

A VISION FOR ARLINGTON

Arlington envisions a physical environment that strengthens existing connections, encourages social interaction, and fosters a sense of community. The Town envisions:

- *Open Spaces that Connect Us*
- *Corridors that link neighborhoods*
- *Thriving, interconnected business districts*

**FIRST
DRAFT**

1. INTRODUCTION

A. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

We haven't written this section yet.

B. KEY FINDINGS

- Arlington's beauty is influenced by many factors: its varied landscape and topography, the presence of water resources, and its historic architecture. In addition, Arlington's distinctive street trees and urban woodlands play a critical role in the town's appearance, walkability, and environmental health. Increased investments in tree maintenance and replacement, including enough personnel to carry out a comprehensive tree and streetscape management program, will be important for Arlington's future quality of life.
- Arlington has many unique neighborhoods, each with recognizable features in topography, housing typology, and streetscape characteristics. Neighborhoods tend to be identified in terms of their physical and cultural relationship with Massachusetts Avenue. As the quintessential "Main Street" of Arlington, Massachusetts Avenue serves many neighborhoods along its length with civic amenities, local businesses, and transportation.
- Massachusetts Avenue has the capacity for growth. It can support mixed-use development commensurate with its function as Arlington's primary commercial corridor. Massachusetts Avenue is accessible to neighborhoods throughout the town, it has frequent bus service, bicycle routes, and good walkability. Increased density through greater building heights and massing would benefit the corridor from an urban design perspective and benefit the town from a fiscal perspective.
- Arlington has a limited number of vacant, developable land parcels, e.g., at Poet's Corner on Route 2, and the large properties next to Thorndike Field and Alewife Brook. The conservation and development opportunities on these and other sites matter, but Arlington's growth management priorities must be Massachusetts Avenue, Broadway, and the Mill Brook area. Addressing Arlington's critical environmental challenges will hinge, in part, on the policies it adopts to guide and regulate future development in these locations.
- The Mill Brook is a hidden gem. It has the potential to spawn transformative change along Massachusetts Avenue west of the center of town. Nearby properties are poised for redevelopment due to their current use, age, and ownership, their location adjacent to the waterway, and their proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway and Massachusetts Avenue.

- Arlington's historic civic spaces are beloved community institutions that serve as both visual landmarks and cultural gathering spaces. Preserving them is a local priority, and overall, Arlington has been a good steward of its historic assets. Still, the Town has unmet preservation needs.
- There are historic properties without any protection, and several historic sites and buildings need long-term maintenance programs.
- Arlington has done more than many Massachusetts communities to promote sustainability. Its early adoption of a climate action plan, its designation by the Massachusetts Green Communities Program, and impressive storm water awareness programs all suggest a strong sense of environmental stewardship.
- Compared with many towns around Boston, Arlington has been successful at creating affordable housing. Through inclusionary zoning and directing federal grant funds to the Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA), the Town has created over 140 low- or moderate-income housing units since 2000. However, despite efforts by the Town, the HCA, and the Arlington Housing Authority (AHA), Arlington has lost some of its traditional affordability. Pressure for housing close to Boston and Cambridge has triggered significant increases in Arlington's property values and home sale prices. Between 2000 and 2012, the median single-family home sale price rose by over 45 percent.
- Arlington's convenient access to employment centers in Boston and Cambridge attracts highly-educated and skilled homebuyers and renters. Thirty-nine percent of its labor force commutes to these two cities alone. Arlington's attractiveness to young, well-educated families bodes well for the vitality of local businesses and the civic life of the town. The same phenomenon helps to explain the dramatic K-12 population growth that has occurred in Arlington at a time that many towns have experienced declining school enrollments.
- Arlington's economy is growing. Seventy new businesses were established between 2008 and 2012, and since 2012, local employment figures have recovered and surpassed pre-recession numbers.
- The Town's two theatres – the Capitol Theatre in East Arlington and the Regent Theatre in Arlington Center – draw approximately 200,000 patrons per year. According to a study prepared for the Arlington Planning Department, these visitors spend \$2.4 million at the local shops and restaurants around them.
- Arlington has a vibrant local arts community. Several organizations devoted to cultural production and appreciation are located in Arlington, and many self-employed residents work in the fine and performing arts. This creative infrastructure helps makes Arlington's commercial districts interesting places to shop, visit and work, which in turn boosts the utility and value of the commercial properties in them.
- Arlington's road network consists of 125 miles of roadway, including 102 miles under the Town's jurisdiction. The network is well-connected and multimodal, with many sidewalks, several bicycle routes and pathways, and transit options, though the latter is mostly concentrated along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor.
- Due to significant traffic congestion, Arlington can be a difficult place to navigate during peak period commutes and school pick-up and drop-off times. The congestion occurs on north-south cross-streets including Pleasant Street, Jason Street, Park Avenue, Highland Avenue, Mill Street, and Lake Street, in part due to motorists accessing major routes such as Route 2 and Route 2A. In addition, congestion often occurs on Mill Street and Lake Street near their intersections with the Minuteman Bikeway.
- Arlington is a well-run, fiscally responsible town. Over the past twenty years, its average annual rate of expenditure growth has been about average or slightly below that of most of the neighboring towns and cities in its peer group. In addition, the Town has made cautious borrowing decisions and through prudent financial management, Arlington has earned a triple-A bond rating. Still, the Town has been

challenged to keep pace with rising costs of community services. Over the past ten years (2003-2013), Arlington has had to reduce its municipal workforce by approximately 14 percent.

