



The EcoInnovation District will create a new model for urban growth in Pittsburgh's Uptown and West Oakland neighborhoods. (Image courtesy Department of City Planning, City of Pittsburgh)

Duquesne Helps Develop FIRST ECOINNOVATION DISTRICT — in the U.S.

By Ken Walters

Duquesne University has joined with the City of Pittsburgh and business, neighborhood and nonprofit groups to help develop the nation's first EcoInnovation District along the Forbes and Fifth Avenue corridor. The groundbreaking initiative will create a new model for urban growth that is inclusive, innovative and environmentally sound in Pittsburgh's Uptown and West Oakland neighborhoods.

Over the past 140 years, the University has worked with government, industry and community partners to advance the Uptown community in numerous ways. This latest effort, however, will help make Uptown the first neighborhood of its kind in the United States.

An EcoInnovation District combines the goals of Ecodistricts, which focus on creating resilient, sustainable cities, and Innovation Districts, which target job growth and economic opportunity. The city's EcoInnovation District plan focuses on strengthening the existing community while investing in a sustainable business infrastructure that encourages green development of new and existing buildings.

"We are proud to be working with so many of our neighbors—the city, county, businesses, nonprofits and residents—to help make this groundbreaking EcoInnovation District possible in Uptown," says Duquesne University President Ken Gormley. "This initiative is in perfect alignment with Duquesne's history and its future, as it creates opportunities for improving the economy, health and environment

of our community. It's an exciting chance for Duquesne to once again focus its academic resources, community engagement expertise and role as an anchor institution to improve Pittsburgh and our region. Uptown has always been an integral part of our own campus community and we have deep relationships with our community partners there, dating back over a century. So this is a very meaningful initiative for us."

At the request of City Planning, Duquesne is the convener of the Uptown Task Force, which includes representatives from Uptown organizations and other groups that will play a key role in implementing the EcoInnovation District plan. The goal of the task force is to represent the community's diverse interests, including those of residents, institutions, nonprofits, service providers, businesses, entertainment venues, large landowners and energy providers.

The plan's timing meshes well with the University's recently unveiled strategic plan, which calls for increased engagement with Uptown and other communities in the region.

"This is a dynamic opportunity for Duquesne to work with its neighbors to help enhance Uptown in ways ranging from improved transportation and safety to inclusive innovation and a sustainable infrastructure that attracts families and businesses," says Mary Ellen Solomon, chief of staff to the president and associate vice president for executive affairs at Duquesne, who is chairing the new task force.

Duquesne has a long legacy of serving the region, its people and community partners through initiatives such as the Tribone Center for Clinical Legal Education and its eight community clinics; the Duquesne University Pharmacy in the Hill District; and the Community-Based Health and Wellness Center for Older Adults, among others.

The University's Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research also plays a key role in the community. The center brings together faculty, students and community organizations to identify University resources that can best meet neighborhood needs. It supports a variety of teaching and research projects, including those focused on education, health and housing issues.

Duquesne students from a variety of disciplines are playing an important role in the plan's efforts. A team of students from the University's top-ranked MBA Sustainable Business Practices program collaborated with Uptown Partners to research and present a business case for developing residential and commercial properties in the neighborhood. The team found at least \$850,000 of benefits from green retrofits of existing buildings, and these efforts would reduce operating costs, improve air quality and health and increase building occupant satisfaction.

"What makes this special is that Duquesne is such an important part of the community. Students were invited into this multiyear development process and presented ideas to make the neighborhood more sustainable," says Dr.



Duquesne University convenes the Uptown Task Force. Mary Ellen Solomon, who serves as chair, leads the conversation during a recent meeting.

Robert Sroufe, professor of sustainability and operations management at the University's Donahue Graduate School of Business. "It's an opportunity for us to show the world how we can reinvent the area and create a model that reduces energy usage and costs while improving health, productivity and the quality of life for residents."

In another project, freshman business students presented recommendations to representatives from the city and Sustainable Pittsburgh in November regarding how to attract families to the Uptown area. Their suggestions, which included a tutoring initiative and the placement of blue emergency poles to improve safety, were well received by the officials, who indicated interest in learning more about the projects.

"Duquesne has a rich history of working to increase the quality of life in some of the region's most vulnerable communities," says Bill Generett, vice president of community engagement for the University. "Through the EcoInnovation District plan, we look forward to working with Uptown's community organizations to take the neighborhood to the next level by creating an equitable and sustainable community." ♦



To learn more, visit www.duq.edu/uptown to watch a video produced by students in the McNulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts.