

NEWSBRIEF

A Publication of the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association

Summer 2020
Vol. 18 Issue 2



American Planning Association
Virginia Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

Cover Photo:

Robert E. Lee Statue
in Richmond, Virginia
August 2020
Nick Rogers, AICP, CZA
APA Virginia Board Member

NEWSBRIEF

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Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association

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About Newsbrief

Newsbrief is the flagship publication for the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association, and serves as a robust repository for in-depth analyses of issues and events that are relevant to Virginia Planners. If you have an interesting topic or case study that you think would benefit APA Virginia Chapter members, please consider contributing to the Newsbrief by submitting a request to have your article published.

Contact Newsbrief@APAVirginia.com for all inquiries.

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NEWS *from* *the* BOARD

By Robert Narvaez, AICP

A Discussion on Racial Injustice and the Role of Inclusionary Planning

Hello Virginia Planners,

2020 has been a whirlwind of up and downs. With Juneteenth in June and the recent protest efforts in Richmond, around the Commonwealth, nation and world in response to the killing of George Floyd and other Black lives, renewed awareness has come to racial issues that have long affected this nation's social norms and government policies. These events reminded me of how planning has been used all too often in our profession's history to exclude people of color, women, and our LGBTQ neighbors from our communities. Multifamily housing, duplexes, and rowhouses have also been excluded from communities based on the perception that persons who are not white or not heterosexual will live there.

While these types of discrimination have been outlawed, we continue to see discriminatory efforts target disadvantaged residents of our communities. For example, group homes for intellectual disabled, homeless or people recently released from jail commonly are severely restricted as to where they can be located. While these are needed facilities in any community, residents with outmoded biases and prejudices will fight back citing reasons such as "neighborhood character" and "property values" to maintain exclusive patterns of development.

As planners, we have an obligation to advocate for **ALL** members of our community, especially the disadvantaged and un-

derrepresented. Planners must look at how all plans and projects will have positive and negative impacts on their community, while ensuring that no one group is at a disadvantage.

I know some of you are saying that "equity for all" is aspirational or "I am just following what the code says", but I challenge you to really look at your codes and policies and identify bias and/or lack of mention of equity in such documents. This is an opportunity to revamp your zoning code and comprehensive plan to incorporate more inclusive and equitable policies.

To address these issues, APA Virginia will be featuring resources, leaders, and other content in coming issues of the Newsbrief which bring the profession's efforts for increased equity, diversity, and inclusion to the forefront. We'll also be featuring more contributors, on a continuing basis, from among APA Virginia's members and the broader planning community who will be addressing these needs. If you have any recommendations for us, please pass them along to the Newsbrief team.

In 2019, APA adopted its first version of the Planning for Equity Policy Guide. The guide provides equity policies for planners to call upon for improved practices in housing, education, health, environment, and transportation just to name a few. You can find the Policy Guide here <https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9178541/>.

NEWS *from the* BOARD

Next, I would like to appeal to you personally to join us either on APA Virginia's Board or its Diversity Committee. When I joined the Board in 2016, I was the only person of color. Fast forward to 2020, this is still the case, and it's not representative of Virginia's planners and our membership. Whether it is for an elected Board position or on one of our committees (Young Planners, Diversity, Legislative, Planning Directors, Conference, and Awards), we need you! I would like to see more sessions on equity, inclusion, and diversity at future state conferences. The Diversity Committee aspires to hold discussion panels in all the Chapter's sections around the state on these issues, but we need your ideas, your experiences, backgrounds to make APA Virginia even greater!

The Diversity Committee has been a steadfast component of APA Virginia's presence on the Board of Directors for many years, operating previously as the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee (ECDC). Although the committee's members have turned over in recent years, I want to bring back this committee back to its former glory with you alongside me and others from across the Commonwealth!

Lastly, I want to have open dialogue with *anyone* who wants to discuss *anything* related to equity, diversity, or inclusion. As a second generation Asian American, who watched the same video you did in which an Asian police officer stood there and did nothing to help George Floyd, I contemplated my own privilege and bias. My parents taught me to "mind my own business", "not to make a scene" and stay silent.