- Arlington spends slightly less per capita (\$3,371) on local government services than the median for its peer group (\$3,625). In Arlington, there are 1.8 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions per 1,000 residents, but the Northeast U.S. average is 2.15 FTE per 1,000 residents. Commercial and industrial taxes make up a much smaller percentage of the tax base in Arlington (6.3 percent) than most of the towns in its peer group.
- Arlington High School's accreditation may be at risk unless the Town addresses facility deficiencies identified in a recent accreditation review. There is also a need for improvements to the Stratton elementary school. In fact, Arlington faces demands for several "big ticket item" capital projects in the next few years, not only at the schools.
- Arlington has very little publicly-owned land. The high school, cemetery, Public Works Department and Recreation Department will have difficulty meeting future needs because there is virtually no land for expansion. Some already face capacity problems.

C. GOALS AND POLICIES

Land Use

- Balance housing growth with other land uses that support residential services and amenities.
- Encourage development that enhances the quality of Arlington's natural resources and built environment.
- Attract development that supports and expands the economic, cultural, and civic purposes of Arlington's commercial areas.

Transportation

- Enhance mobility and increase safety by maximizing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access and other alternative modes of transportation.
- Manage congestion safely and efficiently by improving traffic operations.
- Manage the supply of parking in commercial areas in order to support Arlington businesses.

Housing

- Encourage mixed-use development that includes affordable housing, primarily in well-established commercial areas.
- Provide a variety of housing options for a range of incomes, ages, family sizes, and needs.
- Preserve the "streetcar suburb" character of Arlington's residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage sustainable construction and renovation of new and existing structures.

Economic Development

- Improve access to public transit and parking.
- Support conditions that benefit small, independent businesses.
- Maximize the buildout potential of commercial and industrial properties.

- Promote Arlington’s historic and cultural assets as leverage for economic development.

Historic & Cultural Resources

- Maintain, protect, preserve, and promote historic and diverse cultural resources in all neighborhoods.
- Provide attractive, well-maintained spaces for residents to meet, play and grow.
- Promote arts and cultural activities for all ages.

Natural Resources

- Use sustainable planning and engineering approaches to improve air and water quality, reduce flooding, and enhance ecological diversity by managing our natural resources.
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Ensure that Arlington’s neighborhoods, commercial areas, and infrastructure are developed in harmony with natural resource concerns.
- Value and protect the physical beauty and natural habitats of Arlington.

Open Space & Recreation

- Treasure our open spaces, parks, recreational facilities and natural areas.
- Expand recreational and athletic facilities, programs, and opportunities, for all residents.
- Maintain and beautify our public parks, trails, play areas, and streetscapes.

Public Facilities & Services

- Coordinate and efficiently deliver town services.
- Build, operate, and maintain public facilities that are attractive and help to minimize environmental impact and that connect Arlington as a community.
- Balance the need for additional revenue with ability and willingness of property owners to pay for new expenditures and investments
- Guide public facility investments through a long-term capital planning process that anticipates future needs.

D. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Land Use

- i) Recodify and update the Zoning Bylaw (ZBL).

The current ZBL includes nineteen separate zoning districts, including six unique business and one industrial zone. The text of the ZBL is not always clear, and some of the language is out of date and often inconsistent. As a “first step” in any zoning revisions following a new master plan or major update of an existing plan, communities should focus on instituting a good regulatory foundation: structure, format, ease of navigation, updated language and definitions, and statutory and case law consistency. To illustrate issues with Arlington’s present zoning, the Town requires a special permit for churches, schools, and day care centers, yet state law specifically exempts these uses from the special permit process.

- 2) Reduce the number of uses that require a special permit.

Excessive special permit zoning can create land use conflicts and hinder successful planning initiatives. Special permits are a discretionary approval process; the board with authority to grant or deny has considerable power, and unless that power is flagrantly abused, the board's decision will generally be upheld. Developers yearn for predictability. If the Town wants to encourage certain outcomes that are consistent with this Master Plan, special permits should be replaced with by-right zoning, subject to performance standards and conditions, wherever possible.

- 3) Reorganize and consolidate the business zoning districts on Massachusetts Avenue.

The six zoning districts (B1, B2, B2A, B3, B4, B5) along the length of Massachusetts Avenue are interspersed with six residential zoning districts. Addressing continuity of development and the cohesion of the streetscape, as well as density of development, is difficult. It appears that in some cases, parcels may have been placed in a particular district in order to shield them from becoming non-conforming uses (or to protect the buildings from becoming non-conforming structures). While there is nothing inherently wrong with having several business districts, it is sometimes difficult to connect the zoning on a given site with the district's stated purposes in the ZBL. As part of updating and recodifying the ZBL, the Town should consider options for consolidating some of the business districts.

- 4) Provide redevelopment incentives in all or selected portions of the business districts on Massachusetts Avenue, Broadway, and Medford Street

Arlington needs to unlock the development potential of business-zoned land, especially around the center of town. Increasing the maximum building height and lot coverage, and instituting mechanisms to reduce or waive off-street parking requirements would go a long way toward incentivizing redevelopment, as would a clear set of design guidelines. Applicants should be able to anticipate what the Town wants to see in the business districts and plan their projects accordingly.

- 5) Clarify that mixed-use development is permitted along sections of Massachusetts Avenue.

The B3 Village Business district and B5 Central Business district "encourage" mixed use development, but other business and residential districts along Massachusetts Avenue do not. The ZBL is vague regarding uses that are allowed in mixed-use projects. As part of the recodification and update process, the Table of Use Regulations should be clarified, and the ZBL should have specific standards for design, construction, and operation of a redevelopment project.

Transportation

- 1) Create safer pedestrian and bicycle conditions.

