

Executive Report
Submitted to the Executive Committee
September 18, 2024

Arts & Culture

On August 5, Lindsay Randall, Senior Regional Humanities Specialist, organized a walking tour of historic districts in the Town of Marblehead and the City of Salem as part of the [Marblehead Sustainable Heritage project](#). The tour, which included 27 participants, aimed to provide insight into the architectural and historical features of the historic districts, which will inform guidelines for integration of clean energy technology into buildings within Marblehead's Old and Historic Districts, while respecting and preserving the area's heritage. Participants explored historic buildings of both Marblehead and Salem, highlighting examples of both successful and challenging retrofitting practices. These examples help in understanding how sustainability efforts can be integrated with historical preservation. We thank Logan Casey, the Sustainability Coordinator for Marblehead; Patti Kelleher, the Preservation Planner for Salem; Stacy Kilb, the Sustainability Coordinator for Salem; and Larry Sprang, the Chair of the Historical Commission in Salem, for facilitating this exploration of Marblehead and Salem's historical homes. In the next phase of the project, MAPC will convene the Green Marblehead Implementation Committee and the Old and Historic Districts Commission to review initial findings on challenges and opportunities and solicit feedback to inform the development of guidelines.

On September 17, Annis Sengupta, Director of Arts and Culture, delivered a keynote speech to the *Plan NH* conference in Concord, NH. Titled, "Culture Shift: Why making space for arts and culture builds healthy, prosperous places."

Clean Energy

Electrify Everett

As part of the 2024 TAP program, MAPC awarded technical assistance to the City of Everett to support the design and implementation of the Electrify Everett program. Residents in Everett have participated in the Mass Save program at a lower rate per capita than neighboring municipalities despite many of these residents qualifying for income-based assistance than can deliver tens of thousands of dollars of energy upgrades at no cost. Led by the city in partnership with La Comunidad Inc. and several other local community-based organizations, Electrify Everett seeks to accelerate the adoption of building efficiency and heat pump retrofits in homes across the city by focusing on addressing the linguistic, cultural, and building ownership barriers that have prevented residents from accessing Mass Save. MAPC's prior support for Electrify Everett helped the City win a \$400,000 award from the U.S. Department of Energy's [Buildings Upgrade Prize](#). Since the beginning of MAPC's TAP-funded assistance, MAPC staff have delivered in-person training events for CBO and city staff, engaged with key stakeholders, and critically, provided analytical and application writing support for the City's Phase 2 submission to Buildings Up in September. If approved, this submission will unlock an additional \$400,000 to support the City and its CBO partner efforts. MAPC staff expects to transition technical assistance to further training CBO staff to educate residents on energy upgrades and program opportunities, conduct market analyses to identify areas within the city for focused outreach, and support development of educational materials.

Clean Energy Workforce Planning Grant

MAPC received a clean energy workforce planning grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC). In partnership with National Grid, Eversource, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and a green jobs workforce-focused community-based organization, the project team will research and plan for a training curriculum for new and current municipal energy and sustainability directors and managers. The new 3-year Mass Save plans include competitive grants to hire energy managers for municipalities who do not currently have staff. This workforce planning and training effort is designed to support these new staff members as they enter these positions next year and existing clean energy and sustainability staff working at the municipal level. The planning effort will last for 6-7 months, after which the project team anticipates applying for implementation funding from MassCEC to run the training program.

Reading Net Zero Action Plan

On Sunday, September 8th the Reading Net Zero Action Plan team participated in Reading's Fall Street Faire to gather input on the plan's strategies from the community. We did a dot voting activity, in which we asked people to choose their top one or two priorities from a list of eight strategies. We had a big poster board at the table and also walked around the Faire with clipboards to reach more people. Over 150 community members voted, and the most popular strategy was safe walking and biking infrastructure. We heard from so many community members about their current challenges related to infrastructure and energy and their visions for how to improve their community. In the next few months, the team will use this feedback, as well as input from the Community and Municipal Advisory Groups and the Reading Memorial High School Climate Club to refine the strategies, create "implementation blueprints" for the priority actions, and finalize the Net Zero Action Plan.



