

# AICP Exam Prep

## *Professional Development Committee*

*Susan Elks, AICP – PDC Chair and PDO*

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American Planning Association  
**Pennsylvania Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

October 2012 APA-PA Conference

# Today's Agenda

- Why/What of AICP
- Eligibility and Application
- Background and Tips
- Sample Questions
- Test Content Areas

# What is AICP - American Institute of Certified Planners?

- APA's professional institute
- To be AICP, a planner must:
  - meet requirements for education and experience,
  - pass the AICP exam,
  - pledge to uphold ethical standards (AICP Code of Ethics), and
  - engage in ongoing professional development (Certification Maintenance)

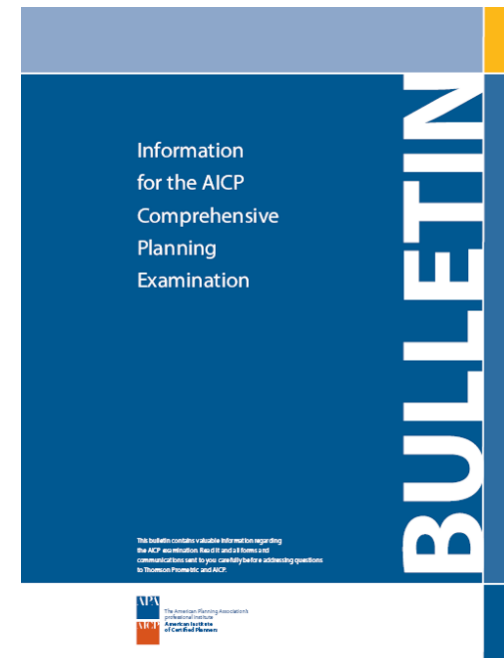
# Why AICP?

- Demonstration to elected officials, community leaders, and employers of a commitment to excellence
- Potential employment
- Salary survey

# Eligibility

- Current APA member
- Submit online application meeting education and experience criteria
- Fee of \$495
- Pass exam

*APA website –  
www.planning.org and the  
Exam Candidate Bulletin for  
all the details*



# Education and Experience Criteria

- Education
  - Graduate planning degree (PAB): 2 years
  - Bachelors planning degree (PAB): 3 years
  - Graduate planning degree (non-PAB): 3 years
  - Other degree: 4 years
  - No college degree: 8 years
- Experience – *Professional Planning as defined by AICP*
  - Apply a planning process appropriate to the situation
  - Employ an appropriately comprehensive point of view
  - Involve a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness
  - Influence public decision making in the public interest

# Education and Experience

- Verifications!!!
  - For degrees and all employment you are claiming as professional planning experience
  - Check dates carefully

# Test Windows - 2 weeks

- May: Application due in January after being open for approximately 5 weeks; response in March
- November: Application due in July after being open for approximately 5 weeks; response in September
- Early bird: earlier deadline, earlier notification
- Approvals (ATT) and incompletes notified by email
- Denials issued by letter



# Need to know...

- Schedule on your own with Prometric
- Approvals are good for 4 exam cycles, but need to inform APA if not taking the exam in the next window
- APA Exam Bulletin and APA staff for any questions – don't wait until it's too late

# Test Background

- 170 multiple choice questions, including 20 sample questions – must answer approximately 110 – 115 of the 150 “real” questions correct in order to pass
- Scoring on a scale, pass rate is approximately 65%
- 3 ½ hours to complete (brief tutorial before exam)
- Test questions last updated in 2008 (no 2010 Census data yet)
  
- **THERE WILL BE AN UPDATE IN 2013**
  
- Test centers
  - Arrive 30 minutes early for paperwork
  - Take required IDs – make sure name and spelling is matching
  - Calculator/paper/pencil provided
  
- Study early and often
  - Identify weak areas
  - Study groups and practice exams
  - Make use of resources appropriate for your background

# Test Content

- History, Theory and Law – 15%
  - **Plan Making and Implementation – 30%**
  - **Functional Areas of Practice – 25%**
  - **Spatial Areas of Practice – 15%**
  - Public Participation and Social Justice – 10%
  - AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – 5%
- These 3 areas make up 70% of the exam – expect lots of approach & process questions.

