

Relocating MIU to the cityscape: gentrifying Wynwood's art district from industrial to institutional

Y. A. Perez

Miami International University of Arts & Design, USA

Abstract

This study explores the use of gentrification as a catalyst to regenerate a decaying urban environment. The study will propose relocating a university (Miami International University of Art & Design, MIU) the catalyst, to a decaying urban art district (Wynwood). Although gentrification generally carries a negative connotation, the type of gentrification projected in this study promotes the best interest for the community without displacing individuals. After all, gentrification's main objective is neighborhood improvement. MIU will be transformed into an urban university that will make a significant contribution to the Wynwood Art District and will play a vital role in enhancing the community. The new urban location will mutually benefit MIU, and the community by contributing to the gentrification of the Wynwood Art District, and enhancing the university's and the community's image. This study will reveal the benefits of relocating the university, and redirecting its growth from place to placemaking. Based on Edward M. Spicer's research document "What is an Urban University?" the research will analyze similar urban institutions and develop best practices for implementation to MIU. Among the case studies will be: (1) Columbia University in the USA, (2) Portland State University in the USA, and (3) the University of Pennsylvania in the USA. These case studies differ in educational philosophies but agree in the importance of an urban institution for the community and students. The fusion of MIU and the Wynwood Art District will result as an integrative link of the place, and a symbol of cultural function. The objective is the showcase MIU, but also as an integral art centerpiece that binds together institution and community.

Keywords: gentrification, neoliberals, urban university, neighborhood change.



1 Introduction

The British sociologist Ruth Glass first coined the term gentrification in 1964 to describe a process of urban change that was beginning to affect inner London. Since that time, according to Lee et al. [1], gentrification has worked its way into the planning manifestos or urban policy agendas to improve the economic, physical, and social outlooks of disinvested central-city locations around the world [1]. In this study, as we shall see, gentrification is the beneficial consequence of changes to the industrial Wynwood Art District in Miami, Florida USA. In addition, rather than demolishing the District's available existing structures, these buildings can be readapted and refurbished for neighborhood improvement. Jacobs [2], urbanist, writer, and activist once said, new ideas require old buildings [2]. To achieve this positive gentrification, Wynwood Art District will partner with Miami International University of Art & Design (MIU), a University who will relocate into the District, MIU will become the catalyst for bringing gentrification to Wynwood Art District. For this to occur, the relocation must be beneficial to both entities. This is particularly true for MIU for, as Glover (Glover and Maurrasse [3]), founder and president of PolicyLink, has observed, the university needs to reconnect to the community.

2 Gentrification

Gentrification, of course, existed before Ruth Glass coined the term. Glass [4] complained that once this process of gentrification starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working class occupiers are displaced and the social character of the district is changed [4]. The earliest systematic appearance of gentrification was in the 1950s and occurred in post-war advanced capitalist cities like Boston, Washington, D.C, London, and New York. Glass described gentrification as an invasion of the middle class to displace the working class. However, over time gentrification evolved into a more dynamic process, losing much of its negative connotation. Today, gentrification is synonymous with 'regeneration', 'renaissance', and 'revitalization'.

2.1 Spontaneous gentrification

Urban evolution has encountered obstacles along its way to try to revitalize decaying sectors of cities; one major obstacle is the tendency to generalize the term 'gentrification' without understanding its various models.

There are, for example, differences between classical and spontaneous models of gentrification. Those differences can lead researchers to wildly different interpretations of the process. Clay [5], one of the earliest analysts of gentrification, argued that all of these general tendencies are worked out differently in particular national, regional and urban settings. At the urban scale, the expansion of gentrification worldwide is tied to the rise of service-based economies and the shifting functions of central cities, as well as the enforced diffusion of neoliberal models of urban governance and redevelopment [5].



In 2001, Andres Duany, an architect and urban theorist, in the essay ‘Three Cheers for Gentrification’ discussed two approaches to inducing gentrification: artificially and spontaneously. Duany [6] notes that opposition to gentrification often starts from the assumption that it is artificially induced, and controllable [6]. This is different from the improvement that occurs without municipal involvement, which is known as ‘spontaneous gentrification’. As Duany [6] observes, spontaneous gentrification happens furtively when a first wave of poor but savvy pioneers discovers the urban allure of a hitherto decrepit area. These are usually students, artists, gays, and other self-marginalized social groups [6]. Duany’s ‘savvy pioneers,’ referred to by sociologists as the risk-oblivious, are creative individuals who transform rough and edgy environments to habitable and charming.