MAPC team (from left to right: Allie Shepard, Colleen Shortell, Francelis Morillo Suarez) tabling at the Reading Street Faire. Photo Credit: Genady Pilyavsky.

Community Engagement

The two Everett HPP Interns completed their summer program. They conducted three informational interviews with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), met with MAPC and City of Everett staff, and worked together to create a narrative summary of the HPP. The City and CBOs can use this to build awareness of housing issues in Everett and suggest approaches the City can take to mitigate the affordable housing crisis.

Data Services

Our Digital team launched two new Mass Broadband Institute funded projects to support the Cities of Beverly and Chelsea with digital equity planning activities under the “Charrette” service model. In the coming months MAPC will conduct workshops with municipal officials, community-based organization and residents impacted by the digital divide and author reports with recommendations for both cities.

Environment

Resilience and Flooding Bylaws

MAPC is providing technical assistance to Cohasset, Norwood, and Topsfield on bylaws and regulations focused on resilience and flooding. We have completed a draft update for Topsfield’s Floodplain Zoning Overlay District, which will bring the Town into compliance with a new state model bylaw required for all towns by 2025. After being reviewed by Town Counsel and the DCR Flood Management Program, the updated bylaw will be brought to Topsfield Town Meeting next Spring. Similar work is being done, together with the Land Use team, for Cohasset’s Floodplain Zoning Overlay District under an EEA Planning Grant, in order to ensure that the town is in compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The draft bylaw has been completed and reviewed by Town Counsel and DCR. It will be brought to a Special Town Meeting this December. We are also preparing updated site plan review regulations to address resilience for the Town of Norwood. This is an FY25 TAP project that kicked off last month.

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plans

MAPC recently completed draft 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plans for six towns: Essex, Hull, Littleton, Medway, Norwood, and Sharon. All plans have had their final public meetings, and the Hull, Littleton, and Medway plans have been submitted to MEMA. Based on FEMA’s review, MAPC revised the Hull plan and FEMA approved it on September 10. This is an important milestone for Hull, as the town has two major mitigation grants pending under FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program, \$11 million for Nantasket Beach and \$4 million for protection of the Wastewater Treatment Facility. Approval of these grants is contingent upon an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, as per FEMA’s regulations.

Updated plans for Marlborough and Norfolk that were previously submitted to FEMA have been approved, maintaining these communities’ eligibility for BRIC mitigation project grants.

Government Affairs

Firefighter Protections and Maternal Health legislation signed into law

The Governor signed legislation on August 15th banning certain toxic chemicals in firefighter personal protective equipment. The law was a piece of a larger PFAS protection bill that MAPC endorsed this session. On August 26th Governor Healey signed the Maternal Health Bill into law which expands access to Midwifery services, Birth Centers, Doulas and Mental Health services throughout the Commonwealth. Many of these policies were included within MetroCommon and the State of Equity Policy.

Land Use

Swampscott 2035 Comp Plan Update

The MAPC team led by Land Use has held two advisory group working sessions, completed a preliminary existing conditions summary, and a municipal tour over the summer. The Advisory Group will meet again to finalize survey questions that will be activated after a fall Public Visioning Forum.

Winchester HPP 2029 Update

The MAPC Land Use team recently completed a joint Planning and Select Board process update over the summer, as well as completed a comprehensive draft of Winchester's Housing Production Plan for review. The Advisory Group will be meeting in late September to finalize the HPP plan report before a final joint Planning Board/Select Board presentation.

3A Zoning Overlay Technical Assistance

MAPC has been providing technical assistance to the Town of Millis to create their 3A overlay district. The town hopes that the new overlay district will spur development on a blighted site in Town Center, as well as provide redevelopment opportunities of older building stock. MAPC is attending a Planning Board Public Hearing on September 10th, ahead of the Town taking action on the 3A proposal at their Fall Town Meeting on November 19th.

MAPC has also been providing technical assistance to the Town of Ipswich to create their 3A overlay district, which is focused on the historic, walkable, and mixed-use Town Center. The Planning Board held public hearings on the proposed zoning and voted unanimously to strongly endorse the zoning to the Select Board for the Fall Town Meeting warrant. The Select Board also held public hearings on the zoning and supported the zoning for the Fall Town Meeting warrant. Ipswich's Fall Town Meeting will be held on October 22.

