

Master Plan Implementation Committee
Report to Annual Town Meeting
April 23, 2018

The Arlington Master Plan, “Your Town Your Future,” was adopted by approximately 75% of Town Meeting members in 2015. The Town then appointed a Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) which meets quarterly to oversee and ensure plan implementation. The following report summarizes the highlights of progress made on each element of the Plan.

Land Use

- **Recodify and update the Zoning Bylaw.**
After much public input, the recodified Zoning Bylaw was passed by Special Town Meeting in early 2018. Recodifying the Town’s Zoning Bylaw was one of the first recommended steps in implementing the Plan, laying the foundation for future policy changes aligned with Master Plan goals. The Zoning Bylaw had not been thoroughly recodified since it was written in 1975 and had become difficult to navigate and out-of-sync with various local, state, and even federal rules and requirements. The Zoning Recodification Working Group formed in 2016 and worked with the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) staff to advance this effort.
- **Adopt design guidelines.** Design standards for buildings abutting the commercial corridors, Mill Brook, and Minuteman Bikeway were adopted by the Redevelopment Board in October, 2015, and are used by the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) in reviewing projects in these areas. The ARB will be exploring codifying these standards.
- **Reorganize and consolidate the business zoning districts.** The Town is issuing a Request for Proposals for a consultant to assist with the reorganization and consolidation of the Business Zoning Districts. The Town will update sign bylaw requirements in tandem with this process.
- **Promote development of higher value mixed-use building by providing redevelopment incentives in business districts. Support vibrant commercial areas by encouraging new mixed-use redevelopment.** Town Meeting in 2016 added Mixed-Use to the list of allowed uses in all of its business districts, with parking reductions by special permit with Transportation Demand Management Plans, to reduce the use of single occupant vehicles. High off-street parking requirements reduce the amount of land area that can be developed. Applicants to the Arlington Redevelopment Board for Special Permits showed a strong interest in using mixed-use zoning: three mixed-use buildings were proposed and approved on Broadway, Massachusetts Avenue, and Summer Street which will add a total of 4,257 square feet of commercial and office space, 14 one- to three-bedroom residential units. One will be a deed-restricted affordable unit.

Traffic and Circulation

- **Work with MassDOT, DCR, and City of Cambridge to improve the efficiency of Massachusetts Avenue/Route 16 signal in Cambridge and work with the MBTA to reduce bus bunching and improve the efficiency of bus service.** The Town received a \$100,000 grant through the Barr Foundation to pilot a bus rapid transit (BRT) project. Arlington was one of four municipalities in Greater Boston to receive the funding. Working in cooperation with the City of Cambridge and the MBTA, a month-long pilot will include the temporary installation of BRT elements along the

eastbound bus routes on Massachusetts Avenue, between the Arlington Heights Busway and Harvard Square Station (in Cambridge). The pilot aims to improve travel conditions for existing bus users as well as increase the number residents using public transit for their morning commute.

- **Review the extension of the regional bikeshare program into Arlington.** The Bikeshare Working Group includes members of the Bicycle Advisory Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee, and East Arlington Livable Streets, as well as DPCD staff and other Town departments. The group was formed in 2017 to investigate options for expanding bikeshare into Arlington, including dockless bikeshare. Dockless bicycles include a built-in locking mechanism that obviates the need for expensive fixed docking stations. In collaboration with MAPC and 12 neighboring municipalities, the group established a regional dockless bikeshare system. The first dockless bikes will arrive in Arlington in early summer 2018.
- **Manage parking in commercial areas.** The Arlington Center Parking Management Plan was approved by the Selectmen in June 2014. Soon thereafter, the Parking Implementation and Governance Committee (PIGC) was established to implement the Plan. Multi-space meters were replaced in the Town parking lots and single-space meters were installed on Mass. Ave. to encourage more turnover of on-street parking closest to the businesses and restaurants. Town Meeting voted to establish a Parking Benefits District (the first of its kind in the state) to earmark parking revenue for expenditures in Arlington Center in association with the newly-installed parking meters. The revenue can fund a wide range of purposes including parking meter maintenance, increased street sweeping or snow removal, beautification, or larger street and infrastructure projects such as lighting or roadway improvements. PIGC members worked with DPCD to identify the first set of expenditures in the district, which were approved by Special Town Meeting in February 2018.

