



Reimagining Community Planning Academies

A Framework for Transformative Community Land-Use Education

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For more than 25 years, dozens of local planning departments have held regular community planning academies (CPAs) for residents as a way to expand land-use literacy and improve community engagement in their planning processes. In the summer of 2021, a team from the Research to Action Lab at the Urban Institute began a national scan of different academy models to identify and synthesize their core characteristics and common features and to explore the following questions: Who hosts the academy? Who participates? What do the academies teach? Beyond this descriptive research, the team considered the following promising pathway for revamping existing academies and redesigning new ones: *Could a new CPA prototype serve as the catalyst for reforming current local land-use, land development, and urban planning systems so they are more inclusive, equitable, and resilient?*

This policy brief offers a blueprint for reimagining planning academies so communities can ensure that their land-use systems can address the contemporary and concurrent land-use challenges of climate change, housing stability, racial injustice, and pandemic recovery. After a brief overview of the project and its rationale, we outline three basic planning academy types—the CPA, the planning professionals academy (PPA), and the community builder academy (CBA). Each model customizes its format and offerings for different participant groups, each with slightly different goals, programming, and levels of understanding about local planning and land-use systems. We then synthesize the four essential features of those models into a framework for a new prototype CPA—the primary focus of this project—that elevates community voice, empowers residents, and lays the foundation for revamping existing planning and land-use systems. We conclude with a call to action that includes several policy and program recommendations for improving and reinvesting in CPAs.

The Promise of Community Planning Academies

Land use and the built environment affect our health, our society, our economy, and our environment. As communities confront the interdependent challenges of climate resilience, racial equity, and inclusive economic recovery, they must make strategic decisions and take critical actions to adapt and recalibrate their land-use systems. The complexities of urban planning, zoning, and other land development concepts, rules, and systems often serve as a critical barrier to elevating community priorities, engaging residents, and ensuring more equitable distribution of benefits. Engagement logistics also often serve as barriers; these include a lack of access to transportation, language barriers, a lack of child care, and meeting times when many residents work multiple jobs or have caregiving responsibilities. Residents may not participate because the policies, processes and terminology are often defined and communicated in ways that are inaccessible and can perpetuate the exclusion of groups not formally educated in the field or otherwise versed in the subject matter. When making important land-use decisions, the politics of land use traditionally favors those with access to power, land, resources, and expertise in how these systems operate. Plus, communities of color may not trust existing land-use systems and their primary actors—local government policymakers/staff, land developers, and property owners—given the long legacy of land-use policies driving racial injustice and economic inequality in cities throughout the United States.

Common examples of those policies include housing segregation, redlining, urban renewal, and exclusionary zoning. A growing body of research, such as Richard Rothstein's pathbreaking book *The Color of Law*, documents how policymakers and public officials have adopted and implemented land-use policies, plans, and projects that have directly or indirectly discriminated against communities of color. Even today, land-use systems reinforce racial, economic, and health inequities.¹ Work at the Urban Institute provides further evidence and analysis on the impact that zoning and other land-use controls have on housing affordability and housing fairness. Residents in historically disinvested neighborhoods are also consistently underrepresented in land-use decisionmaking.² Across the country,³ as communities have begun to update their plans and revamp their codes, momentum is building⁴ to pursue land-use reforms that remedy racist policies.⁵

What Is a Community Planning Academy?

About 30 years ago, planning academies arose in a handful of communities as a strategy to educate local leaders and residents about local land-use issues and to demystify the complex and arcane world of planning, zoning, and land development. Often launched as part of the public engagement process to update a comprehensive land-use plan, planning departments saw CPAs as a bridge to reconnect local government policies and programs with interested and involved residents. Through a series of weekly courses, residents, homeowners, civic and business leaders, community-based organizations, and advocates would learn about common land-use processes, practices, and terminology such as comprehensive plans, zoning, conditional use permits, and land development processes, among others.

Although CPAs have been around for a while, not much is known about them—how many CPAs currently operate in the United States, where are they located, and how many participants do they engage? Only a handful of researchers and practitioners have studied or written about CPAs over the years. Most of the articles describe how particular CPAs operate—how they got started and what they do—with a few that explore how to document the impact and ripple effects of CPAs.⁶

Community Planning Academies as Catalysts for Change

The general policy rationale for sponsoring a CPA is to improve and enhance resident engagement in local land-use and urban planning processes and decisionmaking. By improving residents' understanding, knowledge, and fluency about the basic concepts of comprehensive plans, zoning, development review, and permitting, this theory of change argues that participants would become more involved and thoughtfully engaged in the development decisions that directly affect them and generate broader community support for citywide planning and land-use activities. In essence, community land-use education raises awareness and creates the ideal climate for more specific collaborative engagements, such as residents participating in neighborhood groups, attending planning commission meetings, or testifying before the city council. As a result of residents completing a planning academy, perhaps they become leaders of a neighborhood association or community-based organization in support of or in opposition to proposed neighborhood plans, zoning changes, or development projects. Eventually, a handful of academy graduates might go on to become professional planners or appointed members of local land-use advisory boards, planning commissions, and even town and city councils.

Building on this traditional policy rationale, we contend that CPAs, with a bit more guidance, commitment, and resources, could not only cultivate and deepen community driven land use leadership and power but catalyze and facilitate policy action and systems change. As we discuss later in this policy brief, four potential opportunities for transforming and/or expanding CPA activities exist: (1) peer learning, shared analysis, and dialogue among and between participants and CPA hosts, local government planning organizations, and instructors; (2) learning that can lead to action, where participants have academy projects that involve promising policy and system changes; (3) professional development skills on leadership, advocacy, and community organizing; and (4) support for sustaining continuing education for alumni along with strategic boards and commission placements.

When it comes to confronting the racial legacy of land-use systems, the initial challenge for many communities is figuring out how to strengthen trust, improve mutual understanding, and begin the difficult but necessary conversations that can lead to meaningful systems change. As part of any CPA effort in building the necessary political support and policy momentum for specific land-use reforms, community residents and leaders must actively engage in a transparent healing process that includes a meaningful reexamination of past, present, and future policies, plans, and programs in the context of racial, social, economic, and environmental justice. Community dialogues must involve and engage communities of color directly affected by the history of racist land-use and development policies because these communities bring local wisdom that too often gets ignored. By building pathways for community members to meaningfully participate in this reexamination and shared analysis, those

members are able to provide promising ideas about reforming local land-use systems that better reflect community and neighborhood priorities.

Many CPAs already provide a safe space for exploring the racial legacy and policy complexities of land-use and planning systems and they often have culturally competent staff and facilitators that are critical to such engagements. CPAs also have the experience and expertise in managing transparent engagement processes along with strong relationships and alumni networks out in the communities.

We believe that community-based planning education—and CPAs specifically—can lay the foundation for action by cultivating a receptive community and political climate for reforming local land-use and land development laws, policies, plans, and projects. At the same time, it is important to recognize the formal powers to reform, revise, and implement land-use systems rest with local elected officials and their staffs. Through this project, our team explored potential and promising approaches for redesigning and operating CPAs as forums for community conversations in revamping local land-use, land development, and urban planning systems so they are inclusive, equitable, and resilient.

BOX 1

Core Operating Principles for Land-Use Policy Systems

Local land use policy contains an intricate web of systems with a host of actors that play different roles and with diverse and many time divergent interests. We identify four primary local land use systems: 1) planning; 2) regulatory (this is where zoning comes into play); 3) development review and permitting; and 4) compliance and enforcement. Each have their own legal rules, processes and procedures and decision-making bodies. In order to achieve communities that are inclusive, equitable and resilient, the underlying land use policy systems and the actors that support them must also operate consistently with these core principles:

- **Inclusiveness:** ensuring that diverse communities can elevate their voices, fully participate and engage in all facets of the land use system and become empowered as land use leaders and decisionmakers.
- **Equity:** ensuring equity in land use processes and procedures, in the fair and just application of land use policies and actions and in the distributional benefits of land use policies and decisions, especially for those individuals, communities and neighborhoods that have been structurally marginalized and segregated by past or existing land use systems and decisions.
- **Resilience:** ensuring the land use systems can adapt to dramatic disruptions and shocks (economic, social, political, community, and environmental) that impact their operations, capacities, and decisions and further alter the types and complexities of land use problems and the range of interventions and solutions.

ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY PLANNING ACADEMY GOALS

Depending on the community and particular academy model, existing CPAs seem to emphasize many—but perhaps not all—of the following goals. Based on their leadership and their own capacities and resources, CPA hosts must adapt these goals to local dynamics, but we offer these goals as the foundation for enhancing and expanding the mission, scope, and programming of CPAs.

- **Increase knowledge, accessibility, and resources** that strengthen community capacity to engage in land-use and zoning conversations, decisions, and actions.
- **Provide space for dialogues** among and between participants, local planning officials and staffs, and other land-use and development actors on difficult land-use topics that challenge their collective and individual perspectives, interests, and understandings.
- **Unpack the legacy of structural racism in local planning and land-use systems** and how existing plans and programs perpetuate its disparate impacts through exclusionary zoning and other racially discriminatory land-use policies and practices.
- **Identify and promote change and reforms** to current land-use and land-development policies, plans, and programs so they are more inclusive, equitable, and resilient.
- **Recruit and empower residents**, especially leaders of color who are underrepresented in land-use and zoning decisionmaking to elevate their voices and become land-use leaders.
- **Build networks** and pathways for participants to apply the insights they have learned, collaborate with the people they have met, and advocate for changes to improve existing planning and zoning policies and practices.

Who Is This Brief For, and What Will They Learn?

At the most basic level this brief explains what CPAs do; it also explores what CPAs could do to facilitate the reform of land-use systems so they become more just, inclusive, and resilient. The brief compares the CPA model with other types of local planning and policy academies that are part of a broader spectrum of city government and civic leadership academies.⁷ For community-based organizations and nonprofit intermediaries, as well as local policymakers, planning officials, and staff who are exploring how to design and launch a CPA for their community, this brief offers a new prototype that borrows practices from across a typology of three distinct academy models (as outlined in the following section). Each of those models offers intriguing possibilities to help those who currently run CPAs expand and strengthen the scope, focus, and activities for their respective CPAs. In essence, we believe that communities can blend characteristics from each of the three models as part of building a new CPA prototype and can benefit from the insights and lessons of the other models.

One of the challenges to such cross-pollination of models and sharing of practices and programming is that most CPAs operate independently from each other given their exclusive local focus. As far as we could tell, a national, state, or regional network devoted to community/citizen planning and land-use education does not exist. Over the years, a handful of CPAs have informally talked and compared notes through their own outreach, conferences, and/or professional or academic networks. We believe this brief can build connections across the participants and the organizations that host and manage the three models and thus serve as a catalyst for a national network of community and civic planning academies.

However, to facilitate such cross-pollination, diffuse the CPA prototype, and build a national community of practice, policymakers at all levels, nonprofit intermediaries, universities, and foundations will need to elevate CPAs on their respective agendas. This brief represents the first attempt at making the case for why CPAs are a wise investment and a promising pathway for reforming existing land-use systems so they are more inclusive, equitable, and resilient.

National Scan of Community Planning Academies

In support of our project, we conducted a website scan of academies, bootcamps, and workshops and a synthesis of relevant reports and planning education literature. We also inserted a request for recommendations and academy referrals in a newsletter that was broadcast to several hundred members of the American Planning Association. We identified about 35 to 40 community-based or professional academies in which the primary (and sometimes exclusive) focus was land use, urban planning, land development, and/or environmental justice. By far the most common type in our scan was the CPA run by local government planning departments. Our national scan did not undertake a comprehensive inventory of planning academies, but we did consult previous attempts by existing CPAs to identify their counterparts. We interviewed 10 different organizations leading planning and land-use education activities including local government-run planning academies, nonprofit advocacy and training organizations, and university-based programs. In addition, we conducted a focus group with local graduates from one of the community planning academies, and we delivered a workshop on community planning academies at the 2022 national conference of the American Planning Association, in collaboration with the Philadelphia Citizens Planning Institute.

Typology of Planning Academies

THE COMMUNITY PLANNING ACADEMY

The traditional CPA model is primarily characterized by the presence of local government staff assigned to recruit, instruct, and manage the CPA. Participants typically include members of community-based organizations, nonprofits, small businesses, neighborhood groups, and other residents interested in planning-related issues. Planning departments and related local government agencies typically host this type of CPA.⁸

Programs run from 6 to 12 weeks, with courses each week on the basics of urban planning, zoning, and land development, as well as special land-use topics such as affordable housing, transportation, and community and economic development. In some cases, group projects or capstone presentations enable participants to apply the concepts they have learned within their communities. Examples of this model include the [Baltimore Planning Academy](#) and the [Sacramento Planning Academy](#). One benefit of the CPA model is its replicability among local planning agencies—[Philadelphia's Citizens Planning Institute](#) has served more than 700 members over the past 12 years.

THE PLANNING PROFESSIONALS ACADEMY

University-affiliated planning and land-use policy centers or institutes, often in partnership with state or regional chapters of the American Planning Association, host annual or biannual workshops that train local government land-use decisionmakers and professional planners from within a state. One- to two-day trainings cover the roles and duties of land-use decisionmakers (e.g., public meeting rules, conflict resolution, legal rules) or priority land-use issues and hot topics for continuing education credit for practicing planners. Offerings include webinars and online training courses and certifications. Examples of planning professionals academies include the [Center for Land Use Education](#) at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, the [Land Use Leadership Alliance](#) Training Program at the Pace University Land Use Law Center, and the [American Citizen Planner](#) certification program at Michigan State University.⁹

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER ACADEMY

In this community capacity-building model, courses on planning, land development, and local policymaking are infused with leadership development and empowerment to build and expand the knowledge and power of emerging BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) leaders through urban fellowships and placements on regional and local boards and commissions. As part of the fellowship model, over the course of their 12- to 18-month placement, the participants attend regular courses that offer a blend of policy analysis, community power, and leadership training. Land-use related topics, such as affordable housing and environmental justice, are part of but not the exclusive focus of these academies. Often run by local nonprofits and grounded in principles and practices of social justice and community organizing, examples of these programs include [Urban Habitat’s Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute](#) and the [Greenlining Institute’s Leadership Academy](#), both in the Bay Area/Oakland, CA, and Nexus Community Partners’ [leadership institute](#) in the Twin Cities metro area.

Planning Academy Characteristics and Features

In this section we examine the four common academy features found across the three planning academy models: (1) host and funding, (2) recruitment and participants, (3) curriculum and delivery, and (4) network building and learning that leads to action. We also offer a few insights on how existing and future academies could adapt certain features and practices from each of the models in constructing new prototype CPAs.

Host and Funding

Three different types of institutions host each of the three academy models: (1) local government planning departments typically host CPAs; (2) university centers, institutes, and extension offices host and manage planning professionals academies; and (3) primarily community-based, social and racial justice nonprofits host community builder academies. In essence, we found a close alignment of the hosts’ mission and the underlying policy and program goals of their model. For example, the planning

professionals model seeks to further the professional competency of professional planners and land officials and decisionmakers, sometimes in collaboration with local or regional chapters of the American Planning Association (APA).¹⁰ In fact, a few APA chapters host and/or sponsor their own community or regional planning academies, such as [California's Central Coast APA chapter](#), which includes a hybrid of professional planners and engaged community members. The community builder model tailors the academy format and focus to support the nonprofit organizational missions of social change, social and economic justice, and building the policy and leadership capabilities of emerging BIPOC leaders.

Although existing planning academies seem to have only one institutional or organizational host, our prototype (which is discussed later) explores the potential advantages of how a consortium of organizations might coordinate several academy types that address different levels of land-use and planning education for a wider range of community and professional participants. In essence, a portfolio of academies, workshops, and bootcamps could not only expand access to more diverse participants but also provide deeper knowledge and cumulative understandings that can serve as the foundation for reforming land-use systems.

