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# Year at a Glance 2024-2025



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# The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities

# About the Riley



## Mission Statement

The Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities is an interdisciplinary initiative of the College of Charleston whose mission is to leverage the intellectual resources of the College to support the economic and cultural vibrancy of the City of Charleston and other communities throughout South Carolina, the United States and the world.



## Vision Statement

With access to the resources of the College of Charleston's School of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Riley Center seeks to be a leader in livable communities research, education, and practice.

The Riley Center defines “livable communities” as those which are economically and culturally vibrant, with equitable access for all residents to education, jobs, healthcare, housing, parks and recreation and arts and culture.



## Values

There is no single value that embodies Mayor Riley, rather it is a combination of vision, courage, inclusiveness, perseverance, and the tenacity to never be outworked that enabled his effective and impactful leadership.

The Riley Center for Livable Communities is guided by the values of our namesake Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. Based on input of our Advisory Board, these values have been identified and are incorporated into our planning and goal setting, project development, and in the work we do.



## Core Competencies

The Riley Center achieves its mission by connecting community needs with faculty, staff and student expertise. The Center has five core competencies under which it offers a variety of services. These five areas are:

1. Nonprofit and Local Government Support
2. Public Health and Sustainability
3. Education, Arts and Culture
4. Urban Design, Planning and Housing
5. Public Safety



# Our Team

The Riley Center operates with a small team of full-time employees, undergraduate and graduate students, Executives in Residence, Riley Center Fellows, and College of Charleston faculty and staff from various departments.

## Our 2024-2025 staff included:



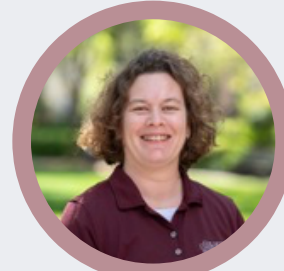
Joseph P. Riley Jr., Executive in Residence, Former Mayor of Charleston (1975 - 2015)



Kendra B. Stewart, Ph.D.  
Riley Center Director



Ali Moriarty, M.P.A.  
Riley Center Assistant Director



Heather Zeidler  
Operations Manager



Shelby Shumard, Ph.D.  
Research Associate



Matt Nowlin, Ph.D.  
Director of the Masters of Public Administration Program



Marla Robertson, M.P.A.  
Assistant Director of the Masters of Public Administration Program



Bill Tomes  
Executive in Residence



Bob O'Neill, M.P.A.  
Executive in Residence



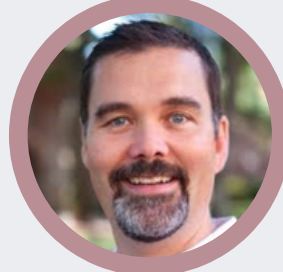
Gerald "Jerry" Gordon, Ph.D.  
Riley Center Fellow



Laura A. Reese Ph.D.  
Riley Center Fellow



Bonnie Bella  
Riley Center Fellow



Brumby McLeod, Ph.D.  
Faculty Fellow



Hsin-Ching Wu, Ph.D.  
Faculty Fellow



Jordan Ragusa, Ph.D.  
Faculty Fellow



Morgan Hughey, Ph.D.  
Faculty Fellow



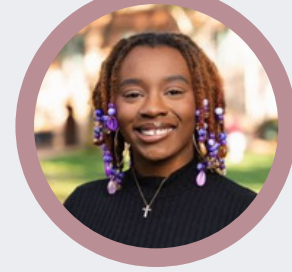
Catherine Holmes, MPA/MES  
Graduate Assistant



Autum Blanchard, MPA/MES  
Graduate Assistant



Kerlyn Mondesir, MPA  
Graduate Assistant



Arianna Parker, MPA  
Graduate Assistant



Rafael Guerra, MPA  
Graduate Assistant



Kit Lowery, MPA  
Graduate Assistant



Alani Boyd  
College of Charleston  
Undergraduate Intern



Mary Connolly  
College of Charleston  
Undergraduate Intern



Erin Solka  
College of Charleston  
Undergraduate Intern

# Advisory Board



The Riley Center is very fortunate to have a distinguished advisory board who offer their time, commitment and expertise to achieve the Riley Center's Mission.

