



COMMUNITY
PLANNING
ACADEMY

ARC Community Resources Committee Meeting
November 12, 2020



Atlanta Regional Commission

Background

- Early 2000s: Some ARC Community Choices projects led to local requests for planning-related training
- Georgia DCA created Community Planning Institute (CPI)
 - Broader statewide mandate and focus
- 2002: ARC created Community Planning Academy to meet local demand
 - Modeled program off Virginia Certified Planning Commissioner Program
- Goal: Educate local planning officials and community leaders to support informed planning decisions and create positive change in their communities
- Nearly 900 alumni as of Fall 2020

Overview

- Signature offering: Training for Planning Officials
- Target Audiences
 - Planning Commissioners – Often come to role without formal background in planning
 - Professional planning staff – New to region or looking to brush up
 - Elected officials – Seeking more planning knowledge for decision-making
- Objectives
 - Technical training on planning fundamentals
 - Best practices, leadership skills, meeting management tools
 - Exposure to planning issues, trends, and topics affecting Metro Atlanta
 - Networking and information-sharing
 - Reading and homework (*“Did he say homework?”*)

New Directions

- Standard format and framework persisted for many years with gradual changes
 - 3 full days, in-person, at ARC
- 2018-2019: Started discussing potential changes at CDG retreats and meetings
 - 2-day in-person training + opt-in modules throughout rest of year
 - Create field guide/course pack that we maintain and update each year
 - Assign homework before first class
 - Assign people to seating pods to move away from lecture/seminar format and to forge more networking
 - Implement more panel style sessions to highlight regional context → local relevance
 - Partner with more outside organizations
 - Provide more interactive activities
 - Go deeper on housing, transit, smart mobility, green infrastructure, placemaking
 - **Use virtual tools (foreshadowing!)**
- 2020: First course was set to begin in April...

COVID-19 Impacts

- Initially postponed to fall...came to our senses over summer
- Pivoted to virtual format
- Six sessions, 3.5 hours each, late October to early December
 - Same amount of instructional time as standard format
 - Two-month duration – prevents participants from losing motivation
 - Six sessions – enough to cover content but not unwieldy
- Simulating interaction – breakout groups, focused virtual discussion
- Multimedia is easier in this environment – videos, readings, etc.
- Excellent speakers are more accessible than ever because we're virtual
- Adding new content to intentionally get into role of equity, race, class



Takeaways

- Participation is more accessible now too – record 79 registered attendees!
- Flexibility and adaptability are key
 - It's a pandemic
 - Zoom fatigue
- Lessons learned from 2020 can be applied to future trainings
 - Both in-person and virtual

Curriculum | Days 1-3

- Day 1 | Why We're Here
 - Regional Framework and Contemporary Planning Issues
 - Discussion Panel – Planning in Metro Atlanta: Past, Present & Future
- Day 2 | Foundational Elements of Planning
 - Ten Lessons of Community Design and What Makes Downtowns Thrive
 - Planning and Zoning 101
 - Legal Foundations of Planning and Zoning
- Day 3 | Practical Guidance for Planning Officials
 - Doing the Job of the Planner
 - Virtual Engagement for Planning Officials
 - Planning in a Continued COVID-19 World

Curriculum | Days 4-6

- Day 4 | Equity
 - The Demographic Dynamics of Metro Atlanta
 - Racial and Social Equity in Planning
 - Aging and Health in Planning
- Day 5 | Resiliency
 - Arts, Culture, and Placemaking
 - Natural Resources, Sustainability and Green Infrastructure
 - The Basics of Economic Development
- Day 6 | More Functional Areas of Planning and Wrap-Up
 - The Development Process and How Decisions Impact Development
 - Housing Affordability and Choice
 - Transportation Planning Deep-Dive
 - Implementation Resources for Decision-Making

Questions?

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