

SUMMER 2025



URBAN  
PLANNING

# URBAN PLANNING

TALES FROM BALL STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF URBAN PLANNING

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**Who's a Superstar Urban  
Planning Graduate?**

Nominate him or her for an  
ECAP award by Sept. 30!



# Successes, Challenges and Opportunities

**JOHN H. WEST, PhD, Chair,**  
Department of Urban Planning

The Urban Planning Department at Ball State is today both stronger and more vulnerable than it has ever been. This year has been marked by trying to find the opportunity within the turbulence. It is stronger because we have more students, more community partners, and more excellent faculty. It is vulnerable because of the current context for higher education. In this context, the department has seized the opportunity to revise and improve our curriculum to better serve our students and the state of Indiana.

## Successes

Starting with the strengths, we are welcoming our largest-ever class into the second year Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development program. The department has 23 new BUPD students, eight new graduate students, and four students in a new accelerated master's program that allows strong undergraduates to take and double count some graduate classes on their way to a master's degree..

As a result of the efforts of the entire faculty, and particularly professors Jeter, Deeg and Reynolds we offered an excellent introductory experience both to CAP first year students and alternative entry students entering the program from other disciplines. The students who have joined the program are excellent, leaders in their cohort, passionate about planning, and already finding opportunities to pursue their passions.

We're bullish that this pattern of growth will continue, in part, because the department hired two new full-time faculty members, both teaching in the CAP first year program. Ralph

Holmes is a seasoned urban planning professional with extensive public sector experience both in comprehensive planning and transportation planning. Danicia Malone is a PhD student from Temple University who specializes in planning and public art. Dr. Teresa Jeter has also taken on important new administrative responsibilities as the co-director of the graduate program, focusing on student recruiting.

Finally, the department has created a new partnership program with three Indiana communities seeking more extensive community engaged studio input for their planning initiatives.

First, Dr. Ruoran Liu kicked off the program last spring with an excellent economic development studio, in partnership with the city of Warsaw, Ked.Co, and Orthoworx, a group of organizations particularly interested in the revitalization of the Winona Avenue corridor in Warsaw. This year several other planning and landscape architecture studios are moving this work forward.

*Continued on next page*



**CHAIR'S CORNER**



4 student internship stories ... coming up!

## Successes, Challenges and Opportunities ... continued

Second, the city of Hanover and Hanover College have contracted with the planning and landscape architecture programs to re-envision the connection between town and gown. Dr. Michael Burayidi is kicking off the program with the field studio this fall.

Finally, thanks to our beloved Chris Palladino, the program has been laying the groundwork for a college-wide student competition to design a site in The Village, with Ball State University as our client. To date these engaged studio projects have yielded nearly \$80,000 in support from community partners that CAP will use to help faculty and students succeed!

### Challenges

The State of Indiana passed a budget and new legislation that affects all of higher education in the state. Of particular note for the Urban Planning Department's programs, the state created new graduation thresholds.

All programs that graduate fewer than 15 undergraduate students or 7 graduate students, on average, have been placed on a list that is submitted to the Indiana Council on Higher Education. University presidents may advocate for programs on the list, or plan for their consolidation or elimination.

The BUPD program falls under the currently designated threshold. With the strong support of the college dean, the provost and the president of the university, we are currently in a monitoring situation. We expect that our

graduation rates will increase because our enrollment has increased to above threshold for the past three years. If the current thresholds are maintained, we will be challenged to meet the goals in the short term, and likely to surpass them in three to five years.

### Opportunities

The Urban Planning Department is significantly revising the BUPD curriculum. The goal of the revisions is to add pathways into the programs, to add professional development opportunities and technical skill development, and to enhance the diversity of studio experiences and outcomes by aligning lecture courses and studios.

I am particularly proud of the creative thinking that our faculty has done around the studios. Each studio is now preceded by a required 'intro' class, in which students learn about ideas and examples of best practices for the fields of practice that each studio represents (e.g. physical planning, community development, and economic development).

Each studio is now also accompanied by a 'lab' class in which students learn new planning skills. Additionally, we have added a planning practicum studio in the fourth year that helps students to develop and reflect on professional experience and interests prior to graduation.

Please take a look at the summary chart of curriculum changes on the next page. Next year, we will be working on a revision of the MURP program, so stay tuned!



# BUPD Curriculum Updates

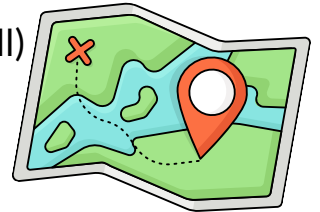
Faculty spent a full year considering updates to the undergraduate curriculum. Along the way we benefited from the advice of alumni, including those on our alumni board and volunteers Rose Scovel and Abby Wiles, members of our Student Planning Association, plus students we visited in classrooms. ECAP Associate Dean Andrea Swartz has been invaluable. A few highlights of the new curriculum are below.

## Studios + Labs

Beginning in 2026, we'll change the focus of a couple of studios and add a lab class to teach so we can highlight technical skills students need. Each combo is five credit hours.

### Second Year

- Physical Planning Design Studio + Real Estate Development Lab (fall)
- Spatial Analysis Studio + Mapping and Design Lab (spring)
- Introduction to Community Development (spring)



### Third Year

- Community Development Studio + Portfolio & Professional Development Lab (fall)
- Introduction to Economic Development Planning (fall)
- Economic Development Studio + Data Visualization Lab (spring)



### Fourth Year

- Field Studio + Urban Planning Practicum Lab (fall)
- Urban Planning Practicum (spring)

## Individualized Professional Development

One of our goals was to provide the students with a strong finish to the program and to provide more professional development. The fourth-year Urban Planning Practicum Lab charges students with crafting their own practicum experience to complete their undergraduate studies. Experiences they can choose from include job shadowing, a second internship, visiting graduate schools, attending professional conferences, and more.

Got an idea to share? Write to [planning@bsu.edu](mailto:planning@bsu.edu)





# Award winners

## Jeb Reece wins young alumni GOLD; Deeg, Palladino named Sappenfields

**Jeb Reece**, BUPD 2020, is director of Strategic Initiatives at Intend Indiana. He is a 2025 graduate of IU McKinney School of Law and will teach planning law for the department this fall.

