

**Mansueto Institute  
for Urban Innovation**

**University  
of Chicago**

**Kreisman Initiative  
for Housing Law and Policy**

# The Kreisman Graduate Fellows Program Training the Next Generation of Housing Leaders

A photograph of a row of brick townhouses with a sidewalk and a fence in the foreground. The image is partially obscured by a purple gradient overlay on the left side.

2022-2023 Report

# Overview

The University of Chicago is a place of rigorous intellectualism, but it is also a place with a commitment to community-based learning and engagement. Housing straddles both domains. With our two-pronged focus — graduate fellowships and an annual symposium — we are committed to research and action on housing. By committing to both scholarship and practice, our goal is to contribute to ensuring that every person has a decent place to live.

The Kreisman family was prescient in their selection of housing as a subject in need of prioritizing. The challenges of housing in the world, the nation, and our city have never been more urgent. And while we engage with the topic in broad ways, our special interest is Chicago. Here, there is a housing crisis staring right at us: loss of affordable housing, exclusionary zoning, gentrification and displacement, a growing unhoused population, loss of missing middle housing (which is naturally affordable), and a development culture that favors building luxury condos and expensive single-family mansions. There is a world of injustice in the housing domain.

To be sustainable in the twenty-first century, cities need quality public transit and bike-able and walkable streets, so citizens don't feel the need to commute by car. Cities need more housing to be near these transit options and for that housing to be affordable. We need help in this from every sector: the public sector, the non-profit sector, and the market. And for the market to deliver — which it has been mostly unable to do — the rules we put in place to encourage housing affordability, such as zoning, must actually support this goal.

As the only opportunity at the University of Chicago for graduate students focused on housing, the Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy's mission is to spotlight, discuss, and try to make a difference on these topics openly. Our graduate housing fellows fan out across Chicago gathering knowledge and providing support at the same time, and they share their experiences with each other back on campus. At the end of the year, they engage at our annual symposium, which brings university researchers, policymakers, and the wider public together in one place to debate how we address the housing crises around us.

Through the Kreisman Initiative and our work with housing fellows and an annual symposium, the University of Chicago will stay focused on the housing challenges of our city, working to move toward actionable policies and solutions.

Emily Talen, PhD  
Professor of Urbanism  
Faculty Lead, The Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy

The Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy offers a one-year Graduate Fellows Program that brings together students across the University of Chicago and puts them in conversation with one-another and local leaders to discuss cross-disciplinary issues of housing. In Spring 2023, the Kreisman Initiative graduated its fifth cohort of ten University of Chicago students committed to pursuing careers in housing. A selective program that brings in master's and doctoral students from across the university — including this year from the Booth School of Business; Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice; the Harris School of Public Policy; and the Division of the Social Sciences — fellows take part in a range of professional development activities over the course of the academic year. This includes meetings with housing leaders, networking events, and an independent internship or research project in the housing field, supported by a stipend. All fellowship activities emphasize an inter-disciplinary, inter-sector approach to connect ideas and people and ultimately promote a better understanding of housing opportunities and solutions.

The fellows program is part of the Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy, the only effort at the University of Chicago dedicated to housing scholarship and practice, with the mission of bringing Chicago ideas to bear on housing debates, policy, and legal and business decision making through research, engagement, and educational programming.

Through this unique opportunity, our students play a part in responses to issues including housing affordability, development of new housing, preservation of affordable housing stock, and housing for children and the elderly. This past year, students held internships at organizations including the Chicago Community Trust, AARP, and Full Circle Communities. Their work included designing housing development proposals, making policy recommendations, and producing analysis of housing policy.

The nearly 50 students who have participated in the fellowship over five years represent a University of Chicago alumni network of trained housing experts. Many have gone on to work on housing in a range of capacities, including through government agencies, developers, healthcare systems, and community groups.

