

Donna Dean

Land Use Planner

Career Description

A land use planner develops plans for managing land resources to best meet the social, economic and environmental needs of a community or region.

Interview

You might say Donna Dean is a landscaper on a grand scale.

While some landscapers design yards and gardens, Donna builds long-range plans for an entire geographic region. Her broad training and experience in geography, environmental and soil science really helps with the wide range of issues she faces every day.

“A land use planner uses many different disciplines,” explains Donna, from her office in Trail. “The only part I didn’t know much about was the legislative process and you can learn that on the job.”

Much of Donna’s work involves preparing and updating Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws. Her challenge is to create an overall plan that balances the social, economic and environmental needs of the region. As a result, Donna often looks at land use issues from several perspectives and tries to help people reach agreement.

“I answer a lot of questions from landowners and the general public about what they are permitted to do with their land,” she says. “I’m always talking with other planners to share ideas and see how they are handling certain applications.”

Donna estimates about 25 per cent of the projects she deals with include an agricultural component. “Agriculture is a big part of the landscape,” she remarks, “but in my job you have to think holistically – you can’t separate out any one part. It’s a system and it all has to fit together.”

Strong analytical and communication skills and the ability to read maps and follow “threads of information” are essential skills for a planner, says Donna. “Soil science is also very useful since soil is the basis upon which ecosystems are formed.

“I really enjoy working with people to find solutions,” she concludes. “I think people appreciate knowing that there is a vision and a plan for their land.”

Key Quotes

“I like the fact that land use planning draws on so many disciplines. It challenges me to look at a situation from different perspectives.”

“I look at many different issues as a land use planner, one of which is to ensure our agricultural land remains productive for future generations.”

Ask Donna: How do you prepare for a career as a land use planner?

“Take a variety of courses so you have a broad perspective. Geography is very useful, especially for map reading, and good writing skills are critical. Soil science is also very useful since soil is the basis upon which ecosystems are formed. Also, take note of the land use issues in your area and start participating in the process.”

Primary Location

- All regions

Interests/Skills

- Fact finding and analysis
- Logical approach to problem solving
- Concern for community
- Map reading and interpretation
- Oral and written communication

Suggested Qualifications

- Degree in Land Use Planning, Natural Resource Sciences or a related discipline and relevant work experience. May also require professional membership in the Planning Institute of British Columbia.

Education and Training Options

- British Columbia Institute of Technology, Burnaby
- Langara College, Vancouver
- Northern Lights College, Fort St. John
- Northwest Community College, Hazelton
- Selkirk College, Castlegar
- Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops
- University of British Columbia, Vancouver
- University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George

Related High School Subjects

- Geography
- English
- Social Studies

Related Careers

- Land Agent
- Environmental Consultant
- Conservation Officer
- Policy Analyst

Did you know?

- 94% of British Columbia’s natural resources are publicly owned (Source: BC Sustainable Resource Management)