

Master Plan Implementation Committee

Report to Annual Town Meeting

April 26, 2021

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 generally meets quarterly to oversee and ensure plan implementation. MPIC reports are organized to follow the topic areas of the Master Plan: Land Use, Traffic and Circulation, Housing and Residential Development, Economic Development, Historic and Cultural Resource Areas, Natural Resources and Open Space, and Public Facilities and Services. The Master Plan is available at: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/planning-community-development/master-plan>.

This report provides highlights of recent accomplishments and the ongoing and upcoming projects. More information on many of the projects listed here can be found at: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/planning-community-development/projects-plans-reports>.

Land Use

- **Update Industrial District zoning to reflect the current needs of today’s industrial uses and markets.** Following an appropriation at Annual Town Meeting, in late 2019, RKG Associates and Harriman were selected through a competitive procurement process to complete the Economic Analysis of the Industrial Zoning Districts. The goals of the project include positioning Arlington to attract new businesses and jobs in emerging growth industries and creating opportunities for the Town to realize greater revenue by making strategic amendments to the Zoning Bylaw. During 2020, RKG Associates and Harriman provided a review of the market and fiscal realities of development scenarios that informed zoning recommendations and possible amendments to match the needs of today’s industrial developers and businesses and position Arlington in a highly competitive industrial and commercial marketplace. Article 35 of the 2021 Annual Town Meeting includes the proposed zoning amendments developed by the Zoning Bylaw Working Group and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

Traffic and Circulation

- **Advancement of a Sustainable Transportation Plan.** While the Master Plan provides goals and strategies for transportation planning in Town, several emerging mobility issues were identified but not fully addressed, including technologies that are starting to change travel patterns and behaviors. During 2020, the Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee and DPCD undertook the preparation of a Sustainable Transportation Plan, known as Connect Arlington. The completion of the plan is anticipated this Spring 2021, and components of the plan will address many actions in the Master Plan’s Implementation Plan. Connect Arlington will ensure that all Arlingtonians, workers, business owners and visitors are provided a safe, reliable, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all people of all ages and abilities. Related to this project is the Minuteman Bikeway Visioning Project, funded by the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Committee at the November 2021 Special Town Meeting. This project will focus on developing a shared community vision and implementation plan for the Minuteman Bikeway. It will simultaneously address users’ expressed concerns about pressing issues while providing an opportunity for the Town to be more visionary about what the future Bikeway could look and feel like and how it could function. DPCD will be issuing a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant this Spring.
- **Lake Street/Minuteman Bikeway Signal.** The Lake Street/Minuteman Bikeway signal project, a key priority in Arlington’s Complete Streets Action Plan, is now substantially complete. Construction began in Summer 2020 and was completed by late Fall. The improvements to the intersection included the installation of a new vehicle/pedestrian/bicycle signal at the intersection that is coordinated with the signal at Brooks Avenue and Lake Street, which was also upgraded. The project

also created a separated crossing for bicyclists and pedestrians, created new gathering and sitting areas along the Bikeway near the intersection, improved sight lines for drivers and Bikeway users, and included new signage and pavement markings, handicap access improvements, and vegetation maintenance. This project was made possible by \$750,000 in funding approved by the 2019 Annual Town Meeting.

