2022

Whatcom Planning and Develpment Services Planning Intern

Abbas Theophilus
Western Washington University

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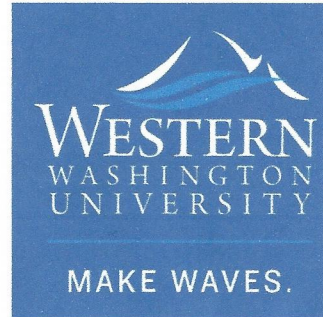# COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

MAKE WAVES.

Internship Title: Long Range Planning Intern

Organization Worked For: Whatcom County Planning & Development Services

Student Name: Abbas Theophilus

Internship Dates: 7/16/22   9/15/22
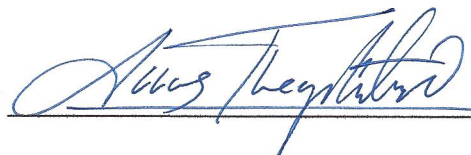
Faculty Advisor Name Ed Weber

Department UEPP

STUDENT SIGNATURE *[signature]*

DATE: 6/3/23

Abbas Theophilus
Internship Report

Internship with the Whatcom County Planning & Development Services

Throughout the Summer of 2022, from July to mid-September, I interned with the Whatcom County Planning & Development Services offices under the guidance of long range planner, Matt Aamot. The internship required me to complete both "educational" tasks and "work" tasks. Through my internship I not only learned the soft skills of a working planning office, but the relationship between the planner and the work structure of a public office, the daily pattern of action as to where tasks come from and who guides their execution, how specialized planners coordinate their insights, how the tasks and powers of the planner are delineated by state and federal decisions, and how the county planner can work with city planners in making overarching visions and goals.

In the office, my educational tasks consisted in reading memorandums and reports, responding in writing to a series of questions on the readings posed by Mr. Aamot, and engaging in weekly discussions around topics of interest to planners. These weekly discussions on various relevant planning subjects were followed up by reviewing a complementary resource or document.

Work tasks, while clearly also educational, directly benefited the Planning Office. These tasks included updating spreadsheets with data of home prices and lot sizes in multiple sets of two different housing developments in relatively close proximity to one another to provide useful data as to how increased density affects the price of individual home sites. Other work tasks included creating electronic inventories of physical water and sewage system files, and a complete index of mentions of the words "multi family," "duplex" and related terms in the Whatcom County Zoning Code.

My coursework at university covers many elements of planning, particularly theory and approaches with some particular classes in platforms such as GIS and Sketchup. One way that my internship compliments my coursework is in providing a hand-on practice and outward expression to the theory discussed in class- enabling myself to better analyze and understand both the decisions and actions of the planner in action as well as enabling me to better analyze the day to day implications of types of planning theories such as technicist planning, social reform planning, and social justice planning. Additionally, through my analysis and completion of tasks related to growth management areas in Whatcom County I was able to understand how long range planners practically work to promote density and reduce sprawl, the negative effects of which classes such as Urban Patterns and History of Planning teach. My knowledge of how planners determine growth management areas and set density goals, how they review the

success of these areas in light of actual growth and infrastructure on a regular basis, helps me to begin to similarly apply this knowledge in practice and in the classrooms such as Western's year long Studio project at Lummi Nation. These insights also help me in contributing to seminars, my urban planning studio class discussions, projects, and planning discussions that involve coordination with the Washington State counties or the cities. My experience also helps me explain and encourage undergraduate students investigating the Urban Planning program at Western. My internship also required writing weekly memorandums and responses in condensed and direct emails, which prepared me for my technical writing class -which in turn will prepare me for entering a planning department as a planner.

       In conclusion, my internship with the Whatcom County Planning & Development Services offices grew my understanding around how planning theory and knowledge are applied and reflected on within the profession, and developed my capacity to engage effectively in urban planning endeavors.