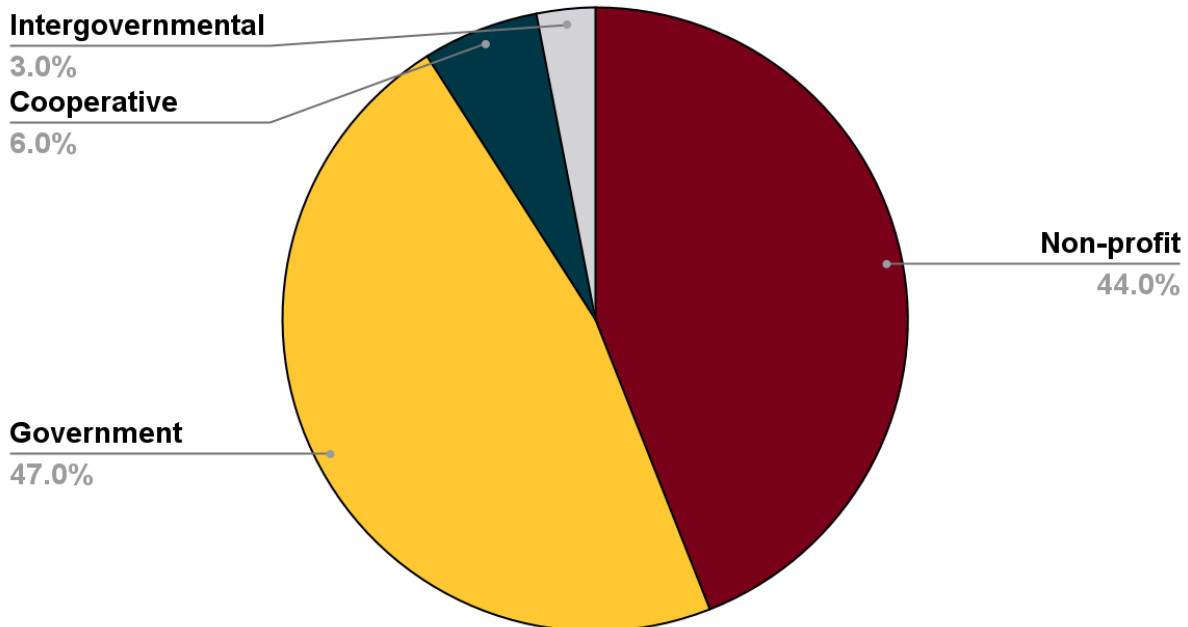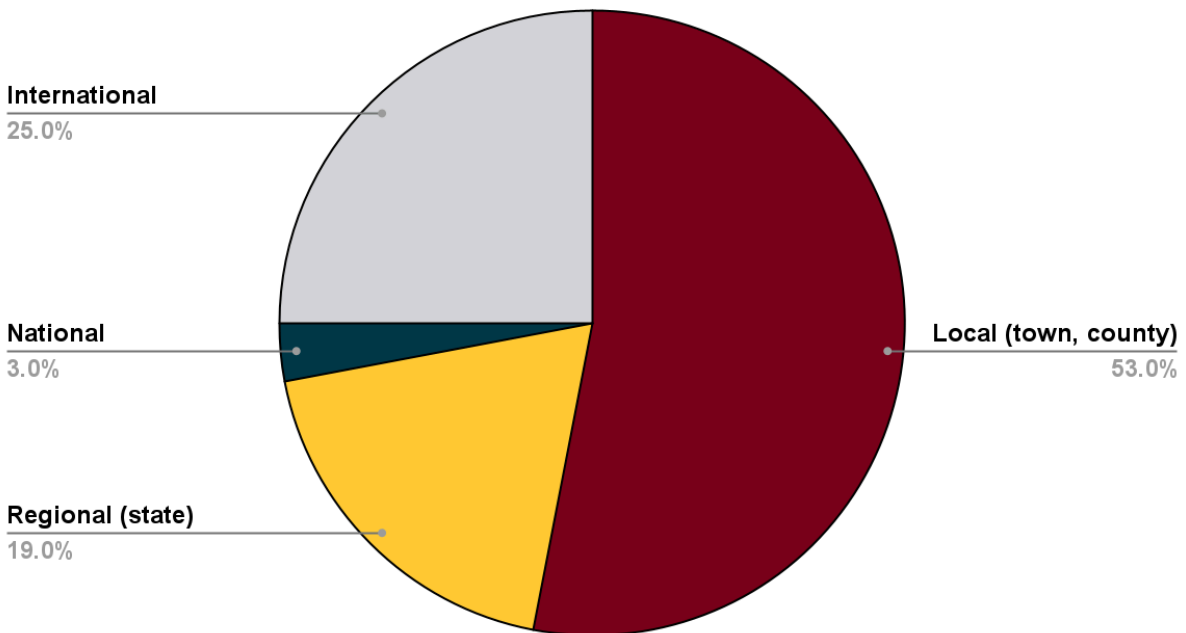# 2023-2024 Capstone Project List

Summary:

The Capstone Program at the Humphrey School in academic year 2023-2024 (spring & summer)

- involved **8** HHH faculty,

- overseeing **32** capstones,

- involving **121** students,

- collaborating with **28** distinct partners.

