KPMG

Universities: harnessing their superpowers

Principles for city collaboration

Education

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"The realisation is growing that universities can be an essential partner with cities, as trusted local organisations, conduits to knowledge, and sources of skilled judgement, to the benefit of both partners."

City Futures and the Civic University[1]
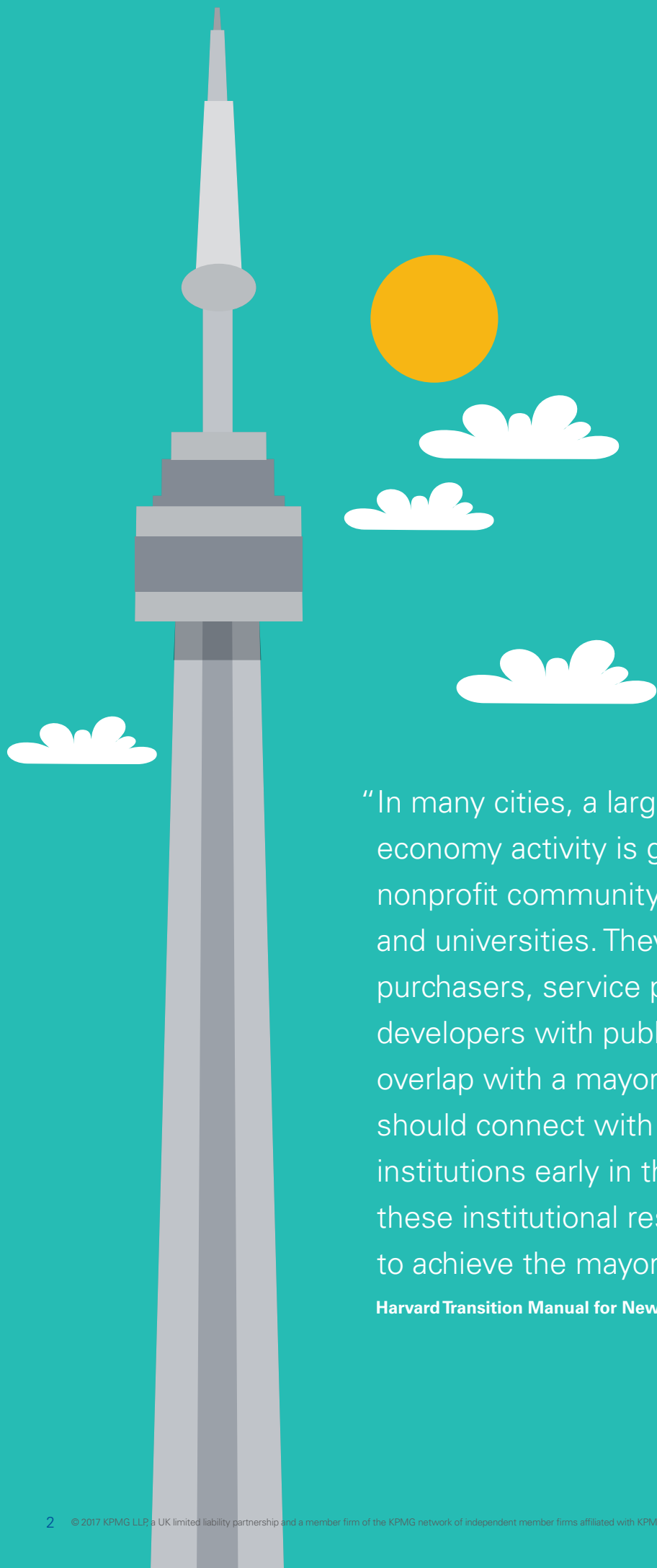
"In many cities, a large portion of the economy activity is generated by [the] nonprofit community, in particular hospitals and universities. They are major employers, purchasers, service providers, and property developers with public missions that often overlap with a mayor's priorities. New mayors should connect with the leaders of these institutions early in their terms to assess how these institutional resources may be leveraged to achieve the mayor's goals."

Harvard Transition Manual for Newly Elected Mayors[2]

01
Our view

"In our view, universities are an undervalued force for change. With a presence in nearly every major town and city in the world, they should be right at the centre of regional regeneration, place-based industrial strategy and international partnerships.

Or to put it another way, universities can be a city's superpower."

Justine Andrew
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kpmg.com/uk/education

Much has been made of the role UK universities can play as 'anchor institutions' in their local area – a theme that was also explored in our previous report 'Connected universities, connected cities'.

Many universities are being proactive in this respect, putting themselves at the forefront of 'place' leadership. Yet the current debate around fees, funding and the role of universities in general can often seem to be pulling in the opposite direction, failing to recognise the wider social and economic benefits universities can bring to the area in which they are based.

To see where these powers have been deployed to great success, you could not ask for a better example than Toronto, whose universities have played a central part in driving long term prosperity, local-inclusivity and city-building. This report seeks to explore what the universities' superpowers are and how they have been deployed to such great effect, not only in Toronto but also in other places such as Glasgow. We also look at the fundamental principles that enable this to happen, giving a framework that we hope will be helpful to thinking about these issues in the UK context.

Here in the UK, it's fair to say that there is more that could be done by both universities and cities to build on this anchor tenant role. But this requires a re-setting of the dial. In other words, revisiting both how universities operate and are structured around collaboration and how they are perceived by potential partners. Those partners might be civic authorities, other anchor institutions such as the NHS or the broader corporate and business community. All of us find ourselves facing a post-Brexit world in which change is bearing in on all sides, including initiatives such as the Government's industrial strategy. Understandably, people are often unsure how to move forward in this new landscape of ever more complex intersections and collaboration.

