

# AICP Exam Prep

## ***Professional Development Committee***

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American Planning Association  
**Pennsylvania Chapter**

*Making Great Communities Happen*

October 2016 APA-PA Conference

# Today's Agenda

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

# 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)

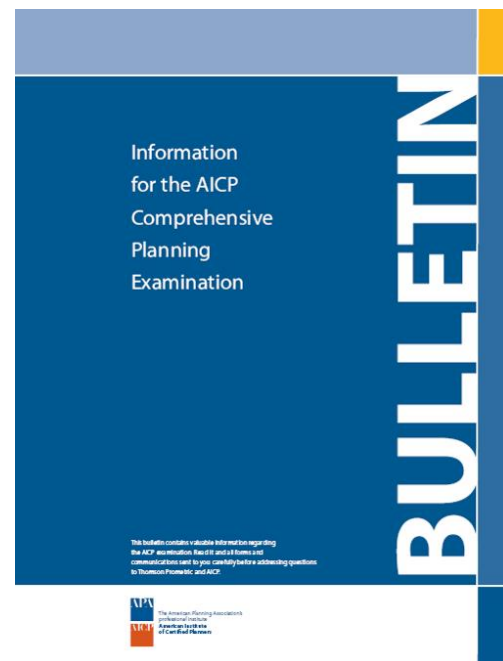
# Why AICP?

- 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](http://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 - 2 weeks

- May: Application due in December/January after being open for approximately 5 weeks; response in March
- November: Application due in June/July 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)
- **Overall format remains the same for November 2015. New questions with a different content outline, but same exam format, are expected for May 2017.**
- 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**

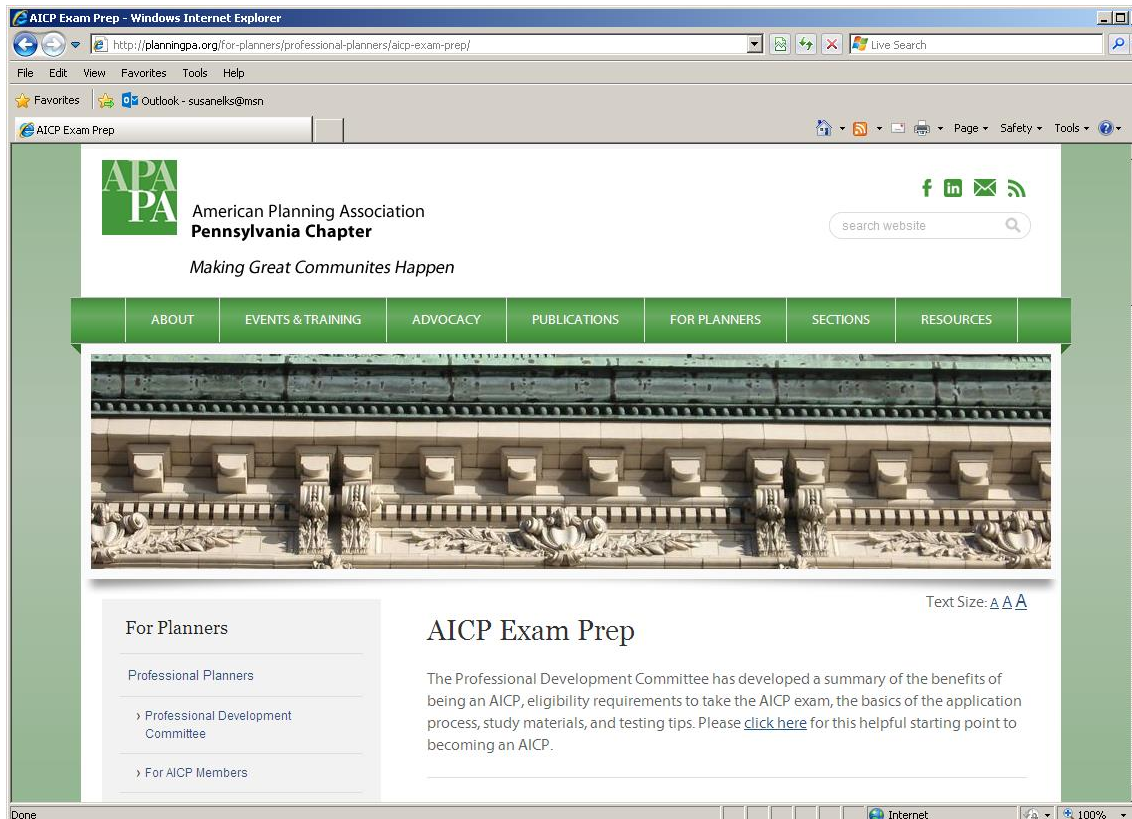
***your own background***

*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

# Test Tips

## Study Materials from PA Chapter



www.planningpa.org  
“For Planners”  
“Professional Planners”  
“AICP Exam Prep”

