

# University Real Estate Development Database: A Database-Driven Internet Research Tool

By Wim Wiewel and Kara Kunst

## **Abstract**

*The University Real Estate Development Database is an Internet resource developed by the University of Baltimore for the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy containing over six hundred cases of university expansion outside of traditional campus boundaries. The University Real Estate Development database is a searchable collection of real estate projects that provides institutional demographics, project demographics, and detailed narratives of university expansion. The database allows the user to search independently, work in conjunction with researchers at the University of Baltimore, or submit additional information or relevant cases through a dynamic interface.*

University Real Estate Development is a new area of academic and applied inquiry that explores the ways institutions of higher education expand outside of their traditional campus boundaries. The University Real Estate Development (URED) database is a searchable collection of real estate projects (URED projects) undertaken by urban colleges and universities outside of or on the periphery of traditional campus boundaries. As major landowners and economic drivers, universities and other institutions of higher education represent a significant subsection of urban planning and development that bears investigation. With current holdings worth billions and buildings and expansions underway at hundreds of urban schools, universities have an immeasurable impact on the local, state, and regional economies. Universities are also desirable amenities as land developers because they can be a stabilizing force for their local communities as well as their metropolitan regions. Additionally, universities provide cultural centers, jobs and job training programs, and commerce support and economic development in addition to the fundamental academic missions of teaching, mentoring, and preparing students to be active, competent citizens.

The URED database is an investigation of university real estate development in every metropolitan area in the United States. The purpose of this research is to create a comprehensive survey of real estate development to make broad, general statements regarding the impact of University Real Estate Development on the local and regional social, political, and economic landscape as well as provide detailed, individual cases that allow for benchmarking, comparisons, and other research for local development by university administrators, public planners, and private developers. Each case study

describes a URED project through institutional demographics, project demographics, project categorization, and a detailed narrative. URED allows researchers such as administration, policy makers, or developers to identify detailed examples or models of projects that can be learned from when undertaking local development.

The URED project was initiated in 2005 in response to the publication of David Perry and Wim Wiewel (eds.) titled *The University as Urban Developer: Case Studies and Analysis* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy 2005). Perry and Wiewel posed a number of questions regarding the methodologies and causes of university real estate development that have been investigated at the University of Baltimore through a contract with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

## **Areas of Inquiry**

URED explores a number of questions regarding how and why universities conduct real estate development projects outside of traditional campus boundaries. Why universities expand, how universities fund development, and what impact these projects have on the community are just three questions posed and responded to through URED project case studies.

Expansion outside of or on the periphery of traditional campus boundaries is the result of internal and external demands. Universities need space to construct facilities that specifically fulfill their missions such as space for increasing student enrollment, solidifying their presence in a community or region, and generating revenue. These internal demands lead to the construction of classrooms, research space, stadiums, field houses, parking, and student housing. In addition to mission-related purposes, URED projects are a response to external forces brought by the university's constituents. As one of the few place-based institutions remaining in cities, universities have constituencies both on campus and in the surrounding communities. On-campus constituencies include faculty, staff, and students who pressure the university for high quality facilities to conduct research, teach classes, and live. Off-campus pressures come from neighboring communities, municipal and state governments, and inter-university competition.

Off-campus pressure leads to projects that have embedded community or regional economic development goals. URED projects that involve the construction of early childhood education centers, elementary and secondary public schools, small business development centers, neighborhood housing, and health clinics are designed and implemented with the specific goal of improving neighborhoods and communities outside of the institution. URED projects that create research parks and business incubators are undertaken as part of larger regional economic development goals.

Regardless of benevolent economic development goals, URED projects almost always advance the university and its mission in some way. These raise the profile of the university as major economic generator and contribute to community- or government-led regional economic development programs.

