



“I’M BIASED, BUT I’M TRYING NOT TO BE”

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AGENDA

Introduction to Bias

Bias in Planning & Among Planners...
how it happens?

Increasing Awareness & Addressing Bias



I DON'T KNOW YOU
&
YOU DON'T KNOW ME



How well
do we know
those around us?

WHY BIAS?

The American Planning Association (APA) has taken a clear stance against bias and discrimination in any type of planning practice or procedure.



BIAS DEFINED... (not)

Bias is a term used in the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, but is not defined.

We must look elsewhere...



BIAS DEFINED

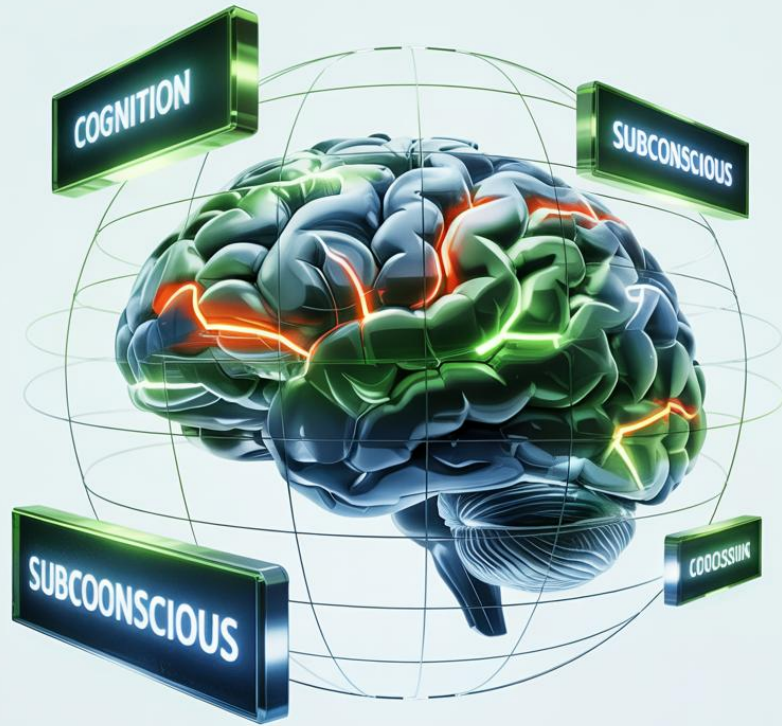
noun: **bias**

- prejudice in favor of (or against) a thing, person or group – usually in a way considered unfair
- opposite: objectivity, fairness, impartiality

statistics: **distort**

- a systematic distortion of a statistical result





Conscious Bias

- **Explicit** attitudes and intentional actions that favor particular groups. These biases are recognized and acknowledged by the individual.

Unconscious Bias

- **Implicit** associations and automatic responses that occur without awareness. They become our '*default.*' They affect decisions despite good intentions.

Impacts

- A 2022 Harvard study found that 75% of planners demonstrate measurable implicit bias affecting community decisions.