Capstone Partners by Sector

- Intergovernmental 3.0%
- Cooperative 6.0%
- Non-profit 44.0%
- Government 47.0%

Capstone Partners by Scope

International
25.0%

National
3.0%

Regional (state)
19.0%

Local (town, county)
53.0%

The following Capstone Projects encompassed a minimum of **15,246** hours of student-led work.

Oromia Human Rights Abuse Coverage: Cataloging the Coverage of Human Rights Abuses in the Oromia Region

Utilizing a literature review, this project catalogs and analyzes the coverage of human rights abuses in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. The Oromia region, like other parts of Ethiopia, has been blighted by ethnically motivated civil conflicts for decades. Our client, the Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association, sought to understand any discernible trends in the level of human rights abuse coverage the Oromia region received over the last six years and the nature of that coverage. We tallied the amount of coverage human rights issues in Oromia received from 2018 to 2023 for seven select media organizations and human rights-focused international non-governmental organizations (INGO). We highlighted any discernible trends in the level of coverage the region received from the selected organizations. Additionally, we analyzed the formal human rights abuse reporting prepared by four human rights-focused governmental bodies to identify the amount of coverage focused on human rights abuses received by the region, recurring themes across their reporting, and analyzed the major themes noted for congruence with the prevailing socio-political situation in Ethiopia at the time. To provide some comparative basis from other regions in the country we also completed the steps detailed above for tallying coverage for the Amhara and Tigray regions for the years 2018 and 2020. We also analyzed the reporting on the Amhara and Tigray regions in the formal report reviewed in conjunction with the Oromia region. We found that 2020 represented the peak year of coverage for the Oromia region but only as a by-product of the increased focus on the fledgling conflict in the Tigray region despite the conflict in the Oromia region having been ongoing for years by then. We also found that the onset of the Tigray conflict brought with it an increased level of coverage in the formal human rights reporting that was absent from ongoing conflicts in other regions. We recommend additional research here with an expanded timeline and more defined parameters to analyze the articles and reports published by the media and INGOs for a comprehensive and qualitative analysis.

Community Partner: Oromo Legacy Leadership and Advocacy Association
Team: Biftu Adema (MHR), Oketekyie Dakwa- Agyekum (MPA), Abdirizak Diis (MPA)

Considering the well-being of children during parental pretrial detention

This report comparatively examines the pretrial period and the effects of parental pretrial detainment on children in the United States and select international case studies. The research in this report comes from primary and secondary sources, including a literature review and several interviews with experts, advocates, and researchers in the field. The pretrial period is characterized by particular definition, structure, and variability in practice. Existing research thoroughly examines the impacts of long-term incarceration on both those incarcerated and their families and children. However, less attention has been paid to the pretrial period specifically. Without a standardized practice in the United States for considering the well-being of the child during their parent's pretrial detainment, they are left at the mercy of the various legal and judicial actors in the criminal legal system. Internationally, policies that address children's best interests during the pretrial period are

lacking. This report recommends a highly adaptable and layered approach to addressing the needs of parents, children, and families during the pretrial period in the United States. Recommendations include becoming a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and examining "preferred alternative" solutions, including prison nurseries and electric home monitoring.

Community Partner: Children of Incarcerated Caregivers
Team: Elise Busse (MPP), Brandon Garcia (MPP), Heather Grab (MPP), Emma Schubert (MPP), Marta Zurn (MPP)

Evaluation of Alight's Funding from Institutional Donors and Recommendations to Increase Their Rate of Success

The proposal development environment at Alight, formerly the American Refugee Committee, varies by country office size and resources. Alight's Global Support Team provides support and guidance, but the level of support is inconsistent and poorly defined. Recognizing the need for improved practices, the Humphrey team conducted a summative evaluation of the current proposal development process, focusing on country offices in Somalia and Ethiopia. Using surveys, a proposal tracking spreadsheet, and a literature review, the evaluation aimed to understand existing processes and identify best practices. Findings highlighted the need for more data collection, improved data management, and enhanced professional development. Recommendations include post-submission reviews, project management software, and creating a historical database. The results are intended to guide Alight in future strategic planning and improve proposal development success.

