

Accomplished urban planning professor Harvey Jacobs (BAED '73) says experience at UB was "life-changing"



Harvey Jacobs (BAED '73) says his time in Buffalo has profoundly influenced his teaching and research over the course of his career. Jacobs retired from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2018 after more than 30 years as a professor of urban planning and environmental studies.

Published June 15, 2021

Harvey M. Jacobs graduated from UB's School of Architecture and Environmental Design in 1973, in the second class of the BAED program.

Jacobs says the experience was "life-changing," and that he knew from the moment he walked into former UB architecture professor Michael's Brill's "Intro to Environmental Design" course that he had found his path.

"The inter- and cross-disciplinary systems thinking of the program has shaped my studies, my teaching, and my research, throughout my career," says Jacobs, who recently retired from the University of Wisconsin - Madison, after more than 30 years as a professor of urban planning and environmental studies.

Jacobs recalls the early years of the program under the leadership of founding Dean John Eberhard as a "heady time." Inspired by general systems theory, one of the great intellectual fashions of the day, Eberhard saw the challenge before the profession was not to design better buildings, but to redesign the entire process by which society planned, designed, and delivered the built environment.

In addition to Brill, Jacobs cites former faculty members Ibrahim "Himi" Jammal, Ranier Hasenstab and Terry Collison as particularly influential to his intellectual development.

Jacobs' first position after graduation was with a regional planning commission in Vermont, where he put to work his passion for citizen engagement in the planning process. Jacobs says those values were cultivated by his experience at UB, including a pivotal internship with Buffalo architect (and former faculty member) David Stieglitz.

He would next take up graduate study at Cornell University, earning his PhD in land policy and social and political theory in 1984. Soon after, he was hired by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he found a faculty and campus highly receptive to his research interests in land and environmental policy and planning theory.

His tenure with UW-Madison included joint appointment as a professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning and the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. He retired in 2018 and is now professor emeritus.

In retirement, Jacobs remains quite active across the profession and academy (view his personal website [here](#)). He continues to undertake scholarship and to consult in his areas of professional expertise – the social and legal aspects of land policy with a particular focus on property rights. He also serves as senior expert in public policy and property rights at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies at Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and holds an appointment as faculty from abroad in the master of public policy program at the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru.

Jacobs also has published scholarship and commentary on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on urban planning, including as co-author of a [viewpoint piece in *Town Planning Review*](#) on the relationship of pandemics, planning and property. He also [co-produced a video](#) last year with a global group of urban planning scholars, exploring the pandemic through the lens of land-based property rights and spatial planning.

Harvey Jacobs on COVID-19 and urban planning

"Cities will endure; for millennia they have been the cauldron of innovation. But how we use them will change. We have become more sensitive to the design and functioning of shared spaces, and I expect this to continue. From my particular perspective, this means the time is ripe to rethink our notions of what it means to own and use property, and what constitutes private, public, and shared property."

- *Harvey Jacobs (BAED '73), professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin - Madison*

Additional past roles include visiting professorships with the University of Kansas, the University of Toronto, and within a cooperative program among Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands; Cardiff University, UK; and Blekinge Institute of Technology, Karlskrona, Sweden.

He has held fellowships with The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the Rockefeller

Foundation, and the University of Bielefeld, Germany. And he has received multiple Fulbright Specialist awards. In addition, he received teaching awards at UW-Madison. His research has been recognized by the *Journal of the American Planning Association*. Throughout his career, he has been invited to speak, consult, and offer training on his areas of specialization at universities and with governments and agencies globally

<http://ap.buffalo.edu/People/alumni.host.html/content/shared/ap/students-faculty-alumni/alumni/harveyjacobs.detail.html>