State Park.
 - Coordinate with the PDP to implement objectives of the Downtown Mobility Plan to improve connections.
 - Advocate for needed bike infrastructure to increase mobility options and safety to and from the PPU campus.
 - Add a PPU bikeshare station to connect to a more extensive network across the city.

Knitting PPU into downtown while defining it as a unique asset will only further the large downtown revitalization goals.



Point State Park, which sits at the peak of the Golden Triangle, where the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers convene to form the Ohio River.

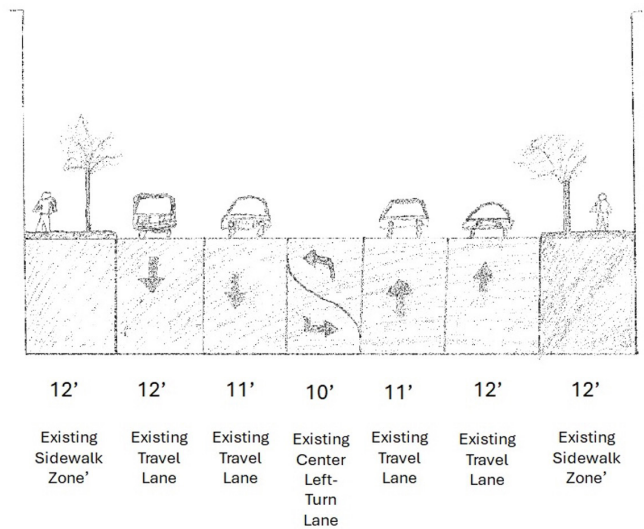
Creative Commons



REIMAGINE THE BOULEVARD OF THE ALLIES

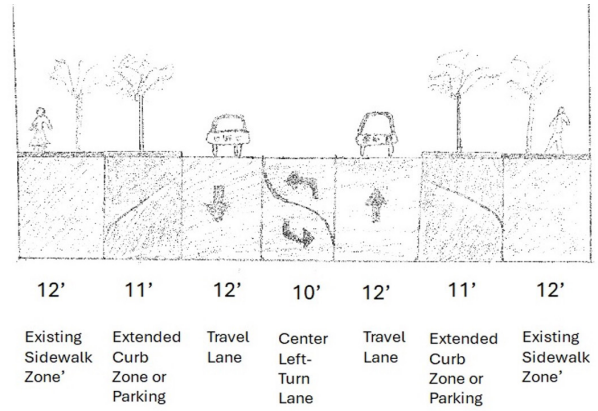
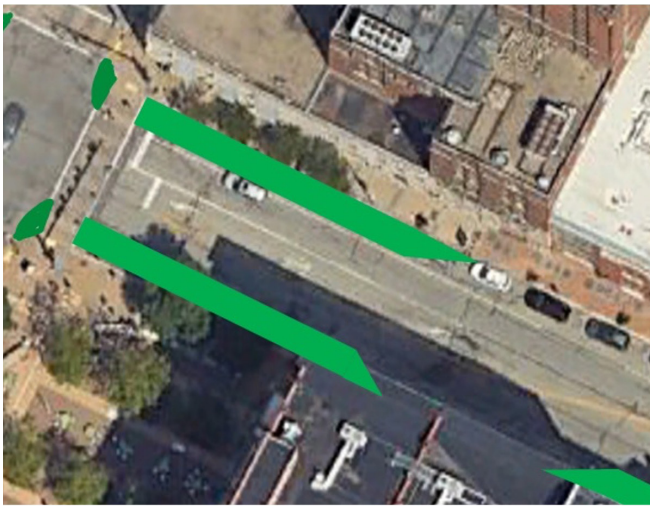
The Boulevard of the Allies is a continued piece of the PPU connectivity puzzle that would benefit from reconfiguration. PPU can't do this alone, but with a partnership with the city and PennDOT, a new alignment could benefit the university and the downtown. It would create a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment that solves critical challenges for nonvehicle transportation users.

The 2007 ULI Advisory Services report identified reconfiguration of this boulevard and contemplated a tree-lined center median. Although the panel agrees this could be a solution, it also understands that the Boulevard of the Allies is a critical detour route when I-376 is flooded. Therefore, the 2024 panel recommends an alternative option, extending the curbline rather than implementing a center median to increase the streetscape zone and decrease the number of travel lanes, as shown below. The panel also recommends the addition of a one-way bicycle lane on each side of the street.



Google Earth, Erwin Andres, ULI

Existing conditions on Boulevard of the Allies.



Google Earth, revised by Erwin Andres, ULI

Potential future conditions for Boulevard of the Allies with extended curb zones to host greenery or parking.

Extending the curblines can still allow PennDOT to use the roadway when there is need for a flood route, allowing for flexible use of the middle lane to accommodate traffic patterns as needed. The proposed reconfiguration is also most critical for the section directly affecting PPU, from Stanwix Street to Smithfield Street (about three city blocks), which could be a great pilot for PennDOT to test out the reconfiguration. Building upon that, extended curblines can be implemented quickly and

temporarily with bollards and paint. The overarching goal of this reconfiguration is to increase the pedestrian zone to create a comfortable place where people may even want to stay. PPU will need to work with their local transportation partners to ensure the design accommodates existing transit and helps in the long-term development of bike lanes throughout downtown.



