

AICP Exam Prep

Professional Development Committee

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October 2021
APA-PA
Conference



American Planning Association
Pennsylvania Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

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)

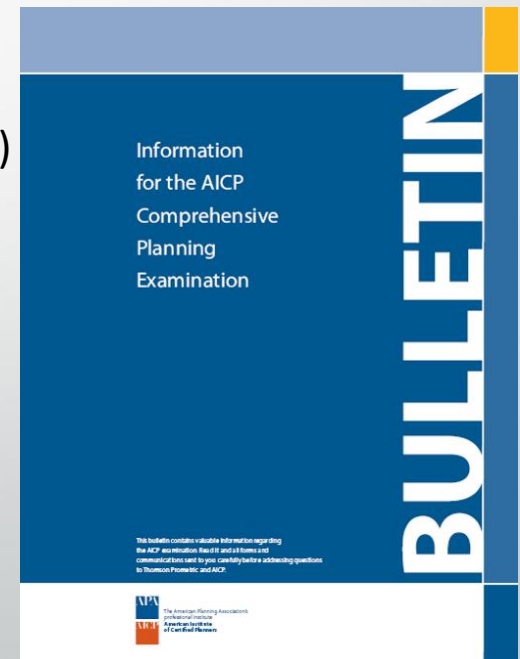
Why AICP?

- 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 \$510
 - Application fee - \$70
 - Planning experience essay fee - \$220 (expedited \$290)
 - AICP exam registration fee - \$220
- Pass Exam and Submit Planning Experience Essays

*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*
 - Involve a professional level of responsibility and resourcefulness while applying a planning process appropriate to the situation
 - Employ an appropriately comprehensive point of view
 - 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 – 4 weeks

- May: Application due in December/January (if submitting essays) after being open for approximately 5 weeks; response in March
- November: Application due in June/July (if submitting essays) after being open for approximately 5 weeks; response in September
- Early bird: earlier deadline, earlier notification

Need to know...

- Schedule on your own with Prometric
- Approvals are good for 6 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)
- **Updated questions with a different content outline, but same exam format, were put in place for May 2017. The overall format remains the same.**
- 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

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
- Look for refreshed content

Test Tips

Study Materials from PA Chapter

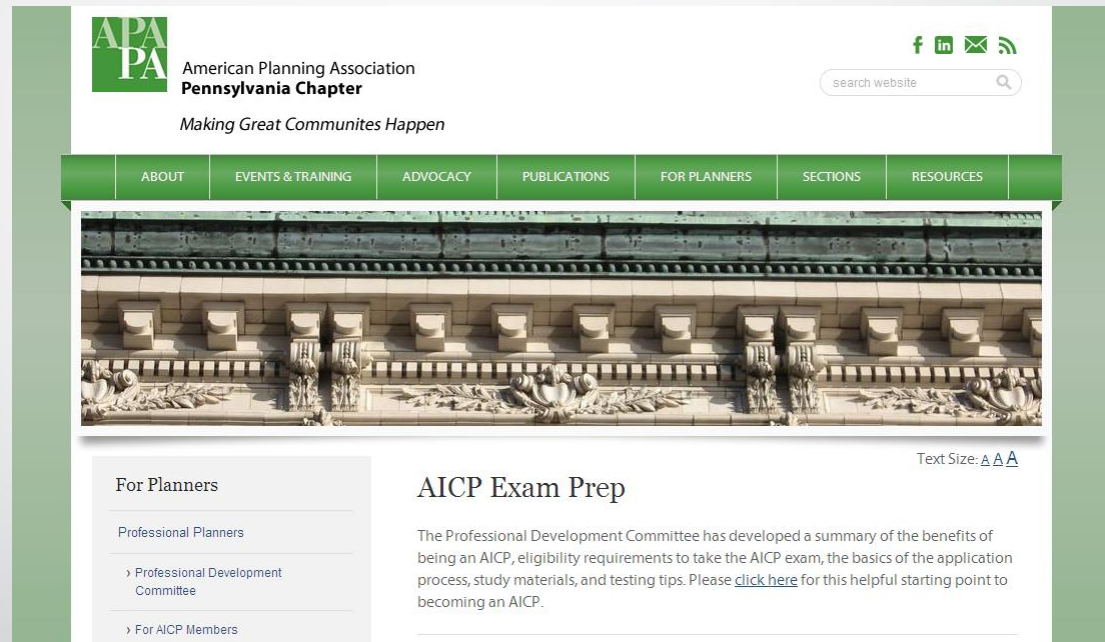
www.planningpa.org

“For Planners”