- Consider installing a pedestrian hybrid signal at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue/Water Street to allow for safe pedestrian crossings across Massachusetts Avenue. If installed, the hybrid beacon should be coordinated with nearby intersections.
- Initiate a complete and safe sidewalks plan for all of Arlington, in coordination with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program.
- Identify unsafe pedestrian crossings throughout Arlington, including the intersections of Broadway/Warren and Warren Street between River Street and Broadway, and along the Mystic Valley Parkway. Crossing need to be improved with signals, signage, or modifications to the road design.

- 2) Improve conditions, access, and safety along the Minuteman Bikeway.

- Address ADA requirements for the Bikeway, improved lighting, signalization at street crossings, including raised crossings for the bikeway to give more visibility to pedestrians and bicyclists, and speed control to drivers.
 - Make efforts to provide safe connections between the Minuteman Bikeway and commercial centers in East Arlington, Arlington Center, and Arlington Heights. Corridors should be identified and equipped with wayfinding signage to direct path users to and from the path, including a map directory of local businesses along the path.
 - Add bicycle parking and access into commercial zoning regulations along the bikeway and in adjacent business districts.
 - Review the extension of the regional “Hubway” bikeshare program into Arlington.
 - Include bicycle friendly design and technology into all new road projects, such as bicycle detection at intersections, queue jumping, longer signals where needed, and uninterrupted bicycle lanes.
 - Bicycle lanes should be added on Massachusetts Avenue from Swan Place to Pond Lane to connect lanes created by the Massachusetts Avenue Rebuild Project and the Arlington Safe Travel Project.
 - Provide contra-flow bicycle lanes on high-demand one-way streets, such as Swan Street westbound, Foster Street northbound, and River Street northbound.
 - Support a carpooling campaign for those children who are not bussed to school. Continue to support and expand the safe routes to school program to encourage more biking and walking to school.
- 3) Work with the MBTA to reduce bus bunching, and improve the efficiency of bus service, including the provision of queue jump lanes, bus-only lanes, and/or bus stops at curb extensions.
- 4) Address parking issues, especially in the commercial centers.
- Consider a parking study in the East Arlington neighborhood to determine whether there is a parking deficiency and to develop strategies to improve parking management in the area.
 - Implement the recommendations in the 2014 Arlington Center parking study, as appropriate, and continue to monitor parking trends in the area to determine if these measures were effective.
 - Wayfinding signage for public parking lots is needed, including maps and parking limits to inform customers and improve the visitor’s experience. In addition, information on parking areas, regulations, and policies should be provided on the Town’s website.
 - The Town should review its existing parking policies, including overnight residential street regulations and unregulated residential street parking, and determine strategies to curb non-resident commuters who park on residential roadways. The Town should consider fee-based resident overnight parking for residents that can demonstrate a special need, and daytime resident parking regulations that preclude the use of Arlington streets as parking facilities for out-of-town commuters, such as a resident sticker program.
 - Consider assuming more responsibility for private streets to bring them up to the same general condition of public ways.
 - Initiate a coordinated study to further extend the Green Line Extension into West Medford, East Arlington, or Arlington Center.
- 5) Coordinate efforts to reduce traffic congestion

There are several specific locations and times of day where traffic congestion is problematic in Arlington. The morning and evening rush hours and school runs add additional cars and busses to main arteries and secondary streets alike. In addition key intersections, at the edge of town, become bottlenecks to traffic flow, causing major back-ups, primarily on Massachusetts Avenue and Pleasant Street. Concentrated efforts to relieve congestion should be addressed.

- 6) Work with MassDOT to improve the efficiency of the signal at Massachusetts Avenue/Route 16 in Cambridge, just east of the Arlington Town Line.
- 7) Massachusetts Avenue Corridor and Intersections
 - Make improvements to intersections to improve traffic flow in the two-lane section of Massachusetts Avenue. Such improvements may include left-turn pockets at intersections, where justified, and signal coordination.

Housing

- 1) Create an Affordable Housing Plan (Housing Production Plan) and submit to DHCD for approval under Chapter 40B.

The Town of Arlington's last Housing Needs and Strategy plan was prepared in 2004. The town should review it for current applicability, especially in light of the increase in young families moving to town. A housing production plan should take into consideration the needs of all demographics, including families, elderly, families with special needs, and households with low and moderate incomes. The plan should be prepared with Chapter 40B requirements in consideration, but also made to support housing needs not met by Chapter 40B developments.

- 2) Work with DHCD and the Town's state representative and senator to determine Arlington's status under the Chapter 40B 1.5 percent land area rule.

Arlington should provide affordable housing in ways that protect neighborhood character, support a diverse population, and meet the needs of low-income households both locally and in the region. These objectives should not conflict with the purposes of Chapter 40B. However, it is very difficult for towns to control land development and protect neighborhood character unless they meet or exceed the Chapter 40B 10 percent minimum. The other statutory option for exerting control is the so-called 1.5 percent land area rule, i.e., whether 1.5 percent of Arlington's total land area is developed for affordable housing. It is very difficult for communities to determine whether they meet the 1.5 percent minimum. Historically, DHCD has declined to provide an opinion unless a developer has appealed a local board's decision to deny a comprehensive permit.

Arlington is working toward the 1.5 percent minimum, but based on available information, it is not clear how much additional land needs to be permitted for affordable housing in order for Arlington to meet the requirement. However, it will probably be easier for Arlington to satisfy the 1.5 percent land area requirement than to reach the 10 percent minimum, given that Arlington has so little vacant land left for new development. The Town should work with its legislators, Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), and state officials to develop a process for communities to obtain a 1.5 percent land area determination from DHCD.

