Regional Land Use Leadership Institute
The Mission of ULI Washington’s Regional Land Use Leadership Institute is to provide a powerful local resource to raise awareness and strengthen collaboration among real estate industry and business leaders from all sectors to tackle the National Capital Area’s complex land use issues. The Regional Land Use Leadership Institute helps develop tomorrow’s leaders who share the ULI’s mission. Throughout the nine-month program, the 30 participants enjoy a mix of lectures and experiences in which they collaborate with real estate, business, and public sector professionals in learning about the region and the complex issues confronting it.

Learn more at washington.uli.org.
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ULI Washington
Regional challenges and successes identified by participants.
Jess Alexander  
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Jess is an urban designer specializing in complex large scale, urban design, and master planning projects. He has over 14 years of experience and over the past decade has been part of the Stantec Architecture Inc. Urban Places global design group involved in projects that range from small urban interventions to city-wide strategic and vision plans. His focus is on the design and project management on a variety of new cities, waterfront developments, planned communities and high density downtown developments, many of them located in the Middle-East North Africa region. Jess is a passionate believer in the power of place making, putting people first and foremost in all our work and a strong proponent of innovation through collaboration.

Jess began my career in Denver Colorado then moved to Abu Dhabi in 2011 to lead the local office and build a presence in the region, in 2018 he moved back to the U.S. and settled in D.C. Jess has two kids (ages 9 and 11) and enjoys biking, traveling and going to the beach in his spare time.

Jennie Black, AIA, WELL AP, received her B.A. in Psychology and Studio Art from the University of Virginia, and then became increasingly interested in the built environment while traveling internationally for work with an industrial and organizational psychology firm. She received her Master of Architecture, with a certificate in historic preservation, from the University of Maryland in 2013.

She currently resides in Washington, D.C. and works as an architect at HKS, Inc. She loves to spend her time traveling with her husband, baking cakes, going to Zumba classes, and staying up late watching too many YouTube videos.

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Fernando is the founder of Soto Architecture & Urban Design, a firm based in Washington, DC dedicated to the design of mixed-use and mixed-construction developments in urban settings. Fernando has 20 years of experience in the design, documentation and construction of a variety of market-rate and affordable developments including Assisted Living facilities, Student Housing, Multifamily and Senior-Living communities. Fernando's design approach considers all aspects of the proposed development, weighing density, cost as well as demographics and sustainability.

Prior to starting his own firm in 2014, Fernando was a Principal at Grimm + Parker Architects; where he led the Residential & Urban Design studio. Fernando holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Universidad San Francisco de Quito (Ecuador) and accreditation from NCARB (National Council of Architectural Registration Boards). Fernando is married and has 3 wonderful kids (ages 14, 11 and 8). He is an avid cyclist and loves reading and traveling in his spare time.

Mr. Amol Deshpande, Principal at LSG Landscape Architecture, is passionate about landscape architecture and outdoor place making. He brings a wide perspective to design, with over 18 years of experience in landscape architecture, as well as background in architecture and urban design. His expertise in management of complex and challenging projects come from extensive project experience in the US, India, China and the Middle East. Mr. Deshpande's award-winning projects exemplify his commitment to sustainable design practices, while creating a unique sense of place for each community.

He is involved with AIA's DC Urban Design Committee. The participants promote beneficial Urban Design principles and concepts, and team with regional leaders in City Making. He currently serves on the Loudoun Design Cabinet, promoting architectural and landscape design that yields high-quality ecological stewardship for Loudoun County.

Amol and his family are Ashburn, VA residents. Amol loves long distance bicycling and hiking in the mountains.
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Tanner is a Director with HR&A Advisors, a real estate and economic development consultant based in Washington, DC. Tanner serves as a project manager and real estate advisor to multiple public and private sector clients implementing complex urban development projects across the United States and abroad. Tanner specializes in market-rate and affordable housing real estate development finance and feasibility, structuring public-private partnerships, and leading development negotiations. Tanner is a New England native who has lived in the District of Columbia on and off for several years, where he earned his undergraduate degree from American University, as well as time overseas, the western United States, and North Carolina where he earned a master’s in city and regional planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Outside of work Tanner enjoys running, skiing, mountaineering, guitar, woodworking, and New England sports.

