



CONNECTIONS



Planning, Health, and the Built Environment

By Jeff Sledge

A pandemic is sweeping most westernized cultures today, rooted not in an invading bacterium or virus, but in how and where we live. Questions about health and the built environment have, since the time of English physician John Snow and the London cholera outbreak of 1854, often focused on illness and death. Cities have historically concentrated and proliferated various diseases through air and water contaminants and the location and design of buildings and other infrastructure that negatively impact mental, emotional, and physical health. The tools that Snow used to discover the epicenter of disease outbreaks are the lineal ancestors of those used by planners and public health practitioners today. Snow arranged maps of London’s infrastructure as separate elements with the disease incidents and deaths overlaid on a base map. Intersections between these data layers revealed to Snow that faulty water systems combined with local behaviors—the where and

the how of the outbreak—led to the spread of the disease. It was this revelation that led to an effective intervention that ended the spread of cholera.

Research on urban morbidity and mortality drove over a century’s worth of effort to improve public health and was the genesis of extensive urban policy initiatives, including land use zoning codes and other regulatory reforms. Coupled with advances in bacteriology and virology, as well as advances in medical procedures and treatment availability, we have seen dramatic changes in communicable disease outbreaks as well as our ability to react to and predict them. By no means has the threat of communicable disease disappeared, but it has significantly diminished in the last several decades. And for most places in the United States, communicable disease is no longer linked to the quality of the built environment.

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IN 2004, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN RESEARCH SCIENTIST DR. JEFFREY SLEDGE began studying methods of recording and

analyzing movement and fundamental biometric data, such as heart rate and respiration, in relation to the built environment with the goal of establishing parameters for how individuals expended energy every day. There had been significant prior work on human energy expenditures in a laboratory or other controlled setting, but that data wasn't well-tied to real-life interactions of place, time and disease. To facilitate this, Dr. Sledge tied high accuracy biometrics and environmental sensor to GPS points of monitoring devices given to subjects in a study. By combining the data layers into a geographic information system, he was able to visualize patterns of movement and effort as individuals went about their day. This moved the conversation about human energy expenditures, opening up quantitatively grounded questions about what happens in-between treatment applications and understanding what happens to the body as life is lived. Since this work, Dr. Sledge has worked with URPL and the UW School of Medicine and Public Health on assessing adolescents at risk for metabolic disease. He has also been working with Indiana University's Melvin and Bren Simon Cancer Institute on assessing and treating women with breast cancer. His work in both areas studies the relation of the individuals' energy capacity to their disease, allowing the research teams to design treatment regimes that used the built environment as part of therapy.

Now, we are excited to announce the next phase in this work by exploring the creation of a new URPL lab headed by Dr. Sledge that will focus on the connections between health and the built environment. Preventing health impacts, reducing healthcare costs, and providing individualized information systems for healthier lives are some of the issues we will be pursuing in this new URPL lab.

Today we find ourselves recognizing new health concerns arising from the built environment: chronic disease. Chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes present us with complicated challenges, with their high certainty of long-term and often complex morbidities and eventual mortality. The costs are not just financial, but personal and social as well. They include reduced quality of life and productivity, emotional burdens of providing long-term care, and the various social effects of persistent poor health.

If we focus only on treating the diseases themselves, we fail to address the root of these public health challenges and have done nothing to prevent future incidences of chronic disease. Identifying the sources of the diseases in the built environment can get us closer to that goal. Piggybacking off of John Snow's legacy, we must examine how the built environment people live in can be itself transformed into an aspect of disease treatment protocols. We must have conversations about how we can reshape the built environment to enable healthier living.

A little over a decade ago a combined academic and clinical team, with leadership from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (URPL), began to pose questions about health and place in a very different way. This team believed that the question of harms of disease should be complemented with questions about strategies for wellness from a planning perspective and recognized that we needed to build a clear understanding of the causal relationships between chronic disease and place. Initially, researchers pursued separate paths, looking at individual parts of the planning and health puzzle. More recently those efforts have been coming together to build a more coherent picture and to provide clearer direction for future research and importantly, for practices that enhance health.