Housing

Point Park University

PPU IS A NATURAL HOUSING PROVIDER FOR DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH, given the existing student population, the desire to increase the number of students, and the potential to alleviate other housing pressures the city is experiencing. Currently, PPU represents 850 beds downtown for traditional-age university students, one of the largest sole-source residential providers in the Golden Triangle. PPU needs to reduce vacancies in existing university housing and improve the perception of security. In doing so, PPU can maximize occupancy in existing university housing and fulfill immediate increased demand for student housing by master leasing short-term rentals close to campus.

There is also a need for nontraditional student housing, including housing for families and older students, and to meet the increasing demand from a growing student enrollment. The panel recommends establishing new partnerships with private not-for-profit developers, operators of student housing, and nearby universities to meet this need.

Affordable and Workforce Housing

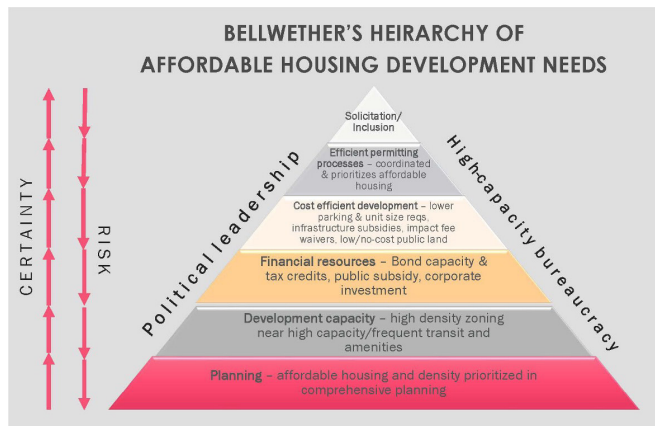
Affordable housing is a high priority in the Golden Triangle, of which PPU is an anchor and leader. There is political pressure to create affordable housing that is welcoming and accessible to the broader Pittsburgh community. The interviews conducted by the

ULI panel revealed a strong desire for PPU to provide leadership and political muscle: convening stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to address this community crisis as a downtown partner. Benefits to PPU in providing such leadership include the following:

- Stronger political support for the university,
- Opening the door to new funding resources and philanthropic support,
- Potential lease revenue if PPU properties are acquired or used, and
- Increased activation of the PPU neighborhood.

One way to kick off this effort would be to convene a workshop with potential partners to examine financial models, review case

studies, identify shared goals, and outline a framework to advance development of new affordable units.

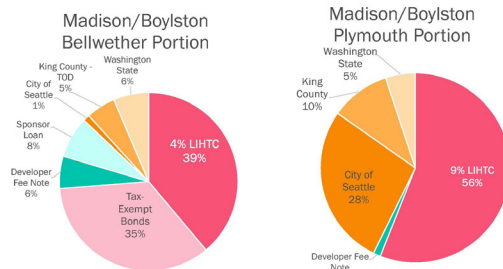


Bellwether Housing, a nonprofit organization in Seattle, Washington, created Bellwether's Hierarchy of Affordable Housing Development Needs as a framework to address the challenges in affordable housing development. The model helps prioritize the needs and actions required to effectively develop low-cost housing projects.

The need for affordable housing is much greater than the availability of public funding. As a result, public funding prioritizes projects that serve those populations with the greatest need, generally families earning 50 percent or less of the area median income. Securing public funding is very competitive, as Pittsburgh provides funding for only one or two projects a year, totaling 200 units. Even with public funding, a gap exists between the cost to develop and the public sources of funding. This gap comprises philanthropic sources and, in some areas of the country, low-interest loans from civically minded corporations and institutions. Pittsburgh benefits from very strong and civic-minded philanthropic organizations. A thoughtful, well-developed revitalization plan with a focus on housing affordable to a broad range of incomes and families would be strongly supported based on stakeholder interviews by the panel.

Private market-rate developers can be encouraged to include affordable housing in their projects by offering incentives and rebates. The percentage of affordable units and the income of families to be served must be calibrated to incentivize the developer. Without an incentive, the project may not move forward. The affordability requirements and incentives should be updated periodically, every three to five years, to keep up with the market.

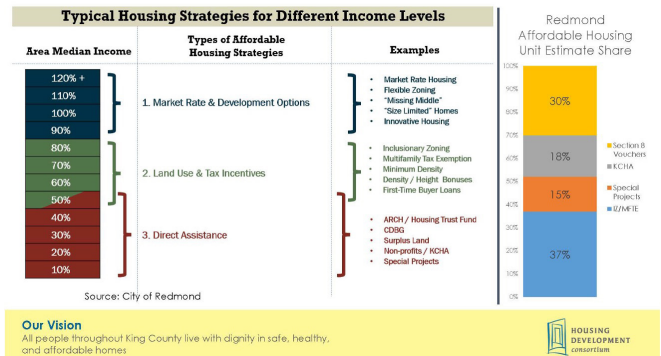
The Money Slices – Seattle Example



Bellwether Housing

Bellwether Housing's "Money Slices" is a concept developed to illustrate how affordable housing projects are funded through various sources, often visualized as different slices of a pie. This model helps clarify the complexities of financing affordable housing and demonstrates how multiple funding sources are pieced together to make a project financially viable. The model helps stakeholders understand how these diverse sources come together and how the financial structure of affordable housing projects is constructed. It underscores the need for a coordinated approach to assembling and managing these funds to achieve successful and sustainable development outcomes.

