



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**MEMPHIS**®

City & Regional Planning



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



## City and Regional Planning Vision

The Department of City and Regional Planning at The University of Memphis will be nationally recognized as a program that builds on deep community ties and interdisciplinary connections to empower students, graduates, and partners in the pursuit of just, equitable, and sustainable cities and regions.

## City and Regional Planning Mission

Our mission is to [educate](#) the next generation of inspired urban planners and scholars, conduct [research](#) that influences planning policy and knowledge, and [engage](#) in community partnerships to affect local [change](#).

## City and Regional Planning Values

### Student Success

We provide students with opportunities to participate as members of the local planning community.

### Justice, Diversity and Inclusion

We promote democratic learning through exposure to multiple perspectives and experiences. We pursue policies, plans, and projects that go beyond treating symptoms and confront systemic barriers that limit equal access to opportunity.

### Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity

We seek partnerships both within and beyond the University to enhance our actions and our outcomes.

### Service and Community Engagement

We engage our community, not as a laboratory, but through reciprocal partnerships in an engaged scholarship model.

### Sustainability

We pursue actions and research that support long-lasting environmental, social, and economic health.

### Innovation

We seek new approaches to problems to advance planning practice.

Dear Friends,

The Department of City & Regional Planning values our relationships with our graduates and local planning professionals. This annual report allows us to reflect on our recent accomplishments as we look ahead to the future together. We hope you'll enjoy reviewing the highlights of our achievements in education and career placement, research, and community engagement.

Our success in these endeavors has not gone unnoticed by our peers. I am happy to report that our program is once again ranked among the Top 10 in the South (#8) in Planetizen's 2023 Guide to Graduate Urban Planning Programs. This is the second time we've received this distinction in their last three reports. Planetizen's guide is the only comprehensive ranking of programs in the field. The rankings are based on the opinions of educators, program characteristics, faculty characteristics, and student characteristics.

I believe that the most impressive accomplishment for our department in 2022-2023 was earned by our students, who took 2nd Place overall in the American Planning Association's Student Design Competition! You can read about that and more here.

We look forward to seeing many of you in Memphis for the TAPA conference in October!

Sincerely,





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## New Faces



**Cathy Moorehead** joined the team in the summer of 2022 as our Administrative Associate I. Cathy had previously served as an Advanced Academics Assistant for Memphis-Shelby County Schools, and has experience in higher education in roles at Southwest Tennessee Community College and the University of Mississippi.



**Atyeh Ashtari** will join the department as an Assistant Professor in the fall of 2023. Atyeh is completing her PhD in Regional Planning at the University of Illinois-Champaign, and holds degrees in Urban and Regional Planning, Landscape Architecture, and Architectural Engineering. Atyeh's research interests center community as the main unit of analysis and emphasis, and broadly lie within the realms of sustainable community-based development; community economies; intersectionality; participatory action research; feminist methodologies and storytelling. She has co-authored several publications, and has done research in Iran, the United States, and Ecuador.



## Student Enrollment and Graduation

The Master of City and Regional Planning program enrolled 12 new students in the 2022-2023 academic year. We continue to attract students from a wide geographic area. Over the past three years, more than 50 percent of our students hold undergraduate degrees from institutions outside of Tennessee. We have enrolled international students from Ghana, Bangladesh, Iran, Italy, and the UK. We have expanded our opportunities to provide interdisciplinary graduate education by helping students craft dual master's degree paths, with recent graduates pairing their planning degree with degrees in Anthropology, Architecture, Geography and Social Work. Our faculty are also supervising several students in the new interdisciplinary Urban Affairs PhD program.