Depending on the type and organization, annual operating budgets for academies can range from \$5,000 to \$35,000. These operating budgets often cover only the direct costs (e.g., food, materials, room rental) to operate the academy. Some operating budgets may also include costs for guest instructors, for participant transportation, and for essential services and support to increase the number of community participants and sustain their engagement such as scholarships/stipends and child care. See table 1 for a general comparison of funding sources and expenditures across the three planning academy models.

During our interviews we found that planning academies basically operate with one to two dedicated staff and they may receive additional administrative support from organization staff or temporary support from college interns. Often, the people that direct and manage CPAs have other responsibilities and roles within the organization such as managing related or complementary programs on leadership, internal organizational development, community engagement, and other forms of land-use and planning education, technical assistance, and training. Given those other complementary roles, staff members that run CPAs may only devote two-thirds or three-fourths of their overall time to the day-to-day management of the CPA.

Several classic CPAs charge a modest fee of \$50 to \$75 for community members to participate but provide scholarships for those who request assistance. Those CPAs that charge a fee contend it motivates participants to fully engage with the academy and helps ensure they will graduate from/complete the CPA. Other CPAs worry that posting a slight fee, even with scholarship opportunities, might deter some community members from applying. In contrast, the CPAs providing continuing education and training for land-use and planning professions typically have a registration fee associated with their academy to defray operating costs and to cover the costs of continuing education administration.

TABLE 1

Funding Comparison of Academy Hosts

Host	Description
Local government agencies	CPA direct costs and staffing are part of the planning department's annual budget (these may or may not be identified as separate line items) and thus they are subject to local government fiscal pressures and shifting political priorities. Foundation funding and in-kind contributions from sponsors may help defray some of the direct costs (such as food, transportation, materials, outreach, etc.).
Nonprofit organizations	When compared with local government CPAs, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) may have larger annual operating budgets for their policy academies that support fellowship stipends and additional coaching, mentoring, leadership development, and placement programs. National and local philanthropic dollars often serve as their exclusive source of funding and thus they are subject to the shifts in foundation funding priorities.
University planning/policy research centers or institutes or extension offices	Housed within law schools or university planning programs, the land-use professionals' model often has operating budgets supported by full-time research faculty and perhaps graduate research associates. This model may also provide fee-for-service (e.g., technical assistance, policy publications) to pay for some of the land-use educational programming and it may conduct applied research supported by foundations. In some states, extension offices may also include state funds that pay for academy staff and direct costs. In some universities, academy-related activities may be subject to standard university overhead rates.

Recruitment and Participants

In general, academies seek to recruit a diverse cohort of participants by considering factors such as race, neighborhood, stakeholder-type, land-use experience, and tenure living in the community. The CPA directors we spoke with acknowledged that local planning and land development processes still favor those communities and individuals with greater resources, capacities, and education, which enables them to navigate and effectively influence the development of land-use plans, policies, and projects. When dominated by privileged residents, communities across the country see the impact of those conversations and land-use decisions such as locating intense industrial and commercial uses in neighborhoods of color or imposing regulatory barriers to affordable housing. By having more diverse academy participants, planning academies can make complicated land-use and land-development systems more accessible to disenfranchised communities and hopefully foster their direct engagement with future land-use decisions that will reflect and benefit their communities.

Beyond traditional communication vehicles (e.g., websites, social media, presentations), relationships and alumni are the most powerful strategy for recruiting participants. As a general practice, planning academies do not have much time or resources for extensive promotion and marketing, so they must rely on their respective professional networks, "word-of-mouth" recommendations from their alumni, and their creativity. Baltimore holds "pop-up" presentations in branch libraries where planning academy staff spend a couple of hours discussing land-use issues and explaining what happens in their CPA. Although these mini workshops offer a more accessible and informal format, they also help identify pressing neighborhood priorities and potential academy participants.

Across the board, the community demand for the limited number of academy slots consistently exceeds the capacity of CPA offerings. The traditional cohort model limits the total number of potential CPA participants to around 50 to 70 a year depending on the frequency and format. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Citizens Planning Institute in Philadelphia reported receiving about 150 applications for 30 spots for each cohort. When looking at applications, CPA directors mentioned it is now more common for community members to apply at least two to three times before they get accepted. As for the application process, CPAs and community builder models often require some type of application that typically includes an essay in which applicants outline why they want to participate and a brief history of their community/civic engagement activities. They try to make the application itself simple so it does not inhibit residents from applying. CPA alumni can also play important roles in helping prospective participants with their application. After initial screening of the written applications, several academies will conduct interviews (by phone or video conference) with the list of finalists to get a better sense of the applicants' potential to engage and advance change.

Under each of the following categories, we further describe the key factors that planning academies use to select participants.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Depending on the academy model, basic eligibility criteria can include age (some CPAs will include participants at 16 years old), city residency, and an applicant's commitment to participate in the entire 6- to 12-week series of courses. Based on underlying principles and practices of planning equity, CPAs focus their recruitment and selection on residents from historically underinvested and underrepresented neighborhoods. In Baltimore, they leveraged the city housing department's neighborhood typology and assigned additional "points" to those that live in "priority" neighborhoods in the application scoring. Another academy tracks applicants to ensure they represent all the officially designated neighborhood planning districts. Although geography remains important, CPAs must be mindful about changing neighborhood demographics as new developments and market dynamics may cause long-term residents, especially low-income and/or residents of color, to leave priority neighborhoods.

Some planning academies collect race and ethnicity demographics data as part of the application to ensure the cohort represents the diversity of the municipality's residents. That is, if a city's population is 18 percent Latinx, they aim to recruit a cohort where about 18 percent of attendees identify as Latinx. Although other planning academies also consider race and ethnicity, the PPA model has a different mission (that is, providing continuing education) so its class or cohort composition varies according to the demands within the profession. PPAs may develop courses that correspond to new laws and policies as well as more advanced courses based on participants' levels of professional planning and land-use experience along with leadership potential. Some PPAs recruit city teams for customized workshops that have aspects more aligned with technical assistance and training. Note that we found the missions for the CBA models explicitly require recruiting from groups (including,

Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other communities of color) that are underrepresented in their communities' governance and leadership structures.

CHANGEMAKING CAPACITY

Planning academies continue to look for individuals who currently have or who have great potential to access policy levers, networks, capacity, and positions to change existing systems. Some academies stress experience in local policy advocacy and community organizing practices, even experience in issues that are not directly related to land use and planning. In selecting candidates for their changemaking capacity, academy directors and staff carefully review applicants' essay submissions and they may conduct interviews to learn about the applicants' previous community-based and advocacy experiences. They also rely heavily on recommendations from local leaders and former alumni. The applicants' changemaking capacity also influences the curriculum and program delivery because academies want to ensure that participants have opportunities to apply their knowledge to contemporary, real-world planning and land-use issues in their community.

PARTICIPANT TYPE

As a general rule, the academies strive to ensure that each cohort reflects a range of participants that hold essential and/or support roles within the local civic, policy, and planning/land-use ecosystem. Ideally, academies would include active, engaged community residents (specifically nonplanners), grassroots organizers, nonprofit professionals, developers, business owners, civic leaders, planners, engineers, lawyers, elected policymakers, and planning officials. The eventual mix of participants depends on the primary mission and focus of the academy. For example, the PPA model targets existing land-use professionals and planning officials while the community builder model seeks community members and/or the next-generation residents from BIPOC communities to help them become advocates for change and gain leadership positions within the local planning and land-use board and commissions. Other planning academies, such as CPAs, tend to recruit a mix of stakeholders so participants can learn from individuals with varied backgrounds and be exposed to the perspectives they bring to the sessions. For example, a planning academy that recruits developers and residents might foster mutual understanding among these often-divergent perspectives which could, in theory, set the stage for consensus-building around a pending or future land-use plan or development project. Such academy conversations also must acknowledge the inherent power imbalance that developers bring to the table. Many developers have significant resources and support (lawyers, architects, builders, public relations teams) that not only shape their world view but also can intentionally seek to persuade participants. If done right, such academy conversations between developer, city staff, and residents would provide a safe place for all sides to learn from each other.