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Justin Duncan is Commercial Counsel and Assistant Vice President of Fidelity National Title. Previously he was Underwriting Counsel for Commonwealth Land Title. In addition to underwriting and title insurance responsibilities, he has made seminar presentations on foreclosure, relevant state case law, and hosted lunch and learns with current colleagues and clients. He has a B.S. in Biology and a minor in History from the University of New Hampshire and received his J.D. from Thomas Jefferson School of Law. He is admitted to practice law in Maryland, Washington, D.C., New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Duncan currently resides in Takoma Park, with his wife, two children, and dog. When he is not spending time at work or with his family, he is a competitive disc golfer. Justin is formerly a Division I swimmer and was a member of the Sailing Club while at the University of New Hampshire.
Josh Ghaffari is the Comprehensive Plan Program Manager at the District of Columbia Office of Planning (OP). Mr. Ghaffari is leading the update process for the Comprehensive Plan, which is DC’s 20-year framework that guides future growth and development. Mr. Ghaffari is developing resilience policy, which is being integrated into DC’s Comprehensive Plan for the first time. Mr. Ghaffari has worked in the planning profession with the Government of the District of Columbia since 2007 in various capacities.

Mr. Ghaffari grew up in Annapolis, Maryland and has lived in Washington, DC since 2010. Mr. Ghaffari recently got engaged and is getting married next year. In his free time, Mr. Ghaffari enjoys traveling, going to the theater, swimming, playing darts and spending time with family and friends.

Hyojung Kim Garland supervises the Park and Trail Planning Section of Montgomery County Parks. As an urban designer/planner advocate for improving public space through interdisciplinary strategies, her extensive community planning experience enhances her park planning, which critically values social equity and integrates the community’s needs to frame park planning.

She has overseen planning in the Town of Vienna, managed the Richmond Highway and Annandale areas as a revitalization program manager in Fairfax County, and created several master plans as a community planner in Prince George’s County. In private practice, she specialized in project entitlement, BRAC development, and urban design guidelines. With 19 years of experience, and LEED AP and AICP credentials, she received her MLA from the University of Pennsylvania and received her BA at Seoul National University, South Korea.

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In Greg’s 18 years at DAVIS he advanced from intern to a Director in DAVIS’ commercial real estate repositioning group. Greg is a key player in some of the DC region’s most notable and award-winning commercial construction projects including Constitution Center ($253M), HQ for a major bank ($102M), SiriusXM Satellite Radio ($48M), Silverline Center ($30M), 2000 K Street ($43M), and many more. As Director, Greg is the top DAVIS leader for multiple ongoing construction projects, with overall responsibility for delivering the project to the client on time and within budget. Greg also serves by invitation on several internal DAVIS committees focused on bettering DAVIS’ business practices and have been acknowledged as a trusted and respected contributor by the company’s executive leadership.

Outside of DAVIS, Greg serves as President of his condo board and recently retired after 15 years of coaching high school hockey at DeMatha Catholic High School (reaching the state championship ten times). Greg lives in Adams Morgan DC with his wife, Hillary, who is expecting their first baby (girl).

Robert Gibson grew up in Arlington County and now works as a transportation planner for the County. Over the past 10 years he has worked on over 15 million square feet of development that has been approved and built. Most of his contributions cannot be seen, because they start with making sure new projects have the infrastructure to support the growth. If you are in Arlington and you like the new sidewalk you are strolling down, there is a good chance Rob had something to do with it.

Before working for Arlington, Rob consulted on traffic/transportation engineering and planning projects across the Washington DC area. Over his career, his focus has been on creating transportation solutions that help people enjoy the city rather than being a “Slave to the Traffic Light”. (Catch the Phish reference?)