The department awarded 13 master's degrees during the 2022-2023 academic year. Congratulations to the following graduates:

### Miles Carter

BS, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

### Julia Nickle

BS, University of Kentucky

### William Ezzell

BA, Bowling Green State University

### Nabanita Nira

BArch, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

### Robert Harris

BS, Jackson State University

### Amanda O'Meara

BA, University of Memphis

### Andrew Hockensmith

BA, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

### Robin Richardson

BA, Rhodes College

### Javlon Jones

BS, Tennessee State University

### William Simco

BA, University of Memphis  
MS, University of Memphis

### Laura Lamboley

BA, Davidson College

### Sophie Vogel

BS, University of Central Lancashire

### Jafrin Mouli

BURP, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology

### Jasmine Bowden,

BA, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## Career Connections: Fellowships, Assistantships, and Job Placement

Our active agenda of funded research and partnerships with local community development organizations enables us to support many of our students with graduate assistantships, internships, or fellowships. These opportunities allow students to gain valuable practical experience while addressing planning problems in the City of Memphis.

Externally funded internship placements in 2022-2023 included:

### Memphis Area Transit Authority

Miles Carter      Ja'Ravia Hemphill

### City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development

Nabanita Nira

### Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development

Sophie Vogel      Laura Lamboley      Robin Richardson  
Robert Harris

### City of Memphis Bikeway and Pedestrian Program

Will Ezzell

During 2022-2023, four of our students participated in the HCD Fellowship program, funded by the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Those students were placed with the following agencies:

### Innovate Memphis

Jafrin Mouli

### Memphis Medical District Collaborative

Leta Rowan

### Center for Transforming Communities

Nicholas Wardroup

### Binghamton Development Corporation

Amanda O'Meara

The following graduate assistants worked with faculty in the Department:

Julia Nickle      Afsana Tarannum      Sagorika Zannat

## Job Placement

Here is where our 2023 graduates have started their planning careers:

<b>Miles Carter</b>	Transportation Planner, Gresham Smith (Nashville)
<b>William Ezzell</b>	Bikeway and Pedestrian Program Coordinator, City of Memphis
<b>Robert Harris</b>	Junior Planner, Ragan Smith (Nashville)
<b>Andrew Hockensmith</b>	Assistant Planning Director, City of Horn Lake, MS
<b>Javlon Jones</b>	Project Manager – Major Capitol, Kroger, Nashville, TN
<b>Laura Lamboley</b>	Urban Planner, Green Transportation, Madison, WI
<b>Jafrin Mouli</b>	Transportation Planner, Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>Julia Nickle</b>	Community Development Specialist, Sankofa CDC, New Orleans, LA
<b>Nabanita Nira</b>	Planner, Town of Collierville
<b>Amanda O'Meara</b>	Project Analyst, City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development
<b>Robin Richardson</b>	Planner, Memphis-Shelby County Office of Sustainability and Resilience
<b>William Simco</b>	Planner I – Stormwater, City of Horn Lake, MS
<b>Sophie Vogel</b>	Associate Planner, City of Columbus, OH
<b>Jasmin Bowden</b>	Program Manager, The Works, Inc., Memphis, TN



## Alumni Notes

The 2022-2023 academic year was also full of career changes and advancements for the program's alumni.

**Paul Luker** (1995) took over as Director of Planning for the City of Lakeland (TN), a role he previously held in West Memphis (AR).

**Lisa Milligan** (1999) was promoted to Assistant Director of Land Development at Metro Nashville Planning Department.

**Jessica Buttermore** (2010) is splitting time as Data Research Analyst with the Institute for Health Equity and Community Justice at Rhodes College and a Digital Organizer for ACORN International.

**Katie McKeel** (2014) was promoted from Project Manager to Environmental Planning Manager for HNTB in Nashville.

**Mandana Hooshyar** (2016) is working with A2H as an Architectural Designer.

**Brian Crooks** (2017) relocated from Columbia, South Carolina to Georgia where he is Planner with the City of Pooler.

**Meredith Duvall** (2017) was promoted to City Planning & Code Compliance Manager for the City of Gillette (WY) and will soon be adding an Economic Development title.

**Patrick Besseliever** (2018) was promoted to Appraiser with Cushman & Wakefield in their Jackson (MS) office and has been teaching Principles of Real Estate as an Adjunct Professor at Mississippi State University.

**Christina Crutchfield** (2018) moved from The Heights CDC to BLDG Memphis in their newly-created position of Director of Neighborhood Planning.

**Katie Flynn Koleini** (2018) left the Downtown Memphis Commission for New York City where she works as a Senior Associate of Development for the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund.