Bellwether Housing



Our Vision
All people throughout King County live with dignity in safe, healthy, and affordable homes



Housing Development Consortium

The Housing Development Consortium outlines strategies tailored to various income levels to address the diverse needs of the community in terms of affordable housing. Each strategy is designed to address specific needs and challenges faced by different income groups, ensuring that affordable housing is available to a broad spectrum of the population.

Fair housing laws limit the ability to set aside housing for PPU students, faculty, and staff if the project uses federal funds to develop or acquire the property. However, PPU can master lease housing for students in developments that use sources of financing other than federal funding and federal tax credits. PPU can also be a crucial partner in advocacy for land use policy and financing from state and local sources.

In addition to affordable housing, there is a vast need for workforce housing for individuals earning between 60 percent and around 120 percent of the area's median income. Unlike affordable housing projects, workforce housing projects do not use federal funding, lessening the qualification restrictions, but instead benefit from property tax exemptions and low-interest financing. Given downtown Pittsburgh's high density, there are ample opportunities for tax exemptions and low-interest loans through the local foundations, taking the place of some of the equity that would go into private development. As is the case for affordable housing, fair housing laws require these units to be available to the public, and PPU can't set aside units for its students or faculty.

Student Housing



Cornish Commons.

In addition to advocating and partnering locally for the development of affordable and workforce housing to fill the existing housing gaps, PPU can move the needle on the community's housing needs by developing student-specific housing. This is an important piece of the city's overall housing strategy and will help alleviate the housing burden in downtown.

STUDENT HOUSING PARTNERSHIP MODELS

In the current market, private developers are interested in ground lease opportunities to develop housing for universities that market housing to a larger pool of potential student residents. The university can fill beds during the summer quarter with conferences, some 12-month leases, and intern housing availability.

As a university, PPU would have the advantage of an exemption from property taxes. PPU can also finance the project with 100 percent debt and no private equity with long-term tax-exempt financing at a lower interest rate. By partnering with private developers such as Greystar, Capstone, and Gilbane, who specialize in student housing, PPU minimizes its risk and financial exposure and creates opportunities for large-scale projects (200–500 beds). Furthermore, if PPU uses land it already owns, there are no land costs. This creates significant development advantages for the university for student housing.

Other universities have taken advantage of these types of partnerships and have set up projects by hiring developers who put forth the money needed to make the project happen. Then the university brings in a not-for-profit company that issues the bonds, and the university leases the land for the duration of the financing, typically 30 to 35 years. The university ultimately gets back the improvements after the lease is done at no cost.

The panel also recommends that PPU consider partnerships with Duquesne, Pitt, and Carnegie-Mellon universities for these student housing development projects. The region has an overall housing need, and working with other universities further limits PPU's financial exposure. Moreover, there is a new bus rapid-transit line that will connect all the universities listed and could provide new housing opportunities for the students of Duquesne, Pitt, and Carnegie-Mellon while increasing the residential population and stimulating the economy.

Creative Commons

Case Study: Cornish Commons. A Partnership for Enrollment Growth

Background: Cornish College of the Arts, located in downtown Seattle, faced a housing challenge as it aimed to increase its student population from 800 to 1,200 by 2022. The college's existing student housing, leased and located three blocks away from campus, was slated for redevelopment due to urban growth spurred by companies in the area. This would mean that 300 students would be faced with no housing.

Partnership Formation: Cornish and nearby City University of Seattle identified a joint need for student housing. Together, they sought to accommodate 400–450 students through a new development project. In 2013, Cornish approached a real estate development company to address their urgent housing requirements.

Objectives and Financing: Cornish aimed to integrate housing with academic and social spaces, including art studios, music rooms, and a communal living room for students. The financing for Cornish Commons was uniquely structured to meet the needs of a small institution in a fast-growing urban area with high rental rates. It involved 50 percent private equity, a construction loan transitioning to a permanent loan, and a rate-lock agreement finalized in March 2014. This innovative approach also utilized a “burn off” master lease from a neighboring institution to support both housing and academic spaces. The project, totaling \$50 million, included multiple floors of classrooms and offices leased to Cornish under a long-term ground lease arrangement where Cornish receives a share of annual project revenues until ownership transfers debt-free upon lease expiration.

