

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. In the foreground, there are several houses with red and grey roofs, surrounded by green lawns and trees. A large, open grassy field is visible in the middle ground. In the background, a dense line of trees separates the neighborhood from a city skyline with various skyscrapers under a clear blue sky.

# **Master of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy Student Handbook**



**Revised June 1, 2025**



Barbara Jordan - Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs

# Welcome Note

Welcome to the Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy in the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University. In the Houston area, as the only accredited urban planning program by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), the Master's program, fondly called MUPEP, is the fourth accredited planning program in the State of Texas. The mission of the Masters in Urban Planning and Environmental Policy is to train policy-oriented planners and environmental policy analysts for leadership positions in planning and environmental policy-related organizations, with special emphasis on issues of significance to the communities and regions of the Southwest.

Our program is supported by six full-time tenured faculty members who are highly qualified and deeply committed to excellence in both teaching and research. In addition, we are proud to have several adjunct faculty members who bring valuable real-world experience and focus on the practical and professional dimensions of planning practice. Collectively, our faculty offer a rich and diverse range of expertise, with extensive research backgrounds in key areas such as housing and community development, environmental and sustainability planning, transportation systems, and spatial analysis using advanced technologies. Their academic rigor, combined with hands-on professional insight, provides students with a well-rounded and forward-thinking educational experience.

With a strong foundation in both theory and practice, the MUPEP program prepares students to address complex urban and environmental challenges with creativity, equity, and resilience. We invite you to join our vibrant academic community and become a part of the next generation of planning professionals committed to making a meaningful impact.

# 1. Primary Contact Information

**Dr. Laura Gwen Solitare**

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Master's Program Coordinator  
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**Dr. Bumseok Chun**

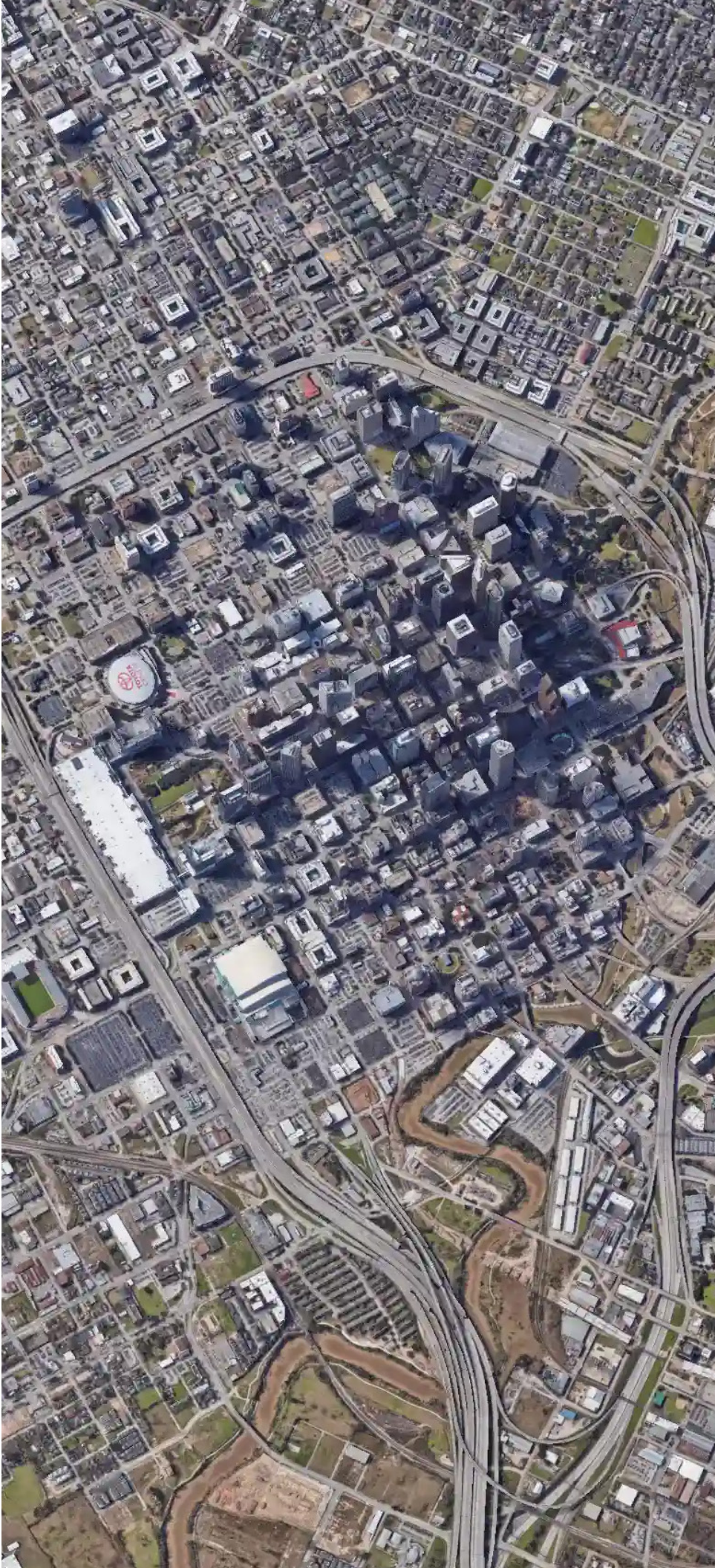
Acting Departmental Chair  
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Downtown of Houston, Texas  
Google Earth. (2025). Satellite imagery of Houston, Texas  
Retrieved April 12, 2025, from <https://earth.google.com>

