

# The Promise of Community Planning Academies

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Baltimore County CRA

# Session Overview

**Part 1:** Debates and Conflicts over Land Use Planning, Land Development, Zoning, Parking etc.

**Part 2:** Three Common Community Planning Academy Models

**Part 3:** Prototyping in Fresno and Memphis

**Part 4:** Maryland CPA Examples

**Part 5:** Our Ambition: Building a National Network of CPAs and Community of Practice

# The battle over single-family zoning is also a fight over what to call it



LOCAL

## Columbus effort to end zoning fights leads to zoning fight at Henderson and Olentangy

**Bill Bush** Columbus Dispatch

Updated June 12, 2024, 6:26 a.m. ET



Advertisement

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fighting irresponsible zoning changes

by Kathy Corcos May 9, 2023

In multiple River Forest neighboring blocks in the Madison Street Corridor TIF district, residents are fighting a similar fight to that of Oak Park residents regarding zoning changes that allow for development of high-rise buildings which push boundaries beyond what fits in an old, established residential area.

Local news, straight to your inbox!

## WHY IT IS WORTH IT TO FIGHT A ZONING PROJECT

@ Jordan Matyas January 12, 2021

# Why is local land use, land development often fraught with conflict and controversy?

- Property rights
- Power
- Money
- Competing or conflicting interests and goals
- Uncomfortable with change
- Other thoughts?

# Urban Institute's CPA Project and Engagements

# Research and Prototyping CPA Models 2022-2024



**Grant from  
Kresge to  
Conduct  
National Scan**



**Interviews and  
Focus Groups**



**2022 Fresno  
Co-Design and  
Prototyping**



**Urban Institute  
Report  
Nov 2022**

**2023–  
2024  
Piloting &  
Launching  
Fresno  
CLUA**

# National Scan of Diverse Academy Models



American Citizen  
Planning Program at  
MSU



Baltimore Planning  
Academy



Center for Land Use  
Education at  
University of  
Wisconsin



Greenline Institute  
Leadership  
Academy



Nexus Community  
Partners Boards and  
Commissions  
Leadership Institute



Pace Law School  
Land Use  
Leadership Alliance  
Training Program



Philadelphia  
Citizen's Planning  
Institute



Sacramento Citizen  
Planning Academy



Upstate Forever  
Citizens Planning  
Academy

# Urban Found Three Primary Planning Academy Models

- Traditional Community Planning Academy Model
- Planner/Land Use Professional Model
- Community Builder Model

# Community Planning Model—CPA

## Baltimore, Philadelphia, Sacramento

<b>Host</b>	Local Government Planning Agency
<b>Staffing</b>	Planning Staff
<b>Applicants</b>	City or county residents identified as leaders in their community due to their community involvement, organizing, volunteering, or advocacy work
<b>Application</b>	Referrals, Applications, and Interviews
<b>Cohort size</b>	20-30 people
<b>Duration</b>	3-5 months
<b>Topics</b>	Planning/land use basic concepts and local processes, zoning, and special topics such as affordable housing, transportation, etc.

# Planner/Land Use Professionals Model—MSU, WVA, Pace Environmental Program

<b>Host</b>	University-affiliated land use law/policy center or land grant extension office
<b>Staffing</b>	Research Faculty and Extension/Outreach Staff
<b>Applicants</b>	Current local planning officials and planning professionals, such as commissioners, zoning board members Some nonprofits or community-based professionals involved with land use planning
<b>Application</b>	Workshops developed by request <i>or</i> applicants are nominated
<b>Cohort size</b>	10-20 people
<b>Duration</b>	1-2 day workshops or a retreat of a few days
<b>Topics</b>	basics of land use planning/zoning, rules and requirements related to the powers and processes for making land use decisions, public meeting rules, conflict resolution, legal rules and standards.