Community Partner: Alight
Team: Emily Kirkevold (MPP), Enkhtaivan Enkhbayar (MHR), Halima Hamud (MDP), Yeng Vang (MPP)

Sand Extractive Industries and Human Rights

Sand mining is associated with a wide range of human rights abuses, primarily through environmental degradation that undermines the rights to food, water, health, and life. Affected communities face issues relating to land tenure and governance, and often experience violations of their procedural rights to public participation, access to information, and access to justice. This report analyzes the major human rights impacts of sand extraction in the Upper Midwestern United States, Kenya, and India, incorporating the perspectives of various stakeholders and evaluating the relevant legal and regulatory structures and practices for each case. Employing a qualitative research approach informed by literature review, stakeholder and expert interviews, and media analysis, we describe the human rights situation in each location and identify major trends characterizing the issue across different human, political, and physical geographies. We conclude by offering recommendations for States, businesses, and civil society organizations to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights threatened by sand extraction.

Community Partner: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Team: Azra Bano (MURP), David Clower (MHR), Ivan Torres (MURP)

Global Policy
Faculty: Eric Schwartz
Projects: (4)

Impacts and Insights: Impacts on the GCC as Demand For Oil Decreases

This paper will examine the social, economic, political, and governmental impacts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as the world transitions away from oil as a fuel source.

The growth in demand for oil is projected, almost unanimously, to stall in 2040. The GCC countries: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman each released a plan aimed at diversifying their economies. This economic transition will come in tandem with larger social and political changes as the countries transition away from oil.
Community Partner: International Republican Institute
Team: Bauyrzhan Amanbek (MPP), Ahmed Khalaf (MDP), Zoey Weil (MPP)

Increasing Access to Political Participation Among Conflict IDPs
How do states protect the right of political participation among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)? We review the common legal, policy, and intersectional barriers impacting IDP political participation using voting as a proxy in 4 countries: Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Myanmar. We discuss previous strategies these countries have used to help, or hinder, IDPs exercising their political rights. We also engage in comparative analysis between the 4 countries to identify shared trends. We conclude by highlighting key recommendations for the IGO community and governments to ensure the rights of IDPs are protected.
Community Partner: International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Team: Tenzin Choesang (MPP), Trevon Hood (MPP), Mariam Latsabidze (MPP), Quinn Rowe (MPP), Lionel Wichman (MPP)

Evaluating Gender-Transformative Programming in Humanitarian Aid
Since the United Nations Resolution 1325 was passed, the humanitarian community has developed guidelines and tools to assist practitioners in designing and implementing more gender-sensitive and gender-inclusive programs. However, in practice, the operationalization of gender-inclusive approaches is often pro forma, peripheral, or an add-on to existing and predetermined programming efforts. This research project, undertaken in partnership with the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), a leading organization committed to addressing the unique needs of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis, seeks to determine the barriers faced by program staff when implementing gender-transformative programming. The study includes a desk review of existing literature regarding this kind of programming in humanitarian aid, and qualitative interviews with gender experts in the aid sector to fill in any gaps found in the literature. Through the desk review, there are two cluster focuses, food security and sexual and reproductive health, along with two crisis focuses, the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and internally displaced peoples in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The desk review was used to formulate the interview guide for the expert interviews. Based on the findings of the literature review, case studies and the interviews, we formulated recommendations to implement effective gender-transformative programs.
Community Partner: Women's Refugee Commission
Team: Paxton Andrada (MHR), Shweta Bhor (MPP), Malak Khalil (MDP), Alishia Wright (MPP)

A Nuclear State of Mind: Identifying the Impact of Climate Change on Nuclear Security
There is a broad assumption that nuclear energy is ready to solve climate change without a proper understanding of how climate change will impact the civilian nuclear energy industry. It is this assumption that is interrogated within the research and analysis portions of this literature review. The sweeping assumption that nuclear energy is ready for global dependence would have dangerous implications if it were wrong. Even if it is right, the process required to reconfigure the energy industry in order to prepare it for the world's demand for energy would still necessitate incredible strides. This literature review hopes to

shine a spotlight on some of the unanswered questions while offering a vignette of the industry as it currently sits today.
Community Partner: Stimson Center
Team: Zulfikar Jaffery (MPP), Gregory Nordhougen (MPA), Sam Padmanabhan (MPP), Trevor Woyda (MPP)

Leadership & Management
Faculty: Tia Sherèe Gaynor
Projects: (3)

Building Together: Integrating Community Insights from North Minneapolis into West Broadway Development

Justice Built Communities (JBC), an equitable economic development arm of Pillsbury United Communities (PUC), owns a handful of vacant lots and disused properties in North Minneapolis. PUC envisions a development process that heavily involves the community. As JBC is still in its infancy, PUC is looking to gather information from residents and business owners on how to best develop the acquired properties. The Humphrey team laid the foundation for future engagement. This included conducting interviews with previous organizations who engaged in the area, community engagement work, and focus groups. Additionally, a content analysis of engagement documentation associated with North Minneapolis was synthesized and gaps identified. The culmination of this work resulted in recommendations to PUC to equitably engage the community with purpose and meaning. These recommendations will be further leverage to create a space that will lead to prosperity for its residents.
Community Partner: Pillsbury United Communities / Justice Built Communities
Team: Ed Caples (MURP), Carly Eckstrom (MPP), Ahlam Mussa (MPP), Spencer Polk (MURP)