For example, we know that parks are one type of land use that can enhance healthier living by providing places to exercise and pursue other recreational opportunities. Streets and sidewalks are slowly being incorporated and

enhanced into making places more livable, but they often still remain dangerous to bicyclists and pedestrians. What would happen if we committed to planning our neighborhoods and communities to promote good health? What would these places look like if we designed them with the intention to help cure a disease like cancer? Is this even possible? Can places be designed to mitigate disease harms or help people escape from chronic illness? Can these places prevent these diseases from happening in the first place? These are the types of questions being explored by researchers working on planning and the built environment, and they are critical to our future well-being.

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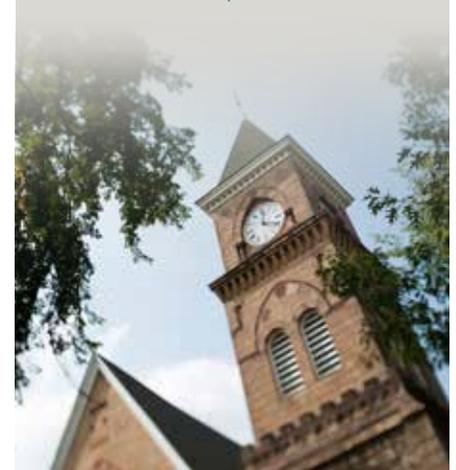
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Members of the Workshop class working in Fitchburg pose on Bascom Hill. L-R: Phil Rynish, Charles A. Androsky, Natalie Cotter, Abigail Jackson, Dan Handel, and Matt Sorensen.

URPL Workshop Students Help City of Fitchburg

By MS Candidate Phil Rynish

Local food, farming, community development, and bringing tourists to the City of Fitchburg are all goals of the 2015 URPL Workshop. Associate Professor Alfonso Morales and Fitchburg City Planner Wade Thompson have incorporated student work into two real-world Fitchburg planning projects. The fourteen students are split into two groups and are working on separate projects. The first group is conducting a feasibility study for a community center in the North Fitchburg neighborhood. The other is conducting a pre-feasibility and existing conditions analysis for a potential agricultural business development route, known as the Fitchburg Agricultural Route, or FAR.

Both groups have focused on analyzing the existing conditions surrounding the projects. These analyses include examining current city policy and programs, Fitchburg physical environment conditions, and citizens' perspectives about the projects. Students then analyze how their project may fit within the existing conditions. Recommendations will eventually be made to Fitchburg staff regarding potential issues that need

to be addressed and changes that may need to be made for these projects to be successful. For example, students focused on the North Fish Hatchery Road Community Center project will be suggesting potential locations and programming based on what they've studied.

A major part of the feasibility reports for both projects has been gathering data on the public's perception of the projects. Strategies for doing so have included interviews, workshops, focus groups, and surveys. In the FAR public workshop, URPL students worked with area landowners to discuss opportunities they see in the FAR concept and what barriers currently exist that keep them from realizing those opportunities.

Working with the people these projects will impact has been a valuable exercise for the students. Second-year URPL MS student Xiaojing Xing, who is originally from the Hebei Province of China, sees this type of experience extending to her future work in China. Says Xing, "It is my first time participating in a public workshop and listening to residents and hearing what they like and dislike about the community and their willingness to support a community

center. I think this will be applicable in China because planners are becoming more and more focused on public opinion, so I really think this experience will be valuable for me."

Understanding FAR's potential place within a regional economy has been a central tenet in determining the project's feasibility. Second-year URPL MS student Abigail Jackson, who has taken a large role in this part of the project, explains that "it's been a really great experience meeting all of the stakeholders involved and doing the outreach process. I've also really enjoyed learning about different market analysis tools, which I think will be useful in my future work."