Utilizing Glass’s definition of classical gentrification, Clay [5] developed in 1979 one of the first models of gentrification; he outlined a schema from stage 1 (pioneer gentrification) to stage 4 (maturing gentrification). In Clay’s stage 1:

A small group of risk-oblivious people move in and renovate properties for their own use. Little public attention is given to renovation at this stage, and little displacement occurs because the newcomers often take housing that is vacant or part of the normal market turnover in what is often an extremely soft market. This pioneer group accepts the risk of such a move [5].

Both Clay’s stage model and Duany’s spontaneous gentrification recognize the role of avant-garde artists in the early revitalization process. The risk-oblivious, or neoliberals, seemed to value mixed-use and multicultural neighborhoods, bringing in diverse architectural qualities, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Positives and opportunities of gentrification.

Positives	Opportunities
Neighborhood transformed into an Urban University.	Improves neighborhoods and university’s image, safety, services, and capacities.
Resource allocations.	Provide high-quality diverse housing choices.
Revive commercial activity.	Formulate activities with an overall strategy for community integration.
Enhance local services.	Neighborhood revitalization that would require a partnership between community and the supportive urban institution.
Economic growth.	Increasing property value, and land use improvement. Supports a business district that can provide employment opportunities.

2.1.1 Art and gentrification

Historically, an unwanted consequence of gentrification has been the displacement of the neighborhood's previous residents. The gentrification approach in this study has been defined as spontaneous, and will regenerate a decaying urban environment by using existing edifices and respecting the nature of the neighborhood. This will be accomplished through the relocation of higher learning institutions dedicated to the arts, in short MIU.

3 Case studies

Urban universities are connected to their host communities. Each develops unique characteristics that reflect and respond to the nature and composition of their communities. The relationship between the state systems of higher education and the community, form an urban university. They have considerable differences but also much in common.

In his research document, 'What is an Urban University', Spicer [7] suggests how urban universities answer some of the community's basic needs. Based on the clientele it serves, which is the student body, Spicer's defines urban university with the specific criteria [7]:

1. It enrolls 20% or more of its students on a part-time basis
2. It is located in a city with a population of 250,000 or more
3. It has graduate and professional schools
4. It grants the PhD degree

In addition, Spicer [7] cites, the comprehensive urban university, with its flexibility and its resources, is the one vehicle, with local and regional cooperation, which could have a tremendous impact in finding solutions to some of the social and environmental problems that now confronts us [7].

Under the definition used by Spicer and the positive impact of urban universities in neighborhood improvement, this research will analyze similar urban institutions to develop best practices for implementation further in this study to Miami International University of Art & Design. These case studies follow Spicer's criteria. The case studies include (1) Columbia University, (2) Portland State University, and (3) University of Pennsylvania, all in USA.

3.1 Columbia University

Located in Upper Manhattan, in New York City, Columbia University is making a difference through community partnership. Columbia embraces the opportunity to give back to the neighborhood the university calls home, contributing in ways to improve the quality of life in Upper Manhattan.

Columbia University [8] is involved with the community, constantly searching for ways to improve the quality of its residents. It offers from one on one tutoring to health screening; by joining with community and partnering with other organizations and agencies, the university continues to expand the programs and services available to its neighbors. Community residents, business



owners, organizations, and activists have long led the way in providing a wide array of community services that enrich all of our lives. Columbia seizes the opportunity to work with its neighbors and strengthen university relationships and working partnerships [8].

Columbia is an internationally respected academic establishment; it is also a vital local New York institution committed not only to the economic and social growth of the city, but also to the cultural vitality of the neighborhood. Constantly, Columbia is involved in neighborhood improvement with various projects.

Recently Columbia has developed a comprehensive plan together with West Harlem to develop a mixed-use academic center. In May 2009, New York State's Public Authorities Control Board granted Columbia the final public approval for the plan. This chains an expansion of educational and cultural programs involving Columbia University [8] with the local community:

The 17-acre site primarily consists of a four large blocks in the old Manhattanville manufacturing zone that over the time will create "A new kind of urban academic environment that will be woven into the fabric of the surrounding community.

The plan includes more than 6.8 million square feet of space for teaching, research, underground parking, and support services. It features new facilities for civic, cultural, recreational, and commercial activity. In addition, its improved, pedestrian-friendly streets and new publicly accessible open spaces will reconnect West Harlem to the new Hudson River waterfront park [8].

As a result, Columbia with its new approach is contributing to the positive gentrification of a decaying old industrial zone. In addition, it is generating new local jobs opportunities for the local residents.



Figure 1: Existing view from West 130th Street and Twelve Avenue looking East. Source: <http://neighbors.columbia.edu/pages/manplanning/>.



Figure 2: Proposed view for West 130th Street and Twelve Avenue. Source: <http://neighbors.columbia.edu/pages/manplanning/>.

