

Curriculum Vitae

Zahra Jaffer, RPP, MCIP

Program: PhD in Urban and Regional Planning

SUMMARY

Planning consultant with a long-standing interest in environmental science, sustainability, and urban development affairs with cross-cultural experience, having lived in Kenya, the UAE and Canada. My core planning skill set includes leadership and project management in the areas of planning policy, public engagement, climate change adaptation, environmental assessment, urban design, and application of green building best practices. I have worked in the private and NGO sectors, and can communicate fluently in English, Kiswahili, Hindi and Gujarati along with basic French.

EDUCATION

University of Waterloo – Waterloo, ON - Sept 2011 – July 2013

Master of Environmental Studies (MES) in Planning.

Thesis Topic: *From Formulation to Implementation: Investigating the Environmental Policy Process in Nairobi, Kenya.*

University of Toronto at Scarborough – Toronto, ON - Sept 2006 – Aug 2010

Honors BSc. (Specialist), Environmental Biology - Co-op (With Distinction)

CERTIFICATIONS

St. John's Ambulance, Kitchener - November 2024

Certified in First Aid and CPR (Emergency)

Mental Health Commission of Canada - June 2023

Certified in Mental Health First Aid

Thrivance Group- May 2022

Ethics of Community Engagement

Thrivance Group - May 2022

Dignity Institute Certificate

Estidama Pearl Rating System – Abu Dhabi, UAE - July 2011

Certified Pearl Qualified Professional in Buildings and Community Rating Systems

Det Norske Veritas (DNV) Training – Dubai, UAE - November 2010

Certified ISO 14001 Lead Auditor

AFFILIATIONS/ASSOCIATIONS

Ontario Professional Planners Institute

- Full Member
- Planning Knowledge Exchange Committee – Southwest District Representative (2020 – Present)
- Conference Organizing Committee Member and submissions juror (2020 – 2024)
- Opportunity Scholarship Review Panelist (2023)

International Association for Public Participation

- Great Lakes Chapter Volunteer/Training Coordinator (2024-2025)
- Great Lakes Chapter Executive Committee Member (2020-2024)

WORK EXPERIENCE

Dillon Consulting Limited – *Kitchener, ON*

May 2014 – Present

Planner, Associate (2019-Present)

Technical Group Strategist, Community Planning & Urban Design National Practice (2020-2025)

- Planner and engagement specialist leading project work and team development for close to 200 projects in the government and private sectors, leading service delivery for award winning projects.
- Project manager for over 20 projects for government sector clients across Ontario, with a focus on land use planning policy, climate change adaptation, housing, public engagement, and social equity analysis.
- Technical Group Strategist for the Community Planning and Urban Design National Practice since 2020, leading the professional development, external and internal profile, and programming for a community of practice consisting of over 70 Dillon staff across Canada.
- Highly experienced in service delivery and sales, serving as lead proposal author for successful submissions to build the community planning and engagement services practice for Southwest Ontario.
- Client Account Manager for the Region of Waterloo, overseeing proposals and client outreach for the client portfolio with the firm and responsible for advancing client growth and service initiatives.
- Advisor and mentor to junior staff, responsible for their professional development as they work through the Early Career Development program at Dillon.
- Built profile and community connections representing Dillon at Provincial conferences and professional networking and industry events.

School of Planning, University of Waterloo – *Waterloo, ON*

Sept 2011 – Nov 2012

Research Assistant

- Provided chapter-editing support for material authored by an Academic Advisor, in addition to assisting in the development of book proposals and associated research.
- Conducted interviews and secondary research in collaboration with Academic Advisor in the study of knowledge transfer processes related to planning practice from Canada to cities in the Middle East.
- Co-authored articles for submission to peer-review Journals, and presented at the Conference of the Canadian Association of Geographers and Association of Canadian University Planning Programs (2012).

WSP Energy & Environment (Middle East) – *Dubai, UAE*

Nov 2010 – Aug 2011

Assistant Consultant

- Interim project manager for the Estidama Training Program, designed to provide orientation training to practitioners working with the Estidama Pearl Rating Scheme (a set of sustainable

- building regulations for construction projects in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, similar to LEED).
- Provided research, report writing, project proposal development assistance, and administrative support to the Sustainability, Environmental Planning and Environmental Protection teams.
- Attained certification in the Estidama Pearl Building and Communities Rating Systems, which applies sustainable planning and construction regulations to new projects in the Abu Dhabi Emirate.
- Worked on development projects for clients as an Estidama Pearl Qualified Professional (PQP), providing guidance and consultation on the implementation of sustainability-oriented regulations.
- Developed promotional materials for client information brochures on regional planning regulations and WSP services.
- Participated in energy, waste and water site auditing with corresponding report compilation for a local high school.

