

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

For 14 years, the *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design* has served as a unique platform for exchanging ideas, examining urban issues through new perspectives, and providing real solutions to the problems planners face. This year is no different. I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with such a bright group of authors and staff editors, and I am blown away by the work they have produced. Beyond the accomplishment of publishing the journal for a 14th consecutive year, the 2019-2020 *Agora* team conducted a highly successful fundraiser, hosted a Salon event that fostered critical discussion among students and faculty, and instituted a new scholarship for the exceptional pieces chosen for the Symposium.

The title of *Agora's* 14<sup>th</sup> volume, *Convergence*, reflects the journal's exploration of the tensions that exist within the urban setting and our roles within these tensions. This year's *Agora* team published this journal in unprecedented circumstances. The novel coronavirus pandemic – which, at the time of publication, is escalating in the United States and around the globe – sent our staff into isolation, forcing our highly collaborative editing process to become fully virtual. It has also, and much more importantly, exposed existing tensions in our urban fabric that must be urgently addressed: predatory housing markets, unequal access to high-quality food, and the precarious nature of healthcare and childcare tied to employment that feels ever-unstable even under well-functioning capitalistic societies. Amidst these challenging circumstances, I hope this year's edition of *Agora* offers a critical exploration of some of these tensions. Meagan Gibeson's "Formal Housing Provision Under Neoliberalism in the United States" examines the history of public housing in the U.S. and proposes a shift in ideology away from housing as a market good and toward housing as a right. Madeline DeMarco and Amanda Richman's "From the Outside Looking In: Reflecting on Detroit's Food System" provides tools to document food systems and their accessibility in the City of Detroit, exploring what it means to document this information as 'outsiders' of a city whose narrative is so frequently co-opted by those who are not residents. Finally, Heather Kiningham's "Health as a Planning Problem: Combating Diseases of Poverty" documents the close connections between public health crises, inadequate infrastructure, and poverty, and proposes policy solutions to address diseases of poverty. These issues are extremely pressing – now more than ever – and I am thankful for the brilliant work produced by our authors on these topics.

Despite the unique circumstances in which we published *Agora 14*, I hope that the critical analyses in these extraordinary pieces can offer hope and optimism. The hurdles seem at times impossible to conquer, but these articles demonstrate that feasible and immediate solutions exist – there is another way forward. I am so proud of this volume of *Agora*, and of our incredibly hard-working team of 22 graduate students who pushed through uncertainty and hardship to publish the journal. I hope you enjoy reading *Agora* as much as we enjoyed making it for you.

Kim Higgins  
*Editor-in-Chief*