



WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY



APLU

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY UNIVERSITIES  
AWARDS PROGRAM

IEP CATEGORY • TALENT

CASE  
STUDY  
2019

## Wayne State University: Retaining and Attracting Talent in Midtown Detroit

## ABOUT RETAINING AND ATTRACTING TALENT IN MIDTOWN DETROIT

Wayne State University (WSU) has been intentional in its efforts to transform from a commuter destination to a 24-hour campus with strategic efforts around housing, transportation and mobility, and placemaking. We know that neighborhoods with density and diversity in housing, jobs, transportation and cultural amenities are critical to attracting and retaining talent, and our goal is to create the kind of campus and neighborhood that offers these features while remaining accessible to all.

### Housing

Since 2002, WSU has constructed four new residence halls, adding more than 2,400 beds. The university expects to [expand on-campus housing capacity](#) from 3,400 today to 3,750 by 2022. WSU has also contributed to residential density by [partnering with private developers](#) on mixed-use developments, as well through its participation from 2011-2015 in [Live Midtown](#), a program offering financial incentives to employees of WSU, Detroit Medical Center and Henry Ford Health System who purchase or rent a home in Midtown.

According to figures provided by Midtown Detroit, Inc. (MDI), which manages Live Midtown, the incentive attracted and retained 2,025 residents between 2011-2015. Of that number, 571 were WSU employees. During the first five years of the incentive, residential occupancy in the neighborhood increased from 92 to 98%. Live Midtown was extended beyond its original five-year term in 2016; with neighborhood occupancy at a high, WSU elected not to participate in this extension. MDI reports that more than 2000 residential units have been added or renovated since 2006, with another 4000 units/beds under construction or in the pipeline. This increased residential density is impacting the neighborhood's small businesses, with 150 new businesses and nonprofits opening since 2013.

The [overall financial impact](#) of Live Midtown between 2011-15 was \$21 million. MDI also recently launched a [Stay Midtown](#) program, a residential retention program targeted toward Midtown's working class population who may be experiencing cost increases and other negative effects related to neighborhood revitalization.



*Figure 1: WSU has invested heavily in transportation and mobility initiatives to ensure the community has access to a range of transportation options.*

## *Transportation and Mobility*

[Research](#) shows the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce wants to live in transportation-rich cities and regions. WSU has invested heavily in transportation and mobility initiatives to ensure our on- and off-campus students, as well as our faculty, staff and neighbors, have access to a range of transportation options.

WSU was a major investor in the [QLINE](#), a 3.3-mile streetcar line traversing the city's major thoroughfare. We initiated a greater downtown Bike Share program – MoGo Detroit – that launched in 2017 and [reached its 100,000-ride goal](#) more than six months early. Low-income Detroiters who receive any kind of state benefits are eligible for a \$5 Access Pass. WSU students, faculty and staff are eligible for a discounted annual pass. We brought car-sharing to Detroit, starting with two ZipCars on campus in 2011 and expanding to 23 on campus, and 58 throughout the city, today. Additionally, WSU has also partnered with our city and suburban bus systems to provide 14,000 free monthly bus passes to WSU students since 2014, and we promote walking and biking through various initiatives, including Bike to Work Day and the annual Baroudeur bike ride, with proceeds supporting student scholarships.

Recognizing transportation access is a key contributor to both neighborhood vitality and student success, several WSU departments came together to create a campus Transportation Ambassador position in 2017-18, and to launch [WayneRides](#), a new one-stop-shop for information on transportation in and around Detroit.

## *Placemaking*

Placemaking is a core component of WSU's effort to create a 24-7 campus and build connections within the campus community and with our Midtown neighbors. WSU's Office of Economic Development (OED) leads several [Placemaking Initiatives](#), including convening a Placemaking Steering Committee, an advisory board comprised of representatives from more than 20 colleges and departments and community organizations. Previous projects include the 2015 and 2016 Walk [Wayne State] campaigns designed to encourage people to explore nearby destinations; partnering with the Detroit Institute of Arts' Inside|Out program to place reproductions of the museum's collection at sites across campus; and placing pop-up seating throughout campus to encourage the campus community to congregate and forge new connections.

These small-scale interventions, following a concept known as tactical urbanism, are designed to be inexpensive and flexible, while encouraging interaction and a sense of place. Based on the success of these smaller initiatives and feedback from thousands of members of our WSU community, OED raised more than \$100,000 to develop an inviting, accessible, [family-friendly park](#) on five contiguous empty lots at a highly visible neighborhood intersection. Improvements will be complete in Spring 2019. Planned programming includes a community-facing [Farmers](#)

[Market](#) that accepts food stamps and Double Up Food Bucks (a one-to-one match for SNAP beneficiaries purchasing fresh produce) as well as Student Advantage discount cards for students.

## IMPACTS

The 2020 Census will help us better understand our shifting neighborhood, city and state demographics, and our success in retaining and attracting college graduates. So far, we know our neighborhood's residential occupancy rate increased from 92 to 98% between 2011 and 2015, and has remained steady even as thousands of new units have been added. [Our population increased by 14% between 2014 and 2018 and 149 new businesses opened during this same period, 69 of which received assistance from TechTown.](#) The residents of Midtown, both on- and off-campus, contribute significantly to the neighborhood's vibrancy and economic vitality: they pay property and income taxes, they increase property values and they patronize local businesses, among many other investments. [Additionally, our region's 25-34 year-old population increased by 9.4% between 2013 and 2017, outpacing the national average.](#) Vibrant, transportation-rich neighborhoods like Midtown are key to retaining and attracting this generation, which is on track to be the most-educated generation to date.

## ABOUT APLU

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is North America's oldest higher education association. APLU is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. The association's membership consists of public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations.

APLU's mission is to: expand access and improve student success to deliver the innovative workforce of tomorrow; advance and promote research and discovery to improve society, foster economic growth, and address global challenges; and build healthy, prosperous, equitable, and vibrant communities locally and globally.

Based in Washington, DC, the association's work is furthered by an active and effective advocacy arm that works with Congress and the administration as well as the media to advance federal policies that strengthen public universities and benefit the students they serve.

## ABOUT THE IEP UNIVERSITIES PROGRAM

APLU and its **Commission on Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)** established the Innovation and Economic Prosperity (IEP) Universities Program to help higher education institutions codify, elevate, and advance their campus enterprise supporting economic and community development.

The **IEP designation program** recognizes institutions that have demonstrated a meaningful, ongoing and substantial commitment to economic and community development, growth, and economic opportunity.

The **IEP awards program** recognize exemplary and innovative projects in university-based economic and community engagement:

- **Talent** and workforce development
- **Innovation**, entrepreneurship, and tech-based economic development
- **Place** development through public service, outreach, and community engagement

Learn more at: [www.APLU.org/IEP](http://www.APLU.org/IEP)