Sustainability Office, University of Toronto at Scarborough

May 2009 – April 2010

- Sustainability Assistant
- Worked under the Manager of Health & Safety, Sustainability at the University of Toronto at Scarborough as the outreach coordinator for all Sustainability campus events and projects.
- Co-ordinated, organized, and led activities for recruited volunteers and work-study students on campus, to ensure the smooth execution of events.
- Designed materials and carried out promotional campaigns for projects and events that the Office organized and collaborated on.
- Maintained the Sustainability Office website and social networking accounts, to encourage increased student participation in environmental events and initiatives on campus.
- Successfully established collaboration between the Sustainability Office and various University Departments, to create and lead environmental and development-related events for the campus.
- Created presentations and wrote reports on Department activities, as well as representing the Office at community outreach events.

Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) – Dubai, UAE

Jan 2008 – May 2008

Environmental Projects Co-op Intern

- Undertook tasks to facilitate the organization of various institutional programs including recycling campaigns, workshops and conferences.
- Administered and authored a report on a survey to assess member participation in EEG waste management programs, in addition to administration of surveys designed to collect feedback on events organized by the EEG.
- Wrote lead articles for the bi-annual and monthly publications of the EEG, in addition to press releases to local newspapers for events hosted by the organization.
- Designed information brochures on the various recycling campaigns for paper, glass, cans, and plastic aimed at awareness raising for public distribution.
- Performed research for various projects, in addition to contributing toward the creation of presentations to be made by EEG representatives at conferences in the UAE.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE/ ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT

PLAN 313: Community Design Studio, University of Waterloo School of Planning

- Panelist – Final Reviews (2019, 2022, 2023)

PLAN 408/647: Urban Design Seminar, University of Waterloo School of Planning

- Guest Session Host (June 2019)

Futures Forum 2023 – Public Engagement & Technology, University of Waterloo School of Planning

- Panelist/Guest Networking Participant

Winter 2019 Leadership Series Speed-Mentoring Event, University of Waterloo Faculty of Environment

- Alumni Discussion Host

Karibu Homes, Nairobi, Kenya (2012-2014)

- Sustainability and social impact reporting consultant on the Karibu Homes project in Nairobi, Kenya, which seeks to offer sustainable and affordable housing options for ownership to lower income bracket buyers in Nairobi.
- Connected directors with local contacts to facilitate engagement with financial institutions to secure low-income mortgage offerings to potential buyers.

Habitat for Humanity (2013-2014)

- Site build volunteer

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

- Communications/Branding Consultant (November 2013) – developed a unique identify for the Livelihoods, Employment, and Economic Development program of the PPAF, along with complementary communications materials.

UW Planning Bookshelf, School of Planning, University of Waterloo (2012-2013)

- Co-founder and editorial team member of the UW Planning Bookshelf, a student-based organization dedicated to acknowledging and sharing academic work to create a forum for peer discussion within the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo.

Design and Marketing Materials

- Designed the group identity logo and official T-Shirt for the 2011-2012 University of Waterloo Association of Graduate Planners
- Performed formatting and design layout for the WSPress, an internal organization publication of WSP Middle East (2010).

PUBLICATIONS

- **Olufemi, O. and Jaffer, Z. (2024).** An intersectional approach to the affordable housing crisis: A logic model framework. Y Magazine Issue #15, Ontario Professional Planners Institute.
- **Jaffer, Z. and Nooren, L. (2023).** A Systems-Thinking Approach: Extreme Heat, Climate Change, and Learning to do what Works. Y Magazine Issue #14, Ontario Professional Planners Institute and OPPI Planning Exchange Blog, September 11, 2023.
- **Jaffer, Z. (2017).** How to make friends and influence people. Ontario Planning Journal, March/April 2017, Vol.32 No.2, Ontario Professional Planners Institute.
- **Khirfan, L. and Jaffer, Z. (2014).** Sustainable Urbanism in Abu Dhabi: Transferring the Vancouver Model. Journal of Urban Affairs, 36(3), 482–502. <https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12050>
- **Khirfan, L., Momani, B., and Jaffer, Z. (2013).** Whose authority? Exporting Canadian urban planning expertise to Jordan and Abu Dhabi. Geoforum. Volume 50, pages 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2013.07.007>
- **Khirfan, L. and Jaffer, Z. (2012).** Canadian Planning Knowledge in the Middle East: Transferring Toronto to Amman and Vancouver to Abu Dhabi. The Canadian Journal of Urban Research, special issue on Canadian Planning and Policy, pages 1–28. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26193896>