Reece has devoted his professional career to preserving and creating homeownership while improving quality of life in Indiana communities.

Among his professional accomplishments, his grant writing and real estate development skills have raised over \$30 million in state, federal, local, and philanthropic funds for affordable housing development and financing in Indiana.

**Lohren Deeg**, ARCH '04, is an associate professor of urban planning. Beyond the studio or classroom, the opportunity for field study has been at the core of Deeg's teaching experience, leading local interpretive walks and bicycle tours in Muncie and participating in over 60 community and immersive neighborhood design charrettes.

He believes teaching is a two-way exchange, learning as much from students as he imparts to them. His approach centers on balancing values



*Jeb Reece*



*Lohren Deeg*



*Chris Palladino*

and skills with consistency, care, and a student-first mindset.

This philosophy is not only the foundation of his teaching but also a core part of who he is. He looks forward to continuing this journey of teaching and learning for years to come.

**Chris Palladino**, BUPD 1995, is assistant director for capital planning and real estate management at Ball State and director of the department's real estate development program.

Before joining Ball State in 2009, Chris spent 15 years as a private real estate developer. At Ball State, he has led master planning, facilities planning, and real estate initiatives while also restructuring the real estate development minor and certificate programs to enhance accessibility and real-world relevance.

His latest endeavor is directing the public-private revitalization of The Village, a transformative project that will bring nearly \$200 million in new investment across five sites.

He has led students in the NAIOP University Challenge in Indianapolis, a commercial real estate trade organization.

Thanks to the alumni who nominated Deeg and Palladino!

## ECAP Awards: Nominate a Star!

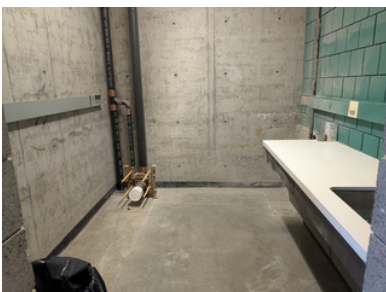
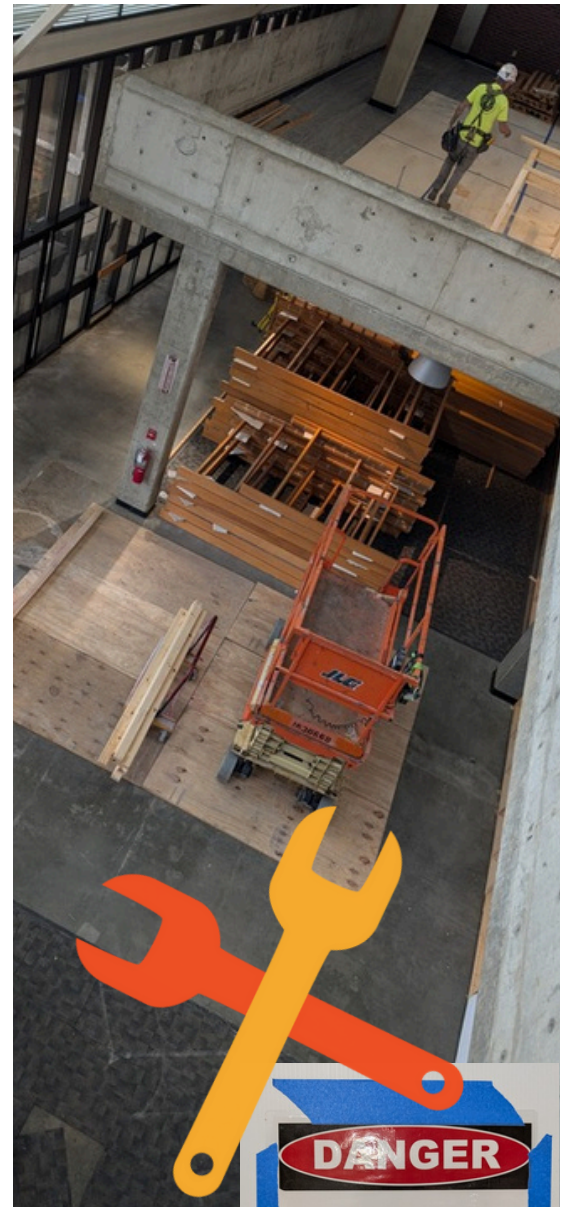


The Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning Executive Advisory Board annually recognizes alumni who demonstrate outstanding professional success or achievement in their field of endeavor.

You can nominate CAP alumni for the 2026 awards now. The nomination form is simple, and the person you recommend will receive an invitation to submit a resume and other supporting materials.



The ECAP ceilings look ... dated ... with the pretty oak removed to allow for a new HVAC. Some sink/vending machine rooms (below) are becoming restrooms. CERES (middle pic) is off limits while new studio space is crafted. Planning classrooms are temporarily on the second floor and in downtown Muncie on Walnut Street!



## ECAP Construction







# The Making of a Planner

By **CODY HEDGES**  
MURP 2017

There are few fields that host a more eclectic group of professionals at their conference than urban planning. Not eclectic in personality, but eclectic in background. If you take some time during networking breaks, you will be hard pressed to find any who will tell you that urban planning was the answer to their second grade “essay” on what they wanted to do when they grew up. However, there is a common thread that would weave through all the answers: a desire to make the world a better place. So, if you feel like your path to becoming a planner is unconventional, remember it’s not about where you’re from but why you’re here. As an example, let’s take a stroll down my own memory lane.

After realizing that my 8-year-old self’s goal of becoming a Karate Master wasn’t quite the vision I dreamed for my future, I zombie walked myself all the way through high school and an undergraduate degree in earth-space science education. I graduated from Indiana University-Bloomington, working odd jobs along the way, one of which turned out to be rather influential to my future.

