Laine Cidlowski ‘07
Instrumental in Sustainable DC Act

by BRYNN LEOPOLD (MCP ’14)

As the sole Urban Sustainability Planner at the District of Columbia Office of Planning, Laine Cidlowski (MCP ’07) was instrumental in the January passage of the District’s newest Master Plan, Sustainable DC. The 20-year plan aims to make DC the healthiest, greenest, and most livable city in the United States within one generation, while being one of the fastest growing cities in the country.

“The city had been spinning its wheels with sustainability to an extent,” said Cidlowski. “Each department was doing a little bit, but there was no holistic vision of what was possible.” That all changed after D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 2011. “Following the conference,” Cidlowski recalls, “the mayor returned with a mission for how to make the District even better.”

Despite this newfound vision, the District was forced to confront the challenges inherent in devising long-term planning policy. “There’s always people who have been around for a long time and fall victim to short-term thinking or the political news cycle,” Cidlowski related. The Sustainable DC process spanned nearly 18 months of research, planning, and public outreach; in her role, Cidlowski was responsible for spearheading extensive collaboration between the D.C. Department of Environment and numerous other agencies to coordinate dozens of varied programs.

“People who have been around for a long time and fall victim to short-term thinking or the political news cycle,” Cidlowski related. The Sustainable DC process spanned nearly 18 months of research, planning, and public outreach; in her role, Cidlowski was responsible for spearheading extensive collaboration between the D.C. Department of Environment and numerous other agencies to coordinate dozens of varied programs.

With a passion for interdisciplinary work, Professor Hillier is the only faculty member appointed jointly by the School of Social Policy and Practice and the School of Design. Her scholarship covers a wide variety of topics, including the role of maps in reinforcing, documenting, and transforming disparities; child welfare; food insecurity; mapping for social change; and the work of W.E.B. Du Bois.

Hiller began her career at Penn as an M.S.W. student in 1995, following her graduation, summa cum laude, from Middlebury College. She later received a Ph.D in Social Welfare from Penn in 2001 and began teaching in the School of Design in 2005. “Getting tenure at the University of Pennsylvania is an amazing privilege,” Hillier related. “Tenured faculty are expected to be leaders in their field, influencing how people think.” PennPlanning is thrilled to have Prof. Hillier continue to play an active role as an innovative and interdisciplinary thought leader.

(continued on Page 2)
Urban Innovations

by JOHN LANDIS

Where and why do urban policy and planning innovations occur? Can they be replicated elsewhere? And what can planning schools do to encourage them? During the last ten years, two cities, New York City and San Francisco, have emerged as the nation’s urban innovation leaders, just as Portland and Vancouver did in the 1980s and 1990s.

Under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, New York City has implemented a series of urban innovations which combine far-sighted thinking about the role of quality-of-life issues in attracting people to cities, a reliance on outcome data, and a willingness to experiment. These include PlaNYC, the first attempt by a large American city to integrate sustainability into everyday city planning; real-time efforts to monitor, analyze, and anticipate crime locations; the Times Square street-to-pedestrian plaza conversion; a citywide bike-lane program; and last but not least, efforts to make sure that New Yorkers eat more healthy foods.

Out on the West Coast, San Francisco has become the sandbox for a generation of young, Internet-oriented entrepreneurs looking to take advantage of the city’s higher-density lifestyles while developing web-based applications to make urban services more responsive and even fun. As San Francisco Chronicle urban design writer John King noted when he joined Philadelphia Inquirer design critic Inga Saffron on a recent PennDesign panel, these innovations are happening at the fringes of traditional city planning, in neighborhoods where residents feel empowered to try to shape their own urban futures, rather than rely on city planners to do it for them.

Urban innovations aren’t limited to New York or San Francisco. Under the leadership of Mayor Michael Nutter, the City of Philadelphia is being increasingly recognized as a major urban innovator. There are ways in which Philadelphia’s Greenworks sustainability plan is even better than PlaNYC, and just last month, Philadelphia was honored with one of four $1M Bloomberg Foundation urban innovation grants.

