

THE LINK

STUDENT NEWSLETTER OF PENNPLANNING



IDEA DAYS
SEPTEMBER 20 & 21

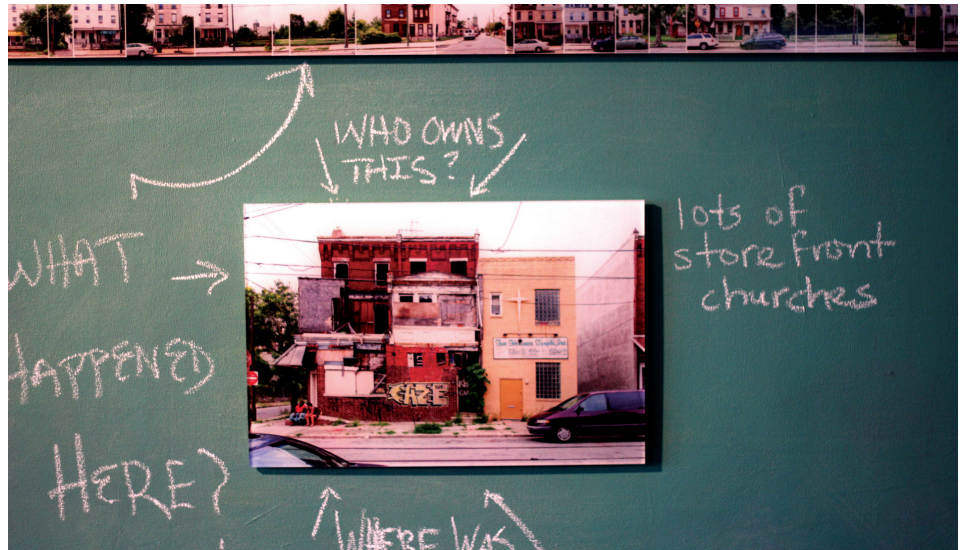
This year marked the first **PennDesign IDEA Days** festival, a program of interdisciplinary design and engagement activities meant to encourage students and faculty to collaborate with partners from across the University and the City of Philadelphia. The festival sought to ignite passion towards building an integrated community—one that leverages resources from diverse fields towards examining how good design can help to improve the quality of everyday urban life.

Bartram's Workshop Tackles Mixed Use Challenge

On the Saturday afternoon of IDEA Days, about 25 intrepid PennDesign students traded in the somewhat-friendly confines of Meyerson Hall for a glimpse of a public space improvement project currently underway in Southwest Philadelphia called "Bartram's Mile." While Bartram's Mile is working to accomplish the seemingly innocuous task of extending the Schuylkill River Trail to new communities, its civic engagement process has unearthed an intricate and tangled story of a neighborhood in transition—one whose residents include the oldest oil refinery in the country, the oldest public botanical garden in the country, thousands of Philadelphians in low-income housing, and a slew of vacant land with vast potential.

PennPraxis Executive Director **Harris Steinberg** and Senior Planner **Andrew Goodman, MCP '07**, along with Historic Preservation professor **Aaron Wunsch**, saw Bartram's Mile as the perfect Petri dish of activity for students to examine during IDEA Days. The afternoon consisted of a walking

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Students brainstorm about existing conditions and potential interventions along the Linear Mile

Mixplace Immersion Engages PennPlanning Students in the Linear Mile

by MARIE SUVANSIN (MCP '15)

During sessions on both days of the IDEA Days festival, **Mixplace Studio**, the collaborative urban education initiative based in West Philadelphia, staged a two-part event entitled *Mixplace Immersion*. The workshop sought to engage PennPlanning students in a discussion about 40th Street's "linear mile," which spans from Locust Street to Westminster Avenue and serves as a metaphor for the close proximity in which communities of need exist from communities of choice right in Penn's backyard. PennPlanning Associate Professor **Amy Hillier** and Assistant Professor **Laura Wolf-Powers**, along with Senior Lecturer **Aaron Levy** of the Department of English, led the exercise at the Slaughter Foundation Headquarters on the corner of 40th and Walnut.

In an attempt to unravel the complicated nature of neighborhood disparities, PennPlanning students discussed the experiences people have as they interact with each other and brainstormed ways of portraying the linear mile in an understandable way. **Lanzi Li** (MCP '15) and **Morgan Findley** (MUSA '14) suggested assigning noises to features of the built environment, and compiling them to create a unique soundscape for participants to listen to as they walk down the linear mile.