This year, the Kreisman Initiative gained its first faculty lead, Emily Talen, Professor of Urbanism in the Division of Social Sciences, who has brought her depth of experience engaging in and researching urban planning and design to the role. The initiative also welcomed a new program director, Brian Wilson, who earned his PhD in anthropology at the University of Chicago and has previously worked in UChicago's office of Alumni Relations and Development. This report presents this dynamic work through the a summary of the fellows' activities and projects over the past academic year.





*Kreisman Initiative faculty lead Emily Talen introducing the Kreisman Symposium in May*



*Program Director Brian Wilson (left) at the Kreisman Symposium*

# Highlights



During the academic year, fellows engaged with the many complicated and pressing issues in urban housing, participating in meetings and conferences with leading thinkers in the field, and benefiting from each other's points of view and disciplinary perspectives.

The housing market continues to pose significant affordability challenges, owing to high mortgage interest rates, rising rents, and a national housing shortage. Urban cores struggling with vacancies and crime and public safety also continue to pose challenges to residential life. But housing in cities is still both sought after and necessary, continuing to make law and policy that addresses the above challenges essential.

**Kreisman Graduate Fellows by the Numbers:**

- 10 2022-2023 graduate fellows
- 13 internships and projects supported in 2022-2023
- 7 UChicago graduate programs represented
- 47 fellows graduated over 5 years

## Chicago Department of Housing

In January, the Kreisman Fellows took a trip to Chicago's City Hall to meet with Daniel Kay Hertz, Director of Policy, Research, and Legislative Affairs at the Chicago Department of Housing, to discuss what the city of Chicago is doing to create more affordable housing options, as well as encourage equitable transit-oriented development — to bring more public transportation options to all neighborhoods and income levels in the city. The fellows also enjoyed a networking reception, giving them an opportunity to get to know their peers and the faculty and program directors.



Kreisman fellows with Daniel Kay Hertz (far right), Director of Policy, Research, and Legislative Affairs at City of Chicago Department of Housing



Kreisman fellows with faculty director Emily Talen at a networking happy hour in January

## Charnley-Persky House

In April, the fellows visited the Charnley-Persky House Museum, where they toured the historic home, designed by famed Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, with assistance from Frank Lloyd Wright. They also got an inside look at the exhibit [The City Beyond the White City](#), which examines the history of Chicago through race and two Chicago homes: the Charnley-Persky House and the Mecca Flats, which was designed as a new style of urban apartment living on Chicago's South Side. The world's largest apartment building when it opened in 1892, Mecca transitioned over time and with the Great Migration from housing majority white American-born, to working-class, to white, foreign-born working class, to majority Black, and was finally demolished during the urban renewal movement.



The Charnley-Persky House

## 'Missing Middle Housing' Symposium

In May, the Kreisman fellows attended the second annual Kreisman Symposium, [Missing Middle Housing: The Key to Scaling Affordability?](#) at the David Rubenstein Forum at University of Chicago. The convening centered around whether building and preserving "middle housing" — the tier of housing that falls between single family homes and high-rises, typically in smaller buildings — can create more affordable housing options in the United States. Experts from Chicago and around the country in government, housing organizations, preservation non-profits, design and development firms, real estate, and academia, shared strategies to address this complex challenge, including preserving existing middle housing, incentivizing the development of new housing, and mobilizing communities. Keynote speakers included University of Chicago alumna Erika Poethig, MPP '96, who recently served as Special Assistant to the President for Housing and Urban Policy on the White House Domestic Policy Council; Daniel Parolek, founding principal of Opticos Design, Inc. and author of Missing Middle Housing; and Jenny Schuetz, Senior Fellow at The Brookings Institution and author of Fixer Upper: How to Repair America's Broken Housing System.



