

## ***“Helping the Community Through a Sense of Servant Leadership”***

Julio A. Portillo  
Executive Director, MidTown, Inc.  
MPA, Columbus State University 2007



“What can I do today to better the quality of life of residents in my community?”

“Columbus State University was instrumental in providing me with the necessary tools to enter the workforce.”

Julio was born and raised in San Salvador, El Salvador, where he attended the British Academy from pre-k to 12th grade, fortunate to have learned English and French, as well as Spanish- his native tongue. Julio’s academic upbringing at the British Academy guided him on his college search in the United States.

In the early 90s, Julio’s father arrived at Ft. Benning, in a military exchange program; this was Julio’s first encounter with Columbus, GA, and it was also a leading factor when choosing a university. His experience in the local community is what drove Julio to decide on Columbus State University, where he earned a BBA with a concentration in Marketing and MPA with a Government Administration Track.

Two months after completing his master’s degree, Julio was hired by the Lower Chattahoochee Regional Development Center as an Urban/Regional Planner. This agency would later become the River Valley Regional Commission-where Julio would spend 12 years working on Transportation and Community Planning. It was during this time when Julio’s first interactions began with MidTown, Inc. He worked closely with their former Executive Director, Anne King (now retired living in Greenville, SC), and which ultimately led to him becoming the 3rd Executive Director of the organization following Teresa Tomlinson and Anne King.

“Columbus State University was instrumental in providing me with the necessary tools to enter the workforce.” CSU also instilled in Julio a sense of Servant Leadership; while he was not in the [Servant Leadership] program, CSU always portrayed itself as a school that closely interacted with the community. After receiving his BBA, Julio decided to obtain an MPA as he wanted to see what positive impact he could have in the public/non-profit sector.

There’s an underlying but powerful message behind the work in the public and non-profit sectors. To Julio, that message is: “what can I do today to better the quality of life of residents in my community?” This statement drives the work that Julio does. From small projects like Free Little Libraries to significantly larger initiatives like building the road infrastructure to better connect Midtown to Uptown and other places in the community. All the programs and initiatives we [MidTown, Inc.] develop have a goal of improving people’s lives through bettering our community.

## Julio's Achievements

- 2008: Guest speaker at the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Community Development Block Grant Applicant's Workshop – Project Competitiveness in Rural Georgia.
- 2010, 2012 and 2016: Presenter at the Georgia Planning Association Annual Conference – Urban/Rural Transportation Planning and Planning for Bicycle Tourism in Rural Georgia.
- 2011 and 2016: Guest speaker at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) – Regional Approach to Bicycle-Pedestrian Projects and Developing Bicycle Tourism in Rural Communities.
- 2014 and 2016: Presenter at the Georgia Bicycle Summit – Working with local governments to implement healthy community initiatives and developing Complete Streets Policies.
- Board member of Georgia Bikes! Statewide bicycle advocacy organization 2018-2020.
- Board member: Georgia Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers, Inc.-2013-2016.
- Ex-Officio Board Member: Trees Columbus and Historic Columbus Foundation, 2018-present.
- Member of Safe Kids Columbus Advisory Council 2017-2019.
- Co-Founder and Technical Advisor to the Board of Bicycle Columbus, Inc., Sumter Cycling, Inc., and the Chattahoochee Valley Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association.
- Member of the American Planning Association – Georgia Chapter, 2007 – present.
- Member of the Core Leadership team for the MidTown Inc., Knight Cities Challenge: Minimum Grid-Maximum Impact – development of grant application and project implementation.
- Advisor to the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley-Friends of the Dragonfly Trails Project.
- Advisor to the City of Columbus' Mayor Bicycle Friendly Community initiative.
- Advisor for the Standing Boy Creek Park State Park project – Columbus, GA.
- Board member of the Chattahoochee Sailing Club, 2014 to present.