## So How Many Questions?

Plan Making: 45

Functional: 38

History, Law, & Theory: 23

Spatial: 22

Public Participation & Social Justice: 15

Ethics: 7

*Review the APA outline of material.*

*Allocate study time according to the APA outline and your own background.*



# How Should You Prepare?

*Review the APA outline of material*

*Allocate study time according to the APA outline*

**AND**

*your own background*

*Get at least one comprehensive study source and supplement with other sources as necessary*

- Study early and often
- Identify weak areas
  - Study groups
  - Practice exams

# Test Tips

## Study Materials from PA Chapter

[www.planningpa.org](http://www.planningpa.org)  
“For Planners”  
“Professional Planners”  
“AICP Exam Prep”

- Prior Prep Session PowerPoints (spring session is a full day)
- Ethics presentation and scenarios
- PDC Study Notes
- How to obtain the CPC Manual
- Other Chapter information (NC, WA, FL, GA)

The screenshot displays the website for the American Planning Association - Pennsylvania Chapter. The page features a navigation menu with links for CONTACT US, ABOUT US, EVENTS & TRAINING, LEGISLATION/LAW, ONLINE SERVICES, CAREER CENTER, EDUCATION, and SECTIONS. The main content area is titled "AICP Exam" and includes a list of links: About the AICP Exam, Taking the AICP Exam, AICP Exam Schedule, Partial Scholarships available, AICP Exam Study Materials, and AICP Exam Prep Session via Webcast, August 27. Below this, there are sections for "About the AICP Exam", "Taking the AICP Exam", "AICP Exam Schedule", "AICP Exam Study Materials", "Practice Questions and Answers developed by Tara Hitchens", "AICP Exam Preparation Course Presentations", "APA AICP Exam Study Manual", and "Study Materials from Other States".

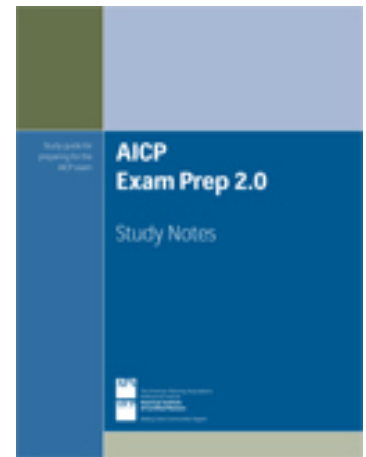


# Test Tips

## Study Materials from APA

[www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org) and [www.planning.org/certification/examprep](http://www.planning.org/certification/examprep)

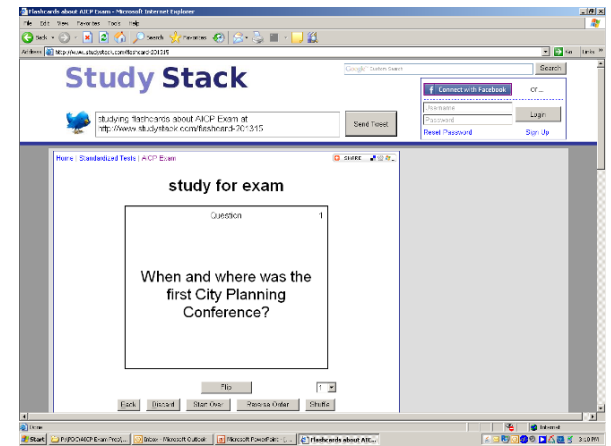
- AICP Exam Prep 2.0
- Ethics Code and Information/PowerPoints
- Policy Guides ([www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm))
- Legislative Information
- Top 25s - 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Planning Stories,
  - Cases in Planning and Environmental Law,
  - APA Award Winners,
  - Most Significant Planning Laws (1978 – 2003),
  - Individuals Who Influenced Planning Before 1978
- Timeline (or Pathways) of American Planning History – APA website or Google to find this listing from 1785 to 2000



# Test Tips

## Other Sources

- Webcast series (on Utah Chapter website)
- [www.planetizen.com](http://www.planetizen.com)
- [www.planningprep.com](http://www.planningprep.com) (free now, perhaps dated?)
- Electronical flashcards: [www.studystack.com](http://www.studystack.com) (search AICP) and gFlash app for mobile devices
- [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org) (legal...but use NC Chapter notes first)
- Cyburbia(<http://www.cyburbia.org/forums/>)
- Chapter Presidents Council manual
- *AICP Exam Secrets* (Mometrix Media publication)



*Practice exams are critical, but don't study the questions – pay attention to the topic. Format quality varies greatly by source.*

*Real questions are likely to require a mix of professional judgment and technical knowledge.*

