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Quotations from Graduates:

"CPI inspires me to be a better Philadelphian and tells me how to do it!" and "Learn to use the powerful resources and toolkits already available to you." and "To quote a presenter: "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu."--**Spring 2019 participants**

"I can still see how the lessons from CPI are continuing to shape my life, as I am learning about neighborhoods and community programs in Montreal. Even though I'm not in Philadelphia anymore, CPI is still an important part of who I am. Thank you for creating such an important program." -**Katie Monroe, Spring 2016**

"The networking opportunities in CPI are PHENOMENAL! From the presenters to the other citizen planners, what a dynamic, informative, and enthusiastic collection of people!" -**Daniel Bryan, Spring 2019**

"I've learned what other communities are doing, the city's planning and vision for the future, how individual neighbors and neighborhoods can make a difference in big and small ways."--**Brenda Simons, Spring 2019**

"The CPI course is eye-opening, life-changing, and essential for anyone interested in collective action for community benefit."—**Joe Venti, Fall 2018**

"Neighborhoods many seem wildly different but they may be facing extremely similar challenges. It's a great way to learn from fellow citizens that live in other areas."--**Fall 2018 participant**

"Everyone is a wealth of knowledge and I am confident everyone is [making] and will make long-lasting impact on their respective communities and Philadelphia. CPI will be in my toolkit and I will suggest it to everyone I meet who is interested in making a difference."—**Luciana Boone, Fall 2018**

"CPI is growing community spirit in Philadelphia. It builds your capacity to problem solve. It keeps you from burning out. If you're there, you're already civic-minded, it's already in your heart. But it helps when you're equipped with the knowledge of how to solve problems, and see how other people are solving problems. The comradery that develops between classmates, between civic minded people from around the city, is priceless." —**Ruth Birchett, Fall 2015**

"Completing CPI makes you see the city, your neighborhood and your potential a little differently. Being around like-minded people gives you the drive to make a difference."—**Kelly E. Wiles, Fall 2017**

"More and more people should participate in CPI because it instills people with one of the greatest forms of knowledge – the knowledge that you have the power to affect change." —**Jacqueline Wiggins, Spring 2016**

"I would have not known where to begin or who to contact on a project of this scale if it were not for CPI." (*renovation of the oldest standing school building in the state- Lower Dublin Academy- for use by*

the Albanian-American Social-Cultural Organization, a cultural organization that hopes to provide a bridge between America and Albania.)—Lluka Lakuriqi, Fall 2015

“CPI taught me that if you’re frustrated by waiting for “somebody” to do something to improve things for your community, look in the mirror. You are that somebody.” —*Larissa Mogano, Spring 2011*

“Before CPI I didn’t know what I didn’t know. And you can’t ask for help if you don’t know where to begin. Now I have a base of knowledge from which to inform my own questions.” —*Larissa Mogano, Spring 2011*

“CPI taught me to be open-minded. Especially during the final project presentations, you learn what people from other neighborhoods are trying to achieve. You may assume someone is going in one direction, but if you hear them out they end up saying the opposite. So now in my work, when I’m visiting with these organizations, I let them tell their whole story and try to see how I can support what they’re doing.” —*Jasmine Sadat, Fall 2015*

“CPI taught me how forward-thinking planning and good zoning can help blocks flourish. It also made me realize that community consensus building and bottom-up change is a key component of how this city functions.” —*Philip Green, Fall 2011*

“After doing the CPI program, I’ve become a member of several community organizations and business associations. I’m using the knowledge I learned from CPI to become more of a force than just an individual.” —*Ted Smith, Spring 2014*

“I’m 100% a product of CPI. Before the program, I didn’t know anything or anybody... I went from knowing no one to knowing a ton of people who could really support me in what I wanted to do.” —*Marissa Rumpf, Fall 2015*

“Without CPI, I wouldn’t have been able to talk the talk.” —*Greg Trainor, Spring 2014*

“I appreciate how CPI makes use of time. You covered a lot in just 18 hours of total class time. It was clear that each hour of programming was intensely thought about and planned. Well done...I don’t think I’ve ever been part of a training that so effectively maximized learning-per-hour as the Citizens Planning Institute training does. It was a great experience, thank you.” —*Joey Bilyk, Spring 2018*