Curriculum and Delivery

When it comes to their content, academies have three general types of curriculum and related activities: (1) the basics of planning, zoning, and land development; (2) special or contemporary land-use and planning issues; and (3) skills development (e.g., public speaking, leadership, advocacy, policy analysis). The mission of each academy model dictates the level and emphasis of what each model

teaches and how it teaches. Here we categorize and compare the general subject matter of academy courses, borrowing the hierarchy that one might find in a university or college course catalogue:

- **CPAs** typically focus on entry level “101–301 undergraduate” courses that concentrate on teaching their participants the fundamentals of planning, zoning, land-use, and development processes and practices.
- **PPAs** spotlight intermediate courses and perhaps more advanced “graduate”-level work that explores in depth the complexities of planning and/or challenging or emerging land-use policies, plans, and programs, such as affordable housing, urban design, transportation, climate change.
- **CBAs** specialize in the “practicum or studio” as a complement to basic land-use and local policy education where participants develop core professional development skills and apply the concepts and strategies to actual places and problems (also known as a living laboratory).

Note these categories are not mutually exclusive and that each academy model at different times can offer a blend of these courses at different levels along with more robust professional skills development. As outlined in the following sections, curriculum and delivery offer one of the best pathways for advancing and expanding principles and practices of inclusion and equity along with supporting new prototypes that can serve as catalysts for transforming existing planning and land-use systems.

LAND-USE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BASICS

The consensus goal for most of the academies is to demystify local land-use planning and zoning procedures by discussing basic concepts, terminology, and processes so that participants can more thoughtfully engage in planning and land-use decisions and become community agents for change. This includes topics such as dissecting the specific elements within local comprehensive plans, outlining different zoning code provisions and walking through land development hearing procedures. At the outset, participants in CPAs and CBAs may not realize that planning processes and zoning practices are inherently legal and administrative systems that govern development patterns for their community and regulate what people can and cannot do on their private property. In essence, these academies break down the planning and land-use ecosystem, identify the core actors, understand the legal and policy drivers, chart the different activities, and frame their intersections. A critical step in this learning process is to make these land-use terms and concepts accessible to all local residents who have diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Once the participants grasp the basics, it becomes essential for participants to then understand how they can influence planning and land development decisions, elevate community priorities, and advocate for change. For example, helping participants identify who makes policy and planning decisions and the competing forces that come into play becomes a critical first step in these discussions. Using past or present examples of local land-use issues that directly affect that community will not only foster engagement and cohort problem solving but also set the stage for effective advocacy. Knowing when, where, and how they can plug into the land development process

ensures that participants can effectively engage and not miss opportunities to advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities.

Several of the academies supplement their land-use and planning 101 curriculum with two to three special topic courses, such as urban design, affordable housing, transportation (infrastructure and mobility), environment/green space, resilience, economic development, public health, or sustainability. A CPA or PPA may discuss these special topics as part of the regular cohort workshops or convene them as webinars or half-day minicourses. In some cases, the local CPA aligns these special courses with current development projects or special land-use initiatives underway in the city, such as adoption of a sustainability plan or economic development strategy. Often these specialized courses are led by alumni, practitioners, and experts within and outside of the local planning department.

LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY, COLLABORATION, AND SYSTEMS CHANGE SKILLS

Beyond the primary focus on land-use and urban planning, several academies feature sessions on skill building, such as power-mapping, storytelling, public speaking, and negotiation along with relationship- and coalition-building strategies. For the most part, CPAs integrate professional development as part of their regular land-use curriculum, such as capstone presentations on pressing development issues in their neighborhood that provide students with public speaking and collaboration opportunities. On the other hand, PPAs and some CPAs offer courses for managing land-use conflicts, such as mediation, community engagement, consensus building, small-group facilitation, and negotiation. For example, the Land Use Leadership Alliance at Pace Environmental Law School in New York includes instruction on conflict resolution and on cross-sector, collaborative decisionmaking that can enable more sustainable and equitable land-use policies and projects.

As a general rule, community builder academies focus their curriculum on developing advocacy and leadership skills in communities of color and positioning the next generation of BIPOC leaders to help change a wider range of policy systems beyond land use (e.g., education, policing, health, wealth creation). In many ways, this emphasis on leadership development and advocacy aligns with principles and practices that elevate community voices and seek policy and systems changes that foster their underlying missions of social, economic, and racial justice.

In the Bay Area, Greenlining Institute's Leadership Academy offers its cohort of young professionals, many of whom are recent college graduates (undergraduate or graduate school), a cohesive suite of courses that incorporates leadership development, skills building, and policy experience. Racial equity serves as a through line for their skills-building courses and activities that cover areas such as community engagement, policy research and advocacy, sustainability, and program/policy evaluation. Another creative component of Greenlining's Policy and Leadership Academy is the opportunity for self-exploration and reflection that is infused throughout the fellowship program along with one-on-one coaching and cohort learning. Given their general focus on leadership, professional skills, racial equity, and personal growth, community builder academies seem to require different formats, level of engagement, and instructor skills compared with more traditional CPAs and PPAs that host and teach courses exclusively on substantive planning, land-use, and local policy.

THE LEGACY OF STRUCTURAL RACISM AND EXCLUSIONARY LAND-USE DECISIONS

As part of their core curriculum, most academies dedicate one or more sessions to discussing the history of planning and land use in their community through the lens of systemic and institutional racism. After participant introductions, some CPAs use their first or second meetings to examine local history of how racist land development policies (such as urban renewal, redlining, and exclusionary land-use plans) and regulations led to racial segregation and disinvestment in neighborhoods of color. Some academies feature articles and videos that explore in depth these policies and decisions, such as the film *Segregated by Design*, based on Richard Rothstein's book *The Color of Law*.¹¹

BOX 2

Housing Segregation and Land Use Systems.

Land-use regulations often codify popular cultural attitudes and contemporary economic and political priorities, which translates into expanding access to resources and amenities (such as parks, trails and green spaces; safe housing; community facilities; and clean air) for some people and, conversely, limiting access for others, who are then subjected to smog, noise pollution, housing instability, and long commutes from population centers. One notable result of these laws is the racial segregation of housing, with stricter regulations coinciding with higher concentrations of non-Hispanic white residents. Government officials and mortgage lenders also have histories of explicitly tying housing, community, and economic development investments to race and land-use regulations. Historically, planning commissions and zoning boards have approved land-use plans and policies that in turn promoted exclusive single-family zoning that constrains housing supply (like minimum lot sizes and single-family parcels of land), drives up housing prices, and disproportionately excludes and even displaces low-income people, who tend to be disproportionately people of color, out of their own neighborhoods. For resources on the relationship between racial equity and land use, please see appendix A.

Past land-use policies and plans provide a solid framework for engaging in difficult conversations about racial equity and how the built environment in US cities reflects these structural inequities. For example, redlining maps related to discriminatory housing policies and programs illustrate how those past policies still affect and influence neighborhoods of color today.¹² Communities such as Memphis, TN, and Louisville, KY, have used their redlining maps as the foundation for community conversations about structural racism, disinvestment, land use, and community development.¹³ National organizations such as the Government Alliance on Race and Equity along with new academic and policy research continue to expand the applications and insights on how to address the legacy of land-use systems and race.¹⁴

When facilitating learning around structural racism, academy directors we interviewed acknowledged that it is critical to assess participants' knowledge and meet participants where they are. Some participants might be "hearing" about the concepts of structural racism for the first time and participants of color might be frustrated that ongoing discussions have not led to any meaningful

changes. They and others who have been traumatized by racist actions need a safe space in which to share insights and personal experiences.

However, the reality is that participants in some parts of the country (for example, rural communities or small towns) may not share the same baseline understanding of race and land use or feel it is a pressing priority. For example, when one academy shared *Segregated by Design* as the last course of the program, the academy leaders felt the participants had a more positive experience compared with presenting the video documentary at the academy launch. Other issues included a presenter on zoning not acknowledging that racist structures still exist. Even though the demographics, development patterns, and built environments might be different, all land-use systems come from the same legal and policy foundations; thus, these communities also can leverage the planning academy model to confront their own racial legacies when it comes to land use and planning.

