

**The University of Pittsburgh and the Oakland Neighborhood: From Conflict to Cooperation, or How the 800 Pound Gorilla Learned to Sit with -- and not on -- its Neighbors**

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## Introduction

In the summer of 2002, two separate, but interrelated events occurred in Oakland, the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, neighborhood that surrounds the University of Pittsburgh. The first was an exhibition, “Designing Oakland,” a retrospective of a century of plans and planning in the Oakland neighborhood, Pittsburgh’s traditional cultural center.

As the visitor moved through the exhibit, several models stood out, largely centered on and conceived by planners for the University of Pittsburgh. One design, Chancellor Edward Litchfield’s plan of 1958, portrayed an expanded University with new buildings extending well in Oakland’s residential neighborhoods. Championed as “a new era for Oakland,” the plan reflected the University’s desire to become “a great university” (Breacher 1958, 2). A later, bolder proposal for Oakland included an entire skyscraper laid on end and a technology park of hanging gardens, the “first city of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Faust 1963, 7). These visions for University expansion slated several areas bordering the campus for clearance and redevelopment (Breacher 1958; Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association 1961).

Another campus plan was less imaginative in scope, but no less expansive. Designed by the Pittsburgh architectural firm Deeter Ritchey Sippel, this 1967 plan extended Pitt’s campus in two directions, sprawling up the hill from the Upper Campus and extending deep in the heart of Oakland on the campus’s south west side next to Forbes Field, then home of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team.

Though architecturally different, the Litchfield and Deeter Ritchey Sippel campus plans shared similar traits. The plans envisioned a University of Pittsburgh both spatially and academically larger than the institution of 1960, with new buildings grouped by academic discipline and activities. Both plans provided more student residences to house the growing student population. Both slated several Oakland residential areas for demolition and redevelopment (Breacher 1958; Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association 1961), including the Forbes Field area, which would become available for redevelopment when the Pirates moved to their new home near downtown. And both plans viewed the nearby Oakland neighborhoods as spaces for University’s expansion, treating the community “like barren ground” (Phillips, 2002). This was the University as the 800 pound gorilla.

Just a few blocks away from the Oakland exhibit, the second event occurred. The University of Pittsburgh was opening a new building on the southern part of campus called Sennott Square. This new building housed “multi-purposes,” including academic and nonacademic functions, university and commercial uses. The opening of the new building culminated a cycle of planning, community resistance, and organizing that dated back to the plans on display at the museum. The building’s location, called the “two-block” area, “ha(d) been a battleground for University/community sparring that spanned the tenure of four chancellors” (Hart 2000, 1). Reflecting on that history and the evolution of university-community relations over the period, University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark Nordenberg proclaimed at Sennott Square’s dedication that the project represents a “tangible reflection of our new era of partnership and progress within our community” (Sammons 2002, 2 ). This was the University who learned to sit with its neighbor.

This case study analyzes the planning and real estate development processes of the University of Pittsburgh from the 1960s onward and its relation with its Oakland neighborhood. Relations between institution and community changed over this period, as both the institution

and the community underwent a series of changes reflective of different eras and institutional shifts. We argue that two key themes influenced these changes. First, in 1966, the University of Pittsburgh became a quasi-public institution. This “public-ization” began a process that changed its role and identity from private to public actor in the city and region, a role which required some time to grow into. Second, the external context of community planning was changing in the 1960s, as cities and communities battled bulldozers and urban renewal. The Oakland community was undergoing its own mobilization toward organizational and political changes like many places in America at that time. The University’s early plans, showcased in “Designing Oakland,” led to conflict, then confrontation, between community and institution. Over time, the community and University moved through an uneasy and uneven process toward cooperation and collaboration. The Sennott Square dedication represented the culmination of the changes in the University in an era of cooperation, a shift from what Thomas Bender calls “the university in the city” to a “university of the city” (Bender 2002, 150).

### **Context: The Oakland Neighborhood**

Oakland and the University of Pittsburgh were no strangers to grand plans. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, former resident Mary Schenley donated 300 acres to establish a park, with the city adding more, centered on a plaza in the Schenley name (Coyne et al. 1974). Andrew Carnegie selected Oakland for his library, museum and lecture hall in the late 1890s, and a few years later, his technical school. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local businessman Frank Nicola conceived of Oakland as Pittsburgh’s City Beautiful Civic Center, and attracted the University of Pittsburgh in 1908 with its plans for an “Acropolis on the Hill” (Brecher 1958; Lowry 2002). By 1920, Oakland lay claim to the region’s cultural and civic center (Lubove 1995). A few years later, the University began construction on the 42-story Gothic Cathedral of Learning, dubbed the world’s tallest educational building.