I recently finished reading The Idea Factory, John Gerner’s history of Bell Labs, arguably the most successful center for technological innovation of the last hundred years, and the place where the transistor, radar, communication satellites, and even cell phones were either invented or substantially advanced. Bell Labs was assembled in the 1920s and 1930s (under the umbrella of AT&T’s protection from U.S. antitrust laws) by electrical engineer Mervin Kelly, who understood that for AT&T to keep providing the best phone service it would have to ultimately have to transform itself into an information and communications company. Kelly traveled to the top research universities looking for young physicists and engineers who wanted to work on applied problems in a collaborative and interdisciplinary environment. Managers set innovation and performance goals but not product or sales targets (in exchange for its anti-trust exemption, Bell Labs was required to license its discoveries to other companies), and teams of engineers, physicists, mathematicians, and chemists were given wide latitude to experiment with different technologies and solutions.

The examples of Michael Bloomberg and Mervin Kelley also point to the importance of confident, results-oriented leaders who are not afraid to experiment with new approaches and to make risk-taking a part of their organizational culture. In New York and at Bell Labs, innovators are encouraged as much as much as innovations.

Urban regions will be the locus of global population and economic growth over the next 50 years. For them to succeed as innovation and quality-of-life centers against the counteracting effects of congestion, city planners will have to become more conversant with real-time urban performance data (as in New York City), be more willing to try pilot projects (also as in New York City), better empower local residents and entrepreneurs to help solve urban problems (as in San Francisco), and, as at Bell Labs, allow a results-oriented and collaborative sandboxes to emerge, even—or perhaps especially—at the expense of traditional comprehensive planning.

Here at PennPlanning, we will be looking for ways to shake-up and “de-silo” our program in search of a more innovative planning culture. If you have ideas about innovative technologies, innovative courses, or innovative projects that will better position planning for the future, please drop me an e-mail at jlan@design.upenn.edu.

(continued from Page 1)

Cidlowski also sought to channel the enthusiasm displayed by the local community. “During one of the kickoff meetings held at the Convention Center, over 440 community members attended—way more than could fit in the room!” A diverse range of stakeholders participated in the planning process—“everyone from a beekeeper to groups dedicated to mitigating the effects of climate change”—which was bolstered in large part by the District’s highly educated workforce. “We had so many people of so many diverse interests,” Cidlowski beamed. “It actually became a little bit of a problem!”

Cidlowski came to PennPlanning with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. While at Penn, she pursued a concentration in Urban Design, with a particular emphasis on sustainable best practices. “I always looked through the lens of sustainability, rather than a particular section of planning, like environmental planning.” To Cidlowski, the District’s emphasis on planning for future sustainability—as well as on improving local opportunities for education, employment, and socioeconomic mobility—will continue to revitalize the city.
PennDesign Teams Up with Rebuilding Together

by JENNIFER WEBBER (MCP ‘14)

Mantua is a low-income community just 10 blocks north of the University of Pennsylvania, but it exists in an entirely different world. It isn’t unusual to find homes with holes in the floor, blown-out basement windows, and plumbing that has been backed up for years. This month, PennDesign students partnered with Rebuilding Together Philadelphia and the Wharton School to make a profound change in the community.

Rebuilding Together Philadelphia is an affiliate of a national organization whose mission is to ensure safe and healthy homes for all people. Rebuilding Together works with low-income homeowners to identify and address the critical improvements needed in their homes.

For two consecutive weekends in March, more than 30 PennDesign students volunteered their time on a 20-house block build. Clustering the homes so that improvements had the greatest impact, all 20 homes were centered on the corner of 38th and Olive Streets.