One day I decided to figure out the entire route of this new thing I encountered called a transit system (I’m from the country, folks...our only buses are yellow). So, I hopped on an IU campus bus and stayed on until the end and, luckily, I met Rob, a fantastically pleasant bus operator who asked if I had ever considered driving a bus. The upside? it was the best paying job a student could get on campus. The downside, I was not quite 20 and had



to be 21 to get my commercial driver’s license. But, one year later, I signed up to enter the required training to jump behind the wheel of a 40’ Gillig, low-floor transit bus! Unbeknownst to me, that would eventually change just about everything ... although not immediately. I completed my undergrad degree and decided high school teaching wasn’t my jam. So I returned to bus driving, and I started reading things I wanted to read rather than what professors told me to read. Using curiosity as my only guide, I eventually stumbled across a book called *Human Transit* (which has an updated edition that was released just this year!). And did you know that there are these crazy people called urban planners that plan how cities and transportation systems work? It was my eureka moment. Yes, I was driving a bus down 17th street in Bloomington when it happened; yes, this was the path I was supposed to follow; and yes, I set a plan in motion to become a

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## Making of a Planner... continued

planner, and ended up at Ball State (largely thanks to the quick wit of Christine...that's a different story). Thus began my journey as a planner, one I'm still traveling 10 years later.

And it's a journey that's been rather tortuous. But it's a feature, not a bug, and it's an aspect of my career that's been highly beneficial. After an amazing internship with the Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo) working on their Red Line Bus Rapid Transit stations and on-board bicycle storage, I made my way to the West Coast (\*cough\* Best Coast) for an internship with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for The Bay Area.

Then I landed a full time position as an environmental planner with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) which, go figure, I qualified for because of my undergraduate degree in science, not my masters in planning.

Early on, I found out that the engineers at Caltrans complete a rotation upon arriving where they spend their first 2 years rotating every six months through four specialities, with the idea that it both creates more well rounded engineers and allows new engineers to explore their different options and interests within the organization.

When I found out that no such program existed for planners, my obvious response was, "I'll just do it myself!" So, after 1.5 years as a NEPA/CEQA Generalist, I transitioned to another 1.5 years as



*Cody Hedges circa 2016.*

a transit grants administrator, both at Caltrans. Then life took me to Denver, Colorado, where I spent one year as a land use planner with Jefferson County. That then led me to my current position, where I'm wrapping up 2.5 years as a senior rail and transit planner for the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Every position has brought its own unique challenges and learning experiences. From the highly interactive and internal work of an environmental planner, to the highly budgetary and external work of a grants administrator, to the ever public facing work of a land use planner, and the excessively fun and highly political work of working in passenger rail.

Now, for those paying attention, you probably noticed I said that I'm wrapping up. That's because I'm on the move again. But this is also the part where the concept of the ouroboros comes in, where the experiences and relationships I built along the way come back

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## Alumna Beth Johnson honored by Ball State

Each year, the Ball State Alumni Awards honor individuals who have achieved career excellence, served their communities, and supported the university in meaningful ways. This year's winners were announced Aug. 21 and include awesome BUPD grad Beth Johnson!

Beth is a nationally recognized leader in historic preservation with over 16 years of service to cities including San Antonio, Austin, Covington, and Cincinnati. With a degree in Urban Planning and Development, Beth also holds a master's in Historic Preservation Planning from Cornell University. She has risen through the ranks of her profession from senior planner to her current role

as the executive director of the Cincinnati Preservation Association, where her leadership has driven strategic growth and increased community impact.



Beyond her professional work, Beth is a committed volunteer, mentor, educator, and advocate, generously serving on numerous boards and civic initiatives. She embodies the spirit of service, leadership, and lifelong learning that defines Ball State's best.

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## Making of a Planner... continued

full circle...and with unexpected and delightful surprises.

In June, I started as the climate change and adaptation planning branch chief, working in the same office of Caltrans as when I was a grants administrator, and working in tandem with some of the same staff that I worked with when I was environmental planner.

Somehow, life has brought me through a custom-fit country-wide rotation that landed me back to the place I started seven years ago. Today I have keener insights and a wealth of experience on which to draw.

At this point, you may be saying, "yeah, fun story Cody. What's the point?" Well, anecdotes are a thing, so there's that. But also, I've learned important lessons over the last decade.

**First**, Don't be afraid to be different. You're a planner, most of us are a little off the beaten path.

**Second**, you reap what you sow, and that counts for positive things as well. If you plant it well and water it, it may just grow into something beautiful.

**Third**, do what's right, especially if you're the only one. People going the wrong way on a one-way street have no stop signs, and, chances are, lots of people notice and are too nervous to mention it.

**And finally**, the hardest part is knowing which path is the right one. And harder still, there is no one right path, just a series of options.

So, next time you're surrounded by a gaggle of planners, make sure to ask how they found their way into planning. At the very least, you know the next few minutes (or hours) won't be boring.





# Dark Skies in Breckenridge and a Skateboard Park in Muncie make for a packed summer

By **CALEB SWARTZ**  
BUPD 2025

This summer, I worked in the Department of Community Development as a planning intern for the Town of Breckenridge, Colorado. My key role was to support the planners and community in navigating an update to the exterior lighting town code. The dark initiative will result in the town becoming a DarkSky International Certified Community.

I first learned of the opportunity when networking at the 2025 National Planning Conference. I interviewed two Breckenridge employees during the conference. Later, I applied for the position and interviewed for it.

## Internship spotlight

I attribute my success in getting the internship to my participation in the Student Planning Association, where I served as president for one year. It's essential not to be afraid to venture out on your own to explore networking and employment opportunities.

I spent my first month conducting a GIS survey of all the exterior lighting on private property in Breckenridge. This enabled me to become familiar with the community's geography and

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Check out Caleb's cool graphic





## Breckenridge to Muncie ... continued

the updated exterior lighting ordinance. We next issued notices to all private property owners who were identified as being out of compliance with the regulations.

After we issued the notice letters, I managed the hotlines for the Dark Sky Initiative. I answered phone calls, responded to emails, conducted site visits, hosted community engagement events, collected sky quality measurements, planned community engagement events, maintained compliant survey responses and the GIS database, and attended regular meetings to support staff.

Eventually, I was able to take on more responsibilities. I improved the user interface experience of sourcing relevant Dark Sky information by curating the updates for the town's exterior lighting website and resources. I reviewed and approved permits, conducted code enforcement walks, and issued the necessary fines and paperwork for violations.

Beyond Dark Sky, I also spent a day with the trail's maintenance crew. I was able to assist them in implementing field maps to navigate their GIS mapping and work order system. All day, I hiked alongside the crew, clearing drainage ditches alongside the trails and removing and scattering fallen and at-risk-of-falling trees.



