

# Executive Summary

## Developing Productive and Equitable Community-University Partnerships for Aggie Square

The University of California Davis-Sacramento Innovation Center

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## INTRODUCTION

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Aggie Square is a joint effort of the University of California, Davis (UC Davis), the City of Sacramento, and multiple other partners. Launched in 2018, Aggie Square will provide a range of co-location spaces for the university, business partners, and local neighborhood organizations to collaborate on new economic and community-development enterprises on and around the UC Davis Health campus in Sacramento. Aggie Square will enhance UC Davis' existing urban campus as a place where faculty, students, staff, business, and community organizations can teach and learn together.

Aggie Square's goals reflect UC Davis' historic mission as a land-grant institution. They also clearly align with the priorities and efforts currently being undertaken by the City and County of Sacramento, as well as the city's business and nonprofit sectors. These can be summarized in five key development themes:

1. Inclusive Economic Development
2. Workforce Development and Education
3. Housing Affordability and Supply
4. Community Health
5. Public Space and Mobility

Aggie Square is the product of a rich and ongoing dialogue between the university, city and community. Still, in embarking on this project, UC Davis recognizes its own special role and responsibilities within it. The university's hybrid role as an academic institution, medical service provider, and major employer makes it a uniquely influential catalyst for community development. In launching this project, the university will be called upon to ensure that Aggie Square will contribute to sustaining neighborhood quality of life for Sacramento residents who work and live near the project, as well as the public, private and nonprofit organizations that serve them.

This is especially important in light of community concerns about Aggie Square's wider community impact. These concerns are related to the project's role in potentially exacerbating urban gentrification and displacement, and the need to ensure that residents of nearby neighborhoods be granted equitable access to the jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities generated by this initiative.

This report is intended to illuminate and address these concerns. It offers insights, lessons and context drawn from both local and national experiences that may help UC Davis and its Aggie Square partners work collaboratively toward a more equitable and sustainable form of local community development. Guided by the shared values listed above, the report seeks to tackle four principal questions, organized in four separate sections, as follows:

**I. WHICH EXISTING UC DAVIS EFFORTS CAN INFORM AGGIE SQUARE?**

This section offers a compilation of some existing community-university partnerships already established by UC Davis administration, faculty, and staff, showcasing the university's substantial record of and commitment to thoughtful community engagement.

**II. WHAT LOCAL CHALLENGES CAN AGGIE SQUARE ADDRESS?**

This section provides an overview of the local community context as identified by members of the Aggie Square university and city leadership, residents and other stakeholders.

**III. WHAT LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES CAN AGGIE SQUARE SUPPORT?**

This section offers a review of relevant local planning efforts that articulate community needs, interests, and visions.

**IV. WHICH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODELS CAN SUPPORT AGGIE SQUARE'S GOALS?**

This section offers a scan of other community-university partnership models from around the country, suggesting promising practices that may be adaptable for Aggie Square.

The report is based on data from several sources. These include demographic data from the Center for Regional Change's (CRC) Regional Opportunity Index, as well as other sources; prior community plans for the neighborhoods near Aggie Square; a national scan of promising community-university partnership models; and a survey completed of UC Davis faculty, staff, and administrators working in the neighborhoods adjacent to the Aggie Square site. The report also reflects feedback received from the CRC's Regional Advisory Committee made up of leaders in the nonprofit, government, business, and philanthropic sectors, and members of the Aggie Square Community Engagement Advisory Committee.

Here, we provide a summary of each of the report's four sections. Each is organized according to the five key development themes outlined above.

## I. WHICH EXISTING UC DAVIS EFFORTS CAN INFORM AGGIE SQUARE?

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UC Davis has served as an active partner in the Sacramento region for many years, supporting ongoing outreach programs, investing resources in the community, and pursuing public scholarship. These efforts have been initiated by both the Davis and Sacramento campuses, and include faculty-led projects, administration-led programs, and funding for local community partners. Most, if not all, of these efforts already address the key development themes of Aggie Square.

### 1. Inclusive Economic Development

Some examples of existing UC Davis initiatives include a study for the revitalization of the Broadway corridor, and the development of a strategy for the unincorporated neighborhoods of South Sacramento, which are outside city boundaries.

### 2. Workforce Development and Education

UC Davis has already launched programs in this domain, including Early Academic Outreach Programs, collaborative research on supporting school attendance, a range of STEM and educational enrichment programs, and health workforce development initiatives.

### 3. Housing Affordability and Supply

UC Davis has already embarked on a study about how to increase public support for

housing affordability and supply, and how to strengthen UC Davis collaboration with the City of Sacramento on several housing programs.