# Community Builder Model—Nexus or Greenlining Institute

<b>Host</b>	Regional/ local non-profit
<b>Staffing</b>	Non-profit staff
<b>Applicants</b>	Young BIPOC professionals and community-based leaders involved with local policy/neighborhood issues.
<b>Application</b>	Workshops developed by request <i>or</i> applicants are nominated
<b>Cohort size</b>	8-12 people
<b>Format/ Duration</b>	Fellowship Model: 9–12-month fellowship/community policy project Boards & Commissions Model: 3–5-month academy to prepare BIPOC placement on local boards and commissions
<b>Topics/ Focus</b>	Specific projects/topics (land use+) on pressing priorities to the nonprofit and community, includes leadership development skills. Another model focuses on recruiting, training, preparing and placing individuals of color on a wide array of local government boards and commissions.

# Academy Characteristics—The Four Features

- **Host & Funding**
- **Recruitment & Participants**
- **Curriculum & Delivery**
- **Network Building & Learning to Action**

# Other Local Academies—These are NOT CPAs 😊

- Local government academies (state level):
  - State of Penn: <https://www.localgovernmentacademy.org/>
- City and town govt academies
  - Alexandria, VA: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/CityAcademy>
- Civic and business leadership academies
  - Memphis, TN: <https://leadershipmemphis.org/>

# Promoting CPAs through Policy and Programs

- Expand the scope and scale of CPA programming
- Align multiple academy models through collaborative partnerships and networks
- Support learning networks that lead to action, advocacy and community capacity building
- Provide a safe space for difficult conversations on exclusionary land use policies
- Elevate equitable land use reforms
- Leverage state and philanthropic grants to support community land use education and capacity building



## Reimagining Community Planning Academies

A Framework for Transformative Community Land-Use Education

*Joe Schilling, Emily Bramhall, and Ananya Hariharan*

*November 2022*

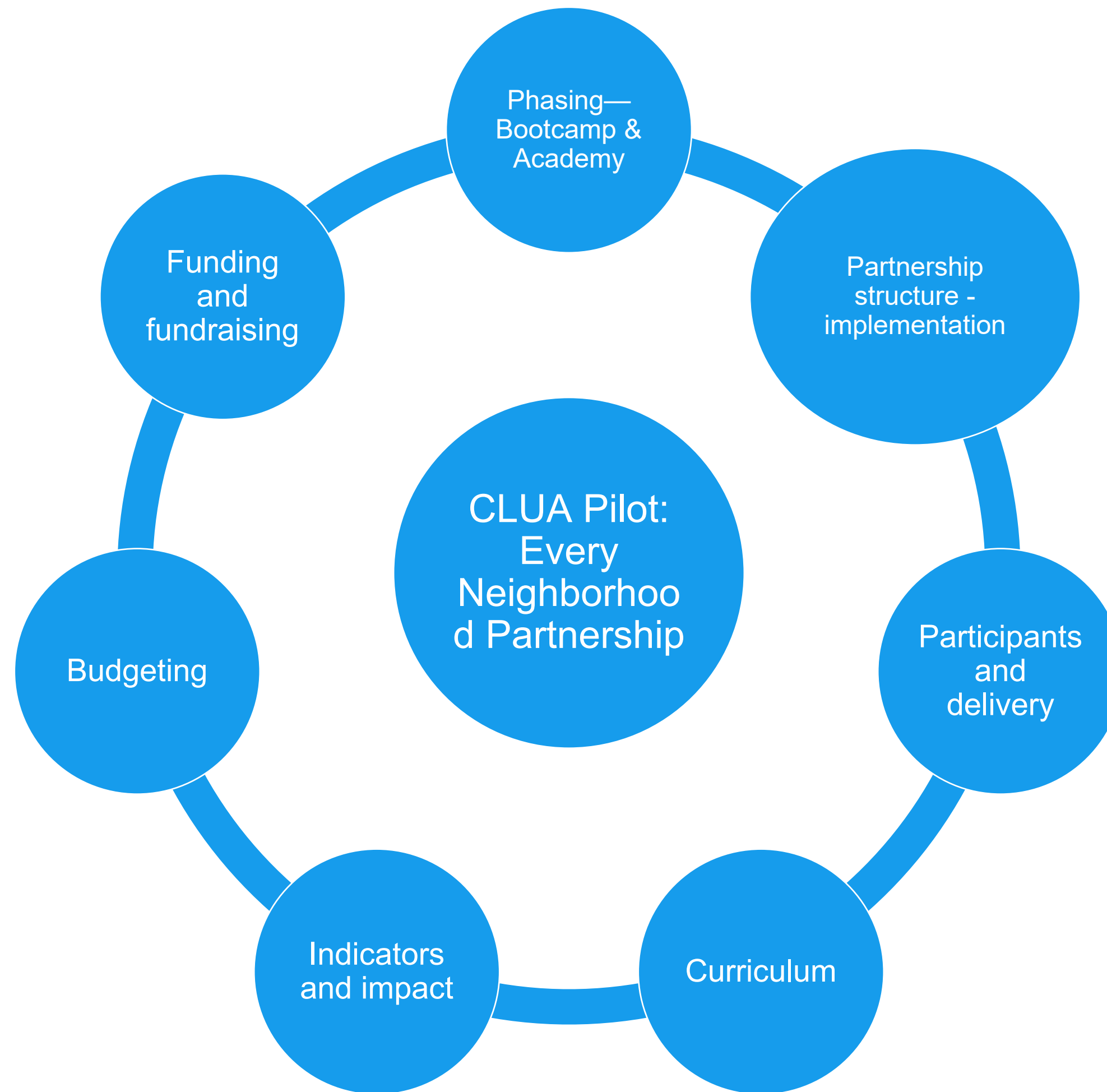
For more than 25 years, dozens of local planning departments have held regular community planning academies (CPAs) for residents as a way to expand land-use literacy and improve community engagement in their planning processes. In the summer of 2021, a team from the Research to Action Lab at the Urban 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.