Annex Teen Clinic Service Area Demographic Report

The purpose of the Annex Teen Clinic Service Area Demographic Report is to provide comprehensive insight into the demographic makeup, population trends, and health-related data of the Minnesota Northwest Metro area, specifically focusing on individuals under the age of 26. The report serves as a vital tool for strategic planning, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts aimed at improving sexual healthcare and education for young individuals in the Northwest Metro Area.
Community Partner: Annex Teen Clinic
Team: Daisy Corona (MPP/MPH), Tiffani Mathew (MPP/J.D.), Wyatt Anderson (MPP), Josie Meloy (MPP), Margaret Turvey (MPP)

Data to Policy Change: Creating an Interactive Dashboard to Voice Youth Perspectives

The Dashboard Safety Index Project, in alignment with the 2022 YMB Annual Report and YCB's mission, aims to provide a continual platform empowering youth to express their perspectives for policymaking. This interactive tool fosters inclusivity and responsiveness by integrating youth voices into community safety and policy discussions. The project employs a comprehensive methodology, including multiple stakeholder perspectives, regional breakdowns, and alignment with UNICEF goal areas. Challenges such as missing data and inconsistencies in data collection are addressed, while recommendations for dashboard design and data collection prioritize user engagement and youth involvement. The project not only reflects a significant step towards inclusivity but also enhances the relevance and impact of public policies concerning youth safety, ultimately serving as a practical, user-centric tool for policy-makers and the community.

Community Partner: Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board (YCB) City of Minneapolis
Team: Maria Gjerdrum (MPP), Allison Glass (MPP), Antonio Sanchez (MPP/JD), Alexandra Wilson (MDP)

Science, Technology and Environmental Policy (STEP)
Faculty: Steve Kelley
Projects: (4)

Accelerating Deployment of Rural Beneficial Electrification for Residential Heating and Cooling

Great River Energy (GRE), a generation and transmission (G & T) electric cooperative, requested our team to research and develop pathways for accelerating beneficial electrification for residential customers in their largely rural territory. Residential customers are directly served by twenty-seven separate distribution cooperatives that are the member-owners of GRE. The goal of this project is to develop a playbook of best practices for the adoption of beneficial electrification that can be used to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to contribute to Minnesota's 100% clean electricity standard. To reach this goal, our team gathered information from GRE, conducted an online literature review including case studies from different programs across the nation, and conducted qualitative research interviews with multiple stakeholders involved in beneficial electrification. Although we refer to beneficial electrification as a whole, this report focuses on the transition to air source heat pump (ASHP) technology for residential heating and cooling within the home.

Community Partner: Great River Energy
Team: Carl Ludewig (STEP), Jane Eastes (MPA), Steve Coleman (STEP)

Making Duluth a Smart City

This project details a collaborative effort between the City of Duluth, Minnesota, and the University of Minnesota's Resilient Communities Project to assess the viability of integrating smart sensors and web-integrated Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) to enhance operational efficiencies within the city's water utility. Employing a Project Design Framework incorporating secondary research, case studies, and informational interviews, the study conducted cost-benefit analyses projecting the expenses of three distinct smart city technology deployment scenarios. The results indicated the feasibility of implementing these technologies, forecasting significant operational enhancements and a reduction of approximately 16 metric tons of carbon emissions within five years post-deployment.

Community Partner: City of Duluth, MN
Team: George Masson (STEP), Garrett Schoonover (MPP), Marianne Sciamanda (STEP)

Connexus Energy Air-Source Heat Pump Potential Study

This report assesses the perceptions among the members of the project client, Connexus Energy (Connexus), a Minnesota electric cooperative, towards air-source heat pumps (ASHPs) to inform the client's future approach toward ASHPs. To answer this question, the authors conducted qualitative and quantitative research, including two surveys of Connexus members, a focus group with members, and performed cost-benefit analysis of ASHP adoption for Connexus members. The research findings were synthesized to inform the recommendations to Connexus. The recommended actions for Connexus to take include the creation of a preferred HVAC contractor network that customers can utilize, more robust marketing of ASHPs, targeted messaging towards customers regarding ASHPs, and the restructuring of incentives to increase utilization and benefit to customers.