Students also presented their ideas to youth researchers who had been contributing to Mixplace Studio since the summer. High school students recruited by the People's Emergency Center collaborated to design the interior of the studio and created narratives about the linear mile. Some participants of Mixplace Immersion will continue working with youth researchers as Mixplace graduate fellows over the course of the 2013-2014 school year.

The formation of social contracts was also explored. Students were videotaped individually as they expressed their connection to the community and their expectations of the workshop. Over dinner, these social contracts were shared with youth researchers, forming a foundation for collaboration.

Going forward, Hillier hopes that participants will continue their involvement in Mixplace Studio as it strives to create an urban education model of engaging youth in community development.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



John D. Landis, Crossways Professor and Chair

Two New Urbanisms and an Antidote for Shrinking Cities

by JOHN D. LANDIS

This year's kick-off speaker in the Fall 2013 PennDesign/City Planning Lecture Series was Wayne State University Professor **George Galster**, who spoke about his new book, entitled *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*, published by Penn Press. In his presentation, Professor Galster talked about how eighty years of a dysfunctional political economy—including suburban overbuilding, a poisoned culture of automaker-automaker labor relations, and ever-worsening racial segregation—combined to encourage deindustrialization and accelerate population loss. When asked about Detroit's future, Professor Galster, a fifth-generation Detroit native, was wistfully downbeat: unless some new engine of economic development and job growth could be created or found, Detroit's future, he concluded, was likely to get worse—much worse—before it got better.

Professor Galster's sad prognosis for Detroit got me wondering, "What can once-grand-now-down-on-their-luck-cities like Detroit do to come back?" As it happened, the week before Professor Galster's Detroit lecture, the second-year theory course—which this year is organized around "Dialogues and Debates in Planning Theory and Practice"—had been discussing this very question:

What can be done about shrinking American cities like Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Birmingham? After dismissing today's solutions du jour like urban farming or arts districts or innovation labs as not being sufficiently scalable, we quickly focused on two strategies that could do the job. Forgive me for adding to the recent proliferation of faddish urbanisms, but let me call the two strategies consumable urbanism and immigrant urbanism.

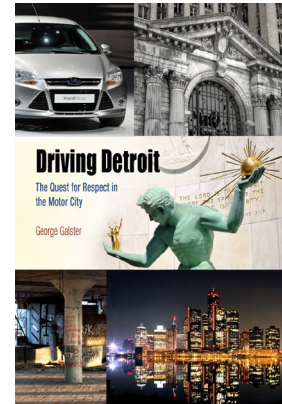
Consumable urbanism builds on the idea of urban neighborhoods as consumption places where young singles and families can consume the sorts of walkable streets, fine-grained retail storefronts, interesting food choices, boutique clothing and furniture stores, and in some places, improved schools (either public or charter) that they can't find in the suburbs. Prominent examples of these consumable urban neighborhoods include Park Slope and DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) in Brooklyn, Echo Park in Los Angeles, Locust Point in Baltimore, Somerville in Cambridge, and here in Philadelphia, the newly resurgent Graduate Hospital area. Yes, these areas have also experienced significant gentrification, but their economic and physical revival is nothing short of amazing—and often in as few as ten years.

Immigrant urbanism sees revitalized neighborhoods as open enclaves of immigrant entrepreneurs. For a whole bunch of reasons, young, recent immigrants are much more likely than native-borns to start their trip up the economic ladder by starting their own retail or service businesses. Thanks to social networking, word-of-mouth, a growing appreciation for cultural fusion, low start-up costs, and plain old good value, many of these businesses are quickly able to expand. Whether in Los Angeles, Toronto, Atlanta, Houston, Minneapolis, Oakland, or Washington, DC (to name a few), immigrant business districts are quickly becoming engines of reinvestment and renewal.

Do these two trends have legs or are they merely flashes in the pan? And are they scalable to a level that could help cities like Detroit get back on their feet? I don't have any firm numbers documenting the rise of consumable and immigrant urbanism, but stay tuned and I'll try to put something together for the Spring 2014 issue of Panorama, PennPlanning's outstanding student publication.

Meanwhile, I highly recommend *Driving Detroit*—especially for elected officials and policy-makers who think Detroit's troubles

couldn't possibly happen in their city. The line between prosperity and decline is much finer than many people think: once the forces of economic disinvestment are unleashed, and a city or region starts down the road toward insolvency, bringing it back become harder and harder.



Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City, by George Galster, can be purchased at Amazon or directly from Penn Press: (<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15027.html>)

(Bartram's Mile, continued from Page 1)

tour of half of the Mile, following by a panel discussion and Q&A at Bartram's Garden, the crown jewel of the Mile. Also joining the day were Joel Fry, curator of Bartram's Garden, Paulette Rhone, Cobbs Creek resident and board president of the Friends of Mount Moriah Cemetery, and Tom Dalfo, Senior Real Estate Manager for the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation.

Students were shown a rich landscape with multiple identities: a neighborhood that evolved from streetcar suburb to Civil Rights battleground to the next potential site for University City expansion; a heavy industrial "moonscape" that is now being envisioned as Philadelphia's research and development hub; a community of residents that feels forgotten from the rest of the city; and a riverfront trail that is supposed to unite them all.

Organizers hoped to get students workshopping more than what time allowed, but the speakers were nonetheless able to convey the message that one can never judge a book (or neighborhood) by its cover. As a planner, one should always embrace the loftiest of design challenges and ensure that the future good of our most forgotten public is at the center of his or her work.

TACKLING VACANCY: TWO APPROACHES



Hand drawing by Meng Cao, MCP '14, illustrates envisioned neighborhood core

Urban Design Studio: Public Realm

by DANIEL WOLF (MCP '14)

With an estimated 40,000 vacant properties in Philadelphia, how should urban designers respond to this issue and try to reverse the cycle of blight that exists in so many of the city's struggling neighborhoods? Those questions form the core of this semester's **Public Realm Studio**.

The studio's nine MCP students concentrating in Urban Design and one M. Arch student are guided by **Evan Rose**, Professor of Practice and founder of Urban Design+, an urban design, planning, and sustainability firm based in New York and San Francisco. Rose divided the semester into three units: first, the studio investigated the opportunities of vacancy at the citywide scale on a conceptual level in two groups; second, each student is applying these concepts to a specific neighborhood; and third, the whole group will extract best practices from the individual exercise to create a detailed design on the scale of a few blocks.

One group's citywide scheme centered around creating strong and connected neighborhood "cores," distinctive and vibrant centers that serve local populations as well as attract the regional population. This goal would be achieved partially by extending the regional park system directly into the cores along a combination of vacant land and streets. These new green corridors would link residents and their cores to park amenities and to

other cores around the city. Another idea proposed is a circular Bus Rapid Transit line to complement Philadelphia's currently radial network of regional rail and rapid transit lines. The new route would further link these cores to each other by running along a combination of unused rail lines, arterial streets, and neighborhood streets, occasionally splitting onto two parallel one-way streets where necessary.

While design alone cannot solve all of Philadelphia's problems, the group hopes that by working to create places people want to live in, we would make Philadelphia "magnetic" and encourage more people to invest in these neighborhoods, eventually building a market to re-inhabit Philadelphia's excess vacancy.

Alumni Profile: Tania Nikolic, MCP '03



Tania Nikolic, MCP '03

by JED POSTER
(MCP '14)

Like many older American cities, Philadelphia faces a formidable obstacle to its redevelopment efforts: blighted,

abandoned land. In order to transition disused properties into productive use, a growing number of municipalities across the nation is exploring the utility of land banking. A government-sponsored land bank captures

delinquent, foreclosed, or outright abandoned properties and facilitates their transfer to motivated developers. Because nearly three-quarters of Philadelphia's 40,000 abandoned parcels are held in private ownership, this strategy could be a perfect fit.

Before Philadelphia could even dream of establishing such a mechanism to corral sites for potential redevelopment, however, a sweeping overhaul of the City's land database would be necessary. Enter the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and its Deputy Executive Director of Development, **Tania Nikolic, MCP '03**. "In 2009 the Redevelopment Authority didn't have a clear inventory of which parcels were in the public inventory and available for purchase," Nikolic recalls. "Interested buyers would call in about a specific property, and we'd spend hours poring through Excel spreadsheets of addresses and old appraisals." In addition to the sheer number of City-owned parcels, the plethora of agencies who maintain control of disused land made it challenging for the PRA to establish a comprehensive system for tracking publicly-held land and responding to requests from potential developers. "We needed to create a database management tool that accomplished three goals," Nikolic relates. "First, what do we own? Second, how do we disseminate that list to the public? And third, how do we make it easy for private actors to express interest?"