I-90 Priority Mapping Project

We are working with the communities of Ashland, Framingham, Natick, Watertown, and Wellesley to identify important locations for future development and preservation. We have worked with municipal staff on identifying local priorities and are developing a regional land use suitability analysis to help refine and prioritize locations. An important aspect of this project will be working with local residents and community-based partners to further refine and inform the plan's recommendations.

Municipal Collaboration

Emergency Preparedness

On September 10, the Emergency Preparedness team presented the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) Emergency Preparedness Plan to the BHA Board of Commissioners. The plan established the

organizational framework for the activation of staff and management of BHA facilities in response to incidents or events that may have health and safety implications. The Emergency Preparedness team has worked directly with BHA staff over the last year to offer insight on how to increase resident preparedness, improve communication with various stakeholders, and how best to create a repertoire of recommended trainings and tracking documents so that staff is ready the next time an incident occurs.

Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council (NERAC)

Continuing its commitment to active shooter preparedness, NERAC funded another offering of the Active Attack Integrated Response (AAIR) course on August 19-20. A regional high school served as the training location, and attendees included Law Enforcement, Fire/EMS, and Communications/Dispatchers from 15 municipal agencies. Through classroom lessons, hands-on training, and practical scenarios, participants learned tactical emergency casualty care (TECC) medical skills to treat victims at the point of injury, and the framework for cooperative response in the form of rescue task forces.

Public Health

Cambridge Disability Access Project

In September, the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) and the Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD), in partnership with MAPC, successfully launched the Cambridge Health and Disability Access Workgroup.

This initiative brought together a diverse group of 10 stipended community members, reflecting Cambridge's tapestry of languages, ages, racial and ethnic identities, and experiences with disability. The recruitment process, which prioritized inclusivity and representation, was a multi-step process that included setting up language interpretation and CART services to support member's full participation in meetings.

To support this effort, the team developed an accessible, plain-language definition of disability. Created collaboratively with the Cambridge Language Justice Coordinator and Community Engagement Team Managers, this definition will be piloted in the CHII project and may serve as a model for city-wide use.

Funded by a multi-year [Community Health Inclusion Index \(CHII\) mini-grants](#), this diverse workgroup will meet regularly over the next year to identify and design changes that increase access to opportunities for healthy living and well-being for people with disabilities in Cambridge. This project represents a significant step forward in the city's ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and accessible community for all residents.

Older Adult Climate Corps

The public health team wrapped up a five-month climate resiliency project focused on older adults in three MetroWest municipalities. Nine older adults (pictured below), with connections to neighborhoods meeting Environmental Justice criteria, helped design outreach materials and then lead interviews and share information with their older adults in their communities. Our final meeting produced a number of action items, including items related to community building, communications, emergency preparedness, and home improvements, which will form the basis for the next phase happening this Fall 2024/Winter 2025 (preparing for next summer and this winter).



Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Plan

Last year, DSI requested organizational funds to cover staff’s participation in internal learning opportunities we call “Lunch and Learns”. Lunch and Learns aren’t new at MAPC, but popularity had dwindled down to a handful a year. Feedback suggested it was because staff had to attend on their own time. MAPC leadership responded by providing time for staff to attend lunch and learns and time for staff to organize them. DSI marketed the program, managed the calendar, and set minimum standards for presentations.

Lunch and Learns

Since announcing the funds in October of 2023, staff have completed 10 Lunch and Learns on a variety of topics. MAPC’s government affairs staff presented on the Immigrant Housing Crisis. We got a Primer on Preservation and Public History via a collaboration between our Land Use and Arts and Culture Team. Staff also brought in outside speakers. Barry Keppard invited Jenny Roe to discuss her work at the intersection of urban design and wellbeing and Josh Fiala asked David Gamble to talk about his book “Idea City” with us.