We hope that this report goes some way towards answering that question, offering valuable insight into 'what works' and the principles under which university 'superpowers' can be put to the best possible use here in the UK to drive longer term prosperity.

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Introduction: unlocking their superpowers

Universities are an undervalued force for development. With a presence in nearly every major town and city in the world, they should be at the centre of regional regeneration and international partnership building. But too often they are secondary partners, or used to fill subcommittee seats.

However, some universities are leading the way in city-building efforts. They are the city's superpower – a force for long-term prosperity and local inclusivity. Universities recognise that if their city is failing, they too will fail. Universities recognise that a skilled and connected city is a successful city. They are proactive and pragmatic. They recognise their role within the city and the mutual benefit their engagement will bring. They understand how they can help solve societal challenges, and they understand that local engagement complements international relations.

Now is a good time to unleash this superpower and strengthen university-city collaboration:

– **Decision-making and responsibility is becoming more local, shifting from nations to cities.** Much of this is informal rather than formal, despite recent devolution deals and elected mayors in England. Cities need to develop their own climate change strategies, deal with the threat of terrorism, and design policies for ageing populations. Universities can provide evidence and expertise on these issues.

– **There is growing recognition of university roles beyond the traditional functions of teaching and research.** Universities working with business, local government and civil society can benefit the city whilst strengthening teaching and research.

– **We're seeing a renewed focus on the city.** By 2050, 70% of the world's population will live in cities, and more than 60% of the cities that will exist in 2050 have yet to be built. The focus on cities is due to more than population growth and new buildings, which we often associate with the term urbanisation. Yes, cities are growing. But they are also political actors and centres of creativity and innovation.

Unlocking the power of universities in cities requires a deep understanding of 'place'. Collaboration begins on campus, and in the communities surrounding the university. It involves shaping the public flow of people through the university as a means of sharing knowledge and understanding issues. Collaboration extends to the city as a whole, and university engagement with the mayor or City Hall. It covers graduate retention and city branding and strategic planning. And understanding place involves grappling with the position of the city and the city's universities in the world. Solving societal challenges and building strong connected cities in the future means travelling through the different levels of place from campus development to global relations, neglecting none. Cities are built one community centre and one international partnership at a time; societal challenges are solved one household intervention and one citywide initiative at a time.

This report will take you on a journey through the different dimensions of place, looking at how universities and cities can work together from the 'hyperlocal' (individual buildings and communities) to the international level. We propose five principles that will shape the future of university-city collaboration (section four). Understanding these is essential for city-building and problem solving. But there is also much we can learn from elsewhere.

Many UK cities can relate to Toronto: the city has a handful of strong universities, a history of post-industrial economic transformation and a vibrant multiculturalism, but also faces issues of inequality and global competition (section three). As Canada celebrates its 150th birthday, commentators have called for a greater governance role for its cities as they tackle more pressing issues.[3] And as Toronto has grown, municipalities outside of the city centre have looked to universities to build their identity and engage in new collaborations.[4]