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Canadian Institute of Planners Annual Conference

- 2025 (Accepted): The Role of Journey Mapping to Understand the Experience of Persons with Disabilities (Lead Presenter)

Ontario Professional Planners Institute Annual Conference

- 2022: Session 101: Welcome Panel for Students (Panelist)
- 2022: Session 301A: Doing what needs to be done: Centering climate justice in planning (Lead Presenter)
- 2022: Session 603: Ableism and Cities Past, Present, and Future (Organizer, Moderator)
- 2021: Session 501: Toronto MCR Engagement Process: Experience Exchange (Co-Presenter)
- 2019: Session 202B: A Risk-Based Approach to Climate Change Planning in the Town of Ajax (Presenter)

Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences: Congress 2012

- 2012: Importing Planning Expertise: Adapting the Vancouver Model in Abu Dhabi (Co-Presenter)

HONOURS AND AWARDS

University of Toronto

- 2006: University of Toronto at Scarborough Entrance Scholarship
- 2010: Honours BSc. In Environmental Biology (Co-op) - Graduation with Distinction

University of Waterloo

- 2011-2013: International Masters Student Award
- 2013: Graduate Scholarship
- 2014: Outstanding Achievement in Graduate Studies

Professional Awards

- 2018: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Award: Core Values Award for Visual Engagement

PROJECT EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The following is a selection of recent projects completed or underway in my current role.

Climate Change Specialist, New Official Plan, City of Kitchener

Supporting the development of locally specific climate change adaptation and mitigation policy recommendations to be integrated into the City's new Official Plan, looking ahead to 2051 and considering the outcomes of the climate risk and vulnerability assessments completed by the City. (Ongoing).

Engagement Lead, Secondary Plan and Community Planning Permit System, City of Peterborough, Ontario

Leading the design and delivery of community education and engagement around planning for growth in the City's Strategic Growth Areas. The project includes development of communications materials for public meetings, stakeholder workshops, Indigenous community engagement, and virtual engagement with the use of ArcGIS Storymaps, surveys, and video. (Ongoing).

Journey Mapping Lead, Hamilton Accessible Transit Services, City of Hamilton, Ontario

Led the journey mapping exercise to illuminate key considerations in the experiences of Accessible Transit Service users, through interviews and visual storytelling. The project includes working closely with Hamilton ATS Staff and advisory groups, in-depth interviews, and visual

communication of findings to inform recommendations to Council on improvements to transit services. *(Ongoing)*.

Project Manager/Engagement Specialist, Climate Change Educational Program, Ontario Professional Planners Institute, Toronto, Ontario

Leading the development of training material on climate change adaptation for professional planners in Ontario with the Climate Risk Institute. Specific works include needs analysis, summary of Adult Education principles, review of existing climate change based training programs, engaging an Advisory Committee, developing training materials including PowerPoint, case studies, interactive website, participant packages and trainer materials. 2022 *(completed)*.

Engagement Lead, Community Planning of Settlement Services, London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, City of London, Ontario

Leading consultations and engagement with key informant groups including settlement services organizations, policymakers, ethno-cultural and faith-based groups, and newcomers, towards developing a local model for immigration and settlement services in London and Middlesex. Approach includes innovative, bi-lingual facilitation techniques to build consensus and highlight key opportunities for improvement to support integration of newcomers to the community. 2023 *(completed)*.

Climate Change Specialist, Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), Ontario

Member of the project team working on the climate change risk framework to inform a climate change risk assessment for the Province, split into regions and Areas of Focus. 2022 *(completed)*.

