

# A vision for the communities: becoming an urban planner essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



As children we were asked what we wanted to be when we grew up. I remember giving the rather un-realistic answer of “superstar” at the time. I struggled with finding a path that suited me for awhile; however now that I am older and have a better understanding of the world, I have the answer to what I want to be, and that is an urban planner. According to the American Planning Association (American Planning Association, 2013), “Planning, also called urban planning or city and regional planning, is a dynamic profession that works to improve the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations.” This explanation of what I would be doing as an urban planner feels right to me. I would love to help implement effective measures in the community that fosters growth and development.

I have researched the technical specifications, pros and cons, and examined whether my goals line up with what is needed of me, and I am certain that I have chosen a much more realistic and fulfilling career. I wish to become an urban planner because of how the nature of the job is serving the community. I would be getting out there and finding out what people need, and then making a plan to get it done. Some projects cater to schools, the homeless, transportation, housing or nature preservation. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). These are the aspects that make our neighborhoods what they are. I see cities like Baltimore that need so much reform and change, and I just want to do something! I have always heard that social science and psychology majors do not make a lot of money.

However, I have always been in the school of thought of it is better to do what you love rather than taking a job you hate for the money. On that note, it is important that I am at least able to pay my bills and live a comfortable lifestyle. Luckily, the Bureau of Labor Statistics states “ The median annual wage of urban and regional planners was \$63, 040 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$40, 410, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$96, 420.” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). I believe even at \$40, 000 I can begin to make a decent living for myself.

And I am sure that as with any career my salary will also go up with experience. Upon graduation, I believe it is a lot of students’ concerns about the difficulty of finding a job in this day in age. There seems to be so much competition and not enough jobs. I do believe the job prospects are at least fair for an urban planner. Due to the need to address growth and environmental issues, planners are needed to solve the emerging issues; despite that, one of the downfalls would be that although there is a demand for planners, there is not always the money it takes to start or complete a project in this economy. However, once the economy does pick up, there will be an even greater demand to make up for the time those projects went undone (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). I am very glad that I decided to take my Learning Principles course, as it has set a blueprint for the skills I will need to develop to succeed in my career.

We devoted a whole week to the principles of decision-making, and the American Planning Association states that the “ability to solve problems using a balance of technical competence, creativity, and hardheaded pragmatism” is a skill that “successful planners possess” (American Planning Association, 2013). I will have the time throughout my undergraduate career to cultivate this skill, so that I too will be a successful planner. I have also learned the components of setting a goal, which is that it has to be attainable and has to have measurable actions. I have decided to volunteer or have an internship every summer until I graduate. This is something reasonable since there are many opportunities in my community to volunteer, and measurable because I will be able to add the experience to my resume after each experience.

Finally, I have set a foundation for time-management, critical thinking and proper communication, skills that will prove priceless to me in my profession and have just learned a lot about how I think and learn. Learning Principles has armed me with the tools that I will need for life while in school, and later once I am into my career. One thing I have had concerns about is whether I am taking the right major for what I want to be. I have always been interested in people and what they do and think, and choosing social science just felt right to me. However, I have seen very few undergraduate urban planning programs, and I like that the University of Maryland, University College fits in with my working-adult lifestyle, even though they do not offer a specific major for urban planning.

The Princeton Review explains how “ Urban Planning majors study the socio-economic factors and conditions behind housing projects in the city while also studying the effect of public transportation in suburban areas. It’s both an analytical and quantitative approach, one that combines policy, statistics, a sense of history, and a lot more” (The Princeton Review, 2013). In the description for the social science major at the University of Maryland, University College, it states “ Graduates in social science may pursue a variety of careers in which understanding of social science issues is important, including business administration, elder care, government, health services, law enforcement, human resources, and community service ” (UMUC, 2013). With that in mind, I believe the courses I will take to obtain my degree fall right in line with other with urban planning programs, especially if I am careful about which electives and tracks I take. So far I have my courses planned down to the last credit to make sure I am maximizing my time spent in school. Making a plan and following through will be good practice for the day-to day and long-term goals while working within my field. The downfall of choosing an advanced career is the advanced training I will need.

To really be able to do the planning work I want to do, I will need to obtain my masters. I would also want to consider accreditation by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AIPC) to be truly recognized as a professional in the field (APA, 2013). I need to start gaining experience by seeking out relevant internships in my junior and senior years, and relevant jobs after graduation. The idea of going to Graduate school is very daunting for me. I

never thought I would be striving to go so far. I am naturally a little bit lazy and thought my bachelor's would be good enough.

However, I am absolutely sure that I want to be a urban planner, and gaining my master's is a long-term goal that I am proud to have. I believe my social science degree will set me up with finding an awesome job that is suited to my tastes while I achieve my masters degree. After all, there is no reason why I should be limiting myself to what I can do and be. From this vantage point, I am looking at a long academic road to becoming an urban planner. I will write countless papers, take endless exams, and spend plentiful hours researching, assessing and applying.

And yet, I have always heard that anything truly worth having takes hard work and sacrifice. To me, being somebody who can positively affect my community and make long-lasting changes as an urban planner, is well worth it.