

Baltimore Planning Academy FAQ

What is the application time frame?

The application time frame for Planning Academy applications this round (Fall 2026 and Spring 2027) is June 29th – July 17th. As we usually receive more applications than seats available, we will also fill seats for the Spring 2027 program from this application round.

When will workshops be held?

Moving forward, Baltimore Planning Academy workshops will be held in person at the Department of Planning office (417 E. Fayette Street) on Wednesday evenings from 6:00–7:30 PM over the course of eight weeks, with the exception of one or two field trips.

The Fall 2026 cohort will begin on **September 9, 2026**, and will meet on the following dates:

- September 9
- September 16
- September 23
- September 30
- October 7
- October 14
- October 21
- October 28

The Spring 2027 cohort will take place in late April 2027. Exact dates will be announced at a later time.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for the Baltimore Planning Academy, you must be a Baltimore City resident and available to attend all eight weeks of the program.

Because the Academy is designed as a cohort-based learning experience, attendance is required. Participants who miss more than two sessions may forfeit their place in the program and become ineligible to receive a certificate of completion or join the network of more than 500 Planning Academy alumni.

No prior education, training, or professional experience in planning is required. The Academy is designed for residents who want to better understand how planning and

development shape Baltimore's neighborhoods and how they can effectively participate in planning processes and community decision-making.

Who is the Planning Academy for?

The Baltimore Planning Academy welcomes **residents from all backgrounds** who want to strengthen their understanding of urban planning and community development.

Participants may include:

- **Resident Activists** – curious and engaged residents who want to better understand how Baltimore works, stay informed about neighborhood issues, and effectively advocate for their community.
- **Community Leaders** – residents who are actively involved in their neighborhoods and want to strengthen their leadership skills, build partnerships, and drive positive community change.
- **Community Development Professionals** – professionals working in real estate, housing, economic development, nonprofit management, public service, or related fields who want to deepen their understanding of Baltimore's planning processes and enhance their impact on neighborhoods and communities.

Where do you go to apply?

Interested applicants can apply at <https://www.baltimoreplanningacademy.com/>. At this address, they can apply online via the form linked to the site (see yellow box or the link at the top right of the page).

How will applications be reviewed?

Each class is limited to 35 people to encourage interaction and community building. We anticipate receiving far more applications than seats. A collaborative team from DOP and Planning Academy Alumni will review and rank all applications based on the responses to four essay responses received - please take care to answer those. We are looking for residents dedicated to Baltimore, and interested in supporting and leading their community.

In addition, applicants from areas that have faced challenges of disinvestment, per [Housing Market Typology data](#), will receive additional preference points in the process.

What does the curriculum cover?

The curriculum begins with by reviewing planning history in Baltimore – especially the way in which planning policy has led to inequitable outcomes. This discussion informs our conversations later in the course.

We always cover a core curriculum that includes zoning, the city budget, and neighborhood planning. Each cohort also includes at least one field trip or site visit—sometimes to a development project under construction or recently completed, and sometimes to a neighborhood where participants meet with a local Community Development Corporation. Depending on speaker availability and participant interests, we may also offer sessions on specialized topics such as equitable development, gentrification, and housing finance.

What are the outcomes? How do residents use what they've learned?

Baltimore Planning Academy graduates apply what they learn in many different ways, depending on their interests, goals, and communities.

Many alumni have stepped into leadership roles within their neighborhoods, serving on neighborhood association boards, leading land use and development committees, and organizing community improvement initiatives. Others have been appointed to City commissions, advisory councils, and other civic leadership bodies where they help shape policies and decisions that affect Baltimore residents.

Academy graduates have also led community projects such as food distribution efforts, public art initiatives, neighborhood beautification projects, and other resident-driven civic activities. Some alumni have successfully developed neighborhood plans that were adopted by the Planning Commission, while others have become emerging developers focused on community-led, equitable development in their neighborhoods.

Beyond the skills and knowledge gained through the program, graduates become part of a growing network of nearly 500 Baltimore residents committed to building stronger, more resilient communities. Through this alumni network, participants can continue learning, sharing resources, and collaborating on projects long after completing the Academy.