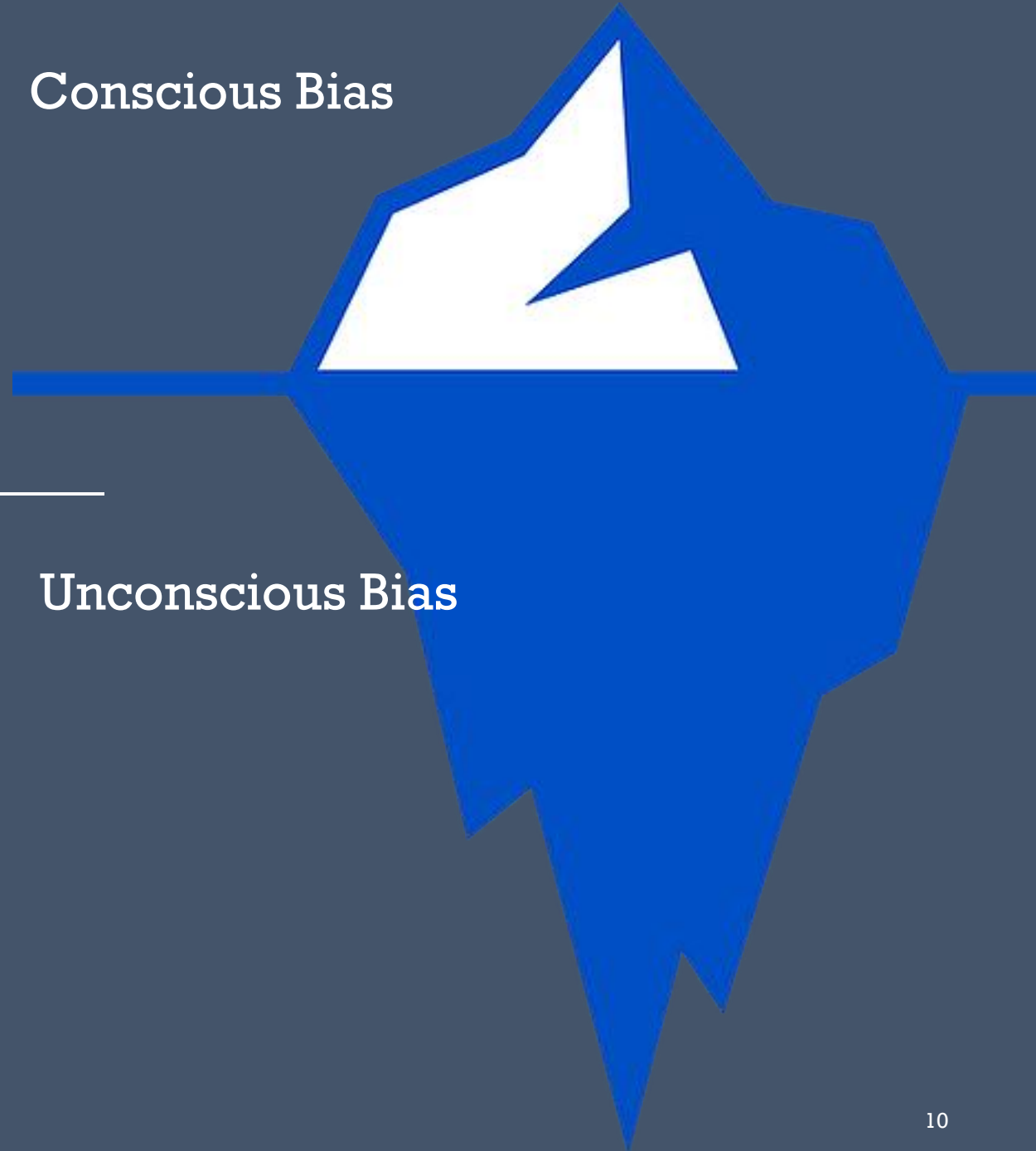
BIAS DEFINED

The communities we build reflect our values AND our biases.

- Recognize and understand how your conscious and unconscious biases shape decisions, communities, infrastructure, and public spaces.

Conscious Bias

Unconscious Bias



BIAS DEFINED

More than one way to
be biased

More than one way to
Experience bias



Overt Discrimination

Explicit discriminatory statements have become rare in planning.

Institutional Bias

Systematic barriers persist in hiring, promotion, and project assignments.

Experiential Disparities

Planner of color and different nationalities report more frequent discrimination than their white colleagues



APA'S CORE MISSION:

**"CREATE GREAT
COMMUNITIES FOR ALL."**

**A SIMPLE PHRASE WITH
PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS.**

Our standards are embodied in the Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct



Section A: Principles to Which We Aspire

1. People who participate in the planning process shall continuously pursue and faithfully serve the public interest.

Examine our own cultures, practices, values, and professional positions to reveal and understand our conscious and unconscious biases and privileges as an essential first step so we can better serve a truly inclusive public interest promoting a sense of belonging.

Our standards are embodied in the Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct



2. Be conscious of the rights of others. Develop skills that enable better communication and more effective, respectful, and compassionate planning efforts with all communities, especially underrepresented communities and marginalized people, so that they may fully participate in planning.

Respect the experience, knowledge, and history of all people.