Despite having diverse communities and perhaps divergent views on structural racism and land use, all the academies we spoke with were taking steps to improve what they taught and how they taught, facilitated, and discussed race and equity. A good starting point is to ensure everyone is on the same page with the concept and definition of equity. As a rule, any land-use policy and/or plan can affect and influence four core dimensions of equity: (1) structural—how have policies and plans embedded historic advantages and disadvantages that affect residents in certain communities; (2) procedural—how have residents historically been excluded from planning and land-use processes; (3) distributional—does the distribution of civic/governmental resources and investments consider potential racial disparities; and (4) transgenerational—does the policy or project result in unfair burdens on future generations (Park 2014). Several academy directors noted that for these conversations to be successful, it is critical to have staff and instructors on your team that have sufficient training or expertise in facilitating sensitive conversations and to have prepared accessible materials that help participants see the connection between land-use policies and plans and racial inequities. By and large these academy directors felt that planning academies offer ideal platforms for having these difficult individual and community conversations.

LAND USE, HEALTH EQUITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

When it comes to expanding a racial equity lens to contemporary land-use issues, it seems many planning academies have more work to do. We spoke with several academies that were in the process of revamping or developing special courses (the more advanced curriculum) to examine inequitable impacts of pressing land-use policies and pending development projects with an eye toward identifying pathways for reform. For example, some academies are highlighting stringent zoning laws that restrict housing supply and make it nearly impossible for lower-income residents, often families of color, to find affordable housing. Other academies have reviewed racially disaggregated data on well-being and public health outcomes as they relate to patterns of land development decisions. For example, strong evidence indicates that food deserts and access to trails and park amenities are avenues for exploring the health equity impacts of zoning and land-use decisions. In addition, research already documents that communities of color are at greater risk in relation to the disproportionate impacts of climate change as past and present land-use policies have put Black and brown residents in

neighborhoods with higher risks for floods, poor air quality, and unsafe urban heat. Discussions about urban heat islands and about programs that green vacant lots or foster urban forestry provide academies with compelling examples for connecting racial equity and contemporary planning challenges related to climate change.¹⁵

Baltimore's Planning Academy illustrates how equity can serve as the core focus for planning academies. In 2017, the Planning Department's first Equity Action Plan established five goals, including to improve and increase the dialogue with underserved communities and to use an overall equity lens to develop, revise, and evaluate city policies and prioritize capital investment. In response, the Planning Department's director hired a new assistant director and reorganized staff to focus on implementing the Equity Action Plan. In 2018, the department launched the Planning Academy as the primary vehicle for community dialogues to elevate equity and engagement in planning (Bravve 2022).

Given their mission to recruit, train, and support the next generation of BIPOC leaders, community builder academies also provide a wealth of information and training curriculum on structural racism, environmental justice, and strategies for equitable development across broader policy domains such as transportation, education, and workforce development. CPAs and PPAs could benefit from a closer review of their curriculum and conversations with leaders and participants from community builder academies. For example, one community builder academy developed policy assessment tools to consider racially equitable outcomes in zoning and land-use decisions. It equipped each participant with an equitable development checklist and dedicated lessons on how to use data to understand the impact of land-use decisions on different groups of people.

DELIVERY FORMATS AND INSTRUCTORS

Planning academies organize their courses and companion activities into three basic formats: weekly cohort classes; class series that focus on a special topic; and/or one- to three-day workshops. The weekly classes are typically two to three hours long, while the special classes might take half a day. Academies with cohorts tend to schedule most of their classes in the late afternoon or early evening—close to the end of the work day or outside of normal work hours. CPAs may convene two to three cohorts per year with each cohort covering 6 to 10 sessions, while CBAs may host only one academy per year, with 10+ classes, that aligns with their annual fellowship cohorts. PPAs may hold day-long workshops for continuing education credit for planning professionals or they may offer topical trainings to local officials on basic planning, zoning, and land-use and land development processes and practices. Other conditions important for a successful academy experience include the facilities' location and physical space, and services that make the academies more accessible such as child care and transportation support. Providing food on site and meal sharing also offers opportunities for participants to bond with each other and academy instructors and staff. More academies are also expanding their virtual and hybrid class options given the recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most CPA and PPA academy directors have some level of planning and land-use expertise and experience and thus serve as the primary facilitator/spokesperson for the CPA and as the primary instructor. Besides the director, the academies often have a principal assistant or codirector along with

access to administrative support from the host entity at large. The academy director and co-director most often develop the curriculum and format for the sessions, though some CPAs also plan sessions with guest presenters. Guest presenters could come from the private and public sectors, nonprofits, and CPA alumni.

Guest presenters include professionals such as planning officials, other city department staff, nonprofit leaders, real estate developers, builders, and architects. Inviting guest presenters enables participants to hear diverse land-use perspectives firsthand while also allowing them to connect with the people working on planning, development, and land-use in their community. At the same time, the academy may not have as much control over what the presenter will say. When working with guest presenters, it is helpful to spend sufficient prep time to frame and align the presenters' presentation and talking points with the planning academy's overall goals and culture. Otherwise, academies might find the guest instructor or presenter is not on the same page when it comes to framing controversial issues such as the existence of climate change or structural racism. Some CPAs combat this by vetting guest presenters' content beforehand to ensure that the content is accessible and aligns with other lessons in the curriculum.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person learning for about two years (2020 and 2021). The academies we spoke with were able to effectively adjust and adapt their in-person academies to virtual learning platforms and formats. The in-person format with its face-to-face interactions remains the ideal climate for peer learning and active engagement so critical to any type of community-based planning- education. Given their relative success, several of the academies have now incorporated virtual learning and other formats into some of their activities as they return to the traditional in-person model. To reach a wider audience as part of its next update to Philadelphia's citywide comprehensive plan—Philadelphia 2035—the Citizens Planning Institute produced a series of 10-minute videos on the basics of zoning and planning.¹⁶ Given their mission to provide regular training to planning professionals, PPAs have perhaps the greatest incentive to make the most advancements toward virtual learning. For example, the American Citizen Planner (ACP) at Michigan State University's Extension Services Program offers a special certificate for elected and appointed officials and citizen volunteers who complete their virtual ACP 101 and 201 courses. In 2021, Michigan State University partnered with Planetizen (the planning news website) to offer similar training, course work, and certification for urban planners and planning officials nationwide.¹⁷

A virtual format can expand access to individuals, especially individuals of color, who may not have the time or resources to consistently attend weekly CPA sessions or regular PPA workshops. Broadband access now becomes a critical consideration that academies must now factor into their virtual programming. At the same time, the in-person interaction and engagement will always remain one of the important benefits of planning academies. Going forward, it would seem strategic for existing and future academies to use a blend of in-person and virtual learning formats to host CPA participants regardless of their ability to be physically present within a classroom. For example, CPAs and CBAs could benefit from PPAs' insights and lessons in providing a comprehensive online series of classes, but also consider strategies for ensure broadband access alternatives.

In Philadelphia, the Citizens Planning Institute received a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to prototype a custom educational and outreach set of tools—"CPI in a Box"—that its graduates can share with their neighborhoods to discuss the basics of planning and zoning. As part of the design and development process, the institute selected six alumni, who received a stipend, to cocreate this outreach tool. As the city's Planning Commission begins outreach to update the city's comprehensive plan, Philadelphia is seeking to mass produce CPI in a Box, translate it into multiple languages, and deploy alumni.

Learning that Leads to Action and Network Building

Experiential learning remains the hallmark of planning academies, especially the CPA and community builder academy. Each model has its own suite of activities that engage participants and facilitate connections among and between the instructors, participants, and the places they call home. Participants have opportunities for peer learning, networking, and applying concepts and principles to local land-use issues that affect their neighborhood or community through capstone projects and other exercises. Even after participants graduate, academies can facilitate continuous learning, cultivate connections through alumni networks, and support career and civic placements that can help empower and elevate community priorities and collaboration.

PEER LEARNING

Participants bring their own expertise, knowledge, and resources to the planning academies including deep knowledge of their neighborhoods and communities, local politics, and market dynamics, along with their own professional experiences such as running a development firm or small business or leading a nonprofit, neighborhood association or community development corporation. Thus, a cohort drawn from across a planning academy's geography can expand the horizons of participants to consider land-use impacts and diverse perspectives from other neighborhoods. Even PPAs can benefit from hosting diverse cohorts from different types of cities—smaller cities, suburban cities, fast or slow growing communities—that can yield important comparative planning and policy insights and facilitate peer learning.