Kreisman Fellows and other graduate students at the annual Kreisman Symposium



# Internships and Research Projects



A hallmark of the fellowship is the professional development component, where students do an internship or conduct research of their own design, supported by funding from the Kreisman Initiative. Giving them hands-on experience related to housing, fellows this year addressed the wide variety of issues in the housing world, from affordable housing development to equitable transit access to lead exposure and housing, to “middle housing.” Learn more about their work:



## Audrey Baer

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Internship, Chicago Community Trust**

Audrey interned with the Chicago Community Trust from June 2022 to May 2023. As a community foundation, the Trust directs its grantmaking toward initiatives that align with its mission of closing the racial wealth gap, including building wealth through homeownership. In partnership with Shandra Richardson, the Trust’s director of strategic initiatives, Audrey worked on [Advancing Equity: Homeownership](#), a project series convening policymakers, funders, residents, housing organizations, and other relevant stakeholders that gathered in October, January, and May. The first session was dedicated to answering the question, “What is the homeownership gap, and why have these problems persisted?” The second session focused on co-creating solutions, and the final session was a call-to-action for participants to disrupt the current system and act in their respective industries. The project involved partnerships with the Metropolitan Planning Council, the Folded Map Project, Chicago Bungalow Association, the Woodstock Institute, and the University of Illinois, Chicago. The findings from these sessions will continue to inform the Trust’s grantmaking strategy for homeownership



## Lauren Beard

**PhD, Sociology  
Research, Youth Aging out of Child Welfare System**

The Kreisman fellowship helped support research Lauren is conducting focusing on youth aging out of the child welfare system. She utilizes mixed methods to better understand how to connect youth with needed supports once they are deemed too old to receive child welfare services — a transition that is often marked by housing insecurity, mental health crises, and more. She combined national-level administrative data on youth outcomes with longitudinal interviews with youth aging out in the greater Chicago area, where she has leveraged her professional connections to collaborate with multiple child welfare agencies throughout the city. Her study identifies how policy frameworks differentially support youth aging out and addresses how youth navigate the transition to the adult-serving social safety net. Through this research, she aims to advance more effective policy configurations and systems pathways for supporting youth at a critical juncture in their lives.



## Lauren Cole

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Internship, AARP's Livable Communities Team**

Lauren worked as a graduate intern with AARP's Livable Communities team, where she promoted policies that enhance the livability and accessibility of communities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Her work focused on mixed-use zoning, varied transportation options, diverse housing types, and accessible public spaces. As part of this effort, she conducted research and explored policies that would encourage innovative solutions to improve housing affordability and accessibility from an intersectional perspective. During her internship, she collaborated with government affairs directors to produce research, engage in strategy discussions, and coordinate with state offices to present research and incorporate it into advocacy efforts. She contributed to [Re-Legalizing Middle Housing: A Model Act and Guide to Statewide Legislation](#), which provides information on how to improve housing affordability and accessibility through state-level policies and legislation.



**My work with AARP's Livable Communities team has been a valuable experience that allowed me to learn about the needs of aging populations and explore innovative solutions to improve housing affordability and accessibility.**

-Lauren Cole



A diagram illustrating "middle housing" (by Opticos Design, Inc.)



## Lizzie DePentu

**MSW, Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy and Practice  
Internships, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Full Circle Communities**

Lizzie worked with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago and Full Circle Communities, a nonprofit developer and operator of affordable and permanent supportive housing. At Full Circle, she designed and implemented a focus group strategy to assess resident needs at permanent supportive housing properties. The findings subsequently informed service offerings, property management, and ongoing permanent supportive housing developments in Chicago and Detroit. At Chapin Hall, Lizzie contributed to the evaluation of a Connecticut-based pilot project that matches housing vouchers with Head Start families experiencing housing instability. Initial findings highlight the importance of landlord engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and wraparound services when implementing housing voucher programs for unstably housed families. Lizzie also contributed to Chapin Hall's New Opportunities Initiative to explore narrative-based and participatory approaches to youth homelessness research. This work aimed to understand root causes of youth homelessness and craft upstream interventions and supports to prevent it.