The Oakland neighborhood expanded with these developments. By 1950, 22,000 people lived in Oakland, with 8,452 living in the core area next to the University.<sup>1</sup> Residents often worked in Oakland’s educational and cultural institutions or in the sports stadiums located in the neighborhood. Just after World War II, this concentration of activities began to weaken. The city planned to build a new sports stadium near the downtown and move the Pirates baseball team from their Oakland home at Forbes Field. The city also embarked on plans for a new cultural district in the heart of the CBD (Hart, 2000). Oakland’s economic base was changing.

Neighborhood residents, made up of family homeowners and long term renters at war’s end, were also changing. While over 80 percent of Oakland’s population lived in their residence for more than five years in 1950, the figure dropped to just over 50 percent by 1960 (Dolan 1993). The trend toward more short term residents and rental properties was underway, as many residents moved to suburbs, but University changes and plans would accelerate the trend.

Pitt’s plans in the 1960s began the period of conflict between the institution and the neighborhood. The fanciful hanging gardens and technology park were never realized and only a few buildings in the 1958 comprehensive plan were built – Lawrence Hall, Litchfield Towers dormitory, and Hillman Library. The University was facing financial distress, and the Chancellor was forced to resign. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had to step in to absorb

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<sup>1</sup> Central Oakland’s population fell to 5,281 by 2000.

Pitt as a “state-related” institution.<sup>2</sup>

## **Conflict and Confrontation**

In 1966, the University of Pittsburgh joined the Commonwealth (Pennsylvania) System of Higher Education as a “state-related” institution. The change in status from private to “quasi-public” changed the University. Under Chancellor Litchfield, the University planned to expand the physical campus and increase enrollments to 22,000 (PRPA, 1961). “Public-ization” accelerated both processes. Enrollments doubled in six years and the number of full time students exceeded previous projections.

“Public-ization” meant a new role for the state in the institution, with executive and legislative bodies involved through finances, governance, reporting, and appropriations. Some of these changes were felt immediately, while the impact of others only became evident later in the development process. Tuition dropped by over two-thirds, and the public contribution rose to 50 percent of the University’s operating budget by 1971 (Kobosky 1974). Through the General State Authority (GSA), the state planned over \$100 million in campus construction projects and could act on behalf of the University to use eminent domain to acquire the land. In 1967, the GSA purchased land near Forbes Field, a two-block area bounded by Forbes Avenue, Bouquet Street, and Oakland Avenue (Hart 2000; Roling 2002).<sup>3</sup> The new Chancellor unveiled a master plan in 1968, less expensive and less expansive than the Litchfield plan, but targeting the same parts of Oakland for campus expansion (Roling 2002; cf Shaw 1973). The key areas for expansion plans were the “two-block area,” as the eminent domain area near Forbes Field came to be known, and an area above the campus in a north Oakland neighborhood.

The University proceeded using a traditional approach to planning of that time: finalizing a plan internally, focusing on formal organizations, and ignoring grassroots and noninstitutional interests (Shaw, 1973; Kobosky, 1974). The University unveiled its master plan to the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, the city’s Planning Department, and Model Cities, none of whom expressed serious reservations with it. The University then requested funding from the state, but was blindsided by what occurred next, as Oakland residents were extremely upset by both the master plan and being excluded from the process.

While parts of the campus master plan proceeded without incident – including new buildings on Pitt’s existing campus -- areas that came into conflict can be summed up briefly: The campus expansion plans called for new student housing for the larger enrollment, roughly 1,500 students to be housed in a new Hillside dormitory located in the upper campus (Spatter 1992). The project was to take part of a private school’s playground, the Falk School (ironically, a private school operated by the University’s School of Education), in a congested area that included nearby residents and the Veteran’s Hospital, which had already encroached on the neighborhood with its expansion. The University informed the Falk School’s director of its plans in 1970. The school principal, school supporters, and residents began to organize and

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<sup>2</sup> The Commonwealth also took over Temple University around the same time.

<sup>3</sup> Pitt was quoted as saying the University was not involved in property acquisitions or negotiations with property owners (Spatter, 1969). However, several informants disputed that statement, claiming that the University had front people working for them. The process sped up speculation in the neighborhood, either waiting to be acquired by the University through the GSA or holding properties for depreciation cycles and swapping with other landlords (Phillips 2002).

complain to the University (Shaw 1973; Roling 2002). The second area of conflict was the Forbes Field area extending into the community, called the “two-block” area. The master plan called for a four phase development, part a contracted version of the Litchfield plan with a new Law School and a professional schools quadrangle.

Eminent domain, the acquisition of property, the lack of relocation of residents, and the destruction of Forbes Field provided the sparks for neighborhood residents and activists. Community opposition at the grassroots level emerged and organized as the confrontation with the University intensified. As in many areas across the country, community efforts to battle eminent domain and redevelopment resulted in new community development corporations (CDCs) in these neighborhoods (Gittell and Wilder 1999). Oakland followed this path

Opponents to the Hillside dormitory project came together in a series of meetings in September 1970, forming People’s Oakland. As students, professors, architects, lawyers and others joined the Hillside residents in fighting the University’s expansion plans, the focus of the group expanded to the future of Forbes Field and the feared disappearance of Oakland (Coyne 1974; Hart 2000, Phillips 2002). People’s Oakland’s leader summarized their approach as finding “small technicalities” that create delays, which can kill a project (Phillips 2000).

