Gown, Town, and Neighborhood Change: An Examination of Urban Neighborhoods with University Revitalization Efforts

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Abstract

Universities are expanding their missions to encompass neighborhoods and revitalization strategies, yet there is an inadequate understanding of how targeted neighborhoods have changed. This study combines institutional survey data with 1990 and 2010 Census metrics to examine twenty-two neighborhoods with university revitalization initiatives. It explores market and socioeconomic change for target tracts relative to their regions, finding significant positive changes in target tract median home and rent values. The research suggests universities use revitalization efforts to respond to place-based deficits and, in doing so, align their neighborhoods with concurrent national trends toward growing enrollment and urban revitalization.

Keywords
urban revitalization, anchor institution, neighborhood change, gentrification

Introduction

Each year, universities welcome new students into their communities. They pursue missions to educate a diverse and inclusive student body, generate knowledge for academic and real-world applications, and demonstrate leadership in innovation. Inclusivity, diversity, affordability and accessibility, leadership and excellence, and innovation—these are key words at the core of university mission statements and strategic plans. However, another set of words is increasingly present in university mission statements—community engagement, social embeddedness, and local impact—and they have taken on new meaning in recent decades.

Since the 1990s, a growing number of universities have extended their expertise beyond the realm of higher education to reshape their neighborhoods (Kleiman et al. 2015; Taylor and Luter 2013). In many cases, these urban anchors were among the few remaining champions of declining central cities. As households and corporations left for suburban locations, property disinvestment and abandonment initially represented a threat to universities and their immobile assets. Subsequently, the lack of rivals for land transformed neighborhood risk into an opportunity to seed change.

In the last two decades, university investment in neighborhoods has become a critical revitalization tool in many places. The literature suggests a university’s willingness to invest signals a renewed commitment to its city, even as other employers and landholders leave (Kleiman et al. 2015; Harkavy and Hodges 2012; Birch 2007; Benson and Harkavy 2000; Harkavy and Zuckerman 1999). Several media outlets have anointed anchor institutions as the “saviors of cities,” bringing jobs, generating knowledge and innovation, and supporting the “back to the city” movement (Katz 2014; Misra 2014; Coalition of Urban Serving Universities 2010; CEOs for Cities 2007). Undoubtedly, these revitalization efforts have implied a different style of town–gown engagement than in the past; the tumultuous Urban Renewal period lingers in many of these communities. The approach also demonstrates a shift in the ways universities conceive of “place” and leverage place-based characteristics to their advantage.

The embedded assumption in anchor institution theory is this: a subset of universities (and other anchors) recognize their vested interest in neighborhoods. Neighborhoods can either represent an asset or a risk to these institutions. A neighborhood’s “sense of place” is tied to an institution’s
reputation; further, its perceived safety and stability is a critical factor in the university’s ability to attract and sustain a student population, who not only studies but, in many cases, also lives in the neighborhood. Thus, universities see revitalization strategies as worthy investments to mitigate place-based risks. Yet, few institutions have completed an evaluation of their revitalization work. It is not uncommon for university leadership to highlight the quantity of retail space added to the neighborhood or the amount of private investment the university leveraged, but, much like a ribbon-cutting ceremony, this one-dimensional perspective reflects a moment in time. For university revitalization efforts, there is an inadequate understanding of how neighborhoods change once those ribbons are cleared away.

**Beyond Missions: What Does University Investment in Place Mean for Neighborhoods?**

This study draws from a survey of twenty-two universities with neighborhood revitalization strategies, aggregating survey responses with Census data (see Supplement 1 for a summary of the university sample). Its purpose is to examine neighborhoods with university revitalization strategies, assessing real estate and population trends and using empirical data to engage the emergent anchor institution discourse.

The anchor institution literature provides a framework for defining “revitalization activities.” Broadly, they include institutional initiatives that target neighborhood-wide quality of life issues, including physical conditions (e.g., crime and safety, public infrastructure and amenities, housing), socioeconomic conditions (e.g., poverty, unemployment), and/or services (e.g., commercial and retail, neighborhood schools). These initiatives are distinct from other traditional forms of university investment, extending beyond campus boundary to engage with revitalization in the private market. For the survey, I refined these broad divisions into seven predetermined categories, supported by the literature, including place-based strategies related to (1) housing or (2) commercial uses, (3) economic development initiatives, or more conventional forms of town–gown engagement, such as (4) public safety, (5) public amenities, (6) community service and volunteerism, or (7) K–12 education initiatives. Within this framework, all university survey respondents reported activity in multiple categories of revitalization. A majority (68 percent) incorporated physical, place-based investments in housing and/or commercial projects in their approach (see Ehlenz 2016b for a more detailed discussion of survey patterns).

The research pursues two related questions. First, how did the target tracts with university revitalization efforts change between 1990 and 2010? Here, the study seeks to establish a trend for the target areas alone, approximating a pre and post hoc indicator of change. Second, how did these tracts change relative to citywide trends and other tracts in the same county? In other words, is there an observable difference in the patterns of change for case tracts versus other tracts in their region?

The first question is important, but the second is critical as it accounts for macro-trends in each university’s city and contextualizes the improvement (or deterioration) of target tracts with other tract-level trends in the same region. To answer these queries, I used cross-tabulation analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) regression models, and multivariate regressions to build an understanding of how university revitalization areas changed in both time (1990–2010) and space. Findings show that the university case tracts saw positive shifts in their housing markets—particularly for median home values—that are significantly different than their regions. Yet, even as the market value improved, the socioeconomic indicators did not change in significant ways, suggesting a bifurcation in the populations who are living in the target neighborhoods.

**Literature Review**

**The Intersection of University Anchors and Neighborhood Improvement**

Over the last decade, scholars have produced a body of literature to document the scale and scope of university investments in neighborhood revitalization.¹ The research spans single cases and comparative analyses, as well as histories and typologies of university–community engagement. A review of university revitalization scholarship reveals two common themes: (1) the studies are frequently one sided, representing the university’s perspective (e.g., Bromley and Kent 2006; Kromer and Kerman 2005; Fulbright-Anderson, Auspos, and Anderson 2001) or, less often, the critics’ viewpoint (e.g., Bose 2015; Etienne 2012); and (2) most cases lack longitudinal data to construct a robust evaluation of the outcomes—a gap this article begins to address at a national scale.