# Essential Goals for the CPA Field

- ***Increases knowledge and resources*** available to community members to engage in land use and zoning conversations, decisions and actions
- ***Unpacks the role of structural exclusion and power in land use*** and how it is perpetuated through zoning and other discriminatory land use policies and practices
- ***Provides space for conversations*** between participants, planning officials, and other land use and development actors on difficult land use topics
- ***Explores change and reforms*** to current land use and land development policies,
- ***Recruits and works with individuals*** who are underrepresented in land use and zoning decision-making including leaders of color
- ***Builds networks*** and pathways for participants to apply insights they learned, collaborate with the people they have met, and advocate for changes to improve existing planning and zoning policies and practices

# Prototyping & Launching the Fresno Community Land Use Academy (CLUA)



# Fresno's Pilot—Community Land Use Academy (CLUA)

## Community Bootcamp



- Entry-level for community members
- Focus on how land use affects their neighborhoods/everyday lives and discusses basic land development, zoning and planning concepts
- Delivered in the neighborhood over 6 weeks
- Delivered by community organizers/developers tailored to local land use problems

## Planning & Development Academy



- Bootcamp graduates and active/engaged community members
- Focus on city wide and regional land use systems, land development and urban planning more broadly
- Delivered in a 10-week cohort model
- Taught by local land use professionals, practitioners and experts in the field

# Community Land Use Academy

home / community land use academy

## CLUA Testimonials

“After this class, **I don’t drive around Fresno the same.** I notice the speed limits, how buildings are facing, where affordable housing is located. I’m writing down the numbers of abandoned buildings to find out who owns them and what could be done to beautify Fresno.”

~ Melissa Perry, Associate Director with Generation Changers.

“If you are someone who wants to make a change, I definitely recommend taking this class.”

~ Tony Quezada, Owner of Lets Roll Fresno & Soccer Coach.

“For many years I was advocating with a group of residents for a pedestrian crosswalk in our area- the area around Susan B Anthony [Elementary School]. **Now that I am in this program, I know exactly what the process is that I have to follow to guide other leaders so they can advocate for the development of our communities.** I am very grateful to be a part of this academy.”

~ Juana Iris Meza, community organizer with The Children’s Movement of Fresno



<https://everyneighborhood.org/clua/>

# RESOURCES ON TRADITIONAL CPAs



### The Baltimore Planning Academy: Community Empowerment Through Civic Education

By Elina Bravve

In 2018, the Baltimore Department of Planning (DoP) launched the Baltimore Planning Academy. The [Planning Academy](#) is a cohort-based, six-week program designed to build community leadership around urban planning, zoning, and development topics (Figure 1).

The development of this program stemmed from five goals embedded in the DoP's Equity Action Plan. The first goal states that the DoP aims to "improve and increase the dialogue between the Department of Planning and underserved communities in Baltimore." The Planning Academy was an action recommended under this goal.

The Planning Academy seeks to elevate the ability of community members to affect the public processes around planning, policy, and urban development and to elevate equitable public engagement as a major goal for the DoP.

This PAS Memo explains the vision and goals of the Baltimore Planning Academy, its structure and design, and the impact thus far of the program. The Memo also offers recommendations and action steps for planners toward replicating this program in other municipalities.



Figure 1. The Baltimore Planning Academy's 2019 cohort (Baltimore Department of Planning)

#### Equity and Engagement In Context

Broadly defined, *equity* seeks to redistribute public resources based upon public need. In 2015, DoP staff began exploring what this concept could mean for planning in Baltimore.

That year, a food justice training at the DoP galvanized a small group of staff to create an Equity in Planning Committee. Monthly meetings were attended by at least one member (but often more) of each [internal division](#), and initially involved a process of self-education and discussion, focusing on urban planning and local government policies that have led to inequitable outcomes in Baltimore and so many cities like it. The focus soon shifted to developing an equity action plan with concrete goals and recommendations for the purpose of presenting these ideas to senior leadership.

The Committee worked together over the course of 2015–2017 to develop its own shared language and understanding of equity. This resulted in the following internal definition:

*An equitable Baltimore addresses the needs and aspirations of its diverse population and meaningfully engages residents through inclusive and collaborative processes to expand access to power and resources.*

The [Equity Action Plan](#) was finalized in 2017. It consists of five overarching goals developed collectively by members of the Equity in Planning Committee, each with a series of specific recommended actions. The five goals are as follows:

1. Improve and increase the dialogue and connections between the Department of Planning and underserved communities in Baltimore.
2. Ensure that the Planning Department staff reflect the demographics of Baltimore City.
3. Use an equity lens to develop, revise, and evaluate City policies.
4. Use an equity lens to prioritize capital investments.





**Baltimore Planning Academy  
Fall 2023 Cohort**

# Profiles of Existing CPAs in Maryland

Maryland has seen a series of community planning academies emerge in both urban and suburban jurisdictions. The following three profiles examine academy goals, content covered and their impact.



# BALTIMORE PLANNING ACADEMY



**2017**  
Established



**385**  
Number of Graduates



**Spring + Fall**  
Sessions



**35**  
Typical Cohort Size

## Typical Topics

Historic Preservation, Zoning, Development Process, Community Planning, Land Use, Sustainability