- **Continue to support and expand the Safe Routes to School program to encourage more biking and walking to school.** The Town received a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Project Award to fund pedestrian safety improvements near the Stratton Elementary School. The proposed project will provide a fully accessible walking route with safe roadway crossings for children and others walking to Stratton along Hemlock Street between Brattle Street and Dickson Avenue and Dickson Avenue between Hemlock Street and Pheasant Avenue. DPCD continues to work with MassDOT's consultant, AECOM, to guide the project through the MassDOT project development process. The Massachusetts SRTS Program is a federally-funded initiative of MassDOT. It is anticipated that this SRTS project will be funded in Fiscal Year 2024 by MassDOT.
- **Review the extension of the regional bike share program into Arlington.** In 2020, the Town became part of the Bluebikes regional bike share system. When Lime announced in March 2020 that its bike share system would be discontinued, the Town, through DPCD, investigated options to bring bike share back to the community to provide a sustainable transportation solution. Bluebikes is the docked bike share system that operates in Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, Everett, and Somerville. Five stations were installed in East Arlington and Arlington Center in the Fall of 2020, and this Spring the stations will be reinstalled with a sixth at Broadway Plaza. The Town continues to investigate locations for extending the network through the Center and into Arlington Heights.
- **Manage parking in commercial areas.** Although during most of 2020 the Select Board did not collect parking fees in Arlington Center due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Parking Advisory Committee worked to update all parking meters to accept PayByPhone. PayByPhone is a leading global provider of mobile parking payment solutions and will be available at more than 500 spaces in surface lots, including the Railroad Lot, Russell Common Lot, and Library Lot, and on the streets in Arlington Center. With PayByPhone, visitors to the Center will have a contactless payment option in addition to using currency or credit cards at the meters.
- **Adopt a plan for future sidewalk paving design treatments according to density and road geometry, consistent with the Sidewalks Plan.** The Arlington Center Sidewalk Project got underway and was completed during 2020. The project is one component of ongoing improvements to the Massachusetts Avenue corridor. It also includes the reconstruction of Broadway Plaza, which is the location of a Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) project scheduled for 2021. As part of this project, the brick sidewalks in the eastern section of Arlington Center were removed and replaced with an accessible sidewalk paving design.
- **Pandemic-Related Activities.** In response to the coronavirus pandemic, DPCD's Transportation Planner, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, worked to implement shared and slow streets to provide safe social distancing space for people walking, bicycling, and rolling. Gateways, traffic calming, and signage are key components to creating spaces that are safe and comfortable for sharing streets with drivers, serving Arlington's larger goal of creating shared street networks and supporting healthy travel as the community continues to respond to the pandemic. Shared and slow streets were implemented along Brooks Avenue, several side streets between Brooks Avenue and Herbert Road, and along Mary Street. This project was supported by MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant intended to support municipalities during the pandemic. In addition, traffic signal phases at major intersections were updated to have an exclusive pedestrian phase, allowing pedestrians to cross intersections without needing to touch the pedestrian signal button.

Housing and Residential Development

- **Study and consider techniques that could address concern for neighborhood impacts of new large homes constructed in existing residential neighborhoods.** In 2019, DPCD staff prepared a study of the impact of the demolition of structures and the compatibility of the new structures in established neighborhoods. One of the key recommendations of this report was to develop residential design guidelines. Subsequently, the Design Review Working Group (DRWG) and DPCD worked with consultant Harriman, hired in late 2019, to engage the community through virtual public workshops, surveys, and remote input opportunities in the development of the guidelines. The final report, the Arlington Residential Design Guidelines, published in December 2020, outlines design recommendations based on community input and feedback, specifies how these recommendations can be met, and describes a review process by which proposals for new construction and additions can be evaluated. While the guidelines are advisory in nature, they will be considered by the Zoning Board of Appeals and staff when evaluating applications and requests for Special Permits.
- **Update to Housing Production Plan.** The existing Housing Production Plan (HPP) will expire in late 2021. The Plan positioned the Town to better meet local market-rate and affordable housing needs and demand, and in doing so work towards the State's Chapter 40B statutory minimum requirement that 10 percent the housing in a town be affordable. The HPP consists of three major components: a housing needs and demand assessment; an analysis of development constraints, capacity, and opportunities in Town; and an implementation plan consisting of housing goals and strategies to achieve them. The Housing Plan Implementation Committee is charged with implementing the actions identified in the HPP. In early 2021, the Town hired Barrett Planning Group, LLC, to complete the update of the HPP with a five-year time horizon.

Economic Development

- **Pandemic-Related Activities.** Although the Master Plan did not contemplate the economic needs arising from the pandemic, many of the Town's pandemic-related activities advanced goals of the Master Plan. DPCD's Economic Development Coordinator was called on to provide dedicated support to the Arlington business community during the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting economic impacts. The Coordinator established the Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force, which includes representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Select Board, the Park and Recreation Department, the Office of the Town Manager, the Arlington Redevelopment Board and the Department of Planning and Community Development. These Town officials and their boards and committees establish, create, and implement policies and regulations that will help drive and revive our economic recovery. The business owners, nonprofit leaders, property owners, banking executives, and others on the Task Force guide the Town by creating policies procedures that meet real needs and address concerns of health and safety as the state allows businesses to reopen. The contributions of members of this Task Force will also guide the Town's longer-term economic recovery to ensure the continued health and stability of our business districts.

In addition to relaying important information from the state government to the local business community, the Economic Development Coordinator worked with the Select Board, the Recreation Department, and the Department of Public Works to ensure that local businesses could utilize outdoor spaces to support business activities. The Select Board provided the ability for permitting to be handled administratively in an expeditious manner to allow businesses to hold classes outdoors in public spaces such as parks and other recreational facilities and to allow restaurants and food establishments to utilize the sidewalk for outdoor dining.

