

# MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

A publication of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association



American Planning Association  
Massachusetts Chapter

*Creating Great Communities for All*

Winter 2025

## 2024 APA-MA Planning Awards

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Cover: Lynn Greater Gateway Initiative, 2024 Student Project Award

## From the President



Happy New Year! The new year gives all an opportunity to reflect on last year, celebrate last year's achievements, and make plans to tackle this year's goals. We, as an organization, are doing the same! Thank you to all who joined us in Sturbridge to celebrate the 2024 APA-MA award winners. Read on to learn more about each of these exciting projects and individuals!

Since the last edition of our magazine, we hosted the SNEAPA Conference in Springfield. With almost 600 people in attendance, it was our largest conference since 2019! Thank you to the whole Conference Committee who organized this year's event!

**Cheers to a happy and healthy 2025!**

If you're interested in volunteering to help plan next year's conference in Newport, be in touch. We'll be convening a conference committee in the coming months and would love to have new people involved!

We continue to follow legislation on Beacon Hill and will work to advance good planning across the Commonwealth. Stay tuned for a revision to our spring AICP Preparation Course. Professional Development Officer Bill Nemser is completely revamping and expanding our course to provide additional support for future test takers. Keep an eye out for future communications about our upcoming movies and social events, kicking back up as we get into the depths of winter.

Cheers to a happy and healthy 2025! As always, be in touch with any questions, suggestions, or to volunteer with the chapter.

Alison

Alison LeFlore, AICP  
[president@apa-ma.org](mailto:president@apa-ma.org)

The APA Economic Development Division is seeking nominations for its **2025 Economic Development Planning awards program**. There are several categories, recognizing Best Practices, Planning & Implementation, and Innovation, as well as the Holzheimer Student Scholarship and the Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development award, honoring Don Hunter, who contributed a great deal of time and wisdom to APA, including serving as Chair of the Economic Development Division. Please review all categories as more have been added in the 2025 awards cycle, providing greater opportunity for deserving projects to be recognized. Nomination deadline is Friday, **January 31, 2025**.

# Guideline or Regulation?

## State's Highest Court Declares MBTA Communities Act Requirements Are Constitutional...But Unenforceable

by Amy Swesell, Esq.

**O**n January 8, 2024, the Supreme Judicial Court issued its decision in *Attorney General v. Town of Milton* (Docket No. SJC-13580) affirming the Attorney General's authority to enforce compliance with G.L. c. 40A, § 3A, commonly known as the "MBTA Communities Act," ("Act"). The Court found further that the compliance guidelines ("Guidelines") issued by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities ("EOHLC") to enforce the Act were not properly promulgated and are currently unenforceable.



### Factual Background

General Laws c. 40A, § 3A mandates that "MBTA Communities" adopt zoning amendments to create at least one zoning district of reasonable size that allows multi-family housing as-of-right. In February of 2024, registered voters of the Town of Milton, a "rapid transit community" under the Guidelines, rejected a change to the Town's zoning that had been approved by the Milton Town Meeting, which change would have brought the Town into compliance with the statute. The Attorney General brought suit against the Town to enforce the statute.

### Court's Decision

The Supreme Judicial Court reached three conclusions in its decision: (1) the Act is constitutional and does not violate the separation of powers by vesting power in an executive agency, EOHLC, to implement its provisions; (2) the Attorney General has the power to

enforce the Act and that the inclusion of certain financial penalties does not preclude the enforcement power of the Attorney General; and, (3) the "guidelines" issued by EOHLC constitute a "regulation" for purposes of the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, and EOHLC's failure to follow the statutory process for promulgating regulations renders the current Guidelines unenforceable.

### 1. Constitutionality

The Town of Milton argued that the Act was unconstitutional because it violated the separation of powers doctrine by impermissibly vesting EOHLC with the power to make fundamental policy decisions. The Court rejected this argument. The Court found instead that the Legislature, through enactment of the statute, made a fundamental policy decision regarding the creation of housing and, further, gave adequate direction for implementation of that policy through its description of the location and density of the mandated zoning district. Finally, the Court found that the statutory requirement that EOHLC work with three other state agencies to promulgate these "guidelines," and the right of an aggrieved party to seek judicial review, provide adequate safeguards against agency abuse of discretion.

### 2. Power of Attorney General

The Court also rejected Milton's argument that because the Act outlined specific consequences for non-compliance, ineligibility for certain grants and funding sources, and did not specifically grant the Attorney General specific enforcement powers, the Attorney General is unauthorized to enforce the Act. The Court found that the

*continued next page*



The Mattapan Line at Milton Station.

The decision of the Supreme Judicial Court upholds the constitutionality of the MBTA Communities Act. The decision also affirms the Attorney General's position that municipalities must comply with the Act. The Court also stated definitively that the Guidelines, in their present form, including the deadlines for compliance, are unenforceable.

Hutima (Wikimedia)

## Guideline or Regulation? *cont'd*

Attorney General has “broad powers to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth” and that the inclusion in the Act of specific penalties for noncompliance does not preclude enforcement by the Attorney General. The Court reasoned that to prevent the Attorney General from exercising her enforcement power would frustrate her ability to protect the public interest, here, increasing housing stock, thereby “converting a legislative mandate into a matter of fiscal choice.”

### 3. EOHLC Guidelines

Finally, the Court agreed with the Town that EOHLC’s failure to comply with the rule-making process set forth in G.L. c. 30A renders the Guidelines unenforceable. The Court rejected the Attorney General’s argument that EOHLC did not have to follow the G.L. c.30A procedure because the statute directs EOHLC to promulgate “guidelines” rather than “regulations.” The Court found that “[g]iven the breadth, detail, substance, and mandatory requirements of the [EO]HLC guidelines” the guidelines referenced in the statute constitute “regulations” for purposes of G.L. c.30A.

### Summary and Implications

The decision of the Supreme Judicial Court upholds the constitutionality of the MBTA Communities Act. The

decision also affirms the Attorney General’s position that municipalities must comply with the Act or (a) be subject to the penalties outlined in the Act, i.e., the loss of certain state funding, and/or (b) potential enforcement by the Attorney General through a suit for declaratory and injunctive relief. The Court also stated definitively that the Guidelines, in their present form, including the deadlines for compliance, are unenforceable.

It is anticipated that the EOHLC will move forward swiftly to promulgate enforceable regulations establishing new deadlines, and, based upon the history of this matter, that the Attorney General will seek to ensure compliance with the regulations. The decision did not address whether the framework EOHLC established by the Guidelines, to be promulgated as regulations under G.L. c.30A, is or will be consistent with the statutory authority of EOHLC under the Act. Further, the decision does not address the scope of the Attorney General’s enforcement authority beyond seeking declaratory or injunctive relief.

– Amy Kwesell, Esq. is a Shareholder of KP Law and the Chair of the Land Use Department. She represents municipalities before every level of the Massachusetts courts and various administrative agencies. Amy specializes in many land use matters including but not limited to the MBTA Zoning Act, zoning and subdivision law, conservation law and bylaws, and comprehensive permits.



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# APA-MA Annual Planning Awards

*The APA-MA awards recognize outstanding planning projects, individuals, and organizations across Massachusetts for significant contributions to the field of planning.*

## COMMUNITY OF THE YEAR AWARD

### Town of Medfield

The Town of Medfield has exhibited relentless and exemplary community planning techniques since acquiring the former Medfield State Hospital (MSH) property from the Commonwealth in 2014, which closed the facility in 2003. With the purchase of MSH, the Town accepted the challenge of re-purposing this scenic, historic National Register-listed former state hospital grounds overlooking the Charles River.

The Town spent four years working on the reuse master plan, an arduous endeavor which is truly paying off! The MSH Strategic Reuse Master Plan was recognized by APA-MA in 2018 and APA Small Towns and Rural Planning Division in 2019 because it represented the consensus vision for future land use at the state hospital with an active community core, including the campus chapel and nearby buildings to be converted into an arts and culture center with MBTA Communities-compliant multi-family residential. The plan calls for preserving public access and open space, preservation of as many of the historic buildings as is feasible, programming and uses that will draw town residents to the site, and limited development of new structures so as not to impact the overall character of the site and the town.

Medfield's dedication to the implementation of the Plan has been demonstrated in the following ways: passage of the enabling zoning bylaws in 2019, an informal

request for information process informing the future town solicitation which received two responses; one highlighting the value of good planning while not offering much money and one offering a lot of money for the demolition of the historic buildings. In deliberating the preferred response and ultimately overwhelmingly supporting the master plan-focused response, community leaders and voters signified a dedication to the values they spent years articulating.

The Town and the selected developer, Trinity Financial, continue to work as partners through the two-phased permitting process as having certain approvals assists the developer in securing financing and other funding to move towards the actual purchase of the property and construction; anticipated to begin in 2025.

We are impressed with this important work and the opportunity it presents and we are excited to present the 2024 APA-MA Community of the Year award to the Town of Medfield.



Worcester Now | Next

Over the course of two years, from early 2022 to early 2024, the Worcester Now | Next planning process engaged a wide variety of community members and stakeholders in the collective creation of a plan that could reflect the aspirations and needs of the Worcester community now and in the future. The City selected Utile, an urban planning and design firm based in Boston with a presence in Providence, to lead development of Worcester Now | Next. What resulted was a Comprehensive plan that reflects the City’s deep commitment to equity in the planning process by incorporating three key creative and innovative ideas.

The first idea was to take the time and work with partners to tell the story of redlining, urban renewal, and exclusionary zoning and the lingering spatial equity impacts on Worcester. This was a critical step to build community trust and ensure that the plan recommendations did not reinforce past harms due to a lack of awareness.

The second idea was to engage in City-wide scenario planning test-fitting where Utile used site and district scale to explore development feasibility and inform community decision making around development alternative.

The third idea was to engage and embed a local community organizer in order to ensure a strong foundation of trust in the process. To that end, Utile partnered with the City to bring in a local community organizer to broaden awareness and build trust and increase public participation beyond the “usual suspects.” Another focus was to ensure a bilingual process that allowed full participation among Worcester’s significant Spanish-speaking community. With the organizer on-board, the process was able to go beyond traditional public meetings and surveys to include many “pop-ups” at local events to help ensure that the plan was informed by widespread community identification of key issues, opportunities, and values.

Comprehensive and master plans are constantly evolving and incorporating novel approaches to encourage public participation and review of these plans; however, Worcester Now | Next goes beyond the usual engagement techniques and highlights the fundamental principle of equity in the planning process. This Plan serves as an example for other communities, projects, and planners to recognize that true community engagement includes the most marginalized voices and recognizes past harms with an eye to a more equitable future.

We are impressed with the important work that Worcester has undertaken to redefine and reimagine the role of community engagement in the planning process and to consider the lingering impacts of the past. For these reasons, we are excited to present the 2024 APA-MA Comprehensive Plan award to the City of Worcester.



**Guiding Principles**  
The guiding principles for Worcester Now | Next build directly from the Strategic Plan, Green Worcester Plan, and Cultural Plan in order to create a vibrant, thriving city with strong neighborhoods and opportunity for all.

- Equity** Being fair and just, via creating programs, programs, and projects that ensure equal opportunity for the alternative spread distribution of resources, opportunities, and impacts to our communities.
- Resilience** Building the capacity of physical and social systems to prevent, adapt, and thrive in the face of disruptive shocks and stresses, whether they are environmental, economic, or social.
- Innovation** Encouraging thoughtful new ideas, methods, or tools that solve a pressing problem through our community.
- Inclusion** Including, representing and making all groups, especially those who have historically been excluded based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, up-to.
- Integrity** Being honest, transparent, and accountable.