Not only was I able to support Breckenridge this summer, but I was able to continue working with the City of Muncie. I attended the grand opening of the Westside Skatepark and shared an update on the legal graffiti wall project with the mayor and the parks department. As a result of my efforts, the mayor endorsed and advocated for the final partnership required for the project's success. As a result of the fundraiser, we were able to reach our goal of \$500, and we also gave away skateboards, helmets, T-shirts, and more!

The internship in Breckenridge expanded my technical, interpersonal, and professional planning skills. I'm grateful to both the Town of Breckenridge and Ball State's Department of Urban Planning for preparing me to contribute meaningfully to communities both near and far.







# Appreciating Old Urban Design Techniques in the Curating Process

By DANIELLE SIPP

BUPD 2026

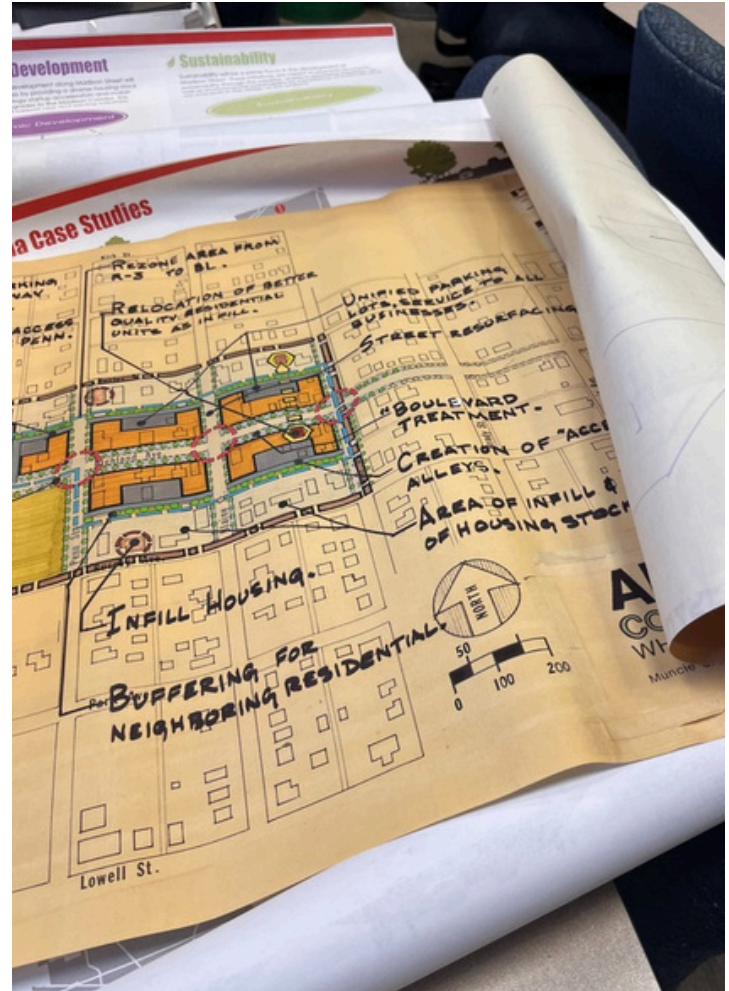
With the invention of modern design software such as Adobe Creative Cloud, Sketchup, Lumion, AutoCAD, and ArcGIS, much of the design techniques used to observe a site from a spatial lens have transformed to fit the medium.

For proof of this change, one only needs to compare today's published urban and landscape plans to those released before modern software existed. This is part of what I was tasked to do for my internship with the Ball State Department of Urban Planning this past summer.

## Internship spotlight

Over the course of two months, I worked with faculty and staff from the planning department and from Ball State Department of Community Engagement to curate a public library for the purposes of documenting past and present student, faculty, and public planning deliverables.

In this process, I've been cataloging work based on relevance, techniques used, aesthetics, and



authorship. It's been a tedious yet fulfilling process as I've had to relearn the urban design techniques that I was introduced to as a freshman and interpret how they were applied in earlier plans.

As part of this process of relearning, I've gone back to Kevin Lynch's design principles as well

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## Urban Design Techniques ... continued

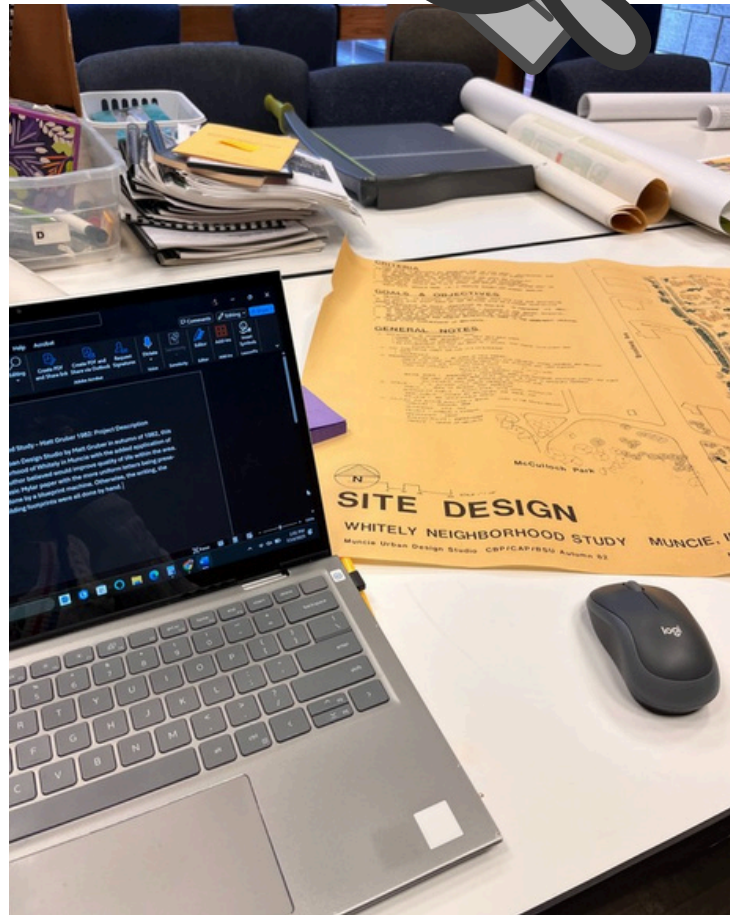
as consulting with Professor Lohren Deeg and administrative coordinator Christine Rhine to better understand the differences between past and present printing techniques.