# Test Tips

## Comprehensive Study Sources

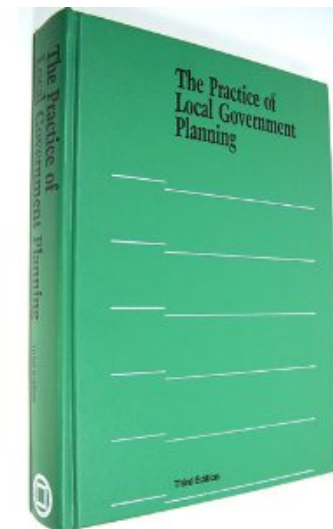
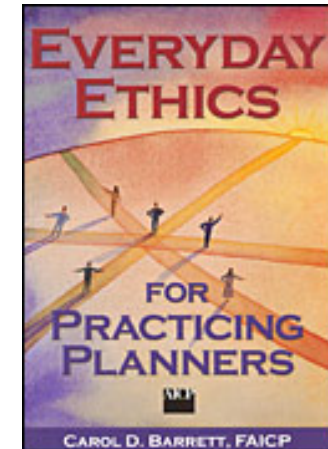
- PDC Study Notes...*free*
- PLAN 310 Planetizen AICP Exam Preparation Course (\$159)...  
*interactive with practice exams*
- APA AICP Exam Prep 2.0 (\$195)...*practice exams*

*These generally review all topics noted in the  
APA outline of test content.*



# Test Tips

## Reading Materials



A screenshot of a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the AICP Certification Exam Selected Readings page. The address bar shows the URL: http://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/selectedreading.htm.

The page content includes:

- AICP Certification**
  - November 2010 Exam
  - May 2011 Exam
  - Post-Exam Information
  - Exam Candidate Bulletin
  - Exam Preparation**
    - Exam FAQ
    - Eligibility Requirements
  - Certification Maintenance
  - Advanced Specialty Certification
  - From the Commission
  - Ethics
  - Symposiums
  - Fellows of AICP
  - AICP Products
  - Reinstatement Policy
- AICP Certification Exam Selected Readings**

The following list may help planners who are preparing to take the AICP examination. Please note that the readings are presented with two cautions:

  - No reading list can span the entire range of material in the AICP exam. As a result, the list is not a substitute for professional planning experience and education. It is not expected that exam takers will have read all the resources cited.
  - The readings are intended as guidelines only. The AICP exam questions are not drawn from these readings directly, but are developed from materials of similar content.
- General Reference**
  - Books**
    - Dalton, Linda, Charles Hoch, and Frank So (eds.). 2000. *The Practice of Local Government Planning*. Washington, D.C.: ICMA.
    - American Planning Association (ed.). 2006. *Planning and Urban Design Standards*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.
  - APA General References**
    - Planning* magazine
    - Journal of the American Planning Association*
    - PAS reports
    - Planning & Environmental Law*
    - Policy Guides
  - I. History, Theory and Law**
    - Brooks, Michael. 2002. *Planning Theory for Practitioners*. Chicago: American Planning Association: (2002).
    - Campbell, Scott (ed). 2003. *Readings in Planning Theory*. Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.
    - Eisner, Simon, Arthur Gallion, and Stanley Eisner. 1993. *The Urban Pattern* (6th ed). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
    - Lucero, Lora (ed.). 2005. *Four Supreme Court Land-Use Decisions of 2005*. Planning Advisory Service Report No. 535. Chicago: American Planning Association.
    - Hall, Peter. 1988. *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
    - Irons, Peter H. 1996. *May It Please the Court*. New York: New Press.
    - Krueckeberg, Donald (ed.). 1983. *Introduction to Planning History in the United States*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy.
    - Peterson, Jon. 2003. *The Birth of City Planning in the United States: 1840-1917*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

On the right side of the page, there is a login section for 'My APA' with fields for ID or E-mail and Password, a 'Remember My ID' checkbox, and a 'Login' button. Below this is a 'JOIN APA' section with a 'Join' button. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'Online Master of Arts in' from Northwestern University School of Continuing Studies.

The taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button, several open applications including 'Inbox - Microsoft Outlook', 'AICP Exam Prep 0310.ppt', 'AICP Exam Prep 0810 w...', and 'AICP Certification Exa...', and the system clock showing 12:42 PM on 12/24/2010.

# Test Tips

- Get plenty of rest for the exam
- Dress in layers
- Eat before the exam
- Arrive early
- Answer every question
- **Use the “marking” option**
- Think of answer before reviewing choices
- Skim answers before reading long questions
- Do math twice
- **Think national**
- **Think APA**
- **Think AICP/Code of Ethics – the BEST answer**

# Sample Question

An urban municipality has received grant funding to restore riparian buffers in order to improve the untreated water quality of the municipality's public water, which is drawn partially from surface waters. Which of the following steps is not necessary to get the project underway?

