

Civil Service Form

Extraordinary or Superior Qualifications, Experience, Credentials

Appointing Authority Name: New Orleans City Planning Commission

Appointing Authority Department: City Planning Commission

Appointing Authority Phone Number: X7018, X7004

Appointing Authority E-mail: rdrivers@nola.gov; jenny.star@nola.gov

Employee Information

Name: Laura Bryan

Current Class: Principal City Planner 4305

Proposed Class: Assistant Planning Administrator 4306

Promotion or New Hire: Promotion

New Job Class: Assistant Planning Administrator

Job Posting and Appointment

Duration of job posting: Continuous

How the position was advertised: City Website

Date of appointment:

Type of appointment: Probationary

Detailed Position Description:

Administrative, professional and supervisory work directing and supervising planning surveys, investigations, studies and the preparation of planning recommendations for City Planning Commission; and related work as required.

Qualifications

1. How many applicants were on the eligible list?
2. How many of them possessed this extraordinary qualification?
3. Minimum qualifications exceeded and description of credentials (experience, education, certifications, etc.) that exceed the minimum qualifications:

Minimum Qualifications (from job announcement):

Four (4) years of professional city planning experience. One (1) year of this experience must have been in a responsible administrative or supervisory capacity.

AND

EITHER: A Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university in Architecture, Landscape Architecture or a closely related field.*

OR: A Master's Degree from an accredited college or university with at least twenty-four (24) semester hours of coursework in Urban and Regional Planning, Urban Design, Urban Studies or related coursework.

* Master's Degree transcript must be submitted to the Civil Service Department within two (2) weeks of filing your application.

Employee's qualification(s) that exceeds the minimum:

1. Over 11 years in the field of Urban Planning/Urban Studies, 8 of which have been with the City of New Orleans.
2. Handles challenging comprehensive text changes which are often high-profile and contentious and require coordination with various stakeholder groups, including many different City agencies, the City Council, and other members of the administration.
3. Serves as a primary staff member for transportation related initiatives.
4. Assists in the onboarding and training of new staff members.
5. Participates in public engagement and stakeholder meetings that include presentations to various groups, and coordinates closely with members of the public.
6. Fills in for the Planning Administrator when necessary by representing the team at the City Council, with internal staff, or other administrative departments and other stakeholders.
7. Supports the leadership team by providing sound, data-driven advice on numerous city planning policy related issues and topics.

Details:

The Assistant Planning Administrator position that Laura will fill is specifically geared towards overseeing the Master Plan Amendments, presenting comprehensive land-use items to City Council and completing higher-level comprehensive zoning assignments including overseeing major studies and supporting in the management of staff. The position will require the planner to work closely with the Planning Administrator who oversees the Comprehensive Division, the Planning Administrator in the Land Use Division, and the Director and Deputy Director of the City Planning Commission. Laura is one of few planners assigned high-level comprehensive text change reports. Laura's ability to manage larger studies and reports and her unique skillset in land use policy, specifically transportation an local and federal policy, make her extraordinarily qualified for the Assistant Planning Administrator position.

Laura has worked with the City of New Orleans for a total of 8 years, and 1.5 of which have been with City Planning Commission (CPC). For four of those years she served as Director of the Office of Transportation for Mayor Cantrell where she led Cantrell's transportation initiatives and coordinated with stakeholders. Laura developed the Mayor's 5 year Transportation Action Plan and led implementation amongst various internal departments and external entities. In her role directing the Office, she brokered the Bike Share agreement for the current Blue Bikes Program, facilitated the award and receipt of a \$5.4M FRA State of

Good Repair grant for improvements at Union Passenger Terminal, and sat on the board for the Regional Transit Authority throughout leadership changes, contractual changes, and the pandemic and recovery. This administrative experience brings institutional knowledge unique to City Hall and the Cantrell administration.

Prior to that position she worked as Land Use Director for Council District B under then Councilmember LaToya Cantrell. In that role Laura developed and implemented Cantrell's land use policy agenda, and oversaw all the City Planning Commission zoning dockets and requests that Council acted upon including the 2015 Master Plan Update.

