

# **T. William Lester, Ph.D.**

**Research Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, College of Arts and Sciences  
at UNC-Chapel Hill**

Chapel Hill, NC, US

Lester is an expert on the impact of minimum wage and living wage policies on urban economic development.

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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."

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Economic Development, Economic Development Incentives, Labor Market Institutions, Living Wage Policies, Minimum Wage Policies, Labor Economics, Employment Opportunities in the Green Economy

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**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 Redistributive 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

**When are Economic Development Incentives Successful: Evidence from a Time-series Analysis from North Carolina**

Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Conference

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**University of California, Berkeley**  
Ph.D. City and Regional Planning

**University of Illinois at Chicago**  
M.U.P.P. Urban Studies

**University of Pennsylvania**  
B.A. Urban Studies and Economics

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**Faculty Fellow, Institute for the Environment (Current)**  
Awarded by the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

**Scholar in Residence, Center for Urban and Regional Studies (2013)**  
Awarded by the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

**Chester Rapkin Award (2012)**  
Awarded by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), for best paper published in 2012 in the Journal of Planning Education and Research (JPER).

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