Truthfully, the information that I've gleaned during my internship has changed the way that I interact with urban design.

What I found while observing the work of the past versus the present has renewed my interest for urban design and landscape architecture as an art form. Rediscovering the usage of blueprint machines, Mylar sheet paper, and hand-drawn large scale aerial maps, as banal as it may sound, has reshaped my relationship with older, more historic visual plans.

It has turned the process of observation from a tedious, purely professional experience into an artistic and technical reverie, that's akin to a novice painter studying art pieces and the techniques that came before. It has also indirectly taught me the spatial relationship that data once had in the public realm.

Prior to the introduction of the census.gov and public GIS websites like Beacon, data collection was a physical process that required the researcher to visit an educational institution or a public library for exact numbers. This way, for many, was a monotonous yet necessary method of obtaining information. Though, for those without access to a public library, the process was completely inaccessible. The online publication of these softwares, however, has changed the way that data is shared and received to an incredible degree.



*The hand drawings and press-on letters of the past lend an artistic flair to site designs of the past, but computers allow for easy editing and better accessibility for the public.*

Today we have free state and federal websites that can be used to create a quick assessment of an area. This has nearly streamlined the process of demographic data collection. Easily accessible public data sets and software such as Adobe Creative Cloud and Sketchup are privileges that I know I have taken for granted, and for which this internship has given me an increased appreciation and understanding.



# Celebrating opportunities in the small towns of Wabash County

By **BROOKE WAGNER**

BUPD 2028

The summer of 2025 has been nothing short of exciting, relevant, and impactful—both for the town of North Manchester, Indiana, and for myself as a sophomore in Ball State's Urban Planning program. Since May, I have interned with the Community Foundation of Wabash County (CFWC) under president and CEO Alex Downard and Imagine One 85 Project Manager Conner Hindman.

The Imagine One 85 strategic plan addresses population decline in Wabash County and has created new opportunities for strategic projects, community engagement, and placemaking efforts to better serve residents.

## Internship spotlight

As a summer intern, I contributed my graphic design and community engagement skills to several Imagine One 85 initiatives. The experience gave me valuable practice in listening to community needs and translating those ideas into designs and strategies that can be implemented. Some of the projects I worked on included developing a student engagement program, creating floor plans for a neighborhood stabilization effort, rendering a schematic



*Author Brooke Wagner, center, interned with the Community Foundation of Wabash County this summer. Below, Brooke imagined a veteran's memorial for the small town of Lagro.*



perspective for a veteran's memorial and writing a small grant application to support a universally accessible co-design session with Wabash County residents.

One of the most meaningful projects I contributed to was the Manchester

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## Celebrating Small Towns ... continued

Mile, a one-mile walkable corridor connecting Manchester University to downtown North Manchester.

Working alongside Jones Petrie Rafinski, I helped research, write, and design a student engagement program to reimagine how university students and local residents move through and interact in shared spaces. This project emphasized for me the role of urban planning in bridging connections between people and places.

Another project, the Neighborhood Stabilization Act, focuses on revitalizing vacant homes in Wabash County and reselling them at below-market prices. This initiative provides affordable homeownership opportunities for lower-income families and local graduate students. As part of this effort, I measured a vacant home in Wabash and created a schematic floor plan using SketchUp, which will help inform its redevelopment.

In Lagro, Ind., I worked on a rendering for a prospective veteran's memorial at Kerr Locks, supported by the Indiana Housing & Community Development authority's CreatING Places grant program. This project highlighted how even small communities can leverage planning tools and design vision to

## THE MANCHESTER MILE

### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Through direct involvement in planning and implementation of the Manchester Mile, students in and around North Manchester will help to reimagine downtown North Manchester as a walkable, welcoming space. This initiative is an investment in both the future of our community and the development of tomorrow's leaders.



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*Brooke helped to design a plan to engage Manchester students with the community*

celebrate local history and identity.

Through each of these experiences, I gained firsthand insight into how urban planning combines technical skills, design thinking, and community collaboration. My

internship with CFWC not only sharpened my academic and professional skills but also reaffirmed why I chose urban planning: to create spaces that are accessible, equitable, and meaningful for the communities they serve.





# My Summer with Indiana Landmarks Black Heritage Preservation Program

By **BROOKLYNN FERRELL**

BUPD 2028

As this new school year begins, I've been looking back on my 12-week internship with the Indiana Landmarks Black Heritage Preservation Program. This experience was as inspiring as it was unforgettable.

This summer kicked off with the Juneteenth Jubilee celebration at Indiana Landmarks, where I had the chance to help bring an incredible day of music, culture, and history to life. I also supported the Resilience in Indiana program, featuring amazing panelists and speakers who shared powerful stories of perseverance and heritage.

One of my favorite moments was helping curate an Oral History Harvest for the Martindale community.

## Internship spotlight

We collected and preserved voices that have shaped the neighborhood's story for generations. That work flowed right into assisting with the planning of a community engagement meeting designed to get Martindale recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, a step toward



*Author Brooklynn Ferrell, right, worked alongside Ingrid Fogle, a graduate student in the MURP program.*

honoring and protecting its legacy. The Historic Preservation office at the DNR assisted in this effort, in particular historian Anthony Colney and consultant specialist Kurt Garner.

I also had the joy of embracing global culture by organizing a celebration featuring a vibrant Ethiopian performance called AWAD. It was a beautiful reminder of how music, dance, and shared traditions can connect communities across borders. To know your heritage and the people who embrace you.

Beyond events, my summer was filled with learning. I had the privilege of job shadowing with METICULOUS Design + Architecture (MD+A), Browning Day,

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## Indiana Landmarks ... continued

arcDESIGN, V3 Companies, and The Nature Conservancy. Each team gave me a new perspective on the innovative, impactful work happening not just in Indiana, but around the world.

Closer to home, I helped with the Next Great Architects Camp alongside Kionna Louise Walker, AIA, NOMA. Together, we guided middle and high school students as they reimagined Indiana Avenue, proving that the next generation has bold, brilliant ideas for our communities.