“Professional Planners”

“AICP Exam Prep”

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



Test Tips

Study Materials from APA

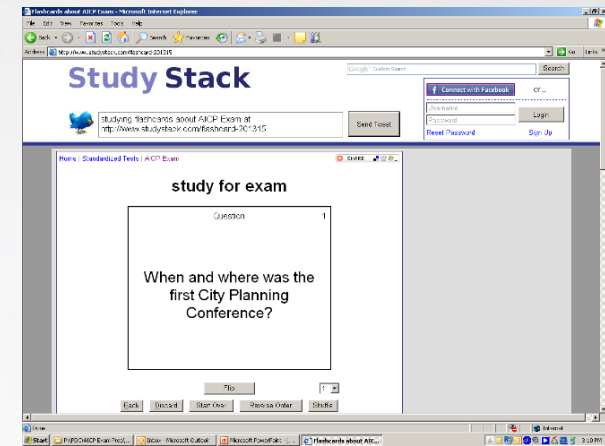
www.planning.org and www.planning.org/certification/examprep

- Site updated to provide more general tips
- Ethics Code and Information/PowerPoints
- Policy Guides (www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm)
- Legislative Information
- Top 25s (2003)
 - Cases in Planning and Environmental Law,
 - Most Significant Planning Laws (1978 – 2003),
 - Individuals Who Influenced Planning Before 1978
- Timeline (or Pathways) of American Planning History – Google to find this listing from 1785 to 2000
- Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Reports (www.planning.org/pas/reports/) --- these are now available at no cost to all APA members, and are a great resource

Test Tips

Other Sources

- Webcast series (Planning Webcast on YouTube)
- www.planetizen.com
- www.planningprep.com (free now, perhaps dated?)
- Electronical flashcards: www.studystack.com (search AICP) and gFlash app for mobile devices
- 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)
- *The Ethical Planning Practitioner*, Jerry Weitz FAICP



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

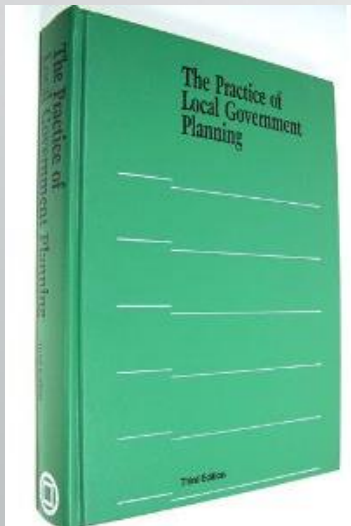
Comprehensive Study Sources

- PDC Study Notes...*free*
- PLAN 310 Planetizen AICP Exam Preparation Course (\$275 and up)...*web-based with multiple practice exams and active online forum*

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

Test Tips

Reading Materials



A screenshot of the American Planning Association (APA) website, specifically the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination page. The browser address bar shows the URL: <https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/selectedreading.htm>.

The page features a navigation bar with links: sources, Chesco Municipalities, APA&PA Chapter&P..., CF&S Links, Gov Links, Longwood, Land Use, Nonprofits, Planning Resources, Regional Student Fo..., AICP Exam Prep, APAOH | Webcast S....

The main content area is titled "PENN STATE | ONLINE" and "Community and Economic Development Graduate Programs". Below this is the APA logo and the tagline "Making Great Communities Happen".

The page is divided into two main sections: "AICP" and "Selected Readings".