Structure of Financing:

- 50 percent private equity investment
- Construction/mini-perm loan arrangement
- Forward commitment/rate-lock for a fully amortizing permanent loan
- Real estate development team and equity partner closed on equity and construction/mini-perm loan in March 2014
- Permanent loan finalized at project completion in fall 2015

Low-Cost Financing Components:

- Use of “burn off” master lease for housing
- Rental revenue supported housing component
- “Zero profit” lease for academic and administrative spaces leased to Cornish
- Creative financial terms to secure competitively priced debt and equity for the \$50 million development

Additional Structures:

- Construction and master lease of multiple floors of classroom and administrative space to Cornish
- Long-term ground lease arrangement with the college
- Compensation to Cornish through annual percentage of project revenues during the ground lease term
- Transfer of land and improvements to Cornish debt-free at the end of the ground lease

Facility Design and Features: designed by Ankrom Moisan Architects, Cornish Commons is a 20-story tower encompassing 157,623 square feet. The building includes 224 student rooms, academic facilities, and vibrant communal areas such as a sky deck with panoramic views, a fitness center, and studios for student activities.

Impact and Outcomes: Cornish Commons opened in July 2015 and was fully leased upon opening. It quickly became a recruiting asset, boosting enrollment interest by nearly 30 percent and applications by 25 percent. The project not only met immediate housing needs but also received acclaim, winning awards for Best New On-Campus Development and Best Public/Private Partnership.

Conclusion: Cornish Commons stands as a testament to effective collaboration between educational institutions and developers. By integrating student housing with state-of-the-art facilities, Cornish College of the Arts successfully enhanced its campus environment and positioned itself for future growth in downtown Seattle.

Source: [Cornish Commons: A Housing and Student Life Center](#)



Downtown Events Center

PPU HAS SET ITS SIGHTS ON DEVELOPING A DOWNTOWN EVENTS CENTER as a critical piece of the university's growth strategy. With the advancement of the university's NCAA Division II athletic program, the continued prominence of the performing arts departments, and the opportunity for an events center to catalyze economic and housing development in this part of downtown and to replicate the workforce development design philosophy that is already being done at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, there is a strong case for pursuing this opportunity, in partnership with the downtown community.

Considerations for a New Venue

The programming and operations for this facility must be shared with the community if substantial public funding is needed to develop the event center. Not only will the newly acquired NCAA Division II Mountain East designation be a key recruitment tool for student athletes, but also it will increase the number of opponent visitors at athletic events. PPU envisions that the proposed 2,000-seat venue to support its growing athletics programming will provide double the seating of the current facility that it rents. It will also serve as a community space that provides access for a broader set of events, such as city and regional youth tournaments

and performances, ensuring that the use of the space is optimized year-round.

The downtown events center will allow for more student community activities, youth programming (e.g., intramural sports), and experiential learning. As the university moves to increase its curriculum and programs, this allows for opportunities for growth in the live entertainment and technology sector. This would provide students with the capability to learn and master skills in the production of live entertainment and theatrical live performance.


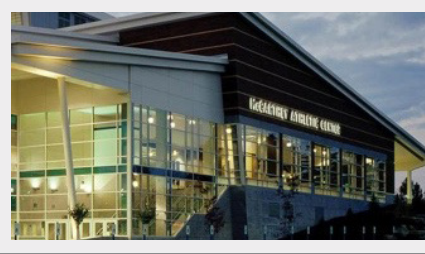
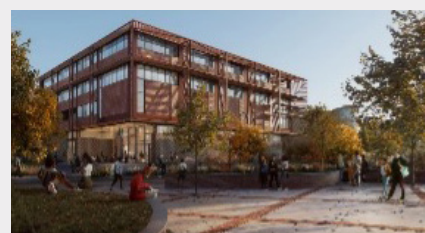
The panel supports the university in this pursuit and agrees that a community focus is vital to fulfilling its role as a driver for downtown revitalization. Ensuring that the space is open for community performances, K–12 use, potential conferences, and other significant events that benefit the entire community is vital. The center, as a destination location, can drive a new business to open on the nearby block and potentially spur additional economic growth along the same corridor. It also has the potential to be a catalyst for housing investment and development downtown, which will continue to drive economic revitalization in the neighborhood. Together, these elements can create a “Point Park District” in downtown Pittsburgh.

University Case Studies for New Venues

There are many precedents for a robust athletic program to increase the university’s profile, student enrollment, and the students’ college experience. For example, Gonzaga University in Spokane has substantially increased its national profile because of its successful basketball program. Enrollment has increased from 4,000 students in the 1970s to 8,000 students today. Similarly, Seattle University was reclassified from NCAA Division I to NAIA in 1980, then back to NCAA Division II, and then Division I in 2008 due to budget and fiscal priorities.

The following table provides an overview of this and other university projects that PPU can consider as it develops its downtown events center.