Community Partner: Connexus Energy

Team: Sam Benson (STEP), Daniel Tikk (MPA), Akia Vang (STEP)

Scaling the Twin Cities Climate Resiliency Initiative

Recognizing that Minnesota's communities are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, the Green Cities Accord (GCA) developed a program to expand the urban tree canopy in the Twin Cities area with the use of carbon offsets. By planting trees, urban communities experience the many benefits of the canopy, including rain interception, air pollution reduction, urban heat island impact reduction, and carbon sequestration. Now that the program has been established, and many trees have been planted, GCA is working to sell Carbon+ Credits from the City Forest Credits registry to corporate partners and enlisted a student team at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs to conduct market research and develop recommendations to improve the organization's Outreach strategy. Today, offsets face many criticisms, leading many corporations to be hesitant to purchase them as part of their sustainability initiatives. To determine how GCA might better market its credits to potential partners, our capstone student team conducted a research process to learn more about the Twin Cities sustainability landscape and the current state of the carbon offset market. Building on these insights, we've identified an outreach strategy to better market the program to potential partners.

Community Partner: Green Cities Accord

Team: Paulina Vergara Buitrago (MDP minor), Grace DeLee (MURP), Samantha Maul (STEP), Naivetya Patle (STEP)

Social Policy
Faculty: Jeannie Entenza
Projects: (4)

Efficiency, Equity, and Eliminating Homelessness in Hennepin County

The Coordinated Entry System (CES) is a process utilized by Hennepin County to facilitate the intake, assessment, and referral of homeless individuals and families with the highest needs to housing opportunities. This study sought to identify the challenges Hennepin County staff and service providers face when moving homeless individuals and families through CES and offer recommendations on how to increase efficiency and ensure equity in the referral process to guarantee successful housing outcomes. Through qualitative interviews with the aforementioned actors and quantitative analysis of key County reports, we make offerings around assessments, documentation, HMIS, program and referral misalignment, County and service provider goals, County-provider collaboration, and comprehensive support for clients.

Community Partner: Hennepin County Housing Stability

Team: Ed Adams (MPP), Yasmin Banishoraka (MPP), Madison Gebeck (MPP), Alex Goudie-Averill (MURP), Deborah Makari (MHR)

2024 Rural Affordable Housing_ Identifying Barriers & Increasing Equity

This report explores affordable housing finance in Greater Minnesota. Our team sought to determine 1) which state programs are being used in rural areas, 2) what barriers these communities face, and 3) what needs to change to improve accessibility. To gather information on this topic, we conducted a literature review as well as interviews with key stakeholders. These individuals work for rural cities, housing nonprofits, foundations, a private development firm, and state agencies. We transcribed and coded our interviews to identify key themes, and based our recommendations on these findings. While the scope of this report is Greater Minnesota and our findings are relevant for all of rural Minnesota,

many of our interviewees live and work within Itasca County. As such, there may be issues experienced by other regions of Minnesota that are not captured in this report.

Community Partner: Blandin Foundation

Team: Roman Morris (MPP), Aaron Osowski (MURP), Rebecca Whitmore (MPP)

Rethinking Adolescence and Education Policy

We were commissioned to conduct the research for this report by an organization called The Civic Affairs Trust, or TCAT. TCAT is a Minnesota-based trust whose purpose is to facilitate the redesign of community services and systems so they are self-improving. To date, TCAT's focus has been the K-12 public education system. TCAT approached the Humphrey School with the hypothesis that current policies governing eligibility for two alternative pathways programs, Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) and the General Education Development test (GED), are creating barriers for students because these policies limit participation based on age. We used qualitative research methods to answer three research questions: 1. What is adolescence? 2. Are age-restricted education policies creating unnecessary barriers to GED and PSEO programs in Minnesota? 3. If age is not a useful measure of readiness for PSEO and GED programs, what alternative measures might we consider? Our conclusions and recommendations around these three questions are based on our qualitative research findings.

Community Partner: The Civic Affairs Trust

Team: Melanie Leopold (MPP), Lauren Piper (MPP/MSW), Sophia Reese (MPP), Isabelle Trueblood (MPP)

Achieving Equitable and Effective Community Engagement through Social and Relational Network Analysis

Through the Humphrey School of Public Affairs capstone program, a student-consultant team of four graduate students worked with their capstone client, the City of Minnetonka, to better understand social networks within the City of Minnetonka and the impacts social networks may have on equitable community engagement. The City of Minnetonka is situated in Hennepin County and has a population of approximately 54,000 (Metropolitan Council, n.d.). Community inclusiveness is a strategic priority of the City of Minnetonka, which includes actively engaging the community to achieve broader policy outcomes, respond to community needs, and remove barriers for participating in programs and services. City staff proposed that, through a better understanding of social and relational networks within the city and between the city and community, the city can develop more effective and equitable public engagement and work towards achieving community inclusiveness.

The team focused on understanding the social networks of City of Minnetonka staff and the nature of relationships between city staff and community members. This was informed by background research on social networks, social network analysis, and equitable engagement. Social networks are composed of network members, which can be people or organizations, that are connected to other members through one or more relations (Marin & Wellman, 2009). Through social network analysis, which is the visualization and analysis of network members and their relations, this project sought to bring greater understanding of the social networks among city staff and between city staff and community members.