# Methodology

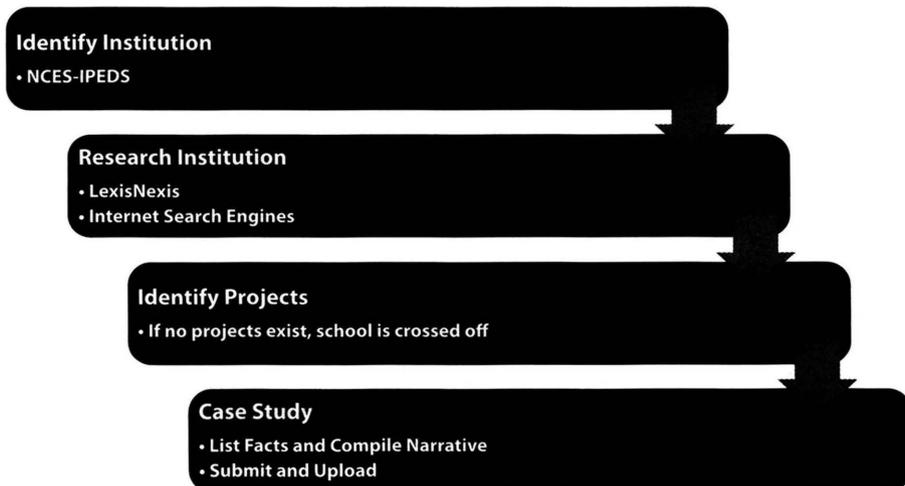
URED is the only compilation of university real estate development projects created through a complete survey of urban universities. Initial search parameters were established based on existing knowledge of university real estate development (Perry and Wiewel 2005).

The URED database includes all nonprofit institutions of higher education in urban areas. Urban areas were identified using the 2000 census listing of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSA). MSA's and CMSA's are county-based regions established by the U.S. Census Bureau to illustrate the economic impact of major cities. After all urban areas were established, institutions of higher education in each urban area were identified using the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. URED includes a survey of community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, graduate schools, and professional schools as well as all other postsecondary learning centers.

The list is, as previously mentioned limited to nonprofit institutions because for-profit institutions such as technology and professional certificate schools and college chains have fundamentally different motivations than traditional nonprofit educational institutions. Additionally, as universities and colleges have established new or satellite campuses those institutions were added to the database. The current list of colleges and universities has over one thousand individual institutions of higher education.

Each institution is researched using the LexisNexis Academic search engine and the Google internet search engine. LexisNexis news archives are used to identify projects and Google is searched for additional university and developer information. Identified projects are then written up in a defined case study formula consisting of quick facts and a detailed narrative (Figure 1: Research Process Overview).

**Figure 1: Research Process Overview**



The database contains demographic information for each project and institution. Demographic information is searchable by drop-down menu. Each case study is also searchable by narrative keyword. The database is also searchable by project specific information. Information collected is the cost of the project, the square footage of the structures involved, and the parcel square footage. The name and URL of the developer, an opened or project completion date, and a project timeline are also included in the project demographics.

Three primary categories were created for URED projects to create searchable parameters for the database: purpose, construction and property source. These categories were not created to be definitive descriptions of the project but to provide overarching themes for investigation and comparison.

URED PURPOSE categorizes projects into fifteen types based on the dominant use of the property:

- Academic: structures designated for academic or classroom space
- Administrative: structures designated for administrative offices
- Arts: structures built primarily for artistic and cultural endeavors
- Athletics: structures designated primarily for athletic activities
- Demolition: projects that involve the destruction of a structure without plans for construction
- Early Child Care/Education: structures designated to the education and care of young children, generally pre-kindergarten
- College-Sponsored K-12 schools: projects that involve the creation and/or support of a kindergarten through 12th grade school
- Land Sale or Swap: sale or exchange of campus property; demolition and land sale or swap are the two types of real estate projects that involve the university dealing in property outside of its traditional boundaries without expanding the campus
- Mixed Use: structures developed for multiple purposes
- New or satellite campuses: the construction of a new campus, generally within the same state as the host institution
- Other: structures that do not fall into any other category
- Religious: structures designated for religious use
- Research: structures designated primarily for research including but not limited to research parks
- Residential: structures designated for housing, either student, institution faculty and staff, or community
- Student Centers: structures designated for student services and/or student life

URED CONSTRUCTION categorizes projects into four types based on the construction involved:

- New: the construction of completely new structures
- Renovation: structures that were renovated
- Renovation and Expansion: renovation of an existing building as well as the addition of a new building or wing

- NA: projects that do not involve construction or renovation of structures on the property

URED PROPERTY SOURCE categorizes projects into nine types based on the previous owner or controlling party of the property:

- Campus Property: Property owned by the university, the university foundation, or a nonprofit entity controlled by the university
- Government: property most recently controlled by city, state, or federal government
- Leased: the university leases the property from another organization
- Other educational institution: another college or university controlled the property
- Other: Previous owner is known, but does not fall into one of the narrower categories.
- Nonprofit: a non-governmental, nonprofit organization
- Religious Organization: property was most recently controlled by a religious nonprofit organization
- Private—Corporate: A private, for-profit entity most recently controlled the property
- Private—Individual refers to property owned by a private individual
- NA: property ownership information is not available

The bulk of each case study is the narrative. With the exception of the Synopsis, the majority of the narrative is directly quoted from primary sources (master plans, committee reports and press releases) or newspaper articles. The purpose of this is to remove editorializing from the case studies and provide direct accounts of the issues and purposes surrounding each project.