I cannot stay silent anymore.

While Asian Americans have had our own race struggles, **all** people of color here in America are beneficiaries of social justice movements of Black Americans. My parents, my friends and others would not be able to be here if not for the Black community fighting for their equity. For me, I will find ways to support the Black community whether it's through donations, purchases from black-owned businesses, marching in protests, or learning more about racial discrimination. As planners, we must recommend policy changes that help our communities be more equitable and inclusive.

Planning can and does help communities prosper. Planners find ways to create spaces and places for everyone. APA Virginia emphatically supports you and your community's initiatives of inclusion, and unequivocally expresses its alliance with and support for the Black Lives Matter movement. With the pandemic and protests, the old ways our communities have acknowledged these needs must change. What has your community done to be more inclusive and equitable? What will you do to activate this long overdue change?

You can email me at inclusion@apavirginia.com.

Stay safe and healthy,

Robert Narvaez, AICP
Inclusion Director
APA Virginia Chapter



A Letter from Our AICP Commissioner

By Arlova Vonhm, AICP



Greetings APA Virginia!

First, I want to sincerely thank you for your support last fall in endorsing me as a candidate. As a result, I'm excited to serve and support you in my role as AICP Commissioner for Region 2. While I am not a Virginia resident, I work for Arlington County, VA and discovered the planning profession at the University of Virginia as an undergraduate student. (I hope that's enough to consider me an honorary member!)

When I was originally asked to write this letter (many months ago – my apologies!), the world was undeniably a different place. But in some ways, it hasn't changed at all. At the onset of 2020, the COVID-19 virus had not yet turned our way of life upside down, caused us to rethink our approach to everything from the importance of balconies to the use of public space to evaluating the demand for office space. This pandemic has required us to take a fresh look at the ways we live and work, making changes that many thought would be temporary but may last for some time. This health crisis has also shined a bright light on the policies, practices, and regulations that are rooted in systemic racism and that have led to disparate health impacts on people of color. As planners we must take responsibility for our role in perpetuating these inequitable conditions, whether we were consciously aware of it or not, not to lay blame or assign guilt, but to be able to move forward with the confidence found in understanding why and how we got here as a way to prevent it from happening again.

This requires acknowledging that inequity exists and actively fighting against it. An intent to do no harm is not enough to address long held beliefs, institutions, or policies that have demonstrated inequitable outcomes. We also have to be transparent in telling our stories and utilizing disaggregated data (i.e., providing demographic information including age, gender, race in our analysis) to demonstrate the impact of our decisions. Until we consistently look at things through an equity lens, we will remain blind to how the choices we make effect some communities, people, and races differently than others. Part of that work requires asking some very critical questions. In the community I work in, our leadership was recently challenged with considering the following four questions as part of the FY21 budget process. As a small step towards helping ensure equitable outcomes in our work, I would encourage all of you to consider them

before making a decision on a new program, policy, or project:

Who benefits?

Who is burdened?

Who is missing?

How do you know?

I've seen several variants of these questions used by other communities. Adapt them as you see fit to your circumstances. The point is that we stop and think about who we haven't heard from when evaluating the work that we do. I think planners need to be "critical lovers" of our institutions as well. By this I mean that we must resist the urge to adopt a "one size fits all" approach to every scenario, community, or issue. We need to be willing to listen to the people most directly impacted by the change. The last four months have taught us to be nimble and quickly adapt to new ways of doing things. Lastly, I would offer that planners remain practical visionaries. By that I mean that we are able to envision and imagine a future that does not yet exist *and* chart a course (or plan) for getting there. We need that positive, creative, and ? spirit now more than ever.

