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How did you find your way into the industry?

As an undergraduate, I majored in Anthropology and discovered shortly after that career prospects were limited in the field. I bounced around a number of internships and found myself drawn to a career in public service because I wanted to make a meaningful difference in my community. I landed a Planning internship with the City of Mission Viejo, and while I knew very little about city planning, I enjoyed the high level of interaction between city planners and the public. Some residents have never visited City Hall, and creating a positive experience for them can completely change their outlook towards local government. I was especially intrigued by the role the built environment plays in creating memorable spaces.

What advice would you give to an emerging young leader just starting their professional career?

Don't be afraid to explore, take risks, and ask questions! To be successful in your field, you need to be passionate about your work, so take the time to find the right position or company to carve out your niche. Your colleagues and peers are also an incredible resource; fostering relationships with others throughout your organization and from different industries will expand your knowledge and help you stand out from the rest!

What traits do you think define a successful leader?

The most effective leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and enable their team members to reach their highest potential. They are humble, stick to their principles, have a good sense of humor, and are not afraid to stand up for their colleagues. Successful leaders are visionary, proactive, and never accept "business as usual."

What is your current job and what types of projects are you working on now?

As a planner in the City of Irvine's Community Development Department, I am assigned to the Project Entitlement Division and serve as the Project Manager for a wide variety of discretionary planning applications. In this role, I evaluate projects for consistency with the Irvine General Plan and Zoning

Code, coordinate review with multiple City departments, and prepare staff reports and present recommendations to the Planning Commission and other approval bodies. Currently, I am working on the implementation of the recently-approved Concordia University expansion, which includes traffic mitigation measures such as monitoring of their special events and maximum daily trip cap.

What do you find most challenging about your profession on a day-to-day basis?

The most challenging aspect of the public sector is matching community expectations with available resources in the time desired. Sometimes members of the public request things that are outside of the City's control, or it represents only a small margin of the population. As a city planner, it is especially difficult balancing the diverse, and often conflicting, interests of the business and development community with the general public.

What are you looking for in terms of career development - OR In what areas would you like to professionally develop further?

Land use and development issues are becoming increasingly more complex. Overcoming these challenges requires active collaboration between the public and private sectors. To that end, I am trying to learn as much about development and real estate to become a more well-rounded and effective planner. Ultimately, I hope to further my career into city management and work alongside the private sector to build attractive, sustainable, and economically viable communities of lasting value. ULI has played an important role in my career development by helping grow my expertise and professional network.

Describe a situation that was a great learning experience.

Although not directly related to work, my time serving on a previous employer's "party planning committee" was a great learning experience. I was a new employee and my boss volunteered me for the committee, which included staff from every department at different career levels and walks of life. This was truly a test of personality management. For example, even the simplest tasks, such as choosing a game to play at the Halloween party, became hour-long debates. This experience taught me patience, open-mindedness, and how to mediate differing viewpoints and build a consensus.

How do you deal with stress at work?

I've found the best way to tackle a large project is by breaking it up into bite-sized and more manageable tasks. I love making "to-do" lists and nothing beats the satisfaction of crossing tasks off my list. Aside from that, a good Spotify playlist, a hearty laugh with a co-worker, and junk food gets me through the most stressful days!