## Noah Fischer

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Research, Vacant Unit Tax Propositions in San Francisco and Oakland**

Noah's research focuses on evaluating the revenue potential of vacant unit tax propositions in San Francisco and Oakland. With the nation facing a drastic housing shortage, large cities are contemplating vacant unit tax schemes to incentivize property owners to reduce the time during which units are held vacant. The taxes collected are then typically earmarked for a specific fund that provides a combination of rental subsidies and development funds for affordable housing construction. Both Oakland and San Francisco have passed ballot measures to introduce vacant unit taxes in recent years. Utilizing public data, Noah estimates the tax revenues for both cities given the respective rules of each measure. Additionally, he estimates a per unit development cost for affordable units in both cities to better understand the extent to which the tax revenues collected could bolster affordable housing supply. Preliminary results suggest that while these tax schemes could generate a substantial amount of funds, prohibitively high development costs limit the potential to dramatically increase housing supply, at least in the short term.



**My experiences at both Chapin Hall and Full Circle allowed me to explore how housing policies and programs can center lived expertise and promote people’s self-determination and well-being.**

-Lizzie DePentu



*Kreisman Fellow Noah Fischer evaluated the revenue potential of vacant unit tax propositions in San Francisco and Oakland*

## Thomas Haskin

**MBA, Booth School of Business Internships, HUD Innovation in Affordable Housing Design Competition, Ezio Community Development, & Civic Projects Architecture**

Thomas worked on a team that participated in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) annual Innovation in Affordable Housing (IAH) competition, which this year focused on a 0.45 acre Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)-owned site at 420-430 W. North Ave in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago. The team of five graduate students, which included two Illinois Institute of Technology architecture students and two Harris students — including Kayla Jones, another Kreisman Fellow — created a proposal for a 48-unit mixed-use affordable housing development called Marion Commons. The six-story building contained studio, 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom layouts, ground-level commercial spaces for an early childhood center, a sustainable furniture co-op, and a rooftop solar panel classroom. To develop the proposal, the team conducted research on public housing in Chicago, analyzed neighborhood economic conditions and zoning ordinances, made in-person site visits, investigated sustainable building practices and materials, studied traffic calming measures, drafted various architectural schematics and renderings, and built a pro forma based on a number of federal, state, and local housing finance resources. Their work product and design concepts will be part of a catalog of submissions that HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research shares with public housing agencies and other grantees throughout the country to inform innovations in affordable and public housing practice nationwide.



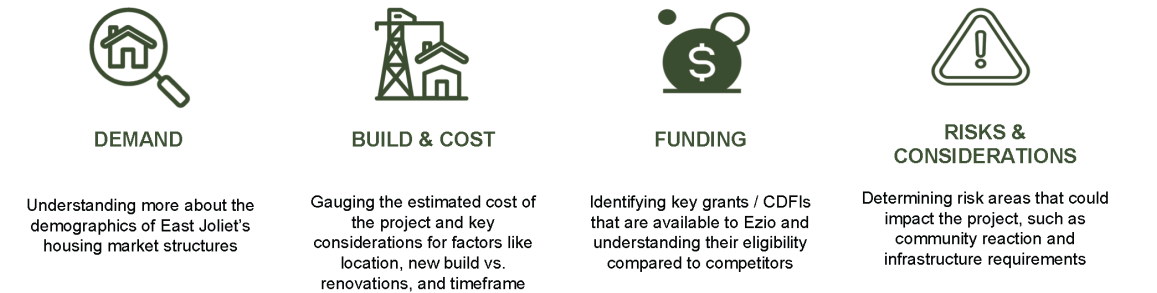
**Personally, I was exposed to a number of new elements of the housing design process, especially when it came to learning about sustainable design and building materials, how tenets of economic opportunity programs like Moving to Work (MTW) can be incorporated into mixed-use developments, and creating capital stacks for affordable housing.**

-Thomas Haskin

Through Booth’s “Business Solutions Group,” Haskin also worked on a pro-bono consulting project for Ezio Community Development Services, a non-profit in Joliet, Illinois. His team conducted a feasibility assessment for a project to develop 60 affordable homes for first-time homebuyers, provided cost projections and funding analysis, and ultimately proposed shifting to a partnership approach with more established non-profits, or pivoting to a rent-to-buy model.