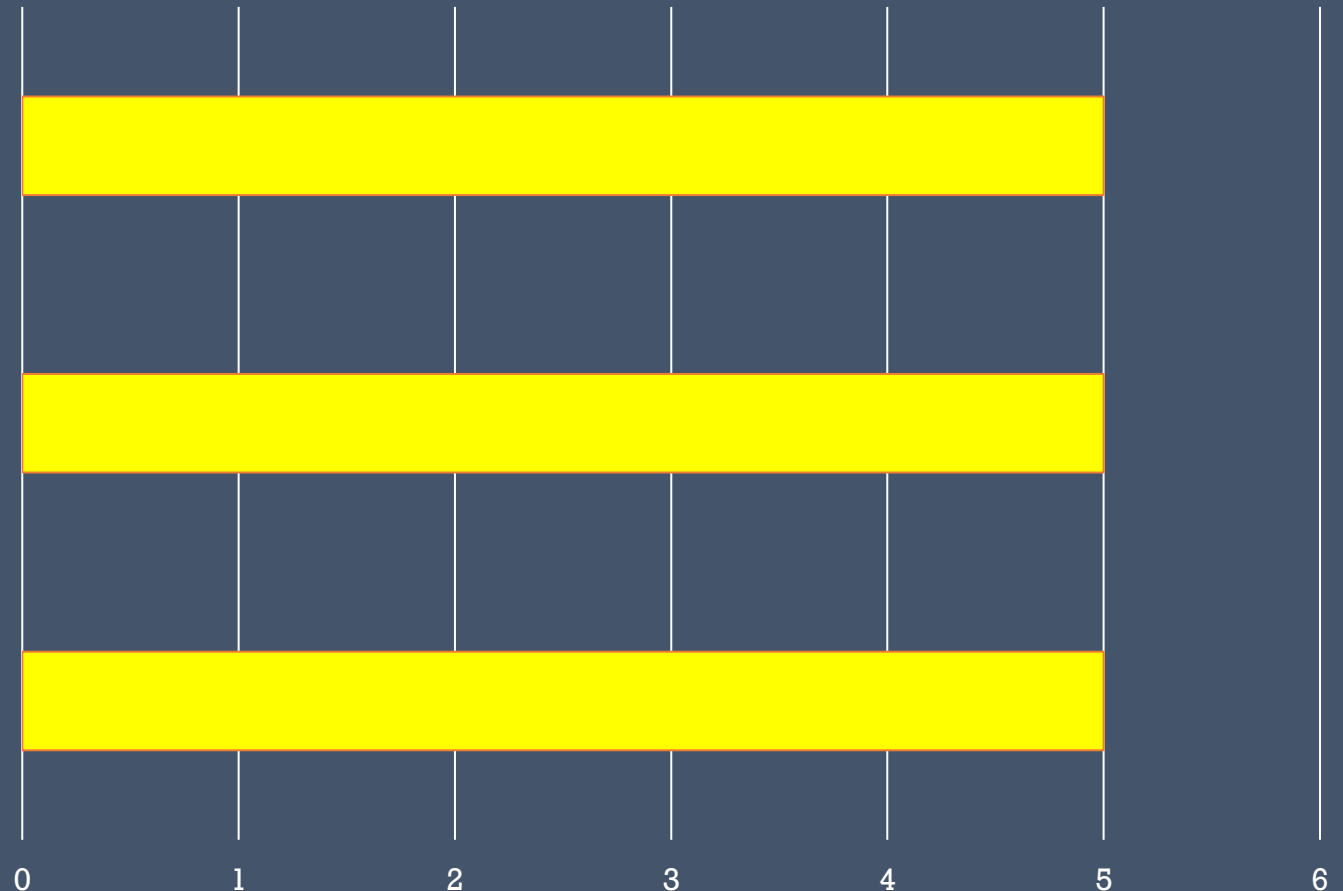
CODE OF ETHICS

FOUNDATIONS AGAINST BIAS

