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**Subject:** Re: [Town Meeting] Through Dec. 1, input on Draft Master Plan  
**To:** Carol Kowalski <CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**From:** Jennifer Susse <jennifer.susse@gmail.com>  
**Date:** 11/17/2014 05:19 PM

Hi Carol,

I continue to make a case that it is wrong to think of Arlington as "aging". Yes, there are not a lot of 20-34 year olds, but the people moving in who are 35-44 are coming with babies. The census department has a useful trove of stats. Here are some data points:

\* 22.1% of people in Arlington are under 18 (in 2000 it was 20.8)

\* 31.2% of households have children under 18 years old (in 2010 it was 27%). Fifteen years ago it was closer to 20%.

We cannot just look at the current population demographics and assume that everyone that is here now will stay. Arlington is experiencing a very high turnover. Over 62% of people living in Arlington today were not here in the year 2000.

Here is a link to census data:

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t#none>

On Fri, Nov 14, 2014 at 12:26 PM, Carol Kowalski <CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us> wrote:

Hello Town Meeting Members,

The draft Arlington Master Plan is available for comment through December 1. Easy access to the draft plan and input survey are available at the following link.

<http://www.arlingtonma.gov/Home/Components/News/News/2475/16?backlist=%2fhome>

Save the date: January 12, 2015 the public hearing on the master plan will be held at 7:00pm in the Town Hall Auditorium. The Redevelopment Board will then consider a vote to adopt the plan. The master plan will then be presented to Annual Town Meeting for endorsement.

I encourage Town Meeting Members to peruse the draft master plan and submit your comments and input



**Subject:** Re: [Town Meeting] Through Dec. 1, input on Draft Master Plan

**To:** Carol Kowalski <CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>

**From:** Jennifer Susse <jennifer.susse@gmail.com>

**Date:** 11/17/2014 05:53 PM

**Cc:** Kathleen Bodie <kbodie@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Diane Johnson <djohnson@arlington.k12.ma.us>, Joseph Curro <jcurro@alumni.tufts.edu>

A couple of more things.

On p. 152 I read "The School Department plans to file a Statement of Interest with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) by the deadline in April 2014."

The School Department submitted the Statement of Interest in 2013. We are still waiting to hear from them.

on p. 153 I read "When work began on this master plan in 2013, the school department's enrollment projections anticipated a pattern of gradual decline – as has happened in many suburban schools throughout Middlesex County."

That can't be right. Given that enrollment has grown in each of the last 7 years (with the exception of 2011-2012 when it went down .1%), I can't believe that anyone recently was projecting a decrease. Ten years ago, perhaps.

Here are the changes in enrollment over the last 7 years:

2014-15 3.3% increase

2013-14 2.7% increase

2012-13 3.0% increase

2011-12 .01% decrease

2010-11 .7% increase

2009-10 2.0% increase

2008-09 2.1% increase

**ARLINGTON DRAFT MASTER PLAN - COMMENTS BY ARLINGTON TREE COMMITTEE**

**SUBMITTED ON November 25, 2014**

Contact: Eliza Burden 617-733-4829 or Susan Stamps 978-807-7933

To the Master Planning Committee - We have pasted in the relevant sections of the draft Master Plan below, and then made redlined changes that we wish to see. Most importantly, we propose replacing the rather vague recommendations with a list of specific recommendations, as is done in other parts of the document, e.g. the very detailed and specific recommendations in Section 7: Historical and Cultural Resources. It is important to have these specifics to provide heft to the document as it will provide a road map for future actions and a platform for future requests for grants and other funding to address tree issues. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **B. KEY FINDINGS (page 1)**

□ 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 more trees, 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.

### **C. GOALS AND POLICIES (Page 3)**

#### **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 and enhance the physical beauty and natural resources habitats of Arlington.

## 8. NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE

### B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### 3. Vegetation

##### STREET TREES AND WOODLANDS (page 122)

One of the most important elements of Arlington's well-developed streetscape are is the ~~abundance of street trees and shrubs in some parts of town, although there are many areas where the tree canopy is thin or nonexistent.~~ Arlington's ~~has significant tree coverage~~ helps ing to improve air quality, filter pollutants, in addition to aiding flood control and erosion prevention. Street trees provide a buffer from car traffic, and some relief from the summer sun and winter winds. Trees and plants play a critical role in the hydrologic cycle, stormwater management, and heat management. Woodlands, though limited in size, are still found in several locations throughout town, at Menotomy Rocks Park, Turkey Hill, Mount Gilboa, Arlington Reservoir, portions of the Symmes property, Hill's Hill, and the Crusher Lot at the Ottoson School. According to the Town's *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, these woodlands include White Ash, several species of Oaks and Hickories, White Pine, Sassafras, Staghorn Sumac, Grey and Paper Birches, and more limited examples of Sugar Maple, Black Cherry, and Linden trees. Native shrubs and plants found in these woodland areas include Blueberry, Currant, Dangleberry, Deerberry, Maple Leaf Viburnum, Whorled Loosestrife, and False Solomon's Seal.<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately, Arlington as a whole is experiencing a diminishing street tree population. There are currently approximately 18,000 public trees bordering Arlington's streets and sidewalks, just 75% of the 24,000 estimated in a 1998 statistical survey. Many of those remaining are the invasive Norway Maple.

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The Town's commitment to protecting its trees is key to its sustained designation as a Tree City USA community.<sup>98</sup> Cities and towns become eligible for designation if they meet four key requirements: having a tree warden, following state law for regulating the forest, celebrating Arbor Day, and spending at least \$2 per capita on forestry preservation and maintenance. Arlington has instituted policies for responding to requests from residents to remove or add street trees. The Town does its best to address problems with dead or dying trees and hazardous tree limbs on public property, but it will not remove healthy trees. Residents who want to remove healthy street trees have to accept financial responsibility for public notification, a public hearing, taking down the tree, and planting a replacement. Although the Town plants eighty to ninety trees every year, local officials report that Arlington is losing more trees than it gains, in part due to sporadic torrential rains and winter storms. Arlington Town Meeting established the Tree Committee to assist the Tree Division by promoting work-on programs to identify areas needing more trees and to promote the protection, planting and care of trees in Arlington.~~better tree care by residents.~~ Other initiatives of the Tree Committee include: Increasing the number of site-appropriate public trees; promoting community awareness of trees and their benefits; providing a website about trees (public and residential) and related Town services; providing information about tree selection, planting, and care; raising funds to support the Tree Committee's mission; and exploring the feasibility of a Town-wide tree inventory.

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## C. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### 5. Tree Cover (page 131)

Despite Arlington's ongoing support for maintaining and protecting trees, the town is losing tree cover due to storms, utility company maintenance, and the failure of replacement street trees to thrive, and budget limitations. In July 2012, for example, a "microburst" rain storm descended on East Arlington, destroying approximately one hundred trees. Although the Town appropriates funds for tree replacement each year, the DPW is not staffed to provide the amount of field labor involved with proper urban forestry management. According to the DPW director, the town is losing more trees than it is replacing each year. Storm-related problems are not the only cause of tree loss. Sometimes new trees planted to replace older trees (uprooted or removed) do not

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.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that the town has a full- or part-time tree warden whose role is to oversee the planting, care, and maintenance of public shade trees in Arlington.
- Implement a Tree Inventory/Management Plan (using i-Tree software or comparable program) to document tree plantings and manage tree maintenance activities in town.
- Preserve mature trees. Due to the many years required for tree growth, healthy native trees should be preserved whenever possible. Work with utility companies to adhere to proper pruning practices.
- Identify locations for tree replacements and additions to commercial and residential areas, especially those identified as having thin tree canopy.
- Enhance older commercial corridors, especially those that lack tree cover, by including street trees as part of redevelopment programs. Extensive paving in some areas prevents the planting of trees. Use the services of a landscape architect or similarly qualified professional to develop a plan that addresses the lack of tree strips or pits and work with the Tree Division in its design and implementation.
- Improve tree stewardship in town. Work with residents and businesses to care for trees, especially during the first three years after planting.
- Provide outreach to the community to increase awareness of trees and their benefits.
- Diversify tree species. A variety of species should be planted to avoid losing significant proportions of the urban forest to blight or insect infestation.
- Plant the right tree in the right place. Smaller tree species should be planted under overhead utility lines; larger trees should be planted away from wires.
- Seek grant funding for tree planting initiatives

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survive. In the business districts, there needs to be a close collaboration between the Town, store owners, other commercial tenants, residents, and community organizations to take better care of both existing and new trees. Aside from the environmental and public health benefits of trees in urban areas, the trees have a significant impact on the quality of the pedestrian's experience in Arlington's commercial centers and neighborhoods.