The forward-looking policy research also reveals trends for the field. Anchor institution research is emergent and an interest in identifying anchor institution permutations persists. Yet, as more urban institutions readily don the title of “anchor institution,” there is a subtle shift in the scholarly inquiry. First, researchers are beginning to implement systematic national scans of the anchor population, particularly university neighborhood revitalization endeavors. These ongoing surveys include in-depth data collection on the costs and benefits associated with university–community engagement strategies. To date, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) is at the forefront of this work (Friedman, Perry, and Menendez 2014; Perry and Menendez 2010), although their studies are restricted to public research universities with a USU membership.

Second, there is mounting interest in the idea of measurement for anchor institution efforts (Initiative for a Competitive Inner City 2014; Dubb, McKinley, and Howard 2013). The broad call has focused on the need for indicators or outcome
metrics to both assess and guide university investments in place; to a lesser extent, some researchers are introducing "return on investment" (ROI) into the anchor institution conversation, calling for a review of internal (i.e., institution) and external (i.e., neighborhood/community) ROIs. Simultaneously, a cadre of progressive scholars are underscoring "shared value" in evaluations, pushing the conversation beyond a passive assessment of what has been done into a policy discussion of what could be (Ehlenz 2015, 2016b; Dubb, McKinley, and Howard 2013; Dubb et al. 2013; Dubb and Howard 2012).

Third, researchers in the anchor institution field are beginning to ask about transferability. To date, urban universities have been the most active and studied type of anchor institution. Researchers and institutions are now asking how the model and best practices might translate to other anchors, particularly hospitals (Zuckerman 2013), but also civic institutions (e.g., libraries, art and cultural institutions), as well as how to connect public policy and subsidies (e.g., affordable housing policy and investments) to anchor institutions (Silverman et al. 2015; Patterson and Silverman 2014).

University Anchors and Neighborhoods: Measuring Neighborhood Outcomes

While a few studies have moved toward a place-based framing of anchor institution investments, they have not yet moved the discussion beyond program evaluation within the university to external neighborhood effects (Dubb et al. 2013). Thus, I draw from robust neighborhood revitalization literatures, drawing parallels to anchor institutions.

Universities are just one of many actors intervening in neighborhoods, attempting to prime the revitalization pump with their investments. Policy initiatives aimed at neighborhood revitalization have included a number of federal programs. The Promise Zone Initiative (2013–2016) aimed to improve place-based opportunities and outcomes in twenty-two designated zones across the country. Selected areas demonstrated holistic strategies for community revitalization, which often included multiple partner organizations (universities among them). The Neighborhood Stabilization Program, a temporary program (2008–2011) launched in the wake of the Great Recession, offers another example of targeted revitalization efforts. From an evaluation perspective, the literature on large-scale policy interventions, such as HOPE VI (and its 2010 successor, the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative) or CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) investments, is particularly relevant to place-based university initiatives, demonstrating direct and indirect impact measurement in target neighborhoods (Silverman et al. 2015; Cloud and Roll 2011; Galster, Tatian, and Accordino 2006; Galster et al. 2004; Zielenbach 2003). The studies frequently analyze multiple treatment neighborhoods side by side and incorporate qualitative case studies to provide a greater insight into impacts.

The second approach measures postintervention absolute change (Cloud and Roll 2011; Galster, Tatian, and Accordino 2006). Similar to a descriptive analysis, these studies use several demographic and socioeconomic indicators to quantify neighborhood change. The studies often incorporate control neighborhoods and/or city- or MSA-level data points to assess differences, in addition to qualitative analysis.

The third strategy uses statistical models to estimate differences between treatment and control neighborhoods (Galster, Tatian, and Accordino 2006). These studies employ a range of methods, including difference-in-difference, hedonic regression, and adjusted interrupted time series models (Silverman et al. 2015; Galster, Tatian, and Accordino 2006; Galster et al. 2004; Schill et al. 2002). Unlike descriptive or absolute change analyses, these models rely on a discrete set of variables selected to measure change and minimize redundancy. They also incorporate control variables to account for other factors that may influence revitalization outcomes. Relative to other approaches, statistical models provide the most direct measure of intervention-induced change and contribute to an empirical understanding of neighborhood revitalization.

Collectively, this literature offers a framework for evaluating change in university neighborhoods. The target tracts, revitalization strategies, and time frame of many revitalization interventions are similar to the conditions found in university approaches. And while the revitalization efforts frequently assess public-sector interventions, anchor institutions, as nonprofits with long histories in urban neighborhoods, often face similar scrutiny from and are held to a similar standard by their neighborhoods. To a large extent, this represents a core debate within anchor institution literature and on the ground. Whereas private sector actors might be condemned for gentrification, communities do not have a means of holding them accountable for their actions. As institutional actors, communities hold the expectation that government entities, universities, hospitals, and CDCs, by virtue of their nonprofit status, have a de facto commitment to the neighborhood.

Data and Methods

Study Area and Data

The neighborhood change assessment relies on city- and tract-level indicators, including housing, demographic, and economic data from the Decennial Census (1990 and 2010) and the American Community Survey (2008–2012, five-year estimates). To account for changing boundaries, I collected
1990 data from the Neighborhood Change Database, normalizing 1990 tracts to 2010 boundaries. Most universities in the sample began investing in revitalization strategies during the late 1990s or early 2000s; thus, 1990 is used as a preinvestment measure and 2010 represents a “post” investment indicator (although the work, of course, does not necessarily stop in 2010).