**Engagement in Numbers**

- Citywide Online Visioning Survey: 1,377 Participants, 1,241 Statements Submitted
- Public Visioning Workshops: 100+ Attendees, 765 Comments Submitted
- Visioning Listening Tour: 13 Community Event Pop-ups, 258+ Vision Cards, 3 Focus Groups
- Priority Goals Questionnaire: 1,030 Responses
- Public Draft Plan Workshops & Library Exhibit: 113+ Attendees, 50+ In-person Attendees, 63 Virtual Registrations, 150+ Written Comments, 2,026+ Recommendation Sticky Dot Votes

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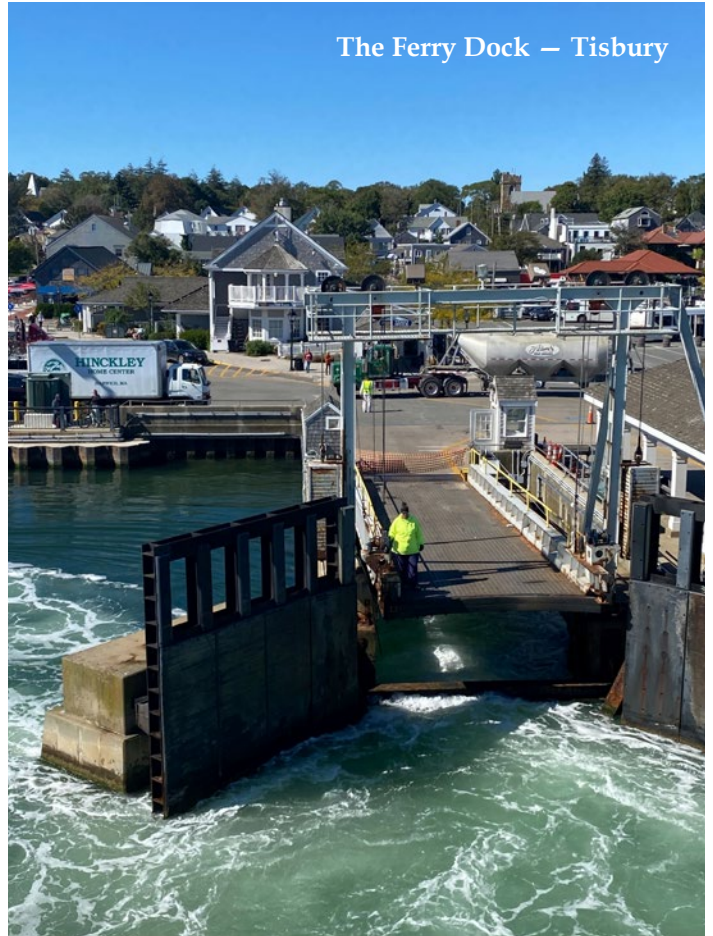
Town of Tisbury

The 2024 Tisbury Master Plan was the first ever comprehensive plan for the Town in its 350+ year history. The Master Plan incorporated creative and innovative ideas to address town governance, climate resilience, as well as housing and economic development opportunities in the commercial district areas.

In an exciting collaboration, the Town of Tisbury, Massachusetts, teamed up with a consultant team led by Barrett Planning Group to create its first-ever Town-Wide Master Plan. Supported by the Martha’s Vineyard Commission and led by a dynamic volunteer Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC), the project team engaged with the community by conducting outreach and interviews with town staff, officials, business owners, and both year-round and seasonal residents.

The scope of work included developing a community engagement plan, existing conditions report, identifying key issues and opportunities, recommendations, and an implementation action plan. The master plan process was done concurrently with the development of the commercial district vision plan, prepared by Dodson & Flinker, which helped inform and shape the master plan and many of the action items in the implementation program.

The Tisbury Master Plan demonstrates excellence of



The Ferry Dock — Tisbury

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thought, analysis, writing, and graphics by integrating insights from community engagement with comprehensive data analysis. It clearly outlines actionable steps to achieve the plan’s long-term goals and objectives. Visually engaging maps, charts, and photographs support the text and help communicate the key objectives and vision for the Town’s future. The plan balances in-depth research with accessible writing and includes graphics that support the text.

The Tisbury Master Plan provides a helpful example for other communities on how to begin addressing climate resilience, especially by making gradual changes that help waterfront areas adjust over time. It highlights the importance of planning ahead and taking small steps to protect vulnerable coastal zones.

The plan is to benefit the people in Tisbury by guiding changes to the town’s government and updating zoning bylaws. These changes aim to create a more responsive, effective governance structure and promote sustainable development that reflects the community’s needs and values.

For all of these reasons, we are excited to present the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Award to the Town of Tisbury.



## Gina-Louise Sciarra

City of Northampton Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra is a mayor that embraces planning and plan implementation, even when it requires hard political choices. Many of the plans were created during previous administration, but even then, the mayor committed to implementing and crediting those plans. Recognizing the importance of addressing climate change, she formed the Department of Climate Action and Project Administration to implement projects to address climate change in the City of Northampton. She authorized the \$3.1 million dollar purchase of a building for a community resilience hub to serve social equity and implement resiliency programs.

Mayor Sciarra didn't stop at addressing climate change. Her administration provided significant funding and surplus city land to



**Mayor Sciarra is a leader who values planning, community engagement, and action.**

advance affordable housing and implement the housing element of the Sustainable Northampton plan. Additionally, the mayor undertook a major project to convert Main Street from an auto-focused thoroughfare to a corridor that is safer for bicycles, pedestrians while activating sidewalks that encourage social connection and economic activity.

Mayor Sciarra is a leader who values planning, community engagement, and action. Her dedication to making Northampton a safer, more resilient community is a shining example of when good plans are put into action with bold leadership. We are proud to recognize Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra as the Elected Official of the Year in 2024.



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Sarah O'Brien

Sarah O'Brien, AICP, joined CMRPC in 2021, during her fifth-year master's program at Clark University in community development. Since joining CMRPC, Sarah has greatly surpassed management expectations for an early-career planner. Sarah has been instrumental in CMRPC's in-development regional comprehensive plan ("Imagine 2050"). Sarah coordinated and led a complex, regional-level community engagement campaign for Imagine 2050, working collaboratively with management-level staff, regional stakeholders, agency partners, and the broader CMRPC team. She undertook countless stakeholder interviews, tabled festivals, inspired youth she met along the way to explore the planning field, pounded pavement for survey responses, and herded a steering committee composed of senior practitioners and partners.

Sarah led all aspects of the outreach campaign, bringing contagious enthusiasm for planning and the public process to everyone she met. It was a tremendous success and greatly extended CMRPC's reach as a regional planning agency. Sarah continues to play a pivotal role



in Imagine 2050, co-leading staff planners through the development of chapters. Notably, she championed scenario planning as a component of the regional plan and co-organized CMRPC's inaugural exploratory scenario planning event. Subsequently, CMRPC began incorporating scenario planning into the municipal master planning process, which will greatly aid our communities in decision-making.

Sarah consistently demonstrates leadership and planning skills beyond her years. Her leadership and commitment to growth have been recognized through credentialing (AICP) and project management opportunities not typically afforded to early-career planners. Sarah is one of those planners who want to try everything. Recently, she put her big toe in the waters of Economic Development, and assisted the tiny Town of Millville on plans to redevelop an old mill.

While Sarah has a very bright career ahead of her, she has also shown a special dedication to bringing her peers along with her. Sarah has helped several CMRPC planners explore and approach AICP, serving as the agency's go-to staff resource. She would be the winner of the CMRPC Planning Spirit award if we had one. As a former stage manager, her organizational talents are engaged for numerous activities that build the special CMRPC team dynamic.

For all these reasons we are excited to present the 2024 Emerging Planner Award to Sarah O'Brien, AICP.

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Mark Favermann

Our Journalism & Communications Award this year recognizes the outstanding contributions made by Mark Favermann, founder of Favermann Design, a planning and urban design firm based in Boston. Mark has dedicated over five decades to promoting the unique characteristics and features of communities, trails, business areas, and urban corridors. A key part of this has been writing about and celebrating urbanism, architecture, the built environment, design and public art. Through numerous publications, Mark has published or posted several hundred articles about urban and rural issues and opportunities to make a difference.

His work not only informs public discourse but also engages readers with thoughtful, critical, and often humorous insights. Throughout his remarkable career, Mark has published hundreds of articles across a diverse array of esteemed publications, including:

- Massachusetts Planning magazine (APA-MA)
- Arts Fuse
- Boston Herald
- The Providence Journal and others

**Storefronts and Façades: The Secret Sauce of Personality of Place**  
by Mark Favermann

A storefront is the first point of contact as a shopper may have with a business and can strip a shopper's to the bone. It is a visual representation of a business and a key part of the business's identity. It is a visual representation of a business and a key part of the business's identity. It is a visual representation of a business and a key part of the business's identity.

**Public Art: Opportunity Lost and Found**  
by Mark Favermann

For many years, public art has been a topic of discussion in the planning and urban design community. It is a visual representation of a community and a key part of the community's identity. It is a visual representation of a community and a key part of the community's identity.

**Happy Birthday, Frederick Law Olmsted!**  
by Mark Favermann

This year, 2022, marks the 186th birthday of the landscape architect and urban planner Frederick Law Olmsted. He is a visual representation of a community and a key part of the community's identity. It is a visual representation of a community and a key part of the community's identity.



His articles and written work are notable for their:

- Sophisticated thinking on urban design, placemaking, and wayfinding issues
- Engaging narratives that put the reader into the place
- Commitment to improving community aesthetics and functionality

Since 2022, Mark has been a contributing columnist for the APA-MA quarterly magazine, adding a critical voice to discussions on urban design and planning

His work continues to inspire and elevate the conversation around urban planning and design. Join us in celebrating our Journalism & Communications Award recipient, Mark Favermann, for his contributions to our chapter and the Massachusetts planning community.

What could we create if we worked together?



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**LARGE CITY PLANNING PROJECT AWARD**

**Sustainable Landscape Guidebook with the Towns of Arlington, Stoneham and Winchester**

Through education and resource creation, the towns of Arlington, Stoneham, and Winchester teamed up with Kim Lundgren Associates and Bohler Engineering on a Sustainable Landscape Project to help owners manage their properties in environmentally sustainable ways, acknowledging that the landscaping practices we choose can have important impacts beyond mere aesthetics. A sustainable landscape can be beautiful without sacrificing those other important values. In fact, it can enhance them. The group highlighted three program priorities – nature-based solutions, climate convenings, and social resilience – which guided their work and led to great success.

