Baljot Jagdev

Baljot Jagdev, 22, worked in the Toronto office of Urbantypology for 14 months, from May 2023 to June 2024.

What did you do to find the placement?

I was fortunate to receive a referral from one of my third-year professors, who recommended the office to me. Additionally, a peer of mine was already working there and put in a good word for me. This combination of support helped me secure the position.

How did you choose where to go?

This co-op placement was the best opportunity I received that aligned with my degree focus in urbanism. Working at a small urban design office allowed me to directly engage with urban design on a practical level, which felt like a natural extension of my studies.

What exactly did you do in the office?

I took on multiple roles, primarily as an urban design intern. My tasks included drafting subdivision plans, creating various visual deliverables, and conducting market research. The range of responsibilities allowed me to build skills across different aspects of urban design, from technical drafting to creative presentation.

What was it like?

It was a great experience overall. Working in a small office created an intimate environment that encouraged collaboration and personal growth. I felt like an integral part of the team, which made the experience even more rewarding.

What specifically did you learn?

I gained proficiency in AutoCAD, a tool that's essential in the field. Beyond software skills, I learned the intricacies of urban design and how to work effectively with clients, both in terms of understanding their needs and presenting solutions. Additionally, I developed skills in teamwork and independent work, taking on responsibilities that required respect, drive, and discipline.

What did you gain from the experience?

I gained extensive real-world knowledge in urban design and landscape architecture, learning

more about how designs are implemented in real communities. This experience helped me understand how design must to address both client and community needs.

What did you bring to the job?

I brought ambition, a strong willingness to learn, and a self-sufficient approach. My natural drive helped me adapt quickly to the work environment and tackle challenges with confidence.

What was the most fun?

The most enjoyable part of the job was working on master-planned projects. I was able to create deliverables for these large-scale projects and was given the freedom to explore creative ways to present the work. This creative freedom was both exciting and rewarding.

What was the least fun?

Overall, I enjoyed the experience, but occasionally the long stretches between client communications could be frustrating. Waiting on responses sometimes slowed down project momentum.

What surprised you?

I was surprised by how self-sufficient I became. The role required a level of independence I hadn't experienced before, and it helped me realize how much I could accomplish on my own with the right mindset and resources.

What's the biggest thing you learned that you didn't know going in?

I learned the real-world application of design, especially how to balance developer interests with community impact. The experience taught me how to create designs that are functional and attractive to developers while also serving a greater purpose for the community.

In what way were you transformed?

I emerged from the experience as a much more self-sufficient and confident urban designer. I also developed a greater awareness of how design choices affect the people and communities that use these spaces. This understanding deepened my appreciation for the role of urban design.

What's an anecdote that encapsulates the experience?

One day, we were working on a tight deadline for a master-planned project, and I was tasked with delivering a set of visuals. The whole team pitched in, each person adding their own touch. Problem-solving as a team under pressure really encapsulated the collaborative spirit of the office and showed me how effective teamwork can be.

Have your feelings or ambitions for architecture changed as a result?

Yes and no. While the job focused more on the urban design scale, the experience reminded me of how important architecture is within urbanism. I realized that my true passion lies in the intersection of the two, and I hope to balance both fields in my future career rather than treat them as separate.

How do you feel returning to school after co-op?

At first, returning to school was a bit overwhelming because I no longer had the set work schedule I had grown accustomed to over the past year. However, I quickly adjusted to the academic environment, and I feel motivated by the new perspectives I gained.

What advice would you give students thinking about doing co-op?

If you have the chance to pursue a good opportunity, go for it. Real-world experience offers a different kind of knowledge that can't be learned in the classroom, and it will enhance your perspective as a designer.