City of Boston
Planning Department

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?**

   Submit your application between July 1 and August 3, 2026. City staff will be reviewing all applications and will select 25 applicants to take part in this 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 at Boston City Hall every Tuesday from 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM from September 29 - November 17, 2026.

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 are 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. **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

7. **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

8. **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

9. **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!

10. **I still have questions. Where else can I find answers?**
    Register to join a virtual info session on Wednesday, July 22, 2026 from 6:00 - 7:30 PM. Or email your questions to PlanningAcademy@boston.gov