These multifaceted projects have exposed students to relevant topics and strategies within the planning field. The on-the-ground experience being gained will no doubt pay dividends in future planning careers. Beyond that, these projects represent a valuable opportunity for Urban and Regional Planning at UW-Madison to extend the Wisconsin Idea and play an active role in helping the communities it serves.

Message from the Chair



Ken Genskow

Greetings from Old Music Hall! The six months since our last issue of *Connections* have been full and active ones for the department. In addition to welcoming a great

class of 20 new MS students and one new PhD student in September, we also welcomed Clare Christoph (MS '13) back to URPL as our department administrator. Clare's timing couldn't have been better as the department has launched into an eventful period, including preparation for our upcoming MS degree reaccreditation review and many new initiatives.

As highlighted in the feature story, URPL is looking to build on its strengths in community food systems, site design, and broader public policy issues with an expanded focus on health and the built environment. We anticipate a new Lab for Health and

the Built Environment to be up and running imminently, and we are excited about Dr. Jeff Sledge directing that initiative (See sidebar on page 2). URPL is also exploring new ways to connect with communities around themes of sustainability by participating the UW UniverCity Alliance and their pilot UniverCity Year initiative with the City of Monona. Stay tuned for future updates about that.

Although UW–Madison has faced a very difficult year with state budget cuts, we are optimistic and enthusiastic about growth opportunities and positive changes on the horizon for URPL. For one, Dr. Revel Sims, introduced in last year's winter issue of *Connections*, will join the URPL faculty next fall as a tenure-track assistant professor. Revel's work broadly addresses gentrification and urban change. URPL will also be adding a new faculty position in partnership with Cooperative Extension focusing on applied local government and public sector financial planning issues. We hope to be welcoming someone into that position next fall as well.

Last but not least, URPL is beginning discussions in earnest to explore a potential merger with UW–Madison's Department of Landscape Architecture. We see strong potential synergies with LA related to sustainability, built environment, public health, environmental restoration and protection, community development, and a host of other important planning issues. We are interested in the thoughts of you, our alumni, about this potential new direction, and we may be soliciting your input and comments in the months ahead. Of course, you can always feel free to contact me (or any other faculty and staff) to share ideas or just to say hello.

On behalf of the department, we hope you are doing well and share our warm wishes for a happy and enjoyable holiday season.

Ken Genskow

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Thank you

A sincere thank you to our recent donors, whose support is vital to URPL's educational and outreach efforts:

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URPL Alums Lecture to Incoming URPLs

In this year's Introduction to Planning class (URPL 741), Professor Harvey M. Jacobs invited six URPL alumni to talk about their work and career trajectories. These speakers talked about their time since graduation and different sectors and practice areas. They also offered incoming students valuable insights into how planning is practiced and what they might expect in the years to come. Speakers included:

Carolyn Kennedy, URPL MS '89, executive director, Churches Center for Land and People. Her career has taken her from social planning to the ministry and is now blending the two in food systems work. She spoke about following your passion, trusting yourself, coalition building ("if everyone in your coalition agrees, your coalition isn't broad enough"), and importantly acknowledging that you are likely to get fired, perhaps even more than once!

Ruben Anthony, URPL MS '93, executive director, Madison Urban League. He worked for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for nearly twenty years and now directs a prominent urban nonprofit focused on social and racial equity issues. He focused on career development, moving into leadership positions, and the unexpected twists and turns that a career can take.

Salvör Jónsdóttir, URPL MS '94, formerly with Columbia County Extension and then later the planning director of Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city. She spoke on issues of community conflict, conflict resolution, and environmental planning common to both Wisconsin and Iceland. She emphasized empathy for citizens' perspectives, the importance of maintaining vision in one's practice and career, and the way politics influences planning implementation.

Heather Stouder, URPL MS '04, neighborhood planner, City of Madison Planning Department. She spoke on public sector planning from a neighborhood perspective, the tensions she experiences in working with local residents who care so much about their homes, property and neighborhood, the difficulty yet necessity of bringing

issues such as affordable housing onto the planning agenda, and the satisfaction she receives from seeing projects through to fruition.

