



GEORGIA PLANNING ASSOCIATION FALL CONFERENCE

# Internships Don't Make a Cruel Summer

Department of City Planning  
Office of Design Internship Program

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Department of  
**CITY PLANNING**

INTERNSHIPS DON'T MAKE A CRUEL SUMMER

# Introductions



**Alexis Calvin-Epps**

Project Manager III



**Carlos García**

Urban Planner II



**Nicole Mitchell**

Management Analyst, Sr



**Iman Ahmad**

Intern



**Kasturi Palit**

Intern

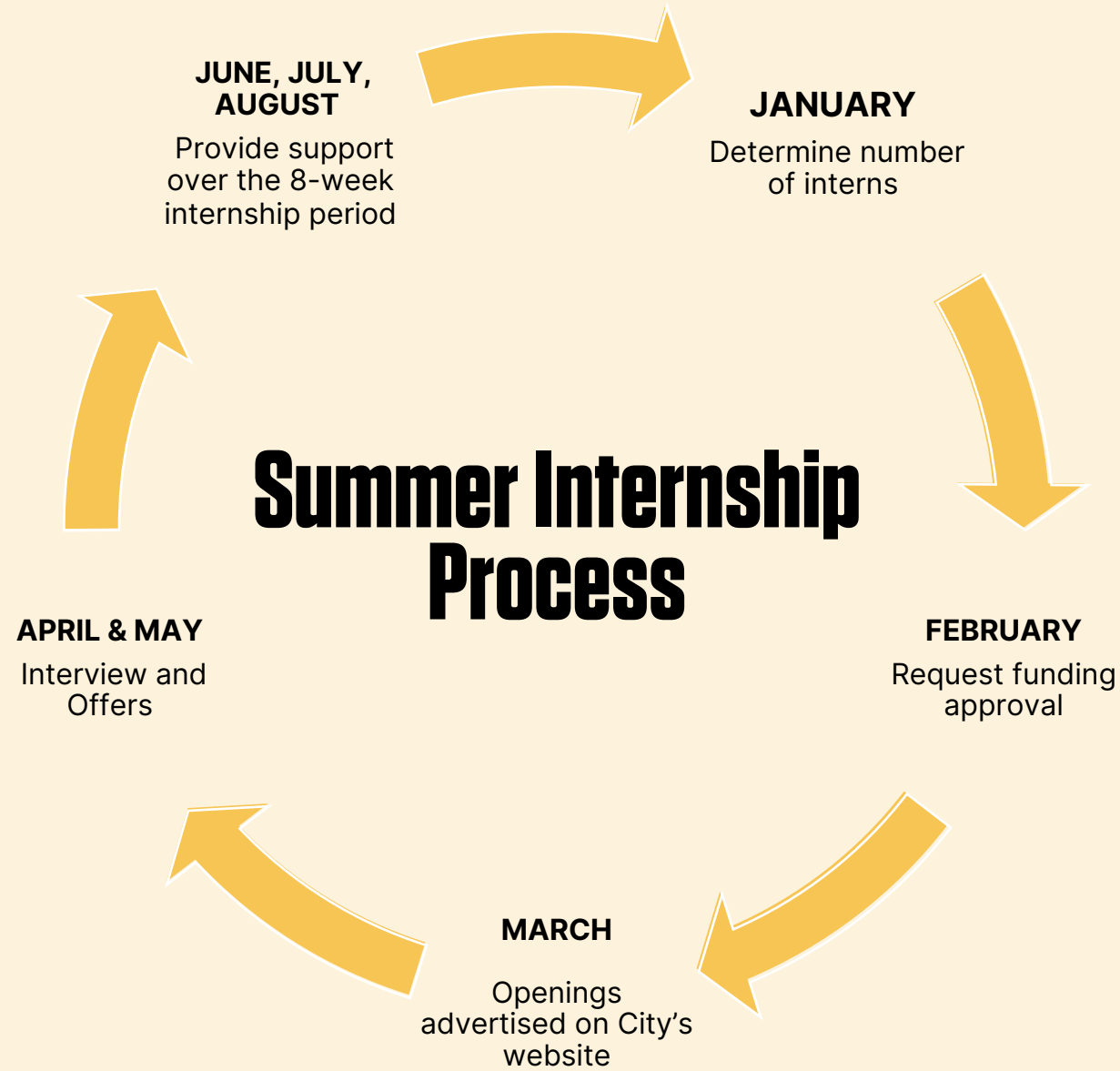
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# DGP Summer Internship