The study uses a constructed neighborhood database with institutional and neighborhood data for each of twenty-two universities in the survey (see Ehlenz 2015). The database matched tract-level data with survey responses and standardized data from the Institutional Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS). The survey was used to establish a university revitalization dummy variable. I identified all tracts within the university’s county, which comprised the sample for the neighborhood change analysis (n = 5,352). To identify target tracts in university revitalization areas, I used a combination of survey-reported boundaries and a three-quarter-mile campus buffer. Tracts with their centroid inside the buffer were assigned to the target group (n = 210); all other county tracts were assigned to the nontarget group (n = 5,142). At an institutional level, a university’s revitalization area included between three and twenty-seven tracts; on average, a university pursued revitalization in ten tracts.

In the analysis, I relied on two categories of indicators to assess neighborhood change. Both are derived from the neighborhood revitalization and gentrification literatures, which assess the intersections of people (socioeconomic indicators) and place (market-based indicators). The first category emphasized physical assets and change in the market. I used tract-level median home values and rents, in addition to vacancy rates. To measure change, I utilized a relative measure of median value: the ratio of the tract’s median home or rent value divided by the city’s median value. Calculated for 1990 and 2010, the ratio expresses tract value as a percentage of its city, thereby controlling for macroeconomic trends between 1990 and 2010 (e.g., a rapidly growing or declining city). The transformed variables enabled me to discover if, all other things being equal, tracts with university revitalization efforts behaved differently than one would expect given non-target tract trends in the region. Further, the value ratio allowed for comparison across cities, indexing each home or rent value to its own market (e.g., Boston vs. Cleveland). The second category relied on socioeconomic indicators, including educational attainment, poverty, unemployment rates, and median household incomes to examine observable changes in the population base of the neighborhoods.

**Methodology**

This study utilized a sequential analysis of neighborhood change, layering findings from three statistical tests to offer a nuanced and robust understanding of change over time and in space. For both market and socioeconomic indicators, I examined statistical differences across target and nontarget tracts, focusing on three questions:

1. How does the outcome variable compare during the baseline year (1990) for tracts with and without university revitalization initiatives (represented by $\beta_{\text{Space}}$)?
2. How does the variable change over time (1990–2010) for the nontarget tracts? In short, what is the expected trend for the comparison area (represented by $\beta_{\text{Time}}$)?
3. And, most importantly, how does the difference in means for the outcome variable in target tracts (1990–2010) compare to that of nontarget tracts (1990–2010) (represented by $\beta_{\text{Interaction}}$)?

The primary tests included an ANOVA ($F$ test) for differences in means, as well as a difference-in-difference regression model to compare difference-in-means across both time and space (conducted using GeoDa software). I also used cross tabulation to examine categorical shifts in market indicators, substantiating the variation identified with the difference-in-difference models (see Supplementary Material). Last, I employed multivariate regression to estimate the predictive market value of a university revitalization effort, if any, to target tracts during the study period. Using the national sample, I emphasized two predictor variables: the 1990 median home (or rent) value ratio, which controls for neighborhood durability—knowing something about the neighborhood’s 1990 condition sets a reasonable expectation for its condition twenty years later, and a dummy variable indicating the presence (or absence) of a university revitalization effort. In both models, the outcome variable is the 2010 median home (or rent) value ratio.

**University Neighborhoods: Descriptive Analysis of the University Target Tracts**

Prior to exploring the ways target tracts changed during the revitalization period, it is important to acknowledge that university tracts are—and have traditionally been—different from other tracts. Table 1 compares the descriptive statistics for the university target tracts with other tracts in the study regions between 1990 and 2010. The university target tracts tended to have more diverse populations, though the difference diminished dramatically over the study period. Target tracts showed higher rates of educational attainment, higher rates of poverty, lower median household incomes (though they became more stable over the period), and a substantially greater share of renters (an average of 75 percent renter households) than other tracts in their counties. Each of these indicators is consistent with the assumed characteristics of a college neighborhood, with a greater presence of cash-poor students alongside education-rich graduate students and middle- to upper-income faculty who cluster within diverse town–gown communities.
At a descriptive level, the most dramatic variation between target and nontarget tracts occurs in the real estate market. Tracts with university revitalization increased in both median home and rent values at nearly double the rate of other tracts. In 1990, the average rent spread between neighborhood types was nearly $80. Twenty years later, the difference narrowed to $18, as rents in university target tracts increased by 15.0 percent to $892 and nontarget tracts increased to $910 (6.4 percent). The gap was more significant for median home values. The two tract groups possessed relatively equal median home values in 1990; in 2010, median home values in nontarget tracts had grown by 38.7 percent to $225,819, while tracts with university revitalization appreciated more than $130,000 to $285,082 (86.1 percent).

Table 1. Descriptive Mean Statistics: Neighborhood Changes for Target and Nontarget Tracts, 1990-2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>University Target Tracts</th>
<th>Nontarget Tracts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population, mean</td>
<td>3,055</td>
<td>3,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>53.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African American</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Asian</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational attainment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with BA or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income (2010 dollars, nearest $100)</td>
<td>$39,011</td>
<td>$38,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% below poverty</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent (2010 dollars)</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>$892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median home value (2010 dollars)</td>
<td>$153,205</td>
<td>$285,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% owner-occupied</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University tracts are, predictably, different from nonuniversity tracts, as confirmed by this sample. However, the question for this research is not if university tracts are different but whether the case tracts behaved in discernibly different ways during the study period as measured by rates of change. In other words, have these university neighborhoods changed in meaningfully different ways than one might expect given trends in their region? The remaining findings pursue this question to examine if, and to what degree, the observed descriptive patterns hold.

Findings

As described in the literature, university revitalization efforts often embrace multiple strategies, including conventional community outreach and volunteerism activities; however, many also prioritize the institution’s core competency for physical planning, development, and asset management. The study survey identifies multiple motivations that shape a university’s efforts. First, there is an interest in serving as an engaged member of the community, with survey respondents describing mission-driven work “with community partners, to create safer and more livable campus and off-campus neighborhoods” and the establishment of “mutually-beneficial community-university partnerships.” As one respondent phrased it, “neighborhood revitalization is one way that [the university] demonstrates its commitment to the community. [University] scholarship is closely tied to our neighborhood . . . [and the institution] is heavily invested in the welfare and development of our community.” These motivations align with university missions to be engaged civic institutions, fostering partnerships among community stakeholders and “building strong, healthy communities through engagement of teaching, research, and outreach resources.”

