

Master Plan Implementation Committee

Report to Annual Town Meeting

April 24, 2017

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 progress made on each element of the Plan.

Land Use

- **Recodify and update the Zoning Bylaw.** The Zoning Recodification Working Group (ZRWG) was formed in 2016 to oversee rewriting and modernizing the Zoning Bylaw. This group’s priority is to update and revise the Arlington Zoning Bylaw to be clearer, internally consistent, reflective of the Master Plan, and in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40A and current case law. The ZRWG and Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) staff have been working closely with the Town’s consultant, RKG Associates, to gather data on deficiencies and things that are not working well in the current bylaw.

The consultants delivered their first product, “Arlington Zoning Review and Reorganization Framework,” on February 28, 2017. A first draft reading of a new bylaw will occur in May 2017 by the Working Group. A public meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 13, 2017 to review a second draft of the revised Zoning Bylaw. There will be a third reading and public meeting in Fall 2017. A new Zoning Bylaw is expected for a Fall 2017 Special Town Meeting.

On the Warrant for this Town Meeting is a request for \$55,000 (Warrant Article 38) for funds to make substantive changes to the Zoning Bylaw following adoption of a new Bylaw. Changes might include consolidating zoning districts and revising the Zoning Map to better reflect the Land Use policy recommendations of the Master Plan.

- **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 ARB in reviewing projects in these areas.
- **Reorganize and consolidate the business zoning districts.** This will be tackled after a new Zoning Bylaw is adopted.
- **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. During the past year, one new mixed-use development was approved by the ARB, with four more in varying phases of design.
- **Boost industrial and commercial revitalization by allowing multiple uses...without losing commercial and industrial uses.** Town Meeting in 2016 adopted definitions for two new types of

industry designed to encourage emerging growth sectors. “Artisanal Fabrication” includes woodworking, jewelry making, food and alcohol production, and “Artistic/Creative Production” includes new forms of creative enterprises, including communications, visual and performing arts, and fabrication. This Town Meeting Warrant includes an amendment to the definition of “Artisanal Fabrication” (Article 7), to remove the 5,000 square foot size limit, which may inhibit such businesses from choosing to locate in Arlington.

- **Establish parking ratios that reflect actual need for parking.** In 2016, Town Meeting adopted increased flexibility in parking requirements, in multi-family and business zones. Owners may build less parking when incentives are provided for reduced car use. Reduced parking provides more area for much-needed housing units, especially along transit routes. Reduced car dependence also results in less traffic congestion.
- **Establish areas that are a priority for preservation, and areas that are a priority for redevelopment.** The three business districts and Broadway have been the focus of development activities. Steps were taken to try to preserve and protect the Mugar property in East Arlington from development.

Traffic and Circulation

- **Develop a Complete Streets Policy governing design and implementation of street construction.** In April 2016 the Selectmen adopted a Complete Streets policy to promote a sustainable, cohesive, connected transportation network that serves all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, transit riders, and freight carriers. In July 2016 the Town was awarded a Complete Streets grant of \$400,000 from MassDOT for new sidewalks and other pedestrian accommodations on Gray Street. Construction will take place in Spring 2017.
- **Create safer pedestrian conditions to increase walking in Arlington.** The Complete Streets Prioritization Plan gives high priority to sidewalk accommodation near high pedestrian traffic areas, such as the business centers and around schools. Upgrading sidewalks in Arlington Center is also a high priority in the Mass. Ave. Phase II Rebuild Project.
- **Improve Minuteman Bikeway.** Work has begun on designing safety and mobility improvements to the intersection of Lake Street and the Minuteman Bikeway. The Transportation Advisory Committee and Town Engineer are working with a committee of residents to assure that the design meets the needs of all users of this intersection.
- **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. The 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 Warrant Article 26 provides for Acceptance of Legislation to establish a Parking Benefits District to allow the Town to spend net meter revenue within the metered area of Arlington Center. This allows the Town to accomplish many Master Plan recommendations regarding upgrading the Center. Anticipated projects include: upgrades to the Russell Common Lot and the alley providing access to the lot, known as Dormer Way; replacing sidewalks; planting street trees; improving lighting, installing benches, bike racks, and seasonal decorations; and upgrading Broadway

Plaza. The PIGC will soon be monitoring the turnover of parking in the area to gauge the success of the program, and to help inform future decision-making.

