

## The Role of the University Campus in Shaping the Built Environment of Its Local Communities

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**Abstract :** The university has been in existence, in one form or another, for over a thousand years and has contributed in multiple ways to modern society. It is considered a center of culture, aesthetic direction, and moral forces shaping the civilized society. Universities also contribute in important ways to the economic health and physical landscape of neighborhoods and cities, serving as permanent fixtures of the urban economy and the built environment. Due to the size and location of university campuses, they put demands on the urban character, systems, and infrastructure of the neighboring communities. These demands or impacts have substantial implications for the built environment. It is important to understand the impacts university campuses have on their surrounding communities and urban environments because the destiny of the university is inextricably linked to the destiny of the adjacent neighborhoods. This paper identifies the diverse factors generated by universities in shaping the built environments of their local communities within different spatial contexts such as urban, rural, and township regions situated in South Africa. By applying a mixed methods approach in four university campuses within the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Several data collection instruments were used, such as in-depth interviews, a survey, remote sensing, and onsite observations. The thematic findings revealed numerous factors which influence the morphology of neighbourhood built environments and the myriad of relationships the university has with its local community. This paper also reveals that the university campus is more than a precinct which accommodates buildings and academic endeavours, the role of the university in this century has changed dramatically from its traditional roots of being an elite enclave of academics to a more inclusive and engaged entity that is concerned about providing relevant holistic solutions to society's current challenges in the built environment.

**Keywords :** university campus, built environment, architecture, neighborhood planning

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