The community was helped by political changes in Pittsburgh. Peter Flaherty was elected Mayor in 1969, and brought new politics and planning to the city (Lorant 1978). Flaherty defeated the Democratic machine candidate in the primary and won the general election. His campaign platform emphasized a redirection for Pittsburgh toward its neighborhoods and away from the non-residential projects of the famed Pittsburgh Renaissance (Lubove 1995). Dubbed “a new folk hero” by the New York Times (Lorant 1978, 62), Flaherty changed the planning department to reflect his focus on neighborhoods involvement and issues (Lurcott and Downing 1987). Planners from the city aided community activists in Oakland (Kobosky 2002; Phillips 2002). Flaherty also battled the expansion of nonprofit organizations, such as the University, as the city feared losing more taxable properties.

Using political channels and creating delays advanced the community’s agenda. In January 1971, People’s Oakland filed an objection with the planning commission to the University’s conditional use application on the Hillside Dormitory project. The planning commission delayed approval of Pitt’s plans until the city, community, and University discussed and agreed on the plans.

The community also proposed alternative reuse plans for Forbes Field, which Pitt rejected. People’s Oakland lobbied state officials in Harrisburg to stop the University’s demolition of Forbes Field (Hart, 2000; Phillips, 2002). With support from then Governor Milton Shapp, another independent Democrat, and state development monies running out, the state suspended funding for Pitt’s construction projects until the University could work with the community on a new plan.

The community’s tactics worked. The University abandoned its master plan and thus plans for the contested “two-block” area and the Hillside dormitory. It agreed to relocate buildings to other sites and entered into a joint planning process with the community and the City, mediated by a GSA official and described as “a new era of cooperation” (Dunlop 1973). The state was interested in a joint plan gaining approval, having invested significant funds in the master plan and facing rising construction costs. The community agreed to end its battle to save Forbes Field, but persisted in defining the border of Pitt’s new construction to be Bouquet Street,

the eastern edge of the two-block area, held by the GSA. Furthermore, the University agreed to “the development of new commercial space and ‘people-oriented’ space in the Forbes Field area” (Shaw 1973, 24).

Early outcomes were achieved: the Law School and professional schools building were located to new sites, Pitt agreed to pay the city an amount for city services (instead of payments in lieu of taxes), and People’s Oakland created a new community planning organization, Oakland Directions, Inc. (ODI) (Kobosky 1974; Phillips 2002). ODI was established as a permanent joint planning process in Oakland, with community, university, and city planning in leadership and activist roles. ODI secured public and private funding for the process.

The joint planning process centered on a number of issues, including the “two-block” area, still owned by the state and now freed from University expansion by the reduced Forbes Field area expansion. In 1972, the University and community settled on a plan for the area, which was to include 17,000 square feet for the community and 35,000 square feet of space for the University (Coyne 1974, 8). The University was to maintain the buildings, which would also include the local office of the GSA.

Over the period of conflict and confrontation, the University underestimated the political strength of the community and the changed politics of both city and state officials. A 1973 analysis of the process concluded that “(t)he University ... proceeded without effective organization and planning, thus compiling a record of what now is seen as comic opera episodes which made the University appear intransigent and uncooperative and may have assisted the organizational efforts of the adversaries to campus expansion” (Shaw 1973, 10).

The University also misunderstood its own role as a newly public institution. One informant characterized the University coming out of its private status as “grand style with a lot of vision and little practical ability to make things work.” Through the period of conflict, University community and public affairs were handled by the Office of Physical Plant, which lacked expertise in these areas. While individuals in the institution recognized the changed environment in which the University was working, an early proposal to establish a community policy (1970) was not enacted (Shaw 1973). Since the University was forced into joint meetings with the community by the city and state, it had to change its understanding of what it meant to participate formally with the community. After abandoning the master plan and Forbes Field project, the university established the Office of Public Affairs. It was responsible for the joint planning process and communications with the community, city, and state (Kobosky 1974).

The University did expand greatly over the 1960 – 1980 period. The University increased from 64 to 110 acres, most of that from the former Forbes Field site (Hart 2000). The number of buildings increased from 23 to 40 over the same period, most were within the University boundaries and not a threat to Oakland: the Nursing School, Chevron Hall, Crawford Hall, Hillman Library, Learning Research and Development Center, Benedum Hall, Graduate School of Public Health, and Trees Hall.

