

# James G. Stockard, Jr. MCP '68, LF '78 Fund

2021 – 2022



Harvard University  
Graduate School of Design

# Mel Miller

## MUP '22



### My Research Interests

I came to the GSD after working in education and public health for several years. During my time at the Education Development Center, I worked on aging-related projects that addressed elder mistreatment in healthcare settings and began to question how to address health inequities through the built environment. As an urban planning student, I have explored aging-specific work through my research and coursework across Harvard and MIT. I have valued the new skills and tools I have gained to approach my initial curiosity of constructing a built environment to support the needs of its populations. Along the way, I have solidified my interest in creating affordable, healthy communities and the role of local governments, nonprofits, and others in that effort.

**Where I Call Home**  
Ringwood, NJ

**Education**  
Hamilton College

**Work Experience**  
Education Development Center  
Turkish Fulbright Commission

### Highlights of my time at the GSD

- This past summer, I served as the Edward M. Gramlich Fellow in Community and Economic Development, supported by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies and NeighborWorks America. Through this fellowship, I explored how resident services are delivered and funded through affordable housing nonprofits. It was a unique opportunity to combine my background in public health with my urban planning coursework at the GSD.
- When I first started at the school, I found community and involvement with Queers in Design. This student group enabled me to meet new people and keep community throughout the first year of the pandemic. It's been rewarding to transition this community from Zoom to in-person this year.
- During my first semester at the GSD, I was introduced to the field, especially the history of housing in the U.S., through "[Housing and Urbanization in the United States](#)" led by Jennifer Molinsky and Jim Stockard. This course helped form my interest in housing and the complexities of our country's approach to it. I was fortunate to serve as a Teaching Assistant for this course in fall 2021.



## Dear Jim and Donors of the Stockard Fund,

Before I came to the GSD, my knowledge of urban planning was based on my bike commutes, runs throughout Boston, and the ever-delayed Green Line Extension project. While curiosity sparked my initial interest in urban planning, applying to graduate programs in the field helped me to connect these experiences with other parts of my upbringing. My admittance to the GSD, especially my financial aid package, provided me with the opportunity to formalize these experiences and learn about the field as a Master in Urban Planning student.

Throughout my time at Harvard, I have been able to apply my background in public health and education to advance equity across cities. During my first year, I had the opportunity to immediately explore the intersection between public health and urban planning through housing, studio, and data-specific coursework. In my second semester Master in Urban Planning Core Studio, I created the Age-Ready Belvidere Toolkit for the Belvidere neighborhood in Lowell, MA. The six-domain toolkit was comprised of fifteen elements that I recommended for implementation across three domains: commercial centers (see Figure 1), residential areas (see Figure 2), and open space.

Serving as the Edward M. Gramlich Fellow in Community and Economic Development this past summer enabled me to further formalize and affirm the connection between urban planning and public health as I researched how resident services are funded and delivered by affordable housing nonprofits. As a second-year planning student, I have expanded my education across the Harvard network with coursework at the Kennedy School, Law School, and MIT. In doing so, I have addressed questions related to expanding housing and transportation opportunities for older adults, advancing economic development in Brockton, MA, and increasing equitable development through zoning in Cambridge's Alewife neighborhood.

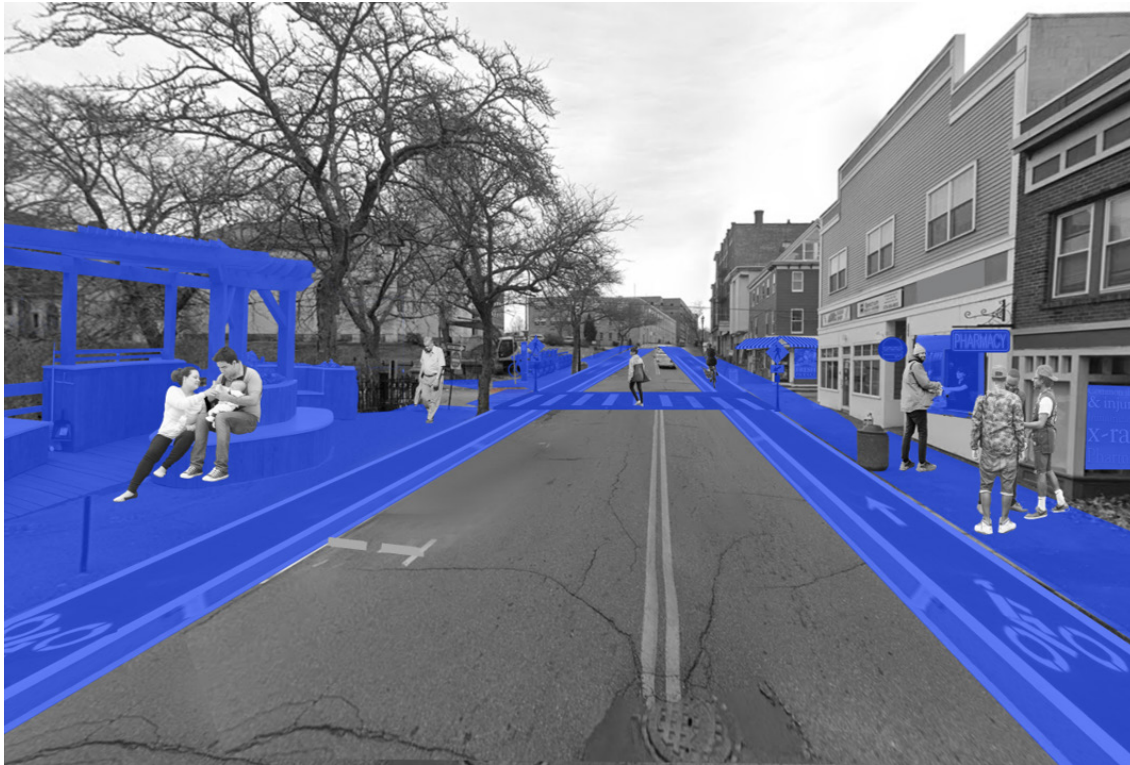
Your generosity has helped make my attendance and future career in public service possible. Thanks to the support of Jim and the donors of the James G. Stockard, Jr. MCP '68, LF '78 Fund, I have been able to make commitments and achievements throughout my time at the GSD. Along the way, I have deepened my understanding of the field, connected with professionals, and met outstanding professors and classmates. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to learn and grow in such an incredible institution and field.

Best,

**Mel Miller**

melmiller@gsd.harvard.edu





**Figure 1. Applying the Age-Ready Belvidere Toolkit to Belvidere's Commercial Center.** The application of the toolkit introduces bike lanes, benches, a parklet, improved sidewalks, crosswalks, age-friendly businesses, and accessible healthcare to a commercial corridor along East Merrimack Street in Belvidere.



**Figure 2. Applying the Age-Ready Belvidere Toolkit to Belvidere's Residential Neighborhoods.** The application of the toolkit re-imagines a residential street in Belvidere through transportation and housing-related interventions to enable a more lively, safe, and livable environment.