Universities need to adapt to work effectively with their city. And as the burden of local and global challenges falls increasingly on cities, and as future prosperity continues to depend on training and retaining the most skilled individuals, city leaders will need to unlock the superpowers of their universities.
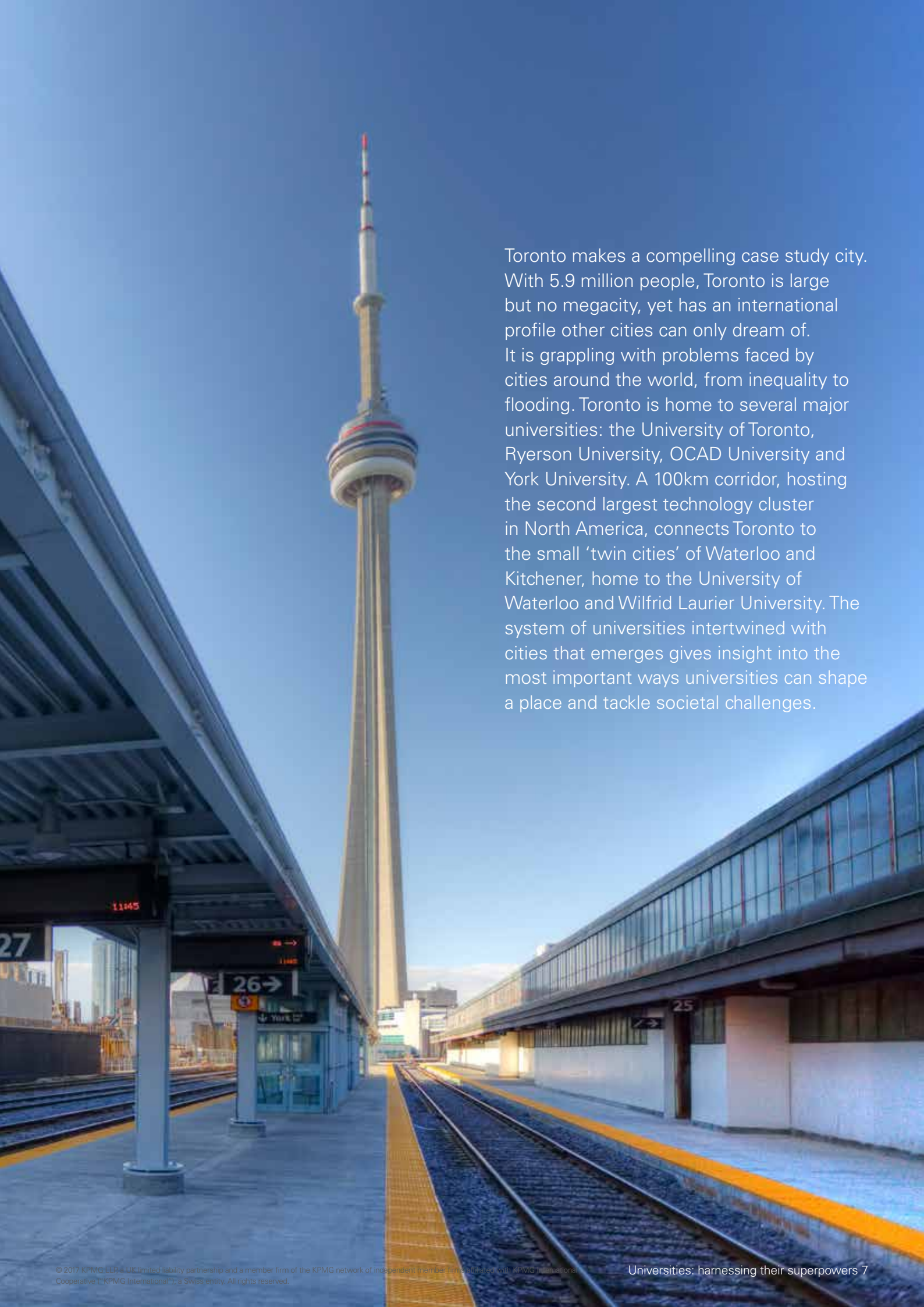
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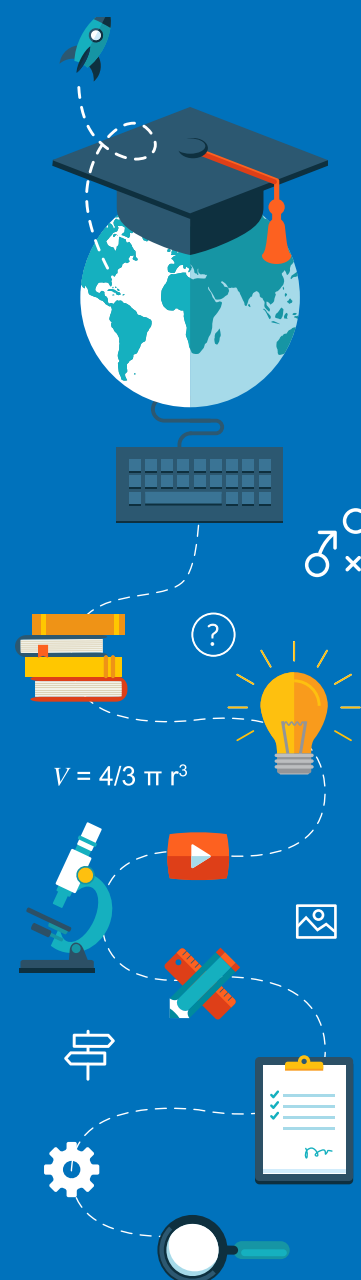
03

What can we learn from Toronto?

Universities and city-building

The superpowers of universities are on show in Toronto and the wider region. This section explores how universities work with their city and strengthen it. Five city superpowers will be essential in adapting to the principles (section four) that will shape the future of university-city collaboration:

– Universities are **'anchor tenants'**, investing in the future and inspiring confidence. They send a message to fellow city residents: we believe in the prosperity of this area.

– Universities have **long-term visions**. Looking beyond the cycle of mayoral appointments and provincial elections, universities are a **trusted partner** for future planning.

– Universities can be **critical yet constructive**, outspoken yet objective. They are machines for **solving problems and generating ideas**, home to highly-concentrated brainpower, and steeped in knowledge and evidence.

– Universities **educate and train** the future workforce. They provide the skills to build the city.

– Universities are a **window to the world**, framing local issues within international debates, and bringing global discoveries to the city.

Toronto makes a compelling case study city. With 5.9 million people, Toronto is large but no megacity, yet has an international profile other cities can only dream of. It is grappling with problems faced by cities around the world, from inequality to flooding. Toronto is home to several major universities: the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, OCAD University and York University. A 100km corridor, hosting the second largest technology cluster in North America, connects Toronto to the small 'twin cities' of Waterloo and Kitchener, home to the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. The system of universities intertwined with cities that emerges gives insight into the most important ways universities can shape a place and tackle societal challenges.

Universities have city-building superpowers

A few years ago, residents of Kitchener-Waterloo used to advise visitors to avoid the area of King Street West at night. Today, the area is thriving with start-ups, student housing and a new Google office – a redevelopment process kick-started by the University of Waterloo siting a new School of Pharmacy on Victoria Street. The confidence universities inspire as 'anchor tenants' is the first city-building superpower: a message to fellow city residents that universities have a long-term vision for the area and are investing in its prosperity.

This long-term vision is a second superpower. Looking beyond the cycle of mayoral appointments and provincial elections, universities are a trusted partner for future planning. The University of Toronto has led a coalition of partners in a bid to become a UNESCO Creative City.[5] This coalition can be sustained long after the current political leaders have left office.

As relatively independent institutions, universities can be critical yet constructive, outspoken yet objective – their third superpower. They are machines for solving problems and generating ideas, home to highly-concentrated brainpower, and steeped in knowledge and evidence. Universities can sit on committees that support Toronto's new Chief Resilience Officer (a post established to tackle city-wide challenges), whilst independently measuring his success. They can provide him with policy guidance, whilst, if needed, arguing publicly for the post to be more deeply embedded in the city administration.

Other superpowers are more subtle. Universities project soft power through influencing the city agenda, through fostering student, alumni and staff networks, and developing institutional partnerships. Through the Creative City bid, the universities have helped make tangible the role of creativity in urban development, and are steering the conversation towards culture playing a key role in attracting talent. In educating and training the future workforce, they provide the skills to build the city. And, as we shall see, they are a window to the world, framing local issues within international debates.