Outside of the formal course times, academy staff and participants that we spoke with felt it was important to create informal gathering spaces for participants to connect and share recommendations, experiences, and knowledge. These conversations can build the foundation for opportunities to apply their academy experience to land-use issues in their neighborhoods or in other parts of the city. In addition, participants from CPAs stressed that although planning academies were an opportunity for them to gain knowledge of governmental processes, they also are opportunities for academy hosts, government officials and planning staff to learn from participants via capstone presentations and to listen to participants' direct experiences with land-use and planning policies and procedures. If academy participants work together and raise concerns that affect people and neighborhoods across the city, elected officials and other governmental actors may be more likely to respond and address those land-use challenges.

CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Many CPAs and CBAs assign optional capstone projects that enable participants to apply the insights and knowledge they have gained in the courses to a real-world issue they feel passionate about. Topics might focus on proposed developments in their neighborhood or discuss citywide land issues such as streamlining zoning or strategies for improving access to healthy foods. The Citizens Planning Institute in Philadelphia gives participants the option to do a final assignment on their own or with another member and the assignment can take different forms such as a memo, an action plan, or a five-minute presentation to their cohort and planning staff. Insights from these capstones can provide the local planning department with community insights and ideas on pressing land-use issues.

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SPECIAL COURSES

Learning and engagement often do not stop at the end of a planning academy. Several CPAs now host special topic webinars and workshops that explore zoning and urban planning issues in depth or examine pressing priorities such as economic development, environment/green space, transportation, preservation, health, urban design, community/neighborhood planning, and affordable housing. The special courses are open to all alumni and can serve as opportunities for further network building.

PPAs typically offer a wider range of more advanced courses and sessions to help ensure that planning officials and staff stay current and to respond to the demand for relevant continuing legal education credits and certifications. Special courses can also provide the safe space and time for a smaller cohort of participants to move beyond the history and explore contemporary strategies for addressing their communities' structurally racist land-use plans and policies.

DEVELOPING ALUMNI NETWORKS AND DOCUMENTING IMPACT

A critical ingredient to the sustainability of many academies, especially the CPA and CBA models, is the ability to cultivate and connect a network of alumni participants. Successful academies create the ideal climate for continuous learning as many participants hunger for more content and the ability to learn how to turn their insights and ideas into action. In Greenville, SC, Upstate Forever is working with alumni to design a 2.0 curriculum that would involve half-day workshops with a focus on advocacy and policy change. As discussed, other academies invite alumni to attend special topic courses and, in some cases, to serve as guest presenters.

Many of the participants also continue the relationships (with each other and with the academy staff) they developed during the academy and become active in neighborhood and citywide land-use issues. Some academies invite alumni back as guest speakers, seek their assistance with curriculum development, or invite them to participate in selection committees. Philadelphia's Citizens Planning Institute maintains a quarterly newsletter that tracks recent alumni accomplishments and activities. The Planning Institute also organizes an annual alumni mixer where former and current students get a chance to meet each other along with local officials and nonprofit community leaders. Alumni of the Planning Institute also maintain their own Facebook and LinkedIn groups. In Baltimore, the planning academy has an alumni network representing more than 100 neighborhoods throughout the city. In

addition to alumni events hosted or led by the city, Baltimore is working on a network of community groups sponsoring their own engagement events (Bravve 2022).

One of the ways to document an academy's influence and impact is by tracking the participants' land-use and planning activities and accomplishments. Some participants become champions for land-use projects in their neighborhoods, such as urban greening or helping lead the adoption of neighborhood plans or districts. Others may leverage the academy's insights and networks to advocate for citywide land-use policies and plans or become nonprofit leaders or even members of local boards and commissions. For example, graduates from the Baltimore Planning Academy have served on the planning commission, comprehensive plan advisory council, and climate action plan advisory council and they have contributed to the city's equity criteria as part of the planning department's capital improvement program. A few academy graduates have become involved with their own development projects—putting equity at the center (Bravve 2022).

BOX 3

Evaluating the Impact and Influence of Community Planning Academies

In general, academies perform participant evaluations, often by in-person or online surveys, that focus on the curriculum, future content, instructor delivery, and other feedback on the process and logistics of academy sessions and cohorts. Our scan, however, did not find many formal program evaluations of planning academies. Several PPAs routinely examine the range and types of participants in their professional workshops and trainings and then track the land-use plans and policy actions their communities adopt and implement. Others, such as community planning academies in Baltimore and Philadelphia or the Land Use Leadership Alliance at the Pace Land Use Law Center, keep tabs on accomplishments of their graduates and share them in annual reports and newsletters.

The field, however, does not have a consistent approach to measuring the influence and impact of planning academies. One potential evaluation framework applies the well-known concept of human and social capital to the actions participants take to improve the conditions of their community, like the Citizens Planning Institute's "Citizen Planners in Action" feature on its website (Mandarano 2015). The field needs more guidance and technical assistance to help planning academies adopt common measures of success and indicators of impact and the resources and capacity to track those impacts (for example, identifying the common outputs and outcomes that flow from the academy experience, such as participants' engagement and in some cases their leadership in making changes to land-use plans, policies, and projects). Participants also come to CPAs with varying levels of knowledge about planning processes, thus a baseline approach to measuring impact would center around changes in participants' familiarity with CPA subject matter and perhaps their attitudes toward planning issues. Tools like pre- and postintervention assessments can help CPA staff assess programmatic impact in this way.

The challenge for many academies is having the additional resources and staff time to more actively engage with and document their work and the work of alumni. Given tight budgets and limited capacity, several academy directors felt they could not devote the attention to alumni relationships and network building that these elements deserve.

Community Planning Academy Prototype for Fresno

The second element of our project involved working with local stakeholders to apply the insights and ideas from our interviews and scan to design and launch a CPA prototype for Fresno, California. Over the past 5+ years, our team has led several technical assistance projects in Fresno with the Central Valley Community Foundation as part of the Kresge Foundation's Shared Prosperity Partnership.¹⁸ Our early research found Fresno as one of the poorest cities in California and in the nation.¹⁹ During our different Fresno engagements, land-use issues inevitably surfaced as barriers that prevent many residents from living in healthy and safe communities and prevent many neighborhoods from achieving more inclusive and equitable growth.²⁰ Decades of structurally racist land-use policies and environmental injustices have caused a range of disparate socioeconomic and environmental impacts on Fresno's neighborhoods of color (Pacheco-Werner et al. 2018).

In early 2022, informed by interviews and a national scan, the Urban Institute and local partners hosted a series of virtual design workshops to gauge interest, gather insights, and assess what a community-driven planning academy could look like in Fresno. Representing local housing and community development nonprofits, community organizers, institutions, and local government agencies and departments, the 15 to 20 workshop participants identified three primary groups of Fresno residents that could benefit from academy programming: community members with lived experience but with little formal land-use knowledge; community members and land-use professionals with ample land-use experience; and community and nonprofit leaders with great potential and strong interest in becoming a player or decisionmaker within Fresno's land-use ecosystem.

In response to the workshop participants' insights and ideas, the Urban Institute helped the group design a prototype academy—The Fresno Community Land Use Academy—with three interconnected program tracks: the Land-Use Bootcamp, the Planning and Development Academy, and the Land-Use Leadership Academy. Each program track would provide complementary educational programming for all three primary community audiences and improve overall land-use literacy by equipping members of each sector with the requisite building blocks for influencing and impacting land-use policies and land development decisions that affect their communities and neighborhoods. Although Fresno residents might not map onto our community audience designations cleanly, we hope that distinguishing the three “tracks” can help potential participants identify which curriculum fits their needs the best. These comprehensive tracks collectively address the breadth of Fresno residents' land-use-related needs and build upon each other: bootcamp graduates would have the foundation to participate in the planning academy and planning academy graduates would be equipped to participate in subsequent leadership academies.