[There is no par. D in the draft]

## E. RECOMMENDATIONS (page 132)

~~2) Increase the number of street trees. Address street tree problems, including the replacement of trees lost due to storms and the failed survival of many newly planted trees. Develop a comprehensive tree management plan. Coordinate tree care between the Town and property owners.~~

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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 lost in recent storms, and more still are at risk. To ensure that the Town maintains a healthy tree canopy, the Arlington Tree Committee makes the following recommendations:

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~~A street tree inventory needs to be taken and a long range tree master plan with a specific timeline needs to be prepared and implemented in order to not just replace lost trees, but to maintain existing trees and increase the number of trees and expand the tree canopy to a desired density, 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. There needs to be overall professional management of trees, including the appointment of a full-time tree warden on the Department of Public Works staff.~~

-----Original Message-----

From: Amos Meeks <am0053@gmail.com>

To: TFields@town.arlington.ma.us

Date: Sun, 30 Nov 2014 15:04:57 -0500

Subject: Master Plan Comment

Hello Ted,

I found your email address on the Economic Development page on the Arlington town website. I have a comment on the economic development part of the master plan that didn't fit well into the survey. I don't know exactly who to contact, so I'm hoping that you might be the right person, or could direct me to whoever is the right person.

Specifically, in the report it was written that "there is demand for an additional 12,000 sq. ft. of grocery store space, although few regional or national grocery chains will bother to build a small 12,000 sq. ft. market. An existing grocery store could expand, perhaps, if land/site needs can be met and the project could comply with Arlington's existing zoning." Given this demand and the unlikelihood of established grocers expanding to meet it, I was wondering if the town had considered supporting a community/consumer owned grocery co-op? It strikes me as an effective way of meeting this need that is good for the community, the town, and the local economy.

Thank you,  
-Amos



Carol

Carol Kowalski AICP  
Director of Planning & Community Development  
Town of Arlington, MA  
Phone: 781-316-3092

-----Original Message-----

From: "Berkowitz, William" <William\_Berkowitz@uml.edu>  
To: "CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us" <CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>  
Date: Sun, 30 Nov 2014 15:57:13 +0000  
Subject: Comments on Master Plan draft

November 30, 2014

Carol Kowalski  
Director of Planning and Community Development  
Town of Arlington  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02476

Dear Carol,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Master Plan draft, and for the opportunity to comment on it.

As I read it, there is much to praise, though in my opinion two important omissions to note.

There are many things to admire about this plan and how it came to be. I admire in particular the public participation process, which was extensive and inclusive throughout. I am impressed by Advisory Committee established to assist planning staff and consultants. And the plan itself is certainly thorough and detailed; many people very clearly did their homework and gave considerable thought to its content; and it shows,

1. My primary area of concern is that **the plan does not address the overall quality of community life in Arlington, nor what it would take to improve it.** The plan instead emphasizes places rather than people, the physical rather than the

social infrastructure. But it's the social infrastructure that binds people together into meaningful relationships that help make community life worth living.

This is not simply my own concern. It was a major theme expressed during public meetings about the plan; but unfortunately in this e plan it has been ignored. More specifically, going back to the opening kickoff meeting for the plan in 2012, and according to reports your office released, participants at that meeting rated the most special quality about Arlington to be "human capital"; the qualities of the community most worth keeping were to them were "participation in government / civic engagement." Human Capital, Civic Engagement, Community Centers, and Gathering Places were all rated as first in their respective question categories.

Yet there is little if any mention of any of these essential community attributes – nor of the strongly-community-oriented Vision 2020 goals or 2013 Vision 2020 survey results – anywhere in the 150+ pages of the draft plan. But would we not want (just for example) the same level of participation in community life that you sought and received in the master planning process?

Perhaps those who drafted the plan do not see concerns about the social aspects of community life as legitimate parts of a Master Plan process, and that such a plan should restrict itself essentially to land use, housing, and physical development.

There's no doubt at all that a Master Plan must fully address those fundamental issues. But a comprehensive Master Plan in my opinion should also address the overall quality of community life; and that quality depends on great measure on the relationships residents have with one another. These are what ultimately determine the character and the quality of life of any community. To omit them would I think be a mistake.

I feel it's important to reiterate this basic point, although it's not feasible here to bolster it with complete research-based detail. But even though it is late in the process, I hope the finished plan will still be able to include a section on social interaction and sense of community (both are referred to as goals at the beginning of the online vision statement, but, strikingly, not mentioned at all in the plan content itself), or at least significant references to them. Do you think this is possible?

2. A second major area of weakness in the current draft has to do with implementation. To my eyes, the current implementation content is weak. There is a detailed table, but no explanatory prose. There is no timeline (the "phases" noted are not defined). There are no specific action steps. There is no cited monitoring or evaluation mechanism. Overall, what's there seems unconvincing.

As I know you are aware, implementation is the most crucial aspect of the plan; otherwise, it can have little lasting value. Specifically, unless there are very clear implementation mechanisms, firmly institutionalized in the Town's governmental structure, and with teeth capable of biting, this plan (or any plan of its type) is likely to fail.

Specifically, I can envision a scenario where these public comments are collected and the public hearing is held in January. At the hearing, there will be a good amount of justified praise, along with some sharp criticism. Acknowledgment will be made of the concerns of the critics. A few largely-cosmetic adjustments may be made. When the final plan goes before Town Meeting, it will almost certainly be approved, if only because any opposition to it will not be organized. There will be congratulations, and not without foundation.

Then, very soon afterwards, the luster of the plan will start to fade, and its particular goals will gradually be forgotten, for other planning priorities and necessities will take their place. Eventually, the planning staff themselves will move on; and before long the new incumbents will need to be reminded that a master planning process once occurred.

This projected scenario is not unique to Arlington. I've seen it happen too many times in my professional lifetime. It can be avoided, and I hope it will be avoided, but only (again) by including very explicit implementation mechanisms with timelines and action steps, together with very explicit and enforceable procedures for overseeing how well the plan is being implemented, and for determining the degree to which agreed-upon actions have been taken and goals achieved. None of this exists in the current plan as drafted.

Thank you for reading through these comments, which I hope you understand are made in the spirit of wanting to make Arlington – already a good place to live – a better place to live for everyone.

With all best wishes,

Bill Berkowitz

12 Pelham Terrace  
Arlington, MA 02476  
(781) 646-6319  
[Bill\\_Berkowitz@uml.edu](mailto:Bill_Berkowitz@uml.edu)

## 2. Historic Landscapes

Arlington’s historic landscapes are as varied as the town’s historic buildings, representing both formal landscapes designed by landscape architects and heritage landscapes formed by generations of human interaction with the land. In addition to offering a visual respite from the town’s densely-settled built environment, these landscapes serve as community gathering spaces and areas for quiet contemplation.

Designed Landscapes. Arlington Center has two public green spaces, both designed as part of building projects.

▣ The Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden\* (1913) was laid out as part of the Town Hall construction project in 1913. The original garden design included the Cyrus Dallin sculpture The Menotomy Indian Hunter. In 1939, Olmsted Associates reconfigured the garden in a more natural design with a rubble rock base for the Indian sculpture, flowering trees and bushes, winding brick paths, a

circular fountain and a pool, and a masonry garden wall surrounding the grounds. The Town prepared a preservation master plan for the garden The Arlington Civic Block Master Plan (1998) by Patricia S. Loheed and Sara B. Chase. This Master Plan was intended to provide a decision making framework for the restoration and unification of the major gardens in the Arlington Civic Block, including the Winfield Robbins Memorial Gardens, which is listed in the national and state Historic Registers.