The exact location of universities matters

A university's postcode determines how it engages with the city. Ryerson University sits next to the busiest intersection in Canada, in the heart of the city centre. The University of Toronto is also centrally located, and is one of the largest landowners in the city. York University is in a historically deprived suburb, a metro and bus ride from the downtown business district. And the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier are a 60-minute drive, in one of the several smaller cities near Toronto.

Each university capitalises on this:

– Ryerson faculty and students come from more than 100 countries and speak more than 100 languages. The city centre location offers placement and employment possibilities at the hundreds of national and international businesses that are neighbours of the university.

– The University of Toronto acts as a magnet for attracting talent to the city – the newly opened Vector Institute has put Toronto on the map for Artificial Intelligence research, garnering international attention from the BBC to the New York Times. The university is consistently ranked as Canada's leading research university.

– York University is a suburban university – a large campus and the third biggest in Canada. It has forged close links with the Black Creek community, with accounting students helping low-income residents at the Tax Clinic,[6] for example. This ethos is easily adapted to changing circumstances: Arabic-speaking students from the interpreting programme have been helping Syrian refugees as they land in Toronto and Montreal.[7] The university is also building a new campus in the nearby city of Markham, set to be home to 4,400 students.

– And the University of Waterloo is a central node in the innovation ecosystem surrounding Kitchener-Waterloo, and a key actor in the corridor stretching to Toronto. In a town with a reputation for nurturing small businesses and a history of innovation breakthroughs, Waterloo manages to avoid living in the shadow of Toronto.

New infrastructure should guide university activities

Postcodes may be fixed, but the lines connecting them and buildings within them are not. The easiest ways for a city to annoy its residents are to build shoddy housing (and not enough of it) and to design slow and expensive public transport. As a result, housing and transport are high on the agenda of city leaders.

Both shape universities. Affordable quality housing means students and staff – drawn by the cultural buzz and economic opportunities – are able to stay. Speedy transport improves quality of life, but also means ideas can be shared faster and people mix more easily.

The same logic that drove the idea of the Northern Powerhouse in the UK is guiding infrastructure investment in the Toronto region. The metro is being extended to York University and beyond, bringing poorer communities much closer to downtown jobs and increasing the flow of students into the suburbs. A proposed high speed rail line will connect Waterloo to Toronto, and electrify the innovation corridor. The logic is connectivity, connectivity, connectivity.

But decent houses and new metro lines are not enough by themselves to promote inclusivity and overcome inequality. York University will need to continue to work closely with the Black Creek community and hold public events – as they have recently – on the safety of residential towers (learning from the UK's Grenfell tragedy). The universities of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier will need to link with universities in Toronto and employers along the railway line to bring the benefits of connectivity to the region.

Universities mould city identity

As universities establish new relationships and allow different people to meet and work together, and as marginalised communities begin to share in the benefits of economic growth, the fabric of the city changes. Universities are part of the city brand, and they shape the city's identity.

This can take many forms. Ryerson offered a guiding hand on the development of Toronto's downtown core. Forced to be pragmatic in the balance between rapid growth and tight building controls, the university co-developed a multiscreen cinema on Dundas Street. Research centres and incubation spaces sit on top of the building and the cinema screens are used to host lectures outside of public screenings. The building erases borders between the city and the university, maximising the use of space and providing income. Public events continue to guide future development, including possible pedestrianisation options. With 50,000 people travelling to the university every day – plus hundreds of thousands of others passing through and around the campus – minor tweaks can have huge impact. As Ryerson's President has said, 'we don't have silos… we don't have boundaries… we are part of the city, and Toronto is part of Ryerson'.[8]

The flow of people around and through a campus defines university-city interaction. It can bring different groups together, and transmit knowledge between communities. St Paul's GreenHouse is a social innovation incubator at the University of Waterloo, working directly with the community and city region officials to address local challenges.[9] It is building a new hub on campus, designed to showcase the available opportunities and draw the community in.

But sometimes the university needs to step out of the campus. In developing the bid for Creative City status, the University of Toronto held a public event on Toronto's waterfront. The event brought together councillors, journalists and Toronto's Poet Laureate – the city's ambassador for poetry, language and the arts. A high-profile initiative like the UNESCO bid clearly requires dedicated university resources, but the coalition of 100 partners and the backing of City Hall can help guide the trajectory of the city, increase international visibility, and define a city brand.

Feeding Blackberry's ghosts (or, how to win from a collapse)

City brands can also be forged in the ashes of a company's decline. A small start-up called Research In Motion (RIM) was founded by Mike Lazaridis and Douglas Fregin in a cream-coloured building in Waterloo in 1984. RIM went on to create the BlackBerry phone, which found itself in 79 million pockets by 2012. RIM – now BlackBerry – has since transitioned to software services, and Lazaridis became one of Canada's richest men.

Lazaridis was an engineering student at the University of Waterloo. The university is famous for having a generous intellectual property policy granting sole ownership to the creator, and a co-operative education programme alternating periods of work and study. Motivated to give something back to the city, Lazaridis and his wife have become famous for their philanthropic work. Hundreds of millions of Canadian dollars have helped set up world-leading research centres in theoretical physics and quantum computing at the University of Waterloo, and a business school at nearby Wilfrid Laurier. But perhaps as important, and reminiscent of the story of Nokia in Finland, the shift away from a single huge technology employer has spawned an ecosystem of hundreds of smaller innovative businesses. The critical mass of BlackBerry lives on in the Velocity Garage and the Communitech Hub, stylish incubators for businesses with an idea, a handful of employees, and the occasional co-op student – and the possibility of providing the next millionaire who will one day give something back.

Universities: landlords for innovation

Refitted warehouses with excellent coffee and plenty of space for mingling make for excellent business incubators. They are also relatively easy to build in city centres – at least compared to the sprawling research parks of the 1990s. Innovation has moved downtown, becoming an integral part of city centre identity, often with universities driving the process.

The MaRS Discovery District lies in the heart of Toronto, with the commercial heartland to the south, and the University of Toronto to the north. It is the world's largest urban innovation hub, with the university as an anchor tenant. MaRS is home to 120 organisations, from Autodesk to AirBnB, Etsy to Facebook, Ryerson's Faculty of Science to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Medicine.

The infrastructure for innovation is always evolving, as are the companies that drive it. But the trend is towards city-centre, open, connected sites – people and ideas colliding. Richard Florida, one of Toronto's most famous academics, argues that innovation and entrepreneurship do not simply happen in cities, but require cities – urban regions and cities are not mere containers but active partners for innovation.[10] However, the entire edifice is dependent on people. The underlying success factor for a prosperous city is a highly-skilled, knowledge-driven workforce. Together, universities can provide the infrastructure of prosperity and innovation, but they also provide the pipeline of talent to solve challenges and power the city.

Working collectively increases university impact

Universities have multiple roles in addressing societal challenges. One way they can work together is joint research drawing on institutional data. Toronto's four universities collectively produce an annual research report for the city. This year's focus is on affordable housing.[11] StudentDwellTO will connect nearly 100 university staff, researchers, students and partners to explore potential solutions for addressing student housing affordability challenges. The previous report covered student mobility, analysing data from over 15,000 students across four universities.[12] A jointly-produced report carries extra weight: it captures the geographic, social, cultural and academic variety of different parts of the city. It demonstrates collaboration and is difficult for the city to ignore. The four university presidents meet quarterly, and once a year they meet together with the mayor.

Poverty in the suburbs is invisible to a tourist unless they catch a bus. Equally, flooding on Toronto's tourist islands is merely a curiosity to a poor family on an unstable income. Yet universities can overcome the complexity of multiple challenges, from the household to the citywide.

They can demonstrate the real impact of flooding on the city's economy and help support City Hall's resilience programme. They can also tell the story of marginalised families, and lobby on their behalf for more inclusive policymaking.

Universities frame local issues within international debates. The University of Waterloo's Canadian Index of Wellbeing measures health, community vitality and other quality of life indicators at city level, but also maps these against the global UN Sustainable Development Goals.[13] At the same university, St Paul's GreenHouse matches students to local challenges, partly identified by staff working for Waterloo City Region government. Students bring specific expertise which is adapted to issues that need solving, or students identify a solution to a problem. These range from self-care tools to manage anxiety to a mattress that relieves the suffering of bedsores.

City-building is powered by universities. Universities offer long-term vision and cultural diplomacy. They can work with communities, train skilled workers for new companies, and develop solutions to very local or entirely global challenges. The next phase of city-building will see greater autonomy and leadership of individual cities. The challenges cities face will grow in complexity and severity. Universities will need to bring their superpowers and play a role at multiple levels: from the 'hyperlocal' to the international. The next phase of city-building will bring new opportunities for university-city partnerships.

The Toronto model
A one-page guide to getting started

Map what's going on

Toronto's City Manager is developing a memorandum of understanding with each post-secondary institution in the city.[14] The benefit is twofold: to capture the vast amount of interaction between the universities and colleges and the city, and to use this to attract investment and develop more collaboration.

Establish a relationship manager on the city side

A city partnerships office or similar function often pays for itself in new business generated and solutions developed. Toronto's Office for Partnerships acts as a broker. Universities can use the office to navigate city hall. City officials can use the office to gather expertise from university departments, or to share information: for example, public health advice. Such offices are sometimes funded through sponsorships or donations – or universities may wish to consider seconding staff.

Produce joint research

The joint research projects of the University of Toronto, OCAD University, York University and Ryerson University allow a city challenge to be analysed from different disciplinary perspectives. Issues are documented, solutions developed.

Consider soft-power projects

Toronto's bid for UNESCO Creative Cities status offers the potential of global recognition, but more importantly galvanises many organisations and institutions around a single project. Such coalitions take time and persistence to form and maintain, but offer great potential for future activities.

Bring everything together

Use joint research to understand city challenges and opportunities. Map this onto the memorandum of understanding. Use the MOU to shape future projects, and the city relationship office or manager to facilitate connections in and beyond the city.

04

The five principles

Five principles govern the future of universities and cities. The principles flow into one another, broadening in geographic scope as they develop: from developments on campus, to city-wide links, to relations across the world.

1. **The campus is the city's ideas machine.** Through testing new technologies on campus and opening up the campus as a public space, universities can be test-beds and breeding grounds for innovation, benefiting the city whilst strengthening their relationship with it.

2. **Graduate retention begins with place building.** By working together to improve the livability of the city and by looking for alignment in strategic planning, city and university leaders can attract and retain skilled graduates.

3. **Mayors are shaping the world.** Mayors are powerful forces for soft power and 'getting things done' locally. Universities need to come together to collectively engage with their elected mayor.

4. **The diplomats of the future will represent cities.** Relations between cities are rapidly growing in importance. Universities and cities are increasingly sharing their international connections for mutual benefit, and this will become a signature trait of the successful connected cities of the future.

5. **City planning agencies are the new Whitehall ministries.** City planning bodies are becoming more important for local decision making. Universities should work with them and link up their own research centres that produce evidence and analysis, drawing on the university's global connections.

