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## **Auburn University Takes Top Honors in Fifth Annual Colvin Case Study Challenge**

*National competition recognizes excellence among emerging professionals*

College Park, Md.— Three graduate students from Auburn University took the first-place win for their analysis of a transit-friendly, mixed-use tower in Orlando, Florida, the result of a nail-biter showdown at the fifth annual Colvin Case Study Challenge. The team beat out an initial 20 entries and four semi-finalists from university programs across the nation in a juried, virtual competition on Saturday at the University of Maryland.

“This year brought four incredible projects to the Case Study Challenge, making it a really tough job for our jury,” said Maria Day-Marshall, director of UMD’s Real Estate Development Program. “It was a thrill to showcase such incredibly talented emerging professionals.”

Sponsored by the University of Maryland’s Colvin Institute of Real Estate Development, the Colvin Case Study Challenge is a national retrospective written case study competition that challenges teams to document a recent innovative real estate project within their own metropolitan region. Projects are judged by leading real estate professionals on several criteria, including a depth of understanding of markets, project valuation, finance, urban design and sustainability, entitlement processes and operational issues.

The outstanding presentations this year left the judges in a near deadlock for choosing first and second-place winners; one judge noted that “it was a photo finish” for Auburn, who ultimately prevailed with a comprehensive review of Sun Trust Plaza, an ambitious, 25-story project that capitalized on Orlando’s development boom. Thomas Jefferson University master’s student, Sharmaine Belton, the first one-person team in the competition’s history, took second place with a review of a transit-oriented development in South Philadelphia. An undergraduate team from Virginia Tech took third place and honorable mention was awarded to a graduate team from Columbia University.

### **Colvin Case Study Challenge 2020 Winners:**

#### ***First Place: Auburn University***

Kevin R Boyett, Zac Marquess, McDaniel Wyatt (all Master of Real Estate Development)

**Project:** Church Street Plaza

#### ***Second Place: Thomas Jefferson University***

Sharmaine Belton (Master of Real Estate Development)

**Project:** Lincoln Square

#### ***Third Place: Virginia Tech / Pamplin College of Business***

Carter Ramos, Nick Wright (Undergraduate)

**Project:** West Half

***Honorable Mention: Columbia University***

Lin Hou, Jiazhen Lin, Aaron Sage (Master of Science in Real Estate Development)

**Project:** Empire Stores

In addition to gauging their understanding of the critical aspects of real estate development, the challenge also provides an opportunity for the students to glean feedback and counsel from experts in the industry, both through mentorship and jury interaction. This year's jury comprised leaders in real estate development and education from across the country. The Colvin Institute thanks Michael E. Johnson ('76), President and CEO, UrbanCore Development, LLC; Karen McGrath, Assistant Professor, Bucknell University; David Roodberg, CEO and President, Horning Brothers; and Cory Zelnik ('86), Founder/Chief Executive Officer, Zelnik & Company LLC for serving on the 2020 jury.

"The Colvin Case Study Challenge continues to be the place for emerging professionals to strut their stuff," said Interim Dean of the School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation Donald Linebaugh. "We had an incredibly sharp crop of students this year. Their ability to navigate questions from the jury with such professionalism was inspiring to watch."

The Case Study Challenge is named for the late Baltimore Developer John Colvin, who founded the Colvin Institute of Real Estate Development in 2008. The Colvin Institute of Real Estate Development supports the interdisciplinary approach of the University of Maryland's Master of Real Estate Development curriculum that comprehensively covers finance and capital markets, law and public policy, structure and site design, construction management, property, portfolio and asset management as well as marketing and commercial leasing. Learn more about the Colvin Institute of Real Estate Development [here](#).