Project Details Description

<p>GSU Convocation Center Georgia State University Atlanta, Georgia Size: 200,000 square feet Capacity: 8,000 seats Cost: \$85 million Year built: 2020</p>	<p>The 200,000-square-foot, multiuse, state-of-the-art facility was built on the grounds of the former Atlanta Braves campus. The 8,000-seat facility provides indoor assembly space for the campus for various athletic events, conferences, commencements, graduation ceremonies, convocations, large gatherings, and concerts. It also serves as the court for GSU basketball games, though the sports arena will continue as the home (offices, training, and practice) for basketball.</p>	
<p>McCarthy Athletic Center Gonzaga University Spokane, Washington Size: 148,000 square feet Capacity: 6,000 seats Cost: \$38 million (2023 \$) Year built: 2004</p>	<p>The Athletic Center is home to the Gonzaga Bulldogs men’s and women’s basketball and rowing facility. It includes athletic department offices and is also used for concerts, banquets, graduations, meetings, and receptions.</p>	
<p>Center for Innovation and the Arts Spelman College Atlanta, Georgia Size: 84,000 square feet Cost: \$86 million Year built: currently under construction</p>	<p>The Center for Innovation and the Arts is home to Spelman’s thriving arts programs in dance, documentary filmmaking, photography, theater and performance, music, and the Atlanta University Center Art History and Curatorial Studies Collective. It also provides expanded space for the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art. The Arthur Blank Innovation & Entrepreneurship Lab will be home to the cocurricular activities of the Center for Black Entrepreneurship.</p>	

John Stinson/courtesy of Perkins + Will

Gonzaga University

Studio Gang



Funding and Incentives

SOURCES AND AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE on what program is included in a development and when a project can be developed. Funding opportunities must be organized and evaluated for integration into the individual elements of the plan. This will require dedicated research once more specific programmatic objectives are established. The panel has developed a brief list of examples to provide a starting point.

As PPU moves forward and individual projects evolve, more specific financial opportunities can be identified during each project's planning and development process. These can include the sources discussed in the following figure and as suggested

by the panel regarding student housing, private investors and grantors, and program-related investment from mission-interested entities, including philanthropies, financial institutions, and civic-minded corporations and individuals.

Federal Sources	State Sources	City Sources	New Sources
Low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) program (4 percent and 9 percent) (affordable housing): LIHTCs are most commonly combined with tax-exempt bond financing, providing source-of-debt financing at a lower interest rate.	(All the financing tools below can benefit uses, including housing, university uses, and commercial development.)	Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA): URA has numerous programs to support housing development for PPU, including student, affordable, multigenerational, senior, office-to-residential conversion, and conventional market-rate housing in the PPU campus neighborhood. These programs should be investigated for applicability.	Housing benefit districts (Washington state)
Historic tax credit (HTC) program (also available state HTC programs): housing and commercial development can benefit from historic tax credits in a qualified historic building.	The Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP) Commonwealth grant program: the RACP Commonwealth grant program is administered by the Office of the Budget for the design, acquisition, and construction of a regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement project. RACP project requirements include the following:	Rental Gap Program	Credit enhancement for not-for-profit housing developers
New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)	A total project cost of at least \$1,000,000	Rental Vouchers Program	Real estate excise tax
Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac multifamily financing (housing)	A project that will generate substantial increases in or maintain current employment levels, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity	For-Sale Development Program	Recording fees
HOME Investment Partnerships Program	A project which has a regional or multijurisdictional impact or, in the case of housing, is part of a community revitalization plan	Housing Preservation Program	Pay instead of performance fees (many cities and states)
	Eligibility for tax-exempt bond funding under existing federal law and regulations	Housing Opportunity Fund	Property tax levy for affordable housing (Seattle, Bellingham, and Vancouver, Washington)
	Secured at least 50 percent nonstate financial participation	Pittsburgh Downtown Conversion Program	Expediting permitting for projects that include permanent affordable housing
	Tax-exempt bond financing	<i>This program includes various options for levels of financial support depending on the specific level of affordable housing to be included in the project.</i>	
	Tax-increment financing (TIF)	CDBG Funding	
	Property tax exemptions (university uses, including student housing, are already exempt from property taxes)	<i>This funding is for capital projects related to revitalization.</i>	



Implementation

THIS SECTION OUTLINES THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND ACTIONABLE STEPS NECESSARY to bring the vision for the downtown Pittsburgh neighborhood and PPU community to fruition. The panel's approach to implementation is structured to ensure clear, measurable progress and sustainable outcomes.

Key Performance Indicators

The panel was asked to explore a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) and best practices/comparables from other cities related to how PPU's revitalization efforts could benefit downtown Pittsburgh—ranging from annual visitors to wage levels, occupational diversity, skills development, year-over-year business trends, and diversity/representation.

The panel appreciates that PPU is taking a business approach to its downtown contributions. This aligns with the well-known saying that “what gets measured is what gets done.” The metrics provided are certainly areas worth tracking, with the cautionary note that some items—particularly wage levels and overall business trends—might be outside the university's direct control. The past few years have shown that, despite our best efforts to

move the ball forward, larger forces (i.e., a global pandemic, civil unrest, economic uncertainty) can derail the best-laid plans.

In addition to the previously mentioned KPIs, PPU may want to develop project-specific KPIs such as the ones on the next page.

Economic and Social Impact Study

In addition to KPIs, the panel recommends that PPU commission an economic and social impact study to provide broader data benchmarks. The panel understands that previous economic studies commissioned by PPU were project specific and do not reflect current conditions.



Refreshed economic data and a corresponding narrative can enhance PPU's positioning as it looks to strengthen partnerships, build community and political support, and leverage financial tools for the more significant civic initiatives it considers related to amenities, enhanced streetscapes, and housing. Ultimately, these data can be used as an engagement and promotional tool for the larger civic, business, and residential communities.

