

North Suburban Planning Council (NSPC) Work Plan, FY2025

Effective July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Introduction

This Work Plan outlines NSPC goals for FY2025 and a schedule of meeting topics and activities the Subregional Coordinators will undertake to improve NSPC's effectiveness.

NSPC is composed of eight towns and one city that have formed a voluntary association to facilitate cooperative regional planning. The goals of NSPC are to:

- Facilitate communication between communities through the participation of local officials involved with planning issues, in concert with MAPC representatives;
- Promote and seek opportunities for inter-municipal coordination and cooperation as well as regional collaboration;
- Assist participating communities in setting an agenda for action on planning topics including issues of growth management and land use, and other planning issues which, if thoughtfully addressed, will allow the region to retain its character and its desirability as a place to live and work;
- Educate participating communities of new and important issues in the planning field; and
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in planning processes.

Funding

NSPC work in FY 2025 is funded through two sources: funds from the Metropolitan Planning Organization to implement the annual Unified Planning Work Program and the annual assessment collected from its member municipalities.

Membership and Voting

NSPC is composed of the following municipalities: **Burlington, Lynnfield, North Reading, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn**. According to NSPC bylaws, each of the nine member municipalities may designate up to three representatives to NSPC:

- One shall be a member of the Select Board or City Council (in the case of a city) or a designee appointed by the Select Board or City Council.
- One shall be a member of the Planning Board or a designee appointed by the Planning Board.
- One shall be the municipality's representative to the MAPC Council or the MAPC Council Alternate.

NSPC representatives are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings. If a decision at a meeting requires a vote, each community has one vote. A quorum consists of NSPC representatives from a majority of the communities including the Subregional Coordinator(s) (6/10).

Subregion Participation

Identifying a diverse range of individuals and groups that can enrich the NSPC network through participation in subregional meetings, programs, and projects continues to be a priority. Assistance from the MAPC Executive Committee and NSPC members will be sought to identify these groups. The NSPC representatives from each community are responsible for assisting in outreach and helping to identify individuals within their own community who

might want to attend NSPC meetings, forums, and workshops when the meeting topic is applicable. NSPC representatives may want to invite participation from municipal planners, public works and engineering departments, public health, public safety, municipal boards and committees, chief elected officials, nonprofits, community-based organizations, citizens, businesses, and additional Select Board and Planning Board members who are not official NSPC representatives. Each member municipality is also encouraged to bring more than one representative to major forums and workshops. The Subregional Coordinator(s) will, from time to time, invite the participation of nearby regional planning agencies or subregions regarding meeting topics or subregion projects involving bordering communities.

Leadership and Staff

Francelis Morillo Suarez and Brandon Stanaway serve as the NSPC Subregional Coordinator(s). The Coordinator(s) shall schedule meetings; prepare agendas; organize forums and workshops; maintain the contact list outlined in Article III, Section 4; manage the subregion's budget; provide small-scale technical assistance to participating municipalities; implement subregional projects; support the development of project ideas; and provide regular correspondence regarding MAPC or subregional programs/projects, events, meetings, announcements, or funding opportunities.

A co-chair election was held at the June 11, 2024, meeting to elect new co-chairs. Jayne Wierzbicki, Wilmington, and Taylor Herman, Winchester will serve as the NSPC co-chairs for FY 2025.

The co-chairs shall share the following responsibilities: assist the Subregional Coordinators with the preparation of meeting agendas; facilitation of meetings; appointment of all sub-committees; ensuring that the Subregional Coordinators carry out Council directives; and represent the Council before other local, regional, or state agencies or organizations. Please reference the [NSPC Co-Chairs position description](#) for additional details.

The subregion has one designee to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Melisa Tintocalis, Economic Development Director for the Town of Burlington.

NSPC Bylaws

The NSPC Bylaws, which include additional details regarding the purpose of the subregion, officers, and elections, are available on the NSPC website at:

http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NSPC-Bylaws_Revised_November2012.pdf.

NSPC Goals and Program, FY 2025

NSPC will continue to serve as a forum providing members with:

- Timely notification and information on issues of importance
- A role in influencing MAPC policy positions
- A strong, united voice on issues of concern to communities
- Resources, tools, and best practices for including an equity lens to their work
- A forum for exchange of information between municipal officials

In particular, NSPC will

- Expand its network and contact base to include non-municipal representatives from non-profit, business, environmental, housing, education, and other community groups
- Advance racial equity by engaging diverse groups in local and subregional planning processes

- Collaboratively identify, recommend, and/or pursue studies or project opportunities involving multiple communities in the subregion;
- Build capacity and expertise in topic areas such as economic development, environmental and energy planning and policy, public health planning, among other topics; to respond to the pandemic and its impacts to public health, housing, the economy and other areas of need
- Monitor and comment on the [Boston Region MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan](#), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Ensure NSPC community representation at the MPO and participate in RTAC;
- Collaboratively identify, recommend, and/or pursue studies or project opportunities involving multiple communities in the subregion
- Work with the MAPC legislative team and the NSPC representative to the Legislative Committee to advance key legislative priorities
- Build capacity and expertise to adapt to the new reality communities face as our health care, economic, transportation systems have changed as a result of the global pandemic.

The NSPC Subregional Coordinators, in collaboration with the co-chairs and the membership, will engage in the following activities that are made possible by funding received from the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and assessment funds.

Outreach

NSPC strives to be a forum that is representative of and accountable to the municipalities we serve. While our core membership is municipal staff and volunteers serving on municipal boards and on the MAPC Council, the subregion is also committed to ensuring the participation of individuals who live and work in the subregion who are representative of the region's diversity in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, ability, professional background and other characteristics.

- 1.1 *Expanding subregion designees.* The Coordinators and Council members will work to expand participation in subregional meetings and events by revisiting the list of appointed designees and extending formal invitations to newly appointed members of Planning Boards and Select Boards.
- 1.2 *Outreach and engagement in the subregion.* The NSPC mailing list will continue to be broadened to include non-municipal representatives from non-profit, business, environmental, housing, education, and other community groups. To accomplish this, the Coordinators will work with MAPC Community Engagement staff to engage and maintain existing relationships as well as conduct targeted outreach to new contacts before each meeting, forum, or workshop to increase overall meeting attendance. The Coordinators will also draw on the resources of the Data Services department to better understand the demographics and other data points about the subregion. The subregional coordinators will also work with member municipalities this year to identify needs for specific planning assistance. Once these needs are identified, the coordinator will arrange for MAPC staff with expertise in these topic areas to meet with key municipal staff and discuss technical assistance opportunities.

Meetings, Workshops, and Forums

NSPC will aim to offer two meeting types in FY 2025: subregional meetings by topic, and workshops or forums. NSPC will hold a minimum of eight meetings in FY 2025.

- 2.1 *Topical meetings.* NSPC will continue to offer topical meetings on various planning topics.
- 2.2 *Special workshops or forums.* NSPC will offer at least one professional development workshop that will build the skills of our membership. NSPC will also hold at least one evening forum that may be cosponsored with another entity that aims to attract a new audience of volunteers who may serve on municipal boards and other interested individuals who can only attend night meetings.

Technical Assistance

3.1 *General technical assistance.* The Coordinators will offer small-scale technical assistance on an as-needed basis to member municipalities on topics related to MetroCommon goals and objectives. Support may include data collection and analysis, assistance with proposal writing, and collaborative project development. The Coordinators will prioritize assistance for projects that advance equity, subregional development, and preservation priorities identified through the NSPC Priority Mapping Project. The Coordinators will also aim to connect member municipalities with funding and technical assistance programs administered by MAPC and work with communities to develop and/or undertake projects that may be funded through a combination of MAPC and municipal resources. The Coordinators will also connect member municipalities with the work MAPC is doing and can support with post-project implementation questions.

Meeting Structure

All NSPC meetings are open to the general public. Official meeting notices are posted on the MAPC website. Meeting agendas are posted on the NSPC webpage of the MAPC website at www.mapc.org/nspc. Meeting materials will be kept on file at MAPC and posted on the MAPC website.

NSPC Meeting Schedule and Topics

Meetings will be held from **9:30 AM to 11:00 AM** on the second Thursday of the month unless circumstances require a change in meeting time, such as holidays or school vacations, or the group decides to change this meeting time. NSPC will hold a minimum of eight meetings during the FY 2025 year. No meetings will be held during the months of January, July, and August unless a time-sensitive matter arises that requires a meeting of the membership. Meetings that are scheduled outside of the normal meeting time are noted with an asterisk (*). Meetings for FY2025 will be hosted on Zoom, in-person, or hybrid as is the preference of NSPC members.

The chart below is a draft of ideas for FY2025 meetings. Locations marked with an asterisk are not confirmed.

Date	Location	Meeting Topic
July/August 2024	TBD*	Optional Site Visit
September 12, 2024	In-person or Via Zoom	Arts and Culture: explore doing a regional Arts and Culture trail & Shared Services + Regionalization Grant discussion
October 10, 2024	Via Zoom	Supporting Resilience-Focused Planning Efforts (with the MPO + Ipswich RWA) & Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding coordination and idea sharing
November 14, 2024	In-person	Economic Development: Addressing vacant store fronts & how to establish downtown organizations (such as a Business Improvement District or a Main Streets Organization)
December 12, 2024	Via Zoom	Clean Energy: Discuss potential for a regional procurement project (for bundled clean energy technology for residents with a focus on equitable program models)
February 13, 2025	Via Zoom	Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP) Program Community Presentation & Diversifying boards and committees in town
March 2025	In-person	Legislative Breakfast

Date	Location	Meeting Topic
April 10, 2025	Via Zoom	Housing: communications and messaging around zoning tools; Affordable housing governance models (e.g., trusts, commissions, authorities, etc.); Exploring the history of redlining and racially restrictive covenants in the subregion
April 2025	In-person*	Optional NSPC Volunteer Opportunity?
May 8, 2025	In-person	Transportation: Microtransit Opportunities
June 12, 2025	In-person*	Professional Development / Workshop Day

Note: Meeting dates, times, and topics are subject to change.

In addition to the topics outlined above, each meeting will strive to include the following content:

- Community Exchange: opportunity to share notable municipal achievements or updates. NSPC will have a group exchange as well as an informal presentation from each community regarding a specific topic of interest during the meetings identified in the chart above.
- Legislative update (quarterly): update on legal precedents pertaining to land use and updates on state legislation of note and information regarding advocacy for NSPC or MAPC legislative priorities
- Funding opportunities of interest

Process Benchmarks and Policy Outcomes

The NSPC Coordinators have identified the following Process Benchmarks and Policy Outcomes in order to track progress and outcomes.

Process Benchmarks

- 1) Engagement with a diversity of new contacts that reflect the economic, social and sectoral (e.g., public and private) characteristics of the NSPC subregion
- 2) At least 25 new contacts are added to the subregion mailing list
- 3) At least 15 individuals from the subregion attend each special workshop or forum
- 4) Expand NSPC membership from each municipality (newly hired planning staff, other planning adjacent staff who would benefit from participating)

Policy Outcomes

- 1) Increased collaboration of municipal, non-municipal and regional partners in the North Suburban subregion for smart growth planning projects
- 2) A coalition of representatives that support funding, activities, and legislative changes that advance implementation of MetroCommon
- 3) A consideration of the impacts the group's decisions have on the advancement of Regional Equity when decisions are made

Appendix A: Co-Chairs Position Description

North Suburban Planning Council (NSPC) Subregion Chair (x2)

Description

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) region consists of 101 municipalities in Eastern Massachusetts. Planning is local. One planner cannot know every intricacy of each community in the region. MAPC, therefore, broke down its region into subregions and connected its staff (Subregional Coordinators) to planners and policy makers in those subregions to better understand the planning challenges facing local communities. Broadly, the role of the Subregional Chair position is to elevate the needs, wants, and challenges of the subregion's members to the Subregional Coordinators so that those concerns can be integrated into the regional planning practices pursued by MAPC. They are to serve as an advisor to the group at large and to the Subregional Coordinators.

General Responsibilities

- Bring to the attention of the Subregional Coordinators topics of discussion, needs, and wants from planners in the subregion.
- Build connections with NSPC members outside of our regularly scheduled meetings to foster collaboration between the municipalities.
- Assist in identifying and fostering planning projects and research topics among NSPC's constituent communities for potential project assistance and grant funding (e.g., MAPC's [Technical Assistance Program](#)).
- Assist Subregional Coordinators and MAPC's Government Affairs Team in identifying discussion topics for the annual Legislative Breakfast.
- Assist Subregional Coordinators with an annual in-person workshop for NSPC Members, an optional evening forum, and a professional development day.
- Ensure that the Subregional Coordinators carry out Subregional Council directives.
- Represent the Subregional Council before other local, regional, or state agencies or organizations.
- Meet with the Subregional Coordinators ahead of monthly Subregional meetings to assist with the preparation of meeting topics, facilitation of the meeting, workshops, speakers, and agendas.
- Support the establishment of a consistent practice of integrating equity into community engagement and planning projects within the NSPC region in the same vein as the goals documented in MAPC's [REDIS statement](#), and in our [subregional workplan](#).

Term-Specific Goals/Responsibilities

- Assist with sourcing names and contacts of community-based organizations (CBOs) in the region and hold introductory and subsequent check-in meetings to build and maintain relationships with CBOs in the region.

- Identify potential planning areas that could benefit from a “shared services” model. Expand established shared services compacts.

Benefits

- Represent MAPC/the Subregion at regional events (e.g., MARPA) and/or in advocating for MAPC-supported policies (i.e., testifying at State House and/or Senate hearings/briefings).
- Further opportunities for networking with other planners in the MAPC region, such as through participation in the annual Subregional Co-Chairs Luncheon.
- Additional Professional Development opportunities; funds for pursuing PD from a list of approved PD courses/webinars.
- Priority given for opportunities to take on additional advocacy roles, such as participating on MAPC's Legislative Committee, an implementation committee or in other advisory capacities as they arise.

Time Commitment

Co-chairs are expected to spend, on average, 3.5 hours each month (in addition to the 1.5-hour monthly NSPC meeting) working to fulfill the goals and responsibilities outlined in the previous sections.

Duration

Individuals are elected to serve a **two-year** term beginning in February 2024 and terminating in February 2026. An election for the next term will be held in February 2026. According to our by-laws: “A person may only serve as Co-Chair for no more than two consecutive full terms (one full term is 2 years) and may only be re-elected or appointed to an office after spending one year out of office.”

Candidates for chair will be nominated by voting members (as defined in the Bylaws) via email one month prior to the election. Voting members may nominate themselves or other voting members. An election will be held at the subsequent NSPC Subregion monthly meeting. Votes will be cast by voting members present at the meeting. Each voting member will have two votes (since two chairs will be elected). Nominees receiving the first and second most votes will be elected as chairs.

If a chair is to vacate their seat during their term, nominations for a replacement will be solicited and an election held at the next NSPC Subregion monthly meeting.

Appendix B: Group Agreements

Proposed Group Agreements for our NSPC Community

- Listen deeply, be present
- Speak from your own experience; make “I” statements
- Step up, step back / take space, make space
- Permission to speak in “first draft”
 - Don't worry about having a fully thought-out response, you can speak in “first draft”
- Keep it here – Take the lessons, leave the names
- Use “oops” & “ouch”
- Define your acronyms
- Be willing to be uncomfortable
- Take care of yourself/access needs (body comfort, camera on/off)
 - If you have to get up and stretch, use the bathroom, if you feel you need a breather and want to step out of the room, etc. feel free to do so and take care of yourself
- Call in instead of call out
 - When we call someone “in” instead of calling them “out,” it may lead to deeper understanding. Resource here: [Call out & call in racism - Creative Equity Toolkit](#)

Any clarifying questions? Any new ones to add? We will finalize our community group agreements together.

