FORWARD City Labs

Shaping Urban Communities, From Concept to Completion

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WeWork, 333 West San Carlos Street, San Jose, CA 95110

Urban Designer / Planner – Housing & Transit-Oriented Communities

Application Deadline: November 30th, 2026

Forward City Labs · San Jose, CA · Hybrid (about 40% office/site, 60% remote) · Full-time (part-time considered) · 4+ years experience in the USA.

Salary: $65,000-$90,000 per year, depending on experience, plus bonuses and benefits

A note from our founder

Forward City Labs is a lean, growing practice built on purpose, flexibility, and a deep commitment to community. As a boutique firm, every team member matters. If you want a place where your voice is heard, your life outside work is respected, and your growth is tied directly to the firm's success, we'd love to meet you.

- **Mutual trust and real flexibility.** We work on trust and output, not micromanagement or clock-watching. Need to step away for a school pickup, a doctor's appointment, or an errand outside meeting blocks? Structure your day around your life.
- **A front-row seat to practice growth.** You won't be one face in a 50-person studio. You'll work directly with the founder and see firsthand how projects are delivered, clients are won, and a business is run.

— Atisha Varshney, AICP, CEO & Founding Principal

About the role

We're looking for an entrepreneurial urban designer, planner, or development professional with 4+ years of experience. We aren't a traditional planning consultancy. We work at the intersection of housing development and Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC), and we prioritize real-world, implementable solutions over conceptual graphics.

Our work goes well beyond master planning. We drive developer RFPs on public land, execute TOD projects, support multi-site portfolio strategies, and craft actionable TOC implementation plans and policies- all rooted in good design and community input. As we grow, we're investing in our small-lot practice and stepping into developer roles ourselves.

This is an external-facing role for a mid-tier project manager planning professional who wants to combine design, real estate development, TOC & housing policy, and business development to deliver tangible community impact and on ground implementation.

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Who you are

You're growth-minded, adaptable, and eager to learn. You bring curiosity, humility, and a passion for collective learning in emerging fields.

- **Tech-savvy and innovative.** Technically strong and open to new workflows, including AI tools, digital communication platforms, and cloud collaboration.
- **A versatile communicator.** Comfortable facilitating a public workshop, pitching a prospective client, or collaborating remotely.
- **Entrepreneurial and collaborative.** You bring an ownership mindset and look for ways to improve project delivery and help the firm grow.

What you'll do

- **Housing policy and TOC strategy:** Draft housing policies and development strategies, and implement transit-oriented communities. Produce site layouts, massing models, zoning and state-overlay analysis, and high-level pro formas.
- **Community engagement:** Design and lead public workshops, stakeholder roundtables, and pop-up events, including some evening and weekend sessions.
- **Project management:** Coordinate multidisciplinary teams (engineers, developers, agency staff) and track budgets, schedules, and deliverables.
- **Business growth:** Support proposals, client networking, and in-house digital and web initiatives.

Qualifications

- **Experience:** 4+ years of professional urban design, planning, or development experience focused on housing, TOC, or community development.
- **Education:** Bachelor's or master's degree in urban planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, real estate development, or a related field.
- **Writing:** Strong writing skills, with experience producing policy memos, reports, proposals, community engagement materials, or plans for public and private clients.
- **California planning and housing law:** Working knowledge of California land use and housing law (e.g., CEQA, State Density Bonus Law, SB 35/SB 423, SB 79) and local entitlement processes.
- **Design tools:** Strong proficiency in Adobe Creative Cloud (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop), SketchUp or Rhino, and AutoCAD.
- **Office and collaboration tools:** Proficiency in Excel (including building pro formas) and PowerPoint or Google Slides; fluency with Google Workspace and cloud-based collaboration tools.
- **Technical aptitude:** Openness to AI workflows, data tools, or in-house web projects is a big plus.

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- **Travel:** Valid California driver's license and reliable transportation to project sites and community events.

Nice to have: ArcGIS / ArcGIS Pro; real estate pro forma experience; affordable housing finance (LIHTC, AHSC, HCD programs); rendering tools such as Lumion; AICP or progress toward it; Spanish or Mandarin.

Schedule and location

- **Hybrid:** about 40% in our San Jose office or at client and project sites, 60% remote. Candidates should be based in the Bay Area.
- **Flexibility:** High day-to-day autonomy around core team meetings, with flexibility to cover occasional evening and weekend community events.

Compensation and benefits

- **Base salary:** $65,000- $95,000 per year, depending on experience (pro-rated for part-time)
- **Incentive bonuses:** Bonuses for proposal wins and business development, plus performance bonuses for efficient, high-quality project delivery
- **Remote-work stipend:** Monthly allowance toward home internet, phone, and utilities
- **Professional growth:** $2,000/year for professional development and networking, plus two company retreats a year

Start Date: January 2027

How to apply

Ready to build housing and transit-oriented communities with us? Apply online with: (1) your resume; (2) a portfolio or work samples (PDF, 10 MB max); (3) a 2–5 page work sample, such as a memo, engagement links, report section, or proposal;

Apply here: https://forms.gle/ReTarev4VwZNKhKN6

Priority review begins [date]; the position is open until filled. We are [able / not able] to sponsor work visas for this role. Questions? Email info@forwardcitylabs.com.

Forward City Labs is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applicants of all backgrounds and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. We will consider qualified applicants with arrest and conviction records in accordance with the California Fair Chance Act. If you need a reasonable accommodation during the application process, email info@forwardcitylabs.com.