**Jackson McNeil** (2018) returned to Memphis from New York City and is serving as the Transportation and Mobility Director for Innovate Memphis.

**Jim Carpenter** (2020) is a Planner II with the City of Galatin (TN).

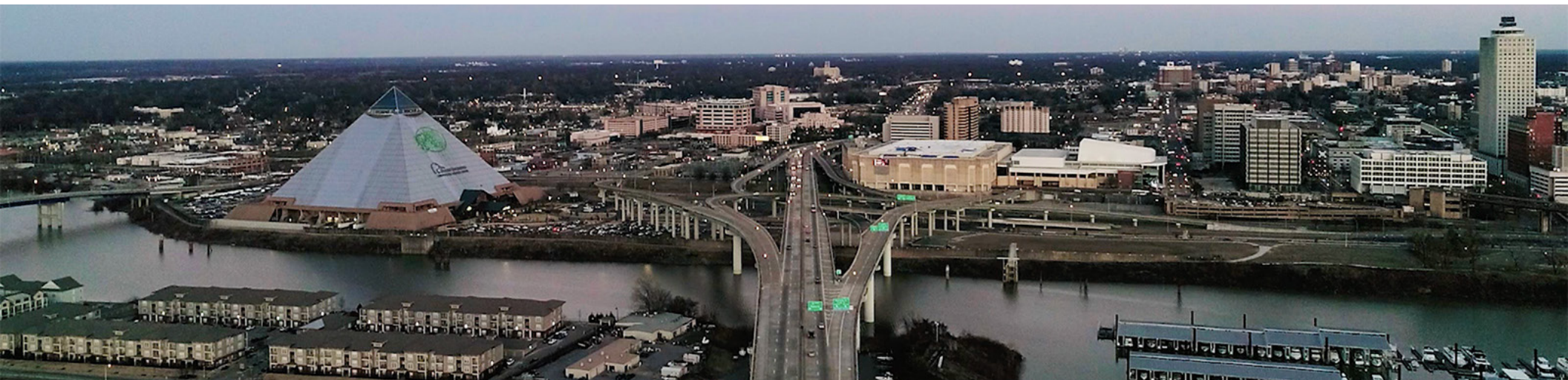
**Clarke Shupe-Diggs** (2020) relocated to Chicago, where she is a Research Analyst with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

**Alex Barthol** (2021) is working alongside Paul Luker as Staff Planner in Lakeland.

**Suzie Marshall** (2021) returned to Texas, where she is a Planner for the City of San Antonio.

**Kevin Murphy** (2021) is a Planner II Chester County (NC) Department of Community Development.

If we missed any alumni career advancement or noteworthy accomplishments, send us a note and we'll be sure to share on social media!





## Community Connections

Students in our 2022 Comprehensive Planning Studio, led by **Dr. Andy Guthrie**, partnered with JUICE Orange Mound to produce a progress report on planning activities and projects currently underway in the neighborhood and lead a community visioning process for the beautification and reactivation of a long-disinvested former center of street life and Black entrepreneurship in the neighborhood.



Students in our 2022 Project Planning Studio, led by **Dr. Stephen Diko**, partnered with The Works, Inc. and the City of Memphis Division of Engineering on the theme Addressing Urban Pluvial Flooding through Community Engaged Research. The final report, titled Understanding Urban Pluvial Risk in South Memphis, informed community engagement activities in South Memphis with the support of The Works, Inc.

**Dr. Charlie Santo** engaged in a series of conversations with leaders in rural West-Tennessee communities about the potential development impacts of the Ford Blue Oval city project. He presented and led conversation at The West Tennessee Mega-Site / Blue Oval City Next Steps Forum, hosted by Memphis Area Association of Governments, and at the West Tennessee Associated Builders and Contractors leadership meeting.



Dr. Santo is also a regular commentator on Emily Trenholm's (2001) Memphis Metropolis weekly radio show and podcast. The show airs Monday's at 1:00 on WXYR 91.7, Memphis newest non-profit community radio station. You can also find episodes anywhere you get your podcasts.