Best-in-class examples of recent higher-focused economic impact reports include the following:

- Brown University: [Brown's Economic Impact in Providence and Rhode Island](#)
- University of Southern California: [Economic Impact](#)
- Princeton University: [The Economic Impact of Princeton University](#)

The panel further recommends that in addition to a traditional report, key data points be conveyed in a concise, bold, and public-facing website. This will increase the visibility of primary messages and make the information more accessible to larger audiences. The report's release can be a public event in partnership with local business media partners. In preparation for this work, PPU can gather the relevant data sets, which can be supplied to a third-party consultant, including documentation of how PPU contributes to the region's skill development and career pathways. Data cleansing and enrichment is also a process that can start early to improve accuracy and locate missing information.



San José State University

Economic and Social Impact of San José State University

<p>Every \$1 Generates \$24</p> <p>Every \$1 in State funding helps SJSU generate roughly \$24.0 in economic output and \$9.2 in labor income throughout California.</p>	<p>25,460+ Jobs</p> <p>SJSU-related spending supports over 25,460 jobs, generates roughly \$1.6 billion in labor income, and produces over \$4.1 billion in total economic output.</p>	<p>\$1.6 Billion in Labor Income</p> <p>SJSU generates \$1.6 billion in labor income in California, almost half in Santa Clara County alone.</p>
<p>Diversifying the Workplace</p> <p>SJSU students—over 83% people of color and 42% first-generation college students.</p>	<p>\$606.9 Million in Tax Revenue</p> <p>SJSU-related spending creates a great deal of tax revenue that benefits local, state, and federal governments (generated in 2018-19).</p>	<p>50% Less Debt</p> <p>On average, SJSU undergraduates graduate with only \$15,720 in student debt, which is less than half the average debt of California college graduates.</p>

This infographic from San José State University highlights the university's impact on the community during the 2018–2019 academic year. It provides a snapshot of the university's contributions and achievements in various areas.

Organizational Structure and Leadership

Implementing all the panel's recommendations will require significant commitment from public and private partners, including Point Park University. The panel sees the need for capacity building to make meaningful progress on downtown Pittsburgh's improvement trajectory.

The panel recommends that PPU create a structure for managing large development projects by hiring a staff or contract position that would serve as a senior project manager and also establishing a neighborhood revitalization task force to advise on community-facing components of the plan, including an event facility. As positions open on the board of trustees and staff, look to expand expertise and representation in the following areas:

- Diversity (ethnicity, gender, age, education, sexual orientation, and religion)
- University housing
- Real estate (appraisal, acquisition, land use, environmental review, entitlements, and financing)
- Development and construction
- Property management

Leadership is perhaps the most important factor the panel identified for the future success of downtown Pittsburgh and, by extension, key institutions such as Point Park University. The key question is what organization will ultimately be responsible for implementing these changes with a sense of urgency and strong accountability.

During the panel interviews, the panel heard from many individuals that there are multiple stakeholder groups and government partners with overlapping members who are highly engaged in the future of downtown Pittsburgh. These partners include, but are not limited to, the following:

Community Organizations:

- Allegheny Conference
- Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
- Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership
- Riverlife
- Pittsburgh Downtown Neighborhood Association
- The Greenwood Plan
- Partner4Work
- International Free Expression Project
- Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education

Government Partners:

- Urban Redevelopment Authority
- City of Pittsburgh
- Allegheny County
- State of Pennsylvania
- Pittsburgh Public Schools (if cradle to career is a focus)

However, the panel also heard that although the groups are reasonably informed of and intertwined with each other's efforts, no single entity can coalesce recommendations, prioritize strategies, and fund and implement action items. Ideally, a lead agency would be identified that had the following characteristics:

- Represents the broad spectrum of community stakeholders, including the following:
 - Residents from youth to seniors
 - Small and large businesses
 - Civic organizations
 - Educational institutions
- Has the ability to assemble and manage real estate, functioning like an economic development corporation or community development corporation
- Can articulate a strategic and comprehensive growth and recovery plan encompassing physical and programmatic elements
- Has professional staff with expertise in planning, community and economic development, mobility, design, marketing, and finance

This could be a brand-new organization, an enhanced version of an existing organization, or an amalgamation of multiple existing organizations.

Implementation Plan

The ULI panel has mapped out short-, medium-, and long-term steps of the recommendations included in this report that PPU should pursue.