The Handbook provides comprehensive yet user-friendly information on implementing sustainable

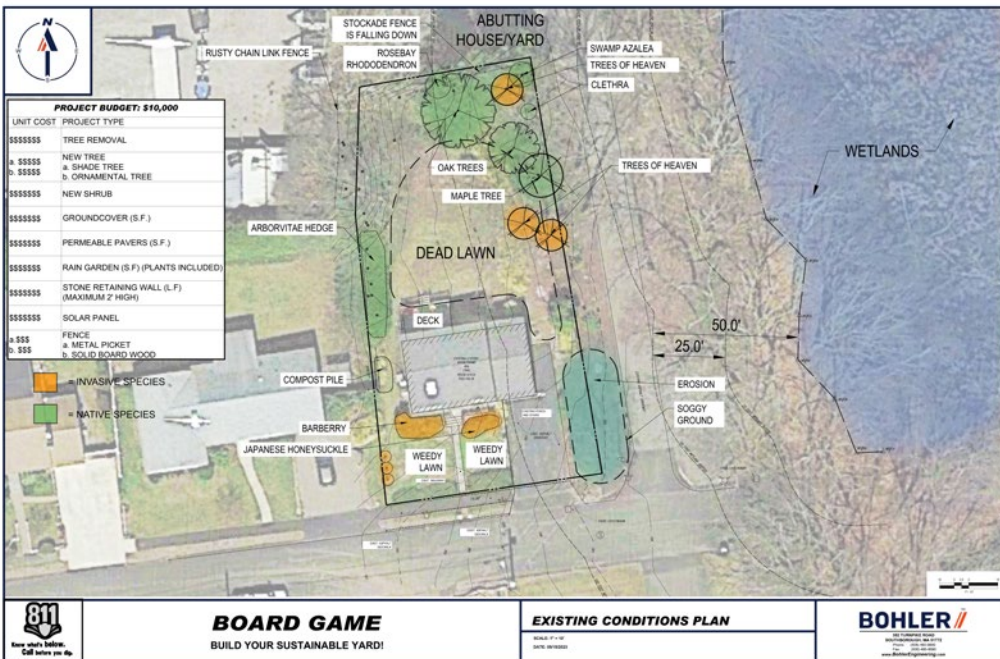
landscaping practices at home. It’s designed to help users design, implement, and maintain the landscape in a way that conserves water, takes the changing climate into account, and promotes the health of native habitats. The community engagement was designed intentionally and the variety of resources such as videos, presentations, guidebook in multiple languages created a solid foundation and path to wherever one is on their sustainable landscape journey.

It was important that all community members, regardless of socioeconomic status or English language proficiency, have access to tools to make their spaces more sustainable and a base of residents, renters, and other property owners who have been through training together and who stay in touch and offer advice and



support to each other as they work toward landscaping their properties in more sustainable ways. Through this type of collaboration, community members will become trusted partners to guide others toward greater resilience, not only on their properties and communities but in the region as a whole.

The planning principles observed in the Sustainable Landscape Handbook are commendable and innovative and we are pleased to present the 2024 APA-MA Large City Planning Project Award to the Towns of Arlington, Stoneham, and Winchester.

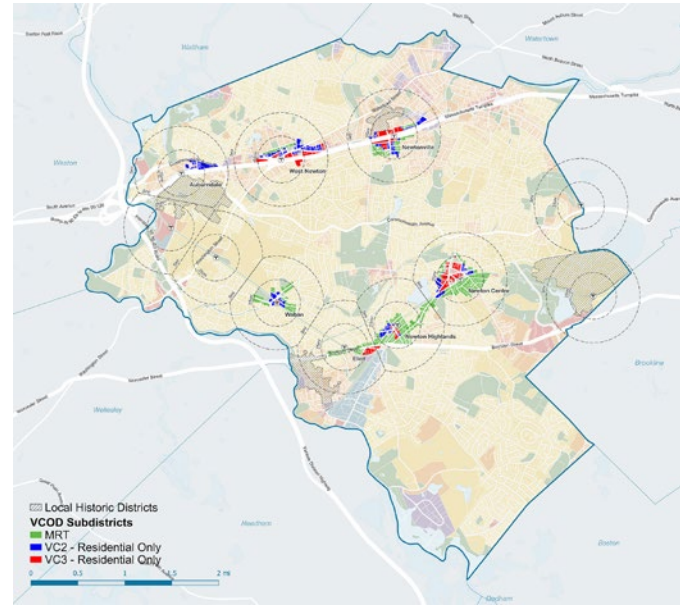




City of Newton

The 2024 Mid-Sized Community Plan of the Year is awarded to the City of Newton. The Zoning Redesign of its village centers is a momentous step forward for Newton, offering zoning that allows for the clustering of housing and commercial development opportunities close to transit, amenities, and community gathering spaces. Developed over a multi-year process with the City of Newton, and with economic development support from Landwise Advisors, the Newton Village Center Overlay District is an opt-in overlay district that permits the by-right development of multi-family housing near seven transit stations.

The Newton Village Center Overlay District is based on a light version of form based code. The code includes three primary factors: maximum building footprint, maximum building height, and rules for shaping the roof form to allow for a pitched occupiable half-story. The zoning is exemplary for its rigor in drawing multiple test-fit scenarios to understand the maximum possible outcome that could be produced. The plan serves as a model for what can be achieved through the adoption of form-based code and the kinds of projects that are attractive for developers as well as the greater community.



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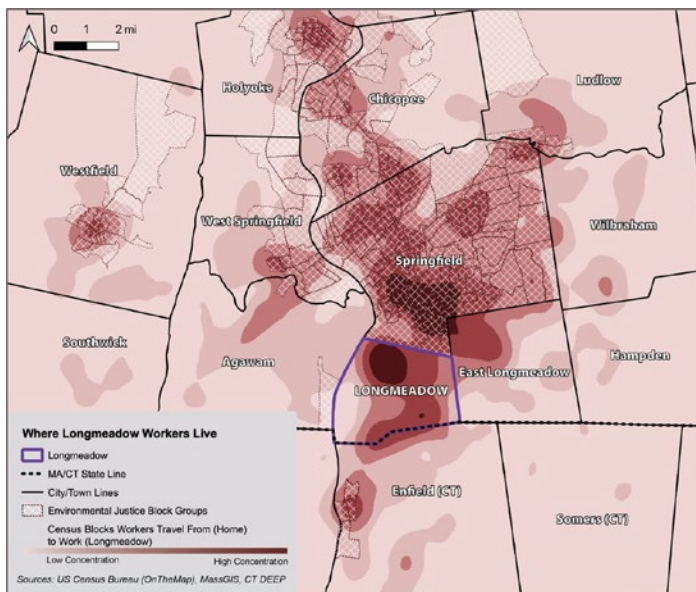
## Longmeadow 2024 Climate Resilient Long-Range Plan

The Longmeadow 2024 Climate Resilient Long-Range Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for the town's growth over the next 10 years, through a lens of climate resilience and social equity. The plan, supported by a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant, was adopted in June 2024 after two years of public process and extensive community involvement. The planning process was facilitated by an interdisciplinary team of consultants led by Barrett Planning Group, who relied on subcontractors BETA Group, Inc. and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for their expertise in climate planning and Age Friendly planning, respectively.

The Town of Longmeadow was committed to creative and innovative engagement methods, and contracted with Arts Integration Studio and Mass Audubon to implement arts and science-based outreach programming to draw attention to the Long Range Plan.

Locally, the planning process was guided by an 18-member Long Range Plan Steering Committee and the Assistant Town Manager/Director of Planning & Community Development, Corrin Meise-Munns.

While submitted under the Comprehensive Plan Category, we were impressed with the town's 2021,



Longmeadow voters approved a warrant article directing the Town to develop and implement a climate action and resilience plan, and to “consider climate change in all appropriate municipal decisions and planning processes” which led the Awards Committee to re-nominate the project under this category. Congratulations to the Town of Longmeadow on the APA-MA Small City Planning Project Award.



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**PRESIDENT'S AWARD**

**Alyssa Sandoval, AICP**

Alyssa Sandoval is Deputy Chief Planner for the City of Newton Planning & Development Department where she does great work, but she's receiving the President's Award for her service to our chapter this year as SNEAPA Co-Chair. Everyone is always surprised to hear that the SNEAPA Conference is fully volunteer organized. The three states work together, but the bulk of the effort organizing a 500-plus person conference lands on the host state. Alyssa began volunteering for the SNEAPA Conference Committee a few years ago, but this was her first time as the host state and she, thankfully, didn't quit when asked to co-chair the conference this year. Not only did she not quit, but she was also amazing! This year's conference would not have been the success it was without her tireless effort. She worked closely with the other state chairs and every single volunteer on the committee to keep conference planning on track. She was always the one following up, keeping track of everyone and everything. She made sure we didn't miss any details or deadlines. With her leadership, we hosted one of the largest SNEAPA conferences ever and were back at our pre-pandemic attendance. Thank you, Alyssa, for your dedication and effort. On to Newport!



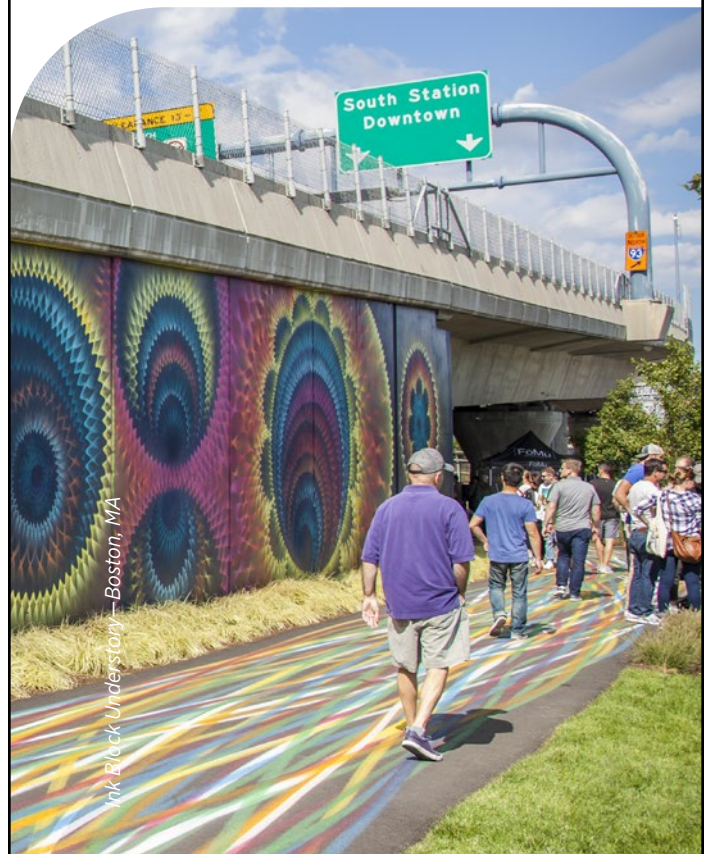
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**PROFESSIONAL PLANNER AWARD**

Jeff Speck, FAICP, FCNU, LEED-AP, HON. ASLA

Jeff Speck is a Brookline-based city planner who advocates internationally for more walkable cities. His 2012 book, *Walkable City*, is the best selling city-planning title written this century and has been translated into seven



languages. As Director of Design at the National Endowment for the Arts from 2003-2007, he presided over the Mayors' Institute on City Design and created the Governors' Institute on Community Design. Prior to his federal appointment, Speck spent ten years as Director of Town Planning at DPZ & Co., the principal firm behind the New Urbanism movement. From 2007-2023, he led Speck & Associates, a private design consultancy. Today, he serves as a founding partner of Speck Dempsey, an internationally recognized urban planning and design firm created with the single-minded goal of making walkable places. The firm has a wide range of projects completed or underway, including plans for downtown Lowell, Hyannis, and Bridgewater, among others.

In addition to *Walkable City*, Speck is the co-author, with Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, of *Suburban Nation*, which the *Wall Street Journal* calls "the urbanist's bible." He is also the writer of *The Smart Growth Manual and Walkable City Rules*. Speck has been named a fellow of both the American Institute of Certified Planners and the Congress for New Urbanism. In 2022, he received the Seaside Prize, whose former awardees include Jane Jacobs and Christopher Alexander. His TED talks and YouTube videos have been viewed more than six million times.

For all of these reasons it is our pleasure to present the 2024 Professional Planner Award to Jeff Speck.



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## Lynn: A Greater Gateway

Lynn: A Greater Gateway is a partnership between the City of Lynn's Planning Department and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Department of Urban Planning and Design. The project aimed to:

- Better understand and quantify the social and economic benefit that immigrants and refugees bring to Lynn.
- Take stock of how Lynn's built environment helps immigrants and refugees integrate and thrive.
- Make physical, policy-based, or programmatic recommendations aimed at making Lynn a better gateway city.