Along with Wharton students, neighborhood residents, contractors, and other skilled workers, the volunteers transformed 717 and 743 N. 38th Street into safer, healthier homes. Volunteers in 717 repaired plumbing, installed a new kitchen sink, repainted the house, repaired insulation and drywall, installed new windows, and repaired exterior masonry. Those working in 743 installed all new flooring, fixed the kitchen plumbing, painted throughout the house, repaired a bedroom ceiling, and secured basement windows that had been open to the elements. Every house was equipped with several smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

To ensure a community-wide impact, the neighborhood itself underwent some physical changes. College Painters donated its services and repainted the exterior of all 20 houses. Vacant lots were cleaned of debris, homeowners were provided with new house numbers, railings were repainted, and storm water drains were cleared.

PennDesign Students Recognized by ULI

by ARIANA ZENO (MCP/MSW ‘14)

PennDesign is proud to announce that two separate teams of students received Honorable Mention in the annual ULI Hines competition. Kept secret until the start of the competition, the focus of this year’s project was the planned replacement of the Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis. Interdisciplinary teams presented a development concept and financial plan for an underutilized area between the stadium and the central business district located near a light-rail line.

Katrina Flora (MCP ’14), Anna Ishii (MCP/M.Arch ’15), and Thomson Kao (MCP ’14) participated in the competition with “Influx,” their vision of a civic promenade hugging the light-rail corridor lined with regionally-significant venues and establishments. Along with Alex Holstein (M.Arch ’14) and Stefanie Loomis (MLA ’14), they planned for a bicycle commuter center to serve the central business district and envisioned green alleys to provide shelter and engagement during the winter.

First-Year Workshop Shifts Focus to Suburbs

by JED POSTER (MCP ’14)

2013 Workshop has shifted its focus away from the City of Philadelphia and towards the region’s first-generation suburbs. In doing so, Workshop aims to cultivate creative solutions for the pressing issues faced by similar municipalities throughout the country.

Workshop is structured as a semester-long, charrette-style program that assembles groups of up to eight students, guided by practicing professionals from a variety of planning firms in the Philadelphia region. Every group incorporates students from each of the five MCP concentrations, so that a breadth of techniques and approaches are utilized in assembling short, medium, and long-range proposals for community stakeholders.

The seven study areas were selected in conjunction with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to ensure a diverse range of communities. Despite the distinctive qualities of each area, the students were tasked with devising strategies to alleviate common issues faced by aging suburbs throughout the region. During the “Alternatives Phase” of Workshop, each group presented a scenario designed to increase walkable urbanism in its respective community, as well as one “outlandish” scenario that sought to encourage radical thinking and develop fresh ideas.
The entire PennPlanning community aspires to carry on Professor Seymour Mandelbaum’s legacy as an intellectual and planner with a love for his students, a concern for equity and fairness, and a devotion to the University of Pennsylvania.
Recent Alumni Reflect on New Careers

After two intense years of study, PennPlanning’s most recent graduates have settled into their first jobs post-graduation. While the processes of networking, writing cover letters, and interviewing can be arduous and bewildering at times, many alumni report that the elation of receiving a job offer from their ideal employer is a testament to the hard work they put in throughout their time at Penn.

Four of these newly-minted MCPs related their lessons learned, their experiences in their current roles, and their advice for future generations of aspiring planners. Despite the wide range of backgrounds represented by Liza Cohen, Aaron Kurtz, Katie Olson, and Tim Ponti, all four echoed the common theme of perspective, or keeping in mind that a rewarding career will be the end result of persistence, creativity, and careful research.

The biggest thing I learned in my job search was not only talking to people, but also **not being afraid to talk to people**! I asked almost everyone I met in the planning world if they would have just ten minutes to tell me how they got where they were, and shockingly all kinds of people agreed to talk with me. If you don’t know what to talk about, it’s always easy to get someone to talk about themselves (and you can learn a lot from it!).

The most important thing: never stop applying. Try to submit short, concise cover letters. For companies that receive hundreds of applications, this is very much appreciated.

Keep in mind that all interviews boil down to three basic questions:

**Can you do the job?**
**Will you like the job?**
**Can you work well with others?**

Never stop applying!

