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How did you find your way into the industry? I actually studied landscape architecture in college, but never had the same enthusiasm as my classmates. I did however enjoy looking at the bigger picture, and understanding how different types of land uses work together to create the fabric of a project. I was fortunate enough to have a college friend whose mom works on the operations side at William Hezmalhalch Architects (WHA) - the firm I work for now. She knew the company was looking for a marketing intern the summer I was graduating from college, and asked if I would be interested. That got my foot in the door - I quickly began dividing my time between marketing and admin work. About six months after dividing my time between marketing and admin, I began interning in planning department too. When the opportunity opened up for me to transition full time into planning, I took it!

What advice would you give to an emerging young leader just starting their professional career? I would say to find your passion and continue to build on it. Never stop learning or asking questions - it can only help create a better foundation. Continue to push yourself to be the best you can be, try new things and keep growing. Get involved in groups or organizations like ULI to give yourself the opportunity to meet new people and be introduced to new topics and ideas.

What traits do you think define a successful leader? I think a successful leader is someone who can work with others, and shows passion and integrity for what they do. They can see the big picture for each project and understand the importance of utilizing each person's strengths.

What is your current job and what types of projects are you working on now? As a planner at WHA, I focus primarily on infill development. These sites can usually range anywhere from 1 to 50 acres. My primary work finds me coordinating with landscape architects, civil engineers, developers, and cities to prepare entitlement packages. With new projects, I work with the clients to meet their target yield and market with the types of homes I plot. Finally, with most projects, I work with designers and architects in our office to make ensure the buildings fit on the site. (As we go through the design process, the buildings inevitably grow a few inches as they make tweaks to the floorplans.) Right now, I am working on a 157 homes site in Glendora, a 38 homes site in San Dimas, a 81 homes site in Santa Ana, a 800 homes site in Fullerton, and 155 homes site in Rancho Cucamonga to name a few. These projects all offer different housing types including high density 3-story townhomes, detached single family motorcourt cluster homes, and small lot conventional homes.

What do you find most challenging about your profession on a day-to-day basis? When a client brings you a new infill site, it is usually irregularly shaped, and when you're really lucky, its a triangle to boot. It is not the most helpful when you are trying to achieve a high density on the site, and have square buildings, need space for roads, parking, and open space. Irregular shapes provide an opportunity for a creative solution... really creative at times... that creates a great community environment while respecting the livability needs of the future residents.

What are you looking for in terms of career development - OR In what areas would you like to professionally develop further? While it is hard to say where the future will lead me, I am in a field that I am passionate about, and right now, could not imagine doing anything else. I hope to continue learning, taking on challenging projects, and developing my project management and presentation skills.

Describe a situation that was a great learning experience. The day to day work at WHA can be hectic at times, with multiple projects requiring attention and all of them needing it right now. There was one time in particular that I was rushing to get out a few rough site plan adjustment alternatives. I explained the differences in an email, however I did not fully check the call outs and stats on the plans. When the client reviewed these alternative site plans, there was doubt over the accuracy of it all. I knew the drawing themselves were correct, but the called out information was not. This experience made me realize that no matter how crunched you are to get work out, it is important to slow down, double check things, and create quality work.

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How do you deal with stress at work? I have to say that I am lucky enough to work with people I genuinely enjoy spending time with. Because of this, whenever I am stressed out, I can reliably turn to one of them or go into one of my bosses' offices to just vent and let it out. Accordingly, they take it all in, give me some "third party" advice about how to approach whatever the problem is, and provide me with a good laugh. On the days where we are all stressed though, we just stop what we are doing and turn our team area into a yoga studio for 10 minutes.