

PROFESSIONAL BIOGRAPHY (500 WORDS) FOR TOBELA MICHAEL ZENZELE TWALA
(MBA, Pr Pln, SAPI, CAP)

Tobela Michael Zenzele Twala is a highly accomplished urban and regional planner, strategic advisor, and sector leader whose work spans government, academia, and professional institutions. With over a decade of experience across the built environment, infrastructure governance, land development, and intergovernmental planning systems, he has established himself as a respected voice in spatial transformation, rural development, and climate-responsive planning in South Africa.

Twala currently serves as **Senior Advisor: Built Environment (Unit Head & Senior Manager)** at the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in Gauteng. In this capacity, he oversees three major provincial portfolios namely Human Settlements, Public Roads & Transport, and Development Planning positioning him at the forefront of municipal planning support, programme coordination, strategic stakeholder engagement, and the enhancement of provincial intergovernmental forums. He also forms part of the Provincial Management Team of SALGA, contributing to organisation-wide strategy and governance processes. His leadership extends to major provincial initiatives such as the **Gauteng Urban Forum** and the **Gauteng Property Investment Showcase**, where he led strategic planning, programme development, and high-level stakeholder convening.

Twala's academic achievements demonstrate his commitment to intellectual excellence. He is currently pursuing a **PhD in Town and Regional Planning** at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, funded through University's doctoral remission. His postgraduate research builds upon a distinguished academic foundation that includes an **MBA (passed with 84%, distinction and Golden Key Award)** from the South China University of Technology, awarded through a competitive Department of Higher Education and Training scholarship. He completed his undergraduate **Bachelor's Degree in Town and Regional Planning** at the University of Pretoria with distinction for his research dissertation. Complementing these qualifications are further credentials in project management, IT-AI & Data Analytics, and executive leadership programmes.

A key figure in professional planning governance, Twala serves as a **National Board Member, EXCO Member, and Chairperson of the Gauteng Region** within the South African Planning Institute (SAPI). He played a critical role in the successful organisation and revival of the **SAPI Planning Africa Conference 2024**, particularly through his leadership of the marketing subcommittee and his involvement in the abstract management process. Internationally, he was appointed a **Judge for the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) Young Planners Awards 2025**, reflecting his growing global influence.

His professional experience includes senior leadership roles at the **National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure**, where he led & contributed to high-value presidential and ministerial projects, national GIS programmes, asset management systems, and complex land development processes such as township establishment, land availability negotiations, and property regularisation. He has also managed his own planning consultancy and served as a research consultant for the 2022 KZN Floods Disaster Risk Reduction project.

Twala is a sought-after public speaker, panel chair, and keynote presenter, having addressed national conferences, academic institutions, and sector workshops. His media engagements include expert commentary on eNCA and participation in podcasts focused on planning, sustainability, and governance.

An advocate for mentorship, youth development, and organisational transformation, Twala continues to influence the built environment sector through leadership, scholarship, and impactful public service.