At the same time, survey respondents described how place-based conditions, and their associated risks, were connected to the university’s underlying purpose of educating students and maintaining institutional reputations. Universities acknowledged that their survival is “dependent upon [their] adjacent neighborhoods as a source of housing, commerce, and support. [They] cannot operate or survive by sticking [their] head in the sand.” They saw how “decline in and around the university neighborhood” denoted a risk to the stability of university facilities and safety of its population. In response, neighborhood revitalization investments sought to “establish and maintain a positive relationship with these neighbors while, at the same time, addressing the need for facilities needed by the increased population of students, faculty, and staff.”

An analysis of survey results supports the place-based motivations felt by universities and demonstrates how institutions strategically used their investments to reduce neighborhood-centered risks. Across the university cases, 68 percent of respondents reported investments in development strategies (i.e., housing and/or commercial projects); more than three-quarters put resources into public safety and amenities (77 and 82 percent, respectively) (Ehlenz 2016b). Following the logic of hedonic demand, one might argue these physical upgrading and safety strategies contribute to a market shift, catalyzing change in the neighborhood and giving confidence
to secondary investors. In response, a gentrification process may ensue, with new households moving into the neighborhood to take advantage of the amenities, followed by additional private investment. The primary benefit—and, for some, concern—of this strategy is the anchor institution’s ability to drive rapid, highly visible change in a neighborhood, often reversing years of instability and attracting considerable private investment in its wake. But does this perception of university-induced revitalization match the reality of neighborhood change?

**Market Improvement Indicators**

The evidence suggests that, in this instance, perception and reality may overlap. The university target tract group demonstrates significant positive change in market improvement indicators, including relative median home and rent values and vacancy rates. These changes differ from the trends for nontarget tracts in the region and largely eliminate the gaps between the two groups. Figure 1 shows the ANOVA market and socioeconomic trends for target and nontarget tracts; each chart shows the target and nontarget tract trend lines (1990–2010) for the mean value of the indicator. Table 2 summarizes the difference-in-difference regressions. For median home values, the trend for the nontarget tract group was flat over the twenty-year period with indexed home values decreasing minimally ($\beta_{\text{Time}} = -0.0008^{**}$). By comparison, the target tract group possessed significantly lower home values in the base year of 1990 ($\beta_{\text{Space}} = -0.2638^{*}$) equivalent to a 26 percent suppression in indexed home values. By 2010, however, the target tract mean home value appreciated significantly more than the nontarget group ($\beta_{\text{Interaction}} = 0.2357^{*}$). The change in target tracts was so transformative that, by 2010, there was no longer a statistical difference between the mean values of the two groups’ median home value.

Rents followed a similar pattern. The two groups remained statistically different from one another in both 1990 and 2010, but the gap narrowed substantially over this period. The mean indexed rent for the target group was 20 percent lower than the nontarget group in 1990 ($\beta_{\text{Space}} = -0.2024^{**}$). Twenty years later, the national rental market was tight and rents were increasing in many markets. The nontarget tracts reflected this upward pressure with a 4 percent bump in rents relative to their city’s median ($\beta_{\text{Space}} = 0.0447^{**}$); however, target tracts saw even greater pressure (nearly 10 percent more) in their markets ($\beta_{\text{Interaction}} = 0.0990^{**}$). Meanwhile, vacancy rates reflected the burgeoning demand in target tracts, bucking the increased vacancy demonstrated in the nontarget tract group ($\beta_{\text{Time}} = 0.0286^{***}$) to experience a slight decrease and eliminate the variation between the two groups entirely ($\beta_{\text{Space}} = 0.0388^{***}$ and $\beta_{\text{Interaction}} = -0.0298^{*}$). A cross-tabulation analysis underscores the divergence in market trends for target versus nontarget tracts (see Supplement 2). During the 1990–2010 period, all tracts in the study showed stability in median home values and appreciation in median rents. Yet, when examined independently, target tracts demonstrated substantially more movement across the homeownership market than nontarget tracts. Although nearly half of all target tracts had low median home values in 1990, less than 20 percent remained in that category by 2010; this shift propelled target tracts into a proportionately stronger distribution (among low-, medium-, and high-value categories) than nontarget tracts by the end of the study period.

The upward shift in the distribution of home values and rents lends credence to anecdotal claims that university revitalization efforts are changing the housing landscape in some of these target neighborhoods (e.g., Bose 2015; Etienne 2012; Drummond 2009; McQuade 2004; Amborebieta 2001). While nontarget tracts displayed modest change in median home values between 1990 and 2010, those trends were magnified in the study’s target tracts. But how much of an increase in median home values and rents could the presence of a university revitalization initiative predict? Two multivariate regression models estimate the value of market change between 1990 and 2010 (Table 3).

Estimates from model 1 predict that target tracts experience neighborhood change differently with respect to median home values. The model establishes a trend line between the 1990 and 2010 median home value ratios ($\beta = 0.746^{**}$), corroborating relative neighborhood durability over time. However, for the sample, the university dummy variable alters the trend line, boosting the estimate of the 2010 median home value ratio by 17 percent ($\beta = 0.169^{**}$). Conversely, the estimates for model 2 do not predict a statistically significant change in relative rents for target tracts. While the rent model establishes a slightly weaker trend line between 1990 and 2010 median rent ratios ($\beta = 0.573^{**}$), it does not find a statistically significant association between the university dummy variable and relative rent change, despite observed distributional changes in the cross-tabulation analysis.