Repairs to the garden’s sandstone and limestone wall were completed in 2013. The garden is protected by a preservation restriction and is used for both community and private events.

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**From:** ELIZABURDEN@comcast.net  
**To:** "Kowalski, Carol" <Ckowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>, "Glushko, Joey" <jglushko@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Date:** 12/01/2014 11:07 AM  
**Subject:** Draft Master Plan-Friends of Winfield Robbins Memorial Gardens comments attached (please confirm receipt)

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Attached are comments on the Winfield Robbins Mem Garden section (p. 99 of Draft Master Plan).

Please confirm that they have been received. Thank you.

**Attachments:**

File: <u>Winfield Robbins Memorial GardenDraftMasterPlanCommentsDec2014.docx</u>	Size: 12k	Content Type: application/vnd.openxmlformats-officedocument.wordprocessingml.document
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12 Woodland St  
Arlington, MA 02476  
November 2014

Ms Carol Kowalski  
Director Department of Planning and Community Development  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02176

Dear Carol,

Jane and I have, as you know, followed the development of the Master Plan by attending many of the public meetings and offering verbal suggestions. We have reviewed the Draft Master Plan (DMP) as published on the Town's website. We see little or no sign that our input has been acted on. In the following material we repeat our concerns and try to explain why we think they are important.

The Town Goals bylaw, Article 15, was voted by Town Meeting in 1993. The wording of the goals was included in the bylaw by reference. The wording was developed over more than a year of discussion at public meetings not unlike the Master Plan meetings. For your convenience we provide them in the enclosure. These goals are broad and they cover all the goals in the Master Plan but not at the same level of detail. They are meant to guide Town leaders including employees, elected officials and volunteers. The Master Plan goals are consistent with the Town Goals. We believe it is important to state this in the Master Plan. This will enhance its credibility and will avoid confusion. Lacking this inclusion, the Master Plan might face resistance at Town Meeting.

Last year's preliminary plan had a section on public art (Page 6-9). This section has been deleted. We believe that this is a mistake. Public art enhances our public spaces. It attracts visitors. It fosters pride in the community as it draws the community together. Much of it is made by local artists. Public art in Somerville has changed the perception of the city from a rusty 19<sup>th</sup> century slum to a modern forward looking city able to compete with its neighbors for redevelopment. We would like to see the plan include a recommendation to encourage public art. Enclosure 2 is a partial list of current public art in Arlington

In the section on economic development on page 82 the DMP makes a case for the economic benefit of the Capital and Regent theaters. The Arlington Friends of the Drama (AFD) should also be mentioned since its 4 or 5 annual productions, each given 6 to 9 times in the often sold out 190 seat theater, bring in more than 4000 drama lovers, about half of whom come from other communities. If 2000 people order a \$20 meal in an Arlington restaurant, that is \$40,000. This is not a professional study but it suggests that AFD, Arlington Children's Theater, and True Story Theater should be included in the recommendation to support theaters on Page 90.

Also in the Arts, Culture and Tourism section (P 82) there is no mention of Arlington's long established musical traditions. The Arlington Philharmonic is more than 81 years old. There are two well established choral groups: the Arlington-Belmont Choral Society and Cantelena. Alan Hovhaness, a world famous composer, grew up in Arlington. The public schools have a strong music program, starting in the elementary schools and continuing through high school. Students can participate in both instrumental and choral music including band, jazz band, orchestra, chorus and madrigal.

One of the economic development recommendations is to invest in local theaters (P 90). It is equally important to support the other performing arts. One way to do this would be to make performance space available at affordable rates.

In the Town Finances section (P151) and in the Planning for Economic Development section (P 84), the DMP reports the concern residents have about the Town's revenue shortfall to support existing services. We think this is the main motivation for many of the recommendations. Based on the experience of other towns, it should be possible to quantify these recommendations in dollars and years. A high quality professional estimate for each recommendation would go a long way to gain support from residents.

The section on archeological resources, P 102, does not mention the mastodon tusk found in Spy Pond in 1959 and on display in the Jason Russell House.

The discussion of parks & playing fields has been moved from the Open Space section to the Public Facilities section. This is unfortunate since, by splitting this discussion into two parts, a reader would find it difficult to appreciate the amount of open space the community has. In addition, the size of the various parks and fields is not listed. A table like X.2 (P 123) would be helpful. Also, McClennen Field and Menotomy Rocks Park (P 146) deserve brief discussions. Both are heavily used facilities.


The text in the DMP refers to figures and appendices which are missing. This limits the validity of the public's review.

The section on Town-Supported Gardens, P 122, fails to mention the Wildlife Habitat Garden of native plants located on both sides of the Reservoir spillway. It was planted and is maintained by Vision 2020 volunteers.

The DMP makes heavy use of bullets. We urge you to number these bulleted paragraphs so that they can be easily referenced.

Several tables in the DMP cross a page break. When this happens we suggest repeating the header on the 2<sup>nd</sup> section.

On page 90 the DMP recommends implementing the recommendations of the Koff report. We have heard rumors about this report but have never seen it. It seems to be missing from the Town website. We urge you to include the actual recommendations in the master plan.



Jane L Howard



Peter B Howard

CC Charles Kalaukas, Co-Chair Master Plan Advisory Committee  
Carol Svenson Co-Chair Master Plan Advisory Committee



## TOWN GOALS

### ARTICLE 1. COMMUNITY AND CITIZEN SERVICE

We value Arlington's geographic neighborhoods, common interest groups, and the sense of community in our Town. We value an active and compassionate citizenry delivering services in our community. We will be known for the vitality of our neighborhoods and as a community of people helping others.

### ARTICLE 2. DIVERSITY

We value the diversity of our population. Our Town's mix of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, as well as economic and personal circumstances, enriches us all. We will be known for the warm welcome and respect we extend to all.

### ARTICLE 3. EDUCATION

We value learning for all Arlington citizens. We are responsible as a community for educating our youth and providing all ages with opportunities for educational growth. We will be known for demonstrated excellence in public education and our commitment to life-long learning.

### ARTICLE 4. ENVIRONMENT

We value the physical beauty and natural habitats of our Town – parks, ponds and wetlands, dramatic vistas and tree-lined streets – as they contribute to the well-being of our community. Recognizing the fragility of our natural resources, we must ensure that Arlington's residential areas, commercial centers, and infrastructure are developed in harmony with environmental concerns. We will be known for our commitment to the preservation of Arlington's beauty, limited open space and resources, as well as our place in the regional and global community.

### ARTICLE 5. CULTURE AND RECREATION

We value the many opportunities to meet, play and grow in Arlington while treasuring and preserving our unique historical resources. Our social, cultural, artistic, historic, athletic, recreational, and other community groups strengthen Town life. We will be known for the breadth and richness of our resources and activities available to Arlington citizens.

### ARTICLE 6. COMMUNICATION

We value public dialogue. Communication and information-sharing build trust. Our goals are true openness and accountability. Arlington will be known as a community that thoughtfully searches beyond divisive issues for the opportunities that bind us together.

### ARTICLE 7. FISCAL RESOURCES

We value Arlington's efficient delivery of public services providing for the common good. The benefits from these services and the responsibility of taxation will be equitably distributed among us. We will be known for our sound fiscal

planning and for the thoughtful, open process by which realistic choices are made in our Town.

#### ARTICLE 8. GOVERNANCE

We value our representative Town Meeting system and the community spirit it fosters. Participatory governance is both responsive and innovative. We will be known as a community where government provides effective and efficient services, insures open two-way communication, promotes the lively exchange of ideas, and encourages active citizen participation.

#### ARTICLE 9. BUSINESS

We value Arlington's diverse and accessible mix of merchants and service providers. We will be known for our vibrant, attractive commercial centers supporting the primarily residential and historic character of the Town.