- 3) Address the quality and condition of aging housing stock, including financial assistance programs for homeowners and landlords, and zoning options to redevelop and convert older single-family residences located around commercial nodes to multi-unit dwellings.

- Improvements to the structure and aesthetics of one house on a block often spurs further investment on adjacent properties. Arlington should continue to provide housing rehabilitation assistance with its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation in order to help moderate-income homeowners address substandard housing conditions. Currently the Town provides low-interest loans to address code violations. Eligible homeowners have to satisfy basic credit requirements, have a stable income history, and repay the loan within fifteen years. In addition to its current program, however, Arlington could provide some CDBG assistance as a grant (or deferred payment loan) to very-low-income homeowners with extraordinary or emergency housing needs. Despite Arlington's rising levels of household wealth, it still has a significant number of low- and moderate-income residents. According to the most recent housing affordability data from HUD, almost 19 percent of Arlington's households and 10 percent of its homeowners have low incomes (below 50 percent AMI).
- Changes the Zoning Bylaw to allow accessory apartments in owner-occupied single-family homes in the R₀ and R₁ districts by special permit and in all other residential districts as of right. Accessory apartments are a remarkably "low impact" strategy for providing housing choices and supporting aging-in-place for older homeowners (see below). A typical accessory apartment bylaw provides for a small unit in a single-family dwelling (and sometimes in accessory buildings), limits the size of the unit with floor area and number-of-bedroom standards, requires the project to preserve the appearance of a single-family home, requires the house or the apartment to be owner-occupied, and regulates the location of off-street parking. If Arlington had accessory apartment zoning in place, it could use CDBG or federal HOME funds to help subsidize the creation of accessory units for very-low-income seniors. Under current DHCD policy, the units would not "count" on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, but they would nevertheless address a local affordable housing need
- Change the Zoning Bylaw to allow conversion of detached single-family homes to multi-unit dwellings, up to four units as of right, especially near the commercial areas on Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway. Arlington currently allows "apartment conversions" up to 18 units in the R₄ and R₅ districts and apartment buildings in the higher-density districts (R₅, R₆, and R₇), but these uses require a special permit. Allowing smaller conversion opportunities as of right, subject to appropriate design standards, would encourage small-scale multifamily housing in areas with adequate facilities and access to transportation, and bring more people closer to the town's retail and service establishments.

- 4) Evaluate the aging-in-place needs of Arlington's senior population and begin to plan for changes in service delivery.

The housing plan should include an assessment of Arlington's aging-in-place needs – not only housing quality, but also accessibility, transportation and health care services, ample and diverse social and leisure programs, and opportunities to volunteer.

- 5) Zone for infill housing on nonconforming buildable lots.

Sometimes lots created before zoning took effect remain unbuilt because they do not comply with current regulations. Rather than keeping the property unused, unappealing, and off the tax base, the Town could establish regulations to allow substandard lots to be developed for housing. Market demand is growing in Arlington and could favor smaller scale development. Arlington should consider amending the Zoning Bylaw to allow infill housing to be built on lots that are otherwise unbuildable due to insufficient lot area. Changes to setbacks, height and density would have to be addressed.

- 6) Allow on-street parking in the vicinity of new multi-unit conversions or mixed-use developments and lower or remove the requirement for minimum parking.

The cost of parking is often the greatest hindrance to the economic feasibility of dense, urban developments. Minimum parking requirements should be removed for new mixed-use developments on Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway. These locations are well-served by public transit, and are close enough to commercial amenities and civic services so that the need for car use will be reduced. In addition, overnight on-street parking for residents in areas of mixed-use development should be allowed.

Economic Development

- i) Amend the Zoning Bylaw to increase density in the business districts.

The B1 district helps to preserve small-scale businesses in or near residential areas, but changes in other business districts should be considered, too. The Town should allow higher-density and larger-scale development, particularly on Broadway and Massachusetts Avenue in East Arlington.

- 2) The Industrial district zoning should be updated in order to reflect current market needs. Whereas rezoning from Industrial to Business may not be desired or even possible due to present uses, some modifications to use regulations could be effective in business and job creation.

The following changes should be considered for the Industrial district:

- Remove the minimum floor area requirement of 2,000 sq. ft. for Personal, Consumer and Business Services. Some manufacturing facilities operate in small spaces, so it should be possible to subdivide available floor area if necessary to support smaller industrial operations.
- Allow all restaurants by right or special permit in the Industrial district. Patrons of dining establishments are now accustomed to finding restaurants in non-traditional settings. The restaurant industry is growing in the area, including fine dining and “chef’s” restaurants. Due to the timing of operations, restaurants and manufacturing facilities can often share parking and access routes.
- Allow retail space by right or special permit in the Industrial district. Larger or industrial-type retail space may be served by current buildings, and allowing larger and less expensive properties to be used for retail may prevent their location outside of Arlington.

- 3) Promote new co-working centers to attract small business ventures, innovative companies, entrepreneurs, and currently home-based businesses. These contemporary work environments provide the facilities, services, and networking resource to support businesses and help them grow.

There has been an increasing amount of new co-work space across the nation. Co-work facilities lease offices, desks, or even shared benches for small businesses or individual entrepreneurs. They are meeting needs for comfortable, affordable, short-term work environments by providing monthly leases with maximum support. In the Boston area alone, several of co-work spaces have opened in Downtown Boston, the Seaport Innovation District, Central Square in Cambridge, Field’s Corner in Dorchester, Chelsea, and more. These well-designed and well-equipped offices provide twenty-four hour workspace, lounges, meeting rooms, sometimes food and drink, and most importantly, smart and exciting places to work. They provide more than just an address for a small business; they help to “brand” the business with the collective work environment they inhabit. They are also a hub for networking, promotion, and events.