Housing and Residential Development

- **Plan for Affordable Housing.** The Town created a Housing Production Plan, under the supervision of the ARB. The Plan was adopted by the ARB (June 2016) and the Selectmen (July 2016), and approved the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (October 2016). A Housing Plan Implementation Committee will advance many plan recommendations. In keeping with the Master Plan, the Housing Production Plan recommends that new residences are developed mostly in mixed-use structures along commercial corridors. It promotes production of all housing types, including affordable housing, more housing choices for older residents and families, and a diversity of unit sizes, to meet the needs of all of Arlington’s present and future residents.
- **Use local resources for Affordable Housing.** The Town continues to allocate CDBG funds for affordable housing by funding projects of the Housing Authority (AHA) and Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA), which currently has three projects in varying stages of development. Community Preservation Act funds have also been allocated each year to support AHA and HCA projects.
- **Reconsider parking requirements.** The 2016 Town Meeting adopted increased flexibility in parking requirements in multi-family and business zones. Building less parking saves money and land, allowing more units to be built within the same property footprint.
- **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 continues to meet 2-3 times per month to develop Warrant Articles for Town Meeting. The 2017 Town Meeting Warrant includes the following Articles developed by the Residential Study Group:
 - Article 8. Zoning Bylaw Amendment/ Residential Driveway and Parking Accommodation Zoning Changes. This Article will address concerns about driveways accessing below-grade garages by limiting the grade of driveway slopes and providing incentives to build parking on the surface. The companion article is 2017 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 1. Bylaw Amendment/ Definitions, to amend the definition of “Open Space, Usable” will reduce the required horizontal dimension to allow an incentive for surface parking at newly-constructed dwellings.
 - Articles 11-14 which constitute components of a Residential Construction Control Agreement to codify Town Bylaw rules and regulations and add new rules that address a range of concerns expressed by residents abutting new construction activities.
 - Article 11. Bylaw Amendment/ Residential Construction, Open Excavation and Demolition Activity Regulations: Neighbor Notification and Meetings.
 - Article 12. Bylaw Amendment/ Residential Construction, Open Excavation and Demolition Activity Regulations: Building Site Maintenance.
 - Article 13. Bylaw Amendment/ Residential Construction, Open Excavation and Demolition Activity Regulations: Abutter and Public Property Protections.
 - Article 14. Bylaw Amendment/ Residential Construction, Open Excavation and Demolition Activity Regulations: Noise Abatement.

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 also recommends increased height and lot coverage limits, to promote development of higher value properties. These have not yet been considered.
- **Amend Industrial District Zoning, to adapt to current market needs.** Recently adopted definitions for “Artisanal Fabrication” and “Artistic/Creative Production” may result in growth of new industries in Arlington. The Master Plan also recommends allowing restaurants, retail, and live/work space, to create mixed-use zones. This will be considered following recodification of the zoning bylaw, particularly in industrial areas abutting the Mill Brook.