Rob lives in Adams Morgan with his partner. They are looking for a new beagle to share their home and hearts.
Erin is currently working as the Real Estate & Market Analyst for the Montgomery County Planning Department’s Research and Special Projects Division. She has over 8 years of consulting experience in real estate development, investment, and construction project management. Her areas of expertise include real estate financial modeling, property rehabilitation/redevelopment, and market analysis.

Erin earned her Masters’ degree in Real Estate from Georgetown University and her Bachelors’ degree in Economics from Mount Holyoke College. In addition to her work in real estate, she is also the proud single mom of adopted triplet boys, an artist, and an outdoor adventure enthusiast. She loves people, animals, traveling, helping others, and staying active in the outdoors with her friends and family.

Jen Harkleroad is a civil engineer and project manager with over 15 years of experience in site design, stormwater management, water and sewer design, roadway design, permitting, and construction cost estimating. She has several years of experience working in the DC Metro area, including projects for the Architect of the Capitol and the National Zoological Park. She is currently involved in the DC Clean Rivers Rock Creek Project which includes the construction of green infrastructure to eliminate discharge into the District’s combined sewer system.

Jen grew up in a Navy family and moved nine times in sixteen years. She earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Jen was active in ULI North Florida for many years before relocating to Maryland in 2015. Jen was a ULI Urban Plan volunteer and served on the Technical Assistance Panel committee and the Membership committee. Jen joined ULI Washington in 2016 and has served on the WLI Communications Committee.

Jen’s previous work experience included thirteen years in Jacksonville, FL working on master planned developments, public infrastructure projects and federal projects in the Southeast.
Richard Houghton, AIA, LEED AP, is Assistant Vice President of Construction and Development for the B. F. Saul Company and Saul Centers in Bethesda, Maryland. His responsibilities include concept planning, design development, construction documentation and project delivery. Mr. Houghton has managed complex mixed use developments on demanding and constrained urban sites, including Park Van Ness, in Washington, DC and Clarendon Center, in Arlington, Virginia. His most recent project was a Homewood Suites Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, completed in February.

Mr. Houghton’s design and management experience spans the commercial and the public spheres. As an architect with Hartman-Cox Architects, Mr. Houghton headed up planning and preservation initiatives on nationally significant historic sites including the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the Smithsonian’s Patent Office Building and Dulles Airport. He oversaw a major addition to the Kennedy-Warren Apartments, a landmark Art Deco building in Washington DC. That project also incorporated the restoration of the building’s historic interiors.

In 2001 Mr. Houghton teamed up with the firm of Lourie and Chenoweth, winning an international design competition for canopies for Metro’s open escalator wells. The iconic glass and stainless steel structures pay homage to the original 1970’s Metro design while increasing Metro’s street presence at stations throughout the region.

Hiroshi Jacobs, AIA is an architect with 15+ years of experience working on projects of many types and scales. He is a trusted design leader at Studios Architecture and is a firm believer that design can be transformative to the human experience. As the founder of HiJAC, a trans-disciplinary art & research practice, Hiroshi is also an accomplished artist. He has completed numerous large scale interactive art installations in DC and beyond.

Hiroshi holds a Master in Design Studies degree from Harvard University, where he was the recipient of the Daniel L Schodek Award for Technology and Sustainability. He also holds Bachelor and Master of Architecture degrees from Tulane University. Hiroshi is a registered architect in the District of Columbia and has held adjunct faculty positions at Tulane University and at Catholic University. He is a recipient of the 2014 National AIA Associates Award and the 2012 AIA DC Emerging Architect Award.

In what little spare time he has, he enjoys working on his 19th century rowhome near H Street and creating new cocktail recipes with his wife Anna.
Through out her childhood, the potential expansion of the BART System stirred up thoughts in Nicole's imagination of being connected to what seemed to be distant yet captivating neighborhoods throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Her interest in place, culture, and accessibility led her to pursue a Bachelor's Degree at Tulane University, in the unique City of New Orleans. A few years later, during Hurricane Katrina's aftermath, she became fascinated with the forces shaping the rebirth, rebuilding, and renewal of the City and ultimately earned a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning.