“It’s been amazing to meet people who are so diverse and therefore learn so much from them while at the same time coming from a shared viewpoint of being concerned Philadelphians.”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“This course empowered me to make change in my neighborhood even if I’m not great at it. Do something with what I’ve learned.”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“Because of this class, I have been inspired to be more active in my community. Thank you, CPI!”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“A real feel-good experience about our fellow Philadelphians. A talented, motivated force for good.”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“Hoping to recruit CPI grads in my neighborhood for our board.”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“You will meet and network with people that have similar interests and goals regarding your communities.”—*Spring 2018 participant*

“The CPI really is a crown jewel in the City of Philadelphia’s portfolio...the lessons and information you shared are a lifetime value and I am so grateful.”—*Michael Beachum, Spring 2017*

“The CPI has enabled me in just a two month period to come up to speed with the new systems that have been put in place to help navigate what once was a very frustrating process. Thank you for selecting me to participate in this process. I now have tools from the Community Design Collaborative, Jumpstart and the Department of Commerce to aid me in moving my project forward.” —**Aazim Muhammad, Fall 2017**

“It was really beneficial to learn more about the planning and zoning process. Even to meet people who are a part of their RCO and see how some people engage in their communities through these organizations and how they can have an impact - getting to see how people get together can accomplish something.”-- **Eliza Michiels, Fall 2016**

“CPI gave me an opportunity to connect with critical stakeholders in design, architecture, and planning fields. Philly, like most cities, has some strong opinions when it comes to zoning, so it was nice to take to city officials to hear a fresh perspective about zoning. CPI influenced my understanding of zoning and planning.”--**Jason Sandman, Fall 2013**

“It helped me build a foundation for advocacy via the intro to Planning/Zoning and panel discussion with nonprofit advocates, and other guest speakers who provided insight I needed to "get started". It helped me to connect the dots and appreciate the importance of networking with city agencies and other organizations. It also gave me the encouragement - or "extra push" I needed to build a network.”--**Joyce Smith, Pilot 2010**

“CPI gave me a tool kit to fight for my community. It also provided me with the education I needed to know to walk away...CPI put me on a new path, in my career and in my life. It also gave me the confidence to submit my petition to run as a committee person in my ward.”—**Venise Whitaker, Fall 2016**

“CPI is a much-needed organization. It helps to connect the dots for experienced as well as emerging community developers. I think that private developers should also be required to participate.”—**Aazim Muhammad, Fall 2017**

“I wanted to shoot you a quick email to express my interest in getting involved further with CPI. I am happy to serve on alumni boards, advisory boards, etc. or wherever you see fit. I really want to give back because CPI has given me so very much. We now have three CPI grads on my civic board and it's just incredible what a difference it's made in every facet of our organization.”—**Tara Gontek, Fall 2016**

“CPI brought all the big players to the table, by way of each week’s instructors and speakers. If you engage with them and your fellow classmates, you will have tremendous access to be successful with your plan / community redevelopment.”—**Fall 2017 participant.**

“I’m so glad the city is investing in people who care so much about civic health. Very wise move.”—**Fall 2017 participant.**

“I came to CPI with no knowledge or experience in community planning...but I had a driving need to uproot the poverty conditions existent in my neighborhood—trash, boarding houses, gun violence and slumlords taking advantage of the most vulnerable pool. I left CPI with the contacts, the knowledge and a real plan on how this neighborhood can be positively impacted. This is an absolutely wonderful experience.”—**Fall 2017 participant**

“With all the development going on, the more you know, the better you can judge the value of the development projects proposed for your community. Knowledge is power! Thanks for all the info you’ve provided.”—**Fall 2017 participant**

“I’m so grateful to be a part of the CPI graduate network. I feel like I will always have a place to go with questions and concerns. I am thrilled to come back for electives and continue to learn.”—**Courtney Bieberfeld, Fall 2017**