The Department of City Planning (DCP) Summer Internship Initiative is a process that includes planning, partnership, and proactiveness. The 8-week immersive initiative is open to college-aged & graduate-level students in a variety of majors – primarily Urban Planning or closely related, but not limited to, who have interest in how a city is designed and the multitude of facets it takes to make it happen.



## INTERNSHIPS DON'T MAKE A CRUEL SUMMER



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# School vs Professional

# School vs Professional Experience

## School

- Clear, instructor-set problems and rubrics.
- Completely free of budget and construction considerations and outside input/requirements.
- Individual work, self-paced timelines.
- Feedback centered on process and exploration.
- Professor opinions based on design theory and successful completing the task.

## Professional Practice

- Design Problem set by community need and stakeholder expectations which sometimes do not match.
- Real budgets, timelines, stakeholders.
- Collaborative, team-based problem-solving.
- Feedback centered on outcomes and delivery.
- Community Approval and disapproval based on success and failure to meet an everyday need; High stakes — decisions affect real clients.

# How I prepared my intern

- Easing them into office culture and professionalism.
- Balancing your workload with meeting culture.
- **Work-life balance**  
Set expectations early on office norms, communication and avoiding burnout.
- **Designing within real parameters**  
Gave interns live design opportunities, from concept to site design to pricing and sourcing materials; Timelines and site constraints to solve within.
- **Coaching independence**  
Taught interns to recognize when to problem-solve on their own versus when to ask for guidance.

# My Approach: Guided Freedoms

1

## Establish the foundation

Built a detailed work plan to structure the internship and establish clear milestones.

Introduced the intern to the studio's design principles and approach.

Connected those principles to the program and project they would be developing.

2

## Build understanding through engagement

Had the intern study the program, its purpose, and how the process worked.

Collaboratively developed an FAQ to test the clarity and legibility of the program from the perspective of someone encountering it for the first time.

Used this process to identify gaps in understanding and strengthen their ability to communicate the work.

3

## Move from research through design

Began a conceptual design exercise for a project type. Started with a site visit to understand the physical context and existing conditions.

Analyzed site context, circulation, traffic patterns, and surrounding significant buildings. Facilitated a design charrette to identify design challenges and opportunities.

Integrated the design requirements established by the broader design team.

# My Approach: Guided Freedoms

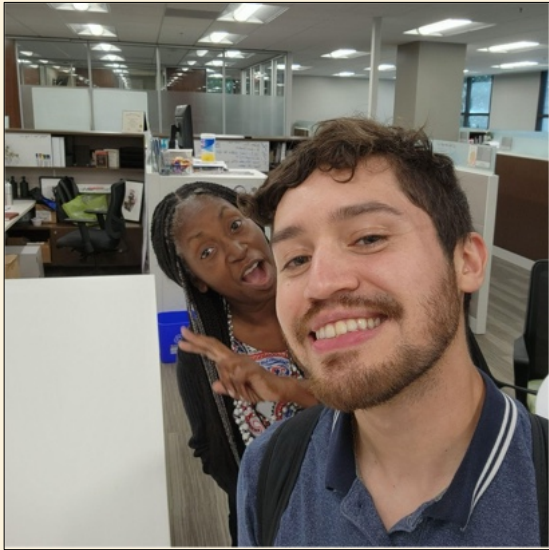
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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>4</div> <div>Develop + Communicate the Design</div> <div><p>Developed conceptual design options based on research, analysis, and team requirements.</p><p>Conducted design reviews and incorporated feedback from the team. Developed presentation materials and boards.</p><p>Prepared the intern to present the work to a large group.</p></div> | <div>5</div> <div>Connect Design to Real-World Constraints</div> <div><p>Developed project budgets for both Concept A and Concept B.</p><p>Used budgeting as an opportunity to connect conceptual design decisions to project feasibility and implementation.</p></div> |
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# From Intern to Staff