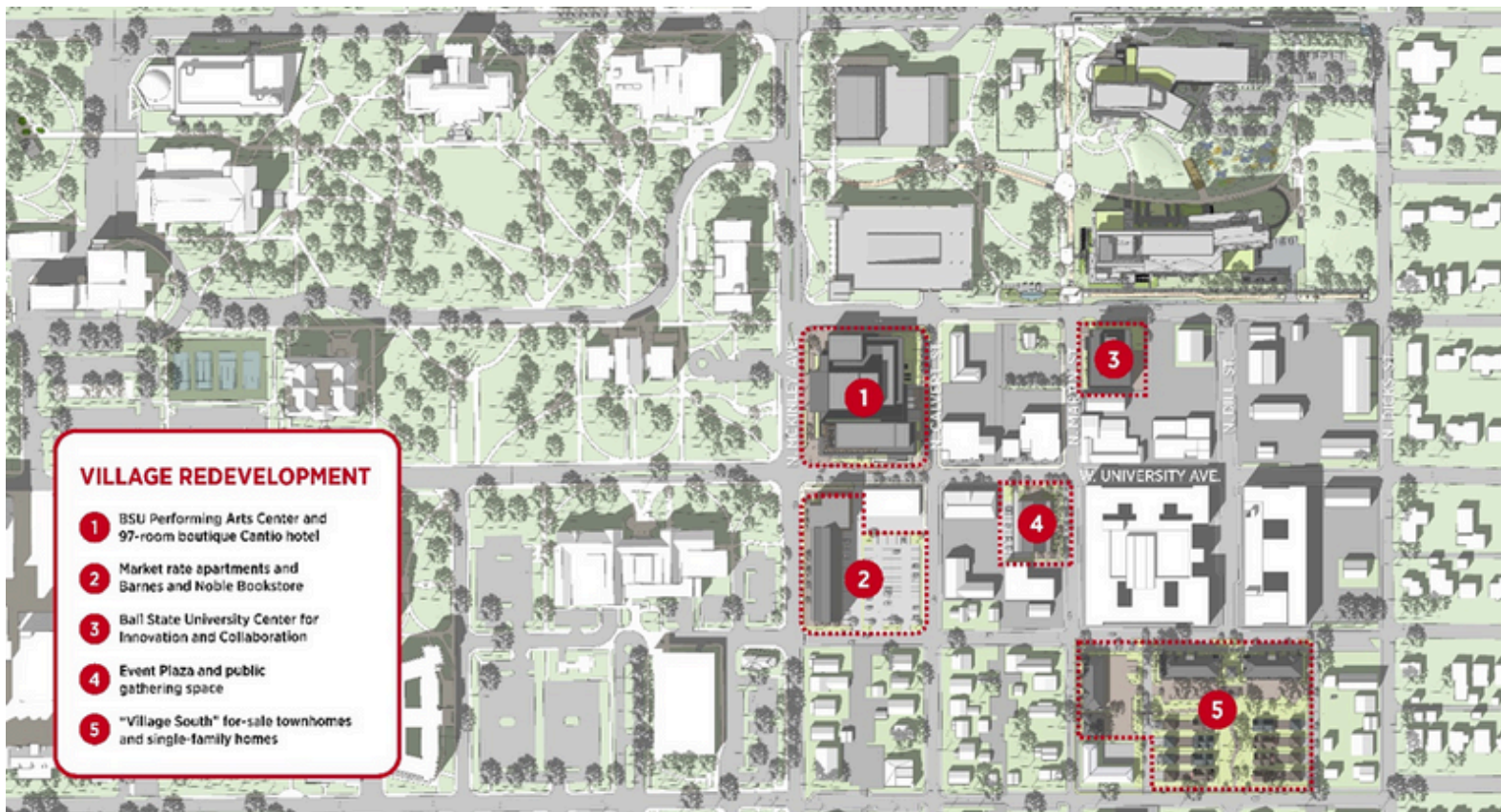
To round it all out, I explored the fascinating

story of the Henry Street Bridge project and the preservation work at Greenlawn Cemetery. It was a deep dive into how history, architecture, and community remembrance intersect in meaningful ways.

This summer was about more than projects; it was about connection, creativity, and the power of preserving stories. I'm grateful for every conversation, every handshake, and every moment that made these twelve weeks so special.

Here's to keeping the work and the joy going!

## Excitement in The Village!



More on The Village project





# Construction ongoing in Village

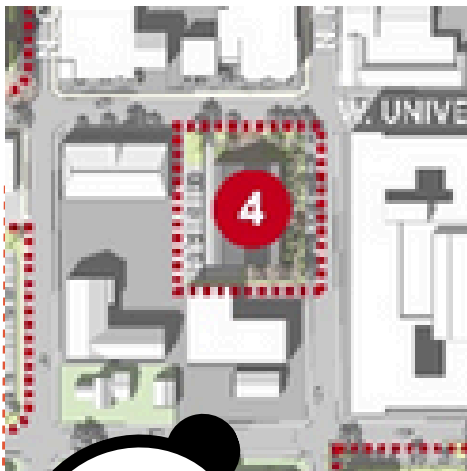
POLL



Take the poll  [click here](#)

In 2020, after years of planning and preliminary investments, Ball State University began to execute a comprehensive plan to revitalize The Village, the commercial district immediately adjacent to the university and to IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital. The revitalization plan is a collaborative public-private partnership involving several private development companies, elected officials from Muncie and Delaware County, local organizations, businesses, and neighborhood groups. The plan focuses on five sites in The Village to be completed over the next four years:

- A new performing arts center, which will attract more than 35,000 patrons each year.
- A 97-room Tapestry by Hilton Hotel, called The Cantio, with a rooftop bar and first-floor restaurant.
- A Barnes & Noble bookstore, which will also serve as the university's textbook provider.
- A three-story, 31,425 square foot Center for Innovation and Collaboration.
- Approximately 96 new apartments are being developed for professionals in the Muncie community, including university faculty and staff, as well as hospital employees.
- 25 new owner-occupied townhomes and single-family homes.
- A stronger physical connection between The Village and downtown Muncie.
- New infrastructure improvements, including street repair, new sidewalks, street lighting, and additional on-street parking.
- A new event plaza and public gathering space to host year-round programs and activities.