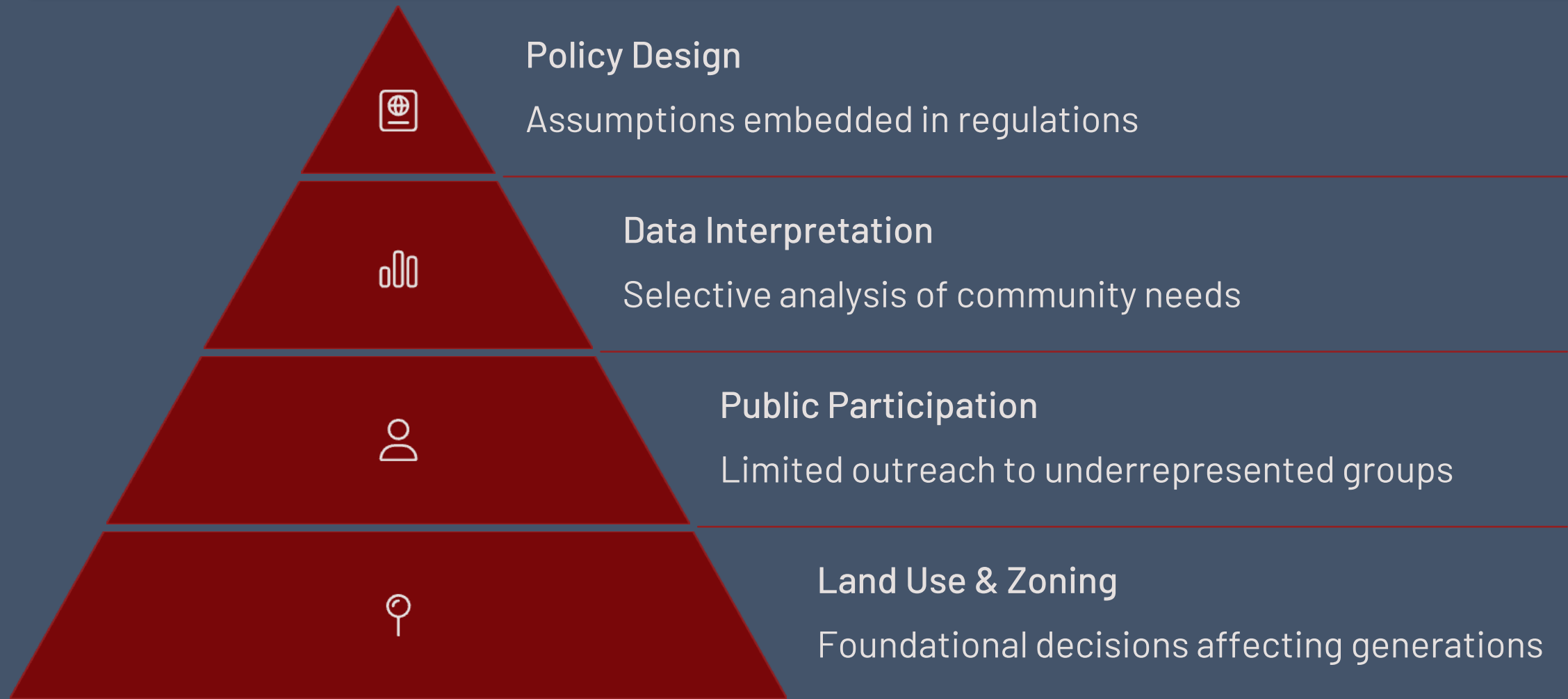
Serve the public interest
Prioritize community needs
over special interests