Since much of the University’s construction plans were realized, did the community influence real estate development at the University? The evidence from sources and interviews points to a qualified yes. Their activism stopped the physical expansion of the 1968 Master Plan. Planning was changing, and community involvement was required for major development plans, from local level to federal government programs. Politics in older industrial cities was changing, such as in Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania, where independent Democrats took power. The

community understood political changes better than the University and made connections with city and state governments. The conflict also changed the community, who began to develop a planning process for Oakland.

The University viewed itself as detached, in part from its history as a private institution, and was not as capable a political player in a public arena. The University required a much longer time to adapt to its “public-ization” process than the short time of its legal incorporation into the Commonwealth system. One former University official felt that had the University become state-related years earlier, “(p)erhaps then the University would have been acclimated to functioning as a public agent and the circumstances of 1971 would have been avoided” (Kobosky 1974, 66). That inexperience proved costly for the Master Plan. Ultimately, though, the delays pushed the University into joint planning with ODI that produced new development acceptable to community and public partners and a new process for future planning.

### **On the Road to Collaboration, or Crisis? The 1980s**

In 1980, ODI published *The Oakland Plan* (ODI 1980). The plan was both a process of community organization and a set of goals for the community. It set boundaries for institutional development and portal areas and focused on revitalization, transportation, and continued joint planning. It created a community development corporation, Oakland Planning and Development Corp. (OPDC), to carry out neighborhood development. During the 1980s, the Oakland plan guided development, with the CDC working on residential development and the University working on expansion within the boundaries established by the plan. University-community relations had calmed down.

Oakland and other Pittsburgh neighborhoods continued to receive strong support from Pittsburgh’s next mayor, Richard Caligiuri. Mayor Caligiuri promoted a second downtown Renaissance – Renaissance I largely rebuilt the downtown in the 1950s and early 1960s – and a more grassroots renaissance in the neighborhoods (Lubove 1996). This focus brought dollars to the neighborhoods for infrastructure and physical improvements and seeded the capacity of community organizations to become development specialists (Jeziarski 1990; Ferman 1996).

OPDC succeeded in this environment. OPDC built over 200 units of affordable housing in the 1980s (Phillips 2002). It secured funds from national foundations, private, and public sources, and found a development partner in an Oakland-based private developer, National Development Corp. National was identified with Pittsburgh’s political leadership, and had completed large developments in the region. It became a major development force in Oakland, partnering with OPDC to complete other neighborhood priorities, housing and improving the neighborhood’s western portal. It also worked with the University (Barnes 1991).

As the 1980s were underway, the University had to turn its public face away from Oakland to other issues. Crisis erupted as the region’s steel industry – and industrial base – collapsed. Over 100,000 jobs were lost between 1980 and 1986 (Deitrick 1999). These losses were widespread, but hit especially hard in the steel towns in the industrial Mon Valley. The University turned its attention to the region’s crisis and focused on regional job loss and economic restructuring (University of Pittsburgh 1983).

Pittsburgh’s economic base was shifting to services, particularly technology, health and education (Mitchell-Weaver, 1992). Its traditional public-private growth partnership, famed for

the Renaissances, represented a corporatist planning model focused largely on real estate development (Ferman 1996; Sbragia 1990). As a major regional employer and research institution, Pitt became part of an urban regeneration agenda stressing economic restructuring (Sbragia 1990). Both Pitt, with biotechnology and health research, and Carnegie Mellon University, with software and robotics, were central to a new, state-financed economic development project, the Pittsburgh Technology Center (PTC) (ACCD 1984; Pittsburgh 1985). Part of the University's attention to real estate matters in the 1980s centered on the PTC, located on the site of a former steel plant.

In Oakland, the University's role was more limited. It assisted OPDC in setting up a development loan fund to help it complete housing and other projects. It acquired key boundary properties to bank for future use (Yeager 2002). The university worked with National Development on several projects, including the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall underground parking lot, Sutherland Hall dormitory, and the Pittsburgh Technology Center (Barnes 1991). When the University was concerned with the lack of hotel space in Oakland, National developed the Holiday Inn/University Center and, later, the Oakland/Forbes-Avenue Hampton Hotel, another component of the western portal improvement (Barnes 1991; Yeager 2002). Though sharing a development partner, University and the CDC never secured a partnership to develop housing in Oakland, something that some speculate might have helped to slow Central Oakland's continued slide to absentee property ownership (Phillips 2002).

Despite the joint planning process, Oakland was not always involved in University real estate plans. As the 1980s came to a close, Oakland's tense community-institutional relationship flared once again. The University, the medical complex and National Development eyed the historic buildings Oakland's City Beautiful period for expansion.<sup>4</sup> Entering the 1990s, the university-community development relationship was off to another rocky start.

