



FEATURE

How to Become an Urban Planner

If you are looking for an occupation where the job market is expected to rise dramatically over the next few years, you should consider the position of urban planner. In this position, you would work at developing short and long term plans for the use of land in a town, a city or a rural area. You will be in act as a consultant advising officials on the best location for roads, various buildings and zones for residential and commercial areas. You will need to have a sense of vision in order to forecast what the needs of the area will be in the future and plan for this need. In the planning of various types of infrastructure, you need to take the community's wishes into consideration. New subdivisions, for example, should have provisions for neighborhood parks, commercial areas and depending on the size of subdivision land should be set aside to accommodate a school.

An urban planner also looks at the existing infrastructure to determine what changes will be needed in order to accommodate future demands. This includes sewage and water systems to meet the needs of a growing population. At the same time, you need to be knowledgeable about building codes and environmental regulations. Part of your duties will be to ensure that contractors adhere to the codes and regulations during the building process.

You will need to be proficient in the use of the computer and various types of software, as you will have to prepare your initial plans electronically. Then you can print them out to present to the city leaders that are involved. As part of this presentation, you will also have to prepare Power Point slides that

include the information you want to share with these officials. You will have to deal with various groups of people in this position. Therefore you should have exceptional interpersonal skills and be able to develop good relationships with the personnel you deal with. You will be involved in many meetings and may have to appear before state and municipal bodies when making presentations.

In order to obtain a position as an urban planner, you should have at least a Master's degree from an accredited university. There are only a few universities offering an undergraduate degree in this area, but you can gain admission to a Master's program with an undergraduate degree in environmental design, geography, economics

or political science. As the need for professionals in this area grows, more and more universities with offer more courses and degree programs.

At the present time, New Jersey is the only state that requires you to obtain a license to work as an urban planner. You can also obtain a certificate in urban planning from the American Institute of Certified Planners, which is nationally recognized. To obtain this certificate you must pass a comprehensive exam, but there are eligibility requirements for writing the exam. You do need to have experience working in this filed and the number of years varies according to your educational experience and whether or not your degree is from an American university or from one in another country.

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