Haskin also has been working with a Woodlawn-based architecture firm, Civic Projects Architecture, focused on participatory design and community revitalization on the South and West Sides of Chicago. With the principal architect, he is developing a request for proposal response to a Habitat for Humanity project in the Austin neighborhood. The project would create 3- and 4-bedroom prototypes that Habitat will break ground on in 2024 and produce 10 units per year by 2028.

**We are focusing on four main criteria to assess the feasibility of Ezio’s Manningdale development:**



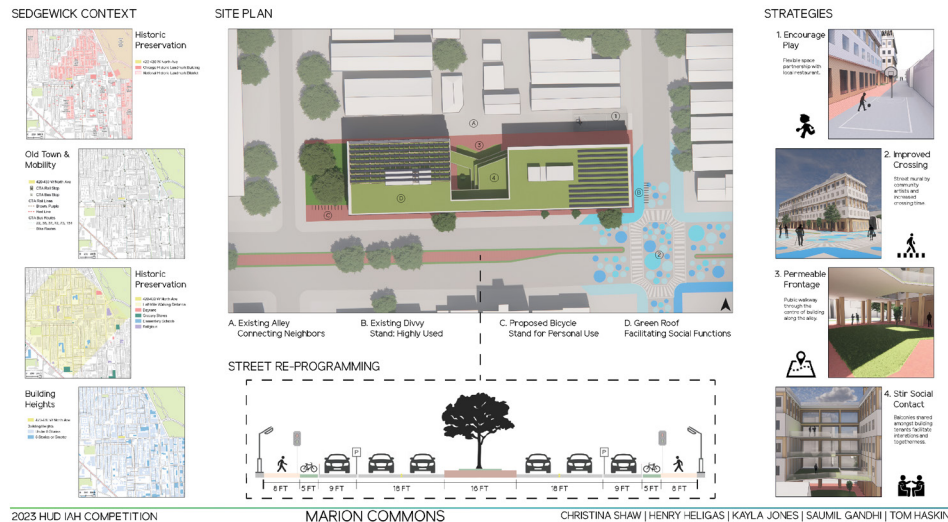
**Excerpt of an affordable housing feasibility assessment by Kreisman Fellow Thomas Haskin and colleagues**



The site plan for Marion Commons



The design for Marion Commons, a proposed public housing development created by two Kreisman fellows and colleagues (Courtesy: Thomas Haskin)



## Kayla Jones

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Internship, HUD Innovation in Affordable Housing Design Competition**

Kayla participated in HUD's 2023 Innovation in Affordable Housing Student Design and Planning Competition, an annual competition run by the agency's Office of Policy Development and Research. The competition aims to challenge graduate student teams to leverage their interdisciplinary skills in designing an affordable housing development that addresses social, economic, and environmental issues. As the team leader, Kayla recruited a multidisciplinary team from UChicago, including another Kreisman fellow, Thomas Haskin (see above), and from the Illinois Institute of Technology. Kayla and her team were tasked with transforming a former CHA public housing complex in Lincoln Park. Their design, Marion Commons, incorporated innovative approaches to enhance walkability, foster equitable ecologies, and promote racial and income integration. Kayla worked on many complex aspects of an affordable development, including navigating social service requirements, understanding the policy implications, adhering to zoning and land use regulations, and securing the necessary financial sources to develop the project. Their work product and design concepts will be part of a catalog of submissions that HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research shares with public housing agencies and other grantees throughout the country to inform innovations in affordable and public housing practice nationwide.