### **Cooperation and Collaboration, After a Rocky Start: 1990s and Beyond**

As the 1990s began, the accord between the University and community to engage in joint planning had weakened. Leadership in both the university and community had moved on or stepped down, a group of people who first battled, then brokered relationships with each other over two decades, improving both community and University planning in the process. The joint planning organization, ODI, became less active with organizational and community changes. A new incoming Chancellor lacked experience with what had preceded him. The University had no formal mechanisms or senior officials in place for working with the community, and relations with both city and neighborhood were handled on an ad hoc basis. As the joint planning process stalled, so too did the process of "public-ization" of the institution at the community level.<sup>5</sup> As one University official noted "in 1991, it wasn't that those ties (university-community) had been severed, but those ties had atrophied" (McManus, 2002).

Central Oakland had also changed. The trend toward more rental properties, begun in the 1950s, accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. Student renters and absentee landlords dominated the housing market; housing conditions were deteriorating rapidly. By 1990, only 16 percent of

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<sup>4</sup> Located between O'Hara Street and Fifth Avenue, these institutions were noted much earlier by the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association (1961, 18) that should these institutions wish to leave their building, "reuse should be by the University of Pittsburgh."

<sup>5</sup> The University's "public-ization" in the 1980s led to a more regional focus following the collapse of steel.

Central Oakland residences were owner-occupied (Dolan 1993).

The decade began with a firestorm, the purchase and razing of the Syria Mosque, located in Oakland's civic center area and a community treasure. The university was effectively in competition for the building with itself, as the medical complex (later called UPMC) and the University sought separately to acquire the property. The medical side prevailed, and its development partner, National Development, purchased the building. Despite, an eleventh hour attempt to save the building through historic landmark status, the politically connected National Development obtained a valid demolition permit two hours before the historic status nomination. Though UPMC purchased and razed the building, the community targeted their ire at the university and its secrecy.

Two developments occurred in 1992 to put joint planning back on both community and institutional agendas and produce the first University plan since the aborted plan in 1971. First, the Syria Mosque episode forced the University to realize that it needed to restart its community relations activities and develop a clear and structured approach to communications (McManus 2002). This started the Oakland Agreement Committee, the first in a series of formal and informal groups to discuss Oakland and University relations and planning, (see Table 1).

Second, the city of Pittsburgh, weary of reviewing institutions' plans on a project-by-project basis, required city institutions to submit for approval a master space plan before any new construction would be permitted. Because of the requirement for community participation in planning, the two changes became interwoven.

The new Chancellor Dennis O'Connor assigned the little-used Plant Utilization and Planning Committee (PUP) of the University Senate to the master planning task (see Table 1). PUP did produce a Master Plan, but the Planning Commission rejected it in 1994 because it lacked a comprehensive housing strategy and transportation management plan. By the time of the planning process, the University had increased student housing on campus. It built a new dormitory, Sutherland Hall, opened in 1992, and built new fraternity buildings to relocate fraternities from North Oakland to campus.<sup>6</sup> Even so, estimates of demand for student housing found a 2,200 bed gap between supply and demand (Dolan 1993). Oakland residents continued to press their concerns about student housing and transportation issues. A year later, the Planning Commission gave conditional approval to the plan, pending the development of the housing and transportation strategies (Sajna 1995; Wilds 2003). The community was pushing for a commitment to construct more new student housing in the near term, 1-4 years.

PUP also set up a subcommittee to gain community input into the master planning process, the Community Input into the Master Plan (CIMP). Through its meetings in the community, CIMP realized that the community wanted to discuss more than the Master Plan. University and community representatives then formed the Oakland Agreement Committee. Reminiscent of the old ODI, City Planning was brought in to facilitate the discussions, centered on housing and transportation issues absent from the Master Plan. This represented the first step in the 1990s to revitalize the joint planning process left behind in the old ODI plan.

As they set out their housing priorities (OAC 1995), the Agreement Committee melded

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<sup>6</sup> The University's request for approval for the Sutherland Hall dormitory gained city planning approval, but after that, planning required all city institutions to have an approved master plan in place before additional construction projects would be approved.

into a more formal organization with more community members, the Oakland Community Council (OCC). The University and OCC continued discussions about University planning, particularly the student housing issue. Dissatisfied with the pace of the University's plans, some community members felt the process was failing and left.

In 1995, the University, as instructed by its Board of Trustees, began a Ten-Year Facilities Plan, a comprehensive review of all capital priorities of the University on its campuses, with short, medium and long term priorities and their costs spelled out. The Provost sought to insure that the Facility Plan was guided by the university's academic plans to ensure a strong rationale for funding and long-term success. The plan, completed by senior administration, laid out \$362 million in capital projects (Steele 1996). In 1996, one year before the final report, the Committee reviewed the plan with internal and external sources. For external review, the City and OCC provided input into the plan, especially regarding student housing issues and other issues focused on Oakland.