Historic and Cultural Resource Areas

- **Develop a historic and archaeological resources survey plan to identify and prioritize outstanding inventory needs.** The Department of Planning and Community Development, working with a group made up of the Historic Districts Commission, Historical Commission, and Historical Society, successfully applied for two grants to upgrade the Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties, create a Survey Master Plan, and create a Historic Structures Report for Arlington High School. Funding will come from the Community Preservation Act Fund, and Massachusetts Historical Commission. Work will begin on this important project when funds are available, in the next fiscal year. The Town was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant program and the Community Preservation Committee allocated \$115,000 for FY 2018, to be voted on at this Town Meeting (Article 49).
- **Preserve Town Owned Historic Resources.** A number of Town and ARB owned buildings are currently receiving attention. Exterior renovations are now complete at the Jefferson Cutter House, funded by a Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grant and CDBG. CPA funds have been applied for to develop a plan for the Whittemore Park, in front of Jefferson Cutter House. A Feasibility Study for a Multi-Purpose Senior Center at the Central School is complete. Funding is in the Capital Plan for design in FY18, and construction in 2019 and 2020. A plan to resurface the driveway on Maple Street in order to improve access to the building is complete, and will go into construction in 2018, using funds from the Capital Plan. The Whittemore Robbins Carriage House rehabilitation project was granted \$289,000 from CPA funds. A contractor has been selected and the work is expected to be complete by the end of summer.
- **Implement the Community Preservation Act.** Funding under this program is in its second year, supporting open space preservation and affordable housing as well as historic and cultural resources.
- **Adopt procedures to plan for public art and performance opportunities.** Cultural planning got underway this year with development of Arlington’s first “Arts and Culture Action Plan”. The Town received a technical assistance grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and utilized local CDBG funds to help write the plan. The Town has applied to the Mass. Cultural Council for designation of a Cultural District in the area of Mass. Ave. from Capitol Square in East Arlington to Arlington Center.

Natural Resources and Open Space

- **Create a Comprehensive Plan for the Mill Brook Study Area.** The Mill Brook Study Group was reformed to enhance the Mill Brook’s environmental value and economic development potential. The Group includes membership from the Mystic River Watershed Association, the Conservation Commission, the Redevelopment Board, and the Open Space Committee. The Group sponsored a clean-up in the fall of a small section of the brook around the Arlington Reservoir and Hurd Field, where the brook is in a natural state. A second clean-up is scheduled for April 30, around Wellington Park. The Mystic River Watershed Association applied for funding from the Town’s Community Preservation Committee for visioning and planning for the Mill Brook around Wellington Park, to make it more visible and accessible to the community.
- **Address maintenance needs for all of the Town's open spaces and natural resources.** The Town Manager's office has established a Working Group for Maintenance of Public Lands, including representation from various commissions and departments concerned with this issue. The Group will begin meeting this Spring to study issues related to short-term and long-term maintenance and management of open space, recreational land, and other natural resources.
- **Ensure consistency between the Master Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan.** To address overlapping goals for greater public awareness of the Town's valued resources in both Town plans, the Open Space Committee has been developing a series of designated walking routes for different sections of Arlington that link local open spaces with other neighborhood features, historic sites, and business centers. A route for East Arlington is almost complete, and others in the Heights are being designed. The Open Space Committee is also developing an interactive electronic document that tracks progress on meeting the Open Space Plan’s goals and objectives.

Public Facilities and Services

- **Establish a Planned Preventive Maintenance Plan, and fund a Facilities Manager position.** The Town established a Facilities Manager position and department in 2016. A Preventive Maintenance Plan is administered from that office.
- **Establish a sidewalk pavement inventory and plan.** The Department of Public Works has completed a sidewalk and street inventory for the Town. It was used to help prioritize projects for the Complete Streets funding application to MassDOT.
- **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. Funding is in the Capital Plan for design in FY18, and construction in 2019 and 2020.

Respectfully submitted by the Master Plan Implementation Committee:

Andrew Bunnell, ARB representative

Michael Byrne, Inspectional Services, ex officio

Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager, ex officio

Joe Barr (Co-Chair), ARB appointee

Peter Howard, Finance Committee appointee

Charles Kalauskas (Co-Chair), Selectmen appointee

Ann LeRoyer, Town Meeting Moderator appointee

Wendy Richter, ARB appointee

Andrew West, ARB alternate

Ralph Willmer, Selectmen appointee