Arlington has many home-based businesses and freelance employees that could be attracted to work in these types of spaces. In addition, new entrepreneurs and small startup firms from Arlington and across the region would have a new, perhaps more accessible option for their operations. Other contemporary business models that often support co-work spaces include business incubators and accelerators. These facilities are operated as for-profit businesses, making equity investments in

companies they host or as non-profit small business or workforce development projects. Supporting incubators or accelerators in Arlington's business scene is also worth investigating.

To develop or attract co-work space, business incubators and accelerators, Arlington should take the following steps:

- Engage with local co-work space providers in the Boston area to learn of their interests or concerns with the Arlington market. This process should include site visits to various co-work facilities in Boston, Cambridge, Chelsea, and Somerville. There should also be a continuation of the community engagement process begun by the Town in summer 2014. Meetings with residents, small business owners, and co-work space developers can help create customized business space for Arlington.
- Survey similar efforts by neighboring cities and towns, including the City of Boston and their current Neighborhood Innovation District Committee, which seeks to expand entrepreneurial small business development throughout the city.
- Identify incentives for small business creation that could be directed through the co-work, incubator or accelerator facility. Tax relief for the workspace property can be converted into cheaper individual rents. In addition, access to federal or state grants could be directed to the development and/or operation of these spaces. This could include, for example, CDBG funds, SBA grants, or specialty loan funds or products from MassDevelopment.

4) Invest in the promotion and support of Arlington's theatres

A recently completed study, *The Economic Impact of Arlington's Theatres* (2013) estimates the impact of the Regent and Capitol theatres on the local economy, particularly for restaurants that benefit from theatre patrons. Arlington should further invest in the promotion of these venues and providing supporting infrastructure.

5) Implement the recommendations contained in the Koff & Associates Commercial Center Revitalization report.

Historic & Cultural Resource Areas

1) Develop a historic and archaeological resources survey plan to identify and prioritize outstanding inventory needs

This should include a prioritized list that includes civic buildings without inventory forms, threatened resources, and buildings in underrepresented neighborhoods such as East Arlington. The inventory can be used towards the demolition delay bylaw. This activity would be eligible for funding through MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program.

2) Seek Certified Local Government (CLG) Status for the Arlington Historical Commission

CLG status, granted by the National Park Service through the MHC, would put Arlington in a better competitive position to receive preservation grants since at least ten percent of the MHC's annual federal funding must be distributed to CLG communities through the Survey and Planning Grant program.

3) Expand Community-Wide Preservation Advocacy and Education

- Increase educational and outreach programs for historic resources. Develop public awareness campaigns to garner community-wide support for preservation initiatives. These efforts could include interpretive markers, informational brochures, and articles in local media, in addition to the

utilization of smartphone apps and audio recordings in order to reach a broader audience. Educational initiatives would be an eligible activity for Survey and Planning Grant funds as well as other funding sources.

- Expand educational outreach to property owners of non-designated historic properties. The majority of Arlington's historic buildings are not protected from adverse alterations. While many homeowners appreciate their historic buildings, they may not be aware of methods for preserving the features that make these buildings special. Promote the benefits of historically-appropriate alterations, such as preserving historic wood windows, offer opportunities for combining historic preservation with economic advantages such as energy efficiency, and raise awareness of historic district designation requirements.

4) Implement a Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Historic Resources

- Review and Strengthen Demolition Delay Bylaw. Arlington's existing demolition delay bylaw is limited both in terms of the types of resources subject to review and the time period allowed for the review. To address the deficiencies of demolition delay legislation, some communities have adopted provisions that require building officials to notify the local historical commission when any building more than 50 or 75 years old is proposed for demolition in order to determine historic significance. The length of the review period, currently twelve months in Arlington, could also be extended. Other communities have increased their delay period to eighteen or twenty-four months.
- Provide the AHC with the tools to designate a single-building historic district.
- Consider designating Architectural Preservation Districts (APD), Consider designation of an Architectural Preservation District (APD), also called neighborhood preservation districts and architectural conservation districts. This could allow the Town to define the distinguishing characteristics of scale and streetscape pattern that should be preserved in a neighborhood.
- Integrate Historic Preservation, Conservation, and Planning. Increasing redevelopment pressure on Arlington's existing historic properties has emphasized the need to guide redevelopment in a manner that respects historic character and the architectural integrity of the town's historic neighborhoods and commercial districts. Successful preservation of these resources will require preservation regulations and zoning to work in tandem to preserve the town's historic character and individual assets. Incorporating an active, formal role for the Arlington Historical Commission in the review of development projects affecting historic resources outside of designated historic districts would be important. In addition, the Town could review its environmental design review process and design guidelines to determine whether additional historic preservation objectives could be incorporated. To address the ongoing issue of residential teardowns, the town could consider adopting flexible zoning regulations to encourage the preservation of historic buildings. These new regulations could include different standards for dimensional and use requirements when an historic building is preserved and reused, such as the approval of a special permit for new building lots with modified dimensional standards if the original historic building is preserved.
- Amend the Zoning Bylaw to incorporate historic preservation into the development review process, e.g., by ensuring that the Historical Commission always receives site plan and EDR plans for review.
- Consider adopting flexible zoning to encourage preservation, e.g., by allowing conversions or a variety of uses where they would otherwise be prohibited in order to maintain a historic building's vitality,

5) Preserve the character of the Historic Districts.

- For Arlington's existing historic districts, the need for continued vigilance and dialogue between the AHDC and Building Inspector remains a priority to ensure that any changes within the districts are appropriate. Promoting stewardship for these districts is equally

important. Creating a sense of place for these districts to highlight their significance and promote their importance to the community would aid in these efforts.