## 2. Faculty Members

### Tenured Faculty (listed alphabetically)



**Dr. Robert D. Bullard**

Distinguished Professor  
Ph.D. Sociology, Iowa State University  
M.A. Sociology, Atlanta University

**Research:** Environmental Justice, Sustainable Development, Urban Land Use



**Dr. Bumseok Chun**

Acting Department Chair, Associate Professor  
Ph.D. City and Regional Planning, Ohio State University  
M.CRP. City and Regional Planning, Ohio State University  
M.S. Geodetic Science, Ohio State University

**Research:** Coupled Human-Nature Interaction, Thermal Environment, Scenario-Based Analysis



**Dr. Glenn S. Johnson**

Professor  
Ph.D. Sociology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
M.A. Sociology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

**Research:** Environmental Policy, Community Impact Assessment, Environmental Justice, Community-University Partnership



**Dr. Jeffrey Lowe**

Associate Professor  
Ph.D. Urban Planning and Policy Development, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
M.CRP. City and Regional Planning, Morgan State University

**Research:** Housing and Community Development, Planning and Race, Political Economy of Community Development Organizations, Public Philanthropy



**Dr. Sheri Smith**

Associate Professor  
Ph.D. City and Regional Science, Texas A&M University  
M.CRP. City and Regional Planning, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

**Research:** Urban Infrastructure, Housing and Community Development, Food System



### **Dr. Laura Gwen Solitare**

Associate Professor

Ph.D. Urban Planning and Policy Development, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

M.URP. City and Regional Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Research:** Environmental Planning, Health Impact Assessment, Land Use, Public Health, Environmental Justice