Each principle presents new opportunities for university-city partnerships. Effectively exploited, they will help to solve societal challenges and build strong interconnected cities. But to be successful, the city will need to draw on the university superpowers we explored in section three, and collaboration will need to flow through all levels of place, from the 'hyperlocal' – the campus itself – to international engagement.

The five principles cont...

Principle 1: The campus is the city's ideas machine

India wants 100 smart cities. China had 290 pilots of these running in early 2017. For now, smart cities are largely conceptual, and little known by the average person on the street. We are still some way from realising their transformative potential. But smart city initiatives will be an important part of future city development, in the UK and more widely.

Universities can help shift smart cities from being merely a good idea to providing everyday benefit to citizens. They can do this through smart campuses – developing the principles of smart cities on a limited geographic area, testing new infrastructure and implementing lessons learned, drawing in students and researchers, and then working with city officials to roll these out more widely. For example, the University of Glasgow is increasing its campus size by 25 percent, embedding smart technology – from sustainable materials to sensors – in a development with a projected value of over £1 billion.[15]

Developing a smart campus is arguably easier than developing a smart city, with most of the campus falling under the ownership of one institution. However, it's important to prepare students and staff (the campus equivalent of a city's residents) for smart campuses. After analysing the experiences of smart cities around the world, Nesta have found that many 'top down' smart city ideas have failed to deliver on their promise, and that smart city planners need to take human behaviour as seriously as technology, and to invest in smart people, as well as smart technology.[16] 'Bristol Is Open' – a joint venture between the University of Bristol and Bristol City Council – recognises this. It aims to create 'an open programmable city that gives citizens more ways to participate', from smart rubbish bins to air quality data.[17]

Smart campuses are just one way the university estate can benefit the city. As a public space, the campus can be a site of culture and, in the words of Sharon Zukin, a 'window into the city's soul'.[18] It can also be the best meeting spot in the city, if it is open and accessible (and has good coffee). UK universities can do more to promote their campuses as public spaces.

Cities are successful because of the close proximity of people, companies and universities. From these relationships and networks new ideas are born, develop, and spread. The same happens in universities, and universities themselves can be great incubators for other 'users' of the city to meet and for ideas to grow. There's great power in being the convening space for new ideas, and universities should position themselves as the city's primary meeting space.

Local government and city leaders may be keen to test the concept of a smart city by supporting the development of a smart campus. By seeing campuses as 'cities in microcosm', the development of smart infrastructure can lead to closer working between universities and local leaders. And by softening the edges between a campus and a city, by opening up campuses as public spaces, providing community services and cultural events, by blurring the public realm and the university estate, other residents can become involved in the development of their city.

01

Recommendation 1: Ideas develop when people meet. University spaces should be designed to encourage serendipitous meetings, and bring the community onto campus. A good café is worth ten conference centres.

Recommendation 2: The campus presents opportunities to test smart city technologies. This can also forge new relationships between city and university staff.

Principle 2: Graduate retention begins with place building

You don't need to look too far to see articles bemoaning the flow of graduates from northern cities towards London, although evidence suggests this trend may be changing. This migration isn't new – in fact, it's been happening for centuries.[19]

The retention of skilled workers in towns and cities – especially outside the capital – allows these places to become sustainable generators of their own human capital, training and educating the next generation who will work and study there, and in turn help that place to grow and to prosper. It's a virtuous cycle.

However, we mustn't become preoccupied with retaining graduates in their city of study immediately after graduation. Graduates often move to London for their first job after graduating, but return to their home town – perhaps to start a family, or buy a house – for their second, third or fourth job. The graduates return more 'valuable' than they left, and the town benefits. There is a 'boomerang' effect, with short-term investments giving medium-term returns.

Migration is highly complex, with large cities also suffering from talent deficits in particular areas, masked by overall trends in movement. In London, creative experts are leaving for more affordable cities. Some commentators encourage the term 'brain circulation' (as opposed to 'brain drain') to reflect this. Perhaps, above all else, mobility should be prioritised – it shouldn't matter whether a graduate remains in his or her town after graduating, but rather that the town attracts those people with the skills needed for its development, regardless of where they are from.

The problem lies with those towns and cities that people never return to. Cities that struggle are typically less connected and less skilled. One solution is to better connect such places into regional centres through better transport links. The goal is a 'magnet city' that attracts the young wealth creators of tomorrow, and in turn creates an air of energy and excitement about a place.[20] A 2016 book, 'The Smartest Places on Earth', argues that depleted industrial centres in the US and Europe are reinventing themselves, with the help of universities, as innovation centres that can solve the problems of the future.[21] And Richard Florida talks about a 'people climate' as being more important than tax breaks or government handouts.[22]

Universities foster entrepreneurship, match supply and demand, work with SMEs, and use data to improve retention and mobility. Ultimately, however, efforts to improve retention or to attract skilled people from elsewhere will fail if the place itself isn't an attractive destination to live and work. 'Place attractiveness' is vital.[23] This means liveable, vibrant, culturally-rich, safe places. Housing, transport, future job prospects and the environment are important factors. To deliver these, universities and city leaders need to work closely together.

Recommendation 3: Think about the creation of graduate jobs, but also think about longer-term city-building. A first step is comparing city and university strategic plans, finding areas of overlap or notable gaps, and developing these – as we're beginning to see in Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.

The five principles cont...