**11**

Number of Cohorts

## Method

Hybrid

## Awards & Recognition



**2000**  
American Planning  
Association PAS Memo  
Subject



**American Planning Association**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

# Baltimore City

## Mission + Vision

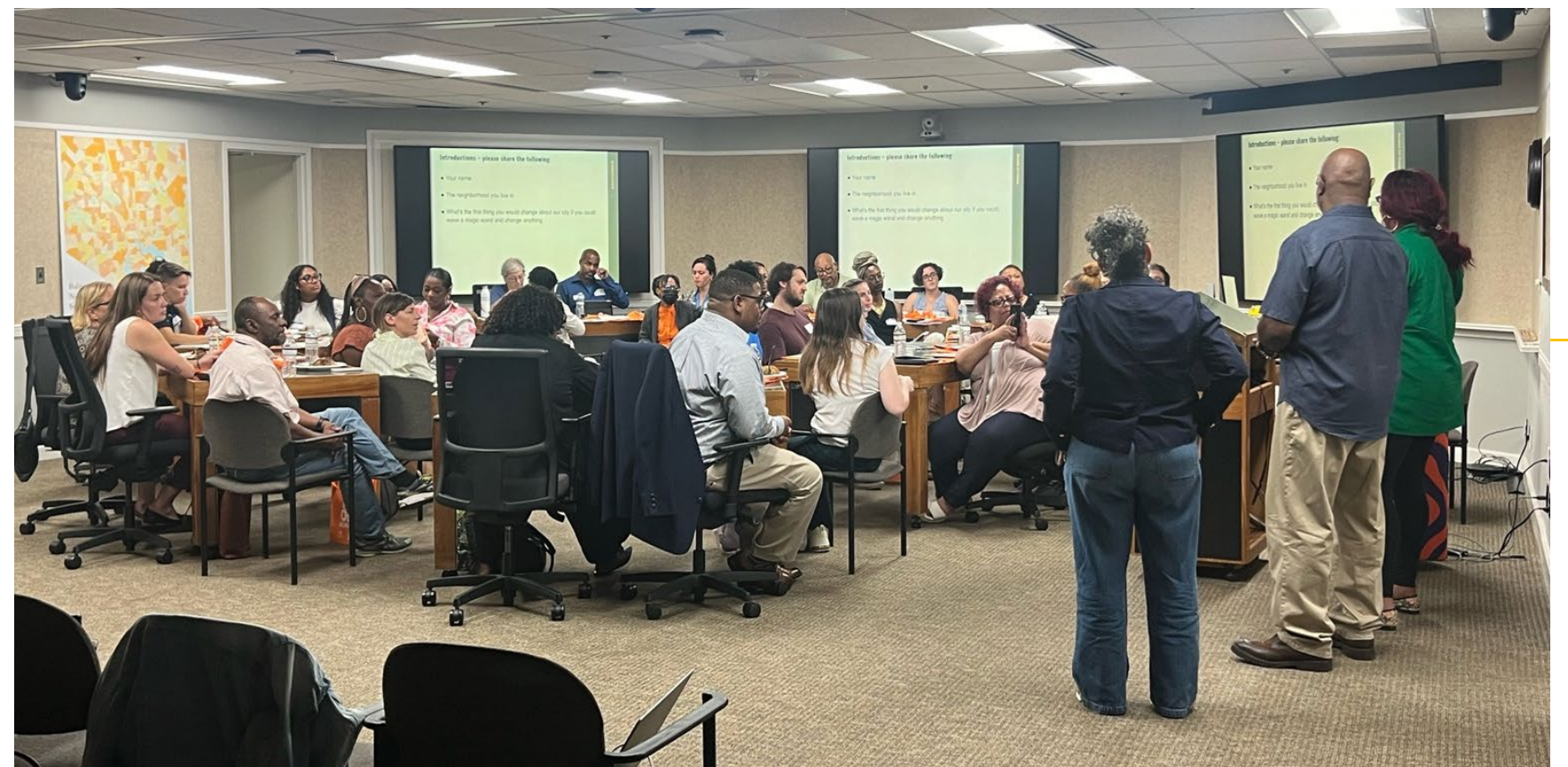
Baltimore's Planning Academy is a free six-week course focusing on the planning and development process in Baltimore.



# Baltimore City

The Academy aims to empower community residents to shape the future of their neighborhoods and of Baltimore by building an understanding of local urban planning and design processes.

Each cohort also participates in a walking tour of a development project during their program.





## **Stephanie Smith**

Assistant Director

Baltimore City Department of Planning

# Contact

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## **Website**

[www.baltimoreplanningacademy.com](http://www.baltimoreplanningacademy.com)



**2017**

Established



**195**

Number of Graduates



**Spring + Fall**

Sessions



**35**

Typical Cohort Size

### Typical Topics

The Academy is a 5-week course that educates Howard County residents on zoning and land use plans, policies, and procedures to help them effectively participate in shaping their communities and our County's future.

**07**

Number of Cohorts

**Method**

In-Person

### Awards & Recognition



**2019**

NACo Civic Education and  
Public Information Award



#### Nationally Recognized

PlanHoward Academy received the 2019 Civic Education and Public Information Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). Recognized as an innovative, effective county government program that strengthens services for residents, PlanHoward Academy seeks to educate residents on land use plans, policies, and procedures that shape and grow our county.