We are engaging departments and the Advisory Committee to receive feedback on the outcomes and strategies under the five strategic priorities. We have set up working groups to build out the “organizational investment” or internal changes MAPC should make to better position the agency to implement the new priorities. The internal changes include: becoming more proactive in project initiation and selection; undertaking more multi-municipal and regional projects; emphasizing a

greater attention to implementation activities; improving the internal charge code system; and realizing more equitable impacts from our project work.

Transportation

MEPA GHG and Climate Resilience Regulatory Update

The Transportation and Environment teams regularly review development proposals deemed to have regional impacts and provides recommendations for consistency with *MetroCommon 2050*, consistency with Complete Streets policies and design approaches, as well as impacts on the environment. The MEPA Office recently announced that it plans to update the [2010 MEPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy and Protocol](#) and the [2021 MEPA Interim Protocol on Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency](#) and that it is seeking early feedback on regulatory updates that include both adaptation and mitigation strategies as part of the MEPA review process.

The MAPC “MEPA team” (consisting of staff from both the Transportation and Environment departments) reviewed the conceptual ideas put forth by EOEAA and submitted a letter with our responses and suggestions for developing the new regulations, particularly as they pertain to greenhouse gas emissions, climate resilience, and using vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as a metric for sustainability. This is a rare opportunity to submit comments at a formative stage before the regs have been drafted, and we expect to weigh in again after the MEPA office issues their draft regulations this fall, with hopes of final policy updates in the winter or spring 2025.

South Weymouth Naval Air Station

In August, MAPC submitted comments on the revised development program for South Weymouth Naval Air Station in Abington, Rockland, and Weymouth. The plan includes the addition of 6,000 residential units and 2 million square feet of commercial space. MAPC’s comment letter focused on the need for the developer to create a mechanism for estimating and reducing parking and recommended reducing the mode share target for single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips. EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper agreed with our comments and is requiring the developer to adopt a higher non-SOV mode share to minimize trips generated by the project. She also called for a comprehensive parking analysis, and updates to parking policies to minimize parking demand and automobile use in the Final Supplemental Impact Report.

Burlington Mall Road Mobility Action Plan

Staff kicked off a planning study in September with the Town of Burlington, to create a Mobility Action Plan with a focus on bicycle and pedestrian access within and to the southern corner of Burlington (Route 3, Burlington Mall Road, I-95, and Route 3A) from other parts of Burlington and adjacent municipalities. The project centers around improving transportation and accessibility to jobs and future housing in a mixed-use village district to support rezoning and long-term redevelopment of the Burlington Mall area. The Plan will help ensure new residential and commercial developments provide accessible transportation options for all residents, visitors, employees, irrespective of socio-economic factors, with a focus on internal walking, cycling, and rolling connectivity.

Chelsea to Everett Greenway Connector

Staff Kicked off a planning study in September with the Cities of Everett and Chelsea to plan the extension of the Chelsea Greenway shared-use path from its current end point in Chelsea to connect to the Encore Casino and to the Northern Strand Trail in Everett. Having safe bicycle and pedestrian connections from Chelsea will help local employees at Encore connect to their jobs without driving

and contributing to local traffic congestion. Furthermore, some patrons may access the Casino on foot or cycling if there is a safer connection.

MAPC will use funding from the Mass Gaming Commission to procure the services of a consultant to conduct an alternatives analysis to identify a preferred alignment or routes from the end of the Chelsea Greenway at Chestnut Street in Chelsea to Broadway (Route 99) in Everett and on to the Northern Strand Trail. The final product will be a preferred alternative that has documented community support, a feasibility analyses, and cost estimate for a high-quality cycling facility that can increase cycling access to the Encore Casino for employees and patrons from Chelsea and points east of the Casino. This analysis and plan for a preferred alignment will be documented in a final PDF report available online via the MAPC website, with clear next steps that MAPC, Everett, Chelsea, and others can use to advance design and construction.

Human Resources

New Staff

Emma Koontz will be starting in September as our Council Engagement Specialist with the Community Engagement Department. Emma holds a bachelor's degree in Public Policy and Management from the University of Oregon. Emma comes to MAPC with previous experience in Community Engagement, and various internships involving community work, creative event planning and meeting facilitation.