

# Executive Director's Report

## Submitted to the Executive Committee

### November 15, 2023

#### Arts & Culture

On October 11, Needham hosted a Public Forum to review the draft goals, strategies and actions for the **Needham Arts & Culture Action Plan**. Over the last year, the Arts & Culture Department has worked with Needham and a Cultural Planning Working Group, comprising town staff and 12 volunteers from local cultural organizations, to outline the vision and values for arts and culture in the community and develop the plan's recommendations. The final plan is organized around four goals: centralize Needham's arts and culture resources; strengthen Needham's arts and culture capacity and infrastructure; support Needham's cultural equity initiatives; and improve Needham's quality of life through arts and culture.



In October, the Arts & Culture Department released a [Draft Arts & Culture Concept Plan](#) examining the potential redevelopment of a decommissioned fire station in Revere's Beachmont neighborhood. On October 26, Link Logistics Real Estate presented a [\\$1 million donation to the City of Revere](#) toward community projects in Beachmont, \$450,000 of which the city has earmarked for redevelopment of the fire station. This funding will support essential repairs and abatement efforts needed to preserve the building, the first step presented in the Concept Plan.

As part of the **Regional Trails Creative Placemaking Project**, the Arts & Culture Department convened residents, town leaders, representatives from the MetroWest and MAGIC subregions, as well as state agencies and non-profit conservation groups, for creative placemaking workshops in Holliston on October 13 and in Acton on November 3. Staff from Arts & Culture and Transportation Departments as well as subregional coordinators for the two subregions, supported the two workshops. Thirty participants attended the Holliston workshop, with half representing communities in the MetroWest subregion. Approximately 18 participants attended the Acton workshop, with about a third representing the MAGIC subregion.

Conversations highlighted opportunities for artists to address challenges with connecting trails to adjacent commercial areas and promoting a greater sense of welcoming and belonging for the region's diverse communities. Participants engaged in creative activities, break out group discussions, mapping exercises and guided walks as they explored the pathways connecting commercial areas and trails. These workshops will inform a regional creative placemaking strategy for the trail network and calls for temporary art at demonstration project sites in Holliston and Acton in 2024.



In October and November, the Arts & Culture department, in partnership with the **Lex250 Commission**, convened a series of stakeholder meetings to inform a call for artists to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Lexington, which will be celebrated in April 2025. These convenings build on an initial stakeholder meeting held in August, where the team identified project advisors, technical advisors, and a selection panel. Arts & Culture staff met with project advisors in October and early November to identify the core vision and values for the monument. In addition, the team convened technical advisors to clarify the role they would play in reviewing artist concepts and conducted a site visit with Lexington Department of Public Works and the proposed landscape architect responsible for redesigning Belfry Park, the site designated for the art installation. The Call for Artists is scheduled to be released by the end of November. The final installation will be scheduled so that the monument can be unveiled for Patriots Day 2025.

## ***Clean Energy***

The Clean Energy team concluded its **Equity in Clean Energy Webinar series**. The series highlighted projects and individuals who have been working to place equity at the forefront of clean energy and climate planning and implementation work. These webinars were attended by hundreds of diverse participants and included the following topics: planning and implementation; resilience hubs; community engagement; and electric vehicles. Municipal staff, community groups, and other local leaders participated in shared learning and discussion about ways that clean energy and climate planning and programs can advance equity in their respective communities.

MAPC received a **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant** from EOEEA on behalf of the Metro Mayors Climate Taskforce — the first time an RPA received a regional MVP Action Grant. Clean Energy is leading the project, with support from Data Services and Land Use, to advance cool roof adoption within the 16 Metro Mayors communities to reduce urban heat island effect and lower summer energy usage in publicly owned buildings. Key tasks in this project include: 1) forming and facilitating an advisory group; 2) a landscape and market research assessment; 3) stakeholder and community engagement; 4) a cool roofs site suitability analysis; 5) a municipal procurement/funding model; and 6) template zoning ordinances.

The Clean Energy team has completed **Peabody's Net Zero Roadmap**, the final roadmap funded through an EEA Planning Assistance Grant that supported the development of four net zero roadmaps for communities served by municipal light plants (including Marblehead, Belmont, and Ipswich). Peabody's roadmap was developed through an extensive stakeholder engagement process and identified near- to medium-term actions

with the highest greenhouse gas emission reduction potential. The Clean Energy team will continue working with Peabody through the remainder of 2023 to develop a municipal energy reduction plan as part of achieving Green Communities designation.