**Move to where you want to work.** Employers want a sense of how you’ll fit in, which is difficult to gauge over the phone. Plus, there’s likely many local candidates who don’t have to relocate.

**Pound the pavement once you get there.** Informational interviewing is interesting and useful. Most people will conclude interviews by suggesting a job lead, at their firm or elsewhere.

**Join trade organizations and attend events.** Membership lists are great for looking for jobs. ULI or APA networking sessions provide an excellent opportunity to set up informational interviews.

**Be confident!**

Don’t sell yourself short, and don’t downplay your abilities. You’ve made it through graduate school and that is an amazing accomplishment even if it may not seem that way right now. But remember: be humble and be open. Your schooling and whatever is on your resume will perhaps be necessary for you to get the interview, but demonstrating you have the capacity to apply and adapt those skills is just as important to secure the job—and hopefully to thrive in it.

Illustration by Shelly Zhu (MCP ’14)
Olympic Investments: Beijing and Rio de Janeiro
by LEAH WHITESIDE and DANIELLE BORDEN (MCPs ‘13)

The Olympic Investments studio, led by Professor of Practice Evan Rose and Associate Professor Stefan Al, seeks to examine and mitigate the impact left behind by mega-scale international events on their host cities; in other words, what happens after the crowds go home?

To investigate a recent example, half of the studio traveled to Beijing, host city of the 2008 Summer Olympics. They toured the Olympic Park to learn the ins and outs of the city’s new form, and to meet with local academics and professional planners to discuss how to repurpose and redesign the Park following the 2008 Games. In addition to grappling with issues of size and how to create an inviting, human-scale place out of the enormously oversized boulevards and open plazas that were built for the Games, the group also studied the city of Beijing as a whole, identifying its issues and opportunities as a constantly-growing world city.

To evaluate the practicality of preemptive mitigation strategies, the other half of the studio traveled to Rio de Janeiro, the host city for the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics. The students examined the $19 billion being invested in Rio in preparation for these mega events, with an eye toward identifying ways the investments can be leveraged to enhance the quality of life for Rio residents beyond the Games. In a city where long-term planning is still an emerging practice, it is essential to confront the challenges posed by rapid population growth, inadequate infrastructure, land speculation, and transit problems.

The Rio studio met with AECOM, the design firm for the Olympic Park, as well as the Rio State Planning Agency where long-term planning is still an emerging practice, it is essential to confront the challenges posed by rapid growth, inadequate infrastructure, land speculation, and transit problems.

The studio is prepared to take on the challenges of designing for storm-battered townships and municipalities that incorporate sound planning and development practices in the New Jersey coastal region. Several members of the studio also derived tentative environmental and social vulnerability indices for the Shore by using existing data.

They researched physical “soft” (i.e. artificially constructed sand dunes) and “hard” (sea gates, floodwalls, etc.) infrastructure alternatives for protecting the shore, and explored the potential of policy to create more sustainable planning and development practices in the New Jersey coastal region. Several members of the studio also derived tentative environmental and social vulnerability indices for the Shore by using existing data.

The studio has created individual design plans for towns and municipalities along the Jersey Shore. They hope to incorporate hard and soft infrastructure in a manner that minimizes disturbance to the existing physical and social infrastructure and maximizes safety and quality of life. Students are also drafting a policy plan and working to ensure that their interventions serve as amenities that contribute to the character and sense of place. The studio is prepared to take on the challenges of designing for storm-battered townships and municipalities that incorporate sound planning and policy with compassion and understanding.

Jersey Shore
by SARAH RICHARDS (MCP ‘13)

The Jersey Shore Studio, headed by Professor of Practice Jonathan Barnett, is facing a “wicked planning problem” with no clear, one-size-fits-all solution. Emotions run high along the battered and bruised New Jersey coast as people struggle to rebuild their homes, businesses, and lives after the devastation left by Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. The Jersey Shore Studio has taken on the complex and often delicate task of coming up with an alternative to the current “Restore the Shore” mantra of rebuilding everything where it was before. Instead, they are strategizing ways to allow the Shore to maintain its character and sense of place, while also protecting the public health, safety, welfare, and social fabric of the area from future storms.