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# Carlos The Intern



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# From Intern to Fulltime Staff

Why we need interns

How we select our interns

How we set our interns up for success

Leadership styles

Lessons learned as staff guiding interns

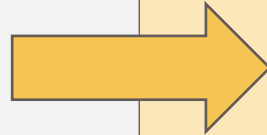


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# Expectation vs Reality

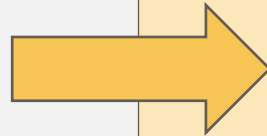
# Expectation vs Reality

Cold atmosphere



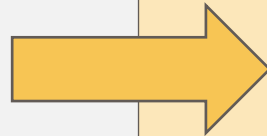
Welcoming and friendly

Helicoptered over work



Freedom and choice

Non-relevant or non-  
impactful work



Major related and tailored

# Building Confidence

## My biggest challenge and area of development

### Capstone was called “Developing as a Designer”

- Imposter syndrome
- Unqualified
- Handling freedom

### Two major factors that helped:

- Consistent support via frequent check-ins
- Kind and professional feedback



# Technical Skills



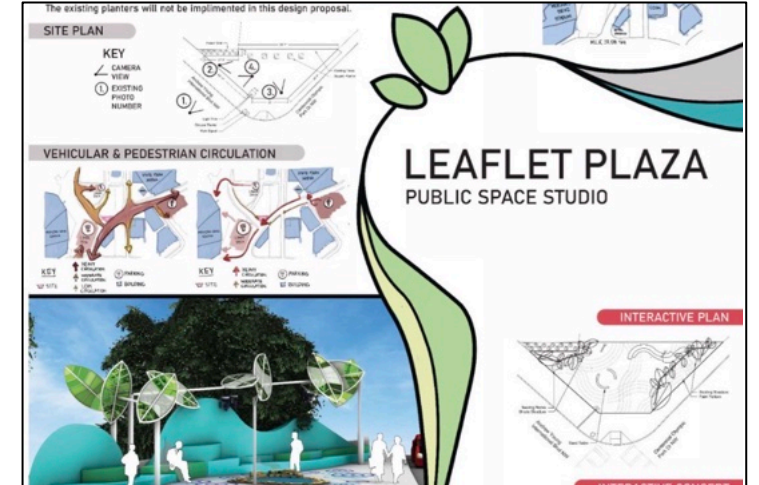
## Site Visit

- Took real measurements of the site.
- Observed the current aesthetic.
- Brainstormed and noted ideas.



## CAD

- Details such as line weight, text size, spacing.
- Keeping site measurements accurate.



## Layouts

- Keeping space for items to breath.
- Thinking about where your eye travels.
- Where to place color.