# Howard County

PlanHoward Academy is an award-winning planning course designed by the Department of Planning and Zoning that educates residents on how the planning and land development process works. The free, five-week course includes in-class instruction, take home materials, and hands-on learning exercises such as table exercises, role playing and small and large group discussions.

The Academy provides an opportunity for residents to become better informed about the important role they play in shaping the County's future.

Howard County  
Plan Howard Academy

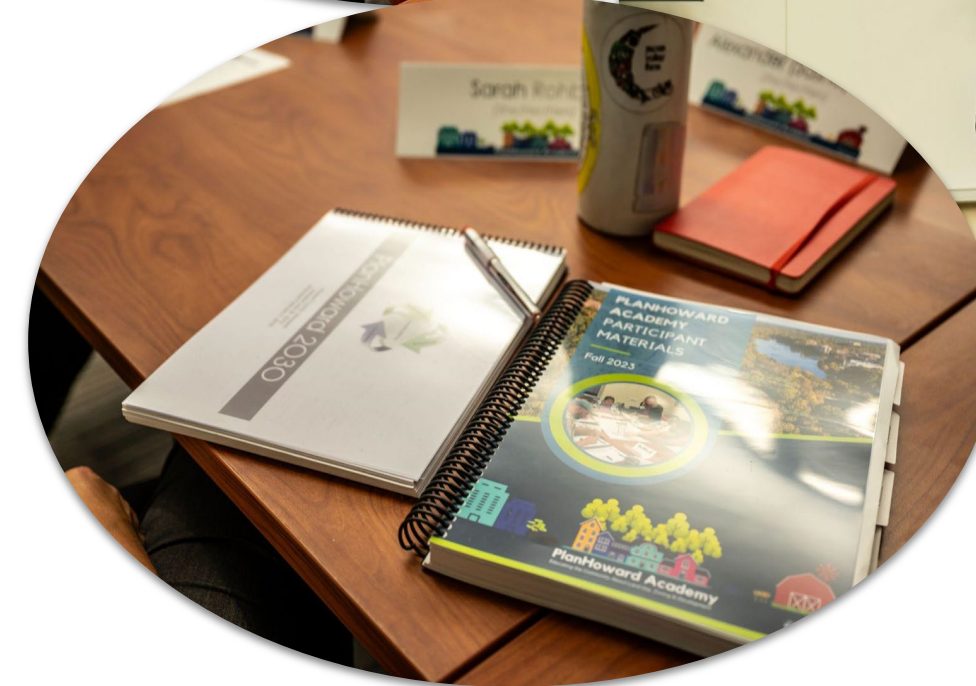
Taught and facilitated by professional planners, the Academy provides residents with a thought provoking, interactive curriculum focused on the underpinnings of land development in Howard County.



PlanHoward Academy

# Why a resident planning academy in Howard County?

- Learn planning terminology and gain an understanding of the land development process, including growth management policies, the role of the general plan, development review, and zoning.
- Be better informed about the County's planning efforts including the general plan updates and current planning efforts.
- Build relationships with planning staff and network with other participants.
- Share their knowledge with neighbors.



*"If we want Howard County to continue to be a great place to live, the citizens need to be active, but we need to be informed in order to be active. This course gives a great background to help you act constructively."*

- Testimonial from a 2019 Participant

*"Thank you for putting together an amazing course...Your enthusiasm and positivity was infectious, the course was incredibly well organized, communication was exemplary, the lectures were clear, relevant and informative, and the speakers were clearly well prepared and knowledgeable... I've learned quite a lot, but more than that, I've come away with a real appreciation and respect for the work that you do. It's made me even prouder to be part of this community and better equipped and more eager to engage."*

- Testimonial from a 2017 Participant

# What do Participants Learn?

## Session 1: Introduction to Planning

- Learn about the history of planning in the County. Gain an understanding of the role of the County's General Plan and the demographic changes and other factors that drive growth in the County. Become familiar with how you can have a voice in the process of comprehensive, corridor, and small area planning.