Community Partner: City of Minnetonka, MN

Team: Jesus Cazares-Reyes (MPP), Terri Grimlund (MPP), Erica Sniegowski (MPA), Alejandria Soria (MPP)

<div align="right">

Urban and Regional Planning

Faculty: Peter Brown

Project: (5)

</div>

To Acknowledge and To Celebrate: Indigenous Placemaking on Hoocak and Dakota Homelands

Indigenous peoples have called Minnesota home for thousands of years, living, hunting, gathering, and traveling through the region. Genocide and forced removal by European colonization tried to erase their histories and connections to the land. The use of public infrastructure is one step in recognizing indigenous people as past, present, and future stewards of the land. Using interviews and community engagement methods, the project team worked with the indigenous residents of the La Crescent area to lay out a framework for the creation of public spaces that acknowledge and celebrate indigenous history and culture. Conversations with the Hoocak and Dakota peoples revealed the importance of having adaptable guiding principles to establish trusting and working relationships with indigenous partners. Ideas for designs of a public space also emerged through conversation including recommendations for representing indigenous history and culture in a way that engages the community. This project established the relational and design foundations for the development of indigenized public spaces in the La Crescent area.

Community Partner: City of La Crescent, MN
Team: Gillian Greenberg (MURP), Edgar Leon Gomez (MURP), Mason Mollberg (MURP)

Trade-offs in Crash Risk: A Safety Comparison of Bidirectional Bicycle Facilities

This research examines the safety outcomes for cyclists on bidirectional bicycle facilities relative to other varieties of cycling facilities in Hennepin County, Minnesota. Using crash data for collisions involving both motor vehicles and bicycles, we determined bicycle facilities consisting only of painted lanes pose the highest risk to cyclists by a significant margin, followed by bidirectional facilities separated from motor vehicle traffic by plastic bollards. Unidirectional bicycle facilities separated by either plastic bollards or curbs and bidirectional facilities separated by curbs were found to pose lower and similar levels of risk to cyclists. Additionally, a majority of crashes occurred in intersections, demonstrating the need for carefully planned crash mitigation strategies on a case-by-case basis. Our findings indicate that when future bicycle facilities are constructed in Hennepin County, unidirectional facilities should be selected over bidirectional whenever possible, and in either case, curb separation should be provided whenever feasible, especially for bidirectional facilities.

Community Partner: Hennepin County Public Works
Team: Aidan Bragonier (MURP), Justin Broughman (STEP), Maxwell Wilson (MURP)

Creating Affordable Homes: An Evaluation of the Minneapolis Homes Create Strategy

This project was a qualitative analysis of the Create Strategy of the Minneapolis Homes Program. The project was designed to determine to what extent the strategy is meeting its goals. The Minneapolis Homes Program is managed by the Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) housing division. The mission of the Minneapolis Homes Program (started in 2020) is to help people access, create, and sustain affordable homeownership to eliminate racial disparities in homeownership. This capstone project was specifically focused on the Create Strategy of the program - to what extent are the Minneapolis Homes: Financing and Property Sale Programs successfully creating opportunities to build new homes and rehabilitate existing homes to eliminate racial disparities in homeownership within the city of Minneapolis? Three key findings emerged from our research: 1) Minneapolis Homes is well led and viewed as a national leader, 2) Some developers experience significant "pain points" when working with the city. Further, the experiences that builders have with the city can vary significantly and can be inconsistent. For example, newer community developers need more support navigating the city's process and receiving early financial support for construction, while larger developers want more

consistency, and 3) The Create Strategy is underfunded. More funding is needed for the Minneapolis Homes Create Strategy to increase capacity within the city as well as for specific development projects. In addition, outside forces such as post-Covid inflation, labor shortages, and the Minneapolis 2040 plan lawsuit are adding time, costs, and stress for builders. On a macro level, we recommend that Minneapolis Homes work closely with city departments and divisions to advance the city's identified primary goal. On a micro level, we recommend that Minneapolis Homes 1) clarify the primary goal within CPED in relation to equity and homeownership: what to incentivize and what to require, 2) seek additional funding to advance the identified goals of the Create Strategy, 3) continue to streamline the process for developers and customize support (including more financial and logistical support when needed), and 4) continue to strengthen communication with developers, city staff, and funders. In addition, Minneapolis Homes should examine whether more homeowner participation in evaluating the Create Strategy is beneficial.