Justin Shell, URPL MS '05, Wisconsin Department of Transportation. He has worked in three state agencies since graduation (Natural Resources, Agriculture, and now Transportation) and spoke on public sector planning from a bureaucratic perspective. He emphasized the dedication and quality of his coworkers and the many positives he experiences from state-level employment.

Spencer Gardner, URPL MS '10, Toole Design Group. After graduation he worked at a large engineering firm in Chicago and now works for a small firm focusing on bicycle and pedestrian transportation planning. He spoke on planning from the perspective of a private sector consulting firm, and in so doing helped to dispel many misunderstandings about private sector work.

Perhaps to the surprise of most of the students, as a group the speakers emphasized the importance of *soft skills*—e.g., listening, organizing, facilitating, public speaking, writing, and theory—over any particular hard skills, though they did speak about GIS, urban design, statistical knowledge, law and policy and assured students that much of what they would need on the job they would learn on the job.

As in past years, speakers came in as a public service to URPL; we thank them and their employers!

Congratulations to our Recent Planning Graduates

Summer 2015

Ramona Lowery (MS)
Hyun Kim (PhD)

Winter 2015

Riley Balikian (MS)
Haopu Rao (MS)
Xiaoting Yang (MS)

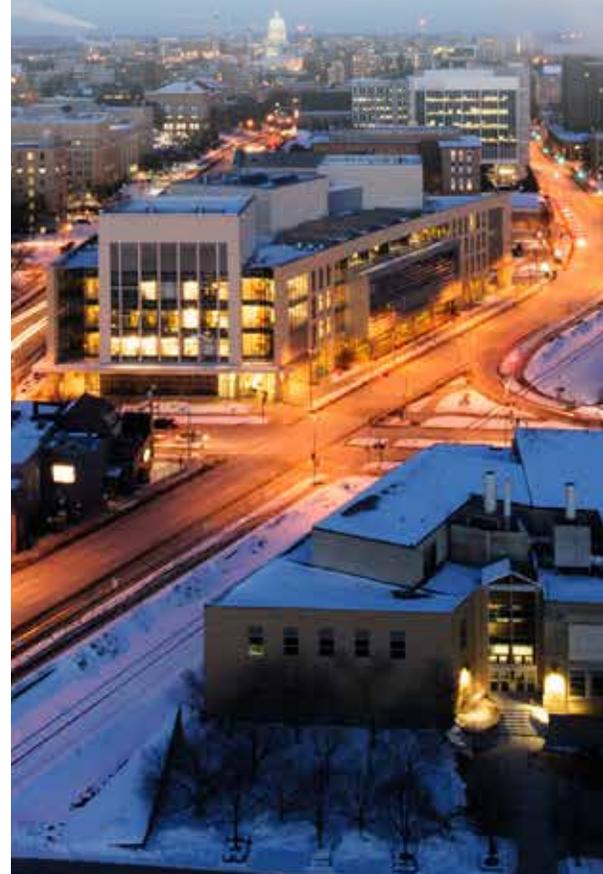
This brings our total number of alumni to 1,113 (MS) and 62 (PhD).

URPL Apparel Sale

The Wisconsin Student Planning Association is happy to announce that the link to purchase URPL apparel for the year is available online through the end of January.

ugpogo.myshopify.com/collections/uw-urban-and-regional-planning

Join us in showing your URPL pride!



Faculty News

Associate Professor Alfonso Morales

is one of the inaugural lectures for the WID/WIDMR sponsored “The Crossroads of Ideas” lectures in December and is presenting papers at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (with URPL PhD student Chris Spahr) and at the American Association of Sustainability in Higher Education. He is the lead of a grant with Slow Food UW (SFUW) that won a Ford Motor Company Foundation Ford College Community Challenge Grants. He also presented “Fining the Hand that Feeds You” with Kathryn Carroll (UW–Madison School of Human Ecology PhD student in consumer science) at the Contesting the Streets II conference at the University of Southern California, October 2–3, 2015. He was a guest on Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) Wednesday, September 23, 2015, discussing the locavore (local food) movement in Wisconsin. Alfonso was also invited to speak at a conference organized by the Chicago Federal Reserve and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Investing in Healthy Rural Communities” conference in Platteville, “Investing in Healthy Rural Communities: Harvesting the power of people, place and partnerships.”