Public Art in Arlington includes, in addition to Cyrus Dallin's work:

Permanent

Uncle Sam statue

Fox Library Mural

Scrim Mural at the Boys and Girls Club

Mural at Arlington Center For The Arts

Mural at Studio 221

Eleven ceramic mosaic murals made by Arlington High School students

Five painted transformer boxes

The hawk tree in Waldo Park

Temporary

Spooky Walk at Menotomy Rocks Park annually before Halloween

Chairful Where You Sit on the lawn at the Jefferson Cutter House and on the  
bike path 2013, 2014

Art Rocks Menotomy at Menotomy Rocks Park 2014

Eco Fest creations

Park Circle Watertower Image Projection & Dance



PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Robbins Memorial Town  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02476

14 DEC - 1 PM 5:12

Fiscal Resources Task Group  
November 2014

Ms. Carol Kowalski  
Director Department of Planning and Community Development  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02176

Dear Carol,

The FRTG has reviewed the Draft Master Plan (DMP) as published on the Town's website. We believe that that this project, undertaken at considerable expense in dollars and time by consultants, staff and residents, will yield a productive result. To this end the following provides what we intend to be constructive criticism.

Last year we provided a letter suggesting improvements to the preliminary plan. Enclosure 1 is a copy of that letter noting, in red, how the DMP used that set of suggestions and several additional thoughts. While a little over one-third of our comments/concerns were incorporated or addressed, the rest were not. We also noted at then that the DMP lacked the figures and appendices that were referenced in the text. That has not changed.

In this, our follow-up correspondence, we will address only what we consider to be major outstanding concerns beyond those expressed previously (See Enclosure 1).

While it contains useful information, the DMP is definitely not a plan. It is quite unfocused. The eight page table provided under "Implementation" has 80 entries and some relevant information. These numerous recommendations are not prioritized, neither are they organized into an approach that the various responsible Town organizations might use to carry out the most urgent recommendations. Additional comments follow:

The Vision (Page iv) is too narrow given the wider scope of the goals. We believe the vision should provide an inclusive overview of the information, ideas and aspirations provided by within the plan.

Perhaps something on the order of "The Town envisions implementing: Business, transit and land use policies that enhance and grow the economic, educational, civic and cultural aspects of the Town which are supported by an effective and affordable matrix of Town (town and school) services."

Next, there is no discussion of income distribution. We see this as key data when judging potential support for Proposition 2 ½ overrides and thus the urgency of redevelopment. We noted this point last year (Enclosure 1).

Further, the Town Goals, as voted by the 1993 Town Meeting and incorporated as Article 15 of the Town Bylaws, should be included as part of the Master Plan. This needs to be incorporated in the final version. (Enclosure 2)

Finally, as a volunteer group, we would be remiss if we did not comment again that only a few volunteer civic committees are mentioned in the DMP. We consider this to be a truly serious oversight. A more inclusive list (Enclosure 1) should be provided together with a brief statement explaining how they, as a group, help the Town function. This could be included.

Gordon Jamieson  
Co-Chair

Davis Garbarino  
Co-Chair

Enclosure 1: Letter FRTG to C Kowalski, Nov 2013 Annotated

Enclosure 2: Recommended Town Goals Insert

CC: Charles Kalaskas, Co-Chair Master Plan Advisory Committee  
Carol Svenson Co-Chair Master Plan Advisory Committee  
Steven Byrne, Chair Board of Selectmen

Fiscal Resources Task Group  
November 2013

Ms. Carol Kowalski  
Director Department of Planning and Community Development  
730 Massachusetts Avenue  
Arlington, MA 02176

Dear Carol,

The FRTG has reviewed the Master Plan Draft Interim Report as published on the Town web site. We have high hopes that this planning effort will be brought to a successful conclusion and the resultant document will drive and guide future development activities with Arlington. To that end, this letter contains some comments that we hope you will find useful.

**VISION STATEMENT:** Although this is an inclusive statement, we feel that stronger recognition of the financial difficulties facing local government and the limitations these difficulties place on what can be accomplished would prove to be a useful addition. *Not incorporated.*

**MASTER PLAN GOALS:** We think that many of these statements capture the aspirations shared by most residents; representing existing, established goals. Several stand out as important new goals: Attract development; Encourage mixed-use development; Maximize build out.

We hope that the Master Plan will recognize these goals as urgent because without new sources of revenue, progress on the other goals is unlikely. We suggest that the ordering and numbering of the goals be aligned with the ordering and numbering of the existing conditions. *Goals unchanged.*

We think that local action to "Mitigate and adapt to climate change" is limited beyond enhancing the established paths of recycling, solar power and encouraging more energy efficient housing and transportation. We suggest that this goal be stated in in such a way as to focus on what can be achieved locally. *The statement of this goal is unchanged. The discussion in Section 8 supports local action only. There are no related recommendations.*

We note that the "need for additional revenue" is not only required to pay for new "expenditures & investments", i.e. new services, but also to pay for the maintenance of existing service levels. This need should be explicitly recognized less the plan be dismissed as fanciful. *The statement of this goal remains unchanged as does the discussion (P131). There are no related recommendations.*

**EXISTING CONDITIONS:** We admire the scope and detail of the information you have gathered into a single document. In general, we think the geographic charts in the presentation are excellent and we hope they will be part of this baseline material. We anticipate that this material will become a trove of off quoted facts. We hope you have taken care that the data is accurate. We draw attention to a few statements below that would benefit from further review. Our comments are by section. We have noted what seem to be sizable gaps. *The charts in the presentation are missing from this draft too.*

## 1 - DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

1-5 - We hope that Table 1.4 will relate the Tracts to local geography. Not done.

Pay As You Throw

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Gordon Jamieson  
Co-Chair

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David Garbarino  
Co-Chair

Recommended Town Goals insert

Key Finding: In 1993, the Arlington Town Meeting adopted a broad set of goals intended to guide the actions of Town leaders, both employee and volunteer. These goals (Appendix ...), have been actively supported by Vision 2020 task groups working with Town officials ever since. Hundreds of residents have contributed.

Goals and Policies:

General

The goals and policies of this Master Plan are intended to carry out the Town Goals (Bylaw 15) as detailed in Appendix ...

Land Use

....

Appendix ...

**ARTICLE 1. COMMUNITY AND CITIZEN SERVICE**

We value Arlington's geographic neighborhoods, common interest groups, and the sense of community in our Town. We value an active and compassionate citizenry delivering services in our community. We will be known for the vitality of our neighborhoods and as a community of people helping others.

**ARTICLE 2. DIVERSITY**

We value the diversity of our population. Our Town's mix of ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, as well as economic and personal circumstances, enriches us all. We will be known for the warm welcome and respect we extend to all.

**ARTICLE 3. EDUCATION**

We value learning for all Arlington citizens. We are responsible as a community for educating our youth and providing all ages with opportunities for educational growth. We will be known for demonstrated excellence in public education and our commitment to life-long learning.

**ARTICLE 4. ENVIRONMENT**

We value the physical beauty and natural habitats of our Town – parks, ponds and wetlands, dramatic vistas and tree-lined streets – as they contribute to the well-being of our community. Recognizing the fragility of our natural resources, we must ensure that Arlington's residential areas, commercial centers, and

infrastructure are developed in harmony with environmental concerns. We will be known for our commitment to the preservation of Arlington's beauty, limited open space and resources, as well as our place in the regional and global community.

#### **ARTICLE 5. CULTURE AND RECREATION**

We value the many opportunities to meet, play and grow in Arlington while treasuring and preserving our unique historical resources. Our social, cultural, artistic, historic, athletic, recreational, and other community groups strengthen Town life. We will be known for the breadth and richness of our resources and activities available to Arlington citizens.

#### **ARTICLE 6. COMMUNICATION**

We value public dialogue. Communication and information-sharing build trust. Our goals are true openness and accountability. Arlington will be known as a community that thoughtfully searches beyond divisive issues for the opportunities that bind us together.

#### **ARTICLE 7. FISCAL RESOURCES**

We value Arlington's efficient delivery of public services providing for the common good. The benefits from these services and the responsibility of taxation will be equitably distributed among us. We will be known for our sound fiscal planning and for the thoughtful, open process by which realistic choices are made in our Town.