“Thank you for the invitations and all of the ongoing information, especially the Facebook page. I really appreciate the network CPI has provided and you will see more of me very soon...I do really need to catchup because the privilege of being a citizen planner is 'worth its weight in gold'.”—**Jessel Alexander, Spring 2017.**

“This program needs to be promoted more- so many people do not know about it. Also, you should encourage submitting program for awards nationwide. Are other cities doing something this fantastic?”—**Spring 2017 participant**

“This program is planting seeds for the future flourishing of our city.”—**Spring 2017 participant**

“CPI empowered me and strengthened my skill set in the areas of zoning and planning. Due to CPI, I was a strong candidate and was hired for a city council office position.” –**Venise Whitaker, Fall 2016**

“The application process was fairly easy for anyone to have comfort to apply. Will encourage others to apply a few times because it is so in demand. “Keep applying—it’s worth it.”—**Spring 2017 participant**

“CPI gave me the skills I need to help other people, and that really matters. The class gives you the tools, and what you do with it is your own creative process. I loved it! It made me realize there were things I could accomplish, that it was doable and tangible.”—**Kyle Shenandoah, Spring 2017**

“CPI was such an inspiring experience, I've been talking it up everywhere I go and trying to think up funding ideas to sustain and grow it”..—**Geraldine Wang, Fall 2016**

“I feel the need to thank Donna & Ariel for the CPI. When I first applied I had one mission, because of CPI I found my path as a citizen activist. My vision has broadened and I am assisting other communities to spread their missions. Being a CPI graduate has given me tools, empowered my skills and opened up doors that were always closed to me. Thank you ladies for this program and please know I'm always here to assist you to continue the vision of CPI.”—**Venise Whitaker, Fall 2016**

“Thank you so much for the feedback and for your facilitation of the CPI program. I had such a great experience and gained a wealth of knowledge. I will use your feedback to continue to work towards uniting my community.”—**Michael Moody, Fall 2016**

“It was the push that I needed. Connecting with like-minded people was great, I was getting discouraged before I took CPI-- just endless meetings of people talking about doing things and nothing getting done.”—**Pamela Stroman, Fall 2016**

“The thing I learned at CPI that really hit home for me was the fact that the City is really accessible to us, and that the perspective of the City is that it really values its citizens as co-workers.” --**Julie Stapleton Carroll, Fall 2014**

“I walked away from each class feeling inspired to be a better neighbor and more connected to Philadelphia.” -- **Chris Parise, MPA, Spring 2016**

“The course was jam-packed with useful information and resources and it was great to hear from those who have done/are implementing changes in their own communities.” –**Judy Walterson, Spring 2016**

“Ever since I attended CPI, I see and look at the city a little differently now, and back in my community meetings I have been generating ideas in my head...”--**Gloria Cartegena, Spring 2016**

I want to thank you for this opportunity to be a part of the 2016 CPI Class. I have been rejuvenated and intend to share what I learned. I know it will make a difference in the work we try to do. —**Denise Whittaker, Spring 2016**

One thing that I learned during CPI is how lucky we are at LSNA. We do not have the same problems many other communities face with vacant lots and properties. It makes me appreciate what we have and that our challenges are small compared to other communities. —**Drew Murray, Spring 2016**

Definitely empowering! When average citizens know how things work, they can be an effective part of the process.—**Spring 2016 workshop attendee**

CPI gave me great insight into challenges facing other communities.

I get what zoning is now☺

Great way to find “best practices” for your organization.

Gave me new “hope for the city” to be in such a great program and meet, learn from so many caring citizens and dynamic professional city workers.

How to engage neighbors...less meetings, more doing.

