

President Fitts receives Vision Award for downtown plans

December 15, 2025 9:00 AM Kimberly Steinmetz

ksteinmetz@tulane.edu



Seth Knudsen, president & CEO of the Downtown Development District, and President Michael A. Fitts celebrate Fitts' Vision Award. (Photo by Kenny Lass)

The Downtown Development District (DDD) honored President Michael A. Fitts with its Vision Award in recognition of his bold leadership in expanding Tulane's presence in the heart of the city. The award was presented at the DDD's recent annual Downtown NOLA Awards night.

The awards "not only honor the vibrancy and the vitality of our neighborhood, but they also recognize those people who inspire and innovate, those who achieve and do great things right here in downtown New Orleans," said the night's emcee,

journalist Camille Whitworth.

“DDD is honored... to recognize the university’s pivotal role in shaping the future of downtown,” Whitworth said as she presented the Vision Award, the final recognition of the night, to Fitts.

In accepting the honor, Fitts emphasized Tulane University’s commitment to downtown and its historic role in helping to grow the city.

“Tulane’s downtown vision is the largest initiative in the history of Tulane,” Fitts said.

The university’s downtown presence already spans 17 buildings, with 2,700 employees working there and more than 2,600 students taking classes there. Over the next eight years, Tulane plans to add another 2,500 downtown employees and boost its annual research spending to approximately \$400 million.

Fitts highlighted the once-in-a-generation opportunity presented by Tulane’s expanding research footprint and its redevelopment projects, calling them “a natural evolution of our mission-focused approach for the 21st century that will propel research and innovation forward, honoring the heritage and culture of New Orleans while driving progress for future generations.”

The university’s downtown expansion will be anchored by the transformation of the former Charity Hospital building into a center of bioscience discovery and entrepreneurship that will produce the cures and treatments of tomorrow and reimagine the New Orleans economy as a biotech ecosystem.

Tulane will occupy more than half of the one-million-square-foot historic structure, while the remaining space will be redeveloped for a mix of residential and other commercial uses. Tulane’s downtown expansion will build on its role as a primary economic driver of both the city and state. The university makes an annual economic impact of \$5.2 billion statewide and \$2.3 billion in New Orleans. It contributes \$88 million in annual tax revenue to the state and supports more than 30,000 jobs statewide, including 17,000 in New Orleans.