**WXYR**  
MEMPHIS / 91.7 FM

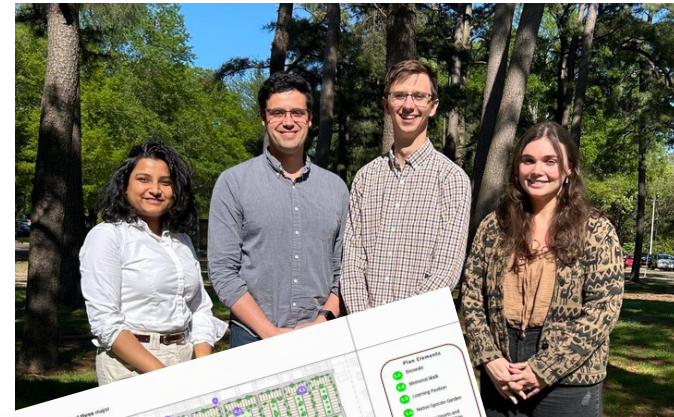


## Student Achievements

Congratulations to the MCRP students who formed the "Memphis Design Group" to compete in the **2023 American Planning Association Student Design Competition**. The team was among three finalists chosen to present their work to an expert jury at the APA National Planning Conference in Philadelphia in April. They were awarded 2nd Place overall!

The Logan Triangle in Philadelphia -- the site chosen for the competition -- is fraught with a painful history of environmental missteps, policy miscues, and failures of public planning. The team developed a thorough, thoughtful, contextually sensitive, and visually appealing plan for the revitalization of the Logan Triangle, that centers on "a culture of healing, resilience, and sustainability," and builds on the hopes of wishes of area residents. You can view the team's impressive [work here](#).

The team members (pictured below) are: **Afsana Tarannum, Isaac Bacon, Nicholas Wardroup, and Ellie Richardson**.



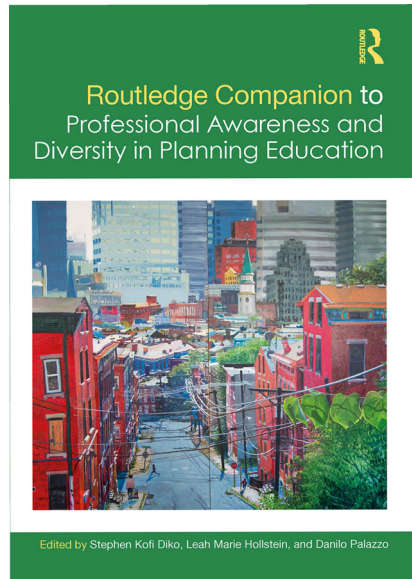


## Research Highlights

**Dr. Reza Banai** continued his research on industrial blight, sprawl, and neighborhood impact, working with master's and doctoral students and interdisciplinary faculty partners to produce journal articles and 2 book chapters in *Advances in Urbanism, Smart Cities, and Sustainability* (Chatterjee, U. et al. eds). Dr. Banai also worked with a Communities of Research Scholars Program team at the UofM, focused on the Watershed Impact of Industrial Blight in Memphis and Shelby County Tennessee.



**Dr. Stephen Diko** co-edited a book titled *Routledge Companion to Professional Awareness and Diversity in Planning Education*. The inspiration and motivation of the book are summarized in [The Conversation article](#) "Urban planning is often overlooked as a career – here are some ways to change that", and also featured in the [Planetizen article](#), "Why Aren't There More Planners?". In addition, Dr. Diko published 3 book chapters and 7 articles in his research area of urban greenspace, climate change, and sustainability. He also gave a guest lecture at the University of Cincinnati as part of the School of Planning Lecture Series on Planning for Sustainable Urban Futures.



**Dr. Andy Guthrie** produced multiple journal submissions focused on transportation planning and innovation both in Memphis and nationally/internationally, as well as on the housing and political economic implications of public transit improvements—all of it with a strong social equity perspective. He also continued his research under the \$100,000 Accelerating Innovative Mobility – Memphis Area Transit Authority Case Study grant in partnership with faculty in Civil Engineering. His work on the project involved developing practical baseline measurements of job accessibility by transit in Memphis to support scenario building around proposed deployment of on-demand mobility services in targeted portions of the MATA service area.