- A. Research existing databases for information on water quality within the source waters' watershed.
- B. Determine ownership of parcels along all surface waters within the municipality.
- C. Review aerial photography to assess conditions adjacent to waterways within the source waters' watershed.
- D. Research the most effective riparian buffer restoration methods for water quality improvement (such as differing buffer widths and vegetation type).
- E. Contact adjacent municipalities that contain any of the source waters' watershed.

*Answer: B. This exact step is not needed. Determining ownership for certain parcels in the source watershed will likely be needed later in the process.*



# Sample Question

More open citizen participation and the preparation of an environmental impact statement were two significant requirements established by what act?

- A. National Environmental Policy Act (1969)
- B. Housing Renewal (1949)
- C. Urban Renewal Act (1976)
- D. Coastal Zone Management Act (1972)

*Answer: A. Know this level of detail on key federal legislation. Note the overlap of content areas – functional (environmental), history, and public participation.*

# Sample Question

Industry	Local Employment	National Employment
X	3%	6%
Y	10%	7%
Z	11%	3%

5. Listed above are two types of employment percentages for industries X, Y, and Z in a metropolitan area. The local employment for each industry is listed as a percent of total local employment, and the national employment in each industry is listed as a percent of total national employment. Under the location quotient method, an economic planner can assign which of these industries to the export sector of the metropolitan area?

- A. Y only
- B. X only
- C. X and Z
- D. Y and Z

*Answer: D. This is a realistic example of the type of calculation question that the exam may have (from the Georgia Chapter).*

# Sample Question

Advocacy planning is associated closely with Paul Davidoff and Saul Alinsky. Which of the following was the significant effect of the advocacy movement?

- A. Assisted single women with children find employment.
- B. Caused social planning to move from back room negotiations into the public forum.
- C. Reduced the need for more environmental documentation.
- D. Created economic stability.

*Answer: B. Questions related to people will not necessarily ask what they wrote or what year it was – they can ask how those people impacted planning.*

# Sample Question

Which of the following court case(s) is/are concerned with takings:

- I. Renton v. Playtime Theatres Inc.
- II. Pennsylvania Coal Co. v. Mahon
- III. Metromedia, Inc. v. City of San Diego
- IV. Agins v. City of Tiburon

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and III
- D. II and IV

*Answer: D. Three points here – one, this question format will appear frequently. Two, court case questions can be important to mark, or make notes from, since they can overlap somewhat (see next slide/question). Three – this is a simple case law question.*

*See the next slide for a more difficult case law question.*

# Sample Question

The landmark case *Agin v. City of Tiburon* (1980) established a test: a regulation is a taking if it can be shown that it:

- I. Prompts a property owner to file a lawsuit.
- II. Deprives property of all economically viable use.
- III. Creates a nuisance on the affected property.
- IV. Fails to advance a legitimate governmental interest.

- A. I and II
- B. II and IV
- C. II and III
- D. III and IV

*Answer: B. Similar points as the prior slide. One – question format. Two – marking (or notes) can help you answer questions due to potential overlap of questions. Three – this is an example of a more difficult case law question, focused on the details of the ruling.*



# Sample Question

Which of the following is not true about a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

- A. They are federally mandated for urbanized areas with a population over 250,000.
- B. They channel federal funds for transportation projects.
- C. They maintain a long-range transportation plan for a region.
- D. Their decision-making committees can be comprised of a mix of local, state, and federal representatives.

*Answer: A. UZA population requirement is 50,000.*

# Sample Question

Which of the following are characteristics of New Urbanism:

- I. Higher Density and Mixing of Uses
- II. Variety of Housing Choices and Grid Street Patterns
- III. Economies of Scale and Euclidean Zoning
- IV. Pedestrian Scale and Multi-Modal Transportation Systems

- A. I and IV only
- B. I, II, and IV only
- C. I, III, and IV only
- D. All of the Above

*Answer: B. Note the question format, you will see this on the exam.*

*Source: Planning Institute of Colorado.*

# Sample Question

You are a planning director at a county that is going to be implementing countywide zoning for the first time. Which steps would be critical in this process?

- I. General public education on the purpose and value of zoning.
- II. GIS analysis of existing land uses throughout the county
- III. Planning department staff review of the Future Land Use Plan in the County Comprehensive Plan.
- IV. Specific outreach to stakeholders (including business community, developers, and community interest groups).
- V. Outreach through a variety of methods (including website, social media, traditional print media, and public meetings).

