



# *Economic Development: Universities & Small Cities Working Together*

A City Practices Brief

August 2007

Many municipalities with colleges and universities make use of the extensive cultural and educational opportunities these institutions provide. Small to medium-sized cities with colleges and universities in their vicinity also view these centers of learning as partners in economic development for their downtowns and for the commercial corridors located near the schools. In working together to stimulate revitalization in an area, educational institutions and cities can maximize their resources and improve the quality of life both for city residents and students.

This document contains examples of collaborations between schools and cities in order to promote economic development and commercial investment. For more examples, visit the City Practices database on the NLC website, [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org).

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## **USC BusinessLINK**

City: **Columbia, South Carolina**

Population: 116,278

For more information, contact: Jim Gambrell, Director of Economic Development  
[jgambrell@columbiasc.net](mailto:jgambrell@columbiasc.net)  
(803) 734-2700

USC BusinessLink is a partnership between Columbia and the University of South Carolina to tap the university's wealth of knowledge and intellect as an economic development asset. The service, staffed by an employee of the university's economic development department, provides a point of contact to receive information or assistance from USC faculty or researchers for the city's economic development staff and businesspersons within the city. Companies use the service to get research that assists their business plans, marketing, legal issues, and patent issues. The program also serves to connect the University's Small Business Development Center, Center for Manufacturing and Technology, the Technology Incubator, Industrial Agreements Unit, and Intellectual Property Office.

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## **Tyler Area Business Incubator**

City: **Tyler, Texas**

Population: 83,650

For more information, contact: Tony Tadasa, Director  
[ttad@tjc.edu](mailto:ttad@tjc.edu)  
(903) 510-2982

The Tyler Area Business Incubator, a joint venture of Tyler Junior College (TJC) and the Tyler Economic Development Council, nurtures new businesses until they are strong enough to make it on their own. It occupies 25,000 square feet of space in TJC's Regional Training and Development Complex, a career development and training facility, which also houses the Small Business Development Center and the Service Corps of Retired Executives. This location gives incubator participants direct access to business expertise and consulting services as well as office equipment and a business library of periodicals, books, videos and the Internet. Program participants are charged market rates for space ranging from 150 to many thousands of square feet. Participation does not have a mandatory time limit, but is considered on a case by case basis to ensure continued success. Originally aimed at high tech startups, the program is now open to any kind of new business except retail, food service or heavy manufacturing.

### **Campustown Action Plan**

City: **Champaign, Illinois**

Population: 67,518

For more information, contact: Veronica Gonzalez, Implementation Planner  
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(217) 403-8800

Champaign's Campustown Action Plan was developed by the Campustown 2000 Task Force to revitalize the commercial area adjacent to the University of Illinois. The Task Force included representatives of the cities of Champaign and Urbana, the University of Illinois, the Chamber of commerce, local property and business owners, and students. There were four subcommittees which focused on personal safety; drainage, public improvements and appearances; transportation, parking, and traffic; resources and financing. The Action Plan provides a summary of existing conditions and issues, then offers goals and objectives to address such issues as street improvements, parking, public safety, housing, beautification, and economic development. Detailed tables show strategies, actions, responsible parties, schedules, and funding information.

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### **The Gateway Project**

City: **New Brunswick, New Jersey**

Population: 48,573

For more information, contact: Roy Epps, President, Civic League  
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(732) 247-9066

The Gateway Project, a partnership among New Brunswick, Rutgers University, and a private development corporation, is a mixed-use development project at the cusp of the city and campus. It includes plans for a high-rise building featuring 200 condominium units, parking and retail space, and university offices. Plans call for nearby College Avenue to become a tree-lined pedestrian-friendly street designed to encourage more interaction between city residents and the university community.

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### **The Bloomfield Center Alliance**

City: **Bloomfield, New Jersey**

Population: 47,683

For more information, contact: Stuart Koperweis, Executive Director  
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(973) 429-8050

Bloomfield has a partnership with Bloomfield College, New Jersey Transit, and local businesses to revitalize the township's central business district, Bloomfield Center. This alliance uses an intensive plan to recruit new businesses into the downtown area after making the place more attractive, accessible, and well-advertised. The funding for Bloomfield Center is coming from the private sector and the township. The MidTown Direct commuter railway between Bloomfield Center and Manhattan is an important feature of the new downtown, as are added parking spaces for commuter vehicles and 14,000 feet of new retail space. Since the name "Bloomfield Center" can technically be applied to a few select, economically active sections of downtown, there are plans to link the entire area together in a public relations campaign during the process of revitalization, hoping to create a unified image of a complete and vital downtown center for Bloomfield.

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### **Mansfield Downtown Partnership**

City: **Mansfield, Connecticut**

Population: 20,720

For more information, contact: Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director  
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(860) 429-2740

The Mansfield Downtown Partnership grew out of the Mansfield Downtown Action Agenda 2000 which outlined the concepts of Mansfield's downtown revitalization plan. To accomplish the goals set forth, Mansfield entered into a partnership with the University of Connecticut, local businesses and members

of the community to create the Mansfield Downtown Partnership. The concept master plan includes three main elements: mixed-use development, a town green, and market-rate housing. Streetscape improvements are also a vital piece of future development. The Partnership is charged with coordinating the enhancement and revitalization of three of Mansfield's commercial areas: the Storrs Center, King Hill Road, and the Four Corners area.

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### **The Bexley Gateway**

City: **Bexley, Ohio**

Population: 13,203

For more information, contact: Bruce Langner, Development Director  
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(614) 559-4255

Bexley and Capital University worked together to revitalize and expand the Main Street corridor by building housing and mixed-use facilities. The city hopes to attract new residents and businesses to the area. The most significant project is the Bexley Gateway, which will include more than 6,000 square feet of retail space, 13,000 square feet of office space, three brownstone residences, and a five-story condominium building. Bexley created a tax increment financing district to offset the costs of public improvements and commit to continued reinvestment. It also offered tax relief to mixed-use projects in order to spur new investment. The projects are estimated to generate \$10 million in property taxes over their first 10 years.

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This Brief was developed by Alice Walkup, Staff Associate, National League of Cities.

City Practices Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practices database, available at [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org). Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email [mrs@nlc.org](mailto:mrs@nlc.org).

