2016-17 MPC projects for SPEA VISTA Fellows

Cost of Segregation
MPC and Urban Institute are conducting a two-year study based on the hypothesis that by reducing segregation, Chicago and our region will experience faster economic growth and a more equitable quality of life. Our driving questions are: What does it cost us all—those living in concentrated poverty and those in concentrated wealth—to live so separately from each other by race and income? And, what policies can we adopt to reduce Chicago’s segregation? The VISTA fellow would support ongoing research to develop and model housing, transportation, economic, health, safety and education policy interventions that set us on the path toward less segregation, greater equity and a more productive economy. These policies will define a future city, county and regional advocacy agenda.

Corridor Development Initiative
The Corridor Development Initiative (CDI) is a community planning and engagement effort designed to help communities grapple with complexities of development. Integral to the CDI is the hands-on opportunity for residents to “build” what they would like to see on specific parcels in their communities and test whether their proposals are financially feasible. The CDI includes an involved community meeting series that the VISTA fellow would create materials for, lead discussions with residents, and assist with community outreach and planning. The fellow would build MPC’s community outreach capacity through this process.

Great Rivers Chicago
The Chicago, Calumet, and Des Plaines rivers connect dozens of Chicago communities with suburbs in northeastern Illinois and northwestern Indiana, the greater Midwest and beyond. In theory they create an excellent connective framework for environmental protection, recreation, and economic development. However, due in part to the extreme variation in municipal planning and investment capacity between those communities, the reality is that affluent communities are more likely to have vibrant riverfronts while lower-income communities struggle to take advantage of their proximity to the very same rivers.

In the summer of 2016 MPC, in partnership with the City of Chicago, will release a vision for the future of Chicago’s rivers and riverfronts, with the aim of stimulating development, access, recreation, and environmental improvements throughout the city. Moving forward into 2017 MPC will be simultaneously working to implement the Great Rivers Chicago vision—e.g. planning parks, proposing trail expansions, and creating a loan program for concessions—and beginning to engage Chicago’s river neighbors in comparable visioning. The SPEA VISTA Fellow will build MPC’s capacity for that work by developing means to support lower-income communities in particular to develop more thriving riverfront opportunities for their residents.
Benefits of a position at MPC:

- MPC staff will work with the SPEA VISTA Fellow to develop a personalized professional development plan for the year
- Opportunities for training sessions in core competency areas, e.g., GIS
- Inclusion in all staff meetings and work planning processes
- Access to immense network of professional contacts, including MPC’s Board and advisory committees
- Transit subsidy
- Monthly staff parties
- Fun, engaging work place