Principle 3: Mayors are shaping the world

England's new cohort of metro mayors have celebrated their first hundred days in office. Universities have engaged. The University of Liverpool's vice chancellor is a special adviser to the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor.[24] Coventry University's Engineering and Computing Building hosted an 'Ask Andy' event, offering the public the chance to ask West Midlands mayor Andy Street questions.[25]

Mayoral offices can differ dramatically from one city to the next, and especially from one country to another. For every story of an ascendant New York driven by visionary leadership there is a declining Detroit, accompanied by mismanagement and corruption. There's a risk that devolution simply reinforces existing local elites and power structures.[26]

Mayors need to manage changes ushered in by a shifting political landscape – as seen through the UK vote to leave the European Union, and the US election of Donald Trump. A degree of international disengagement may strengthen local identities and local leaders may be able to address the concerns of citizens through developing a shared agenda, to avoid regions being further pulled apart by fear and tension.[27]

How can mayors help cities prosper, and how can cities help their mayors succeed? A positive appraisal of a city's potential opens new possibilities. The late political commentator Benjamin Barber said that cities are 'defined by pragmatism and collaboration', and called for a return to the Hanseatic-style leadership of cities, with mayors empowered to tackle humanity's most intractable problems.[28] The Hanseatic League was a collection of powerful cities that emerged in 14th century Europe, exchanging knowledge and goods.[29] A Hanseatic League created today would place extra emphasis on the exchange of knowledge, be global in scope, and have universities as key players.

Universities with a local mayor should make it their business to work with the mayoral office. Ideally this should be in coordination with neighbouring universities, rather than as a series of bilateral relationships initiated by individual institutions. Rallying around specific issues helps: the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England are working with Marvin Rees, the Bristol city mayor, to help improve health outcomes in the city.[30]

To succeed, mayors need to look outwards as much as inwards. Mayors are responsible for strategic decisions over areas devolved as part of their individual deal. However, they also have an important 'soft power' role, acting as a figurehead for the region, developing an international presence, marketing the area, and influencing government policy.

To exert soft power, mayors need to network effectively. How connected are mayoral offices? There are initiatives, such as the self-styled Global Parliament of Mayors, which had its inaugural meeting in The Hague in September 2016, bringing together 60 cities – 'large and small, from North and South, developed and emerging'.[31] Universities should help to bridge new connections. Mayors are on the rise, but an effective mayor will need to be backed by a wide partnership inside and beyond the city.

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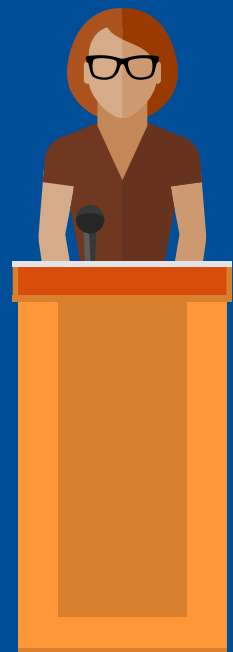
Recommendation 4: Cities are gaining more responsibilities, and universities should be offering their support. Working together on a specific city challenge is a good first step, ideally in concert with other local universities.

Principle 4: The diplomats of the future will represent cities

Relations between regions will be the new international relations. This is based on two developments: the focus on cities as emerging units of governance, taking on the problem-solving responsibilities traditionally held by nations, and the need for these interdependent cities to work with each other. At the same time as new partnerships are being built *within* cities, new partnerships need to be built *between* cities and regions. A strategy is needed for building interregional links, through formal bodies and bilateral relationships. Universities can help.

The formalisation of city connections is perhaps best embodied through the growth of formal city networks – from 55 in 1985 to more than 200 in 2016.[32] Although the scale of networks has grown, networking has long been the 'dominant tool by which to pool scarce local resources', from ad-hoc collaboration in the late 19th century to a 'golden age' of internationalism in the interwar years.[33]

The profile of networks of cities such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability will grow. Most people would struggle to name a group that brings together city or regional leaders, but there are countless well-known examples of gatherings for heads of state, such as the UN or G20. Bilateral relationships between cities will grow. And so too will the role of universities in these relationships. As Michele Acuto notes, 'the average distance between a city hall and the closest major university is just under four kilometres in four of the major networks'.[34]

The University of Glasgow is working with the city council to build new links with cities in Japan and Georgia, through the 100 Resilient Cities network. City REDI, an institute at the University of Birmingham that informs regional growth policies, has established a joint research centre with Guangzhou University, China. The centre shares local experiences of the service industry and urban development.[35]

Universities already have strong links across regions, and in particular international links that aren't solely between one capital city and another. Universities link between the important second-tier cities that are often growing faster and are more innovative, but have a lower profile. They draw on alumni, research, staff and institutional relationships. They think local and act global. And they can play an important role in brokering new regional connections.

04

Recommendation 5: Universities and cities increasingly share their international connections for mutual benefit. Mapping this (without burdening individual staff) and looking for further potential links will lead to closer working relationships between universities and cities, and more opportunities to tackle societal challenges.

05

Principle 5: City planning agencies are the new Whitehall ministries

In 2015, the then Chief Executive of New Economy Manchester described the organisation as a 'mini economics ministry for Manchester'.[36] New Economy provides evidence, strategy and research for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

We'll see more such bodies emerge as devolution unfurls. Universities should work with these new agencies to provide evidence and analysis, support and strategic advice – in the same way as some have seconded staff and provided research for Whitehall ministries. Cities are only as effective as the people making the decisions, and the decisions are only as good as the information that shapes them.

Universities already do this locally, especially through helping LEPs and local authorities with their economic planning. University representation on Boards is important, but moving people into businesses and into decision-making bodies and councils to shape the detail benefits both organisations and the city itself.