Further, with the support of a second MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant, three new public parklets and other public space improvements were installed in Arlington Center and Arlington Heights to enhance public and private outdoor seating, ensure pedestrian safety, and provide

bicycle parking infrastructure. Converting parking spaces, short stretches of roadways, and pedestrian alleyways into safer areas to dine outdoors, walk, and travel by bicycle will assist businesses by providing additional public space for their customers' use and safer means of access to commercial centers during the pandemic. The MassDOT grant enabled the Town to purchase equipment to dramatically expand outdoor seating capacity for dining and other passive uses. The equipment will be reinstalled in Spring 2021.

Finally, in partnership with the Towns of Bedford and Lexington, the Town was awarded a Local Rapid Recovery Planning (LRRP) grant by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI). The goal of the LRRP program is to give every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and immediate COVID-19 impacts that have affected downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas throughout Massachusetts. To that end, the three towns are coordinating on ways to leverage the traffic on the shared asset of the Minuteman Bikeway to drive more customers to their business districts as a recovery strategy from the pandemic. Arlington Heights, East Lexington, and Bedford Center will be areas of specific focus.

Historic and Cultural Resource Areas

- **Place preservation restrictions on Town-owned historic properties not already protected.** In 2019, the Community-Wide Historic Preservation Survey Master Plan was completed. Acting on the recommendations in the plan, DPCD applied for CPA funding to complete a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey and to document historic municipal resources. The funding was approved by the November 2020 Special Town Meeting. The study will produce a comprehensive inventory of known archaeologically sensitive historic and cultural landscapes, including Mill Brook, industrial areas near Spy Pond, Elizabeth Island, and Town-owned recreational areas, and will identify areas of high potential for further planning and preservation. This project will lay the groundwork for potential additional protections of these assets, if necessary. The project to document historic municipal resources will apply to a variety of Town-owned properties, including nine landscapes, one burial ground, and ten buildings. This will enable the Town to pursue grant funding to preserve these historic properties. A request for proposals will be released in Spring 2021 and the Historic and Cultural Resources Working Group will work with DPCD on these two projects.

Natural Resources and Open Space

- **Update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.** The Open Space Committee, with assistance from DPCD, will update the 2015-2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which will expire in 2022. The update will extend the lifetime of the plan for seven years through 2029. CPA funding was granted by 2020 Annual Town Meeting to hire a consultant to assist in the development of the plan, and Horsley Witten Group was hired in early 2021. The Town has had an approved OSRP in place since 1996. This update will be the fifth such Plan. It serves as a foundational document for all Town planning and programs relating to parks, playgrounds, playing fields, natural resources, conservation land, sustainable development, climate resiliency, and other open space issues. Communities with an approved OSRP are eligible to apply for funding from the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program, Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program, and other grant programs administered by the State.

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 was completed in 2017. Capital funds were used to hire an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and designer for the renovation project in 2017 and 2018. Construction of the \$8.1 million project began in March 2020 and continued through the coronavirus pandemic with minimal delays. Completion of the Central School renovation, including the Community Center/Senior Center, Town offices, and building-wide improvements is expected during the Summer of 2021.

- Address ADA requirements.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan was completed in June 2020 utilizing Community Development Block Grant and Massachusetts Office on Disability planning grant funds. The Town hired the Institute for Human Centered Design in 2019 to survey 27 public buildings – including four public safety buildings, 12 public school facilities, two libraries, two facilities managed by the Arlington Redevelopment Board, one cemetery building, one Recreation Department facility, and five Town-owned buildings. The accessibility survey of those facilities includes all the spaces where the Town offers programs, services, and activities to members of the public. Each of the facility reports include an overview that identifies the most substantial accessibility issues and order of magnitude cost estimates for corrective action. The prioritization plan was completed with input from various Town departments as well as the Disability Commission. The Town allocated annual funding in the five-year Capital Plan to remove architectural barriers and address accessibility issues.

Respectfully submitted by the Master Plan Implementation Committee:

Michael Byrne, Inspectional Services, ex officio	Charles Kalauskas (Co-Chair), Select Board appointee
Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager, ex officio	Ann LeRoy, Town Meeting Moderator appointee
Joe Barr (Co-Chair), ARB appointee	Wendy Richter, ARB appointee
Peter Howard, Finance Committee appointee	Ralph Willmer, Select Board appointee

with staff support from Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning and Community Development, and Erin Zwirko, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development. The Master Plan Implementation Committee thanks Ms. Zwirko for her support for the past three years. Additional information about the Master Plan Implementation Committee may be found on its website, including tracking progress on the Master Plan’s recommendations and actions: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/boards-and-committees/master-plan-implementation-committee>.