#### **ARTICLE 8. GOVERNANCE**

We value our representative Town Meeting system and the community spirit it fosters. Participatory governance is both responsive and innovative. We will be known as a community where government provides effective and efficient services, insures open two-way communication, promotes the lively exchange of ideas, and encourages active citizen participation.

#### **ARTICLE 9. BUSINESS**

We value Arlington's diverse and accessible mix of merchants and service providers. We will be known for our vibrant, attractive commercial centers supporting the primarily residential and historic character of the Town.



**Comments on  
Arlington Master Plan  
Draft for Local Review 11/7/2014**

**Submitted by Christopher Loreti  
12/1/2014**

**General Comments**

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft plan. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time made available for public comment, and the draft provided for comment is incomplete. It does not contain any appendices, and figures and tables are missing.

The short time for commenting has been explained by the need for the ARB to hold a hearing in January. It is unclear why they need to hold that hearing then. Hearings on Zoning Bylaw changes are not held until March for the upcoming Town Meeting.

I raise the issue of the comment period because it is not clear to me that town officials really want public input on the master plan. In many ways they seem to be just going through the motions. The initial meeting on the plan was well attended and encouraged comment. Since then, the meetings seemed more designed to direct public comment (if any was allowed at all). And as a result, many of the opinions and recommendations included in the master plan bear little relationship to the desires expressed by residents at that first meeting.

As a threshold matter, the Master Plan Advisory Committee needs to address the question of just whose master plan this is. Is it the town's as a whole or is it the plan of town officials to be imposed on the town. Too, often the plan reads like the latter. That is to say, it looks like a laundry list of pet projects of town officials (be they elected, appointed, or town employees) and not the wishes and aspirations of town residents.

I could go on, but I am running out of time to comment. I have not had time to review all of the sections of the document, so have provided detailed comments on only those sections listed below. The sections are numbered as in the report, followed by the page number to which the comment refers.

**3. Land Use**

**P. 25**

Footnote 12 makes reference to a detailed review of Arlington's zoning in Appendix X. This appendix was not made part of the public review draft, and therefore it is impossible to comment on it.

**P. 26**

The large number of automotive-related businesses in the industrial district is by design. Heavy maintenance activities and auto body repair are not appropriate for Arlington's business districts.

**P. 27**

While the authors of this plan may not wish to forecast the town's build-out potential, it can certainly be done plausibly. Since it is extremely unusual for special permits to be denied, particularly when the proposals conform with the ZBL, the analysis need only look at the maximum that could be build under existing zoning. Clearly, since one of the agendas of the master plan is to change zoning to increase density throughout the town, it serves the interests of the plan's authors not to show just how much build-out is already allowed under existing zoning.

**p.28**

The statement that a 35 foot height limit is "challenging for commercial buildings" is extremely misleading. Outside of the B1 and B2 districts, height limits typically range from 40 to 75 for all uses including commercial buildings and residential buildings, except one and two-family homes.

It is not clear what is meant by saying the ZBL lacks requirements for building placement on a lot. Don't the setback requirements limit building placement?

**p. 29**

Discussion of town house structures is unclear and seems to define townhouse differently than in the ZBL. To my knowledge each separate townhouse does not occupy a separate lot in Arlington, and that is the way the ZBL is written.

**p. 31**

Please cite the relevant statutes and/or case law that exempts schools from special permits. In fact, some communities continue to grant special permits for public schools. In Arlington, even the ZBL's dimensional requirements for schools now seem to be ignored. For example, the Thompson school exceeds the allowed height and story limit, and the former town manager was made aware of this. Yet the schools was built with these zoning violations without the ZBA granting a variance.

**P. 32**

Density and Design. Yet another missing appendix. Please provide the survey results. Did the survey ask whether respondents preferred 3 or 4 story building heights? Or did it show two four-story buildings and ask which they preferred? I would like to know how the authors reached the conclusion that respondents wanted four-story buildings and exactly where they wanted them.

**P. 33**

Alternatives to Special Permits. Plan needs to be clear whether it is referring to special permits issued by the ZBA or the ARB. The former are much more common than the latter, which tend to be for the larger more complex proposals in any case. It is also not clear what is meant by “performance standards”. Doesn’t the existing ZBL already impose them?

**P. 35**

The plan authors should review the parking study for East Arlington conducted in conjunction with the Koff study. Contrary to the received wisdom described in the plan it found that on-street parking, especially on side streets, is generally ample in east Arlington. The only real problem times were Friday and Saturday nights.

**P. 40**

Green Urbanism section, while fashionable, seems out of place here. It is really just a lot of generic discussion unrelated to Arlington, with the recommendation that the so called “tool box” be considered. Delete this section or move it to the recommendations section if that is what it is.

Recommendations start with Number 6. Where are numbers 1-5? Are they secret?

**P. 41**

6) Again, please cite the state law that explicitly exempts churches and schools from special permits. 40A Section 3 does not.

7) There is no evidence that special permits are an impediment to development in Arlington. Unfortunately, given the politicization of zoning decisions in town, the special permit process is the only time the public gets to see whether the ZBL is being enforced or not.

8) Six is hardly an excessive number of business zoning districts. The plan needs to distinguish between reducing the number of districts and placing adjacent parcels in the same district. These are two different things.

9) Lot coverage does not apply to business uses in business districts. The landscaped open space requirement is only 10% and it is questionable how much effect eliminating this requirement would have. While it may make sense to eliminate this requirement for buildings on adjacent lots with no front or side yards, where the building stands alone it or abuts a different use, it may make sense to keep it. It is questionable whether business or town residents want to waive the off-street parking requirement. Similarly, it is not clear that building height has to be increased to attract development. 180 Mass Ave is a successful mixed use development created under existing zoning limitations. Also, the plan needs to be clear what parts of Mass. Ave., Broadway, and Medford Street it is referring to. Some of these changes may be appropriate for the center of town, but not at all appropriate for most of Broadway, for example.

## **5. Housing and Residential Development**

### **p. 74**

The master plan has provided no evidence that more than three stories are needed to attract mixed use development, including that with a residential component. As 180 Mass Ave. shows, you can have mixed use development without any residential component at just three stories.

The town need not wait until a 40B submission is made to claim that it is exempt based on the 1.5% land area threshold. If it has reached that threshold consistent with the way the state has approved the same exemption for other communities, it should publish that determination and state that it is the town's policy that it is exempt from 40B on that basis. Then let prospective 40B developers challenge it if they wish.

### **p. 75**

3) It is absolutely outrageous that a recommendation for accessory apartments is being put forth again. Recently, it was rejected by the town two years in a row. Why is in the master plan? This gets back to the question of whose master plan is this? Delete this recommendation.

It is even more outrageous that this plan proposes to allow the conversion of single family homes to four-unit dwellings by right. If the town overwhelmingly has rejected allowing the addition of one unit to a single-family home, why in the world would it support adding three units? Delete this recommendation.

5) There are relatively few lots like those described in this recommendation. They should be left vacant as or adopted by neighbors to expand their yards. There is good reason for them not to be built upon. As the land use section notes, the size restrictions on Arlington's residential lots are appropriate. Those restrictions should be respected. Delete this recommendation.

6) The town has consistently shown its support for its overnight parking ban. Mixed use development and multi-unit develops deserve no exceptions. The fact that some of these developments will be close to public transportation does not eliminate the fact that most residents will still have cars. Delete this recommendation.

## **6. Economic Development**

### **p. 80**

Figure X.3 is missing. This is unfortunate, especially if the figure broke out children and seniors. Since the town spends much less on seniors than school children, the relatively low age dependency ratio for Arlington is a good indicator that town per capita spending should be less than comparable communities with more school children.

**p. 85**

If many people in town believe there is too much residential development in non-residentially zoned areas, then the plan authors need to ask themselves why there is so much emphasis on mixed use development in the plan (residential plus business, but in reality predominantly residential). This will only exacerbate the problem of too much residential development.

**p. 86**

The authors need to discuss the failure of Arlington's Board of Assessors to value non-residential properties at their full, fair market value and the effect that has on CIP tax base.