Nikolic spearheaded a two-plus year project that was designed to achieve exactly that. In collaboration with a private IT consultant, Nikolic and her team created PhillyLandWorks.org, a consumer-facing web app that culls inventory from the Redevelopment Authority's overhauled internal database and presents it in an intuitive way. "The project was borne of an overwhelming need to track each publicly-owned parcel from birth to death," Nikolic describes. "We needed to create a singular set of rules to govern how every City agency handles vacant land that comes into its possession."

With debate over the viability of a Philadelphia Land Bank now in City Council's docket, a new strategy for encouraging sustainable redevelopment is on the city's horizon. Whether or not that vision becomes reality, however, PhillyLandWorks.org has become an invaluable tool in the City's arsenal for combatting blight and encouraging targeted reinvestment by the private sector. As in all planning endeavors, understanding the spatial dimension of the problem is key to effecting its eradication. "After all," Nikolic declares, "it's all about the dirt."

FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

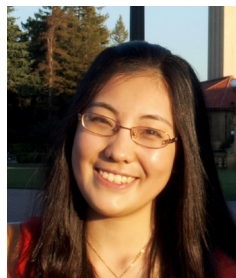
PennPlanning is thrilled to welcome one of the most diverse first-year classes in recent memory—40% of our new students are from outside the United States. We asked a few newcomers about their background, what drew them to Penn, and how they plan to use their degree.

by LANZI LI (MCP '15)

Hometown: Qingdao, China

I have always been asked the question “how did you choose to major in City and Regional Planning in college?” It’s hard to answer because this idea seems rooted in my heart since I started reading, travelling and watching people. While my Dad expected me to become an investment banker, I chose to come to the U.S. to study City and Regional Planning.

I grew up in Qingdao, a city along China’s northeastern coast. I went to The Ohio State University to study Planning for my undergraduate degree. During college, I interned for a year at Columbus 2020, a regional economic development partnership, and at the Qingdao City Planning Bureau for a summer. After that I came directly to Penn to



pursue my Master of City Planning, concentrating in Public-Private Development.

My experience at Ohio State gave me a good introduction to the field of planning and I realized that it really is my passion. Planning is such a comprehensive discipline that it can embrace my broad interests. It is also a profession through which I can put my love of people and society into action. During my internship with Columbus 2020, I found that social and economic aspects of planning interest me the most. I believe cities are places of people, and cities should be created for people.

I was attracted to PennDesign because of its location in Philadelphia, the abundant resources within the University, and the program’s practical focus. After being here for two months, this program has met all of my expectations and more. The Introduction to Property Development course walks us through how to be a developer, which is a profession whose connection to planning I had not considered. I love that course and started to observe things from different perspectives. A friend of mine said, “I came to PennDesign to pave a path to work in the Chinese Government as a planner, but it opens so many other paths for me.” I couldn’t agree more. The program teaches me how to think rather than what to think. Now I am dreaming of working at an international NGO after graduate. I am not sure whether it will change tomorrow, but I am sure Penn will lead me to somewhere bright.

by STEFAN IVANOVSKI (MCP '15)

Hometown: Skopje, Macedonia

“Another factory shutdown” and “hundreds of workers laid off” were some of the headlines that made the breaking news when I grew up in Macedonia. Many educated people—such as architects and engineers—who lost their jobs started driving taxis, mostly as unregistered drivers. Some of these people were my neighbors, and I knew that they wanted to work and provide for their families. Since jobs were—and are—difficult to acquire in the formal economy, many chose to work in the grey sector. Those who had the opportunity to leave the country did so without looking back.

I lived in the Netherlands for three years and I frequently thought to myself, “Why can’t people in Macedonia enjoy the relative socio-economic



prosperity of people in the Netherlands? What makes the Dutch so much better at providing a thriving environment for its citizens?” This is when I started thinking in terms of planning and more specifically,

community and economic development. I knew that if I wanted to make a difference in my country, I would need to get some work-experience in the field—not just a master’s degree in Economic Development.

My experiences growing up in Macedonia—and my experience working on educational programs in Puerto Rico last summer—led me to pursue the Community and Economic Development concentration. While at Penn, my goal is to study the process of creating educational institutions to train the future leaders and entrepreneurs in my home country. The unemployment rate has been over 30% for the past two decades and foreigners have not invested quickly enough to reduce unemployment. We cannot wait idly for development to come from abroad; it has to be promoted from within as well. I believe that there is a lot of untapped human potential and talent in Macedonia that can be fostered by promoting formal and informal educational opportunities.

