



darrencotton

urban planner • graphic designer • community organizer

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EDUCATION

May 2012 **University at Buffalo, State University of New York**
Master's in Urban Planning (M.U.P.)
Specialization in Urban Design

February 2010 **University at Buffalo, State University of New York**
Bachelor of Arts, International Studies
Bachelor of Arts, Linguistics
Minor in Political Science
Summa Cum Laude, University Honors Program

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

June 2015 – Present **University District Community Development Association - Buffalo, NY** / *Director of Community Development & Planning*

Plan, coordinate, implement, and monitor projects focused on housing rehabilitation, commercial corridor revitalization, and community capacity building in Buffalo's Northeast Communities. Developing new funding opportunities both internally for the organization and externally for community partners. Building coalitions and leverage resources among public, private, and nonprofit partners in the neighborhood. Creating original content and marketing materials around neighborhood redevelopment projects and events.

November 2012 – May 2015 **University at Buffalo Regional Institute - Buffalo, NY** / *Associate Planner*
Coordinated public, private, and non-profit stakeholder groups for the development of municipal and regional plans. Developed and implemented communication strategies through traditional and social media to further community engagement and participation. Utilized innovative digital and mobile technologies to incorporate traditionally marginalized populations in the planning process. Drafted professional reports, authored original content, and developed maps, infographics, and presentations to easily convey policy work to a wide variety of audiences.

2010– Present **Freelance Consulting - Buffalo, NY** / *Graphic Designer*
Developing branding and identity solutions for a niche market of community development and historic preservation-related firms and organizations. Designing logos, data visualizations, and marketing collateral across both print and digital applications, incorporating original photography, and optimizing materials and content for social media campaigns.

September 2010 – October 2012 **University at Buffalo Urban Design Project - Buffalo, NY** / *Graduate Assistant*
Worked with professional planners, designers, and architects in preparing, implementing, and managing development plans for various projects in the Buffalo-Niagara region. Coordinated public outreach and facilitated public participation through workshops, meetings, and design charrettes. Performed data and trend analysis to help inform public decision making. Designed and fabricated professional newsletters, posters, maps, graphs, and various visual aids to complement development plans and aid in community learning.

REPRESENTATIVE PROJECTS

- 2012 – May 2015** | **One Region Forward.** Communications, marketing, social media, public engagement, meeting facilitation, graphic design, and content creation for a regional plan for sustainable development. Federally funded through the Sustainable Communities partnership between HUD, EPA, and the DOT, One Region Forward seeks to improve the long term sustainability of the Buffalo Niagara region by taking a holistic approach to the interconnected issues of housing, transportation, employment, and the environment.
- 2012 – January 2015** | **Larkin District Master Plan Update.** Best practices research, auditing of original plan, urban design mapping, data visualizations, and layout design for a plan update that will guide future redevelopment in the Larkin District, a former industrial area of Buffalo, NY. The birth place of industrial in Buffalo, the Larkin District has begun to shift the development paradigm in Buffalo be focusing on historic preservation, adaptive reuse, and sustainability to transform a derelict industrial district into a vibrant mixed-use community.
- 2012 – 2014** | **Buffalo Brownfield Opportunity Areas.** Project manager for community engagement, public meeting facilitation, and communications strategy for three Step 2 Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Nomination studies awarded to the City of Buffalo. Funded by the New York State Department of State, The BOA Program provides communities with guidance, expertise and financial assistance, to complete revitalization and implementation strategies for neighborhoods or areas where contamination or perceived contamination has impeded investment and redevelopment.
- 2010 – 2015** | **Buffalo Green Code.** Communications, public engagement, and stakeholder outreach for the City of Buffalo's multi-year effort to overhaul its comprehensive land use plan and zoning ordinance. One of the few form-based codes in the country, the Green Code will guide the city's physical development over the next 20 year by building on communities' unique sense of place and creating vibrant, mixed-use, and walkable neighborhoods. (2010 - 2012)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2011 – Present** | **University Heights Tool Library - Buffalo, NY / Executive Director**
Developed, opened, and currently operate a non-profit tool lending library in the University Heights neighborhood of Buffalo. Responsible for day to day operations as well as long term strategic planning for the organization. Actively seeking out program partners and identify fundraising opportunities through public and private partnerships. Developing coalitions of community stakeholders to tackle quality of life issues throughout the University District. Managing the Tool Library's public relations and brand identity through print, digital, and social media. Designing annual reports and data visualizations to convey our impact in the community.
- 2009 – Present** | **University Heights Collaborative - Buffalo, NY / Board Member (Vice President)**
Providing a voice on how to tackle quality of life issues facing the University Heights through community action. Maintaining organizational website, email, and social media accounts to keep various community stakeholders engaged and informed. Helped successfully advocate for the investment of \$1.2 million in federal funds as part of the North Buffalo Rails to Trails project. Coordinating and facilitating volunteer opportunities in the community. Designing posters, logos, maps, and promotional materials to help rebrand the neighborhood.

RELEVANT SKILLS

Microsoft Office
Adobe Photoshop
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe InDesign
ArcGIS
Google Sketchup
Wordpress