### **Adjunct Faculty (listed alphabetically)**



### **Shad Comeaux, AICP**

Principal and Vice President, Freese and Nichols

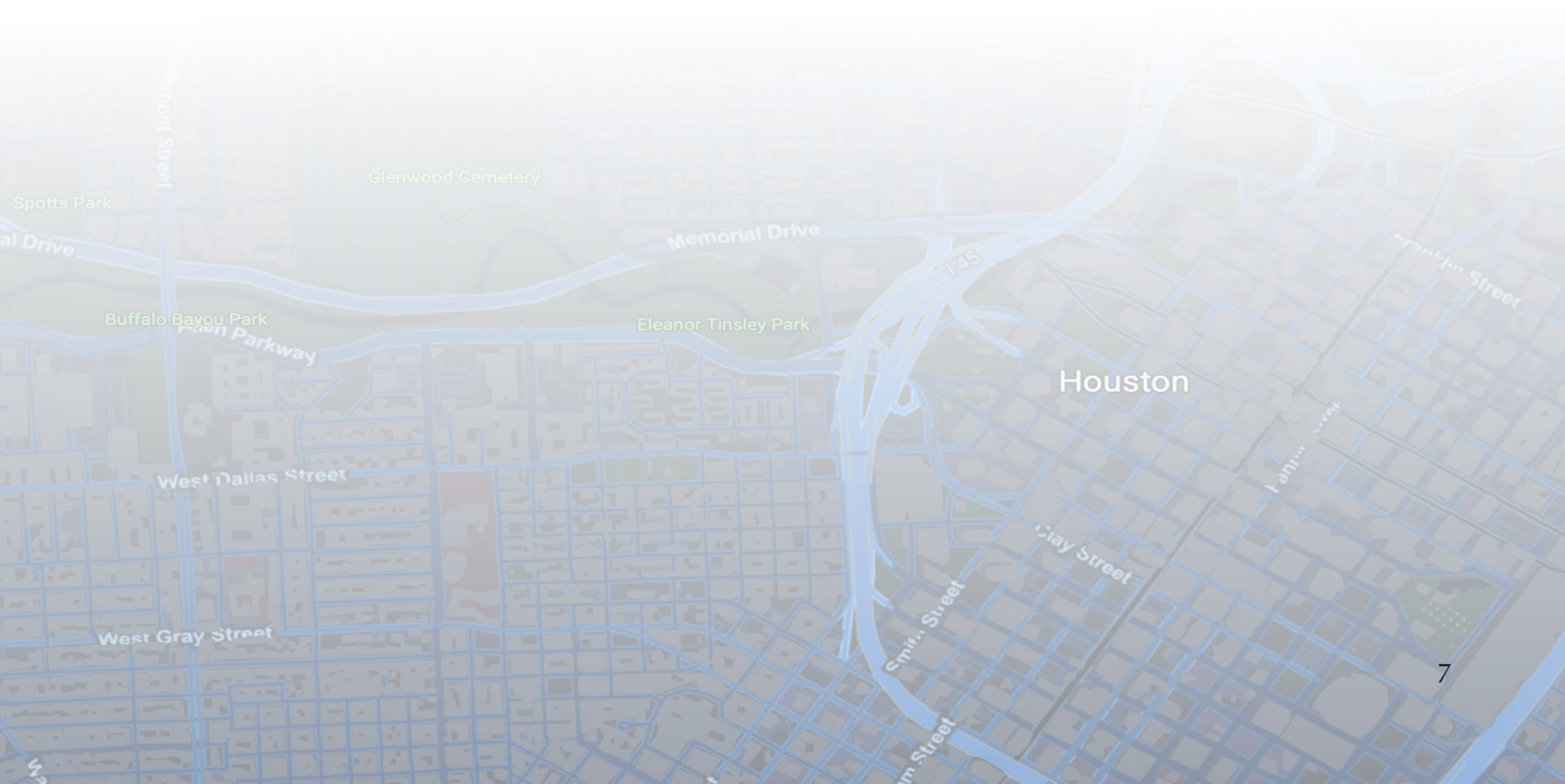
**Teaching Course:** Urban Design



### **Otis Spriggs, AICP**

Director of Development Services/City Planner, City of Angleton

**Teaching Course:** Intro Land Use, Plan Making and Implementation



### 3. Program Mission

The mission of the Master of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy (MUPEP) program is to offer a multi-racial and culturally diverse student body a sound professional education for the practice of urban planning. Whether desiring to become a planning generalist or a generalist with a specialty, students graduate from the MUPEP program with the skills and knowledge of equity, social justice, and sustainability. We prepare students to become planners who demonstrate critical, visionary, and utopian thinking with an ability to elicit, understand, and respectfully characterize community values within planning projects.

