

# CORTEX: Building on innovation and imagination

**BY ROSALIND EARLY**

The struggle is real in the Midwest when it comes to creating new jobs, retaining talented young people and maintaining industrial districts where the industry of yore has closed down. But St. Louis has confronted the problem head on with Cortex, an innovation community started in 2002 thanks to a \$15 million lead investment from Washington University. Other institutions joined WashU, including BJC HealthCare, the Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis University and University of Missouri–St. Louis, and the coalition took a 200-acre, blighted industrial complex in St. Louis’ Midtown and turned it into a hip, mixed-use urban technology district that is home to more than 400 companies. Now, Cortex is a regional center for innovation and entrepreneurship that has brought in more than 5,800 jobs and \$342 million in direct payroll, and the district just keeps on growing.



HOST TO

**7**

FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES

**6**

more buildings are in planning stages

GENERATED **\$34 MILLION** IN TAX REVENUE SINCE 2014



GENERATED MORE THAN **5,800 JOBS** AND COUNTING

## CIC@CET

**THEN**

The Center for Emerging Technologies Building

**NOW**

After a three-phase, \$5 million overhaul, completed in 2016, the building now contains the CIC Labs, shared lab space. CIC (Cambridge Innovation Center) leases the lab spaces to budding entrepreneurs for \$600 per month.



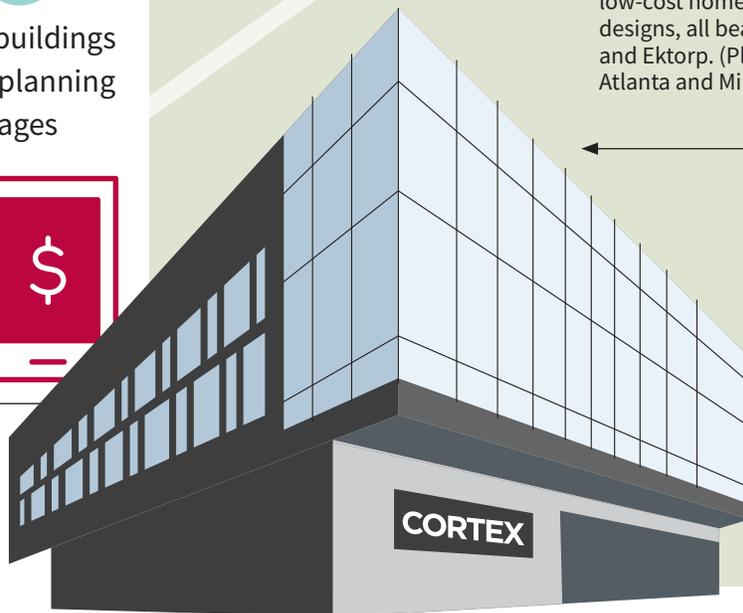
## IKEA

**THEN**

Abandoned, empty lot

**NOW**

It's Swedish megaretailer IKEA, known for its low-cost home goods with simple but elegant designs, all bearing Swedish names like Poäng and Ektorp. (Plus, it's bigger than the IKEA's in Atlanta and Minneapolis.)



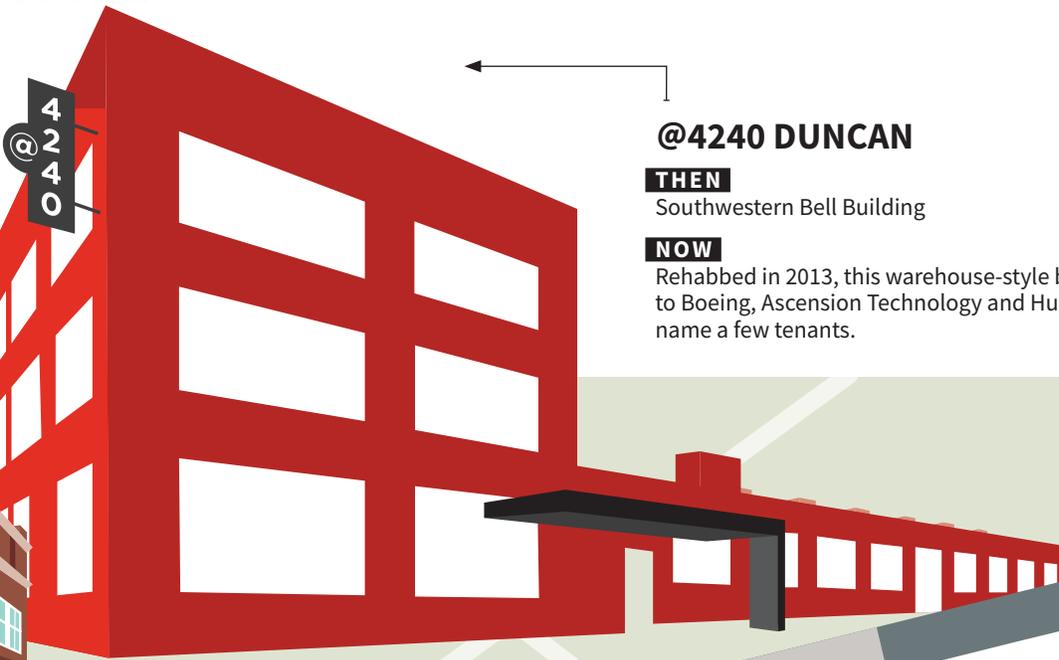
## CORTEX ONE

**THEN**

Crumbling industrial structures

**NOW**

A 177,000-square-foot office and lab space that the *Riverfront Times* described as “an expression of optimism and sophistication” when it was unveiled in 2006. Jim McKelvey’s Square is a main tenant.



### @4240 DUNCAN

**THEN**

Southwestern Bell Building

**NOW**

Rehabbed in 2013, this warehouse-style building is now home to Boeing, Ascension Technology and Husch Blackwell, to name a few tenants.



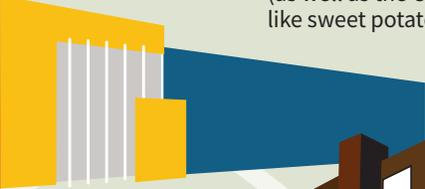
### 4220 DUNCAN

**THEN**

Parking lot

**NOW**

A 180,000-square-foot office space and lab complex developed by Wexford Science and Technology and home to professional services firm Aon and Microsoft's regional headquarters (as well as the Chocolate Pig, a restaurant that serves things like sweet potato pie milkshakes and beet ceviche).



### CRESCENT BUILDING

**THEN**

Rotogravure printing press for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

**NOW**

After a recently completed \$44 million multi-tenant renovation, the space at 4340-50 Duncan caters to biomedical and biotech companies with 96,000 square feet of affordable lab space, creative office space and other services. Currently, the anchor tenant is BioGenerator, which invests in promising companies in St. Louis.

### COFACTOR GENOMICS

**THEN**

Light industrial manufacturing building where components of MetroLink stations were built

**NOW**

Home to a company that provides full genome sequencing, DNA sequencing, RNA sequencing ... you get the idea.



Go to [magazine.wustl.edu](http://magazine.wustl.edu) to see a video.