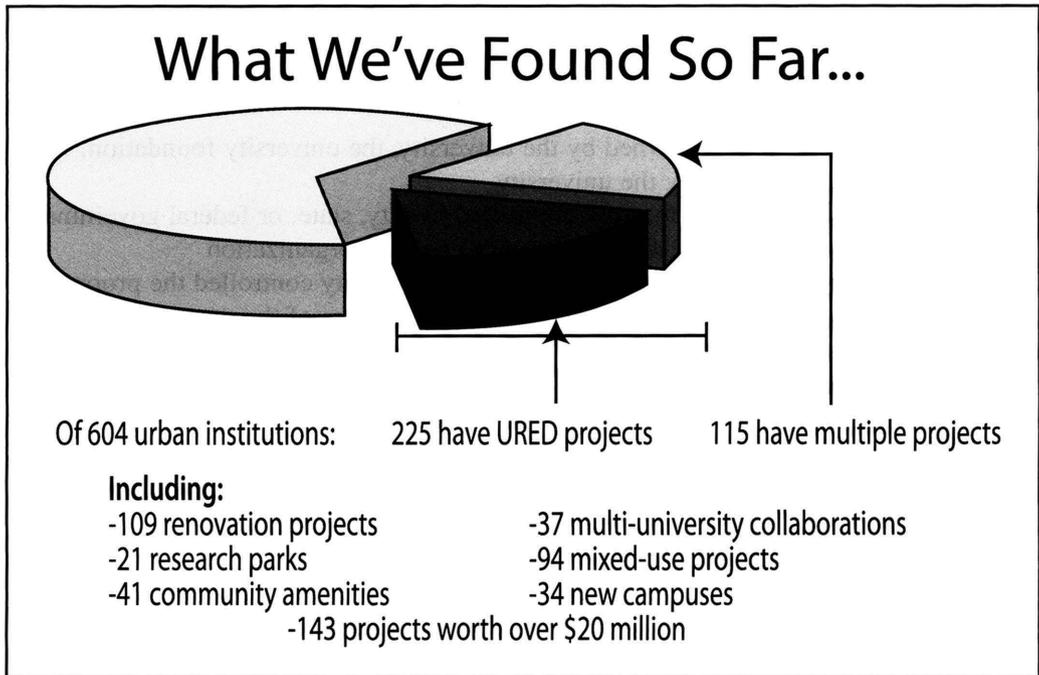
Each narrative contains eight sections:

- SYNOPSIS
- HISTORY/PREVIOUS USE
- DEVELOPMENT/CONSTRUCTION
- FINANCING
- TOWN/GOWN RELATIONS
- GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
- OTHER ISSUES
- CITATIONS

## **Database Contents and Current Database Uses**

During the first eighteen months of the research process, urban areas in thirty-three states have been researched and over six hundred cases have been identified. Thirty-seven percent of researched universities are expanding outside of or on the edge of traditional campus boundaries and the need for additional space for campus purposes does not appear to be diminishing. The size, scope, cost, and purpose of URED projects varies depending on the size of the institution, the available resources, and the ability to expand (see Figure 2 for details).

**Figure 2: URED Contents Overview**



The database is searchable by keyword, drop-down menu selection, and check boxes and can be sorted by any of twelve categories including property type, university name, location, or size.

While the URED database is created specifically for use by researchers, university leadership, private developers, and public agency planners, it has proven useful for a wide audience. Information requests have come from a wide audience ranging from graduate students in economics to journalists reporting on university growth asking for a variety of information, including how often eminent domain is used to acquire property that is used for university real estate development or what types of buildings are universities focusing on acquiring.

## **Case Study of Database Use**

The database can be used as a tool to identify, compare, and analyze cases of development projects. A sample question is what university-led, off-campus student housing facilities could be used as models or lessons for a student housing development at the University of Baltimore (a hypothetical user)? The database could provide examples of facilities that house the type of student-customer the University of Baltimore (UB) caters to, what kind of mixed-use developments featuring student housing are being created, how this type of project is financed, etc.