Students examined how planning could be used to help immigrants and refugees thrive through investments in housing, transportation, open space, and economic development. Students worked directly with Lynn residents, documented the outcome of the engagement process, conducted critical research, and made physical, policy-based, or programmatic recommendations aimed at making Lynn a greater gateway city. Students worked to get feedback from diverse groups via intercept studies, surveys in multiple languages, and focus groups. Key insights were distilled from hundreds of student conversations with residents, city officials, business owners, leaders of community-based organizations, and developers.

Based on this engagement, students focused on six main areas for analysis and planning action: housing, transportation, economic development, open space and

recreation, natural systems, and public facilities. From robust community engagement and the subsequent analysis, students identified vacant parcels and underutilized parking lots in the downtown, the waterfront area, and along major thoroughfares. They clarified problems with housing supply and fit, dangerous road conditions, and barriers stopping access to natural areas and parks.

Students generated topic-specific goals, strategies, and actions, which were further developed and presented as Requests for Proposals (RFPs). These included RFPs for the following:

- Developing housing over surface parking, municipally-owned infill lots, and the municipal golf course.
- Developing the 65-acre Gear Works site
- Improving wayfinding and mobility, establishing safer routes for all users, and ensuring that TOD is done in an equitable manner.
- Preparing ecological master plans for Lynn Woods and Lynn's beaches.
- Establishing a career incubator.
- Creating a new city branding identity.

The approaches to planning in Lynn that the students developed have applicability to dozens of similar cities within Massachusetts and elsewhere. This project provided a unique opportunity to explore issues around themes common to planning processes from the perspective of immigrants and refugees. The project illustrated a deep understanding of the challenge, as well as a deep understanding of the community context and aspirations.

[See the final report.](#)





## Somerville Climate Forward

The 2024 Sustainability and Resilience award recognizes the City of Somerville’s Office of Sustainability and Environment as well as their consultant team of ARUP, John Buldoc & Kim Lundgren, for their updated Community Climate Action Plan, Climate Forward.

The Climate Forward plan, published in 2024, sets forth a bold vision and implementable strategies that will help Somerville reach its carbon neutrality and reduction goals including the following key elements:

- Identifies key pathways for Somerville to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions
- Adaptation strategies to climate impacts
- Promote equity in climate action benefits

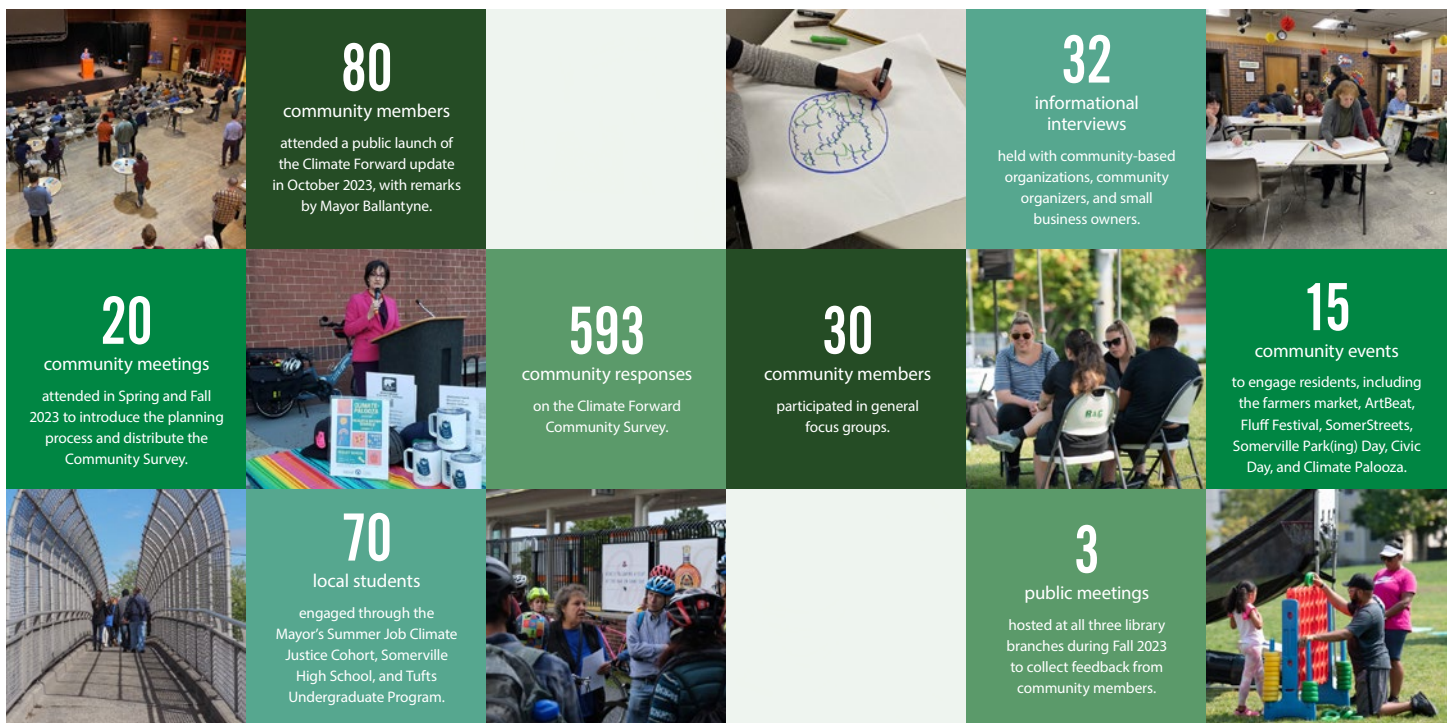
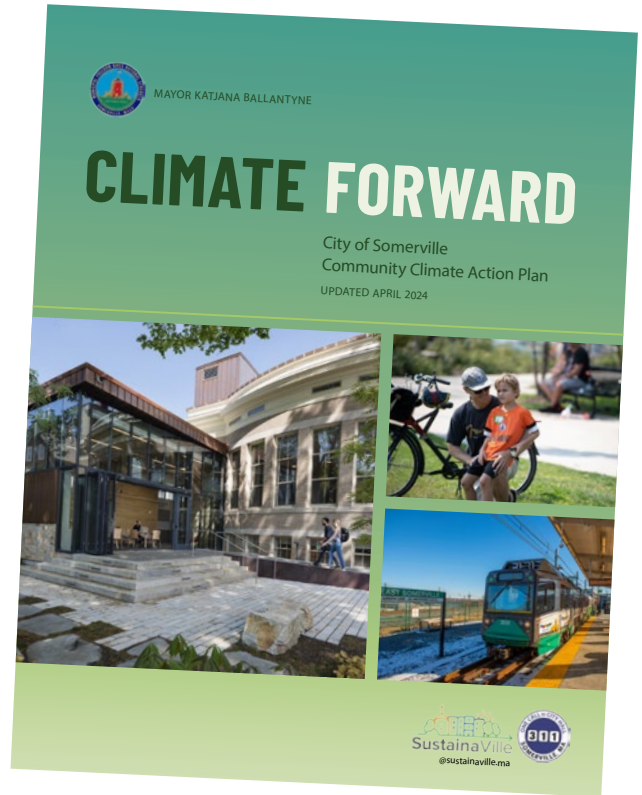
Key innovations include introducing Somerville’s first consumption-based emissions inventory, a Massachusetts first.

This update emphasizes broad community participation, featuring:

- 32 focus groups and extensive public events.
- A community survey with 593 responses in multiple languages.

The plan outlines 77 actionable items for implementation through 2035, supported by Climate Forward Task Forces to ensure accountability and transparency.

In summary, Climate Forward 2024 exemplifies a comprehensive and innovative approach to sustainability. This award celebrates the City of Somerville’s commitment to a resilient future.



MBTA

In 2021 the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and MBTA launched the Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis to explore the feasibility and utility of various corridor and service options to extend the Silver Line 3 from its current terminus in Chelsea through Everett and on to Somerville, Cambridge and/or Boston.

Over the course of approximately two years, MassDOT and the MBTA, partnering with a consultant team lead by Nelson\Nygaard, analyzed dozens of potential operational and corridor alignment options against a discrete set of goals and objectives, developed in concert with a Working Group of municipal and advocacy partners and the general public.

The planning process evaluated several alignment alternatives through an iterative process to identify the preferred alignment that would best connect the communities served by the extension. Shortly after completing the plan, the MBTA successfully won a \$22 million dollar RAISE grant to implement the Silver Line Extension. When fully implemented, the project will nearly double daily ridership and reduce delays through the corridor by 95%.



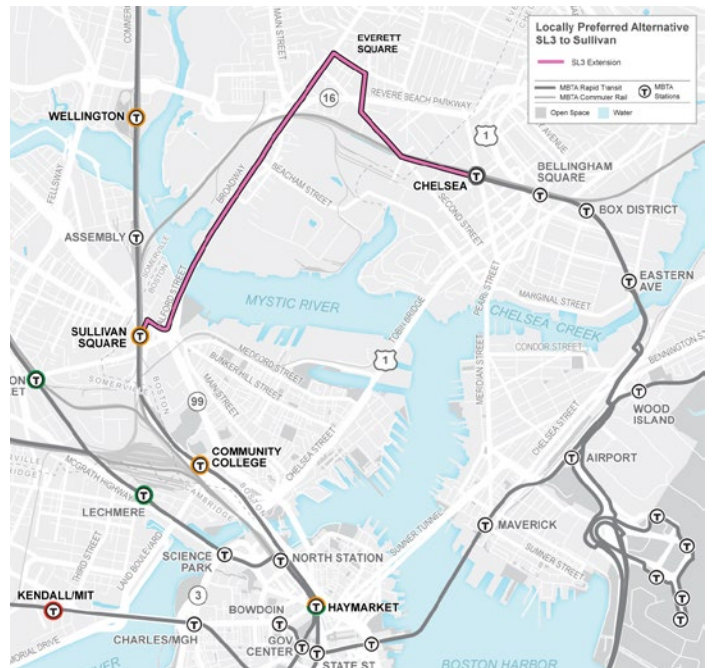
The level of investment planned for the lower Broadway corridor and other segments of the SL3 extension alignment would not have been possible without the consensus and support developed by the Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis. For their dedication to advancing an important transportation project, we are proud to present the 2024 Transportation Plan Award to the MBTA.