3.1.1.1 Portland State University

In response to neighborhood improvement, universities are reviewing their missions and adopting missions-specific goals. According to Ramaley [9], a biologist and administrator, these types of institutions are characterized by the nature and extent of its responsive to the research and educational needs of complex metropolitan regions [9]. The emerging distinctive institution is the urban university.

Located in Oregon, national environment is a concern for Portland State University (PSU), and its academic and administrative setting has engaged resources to the support its distinctive urban mission. In 1990, PSU entered into a period of change generated from economic crisis. PSU became an urban university and the first step was to rethink its mission statement. In Ramaley [9] 1991, the mission statement of PSU reads as:

The mission of Portland State University is to enhance the intellectual, social, cultural and economic qualities of urban life by providing access throughout the life span to a quality liberal education for undergraduates and an appropriate array of professional and graduate programs especially relevant to the metropolitan area. The university will actively promote development of a network of educational institutions that will serve the community and support a high quality educational environment and reflect issues important to the metropolitan area [9].

The distinctive characteristics of the change process of PSU were addressed simultaneously. First, the transformation was in the hands of faculty and staff whom along brought in community participation. Second, the mission statement of PSU framed the work with clear and specific institutional goals. Third, the expansion of change, with partnerships of faculty and administrators with other local institutions, attempted neighborhood improvement. Fourth, PSU created a habit of presenting results at national meetings as critical reviews.

3.1.1.1 University of Pennsylvania Located in West Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania (Penn) has become partners with the community to improve the neighborhood and the economic growth of the city. It has contributed with the continuing process of revitalization improving three areas of constant interventions:

1. Neighborhood safety, capacity and services improvement.
2. Significant renewal of retail activity, economic development directed toward local residents.
3. Surrounding public school showing improvement.

Penn's economic development effort has generated activity in the center of the campus thriving into the night in a good-illuminated setting. Previously the area was dark and desolate at night, situation that was a good setting for criminal activity.

With this economic boost, Penn is also undertaking a special effort to hire local manufacture, and employ a majority of locals of the new businesses. Given that, the hospitality industry is becoming the main focal point of the city's development, Penn is running an effective job-training program to prepare residents to work in a variety of local hotels. Maurrase [10], an author, speaker, and researcher, observes Penn's development strategy built upon the history of other joint ventures between large nationwide suppliers and local minority-owned business [10].

Penn has also partnered with Philadelphia's School District establishing a university-assisted pre-K-to-eight public school. With this approach, Penn is providing better public education models for advancement in teaching and learning, involving the partnering of private and public, and of community and institution to participate with a common goal of neighborhood improvement. After all, one needs the other one to succeed.



Figure 3: Bird's eye view of the University of Pennsylvania campus. Source: http://www.aashe.org/files/resources/campus_awards/aerial%20campus.png.

4 The community, the vehicle and the transition

In a way to achieve social and economic equity communities and urban universities become partners. This partnering involves the community and the university working jointly to take common action intended to solve problems. Moreover, the approach relies on strengthening the existing community by creating new partnerships to bring change. The results of these efforts include improving quality of life, creating better communal equity, and setting new standards for changing communities.

4.1 The community: Wynwood Art District

The recent and rapid cultural developments have launched the Wynwood Art District. The section extends from Miami Avenue five blocks west, between Interstate 395 and NW 36th Street containing more than 60 galleries, studios, workshops, museums, and collections that have emerged from the remnants of a past industrial zone. Wynwood Art District is the link between Miami's Design District to the north, and Downtown's Performing Arts Center to the south, allowing neoliberals (artists) and production industry members to flourish and develop. Referred as the 'art district' due to its prevalence of artist studios, it is also home to Miami's Fashion District, an area that stretches along NW 5th Avenue from 23rd to 29th Streets.



Figure 4: Wynwood Art District renewal area. Source: http://www.miamiartspace.com/images/wynwood_map.jpg.

Every second Saturday of each month the Design District and Wynwood Art District holds a community art walk from 7 to 11p.m.; this is the only time when the Wynwood area becomes a safe place to walk in the evenings, drawing a wide range of neoliberals. A little more than a decade ago, the area was more an apparel and warehouse district next to a massive train yard. As the rail shipping business disappeared, the area became blighted. Just a few years ago, walking through Wynwood at night would have been inviting danger at worst, and taking an extremely monotonous stroll, at best.

The Wynwood Art District location allows three fundamental premises:

1. The development of the cityscape.
2. The connection between the urban density (population) and the available spaces (warehouses), which makes rehabilitation-readaptation the most notable characteristic for the available spaces.
3. The confluence between art and architecture by means of segregated interventions, occupying some of the available warehouses will enable a new identity, enhancing the neighborhood as a whole to the city.

