Career Spotlight

Urban Planner

Urban planners develop long- and short-term plans for the use of land and the growth of urban, suburban, and rural communities and the region in which they are located. They help local officials by recommending locations for roads, schools, and other infrastructure and suggesting zoning regulations for private property. This work includes forecasting the future needs of the population.

EDUCATION

Most entry-level jobs in federal, state, and local governments require a master's degree from an accredited program in urban or regional planning or a related field. A bachelor's degree in mathematics, economics, geography, political science, or environmental design is especially good preparation for urban planners.

WHEN MATH IS USED

Urban designers use math as they design the arrangement, appearance, and functionality of towns and cities, and in particular, the shaping and uses of safe public space. Also, urban designers use mathematical models to forecast the future needs of a group of people.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicted faster than average employment growth for urban planners from 2008-2018, and those with a master's degree can expect the best employment opportunities. The BLS anticipated the majority of new jobs to be created in quickly growing communities that required regulation and improvement in areas such as residential and commercial development, wildlife and geological conservation and local and inter-city roadways. Private sector jobs were expected to hold the greatest opportunities, with firms and developers hiring urban planners to consult on issues ranging from permits and environmental issues to more aesthetic concerns. About 68 percent are employed by local governments. Companies involved with architectural, engineering, and related services, as well as management, scientific, and technical consulting services, employ an increasing proportion of planners in the private sector. Other urban planners are employed in state government agencies dealing with housing, transportation, or environmental protection, and a small number work for the Federal Government.

MATH REQUIRED

- College Algebra
- Trigonometry
- Geometry
- Calculus I and II
- Number Theory
- Analysis
- Statistics

Low-end Salary: $42,940/yr
Median Salary: $68,220/yr
High-end Salary: $102,200/yr

FACTS

People who are successful in urban planning have visual and kinesthetic/tactile talents. They possess an interest in design combined with a heightened social consciousness. Urban planners are people-oriented. They possess strong communication skills, are comfortable in meeting with many different types of people, and are attentive listeners. Urban planners are interested in multidisciplinary issues and enjoy working collaboratively with other professionals. Many seek international job opportunities. Although contemporary professional use of the term 'urban design' dates from the mid-20th century, urban design has been practiced throughout history. Ancient examples of carefully planned and designed cities exist in Asia, India, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, and are particularly well-known within Classical Chinese, Roman, and Greek cultures.

CITATIONS

http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Life-Physical-and-Social-Science/Urban-and-regional-planners.htm
http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes193051.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_design