T. William Lester, Ph.D.
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T. William "Bill" Lester is an Associate Professor of City and Regional Planning specializing in economic development. His research focuses on the role of labor market institutions in fostering greater equity at the urban and metropolitan scales. He is an expert on the impact of minimum wage and living wage policies on urban economic development.

Lester employs quantitative and qualitative methods drawn from the fields of labor economics, political science and regional development. While his research on the minimum wage and living wage has garnered national attention recently -- including a mention in the State of the Union address -- he continues to broaden his research agenda within the field of economic development.

He recently completed a collaboration with Nikhil Kaza, Daniel Rodriguez, Yan Song and Phil Berke on a project funded by the What Works Collaborative that examines the links between economic development and land use and builds a strategy for preserving industrial land in urban areas.

Lester is also continuing a variety of research projects aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of economic development incentive programs. Specifically, he completed a paper published in Urban Studies focused on the effectiveness and economic impact of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in Chicago. Some recent articles in Chicago Magazine feature his work and highlight several policy reforms. He also published an evaluation of the use of economic development incentives in North Carolina, which will appear in Economic Development Quarterly.

Lester is also engaged in numerous projects that study the potential for environmental solutions to generate meaningful employment opportunities in the so-called "green economy."


Replacing Truth with Social Hope and Progress with Re-description: Can the Pragmatist Philosophy of Richard Rorty Help Reinvigorate Planning?
Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) Conference

The Role of History in Redistributional Policy Discourse: Evidence from Living Wage Campaigns in Chicago and San Francisco
Urban Affairs Association Conference

The Long Term Employment Impacts of Gentrification in the 1990s
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Conference