- A. I only
- B. I, II, and V
- C. I, II, III, and V
- D. I, II, III, IV, and V

*Answer: D.*



# Sample Question

You are an urban planner for a city, working on a revitalization plan for a commercial area that is a distinct entry point for the city, as well as an important provider of commercial services to the adjacent residential neighborhoods. The area has two anchor stores that are still vibrant, along with a few new businesses and several vacant or underutilized properties. For this project, the least appropriate method of public outreach and engagement would be:

- A. Delphi Method
- B. Design Charette
- C. Taskforce Meetings
- D. Targeted Interviews

Georgia Chapter has many sample questions focused on public participation and social justice (2012 exam review powerpoint).

*Answer: A.*



# History, Theory, and Law - 15%

- History of planning – refer to Green Book and Timelines (or Pathways) of American Planning History, know people and events, philosophies and movements
- Planning law – amendments (1, 5, and 14) and case law
- Theories of planning – overall theories, urban design theories, city development theories...
- Patterns of human settlement

*Georgia Chapter has an extensive review of history and theory on their website (2012 exam review powerpoint)*

*APA-NC's website is a great resource for law information:  
Annotated Planning Law Outline  
Planning Law Case Chart  
Big Cases*

# Plan Making and Implementation - 30%

- Visioning and goal setting
- Quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Collecting, organizing, analyzing and reporting data
- Demographics and economics
- Natural and built environment
- Land use and development regulations
- Application of legal principles
- Environmental analysis
- Growth management techniques
- Budgets and financing options
- GIS/spatial analysis and information systems
- Policy analysis and decision making
- Development plan and project review
- Program evaluation
- Communications techniques
- Intergovernmental relationships
- Stakeholder relationships
- Project and program management

*Consider the plan making process in the different functional areas, in the different spatial areas, in the context of public participation and social justice.*



# Functional Areas of Practice - 25%

- Community development
- Comprehensive or long range planning
- Development regulation or administration
- Economic development and revitalization
- Economic analysis and forecasting
- Educational, institutional, or military facilities planning
- Energy policy
- Food system planning
- Growth management
- Hazard mitigation and disaster planning
- Historic preservation
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Labor force or employment
- Land use
- Natural resources and the environment
- Parks, open space, and recreation
- Planning law
- Policy planning
- Public services
- Social and health services
- Transportation
- Urban design

*Understand the history, legislative background, terminology, and implementation tools for these topics – and how to plan for them!  
Read the APA Policy Guide for any topics you are not familiar with.*



# Spatial Areas of Practice - 15%

- Planning at national level (environmental, housing, transportation)
- Planning for multi-state or bi-state regions (TVA, transportation)
- Planning for state (environmental)
- Planning for sub-state region (Outer Banks)
- Planning at county level (hazard mitigation planning, growth management)
- Planning for urban areas (infill, redevelopment)
- Planning for suburban areas (old and new, sprawl, infrastructure)
- Planning for small town (infrastructure, economic opportunity)
- Corridors (transportation, environmental)
- Neighborhoods (access to services, walkability)
- Waterfronts (hazard mitigation, access and economic opportunity)
- Historic districts or areas (National Register and local)
- Downtowns (mixed use, signage, events/tourism)

*Why plan at all of these different levels?  
Because the resource demands it.*



*Categories are not exclusive – this is an umbrella topic.  
Complexity of planning process generally grows as the planning area grows.  
Study within other topic areas, particularly functional.*



# Public Participation and Social Justice - 10%

- Public involvement planning
- Public participation techniques
- Identifying, engaging, and serving underserved groups
- Social justice issues, literature, and practice
- Working with diverse communities
- Coalition building

*Understand techniques and how they function and when they are best used.*

*Know names - Alinsky, Davidoff, Arnstein.*

*Understand basic social justice issues and approaches to solving them.*



# AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct - 5%

- Four sections

- **Principles to Which We Aspire** – responsibility to the public, clients, employers, profession, and colleagues, no sanctions for violating
- **Our Rules of Conduct** - 26 rules that you can be sanctioned for violating, many on accurate information and conflict of interest
- **Our Code Procedures** – informal advice, formal advice, charges of misconduct
- **Planners Convicted of Serious Crimes** – automatic suspension of AICP

*Effective June 1, 2005; Revised October 3, 2009. Available on the APA website.*



**“We need to draw the line on unethical behavior.  
But let’s draw it with an Etch-a-Sketch and  
don’t be afraid to shake it a little.”**

*Rule 26 and Section D  
(Serious Crimes) are  
not currently on the  
exam, but should be  
added during the  
2013 update.*

**Susan Elks, AICP**

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**PA Chapter Professional Development Officer**

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