**p. 89**

1) First sentence of the first recommendation is unclear. Is the plan suggesting changes in the B1 district? It is also not clear whether the recommendation is to up-zone using the existing zoning district definitions or change the requirements for the existing districts. Finally, if there has been any public expression of interest for allowing widespread large-scale development on Broadway and Mass Ave in Arlington, please describe it. I suggest there hasn't been any, and this is the plan authors representing their own view's and not public preference.

2) First bullet makes no sense. Several Personal, Consumer, and Business Services uses are already allowed by right in the Industrial district and they have no minimum floor area requirement

Second bullet also should note that restaurants under 2000 square feet in area are already allowed by right in the I district.

Third bullet requires further explanation as to whether allowing commercial development in the industrial district could lead to the displacement of businesses that can only locate in the industrial district—or do so because of lower rents.

**P. 90**

3) If the town wishes to have planning staff encourage co-work space providers to come to town, that is fine. It should not be spending any other tax dollars to do so, however, either by hiring consultants, or providing tax or other incentives. Governments are ill-equipped at picking winners in the business fields. Too often they fail when they try to do so, and it is the taxpayers who end up paying.

As the cited study showed, the economic impact of Arlington's theatres is extremely modest. Just as the state should not be wasting money bringing film-makers to the state, the town should not be providing any investments in its theatres. That is the responsibility of the theatres themselves as profit-making enterprises.

4) It is interesting that the master plan makes mention of the Koff study, but then proceeds to make many recommendations that are inconsistent with it. The Koff study

specifically recommended that commercial development be focused on the three business districts. The master plan seems to want to spread it throughout the town.

## **9. Public Services and Facilities**

### **P 136.**

*Facilities.* All of Arlington's general government functions are housed in the Town Hall and annex at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Academy Street in Arlington Center.

This statement is not correct. Legal and the ZBA are not in these buildings. I do not believe HR is, either, and IT had been in one of the schools. Has it moved to Town Hall? It would make sense for the town to consolidate all of its general government functions in the town hall annex as there is plenty of space available in these buildings.

### **P. 140**

*The Arlington Department of Public Works (DPW) consists of eight divisions with a combined total of 77.3 FTE employees (Table X.8), or just 1.8 FTE per 1,000 population – including those employed under the water/sewer enterprise. The average ratio of employees in the U.S. Northeast region is 2.15 FTE.*

These statements are completely meaningless without considering how different communities handle outsourcing of their DPW functions and how outsourcing has changed in Arlington over time. Town government is not an employment agency. It is there to provide services to residents. To the extent that it can do that more cost-effectively with fewer employees, it should be applauded—not criticized as being understaffed.

### **P. 141**

*...the DPW is particularly proud of its accomplishments with solid waste and recycling. In 2012, for example, the Town reduced solid waste disposal from 14,527 to 14,214 tons and increased recyclables from 4,395 to 4,652 tons.*

Shouldn't DPW be proud of Arlington residents, rather than itself? It was the residents who reduce their waste disposal and increased recycling. And if DPW attributes the waste reduction to its recycling coordinator, how does that savings, which translates into less than \$20,000 (at \$75 per ton tipping fee) compare to the salary and benefits paid to the recycling coordinator?

*Relative to its peer group, Arlington is fairly affordable in terms of water and sewer costs. An annual survey of water and sewer rates in Massachusetts indicates that Arlington's average sewer bill falls well below the peer group midpoint, and its average water bill is at the midpoint.*

These statements and the associated table are misleading for a couple reasons. First, the recent increases in Arlington's water and sewer rates are not included. Second, the comparison on which the rates are based do not appear to take into account what Arlington residents pay for water and sewer as part of the property tax bills.

**P. 145**

*Robbins Library has also been proposed as a public cooling zone for the community during summer weekends, which would require additional funding to keep the library open for summer weekend hours*

Really? Proposed by whom? Who says the town needs a weekend "cooling zone"? The former library director? Is this just a way for the library to try to get more funds? I looked at the results of the "World Café". I couldn't see that anyone wanted a "cooling zone" at the library or anywhere else. Who makes this stuff up?

**P. 146**

***McClennen Park.***

Why no description of this park?

**P. 151**

*Since the mid-1980s, the tax base has gradually changed from 90 percent residential to almost 94 percent in 2013. In the intervening years (1986-2013), a combination of very little new growth, state aid fluctuations, three recessions, substantial increases in the cost of employee benefits such as pensions and health insurance and changes in school spending requirements have also contributed to making it hard for built-out suburbs like Arlington to pay for the services residents want to receive.*

The report should also note how the inability or refusal of Arlington's Board of Assessors to value commercial and industrial properties at their full value contributes to the increasingly residential tax base. The inability of the town to limit salary increases to the rate of inflation should also be noted as a major contributor (perhaps the largest contributor) to the town's structural spending problem.

**P. 152**

*Arlington is left "with only two choices: significant budget cuts resulting in service reductions or Proposition 2 1/2 general overrides."*

While this statement no doubt comes from a town budget and financial plan, it is plainly false and should not be uncritically repeated in the Master Plan. The choice the town has failed to make is to maintain labor productivity. Because town leadership has lacked the political will to control labor costs (as all the Selectmen know, town employees are a significant political constituency) the increase in town payroll costs have far exceeded inflation in recent years. While town revenues have also increased at a rate significantly exceeding that of inflation, the town has made the policy choice to increase payroll at an even greater rate. That is why the “structural deficit” is more correctly referred to as a structural spending problem.

***Table X.17. Financial Comparison Data***

It is not all clear what “2011 Expenditures Per Capita” is referring to. It certainly is not total town expenditures (budget) per capita. For Arlington and all the other communities that figure is much higher. Arlington’s total expenditures per capita (\$3415 based on its FY14 budget) rank it 159<sup>th</sup> out of 351 Massachusetts municipalities, above, but roughly equal to the median. Average single family property taxes should also be shown on this table too. They would paint a different picture of Arlington.

*To preserve basic services and manage the rate of spending growth, Arlington approved an override of Proposition 2 ½ in 2011...*

How does an override manage spending growth? It actually does just the opposite. It allows the town to spend more than the proposition 2.5 limits—and more than the recent rate of inflation.

*The School Department plans to file a Statement of Interest with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) by the deadline in April 2014.*

It is now November 2014. Revise this sentence to reflect what did happen.

**P. 153**

*Aside from a 29 percent decrease in DPW employees between 2003 and 2013 (measured in FTE), 138 the DPW operates with some constraints that are unique to a built-out community.*

Explain how outsourcing affects the figure for this decrease or delete this sentence. For example, cemeteries experienced the biggest staffing cut as service were outsourced. Did this save money or not? Has cemetery maintenance improved or deteriorated?

**p. 154**

*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.*



This sentence is not clear, both as it is written and as to what it seems to be suggesting. Why should the town accept responsibility for streets that a developer put in years ago that were not up to standard and that current abutters of the street are not prepared to bring up to standard? Is it the responsibility of Arlington's taxpayers to bail out developers who were too cheap to put in decent roads or those who bought their properties?

## Comments on Draft Master Plan

For over a year Master Plan consultants have received comments from many citizens in response to draft preliminary sections of the Plan. Many of these comments have been reflected in the Draft Master Plan just released (11/7/2014) but many have been ignored especially in the all-important recommendations at the end of each section. (At least the factual errors and typos pointed out by citizens have been cleaned up.) Also, listed recommendations in specific sections include numerous concepts which were specifically opposed by those citizens who attended the hearings throughout the year. The listed Draft Master Plan recommendations should be redesigned to remove these undesirable and in many cases already rejected recommendations. Sections containing the most offensive recommendations are: Land Use; Housing and Residential Development; Public Services and Facilities. If these already-rejected ideas are not removed then it is clear that the opinions of the residents of Arlington have been deemed of no consequence and have been rejected in favor of the ideology of the planners.