**David Agnew** - Managing Director, Macquarie Group

**Capers Barr** - Partner, Barr, Unger & McIntosh, LLC

**Rusty Bennett** - Real Estate Investment & Development

**Ron Bogle** - President & CEO, American Architectural Foundation

**Sandra Campbell** - TourRific Tours

**Ginny Deerin** - Major Gifts Officer, International African American Museum

**Charlton DeSaussure, Jr.** - Attorney, Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd

**Yvonne Evans** - Former City Councilmember

**Foster Gaillard** - Partner, Womble Bond Dickinson, LLP

**Lewis Hudgins** - Former Senior Advisor to the Mayor

**Lee Higdon** - Retired President, College of Charleston and Connecticut College

**Ray Huff** - Director & Professor Emeritus, Clemson Architecture Center, Charleston

**Linda Ketner** - Businesswoman, donor, activist

**Chris Marlin** - Former President, Lennar International, LLC

**Clay N. Middleton** - Managing Director, Mercury

**Layton McCurdy** - Dean Emeritus & Professor, Medical University of South Carolina

**Scott Parker** - Co-Founder and Partner, DesignWorks

**Elise Partin** - Mayor of Cayce, SC

**David Rawle** - Retired Chairman and Founder, Rawle Murdy

**Robert Rosen** - Founder, Rosen Law Firm, LLC

**Henry Smyth** - Partner, Womble Bond Dickinson, LLP

**Mary Ann Sullivan** - Former Senior Advisor to the Mayor

**Steve Swanson** - Former CEO, Automated Trading Desk

**Sheila Wertimer** - Founder, Wertimer & Associates Landscape Architects



# Spotlight

1

## Early Learning Action Report

Following selection by the National League of Cities, the City of Charleston and Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative formed the Lowcountry Early Learning Action Team (ELAT) to improve early learning conditions. The partnership focused on accessible, affordable, high-quality childcare for children, practitioners, parents/families and businesses.

The project had a three-pronged approach, with the Riley Center handling data and research. Graduate assistants from the Riley team collected data through surveys distributed to parents/guardians and childcare providers in the Tri-County area to understand challenges related to childcare accessibility, affordability and continuity. ELAT aimed to use this survey data to develop regional strategies addressing childcare issues. Survey responses were kept anonymous, and the collected data was presented regionally.

The Riley team produced The Lowcountry Early Learning Action Report 2024 and presented the findings at the Early Learning Summit in June 2024 to the ELAT team and community members focused on early learning. Additionally, the research aspect was presented at the 2024 Southeastern Conference of Public Administration (SECoPA) in September 2024 to early learning researchers, demonstrating how to conduct research in the field of early learning from a practitioner's perspective.

2

## Charleston Alternative to Detention

In the Summer of 2024, the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities was approached by Charleston Alternative to Detention (CAD), with the goal of assisting them in growing their mission and expanding their reach by trying to determine the cost burden on taxpayers associated with the cost of placing juveniles in detention centers. CAD aims to provide after-school, summer, and weekend programs to keep young children out of the prison pipeline in the Tri-County Region, while enhancing community-driven alternatives to detention to promote public health, safety and economic opportunities. Post-COVID-19, CAD shifted to a financial capacity-building mission to support similar organizations facing increased funding needs.

The Riley team researched annual budgets from South Carolina's Juvenile Justice Center and Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester Counties, along with arrest data from Charleston's Juvenile Detention Facility. They obtained information from the Charleston County School District (CCSD) via a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to identify juveniles committing 700-level infractions, often leading to expulsions or detention. The data was categorized into 700 Level Offenses, Expulsions, Referrals to Police and Arrests.

A report with the findings was created and provided to the CAD team. Subsequently, the Riley team in charge of the research was invited to the Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to present the findings to various stakeholders, including law enforcement, mental health specialists and local non-profits.



# Spotlight

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## Riley Mayors' Design Fellowship

In February of 2025, the Riley Center hosted its seventh year of the Riley Mayors' Design Fellowship. This year, the program was held in partnership with the College of Charleston's Public Service Assistantship Program (PSAP), the Municipal Association of SC and the SC Arts Commission.

Mayors from across South Carolina were paired with PSAP Graduate Assistants and experts in landscape architecture and downtown revitalization to address an issue or a proposed project in their town or city.