In the past two months I have made friends with very intelligent, knowledgeable and humble students. Professors continually challenge us to learn about urban issues and think practically about how we can influence decisions in cities and governments. I am confident that the knowledge, skills, and friendships gained at Penn will serve me well in making Macedonia a better place to live.

by MAZEN CHAANINE (MCP '15)

Hometown: Beirut, Lebanon

I was about ten years old when I was first introduced to a broad concept of urban planning. I was at the home of a family friend who, to keep me entertained while the adults were sipping their coffee, suggested I play Sim City on his Nintendo console. At the time, the very idea of designing a city from scratch seemed very appealing. I would spend hours on the game, creating a transportation network for my city, deciding on its zoning plan, and setting up parks and recreational areas. As I grew in age and maturity, so did my love for planning. By then, I had a clearer understanding of the term as an academic and professional discipline, and was certain of my desire to pursue a career in this field.



After obtaining a degree in Economics from the American University of Beirut, and working for three years with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Beirut, I decided to apply for a master’s

degree in planning. Being particularly fond of transportation-related issues, I was looking for a program that offered a concentration in this field. Penn was the perfect fit. Not only is it located in an “urban laboratory,” the very fascinating city of Philadelphia, it also boasts a practical and straight-to-the-point curriculum. What I came to discover at Penn upon my arrival is just how much attention we receive from both staff and faculty members. Here, one truly feels special, and there is no other place I would have hoped to be in.

Ultimately, my professional goal is to focus on the development of transit-oriented urban centers in developing and emerging countries, where urban growth will be the most pronounced. I aim to look at more efficient transportation schemes that have the power to accelerate economic development. Big dreams? Perhaps. But that’s the beauty of it all, and I know that I can count on Penn to help me succeed.

NEW FACULTY



Assistant Professor Francesca Ammon

by MARIE SUVANSIN (MCP '15)

PennPlanning welcomes historian Francesca Ammon, whose most recent appointment was as a Visiting Scholar at the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. I spoke with Dr. Ammon about her research interests, what attracted her to PennPlanning, and how her experience in Philadelphia has been so far.

Q: What does your current research primarily focus on?

A: My primary research interest is the cultural history of the bulldozer. In postwar decades, the bulldozer made urban renewal possible. It was a moment when big plans were being implemented, and there was a large appetite for redevelopment through land clearance. I am also researching the influences of attempts to revitalize Ashbury Park, NJ, which suffered from postwar deindustrialization. What makes Ashbury Park unique is that the industry was tourism.

Q: What attracted you to PennPlanning?

A: I saw coming to PennPlanning as a great opportunity to teach the history of the built environment. The humanistic study of design and history of the built environment are strengths of this school, and there is always a need to study these areas further.

Q: What has your impression been of PennPlanning so far?

A: It is exciting to teach people who are interested in practice and academic research, from undergraduate to Ph.D. students. I also appreciate how Penn Planning draws upon Philadelphia as a laboratory they can both research and contribute to.

Q: How do you like living in Philadelphia so far?

A: I am enjoying living here. Philadelphia is a highly livable and walkable city. There is a great mix of urban density and access to open space like Fairmount Park, where I can take my young children.



Assistant Professor Erick Guerra

by JIZHE YANG (MCP '15)

Dr. Erick Guerra joined the City and Regional Planning Department this fall. He completed his Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, Master of Urban Planning at Harvard University, and Bachelor of Arts at the University of Pennsylvania.

Prior to coming to Penn, Professor Guerra did extensive research and consultation work in the field of transportation and land use for a variety of development agencies across the globe including the City of Cambridge (Mass.), UN-HABITAT, and Cities Development Initiative for Asia. His primary research interest is in finding ways to integrate public transportation and lower cost housing into cities around the globe.

Currently, Professor Guerra is teaching Quantitative Planning Analysis Methods and Introduction to Transportation Planning. This spring he will teach Transit Planning and Operations, a course on comparative case studies of international practices and implementations of transportation and land use policies.

With good students, good faculty and lots of opportunities going on, he finds Penn a very attractive place to be. Having studied here as an undergrad, he loves Philadelphia and knows the place well. The idea of building the transportation program with Professor Ryerson is particularly exciting for him.

Kate Daniel Wins!

At the PennDesign Awards Ceremony on May 13, **Kate Daniel** won the inaugural **Outstanding Service to Students Award** in recognition of her commitment to going above and beyond the call of duty to help our students succeed. *The Link* and the PennPlanning community offer hearty congratulations to Kate for this long-overdue award!