In the final plan approved in 1997, the long disputed two-block area would be developed, with a multi-purpose academic building (MPAC), a convocation center (later sited elsewhere), and, finally addressing the community's concerns, new student housing. These became the University's chief building priorities in the latter half of the 1990s. Resources remained the sticking point until the state committed \$135 million over the next five years for Pitt's facility projects (Barnes 1998). Combined with a capital campaign and other funding reserves, the university now had the resources to realize its plans, though community opposition continued, as the time frame was not yet confirmed. What emerged in the university at this time was a single-mindedness to press forward and demonstrate that the University would implement its plans. The need to reinvigorate the university-community relationship became an important part of the implementation process, and this included maintaining continuity of relations and engaging senior administration in this dialogue (Golomb 2002; McManus 2002).

During this period, the University assumed a change in leadership, as Dennis O'Connor resigned and a new chancellor, Mark Nordenberg, was appointed in 1995.<sup>7</sup> He received a mandate from the Board of Trustees to expand the University's involvement in regional economic and community development, especially with neighborhoods on the University's borders (University of Pittsburgh 1996; Wilds 2002). Promoting community quality of life in Oakland became an important part of the University's transformation into a public institution.

Oakland also remained on the city's agenda. City planning led another planning process in Oakland, with community and institutional participation. Rather than updating the 1980 plan, the group decided to focus on three areas raised by the Oakland Agreement Committee: housing, zoning and public corridors. With financial support from the institutions and the city, the group produced *The Oakland Improvement Strategy* (1998). The University became a major part of implementing dimensions of the strategy, by helping to fund a new Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID), contributing to OPDC's development fund, and sharing the costs with the city of a building inspector assigned to Oakland (OIS 1998).

Just after assuming office, the new Chancellor oversaw yet another community imbroglio. The Master Plan had proposed closing Bigelow Boulevard, a main thoroughfare through the central campus. The city agreed to the closure, but the community saw the closing

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<sup>7</sup> Nordenberg was first appointed interim chancellor in 1995. His appointment was made permanent in 1996.

as another university land grab. The university was allowed to close the boulevard for a 60 day trial period, but it was subsequently reopened by the city. In private, many residents supported the closing as pedestrian friendly; but publicly felt that “the University should not be allowed to move forward with what it wanted until the community got what it wanted,” which was student housing on campus and improved transportation management (McManus 2002).

In accordance with the facilities plan’s priorities, the University revised its housing strategy, which, finally to the community’s satisfaction, addressed immediate housing construction. The construction of the first phase of new housing received highest priority, at a cost of \$5.3 million for the initial phase, scheduled to open in 1999 (University of Pittsburgh 1998). Bouquet Gardens, as the project became known, would house 500 students in garden-style apartments. The University finally realized that key to completing any projects in the future would be the passage and construction of the new student housing.

After the missteps above, the University again revamped its procedures to work with the community. Chancellor Nordenberg appointed Eli Shorak, under the Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs, to serve as the point person with the community as it relates to construction projects. A relative “new kid on the block,” Shorak had no “baggage” with the community, but lacked experience in community and city planning (Garvey 2002; Shorak 2002). His mandate was “to get those buildings built” (Shorak 2002). Though inexperienced, he learned from University personnel, community representatives, and city officials. He spoke directly with and for senior administration in his relations with the community and the City, and unlike previous community liaisons, Shorak was able to make commitments for the university. The community had never had this level of coordination with the university. (Shorak 2002; McManus 2002).

Community input on the former two-block projects included design changes and parking. The façades of Bouquet Gardens were redesigned to fit the neighborhood context, and student residents were banned from the residential parking program. Community needs for short-term parking were built into the new multi-purpose building. The Oakland Improvement Strategy stressed the need for improvements in the Forbes Avenue commercial corridor, and MPAC addressed these concerns, with design for 18,000 square feet of retail space.<sup>8</sup>

The University also had to deal with the relocation of organizations from the “two-block” area. Through a contentious process, the University did relocate community organizations to other parts of the neighborhood. OPDC, OCC, and OBID moved into a University-owned building that OPDC now owns. The University helped People’s Oakland purchase a building for their use, with \$100,000 toward the purchase.

By the end of the decade, the University had learned to sit with its neighbors. Shorak and OCC met bi-weekly to discuss the University’s real estate concerns so that the community would have a regular dialog and input on issues. The group, dubbed the “Eli meeting,” represents what informal channels can achieve through regular communications. The group had input into design changes of Bouquet Gardens and MPAC, now called Sennott Square. They continue today, discussing important issues, such as problematic landlords, code enforcement, and zoning.

In 2001, the university moved its football games to the new Heinz Field home of the Pittsburgh Steelers. It razed Pitt Stadium for the construction of a new convocation center that

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<sup>8</sup> This was the space devoted to community uses in the “two-block” area. Now the community wanted retail to improve the commercial corridor and place the community groups in new locations.

was once planned for the two-block area. This upper campus development opened up space for a new dormitory for 1,000 students. The plan was supported by the community. While many alumni and business owners opposed the move, the university was doing what the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association plan for Oakland called for in 1961 – but then they were looking to move Pitt football to the then newly proposed Three Rivers Stadium (1970-2000).