SHORT TERM (FIRST SIX MONTHS)	MEDIUM TERM (SIX TO 12 MONTHS)	LONG TERM (12 TO 24 MONTHS)
<p>Gather community organizations and government partners to establish leadership to coalesce a strategy and comprehensive plan for the recovery and growth of downtown Pittsburgh.</p>	<p>Execute the next phase of public realm improvements, including the following:</p>	<p>Execute a final batch of public realm improvements, including the following:</p>
<p>Improve perception of safety and security in the Golden Triangle through activation and art.</p>	<p>Establish more PPU educational programming on the ground floor that welcomes the community.</p>	<p>Enhance the connection from Wood Street to the Wharf.</p>
<p>Make quick, strategic, and low-cost public realm improvements through the following actions:</p>	<p>Complete fully engineered plans for permanent streetscape improvements to the Boulevard of the Allies between Smithfield and Stanwix.</p>	<p>Construct permanent improvements along the Boulevard of the Allies.</p>
<p>Establish a Cultural Walk between PPU and the Cultural District.</p>	<p>Establish wayfinding infrastructure along Wood Street.</p>	<p>Install three gateway structures at Forbes/Wood, Allies/Wood, and Smithfield/Allies.</p>
<p>Install temporary bollards, planters, and pavement markings to soften the Boulevard of the Allies.</p>	<p>Finalize the gateway design.</p>	<p>Work with others to identify and enable funding sources not currently used in Pittsburgh to produce affordable housing, community development, and urban connections.</p>
<p>Establish “First Friday” programming on Wood Street through monthly street closures.</p>	<p>Return student housing to pre-COVID levels.</p>	<p>Secure a site for the downtown events center.</p>
<p>Activate gateway areas with artistic bike racks and pop-ups in vacant storefronts (with the PDP).</p>	<p>Solidify program and potential funding sources for the downtown events center.</p>	<p>Develop anchor institution collaboratives and a shared service model that allows small businesses to access and scale contracting opportunities and training.</p>
<p>Stabilize occupancy of student housing.</p>	<p>Promote findings of the economic and social impact study and create a public-facing website.</p>	<p>Lead community efforts to establish an antidisplacement strategy.</p>
<p>Reach out to other universities to promote joint development of student and mixed-generational housing.</p>	<p>Establish an inclusive and diverse neighborhood revitalization planning task force to advise on community-facing projects with measurable metrics.</p>	<p>Include equitable objectives in all real estate and construction RFPs.</p>
<p>Conduct a needs assessment for a diverse array of internal and external stakeholders, including convening conversations through an equity lens.</p>		<p>Increase diversity and representation among PPU staff and leadership.</p>
<p>Conduct initial research on funding options that are appropriate to the individual elements of the infrastructure plan.</p>		
<p>Develop a scope of work for a project manager.</p>		
<p>Develop a request for proposal (RFP) for an economic and social impact study.</p>		



Conclusion

THE PANEL'S WORK HAS PRODUCED COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS for the downtown Pittsburgh neighborhood and the Point Park University community. The vision promises a vibrant, healthy, and welcoming environment that can serve as the gathering place for the region and includes a more inviting public realm.

The outward-facing university campus welcomes broader public interaction and a diverse range of housing options, including affordable, workforce, student, senior, and conventional market-rate units. Excitingly, the vision also embraces converting older office and commercial properties into residential spaces, preserving much of the historic architectural fabric. With the growing population, retail and job opportunities will likely be expanded. While PPU can be a major catalyst in this transformation, this effort requires a collective endeavor—it will literally “take a village.” Point Park University already has the essential ingredients for success and effective organization.



Point Perk, a campus coffeehouse and gathering spot in Village Park, part of the Academic Village.

About the Panel

LEIGH FERGUSON

Panel Chair

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Leigh Ferguson, retired since December 2021, is a developer with over 40 years' experience in the real estate profession. He is an expert on downtown revitalization, affordable housing, mixed-use development, and partnerships with public and nonprofit entities. He has chaired over 17 ULI Advisory Services panels and participated in more. Most recently the director of economic development for the city of New Orleans, Ferguson was responsible for facilitating downtown real estate development and investment, assisting the downtown community with issues affecting the business environment, advancing downtown planning, and attracting new business and development projects that will result in the expansion of employment, tax base, and wealth creation in downtown New Orleans.

Prior to his time in New Orleans, Ferguson was a senior developer at Bayer Properties, where he was involved with a variety of commercial, mixed-use, and residential products in locations across the United States. His primary duties included operating the residential and mixed-use real estate development and management division that focused on urban mixed-use community development projects in Birmingham's revitalizing Center City. Ferguson also managed the Sloss Real Estate Group's participation as a joint venture partner in a \$100 million dollar HOPE VI, mixed-income residential development. Prior to joining Sloss, Ferguson was the president of Corker Group Inc., where he managed approximately two million square feet of office, commercial, and industrial properties; supervised all leasing, administrative, maintenance, and financial operations; and prepared monthly and annual business plans, budgets, and reports to ownership. From 1991 to 1999, Ferguson was president of Chattanooga Neighborhood Enterprise Inc. (CNE). At CNE, he managed lending, development, financing, and property management functions of approximately \$30 million per year. Previously, he was president and chairman of John Laing Homes Inc. and vice president of development for both the Van Metre Companies and the Mark Winkler Company in the Washington, D.C., area.

ERWIN N. ANDRES, PE

Washington, D.C.

Erwin Andres's diverse experience bridges the disciplines of civil engineering design, urban transportation planning, traffic engineering, land development, environmental analysis, and transportation systems design. Andres has directed transportation impact studies, traffic circulation and transit studies, parking studies, and multimodal studies for master plans, business districts, and new real estate development projects of all types and sizes.