Universities can also create their own local ministries. Earlier this year Nottingham Trent University and the Royal Society of Arts founded the Nottingham Civic Exchange, focused on local social and economic issues.[37] Urban Living Partnerships in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle and York are bringing universities and cities together to identify, understand and address key challenges and opportunities.[38]

In Glasgow alone, the Institute for Future Cities at the University of Strathclyde runs the City Observatory, part of Glasgow's £24 million 'Future City Demonstrator' project, collecting and interpreting urban data.[39] Glasgow Economic Leadership, which provides independent leadership and direction for economic development activity in Glasgow, is chaired by Strathclyde's Principal & Vice-Chancellor and the Executive Director is based at the university. And up the road, the University of Glasgow hosts the Urban Big Data Centre, and will soon launch an internationally-focused Centre for Sustainable, Healthy and Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods, looking to tackle global challenges facing cities.[40]

How might such collaboration evolve in the city ministries of the future? One likely area is resilience. The notion of resilience has been popularised through initiatives such as the World Bank Resilient Cities Group, and, in particular, the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities Programme.[41] Although definitions vary, resilience typically refers to how a region responds to shocks and disturbances, and is distinct from long-term growth. It is perceived as an idea 'whose time has come' within development agencies and national governments, with cities under pressure to demonstrate their resilience.[42] You don't need to be disaster-prone to benefit from improved resilience.

The 100 Resilient Cities programme frames future development issues affecting the city. Different cities have different priority areas – urban sustainability in Bristol, post-industrial adaptation in Glasgow, entrenched unemployment in Manchester – and, much like other groups such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, cities are encouraged to learn from one another. Each of the 100 Resilient Cities appoints a Chief Resilience Officer to work across government departments to help a city improve internal communications, and to bring together a wide array of stakeholders to learn about challenges facing the city.

Universities should support Chief Resilience Officers. In Glasgow the universities are active partners with the Chief Resilience Officer, with university-led research underpinning the city's resilience strategy.[43] Universities should also propose, where appropriate, other equivalent posts: for example, Harvard University and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation are sponsoring a peer network of urban 'chief data officers' to support data visualisation and predictive analytics in cities in the US.[44]

Universities often already have a good understanding of the complex systems that make up a city, already work with communities, businesses and other parts of the education system, and provide evidence and analysis on city assets and needs. They can connect cities to wider agendas and to wider knowledge networks, whilst providing local evidence. Perhaps the greatest reason for universities to contribute to resilience planning is their long-term presence in cities. In some cases, universities were founded hundreds of years ago, and they often plan decades ahead – beyond the constraints of political cycles and electoral terms.

Recommendation 6:
Universities have pockets of expertise in many issues that affect cities. They draw on international practice that can be contextualised locally; they can provide advice on local concerns but also help answer big questions on the future of cities. They should package the evidence and analysis they generate. This could feed into existing city planning agencies. Multi-institution collaborations often carry more weight.

05
Conclusions

Universities are their city's superpower. Yet if a university operates alone, acting outside of the city that houses it, both the university and the city will suffer. Local engagement strengthens international endeavours; partnerships that cross the globe benefit relations with partners on the university's doorstep.

Toronto's universities demonstrate how to excel in individual initiatives, yet come together to benefit the city.

As with the UK sector, the institutions in Toronto are diverse: some old, some new, with different missions and histories and geographical constraints and opportunities. They work within and beyond their unique governance structures, just as successful UK universities navigate the LEPs, Combined Authorities, Midlands Engines or Northern Powerhouses that house them.

We've seen the five superpowers of universities in cities:

– Universities are **'anchor tenants'**, investing in the future and inspiring confidence. They send a message to fellow city residents: we believe in the prosperity of this area.

– Universities have **long-term visions**. Looking beyond the cycle of mayoral appoint-ments and provincial elections, universities are a **trusted partner** for future planning.

– Universities can be **critical yet constructive**, outspoken yet objective. They are machines for **solving problems and generating ideas**, home to highly-concentrated brainpower, and steeped in knowledge and evidence.

– Universities **educate and train** the future workforce. They provide the skills to build the city.

– Universities are a **window to the world**, framing local issues within international debates, and bringing global discoveries to the city.

Cities are gaining new powers. The next phase of city-building will bring new opportunities for university-city partnerships. Five principles govern the future of universities and cities:

– **Principle 1:** The campus is the city's ideas machine

– **Principle 2:** Graduate retention begins with place building

– **Principle 3:** Mayors are shaping the world

– **Principle 4:** The diplomats of the future will represent cities

– **Principle 5:** City planning agencies are the new Whitehall ministries

University superpowers will need to be harnessed to tackle the five principles:

First, testing new technologies on campus and promoting the university estate as a public space will strengthen the position of the university in the city.

Second, by working together to improve the attractiveness of the city to skilled people and growing businesses, city and university leaders will attract and retain graduates.

Third, as universities come together at a city-wide level to collectively engage with their elected mayor, or (**fourth**) align their work with city planning bodies, they will shape the future of the city.

And, **fifth**, as universities and cities share their international connections for mutual benefit, a new club of successful cities will emerge: those that thrive as they gain more responsibility, that show leadership in tackling societal challenges, and that use their university superpowers to do so.
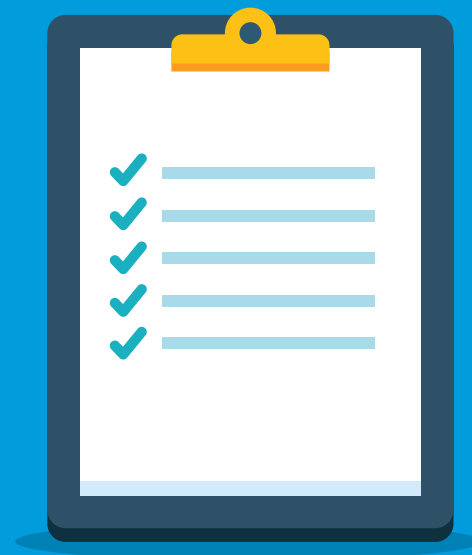
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About this report

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