- The Town should implement the following:
 - Replace deteriorated interpretive markers.
 - Install unique street signs for designated streets.
 - Ensure that historically appropriate public infrastructure improvements are applied to streetscape elements.
 - The AHDC and Town departments should work together to determine historically-appropriate improvements to the town's historic districts, which could include unique street markers, historic district signage, and public infrastructure improvements for historically-appropriate sidewalks, curbing, lighting, and street furniture.

6) Preserve Town-owned historic resources

Several civic properties remain in critical need of restoration and not all town-owned resources are formally protected from adverse development and alterations. The Town needs to institute procedures to require historically appropriate preservation of municipal resources, including:

- Institute a regular, formal role for the Arlington Historical Commission in review and commenting on projects that affect Town-owned historic resources.
- Utilize the expertise of AHC members to ensure that restoration efforts are architecturally and historically sensitive and comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Develop long-term maintenance plans for town-owned historic buildings, structures, parks, cemeteries, and monuments.
- Place preservation restrictions on restored properties to ensure the preservation of publicly-assisted resources.
- Consider placement of Preservation Restrictions on Town-owned historic properties to ensure continued protection of these community landmarks.
- Implement recommendations established in past planning studies completed for Town-owned properties.
- Pursue historic preservation grants to fund restoration projects for Town-owned historic resources.

7) Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

Natural Resources & Open Space

- i) Create a comprehensive plan for the Mill Brook environmental corridor, including possible "daylighting" options for culvert sections of the waterway, flood plain management, and pathways. In addition require public access or apply visual and physical design guidelines for new development along the corridor.

Comprehensive plans allow decision making at various scales to adhere to overlying principles. The Mill Brook corridor crosses residential, industrial and open space land use districts. These different zoning districts regulate land use, but do not necessarily ensure that new or repurposed developments react properly to their environmentally sensitive location. A Mill Brook plan should create landscaping and building design standards, and establish requirements for public access to the Mill Brook, and the preservation of views.

- 2) Address street tree problems, including the replacement of trees lost due to storms and the failed survival of many newly planted trees. Coordinate tree care between the Town and property owners.

Trees are a major asset for Arlington streets. They provide beauty and shade, help mitigate ground level pollution, and are part of the greater ecological system. Many trees were felled in recent storms, and more still are at risk. A plan with a specific timeline needs to be implemented in order to not just replace lost trees, but attain a desired planting density. A professional examination of failed plantings needs to be undertaken, and measures to prevent future failure need to be implemented. At current rates, Arlington is not replacing as many trees as it loses each year. A temporary budgetary allocation is required in order to reverse this trend and start a net increase in street trees.

Concurrently, the jurisdiction and management of street trees needs to be better outlined. The responsibility and care for street trees needs to be well understood by residents. The Town and the Tree Committee need to perform public outreach to educate property owners.

- 3) Pursue strategies to protect the large parcels of vacant land in the southeast corner of Arlington near Alewife Station and Thorndike Field. Preserve open space and manage the floodplain that lies across much of this site.

Three prime properties in southeast Arlington totaling fourteen acres remain undeveloped. The parcels, part of Arlington's only Planned Unit Development (PUD), remain vacant after several proposals were rejected by the Town. The properties are located adjacent to a large park (Thorndike Field), near the Minuteman Bikeway, Spy Pond and Alewife Brook. The majority of the site is located in the 1-percent flood zone and construction is heavily restricted. Arlington needs to continue to pursue resolution of this land, either for partial development or complete open space protection.

Among the tools available, a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaw should be considered as a combined land protection and economic development strategy. In order to be effective, a TDR bylaw will require partnering with a viable land trust so that development rights can be acquired efficiently when the owner of a "sending" area (such as the vacant land near Thorndike Field) is ready to sell.

- 4) Create a bylaw to control / remove invasive plants and species.
 - Arlington should explore the legality of imposing restrictions on invasive plants and removing them from private property when they create a hazard or threat to other properties or public land.

Public Services & Facilities

- i) Perform a space needs analysis for all Town-owned buildings.

The Town of Arlington owns and occupies many buildings across town. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of all these facilities is needed to prevent the underutilization of space and misappropriation of resources between departments. This analysis should also identify potential lack of space for current or projected use, and poor arrangement qualities that might affect the operations of a department. In addition to looking at the physical layout of space, an assessment of the environmental qualities, such as daylight and the availability of fresh air, should be undertaken.

- 2) Assess the benefits and drawbacks of the Town taking on maintenance of private ways.

The Town of Arlington operates trash and snow removal service on private ways, as a preventative measure for public safety. However, property owners or developers are responsible for maintenance of over twenty-three lane miles of private ways in Arlington. Many of these roads are in deteriorated condition, and continue to fall further into disrepair. The possibility of the Town eventually taking maintenance of

some private ways in a worsened state might be worth consideration for assuming responsibility for these roads sooner. The costs and manpower involved in adding additional mileage to the purview of the DPW, however, is at present, a major drawback.

- 3) Establish a regular process for evaluating the continued need to retain Town-owned properties and for disposing of properties that no longer serve public purposes.

As part of its asset management responsibilities, Arlington should create a procedure to evaluate Town-owned properties as potential candidates for disposition, and policies to guide how proceeds from the sale of Town property will be used.