The graduate assistants visited mayors to learn about their cities and proposed projects. They explored the towns, interacted with local leaders and residents, and subsequently created StoryMaps. These StoryMaps were presented on behalf of the mayors, showcasing the historical landscape and introducing the proposed projects.



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## Reality Check 2.0

Reality Check 2.0 is a regional growth visioning exercise for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester (BCD) Region. On April 30<sup>th</sup> 2025, elected officials, businesses, environmental, real estate, civic and community leaders were invited to participate in this exercise to raise awareness about the projected growth to come in the region by 2045.

Reality Check 2.0 was a chance for various stakeholders in the Tri-County Region to come together, think strategically and shape a plan that would accommodate the projected growth, in balance with existing communities, while embracing a thriving and sustainable future.

The Riley Center, in collaboration with local municipalities, associations, and businesses, sponsored this year's Reality Check. During the April 30<sup>th</sup> event, Riley staff served as scribes, meticulously documenting all major points from the table discussions and clearly noting areas for growth and next steps within the region. They highlighted common guiding principles and scenarios for future planning to meet projected growth demands, ensuring clear direction and productive discussions following the day's events.





# Spotlight

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## Women & Civic Arena

As part of the Riley Center's ongoing commitment to supporting local government initiatives and associations through a broad array of leadership and supervisory training programs, this year marked the inaugural hosting of the Women in the Civic Arena event. Fourteen participants attended the event, representing a strong start to what is expected to become a recurring and impactful program.

The Women in the Civic Arena weekend retreat was created to provide a space for women at the executive level in local government to understand the challenges facing women in the profession, to share experiences and make connections while developing a plan to live their whole, authentic selves.



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## Athenian

Athenian is a laboratory where introspection, creativity, fellowship, learning, philosophy, relaxation and teamwork mix and reveal to participants new considerations for thinking, leading and living.

*Monica Spells, ICMA-CM, Loudoun County, Virginia*

In alignment with the Riley Center's mission to cultivate strong, forward-thinking leadership in local government, the Athenian Program offers a premier development experience tailored for senior-level public sector executives. Designed for professionals with over a decade of service, the program invites participants to reflect on their leadership legacy, engage with complex societal challenges, and collaborate with peers and thought leaders to shape innovative solutions for their communities.

This year's cohort brought together a dynamic group of seasoned leaders, each committed to deepening their impact and advancing the future of local governance.

The Athenian program changed my life! It renewed my commitment to the profession and showed me how to be more effective in my role.

*Jeffrey A. Fiegenschuh, City Manager, City of Rochelle, Illinois*



# By the Numbers



SC Counties  
Served

**32**



SC Cities  
Served

**90**



Local Government  
Employees who  
Recieved Training

**300+**  
Nationwide



Local Non-Profits  
who recieved  
support

**27**



Total Grants and  
Contracts

**27**



Total Grant  
Funding

**\$495,346**



# Complete Project List

## Professional Development

- Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Leadership Academy
- Local Government Leadership Academy (LGLI)
- Athenian Program
- Women in the Civic Arena

## Community Partners

- Center for Creative Retirement
- Charleston Area Lifelong Learning
- SC Department of Veteran's Affairs
- Vantage Point Foundation

## Strategic Planning, Trainings, Evaluations and Facilitations

- Horry County - Strategic Planning
- Columbia Fire Department - Promotional Testing
- City of Columbia - Evaluation
- Mount Pleasant Waterworks - Evaluation
- City of Orangeburg - Strategic Planning
- Lexington Police Department

## Nonprofit & Government Support

- Sustainability Institute
- Camp Happy Days
- Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor
- Charleston County Just Home Project
- Charleston County Settlement Community Project
- Together SC
- Charleston Horticultural Society
- Postpartum Support Charleston
- Bluffton Self Help
- Charleston Alternative to Detention
- Trident United Way
- Orton Gillingham Center of Charleston
- Berkeley, Charleston, Dorchester Council of Government (BCDCOG)
- Charleston Chamber of Commerce
- South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC)
- Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC)
- South Carolina Association of Registration and Election Officials
- Riley Mayors' Design Fellowship
- South Carolina City & County Management Association (SCCCMA)
- South Carolina Clerks to County Council