**Dr. Charlie Santo** continued to expand on research related to his City in Song class, exploring the utility of popular music as form of ethnographic record and a tool for Urban Studies pedagogy. In addition to conference presentations and journal submissions, Dr. Santo is developing an on-line curriculum tool that uses key songs across a set of related categories, with short lesson plans and discussion questions, to examine the evolution of American cities post World War II. **Julia Nickle** (MCRP 2023) is assisting on the project.







**Andy Kitsinger**, Director of the UofM Design Collaborative, is leading the Department's involvement in a multi-university, Urban-Rural Systems Research Coordination Network funded by the National Science Foundation. The 5-year project focuses on common challenges affecting urban and rural communities in the Mississippi River Basin. The partnering universities are Iowa State University (lead), University of Minnesota, University of Missouri, and Louisiana State University. Five metropolitan areas within the river basin form the backbone of the project: Minneapolis/St. Paul, Davenport, St. Louis, Memphis, and Baton Rouge.



## Department Events and What's Ahead

In the spring, the department kicked off a new **Career Development Lunch and Learn** series. Our first guest was Christian Lentz, Principal Planner who manages the Arkansas office of Half Associates, a multi-disciplinary engineering, planning and design firm based in Richardson, Texas. Lentz shared his experience in moving from the public sector into private consulting and offered his perspective on what firms are looking for when considering early career hires. We will continue this series in 2023, bringing planners from the public sector, the nonprofit world, and planning graduates who have taken different career paths altogether. If you'd like to participate, drop us a line!


City & Regional Planning



**CAREER DEVELOPMENT LUNCH & LEARN**

Career development session for City Planning Students interested in career or internships in private sector consulting.


**Thursday**  
2 March  
Time Noon

University Center  
Iris Room (338)

Lunch will be provided

**SPEAKER:**  
**Christian Lentz**  
AICP, CNV-A  
**half**

Christian Lentz will offer insights on what private consulting firms are looking for when considering young hires.

The Mississippi River Basin Urban-Rural Systems Research Coordination Network is hosting a series of workshops in each of its five participating metro areas. The Memphis workshop is currently slated for Spring 2024. Look for more information coming later this year.

The **Tennessee Chapter of the American Planning Association (TAPA)** will hold its annual conference in Memphis this fall (October 25-27). We're looking forward to seeing alumni and colleagues from across the state in the Bluff City.



And finally, next academic year (2024-2025) will mark the **50th Anniversary of the Master of City and Regional Planning program** at the University of Memphis! We'll be planning some special events and ways to celebrate the milestone. If anyone has suggestions, we'd love to hear them!



## Keep in Touch

If you have a new address, or any news you would like included in a future annual report or newsletter, or posted on our website, please contact us at [cityplanning@memphis.edu](mailto:cityplanning@memphis.edu) or by phone at (901) 678-2161.

You can also follow us on Facebook at  
<http://www.facebook.com/crp.memphis>  
or join our group on LinkedIn:

<http://www.linkedin.com/groups/University-Memphis-City-Regional-Planning-3960776>

## Support the Department

If you would like to make a contribution to support the efforts of the Department of City and Regional Planning, you can do so online at  
<http://www.memphis.edu/giving> (be sure to specify the City and Regional Planning Foundation Fund 20729) or mail your contribution, payable to The University of Memphis Foundation\*, to:

City & Regional Planning  
107 Browning Hall, University of Memphis  
Memphis, TN 38152

\*be sure to indicate in the Memo line that the donation is to  
Fund 20729, City and Regional Planning

## Faculty and Staff

Charles A. Santo, Chair and Associate Professor

Atyeh Ashtari, Assistant Professor

Reza Banai, Professor

Stephen Diko, Assistant Professor

Andy Guthrie, Assistant Professor

Andy Kitsinger, Director, UMDC

Susan L. Roakes, Professor Emeritus

Cathy Moorehead, Administrative Associate I



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