

Q&A WITH Julia Bahen



THIS IS JULIA



SO IS THIS, ON MOUNT KILIMANJARO!

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE COMMUNITY PLANNING?

I've always had an interest in housing and homelessness, in part, due to my dad's legal work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. But, it wasn't until I completed a field study semester that this interest transformed into a desire to study planning. In my third year at McGill, I spent the winter semester in East Africa as a participant of the Canadian Field Studies in Africa program.

This 3-month program was an amazing experience that provided many opportunities to interact with urban and rural communities across Kenya and Tanzania. These experiences led me to apply to study planning, and at grad school, I focussed my research on housing and homelessness, but my interests remain wide-reaching. Planning also appeals to me because of its flexibility and the diversity of subject matter.

WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS ARE YOU MOST EXCITED TO WORK ON?

I am most excited about projects that need a little bit of everything – research, community engagement, and policy development. I am really enthusiastic about working on the redevelopment of existing social housing. This can be traumatic for existing residents, and ongoing engagement and support are critical to success.

IS THERE A PROJECT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF? WHY?

My first project at CitySpaces! We led the engagement process for Central Saanich's Residential Infill and Densification Study. I worked with graphic design staff to prepare display boards for community consultation. This was a challenging, and rewarding exercise, as I summarized complex policies and regulations into informative, and visually appealing materials. This project was especially pertinent as many BC municipalities have limited opportunities for greenfield development, and there is growing demand for more density in areas close to transit and services.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE PLANNERS PURSUING THEIR MCIP DESIGNATION?

Be patient! It can feel like a very long process, and the paperwork is quite daunting, but it is so rewarding to finally receive the designation. Although arduous, the log book is a great opportunity to reflect on projects, work completed, and key takeaways.