## Marissa Jones

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Research, Lead Exposure in Chicago**

Marissa's research was focused on the ramifications of environmental racism, specifically pertaining to lead exposure in Chicago. She studied policies and programs like the Equity Lead Service Line Replacement Program, which was put in place to remediate lead poisoning among residents. While interviewing investigative journalists, like Erin McCormick from The Guardian, Marissa learned more about the history of lead usage and the deleterious effects associated with lead exposure. In partnership with the University of Chicago Public Policy Podcast Network (UC3P), Marissa was interviewed on the show "The Forum" to discuss lead exposure among Chicago's most vulnerable populations.



## James Karner

**MPP, Harris School of Public Policy  
Internship, Chicago Community Trust**

With the expertise and support of The Chicago Community Trust and its partners, James conducted research and data analysis for various projects and initiatives. He first assisted with research for a [Federal Funds Dashboard](#) created by The Urban Institute that tracks economic recovery funds from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Chicago region. James also prepared a summary analysis of community survey data to support the creation and implementation of a homeownership program in the East Garfield Park and Humboldt Park neighborhoods of Chicago. [The Trust and Connecting Capital and Communities \(3C\)](#) are in the process of providing a suite of resources and opportunities to help community developers and residents to build, rehab, and purchase homes in those neighborhoods. In the Spring of 2023, James conducted independent research with the support of the Trust and Elevated Chicago to analyze a Chicago ordinance, which passed in July of 2022, and aims to promote more equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD) near major transit stations and corridors in Community Preservation Areas. The research hopes to provide an early glimpse into the potential impact of the ordinance on home sale activity. Together with Harris Professor Dimitri Koustas, James produced a final report of the ETOD research, [“Connected Communities Ordinance: Housing Market Research and Findings”](#)



**Kreisman Fellow James Karner conducted research to analyze the impact on home sale activity of Chicago ordinance aimed at promoting more equitable transit-oriented development**



## Angela Wyse

**PhD, Harris School of Public Policy  
Research, Homelessness and Mortality**

Angela conducted research on the health disparities associated with homelessness and Medicaid’s potential role in reducing these disparities. Her project linked restricted microdata from the 2010 U.S. Census on people experiencing homelessness to administrative data on Medicaid enrollment and mortality. Analyses suggest that non-elderly individuals experiencing homelessness face mortality risk that is 3.5 times greater than those who are housed, accounting for differences in demographic characteristics and geography. She also found that a 40-year-old experiencing homelessness faces a similar mortality risk to a housed person nearly 20 years older. Analyses using state-level variation in the adoption of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)’s Medicaid expansions provisions suggest that gaining access to Medicaid does not lead to reduced mortality risk. These findings elucidate the persistent hardships associated with homelessness, while also illustrating the entrenched nature of health disparities. Results from these analyses will be available in a series of forthcoming academic papers.





## Alumni Working in the Housing

- Abt Associates (fair housing research with the City of Los Angeles and HUD)
- Aurora University School of Social Work
- Chicago Housing Authority
- CIM Group
- Federal Reserve Banks of Chicago & Philadelphia
- Goulston & Storrs, Land Use and Real Estate Practice
- Housing Authority of Champaign County
- National Zoning Atlas
- Public Interest Law Initiative
- Recidviz
- Results for America
- Singerman Real Estate Group

## About the Kreisman Initiative

The Kreisman Initiative for Housing Law and Policy is made possible by a generous gift from Susan and David Kreisman, AB '60, JD '63, who share the belief that a dedicated forum to raise awareness and promote discussion on pressing housing issues is essential. The Kreisman Initiative brings together individuals and organizations engaged in policy, social services, business, law, social sciences, urban planning, and data sciences to advance new ideas about housing in cities. Through the initiative's graduate fellowship, we support the development of graduate students with an interest in housing careers, and through our annual symposium, we connect the University of Chicago with housing challenges and opportunities in the United States and around the world. The Kreisman Initiative is based at the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation at the University of Chicago.



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