### 4. Degree Requirements

The overall requirements for the MUPEP are: Completion of 48 credit hours, 24 of which will be core courses. In addition to the core requirements, students are required to take 12 hours in specialization courses. Students have the option to take their remaining 12 hours as electives or split the credits into 6 hours of electives and 6 hours of thesis work. The requirements differ based on whether a student selects **Track A. Internship+Exit Exam or Track B. Thesis.** for completing the degree.

**4.1.** A degree plan must be prepared upon the completion of 18 hours of graduate course credit. Each student will consult with their academic advisor (assigned by the Program Coordinator) to prepare the degree plan. Example of Thesis and Non-Thesis options attached. Failure to have an approved degree plan may affect a student's ability to complete the degree requirements in a timely and efficient way.

**4.2.** Students currently have two options to satisfy the degree requirements: **Track A. Internship+Exit Exam or Track B. Thesis.** The details of each are outlined later in the document.

# 5. Program Curriculum

## Track A. Internship+Exit Exam

This track is designed for students who intend to enter professional practice and gain field experience prior to graduation. For this track, **students are required to complete an internship** to work in a planning capacity over the course of 120 hours. A letter of offer is required that identifies responsibilities and the number of hours to be completed. At the completion of the internship, students are required to submit a report/project/journal reflective of lessons learned or internship accomplishments. Enrollment in UPEP 790 Internship is optional and may be taken for elective credits.

In addition, the **exit exam** is administered on scheduled days during the months of March and October. A student is eligible to take the exam once he or she has:

- earned and maintained a 3.0 graduate GPA in Urban Planning and Environmental Policy courses and a cumulative GPA of 3.0
- successfully completed all core course requirements, the only exception UPEP 720 and UPEP 709 may be taken in the concurrent semester as the exam.
- no outstanding incompletes, and
- a degree plan with Graduate School.

The **exit exam** is graded as pass/fail. A student is allowed two attempts, in consecutive semesters, to pass the exam. Students who are not successful on the second attempt, must then complete an intensive planning project to satisfy the requirement.

## Track B. Thesis

The thesis involves traditional academic research. Depending on the topic, this may include historical analysis, secondary data, original fieldwork, or theoretical inquiry. **Students earn 6 credits for thesis research: 3 credits in UPEP 797 and 3 credits in UPEP 798; both course sections must be taken.**

Students writing theses should obtain a copy of the Thesis Guidelines Manual from the Graduate School and review related requirements, including those for formatting and referencing, at <http://www.tsu.edu/academics/colleges-and-schools/the-graduate-school/pdf/thesis-guidelines.pdf>. The Graduate School and Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy requires planning students to follow APA for formatting, style, and citations. Thesis proposals must be reviewed and accepted by a faculty committee constituted according to requirements of the Graduate School. There are rules regarding the composition of the Thesis Committee, which must have

at least four members. Two members of the committee must be UPEP faculty; the chair of the committee must be a member of the UPEP faculty. The Graduate School will appoint the fourth member, based upon suggestions from the chair/student. Students must submit the REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF FACULTY

### Required Credit Hours and Courses

	Track A. Internship+Exit Exam	Track B. Thesis
Required Course	18 Credit Hours	18 Credit Hours
Required Studio	6 Credit Hours	3 Credit Hours
Specializations	12 Credit Hours	12 Credit Hours
Electives	12 Credit Hours	9 Credit Hours
Thesis	N/A	6 Credit Hours
Internship	3 Credit Hours	Optional

\*Most courses are composed of 3 credit hours.