Andres has evaluated alternative public transportation modal options and has performed traffic impact assessments for residential, office, shopping and convention centers, and institutional complexes. He has been responsible for the transportation and parking components for academic, government, and corporate campuses. He has advocated on behalf of his clients to implement the best access and circulation systems that meet the local jurisdictions' requirements.

EUGENIA DI GIROLAMO

New York City, New York

Eugenia Di Girolamo leads the urban design and placemaking practice at WSP for the northeast region of the United States. She brings extensive expertise in urban design visioning, neighborhood planning, flood resiliency, and community engagement. Di Girolamo previously served as the chief urban designer for the city and county of Denver and as deputy director for urban design at the New York City Department of City Planning, leading urban design research and policy development, neighborhood studies, and rezoning proposals and guiding development projects through land use entitlement processes.

Di Girolamo helped found the Civic Engagement Studio, a think tank to improve outreach practices and enhance community involvement in planning processes in New York City. She has been an instructor at Cornell University. In 2020, she was awarded the Michael Weil Award, a recognition for excellence in urban design in the New York City public sector. She was a member of the inaugural class of the Forefront Fellowship with the Urban Design Forum in 2016. She earned a dual master of architecture and building engineering from the University of Bologna, Italy.

HAL FERRIS

Seattle, Washington

Hal Ferris has a 45-year career focused on community development, including mixed-use, mixed-income, and urban real estate development that enhances the community fabric throughout the Pacific Northwest. Ferris was the founder and managing principal of Spectrum Development Solutions, retired in 2021, and past partner of Lorig Associates and WG Clark Construction. His values and professional practice focus on housing affordability, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

In addition to urban development, Ferris has partnered with 12 public and private universities in developing housing and academic buildings and revitalizing urban neighborhoods. With his wife Carolyn, he formed Ferris Advisors in 2022 to provide advisory

services for organizational leadership and real estate. He currently serves as a leader in advocating for affordable housing land use policy and financing; leads faith-based organizations in developing affordable housing; is a mentor, coach, and guest lecturer for the University of Washington master of real estate program; and is a trustee of the University of Washington Alumni Association. He is the past chair of ULI Northwest District Council; advisory board member of the ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing; past chair of the Bellevue Planning Commission; member of the Bellevue Housing Strategy Technical Advisory Panel; member of the Downtown Livability Committee for the city of Bellevue; member of the Housing and Livability Agenda and Housing Levy Oversight Committees for the city of Seattle; and past board member and leader of Imagine Housing, Housing Development Consortium, and Common Ground. Ferris was the chair of the Eastside YMCA parent-child program and founding board member of the Lake Heights YMCA. He has served on many commissions and task forces focused on affordable housing and community development.

Ferris earned a bachelor of civil engineering from the University of Washington and a master of business administration from the University of Portland. The Ferrises have three children and five grandchildren. Upon retiring, they established the Ferris Family Scholarship for Housing at the University of Washington. The scholarship fund helps students that encounter economic hardship, allowing the students to live on campus and continue their studies.

ASHLEY A. JONES

Atlanta, Georgia

Ashley A. Jones is the cofounder and managing principal of Springleaf Real Estate Advisors (dba Springleaf Advisors). As a start-up mission-focused commercial real estate and community development consulting firm, Springleaf Advisors was established to provide in-depth technical assistance to nonprofit and for-profit entities seeking to provide affordable housing, retail, education, workforce, and/or small business development within the neighborhoods they serve. Jones leads the team in establishing visionary leadership, business development, and setting the overall direction and strategy of the company. In addition to setting goals and objectives for the firm, she maintains key relationships and engages with these stakeholders to ensure that the company and its projects exceed expectations.

With over 15 years of commercial real estate brokerage, community development finance, and real estate development experience, Jones has negotiated well over 10 million square feet of transactions and leveraged more than \$50 million in public incentives, creating over \$1.2 billion in private investment for the metro Atlanta region. Known for her unwavering commitment to social impact, strategic vision, and exceptional communication skills, Jones's talents have allowed her to excel in corporate roles with Microsoft Corporation and Cushman & Wakefield.

KELLY KLINE

Stanford, California

Kelly Kline has dedicated her career to working for and with the public sector in Silicon Valley during transformative years for the region. She has helped to create public/private partnerships that enhance the Bay Area's innovation ecosystem, sustainable urban development, and solutions to civic challenges.

As the associate vice president of local government affairs at Stanford, Kline serves as a key connection between the university and legislative policymakers across multiple cities and two counties. Stanford's leadership on housing, transportation, child care, and climate change make it an engaged stakeholder and thought partner throughout the region.

Kline has served in lead economic development roles in San José, Fremont, and Cupertino. Downtown revitalization has been a particular area of focus, including planning for transformational mixed-use projects, small business support, and public space programming.

Kline earned a bachelor of journalism and political science, as well as a master of public administration from San José State University. A dedicated urbanist, she lives in downtown San José with her family and is an avid long-distance runner. Among her favorite volunteer activities is serving as a student facilitator for ULI's UrbanPlan program.



Urban Land Institute
2001 L Street, NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-4948
uli.org



ULI Pittsburgh
2001 L Street, NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
pittsburgh.uli.org