### 4. Community Health

UC Davis can point to several projects that provide support for farmers' markets and community gardens, investigate the health and safety of home gardening, and promote a new kitchen food incubator program. There are also a number of environmental justice studies that focus on the Sacramento area.

### 5. Public Space and Mobility

UC Davis has launched several studies of transportation planning in the Sacramento area, including some that investigate the health implications of using active transportation (i.e., walking and biking).

## II. WHAT LOCAL CHALLENGES CAN AGGIE SQUARE ADDRESS?

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Here, we focus on the neighborhoods to the west and south of the UC Davis Health campus, including Oak Park, and parts of South Sacramento such as Avondale, Glen Elder, Fruitridge, and Lemon Hill. Based on a number of criteria described below, these neighborhoods are considered disadvantaged communities in need of special attention. This section reviews these neighborhoods' principal strengths and needs, in light of Aggie Square's five key development themes.

### **1. Inclusive Economic Development**

The overall economic profile of these neighborhoods is strong, primarily due to their proximity to the employment centers of UC Davis Health, and downtown and Midtown Sacramento. However, many residents do not benefit from these economic opportunities: unemployment and poverty levels remain high compared to those in the region and state as a whole.

### **2. Workforce Development and Education**

A strong pathway to lifelong learning is critical to promote the long-term economic health and well-being of local residents. Educational opportunities in the focus neighborhoods are often lacking. There is a need for comprehensive enhancement, from pre-K through college, and beyond.

### **3. Housing Affordability and Supply**

The Sacramento region is experiencing a major crisis in housing affordability and supply, with rents climbing faster than those of nearly any other city in the country. The neighborhoods around Aggie

Square similarly face rising rents and housing costs, with high levels of housing insecurity and a strong likelihood of displacement.

### **4. Community Health**

Healthy residents are the foundation of healthy neighborhoods and a healthy economy. The neighborhoods surrounding Aggie Square face a number of health challenges, but also have some important assets, including the presence of UC Davis Health and community clinics.

### **5. Public Space and Mobility**

These neighborhoods enjoy valuable public space resources that provide park access to area residents. However, these resources are not evenly spread throughout the neighborhoods, making sites for local gatherings and events limited for some. Another significant problem lies in residents' uneven access to transit, and hence to educational resources, jobs, and social services, especially for lower-income, transit-dependent residents.

## **III. WHAT LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES CAN AGGIE SQUARE SUPPORT?**

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This section reviews several local plans and proposals that represent the needs, visions, and values of hundreds of residents in the neighborhoods surrounding Aggie Square, as well as those in outlying areas in South Sacramento. Understanding these initiatives can help Aggie Square leaders and planners guide the project's development in ways that affirm and support residents' expressed goals for their neighborhoods, respecting hard-earned local knowledge, and supporting existing investments in local community development.

However, it is not enough to incorporate these design elements into Aggie Square-associated development. Instead, to gain the greatest value from these plans, the Aggie Square partnership should work with neighborhood residents, in a way that allows them to have a voice in the future of their communities. This will enable all parties to engage in a thoughtful and participatory assessment of how well existing plans reflect and support current community interests and needs.

### **1. Inclusive Economic Development**

Aggie Square's approach can prioritize industry partners who: support local workforce development and entrepreneurship; support the development of creative institutions such as co-ops; contribute to local infrastructure and workforce housing; and pay living wages.

### **2. Workforce Development and Education**

Aggie Square can contribute to a lifelong learning continuum by supporting efforts like the Oak Park Promise Neighborhood Plan, which proposed a holistic strategy that includes educational, health, economic development, and workforce development elements.

### **3. Housing Affordability and Supply**

UC Davis could partner with city, county, and other entities to identify properties suitable for development to boost housing affordability and supply. For example, Aggie Square's development can invest directly in development projects, and identify other creative avenues for doing so, such as housing co-ops, deed-restricted affordable housing, and community land trusts. Aggie Square partners can also promote public policies that encourage the development of affordable housing in

the focus neighborhoods. This will help minimize the displacement of existing residents, and address housing need for employees, students, and faculty.

### **4. Community Health**

The university can continue to expand its primary care services to serve nearby residents through neighborhood clinics and other means. Aggie Square could also collaborate with local nonprofits and public agencies to establish a service delivery hub that provides support for local children and families. Aggie Square could support local food systems by: providing spaces for a farm stand/farmers' market; offering support for a cottage-industry food kitchen; setting up food education spaces and urban gardens; and drawing on the community health expertise of local residents.