AICP Section:

- Why AICP?
- Get Certified!
 - Current Exam
 - Exam Candidate Bulletin
 - Exam Application Tips
 - Eligibility Requirements
 - Exam Preparation
- Certification Maintenance
 - Advanced Specialty Certification
 - AICP Commission
 - Ethics
 - Core Competencies
 - Community Assistance Program
- Resources for AICP Members
 - Symposiums
 - Fellows of AICP
 - Reinstatement

Selected Readings Section:

The following list may help planners who are preparing to take the AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination. Please note that the readings are presented with these understandings:

- 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. While many AICP exam questions are based on these readings, many are developed from other materials of similar content.
- Many readings are available for download on the web or in any well stocked planning office library. Those choosing to purchase readings are encouraged to do so selectively. Consider purchases that not only help in preparing to take the exam, but also serve as long lasting references for professional practice.
- Due to copyright, site endorsement, and continuity issues, web links are provided only for readings available through the American Planning Association website or a government agency.
- This reading list was last updated in May 2013 in conjunction with the Comprehensive Planning Examination "refresh" in place starting with the November 2013 exam window.
- Those interested in additional APA-published reading lists should consider *The Essential Planning Library Revisited* and *100 Essential Books of Planning*.
- When preparing for the AICP exam, most people will identify areas of strength and those that need improvement. You may want to pay particular attention to those publications that would fill those gaps.

General Reference Books

Hack, Gary, Eugenie L. Birch, Paul H. Sedway, and Mitchell J. Silver. 2009. *Local Planning: Contemporary Principles and Practice*. Washington: 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

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 thoughtfully**
- 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**

Test Content

- Fundamental Planning Knowledge – 25%
- Plan Making & Implementation – 30%
- Areas of Practice – 30%
- Leadership, Administration & Management – 5%
- AICP Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct – 10%

Across
these areas
expect LOTS
of approach
& process
questions



New content outline

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

Test Content

- Fundamental Planning Knowledge – 25%
- Plan Making & Implementation – 30%
- Areas of Practice – 30%
- Leadership, Administration & Management – 5%
- AICP Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct – 10%

New content
outline



Comparison to old outline

(many study resources likely still organized under prior headings)

- *Fundamental Planning Knowledge – combined previous History/Theory/Law and other core values/systems*
- *Plan Making – somewhat carried over, incorporates Public Participation/Social Justice*
- *Areas of Practice – combined parts of Functional Areas of Practice, Spatial, and Plan Making*
- *Leadership – taken out of Plan Making plus new content*
 - *AICP Code – carried over, additional weight*

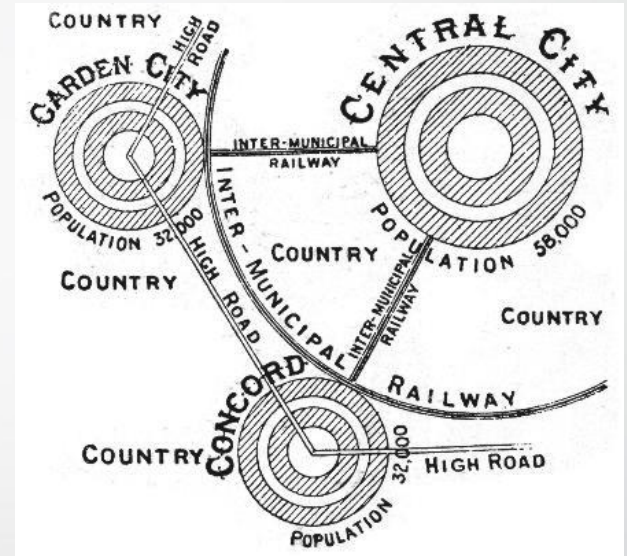
Fundamental Planning Knowledge – 25%

- History of planning, planning movements, influences on planning
- Foundational legal principles and decisions
- Theories of & about planning
- Patterns of human settlement
- Statutory basis of planning (governance structure)
- General terminology, practices, & principles of related professions
- Natural, social, & economic systems
- Core values of planning (equity, social justice, democratic engagement, etc.)

