



Planning Academy

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Planning Academy?

[The Planning Academy](#) is a free, interactive learning experience designed to equip Boston residents from different backgrounds and neighborhoods with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to meaningfully have a voice in planning.

2. How can I take part in the Planning Academy?

We accepted applications between February 9 and March 9, 2021. City staff will be reviewing all applications and will select ~25 applicants to take part in this first group. If you are not selected, stay tuned for future opportunities!

3. When and where is the Planning Academy happening?

Eight weekly sessions will be held in Roxbury near Nubian Square every Wednesday from 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM from April 29 - June 17, 2021.

4. Do I have to attend all eight sessions?

To ensure you get the most out of the Planning Academy and support your partners in learning, we ask that participants attend all sessions. If you're not able to participate in the Planning Academy, [sign up here](#) to receive emails from the Planning Department with other opportunities to get involved.

5. How much does this cost?

The Planning Academy is free! Plus, we will be providing free childcare, dinner, and a T pass to make it easier for folks with busy schedules to attend.

6. I don't speak English, will sessions be held in additional languages?

We will be piloting this initial Planning Academy in English, but stay tuned! We plan to compile the learnings from this initial pilot to inform educational opportunities for those who speak a variety of languages.

7. What's in it for me? Why would I want to join?

We think there are lots of reasons you may want to join! Here are a few:

- a. Deepen your knowledge of planning
- b. Learn how you and your neighbors can be most effective in shaping your neighborhood



- c. Build relationships with your neighbors from across the city
- d. Learn from, and with, city staff and community leaders about how planning works
- e. Free dinner, childcare, and a T pass

8. What are the Planning Department's goals for the Planning Academy?

The Planning Department always works to ensure community members across the City of Boston can get involved in shaping the future of Boston. The Planning Academy is a new way that we seek to expand who takes part in our planning and development review processes. Some specific goals we have for this program include:

- a. Supporting community members in having a deeper understanding of the work of the Planning Department
- b. Allowing for more meaningful engagement on planning, development review, and urban design projects and initiatives
- c. Sharing resources and knowledge about planning and design policies and priorities
- d. Building a bridge between community members and the Planning Department with a focus on communities who have historically been less engaged in planning

9. Am I a good candidate? Who are you going to accept as a member of the Planning Academy?

We are excited to welcome an enthusiastic group to learn together about planning and development. To support learning across the group, we are looking to bring together people with a variety of experiences and perspectives. Some of what we are looking for includes:

- a. City of Boston residents
- b. People who demonstrate enthusiasm to learn about and get involved in planning, development, and design projects or initiatives in the City of Boston
- c. People who are passionate about bringing together folks in their neighborhoods and being, or becoming, collaborative leaders
- d. Diversity of life and professional experiences
- e. Geographic representation from across the city
- f. Balance of long-time neighborhood stewards and people who are newer to community planning
- g. Representation of different stages of life, for example: at least two youth participants (ages 16–24), and parents or caregivers



10. What will be covered in the sessions?

Each session will introduce basic concepts, provide case studies to discuss and reflect on, include activities to learn and practice new skills, and allow participants to use their new knowledge. The specific questions we address include:

Week 1: What is planning and who is involved?

Week 2: How do our values shape planning action?

Week 3: What kind of city are we creating and who is it for?

Week 4: What rules shape what gets built?

Week 5: What is Zoning Reform and who benefits?

Week 6: What kind of city are we building and how do we build it?

Week 7: How do we build affordable housing, and why is it difficult?

Week 8: What will you do next? & Celebration!

11. I still have questions. Where else can I find answers?

We held a virtual info session on Wednesday, February 25, 2026 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM. Here are the [presentation slides](#) and [meeting recording](#). Or email your questions to PlanningAcademy@boston.gov



Additional Questions and Answers from the Info Session hosted on February 25, 2026:

- **Will there be parking?**

Yes. The Planning Academy will be held at Roxbury Community College, which has parking lots available onsite.

- **Can I join the Planning Academy sessions virtually? Or will there be a hybrid option available?**

No, this will be an in-person program. While we appreciate the convenience of remote access, we've designed this program to be an immersive experience with activities that are built for hands-on, face-to-face collaboration. In addition, a primary goal of the Planning Academy is to foster relationships among participants—something that happens most naturally when we are all in the same room.

- **What happens if I need to miss a session?**

It's ok if you need to miss a session, however we would encourage you to make your best effort to attend all sessions. Learning together as a group is important for the success of participants and how the program has been designed. There will not be additional sessions scheduled if you are unable to attend.

- **Will there be homework and background readings?**

There will be no required homework or readings. However, for those who have the time and interest in going deeper, we will share optional resources following each session.

- **Do we need to provide our own technology?**

No technology is required, you only need to show up with enthusiasm to learn and participate. The Planning Department will provide all materials that you will need.

- **Why will there only be 25 people in this Planning Academy cohort?**

We seek to support relationship building among participants and allow for meaningful discussion and therefore we are intentionally keeping the size of the group on the smaller side. A group of this size will allow everyone to participate and get to know each other.



- **Please explain more about the capstone project.**

The capstone is an opportunity for Planning Academy participants to take the tools and knowledge they learn and apply to a project of their choosing. At the final session, participants will have the opportunity to present their work to their peers and City staff. In addition, some projects will be shared at the Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square.

- **Will the syllabus be available in advance?**

Yes, accepted participants will receive a welcome package including the syllabus, directions, car/bike parking information, and other materials to support participants in preparing for the first session.