- 4) Improve the management and maintenance of town facilities and infrastructure.
 - Establish a Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM) program.
 - Create a PPM for all Town-owned facilities.
 - Fund a full-time facilities manager position within the Department of Public Works (DPW); transfer the maintenance budget and building maintenance personnel from the School Department to DPW. This position would benefit Arlington by having a centralized, professional expert overseeing all aspects of facilities management: custodial care, routine inspection, routine maintenance, repair and improvement projects, improvements to make facilities accessible to people with disabilities, energy use, budgeting, and planning. In addition to preparing a periodic assessment of and budget for these needs, the responsibilities of a facilities manager would include maintaining an inventory of the services provided in each facility, including town services and activities conducted by private groups that use town facilities.
- 5) Study and develop an actionable plan for addressing Arlington's long-term cemetery needs.

IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
Recodify and update the Zoning Bylaw.	LU	ARB		1	Consultant
Reduce the number of uses that require a special permit; replace special permits with a system of uses by right subject to performance standards.	LU	ARB		1	Consultant
Provide redevelopment incentives in all or selected portions of the business districts on Massachusetts Avenue, Broadway, and Medford Street (incentives may include more than zoning)	LU, ED	ARB	BOS	1	Consultant
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to clarify that mixed-use development is permitted along sections of Massachusetts Avenue.	LU, ED, H	ARB	JAB	1	Consultant
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to increase density in the business districts.	LU, ED	ARB		1	Consultant
Reorganize and consolidate the business zoning districts on Massachusetts Avenue.	LU, ED	ARB		1	Consultant
Fund a full-time facilities manager position within the Department of Public Works (DPW); transfer the maintenance budget and building maintenance personnel from the School Department to DPW.	PS	ARB	BOS, APS, DPW	1	New Staff
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow accessory apartments.	LU, H	ARB		1	Consultant
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to create more opportunities for multi-family conversions.	LU, T	ARB		1	Consultant
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to add bicycle parking and access in the Town's off-street parking regulations and in adjacent to business districts and multifamily developments	T, H, ED	ARB	BAC	1	Consultant
Implement the recommendations in the 2014 Arlington Center parking study; monitor parking trends.	T, PS	BOS		1	TBD
Work with DHCD and the Town's state representative and senator to determine Arlington's status under the Chapter 40B 1.5 percent land area rule	H, LU	BOS	PCD	1	Existing Staff
Create a comprehensive plan for the Mill Brook environmental corridor,	LU, OS, ED, H	ARB	CC,	1	Consulting Team
Establish an Economic Development Commission or	ED, PS	TM	PCD	1	Existing Staff,

Acronyms: LU – land use; H – housing and neighborhood development; ED – economic development; OS – open space and natural resources; PS – public services and facilities; T – transportation; ARB – Arlington Redevelopment Board; PCD – Dept. of Planning and Community Development; DPW – Public Works; CC – Conservation Commission; TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee; BAC = Bicycle Advisory Committee; CPC – Capital Planning Committee; A-TED – Arlington Tourism & Economic Development Committee; OSC – Open Space Committee; TM – Town Manager; HC – Historical Commission; PRC – Park & Recreation Commission; APS – Arlington Public Schools.

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
Council of Economic Advisors with representatives from the business community, tourism groups, and community organizations to work with the Town Manager and Economic Development Coordinator on economic policy and priorities.¹					New Volunteers
Complete a comprehensive historic resources inventory.	HR	HC		1	Consultant
Develop a plan for universal access to recreation facilities, parks, and trails.	PS, OS	DPW, PRC	DC	1	Existing Staff & Volunteers; Consultant
Address ADA requirements for the Minuteman Bikeway, improved lighting, signalization at street crossings, including raised crossings for the bikeway to give more visibility to pedestrians and bicyclists, and speed control to drivers.	T, OS, PS	DPW	DC, BAC	1	Consultant
Adopt the Community Preservation Act.	C, H, PS	BOS	HC, OS, AHC	1	
Conduct a parking study in East Arlington neighborhood; identify deficiency (if any) and develop parking management strategies.	PS, ED	HC		1	Consultant
Review and strengthen demolition delay bylaw.	CR, LU	HC, PRC		1	Existing Volunteers & Staff
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to incorporate historic preservation into the development review process, e.g., by ensuring that the Historical Commission always receives site plan and EDR plans for review	LU, CR	ARB		1	Consultant
Install a pedestrian hybrid signal at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue/Water Street to allow for safe pedestrian crossings across Massachusetts Avenue.	T	DPW	TAC	1	TBD
Seek Certified Local Government (CLG) designation for the Arlington Historical Commission.	CR	HC	BOS	1	Existing Staff & Volunteers
Establish a Planned Preventive Maintenance (PPM) program.	PS	TM	DPW, BMC	1	Consultant, Existing and New Staff

¹ Cells shaded in yellow were inadvertently omitted from the Draft Master Plan report.

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
Study and develop an actionable plan for addressing Arlington's long-term cemetery needs.	PS	DPW	BOS	1	TBD
Identify options for and resolve the Town's snow storage needs.	PS	DPW	BOS	2	Consultant
Evaluate aging-in-place needs.	PS, H	CoA, HD		2	Consultant & Existing Staff
Allow on-street parking in the vicinity of new multi-unit conversions or mixed-use developments and lower or remove the requirement for minimum parking.	H, PS, T	BOS	TAC	2	TBD
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), identifying both sending areas and receiving areas.	LU, H, OS	ARB	CC, PCD	2	Consultants
Work with the Arlington Land Trust or establish a community land trust specifically designed to function as a TDR land bank.	LU, H, OS	PCD	CC, OSC	2	Consultant, Existing Staff
Amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide for infill development on nonconforming lots.	OS, H	ARB		2	Consultant
Pursue strategies to protect vacant land in the southeast corner of Arlington near Alewife Station and Thoreau Field.	LU, OS	ARB	CC, OS	2	Consultant
Develop long-term maintenance plans for town-owned historic buildings, structures, parks, cemeteries, and monuments	CR, PS	DPW	HC, BOS, PCD	2	Consultant
Improve unsafe pedestrian crossings with signals, signage, or road design modifications, notably at the intersections of Broadway/Warren and Warren Street between River Street and Broadway, and along the Mystic Valley Parkway.	T	DPW	TAC	2	Consultant, construction spending
Determine strategies to curb non-resident commuters who park on residential roadways.	T	DPW, PD		2	TBD
Establish asset management policies and institute a regular process for evaluating need to retain Town-owned properties; institute surplus property policy.	PS	TM	BOS, CPC	2	Existing Staff & Volunteers
Provide safe connections between the Minuteman Bikeway and the 3 commercial centers. Identify/equip corridors with wayfinding signage to direct path users to and from the path, including a map directory of local businesses	T, OS	DPW	BAC	2	Consultant, construction spending

