



Report to  
Annual Town Meeting

April 2019

## Introduction

The Envision Arlington Standing Committee is pleased to provide this update on our recent work and our plans for the future of Envision Arlington. Envision Arlington is not a single committee so we begin by identifying the current Task Groups and Committees.

**Diversity Task Group**, fostering awareness, community, and action on diversity issues and creating inclusive and safe spaces where all voices are welcome.

**Education Task Group**, building a community understanding of what it means to be educated, how we measure success (in education and schools) and how to encourage innovation.

**Reservoir Committee**, participating in Reservoir Master Plan Project to guide improvements and planning.

**Sustainable Arlington**, increasing local energy efficiency, renewable energy use, and community resilience to climate change.

**Spy Pond Committee**, helping the town and its residents protect the beauty, water quality, and enjoyment of Spy Pond.

**Governance Task Group**, hosting events to inform the public about matters before town meeting.

**Fiscal Resources**, educating the public about how town government works and the people responsible for planning and managing our finances.

**Standing Committee**, supporting emerging ideas and broad public engagement through activities like the Annual Town Survey.

Detailed reports on the work of Envision Arlington are included in the Town's Annual Report 2018, pages 88 - 91, and links to websites and contact information for our groups are found on the Envision Arlington page on the Town website: [arlingtonma.gov/envision](http://arlingtonma.gov/envision).

## Article 67

The Standing Committee, the Spy Pond Committee and the Reservoir Committee of Envision Arlington work with the Conservation Commission to develop the Water Bodies Fund budget and recommendations to protect the water quality and health of major water bodies in Arlington. Please support Article 67.

## Annual Town Survey 2019

This is the second year that the survey was primarily online using Survey Monkey rather than mailing a paper copy to each household with the Town Census form in January. We continually analyze the responses and demographic patterns to identify underrepresented groups or issues in town, and if so, identify ways to improve our outreach. However, it appears that we have a reasonable

representation of households, both geographically by precinct, and by income as compared to town-wide census data.

For this survey, we included an insert in the Census mailing alerting households to the shift to an online survey format, and we provided a web address on the Town website. We posted reminders through Town social media, Town Notice emails, and local online and print media. We recorded 4573 responses from a total pool of 18,500 households, which is more than double the responses we received last year. We will continue to use multiple channels to inform the public, with the goal of achieving response rates we saw a few years ago when 6000-7000 households participated. We made paper copies available in both libraries and the Senior Center for those with limited internet access or computer skills.

The full report will be posted on the Envision Arlington page [arlingtonma.gov/envision](http://arlingtonma.gov/envision) in the next few weeks. The final page of this report contains some interesting highlights.

## Looking Ahead

Envision Arlington seeks to create a cycle of discussion, work and review so we regularly gather the people who have been working on any number of key issues – such as diversity, education or environment – to share progress and ideas. We hope to develop multiple ways that the community can engage in this effort and ultimately put forth a new set of value statements and goals to be adopted by Town Meeting.

We envision a number of working groups focused on specific tasks to keep meetings to a minimum and maximize productivity. Volunteers are needed to organize outreach to the entire community so that all voices are heard.

- Survey Working Group - improves the implementation of the Town. Volunteers with survey expertise develop strong questions in the Fall and assist with the interpretation of the results in the Spring.
- Governance Working Groups - support precinct meetings and communication between Town Meeting Members and residents.
- Public Engagement Working Group - develop techniques for gathering input on community values to inform revisions to the statements and setting specific goals to measure results.

If you want to get involved or have ideas for small group engagements, online discussion, or smart phone apps that could help, we are preparing to form Public Engagement Working Groups.

Please visit the Arlington webpage at [arlingtonma.gov/envision](http://arlingtonma.gov/envision) to learn more or email [envision@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:envision@town.arlington.ma.us) if you would like to volunteer.

## Survey 2019 Highlights

- 37% were taking it for the first time.
- 22% of the first-time responders have lived in Arlington for longer than 16 years.

### Mobility

- 33% of responses reported that they are not using their preferred mode of transportation in Town.
- Of those who don't get around in their preferred mode, 95% would prefer to get around in any way other than a car (equally split by public transport, walking, and cycling).
- Time is the biggest barrier to getting around town in their preferred mode (31% selected as their top concern).
- Traffic congestion was the top thing to change, both among drivers and those who would prefer to take public transportation.
- Safer sidewalks (14%) and safer crosswalks (12%) were also highly ranked priorities, especially those who would prefer to walk as their primary mode.

### CDBG

- The top activities supported by all households: parks and recreation, senior centers, street improvements, tree planting, energy efficiency, fair housing activity, and youth services, and food banks.
- CDBG-eligible households tended to prioritize activities that supported senior services and amenities, whereas non-eligible households put a higher priority on youth services and activities. Even so, both youth and senior programs ranked among the top four priorities in each category among all respondents.

### Environmental (Stormwater and Hazard Mitigation)

- Respondents seemed to be most interested in taking personal action – what they can do themselves to make an impact – rather than information about regulations. More than half of all respondents (56%) were interested in updates about Arlington's stormwater projects, and nearly half (47%) were interested in learning more about ways to reduce stormwater runoff from their property.
- Responses suggested a number of programs that could be developed or better promoted in town for implementation of stormwater mitigation strategies. Read the report to find out more!
- The most significant hazard risk for all respondents was regarding winter storms, with seniors expressing the most concern (52% were very or extremely concerned).

### Residents and Government

- Although few people attend precinct meetings, the interest in learning about issues at these meetings has increased from 61% in 2016 to 72% in this survey.
- 67% of respondents read the warrant.
- 36% taking the survey had never heard of Town Notice emails and 58% of them have lived in Arlington for more than five years.
- Transparency, Efficiency, and Communication were the values ranked most highly for Town Government.