---**Spring 2016 workshop participants**

The relationships I built in CPI was the #1 most important factor in implementing – in 10 days! – a project I’d hoped to accomplish in a year! –**Marissa Rumpf, Fall 2015**

I am truly thankful and grateful to be selected to attend the fall 2015 session. Each class gave more than expected. Each presenter was knowledgeable, approachable and resourceful. It has been beneficial and inspiring to meet other civic minded persons, activists in their communities... ---**April Williams, Fall 2015**

...some of the real-world examples of projects initiatives and organizations that are currently active in the City provided by the guest speakers is immensely valuable in both learning about what people are doing to improve their communities in Philly, as well as showing that as ordinary citizens we can make an impact in our own communities...--**Gregory M. Diehl, Fall 2015**

I simply didn’t know what I didn’t know. The CPI course opened my eyes to all the resources, data, and tools available to community groups.—**Kyle Wherrity, Spring 2015**

The subject matter that was taught during the courses should be provided city-wide, meaning, I believe that any citizen of Philadelphia would benefit from the knowledge I learned in the last six weeks.—**Mary Chicorelli, Spring 2015**

The CPI program has introduced me to the world of planning and development. This program should be adopted by institutions to introduce students to career options and civic engagement opportunities. —**Ricardo Newell, Spring 2015**

I met many people passionately working on projects to strengthen their neighborhoods and willing to share resources to make all of our projects better than if we kept working in isolation. --**Karisa Barlow, Spring 2015**

I found the CPI course to be energizing and the instructors to be generous and encouraging. —**Eileen Talanian, Spring 2015**

"I believe as time goes on CPI will be credited with having played a vital role in Philadelphia's renaissance."
--Ron Francis, May 2014

"This course helps build a sense of civic responsibility..."—**Spring 2014 participant**

"...I just wanted to personally thank you for your time and talents you gave to all of us during the spring 2014 CPI course. This course has motivated me beyond what I thought it would. It has encouraged me to think higher and outside the box. The classes were well planned, fun, organized, engaging and very insightful."-- **Ted Smith, Spring 2014**

"...Thank you for creating a nurturing, constructive learning space for the past several weeks. I want to learn as much as possible so that I can help my neighborhood achieve...well, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. :) This course has been a fantastic introduction to city planning and many aspects of development. I will continue to build on the foundation CPI has laid out and I am beyond grateful to have had the honor to participate in this class."—**Antonio Romero, Fall 2014**

"... This class was great. It definitely broadened my perspective of what is important to residents in their neighborhoods and how all these neighborhood activities can weave together for "city-wide" improvement. You are also a great person to coordinate the class."—**Philippa Campbell, Fall 2014**

"I feel that this program is critical for our future as a City (and as a community, and as a community of communities), so I want to do my part in ensuring its continuation and success... It would be an understatement to say that I feel empowered now... we were provided with tools, people, connections and other resources to guide us. Citizens need to be less reactive and more proactive, especially in a world that is growing ever smaller. And knowledge is power."—**Anthony Fasano, Fall 2014**

"I didn't realize how many resources were available and how many questions could be answered with a little research. Every night after class I've felt so excited and empowered and ready to share!"—**Fall 2014 participant**

"What a very excellent experience. I would like to say the best part for me was meeting so many competent leaders. Every person I met is working so hard and with such heart to DO GOOD! It raised my spirits about Philadelphia's future! CPI fully deserves its high ranking on the Philadelphia City Planning Commission website. Thank you for accepting my application to join in the great thing you have created with CPI. You truly must expand to other cities that are less privileged and could use some empowerment."—**Sylvia Palms, Fall 2014**

"The structure of the course- presentations followed by interactive projects- allows participants to instantly apply knowledge gained earlier in the class session, and uncover questions and challenges we may face when applying these ideas in our communities."—**Fall 2014 participant**

"The opportunity to network with people from diverse neighborhoods made the course invaluable for understanding how much we have in common despite geographic differences. It truly felt like 100% Philadelphia."—**Fall 2014 participant**

"I wanted to take the time to say thank you for providing this program and being a part of my personal growth and development, I'm always on a mission! This program has made me more tuff, stronger, and more aware and better equipped for where I'm headed! I thank you and send you my blessings... I love CPI and I recommend this knowledge and skills for many people from my walk of life!"—**Halik Jackson, Fall 2014**

"Thanks to my experience with The Citizen Planning Institute, I gained the education and confidence to run for a seat on the board, and I am happy to say, I am registered for a 2 year board seat!"—**Jason Sandman, Fall 2013**

"I can't say enough good things about CPI thus far, it's been eye opening and a great was to meet people from other neighborhoods. I'm still very new and unfamiliar with the process, so I've taken the "you can learn a lot by listening" approaching."-- **Jim Jennings, Fall 2013**