Today she manages cross-departmental initiatives focused on creating a more prosperous, accessible, livable, and sustainable metropolitan Washington at the Council of Governments. Her work involves supporting local jurisdictions work through the challenges of integrating transportation and land use planning to create vibrant communities. Outside of work she enjoys rock climbing, gardening, and training for long-distance bike tours.

Catherine's work includes design review for new construction located in Old Town as well as reviewing rehabilitation projects for historic buildings and providing technical assistance. Recent projects include the redevelopment of public housing into mixed-income developments and new development on the waterfront, including a hotel and parks. Additionally, she has worked on long-range planning efforts including the recently approved Old Town North plan and the Route 1 South Housing Strategy.

Prior to working in Alexandria, Catherine spent time at a preservation consulting firm in DC and as a county planner in rural Virginia. She has master's degrees in Urban & Environmental Planning and Architectural History from the University of Virginia and a BA in History from Dartmouth College. She enjoys being outside on the weekends whether hiking, exploring new places or visiting historic sites with her husband and two high-energy sons.
Babatunde Oloyede is currently the President and CEO of the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization, Inc. Throughout his career, he has held various leadership positions within organizations providing both managerial skills and mentoring. His career has encompassed advising clients, streamlining operations, negotiating contracts, managing assets, conducting due diligence, developing strategic initiatives for both the private and public sectors.

He developed, renovated, and managed over 40 single-family and multi-unit residential properties during his career. The majority of his projects focus on revitalizing distressed commercial and residential properties. Through his projects, Babatunde has become well versed in HUD housing standards and has acquired significant experience managing market rate and HUD subsidized units. Additionally, Babatunde earned an Illinois’s Real Estate Broker’s License. He was a member of former Mayor Vincent C. Gray’s Comprehensive Affordable Housing Task Force. In addition to his real estate and management experience, Babatunde assisted with the launch of Custom Cut Clothiers, a start-up that aggregated the world’s leading custom apparel manufacturers and combined them with a network of professional style consultants to offer made to measure and customized apparel at ready-to-wear price points. Babatunde earned a B.S. from Northwestern University and an M.B.A from the Simon School of Business at the University of Rochester with a concentration in Finance and Entrepreneurship. He has received fellowships from the following organizations: Artemis Real

Josh is the Director of Engineering in the Washington DC office of LandDesign. He has over 16 years of experience in the region in design and construction of residential, multi-family, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use projects. He manages both public and private infrastructure and development projects. He advocates for the collaboration of designers, both engineers and landscape architects, to create places that bring people together. His experience with all stages of the development process from site selection to bond release allows him to anticipate potential conflicts and develop strategies to keep the project moving forward. His focus is on finding solutions and eliminating “no” as answer. Before Josh started at LandDesign he spent a few weeks starting to build his river house out in Woodstock, Virginia. Josh and his wife Jodi are avid concert goers, just ask about his collection of t-shirts.
Dan Outen and his wife, Caroline, and their dog, Sully, are back in DC after two years in Chapel Hill, NC at Kenan-Flagler Business School and then two years in Newport Beach, CA. In California, Dan served as a Development Director for the Irvine Company where he focused on office development projects and long-term retail strategy. Prior to business school, Dan spent four years with The JBG Companies as a Senior Analyst working on mixed-use residential developments including Fort Totten Square, The Galvan and 275 N Washington Street.

Now back in DC, Dan is a Managing Director at Outlier Realty Capital where he leads the development group. Outlier invests in and develops primarily multifamily assets including a growing co-living portfolio.

Dan and Caroline enjoy sailing, activities with their dog and trying new restaurants with friends. They look forward to rediscovering the city and are always open to food or drink recommendations!

Haley is a transportation planner specializing in systems and transit planning with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) in Washington, D.C. She manages planning for major transit and multimodal planning projects in the District, including DC Streetcar and Washington Union Station expansion. She also specializes in National Environmental Policy Act processes for complex transportation processes and has worked closely with State and local DOTs and environmental agency staff on plans and projects across the U.S. Haley previously worked at the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Volpe Center, where she managed long-range and project-specific planning for MPOs and public land management agencies.