Not all disputes are settled or settled amicably. Despite new dormitory space, the persistence of student overcrowding and absentee landlords means housing conditions continue to deteriorate in Central Oakland.<sup>9</sup> Some residents remain suspicious of any moves the University makes, given their long history. Regarding a real estate project, one Oakland leader felt the University is “not going to tell you anything” (Potts 2002).

Nonetheless, over the 1990s, the joint planning process between the University and community emerged stronger than as the 1990s began. In 2000, the University was awarded a Community Outreach Partnership Center grant from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for community-university partnership projects in Oakland, Oak Hill and Hazelwood. The University participates in yet another Oakland planning process, the Oakland Task Force, a formal organization which is implementing the *Oakland Improvement Strategy*. The Task Force aims to restore Oakland as a “showplace,” back to its City Beautiful roots. The University will be a major investor in the public projects of this effort. The public-ization of the University of Pittsburgh has matured.

### **University-Community Partnership – Sitting with its Neighbors in the New Millennium**

The University of Pittsburgh and the Oakland neighborhood represent a case study of development and planning of an urban university. We find two main themes affecting University and community planning and its changes: the University’s adaptation to its role as a newly public institution -- the “public-ization” of the University of Pittsburgh -- and the evolution of the planning process in the Oakland community and University.

Both the University and community began in reactive modes during the period of conflict and confrontation. The University found itself in an unfamiliar public role, opposed by growing community activism as it tried to expand in the Oakland community. Conflict and confrontation led to a city- and state-brokered joint planning process that grew into a more collaborative initiative in the years to follow. The community was learning to plan for its future development while the University was learning to be a public partner in planning with its neighbors.

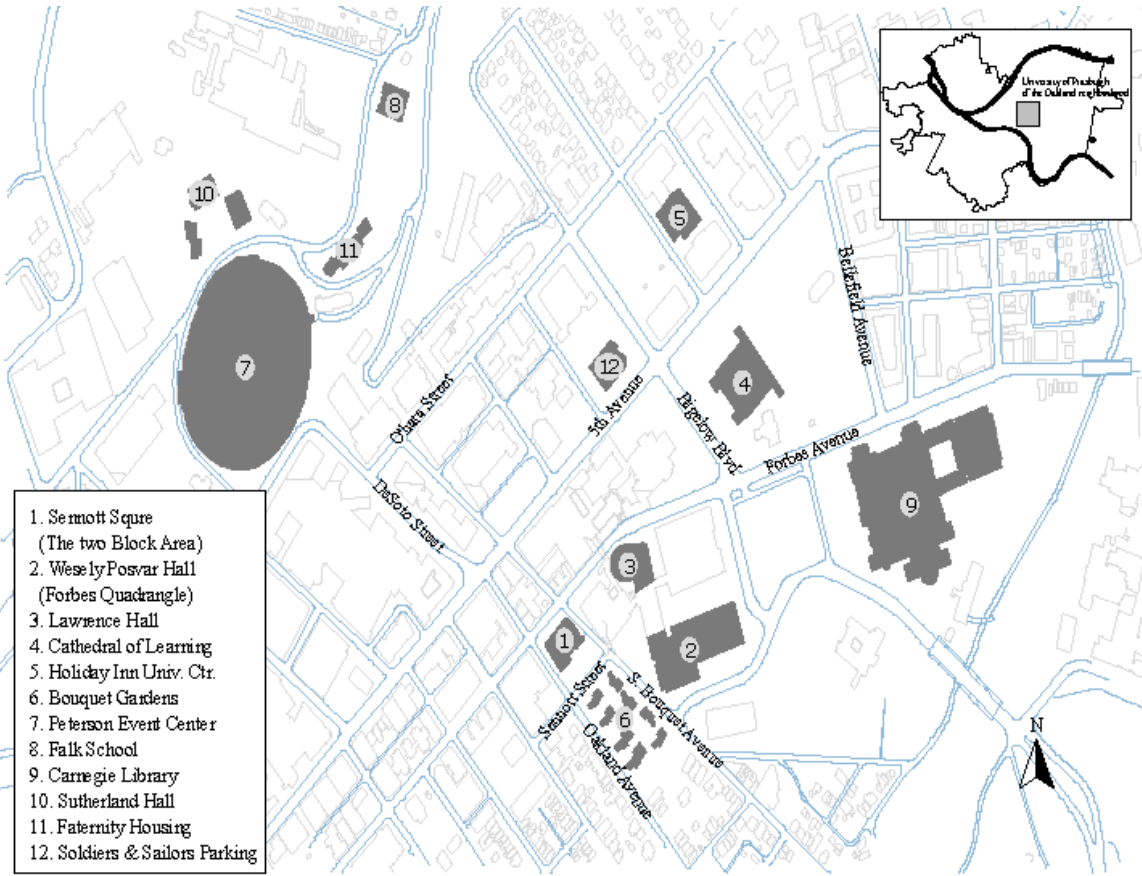
Leadership changes in both the community and the University resulted in new contentions and the need to revisit the joint planning process in the 1990s. Over some rocky years, the University established more effective structures for communicating and working with the community. A new process of city planning required greater public input into the University’s plans and resulted in some community needs being met. The University now finds

