Anchor Institutions as Agents of Neighborhood Revitalization: The Case of Midtown

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Anchor institutions, especially universities and hospitals, in disinvested urban neighborhoods have become increasingly visible as agents of neighborhood improvement. These “eds and meds” anchors typically control significant resources, are committed to remaining in the city, and require improved neighborhood environments to compete successfully. Working in this tradition, Wayne State University, the Detroit Medical Center, and Henry Ford Health System launched in 2011 a much heralded effort to stimulate the growth of Midtown by providing an attractive package of financial incentives for their employees to move to the neighborhood. This seminar will present early results from the “Live Midtown” initiative, position them in the context of broader efforts to revitalize the Woodward corridor, and assess the program’s potential to stimulate new development.

Professor Avis Vidal is an urban planner specializing in the analysis of alternative approaches to strengthening disinvested neighborhoods, with a particular focus on community-based development. She is best known for her research on the contributions that community development corporations (CDCs) make to the well-being of poor neighborhoods and their residents. Prior to joining Wayne State, she directed the Community Development Research Center at the New School for Social Research, and was an Associate Professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.