In October **Professor Brian Ohm** organized and helped present the Case Law and Legislative Update session at the American Planning Association’s 2015 Upper Midwest Planning Conference held at Monona Terrace in Madison.

Professor Harvey M. Jacobs had a busy summer. His appointment as visiting professor in the Institute for Management Research and the Department of Geography, Planning and Environmental Studies at Radboud University in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, was extended for the two-year academic period of 2015–17. With a term that began in June, Harvey was

elected chair of the Environment and Resources program in the UW–Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. The E&R program is the largest of the Nelson graduate programs and the only program where students can undertake a PhD. The chair is expected to serve for a three-year period. In July, Harvey was one of three international scholars invited to serve as an instructor in a “Training the Trainers Workshop on Planning, Law, and Property Rights,” organized and conducted by the Peking University–Lincoln Center in Beijing, China. Harvey ended his residency in Beijing by participating in Lincoln’s International Symposium on Urban Planning and Land Policy. In August and September he spent one month as a Fulbright Specialist at the Master of Public Policy Program in the National Law School of India University in Bangalore, where he taught a specialty course on land policy. While in India he was also invited to deliver the keynote address to the First South Asian Regional Conference of the International Association on Planning, Law, and Property Rights.

For the 2015–16 academic year, Harvey has been appointed to a Vilas Life Cycle Professorship (administered by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute of UW–Madison) to continue work on his research on “Property Rights Advocacy in Europe: Towards an Understanding and Explanation of What is (not) Going On.” In early December Harvey was invited by the Group for Research in Environmental History, Center for Historical Research, National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, France, to give a featured presentation at an international conference titled “Disaster, Environment and Property: historical approaches, 19th–20th centuries; he presented “20th Century Regulation of Private Property in the United States: Disasters, Institutional Evolution, and Social Conflict.”

Harvey’s recent publications include a blog essay titled “What Kind of Property? Landownership for the

Urban Century,” prepared under the invitation of URPL alum Mark Watkins (MS ’13) at the site of the Urbanization and Global Environmental Change Project (ugcviewpoints.wordpress.com/2015/07/02). This will serve as the core for a special seminar he will offer in the spring semester.

Associate Professor Kurt Paulsen

published a commentary, “Great Neighborhoods for Whom?,” in volume 81 of the *Journal of the American Planning Association*.

Student News

MS student **Sam Wessel** attended a variety of sessions at the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association conference, ranging from transportation to groundwater, and quickly learned about which areas of planning he needs to continue learning. There were a variety of sessions to choose from, and Sam reports that keynote speaker Chuck Marohn’s presentation couldn’t have been more relevant to today’s emerging planning challenges.

MS student **Riley Balikian** presented with Chuck Law, director of the University of Wisconsin Extension’s Local Government Center, at the 20th anniversary Small City and Regional Community conference in Wausau, Wisconsin, on October 7, 2015. They discussed how business improvement districts can support infrastructure maintenance in small cities, based on data they have been gathering over the past year about BIDs in the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin ranks third in terms of the number of BIDs operating in the state, and has more BIDs operating in small cities than any other state in the United States. There are currently 86 BIDs in Wisconsin, with 28 of those BIDs operating in cities of less than 25,000.