Promote fairness
Planning must be transparent
& accessible to all

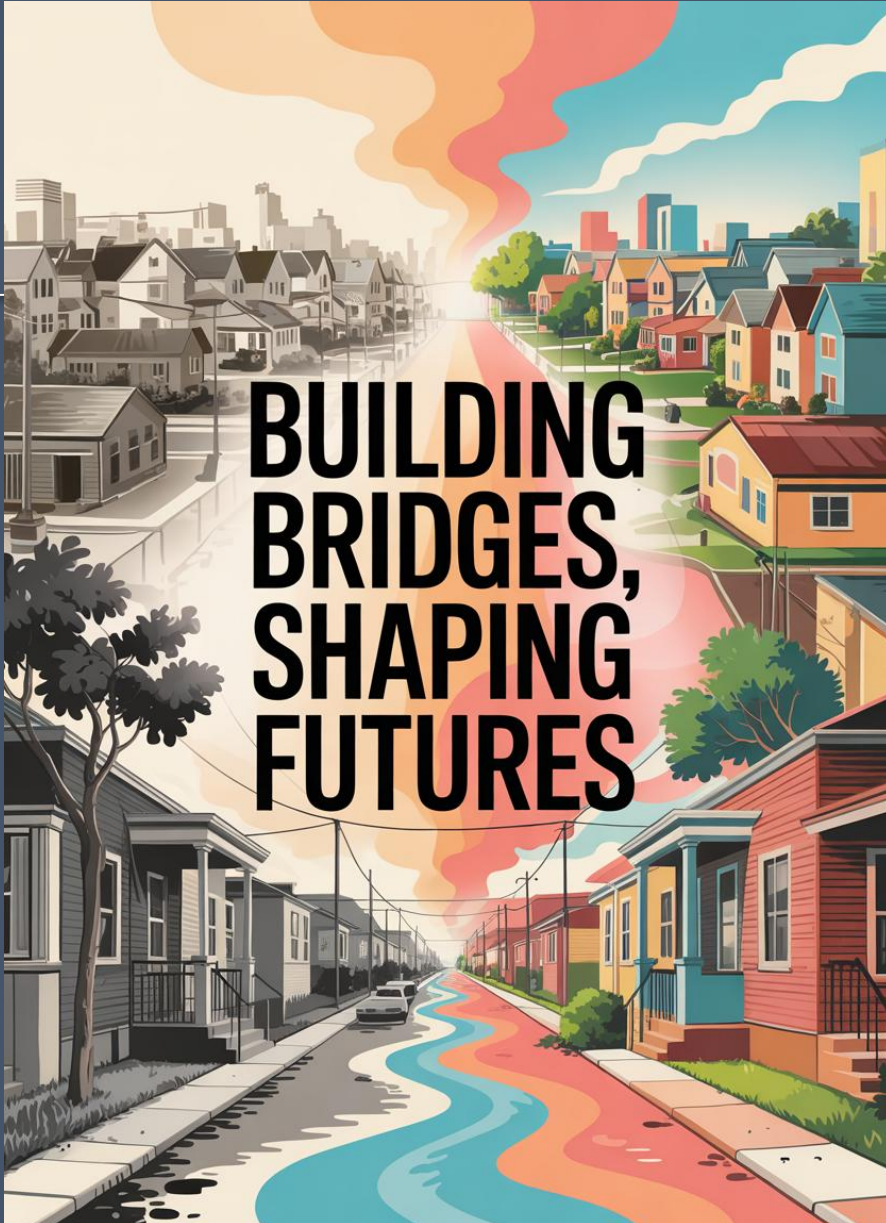
Reject discrimination
in all its forms



HOW BIAS ENTERS COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESSES



COLLECTIVE BIAS



- **Formal Acknowledgment**
APA has publicly acknowledged planning's role in structural racism and discrimination.
- **Housing Segregation**
Historical zoning and housing policies created lasting residential segregation patterns.
- **Transportation Inequity**
Infrastructure decisions prioritized wealthier places over lower-income areas.
- **Educational Disparities**
School siting reinforced neighborhood segregation and educational inequality.

SURVEY OF PRACTITIONERS - KEY FINDINGS

Finding Category	Survey Result	Implication
Experience Disparities	80% of planners of color report bias	Widespread problem requiring attention
Perception Gap	30% of white planners acknowledge bias	Awareness barriers hinder progress
Institutional Issues	65% cite systemic rather than individual bias	Structural changes needed beyond training

Planning Profession Bias Analysis



STRATEGIES TO RECOGNIZE AND REDUCE BIAS



Training Programs

Implicit bias training to create awareness of hidden prejudices affecting decisions.



Equity Assessment Tools

Data-driven analysis to measure infrastructure, resource, and access gaps within community.



Inclusive Engagement

Multiple languages, varied meeting times, and childcare help ensure diverse community participation.

MOVING FORWARD CREATING EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

Assessment & Transparency

Regular equity audits with published results ensure accountability and track improvements over time.

Policy Reform

Minneapolis eliminated single-family zoning to increase housing options and reduce segregation patterns.