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<sup>9</sup> Absentee landlords and property speculation continue to increase in Oakland. Over nearly two decades of property swap by a core group of absentee landlords was documented by a University of Pittsburgh neighborhood development class (Feathers, 2001).

investments with benefits for both University and community and participates in the community planning process with greater commitment, including financial.

Looking back on the original plans for Oakland, much of the earlier visions for the University of Pittsburgh have come to fruition (Dolan 1993). But that doesn't mean that plans and planning didn't change. It wasn't just real estate development that changed the University of Pittsburgh. The changing planning process proved to be important in the transformation of the University into a public institution, what we call the University's public-ization. The University of Pittsburgh, like many urban universities, has matured and recognized that the university and community are inextricably linked. As the University came to understand the practical nature of community politics, recognizing and respecting the process of community problem solving and the political power of the community, it was able to assume a broader community development role. The 800 pound gorilla has learned to support and engage in collaborative planning through university-community partnerships, forged over four decades, and now sits with – and not on – its Oakland neighbors.



**Figure 1. Map of Oakland neighborhood and major University of Pittsburgh real estate projects.**

**Table 1. PLANNING GROUPS IN THE 1990s**

<u>Planning Group</u>	<u>Composition</u>	<u>Tasks/Outcomes</u>
Oakland Directions, Inc. (ODI)	Community groups, City, University, Institutions	The Oakland Plan (inactive by early 1990s)
Plant Utilization and Planning (PUP)	University Senate sub-committee – faculty, staff, and administration	1994 Master Space Plan 1995 Master Space Plan 1995 Oakland Housing Plan 1995 Transportation Study
Community Input in the Master Plan (CIMP)	Oakland’s community organizations working with PUP and University	1995 Master Plan community input to plan
Oakland Agreement Committee (OAC)	Community organizations and University; City-facilitated (grew from CIMP)	Non-University development 1995 Oakland Housing Proposal
Oakland Community Council (OCC)	Coalition of Oakland’s community organizations (grew out of/replaced CIMP)	1997 Master Space Plan community input to plan
Facilities Planning Committee	Internal University administrative committee	1997 Master Plan
Oakland Improvement Strategy (OIC)	City-lead, Community organizations, University, Institutions	Non-University development 1998 Oakland Improvement Strategy – housing, zoning, and public corridors
The “Eli” Group	Forum between University and Oakland organizations focused on University development impacting Oakland	“two-block area” student housing and Sennott Square; ongoing university developments
Oakland Task Force (OTF)	Long-standing but little-used forum from Caligiuri era; community organizations, City, University, Oakland Institutions, Allegheny Conference on Community Development (Corporate leaders planning group)	Became proactive late 1990s Schenley Plaza and other institutional and non-institutional developments in Oakland

**Table 2. University of Pittsburgh and Oakland Community Plans in the 1990s**

<b>Plans/Proposals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Principles Involved</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Oakland Historic Core	1992	City of Pittsburgh – City Council	Reaction to demolition of Syria Mosque
Interim Planning Overlay District Proposal	1992	City of Pittsburgh Planning Department and Oakland Resident Groups	
Initial University Master Plan	1994	University of Pittsburgh Administration	Rejected by City Planning Commission
Oakland Housing Strategy	1995	Oakland Agreement Committee – University and Oakland groups	
University Master Housing Plan (revised)	1995	University Plant Utilization and Planning Committee, University Administration	Received conditional Planning Commission approval
Bigelow Blvd Closing Proposal	1996	University of Pittsburgh, City of Pittsburgh, Oakland groups	Reopened after 6 month trial period
University of Pittsburgh Facilities Plan: 1998-2007	1997	University of Pittsburgh Facilities Planning Committee	Plans for two-block area include multi-purpose facility and new student housing
Pitt Master Space Plans	1998	University Implementation Committee	Revisions of 1995 plan; integrated space and academic plans
University Comprehensive Housing Strategy	1998	University with input from Oakland community	Updates master plan to include new student housing on two-block area
Oakland Improvement Strategy	1998	Oakland community partners, institutional partners, funders and City of Pittsburgh	Action plan for Oakland, focusing on design and zoning, created Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID)
Final Master Space Plan	1999	University, City of Pittsburgh, Oakland groups	Revised 1999-2000 to meet Planning Commission stipulations

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