

Cultivating Community Planning Academies (CPAs) in Maryland

Presented **October 22, 2024**

APA MD & MPCA Joint Conference



Baltimore City
Howard County
Baltimore County

Session Overview

Part 1: National Overview of CPAs

- **Joe Schilling**, Urban Institute

Part 2: Baltimore City

- **Stephanie Smith**, Assistant Director of Planning

Part 3: Howard County

- **Kristin O'Connor**, Division Chief of Comprehensive and Community Planning

Part 4: Baltimore County

- **April Smith**, Planning Academy Director

Part 5: Moderated Discussion and Q & A

- **Bill Butts**, VP Maryland Planning Commissioners Association

Community Planning Academies & Neighborhood Boot camps—Reimagining Community Land Use Education

*Urban Institute's
Typology of Academy Models
JSchilling@urban.org*

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 &
Lanching
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

- Community Planning Model
- Planning and Land Use Professional Model
- Community Builder Model

Community Planning Model—CPA Baltimore and Philadelphia

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

Planning and Land Use Professionals Model—MSU

Host	University-affiliated land use law/policy center or land grant extension office
Staffing	Research Faculty and Extension/Outreach Staff
Applicants	Current local planning officials and planning professionals, such as commissioners, zoning board members Some nonprofits or community-based professionals involved with land use planning
Application	Workshops developed by request <i>or</i> applicants are nominated
Cohort size	10-20 people
Duration	1-2 day workshops or a retreat of a few days
Topics	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, Minneapolis

Host	Regional/ local non-profit
Staffing	Non-profit staff
Applicants	Young BIPOC professionals and community-based leaders involved with local policy/neighborhood issues.
Application	Workshops developed by request <i>or</i> applicants are nominated
Cohort size	8-12 people
Format/ Duration	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
Topics/ Focus	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**

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 racism in land use*** and how it is perpetuated through exclusionary zoning and other racially 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

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
- Elevate structural racism and equitable land use reforms
- Leverage federal/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

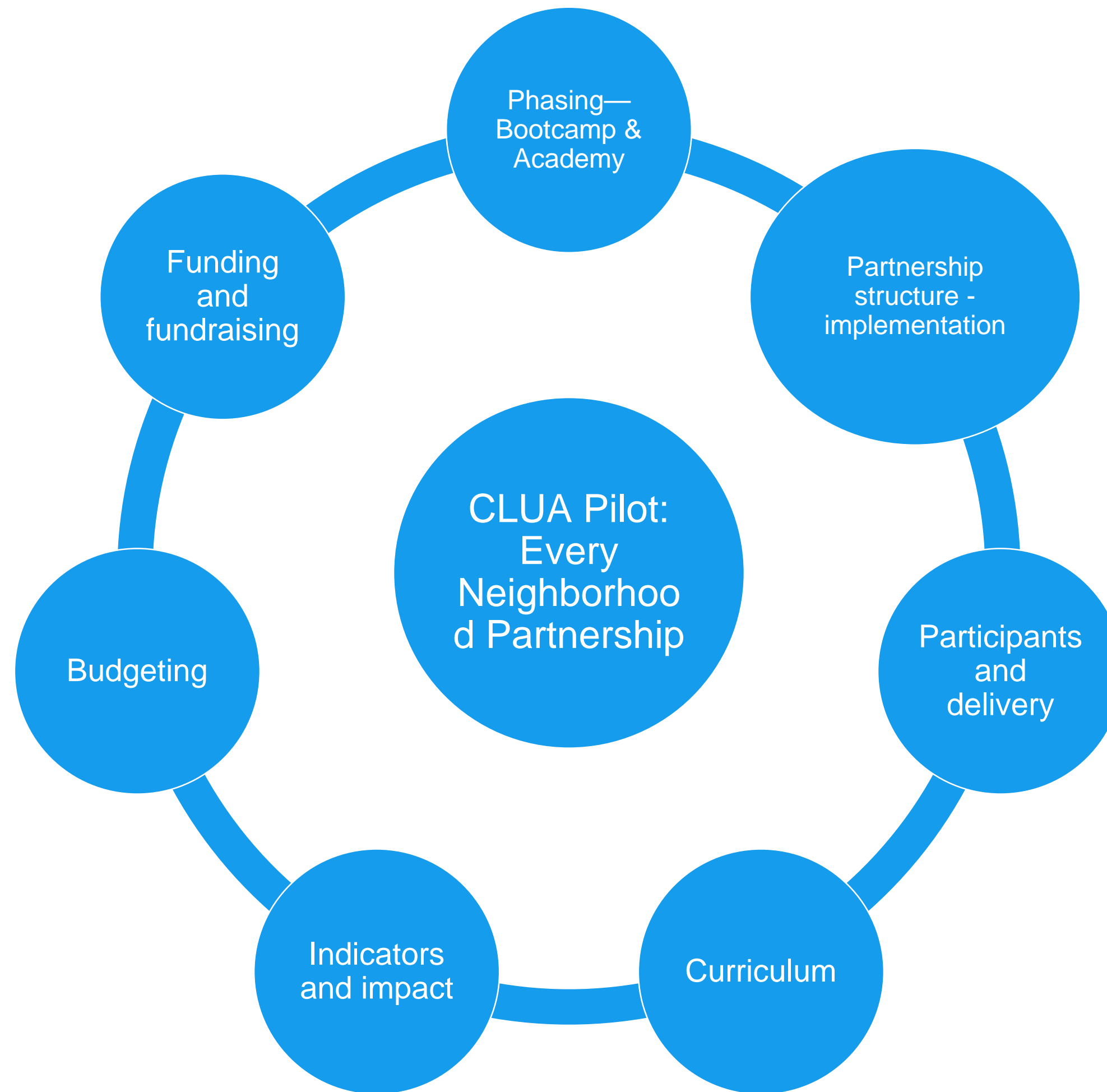
Joe Schilling, Emily Bramhall, and Ananya Hariharan

