THE STATE OF UNIVERSITY CITY
2010
A letter from the executive director

The newspaper headlines of 2009 and 2010 weren’t supposed to be about more than a dozen new restaurant openings, about the nearly $1.7 billion in real estate projects completed or under construction, nor about one of the lowest office vacancy rates in Southeastern Pennsylvania. But University City is a place that defies the odds.

University City is, in short, Philadelphia’s boomtown. Sixty-five thousand jobs—largely concentrated in a single square mile, more than half a billion dollars in new National Institutes of Health funding, the city’s largest construction project outside of the Convention Center expansion, and more than $54 million in new funding for University City scientists from the National Science Foundation make for an economic base that rivals any knowledge-rich community in the country. But University City is more than an engine of prosperity. It’s a neighborhood, as diverse, eclectic and charming as any in the region, a place of choice for thousands of people and families, a magnet for those who grew up both around the globe and around the corner.

The story of University City is a story of first class neighborhoods and world class institutions. It’s a story of community and commercial vitality, and of innovation and knowledge. This report tells that story for 2010, highlighting University City’s central place in the future of the city and region. It’s a tale told in several parts, focusing on the commercial vibrancy and real estate boom that are palpable in the district, the pioneering spirit of University City as a knowledge innovator in realms ranging from genetic research to sustainability practices, and the fantastically livable, walkable and enviable neighborhoods that anchor University City on all sides.

The story of University City as told in these pages is very much about what’s next. Because of this community’s unique assets, we believe fervently that University City’s future is critical to the future of Philadelphia. And we’re happy to report that, from where we sit, the future looks wonderfully bright!

Sincerely,

Matt Bergheiser
Executive Director

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“I love this area of Philadelphia. The people in this neighborhood are so warm and friendly. Ever since we opened Bobby’s Burger Palace in University City, we’ve been truly embraced by the young and thriving community that resides around us. It’s nice to know you’re in such a great food town, but it’s also nice to know our local customer base supports our passion and desire to deliver great food every day.”

Bobby Flay, Chef and Restaurateur
An exciting year for new businesses

University City saw a steady stream of new business openings in 2009 in retail, food and drink, and services, adding to the rich mix of businesses that call the neighborhood home.

The number of full service restaurants in University City increased by almost 15% in the last year.

Number of existing businesses

- 1
- 2 - 5
- More than 5

New businesses

- Food & Drink
- Retail
- Services

Source: UCD survey of ground floor commercial spaces, 2009
A strong office market

University City had the second lowest office vacancy rate of 28 regional sub-markets in 2009.

Source: Grubb & Ellis, 2009 (fourth quarter)
A skyline transforms

Despite the recession, nearly 30 new development projects advanced or were completed in University City in the last eighteen months, representing approximately 2.9 million square feet of new office, research, academic and medical space, many of which incorporate sustainability as a guiding theme.

Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine + Roberts Proton Therapy Center

The Raymond and Ruth Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine (pictured here) is a 500,000+ square foot outpatient facility, blending outstanding medical practitioners with state-of-the-art technology to offer the most advanced treatment options available. Opened in October 2008, the Center encompasses Penn’s NCI-designed Abramson Cancer Center, a new cardiology center and an outpatient surgical pavilion.

The Roberts Proton Therapy Center, a 67,000 square foot facility, located mostly underground, is connected to the Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine and is part of Penn’s Department of Radiation Oncology. The first of five treatment rooms opened in January 2010. Upon completion of the last treatment room—in early 2011—this will be the largest proton therapy center in the world.
Transformation of historic building brings 5,000 jobs to University City

In 2007, Brandywine Realty Trust purchased the former United States Postal Services building at 30th and Market streets and is doing a complete retrofit of the building which will become the new Philadelphia campus for the Internal Revenue Service. The $260 million project is one of the largest historic building renovations projects in the country, and will qualify for a historic tax credit and LEED Silver certification. At full occupancy, the building will be home to more than 5,000 IRS employees.

In addition to the building renovation, Brandywine is constructing a $90 million, 11-level, 1,662 car garage at 30th and Chestnut streets, which will be 94% occupied by IRS employees. Future phases of the project will include over 800,000 square feet of office space and a possible 250-room hotel.
Penn Park

Replacing acres of impermeable asphalt, the University of Pennsylvania’s new Penn Park will be one of the most visible new sustainable landmarks in University City, as well as an inviting gateway into the neighborhood. Visitors to the park will be able to walk or bike along the pathways and enjoy athletic events with the knowledge that they’re sitting atop a complex piece of sustainable engineering.