Assistant Professor Megan Smirti Ryerson

by JOHN CHRISTOPHER (MCP'15)

Rounding out the crop of new professors, Dr. Megan Ryerson joined the faculty this fall as an Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning. Dr. Ryerson completed her B.Sc. of Systems Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania in 2003, and worked for a consulting firm before earning her Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley in 2010.

Dr. Ryerson became interested in transportation because of the human element. She finds the field's complex mix of economics, planning, and modeling fascinating. In her current research, Ryerson aims to design and optimize networks that are resilient in times of outage. She recounted the story of how the 2011 tsunami in Japan created a situation where a number of airplanes reached "critical fuel" status while waiting to land. She sees network optimization and innovative, ad-hoc infrastructure management as a way to lower risk, inconvenience, and inefficiency in situations like this. Though her interests span far and wide, she is particularly interested in aviation, ground and air logistics systems, and high-speed rail.

In the spring semester, Dr. Ryerson will guide an Advanced Transportation Seminar that will be designed to incorporate students from a variety of backgrounds and skill levels. She noted that she expects students from across PennPlanning, as well as from Systems Engineering.

Transportation is a truly multi-disciplinary field that requires understanding of economics, engineering, modeling, and theory. Dr. Ryerson comes to Penn at a time when the campus has many transportation initiatives that it hopes to weave into a well-organized, cross-cutting collaboration. She will be a central figure in strengthening the ties between Penn's various transportation-oriented initiatives. Her arrival at the University of Pennsylvania is a welcome addition to the transportation faculty at the University.

OUT IN THE REAL WORLD

by TALI CANTOR (MCP '14)



Urban Design

This summer I had a unique opportunity to work as an intern in two different planning environments: the **New York City Department of City Planning**, and **AECOM's** New York Design + Planning office.

As a Planning Intern for the Manhattan Borough Office at DCP, I split my time between two projects focused on public open space: Publicly Owned Public Spaces (POPS) and the High Line. POPS were created as part of an incentive-zoning program that permits greater density—bonus floor-area ratio—if the developer provides and maintains public open space on site. My main POPS task was to review site plans, certifications, and zoning calculations for spaces built since 2000 for an updated electronic database. I was also responsible for inspecting new proposals to ensure they adhere to the approved site plan and zoning requirements. I even had the chance to present my findings to DCP Commissioner Amanda Burden.

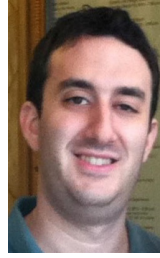
My second project at DCP focused on development surrounding the High Line as a result of the 2005 West Chelsea rezoning. The rezoning aims to protect the park and access points for public use by allowing property owners to transfer development rights from the High Line to designated receiving sites within the High Line Transfer Corridor (HLTC). Using GIS, my co-intern and I identified lots that fell into the HLTC, and examined tax and legal records for existing transfers to determine the amount remaining for future development.

In addition to experiencing day-to-day life at the planning agency, the internship with DCP offered regular field trips to current planning and development site throughout NYC, including hard-hat tours of the High Line's third section, and Governor's Island Park.

While my projects at DCP allowed me to dive into New York's complex zoning and land use, at AECOM I was able to use more of the design skills acquired in my urban design coursework at Penn. As an Urban Design Intern, I assisted design staff on graphic materials and research for an international design competition for a campus master plan and a waterfront site in East Newark. Working in this fast-paced environment allowed me to hone my graphic skills, and gain exposure to the design process at a global firm.

The combination of these internships gave me a broader view into the wide range of planning and design work within the public and private sectors. I look forward to exploring this further upon graduating from Penn.

by JEREMY STRAUSS (MCP '14)



Sustainable Transportation & Infrastructure Planning

This past summer, I interned with the **Montgomery County, Maryland Planning Department**, a subsidiary of the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission, in beautiful Silver Spring, Maryland. My position was

situated within the Department's Functional Planning and Policy Division (FPP), which addresses countywide issues related to transportation, environment, and capital improvements. For the most part, my internship was focused on projects within FPP's transportation division.

While working in support of the County's various area master plans, FPP also develops functional plans meant to guide larger geographic regions. One such functional plan on which I had the pleasure of working was the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan. Over the summer, the Montgomery Planning Board approved the plan, which proposes a new, lengthy transit network largely comprised of Bus Rapid Transit, for review by the County Council.