Her additional experience includes land use and urban design planning firms in Florida and Colorado. Haley holds a master’s degree in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and she is an avid cyclist, runner, and urban explorer.
Mark Phillips is a talented planner with 15 years of experience and a true passion for the field. He has spent the last three years with WMATA’s Office of Planning managing studies to improve the system’s reliability, flexibility, and capacity; developing strategies to improve service while reducing costs; and working to advance TOD planning efforts. Before joining WMATA he was the long-range planner for St. Louis’s transit system, a city planner in New York, and a regional planner in New Orleans. That interdisciplinary experience helps him bridge gaps between land use, transportation, and economic development planning.

In his spare time, Mark loves reading, coffee, wine, biking, activism, Netflix, and spending time with friends and family. He appreciates authenticity, and tries to find beauty and interest even in the small stuff. He loves exploring cities by foot and bus, and would spend all his time traveling if he could afford it!

Sarah Ridgely is a senior urban planner with the National Capital Planning Commission. With over 12 years of public service experience at local and federal levels, her work focuses on the how the public realm and private development can work hand-in-hand to create engaging and resilient communities.

As part of NCPC’s Physical Planning Division, she focuses on a variety of long range planning and design initiatives for the federal government. Her projects range from small parcels to large campuses, including work on infrastructure, public realm design, and economic development. Her recent work at NCPC focuses on a new vision for Pennsylvania Avenue, a significant public space that serves both national and local needs in the capital city. Prior work includes the SW Ecodistrict and CapitalSpace.

Born, raised, and still living in Alexandria, Sarah enjoys golfing with her husband and bike rides throughout the mid-Atlantic region.
Laura Schonfeld is a Senior Development Manager at PN Hoffman, focusing on The Wharf. In Phase I of The Wharf (opened October 2017) she managed the design, development, and operational planning of The Channel, a 501-unit mixed-income apartment building and The Anthem, 6,000 person concert venue. In Phase II of The Wharf (planned opening 2022), Laura is managing the development of a 255-unit mixed income apartment building and a 131-key luxury boutique hotel, along with initial site planning elements including entitlements.

Laura holds an MBA from The George Washington University along with degrees in Art History (McGill University) and Interior Design (International Academy of Design). Previously, she worked as an interior designer and in sustainable design and construction.

In her free time she enjoys travelling, cooking, learning more about architecture/design, cheering on the Capitals and doing really challenging boot-camp workouts.

Nimita Shah joined Toll Brothers in 2005 and is currently a Director of Land Acquisition in Ashburn, VA. Her interest in the built environment was sparked as she watched her father manage the maintenance of the great bridges of New York City as an employee in the NYCDOT. From there, she pursued opportunities in the private and public sector to round out her real estate knowledge, including working at the NYC Economic Development Corp and the DC Deputy Mayor’s Office of Planning and Economic Development. Her focus has been in the acquisition and development of for-sale, multi-family real estate in New York City and the Washington, DC Metro Area.

Nimita received a Bachelor of Science in Economics from The Wharton School and a Bachelor of Applied Science from The University of Pennsylvania’s School of Engineering and Applied Science. She currently lives in Great Falls, VA with her husband and two children.
Atul is an urban designer with over a decade of experience working in architecture and planning organizations in both the public and private sector. Atul brings to the table a comprehensive understanding of the policies, regulations and investments needed to transform places. Atul's experience includes working with real estate developers and public agencies across the region, country and beyond has exposed me to creative ways in which regulations, investment and design can be strategically coordinated to create long lasting value in a place.

Atul grew up in India and now lives and works in Silver Spring with his wife and two little kids. He loves drawing, art, and taking very long walks in great parks and cities, whenever he can.