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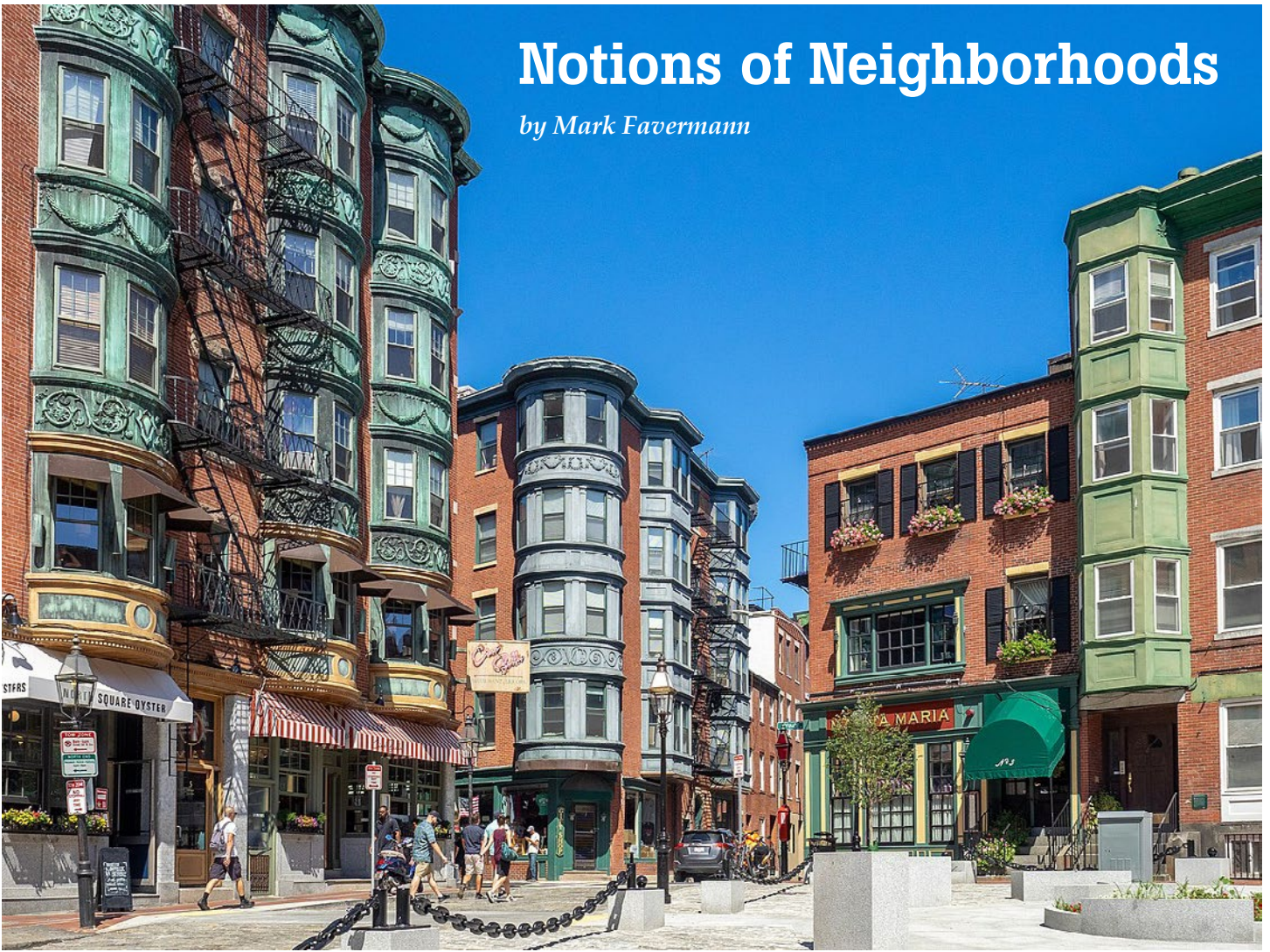
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# Notions of Neighborhoods

by Mark Favermann



Boston's North End

Like nostalgia, today's neighborhoods are certainly not what they used to be. First, the two terms, "community" and "neighborhood," are often used interchangeably, yet they have distinct meanings. An individual *neighborhood* is a physical space where people live, while a *community* is a social and often economic construct that converges on the connections and relationships among people.

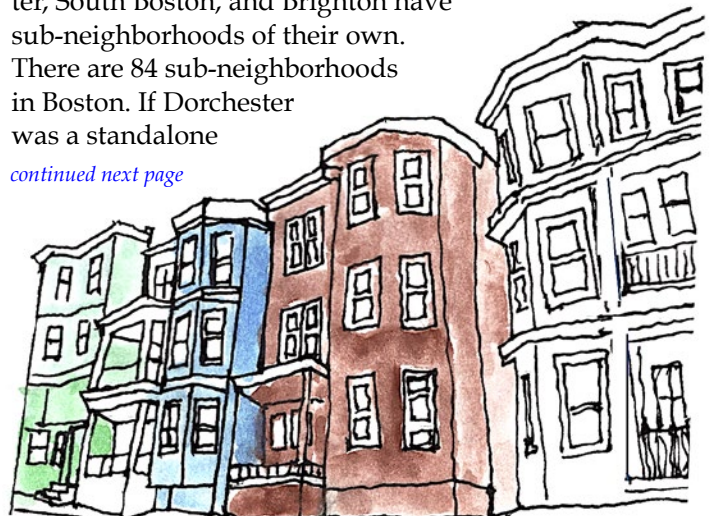
Traditional neighborhoods shared distinctive physical features, such as streets, parks and playgrounds, local shops, family-owned restaurants, local bars, a multitude of convenient services, and neighborhood schools. With fewer cars in urban areas, walkability was a given. Only kids and eccentric adults rode bikes. The neighborhoods with the most character and personality contained a unique essence or even a secret sauce. These connections were what resulted in community.

In a meaningful way, neighborhood is about memory – both past and present as well as the good, bad and sometimes ugly. Wrapped in shared traditions, experience, and structural scale, neighborhoods in our recollections are part sight, touch, taste and even smell. Actually, the good old days were not so wonderful, but they had

their moments and even resonate a past-perfect familiar embrace. So how have neighborhoods changed today?

Looking around the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, neighborhoods are everywhere. The City of Boston has 23 "neighborhoods." Some of these were separate adjacent towns that overtime were integrated into the city's administration. The largest like Dorchester, South Boston, and Brighton have sub-neighborhoods of their own. There are 84 sub-neighborhoods in Boston. If Dorchester was a standalone

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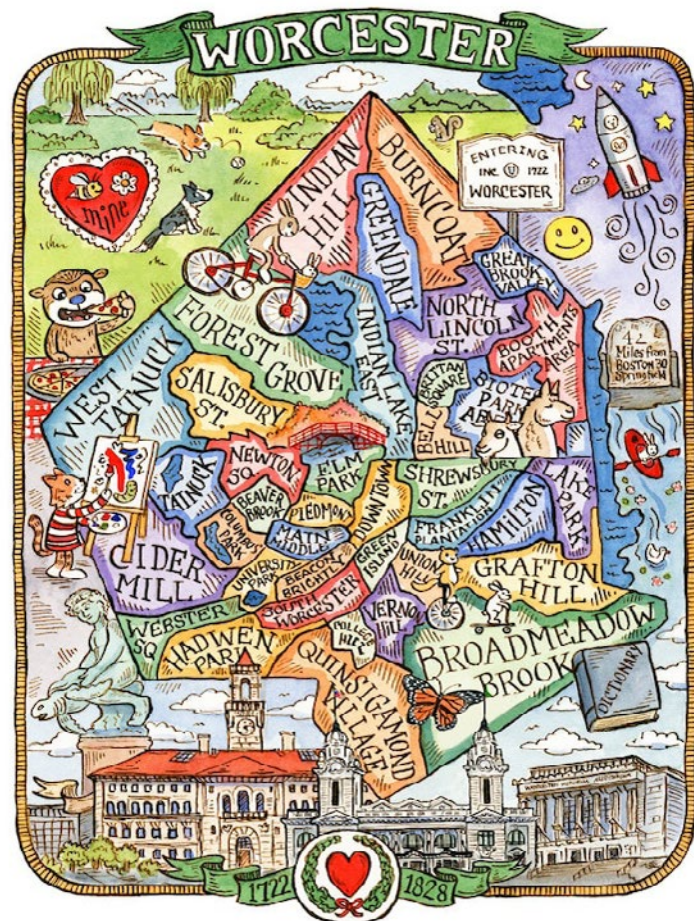
Mark Favermann



city, it would be slightly larger than Cambridge and the eighth largest in New England.

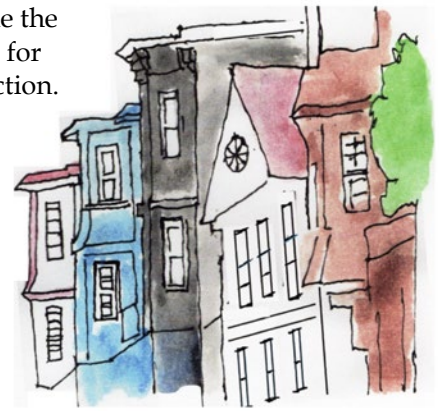
The City of Cambridge is composed of thirteen well defined neighborhoods, each with a separate identity and often demographic and economic differentiations. The City of Worcester has 16 individual neighborhoods. The City of Newton has 13 “villages” that could be considered neighborhoods. Other neighborhoods like in the City of Somerville were designated by their adjoining “squares.” Teele, Davis, Union, Ball and Magoun are 5 of their 14. The City of Pittsfield has 11 associated neighborhoods. The City of Northampton has eight. Fitchburg has seven. And somewhat surprisingly, the small peninsula Town of Hull claims anywhere from 12 to 16 neighborhoods depending on the source.

After World War II, the notion of old neighborhood was destructively, often negatively “modernized,” and strategically sanitized by being torn down and somehow redeveloped for “public housing” projects or private developments. The results were most often flawed and deficient. Due to the ease of federal funding in the early 1950’s and 60’s and formidable local municipal oversight, neighborhood arguments had no bearing on the outcomes. The definition of what could be torn down usually was selectively labeled as “a slum.” This action was unambiguously local politically self-defining and invariably Federally blessed. Thus, Boston’s West End



Neighborhood became the national poster image for neighborhood destruction.

In Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the author (aka the “Godmother of Gentrification and Unintended Consequences”), championed her beloved Lower Manhattan’s



Mark Faerman

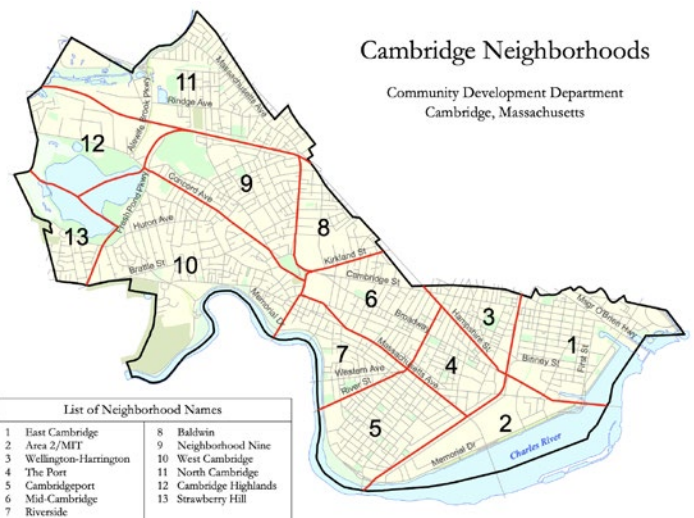
Greenwich Village neighborhood. Her cause was righteous, and she first publicly voiced the unspoken desire to save the best aspects of local neighborhoods.

However, the resulting long-term consequence was that these physical as well as ambient aspects (including the hotdog wagon, shaved ice vendor, and the itinerant street artist) were more appealing to the better educated and more sophisticated rather than the working-class local residents who were just happy to have a roof over their heads, pay their bills and eat regularly.

Over the last 75 years or so, suburbanization became pathological. It caused many metropolitan area maladies: the GI Bill granted easier mortgages to returning veterans allowing purchasing of housing in nonspecific subdivisions; restrictive home sales and purchases were fostered by redlining by financial institutions in certain older neighborhoods; regional concrete box shopping malls destroyed locally owned businesses; and low-density restrictions did not allow for meeting the demands of a growing population. Additionally, expanded roads allowing for a swollen car culture underscored by suburban sprawl led to generational shifts in behavior by the parents of Baby Boomers and later the now retiring Boomers themselves.

With all these as context, an intensifying middle and professional class participated in a major exodus from the inner cities for more suburban communities – yes, for

*continued next page*





**Notions of Neighborhoods** *cont'd*

the house with white picket fence syndrome, perceived safety, and a better school system. Quickly, homogenization prevailed. Often racially segregated, suburban neighborhoods seemed to be a function of class, ethnicity and housing prices. Yet, counterintuitively, today suburbs are becoming more urbanized but not necessarily in the best ways.