**Socioeconomic Indicators**

While many scholars continue to debate the definition and process of gentrification, the market changes observed in the target tract group often constitute a first step (Barton 2016; Brown-Saracino 2013; Freeman 2005; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). Gentrification is often characterized by a process of neighborhood change marked by two shifts: (1) An increase in the cost and/or value of housing; and (2) corresponding changes in the local population, captured by shifts in the socioeconomic status of households (from lower to higher), which can also be accompanied by change in the neighborhood’s racial and ethnic composition. Universities, as they directly and indirectly reshape the physical conditions of neighborhoods, are often accused of being gentrifiers of place—one only needs to look to the media to find stories of the gentrifying university in cities like Chicago,
Boston, New York, or Philadelphia (e.g., Drummond 2009; Jackson 2014; P. Smith 2016; Williams 2006). In this study, to the extent median home values, median rents, and vacancy rates serve as bellwethers for a neighborhood’s market condition, the findings denote that the target tracts experienced significantly different market trajectories than other tracts in their respective regions. But what about the socioeconomic indicators? Did the target tracts change in ways that suggest fundamental socioeconomic change?

The concise answer is no. The evidence indicates that the target tracts remained economically distinct from other tracts in their host counties; the fact that they had university revitalization strategies did not correlate with socioeconomic improvement. In nearly all instances, the target and nontarget groups demonstrated comparable trends—increasing or decreasing at similar rates—but the case study tracts remained on a parallel track, either above or below their counterparts depending on the variable (refer to Figure 1 and Table 2). With respect to both educational attainment and poverty, the target tracts remained well above—and statistically significant from—their counterparts and increased at a slightly steeper rate between 1990 and 2010. Median household incomes flipped the relationship, with target tracts claiming a persistently lower income. Yet the basic trend was the same, with similar rates of growth that maintained the statistically significant difference between the two groups. Collectively, these variables appear to support the ongoing presence of cash-poor and education-wealthy students in the university cases, as would be expected in the typical college neighborhood.

**Figure 1.** National analysis of variance charts.
Table 2. National Difference-in-Difference Regressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Y Variable</th>
<th>X Variable</th>
<th>$R^2$ (Adjusted)</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market indicators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median home value, indexed, tract (2010 dollars)</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
<td>1.2370***</td>
<td>0.0120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.2638*</td>
<td>0.0607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0008**</td>
<td>0.0170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.2357*</td>
<td>0.0859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median rent, indexed, tract (2010 dollars)</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0082</td>
<td>1.267***</td>
<td>0.0061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.2024***</td>
<td>0.0307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0447***</td>
<td>0.0086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0990**</td>
<td>0.0434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy rate (%), tract</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0379</td>
<td>0.0773***</td>
<td>0.0010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0388***</td>
<td>0.0052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0286***</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0298***</td>
<td>0.0074</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Socioeconomic indicators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational attainment, BA+ (%), tract</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0591</td>
<td>0.2158***</td>
<td>0.0027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1260***</td>
<td>0.0137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0814***</td>
<td>0.0038</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0193***</td>
<td>0.0194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (%), tract</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0285</td>
<td>0.0795***</td>
<td>0.0011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0286***</td>
<td>0.0053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0252***</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0188***</td>
<td>0.0075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate (%), tract</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0445</td>
<td>0.1397***</td>
<td>0.0021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.1243***</td>
<td>0.0107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0344***</td>
<td>0.0030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0332***</td>
<td>0.0151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income, indexed, tract (2010 dollars)</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.0163</td>
<td>1.2719***</td>
<td>0.0096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.4374***</td>
<td>0.0485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0632***</td>
<td>0.0136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0244*</td>
<td>0.0686</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: For the difference-in-difference regressions, the coefficients represent the following: The constant represents the mean value for nontarget tracts in 1990; space is the predicted difference between target and nontarget tracts in 1990; time refers to the predicted change for nontarget tracts between 1990 and 2010; and interaction represents the predicted difference in slopes between target and nontarget tracts over the study period. ***p ≤ 0.01; **p ≤ 0.05; *p ≤ 0.1.

Table 3. Multivariate Regressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1: 2010 Median Home Value Ratio</th>
<th>Model 2: 2010 Median Rent Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>n</strong></td>
<td>1990 Median Home Value Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>5245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$ (adj)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p ≤ 0.01.
Unemployment rates did offer a minor exception to the socioeconomic trends. In this instance, it would appear that the durability of anchor institutions—a key component of their status as major employers with persistent roots—rang true. While the target tracts had a statistically higher unemployment rate in 1990 ($\beta_{\text{Space}} = 0.0286^{***}$), which is likely explained by the higher proportion of students, it did not waver over the study period. This was evident even as non-target tracts realized a nearly 3 percent increase ($\beta_{\text{Time}} = 0.0252^{***}$), corresponding with national economic trends and the effects of the Great Recession. By 2010, the two tract groups were no longer significantly different from one another. While observed employment durability is likely not a function of university revitalization initiatives, it is consistent with stable presence of a major employer. Further, several universities in the sample did report local hiring initiatives that could augment this pattern in the future.

Discussion

The findings point to differences in the ways target tracts and similarly located nontarget tracts changed between 1990 and 2010. The divergent trends are particularly evident for market-based metrics. For median home values, median rents, and vacancy levels, the rates of observed change largely erased the statistically significant 1990 differences between the two groups. Given the place-based nature of the neighborhood changes, there could be multiple explanations for these findings. Perhaps the most obvious is a simple increase in demand for university neighborhoods, fueled by growth in higher education enrollment in the 1990s and 2000s.

Over the last twenty-five years, university enrollment rates have climbed to new heights. Between 1990 and 2012, enrollment levels for undergraduates in degree-granting institutions reached 17.7 million, an increase of 48 percent (Sackett 2015). Full-time enrollment expanded even more quickly, growing by 59 percent during the same period. Two primary factors contribute to these growth rates. First, post-secondary education and its applications have become both more widespread and accessible; although higher education was once reserved for traditional “elites,” it has become a tool to access “elite” status in its own right (Schofer and Meyer 2005). Second, demographic trends have shaped the higher education sector. Millennials have expanded the band of college-aged people (i.e., eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds) in recent years. Together, these factors mean the twenty-first century has seen growth in the absolute numbers of college-aged adults, as well as higher postsecondary education rates—whereas only 26 percent of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds enrolled in degree-granting institutions in 1970, 40 percent enrolled in 2014 (Snyder, de Brey, and Dillow 2016).

