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New Drexel U. President Plans Revitalization for Nearby Neighborhoods

By [Scott Carlson](#)

You can say this about John A. Fry: The man has a formula for making a college successful, and he doesn't waste time putting it into action.

The Philadelphia Inquirer reports that Mr. Fry has outlined a plan to revitalize the neighborhood around Drexel University, where he was recently appointed president. You'll recall that Mr. Fry [made a name for himself](#) in higher education in part by leading a plan to [revitalize the neighborhood](#) around the University of Pennsylvania when he was a vice president there.

He then moved to Franklin & Marshall College, where he oversaw [a major redevelopment](#) plan that included tearing down an old flooring plant near the college and then cleaning up the site. Redevelopment also helped make a strip of old commercial properties across from the campus along Harrisburg Pike more attractive. In addition, he set up a program to [control off-campus student housing](#), which was controversial.

Now he has similar goals at Drexel, the *Inquirer* notes:

Fry, who became president August 1, lamented what he sees in Drexel's Powelton and Mantua neighborhoods: littered streets, dilapidated houses, and broken streetlights. As Drexel has grown, students are moving deeper into the neighborhoods.

"It's an environment which is not necessarily an inviting one, and it's an environment that houses over 5,000 of our students," said Fry.

The article says that Drexel will expand security patrols in the area and spruce up the walkways with greenery.

It seems that he also has plans for off-campus housing, the conditions of which "make me nervous," he told the paper. The university is offering financial incentives to employees who choose to live in the surrounding neighborhood. The university, Mr. Fry said, is selling the current presidential mansion -- a \$2.7-million estate 20 miles west of the campus on the Main Line -- and will acquire a property close to campus.

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