

Career Profile: Town/Regional Planner

Planners develop long- and short-term plans for using land for revitalisation and growth of urban and rural communities. They also advise local officials who have to resolve social, economic and environmental problems. They must be creative, sensitive, analytical and have a good strategic sense as they are expected to suggest viable alternatives to present settlement. The challenges in South Africa are complicated by the legacy of the past. There are demands for equity and rectification of the spatial and other imbalances of the past and at the same time improving inefficient and underperforming living environments. Heightened global environmental concerns add further complications to an already complex framework. It should come as no surprise that a planner needs a multidisciplinary perspective in approaching any project in this field.

Typical activities of a town/urban and regional planner include:

- identifying the best use of a community's land and resources for residential, commercial, institutional or recreational purposes
- investigating alternative public transportation systems
- protecting ecologically sensitive areas
- analysing traffic congestion problems and suggesting solutions
- addressing issues such as air pollution and coping with the effects of changing communities, whether growing or shrinking
- formulating plans for the construction of new school buildings or other infrastructure.
- keeping up-to-date with economic and legal issues involved in zoning codes, building codes, and environmental regulations and monitoring builders and developers to ensure that they abide by these codes
- using computers to record and analyse information and prepare reports and recommendations for various parties
- projecting programme costs and forecasting future trends in employment, housing or population with the aid of databases, spread sheets and analytical techniques.

Planners who work in large organizations may specialise in areas such as housing, demography, transportation, environmental and regulatory issues or economic development. In smaller organisations a planner needs to do various kinds of planning.

Education Requirements

National Senior Certificate (NSC)

For a career in town and regional planning students are advised to select English and Mathematics, and to add to this a selection from the *designated* subjects. These are subjects that are particularly suitable for tertiary study.

Bachelor Degree

Bachelor in Town/Urban and Regional Planning (BTRP) (4 years)

A four year degree programme that focuses on developing knowledge and skills for entry into careers in the field of town and regional planning

Offered at:

- [University of Pretoria](#)¹ (Department of Town and Regional Planning - Bachelor Town and Regional Planning (B TRP) 4 year professional qualification)
- [University of Venda](#)² (Environmental Urban and Regional Planning - BURP)
- [University of the Witwatersrand](#) ([School of Architecture and Planning](#)³ - BSc (URP)) 3 years + Honours 1 year (professional degree)

National Diploma / BTech

National Diploma in Town and Regional Planning (3 years)

Bachelor of Technology in Town and Regional Planning (1 year)

Offered at:

- [University of Johannesburg](#)⁴ (Department of Town and Regional Planning)

Possible Employers

- All tiers of government (national, provincial and local), e.g. Departments of Land Affairs, Housing, Local Government, municipalities
- Private town and regional planning firms
- Non-governmental organisations
- Property developers
- Companies and institutions not directly related to the field, e.g. Eskom, oil companies.

¹ <http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryId=3304&sub=0&parentid=1068&subid=1069&ipklookid=7>

² http://www.univen.ac.za/environmental_sciences/urban_courses.html

³ <http://web.wits.ac.za/academic/ebe/ArchPlan/>

⁴ <http://www.uj.ac.za/trp/Programmes/NationalDiplomaTownandRegionalPlanning/tabid/2156/Default.aspx>

Find out more

Find out more about careers in town and regional planning:

- Informative brochure from the [University of Venda](#)⁵.
- Useful website links provided on this [University of Pretoria](#)⁶ page for town and regional planning, including relevant government departments.
- [Design, Space and Place](#)⁷, SAPI's e-newsletter gives some idea of the work planners do.
- [South African Council for Planners \(SACPLAN\)](#)⁸. The Minister of Land Affairs appoints the SACPLAN Council in terms of the Planning Profession Act (Act 32 of 2002). The Council, in turn, regulates the planning profession by identifying planning professional work that only registered planners may undertake. It provides guidelines for planners seeking registration.
- The [Association of Consulting Town and Regional Planners](#)⁹ (SAACPP)
- The [South African Planning Institute](#)¹⁰ (SAPI)
- [MTO Town and Regional Planners](#)¹¹ is an independent consultancy.

⁵ http://www.univen.ac.za/environmental_sciences/docs/URP_Deapartmental_Brochure.pdf

⁶ <http://web.up.ac.za/default.asp?ipkCategoryID=3320&subid=3320&ipklookid=7>

⁷ <http://www.sapi.org.za/change/uploads/files/sapi1.doc>

⁸ <http://www.sacplan.org.za/Default.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.saacpp.org.za/default.asp?subid=16>

¹⁰ <http://www.sapi.org.za/>

¹¹ <http://www.mto-townplanners.co.za/index.asp?page=home>

Are you suited to this career?

This quick quiz can help you to identify whether you are suited for this career.

Quiz	YES	NO
Are you aware of the aspirations, frustrations and sometimes conflicting expectations of various groups?		
Are you committed to justice and human development?		
Are you creative?		
Are you interested in understanding issues from a number of different perspectives?		
Are you a good listener?		
Are detail and accuracy in your work important to you?		
Are you analytical in your approach to your work?		
Can you communicate well in speech and in writing?		
Do you work well with other people and communicate clearly with them?		
Are you able to handle stress and conflict constructively?		

If you have mainly yes answers it may be an indication that this is a career to consider.