## Session 2: Planning Law & Zoning Overview

- Attend interactive presentations on planning law and county zoning. Learn about the legal underpinnings of land use decisions while gaining an understanding of case law, Supreme Court decisions, and the legal process of land development. Learn how zoning regulations regulate or encourage different types of development in specific geographic areas, and how you can participate in zoning decisions.

## Session 3: Zoning & Land Development

- Gain a better understanding of commercial and residential land development processes. Understand the different types of development projects and the required plan submissions for each. Learn when and how citizens can become involved during the development review process.

## Session 4: Development Review & Enforcement

- Understand the process for expanding or modifying an existing development. Learn about the types of relief from regulatory requirements that can be considered and how requests are processed. Find out when and how citizens can be more involved in plan review and code enforcement.

## Session 5: Responsible Growth & Informed Citizenry

- Learn about adequate public facilities, infrastructure planning, capital budget planning, and pacing new development. Understand tools and approaches that can lead to responsible growth in the County.



*"If you want to learn more about planning and zoning, about how Howard County's process works, and how you (as a resident) can give input on zoning and other plans - this is the place to come." -*

Testimonial from a  
2019 Participant

# Who participates?

Each cohort attempts to be representative of the County as a whole with participants that:

- live in various geographic areas of the County
- represent the County's diverse population
- have lived in the County for various amounts of time
- concerned with a variety of land use and planning interest areas (transportation, housing, environment, schools, preservation, etc.)

Alumni have included five elected officials, two Planning Board members, 17 Civic Association members, and 13 board or committee members.

## What's Next?



*"It is a great learning experience and a wonderful way to meet others in the community who have similar interest and the outstanding staff who make the county a place where folks can feel heard and appreciated."*

Testimonial from a 2018  
Participant



## **Kristine O'Connor**

Division Chief, Comprehensive and  
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## **Website**

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/planning-zoning/planhoward-academy>



**2022**

Established



**~70**

Number of Graduates



**Spring + Fall**

Sessions



**23**

Typical Cohort Size

### Typical Topics

The Department of Planning has created the Community Planning Institute (CPI) to empower Baltimore County community members & stakeholders to be productively engaged in planning, land use, and development processes & practices that impact their communities and neighborhoods.

**03**

Number of Cohorts

4th cohort in session

**Method**

In-Person

### Awards & Recognition



**2024**

**NACo 2024 Achievement Award**

Community Planning Institute

# Baltimore County

**Vision: Improve the way Baltimore County community members engage with planning, land use, and development processes.**

- Build capacity of individuals and organizations through education, exposure, and shared-experiences.
- Foster a healthy, interactive, and holistic learning environment that increases knowledge and understanding of practical approaches to community and urban planning issues or concerns
- Create opportunities to build positive cross-county relationships
- Provide tools and resources to help increase knowledge about Urban Planning concepts and practices
- Broaden the understanding of strengths, challenges, constraints, and outcomes associated with growth management and development

Baltimore County  
Community Planning Institute

**The Community Planning Institutes seeks to empower Baltimore County community members & stakeholders to be productively engaged in planning processes that affect their communities and neighborhoods.**



# 5-Week Curriculum

The Institute will consist of weekly in-person sessions, led by various county agencies and guest speakers. Participants are able to listen to lectures, complete small group activities, and create an action plan to utilize the tools and knowledge they gain.



## **WEEK 1 | Welcome/Kick Off**

Meet class members and other Baltimore County officials and more!



## **WEEK 2 | Planning 101**

Learn the purpose of community planning and common practices of the Department of Planning.



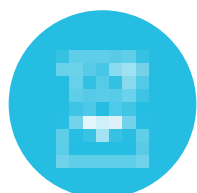
## **WEEK 3 | Understanding Zoning**

Understand the purpose of zoning and how that impacts the long-term make up of Baltimore County neighborhoods.



## **WEEK 4 | Baltimore Co Development**

Overview of how Baltimore County officials, developers, and lawyers approach development.



## **WEEK 5 | Graduation**

Attend graduation ceremony and officially become a Planning Ambassador.





**April Smith**

Community Planning Institute Coordinator,  
Baltimore County



# Contact

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## Website

<https://community-planning-institute-bc-gis.hub.arcgis.com/>

# Q & A