I also had the opportunity to sit in on several coordination meetings reviewing a proposed design for the Bethesda Purple Line Station, a County-approved light rail network that will ultimately span east to west from Prince George's County to Bethesda, filling a major gap in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority's MetroRail system. Over the summer, FPP planners, alongside stakeholders from agencies such as WMATA and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, worked through the process of determining where the western terminus should be situated, and how a bike trail could fit into the Bethesda station's construction.

Additionally, I had the chance to expand my horizons and seek work outside of FPP. For instance, my supervisors granted me the opportunity to evaluate the State of Maryland's Forest Conservation Program within Montgomery County. In an effort to preserve forest land for environmental and stormwater reasons, any new development in the state (unless given an exception) must produce a Forest Conservation Plan showing amounts of forest destroyed or planted (on or off site), and how the developer will offset or account for any loss. My evaluation was presented to an environmental review board.

Overall, my experience was enjoyable. Throughout the summer, I learned a great deal about the functions and daily tasks of a planning department, as well as how a planning board interacts with its department.

by AMY VERBOFSKY (MCP '14/MPA '15)



Community & Economic Development

I joined the **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)**—Philadelphia's Metropolitan Planning Organization—as a Food System Planning Intern in September 2012 and was fortunate enough to

be offered a position for the summer as well. During my time at DVRPC, I've focused primarily on two projects: one on the challenges facing beginning and small farmers and the other on developing strategies to enhance Camden's economy around the food sector.

When I started at DVRPC, I had very little knowledge about financing or farming, but was able to gain an understanding of the problem by speaking with professionals in the field and by reading anything I could get my hands on. Over the course of the past year, I developed **Resources for Small and Beginning Farmers: A Guide to Financial and Technical Assistance**, which addresses a number of the challenges that small and beginning farmers face in accessing knowledge, land, and financing. My favorite part of this project was interviewing people at organizations across the country who have developed innovative solutions to some of the issues facing beginning farmers, like the Carrot Project, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, and Whole Foods. I was able to present my research and recommendations at the August meeting of the Greater Philadelphia Food System Stakeholder Committee.

I have also worked on the Camden Food Economy Strategy, a joint effort to create strategies that use food as a way to promote economic development and revitalization in Camden. For this project, I helped to organize a number of Work Group, Advisory Committee, and one-on-one meetings with stakeholders throughout the city, including organizations like Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers, Heart of Camden, and the Center for Environmental Transformation. Additionally, I conducted best practice research, focusing largely on how other cities have implemented food innovation zones. I will continue to support DVRPC's work on this project throughout the fall semester.

My time at DVRPC has been a wonderful learning experience. My supervisor has pushed me to grow professionally by encouraging me to take on more responsibility and to use the opportunities at DVRPC to expand my professional network. The internship has also helped to reinforce my desire to pursue a career within a governmental or quasi-governmental organization in the Philadelphia area that focuses on economic development.

OUT IN THE REAL WORLD

by XIAOXIA (Summer) DONG (MCP '14)



Sustainable Transportation & Infrastructure Planning

Many say that China has become a playground for architects and planners. This past summer, I had the opportunity to explore this maxim through my internship with **Werkhart International** in **Beijing**. Werhart is an

architecture, design, and planning firm based in Frankfurt, Germany with branch offices in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Beijing. I participated in two projects to develop master plans for two rural towns in Henan Province and Inner-Mongolia in central and northeast China, respectively. The internship allowed me to learn from professionals and apply classroom knowledge to real world practice. More importantly, I was able to examine the current planning environment and trends in China.

Since 2011, the central government has committed to accelerating urbanization. Officials in rural areas have responded by pursuing large-scale developments to capitalize on the large pool of financial resources that were not available only a few years ago. The Henan project was developed in this political context. The site for the project encompasses an area of 5,200 acres, most of which is currently either undeveloped or underdeveloped. The master plan aims to transform the site with skyscrapers, high-rise apartment buildings, wide streets, and other elements that are conventionally associated with the term "modernity." My work involved performing economic research, positioning and mapping bus stops and parking lots, developing a pedestrian circulation plan along rivers and other water features, and creating illustrations on various subjects for this area.