Instead of the local planning department, the prototype design group felt that a local nonprofit intermediary—Every Neighborhood Partnership—should serve as the host or hub for managing and coordinating the academy's three program tracks. The city planning department along with nonprofit organizations and institutions, such as community development corporations, social justice advocates,

neighborhood groups, and the community foundation, would play important roles and could co-manage one of the program tracks (e.g., the planning and development academy). The group also shifted the name away from just “planning” to “community land-use” as a recognition that land-use is the underlying focus, and that urban planning serves as one of the primary strategies and tools but it is not the only policy or program pathway to ensuring the built environment in Fresno is more inclusive, equitable and resilient. Thanks to a grant from the Kresge Foundation, Every Neighborhood Partnership and their community partners are now working to launch the bootcamps in early 2023 followed by the planning and development academy later in the year. Based on the results from the pilot, Fresno Community Land Use Academy would focus on the leadership academy in 2024.

Conclusion—A Call for Reinvesting in Land-Use and Planning Academies

The distinct academy models provide a platform for improving the accessibility of existing land use systems while increasing the capacity of a wide range of communities—from residents and professional planners to the next generation of community leaders and land-use officials. Our project identifies a range of new opportunities for nonprofits, universities, and planning departments to adapt and expand the traditional CPA model so that it can serve as a catalyst for reforming planning and land-use policies and programs to be more inclusive, equitable, and resilient. We recognize that systems change is not the primary mission for many CPAs as local government officials (elected and appointed) control the land-use policy and program levers. As land-use educators, CPA directors and staff tend to apply a neutral lens with their entry-level programming on the nuts and bolts of the current system rather than reflect on how to reform it. If CPAs, however, adopted some of the practices from the PPAs and the community builder academies as part of expanded intermediary curriculum and activities, we contend that it would build momentum and create a stronger pathway for action and land-use reform.

Although the PPA and CBA models also can be revised and revamped, scaling a new prototype CPA would have the most direct impact and set the stage for further learning that can lead to action. On the basis of our research and analysis, we offer two sets of recommendations: (1) CPA structure and operations for launching new prototype academies, and (2) broader policy insights and ideas for government and philanthropy to invest in land use and planning academies. Communities interested in revamping current academy models or launching future iterations will need new partnerships and new investments to actualize the potential land-use system changes that land-use and planning academies can help them achieve.

Community Planning Academy Structure and Operations

Based on our national scan, conversations, and synthesis of the diverse academy models, we offer the following four principles to help communities retrofit existing CPAs or design a new prototype that

can facilitate community dialogues, elevate community voices, and empower community action as part of their land-use and planning educational programming:

- **Expand the scope and scale of CPA programming.** Each academy model has its own strengths and assets because each model serves compatible but slightly different missions and constituents. Consider expanding the classic CPA to include programming and activities that integrate features from the other models. For example, local planning departments that run CPAs could refocus some of their curriculum to work with youth and BIPOC young professionals. Another option is to expand course offerings for participants and alumni on leadership, community organizing, power mapping, and other professional skill-building courses.
- **Align multiple academy models through collaborative partnerships and networks.** A city or region can have more than one type of academy. The city planning department might host the classic CPA, but local nonprofit groups might run a series of neighborhood-scale bootcamps while the local university manages an annual planning academy for elected officials, land-use commissioners, and professional planners. Another nonprofit focuses their energies on training and placing academy alumni on land use task forces, boards and commissions with a city or region. Perhaps in another city a consortium of nonprofits runs the CPA but the planning department coordinates the PPA. Imagine a network of academy models within a region or state that could compare notes and share resources and ideas.
- **Support learning opportunities that lead to action, advocacy, and community capacity building.** Beyond the courses and the classroom, CPAs provide prime opportunities for service-learning projects, collaborations with university planning studios, and empowering graduates to advocate for land-use processes and decisions that reflect community priorities and help address underlying disparities, especially in communities of color. Ensuring that CPAs have space for the development of leadership skills, public speaking, and community organizing will complement more substantive curriculum content and help prepare CPA participants to extend their involvement with planning to outside of the classroom. In addition, spending time cultivating CPA alumni through enrichment courses, networking, and coaching and through placement on local advisory boards and commissions can create a CPA network that may enrich community projects and organizing around advocacy issues.
- **Elevate structural racism and equitable land-use reforms.** All models can serve as a platform for community conversations about the legacy of redlining, segregation, and exclusionary zoning. More work must be done to ensure that more people understand that existing land-use policies and plans still perpetuate structural racism. Create or revamp CPA curricula to explain the disparate impacts that past and current land-use plans and policies have on neighborhoods of color. Invite debate and provide innovative strategies and approaches from other cities on how to reimagine more equitable planning and land-use systems.

Investing in the Next Generation of Planning Academies

Land use and the built environment affect our health, society, economy, and environment. As communities confront the interdependent challenges of climate resilience, racial equity, and inclusive economic recovery, they must make strategic decisions and take critical actions to adapt and recalibrate their land-use systems. The complexities of urban planning, zoning, and other land development concepts, rules, and systems continue to exclude communities of color and often serve as critical barriers to elevating community priorities, engaging residents, and ensuring more equitable benefits.

As this report highlights, planning academies can fill this void by providing effective and efficient community-driven land-use education that can then serve as a platform for changing existing land-use and land development systems so they are more equitable, inclusive, and resilient. Although the power and legal authority to reform local land-use systems rests with state and local government officials, CPAs can build the foundation for action by providing the venue for dialogues between and among policymakers, land use officials, developers and residents. And some planning academies, such as the community builder model, can support community action through training and workshops on advocacy, organizing, and leadership development. Despite this potential, our research found that CPAs run on a shoestring budget with small staffs, and they often rely on periodic foundation funding. During lean budget years several planning departments were forced to suspend their CPAs. From a broader policy perspective, planning academies largely remain an untapped and underresourced program, even in those communities that have hosted planning academies for years.

Now is the ideal time for policymakers, planners, and communities to launch, expand, and revamp planning academies given the unprecedented governmental and philanthropic investments in infrastructure, climate resilience, sustainability, economic recovery, and environmental justice. These national, regional, and local resources will involve significant and numerous local land-use planning, policy, and development decisions where community ownership, empowerment, and engagement are essential to creating a more healthy and equitable future.

The missed opportunity is whether communities can access and leverage the following grants and other place-based grants for community capacity-building activities, such as planning academies, that can elevate equity and empower communities beyond individual projects and programs. Our CPA prototype presents government institutions and their nonprofit partners with a promising vehicle for expanding community land-use capacity while catalyzing the necessary policy and systems change.

- **Leverage federal and state grants to support community land-use education and capacity building.** We propose that federal and state governments enable local governments to use their infrastructure, climate, and recovery grants and resources for community land-use education. More specifically, policymakers and government officials should revise existing policies and grant programs that would allow communities, in collaboration with their philanthropic and nonprofit partners, to launch, expand, and revamp planning academies consistent with the principles and practices outlined in this report. For those communities

interested in launching or revamping a planning academy, one of the first steps is undertaking some type of assessment. Building on the lessons learned from our Fresno prototype experience, it can take anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000 to undertake a six-month (or longer) feasibility analysis, build a coalition of supporters and advocates, and then design the structure, obtain funding, and eventually launch a planning academy. Depending on the number of academy programs, we estimate the minimum annual operating budget for a CPA to be about \$100,000 to \$150,000, which includes a full-time director, one to two dedicated staff members, along with sufficient resources to support two to three cohorts a year. Special workshops and alumni activities might cost more. Although these estimates will vary from place to place, they establish the threshold investment that governments and philanthropies must make to cultivate planning academies.

- **Establish a national learning network of planning academies.** Grants or resources alone, however, will not ensure the success of individual academies or the ability to scale multiple academies. Government and philanthropic partners also should invest in the establishment of a national network of planning academies that could provide guidance and technical assistance in the design and development of CPAs as well as facilitate peer learning among CPAs and across different planning academy models. Such a network similar to the [Association for Community Design](#) that serves neighborhood design centers could ensure the expansion and sustainability of CPAs. A nonprofit entity working as a backbone organization for this national network could assist in curriculum development on land use and racial justice, embed the core principles of inclusion and equity, and undertake academy program evaluation and impact assessment. A national network would expand and diffuse different iterations of the CPA prototype and could help catalyze a land-use reform movement in states and cities across the country.

