

Tyler Mekus

Personal Statement

As an individual who grew up in Western New York and has seen the beauty and wonder of this area, the field of planning has opened my eyes on the unlimited potential of this region. Upstate New York has been home to my family for over 200 years since my ancestors were some of the original settlers to Chautauqua County and the Southern-Tier in the early 1800's. My ancestors and family members have held positions from farmers to factory presidents, and steel workers to salon owners, all while helping build the region we now know as Western New York. My family has instilled in me a sense of pride in for Western New York, and the importance of helping give back to a community and region that has been so generous to us over time. As this region has fallen on hard times recently with the loss of jobs and population, I have seen friends and family move away, and cities begin to deteriorate as people leave for better opportunities and a brighter future. The opportunity to bring positive change and influence to Western New York by my actions has been opened through career aspirations in Urban and Regional Planning.

As someone that was always concerned with the physical environment and development issues facing my hometown and region, the field of planning was a natural fit for myself. Often I was left discouraged by the loss of population and urban decline, while farmland and rural areas were facing growing development pressure. Urban and regional planning opened my eyes to a world

that is conscious of their impact on the environment, and most importantly how our communities and cities developed over time. The University at Buffalo School of Urban and Regional Planning has been a godsend for myself, as I have been able to study and work in my home region, while understanding the disparities and conflicts that exist in Western New York. Through the University at Buffalo I have been able to work hands on in the city and region with politicians and planners that help shape Western New York. More specifically I have been able to use the skills and traits I have gained from my time at UB to acquire internships in my home town and county. The educational and real world experience I have gained since entering the academic world of planning has allowed myself to not only bring positive change, but also help myself on a path to finding a career in Western New York where I can begin to see my ideas and plans come to fruition over time.

After growing up in a small city that was faced with the loss of industry and well paying jobs over much of the last forty years, the importance of economic development and planning that creates attractive communities to business and development began to hit home. As many of the economic and social disparities that exist in Western New York can be credited to the decline of the economy and business, the importance of creating environments that encourage development and growth became an important factor in my view of planning. With urban decay and population loss causing a strain on all aspects of life in Western New York, planning must be utilized as a tool that can help revive our central cities and create an overall stronger region. With a career in urban and

regional planning I look to bring an economic friendly mindset that caters to business, but also looks to restore our urban centers while controlling sprawling development.

The development and well being of our region has always concerned myself to a point where I have sought a career in helping bring positive change and viewpoints to the growth of Western New York. I hope to use my planning education from the University at Buffalo as a tool to create a renaissance in Western New York, and help build this region as my family and ancestors once did. With this knowledge I hope to embark on a career that will help create an innovative regional economy that is not only environmentally and financially sustainable, but also helps retain our population and attract the best and brightest. The potential that this region and its residents contain is limitless, and it is within our ability to help bring change through tools of planning and redevelopment that will make this area attractive to business and developers from across the nation. As I will soon be a graduate entering the workforce of Western New York, I hope to find myself in a position in the near future where I can use my knowledge and skills to help bring change and a transformation to this region I call home.