Laura's exposure to these initiatives provides her with extraordinary experience for the Planning Administrator, Assistant position. Laura is prepared to coordinate publicly on behalf of the Commission with any stakeholder group, to develop and lead the implementation of city planning policy and strategy, and completes her work with a high-level of excellence in a timely and professional manner.

4. Description of how similar qualifications are not readily available in the labor market at a minimum entrance rate:

There are few people with experience in urban planning policy and initiatives at the local and federal level. Laura spent her early years working to deliver FEMA's Alternative Housing Pilot Program for Louisiana and for transportation projects under Federal Highway Administration which provided her with a federal perspective that is unique to New Orleans. Laura's local experience in the City Planning Commission, in City Council, and in the administration under Mayor Cantrell, provide her with a unique understanding of our system and makes her able to accomplish projects and tasks that others have difficulty with.

These qualifications are not readily available in the labor market at the minimum entrance rate, and increasing compensation for Laura will allow us to retain her in the role.

5. How are the duties of the position relevant to the advanced qualification?

The duties of the Comprehensive Planning Administrator, Assistant position require the individual to oversee Master Plan amendments, new policy initiatives within the department, assist and lead CPC studies and continue to work on general planning recommendations for the BZA, Land Use, and Comprehensive Sections.

Laura has demonstrated great aptitude for complicated zoning matters, professional and timely communication with colleagues and the public, and an ability to effectively handle an exceedingly large workload. She is intimately familiar with the processes required of this position and will continue to excel in the new role.

6. How will hiring this person at the rate specified below be a financial advantage to the City? Please Provide an objective financial analysis.

It takes years to fully understand the nuances of working at the City Planning Commission. New hires require a substantial amount of training, utilizing time of their colleagues to understand the processes imbedded into the job functions of a city planner. Laura's ability to lead and manage larger projects

independently and her institutional knowledge of existing CPC and City policy will allow her to perform this position with little supervision.

CPC struggles to locate and hire qualified candidates for all planner positions, including the Planning Administrator, Assistant position. Moreover, CPC struggles to retain its existing staff. After the pandemic many employees departed for higher-paying work found in other cities or in the private sector for similar roles with similar qualifications. The City Planning Commission is a continual stream of revenue for the city and the backbone to the City's economic development initiatives. Disruptions, including hiring of staff from outside the department, can affect this revenue stream by slowing down business.

The relatively small increase in pay requested would have negligible effect on the City but could be a financial advantage to the City by ensuring continued and smooth operations in the City Planning Commission department.

7. List other departmental employees in this classification. Do they also possess the exceeded qualification and is it job-related? Please attach copies of this form for people with the same or equivalent extraordinary qualifications.

Sabine Lebailleux also possesses the exceeded qualifications designation.

Rate granted (in steps; % must be in increments of 1.25):

Percentage in steps: 2\

Despite the ranking, I believe that Laura has significantly more experience than Valerie, and more importantly, significant more experience at the supervisory/managerial level, which is critical at this time.

Both Valerie and Laura have become Principal Planners over the last year – Valerie after a brief stint as a Senior City Planner, and Laura as a new hire. Both also have previous experience with the CPC – Valerie as a Senior City Planner, and Laura as a City Planner. Based on this alone, the two appear to be similarly qualified. However, it's the experience gained between the original and current tenures that separates Laura out as an exceptionally qualified candidate:

- After leaving the CPC, Laura took a position with then-Councilmember Latoya Cantrell as the Land Use Director for District B. In this capacity, she was the Councilmember's liaison with the CPC, applicants and constituents regarding all of the numerous land use and planning-related issues that came before the Council. If you are not familiar with the relationship between the CPC and the Council, one of the CPC's primary functions is to provide recommendations to the Council on land use matter. Accordingly, Laura was responsible for all land use matters coming from the CPC to the Councilmember. The role required her to have a significant understanding of not only the CPC regulations and procedures, but also a more direct understanding of Council processes and priorities. The experience gained in this role – first-hand knowledge about the Council, numerous connections made with constituents and the development community, and the ability to oversee and manage the hundreds of land use matters coming from the CPC to the Council – makes her exceptionally qualified for the role.
- From the beginning of Mayor Cantrell's first term in office until rejoining the CPC, Laura held the position of Director of the Mayor's Office of Transportation. One of Mayor Cantrell's priorities coming into office was to place more attention on transportation matters in the City. Specifically, Laura's role was to be the Administration's point person for all transportation-related activities in the City, including transit planning, bicycle infrastructure, streetscape improvements, public works, Transit-Oriented Development planning, federal funding, road safety, and more. Significantly, Laura's role was to collaborate and coordinate with all of the City's transportation partners: the US Department of Transportation, the La. Department of Transportation and Development, the Regional Planning Commission, the Regional Transit Authority, the Port of New Orleans, Bike Easy, as well as many others at the local, state, federal and international levels. Finally, as Director of the Office, Laura was responsible for recruiting, hiring, and managing a support staff. Every aspect of her job had a direct relationship with planning at the highest levels, and included significant interaction with the CPC staff. Again, the experiences gained in this role, and the relationships made, make her exceptionally qualified for the role.

This is in no way suggesting anything negative about Valerie, but her level of experience simply does not compare to Laura's. Her time away from the CPC was not at all related to land use and planning at the same level as Laura's, and she does not have similar supervisory and management experience. Finally, she does not have the important connections and relationships, or the goodwill in the planning/development community that Laura has, which will be such a valuable asset for the Department going forward.

As to the cost benefit of hiring Laura with an EQ increase, I believe we would be getting a bargain, given the level of experience Laura brings. The Assistant Planning Administrator (APA) position in the Comprehensive Planning Section is a senior-level supervisory position in our office, so her management

experience is important: I do not have to spend the time and effort training Laura to immediately step into the role. Given Valerie's relative lack of leadership experience, a significant amount of training and oversight would be required. Moreover, the APA plays an important role in our office, supporting the Planning Administrator by playing a lead role in the Section's activities. Currently, the Section is undergoing a revision of the Master Plan, and completing significant land use studies regarding Affordable Housing, Transit-Oriented Communities (TOC), and Short-Term Rentals (STRs). Laura has provided valuable leadership with the Master Plan and Housing Study, and has been the lead on TOC and STRs. In contrast, Valerie is playing a major role with the Master Plan, but as a recently-promoted Principal Planner, she has not yet developed the experience to immediately lead a land use study. She needs more time as a Principal Planner to develop that experience.

Another factor separating Laura out as an exceptional candidate is the fact that the Comprehensive Planning Section is currently undergoing a significant transition with the recent retirement of Paul Cramer, who was the Planning Administrator for that section for the last 15+ years. Because of her exceptional experience, Laura was my first choice to replace Paul; she was very interested in the position, but declined for personal reasons. Rachael Berg, who is the new Planning Administrator for the section, is obviously new at the position, and will require time to adjust to the responsibilities of leading a section for the first time. Having Laura's experience in the Assistant Planning Administrator position will be a much-needed resource for Rachael as she transitions into the role.

To summarize, Laura brings a significantly higher level of leadership and planning experience to the position at a critical transitional period for the Comprehensive Section. As wonderful as Valerie is, she cannot currently fill the role at a comparable level.

I hope this helps. Let me know if you need any additional information.

Thanks,

Bob
Robert D. Rivers
Executive Director
New Orleans City Planning Commission
Office of Business and External Services

From: Tia N. Harrison
Sent: Thursday, April 13, 2023 5:11 PM
To: Larry W. Massey Jr.
Cc: Sinead C. Daniell ; Robert D. Rivers
Subject: RE: Extraordinary Qualifications Form - Planning Administrator, Assistant

Good afternoon,

Valerie McMillan applied for the Planning Administrator, Assistant position and indicated that she would accept the position at the posted minimum. Ms. McMillan also ranked the same as Ms. Bryan. Why was Ms. Bryan chosen over Ms. McMillan and what are the cost benefits of hiring Ms. Bryan at the hire salary?

Tia