**Land Use:** Arlington is very land poor being the second most dense town in the Commonwealth. As a result we must be very careful about our land use. Most of us experience Arlington in three types of zones: residential, commercial, and open space. In the foreseeable future it is highly probable that many large lots will change hands creating exciting opportunities for the future. These include land between Massachusetts Avenue and the Minuteman Bikeway. Pertaining to this section are recommendations such as #9 on page 41 of the Land Use section which advocates, for example, increase of building height and lot coverage in some business/residential zones or #7 which advocates reduction of the number of uses that require Special Permits. These exemplify exactly the wrong approach for a town which is so land poor that land use should be carefully controlled and coordinated. Such provisions benefit only developers and will result in a feeding frenzy for them and their enablers.

**The residential experience:** the recommendations made in the section on Housing and Residential Development, pages 75 and 76, item 3 second and third bullets pertaining to accessory apartments and as-of-right conversions should be rejected their totality. Their inclusion is outrageous in view of well-recorded Town discussions and votes. Enactment of zoning changes advocated by them will completely alter the residential areas in Arlington and lay it bare to the worst type of exploitative continuous and rapacious development. The only type of new housing which should be permitted in Arlington is affordable housing. Any other housing simply adds to our problems from excessive population density and 40B vulnerability and this section should have eliminated it from uses in the business zones to avoid these zones being gobbled up by lucrative undesirable developments including luxury apartments. As Arlington Housing Authority Chairman years ago I authorized help by the Authority at that time in establishing the Housing Corporation of Arlington's program of acquiring scattered site existing residences and renovations within the footprints of existing buildings to add to our affordable inventory (I also advocated for the use of CDBG funds for this purpose). That is the kind of housing suggestion the Master Plan should prioritize. The Plan should also suggest

mechanisms to ensure that fiascos such as the neglect of the potential of the Atwood House for affordable housing are not simply left to fester.

**Economic Development:** Since land availability is so limited in Arlington the suggestions to allow all restaurants or retail space by right (item 2, second and third bullets, page 89) is unwise and could result in an unsuccessful hodge-podge of failing enterprises especially as there has been no presentation of a vision for the potential improvement for the town if and when large commercial lots change hands. Also, the repeated recommendations throughout this section for revision of business districts zoning to allow higher density should be rejected. It adds to the steady drumbeat throughout this Draft Master Plan to drive up the population density regardless of the damaging effects on the town.

**Public Services and Facilities:** Among the recommendations on Page 154 there should be included a space-needs analysis for recreation fields. Arlington's fields were once the envy of other communities. Now they are somewhat hazardous because of overuse. They are used not only by youth groups but increasingly by adults and are important for health maintenance. Of course, encouraging high density development will only exacerbate this problem. Some of the commercial endeavors which may change hands are among the areas large enough to be considered for acquisition for field and recreation space and if possible that should be anticipated especially in view of the recent successful CPA vote.

The above describe a few of the changes which should be made to the Draft Master Plan. In particular some recommendations mentioned in several contexts throughout it – for instance reducing the use of Special Permits and changes of zoning to encourage increased population density are particularly foolhardy for our densely populated town of very limited and precious land area. These recommendations are a recipe for disaster inviting an orgy for developer nirvana.

Patricia Barron Worden, Ph.D.  
27 Jason Street

Town Meeting Member, Precinct 8  
11/30/2014

John Arden

## Arlington Draft Master Plan

### Comments & Suggestions for a Better Plan

#### Land Use

In terms of land use, Arlington's biggest deficit is lack of open space. Although population has declined from its high in the early 70s, our Town is still the 12<sup>th</sup> densest community in the Commonwealth (Arlington used to be the densest town, but has recently been edged out by Brookline for that dubious distinction). It would seem that we have done our share – and more – to provide housing opportunities. Thus, the preservation of what little open space we have, whether public or private, should be of paramount importance. Assessment policies should be changed so as not to penalize the owners of large lots, and available funds, such as CPA, should be utilized to the maximum extent possible for open space acquisition, such as the Mugar parcel in East Arlington. Current Town-owned open spaces should be maintained as such and not devoted to other uses, as has unfortunately happened in the past.

The recommendations under this section begin with 6 – are there five secret recommendations yet to be revealed?

The idea to do away with or limit special permits seems to be a solution in search of a problem. Is there any evidence that the special permit process which has, at least to a limited extent, protected the Town from the sort of bad developments of the past, been a problem? If anything, the Redevelopment Board should be more aggressive in standing up for the interests of the Town rather than those of developers. Although certain uses, as listed in the report, are allowed by state law in any district, dimensional rules, which are so vital to protect neighborhood interests, can be controlled, and the way in which Arlington does so is by special permit.

#### Housing & Residential Development

Any consultants worth their salt should know that getting helpful assistance from DHCD towards immunizing Arlington from 40B is about as likely as the Russian-supported militia observing the cease-fire in Ukraine. Possibly this will change if Mr. Baker removes the foxes from the hen house when he assumes office in January. I have been informed by the planning director, and I believe she has said publicly, that there is just a small area needed to bring Arlington within the 1.5% criterion. All efforts should be made to bridge that gap within Arlington's own zoning. Another avenue of attack would be to attempt to persuade DHCD (under a hoped-for better new administration) to count as affordable housing all of the numerous group homes that are scattered throughout just about every Arlington neighborhood, instead of just some of them.

The only additional housing needed in Arlington is affordable housing – and that should be developed within existing building envelopes (e.g. the Housing Corporation's recent

Capital Square project) and within the provisions of our current zoning by-law. If proponents want a different use than allowed by zoning, or higher intensity, then they must go to Town Meeting for a map change, not invoke the odious provisions of Chapter 40B. Any other residential developments will increase our vulnerability to Chapter 40B.

The suggestion to authorize accessory apartments – essentially turning every single-family zone into a two-family zone – is a tired concept twice rejected by Town Meeting and does not even deserve further discussion.

Even more outrageous is the recommendation to allow as of right, the conversion of single family homes “near commercial areas” into small apartment houses.

Doing away with minimum lot sizes is exactly the opposite of Arlington’s need of more open space both public and private. Developers have already figured out how to squeeze new structures unto just about every lot that meets our minimalist requirement of 6,000 feet - and now they want to let them build on 2, 3 or 4,000 foot lots?

It is apparent that the consultants are of the school of certain contemporary planners who take the libertarian view that zoning is an evil to be done away with. On the contrary, for the past 90 years, ever since the Supreme Court decided *Euclid v. Ambler*, zoning has played a decisive role in protecting at least to some limited extent communities like Arlington from rapacious developers. Of course, typically the proponents of the anti-zoning approach themselves reside in leafy outer suburbs like Weston and Lincoln, where the kind of development they purport to like is unlikely to occur.

To make their proposed evisceration of the single family zones even more devastating the consultants want to allow overnight on-street parking. Have they ever tried to drive a fire truck, ambulance, or garbage truck through one of our side streets with cars parked on both sides?

Curiously, none of these tired and inappropriate ideas seem to have originated from the charts of citizen input obtained from the planning department.

This is not to say that our zoning by-law could not use some improvement:

- Using perhaps FAR requirements could limit the development of maxi-houses on mini-lots
- Considering set backs along a street, and scale of extant building in permitting new structures or substantial enlargements
- Keeping in mind that small, 1½ storey houses – which may be on decent-sized lots –would be the nearest thing to affordable single-family housing in Town, if zoning did not permit them to be bid up by developers, torn down, and redeveloped with monster buildings out of scale with the neighborhood

- Devising a method to govern and regulate the current practice of incremental expansion of buildings in phases small enough not to trigger the “large addition” special permit requirement
- Correcting a major weakness of long standing in the current law, namely that the easiest place to build high rise residential is in a business zone, thus crowding out less economically profitable commercial or office uses. Any such development should require a commercial element, and not at the nominal level of the Legacy project in Arlington Center
- Rigid enforcement of the affordable housing requirement where more than five units are being developed.

### Economic Development

The Industrial Zone should be preserved as is, or perhaps even strengthened. The kinds of enterprises in that small area are the sort of services and products that people actually need. Other proposed uses can be located elsewhere. Opening up the industrial district to a variety of more profitable uses will result in loss of things we need and can use, such as auto repair, and replace them with more of what we really don't need, or already have in ample supply.

