



Innovation Places Vision

Innovation districts represent a radical departure from traditional economic development. Unlike customary urban revitalization efforts that have emphasized the commercial aspects of development (e.g., housing, retail, sports stadiums), innovation districts help their city and metropolis move up the value chain of global competitiveness by growing the firms, networks, and traded sectors that drive broad-based prosperity. Instead of building isolated science parks, innovation districts focus extensively on creating a dynamic physical realm that strengthens proximity and knowledge spillovers. Rather than focus on discrete industries, innovation districts represent an intentional effort to create new products, technologies and market solutions through the convergence of disparate sectors and specializations.

—*The Rise of Innovation Districts*. Bruce Katz and Julie Wagner. Brookings Institution, May 2014.

Background

CTNext is a public/private network of entrepreneurs, mentors, service providers and others helping Connecticut's most promising startups succeed and grow. In 2016, CTNext expanded to new initiatives helping key places in the state become magnets for talent, supporting entrepreneurship in higher education, and focusing more on growth-stage companies. The first of these efforts, Innovation Places, is described below. It weaves together entrepreneurship support and relationship-building with physical planning and development.

Vision

The Innovation Places program seeks to support entrepreneurs and leaders developing places that will attract the talent high-growth enterprises need. Think of an area you can walk to, bike to or take a train to where your mind comes alive with possibilities; where you run into brilliant people solving big problems and inventing new technology; where the sidewalks and cafes are full of conversation; where art events and music venues brim with people making new friends—a place full of ideas.

Such places attract talent like magnets. And they produce new solutions, products, and businesses that create jobs—high-skill, mid-skill and low-skill jobs—quickly. Young people and innovative organizations want to be in dense, vibrant, walkable places with public transportation and a mix of uses. Enterprises often grow quickly in areas with anchor institutions and where cutting edge research is taking place. Innovation Places are a part of the solution.