"Through the CPI course I learned valuable insight into how city government works, and how clear methodical thinking to can set a future path -- both of which will be useful as I move to my next career. As a Philadelphia native and proud current resident, I thank you for the job you and your team have done to make the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection a great place to live, work, and play." --**Desiree Wellborn Wayne, Fall 2013**

"Thank you again so much for your patience, and for all of the hard work you've put into CPI. It was a really fantastic opportunity, and I'm very glad that I was able to participate. You have been so helpful during the entire process, and I really appreciate your passion and desire to see people succeed! " --**Monica Manklang, Fall 2013**

"Thanks again for the opportunity to be a part of this cohort, I honestly learned so much that I know will help me as I grow in this field of community work. If you ever need a volunteer or help with anything that I can be of assistance with please let me know. " --**Stephanie Michel, Fall 2013**

"CPI demystifies the process of planning by pointing you to the resources necessary to make changes in your neighborhood. Whether you are a seasoned neighborhood leader or a new resident eager to be more active in the community CPI will help you in envisioning the necessary steps to create and follow through on a plan." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"Gained a feeling of forward momentum- that all things are possible and achievable at the level of community involvement- don't need to depend on the 'experts' or the politicians." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"CPI enabled me to focus my energy and efforts toward actionable items that have proved successful in the past. The lessons learned and showed were most helpful to avoid the pitfalls and aim high for real and lasting improvement." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"I have learned so much from the great variety of guest speakers. I have a deeper understanding of planning and zoning (and other things!) that will help my neighborhood thrive. The expertise and willingness of the guest speakers to share insight is priceless." --**Haley Dervinis- Point Breeze, Fall 2013**

"It is so easy to feel discouraged in a city where problems can feel so intractable. CPI, Donna and my fellow students, the wonderful presenters have created an atmosphere that is inspiring and hopeful; an important feeling to have to keep one going." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"With knowledge comes power. Through CPI I feel confident and ready to share knowledge with my neighbors so we can make educated decisions for planning that will best serve our communities needs." **Haley Dervinis, Point Breeze, Fall 2013**

"There is a clarifying aspect to being in the presence of so many great leaders of our city and hearing what they have accomplished. That, alongside hearing the experiences and challenges that students have encountered, has created a space that propels me to think more creatively and strategically about my approach to community involvement and improvement." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"CPI has connected me with a network of neighborhood leaders for whom I can continue to learn from and collaborate with for positive change." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"CPI has built my level of confidence and knowledge in understanding planning and development of my community. Sharing ideas and processes with other community 'leaders' has been one of the best resources I've experienced." --**Participant, Fall 2013**

"I encourage anyone with special interest to apply to become a "Certified Citizen Planner". It's a really cool and innovative initiative that most that pay attention to city politics might not expect to find in Philadelphia." --**Luke Smith, Germantown, Spring 2012.**

"...It is people like you, and the work you do, that makes me proud of our city and very hopeful for Philadelphia's future, for me and my children. I'd probably never leave this city anyway, but you make that path an easier one. I'm studying at Fels and you're putting into practice the ideas that might otherwise be kicked endlessly around the halls of academia. It's very encouraging, and I'm honored to be a part of it." --**Luke Smith, Germantown, Spring, 2012.**

Attending the CPI class was truly a great experience. It provides the tools (knowledge) that helps to navigate through the myriad of processes that are critical to the success of any community planning. Collectively, the sessions provided me with the template for the creation of a meaningful plan that addresses all of the critical components for a comprehensive community plan. We now have a great starting point and tools available to shape our community thanks to the CPI." --**Carolyn Moseley, Eastwick, Fall 2012.**

"This experience really helped me to understand the importance and impact of planning, get past my reservations of the unknown and know that as front line soldiers we are not alone and share the same vision; a better city and future for all." --**Cassandra Green, Mill Creek, Spring 2011**

"Thank you CPI for helping me see my vision clearly, put it on the right path and bring it to fruition. Most importantly, I'm elated to have met so many wonderful and dedicated community leaders and faculty members. At this moment, I FEEL SO PROUD!"-- **Carol D. Tart, South, Fall 2011 (Facebook post)**