With the realization of exorbitant cost of urban and suburban housing rental and ownership, a few efforts are now being strategically made to correct the situation a bit. A major Massachusetts homebred partial solution is the MBTA Communities Law that mandates that towns and cities serviced by the "T" approve and build multifamily housing districts creating more affordable accessible housing.

Add to this neighborhood algorithm fluctuations in the economy, dropping birth rates but greater demand for housing, inflation Covid-19 and other healthcare concerns, climate change, greater individual isolation due to working from home, digital overreliance, and other factors like play dates rather than just playing outside and mounting private daycare costs.

Not without controversy, there are many questions connected to this law including: *Will the newcomers be*

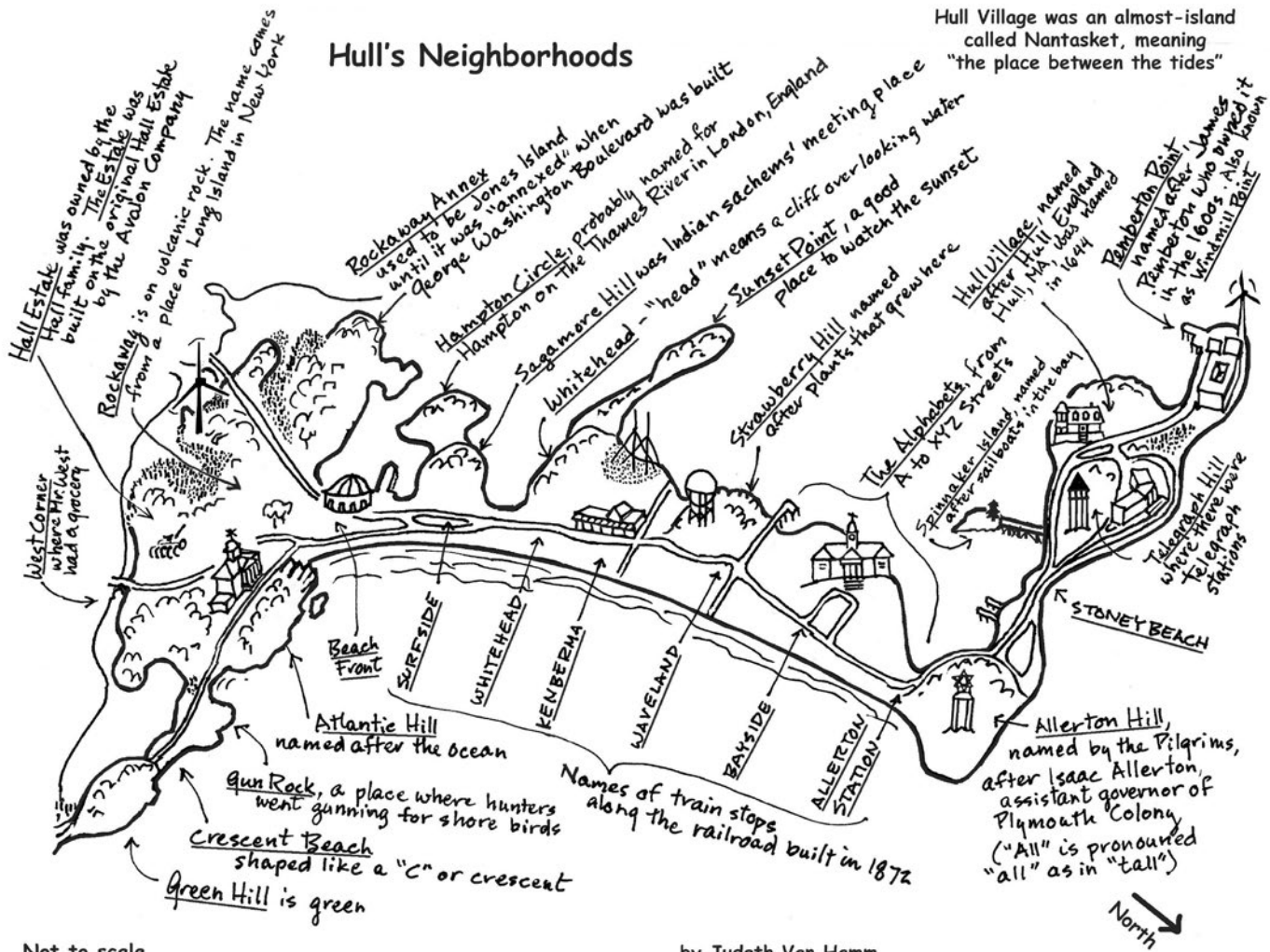


Somerville

*welcomed? Will social justice and diversity properly be served? Will new neighborhoods be created and reinforced by the process?*

But perhaps there are a few positive directions in these problems? Directions have been suggested by less local use of autos, more walking and biking, greener and more sustainable focus on energy and recycling, public daycare like in Cambridge, mixed-use new development with ground floor commercial tenants and residents above like in Brookline.

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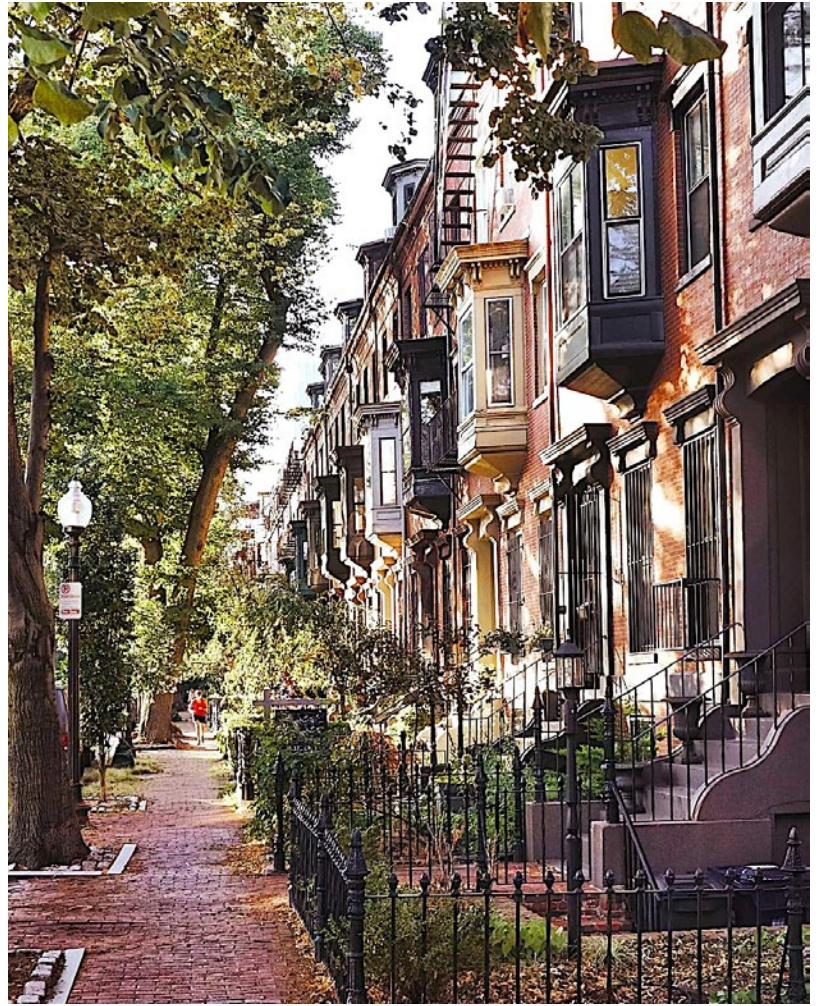


Additionally, there has been deepened concern for more affordable healthcare and prescription pricing, Massachusetts Cultural Council designated Cultural Districts to enhance participation and appreciation in the arts. Underscore all this with the acknowledgement of the need for greater citizen participation in public issues, and a different approach emerges to create new forms of neighborhoods cloaked in cooperative and collaborating communities.

Living in the 21st century, we continue to meet challenges. We are nothing if not resilient and intuitively work at sustainability. The future of neighborhoods is somewhat clear: they will be certainly different. With strategic community effort, they can hopefully be better.

—Mark Favermann is principal of Boston-based Favermann Design, a creative urban design and planning practice involved in community branding, wayfinding, strategic placemaking, storefront and façade enhancement, beautiful and functional streetscapes, and compelling public art. He is a noted writer/critic, speaker and sculptor.

Right: Boston's South End.  
Below: West End.





# The Carol Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund Awards

The Massachusetts Chapter of APA has established a scholarship fund in honor of the memory of Carol Thomas, FAICP. Initially, the fund will be used to mentor students and emerging planners by awarding scholarships to attend the Southern New England APA (SNEAPA) Conference. Carol Thomas taught planning courses at both the University of Rhode Island and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She was an ardent mentor to so many students and emerging planners and strongly believed in the value of students and young planners attending and networking at conferences.

As the fund grows, scholarships may also be awarded to attend the APA National Planning Conference, to provide scholarships to students enrolled in a university planning program of study, or for other uses that would advance the planning profession that Carol so nobly represented. A committee made up from the APA-MA membership will oversee the fund.

We are very pleased to have made the following awards to these students to attend the 2024 SNEAPA conference held in Springfield!

## Amelia Lavalley

*University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst*

Each year, professionals of planning, or planning-related disciplines from across Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island assemble at the Southern New England American Planning Association (SNEAPA) Conference. The host municipality provides a space for attendees to showcase their most recent professional and/or academic projects, provide training on a myriad of topics and/or certifications, boost collaboration and networking with regional colleagues, and celebrate accomplishments in planning across southern New England. This year, the conference was held in Springfield, Massachusetts, an epicenter for emerging planners and tenured professionals alike. As a graduate student of regional planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, I was eager to attend and immerse myself in planning history, practice, tools and techniques, and the experiences of local planners.

As a former intern and interim staff member of a municipal planning office, I have a great interest in what I refer to as “boots on the ground planning.” This means planning in practice, duties of the public servant, municipal planning politics, and learning from those whose



offices are found in a City Hall. These interests led me to attend the “Out of the Frying P(l)an and into the Fire: Implementing the Comprehensive Plan with Gusto!” afternoon session on the first day of the conference. Here, four municipal planners representing Bridgeport, Connecticut; Brockton, Massachusetts; Westborough, Massachusetts, and Woonsocket, Rhode Island shared their divergent experiences developing, implementing, and evaluating the successes (and occasional failures) of their respective cities’ comprehensive plan update.

The four presenters shared their experiences with long-term planning initiatives, such as creating and implementing the comprehensive plan. Unsurprisingly, each planner utilized different techniques to develop and execute the plan’s goals, policies, and actions depending upon their tenure with the municipality, levels of community buy-in, administrative support, staff size and other variables. I have developed the following graphical depiction of the similarities and differences identified in the comprehensive planning process by municipal planners from different areas across the region.

Each presenter discussed their city’s long-term planning processes, covering topics like regulatory requirements, challenges, inter-departmental collaboration, accountability, and implementation strategies. They also addressed questions about community involvement, tracking progress, and future updates. Despite differing experiences, all agreed on the importance of community buy-in, momentum for implementation, inter-departmental support, and that the “community must champion the plan.” The four municipalities, differing in population size, income, demographics, and location, vary in staff capacity, political support, funding, and community interest, but are all led by community-focused leaders and planning experts.