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**Site 4 will be influenced by ECAP students!**



# Student competition for Site 4!

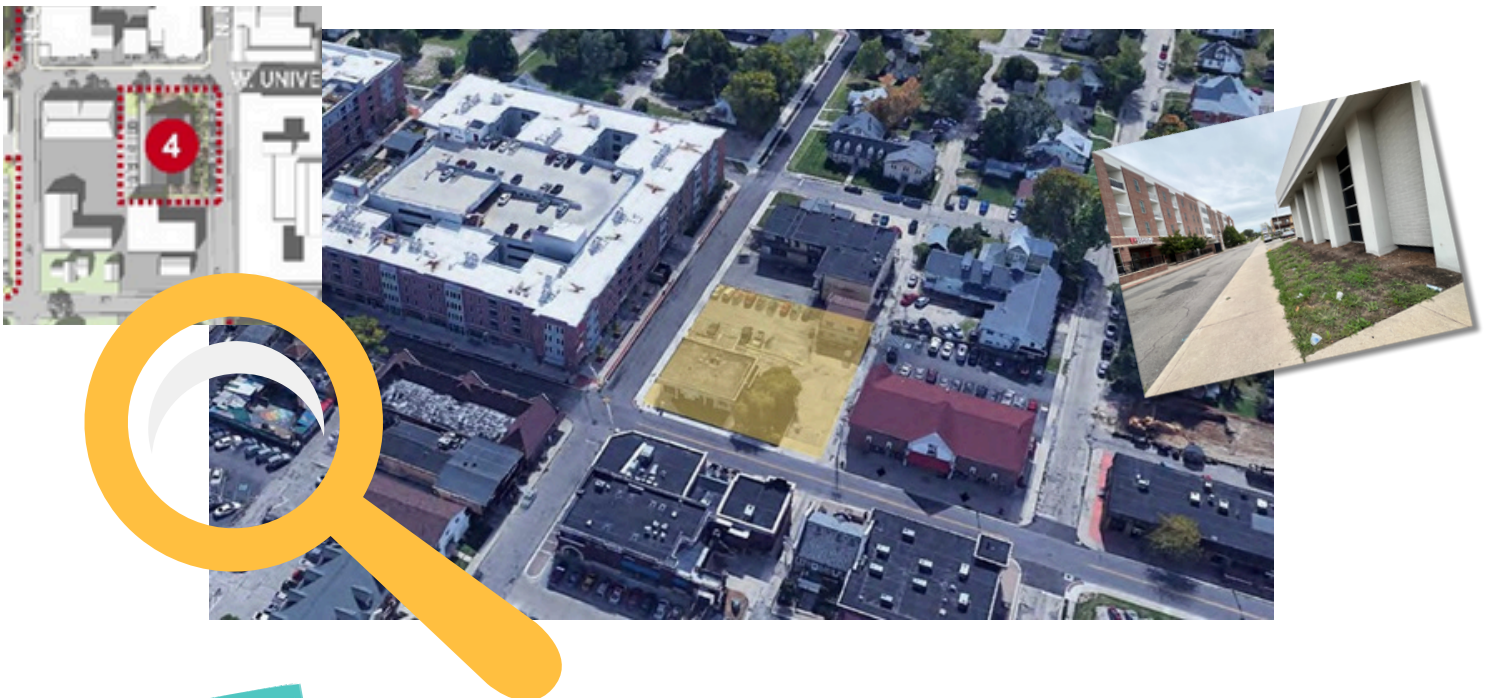
## Goals and Intent of Event Plaza at Site 4

Site 4 is envisioned to be a central gathering place for The Village, one that not only serves the Ball State community but also the larger Muncie community. Originally conceived as a site for a food hall, the project team is now focused on providing a well-designed event plaza that will help attract more people to The Village. Permanent physical structures, such as a small food hall or other commercial space, may be considered as a future project phase once market demand increases.

## Study Area

The primary study area is illustrated below (yellow). The primary site is approximately 122'-8" wide (E-W) and 145' long (N-S). The secondary study area includes the configuration layout and design of Martin Street from the Alderice Gates south to North Street. Successful entries will explore ideas and a vision for both the primary study area and the future of Martin Street in this general area, making a successful link between the Alderice Gates and the beginning of the shared-use path leading to the White River Park and Greenway.

We look forward to student entries to the competition. Registration information and guidelines were released during the first week of class!



## Big changes in the Village!



# Holmes, Malone Join Faculty



Ralph M Holmes III is an architect and an urban planner who will teach in the CAP first year program and in the graduate level graphic communications course. He earned his Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Ball State and a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and Environmental Design from SUNY University at Buffalo.

For the past 12 years, Ralph has served as a community and transportation planner for a Metropolitan Planning Organization. A Geographic Information Systems Professional and American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) member, he's known for spearheading award-winning regional and local planning initiatives and public engagement efforts throughout Indiana's east-central region. When he's not in the classroom, Ralph enjoys his passions for building custom hardwood furniture and gardening.



Danicia Monét Malone is a cultural strategist, urban planner, and critical geographer whose work sits at the intersection of policy, public space, and aesthetic research. Currently pursuing her Ph.D. in spatial aesthetics and the racialized user experience of the built environment, her applied research focuses on Growing Cultural Literacy in the Built Environment to support the wellbeing of historically “othered” bodies.

As the founder and principal interaction designer at Rokh Research & Design Studio, Danicia leads community-rooted projects that bridge urban planning, public art, and civic design—cultivating spaces that are as liberatory as they are livable. She has held fellowships with Yale School of the Environment, Americans for the Arts, Transportation for America, and the Wilma Gibbs Moore Fellowship.

Her writing and projects have been featured in Forbes, The Washington Post, Fast Company, and Next City, among others.



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# Reflections on a Summer in Italy

By **MICHAEL BURAYIDI**  
PROFESSOR

In 2023, Artur Hulu (better known as Gaius Flavius), a Roman reenactor suggested in an Instagram post that women ask their male relatives how often they think of the Roman Empire.