"Since graduating from CPI, I have felt more confident in discussing planning issues and contributing to my community. It has actually inspired me to explore new careers in urban commercial development and has broadened my initial interest in my civic association...I am also encouraging friends to apply to the CPI program and anyone who LOVES Philadelphia would benefit. I look forward to continuing my education with CPI and sharing my knowledge. Thank you!" --**Jennifer Devore, Newbold, Pilot 2010**

"I am proud to be a graduate of the CPI! I truly had a wonderful experience and learned so much that will be of practical application. Will recommend this course to others in the future." **Thomas El, Brewerytown, Fall 2011, (Facebook post)**

"Absolutely wonderful to the very end. Thank you sincerely for selecting me to be among those to participate in this extremely valuable course. I loved the graduation, appreciate the photos and look forward to participating and being of assistance in any way that I can as you move forward. Thanks again!" --**Sandra Broadus, Ogontz, Fall 2011, (Facebook post)**

"The CPI is a dream-come true for me to actually be able to study in a more formal structure, surrounded by both the people who really know the concepts/process and those who have come to the CPI to learn because they love their communities so deeply....Being able to step up my education, take it back to the Neighborhood, spread the word and get folks young and old involved at this critical time is such a blessing." --**Jeff Carpineta, East Kensington, Pilot 2010**

"This course of study is an opportunity for me to be more effective in my community...what is changing, what needs to change to preserve, protect and celebrate historic elements, diversity and design within Philadelphia..." --**Cynthia Temple, Queen Village, Pilot 2010**

"CPI is a unique and timely course that brings a careful balance of theory and practice to city planning." - **Betty Turner, Germantown, Pilot 2010**

"I am writing to say how much I enjoyed the CPI program and in talking with my classmates, they did too. I recognize that this was a huge amount of work for you and your colleagues, but it is exactly what the City should be doing to help equip and energize citizens. Thanks for your good work and that of those who assisted." --**Joseph R. Synchron, PE, PLS Pilot 2010, President & CEO, Schuylkill River Development Corporation**

"Overall, this course definitely empowered me...I have so much more to learn and I hope that I can be part of the reason my Civic organization turns around and brings my community to its full potential." --**Candice Prendergast, Wissahickon, Pilot 2010**

"(this course) has been invaluable and timely to the needs of our organization...I could see many dots connecting in terms of how to holistically address the needs of the community." --**Dawn Ang, Chinatown, Spring 2012**

"Philadelphia's greatness depends largely upon the level of participation in the planning process by those who live and work here."—**Sister Elaine George, Juniata Park, Pilot 2010**

"The course really opened my eyes to the process...This course was worth my time and effort and then some. I believe this program has the potential to re-create our communities." (*survey comment*)

"It (CPI) is the best thing lately...to build a first class city of informed citizens actively participating in developing healthy, safe and beautiful neighborhoods that are strong-- economically, socially and politically. Excellent!" (*survey comment*)

"I just wanted to say thank you for having me in the class this semester. I learned a ton, and the program has inspired me to build new connections in my community and to think about ways that I can play a bigger role in developing it. It's also enabled me to participate in development discussion on a deeper level because I have a much better understanding of the zoning and planning process..." --**Will Waggenpack, Old City, Fall 2012**

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to participate in such an excellent and well run program. I loved interacting with people from across the city, hearing from a myriad of highly engaging experts, and starting to apply the perspectives I gained from the CPI courses to my own neighborhood. I've actually been inspired by my experience with CPI to pursue graduate studies related to urban and environmental planning, design, and policy. Fascinating stuff! I look forward to attending more CPI electives when I return to Philadelphia in a couple of years."—**Arianna Hall-Reinhard, Fishtown, Fall 2012**

"...I was very inspired by the various groups from neighborhoods that I never heard of before and their ability to make so many positive changes within this city. It was great to be able to meet with such positive thinking people. All the speakers were very professional and giving in their presentations..."--**Cindy Masiejczyk, Fox Chase, Fall 2012**