*This includes
information from
the previous content
area of
History/Theory/Law*

Fundamental Planning Knowledge – 25%

- Resources: Green Book, Timelines (or Pathways) of American Planning History, amendments 1, 5, and 14 and case law
- Know people and events, philosophies and movements, overall theories, urban design theories, city development theories...

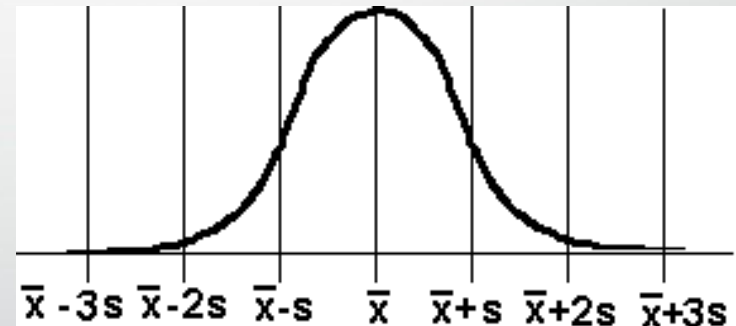
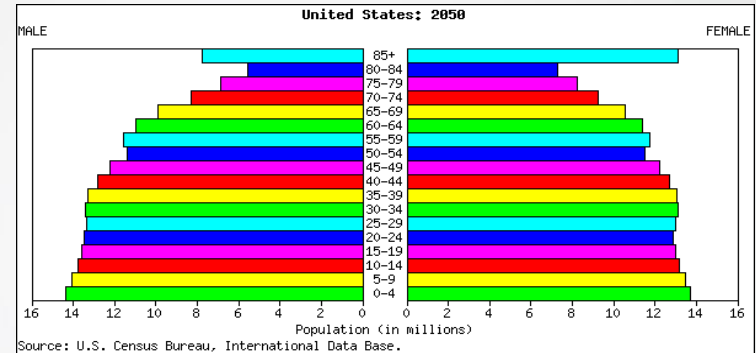


Georgia Chapter has an extensive review of history and theory on their website (and is updated)

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

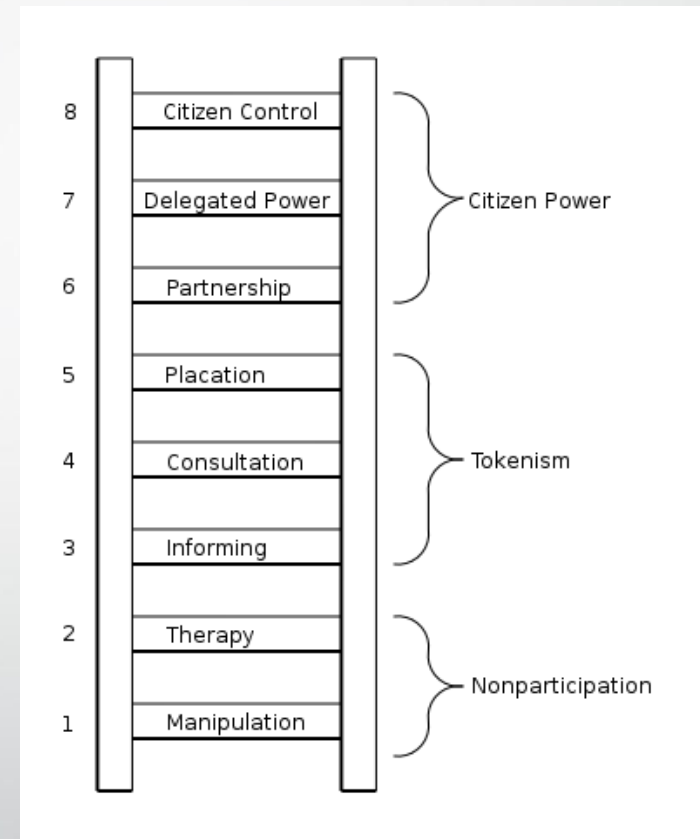
Plan Making and Implementation – 30%

- Conducting research and acquiring knowledge
- Spatial analysis
- Public engagement
- Communication
- Preparing to plan
- Formulating plans and policies
- Plan implementation
- Monitoring and assessment
- Project or program management
- Social justice