Attending this session provided a valuable learning experience, offering the opportunity to hear planners from CT, MA, and RI discuss the comprehensive planning process. It was particularly insightful to explore their distinct approaches to plan development, implementation, and public engagement strategies in consideration of existing obstacles. I was especially struck by the following quote by Rob May, Director of Planning and Economic Development for Brockton, MA, regarding the importance of developing a strong community vision and associated long-term planning document for your own community: “The comprehensive plan is the overarching aperture on which everything else is hung.” In other words, the comprehensive plan and its accompanying elements are the basis of community, both the physical conditions of community, and the economic and social

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## Scholarship Awards *cont'd*

as well. To conclude, this session not only deepened my understanding of the comprehensive planning process but also reinforced the critical role a well-developed comprehensive plan plays in shaping all aspects of a municipality, in light of all salient challenges and relevant obstacles. A special thank you to APA-MA and the granting authorities of the Carol Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund for allowing me the opportunity to attend the 2024 SNEAPA Conference. I am incredibly grateful for this experience.

### Charles Ofosu

Harvard University, Graduate School of Design

On November 07, 2024, I had the privilege to attend the Southern New England American Planning Association (SNEAPA) conference held at Springfield, MA. The conference brought together the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island chapters, providing a high quality presentation, workshops, panel discussions, and valuable opportunities to engage with planning



professionals, engineers, architects, policymakers, and fellow students to further deepen my understanding on the current trends and challenges in urban and regional planning. This experience left me with a renewed energy and sense of purpose to help address the pressing environmental issues as a young and emerging planner.

The conference shed light on concerns related to community resilience, building intersectional bridges in planning, zoning, housing, sustainable transportation and mobility, diversity and inclusion, and the importance of a well-written request for qualifications or proposals.

One insightful thing I learned from the session was that a well-written Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or Request for Proposals (RFP) is crucial for ensuring that an organization effectively communicates its needs, expectations, and requirements to potential vendors, consultants, or contractors. Whether you're issuing an RFQ or RFP for a construction project, a consulting service, or a creative endeavor, the quality of the request has a direct impact on the success of the project. The session highlighted key elements to consider when writing an RFQ or RFP, such as a detailed outline of needs that clearly defines the project scope, objectives, timeframe, budget, and open-ended deliverables. This helps ensure that all parties have a common understanding of what the project entails. This strategy stood out for me, and I would apply it in future work.

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## Scholarship Awards *cont'd*

The conference provided ample networking opportunities with fellow students, planners, and professionals in the field. During breaks and networking sessions, I had the opportunity to speak with several planning practitioners about career paths, emerging trends in the industry, and potential internship or job opportunities. On November 8, 2024, as I reflected on the SNEAPA 2024 conference on my return journey home, I was filled with excitement and a sense of accomplishment. But what made this experience even more special was that it coincided with my birthday. This unusual alignment of events has given me the opportunity to reflect on both the professional growth I gained from the conference and the personal growth of turning another year older.

Thank you, SNEAPA.

## Charlotte Collins

*University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

I particularly enjoyed the Special Session “Generational Conversations: Building Intersectional Bridges in Planning” led by Jacquie McPherson, AICP, Jay Vinskey, AICP, RLA, Savannah-Nicole (SN) Villalba, AICP, AZT, and Tim Shea. This talk discussed the importance of

communicating across generations and learning from individuals’ differing understandings of and experiences in the planning field. The session began with an overview of intersectionality and generational differences in planning education.

We then moved on to several small group discussions with our table prompted by the provided questions. When attendees entered the room, we were asked to find a table with those in a generation different from our own, so all the tables became varied in age.

In our small groups, we discussed topics such as equity and diversity in the planning field, insights from and challenges with community engagement, and our own positionality as planners and people. In my discussion group, I learned valuable insights about the planning process and the everyday role of planners in different settings. I appreciated having the opportunity to ask questions about planning practice and education and value the connections I made with my group members.

Thank you to Jacquie, Jay, Savannah-Nicole, and Tim for hosting this session and facilitating intergenerational connections!

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## Emily Hodos

University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst



I grew up in Greenfield, Massachusetts, when Wilson's Department Store was the center of downtown activity, alongside other thriving retail outlets like Clark's Sport Shop, Hamilton's Shoes, Knapp's Hardware, and Barrett & Baker. The typical small-town challenges posed by global economics, "brain drain," and aging rural populations were—in large part—my motivation to return to school in the UMass/Amherst Master of Regional Planning program. For decades Greenfield has been discussed as a town that has "so much unrealized potential." That's why I was particularly excited to attend the first morning session, "The Small City Housing Playbook: How Greenfield creates housing opportunities through progressive policy, innovative partnerships, and community conversation."

Even before attending this session, I was keenly aware of the Wilson's mixed-used redevelopment project. It has had a good deal of press coverage as it could serve as a true game-changer for the Greenfield downtown corridor. It's an excellent example of a collaborative initiative that repurposes vacant and deteriorating buildings to address multiple needs, revitalizing both a struggling downtown and the local housing market. The key investors are Franklin Community Coop, the City of Greenfield, The Community Builders, and MassDevelopment. The goal is to revitalize the downtown with upgraded retail offerings, especially the expansion of Green Fields Market, and 61 mixed-income rental units.

What I learned during this session, however, is the exciting movement of additional housing initiatives, including another major mixed-use development along Greenfield's Main Street directly one block west of the Wilson's project. This is a Massachusetts Housing Partnership-supported project that will add another 24 units of affordable housing and upgraded retail space to the downtown. If both of these projects are fully realized, they will fundamentally transform the downtown, particularly by introducing a higher-density residential hub—something the area has never had, even during its peak as a bustling commercial center.

In addition to these large-scale projects, the Rural Development Inc., under the auspices of the Greenfield Housing Authority and with the purpose of expanding affordable home ownership and rentals, have piloted a program that operates on a much smaller scale, more in the spirit of Habitat for Humanity. They undertook the rehab of a single-family home with a funding design that provides attainable home ownership.

As exciting as these projects are, there are many

hurdles to jump. CommunityScale, a private planning firm, worked with the City of Greenfield to draft a comprehensive [housing plan](#) to project the housing needs of Greenfield over the next 10 years. They have assessed the minimum need for a total of 486 units over the next 10 years to keep up with projected population growth by household unit. This includes a more diverse mix of housing by measures such as income, family configuration, and age projections. A key priority common in rural communities is addressing the needs of an aging population. This includes making adaptations for aging in place as well as building more senior housing. Many of the existing homes, including those of older adults, are old, energy-inefficient, and suffer from deferred maintenance, as residents often struggle to afford necessary and costly upgrades. Additionally, a common topic in housing planning discussions across regions is the need to revise zoning regulations to increase the housing supply, whether by allowing accessory dwelling units or permitting multi-family structures in areas currently zoned for single-family homes.

Much of the information shared echoed discussions happening in rural communities, all stemming from the same underlying issue: we are in the midst of a housing crisis. But there was one important statement made that stuck with me, especially as someone interested in rural economic and workforce development: "Affordable housing IS workforce housing." The health of the economy and the ability of a community to sustain a functioning, stable workforce is inherently linked to the affordability of living there. It emphasizes that affordable housing is not just a general need but a critical resource for workers in industries like education, healthcare, retail, and other key sectors. Without affordable housing options, workers may be priced out of the areas where they work, leading to economic and social challenges. I believe this is at the heart of planning—examining and taking action on the interdependencies between various community sectors, whether it's economic growth, workforce development, housing, transportation, and beyond.

I am grateful to be awarded a stipend from the Carol Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund to attend the 2024 SNEAPA Conference.

## Prajakta Ghorpade

University of Massachusetts,  
Amherst



At the SNEAPA conference in Springfield, Massachusetts, I attended an insightful session on the evolving needs of young planners in municipal settings. The session, "A New Generation in City Hall: Retraining Young

*continued next page*



# The PDO Corner

by Bill Nemser, AICP, MA Chapter PDO



Happy 2025 fellow planners! For our New Year's resolution, the APA-MA Board is again committing to bringing you all the interesting, useful, and yes – enjoyable – educational opportunities we can!

In 2024, the chapter sponsored or co-sponsored 16 local educational events including lectures, workshops, films, field events and more. Most, if not all, at no or low cost to APA-Ma members and qualifying for AICP CE credits. All the more reason to ensure you have a current [APA-MA Chapter membership!](#)

## AICP Exams 2025

So what's next? Let's get our Chapter AICP numbers even higher than they are! And now we're making it easier than ever to pass the AICP exam.

Well, more of the same to be sure but we have an exciting new twist: we are expanding and revising our AICP prep course offerings. The 2025 schedule for the national exam and registration can all be found on the [APA National website](#). Now for 2025, AICP exam takers can prepare for the test in more ways than ever. This begins with the APA-MA Exam Prep Series. For 2025, the Chapter courses:

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## Scholarship Awards *cont'd*

Planners in the Public Sector," highlighted that today's planners, particularly Gen Z, value transparency and clear workplace expectations. They thrive in collaborative office cultures where supervisors support growth and allow space for learning through mistakes. It was emphasized that young planners are passionate about communicating complex topics, like zoning and development, in accessible ways to foster public understanding and engagement.

An important aspect of growth mentioned was the role of peer collaboration for both personal and professional development. This generation of planners also tends to hold positions for shorter durations (typically 2-3 years), often seeking new opportunities for better compensation or fresh perspectives.

Guidance from senior colleagues remains vital, particularly for navigating challenges such as learning when to say "no" and effectively pitching ideas in proposals. The session concluded with valuable advice: small contributions matter, even a 10% role in a project adds up to significant progress over time.

This session provided a refreshing look at the needs and aspirations of emerging planners and offered valuable perspectives on how to support and grow within the profession.

- Will remain online.
- Have expanded from four classes to six classes taught by local members.
- Have been recalibrated to align with the national breakdown of topics covered on the AICP exam.
- This year's classes will be free for all current members of APA-MA and other chapters.
- Will be held weekly beginning in the first week in March and concluding mid-April. Classes will be from 6-9 p.m.
- Registration and final dates to be announced shortly (but be sure to check the APA-MA website periodically for new details).

The updated classes take the approach that while you can't cover everything that may show up on the AICP exam in a few classes, we can try to provide you with a basic foundation of major topics and establish a clear baseline for future study. If you are interested in participating in the Chapter Prep sessions, reach out to me, Bill Nemser at [pdo@apa-ma.org](mailto:pdo@apa-ma.org) and I will make sure you get class details. And remember: you must be an APA member to sit for the AICP exam. If you are not a member, [register here](#).

## More Options for AICP Study

The Chapter also wanted to make it easier for our members to access and take advantage of other sources of study materials and classes. After all, why reinvent the wheel? So, in conjunction with my long-time friends Susan Coughanour, FAICP, and Henry Bittaker, FAICP, APA-MA members can participate in their weekly AICP Study Group online sessions for free! The sessions hosted by the Treasure Coast Section of APA-FL start January 2, 2025 and are typically held twice weekly. But to participate **you must first be added to the mailing list** by contacting Henry Bittaker at [hbittaker@aol.com](mailto:hbittaker@aol.com) and providing your APA member number and Chapter name. You will be provided a password and instructions on how to access the Treasure Coast's One Drive site and extensive collection of study materials and recordings of past classes.

Additionally, we've worked with our friends in APA-CT to allow our members to register for their intensive one day online AICP Saturday Prep Session. A date in March is being solidified, so stay tuned!

All of this adds up to additional opportunities for AICP exam takers to adjust study to fit their schedule.

What does all this mean? It means that we are committed to providing our members the very best educational opportunities we can. Educational programming that will enhance and maintain the outstanding pool of talent APA-MA and help our Chapter to stand out not only in the area we serve but nationally.

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions to [pdo@apa-ma.org](mailto:pdo@apa-ma.org).

Happy New Year!