Additional definitions below:

LISTEN DEEPLY	Listen for understanding, not to prepare your rebuttal. Don't interrupt people as they speak. Try to acknowledge what you've heard before going on to make another point. When you hear something that is different from your own thinking or analysis, accept the speaker's description of their experiences as real for them, even if you haven't experienced it or don't understand it.
MAKE "I" STATEMENTS	Speak from your own experience rather than speaking for others or about others, or generalizing your experience assuming it applies to others. Avoid statements like "Everyone knows that..." "We all feel that ..." or "We've all experienced ..."
STEP UP-STEP BACK	If you tend to talk early and often, challenge yourself to step back and make space for others. If you tend not to talk much, challenge yourself to jump in.
KEEP IT HERE	Exercise good judgment and respect if people share personal stories. Carry away what you learned without sharing who said what.
WE DON'T HAVE TO AGREE	When we disagree, challenge the statement or the behavior instead of the person. Avoid using blame, shame, and guilt on ourselves or others. Try saying "...yes AND..." rather than "...yes BUT..." to make space for different views to be heard.
USE "OOPS" & "OUCH"	We may say something without intending to harm or offend, but harm or offense might result anyway. Use these moments as teachable moments to highlight the difference between intent and impact.
BE WILLING TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE	Don't mistake discomfort for a lack of safety. It's possible to be safe and uncomfortable at the same time. Lean into the discomfort to see what you can learn.
EXPECT & ACCEPT A LACK OF CLOSURE	You might leave this training with more questions than answers, and that's okay. We won't be dismantling racism in a day, and we may not address all your areas of race-related problems or concerns. We encourage you to expect and accept a lack of closure, and keep an eye out for the seeds of questions, thoughts, ideas and connections that you might build upon in the future.

Resource from the [Fundamentals of Facilitation for Racial Justice Work](#)

Appendix C: MAPC Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement (REDIS)

MAPC RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT (“REDIS”)

MAPC RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT (“REDIS”), & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

MAPC’s agency mission, which includes smart growth and sustainability principles, strives to integrate racial equity and diversity lenses in its services, analyses and work products for municipal clients and partners.

MAPC integrates informative content to bring awareness to unintentional barriers to opportunities and resources. Oftentimes this includes but is not limited to regulatory constraints pertaining to zoning, housing options, and public transit services. These barriers can have a disproportionate impact on more vulnerable members of society as well as hamper the social and economic development of a community at large.

MAPC looks forward to **active** collaboration with its municipal project partners and stakeholders in its community outreach, meeting participation, and client review and approval of its work products. As part of the scope of work and planning project contract, MAPC finds it beneficial to highlight its mission statement as well as a succinct explanation of the equity and inclusion principles that will be referenced in its work.

MAPC MISSION

Our mission is to promote smart growth and regional collaboration. Our regional plan, MetroCommon 2050, guides our work as we engage the public in responsible stewardship of our region’s future.

We work toward sound municipal management, sustainable land use, protection of natural resources, efficient and affordable transportation, a diverse housing stock, public safety, economic development, clean energy, healthy communities, an informed public, and equity and opportunity among people of all backgrounds.

WHAT IS EQUITY?

Equity is the condition of fair and just inclusion into a society. Equity will exist when those who have been most marginalized have equal access to opportunities, power, participation and resources and all have avenues to safe, healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives. It requires restructuring deeply entrenched systems of privilege and oppression that have led to the uneven distribution of benefits and burdens over multiple generations.

Source: MetroCommon2050 Values

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The primary municipal project partner contact for the MUNICIPALITY agrees to provide support throughout the community planning process by:

- Proactively identifying and/or reaching out to a variety of internal and external stakeholders immediately after contract finalization and before the official project kick-off; and
- Striving for diversity and inclusion regarding advisory group/committee formation (if applicable) as well as with the overall community outreach and participation throughout the process. This includes not exclusively seeking nominations from existing community members who already serve on other committees, but also reaching out to a wide net of community organizations, and the general public and community at-large.
- The primary municipal project partner is aware that such themes regarding racial equity, diversity and inclusion may permeate the content of the planning process and ultimately the plan report goals and recommendations.

Acknowledgement

By signing this, I acknowledge my receipt and awareness of the statement.

Name – of Chief Executive of Municipal Project Partner/Client
Title & Community

Date: _____

Name – of Primary Project Contact – Municipal Project Partner/Client
Title & Community

Date: _____