I would be remiss to not take advantage of this opportunity to share some of the work that APA and the AICP Commission is doing right now, including our virtual [Policy and Advocacy Conference](#) in September. My role on the AICP Commission currently includes serving as chair of the Committee of Fellows, an esteemed group of our most experienced and impactful leaders – including APA Virginia chapter member Julie Pastor. A current Commission initiative is a task force that I'm co-chairing aimed at increasing diversity within FAICP. Our charge is to identify barriers to entry for FAICP, including both the pipeline of qualified candidates and the nomination process itself. Many of you will likely be hearing

A Letter from Our AICP Commissioner

from us soon in the form of a survey to seek your thoughts and ideas on the matter. Other commission activities include the ongoing work of reviewing the AICP exam, evaluating potential changes to mandatory CM credits, and expanding AICP testing options to accommodate the closure of in-person testing centers. Needless to say, we remain busy!

In closing I'd like to say that I am encouraged by what I see amongst my fellow colleagues. The challenges we are facing have inspired a renewed commitment to the profession in so

many, including me, in ensuring that we are on the right side of history regarding where we go from here. I look forward to meeting, sharing, and learning with you at the next opportunity, either virtually or in person. Until then be safe, wash your hands :), and be kind to yourself and others.

Arlova J. Vonhm, AICP
AICP Commissioner Region II
APA

RESOURCES FOR *INCLUSIVE PLANNING*

*This section will be part of a recurring segment in the **Newsbrief** that will feature resources, leaders, and other content that bring to the forefront the profession's efforts for increased equity, diversity, and inclusion.*

“Don't let this look like a stunt. This isn't another Black History Month.”

These words, and similar admonitions, came to me as I reached out to trusted Black colleagues of ours over the summer on what to do. We were at the height of full-on protests in what felt like every major metropolitan center in the United States at the time – and we needed to pull together the next issue of the Newsbrief. We needed to do something authentic, and I'm so grateful to those of you who answered my calls.

It would have been tone deaf and hollow for us to not acknowledge the reckoning that was going on daily in the news, with more and more of our neighbors understanding the depth of the danger and violence that our Black communities too often encounter with seemingly routine interactions with law enforcement. The issues with systemic, institutional racism layer in between so many facets of our lives beyond the police. Here too, in planning, we've received our own call to action.

Sadly, the issues are not new. But luckily, we're in a moment now where the profession and its allies are buoyed by renewed public sentiment that the old ways of doing things aren't good enough, and that political capital must be spent now to unravel the implicitly discriminatory planning policies and practices that helped build our communities. The attention is also on planning departments themselves, which often

are not made up of staff with racial and ethnic backgrounds reflecting the communities they serve. The issues with representation don't get better when you look to count the number of Black planning directors in the Commonwealth.

I took the lead with the pen this time, and this won't be the last time I contribute to this space, but expect this recurring series of resources, articles, and other content devoted to the needs of our communities of color to be authored by other Chapter members on a revolving basis. My goal is simple – to ensure that APA Virginia's Newsbrief brings you planning-related resources with every issue for improving equity in your practice, your office, and your community.