## NEWS FROM CPM | Consulting Planners' Perspective

by Kathleen "Kathy" McCabe, FAICP, Vice-President, Consulting Planners of Massachusetts



# Judi Barrett Honored

Judi Barrett was recognized by the Consulting Planners of Massachusetts at the APA-MA annual awards with the Carol Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement, to much applause and a standing ovation. As many Massachusetts planners know, Judi has been a tireless advocate for good planning and housing. She has served as a trainer and speaker helping planners, planning board members, and citizens throughout the Commonwealth decipher zoning, site plan review, 40B, and master planning at CPTC. She is particularly skillful at making technical issues and planning nuances understandable and accessible to community members. Judi authored the Affordable Housing Permitting Guide under 40B and chairs the chapter's Housing Committee, which recently sponsored the widely attended program on ADUs.



Today, Judi Barrett heads up Barrett Planning Group, a ten-plus person planning firm focused on housing, zoning, master planning, and community development. The Barrett Planning Group, which she founded in 2017, is going strong and growing. Judi and the Barrett Planning Group team garnered additional planning awards this year for the Tisbury Master Plan and the Longmeadow Climate Resilient Long-Range Plan.

Judi's path to founding her own planning firm has spanned both public and private sectors. She started as a writer and a part-time assistant to planning consultant Jeanne VanOrman and went on to serve as Director of Community Development in Plymouth, departing to work with MA Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). She then joined the private sector working with Communities

Opportunities Group and later RKG Associates.

Throughout her career and many roles, Judi has demonstrated a passion for helping people and communities through better planning, housing, and community development. As Daphne Politis noted in presenting the Carol Thomas Award, "I have personally witnessed Judi's dedication and passion as she stayed up working through the night on countless occasions trying to solve a problem, trying to get the words right..."

The Carol Thomas Award recognizes Judi Barrett for her exceptional achievements, tireless work, and dedication to the planning profession as a thought leader, a mentor, a consultant, a lecturer, a colleague, and volunteer. Judi's passion and commitment have set a high standard of excellence and are an inspiration. This award represents CPM's and the Massachusetts planning community's heartfelt admiration for Judi Barrett's remarkable, outstanding, and creative contributions to the field.

### Carol R. Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement

**Carol R. Thomas, FAICP**, was a pioneer and trailblazer in planning in Massachusetts, the U.S., and internationally. She founded her own planning firm as well as the Massachusetts Association of Consulting Planners, now known as Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM). Carol Thomas was a Massachusetts land use planner practitioner providing planning services to cities and towns well into her eighties. She taught at both the University of Rhode Island and Harvard Graduate School of Design as an adjunct. Carol Thomas served as the President of the American Institute of Certified Planners, as well as Chair of the APA Private Practice Division, and APA Divisions Chair.

CPM's Lifetime Achievement Award is in honor of Carol Thomas' life-long commitment and service as a private practice planner and her many contributions to our profession.

### REGISTER TODAY!

#### Upcoming Virtual CPM Program – Transforming Downtown Holyoke with New Housing – Wed., February 28 (12 p.m.)

Downtown Holyoke is reinventing itself using innovative financing tools to fuel both retail and housing development. Come hear and learn about the successes of long-term planning efforts to create vibrant Downtown Holyoke along the High Street corridor, including the role of public-private partnerships, and how the many financing tools can be utilized to build new housing, foster mixed-use development, and spur retail growth.

This virtual case study webinar will feature a walk down High Street and

panelists who are actively bringing about this long-desired investment and activation in Downtown Holyoke. Panelists include Bill Womeldorf, a western Massachusetts real estate developer and investor in downtown Holyoke; Aaron Vega, the Director of Planning & Economic Development for the City of Holyoke; and Paul McMorrow, Director of Communication & Policy with Mass-Housing. Lynne Sweet, Principal of LDS Consulting Group, which specializes in housing finance and incentives, will be moderating the panel.

Register for this informative program here: [www.consultingplanners.org/events](http://www.consultingplanners.org/events). AICP CM credits pending.

Watch for Consulting Planners of Massachusetts's program later this spring featuring a walking tour and case study highlighting Lowell.



## A Conversation with Judi Barrett

As the new recipient of CPM's Carol Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement, **Judi Barrett** sat down on a wintery Saturday afternoon with Kathy McCabe, FAICP, and talked about planning, communities, and her motivations and passion for working with communities. Here are the conversation's highlights, with a mix of both quotes and summary comments.

Judi's energy and passion for planning stems from her desire for communities to work for people, for everyone. **"Community development helps provide needed resources for people who don't typically have a voice. People need help."** And we can help and change lives by providing needed resources through community development, with housing, and better planning.

**"I want to be able for people to have access to housing, to have a great life and to have the means for their children to have opportunities."**

**"I think my passion for housing and planning really comes out of my love for community development. While the Barrett Planning Group is known for master plans, housing, and zoning, we also do a lot of work on community development and consolidated plans."** Planning and community development really need to be seen more closely together. They really are part of the same effort to have **"more human-centered and inclusive communities."**

Judi noted, **"I really want to help local officials connect with people, including people who are less apt to be visible and less likely to be included in municipal conversations about the future. We need to ask, 'who is not here' and reach out to hidden communities."** This takes work. It is critical for planners to reach out and understand the needs of less visible residents. It's important and makes a difference!

### Changes in Planning Work

In-person work and in-person meetings continue to be important for planners. **"At the Barrett Planning Group, we have two in-office, in-person days a week. I can see the difference in the interactions and collaboration amongst our staff and team members. It's much more active when people are present and face-to-face. With all the planning tools and data sets we have today, I often remind younger planners that you really need to visit a community and spend time in the community to know it."** Remote work and Zoom offer convenience and efficiency. Some of the side conversations, the personal connections and relationship building, and the incidental observations that are important to planning are missing in the virtual context. Good planning needs in-person,

face-to-face contacts, in the community, which can be supplemented by virtual meetings.

**"The loss of local newspapers is another big change, and a tremendous loss. It's harder for people to get current information and news about their local communities. Local newspapers often provided the forum for discussions and accountability. A municipal website doesn't provide the same level of information. There is not a reporter asking officials questions and why."**

### Current Challenges

As communities are building and providing for more housing, which is desperately needed, **"We need to think more about community design. Density and new housing production are critical. We also need to be creating human-centered communities. The quality of housing and neighborhoods is as important as the quantity of housing. There needs to be a mix of housing types, including smaller units, to create vibrant neighborhoods that people want to live in, and have nearby parks and play spaces for kids."**

Downtowns and town centers are changing and evolving. **"Municipalities need to be flexible and embrace change,"** rather than be overly prescriptive about specific types of development.

Analytically, **"we should be more focused on analyzing household trends and changes in a community, and not just focus on population projections. It's households that create the need for new housing."**

**"Planning needs to be more equitable, integrative, and holistic in the future with a focus on creating communities where people want to live, love, and put down roots. There needs to be less of a checklist approach, and more of human understanding of the multiple and diverse needs and interests of individuals."**

### The Future

Communities are complex. Getting to know communities takes a lot of work.

**"As planners we may need to be vulnerable. We need to be able to push back. I love the AICP Code of Ethics. We need to live and work by it. We need to be models defending civil rights."**

**"It's a fun time to be a planner. There are so many tools, and changes, plus the young people who are becoming planners bring new ideas and energy."**



Courtesy of Vineyard Gazette



# Legislative Update

by *Ralph R. Wilmer, FAICP,*  
*Legislative & Policy Officer*



As expected, the Massachusetts Legislature recently advanced two key pieces of legislation that were not adopted when the last legislative session ended in July. Many of the provisions of each bill will be of interest to planners and they are summarized below (information provided by the office of Rep. Kristin Kassner).

## S2967 – An Act promoting a clean energy grid, advancing equity and protecting ratepayers

- Establishes the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity to ensure that all have access to a clean environment.
- Consolidates state permitting for state/regional and local projects.
- Grants DPU the authority to establish criteria for moderate income discount rates in addition to low-income rates.
- Outlines plans for long-term procurement of clean power and updates energy storage requirements
- Requires energy distribution companies to deploy advanced metering infrastructure to assess energy usage
- Requires DOER to forecast electric vehicle charging demand along major routes/service plazas to build EV charging infrastructure
- Streamlines permitting for ecological restoration projects
- Includes geothermal in the definition of an energy company, and fusion as renewable energy
- Updates flood risk mapping
- Reforms building code best practices to meet greenhouse goals

## H.5100 – An Act strengthening Massachusetts' economic leadership

The \$3.9 billion bill proposes funding and tax credits for economic development projects and initiatives.

- \$500 million for MA Life Sciences Breakthrough Fund
- \$400 million for Clean Energy Investment Fund
- \$200 million for Offshore Wind Industry Investment Fund
- \$400 million for MassWorks Public Infrastructure grants to municipalities

- \$100 million for infrastructure improvements in rural communities
- \$150 million in grants for approved library projects
- \$100 million in Municipal Finances Assistance Grants to assist municipalities with workforce development
- \$100 million for Applied AI Hub
- \$21 million for resilience in agriculture and fishing
- \$9.5 million for downtown vitality
- Live Theatre Tax Credit

As we head into 2025, we are tracking the evolving draft regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) as well as legislation to be introduced as the new legislative session begins in January. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) has released draft regulations and comments were due on January 10, 2025. Members of the MA Chapter Legislative and Policy Committee are reviewing the draft regulations and plan to submit comments to EOHLC. The law is set to take effect on February 2nd. You can access information on ADUs at [www.mass.gov/info-details/accessory-dwelling-units](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/accessory-dwelling-units).

With the new legislative session around the corner, we are working with a coalition of partners to redraft legislation to codify site plan review into MGL c. 40A. This effort will build upon the work done in 2024 and we hope to broaden support for the bill to get it past the finish line in 2025. Other bills we will be tracking include refile bills to mandate training for planning and zoning board members and to allow for the appointment of associate members to planning and zoning boards.

Feel free to contact me at [ralphwillmer.apa@gmail.com](mailto:ralphwillmer.apa@gmail.com) if you are interested in any of these (or other) legislative issues.

## Free Listing of RFQs and RFPs

Looking to get the word out about a Request for Quotes or an RFP? Consulting Planners of Massachusetts will list your announcement for free on its website and send it out in our regular monthly email to consulting planners. If you have an RFQ or RFP, please send it to: [TreasurerCPM@aol.com](mailto:TreasurerCPM@aol.com).



**Save the date: Massachusetts Distinguished Planner Lecture**

The **Massachusetts Distinguished Planner Lecture** is an annual lecture which honors a retiring or retired practitioner. The lecture offers the featured planner the opportunity to reflect on their practice and speak openly and frankly about their experience in the profession. The lecture will enter its 3rd year in 2025. This year's lecture will take place at the Northeastern University School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs in Boston on **Thursday, March 13th at 4PM.**

The lecture operates in partnership with APA-MA and aims to strengthen connections between planning professionals and the university communities within MA. Learn more: <http://sites.tufts.edu/plannerlecture>.

**Congratulations to Consulting Planners Making 2024 APA-MA Award-Winning Plans**

- Utile with HR&A and Nelson/Nygaard**  
*Now/Next, Worcester's Citywide Plan*
- Barrett Planning Group with Dodson & Flinker, Horsley-Witten Group, Beta, and FXM Associates**  
*Tisbury Master Plan*
- Kim Lundgren Associates and Bohler Engineering**  
*Sustainable Landscape Handbook*
- Utile with Landwise Advisors**  
*Newton Zoning Redesign - Village Centers*
- Mark Favermann, Favermann Design**  
*Journalism and Communications*
- Barrett Planning Group with Beta and PVPC**  
*Longmeadow Climate Resilient Long-Range Plan*
- ARUP, John Bolduc, & Kim Lundgren Associates**  
*Climate Forward, Somerville's Community Climate Action Plan*

**And we celebrate Judi Barrett, recipient of the Carol Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement**

*Private Sector Planners Providing Expertise & Making A Difference*



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