

Key Points Made by Don Carter, President of Urban Design Associates

During his visit to the Midway on June 5, 2003

Prepared by University UNITED

A number of other cities are using high-technology commercial development as an opportunity for neighborhood revitalization. In Baltimore, a comprehensive planning effort was *led* by community groups, working in conjunction with key institutions, the business community, and elected officials. It featured a community development initiative surrounding a compatible biotech center.

In relocation decisions, technology companies look at more than the just their office building. For the sake of their employees, they are concerned about the quality of life and amenities offered by the surrounding community.

Those who work in the technology field are generally attracted to vibrant and stimulating urban environments. Amazon.com, was recently forced to move from a suburban campus to downtown Seattle to accommodate the lifestyle preferences of its workers. He specifically pointed out the flourishing arts community at Raymond Avenue as an attraction to companies considering relocating to the area.

Vibrant urban communities feature a mix of land uses, including housing, retail, and commercial. Younger, entry level, researchers and scientists especially prefer to live and work in a 24 hour city. The suburban office park model would not be appropriate for a biotech corridor in a urban, university context.

Housing and transportation costs are a major determinant in attracting workers. The biotech corridor near MIT and Harvard has difficulty retaining workers who can't find affordable housing close to work. The Twin Cities has a distinct competitive advantage, especially with its attractive neighborhoods like St. Anthony Park. The Mayor's Housing Plan calling for 5,000 new units should be touted. Residential development and neighborhood amenities should complement the commercial development. The University busway, and possible transportation enhancements like light rail are very important.

Technology workers, especially those in the biotech sector, are very interested in "health and wellness" issues, and place a high premium on living and working in a community that has an abundance of recreational and athletic facilities. The environmental research and wetlands mapping recently done by St. Anthony Park Community Council, could serve as the basis for an open space and natural trail system throughout the proposed biotech corridor. Technology workers are also concerned about the environmental sensitivity and sustainability of their office campus. "Green industry" practices, as promoted by the Green Institute in Minneapolis, may be another attractive component.