

UrbanPlan: The Classroom, Volunteering & Training

What your ULI member colleagues say...

“Until you have done UP training, you can’t grasp the power and sophistication of the program. Make a professional commitment to this training as if it were an Advisory Services Panel. If you don’t do the assigned prep - especially the written part – I guarantee that you’ll be embarrassed in the training and unready for the classroom. “

Rick Dishnica (Chair MFCBlue; President of the Dishnica Company, Point Richmond, CA)

“UrbanPlan volunteer training goes deeper than any traditional real estate development class. The take away value transcends effective volunteering. The intellectual discipline & Socratic method of questioning is an asset in my professional life.”

Kim Diamond (Principal Ev8 Real Estate Services, San Francisco, CA)

The UrbanPlan training is absolutely the best training of any kind that I have ever attended! It takes you back to the fundamentals of your business. I get more out of it every time. It makes me a more effective developer. Paula Blasier is a gifted instructor—very knowledgeable and focused with a great sense of humor. The session is fast-paced and thoroughly enjoyable.

Ron Nahas (IOPC Gold, ULI Foundation governor, Principal Rafanelli & Nahas, Orinda, CA)

UrbanPlan in the Classroom

Objective: Students learn the fundamental forces that drive development under our system of government and economics; i.e. how the forces of our market economy clash and collaborate with those of our representative democracy to create the built environment. Concepts like risk/reward, markets, capital, interest groups, politics, regulation, trade-offs etc., are all explored in depth. This knowledge provides the foundation for all meaningful land use conversations, enabling a more civil and sophisticated dialogue among stakeholders at the local level—where the real land use decisions are made.

Process: High School -UP runs in high school **economics** and selected government/civics classes. Students form 5-person private sector, for profit, development teams that respond to a “Request for Proposal” for the redevelopment of a blighted site in a hypothetical community. Each team member assumes one of five roles: finance director, marketing director, city liaison, neighborhood liaison, or site planner.

Through these roles, students develop a visceral understanding of the various stakeholders in the development process and the challenge of reconciling their often-competing agendas to create a well designed, market responsive, financeable, buildable project. (**University** curriculum and process is identical. Implemented at graduate level with land use focused students: MBA, architecture, planning)

Facilitation: Over the course of the 15 class-hour project and prior to the presentations, land use professionals who have attended UrbanPlan volunteer training engage in Socratic interaction two times with the student teams.

Presentations: Addressing challenging financial, market, social, political, and design issues, students develop a proforma and three-dimensional model of their plan; and present their proposal to a “**City Council**” of ULI members that awards the development contract to the winning “developer”.

ULI Member UrbanPlan Volunteers: Facilitator, City Council & Presenter

The Time Commitment

Once you have made the **one-time** commitment to the **one-day UP training**, which requires **8 hours of preparation prior to the training session**, you are qualified for all volunteer positions. Once trained you can elect to spend as little as **one hour per year** in the classroom.

The Volunteer Opportunities – Is it right for you?

1. **Facilitator:** *Biggest impact – biggest responsibility – minimal time commitment.* You are a change agent. Through Socratic interaction, **facilitators** challenge the students to think more critically about the UrbanPlan issues and the specific responsibilities of their “role” (finance, market, site, city goals & objectives, neighborhood interest group issues).

Effective facilitators have

- extensive development project experience
- the patience to question rather than advise or coach
- the time and willingness to learn the details of the UP “case”

Facilitators visit the classroom twice during the 15 hours of the program; however, you only need to commit for one of the two visits. Classes are **45 – 90** minutes long depending on the school. The facilitator should work with one team for the entire class. Typically, you will spend approximately 35 to 60 minutes with each team. (More at the university level)

2. **City Council Member:** *Big responsibility-slightly longer time commitment.* You are the final “accountability and reality check” for the development teams. The 4 person city council hears student presentations, challenges their proposals as in an actual city council hearing, and awards the development contract to the winning team. Council ensures that the proposals are responsive to the RFP, grounded in the facts of the UP case, and consistent with reality.

The most effective city council members

- have development project experience
- have presented to city councils, planning commissions, etc
- assume and maintain the “city council member” role and do not lapse into “academic advisor,” “kindly adult,” “design charrette jury” behavior.
- the time and willingness to learn the details of the UP “case”

The length of a City Council session depends on the number of student teams presenting (typically 4-6 teams in a class) and ranges from approximately **2 ½ to 4** hours.

3. **Guest Speaker/Presenter:** *Visits class at teacher’s option depending on teachers goals and class time. Teachers select the discussion topic in collaboration with UP staff/member. Training implication- Requires adding 30 minutes to standard volunteer training.*

A presenter is not a talking head or lecturer. Presenters visit the classroom after the students have completed their first development scenario and first facilitation session. Therefore, when you visit, the students are “junior developers.” You will create an **interactive** session with the students on an aspect of their work that relates to the issues and decisions the students are struggling with in UrbanPlan. Topics can range from how to make an effective presentation to a client, working with neighborhood groups, a development project of yours, raising capital, affordable housing, etc.

The most effective presenters

- consistently draw students into the discussion based on the UP case
- avoid real estate/technical jargon
- have the time and willingness to learn major issues of the UP case

A presenter session will last for most of one class period, 35-50 minutes.

Thank you again for your interest in UrbanPlan. Questions? Contact Marisita Jarvis at marisita.jarvis@uli.org