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
along the path.					
Promote carpooling for children who are not bussed to school.	T, PS	APS		2	TBD
Evaluate merits/drawbacks of assuming more responsible for maintenance of private streets.	T, PS	DPW	CPC	2	TBD
Work with MassDOT to improve the efficiency of Massachusetts Avenue/Route 16 signal in Cambridge.	T	DPW	TAC	2	TBD
Include bicycle friendly design and technology in new road projects.	T	DPW	BAC, TAC	2	TBD
Work with the MBTA to reduce bus bunching and improve the efficiency of bus service.	T	TAC		2	TBD
Create an Affordable Housing Plan (Housing Production Plan) and submit to DHCD for approval under Chapter 40B.	H, LU	PCD		2	Existing Staff (Possibly Consultant)
Establish a Housing Partnership Committee.	H, PS	BOS		2	Existing Staff
Create commercial district design guidelines and cross-reference them in the Zoning Bylaw.	ED, ED	ARB		2	Consultant
Update Industrial district zoning to reflect current market needs.	ED, LU	ARB	ED	2	Consultant
Assess the benefits and drawbacks of the Town taking on maintenance of private ways.	PS	DPW		2	Existing Staff
Promote new co-working centers to attract small businesses, innovative companies, entrepreneurs, and currently home-based businesses.	ED	ED		2	TBD
Develop a historic and archaeological resources survey; identify and prioritize outstanding inventory needs	CR	HC		2	Consultant
Consider designating single-building historic districts	T	HC		2	Consultant, Existing Staff
Create a bylaw to control / remove invasive plants and species.	OS	CC		2	Technical Assistance
Place preservation restrictions on town-owned historic properties	CR, PS	HC, BOS		2	TBD
Review the extension of the regional "Hubway" bikeshare program into Arlington.	T	BOS	BAC	3	TBD
Add bicycle lanes on Massachusetts Avenue from Swan	T	BOS, DPW	BAC, TAC	3	TBD

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
Place to Pond Lane to connect lanes created by the Massachusetts Avenue Rebuild Project and the Arlington Safe Travel Project.					
Consider designating Architectural Preservation Districts (APD) or Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCD),	CR, LU, H	ARB, HC		3	Consultant
Provide contra-flow bicycle lanes on high-demand one-way streets, such as Swan Street westbound, Foster Street northbound, and River Street northbound.	T	BOS, DPW	BAC, TAC	3	TBD
Initiate a coordinated study to further extend the Green Line Extension into West Medford, East Arlington, or Arlington Center.	T, ED	BOS	ARB, TAC	3	TBD
Implement the recommendations contained in the Koff & Associates Commercial Center Revitalization report.	ED, LU, PS	Multiple ²		Ongoing	TBD
Expand community-wide preservation advocacy and education	CR, PS	HC	A-TED, IT	Ongoing	Existing Volunteers
Integrate master plan implementation within the Board of Selectmen/Town Manager annual goal-setting process.	PS	TM	BOS	Ongoing	Existing Staff
Work with Vision 2020 or another town committee to assist with an annual process of evaluating master plan implementation and identifying potential amendments to the plan, as appropriate.	PS	Vision 2020	BOS, ARB	Ongoing	Existing Volunteers
Maintain timely updates of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.	OS, R	OSC		Ongoing	Existing Volunteers & Staff
Initiate a complete, safe sidewalks plan town-wide, in coordination with the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program	T, PS	DPW		Ongoing	TBD
Continue to support and expand the safe routes to school program to encourage more biking and walking to school.	I	APS		Ongoing	TBD
Install wayfinding signage for public parking lots, including maps and parking limits. Post regulations and policies on Town's website.	T	PCD		Ongoing	TBD

² Note to MPAC: This item involves several recommendations and not all of them will fall under the same lead entity. We will break them down in the implementation narrative so it's clear who should be doing what, but it didn't make sense to try and accommodate that level of detail here.

Action	Elements(s)	Lead Entity	Support	Phase	Resources Needed
Improve intersections to improve traffic flow in the two-lane section of Massachusetts Avenue west of Arlington Center.	T	DPW	TAC	Ongoing	TBD
Address the quality and condition of aging housing stock, including financial assistance programs for homeowners and landlords.	H	PCD		Ongoing	CDBG, HOME
Promote and support Arlington's theatres	ED	BOS	A-TED	Ongoing	
Address street tree problems, including the replacement of trees lost due to storms and the failed survival of many newly planted trees. Coordinate tree care between the Town and property owners.	PS	DPW		Ongoing	
Continue to include sidewalk maintenance in the Department of Public Works' pavement management system.	S	DPW		Ongoing	TBD
Review the continued need for town boards and committees and disband committees that are no longer needed.	PS	BOS		Ongoing	Existing Staff

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