

Lorenzo Gonzalez

Reflection on The ULI Fall Meeting at Los Angeles

Being part of the Randall Lewis Mentorship Program, I had the opportunity to attend the ULI Fall Meeting in my backyard of Los Angeles. This meeting combined my two passions of pursuing a future where individuals can self-actualize and my desire to influence the built environment for future generations. My career choices embody my two passions as intertwining medicine with urban planning addresses the externalities that have manifested today. During the first day of the Fall Meeting, I was unsure how to navigate the room of professionals, and how they would receive my many viewpoints that have been deemed unrealistic or extreme by the majority of my medical community. Yet, everyone in attendance at the Pacoima gathering to learn about building healthy places was open, inquisitive and optimistic towards my vision about the promise of urban planning and medicine as a possible strategy to improve our overall health and wellbeing.

From the theoretical to the practical, the day explored how revitalization, planning, and design impact the health and wellness of a community at a macro and individual level. I was surprised to see my USC professor present about Healthy Corridors and she emphasized the importance of having academia, the public sector, and professional organizations coming together to leverage their unique resources and power for the betterment of our society. A specific presentation about developing metrics to measure and quantify the built environment's impact on our health was illuminating as it conveyed the necessity to evaluate the outcomes. Metrics and research are going to be critical to strengthening the Building Healthy Places initiative especially when collaborating with other professional disciplines rooted in data such as medicine and public health. Interestingly, the week prior to the Fall Meeting, I attended a physician's convention dedicated to developing healthy communities which was hosted by the California Medical Association. The conversations held by these two professional groups couldn't have been farther apart as physicians continue to be enamored by investigating health systems and health care delivery as the focal points for developing healthy communities. The disconnect and monumental differences between these two professional societies is one of the largest obstacles that needs to be addressed in order to harness the current movement around health in general.

Furthermore, my interactions with my mentor Chris Bodnar and my fellow Randall Lewis mentees added another dimension as we started the nexus for future collaboration/cross-national resource mobilization. By having a basic understanding on how we perceive the world, friendships and partnerships were easily formed between all of us. I am excited to continue to discuss these intersectoral issues and keep learning about innovative initiatives throughout our home cities. Our conversations about creating real change left me with wanting more. Yet, it is hard to see any collaboration or impact actually happening with only meeting once. I hope to meet again with my mentor and fellow mentees to nurture our network and visit each other's city. We all agreed that the Randall Lewis Mentorship Program and the Urban Land Institute are striving to make large scale impacts in this sector by bringing passionate professionals together with ambitious and aspiring future leaders. Yet, there is much more work to be done. I know that our continual collaboration will be instrumental to the future of this mentorship program and hopefully I can spearhead the inter-collaboration between more sectors which see health and well-being as an immediate priority. I want to continue growing in ULI and become a leader that will bridge commonalities and work on a consensus between historically drifted professions in order to create a world where humans can thrive.