A rainwater harvesting system will collect water for use by a high efficiency irrigation system for the park’s plants, which will be selected for their low water requirements. Artificial fields will reduce the need for irrigation and will provide significant stormwater storage and groundwater recharge. Permeable pavement and vegetated swales will further increase water infiltration.
The word sustainability gets thrown around a lot these days, but in this neighborhood it’s not just a buzzword. It stands for the long-term thinking about our environmental impact that has been in the bones of the people of University City for years. It’s a reason why people move here; for the bustling farmers markets, the community gardens, the ease with which we give up cars and ride a bike or trolley to work. Sustainability happens at all scales, but in University City we know that it’s a shared commitment, from individual actions to the exciting projects described on these pages.

**Drexel Recreation Center**

This facility boasts a number of sustainable features and has been designed to collect rain water from the new structure and the existing Athletic Center into an underground cistern to be infiltrated and used on site. The integral glass and metal panel façade, together with light scopes on the roof, will provide enough day lighting to eliminate the use of electric lights in 87% of interior occupied space.

**South Street Bridge**

When it’s completed in late 2010, the new South Street Bridge will provide an inviting new gateway for bicyclists entering University City. The new bridge will have wide 6-foot 4-inch bike lanes, creating a safe and convenient route to University City and will include a ramp to the new boardwalk section of the Schuykill River trail, further connecting University City to the expanding bike network in Center City and beyond.

**Drexel Smart House**

Drexel Smart House is a student-led, multidisciplinary project to rehabilitate a 19th century urban home to serve as a “living laboratory” for exploring cutting edge design and technology through student-developed products and research. Students who live and work in the facility will focus on sustainability, from building construction and energy consumption to health and lifestyle.

**UC Green**

The mission of UC Green is to promote, coordinate, and support volunteer community greening in University City and surrounding neighborhoods. In 2009, UC Green planted 422 trees, removed concrete for 189 tree pits, and hand pruned an amazing 44 city blocks—444 trees—with their volunteer pruning club. UC Green also maintains trees with the help of local youth in the Green Corps and works with community gardeners committed to growing local produce.
Green roofs take root

Green roofs can take many forms, but all are partially or completely covered by vegetation, with the goal of reducing stormwater runoff, reducing building heating and cooling, minimizing urban heat islands, and providing wildlife habitat. As of 2010, there were more than 58,000 square feet of green roofs in University City. This represents roughly 17% of all of the green roofs in Philadelphia, even though University City accounts for less than 2% of the city’s land area.

Gurka (the dog pictured below) enjoys The Fencing Academy of Philadelphia’s green roof (3519 Lancaster Avenue).
Community gardens, tree-lined streets, wide porches, and a plethora of parks and open spaces make University City a choice neighborhood and one of the most ethnically, culturally and socio-economically diverse communities in the region. On Saturday mornings, 1,200 neighbors shop for fresh food at the Clark Park Farmers’ Market (pictured here), and every year the increase in dining offerings attract audiences from the region and beyond. World class educational institutions, a stable and historically-rich housing stock, one of America’s finest transportation hubs, and a growing workforce all enhance University City’s desirability.
University City is a destination

Whether it’s for cutting edge arts exhibits and performances, or for some of the most innovative and diverse dining options in the region (including two Iron Chef restaurants within as many blocks), the crowds just keep coming. University City District’s popular Dining Days promotion (expanded to two weeks in 2010 due to its popularity) lets tens of thousands of visitors experience the neighborhood’s burgeoning restaurant scene. Though the number of patrons increases by a remarkable 45% during Dining Days, you can always find a seat at one of the neighborhood’s exceptional craft beer bars, or a sidewalk table at a neighborhood restaurant featuring food from India, Ethiopia, Vietnam, or beyond.

With one of the highest concentrations of arts and cultural organizations in the region, University City also attracts half a million arts patrons annually, who spend more than $20 million in the area on meals, lodging, and other arts-related activities. They come to see and hear practically any kind of cultural event imaginable—museum exhibitions, dance and theatrical performances, live music, and everything in between.

Friends enjoy a meal at Landmark Americana.

Mike’s World, a recent exhibit at the Institute of Contemporary Art.
Penn Alexander ranks top ten in public schools

The Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School, commonly called Penn Alexander, is recognized nationwide as a model of university-assisted schools. Opened in 2001 as the result of an unprecedented partnership between the University of Pennsylvania, the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, Penn Alexander is ranked among the top ten Philadelphia public elementary schools and sends nearly all of its graduates to select high schools in the city.

2010 marks several accomplishments for the school: the first Kindergarten class will graduate as eighth graders in June, a first grade teacher achieved National Board Certification, and the middle school science teacher was named outstanding science teacher of the year by the Philadelphia Chapter of Professional Engineers.

