



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Date: March 23, 2023

From: Claire V. Ricker, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development

To: Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB)

Re: Proposed Warrant Article 14 Vote/Strategic Plan for New Growth

The Board has asked staff to prepare a response to Warrant 14 for discussion and possible submission to the Select Board. The Warrant Article is attached to the agenda for the Board's 3/27/23 meeting. Principally, the Warrant Article proposes:

VOTE/STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NEW GROWTH to see if the Town will vote to create a study group, composed of staff and other appointed residents, for the purposes of developing a strategic plan to increase new growth; or take any action related thereto.

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) has concerns about creating a new committee to study the long-term growth and impacts of forward planning in Arlington for the following reasons:

1. Although adoption of MBTA Communities policy has been and will continue to be one of the primary projects for the Department through most of 2023, in early 2024 under the auspices of the ARB, DPCD plans to kick-off a project to update the 2015 Master Plan that will be a decade old in 2025.
2. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, section 81D (MGL c. 41 (81D)) establishes that the responsibility for development of a Master Plan lies with the Town planning board. Study and review of long-term growth strategies, planning, and development of plans are under the purview of the Arlington Redevelopment Board, which functions as the planning board for the Town. To wit:

*A planning board established in any city or town under section eighty-one A shall make a master plan of such city or town or such part or parts thereof as said board may deem advisable and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan. Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations, or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the **long-term physical development** of the municipality. (emphasis added) MGL c. 41(81D)*

3. There are several required sections for a Master Plan as described and defined in MGL c. 41 (81D) that are related to future growth and development including the following:
- *Goals and policies statement which identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its **future growth and development**. MGL c. 41(81D)(1)*
 - *Land use plan element which **identifies present land use and designates the proposed distribution, location, and inter-relationship of public and private land uses**. MGL c. 41(81D)(2)*
 - *Economic development element which **identifies policies and strategies for the expansion or stabilization of the local economic base and the promotion of employment opportunities**. MGL c. 41(81D)(4)*

While we appreciate the enthusiasm for study, development, and review of strategies for long-term growth, let alone development of a strategic plan, we believe this work is best suited to the future Master Plan Advisory Committee, working with the ARB and DPCD, that can evaluate growth within community recommendations for economic development and land use. This work is best served by the robust and comprehensive public process of master planning and should be evaluated in an iterative process with a holistic eye toward the development of additional plan sections such as housing and open space.

As with all planning projects, we endeavor to engage a diverse representation of the Arlington community to plan for the future of Arlington. The project to update the Master Plan will be no exception. A new committee to complete a strategic plan for new growth would be redundant to the important work of developing an update to the Master Plan in early 2024.