



FALL 2024 PROGRESS REPORT

JANUARY 2025



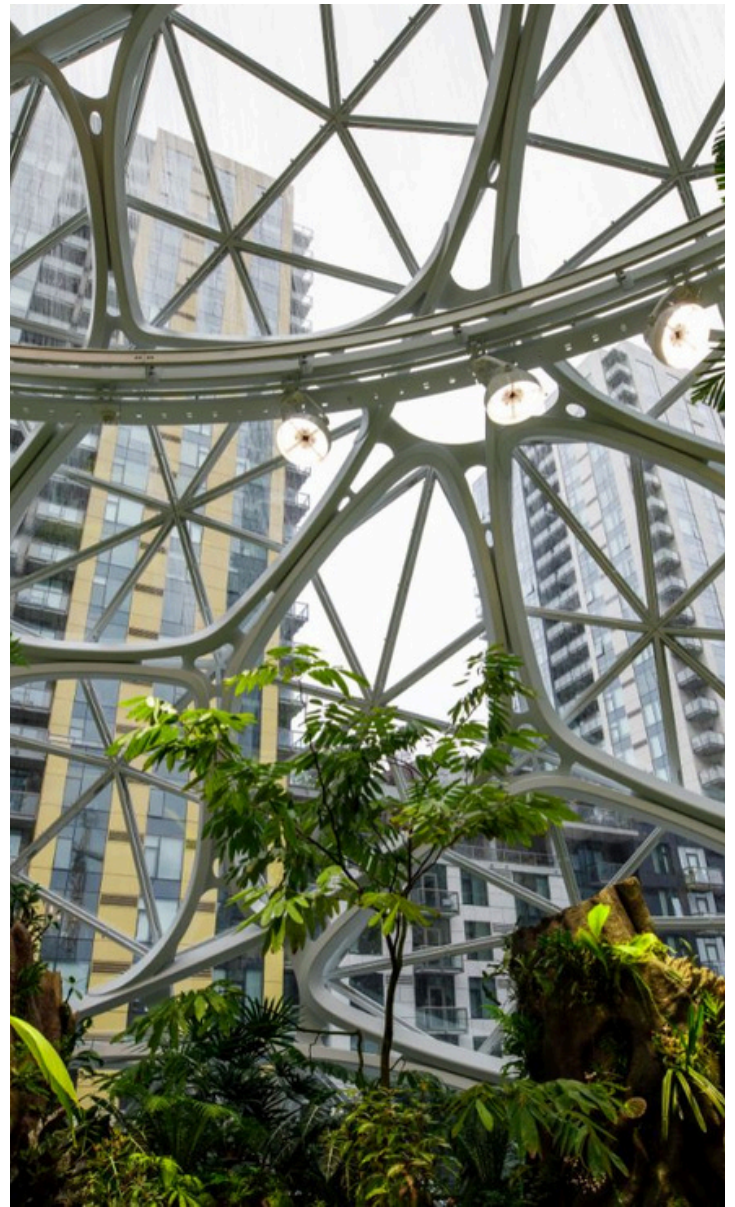
INITIATIVE *for*
URBAN STUDIES

SHAPING DUKE'S URBAN CONVERSATION

OUR INITIATIVE'S GOAL

We are a collective of students interested in promoting and expanding academic endeavors in the field of urban studies at Duke University.

In the fall of 2020, we launched the Duke Initiative for Urban Studies (DIUS) out of a shared interest in cities, and the bold aspiration of transforming Duke University into a leading hub for education, research, and engagement in our urban future. In two years, we've developed a strategic plan for expanding urban studies programs at Duke, met with dozens of administrators and faculty, launched a student organization, taught three semesters of a house course, and catalyzed peer interest through an active on-campus and social media presence.



Cities are our future. By recognizing this simple, yet powerful statement, we implore the Duke community to be more intentional about how we approach urban studies. According to a report by the United Nations, more than 68% of the world's growing population will be living in cities by 2050. Duke's integral role in Durham, the Duke Kunshan campus, and the network of students, research projects, and alumni worldwide give us unprecedented access to tomorrow's innovative and fast-growing cities. Leveraging our focus on interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and collective strength in fields as far-ranging as economics, public policy, engineering, an environmental studies, Duke is poised to have an outsized impact on urban studies pedagogy..

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

1. Urban Studies Research Fair:

- a. Successfully held on December 2nd, 5:15–6:30 PM at Old Chem 003.
- b. Highlighted student and faculty research, fostering networking and collaboration.

2. Speaker Series:

- a. Hosted Paul Zarian (November 12th) and Adam Klein (December 4th).
- b. Explored key topics in urban studies, sparking meaningful discussions among attendees.

3. House Course Development:

- a. Approval was secured for the Spring 2025 and Fall 2025 House Courses.
- b. Promotion efforts initiated, including outreach to past graduates for teaching opportunities.

4. Website Updates:

- a. Continued enhancement of our online presence to provide resources and updates on Urban Studies activities.
- b. Developed short bios and headshots for executive members to improve visibility.

5. Community Engagement:

- a. Strengthened relationships with local organizations such as Bike Durham and Durham for All.
- b. Collaborated with faculty from various schools (Pratt, Trinity, Nicholas) to explore interdisciplinary opportunities.

6. Social Media and Communications:

- a. Expanded reach through regular Instagram posts and Urban Update emails.
- b. Initiated strategies to enhance engagement and visibility.

LOOKING BACK ON THE SEMESTER

Strengths:

- Strong collaboration among team members and partners.
- Successful events that engaged a diverse audience.
- Progress in formalizing academic opportunities like the House Course and Urban Studies Certificate.

Challenges:

- Limited student attendance at some events.
- Delays in securing reimbursement for event-related expenses (due to lack of official designation)

CURRENT TASKS

AND UPCOMING PROJECTS

Efforts are underway to promote the house course by continuing outreach to past graduates to secure instructors for upcoming sessions and addressing administrative requirements for course approval. Website updates are also a priority, including the addition of short bios and headshots for all executive team members and the creation of a dedicated page for event recaps and resources. On the social media front, enhancements to Instagram posts and Urban Update emails aim to boost engagement by highlighting past events and promoting upcoming opportunities. Faculty and community outreach is another focus, with meetings being scheduled with faculty across disciplines and strengthening ties to organizations such as Durham for All and Bike Durham.

Future plans include organizing speaker events, with potential speakers such as Will Ferris, and exploring partnerships with organizations like AEI to host housing specialists. To increase visibility and foster community, the team will join Duke Groups and launch an updated survey to gauge student interest in Urban Studies courses and initiatives. Academic development efforts will continue, focusing on the Urban Studies Certificate in collaboration with faculty like Ed Balleisen, as well as finalizing house course promotion for Spring and Fall 2025. Outreach will involve strengthening connections with alumni, local organizations, and UNC's Planning Department, while also broadening faculty engagement across disciplines. Lastly, communications will see a refreshed website and social media strategy to promote events and achievements, alongside a focus on mentorship within the executive team and refining roles for better teamwork.