Nadia Shirin is the Director of Operations with Cornerstone Capital, a DC-based private equity investment firm specializing in high-yield commercial real estate lending, equity investing, acquisitions and development in top markets nationwide. Nadia develops and implements the firm’s business operations, infrastructure, and capacity building strategies to deliver on client experience, investor return, and overall fund performance. In addition, Nadia tracks, measures, and reports portfolio growth and identifies new value-add initiatives that meet the goals of the clients, investors and community.

Before joining Cornerstone Capital, Nadia was an associate with a capital markets firm planning the launch of a new business segment raising capital for market rate and affordable projects under $20MM in Washington, DC. Prior to relocating to DC, Nadia founded and led a statewide economic development initiative in North Carolina addressing multi-generational poverty through advancement of middle and high school young women first in their family to go to college.

Nadia is a vegan who loves hiking, world travel, and hosting gatherings in her home. Nadia has a Bachelors in Business Marketing & Information Technology from University of North Carolina Greensboro, a Masters in Nonprofit Management from High Point University and is currently earning her Masters in Real Estate Development & Finance at Georgetown University.
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Beth is a DC-based urban planner and economic development practitioner, and is the Co-Founder and Vice President of Operations for the Lotus Campaign. Before joining the Lotus Campaign, Beth was the Vice President of Advisory Services for the Urban Land Institute (ULI), working with global communities to think through complex urban challenges and develop unique programs to help places address everything from housing affordability to community resilience. Beth helped create and staffed the Equitable Economic Development Fellowship, a partnership between NLC, ULI and PolicyLink—providing one year of technical assistance to an annual class of six cities to help them pursue more equitable and inclusive economic development policies, programs and funding.

Prior to ULI, Beth was Assistant Vice President/Chief of Staff with the NYC Economic Development Corporation, balancing program management with a portfolio of economic development, real estate, cultural heritage, and policy projects. She was also a senior analyst for Economics Research Associates, creating planning and development strategies for a variety of clients. Beth holds a Master’s degree in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor’s in urban landscape studies from the University of Maryland. When not working, Beth can usually be found outside; running, biking, surfing and hiking… and generally encouraging friends and family to enjoy the great outdoors with as much unabashed enthusiasm as she does.

Her personal motto is: “Find out who you are and do it on purpose”.

Meghan Van Dam, AICP currently serves as a branch chief within the Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, Planning Division. She has worked for the county for the past 14 years, primarily focused on long range planning studies, comprehensive plan amendments and development review. She has led or overseen such projects as the more recent Embark Richmond Highway in Alexandria, VA and the Springfield Connectivity study, as well as assessments of the future of vacant office and retail buildings.

Prior to her time in Fairfax, she worked for the Director of Strategic Planning in Charlottesville, VA, and possesses a Master’s Degree in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia.
Jerry Walters is a seasoned design and construction project management professional with more than 20 years of experience managing the delivery of hospitality, workplace, mixed-use, and residential projects nationwide. Jerry has special expertise in leading complex renovations of facilities that must maintain operations during construction, with minimal disruption to building users. His core competencies include project management, contract negotiation, quality control, cost and data analysis, problem solving, and project planning, with experience serving both private and public sector clients.

Prior to joining MGAC in 2010, Jerry worked at the Battelle Memorial Institute, The JBG Companies and The Whiting Turner Contracting Company. Jerry earned his Master of Business Administration from the University of Maryland and his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Bucknell University. Jerry is married with two sons, Jack (11) and PJ (7). Jerry enjoys running, biking and spending time outside with his family.

Brendan Whitsitt is a Development Manager with Insight Property Group, where he is responsible for all aspects of multifamily development and construction. His team is highly focused on delivering exceptional, boutique apartment communities that set a new standard for design and resident experience. Most recently he delivered The Apollo, an award-winning mixed-use community located in the exciting H Street NE Corridor.

Prior to joining Insight, Brendan worked as an architect and development consultant in China, the Middle East, and in DC. He was drawn to real estate development by the opportunity to create great urban places, and to help his community create new social and economic opportunities. Brendan also serves as the Board Chair of After-School All-Stars DC, which provides free after school programming to DC’s youth.

Brendan lives in Brookland with his wife, Kim, and their dog, Doug.