### **5. Public Space and Mobility**

The design of Aggie Square can create visually welcoming multi-purpose public spaces that make the project a gathering place for residents, faculty, staff, and students. Transportation planning around Aggie Square can also improve mobility, connectivity, circulation, access, and active transportation to/from/around Aggie Square for pedestrians and bicyclists, while enhancing neighborhood vitality.

## IV. WHICH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODELS CAN SUPPORT AGGIE SQUARE'S GOALS?

Historically, much of UC Davis' land-grant mission has focused on rural communities. Aggie Square invites the university to explore innovative ways to extend its mission into the urban sector. One nationally established framework for this kind of work is the anchor institution model. This model emphasizes long-term, place-based investments that universities can make in metropolitan areas. Two major anchor institutions in this model are colleges/universities and hospitals (colloquially referred to as "eds and meds"). As a world-class university with a medical school and medical center, UC Davis has the advantage of being both.

Creating a successful anchor institution partnership calls for a series of steps. UC Davis could undertake these as follows:

- Identify an anchor institution model that can help Aggie Square's project leaders serve as effective facilitators, leaders and conveners.
- As an anchor institution, UC Davis can bring its community development capabilities to bear on neighborhood improvement, leveraging its roles as a real estate developer, cluster anchor, infrastructure builder, service provider, purchaser, employer, and workforce developer.
- Develop effective governance and participation structures and processes that provide for a decisive yet inclusive leadership team that includes local residents. UC Davis might also consider developing a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) to ensure mutual accountability. The CBA could address such issues as: funding to improve housing affordability and supply; the establishment of local hiring and living wage standards; and the creation of neighborhood-serving facilities.
- Identify collaborative community development strategies. The Aggie Square leadership could engage with a range of partners in order to address multiple, interconnecting aspects of community health and well-being.
- Evaluate progress on Aggie Square's implementation, to promote active learning and continuous improvement. From the start, Aggie Square partners could work collectively and meet regularly to measure and reflect on their progress, deepening and continually updating their understanding of effective and positive community change.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

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To conclude, this report makes five principal recommendations to the Aggie Square partners. These derive from the information and analysis provided in the report's four main sections, and are intended to boost the project's success, reach, equity, and sustainability. These are:

### **Sustain a Participatory Process**

Build on the partnerships that began with the launch of the Aggie Square planning trajectory. Include leaders in elected office, as well as those from the business, nonprofit, and civic sectors. Make special efforts to engage with leaders and members of grassroots organizations, and residents of the focus neighborhoods, all of whom have a significant stake in the project's outcomes, and who are often excluded from similar planning efforts.

### **Center on Equity**

Adopt a social equity approach that pays close attention to how the benefits and costs of the project's development are distributed. Address key community concerns related to Aggie Square's development, such as the risk of gentrification and displacement, and the potential lack of access to jobs and other economic opportunities that community residents may encounter.

### **Engage Local Knowledge and Address Local Needs**

Carefully review the existing community plans and visions presented in this report in consultation with local residents, and

use them to derive design principles and elements that can be adapted to Aggie Square's development. Work closely with the city, county, residents and other partners to develop a collaborative plan for addressing a range of neighborhood needs and opportunities.

### **Build on Campus Expertise**

Benefit from and support existing community engagement activities and long-standing relationships by campus administration, faculty and staff. Collaborate with campus programs and initiatives that engage undergraduate and graduate students in experiential and global learning, and tap into student networks, skills, cultural knowledge, energy and insight.

### **Learn from National Promising Practices**

Draw upon the models of anchor institutions presented in this report, to help maximize UC Davis' role in promoting long-term and equitable economic development and community well-being, and consider developing a Community Benefits Agreement or similar framework. •



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### UC Davis Center for Regional Change

*Primary authors:* Carolyn Abrams, Krista Haapanen, Jonathan K. London

*Consultation on report content:* Center for Regional Change Regional Advisory Committee

*Graphic design:* Sara Watterson

### Aggie Square

Bob Segar, Sonja Colbert, David Wescott, Laura Niznik Williams, Mary Mumper,  
Mabel Salon, Matt Dulcich

### Editorial Assistance

Krystyna von Henneberg, Ph.D., Founder and Principal, Creative Language Works,  
Davis, California

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**This executive summary and the full report are available online:**

<https://leadership.ucdavis.edu/aggie-square/about>

**For more information, please contact the UC Davis Center for Regional Change**

[rcinfo@ucdavis.edu](mailto:rcinfo@ucdavis.edu) | <https://regionalchange.ucdavis.edu>