The lessons I learned during my internship were both informative and provocative. While the master plan might look like what would happen if Le Corbusier were handed the key to the planning office, it nonetheless epitomizes the current planning trends in similar settings across China. Deep building setbacks, long blocks, wide streets, separated uses, and other elements that have often been deemed detrimental to placemaking are repeatedly found in these large-scale rural development plans. However, what was usually neglected was the concept of human scale. I couldn't figure out whether the neglect was intentional due to the brevity of my internship, but to me, the lack of a human angle was an obvious flaw. As China is transitioning from a rural to an urban economy, it is critical to create places that allow citizens to live with comfort and dignity while also accommodating unprecedented growth.

by ERIN LONOFF (MCP '14)



Public-Private Development

This summer I worked for **HR&A Advisors**, a real estate and economic development consulting firm, in their **New York** office. I had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects for both public and private

sector clients, with short- and long-term deadlines, as well as some business development work. I had never had an internship like this before where I was truly immersed into work so quickly. By 11am on my first day I was busy on two projects with impending deadlines, and this level of work was sustained through 6:00pm on my last day of work, three months later. Because of this immersion into project work, I learned a lot about HR&A's specialties, as well as about the consulting field.

My role on the projects primarily consisted of conducting research and then analyzing and synthesizing the relevant information into either a written report or a presentation that would later be given to the client. Project type varied greatly and included an economic and market analysis of a neighborhood as part of a larger planning study; a benefit-cost analysis for a TIGER Grant application; and case study research of economic development and neighborhood transformation near recently constructed sports stadia. I was pleasantly surprised by how much my coursework at Penn had prepared me for my summer at HR&A. Specifically, I drew heavily upon our Quantitative Planning Methods and Analysis and Urban Economics courses. I also had the opportunity to perform spatial analysis, so having studied GIS with Dana Tomlin was also crucial.

My summer internship at HR&A was a great experience not only because of the projects and clients, but also because of the work environment and people with whom I worked. Everyone was extremely friendly and passionate about the work they do, which made the internship that much more rewarding.

by WESLEY VAUGHN (MCP '14)



Land Use & Environmental Planning

After three phone calls and more than 30 emails over a three-month span, I secured the opportunity to intern for **Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ)** in **Miami** this past summer.

DPZ was the first planning firm that I heard about, so I had always kicked around the idea that I could work there. However, as a policy wonk with a communications background, my skillset isn't typically associated with an architecturally minded firm known for its watercolor renderings. I assured them, though, that they would never regret hiring me and that I would bake cookies.

Working at DPZ is like working in two different worlds. In one, employees operate like those at other firms. They work on long-term projects, publish reports, and communicate with clients.

In the other, the firm operates at a frantic pace while Andrés Duany is in the office. Duany consistently has at least three huge ideas a day, and he will grab those nearest to him to meld those ideas into an actionable product until he is satisfied. It is exhilarating and stressful as you mentally sprint to keep up. One idea that I worked on is a local government subsidiarity embedded in "Lean Urbanism," an evolutionary offshoot that attempts to reduce inefficient bureaucracy.

Beyond the New Urbanist projects that DPZ is known for, the firm is involved in the development of the New Urbanist theory and practice and regularly publishes books on concepts such as the Rural-to-Urban Transect. Employees from the Philippines, Belarus, Cuba, and Brazil also support the firm's international work.

The office operates with the help of Cuban espresso, the several dogs that roam the hallways, and the cheap Central American food from the surrounding Little Havana area. I didn't pick up much Spanish this summer, but I now know that a pupusa de chicharrón and café con leche is all you need in life.

I hope I made it clear how much I enjoyed working at DPZ and in Miami. My true interest actually lies in working in the public sector for post-industrial cities, but working in the private sector in such a dynamic (and sunny and beautiful) city certainly broadened my perspective in a positive way.

THE LINK

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
SCHOOL OF DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING
210 S. 34TH STREET
127 MEYERSON HALL
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104-6311

Non Profit Organization
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Permit No. 2563
Philadelphia, PA
19104-6311

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Contributors

The Link is published by students of the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Design.

Department of City & Regional Planning
University of Pennsylvania
210 South 34th Street
127 Meyerson Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6311
Phone: 215.898.8329
Fax: 215.898.5731

Senior Editor: Jed Poster, MCP '14
Junior Editor: John Christopher, MCP '15
Design Editor: Ryan Debold, MCP '14
Contributors: Tali Cantor, Mazen Chaanine, John Christopher, Xiaoxia (Summer)
Dong, Stefan Ivanovski, Lanzi Li, Erin Lonoff, Jed Poster, Jeremy Strauss, Marie
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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 kate@design.upenn.edu or better yet, log onto <http://www.alumniconnections.com/penn/> to update your info.



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