Community Partner: City of Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development

Team: Dan Goodrich (MPA), Beth Yudelman (MURP)

Building for the Future: Affordable Redevelopment on Wayzata Boulevard

The way we think about commutes and suburban transit is changing, all the more rapidly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit agencies nationwide are seeing demand for Park & Ride decline, and the same is true for Metro Transit in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. This study examines possible site plans for an underutilized suburban Park & Ride site near the corner of Wayzata Boulevard and Barry Avenue in Wayzata. Utilizing 1) Existing site conditions, 2) City regulations and documentation, 3) an Affordable Housing finance literature review, and 4) Developer interviews, our team compiles a development switchboard, which is used to propose two primary paths for redevelopment on the site. These two paths are used to illustrate tradeoffs that would be involved in the future development at this site. The first development path, As-of-Right, examines what is possible on the site under current zoning constraints, and how it may correspond and conflict with the goals of the City, Metro Transit, and a theoretical development team. The second development path, Maximize Residential, asks what zoning and policy changes would be required to successfully develop affordable housing at a meaningful scale, including accessing the resources of Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. The final section of the report outlines the past community engagement regarding this site and presents an equity-oriented engagement framework to incorporate key community member feedback throughout the process of site redevelopment.

Community Partner: City of Wayzata, MN

Team: Aidan Breen (MURP), Zach Farmer (MURP), Dwight Klingbeil (MURP)

Deeply Affordable Housing in the Twin Cities Metro: Who produces it, where, and how?

Despite a vibrant affordable housing industry in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area, little research has focused specifically on the challenges in developing deeply affordable housing. This capstone project shines light on the local landscape of deeply affordable housing, through data analysis, mapping, and stakeholder engagement. Over the past decade, deeply affordable housing development in the Twin Cities metro has been concentrated in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and supply trails far behind demand. Amid a decades-long disinvestment in public housing at the federal level, non-profit developers are overwhelmingly responsible for providing deeply affordable housing. These developers operate on razor-thin margins and rely heavily upon subsidies from all levels of government, including tax credits, project-based vouchers, tax increment financing, and various loans and grants. Currently available subsidy is highly competitive and falls short of adequately

supporting both new developments with deeply affordable units and preserving already existing deeply affordable units. Further, as construction and operating costs rise and interest rates remain elevated, the subsidy available is stretched thinner still. With little hope for significant investment at the federal level, public entities at all levels of government in the state can enact policy interventions to increase development, which could include state sponsored vouchers, a robust state housing tax credit, inclusionary zoning, and more. To address concerns over the need for sustained investment in housing, a statewide constitutional amendment has been proposed at the legislature. This could provide needed and ongoing funding to meet the metro-wide demand for deeply affordable housing.

Community Partner: Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Team: Abdullahi Abdullahi (MPP), James Koch (MURP), Harrison Maxwell (MURP), Griffin Mcenery (MPP)

Urban and Regional Planning
Faculty: Nichola Lowe
Project: (3)

Duluth Blight Mitigation: Revising the Property Condition Scoring Metric

As the city of Duluth, Minnesota sees changes in demographics and population, it is essential to consider their housing stock and its ability to sustain different populations. This report examines and adapts the methods in which the city uses to determine and address blight in their aging housing stock through the creation of a community-friendly online tool designed to identify blighted properties. The report discusses the process of developing the digitized metric, the pilot process, and the tool's mapping features. Finally, it provides recommendations for future usage of the tool and supportive practices to ensure the metric is used to its fullest potential.

Community Partner: City of Duluth, Minnesota

Team: Elizabeth Kohler (MURP), Danielle Elizabeth Dorothy Sindelar (MURP), Eve Vanagas (MURP)

City of Edina Density Study

The City of Edina has outlined a series of goals and actions in its 2019 Climate Action Plan to reduce citywide greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, including increasing average population density per developed acre by 4%; decreasing citywide vehicle miles traveled by 7%; and doubling public transit commuter mode share from 3.3% to 6.6%. To aid in the continued amendment of this plan, this study explores the relationship between population density and transportation mode share in Edina to determine whether the projected density increases are likely to be sufficient to meet the City's transportation goals. The study uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods: a statistical regression analysis, a zoning scenario analysis using the software Urban Footprint, the development of a transportation decision-making framework, an analysis of Edina's peer cities, and a review of existing City plans and policies. We conclude that the existing population density targets set by the City of Edina are not sufficient to meet the transportation goals outlined in the Climate Action Plan. Targeted increases to allowable residential density are found to be more effective at reaching the City's transportation goals than citywide density increases. The report concludes with three recommended zoning scenarios of increasing allowable density along with a set of eighteen recommended policy actions that the City can take toward meeting the goals it has set in the Climate Action Plan.

Community Partner: City of Edina, MN

Team: Kenton Briggs (MPP), Holly Leaf (MURP), Johnny Menhennet (MURP), Greg Olberding (MURP), Jem Thompson (MURP), Yuping Wu (MURP)

[Downtown Redevelopment Plan: City of Sandstone, MN](#)

The City of Sandstone hopes to position itself as an outdoor destination town. Owing to its close proximity to ice and rock climbing at Robinson Quarry Park, whitewater rafting on the Wild and Scenic Kettle River, bicycling on the Willard Munger State Trail, and a plethora of recreational opportunities at Banning State Park, Sandstone has numerous natural and cultural assets that can be leveraged to support its downtown economy. Through interviews with visitors at the 2024 Sandstone Ice Festival and local business owners, quantitative analysis of visitor data to nearby parks, and case study analysis of economic development strategies employed by similar communities, this report identifies strategies that the City of Sandstone might employ to develop its downtown economy and its status as a recreation destination. Recommendations include broad policies or programs that the City might enact as well as site-specific land use proposals, which fall into five themes: marketing, housing and lodging, supporting local business growth and development, enhancing the downtown experience, and increasing access to downtown. In addition to this report, a digital Downtown Redevelopment Plan was also developed on ArcGIS StoryMaps for easy accessibility to the public.