Alongside growing student bodies, many universities have shifted away from their commuter-focused roots to embrace a residential campus model (e.g., Hoover 2016; Wolverton 2015). However, their facilities—and, specifically, residential dorms—have not kept pace with burgeoning demand (Clark 2016). This has put pressure on off-campus housing markets, stimulating private investment in student-focused residential projects (Sackett 2015; Gallun 2016; Bronstein 2005). Thus, one explanation for the observed patterns of tightening housing markets in the university case tracts is that growing enrollments increased demand (and, by extension, prices) for housing in the surrounding neighborhoods. An analysis of the case universities’ enrollment relative to peer institutions, however, suggests a more complex interpretation.

Figure 2 shows full-time enrollment trends (three-year moving averages) for 674 US universities, including the twenty-two case study universities, between 1988 and 2015. All of the institutions are accredited, nonprofit, four-year, degree-granting universities in an urban setting, reflecting the initial criteria for the case institutions. Nationally, universities realized between 2 and 3 percent growth in the 1990s, accelerating above 4 percent in the early 2000s. This trend reflects macroeconomic circumstances, including recessions in the early 1990s and 2000s that are correlated with stronger enrollments.

During the same period, however, the case universities demonstrated a different pattern. In the early 1990s, they experienced declining growth rates—falling below 0 percent between 1992 and 1995. This pattern converges with both the anchor institution literature’s discussion of what motivated universities to invest in their neighborhoods, as well as the survey-reported timing of revitalization initiatives (mid-to late 1990s and early 2000s for most institutions) (Taylor and Luter 2013; Perry, Wiewel, and Menendez 2009; Rodin 2007; Perry and Wiewel 2005; Rodin 2005; Cisneros 1996).

Beginning in 1996, the case universities saw slower growth relative to the national trend, increasing in the range of 1–2 percent during the boom enrollment years of the early 2000s (half of the rate for the national sample). By 2007, however, they showed stronger enrollment averages and, in 2009, the growth rate for case universities was a full percentage point higher than the national sample. In the years that followed, the case universities maintained a higher enrollment rate; by 2015, the national growth rate was 0 percent while the case universities remained close to 1 percent.

Qualitative survey responses underscore the observed difference in enrollment trends. Although university enrollments were strong nationally in the early 1990s, the case universities reported distressed neighborhood conditions that depressed growth in the student body. A quote from a university administrator illustrates the sense of neighborhood disinvestment and the resulting threats to student and faculty success expressed by several institutions in the survey:

The primary motivation [for revitalization] was the gradual and significant physical deterioration of the neighborhoods adjacent to the campus. This decline was accompanied by or,
in some cases, generated by a significant increase in illicit activities in what were once grand and flourishing neighborhoods. Faculty, staff and students who once lived, worked, and played in these areas [were] no longer willing to negotiate them. Although increased academic standards significantly bolstered the reputation of the institution, the physical condition of these areas was a serious deterrent to decisions to attend the institution by prospective students, parents and employees. Some sort of radical institutional investment was necessary.

Correspondingly, several survey responses cited place-based objectives for their revitalization strategies, such as “create a safe, livable environment,” “create a safer and more livable campus and off-campus neighborhoods with permeable boundaries,” and “encourage vibrant commercial areas [and] housing options near campus with a range of price points.”

Given the divergent trends in full-time enrollment and the supporting evidence from the survey, I propose another interpretation of the research. The findings suggest there may be a relationship between enrollment, urban revitalization, and university initiatives. Rather than being a discrete cause of revitalization, I infer that university initiatives helped leverage national enrollment trends by making challenged university neighborhoods more attractive to prospective students, and shape the tenor of revitalization in the immediate vicinity of campus through their selected strategies. In short, the university’s efforts represented a tool that enabled the institution address its place-based deficits (e.g., crime rates or property disinvestment) and, in doing so, aligned the neighborhood with concurrent national trends toward growing enrollment and urban revitalization.

This explanation is not evidence of a causal relationship between university revitalization initiatives and enrollment, as it is based on trend analysis and does not control for potential confounders or other omitted variables. Nevertheless, the proposed interpretation is supported by the survey results, the qualitative responses of university administrators, and analysis of the enrollment patterns. Moreover, it offers insight into the experience of a subset of urban university neighborhoods, as they encountered a confluence of institutional and private-sector investments aimed at reshaping their markets.

**Examining the Potential Implications for Neighborhoods with University Revitalization**

The proposition that university anchors can use neighborhood-focused tools to target place-based vulnerabilities and shape the character of revitalization introduces a number of questions about how those neighborhoods change and who the intended (or unintended) audience(s) might be. Observed socioeconomic trends suggest moderate growth in student-sensitive categories, such as educational attainment and poverty rates, in ways that augment existing conditions and support enrollment growth, rather than substantially change them. This finding underscores an attraction strategy for university revitalization: students remain the focus for the campus and renewed university neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the market indicators emphasize strong appreciation of housing markets, particularly for owner-occupied properties. Initially, target tracts were in a lower-value bracket (per the cross-tabulation analysis), with nearly
50 percent falling into the low-home value category. This pattern aligns with the survey-reported story that declining neighborhood conditions motivated university revitalization efforts, as they threatened the assets and brand of the institution. Over a twenty-year period, however, the target neighborhoods appear to have corrected for disinvestment and caught up with the “Joneses,” showing distributions nearly equal to or higher than their regional counterparts and statistically significant differences in means. At the same time, the proportionate share of housing in university tracts, including, but not limited to, those with revitalization strategies, remains skewed toward the rental market. This is consistent with high student-demand for housing. There is limited evidence that the tenure composition of the target tracts changed in meaningful ways, with owner-occupancy growing nearly 10 to 26.8 percent over the study period (Table 1).