This birthed a TikTok trend with users posting videos of interesting answers they received from their male friends. Although I was never asked this question, I think of and talk about the Roman Empire on several occasions throughout the academic year when I discuss the history of planning with students. And so it is that rather than thinking about the Roman Empire, I decided to see Rome and Italy firsthand in the summer of 2025.

My journey started in Rome and took me to more than a dozen cities in northern Italy. Among them were Orvieto, Venice, Lake Garda, Cinque Terre, Florence, Pisa, San Gimignano, and Siena.



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## Summer in Italy continued

As an urban planner, I was eager to see firsthand what I read and learned about Rome and the Roman Empire; the grid street network, the Forum, the Cardo and Decumanus, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and of course, the Vatican and Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance.



Several things were jarring about my experience in Italy. The first was the realization that the world is on the move. Everywhere we went there were crowds, and I mean shoulder to shoulder crowds. This was especially the case in Rome at the most celebrated sites of the city such as the Pantheon and Colosseum, at the Vatican, and in Venice, a city built on 118 islands connected by bridges and canals.

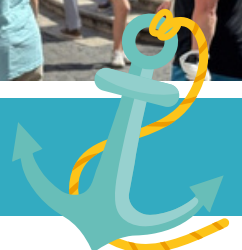
This experience revealed to me not only that the world is on the move, but that people are getting wealthier and have more free time, and/or are in pursuit of the never-ending human curiosity to learn about distant places. This may also explain the not so quiet revolt against tourism in some of the highly visited cities such as Venice.

On my trip I spent three days in Rome and experienced an inner awakening. It was not an awakening of the spiritual type, but an urban



planning awakening. It became clear to me how important nature is to the health of city residents. Although I have in the past spent time in large cities, this was the first time I missed seeing vegetation. Although there are parks in Rome, these are not easily accessible and most other places are a concrete jungle. There was no green grass or trees in sight, at least nowhere near the hotel in which I stayed. As if to compensate for this missing piece, homeowners grew climbing shrubs along their fence walls. The human body

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## Summer in Italy ... continued

yearns for what it lacks. I missed the noise of nature, the sound of grass crumbling beneath my feet, the chirping of birds on trees, the rustling of tree leaves as the wind blows pass. I used to think that front lawns in US cities were a waste of land. After my awakening, I now think differently. My experience tells me that we must incorporate nature into cities for the health of urban residents.

Rome does have an amenity that every city needs to imitate. The city has over 2,000 water fountains located throughout the city. Popularly called “big nose” or “nasoni” in Italian, because the curved cylindrical shape tap resembles a nose, the fountains are a hit for tourists and residents alike. The first “nasoni” were installed in the 1870s to provide free drinking water to residents. The water is highly refreshing particularly after a long walk.

An additional benefit is that these water fountains cut down on the use of plastic bottles. Even without a water bottle you can drink directly from the fountain by placing your hand over the main spout to make the water spurt from a smaller hole at the top. Every city should have this water system!

The central organizing feature of the cities we visited was the church, along with its baptistry, and bell tower. These churches, whether in San Gimignano, Orvieto or Florence, were massive and monumental, the size reflecting the importance of the city at the time. Most were striped in black and white colors. We learned that it was a way to



make the building stand out from its natural environment, and to also display wealth as the marble had to be imported from faraway places for the construction. In the Gothic era, the

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## Summer in Italy ... continued

prominence of the church conferred status on the city and so cities spent significant resources to build monumental churches with imported marble, sometimes taking decades to complete.

The Romans were famous for popularizing the use of the orthogonal street grid in the layout of cities. Called Castra, these were initially military camps that in some cases eventually turned to permanent settlements (Lancaster, in the UK is one such example), so I was looking forward to seeing this pattern in Italian cities on my trip. Surprisingly, I found very little of it in use. While many of the cities we visited had centrally located public squares, there was no discernible street grid either in Rome or any of the Italian cities we visited.

Cities in the Roman Empire also had two prominent streets. The Cardo was the main north - south street, while the Decumanus was the east - west street in the grid system. Narrower east - west and north - south streets completed the grid. In Florence and a few other cities, the Cardo and Decumanus streets still exist, although the narrower streets have been widened overtime to accommodate the automobile.

The cross streets converge at the city center where the public square is located. Here you will find the most prominent features of the city such as the Church and its bell tower as well as monuments and sculpture of Greek and Roman gods and legends. City walls that were built to protect residents and prevent invasion from



enemies also remain, as was the case in San Gimignano.

Florence, the birthplace of the renaissance reminded me of the contributions of the Romans to western civilization. The development of the merchant guild and its influence in local politics laid the foundation for modern day trade unions. The original building of the cotton guild still stands in downtown Florence. The banking

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## Summer in Italy continued

system, most prominently the Medici Bank which was formed by the Medici family in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Florence and expanded throughout Europe, influenced the modern financial system. It enabled merchants to transfer funds between banks in distant places.

The use of promissory notes by the bank provided precedence for modern bank checks that are issued today. Wealth from the Medici Bank enabled the Medici family to support artists like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli and contributed to the birth of the Renaissance.

I rode the gondola through the meandering canals of Venice and learned the virtues of historic preservation. Venice was built on a muddy lagoon and over time, the ground beneath the city has been compacting and causing the city to sink. Venice is sinking due to rising sea levels and the effects of moisture on the old historic buildings. Evidence shows the city sunk 9 inches in the last century, exacerbating flooding, which occurs 100 times a year.

Most of the original residents of the islands have left to the mainland and those buildings that are not sold are starting to decay. Sewage is unregulated and simply dumped into the canals. We were instructed not to touch the water. Venice is constructing what's called the MOSE project, some 78 mobile sea barriers to protect the city against floods, but rectifying the problem will take years and billions of dollars.

We had a brief stop in Pisa to witness the marvel



of the leaning tower. It was meant to be a bell tower for the Pisa Cathedral. I even helped prop it up from falling as you can see in the picture. There is a life lesson from the leaning tower of Pisa. The tower began to lean during construction due to a weak foundation and an unstable soil on which the building was being erected.

And here is the takeaway from this. Not all of us started on a good foundation, and the soils on which we were planted may not have been fertile, but we can become the wonders of the world. So don't let your "beginning" determine your "end." For everyone reading this and especially for our students, I can't wait to see the wonders you will be creating in the world!

## Hope you enjoyed our newsletter!