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# Key Learning Moments

# Planning in Atlanta



## My Education

### 01 Bachelor of Architecture

National Institute of Technology Patna, IN

### 02 Master of City Planning

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, IN

### 03 Master of Science in Urban Analytics

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta

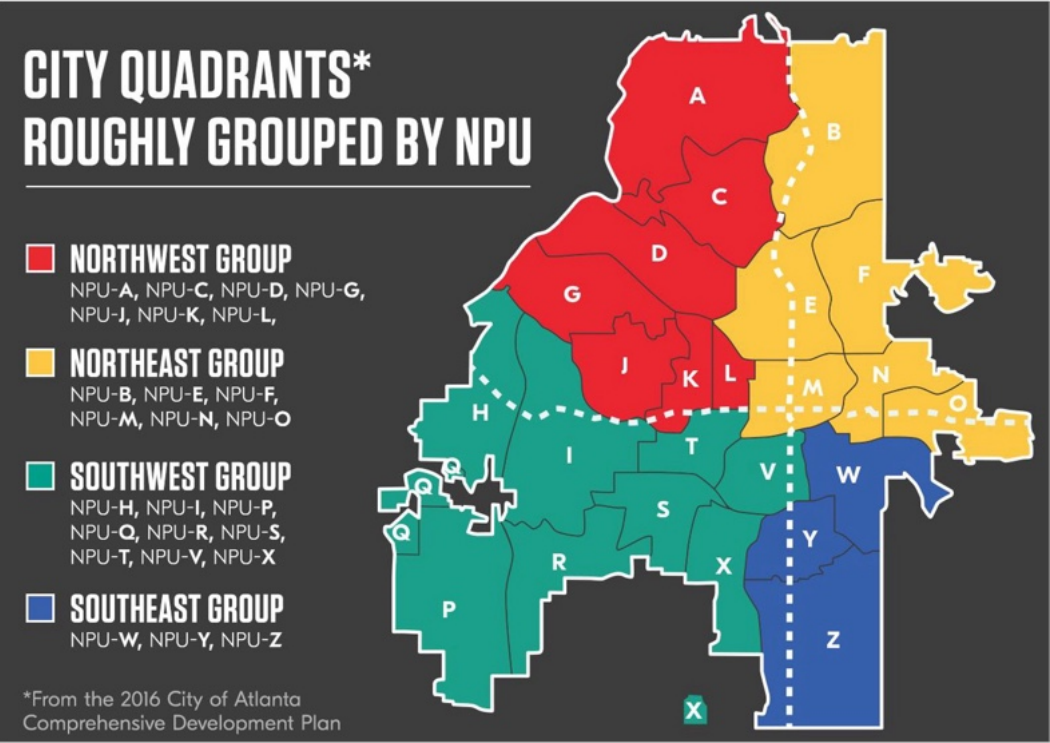
## My Focus

Data visualization and technology as a bridge between people and information.

## My Experience

This internship brought me back to the city that shaped my graduate education - my first hands-on opportunity working alongside city officials, and a chance to give back to the community that gave so much to me.

# The Challenge



**240+**  
NEIGHBORHOODS

**25**  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
PLANNING UNITS

**50**  
PLANS ADOPTED  
SINCE 2000

# The Project

## Centralizing Neighborhood Planning Data

A web application built in ArcGIS Experience Builder for Atlanta's Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs).

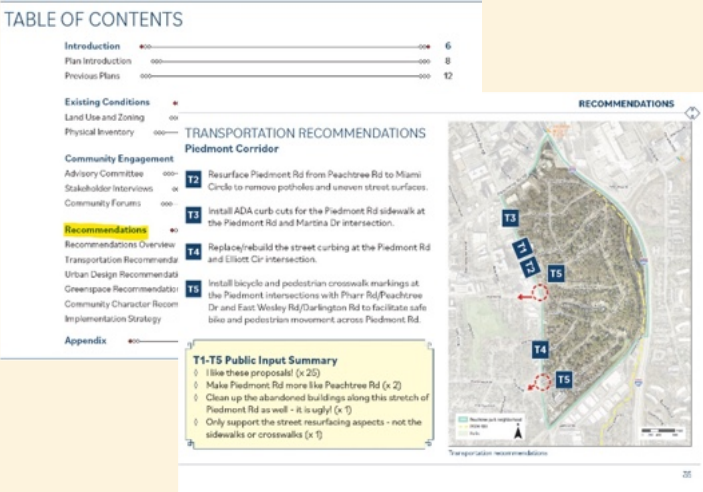


# Approach

1

## Establish the foundation

Identifying recommendations across decades of static PDF neighborhood plans.



2

## Geocode & Structure

Testing multiple geocoding methods to turn text-based recommendations into mapped points.



3

## Live web app

Creating one centralized map in ArcGIS Experience Builder for every NPU to use.



# Key Learning Moments

## Concept Review Committee

Observed how DCP's core values, Equity, Progress, Ambition, Access, and Nature, are translated into planning decision.

## ATL Community Engagement Cohort

Learned how agencies and organizations collaborate to align projects and share knowledge.

## NPU Meetings

Observed how resident perspectives shape planning priorities. Learned that meaningful public participation is essential, and community members are partners throughout the planning process.

## GIS Neighborhood Dashboard Project

Recognized the City's role as an enabler and information provider in creating more equitable planning outcomes.

# What I learned about Planning in Atlanta

- Atlanta's planning framework.
- Planning is a collaborative process.
- Community is a planning partner.
- Information as a tool for equity.
- How to apply Atlanta City Design vales in practice.
- Professional and technical growth.



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# Thank You



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