Engagement Specialist and Project Evaluation Lead, Guelph-Wellington Our Food Future Initiative, City of Guelph and County of Wellington, Ontario

Leading the community-wide engagement and communications aspects of the Our Food Future Initiative, in partnership with Overlap and Associates and RallyRally. Guelph-Wellington is working to become Canada's first technology-enabled Circular Food Economy, reimagining an inclusive food-secure ecosystem. The project included development of an engagement plan with a broad range of innovative approaches to developing and executing an inclusive and accessible approach to engagement over five years, and is a winner of the Infrastructure Canada Smart Cities Challenge \$10 Million award. 2019 *(completed)*.

Work Program & Creative Director & Facilitator, Municipal Comprehensive Review, City of Toronto, Ontario

Provided City-wide Engagement and developed a Communication Strategy in Support of the City's Municipal Comprehensive Review. Specific works included stakeholder, and Indigenous engagement, social media campaign design, establishing and facilitating a Community Leaders Circle with grassroots and community services organizations, and creating a suite of digital engagement tools including surveys and a StoryMap (interactive multimedia website). 2023 *(completed)*.

Engagement Lead, Regional Official Plan Review, Region of Waterloo, Ontario

Led the engagement planning, facilitation, and design of materials for online and public meeting consultations for the a review of the Region's Official Plan through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process, to support alignment with Provincial policy direction, and undertake an in-depth study of current and future development in the Region as part of long-term planning. The project included a range of tactics to communicate planning and policy concepts in a visually compelling manner and engage a broad range of community members. 2022 *(completed)*.

Project Manager and Facilitator, Wastewater Climate Resiliency Planning and Workshops, Regional Water Services, Region of Waterloo, Ontario

Developed a framework for planning for climate change resiliency of wastewater services operations and facilities, including a hands-on planning and adaptation workshop with Region staff

to review the approach, confirm key risks and vulnerabilities, collaboratively develop actions, and identify responsible parties for the climate action plan. 2024 (completed).

Engagement Lead and Facilitator, Workshop: Integrating a Climate Change Lens for Growth Management, Session for Long Range Planners of Ontario (LORAPON), City of Hamilton, Ontario

Led the design and facilitation for a collaborative workshop to build capacity and explore solutions to integrating climate change considerations into high level growth management and planning policy assignments. 2020 (completed).

Engagement Specialist and Lead Coordinator, Biosolids Master Plan, Region of Waterloo, Ontario

Updated the Region's 2011 biosolids master plan with enhanced communication and public engagement. The project included an extensive community engagement process with a range of formal and informal activities, as well as online methods of integrating community input at each step of the decision-making process. The project was the winner of the 2018 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values Award for Visual Engagement (aka Dazzling Notice Award) at the IAP2 North America Conference. 2018 (completed).

Communications Designer and Project Coordinator, Biosolids Education Materials, Region of Waterloo, Ontario

Dillon developed educational materials to complement the biosolids strategy project. The materials involving a mixture of print and on-line materials for both schools and the general public to help explain the topic in a simplified, educational format. 2016 (completed).

Planner and Communications Designer, Sustainable Development Guidelines, Region of Peel, Ontario

Dillon developed regional sustainable development guidelines. The project included an in-depth background study of sustainable development initiatives in the region, a comparative evaluation of sustainability rating systems, development of a sustainable community framework and a communication document and policy implementation models. 2015 (completed).

Engagement Lead, Integrated Mobility Plan, City of Burlington, Ontario

Developed the City's first Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) to guide multimodal transportation networks, policies, and programs in the city to 2051. Specific works included creating an engagement plan, provided communications and engagement support, including coordinating the launch event, digital engagement through online surveys, and creating a StoryMap (interactive multimedia website). The project included the development of community-based personas to take a storytelling approach to illustrate the experience of residents with different mobility needs in Burlington today and into the future. 2023 (completed).

Planner and Engagement Designer, Climate Change Action Plan, Vulnerability Assessment and Community Risk Assessment, City of Mississauga, Ontario

Developed a set of priorities for the City in the fight against climate change. The project included raising public interest and awareness and engaging stakeholders to provide input for development of the CCAP. The plan included parks infrastructure vulnerability assessment; community climate change risk assessment; fleet greenhouse gas reduction study; Cleantech sector assessment; and an energy mapping study. The plan set targets and timelines and identified budgetary requirements. 2019 (completed).

Engagement Lead, Road Master Action Plan, County of Wellington, Ontario

Led the engagement design and implementation to collect feedback and input on the development of a high-level in-service road safety reviews, development and evaluation of alternatives, and identification of recommended improvements and associated capital costs for 22 intersections (both rural and urban) across the County. 2021 (completed).