

careers



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There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm.

WILLA SIBERT CATHER, AMERICAN AUTHOR

Drawing lines on the city map

A town planner provides ideas that can be built upon physically, finds Aruna Rathod

Architecture offers a balance between art and science, deductive logic and design. Urban planning appealed to Aparna Vedula and she is now a town planner with CIDCO. "Apart from the geographical aspect, this subject is inextricably woven into the economic, political and social systems of a given community/society/nation," says Vedula. After her B. Arch from Jadavpur University and Master of Urban Planning at IIT Kharagpur, Aparna joined her first job in Pondicherry in a private firm. "We were involved in planning of massive public sector townships planned around steel plants of Salem and Vishakhapatnam. "The sheer variety of work, from macro to micro planning is astounding. The magic of your decisions translating into a built-up environment on a massive scale of development, has kept me hooked," she says.



WHAT IS A TOWN PLANNER'S CAREER ALL ABOUT?

It involves comprehensive planning of an urban settlement, whatever may be the scale of it, in its contemporary context. This is not only the physical plan, i.e roads, electricity, water supply, schools hospitals etc. with engineering and social infrastructure. It is about day-to-day brass tacks, real-life implementation. It is also about, ensuring the social well being of residents, a conflict free ambience, harmonious distribution of resources, so that the main intentions of the plan are not washed away by the ambient social dynamics. When you enter the profession, you may concentrate more on the detailed physical planning aspects, later it is more of ambient policy formation, to facilitate better planning.

SKILLS REQUIRED TO BE A GOOD TOWN PLANNER.

Basic understanding of space, being able to relate easily to the ambient built-up environment
Understanding of scale, i.e. the difference between say a cluster of houses, a neighborhood, a settlement, a town, a city, a metropolis
Perception of the variation in the requirement of a community as it changes scale.
Perception of the systems approach, i.e., that all we see around us works within a set and subset of systems, nothing is isolated.
Basic computer skills to work in a digital environment.



HT FILE PHOTO

CLOCK WORK: Timeline of a day in the life of a town planner.

10-11 am: Check duties of the day, delegation of work
11-1 pm: Internal discussions and meetings
2-5 pm: Meetings with other departments, attending to visitors, site visits
5-7 pm: Review of the analysis/plans/ proposals that have come in, decisions on the same

HOW DO I GET THERE: EDUCATION PATH

Bachelors Degree in Architecture or Civil Engineering
Masters Degree in Town Planning

However, some institutes do offer Bachelors Degree in Planning. But most employers prefer a Masters in Town Planning

THE PAYOFF

Entry level
₹2.5-5 lakh pa
Middle level
₹6 - 9 lakh pa
Top level
₹15-24 lakh pa
The wide range is due to the variation between public and private sector pay packages. Also, in the private sector, a town planner takes up a wide range of roles and the package varies.

PROS AND CONS

PROS

- Predominantly a desk job with occasional site visits
- Adaptable to flexi-timing
- Purely planning as a profession has scope in the public sector only. In the private sector, it is more of a switching of roles to architecture/civil engineering aspects

CONS

- In the public sector employment, one has to be prepared for a quantum of stagnation
- The private sector offers many opportunities, but one has to be prepared to take up various jobs.

INTERVIEW PALLAVI LATKAR

Director, Grassroots research and consultancy

'Our role has changed drastically'

What are the career options for town planners?

The study of significant issues of urbanisation is the call of the day. Town planners work at every level of the government, including cities, regions, counties and states, as well as national and international agencies. They also work in the private sector for consulting firms, land development companies and law firms.



How has your journey in this career been?

When I began my career in planning, the role of the planner was restricted to town planning departments of the government sector only. Their role was perceived to be that of only a physical planner typically planning grid iron pattern cities and making zoning regulations. But this has completely changed during the last decade.

Are there enough qualified people to serve this sector?

Unfortunately we do not have enough qualified people in this sector. There are very few Institutes offering this course.