***This isn't a stunt.
This is your Newsbrief.***

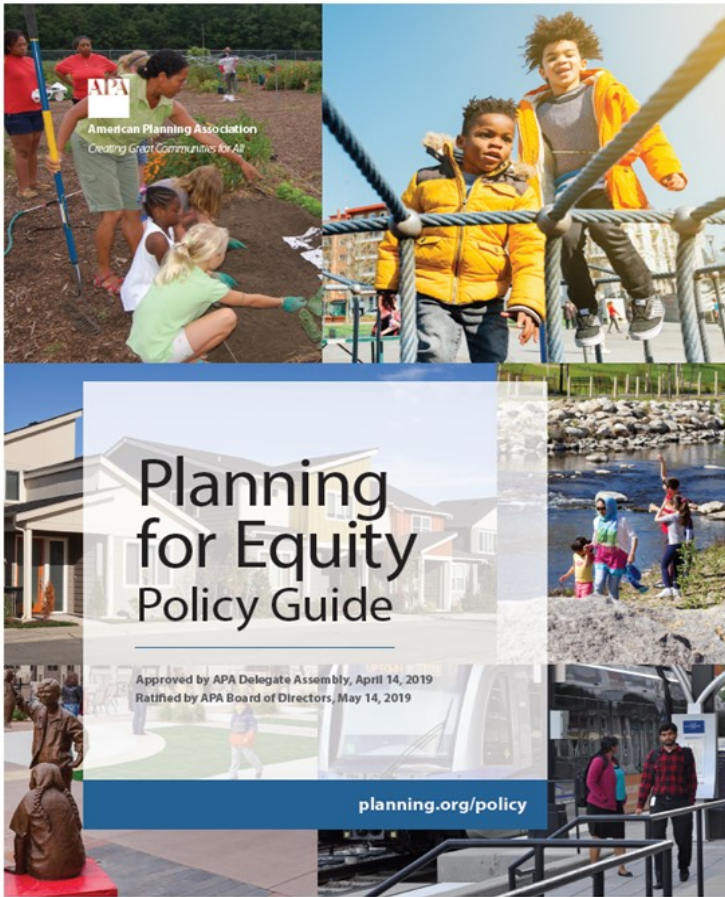
Nick Rogers, AICP, CZA (@NickRoge), is APA Virginia's Vice President of External Affairs, and a Principal Planner with Arlington County's Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development.

RESOURCES FOR *INCLUSIVE PLANNING*

APA's Planning for Equity Policy Guide

In 2019, APA adopted the Planning for Equity Policy Guide to benchmark the planning practice's commitment to both promote equity on all fronts of the planning profession and intentionally eradicate institutional barriers which perpetuate inequity. The guide was formulated through the work of 12 co-authors, chaired by Lynn Ross, AICP ([@mslynnross](https://twitter.com/mslynnross)) and [Susan Wood, AICP](#).

To fulfill this commitment, we must take an *equity in all policies* approach to our work, reevaluating our planning and updating policies and programs to remove impacts and hindrances to the progress of certain segments of the population. The guide incorporates specific approaches planners can take to combat gentrification, implement environmental justice, and enhance community engagement and empowerment for all populations. Planners will also find key principles for championing greater equity in housing, transportation, heritage preservation, and other planning disciplines.



GiGi the Planner

Website: <http://gigitheplanner.com>

Twitter: [@gigitheplanner](https://twitter.com/gigitheplanner)

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Podcast: <https://gigitheplanner.libsyn.com/>

Gisla Augustin is a Planner with the City of Pompano Beach, Florida. She also is the Founder/CEO of GiGi the Planner – part consultant, part coach, part content creator, with a planner gear and apparel store, too! GiGi's podcast covers topics relevant to planners at all stages of the profession, with particular focus on what the planning profession really entails. GiGi is steadfast in her goal of increasing the number of Black planners in the profession, and recently contributed to a report written by Arizona State University's Kendra Ellner outlining [Standards and Procedures for Black Planners](#).



BlackSpace

Website: <http://blackspace.org>

Instagram: [blackspace](#)

The BlackSpace Urbanist Collective brings together 200 planners, architects, artists, activists, designers and leaders to protect and create Black spaces. BlackSpace's website details how they provide a range of skills to serve this need, from engagement in historically Black neighborhoods, to hosting cross-disciplinary events. These offerings come under the umbrella of [14 objectives in a manifesto](#) that guides their work – some of these include Move at the Speed of Trust, Choose Critical Connections Over Critical Mass, and Manifest the Future.

