

Brad Stephens

School of Public & International Affairs
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
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Education

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA
Ph.D. in Planning, Governance, & Globalization, *degree expected* May 2026
Tentative Dissertation Committee: Max Stephenson (Chair), Claire Cahen, Marc Stern, Ben Teresa (VCU)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA
M.S. in Forestry (Human Dimensions of Natural Resource Management), May 2016
Advisor: Bruce Hull

Centre College, Danville, VA
B.A. in Religion, May 2007

Research Interests

Trust
Community Development
Urban & Regional Planning
Nonprofit Management/Leadership
Municipal/Local Government

Research In Progress

Neighborhood Levels of Institutional Trust in Richmond, VA - Measurement, Impact, and Factors

- This project is focused on applying trust theory to the world of urban planning and community development. It will involve a mixed-methods approach with three distinct portions. These are loosely as follows...
 - Measurement - Surveying the entire city of Roanoke and identifying high- and low-trust neighborhoods
 - Impact - After identifying the amount of institutional trust for each neighborhood, statistical analysis will be done to determine to what extent trust can explain the outcomes of each neighborhood.
 - Factors - Finally, the project will include at least two, and up to four, case studies of Richmond neighborhoods focused on further exploring the causes and complexities of trust dynamics in each place. The goal is to compare low- and high-trust neighborhoods as well as isolate racial dynamics.

Government Control & The Racialization of Space in Richmond, VA

- The purpose of this project is to examine how local governments exert control over their populations through standard planning processes and whether there is differentiation in this exertion along racial and cultural lines. The main data source for this study will be public records from some of the public commissions and boards of the City of Richmond.

St. Paul's Leadership Institute Visioning

- This project is focused on helping St. Paul's College, a closed HBCU based in Brunswick County, Virginia, blaze a new path forward. Our project's focus is on assisting with public engagement and providing planning guidance.

Previous Research

Tea Party Opposition to Sustainable Development

- This project examined the reasons for opposition to local sustainable development projects by members of the Tea Party Movement. It focused on applying the lens of individualism to explain why public planning sessions and community visioning meetings were being disturbed and shut down.

Publication(s)

Stephens, B. A. (2016). *Understanding the Tea Party Response to Local Environmental Initiatives: A Conflict Between Individualism and Collectivism* [Thesis, Virginia Tech]. <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/71307>

Copenheaver, C. A., Kidd, K. R., Shockey, M. D., & Stephens, B. A. (2014). Environmental and social factors influencing the price of land in southwestern virginia, usa, 1786-1830. *Mountain*

Research and Development, 34(4), 386–395.
<https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-12-00124.1>

Research Techniques & Skills

Qualitative Research
Quantitative Research
Mixed-Method Research
Public Record Research

Technical Skills: ArcGIS, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Podcast Production, Graphic Design, Social Media Management

Professional Experience

Executive Director

REACH, Inc. | January 2021 - Present

- Transformed the organization from a founder-driven startup to a stable, growth-oriented organization.
- Built and implemented many new systems
- Developed & refined both programming & messaging
- Strengthened board leadership
- Led all fundraising and marketing efforts

Business & Development Manager

Western Virginia Workforce Development Board | July 2019 - March 2021

- Grew and maintained relationships with hundreds of businesses
- Led marketing efforts that substantially grew the reach of the organization
- Facilitated long-term planning efforts

Director

CoLab Roanoke | Jan 2017 - July 2019

- Managed day-to-day operations of region's premier coworking and innovation hub
- Convened the Regional Entrepreneurial Coalition
- Developed and implemented educational and networking programming
- Ran social media, print, and Google marketing efforts
- Determined opportunities for growth and built countless partnerships

Lead Planner

CityWorks (X)po | Jan 2016 - July 2019

- Ran operations for the annual placemaking conference
- Hosted and produced "Big Ideas for Better Places" Podcast
- Developed & implemented new year-round programming
- Led branding and marketing efforts

Academic Experience

Editorial Board Member

Community Change Journal | September 2022 - Present

Graduate Assistant

Institute of Policy and Governance | August 2022 - Present

Member & Officer

Community Change Collaborative | August 2022 - Present

Additional Leadership Experience

Board Member

City of Roanoke Human Services Advisory Board | Jan 2017 - Present

Co-Founder & Convener

SIMPLE Roanoke - Micro-Foundation | Oct 2017 - Jan 2022

- A giving circle model that connects nontraditional funders with creative and innovative ideas through a \$1000 monthly grant.

Co-Founder

Noke Codes | May 2015 - May 2018

- A civic technology organization that conducted hackathons and helped local community NGOs better utilize technology to pursue their missions.

Founder

Big Lick SOUP - Micro-grant Community Meal | September 2014 - April 2018

- A community meal in which four ideas for community change are presented and then voted on with the leading vote-getter receiving a micro-grant.

References

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