What could these findings mean? The surveyed universities suggest that target neighborhoods are attracting bifurcated populations. At one end, target tracts now possess housing markets that, at a mean median value, are no longer statistically different from other tracts in their cities and counties. By extension, this signals that the market became less accessible to lower-income buyers than it was previously, while becoming more attractive to a higher-income bracket. This pattern aligns with a conventional gentrification argument at the homeowner level. At the same time, the study introduces questions related to broad-based gentrification claims for renters. From a housing cost perspective, the findings point to more upward growth in the case study rental markets, nearly eliminating the median rent gap between target and nontarget tract groups over time. However, the rent regression model did not predict a significant increase (or decrease) in rents for tracts in a university revitalization area. Perhaps, more plausibly, these findings can be interpreted as a ubiquitous tightening of rental markets. National housing data suggest that rents are elevated across the country, as demand outpaces supply in a tight, postrecession rental market (Joint Center for Housing Studies 2015). Recent work by Matthew Desmond (2016) highlights how narrow the rent gap can be, with the difference between the least and most expensive units amounting to as little as a few hundred dollars. Although this study’s findings do not necessarily support a gentrification argument for renters in university target tracts, research intimates this may be due to significant pressure on most rental stock in urban neighborhoods, pushing the “affordable” threshold higher throughout the market.

The stability of target tract socioeconomic characteristics also introduces questions about what kinds of changes are occurring to the population of these university neighborhoods. Do the stable socioeconomic indicators signal that the neighborhoods are not gentrifying, despite claims in the media and changes in housing markets? Or is something else happening? The study findings reinforce the argument that universities have a vested interest in neighborhood stability on behalf of their student populations, as well as their faculty and staff. Though university respondents express a commitment to the community, they also describe the inherent dependence of the institution on its neighborhood as a source of housing and commerce. While socioeconomic indicators appear to imply that gentrification is not a concern, the evidence does suggest the neighborhood is changing. One potential explanation is that the neighborhoods are experiencing a more nuanced kind of pressure, influenced by changes at both higher and lower socioeconomic thresholds.

At the upper end, target tracts saw a modest uptick in owner-occupancy and a significant increase in median home values. Neither of these indicators are likely correlated with student populations, but with higher income households who are attracted to the revitalizing neighborhood and can afford higher-cost homeownership. Meanwhile, the target universities saw their enrollments increase, which could suggest more students living in the surrounding neighborhoods. In combination, these trends introduce a question: Might the presence of students alter the conventional gentrification signals in a neighborhood by splitting change across higher-income homeowners and cash-poor students? If that were the case, the resulting pressure on these university neighborhoods might be better characterized by a co-mingling of gentrification and “studentification,” a process that describes how growing numbers of students can shape a neighborhood (Hubbard 2009; Revington 2017; Sage, Smith, and Hubbard 2012; D. Smith 2008). These questions introduce the opportunity for future empirical research, which could engage with resident-level data to examine population shifts within the neighborhood, including changes in the university- and non-university-affiliated households. Although it can be challenging to collect address-level data to determine the dispersion of off-campus student housing choices, this future research could provide meaningful insights into the relative scale of student populations in university-adjacent neighborhoods, as well as the unique pressures felt by these communities.

**Future Research**

This research provides an initial basis for demonstrating that neighborhoods with university revitalization initiatives change in ways that differ from other neighborhoods in their region. It introduces a new perspective about the ways university revitalization tools may intersect with broader urban revitalization and enrollment trends. It also opens up several pathways for future anchor institution research.

A critical opportunity is to study variation in university revitalization strategies, examining whether and how various strategies might stimulate different degrees of change in target neighborhoods. The current research provides some direction in this regard. Among the case universities, respondents reported engaging across seven categories of revitalization. One method of assessment might consider the “diversification” of the anchor strategy; in other words, how many of the seven categories did the university pursue and are there discernible
patterns in their effectiveness? For the twenty-two universities in the study, eight constructed highly diversified approaches with six or more categories of investment; eleven of the institutions engaged in moderately diversified approaches with four to five categories of investment; and three universities invested in low-diversification approaches with fewer than four categories of investment. Future work could determine whether a more robust revitalization effort is associated with more substantial neighborhood change over time.

Alternately, universities might also be stratified based on the presence of place-based strategies in their revitalization efforts. Given the market-based findings of the current research, a reasonable proposition might be that universities with place-based strategies (i.e., investments in housing and/or commercial projects and programs) as part of their revitalization initiatives are associated with greater levels of neighborhood change over time, particularly because these are the kinds of tools that intersect most directly with private-sector investments in place. Among the twenty-two cases, ten university revitalization approaches included place-based housing and commercial investments; four universities included place-based investments in housing (but not commercial); one institution included place-based investment in commercial (but not housing); and seven universities did not include any place-based initiatives in their efforts.

From an empirical standpoint, there is an opportunity to expand the comparative analysis beyond the case universities, allowing for stronger causal inference. Subsequent work could build on this research by addressing the inherent selection bias of university initiatives, which do not occur at random but are contingent upon the proximate relationship of tracts to an engaged anchor institution. One method would be to establish a two-way matched pair analysis, controlling for (1) the intrinsic effect of a university writ large, generating a set of control institutions without neighborhood revitalization initiatives, and (2) the anticipated trends for similarly matched neighborhoods without a university anchor.

There are also significant opportunities to pursue a deeper analysis of how change manifests on people in place. For instance, the home value regression model suggests a measurable increase in the estimates for relative median home values over time. But it provides little insight as to the effects on residential mobility and household incomes. Are existing homeowners able to cash out of (or stay in) the neighborhood with positive equity gains? Or are they experiencing housing cost burdens, such as increased tax assessments? The questions are murkier for rents, as the model did not indicate predictable differences in rents for university target tracts on a national scale. But how are these neighborhoods accounting for growing student populations and new multifamily developments? Is there greater demand for rental stock, which gives a competitive advantage to university-affiliated renters who are willing to pay more for proximity? Or is the influx of student-centric units inducing preference-based moves, as students change the residential culture of the neighborhood?

Similarly, there are a number of opportunities to pursue qualitative questions that generate knowledge about the implementation and impacts of anchor institution strategies, as well as pursue theory building within the field. As discussed above, the university revitalization approaches documented in the survey were diverse, tailored to the university’s mission, resources, and the community context. As the anchor institution model is refined, it will be instructive to understand the nuances of various approaches and the qualitative impacts on the ways institutions and communities occupy place.