Wisconsin Student Planning Association News

Greetings from Madison! The semester is well under way by now, and the Wisconsin Student Planning Association (WSPA)—our department’s student organization—has a number of exciting updates. First, we’ve welcomed 21 wonderful new students this fall. Our second-year students have been busy with their workshop; they are working with Wade Thompson, planner for the City of Fitchburg, Wisconsin, on two community development projects. Check out the article that was written in the October 16, 2015, edition of the *Wisconsin State Journal* for more details. WSPA is currently putting together another apparel/mug fundraiser. We will have t-shirts and quarter-zip sweatshirts bearing our graphics. See the ordering information on page 5 if you are interested.

Looking forward to the spring, URPL students hope to attend either the New Partners for Smart Growth conference in Portland or the national APA conference in Phoenix. Second years will be presenting their professional projects on Friday, May 13, 2016. All alumni are welcome to attend.

Hoping all is well with you,
Dan Handel
WSPA Chair

Alumni News

After years of working as a consultant to the National Roads Department of Norway—a Nordic spatial development institute—**Susan Brockett (MS '73)** is currently in Hakadal, Norway, and about to retire. Right now her focus is on “giving back.” She is trying to write a handbook on designing and facilitating planning and development processes, especially those with high conflict levels. Although she plans for it to be in Norwegian, Susan says that if she manages to complete it, she may also translate it back to her first language and send it off to URPL.

Sarah J. Elliott (MS '08) has been employed at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection since July 2013. She is the Wisconsin Farm to School Program director and a local food economic development consultant.

In October 2015, **Rachel J. Holloway (MS '08)** joined JSD Professional Services as a staff planner after working two years with the Village of DeForest and two years with the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission. She also became AICP certified in spring 2015.

Kevin Luecke (MS '09) is director of Toole Design Group’s Madison office. Toole Design Group is the nation’s leading planning, engineering, and landscape architecture firm specializing in bicycle and pedestrian transportation. Kevin’s work is focused on making communities across the Midwest better places to walk and bike. Toole Design Group’s Madison office includes fellow URPL alumni Tom Huber, Sonia Dubielzig, and Spencer Gardner. Kevin and his wife, Maggie Carden, live in Madison with their two young children, where they are car-free, year-round bicycle commuters. Kevin is not looking forward to the impending winter.

In Memoriam

Former URPL lecturer **Max Anderson** passed away on May 23, 2015. He was a consultant and lecturer in urban and regional planning, economics and design. His career spanned nearly 60 years and included public agencies at all levels of planning ranging from large multi-state regions down to cities and neighborhoods. He opened his own office in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1961 and branch offices later in Iowa and Illinois. He was principal planner and author of master plans and development regulations for a total of five entire counties, 86 municipalities, 46 tax increment districts, four cases for incorporation of towns as villages.

He was coordinator of Wisconsin’s first state planning effort; author of studies titled “Plan for Wisconsin,” “Land Use in Wisconsin,” and “Facilities in Wisconsin”; consultant to the Wisconsin Governor’s office, Departments of Administration, Resource Development, Health and Human Services, and the Federal Surplus Property Development Commission; urban planner for two new towns; and consultant and author of several studies for the Upper Great lakes Regional Commission, including the Commission’s report to Congress titled “Development Strategies Upper Great lake Region.” He was a lecturer in URPL from 1962–65, teaching courses in planning theory and practice.

Racine County’s first planning and development director, **Arnold Clement**, passed away on July 13, 2015, after a short battle with cancer. Julie Anderson, director of Public Works & Development Services in Racine County, sent this obituary:

Arnie worked for Racine County from 1967 to 2002 as the Planning & Development Director, and he was the cornerstone of most aspects of all things planning, zoning, and development across this county. I’m sure many of you may have known Arnie. After he retired, he spent much of his time up north at his lake home in Price County on Pike Lake with his wife, Kay. He was an avid outdoorsman and loved to hunt and fish. When he would stop by our offices about once a year, he would tell us all how much he was enjoying retirement. He will be missed by those of us who had the pleasure of knowing him and working alongside him on various projects through the years. Racine County owes Arnie a debt of gratitude for his many years of service.

Desmond Fortes (MS '04) passed away November 8, 2015.



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