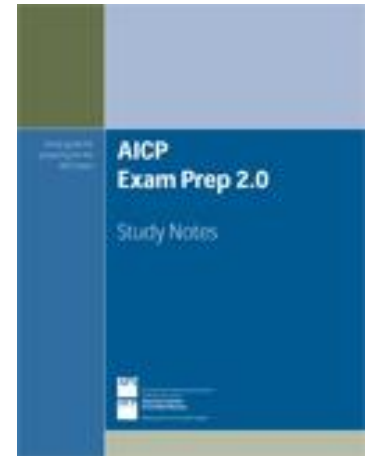
- Prior Prep Sessions PowerPoints (spring session is a full day)
- Ethics presentation and scenarios
- PDC Study Notes
- How to obtain the CPC Manual
- Other Chapter information (NC, FL, GA)

# Test Tips

## Study Materials from APA

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

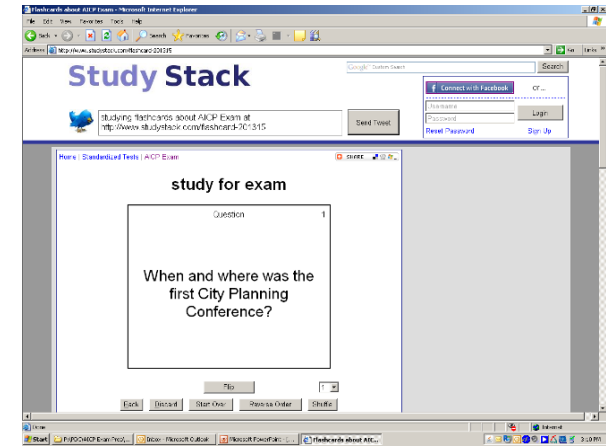
- Site recently updated to provide more general tips
- AICP Exam Prep 2.0 hard copy...**3.0 online now**
- Ethics Code and Information/PowerPoints
- Policy Guides ([www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm](http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/index.htm))
- Legislative Information
- Top 25s - 25<sup>th</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 (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)



*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 (\$295 and up)...*web-based with multiple practice exams and active online forum*
- APA AICP Exam Prep 3.0 (\$295)...*web-based with practice exams and remains open for 3 years*


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


# Test Tips

## Reading Materials

https://www.planning.org/certification/examprep/selectedreading.htm

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...

**PENN STATE | ONLINE**  
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**AICP**  
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

**AICP Comprehensive Planning Examination**  
**Selected Readings**  
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.

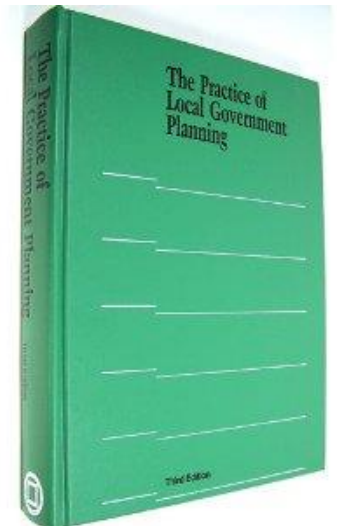
**General Reference**  
**Books**  
Hack, Gary, Eugene L. Birch, Paul H. Sedway, and Mitchell J. Silver. 2009. *Local Planning: Contemporary Principles and Practice*. Washington: ICMA.  
American Planning Association (ed.). 2006. *Planning and Urban Design Standards*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.  
**APA General References**  
*Planning* magazine  
*Journal of the American Planning Association*  
**PAS reports**  
*Planning & Environmental Law*  
**Policy Guides**

  
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# 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**

# 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.

  
This content outline is  
what is expected to  
change for May 2017

## 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.*

# 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*

*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, Krumholz.*

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

# AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct - 5%

- Five sections

- **Principles to Which We Aspire** – responsibility to the public, clients, employers, profession, and colleagues, no sanctions for violating. NO CHANGE IN 2016.
- **Our Rules of Conduct** - 26 rules that you can be sanctioned for violating, many on accurate information and conflict of interest. NO CHANGE IN 2016.
- **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)

*Effective June 1, 2005; most recently **revised April 1, 2016**. 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."**



# 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.*

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