In any redevelopment, it is important that new or expanded structures be on a human scale. Town Meeting decided some years ago that five storeys was the limit, and there is no reason to change that.

### Historic & Cultural Resource Areas

The report should be amended where applicable to reflect the fact that CPA has been approved by the voters.

The suggestion that the Arlington Historical Commission be given the power to create single-building historic districts is not possible under the General Laws – such designations must be voted by Town Meeting, and typically would come at the instigation of the Historic District Commissions. Of course, both these commissions could use more funding for research and support.

Although the recommendations are positive about streetscapes in historic districts, a stronger statement would be preferable – for example, the Town only replaces sidewalks about once every hundred years so with that level of amortization period, why not do it right? If there are presently brick sidewalks, fix them if necessary, or replace them with the wire cut variety.

Natural Resources & Open Space

Previous comments in this memorandum relate to this topic which is of paramount importance.

The preservation of open space has been a goal for all of my adult life. My first position of authority in Town was president of the Arlington Conservation Association. Putting our money where our mouth is, my wife and I bought a vacant lot near our former home and gave the Town a conservation restriction on it – so that that little patch of grass, shrubs, and trees will forever remain to grace our former neighborhood. Imagine what a better and greener place Arlington would be if every owner of an extra lot or a large side yard were motivated more by community spirit and less by greed. This being unlikely,, the Master Plan should strongly recommend the establishment of a program – perhaps funded by CPA – for the Town to buy conservation restrictions on those few such lots that remain.

An aspect that needs to be addressed – and the Tree Committee has failed to do so – is to ask Town Meeting to enact a by-law, as has been done in Lexington, regulating the removal of substantial trees on private property.

John L. Worden III  
27 Jason Street  
Town Meeting Member, Pct. 8

November 27, 2014

**From:** "Joe Connelly" <JConnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**To:** "Carol Kowalski" <CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Cc:** "Joey Glushko" <JGlushko@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Date:** 12/02/2014 11:17 AM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Arlington Master Plan Comments

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fyi

**Joseph Connelly**  
Director Recreation/Ed Burns Arena  
Town of Arlington  
422 Summer Street  
Arlington, MA 02474  
tel: 781-316-3880  
fax: 781-641-5495

-----Original Message-----

From: Don Vitters <dvitters@sasaki.com>  
To: Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>  
Cc: "blmayer@msn.com" <blmayer@msn.com>  
Date: Tue, 2 Dec 2014 10:14:31 -0500  
Subject: Arlington Master Plan Comments

Joe,

Attached is a copy of the "Draft" Master Plan Review Comments. Please call with any questions.

Don

--

**Don Vitters**  
Principal

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**Attachments:**

File: [Draft  
Master Plan  
Review  
Comments  
\(DV\).docx](#)

Size: 18k Content Type: application/vnd.openxmlformats-officedocument.wordprocessingml.document



**“Draft”**  
**Arlington Master Plan Review Comments (DV)**

**Chapter 1 – Introduction**

- The “Open Space & Recreation” section title in Chapter 1 - Introduction is different than Section 8 - Natural Resources and Open Space title in the report.
- The Goals and Policies in the Open Space & Recreation are good and address our park, recreation facilities, athletic facilities and play areas.

**Chapter 8 – Natural Resources and Open Space**

- Chapter 8 – Natural Resources and Open Space addresses conservation land and open spaces excluding the areas of open space under the jurisdiction of the Park and Recreation Commission (PRC) which are included in Section 9 - Public Services and Facilities.
- Because our parks, playgrounds and athletic fields represent large and visible “open spaces” that actively used by all ages in our community it is more appropriate that they be listed under the category of Open Space & Recreation as shown in the introduction rather than in Public Services and Facilities that include buildings and programs for the recreation program.
- The detail descriptions of Spy Pond and the Arlington Reservoir are focused in the Water Resources and not the use and need for upgrades and maintenance of the surrounding park land.
- The Open Space section lists all of the Town conservation land but not the public park and recreation facility open spaces some of which are described in Chapter 9 – Public Services & Facilities.

**Chapter 9 – Public Services & Facilities**

- The Recreation Section of Chapter 9 – Public Services & Facilities addresses the programs, staff and facilities used by the Recreation Department including the number of participants.
- Included in this section is a brief description of Robbins Farm Park, Menotomy Rocks Park, McClennen Park, Spy Pond Park, Reservoir Beach, Hurd Field and Thorndike Field. The list and description is incomplete and should include all of the PRC open space facilities and indoor spaces.
- A portion of the report should also be devoted to addressing the importance of continued funding for the PRC Capital Plan and its success in maintaining and upgrading Arlington’s park, athletic field, playground and passive use open spaces for the use and enjoyment by a large population of the Arlington community and its role in making Arlington a desirable place to live and raise a family.
- The role and importance of funding and providing maintenance for Arlington’s parks, athletic field and playgrounds should also be included in this section.

**From:** Laura Notman <laura.notman@gmail.com>  
**To:** CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us  
**Date:** 12/02/2014 01:16 PM  
**Subject:** Master Plan Draft Comment

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Hi Carol,

I missed the deadline yesterday for commenting on the Master Plan, but I wanted to send a brief comment along anyway:

I would like to suggest the Master Plan include a recommendation for resiliency and sustainability review of all new projects and significant alterations for both town buildings and private projects. For the town projects, this could be done as part of the space needs assessment and facilities manager roles/process. For private projects, it could be accomplished by raising awareness of resiliency planning principles through information provided to applicants by the building department, and other town education efforts (perhaps in partnership with groups like Sustainable Arlington). The following are some basic checklist items:

- how to locate building mechanical systems / utilities to prevent damage from flooding
- Passive survivability (natural light and ventilation available for emergencies - especially to egress routes or shelter in place areas)
- All major building improvements should increase efficiency of energy/water use of the property.
- New buildings should include capability for future solar or other renewable installations
- Considerations to ensure some large public buildings such as schools can act as shelter in heat, storm or other emergencies with access to emergency power for heat/cooling and water.
- How can the town help ensure an emergency supply of safe drinking water access in water system emergency.

Some of these may already be covered in the towns emergency preparedness plans, but as we upgrade or building new facilities there should be a continual process to ensure plans stay current.

I hope these comments are useful, and I want to commend the committee on the draft plan effort. I am really proud of Arlington and the smart and inclusive government we have.

--

Laura Notman  
15 Longfellow Road  
Arlington, MA 02476  
781-643-5980

**From:** Leslie Mayer <blmayer@msn.com>  
**To:** Joe Connelly <jconnelly@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Cc:** "CKowalski@town.arlington.ma.us" <ckowalski@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Date:** 12/02/2014 02:22 PM  
**Subject:** Master Plan input

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In addition to the previous input on the Working Papers given to Bob, Ann and Joey, here are some thoughts on the goals and recommendations:

#### Natural Resources

- Recognition that the Town's outdoor properties, used for both active and passive recreation activities, are important valued assets and contribute significantly to the town's quality of life and overall attractiveness.
- Funding mechanism and staffing to support maintenance of parks and natural spaces for work related to tree trimming, path erosion, and on-going ADA compliance.

#### Public Facilities

- Recognition that the Town's public recreational assets are as important as its natural open spaces and conservation lands, serving the needs of all ages and abilities within the community.
- Clearly delineated boundaries, lines of authority, responsibility and accountability for all Town recreation properties, both indoor and outdoor.
- Funding mechanism and staffing to support maintenance of playgrounds, playing fields and other outdoor recreation facilities.
- Ability to set aside Enterprise Fund revenues for the purpose of maintenance activities at recreation facilities, such as the Reservoir Beach.
- Establish a true partnership relationship with the State DCR related to required ADA and other capital improvements at the state-owned/town-managed Ed Burns Arena.
- Continued commitment of capital funds to the on-going improvement and renovations of the Town's indoor and outdoor public recreation facilities, and determination of how to integrate CPA funding into these activities.
- Implementation of the recommendations in the IHCD- conducted ADA Study for the Town's recreation facilities to insure compliance with

accessibility requirements, and attention to the on-going requirements for compliance.