

# Columbus Community Geography Center

## What is Community Geography?

Community geography is a "growing area of academic geography that leverages university community partnerships to facilitate access to spatial technology, data, and analysis" (Robinson, Block & Rees 2016).

Working with local non-profit agencies, community organizations, and local government bodies, the Columbus Community Geography Center (CCGC) involves faculty and students in service-learning research projects that:

Raise awareness about important community problems and resources;

Inform community and neighborhood planning processes;

Support community organizing; and

Empower communities to make positive change.

## Our Mission

Located in the Department of History and Geography at Columbus State University, the CCGC is a community-driven collaboration that uses geographical thinking to research, map, analyze, and provide fresh and insightful perspectives on issues in Columbus and the region. The CCGC is committed to addressing community challenges that relate broadly to themes such as:

- Community and economic development;
- Food accessibility; and
- Neighborhood revitalization.

## Vision

Bringing students and community members together, the Columbus Community Geography Center helps create communities – from neighborhoods to regions – that are empowered to use maps, spatial analyses, and other geographical and historical data and techniques to better understand their landscape and to build a just society.

## Community Focus

The CCGC provides services to, and serves as a resource for, community and neighborhood groups, non-governmental organizations, faith-based agencies, chambers of commerce, and community coalitions that would like to use GIS mapping and other geographical techniques (such as place-making) to address community concerns.

## Making Geography Relevant

Because geography is critical to understanding people's connection to their physical and social environment, community geography helps make the knowledge and tools that geographers use relevant and accessible to everyone in our community. Our research addresses questions relevant to local communities, and our public participation process ensures that all participants both contribute and gain knowledge and skills. Finally, our results inform action and help communities bring about change.

## Community Geography Projects & Partners

Since 2009, we have partnered with 27 distinctive non-profit & citizen groups, along with city, county, and state government agencies, educational institutions and programs, and chambers of commerce.

Our projects include:

- Integrating youth into the urban planning process;
- Analysis of vacant lots for potential use by the Columbus Land Bank;
- Historic preservation research and proposals;
- Heritage and arts tourism development;
- Public housing accessibility;
- Local Food Bank food pantry accessibility study; and
- Mapping and analysis community garden sites and design.

In our first decade we produced over 20 community geography projects. The reports, maps, and digital humanities projects that have arisen from these projects are all published at the [Columbus Community Geography Center ePress](#).

## Recent CCGC and CG Student Recognition and Awards

**2019:** University System of Geography Award for Outstanding Service Learning Project for the CCGC project "Carver Heights: Oral History Harvest" to students

**2018:** The [CCGC](#) was featured in the National Humanities Alliance's [Humanities for All](#) publication. This publication also showcased 9 CCGC projects. The National Humanities Alliance's mission is to share examples of publicly engaged humanities work at colleges and universities across the United States

**2016:** Student Amanda Hall, "Exceedance Probability of E. coli in Weracoba Creek's Watersheds", awarded Best Presentation at CSU Tower Day

Students Ryan Hutto and Brendon O'Keffe, "Losing the Night: A Survey of Light Pollution in Columbus, GA", awarded Best Poster, CSU Tower Day

**2014:** Student Joyce Wade, "Eagle & Phenix Mills Alabama Tenant Housing 1851-1939", awarded Best Presentation at CSU Tower Day

## The History of Columbus Community Geography

**2008:** After the Bibb Mill fire in fall 2008, CSU faculty and students came together to consider the history of the Bibb City community and contemplate its future after losing the massive historic mill structure in spring 2009. An interdisciplinary group of geography, history, and theater students worked with present and former community members to develop interpretive materials to aid the community's planned Historic District status, and to support a reinterpretation of the community.

**2009:** We hired a second geography faculty member and developed our community geography focus in upper level geography courses (GIS, cultural and urban geographies).

**2010:** With a grant from [Gamma Theta Upsilon](#), we welcomed Dr. Jonelle Robinson, director of the [Syracuse Community Geography \(SCG\)](#), program to share her work and text-ig a community discussion on creating community-university partnerships.

**2013:** With a second grant form [Gamma Theta Upsilon](#), we welcomed Dr. Daniel Block from Chicago State University to share his approach to community geography and the work of the Neighborhood Assistance Center. Dr. Block facilitated a workshop on food accessibility with local community partners.

**2015:** GIS Certificate program is established.

**2019-2020:** 10th Anniversary of the Columbus Community Geography Center. We also celebrate our success in exceeding our goals of racial and gender diversity in the program.

## Connect

You can connect with the Columbus Community Geography center Facebook group at [CG@CSU](#), where you can follow our community projects, connect with former and current CSU geography students, and celebrate their successes.

## More Information

For information on the Columbus Community Geography Center, please contact

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