Plan Making and Implementation – 30%

- Knowing appropriate planning process is KEY to passing this exam
- Consider the process in the different areas of practice and in the context of public participation and social justice
- Resource: Planners Communication Guide 2.0
www.planning.org/communicationsguide/



Areas of Practice – 30%

- Comprehensive and sectoral planning
- Community, subarea, corridor, and neighborhood planning
- Current planning
- Sustainability planning
- Transportation planning
- Infrastructure planning
- Hazards, mitigation, and resiliency planning
- Environmental and natural resources planning
- Economic development planning
- Urban design
- Housing planning
- Parks, recreation, open space
- Historic and cultural resources planning
- Institutional planning and siting
- Food planning
- Health planning
- Rural and small town planning



Kennedy & Montgomery Streetscape Concept

Areas of Practice – 30%

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

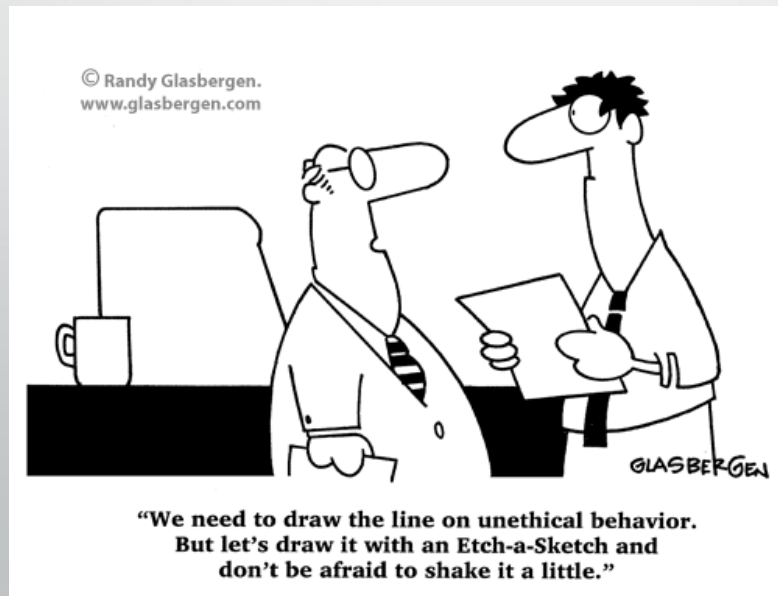


AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – 10%

- Most recent version 4/1/16 – available on APA website
- Five sections of code
 - **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.
 - **Advisory Opinions** – informal advice, formal advisory opinion, and annual report
 - **Adjudication of Complaints of Misconduct** – filing a complaint of misconduct; how complaints are investigated and adjudicated
 - **Discipline of Members** – discipline for Code violations plus other reasons (crime)

AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – 10%

- Learn the differences between principles that we aspire to and rules of conduct we are required to meet
- Learn how advice can be sought
- Learn how charges are filed and defended
- Learn who the players are – Ethics Officer and Ethics Committee



AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct – 10%

- Resources:
 - *The Ethical Planning Practitioner*, 2016 – Jerry Weitz
 - PA Chapter AICP Exam page
 - Toolkit for Conducting Ethics Session
 - Ethics Case of the Year
 - Planning Ethics in Action Blog

Leadership, Administration, and Management – 5%

- Leadership
- Managing external relationships
- Internal organizational management
- Technology and related applications

Resource: PAS Report: Local Planning Agency Management

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

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 *Agins 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

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

Answer: A.

Ethics Sample Question (often scenario based)

You are the planning director in a small town. Your husband runs the local country club and is applying for construction of a new swimming pool. This application will be reviewed by the planning commission for approval. What will you do?

- A. Invite the planning commission to tour the country club to see exactly where the pool will be built.
- B. Ask your husband to offer complimentary memberships to all commissioners.
- C. Inform the commission about your connection to the situation and remove yourself from the review process.
- D. Write an extensive staff report about the benefits of the pool for the community.

Answer: C.

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