## ***Communications***

MAPC earned media coverage of the Revere Apartment Wi-Fi project, which included being highlighted in the Boston Globe's Editorial "[Subsidized housing residents need better internet](#)" and [online](#) and [print](#) stories in the Revere Journal. Deputy Executive Director Lizzi Weyant also spoke to WBUR about the project.

I also had the opportunity to discuss the Healey-Driscoll Administration's Affordable Homes Act with Jim Braude and Margery Eagan on WGBH on Nov. 2.

MAPC's report, "The Increasing Threat of Stormwater Flooding in Greater Boston" received additional coverage by State House News and [NBC 10 Boston](#).

The latest edition of [MAPC Matters](#) was sent to our 12,000+ email subscriber list on November 9. The Communications Department is supporting several other key agency initiatives, such as the Racial Equity Advancement & Collaborative Hub (REACH), the recently concluded Indigenous Knowledge and Climate Resiliency online speaker series, and the upcoming "Homes for Profit" report release (Data Services provides more details below). Communications is heavily marketing the Nov. 30 webinar and anticipates strong media interest.

## ***Community Engagement***

The Community Engagement Department completed a series of briefings on the Draft Norfolk Master Plan vision and goals with the Norfolk Select Board, Small Business Association, and Council in Aging, and, furthermore, developed an online engagement platform for the draft vision and goals using Social Pinpoint. The team hosted two Language Access Roundtable Conversations, focused on the *Act Relative to Language Access & Inclusion* and individual community challenges/priorities related to Language Access. In addition, Community Engagement staff members testified at the hearing in support of the bill and its potential impact on municipal language access.

Through the Framingham Climate Action Plan (CAP), Community Engagement provided training sessions for CAP Liaisons and supported them in developing upcoming engagement events to hear from non-English speakers in Framingham. Community Engagement led a reflection session with the project team to assess equitable community engagement successes and barriers and to identify lessons learned for future projects through the Boston Urban Agriculture project. Additionally, Community Engagement completed Phase 1 of the Boston to Blue Hills Project, which aims to create a vision for a continuous greenway corridor between Mattapan and the Blue Hills.

## **Data Services**

### **Homes for Profit: Speculation and Investment in Greater Boston – Research Release Webinar**

On November 30, MAPC will release research examining the prevalence, characteristics, and spatial patterns of residential property speculation in Greater Boston. Our research finds that one in every five homes sold to an investor from 2004 – 2018, and that low-income urban communities of color experience the highest rates of investor activity. Investors are often able to buy properties at a discount using cash; they are more likely than non-investors to flip their properties and to make a significantly higher profit on flipped properties than non-investors. Our November 30 webinar will feature a presentation of this research and a panel discussion. Panelists will include an academic researcher and local experts representing tenant advocacy and community development, including MAPC Executive Committee member and Executive Director of Asian Community Development Corporation, Angie Liou. Register for the webinar [here](#).

### **Revere Rose and Pomona Apartment Wi-Fi launch event**

On November 1, in partnership with the Revere Housing Authority (RHA), the City of Revere, and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), the MAPC Digital Equity team hosted a successful community event in Revere, officially launching a broadband-speed Wi-Fi network for residents of 100 affordable housing units at the Rose and Pomona Street apartments. This project marks the first free broadband network installation for public housing as part of our statewide [apartment Wi-Fi program](#). The event program included Revere's Acting Mayor Keefe, Representative Giannino, MBI's Director of Programs (our former colleague) Josh Eichen, RHA's Executive Director Dean Harris, and a youth resident of Rose Pomona. It also resulted in earned media coverage, including in [the Boston Globe](#). The event, project, and program as a whole have involved significant cross collaboration among multiple departments including Data Services, Municipal Collaboration, Community Engagement, Communications, Government Affairs, and Legal. This team is just getting started on this multi-year effort, so we can expect many more free apartment Wi-Fi installations to come!