One research path might consider variation in anchor institution density across neighborhoods and/or cities and, subsequently, the potential for concentrated effects on place. Several cities house multiple universities, hospitals, and other vested “anchors” in proximity to one another. The University of Pennsylvania shares its larger West Philadelphia neighborhood with a major medical hub, Drexel University, and the University City Science Center, among other anchors. Similarly, the University of Cincinnati is one of five anchors in its neighborhood, including three healthcare centers and the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden; in addition to operating independently, the anchors have united to form an anchor institution consortium. These clusters represent special challenges, but also opportunities, for anchors to leverage their mutual interests and, potentially, aggregate their resources for neighborhood improvement. Alternately, in cities where there are fewer anchor institutions or a university represents the sole anchor in a neighborhood, there may be limitations, for better or worse, on the impact of revitalization efforts. Another emergent line of research might consider how other anchors, such as hospitals or arts and cultural institutions, are thinking about their community ties. How might those institutional resources be harnessed to build not just stronger anchors but also generate mutually beneficial outcomes for urban neighborhoods and their regions?

Conclusion

Among university leaders and advocates, there is growing consensus that the fortunes of anchor institutions are tied, at least in part, to those of their neighborhoods. Institutional assets are rooted and, thus, subject to the same economic and market forces as the adjacent properties. University constituents—faculty, staff, students, and visitors—and community residents both depend on the neighborhood for housing and commercial amenities. And, as much as a neighborhood derives some of its identity from the university—the urban equivalent of a “college town,” a university increasingly extracts its institutional identity from its surroundings. Under this pretext, universities report mounting pressure to establish porous boundaries with the neighborhood, fostering a “sense of place” in both town and gown to support institutional stability.
Notably, this comparative case analysis has limitations. The results do not portend to causation, but emphasize the association between university revitalization activities and neighborhood trends over a twenty-year period. It does not account for, nor make specific claims about, the multiple factors that may be driving change in the target university neighborhoods, including the contributions of other nonprofit and private-sector actors. Observations and complementary research suggest that universities do not drive revitalization independently, but, rather, their investments intersect with private market interests (e.g., see Ehlenz 2016a, 2016b) and higher education trends, for instance. The analysis is also bounded by the universities participating in the survey, all of which reported engagement with revitalization activities. There are no “control” universities in the sample to account for changes in university neighborhoods at large (i.e., university neighborhoods without discrete revitalization initiatives).

Despite its limitations, this study examines the ways a subset of urban neighborhoods with university revitalization efforts changed over time. The evidence suggests those changes were meaningfully different than their regions, particularly with respect to market conditions. This study also raises questions about how university revitalization efforts intersect with the multitude of other factors and players affecting neighborhoods. While university investments in a community may be important, they are not isolated from the social or economic characteristics of a place. From this perspective, anchor institutions ought to be considered a tool—one of many potential tools—within an urban neighborhood. And, as with any policy tool, its usefulness is contextual. There are likely circumstances where it will be effective, others where it will not, and others still where it may need to be modified to have the desired outcome. In some circumstances university revitalization may play a predominant role; in others, it may serve a supplementary purpose, perhaps augmenting a positive trend or addressing a needs gap. Further, as with any policy action, the costs and benefits are not likely to be evenly distributed, with some groups realizing more of the gains and others shouldering more of the losses. This research offers a foundation on which future work could build to explore these essential issues.

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Notes

1. Foundational literature in the anchor institution field includes Friedman, Perry, and Menendez (2014); Taylor and Luter (2013); Harkavy and Hodges (2012); Hodges and Dubb (2012); Perry and Menendez (2010); Perry, Wiewel, and Menendez (2009); Sungu-Eryilmaz (2009); Rodin (2007); Perry and Wiewel (2005); and Maurrasse (2001).

2. See Carolyn Adams’ recent work for a larger discussion of third-sector organizations, including university anchors, and the limits to public accountability (Adams 2014). This privilege, where an institution holds the benefit of tax-exempt status and public subsidies but retains the freedom to pursue a private agenda, is at the heart of the debates between town and gown.

3. The landscape study examined campus expansion and neighborhood revitalization investments through a national survey of sixty-five universities, drawn from a 1,030-unit sample with the following characteristics: four-year, degree-granting, accredited universities located in urban settings. A review of the anchor institution literature identified the sixty-five universities investing in expansion and/or neighborhood revitalization. I sent a survey to this sample, and twenty-two universities, located in nineteen cities, participated (34 percent response rate). The survey collected information about a university’s expansion and/or revitalization motivations, its tenure with these types of activities, and the nature of its investments in its neighborhood. In addition, it asked universities to provide information on their efforts to conduct internal evaluations of their work and the relationship between their investments and broader university missions. The survey data serves as a foundation for the quantitative analysis of neighborhood-level outcomes presented in this article.

4. IPEDS is an annual survey database, constructed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the US Department of Education. IPEDS collects survey data across nine broad categories, including institutional characteristics (e.g., public or private governance structure; Carnegie classification and degree offerings; city size and density), enrollments, and financial resources. The surveys align with three collection periods (Fall, Winter, Spring) and are mandatory for all institutions participating in any federal financial assistance program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (http://nces.ed.gov/about/).

5. The three-quarter mile boundary corresponds with the university’s typical target area, as compared with reported target areas. In cases where the survey respondent could not provide clear boundaries, I used the three-quarter-mile buffer as a proxy in order to focus on the analysis on those tracts with greater proximity to the campus.

6. All monetary variables are reported in 2010 dollars. I used the Consumer Price Index to transform 1990 monetary variables into...
2010 currency. Transformed dollar amounts were rounded to the nearest $100 to account for variation in CPI conversion factors.
7. Using IPEDS data, 685 universities met the selection criteria, which were the same criteria used to identify case institutions for the landscape study (see endnote 3). Visual inspection of the enrollment data histogram suggested it was skewed by outliers (e.g., enrollment growth of 1,000 percent). I subsequently dropped the 99th percentile (eleven institutions) to account for these outliers and make the distribution closer to normal.

References


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