Located on a five-acre park-like setting, the school offers a rigorous liberal arts education to more than 500 PreK-8th grade students in West Philadelphia in a state-of-the-art facility. The University of Pennsylvania subsidizes the school with an operating contribution of $1,300 per student—an amount that helps to keep the student-teacher ratio low. Many University of Pennsylvania schools, departments, and programs work with the school to enrich the students’ educational experiences and to provide professional development opportunities to teachers. An active Home and School Association supports the school’s program with fundraising and community-building activities.
West Philly High students win recognition and admiration across the country

The West Philly Hybrid X Team (EVX Team), a group of high school students and teachers who builds and races alternative fuel vehicles, has achieved remarkable success since its inception over eleven years ago. As entrants in the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association’s Tour de Sol, the EVX Team outperformed university teams and production vehicles, winning the competition in 2002, 2005 and 2006. In 2007, the team won the 21st Century Automotive Challenge. The cars they develop are models for the future.

This story of unlikely success has shaped the EVX Team’s business plan. Their plug-in hybrid—an affordable compact sports car—not only promotes environmental sustainability, but also social sustainability by growing green jobs in Philadelphia and developing a pathway for high school interns to obtain employment opportunities. Working together, they provide a powerful example of the tremendous growth potential of West Philadelphia’s youth. The EVX Team is based at the West Philadelphia High School Academy of Automotive and Mechanical Engineering. The Auto Academy is a program of Philadelphia Academies, Inc., (PAI) a non-profit organization whose mission is to expand life and economic options for Philadelphia public school students through career-focused programming that prepares young people for employment and post-secondary education.

Nowhere Fast, a recent exhibit at the Esther M. Klein Gallery at Breadboard that features works by Jordan Griska, a Philadelphia-based artist who creates large-scale sculptural works and performances that combine themes of the body, science and exploration.
Autism genes found to help shape connections among brain cells

In the largest-ever genetic study of autism, a research team from The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia connected more of the intricate pieces of the autism puzzle, with two studies published in the prestigious journal *Nature* that identified genes with important contributions to the disorder.

One of the studies, led by Hakon Hakonarson, M.D., Ph.D., and colleagues in the Hospital’s Center for Applied Genomics, pinpointed a gene region that may account for as many as 15 percent of autism cases, while another study identified missing or duplicated stretches of DNA along two crucial gene pathways.

Significantly, both studies detected genes implicated in the development of brain circuitry in early childhood. Because the gene region affects how brain cells connect with each other in early childhood, the research significantly advances the understanding of how autism originates.

The findings received substantial media attention and were among the top scientific achievements in 2009 according to *Time* magazine, *Discover* magazine and the journal *Science*. 
Creating innovative technology solutions for a sustainable future

In 2006, an Engineers Without Borders project in the mountains of rural Honduras inspired the idea of creating a high-performance, low-cost, and easy-to-adopt technology to create inherently antimicrobial water pipes, that would prevent the growth of bacteria and harmful microorganisms and help purify water as it flowed through the pipes. One year later, at the Materials Science & Engineering Department at the University of Pennsylvania, the idea became a reality, and a new technology for modifying the properties of materials was born.

While the technology was initially developed to embed nanoparticles and microparticles into the surface of pipes, the team quickly realized they had in fact created a technology platform that enabled them to take virtually any particles and embed them into the surfaces of a wide array of plastics, composites, and coatings. This technology, that would later be named “Innlay,” effectively and inexpensively functionalizes surfaces, enabling new devices and enhancements that range from antimicrobial medical devices to high-efficiency solar cells.

The Innlay™ technology was spun out of the University of Pennsylvania in 2008 when Arjun Srinivas and Alex Mittal (pictured) founded Innova Dynamics. The company began commercializing the Innlay™ technology, and launched IonArmour® in 2009 to help product manufacturers bring high performance and naturally-based antimicrobial properties to their products. Today, Innova Dynamics’ customers range from consumer products and medical electronics manufacturers to the U.S. Army.

In May 2010, the company closed a $5,500,000 Series A round of financing led by Rho Ventures, with participation from MentorTech Ventures. In less than three years, this disruptive multi-faceted technology developed from a simple but profound idea to a game-changing commercial technology at an unprecedented pace.

