

Tamara White

Principal – Elevate Community Planning; Managing Director – Small Housing BC

What is or was your ULI involvement and what motivated you to volunteer for UrbanPlan?

I volunteer for UrbanPlan because I see the importance of cultivating a new generation of citizens who recognize the tradeoffs within urban growth and development, and the delicate balance of designing a project that's both profitable and socially beneficial. Among the students, I see future YIMBY advocates, development professionals, and politicians, and I'm assured that my time is well spent.

What has been a memorable part of your experience volunteering for UrbanPlan?

Witnessing the "aha" moments of small groups of students experimenting with different development approaches and gaining new insights is a memorable and gratifying experience that's core to volunteering with UrbanPlan

How does being a volunteer/member affect your understanding of ULI's work and impact?

I think this is an important line of work for ULI to engage in – stimulating local teens' interest and involvement in urban development at a critical age in their own development and career exploration. It empowers youth to speak to urban issues and perhaps get more involved in charting the path of their cities and communities.

What is your approach to volunteering and connecting with young people?

Each group is different, so it's important to sense what their interests and skills are, adapt my facilitation style, and encourage them to explore the content from their own lens. I generally try to make the scenarios as relatable as possible to the realities of local youth, so they can connect with the content. Some of the students really get into the roles they've been assigned, developing full personas and dialing up their marketing schticks. Others dive deep into the proformas. It's always fun to see the different approaches they take.

What have you learned about yourself or from students through volunteering and being involved with ULI/UrbanPlan?

It's an amusing time warp to walk through the postered halls and past the lockers, remembering that pivotal time in my own life and the influences that steered me on my intellectual and professional journey. It's inspiring to engage with young people who are already conscientious of social and environmental issues, and are eager to apply these values to their studies and their involvement with their community. It gives me great hope.

What do you see for the future of UrbanPlan?

The program is very well designed, so it's easy for urban professionals to jump right in with all of the materials and resources they need. I hope to see the program expand with more volunteers, and reach an even greater audience.