

Urban Planner

Decide what gets built where. A planning degree, two years on the job, then a professional title. Expect public meetings and politics.

TYPICAL PAY

\$96,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$59k to \$135k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Good

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Municipalities, consulting firms,
provincial ministries, developers**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Geography, math, English and civics. Go to a city council meeting once. If you find it interesting, this might be for you.
- 2 Degree** 4 to 6 years
Either a 4-year accredited planning bachelor's (Waterloo, TMU (Toronto Metropolitan University, formerly Ryerson), Dalhousie, Saskatchewan), or any bachelor's followed by a 2-year planning master's (Queen's, UBC (University of British Columbia), McGill, Toronto, D...
- 3 Candidate member** About 2 years
Join your provincial institute as a candidate and work under an RPP (registered professional planner). Log two years of experience with a sponsor, spend at least a year with a mentor and pass an ethics course. Many take three years or more.
- 4 Professional exam** A few months
An exam on ethics, planning law and practice, run through your provincial institute.
- 5 RPP (registered professional planner)** After the exam
Full membership in your provincial institute and the CIP (Canadian Institute of Planners). Now you can sign planning reports under the title.

Pros and cons

- + You shape the city you live in
- + Municipal pensions and job security
- + No exam until after you are hired and paid
- Public meetings can be hostile and personal
- Politics decides outcomes, not your analysis
- Projects take years; some never happen

Good to know

Jane Jacobs lived in Toronto

The most famous writer on cities moved from New York to Toronto in 1968 and helped stop the Spadina Expressway, which would have cut through the Annex. The province cancelled it in 1971.

Toronto legalized fourplexes everywhere in 2023

For decades most residential streets in Toronto were zoned for detached houses only. In 2023 council voted to allow up to four units on any residential lot in the city.

Optional boosts

GIS (geographic information systems). Transportation or urban design specialty. Environmental assessment. Development finance.

Where these numbers come from

Canadian Institute of Planners

Job Bank: Urban and land use planners, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Ontario Professional Planners Institute: Become a member

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/urban-planner>



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