BLACKSPACE

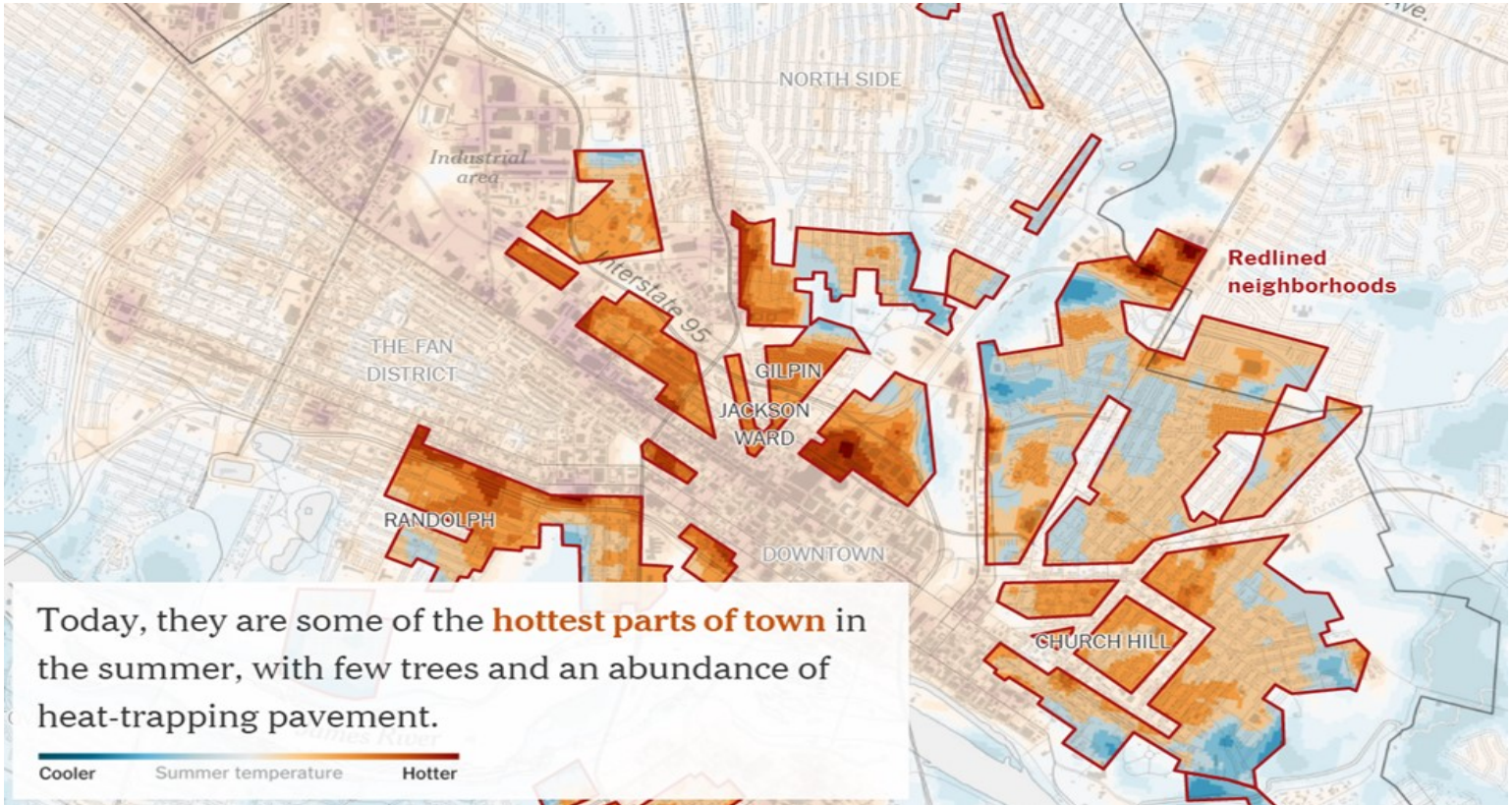
The Planner's Beginner Guide to the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

Website: <https://bit.ly/PlannersGuideBLM>

University of Southern California's Danielle Dirksen ([@danielle2016](#)) has compiled a one-stop source for planners to educate themselves and their colleagues on the Black Lives Matter movement. This guide gives foundational information on the movement, its intersections with the planning profession, and lists numerous Black planning professionals to follow on social media. Danielle's work is especially well suited to undergraduate/graduate planning students, new professionals, and planners seeking to find new outlets to support the Black Lives Matter movement.



