As a little girl, Lauren Gillingham, BUPD ’18, was already thinking about a career in planning. She just doesn’t remember it.

Her dad does, though. He recalls his then 10-year-old daughter saying that city manager sounded like a “cool job.”

A Greenfield native, Gillingham spent two years at the residential high school Indiana Academy next to the Ball State campus. She became interested in design and architecture there, although civil engineering and pediatric cardiology were also considerations for further study. Two weeks in London on a field trip with her Academy classmates piqued her desire to learn more about transportation planning as she fell in love with the subway system.

Her mother, owner of Red Dog Realty in Greenfield, enjoyed reminding her daughter about property development issues while her dad, a futures planner at Hoosier Energy, talked about long-term economic growth.

As their daughter pondered her future, it was PLAN 100 with Prof. Scott Truex that sealed the deal: All of those long-time interests and family suggestions--well except for the pediatric cardiology rabbit trail--synthesized neatly into a career in planning.

“Lauren is a fun student to have in class,” says Truex. “Her enthusiasm for planning and zest for life affect everyone around her.”

Now in her junior year, spunky Gillingham serves as president of the Student Planning Association. “I felt like I could lend a lot to the organization,” she says. Rattling though the ambitious list of activities and fundraisers the group has undertaken, she adds quickly, “I have a really great exec board. We’re all really supportive of each other.”

A people person, Gillingham says she loves the cookouts and field trips in CAP as well as the common first-year program which she says gives the students great peer resources as they work on projects throughout their academic careers.

A favorite project has been the third-year studio project in the Kimbrough and Kirby neighborhoods where she found herself working on code enforcement issues. “I talked to so many people in the neighborhoods, and they told me some of my ideas would work and others wouldn’t, and that was really helpful. I really love planning for people and their daily lives.”