4.1.1 The vehicle: Miami International University of Art & Design, MIU

When in 2005, Miami International University of Art & Design (MIU) opened its doors in OMNI, its full intention was to build a solid tradition of excellence in design-focused education for Miami's residents. MIU is one of more than 40 Art Institutes located throughout North America, providing an important source of design, media arts, visual arts, fashion, and culinary arts for professionals. Five years later, the university continues to show growth. According to Dean Paul Cox, "MIU has begun to grow and become educationally vibrant and today has evolved into a University offering a broad spectrum of associate, undergraduate and graduate programs in art and design."

When the university opened, the surrounding area at the time was experiencing an influx of high-rise mix-use condos. Decisions were made to locate the university within what used to be an indoor shopping center (OMNI). Currently the university is not the focal point within the OMNI, as it competes with hotels, government agencies, and offices. MIU in its five-year history has undergone remarkable growth; the university has more than 2,000 students in its educational programs and more than 150 professional on its faculty. MIU leases directly from the OMNI, utilizing about 100,000 square feet of space.

In redefining MIU's role, the first important step taken will be the relocation of the university to the Wynwood Art District. With the new location, the university will be helping substantially in the gentrification of Wynwood Art District. In addition, MIU will be intervening directly through employment generation, housing and economic development initiatives, to flourish the decaying neighborhood.

4.1.1.1 The transition: Urban University Events such as developing sense of identity, increasing student activities, and correcting urban decay, solidify the idea of embedding an urban university in gentrified cities.



Klotsche [11], a former chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, provides a proper suggestion:

Our society is irretrievably urban. Since our cities are here to stay, the time is at hand to take a new look at them. It is urgent that a major effort be made to reshape them. This will require serious reflection, and positive action. In all of these matters the urban university can play a central role. It can, in fact, become the single most important force in the re-creation of our cities [11].

The most urgent problems of a city can be solved with the university participation in a community's development. Urban revitalization is an enormous mission and it is past the scope of any single institution to resolve. Partnerships can provide a possible approach to solving these problems. As for the university, the participation promotes positive identity, positive impact on student recruitments, faculty and staff, enlarging the potential of ethnic and racial diversity as shown in table 2. For this, Klotsche [11] also states:

The urban university is on the threshold of unparalleled expansion; a phenomenon of this century, the growth of the urban university will be far more dramatic than that of other institutions of higher education. For this new kind of institution located in the city is at the very center of the most dynamic and volatile force in America today – the emerging metropolis [11].

These positives are channels to better opportunities for the community that concludes in neighborhood improvement, as shown in figure 5.

Table 2: Benefits of a partnership.

Positives	Opportunities
Location within the city. The scale, the diversity, and the density of the cities.	Economic growth. The city attracts consumers of education, having a tremendous economic impact on the cities that contains them.
Universities are among the top ten private employers in the largest cities in the United States.	City management. Job generations that contribute to a more experienced and educated workforce.
Create university and community relationships.	Marketing tool for the city. Appreciate the valuable and diverse roles that university's can play in the immediate area, by contributing to neighborhood improvement.
University engages in change.	Promotes citizenship. Supports artistic and cultural diversity while strengthening community identity.



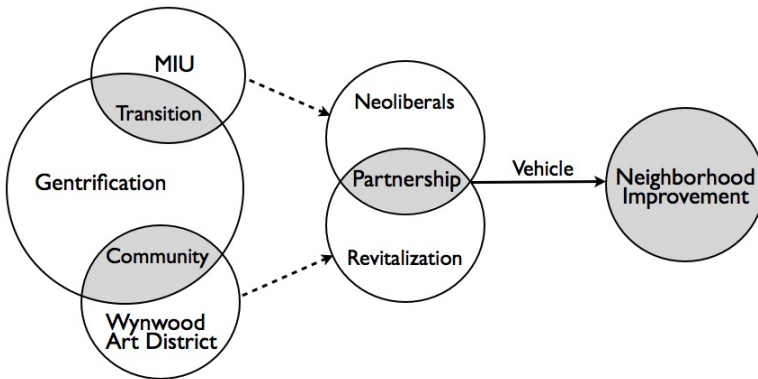


Figure 5: Diagram of the process of gentrification. Source: Yadira Perez.

Gentrification is a process that can positively affect a neighborhood. By creating a partnership with the community and an educational institution, a decaying neighborhood can overcome the negative aspects and redefine itself anew. This partnership is the vehicle to achieve neighborhood improvement.

In analyzing the case studies, there is a clear correlation between the education institution's mission statement and the community. Education institutions must be the catalyst to create the change in community. Mission statements must be redeveloped to include the community. This commitment creates the initial concept toward a gentrification that will empower the community and the university.

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