



Arlington Open Space Committee

June 25, 2023

MBTA Communities Working Group / Arlington Planning Director / Arlington Redevelopment Board
Town of Arlington
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RE: Open Space Committee Input on MBTA Communities Act Planning

The MBTA Communities Act has the potential to bring significant, needed housing to Arlington. The zoning changes required by the Act will not only encourage housing growth; they will also bring opportunities and challenges for the Town's critical open spaces.

As you know, the Open Space Committee is tasked with promoting and advocating for the Town's open spaces. Reviewing the MBTA Communities Act, we are concerned that the addition of residential density may squeeze out current and potential open spaces - unless the Town's open space objectives are built into the planning process. With this in mind, we would like to voice several recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of open space. Our five recommendations are:

1. Incentivize the inclusion of publicly accessible open space in and around new development projects.
2. Identify, protect, and enhance existing public open spaces near MBTA Communities Districts, ensuring good access throughout each district.
3. Invest in connecting MBTA Districts to open spaces, bike routes and other corridors (inside and outside Arlington) for pedestrians, cyclists, and bus riders.
4. Build public green open spaces with trees to mitigate heat impacts from climate warming.
5. Incorporate the Mill Brook corridor/Linear Park concept in the planning of districts along the brook, including waterway restoration, historic sites, passive recreation, and flood management.

The 2023 Envision Arlington survey shows strong community support for protecting and enhancing the Town's open space. Respondents gave high rank to: Preservation of undeveloped spaces; Additional tree planting; Addition of small parks and outdoor seating. It will be important to honor this public sentiment in planning around the MBTA Communities Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to partner in building a positive future for Arlington. We look forward to seeing actions built into the plan which reflect the goals and objectives in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. We would be happy to discuss these ideas and provide additional details at your convenience

Sincerely,

Wendy Richter
Elisabeth Carr-Jones
For the Open Space Committee