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.

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/>

For More Information:

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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.

1

American Planning Association | planning.org



<https://www.planning.org/publications/report/9273996/>



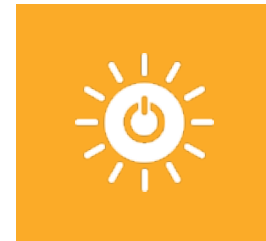
**Baltimore Planning Academy
Fall 2023 Cohort**

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.



Baltimore City

Why Planning Academy?

Baltimore is a city of neighborhoods - nearly 300 - that have their own rich histories, cultures and relationships to the planning process.

Baltimore Department of Planning recognizes our need to build trust, improve community engagement and increase resident understanding of our role and resources.

Through the Planning Academy, we want to connect residents to Baltimore's Planning Department, to other resources in City government, and to each other. Community members from the weakest housing markets are prioritized in the selection process.

JPMorgan Chase invests millions into non-profits to stabilize housing supply in Baltimore

Pennsylvania Avenue: Revitalizing what was once Baltimore's thriving arts, entertainment district

'It was a thriving business district. It was our business district'

Lady Brion is Maryland's 11th poet laureate — and its youngest ever

Taji Burris

9/16/2024 7:15 p.m. EDT, Updated 9/16/2024 9:21 p.m. EDT



Nonprofit group restores 15 abandoned homes into properties for teachers



Real Revitalization (Part 1): Parity buys back the block to drive community revival without displacement in West Baltimore

Roodgally Senatus





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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

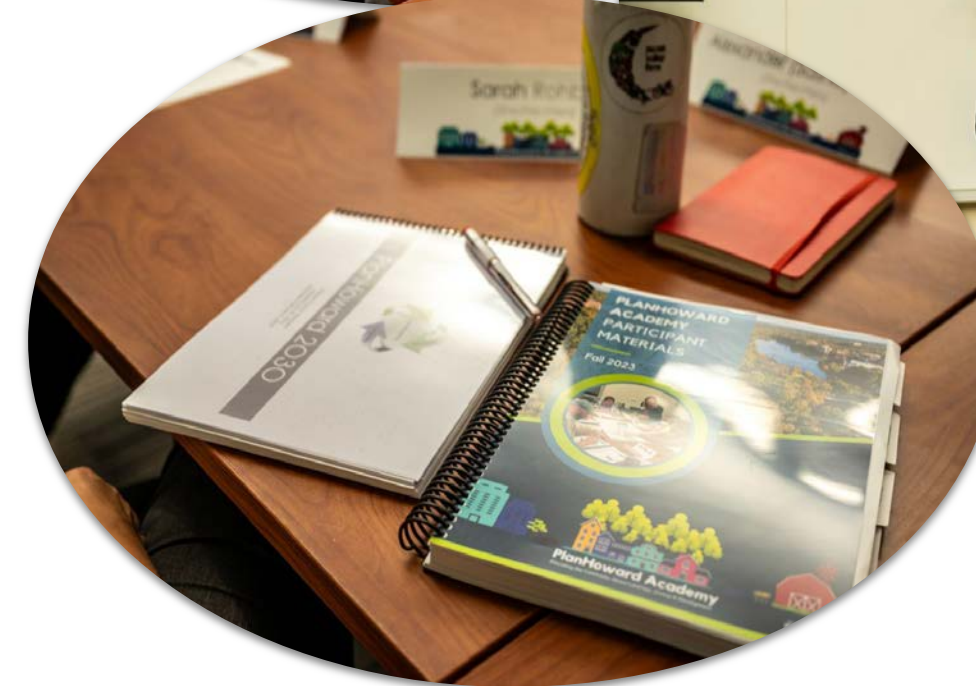
Taught and facilitated by professional planners, the Academy provides residents with a thought provoking, interactive curriculum focused on the underpinnings of land development in Howard County.



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
Community Planning

Howard County Department of Planning
and Zoning (DPZ)

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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

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



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.



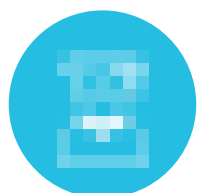
WEEK 3 | Understanding Zoning

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



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Panel Discussion + Q & A