### Required Courses

UPEP 703: Planning History, Theory and Practice  
 UPEP 705: Introduction to Land Use Planning  
 UPEP 709: Principles of Planning Law  
 UPEP 719: Plan Making and Implementation  
 UPEP 725: Introduction to Statistics  
 UPEP 726: Applied Planning Methods

### Required Studio

UPEP 720: Planning Studio I  
 UPEP 721: Planning Studio II

\* For Track A. Internship+Exit Exam, students take both. For Track B. Thesis, students only take one (UPEP 720).

### Specialization

In addition to core courses, all master students must take 12 hours of coursework in one of the following three specialization areas: Sustainable Environmental and Land Use Planning, Community Development and Housing, or Spatial Planning and Mobility.

### Specialization 1. Sustainable Environmental and Land Use Planning

This specialization provides planners with conceptual and methodological skills to manage both the built and natural environments to promote sustainable and equitable urban development. Issues include:

waste management, flooding and storm water, environmental pollution, land use planning, climate change, and environmental justice. Students pursuing this specialization must take these two required courses:

UPEP 750: Urban Infrastructure Planning and Policy  
UPEP 761: Land Use and Environmental Planning

AND must take 2 of the following four options:

UPEP 730: Introduction to GIS in Urban Planning  
UPEP 776: Environmental Assessment  
UPEP 744: Public Participation in the Planning Process  
UPEP 767: Environmental Justice and Equity

### **Specialization 2. Community Development and Housing**

The Housing and Community Development specialization introduces students to the myriad of issues facing urban communities. Courses train students in the methods used to assess the potential need and impact of housing and community improvement projects and their impacts on the surrounding residents. Topics covered in this specialization include a basic overview of housing policy and the issues of affordability; the evolution and new approaches to community redevelopment; real estate and land valuation; infrastructure and its role in communities; project public participation and the decision-making process; and project evaluation. Students pursuing this specialization must take these two required courses:

UPEP 740: Community Development in the Urban Millieu  
UPEP 742: Housing Policy: Context and Impact

AND must take 2 of the following four options:

UPEP 750: Urban Infrastructure Planning and Policy  
UPEP 744: Public Participation in the Planning Process  
UPEP 746: Introduction to Real Estate  
UPEP 748: Methods of Land Development Project Analysis

### **Specialization 3. Spatial Planning and Mobility Specialization**

The Proposed Spatial Analysis and Mobility Planning focuses on the coordination and visualization of the built environment and the impacts of land use policies. The specializations combine courses that allow students to identify development needs and issues and visualize clearly desired outcomes across functional areas. Included in the course are a progression of GIS, analytic and visualization tools that are standard to the Planning Profession. Site design, transportation and economic analysis courses provide the content that is under study. Student pursu-

ing this degree must take these two required courses:

UPEP 730: Introduction to GIS in Urban Planning  
 UPEP 732: Application of GIS in Urban Planning

AND must take 2 of the following four options:

UPEP 713: Principles of Site Design  
 UPEP 729: Urban Land Economics  
 UPEP 780: Comparative International Topics in Transportation  
 UPEP 732: Advanced Studies in GIS

### Electives

UPEP courses taken that are outside a student's specialization may count as electives. In addition, graduate courses taken in other TSU departments can count as electives. Current UPEP elective-only courses include:

UPEP 707: Exit Physical Planning  
 UPEP 718: Professional Communications In Planning  
 UPEP 727: Multivariate Analysis Method  
 UPEP 769: Environmental Legislation and Policy  
 UPEP 772: Climate Change's Impact Topics  
 UPEP 774: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management  
 UPEP 778: Pollution Control  
 UPEP 785: International Development Planning  
 UPEP 790, 791, & 792: Special Topics  
 UPEP 795: Internship (for students pursuing the Exit exam option)  
 UPEP 797 & 798: Thesis (for students pursuing the thesis option)





A view of the School of Public Affairs (SOPA) Building lobby from the second floor



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Barbara Jordan – Mickey Leland  
School of Public Affairs