Equitable Participation

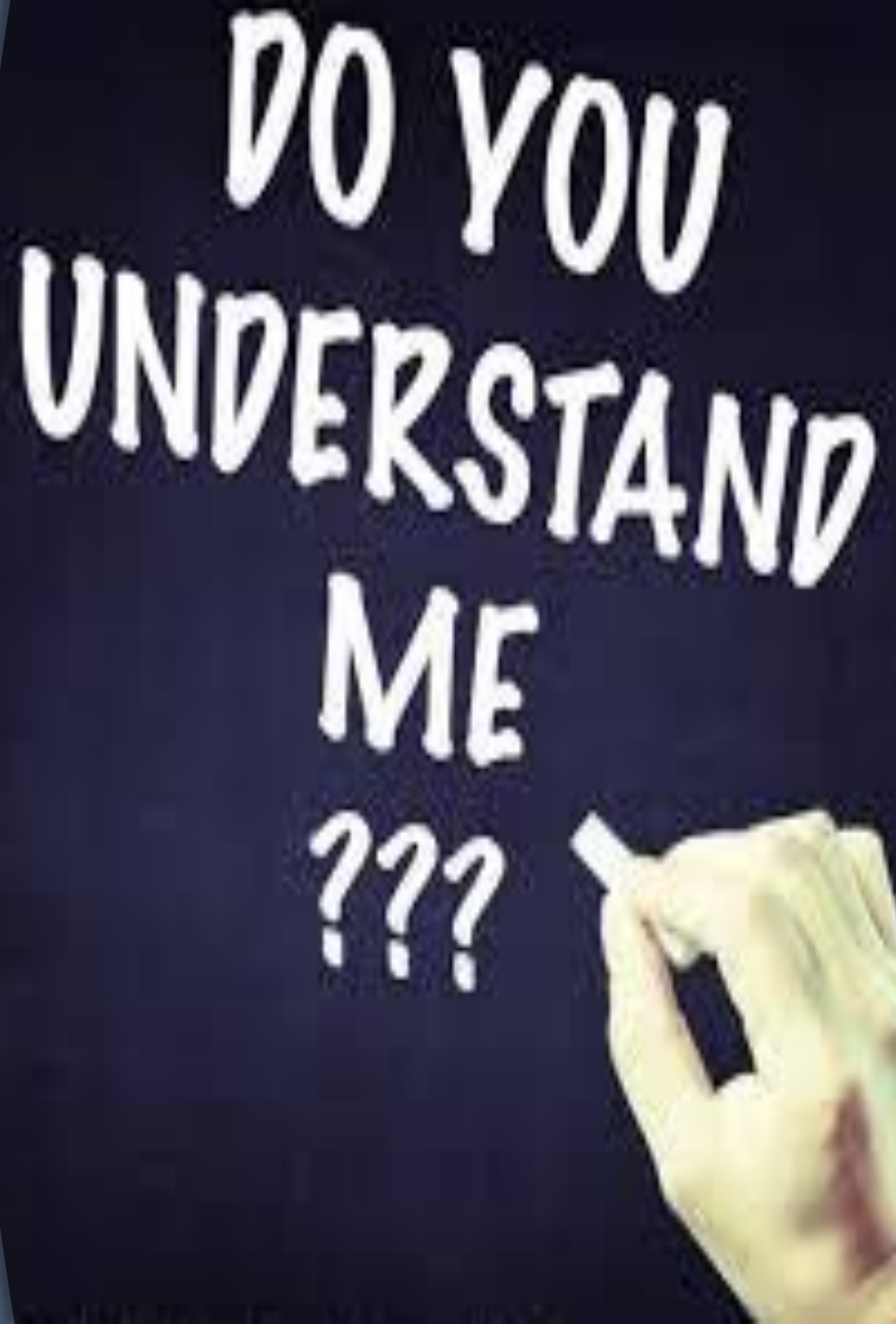
Empower historically excluded communities with decision-making authority and resources for meaningful input.



BIAS IN PLANNING

The communities we build reflect our values—and our biases.

- We must recognize and understand how our conscious and unconscious biases shape our decisions, communities, infrastructure, and public spaces.



“Quit talking
and begin doing.”

Walt Disney



Thank You...

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