Appendix A: Resources on Race, Land Use and Equity

This short list of resources that looks at strategies for addressing the structural racism found in existing land use systems (e.g., zoning, land development processes, urban planning, etc.). Some of the resources offer more general equitable development frameworks that communities could apply to land use. The goal is to point communities in the general direction as nonprofits, foundations and government at all levels continue to publish new policy reports, academic articles, blogs, and tool kits to assist policymakers and community leaders.

American Planning Association: Planning for Equity Policy Guide

<https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9178541/>

Furman Center (NYU): Exclusionary Zoning

<https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/policy-minute-exclusionary-zoning>

Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE): Racial Equity Toolkit

https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf

Grounded Solutions Network: Inclusionary Housing and Advancing Racial Equity in Housing and Community Development

<https://inclusionaryhousing.org/>

Othering and Belonging Institute: Decoding Zoning

<https://belonging.berkeley.edu/keywords/zoning>

Land Use Lab at the Urban Institute

<https://www.urban.org/projects/land-use-lab-urban>

Mapping Prejudice Project, University of Minnesota

<https://mappingprejudice.umn.edu/>

Next City: How Zoning Laws Perpetuate Segregation

<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/apartheid-by-another-name-how-zoning-regulations-perpetuate-segregation>

Turner Center, University of California, Berkeley

<https://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/research-and-policy/>

Undesign the Red Line Project

<http://www.designingthewe.com/undesign-the-redline>

Appendix B: Organizations Interviewed

As part of a national scan, we had the opportunity to speak with directors and staff involved from the following planning academies that illustrate the different institutional hosts for the three academy models:

- Community planning academy model: local government planning department or agencies
 - » Baltimore Planning Academy, City Planning Department
 - » Philadelphia Citizens Planning Institute, City of Philadelphia Planning Commission
 - » [Sacramento Planning Academy, City Planning Department](#)

- Planning professionals model: university centers and extension offices, and research institutes
 - » Pace Law School Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program
 - » Center for Land Use Education, College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point
 - » Mountain State Land Use Academy, West Virginia University School of Law
 - » American Citizen Planning, Michigan State University
 - » [Citizen Planning School](#), University at Buffalo Regional Institute, School of Architecture and Planning
- Community builder model: nonprofit organizations
 - » [Greenlining Institute's Policy Leadership Academy, Oakland, California](#)
 - » Upstate Forever, North Carolina
 - » Nexus Community Partners Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute, Minneapolis—St. Paul, Minnesota

Notes

- ¹ Yonah Freemark and Gabi Velasco, "Louisville is using zoning reform to tackle inequity. Could this work for other cities?" *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, March 12, 2021.
- ² Jared Brey, "This Data Shows Who Grabs the Mic at Public Planning Meetings," NextCity, September 6, 2018, <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/new-data-boston-metro-nimbys-public-meetings-development>.
- ³ Solomon Greene and Jorge González-Hermoso, "How communities are rethinking zoning to improve housing affordability and access to opportunity," *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, June 12, 2019.
- ⁴ Jerusalem Demsas, "A fight over housing segregation is dividing one of America's most liberal states," *Vox* (blog), March 29, 2021.
- ⁵ Margery Austin Turner and Solomon Greene, "Causes and Consequences of Separate and Unequal Neighborhoods," Urban Institute, accessed July 24th, 2022 <https://www.urban.org/racial-equity-analytics-lab/structural-racism-explainer-collection/causes-and-consequences-separate-and-unequal-neighborhoods>.
- ⁶ For example, see Mandarano (2015).
- ⁷ Beyond the three somewhat distinct models of land-use/planning education identified by our project, it is important to acknowledge parallel academy forms that instruct emerging community leaders and/or practitioners about the fundamentals of local government operations, such as the Local Governance Summer Institute at Stanford, and community leadership academies, such as Leadership Memphis. Although these academies touch upon land use and planning, their mission and goals are broader and thus the participants, programming, and activities are different.
- ⁸ Some local governments host similar community-based academies that focus on local government operations, such as the Neighborhood College of Arlington County, Virginia; see <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Arlington-Neighborhoods-Program/College>, accessed July 24, 2022.
- ⁹ Several state municipal leagues, often in partnership with their state universities, host academies as professional development for new and returning local government officials to ensure they understand their roles, responsibilities, and authorities. Examples include the Municipal Leaders Academy in Iowa (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/oslgp/MLA>, accessed July 24, 2022) and the Institute for

Local Officials in Virginia (<https://www.vml.org/education/conferences/institute-for-local-officials-2/>, accessed July 24, 2022).

- ¹⁰ As the national association for professional planners, the American Planning Association (APA) and its state chapters manage the professional accreditation and continuing education for professional planners in the United States. In addition to the national office, APA chapters, universities, and some nonprofit organizations provide courses and workshops approved by APA.
- ¹¹ The film *Segregated by Design*, which is based on *The Color of Law*, examines how federal, state, and local governments imposed racial segregation on metropolitan areas across the United States (<https://www.segregatedbydesign.com/>).
- ¹² More information about the “Undesign the Redline” exhibit is available at the Designing the We website, <http://www.designingthewe.com/undesign-the-redline>.
- ¹³ “Redlining Community Dialogue,” government of Louisville, Kentucky, accessed July 24th, 2022, <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/redevelopment-strategies/redlining-community-dialogue>; Cole Bradley, “Seeing Red I: Mapping 90 Years of Redlining in Memphis,” High Ground, March 31, 2019, <https://www.highgroundnews.com/features/SeeingRedlining.aspx>.
- ¹⁴ Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), accessed July 24, 2022, <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>.
- ¹⁵ Emma Zaher, “Smaller Legacy Cities and Greening in the Age of COVID,” *Land Lines*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, November 18, 2020, <https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/articles/2020-11-legacy-cities-urban-sustainability-greening-covid-19>.
- ¹⁶ “Philadelphia 2035,” Philadelphia City Planning Commission, accessed July 24, 2022, <https://www.phila2035.org/single-post/new-planning-video-series>.
- ¹⁷ “Planning Commission Training,” Planetizen, accessed July 24, 2022, <https://courses.planetizen.com/planning-commissioner-training>.
- ¹⁸ Chantel Rush, Joseph Schilling, and Gretchen Moore, “A Strategic Plan to Rebalance Power in Fresno for Inclusive and Equitable Growth,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review Magazine*, November 4, 2020, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/a_strategic_plan_to_rebalance_power_in_fresno_for_inclusive_and_equitable_growth#.
- ¹⁹ Erika C. Poethig, “How local philanthropy is addressing Fresno, California’s severe economic inequities,” *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, November 16, 2018, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-local-philanthropy-addressing-fresno-californias-severe-economic-inequities>.
- ²⁰ Reis Thebault, “Fresno’s Mason-Dixon Line,” *The Atlantic*, August 20, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/08/fresnos-segregation/567299/>.

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As a land-use, urban planning, and environmental educator and trainer, Schilling has developed and delivered practitioner workshops, facilitated policy roundtables and led communities of practice on topics from brownfields redevelopment and environmental justice to strategic code enforcement, housing preservation, and sustainability planning. For 12 years Schilling taught urban planning as a research professor for Virginia Tech (Northern Virginia Campus) where he featured interactive courses, planning studios, and exercises that applied complex legal and planning concepts to real-world land-use and planning problems.

Schilling's research work highlights the critical planning and policy intersections around health equity, sustainability, and the built environment. He is coauthor of the 2020 research report *Leveraging the Built Environment for Health Equity*, which identifies promising strategies that small to midsize cities could adopt to improve the physical environment and foster health equity. As a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellow (2016–19) with the Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program, Schilling cowrote a first of its kind health impact assessment on strategic code enforcement and substandard housing in Memphis, Tennessee. With funding from the Pew Charitable Trust, Schilling and his team released a second health impact assessment that identifies regulatory actions and housing resource for addressing substandard rental housing in Philadelphia.

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