Innova Dynamics, the recent winner of the Eastern Technology Council’s “Company to Watch” award, operates at The Science Center in University City—a few blocks away from where the initial research began. “The Science Center provided us with the resources and location to succeed as a materials technology company,” says Arjun Srinivas, COO of Innova Dynamics, “Being located right between University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University and in the midst of the Philadelphia technology corridor gives us accessibility to an enormous wealth of people and resources which have helped us to develop and commercialize the Innlay platform.”
Meeting new demands on pharmacists

Philadelphia College of Pharmacy (PCP), the oldest and largest college within University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, is steeped in a long tradition of educating pharmacists and leaders. PCP, though, is constantly adapting to meet the needs of a rapidly changing healthcare environment.

The newly remodeled state-of-the-art Center for Advanced Pharmacy Studies (CAPS) laboratory offers interactive, simulated training situations that future pharmacists may encounter.

MegaCode Kelly (pictured), an advanced life-support training manikin, helps pharmacy students learn to work as a team in providing emergency care by using hospital protocols, checking vital signs, administering medicine, and saving the life of their simulated, high-tech plastic patient.

The Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences is one of the few places in the nation where students can gain experience in a manufacturing lab. Students can elect courses where they, literally, can take a drug from synthesis through an initial set of tablets.

At the core, all of these modifications to the students’ education and experience are designed to help support PCP’s refined vision and its mission “to develop respected professionals and leaders in the science, practice, and business of pharmacy.”
Tissue hugging implant maps heart’s electrical activity in unprecedented detail

A team of cardiologists, materials scientists, and bioengineers from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Illinois have created and tested a new type of implantable device for measuring the heart’s electrical output that they say is a vast improvement over current devices. The new device represents the first use of flexible silicon technology for a medical application.

The researchers believe that this technology may herald a new generation of active, flexible, implantable devices for applications in many areas of the body. Initially, findings will be applied to the design of devices for localizing and treating abnormal heart rhythms. The hope is that these new devices will allow doctors to more quickly, safely, and accurately target and destroy abnormal areas of the heart that are responsible for life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias.

“The new devices bring electronic circuits right to the tissue, rather than having them located remotely, inside a sealed can that is placed elsewhere in the body, such as under the collar bone or in the abdomen,” explains Brian Litt, an associate professor of Neurology at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and also an associate professor of Bioengineering in Penn’s School of Engineering and Applied Science. “This enables the devices to process signals right at the tissues, which allows them to have a much higher number of electrodes for sensing or stimulation than is currently possible in medical devices.”

Now, for example, devices for mapping and eliminating life-threatening heart rhythms allow for up to 10 wires in a catheter that is moved in and around the heart, and is connected to rigid silicon circuits distant from the target tissue. This design limits the complexity and resolution of devices since the electronics cannot get wet or touch the target tissue.

The tissue-hugging shape of the newer implant allows for measuring electrical activity with greater resolution in time and space, and can also operate when immersed in the body’s salty fluids. The device can collect large amounts of data from the body at high speed and the hope is to use this technology for many other kinds of medical applications, for example to treat brain diseases like epilepsy and movement disorders.
Established in 1997, University City District (UCD) is a nonprofit, neighborhood-based 501(c)3 special services district dedicated to improving the quality of life in the 2.4 square mile area of West Philadelphia known as University City. UCD’s full-time administrative staff manages programs and services that enhance the public space, increase public safety, assist commercial and rental property owners, and promote University City attractions and amenities. UCD is an independent organization guided by a 25-member Board of Directors representing University City’s prominent institutions in education, health care, and scientific and medical research as well as representatives of University City’s businesses and residential communities. Funding for UCD’s programs and services comes from voluntary contributions from University City businesses, institutions, and individuals, as well as grants, sponsorships, and fee-for-service contracts.

UCD’s 25 Public Space Maintenance (PSM) employees work seven days per week from 8:00am to 4:30pm to clean and enhance more than 160 commercial and residential blocks and maintain nearly 150 public trash cans throughout University City. Seen here, a PSM employee paints over one of the more than 10,000 graffiti tags removed by UCD each year.

UCD’s 45 Public Safety Ambassadors patrol University City streets seven days per week from 10:00am to 3:00am. In cooperation with the Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania and Drexel Police Departments, and University of the Sciences security forces, Safety Ambassadors provide a secure, welcoming presence for University City’s residents, employees, students and visitors.

UCD has implemented more than $3 million of streetscape and public infrastructure projects, including the recent addition of over 70 much-needed pedestrian streetlamps along Baltimore Avenue.

From dining and retail promotions to façade renovations to special events, UCD oversees a variety of initiatives and programs that promote the district’s retail, dining and cultural portfolio.
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Copies of the 2010 State of University City report are available at University City District, 3940 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104 or as a PDF at universitycity.org. UCD has made every effort to avoid errors in this publication. If a correction should be made, please let us know. Additional data and research also available online.

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