## **Environment**

### **Accelerating Climate Resilience Grants Awarded**

The FY24 Accelerating Climate Resilience (ACR) grant round received 36 proposals, totaling \$1,032,166 in requests, the highest volume of applications to date. The FY24 grant round will fund only one-year projects, to be implemented in January and completed by December 2024. Proposals received represent all MAPC subregions, and some applications were partnerships between communities across more than one subregion. Based on the technical review team's evaluation and recommendations, MAPC awarded \$329,600 to the following projects:

1. Boston: Building Climate Resilience Through Immersive Education and Training - \$45,000
2. Ipswich: Leveraging Rainwater Harvesting to Promote Accessible Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies - \$33,000
3. Hull: Cadish Avenue Resilience Project - \$50,000
4. Acton: Greening the Red House: A Living Example of Community and Climate Resilience - \$37,600
5. Cambridge: Community Center Resilience Hub Solar Panels - \$50,000
6. Chelsea: Urban Garden and Green Roof Design Pilot - \$15,000
7. Braintree: Watson Park Stormwater Retrofits - \$20,000
8. Hopkinton: HopPlanning for Climate - \$35,000
9. Wayland: Empowering Climate Resilience for Aging Residents in Wayland, Weston, Natick, Framingham and Ashland - \$44,000



## **MVP 2.0 (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness)**

Following the August announcement of awards by the Healey-Driscoll administration, the Environment staff has partnered with two of the 28 communities that received grant funds to pilot a new phase of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program, known as MVP 2.0. In collaboration with Public Health, the Environment team is working with Acton and Sudbury to enhance resilience in their communities. Municipal representatives and community liaisons will focus on the planning and implementing climate resiliency projects, with a particular emphasis on equity, priority populations, vulnerability, and community engagement. As part of these projects, we are developing a toolkit so that MAPC is prepared to assist other communities as the MVP 2.0 process becomes a requirement of MVP communities in the coming years.

## ***Government Affairs***

With the Healey-Driscoll Administration's release of *The Affordable Homes Act* in October, the Government Affairs team is hard at work to get the word out about the bill's tremendous provisions and begin advocacy on the priorities included. In addition to the bill's landmark \$4 billion in housing investments, more than double the total of previous housing bond bills, the bill includes several longtime MAPC policy priorities: a local option transfer fee, ADUs By-Right, inclusionary zoning by simple majority votes, eviction sealing, and more. With a first hearing before the Joint Committee on Housing expected later this year or early next, staff will focus on preparing robust panels to provide the perspective of municipalities and allied stakeholders at this and subsequent hearings, discussing the bill's provisions with key legislators, and ensuring residents throughout the region understand the consequence of the bill's provisions.

## ***Land Use***

### **Lynnfield Visioning Plan**

MAPC has been working with Lynnfield on a [visioning plan](#) that will provide the foundation for a future comprehensive plan. As part of the project, MAPC spent a morning at Lynnfield High School with town staff and planning board members talking with four classes of 10<sup>th</sup> grade social studies students about their vision for the future of Lynnfield. Students talked about the aspects of Lynnfield that they loved as well as the opportunities for improvement and learned about the importance of civic action. Their feedback will augment a community-wide survey and one-on-one conversations with town stakeholders to inform the goals and recommendations of the final visioning plan.

### **Application Submitted to HUD's Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) Grant Program**

MAPC, along with Boston, Everett, and Newton submitted an application to the [HUD PRO Housing](#) grant program on Nov. 6. If awarded, this will bring up to \$6M in funding to the MAPC region to research offsite construction/modular construction alternatives and potentially attract a new manufacturing facility to help us reach our housing production goals. Pending the grant award, MAPC anticipates expanding the list of partner municipalities to include Cambridge and other Inner Core communities.

The **Metro Mayors Housing Task Force** met on October 4 on the topic of communications to support housing advocacy. Outside speakers included staff from Abundant Housing Massachusetts, who presented on their coalition-building efforts in MBTA Communities and strategies for supporting grassroots advocacy. MAPC's Communication Department also gave a "Comms 101" overview and will begin working with municipalities to craft a communication strategy for the Task Force. In addition to its communications-related work, MAPC is also in the process of obtaining funding for two multi-municipal Task Force projects. One project involves better

connecting zoning with the built form. This project aims to identify the areas with the greatest zoning non-conformities in participating communities to target areas for upzoning and other changes. The other project involves establishing best practices for the acquisition and disposition of public land for affordable housing and creating a digital tool that assists municipalities, both within and outside the Task Force, with identifying suitable public land that could be utilized for affordable housing purposes.