Image Credit: [blacklivesmatter.com](#)



[“How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering”](#)

New York Times – August 24, 2020

Brad Plumer ([@bradplumer](#)), Nadja Popovich ([@PopovichN](#)), and [Brian Palmer](#) document the links between redlining practices in Richmond and increasingly hot temperatures for redlined communities. Majority Black Richmond neighborhoods were mapped by

the federal government in the 1930s and given the lowest score of “Type D” on so-called “residential security maps”, which resulted in the refusal of mortgage lenders to fund mortgages in majority Black communities. The concentrations of poverty that resulted from these practices are well documented, but the authors highlight additional impacts such as anemic tree canopy coverage, more intense heat, and far fewer publicly accessible park spaces compared to majority white Richmond neighborhoods.



Professional Development Update

By Andrew Hopewell, Professional Development Officer

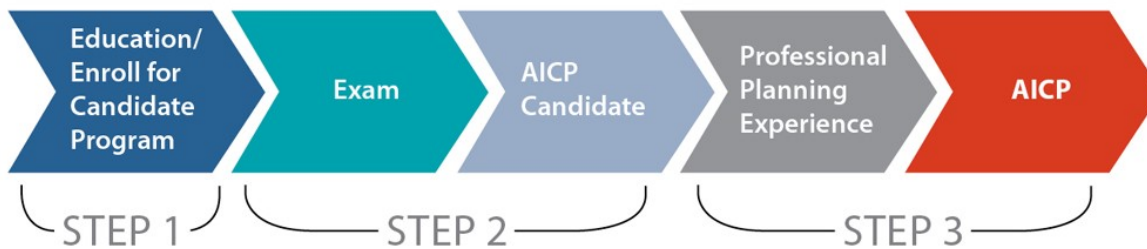
CHANGES TO THE AICP CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The AICP Candidate Program began in November of 2017 and seen a great deal of success in encouraging recent planning graduates to seek certification as they enter the field of planning. Traditionally, the path to certification had required planners to obtain their education and experience prior to taking their exam. The AICP Candidate program allowed planners to take their exam fresh out of planning school to earn the *AICP Candidate* designation while they earned the necessary professional

Traditional Sequence



AICP Candidate Pilot Program Sequence



experience.

Another change to the way that one can earn their AICP designation is now upon us. The process of earning one's AICP designation has long had two primary components that have not been viewed equally despite similar levels of importance. The exam has long been seen as the primary hurdle in earning AICP designation, yet the essays demonstrating professional experience are just as important. Part of the

problem may have stemmed from the essays being labeled the "application" to take the exam. In recognizing the equal importance of the professional experience to the knowledge, there are now two separate components to earning AICP certification – Planning Experience Essays and the AICP Exam. What's more, planners are no longer required to submit their essays in advance of taking their exam. The two steps are interchangeable in their ordering in the process. Additionally, the fees associated with each are equal (and individually less than the old exam fee), reducing the financial risk associated with each step in the process.

The costs associated with the process are now \$70 for the initial application which involves education and employment verification. Thereafter, there is a \$220 fee for the essay review and a \$220 fee for taking the exam at a total cost of \$510. Previously, the initial application which encompassed the education and employment verification as well as the experience essays, was \$85 with the remaining \$425 associated with the exam. Both total \$510, but the new pricing distributes the costs more equitably. There is still the potential for an expedited essay review process, but this opportunity to address any essay deficiencies within the same review window will come at a \$70 additional charge.

The new fee structure and process should be in effect for upcoming registration windows. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at pdo@apavirginia.com or to APA at aicpexam@planning.org.



2020 Annual VIRTUAL Conference

This year's conference will include keynote and plenary sessions, breakout sessions with live Q & A, and daily releases of on-demand sessions. Throughout the conference APA Virginia will host our annual awards ceremony along with a number of networking opportunities. Office hours will be available throughout the week so attendees can connect with staff and APA Virginia Board members to ask questions, share feedback and network. For more details on the conference and to register to attend, please visit the [Annual Conference website](#).

2020 APA Virginia Chapter Annual Conference **WE'LL GET YOU MOVING!**



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