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Penn Station, NYC
by BRYAN BARNETT-WOODS (MCP ‘13)

The New York City Penn Station studio, led by Professor of Practice Bob Yaro and Dean Marilyn Taylor, explores and re-imagines Penn Station and its role as a global gateway to New York City. The multidisciplinary project not only examines redesigning the Station to accommodate future capacity, but also to create a new and inviting public space for visitors and commuters; to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood; and to build a station in testament to New York’s greatness. The studio’s scope exceeds any singular planning concentration and is divided into interchangeable groups working to tackle the many complex problems of re-inventing the Station.

This February, the studio traveled to London to study other train stations that serve as global gateways. They participated in a design charrette and saw first-hand Penn Station’s unrealized potential. King’s Cross Station and St. Pancras International Station in London provided illustrative examples of redesigned train stations that have sparked new development as well as re-invented traveling in the United Kingdom and the European continent.

The team also worked with local transportation, architecture, development, and urban design professionals to incorporate ingredients of success from the European stations into a redesigned Penn Station. While there, the students learned that station building is more than simply architecture, transportation, and urban development, but also an integration of stakeholder groups, institution building, and defining leadership that can leverage political and financial support and champion the project from start to finish.
“My Travel Time” Application
by FERN BRAUN (MCP ’13)

PennPlanning is upping its technology credentials with an independent studio led by Department Chair John Landis. The studio is creating an online transportation application in support of a travel behavior study examining how people respond to real-time traffic congestion information. The application also hopes to be a unique tool to commuters outside of the study.

The web-based app incorporates live traffic information and historic drivetime data. It allows users to easily and simultaneously view the average driving time for their commute, the expected driving time should they leave immediately, and the estimated future driving time should they choose to delay their trip.

The study assigns the app to half the workers at a firm to determine whether the information it provides impels workers to leave at different times based on the amount of congestion they expect to encounter, or whether travel behavior will be unresponsive to this information. If the study reveals that commuters are willing to alter their travel behavior based on congestion information, widespread use of such an app could produce valuable time savings and environmental benefits by distributing morning and evening peak traffic over longer periods.

Philadelphia School Reuse
by PETER CHOMKO (MCP ’13)

When the final dismissal bell of the Philadelphia school year rings out this June, students and teachers at nearly two-dozen schools across the city will hear not only the start of their summer holiday, but also the ring of their schools’ death knell. Facing a massive and still-unresolved budget deficit and a consultant report pointing to significant underutilization of School District of Philadelphia (SDP) facilities, the SDP has determined that it must shrink its portfolio of public school buildings.

Philadelphia is already struggling to deal with citywide crises of public and private vacancy, and the news that this batch of mostly purpose-built structures – in various states of (dis-)repair, ranging from roughly 50,000 to more than 400,000 square feet, and sitting on parcels as small as a third of an acre and as large as nearly a dozen – would be added to the for-sale queue has stirred planners and policy-makers at both the City and the School District into action.

The Philadelphia School Reuse Studio, led by PennPraxis Executive Director Harris Steinberg, has centered its work on the recognition that school closings represent a combination of crisis and opportunity Philadelphia has not seen since the urban renewal era. The closings process has not only disrupted the physical fabric of neighborhoods–predominantly low-income, predominantly African-American neighborhoods–but also undermined trust in public institutions. The Studio has set two goals for itself: first, ensure that vacant school sites are quickly converted to new uses that respect neighbor’s visions for their communities; and second, do this through a process that helps restore faith in the municipal government as an ally, rather than a foe.

The Studio is addressing the issue as it unfolds, meeting with representatives of the SDP and other public agencies and working to provide what assistance it can to everyone from students and parents concerned about what closures mean for their neighborhoods, to SDP personnel, to the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development as he looks to craft an appropriate civic response to the issue. Additionally, the Studio will simultaneously work to help the SDP update its policy on the sale and reuse of school buildings, and look at individual school sites with a planner’s perspective to help both local communities and the city turn this crisis into an opportunity.