In order to find examples of off-campus student housing development that would be applicable to a project undertaken at UB, the first step is to search the dropdown

category “Project Type” for Residential and Mixed Use projects and do a keyword search for residential, residence, or apartment. This type of search provides over a hundred results with sixty-eight examples of residential development, thirty-one examples of mixed-use development that are partially residential facilities, and two residential projects that are part of larger new or satellite campuses. These projects range in cost from \$300,000 to \$330,000,000, have square footages of three thousand to 1.2 million square feet, and house as few as a dozen and up to one thousand students. The majority of these results are irrelevant to UB and any student housing UB would develop. Ideally, UB would be able to find half a dozen projects that could serve as model student-housing projects.

To identify more relevant URED projects, UB’s specific needs could be applied to the search. The overwhelming majority of the student population is junior, senior, or graduate level non-traditional students that are more likely to be interested in apartments or suites than traditional student dorms. UB would also want to construct a mixed-use facility with retail or office facilities that would promote local commercial growth as well as local consumption by students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, UB is not a real estate developer and would probably seek external assistance in developing a mixed-use complex such as a private developer. Public-private partnerships are useful because they can speed up construction and development time. UB is also one of many schools located in downtown Baltimore that has student housing needs, and there is the possibility that UB could create housing that would be open to students from area universities or market-rate apartments that serve students, faculty, staff, and other local populations.

Using new parameters and looking at the resulting case studies, a number of examples that could serve as models for a UB student housing project can be identified. There are approximately thirty-three projects that are relevant to UB that are mixed-use projects. While there is no sample that meets all of the potential criteria UB would look at, there is a mix of projects that was undertaken by multiple universities that are the result of public-private partnerships or serve the public as well as the university population. Of the thirty-three results, four examples stand out that UB could then investigate further. Marymount Manhattan College’s 55th Street Residence, Canisius College’s Delevan Armory Apartments, the University of South Florida’s Magnolia Apartment Complex, and the Temecula Education Center each have characteristics that would be ideal for a UB student housing complex.

The 55th Street Residence is an example of a public-private partnership that features housing for students as well as market-rate housing for the general public. The Delevan Armory Apartments are townhome-style buildings with three- to five-bedroom apartments that reuse brownfield space adjacent to the university’s existing campus. The Magnolia Apartment Complex at the University of South Florida is housing for graduate-level non-traditional students, the majority of which are students with families or international students that will remain in the housing year-round as opposed to student housing that functions primarily during the traditional September-to-May school year. The Temecula Education Center is a thirty-two-acre multi-university satellite campus with housing and retail in addition to traditional campus facilities such as

administrative offices and classrooms in the city of Temecula. While it will eventually house five Californian universities, at the time of research, three schools used the space: Mount San Jacinto Community College, Point Loma Nazarene University, and the University of California, Riverside. The housing project at the Temecula Education Center is the result of a public-private partnership where students from the universities will have the option of living in apartment or suite-style student housing.

## **Conclusion**

URED provides users with variety, relevance, accuracy, and detail. As a complete survey of all urban institutions, URED provides the most thorough database of university-led real estate development available. As such, there is a breadth of projects ranging from the lease of a parking lot for overflow parking to the purchase, renovation, and expansion of a corporate campus into a research park.

Certain characteristics are found among many of the URED databases projects. URED projects take a long time from start to finish. They require strong leadership, stakeholder collaboration, and financial and non-monetary investment. They offer the opportunity to shape urban development and are often models of smart growth.

The University Real Estate Development database is free and will be available online in the Resources and Tools section of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Web site at [www.lincolninst.edu](http://www.lincolninst.edu).

## **Resources**

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. 2005. *Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: City, land, and university project*. <http://www.lincolninst.edu/subcenters/clu>

Perry, D., and W. Wiewel, eds. 2005. *The university as urban developer: Case studies and analysis*. M.E. Sharpe, May.

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## **Author Information**

Wim Wiewel, Ph.D., is the Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at the University of Baltimore. He holds degrees in sociology and urban planning from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Northwestern University.

Kara Kunst is a Master's student in the University of Baltimore's School of Public Affairs and Graduate Assistant with the University Real Estate Development database project. She received her Bachelor's in history from the University of Baltimore's Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts and wrote her undergraduate honors thesis on Korean-American Immigration in Baltimore, Maryland.

Wim Wiewel  
1420 N. Charles St, AC249  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
E-mail: [WWiewel@ubalt.edu](mailto:WWiewel@ubalt.edu)  
Telephone: 410-837-5244  
Fax: 410-837-5249

Kara Kunst  
1420 N. Charles St, AC607  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
E-mail: [Kara.Kunst@ubalt.edu](mailto:Kara.Kunst@ubalt.edu)  
Telephone: 410-837-4057  
Fax: 410-837-5249