Housing and Residential Development

- **Reduce the number of uses that require a special permit.** The Town secured a Planning Assistance Grant from the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to advance the Housing Production Plan (adopted by the Board of Selectmen and Arlington Redevelopment Board and approved by the state in 2016). The HPP identified the development of multi-family housing in select locations, including by-right, as one strategy to increase housing diversity and affordability in town. This project will assist in implementation of these HPP strategies to support multi-family housing development by informing and resulting in proposed zoning amendments for a future Town Meeting.
- **Study and consider techniques that could address concern for neighbor impacts of new large homes constructed in existing residential neighborhoods.** The Residential Study Group was formed to address concerns regarding new construction in existing neighborhoods, as requested in a resolution at Spring 2016 Town Meeting. The Group started meeting in September 2016, and met frequently leading up to 2017 Annual Town Meeting to develop Warrant Articles within its scope. Town Meeting adopted all zoning bylaw and Town Bylaw amendments proposed by the group, which included setting maximum driveway slopes and incentivizing surface parking, as well as creating a new Residential Construction Control Agreement to codify Town Bylaw rules and regulations and add new rules that addressed a range of concerns expressed by residents abutting new construction activities. In 2018, one of the group's priorities will be exploring Design Guidelines for new residential construction in R0, R1, and R2 zones.

Economic Development

- **Amend Business District Zoning to enhance flexibility and promote development of higher-value mixed-use properties.** The 2016 Town Meeting adopted mixed-use and flexible parking requirements in the business zones. The Master Plan recommends increased height and lot coverage limits, to promote development of higher value properties. The Town will be issuing an RFP for a consultant to draft amended zoning that aims to consolidate and redefine the business zoning districts on Massachusetts Avenue. The consultant will also draft an amended sign bylaw.
- **Amend the Zoning Bylaw to 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).** The Town received \$40,000 in technical assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to complete several Master Plan implementation actions relevant to Arlington Heights, such as exploring options for spurring revitalization efforts along Massachusetts Avenue to attain the area's potential for mixed-use development. The project will also examine potential barriers to development and recommend future zoning or regulatory amendments.

Historic and Cultural Resource Areas

- **Develop a historic, architectural, and archaeological resources survey plan to identify and prioritize outstanding inventory needs.** The Department of Planning and Community Development, working with representatives from the Historic Districts Commission, Historical Commission, Historical Society, and MPIC, is focused primarily on updating the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*. With funding from both the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Survey and Planning Grant Program, the group is working with an historic preservation consultant and MHC to add properties to the Inventory that were not previously documented.
- **Adopt procedures to plan for public art and performance opportunities.** In 2016, DPCD launched a town-wide arts and cultural planning process working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC), and others. The Arts and Culture Action Plan was completed in 2017 and aims to strengthen and grow arts and cultural opportunities in Arlington, leading to a thriving arts and cultural life for all. The plan also bolsters the Arlington Cultural District which spans from Arlington Center to East Arlington and was designated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council in the fall of 2017.

Natural Resources and Open Space

- **Update Arlington's sustainability action plan and address Arlington's concerns about flooding and climate change adaptation.** The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Core Group was formed in the spring of 2017 to coordinate a community resilience planning process to address the local impacts of climate change. This initiative is the result of a \$23,000 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant, which was awarded to Arlington by the State's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. At the core of the planning process is a Community Resilience Building Workshop, which involved community members in the development of a climate change vulnerability assessment and action plan. In addition to advancing aims of the Master Plan, this process will fulfill key objectives of Arlington's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2015-2022).
- **Create a Comprehensive Plan for the Mill Brook Study Area.** The Mill Brook Corridor Study Group was formed in late 2015 to increase awareness and guide changes in the Mill Brook corridor. The

group includes membership from the Mystic River Watershed Association, the Conservation Commission, the Redevelopment Board, and the Open Space Committee. The Mill Brook was recognized in the Master Plan as a hidden gem with the potential to create transformative change as a multi-faceted resource for the Town. The working group is updating previous studies and recommending actions to create opportunities for conserving and protecting this resource while leveraging recreational, economic development, and historic preservation opportunities. During this past year the group coordinated a community-wide brook cleanup event at Wellington Park and has been closely collaborating with the Mystic River Watershed Association on a CPA-funded project to develop a new design and environmental assessment to revitalize the portion of the brook adjacent to the park.

Public Facilities and Services

- **Prepare a feasibility study for an updated Community Center/Senior Center.** A Feasibility Study for a Multi-Purpose Senior Center at the Central School is complete. Capital funds were used to hire an Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) and designer for the renovation project. Funding is in the Capital Plan for construction in FY2020.

Respectfully submitted by the Master Plan Implementation Committee:

Andrew Bunnell, ARB representative	Charles Kalaskas (Co-Chair), Selectmen appointee
Michael Byrne, Inspectional Services, ex officio	Ann LeRoyer, Town Meeting Moderator appointee
Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager, ex officio	Wendy Richter, ARB appointee
Joe Barr (Co-Chair), ARB appointee	Andrew West, ARB alternate
Peter Howard, Finance Committee appointee	Ralph Willmer, Selectmen appointee

with staff support from Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning and Community Development