### **Chelsea Fair Housing Plan**

MAPC has completed the draft Chelsea Fair Housing Plan and released the plan for public comment on November 8. The public comment period will be open through the end of November with an expected final release date before the end of the year.

### **South Acton Vision & Action Plan**

MAPC and Acton held an in-person open house workshop on the evening of October 3 for the South Acton Vision & Action Plan. The focus of this session was on zoning recommendations to enable Acton to comply with the MBTA Communities Requirement (Section 3A). Approximately 50 Acton residents attended.



### **Conferences in Boise and Phoenix**

I have recently returned from two conferences in the Western US. The National Association of Regional Councils met in Boise, where William Murdoch, Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and I presented on the housing work of our agencies. I focused on the implementation of the Section 3A Multi-Family Mandate for MBTA Communities. Both of us presented our plans to expand the Housing Working Group to all NARC members, with an initial virtual event in January and housing track at the next NARC conference next spring. The Housing Working Group started as an initiative of MAPC, MORPC, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in the DC region.

I also presented on the 3A program at RailVolution in Phoenix (the conference now goes by the title MPact, whatever that means). I shared the panel on “housing mandates” with colleagues from BART in the Bay Area, Futurewise in Seattle, and Up for Growth in DC.

The highlight of the trip were peer exchanges with the leaders and staff of the Wasatch Front Regional Council (Salt Lake City) and the Maricopa Association of Governments (Phoenix), and a discussion with two leaders of the Greater Nashville Regional Council (including Executive Director Michael Skipper, who is a CTPS alumnus!). I have brought back many lessons in topic areas as diverse as parking, housing, transit finance, the inclusion of indigenous populations, and volunteer programs for regional agencies.

## ***Municipal Collaboration***

### **Region 3 Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition**

MAPC staff, on behalf of the Region 3 local public health departments, held the first of four Equity Workshops on inclusion and planning, with a focus on the inequities associated with individuals with disabilities, the elderly population, and various ethnic groups in areas of emergency preparedness. The workshop included speakers from the Chelmsford Council on Aging, Lowell Community Health Center, North Shore Community Health Center, and a trainer from the New England ADA. Fifty-three local public health stakeholders attended.

### **Emergency Preparedness Practice**

On October 18, MAPC staff facilitated a tabletop exercise with Medford to test the recent updates made by the team to their Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Forty-six participants included staff from various municipal departments and partner agencies including Tufts University.

### **Procurement**

On November 3, Municipal Collaboration staff presented to the members of the Greater Boston Police Council (GBPC) at their annual meeting, giving an update on our contracts and the overall procurement program. At the meeting, we discussed the recent rebidding of the trucks procurement, which has been successfully evaluated and whose contracts are currently in process. We are looking ahead to our upcoming GBPC procurements for sweepers, as well as potentially medium and heavy duty construction equipment, as we have observed interest from other parties in participating in our program.

## ***Transportation***

### **MetroWest Trails Summit**

On October 26, staff held a bicycle and walking trails planning summit for the municipalities in the MetroWest Collaborative subregion. Seventy people participated, including Framingham Mayor Charles Sisitsky and numerous state legislators and other local officials. The summit focused on connecting existing regional trails via key gaps in Framingham, and developed a set of recommended next steps:

- Apply for a [Mass Trails Grant](#) (due Feb. 1) to hire a consultant/engineer to develop alternatives for a continuous trail/greenway corridor throughout Framingham between the Bruce Freeman Trail and Sherborn, focusing on locations that are not under CSX freight control.
- Prioritize better connected trails in South Framingham, the most significant environmental justice community in the region.
- Open to public access the Sudbury Aqueduct in South Framingham, and the Weston Aqueduct on the north side of Framingham.

### **Encore Casino Expansion**

In October, MAPC submitted comments on the proposed expansion of the Encore Casino in Everett as part of the project's environmental permitting process under MEPA. MAPC opposed Encore's Final Environmental Impact Review largely based on the amount of parking the casino wants to build, which far exceeds what a typical parking analysis recommends for the proposed mix of entertainment and gambling land uses. EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper agreed with our comments and is requiring Encore to conduct additional analysis.