Community Partner: City of Sandstone, MN

Team: Macklyn Hutchison (MURP), John Micevych (MPP), Mallory Prangley (MURP), Ryan Walz (MPP)

Development Practice (MDP 5200)
Faculty: David Wilsey
Projects: (2)

Project details unavailable

Summer 2024

Leading Organizational and Community Change
Faculty: Jeannie Entenza
Projects: (3)

[MN StoryCollective: Citizen Storytelling](#)

The Minnesota Story Collective (MNSC), an initiative of the State of Minnesota, was established to collect and analyze qualitative narratives from diverse community members. This effort aims to provide state agencies with a flexible and ongoing source of qualitative data to ensure that programs, policies, and practices better meet the needs of all families. In Fall 2023, MNSC collected a substantial dataset through community events and an online portal, creating an opportunity to more deeply understand key communities or subgroups in Minnesota, including: youth, single parents, and parents of children with identified special health needs. This project was undertaken to analyze the collected narratives and identify recurring patterns and themes within the data of these three subgroups. The analysis focused on three key research questions: (1) What are the frequently recurring ideas shared by participants? (2) What do these stories reveal about the lived experiences of Minnesotans? (3) How can the MNSC initiative be effectively communicated to potential users to enhance policy-making processes? Through thematic analysis, the study identified seven primary themes across the narratives: Home, Region/Place, Events, Community, Institutions, and Needs (with subcategories of Barriers to Needs and Needs Met). These themes were further explored within the context of the three target populations, providing insights into the unique challenges and experiences faced by each group.

Community Partner: MN StoryCollective
Team: Maximillion Inglis (MPP), Abrahm Neuser (MPA), Julia Olson (MPA), Matt Williams (MPA)

Bridging the Gap: Lifting Up Unheard Community Voices and Enhancing Resident Engagement in Duluth Through Effective Communication

This study evaluates current communication practices, identifies gaps in outreach, and provides recommendations to improve effectiveness given the constraints of reduced resources for the City of Duluth, MN. By using a mix-methods approach this report focuses on how Duluth residents learn about City programs, services, and policies, what gaps exist in how Duluth residents learn about programs, and how do Duluth residents prefer to be communicated to. After analyzing the City's current communications strategy, stakeholder analysis, literature review, comparative analysis with peer cities, we identified gaps in effective channels to reach all residents especially those of older age, outreach gaps for people of color, non-English speakers and historically underserved communities and resident's preference in simple and clear language in existing communications. The City should include residents, especially those underrepresented, in their strategic plan for outreach. Academic literature supports that community-based participatory research brought considerable benefits to minority communities by helping the cities to find culturally sensitive solutions. To effectively communicate with its residents and enhance public engagement, the City of Duluth should address the identified gaps and implement the recommended strategies. By expanding outreach methods, increasing transparency, leveraging data-driven insights, and increasing communications staff, Duluth can better serve its diverse population and improve overall communication efficacy.

Community Partner: City of Duluth, MN
Team: Geida Cleveland (MPA), Beth Moncrief (MPA), Drew Nelson (MPA), Josh Ortiz (MPA), Emma Young (MPP)

Ramsey County: Food Security Through Urban Agriculture and Community Gardening

In 2021, over 10% of adults and 17% of children in Ramsey County faced food insecurity, despite the availability of land suitable for agriculture. In response, Ramsey County initiated efforts to combat food insecurity through expanded programs, investments, and ordinance reforms focused on urban agriculture. Our team partnered with county staff to develop resources for municipalities to implement urban agriculture projects, drawing from successful examples in comparable regions. We focused on key areas such as maximizing urban growing spaces, identifying partnerships and stakeholders, securing diverse funding sources, investing in workforce development, and expanding educational opportunities. The outcome includes a catalog of national public policy options and public/private partnerships, along with detailed briefs on notable urban agriculture projects for local consideration. Additionally, we provided a memo on the social and community benefits of community gardens, emphasizing their positive impacts on stress relief, community cohesion, anxiety, asthma, and blood pressure. This resource serves as an introductory guide for cities within Ramsey County interested in supporting community gardens and urban agriculture initiatives.

Community Partner: Ramsey County
Team: Leslie Crawley (MPA), Andy Jorgensen (MPP), Liam O'Brien (MPP), Frank Pichel (MPA)