As the situation unfolds, Penn planners are working to help the City and SDP turn a contentious issue into productive and progressive outcomes for all Philadelphians.

Madrid: Anticipating the City that Never Was
By MARGIT LIANDER (MCP ’13)

In Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture Christopher Marcinkowski’s studio, “Anticipating the City that Never Was,” students examine the numerous vast landscapes of incomplete and unoccupied contemporary urban development, leisure amenities, and mobility infrastructure surrounding Madrid, Spain. These landscapes have multiplied globally in the last two decades in a range of diverse geographic, political and economic contexts.

The studio began the semester by studying various historical housing bubbles in the early 21st century in the United States and Europe, as well as, current cases of rapid urban development in China and parts of Africa, many of which are predicted to burst. Following this analysis, the team traveled to Madrid and examined the physical consequences of the 2008 financial crisis on the city and its surrounding region. While visiting Madrid, they witnessed the failed speculative urbanization firsthand in the form of various incomplete housing developments, such as Seseña Nuevo in the province of Toledo and Valdeluz in Guadalajara, in addition to numerous abandoned toll roads, the closed Ciudad Real Central Airport, and other underutilized sites.

As a studio, their goal is not to “fix” the failed settlements, but rather to rethink Madrid’s failed urban growth model and address the volatile nature of contemporary urbanization. Rather than ply a solution, many projects are attempting to reevaluate the field of urban design and its emphasis on a singular, preferred outcome and replicable formats of urbanization.

Harare, Zimbabwe
by PETER BARNARD (MCP ’13)

The Harare, Zimbabwe Studio, led by Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture David Gouvernour, was organized as a partnership between PennDesign, Gensler and Old Mutual (a development company based in Harare) as a way to bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to the many issues facing the city. Harare is the political, social and economic capital of Zimbabwe and has historically been a small city at the center of an export-driven agrarian economy; however, changes in political structure and the failure of land redistribution schemes have pushed people from rural areas into urban centers.

As the population of metropolitan Harare has exploded from a couple hundred thousand to more than three million over the last 30 years, over-taxing urban infrastructure with little money for maintenance or large capital projects.

To explore how to design a city with scant infrastructure investments that will double in population within 15 years, a group of 22 landscape architects, planners and architects from PennDesign traveled to Zimbabwe, where they met with developers, community members and officials. The trip culminated in a charrette with students from the National University of Science and Technology where three teams worked on initial proposals for meeting the city’s current and future challenges. These proposals were presented to city officials before returning to the United States, where studio members continue to refine their ideas on how to best meet the challenges facing Harare. The studio will submit their final proposals to the city for further consideration.
The Real Estate Club is one of the most engaged clubs at PennDesign. Throughout the academic year, the club has been actively programming events for students interested in real estate and design. These events include an internship panel for students with young PennDesign alumni; the ULI Hines Competition kickoff meeting; and a trek to New York City to visit an affordable housing development by Jonathan Rose Properties and the new World Trade Center site.

Students in the club have also participated in events co-sponsored by Wharton’s Zell-Lurie Real Estate Center, including career fairs, mixers with PennLaw and Wharton students, rebuilding homes in West Philadelphia, Ballard Lunches with industry executives, and training in financial modeling using the ARGUS software. The Real Estate club continues to provide valuable skills development, networking opportunities, education and exposure to the many facets of the real estate industry.

For more information, please contact Jezreel Apelar at apelar@design.upenn.edu.

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Calling all Alumni!

Please make sure we have your current address on file! We are missing the email addresses of many of our alumni. Since we are trying to reduce the amount of paper we send out, having a current email address is crucial to keeping you informed. Send updates to Kate Daniel at katf@design.upenn.edu or better yet, log onto http://www.alumniconnections.com/penn/ to update your info.